



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS & GLOBAL HEALTH

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LAST TIME CO2 LEVELS WERE THIS HIGH, THERE WERE TREES AT THE SOUTH POLE

Researchers have found that temperatures near the South Pole were about 20C higher now than in the Pliocene epoch, from 5.3m to 2.6 million years ago. In the Pliocene, a variety of beech and possibly conifer trees grew at Oliver Bluffs, 300 miles from the South Pole. The tree remains had been unearthed as fossils, along with cushion plants and mosses. Many scientists use computer models to predict the impacts of human-caused climate change, but looking back in time for real-world examples can give new insights. Global temperature has already risen by 1C since the industrial revolution, when CO2 levels were 280 parts per million (ppm). CO2 is now at 412ppm.

[Read more at The Guardian](#)



Credit: J Francis, A Ashworth

DIAPERS AND SANITARY PADS MAY BE LEACHING CHEMICALS INTO OUR BODIES

A recent study published in Reproductive Toxicology found that many name brand diapers and sanitary pads contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and phthalates that are likely being absorbed via the genitals over time. Exposure to VOCs increases risk of asthma, certain cancers and reproductive functioning. Phthalates, which are commonly found in cosmetics, toys and other plastics, have been linked to endocrine disruption, cancer and birth defects. The study stems from a 2017 investigation by South Korean TV media outlets into whether sanitary pads might be causing menstrual irregularities, infection, rashes and intensified cramping. Alexandra Scranton, director of science and research for Women's Voices for the Earth, predicts the diapers component, however, will likely bring more urgent attention to this particular study. [Read more at Sierra Club](#)



Credit: Medical News Today

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Credit: Sustainable Business Network

RAPA NUI'S (EASTER ISLAND'S) STONE STATUES AND MARINE RESOURCES FACE THREATS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

On this island in the Polynesia region of the Pacific Ocean, 3,800 kilometers from the coast of Chile, to which it belongs, the effects of climate change are already evident. Water temperatures are rising and some corals are beginning to bleach on the shores of Rapa Nui. The rains are heavier, shorter and very intense, causing erosion that reaches the sea and covers the corals. Other damage caused by the rise in temperature is the near disappearance of auke, an endemic algae "that used to be very abundant. Pedro Edmunds Paoa, mayor of Hanga Roa, the capital, told IPS that "since the El Niño current was identified in 1984, the island has been suffering declines in its marine fauna and flora populations."

[Read more at Inter Press Service](#)



Credit: Matthias Huss/Cryosphere/EGU

IS YOUR BANK FINANCING CLIMATE CATASTROPHE?

According to the 10th edition of "Banking on Climate Change," a report released in March 2019, banks significantly contribute to climate change. Between 2016 and 2018, 33 global banks have financed fossil fuels with \$1.9 trillion, and \$600 billion of this financing supported fossil fuel expansion. JPMorgan Chase seems to be the worst offender, financing more climate change than any other banking institution in the world. Moreover, finance for fracking is on the rise. Unfortunately, our carbon budget—the estimated amount of CO2 we can emit while limiting global temperature rise—has no space for new fossil fuel projects. [Read more at Sierra Club](#)



Credit: Orlando Milesi IPS

TWO-THIRDS OF GLACIER ICE IN THE ALPS WILL MELT BY 2100

A study has found that half of the ice in the Alps' 4,000 glaciers will be gone by 2050 due to global warming already baked in by past emissions. After that, even if carbon emissions have decreased to zero, two-thirds of the ice will melt by 2100. Unlike previous work, their models explicitly included how the glaciers move down the mountains. This led to lower projected ice losses compared with earlier research, but still depressing. Applying this approach to other glaciated mountain chains could improve ice loss forecasts. Cutting the emissions from fossil-fuel burning, deforestation and other polluting activities is the biggest factor in minimizing the melting of the ice. [Read more at The Guardian](#)



