



NEWS ROUNDUP

08 APRIL 2025 [08:00 am]

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By: Henry Go

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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According to the International Monetary Fund, the forecasted GDP growth for the Philippines is 6.1% for 2025, thus, the country remains among Southeast Asia's rising economies. However, to attain that growth level, a number of priority challenges such as climate-change vulnerabilities, intensifying competition for investment, rising protectionism, and on-going geopolitical tensions, should be addressed to minimize its adverse effects on the economy. Therefore, to sustain economic growth, the country must undertake strategic structural reforms that pave the way for a shift toward a high-value economy. This transformation must concentrate on integrating artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, digital innovations, and climate resilient agriculture to maneuver the country through market disruptions, adjust to changing economic trends, and build a resilient, future-ready economy.

I) Strategic pathways toward sustainable growth

The Philippines can transform into a high-powered and resilient economy by 2030 by leveraging important identified opportunities and implementing these strategies:

High-Value Industries Shift —Target emerging sectors such as semiconductors, electric vehicle (EV) battery, and artificial intelligence (AI). Intensify the promotion of government initiatives such as the Philippine Investment Promotion Plan (PIPP) and CREATE More to bring in additional foreign investors and build these sectors.

Increase EV Battery Production: With our large nickel resources being tapped, it shall enhance EV battery manufacturing and integrate the country into global clean energy supply chains. In fact, CREATE More already attracted US\$1.2 billion EV investment from a South Korean company.

Improve Digital Systems— Invest in better Internet, cloud services, online banking (fintech), and artificial intelligence (AI) to boost growth of both emerging and traditional industries.

Modernize Farming—Utilize smart farming, AI-based weather forecasts, and better irrigation to grow more food. Focus on valuable crops and those that can handle extreme weather to make farming resilient and more sustainable.

Develop physical and digital infrastructure: Infrastructure is not just a support system—but a key enabler of high-value economic transformation.

Workforce Development: Match education and skills training with today's industry needs and new technologies to prepare a workforce ready for the future.

II) Shielding the economy from tariffs through high-value industries and digital innovation

US President Trump recently declared “Liberation Day,” imposing the largest tariff increase on all imports since the Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930. This move places significant pressure on the Philippines' traditional export sectors, including garments, electronics, and agriculture. The Philippines must now adapt to this new trade landscape by diversifying into high-value industries and digital innovation to mitigate the impact of these tariffs and maintain economic stability.

To strengthen its economy, the Philippines needs to focus on high-value industries and digital innovation. Key sectors like artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and renewable energy technologies and products are growing globally and present great opportunities. By investing in these areas, the Philippines can reduce the impact of tariffs, especially on exports to key markets like the US, while attracting foreign investments and boosting exports of advanced, value-added products.

Apart from neutralizing tariff challenges, adapting trends in technology and sustainability will give the Philippines trade diversification and competitive advantage in rapidly evolving supply chains. This strategic thrust can create long-term economic stability and growth while enhancing integration into future global markets.

III) Inclusive growth and empowering SMEs

The migration to a high-value economy has to be inclusive with active participation of SMEs. Digital services and advanced manufacturing offer opportunity to SMEs to integrate into the supply chains that are global. By adapting smart technology and forming strategic partnerships with large industrial partners, SMEs gain an opportunity to innovate and effectively contribute to the economic transformation.

Making available microfinancing, IT training, and affordable bank credit will help empower SMEs to contribute meaningful contribution to the high-value economy. This integrated approach ensures that the economic benefits extend from large companies to smaller ones and local communities.

Conclusion: Seizing the future—A call to bold, transformative action

The journey towards a high-value and resilient economy is filled with challenges. Recent economic indicators, such as the drop in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' survey of Confidence Index from 44.5 percent to 31.2 percent and the contraction of the Manufacturing PMI to 49.4 in March 2025, marking the first time in 19 months that it fell below the neutral 50 level, serve as a clear call for urgent and decisive action. However, these challenges may seem to be very unnerving, they also offer valuable opportunities for innovation and transformation.

