



NEWS ROUNDUP

29 APRIL 2024 [08:00 am]

- Is climate change to blame for the deadly Dubai flooding?
- Philippines to endure extreme heat until mid-May
- Schools closed, warnings issued as Asia swelters in extreme heatwave
- [Opinion] Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate
- DENR reiterates order on intensified forest protection efforts
- Philippines to spend P9.5 B in global efforts to protect ocean
- Be more adaptive, break siloed approach to climate crisis\
- Heat risk protection for workers
- Climate change may have aggravated rains in Gulf: Scientists
- Germany to industrialized nations: live up to your climate pledges
- German Envoy Reveals About P8.7B Economic Plan For Philippines
- [Opinion] The poor suffer most from global warming
- Distance learning for public schools on April 29, 30 due to extreme heat, transport strike

CCC IN THE NEWS:

- Ambitious climate action: Prescription for health in the face of extreme heat
- Combating plastic pollution to secure our planet's future
- SM Group works with industry, gov't for climate action, low-carbon economy

ABS CBN

[Is climate change to blame for the deadly Dubai flooding?](#)

By: Lou Albano

The rainfall that caused at least 20 deaths in Oman and four in Dubai last week was made 10-40% more intense by climate change, according to a rapid study by a group of international climate scientists from the World Weather Attribution Group (WWA).

[Philippines to endure extreme heat until mid-May](#)

Unusually hot weather in the Philippines was expected to last until mid-May, a forecaster said Sunday, after the temperature hit a record high in the capital Manila.

Schools closed, warnings issued as Asia swelters in extreme heatwave

South and Southeast Asia braced for more extreme heat on Sunday as authorities across the region issued health warnings and residents fled to parks and air-conditioned malls for relief.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Opinion] Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate

By: Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa

Climate change is having serious impacts on the safety and health of workers in the Asia and the Pacific region.

DAILY TRIBUNE

DENR reiterates order on intensified forest protection efforts

By: Jing Villamente

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Friday reiterates its order for intensified forest protection efforts amidst a series of reported forest fires around the country.

MANILA BULLETIN

Philippines to spend P9.5 B in global efforts to protect ocean

By: Joseph pedrajas

The Philippines will be spending roughly P9.5 billion as its contribution to global efforts of protecting the ocean.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Be more adaptive, break siloed approach to climate crisis

Record-high temperatures affecting the country's agriculture and water resources, local governments declaring a state of calamity in their areas, and schools implementing remote learning arrangements—this is the reality Filipinos face today.

Heat risk protection for workers

The Philippines, like many other countries, is experiencing high temperatures that could surpass the global average last year, the hottest year since global records began in mid-1800s. El Niño is making things worse with the heat index reaching up to 47 degrees Celsius this week in some parts of the country and forecasted to get even hotter next month. Face-to-face classes in public schools have been suspended and work-from-home option has been revived for employees to cope with the unbearable heat. But more than these stopgap measures, the government must consider long-term policies and craft a heat risk protection plan to help Filipinos manage extreme weather conditions.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Climate change may have aggravated rains in Gulf: Scientists

Scientists are looking into the possibility that torrential rains that hit the Gulf region last week may have been exacerbated by climate change.

Germany to industrialized nations: live up to your climate pledges

Germany on Thursday called on industrialized nations to live up to their climate pledges, and not to cut down funds for developing countries.

POLITIKO

German Envoy Reveals About P8.7B Economic Plan For Philippines

By: Roy C. Mabasa

Germany's Ambassador to the Philippines, Dr. Andreas Michael Pfaffernoschke disclosed that his country's commitment to economic cooperation is evident through its comprehensive portfolio of projects totaling EUR 145 million (approximately Php 8.7 billion).

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] The poor suffer most from global warming](#)

By: Fr. Shay Cullen

It is the poor that suffer the most from global warming. They are in despair of escaping poverty, and they endure the unbearable life in the slums where the incredible heat relentlessly beats down on them. With average temperatures ranging from 36 to 40 degrees Celsius this past week and a heat wave for several weeks, we ask, is this the impact of climate change, and will it be like this more frequently?

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Distance learning for public schools on April 29, 30 due to extreme heat, transport strike](#)

The Department of Education (DepEd) has announced that all public schools will implement distance learning on Monday and Tuesday due to extreme heat and a nationwide transport strike.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Ambitious climate action: Prescription for health in the face of extreme heat](#)

In the midst of the searing heat gripping the country, the evident impact of climate change on human well-being highlights their interconnectedness, straining public health and emphasizing the urgent need to address this critical issue as temperatures continue to rise and extreme weather events become more frequent.

[Combating plastic pollution to secure our planet's future](#)

Throughout modern history, a silent yet pressing crisis continues to unfold: the pervasive infiltration of plastic pollution on the Earth's ecosystems. As we observe Earth Month this year with the theme "Planet vs Plastics," the urgent need to protect our only home from the perils of plastic waste calls for immediate action.

MANILA STANDARD

[SM Group works with industry, gov't for climate action, low-carbon economy](#)

The SM Group said it is advancing meaningful discourse on climate action and fostering partnerships aligned with efforts to support the country's commitment to addressing climate change.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

[Is climate change to blame for the deadly Dubai flooding?](#)

By: Lou Albano

The rainfall that caused at least 20 deaths in Oman and four in Dubai last week was made 10-40% more intense by climate change, according to a rapid study by a group of international climate scientists from the World Weather Attribution Group (WWA).

Rains usually occur in the Arabian Peninsula during March and April, often short, infrequent, and intense, so the rainfall itself was normal. But according to the WWA, last week's deluge was made stronger by climate change, which is caused by burning fossil fuels and deforestation.

"Extreme rainfall events have become at least 10% heavier in the UAE and Oman. This finding is not surprising and agrees with the basic physics that a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture," Mariam Zachariah, researcher at the Grantham Institute - Climate Change and the Environment, of Imperial College London, said in a statement.

At the present 1.2C warming, "the atmosphere can hold about 8.4% more moisture" the statement added. The Paris Agreement of 2015 has set the warming limit between 1.5C and 2C.

Meanwhile, scientists at the WWA also looked at how El Niño could have influenced the extreme rainfall and their observations indicate "El Niño plays an important role in the likelihood of heavy rain episodes in this part of the world, as the heaviest rainfall events in the region all occurred during El Niño years," the press statement said.

While the scientists are careful not to attribute the extreme rainfall solely to climate change, they are certain "global warming is the most likely explanation."

