



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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### [The choice between brine and wetlands](#)

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By: Michaela Del Callar

A possible trilateral mechanism among the Philippines, Japan, and India is being explored to bolster their security, economic, technology, and development cooperation, a senior Foreign Affairs official said Friday.

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### **[‘Mix of human factors turns downpours into disasters’](#)**

Faulty warning systems, poverty and deforestation of mountains in the southern Philippines turned recent unseasonably heavy rains into deadly disasters, scientists said in a report Friday.

## **SUNSTAR**

### **[DavSur town bears impact of climate change on tourism, welfare of residents](#)**

The tourism industry in the town of Sta. Cruz is significantly impacted by climate change, according to its tourism officer, Julius Paner.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[\[Opinion\] Debunk climate science mis- and dis- information](#)**

By: Ludwig Federigan

"It's a good day for us, it's a good day for [climate] science," exclaimed an eminent climate scientist after a jury awarded him a million dollars in a defamation suit against two writers. The news flooded major US media outlets at the start of February.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[DENR, Rizal ink deals for water security, sustainable tourism projects](#)**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico -

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and government officials from Rizal have signed agreements for projects aimed at enhancing water security and promoting regenerative tourism in the province.

### **[SWS: Pinoys wary of climate change impact on mental health](#)**

By: Janvic Mateo

Aside from its threat on physical health, climate change is acknowledged by a large majority of Filipinos as having a dangerous impact on mental health.

### **[Weak warnings, land use exacerbated impact of heavy rain in Mindanao — scientists](#)**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Scientists found deforestation, settlements in danger zones, and inadequate warning systems were key factors in the deadly effects of heavy rainfall in Mindanao last February.

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

### **ADOBO MAGAZINE**

#### **[DENR and PDRF call for stronger partnership between public and private orgs to address climate issues](#)**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), in partnership with Ayala Corporation, Metro Pacific Investments Corporation, Aboitiz, First Philippine Holdings, and in cooperation with Makati Business Club (MBC) and Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), recently organized The State of Climate Change forum in Makati to facilitate collaboration between the public and private sectors in addressing climate-related issues.

### **DAILY TRIBUNE**

#### **[CCC, UP enhance efforts for climate governance](#)**

By: Lade Jean Kabagani

The Climate Change Commission and the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen collaborative efforts, aimed at advancing climate governance and good governance initiatives in the country.

### **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

#### **[Climate Change Commission unveils robust climate mitigation and adaptation policies and initiatives to municipal leaders](#)**

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. graced the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) Annual General Assembly by his presence at the Grand Marriott Ballroom in Pasay City. In his speech, he emphasized the need for collaboration between the local government units (LGUs) for they are the frontliners to climate action.

**PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

**[CCC, UP boost ties to advance climate governance](#)**

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG) reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen collaborative efforts, aimed at advancing climate governance and good governance initiatives in the Philippines.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **The choice between brine and wetlands**

By: Jonathan Mayuga

As the Philippines struggles to revive its moribund salt industry, experts have warned against increasing the areas dedicated to the production of the so-called white gold, citing its adverse environmental impacts.

On Wednesday, environmental group Wetlands International Philippines warned against the proposal to convert abandoned, underdeveloped and underutilized (AAU) fishponds into salt farms.

The aggressive promotion of salt farming is emerging as the latest threat to the already dwindling mangrove forest cover and wetland ecosystems in the Philippines.

Wetlands, according to the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), are important habitats and staging grounds of migratory shorebirds or water birds, and their destruction weakens global conservation efforts for these endangered species.

Dwindling mangrove forest

IN its Philippine Forestry Statistics 2020, the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) said the country's mangrove forest cover is down to just 300,411 hectares, from as much as 500,000 hectares in the 1920s, mainly due to conversion to aquaculture areas and deforestation.

Mangroves are often harvested for various uses, for construction material purposes, for nipa and wood for fuel. Charcoal making has also been identified as a major cause of deforestation.

According to the 1990 Forestry Statistics Report of the DENR-FMB, there are 75,000 hectares of fishponds in the Philippines. Many fishponds in the Philippines, however, are now classified as AAUs.

Reviving salt industry

IN May last year, the House of Representatives' agriculture and food panel approved a bill aiming to arrest the declining local salt production industry by boosting production and mandating stronger government and financial support for salt farmers.

House Bill 1976 or the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act, aims to draw up a government strategy that will upscale local salt production to achieve salt self-sufficiency and shield the country from the global supply chain vulnerabilities.

The measure also seeks to provide funding, training, technical support, trade and export assistance to salt farmers and producers to achieve salt production targets and decrease reliance on imports.

However, environmentalists said converting more areas to fishponds is “a bad idea,” considering it might lead to the conversion of more areas into salt farms.

From fishponds to salt farms?

AUU fishponds that used to be thriving mangrove areas are now being eyed for conversion into salt farms.

Environmental advocate Jimely Flores, a fisheries and marine scientist, highlights concerns regarding salt farming on ponds, emphasizing its adverse effects on biodiversity. Flores warns that this practice is susceptible to the accumulation of nano and microplastics, along with other harmful contaminants.

Converting AUU fishponds into salt farms, she said, is not a good option, adding that abandoned fishponds can economically be best used for extensive aquaculture of native species or just be reverted into mangrove areas.

She said there are best practices in small-scale salt farming, which is done on raised bamboos or raised tiled platforms.

“Bamboo is less capital-intensive and does not need a fixed space. But it is not on a commercial scale,” she said. She cited Iloilo where salt farmers use bamboo for salt making.

In northern Philippines areas like Ilocos, Flores said the practice is cooking seawater collected from the sea. But this, she said, is energy intensive but with renewable energy, it might be feasible although they combined it with the mined salt from Australia.

