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Vessel traffic management system launched in Cebu

A 1.5-billion yen (P739-million) vessel traffic management system (VTMS) was recently launched in Cebu as part of an ongoing development cooperation between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to boost Philippine maritime safety.

"Maritime safety is indispensable to Philippine development. The VTMS technology can help ensure maritime safety along the Mactan Channel, which has one of the busiest maritime traffic in the Philippines, and facilitate movement of people and goods efficiently," said JICA Chief Representative Susumu Ito. "Central Visayas is also a potential growth center with its creative people, rich culture and natural resources. By facilitating safety in its ports and

seas, the region can help sustain the country's economic growth and create jobs in the country."

The VTMS is part of JICA's cooperation with the PCG and came about after the ferry incident in Talisay, Cebu in 2013. Under the project, radar stations were built in Talisay, Bantolinao and inter-bridges.

A VTMS control center was also installed at the Coast Guard District Central Visayas in Cebu.

In addition to VTMS, JICA also provided communication systems for PCG vessels, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources vessels and PCG district offices under the project. The enhancements on the PCG coastal communication system can help address traffic in ports and address maritime crimes and accidents.

Data from the Maritime Industry

Authority (Marina) showed that from 2011 to 2016, there were 3,157 recorded maritime accidents/incidents in the country, with 592 casualties, 102,726 persons rescued and 914 persons missing.

Maritime accidents occur due to increased passengers and cargo between islands, use of antiquated vessels, cargo overloading, unskilled ship handling techniques, and Philippine climatic and geographic features.

Aside from the communication system, JICA is also financing ten middle-size multi-role response vessels (MRRVS) and two large-size MRRVs to PCG as support maritime safety and security in the country. For many decades, JICA has also helped train PCG personnel on search and rescue operations and maritime law enforcement.

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