Said, Friederike Otto, Senior Lecturer in Climate Science at the Grantham Institute - Climate Change and the Environment, Imperial College London, "Both El Niño and human-caused climate change appear to be influencing heavy rainfall in the UAE and Oman."

"While we can't stop El Niño, we can stop climate change. The solution is to stop burning fossil fuels, to stop deforestation," she added.

"If the world keeps burning fossil fuels, rainfall in many regions of the world will get heavier and heavier, resulting in deadlier and more destructive floods," Otto said.

Regions of the Arabian Peninsula was hit by extreme rainfall last week, with Dubai receiving a year and a half's worth of rain in just 24 hours.

More than 80mm of rain fell on the United Arab Emirates — the most the UAE has seen since record-keeping began in 75 years. In Dubai, more than 14cm of rain fell in just 24 hours, that WWA said.

The rains killed four individuals in UAE, including three Filipino OFWs, and disrupted the Dubai International Airport. Among those who were stranded was Rhian Ramos.

Philippines to endure extreme heat until mid-May

Unusually hot weather in the Philippines was expected to last until mid-May, a forecaster said Sunday, after the temperature hit a record high in the capital Manila.

Extreme heat has scorched Southeast Asia in recent days, prompting thousands of schools to suspend in-person classes and authorities to issue health warnings.

In the Philippines, many people flocked to air-conditioned shopping malls and swimming pools for relief from the relentless heat.

"This is the hottest I've ever experienced here," said Nancy Bautista, 65, whose resort in Cavite province near Manila was fully booked due to the hot weather.

"Many of our guests are friends and families. They swim in the pool to fight the heat."

The temperature in Manila hit a record high of 38.8 degrees Celsius (101.8 degrees Fahrenheit) on Saturday with the heat index reaching 45C, data from the state weather forecaster showed.

The heat index measures what a temperature feels like, taking into account humidity.

The months of March, April and May are typically the hottest and driest time of the year, but this year's conditions have been exacerbated by the El Nino weather phenomenon.

"All places in the country, not necessarily just Metro Manila, are expected to have hotter temperatures until the second week of May," Glaiza Escullar of the state weather forecaster told AFP.

"There is a possibility that the areas will exceed those temperatures being measured today until the second week of May."

Camiling municipality in Tarlac province, north of Manila, recorded a temperature of 40.3C on Saturday -- the country's highest this year.

As the mercury rose, Gerise Reyes, 31, planned to take her two-year-old daughter to a shopping mall near Manila.

"It's hot here at home. This is the hottest I've ever experienced especially between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm," she said.

"We need a free aircon to cut our electricity bill."

Global temperatures hit record highs last year, and the United Nations' weather and climate agency said Tuesday that Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace.

The Philippines ranks among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Schools closed, warnings issued as Asia swelters in extreme heatwave

South and Southeast Asia braced for more extreme heat on Sunday as authorities across the region issued health warnings and residents fled to parks and air-conditioned malls for relief.

A wave of exceptionally hot weather has blasted the region over the past week, sending the mercury as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) and forcing thousands of schools to tell students to stay home.

The Philippines announced on Sunday the suspension of in-person classes at all public schools for two days after a record-shattering day of heat in the capital Manila.

In Thailand, where at least 30 people have died of heatstroke so far this year, the meteorological department warned of "severe conditions" after temperatures in a northern province exceeded 44.1C (111.4F) on Saturday.

And in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, India and Bangladesh, forecasters warned that temperatures could exceed 40C in the coming days as people endured searing heat and stifling humidity.

"I dare not go out in the daytime. I am worried we would get heatstroke," said a 39-year-old cashier in Myanmar's Yangon who gave her name as San Yin.

She said she has been going to a park with her husband and four-year-old son at night to escape the heat of their fourth-floor apartment.

"This is the only spot we can stay to avoid the heat in our neighborhood," she said.

Global temperatures hit record highs last year, and the United Nations weather and climate agency said Tuesday that Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace.

Extensive scientific research has found climate change is causing heat waves to become longer, more frequent and more intense.

Myanmar has recorded temperatures that are 3-4C higher than the April average, its weather monitor said last week.

And on Sunday, the national forecaster predicted temperatures in the central city of Mandalay could rise to 43C.

The ministry of water and meteorology in Cambodia warned that temperatures could also hit 43C in some parts of the country in the week ahead, while the health ministry advised people to monitor their health "during hot weather related to climate change".

Temperatures in Vietnam were also forecast to remain high during a five-day national holiday, with forecasts as high as 41C in the north.

Forecasters there said it would remain intensely hot until the end of April, with cooler conditions expected in May.

India's weather department said Saturday that severe heatwave conditions would continue through the weekend in several states, with temperatures soaring to 44C in some locations.

"I have never experienced this heat before," Ananth Nadiger, a 37-year-old advertising professional, told AFP from Bengaluru.

"It's very unpleasant and it takes the energy out of you."

The world's biggest democracy is in the middle of a six-week general election that saw millions of voters queue up in searing temperatures on Friday.

India's election commission said it had formed a task force to review the impact of heatwaves and humidity before each round of voting.

And in Bangladesh, millions of students returned to schools that had been closed due to extreme temperatures, even though its weather bureau said Sunday the heatwave would continue for at least the next three days.

"I went to the school with my 13-year-old daughter. She was happy her school was open. But I was tense," said Lucky Begum, whose daughter is enrolled at a state-run school in Dhaka.

"The heat is too much," she told AFP. "She already got heat rashes from sweating. I hope she does not get sick."

- School closures -

The suspension of in-person classes in the Philippines came after Manila witnessed its highest temperature ever recorded, with jeepney drivers also planning a nationwide strike on Monday and Tuesday.

The temperature in the capital hit a record 38.8C (101.8F) on Saturday, with the heat index reaching 45C, data from the state weather forecaster showed.

The heat index measures what a temperature feels like, taking into account humidity.

Many schools in the Philippines have no air-conditioning, leaving students to swelter in crowded, poorly ventilated classrooms.

The hot weather persisted on Sunday, with many flocking to air-conditioned shopping malls and swimming pools for relief.

"This is the hottest I've ever experienced here," said Nancy Bautista, 65, whose resort in Cavite province near Manila was fully booked.

"Many of our guests are friends and families. They swim in the pool to fight the heat."

March, April and May are typically the hottest and driest months of the year in the region but this year's conditions have been exacerbated by the El Nino weather phenomenon.

