



NEWS ROUNDUP

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By Darryl John Esguerra

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East Asia Forum

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By Takayoshi Kato

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The Philippine Star

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We are in climate change conditions where everything is more extreme. With higher temperatures, rising seas and our rampaging destruction of geographical features like forests, hills and rivers, it is not a good idea to live near the coast, or near denuded hills and mountains, silted rivers and garbage-strewn areas, especially during extreme weather events. Add to that drainage-neglected places. When rains, storms or even earthquakes occur, these areas pay dearly in terms of lives and destruction.

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Legacy – Senate of the Philippines

[2025 GAA SHOULD BE A CLIMATE-ADAPTED AND CLIMATE RESILIENT BUDGET](#)

In the aftermath of the massive destruction and loss of lives brought about by tropical storm Kristine, Senate President Francis Escudero said the annual general appropriations act, starting with the 2025 version, should already be "climate adapted and climate resilient."

Philstar

[Flooded by Corruption](#)

By Marichu A. Villanueva

Sen. Villanueva recalled having raised this question already at the budget plenary that as much as P1.44 billion a day was supposed to be spent for flood control measures by several government agencies implementing them. These included the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH); the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), he cited.

NEWS ROUNDUP

[Marcos vows to further improve DRR efforts after widespread flooding](#) By Darryl John Esguerra

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has vowed to further improve disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts at the local and national levels after the country reeled from massive flooding caused by the recent spate of typhoons.

In a vlog posted on social media Friday, Marcos noted that millions of Filipinos have been affected while billions worth of damage were incurred by the infrastructure and agriculture sectors due to the recent onslaught of typhoons, which he said have been exacerbated by climate change.

Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name Trami) caused massive flooding in the Bicol region and led to the suspension of classes and government work in Luzon last week.

Just this week, Typhoon Leon (international name Kong-Rey), a super typhoon at one point, battered northern Luzon, especially Batanes province.

Noting the Philippines' vulnerability to disasters and climate change, Marcos emphasized the need to improve the planning of infrastructure projects, as well as the DRR efforts of the government to mitigate the impact on the communities.

“Ang mabilis na pagresponde sa mga nasalanta ay mananatiling prayoridad natin. Kasama ang DSWD, DND, DPWH, DILG at iba pang mga ahensya ng pamahalaan, maaasahan ninyong pagtitibayin pa ang ating national at local disaster risk reduction at response (Rapid response to the victims will remain our priority. Together with the DSWD, DND, DPWH, DILG and other government agencies, you can count on us to strengthen our national and local disaster risk reduction and response),” Marcos said.

“Kaya kailangan natin maging magaling sa larangan na ito. Disaster risk reduction, both the public at saka private sector. Para naman mabawasan ang mga napapahamak sa mga ganitong uri ng sakuna (We need to be good in this field.

Disaster risk reduction, both the public and private sector. In order to reduce the casualties from these types of disasters),” he added.

Annually, about 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines, which sits at the heart of the Pacific typhoon belt.

In 2013, Super Typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan), one of the strongest recorded tropical cyclones in the world, left more than 7,000 people dead or missing and flattened entire villages.

Recovery

The President, likewise, assured the public that the government remains ready to render the necessary assistance to help those affected by the recent typhoons.

“Naririnig namin ang inyong saklolo at ginagawa namin ang lahat upang mailagay kayo sa mas mabuting kalagayan (We hear your plea and we are doing everything to put you in a better situation),” Marcos said.

“Sa isang Bagong Pilipinas, lalo pa natin pagbubutihin ang ating pagtugon sa hamon ng climate change (In the New Philippines, we will further improve our response to the challenge of climate change),” he added.

“Upang, una, mabawasan ang kaswalidad sa bawat sakuna; pangalawa, upang mabawasan ang bilang ng mga tao at pamilyang naapektuhan; at pangatlo, upang maprotektahan ang mga maliliit na komunidad at ang mga kabuhayan nila dito (First, to reduce the casualty in each disaster; second, to reduce the number of people and families affected; and third, to protect small communities and their livelihoods),” he went on.

Damage in Batanes

As this develops, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in Cagayan Valley reported that Typhoon Leon has inflicted severe damage on the province of Batanes.

In an interview with PTV 4, OCD Region 2 Director Leon DG Rafael said Batanes was the hardest-hit area as the super typhoon exited the Philippine area of responsibility this morning.

He that he has coordinated with Batanes Governor Marilou Cayco and provincial disaster officials to assess the extent of the destruction.

“There has been damage to houses and various crops, as well as landslides on major roads in Batanes,” he reported.

Cagayan Valley is now experiencing fair weather in time for the observance of All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days, the official noted.

