

15 June 2023 Thursday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



**NOT ENOUGH**  
Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga delivers her speech at the Management Association of the Philippines General Meeting, which had the theme 'National Priorities on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change,' on Wednesday, June 14, 2023.  
PHOTO BY ISMAEL DE JUAN

## DENR budget too small – Loyzaga

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) does not have enough funds to carry its mandate. Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said Wednesday.

She lamented that her department's budget is too small to cover the areas that were assigned to them.

"Our place of work covers 30,000,000 hectares of land, over 36,000 kilometers of coastline.

The fifth longest in the world and twice as long as the United States, and waters that extend to the edge of our continental shelves," Yulo-Loyzaga said during the Management Association of the Philippines General Meeting.

The DENR's budget this year is P23.29 billion, lower than last year's P25.4 billion.

Yulo-Loyzaga said the biggest threat to the environment is the unsustainable consumption and

production practices that lead to the generation of too much waste.

"Confronting the complex roots of the pollution on land, seas and air requires a whole of society effort that will come at a cost but will have far-reaching benefits," she said.

Yulo-Loyzaga enumerated some of the interventions being done by the DENR to contribute to socioeconomic development, such as building resilient communities

and supporting the advancement of innovations and best practices for mitigation and adaptation through nature-based and green-gray infrastructure solutions.

She said that while there has been some progress in the areas of climate action and disaster risk reduction, achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable development is "very much a work in progress."

**JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL**



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## CONTRERAS FROM A1

# The real score in Masungi

And yet, in the case of the Masungi Georeserve located in the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL) in Rizal, the DENR behaves as a party to the conflict. And in doing so, DENR is not being totally truthful in its statements.

The Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI) has been threatened with cancellation of the memorandum of agreement (MoA) it signed in good faith with former environment secretary Gina Lopez. Some top DENR officials have openly talked about this. They have publicly lambasted the MGFI as lawbreakers, calling the MoA inimical to the interest of the Republic, and they have done so even under oath during several congressional hearings. The Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) that covers Masungi, which is chaired by the DENR, has passed a resolution to cancel the MoA. And yet, despite these, the incumbent Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said that they "have not spoken about a cancellation of contract."

But then again, it appears that Yulo-Loyzaga is equivocating. This is evident in what she told reporters in relation to the MoA. "We are reviewing it to make the appropriate action. There is no doubt that there has been good work done by this group. However, there are certain features of this agreement that really bring it into question. Because of those features, we would need to take the appropriate action," is what she said.

For someone who denies ever speaking about cancellation, Yulo-Loyzaga comes already

armed with an alternative model for rehabilitation and reforestation in the event it is canceled, which she referred to as Project Transform.

"This is the model that we will be using; we will involve all the LGUs, the key academic institutions in the area, the different private and public stakeholders, including other departments of government," she told reporters.

Yulo-Loyzaga spoke of infirmities in the MoA that they are trying to remedy. But a close perusal of the events reveals that such flaws were mainly because DENR failed to practice due diligence. DENR officials accuse MGFI of failing to secure PAMB and NCIP clearance. And yet, even without these, DENR signed the MoA. Worse, PAMB is attached to the DENR. It is therefore bizarre that DENR now faults MGFI for not securing a clearance from a body that it chairs for a MoA it signed even without such clearance. DENR further raises constitutional issues against the perpetual nature of the land trust which it granted in good faith to MGFI to protect the area. I have already argued that the limitation of 25 years renewable for another 25 years appears to apply only to extraction, utilization and development, with the Constitution being silent on protection.

But what is most bizarre is that it took the DENR six years since the MoA signing in 2017 to raise these issues. Some people are now alleging that the MoA was signed without complete staff work. But whose fault was this? The MGFI submitted a proposal in 2016 which could have provided the

DENR enough time to vet it. One of Lopez's undersecretaries even conducted an ocular visit. Was the delay deliberate? Was this because some tried to run the clock on the proposal, hoping that Lopez would not be confirmed? The DENR did not assign a manager for the Masungi Georeserve Project, nor constitute a steering committee, as required in the MoA. If these were done, then the issues being raised now would have been addressed, and the deficiencies such as the absence of the necessary clearances were rectified. Was there deliberate malice?

Congress appears to be only focused on inquiring into the MoA itself, and the alleged violations of MGFI. It is about time it also inquires into the DENR's part in the process. This is the least that Congress can do to get to the truth, and to hold accountable officials, past and present, for their actions and inactions. It would also finally confirm if the DENR deliberately refused, with malice, to constitute the steering committee and appoint a project manager to undermine a project which from the start many of its top-level officials allegedly opposed.

There are many half-truths and blatant lies being peddled on the Masungi issue. There are also opinions being offered that are based on biases and imperfect information. Parties issue statements that may mislead and serve as pure propaganda.

The DENR is complaining that it is being demonized by MGFI. MGFI, for its part, openly considers DENR as an enemy. The Dumaliangs who are acting as its

main trustees are likewise demonized as a family of land developers who are profiting from Masungi illegally. Some are even saying that the family is simply gaslighting us into thinking that they are victims.

The MGFI was able to rehabilitate and protect Masungi, and there are awards to prove it. Yulo-Loyzaga promises us results through Project Transform where all stakeholders will be involved in accordance with the directive of RA 11038, or the "Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-Nipas) Law."

However, Yulo-Loyzaga cannot blame people for harboring doubts. After all, it was under the DENR's "care" and "protection" that portions of the UMRBPL were titled, quarrying operations obtained permits, private resorts proliferated, and illegal land speculators became bolder and more audacious.

Obviously, the issue is divisive and complex. There are many sides. Congress is divided, with some members being critical of MGFI while others even passed a resolution heaping accolades on it. While many local officials in Rizal are urging cancellation, MGFI has allies among some NCR local government unit heads. Even within DENR, there are different voices.

