

20 JULY 2023 Thursday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

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# Mindoro spill woes 'far from over,' says mayor

**Coast Guard declares cleanup over but exec says oil residue still seen in Pola; groups, fishers press gov't for accountability**

By Jane Bautista  
and Madonna Virola  
@Team\_Inquirer

The first marine environmental crisis under the Marcos administration is "far from over," according to environmentalists and town officials of Pola in Oriental Mindoro province, as they continue to monitor oil residue in the town's shorelines.

While the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) had declared that oil removal and recovery operations had been completed, Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz said she still saw huge tar balls, or lumps of solidified tar, when her team visited their town's shorelines recently.

Cruz, in a press briefing on Wednesday, said she refused to sign the PCG's declaration that the shorelines of Pola were 100 percent cleared of oil spill, which came from the fuel tanker MT Princess Empress.

The vessel was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil when it sank off Naujan town, causing an oil spill which also affected the marine ecosystems and the livelihood of fishing communities in Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Batangas and Antique provinces.

Pola, Naujan's neighboring town, was the hardest hit and had been declared the "ground zero" of the spill.

"We still need to clean up more areas. I'm not contesting the findings of other agencies but I can't issue a clearance as long as I'm seeing oil residue in Pola," Cruz said in Filipino.

The mayor acknowledged



**GONE FISHING** Fishermen in the City of Calapan pull their nets hoping to at least catch enough fish to feed their families in this photo taken on July 9, weeks after the fishing ban, imposed following the sinking of a fuel tanker off Oriental Mindoro in February, was lifted. At right is a container of tar ball fragments from the oil spill found on the shores of Pola town. —PHOTOS BY MADONNA T. VIROLA AND COURTESY OF CEED AND PROTECT VIP NETWORK

that she was not an expert, but based on her observations, she said only around 50 percent of the spill had been cleaned up in her town.

### Environmental impact

Ivan Andres, head of the Oceans, Coastal Communities and Climate program of the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED), said his group conducted an assessment earlier this week and found oil residue along the shorelines of Pola adjacent to marine protected areas and fish sanctuaries.

According to Andres, they saw tarballs on Kabilang Ibayo beach and "fresh" oil residue in Barangay Puting Cacao.

He said they also monitored oil stones lodged between rocks and mangroves, as well as debris and litter covered in oil in the same area.

"Garbage, on its own, harms our environment. Now, we also

need to deal with the impact of the oil spill," Andres said.

A floating object found in Puting Cacao and within the St. John the Baptist fish sanctuary also showed accumulated oil residue beneath the material.

Andres pointed out that even while the MT Princess Empress had been emptied of its cargo, lingering impacts on water quality continue to threaten the ecosystems in the Verde Island Passage (VIP), the center of marine biodiversity in the world.

In discussions with fisherfolk groups in the capital city of Calapan, Andres said fishers were lamenting that there was less fish catch after the fishing ban was lifted.

"We are concerned that fishing bans were lifted with no guarantee of the consuming public's safety due to the lack of public access to [the] results of water quality testing con-

ducted by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources," said Andres.

### 'Hollow victory'

With President Marcos set to deliver the State of the Nation Address (Sona) on Monday, Fr. Edwin Gariguez, convener of the group Protect VIP, stressed that the government could not claim that it had completed the cleanup without accountability and concrete steps to prevent similar incidents.

"The [PCG] says that oil spill operations are over, and we are concerned that this will easily be considered a victory for the Marcos administration's first environmental crisis as we approach Sona," he said.

"But it is a hollow victory, as no one is held accountable and the government remains quiet about what it plans to do to prevent similar incidents in the future," Gariguez added. **INQ**





## Mayor says Pola, OccMin oil spill

### 'nightmare' is still far from over

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

**T**HE Occidental Mindoro oil spill continues to haunt the town of Pola, one of the hardest hit by the disaster, following the sinking of MT Princess Empress on February 28.

At a hybrid news conference dubbed "State of the Oil Spill," Pola Mayor Jennifer Cruz said oil and oil residues are still visible in coastal areas of Pola and rejected insinuations that the worst is over for the coastal communities.

Speaking mostly in Filipino, the mayor said she declined to sign a document when sought by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), stating that the town is 100 percent cleared of oil and oil residues.

"The real situation in Pola, according Coast Guard, 100 percent clear, but we don't see it that way. It's not 100 percent. Just three days ago, with the visit of Senator JV

Ejercito, the oil residues were visible. That's not 100 percent," said Cruz.

She added that as long as oil and oil residues are visible in the coastal barangays of Pola, she would not sign any document stating that the town is already cleared of oil.

According to Cruz, based on their own assessment, the town is only about 50 percent cleared of oil and oil residue.

"I am not the expert, from what we are seeing, we are not clear. We cannot even fish. Our fishermen are not allowed to go out," Cruz said.

The mayor said the Municipal Government of Pola is cash strapped and what remains of their budget for recovery program is a measly P200,000.

She said the threat of oil spill hitting Pola is daunting with such limited budget.

"That's why our budget of P200,000 for recovery. We can't just release [the entire amount] because another oil spill might happen," Cruz said.

The mayor called on the Provincial Government for help and support for Pola.

"If the governor [Eduardo Gadiano] is listening, I am appealing for help. Perhaps you can provide financial aid to us," she said.

According to the mayor, 4,800 fisherfolk are affected by the fishing ban, which still persist in Pola. The last time help from the government came through the Office of the Civil Defense, she said, but the trickle of support is not enough for the fisherfolk to survive.

