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ABS CBN

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By: Alvin Elchico

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BUCKSCO

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By: Alaina Gross

George Washington's famous Delaware River crossing foreshadowed both the birth of a nation and the dawn of human-caused climate change.

George Washington's 1776 crossing of the Delaware foreshadowed both the birth of a nation and the dawn of human-caused climate change, reports David Schechter for CBS News Philadelphia.

BUSINESS WORLD

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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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The Philippines government should develop rights-respecting planned relocation, and international organizations and donors should provide their support.

MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Ricardo M. Austria

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PBC

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The need to accelerate progress on climate change has never been more urgent, and yet strong headwinds over the past year have delivered a clear moment of risk to the transition, as the political landscape in the UK and internationally has shifted, writes Amanda Williams, head of environmental sustainability, CIOB

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

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By: Juanito Joshua G. Sugay III

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro (PIA) — A community group in Naujan town is earning more while helping protect nature through support from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) under the Mindoro Biodiversity Corridor (MBC) Project.

The Dao Waterlily Association, located near the Naujan Lake National Park, received technical assistance during a monitoring visit on Feb. 9 -13.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Legarda pushes resilient growth strategy amid pressing economic realities](#)

FOLLOWING an earlier statement on the country's deteriorating fiscal position, Senator Loren Legarda reinforced her call for a greener, more resilient growth strategy in a privilege speech delivered on the Senate floor on Feb. 10, 2026, warning that the country's economic engine is stalling after the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) reported fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) growth at only three percent and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 63.2 percent, the highest in two decades.

[Free patent system reforms in place to speed up titling](#)

By: Giselle P. Jordan

THE country's residential free patent system has been amended to speed up land titling, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Tuesday.

The changes were made through DENR Administrative Order 2025-35, signed by Environment Secretary Raphael Lotilla and dated Dec. 10, 2025.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Climate change forum scheduled for Friday](#)

The Cebu City Government is set to host a forum that places climate change at the center of the city's cultural and social identity. Legarda pushes resilient growth strategy amid pressing economic realities

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

[End of cold amihan season to result in higher power consumption — Meralco](#)

By: Alvin Elchico

As the cold amihan season nears its end, Meralco reminded consumers to prepare their appliances and adjust their power usage in the coming hotter months.

Meralco Spokesman Joe Zaldarriaga said consumption usually goes up during the "summer" or dry season as more consumers use cooling devices to beat the heat.

Experts from Meralco said air conditioning units or appliances that reduce temperature consume more power when the weather is hotter.

Here's a general guide on how much electricity some common appliances consume, under a 28 °C ambient temperature:

Meralco noted that when summer kicks in, power costs double for air conditioning units used at night, and triple if used during the day.

Zaldarriaga said electricity consumption rises by 20 percent to 33 percent for residential consumers during the hotter months as many use cooling devices like air conditioners to beat the heat.

The northeast monsoon, or amihan, generally lasts from October to March or early April, bringing colder weather to many parts of the country. Weather bureau PAGASA announced the start of the current amihan season in the Philippines on October 27, 2025.

Meanwhile, the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) said on Wednesday that the proposal for the government to shoulder the electricity bill of consumers who consume 135 kilowatt-hours and below every month is feasible or doable.

ERC Chairman Atty. Nino Juan said the bill of House Majority Leader Sandro Marcos to exempt consumers who use up to 135 kilowatt-hours monthly can happen if the government allocates funds for it.

Though the ERC has no idea yet how much the government needs to implement the subsidy, this can be done on top of the lifeline subsidy program for members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and the marginalized sector.

"Kaya yan! magagawan yan ng mga mekanismo para talagang maisakatuparan at maging matagumpay at mafocus natin dun sa talagang objective na mabigyan ng ayuda yung mga nangangailangang consumers natin," said Juan.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has announced over the weekend the start of the lifeline subsidy program for those members of 4Ps and the marginalized sector, but this program is subsidized by all consumers through an increase of P0.01/kwh starting March 2026.

Under the program, eligible members of the 4Ps and the marginalized sector will enjoy a 100 percent discount if their consumption does not exceed 50kwh every month.

