

**DATE**  
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**Friday**

# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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# MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Mt. Apo fire spreads; Mt. Kanlaon ashfall prompts evacuation

By ALEXANDER D. LOPEZ and PNA

The wildfire that has been spreading in the Mt. Apo Natural Park (MANP) escalated early yesterday morning, the information office of Davao City said in a statement to media.

Chief Information Officer Leo Villareal said as of 4:19 a.m. Thursday, the wildfire had already forced volunteers and responders on the

scene to abandon their positions.

As Mt. Apo fire spreads, ash fall blanketed at least five localities in central Negros Occidental following the eruption of Mt. Kanlaon Tuesday night, prompting a minor evacuation and use of gas masks among residents to protect themselves against sulphur fumes.

Last Wednesday, Secretary Ramon Paje of the Department of Environment and Natural

southeast portion of the peak, somewhere in the Davao del Sur province side and quickly spread to other portions of the mountain.

Since Tuesday, only one chopper from the Philippine Air Force (PAF) provided support to the fire-fighting efforts of hundreds of volunteers.

#### Seek assistance of US military

This prompted senatorial candidate Francis Tolentino to propose seeking of assistance from the United States military.

Because forest fires or wildfires are common the US, Tolentino said American troops are well-equipped and more knowledgeable in controlling and managing wildfires or forest fires.

"It is imperative that we immediately stop the fire from spreading. Nothing's wrong if we ask help from our allies in the US. They would know what to do - from methods like 'controlled' or 'prescribed' burning to setting up of fire management zones in areas vulnerable to forest fires," Tolentino said.

Tolentino noted how US soldiers have been involved in humanitarian assistance and disaster response in the Philippines, such as "Operation Damayan" in Tacloban City following super-typhoon Yolanda in 2013.

This is not the first time that the proposal to seek the assistance of the US military was made. Earlier, the American Chamber of Commerce in Mindanao (AMCHAM-Mindanao) had sought the support of the US government to help quell and contain the wildfire.

Tolentino commended firefighters on the scene as well as some 2,000 volunteers from the North Cotabato side of Mt. Apo who are helping set up 'fire lines.' They are clearing parts of the forest from grass and small trees to create a line or barrier to stop the fire from spreading.

#### Long-term plan

But he stressed that apart from their efforts, the government should map out a long-term plan to prepare residents for possibly more forest fires especially with the onslaught of El Niño.

Tolentino suggested that barangay

Resources (DENR) said that if weather permits, the fire could be out by Thursday, citing a report from the Philippine Air Force (PAF).

But with the recent development, there is a possibility that the situation at the park will be raised to higher level, Villareal said. Members of the Incident Management Team (IMT) who are still stationed in Kapatagan, Digos City, Davao del Sur, were still assessing the latest situation yesterday.

Members of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) are also coordinating with IMT to review their strategies and possibly adjust to the latest situation in the area.

Villareal, in the same message, described the current efforts to quell the continuing wildfires in Mt. Apo as "an uphill battle."

#### Black Saturday fire

The wildfire that started at noon of Black Saturday has already destroyed more than 400 hectares in the park, mostly its grasslands. It started on the



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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Mt. Apo fire spreads; Mt. Kanlaon ash fall prompt evacuation

officials be briefed on how to immediately put out forest fires, evacuate residents and conduct clearing operations. He cited as a model for this, Australia where intense bushfires are common during summer. It has an agency solely dedicated to combat and minimize the effects of bushfires.

### DENR's appeal

Paje has appealed to the public to take all precautions to prevent forest fires, especially during summer.

He said our forests are very much at risk to fire especially during summer when there is less rain and dry vegetation easily catches fire. He asked mountain trekkers and hikers to be responsible by extinguishing any camp fires and keeping from discarding cigarette to prevent forest fires like what happened in Mt. Apo.

Meanwhile, Zeaphard Caelian, chief of Provincial Disaster Management Program Division of Negros Occidental, said the ash fall from Mt. Kanlaon is experienced by residents of Salvador Benedicto town, Bago City, La Carlota City, Pontevedra, and La Castellana town.

Due to the sulphur smell, 15 people from Bago City evacuated and sought shelter in the village gymnasium while the others stayed with their relatives.

The affected local government units provided gas masks for their residents, Caelian said.

He pointed out that sulphur from the ash fall is dangerous to a person's health as it could trigger asthma and other pulmonary problems.

Benjamin Tanatan, science research analyst of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) in Canlaon City, said the wind direction after the eruption was southwest, the reason some localities in Negros Occidental were affected by the ash fall.

The ash emission from the volcano drifted to the Occidental side because its origin was northeast, he added.

Tanatan said that if the direction of the wind changes, the ash fall will also affect Canlaon City, Negros Oriental.

Most of the ash ejections were reported in Barangay Ilijan in Bago City, Barangay Ara-al in La Carlota City, and Barangay Sa-ang, La Castellana. (With a report from Ellalyn B. de Vera)



**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

## Grass fires hit Mt. Kanlaon

BACOLOD CITY – Grass fires, caused by hot rocks spewed by Mt. Kanlaon on Tuesday night, broke out on the portion of the volcano facing La Castellana town in Negros Occidental on Wednesday afternoon.

Zeaphard Gerhart Caelian, Negros Occidental provincial disaster management program division head, yesterday said they mobilized 300 volunteers to prevent the grass fires from spreading to the forested areas of the Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park.

Caelian said they would set up fire lines – barriers to slow down or stop the blaze – in Barangays Biak na Bato and Cabagna-an.

He said they also asked the assistance of Bantay Bukid Brigade members and Army soldiers to put out the blaze.

The Negros Occidental Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council convened on Wednesday and approved a P3-million budget to contain the fire.

About 120 hectares of grasslands were razed when grass fires broke out on Mt. Kanlaon during the Holy Week, said Al Orolfo, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Negros Island region director.

Meanwhile, residents near the volcano have been told to wear masks and stay indoors as protection from the ash fall following its eruption.

### **Mt. Apo**

As this developed, Joselin Marcus Fragada, DENR-Davao region director, said operations to put out a forest fire on Mt. Apo continued yesterday.

Fragada said additional fire lines were put up near the peak.

"An Air Force helicopter is still conducting water bucket operations," he said.

The DENR said the fire, which was blamed on a bonfire left by trekkers, had so far razed around 350 hectares of grasslands.

Environment Secretary Ramon Paje said grass fires are expected because of the high temperature and flammable debris in the woodlands.

The DENR said Mt. Apo would soon be closed to trekkers. – **Danny Dangcalan, Rhodina Villanueva**



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## Sunog sa Mt. Apo lumawak; mountain fire sa Mt. Province

UMABOT na sa 350 ektarya ng kabugatan ang nilamon ng apoy sa paligid ng Mount Apo.

