

29 July 2023 Saturday



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Group launches drive vs microplastics

Environmental group Greenpeace yesterday launched a campaign called Black and White against the use of plastics, citing studies that show the presence of microplastics in Metro Manila air and in the waters of Laguna de Bay and Tañon Strait.

At a press conference, Greenpeace Philippines campaigner Marian Ledesma said that based on a report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, global annual plastic production reached 460 million metric tons in 2019. The figure is expected to triple by 2060. Ledesma added that only nine percent of plastic around the globe get recycled.

"Plastic pollution is more than just trash in our oceans. With plastic's overproduction, humanity is at risk. Its impacts reach far and wide, posing a grave threat to biodiversity and our food system, while also harming people's health, exacerbating social injustices, and fueling the climate crisis," she said.

She said their Black and White campaign aims to push for a strong global plastic treaty.

"Greenpeace calls for a strong treaty that encompasses comprehensive measures, including eliminating plastic pollution from production to disposal, capping and phasing down plastic production, and ensuring a just and inclusive transition to a low-carbon, zero-waste, toxic-free, and reuse-based economy," Ledesma said.

"An estimated 170 trillion plastic particles are adrift in our oceans, choking our marine ecosystems and entering the food chain," Ledesma added.

Ledesma said that recent studies reveal the presence of microplastics in the air of Metro Manila and in the waters of Laguna de Bay and Tañon Strait.

A study by the Environmental Science and Pollution Research noted the presence of microplastics in the surface water of Laguna de Bay, the country's largest lake.

It was the first documented evidence of the presence of microplastics in the country's largest lake.

The United Nations Environment Program considers plastic pollution a serious environmental problem. It has been identified as an emerging issue that may impact heavily on biological diversity and human health, alongside climate change.

Ledesma stressed that plastic production is a significant contributor to the climate crisis as 99 percent of plastics are made from oil and gas. — **Bella Cariaso**



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THE PHILIPPINE
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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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the rising water level of Ilang-ilang
beach while a preemptive evacuation
was conducted for Barangay 185.

to Barangay 180 residents.
Meanwhile, the alert warning
at the Marikina River was lifted on

At around 10 a.m.
yesterday, the lev-

alarm. – Mark Ernest Villeza, Em-
manuel Tupas



THE PHILIPPINE STAR
metro

EDITOR: **DULCE A. SANCHEZ**

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SATURDAY | JULY 29, 2023

Personnel from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority help clean up the Manila Bay Dolomite Beach yesterday of garbage washed ashore due to strong winds brought by Super Typhoon Egay.

EDD GUMBAN



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BIG CLEANUP. Field workers of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) are in for a big task in clearing the Dolomite Beach Manila Bay of debris and trash deposited by strong waves due to Typhoon Egay. **Norman Cruz**



After the epidemic — plantdemic

PLANTDEMIC, or green fever, is now the "flavor of the month." For many, the Covid pandemic was the culprit with people having nowhere to go and nothing to do during the lockdowns, they turned to raising plants to fill the time. Even millennials were caught by the trend, raising what they refer to as "plant babies."

Photos of delicate flowers and broad-leafed foliage cultivated in backyards, on balconies and the top floor of buildings flooded social media as housebound Filipinos turned to nature to relieve stress and boredom. As a consequence, demand became high even as prices for the most popular varieties of indoor plants doubled or quadrupled. Ferns, pitcher plants, rubber trees and bantigue trees, popular in the crafting of bonsai, are among the most sought after.



AMBASSADORS'
CORNER

**AMADO S.
TOLENTINO JR.**

Be that as it may, plant business owners admit that these plants, which were taken from their natural growth places, were not replaced by other plants of the same genus, leading to the decline of its number. Some buyers tend to order wild plants to which the sellers will ride on and sell at a high price depending on the rarity of the plant being sold without regard for how they were acquired.

It can easily be concluded that poaching is rampant, rendering inutile the scientific fact that aside from harboring crop viruses and other pathogens, wild plants act as important reservoirs and sources

of insects, mites and nematodes. Certain wild plant species may be indispensable to a vector as its alternate host, acting as an essential intermediary in the ecology of the virus.

PH wildlife law

Not so much discussed nor written about Republic Act (RA) 9147, or the "Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act," which covers not only wild animals (fauna) but wild plants (flora) as well. The purpose of the law is for the State to conserve the country's wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainability. It regulates the collection and trade of wildlife to promote ecological balance and enhance biological diversity. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is in charge of the execution of this law.

