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Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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Boracay folk, tourists send SOS

**Government task force urged to stop overcharging by public transport drivers,
ban cruise ships from the island**

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINQ

ILOILO CITY—A group of stakeholders in Boracay is calling on the government to address problems plaguing tourists and residents, less than two months after the island reopened to tourists.

In a letter addressed to the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF), the group of residents and business operators urged government agencies to, among other things, install lights along the beach for the safety of tourists, ban cruise ships from dropping anchor off the island and stop public transport drivers from overcharging passengers.

"It was a painful experience for us who live and work here, especially [since] many of us were compliant and fighting for Boracay's environment prior to the government-mandated closure ... We write you in [the] hope that all of the sacrifices made in the name of Boracay, that your work and effort during closure will not have been in vain," the group's letter read in part.

Citing feedback from tourists, the stakeholders said



MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

TIME TO WORRY The Boracay travel trade says it is concerned about the safety of tourists.

that while standard rates were provided by the Boracay Land Transport Multi-Purpose Cooperative, tourists were usually charged exorbitant rates for special or chartered trips.

Standard rates

The group urged the task force to ensure that more public transport vehicles be allowed to provide rides at standard rates.

Transport personnel or checkers should also be deployed to ensure that rates are being followed, it said.

Even before the island

closed for six months from April 26 to Oct. 25 for rehabilitation, residents and tourists alike had been complaining of exorbitant transportation rates.

After the island's reopening, residents now have difficulty getting rides during peak hours, as tricycle drivers prefer to cater to foreign tourists, the stakeholders said.

Students should also be provided with school vehicles so they would have available transportation, they added.

The BIATF was also urged to provide a clearer and adequate

system to regulate the number of tourists on the island and keep its carrying capacity at manageable levels.

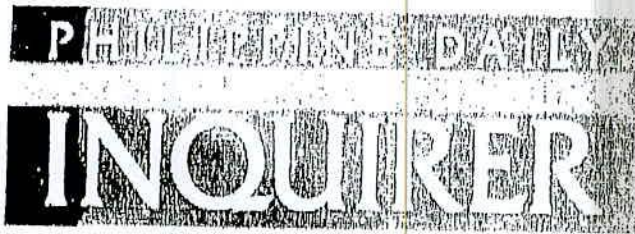
Carrying capacity

The carrying capacity refers to the maximum number of people that can be sustained by the environment.

"Currently, there is no [defined and adequate] entrance controls [in] Boracay ... [A]t times the carrying capacity [is] exceeded. Furthermore, many individuals book one night but stay longer, thus there is no system [to] actu-



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ally control how long people are staying," the group said.

While there is policy against vendors and peddlers of water sports and activities along the beach, the vendors can be found in side streets and other areas where tourists flock.

The stakeholders said designated areas should be provided for public markets and vendors that were accessible to tourists.

They are also calling for a ban on cruise ships that drop anchor off Boracay and bring thousands of tourists to the island for just a few hours.

"The cruise ships bring the island nothing but congestion and garbage," they said.

They pointed out that top tourist destinations in other countries had already banned cruise ships due to their effect on the environment.

"If Boracay is going to be representative of environmental sustainability, we should follow suit and ban cruise ships from Boracay," they said.

The group also pointed out that the tourists brought by cruise ships strained the carrying capacity of the island while "barely [bringing] business to

the establishments as [the tourists] already have their own food and drinks from the ship."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources earlier pegged the carrying capacity of Boracay at 55,000 at any given time. This includes 19,215 tourists and about 36,000 residents.

Cruise ship ban

The number of tourist arrivals should be limited to 6,405 daily in order to meet the island's carrying capacity, the stakeholders said.

Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said the agency would look into the concerns of the stakeholders, especially the banning of cruise ships.

He maintained, though, that the cruise ships did not affect the carrying capacity of the island.

"[They don't] strain the carrying capacity of the island because cruise tourists don't stay long on the island, they don't even swim on the beach. They are just there for sightseeing," he said in a text message to the Inquirer.