"Other fishermen are forced to find jobs—some work as carpenters—others are into planting crops now, but it will take time for them to harvest and hopefully earn," said the mayor.

She said they are also hoping for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to continue the cash-for-work and pay the people for the number of days they have already rendered to help them cope with the situation.

Fr. Edwin Gariguez, Convenor of Protect VIP, lamented that the government has no clear plan or even budget for the rehabilitation of affected areas in Occidental Mindoro, particularly Pola.

"We are hoping that in his state of the nation address, President Marcos will bare plans how to rehabilitate Occidental Mindoro," he said.

He added the people affected by the oil spill are yet to receive just compensation from the owner of the close to 1 million liters of oil that ravaged coastal areas in Mindoro and nearby areas.

"Right now, its enrolment time and many school children may not be able to enroll because there's no alternative source of income," he said.

According to Gariguez, while there's indeed a mobile caravan listing names of affected people, it is not clear when and how much they are to receive.

"It is not really over," he said.



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**MY BACKYARD, MY PLANET** A clean-up initiative took place at The Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA), also known as the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park, on Wednesday, July 19, 2023. The initiative, jointly spearheaded by anet CORA (Communities Organized for Resource Allocation) and Uniqlo, is part of their commitment to sustainability by 2030, with a key focus on realizing the goal of Zero Waste. This will be achieved by reducing, replacing, reusing and recycling materials used in the process delivering clothes to customers, organizers said. [MORE PHOTOS](#)





Actress and Oxfam ambassador for resilience Antoinette Taus (left) leads a cleanup drive at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat yesterday. The LPPCHEA is a wetland ecosystem that serves as the habitat of at least 82 wild bird species and migratory birds. (PHOTO COURTESY OF LPPCHEA)



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**HANDS ON**  
— Actress-  
environmentalist  
and United  
Nations Goodwill  
Ambassador  
Antoinette  
Taus (left)  
leads a cleanup  
initiative at  
the Las Piñas-  
Parañaque  
Critical Habitat  
and Ecotourism  
Area (LPPCHEA),  
also known as  
the Las Piñas-  
Parañaque  
Wetland Park on  
Wednesday, July  
19, 2023.  
(Ali Vicoy)





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## CELEBRITY LEADS CLEANUP

**DRIVE.** Actress, environmentalist and United Nations Ambassador of Goodwill Antoinette Taus (left) leads a cleanup initiative at The Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA), also known as the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park, spearheaded by Planet CORA (Communities Organized for Resource Allocation) and Uniqlo. **Danny Pata**







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## EDITORIAL

# Important review of reclamations

It may be a case of too little too late, but credit should still go to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) under the helm of Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga for starting an important conversation on the massive ongoing and planned reclamation projects.

As a follow-up to its initial discussion in May with experts, foreign consultants, and representatives of concerned government agencies including the Philippine Ports Authority and the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), the DENR held a multistakeholder experts dialogue on Monday to continue its “deep dive and ... review of both policy and practice” on reclamation.

Reclamation—the process of creating new land from oceans, seas, riverbeds, or lake beds—may be an urgent environmental issue, but Loyzaga contends that it must also be viewed from a wider lens that considers the complex interplay of ecological concerns and socioeconomic benefits.

After all, the Marcos administration has not disavowed reclamation as a policy direction, with nine reclamation projects in the Manila Bay area alone worth a combined P330.6 billion proceeding as scheduled. The biggest of these is the 287-hectare Parañaque Reclamation project with a price tag of P76.7 billion, followed by the 260-ha Pasay City Reclamation project (P72 billion), the Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation project (P58 billion), the Las Piñas-Parañaque Coastal Bay Reclamation and Development project (P37.8 billion), and the Manila International Container Terminal Berth 6 and Northern and Southern Extension project (P22.4 billion).

DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones acknowledged that reclamation spurs economic activities, with the addition of land that can be developed for residential, commercial, and industrial use to generate badly needed revenue for the government. To this end, the PRA (formerly the Public Estates Authority or PEA) was established in 1977 with the mandate to convert reclaimed lands into valuable real estate properties, such as the 1,000-ha Bay City along Manila Bay that houses the Mall of Asia Complex, Entertainment City, and Asia World.

Leones stressed that reclamation “should not only be confined within economic parameters, but also [seen] in the context of environmental protection and conservation, [as well as] disaster risk and climate change mitigation that are science and evidence-based.”

That the DENR is acutely aware of the potential adverse impact of reclamation on the environment is an encouraging sign among activists who have long called attention to the direct link between reclamation activities and damage to fragile marine ecosystems and fish habitats that, in turn, would impact the livelihood of affected communities.

This has been repeatedly pointed out by the People’s Network for the Integrity of Coastal Habitats and Ecosystems, an alliance of marine and coastal protection advocates, and the Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment, which has called for the outright cancellation of reclamation projects in the Manila Bay area. The group cited the possible destruction of 27,000 ha of coastal areas because of seabed quarrying and dredging, and the added risk of climate-related changes such as more frequent and stronger typhoons that cause widespread flooding. Scientists have also warned that in Thailand and the Philippines, indiscriminate and massive reclamation could only worsen the impact of extreme sea level rise on vulnerable communities, such as those in low-lying coastal areas of Metro Manila.