He added that the OCD continues to monitor water levels in river systems for potential flooding or landslides resulting from the heavy rains brought by Leon and Severe Tropical Storm Kristine, which impacted various regions across the country last week. (With a report from Priam Nepomuceno/PNA)

ISU pushes for bamboo-textile promotion

By Leander C. Domingo

A STATE university based in Isabela province presented its proposed initiatives to the Regional Development Council in the Cagayan Valley region to boost the bamboo and textile industries, and improve water management and security.

Isabela State University (ISU) President Ricmar Aquino, during his presentation on behalf of the Regional Research and Development, and Innovation Committee, mentioned two university projects that needed support: the Regional Yarn Production and Innovation Center; and the establishment of a National Water Resources Center (NWRC).

The proposed initiatives on textile production will encourage all provincial, city and municipal governments to plant "kawayang tinik" bamboo in barangay (villages). They will also ask the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to use the same bamboo species as planting material for the National Greening Program.

More widespread use of the kawayang tinik bamboo will also be promoted to state universities and colleges for their tree-planting activities, and the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Trade and Industry, and the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Center in their establishment of bamboo textile fiber production centers..

Aquino also lobbied for the ISU's goal to form the NWRC, emphasizing the university's research, programs and projects that address issues of water resources management, water scarcity, equitable access to water resources, climate change and environmental pollution.

He also mentioned the university's lead in Smart Water Infrastructure and Management, and the creation of a regional network of local universities to upscale the conduct of research and development on integrated water resources management and water security.

DBM Sec Pangandaman emphasizes peacebuilding, climate

IN her opening address at the International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security (ICWPS), Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman highlighted the Philippine government's dedication to empowering women during crises.

She expressed sympathy for communities affected by Tropical Storm Kristine, noting the unique challenges faced by women in these situations.

Pangandaman connected the storm's impact to the need for increased climate action and collaboration on gender equity.

Reflecting on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, she discussed how it has ftered global initiatives for women's roles in peace and security.

She noted the Philippines' progress in advancing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda through the efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Commission on Women, and others.

Pangandaman emphasized the "Women's Budget" in the General Appropriations Act, requiring government agencies to allocate 5 percent of their budgets to gender-related programs.

She also praised the Bangsamoro Women Commission's role in peacebuilding in BARMM, which will hold its first elections in 2025.

Encouraging collaboration among international delegates, she urged participants to "listen" and support women as agents of positive change in addressing global security challenges.

The ICWPS, a first-of-its-kind ministerial-level event, brings together global leaders to further women's roles in peacebuilding and will continue over the next three days.

To tackle plastic scourge, Philippines makes companies pay **By Cecil Morella**

MANILA, Philippines — Long one of the world's top sources of ocean plastic, the Philippines is hoping new legislation requiring big companies to pay for waste solutions will help clean up its act.

Last year, its "Extended Producer Responsibility" statute came into force -- the first in Southeast Asia to impose penalties on companies over plastic waste.

The experiment has shown both the promise and the pitfalls of the tool, which could be among the measures in a treaty to tackle plastic pollution that countries hope to agree on this year.

The Philippines, with a population of 120 million, generates some 1.7 million metric tons of post-consumer plastic waste a year, according to the World Bank.

Of that, a third goes to landfills and dumpsites, with 35 percent discarded on open land.

The EPR law is intended to achieve "plastic neutrality" by forcing large businesses to reduce plastic pollution through product design and removing waste from the environment.

They are obliged to cover an initial 20 percent of their plastic packaging footprint, calculated based on the weight of plastic packaging they put into the market.

The obligation will rise to a ceiling of 80 percent by 2028.

The law covers a broad range of plastics, including flexible types that are commercially unviable for recycling and thus often go uncollected.

It does not however ban any plastics, including the popular but difficult to recover and recycle single-use sachets common in the Philippines.

So far, around half the eligible companies under the law have launched EPR programmes.

Over a thousand more must do so by end-December or face fines of up to 20 million pesos (\$343,000) and even revocation of their operating licences.

'Manna from heaven'

The law hit its 2023 target for removal of plastic waste, Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones told AFP.

It is "part of a broader strategy to reduce the environmental impact of plastic pollution, particularly given the Philippines' status as one of the largest contributors to marine plastic waste globally."

The law allows companies to outsource their obligations to "producer responsibility organisations", many of which use a mechanism called plastic credits.

These allow companies to buy a certificate that a metric ton of plastic has been removed from the environment and either recycled, upcycled or "co-processed" -- burned for energy.

PCX Markets, one of the country's biggest players, offers local credits priced from around \$100 for collection and co-processing of mixed plastics to over \$500 for collection and recycling of ocean-bound PET plastic. Most are certified according to a standard administered by sister organisation PCX Solutions.

The model is intended to channel money into the underfunded waste collection sector and encourage collection of plastic that is commercially unviable for recycling.

"It's manna from heaven," former street sweeper Marita Blanco told AFP.

A widowed mother-of-five, Blanco lives in Manila's low-income San Andres district and buys plastic bottles, styrofoam and candy wrappers for two pesos (3.4 US cents) a kilogramme (2.2 pounds).

