

08 June 2023 Thursday



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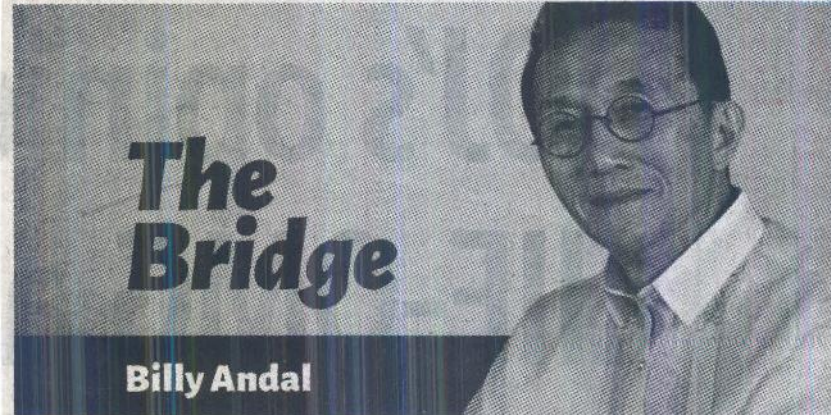
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Water or dirty politics?



The Bridge

Billy Andal

WATER, I mean clean, potable, sufficient and steady supply of water to all Filipinos, 24 hours a day, is a matter of life and death. It is as basic as having oxygen for everyone to survive on earth.

It is in this light that President Bongbong Marcos is taking concrete effort to confront and resolve this major issue, early in his six-year term, with environment-friendly surface water, as the major water source, in focus.

He recently issued EO 22 creating the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) to integrate and harmonize government efforts that will manage the country's water resources and ensure water supply for us, amid the threat of El Niño phenomenon, expected towards the year-end until mid-next year.

The new water body and all existing government agencies such as the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), MWSS, LWUA, LLDA and all the Water Districts in the country will be under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Per the EO, an undersecretary that the President will appoint soon will

lead the WRMO. That is how PBBM looks and addresses the water supply situation nationwide as a major item of the nation's interests, and supports the creation of a Department of Water Management.

Well, it's very encouraging to see what seems to be the mindset of President Marcos and most of our senators and representatives in Congress. The administration is determined to create an agency or institution devoted to ensuring clean, potable and steady water supply, for all households and the various industries' needs. Hence, the bill is now up for legislative deliberation and pretty soon, its approval.

Despite the viable efforts of the President and of our national officials to make sure Filipinos do not endure water scarceness, the exact opposite, however, is the norm in the countryside—in Bohol province, in particular. It makes me sad that there

To avert water crisis in Bohol, approval or extension of the current permit is needed. This will help alleviate the impending water problem and lessen the anxiety of the Boholanos. Will they get water, or will rotten politics prevail?

are LGU officials or local politicians who think and act in a diametrically opposite direction, against the objective of PBBM. In Bohol, it appears to the people that their choice is between water and rotten politics.

The matter of steady water supply in Bohol is the responsibility of its local officials, but former Governor Edgar Chatto didn't do anything. Among other concerns relative to water, the tourist arrivals have doubled from about 80,000 to 120,000 in six months in 2022. There would be a major problem if resorts and hotels there will have no water supply.

A private entity, Richli Corp., saw the need to do it, and is responding to the call of Boholanos for a steady supply of clean and potable water to each and every household. But instead of getting support, they are being opposed and oppressed or given a hard time.

Richli started distributing water in Bohol in 2018 with its 7-stage, state-of-the-art water treatment plant. It sources its supply from surface water from Malingin Falls of Cortes town, and it serves Tagbilaran City, Panglao, Dauis, Cortes and Baclayon. My inquiry reveals that concessionaires are satisfied with their service, including Panglao International Airport and the famous resorts in the area.



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To improve and expand their water source and cover more areas, the private corporation is seeking additional water permit so it can proceed with the infra construction. But every obstacle was placed before them. Very disappointing, indeed, since documents will show that then governor now Congressman Chatto refused to issue an excavation permit to applicant Richli Corp. even if the Provincial Engineer's Office already gave its nod and despite having paid the required fees.

