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Oil spill heading for Verde Island

Endangered hawksbill turtles, whale sharks, manta rays, dugong threatened

By AARON RECUECO

Critically endangered hawksbill turtle, whale sharks, manta rays, dugongs, humphead wrasses, giant groupers, and giant clams at Verde Island Passage are at risk as the Oriental Mindoro oil spill is now heading toward the area.

With the weakening of the northeast monsoon, locally referred to as amihan, ▶ 7



OIL SPILL PROBE — Oriental Mindoro Governor Humerlito A. Dolor (left) stresses a point as Pola, Oriental Mindoro Mayor Jennifer M. Cruz (second from left) listens, while Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Ma. Antonia 'Toni' Yulo Loyzaga updates senators on the damage caused by the oil spill from the sunken MT Princess Empress at the Inquiry of the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. (All Viccy)



experts from the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute said this may result in the oil spill reaching Verde Island Passage and the coastal areas of Batangas.

The Verde Island Passage, dubbed the global center of marine biodiversity, is known for its wide array of corals and endangered marine species. It also provides food and other benefits to around two million people.

In a statement, the UP Marine Science Institute said the weakening of the amihan may result in the hundreds of thousands of liters of industrial oil carried by MT Princess Empress flowing northward.

This would mean the oil spill may affect the coastal areas of Calapan City, the coastal areas of Batangas that include Batangas City, Lobo and San Juan, and the Verde Island.

The UP Marine Science Institute projected that the oil spill may reach these areas by March 16.

Environment experts have been raising the alarm bell on the impact of the oil spill, especially when it reaches the Verde Island Passage. It said that the Verde Island Passage, located between Batangas and Mindoro, has the highest concentration of coastal fishes, corals, crustaceans, molluscs, seagrasses, and mangroves.

"Damage from the oil spill may affect biodiversity (including endemic species only found in the Philippines as well as species yet to be discovered), tourism revenues, and food security in the area," the UP Marine Science Institute said in a statement.

The Department of Tourism had earlier said the oil spill has already started affecting tourism sites in Mindoro and nearby areas.

The RDC Reield Marine Services, owner of the MT Princess Empress that was carrying more than 800,000 liters of industrial oil when it sank off the waters of Naujan, Oriental Mind-

oro, has committed compensation for the damage of the oil spill.

The Philippine government, headed by the Philippine Coast Guard and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), have been conducting aggressive clean-up drive in the oil spill-affected areas since the tanker's sinking on Feb. 28.

Japan donates oil spill clean-up equipment

As the oil spill continues to spread, various equipment donated by Japan to help in the clean-up are now in the country.

According to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Philippine government received on Monday the oil spill cleaning gears.

These included oil blotters, heavy oil absorption masks, working gloves, rubber boots, and protective work wear, which are "expected to boost the clean-up campaign and protect all people who will participate."



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Oil spill heading for Verde Island ◀

The arrival of the support equipment is an additional assistance provided by Tokyo.

Last week, the Japanese government deployed eight members of its disaster relief expert team to help prevent maritime damage and contamination caused by a sunken oil tanker.

"Let's all do our part in saving our precious oceans!" Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koshikawa Kazuhiko said in a Twitter post.

Oil spill booms from organic materials

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local communities have produced oil spill booms made of indigenous materials to help in efforts to protect marine ecosystems.

Booms are temporary floating barriers that are utilized to contain marine spills, protect sensitive wetlands, and aid in the recovery process, the DENR said.

In a statement on Tuesday, March 14, the DENR said the oil spill booms they made restrict the oil from af-

flicting surrounding marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Mimaropa (Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan) and Western Visayas regions.

The agency said the use of improvised spill booms is a "feasible precautionary measure to prevent damage to marine environments."

The DENR said the UP Marine Science Institute's (UPMSI) trajectory map will be used as a guide to install the booms.

"The UPMSI projected that the oil spill could reach northern Palawan mainland and threaten over 36,000 hectares of marine habitats," the agency said. It is also threatening Verde Island.

According to the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) in Mimaropa, it has installed temporary spill booms made of cogon and sawali in the Casiligan and Calimawawa rivers of Oriental Mindoro province to prevent oil from reaching mangrove forests, coral reefs, and other marine life. (With reports from Joseph Pedrajas and Jel Santos)



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Sunken tanker in oil spill lacked permits

By PAOLO ROMERO

The *MT Princess Empress* oil tanker – which sank in the waters off the coast of Oriental Mindoro carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil – sailed without an updated certificate of public convenience (CPC), lawmakers uncovered yesterday during a hearing of the Senate committee on the environment.

“The ship has no authority to operate in the form of an amendment to its certificate of public convenience issued to RDC Reiel Marine Services,” Sen. Cynthia Villar said, reading a report from the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), which is in charge of issuing CPCs.

At the hearing, senators asked the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) whether it made all

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Responders from Semirara Mining and Power Corp. clean up oil spill from the sunken tanker in Oriental Mindoro on Monday. SMPC partnered with the Department of Energy, Philippine Coast Guard, Office of Civil Defense and Department of Health.



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the necessary inspections before the tanker was allowed to sail.

Asked by Sen. Raffy Tulfo asked why the vessel was allowed to sail, PCG Vice Adm. Joseph Coyne replied that in the checklist, the inspectors did not tick the box on CPC.

Tulfo said PCG officials responsible for allowing the tanker to sail should be jailed. "If you did your jobs, we would not be all here," he said.

Fritzie Tee, vice president of RDC, said the tanker was new and the company had applied for an amended CPC in November. The company has a CPC but the new vessel necessitates an amendment that is to be approved by the MARINA.

MARINA administrator Hernani Fabia said the CPC applica-

tion was still being processed. He agreed with Sen. Risa Hontiveros that the tanker should not have sailed.

Upon questioning by Sen. Francis Escudero, Tee said *MT Princess Empress* had sailed at least nine times before the incident.

Escudero said it was possible the owners were thinking the CPC would be released anyway so they allowed the tanker to be deployed.

Villar and Tulfo warned that claimants - individuals and local government units - may not be able to receive insurance compensation from RDC Reield Maritime Services, since it was not supposed to deploy the tanker without an updated CPC.

Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor told the inquiry that RDC lawyers earlier gave

assurances that the company will immediately put up claims offices.

Reports said RDC told the PCG that it was insured for \$1 billion.

"I don't want the people to rely on the \$1-billion insurance... we should plan accordingly that we would not get that... the insurance company will find a basis to not pay them," Villar said.

House probe urged

With the "alarming effects" of the oil spill from *MT Princess Empress*, Aklan Rep. Teodorico Haresco Jr. has asked a House panel to investigate the extent of the damage on environment, public health, tourism and livelihood in affected areas.

Haresco filed House Resolution 842, directing the House committees on natural resources and tourism to do the inquiry in aid of legislation.

- With Sheila Crisostomo



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Sunken tanker no sail permit

*Senators say owners can't collect
insurance to pay for oil spill damages*

By Macon Ramos-Araneta
and Willie Casas

THE tanker MT Princess Empress that caused a massive oil spill when it sank in Oriental Mindoro with 800,000 liters of industrial fuel on Feb. 28 sailed nine times despite having no updated authority to operate, senators said Tuesday.

In a hearing on the oil spill, Senators Cynthia Villar and Risa Hontiveros cited a report submitted by the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) that said the MT Princess Empress, a new ship, was not included in the certificate of public convenience issued to its owner, RDC Reield Marine Services (RDC).

Villar said the lack of the amended CPC would mean the company would not be able to claim insurance on the ship that sank, which has been insured for \$1 billion, and will be unable to compensate those who were affected by the oil spill.

"The government cannot rely that it can get money for damages from the company which owns the sunken ship," she said.

"The MARINA and the Coast Guard will explain that they cannot claim from the insurance because they have no permit to operate. So we should not wait for that anymore.

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CONTAINMENT. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reports two tugboats have deployed their oil spill boom and skimmer around the suspected area of the sunken tanker MT Princess Empress at six nautical miles northeast off the shoreline of Ballingawan Point and Buloc Bay in Oriental Mindoro.



Sunken...

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They will have a problem with that... Don't depend on something that will not come, Villar added.

Hontiveros said without an amended CPC that included the tanker, the MT Princess Empress should not have been allowed to sail on Feb. 28 from SL Harbor Terminal in Limay, Bataan.

Senator Raffy Tulo said Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) officials who checked the ship should be jailed for dereliction of duty.

But the PCG, in a Facebook post, denied that the oil tanker had no permit to operate and shared a copy of the CPC of the MT Princess Empress that was issued by MARINA.

It was unclear which claim was correct, but Fritzee Tee, vice president of RDC Reield Marine Services, said the MT Princess Empress, which first sailed in December 2022 even without an amended CPC, was able to sail nine times before the sinking.

Tee told the Senate panel that the company was coordinating with its insurance firm on the claims.

But Villar insisted it cannot claim from its insurance company as it has no CTC authorizing the MT Princess Empress to sail.

The senator also noted that the ship owner is just a small company, thus incapable of paying compensation and damages and might even go bankrupt.

"So that the government should act to give assistance to those affected by the oil spill," Villar said.

Oriental Mindoro Gov. Hurmelito Dolor was dismayed by Villar's disclo-

sure, saying the shipowner was given them false hope.

Dolor said they were informed last Monday by the shipping company's lawyer that they will build a claim center within the week where people can get their individual claims for damages.

Dolor said the plan was for the people of Mindoro to file collectively as one for damages.

Hontiveros and Senators Bong Revilla and Francis Escudero, meanwhile, proposed the filing of criminal and civil charges against those involved in the "illegal" voyage of the MT Princess Empress.

Also upon the request of Senator Loren Legarda, Villar said she would write to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to clarify who has the mandate to lead efforts to contain and clean up the oil spill and provide assistance to those badly affected by it.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Loyzaga said it will take 15 to 20 days to totally siphon the oil spilled into the waters of Oriental Mindoro. Fishing can resume five days after the clean up, she said.

Senator Francis Tolentino questioned the seaworthiness of the M/T Princess Empress.

Earlier, Tolentino urged the Senate environment panel to demand an in-depth assessment over the vast damage brought by oil spill incident.

He said the government should use existing funds provided by the Oil Pollution Compensation Act since there is a specific provision that calls for the allotment of 10 centavos per liter for every tanker as a compensation fund.

Tolentino said MARINA should lay down the guidelines for the use of the compensation fund.

The senator stressed that it's now a

race against time and authorities should not wait for the compensation and assistance coming from the shipowner

The owners of the sunken tanker apologized to the public for the oil spill that affected the livelihoods of those living in the area and the adverse effects it would have on the environment.

"We are committed to doing everything possible to minimize the ongoing impact on the environment and people's lives and clean up the spill," the company said in its statement.

The RDC Reield Marine Services said it is already in contact with its insurance firm about possibly providing compensation for affected residents.

"We are working closely with our insurers, and those affected by the spill will be duly advised on how to submit their claims for processing," it added.

Also on Tuesday, Protect Verde Island Passage (Protect VIP) called for the urgent exhaustion of available means to secure livelihood reparation and ensure immediate receipt of funds for the communities affected by the oil spill, specifically by holding polluting companies at fault accountable and penalizing them.

The Department of Health (DOH) said 122 people have gotten sick due to the effects of the oil spill.

DOH officer-in-charge Maria Rosario Vergeire said that of the 122 cases reported, most of them had headaches and respiratory-related symptoms like cough and colds.

Vergeire said most of these cases have already recovered.

Only one was admitted in a hospital due to an aggravated asthma, but was also discharged the next day, she said.

With Charles Dantes



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Oil-spill boat had no permit to sail

BY BUTCH FERNANDEZ

✉@butchBM

THE effort to claim \$1-billion indemnity from insurance taken out by the owners of the sunken boat spilling oil in Mindoro Oriental faces an uphill climb because of the company's regulatory lapses, dashing hopes that thousands of people impacted by the massive leak could promptly get financial help for the damage and lost livelihood.

Sen. Cynthia Villar stressed this at Tuesday's Senate hearing on the massive oil spill and urged the government to step in and source funds to cover for the damage mitigation and cleanup for what has been called the country's worst ecological disaster.

Presiding over the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Villar also lined up environment

protection measures filed by senators, including six bills she herself endorsed for plenary action, declaring ecologically vital areas as protected areas (PAs) under the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems (NIPAS).

Villar expressed dismay over the extent of damage caused by the oil spill from tanker MT Princess

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SEN. Cynthia Villar presides Tuesday at the Senate hearing on the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro, tagged as the country's worst ecological disaster. At the hearing, Villar disclosed that the owner of MT Princess Empress, which sank off Naujan town on February 28, had not amended its certificate of public convenience when it acquired the vessel, and thus it had no permit to sail. VOLTAIRE F. DOMINGO/SENATE PRIB





Oil-spill...

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Empress that sank off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on February 28, noting that the oil spill "is emerging to have more extensive effects," compared to the 2006 Guimaras oil spill—considered then as the worst in the country's history.

Citing the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council Situation Report dated March 12, 2023, Villar said the oil spill in the province affected 21,691 families in 117 barangays of Region 4-B; 7,616 families in four barangays of Region 6; a total of 13 marine protected areas and 61 tourist attractions; and an estimate of 8 kilometers of coastline in Caluya, Antique.

"It is an understatement to say that this is a distressing news for the country. For one, this oil spill incident is a setback on our ongoing efforts to strengthen our ecosystem and mend our fragile biodiversity while we are undergoing the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration from 2021 to 2030. You see, the Philippines is among the world's biodiversity hotspots or those areas experiencing high rates of habitat and biodiversity loss," Villar pointed out.

