

DATE : 01-13-20

DAY : Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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TAAL VOLCANO ERUPT

STORY BY JHESSET O. ENANO

President Duterte orders the evacuation of villagers as Taal Volcano threatens a hazardous eruption. Tourists are asked to leave and authorities call off school in a wide area, including Metro Manila.

AB



DANGER LEVEL Lightning strikes as volcanic activity intensifies on a rainy Sunday afternoon, as shown in this photo taken from Picnic Grove in nearby Tagaytay City. —RICHARD A. REYES



Taal Volcano erupts

FROM A1

By Jhesset O. Enano
@JhessetEnanoINQ

Picturesque Taal Volcano belched steam, ash and small rocks on Sunday, prompting the government to order the evacuation of residents in nearby villages and ask tourists to leave the Tagaytay, Batangas and Cavite areas as precaution for an imminent eruption.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) raised the danger level to 4 late on Sunday, meaning a hazardous explosive eruption is possible within hours or days.

Earlier in the afternoon the volcano, which draws many tourists to the province of Batangas, blasted steam and ash up to 1 kilometer into the sky amid signs of its restiveness in recent months.

Phivolcs also recorded a swarm of earthquakes, some of them felt and with rumbling sounds, on Volcano Island and in villages at Agoncillo town in Batangas.

The southwest part of the island was showered with ashfall, Phivolcs said in a statement.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or tourists being stranded in affected villages frequented by foreign and local visitors.

Heavy ashfall in outlying areas prompted authorities to advise residents to wear masks.

Gov't order evacuation

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said President Duterte had given orders for the evacuation of residents of villages near the volcano.

In a statement, Panelo gave assurance that government agencies "are now working closely with the provincial government of Batangas to ensure the safety of the residents, including their evacuation."

As of 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, the evacuation, on boats and water ambulances, of close to 6,000 people from Volcano Island to the mainland towns of San Nicolas, Talisay, Agoncillo and Laurel was still going on, Alex Masiglat, spokesperson for the Batangas disaster council, reported.

Later, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported that 6,000 people had been evacuated in Batangas, mostly from the towns of San Nicolas, Balete and Talisay.

Local authorities had yet to evacuate residents in the lakeside towns of Batangas and in Tagaytay City in Cavite province, famous for its scenic views of Taal Volcano.

In a statement, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat asked tourists to leave the Tagaytay-Batangas-Cavite area for their safety.

Local visitors began to leave under open umbrellas in the afternoon as ashfall came down on Tagaytay Ridge.

"The skies turned sepia and you could actually hear the fine ash falling on the roof like termites," said Lawrence Ramos, a resident of Dasmariñas City, Cavite, 30 km from the volcano.

Ashfall also showered in Silang and Amadeo, in Cavite, and in Calamba, Santa Rosa and San Pedro City in Laguna province.

Classes in school at all levels for Monday were called off in Cavite, Batangas, Santa Rosa and Biñan in Laguna and all of Metro Manila.

Magmatic intrusion

At 2 p.m. on Sunday, Phivolcs raised the danger level around Taal two notches to level 3, indicating "magmatic intrusion that is likely driving the current activity."

Level 5, the highest, indicates an ongoing eruption.

If increasing unrest continues, Phivolcs said, eruption is possible "within day to weeks."

Phivolcs warned the public to stay away from Volcano Island, in the middle of the lake where the volcano lies, and asked nearby coastal communities "to take precautionary measures and be vigilant of possible lake water disturbances related to the ongoing unrest."

Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum said the volcano had been showing moderate to high level of seismic activity since March last year.

On Sunday, Phivolcs recorded three earthquakes, the first at 7:35 a.m. followed by two more at 10:43 a.m. and 2 p.m.

A seismic swarm, or a sequence of seismic events in the area in a short period of time, began around 11 a.m. and went on for a couple hours.

At 1 p.m. a phreatic explosion caused by hydrothermal activity began at Taal's

main crater, spewing ash and steam that rose as high as 100 meters.

Allan Loza, a science research specialist at Phivolcs, said that historically phreatic explosions happen before major eruptions.

"But there were instances when they did not. That's why we'll have to keep on monitoring," he said.

Phivolcs said it also observed a slight inflation of the volcano edifice.



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Taal Volcano erupts

Flights suspended

Flights over Taal were suspended following Solidum's advice to airlines that smoke from the volcano posed danger to airplanes.

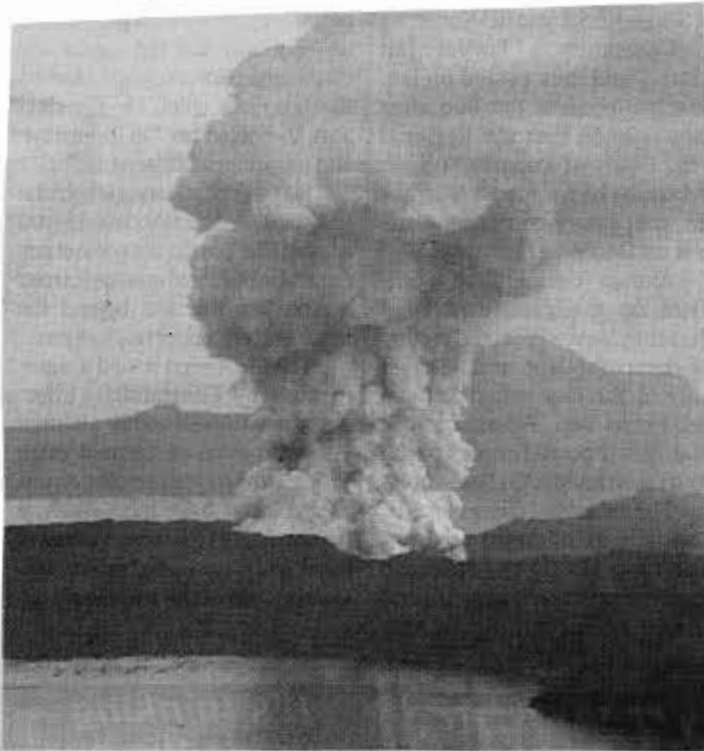
The Manila International Airport Authority issued the advice of flight suspension after 6 p.m., affecting both outgoing and incoming flights.

Solidum also advised the public that Taal's main crater is strictly off-limits, as sudden steam explosions may take place and high concentrations of toxic gases can be released from the volcano.

Taal is the Philippines' second most active volcano, with 34 recorded eruptions, the last one in 1977, which caused no casualties or damage.

Two of Taal's most destructive eruptions happened in 1911, killing 1,335 people, and in 1965, killing about 200 in nearby villages.

One of the world's smallest volcanoes, Taal is among about two dozen active volcanoes in the Philippines, which lies on the "Ring of Fire," a seismically active region of the earth that is prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. —WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, MEG ADONIS, MARI-CAR CINCO, DEXTER CABALZA, AP AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ



RESTIVE Taal rumbles to life in the early afternoon of Sunday. —PHOTO FROM TAGAYTAY CITY CAVITE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION MANAGEMENT COUNCIL




RAIN OF MUD Vacationers seek cover from wet ash as it drizzles at the volcano site. —RICHARD A. REYES



Sa pagsabog ng Taal

KALIKASAN SAGIPIN - DENR



PAGE 2

Sa pagsabog ng Taal KALIKASAN SAGIPIN--DENR

NANAWAGAN kahapon ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources sa taumbayan na tumulong sa pagsagip sa kalikasan, partikular na sa paligid ng Taal Volcano.

Ginawa ni DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Unit Concerns Benny Antiporda ang panawagan makaraang bumuga ng abo at sumabog ang naturang bulkan at idineklara ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology ang alert level 4o sapitang paglikas sa mga naninirahan sa paligid ng bulkan.

Ayon kay Antiporda, marami ring endangrect species sa paligid ng bulkan na maaari pang masagip.

Hinikayat niya ang taumbayan na tulungan silang sagipin ang mga ito at ipasakamay ng DENR para sa kaukulang pangangalaga sa mga ito.

Kaugnay nito, umabot na sa 30,000 katao ang inilikas ng provincial government patungo sa mas ligtas na lugar.

Napag-alaman na ang mga abo ay umabot na sa ibang mga lalawigan kaya naman idineklara na rin ang suspensyon ng klase sa lahat ng antas sa mga naturang lugar.

