

11 June 2023 Sunday



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Heed gov't warnings – PBBM

As Mayon continues to act up, ₱119-M funds, aid assured for affected residents

By RAYMUND ANTONIO and DHEL NAZARIO

President Marcos on Saturday, June 10, asked Bicolanos living near Mayon Volcano to heed government warnings and assured them that aid and funds are on standby in case of a hazardous eruption as predicted.

In a tweet, the chief executive lined up the funds currently available to help the people of Albay, where Mayon Volcano is situated.

Marcos said there is a ₱114 million quick response fund at the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Central Office, ₱5 million at the DSWD Field Office ▶5

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Region V, and 179,000 family food packs in the Disaster Response Centers.

"Sa pagsasalalim sa probinsya ng Albay sa state of calamity dahil sa pag-aaliburoto ng Bulakang Mayon, pinapaalalahanan ang ating mga kababayang Bicolano na sumunod lamang sa mga rekomendasyon at evacuation instructions ng inyong lokal na pamahalaan upang masiguro ang kaligtasan ng bawat isa (in placing the province of Albay under a state of calamity because of the Mayon Volcano's unrest, we are reminding our Bicolano fellow men to follow the recommendation and evacuation instructions of your local government to ensure the safety of each other)," Marcos said.

59 rockfalls, crater glow

In the last 24 hours, one volcanic earthquake and 59 rockfall events in Mayon were recorded, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said on Saturday, June 10.

In its 5 a.m. bulletin, Phivolcs said a fair crater glow or "banaag" can be seen around its summit.

Phivolcs also said a new summit lava dome in the Mayon Volcano Crater has emerged as its pre-existing one has been pushed out in increments that formed rockfall in the first week of June.

"The Mayon Volcano Network has recorded a total of 59 rockfall events in the last 24-hour period and a total of 579 since 1 June 2023," it added.

Entry into the six-kilometer permanent danger zone (PDZ) as well as flying any aircraft close to the volcano remains prohibited.

Phivolcs also warned against the possibility of more rockfalls or landslides or avalanches, ballistic fragments, lava flows and lava fountaining, pyroclastic density currents (PDC) as well as moderate-sized explosions.

Mayon Volcano remains under alert level 3 but Director Teresito Bacolcol said on June 9 that they are not ruling out the possibility of raising it to level 4.

The President shared that families inside the six-kilometer PDZ are currently being evacuated.

9,000 evacuated

More than 9,000 individuals in Albay have been evacuated, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said on Saturday.

In a situational report, the NDRRMC said 2,638 families or 9,314 individuals were brought to 21 temporary shelters in the municipalities of Camalig, Daraga, Guinobatan, and Malilipot; and in the cities of Ligao and Tabaco.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., who chairs the NDRRMC, led a situational briefing on the status of Mayon Volcano in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, on Saturday.

"Sec. Teodoro stressed the importance of timely and orderly evacuation of families in affected communities and the prepositioning of goods and assets for relief operations," Department of National Defense spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said.

Task Force Sagip

The number of evacuees is expected to further increase as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) continues to assist local government units (LGUs) in rescuing affected residents.

The Philippine Army (PA) has activated its Task Force Sagip to ensure the preparedness of troops in rescuing residents in Albay.

Col. Xerxes Trinidad, PA spokesperson, said TF Sagip has coordinated with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in Bicol Region (OCD-5), the Albay provincial disaster risk reduction and management council (PDRRMC), and local government agencies in Albay and nearby provinces for possible humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) operations.

The task force is being led by the Camarines Sur-based 9th Infantry Division (9ID).

"The Army leadership lauds the HADR preparations of 9ID to ensure that all Bicolanos who will be affected by the volcanic eruptions are safe and far from grave danger," Trinidad said.

The 9ID's 9th Civil Military Operations (9CMO) also tapped the 504th Community Defense Center, 5th Regional Community Defense Group for mobilization of the reserve force to augment the troops' strength.

Moreover, the 903rd Infantry Brigade (903rd Inf Bde), which covers the provinces of the second district of Albay, Sorsogon and Masbate, mustered its Emergency Response Team while the 31st Infantry Battalion (31IB), 9ID started to facilitate the mandatory evacuation of residents within the six to eight-kilometer radius danger zone.

DSWD ready

Marcos, meanwhile, said the DSWD is also on standby and ready to help, while key agencies like the Office of the Civil Defense (OCD), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Health (DOH),

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Philvolcs are also coordinating to prepare for the impending eruption of the volcano.

Albay was placed under a state of calamity on Friday due to the threat of a Mayon "hazardous" eruption.

Mayon, one of the country's most volatile volcanoes, displaced tens of thousands of people after spewing ash, rocks, and lava in 2018.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian has assured Albay residents affected by the Mayon Volcano unrest that the government is doing its best to provide their needs while at the evacuation centers.

Gatchalian visited evacuation centers in Albay on Saturday morning and said 102,000 food packs have been initially prepared for the Bicol region and 16,000 for Albay.

Since Mayon Volcano won't be going back to normal anytime soon and evacuation is protracted, Gatchalian said that DSWD is now stockpiling for future response.

"Ito kasing mga sakuna na ito ay protracted, ibig sabihin hindi ito pang bagyo na after three days tapos na. Kausap ko nga mga local officials natin this can go as long as 45 to 90 days (This disaster is protracted unlike a typhoon which is over in three days. I had talked to local officials and they said this could go as long as 45 to 90 days)," he said.

Gatchalian assured that aside from food packs, the DSWD will also give non-food items, such as beddings and hygiene kits.