Also at Tuesday's hearing, Senator Francis Tolentino questioned the seaworthiness of the M/T Princess Empress.

"We want to know how old is the M/T Princess Empress, how long has it been in business, and if it has been inspected for seaworthiness; inspection is crucial," Tolentino

said, speaking mostly in Filipino.

The sea accident continues to affect not only the livelihood of fisherfolk, but also the marine biodiversity and tourism as it heads towards the famous beaches of Coron in Palawan and in Boracay Island.

Representatives from the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) bared to the Senate panel that RDC Reield Marine Services (RDC)—the owner of M/T Princess Empress—has yet to secure an amendment of its certificate of public convenience (CPC) for the ill-fated vessel; thus it should not have been allowed to sail in the first place.

MARINA'S revelation thus confirmed information raised by Villar at the start of the hearing, when she warned against fanning undue expectations of oil spill victims who may think the vessel owner can easily use its insurance claim to cover its liabilities to them.

Tolentino, who earlier spurred the Senate environment panel to demand an in-depth assessment of the huge damage brought by the Mindoro oil spill incident following his privilege speech last week, also urged authorities and M/T Princess Empress's owner to hasten the distribution of compensation for those affected by it.

Compensation Act

TOLENTINO suggested that authorities use existing funds cited in Republic Act No. 9483 or the Oil Pollution Compensation Act, since there is a specific provision there in which for every shipment of oil tanker, 10 centavos per liter is allotted specifically for compensation fund.

"In the law—in Section 1 of the IRR [Implementing Rules and Regulations] sa Republic Act 9483—for every delivery of an oil tanker, 10 centavos per liter of every delivery should go to the compensation fund. These funds are administered by the Maritime Industry Authority [MARINA]," said Tolentino.

According to Tolentino, MARINA should lay down the guidelines on how the said compensation fund provided under the law will be utilized as soon as possible to fast-track its distribution to affected residents and local government units (LGUs) not only in Mindoro Oriental, but also in other areas like in Coron, Palawan and in some provinces in the Western Visayas region.

Tolentino said it's now a race against time and authorities should not wait for the compensation and assistance coming from RDC Reield Marine Services (RDC), owner of the ill-fated boat. Tolentino also noted that the said company should clarify the status of its insurance claim since they are the one primary responsible for damaging the country's center of marine biodiversity.

Authorities at present continue to race against time in containing the 800,000-liter that spilled from the oil tanker after it sank.

Sen. Raffy T. Tulfo called for a review of the provisions of Republic Act 9483 which, he said, tends to shield charterers from oil spill liabilities. Tulfo pointed out during the hearing that RA 9483 exempts charterers from claims for compensation and damages. "A charterer should also have a liability. This also concerns the capability of the coast guard to contain oil spills," Tulfo said.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros stressed the importance of collective and immediate action to clean up and mitigate the effects of the oil spill on the lives of many Filipinos, the environment and to country.

Hontiveros said the oil spill has placed one of the richest biodiversity sites in the world and the livelihood of many of Filipinos living in the affected areas at risk. The Verde Island Passage is known as the center of marine shorefish biodiversity in the world. "The threat that this brings to the Verde Island Passage will impact not only the people living in Mindoro and nearby provinces...but as the area with the highest concentration of coral reefs, fishes and mangroves, it will also negatively affect the country's food supply," Hontiveros said.



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President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda asked government agencies to clarify their roles in the oil spill, citing the need for a concerted action for containing, removing, and mitigating the damage, as well as addressing its impacts on health and livelihood. "There should be one head," Legarda said, as she called for a "coherent, comprehensive response" to the oil spill. "We cannot have different agencies—while well-meaning, well-funded, have the resources—[working] without a head," she pointed out. She said that under Republic Act No. 10121, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) was tasked to provide for a framework and coordinate efforts for such disasters. Legarda recommended that an official be designated to lead the agencies in the oil spill response.

Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero grilled Philippine Coast Guard and officials of the oil tanker over the incident, pointing out the failure of the PCG to check the ship's certificate of public convenience (CPC).

In questioning Fritzee Tee, vice president of RDC Reield Marine Services Inc. which owns MT Princess Empress, Escudero found out that the vessel was newly acquired and has sailed nine times already even though it technically had no permit to operate yet. Tee said they applied for an amended CPC in November 2022. "So nine times from whatever area it left port, the Coast Guard was supposed to inspect it and the Coast Guard saw that there was no amended CPC yet covering this vessel. [That means this is already the] ninth oversight on the part of Coast Guard," Escudero said.

CPC is a license to operate or an authorization issued for the operation of public services for which no franchise, either municipal or legislative, is required by law such as a common carrier. Escudero also learned that the ship was not issued an amended CPC because the owner did not apply for one.



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Clean-up. Residents of Caluya, Antique clean their shorelines affected by the oil slick under the cash-for-work program being implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Western Visayas. Some 1,200 residents, mostly fishermen, are participating in the clean-up drive. DSWD PHOTO

'Ill-fated tanker had no permit to operate'

Senators say PCG remiss in its job

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

SEN. Cynthia Villar yesterday said the ill-fated tanker MT Princess Empress, which sank off the waters of Oriental Mindoro last February 28 and spilled oil that has severely affected various areas, had no permit to operate.

During a hearing conducted by the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change, Villar showed a copy of the accident report by the Maritime

Industry Authority showing the sunken vessel "has no permit to operate in the form of an amendment to its certificate of public convenience (CPC).

"The ship has no authority to operate in the form of an amendment to its certificate of public convenience issued... to operate the MT Princess Empress in the domestic trade pursuant to the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9295 (Domestic Shipping Development Act of

2004)," Villar said, quoting the Marina accident report.

The CPC is a license issued by Marina to domestic ship operators so they can engage in domestic shipping. Once a shipping company acquires a new ship, it needs to file an amendment to its CPC to include the new vessel.

During the same hearing, Mindoro Oriental Gov. Humerlito Dolor slammed the national government over what he said was its lack of collective efforts to contain

the oil spill more than two weeks after the vessel, carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil and 10,000 liters of operational fuel, sank off Naujan town.

Last Sunday, the Philippine Coast Guard said the 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil cargo of the ship appeared to be intact, adding the oil slick in the waters off Mindoro Oriental and nearby provinces came from the vessel's

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operational fuel.

Reacting to Villar's revelation, Sen. Raffy Tulfo said the PCG was remiss in its job to prevent the ship from sailing since it did not yet have a CPC. Tulfo said PCG commanders should be held responsible for the lapses of its personnel.

PCG leaders said they are investigating why their personnel did not board the ship to determine if it has complete papers and why the ship was allowed to sail.

Sen. Francis Escudero said this was the ninth time the PCG failed its duty to inspect a ship.

Villar said with the absence of the CPC, the ship owner – RDC Reiled Marine Services – may not be able to claim the \$1 billion insurance money.

"We will have a problem on that may-be... The Marina and the coast guard will explain that they cannot claim from the insurance because they have no permit to operate. We should not wait (for) that anymore. They have a problem with that... Don't depend on something that will not come," Villar said.

MARINA REVELATION

Hernani Fabia, Marina administrator, said the ship owner has yet to submit complete documents in its application to amend its CPC to include the sunken ship in its fleet.

Since the ship owner has yet to satisfy all the documentary requirements, Fabia said, "they were not issued a permit immediately" and should not have been allowed to sail.

Fabia said RDC also did not apply for a special permit to operate pending the completion of documents.

"We can grant temporary permits or special permits but they (RDC) did not apply. We did not issue because they did not apply... From what I understand, RDC still lacks financial documents. But once they comply, we will conduct a hearing, and then we can immediately issue a CPC," he said.

RDC Vice President Fritzie Tee said the ship was bought sometime in 2022, adding

they immediately applied the amendment to their CPC last November and started to submit the documentary requirements the following month.

Tee said the ship was on its ninth voyage when it sank.

Fabia said the affected areas can still be compensated once the PCG sues RDC so the Oil Pollution Management Fund can be used.

GOVERNMENT SCORED

Dolor, who got emotional during the hearing, said there is no particular government official who is in charge of the situation, particularly on how to prevent the oil spill from reaching the shores of Mindoro Oriental.

"We are looking for answers to our problems in this Senate hearing. There is no clear plan so that the oil spill will not reach our shorelines. It is the local government now who is managing. Can you imagine coconut tree branches (as oil spill booms)? Our mayor has cut coconut tree branches, and coconut husks just to contain it. The coast guard should have immediately acted on this," Dolor said.

While the location of the sunken vessel has been pinpointed, he said the deployment of a remotely operated underwater vessel (ROV) could be of big help to determine the extent of the ship's damage.

He said no one from the national government is moving for the deployment of an ROV.

"We also need an ROV. But it is not my job to get an ROV, this is the job of the coast guard. But who finds a way? Who calls (transportation) Sec. (Jaime) Bautista? Who talks to the coast guard, with the Philippine Ports Authority, with the Bureau of Quarantine? It's Governor Dolor," he said.

He said that even the translation of the insurance contract of MT Princess Empress – written in Chinese, Singaporean, and Japanese – is a task apparently dependent on him.

"You are making me your secretariat. Just to facilitate the arrival of the ROV to the vessel, it is not my job. I am the one taking care because this is my province," he said, adding there are no clear plans on

the cleanup efforts on the shorelines of Mindoro Oriental.

"The national government should be there as one whole team, that's why our request, Madam Chair, senators, and to Secretary Carlito Galvez, is that can the NDRRMC hold one dialogue?"

Sec. Galvez assured me before he left (the Senate hearing) that he will be in-charge. I know the government is doing everything but what we need now is quick action to the problem," he added.

The oil slick can possibly affect approximately 20,000 hectares of coral reef and 6,000 hectares of seagrass in 14 municipalities and one city in the province, based on Bulletin No. 3 of the University of the Philippines- Marine Science Institute dated March 4.

The oil slick can also spread in five municipalities in Palawan, and one in Antique.

"That was a projection made 10 days ago, we hope to see updated figures based on actual scenario now as the spread of the oil spill has been escalating day by day and its effects have become more pronounced," Villar said, adding national government agencies and the ship owner should "contain the oil spill in the most expeditious way possible."

BATANGAS READY

Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas yesterday said the province is prepared to address the oil slick once it reaches their shores.

Mandanas issued the statement two days after the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) warned that the oil slick may reach the Verde Island Passage in Batangas.

Due to the "weakening Amihan (northeast monsoon)," UP-MSI said the oil slick may flow northwards and affect Calapan in Mindoro, Verde Island and some parts of Batangas.

"The oil spill threatens the global center of marine biodiversity located in the Verde Island Passage," UP-MSI said.

In a radio interview, Mandanas said the Batangas provincial government has been monitoring the situation since the MT Princess Empress sank and spilled oil.



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"We're monitoring it in coordination with our Coast Guard," said Mandanas, adding the measures are already in place; ready to be implemented in case the need arises.

As of yesterday, Mandanas said they have not monitored any oil from the sunken ship going to the province.

"Since this problem started up to now, we've been monitoring. Fortunately, no oil is flowing (towards Batangas)," said Mandanas.

Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz slammed the ship's insurance company for not helping in the cleanup of oil in the shorelines of the town.

"They said they are going to help in the cleanup. But until now, you know the ones involved (in the cleanup) are us, the Coast Guard and people hired by the DOLE (under its cash for work program)," said Cruz.

"Where is the help they are saying, we're not feeling anything," said Cruz.

"Until when are we going to wait? There is still no timetable given to us (to stop the oil spill). Our marine resources are already damaged. What if there will be a change in wind direction? Others will be affected," said Cruz.

122 FALL ILL

The Department of Health (DOH) yesterday reported that 122 individuals have fallen ill due to the massive oil spill either through skin inhalation or ingestion.

In a press briefing, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said cases include cough, colds, headache, dizziness, difficulty in breathing, skin rashes, and aggravation of asthma.

"Most of these are coughs and colds as well as headaches," she said.

She said they are minor incidents, with only one with aggravated asthma requiring hospitalization.

"All in all, almost all have already recovered. Only one needed to be hospitalized because of asthma attack but has been discharged after one day," said Vergeire.

The DOH had earlier warned communities in areas affected by the oil spill to avoid exposure to chemicals. These include not swimming in affected areas and avoiding contact with sediments, sand, soil, or other

things contaminated by oil.

The DOH said the public must also avoid consuming water contaminated by oil and avoid eating fish, seashells, and other resources caught in areas near the oil spill.

DSWD PROGRAM

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has already employed 1,453 people, most of them fishermen, under the 15-day cash for work program in oil spill-affected Caluya town in Antique.

The DSWD is set to implement the CFW program in Pola; Bongabong and Bansud all in Oriental Mindoro starting March 15.

The CFW usually involves the cleanup of areas affected by the oil spill and provides work for 15 days, or five days a week for three weeks. They will be paid the prevailing minimum amount per day.

In Antique, the DSWD has also provided 865 affected families with Emergency Cash Transfers (ECT) aid worth P8,122 per household. A total of P7 million in cash has been distributed in Barangays Tinogboc, Semirara, and Alegria, all in Caluya.

In Palawan, the DSWD distributed P5,000 cash aid under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program that benefitted 1,742 affected residents from Barangays Algeciras and Concepcion in Agutaya.

In Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro, DSWD distributed P5,000 cash under AICS to 643 beneficiaries.

DSWD said to date, it has already distributed more than P9.9 million worth of cash assistance

This is on top of the Family Food Packs (FFPs) and non-food items that were distributed to Region IV-B (Mimaropa) or 21,152 FFPs worth P14.8 million, and to region VI (Western Visayas) or 6,600 FFPs worth P3.49 million.

