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IN BRIEF

DENR chief urges biz to back climate plans

DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Loyzaga has urged the country's top business leaders to work with the government to address the climate crisis and create sustainable communities.

Speaking at the general membership meeting of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) on June 14 in Taguig City, Loyzaga pointed out that "climate action for resilience is everyone's business."

"Our government needs partners who go beyond ESG (environmental, social and governance) and the fencelines of their operations to ensure ecosystem integrity and the resilience of communities that surround their operations," Loyzaga told an assembly of CEOs, COOs and other top management executives from the largest companies in the Philippines. **Rio N. Araja**



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Integrate science in climate change policies – diplomat

GLENN Banaguas, chairman of the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Science Diplomats, called on local government leaders to integrate science in crafting policies addressing climate change and disaster risk management.

Banaguas made the call when he guested in the "Business and Politics" program on SMNI hosted by *The Manila Times* Chair-

man and Chief Executive Officer Dante "Klink" Ang 2nd.

Banaguas and members of his group have been traveling around the country to help local government units (LGUs) and Indigenous communities develop a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP).

"We only call that enhanced Comprehensive

► **DiplomatA2**



ON CLIMATE CHANGE Top scientist Glenn Banaguas is interviewed by SMNI's Business and Politics show host Dante 'Klink' Ang 2nd. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA

■ **DIPLOMAT FROM A1**

Integrate science in climate change policies

Land Use Plan if the climate adaptation disaster reduction management strategies are integrated," he said.

He said less than 20 percent of LGUs have integrated disaster reduction management in their comprehensive land use plan.

Banaguas noted that LGUs have technical staff, but they are not "really knowledgeable" about climate change and disaster risk assessment and mitigation.

"It has to be taught in a proper way so that they can really un-

derstand. So, that's what we do. That's the reason why we have been traveling to provide that assistance," he said.

Some of the LGUs also do not have a Climate Disaster Risk Assessment plan, which is deplorable, "especially if your municipality is at risk" from weather disturbances.

He said the group helps the local governments for free. "We're not being paid for that. We love to provide that kind of training. So, we teach them how to assess

what is really happening [on the ground]."

Banaguas has also reached out to Indigenous communities — such as the Dumagat, Mangyan and Tagbanua — to help them understand the effects of climate change on their livelihood.

In 2011 and 2012, the group reached out to the Dumagats in General Nakar, Infanta and Real in Quezon province. He said the Dumagat people face a "very high" risk from tropical "We also had

experiences with the Mangyans in Mindoro. And we also partnered with the Tagbanuas in Palawan," Banaguas said.

"We don't just go there to interview [them]. Part of what we do is also to train them how to use science for their own policies," he said.

The group trained the Tagbanuas to use climate modeling for agriculture and fishery because they are either farmers or fisherfolk, he said.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



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Oil spill not yet over, says Mindoro mayor

BY IRE JOE V.C. LAURENTE

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro: The mayor of the town that was hardest-hit by a massive oil spill in February this year here has vehemently denied the claim of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) that the slick coming from a sunken tanker that caused it is already contained.

In a text message, Pola Mayor Jennifer "Ina Alegre" Cruz on Sunday said siphoning of the oil from the MT Princess Empress

still has to be completed.

"Ang sa akin, ang declaration, dapat kapag clear na lahat. Hindi minamadalali (For me, the declaration should

be made if everything is cleared. It should not be hastily declared)," Cruz also said in her message.

Cruz was reacting to reports in national newspapers and broadcast networks quoting the PCG that the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro had been solved and the agency is now on its way to finally containing the slick.

PCG spokesman Armand Balilo was quoted in a report that based on information from the Malayan Towage and Salvage Corp., which conducted the spill-recovery efforts, all the oil tanks of the MT

Princess Empress are now empty and only oil drips from cargo piping lines are being dealt with.

Cruz said she was also informed of the assessment of the PCG but she did not sign the declaration because she still has to look into the situation on the ground.

"They (PCG) went to me and presented me the statement but I did not sign it because I still have to study it and it is hard for me to say it is okay while I know for a fact that my constituents still see slicks in their area," Cruz said in a telephone interview with *The Manila Times*.