Kabilang na rito ang mga lalawigan ng Cavite, Batangas, Rizal, Laguna at ilang lungsod sa Kalakhang Maynila, gaya ng Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Marikina, Makati, San Juan, Pasig at Caloocan.

Nauna rito, agarang ipinautos ng Batangas provin-

cial disaster management ang preemptive evacuation sa mga residente sa paligid ng Taal nang itaas ang alert level sa bulkan.

Kabilang sa mga apektado ng naunang pagbuga ng abo ang mga residente ng munisipalidad ng San Nicolas, Balete at Talisay sa lalawigan ng Batangas.

Nabatid na ang pagbuga ng abo ng Taal ay bundod ng hydro-thermal activities nito.

Matatandaan na simula pa noong Marso 28, 2019, nagkaroon na ng panakanakang pag-alburuto ang naturang bulkan.

Samaritak, inalerto na rin ang Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines ukol sa apektado ng pagsabog ng bulkan sa mga paliparan.

LYDIA BUENO



Thousands flee Taal

By ELLALYN RUIZ •
AARON RECUENCO •
MARTIN SADONGDONG

Authorities rushed to evacuate at least 8,000 people who are living within the striking distance of volcanic materials after Taal Volcano in Batangas spewed ash on Sunday afternoon.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) has raised the alert status of Taal Volcano from level 1 to 2 following its steam-driven explosion.

As of 3 p.m. on Sunday, a report from the Batangas Provincial Police disclosed that all residents of Sitio San Isidro and Sitio Tabla, both located at the Pulo Island near the Taal Volcano were advised to evacuate as soon as possible.

"They were advised to force-evacuate the perimeter of the volcano," the police report read.

Local officials of Talisay town, where the two sitios were located, have declared Alert Level 3 in order to expedite the evacuation.

The evacuation is ongoing and police forces were tapped to assist.

"Lethal po ang gaseous component ng ni-release po na steam aside from the fact that it's super hot," said National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) spokesperson Mark Timbal.

In a radio interview, Joselito Castro, head of the Batangas Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office, said the initial number of people they aim to evacuate are 8,000.

The priority of the evacuation, he said, are residents of volcano island and parts of San Nicolas, Talisay and Balete towns.

Based on its latest monitoring, Phivolcs has observed increased steaming activity in at least five spots inside Taal Volcano's main crater at around 1 p.m. Sunday.

The largest activity was manifested by a phreatic or steam-driven explosion and has so far generated a plume approximately 100 meters high.

Since March 28, 2019, Science and Technology Undersecretary and Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum earlier pointed out that Taal volcano's seismic network has manifested moderate to high level of seismic activity.

Some of the earthquakes were felt with intensities ranging from Intensity I to "scarcely perceptible" to Intensity III or "weak shaking" in the villages of Calauit, Balete, Sitio Tibag, Pira-Piraso, and Buco in Talisay, and Alas-as and Pulangbato in San Nicolas.

Phivolcs said the felt earthquakes were usually accompanied by rumbling sounds.

On Sunday, three earthquake events were felt at 7:35 a.m., 10:43 a.m., and 2:00 p.m.

"A seismic swarm has started at around 11:00 a.m. and ongoing as of 2:10 p.m.," it added.

In raising the Taal Volcano's alert status from 1 to 2, Phivolcs pointed out that there is "probable magmatic intrusion that may or may not lead to an eruption."

It reminded the public that the main crater of Taal Volcano should be strictly off-limits because sudden steam explosions can occur and high concentrations of toxic volcanic gases can be released.

The northern portion of the main crater rim, in the vicinity of Daang Kastila Trail, can also become hazardous when steam emission along existing fissures suddenly increases.



Taal Volcano sumabog!

Inilikas ang libu-libong residente sa mga bayang malapit sa Taal Volcano matapos itaas sa Alert Level 4 (hazardous eruption imminent) ang status ng bulkan kasunod ng naitalang pagsabog nito kahapon.

Sinabi ni National Disaster Risk Reduction Spokesman Mark Timbal

na isinagawa ng mga bayan ng Balete, San Nicolas, Talisay, Laurel at Agoncillo sa Batangas ang precautionary evacuation makaraang magbuga ng napakataas na mga abo na umaabot ng hanggang 100 metro ang phreatic explosion

NI GEMMA GARCIA

ng bulkan.

Nakaramdam din kahapon ng sunud-sunod na mga pagyanig sa palibot ng Bulkang Taal.

Ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), posibleng magkaroon ng pag-ulan ng pyroclastic density currents at volcanic tsunami dahil maapektuhan ang tubig sa lawa kapag patuloy ang aktibidad ng Taal.

Sinabi ng Phivolcs na, mula ala-1:00 ng hapon ng Linggo, ang bulkan ay nagpakita ng "increased steaming activity sa limang lugar sa loob ng crater.

Nangangamba naman ang Phivolcs kapag nagpatuloy ang pag-aaliburoto ng bulkan ay posibleng tuluyan nang sumabog ito sa loob ng mga susunod na linggo.

Pinaalalahanan ng Phivolcs ang publiko na strictly off limits ang main crater ng bulkan dahil sa biglaang steam explosions at posibleng paglalabas nito ng high concentrations ng lethal volcanic gases.

Ang buong volcano island ay isang "permanent danger zone" (PDZ) at hindi inirerekomenda ang pagtira rito nang permanente.

Samantala, nagdeklara na walang pasok sa lahat ng antas ng paaralan, pribado at pampubliko sa mga lalawigan ng Batangas, Cavite at Rizal, gayundin sa Metro Manila matapos umabot na rito ang pag-ulan ng abo.

Pinangangambahan namang umabot din sa Central Luzon ang abo.

Ilang flights din sa NAIA ang pansamantalang sinuspinde dahil sa ashfall. (Dagdag ulat ni Cristina Timbang)



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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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metro

EDITOR: **DULCE A. SANCHEZ**

MONDAY | JANUARY 13, 2020

Volunteers collect trash along Manila Bay yesterday in line with the government's cleanup drive to rehabilitate the bay.

TOO GUMBAN



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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The Manila Times

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■ Photo shows one of the pontoons on Boracay Island in Malay town, Aklan. The government's inter-agency management group asked the local government to stop collecting fees from visitors using the bridge. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

Bridge fee collection in Boracay stopped

ILOILO CITY: The Boracay Inter-Agency Rehabilitation Management Group (BIARMG) has asked the mayor of Malay town to stop the collection of pontoons payment from Boracay Island visitors.

BIARMG chief Natividad Bernardino sent a formal communication to Malay Mayor Prolibar Bautista on Thursday to stop the collection of P30 per person for the use of two pontoons.

He said the fee collection had yet to be approved by the National Task Force Boracay principals,

including Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu and Interior Undersecretary Epimaco Densing.

"The problem there is it did not go [through] with the task force's deliberation and approval. That was the proposal of the local government unit, but they went ahead with it," Bernardino told the Philippine News Agency on Saturday.

Though it got the nod from the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Malay, Bernardino said anything done in Boracay must still be consulted with the task force since the island

is under rehabilitation.

Bautista has raised the concern during the meeting last November 26 but was told to wait for the principals' decision.

"He (the mayor) was told to justify the basis of the rate," she said, noting that the next principals' meeting is scheduled in the last week of January or the first week of February.

In a separate interview, Bautista said the local government unit (LGU) has stopped the collection of fees on Saturday.

Of the P30 fee, he said P4.50

goes to the LGU, while some are shared by Manocmanoc and Balabag villages and the private company owner.

The collection of the fees has started on last December 21.

"There were questions that it (collection of fees) was not approved by the principals so I stopped the collection of fees but the operation (use of pontoons) will continue," Bautista said.

The pontoon, measuring 100 meters from the shoreline, is used near the boat stations on the white beach. **PNA**



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'URSULA' AFTERMATH

**BORACAY SUSPENDS
TRICYCLE PHASEOUT
AMID POWER LACK**

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@inquirervisayas

ILOILO CITY—The phaseout of gasoline-operated tricycles on Boracay Island has been suspended until the power supply in Aklan province normalizes.

Acting Mayor Frolibar Bautista of Malay town, which includes the three villages of the island, said the implementation of the phaseout would resume when the area would get back its power supply.

Strong winds brought by Typhoon "Ursula" on Christmas Eve toppled more than 1,000 electric posts and structures in Aklan and the northern towns of Antique province.