DSWD said as of March 14, 31,392 families or 141,988 individuals from 122 barangays in Mimaropa and Western Visayas VI have been affected by the oil spill. - *With Victor Reyes, Jocelyn Montemayor and Gerald Naval*



Sunken Philippine tanker that caused oil spill had no permit

THE TANKER that sank and caused an oil spill in the waters of Oriental Mindoro province south of the Philippine capital did not have a permit to operate, maritime officials told the Senate on Tuesday.

RDC [Reield Marine Services, Inc.] has a pending application which we were hoping to conduct a hearing on, but there were documents missing," Hernani N. Fabia, administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority, told a hearing investigating the spill. "Since we still have to hear it, they were not issued (a certificate of public convenience) immediately."

MT Princess Empress was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil on Feb. 28 when it sank off the waters of Naujan Oriental Mindoro, which surrounds 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. Fabia told the Senate environment committee *MT Princess Empress* had not been included in the permit issued to RDC, which meant it was not supposed to sail.

During the hearing, RDC Vice President Fritzee Tee said the

sunken tanker had sailed nine times before it sank.

The company, she added, had applied to include the vessel in its permit as early as November, with all documents passed by December. It sailed after submitting all the requirements.

"So it has happened nine times already," Senator Francis Joseph "Chiz" G. Escudero told the hearing. "Nine times from whatever port it left from. This is the ninth oversight on the part of (the) Coast Guard," he added.

Ms. Tee confirmed two locations — Bataan and Manila where the *MT Princess Empress*, commissioned in 2022, had sailed from.

Senators asked her to send a report detailing the journeys, and for the Philippine Coast Guard to explain why the ship was allowed to operate.

Coast Guard Vice Admiral Joseph M. Coyme admitted that there was no adequate inspection, adding a check on the certificate of public convenience was not included in the ship's pre-departure inspection checklist.

He said the Coast Guard would investigate lapses on the part of their personnel.

"If your people were not careless, they wouldn't have allowed that vessel to sail because it lacked documents and we wouldn't be talking to each other here, period," Senator Rafael "Raffy" T. Tulfo told coast guard officials in Filipino. Coast Guard officials must be charged for negligence, he added.

Coast Guard Deputy Commandant for Operations Rolando Lizardo N. Punzalan, Jr. said the damage caused by the oil spill had reached 55.5 kilometers of the coastline — 45 kilometers in Oriental Mindoro, 6 kilometers in Antique province and 4.5 kilometers in Palawan.

More than 5,200 liters of oil-water mixture and 115.3 kilos of oil-contaminated garbage had been collected.

"It is an understatement to say that this is a distressing news for the country," Senator Cynthia A. Villar, who led the hearing, said. "This oil spill incident is a setback on our ongoing efforts to strengthen our ecosystem and mend our fragile biodiversity while we are undergoing the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration from 2021 to 2030."

"Moreover, as the people are still inching towards recovery from the pandemic, it appears unwarranted for the residents of the provinces and municipalities... to be subjected to additional hardships because of the oil spill," she added.

Marine protected areas and 61 tourist attractions in Oriental Mindoro have been affected by the oil spill the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council said in a report.

'CONTAINMENT'

It also found that 107,232 people in 117 villages in the Mimaropa region and 26,259 people in four villages in Western Visayas were affected.

Ms. Villar called for the ship owner and all concerned government agencies to contain the spill as soon as possible.

"Time is of the essence in order to avert further and irreparable damages," she said. "Sure, it will not be easy, but we have the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan in place, there is technology in the application of containment booms, skimming of oil, siphoning of oil, use of sorbents and if it is safe, the use of chemical dispersants to break down oil," she added.

"We hope to learn and see what will be the calibrated actions of our relevant government agencies towards the goal of oil containment," Ms. Villar said, noting that the private sector, United States and Japan have signified willingness to help.

Senator Francis N. Tolentino said Marina should lay down the guidelines on how the compensation fund under the Oil Pollution Compensation Act could be used to fast-track aid to affected residents and local governments.

Meanwhile, Greenpeace Philippines urged the government of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to seek accountability from the owner of the sunken vessel "for the irreparable and ongoing damage" of the oil spill.

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link bit.ly/tanker031523



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Sunken tanker had no permit to operate

BY JAVIER JOE ISMAEL

THE MT Princess Empress operated without the amended Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC), or the permit to operate issued by the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) to water transport providers.

This surfaced on Tuesday in a public hearing by the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change on the escalating oil spill from the sunken tanker that is now causing damage to the marine ecosystem and biodiversity in Oriental Mindoro and other areas.

With this development, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) told the committee chaired by Sen. Cynthia Villar that it may recommend the filing of appropriate charges against the RDC Reield Marine Services, owner of the vessel.

During the hearing, Villar informed local government officials of Oriental Mindoro led by Gov. Humerlito Dolor not to expect much on getting the damage and

insurance claims from the RDC Reield Marine Services, after she was informed by Marina and PCG that MT Princess Empress has no CPC that allows RDC to operate.

Fritzee Tee, vice president of the RDC Reield Marine Services, also said during the hearing that they are a small family business corporation that is incapable of complying with the insurance claims of the local government of Oriental Mindoro, amounting to \$1 billion in damages.

Governor Dolor said the sunken MT Princess Empress carrying 800,000 liters of oil has left a negative impact on the livelihood and daily lives of more than 99,000 individuals or 19,900 families.

He said the damage is heavy,



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SENATE HEARING Sen. Lorna Regina 'Loren' Legarda listens to Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor during the Senate hearing on the oil spill caused by the sinking of the MT Princess Empress on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. PHOTO BY RENE H.DILAN

especially in Pola, where the oil spill reached the shorelines of all the barangay.

Many fish have died, while some seagrasses, corals and mangroves have been damaged too due to the oil spill, he added.

Dolor said that 122 residents in the province fell sick because of the effects of the oil spill.

Some of them had respiratory-related symptoms while others experienced vomiting and diarrhea.

Meanwhile, environmental groups urged the government to immediately contain the oil spill, as it also impacts the health of residents and livelihood of thousands of fisherfolk in Oriental Mindoro.

In a position paper submitted to the Villar committee, the Greenpeace Philippines supports the call for an inquiry into the Mindoro oil spill.

It also recommends to go beyond looking into the technicalities surrounding the spill and also put a spotlight on the accountability of the companies involved.

They are also calling for reparations for the affected people and communities.

Greenpeace believes that the inquiry should delve into the accountability of the companies, including the owner of the cargo.

The government must mandate the companies concerned to go beyond "cleanup" and pay reparations for the environmental destruction and its impacts on people.

Payment must include costs of the loss of livelihoods, short- and long-term health impacts, destruction of ecosystems, and disruption of ecosystem services.

For its part, Oceana Philippines calls upon the government to declare a state of national calamity and effect immediate action to save highly threatened fisheries, marine ecosystems and communities.

This is in response to the oil spill contamination in the Verde Island Passage, known as the Amazon of the Oceans and considered as the center of the center of the world's marine biodiversity.

Oceana also stated that it has been almost two weeks since the oil spill occurred, and there are no signs of its spread being contained nor do we hear implementation plans from various government agencies.

Length of coastline damage

As of March 13, the total length of coastline affected by the oil spill has reached 55.5 kilometers, according to the latest situation

report issued by the Philippine Coast Guard on Tuesday.

The PCG said 45 kilometers of Oriental Mindoro's coastline, 6 km of Antique's, or at least three barangay in Caluya town, and 4.5 km of Palawan's have been affected by the oil spill.

Meanwhile, 115,295 cubic meters or 115,295 kilos of oil-contaminated garbage and 5,206 liters of oil-water mixture have so far been collected.

In Oriental Mindoro alone, 931 sacks and 22 drums of oil debris have so far been collected during the coastal cleanup drives.

PCG spokesman Rear Admiral Armand Balilo said the agency is focusing on saving marine protected areas in Naujan and Pola in Oriental Mindoro.

According to the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), about 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 ha of mangroves and 6,000 ha of seagrass may be affected by the oil slick.

The PCG is now working with Japan to address the oil spill and has sought additional assistance from the United States.

Sen. Francis Tolentino, meanwhile, wanted to know if the fund from Republic Act (RA) 9483 or the "Oil Pollution Compensation Act" can be used in the recovery efforts of the coastal communities affected by the oil spill.

Tolentino suggested that authorities should utilize funds under RA 9483 as the law provides that for every shipment of oil tanker, 10 centavos per liter is allotted specifically for the compensation fund.

He also underscored the need to "identify" the parties that will be responsible for the cleaning of the spill-affected areas as well as the source of funds that will be used in the recovery efforts.

"We need to know if the fund from the Oil Pollution Compensation Act can be used in the recovery

efforts or if it will be funded by the owners of the MT Princess Empress," Tolentino said.

Sen. Ana Theresia "Risa" Hontiveros deplored that the oil spill has placed one of the richest biodiversity sites in the world and the livelihood of many Filipinos living in the affected areas "at risk."

"The Verde Passage area has the highest concentration of coral reefs, fishes and mangroves. The oil spill here will also negatively affect the country's food supply," Hontiveros said.

Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero slammed the PCG for its apparent failure to check the ship's certificate of public convenience.

In questioning Fritzee Tee, RDC vice president, Escudero found out that the vessel was newly acquired and has already sailed nine times.

Tee said they applied for an amended CPC in November 2022.

"So nine times from whatever area it left port, the Coast Guard was supposed to inspect it and the Coast Guard saw that there was no amended CPC yet covering this vessel. [That means this is already the] ninth oversight on the part of Coast Guard," Escudero said.

Senate President Pro Tempore Lorna Regina "Loren" Legarda, meanwhile, stressed the need for a concerted action for containing, removing, and mitigating the damage caused by the spill, as well as addressing its impacts to health and livelihood.

"There should be one head. We cannot have different agencies — while well-meaning, well-funded, have the resources — [working] without a head," the senator pointed out.

Legarda said that under RA 10121, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council was tasked to provide a framework and coordinate efforts for such disasters.

FRANCO JOSE C. BAROÑA AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



Senate probe sa Oriental Mindoro oil spill sinimulan

SINIMULAN ni Senador Cynthia A. Villar ang imbestigasyon ng Senado sa nangyaring oil spill sa Oriental Mindoro noong Pebrero na dinaluhan ng halos lahat ng opisyal ng kinauukulang ahensya at may-ari ng barkong MT Princess Empress.

Sa pahayag, tinatalakay ng Senate committee on environment, natural resources and climate change na pinalamutian ni Villar ang Senate Resolution No. 537 at 538, kabilang ang privilege speech of Senator Francis Tolentino sa oil leak incident.

Layunin ng imbestigasyon na suriin ang pinsala at iba pang epekto ng oil spill sa lalawigan at residente ng lugar.

Naganap ang oil spill noong Pebrero 28 matapos lumubog ang MT Princess Empress, isang tanker na may kargang 800,000 litro ng industrial fuel sa karagatan malapit sa Naujan town.

Umabot sa 77 coastal village ang naideklara sa ilalim ng state of calamity matapos ang insidente.

Naitala rin ng lalawigan na umabot sa 19,000 residente ang apektado ng oil spill. Nakatakda silang bigyan ng ayuda ng Department of Social Welfare and Development. **ERNIE REYES**



Group presses full accountability from companies linked to oil spill

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL group Greenpeace on Tuesday urged the government to demand full responsibility and accountability from those involved in the Mindoro oil spill.

The call was made as the Senate began its public hearing on the sinking on February 28 of the MT Princess Empress in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro that is reportedly carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil.

The oil spill is projected to affect 36,000 hectares of mangrove forests, coral reefs, and seagrass beds in Mindoro, Batangas, and nearby provinces in the Visayas.

Unless the government demands full responsibility from those involved in the oil spill, companies will get away scot-free and avoid their environmental and social accountability for cleanup and economic damages caused by the disaster, Greenpeace Philippines warned.

The group noted that the tanker owner was slow to take responsibility for the spill, and that two weeks after the spill, the charterer or cargo owner has not come out and their identities remain unknown, with no government agency calling them out to take accountability.

Greenpeace reiterated the need for transparency from the government and urged members of the Senate panel conducting the public inquiry to underscore the accountability of the companies involved and seek reparations for affected communities.

Greenpeace noted that while the owner of the tanker, RDC Reield Marine Services, has apologized for its role in the spill, the owner of the oil cargo is yet to be named, although media reports identified SL Harbor Bulk Terminal Corp., reportedly a subsidiary of San Miguel Shipping and Lighterage Corporation, a company under conglomerate San Miguel Corporation, allegedly chartered the vessel.

a comprehensive inquiry—seek accountability from these companies for the irreparable and ongoing damage the spill has dealt to the communities affected municipalities.

“We must remember that unless the companies involved are held fully accountable, it is the government that will shoulder the costs for ‘cleanup,’ recovery, and long-term rehabilitation of the ecosystems and communities impacted, in effect cleaning up and paying for the pollution private companies have caused,” Chua said. “Full transparency from all the companies and government agencies involved should therefore be sought.”

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) continues to rally communities to create oil spill booms made of organic materials to save marine ecosystems threatened by the oil slick.

Working hand-in-hand with various national government agencies, including the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the local government units and the local communities, the DENR hopes to restrict the oil leaked by the sunken MT Princess Empress from afflicting surrounding marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Mimaropa and Western Visayas regions.

The use of improvised spill booms is a feasible precautionary measure to prevent damage to marine environments. These booms are made from indigenous materials, which are readily accessible to the immediate communities.

The DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) Mimaropa, together with the PCG and LGUs, has installed provisional spill booms made of cogon and sawali in Casiligan River and Calimawawa River in Oriental Mindoro province to prevent the oil spill from reaching the mangrove forests, coral reefs, and other marine life.



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"If these reports are true, these are alarming developments with regard to the spill. This suggests that the government does not have any teeth to compel polluters to own responsibility for a major catastrophe," Greenpeace campaigner Jefferson Chua said in a statement.

"Unfortunately, we have yet to see the government stand up and take side with the communities and LGUs [local government unit] who have lost the main source of their livelihoods and economies by calling for all companies involved to take full responsibility for the damage," he added.

"There is also a glaring lack of official information on what facility the cargo came from and where it's headed, and what it is exactly that's leaking out of the sunken ship," he added. "These are vital pieces of information that can aid in developing policies for the avoidance of such accidents in the future."

Greenpeace said it is in the best interest of the government to name all parties responsible, and—through

Coconut shingles, which have effective adsorption capacities, are also vital materials in fabricating spill booms. These are used with nets in Barangay Misong, Pola, and rice straws at Barangay Aplaya in Poblacion and Barangay Anilao in Bongabong.

Coastal municipalities not affected by the oil spill have started fabricating and deploying spill booms 2 kilometers away from their shorelines as a precaution against the creeping spill.

Imalaguan Island MPA in Cuyo, Palawan now has about 100-meter booms, protecting its sanctuaries inhabited by pelagic fishes, coral reefs, and mangrove forests. Volunteers in Roxas, Palawan, which caters 13 MPAs across its 11 barangays, also started deploying spill booms.

The DENR-EMB Western Visayas worked with the local government of Caluya, Antique and PCG to undertake cleanup operations at the shorelines of Sitio Sabang at Barangay Tinogboc. This included the fabrication and completion of a 1,363-meter improvised spill boom using nets and coconut shingles to help contain the oil spillage, and prevent it from reaching the shore.



Lumubog na MT Princess Empress walang permiso para maglayag - MARINA

ISINIWALAT ng Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) nitong Martes, Marso 14, na walang permit nang maglayag ang MT Princess Empress na lumubog sa Naujan, Oriental Mindoro at naging dahilan ng oil spill sa ilang baybay-dagat ng bansa.

Sa Senate hearing ng Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change sa oil spill sa Mindoro, ibinahagi ng MARINA na walang permit ang may-ari ng tanker para magsagawa ng nasabing operasyon.

May pending application ang kompanya para amyendahan ang Certificate of Public Convenience nito.

Patuloy pa rin ang pagkalat ng oil spill dahil sa paglubog ng naturang barko na may kargang 800,000 litro ng industrial oil noong Pebrero 28 sa bahagi ng Naujan.

Sa pag-aaral ng University of the Philippines (UP) Marine Science Institute, maaaring umabot at makapinsala narin ang oil spill sa Verde Island Passage (VIP) na siyang global center ng marine biodiversity at nagbibigay-benepisyo sa tinatayang 2-milyong indibidwal.



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San Miguel 'silence' on oil spill slammed

BY RAFFY AYENG AND LADE KABAGANI
@tribuneph1_raf @tribuneph1_lade

Heavily diversified conglomerate San Miguel Corp. on Tuesday drew strong condemnation from alarmed environmentalists after documents showed it had chartered the sunken *MT Princess Empress* now spilling 800,000 liters of highly polluting industrial oil into Philippine waters.

Ramon Angled SMC — a food and beverage giant now deeply invested in real estate, public-private sector projects, and power generation — was denounced for its "deafening silence" on the sinking of the transport vessel in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

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San Miguel 'silence' on oil spill slammed

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Groups like Protect Verde Island Passage said San Miguel, which had been boasting of its environmental CSR (corporate social responsibility) projects, should be held responsible for what may end up as the worst oil spill to threaten the country's biodiversity and ecology.

Protect VIP lead convener Fr. Edwin Gariguez said SL Harbor Bulk Terminal Corp., a subsidiary of San Miguel Shipping and Lighterage, negotiated with *MT Princess Empress* operator RDC Reield Marine Service to transport the oil.

"We condemn the silence of San Miguel Corporation in its role in the *MT Princess Empress* tragedy and for the audacity to cover up its involvement with a mere cleanup drive to address the oil spill," Gariguez said.

"San Miguel has been a main perpetrator of the fossil fuel boom in the country, including liquefied natural gas, which we have warned will increase the probability of a maritime incident that would threaten the ecologically sensitive ecosystems of Verde Island Passage. SMC has shown our fear was not misplaced," Gariguez added.

The priest said San Miguel cannot be trusted with safety as long as it remains chained to the fossil fuel industry.

He expressed hope that San Miguel will be held accountable for its role in the oil spill under the Revised Rules on Prevention, Containment, Abatement, and Control of Oil Marine Pollution of the Philippine Coast Guard Memorandum Circular 01-2005.

San Miguel had yet to respond to *Daily Tribune's* questions regarding the oil spill at press time.

Party link

Environmental advocate Senator Loren Legarda last 10 March called on Congress and government agencies concerned to investigate the impact of the oil spill on the environment, health, and tourism.

The spill menacing marine species has threatened Mindoro and its neighboring provinces, including Legarda's home province, Antique. She had yet to respond to *Tribune's* questions on San Miguel's involvement in the oil spill.

Legarda's party, the Nationalist Peoples' Coalition, pushed Ang to run in the 2022 presidential election.

Tourist attractions like Boracay in Aklan, many times adjudged the world's best beach with its powdery white sand, are bracing for the arrival of the spill to their shores.

Oil spill experts from Japan arrived in the Philippines last week and are now aiding the Philippine Coast Guard, the fisherfolk, and private and public sector

groups in the cleanup.

"This puts on SMC the responsibility to pay up. SMC must pay at least a P70,000,000 cash bond — P50 million for the cleanup and containment and P20 million for damages and payment to the impacted communities," Gariguez said.

He stressed that environmental destruction and livelihood deprivation should come with a hefty price tag. "The next time SMC is in the news for something big, we hope it will be for the biggest penalty ever imposed on a Philippine company," he said.

No authority

Maritime Industry Authority administrator Atty. Hernani Fabia on Tuesday revealed that *MT Princess Empress* had no authority to operate since its owner needed to amend its certificate of public convenience or CPC when it added the new ship.

A CPC is a license to operate, or an authorization issued for the operation of public services for which no franchise, either municipal or legislative, is required by law such as a common carrier.

"RDC has a pending application for which we wanted to conduct a hearing, but they were missing some documents. They were not issued a permit immediately," Fabia on Tuesday told the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change which is probing the oil spill.

Senator Francis Escudero grilled the Philippine Coast Guard over its failure to check the CPC for the *MT Princess Empress*.

RDC Reield Marine Services Inc. vice president Fritzee Tee said the sunken vessel was newly acquired and that they had applied for an amended CPC last November 2022.

"So nine times from whatever area it left port, the Coast Guard was supposed to inspect it and the Coast Guard saw that there was no amended CPC yet covering this vessel. (That means this is already the) ninth oversight on the part of the Coast Guard," Escudero said.

Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor raised concerns about how they are going to compensate the fishermen whose livelihood has been badly affected by the oil spill.

"All the funds from the national government (but this is punching us), for the past months we have been suffering from the impact of shear lines and now the oil spill," he said.

More oil in ship

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga warned that all the oil still in the vessel could spill out into the sea.

"The quantity of what we've seen on the shore, it is an indication the cargo

was already spilling," Loyzaga said, noting that the spillage is about 35,000 to 50,000 liters per day.

"The calculation then is it will take about 15 to 20 days to empty the vessel. If the assumption is correct, but until we see the actual vessel, we cannot say, but this is the estimated scenario," she said.

As to how long it would take the oil to reach the different municipalities and provinces, Loyzaga said this would depend on the winds and the water currents.

Senator Cynthia Villar expressed dismay over the extent of the spill which has affected 21,691 families from 117 barangays in MIMAROPA and 7,616 families in four barangays of Western Visayas.

Villar said the oil has reached 13 marine protected areas and 61 tourist attractions, and an estimated eight kilometers of coastline in Caluya, Antique.

Senator Risa Hontiveros said the spill will not only affect the residents of Mindoro and nearby provinces, but will also threaten the country's food supply as the area has the highest concentration of coral reefs, fishes and mangroves.

"The urgency of this matter cannot be underscored enough, and we welcome all the help we can get. We need all the help we can get," she said.

No return

Senator Ramon Revilla Jr. described the extent of the damage caused by the oil spill as "overwhelming."

"But we are already there — the point of no return for our once pristine and blue seas. The damage has been done. Be that as it may, we cannot remain unfazed by the threats to our environment from the oil spill," he added.

Hence, Revilla stressed, there is a need to tighten the voyage regulations for tanker ships on Philippine seas.

"Those whose negligence caused the oil spill should be held equally, if not more, liable," he added.

Revilla said RDC Reield Marine Services Inc., owner of the *MT Princess Empress* "must take full responsibility" for cleaning up the oil spill.

Oceana Philippines International on Tuesday urged the government to declare a state of national calamity amid the continuing "extensive" impact of the oil spill.

"It has caused and is still causing significant and irreversible damage to our natural life support system which has affected the livelihoods of the people living in the area, contaminating the waters, killing marine and bird life, and impacting the health of the affected residents," OCP vice president Gloria Estenzo Ramos said.



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Tanker disaster a 'litmus test' for oil pollution law

THE latest oil spill involving MT Princess Empress is a "litmus test" for Republic Act 9483 or the Oil Pollution Compensation Act, which was signed into law in 2007.

The law, signed by then-president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, was the result of the sinking of MT Solar I off the coast of Guimaras in August 2006, spilling more than 2.1 million liters of bunker fuel. This incident is considered the worst oil spill in the country.

The law requires a contribution of P0.10 per liter for every transshipment by tankers and tanker barges of persistent oil (such as the type of oil on board MT Princess Empress) to the Oil Pollution Management Fund (OPMF).

Ninety percent of the OPMF being managed by the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) came from members of the Philippine Petroleum Sea Transport Association under the Philippine Inter-island Shipping Association, an umbrella organization of the country's shipping vessels engaged in the domestic trade.

"We are asking the government to carefully look into the documents of MT Princess Empress and its company if they qualify to tap the fund," a source said.

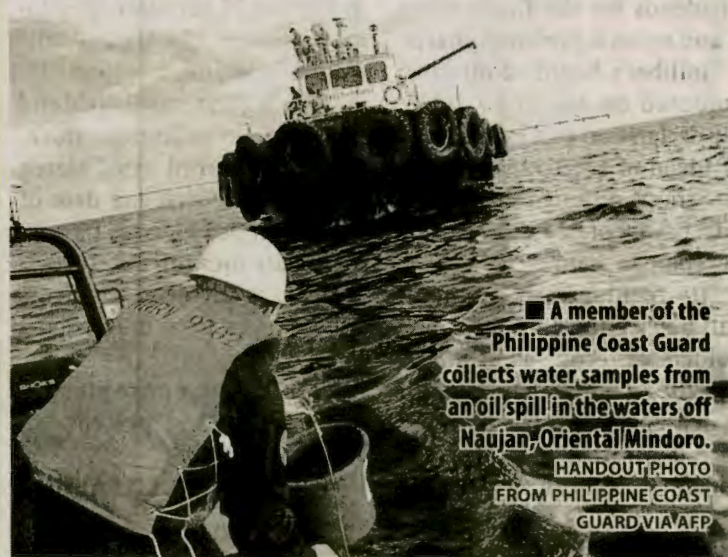
The government was urged to look into the issued certificate of public convenience (CPC), a requirement before a vessel is allowed to trade in the country's domestic waters.

Any vessel that is allowed to sail by government clearing agencies without the CPC, full liability including its cleanup should be shouldered by the owner without prejudice to possible penalties that should be slapped on the persons in government for their negligence.

MT Princess Empress, carrying an estimated 800,000 liters of industrial oil, sank in Oriental Mindoro two weeks ago. The oil spill has reached as far as Taytay in the province of Palawan, endangering the rich marine resources in Verde Island in Batangas, aside from the 76 towns in Oriental Mindoro earlier placed under a state of calamity.

The Philippine Coast Guard classified the spill under Tier 2 of the Three-Tiered Oil Spill System. Tier 2 is considered a medium spill that may require a mutual oil spill response from the region. Tier 3 requires globally available resources, while Tier 1 may be dealt with by individual operators.

