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DepEd suspends classes, work after 6.1-magnitude quake

MANILA -- The Department of Education (DepEd) has suspended work and classes in several public elementary and secondary schools in the National Capital Region (NCR) following the 6.1-magnitude earthquake that hit Luzon on Monday.

In a statement on Tuesday, Education Secretary Leonor Briones instructed all concerned units to make the necessary adjustments in their scheduled activities, and cautioned officials to proceed only with urgent activities "provided that

the Office of the Secretary is informed, and that necessary measures to ensure safety are taken."

Class and work have been suspended in 1,624 schools in the provinces of Zambales, Pampanga, and Laguna.

According to DepEd's partial situation report, as of 11 a.m., a total of 15 schools have
(Turn to p. 2)

Manila Water slapped with P1.13-B fine over supply woes

MANILA – The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Board has sanctioned Manila Water Company, Inc. with a total of PHP1.134 billion - PHP534,050 million in fine and an additional PHP600 million as fund for development of new water supply source - in connection with the water shortage suffered by its customers last March.

This was jointly announced Wednesday

by MWSS Chairman Franklin J. Demonteverde and Administrator Reynaldo V. Velasco, following the approval by the MWSS board - unanimously approving the recommendation of MWSS Regulatory Office on the imposition of penalties on Manila Water for its failure to comply with Article 10.4 of the concession agreement.

The resolution was signed by

Demonteverde, Velasco, and board members Melchior I. Acosta Jr, Mariano C. Alegarbes, Merly M. Cruz, Jose R. Hernandez, Valeriano F. Pasquil, Melanie Sia-Lambino and Elpidio J. Vega.

The additional penalty of PHP600 million will be used for the funding for a new water source.

In a statement, Manila Water President Ferdinand M. dela Cruz said he will abide by the

decision of the MWSS to pay the penalty, as provided for under Section 10.4 of the Concession Agreement for the inability of the concessionaires to meet its service obligations to provide 24/7 water supply to its consumers.

Last March 26, Resolution No. 2019-052 was unanimously adopted by the MWSS

Board, which directed the MWSS-RO to study the appropriate penalties for the East Zone concessionaire.

The penalties are besides Manila Water's self-imposed penalty amounting to P500 million that provided financial relief to its customers affected by the water shortage.

The water crisis that

proved costly to Manila Water highlighted the lack of strategic preparedness, notably on the realistic allocation of water supply to Manila Water, the development of new water supply sources and the much improvement of the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa tunnel and conveyance system.

(Turn to p. 2)

PhilHealth offers free medical assistance to quake victims

MANILA -- All victims of the 6.1 magnitude earthquake which jolted parts of Luzon will be receiving free medical assistance from the country's national health insurance program, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said on Tuesday.

Duque made this announcement before President Rodrigo Duterte during a situation briefing in San Fernando, Pampanga.



"Sinisiguro po natin na lahat ng gastusin sa kanilang pagpapa-ospital ay sasagutin po ng PhilHealth at ng DOH (We assure all victims of the quake that their

hospital feels will be shouldered by the PhilHealth and the Department of Health) through the medical assistance program,"
(Turn to p. 2)

Power restoration in Luzon, Visayas continues after quake

MANILA – Power transmission has been restored in areas covered by the Samar I Electric Cooperative (SAMELCO I) as of 6 p.m. Tuesday, a few hours after a magnitude 6.5 earthquake hit Eastern Samar at around 1.37 p.m.

"Restoration of power transmission services in the remaining parts of Eastern Samar, served by ESAMELCO (Eastern Samar Electric Cooperative, Inc.), is ongoing," the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) said in an advisory



Wednesday.

Aside from the ESAMELCO-covered areas, the quake also resulted in power interruptions in the franchise areas of the Northern Samar Electric Cooperative Inc. (NORSAMELCO) and

Samar I Electric Cooperative City (SAMELCO I), particularly Calbayog City.

The earthquake in Eastern Samar happened less than 24 hours after a 6.1 magnitude earthquake hit Castillo
(Turn to p. 2)

MANILA WATER... FR. P. 1

"The water shortage was an eye-opener, and sad to say, the new MWSS Board inherited this lingering problem having assumed office only in February 2017. We are on a catch up mode and it's only this administration under President Rodrigo Duterte that we have seriously put on track a realistic and doable water security roadmap to ensure adequate water supply," said Velasco.