The phaseout of more than 400 tricycles, the main form of public transportation on the 1,032-hectare island, was supposed to be completed by Dec. 31.

The tricycles would be replaced by 800 electric tricycles as one of the long-term environmental measures. A Department of Environment and Natural Resources study had identified tricycles as the main contributor to air and noise pollution on the island.

Bautista said only parts of Malay have electricity while 13 other villages on the mainland have been experiencing blackouts since Dec. 25.

Electricity has also been partially restored in Boracay.

According to Bautista, electric tricycles cannot yet go on full operation due to the prolonged brownout in some parts of the island.

Electric tricycles are preferred by many tourists because these are quieter and spacious.

Several tricycle operators have appealed against the total phaseout, saying electric tricycles are not economically viable as a source of livelihood due to higher capitalization cost. An electric tricycle costs around P450,000. INQ



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Baguio rehab to take 3 years

By Jeanette I. Andrade
@jiandradeINQ

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año estimated on Sunday that Baguio City's rehabilitation could take three years based on the extent of the city's environmental degradation in the last three decades.

In an interview aired Sunday over radio station dzBB, Año said the rehabilitation was off to a good start but pointed out that it would probably take three years to revive Baguio City.

"We will start with the most important aspects which need immediate action from the national government and Baguio City government," he pointed out.

The interior secretary was in Baguio City last Friday to oversee the initial stage of rehabilitation efforts, part of which is a recommendation for President Duterte to issue a moratorium on constructions in the city.

"In the last 3 years, between 2014 and 2017, Baguio City had 700,000 pine trees which have been reduced to 400,000 because the 300,000 have either died from

old age or were cut down to pave the way for the development of buildings and houses," he said.

Fewer trees, he added, paved the way for pollution and a vastly reduced water supply.

He pointed out, "The truth is 2,000 people died because of pollution [in the city]."

"Water is not enough for tourists and residents. If the number of trees was reduced, there is no water retention. Houses receive water in rations which did not happen before," the DILG secretary said.

He noted that the biggest

problems now in Baguio City were waste and the fecal and coliform level which is almost at 35 billion most probable number (mpn) at the Balili and Bued rivers. "worse than in Manila Bay." Manila Bay had fecal and coliform levels at 1.9 billion mpn prior to rehabilitation efforts.

Año said the sewerage system in Baguio City needed fixing and a material recovery facility had to be set up. "We never thought Baguio City would face an environmental problem. The city was very much abused. It is really time to rehabilitate Baguio City." INQ



Baguio 'di isasara kahit sasailalim sa rehabilitasyon

Nagkaisa ang Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) para sa isang programa na tutulong na isalba ang kasalukuyang lagay ng Baguio.

Sa presscon sa The Mansion, Baguio na dinayo ng mga sektor ng iba't ibang organisasyon kasama si Tourism Secretary Bernadette Puyat ay nagsabing may pag-asa pa ang Baguio.

Dahil rito nagkaisa ang DOT at TIEZA para maglaan ng P480 million para ma-rehabilitate ang summer capital of the Philippines.

Pumunta rin si DILG Secretary Eduardo Año at nagbigay ng mensahe para sa mga opisyal ng Baguio.

Ayon kay Año, katuwang ng Baguio

ang DILG at asahan nilang tutulong ang tanggapan para ma-rehabilitate ang lungsod ng Baguio.

Dumalo rin si DENR Assistant Sec. Enrico Salazar para ibahagi ang iniwang mensahe ni Sec. Roy Cimatu.

Ayon kay Cimatu, mahal na mahal umano nito ang Baguio kaya naman committed ang DENR para tumulong sa lungsod.

Dagdag pa nito, isinara noon ang Boracay pero hindi nila isasara ang Baguio.

Nananawagan si Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong sa mga turistang gustong dumayo sa Baguio na makipagtulungan para masalba at bumalik sa dati ang lungsod.

Nagpasalamat pa ito kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa pagbigay ng P200 million para sa pag-aayos ng Baguio. **(Isah Divina)**





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2020 MMDA BUDGET

**P176M ALLOTTED
FOR 4 NEW BOATS
FOR PASIG RIVER**

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

Efforts to resuscitate the ferry system along Pasig River just got a much-needed boost as President Duterte approved the allocation of P176 million for the purchase of four brand-new air-conditioned passenger boats, Sen. Juan Edgardo Angara said on Sunday.

Angara, Senate finance committee chair, said the fund was included in the P4.1-trillion national budget for 2020 the President signed into law last week.

According to him, the budget was lumped in with the annual spending program of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) that was mandated to operate the ferry system on the major waterway in the metropolis.

"We still have a long way to go before the revitalized ferry system that is being envisioned becomes a reality. But this is a good start," Angara said in an emailed statement.

"[The fund] is intended to make the Pasig River ferry system more viable as a mode of transport especially with traffic congestion in the roads of Metro Manila seemingly getting worse by the day," he added.

The allocation would not only be used to acquire four 50-seater ferry boats, but also ensure that all 14 ferry stations on the river would be operational.

At present, Angara said the MMDA only had two ferry boats transporting passengers to 11 ferry stations traversing the cities of Pasig, Mandaluyong, Makati and Manila. INQ



P176m alloted for Pasig ferry system upgrade

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

TO "EXPEDITE the development of the Pasig River ferry system as an alternative mode of transport for Metro Manila commuters, Sen. Sonny Angara said P176 million has been provided in the 2020 budget under the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Angara, Senate finance committee chairman, said the budget will be used to buy four 50-seater air-conditioned ferry boats that will supplement the current fleet being operated by the MMDA.

The move, Angara said, will make the Pasig River ferry system more viable as a mode of transport especially with traffic congestion in Metro Manila getting worse everyday.

At present, there are nine passenger boats in the MMDA inventory, but only two of these are operating daily.

"There seems to be no end in sight for traffic in Metro Manila. We were given a brief respite after Christmas Day last year but now traffic is back with a vengeance. Motorists and commuters alike have to suffer being stuck in traffic for one to four hours or more, depending on where you are from and where you are going to," Angara said.

"The skyway systems that aim to ease traffic along the major thoroughfares such as EDSA are still under construction but this doesn't mean that we can do nothing to help our commuters. We have to look for solutions and the Pasig River ferry could help," Angara added.

Apart from the purchase of more ferry boats, the funds will also be used by the MMDA to improve the ferry station accessibility and inter-modal transfers.

There are 14 ferry stations along the Pasig River but only 11 of these are operational. The present system can transport passengers from Pasig-Mandaluyong-Makati-Manila.



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GUMAGANA na ang alert level 4 o sapilitang paglilikas ng mga overseas Filipino worker sa Iraq.

May mga OFW nang nagtungo sa Philippine Embassy sa Baghdad, Iraq at inilipad sila sa bansang Qatar.

Mula sa Qatar, lilipad sila pauwi ng Pilipinas.

LIBO-LIBONG OFW

Sinasabing may 2,500 hanggang 3,000 OFW sa Iraq, kasama ang mga iligal na naninirahan at nagtatrabaho roon.

Marami-rami na ang nagpalista para makauwi ng Pilipinas pero meron ding bantolot.

Nauna rito, nakauwi na ang mga may dalang American passport na obrero rin sa Iraq at ang maraming Europeo, iniuwi na rin ng kani-kanilang mga pamahalaan.

Nagkaroon kasi ng malaking takot na siklab ang matinding giyera sa nasabing bansa sa pagitan ng Amerika at Iran makaraang patayin ng mga sundalong Amerikano si Irani-ang General Qassem Soleimani na pangalawang pinakamakapangyarihang lider ng Iran.

Alalahaning malaki ang impluwensya ng Iran sa libo-libong Iraqi militia na tumalaban sa mga Amerikano at maaaring dito manggagaling ang pinsala ng mga dayuhan, kasama ang mga OFW.

Napatunayang kumulo ang pagitan ng Iran at Amerika nang gumanti ang Iran sa pagpapalipad at pagpapabagsak ng mga missile sa dalawang military camp ng mga Amerikano sa Iraq pagkalibing ni Soleimani.

Natural na mailipit sa giyera ang mga OFW kaya pinairal ang Alert Level 4.

IRAQ NAGREKLAMO

Medyo humupa ang lahat nang magreklamo ang Iraq laban sa Amerika at Iran.

Gitnang Iraq, isa itong independiyenteng bansa at hindi dapat na sa loob ng teritoryo nito magkagiyera ang dalawa.

