



NEWS ROUNDUP

28 AUGUST 2024 [08:00 am]

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- UN chief issues climate SOS, warns of ‘unimaginable’ catastrophe
- Surging seas are coming for us all, warns UN chief
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- Classes, government work suspended in NCR due to Habagat —Palace
- CHR commends House bill pushing for climate accountability
- Philippines tops global list in household disaster readiness – Gallup

ABS CBN

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Heavy rainfall warning up in Metro Manila, nearby provinces; serious flooding, landslides possible

PAGASA on Tuesday night issued a red warning for heavy rainfall due to the southwest monsoon or habagat, which could cause flooding and landslides in Metro Manila and parts of Luzon.

As of 9:45 p.m., the red warning was up over Bataan, where serious flooding is expected in flood-prone areas.

Orange rainfall warning was up over Zambales, Metro Manila (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, Quezon City, San Juan, Marikina, Manila, Pasig, Mandaluyong) and Rizal(Rodriguez, San Mateo, Antipolo, Cainta, Taytay).

“Flooding is threatening” in these areas, PAGASA added.

Yellow rainfall warning, which may cause possible flooding in flood-prone areas, is likewise raised over Riza I(Tanay, Angono, Baras, Binangonan, Cardona, Jala-Jala, Morong, Pililla, Teresa) and Metro Manila(Pasay, Taguig, Pateros, Makati, Paranaque, Las Pinas, Muntinlupa).

Meanwhile, light to moderate with occasional heavy rains are expected over Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon, Pampanga, Bulacan, Tarlac and Nueva Ecija within the next 3 hours.

“The public and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Offices concerned are advised to monitor the weather condition and watch for the next warning to be issued,” PAGASA said.

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United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has issued his latest climate SOS, calling on countries to “Save Our Seas” as he warned of a crisis of an “unimaginable scale” caused by greenhouse gases and rising sea levels.

Speaking at a gathering of Pacific Island regional leaders on Tuesday in Tonga’s capital Nuku’alofa, he warned there was “no lifeboat to take us back to safety”.

Speaking at a gathering of Pacific Island regional leaders on Tuesday in Tonga’s capital Nuku’alofa, he warned there was “no lifeboat to take us back to safety”.

“This is a crazy situation: Rising seas are a crisis entirely of humanity’s making. A crisis that will soon swell to an almost unimaginable scale,” he said. “The reason is clear: Greenhouse gases – overwhelmingly generated by burning fossil fuels – are cooking our planet. And the sea is taking the heat – literally.”

Nuku’alofa is hosting more than 1,000 international delegates for the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting until August 30. Climate change and its impact on the Pacific’s low-lying communities is high on the agenda at the gathering of regional officials, who lead some of the world’s most imperilled countries.

Guterres, who last attended the Leaders Meeting in 2019, warned that with about 90 percent of people living within 5km (3 miles) of the coast, and an average elevation of just one to 1-2 metres (3.2-6.5 ft) above sea level, the “Pacific islands are uniquely exposed”.

He is also expected to visit Samoa while he is in the Pacific.

“Without drastic cuts to emissions, the Pacific Islands can expect at least 15 centimetres [6 inches] of additional sea level rise by mid-century, and more than 30 days per year of coastal flooding in some places,” he said. “But if we save the Pacific, we also save ourselves. The world must act and answer the SOS before it is too late.”

Among the Pacific Islands’ most ambitious climate change mitigation efforts is the Pacific Resilience Facility. The “Pacific-owned and led” financial institution, which will support local communities to become more resilient to climate change, is scheduled to start operations in 2025 but is facing a severe shortfall in funding from international donors.

Guterres repeated his longstanding appeal to “the biggest emitters”, the Group of 20 (G20) nations, to financially support the world’s most climate-vulnerable countries.

“We need a surge in funds to deal with surging seas,” he said.

Guterres’s comments came as two UN agencies published stark reports warning of worsening sea level rises on Monday. A World Meteorological Organization report on rising sea levels in the Pacific and a UN Climate Action Team report on surging seas in a warming world both “throw the situation into sharp relief”, Guterres said.

The Climate Action Team report found that sea levels in Nuku’alofa had risen 21 centimetres (8.3 inches) between 1990 and 2020, more than twice the global average of 10 centimetres (3.9 inches).

“Today’s reports confirm that relative sea levels in the Southwestern Pacific have risen even more than the global average – in some locations, by more than double the global increase in the past 30 years,” Guterres said.

The UN General Assembly is set to hold a special session to discuss the existential threat posed by rising sea levels on September 25.

