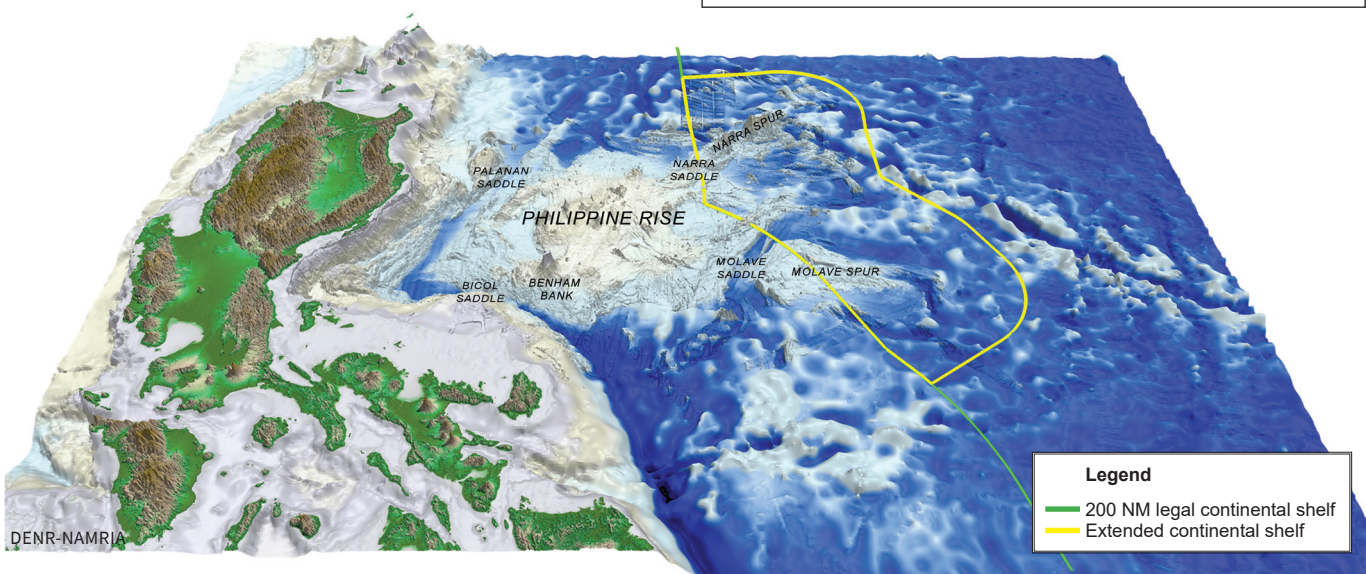
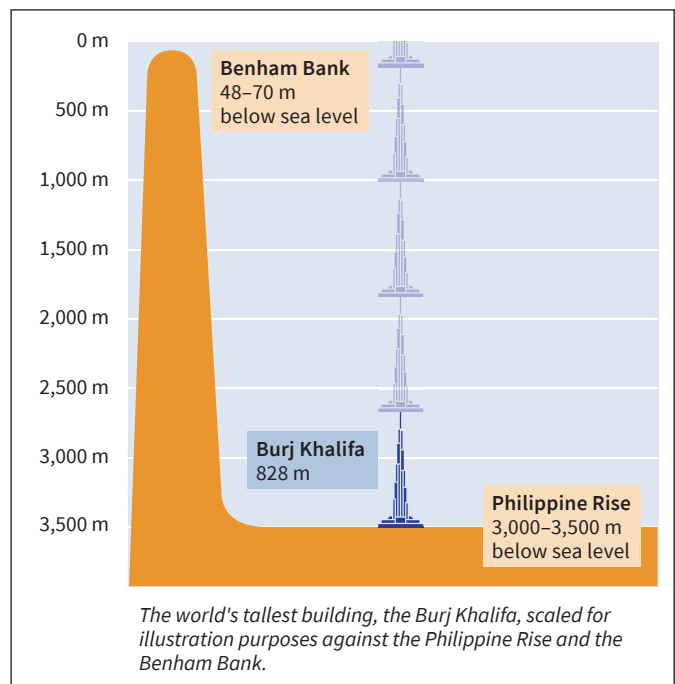