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NEWS BRIEFS

DENR asked to scrap MOU with oil firm

Greenpeace Philippines has called out the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for entering into a "reprehensible partnership" with Shell Pilipinas Corp., saying that the DENR should instead demand that the fuel company pay reparations for contributing to the climate crisis. Greenpeace urged the DENR to scrap its partnership with Shell and "stop being complicit to the shameless greenwashing of climate destruction brought on by Shell's fossil fuel operations." On May 11, Shell announced that it signed a memorandum of understanding with the DENR to develop "nature-based solutions (NBS)" opportunities in the country. Shell said the NBS would comprise activities for the protection and development of natural ecosystems that include forests, grasslands, wetlands and coastal zone, and projects that advance agricultural sustainability. Greenpeace cited a report that the Philippines suffered \$12 billion in climate loss and damage in the past decade. "In reality, around the world, Shell continues to drill for oil and gas even when they know this will worsen climate change," Greenpeace added. —JANE

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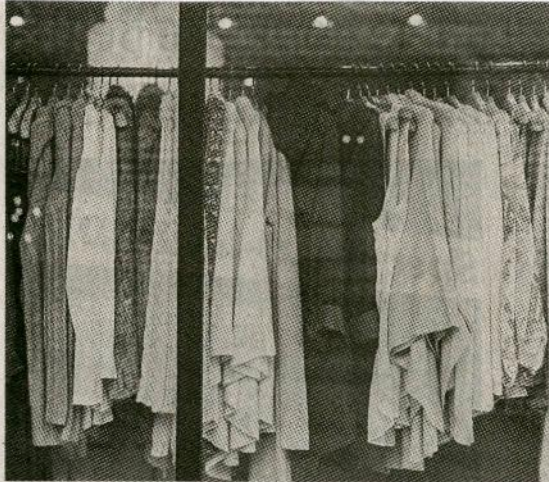


PHOTO BY HANNAH MORGAN ON UNSPLASH

HOW FAST FASHION DESTROYS THE ENVIRONMENT

By ROXOANNE BAGANO-DIZON

THE fashion industry has seen an unprecedented boom in recent decades, and the fast fashion phenomenon has gained traction.

Fast fashion pertains to mass-produced clothing manufactured in a short period and is designed to be disposable. The industry is known for its low-cost, trendy clothing that are constructed at a high volume.

It likewise involves the use of synthetic, low-quality materials that are manufactured rapidly with little attention to sustainability. They use synthetic fabrics such as polyester and nylon, which are used extensively because they are cheaper and have a longer lifespan than natural fibers. This results in environmental and social damage.

These artificial materials take hundreds of years to decompose and release microplastics into the ocean, thereby polluting the water and harming marine life. With clothes that are worn only a few times before being discarded, fast fashion produces a significant amount of waste.

Fast fashion is the second most polluting industry globally, with its refuse accounting for 10 percent of global carbon emissions. This consumption culture contributes to landfills and generates greenhouse gas emissions that affect the environment. It consumes more energy than the aviation and shipping combined. The fast fashion model of production exploits human labor, degrades local economies, and pollutes the environment. In contrast, the traditional model involves clothing production from raw materials to finished products.

In conclusion, the fast fashion industry is damaging the environment at an unprecedented rate, and it is crucial we start making sustainable fashion choices. Sustainable fashion is a growing trend in today's world, and it involves designing, producing, and distributing clothing sustainably with the environment, society, and business ethics in mind.

Adopting a sustainable approach to clothing production and consumption can assist to reduce our environmental footprint and lessen our impact on society. By shopping smarter, embracing minimalism, thrift shopping, renting clothes, and caring for our clothing, we can create a more sustainable future for the fashion industry.

■ The author is a fashion designer, entrepreneur, and educator. She started Roxoanne Bagano Couture, a wedding atelier in 2011. She is a full-time faculty in the Fashion Design and Merchandising Program of the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde School of Environment and Design. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in International Business under Benilde School of Management and Information Technology.



Power firm inks deal to protect mangroves

GNPower Mariveles Energy Center Ltd. Co. (GMEC) has signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other partners for an environmental project aimed at protecting the mangroves of Bataan.

The MoA for the Baka1 Bataan Mangrove Adaptation and Protection project, which was signed last June 14, also involves the Bataan provincial government, the municipality of Orani and the Tubo-tubo Fisherfolks Association.

Arcel Madrid, GMEC assistant vice president for community relations, said the Baka1 Bataan was part of a company corporate social responsibility program.

The project will revolve around adoption, protection, sustainable livelihood, and ecotourism to create a positive environmental, coastal and community impact, GMEC said.

Mangroves can "sequester" three

to five times more carbon than forest trees. Research has shown that mangroves can mitigate the effects of climate change and support marine biodiversity and economic sustainability.

"We are proud to be part of Bataan," GMEC President and CEO Dennis Jordan said.

"We are committed to making sure that Bataan will progress, and we will serve the communities where we operate, and be responsible as citizens of Bataan," he added.

GMEC said that it was committed to creating positive change, shared value, and sustainable social and environmental development.