In the Meralco franchise area, the same sectors can enjoy a 20-35 percent discount as long as their consumption does not go beyond 100 kwh every month.

BUSINESS WORLD

[EU ill-prepared for worsening climate change, advisers say](#)

The European Union is not prepared for worsening climate change and should urgently step up its investments to protect people and infrastructure from mounting floods, wildfires, and severe heatwaves, its independent advisers said on Tuesday.

Climate change has made Europe the world's fastest-warming continent, according to the World Meteorological Organization, driving more frequent and intense heatwaves, flooding, coastal destruction and storms.

The economic damage to European infrastructure and buildings from weather and climate extremes is now 45 billion euros (\$53.34 billion) per year, five times higher than in the 1980s, EU data show.

While the EU has ambitious targets to cut greenhouse gases – the main cause of climate change – its efforts have fallen short on adapting to the extreme weather climate change is already fueling, according to the EU's advisers, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change.

"It is a lack of coherence, a lack of coordination, and also a lack of budget," said the advisory board's chair, Ottmar Edenhofer.

Without stronger preparations, extreme weather will further harm the EU's competitiveness, straining public budgets and increasing security risks, the advisers said.

They recommended the EU agree to prepare, across all member states, for risks associated with 2.8 to 3.3°C of warming by 2100.

This should be used to develop policies to help people and businesses adapt, the advisers said – for example, ensuring housing is not built in flood-exposed areas, planning support for drought-hit farmers, or designing cities to help people stay cool when temperatures spike.

The average global temperature is now 1.4C higher than in pre-industrial times. Countries' latest national climate pledges, if achieved, would still lead to 2.3 – 2.5°C of global warming this century, according to the UN.

The EU advisers said another key area is investing in public early warning systems and increasing insurance coverage, for example, by considering EU-level reinsurance. Only a quarter of climate-related economic losses in the EU are currently insured.

The European Commission will propose a new strategy on "climate resilience" later this year, following weather disasters including 2023 floods in Slovenia whose reconstruction costs equaled 11% of the country's GDP, and Europe's worst wildfire season on record last year.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

[Philippines: Planned Climate Relocations Threaten Rights](#)

The Philippine authorities have sought to permanently move entire communities from various areas to sites deemed safer, without adhering to international standards aimed at protecting the rights of those affected.

Past failures in the region underscore the urgent need for authorities to ensure inclusive, rights-based solutions, including through fully consulting those affected.

The Philippines government should develop rights-respecting planned relocation, and international organizations and donors should provide their support.

(Tokyo) – Philippine authorities relocating communities displaced in 2021 by Typhoon Odette have ignored the rights of residents, especially those with disabilities, Human Rights Watch said today. Initiatives for relocation on Siargao island in the southern Philippines have lacked meaningful consultation, accessible information, and inclusive participation, undermining rights and putting residents at risk of future extreme weather events.

In December 2021, Typhoon Odette—known internationally as “Rai”—swept across the Philippines, including Siargao, flattening homes, killing hundreds of people, and displacing thousands. Entire coastal communities were left without shelter, clean water, or access to public services. People with disabilities and their families described significant obstacles in evacuating and staying safe during and after the storm. Since then, the Philippine authorities have sought to permanently move entire communities to areas designated as safer, called planned relocation, without adhering to international standards aimed at protecting the rights of those affected.

“Siargao island authorities have relocated people, including those with disabilities, to sites that are inaccessible and lack basic services,” said Emina Ćerimović, associate disability rights director at Human Rights Watch. “The Philippine government needs to fully consult people with disabilities and the wider community to ensure that future planned relocations uphold their rights.”

Between May and September 2025, Human Rights Watch interviewed 48 people, including 25 people with disabilities and their families who live in 4 municipalities on Siargao island—Del Carmen, Pilar, San Isidro, and Santa Monica—community representatives, climate change experts, United Nations representatives, and government officials in Manila, Butuan City, Surigao City, and Siargao.

“My husband carried me on his back through the floods,” said Jocelyn Iytac Eguna, 65, who has a physical disability, describing the typhoon that devastated Siargao and nearby islands. “I felt I had lost hope and really wanted to die. It’s really difficult for me. Other people can just run away but I had to be carried.”