Manila Water's unapproved proposals during Aquino administration

As part of its official report to the President on the water crisis, the MWSS has zeroed in on the root cause of the water supply problem that led to the water shortage last March.

Based on Manila Water's comprehensive report submitted to MWSS, as early as March 31, 2012, Manila Water proposed to MWSS, under then Administrator Gerardo Esquivel, a water system facility for the East Zone that in 2019 would have a raw water supply of 2,222 MLD to address a demand of 1705 MLD plus a buffer of 23 percent for peak demand. However, Administrator Esquivel rejected the proposal and approved a water system facility for the East Zone that in 2019 would have a raw water supply of 1,636 MLD for a demand of 1,408 MLD, assuming a 12 percent NRW, with zero buffer for peak demand.

The previous MWSS administration under President Benigno Aquino III insisted that the non-inclusion of a buffer on water demand will be a "more tariff sensible decision" considering its expectation of a new water source within five to six years.

There were also proposals from Manila Water for two projects that will add extra raw water supply of around 275 MLD, the 100-MLD Rizal Province Water Supply Improvement Project (RPWSIP) and the Tayabasan River Water Supply Project. But these were also rejected by the past MWSS administrator through a letter dated 13 August 2013.

Esquivel insisted that "even without these two proposed projects, raw water supply of both concessionaires will be sufficient up to 2019 considering the expected operation of the Kaliwa Dam."

It is noteworthy that through efficient efforts of the Duterte administration, the Kaliwa Dam Project was

only signed last November 2018.

Manila Water then issued a statement addressed to former administrator Esquivel that it is "cutting away significant programs for building and maintaining the water systems in the East Zone." Manila Water also warned the former administrator that "Because of this, our ability to fulfill our service obligations to our customers will be severely compromised and impaired."

Then, on May 19, 2016, barely two months before Aquino stepped down from office, Esquivel reversed his disapproval of the 100 MLD RPWSIP and authorized Manila Water "to undertake the procurement for RPWSIP's additional 50 MLD through direct negotiation," considering the delay in the implementation and expected completion" of the Kaliwa Dam project. The RPWSIP involves the use of water from Laguna Lake and includes the Cardona Water Treatment Plant. The delayed approval by MWSS of the 100-MLD RPWSIP gave Manila Water no margin of error in the implementation stage, which became a necessity because of the delay in the implementation and completion of the Kaliwa Dam project. The Cardona Water Treatment Plant is now operating at 50 MLD, which will increase to 100 MLD by August this year.

MWSS during the Duterte administration

Velasco, a retired ranking official of the Philippine National Police, was appointed Administrator of the MWSS on Feb. 20, 2017 replacing Gerardo Esquivel who also held the post of Chairman of the Board. The present Chairman is lawyer Franklin Demonteverde, with lawyer Patrick Ty serving as MWSS Chief Regulator.

Administrator Velasco began his stewardship of MWSS under heavy constraint because of impending water supply problems.

A study by UP-NEC in 2011, which was the basis of the MWSS Water Security Infrastructure Roadmap 2016-2037, showed that existing water supply would be insufficient to meet the projected demand. Without buffer, the supply-demand projection showed that by 2021, supply would be unable to meet demand.

As the only way to solve the water supply

PHILHEALTH ... FR. P. 1

Duque said.

Duque said he has also instructed medical center chiefs to provide updates of the day-to-day conditions of all of the injured patients.

At present, Duque said his agency reported that were a total of 16 deaths and 112 individuals treated for injuries obtained from the earthquake.

Out of the 112, 17 were brought to the JB Lingad Memorial Regional Hospital with four of them already discharged.

On the other hand, 75 of the 112 are in the Jose Songco District Hospital and 21 are in the Romana Pangan District Hospital.

Duque, however, assured that all patients are being managed adequately.

"So far they are being managed adequately. No problems in terms of medication and operations for the various seriously injured. It's a range of injuries, Mr. President, from minor to major

problem, MWSS under the new administration found it imperative to break away from the very cautious posture of the past leadership in not undertaking identified infrastructure projects. The MWSS management recognizes that water problems will persist and they underscored the necessity of pursuing vigorously water infrastructure projects.

The road ahead for water security plan

In a related development, Velasco said that he will recommend the issuance of an Executive Order by President Duterte, as he has initiated the drafting to fast-track the water security roadmap of the Duterte Administration for Metro Manila and its serviced areas.

With the concurrence of the MWSS Board, the water agency has crafted a short-, medium- and long-term water security roadmap that will provide potable and sustainable water supply in the next 5, 10 and even 50 years with an increase of at least 1,518 MLD by 2022.