"All places in the country, not necessarily just Metro Manila, are expected to have hotter temperatures until the second week of May," Glaiza Escullar of the state weather forecaster told AFP.

Camiling municipality in Tarlac province, north of Manila, recorded a temperature of 40.3C (104.5F) on Saturday -- the highest in the Philippines this year.

As the mercury rose, Gerise Reyes, 31, planned to take her two-year-old daughter to a shopping mall near Manila.

"It's hot here at home. This is the hottest I've ever experienced, especially between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm," she said.

"We need a free aircon to cut our electricity bill."

BUSINESS MIRROR

[\[Opinion\] Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate](#)

By: Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa

Climate change is having serious impacts on the safety and health of workers in the Asia and the Pacific region.

From blistering heatwaves to dangerously poor air quality, workers bear the brunt of its effects, frequently finding themselves with no choice but to continue working, without adequate protection or recourse, even if conditions are hazardous.

Heat stress is perhaps the most obvious challenge. As temperatures soar, those working outdoors in agriculture, construction, fishing and transport are particularly vulnerable, facing heightened risks of heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke.

However, indoor workers are at risk too, especially where they are exposed to sources of heat or poor ventilation. Factories, food processing plants, brick kilns or warehouses can all be as dangerous to workers as toiling under the hot sun.

Better regulations, enforcement, mitigation strategies, training and awareness can all make a difference. The empowerment of workers, allowing them to stop working due to extreme heat without the fear of losing wages or their jobs, is crucial.

Air pollution exacerbated by climate change heightens the risk of respiratory illnesses. In cities like Beijing, New Delhi and Bangkok poor air quality is a daily reality, posing significant health risks for workers exposed to pollutants.

Ideally, the root causes need to be addressed. But for a delivery driver or streetside vendor spending all day breathing in this toxic soup, awareness, protective equipment and—wherever possible—adaptations to working patterns are needed to help minimize the impact.

Climate change is a real threat to worker safety across the Asia-Pacific region. To mark World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2024, ILO Assistant Director General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa explains what needs to change.

Climate change is having serious impacts on the safety and health of workers in the Asia and the Pacific region.

From blistering heatwaves to dangerously poor air quality, workers bear the brunt of its effects, frequently finding themselves with no choice but to continue working, without adequate protection or recourse, even if conditions are hazardous.

Heat stress is perhaps the most obvious challenge. As temperatures soar, those working outdoors in agriculture, construction, fishing and transport are particularly vulnerable, facing heightened risks of heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke.

However, indoor workers are at risk too, especially where they are exposed to sources of heat or poor ventilation. Factories, food processing plants, brick kilns or warehouses can all be as dangerous to workers as toiling under the hot sun.

Better regulations, enforcement, mitigation strategies, training and awareness can all make a difference. The empowerment of workers, allowing them to stop working due to extreme heat without the fear of losing wages or their jobs, is crucial.

Air pollution exacerbated by climate change heightens the risk of respiratory illnesses. In cities like Beijing, New Delhi and Bangkok poor air quality is a daily reality, posing significant health risks for workers exposed to pollutants.

Ideally, the root causes need to be addressed. But for a delivery driver or streetside vendor spending all day breathing in this toxic soup, awareness, protective equipment and—wherever possible—adaptations to working patterns are needed to help minimize the impact.

Beyond heat stress and air pollution, the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events present additional challenges for workplace safety and health.

From cyclones and floods to droughts and wildfires, natural disasters disrupt businesses, endanger workers and inflict significant economic losses.

One example is the garment industry where a recent study by Cornell University's Global Labor Institute found that extreme heat and flooding could cost the sector \$65 billion in export revenue and 950,000 jobs by 2030.

In the aftermath of disasters, recovery efforts must prioritize the safety and well-being of workers, ensuring access to essential services, protective equipment and psychosocial support.

Not all workers are impacted the same. Those who are vulnerable, informal workers, migrants and the marginalized suffer most. Women are also disproportionately affected. Long standing inequalities and limited access to resources, hinders their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

In the face of these challenges, there is an urgent need for coordinated action to safeguard the safety and health of workers in a changing climate.

The starting point must be robust regulatory frameworks which are essential to enforce safety standards and protect workers from climate-related hazards.

In 2022, the International Labor Conference agreed to include “a safe and healthy working environment” in the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. This carries profound implications for policy and practice.

Governments are now compelled to enact and enforce laws that mandate workplace safety and health measures, adequate rest breaks, and access to personal protective equipment, particularly in high-risk industries.

While some countries in the region such as China, India, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have implemented laws and guidelines to address excessive heat in the workplace, protection for workers against other climate change impacts remain fragmented.

There is a real need for comprehensive legislation that integrates climate resilience into existing Occupational Safety and Health frameworks, risk assessments and preventive measures.

Furthermore, social dialogue between governments, employers, and workers’ representatives as well as researchers and experts in the field is essential for crafting effective policies that are practical and adaptable at the workplace level. Coordination among government departments coupled with knowledge transfer and capacity building, is critical for ensuring policy coherence and implementation. Occupational safety and health initiatives should also be integrated into broader public health campaigns.

At the same time, raising awareness and building capacity among workers and employers will help foster a culture of prevention and resilience. Training programs on heat stress prevention and management, emergency preparedness, and occupational health can empower workers to protect themselves and their colleagues from climate-related risks.

Trade unions have a key role in this process. By advocating for the rights of workers and ensuring their voices are heard they can help champion workplace safety and advocate for fair and equitable policies that drive positive change.

As we mark World Day for Safety and Health at Work in 2024, let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting the safety and health of workers in the face of a changing climate. By taking decisive action and investing in climate-resilient workplaces, we can build a future where safety, health and sustainability go hand in hand, leaving no one behind in the pursuit of a safer, healthier world for all.

DAILY TRIBUNE

[DENR reiterates order on intensified forest protection efforts](#)

By: Jing Villamente

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Friday reiterates its order for intensified forest protection efforts amidst a series of reported forest fires around the country.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga cited the Memorandum earlier issued by DENR Undersecretary Atty. Juan Miguel Cuna to all regional executive directors instructing them "to intensify your conduct of forest protection efforts to prevent forest fires".

The Memorandum which was also issued to the Undersecretary for the Mines and Geoscience Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) also noted the intensified efforts should also "minimize the occurrences and damages" caused by forest fires.

