

10 March 2023 Friday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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## Japan, US to send experts on oil spill removal operations

By AARON RECUENCO

The Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) has committed assistance to the Philippine government in containing and cleaning the oil spill off the waters of Mindoro Island.

In a statement, the Philippine Coast

Guard said personnel from the JCG are expected to be deployed in the country to assist in the ongoing oil spill response operations, particularly in Naujan Oriental Mindoro.

"According to Ambassador of Japan in the Philippines Kazuhiko Koshikawa, Japan will send a **▶10**

## Japan, US to send experts on oil spill removal operations 1◀

disaster relief expert team on oil removal and control to augment the country's manpower and assets," the statement read.

Aside from Japan, the United States Coast Guard has already informed the Philippine government that it will also assist in the same operation.

The oil spill occurred after the MT Princess Empress sank off the waters of Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28. It was carrying more than 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil.

The oil spill has already affected the coastal areas of at least eight towns of Oriental Mindoro, while oil slicks were monitored in nearby areas. The oil spill also threatens to more tourist spots in neighboring

areas.

Discussions are still ongoing to contain the spread of the oil spill, including mapping out of strategies on what to do with the oil tanker.

In a statement, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the location of the vessel was already located through the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) BRP Hydrographer Ventura.

Based on the DENR data, the vessel was located about northeast of Pola, Oriental Mindoro but it is "believed to have moved southeast from its last known position where it completely submerged."

The site is about 1,200 feet or approximately 400 meters below

sea level.

### Cash-for-work

On Wednesday, March 8, the PCG started meeting with the provincial government of Oriental Mindoro to deploy as many people to help in the oil spill clean-up drive.

During the meeting, it was agreed that the government will hire one person per family in all affected coastal areas under the "cash-for-work" program.

"There will also be a massive and simultaneous shoreline clean-up on Friday, March 10," the PCG said in a statement released on Thursday.

For other missions, BRP Bagacay (MRRV-4410) applied 1,200 liters of oil dispersant in the waters off Naujan.

Meanwhile, shoreline clean-up teams, LGU representatives, and volunteers collected several sacks of oiled debris in Pola.



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## Oil spill impact 'for decades'; US, S. Korea boost aid

**By Rey E. Requejo and  
Macon Ramos-Araneta**

THE damage from the oil spill of a sunken tanker in Oriental Mindoro is "extensive" and will be felt for decades,

the environmental group Oceana Philippines warned Thursday.

This developed as the United States and South Korea offered to send more aid and Japan sent a team of oil removal and control experts that would help in the ongoing cleanup that President Ferdinand

Marcos Jr. said would take the government about four months to clean up.

That timetable, however, is "unrealistic" and about two months short at least, said lawyer Rose-Liza Eisma-Osorio, legal and policy director of Oceana Philippines.

"I think the realistic (timetable) would

be 6 months to a year," Osorio told ANC's "Headstart," adding that mangroves, seagrasses, and corals in the area "will take years to recover" from the tragedy.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is planning

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### Oil...

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to seek the help of the participants in the 2023 Balikatan military exercises for the cleanup drives in areas affected by the oil spill, the Presidential Communications Office said.

Environment Secretary Antonia Loyzaga, in a meeting with President Marcos on Wednesday, said her agency would work with the US Embassy "to explore the possibility of deploying the participants of the joint military drills," as part of efforts for cleanup and reduction of the impact of the oil spill incident.

Loyzaga added that the DENR has coordinated with the provincial local government units, the sunken vessel's owner, and the Department of Social

Welfare and Development for potential additional sources of funds for the cash-for-work program that will be given to affected residents.

Thousands of workers displaced by the oil spill will be given temporary jobs under the emergency employment program of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), with over P100 million earmarked for the cash-for-work task.

"Around 10,000 individuals will be expected as beneficiaries," Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma said in a phone interview on Thursday with the Philippine News Agency, adding DOLE expected to come up with the final list of beneficiaries soon.

Laguesma said ambulant and market stall fish vendors and employees of beach resorts will also be given assistance.

The humanitarian and social action arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) will also send aid to residents affected by the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro.

Calapan, Oriental Mindoro's Diocesan Social Action Center (DSAC) director Fr. Edwin Gariguez said the NASSA/Caritas Philippines would extend assistance to 250 families.

The Lipa Archdiocesan Social Action Commission (LASAC) and the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED) will also provide food items and emergency assistance.

Meanwhile, the oil slick has reached as far south as Cuyo Island in Palawan province, a TV Patrol report said last night, apart from affecting beaches in Mindoro and Antique, and threatening to reach tourist gem Boracay Island.

The motor tanker Princess Empress, which was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil, sank near the Verde Island Passage off Mindoro—one of the most biodiverse marine habitats on the planet.

"With this tragedy that has happened, the damage that it will cost to this ecologically sensitive area would be felt for decades," Eisma-Osorio stressed.

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar filed Senate Resolution No. 537 on Thursday to investigate the oil spill from the sunken tanker that she said "has been causing massive damage to the marine ecosystem and biodiversity, and even threatening the world-renowned Boracay Island."

Villar's measure wants to inquire into the negative impact of the oil spill, ecologically and economically. (See full story online at [manilastandard.net](http://manilastandard.net))



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## Go: Hold oil ship owner accountable

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Go urged the authorities to hold those responsible accountable for the incident.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Coast Guard on Thursday said the Japanese Coast Guard was on its way to help contain the oil spill that is devastating the waters off nine municipalities of the province, including some coastal towns of Palawan and Antique.

“Oil control experts from the Japan Coast Guard will help the Philippine Coast Guard and other agencies in the ongoing oil spill response operations in Naujan,” the PCG said in a Viber message.

The announcement of the Japanese assistance was made in a social media post by that country’s ambassador to the Philippines, Kazuhiko Koshikawa.

According to Koshikawa, “Japan will send an expert disaster team on oil removal and control to augment the Philippines’ manpower and assets.”

The affected towns of Oriental Mindoro include Naujan, Pola, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Basud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay, and Bulalacao, according to the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office.

Seventy-six barangays across the municipalities have been placed under a state of calamity due to the damage caused by the oil spill.

On 4 March, the Philippine Coast Guard reported that the oil spill had reached the island town of Caluya in Antique.

The DENR had earlier said over 2,000 hectares of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass had been affected, while water samples from several areas in Oriental Mindoro failed the water quality test.

Estimates are that over 36,000 hectares of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass will potentially be affected by the oil spill, after reports said the oil has reached the province of Antique, with fears it might go farther west or to Palawan province.

On Thursday, the DSWD said the number of affected families in Oriental Mindoro had reached 25,000.

The DENR said it will seek the help of American soldiers who will participate in joint drills with Filipino soldiers in Balikpapan 2023 in containing and mopping up the oil spill.

Environment Secretary Antonia Yulo Loyzaga said her department will ask the United States Embassy “to explore the possibility of deploying the participants of the joint military drills, the Balikpapan 2023, to mitigate the effects of the oil spill as the dispersed oil might reach as far as the exclusive posh Amanpulo beach resort in Palawan.

Loyzaga said the local authorities of the island in Palawan had been alerted. Balikpapan 2023 is scheduled on 24-27 April. The DENR’s move is on top of Japan’s and South Korea’s intentions to help in containing the oil spill.

Latest data from the provincial government showed an additional 25 oil spill-related health cases – bringing the total to 43.

The government will also start temporary livelihood programs for affected families. Local residents will be hired for the cleanup under a cash-for-work program.

The provincial government and the Coast Guard reported that, so far, around 230 liters of floating oil and 76 drums of oil-contaminated debris that reached the shorelines had been collected.



## Class suit eyed vs sunken tanker owner

The municipal government of Pola will create a task force to run after the owner of the sunken motor tanker *MT Princess Empress* for the oil spill in the waters off Oriental Mindoro, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

The PCG said appropriate legal actions would be pursued against the owner, operator and insurer of the tanker.

Environmental group Oceana said a class suit may be filed against the owner of *Princess*.

"A class suit requires only two conditions - that it has a common or general interest for many persons, and the parties are so numerous that it is impractical to bring them all before the courts. One may sue on behalf or defend for the benefits of all persons," Oceana legal and police director Liza Osorio said.

She said affected residents can seek damages under Republic Act 9483 or the Oil Pollution Law.

Osorio said the owner of *Empress* is also liable under the Fisheries Code and Clean Water Act.

The Oriental Mindoro Provincial Risk Reduction and Management Office (PRRMO) reported that 19,956 families in 65 barangays were affected by the oil spill. In Pola town alone, 11 barangays were affected.

The Department of Health said 18 residents fell ill after being exposed to the oil slick.

The PRRMO said 13 marine protected areas covering 2,743 hectares in Naujan town have been affected by the oil spill.

## Japan to send experts

The Japanese embassy said it is sending experts to help in oil spill removal and control.

"We are one with you in these trying times," Japanese Ambassador Kazuhiko Koshikawa said in a post on Twitter.

The PCG said oil control experts from the Japan Coast Guard would help concerned agencies in oil spill response operations.

Meanwhile, integrated marine service provider Harbor Star Shipping Services Inc. was tapped to assist in efforts to clean up the oil spill.

"On March 7, Harbor Star secured a contract with the owner of the vessel *MT Princess Empress* for the deployment of manpower and resources for shoreline cleanup and oily waste disposal as directed and approved by the Philippine Coast Guard, local government units and other concerned agencies," Harbor Star said.

## P100-M aid for displaced workers

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said it allotted P100 million for the temporary employment of those affected by the oil spill.

Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma said about 10,000 residents are expected to benefit from the emergency employment program, among other assistance from the DOLE.

Laguesma said beneficiaries would engage in cleanup activities to ensure that the oil spill can be addressed at the soonest time possible.

Caritas Philippines and the archdiocese of Lipa, Batangas said it donated financial assistance and relief goods to affected residents in Oriental Mindoro.