To navigate near-term volatility and steer a course towards long-term prosperity, structural reforms are crucially needed. These reforms should focus on enhancing our competitive advantage by offering targeted FDI incentives; improved educational quality and investing workforce development for industries such as artificial intelligence, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing. Additionally, fostering an economic ecosystem that advocates for ease of doing business, promotes fiscal prudence, and ensures peace and order will be crucial to achieving sustainable growth.

As Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto emphasized before over 300 global investors at the Philippine Stock Exchange's "InvestPH 2025" forum, "The Philippines is the right place and the right time to invest." Our consistent growth trajectory over the past three years and strong outlook for 2025 confirm that we are poised for a transformative leap — provided we act with urgency and vision.

As global supply chains undergo a metamorphosis, the Philippines is uniquely poised to take the lead, endowed with expertise, resources, and a strategic location. It is now time to convert those advantages through innovation, inclusion, and economic diplomacy to drive and realize sustainable gains.

This article proposes a strategy that combines key economic ideas, such as structural change, long-term growth, comparative advantage, the role of institutions, and sustainability. The goal is for the Philippines to use technology and make critical changes to its economy to address global challenges. This approach aims to enable the country grow in a way that is resilient, competitive, and sustainable in the long run.

ECO BUSINESS

How do mangroves protect coastal communities from extreme weather?

On the coast of typhoon-prone Philippines, mangroves resembling upside-down tree roots help to protect people from storms and act as a nursery for animals like fish and clams.

When the severe Typhoon Rai hit Siargao Island in 2021, for example, more than 8,000 hectares of mangrove forests broke the energy of the waves and protected coastal villagers, contributing to a low fatality rate, wetland experts say.

Groups of trees and shrubs that live along shores, rivers and estuaries, mangroves also help capture and store carbon.

But they are increasingly being threatened by human activities.

What are the threats to mangroves?

Mangroves can be found in 118 countries, but 75 per cent of the world's mangroves are located in just 15 countries in the tropical and subtropical regions, including Indonesia, Brazil and the Philippines, according to data from the Global Forest Watch.

The Global Mangrove Alliance, a network of scientists and conservationists working on mangrove protection, estimates that there are 147,000 square kilometres (56,756 square miles) of mangroves remaining worldwide, which is an area about the size of Bangladesh.

Despite their ecological and economical importance, mangrove forests are declining around the world, with total cover reduced by more than 5,000 square kilometres (1,930 square miles) between 1996 and 2020, according to the Global Mangrove Watch, an online platform that monitors mangroves.

More than half of the world's mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse due to deforestation, development, sea-level rise and severe storms, according to a 2024 assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a global NGO.

Conservationists are calling for a stop to mangrove habitat destruction, with a goal of expanding the global mangrove habitat by 20 per cent by 2030.

Can mangroves protect communities from extreme weather?

Mangroves act as barriers to storms, coastal erosion and flooding.

While mangroves cannot completely block high water levels that are generated during storm surges, they slow down storm speeds, waves and coastal flooding, according to a 2024 study by the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands.

Mangroves also prevent more than US\$65 billion in property damage from storms and reduce flood risk to some 15 million people every year, according to a report published in the Nature journal in 2020.

In the Philippines, where 60 per cent of the population lives along the coast, mangroves are increasingly important in the face of rising sea levels, population growth and urban expansion, according to Wetlands International Philippines, an NGO.

However, the country has lost more than 30 per cent of its 450,000 hectares of mangrove forests over the last century, according to the Philippines' Climate Change Commission.

According to the IUCN assessment, mangroves protect 15.4 million people and US\$65 billion worth of property per year from coastal disasters.

How can mangroves slow climate change?

Mangroves are the most efficient natural carbon capture and storage systems on earth, currently storing carbon that is equivalent to more than 21 billion tons of carbon dioxide, according to a 2021 Global Mangrove Alliance report.

This is equivalent to about half of the total world carbon dioxide emissions in 2022.

Mangrove ecosystems store carbon in their leaves, stems, branches, roots and non-living biomass such as litter and dead wood for hundreds and even thousands of years.