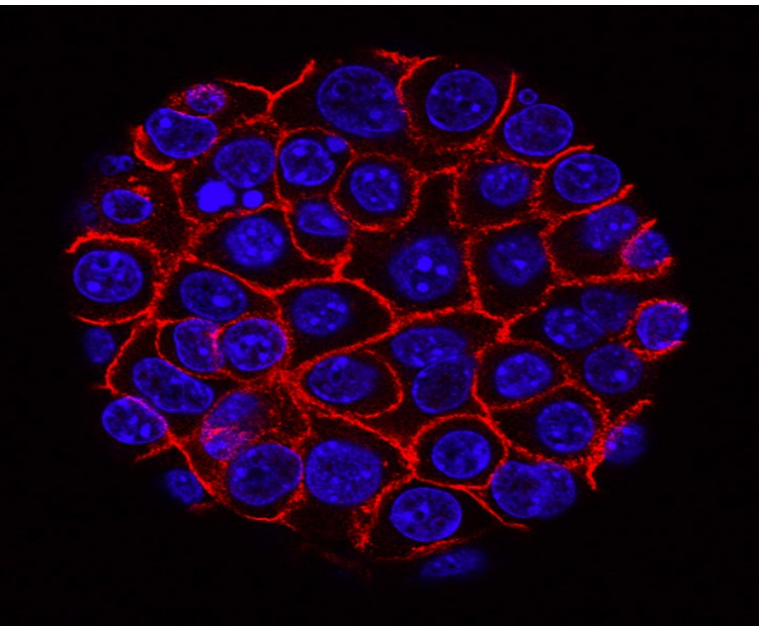
Credit: HuffPost

"A QUESTION OF LIFE OR DEATH" AT WORK

Globally, the mining industry employs more than 24 million people. Everywhere – from China to Kazakhstan – miners go to work with their lives on the line. Most of the people who die do so in silence. The mining industry is full of informal jobs and the number of fatal accidents is considerably higher than in most other sectors. Glen Mpufane, Director of Mining at the global trade union IndustriAll, estimates that the mining industry claims thousands of lives every year. "I would say 7,000–8,000." Some countries have reliable statistics, but globally the reporting on fatal accidents in the workplace has major flaws. [Read more at Inter Press Service](#)



Credit: Tommy Trenchard/IPS



Credit: Min Yu/USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

CANCER GOES UNDIAGNOSED IN ALMOST HALF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN

American researchers synthesized data from national cancer registries where they were available, along with data from the World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory and from demographic health surveys and household surveys. The model estimated that in 2015 there were 397,000 cases of childhood cancer, but only 224 000 cases were diagnosed, leaving about 43% of childhood cancers undiagnosed globally. In most regions of the world, acute lymphoblastic leukemia was the most common cancer. [Read more at JAMA Network](#)

THE DISTURBING LINKS BETWEEN TOO MUCH WEIGHT AND SEVERAL TYPES OF CANCER

Being obese and overweight, long implicated in heart disease and diabetes, has been associated in recent years with an increased risk of getting at least 13 types of cancer, including stomach, pancreatic, colorectal and liver malignancies, as well as postmenopausal breast cancer. Researchers at the American Cancer Society say that excess body weight is linked to about 8% of all cancers in the United States and about 7% of cancer deaths. The type of cancer that is most strongly associated with obesity is endometrial, which develops in the lining of the uterus. Obese and overweight women are two to four times as likely to develop the disease as women of normal weight, and the risk rises with increased weight gain, according to the National Institutes of Health. [Read more at The Washington Post](#)



Credit: AP Photo / Ahn Young-joon

SPOTLIGHT ON OPINION

THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS NUCLEAR WEAPON JUST ROLLED OFF THE ASSEMBLY LINE

The W76-2 nuclear warhead is designed to be fitted to a submarine-launched Trident missile, a weapon with a range of more than 7,500 miles. It carries a far smaller destructive payload than the thermonuclear weapons, five kilotons of TNT instead of 100 kilotons. Yet that very shrinkage of the power to devastate is precisely what makes this nuclear weapon potentially the most dangerous ever manufactured. It isn't designed as a deterrent against another country launching its nukes; it's designed to be used. By September, an undisclosed number of warheads will be delivered to the U.S. Navy for deployment. [Read more at The Nation](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