Kaya, ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), puspusan ang ginagawa nilang mga hakbang para maapula ang forest fire na nagsimula noon pang Sabado.

Una nang sinabi ni DENR Secretary Ramon Paje na nagpadala na sila ng 40 technical personnel para magkalook ng technical support at maghatid ng mga

kinakailangang gamit.

Pinagbawalan na rin ng DENR ang pag-akyat ng mga mountainers sa tinaguriang "protected area" sa hinalang ang kapabayaan ng mga umaakyat sa naturang bundok ang dahilan ng sunog.

Umaasa rin ang kagawaran na tuluyan nang maapula ang apoy sa mga susunod na araw.

Samantala, nakapagtala naman ng mountain fire sa Sitio Fagtoy, Brgy. Samoki sa Bontoc, Mt. Province. Nahirapan ang mga bumbero na

apulahin ang apoy dahil ang lugar ng sunog ay dalawang kilometro ang layo sa national road

Ayon sa isang residente,

posibleng sinadya na mag-sunog sa lugar upang magkaroon ng bagong tubo na mga damo kapag umulan. —*Radyo Inquirer*



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### MT. APO UMAPOY ULIT

Muling nagliyab ang Mt. Apo, mas malaki sa naging sunog mula noong Sabado ng hapon at lumawak pa ang pinsala. Nabatid na umabot na sa 350 ektarya ng kagubatan ang nilamon ng apoy.

Ayon sa ulat, bumalik na ang mga fireworkers upang magpahinga matapos ang pag-apula ng apoy sa naunang sunog bandang alas-dos ng

madaling-araw kahapon nang bigla na sumiklab ang apoy. Nahirapan umanong makabalik sa nasabing bulkan ang mga fireworkers dahil sa zero visibility dulot ng makapal na fog.

Dahil dito ay puspuhan na ang ginagawang mga hakbang ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources o DENR para maapula ang forest fire na nagsimula noon pang Sabado.

Una nang sinamantala ni DENR Sec. Ramon Paje na nagpadala na sila ng 40 technical personnel para magkaloob ng technical support tulad ng mga kinakailangang gamit ng

mga ahensya ng gobyerno na nagtutulung-tulong para maapula ang apo.

Nanawagan ngayon ang grupo sa mga nagmamais na tumulong sa pag-apula ng apo subalit yaong may kaakayahan at kaalaman lamang. Umabot na sa 300 workers ang nagtutulung-tulong ngayon subalit hindi pa umano sapat ang nasabing bilang upang tuluyang maapula ang apoy.

Ayon kay Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum, nanangamba din ang Eagle Philippines Foundation na baka tumawid sa Mt. Canobo ang sunog at maapektuhan ang tirahan ng mga agila. (Lhean Angeles)

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**Echoes From**

**Johnny Dayang**

**Community-based forest management**

**T**HE 200-hectare Mt. Apo forest destroyed by fire could have been prevented if the community-based forest management scheme has been seriously observed.

Community-based forest management program under DENR engages organized upland communities to care for, promote and

protect delineated forest areas, in exchange for which they are granted the right to properly use and harvest forest resources in addition to other forms of assistance extended them.

The El Niño phenomenon should have compelled DENR to be extra serious in mobilizing upland communities against forest fires. Presumably the scheme is in place in the Mt. Apo, the Philippines' highest peak and principal breeding ground of our endangered Philippine eagle, but its implementation seems to have been lackadaisical.

I know the effectiveness of community-based forest management. My son Jed and I are members of the Kalibo Save the Mangroves Association, Inc. the watchdog of the Bakhawan Eco-Park in Kalibo, Aklan, a 250-hectare mangrove forest, developed under the leadership of Dr. Allen Salas Quimpo, former three-term Aklan congressman, and current Northwestern Visayan Colleges president. The United Nations has cited it as one worthy model in environmental protection and development.

Aside from Boracay, Bakhawan Eco-Park is now Aklan's prime destination that attracts both Filipinos and foreign tourists and visitors. It is now a marine life breeding ground and home to various kinds of birds and migratory species from all over the world. With tourism entrepreneur, retired US Navy officer Ariel Abriam's help, the Bakhawan project now has world-class facilities for visitors, and hosts the regular Kapihan sa Aklan media forum.

development.

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Filipinos living in the Czech Republic in central Europe notice the increasing number Pinoys visiting Prague to pay homage to the miraculous Holy Infant of Prague.

Aklan Gov. Joe Ben Miraflores and wife, Ibajay town Mayor Malou; Malay (Aklan) Mayor John Yap and wife Abe were Prague pilgrims.

The Baroque Church of Virgin Mary the Victorious in Mala Strana houses the tiny Prague Holy Infant sculpture, presented in 1628 to Prague Carmelites by Polixena of Lobkowitz who received it in Bohemia from Maria Manrique de Lara from Spain. Pilgrims from the world over pay homage to the Holy Infant, now also known as the Little Prager.

Czech priests of the Church of Virgin Mary in Prague whom I briefly talked with have expressed interest in witnessing the Sto. Niño celebrations here in the Philippines.



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# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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## 400 marginalized farmers in Tarlac receive land titles

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga—Some 400 marginalized farmers in Tarlac have secured ownership of the land they have been tilling and occupying for years.

This is part of the Handog Titulo program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in an effort to promote social justice and alleviate poverty in the rural areas.

Tirso Parian Jr., assistant regional director for Management Services of DENR Regional Office 3, said a total of 82 land titles, consisting of residential and agricultural free patents, as well as miscellaneous sales patents, covering more than 11 hectares of public lands, were distributed to the marginalized farmers of Tarlac.

"We aim to uplift the lives of the Filipino people, especially those working in the agriculture sector, by giving them access to free land titling and empowering them with legal ownership over land which some of them have been living on and toiling on for more than a decade," Parian said.

He said any Filipino citizen, who is an actual occupant of a residential land for at least 10 years, is eligible to apply for free patent under Republic Act 10023 of 2010, or "An Act Authorizing the Issuance of Free Patents to Residential Lands." **PNA**



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Thumbs down on tree-killing bets — DENR

**ILOILO CITY** — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Western Visayas (DENR-6) is urging the citizenry in the region not to support candidates who have been nailing campaign materials on trees.

"We are campaigning that people should not vote for candidates killing our trees," said DENR-6 Regional Director Jim Sampulna.

Right after the March 29 official kickoff of the local campaign period for the May 2016 elections, reports reached DENR-6 that campaign posters of local candidates nailed on trees have intensified.

