

20 June 2023 Tuesday



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IN BRIEF

4 tarantulas seized on shipment to Seoul

CUSTOMS agents at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) have intercepted a shipment of four tarantulas bound for South Korea.

Personnel of the Customs X-ray Inspection Project (XIP) under lawyer Ma. Lourdes Mangaoang scanned the parcel at the Central Mail Exchange Center in Pasay City and detected suspicious images which turned out to be spiders.

“Through the intensified screening of XIP operatives, the parcel was tagged as suspiciously containing illegal goods based on the generated images,” the BI agents said.

The package was subsequently examined in coordination with agents from the Enforcement and Security Service - Environmental Protection and Compliance Division and Department of Environment and Natural Resources detailed in NAIA.

“As per examiners findings, it contains four heads of tarantulas in violation of Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act,” the BI said in a report.

Joel E. Zurbano



EDITORIAL

A breakthrough for the planet

THE new High Seas Treaty, set to be adopted by the United Nations today, Philippine time, contains landmark tools for the conservation and management of international waters.

It stipulates that environmental impact assessments must be completed before any new exploitation of marine resources in areas beyond national jurisdictions.

It also features provisions to allow for the equitable sharing of knowledge, technologies and benefits from marine genetic resources.

Experts are agreed that almost two-thirds of the planet's surface is ocean and the seas make up 95 percent of the Earth's total habitat by volume.

But, only 1 percent of the high seas has, up until now, been under any protection protocol and just 39 percent of the ocean falls under the national jurisdiction of individual countries.

After years of negotiations, Member States of the United Nations have agreed on the High Seas Treaty to protect oceans of the world that lie outside national borders, which cover round 69 percent of the world's oceans, ensuring the protection and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Interesting to note that the first international agreement to protect the world's oceans aims to create "international parks" in the high seas.

“ The new High Seas Treaty features provisions to allow for the equitable sharing of knowledge, technologies and benefits from marine genetic resources ”

The United Nations High Seas Treaty is a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Experts have said ocean ecosystems create half the oxygen humans breathe and limit global warming by absorbing much of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities.

Once adopted today, the UN treaty will go into force 120 days after 60 countries have

ratified it.

In March this year, the president of the final Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea aptly said "the ship has reached the shore."

Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo, Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations, lauded the conclusion of the negotiations.

"As an archipelagic state situated in the center of marine biodiversity, the Philippines places high importance in the BBNJ Agreement, which sets a framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; the sharing of benefits of marine genetic resources; and enhanced international cooperation," he said.

The High Seas Treaty, as the BBNJ (Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) is alternatively referred to, is a legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It provides a strong overall policy framework for the oceans, which to date have suffered from a siloed approach to ocean management and significant under-funding.

Lagdameo said: "This is a milestone in the global efforts to address the unprecedented pressures facing the world's oceans.

"The early ratification, entry into force, and effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement should be a priority."



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A spiritual 'solution' to plastic pollution

'When you have something and you waste it, it won't be there when you need it'

By Marge C. Enriquez
@Inq_Lifestyle

The Philippines is ranked as the world's third largest source of plastic trash in the oceans. The rising consumer demand, the sachet or *tingi* lifestyle and economic growth have fed the plastic pollution. To check the alarming situation, hotels have switched to biodegradable straws and glass bottles for water; some vendors have reverted to paper bags, and groceries encourage shoppers to bring their own bags or buy eco-bags. Recently, the new Extended Producer Responsibility law requires plastic packaging producers to pay the costs of plastic waste management.

But can these measures reduce plastic pollution in the country?

Since the crisis is a manifestation of materialism and gratification, the answer begins with the right mindset. "How can I live my life in a way that allows me to be respectful to the environment?" asked United Kingdom-based lecturer Manda

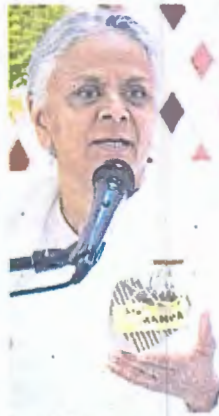
Patel. "Spiritual solution is the solution. This energy—this vibration—will serve us."