She then sells them at a 25 percent mark-up to charity Friends of Hope, which works with PCX Solutions to process them.

"I didn't know that there was money in garbage," she said.

"If I do not look down on the task of picking up garbage, my financial situation will improve."

'Still linear'

Friends of Hope managing director Ilusion Farias said the project was making a visible difference to an area often strewn with discarded plastic.

"Two years ago, I think you would have seen a lot dirtier street," she told AFP.

"Behavioural change is really slow, and it takes a really long time."

Among those purchasing credits is snack producer Mondelez, which has opted to jump directly to "offsetting" 100 percent of its plastic footprint.

"It costs company budgets... but that's really something that we just said we would commit to do for the environment," Mondelez Philippines corporate and government affairs official Caitlin Punzalan told AFP.

But while companies have lined up to buy plastic credits, there has been less movement on stemming the flow of new plastic, including through redesign.

"Upstream reduction is not really easy," said PCX Solutions managing director Stefanie Beitien.

"There is no procurement department in the world that accepts a 20 percent higher packaging price just because it's the right thing to do."

And while PCX credits cannot be claimed against plastic that is landfilled, they do allow for co-processing, with the ash then used for cement.

"It's still linear, not circular, because you're destroying the plastic and you're still generating virgin plastic," acknowledged Leones of the environment ministry.

Still, the law remains a "very strong policy", according to Floradema Eleazar, an official with the UN Development Programme.

But "we will not see immediate impacts right now, or tomorrow," she said.

"It would require really massive behavioural change for everyone to make sure that this happens."

[Dragonboat World Championships in Palawan Drives Climate Action and Tourism](#)

The 2024 International Canoe Federation Dragonboat World Championships officially opened today at the Puerto Princesa City Baywalk in Palawan, Philippines. While the event celebrates the competitive spirit of dragon boat racing, it also emphasizes a deeper purpose: promoting tourism, environmental protection, and mobilizing for climate action.

In a message from Philippine President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr., delivered by Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief-of-Staff Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., the government highlighted sports as a platform for shared environmental responsibility. "We recognize that sports carry a profound power: the power to move people, nurture communities, and uplift nations," said the President, aligning with the United Nations' call for sports to foster peaceful, inclusive communities.

Puerto Princesa City Mayor Lucilo Bayron echoed the national government's sentiments, encouraging delegates to experience the city's beauty, notably its UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Subterranean River National Park.

The Philippine government has shown strong support for the Dragonboat Championships, marking the first international dragonboat event in the country and Southeast Asia. The championships coincide with the newly declared "Moving Forward Paddling Week Philippines," an initiative established by President Marcos through Proclamation No. 699, celebrated annually during the fourth week of October. The proclamation encourages collaboration between government and private sectors to support the dragonboat community and its goals for tourism, environmental protection, and community involvement.

The Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) has been tasked with leading this initiative, coordinating programs and projects in line with Moving Forward Paddling Week Philippines. "For this purpose, the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) is hereby directed to lead, coordinate, and supervise the observance of the Moving Forward Paddling Week Philippines," stated President Marcos in the proclamation, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on October 2.

PSC Chairman Richard Bachmann has also visited multiple cities across Mindanao, including Iligan in Lanao del Norte and Cotabato City, where local governments have expressed their commitment to promoting the sport. These areas, rich in aquatic attractions such as Lake Lanao and Lake Sebu, have become active supporters of the dragonboat community's goals for growth and environmental impact.

Iligan City Mayor Frederick Siao and Vice Mayor Marianito Aleman shared the achievements of the first-ever Iligan National Dragon Boat Festival held in September at the Mandulog River Esplanade, with plans to expand the event to international standards.

Bangsamoro Sports Commission Chairman Arsalan Diaomaoden similarly expressed his support, noting that their 12-point agenda includes developing sports tourism and integrating local culture into their initiatives. Leaders in Tawi-Tawi, during the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair last May, also voiced plans to develop water sports such as dragonboat racing, canoe-kayak, swimming, rowing, and deep diving to highlight the rich aquatic landscapes of the southern Philippines.

The 2024 ICF Dragon Boat Championships in Palawan has gathered nearly 2,000 athletes from 27 countries, including the Philippines, competing for coveted spots in the 2025 Chengdu World Games. This high-profile event is not only a showcase of athletic prowess but also a powerful call to action for climate awareness, environmental stewardship, and sustainable tourism.

[Adapting together to climate change in developing nations](#)

By Takayoshi Kato

Climate change exacerbates existing socio-economic challenges in developing nations. Adaptation challenges demand local solutions, supported by national authorities and non-state actors. Even in richer countries, institutional frameworks that promote local climate adaptation must be strengthened. Crucially, these

initiatives must ensure that the costs and benefits of adaptation efforts are equitably distributed such that no vulnerable group is left behind.

