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- Nasa reports record heat but omits reference to climate change
- Linking climate change and biodiversity: a call for integrated solutions

ABS CBN

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BUSINESS WORLD

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THE MANILA TIMES

Linking climate change and biodiversity: a call for integrated solutions
By: Leander C. Domingo

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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These following areas may experience strong winds, PAGASA said.

- Catanduanes
- southeastern Albay
- Sorsogon
- Northern Samar
- Samar
- Eastern Samar
- eastern Biliran
- eastern Leyte
- eastern Southern Leyte
- Dinagat Islands
- Surigao del Norte
- Surigao del Sur

At 10 a.m., tropical depression Ada was located 420 km east of Surigao City, Surigao del Norte. It was packing winds of 55 kilometers per hour with up to 70 kph gusts.

Moving west northwestward at 10 kph, the tropical depression is forecast to reach tropical storm strength later today.

Ada will continue to move northwestward and will pass close to Eastern Samar and Northern Samar between Friday evening, January 16 and early Saturday, January 17.

A close approach with Catanduanes is possible between Saturday evening and Sunday morning, January 18 before the disturbance turns northeastward.

A further westward shift in the storm's track could increase the likelihood of a landfall over Samar Island and Bicol Region.

Ada will bring significant rainfall over Caraga, Eastern Visayas, and Bicol through the weekend.

Heavy to intense rains are expected over most of Samar Island and Bicol Region.

Flooding and landslides are likely, with lahar flow also possible along the slopes of the restive Mayon Volcano.

The public is advised to continuously monitor weather updates for further developments.

PREPS

The Office of the Civil Defense in Eastern Visayas said 31 seaports in the region suspended travel ahead of Ada's onslaught.

The regional disaster council issued memoranda on the activation of the virtual emergency operations center, the implementation of a no sail policy, restriction of water activity, and storm surge preparedness measures, OCD Region 8 officer-in-charge Director Rey Gozon said.

As of 12 p.m., 20 local government units have suspended classes in Eastern Samar, Gozon said.

The official added that relief items have been prepositioned in the region.

"Ready naman po 'yung ating regional DSWD to augment if and when kailangan ng support coming from the affected local DRRMCs," he said.

BUSINESS MIRROR

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Even while Congress was on session break, House Committee on Climate Change Chairwoman Aniela Tolentino took the initiative to convene a special committee hearing, underscoring the urgency and national importance of preparing the country for access to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD).

Colleagues praised Tolentino for her leadership and foresight in ensuring that the Philippines does not lose momentum on a once-in-a-generation opportunity to tap global climate finance.

During the hearing, Deputy Majority Leader Anna Tuazon raised concerns on whether agencies are already prepared to accept project submissions even if the official roadmap and criteria have not yet been finalized. She asked whether the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) plans to consolidate proposals for submission to the FRLD, who will decide which projects qualify under the criteria, and when the finalized guidelines will be released.

“In terms of the process of decision making, can we ask who gets to decides which proposal will get to through to your criteria? Do you have supporting documents or database for the number of people affected by these calamities. If in case there is, where can we find the data? What is the number of people that are affected or for reallocation?” Tuazon said.

Tuazon also sought clarity on the availability of data on communities affected by climate disasters, including those needing relocation, and asked whether there are existing documents or databases that track the number of people impacted by climate-related events.

Responding to the queries, DENR Undersecretary Analiza said the department is currently preparing a detailed roadmap aligned with the timelines set by the FRLD and is targeting the release of the finalized criteria or guidelines by early February. She acknowledged that comprehensive data on affected populations remains a major gap identified during the rapid assessment process. To address this, one of the key proposals under consideration is the creation of a national loss-and-damage database that will systematically capture information on communities affected or displaced by climate disasters.

Chairwoman Tolentino also asked whether DENR has any existing methodologies for measuring economic losses caused by climate events, highlighting the importance of having clear tools to quantify damage for future project proposals.

Brian Poe, in his line of questioning, emphasized the importance of early consultation with Congress and stakeholders while the guidelines and selection process are still being crafted. He

asked what frameworks are currently being considered and whether there is already some level of consensus that lawmakers can help refine.