CARMELA I. HUELAR



■ A member of the Philippine Coast Guard collects water samples from an oil spill in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

HANDOUT PHOTO
FROM PHILIPPINE COAST
GUARD VIA AFP



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Gov't failures bared in Mindoro oil spill

Senators on Tuesday expressed concern over the lack of a coordinated response to contain the Feb. 28 oil spill off Oriental Mindoro, which has spread to coastal areas in three provinces and affected the livelihood of thousands of fisherfolk. At the start of its inquiry into the disaster on Tuesday, the Senate committee on environment also learned that the sunken tanker did not have the required government permit. —STORY BY MELVIN GASCON

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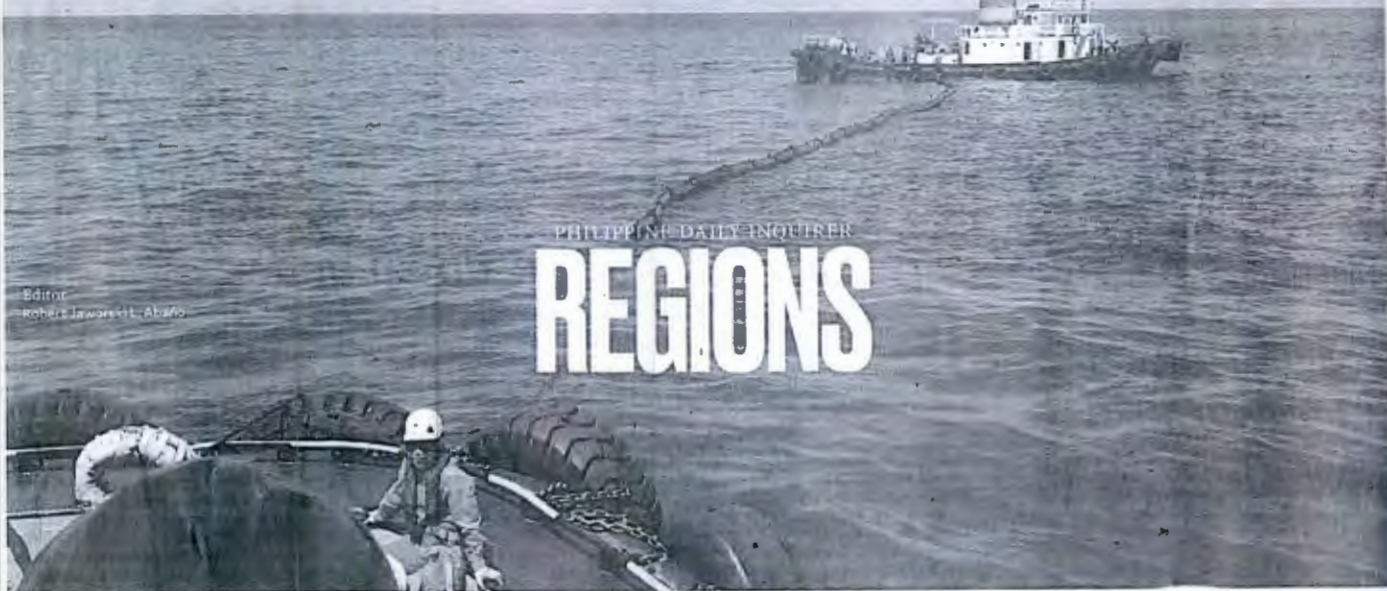
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
REGIONS

Editor
Robert Jaworski, B.A., M.A.

CONTAINMENT AND RECOVERY In this photo taken on March 9, Philippine Coast Guard personnel place an oil spill boom in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, where a fuel tanker sank on Feb. 28. The operation is part of containment and recovery efforts to prevent oil slick from reaching a wider area in the coastlines of at least three provinces. —PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD PHOTO



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Gov't failures bared in Mindoro oil spill

At environment committee hearing, senators learn sunken fuel tanker had no permit; local officials lament lack of coordinated response to marine disaster

By Melvin Gascon
@melvingasconINQ

Senators on Tuesday expressed concern over the lack of a coordinated disaster response to contain the Feb. 28 oil spill off Oriental Mindoro, which has already spread to coastal areas in three provinces and deprived thousands of fisherfolk of their livelihood.

At the start of its inquiry into the maritime disaster on Tuesday, the Senate committee on environment confirmed that the sunken tanker MT Princess Empress, which is feared to spill up to 800,000 liters of industrial-grade oil into the sea, did not have the required government permit to be allowed to sail out to sea.

Citing the complaint of Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda noted that no single official had been directing the national government's disaster response on concerns like containing the oil spill and mitigating its impact on the environment and the livelihood of the affected communities.

"We heard Governor Dolor talk about how they (in the local governments) have been confused because they do not know who was in charge. Government efforts cannot be piecemeal, that every now then, local governments have to wall and beg for assistance," she said.

"I understand the frustration and confusion; (the local governments) are looking for someone who will take the lead," Legarda added.

In response, Sen. Cynthia



INQUIRY Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga (bottom right) and other officials on Monday face senators during an inquiry of the environment, natural resources and climate change committee into the Feb. 28 oil spill in Oriental Mindoro. —RICHARD A. REYES

Villar, who was presiding over the hearing, said the committee would request President Marcos to designate an official to lead the government's response to the impact of the spill.

The probe was prompted by Senate Resolution Nos. 537 and 538, and the March 6 privilege speech delivered by Sen. Francis Tolentino.

Cleanup

According to the Office of Civil Defense, the oil spill has already affected more than 108,000 people in 118 villages in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro and Palawan.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was looking at a "worst case scenario" in dealing with the spill, with a cleanup that could last for weeks and could render the waters unsafe for

fishing for about five months.

"Our assumption is that we will not be able to stop the seepage and that we will act if we are [in] the worst-case scenario in order to present our needs assessment in our collaboration with the rest of the stakeholders," she told senators.

Dolor complained that the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) was quick to file for insurance claims from the P63-million coverage for its own cleanup operations, while the provincial government was struggling to source relief funds for its displaced residents.

"It pains me to hear that while our government is confused about the response, our people in Oriental Mindoro get to bear all the sufferings. You let the vessel sail even without a CPC (certificate of public convenience), and here you are, claiming the funds for your own operations and taking for granted the

needs of our own people. Is that even humane?" Dolor said.

Assistance

Sen. Raffy Tulfo pressed the shipowner to shell out funds for the immediate assistance of displaced fisherfolk, as he expressed concern that the government's cash-for-work might take a while before it could provide relief to affected communities.

"I am told that before, you were hiding from concerned parties. What you should be doing instead is to work closely with (local governments)," he told Fritzee Tee, vice president of RDC Reiled Marine Services, the ship's owner.

In Oriental Mindoro, Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz had given the vessel owner 10 days "to make residents feel their direct support" or face a legal battle.

Cruz said residents of 11 coastal villages of Pola, the worst-hit town by the oil slick, were struggling to survive as they needed to abandon their livelihood due to a fishing ban.

The mayor said she "cannot wait long for the promised compensation of the owner of the oil tanker," citing her obligation to protect the rights of her constituents.

Tulfo said the proceeds of RDC's indemnity insurance for MT Princess Empress might also be used to provide for livelihood assistance for residents.

Villar, however, expressed doubt that RDC would be able to collect insurance claims after Marina confirmed that MT Princess Empress had not been listed in the company's CPC, which is a form of license. —WITH A REPORT FROM MADONNA T. VIROLA INQ



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Gov't protects marine protected areas from oil spill

By CORY MARTINEZ

TO save the marine protected areas (MPAs) in the MIMAROPA and Western Visayas regions, improvised spill booms that were made from indigenous materials were installed to restrict the oil leaked by sunken MT Princess Empress in said areas.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said that with the help from the local government units, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and the local communities in the two regions continue their efforts to protect the MPA's from being damaged from the oil spill.

Booms are temporary floating barriers used to contain marine spills, protect sensitive wetlands, and assist in recovery. The trajectory map of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UPMSI) serves as a guide to install the booms. The UPMSI projected that the oil spill could reach northern Palawan mainland and threaten over 36,000 hectares of marine habitats.

The use of improvised spill booms is a feasible precautionary measure to prevent damage to marine environments. These booms are made from indigenous materials which are readily accessible to the immediate communities.

The DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) MIMAROPA, together with the PCG and LGU, has installed provisional spill booms made of cogon and sawali in Casiligan River and Calimawawa River in Oriental Mindoro province to prevent the oil spill from reaching the mangrove forests, coral reefs, and other marine life.

Coconut shingles, which have effective adsorption capacities, are also vital materials in fabricating spill booms. These are used with nets in Brgy. Misong, Pola, and with rice straws in Brgy. Aplaya in Poblacion and Brgy. Anilao in Bongabong.

The coastal municipalities not affected by the oil spill have started fabricating and deploying spill booms two kilometers away from their shorelines as a precaution against the spill.

The Imalaguan Island MPA in Cuyo, Palawan now has about 100-meter booms, protecting its sanctuaries inhabited by pelagic fishes, coral reefs, and mangrove forests. Volunteers in Roxas, Palawan, which caters 13 MPAs across its 11 barangays, also started deploying spill booms.

Meanwhile, the DENR-EMB Western Visayas worked with the local government of Caluya, Antique and PCG to undertake cleanup operations at the shorelines of Sitio Sabang in Brgy. Tinogboc. This included the fabrication and completion of a 1,363-meter improvised spill boom using nets and coconut shingles to help contain the oil spillage, and prevent it from reaching the shore.

The DENR assured that it remains vigilant in protecting the country's environment and natural resources, especially those in the MIMAROPA and Western Visayas regions, whose island provinces are home to hundreds of marine protected areas rich with marine biodiversity, coral cover quality and diversity, and fish composition that have significant value to communities.



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Owner of sunken tanker says

BY YASHIKA F. TORIB

RDC Reield Marine Services, the owner of MT Princess Empress, expressed regret and apologized for the massive oil spill that devastated coastal towns in Oriental Mindoro and Palawan.

"We are truly sorry that this incident has affected the livelihoods of those living in the impacted areas and the spill's effect on the environment. ... We are committed to doing everything possible to minimize the ongoing impact on the environment and people's lives and clean up the spill," RDC Reield Marine Services said in a statement issued on March 13.

It said the company is focused on oil spill response. "We are adopting a phased approach as advised by experts," it said.

The shipowner said Phase One calls



■ PCG
Commandant
Admiral Artemio
Abu said the
actual depth of
the ship's location
is 389.1 meters
(13.89 kilometers)
northeast of
Balisangan Point,
Pola, Mindoro.
FILE PHOTO

for emergency measures to stop the oil from further spreading. It also mobilized appropriate assets to the site and integrated multiple response elements into a single cohesive strategy to ensure an effective operation.

"Onsite, tugs with spill response equipment onboard continue working

with the Philippine Coast Guard on at-sea containment, recovery and storage of the recovered oil.

"Ashore, international oil spill experts from the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF) are providing technical advice to all parties, including the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), key govern-

sorry for massive oil spill

ment departments such as DENR, central government, local authorities and onsite contractors, our P&I Club and the International Oil Pollution Compensation (IOPC) Funds, to ensure a unified approach.

"In addition, we have retained the specialist French oil spill response company, Le Floch Depollution (LFD), who is mobilizing local assets and personnel, deploying necessary assets within the Philippines, and importing needed equipment from overseas," the company explained.

Phase Two of the oil spill response involves the development of a detailed plan by ITOPF and cleanup contractors, outlining the at-sea and shoreline response for different affected areas for the Philippine authorities' approval and implementation.

Phase 3 involves delivering a cleanup plan with ongoing engagement with government authorities and other stakehold-

ers to ensure clarity and consensus on all aspects of the ongoing operations.

The ITOPF will lead a series of joint surveys of affected sites with key stakeholders to formulate and implement effective cleanup plans with shared agreement on when to end operations.

The RDC Reield Marine Services ensured the public that it continues to work closely with the Philippine government, the PCG, local government representatives, international oil spill experts, and contracted responders to minimize the impact of oil cargo that leaked from the vessel after sinking off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro last February 28.

It was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel when it sank.

The PCG said that that MT Princess Empress was located by the National Mapping and Resource Information

Authority (Namria).

"The actual depth of the ship's location is 389.1 meters and that is 13.89 kilometers northeast of Balisangan Point, Pola, Mindoro," Admiral Artemio Abu, the PCG commandant, said.

Abu explained in a news forum last Saturday that the oil spill is less than 1 million liters, thus, is identified to be Tier 2 under the PCG's National Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

"Right now we are Tier 2 so the Coast Guard will oversee the oil spill response," he said.

The Japan Coast Guard has sent an eight-man team to assist in the oil spill cleanup as the Japanese government committed to providing equipment such as oil blotters, oil snares and oil-proof gloves.

The United States and South Korean governments have also committed to help the Philippines.



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'Oil spill may reach Batangas, Puerto Galera'

Local government officials in Batangas as well as in Puerto Galera and Calapan in Oriental Mindoro should prepare amid the threat of oil spill from the sunken motor tanker *MT Princess Empress*.

"Based on the latest projection on the trajectory of the oil spill, because of the weakening of *amihan* and the prevailing current, part of the oil slick can go to the northern part of Oriental Mindoro and reach Puerto Galera, Calapan and some areas in Batangas," University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) associate professor Dr. Irene Rodriguez said in a radio interview.

She said that the oil slick may reach "very close" to the waters of Puerto Galera and Calapan by today or tomorrow.

"The local government units in areas covering the Verde Island Passage (VIP) in Calapan, Puerto Galera and some areas in Batangas should prepare," Rodriguez said.

The VIP is the body of water between Batangas and Mindoro. It has the highest concentration of coastal fishes, corals, crustaceans, mollusks, seagrasses and mangroves, and is home to endangered and threatened species.

Rodriguez said the UP-MSI is awaiting reports from local government units, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Philippine Coast Guard on sightings, oil debris and analysis on water samples to determine the extent of the damage caused by the oil spill.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DOH) said 122 people have fallen ill due to the oil spill.

DOH officer-in-charge Maria Rosario Vergeire said most of the cases involved cough, cold and headache. There were also cases of dizziness, difficulty in breathing, rashes and asthma attacks.

