



NEWS ROUNDUP

21 June 2024 [08:00am]

- Four in five people want more climate action, UN poll finds
- Preparation for COP29 progressing according to set time, Deputy FM says
- Why are rainforests crucial for the planet?
- Philippines slips in 2024 energy transition index ranking
- SMILEES roadshow highlights Davao City's sustainable development initiatives
- Renewable energy projects dominate government's green lane
- Journalists revive kids' environment awareness program
- 'Climate change made killer heat 35x more likely in US'

AL JAZEERA

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AZER NEWS

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ECO BUSINESS

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MANILA BULLETIN

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MINDANAO TIMES

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THE MANILA TIMES

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

AL JAZEERA

[Four in five people want more climate action, UN poll finds](#)

Four in five people want their countries to ramp up efforts in the fight against climate change, according to a United Nations survey billed as the largest yet on the issue.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) published the poll on Thursday, finding that a majority of people in 62 of the 77 countries surveyed said they supported a quick transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy.

These included the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters, with 80 percent in China and 54 percent in the United States supporting the move, though respondents in Russia were notably less keen, with only 16 percent approving.

"As world leaders decide on the next round of pledges under the Paris Agreement by 2025, these results are undeniable evidence that people everywhere support bold climate action," said Cassie Flynn, UNDP global climate director.

Conducted in collaboration with Oxford University and GeoPoll, the survey posed 15 questions by randomised telephone calls to 75,000 people in 77 countries, the populations of which represent 87 percent of the world's total – making it the biggest poll of its kind.

Overall, 80 percent of those polled wanted to see stronger commitments to addressing the problem, the clamour for action rising to 89 percent in poorer countries feeling the brunt of climate change.

Climate anxiety was higher in poorer countries like Fiji, where 80 percent are more worried about the problem compared to a year ago, followed by Afghanistan (78 percent) and Turkey (77 percent). Saudi Arabia saw the lowest increase in climate fears, with 25 percent more concerned.

Overall, the survey found 56 percent of respondents said they think about climate change at least once a week. Over half of those surveyed said they were more worried about climate change than last year, compared with 15 percent who said they were less worried.

Climate change is also changing people's lives, with 69 percent of respondents saying that global warming had impacted major decisions, such as where to live or work and what to buy.

But Achim Steiner, head of the UNDP, said these concerns do not necessarily translate into electoral and consumer decisions.

He pointed to what he called a "perception gap" when it comes to climate action, summing up people's typical reaction as: "I would do more. But the others won't. So I will not do anything."

AZER NEWS

[Preparation for COP29 progressing according to set time, Deputy FM says](#)

One of our biggest challenges in preparing for COP29 was the lack of time. Nevertheless, the work done so far is on schedule.

According to Azernews, Yalchin Rafiyev, the chief negotiator of COP29, Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, said this in his statement to journalists.

"If we divide the preparatory stage for COP29 into pre-session and post-session stages, we will see that the work is progressing in its own way. Our plans and "road map" for the next stages are ready," said the deputy minister.

ECO BUSINESS

Why are rainforests crucial for the planet?

From the vast Amazon rainforest that unfurls across nine South American territories to the tropical forests that shelter mountain gorillas in the Democratic Republic of Congo and orangutans in Indonesia, forests are key to human life.

But these rich resources are under threat from deforestation driven by mining, land-grabbing, animal grazing and deadly wildfires. And that's bad news for humans and the planet as rainforests are key to reining in runaway climate change.

With the United Nations warning that the battle to limit global warming will be won or lost in the 2020s, here's why rainforests need to be protected:

Why are rainforests crucial for the planet?

Tropical rainforests encompass around 1.2 billion hectares (3 billion acres) of vegetation and they are one of the world's largest stores of planet-warming greenhouse gases because trees absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide and release the oxygen humans need to live.

That means that forests act as carbon sinks and remove about 7.6 billion metric tonnes of CO₂ each year from the atmosphere, which is around one-and-a-half times the average annual emissions of the United States.

But if too many trees die and rot, forests become net carbon emitters and can accelerate climate change. This destruction also imperils biodiversity because of how many plant and animal species call forests home.

