

03 March 2023, Friday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



REGIONS

## Sunken tanker's oil spill reaches shores

CITY OF CALAPAN—The oil spill caused by a sunken fuel tanker has spread and reached the shores of several towns in Oriental Mindoro, potentially posing damage on fish sanctuaries in at least 21 marine protected areas managed by local communities. The Philippine Coast Guard on Thursday reported a spill along the coastline of Pola town and "patches of emulsified oil" off Pinamalayan. —STORY BY THE INQUIRER STAFF

# Sunken tanker's fuel cargo leaks into sea

### At least 21 marine sanctuaries in waters off Mindoro threatened by spill as slick, 'patches of emulsified oil' reach coastal villages

By the Inquirer Staff  
@Team\_Inquirer

CITY OF CALAPAN—The oil spill caused by a sunken fuel tanker has spread and reached the shores of several towns in Oriental Mindoro, increasing the risk of damaging fish sanctuaries in at least 21 marine protected areas managed by local communities, reports from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the environment department showed on Thursday.

The vessel, MT Princess Empress, which was carrying 800,000 liters of fuel, was on its way to Iloilo province from Limay, Bataan, when engine trouble developed and began to sink on Tuesday morning.

In a report posted on social media, the PCG said it observed an oil spill along the shores of Barangay Buhay na Tubig in Pola town and "patches of emulsified oil"—or a mix of industrial fuel and oil—along the coastline of Pinamalayan town. These areas are 60 kilometers and 42 km, respectively, from the waters off Naujan town, where the vessel capsized early Tuesday and eventually sank on Wednesday.

After conducting water sampling in Naujan, Pola and Pinamalayan towns, the Environmental Management Bureau reported that 21 marine protected areas, located as far as 40 km from the eastern sec-



**WATER SAMPLING** In this handout photo from the Philippine Coast Guard and taken on March 2, a coast guard personnel collects water samples from an area hit by oil spill off the waters of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. The spill, a mix of industrial fuel and oil, came from a tanker that sank there on Tuesday.

tion of Balingawan Point, could be impacted by the oil spill.

"It has mapped potential risk areas including seagrass beds, mangroves and dispersion pathways for spawned fish larvae," the agency said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the PCG would install spill booms to shield the marine protected areas.

#### Continuous cleanup

Patrols by the Naujan Bantay Dagat (sea watch) also reported that the oil spill had reached the waters off Sibale Island in Romblon province, more than 62 km south of Naujan.

Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor, in a statement, said the oil spill had spread in

the vicinity of Sitio Tuhod in Barangay Herrera, Naujan.

The coverage area was estimated to be 6 km long and 4 km wide. The spill, Dolor said, has become a risk to Naujan's three fish sanctuaries, its public cemetery, Pitugo Beach, Papangkil Beach and the Montemayor Cove, as well as the seven fish sanctuaries and Polacay Beach in Pola town and four fish sanctuaries in Pinamalayan town.

Dolor had instructed the PCG in the province to deploy vessels along these coastlines to warn fishermen who might sail near the spillage area.

The PCG-owned tugboat Titan continued spraying oil dispersants in the area on Thursday, the agency said. The tanker's shipping company,

RDC Reield Marine Services Inc., has contracted Malayan Towage and Salvage Corp. to assess the level of oil spillage, it added.

#### Verde Island Passage

"Our primary concern is to determine the exact location of the sunken tanker, secure and retrieve its industrial fuel cargo and prevent the spread of contamination that will bring harm to residents, the local fishing industry and the biodiversity of the Verde Island Passage (VIP)," Dolor said.

The VIP is a resource-rich body of water spanning the provinces of Batangas, Marinduque, Romblon, Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro.

Dolor has been coordinating with Naujan Mayor Henry Joel Teves and Environment Undersecretary Marilou Ernl, as well as the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on what measures to take to contain the spill.

In coordination with the PCG and Philippine Air Force, the DENR's "Task Force Naujan Oil Spill" would conduct aerial surveillance in the coming days to further monitor the situation. The DENR has also tapped experts in the private sector to help in addressing the incident and creating a mid- to long-term risk management strategy for the affected area. —REPORTS FROM MADONNA T. VIOLA, DELFIN T. MALLARI JR., JANE BAUTISTA AND FRANCES MANGOSING INQ



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## Oriental Mindoro oil spill reaches shore in 3 towns

The shorelines in three towns in Oriental Mindoro have been affected by an oil spill from the motor tanker *MT Prince Empress* that sank in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said it is working double time to secure the shorelines of Naujan, Pola and Pinamalayan.

The PCG said it is implementing measures to contain the source of the oil spill and recover spilt oil aside from conducting spill assessment.

It said oil spill stranding was monitored along the shore in Barangay Bahay na Tubig in Pola.

As of yesterday afternoon, the oil spill had reached an area six kilometers long and four kilometers wide.

The oil tanker was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel when it encountered engine problem and drifted due to rough seas before it sank.

PCG spokesman Rear Admiral Armand Balilo said the agency is ready to deploy oil spill booms and dispersants, among other resources.

"We're still hoping *na sana ito lang ang langis na ginagamit ng barko, pero hindi tayo nagpapakakampante, sinusuri na po ito ng mga eksperto ng marine environmental protection command kasama ng Depart-*

ment of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)," Balilo said.

The DENR announced yesterday the creation of Task Force Naujan Oil Spill.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga designated DENR Undersecretary and chief of staff Marilou Emi, who served as corporate ground response coordinator when an oil spill occurred in Guimaras in 2006, as task force head.

The creation of the task force was agreed upon after an emergency meeting of the DENR with the PCG, Oriental Mindoro Gov. Bonz Dolor and Naujan Mayor Henry

Joel Teves.

Twenty-one locally managed marine protected areas are threatened by the oil spill, according to the DENR.

