



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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## ABANTE TONITE

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## BILYONARYO

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By: Valerie Volcovici

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## **MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**

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## **MANILA BULLETIN**

### **[Strong implementation of EPR law needed now](#)**

By: Climate Reality Project Philippines

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## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

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### **[Strengthening Resilience: Strategies for disaster risk reduction under the Marcos administration](#)**

The Metropolitan Manila Earthquake Impact Reduction Study (MMEIRS) predicts this bridges' scenario in the aftermath of "The Big One" or the 7.2-magnitude earthquake from the West Valley Fault: seven bridges in the metropolis, at the least, will collapse.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Building resilient futures: Asean's path to sustainable urban development](#)**

By: Ludwig Federigan

We find ourselves amid a confluence of unprecedented challenges that demand our immediate attention and innovative solutions. The stakes have never been higher as we grapple with the looming threat of climate change, the accelerated urban congestion in our cities driven by a rising population and the social disparities intensified by rapid transmigration. Our cultural identities are facing dilution in an increasingly globalized world. In transitioning from an analog to a digital era, we must question whether the technological advancements we pursue are genuinely improving our lives or merely adding complexity to our existing challenges.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABANTE TONITE**

### **Calamity fund dinagdagan ng P500M para sa climate change**

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Inihayag ng isang mambabatas na dinagdagan ng Kongreso ng P500 milyon ang calamity fund ngayong taon upang isulong ang mga programa para sa paghahanda ng bansa sa epekto ng climate change.

Mula sa P20.5 bilyon noong 2024, ang Calamity fund o National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund ngayong taon ay ginawang P21 bilyon, ayon kay Quezon City Rep. Marvin Rillo, miyembro ng House Committee on Appropriations.

Sa P21 bilyong pondo, P10.7 bilyon ang nakalaan para sa aid, relief, at rehabilitation services sa mga komunidad na maaapektuhan ng kalamidad; P9.3 bilyon para sa pagpapagawa ng mga pangunahing imprastruktura na masisira ng kalamidad; at P1 bilyong People's Survival Fund para sa mga programa at inisyatiba upang mas maging ligtas ang mga lugar na delikado sa pagbabago ng panahon.

Ayon kay Rillo, mayroon ding nakalaang Quick Response Fund (QRF) sa iba't ibang ahensiya na magagamit upang suportahan ang disaster operations at rehabilitation ng gobyerno sa mga sinalanta ng kalamidad.

Batay sa World Risk Index 2024, ang Pilipinas ang world's most disaster-prone country sa mundo.

Ang Pilipinas ay nasa typhoon belt ng Pacific Ocean at dinaraan ng average na 20 bagyo kada taon. Ang bansa ay matatagpuan din sa Pacific Ring of Fire.

## **BILYONARYO**

### **[Trump pulls US out of key global climate assessment, sources say](#)**

By: Valerie Volcovici

The Trump administration has halted the participation of U.S. scientists in key U.N. climate change assessments, two sources familiar with the situation told Reuters, part of its broader withdrawal from climate change mitigation efforts and multilateral cooperation.

The stop-work order affects staff members of the U.S. Global Change Research Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who engage with a key working group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

It means the U.S. will not attend a major IPCC plenary meeting in Hangzhou, China, next week, to plan the seventh global climate assessment, said one of the sources.

The White House declined to comment and the State Department did not respond to a request for comment.

“The power of the IPCC is that governments, businesses and global institutions can operate with shared conclusions. The U.S. being completely removed from that process is concerning,” said Delta Merner of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

While American scientists will be in attendance and continue to work on climate research used by the IPCC, the absence of the U.S. in the IPCC process will be felt.

The Hangzhou meeting from 24-28 February is expected to make a few key decisions that will shape the outcomes of the next climate assessment, including around the role of carbon removal and capture technology.

China’s foreign ministry said on Thursday it was unaware of the withdrawal of U.S. participants.

The U.S. is a co-chair along with Malaysia of a working group on climate mitigation, or ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The U.S. had also pledged around \$1.5 million to support the IPCC, though that money had not yet been appropriated by Congress.

Withdrawal of the U.S. from the IPCC does not come as a surprise to climate scientists, given President Donald Trump’s moves to withdraw the U.S. again from the Paris climate agreement, claw back U.S. global climate finance and sever international partnerships on climate.

“This would align with Trump’s signals around climate action,” said Kathryn Bowen, a professor at Melbourne University and a lead author on the IPCC’s sixth assessment report published last year.

She said the loss of federal support comes at a time of reduced funding for climate science globally.

“Unfortunately there has been a slow reduction of funding support for authors in the IPCC process in the last few years,” Bowen said. “High-income countries are looked upon as important sources of funding for colleagues from the Global South.”

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **[Climate change is shrinking glaciers faster, with 7 trillion tons lost since 2000](#)**

By: Seth Borenstein

Climate change is accelerating the melting of the world's mountain glaciers, according to a massive new study that found them shrinking more than twice as fast as in the early 2000s.