# THE PHILIPPINE RISE

## FAST FACTS

### 1. WHERE IS THE PHILIPPINE RISE?

The Philippine Rise, previously known as the Benham Rise, is a natural submarine prolongation of the Luzon Island extending up to 318 nautical miles (589 kilometers), from the Eastern Philippine Seaboard facing the Pacific Ocean. The Philippine Rise Region is comprised of the 200-nautical-mile continental shelf from the baselines of Luzon and the extension of the seabed and subsoil approximately up to 118 nautical miles beyond the legal continental shelf limits. In particular, it consists of a plateau and the Molave and Narra Spurs and Saddles in the east and northeast. It is docked to Luzon through the Palanan Saddle in the northwest and the Bicol Saddle in the southwest, and moves with it as a single unit. The Philippine Rise is geomorphologically distinct from the deep ocean floor and forms a thick crust lying at about 3,000–3,500 meters below sea level, except for the Benham Bank, its shallowest point, which towers up to 48–70 meters below sea level.



The Benham Rise was named after American geologist Andrew Benham who surveyed the area in the 1930s. On 16 May 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive

Order No. 25 renaming the Benham Rise to Philippine Rise.

## 2. HOW DID THE PHILIPPINE RISE FALL UNDER PHILIPPINE MARITIME JURISDICTION?

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is considered the constitution for the world's oceans. Under Article 76 of UNCLOS, coastal states have a legal continental shelf of up to 200 nautical miles from the baselines. The prolongation of the continental margin may extend beyond 200 nautical miles but not exceeding 350 nautical miles from the baselines. The claim for an extended continental shelf must be submitted to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).

On 8 April 2009, the Philippines submitted to the CLCS its claim for an extended continental shelf in the Philippine Rise Region. The Philippines presented scientific and technical evidence such as geodetic, bathymetric, geophysical, and geological data from national government agencies and international sources to support its claim. On 12 April 2009, after a series of intensive deliberations, the CLCS adopted by consensus the recommendations of its sub-commission with regard to the Philippines' submission on the Philippine Rise Region.

## 3. WHAT RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND IN THE PHILIPPINE RISE?

The Benham Bank exhibits a rich marine biodiversity. Its reefscape contains corals, algae, sponges, and *Halimeda*, which in turn sustain a variety of fish, making it a potential candidate for a marine key biodiversity area. Results of exploratory fishing suggest that the Philippine Rise Region yields the highest catch rate of tuna species, including bigeye, yellowfin, and albacore, compared to other areas of the Philippines. It is also comparable with the catch rate along the Eastern Philippine Seaboard off the Visayan Islands when it comes to billfish species, like marline, sailfish, and swordfish. Likewise, fish larvae surveys also show that the vicinity of the Philippine Rise is a spawning ground for tuna, including the Pacific bluefin tuna.

With its rich fishery resources, the Philippine Rise Region is an important fishing ground to the tuna hand-liners and ring-netters from Infanta and Real, Quezon; Baler, Aurora; Catanduanes; and adjacent provinces along the Northern Philippine Pacific Seaboard.

The Philippine Rise may also contain the following seabed resources: (1) cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts located in seamounts on the area, which can contain very expensive minerals; (2) hydrothermal polymetallic



