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By: Robert E.A. Borje

On 2 February, we observed World Wetlands Day to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands for both people and the planet, particularly in supporting biodiversity, combating climate change, and protecting communities from natural hazards. This year’s theme, “Protecting wetlands for our common future,” resonates deeply with our national climate action agenda, as the Philippines continues to strengthen efforts to conserve and rehabilitate these vital ecosystems.

[Strengthening the path towards a green economy through the Sustainability Forum 2025](#)

The German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GPCCI), in collaboration with the German Embassy in Manila, successfully hosted the Sustainability Forum 2025: The Green Economies on 31 January 2025 at the Makati Shangri-La. This significant event brought together leaders from government, business, and civil society to discuss climate action, green infrastructure, and the future of green jobs in the Philippines.

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

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A fresh surge of Amihan or the northeast monsoon is expected to bring cold weather to most parts of Luzon this week

According to Ariel Rojas, ABS-CBN's new resident meteorologist, the surge may bring light to occasionally moderate rains over Cordillera, Cagayan Valley, Aurora, and Quezon until Friday.

This may be enhanced by a shear line, a boundary where cold and warm air masses meet, which will fully develop on Wednesday.

The shearline will bring scattered moderate to heavy rains over Eastern Visayas and parts of Caraga Wednesday; shifting to Bicol, northern MIMAROPA, and Panay Thursday to Saturday; and moving down again to most of Visayas and northern parts of Mindanao by Sunday.

"Flooding and landslides are expected in these areas," per Rojas.

A weather disturbance is also expected to form east/southeast of Mindanao by midweek, but it has very low chance of developing into a tropical cyclone.

Meanwhile, cloudy weather is expected in Metro Manila from Monday through Wednesday. There will be sunny spells in the morning and possible light rains Thursday to Sunday.

BUSINESS WORLD

Reflections on a just transition

By: Rhoda Viajar

The Conference of Parties (CoP29) or the climate summit wrapped up in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2024 with two clear outcomes: having a new target for climate finance to developing countries and laying down initial rules for bilateral and global carbon trading. These are not the ambitious and desired outcomes that climate activists have been hoping for, especially in the light of calls for a “just transition,” but at least the negotiations did not completely collapse.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines just transition as “a set of principles, processes and practices that aim to ensure that no people, workers, places, sectors, countries or regions are left behind in the transition from a high carbon to a low carbon economy.”

One emerging concern is that this transition requires the quick, deep, and massive transition in energy sources, access, and distribution. To deliver this transition to “clean energy,” massive amounts of minerals and raw materials are required, including nickel, cobalt, aluminum, lithium, and other rare earth minerals.

Which creates a dilemma. If we require more minerals to achieve the clean energy transition and pursue a “just transition,” would this mean we are going to open more mines? What if the mineral extractions would result in more deforestation, displacement of communities, or environmental harm?

In response, the extractives industry and some mining countries have touted their intent to expand “responsible mining” to reconcile the demand for more of these “transition minerals” with the triple-bottom lines of profit, people, and planet.

While it is true that transition minerals are needed for renewable energy systems, a large part of the demand for transition minerals is expected to be utilized for electric vehicles, and not necessarily for solar or wind energies.

In Germany, for instance, around 60% of raw material consumption is expected to go to the transport sector. A study by Power Shift investigated the metal requirements in the production of battery-powered cars by Volkswagen. It found out that the batteries alone could require around eight times more aluminum and nickel in 2030 than the entire planned expansion of wind power plants in Germany.

The questions then are: Who will benefit from mining transition minerals? Are they going to be used for solar or wind energies to power our cities and countryside, or are they going to mainly serve the shift to electric vehicles? Are they going to be utilized for the Philippines' own industrialization, or are they going to be used mainly by rich countries' energy transition?

More importantly, who will shoulder the costs — environmental, social, and health — of mining? Are there enough safeguards to prevent deforestation, water depletion, and noise and air pollution? Who will bear the impacts of loss of biodiversity, toxic mine accidents, and disasters? How about lost livelihoods by the affected communities?

Responsible mining claims that the jobs generated by mining companies justify acceptance for mining. However, government data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau show that in 2023, the mining industry's contribution to total employment is only at 0.45%, while its contribution to GDP is only 0.70% (at current prices).