Fr. Edu Gariguez said a "fund transfer" from Caritas Philippines is being processed for the Diocesan Social Action Center in the province.

- Robertzon Ramirez, DM, Mayen Jaymalin, Pia Lee-Brago, Elijah Rosales, Evelyn Macairan



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Philippine Coast Guard personnel continue installing an oil spill boom as part of containment and recovery operations in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro yesterday, in this photo posted on Facebook by the PCG.



THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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EDITOR: TERESA B. COROS

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IMPACT ON LIVELIHOOD, MARINE ENV'T

## PCG SAYS POLA LOCAL GOV'T EYEING SUIT DUE TO OIL SPILL

By Dexter Cabalza  
and Jane Bautista  
@Team\_Inquirer

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said the municipal government of Pola in Oriental Mindoro would pursue legal actions against the owner, operator or insurer of the sunken fuel tanker in proper courts or administrative agencies due to the damage from the oil spill.

The PCG said the town would create Task Force Pola to study the appropriate charges.

Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz said that apart from the temporary suspension of fishing activities in the province, the tourism industry in her town also saw a decline after the oil spill reached some of their beaches.

MT Princess Empress, which carried 800,000 liters of industrial oil, capsized in the waters off Naujan town in Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28 and sank the following day after experiencing engine trouble.

The spill has affected coastal areas of Oriental Mindoro and Caluya town in Antique province.

In an online press conference on Thursday, Ram Joseph Temeña of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office in Oriental Mindoro, said Pola was the worst hit as 11 barangays reported sightings of the oil spill in their shoreline.

Temeña told a virtual press conference that nine out of 15 towns in Oriental Mindoro had been affected by the spill while 18 people reportedly got sick due to inhalation of toxic fumes.

The PCG said the shoreline cleanup team in Pola "observed minimal traces and patches of oil along the shorelines with a 3-kilometer length area covered. They also noted patches of oil floating on the surface of the water."

PCG spokesperson Rear Admiral Armando Balilo earlier admitted it would be difficult for responders to conduct salvage operations because the vessel sank 400 meters deep in the sea. The PCG has been installing booms in the waters off Naujan as part of its containment and recovery operations.

work program," the PCG said.

A simultaneous shoreline cleanup will be conducted in different areas in Oriental Mindoro on Friday.

Harbor Star Shipping Services Inc. said it secured a contract with the vessel owner on March 7 for the "deployment of manpower and resources for shoreline cleanup and oily waste disposal."

### Deja vu

Danny Ocampo, senior campaign manager of the conservation group Oceana, said the incident was like a "deja vu" of the Guimaras oil spill in 2006.

"I saw people before in Guimaras *na tinatabo-tabo yung* (using dippers to scoop the) oil with no personal protection equipment and I saw that again in Pola and here we are 10 days since the spill but there's still no clear way to contain it," he said.

"We salute government agencies for doing their part but we think there's not enough information available for preparedness. People in Antique are reaching out to Oceana and maybe other NGOs (nongovernmental organizations): 'What should we do in case the oil reaches our shores?'" he said.

Libertad, Antique Mayor Mary Jean Te, in the same press conference, said coastal communities were concerned that the oil spill would reach their area and would impact on local livelihood and marine biodiversity.

The PCG, however, said it found no trace of fresh oil drifting in the waters off Caluya, Antique, where the spill reached three coastal villages earlier.

No "significant landing of oil" had been observed along the shorelines since March 8, said Commander Jansen Benjamin, public information officer of the PCG Western Visayas District.

But Benjamin said the danger remained that MT Princess Empress would release all its cargo unless the sunken tanker was properly assessed.

Environmental groups Oceana, Greenpeace Philippines and the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development called for transparency from the national government on the real extent of the damage caused by the spill.

### Cleanup help

In a statement on Thursday, the PCG said a team from the Japanese Coast Guard was expected to be deployed in the country to assist in the oil spill response operations, particularly in Naujan town.

"According to Ambassador of Japan in the Philippines Kazuhiko Koshikawa, Japan will send a disaster relief expert team on oil removal and control to augment the country's manpower and assets," it said.

On Wednesday, the PCG met with Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor to discuss updates on the response operations.

"The officials have agreed to hire one person per family in all affected coastal municipalities under the cash-for-

"More importantly, there must be accountability from the companies involved, especially the owner of the cargo. They must pay for the immediate and long-term damages their business operations have caused, especially in the disruption of livelihoods and access to ecosystem services," said Greenpeace campaigner Jeff Chua.

Fernando Hicap, chair of the fisherfolk group Pamalakaya, said the government must come up with a contingency plan "for any potential ecological disaster" caused by potential fish kills following the massive oil spill.

—WITH REPORTS FROM DEMPSEY REYES, TYRONE JASPER PIAD AND CONNIE FERNANDEZ-BROJAN INQ



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# Editorial

## Oil spill exposes issue of accountability

**O**N February 28, the oil tanker MT Princess Empress began taking in water after sailing into rough seas off the coast of Naujan town, Oriental Mindoro. The ship was on its way to Iloilo from Bataan with 800,000 liters of industrial oil.

Two days later, the Princess Empress finally slipped beneath the waves, triggering what could be the country's worst oil spill since another tanker sank off Guimaras in 2006.

As of Thursday, authorities were still scrambling to locate the Princess Empress, believed to be lying about 1,200 feet below the surface.

Finding the tanker is a race against time; officials need to know how much more oil is leaking from its cargo hold, and if the flow could be contained.

The oil that has seeped out has formed a slick about 25 kilometers long and 500 meters wide. The slick has already fouled up the waters and beaches of at least eight coastal towns in Oriental Mindoro. There are concerns that the winds and tides could bring the slick to as far as northern Palawan. Along the way, it could contaminate the pristine beaches of Boracay Island in Aklan. Patches of oil have also been reported in Antique.

A major environmental disaster appears to be in the making. Thousands of hectares of coral reefs, mangroves and seaweed are under threat.

The oil slick has already impacted hundreds of fishermen and their families in Oriental Mindoro, exposing them to health risks and endangering their livelihood.

Transporting oil from production sources to consumption locations is an essential function in global commerce, but it is a function that carries big risks as well.

Accidental oil spills inflict severe damage on ecosystems, the well-being of communities and local economies. The world first realized that in 1989, when the tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound in Alaska, releasing 11 million gallons of oil that blackened 1,300 miles of shoreline. The oil killed thousands of fish and wildlife and polluted their habitats, and affected local industries and communities.

The Exxon Valdez incident stood as the US' largest environmental tragedy, surpassed only in 2010, when an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil well drilling platform killed 11 workers and discharged millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

In response to the Exxon Valdez disaster, the US Congress passed the Oil Pollution Act, which requires that federal and state agencies work with the companies responsible for oil spills to assess the overall damage. Once a report is finalized, the responsible parties must pay for cleanup efforts and compensate the people affected.

In 1992, 74 states, including the Philippines, signed a treaty to set up the International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, which pays victims of oil pollution damage who cannot get compensation from the owner of tankers responsible for oil spills.

In consonance with the treaty, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed in 2007 Republic Act (RA) 9483, or the "Oil Pollution Compensation Act," which establishes a fund for oil pollution management.

Under RA 9483, the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) administers the fund, and is supposed to collect a 10-centavo-per-liter fee on every delivery or transshipment of oil by tanker barges and haulers.

The fund will finance the containment, removal and cleanup operations of the Philippine Coast Guard during oil pollution incidents.

Noble as its intentions are, RA 9483 remains largely unenforced because it lacks the implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

As early as 2014, then-Kabataan party-list representative Terry Ridon sought to correct this oversight by authoring a House resolution calling for the drafting of the IRR to reactivate the dormant law.

Ridon filed the resolution in reaction to the damage caused by oil leaking from a power barge that was beached in Estancia, Iloilo, at the height of Typhoon "Yolanda" in 2013.

He also said Congress must determine if oil tanker owners have been contributing to the oil pollution management fund. RA 9483 needs to be reviewed, especially now that we could be facing another environmental nightmare.





# Groups warn of 'long-term impact' of Mindoro oil spill catastrophe

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA  
@jonlmayuga

**P**ARTICIPANTS of an online forum organized by international environmental groups Greenpeace and Oceana Philippines on Thursday expressed grave concern over the "long-term environmental, social, economic, and health impact" of the Mindoro oil spill.

Paul Horsman, Greenpeace Strategic Advisor, said oil spills like the Guimaras oil spill in 2006 and elsewhere around the world, have long-term impacts on the environment, including the biodiversity in affected ecosystems.

Oil spills can sometimes be felt even 30 years after the tragedy, causing irreparable damage to corals, seagrass, and mangroves.

Greenpeace responds to oil spills around the world and has witnessed its long-term impacts.

"We are trying to campaign for the phase out of oil, gas and coal," Horsman said in a pre-recorded video message.

"Oil spills are dangerous to marine life and the environment. We are dealing here with highly toxic material that is normally buried underground," he explained.

According to Horsman, the chemical makeup of oil cause cancers, direct poisoning, and physical effects on animals. He said in the past, thousands of thousands of birds die as a result of the impact of oil.

"It has a lasting effect on the environment. What you don't see is the longer effect of an oil spill," he said, adding that even after cleanups, oil remains in the environment and could hardly be really removed.

"The biggest mistake by government, authorities, and corporations in responding to an oil spill is they undermine or understate the potential impact. The fact is, they will have along-term impact. The corporations are trying to undermine the oil spill," Horsman pointed out.

## Prevention

WHAT the government and the private sector can do against oil spills is

prevent them from happening, or if they do, contain them from spreading and prevent them from reaching the shores, he said.

Horsman said the one thing that the government and other stakeholders responding to an oil spill can do is by removing the oil safely. "But you can't clean it up. You have oily waste that has to be dealt with," he said.