The world's glaciers lost ice at the rate of about 255 billion tons (231 billion metric tons) annually from 2000 to 2011, but that quickened to about 346 billion tons (314 billion metric tons) annually over about the next decade, according to the study in this week's journal Nature.

In the last few years, the melt has accelerated even more, hitting a record 604 billion tons (548 billion metric tons) lost in 2023, the last year analyzed.

The study drew on an international effort that included 233 estimates of changes in glacier weight. In all, the world's glaciers have lost more than 7 trillion tons of ice (6.5 trillion metric tons) since 2000, according to the study.

"The thing that people should be aware of and perhaps worried about is that yes, the glaciers are indeed retreating and disappearing as we said they would. The rate of that loss seems to be accelerating," said William Colgan, a glaciologist for the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland and one of about 60 authors of the study.

Glaciers in Alaska are melting at the fastest rate of any of the 19 regions studied, losing about 67 billion tons (61 billion metric tons) of ice a year, producing the biggest net ice loss, the study found.

In the past 24 years, Central Europe's glaciers have lost the highest percentage of ice of any region, now 39 percent smaller than they were in 2000, the paper said. Colgan said he worries most about the Alps because "elevated summer temperatures have been hammering the Alps. "

Fifteen years ago, scientists were worried most about the Andes and the Patagonia glaciers, but the Alps have shrunk so fast they could eventually disappear, Colgan said.

"Glaciers are apolitical and unbiased sentinels of climate change, and their decline paints a clear picture of accelerated warming," said Gwenn Flowers, a professor of Earth Sciences at Simon Fraser University in Canada, who wasn't part of the study.

University of Colorado ice scientist Ted Scambos, who also wasn't part of the study, said glaciers shrank and grew in the past for local, well-understood reasons that were not climate change. What's happening now is different and clear.

He said: “It’s due to greenhouse gas increases caused directly by coal, oil, and natural gas burning.... No amount of rhetoric, tweeting, or proclamation will change that.”

Scambos, Flowers and other outside scientists called the assessment sobering and accurate but not surprising.

Colgan said that many places—such as those in the US West—are seeing extra water now from fast-melting glaciers and benefiting from that boost, but that will soon disappear as the glaciers melt beyond a point of no return.

Melting glaciers contribute more to sea level rise than ice loss in either Greenland or Antarctica. Only the expansion of water as it warms plays a bigger role in sea level rise, the paper said.

The overall glacier loss rate is similar, if maybe slightly less, than that found by earlier and less comprehensive studies. But this new work will probably trigger new predictions that will be even gloomier in the future because of better information and worsening warming, Colgan said.

“If you’re losing 5.5 percent of the global ice volume in just over 20 years, clearly that’s not sustainable,” Colgan said. “That’s going to catch up with you.”

The more than 600 billion tons of glacier loss in 2023 “sounds incredible now, but it might sound pretty normal in 10 years from now,” Colgan said. “Mountain glaciers as a whole can flip into collective ice loss pretty darn quick.



## DAILY GUARDIAN

### [‘MEASURE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT’: 5th Philippine Environment Summit Calls for Climate Action](#)

By: Mariela Angella Oladive

As climate-related disasters escalate globally, the 5th Philippine Environment Summit called for urgent climate action, emphasizing individual responsibility in reducing carbon emissions.

Organized by Green Convergence and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the summit gathered environmental advocates, policymakers, and industry leaders from Feb. 19 to 21 at the Grand Xing Imperial Hotel in Iloilo City.

Themed “Ako Ang Bukas: Quantum Leap to Climate Neutrality,” the event focused on the need for large-scale, immediate action to combat climate change. It also introduced a carbon footprint calculator to help individuals and organizations measure their emissions.

Green Convergence trustee and “Ako Ang Bukas” Program Director Dr. Angelina P. Galang stressed the importance of accurately tracking emissions. “We reduce, reuse, and recycle. We conserve electricity, water, and materials. But we need to go further by measuring how much we are affecting the climate. We must track our impact by measuring our carbon footprint,” she said.

Galang explained that the organization developed a calculator to measure an individual’s carbon emissions. By using it regularly, users can track their progress and determine whether they are successfully reducing their footprint.

She urged individuals, households, businesses, and even religious institutions to adopt carbon tracking as part of their commitment to fighting climate change.

“The world is getting hotter, affecting atmospheric and water currents, leading to terrible typhoons and disastrous droughts. When we say ‘Ako Ang Bukas,’ or ‘I am the future,’ it means we are responsible for what tomorrow will bring,” she added.

She also noted simple ways individuals can help reduce carbon emissions, such as switching off lights during the day, using reusable bags, recycling plastic bottles, walking instead of driving short distances, and conserving water.

