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By: Harlene Delgado

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DAILY TRIBUNE

Pedals against carbon emission

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ECO BUSINESS

[How ‘mid-level bureaucrats’ are helping to shape Chinese climate policy]
By: Anika Patel

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRE

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By: Keith Clores

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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By: Wilnard Bacelonia

Sen. Loren Legarda on Friday urged policymakers to pursue greener, more inclusive and value-driven growth following weaker-than-expected economic performance in 2025.

THE MANILA TIMES

Fingerprints of a broken planet
By: Ludwig Federigan

THE year 2025 will be remembered not as an anomaly but as a juridical moment for the climate era: science no longer merely warns us about warming — it can increasingly point a finger. Christian Aid’s Counting the Cost 2025 and World Weather Attribution’s (WWA) review, together with the Global Challenges Foundation’s Global Catastrophic Risks 2026, make a single, stark argument. First, attribution science turns abstract peril into event-level evidence. Second, global governance remains fragmented and fails to act. The consequence results in ever-rising human and economic costs.

UNDP

Climate Action in Classroom: Living the SDGs Through Education

Climate change is no longer a distant threat—it is part of everyday life. From unpredictable weather to rising air pollution, its impacts are increasingly felt by communities across Thailand and around the world.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

Wetlands as the Philippines' quiet climate shield
By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

As the world marks World Wetlands Day today, the Philippines confronts a reality that is neither abstract nor symbolic. In a country repeatedly tested by storms, floods, and rising seas, wetlands are not peripheral landscapes. They are part of the country's essential risk-management fabric, shaping how communities endure climate stress long before disasters arrive.

PANAY NEWS

PH should have a carbon neutral or a net zero goal
By: Ike Seneres

BELIEVE it or not, the Philippines is the only country in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that has not yet set a formal carbon neutrality or net-zero target.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Marcos Jr. orders economic team to implement ‘true reform’ to boost PH economy
By: Harlene Delgado

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed his economic team to implement “true reform” to strengthen the country’s economy, according to the Presidential Communications Office.

The president met with several members of his Cabinet Friday, January 30 in Malacañang in the wake of the country’s worst economic growth since 2011.

The PCO said Marcos Jr. ordered to focus on several strategies to stimulate economic growth such as digitalization and fast-tracking of infrastructure projects.

“Iniutos ng Pangulo ang pagtutok sa mga estratehiya tulad ng digitalization at ang pagpapabilis ng infrastructure projects, lalo na ang pagtatayo ng mga silid-aralan, gayundin ang regular na monitoring ng mga ahensya at kanilang mga proyekto upang masiguro ang mabuting implementasyon ng mga ito,” it stated.

The Philippine economy grew at its slowest non-pandemic pace in 14 years in 2025, data showed Thursday, as it was swiped by a corruption scandal and climate change-fuelled weather woes.

DAILY TRIBUNE

Pedals against carbon emission

"The European Union has set ambitious targets to combat climate change. We are working to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030, and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. But we know that climate change is a global challenge that requires global solutions," said H. E. Massimo Santoro, EU Ambassador to the Philippines.

"It is heartwarming to note that today we are all convinced that soft mobility, through public transport and bicycles, are effective and affordable solutions for achieving these objectives," added Ambassador Santoro while concluding that the bike racks in Rizal Park are a perfect representation to promote cycling as a viable, accessible mode of transportation, to help reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion, improve air quality and promote a more sustainable urban landscape and healthier lifestyle for Rizal Park visitors.

The rehabilitation of the bike racks in Rizal Park and Intramuros is an initiative of the EU Delegation to the Philippines in partnership with the National Parks and Development Committee. The re-launch is supported by cycling associations and advocates for sustainable lifestyle including Kalyetista, CYCAD, Cyclebros, Firefly Brigade, Tiklop Society of the Philippines, PINASLOWRIDAZBC, Make it Safer Movement, Bamboo Bikes and Renacimiento.

As noticed by NPDC deputy executive director Jezreel Gaius A. Apelar, "These facilities and partnerships stand as a testament to our shared commitment to promoting active mobility, sustainability and inclusivity in our public spaces. They also represent our support for environmentally responsible transport and our dedication to making our parks more accessible to all through international cooperation."

Participants joined the EU in its advocacy toward achieving more sustainable lifestyle and liveable cities by ringing their bike bells to amplify the call for families and communities to do their share in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Mia Bunao, administrator, Kalyetista/Explore Your City on a Bicycle, highlighted that the Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines' bicycle rack project is an enduring gift that creates a sense of community and is a symbol of " pakikipag kapwa" and a shared mission with active mobility stakeholders to promote sustainable and liveable cities.

Dr. Roselle Leah Rivera of Firefly Brigade Inc. remarked: "We summon the city to the dusk-dance of wheels, pedals pulsing like heartbeats in cooling twilight. Fireflies reborn in flickering bike-lights as communities rise, ride and breathe as one — each crank-turn sparking awareness and every mile rekindling climate courage.

"Today is a great day, as we bear witness to the relaunching of the bike racks at the Luneta. While every completion of any bicycle friendly infrastructure is a cause for celebration, this one is special since it allows bicycle access to the Philippines' foremost historical landmark, and it is made possible by friends from the European Union," said Pio Fortuno Jr., president of Tiklop Society of the Philippines, which promotes the use of folding bikes in the country.