Patel visited the Philippines recently to speak at the World Environment Day program at the Brahma Kumaris Center for Spiritual Learning in Tagaytay. Brahma Kumaris is an international nondenominational, nongovernmental organization dedicated to personal growth and world change through meditation.

Inevitable

She said the usage of plastic is inevitable especially in a consumer-driven society where many affordable and user-friendly products are packaged in plastic. She admitted that her uniform white sari is made of polyester. This synthetic fabric is cheap, takes less time to iron and is ideal for travel, unlike cotton which is pricier and requires starching. Polyester is made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET), the same material used in bottles and containers.

"In the past 50 years, our lives have become intense. Why



Manda Patel —OJEVINGARA

do we have this perception that time is moving fast? We are trying to do so much in a short space of time. Technology and (scientific) advancements have sped up, such that we try to chase the pace. We then create stress and tension for ourselves. Then we seek to be com-

forted in a physical way instead of addressing the speed of time and technology," she said.

Although the individual runs after technology, success, money, power and position, one feels empty of peace, love, joy and the beauty of life, Patel noted. "Instead of going inside of ourselves, we look for things to make the body feel comfortable instead of seeking to comfort the heart, our emotional, physical and spiritual well-being," she said. "My inner world becomes a small place when I become self-centered."

Patel said one needs to be more aware of what Nature has been doing for us. Likewise one must be aware how thoughts, desires, expectations and actions affect the world.

"We have become too clever for our own good. Our cleverness manifests in the ego of who we are, what we are, and how much we have achieved. Ego can deceive and deplete us," she said.

Nature, including the body, is comprised of earth, water, fire, air and ether. These five elements have been big-hearted-

ly serving humanity by making us happy and safe. The lecturer pointed out that the generosity of nature and the seed of human existence stem from the Divine, the Supreme Being or God.

Benevolence

"Everything in Nature is infused with benevolence. Do I see that aspect and use Nature with respect?" she asked.

Patel quoted Mahatma Gandhi, leader of India's nonviolent independence movement, as saying, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."

"Our anger and ego make us abuse Nature. Wasting food creates an account with the environment," she said.

Patel recommended simplifying one's lifestyle. People should buy only what they use, never in excess. There is a natural law that works in any relationship, whether it is between people or the planet, that whatever energy we give out comes back to us.

"When you have something and you waste it, it won't be there when you need it. Phys-

ical resources will always run out if you use it carelessly," she said. On the other hand, when you use something for the benefit of people and the planet and when you give out positive vibrations, you will always be served by Nature.

Patel shared that she transitioned into a vegan diet to reduce environmental impact. Studies have shown that a plant-based diet has half the water consumption of a conventional meat diet.

Yet despite efforts to clean up any pollution, humanity can only do so much in saving the planet. Patel pointed out that an important practice is expressing gratitude to Nature and the Supreme by preparing food in peace.

"Since we eat to nourish the body and the soul, we source the food as naturally as possible. We prepare the food with love and remembrance of God. It is then offered in meditation to fill it with pure vibrations. There is this mindful consciousness that I'm feeding myself with those loving vibrations," she said. —CONTRIBUTOR INQ



Environment group urges gov't to expedite grant of incentives to EVs

By AARON RECUENCO

Environment group Pollution Control Association of the Philippines (PCAP) urged on Monday, June 19, the national government to speed up the grant of incentives mostly needed to mainstream electric vehicles.

PCAP Vice President for External Affairs Jeremiah Dwight Sebastian emphasized the benefits of aggressively pushing for the electric vehicles in the country, saying it would pave the way for less air pollution which translates to good public health.

"The benefits of electric vehicles mean having less air pollution which means less sick people, and less need to go to the hospital," said Sebastian.

"Electric vehicles are critical technology to push forward the 'decarbonization' effort since this will allow us to have a more flexible option in its energy source... this can also minimize what I believe [is] a major issue of pollution in highly urbanized [communities]," he added.