Revert fishponds to mangrove

MEANWHILE, instead of entertaining the idea of converting these idle fishponds into salt farms, the group called on the government to rehabilitate the country’s coastal and marine ecosystem by fast-tracking the reversion of these fishponds back to mangroves

to enhance the country's natural defense against tsunamis, storm surges and sea-level rise, and boost the replenishment of the country's fish stock, Wetlands International said.

Specifically, Wetlands International urged the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to revoke and transfer all fishpond lease agreements for AUU ponds back to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). This action aims to facilitate mangrove reforestation efforts under the purview of the DENR.

DENR, DA-BFAR mandate

"THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources originally had jurisdiction over many of the mangrove areas that were lent to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources under the Department of Agriculture (DA-BFAR) for aquaculture production. However, many of those fishponds have been idle or largely underutilized for over five years," Dr. Annadel Cabanban, Country Manager of Wetlands International Philippines, said in a statement.

Cabanban said under the Philippine Fisheries Code, as amended, BFAR is required to return the lease agreements for aquaculture areas of unutilized fishponds back to the DENR so that the areas can be reverted to their original mangrove state or functions, she added.

Section 49 of Republic Act No. 8550 mandates the DENR, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture, local government units, other concerned agencies, and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils, to identify AUU fishponds covered by Foreshore Lease Agreements to be reverted to their original mangrove state or functions.

Meanwhile, Section 99 of RA 10654 likewise prohibits any person from converting mangroves into fishponds or for any other purpose.

Climate change

"WE are already in a race against climate change. If we lose any more mangroves, the more vulnerable our country will be to coastal flooding, erosion and storm surges," said Cabanban.

Cabanban said the new proposal of the DA-BFAR to use AUU ponds as salt farms is a new threat to mangroves.

"Mangroves need brackish water and can hardly survive or grow in conditions too high in salinity. So salt farming and mangrove survival are unlikely to coexist," she explained.

## Costly and tedious proposal

ACCORDING to Cabanban, converting salt farms back to mangrove forests will be tedious and costly.

“Some studies say that mangrove restoration can still happen in former saltbed areas, but it is costly and tedious,” she said.

Moreover, she said it would only allow species that can tolerate high salinity. It will not be reverted to a multispecies mangrove area.

“We thus urge the DA-BFAR to thoroughly reconsider and revise its draft FAO 197-2 as it may exacerbate the further degradation of mangroves,” Cabanban said.

According to Cabanban, excessive water salinity can stunt the mangroves’ growth, reduce biomass, and impair photosynthesis. It can also interfere with the way the mangroves’ roots absorb water and nutrition from the ground, which makes it difficult for the mangroves to survive.

## A better alternative

INSTEAD of using the AUU fishponds for salt farming, Wetlands International Philippines recommends implementing the Associated Mangrove Aquaculture (AMA) approach as a mangrove-friendly aquaculture strategy.

“The Associated Mangrove Aquaculture is both mangrove-friendly and socioeconomically viable. It adapts the restoration of mangroves along waterways and a win-win situation for sustainable use,” said Cabanban.

AMA restores mangrove greenbelts in the estuary along inland waterways and protects adjoining fishponds. It uses mangroves’ ability to enhance biodiversity in an area to increase aquaculture production and is a more sustainable alternative to the silvofishery systems, which are being practiced by some fish farms in the Philippines.

Wetlands International Philippines said it is working to pilot the AMA approach in the Philippines as a means of reconciling the need to restore mangroves and ensure ample fisheries supply.

## Blue carbon projects

ANOTHER opportunity the Philippine government should consider is developing robust, high-quality blue carbon projects following the Ecological Mangrove Restoration

guidelines, suggested Cabanban, adding that a ratio of 4:1, mangrove area to fishpond, along the coastline is one aquaculture practice in a blue carbon project or economy.

“This presents a timely opportunity to secure sustainable financing, including access to carbon markets, that conserves critical ecosystems while enhancing livelihoods and resilience. Policy reforms, institutional coordination, and local governance support are vital for project success,” said Cabanban.

“Mangrove forest rehabilitation in fishponds can be a strategy for increased blue carbon investments. So we recommend the DENR, DA-BFAR, other related agencies, and our policy makers to come up with the policy and implementing rules and regulations for increased blue carbon investments in the Philippines,” Cabanban said.

She suggested encouraging corporate social responsibility programs and public-private partnerships focused on mangrove and seagrass rehabilitation, ecotourism, and blue carbon ventures.

“We are willing to work with all involved agencies, groups and communities for solutions that would ensure both food security and mangrove conservation and rehabilitation,” Cabanban assured.

## DAILY TRIBUNE

### BBM: Collective action vs climate change needed

By: Tiziana Celine Piatos

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. emphasized the urgent need for multilateralism to combat the existential threat of climate change.

Addressing the Australian Parliament on Thursday, Marcos underscored the imperative for collective action to safeguard the future of humanity.

“Now, more than ever, we need multilateralism to work,” Marcos said.

“This is particularly important given the scope of global cooperation needed to address our most pressing vulnerability — one that threatens the very survival of our peoples, one that threatens our very future,” he added.

Highlighting the severity of the climate crisis, Marcos reaffirmed the Philippines’ commitment to accelerating a just, affordable, sustainable, and inclusive energy transition towards carbon neutrality.

The Philippines, Marcos noted, possesses the potential to become a net carbon sink, capable of absorbing more carbon dioxide than it emits.

However, despite this ecological potential, the Philippines ranks as one of the most climate-vulnerable nations globally, topping the 2023 World Risk Index.

“This glaring disproportion between our share of responsibility and our vulnerability reflects an injustice that must be corrected,” Marcos said.