May 5,000 sundalong Kano sa Iraq at nagpasa na ang Iraq parliament ng resolusyong paalisin ang mga sundalong Kano.

Pero ayaw umalis ang mga Kano sa dahilang may malaki umano silang interes para sa buong Gitnang Silangan at kasama ang mga nakatasyong sa Iraq ang



NI BENNY ANTIPORDA

SAPILITANG PAGLILIKAS SA GITNANG SILANGAN

pwersang titiyak ng mata-tag na interes sa nasabing rehiyon.

Pinatawag din ng Iraq ang mga ambassador ng Amerika at Iran upang linawin sa kanila ang posisyon ng Iraq.

Kung paano nagmatigas ang mga Amerikano na manatili sa Iraq, hindi rin basta mapaalis ang Iran dahil sa koneksyon nito sa mga Shiite militias na nauugnay sa lideratong Shiite sa Iran.

Pero nagpahayag ang Iran ng pagrespeto sa soberenya ng Iraq.

Medyo humupa na ang banta ng matinding digmaan pero sino ang makatitiyak na ganito ang kalagayan sa mga susunod na araw?

Kaya naririyang ang mandatory evacuation ng mga OFW.

TRABAHO AT IBA PA

Habang nagkakaroon ng mandatory evacuation, may mga OFW namang humihiling na ilipat na lang sila sa mga bansang mas ligtas para magpatuloy bilang mga OFW.

Ito'y tinitingnan din ng pamahalaang Duterte na posibleng gawin.

Kaya naman, naririyang ang bukas na komunikasyon sa ibang mga bansa na maaaring tumanggap ng ating mga OFW.

Pero sa mga uwi na, naririyang ang habilin sa lahat ng mga kawakulang ahensya ng pamahalaan na umayruda.

Aalukan sila ng trabaho ng Department of Labor and Employment, ng puhunan ng mga bangko ng gobyerno, ng kaunting halaga mula sa Overseas Workers Welfare Administration para panggastos habang wala pang pangnegosyo at mapasukang trabaho.

Naririyang din ang pagtitiyak na makapag-aral ang mga nag-aaral pang anak ng mga OFW batay sa batas sa libreng edukasyon mula kinder at elementary hanggang sa high school, senior high school at kolehiyo.

May pribilehiyo rin sila sa usapin ng kalusugan sa mga public health center at hospital.

Alalahanin na kaya nagtatrabaho sa abroad

ang mga Pinoy ay dahil gusto nilang mapag-aral ang kanilang mga anak, magkaroon ng magandang kalusugan ang kanilang pamilya at magkaroon ng kahit paanong ginawa at magandang kinabukasan.

Sa rami ng libreng serbisyo ng gobyerno sa lahat ng mamamayan simula nang mahunungkulan si Pang. Duterte, marami naremedyuhang problema ng mga OFW, kasama ang droga na sumasalakay sa mga pamilya-OFW.

PASASALAMAT

Siyempre pa, naririyang ang pasasalamat natin sa mga lokal nating airline companies na nag-aalok ng libreng sakay sa mga OFW mula sa apektado ng giyera at sa mga lokal na biyaheng panghimpapawid.

Kabilang sa mga nag-aalok ng libreng pasaha ang Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific at ang AirAsia naman para sa lokal biyahe.

Tiniyak din ng bansang China na tumulong makaraang pakiusapan sila mismo ni Pang. Digong na pasakayin nang libre ang mga OFW.

Magkagayunman, gagamitin lang ang mga eroplano ng China kung siakaling matindi na ang pangangailangan.

Naroon na sa Qatar si DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu na ipinadala ni Pang. Digong para pangasiwaan ang pagbabakwit.

At kasama sa mga pag-aaralan ng kalihim ang kalagayan ng mga OFW sa Irani, Lebanon at Libya.

Itong Libya, mga Bro, ay problema rin dahil pukpukan ang giyera sa agawan ng kapangyarihan mismo sa Tripoli na.

Humupa lang nang kaunti ngayong araw dahil sa ceasefire na ipinanawagan ng Russia at Turkey.

oOo

Anomang reaksiyon o reklamo, maaaring iparating sa 0922840-3333 o i-email sa baniporda@yahoo.com.



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Marcos warns vs. involving military in OFWs' rescue

By Mcon Ramos-Araneta

SENATOR Imee Marcos on Sunday warned the government about involving Philippine military personnel and transport in evacuating and repatriating OFWs in the Middle East, amid ongoing hostilities between the United States and Iran.

Marcos said diplomatic hitches, logistical delays, or worse may arise if host governments at transit and exit points see OFW rescue operations as military in character, while Filipinos maintain a Mutual Defense Treaty with US.

"Why was Secretary Locsin stuck in Twitter? I understand the President's confidence in our soldiers to do their duties. But diplomacy should be foremost in this situation," Marcos said.

"It's the job of the DFA to deal with other countries. The evacuation of our OFWs is the task also of is also of DFA, DOLE and the policemen trained by the DFA," Marcos added.

The government plans to deploy Filipino soldiers and military air and naval assets to assist in bringing OFWs home and has sent Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, who was recently appointed by President Duterte as Envoy to the Middle East, to Qatar.

Marcos wondered why not a word has been said about asking the United Nations for help when it can provide its site camps in the Middle East as temporary shelters for OFWs.

"Dapat makipag-ugnayan si Secretary Cimatu sa UN na may maraming mga tauhan sa Middle East, kabilang ang mga Pilipino," Marcos said.

She added that the problem of providing transit shelters for Filipino migrants and of reducing the number of undocumented OFWs may now complicate rescue operations could have been solved if a National Overseas Employment Authority had already been created.

Marcos filed Senate Bill 407 last July, seeking to merge DFA and DOLE expertise on OFW issues into a Cabinet-level agency, upgrading the functions of the present Philippine Overseas Employment Authority.



Unang batch ng OFWs na umuwi mula Middle East dadating ngayong araw

INAASAHAN nang dumating sa Pilipinas ngayong Lunes, Enero 13 ang unang batch ng mga Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) na inilikas mula sa Iraq.

Ito mismo ang kinumpirma ni Defense Sec. Delfin Lorenzana kung saan sinabi nito na nasa Philippine Embassy na sa

Iraq ang unang batch ng mga OFWs na binubuo ng 14 na Pilipino.

Aniya, tiniyak mismo ni special envoy to the Middle East at DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu na sa Lunes pa lilipad patungong Pilipinas ang mga inilikas na OFW mula Doha Qatar.

Matatandaang, nagpatupad ang pamahalaan

ng mandatory repatriation o puwersahang pagpapalikas sa mga OFW na nasa Middle East dahil sa tumitinding tensyon sa pagitan ng Iran at Estados Unidos.



10 OFWs sa Iraq, uuwi na

Sa susunod na linggo, asahan na ang pagdating sa bansa ng unang batch ng 10 overseas Filipino worker (OFW) mula sa Iraq sa ilalim ng mandatory repatriation/evacuation na ipinatutupad ng pamahalaan ng Pilipinas dahil sa tensiyon sa Middle East.

Ang nasabing grupo ng OFW ay bahagi ng 1,600 Pinoy sa Iraq na unang nagpahayag ng pagnanais na makauwi na sa Pilipinas subalit tila nagbago ang isip ng karamihan na huwag nang tumuloy dahil sa paghupa ng tensiyon at pagbalik sa normal sa sitwasyon doon.

Inaasahang sa Miyerkules bibiyahen ang 10 OFW sakay ng flight mula sa Doha, Qatar pabalik ong Manila.

Nabatid na tumutuloy ang mga inilikas na OFW sa Embahada ng Pilipinas sa

Baghdad bago dadalhin naman papuntang Doha, Qatar kung saan mismong si Environment Secretary at Special envoy to ME Roy Cimatu ang sumalubong sa kanila.

Nasa Qatar si Cimatu upang i-monitor ang sitwasyon sa ME at personal napangasiwaan ang mandatory evacuation/repatriation sa mga Pinoy doon.

Bibisitahin din ni Cimatu ang Baghdad sa Iraq at Kuwait.

Nagpapatuloy ang isinasagawang assessment ni Cimatu sa sitwasyon sa Iran, Iraq, Libya at karatig-bansa.