He explained that this is due to electric vehicles' zero tailpipe emis-

sions which reduce carbon emissions and carbon footprints as compared to gasoline-powered cars.

The Statista Research Department found that the Philippines' transport sector in 2021 emitted 31.54 million tons of carbon dioxide.

According to the American Lung Association, transitioning to electric vehicles will help save 110,000 lives, prevent 2.7 million childhood asthma attacks, and over \$1.7 trillion in global climate benefits gained in the United States alone.

The shift to electric vehicles is seen as one of the solutions that the government is implementing to decarbonize the Philippines and help weaken the effects of climate change.

Earlier this year, Executive Order No. 12 series of 2023 was issued to mainstream the usage of electric vehicles in the country along with the target of slashing the rate of carbon emissions caused by fueled-run vehicles.

Different types of electric vehicles received tax breaks except for the e-motorcycles which are still subject to

30 percent import duty, prompting several stakeholders in the electric vehicle industry to call for its revision.

"Only more affluent Filipinos — indeed a limited segment of the population — can afford to buy four-wheel vehicles and hence enjoy these incentives... This is why the government must make these tax incentives more inclusive," said Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship Secretary General Felix Jose Vitangcol.

Motorcycles move the majority of motorists in the country, recording more than 7.81 million registered motorcycles in 2022, based on the study by Statista Research Department.

The Department of Energy (DOE) aims to roll out 2,454,200 electric vehicles, consisting of cars, tricycles, motorcycles, and buses, and 65,000 charging stations nationwide by 2028.

The revision of the EO12 to include e-motorcycles is expected to accelerate the country's full shift to electric vehicles.



NO TO WASTE — Senator Cynthia Villar looks over the variety of recycled products during the opening of the Solid Waste Management Summit and Exhibit with the theme, 'No to Waste: Advancing Circular Economy to beat Plastic Pollution,' on Monday, June 19, 2023, held at Trinoma Mall, Quezon City. Sen. Villar shared insights on the importance of solid waste management. The exhibit also feature products and services that promote a circular economy. (Matk Balmores)



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Further Angat water cut eyed

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is eyeing the further reduction of water allocation for water concessionaires servicing the National Capital Region (NCR) and nearby areas from Angat Dam in Bulacan, citing the threat of El Niño.

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. explained that the agency has to prepare for the worst-case scenario and this includes ensuring that there would be ample water supply at the time span of the dry spell.

"Sa tingin po natin ay kailangan ng i-control na ang pagrerelease, para po

mapangalagaan ang pangangailangan natin sa susunod na taon. Kung patuloy po na pagbaba ay baka po mag-alangan (We think that we need to control the release of water in Angat Dam, since we need to consider the future)," said David.

He explained that keeping higher allocation for Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and its water concessionaires may lead to depletion of water supply from Angat Dam, especially that the water level in Angat Dam continues to decrease as there has been no rainfall in the past weeks to increase its water level. (Nicole Magmanlac)



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Highest dip in Angat water level recorded

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) yesterday recorded the highest daily drop in the water level of Angat Dam, from 186.55 meters to 186.15

meters or a decrease of at least 40 centimeters.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water at Angat Dam was only 6.15 meters higher than its minimum operating or critical level of 180 meters.

The water level of Angat Dam continued to

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go down as the rains last week failed to improve its level.

According to the state bureau, the water level of Angat Dam is still 3.63 meters away from reaching its rule curve elevation of 182.52 meters or the level of the dam to be able to fulfill its functions.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and irrigates 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga. The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has extended until June 30, 2023 the 52 cubic meters per second (cms) water allocation for Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water to prevent rotational water interruption for more than one million connections.

NWRB executive director Sevillo David Jr. said that based on the projection of PAGASA, another extension of the 52 cms water allocation for the two water concessionaires can no longer be accommodated.

Based on projections, Angat Dam will not recover before yearend, especially during El Niño.

On the other hand, the water level of San Roque Dam in Pangasinan also dropped by six centimeters, from 235.25 meters to 235.19 meters.