The impact of climate change on developing countries is profound. By altering and intensifying disaster risk patterns, it exacerbates existing challenges such as poverty, inequality, poor health, insufficient infrastructure and geopolitical instability faced by those countries. This combination of factors threatens their ability to meet their sustainable development goals. Climate adaptation efforts must promote social inclusiveness and should be supported by granular risk identification for the most vulnerable segments of society.

One key to effective climate change adaptation in developing nations is allowing local actors to take the lead. Climate risks are highly context-specific and efforts must be driven by those who understand the local dynamics best — local stakeholders. National governments must support them by designing and implementing regulatory frameworks, promoting information exchange and capacity development, as well as allocating necessary financial resources. The Philippines' National Climate Change Action Plan 2011–2028 and National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan 2011–2028 both include a strong focus on integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into regional and provincial development and land-use plans.

It is essential to measure and monitor climate risks at various territorial levels, including the community level. This ensures vulnerability assessments are conducted on a more granular scale, leading to more effective responses to local disparities. Emerging initiatives reflect this approach. In Central Asia, water basin councils and emergency and hydrometeorological institutions collaborate to manage climate risks at the basin level, while Ghana has conducted an assessment of climate risks at the sub-national level.

Implementing locally led, place-based strategies to strengthen climate resilience, including in urban areas, requires extensive stakeholder engagement. But this process can be time-consuming and resource intensive. Some stakeholders may hesitate to participate due to the time commitment or because they feel that their voices were not adequately considered in previous policy processes following consultations.

Non-state actors, such as civil society organisations and the private sector, can bridge this gap. Civil society organisations often have better access to remote areas and communities most vulnerable to poverty and climate risks. Meanwhile, business associations can help local businesses access the technical support they need to enhance their climate resilience. This is exemplified by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which collaborates with the government to co-ordinate the MSME Resilience Core Group that promotes the resilience of Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises in the country.

Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks for local climate adaptation is crucial, including by clarifying roles and improving coordination across levels of government. Even in richer countries, integrating the role of local authorities into national climate strategies remains limited. Only one-third of OECD member countries mention the role of local authorities in measuring and evaluating adaptation progress in their National Adaptation Plans and National Adaptation Strategies.

Yet good practice examples already exist. Poland's National Urban Policy 2030 emphasises climate goals at urban, rural and regional levels. And France's 'eco-district' program supports neighbourhood-scale projects that promote resilience while addressing broader social and economic objectives such as employment and safety.

Enhancing funding mechanisms is vital to provide the financial support that cities and regions need. Green budgeting and procurement practices can help sub-national governments align their resources with climate objectives. Bangladesh's Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-Operatives has implemented the 'Local Government Initiative on Climate Change'. This initiative provides nine districts with support in, among other things, developing the capacity to undertake risk-informed, locally-led adaptation planning and budgeting.

The 'Disaster Response Capability Mapping' initiative in the Philippines integrates climate risk consideration into local investment planning. And Peru's National Disaster Risk Management System law requires regional and local governments to integrate disaster risk management into their planning and budgeting processes.

The importance of climate resilience affects both human and natural systems. The role of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) — actions to address societal challenges by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring ecosystems — in enhancing the climate resilience of these systems is increasingly recognised, as is the role of local authorities in involving communities in planning and implementing NbS. Indonesia's 'Building with Nature' initiative is restoring mangrove forests in coastal communities, such as Timbulsloko village. These mangroves serve as natural barriers, providing protection against shoreline erosion and flooding. The project is crucial in safeguarding around 70,000 people living in high-risk coastal areas.

At the same time, there are also challenges to ensure successful NbS. Another study of eight mangrove planting sites in Indonesia found that about 79 per cent of them were unsuccessful. These initiatives face issues such as a lack of proper land preparation, regular maintenance and monitoring, as well as a low level of mangrove seed survival rates.

The Asia Pacific region is marked by its cultural, economic and environmental diversity, which shapes the varying levels of vulnerability to climate risks across

different countries. A common challenge throughout the region is that the poorest and most marginalised communities bear the brunt of climate change.

Initiatives to enhance climate resilience must ensure that progress for one group does not come at the expense of another, prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable and distribute the benefits of climate resilience equitably across all communities. Building inclusive, resilient communities and cities capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change is not just an economic necessity for developing nations — it is a matter of justice and fairness.

Takayoshi Kato is Environmental Economist at the OECD

Climate change may cut Philippines GDP by 18% – ADB **by Louella Desiderio**

MANILA, Philippines — Climate change under a high-end greenhouse gas emissions scenario may lead to an 18-percent reduction in the Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) by 2070, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

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This was among the findings in the ADB's inaugural Asia-Pacific Climate Report, which details the damaging impacts threatening the region.

In the Philippines, ADB senior economist David Raitzer said that “about half of losses come from sea level rise.”

“And then a larger share than at the regional average would come from natural resource-based sectors. So agriculture, fisheries, forestry,” he said in a webinar.