Fr. Edu Gariguez, convenor of the Protect the Verde Island Passage (VIP), raised concern that the oil spill would affect marine life in the area.

The 1.4 million-hectare VIP, which is called the "center of the center of marine shorefish biodiversity," is home to over 300 coral species, underwater rock canyons, reef formations and 60 percent of known shore fish species in the world. — Robertzon Ramirez, Evelyn Macairan



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THE EXHIBIT OF THE PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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# Oil spill reaches OrMin coast

By AARON RECUENCO

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has started securing the shorelines of at least four towns in Oriental Mindoro following the sinking of an oil tanker loaded with 880,000 liters of industrial oil in the sea of the province.

Traces of oil have been monitored in some coastal barangays of Naujan, Pola, and Pinamalayan and as of Thursday afternoon, March 2, these were also monitored in Barangay Aplaya in Bongabong which is more or less 35 nautical miles from where the MT Princess Empress sank.

The oil tanker, which was also carrying 20 people later rescued by passing ships, encountered engine trouble on Tuesday,

Feb. 28, causing it to be partially submerged off the waters of Naujan. It was fully submerged on March 1.

In a statement, the PCG said it is already coordinating with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to come up with strategic plan to secure at least 21 local marine protected areas in the Mindoro provinces and nearby areas.

"The instruction given to us by PCG Admiral (Artemio) Abu is for all personnel with expertise and all the available assets should be deployed in the area to address the situation," said Rear Admiral Armand Balilo, PCG spokesman.

Based on initial statement, the oil spill could reach a

maximum radius of 40 kilometers from where the oil tanker sank.

The PCG said their initial response was to contain the source of oil spill and recovery of spilled oil.

It said its personnel, along with those of other government agencies, have been manually and mechanically scooping spilled oil.

Absorbent pads were also deployed, along with manual deployment of oil spill boom and absorbent boom.

Balilo said experts from government and private companies have been meeting to come up with the best measures to address the problem. Some of these are salvaging the sunken oil tanker and siphoning the remaining oil to prevent it from spilling further.



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## DENR bumuo ng Task Force Naujan Oil Spill

**BUMUO** na ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR) ng Task Force Naujan Oil Spill kasunod ng emergency meeting nito sa Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Oriental Mindoro Governor Bonz Dolor, at kay Naujan Mayor Henry Joel Teves.

Itinalaga naman ni DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga si Undersecretary at Chief of Staff Marilou Erni bilang Task Force Commander.

Si Undersecretary Erni ay naging corporate ground response coordinator sa nangyaring Guimaras Oil Spill noong 2006.

Ang Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), partikular ang Marine Environmental Protection Command, ang lead agency sa response operations.

Nakapagsagawa na ang EMB ng water sampling sa tatlong munisipalidad, ang Naujan, Pola, at Pinalayan.

May 21 na locally-managed marine protected areas ang apektado ng oil spillage.

Kabilang sa mga poten-

tial risk area ay ang sea-grass beds, mangroves, at dispersion pathways para sa pangitugan ng isda o spawned fish larvae.

Nakikipag-ugnayan na ang DENR sa mga eksperto at sa mga Local Govern-

ment Unit upang makapaglatag na rin ng kongkretong hakbang o long-term risk management strategy para sa mga affected area at upang hindi na maulit ang naturang marine incident.

(RONALD BULA)



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# DENR creates TF Naujan Oil Spill

By CORY MARTINEZ  
& ZAIDA DELOS REYES

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has created Task Force Naujan Oil Spill to further assess the extent of the oil spillage caused by the sinking of MT Princess Empress in Oriental Mindoro.

The task force was created after an emergency meeting convened between the DENR, Philippine Coast Guard, Oriental Mindoro Governor Bonz Dolor, and Naujan Mayor Henry Joel Teves.

DENR Secretary Marla Antonia Yulo Loyzaga has designated Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Marilou Erni as Task Force Commander. Erni previously served as the corporate ground response coordinator during the Cumaras oil

spill in 2006.

Other members of the task force include Undersecretary Jonas Leonas, Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna, Assistant Secretary and concurrent Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) Director Gilbert Gonzales, Assistant Secretary and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Marcial Amaro Jr., Regional Executive Director Lormelyn Claudio, and representatives from the local government units: Provincial Environment and Natural Resources (PENR) Officer Alma Gilbe and City Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) Officer Rodiel Boyles.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), particularly

its Marine Environmental Protection Command, is the lead agency tasked with response operations in the affected area.

In its report, the PCG confirmed that the MT Princess Empress, which carries 800,000 liters of industrialized fuel oil, has submerged.

With known coordinates, the PCC will install spill booms to protect the locally-managed marine protected areas.

The Task Force, in cooperation with PCG and the Philippine Air Force, will conduct an aerial surveillance in the coming days to further assess the situation.

As of writing, the oil spill has reached an area six kilometers long and four kilometers wide.

The DENR-EMB conducted water sampling in Naujan, Pola, and Pinalmayan.



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## Barko lumubog sa Mindoro, kumalat na petrolyo

Kinumpirma ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) ang oil spill sa Oriental Mindoro mula sa isang tanker na lumubog sa karagatan na sakop ng bayan ng Naujan.

Ayon sa PCG, mula sa MT Primias Express ang itinatanggal ngayon na langis sa karagatan.

May kargang mabigat 800,000 na industrial fuel oil ang natirang tanker nang lumubog sa karagatan dahil sa aberya sa makina na nag-overheat.

Kumalat naman kaagad ang PCG at naglagay ng mga 'dispersant' sa karagatan para magapan ang pagkalat na lalo ng tumagas na langis mula sa barko.

Sinabi naman ng Hanny Dogat na nakakalat narin ang oil spill sa humigit-kumulang isang ektaryang katubigan.

