

10 June 2023 Saturday



DENR

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DENR orders review of MGB, EMB processes

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has tapped Isla Lipana & Co./PwC Philippines to review the systems and processes of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

The partnership was formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the two parties.

In support of the DENR's transformation initiatives, the project

with PwC aims to review the existing policies of the MGB and EMB to identify the major gaps on their processes and functions.

DENR Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said the recent DENR Field Operations Management Conference revealed gaps in their processes and have the potential for synergy.

"This will be an opportunity to actually address those gaps and to build value on the efforts done by everyone in the department," she said.

Earlier, the DENR chief said there would be a comprehensive

review of the DENR's people, processes, products, and services to ensure that the agency would "respond to all stakeholder needs in relation to the directives of the President" and the preservation of the environment and the country's natural resources.

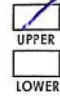
Under the partnership, PwC shall conduct comprehensive assessment using appropriate governance, risk management, and compliance tools to review and assess risks in the existing systems and processes of MGB and EMB.

- With Bella Cariaso



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IN BRIEF

DENR taps Isla Lipana for bureau systems review

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) partnered with Isla Lipana & Co./PwC Philippines to review the systems and processes at the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the Environmental Management Bureau.

The partnership was formalized through the signing of a memorandum of understanding between DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga, and Alex Cabrera, chairman emeritus of Isla Lipana & Co.

PwC Philippines is a professional services firm engaged in delivering audit and assurance, and tax and advisory services within and outside the Philippines. **Rio N. Araja**



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PGMPI gains govt support to be key player PHL mining industry

THE Philippine General Minerals Project Inc. (PGMPI) has announced it is ready to undertake mining operations for the sustainable extraction of critical minerals and rare earth elements.

After almost three years of research and development in the rehabilitation of mining areas.

PGMPI, in news statement, said it "is thrilled to announce its successful and highly productive meetings with key government officials following President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s pronouncement during the 42nd Asean Summit on May 10, 2023, in Indonesia that the Philippines will be a producer of critical metals and minerals, and not just an exporter of iron ore."

"As industrialized nations grapple for control of the supply and demand of critical minerals and resources necessary for space and defense technology, the EV industry, nuclear power, and telecommunications, President

Marcos' announcement is certainly well timed. The Philippines sits on vast natural resources, and more than 3,000 mining operations in the country have left millions of tons of waste materials which, incidentally, PGMPI's R&D, as well as other companies around the world, have confirmed to contain many of these heavily contested materials," the PGMPI statement added.

Founded by Lt. General Antonio G. Parlade Jr., former Southern Luzon Commander, along with a group of close associates, PGMPI initially conducted extensive research to delve into the dynamics of the trade war between the US and China, particularly regarding rare earth materials and precious metals.

The research, the statement added, "unearthed" a wealth of information on the presence of these critical minerals in waste tailings, both on the surface and underground, as well as millions of tons of ore being shipped out of the country, many

of them finding their way in the reclamation activities in the West Philippine Sea.

With clear guidance from the then National Security Adviser Secretary Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr., and former Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, PGMPI "meticulously explored" methods of harnessing these minerals without causing further harm to the environment.

Supported by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, PGMPI research involved onshore and underwater surveillance of black sand materials in Cagayan and Albay, ores and tailings from Kalinga to Tawi-Tawi, and even from disaster-ridden mining sites such as Marcopper in Marinduque and Apex Mining in Davao de Oro, where vast quantities of tailings remain stagnant in artificial lakes and ponds, and continue to pose potential risks to low-lying villages and necessitates attention from the Office of Civil Defense and the Department of National Defense.



Cave within titled property is still owned by the State; there must be permit before collecting plants and mineral deposit

Dear PAO,

My grandfather owned a property in the province. It is a titled land, but for the longest time, no one in the family had the time to manage it because my father had already passed away, so my mother and I moved here in Manila to live with my maternal relatives, while my uncle, my father's only sibling, used to work abroad. He decided to come back and settle in our province. He wants to manage the property, but he was surprised to learn that there is a natural cave within my grandfather's property. Is that our family's property as well? Can we collect the plants and mineral deposits that we can find there?

Daryl

Dear Daryl,
Republic Act (RA) 9072, otherwise known as the "National Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act," delineates the policies relating to the conservation, protection, and management of caves and cave resources both in private and public lands. It can be gleaned under Section 6 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9072 that caves remain to be owned by the State, even those found within private lands, so any collection, use or extraction of plants, mineral deposits, and the like must be authorized by the government:

"Sec 6. Caves within Private Lands. Caves and cave resources are owned by the State. As such, landowners with caves inside their private lands shall secure the necessary permit from the DENR for the use, collection or removal of any cave resource found therein.

"All resource utilization outside



caves within private lands, including the harvesting of planted trees, shall be regulated by the DENR in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations to preserve the integrity of the cave.

"The private landowner may enter into a Tripartite MOA or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DENR and LGUs in the conservation, management and protection of caves and cave resources found therein."

