



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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## **THE MANILA TIMES**

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By: Ernie Cecilia, DPM

In October 2022, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, speaking with the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines, admitted that the country's power supply situation in 2023 is likely to be difficult. He said, "In 2023, the situation is a bit difficult, especially in the summer months. The scenario... shows several yellow alerts and possible red alerts in 2023."

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Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda on Wednesday urged recipients of the 2023 Philippine Resilience Awards (PRA) for Women to continue being an image of resiliency and an empowered Filipina.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

**BBC**

**[Greta Thunberg charged following Fossil Free London protest](#)**

By: Yasmin Rufo

Greta Thunberg has been charged with a public order offence after her arrest during a Fossil Free London protest.

The 20-year-old is accused of breaching a Section 14 order that police put in place outside the InterContinental Hotel on Park Lane, where oil executives were meeting on Tuesday.

The climate change activist was among protesters who gathered to object to an Energy Intelligence Forum event.

In total, 27 protesters were arrested and 26 charged, the Met Police said.

Ms Thunberg, a Swedish national, has been released on bail with a trial set for 15 November.

'Deals and compromises'

The Met said on Tuesday that it imposed conditions on the protesters under Section 14 of the Public Order Act, to "prevent serious disruption to the community, hotel and guests".

It said officers had asked the activists to move from the road and on to the pavement if they wanted to continue their protest but that a number of them failed to do so and were arrested.

The force said 21 people had been charged with failing to comply with orders to move off the road and five had been charged with obstructing the highway.

Fossil Free London's protest took place on the first day of the three-day Energy Intelligence Forum - formerly called the Oil and Money conference - where bosses of Shell and Total were due to speak.

Speaking at the rally, Ms Thunberg said: "Behind these closed doors at the Oil and Money conference, spineless politicians are making deals and compromises with lobbyists from destructive industries - the fossil fuel industry.

"People all over the world are suffering and dying from the consequences of the climate crisis caused by these industries who we allow to meet with our politicians and have privileged access to."

Dozens of protesters at the rally blocked Hamilton Place, near Park Lane. Many carried banners and pink umbrellas with eyes painted on, shouting "oily money out" and "cancel the conference", while some lit yellow and pink smoke flares.

## ECO BUSINESS

### What is COP28, and what does it mean for South Asia?

By: Aron White, Joydeep Gupta

COP28 is this year's crucial UN climate summit, the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The meeting will bring together the 198 signatories to the convention, which meet every year to discuss efforts to limit climate change and adapt to its effects. All UN member states plus the European Union are parties to the UNFCCC.

Since the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015, climate COPs have focused on its implementation and progress towards its aims of restricting global warming to "well below 2°C" and "pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels".

When and where will COP28 be held?

COP28 will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 November to 12 December 2023. The venue for the summit is Expo City Dubai, a huge site in the south of the city which was first built for the world's fair Expo 2020.

Who is the president of COP28?

As announced in January, the COP28 president will be Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, who is both the UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, and CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. This appointment has attracted criticism from environmental groups, with many seeing these roles as conflicting.

What will be discussed at COP28?

A major focus of discussions at COP28 will be the first Global Stocktake, which will conclude at the summit in Dubai. This two-year process has involved collecting information on parties' climate actions and identifying gaps, thereby assessing the overall implementation of the Paris Agreement. COP28 will adopt a resolution on what the stocktake shows, and the direction it indicates for climate action. This is expected to include fresh pledges from governments.

The Global Stocktake report, released in September, concluded that the world is not on track to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. In early October, the UNFCCC Secretariat also released a synthesis report of the first Global Stocktake.

In July 2023, the COP28 president declared that the summit would focus on four “paradigm shifts”, concerning:

- fast-tracking the transition away from fossil fuels;
- transforming climate finance arrangements;
- the role of people and nature in climate action;

and ensuring inclusivity at the summit, including for women, Indigenous peoples, local communities, youth and subnational actors.

How these aims can be achieved under a presidency that is heavily investing in fossil fuels and places severe restrictions on freedoms of speech and assembly remains a controversial sticking point.

One topic likely to attract attention at COP28 is progress on a fund for loss and damage, into which developed countries would pay to support developing countries in dealing with irrevocable losses caused by climate change. Agreement to establish such a fund was a hard-fought success for developing countries at last year’s COP27 summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, but its efficacy will depend on how it functions and how much money it can attract.