The company owns and operates two 345-megawatt clean coal-fired power plants in Mariveles and operates under a private limited partnership of AboitizPower's Therma Power Inc., Ayala Corp's AC Energy Holdings Inc., and Power Partners Ltd. Co.

FRANCIS EARL CUETO



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What will the UN high seas treaty mean for protecting the ocean?

UNITED NATIONS, New York—The world's first international treaty on the high seas, set to be adopted by the United Nations on Monday (Tuesday in Manila), contains landmark tools for the conservation and management of international waters.

International waters—outside the jurisdiction of any single state—cover more than 60 percent of the world's oceans.

Ocean ecosystems create half the oxygen humans breathe and limit global warming by absorbing much of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities.

Once adopted, the UN treaty will go into force 120 days after 60 countries have ratified it.

Here are the key points of the text approved in March. The final version to be voted on has not yet been published.

Ocean under threat

The treaty begins by recognizing "the need to address, in a coherent and cooperative manner, biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems of the ocean."

These impacts include the warming of ocean waters along with their loss of oxygen, acidification, mounting plastics and other pollutants, as well as overfishing.

The text specifies that it will apply to waters beyond countries' exclusive economic zones, which extend to a maximum of 200 nautical miles from the coasts.

It also covers what is known as "the Area," shorthand for seabed and subsoil beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

The Area comprises just over half of the planet's seabed.

The Conference of the Parties will have to navigate the authority of other regional and global organizations.

Chief among these are regional fisheries bodies and the International Seabed Authority, which oversees permits for deep-sea mining exploration in some areas and may soon make the controversial move of allowing companies to mine beyond current test runs.

Marine protected areas

Currently, almost all protected marine areas are within national territorial waters.

The treaty, however, allows for these reserves to be created in the open ocean.

Most decisions would be taken by a consensus of the COP, but an MPA can be voted into existence with a three-quarters majority, to prevent deadlock caused by a single country.

One crucial shortcoming: the text does not

It also calls for countries to assess the potential impact on international waters of activities within national jurisdictions that may cause 'substantial pollution' or harm the high sea marine environment.

say how these conservation measures will be monitored and enforced over remote swatches of the ocean—a task that will fall to the COP.

Some experts say satellites could be used to

spot infractions.

Individual countries are already responsible for certain activities on the high seas that they have jurisdiction over, such as those of ships flying their flags.

Sharing the bounty?

On the high seas, countries and entities under their jurisdiction will be allowed to collect animal, plant, or microbial matter whose genetic material might prove useful, even commercially.

Scientists, for example, have discovered molecules with the potential to treat cancer or other diseases in microbes scooped up in sediment, or produced by sponges or marine mollusks.

Benefits-sharing of those resources has been a key point of contention between wealthy and poorer nations.

The treaty establishes frameworks for the transfer of marine research technologies to developing countries and a strengthening of their research capacities, as well as open access to data.

But it's left to the COP to decide exactly how any monetary benefits will eventually be shared, with options including a system based on specific commercialized products, or more

generalized payment systems.

Environmental impact studies

The treaty requires signatories to assess the environmental impacts of planned activities under their control on the high seas before they are authorized in instances when such activities may have more than a minor or transitory effect.

It also calls for countries to assess the potential impact on international waters of activities within national jurisdictions that may cause "substantial pollution" or harm the high sea marine environment.

Ultimately, states are responsible for giving the green light to any potentially harmful activity—a role NGOs hoped would go to the COP, to make controversial approvals more difficult.

The treaty also requires states to publish updates on an activity's environmental impacts. Approvals can be called into question if unanticipated impacts arise.

Though they are not specifically listed in the treaty, activities that could come under regulation include transport and fishing, as well as more controversial subjects such as deep-sea mining or even geo-engineering initiatives to mitigate global warming. **AFP**



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Water levels in 6 dams drop

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The water level of Angat Dam and five other dams in Luzon continued to drop despite rains experienced last week in many areas in the country, according to latest data from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said as of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level of Angat Dam in Bulacan decreased to 186.55 meters compared to its previous level of 186.78 meters, which is a decrease of 0.23 meters.

The current water level of Angat Dam is still 3.97 meters higher than its rule curve elevation of 182.58 meters or the level of the dam to be able to fulfill its functions.

In a radio interview, National Water Resources Board (NWRB) executive director Seville David Jr. said over one million connections would be affected by rotational water interruptions once the 52 cubic meters per second (cms) water allocation of the two Metro Manila concessionaires ends on June 30.

"Around more than one million connections were affected in April before the NWRB granted the 52 cms. If it is decreased to 50 cms, these areas will be affected again. That is why we decided to continue

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(the water allocation) to prevent the water interruption in the affected areas," David said.