Being fast-tracked under the new water

others needing amputation," Duque said.

"Don't worry, Mr. President, because we are doing everything to make sure that the medical assistance is adequate if not more than adequate," he added.

Moreover, Duque said his agency is monitoring the absorptive capacity of DOH hospitals as well as in coordination with the local hospitals, the district hospitals in particular for any additional assistance or complementation of services.

Duterte said he was satisfied with the medical assistance being provided by the health department.

"So, in other words, that the --- are medical response to everybody -- - to every kind of injury suffered now by the people can adequately be met by government at this time?" Duterte asked Duque, who replied the affirmative.

"Okay, I'm quite satisfied with this," he added. (PNA)

security roadmap are the following projects: 150 MLD Putatan (2019); 100 MLD Cardona (2019); 188 MLD Sumag (2020); 50 MLD Rizal Wellfield (2020); 80 MLD Calawis Wawa (2021); 100 MLD Putatan 3 (2022); and 250 MLD Lower Ipo. These, aside from the 600 MLD Kaliwa Dam projects whose implementation was began in 2017 and is expected to be completed in 2023.

According to Velasco, to complement the New Water Security Roadmap (2019-2022), there is an urgent need to fast track the completion of Aqueduct 6 and Tunnel 4, both started during the Duterte Administration by the present MWSS Board and Management. The two projects are expected to be operationalized by January 2020.

MWSS also expects to complete by June 2022, Aqueduct 7 and Tunnel 5 which are now on stream to provide another 1,600 MLD to flow towards La Mesa. The completion of these aqueducts and tunnel system will optimize the flow of excess water from Angat to La Mesa Dam. (PNA)

POWER RESTORATION... FR. P. 1

past 5 p.m. Monday and jolted nearby provinces, as well as Metro Manila, and also caused power interruptions.

The Department of Energy (DOE) said that as of 2:45 p.m. on Tuesday, 98.5 percent of power in areas being serviced by the Pampanga Electric Cooperative II (PELCO II) has been restored.

DepEd... FR. P. 1

been damaged by the moderately strong earthquake.

They are Carlos P. Garcia High School, Sainsain National High School, Colo Elementary School, Facundo Angeles Memorial Elementary School, O.M. Esteban (Pulong Yantok) Elementary School, Linagit Primary School, Gabihan Elementary School, Balaong Elementary School, Calumpang Elementary School, Bagong Barrio (Balasing PS Annex) Elementary School, Planas High School, Dela Paz Elementary School, Sta. Cruz North Central School, Mapanao Elementary School and PICAB Elementary School.

These schools have cracked floors, collapsed

"The remaining 1.5 percent covers around 2,300 households in the municipalities of Guagua, Lubao and Porac," it said.

"While the rest of Luzon has already been reenergized, PELCO II is targeting the full restoration of power in its service area by tomorrow morning," it added. (PNA)

perimeter fences, walls, ceilings, and damaged corridors, pathways, and school buildings.

The DepEd said classes and work in private elementary and high schools and at the tertiary level in the three provinces were also suspended.

Earlier, the DepEd released a memorandum for the thorough and immediate inspection of school and office buildings and facilities.

"Only when the structural integrity and safety of school buildings and facilities is assured can the learners, teachers, and personnel be allowed to enter the same," DepEd

Undersecretary for Administration Alain del Pascua said in the memorandum. (PNA)

CAVITE NEWS

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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 OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF COURT
 & EX-OFFICIO SHERIFF
 IMUS, CAVITE