Obviously, threats of a MoA cancellation do not help solve the problem. Actual cancellation will not automatically lead to Project Transform since the issue will most certainly end up tied up in litigation. Indeed, there are many sides to this story. But at the end of the day, the crucial consideration is what is good for the environment.



## UAE reaffirms vow to support PHL economy, mangrove project

**T**HE government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has reaffirmed its strong commitment to the Philippines through its continued support for the country's environmental programs and economy, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said.

In a courtesy visit to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. last Tuesday, UAE Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary H.E. Mohamed Obaid Salem Alqataam Alzaabi said that they value how the Philippine government perceive the UAE as a country that has no enemies and a country that is a good friend to everyone.

In terms of the economy, the UAE envoy said there are a lot of companies in their country wanting to build their businesses in the Philippines as they emphasized that they wanted to introduce a new program, which is similar to what they have been doing to other countries.

"This program is to exchange information [between our] countries. We have more than 40 countries now in this program. It's a government exchange program by the Office of the Prime Minister," the UAE Ambassador told Marcos.

He explained that the program was launched in 2018 as "platform knowledge," where the Philippine and the UAE governments, for example, can exchange information to be covered by a memorandum

of understanding (MOU), should President Marcos approve the proposal.

The exchange of information program was already introduced in Egypt, Spain, Jordan and other countries.

The PCO said the President has directed Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin to draft an MOU on this, saying that he is looking forward to signing an agreement with the UAE.

Moreover, the PCO said the UAE Ambassador told Marcos that they are looking forward to the Philippines becoming a member of the "Global Mangrove Alliance," which will benefit the country, being prone to calamities and disasters, and for the management of the abundant waterways.

For his part, Marcos said that joining the alliance would be good for the Philippines as he emphasized the government's efforts to preserve and restore the mangrove ecosystem.

"We have made great efforts to preserve and restore our mangrove ecosystem. As a matter of fact, the law in the Philippines is, you cannot touch mangroves at all, and because of that, the mangroves have grown back," Marcos said.

"In fact, they grow back so much that sometimes they are already beginning to block the rivers. So maybe there is much you can learn on the management of it because I think we have done as much as we can in terms of

preservation," he added.

Marcos also emphasized that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will be very pleased to participate in the Global Mangrove Alliance.

The Chief Executive also noted that he would want to study the structure of the alliance, what will be the commitment of the Philippines to the group, the commitment of other member countries, and how the group works.

"But again, the preservation of the mangroves is a very big issue. It is a very important point for the Philippines because of all the waterways that we have," he added.

The UAE official also relayed the invitation for President Marcos to attend the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, or the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in December this year at the Expo City in Dubai.

Aside from the proposed exchange of information program, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos Jr. also relayed to President Marcos that the UAE has extended invitation to the Philippine National Police (PNP) to study cybercrime-related cases, including scholarship offering for police officers.

Abalos was present during the courtesy visit of the UAE officials.

Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz



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For boosting climate resilience

# PH gets new \$750-M WB loan

By CHINO S. LEYCO

**T**he World Bank has approved Philippines' \$750-million fresh loan to support the government's reform program aimed at boosting environmental protection and climate resilience.

The Philippines First Sustainable Development Policy loan would be used to accelerate the country's economic recovery and boost long-term growth.

According to the World Bank, the new financing supports ongoing government reforms to attract private investment in renewable energy, enhance plastic waste management through

reduction, recovery, and recycling, as well as promote green transport.

The World Bank loan also seeks to reduce climate-related fiscal risks from the agriculture sector.

Ndiame Diop, World Bank Philippines country director, said the country has tremendous potential for renewable energy generation, especially in solar and wind.

"Government actions to encourage investments in this sector, such as promoting foreign direct investments and streamlining the permitting process, could unlock this potential," Diop said.

He noted that renewable energy can help the Philippines mitigate climate change and bring numerous benefits,

including enhanced energy security, the creation of green jobs, and improved access to electricity.

"It is a crucial step towards a more sustainable and resilient future for the country," he added.

The Philippine government has set an ambitious target of 50 percent of renewable energy (RE) in total power generation by 2040 and has started to pursue reforms to implement it, supported by this financing operation.

This increased focus on RE is pursued in parallel with slowing the expansion of coal-fired power generation capacity from 2026 onwards.

Achieving these targets will require a significant increase in investments

in solar and wind technologies and strong policy environment conducive to investment in RE.

"This financing program also supports the introduction of new insurance products suitable for vulnerable smallholder farmers and strengthens the coverage and operations of the Philippine Crop Insurance Commission," World Bank said.

"The aim is to help mitigate climate-related disaster risks to the country's budget and the farming sector. If properly designed and targeted, crop insurance can help stabilize farm income, reduce poverty, and provide a climate safety net for food producers," it added. **►B-5**

## PH gets...

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The Philippines, along with China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, accounts for 55 to 60 percent of the plastic waste that enters the ocean.

Approximately 1.7 million tons of post-consumer plastic waste is generated in the Philippines annually, with

an estimated recycling rate of only 28 percent for recyclable plastic waste.

The remaining balance either leaks into the environment or is disposed of as part of the mixed waste stream.



## Global plastics treaty faces a rough road



**T**HERE have been some updates on developments in the talks to create a global plastics treaty following the second of five planned negotiating sessions, which took place in Paris last week. The quick version is that those who are hoping to see an agreement with substantial outcomes any time soon, or any agreement at all, should probably manage their expectations.

The global mandate to create a plastics treaty was agreed in March of last year, successfully capping off a sometimes excruciating exercise in political bargaining that took several years. While getting most of the world's countries to agree that there should be a plastics treaty was rightly hailed as a breakthrough, that in no sense made the actual creation of a treaty a foregone conclusion. In order to hammer out the details and develop one, it was agreed that there would be five negotiating sessions, each lasting about a week, spread out over the next three years. The first was held in December of last year, the second was held last week, and the next is planned for the end of this year.