David maintained that based on the projection of PAGASA on the impending threat of the El Niño phenomenon, if there will be another extension of the 52 cms water allocation

for Maynilad Water Services Inc., the NWRB can no longer accommodate Manila Water.

"Based on our projection, the Angat Dam will not be able to recover before the end of the year, especially during the onslaught of the El Niño so we are preparing for this. We need to manage the releases (of water from Angat). It's difficult to grant the 52 cms," he noted.

The current 52 cms water alloca-

tion for the two concessionaires will be effective until June 30, 2023 after the NWRB authorized to extend it for another 15 days.

On the other hand, aside from Angat Dam, the water level at Ipo Dam in Bulacan also decreased to 99.05 meters or by 0.09 meters compared to its previous level of 99.14 meters.

The water level at Binga Dam in Benguet also dropped to 571.42 me-

ters or 0.61 meters less from its level of 572.03 meters on Saturday.

There was also a 0.10 meters decrease in the water level of Pantabangan Dam in Nueva Ecija after it dropped to 183.37 meters or 0.10 meters less its previous level of 183.47 meters.

On the other hand, the water level at Magat Dam in Isabela also dropped to 168.10 meters or 0.36

meters less compared to its previous level of 168.46 meters.

PAGASA said the water level of Caliraya Dam in Laguna also decreased to 286.17 meters or 0.03 meters less compared to its previous level of 286.20 meters.

Rains were experienced in many areas in the country last week as Typhoon Chedeng enhanced the southwest monsoon.



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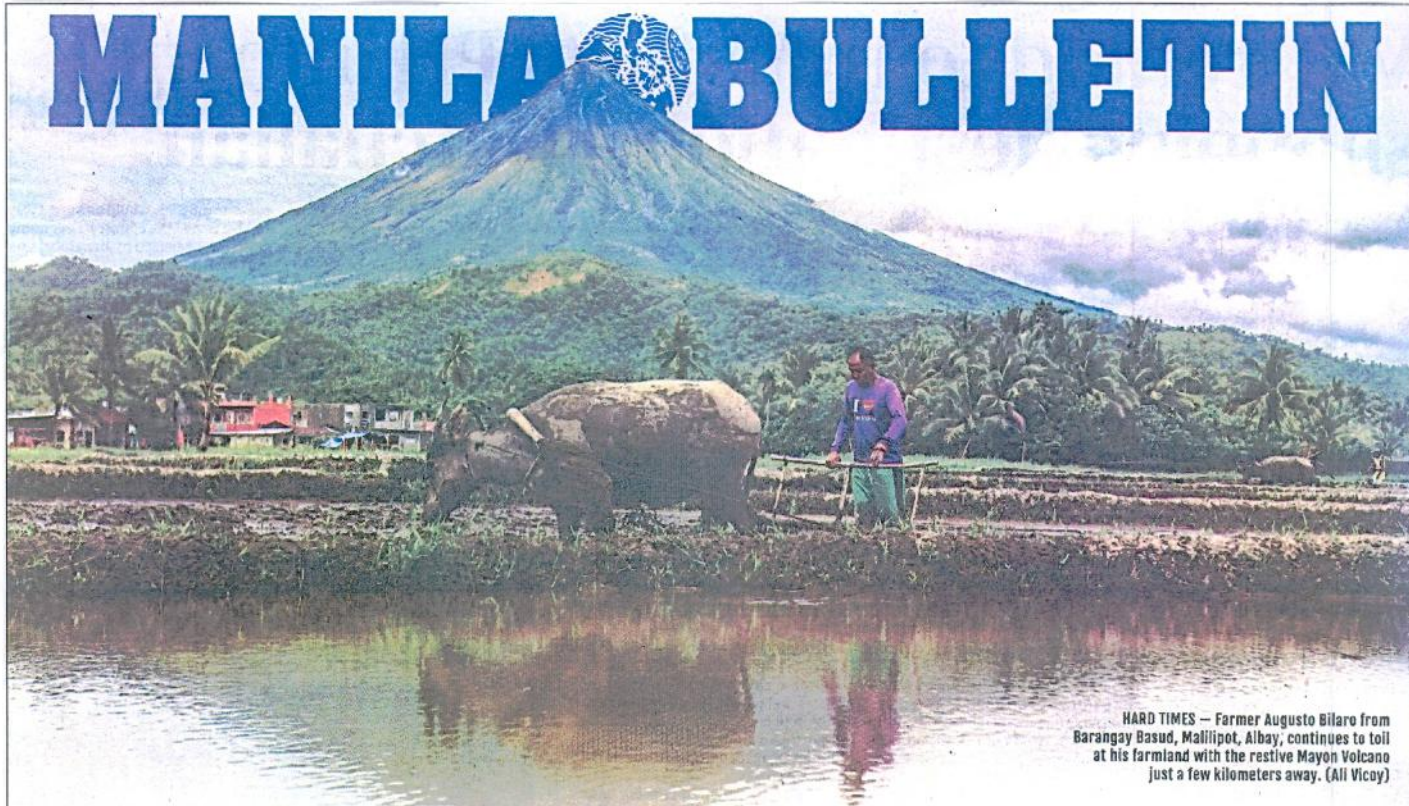
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HARD TIMES — Farmer Augusto Bilaro from Barangay Basud, Mallipot, Albay, continues to toil at his farmland with the restive Mayon Volcano just a few kilometers away. (All Vicoy)