Campaign posters nailed on trees are highly visible along roadways in Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, and Iloilo provinces.

With the coordination of the Commission on Elections (Comelec), Sampulna said DENR-6 will soon activate "Oplan Baklas" which involves the removal of illegally posted campaign materials.

DENR-6 reiterates that nailing campaign materials on trees causes harm especially to younger trees.

"Nailing can cause growth stunting on trees," Sampulna explained.

Sampulna added it is not only the nailing of these campaign posters, but hanging of big streamers or tarpaulins that also causes harm to trees. He noted how nylon strings or the rope that are used are also clinging to branches, causing these to break.

The agency warns that candidates or their supporters can be charged with violation of Section 3 of Presidential Decree 953, which prohibits the damaging or injuring of a naturally grown or planted tree.

Guilty violators can be imprisoned for a period of "not less than six months and not more than two years."

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Kanlaon fire under control

By Carla P. Gomez  
*Inquirer Visayas*

LA CASTELANA, Negros Occidental—The fire raging near the crater of Mount Kanlaon on Negros Island destroyed about 400 hectares of grassland.

But Supt. Rodolfo Dinaga, Negros Occidental provincial fire marshal, said the grass fires were already manageable especially that Mount Kanlaon had been calm since Tuesday night when it released ash and fiery rocks and other incandescent materials.

Residents of this town went about their business as they were already used to the volcano's intermittent minor eruptions.

Dinaga, who heads the unified command post tasked to put out the blaze, said 69 firefighters were trying to prevent the blaze from reaching forest land about 4 km away.

The fire on the 300 ha of grassland on the La Castellana side of the volcano was caused by materials spewed during the eruption on Tuesday night.



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## PAMB OKs resolution on indefinite closure for Mt. Apo rehabilitation

DAVAO CITY – The Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) XI has ordered the closure of all entrances to Mt. Apo for an indefinite period to allow rehabilitation to take place after more than 300 hectares have been damaged by the forest fire.

PAMB has also agreed to use the Integrated Protected Area Fund (IPAF) raised from trekking fees for the rehabilitation. IPAF is managed by the local government units.

These were the decisions of PAMB during a meeting of all members yesterday morning in Kapatagan.

So far, the forest fire has continued to wreck havoc on the Sta. Cruz side of Mt. Apo particularly in the area of sulfur vent on Wednesday night, according to Harry Camoro, executive officer of the Davao del Sur Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council.

In a phone interview, Camoro however said large parts of the affected area have already been contained and the fireline already reached almost one kilometer. "*Bumibilis ang trabaho ng* teams (The work of the teams is being fast-tracked)," Camoro said, adding that they have shifted operation to the south side or the sulfur vent area of Sta. Cruz after new fire broke out Wednesday night.

The fire line is one option in containing forest fire. DENR explained that it is a gap in vegetation or other combustible materials

that will act as a barrier to slow or stop the fire. To establish a fire line, vegetation must be cleared out approximately 10 meters away from the burning area. Trees and grasses are among the vegetation that could easily ignite and create fire.

The forest fire in Mt. Apo started last Saturday afternoon in one of the campsites at the peak. DENR reported that the fire spread downhill on all sides of the mountain, reaching the edges of the natural forests in Magpet and Davao City, reforestation area of Energy Development Corp. in Maag, Makilala and Bansalan and the remaining patches of forests in Digos City and Sta. Cruz. Mt. Apo, considered the icon of Regions 11 and 12, is the highest mountain peak in the country with estimated elevation of 9,692 feet above sea level and can be accessed through the Kapatagan in Digos City; New Israel in Makilala; Balutakay in Bansalan; Agco in Kidapawan; Bongolanon in Magpet; Baruring in St. Cruz; and Tamayong in Davao City.

On its side, Kidapawan city government has already closed Mt. Apo on Monday while the Tamayong trail had been closed by the city government years ago to protect the watershed area although there are reported "guerilla trekkers" who take this trail. The Tamayong trail is considered as the toughest and longest way to the peak which lures climbers to pass the Mt. Talomo Peak, making it a double major climb.

**PNA**



# Business World

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### All trails to Mt. Apo closed indefinitely

DAVAO CITY — The Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) has announced that it is closing all trails leading to Mt. Apo, which has been hit by fire since Saturday, near the peak.

In a statement from the Philippine Information Agency, the board said it passed a resolution on Thursday, closing all the trails indefinitely.

The resolution also calls for the “use of the integrated protected area fund from trekking fees for the immediate rehabilitation” of the mountain.

Meanwhile, an official of Sta. Cruz town, one of the entry points to the country’s highest peak, said the scheduled Mt. Apo Boulder Face Challenge has been postponed indefinitely.

The event, scheduled annually on April 23-24, is part of the Visit Davao Fun Sale (VDFS), the Department of Tourism (DoT)-Davao Region’s flagship marketing campaign.

“There is no definite date when to conduct the challenge,” said Sta. Cruz Tourism Officer Julius R. Paner.

Mr. Paner said a proposal was put forward yesterday in a meeting with the DoT to re-program the event into a rehabilitation activity for Mt. Apo.

However, the government will first have to get the consent of the event’s major sponsors, including San Miguel Brewery, Inc., the Aboitiz group, and Seaoil Philippines, Inc.

“We will get their blessings and encourage them to support instead of pursuing the challenge,” Mr. Paner said.

The sporting event involves cycling, trekking, tubing, and road running.

“What is unique about the race is not only about the prize money

but it strengthens our advocacy of protecting the Mt. Apo and tell the world that we have the highest peak here,” Mr. Paner said.

#### MORE THAN THE LIMIT

Meanwhile, a DoT report indicates that the limit on the number of trekkers this year was not strictly observed.

The Holy Week climb to Mt. Apo this year was, like last year, “controlled” due to the drought, with only 1,000 climbers supposedly allowed to go up via the six trails in North Cotabato’s Kidapawan, Makilala and Magpet and Davao del Sur’s Digos, Sta. Cruz and Bansalan.

According to the report of the DoT Region 12, the actual count of trekkers at the peak as of 10 a.m. of March 26 — or three hours before the fire started at the peak — was 989.

“This figure is just for March 26, 2016 at a particular time but the number was bigger on other times, and hence went beyond the 1,000 limit, as there are entry points that had exceeded their agreed allocation of trekkers,” the report said.

“The Trekking Policy Resolution No. 2015-01 of the Mt. Apo Natural Park - Protected Area Management Board (MANP-PAMB) provides under policy number 19 six items on Fire Prevention measures: cooking shall only be done using portable burners (and) use of firewood is strictly prohibited; campfires are strictly prohibited in all trails and camp sites of Mt. Apo; no fireworks allowed; smoking is strictly prohibited; all trails shall be closed during the dry season and absence of rain for at least two months; and forest guards shall be deployed by the respective LGUs on the

trails, to enforce closure during dry months.”