Such threats should prompt the DENR to undertake a clinical impact assessment or cost-benefit analysis of ongoing and future reclamation projects, according to Alyansa Tigil Mina. To this end, the DENR has reached out to more experts so that solid data and scientific studies could back up decisions on whether or not to approve or continue the reclamation projects.

In the short term, the DENR can effect quick wins by resolving policy differences among the different government agencies involved in reclamation. The PRA, for instance, enforces a mere three-meter easement zone policy, far shorter than the DENR’s 40-meter easement zone from the edge of bodies of water.

The DENR is also reviewing just when to conduct its environmental impact and risk assessment, and conduct public consultation for proposed reclamation projects, noting that under the current system, these only come after the project proponent and the local government unit have come to an agreement. Which means that with the private proponent already advancing money even before the process of securing the needed environment clearance is started, it would be difficult to put a stop to any project deemed less than ideal.

Clearly, there are policy and implementation issues that have to be resolved, with the DENR moving in the right direction. It is a welcome, albeit long overdue, development that deserves wide support, if only to ensure that future generations won’t pay too high a price for these reclamation projects.





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# Phivolcs: No sign Mayon quieting down

By **CET DEMATERA**

Mayon Volcano displayed more signs of restiveness as it spewed ash again and more volcanic quakes were recorded, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology reported yesterday.

Phivolcs said 304 weak and shallow low-frequency volcanic quakes associated with discreet and rapid releases of volcanic gas from the crater were monitored.

"Some of these degassing events were accompanied by audible thunder-like sounds and entrained ash at the crater to produce ashing of short dark plumes that drifted southwest," the agency said.

Paul Alanis, Phivolcs resident volcanologist at the Lignon Hill Observatory in Legazpi City, said despite Mayon's additional abnormal activities, these are "not yet beyond the Level 3 status."

"Mayon's overall abnor-

mal behavior is still high. There is no single sign yet that it is waning," Alanis said.

Phivolcs said three pyroclastic density currents, 137 rockfall events and sulfur dioxide emissions that averaged 1,945 tons were monitored in the past 24 hours.

Lava flows remained stretched at 2,800 meters along the Mi-isi Gully in Daraga and Bonga Gully in Legazpi City and 600 meters along Basud Gully in Sto. Domingo.

Phivolcs said Mayon, which remains under Alert Level 3, is in a relatively high level of unrest.

It reiterated its warning

that hazardous eruption of the volcano is possible within weeks or days.

## Gov't aid reaches P225.7 M

Meanwhile, government assistance received by families affected by Mayon's unrest has reached P225.7 million.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported yesterday that P83.7 million was used to provide cash aid to 9,833 families.

The NDRRMC said P44.6 million was used by the Department of Social Welfare and Development for family food packs and P29.6 million for other food and non-food items.

The NDRRMC said 9,867 families or 38,377 people have been affected by Mayon's restiveness.

At least 5,392 families or 18,826 people remain in 27 evacuation centers.

## Psychosocial support

The Department of Health (DOH) said more than 7,000 Mayon evacuees have been provided with various forms of psychosocial support.

Among the interventions were art and play sessions, social and community support, consolidation and emotional ventilation and psychosocial education.

The evacuees also underwent stress management, consolation and emotional ventilation as well as debriefing sessions.

Undersecretary Eric Tayag had earlier said the DOH would also check the mental health of Mayon evacuees. — **With Michael Punongbayan, Mayen Jaymalin**





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MORE THAN 700 VOLCANIC QUAKE

# MAYON'S FREQUENT RUMBLING, PLUMES WORRY ALBAY FOLK

**By Ma. April Mier-Manjares**  
@MaAprilMierINQ

LEGAZPI CITY—The continuous loud rumbling noises created by the “ashing,” or ejection, of short and dark plumes of ash and the frequency of volcanic earthquakes have made residents living around Mayon Volcano anxious, triggering fears of a hazardous eruption.

Jan-Rhea Grageda, 36, said every time they would hear the rumbling, which they likened to thunder, they would go out of their houses in Barangay Salugan in Camalig town to check on the volcano from afar.

She said the disturbing sound started on Tuesday night, but even then, their family was alert to a possible evacuation as their house was inside the 7-kilometer radius extended danger zone of the volcano.

“[The sound] was really alarming because every time we hear something like that, we know that anytime soon, there’s a possibility of a big eruption, just like before,” Grageda said in an online chat message on Wednesday.

Raziel Nace, 46, said the series of rumbling sounds was also loud enough to be heard in their area in Barangay Gapo, around 9 km to 10 km away from the volcano.

“We repeatedly heard it last night, and it was clearly heard even though our village is far from the volcano,” she said in a separate private message.

### ‘Stay alert’

Tim Lawrence Florece, information officer of Camalig town, said residents inside the 7-km to 8-km extended danger zones of the volcano had been advised to “be calm and stay alert.”

“If alert level 4 is raised, residents in the villages of Salugan and Cabagñan will also be evacuated,” Florece told the Inquirer.

The provincial government on June 9 ordered the mandatory evacuation of residents living within the 6-km radius of Mayon, a day after the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) raised the alert level to 3 over the volcano. With alert level 3 raised, the public is warned that Mayon is likely to cause a hazardous eruption within weeks or even days.

In a bulletin on Wednesday, Phivolcs said about 304 weak and shallow low-frequency volcanic earthquakes (LFVQs) were recorded and associated with “discrete and rapid releases of volcanic gas” from the summit crater.

At least 761 LFVQs were recorded by the Mayon Volcano Network from July 16 to July 19, Phivolcs said.