## Where's the boat?

RAM JOSEPH TEMENA, Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO) chief of Oriental Mindoro, which is severely affected by the sinking of MV Princess Empress off the shores of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on February 28, said until now, authorities have yet to pinpoint the exact location of the ill-fated vessel.

It was reported to be carrying 800,000 liters of oil that began to ooze out from the sunken vessel and started to spread to coastal towns nearby.

So far, he said out of the 15 municipalities of Oriental Mindoro, nine municipalities are now affected by the oil spill.

"We have 65 barangays affected. The town of Pola is the worse affected. We have sightings of oil spill in the shoreline already. Eleven barangays reported that the oil spill reached the shores already," Temena said.

He added that fisherfolk from the province's 111 barangays in the affected towns are also affected as they are prevented from fishing activities.

So far, Temena said, a total of 19,556 families in Oriental Mindoro alone are affected and belong to coastal communities from the towns of Naujan all the way to Bulalakaw.

He added that based on reports received by the PDRRMO, of the total of 29 marine protected areas or MPAs, 13 are already affected, covering a total of 2,743 hectares.

In terms of its health impact, Temena said 18 persons in the town of Pola have reported suffering from nausea and vomiting, particularly from the Buhay na Tubig, one of the barangays severely affected by the oil spill.

"We have an incident command

post in Pola to help the town manage the disaster situation. Right now, the sea condition is preventing us from reaching affected barangays. Some are barangays not reachable as they are accessible only by small boats and single motorcycles," he said.

Temena said the sea conditions remain "bad" preventing the PDRRMO, including the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and other volunteers from conducting oil cleanup operations.

So far, he said a total of 21.5 drums of oil and oil debris were collected in three barangays in Pola.

"We are really trying to contain this since March 1. Our governor is hands-on and is working with various agencies, particularly the PCG, which is taking the lead in addressing the disaster," he said, adding that the DENR is also helping out and is conducting water sampling to collect data from the shorelines.

## PCG response

PCG Commodore Fidellés D. Saldao said in response to the oil spill, offshore and onshore cleanup is being conducted.

He said manual scooping is being done onshore to put the oil in containers and bring them to Calapan, Oriental Mindoro for hauling. "We collected mixture, 580 liters of oily water mixtures were collected. Why only that? It is because of the dispersal operation that we are conducting. We spray the spill [with chemical dispersants] to dilute the oil. It will disperse. *Kaya iyon lang ang nakuha natin na oil*," he said in narrating PCG's onshore response.

Offshore, he said four teams from the PCG were deployed in Pola.

"As of reporting, we have collected approximately 16.63 cubic meters of debris. Contaminated absorbent booms and pads are included in the estimated debris. The concentration that is coming out is the target of the operation," he added.

Ivan Andres, Center for Energy, Ecology and Development coastal communities and climate program lead, said based on reports gathered

by the group, 18,000 fishermen are not able to fish.

He said the impacts are not only with the fisherfolk. The team deployed on the ground reported that the "no-fishing" order affected the economy, including tourism. Around P11 billion in fisheries livelihood is estimated to be lost.

Andres said revenue loss from tourism is also expected. In 2019, he noted that revenue from tourism in the area was P3.5 billion.

He added that as of Wednesday, March 8, 43 people are already suffering from severe headaches and nausea in various parts of the province, and called on the government to look into these health occurrences.

He expressed alarm on key findings from the University of the Philippines-Marine Science institute that around 36,000 hectares of fishing could be affected by the spill.

## Help

CASH aid and food packs, he said, are being released but communities are worried as to until when such help will last.

While an extensive effort should be exerted to contain the oil spill, Andres said it is equally important to address the livelihood, environmental, and health problems brought about by the oil spill, and hold those responsible accountable for the disaster.

## Accountability

ATTY. Liza Osorio, Legal and Policy Director at Oceana Philippines reiterated that accountability measures are in place, and government only needs to enforce them.

She said there are various laws wherein affected communities can seek legal remedy, and demand accountability from the private companies to the government who are responsible for the oil spill.

The owner of the ill-fated vessel MT Princess Empress, which until now remains to be unidentified, should shoulder clean up expenses and consequential loss for the contamination, including income, or earnings, of persons affected, including human health or loss of lives.



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**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. on Wednesday said the government aims to clean up the 800,000-liter oil spill from a tanker that sank in the waters of Naujan in Oriental Mindoro last week in less than four months.**

## Gov't should be transparent on oil spill extent, impact says Greenpeace Philippines

GREENPEACE Philippines on Thursday urged the government of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to ensure transparency on the real extent of the oil spill off the province of Oriental Mindoro south of the Philippine capital and its effect on communities.

"We need the utmost transparency from the government on the real extent of the spill and its impact," Jefferson M. Chua, campaigner at the environmental group, told a virtual news briefing. "We also need transparency in terms of efforts being made, to make these companies involved provide the immediate redress to communities."

Japan has sent a team of experts who will advise the Philippines on the cleanup of an oil spill off the coast of Oriental Mindoro Province that threatens tens of thousands of hectares of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass, not to mention residents of the area.

The Japan Disaster Relief Expert Team would be sent "on humanitarian grounds and for marine environment conservation," the Japanese Embassy in Manila said in a statement on Thursday.

"Japan hopes that this assistance contributes to the prevention of further marine contamination and to the restoration of the marine environment, and intends to continue working closely with the Philippines," it said.

Mr. Marcos on Wednesday said the government aims to clean up the 800,000-liter oil spill from a tanker that sank in the waters of Naujan in Oriental Mindoro last week in less than four months.

*MT Princess Empress* was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil when it sank off Oriental Mindoro, one of the five provinces surrounding the Verde Island Passage, one of the world's most diverse marine habitats.

Marine experts estimate that as many as 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of mangroves and 6,000 hectares of seagrass could have been affected by the spill.

Senators and congressmen have called for separate investigations of the incident, which prompted the province to place nearly 80 coastal villages in nine towns under a state of calamity.

Mr. Marcos said the government had tapped local fishermen who were temporarily banned from sailing to help the government in the cleanup drive.

"We are monitoring the situation closely," he said, adding that the government is working with the private sector and Japan to address the issue.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has said about 11,000 fisherfolk families were affected by the oil spill.

"The only way to know the size of this oil spill is through sampling and accurate and timely reporting by government authorities and the vigilance of communities," Mr. Chua said.

Mary Jean N. Te, mayor of the town of Libertad in the province of Antique, said they were afraid that the oil spill could reach their shores especially as the harvest season for yellowfin tuna starts. "We have the biggest number of mangroves, and we have a well-managed coastal resource," she told the briefing.

Ram Joseph D. Temefia of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office in Oriental Mindoro said at least 19,556 families from nine of 15 municipalities were affected by the oil slick. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

### FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link < [bit.ly/oilspill031023](http://bit.ly/oilspill031023) >



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## DOLE provides emergency jobs to 10K Mindoro residents affected by oil spill

BY SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

[@sam\\_medenilla](#)

**A**ROUND 10,000 residents affected by the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro, are expected to benefit from the emergency employment program of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

This was based from the initial estimate of the department of qualified beneficiaries of their Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) program in oil-spill affected areas.

Under TUPAD, beneficiaries are usually given light public works like street sweeping, debris cleaning, and declogging works, which lasts for 10 to 90 days.

"Around 10,000 individuals will be [the] expected beneficiaries. Secondary affected families, such as ambulant and market stall fish vendors and employees of MSMEs [micro, small, and medium] beach resorts will also be provided assistance," Laguesma said.

The TUPAD beneficiaries will help in the clean up of the oil spill caused by the sinking of MT Princess Empress in the waters off Naujan town in Oriental Mindoro province last February 28.

The emergency employment will last for 10 to 30 days and its beneficiaries will be given personal protective equipment to ensure their safety while cleaning the oil spill.

Laguesma said they would also provide livelihood aid in the oil spill-affected communities.

DOLE allocated P100 million for the said interventions.

Laguesma said they are now coordinating with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to finalize their list of beneficiaries within the week.

DSWD earlier said the oil spill already affected 7,000 families in six municipalities in Oriental Mindoro.



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# Something in the water

The turn of the season to the hot and humid months brings with it anticipation for summer breaks and island visits.

Unfortunately, the travel sector's big plans for a full resurgence of the industry are currently darkened by that recent oil spill off Oriental Mindoro province.

Residents' health remains at risk, and tourist destinations around the area may also suffer from the consequences arising from the engine trouble that sent an oil tanker to the bottom of the ocean.

The *MT Princess Empress*, belly full with 800,000 liters of industrial oil, sunk on 28 February in the waters off Oriental Mindoro, "7.5 nautical miles from Balingawan Point, facing Pola Municipality in Oriental Mindoro," reports said.

Soon after it happened, demands were made for quick action by the agencies concerned to stave off the oil spill's adverse effects.

Affected are "34 locally managed marine protected areas in 10 municipalities and some 36,000 hectares of coral reefs, mangroves, and sea grass," another report stated.

“*Yet how do we contain a massive oil spill that no doubt has immediately and possibly irrevocably affected marine life in several areas?*”

“*Will the sea vessel's reported \$1 billion insurance offer the lifeline needed by these affected families and businesses?*”

Environmental impact notwithstanding, the real question is why oil tankers, such as the *MT Princess Empress*, should be allowed to ply our precious waters when they may be accidents waiting to happen.

How much care is taken by operators of commercial sea vessels to ensure a safe journey for all — not just the crew, or the cargo, but the people who could bear the full brunt of possible negligence or even law-breaking?

Much has been said about the details of the oil spill, and even the fact that the Japanese government "is set to send a team of disaster relief experts to assist the Philippines in the ongoing cleanup of the massive oil spill," a recent report shows.

Yet how do we contain a massive oil spill that no doubt has immediately and possibly irrevocably affected marine life in several areas?

The oil will spread, certainly, and word has it that it "might likely even reach the world-renowned Boracay Island."

Thousands of families in the coastal areas of Mindoro were immediately advised to relocate or take extra caution with their water usage. These, of course, are not easy to do.