ECO BUSINESS

How 'mid-level bureaucrats' are helping to shape Chinese climate policy

By: Anika Patel

However, a new book – "Implementing a low-carbon future: climate leadership in Chinese cities" – argues that these officials play an important role in designing innovative and enduring climate policy.

The book follows how four cities – Shenzhen, Zhenjiang, Xiamen and Nanchang – approached developing low-carbon policies over the course of almost a decade.

It identifies "bridge leaders" – mid-level local bureaucrats who have a strong interest in a specific policy area and who are unlikely to move often between different posts – as key to effective local climate policymaking.

Carbon Brief interviews author Weila Gong, non-resident scholar at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy's 21st Century China Center and visiting scholar at UC Davis, on her research.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

- Gong on why cities are important: "Over 85 per cent of China's carbon emissions come from cities. The majority of Chinese people live in cities, so the extent to which cities can become truly low-carbon will also influence China's climate success."
- On what motivates local policymakers: "Mid-level bureaucrats need to think about how to create unique, innovative and visible policy actions to help draw attention to their region and their bosses."
- On cities as a way to test new policies: "Part of the function of local governments in China is to experiment with policy at a local level, thereby helping national-level officials develop responses to emerging policy challenges."
- On how local policymakers get results: "Even though we tend to think that local officials are very constrained in terms of policy or financial resources, they can often have the leverage and space to build coalitions."
- On uneven city-level engagement: "To begin with, all regions received political support if they joined the [low-carbon city] pilot programme. But over the years, different regions have engaged very differently."
- On the need for 'entrepreneurial bureaucrats': "China will always need local officials willing to introduce new legislations or try new policy instruments…For that, it needs entrepreneurial bureaucrats who are willing to turn ideas into actions."
- On international cooperation: "Even with how geopolitics is really complicating things, many cities continue to have common challenges. For example, collaboration between Shanghai and Los Angeles on green shipping corridors is still ongoing".
- On the effectiveness of mid-level bureaucrats: "They are creative, they know how to convince their boss about the importance of climate action and they know how that can bring opportunities for themselves and their boss. And because of how long they have

worked in one area, they understand the local politics, policy processes and the coalitions needed to provide solutions."

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Carbon Brief: You've just written a book about climate policy in Chinese cities. Could you explain why subnational governments are important for China's climate policy in general?

Weila Gong: China is the world's largest carbon emitter, so the extent to which global efforts to address climate change can actually reach their goal is largely influenced by China's efforts.

If you look at the structure of China's carbon emissions, over 85 per cent of China's carbon emissions come from cities. The majority of Chinese people live in cities, so the extent to which cities can become truly low-carbon will also influence China's climate success. That's why I started to look at this research area.

We tend to think of China as a centralised, big system and a unitary state – state-run and top-down – but it actually also has multi-level governance. No climate action or national climate targets can be achieved without local engagement.

We also tend to think subnational level [actors], including the provincial, city and township levels, are barriers for environmental protection, because they are focused on promoting economic growth.

But I observed these actors participating in China's low-carbon city pilot programme [as part of my fieldwork spanning most of the 2010s]. I was really surprised to see so many cities wanted to participate in the pilot, even though at the time there was no specific evaluation system that would reward their efforts.

We think of local governments just as implementers of central-level policy. When it comes to issues like climate change and also low-carbon development – in 2010 [policymakers found these concepts] very vague…So I was curious why those local officials would want to take on this issue, given that there was no immediate reward, either in terms of career development or in terms of increasing financial support from the central government.

CB: Could you help us understand the mindset of these bureaucrats? How do local-level officials design policies in China?

WG: The role of different local officials in promoting low-carbon policy is not very well understood. We tend to focus on top political figures, such as mayors or [municipal] party secretaries, because we see them as the most important policymakers.

But that is not entirely true. Those top local politicians are very important in supporting efforts to tackle problem areas…but the focus in my book is the mid-level bureaucrats.

Unlike mayors and party secretaries, mid-level officials tend to stay in one locality for their entire career. That helps us to understand why climate policy can become durable in some places and not others.

Mayors and party secretaries are important for [pushing through policy solutions to problem] issues, but they can also be key barriers for ensuring continuation of those policies – particularly when they change positions…as they tend to move to another locality every three to five years.

Therefore, these top-level officials are not the ones implementing low-carbon policies. That's why I looked at the mid-level bureaucrats instead.

The conventional understanding of these bureaucrats is that they are obedient and only follow their bosses' guidance. But actually, when low-carbon policies emerged as an important area for the central government in 2010, opportunities appeared for local governments to develop pilot projects.

Mid-level local officials saw this as a way to help their bosses – the mayors and party secretaries – increase their chances of getting promoted, which in turn would help the mid-level bureaucrats to advance their own career.

Impressing central government officials isn't really a consideration for these officials…but their bosses need visible or more reliable local actions to show their ability to enforce low-carbon development.

As such, mid-level bureaucrats need to think about how to create unique, innovative and visible policy actions to help draw attention to their region and their bosses.

Secondly, mid-level bureaucrats are more interested in climate issues if it is in the interest of their agency or local government.

For example, Zhenjiang [a city in east China] came to be known as a leader in promoting low-carbon development due to a series of early institutional efforts to establish low-carbon development. In particular, in part because of this, it was chosen for a visit by president Xi Jinping in 2014.