The wife of Chatto who is the mayor of Balilihan, Bohol, also opposed the application of Richli for water permit, while Vice Governor Relampagos questioned the operation of Richli with the NWRB. In another case, to clear any legal obstacle to an existing permittee, Richli went to NWRB to secure a water permit to extract water at Ohan Spring located in Lourdes, Cortes, Bohol.

The petition was granted in September 2021 by NWRB. However, Bohol Water Utilities Inc. filed a motion for reconsideration. Up to now, it remains undecided by its Executive Director Seville David Jr. In the meantime, Boholanos are seen facing water supply problems with the projected El Niño phenomenon in the coming months. To avert water crisis in Bohol, approval or extension of the current permit is needed. This will help alleviate the impending water problem and lessen the anxiety of the Boholanos. Will they get water, or will rotten politics prevail?

To be continued.

For comments, e-mail me @andalbilly@yahoo.com



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NBI SLAPS RAPS VS OIL TANKER EXECS, PCG MEMBERS OVER MINDORO OIL SPILL

By Abby Boiser
@AbbyBoiserINQ

The National Bureau of Investigation's Environmental Crime Division has filed in the Department of Justice (DOJ) multiple cases against 35 people over the sinking of MT Princess Empress which caused an oil spill in Oriental Mindoro.

Charged on Monday with falsifying public documents

and using falsified documents were seven officials of shipowner RDC Reield Marine Services Inc., six crew members of the oil tanker and 19 members of the Philippine Coast Guard. Two RDC officials are also facing a complaint for perjury.

On the other hand, charges of falsifying public documents were filed against the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) Region V director, and the chief of

the Marina Shipyard in Region V.

Aside from the NBI, Mayor Jennifer Cruz of Pola, Oriental Mindoro was also a complainant in the case since her town was among those affected by the oil spill.

DOJ spokesperson Jose Clavano, in a briefer on Tuesday, said that officials from Marina and RDC allegedly conspired to illegally register MT Princess Empress using false docu-

ments, including a certificate of public convenience (CPC).

"The document falsified is the certificate of public convenience or CPC," Clavano said, adding that an authenticated copy was issued even though no original document had been issued in the first place.

The CPC is a permit given to a domestic water transport service provider which allows it to

operate a vessel for commercial or public use.

The NBI also said that the 19 Coast Guard members were liable since they failed to check if the CPC was authentic when they conducted the pre-departure inspection of the oil tanker.

Carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil, MT Princess Empress sank off the coast of Naujan in Oriental Mindoro

due to engine trouble on Feb. 28. The oil that leaked from the tanker spread as far as Palawan and Batangas provinces.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources reported the estimated damage to people's livelihoods at nearly P1 billion, while the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said that 172,928 people were affected. —WITH A REPORT FROM TETCH TORRES-TUPAS INQ



THE PHILIPPINE STAR
metro

EDITOR: DULCE A. SANCHEZ

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Workers unload garbage from a truck at a dump in Parañaque yesterday. According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Philippines is struggling against single-use plastic as the country continues to generate thousands of tons of plastic daily. AFP



HIGHER WORLD PRICES, HIGHER OUTPUT

PRECIOUS METALS PRODUCTION SPIKED IN Q1, SAYS MGB

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

Elevated prices and higher output of certain metals pushed up metal production in the Philippines in the first quarter of this year, a report from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) showed.

The value of metal production reached P58.92 billion in the three months ending March, an increment of 22.83 percent from P47.97 billion in the same period a year ago.

“The upbeat performance was inspired by the growth in the volume and value of gold, nickel direct shipping ore and chromite,” the MGB said.

Gold clinched the top spot with P27.74 billion, equivalent to a share of 47.08 percent.

The collective output of nickel ore and other nickel by-products finished second with P23.85 billion or a 40.48 percent share.

Copper settled at third with

P6.52 billion (11.06 percent) while that of silver, chromite and iron ore made up for the remaining 1.38 percent or P810.2 million of the total value.

The price of the yellow precious metal inched up by less than a percent to \$1,889.05 per troy ounce from \$1,874.91 per troy ounce during the reference period. Average prices of nickel, copper, and silver declined.

Nickel prices averaged \$11.78 per pound from \$12.74 per pound.

“But the said prices are still way higher than their pre-pandemic levels from 2019 to 2021 [when] prices were only at a one-digit mark playing around \$5-9 per pound,” the agency noted.