Poe further inquired whether the FRLD application process will resemble other funding mechanisms with predefined project categories, and what international or local frameworks DENR is currently studying as models.

He highlighted the situation of farmers and fisherfolk, noting that financing for recovery, especially through crop insurance and other risk-financing tools, remains a major challenge in disaster-prone areas.

“For the farmers and fisherfolks in particular, one of the major concerns has always been financing, especially in insurance, crop insurance… because sa pag-iikot ko, especially in Pangasinan after the latest storms, the problem is the recovery after, yung utang nila, so if we can find a way to promote that within this new fund in which hindi sila mababaon sa utang… I think that might be a good consideration for the guidelines,” Poe said.

He also asked whether conservation projects would be eligible under the future guidelines, noting that in many international funds, conservation efforts are often not prioritized despite their importance in reducing long-term climate risks across the country.

Lawmakers also noted that the Speaker of the House has consistently put a premium on strengthening crop insurance, disaster financing, and budgetary support for farmers and fisherfolk, stressing that any guidelines for the Loss and Damage Fund should align with this priority to ensure that frontline agricultural communities are protected before and after disasters.

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is a newly established global climate finance mechanism created to support vulnerable developing countries in responding to climate-related losses that go beyond what adaptation alone can address. The fund emerged from global climate negotiations in 2022 and became operational in 2023, with its first pilot phase of project funding now underway.

The Philippines plays a unique role in this effort. As one of the world’s most climate-vulnerable countries, it was also chosen to host the Board of the Loss and Damage Fund, placing the country at the center of global decision-making on climate finance. This makes the crafting of clear national guidelines especially critical so that Filipino communities most affected by typhoons, floods, and other climate disasters can meaningfully benefit from this historic fund.

The hearing highlighted the need for clear, transparent, and inclusive guidelines for accessing the Loss and Damage Fund, as well as the importance of reliable data systems to support evidence-based project proposals. Lawmakers stressed that early coordination between Congress and implementing agencies will be crucial to ensure that future projects truly reach communities most affected by climate change.

BUSINESS WORLD

Resilience gap threatens Philippine growth as typhoons intensify

By: Chloe Mari A. Hufana

The Philippines can sharply reduce the economic toll of typhoons and floods by overhauling how it designs, procures and verifies public works — turning disaster resilience from a planning assumption into a measurable obligation, analysts said.

As climate risks intensify, the focus of infrastructure policy must shift from project costs to whether projects perform under stress, Krista Danielle S. Yu, a professor at De La Salle University Carlos L. Tiu School of Economics, said. Ms. Yu, a leading expert in the economics of disasters in the Philippines, said that future reforms must focus on filling this gap.

“Substandard public works change the way we estimate economic losses from typhoons and floods such that they are quietly worsening the model inputs that resilience projects are supposed to improve,” Ms. Yu said via e-mail.

“When flood control or drainage projects have substandard construction and inadequate maintenance, they fail to reduce vulnerability as assumed in the project appraisal. This can also create a false sense of security.”

The country was hit by a series of typhoons in October and November last year, including Typhoon Kalmaegi (locally named Tino), which claimed more than 200 individuals, and Fung-Wong (Uwan), which reached super typhoon category.

As the Philippines braces for stronger ones and more intense flooding, Ms. Yu said the next phase of climate resilience may hinge less on how much the government spends and more on whether public works deliver real protection when storms arrive.

For decades, billions of pesos have been poured into flood control systems, drainage networks and related public works, all intended to shield households, firms and supply chains from climate shocks. Yet weak construction, poor maintenance, and political interference have quietly turned some of those investments into sources of economic fragility rather than resilience.

As climate change accelerates and urban development pushes deeper into flood-prone zones, the gap between planned infrastructure projects and their actual performance on the ground is becoming harder to ignore. This is even more compounded by a graft scandal that has implicated lawmakers, contractors, high-ranking government officials, including President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. himself, of allegedly conspired to divert billions in public funds.

Mr. Marcos’ exposé of the rampant corruption within the bureaucracy, particularly in flood control projects, sent the economy and markets into a frenzy. Economic growth slowed to 4% in the third quarter, marking the weakest expansion in more than four years, or since the height of the

coronavirus disease pandemic. For the first nine months of the year, gross domestic product grew at an average of 5%, undershooting the government's 5.5%-6.5% target.