Accordingly, you or your family cannot unilaterally collect the plants and mineral deposits found in the cave within the property of your grandfather. The necessary permit must be secured and issued in your favor first. If you fail to secure such permit, you are at the risk of being penalized because under Sections 7 and 8 of RA 9072 state:

"Section 7. Prohibited Acts - The following shall be considered Prohibited Acts:

"(a) Knowingly destroying, disturbing, defacing, marring, altering, removing, or harming the speleogem or speleothem of any cave or altering the free movement of any animal or plant life into or out of any cave;

"(b) Gathering, collecting, possessing, consuming, selling, bartering or exchanging or offering for sale without

authority any cave resource; and

"(c) Counselling, procuring, soliciting or employing any other person to violate any provisions of this Section.

"Section 8. Penalties - Any person found guilty of any of the offenses enumerated under Section 7 hereof shall be punished by imprisonment from two (2) years to six (6) years or a fine ranging from Twenty thousand pesos (P20,000) to five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00) or both at the discretion of the Court: Provided That the person furnishing the capital to accomplish the acts punishable herein shall be punished by imprisonment from six (6) yrs and one (1) day to eight (8) years or by a fine ranging from Five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00) to One million pesos (P1,000,000.00) or both at the Discretion of the Court. Provided further that if the area requires rehabilitation or restoration as determined by the Court, the offender shall also be required to restore the same, whenever practicable or compensate for the damage: Provided finally that if the offender is a government employee, he or she shall likewise be removed from office." (Emphasis supplied)

We hope that we were able to answer your queries. Please be reminded that this advice is based solely on the facts you have narrated and our appreciation of the same. Our opinion may vary when other facts are changed or elaborated.

Editor's note: Dear PAO is a daily column of the Public Attorney's Office. Questions for Chief Acosta may be sent to dearpao@manilatimes.net



El Niño is here; BBM orders water conservation measures

By HELEN FLORES

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the United States on Thursday issued an El Niño advisory, announcing the arrival of the climatic phenomenon.

It formed a month or two earlier than most El Niños do, which "gives it room to grow," and there's a 56 percent chance it will be considered strong, and a 25 percent chance it reaches supersized levels, said climate scientist Michelle L'Heureux, head of NOAA's El Niño/La Niña forecast office.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), had earlier forecast that there would be an 80 percent probability that the El Niño phenomenon would emerge from June to August, and that it will persist until the first quarter of next year.

PAGASA's latest forecast showed a 53 percent chance that El Niño would reach a strong level toward the latter part of the year.

Implement water saving measures

To avert possible water crises due to El Niño or the long dry spell, President Marcos has directed all government agencies to strictly implement water conservation measures.

Through Memorandum Circular 22, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on June 7, the President instructed the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) and its network of agencies to take the lead in implementing water conservation measures.

The Chief Executive also directed all government agencies, including government-owned or controlled corporations and state universities and colleges, to "identify and implement specific quantifiable and attainable water conservation measures that will result in 10 percent water volume reduction of their respective first quarter (January to March 2024) water consumption."

The President also ordered the Local Water Utilities Administration, National Water Resources Board and the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System, while private water service providers (WSPs) are enjoined, to submit to the WRMO a monthly supply-demand projection to determine possible deficit in water supply in the near future.

"National government-run WSPs are hereby directed, and local government-run WSPs are hereby encouraged, to immediately complete their projects to reduce non-revenue water and upgrade their distribution pipes. Local government units are encouraged to process the requests of WSPs for waterworks within a reasonable period of time," the memorandum circular said.

Marcos also directed the WRMO to identify strategies toward water conservation measures and provide quarterly updates to the Office of the President, through the Office of the Executive Secretary.

In a vlog posted on YouTube in May, Marcos had urged Filipinos to be frugal in using water and electricity, citing the country's tight power supply and the expected severe dry spell due to El Niño until the early part of 2024.

Marcos noted that the Philippines' power demand far exceeds supply.



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MARCOS ORDERS GOV'T AGENCIES TO CONSERVE WATER AS EL NIÑO LOOMS

By Nestor Corrales
@NCorralesINQ

President Marcos has ordered all government agencies to "strictly" enforce water conservation measures to avert a looming water crisis due to the threat of El Niño in the Philippines.

Under Memorandum Circular No. 22 signed on June 7, the President directed the newly created Water Resources Management Office (WRMO), under the Department of Environ-

ment and Natural Resources, to take the lead in the implementation of a nationwide water conservation program.

Mr. Marcos created the WRMO in April this year pending the passage of the Department of Water Resources, as he admitted that the Philippines was facing a water crisis.

In his latest memorandum circular, he said all national government agencies, including government-owned or -controlled corporations and

state universities and colleges, should "identify and implement specific, quantifiable and attainable water conservation measures" that would result in a 10 percent water volume reduction of their respective first quarter water consumption.

Marcos also ordered the Local Water Utilities Administration, the National Water Resources Board and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to submit a monthly supply-demand pro-

jection, which would state if there would be a deficit in the water supply in the future.

"Government-run water service providers are hereby directed, and private water service providers are hereby encouraged to implement water conservation measures, such as but not limited to nonrevenue water management and water pressure management," the circular said.

He also urged local government units to process the requests of water service pro-

viders for waterworks "within a reasonable period of time."

According to the President, the WRMO should identify strategies on water conservation and monitor compliance of government agencies, including providing quarterly updates to the Office of the President.

In April this year, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council formed a team to mitigate the impact of El Niño following the order of the President. INQ



President Marcos —PPA POOL



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1880
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Save water, avert dry spell, Marcos orders gov't agencies

By BETHEENA UNITE

President Marcos has ordered all government agencies to strictly implement water conservation measures to avert possible water crisis.