"Una sa lahat, naatasanayo ng Pangulo, President Bongbong Marcos, na siguraduhin na 'yung preparation ng gobyerno, lalong-lalo na 'yung DSWD ay in place. Actually, hanggang kagabi and late last night he was giving instructions kasi he's been monitoring the situation in Mayon, Taal pati na rin itong bagyong 'Chedeng' (We were tasked by President Marcos to ensure government response, particularly the DSWD, is in place. I was in touch with the President last night and he was giving instructions about Mayon, Taal, including tropical cyclone Chedeng)," he said.

Phivolcs is also monitoring Taal Volcano in Batangas and Kanlaon Volcano on Negros island for their continued unrest.

House leader assures help for Bicolanos

Meanwhile, Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Zaldy Co has sent a reassuring message to his fellow Bicolanos amid the uncertainties brought by Mayon Volcano's likely eruption.

"We stand in solidarity with our fellow Bicolanos who have been displaced from their homes due to the imminent danger posed by Mayon Volcano," Co, the House Committee on Appropriations chairman, said in a statement. "Ako Bicol Party-List remains steadfast in our commitment to support and protect the welfare of our constituents. We are here to provide not just immediate relief but also long-term solutions to help rebuild their lives."

Ako Bicol said in the same statement that it has "mobilized a network of dedicated volunteers who are actively engaged in assessing the needs of affected families and distributing essential supplies."

The volunteers "are working closely with relevant agencies to ensure that the necessary resources are readily available," the party-list added.

"As the situation continues to evolve, Ako Bicol Party-list remains on high alert and ready to adapt their response efforts accordingly," it further said. (With reports from Martin Sadongdong, Niño Lucas, and Ellson Quismorio)



BBM asks residents to follow evac orders

New lava dome emerges in Mayon – Phivolcs

By HELEN FLORES and ROMINA CABRERA

Amid mounting concerns over a potential “hazardous eruption,” President Marcos appealed to residents near Mayon Volcano in Albay yesterday to follow local orders to evacuate, as state seismologists discovered the emergence of a newly formed lava dome – a grim indicator of escalating volcanic unrest.

In a message posted on his social media accounts, the President assured all families fleeing high-risk areas around the restive volcano of continued government assistance, including food packs.

“With the province of Albay placed under a state of calamity due to the eruption of the Mayon Volcano, we remind Bicolanos to follow the recommendations

and evacuation instructions of your local government to ensure everyone’s safety,” Marcos said in Filipino.

Albay Gov. Edcel Greco Lagman placed the province under a state of calamity on Friday to allow the local government to tap into the quick response funds and provide support to some 3,000 families forced to evacuate as Mayon Volcano is

under Alert Level 3.

As the forced evacuation of thousands living within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone continues, Marcos said the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is already providing immediate assistance and support to those who fled their homes.

He said these include the P114-million Quick Response Fund from the DSWD Central Office, the P5-million standby fund from the DSWD Field Office Region 5 and the 179,000 family food packs available in Disaster Response Centers.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. **Turn to Page 2**

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said evacuations continue in 20 villages nearest to the volcano. “Our latest reports have it that 2,894 families or 10,260 persons were brought to 16 evacuation centers,” the Presidential Communications Office quoted him as reporting to the President.

“Air transport to Albay is suspended so the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) has prepared alternative transport means. JTF (Joint Task Force) Bicolandia activated by Solcom (Southern Luzon Command) and other DRRUs (disaster risk reduction units) activated in the area,” he added.

New lava dome

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said that the new lava dome at Mayon’s summit emerged Friday night as the pre-existing dome was pushed out in increments following the numerous rockfall events since the first week of June.

In an interview with dzBB radio, Phivolcs officer-in-charge Teresito Bacolcol warned that this new lava dome could contain high amounts of gas that could get trapped and may result in explosive activity if it accumulates.

“If the gas can’t escape easily, it can accumulate in the dome; and if there is a sudden gas release from the dome, it can result in explo-

sive activity,” said Bacolcol, who described the potential incident as similar to the 2018 explosion.

He said it could also result in an “effusive eruption” or magma gradually being forced out to the surface as what happened in 2014.

The Phivolcs, which monitors the new lava dome and Mount Mayon’s high levels of unrest, listed 59 rockfall events in the past 24 hours since Friday, lower than the 199 events recorded between June 8 and 9.

Sulfur dioxide emissions were also measured at 417 tons per day on Friday, lower than the 500 tons per day baseline of Mayon, and one volcanic earthquake.

There was moderate emission of plumes in the volcano with a fair crater flow observed while the volcano edifice remains inflated.

Bacolcol said they are monitoring sulfur dioxide emissions, as well as pyroclastic density currents and lava fountaining that could merit the raising of the alert level to Level 4.

He noted that Mayon Volcano usually erupts between three to 10 years from its last eruption in January 2018.

Evacuation

In an interview with dzBB radio, Gov. Lagman said authorities should prepare for the mandatory evacuation of 8,000 households should the danger zone be extended to a seven-kilometer radius.

“Our estimate might reach



Evacuees carry their belongings to a temporary relocation site at a school in Daraga town, Legaspi, Albay yesterday.

around 8,000 families if it escalates from Alert Level 3 to Level 4,” the governor said in Filipino.

Mayon Volcano remains on Alert Level 3, which means there is a high level of unrest and that hazardous eruption is possible within weeks or days.

Eugene Escobar, officer-in-charge of the Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office (Apsmo), said that at present, they are anticipating 4,000 families or 20,000 persons being evacuated.

“Big number of evacuees came from the danger zones of Guinobatan, Camalig, Daraga and Tabaco City; with some

families also moved to evacuation centers in Ligao City,” Escobar said.

As of 1:30 p.m. yesterday, he said some 1,819 families or 6,681 persons were already taken to various evacuation centers and other government facilities across Albay.

For its part, the DSWD assured the public that around P1.04 billion worth of food and non-food items are also available at the National Resource Operations Center in Pasay City, Visayas Disaster Resource Center and in the warehouses of DSWD field offices.

Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian was in Albay visiting at least two evacuation centers yesterday.

