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BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Kevin B. Lumbre

How can business enterprises save the earth and at the same time save on and implement a tax efficient administration? In many ways, I would say. Businesses can pave the road by supporting the creation of jobs linked to the preservation of the environment. Businesses can also adopt practices developed to prioritize resource management efficiency and implement changes, such as shifting from plastic to paper-based products, or transitioning from paper-based systems to digitalization.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

CNN

China's ancient Silk Road murals face a new threat – climate change

By: Alex Stambaugh and Nectar Gan

Ancient Buddhist murals and statues in caves along China's Silk Road are under "direct threat" from extreme rainfall brought by climate change, researchers have found.

Dating back to the 4th century, the Dunhuang cave temples in the northwestern province of Gansu have withstood wars, earthquakes, sandstorms and vandalism for more than a millennium.

But now, changing weather patterns in the desert are posing significant damage to the fragile wall paintings and sculptures – including at the famous Mogao Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, according to a report released Monday by Greenpeace.

"Gansu is famous for its caves and the art stored inside them for centuries," said Li Zhao, a senior researcher in Greenpeace East Asia's Beijing office. "Increased bouts of rainfall in the desert pose an acute risk. Spikes in humidity, flash floods, and cave ins are already happening."

Over the past two decades, Gansu has seen an increase in total rainfall but a drop in the number of rainy days, resulting in more bouts of intense downpours. Temperatures in the province have also been rising faster than the global average, according to the report.

The artworks in some caves, including the Mogao Grotto, have already shown signs of deterioration. And some artifacts could be gone in a few years, the report warned.

Rising humidity has accelerated the crystallization and build up of salt on the murals' surface, causing them to flake and peel. Rainwater leaks have also eroded the paintings, while flash floods and mudslides caused some caves to collapse, the report added.

The report comes as China is conducting its fourth nationwide cultural heritage survey to log the state of the country's historical artifacts.

But Li warned that by the time the survey is completed, some of Gansu's precious artifacts could already be gone.

"While we're still working to document, understand, and conserve these pieces of our history, they're dissolved before our very eyes. This is a painful reality of the impact of climate change," Li said.

“The sites we looked at include some of the most well-funded, best-staffed cultural heritage sites in China. There are hundreds of less-funded, less-studied sites all around China that are facing these same risks.”

In October 2021, heavy downpours and flooding hit the northern province of Shanxi, causing the collapse of the Jinci Temple and Tianlongshan grottoes, both national heritage sites, Chinese state media reported at the time. A total of 1,783 cultural relic sites were affected, according to Shanxi authorities.

Li said Chinese officials and academics are increasingly aware of the threats of the climate crisis on the country’s cultural heritage sites. But when it comes to concrete actions – both in terms of monitoring the impact and protective measures, it is only the beginning, she added.

Unlike Dunhuang, many historical sites lack long-term monitoring data to research the impacts of climate change, Li said. The Dunhuang Academy has decades of data on the temperature, humidity and wind speed both inside and outside the caves, thanks to its international cooperation projects that began in the 1960s, she added.

“The data can paint a clear picture on the impacts of environmental changes on the cultural relics. But in many other places, monitoring work has only just started in recent years,” Li said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Canada's Magdalen islands have 'front row' seat to climate change](#)

In the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, on the small Magdalen islands, foot paths are caving in, cliffs are receding and the sand dunes are disappearing, leaving homes vulnerable to the lashing waves.

The archipelago, part of Quebec province in eastern Canada, is in a race against time — and the elements — to survive global warming. Residents are feeling the effects of climate change on a daily basis.

“The Magdalen islands are in the front row when it comes to the changes taking place. We are miniscule faced with the immensity of it all,” says Mayka Thibodeau from CERMIM, a research center focused on sustainable development.

The changes seem to be coming fast and furious, leaving the roughly 13,000 residents reeling, as they realize their island home will need to adapt quickly and radically in the decades to come if it is to survive.

The islands' picturesque shores have already been eroded, receding by an average of half a meter (1.6 feet) a year, according to a study by the University of Quebec at Rimouski (UQAR).

It's a figure that concerns Diane Saint-Jean and her partner — they live on the coast and worry the next big storm could sweep their home into the water.

“We were rather naive, we were sure there would be a solution. But nature proved us wrong,” says Saint-Jean, her voice shaky as she stares at the nearby cliffs, which are slowly disappearing.