In Memorandum Circular No. 22, dated June 7, Marcos directed the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) and its network of agencies to take the lead in implementing water conservation measures

amid the dry spell in the coming months.

All government agencies, including government-owned or -controlled corporations and state universities and colleges were told ▶ 5

Save water, avert dry spell, Marcos orders gov't agencies 1◀

to "identify and implement specific quantifiable and attainable water conservation measures that will result in 10 percent water volume reduction of their respective first quarter (January to March 2023) water consumption."

The President also ordered the Local Water Utilities Administration, National Water Resources Board, and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to submit to the WRMO a monthly supply-demand projection to determine possible deficit in water supply in the near future.

Private water service providers, on the other hand, were also encouraged to implement water conservation measures, such as but not limited to non-revenue water management and

water pressure management.

National government-run and local government-run water service providers were also urged to immediately complete their projects to reduce non-revenue water and upgrade their distribution pipes.

The local government units are encouraged to process the requests of water service providers for waterworks within a reasonable period of time.

Marcos also directed the WRMO to identify strategies toward water conservation measures and provide quarterly updates to the Office of the President, through the Office of the Executive Secretary, on the progress.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and As-

tronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the country's El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Alert and Warning System was raised to El Niño Alert as of May 24.

PAGASA said El Niño increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall conditions, which could bring negative impacts such as dry spells and droughts in some areas of the country.

On Thursday, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said the El Niño climate phenomenon has arrived.

The weather pattern last occurred in 2018-19, and takes place every two to seven years on average.

"Depending on its strength, El Niño can cause a range of impacts, such as increasing the risk of heavy rainfall and droughts in certain locations around the world," said NOAA climate scientist Michelle L'Heureux. (With a report from AFP)



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A broader look at today's business



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Palace orders NGIs to implement water conservation measures ahead of El Niño

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

ALL national government agencies and instrumentalities (NGI) will now be required to reduce their water consumption by 10 percent in ahead of the El Niño threat under a new issuance from Malacañang.

Under his Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 22, Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin issued the guidelines for the implementation of water conservation measures for NGIs.

The issuance aims to avert a "looming water crisis" nationwide due to the expected impact of the El Niño phenomenon.

"All national government agencies and instrumentalities, including government-owned and controlled corporations and state universities and colleges,

are hereby directed to identify and implement specific, quantifiable and attainable water conservation measures that will result to 10 percent water volume reduction of their respective first quarter [January to March 2023] water consumption," Bersamin said in his two-page circular.

He also encouraged government and private-controlled water service providers (WSP) to implement conservation measures such as, but limited to non-revenue water management and water pressure management.

MC 22 also instructed the Local Water Utilities Administration, National Water Resources Board, and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and private WSPs to regularly submit a monthly supply-demand projection highlighting the likelihood of possible

water supply deficit.

The Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was tasked to implement MC 22.

"The WRMO shall identify strategies towards water conservation, monitor compliance of government agencies and instrumentalities with aforementioned water conservation measures, and provide quarterly updates to the Office of the President, through the Office of the Executive Secretary, on the progress thereof," Bersamin said.

Last month, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said El Niño is will start in the third quarter of the year and might persist until the first quarter of 2024.



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El Niño here, US agency says; Save more water, PBBM orders

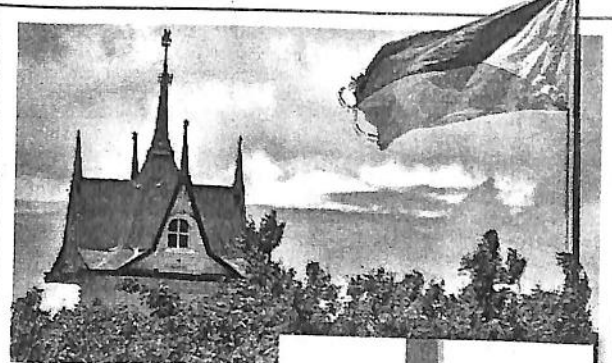
By Vince Lopez

AN expected El Nino climate phenomenon has arrived, raising fears of extreme weather and temperature records, scientists at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Thursday. This developed as President Ferdinand

Marcos Jr. directed all government agencies to strictly implement water conservation measures in light of the possible El Niño long dry spell.

Marked by warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific

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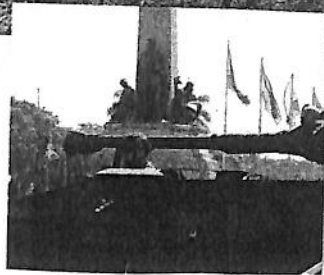


Number coding shelved for June 12 celebrations

THERE will be no number coding on Monday, June 12, as the country celebrates its 125th Independence Day, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

But the MMDA announced on Friday it will impose a traffic rerouting scheme primarily along Roxas Boulevard in Manila due

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INDEPENDENCE DAY PREP.

Members of the Armed Forces conduct exercises in preparation for the 125th Independence Day Anniversary at Rizal Park on Friday, even as a tattered Philippine flag flaps proudly at the Aguinaldo Shrine in Kawit, another site of the Freedom Day rites (inset). **Norman Cruz and Danny Pata**

El Niño...

From A1

Ocean near the equator, the weather pattern last occurred in 2018-19 and takes place every 2-7 years on average.