As a result, the city created a specialised agency [on low-carbon development]. This made it one of the first regions to have full-time local officials that followed through on low-carbon policy implementation.

This increased their ability to declare their regulatory authority on low-carbon issues, by being able to promote new regulations, standards and so on, as well as enhancing the region's and the local policymakers' reputations by building institutions to ensure long-term enforcement.

Another motivation for many local governments is accessing finance through the pilot programmes. If their ideas impress the central-level government, local policymakers could get access to investment or other forms of financial resources from higher levels of government.

In the city of Nanchang, for example, officials were trying to negotiate access to external investment, because the main central government fund for low-carbon initiatives only provided minimal finance.

Nanchang officials tried to partner with the Austrian government on sustainable agriculture, working through China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

It didn't materialise in the end, but they still created a platform to attract international investment, and gathered tens of millions of yuan [millions of dollars] in central-level support because the fact they showed they were innovating allowed them to access more money through China's institutional channels.

CB: Could you give an example of what drives innovative local climate policies?

WG: National-level policies and pilot programme schemes provide openings for local governments to really think about how and whether they should engage more in addressing climate change.

The national government has participated in international negotiations on climate for decades…but subnational-level cities and provinces only joined national efforts to address climate issues from the 2010s – starting with the low-carbon city programme.

So we can see that local responses to addressing climate change have been shaped by the opportunities provided by the national government, [who in turn] want more local-level participation to give them successful case studies to take to international conferences.

Local carbon emission trading systems (ETSs) are an example of giving local governments opportunities to experiment.

In my book, I look at the case of Shenzhen, which launched China's first local ETS. [Shenzhen was one of seven regions selected to run a pilot ETS, ahead of the national ETS being established in 2018.]

Part of the function of local governments in China is to experiment with policy at a local level, thereby helping national-level officials develop responses to emerging policy challenges.

I remember a moment during my field research in 2012, when I was with a group of officials from both the national and local government.

The national government officials asked the local officials to come up with some best practices and solutions, to help them envision what could be done at the national level.
Then there are drivers at the international level, which I think is very interesting.

I observed that the officials particularly willing to take on climate issues usually had access to international training.

During the early stages of subnational climate engagement, organisations such as the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) worked with the NDRC and other national-level agencies to train local officials across the country.

This created more opportunities to help local officials understand what climate change and carbon markets were, and how to use policy instruments to support low-carbon development.

In Shenzhen, local bureaucrats also turned to their international partners to help them design policy.

The city created a study group to visit partners working on the EU ETS and learn how it was designed. They learned about price volatility in the EU ETS and pushed legislation through the local people's congress [to mitigate this in their own system].

One thing that made the Shenzhen ETS so successful is what I call "entrepreneurial bureaucrats" [who have the ability to design, push through and maintain new local-level climate policies].

Shenzhen's vice mayor worked with the local people's congress to push the ETS legislation through. This was the first piece of legislation in China to require compulsory participation by more than 600 local industrial actors. It also granted the local government authority to decide the quotas and scope of the ETS.
These 600 entities also included Shenzhen's public building sector[, a powerful local interest group].
This shows that, even though we tend to think that local officials are very constrained in terms of policy or financial resources, they can often have the leverage and space to build coalitions – even in China's more centralised political system – and know how to mobilise political support.

CB: You chose to look at the effectiveness of four cities – Shenzhen, Zhenjiang, Xiamen and Nanchang – in climate policymaking. Why did you choose these cities and how representative are they of the rest of China?

WG: We tend to believe that only economically-advanced areas or environmentally-friendly cities will become champions for low-carbon development…But I was surprised, because Zhenjiang and Nanchang are not known for having an advanced economy, but [they nevertheless built impactful climate] institutions – regulations, standards and legislation that shape individual and organisational behaviours in the long term. I thought they were interesting examples of how local regions can really create those institutions.

Then there was Xiamen, which is seen as an environmentally-friendly city and economically is comparable to Shenzhen when you look at GDP per capita. Xiamen actually did not turn its low-carbon policy experimentation into long-term institutions, instead randomly proposing new initiatives [that were not sustained].

I conducted more than 100 interviews, talking with policy-practitioners inside and outside of government about specific policies, their processes and implementation.

I found that, over the course of eight years, these [cities] showed very different levels of engagement.

Some I categorised into substantive engagement, where the local government delivered on their climate goals. [Shenzhen falls into this category.]

Then there is performative engagement – such as in the case of Nanchang – where the local government was more interested in [using climate policies to] attract external investment and access projects from higher levels of government.

But they were not able to enforce the policies, because impressing higher levels of government became the primary motivation.

Zhenjiang was a case of symbolic engagement. It actually created a lot of institutions, such as a specialised agency and a screening system to ensure new [low-carbon] investment. When I was observing Zhenjiang, from 2012 to 2018, officials recognised they needed to be carbon-constrained.

The problem was that Zhenjiang has a very strong power sector – mainly coal power – which supplies the whole eastern coast. That meant, even though the government was very determined to promote low-carbon policies, they faced [opposition from] very strong local actors – meaning the government could only partially implement the targets they set.

Then there is sporadic engagement, as seen in Xiamen. [The city's approach to climate policy was incremental and cautious] because of a lack of political support [from officials in Xiamen], as well as local coalitions between key actors. So instead, we find random initiatives being promoted.