“Some of these degassing events were accompanied by audible thunder-like sounds



**Every time we hear something like that, we know that anytime soon, there’s a possibility of a big eruption, just like before**

**Jan-Rhea Grageda**  
Camalig, Albay resident

and entrained ash at the crater to produce ashing of short, dark plumes that drifted southwest,” Phivolcs said.

Paul Karson Alanis, resident volcanologist of Phivolcs Legazpi, said they recorded a total of 30 “ashing” events lasting 20 to 40 seconds and plume heights of 150 to 300 meters from 5:33 p.m. on Tuesday to 4:34 a.m. on Wednesday.

He said the volcanic earthquakes sometimes produced ashing with thunder-like sounds, which was reportedly heard in Legazpi City and Camalig town.

“The gas bubbles ascending from inside the volcano sometimes produce ash, and make sulfur dioxide emissions high,” Alanis said in a phone interview on Wednesday.

He said this could trigger ashfall in the southeast of the volcano facing the towns of Camalig, Daraga and Guinobatan.

“[The height of the plume] was still short, and the ash was likely washed out because of the rain,” he added.

### Lava flow

Alanis said that since Monday, a new direction of lava flow had been noted at the Basud gully in Sto. Domingo town, which reached 600 meters.

“We cannot really tell if the lava flow became voluminous; it’s possible that the Bonga gully was already full and the flow was redirected to the lower crater lip in Basud,” Alanis said.

Based on the latest bulletin, the slow effusion of lava from the summit crater also continued to feed and bulk up about 2.8 km in the Mi-isi gully in Daraga and 2.4 km in the Bonga gully in Legazpi.

The collapsed debris had been deposited 4 km from the crater along the Basud channel.

The agency also recorded three pyroclastic density currents (hot, fast-moving mixture of gas, ash and rock debris) and 137 rockfall events from the volcano, which was lower than the past monitoring, Alanis said. —WITH A REPORT FROM ABBY BOISER INQ





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# Mayon continues to show signs of escalating unrest

BY ELLALYN RUIZ

**M**ayon Volcano continued to exhibit signs of escalating unrest as indicated by ash emissions, volcanic earthquakes, and rumbling sounds over the past 24 hours, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said on Wednesday, July 19.

Phivolcs detected 304 weak and shallow low-frequency volcanic earthquakes (LFVQs) associated with discrete and rapid volcanic gas releases from Mayon's crater.

"Some of these degassing events were accompanied by audible thunder-like sounds and entrained ash at the

crater to produce 'ashing' of short dark plumes," it said.

Phivolcs' seismic, infrasound, visual, and thermal monitors recorded 30 ashing events between 5:33 p.m. on July 18 and 4:34 a.m. on July 19, each lasting 20 to 40 seconds and ejecting a plume that drifted southwest at a height of 150 to 300 meters.

Moreover, the slow lava effusion continues to feed and bulk up lava flows on the Mi-isi, Bonga, and Basud gullies on Mayon Volcano's southern, southeastern, and eastern flanks, maintaining distal lengths of 2.8 kilometers, 2.4 kilometers, and 600 meters from the crater, respectively.

Phivolcs said rockfall and pyroclastic density currents (PDCs) caused by

the collapse of the summit dome and the lava flow margins left debris four kilometers from the crater.

In the past 24 hours, 137 rockfall occurrences and three PDCs were recorded by the Mayon Volcano Network.

However, Phivolcs pointed out that the combined seismic energy release from volcanic earthquakes, rockfalls, and PDCs has not gone above the trend of effusive activity.

According to Phivolcs, Mayon Volcano is still at Alert Level 3, indicating that it is still in a relatively high level of unrest and that a potentially hazardous eruption may occur within weeks or even days.

Phivolcs advised communities near the restive volcano to maintain increased

vigilance against lahars and sediment-laden stream flows on channels draining the volcano edifice, as heavy rainfall could cause channel-confined lahars and sediment-laden stream flows.

Since Mayon Volcano's status was upgraded twice in the past month, first to Level 2 on June 5 and then to Level 3 on June 8, Phivolcs strongly advised that entry into the six-kilometer permanent danger zone be strictly prohibited.

Furthermore, it warned that ash fall may occur in areas south of Mayon Volcano due to current wind patterns.

Phivolcs advised pilots to avoid flying near the volcano's summit because ash from a sudden eruption can be dangerous to aircraft.





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# Mayon makes frequent rumbling sound

BY RHAYDZ BARCIA

**L**EGAZPI CITY: For the past few days, thunder-like sounds have reverberated across Albay province as Mount Mayon remained restive for more than a month now.

The rumbling sounds from Mayon were heard almost around the clock, specifically in the southeast quadrant of the volcano during the night.

Florefie Blanca, 46, a mother of three and a resident of Calbayog village in Malilipot town, is currently staying at San Jose Elementary School, where several other families displaced by the ongoing volcano eruption are also sheltered.

She said that it is not uncommon that the volcano makes rumbling sounds, but "they are getting louder and more frightening."

"We fear that whenever we hear a series of rumbling sounds from Mount Mayon, it might be the signal of an explosive eruption," she said in her local dialect.

"Our apprehension is that it might produce heavy ash fall and pyroclastic density currents (locally known as uson) in our village that could destroy our

houses and crops."

Another evacuee said that even though they are safe at evacuation camps, they worry about their houses located inside the volcano's 6-kilometer danger zone.