Will the sea vessel's reported \$1 billion insurance offer the lifeline needed by these affected families and businesses? In this instance, one might assume the immediate and far-reaching effects are not just on livelihoods but also health.

To avoid sea disasters like this, our government must first review the laws governing the sea, ensure that these are implemented properly, and see that those responsible for vastly damaging accidents like this will be held to account.





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# SPEED UP OIL SPILL CLEAN-UP - PBBM

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## SPEED UP OIL SPILL CLEAN UP - PBBM

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to speed up the oil spill cleanup in the affected areas in Oriental Mindoro.

In response to the President's directive, the DENR is looking into the possibility of tapping the participants of this year's Balikatan exercises for the cleanup drives along the shores affected by the oil spill caused by the Feb. 28 sinking of the MT Princess Empress in the waters off Naujan town in Oriental Mindoro province.

During a meeting with Marcos in Malacañang Wednesday, DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga said the agency would work together with the United States (US) Embassy to explore the possibility of deploying the participants of the joint military drills, as part of efforts for cleanup, mitigation, and remediation to reduce the impact of the oil spill incident.

The Balikatan is the annual Philippine-led bilateral exercise of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the United States Armed Forces.

Loyzaga said Japan and South Korea have expressed their willingness to help contain the oil spill.

The DENR, Loyzaga said, is also coordinating with the provincial local government units, the vessel owner, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as a potential additional source of funds for the cash-for-work program as assistance to the affected residents.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian said areas to be given the temporary means of livelihood include the towns of Bansud, Bongabong, Bulalacao, Gloria, Naujan, Pinamalayan, Pola, and Roxas in Oriental Mindoro; Caluya in Antique; and Agutaya in Palawan.

Loyzaga, meanwhile, noted that about PHP60 million has been set aside for the cash-for-work program of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) called the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD).

She said the vessel owner's insurance provider has offered to bring in a ship from China to plug the leak in the vessel.

The DENR chief cited the latest reports indicating that the oil spill has reached the Cuyo Island group.

Meanwhile, the oil spill in Antique and Semirara Island is continuing to spread, she said, estimating the rate of discharge of oil from the sunken vessel at 35,000 to 50,000 liters a day.

According to the models of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Naujan and Pola in Oriental Mindoro would be the hardest hit.

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## Japan experts to assist in oil spill removal ops

By AARON RECUENCO

The Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) has committed assistance to the Philippine government in containing and cleaning the oil spill off the waters of Mindoro Island.

In a statement, the Philippine Coast Guard said personnel from the JCG are expected to be deployed in the country to assist in the ongoing oil spill response operations, particularly in Naujan town of Oriental Mindoro.

"According to Ambassador of Japan in the Philippines Kazuhiko Koshikawa, Japan will send a disaster relief expert team on oil removal and control to augment the country's manpower and assets," the statement read.

Aside from Japan, the United States Coast Guard has already informed the Philippine government that it will assist in the same operation.

The oil spill occurred after the MT Princess Empress sank off

the waters of Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28. It carries more than 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil.

The oil spill has already affected the coastal areas of at least eight towns of Oriental Mindoro while oil slicks were monitored in nearby areas. The oil spill also threatens to reach tourist spots in the nearby areas.

Discussions are still ongoing to contain the spread of the oil spill, including the mapping out of strategies on what to do with the oil tanker.

In a statement, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the location of the vessel was already located through the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) BRP Hydrographer Ventura.

Based on the DENR data, the vessel was located about northeast of Pola, Oriental Mindoro but it is "believed to have moved southeast from its last known position where it

completely submerged."

The site is about 1,200 feet or approximately 400 meters below sea level.

Cash-for-work

On Wednesday, March 8, the PCG started meeting with the Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro to deploy as many people to help in the oil spill clean-up drive.

During the meeting, it was agreed that the government will hire one person per family in all affected coastal areas under the "cash-for-work" program.

"There will also be a massive and simultaneous shoreline clean-up on Friday, March 10," the PCG statement read.

For other missions, BRP Bagacay (MRRV-4410) applied 1,200 liters of oil dispersant in the vicinity waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

Meanwhile, shoreline clean-up teams, LGU representatives, and volunteers collected several sacks of oiled debris in Pola, Oriental Mindoro.



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## PH, US team up vs. maritime sanctions evasion

THE United States, together with Customs, Coast Guard, and legal officials from the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Taiwan has sought to strengthen regional cooperation in enforcing international maritime sanctions, the US Embassy in Manila said.

In a US-led workshop, held from February 28 to March 2, participants developed closer working relationships to jointly address sanctions evasion activities in the region, the embassy said.

They also joined tabletop exercises where they applied skills in investigating and preventing sanctions evasion.

Delegates discussed the impact of sanctions on key stakeholders, regional examples of sanctions evasion, chal-

lenges to the enforcement of sanctions; and models for implementing relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

"This event is a great opportunity for the delegates to meet and share each nation's response to maritime sanctions evasion activities. The workshop and relationships developed will provide contacts for future collaboration and cooperation," the embassy's Export Control and Border Security Program Regional Advisor Ransom Avilla said.

Philippine Strategic Trade Management Office officer in charge Director Janice Dimayac recognized the initiative's potential contribution in preventing illegal trade activities in the region, especially with Southeast Asia

which is "located in a strategic area prone to various sanctions evasion tactics".

While in Manila, the participants also visited the Philippine National Coast Watch Center for a briefing on the center's functions and its best practices in countering maritime threats.

The EXBS program, under the Export Control Cooperation Office of the US State Department's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, seeks to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, destabilizing and irresponsible transfers of conventional arms and illegal exports of strategic goods by building an effective national strategic trade control system worldwide.



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## Mga sundalong Pinoy, Amerikano lilinisin oil spill

PINAG-AARALAN ng gobyerno na gamitin ang mga kalahok na sundalong Pinoy at Amerikano sa Balikatan exercises para tumulong sa paglilinis ng oil spill sa Oriental Mindoro.

Ito ay matapos atasan ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na bilisan ang paglilinis sa oil spill mula sa lumubog na barkong M/T Princess Empress na may kargang 800,000

litro ng industrial oil noong February 28.

Sa ginanap na pulong ng pangulo at ni DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga, sinabi ng kalihim na makikipag-usap siya sa mga opisyal ng United States Embassy sa Maynila upang tingnan ang posibilidad na magamit ang mga ide-deploy na mga sundalo sa paglilinis ng oil spill bilang bahagi ng kanilang joint military drill sa mga sundalo ng Pilipinas. **(Aileen Taliping)**





## OIL SPILL SA ORIENTAL MINDORO, BIGYAN NG AGARANG AKSYON

**N**AKAPANLULUMO ang kasalukuyang sitwasyon ng sampung bayan sa Pola, Oriental Mindoro bunsod ng oil spill na nanggaling sa lumubog na barkong Mt. Princess Empress noong Pebrero 28.

Nagdulot ito ng malubhang epekto sa marine protected areas, beach resorts, na umabot na rin sa baybayin ng karatig-lungsod na nakaaapekto sa pamumuhay ng mga residente.

Ayon sa University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UPMSI), ang oil spill ay maaaring makaapekto sa humigit-kumulang 20,000 ektarya ng mga coral reef, 9,900 ektarya ng bakawan at 6,000 ektarya ng seagrass sa mga lalawigan ng Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique at Palawan.

Samantala, nasa 5,000 residente na umano ang apektado at 18,000 mangingisda ang pinatigil ang kanilang aktibidad dahil sa malawakang pagkalat ng langis.

Sa kabila ng sitwasyon, nanaig pa rin ang pagbabayanihan sa mga residente na tulung-tulong na naglinis sa baybayin. Gayunman, dahil sa ilang araw na exposure, ilang residente rin ang naitalang nahirapang huminga at hinihika.

Bagama't patuloy ang pagsasagawa ng coastal clean-up ng awtoridad sa mga apektadong lugar, tumatakbo rin ang oras at lumalawak ang epekto ng oil spill, kapwa pangkalikasan at sa pamumuhay ng mga residente.

Kinakailangan ng agarang solusyon ng ahensya ng gobyerno upang masugpo maaga palang ang epekto ng pagtagas ng langis. Sapagkat sa paglipas ng araw na walang aksyon, nagdulot ito ng malaking permanenteng pinsala sa marine ecosystem na tanging pangkabuhayan ng mga residente.

Gayundin, dapat ang patuloy na pag-abot ng tulong ng gobyerno sa mga taong apektado hanggang sa tuluyang luminis ang karagatan at makabalik sila sa pangangisda.



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### **Paglilinis sa tumagas na langis sa Oriental Mindoro inaasahan ni PBBM 'di na aabutin ng 4 buwan**

INAASAHAN ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., na hindi aabutin ng hanggang apat na buwan para tuluyang malinis ang tumagas na langis mula sa lumubog na MT Princess Empress sa Oriental Mindoro.

Sinabi ng pangulo na naglunsad na ang pamahalaan ng clean up drive.

Katulong ng gobyerno ang mga pribadong sektor at ang bansang Japan upang masipsip ang libu-libong litro ng langis mula sa nakalubog na barko.

Paliwanag ng pangulo, nakita na ang lugar na pinaglubugan ng barko kaya maari aniyang matigil na ang pagtagas nito sa pinaka-mabilis na panahon.

Sinabi pa ng presidente na batay sa natanggap niyang impormasyon, nakarating na rin sa mga baybaying dagat at ilang tourist sites ang langis at umaasa syang mapipigilan ang pagkalat pa nito basta't magtuloy-tuloy lamang ang operasyon.

Sa pagtaya ng Philippine Coast Guard, maaring umanong abutin ng 1 buwan bago malinis ang oil spill.