Magkakaroon naman ng contingency meeting sa pagitan ng Embahada ng Pilipinas sa Riyadh at Filipino community sa Saudi Arabia upang talakayin ang paghahanda ng mga OFW sa kabila ng paghupa ng tensiyon.

Bella Gamotea



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Korea trash shipped back Jan. 19

Environment groups laud impending return, urge government to ratify

Basel ban on waste importation

By Jigger J. Jerusalem
@jjerusalemINQ

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Environment watchdogs welcomed the announcement of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to return to South Korea this month the remaining trash stored in a facility in Misamis Oriental province.

Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability (Idis) based in Davao City and EcoWaste Coalition in Quezon City lauded the BOC's decision to finally ship back the imported trash to its country of origin.

Both groups were referring to the 5,177 metric tons of mixed garbage repacked and stored inside the Phividec Industrial Authority compound in Tagoloan town in Misamis Oriental.

The trash was what remained of the 6,500 MT of plastic waste imported by Verde Soko for recycling but were confiscated by the BOC in 2018.

The BOC said they intended to ship back the remaining trash to South Korea on Jan. 19 and Feb. 9.

"The long wait will soon be over. In line with President Duterte's directive banning waste imports and in cooperation with the South Korean government, we are shipping back the remaining waste to its origin on Jan. 19 and Feb. 9," John Simon, BOC district collector for Northern Mindanao, said in a text message.

Clear signal

"The reexport of the 'misdeclared' waste to where they came from should send a clear signal to all parties that our beloved country is not a global dump [site] and that waste traffickers will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law," he added.

The trash will be put in 60 container vans and will be transported by an international



TOXIC MESS The pile of mostly plastic trash stored at the Phividec Industrial Authority compound in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, awaiting reshipment to South Korea. —JIGGER J. JERUSALEM

shipping line to Pyongtaek City in South Korea.

"[This is] good news for the people of Mindanao as we assert our unwillingness to be an entry point of hazardous waste from overseas."

"The reshipment of the South Korean waste to its source is a historic win for our people and

the environment," said Chinkie Golle, Idis executive director.

Environmental injustice

"Sending back the remaining waste will help in correcting the grave environmental injustice inflicted on Mindanaoans, in particular, and the Filipino people, in general," said Aileen

This is only a partial victory as the culprits behind the toxic mess have yet to account for their misdeeds

EcoWaste Coalition

Lucero, EcoWaste Coalition national coordinator.

But Golle said the reexportation would still only be a "partial victory as the culprits behind this toxic mess have yet to account for their misdeeds."

The trash was confiscated by the BOC for "misdeclaration" and because of the importer's

failure to get a permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Ban on waste imports

EcoWaste Coalition again urged the national government to speed up the ratification of the Basel ban amendment and to adopt a full ban on foreign waste importation to "protect the country against trafficking of illegal waste."

The Basel Convention Ban Amendment prohibits the export of hazardous waste for all reasons, including recycling, from countries belonging to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, European Union and Liechtenstein to developing countries like the Philippines.

"Ratifying the Basel ban amendment and further prohibiting the export of all waste to the Philippines will be our best legal protection against waste trafficking," EcoWaste Coalition said in a statement. INQ



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Trash returns to SKorea

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY: Environment watchdogs on Saturday welcomed the announcement of the Bureau of Customs (BoC) that the remaining trash from South Korea, now stored in a facility in Misamis Oriental, will be shipped back on January 19 and February 9.

In a joint statement, Davao City-based Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability (IDIS) and Quezon City-based EcoWaste Coalition lauded the decision of the Customs bureau to send back the remaining waste to its country of origin.

The group was referring to the 5,177 metric tons of mixed garbage that were repacked and put in storage at the Phividec Industrial Authority compound in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

The imported trash is the remainder of the 6,500 metric tons of plastic wastes imported by Verde Soko in 2018 to be recycled into raw materials for plastic products.

However, it was confiscated by the BOC for wrongful declaration as well as the company's failure to secure an import permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Quoting information from John Simon, BOC district collector for Northern Mindanao, the groups said the trash will be put in 60 container vans and will be transported by an international shipping line to Pyongtaek City, South Korea.

"The long wait will soon be over. In line with President Rodrigo Duterte's directive banning waste imports and in cooperation with the South Korean government, we are shipping back the remaining waste to their origin on January 19 and February 9," Simon said in a text message.

"The reexportation of the misdeclared plastic wastes to where they come from should send a clear signal to all parties that our beloved country is not a global dump and that waste traffickers will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law," he added.

Meanwhile, Chinkie Golle, IDIS executive director, said the scheduled send-back of the imported trash was "good news for the people of Mindanao as we assert our unwillingness to be an entry point of hazardous wastes from overseas. The reshipment of the South Korean waste to its source is a historic win for our people and the environment."

But Golle said the reexportation "is only a partial victory as the culprits behind this toxic mess have yet to account for their misdeeds."

The complete removal of the remaining waste, said Aileen Lucero, EcoWaste Coalition national coordinator, "will help in correcting the grave environmental injustice inflicted on Mindanaoans in particular and Filipino people in general."

Meanwhile, the EcoWaste Coalition has urged the national government to speed up its ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment, which entered into force on December 5 last year and to adopt a full ban on foreign waste importation to protect the country from illegal waste traffic.

The Basel Ban Amendment prohibits the export of hazardous wastes for all reasons, including recycling, from rich countries belonging to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, European Union and Liechtenstein to developing countries like the Philippines.

"Ratifying the Basel Ban Amendment and further prohibiting the export of all wastes to the Philippines will be our best legal protection against waste trafficking," the EcoWaste Coalition said. PNA



FOREIGN GARBAGE A file photo of industrial garbage packed in sacks, inside the Phividec Industrial Authority. The garbage was docked inside the premises of its consignee, Verde Soko Inc., in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental last year after arriving from South Korea. PNA FILE PHOTO



EDITORIAL



APPLYING FOR VISA UPON ARRIVAL

Sulat kay Editor

Itapon ang lahat ng toxic ngayong taon

Dear **Abante Tonite**:

Hanggang kailan ba tayo magiging sa katotohanang unti-unti nang nawawasak ang daigdig dahil sa kapabayaan mismo ng tao? At kailan tayo gagawa ng konkretong hakbang para maiwasan ito?

Gumagawa man ng kanya-kanyang hakbang ang mga lokal na pamahalaan tulad ng pagpapatigil sa paggamit ng plastic na isang beses lang gagamitin, tingin ko'y kulang na kulang pa rin ito.

Bago matapos ang 2019, hinayag ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources na mayroong krisis sa basura sa bansa. Isa na itong patunay na kailangan na ng aksyon para matugunan ang problemang matagal nang umaalingasaw sa bansa.

Hindi na sapat ang iba't ibang clean up drive, lalong-lalo ang mga fun run para sa kalikasan.

Bilang suhestyon, simulan natin ito sa ating mga sarili. Sa bahay pa lang ay matutong maghiwalay ng mga basura at umiwas na sa paggamit ng plastic hangga't maaari, tulad ng mga pumipili pa rin sa mga naka-sachet na produkto. Tunog cliché ito, pero ito kasi ang pinakamaliit na paraang nakikita ko na magagawa ng bawat isa.

Hindi lang dapat na toxic na tao ang iwasan ngayong 2020, dapat plastic din.

Ira ng Makati City



ZERO KALAT, MAGING PANATA RIN SANA NG MGA DEBOTO NG ITIM NA NAZARENO

SA kabila ng mga panawagan tungkol sa pagpapanatili ng kalinisan sa katatapos lamang na Traslacion 2020, "trash-lacion" pa rin ang nangyari.

Umabot sa 68 trucks o katumbas ng 330 tonelada ng basura ang nakolekta ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Lungsod ng Maynila nang matapos ang prusisyon.

Nakadidismaya na tila marami pa rin ang walang malasakit sa kapaligiran. 'Yung tipong hirap na hirap sila pagdating sa pagpapanatili ng kalinisan.

Gaano ba kahirap magdala ng sariling lalagyan ng tubig o tumbler para mabawasan ang kalat na plastic bottles? Kung takot silang magutom kaya

nagbabaon sila ng pagkain sa plastic o styrofoam, puwede namang sa bahay pa lang ay kumain na para hindi agad kumalam ang sikmura.