Galang emphasized that the global goal is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, with the Philippines working to minimize its own carbon contribution.

Meanwhile, Green Convergence President Victoria Segovia highlighted the urgency of mitigation and adaptation measures.

“Just around us, we see the chaos climate change is causing—wildfires in California, ski competitions in Europe struggling due to lack of snow, and here in the Philippines, stronger typhoons and unpredictable weather patterns. Global warming is not just an environmental issue but a direct threat to our way of life,” Segovia said.

She pointed out that while international climate negotiations remain contentious, local action is crucial.

“First-world and third-world countries often do not see eye to eye on financing climate solutions. Even political leaders like former U.S. President Donald Trump dismissed climate change. However, at the local level, many states and governments are taking action, regardless of global political disputes,” she added.

The event featured plenary discussions and breakout sessions with notable speakers, including DENR Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems, and Climate Change Atty. Analiza Teh, and First Philippine Holdings Chair Federico Lopez.

Also present was Fr. Gaël Giraud, SJ, research director for Georgetown University’s Environmental Justice Program, alongside sustainability experts and advocates.

Since its inception in 2016, the biennial Philippine Environment Summit has provided a platform for showcasing initiatives that balance environmental protection with socioeconomic progress. Previous summits were held in Cebu City (2018), Cagayan de Oro (2020), and Tagaytay City (2022).

The 2025 summit received support from the Energy Development Corporation, the Forest Foundation Philippines, and the Foundation for the Philippine Environment.

It underscored the need for policy direction, private sector accountability, and grassroots action as necessary steps toward achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

## DAILY TRIBUNE

### [Drowning in plastic: Earth needs help](#)

By: Ginggay Hontiveros-Malvar

Ever heard of the nine planetary boundaries? It sounds like something out of a sci-fi movie, but they're critical in telling how healthy our planet is. They provide a useful framework for understanding challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss. Think of them as the Earth's vital signs: exceeding them risks long-term harm to humanity.

The Philippines' plastic waste crisis illustrates the link between local environmental problems and global planetary health. The country generates over 2.7 million tons of plastic waste each year, consistently ranking among the world's worst ocean plastic polluters. A 2021 peer-reviewed scientific study paints a grim picture of a country drowning in plastic waste. It identified seven Philippine rivers, including the highly polluted Pasig River, as among the top 10 contributors to ocean plastic.

Our over-reliance on plastic has consequences far beyond visible pollution. It shows how we're overstepping planetary limits. The chemicals and materials used in plastic production contribute to climate change and are released into the environment at an unsustainable rate. Plastic's durability also becomes a liability because it lasts for centuries, breaking down into microplastics that endanger marine ecosystems and may eventually end up on our plates.

The harm caused by the plastic waste problem affects people as well. Coastal communities suffer economically when fishing and tourism decline as a result of dwindling fish populations. Making matters worse is the widespread practice of burning plastic, which releases toxic pollutants that worsen air quality and respiratory health.

Solving the plastic crisis requires a collaborative effort from government, businesses, and the public. The Extended Producer Responsibility law holds companies accountable for their plastic packaging from production to disposal. This incentivizes producers to create more sustainable packaging and invest in effective waste management solutions.

The Aboitiz Group is taking an active role in fighting the plastic waste crisis through several initiatives focusing on circular economy principles and community involvement. One notable example is the BRICK Hub Project, a partnership between AboitizPower and the Aboitiz Foundation. Located at the Therma South and Therma Visayas power plants, these hubs transform plastic waste and fly ash into eco-bricks and eco-pavers. The eco-friendly products are used to build resilient infrastructure in nearby communities, supporting sustainable development from the ground up.

Complementing these land-based efforts is AboitizPower's Scubasureros initiative, which involves working with volunteer divers to conduct underwater cleanups in coastal areas near its power plants. These "Scubasureros" monitor marine ecosystems aside

from removing plastic and other debris from the water, providing valuable data on the impact of plastic pollution.

Coca-Cola Europacific Aboitiz Philippines is also promoting sustainable practices and raising awareness about plastic waste through its “Tapon to Ipon” program. This initiative incentivizes responsible disposal by rewarding the collection and exchange of clear PET bottles with Coca-Cola products. Partnering with Aboitiz Foundation, strategically placed collection points were placed at the 24th Aboitiz Football Cup last year, providing a platform to educate participants and spectators about the importance of proper waste management and the benefits of a circular economy for plastics.

While policies and corporate initiatives play a critical role, the fight against plastic waste also requires consumer action. Each of us has a responsibility to minimize plastic consumption by making conscious choices — reducing single-use plastics, properly segregating waste and supporting brands that prioritize sustainability.

Collective action from individuals, businesses and policymakers is crucial to reversing the tide of plastic pollution and restoring the planet’s health, ensuring a habitable world for present and future generations.

## MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

### [Reimagining Philippine cities: DHSUD's green, smart communities](#)

By: Judith Albano

Walk through any major Philippine city today and you'll see the signs of change: rising developments that look different from the concrete blocks of decades past. These new communities represent a fundamental shift in how cities are being built – one that prioritizes sustainability alongside affordability. At the heart of this transformation is the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), which is reshaping how Filipino communities are designed, built, and sustained.

#### The urban challenge

The effects of rapid urbanization are visible across the Philippines – from congested streets to rising energy costs. These daily realities have made it clear that the old approach to city building no longer serves the needs of Filipino communities. Traditional housing developments, focused solely on providing shelter, haven't addressed the broader challenges of climate change, resource efficiency, and quality of life.

#### Building tomorrow's communities today

DHSUD's flagship Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino Program (4PH) is making remarkable progress in its mission to construct one million housing units annually until 2028. As of July 31, 2024, the program has 162,381 units under construction across 53 project sites, with an impressive 1.21 million units in the pipeline. This unprecedented scale of development is matched by equally ambitious financial backing, with Pag-IBIG Fund approving P13 billion in revolving credit lines for key housing agencies and Congress committing P10 billion for interest support in the coming year.

These developments aren't just about numbers – they're about creating communities that last. Each project integrates:

- Energy efficiency through design and technology
- Sustainable materials and waste management systems
- Disaster-resilient architecture
- Digital infrastructure for improved public services
- Innovative displacement protection measures, including temporary communities during construction

The New Manila Bay–City of Pearl project exemplifies this new approach. Planned as a self-sufficient smart city, it aims to create more than just housing – it's designed to foster social mobility and serve as an international destination for cultural integration.

#### Cities leading the way

From Western Visayas to the Cordillera Administrative Region, cities and municipalities are embracing this transformation through active partnerships with DHSUD. Local Government Units (LGUs) across the country are stepping up, signing Memorandums of Understanding to identify suitable land and streamline permit processes. These partnerships extend beyond government agencies – real estate developers, financial institutions, and private companies are all joining forces to pool resources and expertise.

In Pasay City, for instance, innovative solutions are already taking shape, with temporary communities established to protect families during site development. This kind of thoughtful planning shows how public-private partnerships can address both immediate needs and long-term sustainability goals.

### Building a sustainable future

The shift to sustainable urban development is gaining momentum across the Philippines, reshaping how communities are built and maintained. As green technologies become more accessible and developers embrace innovative designs, these new developments are setting the standard for future Filipino communities. Each project brings the vision closer to reality: neighborhoods that are not just affordable and comfortable, but also resilient enough to thrive amid environmental challenges.

As DHSUD Secretary Jerry Acuzar emphasizes, “Our mission is more than just building affordable and quality houses; it is ultimately improving the living condition of many Filipinos, especially the poor by providing them a place to call home in sustainable communities.” With each new development, the Philippines moves closer to realizing this vision. For developers and homeowners alike, the message is clear: the future of Philippine housing isn’t just about having a roof over one’s head – it’s about creating communities that will nurture both people and planet for generations to come.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [Strong implementation of EPR law needed now](#)

By: Climate Reality Project Philippines

In the upcoming 2025 midterm elections, climate action is on the ballot, according to a recent survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations and the Stratbase ADR Institute for Strategic and International Studies.

When asked about the advocacies that would make them vote for a candidate, survey respondents answered the usual—job security, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. Interestingly, two issues entered the top 10: addressing climate change impacts and utilizing renewable energy.

“In our January 2025 survey, [it was revealed that] 87 percent of Filipinos will vote for candidates with advocacy to address the impacts of climate change and enhanced disaster resilience,” said Professor Victor Andres “Dindo” Manhit, Stratbase Institute president and lead convenor of the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST). “That’s quite high [compared to the 70 percent vote that the issue of fighting graft and corruption received] which surprised a lot of us.”

Manhit presented this during the knowledge-sharing session co-organized by The Climate Reality Project PH and PBEST last Feb. 17 at the Asian Institute of Management. The event brought together representatives from government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

The forum emphasized the crucial role of good governance in climate action, focusing on the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022—a key piece of legislation designed to advance a circular, low-carbon economy in the Philippines.

Plastic pollution is a major driver of climate change, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its lifecycle—from production and consumption to disposal. Addressing plastic waste through the EPR Act is a crucial step toward mitigating climate-related risks and building environmental resilience.

The EPR Act requires large enterprises to take responsibility for the entire lifecycle of their plastic products, mandating progressive waste recovery targets: 20 percent by 2023, increasing to 80 percent by 2028.

Early compliance figures, but with gaps

Providing an update, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Jonas Leones said that out of the 2,000 entities covered by the EPR Act, less than half have registered for EPR law compliance. Of more than 900

registered, only 700 have submitted their EPR Act Compliance Audit Reports for 2023, which are now under DENR validation.

