



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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## DAILY TRIBUNE

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## **FINANCIAL TIMES**

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## **MANILA STANDARD**

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## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

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By: Arlie O. Calalo

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**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **Green agenda: 'Using the power to vote to shape country's environmental future'**

By: Jonathan L. Mayuga

As millions of Filipino voters head to polling precincts on May 12, environmental groups are stepping up their campaign activities to promote their environmental agenda.

Their target: to raise environmental awareness among national and local candidates and the voters, highlighting critical and pressing environmental and climate issues hounding the country.

Environmental groups believe there's a need to make the climate crisis and environment as election issues, and to harness the so-called green votes for green candidates come the midterm elections.

#### Green electoral forum

Greenpeace, in partnership with Marikina Kontra Agos, recently organized a Green Electoral Forum aimed at elevating climate action and corporate accountability as the top political agenda of local and national candidates.

Lea Guerrero, country director of Greenpeace Southeast Asia-Philippines, said they want to convince politicians to integrate environmental protection and conservation in their political agenda.

"In the face of the climate crisis, it is evident that very few candidates have the environment on their campaign agenda. That's why we held the forum and campaigned for a five-point agenda for candidates," Guerrero told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview on May 1.

The survey conducted last month by Social Weather Stations and commissioned by Stratbase identified the following top 12 issues:

1. Increase job opportunities.
2. Develop agriculture and ensuring food security
3. Strengthen of health care system

4. Protection of workers' rights and overseas Filipino workers' welfare
5. Reduce poverty and hunger
6. Control the prices of basic services and goods
7. Ensure equal access to education
8. Address the impacts of climate change and enhancing disaster preparedness
9. Fight illegal drugs
10. Achieve energy security and the usage of renewable energy
11. Defend national security and sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea.
12. Eradicate graft and corruption in government

Alyansa Tigil Mina national coordinator Jaybee Garganera is dismayed that just a handful of people have responded to a survey conducted by a coalition of environmental, nongovernment, academe, and religious groups to press senatorial bets to open up on pressing climate and environmental issues.

Worse, he said, another survey, revealed that climate change, environmental issues like mining, coal pollution, garbage, were not among the top 10 among voter preferences.

"It's very disappointing. The closest we saw related to the environment in the voter preference is energy. Even disaster is not on the top 10 list they want politicians to address," he said in Filipino during a telephone interview on May 1.

#### Corporate accountability

For Greenpeace and Marikina Kontra Agos, issues of corporate accountability and the concept of making polluters pay damages to climate-affected communities were on top of their green agenda.

More than a hundred young people from Marikina City issued the resounding call on local and national candidates to stand up for these two issues.

They likewise raised a local environmental concern—flooding in Marikina City because of climate change-triggered extreme weather and the environmental degradation that aggravated the problem.

### Flooding and solutions

In a statement released during the event, Marikina Kontra Agos said there are long-term green solutions to the flooding of Marikina that are not limited to infrastructure projects.

It likewise challenged the city’s candidates to include the protection of the Marikina River system and the Upper Marikina Watershed into their platforms.

The group wants candidates to recognize that the annual overflowing of the river system requires the coordination of Pasig City and the provincial government of Rizal as the river system knows no political jurisdiction.

### Wanted: Climate justice champions

“Young Marikeños are going to elect leaders at a time when impacts of the climate crisis are causing more frequent and intense rainfall and extreme weather, such as super typhoons,” said Greenpeace Campaigner Jefferson Chua in a statement.

“Now is the time to choose leaders who will champion climate justice and hold those responsible for the climate crisis to account, and who will protect vital ecosystems to ensure that communities will be resilient in the face of climate impacts. By doing so, they can help secure a better future for themselves and the country,” Chua explained.

Greenpeace Philippines and Marikina Kontra Agos called on the electorate to support measures that facilitate climate justice, such as the pending Climate Accountability Bill, which aims to hold polluters responsible, secure reparations for affected communities, and pave the way for a corporate transition.