He called upon developed countries to take immediate and decisive action, emphasizing the imperative of equity and solidarity in addressing the climate crisis.

Data from Australian Climate Change Authority’s website showed that Australia recorded 467 million tonnes (approximately 423.6 million metric tons) of greenhouse gas emissions in 2023.

In December of the same year, Marcos called upon Japan, a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions globally, to intensify its endeavors towards achieving carbon neutrality.

## GMA

### [Philippines, India, Japan eye trilateral grouping](#)

By: Michaela Del Callar

A possible trilateral mechanism among the Philippines, Japan, and India is being explored to bolster their security, economic, technology, and development cooperation, a senior Foreign Affairs official said Friday.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Theresa Lazaro said such an arrangement “presents enormous opportunities for these countries and the broader Indo-Pacific region, not only on the prospect of new ‘strategic partnerships’ and security architecture, but also on economic and development ventures.”

“This partnership can help drive the economic engines of these countries towards shared economic prosperity in the region,” Lazaro said at a forum organized by Stratbase ADR Institute in Makati City.

There are no formal discussions yet on the proposed trilateral bloc, but Lazaro said she sees “no difficulties” in forging a triangular cooperation with Japan and India.

“It has to go through certain formalities,” Lazaro said.

Trilateral cooperation, she said, is “an important feature of the present global order” characterized by a multiplicity of actors.

Amid a backdrop of regional uncertainties, Lazaro said more states opt for this arrangement due to common concerns, such as in the economic and security domains.

Territorial disputes in the South China Sea—a busy and resource-rich waterway—have sparked occasional violence and have been regarded as a potential regional flashpoint for armed conflict. It has also been at the center of a strategic rivalry between China and the United States.

The proposed agreement would explore specific areas of strategic cooperation, including connectivity, supply chains, green transformation to manage the impacts of climate change and create greener growth pathways, Lazaro said.

The Philippines, India and Japan can also “learn from their best practices, know-how, and technology in pursuing the greening of crucial economic sectors that weigh heavily,” she added.

Infrastructure connectivity, she noted, is also an important aspect of the cooperation, specifically transport and logistics systems given the breadth of the Indo-Pacific region.

“Infrastructure connectivity shortens distance and increases productivity. The resulting benefits are manifold, among which are increased intra-regional trade, supply chain efficiency, and travel mobility,” Lazaro said.

#### BrahMos missiles arriving

The Philippines is intensifying its maritime dialogue efforts with India in preparation for the delivery of BrahMos cruise missiles this March, which have been procured from the Indian government.

Lazaro said, "The Philippines currently collaborates with eight maritime dialogue partners, including Japan. We seek to elevate our maritime dialogue with India to a track one level in the near future."

The forthcoming arrival of the BrahMos cruise missiles is expected to significantly bolster the firepower of the Philippine Marine Corps.

In a display of bilateral respect, India has shown solidarity with the Philippines by acknowledging the 2016 arbitral tribunal ruling in favor of the Philippines, which invalidated China's expansive claims in the West Philippine Sea.

Training sessions have been conducted between Indian and Philippine Coast Guard personnel, with future sessions planned for ongoing collaboration.

Speaking at the Stratbase forum, India's top envoy to the Philippines, Shambu Kumaran, said there is a need to look at international relationships beyond the bilateral ties amid the continuous security challenges in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain.

“Geopolitical logic of this partnership is very visible given the recent developments in the region especially maritime domain,” Kumaran said, stressing the need for an immediate trilateral arrangement among the three countries is “crucial.”

“Maritime security will be an area of focus and I think we should look at what we can do, the three of us, and multiply what we are each doing bilaterally with each other,” he said.

#### 'Indispensable' partners of Japan

Japan, alongside India, is keen on engaging in a trilateral collaboration with the Philippines. This three-way partnership focuses on economic, agricultural, and people-to-people exchanges, with a primary emphasis on maritime cooperation.

Highlighting the maritime domain as a key potential area for enhanced collaboration, Kumaran cited the importance of active engagement between the three nations.

Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, Kenichi Matsuda, emphasized the transformative potential of cooperative efforts within the envisioned triangular partnership. Matsuda said Japan considers the Philippines and India as “indispensable partners.”

“The rising geopolitical tensions in the region expose the increasing convergence of traditional and non-traditional security threats. Now more than ever, our unified efforts in securing the regional and global commons are the greatest equalizer in upholding the rule-based order,” Matsuda said.

As the formal maritime dialogue between the Philippines and India progresses and trilateral cooperation advances, concerns have been raised by China regarding maritime collaboration efforts between the Philippines and other nations outside the region.

Chinese defense officials expressed dismay, cautioning against joint military exercises or patrols that may heighten tensions in the South China Sea, thereby violating the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

While awaiting an official response from the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding these concerns, Lazaro reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to sovereignty and cooperative relationships with like-minded countries, especially in maritime matters.

Lazaro said, "The Philippines is a sovereign nation, and we are steadfast in upholding our sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdictions. Our actions are not subject to external dictates; we seek collaboration with nations sharing similar values, particularly in maritime affairs."

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [Eleventh Hour: The role of the judiciary in addressing the climate crisis](#)

By: Climate Reality Project Philippines

The Earth is warming at an alarming rate. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global warming has already reached 1.1 degrees Celsius since the 1850s.

The impacts of climate change are already being felt around the world, in the form of more extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and melting glaciers. These impacts are causing widespread damage to nature and people, and they are only going to get worse if we don't take action.

The Climate Reality Project Philippines was honored to be invited to a recent panel discussion attended by a group of volunteer judges working hand-in-hand with the US Embassy of the Philippines Cultural Exchange Program.