### ROUGH TRADE

**BEN KRITZ**

not only voluntary actions." There is a catch, however, although it may be the most sensible point of view. The US preference when it comes to "strong binding provisions" are for those provisions to oblige nations to develop individual action plans, with global standards being somewhat more generalized.

As I have said previously, plastic is so pervasive in the modern world that any notion of simply stopping its production and use, even if that is what actually needs to happen to save the planet, is irrationally optimistic. Sufficiently comparable sustainable materials that could be used in place of plastic in its infinite number of applications simply do not exist. We do have the technology to produce reasonably acceptable (but in most cases, still somewhat inferior) substitutes for some simple plastic things like packaging, but even if those substitutes were applied on the widest possible scale, they would still be a proverbial drop in the bucket compared to the global total appetite for plastics.

So, here's the first problem: Under the best of circumstances, and at this point, the circumstances are clearly not the best, the soonest a treaty would become a reality would be sometime in 2025. It would then need to be ratified by a sufficient number of countries, probably about 60, before it would come into force, which would add another year or more. Between now and then, at the world's current rate of plastic production and consumption, another 1.3 trillion metric tons of plastic will be produced, of which at least 1.18 trillion metric tons will end up as waste — dumped in landfills, incinerated or escaping any sort of management to pollute the environment more directly.

The second problem, which should come as no surprise to anyone, is that the countries taking part in the negotiations (there were 180 represented at the latest meeting) are quickly lining themselves up into two so far irreconcilable camps. On the one side are the countries that are pushing for limitations on plastic production as the main means to reduce the global plastic problem. To this end, 58 countries have organized themselves into a group called the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution to better wield their influence in talks. Make of it what you will, but the Philippines is not a member of this group.

On the other side are the major plastic producers, who are pushing for a plastics treaty that will be based on recycling and waste management; one hears the idiotic phrase "circular economy" a lot from these countries. The chief resisters to any notion of limiting plastic production, other than on a purely voluntary basis, are the usual suspects in China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and India.

Surprisingly, the US is not part of this group, or at least hasn't acted like it so far. Plastics manufacturing is one of the biggest industries in the US, but the official position of the country, according to the undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, Jose Fernandez, is to support a treaty with "strong binding provisions,

*Opinion*

Then there is the problem of getting rid of unwanted plastic, which is practically impossible; more than 99 percent of the plastic produced since its widespread commercial introduction more than a century ago still exists in some form somewhere on this planet, including an alarming amount within our bodies. Only about 9 percent of plastic globally is recycled, and that percentage cannot be increased by a great deal; even in countries that pursue recycling aggressively, the percentage only climbs to 20 to 25 percent, and even then, current recycling technology still leaves 30 to 40 percent of the collected material as unusable waste. Thermal or chemical pyrolysis is the most effective recycling technology that exists, but as of now, it is expensive, energy-intensive, and can only be used on a small scale.

At this point, it seems the two likeliest results that could come from the effort to forge a global plastics treaty are either a treaty that is too weak to have any appreciable effect on the global plastic problem or no treaty at all. An effective treaty, on the other hand, would be one in which there was flexibility for individual countries to address their plastic production and consumption, but required those individual plans to be binding and subject to sanctions if targets are not met. That's the stick; the carrot would be a strong framework to encourage and provide substantial financial and technical support for research and development into plastic alternatives, recycling systems, and waste management. Will the world be able to come up with something like that? I doubt it; humanity has demonstrated a fantastic talent for self-destruction, and increasingly so over the past 30 years or so. If the world fails to come up with an effective plastics treaty, it will be a choice.

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
SINCE 1900  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## Maynilad modular plant in Imus to start producing 5.5 MLD

West Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) announced it will start producing this month an initial 5.5 MLD (million liters per day) of potable water from its newly constructed modular treatment plant (ModTP) in Imus, Cavite, that will get raw water supply from the Anabu River.

The ₱2.12-billion Anabu ModTP—which is one of four similar facilities that Maynilad is constructing in the Cavite area—will serve as a dedicated supply source for Imus, which does not yet have 24-hour water supply owing to its distance from Maynilad's main raw water source, the Angat Dam in Bulacan.

Its initial output of 5.5 MLD is enough to supply the needs of more than 13,000

customers. But once the Anabu ModTP becomes fully operational by the latter part of this year, it can produce a total of 16 MLD, which can serve around 114,000 people in the area.

“With the commissioning of this new facility, we can lengthen supply availability in this part of the West concession that has yet to be provided with 24-hour water service. We aim to enhance service reliability by building more treatment facilities that tap alternate raw water sources,” said Maynilad Chief Operating Officer Randolph T. Estrellado.

The Anabu ModTP is part of Maynilad's measures to mitigate the possible impact of El Niño on the availability of water supply.



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## Bohol mayor orders removal of illegal water-extraction system

Mayor Juliet Dano of Sevilla, Bohol has ordered the removal of

pipes and other structures for bulk water supply of the adjacent Balilihan town at Bugwak Spring located in her municipality.

Dano implemented on June 9 the Sevilla Sangguniang Bayan Resolution 2023-110 ruling issued on June 5.

She said her office would turn over the pipes and structures, including a 100-horsepower submersible pump, to anyone who could prove ownership of the items that were removed.

"The removal started last Thursday, but a police officer from Balilihan came over and asked the Sevilla employees to stop dismantling the structures and asked for a court order allowing the action," Dano said.

The mayor added that workers suspended their work for the day to avoid any trouble, but continued the next day.

Dano said she had to act on the complaints of her constituents for the "intrusion" as the water project operates without a permit or building approval from Sevilla.

Residents and officials of Sevilla have repeatedly asked the Balilihan local government to remove the structures from the spring as they had not given their consent to build on their territory.

- Bella Cariaso





# PGMPI in talks with Korean firm on critical minerals venture

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

Philippine General Minerals Project, Inc. (PGMPI), a Filipino-owned company engaged in the rehabilitation of mining tailings in the country, is in discussion with South Korean investor Busan Equity Partners (BEP), a consortium of South Korea's institutional investors, for potential collaboration and partnership in critical mineral ventures in the country.