The volcano's 6-kilometer radius has been declared a "no man's land" due to the danger of pyroclastic and lava flows, rockfalls and other volcanic hazards.

A bulletin released by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Wednesday, July 19, showed that Mayon Volcano's activity in the past 24-hour monitoring period was dominated by weak and shallow low-frequency volcanic earthquakes that are associated with discrete and rapid releases of volcanic gases from the summit crater.

Some of these degassing events were accompanied by thunder-like sounds.

Between 5:33 p.m. on July 18





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and 4:34 a.m. on July 19, a total of 30 ashing events with durations of 20 to 40 seconds and plume heights of 150 to 300 meters were recorded by seismic, infrasound, visual and thermal monitors.

Slow effusion of lava from the summit crater of Mayon Volcano continued to feed and bulk up established lava flows on the Mi-isi (south), Bonga (southeastern) and

Basud (eastern) gullies.

Currently, these lava flows have maintained distal lengths of approximately 2.8 kilometers, 2.4 kilometers and 600 meters, respectively, from the crater.

At least 304 low-frequency volcanic quakes, three episodes of pyroclastic density currents and 137 rockfall events were recorded by the Mayon Volcano network.

The combined seismic energy release of these, however, has not increased beyond the trend of effusive activity. The volcanic sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emission averaged 1,945 tons per day on July 18.

Alert Level 3 is maintained over Mayon Volcano, which means that it is currently in a relatively high level of unrest and that a hazardous eruption within weeks or even

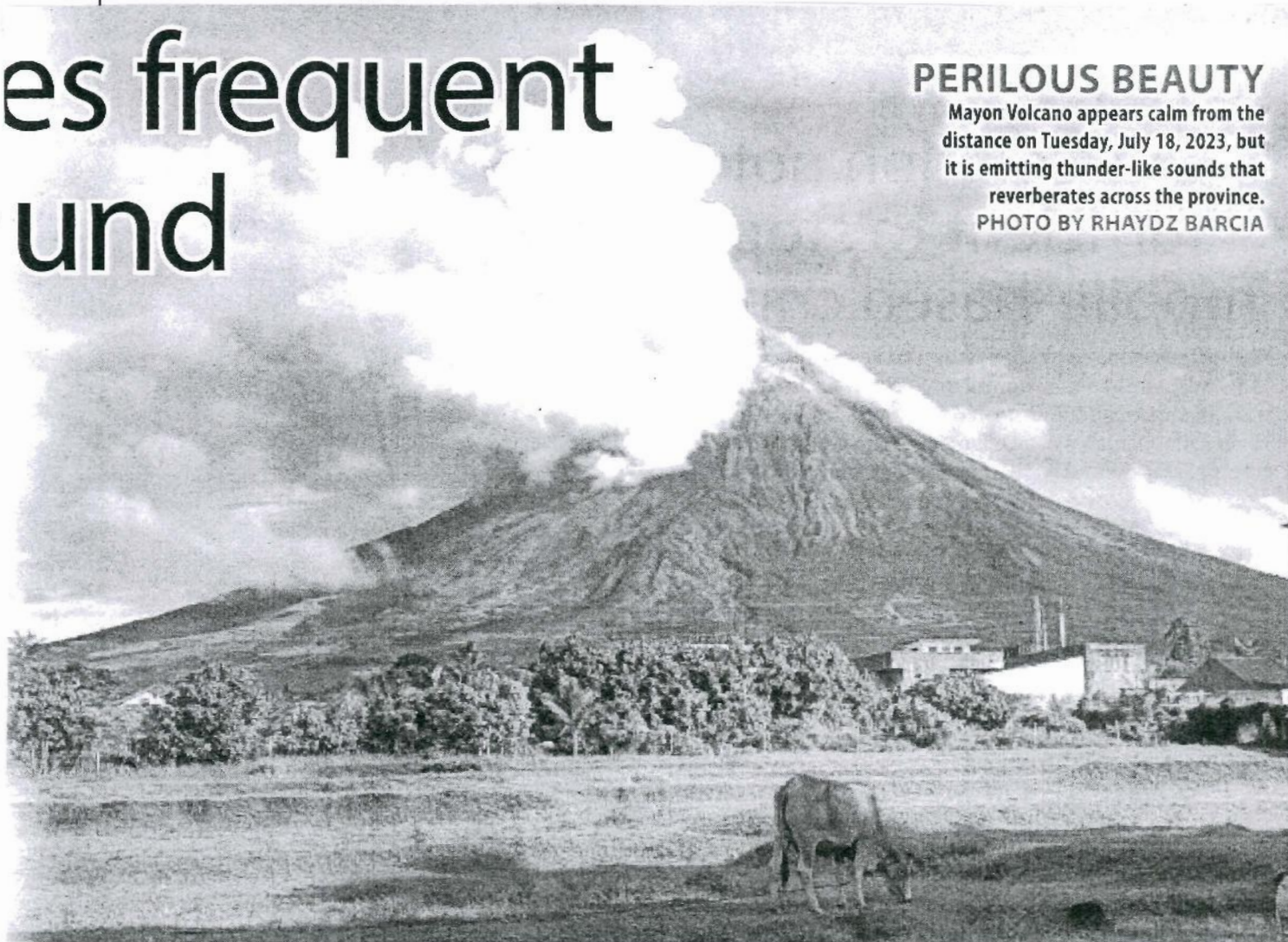
days could still be possible.