'Non-explosive' eruption from Mayon generates more lava

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

More lava flows and collapsed debris from the Mayon Volcano's ongoing "non-explosive" eruption have cascaded down the summit crater for a distance of 1.5 and

3.3 kilometers, respectively, said the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Sunday, June 18.

The "very slow effusion of lava" from Mayon Volcano's summit crater continued to feed lava flows and collapse debris on the Mi-isi and Bonga

gullies on the volcano's south and southeastern sides, respectively, according to Phivolcs' bulletin issued at 8 a.m.

"The lava flows have advanced to maximum lengths of 1,500 meters from



the summit crater, while collapse debris have deposited to 3,300 meters from the crater," it said.

Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum described the current activity of the Mayon Volcano as a "non-explosive eruption characterized by gentle release of lava

from the crater."

Pyroclastic flows, rockfalls, volcanic quakes

In the past 24 hours, Phivolcs recorded 11 dome-collapse pyroclastic density currents (PDC) that lasted two to six minutes, 274 ▶

'Non-explosive' eruption from Mayon generates more lava 1◀

rockfall events, and three volcanic earthquakes.

"Continuous moderate degassing from the summit crater produced steam-laden plumes that rose 100 meters before drifting to the general west," it added.

Phivolcs said Mayon Volcano's sulfur dioxide emission averaged 1,004 tons per day when it was last measured on June 17.

"Short-term observations from EDM and electronic tiltmeter monitoring show the upper slopes to be inflating since February 2023," it said. "Longer-term ground deformation parameters based on EDM, precise leveling, continuous GPS, and electronic tilt monitoring indicate that Mayon is still inflated, especially on the north-west and southeast," it added.

Alert level 3

Mayon Volcano has been on alert level 3 since June 8, indicating that a "hazardous eruption is possible within weeks or even days."

It is "currently in a relatively high level of unrest as magma is at the crater," Phivolcs pointed out.

The evacuation of residents within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone has been recommended due to the risk of PDCs, lava flows, rockfalls, and other volcanic hazards.

Phivolcs warned the public to be cautious of PDCs, lahars, and sediment-laden stream flows along channels draining the volcano edifice.

Permanent evacuation centers
Meanwhile, a pair of lawmakers

from the Bicol region underscored the need for Senate to quickly approve its version of the bill advocating the establishment of permanent evacuation centers in every local government unit (LGU) in the country.

Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co and Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda said in a statement that the current situation of Mayon and Bicol's frequent encounters with powerful storms highlight the necessity for these centers.

"The approval of this bill is of paramount importance in safeguarding the lives and well-being of our communities," Co said.

"The traditional practice of utilizing public schools as evacuation centers falls short in providing the necessary facilities to accommodate evacuees effectively. We must prioritize the safety of our people without compromising their education," he noted.



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The House of Representatives had earlier approved House Bill (HB) No. 7354. Spearheaded by Martin Romualdez, seeks to establish evacuation centers in every city and municipality across the Philippines.

Co says the permanent evacuation centers are crucial in providing immediate and temporary accommodation for individuals affected by natural or human-induced disasters. "It is essential that we have dedicated facilities in place to ensure the well-being and safety of our people during times of crises."

Salceda, whose district was one of those adversely affected by Mayon's rumblings, agreed with his fellow Bicolano.

"The establishment of these evacuation centers will enhance our preparedness and resilience in the face of environmental challenges. We must prioritize the approval of this bill to provide the necessary

infrastructure that can adequately support our communities during calamities," Salceda said.

The urgent need for permanent evacuation centers is underscored by the recent unrest of the Mayon Volcano, as highlighted by the Office of Civil Defense (ODC) spokesperson, Diego Mariano.

Co added, "We need to take immediate action to protect the lives and welfare of our communities in vulnerable areas. By establishing permanent evacuation centers, we can ensure the safety and well-being of our people when faced with disasters."