HOW CITIZENS CAN STOP THE BIG FIVE CANADIAN BANKS FROM DISASTROUS FOSSIL FUEL FUNDING

Canada's banks rank among the bottom in setting any kind of policy to get out of the most destructive fossil fuels, with only TD Bank making commitments related to some coal mining. For any climate-conscious Canadian or institution, it's hard to justify doing any business with the big banks so long as they are financing climate chaos. The good news is that there are alternatives, from credit unions to non-bank mortgage brokers to RRSP-eligible investments that screen out fossil fuels. If banks won't shift out of the bad stuff, we can shift out of them.

[Read more at The Tyee](#)



Credit: Jonathan McIntosh



Credit: Dean Sewell

SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

WE USED TO HAVE DEEP RIVERS AND EXPANSIVE WETLANDS – NOW WE'VE GOT A WATER CRISIS

Australia is the world's driest continent, but when Europeans first arrived, it had deep flowing rivers, expansive wetlands, clear creeks and drinkable billabongs. The Aboriginal nations, custodians of the life-giving water had management practices embedded in Lore, culture and daily life. What has changed is the rise of a way of thinking that looks at water as a tradable, profitable and often privatized commodity. There is a lot of talk about economic and social considerations, and values in terms of how water is allocated, the preference is often given to the large agricultural corporations, and not considering the major economic and social impacts the decisions are having on both Indigenous people and working class non-indigenous people.

[Read more at The Fifth Estate](#)



Of a total 302 pipelines in some stage of development around the world, 51% are in North America. A total of \$232.5bn in capital spending has been funneled into these, with more than \$1tn committed towards all oil and gas infrastructure. The natural-gas output enabled by the pipelines would result in an additional 559m tons of carbon dioxide each year by 2040, above 2017 levels.

"This is a whole energy system not compatible with global climate survival," said Ted Nace, co-author of the Global Monitor report. "These pipelines are locking in huge emissions for 40 to 50 years at a time, with the scientists saying we have to move in 10 years. These pipelines are a bet that the world won't get serious about climate change, allowing the incumbency of oil and gas to strengthen."
[Read more at The Guardian](#)

Credit: Andrew Cullen/Reuters

EVENTS TABLE

DATES	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
May 7th-10th	International Congress on Complementary Medicine Research	Brisbane Australia	http://iccmr2019.com/
May 13th - 15th	Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics (CSEB): 2019 Biennial Conference	Ottawa Canada	https://cseb.ca/conferences/2019-conference/
May 22nd-24th	3rd International Integrative Nursing Symposium	Galway Ireland	https://www.climateleadershipconference.org/
Jun. 6th - 9th	CNIS Bethune Round Table in Global Surgery: Ethics in Global Surgery	Edmonton Canada	https://bethuneroundtable.com/
June 6th - 9th	Society for the Advancement of Science in Africa	Toronto Canada	https://sasascience.org/conference/
June 10th -21st	5th McGill Summer Institute in Infectious Diseases and Global Health	Montreal Canada	http://mcgill-idgh.ca/
June 14th - 16th	North American Refugee Health Conference	Toronto Canada	https://facmed.registration.med.utoronto.ca/portal/events/reg/participantTypeSelection.do?method=loa
October 7th - 11th	Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power	Vienna Austria	https://www.iaea.org/atoms4climate
October 15th - 18th	Global Symposium of Citizenship, Governance and Accountability in Health	New Delhi India	http://www.copasahglobalsymposium2019.net/



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SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA – PHOTO ESSAY

'BOATS PASS OVER WHERE OUR LAND WAS': BANGLADESH'S CLIMATE REFUGEES



Credit: John Vidal – Environmental Justice Foundation

An Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) report says that tens of thousands of Bangladeshi families face becoming refugees in their own land after weeks of torrential rain. 8 million people in 32 districts had been affected by floods, with 307,000 people staying in emergency shelters. Dhaka and other large cities are already home to a growing number of environmental refugees. “We lost everything to river erosion. We escaped with just our lives,” says Renu Bibi, an 80-year-old woman now living in a slum in the Mirpur district of Dhaka. “Today, boats pass over the place where our land was. Sometimes three or four entire villages will be destroyed.”