BBC

[Surging seas are coming for us all, warns UN chief](#)

By: Katy Watsons

The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has said that big polluters have a clear responsibility to cut emissions – or risk a worldwide catastrophe.

“The Pacific is today the most vulnerable area of the world,” he told the BBC at the Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting in Tonga. “There is an enormous injustice in relation to the Pacific and it’s the reason I am here.”

“The small islands don’t contribute to climate change but everything that happens because of climate change is multiplied here.”

But eventually the "surging seas are coming for us all," he warned in a speech at the forum, as the UN releases two separate reports on rising sea levels and how they threaten Pacific island nations.

The World Meteorological Organization’s State of the Climate in the South West Pacific report says this region faces a triple whammy of an accelerating rise in the sea level, a warming of the ocean and acidification – a rise in the sea’s acidity because it’s absorbing more and more carbon dioxide.

“The reason is clear: greenhouse gases – overwhelmingly generated by burning fossil fuels – are cooking our planet,” Mr Guterres said in a speech at the forum.

“The sea is taking the heat – literally.”

This year’s theme - transformative resilience – was tested on the opening day when the new auditorium was deluged by heavy rains and buildings evacuated because of an earthquake.

"It's such a stark reminder of how volatile things are within our region, and how important it is that we need to prepare for everything," Joseph Sikulu, Pacific director at 350, a climate change advocacy group, told the BBC.

Not far from the venue was a street parade, with dancers representing the region, including Torres Strait islanders, Tongans and Samoans. At the start of the parade, a big banner reads: "We are not drowning, we are fighting". Another says: "Sea levels are rising – so are we".

It echoes a challenge that threatens to wipe out their world - the UN Climate Action Team released a report called "Surging Seas in a Warming World" showing that global average sea levels are rising at rates unprecedented in the past 3,000 years.

According to the report, the levels have risen an average of 9.4cm (3.7in) in the past 30 years but in the tropical Pacific, that figure was as high as 15cm.

"It's important for leaders, especially like Australia and Aotearoa, to come and witness these things for themselves, but also witness the resilience of our people," Mr Sikulu said. "A core part of Tongan culture is our ability to be able to continue to be joyful throughout our adversity, and that's how we practise our resilience and to see and witness that, I think is going to be important."

This is the second time Secretary-General Guterres has participated in the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting. The annual meeting brings together leaders from 18 Pacific Islands, including Australia and New Zealand.

As leaders convened for the official opening ceremony, heavy rain caused extensive flooding. Shortly afterwards, a magnitude 6.9 earthquake hit the Tonga region, highlighting just how vulnerable it is.

In 2019, Mr Guterres travelled to Tuvalu where he sounded the alarm about rising sea levels. Five years on, he says he has seen real changes.

"We see everywhere an enormous commitment to resist, a commitment to reduce the negative impact of climate change," he told the BBC. "The problem is, the Pacific Islands also suffer another big injustice - the international financial instruments that exist to support countries in distress were not designed for countries like this."

Mr Guterres on Monday visited local communities whose livelihoods are threatened by rising sea levels. They've been waiting for seven years for a decision to be made on the funding of a sea wall.

"The bureaucracy, the complexity, the lack of sense of urgency because it's a small island, far away," he said, citing the failings of the international financial system, especially when it comes to small, developing island states.

"There are promises of increases of money available for adaptation in developing countries but the truth is we are far from what is needed, from the solidarity that is needed for these countries to be able to exist."

Many Pacific islanders here at the conference single out the biggest regional donor and emitter - Australia.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Australia would be ramping up its extraction and use of gas until "2050 and beyond," despite calls to phase out fossil fuels. "There is an essential responsibility of the big polluters," Mr Guterres said, when asked by the BBC what message he has for regional emitters like Australia.

Without that, the world will breach the threshold of 1.5C that was established in the Paris Agreement in 2015. That agreement aims to limit global warming to "well below" 2C by the end of the century, and "pursue efforts" to keep warming within the safer limit of 1.5C.

"Only by limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius do we have a fighting chance of preventing the irreversible collapse of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets – and the catastrophes that accompany them," Mr Guterres said.

"That means cutting global emissions 43% compared to 2019 levels by 2030, and 60% by 2035."

Last year though, global emissions rose 1%.

"There is an obligation of the G20 that represent 80% of emissions – there's an obligation for them to come together, to guarantee a reduction of emissions now," Mr Guterres said. Singling out the G20 as well as companies who contribute to much of the world's global emissions, he added: "They have a clear responsibility to reverse the current trend. It's time to say 'enough'."