Namataan din ang oil spill sa bahagi ng karagatan sa Bay Bay sa Tubig sa Pala, Oriental Mindoro. (Catherine Reyes)



Sinuyod ng Philippine Coast Guard ang karagatan sa Naujan, Oriental Mindoro kung saan namataan ang oil spill mula sa lumubog na barko. Kumita rin din ng sample ng tubig na nahaluan ng industrial fuel oil. (PCG)



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# Oil from sunken tanker swamps Mindoro coast

CLEANUP efforts were underway on the blackened coasts of Mindoro after spillage from a sunken oil tanker washed ashore. Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Loyzaga said as fears of economic and environmental harm grew.

The oil spill off Naujan town on Mindoro island reached the shores of the next four municipalities on the island's east coast around noon on Thursday and appeared to be flowing further south, Loyzaga said in a statement.

As it sailed into rough seas off Naujan on Tuesday, the Princess Empress sank

with its cargo of 800,000 liters (210,000 gallons) of industrial fuel oil.

Another vessel rescued the 20 crew members on board, but the Princess Empress leaked some of its cargo into the sea after initially spilling diesel fuel, which had been powering the vessel, the Philippine Coast Guard said.

Environment personnel "are now focusing on coastal cleanup" given the extent of the affected shoreline, Loyzaga said.

Divers will, meanwhile, assess the impact on reefs, mangroves and sea grasses, as "possible contamination might actually affect the viability of these systems."

She added: "We expect that these efforts will require personnel who will need to work over a period of time."

The spill had spread over 24 square kilometers (nine square miles) of water by Wednesday, the coast guard said previously.

It is not known how much diesel fuel and industrial fuel oil are in the water.

Provincial Gov. Humerlito Dolor said a search was still underway for the stricken tanker, estimated to be 460 meters (1,500 feet) under the sea.

"The coast guard made assurances to us that they are ready to siphon off the oil

once they identify [the location]," Dolor told local media.

"Unfortunately, after two aerial surveillance [flights], we still can't find the exact location of the ship." In the meantime, the coast guard has deployed oil spill booms to try to contain the material and sprayed chemicals to break down the oil.

Fishermen and tourism operators along the coast depend heavily on the waters for their livelihoods.

Oil has been spotted along a roughly 60-kilometer stretch of water between Naujan and Bongabong municipality, said

Ram Temena, disaster operations chief in the affected province of Oriental Mindoro.

"We have many fish sanctuaries along the coast," Temena said.

"It could have a huge impact due to the possibility that the oil could attach to the coral reefs, affecting the marine biodiversity." Bongabong municipal disaster officer Michael Fanoga said fishermen had complained of a "foul smell" about two kilometers offshore.

"If it spreads in the shoreline, our beaches will be destroyed as well as the remaining coral," Fanoga said.

AFP





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# Fuel from tanker blackens

## coasts

### SUNKEN TANKER'S LEAKING FUEL BLACKENS COAST

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**C**LEAN-UP efforts were under way on the blackened coasts of a central Philippine island Thursday after spillage from a sunken oil tanker washed ashore, the country's environment chief said, as fears of economic and environmental harm grew.

The oil spill off Naujan town on Mindoro island reached the shores of the next four municipalities on the island's east coast around noon Thursday, and appeared to be flowing further south, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Loyzaga said in a statement.

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"We have many fish sanctuaries along the coast," Temena said.

"It could have a huge impact due to the possibility that the oil could attach to the coral reefs, affecting the marine biodiversity," AFP



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**OIL SPILL AFTERMATH.** The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) confirmed that the oil spill in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, was mixed with industrial fuel oil. This after the MT Princess Empress sank with a load of approximately 800,000 liters of oil due to engine trouble. The MTUG Titan continues to apply dispersant to the water and in the shoreline assessment conducted by the PCG in Pinamalayan, 'patches of emulsified oil' were observed.



## Oil spill threatens Mindoro towns

BY VICTOR REYES  
and JED MACAPAGAL

THE Philippine Coast Guard yesterday said traces of industrial fuel oil mixed with diesel fuel coming from the ill-fated oil tanker that sank off Oriental Mindoro last Tuesday has spread to nearby towns, threatening marine ecosystem and the livelihood of local folks.

As of Wednesday night, the oil spill has been estimated at six kilometers long and four kilometers wide, according to the Department

of Environment and Natural Resources.

In a statement, the PCG said "there is already industrial fuel oil in the oil spill in the waters of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro," adding the oil spill has reached the shores of Buhay na Tubig in Pola town yesterday.

The ill-fated MT Princess Empress, transporting about 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil from Bataan to Iloilo, sank after encountering engine trouble due to overheating.

The PCG said teams from its

Marine Environment Protection Unit, local government units and other stakeholders have been ordered to proceed to the affected areas for a shoreline clean-up.

The PCG initially said the oil spill was mostly diesel fuel but the presence of industrial fuel oil in affected areas yesterday indicated the cargo hold of the vessel had broken.

"Based on the shoreline assessment conducted by the PCG in Pinamalayan (town), patches of emulsified oil were observed," the PCG said.

"The spilt oil has also reached the waters of Barangay Aplaya, Bongabong (town), Oriental Mindoro based on information from the Philippine Coast Guard Command Center today," the PCG added.

It said Barangay Aplaya is about 35 miles south from where the ill-fated MT Princess Express sank last Tuesday.

The PCG said it has received information from the volunteer group Bantay Dagat that the oil spill has also reached Sibale Island

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in Concepcion town, Romblon.

It said a tugboat commissioned by the vessel's owner, RDC Reield Marines Services, is continuing to

apply dispersants in the areas.

The PCG has prepared an action plan to address the problem, including the containment of the oil spill and recovery of the spilled oil.

The DENR warned that 21

locally managed marine protected areas can be potentially affected by the oil spill, adding it has mapped potential risk areas including seagrass beds, mangroves, and dispersion pathways for spawned

fish larvae.