[Read more at The guardian](#)



ARE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REACHING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN MOROCCO?



Credit: AP Photo/Mosa'ab Elshamy

The High Atlas Amazigh people experience hard lives in small villages. They are representative of people who need to be served first by sustainable development. Most work as day laborers and agriculturalists with barely enough income to support their families and heat their homes. They feel that Moroccan society is deeply unfair—there is no help for the sick, little support for education, little defense against the cold, and that, for some, corruption is the greatest threat to a sustainable future. Consequently, civil society has an important role in achieving the SDGs. The High Atlas Foundation has been working to help people in this region to organize themselves into collectives that decide both what the collective wants, and pathways to achieve those goals.

[Read more at Inter Press Service](#)



10 BILLION CAPSULES



Credit: The Daily Star

For over 25 years, Nutrition International, based in Canada, has provided more than 10 billion capsules of vitamin A for children under 5. This low-cost intervention prevents blindness and strengthens immune systems. Nutrition International works closely with UNICEF and other development partners to support governments in 55 countries to distribute two annual doses of vitamin A each year to children under five. Nutrition International also delivers nutrition technical assistance in 14 countries as well as comprehensive nutrition programming in 10 core countries. [Read more at Nutrition International](#)



MEASURING QUALITY OF CARE FOR ALL WOMEN AND NEWBORNS: HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE ARE DOING IT RIGHT? A REVIEW OF FACILITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS



Credit: Shutterstock

WHO developed a framework and standards, defining 31 quality statements and 352 quality measures to assess and improve quality of maternal and newborn care in health-care facilities. Their study aimed to assess the capacity of facility assessment tools to measure quality of maternal and newborn care as per the WHO framework. The findings show that existing facility assessment tools provide a valuable way to assess quality of maternal and newborn care as one element within the national measurement toolkit. Guidance is needed on priority measures and for better harmonization across tools to reduce measurement burden and increase data use for quality improvement. [Read more at The Lancet](#)