Matatandaang ilang taon na ang nakakalipas, inabot ng apat na buwan bago tuluyang nalinis noon ang oil spill na nangyari sa Guimaras. (RONALD BULA)



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## Mindoro oil spill might spoil vacation plans

### THE LAST MOHICAN



By MARIO FETALINO JR.

**THE** recent oil spill incident in Oriental Mindoro might spoil vacation plans including mine in Puerto Galera.

Latest reports indicated the oil spill has already affected several areas of the province and that it might reach Verde Islands, a protected area.

Verde Island is located between Batangas province and Puerto Galera.

The possible impact of the oil spill is bigger than one might think. The University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) estimated that 20,000 hectares of coral reef, nearly 10,000 hectares of mangroves, and 6,000 hectares of seagrass are at risk in 21 municipalities across Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, and Antique.

Among these are Calapan, Puerto Galera, and Bulalacao in Oriental Mindoro; San Jose in Occidental Mindoro; and

Coron in Palawan.

In an earlier bulletin, the UP-MSI said the spill might reach the southern tip of Mindoro in a matter of days, given the direction of the wind and waves.

Meanwhile, government agencies are busy addressing the problem. President Marcos earlier appealed for state departments to help ensure that help is extended to victims.

In response, state pension fund Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) has earmarked P315 million in emergency loans for members and pensioners who were affected by the oil spill that emanated from a motor tanker that capsized off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro last February 28.

The oil spill has affected more than half of Oriental Mindoro. "With our emergency loan program, we hope to alleviate the plight of nearly 13,000 GSIS members who are working or residing in the affected areas and pensioners who reside there," President and General Manager Wick Veloso said.

GSIS has allocated a total budget of P6.2 billion for its emergency loan program for the year.

The municipalities of Bansud, Bongabong, Bulalacao, Gloria, Mansalay, Naujan, Pinamalayan,

Pola, and Roxas in Oriental Mindoro have been declared under a state of calamity. Upon receipt of the required documents from the Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro, GSIS will open the emergency loan to affected 11,024 active members, and 1,896 old-age and disability pensioners.

"We are closely monitoring the situation for developments. Should the Oriental Mindoro oil spill further spread and affect other towns and provinces, we assure members and pensioners in said areas that GSIS is ready to open the emergency loan program once a state of calamity declaration has been done and required documents have been submitted to GSIS," Veloso added.

Qualified to apply are members in active service and not on leave of absence without pay; have at least three months of paid premiums within the last six months prior to application; have no pending administrative or criminal case; have no due and demandable loan; and have a net take-home pay of not lower than P5,000 after all required monthly obligations have been deducted.

Old-age and disability pensioners are also qualified to apply if their resulting net monthly take-home pension after loan

availability is at least 25% of their basic monthly pension.

Members with existing emergency loans balance may borrow up to P40,000 to pay off their previous emergency loan balance and still receive a maximum net amount of P20,000. Meanwhile, pensioners and those without existing emergency loan may apply for a P20,000 loan.

The loan is payable in three years or 36 equal monthly installments at an interest rate of 6% per annum.

In a related development, the government is looking at tapping Japan to help contain the rapidly spreading oil spill in Mindoro.

Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista revealed the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) is working with relevant agencies to contain and recover the slick but the spill has already reached another area in the province.

A PCG report also said the oil leak was starting to affect three villages in Caluya, Antique.

"We're looking at asking the Japanese government for help because I was told that it has the capacity to assist us," Bautista said.

For comments, please call or text 09569012811 or email [lastmohican2004@yahoo.com](mailto:lastmohican2004@yahoo.com)



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## NEWS BRIEF

### MT Princess Empress balak kasuhan ng Pola

PAG-UUSAPAN ng mga opisyal sa Oriental Mindoro kung kaka-suhan ang may-ari ng MT Princess Empress dahil sa kawalan ng maayos na pakikipag-usap kaugnay sa epekto ng oil spill sa kanilang mga baybayin.

Ayon kay Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz, ito ay dahil nakukulangan sila sa aksyon ng may-ari ng oil tanker gayung emer-

gency na at kailangang pumunta ng mga ito sa kanilang lugar para makipag-usap.

"Hindi 'yung papatayan nila ng telepono or hindi talaga sila magreply doon sa mga tao na inutusan natin para makipag-usap sa kanila," dagdag ni Cruz.

Idinagdag ng alkalde na dapat harapin ng mga ito ang kanilang kapabayaang at maglatag

ng mga maaari nilang itulong sa kanilang lalawigan.

Samantala, nagpasalamat naman si Cruz sa tulong ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa paglilinis sa oil spill at Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) sa mga ipinamahaging food pack sa mga apektadong residente.



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## Sulat kay Editor

### Isalba ang ating karagatan sa oil spill

Dear Editor,  
Nakakahala naman ang pagkalat ng langis mula sa lumubog na barko sa Oriental Mindoro.

Gayunman ay nakakuwa dahil tulong-tulong talaga ang ating mga kababayan sa paglilinis ng karagatan para hindi na lumawak pa ang pinsala

ng oil spill.  
Kaya sana ay maging mahigpit na ang mga kinauukulan siguring maayos ang lagay ng mga naglalayag na barko para maiwasan ang kahalintulad na insidente.

Sumasainyo,  
Dan J ng Laguna



## Tanker owner hinahanting sa Mindoro oil spill

Nanawagan na sa gobyerno ang ilang grupo at maging ang lokal na pamahalaan sa Oriental Mindoro para panagutin ang responsable sa oil spill sa baybayin ng lalawigan matapos lumubog ang MT Princess Empress na kargado ng 800,000 litro ng industrial fuel oil.

Sa isang pahayag, kinondena ng environmental group na Protect the Verde Island Passage ang insidente at iginiit na dapat mayroong managot sa oil spill at sa pinsalang idinulot nito sa mga apektadong residente.

Glit pa ni Fr. Edwin Gariquez, lead convenor ng grupo, na dapat panagutin ang RDC Reield Marines Services na siyang may-ari ng MT Princess Empress.

Kinuwestyon din nito kung bakit hanggang ngayon ay hindi pa rin umano kinukumpirma kung sino ang may-ari ng industrial

fuel oil na karga ng lumubog na barko.

Hiling pa ni Gariquez na magkaroon ng public investigation sa nangyaring oil spill para mapanagot ang mga sangkot sa insidente.

Maging si Pola, Oriental Mindoro Mayor Jennifer 'Ina Alegre' Cruz ay nagpahayag ng pagkadismaya sa may-ari ng MT Princess Empress na masyado umanong matagal bago nagpakita sa kanila.

Sa panayam sa Tele-radyo, sinabi ng alkalde na sa ngayon aniya ay kaya namang ibigay ng Department of Social Welfare and Development at ng lokal na pamahalaan ang inaalok sa kanila ng tanker owner.

Dagdag pa ni Cruz na kanila pang pag-uusapan kung itutuloy ang pagsampa ng kaso laban sa may-ari ng MT Princess Empress.

Samantala, nanga-

ngamba ang Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) na magkaroon fish kill sa mga lalawigan ng Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique, at Palawan dahil sa paglubog ng MT Princess Empress sa karagatang malalapit dito.

"Nananawagan kami ng klarong plano ng pamahalaan para sa rehabilitas-

yon ng mga apektadong bakawan, bahura, at iba pang bahagi ng pangisdaan. Bukod sa paglilinis ng mga kumalat na langis, kailangan ng mga mangingisda, na mahigit isang linggo nang hindi nakakalaot, ng sapat at agarang subsidiyo mula sa pamahalaan," sabi ni Pamalakaya national chairman Fernando Hicap. **(Eileen Mencias)**



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## Bill seeks p3 prevention of oil spill

### Bill seeks prevention of oil spill

**A measure that seeks to strengthen regulation of ships to prevent oil spills and discharge of harmful substances into the sea, has been filed in the House of Representatives.**

The recent catastrophic oil spill in Oriental Mindoro prompted Negros Occidental Rep. Kiko Benitez to file House Bill 7515 whose main purpose is to provide strict enforcement of the regulations under the 1973 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, and its 1978 Protocol, or MARPOL 73/78, which the country is a signatory in 2001.

"We signed MARPOL 73/78 in 2001. An implementing legislation is long overdue. We must keep our commitment to international law and perform our responsibility to protect the environment," Benitez said.

"We cannot let another oil spill happen again. Its damage to the marine environment is just too much. It is impossible to express the negative impact

to livelihoods and marine ecosystems in monetary terms," he added.

According to Benitez, the bill is crucial in protecting our marine wealth and promoting blue economy to ensure sustainable development of our marine resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The bill empowers the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) to strictly enforce ship-building standards and ensure that ships are constructed and equipped with materials and apparatus to prevent discharge or emission of oil, sewage, garbage and other harmful substances and pollutants into Philippine seas. It also mandates the Philippine Coast Guard to apprehend and detain ships for violations of these regulations.

The bill also imposes fines of up to ten million pesos on ship owners for violations. Proceeds from penalties will be used for clean-up and containment of spilled or leaked substances. *Jester Manalastas*



## Tarlac landfill tambakan ng mga expired COVID bakuna

Dinadala sa isang landfill sa Tarlac ang mga expired COVID-19 bakuna pagkatapos na dumaan ito sa masusing proseso para masigurong ligtas bago itapon, ayon sa Department of Health (DOH).

Inihayag ito ni DOH officer-in-charge Maria Rosario Vergeire sa pagpapatuloy ng pagdinig ng Senate Blue Ribbon Committee nitong Martes kung saan inilahad nito na higit 50 milyong doses ng COVID-19 bakuna ang na-expire na ang bisa.

Nilinaw ni Vergeire na bagama't dinadala sa Tarlac landfill ang mga expired na bakuna ay ligtas ito sa kalusugan.

Ipinahayag naman ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Environmental Management Bureau-Hazardous Waste Management chief Gerry Sañes na dumadaan sa thermal decomposition ang mga expired na bakuna.

"It is being treated through thermal decomposition by pyrolysis by the Integrated Waste Management Incorporated (IWMI) situated in Barangay Aguado, Trece Martires," ani Sañes.