This was after another forest fire engulfed a mountainous area in Barangay Kaganhao, Sta. Cruz in Marinduque early evening Thursday that was only put out Friday morning.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) has urged the Marcos Administration to declare a national climate emergency in response to the worsening impacts of El Niño and climate change in the country.

Erwin Puhawan, Luzon Coordinator of PMCJ, called out the national government for its inaction despite losses reported across the country.

"Nearly 100 municipalities have declared a state of calamity because of the El Niño, but the Marcos administration has not yet acknowledged this emergency on a national level. We need that declaration to be the basis of our disaster response."

"We don't need to wait to lose more crops and for more people to starve before we act," he added.

Puhawan said allied organizations like the Zambales Lingap sa Kalikasan (ZALIKA) led a fluvial action in Zambales, where water quality and crop yields are greatly compromised by mining, on top of extreme weather events.

They claimed that losses have affected the farmers and fisherfolks in the area, as it has in other parts of the country.

Puhawan added that in Atimonan, Quezon, youth from the Kabataan para sa Kalikasan ng Atimonan (KAPAKANAN) distributed pamphlets and organized a rally raising awareness on climate change and the threat of fossil fuels.

"The youth have taken it upon themselves to protest the construction of a liquefied natural gas power plant in their municipality, as it will adversely affect the health of the community around the power plant while exacerbating climate change," Puhawan explained.

In the Bicol region, the provincial government units of Albay and Camarines Norte are also mobilizing towards 100 percent renewable energy.

These efforts began as Albay declared a climate emergency on the provincial level, while Camarines Norte declared it on the municipal (Labo) and barangay level (Cabusay).

"We are already in a climate emergency. This declaration is overdue even before we were struck by this El Niño," Ian Rivera, national coordinator of PMCJ said.

"Our national government needs to devise a comprehensive national disaster response, alongside a transition plan to 100 percent renewable energy. As a country vulnerable to climate change, we cannot afford to make it worse," he added.

The groups expect an official declaration from the Marcos administration as El Niño and its impacts continue to intensify this month.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Philippines to spend P9.5 B in global efforts to protect ocean](#)

By: Joseph pedrajas

The Philippines will be spending roughly P9.5 billion as its contribution to global efforts of protecting the ocean.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said that the government pledged the said amount equivalent to 165.56 million US dollars during a high-level luncheon early April in Athens, Greece.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Ernesto Adobo represented the Philippine government, which will focus on four programs.

The first program is the Marine Protected Areas or MPAs, wherein the Philippines aims to protect a projected 4.85 percent to 15.91 percent of its national waters by 2028 in line with the global goal of protecting 30 percent of land and sea areas by 2030 under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, according to DFA.

The second is the “Great Blue Wall Initiative,” which will establish a nationwide network of MPAs to support both conservation and a thriving blue economy.

The third is the “Ocean Science Research Program,” wherein new research stations will be built across the Philippines to gather crucial data which is essential in informed ocean management decisions.

The fourth program is the “Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project,” which is a World Bank-funded project promoting sustainable fisheries management through the development of management plans and conduct of critical habitat studies.

In making the pledge, the Philippines recognized the ocean’s vital role in climate regulation and sustaining the global economy and at the same time understands the need to strengthen global efforts to protect the oceans and marine biodiversity.

Adobo, during the meeting, highlighted the importance of the collective efforts and commitments of governments, organizations, communities and individuals in protecting the oceans and addressing major threats such as climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution.

He said that the Philippines will actively contribute to such global endeavors through the implementation of various programs, including the four new initiatives.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Be more adaptive, break siloed approach to climate crisis](#)

Record-high temperatures affecting the country's agriculture and water resources, local governments declaring a state of calamity in their areas, and schools implementing remote learning arrangements—this is the reality Filipinos face today.

In the wake of the advisory of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) on the current El Niño issued on April 5, we have been cautioned that this anomalous warming in the tropical Pacific will continue to set the path to sweltering heat and dryness, and reduction in rainfall. Pagasa further emphasized that these El Niño conditions could lead to reduced water supply, leading to rising water costs, and increased cases of pulmonary, and food- and waterborne diseases.

The Department of Agriculture had reported losses reaching P3.94 billion due to the impacts of this current El Niño. This evidence presents important implications for government policies on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management alongside the long-term agricultural productivity enhancing program. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council also reiterated that dry spells, dry conditions, and drought caused by El Niño pose threats to the country's water supply, agriculture, electricity, health, and public safety, which are already felt by communities across the country. In addition, a recent report from the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities warned of power supply shortages from April to June this year, as El Niño threatens the capacity of the country's hydroelectric power plants.

Reducing climate-related loss and damage (L&D) is an urgent action continuously discussed in climate negotiations. The Philippines has secured seats in two L&D-related climate finance mechanisms: the Global Shield Against Climate Risk, jointly established by the Group of Seven countries and the Vulnerable 20 Group of Finance Ministers; and the recently established Loss and Damage Fund of the United Nations. Both mechanisms provide developing countries with funding to address economic and noneconomic loss and damage due to the impacts of slow onset and extreme weather events. These funds aim to support adaptation strategies through pre-arranged protection, such as risk insurance mechanisms, grants, or concessional financing. Blending these innovative mechanisms with existing climate finance and national and local funding can help countries like the Philippines address potential climate impacts.

Climate-related policies and programs in the country are well-crafted and can complement international policy mechanisms, although criticized for their siloed approaches. By adapting to the changing response measures needed to address current and emerging issues, climate policies and programs should complement other areas such as sustainable development and humanitarian emergency management especially when contextualized, at the socioeconomic level. We have to look at climate action holistically, breaking the perceived siloed approaches.

Heat risk protection for workers

The Philippines, like many other countries, is experiencing high temperatures that could surpass the global average last year, the hottest year since global records began in mid-1800s. El Niño is making things worse with the heat index reaching up to 47 degrees Celsius this week in some parts of the country and forecasted to get even hotter next month. Face-to-face classes in public schools have been suspended and work-from-home option has been revived for employees to cope with the unbearable heat. But more than these stopgap measures, the government must consider long-term policies and craft a heat risk protection plan to help Filipinos manage extreme weather conditions.

These policies include returning to the old school calendar with classes beginning in June and building climate-resilient classrooms—points already tackled in a recent editorial. An equally urgent matter is to look into the welfare of those whose nature of work exposes them to heat stress, particularly in the construction and service sectors: those who build our roads and bridges, keep our streets and public spaces clean and orderly, and deliver our food and online purchases.