Gatchalian, who had met with Lagman, asked the government to provide them additional warehouses so the agency could send more food packs. DSWD has started sending 102,000 family food packs for the evacuees.

Marcos said he is kept abreast on the Mayon situation by the Office of Civil Defense; the Departments of Agriculture, of Health and of Environment and Natural Resources; and the Phivolcs.

Taal and Kanlaon

Meanwhile, the Phivolcs is also monitoring unrest at Taal Volcano in Batangas and Kanlaon Volcano in Negros Occidental.

In Taal, Bacolcol noted that there were 11 volcanic earthquakes and four volcanic tremors that lasted three to 97 minutes long.

There was also streaming activity of plumes of up to 1,500 meters in the early afternoon while sulfur dioxide emissions measured 2,941 tons.

Bacolcol said this could imply that there is movement of magma within the volcano.

Taal is currently placed under Alert Level 1 or low-level unrest.

For Kanlaon, there were no volcanic earthquakes recorded and the volcano is under Alert Level 1 or low-level unrest.

However, there were 500-meter-tall plumes and moderate emissions while sulfur dioxide flux was measured at 1,089 tons per day last June 5.

Teodoro said he wants a “timely and orderly” evacuation of families affected not only near Mayon, but also around in Taal.

Teodoro, who chairs the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, ordered the immediate prepositioning of goods and assets for relief operations in areas affected by the two active and restive volcanoes.

— With Cet Dematera, Jose Rodel Clapano, Emmanuel Tupas, Sheila Crisostomo



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Fighting the plastic menace

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) celebrates June as the Philippine Environment Month with the observance of World Environment Day on June 5.

With the theme "No to Waste: Advancing Circular Economy to Beat Plastic Pollution," the DENR, under the helm of Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, highlighted the problem caused by plastic pollution and how the agency tasked to manage the country's environment and natural environment, intends to fight the menace.

This year's World Environment Day celebration theme is "Solutions to Plastic Pollution."

According to the United Nations, over 430 million tons (MT) of plastic are produced worldwide every year, one-third of which are single

used. It also reported that every day, the equivalent of over 2,000 garbage trucks of plastics are dumped into the world's oceans, rivers and lakes.

Circular economy

IN a statement, the country's DENR chief vowed to end plastic pollution in the country through a circular economy where all plastic applications are reused, recycled and responsibly managed during and after use, while enabling a lower greenhouse gas emissions plastic economy.

In January, Yulo-Loyzaga signed the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act 11898, or the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022.

It aims to address the mismanagement of plastic waste and uphold circularity by maximizing its material value, as it serves as the environmental policy approach and practice that requires producers to be environ-

mentally responsible throughout the life cycle of a product, especially its post-consumer or end-of-life stage.

"But in banking on the support and cooperation of big companies in complying with the EPR Act, the Philippines still has a long way to go," admitted DENR Undersecretary for Policy Planning, and International Affairs Jonas R. Leones.

Leones said that of the 4,000 big companies that are obliged by law to implement waste recovery and recycling under the law, only 600 have registered with the DENR.

The big companies have a minimum of P100 million capitalization, while small and medium enterprises are not obliged to implement waste recovery.

"That's why we really need to intensify our information drive with the help of the media," Leones told the BUSINESSMIRROR in a telephone interview on June 6.

Major plastic waste producer

THE Philippines produces a huge volume of garbage every year. It is known as the producer of more than one-third of all oceanic plastic waste in the world.

Despite the efforts of the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) and the DENR, through the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) to implement Republic Act (RA) 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, the volume of garbage steadily increased.

A Commission on Audit report in April 2023 said that more than 20 years after the passage of RA 9003, solid waste-management generation in the country has steadily increased from 9.07 million metric tons (MMT) in 2000 to 16.63 MMT in 2020.

Daily waste generation, according to the DENR, continues to increase. From the 16 MT of garbage daily, the Philippines now produces 61,000 MT daily, or a whopping 275-percent increase.



PILES of garbage, including plastic bags and plastic water bottles, are left behind at the Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, during the Holy Week. ECOWASTE COALITION



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Of the daily volume of garbage produced, Leones said between 12 percent to 24 percent are plastic, citing World Bank and Asian Development Bank studies.

Waste from single-use plastic is a major concern for the DENR because there is still no economically viable replacement for it.

Research and development

INTERVIEWED by reporters as part of the World Environment Day celebrations held at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Rescue Center, the DENR chief underscored the need for the government, academe and other government institutions to find a viable replacement for single-use plastic.

"It is difficult to find a replacement because of the durability [of single-use plastic] and [its lower] cost. We need to do research to identify the products to replace [it]. The challenge is up to the academe, of course, the government, but certainly, the producers that are using plastic products. They need to find a replacement," Yulo-Loyzaga said.

Plastic waste as fuel

ACCORDING to Yulo-Loyzaga, the DENR is looking at several solutions to plastic waste problems. It is closely working with several companies for the implementation of the EPR law.

Another initiative, is using plastic waste as fuel, which is being considered viable.

She said the DENR is also looking at several cement companies that are willing to help address the plastic waste problem, and are now actually doing it.

There are also ongoing talks between some companies and local government units (LGUs) to supply plastic waste to companies that are looking to use it as fuel. At least 40 LGUs, she said, are already in talks with the DENR and cement firms for the purpose.

Ban single-use plastics

OCEANA Philippines, an international ocean conservation nongovernment organization, is calling on the DENR and NSWMC to ban single-use plastic in order to address the problems they pose.

"The government should have banned single-use plastic by simply listing it as nonenvironmentally acceptable product packaging [NEAPP]. If there's no replacement for single-use plastic, the burden of finding [one] is supposed to be on the DENR and the NSWMC. They should have done the research to find an alternative material a long time ago," said Atty. Rose Liza Eisma-Osorio, Oceana's acting vice president and

legal and policy director.