The Environmental Management Bureau has tested waters in the municipalities of Naujan, Pola and Pinamalayan.

The DENR said a Task Force

Naujan Oil Spill has been created to immediately address the emergency situation and create a mid to long-term risk management strategy for the affected areas.

The PCG is set to install spill

booms to protect the locally-managed marine protected areas while the Philippine Air Force will conduct aerial surveillance in the coming days to further assess the situation.



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# Mindoro oil spill reaches nearby towns

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The PCG said that its response strategies for the recovery of some 80,000 liters of oil include manual and mechanical scooping and the deployment of absorbent pads.

For the containment, the PCG said it has initiated the manual deployment of absorbent booms.

The PCG said it has coordinated with Marine Environmental Protection Unit teams and other stakeholders, and the local government units concerned had been told to proceed to the shorelines

for the cleanup.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the oil spill may affect 21 marine protected areas.

"On a maximum 40-kilometer radius from five nautical miles east of the Balingawan port, 21 locally-managed marine protected areas could potentially be affected by the oil spill," the DENR said in a statement.

Oriental Mindoro Governor Humerlito "Bonz" Dolor on Thursday said he had talked to the operator of the *MT Princess Empress* and had received assurances they will be

responsible for any damage.

The DENR created Task Force Naujan Oil Spill after an emergency meeting between the department, the Philippine Coast Guard, Governor Dolor, and Naujan Mayor Henry Joel Teves.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga has designated Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Marilou Erni as the task force commander. Erni previously served as the corporate ground response coordinator during the Guimaras oil spill in 2006.

Other members of the task force

include Undersecretary Jonas Leonas, Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna, Assistant Secretary and concurrent Environmental Management Bureau Director Gilbert Gonzales, Assistant Secretary and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Marcial Amaro Jr., Regional Executive Director Lormelyn Claudio, and representatives from the local government units, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer Alan L. Valle and Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer Rodel Boyles.

@tribunephil\_naf



# Tanker oil spill in Oriental Mindoro spreads in 3 other coastline towns

BY RENE ACOSTA

**T**HE oil spill from the ill-fated tanker MT Princess Empress, which sank in the waters of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, on Tuesday, has already reached the waters of three other towns in the province.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) based on Thursday that aside from Naujan, oil slick has also been reported in some parts of the waters of Pola, Pinamalayan and Bongabong, all in Oriental Mindoro.

The Princess Empress drifted into the waters of Naujan where it completely sank on Wednesday after it developed engine trouble due to overheating. It was carrying at least 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil.

On Tuesday afternoon, the PCG reported that the diesel oil of the half-submerged tanker has begun leaking and has already affected a stretch of 6 kilometers of waters in Naujan as of Wednesday.

On Thursday, the oil slick has widened and has spread into the waters of Barangay Buhay na Tu-

big in Pola and Barangay Aplaya in Bongabong, which is 35 nautical miles away from where the tanker sank.

The PCG said in a statement that based on its shoreline assessment in the waters of Pinamalayan, "patches of emulsified oil" have been detected.

"According to Bantay Dagat members, it [the oil slick] has also spread into more or less a hectare of waters near the Sibale Island," PCG said.

The PCG confirmed that leaked industrial fuel oil has also been traced in the waters of Naujan

where a tugboat tapped by the owner of the sunken vessel continued to apply dispersant against the oil spill.

It said Marine Environmental Protection Unit (MEPU) teams, other stakeholders and the affected towns have been informed to proceed to the affected areas for shoreline cleanup.

The PCG said earlier that among its objectives were to secure the shorelines of Naujan, Pola and Pinamalayan as well as the marine protected areas, while recovering the spilled oil and containing its source.



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## Regional Updates

### Mindoro oil spill hits marine protected areas

AN oil spill from a tanker that sank near Oriental Mindoro province could endanger over 20 marine protected areas, according to the Philippines environmental agency.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said at least 21 locally-managed marine protected areas "can be potentially affected" by the spill from oil tanker *MT Princess Empress*, which had engine trouble Tuesday and had completely sunk by Wednesday.

The agency said the spill could have reached a maximum radius of 40 kilometers, at a point starting five nautical miles east of Balingawan Point in Naujan town in Oriental Mindoro.

It said the Biodiversity Management Bureau had mapped "potential risk areas including sea-grass beds, mangroves, and dispersion pathways for spawned fish larvae."

The sunken vessel, which carried 800,000 liters of industrial fuel, drifted towards Naujan due to strong waves.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) confirmed that the oil spill in the waters of Oriental Mindoro contained industrial fuel oil.

In a statement, the PCG said it had observed "patches of emulsified oil," which has spread near Sable Island waters.

It had also seen an oil spill "stranding along the shoreline" of a village in the town of Pola.

Oriental Mindoro is one of the five provinces surrounding the Verde Island Passage, recognized globally as one of the most diverse marine habitats.

Citing the provincial government's assessment, Oriental Mindoro Vice Governor Ejay L. Falcon said at least 16 "fish sanctuaries" are estimated to have been affected by the spill.

These protected sanctuaries are in the towns of Nauhan, Pola, and Pinalayanan, he

told *BusinessWorld* via Facebook Messenger chat on Wednesday.

The incident has already hit 16 coastal villages in the three towns, he added.

Mc Falcon said that based on a report as of Wednesday afternoon, the oil spill might have also spread to the towns of Balinguan and Bongabong.

Earlier in the day, Governor Humerilo "Bonz" A. Dolar said the oil spill had affected an area of about six by four kilometers.

The coverage of the spill was getting wider, he told ABS-CBN's *Teleradyo*.