RA 9147 prohibits the collection of wild flora and fauna directly from the forest, especially those considered as threatened species. DENR Administrative Order 2017-11 stipulates that collection and trade of threatened species are prohibited unless such acts are covered by a permit. Furthermore, collection of plant species under RA 7586, or the "National Integrated Protected Areas System Act," is strictly for research and would require gratuitous permits issued by the DENR.

Examples of plants considered as critically endangered are the giant staghorn fern or *capa de leon*; staghorn fern (*Platynerium coronarium*); and the waling-waling (*Vanda sanderiana*.) Examples of threatened species, on the other hand, are the green velvet *Aloca-*

► **TolentinoAS**

■ **TOLENTINO FROM A4**

After the epidemic — plantdemic

...sia (*Alocasia micholitziana*); kris plant (*Alocasia sanderiana*); and the zebra plant (*Alocasia zebrina*).

Shift focus of wildlife law

Strict implementation and enforcement of the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection

Law vis-à-vis access and trading of wild flora and prevention of extinction of rare and endangered species of plants easily come to mind. Reference is to the traditional legal inclination to rely heavily on sanctions, including penal. But in this changed world after Covid, is it not timely for the

environmental law on wildlife to be practiced and understood as a function of management with the emphasis shifting to prevention as the principal focus? The scope of environmental law implementation and enforcement is such that it cannot be managed unless the quantity of enforcement is reduced

through active interest and participation in the community.

Only citizens who are informed can interact with wildlife in the environment in a manner that will substantially reduce the burden of enforcement. The necessary information and education can be tied in with environmental awareness

programs where the wild flora and fauna are actually located.

Publicizing and explaining in easy, understandable terms the revised legal tasks in order to acquaint the public and to have lawyers and administrators properly trained, ought to be done, too. Only a widened understanding

of ecosystems will permit man not only to return to nature but also to manage his affairs so as to produce livable human environments with the wide world of wildlife, hopefully protected and conserved.

This article was written with the assistance of Mr. Alejandro Navelgas.



Let us now abolish the MWSS

"ANG tubig ay kasing halaga Arin ng pagkain, kailangan nating tiyakin na may sapat at malinis na tubig para sa lahat at sa mga susunod na salinlahi. Kasama na rito ang tubig na ginagamit natin para sa sakahan (Water is as important as food, we need to ensure that there is ample supply of water for all and in the generations to come. This also includes the water used in irrigation)." – President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., 2023 State of the Nation Address.

"Considering its fundamental importance, water security deserves a special focus. Our efforts must not be scattershot but rather cohesive, centralized and systematic. So, given that urgency, we have created the Water Resources Management Office to specifically handle the delicate job involving this most precious resource," the President said.

He said the Office of the President was now coordinating with Congress to pass a law that would create the Department of Water Resource Management.

House bills filed

There are at the moment 38 bills filed pertaining to the creation of a department catering for water resource management, regulatory functions, irrigation, sewage and other related items.

All of these bills were filed at the House of Representatives —



ALL INSIGHT
**AL S.
VITANGCOL 3RD**

and pending with the committee on government reorganization since December of last year.

The bills aim to establish a national framework for water resource management and at the same time create a Department of Water Resources and Water Regulatory Commission. Other bills differ in nomenclature as to the name of the department, which includes other words like "irrigation," "sewage" and "sanitation."

The proposed department shall "serve as the primary agency responsible for national policymaking, coordination and management of all the water resources in the Philippines."

The bills, likewise, propose the creation of an independent water regulatory commission "to ensure the effective and adequate delivery of water and sanitation services throughout the country under a credible, transparent and accountable regulatory framework." It is envisioned that the new regulatory commission "shall always protect the consumer welfare and reject abusive practices in the water industry."

What government agency is at present tasked to perform water and sewage regulatory functions? It's none other than the Metropolitan Waterworks

and Sewerage System (MWSS).

The wording in the various House bills should be piercing the eardrums of the officials of the MWSS, that is, if they are still sensitive and not numbed over their own callousness. If you carefully read and analyze the words of the pending bills, then it would tend to imply that the current regulatory set-up is not credible, not transparent and not accountable.

More so, the proposed regulatory commission "shall always protect the consumer welfare," which is very much contrary to what the MWSS is now doing. The MWSS does not protect the welfare of the consumers, but is beholden only to the water concessionaires.