The price of copper dropped to \$4.05 per pound from \$4.53 per pound.

Silver prices decreased to \$22.94 per troy ounce from \$23.95 per troy ounce year-on-year. **INQ**



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DMCI Mining to ship 1.5 M wet metric tons of nickel ore this year

By IRIS GONZALES

DMCI Mining Corp. of the Consunji Group aims to ship 1.5 million wet metric tons (WMT) of nickel ore this year.

This comes after its subsidiary Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. successfully obtained an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) in January to produce two million WMT of nickel ore.

DMCI Mining president Tulsí Das Reyes said the company is now targeting to produce up to two millions tons of nickel ore this year.

"We have the necessary facilities and mitigating measures to minimize the impact of our operations on the environment. With these in place, we're targeting to produce anywhere between 1.7 million to 2 million tons of nickel ore this year," Reyes said.

Prior to the ECC issuance, ZDMC was only allowed to extract one million WMT.

From January to March, ZDMC's nickel ore production increased to 599,000 WMT, its highest-ever quarterly output from 318,000 WMT or an increase of 88 percent.

This led to a 16 percent improvement in total inventory to 178,000 WMT.

However, total shipment declined by 21 percent to 487,000 WMT due to the depletion of the BNC mine and stockpile, cushioned by the double-digit growth of ZDMC shipment.

Average selling price increased by 11 percent to \$49 owing to higher Zambales shipments of higher-grade nickel ore.

Despite the mine and stockpile depletion of Berong, standalone revenues of DMCI

Mining declined by eight percent to P1.3 billion due to better selling prices.

Reported net income, meanwhile, contracted by 15 percent to P463 million.

Incorporated in 2007, DMCI Mining is in the business of mining, buying, shipping and transporting, all kinds of ores, metals and minerals. It involves surface mining and direct shipping of nickel ore and is conducted through simple benching operation using excavators and trucks in Sta. Cruz and Candelaria, Zambales.



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Phl metallic production up 22.8% in Q1

By DANESSA RIVERA

The value of the country's metallic mineral production rose by nearly 23 percent in the first quarter, largely due to higher production of most metals and favorable gold prices.

Latest data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) showed metal production increased by 22.83 percent to P58.92 billion in the first three months of the year. Gold was the top contributor to the total production value with 47.08 percent, equivalent to P27.74 billion.

Nickel took the second spot with 40.48 percent valued at P23.85 billion, followed by copper with 11.06 percent or P6.52 billion.

Meanwhile, the consolidated value of silver, chromite, and iron ore accounted for

about 1.38 percent or P0.81 billion of the total production value, the MGB data showed.

In terms of prices, gold prices continued their steady rise to P\$1,889.05 per troy ounce from P1,874.91 per troy ounce.

On the other hand, nickel, copper, and silver prices declined during the quarter, MGB said.

Nickel prices declined to \$11.78 per pound from \$12.74 per pound while copper fell to \$4.05 per pound from \$4.53 per pound. Silver prices were down to \$22.94 per troy ounce from \$23.95 per troy ounce.

While the prices of these metals went down year-on-year, MGB said these price levels remained higher than pre-pandemic levels.

"If we go beyond the review period by looking closely at the second half of 2022, the prices during the first quarter

of 2023 were still at a higher level and prices are still way above their pre-pandemic levels," the bureau said.

In terms of production, gold saw an 17 percent jump in volume to 8,327 kilograms from 1,223 kilograms.

The MGB said Philippines Gold Processing and Refining Corp. in Masbate was the top gold producer during the quarter with 1,442 kilograms valued at P4.8 billion followed by OceanaGold Phils Inc. (OGPI) with 929 kilograms valued at P3.1 billion.

"The re-entry of Greenstone Resources Corporation into the production scene this year has also boosted production. Said company has been under care and maintenance status since 2018," the bureau said, noting the company produced 79 kilograms of gold valued at P0.26 billion.

Nickel ore production also rose to 3,997 million dry metric tons (DMT).

The MGB said only 13 out of 33 nickel operating mines recorded production during the quarter.

Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. topped the list with 1.205 million dry metric tons in production, followed by Eramen Mineral Inc. with 587,565 dry metric tons.

The remaining 20 mines had no production mainly due to weather conditions or under care & maintenance, MGB said.

