



## NEWS ROUNDUP 22 May 2024 [ 07:00am]

---

- At least 1 storm could still enter Philippine area this May: PAGASA
- Marcos touts Philippine economic growth, investment opportunities at Indo-Pacific Business Forum
- Ocean water is rushing miles underneath the 'Doomsday Glacier' with potentially dire impacts on sea level rise
- In drought-hit Amazon, road paving fears grow as rivers run dry
- Cordillera seeks climate change tech as El Niño crop damage hits P768M
- ACB to launch awareness campaigns on Biodiversity Day 2024
- Antarctic sea ice level reached 'exceptional record lows' in 2023
- NegOcc to install 1,270-KW solar power systems in provincial buildings
- Climate change: small island states hail ocean court victory
- Climate crisis fuels deadly floods, worsening hunger in Afghanistan

### CCC IN THE NEWS:

- CCC Boosts Ties With Civil Society, Pushes For Bolder Climate Action
- CCC highlights vital role of academe, youth and IPs in climate action

### ABS CBN

#### [At least 1 storm could still enter Philippine area this May: PAGASA](#)

By: Rowegie Abanto

At least 1 storm could still form and enter the Philippine area of responsibility this May, state weather agency PAGASA said Monday.

#### [Marcos touts Philippine economic growth, investment opportunities at Indo-Pacific Business Forum](#)

By: Pia Guttierrez

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday touted the Philippines' strong economic growth and opportunities before potential foreign business and investors at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum held in Taguig Tuesday morning.

## **CNN**

### **[Ocean water is rushing miles underneath the 'Doomsday Glacier' with potentially dire impacts on sea level rise](#)**

By: Laura Paddison

Ocean water is pushing miles beneath Antarctica's "Doomsday Glacier," making it more vulnerable to melting than previously thought, according to new research which used radar data from space to perform an X-ray of the crucial glacier.

## **ECO BUSINESS**

### **[In drought-hit Amazon, road paving fears grow as rivers run dry](#)**

Behind a narrow border of trees, a crop duster sprays clouds of agrochemicals onto the vast soy fields stretching out on both sides of the BR-319 highway that cuts deep into Brazil's Amazon rainforest.

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[Cordillera seeks climate change tech as El Niño crop damage hits P768M](#)**

By: Vincent Cabreza

The Cordillera farming industry is seeking climate resilient technology to make geologically challenged farms more adaptable to extreme weather, after this year's El Niño dry spell left P768 million in crop losses and because of an anticipated La Niña which may bring prolonged and harsh rainfall, an agriculture official said.

## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **[ACB to launch awareness campaigns on Biodiversity Day 2024](#)**

As the ASEAN's response to halt biodiversity loss, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity is launching awareness raising campaigns on the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) on 22 May, shedding light on the importance of the region's biological resources, emphasising a whole-of-society approach in sustainably managing the use of biodiversity for future generations.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[Antarctic sea ice level reached 'exceptional record lows' in 2023](#)**

Record-low levels of sea ice were seen in the Antarctic last year as a result of climate change, scientists confirmed in a report published on Monday.

### **[NegOcc to install 1,270-KW solar power systems in provincial buildings](#)**

By Nanette Guadalquiver

The Negros Occidental provincial government will install 1,270 kilowatts (KW) total capacity of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems in the seven main facilities of the Capitol this year.

## **REUTERS**

### **[Climate change: small island states hail ocean court victory](#)**

By Riham Alkousaa

A global maritime court found on Tuesday that greenhouse gases constitute marine pollution, a major breakthrough for small island states threatened by the rise in sea levels caused by global warming.

## **UN NEWS**

### **[Climate crisis fuels deadly floods, worsening hunger in Afghanistan](#)**

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) said that as erratic weather on the back of the worsening climate crisis “becomes the norm”, things will only get worse.

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

## **PAGEONE**

### **[CCC Boosts Ties With Civil Society, Pushes For Bolder Climate Action](#)**

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has underscored the crucial role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in advancing and supporting the government’s agenda to efficiently address the adverse impacts of climate change.

## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **[CCC highlights vital role of academe, youth and IPs in climate action](#)**

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) emphasized the crucial role of the academe, youth and the indigenous people communities in fostering climate-resilient and developing climate-active leadership at a forum at the Northern Bukidnon State College.

## **Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABS CBN**

### **At least 1 storm could still enter Philippine area this May: PAGASA**

By: Rowegie Abanto

At least 1 storm could still form and enter the Philippine area of responsibility this May, state weather agency PAGASA said Monday.

PAGASA earlier predicted that 1 to 2 storms could form within or enter the Philippine area this month.

"Ngayong buwan nga ng Mayo posible pa rin na may mabuo na at least na isa na bagyo na maaaring mabuo, papasok sa loob ng Philippine area of responsibility," PAGASA weather specialist Obet Badrina said in a weather report early Monday.