Naintindihan nating mahirap ang sitwasyon ng mga tao dahil nakakagutom at nakakapagod ang halos buong araw na prusisyon at kagustuhan na makapunas ng puting tuwalya sa Itim na Nazareno, pero sana ay maintindihan din nila na ang pagtatapon ng basura sa tamang basurahan o pagbalsa ng maliit na balat ng pinagkainan ay simpleng bagay lamang.

Sa totoo lang, paulit-ulit na itong ipinakikiusap ng lokal na pamahalaan sa mga tao pero taun-taon pa rin ay may mga pasaway na kung saan-saan lang inilalagay ang kanilang basura.

Tandaan, na dahil sa panata kaya tayo nakiisa sa Pista ng Itim na Nazareno at kasabay ng panata ang sakripisyo. Kumbaga, kahit hassle ay dapat pa rin tayong mag-adjust dahil hindi lang iisang tao ang makikinabang sa kaayusan, kundi tayong lahat.

Banal na gawain ang Traslacion kaya dapat ang lugar na pinagdarausan nito ay huwag nating babuyin. Kanino ba magre-reflect ang nakadidismayang gawain, hindi ba sa atin din?



FIGHT VS CLIMATE CHANGE

Inaction not an option – UN

By Elmer N. Manuel
@tribunephil_lmer

Inaction when it comes to the fightback against damaging climate change is not an option, the President of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly told a major energy conference in Abu Dhabi recently.

Tijani Muhammad-Bande addressed the International Organization for Renewable Energy High-Level meeting on the particular threat faced by Small Island Developing States – or SIDS – and their partners in development.

“Inaction will put at risk all life on earth as we know it,” warned the veteran Nigerian diplomat. “Inaction will only lead to more severe and extreme weather events, land degradation and deforestation, loss of biodiversity, pollution and acidification of oceans, global food insecurity as well as drought and floods.”

More than 1,500 delegates including senior ministers, heads of international and regional organizations together with finance leaders and private sector executives are meeting for the 10th session of the International Renewable Energy Agency Assembly (IRENA), in the United Arab Emirates.

“Despite our collective disappointment with the international community’s inability to reach consensus on vital issues during the last Climate Change Conference (COP 25), we are here to chart a way forward, with respect to a related matter: renewable energy,” said Muhammad-Bande.

“Inaction will lead to continued sea level rise, risking

the displacement of 280 million people from coastal areas and islands by 2050,” he added.

Inaction will put at risk all life on earth as we know it.

“Climate change is the single greatest security and development threat facing SIDS, despite this being a crisis not of their making. SIDS are bearing the climate crisis’ most immediate and most severe consequences, including greater recurrence of devastating natural disasters that erase development gains and create additional debt burdens.”

He noted that rising sea levels put the low-lying nations and their entire infrastructure at risk, literally eating away territory, “with some states at risk of being partially or fully submerged in the not too distant future.”

The international community must “exert all efforts” to ensure that the civilizations that have settled on small island States for often thousands of years “are not only safeguarded but thrive in the future,” Muhammad-Bande said.

Climate change is indifferent to borders and is thus not amenable to ‘national’ solutions. We are all in this together.”

The General Assembly’s top official told the room that “we are duty-bound to ensure that no one is left behind, and that we reach the farthest left behind first. Commitments to assist in funding the SDGs, including climate action, have been reiterated. Sadly,

action has lagged far behind. We need to reverse this before it is too late for our SIDS brothers and sisters, and indeed for us all.”

SIDS were a key focus during September’s

opening week of the Assembly, when a high-level summit was convened to discuss their vulnerability, and the search for solutions, on the frontline of the climate crisis.



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Mindanao gets P5B for quake rehab

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

Following the series of strong earthquakes that hit Mindanao, the government has allotted P5 billion for reconstruction, rehabilitation and relief projects for affected survivors in the region.

The amount was included in the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (NDRRMF) in the P4.1 trillion national budget for this year, which President Duterte signed last week.

A check of the 2020 General Appropriations Act showed that the President approved P5 billion as "comprehensive aid to repair earthquake damage."

The fund will be used for recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction, aid and relief projects in the Davao region and Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos), which were badly hit by a string of tremors in 2019.

The bulk of the fund, or P4 billion, will go to capital outlays

while the remaining P1 billion will be spent for maintenance and other operating expenses.

In the last months of 2019, Mindanao was rocked by a string of strong earthquakes exceeding 6 magnitude, which caused massive destruction to properties as well as loss of lives.

The allocation for earthquake-hit areas in the region forms part of the P16 billion NDRRMF this year. The government set aside P20 billion for the NDRRMF in the P3.6 trillion

national budget in 2019.

The fund is to be used for aid, relief and rehabilitation services to areas hit by human-induced and natural calamities, the repair and reconstruction of permanent structures, capital expenditures for disaster operations and rehabilitation activities.

Of the P16 billion fund, P3.5 billion will go to the ongoing Marawi Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program to rebuild war-torn Marawi City. The government

allocated the same amount in the 2019 spending measure.

Another P7.5 billion will be used for disaster risk reduction or mitigation, prevention and preparedness activities; relief, recovery and reconstruction; and as an additional funding for the quick response fund of concerned agencies.

Of this amount, P3.2 billion will go to aid, relief and rehabilitation and predisaster activities, while P4.2 billion will be spent for the repair and reconstruction of permanent structures. INQ



PROTECTION SOUGHT FOR 'UNDERRATED' PALAWAN FOREST

By Maricar Cinco
@maricarcincoINQ

SAN PEDRO CITY—The conservation of Mt. Mantalingahan, Palawan's largest terrestrial protected area and the highest peak in the southern section of the island, is a duty heavier than the mountain itself.

Or at least this is how people working on the ground feel, considering there are only three park rangers (only one is a permanent employee) and a handful of community volunteers to guard 120,457 hectares of deep forests.

Wildlife trafficking, timber poaching, slash-and-burn practices and forest conversion into coffee or palm oil plantations continue to put the forest at risk.

And then there is nickel mining, a constant threat to the protected landscape.

More guards

According to Brooke's Point Mayor Mary Jean Feliciano, at least two companies are holding on to the mineral production sharing agreement issued to them by the previous administrations to mine 2,500 ha inside the Mt. Mantalingahan protected zone.

The zone covers 36 villages in the towns of Brooke's Point, Quezon, Dr. Jose Rizal, Sofronio Española and Bataraza. Last month, the five towns raised P2.5 million as an initial com-

mitment for the protection of the zone.

Henry Adornado, regional director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan), said the amount would be used to hire more forest guards and provide for their equipment and health insurance.

The ideal ratio is one forest guard for every 500 ha, according to the DENR. The protected zone, then, would need about 240 more, it said.

'Overwhelming'

"It's overwhelming, yes. But we take on the challenge," said Mildred Suza, protected area superintendent. "We are up against big people here," she added, referring to mining and plantation businesses.

Feliciano said Mt. Mantalingahan is a biologically rich area, "comparable to the densest forests around the world."

"But it is underrated as a lot more flora and fauna have not been [scientifically] researched yet," she said.

The Mt. Mantalingahan protected zone has been on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's tentative list of World Heritage Sites since 2015.

According to Conservation International (CI), Mt. Mantalin-

gahan's forests are valued at \$5.5 billion in terms of the benefits they provide to the ecosystem.

The zone supports lowland communities through its 33 watersheds, while the entire region serves as an important carbon sink.

Sense of ownership

Suza said the most commonly poached species here was the blue-naped parrot, with Mt. Mantalingahan being one of Palawan's 11 important bird areas, according to CI.

The zone is also home to over a hundred threatened species, with more new species being discovered in recent years.

Suza said about 9,000 members of the indigenous Palaw'an tribe lived inside the protected zone. "We want people to realize how an important part of the ecosystem they are [and heighten the] sense of ownership of the forest," she said.

A hiking blog said locals referred to Mt. Mantalingahan (2,086 meters above sea level)



INDIGENOUS DWELLERS There are only three government-deployed forest rangers and a handful of volunteers from the indigenous Palaw'an tribe to look after its forests against wildlife and timber poachers.

as the "Mountain of God," with many parts still unexplored and others considered "sacred" by the community.

The peak, which can be reached through a three-to seven-day hike, is becoming an attraction to foreign mountaineers, Suza said.

Shift of focus

Only 15 people are allowed at a time on the peak to control the influx of tourists, while studies on the zone's carrying capacity are under way, she added.