DAILY GUARDIAN

[CHR commends House bill pushing for climate accountability](#)

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has expressed strong support for House Bill (HB) No. 9609, known as the Climate Accountability (CLIMA) Act, which aims to create institutional mechanisms to address the adverse effects of climate change in the Philippines.

The bill, introduced by Representatives Edgar Chatto, Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong, Fernando Cabredo, Anna Victoria Veloso-Tuazon, Christian Tell Yap, and Jose Manuel Alba, seeks to establish a legal framework that would ensure accessible remedies for climate-related human rights violations for all Filipinos.

The CLIMA Act proposes policies to combat climate change, protect vulnerable communities, and hold accountable those responsible for contributing to climate change, including major carbon-emitting corporations.

“The CHR commends the filing of HB No. 9609 as it reinforces the Philippines’ commitment to climate justice,” the Commission said, emphasizing that the bill represents a crucial step toward both climate justice and the protection of human rights.

The CHR highlighted the link between climate change and human rights, citing its National Inquiry on Climate Change (NICC) report, which underscored the collaborative efforts needed between states and private enterprises to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The Commission also pointed to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which outline the responsibility of governments and businesses to prevent and address human rights abuses related to environmental harm.

By supporting HB No. 9609, the CHR believes that the Philippines is making a significant move toward holding corporations accountable for their climate impacts while advancing human rights protections.

The Commission stressed the importance of this legislative effort in ensuring a sustainable and just environment for future generations.

“We commend the filing of HB No. 9609 with its alignment to CHR’s recommendations from the NICC report, which encourages businesses to engage in practices that respect, protect, and uphold human rights in addressing climate change,” the CHR added.

ECO BUSINESS

[Managing Asia's healthcare waste and emissions remains challenging amid increasing climate risks](#)

By: Jeremy Chan

When most people ponder healthcare, what usually comes to mind is a trip to the doctor's office, waiting in line, receiving proper treatment and medicine, and ultimately, eventual relief from one's pain.

What many overlook is the waste generated from each clinic or hospital visit, and the sheer amount of energy that keeps the healthcare sector's wheels turning around the clock.

While vast amounts of energy are needed for energy-intensive medical equipment, general heating and cooling purposes, and to keep the lights on day and night, the main energy culprit is Scope 3 emissions, or those that directly stem from the sector's supply chain, and waste that is improperly disposed of.

This includes the production of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals; waste such as personal protective equipment and disposable tools like syringes; the transportation required to ship pharmaceuticals and medical supplies to the clinic; and even the transportation that nurses, doctors, and patients take.

Globally, this sees the healthcare sector responsible for up to 5 per cent of total carbon emissions – exceeding those of the aviation and shipping industry. If left unaddressed, the World Economic Forum forecasts that the healthcare sector's carbon footprint could triple by 2050.

A large chunk of healthcare emissions stems from Asia.

While emissions from the medical industry comprise around 8.5 per cent of the United States' total and roughly 5 per cent of Europe's emissions, Asia's healthcare sector accounts for about 30 per cent of the region's gross carbon emissions.

There are some reasons for this: the region's aging population – set to host two-thirds of the world's population above the age of 65 by 2030 – combined with steady economic growth in recent years driving increased health spending.

The lack of proper waste management infrastructure in the region, coupled with the immense amount of medical waste generated during the Covid-19 pandemic and

resultant ongoing medical practices, has also led to unprecedented quantities of medical refuse.

Asia is also particularly vulnerable to climate-related health risks. The growing frequency and intensity of heat-related illnesses, injuries and risks is sending more individuals to clinics and hospitals, with vulnerable populations often bearing the brunt.

This unending cycle of climate-induced suffering, treatment, and resultant medical waste and emissions is unsustainable, said John Graham, group chief executive officer of healthcare solutions provider Zuellig Pharma.

“The escalating impact of climate change has had an undeniable impact on the health of societies – extreme weather events, air pollution, and increased incidence of vector-borne infectious diseases because of rising temperatures are all evidence of this,” Graham said.

Decarbonisation challenges

Ensuring that vaccines and medication maintain their efficacy while being shipped is one reason why reducing emissions within the healthcare sector remains challenging, Graham notes.

“For instance, ensuring the integrity of temperature-sensitive vaccines and drugs is paramount to ensure they arrive uncompromised and in their intended state for end-users,” he said.

There is also energy-intensive equipment relied on to diagnose and treat patients – think machines such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) scanners – and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems needed to maintain sterile environments.

Another challenge is the lack of personnel to oversee emissions and waste, says Manjit Sohal, regional climate manager, Southeast Asia, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), a non-profit that promotes sustainable healthcare practices.