On the other hand, copper output slipped to 64,730 dry metric tons from 64,841 dry metric tons from the country's three producers, namely Carmen Copper Corp. (CCC) in Cebu, OceanaGold Phils Inc. (OGPI) in Nueva Vizcaya, and Philex Mining Corp. (PMC) in

Benguet.

"In terms of distribution, CCC accounted for 55 percent or 35,648 dry metric tons, OGPI for 25 percent or 16,299 dry metric tons and PMC contributed 20 percent or 12,783 dry metric tons," MGB said.

White metals saw a lackluster performance with volume falling to 11,327 kilograms from 12,657 kilograms.

Government data showed the Balabag Gold-Silver Project of TVI Resource Development (Phils) Inc. in Zamboanga del Sur continued to outperform the others, accounting for almost 37 percent or 4,221 kilograms valued at P0.16 billion of the country's total silver production.

Chromite production rose by 14 percent to 20,496 dry metric tons from 18,036 dry

metric tons while iron ore output remained sluggish, declining by 24 percent to 33,497 dry metric tons.

The MGB said it remains upbeat for the minerals sector due to growing demand for nickel and gold, hinged on the lifting of China's zero COVID-19 policy in December last year.

"The bulk of our nickel ore has always been exported to China. During the last two years, almost 97 percent of our nickel direct shipping ore exports went to China and the rest to Japan and South Korea," it said.

"On gold, the diverse use of these precious metals in jewelry, technology, and investment assets as a haven during economic slowdowns/crises is what placed it in an advantageous position," the MGB said.



Climate change could hit 76.8% of corals by 2100

SYDNEY: Researchers from the University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney) has estimated that 76.8 percent of corals across the world would catch disease by 2100 amid global warming.

In their new study published in the Ecology Letters journal on Wednesday, the researchers created a data set encompassing 108 papers on global coral disease for a further meta-analysis.

They found that both rising average summer sea surface temperatures (SSTs) and weekly sea surface temperature anomalies (WSSSTAs) were associated with global in-

creases in coral disease prevalence.

According to the study, the global coral disease prevalence tripled to 9.92 percent between 1992 to 2018. When predicting future estimates of coral disease, the model suggested that the disease prevalence could reach 76.8 percent in 2100 if temperatures continue to rise.

Samantha Burke, lead author of the study and PhD candidate

at UNSW Sydney, said that the findings highlight the devastating impacts of rising temperatures on coral reefs and the dire need for swift action to mitigate climate change.

"Coral disease is a serious cause of coral mortality globally and reef decline, and our modeling predicts it will only continue to worsen," said Burke.

The scholar warned that as coral disease prevalence is climbing across the globe, more coral will become diseased without urgent action taken to address warming temperatures.

"As the ocean warms, it increases coral stress which can decrease

its immune response," said Burke. "Increasing temperatures can also create more favorable conditions for the pathogen causing disease."

At the current stage, scientists have yet to identify many of the disease-causing pathogens.

"It's still relatively unknown whether the microbes associated with diseased coral are the cause or a symptom of disease, just that the coral is sick, and the tissue is dying," Burke said.

"Whether the fungi or bacteria present caused disease or merely fed on the dying tissue is unclear, so researchers need to study it further," she added. **XINHUA**



