

- **ECONOMY**

ADB report notes 'uncontrolled' growth at tourist destinations

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PHILSTAR

MUNICIPALITIES in the Philippines are developing tourism destinations without proper infrastructure planning, contributing to the country's poor tourism management, the Strategia Development Research Institute, Inc. said.

In an Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) report, "Developing the Philippine Blue Economy: Opportunities and Challenges in the Ocean Tourism Sector," Strategia Development Research Institute Executive Director Maria Angela G. Zafra said the

country has a strong marine economy, with coastline tourism activities generating revenue and jobs within municipalities.

Tourism destinations are still experiencing uncontrolled development despite marine ecosystem protection policies, according to the report.

“Poor implementation and enforcement of laws are typical in the Philippines,” she said in the paper released in December.

“Despite having a national ecotourism strategy and supposed coordination of different national agencies, many tourist destinations in the Philippines are experiencing uncontrolled development.”

A technical expert with the Climate Change Commission, Ms. Zafra said municipalities are focused on using tourism to improve the local economy and alleviate poverty.

“However, many municipalities are developing their tourism portfolios without proper planning and without putting the necessary infrastructure in place,” she said.

She said the Philippines must analyze the ecosystems of tourism destinations in order to estimate the area’s ability to cater to tourists.

“This would allow tourism planners to manage tourist numbers and not exceed the carrying capacity when planning for tourism development,” she said.

“Limiting tourist numbers each day for each site or attraction based on assessments of the carrying capacity and infrastructure can help to address the issue of capacity.”

She said infrastructure needs must be assessed before creating a tourism development plan, adding that civil society groups can help monitor environmental violations.

Tourism was one of the hardest hit sectors after borders closed during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, with the industry’s revenue declining 83% to P81.4 billion in 2020 after the number of foreign visitors fell.

The Tourism department has said it is preparing an infrastructure development plan for 2022 to 2028, which aims to improve destination management infrastructure, including sanitation, engineered landfill, healthcare facilities and emergency response systems. —

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