Following Odette, the Philippine government instituted a No-Build Zone policy in coastal and riverbed areas of Siargao, part of the protected conservation area, to prevent residents from returning to their homes “for their own safety.” However, the authorities did not meaningfully consult displaced communities about their needs and preferences for the future, nor did they offer those displaced adequate alternative housing or sufficient information on plans to provide a durable solution.

In the past decade, storms in the Philippines have displaced at least 43.8 million people. As climate change accelerates, the number of those displaced is expected to increase. A recent study found that human-induced climate change has “more than doubled the likelihood of a compound event like Typhoon Odette.” In November 2025 alone, two back-to-back typhoons in the country affected more than 12 million people, causing hundreds of fatalities and displacing more than 466,000 people, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Under the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions for a durable solution for people displaced by disasters. International standards set out three durable solutions for the displaced: dignified return, local integration, or permanent planned relocation to a new, comparable site. Most residents displaced by Typhoon Odette immediately returned and rebuilt homes in the No-Build Zone, where they face an uncertain future.

Because people’s lives, livelihoods, and identities are deeply tied to their homes, climate adaptation and disaster prevention measures that allow people to remain in place should be prioritized whenever possible. According to the UN Guidance on Planned Relocation (2015), planned relocation should be considered only as a last resort to protect life and health, and based on consultation with affected communities or at their request.

Municipal governments on Siargao have responded in various ways to the typhoon and the No-Build Zone designation. Immediately afterward, the San Isidro municipal government undertook, without consulting the affected families, an unplanned and inadequately supported relocation of 40 families from the San Isidro riverbank to Josephath, a site uphill, which has undermined their rights. Community members and local government officials said that relocated families have inconsistent access to water and difficulties in accessing the river and services in the community. People with disabilities are particularly at risk of injury and lack of access due to the inaccessibility of the site.

Similarly, the Pilar municipal government, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), moved several families to a site that the local community said floods regularly, undermining the whole purpose of relocation. As a result, during extreme weather, the families remain cut off from access to the rest of the village, including the local primary school, which also serves as an evacuation site.

The municipalities of Santa Monica and Del Carmen, which are currently developing planned relocations, should learn from these mistakes and act to ensure a rights-respecting process, Human Rights Watch said.

Mayor Alfredo Coro of Del Carmen acknowledged that the municipality had yet to consult affected communities but expressed his commitment to make the planned relocation human rights-centered and disability-inclusive. If Del Carmen’s planned relocation successfully upholds human rights, it could serve as a model for municipalities across the Philippines, and perhaps in the 77 other countries where disaster-related planned relocations have been documented.

The Philippines is obligated under international human rights law to respect, protect, and fulfill everyone’s economic, social, and cultural rights, and to protect them from reasonably foreseeable climate change risks, including sea-level rise and other climate change impacts. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), authorities at all levels are obligated to ensure protection and safety of people with disabilities in situations of risk, including disasters.

As the national and local governments expand planned relocation in Siargao, it is crucial for them to safeguard human rights through meaningful consultation and accessible information. Ensuring the rights of those most at risk, including people with disabilities, will result in better protection and safety for all, Human Rights Watch said.

“The Philippine government and international donors should provide local authorities in Siargao with sufficient support to develop durable solutions for those uprooted by Typhoon Odette or increasingly exposed to climate risks,” Ćerimović said. “Climate change magnifies existing inequalities, and past failures in Siargao underscore the urgent need for authorities to ensure inclusive, rights-based solutions, including through planned relocation.”

On December 16, 2021, Typhoon Odette made landfall in the Philippines, including on Siargao, claiming hundreds of lives and destroying numerous buildings, affecting 99 percent of the Siargao’s population. People with disabilities and their families described facing significant barriers while evacuating and trying to stay safe during and immediately after the storm.