Growth was weighed down by a sweeping controversy linking public works officials, lawmakers and private contractors to alleged multibillion-peso corruption involving anomalous flood control projects, which dampened government spending and household consumption.

The botched infrastructure projects also dented the labor market as successive typhoons disrupted local economies, forcing temporary closures of businesses and displacing workers. Construction delays and the failure of flood control systems meant that jobs in affected areas were stalled, while disruptions to transport and logistics further constrained employment in services and manufacturing.

The Philippines' unemployment rate rose year on year in November 2025, defying the usual boost from holiday-season hiring, as disruptions from bad weather and job cuts in key sectors offset fourth-quarter gains, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. Preliminary Labor Force Survey data showed around 2.25 million unemployed Filipinos were unemployed during the month compared with 1.66 million in November 2024 and 2.54 million a month earlier.

The President in November vowed to ramp up state spending to ensure the government reaches its target growth by yearend. Despite differing views and cautious signals from his economic team, the Presidential Palace maintained confidence that the country can still meet its growth target.

SMARTER INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFER ECONOMY

The presence of flood defenses signals safety, encouraging households and firms to invest in hazard-prone areas, according to Ms. Yu. If those defenses are unreliable, exposure expands while vulnerability remains high. And when severe weather strikes, losses are larger not only because protection fails, but also because more economic activity has been drawn into harm's way — a dynamic Ms. Yu described as risk-induced exposure.

The economic upside is substantial. Global estimates from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction suggest that every dollar invested in disaster prevention yields multiple dollars in avoided losses, with a 2025 assessment placing returns as high as $15. Capturing those gains, Ms. Yu said, depends less on spending more than on spending smarter.

Looking ahead, Ms. Yu said reforms can reverse that cycle by aligning infrastructure spending with verified performance. Disaster-risk frameworks already show the path forward: losses stem from the interaction of hazard, exposure, and vulnerability. Well-built, well-maintained infrastructure lowers vulnerability, while credible performance standards prevent excessive exposure from accumulating.

Over time, Ms. Yu said, risk-based procurement analytics could help shift public investment toward quality and durability. Data tools can flag patterns associated with failure, including

repeat contract winners, clustered unit prices and abnormal bidding behavior, automatically triggering audits before losses materialize. Stronger blacklisting mechanisms would further protect public capital.

Institutionalizing quality assurance is another forward step with long-term economic payoffs. Independent quality-control checks, random field audits, third-party materials testing and geotagged as-built documentation — particularly for long, linear assets such as dikes and drainage canals — could reduce lifecycle costs and limit future disruptions to production and services.

Beyond construction, Ms. Yu said the next frontier is risk-informed planning. Environmental impact assessments can evolve from compliance tools into economic safeguards by explicitly testing residual disaster risk and downstream impacts.

Over time, climate and hazard scenario testing — covering rainfall intensity, sea-level rise, and compound shocks — can become mandatory inputs in project appraisal, improving the reliability of fiscal forecasts and insurance markets.

“The Philippines has a climate change expenditure tagging mechanism for tracking climate-related spending,” she said.

“This can be strengthened further through requiring every resilience-tagged project to report risk indicators such as expected annual damage reduced, number of households protected, and hours of downtime avoided. This could include accountability and tie it with the performance-based metrics tied to retention payments.”

GOVERNANCE REFORMS

Governance reforms will determine whether those technical upgrades take hold, said Jean S. Encinas-Franco, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines. Without credible enforcement, she warned, the economy will continue to absorb the cost of failed projects through repeated losses and reconstruction.

Ms. Encinas-Franco said future reforms must include accountability for past failures.

“People who are found to be perpetrators of the flood control scandal must be jailed, including the so-called big fish,” she said via Viber.

Looking ahead, she called for removing political discretion from project identification and replacing it with a science-based menu developed through scientific studies and community consultation. Projects should be periodically monitored and evaluated so that public spending is actually reducing economic risk.