The agreement at COP27 was to establish the loss and damage fund within two years, so with this deadline still in the future, it may not be high on the agenda for all government negotiators. However, civil society groups and developing countries are likely to argue that progress on establishing the fund has been inadequate, and to call for greater urgency and redoubled efforts.

Why is COP28 controversial?

Many environmental groups and commentators have expressed concern that COP28 being hosted by the United Arab Emirates – a major fossil fuel producer – could result in weak outcomes, at a point when efforts to curb fossil fuel use need to be drastically increased if limiting warming to within 2C is to remain possible.

The appointment of Sultan Al Jaber as COP28 president, despite the fact he is the CEO of one of the world’s largest oil companies and one which continues to invest heavily in extraction of the fossil fuel, has come under particular criticism. Greenpeace said it was “deeply alarmed” by the appointment, stating, “There is no place for the fossil fuel industry in the global climate negotiations.” Christian Aid said that “the conflict of interest is obvious”, and that “having an oil baron running the global climate talks is like putting an anti-vax conspiracy theorist in charge of the response to Covid-19.”

Al Jaber, for his part, has pitched himself as a figure who can keep fossil fuel companies at the table in negotiating a “phase down” in oil and gas use – language that remains contentious, with many countries and campaigners pushing for a firmer deadline for the “phase out” of fossil fuels.

Civil society groups from around the world have also raised concerns over the UAE’s restrictive laws around protest and freedom of expression, especially given that large public demonstrations are typically held in the host city during climate COPs. In early October, the United Kingdom sought assurances from the UAE at the United Nations over how the summit host will ensure freedom of expression and assembly around COP28.

What outcomes will India and other countries in South Asia be looking for at COP28? India and other countries in South Asia, as well as developing countries the world over, will be looking principally for one thing at COP28: money, and lots of it.

The issue of financial assistance from those most responsible for climate change to support those facing the worst impacts and highest adaptation costs has dogged climate negotiations for almost two decades. Developed countries have consistently failed to match the pledge made in 2009 to provide USD 100 billion per year in climate finance to support climate action in developing countries – and even this is far below the sum poorer countries will need to decarbonise their economies and adapt to the impacts of climate change, now estimated to be in the trillions of dollars per year.

The Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, held in Paris in June 2023, brought to the fore issues such as developing countries paying more to service their debts than they receive as climate finance. Developing countries demanded a restructuring of the World Bank and its affiliates; more concessional and grant-based financing; and debt cancellations for the least developed countries. These issues are almost certain to come up again at COP28.

## FINANCIAL TIMES

### [More than 50,000 companies to report climate impact in EU from 2024 after pushback fails](#)

By: Alice Hancock

More than 50,000 companies must start assessing the impact of their operations on the environment from January, after EU lawmakers overcame rightwing opposition to pave the way for the reporting requirements that will also catch multinational companies.

The attempt by a cross-party group of 44 rightwing and liberal MEPs to block the adoption of new sustainability reporting standards was rejected by more than half of the European parliament.

The resistance to backtracking on transparency and reporting on green issues comes amid a wider pushback against environmental and social and governance investing, particularly in the US but also in Europe.

“Standardised, transparent, and comparable data will not just guide companies in their transition but also inform investors and consumers,” said Tsvetelina Kuzmanova, senior policy adviser at climate think-tank E3G.

The sustainability reporting standards are part of wider legal proposals designed to push companies to be more transparent when it comes to their climate impact. They set out exactly what criteria companies should report on, such as pollution, water use and impact on local communities.

The framework had already been loosened in the drafting stage to allow companies to only report their efforts to come into line with the Paris Agreement goals on global warming if they are deemed “material” to their activities.

The EU has set itself apart from markets such as the US by demanding that companies report on the impact of climate change and sustainability issues on their business and the impact their operations have on the environment — a concept known as “double materiality”.

The lawmakers who pushed to reject the standards said that they placed too much of a burden on companies because they are “complex and of a high quantity”, according to the resolution published. They also undermined Brussels’ effort to cut red tape amid fears that environmental legislation is hurting the competitiveness of EU companies, they said.