Jocelyn Iytac Eguna, 65, who has a physical disability and uses crutches, has lived all her life on Halian, a small, flat island in the Dinagat Sound two hours by boat from Siargao. When Odette struck, her house was damaged and she became trapped inside with her husband. Feeling she was a burden, she urged her husband to save himself. “But my husband said he wouldn’t leave me because I have a disability,” she said through tears:

My husband carried me on his back through the floods, with electric wires damaged and down, and coconut palms falling around us. He carried me all the way and stayed with me. I felt I had lost hope and I really wanted to die. It’s really different for me: other people can just run away and I couldn’t. I needed to be carried. The next few days were difficult: there was no food; we survived mostly on coconut water.

Eguna said the trauma left her with deep psychological wounds. When asked if she had received any psychosocial—mental health—support, she responded, “None. You are the only one who had come to ask me how I feel.”

Many other people with disabilities described similar experiences:

Ronie Ticmon Ruaya, 50, a polio survivor who also lived all his life on Halian, said he decided to stay home with his wife and his children during the storm: “It’s really difficult because of my disability.... If you don’t have polio, you can just immediately run fast, but because of my condition, I just can’t.”

Mary Jane Bual, from Jaboy in Pilar, also decided not to evacuate. Her 16-year-old son has intellectual and physical disabilities, and she said he does not always understand or respond well to changes. “It’s hard to explain to John Francis why he needs to leave the house,” she said. “We could have just forced him to leave by carrying him. But we decided to stay and shelter together.”

An aunt of a 12-year-old boy with developmental and physical disabilities on Halian described his extreme distress as the family tried to shelter inland without adequate protection from the storm and elements. “It’s really a big difference [compared with other children], because he can’t speak,” she said.

Following Typhoon Odette, the national government instituted a No-Build Zone policy alongside Siargao’s coast to prevent displaced residents from returning to their homes. The government stated it was for safety reasons, but ultimately neither the national nor local authorities provided communities with durable solutions through rights-respecting planned relocation. The authorities did not meaningfully consult with the communities about their needs and preferences, and most received no visits from the authorities. In the days and weeks that followed, without any other options, most returned and rebuilt their homes there.

Applicable International Law and Standards

International human rights law on planned relocations is set out in various human rights treaties that the Philippines has ratified, notably the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also established in international standards and guidance, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, which authoritatively interprets to comply with international legal obligations, and the Guidance on Planned Relocation, to help governments plan and carry out relocations of communities at risk in a rights-respecting manner.

With regard to the specific needs of people with disabilities, Philippine government officials acknowledged national laws and policies guaranteeing disability rights, including the National Adaptation Plan of the Philippines, the Magna Carta for Disabled People, and the National Resettlement Policy Framework. But they said that no practical measures are in place to safeguard disability rights, including inclusion and participation, accessible information, protection and safety, accessibility, or access to public services.

In Siargao's Pilar municipality, the local government with the support from IOM relocated several families from Jaboy village to a nearby site. Community members reported—and Human Rights Watch observed—that the new site floods regularly, cutting residents off from the rest of the village and the only evacuation site. This is particularly dangerous for Jimilito Gonzales, a 48-year-old man with an intellectual disability, who doesn't know how to swim and relies on his brother to reach safety. His brother said:

We carry him there [to the village]. I would place him on the makeshift raft made of banana leaves and push the raft. Sometimes, the water is up to our necks, and sometimes it's above our head and we need to swim and push the raft.

IOM confirmed that the organization's primary support was in providing climate resilient housing for the site, but that they also supported pre-relocation assessments and consultation efforts in Pilar. IOM emphasized that responsibility for determining site suitability rests with the local government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which, according to IOM, issued a certification confirming the site's suitability for relocation, noting that the area had a low flood and low landslide susceptibility rating. Nevertheless, IOM acknowledged that assessments based on historical hazard data can be limited in their ability to foresee future hazards. To address this, IOM said it is collaborating with governments to improve site assessment methodologies, including by modeling future risk patterns, and interviewing community members with lived experience.

Regarding consultation, IOM said they consulted affected families in Pilar, including by sharing information about the site and arranging visits before relocation. However, a relocated resident said that "we had no choice," as they had lost their homes and the site was the only land available, despite being known to flood regularly.