Pagkatapos dumaan sa proseso ay saka dinadala sa Tarlac para ibaon sa landfill doon kung saan ay inilalagay pa umano sa mga selyadong drum ang mga naprosesong bakuna.

Sa kabila nito ay nagpahayag ng pangamba si Senador Francis Tolentino para sa kaligtasan ng publiko.

"Hindi ako convinced na 'pag na-pyrolysis, nasunog e safe na 'yon. Definitely, kapag nahalo sa mga ilog...may epekto 'yon kahit papaano," ani Tolentino.

Kung kaya't kinakailangan pa rin aniya na magkaroon ng pag-aaral tungkol sa pagtatambak ng mga na-expire na COVID-19 bakuna.





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## Developing and promoting ecotourism and nature-based tourism



Sonny M. Angara

### BETTER DAYS

**L**AST March 1, 2023, the Senate Tourism Subcommittee on Select Senate Bills on Ecotourism and on the Proposed Senate Resolution on Nature-Based Tourism held a hearing to discuss various measures and, ultimately, to find solutions and initiatives to advance the domestic tourism industry's recovery while instilling eco-consciousness amid the country's upcoming summer months and in anticipation of the influx of tourists this year owing to "revenge travel."

The following measures were tackled: Senate Bill 238, establishing the Northern Antique Protected Seascape and Landscape Act of 2022 filed by Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda; several bills that I filed, namely, Senate Bill 1166, declaring the Pag-Asa Island as an ecotourism cluster and protected area; and Proposed Senate Resolution 472, for the creation of policy reforms and budgetary expenditures to develop the Philippines's potential to be the leading country in the world for sustainable Nature-Based Tourism (NBT).

Discussions on Senate Bill 238 centered on Northern Antique's crucial role in the region's development and its surrounding environment. Department of Tourism (DOT) Re-

gion VI Regional Director Crisma Rodriguez emphasized how Northern Antique positively contributed to tourism growth in Antique, with five of its municipalities registering 14,311 tourist arrivals, or equivalent to almost half of all tourist arrivals in the province and with receipts amounting to P103 million owing to the area's wide range of recreation activities like white river rafting, river tubing, diving, among others. Moreover, local chief executives reiterated that Northern Antique is both a tourism destination and a habitat to dugongs, which are classified as vulnerable species by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). All the concerned stakeholders concurred that the proposed measure will ensure the protection of the

flora and fauna of the Northern Antique seascape and landscape for the benefit of the local communities and future Antiqueños.

For Senate Bill 1166, Rep. Johnny Pimentel (Surigao del Sur 2D), being the counterpart measure's author in the House of Representatives, started the discussion by explaining the bill's noble purpose, which is to assert our sovereign rights through economic initiative or soft diplomacy and to pave the way for the Pag-Asa Island's development. Rep. Edgardo Egay Salvame (Palawan 1D) also manifested his support on the measure and said that the declaration of the Pag-Asa Island Cluster as a protected area would help ensure its coastal and marine resources are protected from overfishing, poaching, large-scale ocean filling or reclamation. While Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Augusto dela Peña manifested the agency's support to the bill, he flagged the need for supporting infrastructures and resources to guarantee peace and order so that the safety and security of civilians and civilian activities would be unhampered. Pag-Asa Island is the only Philippine-occupied island in the Spratlys that is inhabited by civilians. We are talking about pristine waters that are rich in biodiversity, which makes it an ideal destination for tourists.

Proposed Senate Resolution 472 is a result of our meeting with aca-



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# BusinessMirror

*A broader look at today's business*



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EDITORIAL



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*Abwoping...*

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demics from the University of the Philippines who observed that we are not maximizing the promotion of NBT in spite of the competitive advantage our country has because of its wealth of resources. Masungi Georeserve trustee Billie Dumaliang agreed that nature-based tourism in the country is still underdeveloped and undermarketed. In fact the United Nations Development Program found that the gap on financing for biodiversity in the Philippines is at 80 percent. Biodiversity Conservation Society of the Philippines pressed the need for consultations to identify protected areas and other nature reserves in the country that have the potential to become flagship destinations for NBT.

As Philippine tourism was heavily hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a need to diversify the sector's products and services while being conscious of sustainability. We fervently hope these discussions would form part of the country's rallying cry to further advance and develop our competitive advantages to propel growth and recovery in the tourism sector.

*Senator Sonny Angara has been in public service for 18 years—9 years as Representative of the Lone District of Aurora, and 9 as Senator. He has authored, co-authored, and sponsored more than 330 laws. He is currently serving his second term in the Senate.*

*E-mail: [sensonnyangara@yahoo.com](mailto:sensonnyangara@yahoo.com) | Facebook, Twitter & Instagram: @sonnyangara*



## In solidarity with Masungi

**I**t feels like a victory in a series of battles for the control of Masungi Georeserve, when the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) postponed its plan to build a headquarters and transfer the New Bilibid Prison in that environment-protected area.

Gregorio Catapang Jr., acting director general of BuCor said in a Senate committee hearing that the plan "will no longer push through... taking into consideration the impact on the environment of the construction of BuCor facilities in the area." This was a different situation from months ago, when BuCor insisted on its right as "registered owner of the property" and sent personnel to inspect the area, which alarmed the Masungi Georeserve Foundation.

When I talked to Billie Dumaliang, advocacy officer and trustee of the Masungi Georeserve Foundation, which she co-founded with sister Ann, she was aware of the challenges — political, social, economic — of protecting the Masungi Georeserve. Protecting that area, Billie said, is not only for them but more for us. She related to me that the conservation and geotourism project was awarded with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Award in 2022, and the Global Water Changemakers Award in 2021, among others.

To stress the importance of Masungi Georeserve, more than four dozen organizations have signed a statement early this month urging the President and the DENR to stop BuCor's plans in Masungi. Some of the organizations, collectively called the Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition, include the Philippine Native Plants Conservation Society, Philippine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Greenpeace Southeast Asia — Philippines,

Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, Living Laudato Si' — Philippines, Youth Strike 4 Climate Philippines, Philippine Center for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, Sustainability PH, among others.

The statement said, "We fully support the Masungi Georeserve in its efforts to protect and preserve the conservation area from any form of development that may harm its natural resources and biodiversity. We strongly oppose the

*'We stand in solidarity with Masungi and all other environmental defenders who work tirelessly for the conservation and protection of critical ecological areas, recognizing their value in addressing climate change and building sustainable communities.'*

plans of the Bureau of Corrections to build its facilities in Masungi, as this would threaten the delicate balance of the ecosystem and compromise the integrity of the entire area."

"We recognize the need for the BuCor to address the overcrowding in the New Bilibid Prison and provide adequate facilities for the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates. However, we express our concern over the plan to take over the Masungi Georeserve, which is an important karst landscape

crucial to the conservation of the Upper Marikina Watershed."

"While we understand the challenges faced by BuCor in finding suitable sites for their facilities, we firmly believe that this should not come at the expense of the environment — the flora and fauna that have come back and flourished after more than 25 years of rehabilitation by Masungi. A critical part of the Upper Marikina Watershed and other protected areas, Masungi Georeserve also plays a crucial role in regulating the water flow in the region and reducing the risk of flooding and landslides. These ecosystem services are essential in maintaining the ecological balance and sustaining the well-being of the surrounding communities."

It was good that the plan of the BuCor was postponed, but is it indefinite? Or BuCor is just buying time? It remains to be seen. But for the meantime, I wish Billie and Ann all the enlightenment, strength of spirit, and wisdom, as they were entrusted with this environmental "treasure."

To reiterate the statement, it concluded with this paragraph: "We stand in solidarity with Masungi and all other environmental defenders who work tirelessly for the conservation and protection of critical ecological areas, recognizing their value in addressing climate change and building sustainable communities." As an environment writer, I stand in solidarity with Masungi.

*(Johannes L. Chua is editor of the Environment & Sustainability section.)*



**EDITORS DESK**  
JOHANNES L. CHUA



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## Albano halts quarrying in portions of Cagayan River

By Brenda Jocson

CABATUAN, Isabela—Gov. Rodito T. Albano III has ordered mandatory rehabilitation of portions of the Cagayan River which were turned into quarry sites in Cabatuan town.

Executive Order (EO) No. 01 series of 2023 was recently issued to all stakeholders including Cabatuan Mayor Bernardo A. Garcia Jr., Isabela Police Provincial Office (IPPO), Environment Natural Resources Office (Isabela ENRO) and respective officials on all concerned barangays citing the unregulated quarrying

that has been done since 2014 leading to several drowning incidents.

EO No. 01 also placed the entire municipality in a quarry moratorium.

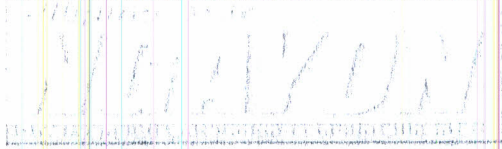
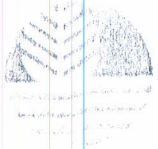
Section 1 of the EO consists of the declaration of the cease and desist order to all quarry operations by the Provincial Government of Isabela, which would take over any and all existing quarry operations to give way to the immediate rehabilitation and desilting of Cagayan River.

“The suspension of quarry permits is tantamount to no quarry permit, thus, failure to comply with this EO shall be considered

and proceeded as violation and may cause the permanent revocation of the quarry permit,” Albano, in a statement, said

Further, the moratorium/suspension shall remain valid and effective pending the outcome of the rehabilitation and desilting activities.

The quarry moratorium stemmed from the letter of Garcia to DENR-MGB Regional Director, Engr. Mario Ancheta expressing the immensely dismal state of the quarry sites within the municipality due to unregulated quarrying activities and the unrehabilitated state of the riverbeds and riverbanks.