This explains the uneven policy implementation in China. To begin with, all regions received political support if they joined the pilot programme. But over the years, different regions have engaged very differently, in terms of the regulations, standards and legislation they have introduced, and whether those were paired with enforcement by a group of trained personnel to follow through on those initiatives.

CB: What needs to be done to strengthen sub-national climate policy-making?

WG: It's very important to have groups of personnel trained on climate policy. Since 2010, when I started studying the low-carbon pilot programme, there were no provincial-level people or agencies fully responsible for climate change. Back then, there was only the [central-level] department of climate change under the NDRC.

By the time I finished the book, provincial-level departments of climate change had been created across all provinces. But almost nothing has been established at the city level, so most city-level climate initiatives are being managed under the agencies responsible for air quality.

That means climate change is only one of those local officials' day-to-day responsibilities. Only a handful of cities have dedicated staff working on climate issues: Beijing, Shanghai, Zhenjiang, Shenzhen and Guiyang.

Nanchang devised some of China's first legislation to include an annual [financial] budget for low-carbon development. But when I revisited the city, officials were not actually sure about how and whether that budget was being used, because there wasn't a person responsible for it.

Therefore, even if there are resources available, they can go unused because local officials at the city level are so busy. If climate policy is not prioritised, or written into their job responsibilities, that can be a challenge for sustaining implementation.

In China's governance structure, the national government comes up with ideas, and the provincial level transfers these ideas down to local-level governments. City-level governments are the ones implementing these ideas.

So we need full-time staff to follow through on policies from the beginning right up to implementation.

Secondly, while almost all cities have now made carbon-peaking plans, one area in which the Chinese government can make further progress is in data.

China has recently emphasised the need to strengthen carbon-emissions data collection and monitoring. But when I was conducting my research, most Chinese cities had not yet established regular carbon-accounting systems.

As such, inadequate energy statistics and insufficient detail remain key barriers to effective climate-policy implementation.

In addition, the relevant data usually is owned by China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which does not always share it with other agencies. Local agencies can't always access detailed data.

When I visited Xiamen, officials told me the local government is now improving emissions monitoring systems. But there should be more systematic and rigorous data collection, covering both carbon emissions and non-CO_2 greenhouse gases. Also, much of the company-level data is self-reported, which could affect the accuracy of carbon-emissions statistics.

For continued climate action, it's also important that the central government ensures that local officials have the institutional support needed to experiment and propose new ideas.

…China will always need local officials willing to introduce new legislations or try new policy instruments – like Shenzhen with its ETS, or establishing new carbon-monitoring platforms.

For that, it needs entrepreneurial bureaucrats who are willing to turn ideas into actions. Ensuring that local governments have the right set of conditions to do this is very important.
CB: What did you find most surprising when researching this book?

WG: That international collaboration is still very important. I found that many officials learnt about climate change through international engagement.

In the current situation, I think international engagement is still very important – particularly given how, even with how geopolitics is really complicating things, many cities continue to have common challenges. For example, collaboration between Shanghai and Los Angeles on green shipping corridors is still ongoing.

That can bring opportunities for continuing climate action at the city level in the face of rising international tensions, as long as national governments give them space to be involved in international climate action.

Another surprise was the factors of what exactly made climate action durable. I was really surprised that many of the cities that I revisited were still involved in the pilot programmes, despite the central government restructuring that shifted the climate change portfolio from the NDRC to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment – which created challenges for the local governments who had to navigate this.

I also thought that the change in mayors for all four cities would lead to climate initiatives falling off the agenda.

But actually, Zhenjiang, Xiamen and Nanchang all maintained their low-carbon initiatives, despite these changes. This showed it isn't only strong mayors that bring success, but rather a group of trained personnel building and enforcing regulations and standards. So the importance of bureaucrats and bureaucracy in making climate action durable was actually way beyond my initial expectations.

I was also surprised that bureaucrats can be entrepreneurial, even though they work in a centralised system. They are creative, they know how to convince their boss about the importance of climate action and they know how that can bring opportunities for themselves and their boss. And because of how long they have worked in one area, they understand the local politics, policy processes and the coalitions needed to provide solutions.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

PH gov't should focus on long-term national planning, says think tank
By: Keith Clores

Amid increasing security, economic, and climate risks over time, Stratbase Group urged the Philippine government on Sunday to end reactive governance and instead focus on long-term policymaking.

“The Philippines is in danger of remaining exposed to overlapping economic, security, and climate shocks unless it shifts from reactive governance to long-term national planning,” Stratbase said in its statement.

During Stratbase’s “Politiká Beyond 2028: The Urgency for Resilient Growth, Inclusive Governance, and Geostrategic Thinking,” its president, Prof. Victor Andres “Dindo” Manhit, pointed out that climate change, economic disruption, maritime tensions, and cyber threats are interconnected and require sustainable planning.

“We are seeing different risks come together at the same time… When governance is fragmented or tied too closely to political cycles, the country ends up responding late and paying a much higher price,” Manhit said.

In terms of environmental vulnerability, Manhit pressed that preparedness and recovery begin at a local level, saying, “Local governments that are prepared and supported by clear national policies recover faster and suffer fewer long-term losses.”
Additionally, he said economic security isn’t simply measured by growing numbers, but the ability of the country to go through external shocks without impacting important sectors.