To fully respond to the challenges of a just transition and towards a clean energy transition, the Marcos Jr. administration must consider the following recommendations:

- 1.) Enactment of an updated mining law. The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 remains inadequate to address climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR).
- 2.) Expansion of the cost-benefit analysis of mining and other extractives projects.
- 3.) Additional and proper enforcement of no-go zones and protected areas, particularly prime agricultural lands, and primary forests.
- 4.) A science-based policy that ensures no sacrifice zones are added to the already many vulnerable and high-risk areas susceptible to climate change impacts.
- 5.) Defining and strengthening the recycling and reuse systems of various industries.
- 6.) Formulation and adoption of a circular economy framework.

While we can recognize that minerals and metals do have roles and contributions to make in the path to industrialization, mining must not create more sacrifice zones nor deepen the suffering of people and planet to satisfy the increasing needs of already richer countries.

New Zealand targets cutting emissions by 51% to 55% by 2035

New Zealand said late on Thursday that it would make a commitment that by 2035 the country would have reduced emissions by 51% to 55% compared to 2005 levels.

The commitment is part of the country's commitment under the Paris Agreement. Its initial commitment had been to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030 and is part of the country's pledge to be net zero by 2050.

"We have worked hard to set a target that is both ambitious and achievable, reinforcing our commitment to the Paris Agreement and global climate action," Climate Change Minister Simon Watts said in a statement.

"Meeting this target will mean we are doing our fair share towards reducing the impact of climate change," he added.

Mr. Watts said New Zealand was on target to meet its commitments as early as 2044.

However, Climate Commission, a government-funded but independent expert, in December called for New Zealand to target reducing emissions further than its original effort as many comparable countries have more ambitious targets than New Zealand and evidence shows that global action is insufficient to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

MANILA BULLETIN

[\[Opinion\] Wetlands: Protecting nature's vital ecosystems](#)

The Senate's approval on third and final reading, of Senate Bill No. 1536, seeking to strengthen the protection of the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park (LPPWP), has brought attention to the critical role wetlands play in the global village.

Wetlands sustain biodiversity, mitigate climate change, and support livelihoods. Despite covering only six percent of Earth's surface, wetlands harbor 40 percent of all plant and animal species and provide essential services, such as flood control, water purification, and food security for over a billion people.

Unfortunately, wetlands are among the Earth's most threatened ecosystem, disappearing three times faster than forests due to urbanization, pollution, and climate change. "In just 50 years — since 1970 — 35 percent of the world's wetlands have been lost. Human activities that lead to loss of wetlands include drainage and infilling for agriculture and construction, pollution, overfishing and overexploitation of resources, invasive species and climate change," according to a United Nations statement.

Every year on Feb. 2, the United Nations leads the commemoration of World Wetlands Day to raise awareness about the significant role of the wetlands.

In the Philippines, there are eight internationally recognized wetlands under the Ramsar Convention – the LPPWP, Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary; Naujan Lake National Park; Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary; Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park; Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park; Negros Occidental Coastal Wetlands Conservation Area; and Sasmuan Pampanga Coastal Wetlands.

These Ramsar sites highlight the nation's critical role in global biodiversity conservation.

The LPPWP, located in Metro Manila, is a unique ecosystem comprising tidal marshes, mudflats, mangroves, and shallow waters. It provides habitat to at least 5,000 birds of 159 species, including the endangered Philippine Duck and Chinese Egret. Beyond its ecological significance, the park serves as a buffer against flooding and storms for Metro Manila residents and supports the livelihoods of 300,000 fisherfolk in Manila Bay.

Senate Bill No. 1536, authored by Senator Cynthia Villar, proposes a three-kilometer seaward expansion from the current shoreline boundary to preserve the park's ecological integrity and safeguard its biodiversity from the pressures of development activities. This measure will be a significant amendment to Republic Act 11038, the

Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (ENIPAS), which already designates the LPPWP as a protected area.

By establishing a buffer zone, the bill aims to protect the park's ecosystems and ensure the free flow of water from interconnected rivers, such as the Parañaque, Las Piñas, and Zapote Rivers. The mangrove forests within the park act as natural shields against disasters, while also supporting fisheries crucial for food security in Metro Manila.

Villar, chairperson of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change, said that with the bill's approval, senators take on their patriotic as well as their global duty to ensure that all steps were taken to fulfill international commitments under the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the ASEAN Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, among others.