During a devastating drought in 2005 in the Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, so many trees died that the forest emitted more greenhouse gases than Europe and Japan's annual emissions, according to research published in 2009.

Rainforests play a key role in the water cycle. The forests' dense canopies hold moisture and feed water vapour back into the atmosphere, driving further rains.

This is critical in South America, sub-Saharan Africa and the islands of Southeast Asia. By maintaining stable rainfall patterns and temperatures, rainforests are vital for food and water security.

About 1.6 billion people, including nearly 70 million Indigenous people, rely on forest resources for their livelihoods.

Forests can also act as buffers against natural disasters as canopies can intercept rainfall and slow it down in a storm, protecting the soil underneath.

Are rainforests facing a tipping point?

Tipping points happen when a small change - such as an incremental increase in global temperatures - sparks a rapid, often irreversible transformation, scientists say.

Forest clearances and global warming may already have pushed the Amazon close to a tipping point that could see the lush forests transformed into savannah in coming decades, according to scientists.

When humans degrade rainforests by removing trees, sunshine beams down through the thinned canopy, altering the temperature and conditions of the rainforest ecosystem.

In 2018, leading climatologists Carlos Nobre and Thomas Lovejoy estimated that between 20 per cent and 25 per cent of the Amazon forest must be kept intact to prevent portions of it from turning into a drier savannah-like ecosystem.

Over the past two decades, the Amazon rainforest has become slower at recovering from longer periods of drought, damaging its complex ecosystem and pushing it closer to a possible tipping point, according to study published in the journal Nature Climate Change in 2022.

The research showed that three-quarters of the rainforest has been losing its ability to recover from shocks, such as droughts and fires, and return to a healthy state.

Tipping points might already have been reached in parts of Brazil's southeast Amazon region, with some areas now emitting more planet-heating carbon than is absorbed, according to research published in the Nature journal in 2021.

What drives deforestation?

Cutting down trees to clear land for agriculture, including small-scale farming, and grazing drives global deforestation.

In the Amazon, home to about half of the world's remaining tropical forest area, most deforested land is used as cattle pastures, followed by soy fields. In Brazil, the world's second biggest beef supplier, cattle herds are increasingly fed on pastures deforested in the Amazon.

Another key driver of deforestation in the Amazon is land-grabbing carried out largely by organised crime gangs. The damage being done to the rainforests in Colombia, Peru, Brazil and Bolivia has been described as "narco-deforestation".

A growing body of research indicates that speculation within this illegal land market, not just food production, is key to deforestation.

Traffickers use drug profits to buy forest land - sometimes illegally speculating or else legally buying forest - that is then turned into cattle pastures.

Illegal gold mining is another major driver of deforestation across the Amazon.

In Peru and Colombia, the clearing of trees to grow coca, the raw ingredient for cocaine, also drives deforestation.

In Indonesia, home to a third of the world's rainforests, deforestation has been linked to clearing land to produce palm oil. The country is the world's biggest palm oil producer and exporter.

Tropical forests are also increasingly prone to destructive wildfires as global warming leads to the hotter, drier conditions that fuel bigger blazes.

Where is tropical forest being lost and protected?

Globally tropical forest loss declined last year - by 9 per cent when compared to 2022 - but the destruction of the world's rainforests still remains stubbornly high, according to research published by Global Forest Watch in April.

In 2023, the loss of primary forests - those untouched by people and sometimes known as old-growth forests - totalled about 37,000 square km (14,000 square miles), an area nearly as big as Switzerland and larger than the US state of Maryland.

Primary forest loss in Brazil and Colombia between 2022 and 2023 declined by 36 per cent and 49 per cent respectively but was largely offset by sharp increases elsewhere, such as in Laos and Nicaragua.

Forest destruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo remained relatively stable but high at around 5,000 square km (1,930 square miles).

In Bolivia, destruction surged 27 per cent driven by agriculture, such as soy expansion, and fires caused by people clearing grasslands for cattle grazing and crops.

More than 140 countries in 2021 committed to end deforestation by the end of the decade, but the world is far off track and trending in the wrong direction, according to Global Forest Watch.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Philippines slips in 2024 energy transition index ranking](#)

By: Chino S. Leyco

The Philippines has fallen in the 2024 global ranking that assesses how economies balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability.