“Based on initial evaluation, we have attained the figure [20 percent diversion target by 2023]. In fact, based on the recovery reports, they have already recovered four million kilos of plastic waste. Out of this four million kilos of waste, 160 thousand have been diverted,” said Leones.

While these numbers suggest progress, industry experts caution that these early figures are based on limited compliance and an incomplete evaluation mechanism.

“When the law was introduced in 2022, we did not have the audit guidelines. I think it was only in early 2024 that that was issued,” said Benjamin Villacorte, Philippines Sustainability Reporting Committee chairman at SGV & Co., a leading audit firm specializing in EPR compliance.

“In many cases, for us as auditors, we were in situations where it's very difficult to issue an audit opinion, meaning many companies were not auditable because they did not have good documents, they did not have good systems and processes and so on,” he added.

Without full industry participation and robust assessment frameworks, these initial results cannot yet be considered a definitive measure of the EPR Act's success.

#### Plastic credits as a stopgap measure

Early compliance has largely been driven by plastic credit purchases rather than actual reductions in plastic waste.

“In the first year, the sole recourse of many companies was really to buy plastic credits. Now they did not really have a lot of time to do innovation, like changing product design or other ways of diversion, but really to rely on plastic credit,” Villacorte explained.

Plastic credits enable businesses to meet sustainability goals by purchasing “plastic credits” from certified organizations or programs that remove plastic waste from the environment or recycle it.

While plastic credits played a crucial role in the early stages of EPR compliance, Villacorte stressed that they should not be a long-term solution. Instead, companies should focus on waste reduction strategies and circular economy innovations that go beyond offsetting plastic use, ultimately leading to more sustainable business practices.

#### Strengthening market mechanisms for circularity



The need for innovative solutions was also raised by Christopher Ilagan, chairperson of the advocacy committee of the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers Inc. (PCFMI).

“Under the EPR law, we know that [incorporating recycled content into packaging for circularity] should be incentivized, but there are no operating rules on how those sorts of efforts can be incentivized. So it goes back to: How do you create that market? I think we need to explore how we can push more companies toward these solutions,” Ilagan urged.

In response, Undersecretary Leones shared that the DENR is working with the Department of Finance and other relevant agencies to develop tailored incentives for EPR Act compliance, aiming to finalize them by the end of the quarter.

He emphasized that the government aims to introduce innovative and practical incentives rather than duplicating existing ones, ensuring they provide real value to obliged enterprises, particularly those that are fully compliant.

Attorney Joseph Fabul, chairperson of the PCFMI Legislative Committee, called for sustainable packaging, circular economy innovations, and stronger public-private partnerships to improve waste management and boost EPR compliance.

“Environmental accountability is no longer just a compliance issue, but a business imperative. While companies are making strides in complying and even going beyond EPR compliance, policy support and stronger collaboration are crucial to driving long-term environmental sustainability,” said Atty. Fabul.

It takes a village

The need for multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure the EPR Act’s effective implementation was seconded by Director Anna Liza Bonagua from the Bureau of Local Government and Development of the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

“EPR implementation requires a holistic approach involving the entire government—from the national government to local government units—as well as the private sector since it’s now their main responsibility to reduce their product waste,” said Bonagua.

Beyond government and industry efforts, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a critical role in ensuring compliance with the EPR Act.

“Civil society organizations act as a bridge between businesses, government, and the public—ensuring that EPR is not just a policy on paper but a reality that leads to a cleaner, more sustainable Philippines,” said Climate Reality PH Deputy Branch Manager Aimee Oliveros.

Oliveros shared that, in addition to leading information and education campaigns on climate and environmental issues, CSOs serve as key watchdogs, ensuring that governments and businesses are held responsible for meeting their stated sustainability goals.

With the 2025 midterm elections approaching, so is the summer heat—a stark contrast to the cooler days Filipinos recently experienced. This seasonal shift will once again push climate change to the forefront of public discourse, just as Filipinos prepare to elect new leaders.

“We didn’t want to wait for the rising heat—or the heat of election season—to [discuss global warming]. We needed to do it now. More importantly, we need to do it more often,” Nazrin Camille Castro, branch manager of Climate Reality PH, stressed.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [Pres. Marcos steers PH toward net-zero emission](#)

Every day, 35-year-old BB rides her bicycle from her Quezon City home to her office in Makati. She's among the roughly 10 million Filipino households using bicycles. A 2023 Social Weather Stations survey shows that 36% of Filipino households rely on bikes for commuting and fitness.

BB credits the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. for the 564 kilometers of protected bike lanes already established nationwide. The bike lane network encompasses 2,400 kilometers of bike lanes to be completed by 2028.

"I bike to work because it's faster, cheaper, and less stressful than driving, plus I get to exercise and help reduce air and noise pollution," says BB, an advertising creative who dreams of touring the country on her bike.