Governments and private sectors must collaborate to protect and restore these vital ecosystems. Enforcing existing environmental laws, expanding protected areas, and investing in green infrastructure are crucial steps. Community engagement and education are also essential to change the perception of wetlands from wastelands to invaluable resources.

As the Philippines takes pride in its Ramsar-designated sites, the approval of the LPPWP Protection Act sets a precedent for future conservation initiatives. It reminds us that wetlands are not just ecological treasures but vital to our survival and well-being.

On World Wetlands Day, may we renew our commitment to safeguarding these lifegiving ecosystems for generations to come.

MANILA STANDARD

[More than defense: How the Philippine military protects the environment](#)

By: Rex Espiritu

The Philippine military is not just safeguarding the nation's sovereignty—it is also taking a stand for environmental sustainability.

From using electric vehicles and solar-powered facilities to planting trees and aiding in disaster response, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has integrated eco-friendly initiatives into its operations.

Philippine Army: Greening the camps

At the Philippine Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, sustainability is in action. Twelve electric vehicles shuttle personnel and civilians across the camp, reducing carbon emissions. The headquarters also installed three solar-powered lamp posts to promote energy conservation.

“Also, no vehicles around the headquarters complex to promote healthy walking and zero carbon emission. We have also constructed solar powered water refilling stations and laundry,” Army Spokesperson Col Louie Dema-ala told Manila Standard.

These eco-friendly initiatives are not confined to Fort Bonifacio. Dema-ala noted that similar projects have been implemented in major Army camps nationwide, including a strict “no-smoking policy” in offices and premises.

To promote environmental sustainability, the Army's 2nd Infantry “Jungle Fighter” Division planted 1,000 bamboo seedlings on January 30 at the San Andres Military Reservation in Tanay, Rizal.

Bamboo plays a crucial role in preventing soil erosion, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening the area's ecological resilience.

Philippine Air Force: Protecting forests and farms

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) has been actively contributing to the National Greening Program, an initiative launched in 2011 to reforest degraded areas.

According to PAF spokesperson Col. Ma. Consuelo Castillo, they have planted over 100,000 trees across Air Bases and partner communities since 2018.

Beyond tree planting, PAF also plays a crucial role in environmental monitoring. Its aircraft are frequently used to survey forests and coastal areas, while helicopters with heli-buckets help suppress wildfires in Benguet, Ilocos, and other regions.

“We also use our aircraft for cloud seeding activities to help farmers grow their crops during El Niño, and produce rain to help prevent or suppress forest fires,” Castillo said. The PAF also supports disaster response efforts for communities affected by heavy rains and typhoons.

Philippine Navy: Climate action through partnerships

The Philippine Navy, meanwhile, strengthened its commitment to environmental protection through strategic partnerships. It recently signed an agreement with Advocates Capable for Environment to Restructure and Sustainability Inc. (ACERS Inc.), a non-profit organization that supports disaster response and climate change awareness programs.

This partnership focuses on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and medical missions while also promoting sustainability efforts within naval operations.

Through these initiatives, the AFP is proving that national defense extends beyond securing borders—it also means protecting the environment by integrating sustainability into military operations.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Charting the path toward a climate-resilient Philippines](#)

By: Joanna Perfecto

The Philippines continues to be among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. It is at the top of the Global Climate Risk Index and is regarded as the most vulnerable in the World Risk Index 2024.

The nation confronts growing dangers from severe weather occurrences that jeopardize lives, ecosystems and livelihoods.

Given that 74% of the population faces climate-related threats, the need for impactful policies and effective leadership is urgent. As the 2025 midterm elections approach, the question remains: will we elect leaders capable of addressing these pressing challenges?

According to the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey commissioned by the Stratbase Group, public satisfaction with the national administration on specific issues highlights disaster response as a top priority.

Helping victims of disasters received the highest net satisfaction rating at +65, while preparedness for strong typhoons ranked lower at +34. Meanwhile, ensuring food security stood at +46, and efforts to prepare for problems caused by climate change saw a modest increase to +34. These numbers indicate that while the public recognizes government initiatives, there is still significant room for improvement in fostering long-term climate resilience strategies.

For the third year in a row, the Philippines has been recognized as the nation most at risk of extreme natural disasters, with a score of 46.91% in the 2024 World Risk Index.