Dr. Paul Alanis, Phivolcs resident volcanologist, has asked civil aviation authorities to 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.

# es frequent und

## PERILOUS BEAUTY

Mayon Volcano appears calm from the distance on Tuesday, July 18, 2023, but it is emitting thunder-like sounds that reverberates across the province.  
PHOTO BY RHAYDZ BARCIA







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## More rain needed to replenish

### Angat – Pagasa

THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Wednesday that more typhoons that would dump a higher volume of rainfall are needed to bring back the water of Angat Dam to normal level.

The Angat Dam in Norzagaray, Bulacan,

is the main source of potable water for Metro Manila and adjoining provinces.

Pagasa hydrologist Elmer Caringal said that while the rains brought by Tropical Depression "Dodong" raised the water level at Angat by at least 3 meters, it was still not enough.

Angat on July 19 registered a 0.27-meter

increase in water level from the 180.67 meters recorded on July 18.

The water level in other major dams like Ipo, La Mesa, Ambuklao, Binga and San Roque dipped slightly due to less rainfall in their watersheds, Caringal said.

He warned that because of the El Niño phenomenon, it is unlikely that Angat's

water will return to its normal high level of 210 meters.

"At least for now, it is slightly increasing, but 29.06 meters are too far for Angat Dam to reach given our current situation wherein we are expecting less typhoons and rainfall due to El Niño," Caringal said.

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# More rain needed to replenish Angat – Pagasa

With a low-pressure area off Surigao del Sur expected to escalate into a tropical depression in 24 to 48 hours, Caringal said they are hoping that more typhoons, "but not the destructive ones," will bring more rain.

Another Pagasa hydrologist, Richard Orendain, said that there is no cause for alarm yet concerning water supply, as the recovery period of dams is expected in the coming months.

"We just hope for weak typhoons that will dump rain, especially on our watersheds," Orendain said.

Pagasa advised consumers to use water wisely.

It advised water concessionaires like Maynilad Water Services and Manila Water Co. to repair leaks.

Pagasa said the effects of El Niño will likely be felt during the last months of the year until the first quarter of 2024, when dry spells and drought will be experienced in most parts of the country.

Meanwhile, Agri party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee reiterated his call for the creation of a Department of Water Resources amid the threats of El Niño.

"This is not the first or the last time we will deal with this critical problem, which is why we need a Department of Water Resources. We need an effective and sustainable water resources management program to address

the impacts of El Niño. President Bongbong Marcos himself mentioned [the measure] in his SONA (State of the Nation Address) last year, and I think this should be pushed as much as possible when Congress opens on Monday," Lee said.

The creation of a Department of Water Resources was among the priority measures mentioned in Marcos' SONA in 2022.

Earlier this year, the President ordered the creation of a Water Resources Management Office.

On Aug. 1, 2022, Lee filed House Bill 2880 mandating the creation of the Department of Water Resources Management, whose aim is to promote universal access to safe, adequate, affordable and sustainable water supply, as well as irrigation, sewage and sanitation services.

The measure also seeks to promote the use of rainwater harvesting facilities to augment the country's water supply.

The creation of the Department of Water Services and Resources was among the priority measures under committee/technical working group deliberation at the House of Representatives as of May 25, 2023.

The 19th Congress, which is on sine die adjournment, will open its second regular session on Monday.

**ARLIE O. CALALO AND  
REINA C. TOLENTINO**





## LPA off Mindanao bringing rains over Phl

The low-pressure area spotted in Mindanao that was forecast to develop into a tropical depression is bringing rains over parts of the country.

The LPA was forecast to intensify into Tropical Depression Egay today.

It would be the fifth cyclone to hit the country this year.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the LPA was monitored 695 kilometers east of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur as of 3 p.m. yesterday.

PAGASA said the weather system would bring scattered rains over Marinduque, Romblon, the south-

ern portion of Quezon, Bicol Region, the Visayas, Caraga, Camiguin and Misamis Oriental.

The trough of the LPA may bring isolated rains aside from localized thunderstorms over Metro Manila and the rest of the country.

PAGASA warned the public of flashfloods or landslides during heavy rain.

The state weather bureau said up to four tropical cyclones may enter or develop in the Philippine area of responsibility this month.

These cyclones may make landfall in mainland Luzon and Eastern Visayas and enhance the southwest monsoon or *habagat*.

- Romina Cabrera





# Spain's Acciona to put up water treatment plant

By DANESSA RIVERA

Razon-led Manila Water Co. Inc. has tapped Spanish infrastructure company Acciona to build the second phase of its water treatment plant in Laguna.

Acciona said it was awarded the contract to design and construct the East Bay 2 drinking water treatment plant (DWTP) in consortium with Prime Metro BMD Corp. and Santa Clara International.

Located in Pakil, Laguna, the East Bay 2 DWTP, will have a capacity of 200,000 cubic meters per day (CMD) to serve a population of two million people.

The plant will draw water from Laguna Bay, the largest lake in the Philippines and the second largest inland freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

The design and construction contract includes a pre-treatment phase, ultrafiltration, reverse osmosis and an 18,000-cubic meter storage tank for brine treatment.

Acciona said the consortium also bagged the contract to operate and maintain the project for one year.

This is the third water contract that the Spanish firm has won in the country.

The first project in the country it won was the Putatan II water treatment plant in Muntinlupa, which was turned over to west zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. in 2020.