Despite these clear provisions of closure during dry months, despite the fact that North Cotabato and Davao del Sur have been placed under a state of calamity due to the drought, the climb was allowed but limited to 1,000 excluding porters, as agreed upon during the Feb. 26 meeting of the Mt. Apo National Park (MANP)-PAMB in Digos City.

During that meeting, the impact of the drought on Mt. Apo was discussed and tourism officers of Makilala and Bansalan recommended closure to trekking. The four other tourism officers, however, suggested a limited climb, citing pre-booked climbers, according to the Mt. Apo Climb Summit Monitoring Update prepared for the Ecotourism Committee of the MANP-PAMB.

The last time Mt. Apo was on fire was in 1998, also a year of drought, Tourism Officer Joey Recemilla, chair of the Ecotourism Committee of the MANP-PAMB, told MindaNews in a telephone interview.

How Saturday’s fire started, no one can say with certainty.

Digos City’s Tourism Officer Edgardo Elera said he “cannot say *kung* (if it was an) accident or deliberate.. Maybe somebody threw a cigarette butt.”

But he maintained that the local government units had not been remiss in reminding trekkers especially since there is already a unified trekking policy. Copies of the policy are given those who register to climb.

“There’s a very high possibility that trekkers caused the fire,” Mr. Recemilla acknowledged. — **Carmelito Q. Francisco and Maya M. Padillo, and Carolyn O. Arguillas, MindaNews**



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## New breakout at Mt. Apo

BY ANGELA LOPEZ DE LEON

THE Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRPMC) of Davao del Sur yesterday said firefighters have discovered a new fire breakout near Mt. Apo's peak, even as the current blaze continued to raze the country's highest peak for the fifth day.

Davao del Sur PDRPMC head Harry Camoro said the new breakout was seen near the peak and was moving down again towards the forest area of Sta. Cruz town in Davao del Sur yesterday morning.

But the good news, Camoro said, is that the fire in four areas between the Davao del Sur and Cotabato sides were contained before dawn yesterday due to water bucket operations.

He also said the fire, which started at the Campsite 3 Saturday noon, is still far from the Talomo mountain range in Davao del Sur, which is the nesting and breeding site of the endangered Philippine eagles.

He said the cause of the blaze could still

not be ascertained because everyone is busy putting it out. He said the probe will come after the fire is out.

In view of the fire, Camoro said he agreed to the idea to close Mt. Apo from trekkers.

As a mountaineer, he said he does not want a God-given natural beauty to be wasted by the actions of an irresponsible trekker.

On Wednesday, Environment Secretary Ramon Paje said he wanted to close Mt. Apo to campers not just for a few years but "forever."

Paje said he already ordered DENR Davao Region Director Joselin Marcus Fragada to discuss with concerned local executives the plan to close the country's highest peak to campers to prevent a repeat of the fire.

The DENR-Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) in Davao del Sur has estimated that 350 hectares has been damaged from Mt. Apo, of which 20 hectares are forested and the rest are grassland areas.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## 5-year closure of Mt. Apo sought

**DIGOS CITY—**Close Mt. Apo for five years.

Authorities are looking at this option to allow the country's tallest peak to heal in the wake of a fire that continues to rage and has so far destroyed at least 300 hectares of grasslands and forests.

Harry Camoro, spokesperson of the Incident Management Team (IMT) and Davao del Sur provincial disaster risk reduc-

tion management officer, said IMT has discussed proposals to bar mountaineering and other activities on the mountain for at least five years.

The proposal was first made by North Cotabato officials. Kidapawan City Mayor Joseph Evangelista has given an order to close the Kidapawan trail to Mt. Apo.

Nelly Nita Dillera, Central Mindanao tourism director, said she would also propose a long-term closure of Mt. Apo.

In Davao City, Roberto Alabado III, the regional director of the Department of Tourism in Southern Mindanao, said the proposal is acceptable to him.

"Our focus is mainly for sustainable tourism," said Alabado. "We have to consider the carrying capacity and the health

of the environment before we encourage tourism activity in the area," he said.

He said, though, that there is no decision yet whether to proceed with the Mt. Apo Boulder Challenge, a race to the mountain peak that is scheduled late this month.

Alabado said mountaineers "are crying." "It is too painful," he said.

Instead of pushing through with the race, Alabado said race organizers "may have to find some way for people to take action to rehabilitate the forest, to heal the wounds of the mountain."

The effort to put out the fire is continuing with several volunteers reported to have suffered from slight injuries when military helicopters dumped water, and skin irritation when they got too close to the fire.

Camoro said operations to establish a five-meter wide fire line on the Davao side of Mt. Apo continue. "We have to create more fire lines," he said.

Fire lines, he said, are among the measures being taken to prevent the fire from further spreading as two more fires have been reported on the Davao side while the one in Kidapawan City has rekindled due to strong winds.

Camoro said volunteers are now focused on digging fire lines.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

5-year closure of Mt. Apo caught

Joey Recimilla, Kidapawan City tourism officer, said the effort to put out the fire has grown bigger especially in the wake of a report by the Protected Areas Management Board saying that damage from the early days of the fire is bigger than what was initially reported.

Camoro said volunteers were told to wear masks at all times because of the fumes. "It is carbon monoxide," he said.

He said while the fire has stopped in some parts of the mountain, the work is far from over.