NEW SPECIES OF ANCIENT HUMAN DISCOVERED IN PHILIPPINES CAVE



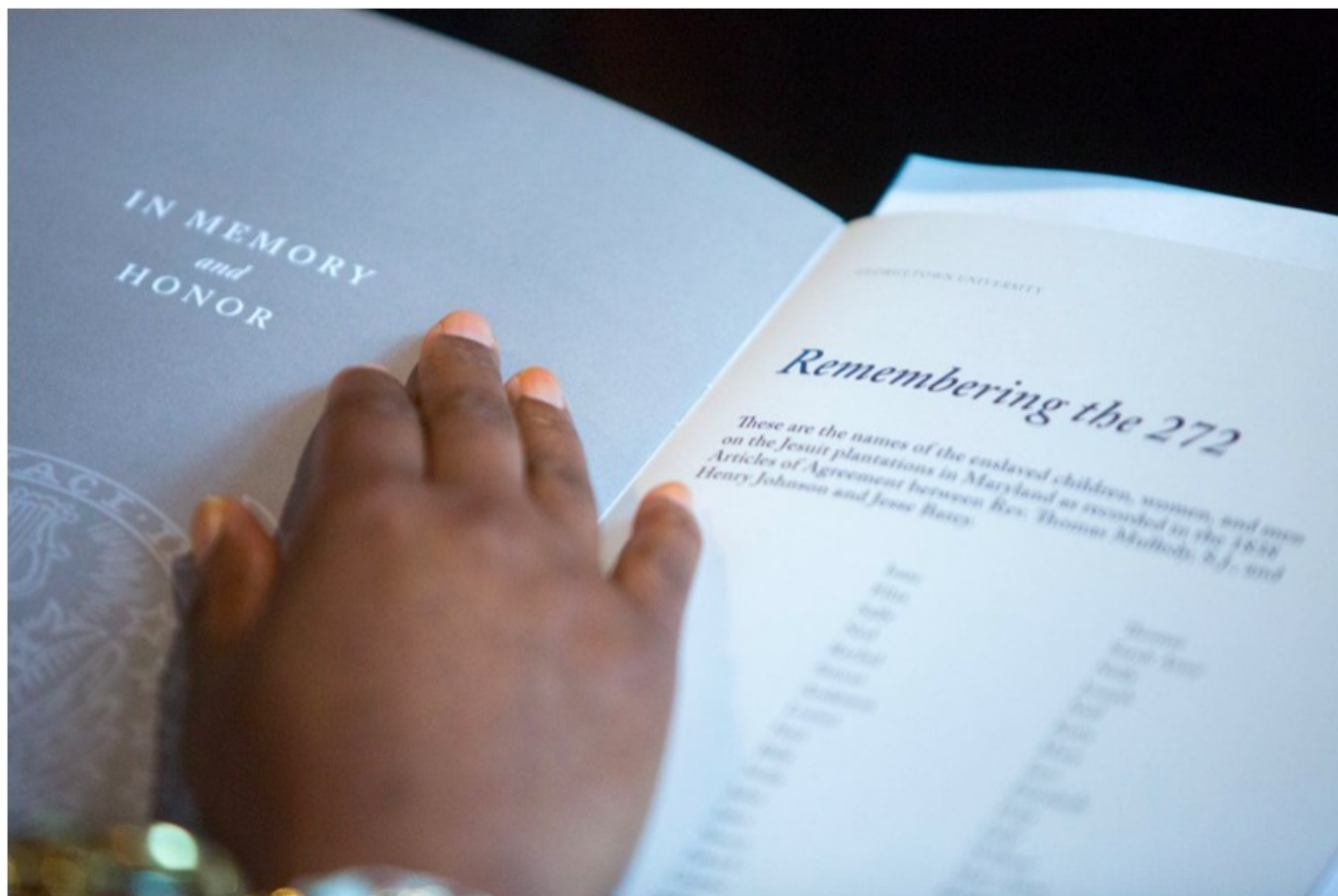
Credit: Quincy/Alamy

A new specimen, named *Homo Luzonesis*, was excavated from Callao cave on Luzon island in the northern Philippines and has been dated to 50,000-67,000 years ago – when modern humans and the Neanderthals were spreading across Europe and into Asia. The excavation did not yield a complete skeleton: seven teeth, two hand bones, three foot bones and one thigh bone were found, thought to belong to two adults and one child. Most intriguing was the presence of a curved toe bone, indicating a mixed lifestyle with an ability to walk on two legs and climb trees. One possibility is that this primitive trait reappeared once the species had become isolated on the island. [Read more at The Guardian](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

TAKE NOTE: GEORGETOWN STUDENTS ARE ACTING ON THE COURAGE OF THEIR CONVICTIONS IN GIVING REPARATIONS



Allison Shelley/For The Washington Post

Students learned of their school's Georgetown University's ties to slavery after a human thigh bone was unearthed during construction of a residence hall in 2014. It was a cemetery site, where the remains of slaves and free blacks had been buried. A referendum proposing that undergraduates pay a "reconciliation fee," in effect reparations, was put to a vote on April 11 — and passed. The beneficiaries would be the descendants of a particular group of 272 enslaved people. They were working around Prince George's County when, in 1838, the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus decided to sell them to raise money for a financially strapped Georgetown University. [Read more at The Washington Post](#)

**Magnificent
Closing Show
Disney World
Orlando, Florida
April 29, 2019**



Credit: David Zakus

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