“Economic security is about stability as much as it is about expansion… It means ensuring our energy, food, and technology sectors can absorb global disruptions without undermining livelihoods,” Manhit explained.

Manhit also called on policies not only for more tangible security threats, but also those in virtual spaces.

“Security today goes beyond land, sea, and air… Cyber and information domains now directly affect national sovereignty and social cohesion,” he continued.

Furthermore, Manhit highlighted that national resilience is affected by public trust, pressing that issues such as corruption, disinformation, and institutional weaknesses can push away development.

“Transparency and accountability are not abstract ideals… They directly affect whether we can attract investment, build infrastructure, and deliver services that people can rely on,” Manhit continued.

He also pointed out that the “recurring weakness” in policymaking in the country lies in changes in priorities depending on the leadership, reiterating that sustainable laws are key to withstanding long-term issues as they come.

“Climate change, geopolitical competition, and technological disruption will outlast any single administration… The real challenge is whether we move from managing crises as they appear to preparing for them before they arrive,” Manhit further said.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Legarda calls for shift to green, inclusive growth amid slower GDP]

By: Wilnard Bacelonia

Sen. Loren Legarda on Friday urged policymakers to pursue greener, more inclusive and value-driven growth following weaker-than-expected economic performance in 2025.

Legarda said the latest data showing fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) growth of only 3 percent — the slowest quarterly expansion in nearly 15 years outside the pandemic — should prompt a reassessment of existing development assumptions.

Full-year growth settled at 4.4 percent, well below the government's target and the lowest annual rate since 2011.

"These economic figures must be understood in context. They invite us to reflect on whether our development strategies are responding effectively to today's realities," Legarda said.

She noted that the Development Budget Coordination Committee's decision to lower medium-term revenue projections through 2028 underscores the need for more prudent fiscal management and structural reform, as investment momentum and fiscal space tighten.

Legarda said decades of growth driven largely by large-scale, concrete-heavy infrastructure have exposed vulnerabilities when governance failures and weak oversight undermine public spending.

"These challenges affect the entire economy," she said, citing impacts on logistics, food prices, local enterprise growth, education outcomes, and household incomes.

She said the country has a policy foundation for an alternative growth path anchored on sustainability and resilience, pointing to landmark laws she authored or championed, including the Clean Air Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Renewable Energy Act, Climate Change Act, People's Survival Fund, Environmental Awareness and Education Act, and the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System law.

"We do not need to start from zero. We have laws that embed sustainability and resilience into the core of economic planning," Legarda said.

As co-chair of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), Legarda said education reform must advance alongside economic planning, noting recent findings on learning gaps and skills mismatch.

"Economic planning and education reform must move in tandem. Unless we invest in human growth, progress will remain uneven and fragile," she said.

Legarda said a development framework that links sustainability, innovation, and education can generate decent jobs, attract responsible investments, and strengthen local economies.

“We must move away from growth that excludes and toward development that uplifts every sector of society,” she said.

THE MANILA TIMES

Fingerprints of a broken planet

By: Ludwig Federigan

THE year 2025 will be remembered not as an anomaly but as a juridical moment for the climate era: science no longer merely warns us about warming — it can increasingly point a finger. Christian Aid's Counting the Cost 2025 and World Weather Attribution's (WWA) review, together with the Global Challenges Foundation's Global Catastrophic Risks 2026, make a single, stark argument. First, attribution science turns abstract peril into event-level evidence. Second, global governance remains fragmented and fails to act. The consequence results in ever-rising human and economic costs.

Christian Aid catalogued disasters from the Palisades and Eaton fires in the United States (over $60 billion in damages) to South and Southeast Asian cyclones costing over $25 billion and claiming more than 1,750 lives. Floods across China, India and Pakistan displaced millions. The Philippines endured a brutal typhoon sequence: Ragasa (Nando), Kalmaegi (Tino), Fung-Wong (Uwan), Wipha, Bualoi and Koto (Verbena), with Super Typhoon Fung-Wong displacing 1.4 million people; Wipha and Bualoi caused estimated losses of $1.5 billion and $900 million.

Attribution science translated these tragedies into causation. WWA finds that the February heat wave in South Sudan was made 4 degrees Celsius hotter by human-induced warming, converting a 1-in-1,600-year event into one expected "every other year." Iberian fire-weather was made 40 times more likely. Palisades and Eaton conditions were 35 percent more likely. A Ragasa-like typhoon was 49 percent more likely in 2025. Hurricane Melissa's peak winds intensified by about 7 percent and rainfall by over 9 percent due to ocean warming. WWA links amplified hazards to unequal burdens: women in heat-exposed informal sectors face disproportionate harm.

This is revolutionary. Attribution science permits specific accountability: we can increasingly quantify how much of an event's intensity or probability is anthropogenic. That evidence underpins claims for finance, reparations and policy change. I call the suffering a "political choice." If attribution provides the forensics, governance must deliver remedies.

But governance is the missing link. The Global Catastrophic Risks 2026 report stresses that climate risk is entwined with ecological collapse, technological hazards and security threats. The past decade's warming culminated in 2024 at 1.55 C above preindustrial levels, closing the margin for stability and raising the chance of tipping points, ice-sheet loss, permafrost thaw, mass forest dieback and coral collapse. Seven of nine planetary boundaries have been breached; isolated responses and siloed institutions are inadequate.