BB's choices reflect the Marcos administration's broader push for sustainability, with the ambitious goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Recognizing that transportation accounts for 15-20% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the government is implementing a range of initiatives to make public transport greener and more efficient.

#### Japan-quality urban mobility

The Marcos administration is championing projects like the EDSA Greenways (elevated pedestrian walkways) and bike lane networks already put up in cities such as Kalibo, Laoag, Marikina, Lipa, Davao, Tagum and San Fernando-Pampanga. The EDSA Busway and bus rapid transit systems in Cebu and Davao should provide commuters with efficient and eco-friendly alternatives to private vehicles.

In July 2024, the Marcos government partnered with Japan to launch a three-year technical cooperation project encouraging a shift from private to public transportation. Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Philippines will benefit from improved public utility vehicle (PUV) services, better route planning, intermodal transport hubs and enhanced commuter convenience.

JICA Chief Representative to the Philippines Takema Sakamoto highlighted the agency's commitment to helping the Philippines achieve "Japan-quality" public transportation systems.

This collaboration encompasses the big-ticket infrastructure projects, such as the Metro Manila Subway, North-South Commuter Railway, and LRT and MRT upgrades.

Additionally, JICA is drafting a 30-year railway master plan for the Philippine government while promoting Transit-Oriented Development to integrate transportation in urban planning.

#### Pioneering clean energy and modernization

While cities like Paris, Madrid, and Athens plan to ban diesel vehicles, and countries like Norway will be phasing out conventional cars in favor of electric vehicles (EVs), the Philippine government aggressively advocating EV use.

Under President Marcos's directive, at least 10% of government fleets are set to transition to EVs. Current infrastructure includes 384 electric PUVs, 7,515 registered EVs, and 563 charging stations nationwide. With the October 2024 inauguration of the country's first EV battery factory in Pampanga, capable of producing 18,000 EV batteries annually, the Philippines is poised to become a regional player in clean energy storage.

To address Metro Manila's infamous traffic congestion—ranked the world's worst in 2023 by TomTom's Traffic Index—the government is investing heavily in modernizing public transportation.

The Public Transport Modernization Program is replacing aging jeepneys and buses with Euro 4-compliant and electric vehicles. Cities like General Santos and Laguindingan in Mindanao have already embraced this program, improving commuter experiences and driver livelihoods.

Intermodal transport hubs and automated fare collection systems are also being implemented to make commuting more seamless and align Philippine transportation systems with global standards.

#### Advancing maritime and aviation sustainability

In the maritime sector, the government has partnered with Green Marine Copenhagen to train 100,000 Filipino mariners in alternative fuels like methanol, promoting greener sea transport.

In aviation, sustainable aviation fuel derived from renewable waste, including recycled cooking oil, has been successfully tested by a Philippine air carrier, further underscoring the country's commitment to decarbonizing all modes of transport.

The Marcos administration is also exploring cutting-edge technologies, such as a water-fueled engine being developed by a Japanese automaker.

These innovations could redefine sustainable transport, providing cleaner alternatives to conventional and electric vehicles.

Despite significant progress, challenges remain, including financial constraints, limited availability of sustainable aviation fuel, and the need for public cooperation. Nevertheless, the Marcos administration's dedication to modernization and sustainability is unwavering.

"Our multi-faceted approach to sustainable transportation demonstrates our commitment to achieving net-zero emissions. By integrating modern technology, fostering international collaborations, and promoting active and green transport, we are addressing immediate challenges while setting a course for a sustainable future," Pres. Marcos said.

"Our efforts stand as a testament to what a whole-of-nation approach can accomplish in the fight against climate change," the President said.

## **Strengthening Resilience: Strategies for disaster risk reduction under the Marcos administration**

The Metropolitan Manila Earthquake Impact Reduction Study (MMEIRS) predicts this bridges' scenario in the aftermath of "The Big One" or the 7.2-magnitude earthquake from the West Valley Fault: seven bridges in the metropolis, at the least, will collapse.

In preparation for these large seismic waves, the Metro Manila Priority Bridges Seismic Improvement Project (MMPBSIP), which aims to strengthen the seismic resilience of Guadalupe Bridge and Lamingan Bridge, underwent adjustments, foremost of which was a budget increase of 30 percent.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. approved in August 2024 the schedule extension for implementation, budget increase, and other improvements of the said project funded through an official development assistance (ODA) loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). "This project is vital for our safety as we strengthen our infrastructure to withstand strong earthquakes, such as 'The Big One'," he said.

The MMPBSIP, a project of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), now has a PHP10.34-billion budget, from the previous fund of PHP7.93 billion.

For context, the Philippines lies in the Pacific Ring of Fire, an active seismic region, where approximately 80 percent of the world's earthquakes take place. In the past five decades, the country has had 15 destructive earthquakes which include four major seismic events. These four major earthquakes, which transpired between November and December 2019, registered an average magnitude of greater than 6.5.