The two women live in La Martinique, a slim band of territory that links the archipelago's two main islands.

They have spent thousands of dollars to reinforce the cliff at the foot of their yard, but in September 2022, Hurricane Fiona struck with brute force, quickly washing away the giant rocks meant to protect their property.

“We woke up one morning and realized we'd thrown away our money. But what can we do?” rues Saint-Jean, a retired nurse.

Costly emergency work

Erosion is a bit of a sensitive topic for most residents on the Magdalen islands, which were first populated in the 18th century and are located more than five hours by boat from continental Canada.

Everyone here remembers spots that are now gone — especially houses that had to be moved because of the risk of flooding.

The situation is a headache for local authorities, who must invest millions of dollars for emergency work.

In Cap-aux-Meules, in the center of town, part of the pedestrian walkway collapsed in 2018, leaving the hospital, a retirement home and a cemetery in the direct path of dangerous waves.

Last year, local authorities built a huge gravel beach, using 143,000 tonnes of stones along an 800-meter (half-mile) stretch to raise the shoreline. It was not the first time the tactic had been used.

“Solutions exist but they are extremely expensive and these projects have to be maintained. So each time we intervene, it’s a tax burden for the future,” explains Jasmine Solomon, who monitors erosion for the local government.

“We likely won’t be able to protect everything. There are spots that are going to need to change, that’s for sure.”

Vanishing ice

In recent years, extreme weather events have become more frequent and more devastating as a result of climate change.

The Magdalen islands are notably losing one of their most important defenses in winter: ice. It has always served as a sort of shield, but without it the coasts are completely exposed when rough storms hit.

With each cycle of freezing and thawing, the red sandstone cliffs crumble more easily.

“One storm can erase a dune, a cliff, or even open up a breach” in the coastline, says Marie-Eve Giroux, the director of local environmental organization Attention Fragiles.

In addition to raising awareness about ecological issues in local schools, her group works on dune restoration, especially by replanting them with beachgrass, which helps keep the sand in place as its roots create a natural net.

Many times, the dunes are the shoreline's only defense against the waves.

The islands are in danger of being lost to rising waters, a fate shared by other low-lying areas around the world. They are also gradually sinking.

"We must look at all realistic scenarios and not bury our heads in the sand," says Thibodeau. "We don't just want to endure what is to come. We want to be part of the solution."

She explains the many projects undertaken by CERMIM to restore the beaches including the use of mollusk shells to make concrete. The idea is to turn the islands into a sort of living laboratory in the global battle against climate change.

For Marianne Papillon, a doctor and public health advisor, the time to act is now.

Papillon has taken up a relatively new job — tackling climate change-related issues.

"We must do something collectively. Individual action won't make sense if everyone is not on board," she explains.

"Faced with the storms we are seeing, people must make the mental link with climate change. They must feel more involved, and personally invested, without becoming too stressed about it all."

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Fair weather, thunderstorms to prevail over Luzon, Visayas

By: Ma. Cristina Arayata

Fair weather and thunderstorms will be experienced over most of Luzon and the Visayas Wednesday, the weather bureau said.

"It will be warm, and generally fair weather in Luzon and the Visayas. However, thunderstorms that may last for about two hours are likely in the afternoon and evening," Obet Badrina of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

He added that the low-pressure area (LPA) last tracked 710 km. east of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur has a high chance of developing into a tropical cyclone within the day or Thursday but has no direct effect on the weather.

PAGASA said the LPA is embedded along the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) that will cause scattered rain showers and thunderstorms over Eastern Visayas, Caraga, Bohol, Camiguin, Misamis Oriental, Davao de Oro, and Davao Oriental.

Flash floods or landslides are possible in these areas due to moderate to at times heavy rains.

Meanwhile, moderate to strong winds will prevail over the western section of Luzon.

Fishing boats and other small sea vessels are alerted against moderate to rough seas in the western seaboard of Central Luzon.

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

REUTERS

[US envoy John Kerry says China-US climate relations need 'more work'](#)

By: Valerie Volcovici and David Stanway

U. S. climate envoy John Kerry said more work was needed this year to reach agreements with China on major climate issues, after three days of talks in Beijing to rebuild trust between the world's two biggest carbon polluters.