Finance and policy requirements

The failure is twofold. Finance and policy lag science. We need a fully funded Loss and Damage Fund, accelerated fossil-fuel phaseouts, increased climate finance and stronger Nationally Determined Contributions. Furthermore, capacity to document events is uneven. WWA warns of "unequal evidence," or that observational gaps and sparse localized models in the Global South mean many catastrophes go unattributed and unremedied. Scientific inequity mirrors impact inequity: those least responsible for emissions suffer most and often cannot prove it.

The remedy must be simultaneous: rapid, deep mitigation and a governance revolution. Practically, that means vastly expanded scientific capacity-building in vulnerable countries, funding observational networks, localized modelling and attribution hubs so evidence is not unequal. It also means a predictable loss and damage mechanism to channel funds to climate‑attributable losses; binding standards for corporate and state accountability where attribution shows disproportionate contribution; and institutional mechanisms treating planetary risks as interconnected rather than discrete.

There are precedents: the Montreal Protocol shows that phased commitments, finance mechanisms and compliance can work. The difference now is scale and simultaneity: climate and ecological risks interact with supply chains, migration and emergent technologies in ways old governance tools cannot manage. New multilateral instruments must act quickly, transparently and equitably, backed by attribution science.
Failing to act will deepen the "limits to adaptation" WWA warns of. Some extremes already exceed adaptation thresholds; Hurricane Melissa shows even strong preparedness cannot avert catastrophic losses when systems are pushed too far. The cost of inaction is tangible: the $60 billion fires, millions displaced, communities rendered uninhabitable and rising instability.
Attribution science hands moral and practical leverage: the ability to say, with growing precision, who contributed to specific harms and how much. Global governance must be upgraded to act on that leverage, linking forensic climate evidence to finance, liability and systemic reform. The choice is stark: heed the fingerprints of a broken planet and rebuild institutions to match the scale and interconnectedness of the risks, or accept ever-rising costs, inequality and chaos. The science has spoken; now the politics must follow.

UNDP

Climate Action in Classroom: Living the SDGs Through Education

Climate change is no longer a distant threat—it is part of everyday life. From unpredictable weather to rising air pollution, its impacts are increasingly felt by communities across Thailand and around the world.

Responding to this reality can begin with education.

Developed by the United Nations Development Programme, Climate Box is a set of interactive climate learning tools that creates a dynamic classroom experience through games, quizzes, and practical activities—connecting global challenges to daily life.

At Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School in Thailand’s Samut Prakan province, one teacher and his students are using Climate Box not only to learn about climate change, but to turn that knowledge into real-world solutions that save water, reduce pollution, and live the Sustainable Development Goals in action.

Making Climate Learning Real

Mr. Prawit Harnuparb, a physics teacher, has been teaching at the school for over two years with a clear intention: to place environmental issues at the heart of the classroom. This approach is increasingly urgent as Thailand faces multiple environmental challenges—from flooding and drought to worsening air pollution.

He believes that knowledge, when placed in the hands of young people, can drive real change. That belief led him to Climate Box, a set of practical climate education tools introduced to schools nationwide in 2025 through a collaboration between UNDP and Thailand’s Office of the Basic Education Commission.

Seeing how well the materials aligned with the existing curriculum, Mr. Prawit began integrating Climate Box into his lessons. Inside the toolkit are games, posters, and learning materials covering climate change, clean energy, and environmental issues from both local and global perspectives. He uses them particularly in physical science classes, especially when teaching topics related to renewable energy, through interactive and activity-based learning.

By turning complex climate concepts into hands-on experiences, Climate Box helps students see climate change as something connected to their daily lives—something they can understand, care about, and act on. Instead of passively listening, students are encouraged to play, discuss, and work through problems together, creating a classroom environment where engagement and curiosity thrive.

From Climate Knowledge to Innovation

As students began connecting classroom lessons to real challenges around them, climate education moved from theory to purpose. That shift opened the door to innovation.

Inspired by Climate Box, four students—Wirat Kladcay, Natnicha Sanitkum, Rinlada Muensoontorn, and Chotiga Rueangkaeo—developed a project called BDS Smart Farm, a solar-powered smart irrigation system designed to save water. The idea emerged from their observations of farmers who struggle with limited water for cultivation.

The system uses soil-moisture sensors to automatically regulate irrigation, ensuring crops receive the right amount of water without waste. Powered entirely by solar energy, it operates independently from household electricity, demonstrating how clean energy can be applied in practical, community-focused solutions.

Scaling Ideas to New Challenges

The students continued to build on their innovation by responding to another pressing issue: air pollution. Adapting the same core system, they developed BDS Dust Free Zone, an automated mist-spraying system designed to reduce PM2.5 dust in shared spaces.

By replacing soil-moisture sensors with air-quality sensors and adjusting the code accordingly, the system now detects pollution levels and automatically sprays fine mist to trap airborne dust particles. Like the original project, it runs on solar energy. Installed in a school pavilion, the system helps create a cleaner and safer space for students and the surrounding community.

Teachers as Multipliers of Change

For Mr. Prawit, these outcomes highlight the powerful role teachers play in responding to climate challenges. When students are equipped with the right knowledge and tools, learning does not stop at the classroom door. Understanding gained by one student can ripple outward—into families, communities, and future careers.