The water level of Magat Dam in Isabela also decreased by 13 centimeters, from 168.10 meters to 167.97 meters.

Meanwhile, the water level of Pantabangan Dam in Nueva Ecija also dropped by seven centimeters, from 183.37 meters to 183.30 meters.

No cloud seeding

Despite the receding water level, David said no cloud-seeding operations were yet scheduled to help raise the water elevation of Angat Dam.

He pointed out that if Angat Dam water elevation recedes below the minimum operating level of 180 meters, its water supply is prioritized

for Metro Manila consumption as per protocol while irrigation and power generation water allocations will be suspended.

Earlier, David explained that clouding-seeding for Angat Dam water resources is part of mitigating measures on the possible effects of El Niño.

He added that the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System will discuss with PAGASA and the Bureau of Water and Soil Management regarding the cloud-seeding operation schedules.

Inter-agency body

Moves to create an inter-agency body that will address the looming water crisis in the country have gained ground at the House of Representatives following the panel approval of a bill proposing it.

Before going on sine die adjournment on May 31, the House committee on public works and highways approved the bill, which seeks to establish the body which will be tasked to propose, formulate, draft and direct the

implementation of a comprehensive master plan to solve the water shortage.

The bill's author, Bulacan Rep. Lorna Silverio, said that over the past two decades, the country had experienced various water shortages, justifying the need to create the body.

"Given the vital importance of water to the everyday lives, leaders of the nation should be alarmed and should act today to avert a devastating water shortage," she noted.

Silverio added that even with the La Niña season, "when there is supposed to be an abundance of water supply, the nation, particularly the National Capital Region, experiences water shortages that adversely impact on communities and business operations."

The lawmaker said the onset of El Niño has worsened the situation, causing the traditional water sources to dry up and "limiting their capacity to supply the water needs of a continuously growing metropolis." — With Ramon Efren Lazaro, Sheila Crisostomo



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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business



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editorial

The forging of a new global financing pact

THE World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were both created at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, with complementary missions. The WB was established to help rebuild Europe and Japan after World War II. Its official name was the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. When it first began operations in 1946, it had 38 members. Today, most of the countries in the world are members. The IMF, on the other hand, was established to ensure the stability of the international monetary system.

Currently, the World Bank Group works with developing countries to reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity, while the IMF serves to stabilize the international monetary system and acts as a monitor of the world's currencies.

On Saturday, in an unusual move, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres criticized the World Bank and the IMF for the "bias and injustice built into the current international financial architecture." Pressing for major changes in the two agencies, the UN chief described their response to the Covid-19 pandemic as a "glaring failure" that left dozens of countries deeply indebted.

From the Associated Press: "Guterres' criticism, in a recent paper, isn't the first time he's called for overhauling global financial institutions. But it is his most in-depth analysis of their problems, cast in light of their response to the pandemic, which he called a 'stress test' for the organizations."

The AP report quoted Guterres as saying the IMF's rules unfairly favor wealthy nations. "During the pandemic, the wealthy Group of Seven nations, with a population of 772 million, received the equivalent of \$280 billion from the IMF while the least developed countries, with a population of 1.1 billion, were allocated just over \$8 billion. This was done according to the rules," Guterres said. This is "morally wrong".

He called for major reforms that would strengthen the representation of developing countries on the boards of the IMF and World Bank, help countries restructure debts, change IMF quotas, and revamp the use of IMF funds. He also called for scaling up financing for economic development and tackling the impact of climate change.

Maurice Kugler, a professor of public policy at George Mason University, told The Associated Press that the institutions' failure to help the neediest countries "reflects the persistence of a top-down approach in which the World Bank president is a US national appointed by the US president and the IMF managing director is a European Union national appointed by the European Commission."

Richard Gowan, the International Crisis Group's UN director, said there is a lot of frustration with the US and its European allies dominating decision-making, leaving African countries with only "a sliver of voting rights." Developing countries also complain that the bank's lending rules are weighted against them, he said.

Guterres issued his comments ahead of meetings called by French President Emmanuel Macron to address reforms of the multilateral development banks and other issues.