In the soon-to-be-enacted law, the reportorial attachment of the MWSS would be transferred from the Department of Public Works and Highways to the new water department. The functions of the MWSS would be subsumed by the new water regulatory commission. In other words, the MWSS would be rendered worthless. Not much of a difference in the present set-up since MWSS is already inutile.

Inept replies of MWSS

Going back to the consumer issue that I brought up in this column last week, MWSS came up with a lame excuse that if I don't answer their e-mail by July 7, 2023, they

would consider the matter closed and any follow-ups would be treated as new complaints.

In their e-mail to me on July 4 (which left me only three days to respond until July 7), they informed me that Maynilad Water Services Inc. had "advised [me] with the results of investigation through phone." This is a lie. Maynilad never called me up since they do not know my telephone number!

I followed up with MWSS, and they sent me an email on July 17 asking me to "Please inform us if the correct installation of the water pump has been done." What is this nonsense? Why would I be the one to inform them on the matter, which I am asking them to investigate in the first place?

I sent another email to MWSS on July 19, "informing" them that the illegal booster pump is still there and is still operating nonstop. MWSS has remained silent since. How is that for protecting consumer welfare? Incompetence abounds at MWSS.

With the looming creation of a Department of Water Resource Management and a Water Regulatory Commission, the MWSS becomes redundant and this, should be abolished.

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Rains raise Angat Dam water level by 5 meters

By BELLA CARIASO and RAMON EFREN LAZARO

The water level of Angat Dam rose by more than five meters amid rains brought by Super Typhoon Egay and the southwest monsoon.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level of Angat reached 188.20 meters or 5.22 meters higher compared to the previous day.

"The more than five-meter increase in the water level of the dam is a good development. It is better to reach its normal high water level of 210 to 212 meters before the end of 2023," National Water Resources Board Executive Director Seville David Jr. said in a text message to **The STAR**.

With the significant increase in Angat's water level, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) is managing the supply to its concessionaires.

"We are advising Angat Hydropower Corp. not to release more water because we want to

make sure we save water coming from inflows," MWSS administrator Leonor Cleofas said in a briefing yesterday.

Maynilad Water Services Inc. has announced the indefinite suspension of water interruption with the improvement in the levels of Angat and Ipo Dams.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation needs of 25,000 hectares of farmland in Bulacan and Pampanga.

The water level of Ipo Dam, which is downstream Angat Dam, was at 101.31 meters as of 6 a.m. yesterday, breaching its 101-meter spilling level.

The water level of San Roque Dam in Pangasinan increased

by 6.57 meters or 253.70 meters compared to the previous 247.13 meters.

The water elevation of Magat Dam in Isabela rose by 2.15 meters or 171.47 meters compared to its previous level of 169.32 meters.

Bustos Dam spills

Meanwhile, Bustos Dam released water on its downstream river system, inundating low-lying areas.

Josephine Salazar, National Irrigation Administration (NIA)-Central Luzon director, said Sluice Gates 1, 2 and 3 were raised at two meters.

The three sluice gates have been discharging 142 cubic meter per second (cms) of water since yesterday.

The rubber gate has been releasing 380 cms for a total of 522 cms compared to its previous day's discharge of 737 cms.

NIA advised residents living

near the Angat river system, particularly low-lying areas in Norzagaray, Angat, San Rafael, Bustos, Baliwag, Pulilan, Plaridel, Calumpit, Paombong and Hagonoy to be on alert.

Ipo Dam also released water that flows down through Bustos Dam.

Floods hit Bulacan

Several towns in Bulacan were submerged in floodwater amid heavy rains.

The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office of Bulacan said water rose by as high as four feet in some areas in Angat, Calumpit, Balagtas, Guiguinto and Paombong.

Twenty-six evacuation sites were put up to accommodate 399 families or 1,672 people.

Local officials of Bocaue, Marilao and Malolos also reported flooding in their areas.

- With Danessa Rivera, Ric Sapnu



EDITORIAL

Crippled by floods

Typhoon Egay left the Philippine area of responsibility last Thursday, but wide swathes of Pampanga and Bulacan remained crippled yesterday as monsoon-induced heavy rains continued, spawning floods of at least a foot deep. Disaster management officials say it could take about a week before the flooding subsides, or longer if the approaching storm called Falcon intensifies and slams Luzon.

The government will have to review the flood control system in the affected areas, where livelihoods and mobility have been seriously disrupted. Coastal areas in Bulacan in particular need urgent flood control interventions as sea levels rise amid global warming. Residents have reported that until a few decades ago, they did not experience serious flooding. They have noted that the problem has worsened amid ongoing reclamation activities in Manila Bay. Many residents in the affected areas have taken to buying or fashioning canoes for transportation. Leptospirosis and other water-borne diseases are constant problems.