The report also showed that economic losses in the Philippines due to climate change could rise and reach 40 percent in 2100.

In Asia-Pacific, the ADB said climate change under a high-end emissions scenario could lead to a 17-percent reduction in GDP by 2070.

By 2100, ADB principal economist Yi Jiang said the potential GDP loss in Asia-Pacific could be higher, reaching 41 percent.

“The primary channel of loss is sea level rise, followed by labor productivity losses and flooding,” he said.

Among sectors, he said agriculture is expected to be the most directly affected.

“The nature of the shocks and where they occur imply that the lowest income countries and the population are most vulnerable,” he said.

People in Asia-Pacific recognize the threat posed by climate change with a survey conducted by the ADB showing 91 percent view climate change as a serious problem.

In the Philippines, 90 percent of the respondents said they see climate change as a serious problem and 86 percent are already feeling its impact now or expect to be affected within the next 10 years.

While 70 percent of those in the Philippines said the government is already taking action to reduce climate change, 59 percent see the need for investments in low-emission and resilient infrastructure.

The survey also showed that 45 percent of respondents in the Philippines support a carbon tax and 43 percent are in favor of laws and regulations limiting emissions.

“Climate change has supercharged the devastation from tropical storms, heat waves and floods in the region, contributing to unprecedented economic challenges and human suffering,” ADB president Masatsugu Asakawa said.

“Urgent, well-coordinated climate action that addresses these impacts is needed before it is too late,” he added.

Apart from accelerated adaptation responses, the ADB sees the need to upscale adaptation-focused climate finance.

The ADB estimates that regional countries will need \$102 billion to \$431 billion annually to adapt to global warming, far exceeding the \$34 billion in adaptation finance tracked in the region from 2021 to 2022.

While government regulation reforms and enhanced recognition of climate risks are helping attract new sources of private climate capital, the ADB also said more private investment flows are needed.

Calamity Plus

By Ma. Isabel Ongpin

THE death toll from recent typhoons is becoming scandalous considering we have a weather advisory service — the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) — presumably modern infrastructure and emergency services for storm-affected areas.

We are in climate change conditions where everything is more extreme. With higher temperatures, rising seas and our rampaging destruction of geographical features like forests, hills and rivers, it is not a good idea to live near the coast, or near denuded hills and mountains, silted rivers and garbage-strewn areas, especially during extreme weather events. Add to that drainage-neglected places. When rains, storms or even earthquakes occur, these areas pay dearly in terms of lives and destruction.

I think Pagasa is doing a good job with predictions, warnings and evacuation advice. But it seems it is not taken seriously, not just by individual populations but by the local governments that have charge of them. There seems to be few preemptive evacuations. Evacuation centers are not enough or are makeshift. It has already been agreed that there should be a serious effort everywhere to put up decent and purposeful evacuation centers but so far when needed they are not there. So, schools become the default evacuation centers which after the emergency disrupt schooling for the chaos all around causing unnecessary damage to the school buildings and unreasonable delay in resuming classes.

Geographical features that could be mitigating factors for storm or earthquake, or even fire are being obliterated by overbuilding on them, or taking away their natural features like trees and open spaces. Worse is the leveling of hills or building helter-skelter on them or near them. When hills or mountains are leveled or cut out, whatever remains becomes vulnerable to the effects of bad weather. Meanwhile, the disappearance of open spaces, grassy areas and natural growth around cities is an invitation to floods after heavy rains. The drainage, too, has been compromised by building usually with shortcuts much-needed water outlets.

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Then there is the infrastructure. It seems bridges, roads, public buildings like schools and hospitals, even municipal and city halls, and other public buildings just fall apart during bad weather. All roads in these typhoon-prone islands should have anti-erosion measures but few do. So, when it rains, landslides occur, closing down travel for all, including emergency help teams. And the so-called flood control systems that clearly cost billions but seem not to have changed anything regarding floods are now the object of speculation about where the money for them went, how they were built, or if they exist at all. National budgets over the years say they should exist and work from the amounts appropriated. But they do not.

The image of that bridge somewhere in Calabarzon completely broken in half seems to indicate it was suspiciously weak from substandard materials and shoddy workmanship. When rocks and trees hit it as the river rose and rampaged, if it was built better, it would have been dented or damaged, not so completely destroyed as to have half of it carried away by the waters. This is a poster for poor infrastructure.

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Then there is the dense population that is overcrowding areas as well as refusing to obey evacuation orders or some precautions that could result in less damage and fewer deaths

and injuries. Here is where land use plans must come to the fore and be enforced with proper places for livable areas designated. How many times in the aftermath of landslides with their consequent deaths and destruction do we hear a local government official say they had warned people not to build where they did but were ignored, and the officials left it at that.

It's time to seriously go back to the drawing board on how we treat geographical features, infrastructure design and build better with the right materials which would also mean choosing the right place, have less or if possible no corruption, and better work standards. Can this be done? Ask our legislators and local government officials. It is time to change our ways of meeting natural disasters.