Once the Senate approves its version of the bill, the House members and senators will convene in a Bicameral Conference Committee hearing to harmonize the two versions. The resulting, consolidated bill will then be inked by the President.



Mayon's lava fronts may breach 'no man's land'

By **CET DEMATERA**

LEGAZPI CITY — A sustained oozing out of fresh and fiery volcanic materials from the summit crater of Mayon Volcano continued on its seventh day yesterday, increasing the possibility that lava fronts would breach the six-kilometer permanent danger zone (PDZ) dubbed as "no man's land."

Amid these developments, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) was also monitoring activity at Taal Volcano in Batangas, about 300 km west-northwest of Mayon, which as of Sunday had recorded 46 volcanic tremors and 7,643 tons of sulfur dioxide emissions per day.

In Mayon, Phivolcs reported detecting in the past 24 hours the very slow effusion of lava from the summit crater, feeding lava flows and collapsed debris along the Mi-isi (south) Gully in Daraga town and the Bonga (southeastern) Gully in this city in Albay.

"If this slow but unabated lava flow would continue, lava fronts could travel beyond the six-kilometer permanent danger zone. Though today, it is still at the upper crater," Paul Alanis, resident volcanologist at Lignon Hill Observatory where Mayon's lava extrusion could be seen in full view, told **The STAR**.

In the past 48 hours, Phivolcs said that lava flows already stretched to 1,500 meters, while collapsed debris had settled at 3,300 meters from the

summit.

Collapsed super-heated pyroclastic density currents (PDCs) had been recorded at least 33 times in the past 72 hours, Phivolcs data showed.

"As some of the abnormal measures are slightly increasing, while other restive signs are slightly decreasing, we can say that the overall condition of Mayon remains at Alert Level 3 parameters," Alanis said.

He said that the rockfall events and PDCs slightly decreased, but the sulfur dioxide emissions and volcanic earthquakes slightly increased in the past 24 hours compared to the previous day's recording.

Phivolcs said there were also 11 dome-collapse PDCs that lasted two to six minutes, 274 rockfall events, and three volcanic earthquakes in the Saturday-to-Sunday monitoring period.

Taal Volcano also restive

Meanwhile, Alert Level 1 remains in Taal Volcano, where the Phivolcs has recorded at least 46 volcanic tremors and a weak emission of plumes reaching 600 meters tall and drifting northwest yesterday.

State volcanologists observed shorter-term inflation of the western Taal Volcano island and long-deflation of the Taal caldera.

Phivolcs has disallowed entry into Taal Volcano island, especially the main crater and Daang Kastila fissures; occupancy; boating on Taal Lake, and flying any aircraft close to the volcano.

It warned steam-driven or phreatic or gas-driven explosions, volcanic earthquakes, minor ashfall, and lethal accumulations or expulsions of volcanic gas can occur at any time.

The Phivolcs has been closely monitoring Taal Volcano since it showed increased activity last June 10, two days after Alert Level 3 was raised in Mayon Volcano.

Mayon evacuees rise to 19,796

Eugene Escobar, officer-in-charge of the Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office, said that as of 8 a.m. yesterday, Mayon evacuees further rose to 5,741 families or 19,796 persons.

Evacuations started when Phivolcs declared Alert Level 3 on June 8. The affected families are now staying at 25 evacuation centers in Albay's two cities and six towns surrounding Mt. Mayon. Alanis noted that during the last major eruption of Mayon Volcano in 2018, the volcano released hot rocks and lava.

"We did not reach a Pinatubo-style (eruption) of Mayon Volcano. That's already an extreme case," he said, but added that the current high level of activity in Mayon is likely to persist for three months more.

"Based on the history of the volcano, its restiveness can last for weeks or even until three months. During its eruption in 2018, it persisted for 90 days," Alanis said.

At the same time, Alanis backed moves to declare the 6-km PDZ ra-



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dius of Mayon Volcano as a national park and disallow human habitat. "It can help if permanent habitation is prohibited (in the PDZ)," he said.

For now, Phivolcs announced: "Increased vigilance against pyroclastic density currents, lahars and sediment-laden streamflows along channels draining the edifice is also advised. Heavy rainfall could generate channel-confined lahars and sediment-laden streamflows in channels where pyroclastic density deposits were emplaced."

It added that civil aviation authorities must also advise pilots to avoid flying close to the volcano's summit as ash from any sudden eruption can be hazardous to aircraft.

Based on the current prevailing wind pattern, ash fall events may most likely occur on the south side of the volcano.