Yesterday, residents in the affected areas reported experiencing a sudden, powerful rush of water that worsened flooding in homes and along streets that have been impassable since the onslaught of Egay. Disaster management

officials denied that this was due to the release of water from dams amid the continuing downpour, saying rivers and other waterways had not been breached as the dams were opened.

These days, even a high tide can cause heavy flooding in the coastal communities, according to residents. A similar problem plagued the coastal areas of northern Metro Manila for decades, with the indiscriminate reclamation of the Dagat-Dagatan area worsening the flooding. A multibillion-peso flood control project in the CAMANAVA area has eased but not completely eliminated the problem.

The government will have to consider a similar public works intervention in the flood-prone areas of Bulacan and Pampanga, where the local economy has been battered by the crippling floods. The government can take inspiration from some low-lying countries, where complex systems of water pumps and catchments have spared people from massive flooding.

One option is the relocation of entire communities to flood-safe areas, but the massive displacement is going to be costly. For now, the government will have to implement mitigation measures ASAP. Residents are asking for interventions that will at least make floodwaters subside quickly, and allow them to get on with their lives.



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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

opinion

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FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Rainwater

The only upside to the calamity that was Typhoon Egay was that our drying dams were refilled with rainwater. The renewed supply is not going to last us very long, however.

Of the Luzon dams, San Roque Dam in Pangasinan gained the most, rising about 10 meters. The substantial gain is explained by the fact that San Roque captured the water overflowing from the smaller Ambuklao and Binga dams in Benguet. Water levels in the two smaller dams exceeded their capacities.

Angat Dam in Bulacan, which supplies 97 percent of all of Metro Manila's potable water, rose by three meters. Before the typhoon struck, water in this dam had fallen below the minimum operating level of 180 meters above sea level (MASL). No water for irrigation was available and the water concessionaires for the metropolitan area warned of rationing.

We should have taken advantage of the low water levels at Angat and the other dams to dredge their heavily silted reservoirs. But we did not.

Nearly all the river systems in central and northern Luzon burst their banks, causing massive flooding. Large farming areas were flooded, leading to loss of crops. Several landslides happened and several roads were cut. All these is par for a super typhoon passing through.

Egay threaded the needle, passing through the channel between the tip of northern Luzon and the Babuyan islands. That cut the devastation a typhoon of this ferocity would have caused if it hit smack into the heart of Luzon. But this will not be the last typhoon we will deal with. Already, a storm is brewing east of the Visayas and will affect our weather next week.

The bulk of the casualties we sustained from the last typhoon was due to yet another overloaded boat sinking at the Laguna de Bay, off Binangonan town. For some reason, this boat was allowed to leave port despite the strong winds. Presumably, since this boat was lying in lake waters, it was beyond the scope of our normally strict Coast Guard.

On the whole, our disaster response was adequate, if not exemplary. The time and resources we all invested in disaster risk mitigation were not wasted. We must continue this work, since climate change will likely bring even more extreme weather in the future.

A string of storms over the next few weeks could rescue us from water rationing and enable us to survive this El Niño episode. We do not know that yet. What we do know, reflecting on how Egay somehow replenished our dams, is that we are absolutely dependent on rainwater to meet the needs of 117 million Filipinos.



In the new conditions brought about by climate change, a steady supply of rainwater is not guaranteed. When extreme weather causes strong typhoons, we are inundated. When a long episode of drought happens, we will not have a reliable supply of fresh water to meet our needs.

Without doubt, we need more dams to store our water and help us generate electricity. The Kaliwa and, eventually, the Kanan dams are indispensable to for the densely populated metropolitan region. They will capture water that otherwise uselessly flows out to the ocean.

Water for household use is one thing. We also use water for our agriculture and our industry.

Rice, our staple crop, uses tremendous amounts of water. Current farming methods require our rice paddies to be submerged. Our paddies yield a lot of water to evaporation, especially during the hot and dry months.

Our present rice price regime, high as it is by global comparison, does not even include the cost of fresh water to irrigate our paddies. Much of our rice irrigation is free, effectively a subsidy to our farmers. If we price in water consumed in cultivation, rice prices will be sharply higher.

It will even be more expensive to pump out water from our aquifers, considering high power prices. Besides, our aquifers have already been overexploited. It will take thousands of years to refill them.