"Depending on its strength, El Nino can cause a range of impacts, such as increasing the risk of heavy rainfall and droughts in certain locations around the world," said NOAA climate scientist Michelle L'Heureux.

"Climate change can exacerbate or mitigate certain impacts related to El Nino. For example, El Nino could lead to new records for temperatures, particularly in areas that already experience above-average temperatures during El Nino," she added.

In Memorandum Circular No. 22, dated June 7, 2023, and signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, President Marcos ordered the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) and its network of agencies to execute water conservation measures to avert a water crisis in the next several months.

Mr. Marcos also directed all agencies, including government-owned or -controlled corporations and state universities and colleges, to "identify and implement specific quantifiable and

attainable water conservation measures that will result in ten percent water volume reduction of their respective first quarter (January to March 2023) water consumption."

The President also instructed the Local Water Utilities Administration, National Water Resources Board, and the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System to do the same.

Private water service providers (WSPs) are enjoined to submit to the WRMO a monthly supply-demand projection to determine a possible deficit in water supply in the near future.

"National government-run WSPs are hereby directed, and local government-run WSPs are hereby encouraged, to immediately complete their projects to reduce non-revenue water and upgrade their distribution pipes," the President said.

"Local government units are encouraged to process the requests of WSPs for waterworks within a reasonable period of time," he added in the memorandum.

President Marcos also said the WRMO "shall identify strategies towards water conservation measures and provide quarterly updates to the Office of the President, through the Office of the Executive Secretary, on the progress thereof." (See full story online at manilastandard.net)



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The Manila Times



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Mayon likely to have 'hazardous' eruption

BY RHAYDZ B. BARCIA, ARLIE O. CALALO,
MOISES CRUZ, RED MENDOZA,
FRANCO JOSE C. BAROÑA AND ARIC JOHN SY CUA

MOUNT MAYON, already res-
titive for the past few days, is
showing signs that it could
be primed for a "hazardous" eruption
soon, the Philippine Institute of Vol-
canology and Seismology (Phivolcs)
said on Friday. ➤EruptionA2



ERUPTION FROM A1

Mayon

As a precaution, authorities have begun evacuating villagers living inside the 6-kilometer permanent danger zone (PDZ) around the volcano.

The provincial government of Albay has also declared a state of calamity as it prepares for relief operations once a major eruption occurs.

Phivolcs Director Teresito Bacolcol told *The Manila Times* on Thursday the agency is further assessing the volcano's behavior before raising the alert status from the present Level 3 to Level 4.

"And under Alert Level 4, there is already what we call hazardous eruption," Bacolcol said.

He said other factors such as an increase in sulfur dioxide (SO₂), higher seismicity and lava fountaining must be considered before the alert level is raised.

He said the possibility of phreatic or steam-driven eruptions "is why we inform the public not to venture inside the 6-kilometer PDZ."

In Legazpi City, Dr. Paul Karson Alanis, Phivolcs' resident volcanologist chief in Bicol, said the series of earthquakes in Masbate, Camarines Sur and Camarines Norte recently could also point to increased volcano activity.

Alanis told a meeting of the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (DRRMC) and Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council meeting in Legazpi on Thursday that aside from the earthquakes, the new magma buildup on Mayon's upper slopes could also be an indication of further restiveness.

"We need to prepare because of Pyroclastic Density Currents (PDC)" have been observed on Mayon, Alanis said. PDCs are streams of superheated ash spewed by the volcano.

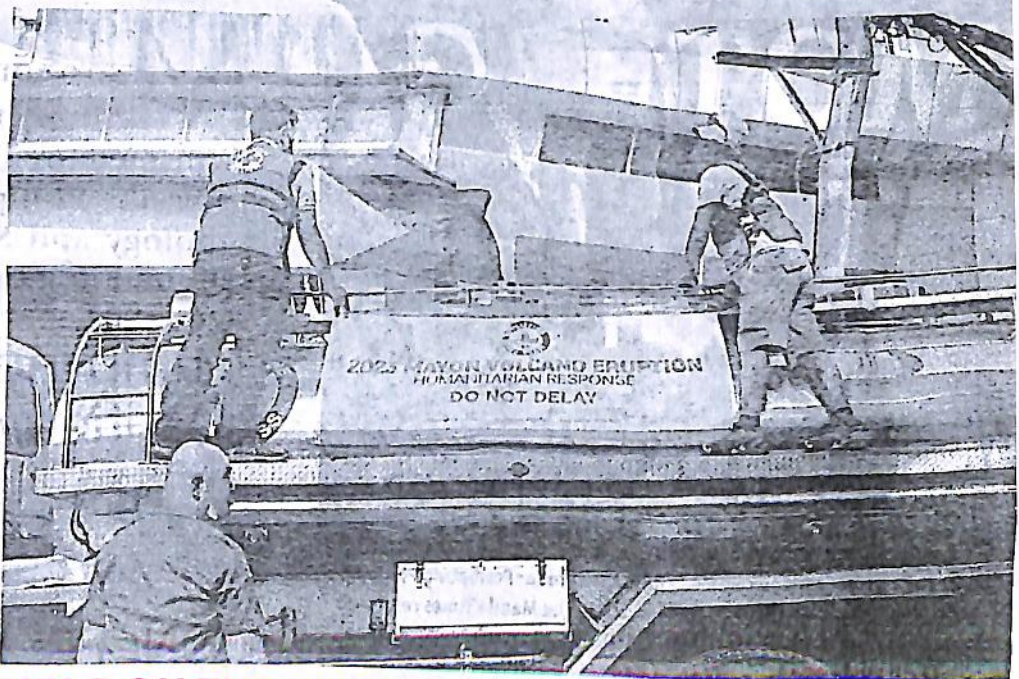
He said that debris from the 2018 eruption continues to create rockfalls.