PAGASA has not monitored a low pressure area inside or outside the Philippine area, Badrina said in the report.

### **THUNDERSTORMS**

Badrina said that Luzon could still experience relatively hot weather during the daytime, which could be followed by isolated rains and thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening, especially in the western section of the island.

Metro Manila and nearby areas in the past few days have been experiencing frequent downpours and thunderstorms in the afternoon towards the evening.

PAGASA has said that the phenomenon signals the country's transition from the warm and dry season to the wet season, which usually begins every June.

Extreme northern Luzon, including Batanes, could be hit by rains due to the shear line or where the cold and warm air meets, according to Badrina.

The easterlies could also bring localized rains or thunderstorms by the afternoon and evening elsewhere in the Philippines.

## [Marcos touts Philippine economic growth, investment opportunities at Indo-Pacific Business Forum](#)

By: Pia Gutierrez

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday touted the Philippines' strong economic growth and opportunities before potential foreign business and investors at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum held in Taguig Tuesday morning.

"The Philippine economy is not only growing, but I should say it is also thriving. In fact, we are one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, [and] we are committed to fostering and continuing this momentum," Marcos said.

In his speech, the Philippine leader highlighted the country's 'outstanding' economic achievements, growing 5.5 percent in 2023 and surpassing major economies in Asia based on the latest available data.

"Foreign direct investments continue to flow in, with four consecutive months of expansion. Our investment pledges have also soared, reflecting a healthy pipeline of inward FDI," Marcos said.

The President, meanwhile, noted his administration's efforts to 'transform the Philippine economy into a regional hub for smart and sustainable manufacturing and [services].' These include key initiatives to spur growth in the Luzon Economic Corridor, which hosts most of the Philippines' export manufacturing and high-technology industries.

Marcos said his administration is also committed to developing priority industries such as electronics, semiconductors and critical minerals; supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises; and embracing digital transformation through government-led initiatives to enhance the country's digital infrastructure, connectivity, and business facilitation.

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic and other socio-political concerns exposed the vulnerabilities of supply chains, we also emphasize the need for diversification and for resilience," Marcos Jr said.

The President also highlighted the government's P9.5 trillion "Build Better More" infrastructure program, which he says will contribute to making the Philippines "the next logistics hub in Asia."

"We are investing in everything from roads and railways to ports [and] airports, all intending to create a transport network that is safe, efficient, and accessible to everyone. Such are the lessons learned from the pandemic," Marcos meanwhile said.

### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Marcos also noted the government's commitment to legislative reforms to create a conducive business environment and attract foreign investments, through legislation such as the proposed amendments to the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises or CREATE Act, the Ease of Doing Business Act and the Green Lanes for Strategic Investments ACT

"With CREATE More, we enhance the existing incentives by widening the range of eligible activities and providing greater flexibility in the application process. Additionally, it streamlines administrative procedures, reducing bureaucratic hurdles [and] making it easier for businesses to access these benefits," he added.

## MAHARLIKA INVESTMENT FUND

Marcos meanwhile said the establishment of the Maharlika Investment Fund “demonstrates the government’s strong commitment to strategically invest in key sectors that will accelerate national development.”

“This fund plays a vital role in financing critical infrastructure projects, stimulating economic growth, and generating long-term returns for the benefit of all Filipinos,” he said. “By mobilizing resources and attracting private capital, the Maharlika [Investment] Fund will be pivotal in our goal of creating more opportunities for future generations.”

The Philippine economy grew 5.7 percent in the first quarter of the year. Economic managers are aiming for an average growth of 6 to 7 percent for 2024.

**CNN**

**[Ocean water is rushing miles underneath the ‘Doomsday Glacier’ with potentially dire impacts on sea level rise](#)**

By: Laura Paddison

Ocean water is pushing miles beneath Antarctica’s “Doomsday Glacier,” making it more vulnerable to melting than previously thought, according to new research which used radar data from space to perform an X-ray of the crucial glacier.

As the salty, relatively warm ocean water meets the ice, it’s causing “vigorous melting” underneath the glacier and could mean global sea level rise projections are being underestimated, according to the study published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctica — nicknamed the “Doomsday Glacier” because its collapse could cause catastrophic sea level rise — is the world’s widest glacier and roughly the size of Florida. It’s also Antarctica’s most vulnerable and unstable glacier, in large part because the land on which it sits slopes downward, allowing ocean waters to eat away at its ice.

Thwaites, which already contributes 4% to global sea level rise, holds enough ice to raise sea levels by more than 2 feet. But because it also acts as a natural dam to the surrounding ice in West Antarctica, scientists have estimated its complete collapse could ultimately lead to around 10 feet of sea level rise — a catastrophe for the world’s coastal communities.

Many studies have pointed to the immense vulnerabilities of Thwaites. Global warming, driven by humans burning fossil fuels, has left it hanging on “by its fingernails,” according to a 2022 study.

