

World News Roundup

Climate

Debt relief call

Calls grow for global justice on 'damage'

BARCELONA, Nov 28, (Agencies): Droughts, floods and storms are nothing new to poor communities in Mozambique – but in recent years, the weather has become so extreme that neither the people nor the state can cope, said an international charity head in the southeast African nation.

After two powerful cyclones battered swathes of the country in March and April, its north now faces floods, while the south struggles with drought, said Gaspar Sitefane, Mozambique director for ActionAid.

In some inland areas hit by the fierce storms, which swamped fields and destroyed homes, people now risk dying of hunger, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, calling on climate change negotiators meeting in Madrid next week to act fast to help.

"If we are not able to get funding specifically for this (climate stress)... the government will be forced to get loans or increase the taxes the public should pay, and it will also create a cycle of poverty because the country will not improve," Sitefane warned from the storm-ravaged city of Pemba.

ActionAid and scores of other green and development groups want this year's UN climate change talks to agree to set up a fund to bail out countries on the frontline of "loss and damage" as a hotter planet brings wilder weather and rising seas.

Sven Harmeling, who leads on climate change policy for aid agency CARE International, said UN science reports in the past year had made clear that worsening damage will happen.

In efforts to avoid such harm, "many years" had been lost due to insufficient efforts to cut climate-heating emissions and scant support for people to adapt to growing disaster risks, he said.

Loss and damage – and finance to help avoid and repair it – is expected to be a hot topic at the Dec 2-13 UN conference, both as losses mount and as a six-year-old body created to tackle the problem comes up for review in Madrid.

The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) has advanced knowledge on key points like ways to help people forced from their homes by rising seas or degraded farmland.

But the WIM has yet to lead to concrete action, especially on providing new sources of finance to deal with climate-related damage, developing countries and humanitarian agencies say.

Ever since talks to establish the mechanism started, there has been push-back from governments, including the United States and Australia, against paying money to mend the rising damage in poorer nations.

That is despite rich countries having emitted, over the decades, most of the heat-trapping gases that are driving the losses in parts of the world that have contributed little to the problem – and which have few resources to respond to it.

Richer states fear compensation claims could soar in the future if emissions continue to increase, fuelling more extreme weather and rising seas.

"It's the wealthier countries who have been emitting for longer that really should be providing the overwhelming share of the resources needed to deal with loss and damage," said Sivan Kartha, senior scientist at the Stockholm Environment Institute.

He worked on a report, released this week, that calculated countries' "fair share" of responsibility for loss and damage, based on their historic emissions and their capacity for climate action, as defined by their national income levels.

The study found the United States owes at least 30% of the bill and the European Union about a quarter, compared to 0.5% for India.

It used estimates of loss and damage costs in developing countries to suggest that new finance of at least \$50 billion a year should be provided by 2022, rising to \$300 billion by 2030.

While the sums of money required may seem eye-wateringly large, such amounts could be raised through measures including levies and taxes on polluting air travel, financial transactions and the fossil fuel industry, research suggests.

Rich countries have mainly backed insurance as a solution, so that countries hit by climate disasters can receive payouts to help them bounce back and protect themselves better.

But at September's UN Climate Action Summit in New York, the Barbados prime minister said Hurricane Dorian, which devastated the Bahamas earlier that month, showed a decade-old Caribbean insurance pool would not provide enough to help those displaced nor to rebuild after increasingly extreme events.

ActionAid, CARE and other aid groups argue insurance is not a "silver bullet" to tackle loss and damage.

They say any new finance facility set up under the UN talks should provide money from a range of sources, including government grants and debt relief.

In a statement due to be issued this week, more than 155 organisations plan to call for an automatic moratorium on debt payments for developing nations experiencing climate disasters, to free up budgets for response and to avoid "lengthy pledging exercises". Harjeet Singh, who leads climate change work for ActionAid, said the UN negotiations provided the right framework for such issues of "global justice".

"Loss and damage finance is going to be an indicator of how the global system respects and protects poor people and countries who have no fault or role in causing the (climate) crisis," he said.

Also:

PARIS: The influential economic policy body, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Wednesday said development aid from the OECD should be more aligned with and should favour climate action while aid for fossil fuel activities should be reduced to zero.