During the panel "In Defense of Independent Judiciary: A Colloquium on the Rule of Law and Climate Justice" held at the Far Eastern University - Institute of Law in 2024, Nazrin Castro, manager of Climate Reality in the Philippines, highlighted the increasingly important role of the judiciary in climate action around the world.

Here is a summary of points Castro conveyed to the judges from the perspective of climate science and global and national frameworks:

Countries do acknowledge the scale and urgency of the climate crisis

Through the Paris Agreement, which was adopted in 2015, nations committed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and to mobilize support for vulnerable developing countries, following the principles of climate justice, equity, and common but differentiated responsibilities.

The treaty recognizes that highly industrialized countries are largely responsible for the climate crisis, and therefore gives them a greater responsibility to reduce their emissions and provide financial, technological, and capacity-building support to developing countries.

The treaty is legally binding within national jurisdictions. In the Philippines, the Executive Department prepared the Instruments of Accession, which the Philippine Senate concurred on. The government submitted its ratification to the UN in 2017.

Following this, nations submitted their respective Nationally Determined Contribution, in support of the goal to hold global warming to 1.5 C. Developed countries also needed to mobilize \$100 billion of climate finance, starting in 2020, as support for developed countries. But on these two fronts, developed countries have so far failed to deliver.

Climate change is a human rights issue

This was affirmed by the 2022 report of the Commission on Human Rights, following a seven-year investigation into the impacts of climate change on the Philippines and the duty of states and private actors to address the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters.

The National Inquiry on Climate Change (NICC) report stated that climate change is “negatively impacting the human rights of the Filipino people and adversely affecting the right to life” and that “neglect in climate change mitigation may be considered human rights violation.”

The NICC report emphasized that the Philippine government has a legal and moral obligation to protect its citizens from the human rights impacts of climate change, which include:

Right to life: Climate change is increasing the risk of death from extreme weather events, such as typhoons, floods, and landslides.

Right to health: Climate change is increasing the risk of heat-related illnesses, infectious diseases, and malnutrition.

Right to food: Climate change is disrupting agricultural production and leading to food shortages and price increases.

Right to water: Climate change is leading to water scarcity and pollution. Right to housing: Climate change is damaging and destroying homes and communities.

Right to livelihood: Climate change is disrupting economic activities and leading to job losses.

Right to education: Climate change is disrupting school attendance and damaging educational infrastructure.

Right to culture: Climate change is threatening traditional livelihoods and cultural practices.

Right to self-determination: Climate change is forcing people to migrate and abandon their homes and communities.

The NICC report also found that “carbon majors within the Philippine jurisdiction may be required to undertake human rights due diligence and provide remediation.” This suggests that it is open to the possibility of penalizing polluters, particularly carbon majors, who are found to be responsible for human rights violations caused by climate change.

While the report is non-binding, it should set a precedent that can influence our legal institutions. The report's recommendations could lead to the development of new laws and policies that would hold polluters accountable, as well as give Filipinos new tools to seek justice from polluters.

Polluters must not only pay, but they must also stop polluting

Current emissions need to fall by 45 percent by 2030 to ensure we are within the climate threshold of 1.5 C. And even if we achieve this, we also need to ensure that we have the resources and the capacity to adapt to climate impacts in a world that is warmer by 1.5 C. But seeing our progress now, we are failing on both.

The judiciary should now be a part of addressing the climate crisis by serving as an instrument in holding polluters accountable. We need to work on greening our courts in the sense that it could foster more accountability and prohibit actions to curtail the effects of climate change at the pace and scale we need it to.

In emphasizing these three points to the judiciary, Climate Reality Philippines urged the judiciary to:

Interpret and enforce climate change laws and regulations. Courts can make governments and businesses answer for their actions on climate change and guarantee that they are following our laws, including the Climate Change Act of 2009.

Develop new legal theories and precedents. Courts can use their authority to create new legal theories and precedents that can help to address the challenges of climate change.

Provide a forum for public participation. Courts can provide a forum for individuals and communities to challenge government policies and actions that are harmful to the climate. For example, courts have allowed citizens to sue governments for failing to take action on climate change.

The Philippine courts must realize their important role in providing justice for vulnerable populations who are at constant risk and danger due to climate change, despite not causing it.

## MANILA STANDARD

### 'Mix of human factors turns downpours into disasters'

Faulty warning systems, poverty and deforestation of mountains in the southern Philippines turned recent unseasonably heavy rains into deadly disasters, scientists said in a report Friday.

More than 100 people were killed in landslides and floods in January and February on the country's second-largest island of Mindanao as the northeast monsoon and a low-pressure trough brought downpours.

On Friday, ABS-CBN also reported that 10 houses were washed away by heavy floods in Davao Occidental province.

A study by the World Weather Attribution group found the unusually heavy rain in eastern Mindanao was not "particularly extreme."

But with people living in landslide-prone areas and shortcomings in weather alerts, the rains became "devastating."

"We can't just blame the rain for the severe impacts," said Richard Ybañez, chief science research specialist at the University of the Philippines' Resilience Institute.

"A range of human factors is what turned these downpours into deadly disasters."

In the deadliest incident, more than 90 people were killed when the side of a mountain collapsed and smashed into a gold mining village on Feb. 6, burying buses and houses.

While climate change was likely one of the drivers of the heavy rain, the report said scientists were not able to quantify its impact due to the lack of available data.

"However, we did detect a strong trend in the historical data—compared to the pre-industrial climate, the heaviest five-day periods of rainfall now drop around 50 percent more rainfall on Mindanao island in the December to February period," said Mariam Zachariah of the Grantham Institute at Imperial College London.

The scientists found that a higher-than-average rate of poverty in the mountainous region had left people vulnerable to the impacts of heavier rainfall, while "intensified deforestation" had increased the risk of landslides.