This latest research adds a new and alarming factor into projections of its fate.

A team of glaciologists — led by scientists from the University of California, Irvine — used high resolution satellite radar data, collected between March and June last year, to create an X-ray of the glacier. This allowed them to build a picture of changes to Thwaites’ “grounding line,” the point at which the glacier rises from the seabed and becomes a floating ice shelf. Grounding lines are vital to the stability of ice sheets, and a key point of vulnerability for Thwaites, but have been difficult to study.

“In the past, we had only sporadic data to look at this,” said Eric Rignot, professor of Earth system science at the University of California at Irvine and a co-author on the study. “In this new data set, which is daily and over several months, we have solid observations of what is going on.”

They observed seawater pushing beneath the glacier over many miles, and then moving out again, following the daily rhythm of the tides. When the water flows in, it’s enough to “jack up” the surface of the glacier by centimeters, Rignot told CNN.

He suggested the term “grounding zone” may be more apt than grounding line, as it can move nearly 4 miles over a 12-hour tidal cycle, according to their research.

The speed of the seawater, which moves considerable distances over a short time period, increases glacier melt because as soon as the ice melts, freshwater is washed out and replaced with warmer seawater, Rignot said.

“This process of widespread, enormous seawater intrusion will increase the projections of sea level rise from Antarctica,” he added.

Ted Scambos, a glaciologist at the University of Colorado Boulder, who was not involved in the study, called the research “fascinating and important.”

“This finding gives a process that, as yet, is not factored into models,” he told CNN. And while these results only apply to certain areas of the glacier, he said, “this could speed up the pace of ice loss in our forecasts.”

One uncertainty to be unraveled is whether the rush of seawater beneath Thwaites is a new phenomenon or whether it’s been significant but unknown for a long time, said James Smith, a marine geologist at the British Antarctic Survey, who was not involved in the study.

“Either way, it’s clearly an important process that needs to be incorporated into ice sheet models,” he told CNN.

Noel Gourmelen, a professor of Earth observation at the University of Edinburgh, said use of radar data for this study was interesting. “Ironically it’s by going to space, using our growing satellite capabilities, that we’re learning much more about this environment,” he told CNN.

There are still many unknowns on what the study’s findings mean for the future of Thwaites, said Gourmelen who was not involved in the research. It is also unclear how widespread this process is around Antarctica, he told CNN, “although it is highly likely that this is happening elsewhere as well.”

A regime change

Antarctica, an isolated and complex continent, appears to be increasingly vulnerable to the climate crisis.

In a separate study, also published Monday, researchers from the British Antarctic Survey looked at the reasons for the record low levels of sea ice surrounding Antarctica last year.

Analyzing satellite data and using climate models, they found this record low would have been “extremely unlikely to happen without the influence of climate change.”

Sea ice melting doesn’t directly affect sea level rise because it’s already floating, but it leaves coastal ice sheets and glaciers exposed to waves and warm ocean waters, making them much more vulnerable to melting and breaking up.

The researchers also used climate models to predict the potential speed of recovery from such extreme sea ice loss and found that even after two decades, not all the ice will return.

“The impacts of Antarctic sea ice staying low for over twenty years would be profound, including on local and global weather,” Louise Sime, a co-author on the BAS study, said in a statement.

The findings add to evidence over the last few years that the region is facing a “lasting regime shift,” the authors wrote.



## ECO BUSINESS

### [In drought-hit Amazon, road paving fears grow as rivers run dry](#)

Behind a narrow border of trees, a crop duster sprays clouds of agrochemicals onto the vast soy fields stretching out on both sides of the BR-319 highway that cuts deep into Brazil's Amazon rainforest.

As the road's asphalt wears thin further north, timber trucks zig-zag to avoid the many potholes along the key transport artery, which spans 885 km (550 miles) and has come to symbolise the tension between infrastructure projects and environmental protection in the world's largest rainforest.

Linking Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, and Porto Velho, Rondônia's state capital, the road has lost most of its paving since it was built in the 1970s - meaning many sections are reduced to a muddy quagmire during the six-month wet season.

Now, as a series of droughts linked to climate change complicate river transport in the region, President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva's government has vowed to repave the BR-319.

Amazon researchers fear repairing the road could trigger a surge in deforestation in Amazonas state, home to most of Brazil's best-preserved rainforest, potentially threatening Lula's progress on stemming forest loss to fight climate change. But calls for rebuilding the road are growing louder.

During a record drought last year, farmers and residents had to rely on the BR-319 as the normally busy Amazon waterways sank to their lowest levels, making it almost impossible for shipping to navigate them.

Back in 2013, maintenance work resumed on the dirt portion of the road that runs through the district of Realidade, in Humaitá municipality, dramatically reducing the time it takes to reach the main city, and beyond. Paving work has not yet begun.