Building state capacity will also matter. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation units across agencies would allow the government to track outcomes rather than just outputs. Congress, she

said, must also be equipped to conduct rigorous oversight, while insertions and unprogrammed funds — often linked to waste and distortion — should be curtailed.

Ms. Encinas-Franco tied these reforms to deeper economic stakes. High election costs and entrenched political dynasties, she said, raise the risk of corruption and weaken the efficiency of public investment. Lowering barriers to political participation could help reduce the incentive to extract rents from infrastructure projects.

For an economy increasingly exposed to climate shocks, the payoff from reform is not just fewer disasters — it is steadier growth, stronger investor confidence and lower long-term fiscal risk. As storms intensify, experts say the real question is whether the Philippines can turn resilience into an economic asset rather than a recurring liability.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Nasa reports record heat but omits reference to climate change

Global temperatures soared in 2025, but a Nasa statement published Wednesday alongside its latest benchmark annual report makes no reference to climate change, in line with President Donald Trump's push to deny the reality of planetary heating as a result of human activities.

That marks a sharp break from last year's communications, issued under the administration of Democrat Joe Biden, which stated plainly: "This global warming has been caused by human activities" and has led to intensifying "heat waves, wildfires, intense rainfall and coastal flooding."

Last year's materials also featured lengthy quotes from the then-Nasa chief and a senior scientist and included graphics and a video. By contrast, this year's release only runs through a few key facts and figures, and totals six paragraphs.

"The press release and publicly available data provide the official agency analysis," the US space agency said in response to a request for comment about the shift in tone.

According to Nasa, Earth's global surface temperature in 2025 was slightly warmer than in 2023 — albeit within a margin of error — making it effectively tied as the second-hottest year on record after 2024.

Other global agencies, including the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service and the United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which use different methodologies and modeling, say 2025 ranked as the third-hottest.

"The US government is now, like Russia and Saudi Arabia, a petrostate under Trump and Republican rule, and the actions of all of its agencies and departments can be understood in terms of the agenda of the polluters that are running the show," University of Pennsylvania climatologist Michael Mann told AFP.

"It is therefore entirely unsurprising that Nasa administrators are attempting to bury findings of its own agency that conflict with its climate denial agenda."

Zeke Hausfather, a research scientist at Berkeley Earth, added: "I'm just happy they were allowed to put out a press release."

"Pretty much all federal scientists working on climate in the US have had to self-censor and leave out reference to human influences on climate change, unfortunately," he told AFP. "Thankfully much of the underlying science is still occurring, even if they cannot talk about it."

Nasa’s analysis found that average temperatures for 2025 were 2.14 degrees Fahrenheit (1.19 degrees Celsius) above the 1951–1980 average.

It was based on data from more than 25,000 meteorological stations worldwide, ship- and buoy-based instruments measuring sea surface temperatures, and Antarctic research stations, with the data analyzed and corrected for changing distributions of temperature stations and urban heating effects that could skew the results.

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Dindo Campilan, International Union for Conservation of Nature regional director for Asia and hub director for Oceania, emphasized these points in a seminar hosted by the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) on Nov. 17, 2025.

First, he stressed that "persistent fragmentation between biodiversity and climate" as distinct fields is no longer tenable. Second, "it remains rare to find professionals who can bridge both," Campilan said.

Third, the pressing gaps in academic programs fail to equip students with the skills needed to address the intertwined challenges of both environmental elements. With traditional conservation approaches insufficient, Campilan emphasized that integrated solutions are necessary. Academic institutions must play a more active role in preparing future professionals to address these challenges.

The harsh numbers make this development urgent: a landmark 2020 paper in Nature revealed that the rate of biodiversity loss has surpassed nature's ability to recover.

"The next-generation leaders and professionals must be equipped to understand, address and work on the intersection of these two," Campilan said. He called on universities to ensure that students gain the skills necessary to navigate the rapidly evolving demands of science and policy, citing the limited pool of talent suited to work at the biodiversity-climate nexus.

Campilan's message is clear: it is time to bend the curve. Systemic changes in production and consumption are needed to address the inextricably linked crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. The clock is ticking, and the next generation of professionals must be equipped to drive this change. The seminar also emphasized that academic institutions, policymakers and professionals must come together to drive this kind of sustainable transformation.

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