Interviewed through telephone on June 7, Eisma-Osorio said after 20 years since the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 was passed, the DENR has failed to come up with even a list of NEAPP that "is supposed to be updated annually."

Microplastics in the air, water and everywhere

ACCORDING to Eisma-Osorio, a recently published scientific report found the presence of microplastics in the ambient air in Metro Manila that should direct the DENR, NSWMC and the Department of Health to move swiftly to prevent further damage to the health and well-being of the people.

"Microplastics are in the air we breathe and in the soil, freshwater and our seas. Our exposure to the dangers brought about by plastic pollution cannot be overemphasized. Plastic is an escalating crisis for the environment, health and climate," she added.

"If we don't act now to mitigate its impacts, when will the government move? Banning single-use plastic with the utmost sense of urgency is a must now more than ever!" Eisma-Osorio pointed out.

A study conducted by the DENR Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau found microplastics in all 10 study sites, with Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, the country's largest protected seascape and major fishing ground, topping the list as having the highest density.

The other marine protected areas, Taklong Island National Marine Reserve and Apo Reef Natural Park, were also found to have microplastics.

"Studies on plastic leaking into the ocean that pose alarming risks to the food we eat are among the reasons we challenge the government to do its job," Eisma-Osorio said.

Pressing environmental concern

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Dr. Theresita Mundita S. Lim said the surge of plastic waste has become one of the most pressing environmental concerns worldwide.

She said in a message on the World Environment Day that of the over 400 MT of plastic produced every year "more than half of [that] entered the market in the past 15 years alone."

Lim said it is estimated that 80 percent of all marine debris in the oceans is attributed to plastic, and an estimated 11 MMT of plastics enter the ocean every year.

In the Asean region, plastic pollution has increased tenfold since

1980, citing a report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Lim noted that about 20 percent of the global plastic production is attributed to the region, causing severe impacts on its marine ecosystems.

She cited a study by "two Japanese universities which found out that about 40 percent of seabirds surveyed around the world have ingested toxic substances derived from plastic waste."

Despite being endowed with rich natural resources, Southeast Asian countries with fast-rising urbanization and population growths, are considered significant contributors to the leakage of land-based plastic waste going into the seas.

"More than 31 MT of plastics, enough to fit in about 1,500,000 shipping containers, are generated annually in just six of the 10 Asean member states, and most of these plastics are of single-use," she said.

Nature-based Solution

ACCORDING to Lim, the application of nature-based solutions (Nbs) as an integrated approach is indicated in The Asean Comprehensive Recovery Framework 2020 and is a viable solution to the worsening plastic problem.

"Nature-based solutions are adaptation actions that fully utilize ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits, and address both social, economic, and environmental challenges effectively," Lim said.

With Nbs, sustainable use and management of natural resources are ensured while providing for the needs of people, she added.

"Seaweed-based products, for instance, can be alternative materials to plastic. Palm-based products can be used as more sustainable packaging instead of styrofoam," Lim said.

"Research and technologies may also be explored for riverine plastic captures, while instruments, such as blue financing, may be pursued with the help of nongovernment and private sectors in the region," she explained.

Lim added that Nbs examples can be fully integrated into important sectors, such as health, agriculture, infrastructure, biodiversity, tourism and others.

She pointed out that marine species, including microorganisms, are important indicators of a deteriorating ocean system.

"It is, therefore, vital for us to protect and monitor these as part of our early warning mechanisms to deliver timely action before the damages from pollution become irreversible and catastrophic," she warned.



PCG: Oil siphoning ops completed by June 19

Siphoning of oil from the sunken motor tanker *Princess Empress* is expected to be completed by June 19, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said yesterday.

PCG spokesman Rear Admiral Armand Balilo said the dynamic support vessel *Fire Opal* is on schedule in removing the remaining oil from the motor tanker.

"Dapat by June 19 nasipsip na nila. Mukhang on target naman sila," Balilo told a news forum.

He said he has yet to receive an update on the quantity of oil from the fuel tanks of the sunken vessel.

Princess Empress was carrying around 800,000 liters of fuel oil when it sank in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28.

The PCG had earlier said between 120,000 to 240,000 liters of oil would be removed from the sunken vessel.

Balilo said only two oil tanks of the motor tanker remain intact.

"Walo ang tangke pero ang analysis nila,

meron pa konti doon sa iba at yung iba wala na," he said.

A team from the PCG is supervising salvage operations commissioned by the owner of *Princess Empress*.

Balilo said a PCG vessel is on standby in the vicinity of the sunken motor tanker.

Meanwhile, PCG commandant Admiral Artemio Abu commended the incident management team involved in oil spill response.

Abu said nearly 400 PCG personnel have engaged in cleanup operations in the sea and on land.

As of June 7, the PCG reported a cleanup completeness rate of 92.79 percent in the towns most affected by the oil spill. These are in Naujan, Pola and Calapan.

An estimated 43,783 liters of oil-water mixture and 171,900 kilos of oil-contaminated debris had been collected, the PCG said. — Emmanuel Tupas, Mark Ernest Villeza



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PCG: Oil spill cleanup likely finished by June 19

The siphoning operations that are part of the oil spill cleanup's final stage in Oriental Mindoro will be completed by June 19, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said on Saturday, June 10.

The extraction of the remaining industrial fuel oil from the sunken MT Princess Empress would be 100 percent done after nine days, PCG spokesperson Rear Admiral Armand Balilo said at the Saturday News Forum in Quezon City.

"Yung kanilang operations, very efficient at naniniwala ako na by June 19 ay 100 percent na 'yung oil na makukuha doon sa mga tangke (The operations are very

efficient and I am convinced that 100 percent of the oil would be recovered from the tanks by June 19)," he said.

The National Task Force on Oil Spill Management on June 1 said the siphoning operations might last up to 30 days.