“Across the region of study, construction in areas declared ‘no-build zones’ raises these dangers considerably,” the report said.

The report said policies, laws and funding of disaster risk management “have largely stalled over the past decades” and were concentrated on post-disaster response.

For example, automated sensors for rainfall and stream level in the region “have not been recording data since at least 2022,” after funding for maintenance and data transmission was cut.

The report also faulted the country’s weather forecasts and warnings, which “have limited granularity on local risk and lack instructions on where and when to evacuate.”

“Evacuations from high-risk locations were carried out when the island was hit by the rainfall in late January. However, many people were still in harm’s way,” said Ybañez.

“It is critical that both early warning systems and assessment of landslide-prone areas are improved to avoid similar disasters in the future,” he said.

The report also warned that the recent rains would have been “more extreme” were it not for the El Niño weather phenomenon causing drier conditions across the country.

The tropical archipelago nation, which is ranked among the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change, is usually affected by around 20 major storms a year.  
With AFP

Editor’s Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline “Faulty warnings, deforestation turned Philippine rains ‘deadly’—study”.

## SUNSTAR

### [DavSur town bears impact of climate change on tourism, welfare of residents](#)

The tourism industry in the town of Sta. Cruz is significantly impacted by climate change, according to its tourism officer, Julius Paner.

He said that while Sta. Cruz has been preparing for the expected long dry spell, continuous rainfall has been the unexpected outcome.

Paner highlighted that the tourism industry continues to flourish in Sta. Cruz due to its fair weather, noting that “El Niño mitigation programs have been prepared in advance to prevent wildfires in the event of no rain for a month. Failure to do so would result in the closure of Mt. Apo to climbers, causing an impact on the tourism industry.”

He noted that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, a considerable increase in tourist arrivals (11 percent) occurred in 2023 when the region experienced an increase in tourist arrivals, with Mt. Apo hosting 5,000 climbers, Mt. Loay hosting 3,720 climbers, Mt. Denor hosting 4,118 climbers, Bamboo Peak hosting 3,369 climbers, and Marine Waterfalls averaging 2,000 visitors.

He said that the shear line weather experienced in mid-January resulted in the displacement of 24 families residing in Barangay Astorga in Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur.

In contrast, the Disaster Response, Monitoring, and Information Center of the Department of Social Welfare and Development-Davao Region (DSWD-Davao) said heavy rains caused by the shear line affected 44,888 families in the provinces of Davao del Norte, Davao de Oro, Davao Oriental, Davao Occidental, and Davao City.

“Fortunately, only 24 families were evacuated in Sta. Cruz, and the local government provided their needs, such as food,” Paner said.

He said that Barangays Inawayan and Astorga were significantly affected by the shear line, and forceful evacuation was carried out in Barangay Astorga to ensure the safety of families in adherence to disaster preparedness and mitigation.

Paner said the government's long-term plan is to pull out residents from landslide-prone areas; however, big landslides have never occurred in Sta. Cruz.

He said the community-based monitoring system is employed to inform the local government of any impending danger, such as floods or landslides.

“In case of any danger, classes at all levels are immediately suspended to prevent problems affecting children in schools,” he said, adding that the response units are activated and monitored by the local government.

He pointed out that the local government unit of Sta. Cruz is investing in a comprehensive warning system over the next three months.

Paner said the warning system will have homing devices attached to flood- and landslide-prone areas to convey the real-time scenario of any impending danger.

“Cameras will be installed on the shoreline of Sta. Cruz and monitoring equipment will be directly attached to the monitoring system of the local government unit,” he said.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### [\[Opinion\] Debunk climate science mis- and dis- information](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

"It's a good day for us, it's a good day for [climate] science," exclaimed an eminent climate scientist after a jury awarded him a million dollars in a defamation suit against two writers. The news flooded major US media outlets at the start of February.

Michael Mann, one of the world's renowned climate scientists, won a defamation case against two writers: a policy analyst and then a fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, and a right-wing author at the National Review for online posts published 12 years ago.

The fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a libertarian think tank, had written an online post: "Mann could be said to be the Jerry Sandusky of climate science, except instead of molesting children, he has molested and tortured data in the service of politicized science." Sandusky was a former assistant football coach who was convicted of molesting children. Then, the right-wing author called Mann's research "the fraudulent climate change 'hockey stick' graph."

The defamation case stemmed from the research of Mann and his two colleagues on what was called the "hockey stick graph" which The Atlantic called "the most controversial chart in science."

Mann, together with Raymond Bradley and Malcolm Hughes, published in 1998 a paper that sought to reconstruct the planet's past temperatures. According to The Atlantic, "The graph depicting this result looked rather like a hockey stick — after a long period of relatively minor temperature variations (the 'shaft'), it showed a sharp upswing during the last century or so ('the blade')."

In 2001, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change prominently featured the hockey stick in its Third Assessment Report.

Mann is a presidential-distinguished professor of Earth and Environmental Science at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the Penn Center for Science, Sustainability and the Media. He is also the leading influential voice on climate change with an engaged audience of 2 million people and one of the foremost defenders of climate science.

He has authored several books including "Our Fragile Moment" and "The New Climate War." I came across his name in 2016 when I watched "Before the Blood," a 96-minute

documentary film co-produced by American artist-turned-climate activist Leonardo DiCaprio. The film narrated the effects of climate change globally and discussed climate change denial.

### The Mann interview

Ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in 2021, I had the privilege to have a virtual interview with Mann on "why we need to act on climate change now."

Full interview is on Spotify at <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1H6UykpaggOW8dPE4FPX0>.

These interviews were published in two parts in my column on October 16 and Oct. 23, 2021, respectively.