The two sides agreed climate change was urgent and that they should stick to the global commitment "to keep 1.5 alive," Kerry said, referring to pledges to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial temperatures. That would mark a shift in China's tone, after Chinese officials in previous months appeared to question the latest United Nations scientific report on global warming.

The U.S.-China climate talks had been suspended nearly a year ago after a visit by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, an island over which China claims sovereignty.

"We - our team and the United States administration - came to Beijing in order to unstick what has been stuck since almost last August," Kerry told reporters late on Wednesday.

While China said its climate policies would not be dictated by others, it planned further negotiations with the U.S. ahead of the next U.N. climate summit, COP28, starting Nov. 29 in Dubai, Kerry said.

"Further engagements should help unlock more ambition in reducing coal consumption, cutting methane emissions and beating a path towards a stronger outcome at COP28," said Li Shuo, senior climate adviser with the environmental group Greenpeace in Beijing.

Li described this week's talks as "a complex rescue operation for the U.S.-China climate dialogue".

Kerry lauded the meetings for realigning the countries on climate, telling reporters that the U.S. was pushing for a new framework agreement that would have China "embrace something they haven't embraced before." Kerry did not elaborate.

Earlier in the talks, Kerry told Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng that climate change was a "universal threat" that should be handled separately from broader diplomatic issues between China and the United States. He said holding global warming to near 1.5C would require significant Chinese efforts to reduce carbon dioxide, methane and other non-carbon-based greenhouse gas emissions, the U.S. State Department said.

Acknowledging the recent diplomatic difficulties, Kerry said the climate issue requires the collective efforts of the world's largest economies to resolve.

"We have the ability to ... make a difference with respect to climate," he said at a meeting at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, China's sprawling parliament building.

"We are only following the best science," he told reporters. "There is no politics or ideology in what we are doing."

'POSITIVE SIGNAL'

Amid the negotiations that often stretched overtime at the iconic, 70s-era Hotel Beijing overlooking the Forbidden City, heat waves scorched parts of Europe, Asia and the U.S. - underscoring the urgent need for climate action.

Kerry spent time with China's top diplomat Wang Yi and Premier Li Qiang as well as veteran climate envoy Xie Zhenhua in a bid to rebuild trust between the two sides ahead of the COP28 climate talks in Dubai.

"If we can come together over these next months leading up to COP28, which will be the most important since Paris, we will have an opportunity to be able to make a profound difference on this issue," he told Han.

Han said the two countries had maintained close communication and dialogue on climate since Kerry's appointment as envoy, adding that a joint statement issued by the two sides has sent a "positive signal" to the world.

Kerry told reporters earlier that the talks in Beijing this week had been constructive but complicated, with the two sides still dealing with political "externalities", including Taiwan. Nevertheless, he described the mood as "very, very positive."

"We're just reconnecting," he said. "We're trying to re-establish the process we have worked on for years."

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

[Climate change: global steel sector's transition from coal-based production risks stranding US\\$554 billion of assets, report says](#)

By: Yujie Xue

The global steel sector's transition away from coal-based production has to gather pace as the continued roll-out of coal-based capacities poses hurdles towards carbon neutrality goals, a survey revealed on Thursday.

Around 368 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) of coal-based steelmaking capacity is under development in countries with net-zero carbon commitments, a 7 per cent increase from 2021 to 2022 even as overcapacity persists, and as much as US\$554 billion of assets is at risk of becoming stranded, according to a Global Energy Monitor (GEM) report.

Stranded assets are those that lose value or turn into liabilities before the end of their expected economic life and experts are urging a switch to energy efficient processes to minimise value destruction.

"Coal-based steel production is on the decline, but not quickly enough," the report said while highlighting "significant action" needs to be taken to retire coal-based blast furnace-basic oxygen furnace (BF-BOF) steelmaking capacity, while halting capacity expansions under development, and switching to cleaner electric arc furnace (EAF) steel production. The EAF route emits just 10 to 20 per cent of the carbon dioxide produced in the BF-BOF steelmaking process.

In 2021, 68 per cent of the operating steelmaking capacity worldwide used conventional BF-BOF process, but contributed to 86 per cent of industry emissions. On the other hand, EAF which accounted for 31 per cent of the industry capacity emitted only 14 per cent of the greenhouse gas, according to GEM.