Retired Army LtGen Antonio G Parlade, Jr., PGMPI president and CEO, said discussions have been held with BEP Managing Director YS Lee following pronouncements by Philippines and South Korean leaders on critical minerals requirements.

"PGMPI and BEP are actively exploring opportunities for collaboration and partnership," said Parlade in a statement. BEP already visited Manila in April this year and held fruitful discussions with key officials from PGMPI, Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual, the Board of Investments Managing Head Ceferino S. Rodolfo, and officials of the Development Bank of the Philippines.

During the meeting, Parlade said the BEP group explored possibilities that Korean investors can participate in PGMPI's Project in order to comply with the Korean government's requirements for these metals.

The meetings focused on exploring possibilities for Korean investors to participate in PGMPI's project, aligning with the Korean government's requirements for these strategic metals, he said.

In addition, he said, the DTI and BOI expressed optimism about the project and pledged to coordinate with counterparts for the Philippines - South Korea Joint Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation (PH-ROKJCTEC) with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy (MOTIE) to facilitate future collaborations with PGMPI.

"These discussions mark an important step towards a potential Private-Public-Partnership, forging strong ties between PGMPI and South Korea's industrialized sectors in pursuit of mutual economic growth and stability," he noted.

According to Parlade they were encouraged by President Ferdinand R Marcos Jr.'s pronouncement during the 42nd ASEAN Summit on May 10, 2023, in

Indonesia, that the Philippines will be a producer of critical metals and minerals, and not just an exporter of iron ore.

"As the industrialized nations grapple for control of the supply and demand of critical minerals and resources necessary for space and defense technology, the EV industry, nuclear power, and telecommunications, President Marcos' announcement is certainly well timed," Parlade said in a statement.

Also in February this year, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeo also expressed their intention to source critical mineral requirements from the Philippines and Indonesia, aiming to reduce their reliance on China by at least 50 percent.

More recently, during the G7 meeting in Hiroshima, President Yoon again reaffirmed the importance of procuring these materials from the Philippines, Indonesia, and other reliable sources.

"These metals are of utmost significance to South Korea's highly industrialized sectors, including prominent manufacturing giants such as Samsung, Hyundai, and POSCO, thus highlighting the urgency of the Philippine government's response on the matter," noted Parlade.

Founded by Parlade, former Southern Luzon Commander, along with a group of close associates, PGMPI initially conducted extensive research to delve into the dynamics of the trade war between the United States and China, particularly regarding rare earth materials and precious metals.

The research "unearthed" a wealth of information on the presence of these critical minerals in waste tailings, both on the surface and underground, as well as millions of tons of ore being shipped out of the country, many of them finding their way in the reclamation activities in the West Philippine Sea.

With clear guidance from the then National Security Adviser, Secretary Hermogenes C Esperon Jr. and former Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, PGMPI explored methods of harnessing these minerals without causing further harm to the environment.



## Mining company president appeases Manobo leaders

THE president of Philsaga Mining Corp. (PMC), Joseph Mahusay, appeased the anger of the Rodrigo Clan from the Manobo tribe following the alleged trespassing incident involving foreign executives at the Agusan del Sur mining site.

The individuals accused of entering the mining site without permission from the PMC are identified as Ryan Welker, the executive director of Vitrinite, and his board nominees to Ten Sixty-Four (X64), PMC's Australian partner Walter Robertson Milbourne Jr. and Andrew John Brown.

The unauthorized visit by the three foreign executives to the mining site was allegedly arranged by former PMC president Raul Villanueva.

"In my capacity as President, I have formally notified the aforementioned Nominee Directors in writing that their visit to our site is not authorized. I took this step after the Indigenous People's Rodrigo

Clan informed me that their presence was unwelcome," Mahusay said in a statement.

Maryjane Rodrigo-Hallasgo and Amatorio Rodrigo, leaders of the clan, strongly criticized Villanueva for failing to exercise due diligence in PMC's operations.

This criticism stems from Villanueva's decision to release the royalty share of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) 136 without obtaining the clan's permission, thereby jeopardizing the rights of the rightful claimants.

Mahusay also revealed that the former PMC president has connections with Vitrinite, the company behind the plan to replace the current X64 Board.

"Their intentions and actions have raised serious concerns," said Mahusay, who said Villanueva, Welker, Milbourne and Brown have been tagged as persona non grata by the Manobo tribe in the area.

THE MANILA TIMES



## Marcos invited to UN climate summit in Dubai

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has been invited to join other world leaders in this year's United Nations climate summit in Dubai, Malacañang said Wednesday.

The invitation was relayed by United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador to the Philippines Mohamed Obaid Salem Alqataam Alzaabi during a courtesy call in Malacañang Tuesday.

"The UAE official also relayed the invitation for President Marcos to attend the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, or the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in December this year at the Expo City in Dubai," Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said in a statement.

The UAE government promised continued support to the Philippines' environmental programs and economy as one of its allies in Asia.

The ambassador told Marcos that they value how the Philippine government perceived the UAE as a country that is a good friend to everyone.

He said that they are looking forward to the Philippines becoming a member of the "Global Mangrove Alliance," which will benefit the country, being prone to calamities and disasters, and for the management of the abundant waterways.

The President agreed that joining the alliance would be good for the Philippines as he emphasized the government's efforts to preserve and restore the mangrove ecosystem.

"We have made great efforts to preserve and restore our mangrove ecosystem. As a matter of fact, the law in the Philippines is, you cannot touch mangroves at all, and because of that, the mangroves have grown back," Marcos said.

Marcos thanked the UAE for its unwavering support for the Philippines and its timely assistance for the families affected by the unrest of Mayon Volcano in Albay province.