Comprehensive strategy

Labor groups have appealed to employers and lawmakers to implement policies for these workers, majority of whom—95 percent per estimate of the National Union of Building and Construction Workers—are under short-term contracts and do not have security of tenure, social insurance, and other benefits. Labor unions have noted that some frontline and field workers have recently reported experiencing heat stress-related illnesses like high blood pressure, dehydration, heat cramps, and heat stroke. It's a double whammy for daily wage workers in this extreme heat: if they don't work, they don't get paid; if they work, they risk their health.

The Nagkaisa labor coalition, which claims to be the country's biggest alliance of labor groups and workers organizations, pointed to the need for a comprehensive strategy to mitigate the impact of extreme weather events on the labor sector. "Current laws and regulations fall short in addressing the challenges and stresses faced by workers due to extreme heat," it said.

Flexible work arrangements

Last year, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) issued Labor Advisory No. 8 outlining guidelines to reduce extreme heat exposure of employees including

adjusting rest breaks or work locations for workers, allowing them to use temperature-appropriate uniforms and personal protective equipment, and providing them with free and adequate drinking water. DOLE also urged employers to adopt flexible work arrangements that allow work hours adjustments while maintaining the required total hours within the day or week until the weather conditions have improved. This could include moving work hours for construction companies, for example, to nighttime when temperatures are cooler.

Nagkaisa is also pushing for legislation that grants special emergency leave to workers. There are several pending bills that lawmakers need to act on: Senate Bill No. 652 and House Bill Nos. 663, 988, and 8847. These measures aim to supplement the provisions of Republic Act No. 10121, or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, by allowing those affected by calamities to avail of emergency leave as long as they have rendered at least six months of service to their present employer. The coalition also proposes paying hazard pay and incorporating “heat leave” in collective bargaining agreements that usually only list typhoons, floods, and earthquakes.

‘Last lung’ of Manila

Practical measures can also help avoid heat stress especially next month when fiestas are held in many parts of the country. Last Wednesday, some 40 dancers at a festival in Negros Oriental passed out during a street performance. Common sense dictates that local governments should adjust, even postpone, festivities if these would put public health at risk. They should also redirect their efforts to planting more trees instead of cutting them down for aesthetic or development purposes. The fact that Arroceros Forest Park, the so-called “last lung” of Manila, recently recorded a lower temperature of 36 degrees Celsius while the rest of the city sweltered at 41 degrees Celsius is an indication that government must fully commit to its tree planting program. Global warming is an evolving challenge that everyone must navigate. While the government works on reducing emissions to meet its global commitment, it must also consider the well-being of those on the frontlines on whose backs the economy grinds. As the International Labor Organization stated: “Working in safe and healthy environments is recognized as one of the ILO’s fundamental principles and rights at work. We must deliver on that commitment in relation to climate change, just as in every other aspect of work.”

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Climate change may have aggravated rains in Gulf: Scientists

Scientists are looking into the possibility that torrential rains that hit the Gulf region last week may have been exacerbated by climate change.

According to CNN, 21 scientists from the World Weather Attribution (WWA), an international academic collaboration, have studied the impact of climate change on the downpours that have disrupted life in Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Yemen.

Creating computer simulations comparing a real weather event to a fictional world without climate change, the researchers also analyzed the rainfall rates of countries in the Gulf region in past years.

The scientists found that in just one day, 10 percent to 40 percent more rain fell than it would have in a world without 1.2C of warming from coal, oil and natural gas use.

Focusing on the possibility that the rainfall may have been exacerbated by climate change, the researchers have determined that the El Niño weather phenomenon, which causes temperatures to rise, may also be a major factor.

Heavy rains and floods in the Gulf region had a negative impact on life in Oman, the UAE, Bahrain and Yemen. Bad weather conditions led to the closure of airports in the countries, disruptions of flights and economic problems.

The UAE announced on April 16 that the country received its highest amount of rainfall in 75 years.

Germany to industrialized nations: live up to your climate pledges

Germany on Thursday called on industrialized nations to live up to their climate pledges, and not to cut down funds for developing countries.

“We in the industrialized countries need to continue to live up to our responsibilities,” Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told participants at the Petersberg Climate Dialogue meeting in Berlin.

She said Germany will continue to provide over 6 billion euros (USD6.4 billion) annually for climate projects in developing countries in the coming years, despite the negative impact of the Ukraine war on the national budget.

“Our climate finance has reached 6.4 billion euros and I want to confirm that our goal for 2025 stands at 6 billion euros even though we face heavy budget pressure as many others,” Baerbock said.

“We encourage other industrialized countries to follow suit so that we will continue to jointly fulfill our USD100 billion commitment for developing countries, as we finally did for the first time in 2022,” the minister added.

Concrete steps for climate

Baerbock called the outcome of last year’s UN climate summit in Dubai “a great success,” saying now is the time to take the necessary step and put the decisions into practice.

She recalled that in Dubai nearly 200 countries agreed to transition away from fossil fuels, to triple renewable energy capacities, and to double improvements in energy efficiency.

“Our decisions now need to materialize in the real world, so that they will also be a great success for our people now,” she said.

The two-day Petersberg Climate Dialogue, co-hosted by Baerbock and Azerbaijan’s Ecology and Natural Resources Minister Mukhtar Babayev, brings together politicians and climate experts from over 40 countries, ahead of this year’s UN climate summit.

The UN Climate Change Conference, also known as COP29, will be held in Azerbaijan’s capital Baku, between Nov. 11 and Nov. 22.

POLITIKO

[German Envoy Reveals About P8.7B Economic Plan For Philippines](#)

By: Roy C. Mabasa

Germany's Ambassador to the Philippines, Dr. Andreas Michael Pfaffernoschke disclosed that his country's commitment to economic cooperation is evident through its comprehensive portfolio of projects totaling EUR 145 million (approximately Php 8.7 billion).

Speaking at the recent media event organized by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Manila, Dr. Pfaffernoschke emphasized the importance of economic relations between the two countries, focusing on areas such as international rules-based order, skilled workers migration, climate cooperation, human rights, and people-to-people relations.

These projects, mainly implemented through Official Development Assistance (ODA) by organizations like Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), cover critical areas like climate protection, biodiversity conservation, and peace and development.

The ambassador highlighted specific initiatives, such as the Trans-Climate project addressing climate change and biodiversity protection, and technical assistance to the Philippine Coast Guard for marine conservation efforts.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) complement ODA efforts, focusing on various fields such as agriculture, education, health, and human rights. Volunteer programs and small-scale projects further contribute to community development.