In order for the global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions to reach net zero by 2050, which would cap the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, over half of the global steel production needs to be manufactured using the EAF route, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). However, despite the rise in EAF proportion in the planned capacity expansion it would only comprise 32 per cent of the aggregate capacity by 2050, GEM found.

“Importantly, the actions of some countries, particularly China and India, have a more pronounced impact on climate goals due to the current and projected size of their domestic iron and steel industry,” GEM analysts said in the report.

Asia is home to almost all of the coal-based capacity under development globally, with nearly 80 per cent coming from India and China, the report found. Although China accounts for around half of the existing global coal-based capacity and 60 per cent of carbon emissions from the steel sector in 2022, it is India which has seen an alarming rise in BF-BOF steelmaking projects in recent years.

According to the report, India has surpassed China for the first time to become the world’s largest developer of new coal-based capacity, with 153 mpta of BF-BOF steel capacity under development now as compared with China’s 146 mpta capacity under development.

GEM has predicted that the steel industry is expected to see an 11-million-tonne net capacity gain and a decline in capacity utilisation, increasing the risk of overcapacity and lower profitability.

While moderate overcapacity is likely to persist on a global level, China is likely to see an increased overcapacity due to a substantial decrease in demand over the coming decade, they said.

In order to tackle overcapacity in its steel industry, China, the world’s largest steel producer, has implemented policies and guidelines in recent years to curb the establishment of new production capacity and reducing emissions in the sector to support its national carbon neutral goal in 2060.

The country is targeting peak emissions in its steel sector by 2025 and aims to include it in the national carbon trading market.

“While the growing proportion of EAF in planned capacity is promising, existing BF-BOF capacity must be closed and planned BF-BOF capacity cancelled,” the report said while urging governments and steelmakers to direct investments supporting green steel transition, such as funding EAF production.

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Scorching temperatures persist across Europe, North America and Asia, as wildfires rage from Canada to Greece. The heat is as relentless as it is intense. For example, Phoenix, Arizona, has broken its record of 18 consecutive days above 110F (43.3C). Even the nights, generally relied upon as a chance to recover from the blistering days, now offer little relief: for more than a week, night-time temperatures in Phoenix have exceeded 90F (32.2C). Meanwhile, severe and deadly flooding has stricken South Korea, Japan, and the north-east United States, from Pennsylvania to Vermont.

The climate crisis – and yes, it is now a crisis – is endangering us now, where we live. Whether it's the recurrent episodes of hazardous air quality in the east coast cities some of us call home from windblown Canadian wildfire smoke or the toll sadly now being measured in human lives from deadly nearby floods, we are witnessing the devastating and dangerous consequences of unabated human-caused warming. That is a fact.

Indeed, as you "doomscroll" on whatever social media platform you prefer these days, you might see selective images and graphs that would lead you to think Earth's climate is spinning out of control, in a runaway feedback loop of irreversible tipping points leading us down an inescapable planetary death spiral.

But that's not what's happening.

The average warming of the planet – including the most up-to-date measurements for 2023 – is entirely consistent with what climate modelers warned decades ago would happen if we continued with the business-as-usual burning of fossil fuels. Yes, there are alarming data coming in, from record-shattering loss of winter sea ice in the southern hemisphere to off-the-charts warmth in the North Atlantic with hot tub-grade waters off the Florida coast. We've also seen the hottest week on record for the planet as a whole this month. We can attribute blame to a combination of ongoing human-caused warming, an incipient major El Niño event and the vagaries of natural variability.

These episodes are a reminder that we can not only expect to see records broken, but shattered, if we continue burning fossil fuels and heating up the planet.

And one of the areas where observed trends truly are exceeding the predictions of climate models is in those extreme weather events we are seeing this summer. One of us has been involved in research that suggests that climate models are still not capturing some of the more subtle physical mechanisms behind persistent summer weather extremes. As the Arctic warms faster than lower latitudes, the temperature difference between the poles and tropics decreases and the jet stream – which is driven by that difference – weakens. Under certain conditions that can lead to a slow, wiggly jet stream, with amplified weather systems that get stuck in place. When weather systems stall like this, the same regions get baked or rained on day after day – precisely the sort of persistent, extreme weather events we’re experiencing this summer.