The Philippines received over 50 tons of humanitarian aid from the UAE government for Mayon Volcano-affected residents.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE**



## Editorial

### The cynicism of climate finance

**E**VER since the signing of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement in 2015, one of that global accord's most important provisions, the funding of the climate adaptation needs of vulnerable countries by the developed world responsible for the greatest part of planet-warming greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, has proven to be one of its most problematic. Not only have rich countries consistently failed to meet the \$100 billion per year target established by the Paris Agreement, as a submission to the Transitional Committee of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) late last month highlight, those countries have cynically found a way to make vulnerable countries pay for their own climate response.

This is obviously completely unacceptable and further strengthens our call for the accounting of climate financing to be in the hands of countries like the Philippines, which need it, and not those that are only begrudgingly and partially meeting their responsibility to provide it.

The Transitional Committee is tasked with developing a draft plan for the one significant idea to emerge from the COP27 climate summit in Egypt in 2022, a fund to compensate at-risk countries for climate-induced damage and loss. The committee met last month in Paris; it held a previous meeting here in Manila in February. In the run-up to its meetings, the committee typically solicits comments and recommendations from various stakeholders, but its members may now be regretting striving for inclusiveness after being confronted by some strong, and we think completely justifiable demands from a coalition of 118 civil society organizations (CSOs), including several from the Philippines.

Citing an analysis by Oxfam using data through the year 2020, the CSO group showed that fully 80 percent of all reported public climate financing has come in the form of concessional and non-concessional loans and other non-grant instruments. Put more simply, climate-vulnerable countries are being asked to pay for climate adaptation made necessary by those who are demanding repayment, and those countries then count those loaned funds as part of their "contribution" to climate response.

Among the biggest climate finance contributors, Japan, France and Germany are the three biggest offenders. By contrast, EU institutions (except for the European Investment Bank), Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Australia provide all or nearly all of their funding obligations in the form of grants that need not be repaid by the beneficiary countries.

The group of CSOs made two demands in their submission to the Transitional Committee. First, any climate-related funding, meaning funding that is intended to meet obligations under the Paris Agreement, must be in the form of grants or other non-debt instruments. Second, obligatory climate financing must be provided over and above other forms of development assistance that is already being provided or is in the pipeline. For example, funding for a commuter rail extension, which does not primarily have the purpose of climate change adaptation or mitigation, cannot be counted against a country's funding obligation simply because it may have coincidental environmental benefits.

At a time when unsustainable debt among countries that are both financially challenged and highly vulnerable to climate change impacts has become a matter of critical concern to developed countries and their development finance institutions, it is utterly shameful that anyone should need to call out those countries on their imposing further debt on those least equipped for it, but here we are. It needs to stop, and it needs to stop immediately.

As we have recently argued, the only rational way in which climate funding for vulnerable countries can be fairly and accurately accounted for is if that responsibility is given to the beneficiary countries. We, here in the Philippines, are in a better position than anyone else to understand our climate response needs and assess if investments, regardless of where they come from, are effectively addressing those needs. We again urge the government to study the matter and to create a framework by which funding can be accurately and consistently defined as climate funding, or something else. Likewise, the government should reject any funding offers for climate response that are in the form of loans, regardless of concessional terms.



# World Bank OKs \$750-M loan for Phl climate resilience

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

The World Bank has approved a \$750-million policy loan to support reforms that promote environmental protection and climate resilience in the Philippines.

In a statement yesterday, the multilateral lender said its board of executive directors gave the green light to the \$750-million Philippines First Sustainable Recovery Development Policy Loan.

This loan will support reforms being undertaken by the government to attract private investment in renewable energy; enhance plastic waste management through reduction, recovery and recycling; promote green transport, including the use of electric vehicles, and reduce climate-related fiscal risks from the agriculture sector.

"The Philippines has tremendous potential for renewable energy generation, especially in solar and wind. Government actions to encourage investments in this sector, such as promoting foreign direct investments and streamlining the permitting process, could unlock this potential," World Bank country director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand Ndiame Diop said.

"Renewable energy can help the Philippines mitigate climate change and bring numerous benefits, including enhanced energy security, the creation of green jobs and improved access to electricity. It is a crucial step towards a more sustainable and resilient future for the country," he said further.

The government is aiming to have renewable energy (RE) account for 50 percent of total power generation by 2040.

To achieve the goal, the World Bank said more investments in solar and wind technologies and a strong policy environment conducive for investment in RE would be needed.

Aside from reforms to promote RE, the loan also supports the introduction of new insurance products for vulnerable smallholder farmers, and strengthens the coverage and operations of the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. to help mitigate

climate-related disaster risks to the country's budget and agriculture sector.

In addition, the policy loan supports the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, which mandates large enterprises to recover up to 80 percent of plastic packaging waste by 2028.

The Philippines, along with China, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, accounts for 55 to 60 percent of the plastic waste that end up in the ocean.

Ever year, approximately 1.7 million tons of post-consumer plastic waste are generated in the Philippines, with an estimated recycling rate of only 28 percent for recyclable plastic waste. The balance either leaks into the environment or is disposed of as part of the mixed waste stream.

The World Bank's development policy loans are being provided to support the necessary policy and institutional changes to create an environment that will enable sustained and equitable growth.

"Advancing economic reforms to transform the economy remains imperative, not only to accelerate, but also to sustain the economic recovery and boost long-term growth," World Bank senior economist Ralph Van Doorn said.

While the Philippines has rebounded from the pandemic, it continues to face challenges, including high global commodity prices, disruptions in supply chains due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, weaker exchange rates and high inflation.

## Climate conference

Meanwhile, President Marcos was invited to attend the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held at the Expo City in Dubai in December.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Mohamed Obaid Salem Alqataam Alzaabi extended the invitation to Marcos during a courtesy visit at Malacañang on Tuesday, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said in a statement.

The PCO yesterday has yet to respond to queries on whether the President has accepted the invitation.