DepEd: Don't suspend classes

The Department of Education (DepEd) in Bicol has ordered concerned officials and teachers not to suspend the holding of classes even as their schools are being used as evacuation centers for families displaced by the high level of unrest of Mayon Volcano.

Mayflor Jumamil, DepEd-Bicol spokesperson, said more than 24,500 elementary and high school students have been displaced in 35 public schools utilized as evacuation sites.

"Our DepEd-Bicol director, Gilbert Sadsad, ordered heads and teachers

of the affected schools to implement contingency measures in order to continue holding of classes until the last school day on July 9," Jumamil told The STAR.

Based on their monitoring, Jumamil said that the school officials and the concerned teachers immediately responded to the "no class suspension" order by shifting to modular, alternate face-to-face and online, or holding classes outside regular classrooms.

Jobs for evacuees

In another development, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) announced an emergency employment program for displaced residents near Mayon and that it has already started the profiling process to employ thousands.

"One member from each affected family will be paid P10,950 for doing community gardening near the evacuation centers, temporary shelter maintenance and housekeeping as well as food preparation," a DOLE statement read.

Earlier, the DOLE turned over P50 million to local government units affected by Mt. Mayon's effusive eruption for the implementation of the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers or TUPAD program.

The DOLE has also pledged to provide livelihood assistance to the evacuees even after they eventually return to their homes. - With Bella Carioso, Mayen Jaymalin



Mayon's danger zone eyed as national park

OCD plan aims to ensure people's safety as declaration means thousands of families will be moved out of volcano's 6-kilometer permanent danger zone

By Jerome Aning and Ma. April Mier-Manjares @Team_Inquirer

Thousands of families living and farming within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone (PDZ) of Mayon Volcano may have to leave their lands and homes for good if the proposal of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) materializes.

OCD chief Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said in a news forum on Saturday that the agency would propose to convert Mayon's PDZ into a national park, which would require resettling residents away from these areas.

"It's being talked about, but the drafting [of the proposal], not yet," he said.

The OCD, Nepomuceno pointed out, sees the natural park project as a long-term solution that would ease the burden of both national and local governments challenged by Mayon's recurring volcanic activities that require evacuating and providing for the affected communities.

"It's really tiresome—let us accept it—that when we evacuate people, we feed them, disrupt the studies [of the children]. The resources of the barangay, municipality and national government are drained," he said.

As of Sunday, 5,751 families or 19,819 people have been evacuated from 26 villages within Mayon Volcano's extended 7-km danger zone in the towns of Camalig, Guinobatan, Daraga, Sto. Domingo and Malilipot, and the cities of Ligao and Tabaco. They were brought to evacuation centers since June 9 when alert level 3 was raised over the volcano after it showed signs of heightened unrest, indicating it could erupt anytime.

Nepomuceno said the PDZ should have no structures or inhabitants in the first place.

In line with this, he said OCD planned to conduct a thorough

research on related legislation that may already be pending or existing policies for enforcement, such as the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas Act or Republic Act No. 11038. Under the law, the Mt. Mayon Natural Park is one of the 94 sites declared as protected areas.

With local officials' support

Nepomuceno claimed that the local governments affected by the Mayon's continuing unrest have expressed their support for the development of a national park and relocation of their residents.

"In fairness to the local government units, when we spoke to some of the mayors there, they also accepted that they have this problem. That is why our agreement is that we conduct a research of related legislation that are pending or maybe there are already [laws] that they can enforce to the Department of Interior and Local Government or other agencies," he added.

Nepomuceno said the OCD is ready to lobby with the members of Congress to push for the legislation for a park development project in the area.

Last week, Albay Gov. Edcel Greco Lagman said during the Laging Handa public briefing that once Mayon's situation has normalized, the provincial government would also consider the options of resettling to safer areas the people living around the volcano, adding that the volcano's activity has become "perennial," occurring every three to five years, and often draining local funds.

Lagman said the relocation could be made mandatory through legislation, and the national government could help fund housing projects for those who would be displaced.

However, he admitted it would be difficult to uproot the

farming communities around the volcano who have been there for four or five generations. A "hybrid" option would be to allow the farmers to continue tilling their lands within the PDZ while residing elsewhere, he added.

Psychosocial interventions

Just as the OCD was considering this option, children forced to endure physical and emotional discomfort at the evacuation centers were given a respite by volunteers and the local governments in Albay through psychosocial programs and the installation of "safe spaces" for them to enjoy some physical activities.

On Sunday, the humanitarian organization Save the Children Philippines (SCP) kicked off its art intervention activities at a public elementary school in Barangay Taladong of Camalig, where about 120 children were sheltered along with their families evacuated from the town's village of Tumpa.