EXTRA-JUDICIAL PETITION FOR
 SALE UNDER ACT 3135 AS
 AMENDED BY ACT 4118

F.C. CASE NO. 5740-08

BALIKATAN HOUSING FINANCE, INC.,
Mortgagee/Assignee,

-versus-

ROSALINA D. BATESTING,
Mortgagor/s,

x-----x

NOTICE OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL SALE

Upon extra-judicial petition for sale under Act 3135 as amended by Act 4118 filed by **BALIKATAN HOUSING FINANCE, INC.**, mortgagee/assignee with principal office at 22/F RCBC Savings Bank Corporate Center 26th and 25 Streets, Bonifacio South Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, against **ROSALINA D. BATESTING**, with residence and postal address at 2229 Paco Roman St., Sta Ana, M. Manila and Lot 5, Blk. 38, Ph. II, Calle Pogi, Golden City Subd. Dasmariñas, bo. Salawag, Dasmariñas, Cavite, to satisfy the mortgage indebtedness which as of **July 29, 2008** amounts to **TWO HUNDRED FOUR THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY PESOS AND 48/100 (PHP204,370.48)** Philippine Currency, excluding interest and penalties, charges, attorney's fees, sheriff's fees and all other charges incidental to this foreclosure and sale the undersigned Sheriff IV will sell at public auction on **JUNE 18, 2019** at **10:00 a.m.** or soon thereafter at the main entrance of the Office of the clerk of court, RTC Multiple Sala, Bulwagan ng Katarungan, Aguinaldo Highway, Imus, Cavite to the highest bidder, for CASH and in Philippine Currency, the following property with all the improvements therein, to wit:

**TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE NO.
 T-396335**

"A parcel of land (Lot 5, Blk. 38 of the subd. plan, Psd-042106-060530, being a portion of Lot 5777-A-2, Psd-042106-057898, LRC Rec. No.), situated in the Brgy. Salawag, Mun. of Dasmariñas, Prov. of Cavite, Is. of Luzon. Bounded on the SE., along line 1-2 by Lot 7 Blk. 38, on the SW., along line 2-3 by Rd. Lot 4; on the NW., along line 3-4 by Lot 3; & on the NE., along line 4-1 by Lot 6, both Blk. 38, all of the subd. plan. x x x containing an area of **THIRTY FIVE SQ. METERS & SIXTY THREE SQ. DEC. (35.63) x x x**"

All sealed bids must be submitted to the undersigned on the above-stated time and date.

In the event the public auction should not take place on said date, it shall be held on **June 25, 2019** at 10:00 a.m. without prior notice.

Prospective buyers and/or bidders are hereby enjoined to investigate for themselves the title of the said real property and the encumbrances thereon, if any there be.

Imus, Cavite, Philippines, **April 15, 2019.**

ANSELMO P. PAGUNSAN, JR.
Sheriff IV

APPROVED:

REGALADO E. EUSEBIO
Clerk of Court VI & Ex-Officio Sheriff



PCLEDO's BIZ iCREATE PROGRAM CONTINUES FOR ENTREPRENEURS' SUCCESS: *Twenty qualified Caviteño entrepreneurs attended the second learning session provided by the Provincial Cooperative, Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development Office under the BIZ iCREATE-Cavite Entrepreneurs Aiming Toward Economic Sustainability program on April 23, 2019 at the PCLEDO Training Area, Trece Martires City. Hoping to further equip business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs with proper entrepreneurial mindset, the lecture and discussion focused on Entrepreneurial Skills Development which was conversed by Dr. Aldrin Antivola, Professor, DLSU-Dasmariñas Graduate School of Business. The participants gained knowledge about the technical skills, personal entrepreneurial skills, business management skills, general management and marketing management needed for satisfying customers and becoming good business leaders. Topics to be discussed in the succeeding sessions include Entrepreneurial Skills Development part 2, Strategic Business Plan and Business Plan Preparation. — (PICAD)*

NO QUAKE... FR. 4

Kindly report any suspicious behavior and unlawful acts being committed to your police stations or police officer," Eleazar said.

Meanwhile, Makati Mayor Abby Binay has ordered the Office of the Building Official (OBO) to immediately conduct inspections of all private buildings in the City to

determine their structural integrity and other safety concerns following Monday's earthquake.

In a memorandum issued immediately after the earthquake, the mayor has also instructed the Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW) to inspect all public buildings and ensure their structural

integrity and safety.

The mayor has also called on private establishments to give their full cooperation to OBO inspection teams that were deployed today to conduct rapid damage assessment on their premises.

"All building management and administrators are strictly ordered to allow unimpeded access to the inspection teams and provide the needed information and cooperation to ensure a thorough and speedy assessment," the mayor stated.

Binay said she has instructed the OBO and the DEPW to submit daily inspection reports for her perusal and appropriate action.

As of this writing, three inspection teams have been deployed to

Century City and Rockwell Center, two teams to Circuit Makati, and a team each to Rufino Tower, Pacific Star and Eton Tower.

Inspections are also underway in other buildings in the City Hall complex, UMak and other public school buildings, Ospital ng Makati, barangay halls and health centers, multi-purpose and covered courts, Makati Homes I and II, and other public structures in Makati.