These disasters are associated with climate change caused by fossil fuel emissions, which persist in obstructing economic growth, social progress, and the overall welfare of individuals. These environmental concerns highlight the need for effective leadership and revolutionary policies that emphasize environmental sustainability and climate responsibility.

The past year underscores the urgency of our climate situation. The World Meteorological Organization reports that 2024 is the hottest year documented, worsening 26 of 29 major global weather incidents and displacing millions.

On a local level, the lack of awareness regarding climate risks worsens the situation. While 71% of Filipinos recognize climate change as a direct threat to their families, a

September 2023 Pulse Asia survey revealed that only 11% report having extensive knowledge about the topic. This gap emphasizes the need for enhanced climate education and communication strategies to connect awareness with action.

The Philippines holds a distinctive role in leading significant climate initiatives. As a leader in the Loss and Damage Fund Board, the country plays a critical role in ensuring transparent governance and equitable distribution of resources to climate-vulnerable nations.

However, financial mechanisms alone are not enough. Enhancing disaster readiness and focusing on long-term resilience approaches, like shifting to sustainable energy, are essential for reducing climate threats and promoting economic stability.

The public's overwhelming support for renewable energy is a promising sign of this potential for action. According to the same survey, 85% of Filipinos advocate for increased use of solar, wind, and hydropower.

A sustainable energy system is critical to meeting the nation's growing demands while reducing its environmental footprint. Similarly, responsible mining practices are vital to supporting renewable energy development, ensuring sustainable resource extraction with minimal environmental harm and aggressive rehabilitation of impacted areas.

As the nation advances toward cleaner energy options, it is just as crucial to implement sustainable resource management methods. This shift aligns with wider legislative and policy initiatives focused on sustainability, including the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, the Circular Economy bill, and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

These measures emphasize sustainable resource use and waste reduction, promoting responsible production and consumption. The proposed Circular Economy bill, for instance, seeks to extend the lifecycle of products, minimize waste, and encourage recycling and responsible disposal.

By mandating industries to adopt circular economy practices, this legislation reinforces environmental accountability. However, the success of these initiatives depends on transparent governance and strict implementation.

Encouraging investments in renewable energy and sustainability initiatives remains crucial in ensuring energy security and long-term economic resilience. Policy reforms supporting clean energy projects, infrastructure development, and incentives for

businesses transitioning to greener alternatives play a vital role in advancing these efforts.

The Philippines' potential for growth in the renewable energy sector has been recognized globally, with international reports ranking the country among the most attractive emerging markets for renewable energy investments.

To drive these initiatives forward, strategic collaboration among government agencies, civil society, and private stakeholders is essential to amplifying their impact.

In support of this, the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) and the Climate Reality Project Philippines are hosting a roundtable discussion, "Building Resilient Communities through Environmental Accountability and Transparent Governance," on Feb. 12, 2025, at the AIM Conference Center in Makati City. This event will bring together experts from various sectors to tackle climate resilience challenges, sustainable consumption, and opportunities within the circular economy.

As the nation approaches the 2025 elections, citizens should select leaders who prioritize sustainable practices and environmental stewardship. Electing representatives who will promote sustainable policies, endorse responsible mining, advocate for a circular economy, and strive for national food security is essential.

Selecting leaders committed to these efforts allows us to make meaningful progress toward a more sustainable and resilient Philippines.

Good governance is inseparable from effective climate action. It is important that government leaders rise above political divisions and focus on human security and ecosystems, and the future of the Philippines. By working together, we can create a nation where economic growth and environmental sustainability go hand in hand.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Protecting our natural defenses for a climate-resilient Philippines](#)

By: Robert E.A. Borje

On 2 February, we observed World Wetlands Day to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands for both people and the planet, particularly in supporting biodiversity, combating climate change, and protecting communities from natural hazards. This year's theme, "Protecting wetlands for our common future," resonates deeply with our national climate action agenda, as the Philippines continues to strengthen efforts to conserve and rehabilitate these vital ecosystems.

Wetlands support rich biodiversity and ecosystems that provide essential resources such as rice, fish, freshwater, and fiber — all fundamental to human survival. These water-dependent ecosystems include lakes, rivers, peatlands, mangroves, estuaries and coral reefs. Beyond sustaining biodiversity, wetlands act as natural buffers against climate-induced disasters. They absorb excess floodwaters, lessen storm surge impacts, and store carbon — helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the 2016 Atlas of Philippine Inland Wetlands and Classified Caves, the country has 314 inland wetlands and 2,487 river systems.

Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, also known as the Ramsar Convention, affirm that properly managed and restored wetlands are crucial in disaster risk reduction. Wetland soils contain approximately 35 percent of the world's organic carbon despite covering only 6 percent of the Earth's surface. Coastal ecosystems, particularly mangroves, salt marshes, and seagrass beds, store two to four times more carbon than terrestrial forests. This carbon remains locked in wetland soils for centuries, which underscores the need to prevent the degradation, drainage, and loss of wetlands.

Yet, despite their importance, we have seen the alarming loss of wetlands due to the expansion of human settlements, land mismanagement and poor agricultural practices — particularly destructive and extractive activities such as draining, dredging, stream channeling, damming and introducing alien invasive species. This loss has severe consequences, especially among vulnerable communities that rely on wetlands for food, water and livelihoods.

The decline of mangroves and floodplains also increases flood hazards, while the depletion of coastal wetlands weakens natural defenses against typhoons and storm surges. As wetlands deteriorate, so does the ability of communities to adapt to

increasing climate risks, making conservation and restoration efforts all the more crucial and urgent.

As a Ramsar Convention signatory, the Philippines is committed to the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of wetland ecosystems. There are 10 wetlands that have been so far declared in the country as Wetlands of International Importance under the Convention, namely: Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Cebu Province (1994); Naujan Lake National Park in Oriental Mindoro (1999); Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (1999); Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in Palawan (1999); Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park in Palawan (2012); Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (2013); Negros Occidental Coastal Wetlands Conservation Area (2016); and Sasmuan Pampanga Coastal Wetlands (2021).

Last year, the Sibugay Wetland Nature Reserve and Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve were added to the list.

Securing its place on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, the fifth-class municipality of Del Carmen, Surigao del Norte, exemplifies how community-led mangrove management can effectively empower local residents and strengthen their capacity to withstand natural and human-induced disasters.

With 4,871 hectares of mangrove forests and 44,000 hectares of municipal waters, the town's primary sources of livelihood are farming, fishing and beach tourism. However, situated in the eastern Philippines, Del Carmen frequently experiences typhoons. But local leaders see these challenges as opportunities to build a more resilient and progressive community. Local government officials and residents have worked together to conserve the mangrove forests, recognizing the role these ecosystems play in coastal protection, biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. Their efforts were tested and best demonstrated in 2021 when super typhoon "Odette" struck. The dense mangroves acted as a natural shield, reducing damage and saving lives.

At the Climate Change Commission, we recognize wetland conservation as a national priority in achieving the Philippines' Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement. As wetlands store carbon, their restoration strengthens climate resilience while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Through the National Adaptation Plan, nature-based solutions such as wetland restoration remain a key component of our long-term climate adaptation strategies. Scaling up wetland conservation requires a whole-of-nation approach, which is now vigorously pursued under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. This endeavor involves national agencies, local

governments, businesses and communities working together to preserve safeguard and sustain these ecosystems.

Everyone has a critical role in wetland protection and restoration efforts. Local residents can adopt sustainable fishing and farming practices, and reduce pollution in mangrove forests and other wetland areas. Civil society, non-government and faith-based organizations, through their community programs, can initiate and help sustain mangrove reforestation. Businesses that operate in geographic areas with wetlands and mangroves can leverage their operations in such communities towards achieving business sustainability and value creation. LGUs can develop and enforce policies that preserve and restore wetlands within their jurisdictions.

Amid the climate crisis, wetlands offer hope and resilience as they stand as our nature's frontline defense. They sustain life, support livelihoods and protect communities. Their preservation and restoration are not just an ecological imperative but a necessity for a climate-resilient Philippines.

As we marked World Wetlands Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting these irreplaceable ecosystems. They are natural assets and lifelines that shield us, especially those in our coastal communities, from the harsh realities of climate change.

[Strengthening the path towards a green economy through the Sustainability Forum 2025](#)

The German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GPCCI), in collaboration with the German Embassy in Manila, successfully hosted the Sustainability Forum 2025: The Green Economies on 31 January 2025 at the Makati Shangri-La. This significant event brought together leaders from government, business, and civil society to discuss climate action, green infrastructure, and the future of green jobs in the Philippines.