Specifically, Marikina Kontra Agos is calling for:

1. The implementation of a 50-year moratorium on all quarry and mining permits within and outside the Upper Marikina Watershed in Rizal
2. Commitment to sustainable, community-led reforestation efforts—not privatized initiatives and certainly not large dams

3. Reconvene the Alliance of Seven to collaboratively address flooding and develop comprehensive, sustainable solutions

#### Five-point agenda

At the national level, Greenpeace released the following five-point agenda for candidates:

1. Champion communities: Help build climate-resilient communities
2. Demand accountability: Make climate polluters pay
3. Support the Just Energy Transition: Ensure clean and just energy for all
4. Advocate health and wellbeing: Promote health-focused climate policies
5. Put climate justice and climate action at the center of policymaking

#### Cavite green agenda

In Cavite City, environmental advocates laid down their local green electoral agenda, including the ban on single-use plastics and a halt to seabed quarrying and reclamation projects.

The opposition to a court decision allowing commercial fishing within the 15-kilometer municipal waters was raised in a forum held in Dasmariñas, Cavite last month.

“We call on local and national candidates to commit to the green agenda and prioritize both social and environmental [concerns] alongside economic well-being. We also call on the public to vote for candidates who pledge to push for these environmental policies and programs once voted into office,” said Eileen Sison of the Green Coalition of Cavite (GCC) in a statement.

The organizations that crafted the Cavite Green Electoral Agenda are the GCC, EcoWaste Coalition, Elisea Youth for Environmental Sustainability (EYES), Kabitenyong Alyansa Laban sa Seabed Quarrying (Kalasag), Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Youth Association, and the Diocese of Imus Ministry on Ecology.

“Meaningful changes that address unjust societal conditions, climate change, and environmental destruction can only be achieved if the environment and communities are at the center of people’s political decisions and of governance,” said Sam Malizon of Kalasag.

“The green agenda not only serves as a basis for electing candidates but also as a platform for exacting accountability from elected leaders,” Malizon added.

Youth leader Lord Noah Tucay of EYES asserted that they are committed to advancing the green agenda before and after the elections to ensure environmental protection for future generations.

The following stand as the central themes of the Cavite Green Agenda:

1. Protection of bodies of water
2. Waste management and pollution
3. Sustainable development of agriculture and fisheries for food security
4. Coastal resource management
5. Clean energy
6. Defending Cavite’s Mt. Palay-palay and other land resources
7. Preserving ecosystem and biodiversity
8. Climate change and disaster risk reduction
9. Protection of and human rights defenders, and;
10. Advancing participatory governance.

Power, electricity agenda

In April, the Power for People Coalition (P4P), together with sectoral representatives from community-based organizations, teachers, youth, and other sectors who engaged senators on their plight as power consumers, held a consumer forum at the St. Joseph’s College of Quezon City.

Dubbed “Powering the Future: A Townhall Forum on the Philippine Energy Landscape in the Context of the 2025 National Elections,” they bared their power and electricity agenda.

“Power and electricity are a critical issue that senatorial candidates seeking to serve the public should not ignore. Today, consumers and communities across the country still bear the brunt of a power sector that perpetuates costly electricity, unreliable and anticonsumer services, and pollution. It’s high time to change this,” said Gerry Arances, convenor of P4P.

Organized as a contribution to Green Agenda 2025, an initiative for green elections led by the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines, the event saw senatorial candidates Ka Leody de Guzman and Atty. Luke Espiritu of Partido Lakas ng Masa, and Teddy Casino and Mimi Doringo of Makabayang Koalisyon ng Mamayan championing the consumers’ power and electricity concerns.

“This election season is a critical time for Filipinos to use the power of their vote to shape our future as a country. Today, social, economic, ecological, and other crises abound, making life difficult for many of our countrymen, especially the poor and vulnerable...” said Bishop Gerry Alminaza, vice chairperson of Caritas Philippines and lead convenor of Laudato Si’ Convergence.