Deeper into the future, science may figure out a way to cultivate rice using less water and less land. But that is deeper into the future. Science cannot solve all our problems.

In the interim, we need to build as many impoundment infra as we can to capture rainwater when it happens. From hereon, we need to look at every possibility for impounding rainwater.

A few years ago, there was a proposal to build a circular dike around the Candaba swamp to impound millions of liters of water that floods low-lying areas in Central Luzon. That proposal was dismissed as outlandish. Today, it might be worth revisiting this proposal.

It might also be worth revisiting the proposal to dam the Chico River and generate renewable energy from it. I saw recent video of water rampaging down the Chico River and inundating downstream communities.

In my youth, I participated in protests against the proposed Chico River dam. I even lived for a while in Macli-ing Dulag's village, documenting the Kalinga people's opposition to the dam. That dam would have submerged some of their villages and several ancient burial sites.

In the vicinity of this village, an NPA platoon operated. It was commanded by a charismatic Kalinga ex-priest named Conrado Balweg. In this remote wilderness, the guerrillas enjoyed much freedom of movement and often joined us for communal meals at the village.

As a result of the protests, the dam project was shelved. It remains shelved to this day.

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Climate change body vows stronger policies

BY JENICA FAYE GARCIA

THE Climate Change Commission (CCC) has committed to further strengthening the country's climate-change action policies in keeping with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s second State of the Nation Address (SONA) that emphasized the critical importance of such policies in building a sustainable economic agenda.

Robert Borje, CCC vice chairman and executive director, on Thursday said the commission will maximize its partnership with government agencies and stakeholders toward beefing up the country's climate-change action policies, particularly their implementation, consistent with the President's pronouncement.

"[We] will continue to collaborate with [them] to further ensure that climate change is integrated

and mainstreamed in national policies, planning, decision-making and implementation," he also said.

President Marcos, in his SONA on July 24, said, "The building blocks of progressive, livable and sustainable communities will never be complete without appropriate and responsible action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change."

Republic Act (RA) 9729, or the

Climate Change Act of 2009, calls for integration and consolidation by the government agencies and stakeholders of the country's plans and programs "to address climate change in the context of sustainable development."

It mandates the CCC to ensure the mainstreaming of climate change in national, sectoral and local development plans and programs.

The mainstreaming includes the "strengthening of the National Climate Risk Management Framework and [updating of] the National Climate Change Action Plan and the Nationally Determined Contribution," Borje said.

Under RA 9729, all local government units (LGUs) are targeted to be capacitated in mainstreaming climate action in local governance.

As of July 2023, the CCC has received a total of 1,472 Local Climate Change Action Plans from the existing 1,715 LGUs.

For fiscal year (FY) 2023, Borje

aid the government's budget for climate change programs and projects, as tagged by various national government instrumentalities, is P464.5 billion.

From this year's climate budget, P411.21 billion, or 88 percent, is aimed at financing climate-change adaptation initiatives as programmed and to be implemented by different government agencies, and P53.29 billion for climate-change mitigation.

For the FY 2024 National Expenditure Program, meanwhile, a total of P543.45 billion is earmarked for climate action, supporting the government's decarbonization and resilience-building efforts.

"The CCC remains committed to advance and pursue the realization of President Marcos Jr.'s vision for a low-carbon, climate-smart and climate-resilient Philippines, and transformative economic growth, with the unlocking of the development of the green and blue economies," Borje said.



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July hottest month ever

as 'global boiling' threatens Earth

PARIS: July is on track to be the hottest month in recorded history, scientists confirmed Thursday, as UN chief Antonio Guterres warned Earth has moved into an "era of global boiling."

Searing heat intensified by global warming has affected tens of millions of people in parts of Europe, Asia and North America this month, combining with fierce wildfires that have scorched across Canada and parts of southern Europe.

"Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning," said Guterres, urging immediate and bold action to cut planet-heating emissions. "The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived."

With the first three weeks of July already registering global average temperatures above any comparative period, the World Meteorological Organization and Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)

said it is "extremely likely" that July 2023 will be the hottest month on records going back to the 1940s.

Carlo Buontempo, director of C3S, said the temperatures in the period had been "remarkable," with an anomaly so large that scientists are confident the record has been shattered even before the month ends.

Beyond these official records, he said proxy data for the climate going back further — like tree rings or ice cores — suggests the temperatures seen in the

period could be "unprecedented in our history in the last few thousand years."

Possibly even longer "on the order of 100,000 years," he said.