The DOH had earlier advised residents of affected communities to relocate until the areas have been declared safe. — **Bella Cariaso, Rhodina Villanueva**



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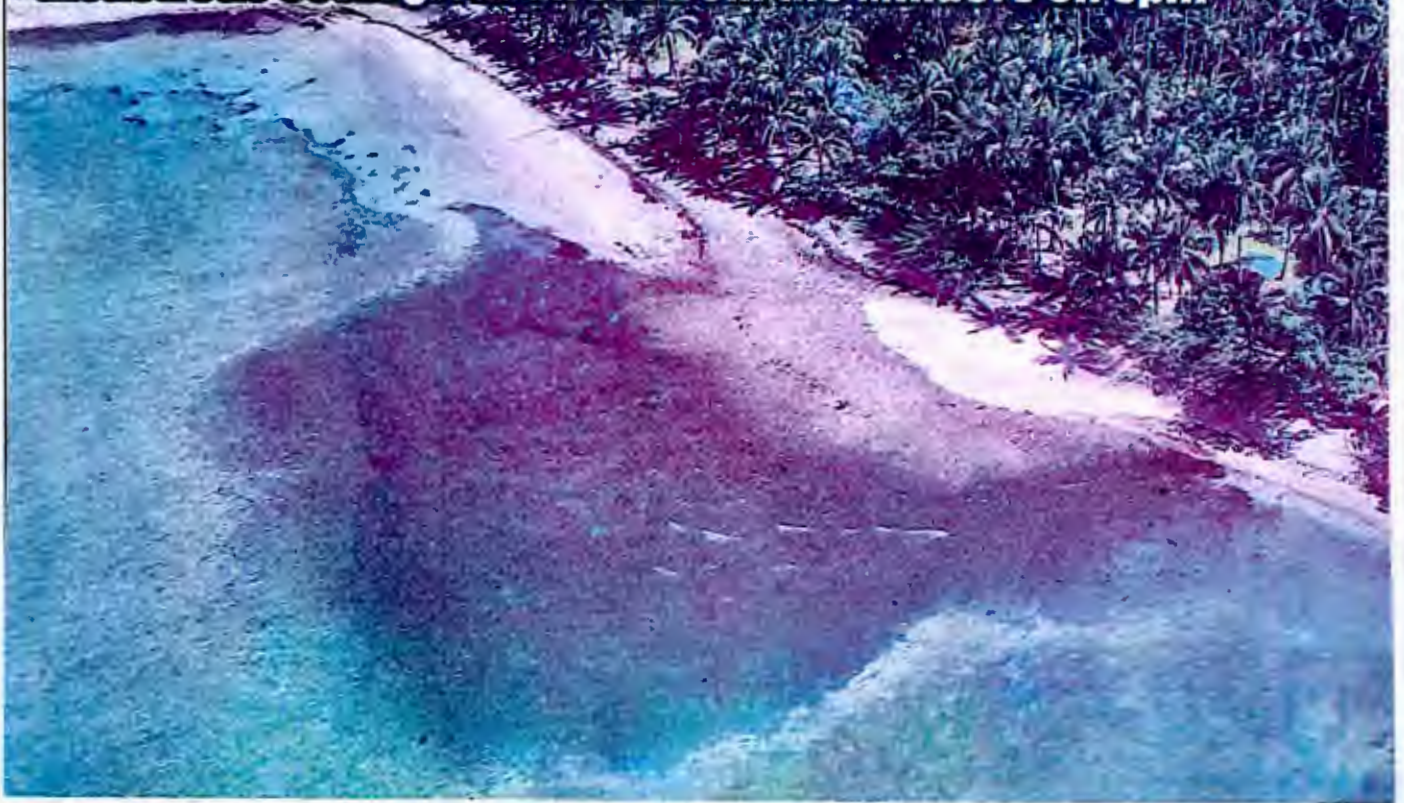
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'(UN)NATURAL' DISASTER

A united effort is mounted to contain a potentially disastrous ecological threat from the Mindoro oil spill Story on p. 2



In aerial view of the Oriental Mindoro oil spill. Photo courtesy of Ezra Acayan FB page.



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United effort mounted to head off disastrous ecological threat from Mindoro oil spill

By Joel dela Torre

THE oil spill containment efforts have been intensified further with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), local government units (LGUs) and surrounding communities in MIMAROPA (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan) and Western Visayas areas joined hands by installing spill booms.

Made from locally available organic materials, booms are temporary floating barriers used to contain marine spills, protect sensitive wetlands and assist in recovery works.

According to the DENR, the use of improvised spill booms is a feasible precautionary measure to prevent damage to marine environments seen to restrict the oil leaked by sunken MT Princess Empress from afflicting surrounding marine protected areas (MPAs).

The trajectory map of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UPMSI) has been used as a guide to install the booms as it projected the oil spill to reach northern Palawan mainland and threaten over 36,000 hectares of marine habitats.

This far, the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) MIMAROPA, together with the PCG and LGU, has installed provisional spill booms made of cogon and sawali in Casiligan River and Calimawa River in Oriental Mindoro province to prevent the oil spill from reaching the mangrove forests, coral reefs, and other marine life.

Coconut shingles, which have effective adsorption capacities, are also vital materials in fabricating spill booms.

These are used with nets in Bgy. Misong, Pola, and rice straws in Bgy. Aplaya in Poblacion and Bgy. Anilao in Bongabong.

Coastal municipalities not affected by the oil spill have started fabricating and deploying spill booms two kilometers away from their shorelines as a precaution against the spill.

Imalaguan Island MPA in Cuyo, Palawan now has about 100-meter booms, protecting its sanctuaries inhabited by pelagic fishes, coral reefs, and mangrove forests. Volunteers in Rox-

as, Palawan, which caters 13 MPAs across its 11 barangays, also started deploying spill booms.

Meanwhile, the DENR-EMB Western Visayas worked with the local government of Caluya, Antique and PCG to undertake clean-up operations at the shorelines of Sitio Sabang in Brgy. Tinogboc.

MINDOROMAYOR DEMANDS AID FOR OIL SPILL

Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz gave the owner of the sunken MT Princess Empress oil tanker 10 days to address the immediate needs of residents affected by the oil spill.

Cruz demanded from the RDC Reield Marine Services "to make residents feel their direct support" during Monday's meeting of the Task Force Pola with several members of the Incident Command System.

She expressed her dismay at the non-coordination of the tanker's owner with them with regard to any compensation or aid for those affected.

MT Princess Empress was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil when it ran aground on Feb. 28 and eventually sank a day after off the coast of the neighboring Naujan town, while en route to Iloilo province from Bataan province after its engine overheated.

As of Monday, there were 11 affected coastal villages here where residents struggle to live every day, Cruz said, noting that most of them are fishers who could not make a living because fishing has been banned as a result of the oil spill.

Philippine Coast Guard Commodore Geronimo Tuvilla, incident commander for the oil spill, gave suggestions to strengthen the legal action against the tanker's owner, including the procedure of investigation.

OVP, DSWD AID AFFECTED RESIDENTS

The Office of the Vice President and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) joined forces in distributing relief operations for residents affected by the oil spill in Caluya, Antique.

Aside from relief goods, residents were given financial assistance from DSWD's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS).

This island town is under a state of calamity due to an oil spill that has affected its municipal waters.

Duterte personally led the distribution of the Relief for

Individuals in Crisis and Emergencies (RICE) to the oil spill victims, the same number of affected families identified by DSWD for AICS payout.

A total of 1,200 rice food boxes were distributed in identified payout sites.

The affected residents are from Barangays Semirara, Tinogboc, Alegria and Sibolo, and Sitio Liwagao.

As of March 3, the oil spill from the tanker near Naujan, Oriental Mindoro spread to other areas, including Caluya Island, affecting 7,617 families or 25,733 individuals, at least 450 of whom are seaweed planters and 3,649 fisherfolk.

This prompted the municipality to declare a state of calamity.

TANKER OWNERS LIABLE FOR OIL SPILL - SOLON

The owners of MT Princess Empress Oil tanker which spilled oil in Oriental Mindoro is liable under several international conventions and should be penalized.

This was stressed by Aklan Rep. Teodorico Haresco as he expressed concern over the alarming effects of the oil spill to the environment, public health, tourism, and livelihood of affected residents in Oriental Mindoro, Antique, Palawan, and other nearby provinces.

According to the veteran solon, the MT Princess Empress is liable under several international conventions which include the 1992 International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (1992 CLC), the 1992 International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage (1992 FUND), the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and the International Safety Management (ISM) Code.

Under the 1992 CLC, the MT Princess Empress owners are liable for up to Php 331.3 Million subject to computation, and additional liabilities under the IOPC Fund should they fail to comply.

"Beyond clean-ups, we must make an effort to make MT Princess Empress and its owners RDC Reield Marine Services ac-

countable to the government for damaging our tourism industries and marine resources and to the affected communities whose health and livelihood are heavily compromised," Haresco said.

EFFECTS OF OIL SPILL ALARMS SENATORS

Senator Cynthia Villar expressed dismay over the extent of damage caused by the oil spill.

In the hearing of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change yesterday, Villar said the oil spill is emerging to have more extensive effects compared to the 2006 Guimaras oil spill, which was considered then as the worst in the country's history.

Citing the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council Situation Report dated March 12, Villar said the oil spill in the province affected 21,692 families in 117 barangays of Region 4-B; 7,616 families in 4 barangays of Region 6; a total of 13 marine protected areas and 61 tourist attractions; and an estimate of 8 kilometres of coastline in Caluya, Antique.

Senator Raffy Tulfo for his part called for a review of the provisions of Rep.

Act. 9483 or the Oil Pollution Act of 2007 which, he said, tends to shield characters from oil spill liabilities.

Senator Risa Hontiveros stressed the importance of collective and immediate action to clean up and mitigate the effect of the oil spill on the lives of many Filipinos, to the environment and to the country.

Senator Ramon Bong Revilla urged proper authorities to act immediately on the matter as he expressed alarm by the threats posed by the incident to the environment and nearby communities especially on the people's health and livelihood.

"Our environment continues to suffer every second of delayed response," Revilla said.

Senator Francis Tolentino underscored the need to immediately identify the parties that will be responsible for the cleaning of the spill-affected areas as well as the source of funds that will be used in the recovery efforts.

Senator Francis Chiz Escudero pointed out the failure of the Philippine Coast Guard to check the ship's certificate of public convenience (CPC).

With Jester Manalastas and Camille P. Balagtas



Editorial

Dapat panagutin ang MT Princess Empress

HINDI na dapat ginamit o ibiniyahe ang MT Princess Empress sapagkat hindi na ito seaworthy. At nangyari nga ang kinatatakutan nang masira ito noong Pebrero 28 habang dumadaan sa karagatang sakop ng Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. Tuluyan itong lumubog sa Pola, katabing bayan ng Naujan. Tumapon ang kargang 800,000 litro ng industrial fuel oil at nasapol ang Pola.

Sa kasalukuyan, hindi lamang ang Naujan at Pola ang apektado ng oil spill kundi ang iba pang mga bayan sa Oriental Mindoro gaya ng Pinamalayan at Gloria. Kahapon, inireport na umabot na rin sa Palawan at Aklan ang langis. Pinangangambahan na baka kumalat pa ito sa Isla Verde, Puerto Galera at Batangas. Dahil sa lakas ng hangin, posibleng tangayin din ang langis sa Boracay Island.

Hindi biro ang pinsalang idudulot sa kabuhayan ng insidenteng ito na maaari namang naagapan kung naging maingat at responsable ang may-ari at namamahala sa motor tanker at hindi na ito ibiniyahe. Sa simula pa lamang, alam na nilang kapag nasira ang tanker habang naglalayag ang kasunod na nito ay pagtagas ng langis.



At marami nang nangyaring ganito. Halimbawa ay ang Guimaras oil spill noong Agosto 11, 2006 nang lumubog ang MT Solar 1 sa Guimaras Strait at tumapon ang 2,100 ng fuel oil. Tinaguriang worst oil spill sa Pilipinas ang nangyari sa Guimaras. Tumagal ng apat na buwan bago nalinis ang natapong langis.

Sinasabing ganito rin katagal bago ganap na mawala ang oil spill mula sa MT Princess Empress. Kawawa ang mga taga-Pola na napuruhan ng oil spill. Manu-manong sinalok ng mga residente ng Pola ang langis sa dalampasigan. Subalit walang pagkaubos ang langis sapagkat patuloy sa pagtapon mula sa tanker.

Maraming residente ng Pola ang nagkakasakit na dahil sa nalalanghap na masangsang na amoy mula sa karagatan. Pinayuhan ng Department of Health (DOH) ang mga residente na mag-face mask. Nagpadala naman ng mga kagamitan ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) para mabilis ang paglilinis sa tumapong langis sa dalampasigan.

Humingi na ng tulong sa Japan para mapabilis ang paglilinis sa oil spill.

Habang marami ang tuliro sa perwisyong dulot ng oil spill, wala namang marinig sa may-ari ng MT Princess Empress. Naghihintay ng tulong ang mga taga-Pola mula sa may-ari ng tanker subalit wala umanong dumarating.

Nararapat nang kumilos ang Senado para puwersahing tumulong at pagbayarin ang may-ari ng tanker sa mga naapektuhan ng oil spill. Nakasaad sa Republic Act 9483 (Oil Pollution Compensation Act) pananagutin ang mga magdudulot ng pinsala dahil sa oil pollution. Nararapat bayaran ng kompanyang sangkot ang mga maaapektuhan ng oil spill.



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122 katao na ang nagkasakit sa oil spill sa Mindoro - DOH

SINABI ng Department of Health (DOH) nitong Martes na umaabot na sa 122 katao ang naitalang nagkasakit dahil sa oil spill mula sa isang lumubog na oil tanker sa Oriental Mindoro.

Sa isang pulong balitaan, sinabi ni DOH officer-in-charge Maria Rosario Vergeire na karamihan sa mga nagkasakit ay nakaranas ng pananakit ng ulo at mga respiratory-related symp-

toms gaya ng ubo at sipon.