The incessant parade of heat domes, floods and tornado outbreaks this summer seems to suggest a precarious if not downright apocalyptic “new abnormal” that we now find ourselves in. And it understandably feeds the fearful impression that we’ve exceeded some sort of breaking point in our climate.

How do we reconcile that impression with the picture that emerges from the steady, rather than erratic, warming response we see in both the observations and models? The answer is that the behavior of Earth’s climate system represents a tussle between sometimes opposing mechanisms that alternatively favor stability and fragility. That constant tussle is evident in an examination of Earth’s past climate history. If the system is pushed, it responds steadily – to a point. Push too hard, however, and we risk crossing certain “tipping points”, such as the disintegration of the ice sheets and the massive sea level rise that will ultimately follow.

The only way to avoid crossing these tipping points is to stop heating up the planet. And comprehensive Earth system models show that if we stop adding carbon pollution, the warming of Earth’s surface stops soon thereafter.

So that brings us back to where we started. Yes, we have failed to prevent dangerous climate change. It is here. What remains to be seen is just how bad we’re willing to let it get. A window of opportunity remains for averting a catastrophic 1.5C/2.7F warming of the planet, beyond which we’ll see far worse consequences than anything we’ve seen so far. But that window is closing and we’re not making enough progress.

We cannot afford to give in to despair. Better to channel our energy into action, as there’s so much work to be done to prevent this crisis from escalating into a catastrophe. If the extremes of this summer fill you with fears of imminent and inevitable climate collapse, remember, it’s not game over. It’s game on.

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How can business enterprises save the earth and at the same time save on and implement a tax efficient administration? In many ways, I would say. Businesses can pave the road by supporting the creation of jobs linked to the preservation of the environment. Businesses can also adopt practices developed to prioritize resource management efficiency and implement changes, such as shifting from plastic to paper-based products, or transitioning from paper-based systems to digitalization.

In fact, under the recently issued Revenue Regulations No. 8-2022 and No. 9-2022, businesses engaged in the export of goods and services, or in electronic commerce, and those registered under the large taxpayer's service, have been required to issue electronic receipts or sales/commercial invoices.

Also, as early as April 2016, Republic Act No. 10771, otherwise known as the Philippine Green Jobs Act of 2016 was signed into law. The Law was enacted to encourage businesses, including self-employed or own-account workers, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) which are involved in the agriculture, industrial and services sector, and community-based business enterprises and cooperatives, to transition into developing business practices that promote sustainable development.

The Green Jobs Act defined the term sustainable development as one that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. The Law introduced the concepts of: Green Jobs, Green Building Practices, Green Economy, Green Goods and Services, and Green Technologies in the Philippines.

Under Section 5 of the Green Jobs Act, businesses which qualify will be entitled to avail of fiscal incentives, specifically: (1) a special deduction from taxable income equivalent to 50% of the total expenses for skills training and research and development expenses which is over and above the allowable ordinary and necessary expenses under the Tax Code; and (2) tax and duty free imports of capital equipment which is actually, directly, and exclusively used in the promotion of Green Jobs. Apart from these fiscal incentives, the law also required different departments of government to encourage businesses to attain the objectives set out by the Green Jobs Act. For instance, the Department of Science and Technology (DoST) is tasked to provide a range of business development

support to MSMEs. Government financial institutions were likewise instructed to provide preferential financial packages to qualified businesses.

In 2017, the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) issued Department Order No. 180, S. 2017 implementing rules and regulations for the Philippine Green Jobs Act. The order clarified that businesses must be certified “green” pursuant to a Certification Standards to be developed by the Climate Change Commission (CCC) to avail of fiscal incentives under the law.

In 2019, the Department of Finance, upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, issued Revenue Regulations No. 05-2019. The regulations provide that businesses duly certified by the CCC qualify for the tax incentives.

However, to date, the certification standards have not yet been issued by the CCC. Thus, qualified businesses have yet to enjoy the tax incentives granted under the Green Jobs Act. It is observed that the Annual Accomplishment Reports of the CCC from 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 only made mention of the Green Jobs Act in passing.

While it has been more than six years since the Green Jobs Act was passed, we remain hopeful that businesses which are qualified will soon enjoy the fiscal incentives granted under the Green Jobs Act. Certainly, businesses can consider these matters as they evolve and implement sustainable development practices as they further flourish in their industries while they save on and implement tax efficient administration systems at the same time.

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