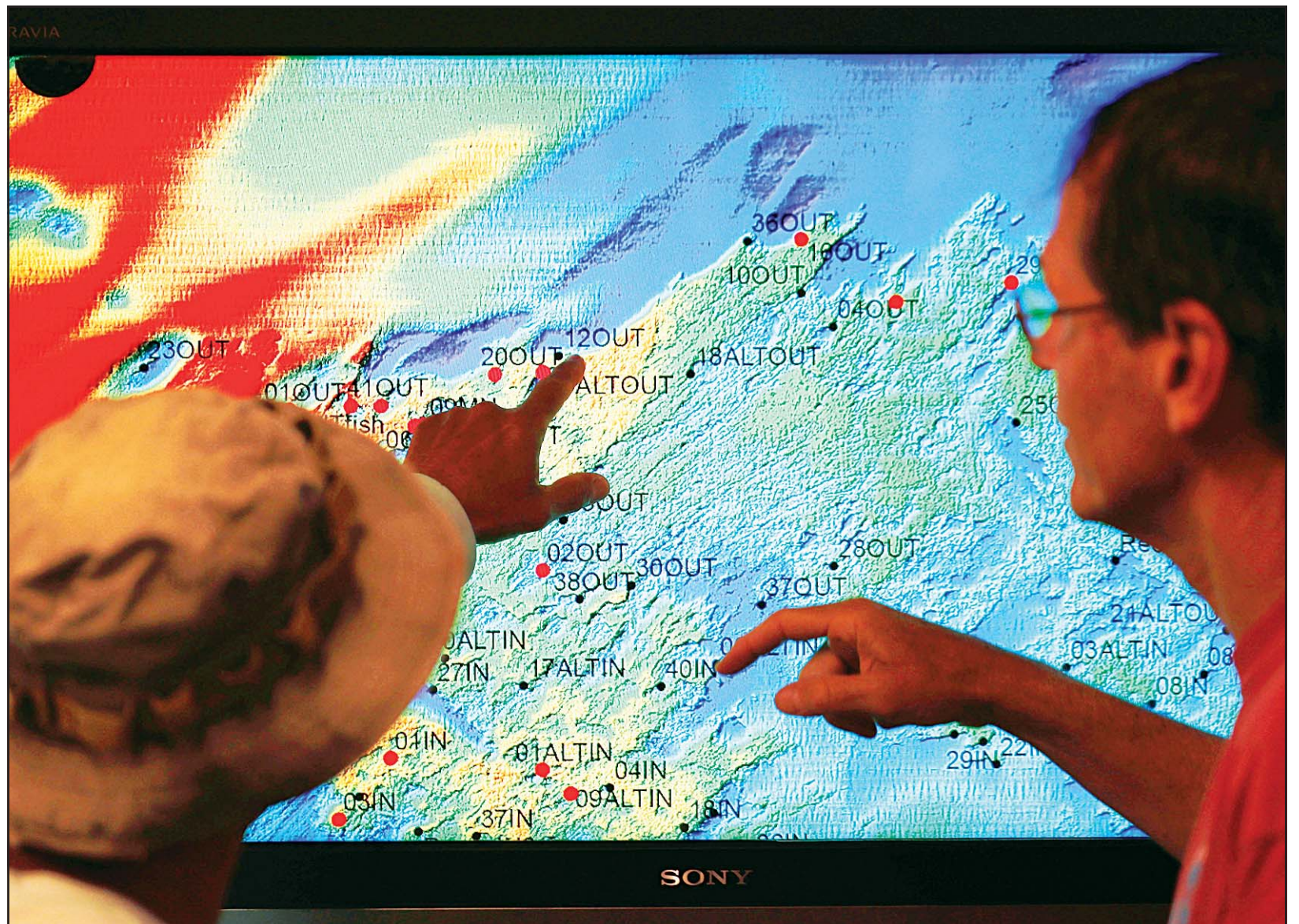
In a report on where donor aid ends up and where it could better be used to help climate goals, the Paris-based OECD warned that only 20 percent of "soft and hard aid" through Development Assistance Committee channels included a focus on climate change in the 2013-17 period.

More broadly, however, the report noted that 40 percent of multilateral aid from UN Agencies included a focus on the climate issue, or double the OECD average.