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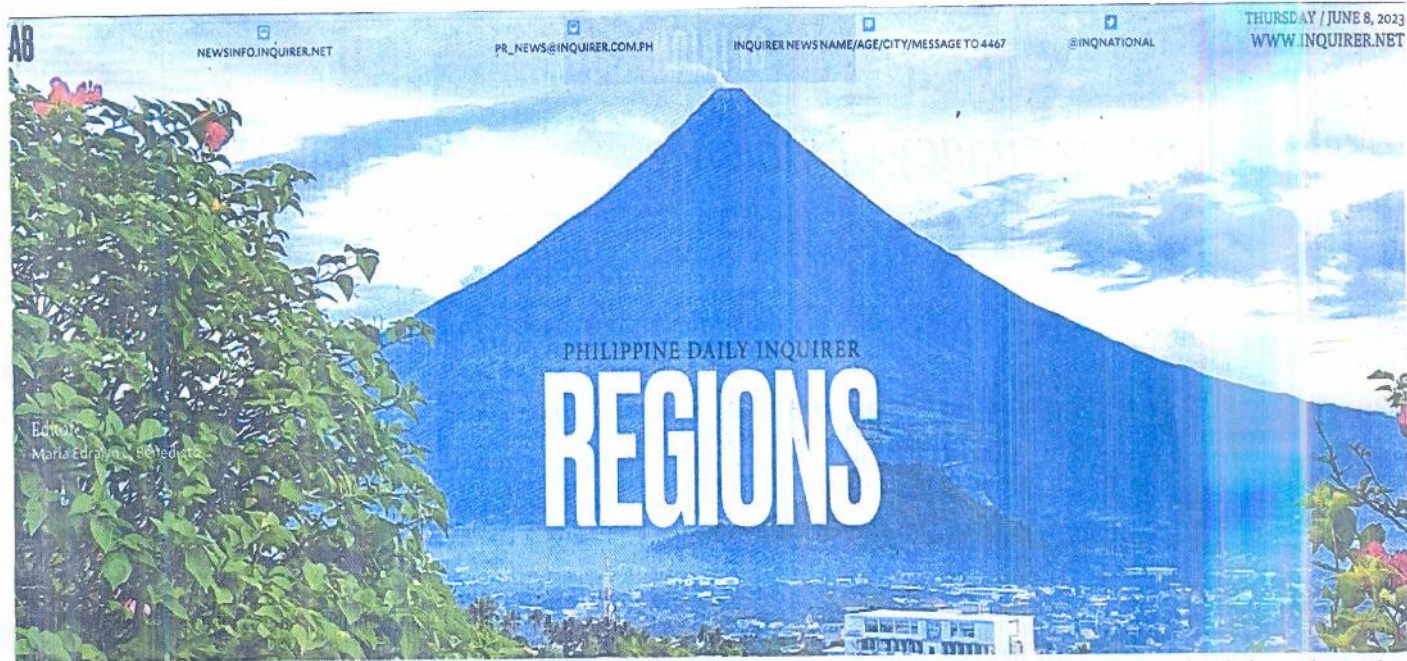
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NOW CLEAR Legazpi City residents and visitors get a full view of the perfect conical shape of Mayon Volcano amid clear skies on Tuesday morning. Government volcanologists continue monitoring the volcano, which has been placed under alert level 2 due to its increasing unrest. —JOHN MICHAEL MANJARES/CONTRIBUTOR



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VOLCANIC ACTIVITY DURING RAINY SEASON

**LAHAR FROM MAYON SLOPES
THREATENS ALBAY VILLAGES**

By Ma. April Mier-Manjares
@InquirerLuzon

LEGAZPI CITY—Residents in Albay are bracing for the possibility of rain-triggered lahar flow from the slopes of Mt. Mayon as the volcano continues to show signs of heightened activity this week.

Levy Lourdes Nuñez, village chief of Mabinit here, said the newly emitted volcanic materials and the old deposits from Mayon might be carried down by rainwater along the Bogña gully in their adjacent barangay now that the rainy season has started.

“Another hazard that makes us fearful is the flooding with lahar flow. We are afraid that the quarry operations on the slopes of the volcano could open the channels leading to our village,” Nuñez said in a phone interview on Wednesday.

Ruthie Pacala, forecaster at the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration Legazpi, said Tropical Storm “Chedeng” (international name: Guchol) would not directly affect or bring heavy rainfall to the province. Albay, she said, is expected to experience only light to moderate rains and thunderstorms in the next few days.

Nuñez said all 390 households, or more than 1,700 residents, within the 8.5- to 9-kilometer radius of Mayon were always evacuated during every volcanic eruption.

Miladee Azur, head of the disaster risk reduction and management office, said the evacuation orders would be based on the assessment of

risks in the affected areas.

“There is a threshold of rainfall volume that could generate lahar, and we have an alert level system based on rainfall volume, which informs the actions to be taken by the communities,” Azur added.

Paul Karson Alanis, resident volcanologist at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) Legazpi, said the volume of new deposits was still small but this might add to the old deposits during lahar flow.

In its Wednesday bulletin, Phivolcs said it recorded 46 rockfall events over a 24-hour monitoring period.