"It's just accumulating a force for a magmatic explosion," Alanis said of Mayon's surge of activity.

He said there were also rockfalls and earthquakes that preceded the major eruptions in 2018 and 2014.

Level 3 was raised on June 8 after lava was observed at the summit, triggering rockfalls and PDCs.

Bacolcol said the conditions



HELP ON THE WAY

The Philippine Red Cross in Mandaluyong City sends trucks containing goods and equipment for residents in Albay, Bicol, who have been evacuated due to the increasing restiveness of Mayon Volcano. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology has raised Alert Level 3 and said on Friday, June 9, 2023, that a 'hazardous eruption' was expected anytime. PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE

indicate that magma continues to rise and make its way from deep inside the volcano to the crater at an increasing rate.

Phivolcs recorded 267 rockfalls and two volcanic earthquakes from June 5 to 8, compared to the 54 rockfalls from June 1 to 4, 2023.

Civil aviation authorities must advise pilots to avoid flying close to the volcano's summit since ash from a sudden eruption can be dangerous to aircraft, Phivolcs said.

Over 18,000 residents within the 6-kilometer permanent danger zone will be evacuated on Friday.

At least 50 barangay in the towns of Camalig, Daraga, Sto. Domingo, Guinobatan, Malilipot and the cities of Tabaco and Ligao are expected to be affected if Mayon erupts.

Albay Gov. Greco Lagman said the province has a P30 million calamity fund that could be used for a Mayon eruption response.

Dr. Pancho Mella, chief of provincial veterinary services, said at least 10,000 farm animals will be evacuated to the Albay Parks and Wildlife grounds.

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) said it is deploying 18 trucks and more than 30 personnel to Albay.

Among the assets deployed by the PRC are four water tankers with five water bladders, two water filtration units and tap stands, four food trucks, two multipurpose vans with health supplies, three

trucks with 2,500 sleeping kits and hygiene kits, and trucks carrying 2,500 jerry cans from PRC's Metro Manila and Subic warehouses, and PRC's Batangas Chapter.

In an interview during the deployment ceremony at PRC's Logistics and Multipurpose Center in Mandaluyong City, PRC Secretary-General Gwendolyn Pang said the assets will be fielded to eight towns around Mayon.

Pang said the humanitarian organization was requested by the provincial government to assist in extracting residents from the permanent danger zones.

"We have been there in previous eruptions. ... We are very much prepared. Our team there knows what to do," Pang said.

PRC Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Richard Gordon added that it is much better to be "over prepared" in times of crisis such as the Mayon eruption.

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian assured Albay officials on Friday that the DSWD Bicol office has been "aggressively managing the situation" in anticipation of an eruption.

The DSWD plans to preposition 102,000 family food packs (FFPs) in warehouses close to the areas that have been impacted by past Mayon eruptions.

Guinobatan and Camalig have the highest number of evacuees,

based on data from the 2018 eruption as well as predictive analysis.

Albay First District Rep. Edcel Lagman said his office has worked alongside the DSWD, Governor Lagman, Tabaco City Mayor Krisel Lagman, and the five mayors in his district in preparation for an eruption.

"Food packs and other relief items are now prepositioned for the eventual calamity," Lagman said.

Albay Second District Rep. Joey Salceda thanked the DSWD for promptly fulfilling his request for food packs for 9,829 families in Camalig, Daraga, Guinobatan, Santo Domingo, and Malilipot, which are within the 6-kilometer and 7-kilometer danger zones.

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) has directed its offices in Bicol and Calabarzon to heighten their monitoring and close coordination with local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils and support agencies to ensure the safety of the communities around Mayon and Taal Volcano in Batangas, which has also shown signs of restiveness.

Civil Defense Administrator and National DRRMC Executive Director Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said on Friday his staff is coordinating with the Phivolcs and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Health for interventions that need to be implemented.



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20,000 flee restive Mayon

Blast at summit sign of possible eruption as Albay declares state of calamity



By Charles Dantes, Rio N. Araja, and Maricel V. Cruz

MAYON Volcano's crater glowed well into the night on Friday as state volcanologists said it erupted at the summit and a bigger blast was possible, while authorities evacuated thousands of residents from its surrounding towns and awaited an escalation to Alert Level 4, one step higher than the activity that saw the lava flow down its slopes yesterday.

MAYON AGLOW. Mayon Volcano's crater is aglow with fresh lava in this photo taken at 8:30 p.m. last night by Phivolcs, while James Albert Polero's photo shows pyroclastic movement as seen from Brgy. Bonga, Bacacay, Albay, on Friday (inset). The entire province of Albay has been placed under a state of calamity as police help residents climb onto trucks to take them away from the volcano's danger zone. **Phivolcs, Albay PNP photos**



The Albay provincial government on Friday declared a state of calamity as

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20,000...