The Malayan Towing and Salvage Corp. started using remotely operated vehicles on June 1 and the deployed catch can collects oil from the cargo oil tanks (COT) of the vessel which sank off the waters of Naujan town on Feb. 28.

The MT Princess Empress was reportedly carrying about 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil when it encountered engine trouble, leading to the disaster.

Approximately 50 liters and 75 liters of oil have been recovered from COT No. 1 Starboard and COT No. 1 Port, respectively.

The amount of oil recovered from

COT No. 2 Starboard and COT No. 2 Port is yet to be determined.

As of May 31, about 83.74 percent or 64.43 km. of the 79.33 km. of affected coastlines have been cleaned. Only 16.26 percent or 12.89 km. remain for cleanup.

The ongoing cleanup operations have so far collected about 44,656.30 liters of oily water mixture; and 10,708 sacks, 997 drums, 119 pails, and 648 1-tonner bags of oil-contaminated sand/debris and oily waste from Calabarzon, Mimaropa, and Western Visayas.

On June 2, the Dynamic Support Vessel Fire Opal arrived at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone to begin extraction of the remaining oil from the sunken vessel.

The vessel extracts the oily waste and transfers them to a tanker for disposal. (PNA)



EDITORIAL

Water conservation

El Niño has emerged, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced in an advisory on June 8, with the effects of the weather phenomenon seen gradually intensifying later this year and in the first quarter of 2024.

Scientists have stressed that El Niño can intensify climatic conditions, whether wet or dry. Climate change, meanwhile, can either exacerbate or mitigate El Niño's varying impacts around the globe. Occurring every two to seven years, El Niño is characterized by warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean near the equator.

This makes the Philippines among the most affected by El Niño. While it is expected to enhance the monsoons and bring heavier than usual rainfall this wet season, El Niño is largely seen to bring drought in the country. This perception is evident in the reaction of President Marcos to the emergence of El Niño. Anticipating a prolonged dry spell, he ordered all government agencies to implement water conservation measures.

Beyond conservation, the President should consider having certain government offices take the lead in initiatives to recycle water. As booming populations and climate change deplete fresh water sources, gray water recycling is gaining popularity across the globe. This is the treatment of certain types of wastewater for re-use for non-potable purposes such as flushing toilets and cleaning outdoor grounds.

Only wastewater from

plumbing systems or appliances such as washing machines and baths can be recycled. Kitchen wastewater, because of high grease content, as well as anything that comes in contact with feces or urine cannot be recycled.

Gray water recycling is used in countries such as Singapore, a city-state that does not have its own source of fresh water. Water recycling is also gaining popularity in designing new commercial and industrial buildings. Technology for gray water recycling at the household level is still in development, and the cost of installing what is currently available for household application can be prohibitive.

It is therefore up to governments to take the lead and set the example in showing the benefits of gray water recycling, and to provide incentives for industries to adopt a system that requires considerable investment. While gray water recycling tends to be energy-intensive, depending on the quality of the wastewater that is treated, certain industries that use water extensively, such as food and beverage as well as chemical can benefit from water recycling.

Alongside water recycling initiatives, the government must fast-track the development of new fresh water sources for Metro Manila, the country's most densely populated region. With an ever-growing population and no commensurate expansion in fresh water sources, a water crisis is inevitable, regardless of whether El Niño or La Niña is affecting the country.



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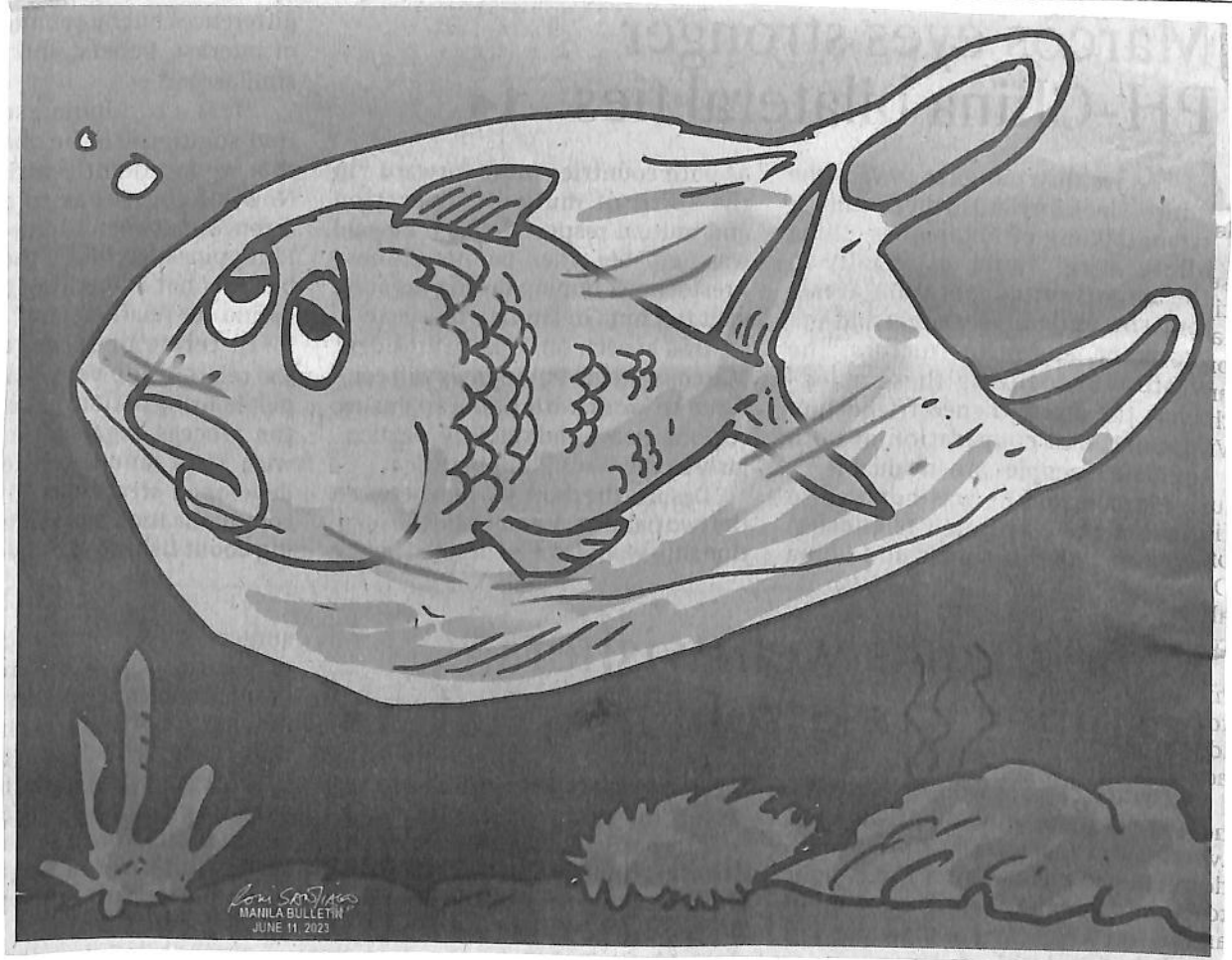
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World Oceans Day: Humans should be the ocean's best friend