CCC IN THE NEWS

The Daily Tribune

[The wrath of typhoons: A call for climate resilience](#)

By Secretary Robert E.A. Borje

Typhoon “Yolanda,” which struck in November 2013, remains etched in our memory as one of the deadliest in history. Its aftermath drove critical reforms in disaster preparedness, but each subsequent storm shows that more must be done to protect vulnerable communities.

Each year, the Philippines faces the relentless onslaught of powerful typhoons, with recent storms, typhoons “Kristine” and “Leon” leaving behind widespread destruction. These extreme weather events, which have become more frequent and severe, remind us of typhoon “Yolanda.” They are part of a worsening trend driven by climate change. The lessons from past disasters are clear: this is becoming the norm. The increasing intensity of typhoons and their rapid intensification are direct manifestation of the climate crisis.

The Philippines, due to its geographical position in the Pacific typhoon belt and extensive coastline, is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Coastal communities are at particular risk, facing the compounded threats of storm surges, flooding and rising sea levels.

Uneven economic development in the country and lower adaptive capacities further amplify vulnerabilities, particularly in rural areas where many directly rely on natural resources for their livelihoods. Each storm that damages crops, equipment and homes drives these communities deeper into poverty, making recovery an uphill struggle.

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) identifies areas of heightened exposure, particularly in rural and coastal regions where poverty is most prevalent. In these areas, local governments and communities struggle to recover after each disaster. The reality

is that the country faces a future marked by increasingly destructive storms, rising sea levels and heightened threats to agriculture, fisheries, and the broader economy. Our lives, livelihoods, and future are indeed at stake.

Typhoon “Yolanda,” which struck in November 2013, remains etched in our memory as one of the deadliest in history. Its aftermath drove critical reforms in disaster preparedness, but each subsequent storm shows that more must be done to protect vulnerable communities.

With the recent typhoons “Kristine” and “Leon,” the economic toll reached P9.29 billion so far, damaging critical infrastructure like roads, bridges and power lines, hampering relief efforts and worsening the situation for affected communities. Farmers, fishers and families were left grappling with significant losses, underscoring the urgency of building resilience that prevents this level of destruction from recurring.

Globally, the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable nations to climate-related disasters. In the latest findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), tropical cyclones are projected to increase in intensity due to climate change. This highlights the need for comprehensive policies and planning that focus on science-based, data-driven approaches to address the immediate impacts of disasters and the underlying factors that heighten climate risk.

At the Climate Change Commission (CCC), we recognize that resilience cannot simply be an afterthought. It must be integrated into every aspect of development, preparedness and rehabilitation recovery efforts. Policies that emphasize both mitigation and adaptation are crucial to ensure our communities are better prepared for future disasters. However, science alone cannot bridge these gaps — political will is necessary to ensure science-based solutions are implemented effectively. For too long, the compounding sins of omission and commission have stymied real progress on climate action. Now is the time to correct course.

The NAP serves as a blueprint for this approach, prioritizing climate risk assessments, infrastructure resilience and inclusive governance. Local governments are key in this effort, as they are often the first responders to disasters. Through the NAP, the CCC encourages local government units (LGUs) to integrate climate adaptation into development plans, ensuring that communities are more prepared for future calamities.

Complementing the NAP, LGUs are mandated to develop Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs) that feed into overall resilience efforts as evaluated annually under the Gawad Kalamidad at Sakuna Labanan, Sariling Galing ang Kaligtasan (KALASAG) of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). Gawad KALASAG recognizes various stakeholders, particularly LGUs, promoting Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) climate change adaptation and humanitarian assistance programs.

Typhoons “Kristine” and “Leon” highlighted the need for LGUs, the NDRRMC, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the CCC and all relevant government agencies to work together to accelerate resiliency capacity building, climate change adaptation, DRRM planning, implementation and assessment and to address gaps. Plans must be tailored to address local challenges and ensure no community is left behind in building climate resilience.

The People’s Survival Fund (PSF) provides critical funding for local climate adaptation projects, helping communities build resilient infrastructure and rehabilitate ecosystems. In the wake of typhoons “Kristine” and “Leon,” we call on LGUs to leverage the PSF for recovery efforts and long-term resilience building.

Internationally, the Philippines has been a strong voice for climate justice, advocating for increased financial support from developed countries to assist vulnerable nations. The establishment of the new Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is a positive step toward addressing the needs of countries like ours. However, policies alone are not enough. We must focus on tangible actions — flood control projects, strengthened infrastructure, and early warning systems can make a real difference on the ground.