The administration has allotted P453.1 billion this year for climate adaptation and mitigation programs, a 56 percent increase from the P289.7-billion budget last year. In a speech at the Asian Development Bank on May 22, Marcos emphasized that "climate change can, will and already is unleashing nature's fury upon our communities and our people." The Chief Executive has made commitments to prioritize climate resiliency and sustainability in all social and infrastructure projects of his administration.

The UAE envoy has reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to the Philippines – one of its allies in Asia – to support the country's environmental and economic programs.

Alzaabi also told Marcos that they are looking forward to the Philippines becoming a member of the "Global Mangrove Alliance," noting that it will benefit the country, being prone to calamities and disasters.

Marcos said joining the alliance would be good for the Philippines, noting the government's efforts in preserving and restoring the mangroves.

"We have made great efforts to preserve and restore our mangrove ecosystem... the law in the Philippines is, you cannot touch mangroves at all, and because of that, the mangroves have grown back," Marcos said.

"In fact, they grow back so much that sometimes they are already beginning to block the rivers. So maybe there is much you can learn on the management of it because I think we have done as much as we can in terms of preservation," he added.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will be very pleased to participate in the Global Mangrove Alliance, Marcos said.

"But again, the preservation of the mangroves is a big issue. It is a very important point for the Philippines because of all the waterways that we have," he added.

—With Helen Flores



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# Marcos checks on Mayon evacuees

By HELEN FLORES

President Marcos flew to Albay yesterday to personally check on the condition of thousands of residents displaced by the ongoing eruption of Mayon Volcano and ordered authorities to prepare

*Aircraft problem delays BBM visit to S. Cotabato*  
See Page 2.

for aid, both food and non-food items, to last 90 days.

Marcos gave the directives during a situational briefing in Legazpi City after Science Secretary Renato Solidum III warned that Mayon's abnormal activities may last for

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Top photo shows a helicopter flying near the crater of the restive Mayon Volcano in Legazpi, Albay yesterday. Insets show President Marcos conducting an aerial inspection of the volcano before distributing relief aid to displaced residents together with Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian.

EDD GUMBAN





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## Marcos From Page 1

few months.

"I think our working numbers should be 90 days. So it'll better if it (eruption) ends earlier than anticipated rather than our assistance will fall short," the President said in mixed Filipino and English.

During the briefing, Solidum presented to Marcos possible scenarios for Mayon.

"Whatever scenario the volcano will follow, the length of the eruption will be in terms of months. So our *kababayans* may have to stay for several months, slightly less than two months to three months," the science secretary said.

Marcos noted that based on an earlier briefing, 30 percent of Albay's Quick Response Fund or QRF can only sustain assistance for 40 days with a budget of P30 million.

With 90 days as the working number, he said concerned authorities must determine immediately how much funding and support are needed.

He noted that Albay Gov. Edcel Greco Lagman already gave some numbers that would help in the recalculation.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian gave assurance that food packs for over 153,000 families are ready to last for 90 days.

So far, the department has distributed more than 38,000 food packs already, Gatchalian said.

Marcos, however, reiterated the government needs also to provide cash assistance for the evacuees.

The President also instructed the Department of Agriculture (DA), which he concurrently heads, to monitor affected livestock for possible diseases such African swine fever (ASF).

He also urged the DA regional office to immediately assess the eruption's damage to agricultural crops, especially rice, corn and coconut. "General figures are OK, but we need specifics. Once we are allowed to go around and assess the damage we have an idea," he said.

### Evacuees

From less than 14,000 persons the other day, the number of individuals displaced and affected by Mayon's continuing volcanic activity rose to 37,231 yesterday.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said the number represents a total of 9,571 families, all from the Bicol region.

Of the number, some 4,417 families or 15,502 individuals are seeking temporary shelter in at least 22 different evacuation centers.



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Relief goods are delivered to Mayon evacuees staying at the Sto. Domingo Central School in Sto. Domingo, Albay yesterday. EDD GUMBAN

The NDRRMC said a total of 18 cities and/or municipalities have been placed under a state of calamity, with six localities suspending classes.

So far, more than P33.6 million worth of assistance has been given to affected and displaced families or individuals in the form of food items, family food packs, water, sleeping kits and other basic needs.

Since the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) raised Alert Level 3 over Mayon Volcano last week, thousands of families have been evacuated from the six-kilometer permanent danger zone (PDZ), fearing a "hazardous eruption" possibly happening "within weeks or even days."

### UAE assistance

Last Tuesday, Marcos personally met Ambassador Mohamed Obaid Salem Alqataam Alzaabi in Malacañang to thank the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for its assistance to Filipinos affected by the ongoing Mayon eruption.

"Thank you very much. I cannot go further without thanking the UAE for the very timely assistance that you provided the victims of the explosion of our volcano," Marcos told Alzaabi.

Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos and Gatchalian received over 50 tons of humanitarian aid from UAE for affected residents.

The UAE government officials assured Marcos that they are more than willing to provide any assistance to the Philippines

and the Filipino people, not only during the country's trying times but also during good times. The President said the Philippines would soon reciprocate the UAE government's goodness to the Filipino people.

### Evacuation

Citing estimates, Abalos said over 40,000 residents may need to be evacuated if Alert Level 4 is raised over Mayon, where over 300 rockfall events within the past 24 hours have been recorded by Phivolcs.

He said national agencies and local government units are ready to respond to the ongoing volcanic unrest, including the evacuation of 40,000 people within 48 hours.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government secretary gave the assurance as a relatively high level of unrest has been observed with Mayon, with the presence of magma at the crater and lava flows.

The Phivolcs bulletin yesterday said there has been a very slow effusion of lava from the summit crater that emplaced lava flow and collapsed debris from the Mi-isi (south) and Bonga (southeastern) gullies within approximately a kilometer from the crater.