From A1

Mayon's unrest prompted the evacuation of at least 20,000 residents around its six-kilometer permanent danger zone and nearby areas, according to local officials.

The state of calamity is expected to speed up the release of funds to assist the affected residents. Classes were also suspended in schools within Mayon's danger zone.

An eruption occurred on the summit of Mayon a day after its alert level status was raised to 3, meaning "an increased tendency towards hazardous eruption," the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) confirmed Friday.

The volcano emitted plumes that reached 800 meters tall, while its edifice was also inflated.

In a TV interview, Phivolcs Director Teresito Bacolcol said an eruption and six pyroclastic density currents (PDC) were recorded from the volcano.

"This would imply a continuous supply of magma to the surface, dislodging all the new surface of the lava dome," Bacolcol said. "Right now, there is an eruption on the summit."

Raising the alert level in the active volcano in Albay signifies an "increased tendency towards a hazardous eruption," Phivolcs said.

It also said the repeated collapse of the volcano's growing summit dome has generated an increasing number and volume of rockfall events since the alert level was

raised from 1 to 2 on Monday.

Due to the danger of pyroclastic density currents, lava flows, rockfalls, and other volcanic hazards, the agency has recommended evacuation from the six-kilometer radius Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ).

Increased vigilance against pyroclastic density currents, lahars, and sediment-laden streamflows along channels draining the edifice is also advised, it added.

Ash fall events may occur most likely on the south side of Mayon considering the current prevailing wind pattern. A thin layer of ash fall was detected in nearby areas.

The PDCs, Bacolcol said, were fast-moving and could reach up to hundreds of kilometers per hour.

Phivolcs said in its June 9 morning bulletin there were 199 rockfall events recorded.

Bacolcol said several parameters were being monitored before the alert level status would be raised.

"For example, if sulfur dioxide emissions go up, because right now, it's at 332 tons a day, which is even lower than the background level of 500 tons a day," he said in Filipino.

Volcanic earthquakes are also taken into account.

"Yesterday, we recorded no volcanic earthquakes. Between June 5 and 8, there were only two. So those are the parameters we look at," he said.

He reminded the public to avoid entering the six-kilometer radius permanent danger zone due to the possibility of rockfall and landslides or even a sudden eruption.

Bacolcol said there are two possible events that may happen.

"This heightened rockfall activity at Mayon could be interpreted as the initial signs of a possible magmatic eruption, or it may also cease just like what happened in 2014 after rock fall events there was a minor lava flow, and then the activity ceased," he said.

The first scenario is similar to the 2018 eruption wherein the rockfall activity progressed into magmatic eruptions.

If the alert level would be raised to 4, this "would mean there is an imminent hazardous eruption that is about to happen," the Phivolcs chief said.

If it rains and Mayon emits sulfur dioxide in large quantities, acid rain may also occur, he said.

Meanwhile, Taal volcano, located about 50 kilometers south of Manila, has been releasing sulfur dioxide this week, blanketing surrounding areas in smog and prompting warnings for people to stay indoors.

Steam-rich plumes have been recorded rising two kilometers into the sky, the seismology agency said on Thursday. It has left the alert level at 1.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) in Bicol has activated different teams in response to the ongoing activities of Mayon Volcano.

Lt. Col. Malu Calubaquib, spokesperson of the Police Regional Office 5 (PRO5), said in an interview the PNP-Bicol ensures maximum deployment of all response teams to help residents in Mayon-affected towns.

"We already activated the Reactionary Standby Support Force (RSSF) and Search

and Rescue Teams who shall be first to be deployed. We also activated a Critical Incident Monitoring Action Team that will be used to monitor and generate situational reports on the current condition of Mayon Volcano as essential steps in ensuring the safety of the Albayanos," Calubaquib said.

She also said logistical capabilities such as trucks and other vehicles were readied for use during the evacuation.

The Department of Agriculture's Regional Field Office V, meanwhile, advised farmers to place their animals in safer areas.

The Presidential Communications Office said the regional office also local farmers to secure all their farm equipment and machinery.

The authorities are preparing an inventory of the livestock population inside the six-kilometer permanent danger zone, the PCO said.

The DA regional office has already positioned hauling trucks at Tabaco City and Camalig, Albay, and updated its seed reserves, the PCO added.

The vice mayor of Guinobatan, Albay, said about 5,000 people were expected to be evacuated from their homes.

In a radio interview, Vice Mayor Anne Gemma Ongjoco said the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) advised all the people within a seven-kilometer radius around the volcano to move to safer areas.

Ongjoco warned that it would be dangerous for tourists to try to view the volcano erupting, particularly if the rain pours.



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Gov't keeping close eye on Taal, Kanlaon activities too

By Charles Dantes

THE Office of Civil Defense (OCD) has ordered its offices in the Bicol region and Calabarzon to heighten their monitoring activities and to coordinate with their

respective communities amid the increased activity from Mayon and Taal volcanoes.

Civil Defense Administrator and National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC)

Executive Director, Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said the OCD is coordinating with the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) and other government agencies in its continuous monitoring.

"We are coordinating with Phivolcs on the volcanic activities of Mayon and Taal as well as with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Health, and our counterparts in

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Bicol Region and Calabarzon for interventions that need to be implemented," Nepomuceno said.