Another crucial aspect is disaster preparedness training. Equipped with the right knowledge and tools, communities can take immediate action to protect themselves. Simple measures — like securing homes, having emergency supplies, and knowing evacuation protocols — can save lives. The CCC is working closely with other national agencies, development partners, the private sector, and other stakeholders to ensure that policies are translated into tangible actions that benefit communities.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. recently reaffirmed the government’s commitment to climate action, calling for decisive steps to address climate vulnerabilities. The CCC fully supports this direction, and we urge all stakeholders — national agencies, LGUs, the private sector and civil society — to help build a disaster and climate-resilient Philippines that will allow us to shift from victims to victors, and from fragility to agility.

Resilience is not solely the government’s responsibility. Individuals and communities play an essential role through actions such as reforestation, mangrove rehabilitation and sustainable practices. By fostering strong, informed, and proactive communities, we can reduce the impacts of typhoons and other climate-related disasters.

Science can help solve this crisis, but political will help ensure those solutions are put into practice. We must bridge the gaps between policy, planning, preparedness and practice — providing a truly systems-based approach that drives meaningful change and makes things happen. Typhoons “Kristine” and “Leon” serve as powerful reminders of the urgent need for disaster and climate resilience. We must lead the nation toward a future where lives are protected, livelihoods are secured, and the impacts of climate

change are mitigated. We cannot wait for the next storm to remind us of our vulnerabilities.

By strengthening our climate policies, working together, and investing in resilience, we can ensure that the next generation inherits a country better prepared to face the challenges of a changing climate.

2025 GAA SHOULD BE A CLIMATE-ADAPTED AND CLIMATE RESILIENT BUDGET

In the aftermath of the massive destruction and loss of lives brought about by tropical storm Kristine, Senate President Francis Escudero said the annual general appropriations act, starting with the 2025 version, should already be "climate adapted and climate resilient."

While it is easy to point fingers at the agencies or personalities supposedly responsible for the massive destruction and loss of lives caused by tropical storm Kristine, Escudero said it would be more productive to prepare for future weather disturbances of similar or even greater magnitude.

"Addressing the problem also includes studying climate change and climate adaptation. We can no longer take a one size fits all approach with our flood control programs. Hindi pupwede porket ganyan ang ginagawa natin noon e ganyan pa rin ngayon dahil nga sa pagbabago ng panahon, dahil nga sa climate change, kailangang mag-adapt, kailangang magbago din tayo," Escudero said.

He said the design of the flood control infrastructure such as seawalls and river control systems have remained unchanged over the decades and many of these are no longer suitable under the current conditions.

Questions that should be raised include how thick and high seawalls should be and if the parameters should be different according to the geographical location and based on the bodies of water they serve.

"Dapat ibahin na yan, i-update na yan, at depende sa lugar iba-iba na rin ang design patungkol sa taas at kapal at kung may bakal nga ba o wala," Escudero said.

"May sapat na ba tayo na pag-aaral sa klase ng flood control na ginagawa natin, depende sa klase at uri ng ilog or karagatan na sinusubukan natin kontrolin yung tubig. Bahagi lahat ito ng pagbubusisi sa mga programa, kaalaman at research ng mga ahensya tulad ng DENR at DPWH," he said.

The Senate President has said that he expects a spirited debate on the issue of flood control during the plenary debates on the proposed P6.352 trillion national budget for

2025, which is set to commence shortly after Congress resumes its sessions on Monday, November 4.

More than just increasing funding, Escudero said spending should be targeted and based on actual research and data in order to ensure that flood control programs will be effective.

Even though the DPWH is the principal body tasked to implement flood control projects, Escudero said the roles of agencies such as the DENR and Climate Change Commission are now also crucial.

"Ano nga ba ang mga kailangan pagbabago at update na kailangang gawin kaugnay ng infrastructure design sa ating bansa. Palala na nga ba ng palala ang climate change at kailangan na natin ng climate adaptation kung saan mas mataas, mas makapal, mas solid yung kailangan nating gawin na river and flood control. Ano pa ang mitigation measures na kailangan nating gawin?" Escudero said.

He said local government units also have a shared responsibility when it comes to preparations for the impacts of extreme weather conditions on their respective areas. Citing the experience of his home province of Sorsogon, the Senate Chief said the province always implements sewer clean-ups during the summer and whenever possible, dredging of the river.

"Matatanda na tayo, mga LGU alam na dapat yan, ika nga dapat pa bang i-memorize ng LGU yan? Hindi na dapat siguro. Hindi na responsibilidad at hindi natin pwedeng sisihin ang PAGASA na dapat hourly bigyan ng update yung mga LGU, trabaho ng LGU alamin by the hour on the hour or every 10 minutes kung kumusta na nga ba ang kalagayan ng panahon," Escudero said.

"Hindi para sa PAGASA na obligahin yung mga LGU na gawin yun. Sa parte naman ng ating mga kababayan again through social media sapat na ang availability ng impormasyon para mapagbigay alam sa kanila yung tunay na estado ng lagay ng panahon at wala silang dahilan maliban na lang kung hindi sila interesado na hindi mapakinggan at malaman yon," he added.