In its 2024 report, the Alliance estimated mangroves hold an average of 394 tonnes of carbon per hectare in their living biomass and in the top meter of soil and more than 650 tonnes per hectare in some places like the Philippines.

However, the conversion of mangroves for aquaculture, palm oil plantations and rice cultivation accounted for 43.3 per cent of global mangrove loss between 2000 and 2020, according to the Alliance.

MANILA STANDARD

[Artificial glaciers boost water supply in northern Pakistan](#)

At the foot of Pakistan's impossibly high mountains whitened by frost all year round, farmers grappling with a lack of water have created their own ice towers.

Warmer winters as a result of climate change has reduced the snow fall and subsequent seasonal snowmelt that feeds the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, a remote region home to K2, the world's second-highest peak.

Farmers in the Skardu valley, at an altitude of up to 2,600 metres (8,200 feet) in the shadow of the Karakoram mountain range, searched online for help in how to irrigate their apple and apricot orchards.

"We discovered artificial glaciers on YouTube," Ghulam Haider Hashmi told AFP.

They watched the videos of Sonam Wangchuk, an environmental activist and engineer in the Indian region of Ladakh, less than 200 kilometres away across a heavily patrolled border, who developed the technique about 10 years ago.

Water is piped from streams into the village, and sprayed into the air during the freezing winter temperatures.

"The water must be propelled so that it freezes in the air when temperatures drop below zero, creating ice towers," said Zakir Hussain Zakir, a professor at the University of Baltistan.

The ice forms in the shape of cones that resemble Buddhist stupas, and act as a storage system — steadily melting throughout spring when temperatures rise.

– 'Ice stupas' –

Gilgit-Baltistan has 13,000 glaciers — more than any other country on Earth outside the polar regions.

Their beauty has made the region one of the country's top tourist destinations — towering peaks loom over the Old Silk Road, still visible from a highway transporting tourists between cherry orchards, glaciers and ice-blue lakes.

Sher Muhammad, a specialist in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range that stretches from Afghanistan to Myanmar, however said most of the region's water supply comes from snow melt in spring, with a fraction from annual glacial melt in summers.

"From late October until early April, we were receiving heavy snowfall. But in the past few years, it's quite dry," Muhammad, a researcher at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), told AFP.

The first "ice stupas" in Gilgit-Baltistan were created in 2018.

Now, more than 20 villages make them every winter, and "more than 16,000 residents have access to water without having to build reservoirs or tanks", said Rashid-ud-Din, provincial head of GLOF-2, a UN-Pakistan plan to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Farmer Muhammad Raza told AFP that eight stupas were built in his village of Hussainabad this winter, trapping approximately 20 million litres of water in the ice.

"We no longer have water shortages during planting," he said, since the open-air reservoirs appeared on the slopes of the valley.

"Before, we had to wait for the glaciers to melt in June to get water, but the stupas saved our fields," said Ali Kazim, also a farmer in the valley.

– Harvest seasons multiply –

Before the stupas, "we planted our crops in May", said 26-year-old Bashir Ahmed who grows potatoes, wheat and barley in nearby Pari village which has also adopted the method.

And "we only had one growing season, whereas now we can plant two or three times" a year.

Temperatures in Pakistan rose twice as fast between 1981 and 2005 compared to the global average, putting the country on the front line of climate change impacts, including water scarcity.

Its 240 million inhabitants live in a territory that is 80 percent arid or semi-arid and depends on rivers and streams originating in neighbouring countries for more than three-quarters of its water.

Glaciers are melting rapidly in Pakistan and across the world, with a few exceptions including the Karakoram mountain range, increasing the risk of flooding and reducing water supply over the long term.

“Faced with climate change, there are neither rich nor poor, neither urban nor rural; the whole world has become vulnerable,” said 24-year-old Yasir Parvi.

“In our village, with the ice stupas, we decided to take a chance.”

PALAWAN NEWS

Urban sprawl, climate change push heat index higher

By: Gerald Ticke

The record-level heat index recently registered is a result not only of climate change but also a product of urban development, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

PAGASA Palawan weather forecaster Sonny Pajarilla explained that the heat index is not new to the Philippines, being a tropical and archipelagic country. The components for the heat index to rise are high temperature and high humidity, which are present in the country, he said.