“It is very important that those who are seeking to serve the public as lawmakers are at the forefront of these conversations. We hope that facilitating dialogues with stakeholders, such as this, can truly help shape our power sector and our future for the better,” Alminaza added.

While most Filipino voters do not consider the current climate crisis and environmental problems as critical and pressing election issues, environmental and climate justice advocates and a growing number of like-minded individuals are making their presence felt in the midterm elections.



## DAILY TRIBUNE

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“When there is a survey on voter preference, what does the Filipino voter think? Since 2010, there are only three: work, food, and in the last three years coming off from the pandemic, health,” he said at the event attended by several party lists and senatorial candidates. “In the top 10, there is no environment.”

Garganera emphasized that this needs to change, warning that we are one to two steps away from losing our access to what we prioritize if we are not able to address the climate crisis.

The Green Agenda 2025 espoused by religious groups, non-government organization and experts aims to reframe environmental protection not as an isolated issue but as one tied to everyday concerns. It consists of 11 actions as follows:

- Preserving ecological integrity and biodiversity;
- Natural resource and land use management;
- Sustainable agriculture and fisheries;
- Waste management and pollution prevention;
- Climate justice;
- Mining and extractives;
- Energy transformation and democracy;
- Pro-people and pro-ecology sustainable development;

- Upholding Indigenous Peoples' rights and protecting ancestral domains;
- Building disaster-resilient communities; and
- Integrating sustainable development and Laudato Si' in education.

Garganera also called for a deeper political engagement, emphasizing that elections have become popularity contests. He encouraged voters to seek candidates with a broader commitment to genuine change.

"Genuine change will not happen in our society if we do not include nature and science in our discussion," he said.

Several concerns were raised during the forum, including what specific legislation candidates would champion to address climate change and how adaptation measures could be implemented effectively at the grassroots level.

Meanwhile, senatorial aspirant highlighted the need for the declaration of a national climate emergency and backed support for the proposed Climate Emergency Act during the forum. He also urged a review of existing environmental laws and a modern approach to the creation of a Philippine National Environmental Code to replace outdated policies.

"It's important to review all the laws, because we have so many good laws that are remaining unimplemented... and to have a Philippine national environmental code because that's what we don't have yet," David D'Angelo said.

On the subject of waste management in poor communities, another senatorial candidate proposed a Healthy Environment Law focusing on promoting a circular economy. Allen Andamo's vision focuses not only on waste reduction but also accountability for large corporations responsible for a significant number of waste production.

Discussions during the forum also touched on climate change and disaster resilience, waste management and pollution control, environmental protection and natural resource management, and just and sustainable development.

## FINANCIAL TIMES

### 'Sitting ducks': the cities most vulnerable to climate disasters

By: Attracta Mooney

Kostas Lagouvardos and his colleagues at the Penteli Observatory, which offers sweeping views of Athens, are what you would call experts on wildfires. They have spent decades researching the link between meteorological conditions and deadly infernos, as well as tackling the challenge of forecasting when and where the disasters might happen.

But even they were caught off-guard by the wildfire that arrived at their door last August. "It was ironic," says Lagouvardos, research director at the Institute for Environmental Research and Sustainable Development at the National Observatory of Athens.

The Penteli site, which forms part of the NOA and is home to the historic Newall refractor telescope, was almost engulfed by a blaze that spread from nearby Mount Pentelicus.

Flames whipped around the grounds, coming within metres of the astronomy tower and other buildings, as helicopters dropped water from above and firefighters below battled to save the crucial scientific site. The observatory buildings were spared, but its nearest neighbour was badly damaged, as were many other buildings in the area. One person died.

The fact that a wildfire came so close to the very building where scientists had long attempted to understand the phenomenon highlights the key challenges for cities around the world as extreme weather intensifies. Not only are wildfires becoming more common, they are difficult to predict and are spreading ever closer to densely populated urban areas. Just last week, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that wildfires in the country were at risk of reaching Jerusalem.