There were some "encouraging" signs whereby OECD members were "moving in the right direction to bring development aid in line with climate goals," but efforts must continue until there is "zero aid going to fossil fuels and more going to tackle climate change," OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría said in a statement alongside the report.



Kartha



Dr Roldan Munoz of NOAA Fisheries (left), and Dr Daniel Gleason of Georgia Southern University discuss the research locations on a map of Gray's Reef, aboard the NOAA Ship Nancy Foster, about 20 miles off the coast of Georgia. Researchers are collecting ongoing data on fish numbers, diversity and distribution, and habitat characteristics such as ledge height and width. (AP)



Craig Aumack, an assistant professor of biology at Georgia Southern University, prepares to press samples of algae collected at Gray's Reef, in the wet lab aboard the NOAA Ship Nancy Foster, about 20 miles off the coast of Georgia. Aumack notes that more tropical species are appearing on the reef as waters warm. The same is true of types of seaweed and fish like the odd-looking and colorful emerald parrotfish. It is native to the Gulf of Mexico but is now found here, most likely pushed hundreds of miles to the north by changing ocean temperatures. (AP)



Thunberg



Berners-Lee

Discovery

India launches sat: The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched on Wednesday locally made earth observation satellite Cartosat-3 along with 13 other nano-satellites owned by the US on board Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C47).

Indian Department of Space said in a statement that the Cartosat-3 and other 13 satellites were injected into a sun synchronous orbit of 509 km successfully as the PSLV-C47 lifted-off from the Second Launch Pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota of south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

The statement quoted ISRO Chairman Dr Sivan as saying after the successful launch: "Cartosat-3 is the most complex and advanced earth observation satellite built by ISRO." Cartosat-3 was a third generation agile advanced satellite having high resolution imaging capability, he added. (KUNA)

Youths put heat on talks: Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of mostly young people are gearing up to rally in cities around the world Friday to demand their governments step up their efforts to curb climate change.

The planned marches come ahead of the latest global climate conference, which this year will take place between Dec 2-13 in Spain following a last-minute switch of venue from Chile.

The teenage Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg is sailing across the Atlantic with a small crew, hoping to make it to Madrid in time to put world leaders on the spot again about what they are doing to protect her generation from the worst of global warming. (AP)

Deer stomach full of trash: A wild deer has been found dead in a national park in northern Thailand with seven kilograms of plastic waste and other trash in its stomach.

Environment

Ocean becomes more acidic

Saving seas, 1 protected area at a time

By Patrick Whittle

From the surface, these 22 square miles of water are unexceptional.

But dip beneath the surface – go down 60 or 70 feet – and you'll find a spectacular seascape. Sponges, barnacles and tube worms cover rocky ledges on the ocean floor, forming a "live bottom".

Gray's Reef is little more than a drop in the ocean 19 miles off the Georgia coast, but don't confuse size for significance. In one of his last official acts, president Jimmy Carter declared the reef a national marine sanctuary at the urging of conservationists who said its abundance of life was unique and worth saving for future generations.

For nearly 40 years, the US government has protected the reef, home to more than 200 species of fish and an amazing array of nearly 1,000 different kinds of invertebrates. Recreational fishing and diving are allowed, but commercial fishing and other kinds of exploitation are not.

And Gray's Reef has served as a global inspiration. Following the lead of the US, other nations have designated similar sanctuaries and protected areas, which now cover about 6% of the world's oceans – a bonanza for researchers but, more importantly, an important tool for safeguarding the seas.

Doubts remain about how much of the ocean they can truly save. Last year was the hottest on record for the planet's oceans, and protected areas can't slow the biggest source of that warming – increasing greenhouse gases. The federal government says more than 90% of the warming that has occurred on the planet over the past half-century has taken place in the ocean.

That has had dramatic effects in the waters that cover 70% of Earth's surface. Scientists have tied the warming to the rise of sea levels, the disappearance of fish stocks and the bleaching of corals. The ocean also has become

more acidic as humans have released higher concentrations of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and that jeopardizes valuable shellfish and the plankton that form the base of the food chain.

The supporters for the protected areas range from sustenance fishermen on the tiniest islands of the Pacific to researchers at the most elite institutions of academia.