In this year's Energy Transition Index (ETI) by the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Philippines dropped to 105th out of 120 countries from its previous position of 94th in 2023.

Compared to its regional peers in the 2024 report, the Philippines was also found to be lagging behind.

Among Southeast Asian nations, Vietnam led the pack at 32, with Malaysia following closely at 40, Indonesia at 54, Thailand at 60, and Singapore at 64.

Despite the lower ranking, the Philippines' overall ETI score improved slightly to 50.2 percent on a 0-100 percent scale, from 48.4 percent last year.

However, the country still fell short of the global average score of 56.5 percent and Emerging and Developing Asia's average score of 53.9 percent.

The WEF report comes days after the Department of Energy (DOE) released the updated regulations aimed at streamlining the procedures for renewable energy (RE) projects in order to accelerate the shift towards clean energy.

With the revised guidelines in place, developers of RE projects can now initiate permit applications, surveys, and feasibility studies prior to the commencement of the official 25-year contract period.

According to the WEF, the ongoing global energy transition towards a fairer, more secure, and sustainable energy system continues to advance.

However, WEF noted that the momentum has waned due to growing uncertainty on a global scale.

“While 107 of the 120 countries benchmarked in the report demonstrated progress on their energy transition journeys in the past decade, the overall pace of the transition has slowed and balancing its different facets remains a key challenge,” WEF said.

WEF noted that economic volatility, heightened geopolitical tensions and technological shifts have all had an impact, complicating its speed and trajectory.

“There is, however, some reason for optimism, with increasing global investments in renewables and significant growth in energy transition performance in sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade,” it said.

Europe continues to lead the ETI rankings, with the top 10 list for 2024 fully composed of countries from that region.

“This year’s Energy Transition Index delivers a clear message: urgent action is needed. Global decision-makers must make bold moves to regain momentum in the transition towards an equitable, secure and sustainable energy future. This is critical for people, entire economies and the fight against climate change,” Espen Mehlum, WEF Energy Transition Intelligence and Regional Acceleration head, said.

MINDANAO TIMES

[SMILEES roadshow highlights Davao City's sustainable development initiatives](#)

By: Lisa Marie Mesiona

The local government showcased the city's sustainable development initiatives in the recently-held Small and Medium Industries and Large Enterprises Embracing Sustainability (SMILEES) roadshow.

The city government established its initiatives through the Local Climate Change Action Plan of 2019 to 2023, a project formulated to pursue and secure the city's development gains and sustainable efforts by building disaster-resilient and climate-change adaptive communities.

Among the government's sustainable efforts was the protection of urban forestry and water resources by distributing 98,411 seedlings and planting 27,346 seedlings and 31,711 propagules.

Additionally, the city produced and distributed 10,431 seedlings and around 925 kilos of assorted vegetables to 552 beneficiaries to foster organic farming.

The city also developed its parks in Los Amigos, Roxas Avenue, and Phase 1 of Doña Vicenta, with the latter's Phase 2 up for construction.

"The development of these parks really helped the growth of businesses in the area, specifically the Roxas Night Market," Errol Denosta, Davao City Project Monitoring and Evaluation Division chief, said.

Further highlighted in the presentation were the disaster risk reduction and management efforts of the local government, which conducted 208 trainings, 159 drills, and 113 benchmarking activities. Peace and order also heightened through the establishment of Peace 911 and constant cooperation with Davaoeños.

The Securities and Exchange Commission-led SMILEES event promoted the overall importance of sustainability among private and public sectors.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Renewable energy projects dominate government's green lane program

By: Alden M. Monzon

More than P2.3 trillion worth of investments have been approved so far by the government under its green lane program, with the latest list containing 74 projects spanning several industries such as energy, digital infrastructure, food security, and manufacturing.

In a statement on Thursday, the Board of Investments (BOI) said most of the investments are in the renewable energy sector, with 65 projects for a total cost of P1.95 trillion.

Of the other projects, five are in digital infrastructure with a cumulative project cost of P338.23 billion, two in food security with P3.4 billion, and two in manufacturing with P29.61 billion.