The provincial government, with the help of various government agencies, is monitoring the oil spill incident," Mc Falcon said, adding that authorities have been pushing to contain the spill and ensure that its impact on coastal communities would not worsen. —

**Kyle Aristoniere T. Atienza**



# Finding the fountain of youth inside the Cavinti Cave

I was actually excited and anxious when I received the invitation from Cavinti Tourism Sites Operators Association (CTSOA) to join a group of vloggers and influencers for a four-day tour to explore the eco-adventure destinations of the municipality of Cavinti. According to the invitation, "the tour is a tourism advocacy campaign by CTSOA and the Municipality of Cavinti headed by its mayor, Arrantlee Arroyo, and the municipal tourism office."

The invitation included the list of attractions that the group will visit, and what caught my interest was the inclusion of Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex. I've been wanting to explore the Cavinti Cave Complex since it was discovered in 2011 but never got the chance. That was many years ago when I was young and active. I am now a 61-year old retiree, and I wasn't sure if I can still be able to keep up with a group of people half my age.

I have done fair share of caving in my younger years. I have explored the caves of Cagayan many times, especially Callao, Sierra, and the challenging San Carlos where I had to crawl on a less than a meter tunnel half filled with soft mud. I also did cave connection in Sagada, where I had to descend from the underground cemetery, pass through very narrow passages, swim on a small chest-deep lagoon, before exiting from the popular Sumaguing Cave. I have also tried caves in Tanay, in Siquijor and even in Bohol.

Caving is not for severely claustrophobic people. Narrow and very tight passages can be truly psychologically draining. I used to be claustrophobic, but when I discovered that caving allows you to dive into the unknown and explore a completely unfamiliar ecosystem, I got hooked. I enjoyed getting down and dirty, squeezing through narrow passages and crawling through muddy surfaces. But those were the days when I was still flexible, and weighed half less as I am today.

Cavinti Cave was discovered in 2011 by a local farmer collecting woods for charcoal. Upon discovery, the cave was explored by professional cavers, LGUs and DENR and they found many hidden chambers, secret passages, underground river and lagoons and waterfalls

inside the caves, making the complex the second largest in the Philippines next to Puerto Princesa Underground River.

The cave is located at the foot of Sierra Madre Mountains, and when it was opened to tourists in 2013, getting there from the Cavinti-Lumban road was already a challenge. But nowadays, the road leading to the cave complex is now all-paved except for the few hundred meters where one has to walk on muddy trail. The Cavinti Tourism Office in Pueblo El Salvador is where one must register, sign waiver and attend briefing, and after completing our requirements take a 30-minute drive to the cave complex.

From where our vehicles were parked, we took a 15-minute trek to the staging area, where we met our guide and received our helmets. While most

water. "That's the fountain of youth," our guide announced. "You can drink from it!" I was a bit skeptical but there's no harm in trying, so I scooped some water using my hands and drank.

It must have been the water from the fountain of youth that brought back the energy to continue the exploration of the succeeding chambers. Gone was the fear that I will not be able to keep up with the younger members. In fact, I started walking past them as I went ahead and crossed the chest-deep water to the "cathedral" chamber where a skylight coming from an opening at the top illuminates an altar-shaped crystal formation.



**SENIOR  
BYAHERO**  
JOSEPH BAUTISTA



ENJOYING THE WATERFALLS inside the cave.

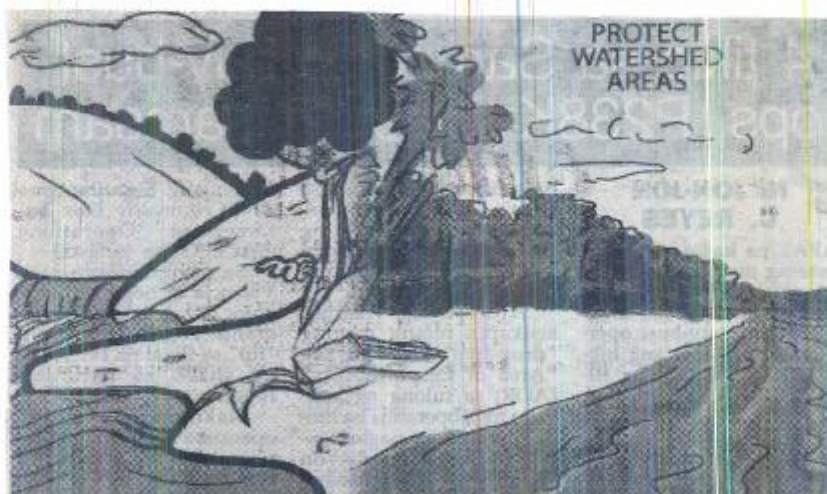
of the young influencers in the group made themselves busy taking selfies. I asked the guide how long the cave is, and he replied "kilometers long," then added that we are doing only the "basic" which we can cover in about two hours.

Our explorations started with several river crossings, then a forest trail that leads to the mouth of a cave. The entrance is hidden by ancient stalactites where one has to squeeze his body through a tunnel about two meters high but knee deep in water. The tunnel leads to the first chamber where one can see the huge pumpkin formation, hundreds of stalactites and stalagmites that already formed into columns, and one giant stalactite drifting with

Our guide led us to the last stop called "waterfalls" with a natural pool. "You can bathe in here," he pointed out. Without hesitation, I jumped into the pool and pushed my body under the waterfalls. Like a child, I started laughing out loud as I enjoyed the water flowing from this underground river.

Getting old is natural and that's going to happen to all of us. I choose to find my fountain, to enjoy the simple pleasures that life brings to make me feel young at whatever age.

*(The author is a senior who recently retired. His taste for adventure has not kept him from travelling, usually via not-so-usual routes.)*



## EDITORIAL

# Protecting watershed

THE continued loss and destruction of the remaining forests across the globe, including the Philippines, contributing to the worsening of the problem of climate change.

Fortunately, however, there are private establishments and pro-environment men and women, who are ready to help state authorities in addressing the problem.

This, they will do, by planting trees, such as narra, mahogany, yakal, agohoy, ipil, kamagong and fruit-bearing trees in watershed areas in various parts of the nation.