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A broader look at today's business

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On June 22 and 23, Macron will convene heads of state and government representatives of financial institutions, and representatives of the private sector and civil society in Paris to lay the foundation for a new system that will meet the world's shared challenges: fighting inequality, climate change and protecting biodiversity.

The Summit for New Global Financing Pact in Paris "will establish the principles for future reforms and pave the way towards a more balanced financial partnership between the North and South. It will set the stage for new agreements to relieve debt distress. It will also enable more countries to access the financing they need to invest in sustainable development, to better protect nature and cut emissions, as well as help protect populations from climate change wherever most needed."

The summit seeks to establish a new pact that offers a level playing field, shares the burden of climate change, and builds prosperity and security for every country. "The New Global Financing Pact will help define the principles and steps needed to reform the global financial system and to combat the high levels of debt that tie governments' hands when it comes to implement ambitious action to reduce the climate, economic and technological gaps that threaten to divide up our world."

Eight decades after the World Bank and IMF were established, the UN chief said an overhaul of the international financial system is overdue. There's an urgent need to correct what Guterres described as "morally wrong" rules. The challenge is to deliver substantial financing to facilitate the green transition, especially in developing countries, without taking away focus from fighting poverty.



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NOT YET AT RISK

GOV WANTS EVACUEES FROM AREAS OUTSIDE MAYON'S

PERMANENT DANGER ZONE TO GO HOME

By Ma. April Mier-Manjares
@MaAprilMierINQ

LEGAZPI CITY—Albay Gov. Edcel Greco Lagman on Monday asked officials of two towns to send home some 8,445 people, or about 44 percent of total evacuees, who were not living inside the 6-kilometer permanent danger zone of the restive Mayon Volcano.

At a press briefing, Lagman said he would recommend decampment for the 1,688 families (5,473 people) in Sto. Domingo and the 377 families (2,972 people) in Guinobatan if the two local mayors failed to justify

their decision to evacuate these residents living within the 7- to 8-km extended danger zone.

He said the decision should be based on science, as the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) only recommended evacuation of the residents inside the 6-km permanent danger zone.

"There is no science behind their actions; now we are having problems on how to sustain this response effort. So, I think we need to meet as soon as possible for them to justify their actions," Lagman said.

Sto. Domingo Mayor Josel-

ing Aguas Jr. said the residents volunteered to seek shelter at the evacuation centers due to fear of the previous eruptions when the Mayon's pyroclastic materials reached the 8-km extended danger zone.

"I haven't heard the governor's comment, but the residents willingly evacuated. You can't control fear. They directly went to evacuation centers using tricycles," Aguas said in an online chat message.

The town started evacuating residents from the villages of Ljdong, Fidel Surtida, Sta. Misericordia and San Fernando on June

12, after noticing the lava flow in Basud Gully of the volcano.

In Guinobatan, residents were evacuated on June 9 the same day that alert level 3 (intensified unrest) was raised over the volcano due to the threat of lahar, or lava flow, as they were living near the two big gullies of the volcano, said Joy Maravillas, head of the town's disaster risk reduction and management office.

Permanent relocation

"Our order of evacuation was solely for the welfare of the people in the said area," Maravillas said in a separate chat message.

As of Monday, 5,751 families (19,819 people) were evacuated from the danger zone in the towns of Daraga, Camalig, Guinobatan, Malilipot and Sto. Domingo; and the cities of Ligao and Tabaco, the Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office (Apsemo) said in a report.

As of June this year, Apsemo recorded 4,749 families, or 18,184 people, living inside the 6-km danger zone in 14 villages.

Lagman said that after the situation has normalized, they would call for a "housing summit," where all of the concerned national agencies would convene and talk about

the plans to permanently relocate the residents inside the permanent danger zone.

He said the budgeting of the national government should also include housing and compensating those who own lots in the said areas.