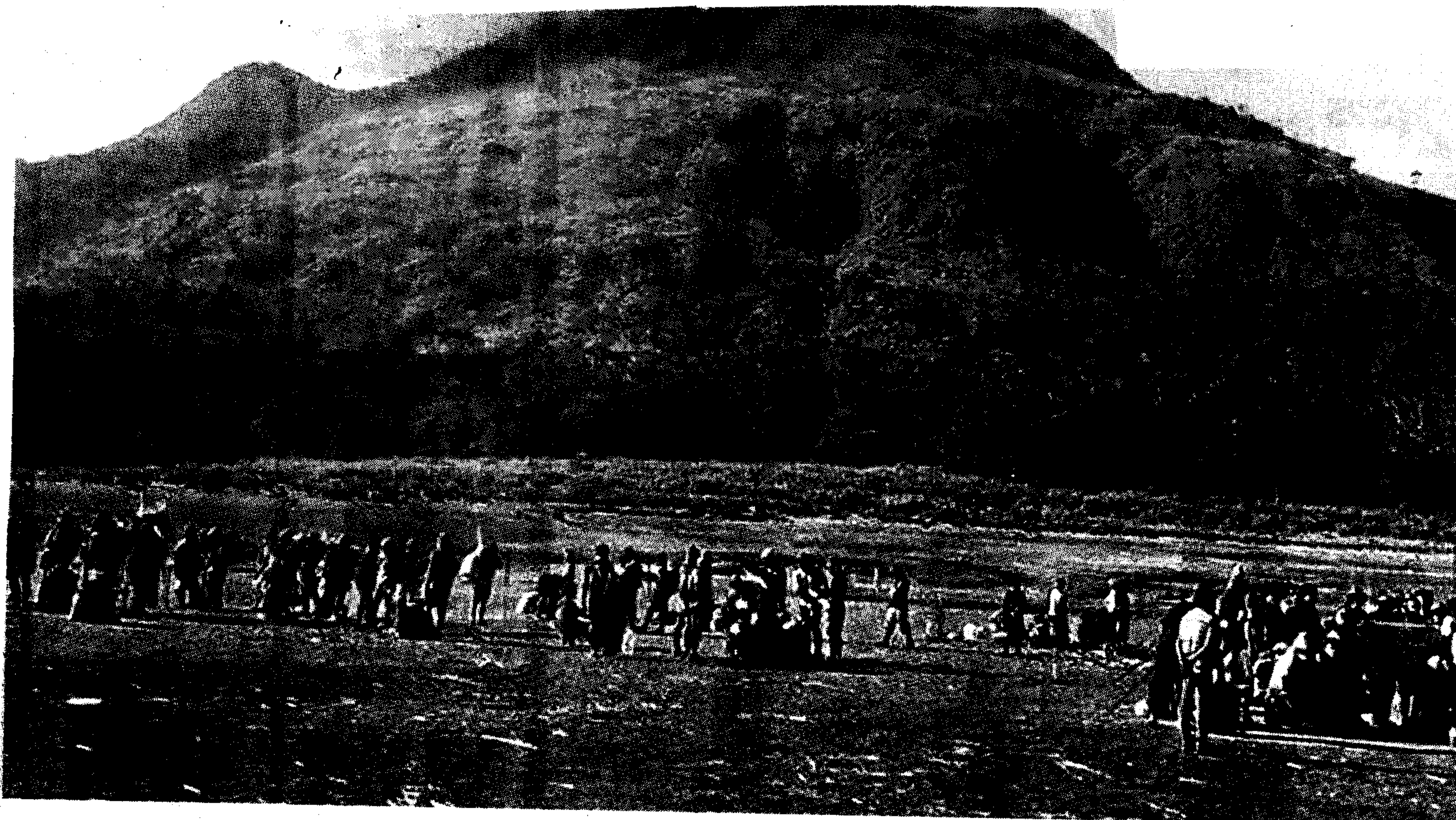
The fire, which has eaten up forests in parts of North Cotabato, Davao del Sur and Davao City, started on Black Saturday and was believed to have been triggered by campers.

Alabado expressed fear that the fire would further spread to forest areas in Davao del Sur and Davao City.

"We need all the help because the fire is now eating up part of our forests," said Alabado.

He said areas in the North Cotabato side of the mountain that have been burned "consist of grasslands and flat lands." "But here, we have real forest lands," he said.

The environment group Interface for Development Intervention also urged the Davao City Watershed Management Council to draw up a quick reaction plan to prevent the fire from wiping out the remaining dipterocarp forests on the Davao City side of Mt. Apo. *Orlando Dinoy and Germeline Lacorte, Inquirer Mindanao*



**VOLUNTEERS** tapped to help put out a fire on Mt. Apo assemble near the foot of the country's tallest peak as smoke from the raging fire billows in th



# The Manila Times

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

## No-fly zone mulled over Mt. Kanlaon

BY ANTHONY VARGAS  
REPORTER

**T**HE Philippine National Police (PNP) mulled on Thursday enforcing a no-fly zone within the four-kilometer Permanent Danger Zone of Mt. Kanlaon in Negros Oriental after alert-level 1 status of the volcano was raised on Thursday morning.

"Alert Level 1 status remains in effect over Kanlaon Volcano, which means that it is currently in a state of unrest probably driven by hydrothermal processes that could generate more minor eruptions," Negros Oriental Provincial Police Office (NOPPO) director Senior

Supt. Harris Fama said.

The police official added that travel restriction in Mt. Kanlaon is now fully enforced and local government units and the public are reminded that entry into the four-kilometer radius from the crater of the volcano is strictly prohibited

due to further possibilities of sudden and hazardous steam-driven or minor ash eruption.

Fama said Civil Aviation authorities must also advise pilots to avoid flying close to the volcano's summit as airborne ash from sudden eruption can be hazardous to aircrafts.

He added that the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and Philippine Institute for Volcanology and Seismology (PHILVOCS) are now closely monitoring Kanlaon's activity.

The police official said that the first eruptions from the volcano were monitored on 6:20 pm Tuesday in Canlaon City, sending plumes of ash up to 1,500 meters in the sky. The second eruption was recorded at around 7:18 pm Tuesday.

"These seismic events were

recorded by the Kanlaon Seismic Network as explosion type earthquake from the Southeastern side of the volcano," Fama said.

The police official added that incandescent ejecta from the volcano have apparently caused small bushfire at the upper slope as observed from La Castellana town.

"Traces of light ash fall were also reported in Sitio Guintubdan in Barangay Aral-al, La Carlota City, Negros Oriental," Fama said.

He added that two episodes of volcanic tremor were also recorded from 10:38 pm Tuesday up to 12:06 am and from 1:30 am up to morning of Wednesday.

"For this reason we have decided to impose travel restriction within the four-kilometer radius of the volcano," Fama said.



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## Mountaineers bawal sa Kanlaon

Hindi na papayagan ang mga tao, lalo na ang mga mountaineer na makalapit sa 4 kilometrong danger zone sa Mt. Kanlaon. Iyan ay kasunod ng pagbuga ng abo ng bulkan nitong mga nakaraang araw.

Prayoridad ngayon ng DENR na pagbawalan na ang pag-akyat ng mga mountaineers sa tinaguriang 'protected area' sa himalang ang kapabayaang mga umaakyat sa naturang bundok ang dahilan ng sunog.

Ito ay makaraang mapag-alaman ng DENR na posibleng ang mga mountaineer, trekkers at bikers ang dahilan ng pagtakaroon ng sunog sa Mt. Kanlaon. Tatlo umano sa hindi nakilalang mountaineers ang responsable sa nasabing sunog makaraang mag-camping ang mga ito sa nasabing lugar at lumisan na hindi nasigurong wala ng apoy.