In its latest report to the mayor, the Department of Education-Makati said there have been no reported major damage in most of the schools. Only Makati Science High School and La Paz Elementary School have so far reported minor cracks on the wall of some comfort rooms, and on the perimeter fence, respectively. (PNA)

BALIKATAN HOUSING FINANCE, INC.,
 22/F RCBC Savings Bank Corporate Center
 26th and 25th Street, Bonifacio South
 Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

ROSALINA D. BATESTING
 2229 Paco Roman St., Sta. Ana, M. Manila &
 Lot 5, Blk. 38, Ph. 11, Calle Pogi, Golden City Subd.
 Dasmariñas, Bo. Salawag, Dasmariñas, Cavite

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Fourth Judicial Region
Regional Trial Court
Branch 20
Imus, Cavite

Extra-Judicial Foreclosure of Real Estate Mortgage Under Act No. 3135, as amended by Republic Act No. 4118

FC. NO. 16691-19

SECURITY BANK CORPORATION,
Mortgagee

-versus-

SPS. BETBET C. SANTOS & JAIME N. SANTOS
Mortgagors,

X-----X

NOTICE OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL SALE

Upon extra-judicial petition for sale under Act 3135 as amended by Act 4118 filed by SECURITY BANK CORPORATION, with principal office address at Security Bank Center, 6775 Ayala Ave., Makati City against SPS. BETBET C. SANTOS & JAIME N. SANTOS with residence and postal address at Blk. 12, Lot 53, Lancaster Village Ph. 2, Alapan 2-C, Imus, Cavite/Blk. 13, Lot 23, Hauskon Homes, Julugan, Tanza, Cavite to satisfy the mortgage indebtedness which as of January 31, 2019 amounts to ONE MILLION SIX HUNDRED TWENTY EIGHT THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY ONE PESOS AND 40/100 (Php1,628,371.40) Philippine Currency, including interest and penalty charges but excluding attorney's fees, sheriff's fees and all other charges incidental to this foreclosure and sale, the undersigned Sheriff IV will sell at public auction on **MAY 28, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.** or soon thereafter at the main entrance of the Office of the clerk of court, RTC Multiple Sala, Bulwagan Ng Katarungan, Aguinaldo Highway, Imus, Cavite, to the highest bidder for cash and in Philippine Currency, the following property with all the improvements therein, to wit:

**TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE NO.
057-2015038787**

A parcel of land (Lot 53, Blk. 12 of the consolidation and subdivision plan, Pcs-04-026192 being a portion of the cons.-Lots 1633, Imus estate (RS-04-004080) 1634-A & 1634-B, Psd-04-034916; 1635, Imus estate, (RS-042109-001771); 1636-B, Psd-04-082041 & Lot 2 Pcs -04-020912) situated in the Barangay Alapan 2-C, Municipality of Imus, Province of Cavite, Island of Luzon. Bounded on the NW., Alang line 1-2, by Lot 44, Blk. 12; on the NE; along line 2-3, by Lot 52, Blk. 12; on the SE & SW., along line 3-4-5- by road Lot 27; on the SW., along line 5-6 by road Lot 28, and on the SW., along line 6-1 by, Lot 54, Blk. 12 all of the consolidation and subdivision plan. Beginning at a pt. marked "1" x x x x containing an area of **NINETY FIVE SQ. METERS & FIFTY SQ. DECIMETERS (95.50) x x x**

All sealed bid must be submitted to the undersigned on the stated time and date.

In the event the public auction should not take place on the said date, it shall be held on **June 4, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.** without prior notice.

Prospective bidders/buyers are hereby to investigate for themselves the title to the said property and encumbrances thereon if any there be.



The Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) thru the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development Office (DSWD) IV – A, held a Lakbay Aral to DSWD implemented programs and services in the localities of Magallanes and Alfonso, Cavite on April 24, 2019. The objective of the activity is to provide learnings on the implementation of anti-poverty programs of DSWD to Pantawid beneficiaries in the abovementioned municipalities. Among the areas visited in Magallanes were the Kabulusan Community Store, with 24 members; San Sebastian Hog-Raising Project with 24 members; Baliwag Community Store with 25 members; Pacheco Water Refilling Station with 65 members and Bigasan sa Pacheco with 24 members. The team also visited the Angat Kababaihan ng Alfonso in Brgy. Taywanak Ilaya, Alfonso, Cavite with 46 members. The said cluster is under the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) project of the DSWD. The tour was participated by almost 30 individuals from the different offices of the Provincial Government of Cavite, DepEd, DSWD IV-A and the LGUs of Magallanes and Alfonso.—PICAD

*Ang kayamanan ng mayaman ang proteksiyon niya; Gaya iyon ng matibay na pader sa imahinasyon niya.
(Kawikaan 18:11)*

Imus, Cavite, Philippines, April 10, 2019.