Humaitá mayor Dedei Lobo is happy - he expects an even harsher drought from May this year, so the road will be needed, especially as rivers are still below average levels.

Asked about environmental concerns over the road repairs, Lobo dismissed them as "a fad launched by NGOs financed by First World countries that have trains, subways, trams etc" while treating Amazon residents as "living in an altar".

Environmental reserves already established around the BR-319 should halt deforestation, as long as the federal government reactivates abandoned enforcement checkpoints, he added.

But the Transdisciplinary Network of the Amazon (RETA), a collection of grassroots environmental groups from the area around the road, has said the work carried out on the BR-319 near Realidade is already driving up land prices.

This is fuelling land-grabbing and deforestation, said Dionéia Ferreira, a RETA coordinator.

Environmentalists also fear that highway development leads loggers, farmers and land-grabbers to extend unauthorised side roads deeper into the forest in a pattern known as "fish bones" because of how the side roads look from space.

According to a 2023 analysis from the BR-319 Observatory, 5,092 km (3,100 miles) of illegal side roads have been built along the highway.

Vicious circle?

When he returned to power in 2023, Lula vowed to protect the Amazon but he also accepted a key demand of Brazil's powerful farming lobby and many locals by promising to pave the BR-319 - at an estimated cost of some 2 billion reais (US\$385 million).

In December, the lower house of Congress approved a bill to relax environmental rules so that the BR-319 could be paved.

The draft law, which still needs Senate approval, authorises the use of conservation funds donated to Brazil to finance the project, such as the US\$1.3 billion Amazon Fund backed by the US and European allies.

The government plans to pave the road's 406-km (250-mile) middle section by 2027, and in late April it launched a bidding process to pave a 20-km (12-mile) northern segment of the road, which has already obtained environmental licences.

Some analysts fear expanding roads in the fragile Amazon region could exacerbate the very problems that created the need for more land-based transport connections in the first place. "Paving the road ... also has effects on deforestation, which may elevate the risk of droughts," said Carlos Souza Jr. from the Amazon environmental institute.

Road density in the Amazon increased 51 per cent between 2012 and 2020, with roads now disturbing 55 per cent of the forest's area, according to a study from the Amazon Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information Network (RAISG), a transnational consortium of Amazon environmental organisations.

In places like Realidade, not everyone thinks more deforestation would necessarily be a bad thing.

Sitting at a bus station beside the BR-319 in the district's main village, coffee grower Norberto Lauret said deforestation "brings the daily bread in, and avoids people having to go live in big cities", though he said forest clearance must be done in accordance with the law.

The process is well underway. Between 2012 and 2022, there was a 20-fold jump in annual deforestation in Humaitá, according to Brazil's Institute for Space Research, consolidating the status of southern Amazonas state as a new frontier for agribusiness and forest loss.

Drawing farmers, Realidade attained district status in 2019 and now boasts small restaurants, farm shops, markets and evangelical churches.

Side roads and satellite dishes

Advocates for repaving the BR-319 deny that the road has prompted deforestation.

"The road has been open for 50 years ... and there has been no deforestation" in its unpaved central portion, congressman Coronel Chrisóstomo said at his office in Porto Velho, flanked by life-size cardboard cut-outs of himself and former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

Many of those most harmed by deforestation also see benefits in the paving of the BR-319, as side roads make remote areas more accessible.

They include the Linha 17, a side road that pushed out from Realidade in 2016, extending through traditional forest communities and, according to Ferreira from RETA, bringing loggers, land-grabbers and cattle ranchers into the interior.

As nut and açai fruit groves were destroyed and erosion from deforestation muddied fishing grounds, the riverside Pirapitinga community saw its traditional sources of income decline, driving some to mine illegally for gold in the river.

Although uncontrolled deforestation is frowned upon, many in the community approve of Linha 17, which was used by the government to electrify the area last year.

“You can now get to Realidade with a motorcycle and shop in no time,” said forest collector and peasant farmer Cimião Alves, as he pointed to his satellite dish and an electric pump pulling water from the nearby river.

Despite the vote in Congress to allocate funds for the road paving project, questions remain over whether it will get the go-ahead from the Environment Ministry.

Last year, Environment Minister Marina Silva told Congress the road’s environmental and economic rationale has not yet been proven.

After selling properties elsewhere in the Amazon, farmer José Antônio de Freitas resettled in Realidade in 2010, attracted by larger plots in the new frontier.

He is confident that Lula will be able to push through the project, citing his past record on contentious Amazon infrastructure projects.

“Opponents do not think about growth and development,” he said. “If I pay taxes for a truck ... then you have to give me the (road) conditions to drive it.”

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [Cordillera seeks climate change tech as El Niño crop damage hits P768M](#)

By: Vincent Cabreza

The Cordillera farming industry is seeking climate resilient technology to make geologically challenged farms more adaptable to extreme weather, after this year's El Niño dry spell left P768 million in crop losses and because of an anticipated La Niña which may bring prolonged and harsh rainfall, an agriculture official said.