"The ocean is the foundation of life. It supplies the air we breathe and food we eat. It regulates our climate and weather."

The strong reminder on the major role the oceans have on everyday life was made by United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres when he opened the UN World Oceans Day celebration last June 8, focusing on the theme: "Planet Ocean: Tides are changing."

"The ocean is our planet's greatest reservoir of biodiversity. Its resources sustain communities, prosperity and human health around the world. Humanity counts on the ocean. But can the ocean count on us?"

Can we sustain the oceans so it can sustain us?

In the Philippines, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Enrique Manalo, who led the commemoration of WOD, cited various initiatives that the country is taking to help sustain the oceans.

"Understanding the fragile balance of our marine ecosystems and the significant role they play, the Philippines exerted all efforts towards finalizing an international legally binding agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement)," Manalo said. The initiative will work for a solution to plastic pollution in the oceans, one of the problems threatening the health of oceans. (Another problem is overfishing.)

Governments around the world have passed laws to protect the oceans from plastic pollution. In the Philippines, two of these laws are the banning of single-use plastics and the law making companies responsible for their plastic packaging, from manufacture to end-of-life.

This is a problem where each person can contribute to a solution. The simple act of recycling to avoid throwing a plastic bag starts at home. Bringing an eco-bag everywhere avoids the use of a plastic bag. Recycling plastic containers is another simple act to help the ocean. It would be good to keep in mind the

numbers that state the seriousness of plastic pollution: At least 40 percent of plastic waste end up in the ocean, and if nothing is done, that may reach at least 29 million metric tons by 2040.

This will severely affect the ocean, "the foundation of life."

"The ocean produces at least 50 percent of the planet's oxygen. It is key to our economy with an estimated 40 million people being employed by ocean-based industries by 2030. Oceans absorb about 30 percent of carbon dioxide produced by humans, buffering the impacts of global warming," according to a World Oceans Day statement.

And yet, according to the opening remarks of UN Secretary General Guterres: "Right now, humanity is its worst enemy."

"Human-induced climate change is heating our planet, disrupting weather patterns and ocean currents, and altering marine ecosystems and the species living there. Marine biodiversity is under attack from overfishing, over-exploitation and ocean acidification. Over one-third of fish stocks are being harvested at unsustainable levels.

"We should be the ocean's best friend," he said.

From your home, you can be a friend to the ocean and be part of the worldwide movement to work for the sustainable management of the world's oceans. Support organizations that work for sustainable fishing, or groups pushing stronger government action against the use of non-biodegradable material like plastic or foil sachets that end up in the ocean.

Remember, oceans cover three quarters of Earth's surface, contain 97 percent of its water, and represent 99 percent of the living space on the planet by volume.

Since 2002, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) sponsors the World Ocean Network, building support for ocean awareness. It is supported by other UN agencies who work to protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts.



Maynilad sets up new algae control equipment

West zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. has set up new algae control equipment in Laguna Lake.

Maynilad said it installed three new units of ultrasonic algae control equipment near the intake structure of the company's Putatan Water Treatment Plant (PWTP) in Laguna Lake.

The new equipment will help to monitor algal blooms and prevent algae proliferation that could affect the lake's raw water quality, it said.

Costing around P9 million, the three units of solar-powered ultrasonic algae control equipment are designed to eliminate algae within a 500-meter radius and provide real-time data on the quality parameters of the raw water that could indicate growth in algae concentrations.

The equipment can also identify the types of algae present in the lake.

Maynilad has six units of this equipment installed around PWTP.

The deployment of this equipment is among the west zone concessionaire's initiatives to address

possible raw water problems in Laguna Lake that may arise due to algal blooms, which result from shifts in the nutrient balance of the lake owing to chemical/ industrial/ agricultural wastes/leachates.

Other initiatives include the upgrade of its silt curtain that surrounds PWTP's intake structure, and the constant replacement of the plant's filters.

The algal bloom in Laguna Lake severely affects the water production of Maynilad's water treatment plants.

Earlier this year, Maynilad's PTWP supply zone experienced water service interruptions for 15 days due to the reduced production in the water treatment plant "resulting from a damaged sludge removal equipment, coupled with a rise in turbidity levels of the raw water from Laguna Lake."

The rise in turbidity levels of the raw water from Laguna Lake reduced the combined production of Putatan 1 and 2 to 240 million liters per day (MLD), affecting the supply to 170,000 customers.