Misinformation is the sharing of inaccurate and misleading information in an unintentional way while disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of false or inaccurate information in order to discredit a person or organization.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), both are persistent false information, widely spread through media networks, shifting public opinion in a significant way toward a distrust in facts and authority. WEF's Global Risks Report 2024 ranked misinformation and disinformation as the second most likely factors to present a material crisis on a global scale this year. They can trigger civil unrest and be a risk of repression and erosion of human rights.

### Climate justice of another sort

Climate change is still not accepted as true in the United States. A new University of Michigan study, "The social anatomy of climate change denial in the United States," reveals that 15 percent of Americans deny that climate change is real. The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication in the Philippines reported that a minuscule 3 percent do not believe that climate change is happening.

Climate scientists have been facing waves of attacks, more often from anonymous accounts questioning either the reality of global warming, or the role of human activities in climate change. Following the change of ownership of X (Twitter), they received threats and suffered insults. This explosion of hate and misinformation made climate science communications harder.

Malaysia's "The Star" newspaper called these organized opponents of climate reforms "trolls" or "bots," while the Paris-based "Le Monde" said that they are "act like an underground army."



## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [DENR, Rizal ink deals for water security, sustainable tourism projects](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico -

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and government officials from Rizal have signed agreements for projects aimed at enhancing water security and promoting regenerative tourism in the province.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and Rizal Governor Nina Ricci Ynares launched on Thursday Project TRANSFORM (Transdisciplinary Approach for Resilience and Environmental Sustainability through Multistakeholder Engagement).

During the launch, Yulo-Loyzaga, Prime Infrastructure Capital Inc., and local government officials of Rizal signed a memorandum of agreement for a sustainable water security project.

This partnership aims to achieve several goals: increasing the forest cover of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, reducing its vulnerability to erosion and landslides, boosting water supply for lowland communities, and addressing both poverty alleviation and food security in upland communities.

The DENR and Rizal government also launched the following projects:

- Regenerative tourism for resilient Tanay
- Provision of livelihood training and programs for indigenous peoples in Tanay
- Trash-to-cash program, educational program, community-risk reduction training, and capacity building on solid waste management and the Extended Producers Responsibility Act of 2022 in San Mateo
- Restoration and maintenance of waterways in Rodriguez
- Preservation of endemic tree species in Baras
- Greenhouse gas accounting in Antipolo City
- Rainforest connect initiative in Tanay

“[This project] really targets those areas that have far-reaching impacts not just on their own provinces but also their surrounding areas as well in terms of regional development and contribution to national development,” Yulo-Loyzaga said.

Rizal hosts five protected areas: Hinulugang Taktak Protected Landscape, Pamitinan Protected Landscape, Kaliwa River Forest Reserve, Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, and National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary and Game Preserve recognized under Presidential Proclamation 1636.

“The launching of Project TRANSFORM would help make every Rizaleno a better steward of Mother Nature. It would help us based on the transformation of our communities into a more resilient and sustainable home, where our children, our future, and our dreams can be nourished and nurtured,” Governor Nina Ynares said.

Project TRANSFORM seeks to converge efforts and expertise of the government, academe, private sector, and civil society to alleviate poverty through green and blue jobs, enhance community resilience to the impacts of climate change, and promote strong public-private partnerships.

The project originated as an offshoot of a panel discussion during the DENR's first multistakeholder forum in 2022. Ormoc City in Leyte became the pilot implementation area.

It was launched in Bataan and Surigao del Norte in 2023.

The initiative will be launched in Sarangani, Lanao del Sur, Baguio, Quezon City, Masbate, Palawan and Bohol this year.

## **SWS: Pinoys wary of climate change impact on mental health**

By: Janvic Mateo

Aside from its threat on physical health, climate change is acknowledged by a large majority of Filipinos as having a dangerous impact on mental health.

A recent Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey found that 81 percent of the respondents perceived climate change as dangerous on one's mental health.

Of the figure, 37 percent said it is "very dangerous" and 44 percent said it is "somewhat dangerous."

The remaining 19 percent said that climate change is not dangerous to one's mental health.

Meanwhile, in terms of climate change's impact on physical health, 47 percent perceive climate change as "very dangerous" and 42 percent said it is "somewhat dangerous." The remaining 11 percent said it is not dangerous.

The survey, conducted from Dec. 8 to 11 last year, found that 87 percent of the respondents experienced the impact of climate change in the past three years.

Of the figure, 19 percent experienced its severe impact, 43 percent experienced moderate impact and 24 percent experienced little impact.

The remaining 13 percent said they did not experience the impact of climate change.

In terms of awareness, 73 percent said they previously knew of climate change, down from 79 percent in similar surveys conducted in March and October, also last year.

Those who said they knew of climate change only during the survey period increased from 21 percent to 27 percent.

Asked about emotions brought about by climate change, 87 percent said they felt at least one negative emotion, while 37 percent cited at least one positive emotion.

Top negative emotions included sadness (56 percent), anxiety (43 percent), fear (43 percent), depression (16 percent), anger (11 percent) and hopelessness (11 percent).

Patience was the top positive emotion with 22 percent of respondents saying it was among those brought about by climate change, followed by hope (seven percent) and calmness (seven percent).

Fewer respondents, based on the survey, thought that the humanity could do something to stop or slow down climate change “if everyone really tried.” It went down to 57 percent in December last year from 76 percent in December 2022 and 69 percent in October last year.

Those who believe that climate change is already beyond humanity’s control increased from 23 percent in December 2022 and 29 percent in October last year to 39 percent in December last year.

Based on the survey, only 39 percent of the respondents said they participated in at least one effort to reduce climate change risks.

Some 18 percent said they contacted a local government employee, followed by contacting traditional or community leaders (12 percent), officials of political parties (eight percent), and non-government organizations (eight percent).