"Mayon Volcano is now at alert level 3. We call on the communities in the area to always follow the warnings and orders of authorities such as the evacuation inside the six-kilometer radius Permanent Danger Zone or PDZ. This is due to the danger of pyroclastic density currents, lava flows, rockfalls, and other volcanic hazards in Mayon Volcano," he said.

But Phivolcs on Friday said it was

safe to visit scenic Albay province and Taal town in Batangas during the June 10 to 12 long weekend, despite the unrest of both Taal and Mayon volcanoes.

Phivolcs officer-in-charge Teresito Bacolcol said the public should wear face masks if they decide to go to Taal due to the presence of volcanic smog, which has reached the towns of Laurel, Talisay, and Agoncillo in Batangas.

"It's safe as long as we protect ourselves by wearing face masks," Bacolcol said in Filipino. "We are used to wearing face masks because of the pandemic. So let us wear face masks to protect ourselves from the volcanic smog."

People visiting Albay, on the other hand, must avoid the six-kilometer permanent danger zone around Mayon, Bacolcol said.

"It's safe to go to Albay as long as they don't enter the permanent danger zones," he added.

The Phivolcs chief reminded the public that permanent danger zones could be expanded if the alert status of Mayon went up.

Meanwhile, Phivolcs said volcanic activity in Mt. Kanlaon in Negros may be pointing towards higher chances of a phreatic eruption.

The volcano has been under Alert Level 1 since 2020 due to an increase in

low-frequency volcanic earthquakes.

Based on its latest monitoring, Phivolcs has observed at least three volcanic earthquakes, with the volcano's edifice inflated. On Monday, Kanlaon also emitted over 1,000 tons of sulfur dioxide.

Phivolcs Chief Science Research Specialist Maria Antonia Bornas said that while magmatic eruptions are still more dangerous than phreatic eruptions, they can still be worrisome.

"The problem with phreatic eruptions is that many such eruptions occur without precursory signals. In recent years, phreatic eruptions have killed more than magmatic eruptions," she said.



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Govt sets 'science-driven' rehab of oil spill-hit communities

'BREATHE, REFRESH AND RESTART'



'Breathe, refresh and restart'

BY REX ANTHONY NAVAL

A SCIENTIFIC approach will be adopted to ensure the rehabilitation of areas and communities affected by the oil spill caused by the sinking of the *MT Princess Empress* in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, on February 28.

"In line with the President's guidance for a whole-of-nation approach in dealing with the consequences of disasters, we are undertaking this multi-sector scientific conference so that the pool of expertise on this subject matter can be tapped to ensure that our way forward in rehabilitation and recovery is effective," Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Administrator, Undersecretary Ariel F. Nepomuceno said in a briefing on June 1.

The OCD chief, who also chairs the National Task Force on Oil Spill Management, said the scientific conference is scheduled this month, and will focus on recovery initiatives that would be truly helpful to the affected communities in "terms of economy, the environment and sustainability."

Expected to participate in the conference are a number of scientific agencies, academic institutions, relevant government departments, local government units (LGUs) and other stakeholder organizations.

"The aim of the conference is to facilitate the conduct of a post-disaster need assessment (PDNA) to determine the effects and impacts of the oil spill incident on the affected areas, including general long-term impacts on agriculture (fisheries), the marine environment, tourism and livelihood, among others," the OCD chief stressed.

End of siphoning ops

ALSO, Nepomuceno said they are looking forward to the conclusion

of siphoning operations by the dynamic support vessel *Fire Opal*, which arrived in Oriental Mindoro to perform its task on May 28.

The ship was chartered by Malayan Towage and Salvage Corp.

It left Singapore on May 19 and arrived at Subic Freeport Zone

on May 26 before starting operations in Oriental Mindoro.

The entire siphoning operation is expected to cover between 20 and 30 days.

The vessel will be used for oil extraction operations, transferring of oily waste to a tanker, and disposal of the collected oil.

MT Princess Empress was loaded with 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil when it sank off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, on February 28.

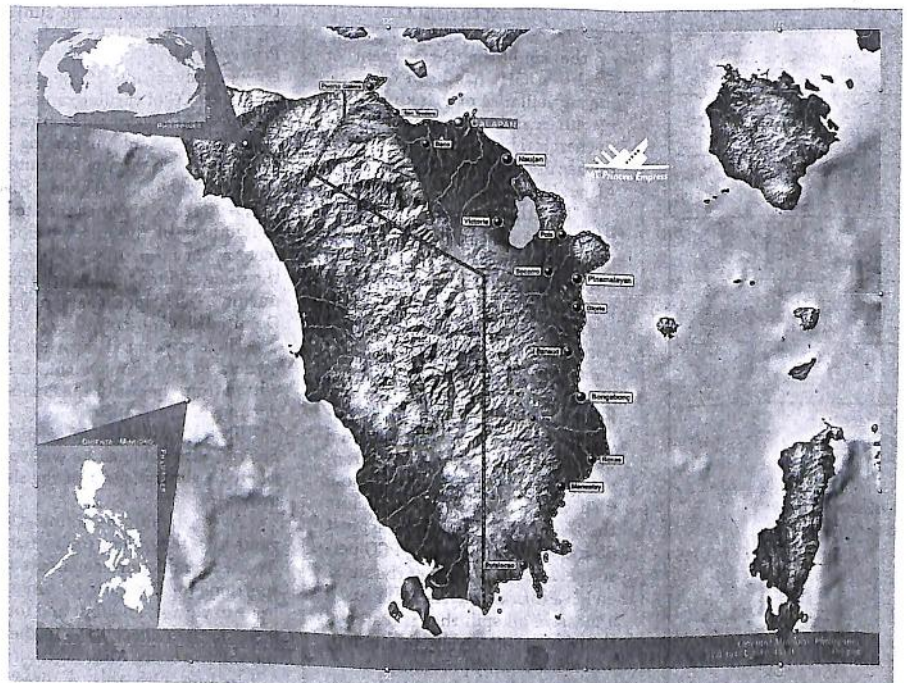
There are conflicting reports on how much *MT Princess Empress* was insured for, and whether the amount is enough to cover the ongoing cleanup and rehabilitation of affected communities.