On humanitarian action and human rights, Germany is a major donor globally, supporting initiatives for disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response, and human rights protection in the Philippines.

Economically, efforts to increase trade, investment, and market access include discussions on a Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the Philippines, with an emphasis on sustainable trade practices.

People-to-people exchanges and skilled labor migration are also prioritized, with initiatives aimed at facilitating bidirectional migration and promoting sustainable recruiting practices.

Dr. Pfaffernoschke, in sum, said the significant strides made in economic cooperation and development between Germany and the Philippines, underscoring the shared commitment to fostering growth, sustainability, and prosperity for both nations.

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] The poor suffer most from global warming](#)

By: Fr. Shay Cullen

It is the poor that suffer the most from global warming. They are in despair of escaping poverty, and they endure the unbearable life in the slums where the incredible heat relentlessly beats down on them. With average temperatures ranging from 36 to 40 degrees Celsius this past week and a heat wave for several weeks, we ask, is this the impact of climate change, and will it be like this more frequently?

According to climatologists, the answer is yes. We are in for a hotter climate, and the poor suffer the effects more acutely than the better off. Drought is one of the worst effects, causing a failure of harvests, loss of crops, less food, more malnutrition, longer sickness and children unable to go to school. The outdoor workers are exhausted from the extreme heat.

We can hear the climate experts saying, "We told you so; 2023 was the hottest year in recorded history, and 2024 may be even hotter." Are they the prophets of doom, or are they our ignored, rejected saviors? They are voices of truth crying in the wilderness, begging governments and industry to listen and act intelligently to save the planet. They advise the power brokers of the world, political and industrial leaders, to phase out coal, oil and gas and rush the construction of more renewable energy sources like solar, wind, hydro and geothermal power plants.

The Philippines has an abundance of this "free" source of energy given by nature, but it requires investment. The Philippines' environmental law has given generous tax and other incentives to investors to build renewable power plants across the nation, such as low-income tax holiday (ITH) and import tax exemption on the equipment, spare parts and needed materials for construction. There is an exemption from VAT payments, and they can employ foreign experts and get a green light through Customs. That, however, may flicker, knowing the inability of some customs officials to resist temptation. For them, the delay means more pay.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla has a mighty challenge to make renewable power plants a reality to save the Philippines from the worst of global warming. In December 2023, the secretary awarded 27 permits to corporations to proceed with solar plants in the Pangasinan towns of Burgos, Labrador, Aguilar, Villasis, Anda, Mabini, Binalonan, Sison, Umingan and Calasiao. In Santa Barbara, there are the Solar Project 1 and 2, which One Manaoag Solar Corp. is building in the towns of Santa Barbara and

Mapandan. Then there is Ayala Corp. Solar, through its partner ACEN, which is building the 60-megawatt (MW) Santo Domingo Solar Power Project in San Manuel town, Aboitiz's 94-MW Cayanga-Bugallon Solar Power Project in Bugallon town and the 3 Barracuda Energy Corp.'s 530-MW in Bugallon. In Zambales, Ayala, ACEN, and Aboitiz have solar plants underway. They are being challenged to replant all the trees and more that they cut down in Zambales.

I ask readers to please message me if they see any construction of solar power plants in the countryside near their towns. Messenger: @predaforchildren. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/predaforchildren/> Hotline: 0917 532 4453.

Given the fact that the world is ruled more by the power of greed than the love of people and the environment upon which we all depend for life, the power brokers, money moguls and billionaire tycoons of industry will never give up burning fossil fuels. Despite the demand of a majority of people worldwide calling on them to save the planet and all species, including the human species, they refuse. That will never happen in my lifetime since the bosses of the giant oil corporations, with the help of their paid-for politicians and media hacks, block all change.

While the politicians and captains of industry mouth support for the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP29) that will convene from November 11 to 22 in Baku, Azerbaijan, they have ignored the resolutions of COP28 that called for a phase-out of fossil fuels. For them, they were just resolutions of desirable hopes, and they were convinced that it would never happen because they would not let it happen.

Here is why in the United States' 38 million people, that is, 11.6 percent of the population, live at or below the poverty line and receive minimum welfare help while the government continues to dole out massive sums of taxpayers' money to the biggest US corporations named among the Fortune 500, including fossil fuel suppliers earning a whopping \$325 billion.

Besides massive earnings and being mega-rich, they are still receiving more than \$100 billion a year in handout subsidies. The congressional representatives and senators most likely receive reelection donations from these corporations that they so generously gift with \$100 billion of taxpayers' money while millions live and suffer below the poverty line. That is a hypocrisy that tastes like poison.

There are subsidy payments also made to EU-selected corporations to the tune of 55 billion euros a year. If only the EU Commission would stop that immoral handout

program to the rich and invest that 55 billion euros, it could use the interest to create jobs for the thousands of needy migrants wanting protection, support and work.

Most of the cash-out payments in America are given to fossil fuel corporations to drill for more oil in the states where the powerful politicians who approve the subsidies have personal interests in the industry. It is conservatively estimated that from the \$100 billion hand-outs, the fossil fuel corporations get about \$20 billion. So, why would they want to phase out their lucrative businesses just because the earth is getting too much sun? The \$20 billion is divided among the fossil fuel producers (80 percent) — the natural gas and oil companies — and 20 percent to the coal industry.

Only when there are a million renewable energy plants in the world to replace the fossil fuel power plants will there be a chance to phase out fossil fuels.

At present, China leads with 1,142 coal-fired power plants. India has 282, the US 214, Japan 91, Indonesia 91, Russia 68, Germany 58, Poland 43, Turkey 34, Ukraine 34, and the Philippines 26. This is the challenge facing the world today. In the Philippines, the government and energy corporations must implement as many renewable plants as possible and phase out coal. It's not only a matter of economic and environmental urgency but a serious moral obligation to protect the poor and disadvantaged. What greater good can one do than to serve the poor and save the planet?

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Distance learning for public schools on April 29, 30 due to extreme heat, transport strike](#)

The Department of Education (DepEd) has announced that all public schools will implement distance learning on Monday and Tuesday due to extreme heat and a nationwide transport strike.

“In view of the latest heat index forecast of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and the announcement of a nationwide transport strike, all public schools nationwide shall implement asynchronous classes or distance learning on April 29 and 30, 2024,” DepEd said in an advisory on Sunday.