Lawyer Jennilyn Dawayan, Cordillera director of the Department of Agriculture (DA), said on Monday that the government is looking into specialized greenhouses designed to withstand very strong typhoons, given how extreme rains devastated highland crops in recent years.

The agricultural sector's economic contraction of -1.3 percent (P27.8 billion) in 2023 was partly the result of climate disasters that struck mountain farms, Dawayan pointed out at a press briefing.

The region is also exploring genetically modified varieties as well as hybrid rice grains that are suited for droughts, or grains that could absorb excessive rainwater, said Danilo Daguio, DA Cordillera assistant director.

Maps, research

But Daguio said hybrid grains need to be acceptable to highland farmers. Rice grown by Cordillera farmers is often tied to their culture and rituals.

The DA Cordillera office also uses the latest climate tools, including a map drawn up by Benguet State University detailing towns most vulnerable to droughts and to landslides and flooding during monsoons, as well as weather forecasting models, which the agency shares with agricultural communities.

Farmers like corn producer Marivic Raganit of Paracelis town in Mountain Province and coffee and livestock farmer Dick Evasco of Atok town in Benguet said they conducted their own research, and had learned to blend data on weather patterns with traditional Igorot farming knowledge.

Social media platforms, including YouTube, had also been accessed by farmers so they could adjust their planting schedules or seek out "do-it-yourself" food growing techniques such as bottle gardening, said 27-year-old Ryan Palunan, chair of the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Council.

Terrain

One of the concerns raised by DA was that some Cordillera farmers were "risk takers" who did not heed government alerts about El Niño, so a more aggressive information campaign would now be undertaken in light of a La Niña forecast.

Dawayan said farmlands in the Cordillera are vulnerable to climate change because of the terrain, since many vegetable and rice gardens were carved from the mountainsides.

Ifugao, for instance, is home to the four-century-old rice terraces, which grow heirloom rice called "tinawon" for household consumption.

As of April 29, the drought damaged or destroyed 40,712.24 metric tons (MT) of rice, corn and high-value crops, like Benguet 's salad vegetables, which had affected 11,671 farmers, according to the DA fact sheet.

Daguio said the biggest losses were recorded in Ifugao (17,811 MT or P311 million in Aginaldo town) and Kalinga (12,196 MT or P263.8 million in the towns of Balbalan, Pinukpuk, Rizal and Tanudan and in Tabuk City).

He said corn (with P638 million in losses) was the biggest casualty among upland commodities, although high-value crops (P1.533 million in losses) were the least affected crops. Damaged rice crops amounted to P127 million.

According to DA, the projected impact on this year's targeted rice production of 355,774 MT would only be a 1.03-percent (3,653 MT) decline.

But the impact of the drought on the targeted corn production of 171,771 MT had been a 21-percent (36,864 MT) decrease as of April, the agency said.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [ACB to launch awareness campaigns on Biodiversity Day 2024](#)

As the ASEAN's response to halt biodiversity loss, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity is launching awareness raising campaigns on the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) on 22 May, shedding light on the importance of the region's biological resources, emphasising a whole-of-society approach in sustainably managing the use of biodiversity for future generations.

Aimed at reaching out to a diverse group of people and sectors in the host country, Philippines and across Southeast Asia, the said ACB campaigns align with this year's IDB theme, "Be Part of the Plan" which puts to light the unique roles individuals play in supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, or the Biodiversity Plan.

Celebrating ASEAN wildlife through photography and content creation

Zooming in on Biodiversity is an ASEAN-wide photo and video contest that promotes appreciation for the region's natural wealth and the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP). For 15 years, this contest has been generating impressive collections of photographs that not only capture plant and animal species but also the relationship of biodiversity with climate change, food security, sustainable livelihood, and health.

In 2024, the Zooming in on Biodiversity Photo and Video Contest will continue to encourage its audience to connect with nature. With the theme Biodiversity in Action, the main category of this year's contest is Caught in the Act, hoping to capture biodiversity in action in its natural habitat. These may include animals playing, feeding, hunting, settling down for sleep, and interacting with each other. Furthermore, the Life in ASEAN Heritage Parks category will remain as another category that highlights the natural and cultural richness of AHPs—the best of the best protected areas in the ASEAN region.

The past edition of the contest in 2021 launched the ACB Tiktok Challenge where ASEAN citizens lent their voices for biodiversity. The ACB will continue to take advantage of social media this year to promote biodiversity by inviting participants to share any audio-visual content on biodiversity with the theme #BiodiversiToks, with the objective of encouraging ASEAN citizens to creatively communicate biodiversity (through visual arts, prose, poetry, music, dance, and performance arts among others) to a highly diverse digital audience.