"The fire was a shock for many people," says Lagouvardos. Although the Attica region in which the Greek capital is located has suffered with many wildfires in recent years, fuelled by record-breaking temperatures, "it was the first time [a blaze] was so close to the city".

Ultimately, Athens, whose wider metropolitan area is home to 3.6mn people, escaped a catastrophic wildfire — but only just. "What was missing was the wind element," says Thomas Smith, associate professor in environmental geography at the London School

of Economics and Political Science, singling out a critical factor that can escalate a wildfire from manageable to devastating.

But Athens, like other big cities including Dallas, Lisbon, Sydney and Cape Town, are what some scientists refer to as “sitting ducks”. In these places, the climate and geographical conditions mean they are extremely vulnerable to global warming-related disasters. This could be wildfires, like those in Los Angeles in January, but also flooding, as seen in Valencia last year. In some cases, one can follow the other.

These so-called sitting ducks “haven’t had an extreme event” so far, says Erin Coughlan de Perez, a professor at Tufts University, an expert in climate risk. “They’ve got lucky.”

But the odds might be against them. With 2025 expected to be one of the hottest on record, despite a cooling La Niña weather phenomenon earlier this year, scientists warn of a rising risk of climate-related disasters.

Climate change is causing a rise in extreme heat, which helps fuel wildfires, while hotter temperatures can also lead to more intense rainfall and flooding, because warmer air holds more moisture.

Research has found the hot, dry and windy conditions that drove the LA fires were about 35 per cent more likely due to climate change. In the case of Athens, modelling by NOAA’s Christos Giannakopoulos shows that, under a “business as usual scenario” where little progress is made on cutting greenhouse gas emissions, the city is on course to have up to 40 more days with maximum temperatures above 35C each year by 2050 compared with the period from 1981 to 2000.

Scientists are now attempting to assess which cities are most at risk of floods, wildfires, severe localised heat and other extremes — and where the next disaster could be mapped. This is also a question preoccupying insurance modellers as the industry attempts to future-proof their business.

“Those types of phenomena at a local scale are extremely rare,” says Guillermo Rein, a fire sciences professor at Imperial College London, likening it to a black swan. “It’s almost impossible for anyone to say, ‘This is going to happen in Athens this summer.’”

“But at the global level, they are becoming more probable,” he adds. “In the next year there’s going to be a big wildfire destroying a big community. But we have absolutely no idea where that is going to happen.”

In Athens, Lagouvardos and his colleagues are doing what they can to get more certainty. As he outlines the charred path of last year's fire, he points to a mountain in the distance. "I think it will be next," Lagouvardos says, referring to the potential starting point of Athens' next wildfire.

Mount Hymettus, rising above the east of the city, is dotted with historic monasteries and pine forest. Simulations made with his colleague Theodore Giannaros, an atmospheric modeller, show how a fire starting on the northern foothills of Hymettus would make "very fast progress" if fanned by strong winds, Lagouvardos says.

Using the mountain's dry forest and vegetation as a fuel source, the flames could quickly make their way down towards the city, near to an area housing the University of Athens.

"This is very close to the city limits," he says, adding that while the mountain is "heavily protected" when there is a risk of fire, a blaze "can happen".

The wider Athens area, like other sitting ducks, has the "perfect mix" of elements needed for a significant wildfire, says Joe McNorton, land surface modeller at European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts. Wildfires need fuel often in the form of vegetation, an ignition source such as extreme heat or a man-made fire, and the right weather conditions, he says, including strong winds.

All of this is exacerbated by urban sprawl. While forest fires are not a new phenomenon, having been part of Earth's ecosystem for millennia, more people now live close to potentially large sources of fuel.

Since the 1950s, construction in Athens has spread from its compact historic city centre, with new low-rise buildings edging ever closer to the mountains, hills and sea that surround the area.