Feliciano said they started giving training in schools and in the communities on sustainable farming to discourage destructive agricultural practices.

"There were some, specially the elders, who cling on to traditional ways [like slash-and-burn]. So we thought of [shifting our] focus on the youth who will later inherit the land," she said.

The government declared Mt. Mantalingahan a protected area in 2009. When the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act was enacted in 2018, Mt. Mantalingahan and four other Palawan protected areas were excluded from it since these formed part of the 1992 strategic environmental plan for the Palawan Act, a special law for Palawan. INQ



EGGS FROM ENDANGERED SEA TURTLE STOLEN FROM THAI BEACH

BANGKOK—A community in southern Thailand has offered a reward for catching whoever stole dozens of unhatched eggs of an endangered turtle species.

The Pacific Leatherback turtle eggs were stolen before dawn from a beach in the southern province of Phang Nga, said Pratom Rassamee, head of the provincial Marine and Coastal Resources office.

"This theft is a grave incident for both marine biologists like me and local residents near the beach," said Thon Thamrongnawasawat, one of Thailand's top marine biologists. "We believe around 50 or more precious eggs are gone."

Outraged local residents donated 50,000 baht (\$1,660) for a reward to catch the thieves, and the sum was matched by provincial authorities, bringing the total to 100,000 baht (\$3,320).

The eggs are protected by law, and stealing or possessing them is punishable by a prison term of three to 15 years, and a fine of 300,000 to 1.5 million baht (\$9,950 to \$49,760).

"Police are hunting those thieves down," Pratom said by phone. "The animal is loved by people living around here."

He said footage from security cameras along the road might offer some clues to the thieves' identity.

The Pacific Leatherback is the world's largest sea turtle but is also critically endangered, and its nests had not been seen in Thailand for five years until January 2019.

They are disappearing because of attacks by predators, excessive fishing, egg poaching by humans for food, and increasingly unsuitable natural environments.

"That's why so many people are upset," Pratom said. "I hope police can bring those thieves to justice. They have to know that those turtle eggs are not food, and they mean a lot both Thailand and the world."

The area around Thai Muang Beach, where the nest was discovered, has long been known as an egg-laying area and hosts a turtle sanctuary run by the government's Phang Nga Coastal Fisheries Research and Development Center. *AP*



Bulakan eco-park offers something new

While crossing the river, you may catch different migratory birds such as king fisher, black headed gull and great white egret

By Rex Estuyo Espiritu

BULAKAN, Bulacan – Being an archipelago, the Philippines has a lot to offer when it comes to tourism. Several of its 7,100 islands, due to their natural beauty, are now well-known the world over.

But have you ever considered engaging in eco-tourist places in the country? If you are wondering what eco-tourism is, leave the metro and start heading north.

About one to two hours from Manila, you may reach the center of government in this municipality where you may ride a trike and head to Taliptip Bridge. You can then sail 30 to 45 minutes along the Taliptip River with a boat.

While crossing the river, you may catch different migratory birds such as king fisher, black headed gull and great white egret which are usually found in neighboring Asian countries, Africa and America before approaching the 24.5 hectares land mass area of Bulakan Mangrove Eco-park in Sitio Wawang Capiz, Taliptip, Bulakan, Bulacan, now part of Barangay Bambang.

Its pristine beauty may catch your eyes, its peaceful waves and melodramatic sound of wind may heal you from the urban stress.

Humble beginning

Declared initially as a protective zone in 2002, the local government aims to conserve and replant mangroves for marine habitats in the area to restore its biodiversity.

Bulakan Mangrove Eco-park materialized in 2004, thru the effort of the local tourism office in cooperation with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The said park is now headed by Jimmy San Jose. They started converting it to an eco-tourism destination by building about 1800m of eco-trail wherein you may enjoy nature walk within mangrove trees, perfect for a couple looking for a nature-tripping date.

The park is picturesque, even providing a birdwatch tower for those who are into birds and nature photography. It is also perfect for travelers who are looking for a genuine peaceful place to unwind.

According to San Jose, the local government unit (LGU) and DENR are both eager to beautify and strengthen the place by maintaining it in terms of continuous monitoring and providing operational expenses. From time to time, the eco-park brings livelihood to some fishermen of Barangay Bambang by planting seedlings of mangrove and offering boat ride services along the vicinity.

By this date, the eco-park can offer tourists who want a boat ride within the vicinity of mangroves, eating and catching seafoods and of course the relaxation of sunset and sunrise viewing.

Local efforts for its promotion

In addition to its promotion, a group of students from Bulakan State University in cooperation with the LGU of Bulakan and other non-profit organization developed and produced a promotional material of the eco-park wherein a one-day event was launched 30 March 30 last year to experience the perks of the eco-park as part of their undergraduate study.

It caters to participants from Bambang who experienced the seminar about eco-tourism, eating mouth-watering seafoods, mangrove seedlings planting and other eco-friendly activities.

From now, the management of the eco-park plans to develop other offerings such as building cottages and expanding its eco-trail when funds are available.



PROTECTION MEASURES TIGHTENED FOR TARSIERS ON MOUNT MATUTUM



THE Protected Area Management Office of the Mount Matutum Protected Landscape has limited the entry of visitors to the tarsier sanctuary in Barangay Linan, Tupi town in South Cotabato province, to protect the critical primate and its habitat. It prohibited the entry of walk-in visitors to the site as part of the enhanced conservation and protection measures.

PAMO-MMPL

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Environment personnel have limited the entry of visitors to a declared tarsier sanctuary on Mount Matutum in South Cotabato province, in a bid to protect the critical primate and its habitat.

Forester Gabriel Baute, area superintendent of the Mount Matutum Protected Landscape (MMPL), said recently they stopped accommodating walk-in visitors at the sanctuary in Barangay Linan, Tupi town, starting the holiday season as part of their enhanced conservation and protection program.

He said the influx of visitors might disturb the tarsiers, dubbed the world's smallest primate, and threaten their natural habitat.

Baute cited that tarsiers are nocturnal animals, normally sleeping during the day and active only during the night, like owls.

"Hence, visitors are enjoined to avoid disturbing these animals in their natural habitat or when visiting the tarsier sanctuary," he said in a statement.

Baute said like other wildlife species, tarsiers are best left in their natural habitat rather than capturing and caging them as pets.

Tarsiers are known to commit suicide when in captivity and exposed to stressors like camera flash, human touch, and other forms of disturbance, he said.

It is listed under "near threatened species" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

In response to the move, the municipal government of Tupi has adopted a program, dubbed "voluntourism," which mainly raises awareness on the need to protect the tarsiers and their sanctuary.

Visits to the site are currently allowed through prearranged schedules with the municipal environment and natural resources office (MENRO).

Rolando Visaya, Tupi MENRO chief, said the program promotes the principles of volunteerism and responsible tourism.

Through the program, he said they tap visitors to help plant trees at the site and its immediate environs.

The primary targets of the program are individuals with high regard and motivation for the protection and conservation of biodiversity, especially the tarsiers, he said.

"This gives our visitors the opportunity to see the tarsiers in their natural habitat and at the same time take part in protecting them," he said.

Mount Matutum is a known sanctuary of tarsiers, which are called "mal" by Blaang and T'boli tribal residents in the area.

The area is part of the 13,947-hectare MMPL, which covers the municipalities of Tupi, Tampakan and Polomolok in South Cotabato, and Malungon in Sarangani province.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources declared parts of Barangay Linan, Tupi, as a tarsier sanctuary by virtue of Proclamation 1030 signed by former President Fidel Ramos on June 23, 1997. *PNA*



Bohol reaps harvests in rice, coconut, and trees

By MINERVA BC NEWMAN

CEBU CITY — The Provincial government of Bohol launched its "Advanced Rice Technology" (ART) program, January 10 to respond to the national call to increase rice production and ensure food security in the country.

The province is also reaping rewards from massive planting of coconut and fast-growing tree species, with support from the Bohol Biodiversity Complex (BBC) in Bilar town, and the private sector led by Bluewater Panglao Hotel.

Bohol governor Arthur Yap presented the ART program at the sidelines of the technical training sessions of Bohol farmers at the PhilRice, Nueva Ecija from January 8-12 with the municipal Agriculture Officers of Talibon, Pilar, Ubay, and San Miguel, farmer technicians from Carmen, Jagna, Candijay, Alicia, Batuan, Dagohoy and Catigbia; Office of Provincial Agriculturist, Pilar RPC, National Irrigation Administration officials and more than 50 rice stakeholders of Bohol and some local media.