Because of this, the MWSS-RO slapped Maynilad with a P27.48-million penalty in January for violating its uninterrupted 24-hour water supply obligation to customers covered by the PTWP Supply Zone.

In April, Maynilad said it was able to raise water production in the Putatan plants to 260-280 MLD and reduce the number of affected customers to less than 79,000.

The PWTP supply zone covers the southern portion of Maynilad's concession area, specifically in Muntinlupa, Las Piñas, Parañaque and portions of Cavite.

Laguna Lake, which provides eight percent of Maynilad's raw water supply, is experiencing changes in its water quality due to the impacts of climate change and the leaching of chemical pollutants, making water treatment all the more challenging, it said.

The company earlier said it is investing in treatment technology upgrades for Putatan plants to help improve and maintain water production.

- Danessa Rivera



STRATEGIC
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Phi, Sweden jointly commit to an energy efficient future

By RICHMOND MERCURIO

The Philippines and Sweden have made a joint commitment to pursue a sustainable and energy-efficient future.

"We believe that a Philippine-Swedish partnership can be a catalyst for positive change in the energy sector in the Philippines," Sweden Ambassador to the Philippines Annika Thunborg said.

"Together, we can build a more sustainable and energy-efficient future," she said.

Attaining green sustainable development in the country can be achieved through innovations in energy efficiency, or eliminating energy waste in transportation and commercial and consumer processes, thereby reducing fuel or coal

emissions.

Thunborg said a joint effort between the Swedish and Filipino governments and private sector is important in achieving sustainable development and contributing to the climate goals.

She said such spirit of collaboration was the key to the socio-economic, democratic, and environmental success of Sweden, which in the 19th century belonged to the poor corner of Europe.

"We are very enthusiastic to see such a high level of engagement from a range of stakeholders from both the Philippines and Sweden. This is a solid foundation for us to continue our collaboration for a green transition," Business Sweden Trade Commissioner Kristina Elinder-Liljas said.

ABB and Hitachi Energy are among

the Swedish energy companies that offer a range of smart grid and transmission solutions, including low-voltage and high-voltage direct current systems.

Turn to B3

Phi, Sweden From B1

These systems can transmit enormous amounts of electricity over long distances with minimal losses, making them a key technology for integrating renewable energy into the grid.

Atlas Copco, a world leader in

industrial solutions and technology, for its part, offers compressed air solutions using advanced technologies to reduce energy consumption and decrease operating costs. It also provides monitoring and control solutions that help customers optimize energy consumption.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla has expressed the Philippine government's commitment to a just and green transition.

He said the government intends to meet the growth in the country's power demand with renewable and cleaner sources of energy.



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PH seeks swift action vs climate crisis

THE Philippines has issued a call for decisive action against the worsening climate crisis during the 58th Session of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB58) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Climate Change Commission Vice Chairman and Executive Director Robert Borje said that COP27 decisions must be converted into tangible outcomes responsive to the needs of vulnerable developing nations.

"As we build on the progress Parties made in Sharm El-Sheikh, we believe in the real possibility that we will be able to transform COP27 decisions into actions with outputs and outcomes that are concrete, relevant, and appropriate, responsive to the vulnerable, developing nations' needs and priorities, and based on the best available science and evidence," Borje said.

He presented data on the losses and damages suffered by the Philippines and neighboring Asean countries over the past 10 years, noting that the Philippines lost \$12 billion during the period, an amount twice its annual budget for important health services.

The Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand were found to be four of the 10 most disaster- and climate-change-prone nations in Southeast Asia. Approximately 50 percent of Asean's population is now vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The Climate Vulnerable Forum and the V20 Group of Finance Ministers reported loss and damage amounting to \$525 billion for 58 vulnerable member countries over the last two decades.

Borje said that the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has prioritized climate change as a critical national concern and vowed to embed climate resilience and accelerated climate action into its development agenda.

This year, the Philippines has allocated \$8.2 billion, or 9 percent of its national budget to climate change adaptation and mitigation projects.

Held in Bonn, Germany from June 5 to 15, SB58 is a meeting of representatives from governments, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders to discuss climate change concerns.

MOISES CRUZ



Orange skies, red alerts and the future

By PAUL KRUGMAN
The New York Times

This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang – that is, a sudden, universal catastrophe – but with a series of smaller, more local catastrophes that keep getting bigger and more widespread.

I've been seeing a surprising number of complaints about the amount of media space devoted to New York's orange skies and red alerts. James Fallows, a former editor of *The Atlantic*, writes: "Everyone who has lived in a big Chinese/Indian city during the past couple of decades, or in Pacific NW/SF Bay area/SoCal during US/Canadian wildfires is thinking: Yes, we feel for everyone in smoke-ridden NYC! And, we can't help but notice the diff in press attention."

True. But air pollution in Asian cities has been created by local conditions. The recent intensified problem of wildfire pollution in the Western United States, by contrast, was indeed a harbinger of coming climate-related disaster, and should have been seen as such. The problem, however, isn't that the air quality disaster in New York (and much of the Eastern United States) is receiving too much attention, but that its predecessors received too little.

Yes, it's unfair that smoke-filled skies in New York, still the center of the media universe, get noticed in a way that comparable crises elsewhere don't. But that's a minor issue compared with the importance of learning from these crises, now that enough influential people have seen with their own eyes what's happening.

So let me make a few points about this disaster, which has disrupted life for tens of millions and will no doubt turn out to have taken a serious toll on health, including a fair number of premature deaths. For the most part these points are almost embarrassingly obvious, but the politics of climate change have been largely about people denying the obvious until, and sometimes after, disaster strikes.

Climate scientists have been saying for decades that global warming would lead to a proliferation of wildfires. Last year a UN report warned of a "global wildfire crisis" as many forested areas become hotter and drier. The smoke-filled skies outside my window are, in effect, a validation of mainstream climate science: The experts didn't predict this particular disaster for this particular week, but this is exactly the kind of thing they've been warning us would happen.