BiodiversiTalks: Conservation Conversations

The advances in mobile technologies enable biodiversity information accessible to all people, making biodiversity conservation discussions possible through various formats such as podcasts, vodcasts, talk shows, and other informative yet entertaining platforms. With this, the ACB will launch an online campaign called BiodiversiTalks, with the aim of promoting biodiversity conservation, one conversation at a time. This will broadcast on different platforms, with YouTube and Spotify as the two major online streaming platforms, while highlights of the episodes will be posted on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

For its premier episode, BiodiversiTalks will take the audience through a nature walk at Mount Makiling Forest Reserve—one of the ASEAN Heritage Parks in the Philippines and home of the ACB headquarters. Hosted by no other than the ACB Executive Director, Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, it is designed to educate the public on the complex issues of nature conservation and inspire them to take individual and collective actions.

## Other events

The ACB likewise participates in other IDB-related activities such as the nationwide International Day for Biodiversity celebration led by the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau happening on 22 May. The said event will emphasise the continuous realization of the Biodiversity Plan in the Philippines and ASEAN, and advance the understanding of biodiversity through different media. The ACB will be sharing a message of support and the global and regional status update on KMGBF in the Biodiversity Talk Show, one of the highlights of the occasion.

Various other events in the IDB calendar lineup include activities on capacity building, exhibits, educational visits, and scientific conferences held in different parts of the ASEAN region such as: ASEAN learning sessions, launch of the Pasonanca Natural Park as the 52nd ASEAN Heritage Park, Hiraya: Earth Month Fair exhibition, National Research Council of the Philippines Annual Scientific Conference, launch of the Massive Open Online Courses on Mainstreaming Biodiversity on Agriculture in the ASEAN region, and the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool Training for AHP Managers, among others.

The extent and coverage of such activities are calling people from all walks of life to contribute to the achievement of the goals and targets of the Biodiversity Plan. It is a call for governments, local communities, non-government organisations, businesses, indigenous peoples, women, youth, and all individuals to realise that they have their own unique roles to play to make living in harmony with nature possible by the year 2050.

On this significant day for biodiversity, the ACB hopes to harness all means to foster greater awareness and understanding of the boundless wonders of nature and all of its benefits—to communicate using traditional and modern media, to remind everyone to protect, restore, share benefits fairly, and to invest and collaborate for our diverse web of life. (ACB)

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [Antarctic sea ice level reached 'exceptional record lows' in 2023](#)

Record-low levels of sea ice were seen in the Antarctic last year as a result of climate change, scientists confirmed in a report published on Monday.

“In 2023, the area of winter Antarctic sea ice fell to the lowest measured since satellite records began in late 1978,” according to research released by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS).

Scientists have found that last year's record-breaking low would be a one-in-a-2,000-year event without climate change and four times more likely under its effects.

The exceptional low state of Antarctic sea ice indicates that it may transition to a new and lower state over the next few decades, warned scientists.

“The reduced return period in forced scenarios suggest that winter 2023's extreme low was made more likely by climate change,” noted the study.

Rachel Diamond, a lead author of the report, said that while 2023's extremely low sea ice was made more likely by climate change, it was still considered very exceptional according to the models.

“This is the first time this large set of climate models has been used to find out how unlikely 2023's low sea ice actually was,” she noted.

Diamond said the only measurements of sea ice are coming from a 45-year-old satellite, making it extremely difficult to evaluate changes in sea ice extent.

“According to the models, the record-breaking minimum sea ice extent would be a one-in-a-2,000-year event without climate change,” she added.

Louise Sime, a co-author of the report, pointed out that the impacts of Antarctic sea ice staying low for over 20 years would be profound, including on local and global weather.



## [NegOcc to install 1,270-KW solar power systems in provincial buildings](#)

By Nanette Guadalquiver

The Negros Occidental provincial government will install 1,270 kilowatts (KW) total capacity of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems in the seven main facilities of the Capitol this year.

On Tuesday, data provided by Governor Eugenio Jose Lacson showed that going solar will enable the province to save between 132,080 and 158,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per month. “By the third quarter, we will be able to bid it out already,” he said in an interview in line with the Provincial Renewable Energy Week from May 20 to 24.

Lacson said that at an estimated rate of PHP12 per kWh, the province can save PHP1.5 million to PHP1.8 million every month.

Last year, the governor initiated an energy audit and its result prompted the province to start utilizing solar panels this year.

“I enjoin everyone, particularly our local government units, to do the same, starting with grid-tied rooftop solar systems,” he added.

Lacson said that with serious energy challenges facing Negros Occidental, including daily power intermittent outages and power rate increases, the Negrenses cannot be defeated by bad news.

“We have the choice to be more solutions-oriented instead of just being problem-oriented. We have the choice to be more proactive instead of just being reactive. May this Renewable Energy Week further activate in more of us the vision, the hope, and the wise strategies for energy security and a green energy future,” he added.