The second is for the 150,000-CMD Laguna Lake DWTP, which is currently under construction. The project will treat water from Laguna Lake.

Acciona said one of the main features of its plants in the country is the advanced treatment of raw water and the provision of drinking water to an increasing portion of the population, considering that, despite the abundance of water resources in the country, many Philippine households lack access to them.

Last year, Acciona said it was targeting at least \$12 billion worth of projects in the country.

It identified water, construction, and concession projects in the region worth around \$25 billion, of which half will be in the Philippines.

Prior to this latest contract, Acciona has been awarded five projects in the Philippines so far, two of which are water and three are transportation infrastructure.





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## QC installs rain harvesting systems

The Quezon City government yesterday said it will implement various initiatives to save water, including the operation of rain harvesting systems, amid the threat of water shortage due to the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Mayor Joy Belmonte directed city engineer Dale Perral to install and operate rain harvesting systems on city-owned buildings, including schools, to save rainwater that can be used for various purposes.

"This will be a big help, especially in communities that will be affected by water interruption," she said in Filipino.

Water utility Maynilad earlier announced daily water service interruptions in several areas, including some barangays in Quezon City, due to the decrease in the water level of Angat Dam.

The water service interruptions were suspended after the water level reached minimum operating level this week.

According to Perral, the city government also has ongoing and upcoming retention basin projects that can help store up to 200,000 gallons of water. — Janvic Mateo





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## Mayor Belmonte vows to address water woes

THE Quezon City government is set to implement various initiatives to save water amid the scheduled water service interruption to affect several of its barangays.

Mayor Joy Belmonte instructed city engineer Dale Perral to install and operate rain harvesting systems on city-owned buildings, including schools.

"This system can store up to 6,000 liters of rainwater, which can be used for various purposes," she said.

Numerous city villages will experience daily water service interruptions of up to 11 hours starting Wednesday due to the decrease in the water level of Angat Dam in Bulacan.

Perral said the city government also has ongoing and upcoming retention basin projects that could help store up to 200,000 gallons of water. **Rio N. Araja**





## editorial

# Protecting the people from extreme heat

**D**EADLY heat waves are broiling many countries with record-breaking temperatures. As global weather becomes exceedingly hot, the frequency, severity, and relative length of heat waves increase. Scientists say these developments align with their expectations for climate change, and warn that more brutally hot temperatures are coming.

From Bloomberg, July 18, 2023: "Temperatures in central Tokyo have soared to nearly 9C [16F] above the seasonal average, as the extreme heat blanketing the world continues to smash historical norms. Over the weekend, Japan's government issued a fresh round of heatstroke warnings, encouraging people to avoid going outside and to check on at-risk neighbors."

Bloomberg said Japan is particularly vulnerable to extreme heat because it has one of the oldest populations in the world, with almost 30 percent of its citizens over the age of 65. Japan's all-time record is 41.1C, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency.

The Associated Press reported on Tuesday that "a relentless streak of temperatures hitting 110 degrees Fahrenheit [43.3C] or more in Phoenix is poised to smash a record for major US cities, showing that Earth's ongoing summer swelter is as persistent as it is hot. The stretch of dangerous heat tied the record on Monday and is set to reach 19 days on Tuesday."

The AP said the temperature in Death Valley, California, the hottest place on Earth, reached 128 degrees Fahrenheit (53.33 degrees Celsius) on Sunday.

"Italian health officials intensified heat warnings Monday as southern Europe began a brutally hot week with temperatures expected to top 40 degrees Celsius—or 104 degrees Fahrenheit—on a continent already sizzling under the sun and overburdened by tourists. Countries with borders on the Mediterranean Sea weren't alone in suffering. Authorities in North Macedonia extended a heat alert for the next 10 days with predicted temperatures topping 43C [109F], while Kosovo also issued heat warnings," according to the Associated Press.

From CNN, July 12, 2023: "Very high temperatures in central and southern Italy are predicted for Friday, when the capital could see record-breaking temperatures between 40 and 45 degrees Celsius [104 to 113 Fahrenheit]. Italy's Health ministry has issued a red alert [meaning 'risk of death'] in 27 cities this week, including Rome, Florence and Bologna. The warning comes on the heels of a report published in Nature on Monday, which found that last year's heat wave killed 61,672 people in Europe. Italy had the highest fatality rate with around 18,000 deaths attributed to heat last year, according to the report."

Emergency room doctors consider extreme heat as a public health emergency. Heat stroke is the greatest health risk from extreme heat, with a mortality rate of anywhere from 10 percent to 65 percent, depending on factors such as length of exposure to heat, the level of internal body temperature when emergency care begins, and a person's underlying health condition.

Older individuals are more at risk, often because their cardiovascular systems are less resilient to the strain caused by excess heat, according to a 2014 article in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. But in extreme enough temperatures, even young, physically fit people can quickly succumb to hyperthermia, which is an abnormally high body temperature.

Weather experts warn that the recent heat waves sweeping the planet are ominous signs ahead of the emergence of El Niño, a climate pattern characterized by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, which can have significant effects on weather patterns worldwide.





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# BusinessMirror

*A broader look at today's business*

  
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Michelle L'Heureux, a climate scientist at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, explained in June that El Niño can "lead to new records for temperatures, particularly in areas that already experience above-average temperatures during El Niño."

In the Philippines, El Niño will likely develop as early as July or as late as September this year, and may persist until 2024. This would mean warmer, drier weather conditions and would likely fuel furnace-like temperatures. Massive heat waves are deadly, which is why there's an urgent need to prepare and assess the foreseeable impact of extreme heat, especially for the most at-risk populations. The government can protect the people from foreseeable harms of extreme heat by preparing effective plans to mitigate the expected effects of a heat wave.





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# Do we need to care about climate change?

## Mommy No Limits

Maye Yao Co Say



BM

**W**E now hear the term "climate change" more than we did a decade ago. But do we really know what it means? According to the United Nations, "Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions.

But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures. The main greenhouse gases that are causing climate change include carbon dioxide and methane. These come from using gasoline for driving a car, or using coal for heating a building, for example. Clearing land and cutting down forests can also release carbon dioxide. Agriculture, oil and gas operations are major sources of methane emissions.

Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use are among the main sectors causing greenhouse gases." The UN report also says that climate scientists have proven that humans are responsible for global heating over the last 200 years, which has caused the average temperature of the Earth's surface to now be 1.1°C warmer than it was in the late 1800s.

Today, global tech company HP Inc. announced new global research revealing the serious actions many parents are taking due to climate change, from everyday decisions to long-term family planning.

The global study found 91 percent of parents are concerned about the climate crisis, leading to changes that reshape their lives and purchasing habits. More than half (53 percent) say it has impacted their perspective on having more children. The research also found many parents favor companies that are taking action to address climate change and expect businesses to lead on the issue. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of parents prefer products that are sustainably sourced and 60 percent say sustainable company practices play a large part in their purchasing habits.

This willingness to seek out sustainable products and decisions comes despite the fact that the vast majority of respondents (84 percent) acknowledge the cost of living is rising and more than half (57 percent) believe engaging in environmentally friendly practices takes up a lot of time.

"We are seeing how climate change has transformed family life," notes Christian Reyes, managing director, Philippines, HP Inc. "Parents now have a higher awareness of how decisions made





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within the home can impact their communities. HP wants to help Filipino families by creating opportunities that enable them to make more sustainable choices."

While parents are taking personal action, most also believe key players in the corporate world must act too. Most parents surveyed globally (51 percent) believe that companies have "a lot" of responsibility in holding themselves accountable on climate action, as opposed to customers (36 percent).

The findings come as HP released its 22nd annual Sustainable Impact report, detailing the company's progress toward comprehensive and bold environmental and social goals.

■ HP has reduced its absolute carbon footprint by 18 percent since 2019. This brings the company closer to its goal to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040—end to end.

■ Reduced single-use plastic packaging by 55 percent compared to 2018.

■ Counteracted deforestation for 41 percent of all paper used in HP products and services toward the goal of 100 percent.

■ Accelerated digital equity for more than 21 million people in path to 150 million by 2030.

In the Philippines, where access to learning opportunities continues to be a challenge for many young learners, HP works with organizations like Atayde Foundation and Teach for the Philippines

(TFP) to help bridge the divide.

With the help of Atayde Foundation, HP provided 150 learning kits for kindergarten and Grade 1 learners in some of the most remote communities in the Philippines: Isabela City, Basilan; Northern Sagada, Mountain Province, and Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. In addition, HP supported 68 new and tenured teachers who have been deployed and are undergoing continuous professional development through TFP's leadership development programs. HP also supports TFP's Batang Bayani Life Skills Development Program (BBP), which aims to support parents in helping their children learn at home, and to equip students with life skills that help them transition to hybrid ways of learning in the new normal.

The tech giant aspires to be the most sustainable and just technology company. In 2021, HP set aggressive Sustainable Impact goals in three areas where the company believes it can make the most difference: Climate Action, Human Rights and Digital Equity.

The 2022 report details progress toward all three focus areas including a net zero carbon value chain, giving back more to forests than we take, creating a more circular economy, building a culture of equality and empowerment, and accelerating digital equity around the world to enable traditionally excluded communities to thrive in a digital economy. ■





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**FISHERMEN'S RALLY.** Fisherfolk stage a protest rally in front of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Quezon City to dramatize their grievances against reclamation, quarrying, and sand mining along 30,000 hectares of shorelines in Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan, Cavite provinces, as well as Metro Manila, saying such activities, along with pollution, gravely threaten their sources of livelihood and very existence. **Manny Palmero**





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

**INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID**

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

1. **RENEWAL & UPGRADING OF MULTI-TEMPORAL IMAGE PROCESSING AND SPATIAL MODELLING SYSTEM**
2. Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): **Php 14,000,000**
3. Project Duration – **Two (2) months**

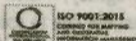
The schedule is listed, as follows:

- |     |                            |                                |                        |
|-----|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 3.1 | Issuance of Bid Documents: | Starting                       | <b>July 20, 2023</b>   |
| 3.2 | Pre-Bid Conference:        |                                | <b>July 27, 2023</b>   |
|     |                            | 10:30 A.M. NAMRIA Lecture Hall |                        |
| 3.3 | Deadline of Submission and |                                | <b>August 10, 2023</b> |
|     | Opening of Bids:           | 10:30 A.M. NAMRIA Lecture Hall |                        |

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

**RUFIN D.M. BELEN**  
Chairman, BAC

NAMRIA OFFICES:  
41 Lantion Avenue, Fort Bonifacio, 1634 Taguig City, PH ☎(632) 8810-4831 to 41  
421 Barraca St., San Nicolas, 1010 Manila, PH ☎(632) 8261-3454 to 98



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P.S. July 20 & 26, 2023