More than a teaching resource, Climate Box serves as a bridge between knowledge and action. It enables teachers to nurture critical thinking, problem-solving, and responsibility among young people, while empowering students to see themselves as part of the solution. Through education that inspires curiosity and innovation, climate action becomes not only possible—but personal.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

Wetlands as the Philippines' quiet climate shield
By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

As the world marks World Wetlands Day today, the Philippines confronts a reality that is neither abstract nor symbolic. In a country repeatedly tested by storms, floods, and rising seas, wetlands are not peripheral landscapes. They are part of the country's essential risk-management fabric, shaping how communities endure climate stress long before disasters arrive.

Wetlands do matter. Assessments under the Ramsar Convention and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change show that wetlands regulate water and store carbon in ways no engineered system can fully replicate. They temper floods, blunt storm surges, and lock away carbon accumulated over centuries. When intact, they quietly reduce climate risk. When degraded, that risk is transferred often directly into towns, infrastructure, and public budgets.

For the Philippines, this global reality takes on a distinctly national form. As an archipelago, we are shaped by water. Mangroves line our coasts, wetlands sit at river mouths and floodplains, and inland marshes and lakes regulate rainfall and runoff. These ecosystems form a first line of defense where climate hazards concentrate. They are where storm surges lose height, where floodwaters spread instead of destroy, and where risk is softened before it becomes catastrophe.

That natural shield, however, is thinning. Worldwide, more than a third of wetlands have disappeared since 1970, declining faster than forests. In the Philippines, land conversion, reclamation, pollution, and poorly planned development continue to erode wetlands even as climate impacts intensify. The result is not simply environmental loss. It is heightened exposure — more flooding, greater storm damage, higher recovery costs, and deeper disruptions to food systems and local economies.

The country's commitments under the Ramsar Convention reflect an understanding of what is at stake. Today, the Philippines counts ten Wetlands of International Importance, including Agusan Marsh, Olango Island, the Las Piñas–Parañaque Wetland Park, and the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve in Siargao. These sites are not symbolic designations. They show that wetland protection already sits within our development pathway, and must be treated with the urgency and scale it requires.

The climate value of mangroves is firmly established. After major typhoons "Yolanda" (Haiyan) and "Odette" (Rai), experience has shown that intact mangrove belts reduce wave energy, lower storm surges, and lessen damage to lives and property. Mangroves do not eliminate risk — but they decisively lower it, protecting buhay, kabuhayan, at kinabukasan — lives, livelihoods, and our shared future.

Equally important, mangrove protection and restoration are significantly less costly than relying solely on built defenses such as seawalls. They reduce the scale of infrastructure required while delivering benefits engineered systems cannot: fisheries productivity, food security, carbon storage and biodiversity. This is not an argument against gray infrastructure, but a reminder that nature-based solutions often make development more efficient, resilient, and fiscally sound.

The same logic applies inland. Lakes, marshes and freshwater wetlands are often treated as secondary to coastal systems, yet they are equally critical to climate resilience. These inland wetlands regulate water across entire watersheds — buffering floods, sustaining food production, and securing water supply during dry periods. Places like Lake Sebu, South

Cotabato, along with marshes and floodplain lakes across the country, are not only ecological assets but cultural and economic anchors for surrounding communities. Yet they are increasingly under pressure from unplanned development, pollution, watershed degradation and resource extraction. When lakes are overbuilt or marshes are drained, the consequences travel downstream — amplifying flood risk, degrading water quality and eroding livelihoods. Treating inland wetlands as expendable landscapes is a quiet but costly mistake in a warming climate.

Seen together, coastal and inland wetlands function as one connected system. What is lost upstream magnifies risk downstream; what fails inland weakens protection along the coast. Addressing these risks site by site is no longer sufficient. Managing wetlands at this scale is ultimately a question of national coordination and governance.

These realities are now reflected in national policy. The Philippines' National Adaptation Plan (NAP) — the country's first comprehensive adaptation framework developed under the leadership and administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. — was driven through a whole-of-government process led by the Climate Change Commission and submitted to the UNFCCC. The NAP recognizes wetlands as central to adaptation, particularly for disaster risk reduction, water regulation and community resilience. It reframes ecosystems not as ancillary environmental concerns, but as core assets for managing climate risk.

This shift matters because adaptation is ultimately about prevention. By embedding wetlands into climate planning, the NAP moves the country from reacting to disasters toward reducing their impact before they strike — lowering human suffering and long-term fiscal costs. It anchors decisions in data, climate projections, and risk assessments, ensuring that resilience investments are guided by evidence rather than impulse.

This is not theory. Over time, the work on wetlands has unfolded through common ground and shared responsibility. In Pandan, Antique, I joined Senator Loren Legarda during her visit to a community-run mangrove forest and nursery — one of many moments where policy intent meets lived reality. Along the coast, from Del Carmen in Siargao to the mangrove edges of Manila Bay, to mangrove parks in Leganes, Iloilo and in the Hundred Islands in Alaminos, Pangasinan, and in private-sector–supported sites such as the Aboitiz Foundation's mangrove and marine turtle sanctuary in Punta Dumalag, Davao, those encounters make clear why mangroves matter: they absorb force, hold the line and buy communities time.