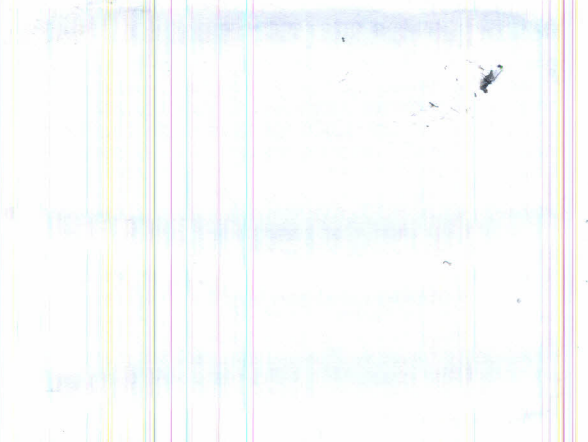


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### ***PRA, walang dredging ops sa Rosario, Cavite***

Walang seabed quarry operations ang Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) sa Rosario, Cavite.

Ito ang nilinaw ni PRA Assistant General Manager Joseph Literal makaraang lumabas ang maling balitang may dredging operations ang nasabing ahensiya, kung saan may fisherfolk community sa nasabing lugar.

Sa isang pahayag, sinabi ni Literal na sa loob ng humigit-kumulang daan-daang libong ektaryang lupa sa Cavite na pinahihintulutan ng pamahalaan ang dredging, tanging 9,000 ektarya lamang ang sakop ng PRA, at hindi kabilang dito ang bayan ng Rosario.

Iba umanong kumpanya ang binigyan ng DENR-Environmental Management Bureau at Mines and Geosciences Board ng "government seabed quarry permit" para magsagawa ng dredging sa municipal waters ng Rosario.

Tanging sakop ng PRA ang mga bayan ng Tanza, Naic, Ternate at Maragondon sa Cavite.

Sa mga lugar na ito, malinaw anya na pinangangalagaan ng PRA ang kapakanan ng mga mangingisda at kanilang pamilya sa Naic at Ternate sa pamamagitan ng livelihood assistance na nakalatag para pagkunan ng dagdag na kabuhayan. *(Doris Franche-Borja)*



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**walang  
dredging operation  
sa Rosario,  
Cavite - PRA**

NILINAW kahapon ng Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) na walang isinasagawang paghuhukay o dredging operation sa Rosario, Cavite.

Ayon kay PRA assistant general manager Joseph Literal, walang katotohanan ang mga ulat na may paghuhukay sa lugar kung saan mayroong fisherfolk community.

Aniya, eiyam na ektaryang lupa lang ang ipinahintulot sa PRA para sa dredging operation mula sa daan-daang ektaryang lupa sa Cavite at hindi kasama rito ang bayan ng Rosario.

Kabilang sa sakop ng PRA ang mga bayan ng Tanza, Naic, Ternate at Maragondon sa Cavite.

Pinangalagaan aniya ng PRA ang kapakanan ng mga mangingisda at kanilang pamilya sa pamagitan ng livelihood assistance na inilatag nila sa mga ito para sa dagdag nilang kabuhayan.



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## **PRA, walang dredging operations sa Rosario, Cavite**

**WALANG** seabed quarry operations ang Philippine Reclamation Authority sa Rosario, Cavite.

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Sa isang panayam, sinabi ni Asst. GM Literal na sa loob ng humigit-kumulang daan-daang libong ektaryang lupa sa Cavite na pinahihintulutaning pamahalaan ang dredging, tanging siyam na libong ektarya lamang ang sakop ng PRA, at hindi kabilang dito ang bayan ng Rosario.

Iba umanong kompanya ang binigyan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources Environmental Management Bureau at mines ang geosciences board ng "government seabed quarry permit" para magsagawa ng dredging sa municipal waters ng Rosario sa Cavite.

Tanging sakop ng Philippine Reclamation Authority ay ang mga bayan ng Tanza, Naic, Ternate at Maragondon sa Cavite.

Sa mga lugar na ito malinaw na pinangangalagaan ng PRA ang kapakanan ng mga mangingisda at kanilang pamilya sa Naic at Ternate sa Cavite sa pamamagitan ng livelihood assistance na nakalatag para pagkunan ng dagdag na kabehayan.

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## Reclamation lalong magpapalubog sa Malabon at Navotas

SA halip ma-excite, kinatatakutan ngayon ng mga residente ng Malabon at Navotas ang National Coastal Bay Reclamation Project sa kahabaan ng Manila Bay.

Ito ay proyektong ng San Miguel Corporation. Tatambakan ang mahigit 500 ektarya sa kahabaan ng baybayin ng Manila Bay at mga kalapit na daluyang tubig para itayo ang Navotas Boulevard Business Park.

Ang proyektong ito, ayon sa San Miguel Corporation, ay naglalayong iangat pa ang kalidad na kabuhayan sa mga komunidad ng Navotas at Malabon dahil sa mga itatayong establisimiyento na inaasahang maghahatid ng mga bagong trabaho at oportunidad. Ganun?

Tinatawag na Southern Gateway to the Manila International Airport, ang reclamation project na ito ang magkokonekta sa Metro Manila at sa ginagawang airport sa Bulacan.

Pero sa kabila ng magagandang pangakong bagong trabaho at mga bagong itatayong negosyo, hindi excitement kundi takot ang nararamdaman sa mga maaapektuhang residente. Ang dahilan ng kanilang takot ay dahil kapag reclamation alam nating tatambakan ng lupa ang mga daluyang tubig. Tuloy nangangamba ang mga residente na ang tubig na hindi na makadaan sa mga natural nitong dinadaluyan ay lalo pang magpapalubog sa Navotas at Malabon lalo na kapag hightide at panahon ng tag-ulan at pagbagyo.

Ngayon ngang wala pang nakabara sa mga lagusan ay binabaha na ang mga naturang lngsod, lalo pa kaya kung babarahan ang mga daluyang tubig.

Bagama't gusto ng mga residente na magkaroon ng mga bagong negosyo at trabaho, natatakot naman silang tuluyan nang lumubog ang kanilang lugar. Sa mga pag-aaral kasj ay sinasabing madaragdagan ng 30-40 percent ang paglubog ng mga komunidad kapag nakumpleto itong reclamation project. Anong kayang pagbaha ang idudulot nito sa mga residente? Nakakatakot na senaryo ito, mga pare't mare...

Alam ng lahat na mababa ang kinatatayuan ng Navotas at Malabon, bukod pa sa malapit sila sa Manila Bay kaya madalas ang mga pagbaha. Kaya ngayon pa lamang natatakot na ang mga residente sa magiging kapalit nitong reclamation project.

Bukod dito, marami nang kabuhayan ang naapektuhan. Sa kasalukuyan ay may 20 tahungan ang ide-demolish kaya paano na ang kabuhayan ng mga apektadong magtatahong at ang kanilang pamilya na umaasa lamang sa trabahong ito?

But wait there's more, may mga bahay na ide-demolish din. At babayaran daw ang mga maybahay ng P15,000. Susmaryosep! Hanggang saan na ba makakaabot sa P15K? Sa mahal ng mga construction materials ubos na agad ito hindi pa man natatapos ang isang bubong. Nakakainsulto naman yung P15K. Napaisip tuloy kami baka namalikhata lamang kami at baka naman hindi P15K yan.

Kaya naman kung ang magiging kapalit ng reclamation project ay P15K at kawalang kabuhayan, ano ba ang maaasahan natin sa mga apektadong residente? Alangan namang yakapin at ikatuwa nila ang proyektong reclamation kung buhay mismo nila ang magiging kapalit nito.

Sino ba ang ayaw sa progreso? Pero sana bago ipalamon sa ating mga kababayan ang salitang progress, kailangan namang tiyakin ng mga kinauukulan na talagang mabibiyayaan ng progreso ang mga kababayan natin. Baka naman ang progreso ay magbibigay benepisyo lamang sa mga negosyante na ngayon pa lamang ay naglalaway na sa pag-iisip sa kanilang kikitain kapag natapos ang reclamation project.

Sigaw ng mga taga-Navotas at Malabon, **REHABILITASYON AT HINDI RECLAMATION!** Pakinggan din sana ang kanilang hinaing. Dapat!







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assistance na nakalatag  
para pagkunan ng dagdag  
na kabuhayan.



# MALABON, NAVOTAS LALO LULUBOG SA RECLAMATION PROJECT

**ISA ang Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation Project sa reclamation projects sa paligid at kahabaan ng Manila Bay.**

Sa sukat na higit limandaang ektarya o 567.7 ha ay tatambakan ng lupa ang katubigan sa buong harapan ng Navotas City kasama ang iba pang karatig na tubig-daluyan upang tayuan ng mga istrukturang bahagi ng Navotas Boulevard Business Park.

Sa pangunguna ng San Miguel Corporation, pagagandahin daw ng proyekto ang antas ng buhay ng mga komunidad ng Navotas at Malabon dahil sa dala-dala nitong oportunidad sa negosyo at trabaho. Tinatawag din ang proyekto bilang 'Southern Gateway to the Manila International Airport' dahil ito ang magdudugtong sa Metro Manila at ginagawang paliparan sa Bulacan.

Ngunit dada nito ang mga residente ng Malabon at Navotas.

Ayon kay Ka Job Valenzuela, lider ng "Pwersa" o Peoples and Reform for Social Advancement, malabong kaginhawahan ang hatid ng Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation Project.

Giit ng grupo ang baha ay malalim nang isyu ng

mamamayan ng Navotas at Malabon. Bukod sa natural na mababang lugar ang mga siyudad dulot ng pagiging malapit sa Manila Bay, taon-taon ay lumulubog din ang lupa dahil sa patuloy na pagdami ng kabahayan at pagbabago ng klima sa buong daigdig.

Ang masama rito ay mas paluhugin ng reclamation project ang Navotas at Malabon.

Lumalabas sa isang pag-aaral na 30-40% karagdagang paglubog ang mararanasan ng mga komunidad kapag tuluyang natapos ang reclamation project ng San Miguel.