In Negros Occidental, La Carlota City Hall has been utilizing a 100-KW solar PV system since February this year.

Mayor Rex Jalando-on said they are gradually switching to renewable energy to promote energy conservation, monetary savings, and environmental protection.

Under the SecuRE Negros campaign, the provincial government commits to securing the energy future of Negros Occidental through the transformative power of renewable energy.

## REUTERS

### [Climate change: small island states hail ocean court victory](#)

By Riham Alkousaa

A global maritime court found on Tuesday that greenhouse gases constitute marine pollution, a major breakthrough for small island states threatened by the rise in sea levels caused by global warming.

In its first climate-related judgment, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea said emissions from fossil fuels and other planet-warming gases that are absorbed by the oceans count as marine pollution.

Its ruling - an "advisory opinion" that should nevertheless provide a precedent for cases elsewhere - also said countries must go beyond the requirements of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement to protect the marine environment and the states that depend on it.

"What happened today was that the law and science met together in this tribunal, and both won," said Cheryl Bazard, ambassador to the European Union of the Bahamas, one of nine Caribbean and Pacific island nations that sought the opinion.

Small island nations with scant economic power but acutely vulnerable to climate change have long felt neglected by successive global summits where pledges to cut carbon emissions have fallen far short of the minimum for limiting the worst effects of global warming.

The court said states have a legal obligation to monitor and reduce the emissions that contribute to climate change and laid out specific requirements for their environmental impact assessments.

It also said states' targets for cutting greenhouse emissions must be set objectively based on the best available science and relevant international rules and standards, thus setting the bar higher than the Paris Agreement did.

### RULING WILL SHAPE FUTURE CLIMATE CASES

"The ITLOS opinion will inform our future legal and diplomatic work in putting an end to inaction that has brought us to the brink of an irreversible disaster," said Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

Nikki Reisch, director at the Centre for International Environmental Law, said: "To those that would hide behind the weaknesses of international climate treaties, this opinion makes clear that compliance with the Paris Agreement alone is not enough."

Climate activists and lawyers said the decision could influence two opinions on states' climate obligations that are pending from the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and the International Court of Justice.

A similar potential precedent was laid down last month, when the European Court of Human Rights agreed with plaintiffs who argued that Switzerland was violating their human rights by not doing enough to combat climate warming.

Eselealofa Apinelu, representing the South Pacific island of Tuvalu, said Tuesday's opinion made clear that all states were legally bound to protect the marine environment, and other states, from the existential threats of climate change.

He called it "an important first step in holding the major polluters accountable".

But the road to concerted global action is far from smooth.

China, the world's biggest carbon polluter, had argued in court that the Tribunal did not have general authority to issue advisory opinions, saying these could fragment international law. China's foreign ministry was not immediately available for comment.

The other nations in the group that brought the case were Palau, Niue, Vanuatu, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines and St. Kitts and Nevis.

## UN NEWS

### Climate crisis fuels deadly floods, worsening hunger in Afghanistan

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) said that as erratic weather on the back of the worsening climate crisis “becomes the norm”, things will only get worse.

This month’s unusually high rainfall followed a dry winter, rendering the ground too hard to absorb water, leading to massive flooding. Unseasonably warm temperatures further complicated the situation by melting mountain snow, causing rivers to overflow and inundating villages with mud.

“With one disaster after another hitting these communities, they are being pushed back into destitution. Recent improvements in food security in Afghanistan now risk being lost,” said Hsiao-Wei Lee, WFP Country Director for Afghanistan.

“These families need emergency assistance to survive, and in the longer term, they need investments in community infrastructure that help protect their homes, lands and livelihoods.”

#### Severe destruction

Floods last week due to heavy rains caused severe destruction in Ghor and Faryab provinces, in northwest Afghanistan. Over 130 people are reported to have died, hundreds more are missing, and thousands of houses and businesses have been destroyed or damaged.

Access is also a major challenge with many villages cut off and humanitarians are struggling to reach affected regions.

As search and rescue operations continue, the number of casualties is expected to rise, highlighting the urgent need for more international support and intervention to address the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

On 10-11 May, the northeast was struck by heavy rains and flash floods, affecting Badakhshan, Baghlan and Takhar provinces. At least 180 people are confirmed to have been killed and a further 280 injured.

#### WFP response

In immediate response to the floods, WFP provided fortified biscuits and nutritional supplements to children, and worked with local bakeries to distribute bread to the hardest-hit communities.

By the end of last week, the agency began distributing food rations and cash assistance in functional market areas.

For its ongoing response, WFP requires an additional \$14.5 million to cover emergency food and nutrition assistance and resilience building projects.

To mitigate future disasters, it is investing in climate adaptation projects, including the construction of protective walls, dams, and irrigation canals.