In impoverished Philippines, there are 412 principal water basins in 119 proclaimed watersheds. Of the number, 19 are considered major water basins.

And the largest proclaimed watershed in this nation of more than 110 million people is the 180,460-hectare Lake Lanao Watershed Reservation in Mindanao.

The Manila Water Company (Manila Water) has planted and nurtured over 1.4 million trees under its ambitious "Watershed Protection and Management Program."

Since the launching of the program in 2006, Manila Water has partnered with the DENR, MWSS, various LGUs and indigenous people living in watershed communities.

Its water protection efforts focus on the Ipo Watershed, Norzagaray, Bulacan; La Mesa Watershed, Quezon City; Upper Marikina Watershed, Marikina City; and General Nakar Watershed in Quezon.

Like Manila Water, we believe that launching of the multi-pronged "Watershed Protection and Management Program" will go a long way in addressing climate change.

It's a move that deserves the all-out support of the Filipino people, including the ordinary citizens.





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
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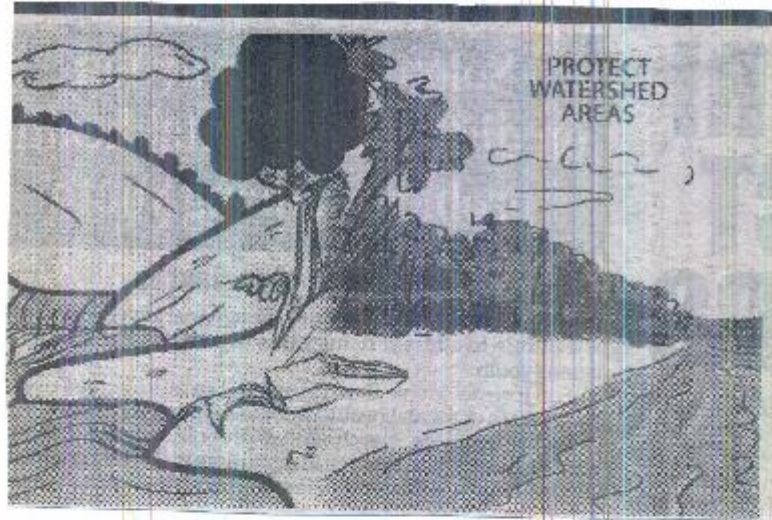
EDITORIAL

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# 'Worrisome' mining official

## BIZ BUZZ



It's early days, but there are already tough questions being asked in the mining industry about the inner workings of the current leadership of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

In particular, some mining firms have raised a collective eyebrow over the naming of one particular official as officer in charge (OIC) of one of the department's key bureau-level units.

This OIC replaced another official who also served as OIC of the bureau.

The problem, some mining firms told Biz Buzz, is that this new OIC actually has several cases pending before the Office of the Ombudsman that Environment Secretary **Toni Yu-lo-Loyzaga** may not have been made aware of before she assigned him to this sensitive post.

More alarmingly, this OIC has also been accused of violating several environmental laws. We hear this is the very same reason why former Environment Secretary **Roy Cimatu** relieved him of his responsibilities at the regional level some years back.

Those issues are in the past. But in the present, the concerns raised against this OIC are slightly different. Some players believe he is favoring a Chinese-owned min-

ing firm with nickel ore mining activities in Zambales—nickel ore that is exported to China.

This Chinese-owned firm is operating using the mining rights of another firm which claims it has yet to be paid the total sum of P1 billion for those rights. More importantly, the Chinese-owned firm was previously accused of having operated without an environmental clearance (transfer of which from the previous owner of the mining rights is prohibited by law).

Just last January, the Philippine Coast Guard stopped a vessel from loading nickel ore consigned by the Chinese-owned firm for exporting the shipment to China. The Bureau of Customs also issued a cease and desist order because the export did not have the required permits and proper documentation.

In any case, with this OIC back in power in this key DENR bureau, the previous owners of the Chinese-owned firm's mining rights now fear the worst.

So the big question now is will Environment Secretary Loyzaga move to rectify this situation? Or will this OIC stay in place as some mining firms fear? *Abangan!* —**DAXIM L. LUCAS**

### Ikea warns Filipinos vs scammers

The mushrooming of fraudulent sites and sellers claiming to be peddling genuine Ikea products has prompted the Swedish homeware and furni-

ture giant to go on the offensive against scammers preying on unsuspecting buyers.

Ikea Philippines, for example, has sought the help of the cybercrime unit of the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation to inform the public about these fake online stores and the legal actions that they can take.

As of March 1, Ikea Philippines has received some 718 reports of scams from its customers and so far, 64 scam websites have been reported by customers.

Ikea Philippines received its first report of a scam on June 6, 2022. It said a customer saw an ad on Facebook with the Ikea name and trademark, placed an order through the fraudulent website but the order was never delivered.

Ikea Philippines estimates unsuspecting Filipino customers have lost a combined P1 million to these fraudulent websites illegally using the name and trademark of the popular Swedish brand.

Buyers are thus advised to be vigilant and transact only through Ikea's official sites and subscribe to the official Ikea digital and social media channels. —**TINA ARCEO-DUMLAO INQ**



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## Carbon dioxide emissions hit record high in 2022

**NEW YORK:** Communities around the world emitted more carbon dioxide in 2022 than in any other year on records dating to 1900, a result of air travel rebounding from the pandemic and more cities turning to coal as a low-cost source of power.

Emissions of the climate-warming gas that were caused by energy production grew 0.9 percent to reach 36.8 gigatons in 2022, the International Energy Agency (IEA) reported Thursday. (The mass of one gigaton is equivalent to about 10,000 fully loaded aircraft carriers, according to NASA.)

Carbon dioxide is released when fossil fuels such as oil, coal or natural gas are burned

► EmissionsA8

### ■ EMISSIONS FROM A1

## Carbon

power cars, planes, homes, and factories.