IOM representatives as well as local government officials acknowledged that land availability is a major constraint and said they had not received formal complaints about flooding in Jaboy from the local government or community members. Nonetheless, based on the concerns reported by Human Rights Watch, IOM said it was committed to "coordinate further with the communities and local and national partners to understand what further support is needed, explore comprehensive solutions, and advocate for potential means through which these needs could be met."

The IOM reiterated that long-term responsibility lies with the local government, and recognized the need to build capacity at local levels.

While other community members who remained in Jaboy believed that the municipal government had a plan to relocate them to safer areas, Pilar's representatives said there were no such plans for Jaboy.

Immediately after Typhoon Odette, authorities in San Isidro municipality relocated several families from the riverbank in San Isidro to Josaphath, an uphill location originally intended as temporary. Officials and an elected representative said in May 2025 and again in September that the site had become permanent because it is considered safe from flooding, and it was easy to move people there because the local government already owns it.

However, community members and local government officials agreed that the site lacks regular access to water and the steep road isolates people with disabilities. Zenaida Tomines, 52, who has a physical disability, said she fears another big storm since the evacuation site—a primary school—is down the same steep road. “I am afraid for my own safety because of my disability,” she said. When Human Rights Watch asked San Isidro officials about plans to address the accessibility problem, they said there were no plans to address it.

Typhoon Odette caused severe destruction in Del Carmen, the island's largest municipality, destroying nearly 5,000 homes and displacing thousands of residents. Essential services, including water and electricity, were widely disrupted. Local authorities believe that their eight-year effort to restore the mangrove forests prior to Typhoon Odette had helped reduce the storm's impact.

To carry out the No-Build Zone policy, the municipal government has been preparing permanent planned relocation sites. The authorities intend to relocate about 1,000 households to three sites, including the entire population of Halian island, which the authorities say will become uninhabitable due to rising sea levels. Other high-risk coastal communities in downtown Del Carmen are also expected to be relocated, though timelines are unclear.

In the near term, the municipal authorities intend to relocate about 250 households from Halian to Mabuhay, on Siargao. The authorities selected the site because it provides easy access to the ocean, which enables the predominantly fishing community to maintain their traditional livelihoods, reflecting some consideration of residents' livelihood needs.

The Del Carmen government has been working closely with the Philippines Department for Housing Settlement and Urban Development (DHSUD) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to secure approvals and funding for the relocation. Mayor Alfredo Coro told Human Rights Watch that the municipality is committed to building the first 10 houses even if they do not have full external support.

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MANILA BULLETIN

[Philippines defies regional slump in UN sustainability goals](#)

By: Ricardo M. Austria

The Philippines is making significant strides toward its sustainable development targets even as the broader Asia-Pacific region risks missing nearly 90 percent of its goals, according to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

In its 10th edition of the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2026, released on Wednesday, Feb. 18, the agency noted that the Philippines showed strong momentum in four key areas despite “sobering” global landscape.

Shombi Sharp, ESCAP deputy executive secretary, said during the webinar that only about 20 percent of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are currently on track worldwide.

The Philippine data stands out as a relative bright spot as four of the country’s 17 goals—covering poverty reduction, affordable and clean energy, reduced inequalities, and responsible consumption—have seen more than 75 percent of their measured targets move in a positive direction.

The progress comes as the government continues to manage economic headwinds and local inflationary pressures that have historically challenged social services.

Another 10 goals in the Philippines, including zero hunger, quality education, and public health, registered moderate progress with improvement in 50 percent to 75 percent of their indicators. While the report highlighted these gains, it also pointed to areas of stagnation. Gains in gender equality and sustainable cities were notably slower, while climate action progress remained unmeasured due to significant data gaps.

The regional outlook remains far more precarious as ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana warned that the Asia-Pacific region is at a critical crossroads, facing a “stark warning” that it may miss 88 percent of its measurable targets by the 2030 deadline if current trends persist.

She noted that the economic engines that previously lifted millions out of poverty are now being undermined by environmental degradation and a reliance on fossil fuels.

The region accounts for approximately half of global gross domestic product and 60 percent of the world’s population, providing it with the necessary capital to pivot toward sustainable growth if managed correctly. However, Sharp noted that life for ordinary citizens is becoming increasingly fragile as climate change accelerates.