Paul Karson Alanis, resident volcanologist of Phivolcs Legazpi, said on Monday that the plan to convert the volcano's permanent danger zone into a natural park (not national park as earlier reported) could help reduce the risk posed to humans, but it requires political will to effectively implement it. INQ



Mayon Volcano unrest similar to 2014 eruption - Phivolcs chief

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The current state of unrest of Mayon Volcano in Albay is similar to its eruption in 2014, but a violent eruption still cannot be ruled out, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) director Teresito Bacolcol said yesterday.

"The state of unrest is similar to the 2014 eruption which was a quiet, effusive eruption. However, there could be changes anytime, and again this may progress in a violent eruption, but right now the unrest is the same as the 2014 eruption," Bacolcol said in a radio interview.

He said Alert Level 3 remains in effect at Mayon Volcano where there is very slow effusion of lava from the summit crater. Current activity of the volcano is expected to persist for three months.

"In 2014, the Mayon Volcano unrest lasted for three months. It started in August and finally ended in November. If we will base it here, it could probably take three months before the activity of Mayon stops," Bacolcol added.

He said the evacuees should remain at evacuation centers until the unrest subsides.

According to Bacolcol, Phivolcs recorded no volcanic earthquakes compared to the three volcanic earthquakes between June 17 and 18. However, he noted that Mayon Volcano is ripe for eruption.

"As early as three years before, Mayon Volcano erupted after its last eruption as late as 10 years, so based on the eruption activities of Mayon, it's been five years already since 2014, and is normal to erupt anew," he said, recalling that the most violent eruption of Mayon Volcano was in 1814 when the Cagsawa church was destroyed.

"That was the most eruptive... (but) right now, the current activity of Mayon is largely effusive eruption, then slow and quiet eruption, hopefully, it will not progress into violent activity," he noted.

According to Phivolcs, the upper slopes of the volcano have been inflated since February, adding that there should be increased vigilance against pyroclastic density currents, lahars and sediment-laden streamflows along channels draining the edifice.

628 injured, sick

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said 628 people have

been reported injured - including people who have fallen sick - more than two weeks after Mayon Volcano started showing signs of increased activity, forcing thousands to evacuate its extended permanent danger zone or PDZ.

Data show that most cases involve cough and colds followed by fever, acute respiratory infection, headache, HPN (home parenteral nutrition), dizziness, skin disease, abdominal pain, colds and acute gastroenteritis.

NDRRMC spokesman Raffy Alejandro IV said the number of injuries is based on the monitoring being done by the Department of Health (DOH), to which the team refers those who are ill.

Alejandro said this is not really a cause for concern because "if you look at the statistics, you say 18,000 evacuees, less than one percent? So nothing, there is no outbreak," he said.

Alejandro said such common illnesses are expected and to address these, the DOH is going around conducting medical missions and providing medicines or treatment.

Though the number may increase, he gave assurance that check-ups and medicines are being provided to the evacuees and the DOH is even planning on establishing clinics or isolation rooms for sick individuals per camp.

As of yesterday, there have been no reported deaths or missing persons.

The NDRRMC said a total of 10,146 families or 38,961 persons in the Bicol region have been affected so far by the continuing volcanic activity.

Of the number, 5,466 families or 18,892 persons are being served in 28 different evacuation centers where national and local government agencies are providing for their basic needs.

So far, more than P71.5 million worth of assistance including cash, food, water, sleeping kits and other essentials have been given to those affected.

Lava flow

For three days, fresh lava oozing from the summit crater of Mayon Volcano accumulated inside the major gullies, preventing lava fronts from advancing further downslope, Phivolcs reported yesterday.

"We could note that the 1,500-meter stretch lava flow and the 3,300-meter collapse debris did not

advance further downslope. This is due to the very slow lava movement and the continuing accumulation of these materials in these deep gullies," said Paul Alanis, Phivolcs resident volcanologist at the Lignon Hill Observatory in Legazpi City.

In its June 17 to 19 bulletin, Phivolcs reported lava flows remained at 1,500-meter stretch and collapse debris at 3,300 meters while being fed at the Mi-isi Gully in Daraga town and Bonga Gully in Legazpi City.