There were also seven dome-collapse pyroclastic density currents that lasted four minutes, as well as continuous moderate degassing from the summit crater, the bulletin said. - With Romina Cabrera, Ralph Edwin Villanueva, Michael Punongbayan, Delon Porcalla, Rudy Santos





# MARCOS VISITS MAYON EVACUEES; WORK PROGRAM SET AT SHELTERS

By Ma. April Mier-Manjares  
@MaAprilMierINQ

GUINOBATAN, ALBAY—A few days after villagers within the danger zone around Mayon Volcano were ordered to evacuate, President Marcos arrived here on Wednesday to check on their condition and personally hand out food packs.

But the families displaced by the volcano's renewed activity said they would prefer cash and livelihood assistance, saying their children needed food more nutritious than instant noodles, the usual grocery item found in the aid rations.

"The evacuees receive sufficient food [among the] relief goods but our children cannot survive with just noodles for breakfast every day. We really need cash [to buy food ourselves]," Rayson Mayor, 36, a resident of Mi-isi in Daraga town who was forced to flee and move to Barangay Anislag,

said in a phone interview on Wednesday.

At around 4 p.m., Mr. Marcos arrived in Albay together with United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Mohamed Obaid and went straight to the evacuation center at Guinobatan Community College.

The UAE has donated some 55 tons of relief goods, with packs containing Basmati, tea and flour coming from India; canned tuna from Thailand; dates from Saudi Arabia; cooking oil, pasta, sugar, milk, tomato paste, powdered milk and beans.

The President later proceeded to Albay Astrodome in Legazpi City for the launch of an emergency employment program for the evacuees under the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole).

Ma. Zenaida Campita, director of Dole's regional office in Bicol, said the agency had allocated about P50 million for the program.



AID ASSURED President Marcos visits Mayon evacuees at Mauraro in Guinobatan, Albay province, on Wednesday. He particularly ordered the setup of more water treatment machines for the families. —MARK ALVIC ESPLANA

Evacuees willing to work would be paid to keep the evacuation centers clean, particularly the kitchen and the toilets; to do some gardening and to

help camp managers in preparing food.

Under the program, there will be one representative per family who can work and earn P365 per day for 30 days. "Afterwards, even if they have already returned to their homes, we can still help them in their livelihood," Campita said.

### Common kitchen

In a speech at Albay Astrodome, the President said he would order the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to send 80 more water filtration machines for the evacuees, and the Department of Health to closely monitor their condition.

Norman Laurio, the director of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Bicol, said her office had asked other local governments for help to provide a wider variety of food for the evacuees, as well as set up "common kitchens so that the families could cook

their own meals."

Beneficiaries of the DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Barangay Sta. Cruz in Ligao City have also set up a "community pantry" at Basag Campsite where some Mayon evacuees are staying.

Jean Cambusa, 48, said she and 10 other 4Ps recipients in her village agreed to donate fruits and vegetables harvested from their own backyard, like jackfruit, papaya and *malunggay*, among others.

"I also want to help because I know how it feels to be in an evacuation center. [Once] there was a typhoon that hit us and we had no food and water inside the evacuation centers," Cambusa said.

### Store in evacuation centers

Hugo Buen, chief of the Tabaco City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, said some of the evacuated families continue to weave ab-

aca products and brought their *sari-sari* store items to sell inside the evacuation centers.

"Some of them asked for space in the evacuation center that will serve as a stockroom for their raw materials," Buen said.

According to Eugene Escobar of the Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office, most of the affected villagers were farmers, but the provincial and national government would later try to teach them other livelihood skills.

The province has a current stockpile of relief items that could meet the needs of the evacuees for 40 to 45 days, Escobar added.

As of Wednesday noon, 5,016 families or 17,94 persons were staying in 30 evacuation centers and private households in Ligao City, Tabaco City, Daraga, Camalig, Sto. Domingo, Malilipot and Guinobatan. —WITH A REPORT FROM MICHAEL B. JAUCIAN INQ



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## 7 volcanic quakes, 309 rockfall events recorded in Mayon

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Wednesday, June 14, said it recorded seven volcanic earthquakes and 309 rockfall events in Mayon the past 24 hours.

These are more than the previous 24-hour monitoring of Albay's restive volcano, which recorded one volcanic quake and 221 rockfall events.

"Thin ash from the rock- ▶ 5

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## 7 volcanic quakes, 309 rockfall events recorded in Mayon 1◀

falls and continuous moderate degassing from the summit crater produced steam-laden plumes that bent and crept downslope before drifting general east," Phivolcs said in a bulletin issued at 8 a.m. on Wednesday.

Furthermore, a very slow effusion of lava from the summit crater, emplacing lava flow and collapse debris on the Mi-isi and Bonga gullies, on the south and southeastern sides, respectively, within about a kilometer of the crater, was observed.

According to Phivolcs, seven four-minute-long dome-collapse pyroclastic density currents (PDCs) were detected via seismic signals as well as visually observed.

Likewise, fair crater glow, or "banaag," and incandescent rockfall shed from new fluidal lava at Mayon Volcano's summit were constantly observed.

### Parameters still indicate high-level unrest

Mayon Volcano is "currently in a relatively high level of unrest," due to magma in the crater.

It has been on alert level 3 since June 8, indicating a "hazardous eruption is possible within weeks or even days."

The evacuation of residents within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone has been recommended due to the risk of PDCs, lava flows, rockfalls, and other volcanic hazards.

Phivolcs warned the public to be

cautious of PDCs, lahars, and sediment-laden stream flows along channels draining the volcano edifice.

It pointed out that heavy rainfall could cause channel-confined lahars and sediment-laden stream flows on channels where PDC deposits were emplaced.

Likewise, it said ashfall events may "most likely" occur on the south side of the volcano, based on the current prevailing wind pattern.

Phivolcs advised civil aviation authorities to ask pilots to avoid flying close to the volcano because ash from sudden eruption may pose hazards to aircraft.

### LGUs ready for the worst

Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos said the local government units (LGUs) in the Mayon Volcano-affected areas are preparing for the "extreme scenario" even if it remains under alert level 3.