When the gas enters the atmosphere, it traps heat and contributes to the warming of the climate.

Extreme weather events intensified last year's carbon dioxide emissions: Droughts reduced the amount of water available for hydropower, which increased the need to burn fossil fuels. And heat waves drove up the demand for electricity.

Thursday's report was described as disconcerting by climate scientists, who warn that energy users around the world must cut emissions dramatically to slow the dire consequences of global warming.

"Any emissions growth — even 1 percent — is a failure," said Rob Jackson, a professor of earth system science at Stanford University and chairman of the Global Carbon Project, an international group. "We can't afford stasis. It's cuts or chaos for the planet. Any year with higher coal emissions is a bad year for our health and for the Earth."

Carbon dioxide emissions from

coal grew 1.6 percent last year. Many communities, primarily in Asia, switched from natural gas to coal to avoid high natural gas prices that were worsened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the IEA said.

And as global airline traffic increased, carbon dioxide emissions from burning oil grew 2.5 percent, with about half the surge resulting from the aviation sector.

Global emissions have grown in most years since 1900 and have accelerated over time, according to data from IEA.

One exception was the pandemic year of 2020, when travel all but came to a standstill.

Last year's level of emissions, though a record high, was nevertheless lower than experts had expected.

Increased deployment of renewable energy, electric vehicles and heat pumps together helped prevent an additional 350 megatons of carbon dioxide emissions, the IEA said.

Strict pandemic measures and weak economic growth in China also curtailed production, helping to limit overall global emissions.

And in Europe, the IEA said, electricity generation from wind and solar power exceeded that of gas or nuclear for the first time. **AP**



## NEWS BITS

### Town implements 'No Plastic Bag Days'

TACLOBAN CITY – The municipality of Atangalang in Leyte province will implement "No Plastic Bag Days" every Tuesday and Friday as part of the municipal ordinance regulating the use of plastic bags in commercial establishments. The ordinance prohibits any person or establishment from using plastic bags as packaging materials for dry goods. It also prohibits the use of plastic bags as a secondary packaging material for wet goods. In the first six months of its implementation, No Plastic Bag Day was imposed every Tuesday, adding a day every six months. It is set to be fully implemented by September 2025 when single-use plastic bags will no longer be allowed to be used. The ordinance imposes a P500 to P2,500 fine, including the revocation of business permits for business establishments. In a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) last year, global plastics consumption will rise from 460 million tons (MT) in 2019 to 1,231 MT in 2050 in the absence of bold new policies. Sen. Loren Legarda filed a bill last year for the regulation and management of single-use plastics by providing penalties, levies, and incentives for industries and consumers. (Marie Tonette Marticio)



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## Asoge

### MANGKOKOLUM

[Kulamnista.blogspot.com](http://Kulamnista.blogspot.com)



Dong  
delos  
Reyes

**NAGMULA** pa sa Paracale, Camarines Norte ang bumili ng ilang pirasong kagamitan para sa kanyang mga tauhan—hindi aakalain na paldong pera ang dala niya sa lukbutan, pulos kaliwaan ang bilihan ng pambomba ng hangin at ilang kilometrong haba ng tubo na dadaluyan ng hangin na pantustos-hinanga ng ilang minero na nagdudukal ng mga tipak ng bato't lupa... na paghahanguan ng madadalisay na ginto.

Asoge pa rin daw ang gamit nila para kumapit ang hilaw na metal... apoy mula suplete ang pandalisay... kumukinang na mumunting tipak ng abo ang hihiwalay, iiwan ng matinding irit ng liyab... at sasalin naman sa hangin ang asoge.

Paulit-ulit na sasalin sa hangin ang hindi matuos na bulto ng asoge sa bawat pagdadalisay ng ginto.

Malalanghap, sasalin sa baga, puso'taagosa sa dugo'tlalagak hangang sa utak... unti-unting mamuminsala. Sinaunang kasabihan: "Kangino ba pakikita ang ginto kundi sa sintu-sinto?"

Paulit-ulit na magsasalaya ng ginto sa Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas ang nakausap na namumuhunan sa minahan sa loob ng bakuran.

Ayon nga sa mga ulat, small scale mining accounts for 80% of gold extraction in the Philippines.

Hindi pa naman siguro namimigat sa asoge ang papawirin sa Paracale, Sibuyan sa Romblon o kahit sa Diwalwal... wala pa marahil kritikal na antas upang sumulpot ang mga kakatwang sakit mula asoge, halimbawa'y mga dispalinghadong mukha, kahila-hilakbot na kakulangan sa mga bahagi ng katawan ng mga isinisilang na sanggol o mga pinsala sa utak at dugo... ganoon ang hatid na panganib ng asoge.

Siguro'y ito ang nakaugnay na pagsablay ng mga pagsisiwalat, pakikipagtalastasan at mga paglalakbay tuwing tila paurong o pabagsak ang manlalakbay na asoge—planet is a Greek word for 'wanderer'—sa kaitaasan... Mercury goes on retrograde or falling motion 3-4 times yearly.

Nais mapatunayan ang sinasabi noon na kapag ipinahid daw ang

asoge sa talaripakan ng patay, babangon ito't manghahabol ng tao. Para mapatunayan kung totoo nga ang ganoon, sinubukan sa isang lamayan... sabi nga, sapiens nihil affirmat quod non probat... pero walang nangyaring makahagalpak-sikmurang hulakhakan, himala o habulan... sa mga napanood na lumang pelikula nina Dolphy, Par-chito at Chiquito nangyayari ang kalmot-kiliti ng asoge sa talaripakan ng bangkay... sa pelikula lang.

Samantala, nakaamba ang Minamata disease at iba pang kahilahilakbot na sakit mula asoge... pero malaking kabutayan ang ginto.