This has helped create a bigger wildland-urban interface or rural-urban interface — the area where buildings and wildlands meet or intermingle and is a flash point for fires.

Although such interfaces cover only 4.7 per cent of the planet's land surface, they are home to 3.5bn people — almost half the world's population, according to research from 2023. In Europe, this area represented 15 per cent of the continent's land, according to a study published in the science journal Nature.

In these zones, human activity can inadvertently spark a wildfire and, because of the population concentration, those blazes then pose a bigger risk to people and property.

Erratic weather patterns are also making wildland more flammable. In the case of LA, the city had experienced an exceptionally wet period that led to the abundant growth of scrubby vegetation. This was followed by a prolonged drought that dried up the plants, creating fuel for a blaze.

It was the perfect storm. Fires raged across 55,000 acres, claiming at least 30 lives, destroying more than 16,000 structures and causing hundreds of billions of dollars in damage and economic loss.

A similar situation could play out in Athens, scientists warn, where a period of rain followed by drought would ensure an abundance of fuel. As well as pine forest, which often dries during summer heatwaves where temperatures can hit more than 40C, shrubby vegetation is also common in the region. This has increased as agriculture has declined, with the loss of goats and sheep that traditionally kept vegetation under control, says the LSE's Smith.

The proliferation of vegetation on the edge of Athens — or in other cities — often means “there are no natural firebreaks to stop the fire from propagating”, says McNorton, the modelling expert.

Then there are the wind conditions. Like the powerful Santa Ana winds that stoked the LA wildfires, Athens is subject to the strong, northerly and dry Meltemi winds that blow in the Aegean Sea region. They typically occur during the summer months when the wildfire risk is at its highest.

In 2018, a wind-whipped blaze burnt a ferocious path from the Penteli area to the coastal town of Mati in Attica, killing 103 people — making it one of the most deadly wildfires of the 21st century. Strong winds also fanned the 2023 Hawaii wildfires that claimed at least 102 lives.

“When there is no high wind, in modern times, fire brigades can stop them,” says Rein. “The fires that no one can stop, they happen when there are high winds.”

As well as the initial assault, wildfires have long-term consequences. Flames burn away vegetation, making the soil less permeable and unable to absorb water, leading to more surface run-off and faster-moving floodwaters.

“A wildfire might damage the suburbs, especially the green ones, but the problem doesn’t end there. There is an elevated risk of floods,” says Michalis Diakakis, an expert on climate-related disasters and extreme events at the University of Athens.

This risk lasts for up to a decade after a fire in some areas, according to research by Diakakis, and can be far more damaging to city centres. “It is easy to block a critical river across a section, pushing water out and inundating the area. The flooding will eventually come down towards the city centre.”

At the Penteli Observatory, blackened trees have been felled and their trunks placed in a terrace-like pattern on slopes where the wildfire burnt last year to prevent flooding, debris flows or mudslides — secondary risks that can follow a wildfire.

The rapid urbanisation of Athens has left the city susceptible to flooding, says Firas Saleh, director of product management at the credit rating and research company Moody’s. “Many streams and rivers have been covered or built over, reducing the city’s ability to manage heavy rainfall.”

Other cities, several of which are in the US, face a similar risk, such as New York and urban areas in South Carolina, adds Saleh. Moody’s estimates that approximately 2.4bn people across the world live in locations that are at risk of inland river or flash flooding.

Houston, Dallas and Washington DC are all at risk of flash flooding, says Melanie Veltman, senior data analyst at Guidewire HazardHub, a technology platform used by the insurance industry. Climate change is increasing the frequency of such floods, because it “brings more short, intense downpours”, she adds.

In a flash flood, water “has nowhere to go and pools in low-lying areas, underpasses, basements and roads”, Veltman says, adding that they can happen anywhere and do not need a river or coast to cause devastation.