Flooded by Corruption

By Marichu A. Villanueva

If we are to rely on the weather forecast of our state-run Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), there will be at least six more tropical cyclones to visit our country before the end of this year. The first two, PAGASA announced last Friday, are expected to enter this month the Philippine area of responsibility, or PAR for short.

We just had one after the other “severe tropical storms” named “Kristine” and “Leon” as the 11th and 12th typhoons this year that entered the PAR. According to PAGASA, our country experiences an average of 20 typhoons each year, with about eight or nine of them crossing the Philippine landmass.

Fortunately, the last two cyclones weakened and did not reach the level of “super typhoon” after making landfall in our country. The term “super typhoon” is used when a typhoon’s sustained surface-wind strength reaches 240 kilometers (150 miles) per hour, the equivalent of a strong category 4 or category 5 hurricane. We could only be thankful to God in giving our archipelagic country its natural defenses like the Sierra Madre mountain range in Luzon.

Our PAGASA weather specialists noted the peak of our typhoon season is from July through October, during which period nearly 70 percent of all typhoons develop. The PAGASA website states: “The Philippines is prone to tropical cyclones due to its geographical location which generally produce heavy rains and flooding of large areas and also strong winds which result in heavy casualties to human life and destruction to crops and properties. Thus, it is of utmost importance to have sufficient knowledge on such maritime phenomena for beneficial purposes.”

With such certainty and predictability of our weather condition, mass casualty events during typhoons still occur in our country.

While it did not develop into a super typhoon, Kristine left behind as many as 150 people dead, with 122 injured and 30 individuals still reported missing. This was based on the last monitoring of calamity reports of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRMMC). While the bulk of reported dead due to Kristine-induced landslides were mostly from Batangas, the NDRRMC reported that Bicol Region is still the hardest hit by heavy rains, landslides and massive flooding.

In fact, many areas in Albay and Camarines Sur remain flooded up to now, though in some parts the floods have substantially receded to knee-deep as of Friday. Barely a few days later, Leon struck and likewise caused widespread devastation, especially in Batanes, Cagayan and nearby northern Luzon provinces.

The NDRMMC reported as many as 81,716 families or 311,980 people remain temporarily housed in 1,980 different evacuation centers in various affected provinces and localities from 17 different regions. Although the National Capital Region was not directly hit, rains brought by Kristine resulted in the usual heavy flooding around low-lying areas in Metro Manila.

In parts of flood-prone Parañaque City, dozens were stranded along Dr. Arcadio Santos Avenue at the height of Kristine until the wee hours of the next morning. Even trucks, buses and other big vehicles were stalled in the middle of the road as vehicles ahead of them opted not to proceed into the thigh-high flooding. Although government employees and schoolchildren have been spared by the suspension of work and classes,

respectively, many of us lesser mortals who have to work and report to office even during typhoons waded through the flood.

Many could not go home due to limited transport options because flooding rendered many roads unpassable. Some cars also broke down due to floods, which also caused traffic jams in the area. Stranded individuals were saved, picked up and rescued in rubber boats and several military trucks that were offered to those who needed a ride to their areas of destination.

Bleeding hearts, especially from leaders and members of Congress, including those from the national and local governments, were only too quick to be seen distributing relief goods and assisting in flood and disaster-stricken areas.

Yes, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. (PBBM) always convenes and meets with his Cabinet officials who are members of the NDRMMC before and after typhoon disasters. However, PBBM cannot just scratch his head and ask them: “But what can we do?”

And the worst part of this problem is how much public funds were lost to corruption in the many big-funded flood control projects all over the country. The biggest question was: “Where did the money in the more than P61.4-billion flood control budgets for the past two years in Bicol go?”

Senator Joel Villanueva, in particular, noted there was P29.4 billion that was allocated to the DPWH budget in flood control projects for Bicol alone in the Congress-approved 2023 General Appropriations Act (GAA). Sen. Villanueva further noted there was P31.9 billion for DPWH flood control projects in Bicol under the 2024 GAA, or a total of P61.4 billion for two years of the budget cycle.

Disclaimer: I am not related to the senator though he claims to be a distant relative from Bulacan.

Sen. Villanueva recalled having raised this question already at the budget plenary that as much as P1.44 billion a day was supposed to be spent for flood control measures by several government agencies implementing them. These included the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH); the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), he cited.

DPWH Secretary Manuel Bonoan was stupified to tell a House budget hearing having discovered “nothing was actually allocated” in the P70-billion counterpart funding for foreign-assisted projects of the agency. Bonoan claimed he was “surprised” when the Congress-approved 2024 GAA came out without it. So where did such a huge amount go?

This hocus-pocus happens behind closed-door GAA bicameral conference committee meetings of Congress.

This is why Filipinos feel frustrated and disappointed to hear laments whenever these catastrophic events are being blamed on climate change. We know that already. Thus, it requires whole-of-nation mitigating and adaptation solutions before these public funds literally go down the drain due to corruption

Information and Knowledge Management Division

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