German Ambassador Andreas Pfaffernoschke emphasized Germany's commitment to climate action in the Philippines:

"Germany is a reliable and long-term partner of climate action in the Philippines. Through our global International Climate Initiative (IKI), a wide range of projects have been implemented in the Philippines since IKI was launched in 2008. Currently, ongoing bilateral projects amount to EUR 53.4 million (around Php 3.2 bn). Our commitment not only underscores our dedication to environmental and climate protection but also highlights our ambition to create a resilient, sustainable, and prosperous society for all."

The forum focused on three key objectives: evaluating the Philippines' progress in meeting its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), promoting sustainable infrastructure and business solutions, and empowering the workforce for green jobs. Discussions explored the Philippines' status in fulfilling its NDCs under the Paris Agreement, emphasizing sustainability efforts and policies that affect various sectors. Industry experts discussed best practices in energy-efficient designs, sustainable urban development, and innovative business solutions. The session on green jobs underscored the importance of equipping the workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in a green economy.

The event featured key experts led by the Climate Change Commission, which delivered the keynote on the Philippines' progress toward its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The Climate Action panel included the Climate Change Commission, Planet 2050, the United Nations Global Compact, and the Asian Development Bank, discussing climate resilience. The Green Infrastructure / Business Solutions panel featured the Department of Energy, Palafox Associates, the Philippine Green Building Council, BASF Philippines, and Siemens Inc. The Green Jobs panel, with ASISST, DOLE – Institute of Labor Studies, PV2 Energie Philippines, Employers Confederation of the Philippines, and Humble Sustainability.

"The strength of the Philippine economy lies in its people, and green jobs are key to securing a sustainable future," says GPCCI President Marie Antoniette Mariano. "By

equipping our workforce with the right skills and fostering business-led sustainability initiatives, we can drive economic growth while advancing climate action."

The Sustainability Forum 2025 concluded with a resounding call to action on urging businesses, policymakers, and civil society to implement impactful sustainability initiatives. Through continued collaboration, the vision of a greener, more resilient future is within reach.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Proposed national disaster map key in saving lives during natural calamities--solon](#)

By: Ellson Quismorio

In a bid to save lives and property during natural calamities, Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan has pitched for the creation of a national disaster map.

Yamsuan's proposal is embodied in House Bill (HB) No.11205 or the Hazard-Mapping Law.

The full title of the bill reads, "An Act providing for the issuance of a list of low-lying areas of the Philippine territory vulnerable to rising sea levels as a result of climate change, and areas at high risk for natural disasters, mandating the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Science and Technology, Philippine Space Agency, Climate Change Commission, and other concerned government agencies for its regular updating and appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes.

"We cannot prevent the occurrences of typhoons, volcanic eruptions and other natural phenomena, aggravated by the added threat of climate change. But it is possible to mitigate their impact by adopting science-based strategies," the neophyte solon said.

"These include creating a national disaster map that would help communities, especially coastal areas, prepare for, and lessen the devastating effects of these disasters," Yamsuan said.

The aspiring Parañaque congressman said 2024 starkly highlighted the urgency of passing this measure, with the country experiencing a record-breaking severe typhoon season that led to the loss of thousands of lives and massive damages to homes, infrastructure and the agriculture sector.

The economic repercussions of these successive calamities were most felt in the Bicol region, where the damage to agriculture alone from typhoons Kristine and Leon reached P2.9 billion.

This is almost half of the nearly P6 billion total losses reported in the agriculture sector, said Yamsuan, a former assistant secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

HB No.11205 mandates the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the National Mapping and Resources Information Authority (NAMRIA) and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), to provide and issue a national disaster map of the Philippines.

Assisting these agencies in completing the task are the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA), Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

The disaster map, among other things, "shall contain proper identification of lands bordering sea levels, exposed to volcanic eruption and lying on earthquake faults".

The map should also include the criteria for evacuation and illustration of recommended evacuation sites and routes.

Creating the disaster map would not have to start from scratch, given that the MGB already has a geohazard map in place that pinpoints vulnerable areas in the country, Yamsuan said.

He said information sources in creating the disaster map should not be limited to scientific instrument-based data, but should also utilize a holistic approach by including, among others, indigenous peoples' knowledge.

The bill provides for a nationwide information drive; training programs for local officials, disaster response teams and community leaders; and other similar efforts to ensure the disaster map's accessibility and proper use.

=END=