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Closing Boracay unjust, business group says

By TARA YAP

The biggest business organization in Boracay, the country's most popular beach, has called as "unjust" President Duterte's statement that he wants to close the world-famous beach destination in Malay, Aklan.

According to Boracay Foundation Inc. (BFI), not all businesses in the island violated environmental laws.

"While there are many violators,

most of the island's business establishments are strictly in compliance with prevailing ordinances and regulations," the foundation said in a statement yesterday, following an emergency meeting held Feb. 12.

Nonetheless, BFI has reason to believe that the President's statement "stemmed from misinformation and unverified data."

Last month, the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR) conducted joint inspections amidst recurring problems such as untreated wastewater disposal, poor trash management, deforestation, and flooding.

For BFI, the solution is to "strictly

implement existing environmental laws and local ordinances while closing all erring establishments immediately."

BFI, headed by its president and Malay Town Councilor Nenette Aguirre-Graf, warned that closing the resort island would have a negative

impact on the livelihood of thousands of people.

BFI also explained the many initiatives it had undertaken, such as coastal resource management, to preserve the 1,032-hectare island that has been hounded by problems of tourism growth.

BFI is pleading to the national government to give Boracay, which earned an estimated P56 billion last year, serious attention.

"We have continuously expressed

our frustration and dismay over the lack of attention given by the National Government. Now that Malacañang is keen on fixing Boracay, we are hopeful that Boracay's issues may finally be addressed," it said.

"Let us work on fixing Boracay while maintaining open lines of communication, transparency, and consultation with the local community," it added.

Meanwhile, BFI is urging its members to strictly comply with the implementation of necessary policies.

*tourism