Marami rin niya, ang nahilo, may sumakit ang tiyap, nahirapang huminga, nagkaroon ng skin rashes at sinumpong ng hika.

Karamihan naman aniya sa mga ito ay kaagad ding nakarekober mula sa dinanas na sintomas habang isa lamang ang kinailangang maospital dahil sa pagsumpong ng hika ngunit nakalabas din ng pagpapantatagan kina-bukasan. (Andi Garcia)



Nagkasakit sa oil spill nasa 122 na

Inihayag ng Department of Health (DOH), nasa 122 indibidwal na ang dinapuan ng sari-saring sakit dahil sa epekto ng oil spill sa mga baybaying barangay ng Oriental Mindoro.

Sinabi ni DOH officer-in-charge Maria Rosario Vergeire na karamihan sa mga nagkasakit ay nakaranas ng pananakit ng ulo at mga respiratory-related symptoms gaya ng ubo at sipon.

Marami rin ang nakaranas ng pagkahilo, may sumakit ang tiyan, mahirapang huminga, nagkaroon ng skin rashes at sinumpong ng hika.

"Marami din pong nahihilo, 16. Meron pong mga sumakit ang tiyan, merong nahirapan huminga, 10. Merong nagkaroon ng skin rashes, around seven. At meron pong lima na na-aggravate -- dahil nga na-inhale nila -- na-aggravate ang kanilang asthma," ayon kay Vergeire.

Karamihan naman aniya sa mga ito ay kaagad ding nakarekober mula sa dinanas na sintomas habang isa lamang ang kinailangang maospital dahil sa pagsumpong ng hika ngunit nakalabas din ng pagamutan kinabukasan.

Ginagawa naman umano ng DOH at ng lokal na health office sa Oriental Mindoro ang lahat ng paraan para maayos ang kalusugan ng mga residente at maiwasan na dapuan pa ng sakit sa hinatirap ang publiko.

Una nang inirekomenda ni Vergeire na lumikas muna sa ibang lugar ang mga nakatira sa mga komunidad na apektado ng oil spill habang hindi pa nareresolba ang problema.

-Danilo Garcia-



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Nagkasakit sa oil spill, nasa 122 na

Umabot na sa 122 indibidwal ang dinapuan ng sari-saring sakit dahil sa epekto ng oil spill sa mga baybaying barangay ng Oriental Mindoro, ayon sa Department of Health (DOH).

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no ng DOH at ng lokal na health office sa Oriental Mindoro ang lahat ng paraan para maayos ang kalusugan ng mga residente at maiwasan na dapuan pa ng sakit sa hinaharap ang publiko.

Una nang inirekomenda ni Vergeire na lumikas muna sa ibang lugar ang mga nakatira sa mga komunidad na apektado ng oil spill habang hindi pa nareresolba ang problema. *(Danilo Garcia)*



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Daily Tribune

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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

THE Philippine Coast Guard's BRP Bagacay (MRRV-4410) scours the vicinity waters off Pola, Oriental Mindoro for the extent oil spill from the sunken oil tanker MT Princess Empress on Monday, 13 March.



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The Manila Times

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OIL SPILL AFTERMATH Relief goods and food packs are loaded on a boat on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, to be distributed to residents in the coastal villages of Masaguig, Herrera, Montemayor, Estrella and Sta. Cruz in Naujan town. This is an initiative of Oriental Mindoro First District Rep. Arnan Panaligan to help families affected by the recent oil spill in the province. Because of the oil slick, fishermen are also banned from catching fish in the area. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



MARINA, PCG PALPAK

Sermon ang inabot ng inga opisyal ng Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) at Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa pagdinig ng Senado nitong Martes kaugnay sa paglubog ng MT Princess Empress sa Oriental Mindoro na nagdulot ng oil spill.

Nabuking sa pagdinig ng Senate committee on environment, natural resources and climate change na wala palang authority to operate ang nasabing barko ng kompanyang RDC Reield Marine Services alinsunod sa itinakda ng Republic Act No. 9295 o Domestic Shipping Development Act of 2004.

Isiniwalat ito ni Senador Cynthia Villar, chairperson ng komite, matapos sabihin ni RDC Reield Marine Services

vice president Fritzee Tee na nakikipag-ugnayan sila sa insurance company para sa kanilang claim.

"The MARINA and the Coast Guard will explain that they cannot claim from the insurance because they have no permit to operate. Kaya we should not wait for that anymore. They will have a problem with that...Don't depend on something that will not come," ani Villar.

Nabatid pa na bago lumubog ang MT Princess Empress ay siyam na beses na itong naglayag.

Sinita naman ni Senador Francis Escudero kung bakit nagawang maglayag ng siyam na beses ng MT Princess Empress kahit na wala silang authority to operate.

Dinukidukid ang Philippine

Coast Guard matapos sabihin ni Senador Raffy Tulfo na dapat kasuhan ang mga tauhan nito dahil pinayagang makalabay ang barko kahit walang permit.

"Doon nagkaroon ng kapabayaang. Kung hindi lang po sana naging pabaya ang mga tao ninyo, hindi napayagang maglayag 'yon dahil kulang sa dokumento, hindi sana tayo nag-uusap lahat dito," sabi ni Tulfo.

'Wag itago ang totoo - Oriental Mindoro gov

Nagsalita naman si Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor kung saan sinabihan nito ang PCG na huwag itago ang totoo dahil lumalaki aniya ang problemang dulot ng oil spill habang tumatakbo ang araw.

Kinuwestyon ni Dolor ang kakayahan ng PCG na pigilan ang pagkalat ng langis sa karagatan matapos ihayag ng isang opisyal ng ahensya na naglalaragay umano sila ng mga oil spill boom.

"Let's be very frank in this hearing. 'Wag natin itago ang totoo. Ang totoo, the problem is becoming huge, bigger and bigger every day. Bakit po? Tinatago kasi natin 'yung problema,'" ani Dolor.

"Commodore, nag-usap tayo. Sabi n'yo meron kayong spill booms. Pero tingin n'yo ba't kinakailangan gumawa ng mga tao ng temporary spill booms? Because you do not have enough," ayon pa sa gobernador.



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Kompanya sa oil spill sampolan



ELY SALUDAR

Dapat ay maging mabangis ang gobyerno sa pagpataw ng parusa sa kompanya na nasa likod ng oil spill sa Oriental Mindoro.

Upang hindi matagalan ang dulot na epekto nito sa karagatan at sa mismong

kabuhayan ng mga mangingisda.

Nabisto sa Senate hearing na wala palang permiso ang kompanya upang maglayag sa Oriental Mindoro kung kaya't may posibilidad na madiskaril ang claim nito sa insurance.

Sa paglubog ng MT Princess Empress sa karagatan ng Oriental Mindoro ay lumawak pa ang pagtagas ng langis sa mga kalapit probinsiya na mas marami na ang apektado.

Dapat ay papanagutin ang kompanya ng MT Princess Empress na RDC Reield Marines Services.

Sakaling hindi makakuha ng kabayaran

sa insurance ay dapat na sampolan ng gobyerno ang mga opisyal ng kompanya.

Ang masaklap nito ay maaring magdeklara lang ng bankruptcy ang kompanyang ito para mawala na ang pananagutan.

Madalas kasi na pinapalusutan ng mga kompanya ang kanilang pananagutan sa pananagutan ng deklarasyon ng bankruptcy.

Dapat ay agad ipakulong ang mga opisyal ng kompanya at ilitin kung ano man ang ari-arian nito upang maibigay bilang danyos sa mga apektado ng pagtagas ng langis sa karagatan.



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MGA SANGKOT SA OIL SPILL, PANAGUTIN!

HABANG úmaan-dar ang araw mula nang sumambulat ang balita hinggil sa tanker na may dalang 800,000 litro ng pang-industriyang langis na lumubog sa Oriental Mindoro at nagdulot ng oil spill ay palala nang palala ang sitwasyon.

Kung dati ay apektado lamang ang marami nating kababayan dahil sa pangamba na masira ang mahahalagang yaman ng dagat ay tila mas lumalaki pa ang kinakaharap nating problema dahil maraming kabuhayan na ang apektado.

Kaya ngayon pa lamang ay naghahanda na ang aking Bayanihan Relief team para magtungo sa mga lugar na apektado ng oil spill upang mamahagi ng ayuda tulad ng relief goods, SBR pack at cash sa ilang piling kababayan natin na mas matindi ang pangangailangan.

Marami kasing bayan ang inabot ng oil spill at maraming mangingisda ang hindi na makalaot sa dagat dahil apektado ng langis, may mga lugar namang nangangamatay na ang isda, kaya wala silang kita at ang resulta ay nakakaranas na sila ng pagkagutom.

Apektado rin ang inuming tubig sa mga inabot na lugar, partikular ang mga umaasa lamang sa tubig poso dahil ang lumalabas umanong tubig ay malabo at amoy langis kaya hindi nila mainom na dumagdag pa sa kaniilang gastusin dahil bumibili pa sila ng purified water.

Base sa datos ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) mahigit sa 137,000 katao ang labis na naapektuhan ng oil spill sa Oriental Mindoro.

Nitong nagdaang Marso 11, nakumpirmang umabot sa 30,042 pamilya o 137,230 indibidwal mula sa 121 barangay sa MIMAROPA at Western Visayas regions ang matinding naapektuhan ng oil spill.

Matindi pa ang pangangailangang tulong sa naturang mga lugar dahil nakikiusap ang mga residente sa apektadong baybayin na padalhan na sila ng pagkain at iba pang tulong dahil wala na silang pagkunan ng kabuhayan.

Daig pa ng mga tao sa naturang lugar ang dinaanan ng matinding hagupit ng bagyo dahil sa ngayon ay nagtutulung-tulong sila, lalo na 'yung nasa Barangay Batuhan, Pola, Oriental Mindoro kung paano malilinis ang hindi maampat na pagkalat ng langis.

Kumalat ang langis mula sa MT Princess Empress na lumubog sa Oriental Mindoro na umabot na sa dalampasigan sa bayan ng Taytay, Palawan at kumalat na rin ang langis sa lalawigan ng Antique.

Ayon sa University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute, ang langis na kumalat ay tinatayang naapektuhan ang may 20,000 ektarya ng coral reefs, 9,900 ektarya ng



**ANAK NG
TETENG!
NI BONG REVILLA**

mangroves at 6,000 ektarya ng seagrass beds sa Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan at Antique.

Noong nakaraang linggo, dumating sa bansa ang grupo ng mga eksperto mula Japan upang tulongan ang bansa, lalo na ang Philippine Coast Guard upang mapabilis ang pag-alis ng langis at pagpigil pa sa pagkalat nito.

Ngayon, heto at nagbabantag abutin na rin ng oil spill ang Verde Island Passage (VIP) na kinaroroonan ng global center ng marine diversity at ito ay sa pinakahuling forecast track ng Marine Science Institute ng University of the Philippines (UP-MSI).

Ayon pa sa UP-MSI, dahil sa paghina ng amihan, posibleng mapadpad ang mga tumagas na langis sa Calapan, Verde Island, at ibang bahagi ng Batangas. Ang VIP ay karagatan sa pagitan ng Batangas at Mindoro na may pinakamaraming bilang ng isda, corals, seagrasses, mangroves atbp.

Kanlungan din umano ito ng mga endangered at threatened species kasama na ang mga critically endangered species na hawksbill turtle, whale sharks, manta rays, dugongs, humphead wrasses, giant groupers at giant clams.

Kaya dapat talaga ay papanagutin ang mga may-ari ng tanker na MT Princess Empress dahil hindi lang mahahalagang protected area ang nasa panganib dahil sa oil spill, kundi maging ang buhay ng marami nating kababayan na nalagay sa peligro.

Alam naman nating sasabihin ng may-ari ng tanker na hindi nila ginusto ang nangyaring oil spill, ngunit palaging ganito na lamang ang sinasabi ng lahat ng nagkalat ng langis sa karagatan at hindi sila mag-iingat kung hindi sila magkakaroon ng pananagutan.

Panahon na para magdoble sa pag-iingat ng mga barkong nagpapabalik-balik sa bansa dahil bukod sa buwis ay wala namang ibang kinikita sa kanila ang pamahalaan, ngunit sa ganitong pangyayari ay kasama ang buong bansa sa perwisyo.

Paulit-ulit na kasi ang oil spill, pero matapos maglagablab ang balita ay kusa ring humuhupa at ang mga tanker na nasangkot ay nagtetengang-kawali lang tapos tuloy na naman ang operasyon na tila walang nangyari.

Sana naman pagdating ng araw ng paghuhukom ay huwag mapunta sa dagat-dagatang apoy at kumukulong asupre ang may-ari ng tanker na ito na walang pakialam at hanggang ngayon ay hindi nagpaparamdam.

Anak Ng Teteng!



Marina kumanta, tanker sa Mindoro oil spill kolorum

KINUMPIRMA ng Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) na walang permit para maglayag ang MT Princess Express, ang oil tanker na lumubog sa Oriental Mindoro at nagdulot ng malawakang oil spill sa lugar at mga karatig lalawigan.

Sa hearing ng Senate committee on environment, natural resources and climate change, sinabi ni Marina administrator Hernani Fabia na walang certificate of public convenience (CPC) ang MT Princess Express dahil pending pa sa kanilang tanggapan ang aplikasyon nito.

Ang MT Princess ay pag-aari ng RDC Re-eld Marine Services na naghain ng amended

CPC sa Marina upang maging legal ang paglayag ng barko.