Ayon naman sa pulisya sa nasabing lugar, sinimulan na nila ang travel restriction sa 4 kilometer radius sa bunganga ng bulkan upang maiwasang mapahamak ang mga residente sa pag-aalburto ng Mt. Kanlaon.

Hindi umano magdadalawang-isip ang mga awtoridad na palihin ang mga pasaway na magpumilit na pumasok sa ipinagbabawal na bahagi ng bulkan.



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## **Mt. Kanlaon ash fall prompts evacuation, use of gas masks**

BACOLOD CITY — Ash fall blanketed at least five localities in central Negros Occidental following the eruption of Mount Kanlaon last Tuesday night, prompting a minor evacuation, and use of gas masks among residents to protect themselves against sulphur fumes.

Zeaphard Caelian, chief of Provincial Disaster Management Program Division, said the ash fall is experienced by residents of Salvador Benedicto town, Bago City, La Carlota City, Pontevedra, and La Castellana town.

Due to the sulphur smell, 19 people from Bago City evacuated, and sought shelter in the village gymnasium while the others stayed with their relatives.

The affected local government units provided gas masks for their residents, Caelian said.

He pointed out that sulphur from the ash fall is dangerous to a person's health as it could trigger asthma and other pulmonary problems.

Benjamin Tanatan, science research analyst of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology in Canlaon City, said the wind direction after the eruption was southwest, the reason some localities in Negros Occidental were affected by the ash fall.

The ash emission from the volcano drifted to the Occidental side because its origin was northeast, he added.

Tanatan said that if the direction of the wind changes, the ash fall will also affect Canlaon City, Negros Oriental.

Most of the ash ejections were reported in Barangay Ilijan in Bago City, Barangay Ara-al in La Carlota City, and Barangay Sa-ang, La Castellana.

Following the 12-minute eruption at 6:20 p.m. on Tuesday, another eruption occurred at 7:18 p.m., lasting for 25 seconds, the Canlaon City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office reported.

The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council in Negros Occidental mobilized 300 volunteers last Wednesday night to contain the grassfire believed to have been triggered by the hot rocks emitted by Mt. Kanlaon.

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## Taiwan firm fined P13M for environment damage

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—For inflicting “massive” damage to the environment on a lot it has been leasing inside the free port, a Taiwanese warehousing firm was ordered to pay a fine of P13 million, according to an official of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA).

MSK Group Work Inc., which is engaged in building construction and civil engineering, was served a new notice of violation (NOV) with fines and penalties for its “unauthorized tree cutting, earth moving and land development activities,” said lawyer Ruel John Kabigting, acting head of the SBMA Ecology Center.

The company had failed to secure environmental clearances when it cut 60 large trees and about 7,000 smaller trees

in a 1,200-square-meter leased area at the Subic Bay Gateway Park, Kabigting said.

MSK had been clearing the area to build a warehouse, but it had not obtained the necessary permits from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), SBMA Chair Roberto Garcia said in an earlier interview.

Garcia said the development activities weakened a slope.

On March 11, Kabigting directed the company to stop its work following a hazard call inspection concerning its lot. He issued a cease-and-desist order (CDO) addressed to Kelly Uy, MSK general manager, which also required the firm to replace the fallen trees with 1,752 saplings worth P86,250. *Allan Macatuno, Inquirer Central Luzon*



THE EXHIBENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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**FIELD OF GRASS ON FIRE** — Fire brigade volunteers train their water hoses on grass burning due to intense heat in an open area in Brgy. Jagoblao, Mandaue City. The Mandaue City Fire Department received a fire alarm at around 4 o'clock in the afternoon yesterday and the fire was extinguished by the city's firefighting personnel minutes after the alarm. No dwellings in the area were affected. (Juan Carlo de Vela)



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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**


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## OceanaGold gets 5-year extension

**KASIBU, Nueva Vizcaya:** An Australian mining firm operating in this mountain town was granted a five-year extension to the exploration period of its Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) in the Philippines.

Mick Wilkes, OceanaGold President and Chief Executive Officer said the five-year FTAA exploration renewal was granted by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and is valid from March 2016 to 2021.

"This is a positive outcome for all stakeholders that will allow the company to expand its exploration program over the broader region around Didipio. We are now reviewing and prioritizing targets and expect to provide clarity around the planned exploration programs in the coming weeks," Wilkes said.

He added that as a recent recipient of the highly prestigious "Most Responsible" mining operation award from President Aquino 3rd, OceanaGold has demonstrated to its stakeholders that it operates to the most stringent social, environmental and safety standards.

OceanaGold holds significant exploration tenements in the Philippines and the FTAA covers approximately 158 square kilometers located in the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

Over the past few years, previous geochemical sampling has identified several gold and copper soil anomalies in close proximity to the Didipio operation.

In the coming weeks, Oceana-

Gold officials said, the company will re-examine and prioritize its drill program for the FTAA bounded area.

At present, the Didipio Copper and Gold Project's total proven and provable reserves stood at 1.55 million ounces of gold, 3.22 million ounces of silver and 0.18 metric ton of copper, a decrease year-on-year as a result of mine depletion.

Mining engineers said that in 2016, the company will continue to drill near mine targets and, in the second half of the year, will commence infill and extensional drilling of the underground resource.

Wilkes said that with continued strong cash flows expected from their operations in 2016 and higher production at even lower costs expected in 2017, the company is well positioned to further increase its resource base organically and through selective external opportunities.

OceanaGold Corporation is a mid-tier, low-cost, multinational gold producer with assets located in the Philippines, New Zealand and the United States. The company's assets encompass its flagship operation, the Didipio Gold-Copper Mine in the Philippines.

In 2016, the company expects to produce 385,000 to 425,000 ounces of gold from the combined New Zealand and Didipio operations and 19,000 to 21,000 metric tons of copper from the Didipio operation at all-in sustaining cost of \$700 to \$750 per ounce.

**LEANDER C. DOMINGO**



THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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## Anti-illegal mining task force organized

By MIKE V. DELMUNDO

**SURIGAO CITY** — The regional office of the Mines Geo-Sciences Bureau (MGB-13) in North-eastern Mindanao yesterday organized an Anti-illegal Mining Task Force (AMTF) to stop the rampant illegal mining operations in Caraga region.

The MGB-13 is determined to put an end to the illegal mining operations especially at the gold rush areas in Barangay Tambis, Barobo, Surigao del Sur and illegal gold mining and quarrying operations at Barangay Comagascas, in Cabadbaran City, Agusan del Norte where big time financiers are reportedly operating.

The agency asked the assistance of Chief Supt. Rolando B. Felix, regional director of Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13), and local officials in the gold rush areas to help end those activities and stop the further destruction of environment.