“For the month of June, a total of P265.465 billion worth of strategic investments was certified, the highest of which is a P183.205-billion solar power project in Luzon,” the Department of Trade and Industry’s (DTI) lead investments promotion body said.

Strategic investments

The BOI noted 59 other projects were still under consideration pending the completion of various requirements. The investment promotion agency said these projects have a cumulative worth of P792.71 billion.

The list contains 37 projects in the renewable energy sector, two in digital infrastructure, 19 in food security, and one in manufacturing.

The government launched the green lane scheme in February 2023 through Executive Order No. 18, which was issued in the same month. It was meant to expedite, streamline, and automate government approval and registration processes for strategic investments.

Applications to the program are submitted to the BOI through a QR code or by emailing the government agency at greenlane@boi.gov.ph.

The One-Stop-Action-Center for Strategic Investments receives and evaluates the applications.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Journalists revive kids' environment awareness program

By Liza Agoot

Journalists based here are strengthening their 32-year-old children's environmental awareness and values formation program by volunteering as facilitators and tour guides in the program that was later on adopted by the local government here.

The local government adopted the local journalists' annual program called Lucky Summer Visitor (LSV), held during the Holy Week since 1992, and called it Eco Walk as part of its Climate Change Adaptation program.

The local government program, which was chosen as Galing Pook awardee in 1995 and among the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) "Global 500" awardee in 2002, took a back seat during the previous local government administration.

Thomas Picaña, Baguio Correspondents and Broadcasters Club Inc. (BCBCI) president and publisher-editor of the local weekly newspaper "Amianan Balita Ngayon" said he is thankful that local journalists remain committed to the program instituted by their colleagues some three decades ago

"Sana ay magpatuloy ang suporta niyong mga kasama sa trabaho sa pangangalaga natin ng watersheds dito sa syudad ng Baguio (I am hopeful that you, our media practitioners, will continue to care for our watersheds in the city)," he said in a speech during the relaunch of the program at the Busol Watershed this Wednesday.

Picaña said the bid to revive the program was because of a dream.

"Nanaginip ako nagkakape kami nila MonDacs (former journalists and former Baguio City Public Information Office head Ramon Dacawi) sa Luisa's (a media water hole). Pina-interpret ko sa misis ko. Sabi nya baka may gusto syang iparating, baka may pinapa-alala (I dreamed of having a coffee with MonDacs at Luisa's. I asked by wife to interpret it. She said MonDac's might be telling me something, might be wanting me to remember something)," he said.

Arthur Joel Tibaldo, also known as "Artibal", a retired government worker who was among those who joined the group that started the environment protection program, said he and Dacawi were members of the Baguio Regreening Movement, then led by Bishop Ernesto Salgado.

"We were asked by the Bishop to come up with an environmental advocacy and values formation (program) for children to inculcate in them the value of protecting the environment. As a group, the old media practitioners met and discussed and there came the Eco Walk," he said.

He later on led a group of Grades 5 and 6 students from Rizal Elementary School here to the Busol Watershed, one of the biggest water sources of the city.

“We asked where their water was coming from and they said it was from the faucet. When asked where the water is coming from, they said it is from the trees. We asked if they wanted to go to the forest and see a lot of trees, they said yes and everything was history,” he said.

Schools then started to adopt an area in Busol, which was called “muyong”, to help protect the forest and the water system in Ifugao, where Mondacs is a native.

Companies also adopted muyongs, which were planted with trees during the rainy season and were cared for during off-planting season.

Aileen Refuerzo, who succeeded Dacawi as Baguio City PIO chief and whose husband is also among the conceptualizers of the Eco-Walk said, “It (the program) was not just (about) planting.”

“The children will first be given a mini-lecture at the “forest classroom”, a shed established in an area where activities and lectures are conducted. The participants will also have games like finding the longest pine, biggest pine cone and later the web of life which connects living things to each other,” she said during the event.

With Tibaldo now serving as the program’s lead tour guide and facilitator, Refuerzo said the group is recruiting other media practitioners who will be trained to join the team of facilitators and tour guides.

“We are reviving the Eco Walk. Interested groups or schools who want to do the Eco-walk can contact us at the PIO-Baguio office and we will organize it with the BCBCI,” she said.