“Yung RDC may pending application which we are going to hear pa sana, may kulang na mga documents. So ihe-hear pa natin ‘yan so hindi sila naisyuhan kaagad,” wika ni Fabia.

“So hindi dapat ito nakalayag?” tanong ni Senador Risa Hontiveros.

“Dapat po,” sagot ng opisyal.

Nabatid din na bago lumubog ang barko noong Pebrero 28, nakabiyahe ito ng siyam na beses. Tanong tuloy ni Senador Raffy Tulfo, bakit hindi inusisa ng Philippine Coast Guard ang CPC ng barko bago ito pinayagan maglayag. (Dindo Matining)



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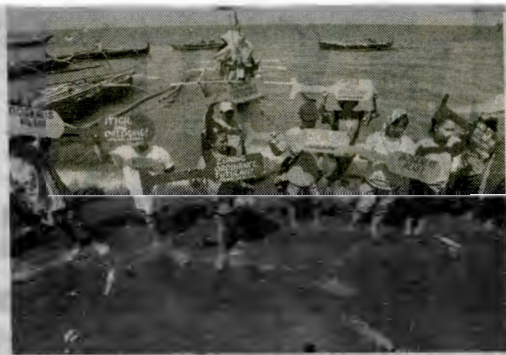
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Daan-daang mangingisdang ng Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) ang nagsagawa ng fluvial protest sa Wawa II Rosario, Cavite upang igit ang agarang pagtigil sa mapanirang dredging sa katimugang bahagi ng Manila Bay. (Jonas Sulit)



How prepared are we for another oil spill?

THE oil spill, which resulted from the capsized tanker Princess Empress, continues to spread and is said to be approaching the Verde Island passage. In this archipelago, the transport of oil primarily relies on sea transport which consequently creates a sense of apprehension on threats of oil spills happening but, at the same time, motivates concerned parties, particularly the government, to prepare for such an eventuality.

Confronting an oil spill incident was one reason why the Philippines ratified the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1992 (CLC), the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage 1992 (1992 Fund Convention), and the Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC) 1990. The civil liability convention requires a shipowner to maintain insurance or financial security to cover his liability for damage to the environment to be afforded the right to limit his liability.

This requirement applies to ships that carry more than 2,000 tonnes of oil as cargo. The right to limit liability is in cognizance of the adventurous character of shipping and therefore shipowners need to



**SEA-
THROUGH**
**ATTY. BRENDA V.
PIMENTEL**

be provided relief in respect of the financial burden imposed on them. Limiting the liability of shipowners, however, is not intended to do away with compensation.

While MT Princess Empress with its 800,000 liters of oil as cargo does not fall within the covered ships of the convention, Republic Act 9483 on the implementation of CLC 1992 and the 1992 Fund Convention requires that all ships carrying oil as cargo must have insurance or financial security to cover for pollution damage. The more pressing issue concerning the implementation of RA 9483 is the legal and administrative procedures by which a shipowner shall constitute the funds to cover his liability for pollution damage.

Has the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) instituted the mechanism for this?

Related to this is the process of compensation. Compensation claims are to be filed before the Regional Trial Court. Will it be in the designated admiralty courts? Even then, as any case of compensation claims

requires evidence or proof of the damage suffered, claimants must be advised on how to preserve or collect the necessary documents to ensure a successful claim. The Philippine Coast Guard has been designated by law to give such assistance to those affected by the oil spill.

It is important to understand that the insurance cover of the shipowner represents the first tier of compensation. Where said cover is not sufficient and goes beyond the limit of liability of the shipowner, the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds) will cover the remaining requirement for compensation.

The IOPC Fund (second tier) is formed through the contributions made by the oil receivers (oil companies/owners).

The MT Solar 1 case which happened in Guimaras in 2006 serves as a best practice for purposes of compensation of the affected parties on the island as they were able to successfully claim against the Fund. What is important at this point is that the shipowner can give such a guarantee to those involved in the response activities that prompt compensation for those who have assisted contain the oil spill in the form of services, equipment and other necessary measures to minimize the damage from oil pollution.



Global floods, droughts worsen with warming

THE intensity of extreme drought and rainfall has "sharply" increased over the past 20 years, according to a study published Monday (Tuesday in Manila) in the journal *Nature Water*.

These aren't merely tough weather events, they are leading to extremes such as crop failure, infrastructure damage, and even humanitarian crises and conflict.

The big picture on water comes from data from a pair of satellites known as Grace, or Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment, that

were used to measure changes in Earth's water storage — the sum of all the water on and in the land, including groundwater, surface water, ice and snow.

"It's incredible that we can now monitor the pulse of continental water from outer space," said Park Williams, a bioclimatologist at the University of California, Los Angeles who was not involved with the study.

"I have a feeling when future generations look back and try to

►DroughtA2

■ DROUGHTS FROM A1

Floods

determine when humanity really began understanding the planet as a whole, this will be one of the studies highlighted," he said.

The researchers say the data confirms that both the frequency and intensity of rainfall and droughts are increasing due to burning fossil fuels and other human activity that releases greenhouse gases.

"I was surprised to see how well correlated the global intensity was with global mean temperatures," said Matthew Rodell, study author and deputy director of Earth sciences for hydrosphere, biosphere, and geophysics at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.

The strong link between these climate extremes and rising global average temperatures means continued global warming will mean more drought and rainstorms that are worse by many measures — more frequent, more severe, longer and larger.

Researchers looked at 1,056 events from 2002-2021 using a novel algorithm that identifies where the land is much wetter or drier than normal.

That showed the most extreme rains keep happening in sub-Saharan Africa, at least through December 2021, the end of the data.

The rainfall extremes also took place in central and eastern North America from 2018 to 2021, and in Australia during 2011-2012.

The most intense droughts

were a record-breaking one in northeastern South America from 2015 to 2016; an event in the Cerrado region of Brazil that began in 2019 and continues; and the ongoing drought in the American Southwest that has caused dangerously low water levels in two of the biggest US reservoirs, Lake Mead and Lake Powell. Those remain low despite heavy rains this year.

Drought events outnumbered heavy rain events by 10 percent. Their geographic extents and how long they lasted were similar.

A warmer atmosphere increases the rate at which water evaporates during dry periods. It also holds more water vapor, which fuels heavy rainfall events.

The study noted that infrastructure like airports and sew-

age treatment plants that were designed to withstand once-in-a-100-year events are becoming more challenged as these extremes happen more often and with more intensity.

"Looking forward into the future, in terms of managing water resources and flood control, we should be anticipating that the wetter extremes will be wetter and the dry extremes will get drier," said Richard Seager, a climate scientist at the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University, who was not involved with the study.

Seager said it's a mistake to assume that future wet and dry extremes can be managed the same as in the past because "everything's going to get amplified on both ends of the dry-wet spectrum." AP



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QC, host muli ng Earth Hour

MAKALIPAS ang walong taon, muling magsisilbi ang Quezon City bilang host ng Earth Hour celebration, na itinuturing na isa sa pinakamalaking grassroots environmental movements sa buong mundo.

Gaya noong 2015, gagawin natin ang Earth Hour sa Quezon Memorial Circle katuwang ang World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines o WWF-Philippines, na pinamunuan ni Executive Director Katherine Custodio.

Eksaktong alas-8:30 ng gabi sa Marso. 25, sasamahan nating makilahok ang mahigit 7,000 siyudad mula sa 193 bansa sa Earth Hour.

Sa nasabing oras, papatayin ng lokal na pamahalaan ang ilaw sa pylon ng Quezon Memorial Circle at iba pang gusali na pinatatakbo ng lungsod sa loob ng isang oras para makatulong sa pagbawas ng epekto ng climate change sa ating planeta.

Inaasahan din nating makilahok dito ang mga QCitizen at mga may-ari ng iba't ibang negosyo sa ating siyudad.

Ang paglahok ng siyudad sa Earth Hour ay patunay sa matibay nating pangako na isusulong ang climate justice para magkaroon tayo ng komunidad na maka-kalikasan.

Bago ang ating switch-off activity, magsasagawa muna ng iba't ibang programa ang mga tanggapan ng Quezon



City government, sa pangunguna ng QC Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department (CCESD).

Magsisilbing punong abala ang ating CCESD at Gender and Development Council Office (GAD) sa gagawing Padyak ng Kababaihan para sa Kalikasan cycling event at scavenger hunt para sa kabataan.

Isang pre-switch off program din ang gagawin kung saan magbibigay ng mensahe ng suporta ang iba't ibang non-government organizations at mga ahensya ng gobyerno.

Sa lights-off proper, isang symbolic run naman ang pangungunahan ng fitness at environmental conservation enthusiasts sa Quezon Memorial Circle, na sumasagisag sa kapangyarihan ng sama-samang pagkilos para maabot ang maayos na kinabukasan para sa mga Pilipino at ating kalikasan.

Kasama namin ng WWF-Philippines ang iba't ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno at pribadong sektor, para matiyak na magiging matagumpay ang darating na Earth Hour.

Para sa kalikasan at susunod na henerasyon, hinihikayat ko ang lahat ng QCitizens na makiisa sa makabuluhang programa na ito.



Rightsizing bill gets House nod

By DELON PORCALLA

Voting 292-3, the House of Representatives yesterday approved on third and final reading a priority bill of President Marcos, which seeks to rightsize by way of streamlining the 1.6-million strong bureaucracy.

Administration lawmakers approved House Bill 7240 or the National Government Rightsizing Program that would carry out what they called "rightsizing" in all government offices to save about P15 billion a year in public funds.

Reps. Rufus Rodriguez and Stella Luz Quimbo - chair of the House committee on constitutional amendment

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Rightsizing From Page 1

and senior vice chair of the appropriations committee, respectively - said the bill deserves support.

The measure is expected to save almost P15 billion in taxpayers' money yearly.

Rodriguez, of the second district of Cagayan de Oro City, said there are many redundant agencies, councils, offices, task forces and similar executive and legislative creations that could be abolished or merged without sacrificing the functions of the surviving entities.

"Just look at the annual budget and one will find that there are councils and offices in many departments that overlap or duplicate the functions of the bureaus or agencies under these departments," Rodriguez said.

He said these redundant offices should be the first to go in the rightsizing program as overlapping of functions has created friction between or among government agencies.

Quimbo, who represents the second district of Marikina, said that rightsizing would ensure that the entire bureaucracy is "sufficiently and optimally manned with rationalized functions."

"This will save billions that can be used

to support economic recovery programs and the provision of basic social services," Quimbo said. "I believe the key driver for rightsizing efforts should be e-governance. Now is the time for the government to go digital."

"Rightsizing means the number of staff positions in government is sufficient to ensure that all mandates are fulfilled at the lowest possible cost. It means that outdated and redundant positions can be abolished, while new but necessary positions can be created," she said.

Quimbo said many inefficiencies in governance could be addressed by a digital pivot.

An economist by profession, she observed that personnel services account for P1.4 trillion or 28 percent of the total national budget, as shown in the 2022 General Appropriations Act.

"Even an incremental reduction of total payroll costs can provide significant funding for much needed initiatives, including fuel subsidies and *ayuda* or financial assistance for our farmers and MSMEs," Quimbo said, referring to the micro, small and medium enterprises.



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Camarines Norte niyanig ng 4.5 magnitude na lindol

NI ZAIDA DELOS REYES

NIYANIG ng 4.5 magnitude na lindol ang Camarines Norte nitong nakalipas na Lunes ng gabi.

Batay sa earthquake information na ipinalabas ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) ang lindol ay naramdaman dakong 6:45p.m. na tumama sa 17 kilometro southeast ng Tinaga Island, Vinzons, Camarines Norte.

Naitala ang Intensity III sa Mercedes, Camarines

Norte; Sipocot, Camarines Sur; at Polillo, Quezon.

Intensity II naman ang naramdaman sa Iriga City at Ragay sa Camarines Sur at Intensity I sa Guinayangan, Mauban, at Gumaca sa Quezon.

Ayon sa Phivolcs, tectonic ang lindol, na nangangahulugang dulot ito ng paggalaw ng active fault malapit sa lugar.

Possible umanong magdulot ng pinsala ang lindol sa mga bahay, gusali at iba pang imprastruktura, base sa Phivolcs, subalit wala umanong inaaahang after-shock.



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL MAPPING AND RESOURCE INFORMATION AUTHORITY
www.namria.gov.ph

INVITATION TO BID

The National Mapping And Resource Information Authority, Bids and Awards Committee (NAMRIA BAC) invites interested bidders for the following project:

1. Upgrading and System Maintenance Renewal of MGB Data Center, AGN Data Center and Disaster Recovery and Backup Facility for the Unified Mapping Project (UMP) FY 2023

Approved Budget for the Contract – PhP 10,000,000.00

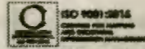
The bidding schedule is as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Issuance of Bidding Documents: | Starting March 13, 2023 |
| 2. Pre-Bid Conference: | 10:30AM March 21, 2023
NAMRIA Boardroom/Lecture Hall
Fort A. Bonifacio, Taguig City |
| 3. Deadline of Submission and Opening of Bids: | 10:30AM. April 4, 2023
NAMRIA Boardroom/Lecture Hall
Fort A. Bonifacio, Taguig City |

The NAMRIA BAC reserves the right to cancel the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid most advantageous to the government.

Dir. RUEL DM. BELEN
Chairman, B A C

NAMRIA OFFICES:
 ■ Lantion Avenue, Fort Bonifacio, 1836 Taguig City, PH | (652) 8910-8931 to 41
 ■ 421 Barrows St., San Mateo, 1505 Manila, PH | (652) 8247-2494 to 99



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