In addition to the 50,000 listed companies that will have to comply from next year, the scope will expand to large non-listed companies and listed small and medium enterprises in 2025 and 2026.

The commission said that it has “worked to ensure a high level of alignment” with other international reporting standards such as those presented by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and International Sustainability Standards Board so that companies do not face vastly different reporting requirements in different regions.

Eelco van der Enden, chief executive of GRI, said that Wednesday’s vote “signals the transition from political debate to practical implementation for these new rules — which are a game-changer for corporate accountability, in the EU and globally”.

Tiemo Wölken, a German socialist MEP, said that if the standards had been rejected companies would have left companies in a limbo about how to apply new financial reporting rules.

“In practice, companies would have no legal certainty as to how the obligations should be implemented,” he said on Twitter, formerly X.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### Public-private collaboration crucial in disaster response: Gatchalian

By: Jose Cielito Reganit

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian on Wednesday highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government and civil society in mitigating the impacts of disasters and calamities.

In his keynote address at the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation's (PDRF) Cluster Connect Conference at the Dusit Thani Manila Hotel in Makati City, Gatchalian emphasized governance as a collaborative endeavor, and that the government needs partners from the private sector in disaster preparedness and operations.

"We cannot do it alone. We need to ensure, not only a whole-of-nation approach, but a whole-of-society approach to address the needs of Filipinos affected by disasters," he said.

As the vice chair for Disaster Response and Early Recovery Pillar of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Gatchalian pointed out that the DSWD continues to strengthen its disaster response and early recovery efforts "to prevent the loss of lives and assure the sufficiency of social protection interventions for families affected by disasters and calamities."

He said the DSWD has embarked on a new disaster preparedness program called the "Buong Bansa Handa" which ensures the seamless provision of basic necessities during disasters and calamities caused by climate change and human-induced hazards.

"It aims to establish two parallel supply chains. The first one will feature an expanded network of national and local government warehousing infrastructure, which is already operating as we speak. For the second supply chain, we hope to tap the private sector to collaborate with us in ensuring food security for disaster victims," the DSWD chief said.

The new disaster response initiative is one of the priority programs of Gatchalian, which aims to engage the government at all levels, and the private sector in mobilizing resources to address food security and social protection during disasters and crises.

Gatchalian thanked the PDRF for the valuable knowledge, skills and new strategies that the private sector has shared with the DSWD "to better serve communities and reduce and manage the impacts of disasters."

He also committed to continue the DSWD's partnership with the foundation, assuring that the Department "will remain supportive to the PDRF toward building stronger and more resilient communities that will help uplift the lives of the Filipino people."

The Cluster Connect Conference is an annual gathering and a platform where the PDRF convenes leaders, practitioners, and experts from the private sector, in collaboration with government and humanitarian organizations to explore pioneering solutions and strategies on how the private sector can amplify a nationally-led disaster response.

## REUTERS

### [US invests \\$3.5 billion to bolster power grid, deploy clean energy](#)

By: Timothy Gardner

President Joe Biden's administration on Wednesday announced \$3.5 billion in grants for projects to protect the aging U.S. power grid from extreme weather and fires and to connect transmission systems with more electricity from renewable energy sources.

The funding for 58 projects across 44 states comes from the bipartisan infrastructure law Biden signed in 2021, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said, and is the largest-ever direct investment in the grid.

The U.S. power grid, much of it built nearly a century ago, is being strained by storms, floods and heat waves fueled by climate change even as electric vehicles and artificial intelligence are boosting power demand, Granholm told reporters in a call.

In 2021, the Texas grid collapsed during a cold spell, killing more than 200 people and leaving millions of homes without power. Wildfires have harmed the grid in other states.

"The grid, as it currently sits, is not equipped to handle all the new demand ... we need it to be bigger, we need it to be stronger, we need it to be smarter, to bring all of these new projects online," Granholm said.

The projects will help bring more than 35 gigawatts of new electricity onto the grid from wind and solar and other renewable power and invest in 400 microgrids, or self sufficient energy systems, the Department of Energy (DOE) said. More than 75% of the projects have partnerships with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union and the aim is to maintain or create union jobs, it said.

It was the first round of selections under the broader \$10.5 billion grid resilience and innovation partnerships program managed by DOE.