"We're not protecting these areas just for ourselves," Roldan Muñoz, a research fishery biologist with the US' National Marine Fisheries Service, says during a research trip to the reef, "they're for our nation."

On a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration expedition to Gray's Reef, the federal research vessel Nancy Foster is packed with scientists conducting research on subjects ranging from whether invasive lionfish are present to how changing ocean conditions are affecting coral species.

Drive

Sanctuary research coordinator Kimberly Roberson and other scientists prepare to dive to collect data about what fish can be found in the area, while Craig Aumack, an assistant professor of biology at Georgia Southern University, peers through a microscope at algae.

Aumack notes that more types of seaweed and tropical species of fish are appearing on the reef as waters warm, like the odd-looking and colorful clown wrasse, a fish native to the Caribbean Sea that was found off the coast of Georgia this summer, most likely pushed hundreds of miles to the north by changing ocean temperatures.

The sanctuary is named after Milton "Sam" Gray, a biologist who studied it in the 1960s and identified it as an ecosystem worth saving – a reef not far from the US coast that teemed with life, especially an "abundance of diversity of invertebrates," Roberson notes. Without that designation, the habi-

tat could have vanished due to high-impact industries such as bottom-trawl commercial fishing, which are now prohibited there.

"In some ways, it's a test of what a marine protected area can do for surrounding areas," says Clark Alexander, director and professor at the University of Georgia Skidaway Institute of Oceanography and a former member of the sanctuary's advisory board. "It was sort of an ideal spot to preserve this kind of habitat and make it available for research and recreation."

In the decades since Gray's was established, large and more stringently protected zones have popped up all over the world.

Phoenix Island Protected Area, established in January 2008, covers more than 150,000 square miles off the tiny island republic of Kiribati and has been cited by scientists for bringing back species of fish in just over a decade. And an area nearly twice as large, the Rapa Nui Marine Protected Area, now surrounds Easter Island after its creation in 2018.

Former US presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama greatly expanded the US' protected areas. Bush created the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument off Hawaii and Obama extended it late in his presidency to a whopping 582,578 square miles.

Smaller protected areas, such as the 5,000-square-mile Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument off New England, created by Obama in 2016, also have been established.

Nine years ago, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity agreed to the goal of protecting 10% of the world's oceans by 2020. The UN said in 2017 that it was on its way to meeting that target and that protected areas "contribute substantial social, economic and environmental benefits to society" and "provide food security and livelihood security for some 300 million people." (AP)

The 10-year-old deer, weighing about 200 kilograms, was discovered by national park rangers on Monday at the Khun Sathan National Park in northern Nan province. Officials estimate that the deer had died at least two days earlier.

"When vets examined the deer's stomach they discovered a lot of trash – most of it plastic," said Kriangsak Thanompan, a director of the protected region in the Khun Sathan National Park.

An initial examination showed that the deer had died from intestinal obstruction after consuming trash over time. Vets found

plastic bags, used coffee and noodle packets, rubber gloves, handkerchiefs, underwear and a plastic rope in its stomach. (RTRS)

'Stop thank you emails': Britain could significantly cut its carbon footprint if people stopped sending unnecessary "thank you" emails, researchers said on Tuesday, calling on the public to "think before you thank."

Britons send more than 64 million unnecessary emails per day, a study by energy supplier OVO Energy found, with un-actionable pleasantries such as "thank you" and "thanks" topping the list of most common offenders.

"Is OVO asking everybody to be more rude? Absolutely not," said Mike Berners-Lee, an expert on carbon foot-printing at Britain's Lancaster University who carried out the analysis.

"But if you send somebody a 'thanks' email, and they're only three metres away from you, it might be nice to just go over and say, thank you very much," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

If each adult sent one less email a day, Britain could reduce its carbon output by 16,433 tonnes – equal to more than 81,000 flights from London to Madrid, the study found.

OVO Energy has created software to identify when a user has sent a potentially unnecessary email and prompt them to be more thoughtful. (RTRS)



This image provided on Nov 28 by the Berlin Zoo shows two Panda cubs in the zoo in Berlin, Germany. China's permanent loan Pandas Meng Meng and Jiao Qing are the parents of the two cubs that were born on Aug 31, 2019 at the zoo in Berlin. (AP)