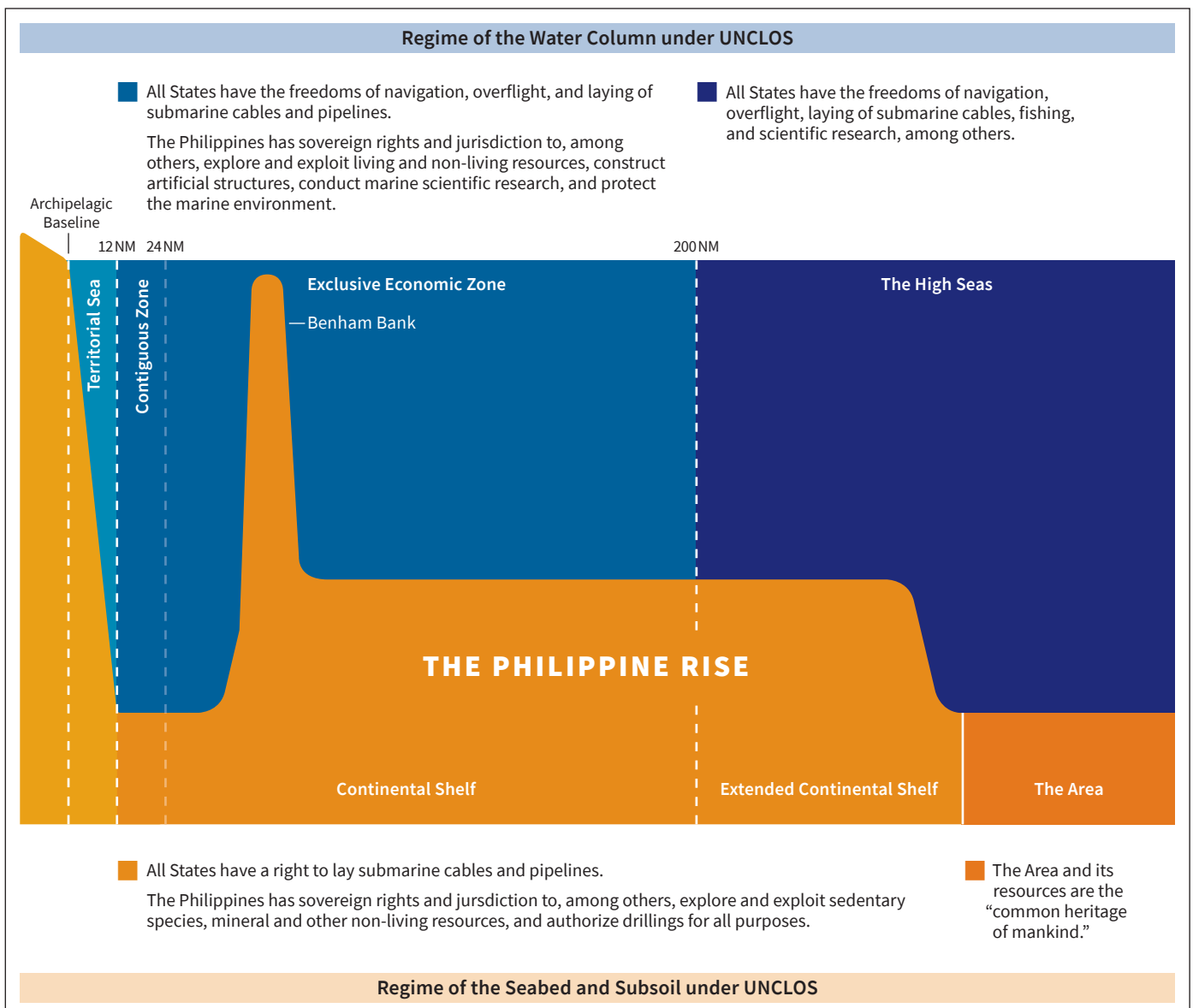
sulfides, which contain minerals used in the aerospace industry; and (3) gas hydrates, which are believed to be a larger hydrocarbon resource than the world's oil, natural gas, and coal resources combined. Gas hydrates are methane molecules encased in ice usually found

in deep-water continental margins like the Philippine Rise. However, there has not yet been any commercial production of these resources anywhere in the world, and their development is still, at most, in the exploration stage.

## 4. WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN THE PHILIPPINES DO AT THE PHILIPPINE RISE? AND WHAT ABOUT USER STATES?

In the area of the Philippine Rise within the 200 -nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf (CS), the Philippines has sovereign rights and jurisdiction on both the water column and the seabed and subsoil with regard to, among others:

- a. exploring and exploiting living and non-living resources;
- b. the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations, and structures;
- c. marine scientific research; and



- d. the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

All States, whether coastal or land-locked, can exercise, in accordance with UNCLOS, the following rights in the EEZ and CS:

- a. freedom of navigation;
- b. freedom of overflight;
- c. laying of submarine cables and pipelines; and
- d. other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms.

In the extended continental shelf outside the 200 nautical mile zone, the Philippines has sovereign rights in exploring and exploiting the mineral and other non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil together with living

organisms belonging to sedentary species. No one may undertake these activities without the express consent of the Philippines. The Philippines also has the exclusive right to authorize and regulate drilling on the continental shelf for all purposes.

The water column beyond the 200 nautical mile zone is the high seas which are open to all States, whether coastal and land-locked. Among the freedoms that can be exercised in the high seas, in accordance with UNCLOS, are:

- a. freedom of navigation;
- b. freedom of overflight;
- c. freedom to lay submarine cables and pipelines;
- d. freedom of fishing; and
- e. freedom of scientific research.

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