Dallas has ideal conditions for flash flooding. Over the past two decades, the city has grown rapidly, expanding into flood-prone areas with heavy use of impervious surfaces such as concrete and asphalt. Creeks and floodplains have been replaced by “pavement and structures that accelerate run-off”, adds Veltman.

At the same time, heavy rainfall is becoming more frequent and intense — a trend driven by warming air holding more moisture, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In August 2022, about 38cm of rain fell in 24 hours in parts of Dallas, causing flash flooding that overwhelmed homes and led to a surge in insurance claims. A quarter of the city's housing units, or about 140,000 properties, are at risk of flooding, HazardHub data suggests.

Diakakis says that an initial climate disaster often has longer-term ramifications, such as hits to tourism that can affect local economies. "Our economic development is very tied to what happens in extreme disasters," he adds.

Cities around the world are waking up to the long-term consequences of climate disasters.

"This issue is rising up the agenda," says Cassie Sutherland, managing director for the climate solutions and networks team at C40 Cities, a network of urban areas concerned about climate change.

Rein, the Imperial College London professor, is also alarmed by rising wildfire risks in traditionally cooler, and greener, cities that have little experience of blazes, such as New York or urban areas in Germany and the Netherlands. "I worry more about London than I worry about Athens," he says.

But there are growing efforts to use modelling or machine learning and other tools to help understand fire risk.

For about 50 years, Canada has used the so-called fire weather index to model the risks of forest fires in its cities. Other countries use or have developed similar models, compiling information on fuel sources, humidity, temperature, precipitation and wind speed to calculate the likelihood and intensity of forest fires. The higher the index, the more favourable the meteorological conditions to trigger a wildfire, known as fire weather days.

Moody's is among those that has created models used by the insurance industry and others to look at the risk of wildfires, floods and other disasters. Its models show that parts of Athens will become more vulnerable to wildfire and heat stress under different climate change scenarios.

"When wildfires reach suburban areas, the damage can vary significantly," he adds. "The worst-case scenario involves urban conflagration, as was the case in the LA fires, where houses ignite one another, turning the structures themselves into fuel."



This is less likely in Athens, where buildings are typically constructed of blocks, bricks and concrete, but is more of a concern in countries such as Australia, Germany and Scandinavia, where wood construction is common, experts say.

In some cases, cities are being redesigned to work better for the extremes of climate change — whether that is heat, flood or both, says Sutherland, at C40 Cities.

That is certainly true for Athens, says Nikos Chrysogelos, one of the city's deputy mayors. As well as collecting data to better understand the risks, the city centre is focused on rolling out solutions to deal with extreme heat and flooding, as well as working with nearby municipalities that are at greater risk of fires, he says.

“We are late [in responding to the climate crisis], so we have to run. We have to take action very quickly,” he adds. “We do not have any alternative.”

But many feel the city is still unprepared. “Athens is not ready,” says Diakakis, arguing that the city has struggled to cope with “moderate” floods or wildfires and would struggle in the face of a more extreme event.

As the wildfire season gets under way, the country is on high alert. Greece's civil protection and climate crisis minister Yiannis Kefalogiannis has announced that a record number of firefighters — about 18,000 — would be deployed this year alongside about 80 drones to help detect blazes across the country.

“We shouldn't be fooled by the fact that climate conditions this year have seemed to be a little milder than in previous years,” he said. “The bad scenarios lie ahead.”

## MANILA STANDARD

### Answering 10 pressing questions about plastic pollution

The world generated an estimated 400 million tons of plastic waste last year. This torrent of water and shampoo bottles, dispensing containers, polyester shirts, PVC piping and other plastic products weighed as much as 40,000 Eiffel Towers.

It is part and parcel of a plastic pollution crisis that experts say is ravaging ecosystems, exposing people to potentially harmful pollutants and stoking climate change.