"We are respectfully requesting assistance from your good office the immediate enforcement and stoppage of these illegal activities within your jurisdiction pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act No. 7942, otherwise known as the 'Philippine Mining Act of 1995' and Republic Act No. 7076, otherwise known as the 'People's Small-Scale Mining Act of 1999, and other relevant laws,'" said MGB 13 Regional Director Alilo C. Ensomo Jr., in his letter to PRO 13 and concerned LGUs, recently.

The MGB-13 regional office has issued a Cease and Desist Order (CDO) dated Sept. 3, 2015 to illegal small-scale miners operating in Barangay Tambis, Barobo, Surigao del Sur and its immediate vicinity. Similarly, it has issued an order dated

Sept. 3, 2015 to illegal small-scale miners and mineral processors operating in Barangay Del Pilar and Barangay Comagascas in Cabadbaran City, Agusan del Norte and its immediate vicinity to cease and desist from engaging in illegal mining and mineral processing activities.

"Since the issuance of these

two CDOs up to this writing, illegal small-scale miners and mineral processors and their respective financiers did not adhere to these orders and now is the time we ask the assistance of other law enforcement agencies and LGUs to stop these," said Ensomo, in an exclusive interview with Manila Bulletin yesterday.



**DEFINING THE NEWS****STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE****[ EDITORIAL ]**

## COAL DEPENDENCE

THE Philippines is probably one of the few countries that still rely heavily on coal as a major source of electricity because they are fairly reliable as base load source of power. They are easy to install and can supply enough volume of electricity to meet the increasing energy demand.

But for climate change and environment protection advocates, coal-fired power plants are the anti-theses. Their emissions into the atmosphere contribute to climate change and the plants pose great risk to one's health.

Former US vice president Al Gore, in a visit to the Philippines in March, urged the Philippines to follow the way of the US in putting an end to the development of new coal plants. Electric generation capacity from coal plants in the US today, according to Gore, stood, at 0.01 percent while that of oil was at 0.07 percent.

Gore's statement drew sharp reaction from Energy Secretary Zenaida Monsada. The Philippines, she said, could not unilaterally and immediately stop the development of new coal power plants. The country has 5,800 megawatts of installed capacity of coal-fired power plants across the country's three power grids. The bulk, or 4,775.6 MW, is in the Luzon grid.

"We still need power... If there will be no coal plants, will the typhoons stop coming, will there be no more flash floods? We need power to fuel the economy," says Monsada. Coal plants account for over half of the Philippine power requirements.

The top energy official said the government had imposed stricter standards on the construction and operation of coal power plants, and that the Philippines was working to achieve a cleaner air target of 70-percent emission reduction by 2030.

Clean energy, indeed, is the future. Technological advancements have allowed the speedy installation of solar, wind and other renewable sources of energy. Geothermal steam remains a significant contributor to the overall energy mix, while hydro-electric power plants provide another base load source to the Luzon and Mindanao grids.

The current coal-fired power plants will remain a major source of electricity in the country for at least the next 25 years. Their contribution, hopefully, will diminish as the Philippines shifts to liquefied natural gas and taps more sources of renewable energy.



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## Time to get ready for La Niña

BY ANGELA LOPEZ DE LEON

THE Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) yesterday said the chances of a La Niña phenomenon occurring by the end of the year is now 50 percent.

In its latest climate outlook bulletin, PAGASA said a La Niña event will likely begin by October.

La Niña, the opposite of the El Niño phenomenon, is the periodic cooling of surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean.

During La Niña, many parts of

the country will experience near normal to above normal rainfall conditions, particularly over the eastern sections of the country.

La Niña is also characterized by strong monsoon activity and formation of more tropical cyclones.

The current El Niño being experienced in the country is among the four strongest events since 1950.

Anthony Lucero, officer-in-charge of PAGASA's climate monitoring and prediction section, earlier said a La Niña typically lasts between nine and 12 months, but some events may persist for as long

as three years.

He noted that a La Niña usually occurs after a very strong El Niño event, similar to what happened in the previous El Niño years.

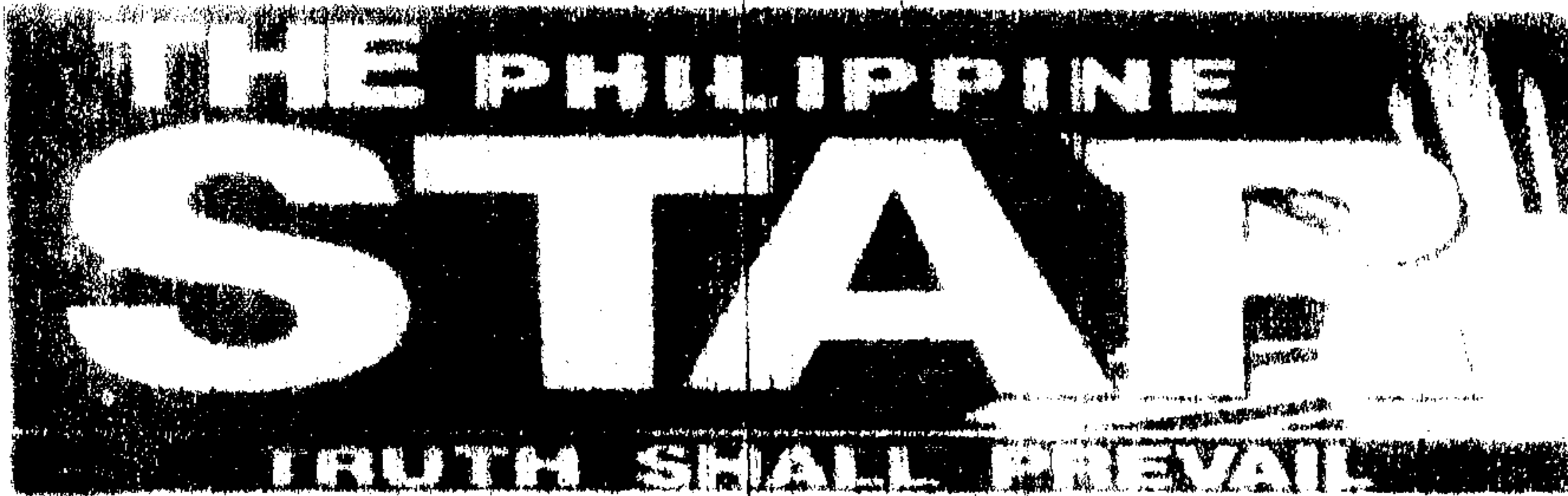
He said from 1997 to 1998, when the country experienced one of the worst El Niño events, a La Niña rapidly followed.