About 1.2 degrees Celsius of global warming since the late 1800s, driven by the burning of fossil fuels, has made heat waves hotter, longer and more frequent, as well as intensifying other weather extremes like storms and floods.

► **HottestA8**



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■ HOTTEST FROM A1

July hottest month ever as 'global boiling'

The intense heat and devastating wildfires seen in July across parts of the northern hemisphere have caused alarm over the impact on health, ecosystems and economies.

With large swathes of the United States facing a record-breaking heat wave, President Joe Biden called the soaring temperatures from climate change an "existential threat."

"I don't think anybody can deny the impact of climate change anymore," he said at the White House, where he held a video conference with the mayors of heat-blasted Phoenix, Arizona and San Antonio, Texas.

Biden, who said heat was the "number one weather-related killer" in the United States, causing 600 deaths every year, announced moves to bolster heat-related safety rules for workers, especially those laboring outdoors.

In Beijing, which saw a record-breaking streak of four weeks of highs above 35 C, authorities urged the elderly to stay indoors and children to shorten outdoor playtime.

Wildfires raged in several countries across the Mediterranean region,

where extreme heat has left landscapes tinder dry.

Hundreds of firefighters are struggling to contain deadly blazes across Greece that have raged for two weeks.

Copernicus and WMO said global average sea surface temperatures, which have been well above those previously registered for the time of year since May, have contributed to the exceptionally warm July.

Buontempo said "a significant swathe" of the central Mediterranean is now close to or above all previous records.

Meanwhile, bathtub-like temperatures in the shallow waters off southern Florida — topping 37.8 C for several hours on Monday — potentially set a new world record and threatened coral reefs.

The WMO has said the eight years to 2022 were the warmest on record, despite the cooling effects of the La Niña weather pattern. That has now given way to the warming El Niño, although this is not expected to strengthen until later in the year.

The UN organization predicts it is more likely than not that global tem-

peratures will temporarily rise 1.5 C above the pre-industrial benchmark for at least one of the next five years.

They stress, however, that this would not mark a permanent breach of the 1.5 C limit set out in the Paris Agreement, which refers to long-term warming.

Scientists say the world will need to adapt to the heat and other impacts already caused by emissions — and that carbon pollution must be slashed dramatically this decade to avoid worse in the future.

"The extreme weather which has affected many millions of people in July is unfortunately the harsh reality of climate change and a foretaste of the future," said World Meteorological Organization's Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.

"The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is more urgent than ever before. Climate action is not a luxury but a must."

This week scientists from the World Weather Attribution group found that the heat waves in parts of Europe and North America would have been almost impossible without climate change.

AFP



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G20 heads race to reach climate accord

CHENNAI, India: Environment ministers from G20 nations meet in India on Friday in a race against time to reach a last-minute consensus to redress the global climate crisis.

But no major breakthrough is expected as delegations were stuck on climate change adaption finance, mitigation and peaking emissions by 2025 in hectic negotiations until late Thursday.

Any agreements reached at the one-day conference in Chennai will be signed by the leaders of G20 nations — constituting more than 80 percent of the global GDP and CO2 emissions — during a summit in New Delhi this September.

The meeting comes only days after the group's energy ministers were criticized for failing to agree on a roadmap to cut fossil fuels from the global energy mix.

It was seen as a blow to mitigation efforts even as climate experts blame record global temperatures for triggering floods, storms and heat waves.

Some major oil producers — such as Russia and Saudi Arabia — were blamed for the lack of progress.

"Given the scale of the triple global crises, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, we truly have no time left to waste," Steven Guilbeault, Canada's Environment and Climate Change minister, warned in Chennai on Thursday.

With raging wildfires in Greece and a heat wave in Italy, EU Commissioner for the Environment Virginijus Sinkevicius said that there was "growing evidence on the ground of devastating climate impact" and "the livelihoods of people are being destroyed."

Most delegations were led by their environment and climate change ministers, while the US delegation was headed by Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry.

Emirati oil boss Sultan Al Jaber was also at the Chennai meeting, ahead of leading the upcoming COP28 talks.

He has been heavily criticized for his apparent conflict of interest as head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

"The world needs its leaders to unite, act and deliver, and that must start with the G20," Al Jaber and UN climate change chief Simon Stiell said in a joint statement on Thursday.

"Those at the frontline of climate change need our support now, not in five years' time," they said, calling for a tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030.

Progress has so far been slow, with the G20 polarized by Russia's war in Ukraine and sharp divisions on key issues — like financing the transition and its immediate impact — between the West and developing countries. **AFP**