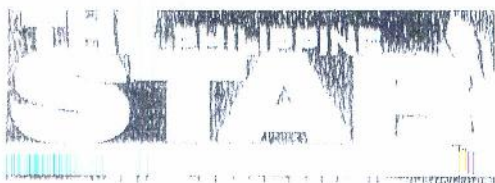
Phivolcs raised Mayon’s warning status to alert level 2 on Monday due to “shallow magmatic processes” that could lead to phreatic (steam-driven) eruptions or hazardous magmatic eruptions.

In Batangas province, Talisay Mayor Nestor Natanauan suspended classes in public and private schools on Wednesday due to the continued volcanic sulfur dioxide emission from Taal Volcano which remains under alert level 1.

Natanauan, in a Facebook post Wednesday, said he suspended classes after vog (volcanic smog) reached the town. Vog consists of fine droplets containing acidic volcanic gas. It causes irritation to the eyes and throat and it can be harmful to persons with respiratory illness.

In its 11 a.m. advisory on Wednesday, Phivolcs reported “ongoing degassing activity” at Taal Volcano over the past 24 hours. —WITH A REPORT FROM

DELFIN T. MALLARI JR. INQ

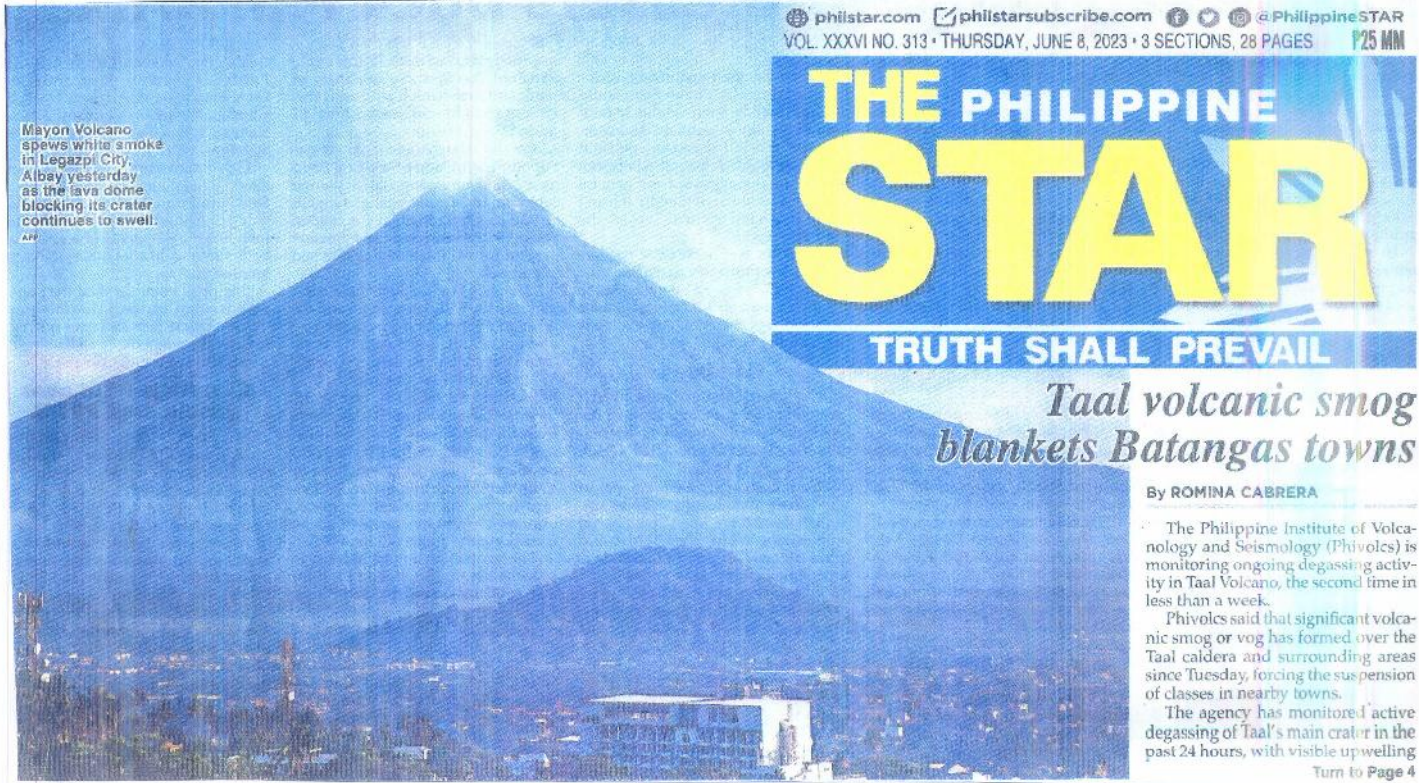


PHILIPPINE STAR
MAYON VOLCANO
TALISAYAN
CAGAYAN DE ORO
DAVAO

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Mayon Volcano spews white smoke in Legazpi City, Albay yesterday as the lava dome blocking its crater continues to swell.
AP