Cognizant of the additional traffic congestion that the project will bring, President Marcos directed concerned government agencies to devise a plan, saying: "We have also been working closely with experts to develop a traffic management plan to minimize the impact on commuters."

The DPWH, following the directive of the President, assured that before actual reinforcement works are done on the two outermost lanes of the Guadalupe Bridge, alternative bridges or temporary detour bridges will be built for both Northbound and Southbound direction starting on August 2025, after the four months preparatory works set on the issuance of the Notice to Proceed tentatively on March 2025. The temporary detour bridges will be constructed within a seven (7) month period and once completed will divert the two outermost lanes of EDSA. Only then will the 17-month retrofitting on the two outermost lanes of the existing bridges begin.

Guadalupe Bridge, which has 10 lanes that run a length of 114.4 meters, connects Makati and Mandaluyong cities, and is also the gateway for motorists to reach the northern and southern parts of the metropolis. Around 365,000 vehicles traverse the 60-year-old bridge each day.

Lambingan Bridge, on the other hand, has six lanes that span a length of 98.1 meters and connects Sta. Ana in Manila and Mandaluyong. Built in 1979, about 30,257 motorists pass by the bridge per day. Lambingan and Guadalupe Bridges are permanent structural links over the Pasig River.

In the 24th Gawad Kalasag Seal and Special Awards for Excellence in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Humanitarian Assistance in December 2024, the President called on concerned agencies “to continue working together to develop innovative solutions that are science-based, sustainable, future-ready, and establish clear guidelines for more effective disaster-response”.

In September 2023, the World Bank’s Project Information Document (PID) for the Infrastructure for Safer and Resilient Schools (ISRS) observed that the Philippines shifted its policies toward a more comprehensive disaster risk management (DRM) from an emergency-centric response. Leading the shift is the creation of National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) through the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act (Republic Act 10121) in 2010.

The council rolled out the National DRRM Plan 2011-2028, which underwent an update in 2020. New policy directions were identified to boost investments in resilience, and also prioritized the “building back better” approach in rehabilitation, recovery, and reconstruction, which follow the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

“We must significantly increase our investments and develop financing mechanisms in disaster risk reduction,” President Marcos called on the international participants of the 2024 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) during the opening ceremony. The conference, themed “Surge to 2030: Enhancing ambition in Asia-Pacific to accelerate disaster risk reduction,” was held in October 2024 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC).

The President said that sustained and predictable data, and financing would help address disaster risks better. “This entails ensuring that developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries, landlocked countries, and small island developing states, are provided greater access to these resources to advance their policies and build disaster resilience,” he explained.

Under the Marcos administration, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) selected the Philippines as the host country of its board. The FRLD assists developing countries, which are most vulnerable to the damaging effects caused by climate change, in managing their economic and non-economic losses. The FRLD board is responsible for decisions regarding resource mobilization, fund allocation, and eligibility criteria.

In August 2024, the President signed into law the Loss and Damage Fund Board Act (Republic Act No. 12019) which grants the board, the fund's governing body, a juridical personality with full legal capacity.

“We're proud to have a seat on its board among the Asia-Pacific Group, and to have been selected as its host. This ensures our voice, and those of other vulnerable nations, are heard to urgently bring much needed help to those who need it most. With this, we can rebuild faster and protect our kababayans (fellow citizens) from future risks for a safer Bagong Pilipinas (New Philippines),” President Marcos said.

### Safer and Resilient Schools

Geological and climate disruptions impact school infrastructure in the country which is not only in the Pacific Ring of Fire but also in the Pacific Typhoon Belt. “The Department of Education (DepEd) estimates that at least 65 percent of schools are in high seismic hazard zones, 8,000 schools are near rivers or waterways, 5,000 schools near the coastline, and 1,200 schools located on small islands,” the World Bank document said.

There has been a steady rise in the number of schools where natural calamities left negative impacts. More than 9,800 schools had minimal to substantial damages brought on by tropical cyclones and over 800 schools sustained damages because of earthquakes.

For 2021 to 2023 alone, the DepEd data showed that impacts of disasters on school infrastructure adversely affected 1.6 million learners and 3,500 school facilities. The Calamity and Quick Response Fund of the government could only provide repair and rehabilitation to a small percentage of the total affected school facilities. This left 3,444 school facilities in need of resilient recovery interventions.

### Infrastructure for Safer and Resilient Schools

Set to benefit thousands of learners, the Infrastructure for Safer and Resilient Schools (ISRS) project to be implemented this year to 2029 by the Department of Education (DepEd) and DPWH was given the green light by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) in May 2024. NEDA is chaired by the President.

The ISRS Project will repair, rehabilitate, retrofit, and reconstruct school facilities in identified regions that were significantly affected by recent calamities. The project aims to build more resilient classrooms that can withstand earthquakes, typhoons, and other cataclysmic incidents in the future, ensuring uninterrupted education.