The department also said that teaching and non-teaching personnel in all public schools will not be required to report to their stations.

However, activities organized by Regional and Schools Division Offices, such as the Regional Athletic Association Meets, can proceed on Monday and Tuesday if safety measures for all participants have been taken into account.

DepEd’s advisory does not cover private schools, but they can also implement similar measures.

The order comes as extreme heat continues to scorch parts of the country. PAGASA said the unusually hot weather, exacerbated by El Niño and climate change, is expected to last until mid-May.

Transportation group PISTON will hold a three-day nationwide strike from April 29 to May 1 in time for the public utility vehicle modernization program consolidation deadline.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Ambitious climate action: Prescription for health in the face of extreme heat](#)

In the midst of the searing heat gripping the country, the evident impact of climate change on human well-being highlights their interconnectedness, straining public health and emphasizing the urgent need to address this critical issue as temperatures continue to rise and extreme weather events become more frequent.

From 1 January to 18 April 2024, the Event-based Surveillance and Response System of the Department of Health (DoH) recorded 34 cases of heat-related illnesses, tragically resulting in six deaths. In 2023, DoH noted that there were 513 heat-related illnesses reported throughout the entire year.

These statistics emphasize the urgency of addressing the nexus between climate change and public health, which has never been more evident.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) issued a red alert on the worsening effects of climate change. According to its State of the Global Climate 2023 report, the average near-surface temperature has risen to 1.45 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels — 0.5°C away from the 1.50°C 'safe' pre-industrial levels as set during the Paris Agreement.

Last year's 1.45°C marked the hottest average global temperatures since recording began 174 years ago, with ocean temperatures also reaching a 65-year high. Without any sign of decreasing, global temperatures this year are expected to exceed 2023's heat records.

The Philippines continues to experience some of its warmest days, with the heat index — a measure indicating the level of discomfort humans perceive due to the combination of high temperature and humidity — reaching 50°C.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration has warned of heat indices reaching 'danger' levels, ranging between 42 and 51°C in many parts of the country.

Extreme heat directly impacts individuals with broader socio-economic implications, particularly for vulnerable communities such as farmers and fisherfolk. These

populations face increased heat exposure and associated health risks, impacting both physical health and economic livelihoods.

Economically, it reduces productivity, damages crops, disrupts fisheries, and increases costs due to the need for additional cooling and irrigation infrastructure. Health-wise, heat exposure leads to heat-related illnesses, exacerbates respiratory issues due to air pollution, and promotes the spread of communicable diseases like malaria and dengue. The increased risk of non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular problems, adds to the health burden.

Furthermore, extreme heat leads to forest fires, wreaking havoc on ecosystems, economic activities, and human health. In 2023, the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recorded 1,484 total number of forest and grass fires in the entire country. Early this year, in the hinterlands of the Cordillera region, 86 forest fires were reported from January to March. On 17 April, Mount Arayat in Pampanga also experienced its second fire of the month, following a bush fire on 2 April that destroyed 12 hectares, including parts of the protected forest reservation. These fires result in immediate tree and vegetation loss and disrupt biodiversity, endangering species and upsetting the ecosystem balance. Additionally, the smoke and haze from the fires pose health risks to nearby communities, particularly those with respiratory conditions.

Together, these impacts can lead to increased migration, displacement, and greater vulnerability, affecting rural communities and further worsening poverty.

Anecdotal accounts from communities across the country underscore the personal toll of extreme heat on individuals and families. In Isabela Province, an elderly farmer took a break from upland farming activities due to his high blood pressure after experiencing dizziness and loss of consciousness in extreme heat conditions. Similarly, in Romblon, a fisherman can no longer endure the heat on the open sea, affecting his ability to earn a living.

The number of Filipinos potentially impacted by extreme heat (i.e., at heat indices greater than 42°C), is projected to reach up to 11 million by 2030 and may increase to 74 million by 2050, according to Boston Consulting Group's analytics.

Addressing the underlying causes of climate change is vital for preventing the escalation and exacerbation of extreme weather events in the future. Transitioning to clean energy, promoting sustainable transportation, and conserving natural habitats are crucial for both mitigating this global issue and ensuring human well-being.

“In confronting the challenges posed by climate change, we must recognize that the health of our planet and the health of our people are intricately linked. Taking bold climate action is not just a choice; it is a necessity for safeguarding our collective future,” said Secretary Robert E.A. Borje, vice chairperson and executive director of the Climate Change Commission.

At present, efforts to address the health impacts of climate change are being pursued at both the national and local levels, with initiatives focusing on climate-resilient health systems, climate-smart agriculture, and community-based adaptation. Strengthening public health infrastructure and integrating climate change adaptation measures into policies and programs are crucial steps toward protecting communities in the face of climate-related hazards.

“As the mercury continues to rise, the imperative for action becomes increasingly urgent. Ambitious climate action is not just a matter of ecological stewardship. It is a prescription for public health, with far-reaching benefits for individuals and communities alike,” Borje emphasized.

Combating plastic pollution to secure our planet's future

Throughout modern history, a silent yet pressing crisis continues to unfold: the pervasive infiltration of plastic pollution on the Earth's ecosystems. As we observe Earth Month this year with the theme "Planet vs Plastics," the urgent need to protect our only home from the perils of plastic waste calls for immediate action.

"Plastic pollution poses a grave threat to our ecosystems, endangering the delicate balance of life on Earth," said Secretary Robert E.A. Borje, vice chairperson and executive director of the Climate Change Commission.

Once teeming with pristine beauty and biodiversity, the Earth now bears the scars of human neglect and abuse. Plastic debris mars its landscapes from the depths of the oceans to the peaks of the mountains, a widespread pollution that threatens the intricate balance of life on our planet.

Plastics were first developed in the early 1900s and have become integral to many aspects of modern life since the 1940s. According to the United Nations, over 400 million tons of plastics are produced globally every year, equivalent to the weight of 39,603 Eiffel Towers altogether. Around the globe, 1 million plastic bottles are bought every minute, totaling 1.44 billion in a day.

In the Philippines, approximately 2.7 million tons of plastics are discarded annually, according to the United Nations Development Program and World Bank statistics. Data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources showed that of the estimated 61,000 metric tons of solid waste generated daily in the Philippines, up to 24 percent is plastic, composed mostly of consumer goods packaging, cutlery and shopping bags.