This, Sohal notes, makes it difficult to track and measure Scope 3 emissions, which is key to reduction efforts in the long term. “Healthcare facilities may lack standardised methods to collect accurate data such as patient travel habits, or waste management procedures conducted by third parties,” she said.

The large number of individuals involved in the healthcare supply chain also complicates efforts, as it involves numerous suppliers, manufacturers, and distributors. This makes

tracking and reducing emissions a daunting task, Sohal notes, adding that 70 per cent of healthcare emissions originate from the supply chain alone.

Because stakeholders within the healthcare supply chain are “dispersed” in nature – meaning that they are geographically spread out or not confined to one location – emissions are more difficult to track and reduce, Graham adds.

“This involves those from clinical trials, supply chain, all the way to distribution,” he said, pointing to the coordination needed between suppliers, distributors, healthcare providers and regulators across Asia and around the world to drive down Scope 3 emissions.

The need for national policies

Despite calls to reduce healthcare emissions, such as those by the World Health Organisation, which encouraged countries to commit to developing climate-resilient health systems at the 2021 United Nations’ Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26), there are currently no legally binding laws globally or in Asia that mandate emissions or waste reductions in the healthcare sector. There are, however, some frameworks and roadmaps aimed at reducing carbon footprint.

One is the United Nations-backed Race to Zero campaign led by HCWH, where healthcare institutions representing over 14,000 facilities have pledged to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. Another is the Global Road Map for Health Care Decarbonisation initiative, also led by HCWH and design and engineering firm Arup, which provides a structured approach for the healthcare sector to reduce emissions.

While these initiatives signal some progress, the healthcare industry may not see true change until mandates at a national level come into play, argues Sohal.

“Progress needs to extend beyond individual facilities – it has to become a systemic endeavour. National governments and health ministries need to mandate emissions reporting, monitoring, and the transition to sustainable, low-carbon alternatives within the entire healthcare system,” she said.

“A tertiary public health facility in the Philippines, for example, cannot independently decide to transition, as such decisions typically come with resource implications that need to undergo national government approval. This ‘centralised’ decision-making process is common across many Southeast Asian countries, where healthcare systems are heavily influenced by national policies and regulations.”

Taking waste and emissions into account

The lack of regulation puts the onus on healthcare solutions companies to find ways of reducing their own emissions and waste.

For example, Zuellig Pharma reduces its Scope 3 emissions by implementing greenhouse gas emissions tracking and monitoring into its processes and evaluates the sustainability of business partners through compliance-based questionnaires.

This ensures that the company only works with suppliers and partners who have demonstrated progress in reducing their carbon footprint, Graham notes, adding that the company has also introduced more electric vehicles within its fleet, and technology to insulate cold trucks and reduce air-conditioning energy use by up to 30 per cent.

Doing so, he adds, has helped to reduce transportation and fuel costs, packaging waste, and led to improved inventory management and lowered emissions.

“We also optimise our load to maximise the capacity of each delivery, and use a blended model of contracted, owned and brokered trucks to ensure that the fewest number of vehicles are used while ensuring a continued supply of critical healthcare products,” Graham explained.

Zuellig Pharma has also found ways of recycling medical packaging waste. The company partnered up with the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) Malaysia and Baxter Healthcare in 2022, launching an initiative called the “Jom Recycle – Plastic Recycling in Homecare” that sees them recycling non-contaminated renal dialysis bags from patients’ homes for recycling into secondary raw materials.

Graham notes that the initiative has diverted more than 500 kilogrammes of high-grade plastic waste from landfills to recycling facilities in Malaysia. More than 260 metric tonnes of recyclable, non-clinical plastic waste fill up Malaysia’s landfills each year.

Zuellig Pharma has recorded a 24 per cent reduction in landfill-destined waste in the last two years and is on track to achieve zero waste by 2030, according to its 2023 sustainability report.

The delicate balance

With the focus firmly pinned on patient health, the region must resort to quick and easy decarbonisation wins while looking for longer-term solutions. This can start with facilities

being sustainably built from the ground up, Sohal says, noting that features like ample ventilation and natural lighting, and energy-efficient machines can go a long way.

Existing healthcare facilities can also consider telemedicine, or remote and real-time patient-doctor video consultations, to reduce their Scope 3 emissions. Patients can then pay for the consultation and prescribed medications online, which are either delivered directly to the patient's home or made available for pickup at a pharmacy or healthcare facility.

One 2021 study found that every virtual medical consultation can reduce between 0.70 and 372 kgs of carbon dioxide equivalent.