Earlier reports placed it at around \$1 billion, while some placed it at \$284 million.

Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) spokesperson Rear Admiral mand Balilo said about 120,000 to 240,000 liters of oil are expected to be extracted by *Fire Opal*.

"We are looking forward to conclusion of the siphoning operations, for this will herald the conduct of the scientific conference. The conference will jumpstart conduct of the PDNA and recovery planning by recommending valuation methods of affected environmental [assets]," OCD deputy administrator for operations, Assistant Secretary Bernardo R. elito Alejandro IV, said.

"The outputs of the conference will serve as the basis for the formulation of a comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery plan for affected areas," he added.





83.74% of affected coastlines cleaned

IN the June 1 meeting, the PCG also reported that of the 79.33 km (83.74 percent) of affected coastlines, 66.433 km had been acceptably cleaned with only 12.89 km (16.26 percent) remaining for cleanup.

The ongoing cleanup operations yielded 44,656.30 liters of oily water mixture, 10,708 sacks, 997 drums, 119 pails, and 648 one-tonner bags of oil-contaminated sand/debris and oily waste from Calabarzon, Mimaropa, and Region 6.

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development also reported the disbursement of more than P611 million worth of assistance in the form of family food packs, non-food items, emergency cash transfers, and cash-for-work to the affected communities.

The total assistance provided by all relevant agencies amounts to more than P476 million.

To date, the oil spill has left P58,137,124 worth of damages and losses to fisheries, affected more than 27,500 fisherfolk, and caused 15 local government units to declare a state of calamity.

More than 42,400 families had been affected coming from the 107 areas of Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Antique and Batangas.

Drinking water resources check

The OCD said that surveillance of all drinking water resources and chemical hazards in areas affected by the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro province is ongoing.

This is part of the whole-of-nation approach in dealing with the oil spill that affected a large number of communities in Oriental Mindoro and nearby provinces to ensure that the health of residents in affected communities will not be severely impacted.

"To continuously caution the communities on the dangers

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of the spill, the Department of Health (DOH) has been conducting surveillance of drinking water resources and exposed individuals to chemical hazards along with the release of public health advisories," Alejandro said.

"Health assessments will continue to be conducted by the Centers for Health Development on the affected population, along with the monitoring of the latest situation, status of response operations, and possible assistance from the DOH Central Office," Alejandro said.

Raps vs 'conspirators' filed

AS this developed, the National Bureau of Investigation-Environmental Crime Division on June 6 filed criminal complaints before the Department of Justice against 35 individuals, including PCG personnel and the owners of the sunken MT *Princess Empress* that caused a massive oil spill that threatened the waters off Oriental Mindoro and other nearby provinces.

Charged with falsification of the certificate of public convenience (CPC) are seven incorporators and directors of RDC Reield Marine Services Company, the

company that owned the sunken oil tanker, the captain of the MT *Princess Empress*, along with six crew members and 19 personnel from the PCG of varying ranks.

"Issuance of an authenticated form, a document purporting to be a copy of an original document when no such original exists. RDC Reield directors are presumed to be the authors of the falsified document as they were in possession of the same and made use of the document," DOJ spokesperson Jose Dominic Clavano said.

He also pointed out that the owners of the sunken ship benefitted from the use of the falsified document.

The captain of the MT *Princess Empress* was liable as he was considered a general agent of the ship owner.

As for the PCG personnel, Clavano said they were found liable "as they conduct pre-departure inspections for domestic oil tankers prior to voyage, and first and foremost on their checklist is to check the validity of the CPC."

In line with this, a director and a regional head of the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) in Region 5, along with two officials of RDC Reield, were charged

with falsification of construction certificate and tonnage measurement; certificate of ownership; and certificate of Philippine registry.

"The officials from Marina and RDC Reield Marine Services Inc. allegedly conspired for the purpose of illegally registering the MT *Princess Empress* with false documents," Clavano explained.

Likewise, two officials of RDC Reield were charged with perjury under Article 183 of the Revised Penal Code.

Among the documents allegedly perjured were the supporting documents to apply for a tonnage measurement certificate.

"The two company officials, through the falsified construction certificate, and the perjured affidavit of ownership and builder's certificate, obtained the tonnage measurement certificate signed by the engineers of Marina. The certificate was issued in favor of MT *Princess Empress*," the DOJ spokesperson pointed out.

Clavano said Pola, Oriental Mindoro Mayor Jennifer Cruz also stood as a complainant in the case aside from the NBI.

Pola was among the towns that sustained the most damage from the oil spill.