He added that the weather phenomenon is just new to the ears of people because it was not talked about before, and that it is being highlighted now because of the modifications in the environment.

“Gusto ko lang klaruhin na nagtatala tayo ng heat index ngayon dahil nagbago na yung klima kundi, hindi lang kasi naging uso noon pag-usapan. Siyempre dahil nga yung temperature noon, nagtatala tayo ng 35 degrees, at ang pinakamataas noon ay 36 degrees. I think that was recorded in the past 10 years,” Pajarilla said in an interview with Palawan News.

He further stated that several factors also contributed to the increasing temperature, which also leads to the rise of the heat index.

“Halimbawa, dumating ako dito sa Puerto Princesa 12 year ago, wala pang SM, yung Robinsons hindi pa operational. Mas malapad na ang sinemento, kumonti na ang mga puno, mas tumaas na rin yung sea surface temperature natin. So pag binalikan pa natin 15 years back, mga puno pa yun. So yan yung mga contributory so binabago niya talaga, merong tinatawag na local climate change,” he elaborated.

“For example, dito tayo nag-uusap, doon sa labas may puno, kung doon tayo mag-uusap, iba yung ating mararamdaman. That is going to be the direct effect of local climate change. Mas mataas na temperature dahil walang magpro-provide sa atin ng enough shade,” he added.

Moreover, he said that aside from global warming, scientists are actually talking about global boiling.

“Mayroong epekto yung global warming pero may pinakamalaking epekto sa climate change ay yung alteration ng local climate system. So ano yun? Binabago natin yung ating land use, yung natural na surface earth cover binabago na natin. So may epekto yung local climate change sa ating heat index? Of course yes kasi mas mainit na e,” he added.

He also added that the absence of rain in the first quarter of 2024 contributed to the rise in temperature, with the heat index peaking at 46 degrees Celsius.

This year, however, he said the heavy rains last February somehow still have cooling effects.

“Pagka nainitan yung surface on the ground tapos meron pang water vapor dyan, pag nag-evaporate yan, may cooling effect yan sa environment e. Yung init na yun, tinatangal niya at dinadala niya sa alapaap. So kung mainit na mainit tapos wala nang halos tubig na i-evaporate, talagang mag nagha-highlight na mainit sa ating pakiramdam,” he said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[The rising hunger rate and the urgent need for the Food Security Act](#)

In the latest Social Weather Stations survey conducted from March 15 to 25, 2025, 27.2 percent of Filipino families experienced involuntary hunger—meaning they were hungry and had nothing to eat—at least once in the past three months. This is the highest rate recorded since September 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rising hunger rate is a wake-up call. Addressing food insecurity requires urgent, coordinated, and sustained action to ensure that every Filipino family has access to safe and nutritious food. An urgent action is the enactment of the Food Security Act.

At its core, the law should reinforce the state's obligation to achieve sustainable national food security through strategic policies, productive investments, and equitable access to livelihoods in the agricultural sector. It calls for a long-term master plan to mitigate climate-related risks, secure food reserves, and safeguard vulnerable populations. The master plan should systematically map the different food production areas, assess risks and opportunities, and pursue local interventions in consultation with stakeholders.

The act should focus on empowering smallholder farmers by converging smart technology, infrastructure, credit access, and related support in clustered farms. It must mobilize local government units (LGUs) and private sector collaboration to institutionalize localized food security programs in tandem with the Department of Agriculture. It should aim to prevent food monopolies, maintain stable food stocks, and provide timely intervention during calamities and emergencies.

Most importantly, the act should emphasize that food must never be used as a tool for political or economic oppression. The government must uphold human rights, gender equality, and social justice to ensure that no Filipino goes hungry.

Food security has long been a national aspiration, especially in ensuring self-sufficiency in rice—the lifeblood of Filipinos. Since the inception of Masagana 99 in the '70s, which briefly made the country self-sufficient in rice, successive programs have aimed at achieving the same goal. Yet, despite these efforts, millions of Filipino families still struggle with food insecurity. Despite being home to prestigious agricultural research institutions and a wealth of scientific expertise, the Philippines continues to be the world's largest rice importer. It is a paradox we must confront head-on.