Nasa panganib din ang kabuhayan ng mga residente sa tuluyang pagkamatay ng ecosystem sa mga yamang-tubig gaya ng ilog, estero, at karagatang pina-ningisdaan sa Manila Bay dulot ng reklamasyon.

Sa kasalukuyang takbo ng proyekto, tinatayang nasa 200 tahungan ang planong gibain - na makakaapekto sa kabuhayan ng higit 1,000 mangingisda at kanilang mga pamilya.

Para naman sa mga kabahayang gigibain, makakatanggap lamang

silang P15,000 para gamitin sa pagpapatayo ng sariling bahay sa itinalagang relocation site.

Planong maglaan ng San Miguel ng P1-milyon bawat taon sa kanilang Social Development Plan para sa tulong pangkabuhayan, edukasyon, at serbisyong medikal sa mga apektadong lugar ng proyektong ito pero kakarampot ito kumpara sa posibleng kitain at yamang mawawala kung sakaling matapos ang proyekto. Hindi rin, anila, matutumbasan ng anumang halaga ang kalikasang mawawasak pati narin ang kultura at kasaysayan ng mga lugar na tatabunan ng reclamation project.

Gusto ng simpleng mamamayan ng kaunlaran. Ngunit, para saan at sino ba ang makikinabang sa kaunlarang ibinibida ng San Miguel Corporation. Kung ang kapalit ng proyektong ito ay pagkawala ng kabuhayan, pagkasira ng kalikasan, at paglubog ng mga komunidad. Tama bang suportahan ang reclamation project?

Bunsod nito ay iginiit

ng mga residente ang tunay na rehabilitasyon at hindi reklamasyon.

Gayundin ang karapatan ng mga mangingisda, at nanindigang nagkakaisa ang mga taga-Malabon para itulak ang kaunlaran para sa lahat, at hindi ng iilan.

Nitong Lunes ay nagprotesta ang mga residente ng 21 apektadong barangay sa pangunguna ng Pwersa upang batikusin ang proyekto.



### Cebu water district bags grant from JICA

THE Philippines signed with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) a grant aid of approximately 2-billion Japanese yen (P807 million) to fund septage management projects of Metro Cebu Water District.

The project involves the construction of a septage treatment facility, provision of vacuum trucks for septage collection and operating system for sludge treatment of approximately 430 cubic meters of septage per day to ensure uncontaminated sewage water is discharged back to the natural environment.

JICA added the project will benefit six local government units including Cebu, Compostela, Consolacion, Liloan, Mandaue and Talisay.

The grant will help the region overcome its capacity shortage for wastewater management facilities as Metropolitan Cebu's roadmap targets to adequately treat wastewater by 50 percent in 2030 and 90 percent by 2050.

JICA also said even if septic tanks are widely spread in the region, de-sludging is not regularly practiced and collected septage are rarely appropriately treated due to limited available treatment facilities which becomes a possible health risk due to negative impacts such as deteriorating groundwater quality and surface water pollution.

"Climate change has increased extreme weather events like droughts, putting pressure on water resources. The JICA grant for a septage management system is one way of using Japan's advanced technology and systems to promote sanitation and improve water quality while protecting water environments," said Sakamoto Takema, chief representative of JICA Philippines office, in a statement.

JICA said the grant also helps the region to comply with the Clean Water Act of 2004 that requires all local government units operating without piped sewerage systems to implement septage management. -*Jed Macapagal*



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## IN BRIEF

### House set to approve gov't rightsizing bill

THE House of Representatives is poised to approve next week on third and final reading House Bill (HB) 7240 or the proposed "National Government Rightsizing Act."

This after the chamber passed the measure on second reading on Wednesday.

The bill focuses on streamlining the operations of different agencies under the Executive branch.

House Committee on Government Reorganization chairman and Bukidnon Rep. Jonathan Keith Flores, as sponsor, explained that the rightsizing program not only seeks to remove or reduce the number of government employees, but to also streamline the processes of government services in order to provide better services to Filipinos.

Under the bill, a Committee on Rightsizing the Executive Branch (CREB) would be created to oversee the implementation of the program. **Maricel V. Cruz**



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## Solons urge readiness for 'Big One'

By CAMILLE P.  
BALAGTAS

### *Cite urgent audit of PH infra*

THE Senate Committee on Public Works on Wednesday conducted a public hearing focusing on the preparedness and structural integrity of the country's infrastructure in the event of catastrophic natural disasters.

The hearing was a continuation of the last, conducted in February, where the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) failed to provide the appropriate data and concrete answers.

DPWH Secretary Manuel Bonoan also failed to attend the initial deliberations on the matter.

Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr., the committee chair of the said Senate panel, reiterated the importance of assuring the public's safety in the event a massive earthquake hits the Philippines.

"Ang nakataya kasi dito ay buhay ng tao, kaya we have to be careful. There are many questions that have to be answered and so many issues that need to be immediately addressed. Yet we are running out of time. Every second we spend on vague answers; is a second wasted. Kaya kumilos na tayo bago pa mahuli ang lahat," the lawmaker said in opening the discussion.

Revilla probed the DPWH on the status of the infrastructure audit he ordered to conduct to ensure that structures would not be a "hazardous risk" to the people during destruc-

tive calamities.

However, the public works department was not able to provide complete and timely data as they presented audits only for the National Capital Region (NCR) and only covered the years 2016-2018.

This prompted the lawmaker to ask the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) if it is only the country's capital that will be suffering greatly from an earthquake.

"Can we confirm kung talagang Metro Manila lamang ang very prone sa The Big One? Kailangan kasi natin ng equitable distribution ng ating disaster-resilient infrastructures," Revilla asked.

Phivolcs responded that the "Philippine Fault Zone," which extends from the northern part of the country down to Mindanao, may cause ground-shaking not only in NCR but in the entire country.

The chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Works further asked DPWH to provide a "master list" of structures and establishments sitting above or near the fault line in order to provide necessary precautions to those at great risk.

In closing, Revilla raised the importance of amending the National Building Code and the National Structural Code of the Philippines to ensure the integrity of the country's infra-

structure.

The solon said that the committee will convene a technical working group to develop comprehensive and fine-tuned measures.

Sen. Raffy Tulfo, during the hearing, grilled the DPWH officials as well as the MMDA (Metropolitan Manila Development Authority) and Phivolcs about the actions they have taken to mitigate the effect of the so-called "The Big One" or the worst-case scenario for Metro Manila should the West Valley Fault move and generate a magnitude 7.2 quake.

Tulfo noted that as early as 2004, these agencies were already informed about the scenario.

He added that a joint study with the Japan International Cooperation in 2004 identified the "poorest of the poor areas" among those that will be badly affected by the strong earthquake.

"What have you been doing? Have you been going around inspecting the houses of our kababayan? Are you coordinating with local government units (LGUs)?" Tulfo asked during the hearing.

Sen. Christopher Bong Go said these government agencies should be "one step ahead" of disasters and make sure that communities remain safe and disaster resilient.

During the hearing, Go underscored the need to review and update the National Building Code and keep the country's laws in tune with the times.



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

### PAGPAPAUPA NG LUPANG PUBLIKO

Ipinagbibigay alam sa madla na ang Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, Bangkal, Davao City ay tatanggap ng selyado o nakasulat na alok sa ika alas 10:00 ng umaga sa ika 24 ng Marso 2023, para paupahan ang isang suklat na lupang publiko na inilarawan sa ibaba nito:

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Lugar                         | Km. 14, Barangay Panacan, Davao City   |
| Deskripsyon                   | Lot Mic-11-001240-D  |
| Sukat                         | 7,567 metro kwadrado   |
| Tasahan ng Lupa               | Php 8,300.00 kada metro kwadrado<br>o kabuuang Php 62,806,100.00               |
| Halaga ng Nakatayong Proyekto | 0  |
| Aplikante                     | NEW DAVAO OIL MILL, INC.<br>Rep. by: Richmond L. Lopez<br>MLA-112402(XI-DC) 20 |

Ang karapatan na upahan ang nasabing lupa ay ibibigay sa tao o partido na makapagbibigay 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 itatayong estruktura. Upang ang isang tao ay makakasama sa isasagawang subasta, kailangang siya ay karapat-dapat na aplikante at kailangang bago magsimula 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 tatanggapin. Ang isang tao na sumali sa subasta na nagrepresenta ng ibang tao ay makakasali lamang kung mayroon siyang pahintulot na ibinigay sa pamamagitan ng kinakulang pahintulot na nilagdaan ng Notariyo Publiko. Sa panahon ng subasta, ang taong sumali ay magkaroon ng dagdag na deposito kapag ang kanyang alok ay itinataas para makumpleto ang kabuuang tatlong buwang upa. Ang karapatang tumanggi o tanggihan ang anumang alok o sa lahat ng alok ay palaging nakalaan para sa pamahalaan.

Ang magwawagi sa alok na ito kung hindi siya ang aplikante ay kinakailangang tumubasan ang kabayaranang nagugol sa pagpapalathala ng panawagang ito sa pagpapasukat ng lupa.

Lungsod ng Dabaw, Pilipinas, Ika 01 ng Pebrero, 2023.

JUVY C. HOFILEÑA  
OIC CENR Officer

Km. 7, SPED Road, Bangkal, Davao City  
Email Add: cenrodavao@denr.gov.ph Telefax No. (082) 228-2557



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                | Panacan, Davao City  |
| Description             | Lot Mic-11-001240-D  |
| Area                    | 7,567 square meters  |
| Appraised Value of Land | Php 8,300.00 per square meter<br>or Php 62,806,100.00 for the whole tract      |
| Existing Improvements   | No Improvements  |
| Applicant               | NEW DAVAO OIL MILL, INC.<br>Rep. by: Richmond L. Lopez<br>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

JUVY C. HOFILEÑA  
OIC CENR Officer

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