More than \$507 million will go the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority and other groups for a project to help remote and under-invested communities by upgrading a smart grid with battery storage, local microgrids, and new transmission lines.

In southeastern Pennsylvania, PECO Energy (PECI.UL) will boost grid reliability and resilience through substation flood mitigation, replacing aging infrastructure, and deploying battery systems for backup power.

Some projects aim to expand transmission across multiple states. In Western states include California, Arizona and Washington, Holy Cross Energy will launch a wildfire mitigation project with a consortium of 39 rural electric co-ops in high threat areas, the DOE said. That will enable hardening of networks with investments in fire resistant infrastructure, putting lines underground, and upgrading overhead lines.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### [The future of energy in the Philippines?](#)

By: Ernie Cecilia, DPM

In October 2022, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, speaking with the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines, admitted that the country's power supply situation in 2023 is likely to be difficult. He said, "In 2023, the situation is a bit difficult, especially in the summer months. The scenario... shows several yellow alerts and possible red alerts in 2023."

Experts have also observed that the continued dependence of the country on fossil fuels and the slow shift to renewable energy sources are causing the current difficulties in the Philippine energy sector.

#### Foreign investors' observation

The International Trade Administration (ITA) is an agency in the United States Department of Commerce that promotes US exports of nonagricultural US goods and services. On its website is an article written by Thess Sula, a Commercial Specialist in the US Commercial Service Philippines, which best describes the ITA's perception of the energy situation in the Philippines.

Ms. Sula perceives that the Philippine energy market offers opportunities in liquefied natural gas (LNG), power generation, transmission, distribution and off-grid islands.

It appears that these opportunities are open to investors as the Philippines is facing a mounting energy crisis. The Malampaya gas fields that supply 30 percent of Luzon's energy consumption are expected to be depleted by 2024. The "ever-increasing population, an Administration-mandated infrastructure boom, and some of the highest electricity costs in South East Asia" — these all combine to challenge the country's energy situation.

The ITA noted that the Philippine electricity sector is fully privatized. Meralco is the largest electric power utility that controls roughly 80 percent of the market. The rest of the market is made up of a few regional players and more than 100 electric cooperatives.

Ms. Sula also noted the need for new equipment and energy solutions because the bigger players favor lower costs and capital expenditures when making commercial decisions. The smaller players cannot afford to invest in newer energy solutions. While the government is openly seeking investors for offshore exploration, the foreign

investors face contract sanctity and have tax issues, and therefore hesitate to consider the Philippine market.

The government also expects applications for investors to build the country's first integrated liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal with a capacity of 5 million tons per annum. The government is also looking at solutions to improve the main grid and engage in new projects, such as the \$2 billion Visayas-Mindanao Interconnection Project.

Meanwhile, smaller utilities must also improve their capabilities. There is a strongly felt need for improving electricity solutions outside of the Luzon area, but often these are not commercially profitable.

ITA thinks US firms can expect some share of such business opportunities in the Philippines. But, they have to build relationships with local utilities and register themselves as potential suppliers.

On the other hand, Statistica thinks that the constant fear of yellow and red alerts, particularly during the summer season, is the main threat to the energy situation in the Philippines.

Statistica also identified four major factors that contribute to the looming insufficiency of electricity supply in the Philippines. They are the "possibility of limited coal imports, depletion of its natural gas supply, slow growth of renewable energy utilization, and aging power facilities."

These factors pose a serious threat to the country's economic recovery. The high cost of energy continues to be a reason why investors look at other investment destinations and skip the Philippines. The government must seriously push the shift to renewable energy and LNG and reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels. It is notable that the Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) 2023-2050 has included nuclear energy as another source, as the Philippines seeks energy diversification that can solve the looming (or current?) energy crisis.

### Renewable energy (RE)

According to the Department of Energy early this year, 58 percent of the country's electricity comes from power plants running on coal, while 22 percent comes from renewable energy and 17 percent from natural gas. The rest — over 1 percent — comes from oil.

Three years ago, the energy mix was composed of coal (47 percent), natural gas (22 percent), renewable energy (hydro, geothermal, wind and solar) 24 percent, and oil-based (6.2 percent), according to ITA. Ms. Sula also observed that while the country indicated an interest in clean energy, "this clearly will not come at the expense of development, and no penalties or incentives are in place for utilizing different types of energy sources."