Seven percent of the respondents said they gave donations, another seven percent claimed they contacted national government employee, while four percent said they contacted “other influential people” and another four percent reached out to legislators or their representatives.

Sixty-one percent of the respondents said they did not do anything to help reduce climate change risks.

The SWS fourth-quarter survey had 1,200 respondents and a margin of error of plus/minus 2.8 percent.

## Weak warnings, land use exacerbated impact of heavy rain in Mindanao — scientists

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Scientists found deforestation, settlements in danger zones, and inadequate warning systems were key factors in the deadly effects of heavy rainfall in Mindanao last February.

Heavy rains brought by the northeast monsoon and a low-pressure trough caused massive floods and landslides across Mindanao last month, burying villages and leaving dozens dead.

In Brgy. Masara, a gold-mining village in Maco, Davao del Sur, landslides claimed 98 lives.

According to a rapid analysis by climate scientists from the World Weather Attribution, heavy rainfall events are now dumping 50% more rain in Mindanao.

However, they pointed out that while the February rainfall was “unseasonably heavy,” it was not “particularly extreme.”

The lack of early warning systems and the presence of communities in landslide-prone areas turned it into a “devastating” event, scientists said.

“We can’t just blame the rain for the severe impacts. A range of human factors is what turned these disasters into deadly disasters,” said Richard Ybañez, chief research specialists of the University of the Philippines Resilience Institute.

High vulnerability of population

The landslide in Masara occurred in an area designated as a no-build zone by the environment department’s Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) after a similar tragedy in 2008.

The scientists highlighted how deforestation due to farming, logging and mining operations across eastern Mindanao has increased the risk of landslides and floods.

Additionally, they noted that poverty negatively impacts the ability of communities to cope with extreme weather events “as their livelihood channels tend to be more limited and climate-sensitive” like mining and farming.

The report also said there are “large gaps” in the region’s early warning systems.

It noted that disaster risk management policies and funding primarily focus on reactive measures like response, and that rainfall and stream level sensors in the area are no longer functioning.

“Evacuations from high-risk locations were carried out when the island was hit by the rainfall in late January. However, many people were still in harm’s way,” Ybañez said.

“It is critical that both early warning systems and assessment of landslide-prone areas are improved to avoid similar disasters in the future,” he added.

In February, Rep. Jose Manuel Alba (Bukidnon) filed a bill that seeks to institutionalize anticipatory actions for mitigating the impacts of hazards before they occur, a move welcomed by humanitarian organizations as a positive step toward addressing climate risks.

#### Influence of climate change

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice earlier called for a state of climate emergency in Mindanao as floods, landslides and drought affected communities in the country’s south.

The scientists said climate change likely played a role in the heavy rainfall that devastated Mindanao because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture. But they were unable to definitively quantify the influence of climate change on the event due to insufficient data.

The researchers also found that heavy rainfall events from December to February in Mindanao are no longer rare events.

“In today’s climate, the event has a return period of one in every 10 years. In other words, a heavy rainfall spell like this is expected with a 10% chance in any given year,” Mariam Zachariah, a researcher from Imperial College London, told reporters.

The report also noted that the heavy rainfall would have been even more severe if not for the El Niño weather phenomenon, which is expected to persist until May.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### ADOBO MAGAZINE

#### [DENR and PDRF call for stronger partnership between public and private orgs to address climate issues](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), in partnership with Ayala Corporation, Metro Pacific Investments Corporation, Aboitiz, First Philippine Holdings, and in cooperation with Makati Business Club (MBC) and Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), recently organized The State of Climate Change forum in Makati to facilitate collaboration between the public and private sectors in addressing climate-related issues.

The forum gathered around 200 delegates from government entities, private sector stakeholders, and non-government organizations. It facilitated a dialogue on the current state of climate change in the Philippines and challenges, sharing of best practices and solutions, and exploration of potential collaborative initiatives across sectors. Among the delegates included Ambassadors of New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, and Israel, Ayala Chairman and PDRF Co-Chair Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, MBC and MAP members, PDRF private sector partners, members of the UN Humanitarian Country Team, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Climate Change Commission (CCC).

In her keynote speech, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga shared that they have completed the National Adaptation Plan, the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory, and the National Determined Contribution Implementation Plan as part of an “integrated approach towards crafting new evidence-informed plans on mitigation and adaptation.” These documents supported the National Economic Development Authority’s Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 framework to accelerate climate action and strengthen resilience. She also mentioned that DENR is launching a National Natural Resource Development Transparency Initiative for Climate Resilient Development.

Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga also shared that DENR has taken actions to address issues regarding clean air and water, waste management, renewable energy, biodiversity, and minerals development.

“At the DENR we posit that there is a need to meld these in with others that support our mandate to maintain a balanced ecology for all Filipinos – namely laws on clean air and water, the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area Systems Act, the Extended Producers Responsibility law, the Renewable Energy Act and even our Philippine

Mining laws. Our principal role of environmental stewardship and sustainable resource use is in engineering resilience through prevention,” Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga said.

Lastly, Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga urged the private sector and other stakeholders to work with the government. “Mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction are critical elements in our race to resilience. These tasks must be informed by science and they are for the whole of society and not just the whole of government.”