ANSELMO P. PAGUNSAN, JR.
Sheriff IV

Approved:

REGALADO E. EUSEBIO
Clerk of Court VI
and Ex-Officio Sheriff

Copy Furnished:
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Security Bank Center, 6775 Ayala Ave.,
Makati City

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Blk. 12, Lot 53, Lancaster Village Ph. 2, Alapan 2-C,
Imus, Cavite
Blk. 12, Lot 23, Hauskon Homes, Julugan, Tanza, Cavite

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No quake-hit police stations in Metro Manila

MANILA -- The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) on Tuesday said there were no affected police stations in Metro Manila following the magnitude 6.1 earthquake on Monday afternoon.

"Based on the ongoing assessment on the damage done by the earthquake, no police stations or structures were affected by the earthquake," NCRPO director, Major Gen. Guillermo Eleazar, the NCRPO chief, told reporters in a press briefing in Taguig City.

However, Eleazar said Marjorie Laurente, 21, was brought to the Perpetual Succor Hospital after she was accidentally hit on the left arm by pieces of broken glass that fell from the seventh floor window of a building in Sampaloc, Manila.

A report from the Manila Police District said the GAW Building, along

Tomas Mapua St., Binondo, Manila slightly tilted and suffered minor damages while water from the roof deck swimming pool of the Anchor Suites along Ongpin Street in Binondo spilled on the road.

"In Metro Manila, we do not see any major problems. Because of the regular conduct of earthquake drills which have been observed by many establishments, it seems many of us are ready for the "Big One", which I hope will not happen. We should take these drills seriously in order for us to be really prepared for the worst," Eleazar explained.

Metro Manila is under full alert status due to the earthquake but Eleazar said it will eventually be downgraded to heightened alert by Wednesday.

"Our police will continue to be on full alert. (Turn to p. 3)

Sri Lanka falls silent for victims of bomb blasts that killed 310

Colombo-Sri Lanka fell silent for three minutes Tuesday on a day of national mourning to honor more than 300 people killed in suicide bomb blasts that have been blamed on a local Islamist group.

Flags were lowered to half mast on government buildings, and people bowed their heads and reflected silently on the violence that has caused international outrage.

The silence began at 8:30 am (0300 GMT), the time that the first of six bombs detonated on Sunday morning, unleashing carnage at high-end hotels and churches packed with Easter worshippers.

Shortly after the silence was observed, a police spokesman said the death toll had risen to 310, with several people dying of their injuries overnight.

The first memorial services for the victims, among them dozens of foreigners, were being held Tuesday, hours after the government imposed a state of emergency and said an Islamist group was behind the violence.

At St Anthony's Shrine in Colombo where scores died as they gathered for Easter Sunday prayers, a few dozen people held candles and prayed silently, palms pressed together.

And at St Sebastian's Church in Negombo, north of the capital, an elderly man wept uncontrollably by the coffin bearing the body of his wife.

Police said that 40 people were now under arrest over the suicide bomb attacks, the worst atrocity since Sri Lanka's civil war ended a decade ago.

The attacks were also the worst ever against the country's small Christian minority,

who make up just seven percent of the 21 million population.

Investigators are now hunting for clues on whether the local Islamist group named as the chief suspect? National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) received "international support", said cabinet minister and government spokesman Rajitha Senarathne.

He said it was not possible for such "a small organisation" to carry out such well co-ordinated suicide strikes.

President Maithripala Sirisena's office said there was intelligence that "international terror groups" were behind the local perpetrators and that he would seek foreign help to investigate.

The state of emergency, which gave police and the military special powers to counter militant strikes, came into force at midnight (1830 GMT Monday). Suspects can be detained without a court order.

A second straight night-time curfew was also put in place, but lifted before dawn.

Parliament will hold its first session since the attacks on Tuesday, amid questions on whether the blasts could have been prevented.

Officials are investigating why more precautions were not taken after an April 11 warning from Sri Lanka's police that a "foreign intelligence agency" had reported the NTJ planned suicide attacks on churches.

Spokesman Senarathne said the warning was not passed on to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe or other top ministers.

Tensions remained high and security heavy after a bomb discovered by police on Monday

near one of the targeted churches blew up before police could defuse it. Although there was a powerful blast, no injuries were reported.