With only five years remaining until the 2030 deadline, UN officials are calling for a fundamental shift in development planning that prioritizes resource efficiency and environmental protection over traditional industrialization.

PBC

[The changing case for sustainability](#)

The need to accelerate progress on climate change has never been more urgent, and yet strong headwinds over the past year have delivered a clear moment of risk to the transition, as the political landscape in the UK and internationally has shifted, writes Amanda Williams, head of environmental sustainability, CIOB

This, in turn, brought into sharp focus the need to question the language and narrative we use around climate action, which emerged as a prominent theme at our most recent CIOB Sustainable Development Goals roundtable for construction leaders.

We were joined by Copper Consultancy, which launched its Winning Back the Net Zero Narrative report last year. They recognised climate action is increasingly politicised and misunderstood and highlighted that public understanding of net zero is low.

The report showed we are losing public support, while other concerns such as the cost-of-living crisis understandably take centre stage. Some 53% of people in the UK don't understand what "net zero" means, so why would they get behind it?

Something Dr Pawas Bisht from Keele University's Institute of Sustainable Future noted in his foreword to the report really struck me.

He said: "In a context of economic stagnation, as cost-of-living concerns occupy public attention, cultural battle lines have been drawn around net zero, framing it as something unachievable, unnecessary and even undesirable – something actively opposed to the interests of the general public.

"This narrative is both false and deeply dangerous, and we need to find ways of countering this storytelling and putting forward a new, more relatable, more hopeful narrative that can resonate with, and be understood by communities."

Copper Consultancy recommended we focus on local benefits to make climate action tangible, proactively engage those with limited understanding or concerns, prioritise social value and make the wider societal benefits clear. These aims, coupled with grounding engagement in local realities and rebuilding trust between developers and communities, were all well-received by construction leaders at our event.

I am regularly approached by CIOB members keen to maintain and accelerate progress in the built environment but concerned about the weaponisation of the term "net zero"; asking how we can better position the benefits of sustainability in a changing political landscape so that we tell compelling stories to inspire action and support, and continue to make the case for change.

Others reach out to share how they are changing the way they talk about the climate crisis to focus more on the social and community benefits of projects that support the transition.

When Climate Outreach launched the Britain Talks Climate & Nature report late last year, examining how the British public think and feel about climate and nature and the implications of this for policy and communication, they highlighted three powerful messages.

These were that people care deeply about nature and want to protect the environment but trust in British society, politics and government is collapsing, and climate action has an image problem which can and must be resolved. This really resonated with me.

What is clear is the current sustainability narrative isn't landing and while people don't necessarily oppose climate action, they don't always see what's in it for them. I have long believed we must avoid over-reliance on technical language and elitist jargon and be wary alarmist messaging does not always inspire action as much as positive stories about progress that demonstrate the art of what's possible.

It is not surprising people care more deeply about nature than carbon emissions. We inherently value the natural world around us and recognise nature as something we can see, hear, smell or reach out and touch.

Focusing on net zero in isolation is simply not relatable to people, particularly if we don't adequately explain the interconnections between different issues, and it is heartening to see organisations increasingly now linking climate action to what people really care about.

So, as these reports have highlighted, we must reframe the conversation, focusing less on net zero targets and more on local benefits to people and nature. We need to start telling positive stories that talk less about minimising harm and more about doing good, and using messaging that works for people and communities, highlighting community and nature benefits, health and wellbeing, economic prosperity and fairness.

By doing this we increase public support for projects and avoid pitting developers against communities as we seek to deliver green infrastructure and sustainable homes.

CIOB is committed to working with members and other stakeholders on this issue throughout 2026 and we welcome collaboration with others to help shift the narrative and deliver a transition that works for all. You can find out more about our work in this area via [Climate change and sustainability | CIOB](#).

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[Waterlily enterprise boosts income, supports biodiversity protection in Mindoro town](#)

By: Juanito Joshua G. Sugay III

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro (PIA) — A community group in Naujan town is earning more while helping protect nature through support from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) under the Mindoro Biodiversity Corridor (MBC) Project.