In his opening remarks, Zobel de Ayala reminded everyone that the Philippines is the riskiest country according to the World Risk Index and that low levels of prevention and preparedness make our “vulnerability the highest.” “This is the primary reason we reorganized our mission and strategy at the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation. While we were established mainly as a relief and recovery-oriented foundation in 2009 after Typhoon Ondoy, we shifted our strategy to add preparedness, prevention, and resilience after Super Typhoon Yolanda,” he added

One of the forum’s highlights was the high-level panel discussion with Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga, CCC Secretary Robert Borje, PwC Philippines Chairman Emeritus Alex Cabrera, MAP President Jose Rene Almendras, and MBC Chairman Edgar Chua. Moderated by PDRF Chief Resilience Officer Guillermo Luz, the discussion emphasized increased stakeholder collaboration and coordination to scale up climate efforts and achieve a more significant impact. Panelists also shared insights in promoting climate-friendly policies and regulations conducive to private sector investment in climate resilience and sustainability. Recognizing the urgency of the climate crisis, they called on other private sector entities to prioritize climate action and sustainable practices.

The delegates also signed a Commitment Wall to solidify their commitment and involvement in climate action.

## DAILY TRIBUNE

### [CCC, UP enhance efforts for climate governance](#)

By: Lade Jean Kabagani

The Climate Change Commission and the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen collaborative efforts, aimed at advancing climate governance and good governance initiatives in the country.

This came after CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert Borje and UP-NCPAG Dean Dr. Kristoffer Berse explore possible areas of collaboration, including improving access to climate financing for vulnerable local government units, enhancing the capacities of diverse stakeholders in climate change programming, and bolstering institutional capabilities for climate change initiatives.

Borje recognized UP's reputation as a premier academic institution.

Hence the the CCC is eager to enlist the expertise of professionals “to refine our capabilities and elevate our proficiency,” he added.

“Our steadfast commitment to advancing climate governance aligns with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s pledge to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities, facilitate access to climate financing, and enhance the programming capacities of diverse stakeholders, specific challenges persist in climate governance, and our success hinges on forging robust partnerships like this with UP-NCPAG,” said Borje.

For his part, Berse emphasized the need for CCC to maintain its leadership in climate governance, especially in collaboration with local government units.

He then highlighted the wealth of experiences and lessons learned in the Philippines.

“We possess models and benchmarks from which other vulnerable nations can draw insights. With our expertise, the imperative is to create a platform that converges these resources, and that is where UP-NCPAG can significantly support the Commission,” Berse said.

CCC, as the government's lead policy-making body on climate change, is tasked to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate programs and ensure integration into national, local, and sectoral development plans.

While UP-NCPAG, one of the country's leading academic institutions in public management and policy, is dedicated to providing instruction, research, and extension services.

This partnership builds on the Memorandum of Agreement signed by CCC and UP in 2013, which aims to strengthen technical collaboration in capacity development and related climate services and actions to national government agencies, local government units, local state colleges and universities, and other sectors in the academe, private sector, development partners, civil society organizations, and vulnerable sectors of society.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [Climate Change Commission unveils robust climate mitigation and adaptation policies and initiatives to municipal leaders](#)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. graced the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) Annual General Assembly by his presence at the Grand Marriott Ballroom in Pasay City. In his speech, he emphasized the need for collaboration between the local government units (LGUs) for they are the frontliners to climate action.

The Mayors and leaders of the municipalities have the first-hand knowledge of the needs of the communities as well as the necessary actions to combat the effects of climate change.

Welcoming the invitation of Commissioner Albert P. Dela Cruz, Sr., his exclusive visit at the station of the Climate Change Commission represents a pivotal moment in our collaborative efforts to address climate change. His presence emphasizes the crucial role of all levels of government in prioritizing and integrating climate action into local planning. The President's engagement with the information and initiatives presented reinforces his commitment to fostering awareness and driving decisive measures towards climate resilience.

This visit acts as a powerful catalyst for collaboration across all sectors of government, promoting a grassroots approach to developing and mobilizing resources that are key to protecting our communities from the impacts of climate change.

## [Office of Commissioner Albert P. Dela Cruz of Climate Change Commission unveils robust climate mitigation and adaptation policies and initiatives to municipal leaders](#)

The League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) witnessed a pivotal moment in the nation's climate action efforts as President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. underscored the imperative of collaborative endeavors in combating climate change at the Grand Marriott Ballroom in Pasay City.

President Marcos, Jr. emphasized the indispensable role of local government units (LGUs) as frontline actors in climate action, recognizing their unique understanding of community needs and tailored strategies for resilience.

Commissioner Albert P. Dela Cruz, Sr. welcomed President Marcos, Jr. to the Climate Change Commission's station, heralding a landmark occasion for unified climate action. The President's engagement underscores the paramount importance of integrating climate resilience into local planning and galvanizing resources for community protection.

In a parallel initiative, Secretary Benjamin “Benhur” Abalos of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) echoed the call for synergistic efforts in integrating climate adaptation and mitigation measures into local governance. Secretary Abalos emphasized the alignment of local initiatives with national priorities, including the Philippine Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goals.

The visit coincided with the dissemination of Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) 1 s. 2018, underscoring guidelines for localizing national plans and enhancing vertical linkages in planning and budgeting processes.

Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go further championed climate awareness at the event, affirming the necessity of empowering LGUs with resources and information to foster environmental sustainability.

The convergence of national and local leaders at the LMP General Assembly signifies a unified commitment towards building climate-resilient communities and safeguarding the nation's future against the impacts of climate change.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [CCC, UP boost ties to advance climate governance](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG) reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen collaborative efforts, aimed at advancing climate governance and good governance initiatives in the Philippines.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert Borje and UP-NCPAG Dean Dr. Kristoffer Berse already discussed possible areas of collaboration, including improving access to climate financing for vulnerable local government units, enhancing the capacities of diverse stakeholders in climate change programming, and bolstering institutional capabilities for climate change initiatives, according to a news release on Saturday.

Recognizing UP's reputation as a premier academic institution, Borje said the CCC is eager to enlist the expertise of professionals "to refine our capabilities and elevate our proficiency."

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