The current El Niño event is now being experienced in the country.

According to PAGASA's newest climate outlook bulletin, the prevailing El Niño is decaying and will weaken further in the months ahead.



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*The only paper you read from cover to cover!*

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Church to campaign vs Laguna Lakeshore

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

At least five Catholic dioceses have joined the campaign against the P123-billion Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike project.

The archdiocese of Manila and the dioceses of Antipolo, Pasig, Parañaque and San Pablo, Laguna vowed to support other faith-based groups and people's organizations in opposing the project, the CB-CPNews reported yesterday.

"The Church should be at the forefront of this advocacy. It's a moral imperative or duty," said Monsignor Jerry Bitoon, diocesan director of the ministry on ecology of San Pablo.

Bitoon said Pope Francis spoke clearly on the need to care for the environment in his encyclical on climate change titled "Laudato Si."

Bitoon said they would raise public awareness on the proposed project through consultative forums.

The project involves land reclamation as well as the construction of a toll road between Taguig City and Los Baños in Laguna and a 45-kilometer flood control dike along Laguna de Bay.

"We consulted scientists and environmentalists who said the project may endanger the environment," Bitoon said.

Geologist Kelvin Rodolfo earlier warned that the planned 700-hectare reclamation would reduce the size of the lake and worsen flooding in nearby areas.



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### Agri think tank signs sustainable development deal for Leyte town

THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) has inked a deal with four partner institutions in Inopacan, Leyte to encourage inclusive growth and environmental sustainability in agriculture and rural development.

The memorandum of agreement (MoA) by the Center, Visayas State University, Visayas Consortium for Agriculture and Aquatic Resources Program, and the local government of Inopacan, Leyte was signed yesterday, according to a statement released by the SEARCA.

Covered by the MoA is the project, "Piloting ISARD Models: Strengthening Linkages among Farmers, Government and Industry Sectors for Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Development in Inopacan, Leyte," to be jointly implemented by the four partner institutions.

"The ridge-to-reef and ecosystems-based approaches to participatory project planning and management were used in conceptualizing, designing and developing the project," added the statement.

The ridge-to-reef approach aims to reverse degradation of coastal resources to minimize the damage to coastal ecosystems and waters.

The project's aims include attaining food sufficiency and reducing poverty incidence within the municipality.

"This can be achieved through increased linkages of the agriculture sector with other stakeholders and markets, and enhanced capability of agricultural workers," read the statement. — **Janina C. Lim**



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**This is On Me**

Floro Mercene

## Climate Report 2015

**T**HE climate report 2015 released on March 21 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) describes the alarming extent of global warming.

A stronger-than-usual El Niño weather pattern pushed temperatures into uncharted territory all over the world. In 2015, the world was 0.76 degrees warmer than the late 20th Century and a whole degree warmer than the late 19th Century. The increase in temperatures is largely a result of human activity releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere that trap heat from the sun here on Earth.

The WMO said that in 2015 climate change made the El Niño the strongest ever. In addition

to the sweaty temperatures, the strong El Niño meant little rainfall to eastern and southern Australia. El Niño also promotes cyclones in the north-west Pacific.

"Today the Earth is already 1°C hotter than at the start of the twentieth century. We are halfway to the critical 2°C threshold. National climate change plans adopted so far may not be enough to avoid a temperature rise of 3°C, but we can avert the worst-case scenarios with urgent and far-reaching measures to cut carbon dioxide emissions," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said. Our planet is sending a powerful message to world leaders to sign and implement

the Paris Agreement on climate change and cut greenhouse gases now before we pass the point of no return," he said.

Observing the World Meteorological Day on March 23, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that extreme weather events are becoming "the new normal" and bold climate action is needed to "face the future now." On April 22, world leaders will gather in New York to sign the Paris Agreement. "But, even before the Agreement comes into force, every country, every business and every citizen has a role to play in combating climate change and building a sustainable future for this and future generations," he said.



# Business World

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

### DoE weighs options after SC nullifies Tañon Strait deal

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy (DoE) is preparing its response to a ruling by the Supreme Court (SC) nullifying a contract between the government and a Japanese company that resulted in blocking oil exploration within Tañon Strait in the Visayas.

Energy Secretary Zenaida Y. Monsada said the decision has an implication on contracts entered into by the department, and that the issue would be elevated to the Office of the President.

"The secretary has given instruction to the technical [staff]... and our legal [department] to prepare a position paper and elevate the matter to the Office of the President," DoE Assistant Secretary Patrick T. Aquino told reporters.

He added that the move comes ahead of a possible filing of a motion of reconsideration in response to the SC ruling in April 2016, which declared null and void Service Contract No. 46, which was

entered into between the department and Japan Petroleum Exploration Co., Ltd. in 2004. The contract called for the exploration, development, and production of petroleum resources in a block covering approximately 2,850 square kilometers offshore of Tañon Strait.

The pronouncement from the DoE follows its receipt of a position paper from the Philippine Petroleum Association of the Upstream Industry (Oil & Gas). Inc. (PAP) expressing its concern over the high court's "decision and resolution" in the case concerning Resident Marine Mammals of the Protected Seascape of Tañon Strait.

In its letter to the Energy secretary on Feb. 29, PAP said it was expressing its "concern over the Supreme Court rulings and its impact on service contract as well as legal submissions that can be considered further in any future filing in relation to the case."

It said the ruling could mean service contracts entered into by the government with foreign-owned corporations involving technical or financial assistance for large-scale exploration, development and utilization of petroleum are unconstitutional if signed only by the Energy secretary.

"At the crux of the Supreme Court's adjudication is its ruling that Paragraph 4. Section 2, Article XII of the 1987 Constitution requires the President himself (or herself) to sign any service contract with foreign corporations for the exploration of petroleum," it said.

"Respectfully, it is PAP's position that there are established principles and rulings of the Supreme Court that will contend differently," it added.

The association also said that the service contract is simply a contractual undertaking by the state "that is nothing extraordinary or unusual in this

age" and is not one of those exceptional circumstances that requires the personal action of the President.

"To hold otherwise will unduly burden the President to engage in the nuances of a specialized field, such as the petroleum industry and power generation, which should be left to a specialized body" such as the Energy department, it added.

PAP is composed of companies that are petroleum service contractors of the government and others that provide services for the upstream petroleum industry.

Tañon Strait is a waterway between the islands of Negros and Cebu. Two separate sets of petitioners sought the nullification of the service contract for its supposed adverse impact on marine mammals in the area, and its effect on the livelihood of the fishermen in Cebu.

— Victor V. Saulon