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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Taal volcanic smog blankets Batangas towns

By ROMINA CABRERA

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) is monitoring ongoing degassing activity in Taal Volcano, the second time in less than a week.

Phivolcs said that significant volcanic smog or vog has formed over the Taal caldera and surrounding areas since Tuesday, forcing the suspension of classes in nearby towns.

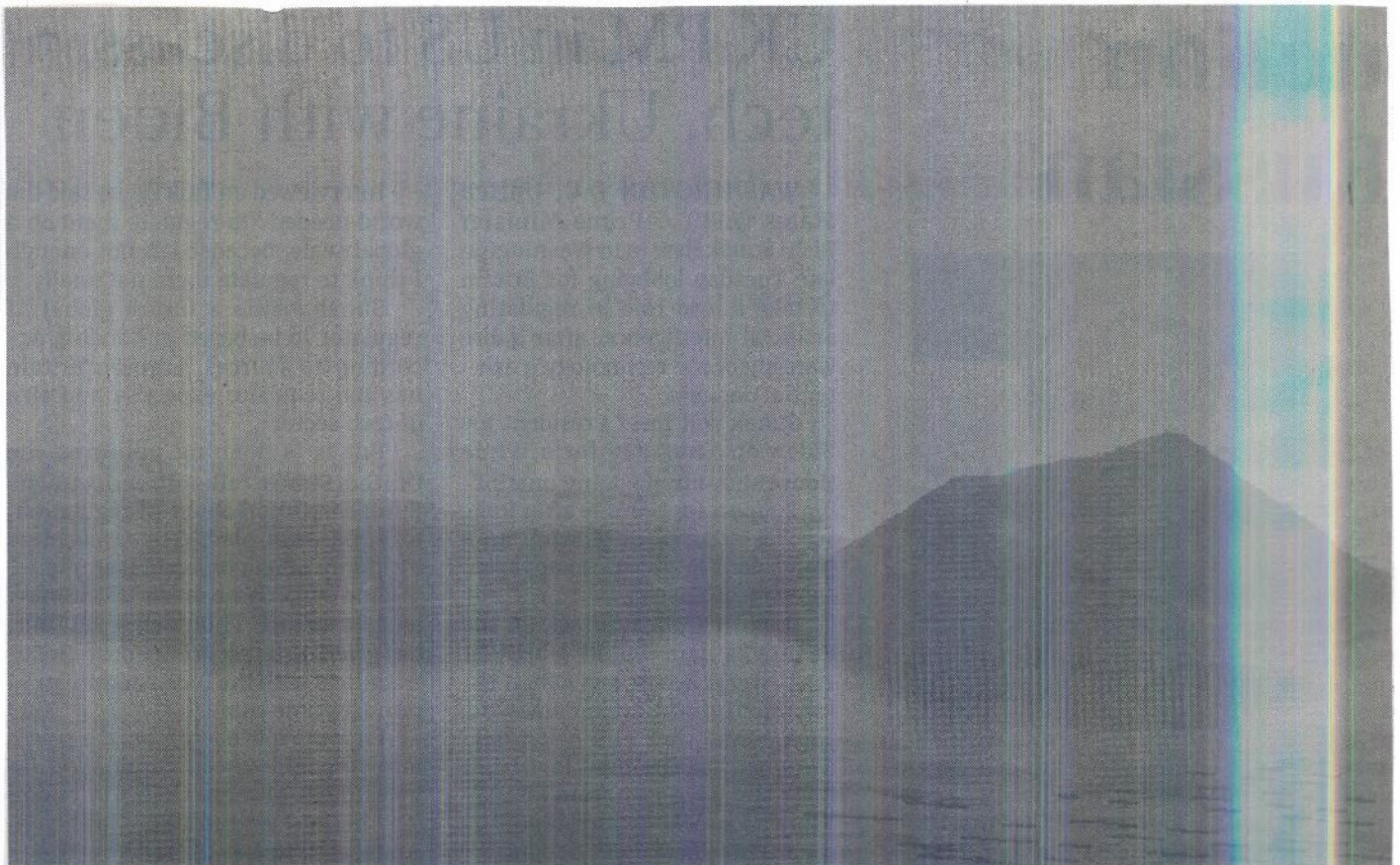
The agency has monitored active degassing of Taal's main crater in the past 24 hours, with visible upwelling