The group and its partner volunteers believed that intervention was necessary, noting that it was traumatic for children to be uprooted from their own homes and made to live indefinitely in crowded evacuation centers.

Dominic Gapas, SCP's humanitarian officer, said three simultaneous activities involving music, theater movements and drama were conducted through their partners, the local volunteer group "Tarabang para sa Bicol" (Mutual Aid for Bicol), and the "Sining Banwa," an Albay-based cultural group.

On Sunday afternoon, the same group held similar activities with children at the elementary school in Barangay Comun, which houses residents from Sua village.

Gapas said they would continue their sessions in other evacuation centers in the province.

Camalig also created a community building cluster, composed of local government workers, to focus on the intervention programs for the evacuees, especially the children, by engaging them in parlor games, informative talks and film showing of documentaries about volcanic eruptions, said municipal information officer Tim Lawrence Florece on Sunday.

He said they also installed tents in the town's open spaces and green fields where children can play.

As of Saturday, Camalig has evacuated 929 families (3,242 people) from four villages within the PDZ.

In Guinobatan, a group of soldiers organized on Saturday some games, coloring sessions and gift-giving activities to 240 children housed at Barangay Maura-ro's public high school. A group of policemen was also in the same evacuation center last Wednesday to entertain the children.

"They are already bored at the evacuation centers and because of the extreme heat, their activities are limited, especially that they are in a new environment. This is a big help to alleviate the inconvenience of the displaced kids," said Joy Maravillas, head of the disaster risk reduction and management office in Guinobatan.

Also bound for Albay to extend aid to the evacuees is the Philippine Navy's BRP Bonifacio, which is arriving on Monday to deliver potable water for the displaced families, said Commodore Joe Anthony Orbe, commander of Naval Forces Southern Luzon, in a statement on Saturday.

Orbe said the combat ship is equipped with desalination systems and has the capability to convert salt water and produce large amounts of fresh water that would be provided to the affected residents. —WITH A REPORT FROM MICHAEL B. JAUCIAN INQ



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40,000 AFFECTED

A WEEK OF UNREST AS MAYON CONTINUES TO SPEW LAVA, DEBRIS

By Abby Boiser
@AbbyBoiserINQ

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Sunday reported that Mayon Volcano continued to exhibit high levels of volcanic activity, spewing lava and triggering rockfall events.

Since Saturday, Mayon's lava flow has increased up to 1.5 kilometers from the crater. It also recorded 274 rockfall events, three volcanic earth-

quakes, and 11 pyroclastic density currents.

"Very slow effusion of lava flow to maximum lengths of 1.5 km and lava collapse on Mi-isi and Bonga Gullies within 3.3 km from the crater," Phivolcs reported in its 5 a.m. bulletin.

Mayon Volcano remains under alert level 3 with "intensified or magmatic unrest."

Phivolcs added that the volcano released 1,004 metric tons of sulfur dioxide. Its con-

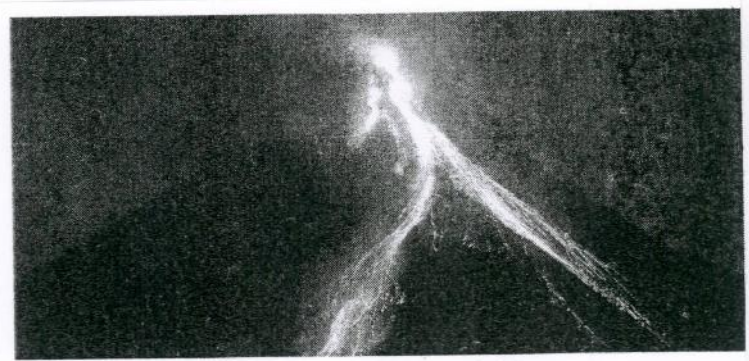
tinuous degassing from the crater, meanwhile, produced steam-laden plumes reaching 100 meters.

Due to this development, the state volcanology agency warned the public that "rock-falls or landslides or avalanches; ballistic fragments; lava flows and lava fountaining; pyroclastic density currents; moderate-sized explosions; and lahars during heavy and prolonged rainfall" may occur within the area.

The 7-km radius permanent danger zone was also reinforced along with the prohibition on flying any aircraft close to the volcano.

Around 20,000 people living in communities surrounding Mayon were evacuated to 28 shelters in Albay after it was placed under alert level 2.

No deaths and injuries have been reported, but disaster risk and reduction agencies estimated around 40,000 people to have been affected. INQ



'SLOW EFFUSION' Flaming lava can be seen cascading from the crater as restive Mayon Volcano remains on alert level 3.
—MARK ALVIC ESPLANA