The project has a PHP30.56 billion budget where PHP27.50 billion will be funded by Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan from the World Bank and PHP3.06 billion will be the counterpart fund from the Philippine government. ISRS will stand to benefit some 1,282 schools, 4,756 school buildings, and 13,101 classrooms.

The ISRS lists three critical aspects of the project: (1) Relatively Simple Works for School Infrastructure Recovery and Operations & Maintenance with a PHP9.65 billion



allocation; (2) Relatively Complex Works for School Infrastructure Recovery with a PhP19.81 billion budget; and (3) Project Management, Monitoring, and Evaluation with a PhP1.1 billion allocation.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### [Building resilient futures: Asean's path to sustainable urban development](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

We find ourselves amid a confluence of unprecedented challenges that demand our immediate attention and innovative solutions. The stakes have never been higher as we grapple with the looming threat of climate change, the accelerated urban congestion in our cities driven by a rising population and the social disparities intensified by rapid transmigration. Our cultural identities are facing dilution in an increasingly globalized world. In transitioning from an analog to a digital era, we must question whether the technological advancements we pursue are genuinely improving our lives or merely adding complexity to our existing challenges.

Urban areas are our economies' engines and the epicenters of these pressing challenges. As we address environmental, spatial, social, cultural, economic and technological issues, it becomes clear that our future cities are at the crossroads. The complexity of these urban and infrastructural hurdles underscores the urgent need for a new culture of innovation, forged by enlightened leadership that can instigate systemic change and champion sustainable outcomes.

Amid this backdrop, I am honored to be one of the 24 participants selected by the UK government to attend the Asean Sustainable Leadership in Infrastructure Program (Aslip) 2025. This course comes at a pivotal time, aligning with the Master Plan on Asean Connectivity 2025 and the Asean Sustainable Urbanization Strategy, both of which serve as critical frameworks for cooperative regional action.

Aslip is uniquely designed to empower Asean leaders, equipping us with the skills and insights necessary to tackle the future's urban and infrastructural challenges. Through a diverse range of themes, we will explore project planning, funding, procurement and future-proofing the places where we live, work, play and learn. The modules will provide us with an understanding of the critical infrastructure that connects urban elements, fostering vibrant and sustainable environments that promote diversity, equity and inclusivity.

Addressing our urban areas' carbon footprint is paramount in our fight against climate change. In the Philippines, where the vulnerability to extreme weather events amplifies, embracing net-zero strategies is not just an aspiration but a necessity. One pivotal module to be discussed is "Toward Net Zero: Impact on Urbanism and Infrastructure." It will enable us to understand how urban design, energy-efficient infrastructures and renewable energy integration can synergize to minimize environmental impact. We can foster urban areas that are resilient to climate shocks and capable of thriving in harmony with nature by investing in green building technologies and materials.

Sustainable systems

The "Sustainable Systems to Deliver Better Built Environments" module aligns with our objectives to create livable, resilient cities. Managed sustainably, urbanization offers opportunities to enhance community living. Implementing comprehensive waste management systems, integrating green spaces and promoting sustainable public transportation can elevate urban residents' quality of life. In cities like Metro Manila where traffic congestion and pollution are persistent problems, it's essential to place sustainable systems at the heart of urban planning — especially when someone sarcastically suggests removing the EDSA Bus Carousel. This approach is vital for creating environments that promote health, well-being and economic growth.

The course will also explore "Enablers to Build Back Better," a significant theme in the context of our pandemic recovery and our region's extreme weather events. The Philippines has faced numerous calamities. In progressively integrating resilience into our infrastructure, we must consider the social implications of our recovery efforts. This module will illuminate how strategic investments can promote inclusive growth, ensuring that marginalized communities are at the forefront of recovery initiatives. We can create spaces that resonate with the cultural identities of the people they serve by incorporating community input into planning processes.

The modules "Toward Net Zero Contracts and Procurement" present opportunities for us to rethink our procurement practices. By integrating sustainable criteria into them, we can stimulate market demand for green products and services while holding ourselves accountable to our net-zero commitments. This paradigm shift will help foster a culture of accountability within governance, ensuring that our actions align with our visionary goals.

In the face of escalating climate challenges, one of the most critical paths to a sustainable future lies in "Leveraging Support and Collaborations Toward a Net Zero World." This module highlights the importance of forging partnerships across various sectors — government, private, academia and civil society — to create a cohesive response to the issues that threaten our communities and ecosystems. Achieving net-zero emissions demands a collective effort, with stakeholders pooling their resources, expertise and innovative capacities to generate effective strategies. Just as urban ecosystems thrive on the interdependence of their elements, so, too, must our approaches to sustainability be interconnected.

Venturing into this program, we will explore how these collaborations can be instrumental in successfully implementing its various components. As we commit to building thriving habitats for current and future generations, we pledge to harness the power of partnership and cooperation, crafting a resilient and sustainable future for all.

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