Antiporda said the carrying capacity was based on the number of people on the "beach front and the swimming areas only." INQ



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EMB 'Refill Revolution' recycling tack draws 2k in Balanga

By Butch Gunio

BALANGA CITY, Bataan—Over 2,000 residents of this city joined the "Refill Revolution" as they trooped to Barangay Dona Francisca covered court here with their recycled plastic bottles and containers for refill of condiments and household products.

The event was part of the Environment Management Bureau Region 3's campaign to beat plastic pollution.

Prices of product refills such as vinegar, soy sauce, powder and liquid detergents, dishwashing liquid, fabric conditioner, and liquid hand soap were significantly lower than their existing re-

tail prices.

EMB Region 3 Director Lormelyn E. Claudio spearheaded the event with Gov. Abet Garcia, Balanga City Mayor Francis Garcia, and PENRO Bataan Raul Mamac attending that showed their serious support to environmental protection.

"The aim is to promote and bring awareness to the concept of refilling from bulk containers which helps cut back on plastic production, consumption and packaging and translate to less air and water pollution," Claudio explained.

"Decreasing the amount of waste created by disposable packaging will be a very difficult task, but with the implementation of these different refill pro-

cesses across Central Luzon, later on replicated in other regions, it may still be possible," she added.

"If we don't reverse the trend, by 2050 plastic wastes will be more than the fishes in our seas," she warned citing study of environment experts.

For his part, Mamac told residents, "This is a very laudable initiative from Director Claudio. Let us all support the project."

"I promise you Director Claudio, I will help you so that this Refill Revolution can be conducted in all 12 towns of Bataan not just here in Balanga," he vowed.

Private companies also partnered in the event.



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Local steel sector calls for strict emission and safety standards

By Othel V. Campos

THE local steel industry is calling for the strict implementation of emission and product safety standards on all steel products made in the country in the light of the entry of induction furnace operators that are being discouraged in China.

The Philippine Iron and Steel Institute noted that induction furnace operators found the Philippines an attractive location because of the lax implementation of local regulations.

"While we lack the necessary rules to inhibit the entry of these induction furnaces, the government should enforce the law on emissions and quality standards," Pisi president Roberto

Cola said in an interview.

Most induction furnace operators have set up operations in the provinces, where the permitting process is relatively easy after under declaring their capacity.

Cola noted that even China had recently clamped down on polluting steel factories through strict local regulations on environment sustainability.

The Philippines welcomed the entry of Chinese steel induction furnaces despite their heavy contribution to China's air pollution.

The Pisi noted the increasing capacity of induction furnaces in the total production of rebars from 150,000 to 200,000 metric tons a year to 450,000

to 500,000 MT.

About six to seven induction furnace facilities are operating in the Philippines with a combined capacity of 450,000 to 500,000 tons, while two more plants are under construction in Misamis Occidental and Davao provinces.

The Environment Department has committed to look into the operations of five steel mills using induction furnace to produce rebars.

The companies, members of the Philippine Induction Smelting Industry Association, are facing charges of alleged violation of labor and environmental laws, particularly the Clean Air Act or Republic Act No. 8749.

The Asean Iron and Steel Council ear-



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ADB STUDY

BURNING WASTE TO PRODUCE POWER VIABLE

By **Ronnel W. Domingo**
@RonWDomingoINQ

Burning solid waste to produce electricity can be a viable solution to garbage management in the Philippines if trash collection and processing are improved, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The ADB said in a study that municipal solid waste process-

ing and disposal remained a challenge in the Philippines, such that the uptake of waste to energy (WTE) as a proven solution had not been realized in the country.

"Despite a well-established PPP (public-private partnership) regulatory framework and a mature PPP market for municipal infrastructure and public services, potential business oppor-

tunities in WTE in the [Philippines has] not attracted private sector investors and financial institutions due to numerous barriers, and thus remain largely unexplored," the multilateral lender said.

The Philippines' only operational WTE facility is the Payatas Controlled Waste Disposal Facility in Quezon City, which started in 2008. INQ