Inland, the same logic applies. In Lake Sebu and Lake Lanao, repeated engagement shows how lake systems quietly sustain food, culture and water security, while remaining vulnerable to decisions made far upstream. Around Laguna Lake, long-standing and open conversations with Mayor Lani Cayetano of Taguig and Mayor Ronald Cosico of Paete have focused consistently on the need to sustain efforts addressing the stresses and strains of surging development, flooding hazards, water quality and fragmented authority. As Senator Legarda has often reminded us, resilience is not built by overpowering nature, but by respecting the systems that protect lives and livelihoods long before disasters arrive.

This year's World Wetlands Day theme —"Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge" — underscores a vital relationship that runs both ways. Across generations, Filipino communities have translated lived knowledge into practice: where to build, when to fish, how to leave space for water. These practices reinforce the value of wetlands and keep alive this memory of respect and stewardship that modern policy often struggles to sustain. In conversations in coastal villages and wetland communities, including with Indigenous Peoples, I have humbly heard the same lesson expressed plainly — that wetlands are not obstacles to progress, but conditions for survival. In return, wetlands protect the communities that have long depended on them by safeguarding livelihoods, anchoring culture and preserving ways of life that form part of the Filipino soul. When science, data, and traditional knowledge converge, stewardship becomes not only effective, but enduring.

The task now is to treat wetlands with the seriousness we reserve for other forms of national infrastructure. Roads, bridges and digital networks receive sustained investment because we recognize their role in economic continuity and public safety. Wetlands deserve the same recognition. Mainstreaming blue carbon and nature-based solutions into climate planning and budgeting is not a choice between development and protection. It is a choice for development and prosperity that last.

In a warming world, resilience is built long before disaster strikes. Wetlands do that work quietly — absorbing, slowing, and buffering risk day after day. Keeping this natural shield in place is one of the most practical, disciplined, and forward forward-looking decisions the Philippines has made. This is a decision we must continue to strengthen and broaden in its implementation nationwide.

PANAY NEWS

PH should have a carbon neutral or a net zero goal

By: Ike Seneres

Believe it or not, the Philippines is the only country in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that has not yet set a formal carbon neutrality or net-zero target.

Yes, you read that right. Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and even Indonesia have set their own timelines. Only the Philippines stands out for its absence.

What happened to us? And why has this happened? Who has been negligent? Is it the Congress? Is it the Executive Branch? Or perhaps the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Climate Change Commission?

Has our mass media also overlooked this? And what about social media, with its legions of bloggers and influencers — have they been silent too? Could it be that even civil society has also overlooked this crucial matter?

The absence of a net-zero goal is not a minor oversight. It reflects something deeper — that the urgency of climate action has not yet fully entered our collective consciousness. This is very important to us now, and even more so for our children in the future.

Let's look at our ASEAN neighbors. Most of them have committed to carbon neutrality by 2050. Thailand set its goal as 2065. Indonesia pushed its target to 2060. But all of them have declared a target year. And the Philippines? None. Not even a hint of a target.

So, should we set our goal at 2070, since we are already so late? Do you think 45 years is enough time to get there? Should we be less ambitious than Thailand, which at least has the advantage of rallying behind their King? Could it be that we have failed to muster political will, wasting our energies on endless political bickering between so many interests?

This is not supposed to be a partisan issue. Having a net-zero goal is so important that it should go beyond political lines. It should be part of our national vision, not our political debates.

But what does the record show? What have the succession of DOE Secretaries done to propose or adopt these goals? If there were already recommendations, why did they fail?
Could it be that powerful lobby groups are working against net-zero commitments? If so, who are they? Are we talking about coal, oil, and gas interests?

On the other hand, what are we doing to generate more energy from alternative sources? From wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, and biogas? What about other biofuels such as those from coconut and nipa palm? These are resources we already have in abundance. Why aren't we scaling them up?

Where is the coordination between DOE, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agriculture (DA), and Department of Science and Technology (DOST)? Shouldn't they be working together on a roadmap toward a net zero goal? Is this not a top priority in the agenda of the Cabinet, of Congress, and even of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC)?
As of today, the Philippines has committed to reducing emissions by 75% by 2030 under its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). But here is the catch: 72% of that commitment is conditional, meaning it depends on international support such as climate finance and technology transfer. Only 2.71% is unconditional, meaning we will do it with our own resources. In other words, we are waiting for the rest of the world to help us before we act decisively.

This is not good enough. We are one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Every year, stronger typhoons and floods wipe out billions of pesos in damage. Every year, our farmers and fisherfolk bear the brunt of climate change. If any country has the moral high ground to act urgently, it is us.

So why are we not declaring a net-zero year target? Even if it is aspirational, it signals intent. It rallies government, business, and communities around a common timeline. It sends a message to the international community that we are serious, and it helps us access climate finance more effectively.

If Indonesia, so dependent on coal, can aim for 2060, why can't we? If Vietnam, with its massive industrial growth, can commit to 2050, why can't we?

The truth is simple: the Philippines should already have a carbon-neutral or net-zero goal. It should be part of our laws. It should be part of our national consciousness. It should be part of our children's future

The challenge is not technical — it is political. And until we muster the political will to rise above lobby groups and short-term interests, we will continue to be behind our neighbors, to our own peril.

So, here is my suggestion: Congress should declare a national net-zero target year by law. The DOE should draft a roadmap with inputs from DENR, DA, and DOST. The President should make it a priority agenda. And civil society, the media, and yes—even social media—should push this issue into the national conversation.

Because if we cannot even set a goal, how can we ever hope to reach it?

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