Police also found 87 bomb detonators at a Colombo bus station.

More details have begun to emerge about some of the foreigners killed in the blasts.

The United States reported at least four Americans killed—including a child—and the Netherlands raised their toll to three.

A Danish billionaire lost three of his children in the attacks, a spokesman for his company said.

Eight Britons, eight Indians and nationals from Turkey, Australia, France, Japan and Portugal, were also killed, according to Sri Lankan officials and foreign governments.

The suicide bombers hit three Colombo luxury hotels popular with foreign tourists—the Cinnamon Grand, the Shangri-La and the Kingsbury—and three churches: two in the Colombo region and one in the eastern city of Batticaloa.

Two additional blasts were triggered as security forces carried out raids searching for suspects.

Interpol said it was deploying investigators and specialists to Sri Lanka, and the US State Department warned of possible further attacks in a travel advisory.

Ethnic and religious violence has plagued Sri Lanka for decades, with a 37-year conflict with Tamil rebels followed by an upswing in recent years of clashes between the Buddhist majority and Muslims.

Burials were expected to begin for some of the dead on Tuesday.

At St Sebastian's,

Japan softens up on North Korea

Tokyo-Japan on Tuesday dropped the push to apply "maximum pressure" on North Korea from its official foreign policy, an apparent softening of Tokyo's position as major powers engage with Pyongyang.

In last year's "Diplomatic Bluebook", published when tensions on the Korean peninsula were soaring, Japan said it was coordinating efforts with its allies to "maximize pressure on North Korea by all available means."

But this language was dropped from this year's edition, drawn up after diplomats had "taken comprehensively into account the latest developments surrounding North Korea", according to chief government spokesman Yoshihide Suga.

"There have been major developments in the situation surrounding North Korea in light of events such as the US-North Korea summits in June last year and February," Suga told reporters.

Abe, seen as a foreign policy hawk, has also softened his rhetoric towards North Korea, frequently offering to meet leader Kim Jong Un to negotiate the decades-old issue of Japanese civilians kidnapped by the North.

the atmosphere was heavy with grief as coffins were brought in the grounds one at a time for services.

"There are so many bodies that we can't accommodate them all at once," Anthony Jayakody, auxiliary bishop of Colombo, told AFP.

The attacks have sparked local and international outrage, and have been condemned by Sri Lankan Muslim groups, with one urging the "maximum punishment for everyone involved in these dastardly acts".

"Japan seeks to normalize its relations with North Korea by comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues as well as settling an unfortunate past," Suga said.

Tokyo has been one of the most hawkish of the major powers on North Korea and has been on the receiving end of some of Pyongyang's harshest rhetoric as well as missiles launched over its territory.

Until late 2017, North Korea repeatedly tested missiles that flew towards or over Japan,

Japan ready to assist PH after strong quakes

MANILA -- The Japanese government is ready to assist the Philippines should it require help, a ranking official said Wednesday.

"As a country that has been tackling with earthquakes, Japan is ready to provide assistance needed by the Philippines to the extent possible. We sincerely wish for the early recovery of the disaster-affected regions," Ambassador Koji Haneda said in a statement.

In his message, Haneda commiserated with the families of those who perished in the aftermath of the recent earthquakes in the country.

"We would like to extend our sincere condolences to the

sparkling warnings blared out on loudspeakers and stoking calls for a tough stance against Pyongyang.

However, Japan now finds itself battling to keep itself relevant in the fast-moving North Korea issue as Kim expands his diplomatic circle.

Kim is now preparing for talks with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, after multiple meetings with US President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping and South Korean leader Moon Jae-in.

Abe will soon meet Trump at the White House where the issue of North Korea is bound to be on the table.

families of the deceased and express our sympathies to all those afflicted by the recent earthquakes in Luzon and Eastern Samar," he said.

Two powerful jolts rocked the country on separate occasions -- a 6.1-magnitude quake in Zambales that affected most parts of Luzon on Monday afternoon, and a 6.5-magnitude tremor in Eastern Samar on Tuesday.

As of April 24, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported that 115 structures were damaged by the two consecutive movements.

A total of 16 persons killed and 86 wounded were reported in Central Luzon, while at least 10 were confirmed injured in Eastern Samar. (PNA)

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Damian Lillard of the Portland Trail Blazers drives to the basket against Jerami Grant (9) and Paul George (13) of the Oklahoma City Thunder during the second half of Game Five of the Western Conference quarterfinals during the 2019 NBA Playoffs at Moda Center in Portland, Oregon. The Blazers won, 118-115. AFP

LRT-1 Cavite extension construction set in May

MANILA -- The construction of the extension of the Light Rail Transit Line 1 (LRT-1) is set to start in May, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said.