Community for Climate Change Adaptation

Tam Jewel Tibaldo, 34, grew up joining Eco Walk activities and other media programs like the LSV with her parents.

“Growing up, I saw the value of my participation in the Eco Walk program, the Lucky Summer Visitor program of the media. Those small experiences, put together, molded me as a person,” she said in Filipino during the relaunching event.

Now based in Manila, Tam said the environment-related activities inculcated in her not just the love for the environment but also the sense of community.”

“I would always tell anyone, because I am Manila-based now, (the importance of) the sense of community. We are a small community in Baguio but our tightness as a community (is strong). Everyone is a “manong” (older brother), “manang” (older sister), “tito” (uncle), and “tita” (auntie), and a family, not just friends,” she said.

Importance of Busol

Busol Watershed is one of the several watersheds being maintained by the city government and the Baguio Water District (BWD) as source of potable water for the residents.

“Busol is very important because this supplies nine to 10 percent of the city’s water connections in 16 of the 128 barangays (villages) in the Aurora Hill and Pacdal sides of the city,” Keith Andrei Cacas, BWD water utilities management officer, said.

It has an area of 336 hectares, with about two-thirds or 227 hectares on the side of La Trinidad, Benguet and 112 hectares in Baguio City. The Baguio side is 80 percent forested while the La Trinidad side is still being reforested.

“We do regular patrolling to monitor illegal structures and encroachments as a protection of our water,” said Hugh Palangdao Jr., BWD watershed management officer.

THE MANILA TIMES

'Climate change made killer heat 35x more likely in US'

Deadly heat that blanketed the United States, Mexico and Central America recently was made 35 times more likely due to global warming, an international network of climate scientists said on Thursday.

The World Weather Attribution (WWA) group of scientists also said extreme highs witnessed over that region in May and June were four times as likely to occur today as a quarter of a century ago.

The record-breaking heat killed at least 125 people in Mexico and caused thousands more to suffer heat strokes, a potentially fatal condition that occurs when the body's internal cooling mechanisms start to fail.

"We likely do not know the full picture of heat-related deaths, since they are usually only confirmed and reported months after the event, if at all," said the WWA, which uses peer-reviewed methods to assess links between specific extreme events and global warming.

They said that as the world continues to burn fossil fuels and emit climate-heating greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, millions more people are expected to be exposed to dangerous levels of heat in the future.

This year has been the hottest on record and already large swathes of the world have endured blistering temperatures before the onset of the Northern Hemisphere summer.

Greece has notched its earliest-ever heat wave, India has suffered a monthlong stretch of searing highs, while the US is dealing with wildfires and scorching conditions.

And in Saudi Arabia, at least 1,000 people died during the annual Hajj pilgrimage, mostly from unforgiving heat, with temperatures in the holy city of Mecca hitting 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit) on Monday.

'Between life and death'

For its study, the WWA analyzed the hottest five consecutive days and nights during a "heat dome" that lingered over the southwestern US, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras in late May and early June.

The scientists have pioneered ways to use climate models to understand how these types of extreme events have changed in a world that is 1.2 C warmer than in pre-industrial times.

They concluded "that human-induced warming from burning fossil fuels made the five-day maximum temperature event about 1.4 degrees hotter and about 35 times more likely."

The WWA warned that if humans continue burning fossil fuels in the near term, these extremes could become more frequent still.

"The additional 1.4 C of heat caused by climate change would have been the difference between life and death for many people during May and June," Karina Izquierdo, urban advisor for the Latin American and Caribbean region at the Red Cross Climate Center, said in a statement.

"As well as reducing emissions, governments and cities need to take steps to become more resilient to heat," she added.

Heat is the deadliest of all extreme weather but is often underestimated, experts say, with children, the elderly and outdoor workers particularly vulnerable.

In Mexico and Central America, the impacts of heat are intensified by poor housing conditions, limited access to cooling services, and for those living in informal settlements.

Extreme heat also threatens the stability of electricity supply, which is critical to the functioning of health care facilities.

Scientists said that extreme heat warning systems and action plans could help bolster Central America's preparedness for such events, with safety measures needed to protect outdoor workers.

Green spaces and improved infrastructure in informal settlements would also help protect the most vulnerable people, the WWA said.

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