Mountain climbers that joined the retrieval operations of the passengers of the ill-fated Cessna plane that crashed over Mayon last February have it that the volcano's major gullies were varying from 50 to 100 meters deep and 100 to 200 meters wide.

Alanis said fresh lava continued to ooze out of Mayon's crater in more than a week. In the past 24 hours, Phivolcs recorded five dome-collapse pyroclastic density currents that lasted three minutes and 265 rockfall events.

Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office OIC Eugene Escobar said evacuees further rose to 5,813 families or 20,049 persons until noon yesterday as Mayon's level of unrest remained high.

Taal, Kanlaon

Bacolcol on Monday said sulfur dioxide emissions of Taal Volcano in Batangas and Kanlaon Volcano on Negros Island increased, indicating that the unrest of the two volcanoes persists.

In a radio interview, Bacolcol noted that sulfur dioxide emission of Taal Volcano reached 7,643 tons per day as of 5 a.m., higher than its previous sulfur dioxide flux of 5,024 tons per day.

He said at least 14 volcanic earthquakes were also recorded compared to the previous 22 volcanic earthquakes between June 17 and 18.

On the other hand, Bacolcol said that Kanlaon Volcano recorded at least 1,198 tonnes per day of sulfur dioxide emission.

"Usually, Kanlaon will emit very minimal sulfur dioxide, about 50 tons per day. The more than 1,000 tons per day is quite significant," he added.

Alert level 1 is currently in effect at Taal and Kanlaon volcanoes.

- With Michael Punongbayan, Cet Dematera



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Mayon unrest 'largely similar' to 2014 eruption – Phivolcs

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Mayon Volcano's current state is "largely similar" to its 2014 eruption based on the parameters observed over the previous week, said the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

"Low-rate effusive eruption of degassed lava has been transpiring

for the past week accompanied only by slight increases in volcanic SO₂ (sulfur dioxide) emission, seismic and ground deformation parameters," Phivolcs said in its volcanic activity report released on Sunday night, June 18.

"The very low mass eruption rate generates sluggish lava flows and intermittent collapse of the summit lava dome and ► 4



Mayon unrest 'largely similar' to 2014 eruption - Phivolcs 1

lava flow margins that feed frequent rockfall and occasional small-volume PDCs (pyroclastic density currents) within the permanent danger zone (PDZ)," Phivolcs said.

Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum told the Manila Bulletin in a text message on June 16 that the ongoing eruption at Mayon Volcano is a "non-explosive eruption characterized by gentle release of lava from the crater."

Given the similarities to the 2014 eruption, Phivolcs said that Mayon's current state may persist for a few months.

Mayon Volcano's alert level 3 status may also be maintained.

3 possible scenarios

Despite the similarities between Mayon Volcano's 2014 eruption and the current unrest, Phivolcs is not discounting three eruption scenarios, similar to the 2006, 2018, and 2000 events, if changes in monitored parameters occur.

In the first scenario, Phivolcs said that if apparent rates of extrusion increase, SO2 emission increases, seismic activity persists, and a cycle of inflation and deflation of the edifice occurs, a slow and sustained lava extrusion similar to the 2006 eruption may occur.

These activities could last for several months, and the alert level will be raised to 4.

In the second scenario, lava fountaining and lava flow with occasional explosions and PDCs within the six-kilometer danger zone, similar to the 2018 eruption, may occur if SO2 emissions increase significantly, seismic activity increases, and inflation of the entire edifice occurs, Phivolcs said.

The second scenario suggests that these activities could continue for a few months. The alert level may also be raised to 4.

In the third scenario, an explosive eruption with high-intensity lava fountaining, long lava flows, and PDCs on all sectors that could exceed the six-kilometer PDZ, similar to the 2000 eruption, may occur if SO2 rapidly escalates or drops, and volcanic earthquake activity and ground deformation occur.

Phivolcs said these activities in the third scenario may last several days to weeks, and the alert level will be raised to 5.