"The weakness of Bohol's rice program lies not with our farmers but in its program management. Rice cannot be grown in small patches and divided amongst political subdivisions like municipalities. Rice grows well depending on water, land, seed and input management," Yap said.

Yap added that when the technicians and the farmers are together managing the production in a systematic way, then there is a chance for inbred seed production to produce more than 120 cavans per hectare and more than 160 cavans per hectare for hybrid seeds.

Meanwhile, the Bohol-wide coconut planting program is in full swing,

with the participation of individual farmers, landowners, tenants, cooperatives, etc. The Philippine Coconut Authority said they have at least 114,658 coconut seedlings ready for planting by participants to the Participatory Coconut Planting Project.

Over at Panglao island in Bohol, Bluewater Panglao has prioritized its tree-planting activity with the cooperation of environment-friendly guests who gamely plant tree saplings in the hotel-resort's compound in Sitio Daurong, Danao, Panglao island.

Guests, especially newlyweds who had their wedding receptions at Bluewater Panglao, were encouraged to plant trees, complete with their name-markers and dates of planting, to be cared for by hotel staff. When they return to the site months after, the guests will be surprised how the trees that they planted had grown and became part of the landscape.

"This is our own small way of contributing to the nation's efforts to care for the environment," said a hotel staff supervisor at Bluewater Panglao.

Meanwhile, the Bohol Biodiversity Complex (BBC) in Bilar town is a 25-hectare ecotourism site with almost two hectares of rainforest and secondary forest. Perfect for nature lovers, this project of the provincial government inculcates in the residents, especially the youth, the conscious caring for nature. The staff teach visitors how to plant trees, ways of having these trees reach maturity, what endemic trees to plant, etc.

The biodiversity complex was envisioned as a self-sustaining environment project of the Bohol Environment Code of 1998, the staff in the complex said. (With additional report from DCC)



Mati City crafts master plan for bay protection

MATI CITY, Davao Oriental: The city government on Saturday committed to implement a master plan for proper sewage disposal as a measure to further protect the Pujada Bay here.

Mayor Michelle Rabat said in a press briefing on Saturday that they will be putting up sewage treatment plants to ensure that wastes from households going out to Pujada Bay are treated and cleaned before they are dumped in the bay.

"I have coordinated with various officials to make sure that all canals that leads to the bay will have a catchment basin," she said.

She said given that plastics and pollution had been a global problem, they have initiated measures to provide solutions and protect not only Pujada Bay, but also other

major bays in the city.

"Here in Mati, all leads to the bay. We have to make sure that all water leading to the bay be treated and recycled," she added.

Rabat assured that they would be providing catchment basins to ensure that no plastics and other garbage would reach the bay.

Pujada Bay, Rabat said, was recently cited by the Most Beautiful Bays in the World (MBBW) Club as it was eyeing to be included in the prestigious MBBW list.

The Pujada Bay-Landscape and Seascape was declared as a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System through Presidential Proclamation 431.

It covers about 20,0887 hectares of protected landscapes and seascapes.

PNA



BW FILE

DAVAO: MATI CITY, DAVAO ORIENTAL Validators call on government, private sector to cooperate in protecting Pujada Bay

VALIDATORS from the Most Beautiful Bays in the World Organization (MBBWO) called on local authorities to coordinate with private owners of islands and resorts around Pujada Bay to maintain its cleanliness and protect it from environmental degradation. The bay, located in Davao Oriental, has been accepted in the MBBWO list based on the provincial government's application, subject to site validation. MBBWO officials, led by Founder and Manager Bruno Bodard and Treasurer Guy Etienne Rousset toured communities around Pujada Bay last week. "We were very surprised by the beauty and quality of the Pujada and Mayo bays that we visited," Mr. Rousset told media in a press conference held at Menzi Beachpark in Mati City, Davao Oriental, Saturday. Mr. Bodard said among the criteria in the Most Beautiful Bays tag include the community involvement in environmental protection. "The Pujada Bay has complied with the requirements. But I don't want to say just Pujada Bay, because Mayo and Balite bays are also beautiful. I will call them Mati's Bays. We will validate these Mati's bays," he said. "We are validating the quality of the water, even the mountain and the forest is very important. It is part of our validation," Mr. Rousset said. He noted that one of the benefits of being included in the MBBWO list is getting international help in protection from toxic products and other concerns. Mati Mayor Michelle Nakpil Rabat, for her part, said the city government would soon implement a master plan for the protection of Pujada Bay. This includes the construction of sewage treatment plants as well as catchment basins for plastics and other wastes. In 1994, the Pujada Bay Landscape and Seascape was declared as a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) through Presidential Proclamation No. 431. Covering about 20,088.43 hectares of protected landscapes and seascapes, Pujada Bay is bounded by the Guang-guang Peninsula in the east and the Pujada Peninsula in the west. — **Maya M. Padillo**



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Mati City adopts master plan for Pujada Bay rehab

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DOE again rejects PXP Energy's unsolicited bid to develop Malampaya

BY LENIE LECTURA [@llectura](#)

THE Department of Energy (DOE) has turned down a request from PXP Energy Corp. to reconsider its unsolicited proposal to take over the operations of the Malampaya gas field from the consortium once the service contract expires.

"As to the reconsideration being sought by PXP on their unsolicited proposal for the strategic development and utilization of an integrated gas hub [IGH] for Malampaya, DOE maintained its position that it cannot accept or entertain any proposal for an existing service contract," said the agency's Energy Resource Development Bureau (ERDB) over the weekend when asked for an update.

PXP Energy had proposed to develop and utilize an IGH at the site of the Malampaya project in Northwest Palawan.

The DOE rejected this, however, saying the unsolicited proposal cannot be accepted because the service area covered by Service Contract (SC) 38 is still subject to a valid and existing contract,

which expires in 2024.

The Malampaya gas field is being maintained and operated by a consortium led by Shell Philippines Exploration BV with 45 percent in SC 38; Chevron Malampaya LLC, 45 percent; and state-led Philippine National Oil Co. Exploration Corp., with the remaining 10 percent.

Davao businessman Dennis Uy's Udenna Corp. is acquiring the Chevron Malampaya's entire stake in the gas project.

"We advised PXP that we cannot be cognizant of their proposal. The reason is very basic. We have PCECP [Philippine Conventional Energy Contracting Program] and, under that legal framework, there are only two ways in order to get a service contract and oil exploration per-

mits," Energy Assistant Secretary Leonido Pulido earlier explained.

Under the PCECP, investors may engage in upstream exploration or development activities in two ways: One, choosing an area from the 14 predetermined areas (PDAs) offered by the DOE and, two, proposing their own areas for exploration.

"There are only two ways. There is no third mechanism. What they are trying to do is create a third mechanism, which is unsolicited proposal. You cannot nominate an area that is already covered by a service contract. SC 38 is already covered by an existing contract so we can't take cognizance of their unsolicited proposal. We have to refuse it and we already advised them on that," explained Pulido.

Meanwhile, the DOE said five PCECP applications are recommended for the issuance of petroleum service contracts.

However, the peace and order situation in Mindanao has prompted the agency to put on hold some of the applications that are recommended for approval.

"Currently, there are five applications that are recommended to award for a petroleum service contract. But due to the ongoing bilateral discussions with BARMM [Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao], two applications were put on hold," added the ERDB.



GOVT. EMPLOYEE HULISA DROGA

ARESTADO ang isang tauhan ng Mandaue City Environment and Natural Resources Office (MCentro), gayundin ang sinasabing nagsusuplay sa kanya ng ilegal na droga kasunod ng mga ikinasang buy-bust operation sa Mandaue City, kahapon ng madaling-araw.

Ayon kay Police Major Hugo Rio Ipong, kinilala ang mga suspek na sina Jennifer Seville, 40, eco-enforcer ng MCentro, kanyang bayaw na sina Julito Moca, 46, at Archie Apor, 21. Naaresto rin sa hiwalay na operasyon ang itinuturong supplier umano ng ilegal na droga ni Seville na si Francis Ranile, 39.

Kasalukuyang nakadetine sa Canduman Police Station ang apat na suspek na nahulihan umano ng hinihinalang shabu na nagkakahalagang P272,000. (V. Reyes)