Notably, a WFP-supported flood wall in Baghlan protected 670 families and 400 acres of agricultural land during the heavy rains.

#### DiCarlo in Afghanistan

Meanwhile, on the political front, Rosemary DiCarlo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, visited Afghanistan from 18 to 21 May, where she met Taliban officials, members of the diplomatic community in Kabul and representatives of civil society.

According to UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, discussions focused on the meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan, which the UN is organizing in the Qatari capital, Doha, on 30 June and 1 July.

The meeting aims to increase international engagement with Afghanistan in a more coherent, coordinated and structured manner.

“She extended to the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, an advance invitation from the Secretary-General to participate at the forthcoming meeting of Special Envoys,” Mr. Dujarric told journalists at the regular press briefing in New York.

Taliban leaders did not attend the last round of the meeting, held in February.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### PAGEONE

#### [CCC Boosts Ties With Civil Society, Pushes For Bolder Climate Action](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has underscored the crucial role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in advancing and supporting the government's agenda to efficiently address the adverse impacts of climate change.

During the Working to Empower Climate Action Network's (WE CAN) 7th Consultation Meeting with CSOs on May 13, the CCC recognized the need to formalize and institutionalize robust coordination and engagement with CSOs.

"The mechanism, at full capacity, will pave the way for the Commission and the CSOs to have a multilateral working partnership with the shared benefits of knowledge and network resource exchange, strengthening further their relationship," the CCC said in a news release on Monday.

As part of its regular preparatory process, the CCC conducted WE CAN's 7th Consultation Meeting with the main agenda of strengthening the mechanism's Terms of Reference.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje highlighted the government's continued commitment to invoking a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach in addressing climate change, citing WE CAN as the pathway for government-to-civil society engagement.

"WE CAN will institutionalize the ways of our engagement, providing a sustainable platform for both civil society and the CCC to work together towards downstream and upstream climate action," Borje said in his keynote speech.

Meanwhile, CCC Commissioner Rachel Anne Herrera stressed the vitality of WE CAN in ensuring a balanced and sustained engagement with the civil society in pursuing climate resiliency and smartness in the country.

"WE CAN is a detailed mechanism that guides us on how we can work together on various programs and efforts on climate action. It is a platform that will make our partnerships more inclusive, participatory, relevant, and more meaningful," Herrera said.

"The intention is to move away from a top-down approach and instead establish a coordination mechanism that is co-owned by the civil society in order to enable a more in-depth discussion of various climate-related matters," she added.

The CCC remains steadfast in its pursuit of inclusive climate goals, ensuring that all sectors, including the civil society, are engaged in the process of building a climate-resilient and climate-smart Philippines.

By leveraging the grassroots connections, advocacy capabilities, and localized knowledge of CSOs, the CCC hopes to involve a majority of the local communities in the achievement of the country's climate agenda.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### CCC highlights vital role of academe, youth and IPs in climate action

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) emphasized the crucial role of the academe, youth and the indigenous people communities in fostering climate-resilient and developing climate-active leadership at a forum at the Northern Bukidnon State College.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje highlighted the urgent need for community-level climate action, underscoring the academe's indispensable function in catalyzing grassroots efforts across all sectors. "Education is a powerful tool in the fight against climate change. It equips us with the knowledge and skills to understand complex ecological issues and find innovative solutions. But education alone is not enough. We need action, and that is where you come in," Borje said during his keynote speech.

He noted the importance of evidence-based research in informing public policies, with the academe serving as a crucial source of data and knowledge. Borje also stressed the academe's role in raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and inspiring action within communities.

In the Philippines, climate education is integrated into the education system, with subjects across various fields incorporating Disaster Risks Reduction Management (DRRM), Climate Change, and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) concepts.

Also, the academe contributes in the field of climate research and development, mobilizing Filipino expertise to understand climate change and guide policy and programmatic responses.

The IP communities, on the other hand, play a vital role in managing resources sustainably, conserving ecosystems and biodiversity, and passing down indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next to sustain their communities and the environment.

Borje emphasized the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, recognizing that individuals have distinct roles based on their resources and capabilities in addressing climate change.

"Sometimes, the challenges we face seem overwhelming, and it's easy to feel powerless. But remember, every climate action counts. Small changes, when multiplied across millions of people, can make a big difference," Borje encouraged.

The CCC, as the head policymaking body of the Philippines on climate change, is tasked to mainstream climate change within the Filipino populace.

The Commission reiterated its commitment to educating all Filipino people about climate science, its dangers and potential solutions. By harnessing the academe's capacity to educate, advocate, and research climate-related issues, the CCC aims to foster climate-smart and climate-conscious individuals, industries, and communities across the country.

For more information on the CCC's climate mainstreaming activities, visit [www.climate.gov.ph](http://www.climate.gov.ph) and [www.facebook.com/CCCPhl](https://www.facebook.com/CCCPhl). (CCC)

**=END=**