The Dao Waterlily Association, located near the Naujan Lake National Park, received technical assistance during a monitoring visit on Feb. 9 -13.

The visit was led by DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems, and Climate Change Analiza Rebueta-Teh and DENR MIMAROPA Regional Executive Director Felix S. Mirasol Jr. They were joined by other national and regional officials to review the group's projects and discuss further support.

The association has 38 members. They produce waterlily bags and handicrafts, grow mushrooms and vegetables, and provide ecotourism services including kayak rentals, floating cottages, food services, and park tours.

Through the Biodiversity-Friendly Enterprise program, the group received a solar panel system and a water pump to improve daily operations and increase production.

In an interview, DENR Oriental Mindoro head and MBC Project Manager Annabelle M. Barquilla said the project links environmental protection with livelihood.

"The project focuses on protecting important natural areas in Mindoro while helping communities earn in ways that do not harm the environment," Barquilla said.

She added that the program supports the protection of threatened species and key habitats while helping communities and indigenous groups develop sustainable sources of income.

Barquilla said that DENR will continue to assist community organizations by helping them write proposals and by providing training in ecotourism management, organizational development and basic bookkeeping.

The CENRO of Socorro and PENRO of Oriental Mindoro were advised to prepare a proposal with the local government of Naujan for a possible expansion of the ecotourism project.

Rochelle D. Martinez, president of the Dao Waterlily Association, thanked DENR and its partners for the support, saying "Lubos po kaming nagpapasalamat sa DENR at sa lahat ng tumulong para maisakatuparan ang proyektong ito. Malaking tulong po ito sa aming samahan at sa aming kabuhayan." (JJGS/JBG/PIA MIMAROPA-Oriental Mindoro/Photos from DENR MIMAROPA)

THE MANILA TIMES

[Free patent system reforms in place to speed up titling](#)

By: Giselle P. Jordan

THE country's residential free patent system has been amended to speed up land titling, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Tuesday.

The changes were made through DENR Administrative Order 2025-35, signed by Environment Secretary Raphael Lotilla and dated Dec. 10, 2025.

"A title is more than a document — it is stability, dignity and protection from abuse," he said.

"Our duty is to ensure that land governance is not only efficient but truly responsive to the realities ordinary Filipinos face."

The DENR noted that many Filipinos live on land passed down through generations but do not have titles due to strict regulations, ambiguous requirements or a lack of access to government services.

Untitled properties cannot be used as collateral for loans, can cause problems in reconstruction after disasters and can be exploited by opportunistic claimants.

The reforms include cutting the processing time to 120 days, allowing electronic filing and tracking, as well as deferred submission of certifications from the Land Registration Authority for up to 90 days. It also removes the cadastral survey fee to benefit applicants, especially those from low-income families.

The revised rules are expected to benefit families who have faced difficulties in proving occupation or continuity of possession, the DENR said.

Given high labor mobility, frequent typhoons and internal migration in the country, many families have been disqualified due to short-term absence as a result of natural calamities, employment or marriage, it added.

By defining who qualifies as actual occupants and allowing the application of spouses, heirs, returning Filipinos and those whose possession was interrupted, the DENR said the new rules provide fairness to households that have struggled in securing titles for reasons not of their own doing.

The move to amend the system is also necessary as untitled properties continue to cause issues such as delays in infrastructure projects, land disputes and problems in family inheritance.

The move to amend the system is also necessary as untitled properties continue to cause issues such as delays in infrastructure projects, land disputes and problems in family inheritance.

Aside from land titling, the DENR also stressed the need for reforms in foreshore management as coastal zones are increasingly being threatened by storm surges, climate change and unregulated development.

It added that stronger foreshore governance was crucial to supporting coastal economies, improving climate resilience and preserving public coastal areas for the benefit of Filipinos living along the country's shorelines.

Lotilla urged officials to take a modern, balanced and climate-responsive approach to land governance, and said 2026 would be a critical year in terms of providing faster and more reliable services, protecting public land assets and ensuring that land administration contributes to the country's development as well as public welfare.