But don't expect climate denialists, who at this point effectively control the Republican Party, to be persuaded. On Wednesday, Rudy Giuliani asked of New York's orange haze, "Is it due to wildfires, climate change or something

more sinister?"

Indeed, conspiracy theories about this disaster have been spreading like, well, wildfire. The Canada fires have been set by directed energy weapons (the updated version of Jewish space lasers); no, they've been set by government drones or antifa activists, or anyway they're part of a plot to force people to wear masks again (which they should) and go back into lockdown.

Given recent political history, it would be a very bad idea to assume that such conspiracy theories, ludicrous as they are, won't gain traction.

But back to sanity. I think it's fair to say that even people who accept climate reality have tended to assume that really serious impacts still lie some years in the future; I sometimes find myself thinking that way, even though intellectually I know better. But it has long been clear that the damage from climate change will gradually build over time, as formerly freakish disasters become bigger and more frequent, as once-in-a-century floods, fires and droughts start happening every few years, affecting ever more people. The climate crisis will get much worse, but it is in fact already well underway.

And there are no safe places. Some people have tended to assume that a warming planet is only bad for faraway places that are already hot – India, say, or the Middle East – and might even be good for people living in colder climes. But right now Canada is on fire, and central New York State – heretofore famous for cold winters and lake-effect snow – has been hit as hard or harder than New York City.

Things could be worse. Indeed, things are certain to get worse: Even effective climate action now won't be enough to prevent disasters from becoming even bigger and more frequent for many more years.

The good news, such as it is, is that we're finally starting to see some real action on climate. All indications are that recent US actions to promote an energy transition are working better and faster than even their proponents expected, with the private sector rushing to invest in clean energy, and there's reason to hope that other nations will move down similar paths. So there's at least some hope that we can still avoid utter catastrophe.

But our belated move to do something about global warming will at best slow, not reverse, the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, so the climate won't improve – at best, it will get worse more slowly. So for the foreseeable future we'll be facing ever bigger climate-related disasters. And this future has already begun. Just look up.



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**TARGET AGENCIES FOR THE EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS
ON THE NATIONAL GUIDELINES ON INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS AND THE
REVISED PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT INTERNAL AUDIT MANUAL**

Schedule	Target Agencies
Batch 1 19 July 2023 (Wednesday) 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Departments and Department-Level Entities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the President (OP) Office of the Vice-President Department of Agrarian Reform Department of Agriculture Department of Budget and Management Department of Education (DepEd) Department of Energy Department of Environment and Natural Resources Department of Finance Department of Foreign Affairs Department of Health Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Department of Justice (DOJ) Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Department of National Defense (DND) Department of Public Works and Highways Department of Science and Technology Department of Social Welfare and Development Department of Tourism Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Department of Transportation National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)
Batch 2 21 July 2023 (Friday) 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Attached Agencies, Other Executive Offices, and Other Agencies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement Service, DBM National Museum, DepEd Bureau of the Treasury, DOF Securities and Exchange Commission, DOF National Telecommunications Commission, DICT National Police Commission, DILG Public Attorney's Office, DOJ Office of the Solicitor General, DOJ Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, DOLE Professional Regulation Commission, DOLE Armed Forces of the Philippines - General Headquarters, DND Armed Forces of the Philippines - Philippine Air Force, DND Armed Forces of the Philippines - Philippine Army, DND Armed Forces of the Philippines - Philippine Navy, DND Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, DTI Philippine Coast Guard, DOTr Commission on Population and Development, NEDA Philippine Statistics Authority, NEDA Dangerous Drugs Board, OP Energy Regulatory Commission, OP National Historical Commission of the Philippines National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, OP National Security Council, OP Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, OP Commission on Human Rights
Batch 3 26 July 2023 (Wednesday) 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	State Universities and Colleges <ol style="list-style-type: none"> University of the Philippines-Manila (NCR) Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (NCR) Rizal Technological University (NCR) Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (Region I) Mariano Marcos State University (Region I) Benguet State University (CAR) Cagayan State University (Region II) Nueva Vizcaya State University (Region II) Bulacan State University (Region III) Tarlac Agricultural University (Region III) Tarlac State University (Region III) Batangas State University (Region IV-A) Occidental Mindoro State College (Region IV-B) Bicol University (Region V) Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology (Region V) Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (Region V) Partido State University (Region V) Sorsogon State College (Region V) Aklan State University (Region VI) Capiz State University (Region VI) Iloilo State College of Fisheries (Region VI) Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College (Region VI) Iloilo Science and Technology University (Region VI) West Visayas State University (Region VI) Negros Oriental State University (Region VII) Visayas State University (Region VIII) Mindanao State University (MSU) – Iligan Institute of Technology (Region X) University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines (Region X) University of Southeastern Philippines (Region XI) MSU (BARMM)
Batch 4 28 July 2023 (Friday) 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Government-Owned or -Controlled Corporations/Government Financial Institutions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Authority of the Freeport Area of Bataan Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Bases Conversion and Development Authority Boy Scouts of the Philippines Cagayan Economic Zone Authority Cebu Port Authority Development Academy of the Philippines Duty Free Philippines Corporation Employees Compensation Commission Home Development Mutual Fund Laguna Lake Development Authority Lung Center of the Philippines Manila International Airport Authority National Irrigation Administration National Kidney and Transplant Institute Philippine Aerospace Development Corporation Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office Philippine Children's Medical Center Philippine Coconut Authority Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation Philippine Economic Zone Authority Philippine Health Insurance Corporation Philippine Heart Center Philippine Institute for Development Studies Philippine National Railways Philippine Ports Authority Philippine Reclamation Authority Senate Electoral Tribunal Small Business Corporation Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Southern Philippines Medical Center Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority