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DENR: SC ruling a big consideration in Manila Bay reclamation projects

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Loyzaga said the 2008 Supreme Court's decision on the clean-up and rehabilitation of the Manila Bay must be considered in reclamation projects on the historic waters.

In its Mandamus ruling, the High Court ordered 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay, restoring and maintaining its waters for commercial propagation of shellfish and milkfish, as well

as for swimming, skin diving, and other recreational activities.

Loyzaga said the ruling also focused on the legal and regulatory context of reclamation activities, including the Manila Bay Mandamus Ruling, Loyzaga stated.

"Reclamation is an environmental issue that must be addressed from a lens that considers the intersectionality between ecological dynamics, socioeconomic and build environments, and the ► 10

DENR: SC ruling a big consideration in Manila Bay reclamation projects ◀

costs and benefits of these activities," Loyzaga said during the recent Multistakeholder Experts Dialogue on Reclamation organized by the DENR.

The reclamation forum featured the sharing of global best practices on reclamation from technical experts from the United States, Japan, United Arab Emirates, and Singapore, and processes and issues on reclamation in the Philippines from academicians, government officials and private sector representatives.

It is a means for the DENR to look deeper and accelerate the review of both policy and practice of environmentally critical issues, such as reclamation.

"Reclamation decisions must consider interactions between land, air and sea—and the multitude of environmental factors from physics and chemistry of water, biodiversity, and the demand for sources of food, power and water," she added.

Loyzaga's statement came amid the ongoing and future reclamation projects at the Manila Bay.

The areas covered by the mandamus encompass local government units from Metro Manila, Rizal, Laguna, Cavite, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan.

Aside from the DENR, other agencies involved in implementing the order include the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), and the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).

Loyzaga also emphasized the need to come up with cumulative impact assessments of all reclamation activities "and not an evaluation of individual projects as they present themselves and stand singly and alone."

The compounded risks due to hazards, according to her, must also be factored into the cumulative impact assessments and resilience analytics. These hazards include liquefaction and tsunami from the movements in the Manila Trench; the West Valley Fault and other fault systems affecting the region; and the impacts of climate change such as rising sea surface temperatures, sea level rise, the projected

increase in the intensity of tropical cyclones, extreme rainfall events, and exposure to storm surge and flooding.

Loyzaga said reclamation could serve a beneficial purpose, citing as successful examples much of the city of Rotterdam, new land for transportation infrastructure and urban expansion in Boston, and other reclamation projects across the globe.

She also noted that areas in Intramuros, Luneta and the CCP Complex in the cities of Manila and Pasay are also reclaimed.

"In each of these areas, however, the level of investment in terms of time, scientific knowledge, planning, evaluation and management was achieved through critical and extensive collaboration between the public and private sectors, and it was maintained through strong science-informed leadership and risk governance," she said.

DENR Undersecretary Jonas R. Leones said reclamation drives economic activities and generates revenues for the government.

"However, reclamation should not only be confined within the economic parameters, but also in the context of environmental protection and conservation, disaster risk and climate change mitigation that are science- and evidence-based," said Leones. (Nicole Magmanlac)



Manila Bay care must for reclamation projects

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said that the 2008 Supreme Court mandamus ruling on Manila Bay should be a precondition for all reclamation projects within the historic body of water.

"The most important and relevant to the dialogue is the Manila Bay Mandamus Ruling," DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said during the multistakeholder dialogue on Reclamation on July 17.

In December 2008, the high court issued a ruling directing 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay.

The 13 agencies mentioned in the directive were the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department

of Agriculture, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Budget and Management, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police-Maritime Group, Philippine Ports Authority, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, and Local Water Utilities Administration.

In a statement released to the media on Wednesday, Loyzaga said reclamation is an environmental issue affecting many areas.

"Reclamation decisions must consider interactions between land, air and sea — and the multitude of environmental factors from the physics and chemistry of water, biodiversity, and the demand for sources of food, power and water," she said.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



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IN BRIEF

DENR agency set to release water management plan

THE newly-created Water Resources Management Office (WRMO), under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is set to release an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan that will account for all water resources in the country and set directions on optimizing the use of existing supply through impoundment, treatment, and recycling.

The move is part of the DENR's efforts to improve the country's water supply situation, amid lingering shortage concerns over El Niño and growing population demand.

The WRMO, the DENR said, will work with other government agencies and the private sector to identify potential sources of surface water for over 1,400 barangays at higher risk of dry spells.

"The solution to our problems starts with fixing the disconnected and fragmented management of water by more than a dozen agencies of government," said Environment Secretary Antonia Loyzaga.

The official also noted that aside from the DENR, several other government agencies and other entities are involved in managing water resources for a variety of uses such as power generation, irrigation and household distribution.

These agencies include the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, the Local Water Utilities Administration, over 500 water districts, the Laguna Lake Development Authority, and the National Water Resources Board. Aside from these, there are thousands of private water providers primarily servicing residential communities nationwide.

"There are long-standing institutional issues which we now have a strong chance of solving and this unlocks some of the barriers in managing water. It also opens the possibility of coordinating projects between agencies to enter with more efficient programs like the construction of multi-use dams and reservoirs," she added.



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'Shore It Up!' enhances Metro Pacific's environmental advocacy on 15th year

METRO Pacific Investments Foundation (MPIF), the corporate social responsibility arm of leading infrastructure conglomerate Metro Pacific Investments Corp., marks its 15th year in helping preserve and protect the country's marine and coastal ecosystems through its flagship program, Shore It Up! (SIU).

To celebrate this milestone, MPIF will host a multisectoral forum titled "Enlarging Our Blue Footprint for Philippine Marine Biodiversity Conservation" on July 28 at the Westin Manila Hotel in Pasig City.

The event will see the convergence of environmental stakeholders who will draft a joint agenda, to be led by Senate Committee Chair on Environment and Natural Resources Sen. Cynthia Villar and Bohol congressman Rep. Edgar Chatto, who will talk on Climate Emergency and Multi-Actor Partnership (MAP) on Climate and Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance, respectively.

Also to be presented are the government's Ridge to Reef Priority Program by Department of Environment and Natural Resources secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, and Sustainable Ecotourism by Department of Tourism Undersecretary Shereen Gail Yu-Pamintuan.

The private sector will be represented by Metro Pacific chairman, president and CEO Manuel V. Pangilinan, and MPIC CFO, CRO, and CSO Chaye Cabal-Revilla who will outline the MVP Group's Sustainability Practices through the "Gabay Kalikasan: Making Better Choices for Tomorrow and Becoming Catalysts for a Cleaner, Greener, and More Resilient Planet for Every Filipino."

"Our archipelago is teeming with world-renowned hubs of biodiversity and requires a strong support system from the private sector when it comes to preservation and conservation. We at the Foundation want to ensure that we

play our part in future-proofing what we have and help mitigate climate change," said MPIF president Melody del Rosario.

The half-day forum will also feature eminent speakers, marine scientists, local government officials, and environmental experts who will share their insights on empowering communities through nature-based solutions and sustainable development.

An event highlight will be an in-depth discussion on safeguarding Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site and the country's largest marine protected area. The talk will be delivered by the Tubbataha Management Office Protected Area Superintendent, along with Shore It Up! advisors and experts.

Since its inception in 2009, Shore It Up has grown from a simple underwater and coastal cleanup initiative to a comprehensive environmental stewardship program. It now extends its efforts to vast mangrove forests, marine protected areas, and wetlands of national importance, benefiting both the ecosystems and the communities within them.

In recent years, SIU has supported two Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance: the Las Piñas—Parañaque Wetland Park in Manila Bay and the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in Cagayancillo, Palawan.

The program has also made significant contributions to key coastal areas, among them Mabini, Batangas; Alaminos City, Pangasinan, Del Carmen in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte; Medina, Misamis Oriental; Cordova, Cebu, and Subic Bay.

Over the past 15 years, SIU has mobilized over 85,000 volunteers from Metro Pacific firms, government agencies, local government units, law enforcement agencies, community organizations, civil society groups, dive industry stakeholders, and public elementary schools.



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Photo from the Bureau of Fire Protection shows BFP personnel taking part in a search and rescue operation after heavy rains and strong winds spawned by Typhoon Egay caused a landslide in Buguias, Benguet yesterday. At right, Philippine Coast Guard rescuers evacuate residents to higher ground in Bacarra, Ilocos Norte. AP

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2 dead, over 180,000 displaced as Egay pounds Phl

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

Super Typhoon Egay roared across Northern Luzon and other parts of the country yesterday, leaving at least two dead and several injured as well as displacing up to 180,400 people or 44,356 families now mostly staying in evacuation centers.

The dead and injured were not immediately identified as the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) has yet to verify reports, which said the figures were recorded in Calabarzon, (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), the Cordilleras, Northern Luzon and Western Visayas.

Authorities have yet to estimate the damage caused by the typhoon.

Egay (international name Doksuri) was forecast to leave the Philippine area of responsibility this morning, and was expected to continue bringing life-threatening conditions over parts of Northern Luzon last night, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said effects of Egay would continue over Babuyan Islands, northwestern portion of mainland Cagayan and northern portions of Apayao and Ilocos Norte last night.

Tropical cyclone wind Signal No. 4 remains hoisted over the northern portion of Cagayan including Babuyan Islands and northern portion

of Ilocos Norte.

Signal No. 3 was raised over Batanes, northern and central portions of Cagayan, rest of Ilocos Norte and Apayao as well as the northern portions of Abra and Ilocos Sur.

Landslide

A 16-year-old student was declared dead on arrival in a hospital after he and his parents were dug out from the rubble following a landslide that buried their home in Barangay Central Bakakeng, Baguio City yesterday.

The couple were rescued shortly after the landslide, which occurred at around 10:30 a.m. Their son was retrieved at past noon.

Two more landslide victims were also rushed to hospital after loose soil rolled down from a mountainside and buried their houses in Barangay Puro 5, BGH compound at around 8 a.m.

Disaster response officials were verifying reports of a woman drowning in a swollen creek in Cardona, Rizal as the typhoon was approaching the country on Monday.

The Isabela provincial government, meanwhile, reported a vendor who died after being hit by a falling coconut.

PAGASA warned of a high-risk of storm surge, which may cause flooding in low-lying and exposed coastal areas of Batanes, Cagayan including Babuyan Islands, Ilocos Norte and

portions of Isabela and Ilocos Sur.

Heavy rains are expected until this afternoon over the northwestern portion of Cagayan including Babuyan Islands and Ilocos Norte.

Egay will also continue to enhance the southwest monsoon, which will bring occasional monsoon rains over the western portions of Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog and the Visayas in the next few days.

Egay was last spotted 70 kilometers west-northwest of Calayan, Cagayan and was moving northwestward at 10 kilometers per hour.

It will exit the Philippine area of responsibility this morning and cross the Taiwan Strait before making landfall in Fujian, China tomorrow.

Egay slammed Fuga Island off Aparri in Cagayan and pounded northern provinces with heavy rains and strong winds that flooded low-lying areas and blew roofs off houses.

The typhoon knocked out power facilities, plunging at least four towns into darkness.

Egay has weakened slightly but remained dangerous with sustained winds of 175 kph and gustiness of up to 240 kph.

"Our northern coastal towns are being battered," Cagayan Gov. Manuel Mamba told *The Associated Press* over the phone.

Assessment will be done after the typhoon passes, but Mamba said



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he feared there could be extensive damage to Cagayan Valley's corn and rice farms.

Coast guard personnel used rubber boats and ropes to evacuate villagers in Bacarra, Ilocos Norte, who were trapped in floodwaters.

Standby fund

The government has readied more than P173 million in standby funds to assist areas hit by Egay, according to President Marcos.

In a tweet yesterday, Marcos - who is in Malaysia for a three-day state visit - said the government is continuously working to address the impact of Egay.

He gave assurance that affected families are in good condition.

The NDRRMC said among regions hit hard by Egay are Bicol, Calabarzon, Central Luzon, Ilocos, Mimaropa, Northern Mindanao and Soccsksargen. Egay destroyed 57 houses in these regions.

The NDRRMC estimated the cost of damage to infrastructure at P1.5 million in Mimaropa, Soccsksargen and Western Visayas.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said the number of stranded people decreased from 11,252 on Tuesday afternoon to 1,675 at noon yesterday.

Of the stranded passengers, truck drivers and cargo helpers, 953 were waiting in various ports in Southern Tagalog; 372 in the National Capital

Region (NCR) and 350 in Bicol.

The PCG said 49 vessels, 308 rolling cargoes and 21 motorized boats were awaiting clearance to resume sail.

At least 7,000 police officers were deployed in areas affected by Egay to assist in disaster response operations, according to the Philippine National Police.

Police said no crimes were reported in typhoon-affected regions.

Several domestic and international flights were canceled due to Egay.

Philippine Airlines spokesperson Cielo Villaluna said further changes are expected as the situation remains volatile.

Carmina Romero, spokesperson for budget carrier Cebu Pacific, said 12 domestic flights were canceled yesterday.

AirAsia Philippines spokesman Steve Dailisan said the airline canceled its flights to Taipei and Kaohsiung in Taiwan.

State-run pension fund Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) is ready to provide emergency loans to members and pensioners who might be affected by Egay.

GSIS president and general manager Wick Veloso said the pension fund is prepared to lend assistance to its members affected by Egay. - With Romina Cabrera, Artemio Dumlao, Alexis Romero, Evelyn Macairan, Emmanuel Tupas, Neil Jayson Servallos, Rudy Santos, Louise Maureen Simeon, AP



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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DELUGE IN THE NORTH Torrential rains and gusty winds whipped up by Typhoon "Egay" (international name: Doksuri) left a trail of destruction across northern Luzon on Wednesday. In La Trinidad, Benguet, a stretch of Pines Park Diversion Road has gone underwater and the province is "in dire need of help," according to Benguet Rep. Eric Yap. At least five deaths were attributed to Egay, based on reports gathered by the Inquirer. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported one fatality and two injuries as of press time. —PHOTO FROM LA TRINIDAD MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

'EGAY' CUTS DESTRUCTIVE PATH THROUGH LUZON

By Inquirer Luzon
@InqNational

LAOAG CITY—Fierce howling winds and heavy rains spawned by Typhoon "Egay" (international name: Doksuri) left at least five dead in Batangas, Rizal and Ilocos Sur provinces, as the typhoon barreled through Luzon on Tuesday and Wednesday, according to reports gathered by the Inquirer.

More than 12,000 people in the hard-hit regions of Ilocos and Cagayan Valley huddled in temporary shelters while thousands of households were left without power, as Egay burst riverbanks, uprooted trees, ripped roofs off houses and pounded coastal communities, including isolated villages tucked away in forests.

While the Inquirer verified the deaths of five persons

due to Egay from local official sources, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported only one fatality and two injured on Wednesday afternoon.

It said Egay affected a total of 309,909 persons, or 93,109 families from 460 barangays in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera Administrative Region, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Central

Visayas and Soccsksargen.

Of these, 12,202 individuals, or 3,823 families, were in evacuation centers.

One of the fatalities, 31-year-old Mike Fernandez of Narvacan town in Ilocos Sur, was electrocuted when he touched a grounded power post while moving his pet dog to a safer spot on Tuesday night, authorities said.

A responding team from

the Narvacan disaster risk reduction and management office (DRRMO) said the victim died while being rushed to a nearby hospital.

In Ramon town, Isabela province, bread vendor Ofelia Daculan, 52, died after a coconut tree fell on her at dawn on Wednesday.

Two other women were reported to have drowned in Rizal province, even before Egay

made landfall over Fuga Island in Aparri, Cagayan, at past 3 a.m. on Wednesday.

Police said Adelfa Escolano, 71, was found dead at 11 a.m. on Tuesday after her house was swept by a flash flood at Barangay Iglesia in Cardona.

In Baras town, the body of Delisa Largo was found floating at Laguna Lake near Kasarinlan Park in Barangay Santiago around 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

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At a resort in Calatagan, Batangas, Gorgan Hagesater, 42, a Norwegian, drowned after he was swept away by big waves while swimming with his friend and compatriot Christian Atle Hanse, 43, on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

P173-M standby fund

President Marcos, who was in Kuala Lumpur for a three-day state visit, said the government had prepared a standby fund for disaster response, deployed search, rescue and retrieval teams and positioned relief items for distribution to affected families.

"The more than P173 million standby funds and food and non-food items are ready, and the search, rescue, and retrieval personnel from our Armed Forces [of the Philippines], Bureau of Fire Protection, and [Philippine] Coast Guard have been deployed," he said on Twitter a few hours before Egay's landfall.

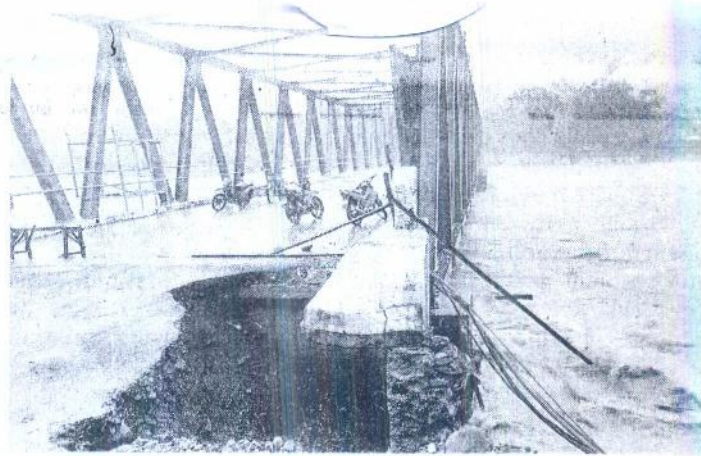
The President reported that electricity had been restored in 93.53 percent of the towns affected by Egay.

He said the government was attending to the needs of 38,991 families affected by the typhoon and the intensified "habagat" or southwest monsoon across eight regions.

Malacañang said Mr. Marcos instructed Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian on Wednesday to "continuously coordinate" with local chief executives and to ensure that the national government could augment resources should the local government units run out of supplies.

In its Wednesday bulletin, the state weather bureau warned the public of "violent and life-threatening" conditions in parts of northern Luzon, with Egay packing maximum sustained winds of 175 kilometers per hour (kph) and gusts of up to 240 kph.

If it continues to move northwestward at 10 kph, Egay is predicted to leave the coun-



INFRA AT RISK Tamdagan Bridge in Vintar, Ilocos Norte, inches away from being engulfed by "Egay" floodwaters, is closed to motorists on Wednesday. —PHOTO FROM BARANGAY TAMDAGAN FACEBOOK

try's area of responsibility by Thursday morning.

State of calamity

Close to 7,000 families, or 22,000 people, were displaced in Ilocos and Cagayan Valley regions as a result of floods and landslides, according to the Office of Civil Defense and various reports from local DRRMOs.

Data showed that more than 3,580 families or 12,000 people were forced to stay in evacuation centers in the two regions, which bore the brunt of the devastation.

Ilocos Norte was placed under a state of calamity on Wednesday.

During a special session, the provincial board approved Resolution No. 2023-07-173 allowing officials to tap local government's Quick Response Fund to bring immediate relief to affected residents.

Assessment of damage to infrastructure, agriculture and properties was ongoing, but provincial board member Franklin Respicio said that so far, "hundreds of millions of pesos worth of damages to agriculture, infrastructure and other properties, including a number of residents were rendered homeless" because of Egay.

Power outages affected large parts of the province while communication signals were intermittent.

The northern portion of

the province remains under Signal No. 4 while the rest under Signal No. 3.

Rescue operations

In Baguio City, a taxi driver and a car wash attendant were rescued from a landslide that buried a shanty within the compound of the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center at 8 a.m. on Wednesday.

The two men sustained minor injuries and were treated at the hospital, police said.

In Ilocos Norte, a man from the capital city of Laoag was saved from raging floodwaters after the Padsan River overflowed. The man had been trying to save his livestock from being swept by the water.

The Benguet Electric Cooperative said all lines were down in its service areas. Only the Mankayan substation in Benguet province remained with power.

Benguet Rep. Eric Yap on Wednesday appealed to the government to send immediate aid for residents of Benguet.

Citing multiple unofficial reports of dead or missing victims, he said: "Benguet is in dire need of help... We need force for intensified operations for disaster rescue and relief." —WIT

REPORTS FROM REUTERS, ABBY BO SER, FRANCES MANGOSING, JEROME ANING, JULIE M. AURELIO, JOHN MICHAEL MUGAS, VILLAMOR VISAYA JR DELFIN T. MALLARI JR., ALLAN MACATUNO AND MADONNA T. VIROLA INQ



'Egay' batters Luzon, leaves trail of destruction

3 casualties being verified, more than 44,000 families displaced, new LPA spotted

By AARON RECUENCO, MARTIN SADONGDONG, ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ, and ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

Typhoon "Egay" pounded Luzon and other parts of the country with heavy rains and strong winds, leaving at least three casualties, displacing more than 44,000 families, and damaging houses, roads and a bridge on its path, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported yesterday.

Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto

Teodoro Jr., who presided over the NDRRMC meeting at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, said they are still validating the three reported casualties.

Based on the latest data from the NDRRMC, one person reportedly died and one was injured due to a flash flood in Cardona, Rizal; while another person was hurt after getting hit by falling rocks after a soil erosion in Nabas, Aklan. ► 10

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"Hindi pa validated 'yung death (The death [report] is yet to be validated), it is still subject to validation. We cannot assess kung gaano tayo nakapaghanda nang lubusan hangat hindi matapos po itong emergency (We cannot assess the impact of our preparation until this emergency is over)," he said.

The Defense chief said the NDRRMC will prioritize rapid response to serve the displaced individuals, ensure that basic services are restored "as soon as possible," and keep the public safe from harm.

After this, Teodoro said the NDRRMC will conduct a rapid assessment to determine the extent of damage caused by Egay.

A total of 44,356 families composed of 180,439 individuals were affected by Egay in 261 barangays in Ilocos (Region 1), Central Luzon

(Region 3), Calabarzon (Region 4A), Mimaropa (Region 4B), Bicol (Region 5), Western Visayas (Region 6), Northern Mindanao (region 10), and Soccsksargen (Region 12).

Of those affected, a total of 2,324 families or 8,917 individuals were brought to 107 evacuation centers.

There were 49 houses that were partially damaged while eight other homes were totally destroyed by Egay in Regions 1, Calabarzon, 6, 10, and 12.

"Naghahanda din po kami sa posibleng pagtama ng isang low pressure area na nasa ibaba po ng ating bansa. Mamanmanan po ng PAGASA [Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration] ang track nito (We are also preparing for the possible impact of a low pressure area down south of our country. PAGASA will monitor its track)," Teodoro said.

Meanwhile, Teodoro assured that there is enough food, water, and other basic necessities for all the affected residents.

The NDRRMC said a total of P1,049,584 worth of relief assistance has been provided to the typhoon victims.

President Marcos, who is in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for a state visit, assured that the government is prepared for the effects of "Egay," which caused flooding in at least five regions of the country.

'Egay' tracker

Typhoon Egay (international name: Doksuri) made its second landfall over Dalupiri Island in Calayan, Cagayan at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, July 26, said the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).



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NOTES FROM THE EU DELEGATION

LUC VÉRON

The devastating impact of climate change: what we can do together



Following some scorching hot summer months, tropical rains have returned to the Philippines and the dreadful typhoon season is back. At the same time, large parts of Europe and Asia are suffering from record-breaking heatwaves, which result in devastating wildfires in some places. I therefore considered it relevant to dedicate this month's column to the impact of climate change, particularly on the Philippines, and how we work together to address this challenge.

I realize that the Philippines lies in the Pacific Typhoon Belt, and that the country has long endured the devastating impact of typhoons, but evidence shows that climate change has escalated the intensity and frequency of these storms. Super Typhoons Yolanda in 2013 and Odette in 2021 were the costliest typhoons in Philippine history and have shown the increasingly destructive potential of these natural phenomena. The warmer ocean temperatures in the Pacific provide the necessary fuel for typhoons to form and intensify. I was able to personally witness the impact of Odette on local communities when I visited Siargao last August, eight months after the landfall of Odette.

Unfortunately, increasingly destructive typhoons are not the only effect of global warming the Philippines is facing. As an island nation with a vast coastline, it is highly vulnerable to rising sea levels. Coastal erosion, freshwater increased vulnerability to salinization, and the displacement of communities are some of the dire consequences of this phenomenon. Low-lying regions, including Manila, are particularly at risk. The torrential rains in the beginning of this year in the Southern provinces in the Philippines and the ensuing landslides and floods have again reminded us of this fact.

Climate change also threatens food security in the Philippines. Past studies have shown that the country incurred P290 billion in damages caused to the agriculture sector over the past decade due to extreme weather events. Erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts and increased pest infestations are adversely affecting agricultural output. Farmers face mounting challenges in maintaining consistent crop yields, which leads to food scarcity and increasing prices.

The message by the International Panel on Climate Change prior to COP27 could not have been clearer: The climate is changing faster than our capacity to adapt. The world therefore must deliver better and faster results in addressing this crisis, but also already adapt to the effects we feel now due to the increasing temperatures. Sadly, despite contributing very little to the causes of climate change, the Philippines significantly feels this pressure. However, while the challenges are significant, I refuse to paint a mere negative picture.

Having been in this country over the past years, I have seen that the Philippines has taken a determined and proactive approach in addressing this global crisis. Together with the EU, this country has demonstrated consistent leadership on the global stage, advocating for stronger action on climate change. The Philippines has also played a pivotal role in the Paris Agreement negotiations and is



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very actively involved in international climate forums.

In order to mitigate the threat of climate change, the Philippines has set ambitious renewable energy goals. With a focus on harnessing solar, wind, hydro and geothermal power, the country has focused in expanding its renewable energy capacity, aiming to generate 35 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040. The EU is actively supporting this goal, with our P4-billion "Access to Sustainable Energy Program" (ASEP) which aims to expand sustainable energy generation, implement energy efficiency and conservation measures and provide clean energy access to Filipinos in remote communities, through last-mile electrification drives. And more support in this regard will be announced very shortly.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of community engagement, the Philippines has implemented grassroots initiatives to build resilience at the local level. The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 has set a goal to make communities, institutions and the natural and built environment more resilient to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change by 2028. Community-based disaster risk reduction and management programs empower citizens to actively participate in disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Here too, the EU stands ready to partner. The EU's Earth Observation flagship program, Copernicus, provides free environment and climate data derived from a constellation of satellites – the Sentinels – which monitor the earth and its many ecosystems 24 hours daily. In April, we launched the National Copernicus Support Action Program for the Philippines (CopPHIL), which is a first step of the upcoming EU-Philippines Global Gateway Initiative on Digital Connectivity. The CopPHIL program will entail capacity building and applications of Earth Observation data and technology, and the creation of a data management facility in the Philippines to support better data exchange and coordination among agencies requiring and utilizing satellite imagery. By providing tools for better planning and implementation of disaster preparedness, response, risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies as well as for better policy definition, increased transparency, commitment and accountability, the Philippines will be able to enhance its hazard management and disaster mitigation strategy and ascertain the nation's resilience to climate change.

Climate change is an existential threat that knows no border. From floods in Lanao del Sur and landslides in Maguindanao to forest fires in Greece and droughts in Northern Italy, we are all already strongly affected by its impact. As President Marcos said in his SONA, "Climate change is now an important criterion in (Philippine) integral national policies, in planning, decision-making, up to the implementation of programs." Let us continue and intensify our work together to address this major challenge.

Luc Véron is Ambassador of the European Union to the Philippines.

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Mayon logs fewer volcanic quakes; Alert Level 3 remains

By ELLALYN V. RUIZ

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) recorded 11 low-frequency volcanic quakes (LFVQs) and one pyroclastic density current (PDC) in Mayon Volcano from Tuesday, July 25, to Wednesday, July 26.

These are down from 32 LFVQs and four PDCs during the previous 24-hour monitoring of the restive volcano in Albay.

However, Phivolcs said the slow effusion of lava from Mayon Volcano's crater continued to feed and bulk up lava flows on the Mi-isi, Basud, and Bonga gullies on the southern, eastern, and southeastern flanks of the volcano, respectively, in the past 24 hours.

Lava flows on the Mi-isi, Basud, and Bonga gullies have maintained distal lengths of approximately 2.8 kilometers (kms), 600 meters, and 2.8 kms, respectively.

Phivolcs said debris was still deposited within four kilometers of the crater from rockfall and PDCs caused by the collapses of the lava flow margins and the summit dome.

In the past 24 hours, Mayon Volcano had 114 rockfall occurrences.

Given these observations, Phivolcs said Mayon Volcano remains on Alert Level 3, which means it is still in a relatively high level of unrest and that a potentially hazardous eruption may occur within weeks or even days.

Communities near the restive volcano are recommended 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.