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VOLCANIC SMOG – Volcanic smog or 'vog' blankets Taal Volcano in Talisay, Batangas, on Wednesday, June 7, 2023. Face-to-face classes in Barangay Banyaga and Bilibinwag in Agoncillo, Batangas were suspended on Wednesday to prevent students from inhaling vog from the Taal Volcano's increased activities. (Juan Carlo de Vela)

Landfall unlikely for 'Chedeng', but 'habagat' may strengthen — PAGASA

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said on Wednesday, June 7 that while tropical storm Chedeng is unlikely to make landfall, it may strengthen the southwest monsoon, or "habagat," which could bring rains over the western parts of the country in the coming days.

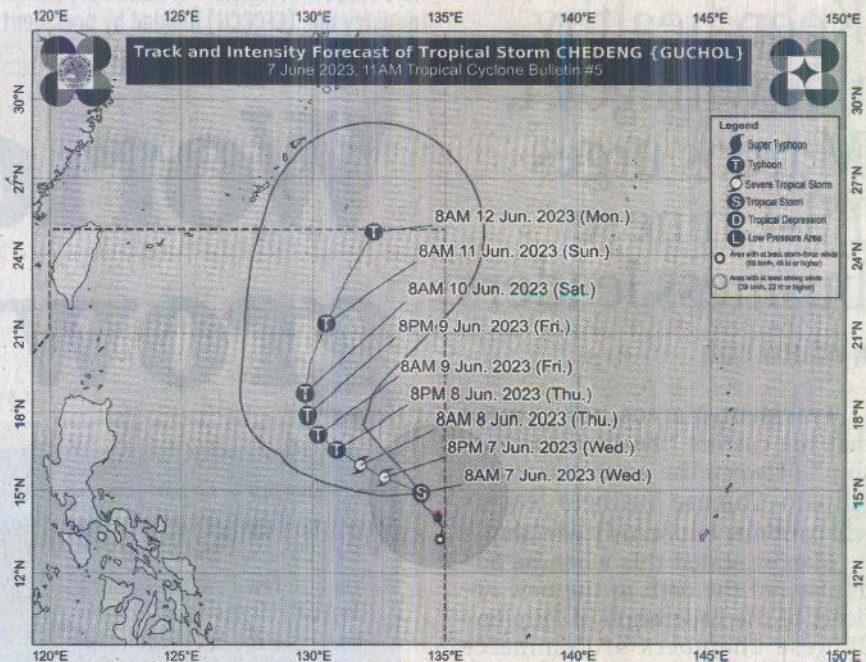
Chedeng was last spotted 1,190 kilometers east of southeastern Luzon in the PAGASA's bulletin issued at 11 a.m.

It has maximum sustained winds of 75 kilometers per hour (kph) near the center and gusts up to 90 kph, and was moving northward at 10 kph.

"Chedeng will remain far from the Philippine landmass throughout the forecast period," PAGASA said, but the "southwest monsoon may be strengthened as a result of Chedeng."

According to PAGASA senior weather specialist Chris Perez, heavy rains from Chedeng are unlikely in the next three to five days, but rains from cyclone-enhanced habagat and localized thunderstorms may affect the western parts of the country.

"Although the current forecast



scenario for this tropical cyclone may result in the enhancement of the southwest monsoon, the timing and intensity of monsoon rains over the country, especially in the western portion, may still change due to the dependence of monsoon enhancement on the forecast movement and intensity of Chedeng and its interaction with the

other weather systems surrounding it," he pointed out.

The public is advised to continue monitoring PAGASA's updates on the potential enhancement of the southwest monsoon.

PAGASA will issue weather advisories if the likelihood of heavy monsoon rains increases over the next three days.