Legarda pushes resilient growth strategy amid pressing economic realities

FOLLOWING an earlier statement on the country's deteriorating fiscal position, Senator Loren Legarda reinforced her call for a greener, more resilient growth strategy in a privilege speech delivered on the Senate floor on Feb. 10, 2026, warning that the country's economic engine is stalling after the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) reported fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) growth at only three percent and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 63.2 percent, the highest in two decades.

"The figures speak loudly: three percent growth and a debt ratio breaching the 60 percent threshold. This is a flashing yellow light on our national dashboard," Legarda said, stressing that the old infrastructure-heavy model of growth has faltered.

She pointed out that despite delayed projects and compromised quality, borrowing continues, diverting revenues away from healthcare, education and social services.

Legarda underscored that the Philippines already has a legislative foundation for a more resilient economy, citing landmark laws such as the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Climate Change Act, and the People's Survival Fund.

She noted that unmanaged waste alone costs the country P45 to 51 billion annually, while improper disposal in the Manila Bay area alone results in P4 billion in losses affecting tourism, fisheries and public health.

"Environmental and climate-responsive governance is a fiscal imperative," Legarda stressed.

She highlighted the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (Pencas) law, which ensures that forests, reefs, and water resources are properly valued in economic planning.

She also emphasized ecosystem-based approaches to flood control, restoring rivers, wetlands and mangroves to reduce corruption-prone procurement and long-term costs.

Beyond ecosystems, Legarda called for stronger investment in human capital, citing the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, UniFAST Act, and ARAL Program Act as critical to building a competitive workforce.

"Unless we invest in human growth, our progress will remain uneven and fragile," she said.

Legarda stressed that education reform must move in tandem with economic planning, as highlighted by the Edcom 2 report.

She also pointed to the Philippine Innovation Act, Creative Industries Development Act and Green Jobs Act as strategic tools to shift toward a knowledge-based and sustainable economy.

"By offering fiscal incentives and tax deductions to enterprises that generate 'green jobs' – employment that restores or preserves our environment – we strategically future-proof the Filipino workforce," Legarda explained, noting the International Labor Organization's estimate that achieving the Paris Agreement goals could create a net gain of 18 to 24 million jobs globally by 2030.

Legarda further cited the Magna Carta for micro, small and medium enterprises or MSMEs and the Barangay Livelihood and Skills Training Act as vital in empowering green startups and moving ideas from research to deployment.

She emphasized that resilience is not built on infrastructure alone but equally on people, urging investments in upskilling, reskilling and robust social protection systems.

Legarda emphasized that the nation already has the framework for resilience, and what is needed now is the resolve to act decisively.

We must choose: Do we double down on ‘old school’ expansion that scars our environment and leaves our growth anemic, or do we fully activate the greener, more resilient blueprint that we have already spent decades codifying into law,” Legarda declared.

“What is now being asked of us is the political will and collective courage to implement them, and to implement them correctly this time around.”

Legarda closed with a vision of a resilient economy.

“Economic growth, environmental stewardship, and human development are not competing priorities. Together, they form a stronger, more coherent, and more future-ready development strategy. Let us maximize the tools that already exist within our laws, our institutions, and most importantly, within our people,” she said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Climate change forum scheduled for Friday](#)

The Cebu City Government is set to host a forum that places climate change at the center of the city's cultural and social identity.

Far from being limited to rising seas or erratic weather, the discussion will highlight how environmental shifts are reshaping the way communities live, the roles individuals assume, and the traditions that bind generations together.

By situating the forum in the museum, the organizers emphasize that climate change is as much about safeguarding identity and resilience as it is about protecting ecosystems.

Panelists are expected to examine how climate pressures intersect with gender dynamics, community resilience, and the preservation of local heritage.

The conversation aims to broaden public understanding and encourage inclusive solutions that reflect the lived experiences of women, men, and vulnerable sectors.

The Cebu City Government has stressed that participation is central to building awareness and strengthening collective action. By bringing together stakeholders from different sectors, the forum seeks to inspire collaboration and practical responses that can sustain Cebu's resilience.

Organizers encourage the public to secure their seats early and take part in what promises to be a vital conversation about the future of Cebu City's culture, heritage, and community life in the face of climate change.

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