Less than 10 percent of the plastics we discard actually get recycled; the rest gets dumped, incinerated or mismanaged.

The ecological impacts of plastic pollution are significant and far-reaching, affecting everything from individual creatures to the overall health of our planet's ecosystems.

Plastic debris poses a significant threat to habitats, natural processes and biodiversity, endangering numerous species such as seabirds, fish, turtles, and others. Animals that become entangled or ingest plastic suffer injuries, starvation and death, disrupting food chains and weakening ecosystems.

Moreover, a considerable portion of the planet's marine species, including whales, dolphins, seals, sea turtles and porpoises have consumed plastic. This occurs because plastic debris can resemble seagrass, squid or other prey, leading marine mammals, including herbivores like dugongs, to mistakenly ingest it.

The World Wide Fund for Nature reported that 81 out of 123 marine mammal species have ingested or become entangled in plastic, resulting in the deaths of 100,000 marine mammals annually.

Plastics also leach harmful chemicals into our ecosystems, contaminating water and soil, which can harm wildlife and potentially make their way into the food chain, affecting human health as well. The UN Environment Program estimated that each person on the planet ingests around 50,000 microplastics, consisting of tiny plastic particles less than 5 millimeters in diameter, annually, often through our drinking water.

Plastics are typically produced from raw materials such as petroleum, natural gas and other chemicals derived from fossil fuels, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change. UN data revealed that annually, 17 million barrels of petroleum are utilized for plastic production, alongside 13 million tons of plastic leaking into the ocean.

Plastic bottles, cellophane and other common types of plastic emit methane and ethylene upon exposure to ambient solar radiation, whether in wet or dry environments. These potent greenhouse gases contribute to the steadily rising global temperatures, exacerbating the impacts of climate change.

Yet amid this ecological challenge, a glimmer of hope arises — the collective determination and commitment of communities to combat plastic pollution and restore our planet's health. From grassroots advocates to champions of sustainability, people are stepping forward, initiating change and inspiring others to join the quest for a cleaner, greener future.

Dedicated individuals and organizations have taken up the mantle of ecological stewardship, embarking on conservation initiatives and grassroots movements to combat plastic pollution. Their endeavors underscore the transformative power of community engagement in nurturing a culture of ecological responsibility.

In many coastal communities in the Philippines, local fishermen have partnered with non-governmental organizations and private companies to clean up plastic waste from their shores, safeguarding crucial marine habitats and securing the sustainability of their

livelihoods. Meanwhile, in urban centers such as Metro Manila and Davao City, innovative entrepreneurs are leading the way in recycling and developing biodegradable alternatives to single-use plastics, providing sustainable solutions to the prevalent issue of plastic pollution.

“However, the battle against plastic pollution extends far beyond the realm of advocacy; it requires a paradigm shift in our societal norms and consumer behaviors. As we strive to transcend the Planet vs Plastics narrative, we must embrace sustainable practices that minimize our reliance on plastic materials while maximizing the preservation of our natural resources,” Borje emphasized.

“From recycling and responsible consumption to the development of biodegradable alternatives, every action, no matter how small, contributes to the collective effort to protect our planet’s future,” he added.

MANILA STANDARD

[SM Group works with industry, gov't for climate action, low-carbon economy](#)

The SM Group said it is advancing meaningful discourse on climate action and fostering partnerships aligned with efforts to support the country's commitment to addressing climate change.

SM said it extended its support for the promotion of a low-carbon economy through nature-based solutions across the group.

"At SM, our vision is to be a catalyst for responsible development in the communities we serve," said Timothy Daniels, SM Investments consultant and head for investor relations and sustainability.

"This involves careful decision-making and integrating sustainable practices into how our business is done," he said.

SM developed a sustainability management system focused on the two key policies of climate action and resource management.

The former incorporates both mitigation and adaptation, consistent with the national policies and the country's commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The latter policy states how SM manages the available natural resources, minimizing extraction of these resources, prioritizes nature-based solutions across its ecosystem of businesses and the promotion of circular systems. It aims to create a more sustainable process by reducing waste while maximizing resource efficiency.

These insights were shared during an educational forum hosted by the Carbon PH Coalition. The forum was held at SMX Aura in Taguig on April 11 focused on the topic of Philippine Policy and Investment Environment for Nature-based Solutions.

SM said its participation underscored the group's commitment to knowledge sharing and advocating for policies that support environmental conservation.

SM is also among the first proponents of the Carbon PH Coalition—a private sector group committed to actively participating in advocacy, capacity building and collaboration in the country's journey towards transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

The group is also actively involved in the review of House Bill 7705, which promotes a low-carbon economy and aims to ensure fair implementation of regulations on carbon emissions among businesses to achieve national climate targets.

Daniels underscored the Philippines' critical place in the global climate change scenario.

"The Philippines is one of 18 mega-biodiverse countries in the world. We only contribute 0.3 percent percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and yet we are among the top three most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change," said Daniels.

Climate Change Commission Secretary Robert Borje noted how public sector efforts toward national decarbonization goals can be achieved through synergies between state initiatives and private sector innovations.

He cited the need for investment-led transformative climate action as a key contribution to combat climate change.

"Government policies, together with private sector investments, can pave the path for stronger climate action," said Borje.

Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, sustainably manage or restore natural ecosystems to address challenges such as climate change, human health, food and water security and disaster risk reduction.

SM Prime Holdings Inc., the group's property arm entered a joint venture recently with GUUN Co., a Japanese-based material recovery and environmental solutions service company.

The venture aims to reduce the landfill impact of SM and develop an infrastructure for systemic waste management and resource recovery.

SM Retail Inc., the SM Green Finds program promotes a circular system among its partners and suppliers by introducing more sustainable ways in the manufacturing of goods and product designs while instilling a green lifestyle for both producers and customers.

Philippine Geothermal Production Company (PGPC), one of SM's portfolio investments helps boost the group's advocacies toward renewable energy which currently operates two steam fields producing around 300 megawatts of steam that is converted into electrical energy.

SM recognizes that as a group in growth mode, it needs to harness a renewable source of energy to ensure its expansion responsibly and sustainably.

When asked what the group's motivation for nature-based solutions was, Daniels answered, "It's the right thing to do."

"We cannot exist in isolation, and we are part of a grander ecosystem," he said.

"We are aligned with Carbon PH in its vision to address climate change through practical solutions and policy advocacy," Daniels said.

The Carbon PH coalition is composed of 48 companies including SM Investments Corp.

=END=