“Plastic pollution is one of the gravest environmental threats facing the Earth but it’s a problem we can solve,” said Elisa Tonda, chief of the Resources and Markets Branch of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). “Doing so could not only improve the well-being of people and planet but also unlock a host of economic opportunities.”

Countries worldwide are now negotiating an international legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution. Against that backdrop, this year’s World Environment Day will focus on ways to prevent plastic waste from escaping into the environment, such as curbing pollution from single-use plastic products and redesigning plastic products so they last longer.

Ahead of World Environment Day, here’s a closer look at what plastic pollution is, why it’s such a problem and what can be done about it.

1. How much plastics is out there?
- 2.

A lot. Today, plastics are an important part of the modern world, used in everything from car parts to medical devices. Since the 1950s, researchers estimate humanity has produced 9.2 billion tons of material, some 7 billion tons of which have become waste.

2. What kinds of plastics are the most problematic?

A major source of plastic pollution are single-use plastic products, which are not circulated in the economy, overwhelming waste systems and entering the environment. Some of the most common single-use plastic products are water bottles, dispensing containers, takeaway bags, disposable cutlery, freezer bags and packaging foam.

3. Where do you find plastic pollution?

The short answer: nearly everywhere. It’s in lakes, rivers and the ocean. It dots city streets and farmers’ fields. It’s bursting from dumpsites. It’s piling up in deserts and

worming its way into sea ice. Researchers have even found plastic debris on Mount Everest and in the Mariana Trench, the deepest point on Earth. (To be continued)

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [DENR calls for sustainable dev't of Northern Mindanao's coastal areas](#)

By: Henniequel Shayne G. Acobo

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has called for a balance between economic development and environmental conservation to protect Northern Mindanao's coastal ecosystems.

Mercedita Barbarona, deputy chief of the Conservation and Development Division at DENR Northern Mindanao regional office, stressed that economic growth and tourism should align with environmental responsibility. "Without conserving our natural environment, we cannot ensure sustainable development," she said.

Barbarona stressed that northern Mindanao's coastal areas are vital to the local economy, with tourism and marine resources playing significant roles. However, human activity and climate change threaten these ecosystems.

With four out of five provinces in the region being coastal, DENR is focusing on coastal-based solutions, including engaging the youth as environmental advocates.

The DENR is implementing its Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Program, which includes the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Currently, seven MPA networks are operational in the region.

It is also collaborating with local government units (LGUs) on coastal zoning to protect critical habitats. LGUs were advised to plan coastal zones carefully to avoid displacing vital habitats like seagrasses, mangroves, and corals.

"Because they provide the support systems. If we lose them, we will also lose our natural capital," she said.

Barbarona explained that balanced development, conservation, and tourism are all necessary, as tourism provides vital revenue. For this reason, she emphasized that proper allocation of land and coastal zone use is essential.

The DENR has also called for the prioritization of endemic species in coastal rehabilitation to prevent the introduction of invasive species.

“We need to be selective with the species to plant in coastal areas because they can change the coastal integrity and conditions. They might bring negative effects, invasive species, but we also have to treasure our own,” she said.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### PH to have generally fair weather with scattered rains —Pagasa

By: Arlie O. Calalo

Warm easterly winds would bring cloudy skies with scattered rain showers over parts of the country as the low pressure area (LPA) off Palawan is expected to exit the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) within the day, state weather bureau Pagasa said early Tuesday morning.

Pagasa weather specialist Chenel Dominguez said that at 5 a.m. the LPA was estimated at 455 kilometers north of Kalayaan, Palawan near the PAR boundary.

Meanwhile, the easterlies – winds passing through the Pacific Ocean that carry warm and humid weather – would bring cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms over Caraga, Davao Region and Eastern Visayas, Pagasa said.

The same weather system would prevail over Metro Manila and the rest of the country where partly cloudy to overcast skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms would be experienced within 24 hours, it added.

"We are no longer expecting any LPA coming in the next few days and the country would again experience generally-fair weather," Dominguez said.

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