Sustained lava flow, PDCs, rockfall events

The "very slow" effusion of lava from the Mayon Volcano's summit

crater continued to feed lava flows and cause debris to collapse on the Mi-lsi and Bonga gullies on the south and southeast sides in the past 24 hours, according to Phivolcs' volcano bulletin issued at 8 a.m. on Monday, June 19.

"The lava flows have advanced to maximum lengths of 1,500 meters from the summit crater while collapse debris have deposited to 3,300 meters from the crater," it said.

Five dome-collapse pyroclastic density currents that lasted three minutes and 265 rockfall events were also recorded by the Mayon Volcano Network.

"Continuous moderate degassing from the summit crater produced steam-laden plumes that rose 600 meters before drifting to the general west," it added.

Alert level 3 stays

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

It is "currently in a relatively high level of unrest as magma is at the crater," Phivolcs pointed out.

The evacuation of residents within the six-kilometer PDZ 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 that ashfall events may "most likely" occur on the south side of the volcano, based on the current 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.

₱1.3-B aid prepared for 90-day response

Meanwhile, more than ₱1.3 billion worth of relief assistance has already been prepositioned by the national government to address the needs of residents affected by the restiveness of Mayon Volcano for 90 days, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) disclosed on Monday, June 19.

OCD Administrator Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said con-

cerned national government agencies and local government units (LGUs) have been in constant communication to coordinate their response protocols amid Mayon's unrest and ensure the well-being of the individuals affected in Albay.

Our preparation covers 90 days. If it ends earlier, then it would be better but the national government and local government should be prepared for a minimum of 90 days," Nepomuceno said in a public briefing.

The national government has prepositioned more than ₱1.3 billion worth of assistance. These include food, hygiene kits, and other necessities especially water," he added.

The 90-day preparation, according to Nepomuceno, was based on the previous experiences of the Albay local government when Mayon erupted in 2014 and 2018.

"Alert level 3 lasted for 90 days and it even reached level 4, so we need to prepare," the OCD official recalled.

At present, Mayon is on alert level 3 and at least 10,146 families or 38,961 individuals from Bacacay, Camalig, Ligao, Daraga, Guinobatan, Malilipot, Sto. Domingo, and Tabaco have been adversely affected by Mayon's ongoing volcanic activities.

Of the number, 5,466 families or 18,892 are staying in 28 evacuation centers.

"The possible challenging situation from level 3 is if Phivolcs raises it to level 4 or even level 5 as the number of people we have to assist in evacuation centers will nearly double," Nepomuceno said, explaining that if the alert level is raised further, those residing within the extended PDZ will also have to evacuate.

Illnesses

Meanwhile, 628 evacuees have required medical attention due to various illnesses they acquired, based on the OCD's monitoring from June 12 to 17.

The top 10 most common illnesses experienced by the evacuees include cough and colds, fever, acute respiratory infection, headache, hypertension, dizziness, skin disease, abdominal pain, colds, and acute gastroenteritis.

OCD spokesperson Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV said this should not be a cause for concern as the situation remains manageable.

"There's no outbreak [of diseases]," he said. "The Department of Health is conducting medical missions to distribute medicines, do checkups, and isolate those who have cold and fever."

Relocation

The national government is also mulling to establish a permanent relocation site for those who are residing within the six-km radius PDZ around Mayon Volcano.

"Let's just accept the fact that it is really too dangerous for the public to reside within the six-km permanent danger zone. We are looking at the possibility of relocating them because it's really prohibited to live there," Nepomuceno said.

He said they will determine what remedies will be given to residents, especially the farmers, since they will lose their source of livelihood if they get relocated.

"But if you ask us, living [within the PDZ] should no longer be allowed because lives are in constant danger. We understand that it's not easy to relocate but they should consider it," Nepomuceno noted. (With a report from Martin Sadongdong)



MAKESHIFT CLASS - Teachers and students of the Maninila Elementary School hold classes in a tent provided by the government at the Guinobatan Community College in Barangay Mauraro, Guinobatan, Albay. Five-hundred sixty-five families or 1,894 individuals were evacuated to the Guinobatan Community College after Phivolcs raised the Mayon Volcano alert level to three. (Nifio N. Lucas)