Renewable energy (RE) is derived from resources that replenish naturally, such as biomass, sun, wind, rain and geothermal heat. Amid growing concerns over global warming and the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere, several countries have found it imperative to harness energy from renewable sources. Considering the high cost of imported sources of energy and the ill effects of climate change, the Philippines should shift to RE soon.

Among all countries in the world, Iceland leads the way, with 86.87 percent of its energy generated from renewable sources. Norway and Sweden come second and third, at 71.56 percent and 50.92 percent, respectively. These countries have abundant natural resources. Ironically, the Philippines is just as rich, if not richer, in natural resources that can sustain renewable energy for its needs.

#### RE implications

Since the 1990s, the Philippines has suffered electricity shortages or outages. The electricity demand tripled from 1991 to 2014. But primary energy supply is expected to only double between 2011 and 2030.

There is a supply-demand gap characterized by unmet demand, high electricity prices, under-investment in generation, reduced self-sufficiency, and high growth of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission levels. The government must now adopt a program to dramatically increase RE technologies' generation capacity by three-fold by 2030. With this, the country can substantially mitigate GHG emissions.

Parenthetically, the Philippines is committed to limiting GHG emissions in the future through policies and programs like carbon taxes, improving efficiency in generation and consumption, diversifying the energy supply mix, and accelerating RE development. A large majority share of RE in the mix of energy solutions will bear fruits in green jobs generation, increased energy security, food self-sufficiency, and reduced poverty.

Truly, RE is potentially the future of Energy in the Philippines. But the government must have the political will to implement its energy reform agenda and use indigenous energy resources while limiting the use of imported fossil fuels.

Elizabeth Ann Warren is an American entrepreneur, writer, consultant and law professor who is currently the senior United States senator from Massachusetts, serving since 2013. One of her advocacies is consumer protection.

She endorses renewable energy and said, "The choice before us is simple. Will we continue to subsidize the dirty fossil fuels of the past, or will we transition to 21st-century clean, renewable energy?"

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

#### [Solon urges PH resilience awardees to spread climate change awareness](#)

By: Leonel Abasola

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda on Wednesday urged recipients of the 2023 Philippine Resilience Awards (PRA) for Women to continue being an image of resiliency and an empowered Filipina.

The awardees, she said, contribute efforts to address issues on climate change anchored in resilience-building and disaster risk reduction.

Legarda said there is still much work to be done and the country needs the unwavering commitment of these individuals to enforce the necessary laws in their respective localities and communities.

“As environmental warriors, your influence and dedication will drive positive change, foster collaboration, and build a resilient world for future generations. The challenge to all of us who understand the risks of climate change and the urgency to take action is to spread awareness and ignite more decisive action,” she said in a statement.

This year’s Philippine Resilience Awards (PRA) for Women awardees are Quezon City Mayor Maria Josefina “Joy” Belmonte; Director Alicia Ilaga of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Climate Resilient Agriculture Office; Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Undersecretary Maria Catalina Cabral; Mariano Marcos State University President Shirley Agrupis; Base Bahay Foundation Inc. President Maria Vicenta Jalandoni; Cagayan State University (CSU) President Urdujah Alvarado; Macatumbalen Community Based Forest and Coastal Management Association chairperson Nida Collado; and St. Paul’s Hospital of Iloilo administrator Arcelita Sarnillo.

“It is your role to give Filipinos hope that together, we can work toward a safer planet, free from the devastating impacts of natural disasters and climate change,” added Legarda, a United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Global Champion for Resilience.

The Philippine Resilience Awards was first conceptualized in 2013 through Legarda’s initiatives.

In celebration of the 2013 International Day for Disaster Reduction, she announced the start of the search for the Philippines' disaster-resilient communities and launched in 2014.

It aims to recognize champions of resilience in various sectors and communities and celebrate women leaders for their achievements in climate and disaster risk reduction and resilience-building work.

This year, the PRA was revived and organized by the Senator's office, the Climate Change Commission, the Philippine Commission on Women, the Carlos P. Romulo Foundation, the National Resilience Council, the Women's International Network for Disaster Risk Reduction-Philippines and SM Prime Holdings, Inc.

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