Pulos digital thermometers and blood pressure monitors ang ginamit sa 'kin nang ako'y maospital... ah, a 2008 Department of Health directive calls for the phase out of mercury-containing devices by September 2010...

Nakaranggap kamakailan ng ulat... Omron Healthcare Group, represented here by Collins International Trading Corporation, "was the first to introduce manual and digital blood pressure monitors into the healthcare market and offers innovative products and medical devices for use in sites ranging from hospitals to the home..."

Pero mas matindi pa rin ang halina ng ginto.



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### NEWS BRIEF

#### EcoWaste: 2 klase ng pampaputi delikado sa mercury

Nagbabala ang EcoWaste Coalition sa patuloy na pagbebenta ng dalawang brand ng whitening cream na mataas ang antas ng mercury na target umano ang mga Pinay na nais pumuti ang balat.

Tinukoy ng grupo ang Goree Beauty Cream na gawa sa

Pakistan at ang 88 Total White Underarm mula sa Thailand na tinawag nitong "toxic duo".

May mga nagbebenta pa umano ng mga naturang brand ng whitening cream sa kabila ng ipinagbawal na ito ng Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"This illegal cosme-

tics are sold with impunity offline and online, as if they are legal to sell and safe to use," pahayag ni EcoWaste coalition national coordinator Aileen Lucero.

Nanawagan ang grupo sa mga awtoridad na umaksoy laban sa pagbebenta ng "toxic duo" at iba pang kontaminadong cosmetic products na mapangasib sa kababaihan at kabataan dahil sa mercury poisoning. **(Dolly Cabreja)**



### Public Notice



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
Community Environment and Natural Resources Office

#### LEASE OF PUBLIC LANDS

Notice is hereby given that the DENR-CENRO at Bangkal, Davao City, will accept sealed or written bids not later than ten o'clock (10:00) A.M. on March 24, 2023, for the lease for industrial purposes of the tract of land herein below described:

Location	:	Panscan, Davao City
Description	:	Lot Mic-11-001240-D
Area	:	7,567 square meters
Appraised Value of Land	:	Php 8,300.00 per square meter or Php 62,806,100.00 for the whole tract
Existing Improvements	:	No Improvements
Applicant	:	NEW DAVAO OIL MILL, INC. Rep. by: Richmond L. Lopez MLA-112402(XI-DC) 20

The right to lease the land will be awarded to the person offering the highest annual rental, which shall not be less than three per centum (3%) of the value of the land plus one per centum (1%) of the value of the existing improvements. In order that a person may be entitled to participate in the bidding, he must be a qualified public land applicant, and must, before the commencement of the same, make a deposit equivalent to at least three (3) month's rental. Only deposit in cash, money order, treasury warrant, certified check, cashier's check or manager's check can be accepted. A person bidding in representation of another may do so under a duly executed Special Power of Attorney. During the bidding, the bidder has to make an additional deposit every time his bid is raised to complete the three (3) month's rental, otherwise, such bid as raised shall not be accepted. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids.

The successful bidder if other than the applicant must reimburse the latter of the expenses for the publication of the notice of auction and the survey of the land.

Davao City, Philippines, February 1, 2023.

JOVY C. HOFILEÑA  
OIC-CENRO Officer

Km. 7, SPED Road, Bangkal, Davao City  
Email Add: cenrodavao@denr.gov.ph Telefax No. (082) 228-2657



Public Notice



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
Community Environment and Natural Resources Office

**PAGPAPAUPA NG LUPANG PUBLIKO**

Ipagbibigay alam sa media na ang Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, Bangkal, Davao City ay tatanggap ng selgado o nakasulat na alok sa ikalimang 10:00 ng umaga sa Ika 24 ng Marso 2023, para paupahan ang isang suklat na lupang publiko na inilarawan sa itaba nito:

Lugar	:	Km. 14, Sarangay Panacan, Davao City
Deskripsyon	:	Lot Mls-1-001240-D
Sukat	:	7,567 metro kwadrado
Tasehan ng Lupa	:	Php 8,300.00 kada metro kwadrado o kabuuang Php 62,906,100.00
Halaga ng Nakatayang Proyekto	:	0
Aplikante	:	NEW DAVAO OIL MLL, INC. Rep. by: Richmond L. Lopez MLA-112-02(XI-DC) 20

Ang karapatan na upahan ang nasabing lupa ay ibibigay sa tao o partido na makipagbibigay ng pinakamataas na upa sa isang taon na hindi bababa sa tatlong (3%) porsyento sa halaga ng lupa at isang (1%) porsyento sa halaga ng itatayang estruktura. Upang ang isang tao ay makakasama sa isasagawang subasta, kailangang siya ay karapat-dapat na aplikante at kailangang bigo magsumula ang subasta ay naka-deposito siya ng halagang katumbas ng tatlong buwang upa. Ang deposito ay kailangang salaping papel, money order, cashier's o manager's check ang siya lamang halagagapin. Ang isang tao na sumali sa subasta na nagrepresenta ng ibang tao ay makakasaal lamang kung mayroon siyang pahintulot na ibinigay sa pamamagitan ng kaukulang pahintulot na nilagdaan ng Notaryo Publiko. Sa panahon ng subasta, ang taong sumali ay magkaroon ng dagdag na deposito kapag ang kanyang alok ay itatasa para makumpleto ang kabuuang tatlong buwang upa. Ang karapatang tumanggi o tanggihan ang anumang alok o sa lehat ng alok ay palaging nakalaan para sa pamamahalaan.

Ang magwawagi sa alok na ito kung hindi siya ang aplikante ay kinakailangang tumambasan ang kabayarang nagugol sa pagpapalathala ng panawagang ito sa pagpasukat ng lupa.

Lungsod ng Davao, Pilipinas, ka 01 ng Pebrero, 2023.

JOVY C. HOFLEÑA  
OIC CENR Officer

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