Climate change, soaring food prices, energy crisis, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and population growth threaten global agriculture. Water scarcity, drought, extreme temperatures, evolving pests and diseases, and degraded farmlands make food production increasingly difficult—especially in rain-fed and upland areas.

Poverty is the root cause of food insecurity and improving livelihoods, particularly in rural communities, is the key to sustainable access to food. National food security must be pursued through equitable development, ensuring that farmers are empowered and consumers are protected.

Smallholder farmers and their communities must be given the tools, resources, and contingency systems to withstand environmental and economic shocks. They must be equipped to navigate natural calamities, secure their livelihoods, and meet emergency food and seed needs.

The future of the Philippines depends on a bold and decisive commitment to food security and sovereignty—one that safeguards our present and future generations. The enactment of the Food Security Act should be a flagship policy initiative to secure a future where food is abundant, available, and accessible to all Filipinos.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Check illegal reclamation, DENR asked](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

As a barangay in Biñan City, Laguna remains flooded even during dry weather, fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to check on illegal reclamation projects in Laguna de Bay.

Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya chair, said a creek in Barangay dela Paz disappeared following the reclamation.

"The local government unit wants expansion of land, that's why it was involved in the reclamation project. But the residents were affected as the creek was covered," Hicap said in an interview with The STAR yesterday.

He claimed that flooding in Dela Paz affects 20,000 residents as he warned that the problem could get worse during the rainy season.

"It has been an issue for years. The DENR, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and even the Laguna Lake Development Authority, which is now under the Office of the President, should act on this," Hicap said.

Hicap added that the flooding in low-lying areas will worsen amid the impact of climate change.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

MANILA STANDARD

[Private sector key in securing resilient future](#)

The private sector plays a key role in strengthening the country's climate resilience and sustainable development because of their vast resources and networks.

Climate Change Commission vice chairperson and executive director Secretary Robert E.A. Borje said in the recent State of Climate Change forum at the Makati Diamond Residences that accelerating climate action and resilience demands the strong participation of the private sector and international partners.

“Preventing losses and damages starts with turning our adaptation plans into tangible solutions, with the private sector stepping up as a driving force in building a climate-resilient future,” he said.

The CCC is leading efforts to localize the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and update the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) — both key frameworks designed to strengthen the country's climate resilience and sustainable development efforts.

San Miguel Corp. Foundation chair Cecile Ang echoed Borje's observation.

“The private sector has the resources, expertise and networks to make a significant impact,” she said. “By investing in sustainable practices and supporting community resilience, businesses can help secure a safer, more sustainable future for everyone.”

The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), in partnership with the New Zealand Embassy, convened key stakeholders for the second State of Climate Change forum.

Supporting the event were the New Zealand Embassy, Aboitiz Foundation, Coca-Cola Philippines, First Philippine Holdings Corp. and San Miguel Corp.—all advocates of climate action and disaster resilience.

The forum also highlighted the growing partnership between the Philippines and New Zealand in tackling climate change. New Zealand Climate Change Ambassador Stuart Horne reaffirmed New Zealand's commitment to supporting the Philippines in advancing climate solutions.

In November 2024, the Philippines and New Zealand signed a Joint Declaration on Climate Change Cooperation. The agreement outlines an 18-month plan to formalize a framework for deeper collaboration—with a focus on innovation, sustainable development, and economic growth.

“New Zealand is committed to working alongside the Philippines in building climate resilience,” said Horne. “Through cooperation and innovation, we can create solutions that not only protect communities but also drive economic growth and investment.”

The forum concluded with a renewed commitment from PDRF to continue working closely with the New Zealand Embassy, the Philippine government and the private sector to accelerate climate resilience initiatives.

“We’re grateful for the continued support of our partners,” said PDRF Chief Resilience Officer Guillermo M. Luz. “By working together, we can create lasting solutions that protect vulnerable communities, drive innovation, and secure a more sustainable future for the Philippines.

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