In an interview over CNN Philippines on Wednesday, June 14, Abalos said the LGUs can evacuate 40,000 people within two days once alert level 4 is raised in Mayon Volcano.

"Once na mag-alert level 4 ito, nag-usap kami ng mga governor (I talked to the governors), they could evacuate up to 40,000, sabi nila (they said), in a span of 48 hours. Magaling ang LGUs ng Albay (The LGUs of Albay are proficient), from the governor to the mayors,



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I've seen it myself," Abalos said.

### ₱33.6-M relief aid sent to evacuees

Amid Mayon Volcano's unrest, relief assistance from the national government, private organizations, and non-government organizations worth ₱33,640,219.14 had been delivered to evacuees in Albay, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said on Wednesday, June 14.

Out of this, a total of ₱9.2 million worth of assistance came from the OCD. The latest batch of relief items transported to Albay include tarpaulin rolls, N95 face masks, family food packs, hygiene kits, pelican cases, and a portable water filtration unit.

"We will continue to provide necessary support from the national government to the affected local government units. Our coordination with OCD regional offices is continuous as we closely monitor the situation," OCD Administrator Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said.

The bulk of assistance is composed of family food packs for the displaced residents amounting to ₱18.6 million. This was followed by hygiene kits worth ₱6.03 million, and sleeping kits worth ₱4.66 million.

The OCD will also provide 3,200 rice sacks amounting to ₱4 million for the affected communities, according to Nepomuceno, to ensure that the evacuees will have enough supply of food.

Data from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) showed that there are 9,571 families or 37,231 individuals from Bacacay, Camalig, Ligao, Daraga, Guinobatan, Malili-

pot, Sto. Domingo, and Tabaco who have been affected by Mayon Volcano's continuing unrest.

Of this, 4,417 families or 15,502 individuals were evacuated from their homes and staying in 22 evacuation centers.

"We have reminded our counterparts and the LGUs [local government units] to implement precautionary measures aggressively to ensure the safety of the residents. We also ask the residents to always follow authorities' warnings and advisories." Nepomuceno said.

### Assistance from Romualdez

Meanwhile, 869 families affected by Mayon Volcano in the town of Guinobatan and Ligao City in Albay are beneficiaries of ₱5,000 cash assistance each from House Speaker Martin Romualdez.

Albay Rep. Fernando Cabredo thanked Romualdez for the aid which came from the speaker's special fund.

"Ito ay special fund na inilagay ng ating speaker sa DSWD. Kausap ko din ang ating (DSWD-Region 5) Director Norman Laurio at sa lokal na pamahalaan ng Ligao, lalo na kay Mayor Nando Gonzales, kung kaya labis ang ating pasasalamat (This is a special fund given by our speaker to the DSWD. I also talked to Director Norman Laurio and the local government of Ligao, particularly Mayor Nando Gonzales, and we are very thankful)," Cabredo said.

Cabredo, who initiated the assistance, said that he initially asked for ₱2,000 cash assistance from Romualdez but it was raised to ₱5,000.

"Unang-una, kinuwento ko sa ating speaker ang tunay na kalagay-

an. Nalaman ko sa DSWD na wala ng problema sa pagkain. Pero sinabi ko sa speaker, maliban sa pagkain, mayroon pang pangangailangan ang ating mga evacuees. Katulad ng pamasaha, gastusin sa araw-araw, mga gamut, at pambili ng pagkain para sa kanilang mga alagang hayop. Wala na silang kabuhayan ngayon dahil nandito sila sa evacuation center. 'Yun ang sinabi ko sa speaker na kung puwede mabigyan sila ng financial assistance (I told the speaker the real situation. The DSWD told me there is no problem with the food. But I told the speaker, the evacuees also need money for their daily expenses. They do not have any livelihood because they are staying in the evacuation center. I asked the speaker if they could be given financial assistance)," Cabredo said.

A payout was held on Wednesday at Campsite Evacuation Center in Barangay Basag, Ligao City for evacuees from Purok 3 and Purok 4 in Barangay Baligang, this city, while affected families in Guinobatan will receive their cash assistance today, June 15.

Teresa Desacula, 29, an evacuee from Barangay Baligang, said that the cash assistance she received will be used to buy milk, diapers, and vitamins for her six-month-old son.

Desacula, a housewife with four children, said his family lives through farming at the slope of Mayon Volcano.

Myrna Bobis, 53, a person with disability (PWD) and an evacuee from Barangay Baligang, said she will use the money to purchase maintenance medicines. (With reports from Martin Sadongdong, Chito Chavez, and Niño Luces)



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# Palace declares June 28 regular holiday for Eid'l Adha

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

Malacañang has declared June 28, 2023, a regular holiday throughout the country in observance of Eid'l Adha, or the Feast of Sacrifice.

Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin signed Proclamation No. 258 by the authority of President Marcos on June 13.

Based on the proclamation, the Commission on Muslim Filipinos recommended the declaration of June 28 as a national holiday following the 1444 Hijrah Islamic Lunar Calendar.

Eid'l Adha is the second of two

Islamic holidays celebrated worldwide each year and is considered holier than Eid'l Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan.

The feast honors the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God's command. It also marks the culmination of the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca or the Hajj.

It is one of the greatest feasts of Islam, and Republic Act (RA) No. 9849 provides that it would be observed as a regular holiday.

Proclamations declaring national holidays for the observance of Eid'l Fitr and Eid'l Adha ▶ **5**

# Palace declares June 28 regular holiday for Eid'l Adha ◀

are issued after the approximate days of the Islamic holidays have been determined under the Islamic calendar or upon Islamic astronomical calculations.

The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos is the body that makes the recommendation based

on Saudi Arabia's highest religious body.

The Philippines has been observing Eid'l Adha as a national holiday for nine years. In 2002 RA 9177 declared Eid'l Adha only a regular holiday in the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).