“We’ll have an event on May 6 to start the actual works of LRT Line 1 Cavite Extension Project. We will send an advisory soon,” DOTr Assistant Secretary for Communications Goddes Hope Libiran said in a text message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA) on Wednesday.

The 11.7-km. railway extension project



will have eight stations from Baclaran in Parañaque City to Bacoar in the province of Cavite, reducing travel time to 30 minutes from the current one-and-a-half hours during rush hours.

The daily passenger volume of the LRT-1 is

expected to increase from 300,000 to 800,000 once it is completed.

The DOTr and the railway system’s private operator, Light Rail Manila Corp., are eyeing to finish the project by the fourth quarter of 2021. (PNA)

Lillard buzzer-beater seals it for Trail Blazers

Los Angeles— Damian Lillard sank a three-pointer on the buzzer to cap a 50-point display as the Portland Trail Blazers completed a late fightback to send Russell Westbrook and the Oklahoma City Thunder crashing out of the NBA playoffs on Tuesday.

Lillard buzzer-beater seals it for Trail Blazers

Needing a win to keep the best-of-seven series alive, Oklahoma City appeared to be on their way to forcing a game six after overturning a nine-point deficit at the end of the third period to open up a 15-point lead in the fourth quarter.

But a sensational burst of scoring hauled the Blazers back within striking distance as their home fans at the Moda Center roared them on.

Lillard leveled the score at 115-115 with a driving layup and when Westbrook subsequently fluffed a chance to restore Oklahoma City’s lead with 18.3 seconds left, Portland ace Lillard was left with a chance to grab the win.

The 28-year-old point guard took his time, eating up the final few seconds before sinking a three-pointer from long-range to seal a 118-115 win and a 4-1 series victory.

“Sometimes it’s your turn to go through something, and when you keep fighting, and keep working through it, and stay together, there’s a reward waiting for you,” Lillard said after the win. Earlier, Lillard had kept Portland in contention almost single-handedly,

playing all 24 minutes of the first half and knocking down 12 of 18 shot attempts to score 34 points by the break.

His first-half exploits appeared to have caught up with him as the Blazers flagged in the third period.

But the Portland talisman led a mesmerizing late rally to finish with 50 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Maurice Harkless added 17 points, Enes Kanter added 13 and C.J. McCollum finished with 17.

It was a disappointing end to the season for Westbrook, who added a triple double comprising 29 points, 11 rebounds and 14 assists.

Paul George led the Thunder scoring with 36 points, adding nine rebounds and three assists in a losing effort. Lillard meanwhile revealed that Portland had been motivated by Oklahoma City’s exuberant celebrations after their win in game three.

“They were out there doing all these celebrations,” he said. “After one win, that was what they decided to do. We were like, OK, we want to win four games, and then there won’t be nothing to talk about.”

Portland will face either Denver or San Antonio in the next round. The Nuggets took a 3-2 lead in their series after a 108-90 win earlier on Tuesday.

In the Eastern Conference, the Toronto Raptors and the Philadelphia 76ers set up a heavyweight playoff

battle after completing comfortable series victories.

The Sixers sealed a 4-1 series win after routing the Brooklyn Nets 122-100 while the Raptors swept to an emphatic 115-96 dismissal of the Orlando Magic to also win their series 4-1.

Joel Embiid led the Sixers with 23 points at Philadelphia’s Wells Fargo Center.

The Sixers were always in control after surging into a 17-point lead at the end of the first quarter.

They led 60-31 at half time as Brooklyn’s challenge effectively collapsed.

Embiid was again immense for Philadelphia, hauling in 13 rebounds to go with his points tally.

Five other Philadelphia players made double figures, with Ben Simmons scoring 13 points and Tobias Harris 12. JJ Redick and James Ennis III added 11 apiece. Jonathon Simmons finished with 10 from the bench.

Embiid believes the Sixers have the talent to mount a championship-winning playoff campaign.

“We think we can win it all,” Embiid said. “Obviously, it’s going to take a lot. You’ve got some great teams in the league, we’re about to play one of them,” the Cameroon international added.

“We just gotta take it one game at a time but we understand that we got all the talent we need, especially to win it all.”