“Every time someone goes to the hospital, this results in emissions from transport or supplies such as single-use plastics or products used to examine outpatients. Some of these consultations can be conducted remotely or online, which can avoid emissions associated with patients going to the hospital,” Sohal says.

“As demand for healthcare services grows, transitioning to telemedicine for outpatients who do not require hospital visits is a viable option.”

But until there are firmer regulations that mandate healthcare emission reductions, the region's industry must continue striking a careful balance between safeguarding patient health and keeping waste and emissions low.

“The [healthcare] industry needs to continue working together to innovate and invest in solutions that reflect modern priorities, and continue to build and invest in strategy, material policies and technology. This way, sustainability can be incorporated into an organisation's purpose, governance, decision-making process, and every facet of its operations,” Graham said.

“We must continuously improve the accessibility of quality healthcare without compromising the societies we operate in and the planet that we inhabit.”

GMA NEWS

Classes, government work suspended in NCR due to Habagat —Palace

Classes in public schools and work in government agencies were suspended in the National Capital Region (NCR) on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, due to inclement weather, Malacañang said.

The work and class suspension due to the Southwest Monsoon or Habagat was effective 7 a.m., according the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) on Facebook.

The suspension of work and classes was recommended by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

"We would like to respectfully inform the President that due to the ongoing and the forecasted rainfall today, August 28, 2024, which will bring occasional rains with possible flashfloods over Metro Manila caused by the Southwest Monsoon, the NDRRMC recommends the suspension of classes and work within the National Capital Region (NCR) effective 7:00 AM, August 28, 2024 (Wednesday)," the NDRRMC said in its recommendation.

"This excludes frontline agencies engaged in emergency services," it added.

Work and class suspension in private companies and schools, meanwhile, will be upon the discretion of their respective heads, the NDRRMC said.

Some local government units (LGUs) in NCR already announced the suspension of classes in private schools.

The council said the suspension "will prevent any untoward incidents and will ensure the safety of the general public."

Following the announcement, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said it has suspended the implementation of the expanded number coding scheme for the day.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Philippines tops global list in household disaster readiness – Gallup](#)

The Philippines leads other countries in having the highest proportion of households with a disaster plan, a U.S.-based polling firm found.

A recent Gallup survey reveals that 84% of households in the Philippines report having emergency supplies ready in case of a disaster, setting a benchmark for disaster readiness in the region.

This preparedness reflects the country's frequent exposure to natural calamities such as typhoons, flooding, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In fact, the Philippines outranks (87%) all other countries for experiencing a disaster within the past five years.

Filipinos may rank highest in disaster preparedness in Southeast Asia, but the region itself has demonstrated a high level of preparedness for natural disasters, outpacing other regions globally.

"The top four countries worldwide where the highest proportion of households have a disaster plan are all in Southeast Asia: the Philippines (84%), Vietnam (83%), Cambodia (82%) and Thailand (67%)," Gallup said in the report.

Southeast Asia, in particular, "stands out" for planning and having a sense of agency for disasters.

Coverage of early disaster warnings is also high in the Philippines, with 92% of adults saying they had received at least one early warning through the media and government on impending disasters, well above the global average of 70% but behind Vietnam's 99%.

What exactly is 'preparedness'?

Being prepared for disaster—which is basically planning and sense of being able to protect oneself—is a component of building resilience against natural hazards, the report read.

"Preparedness helps save both lives and livelihoods, minimizing the shock of disasters and allowing people to bounce back faster from them," it added.

While higher-income countries in Europe or North America, unsurprisingly, have high levels of planning and agency, lower-middle-income nations in Southeast Asia outperform them.

In Southeast Asia, 67% of respondents in the region expressed confidence in their ability to protect themselves and their families from future disasters or also called “feelings of agency.”

In comparison, North America, while being significantly less disaster-prone, closely follows Southeast Asia with 60% of households having disaster plans and 67% of individuals having feelings of agency in disaster preparedness.

This heightened state of readiness is attributed to several factors:

- Frequent exposure to natural hazards
- Government initiatives promoting disaster preparedness
- Cultural attitudes emphasizing community resilience

The downside. The high level of readiness suggests a population equipped to face future calamities. Experts caution, however, that preparedness alone is not sufficient.

A comprehensive disaster risk reduction, the report suggests, entails continued investment in infrastructure, early warning systems and climate change mitigation.

The Philippines and its Southeast Asian neighbors are also not doing as well in other forms of resilience. Financial resilience, for one, has slid.

"In 2021, 30% of adults said they could meet their basic household needs for less than a month if they lost all income. This rose to 35% in 2023," the report said.

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