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Headline: Walkathon, fashion show highlight Earth Hour in Cebu

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CEBU CITY, Philippines—Cebuanos were expected to mark the Earth Hour on Saturday with a musical fashion show, a walkathon and lantern making, among others, to drum up concern for the environment.

SM City Cebu, Ayala Center Cebu and the Persimmon Plus of Aboitizland Inc., among others, had signed up for Earth Hour 2012, a worldwide event organized by the Switzerland-based charitable trust World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The activity, held every last Saturday of March, encourages households and businesses to turn off their nonessential lights for an hour to raise awareness about the need to take action on climate change.

In the Philippines, the country's major switch-off sites are Cebu, Manila and Davao although all other cities and municipalities were encouraged to participate in the symbolic activity.

With the theme "Uniting People to Protect the Planet, this years Earth Hour is designed to provide people with the opportunity to unite their voices in a call to for a sustainable future and direct them toward quantifiable outcomes through petitions, campaigns, and events.

According to Ethel Natera, corporate communication manager of the Visayan Electric Co. (Veco), the company registered a load drop of 18 megawatts in last year's Earth Hour. Natera said that before the Earth Hour switch-off, Veco's load was 257.1 megawatts (MW) but it dropped to 248.89 MW during the Earth Hour.

However, the 2011 load drop was lower than the 20-MW decline in load registered by the Veco franchise area both in 2009 and 2010.

"Through the efforts of Veco, we hope to achieve a higher load drop this year," she said.

Veco, the second largest electric utility in the Philippines, partly owned by Aboitiz Equity Ventures, serves the cities of Cebu, Mandaue, Talisay and Naga and the municipalities of Liloan, Consolacion, Minglanilla and San Fernando.

The Aboitiz group observed the Earth Hour through a walk, led by AEV chief executive officer and president Erramon Aboitiz, that started at around 5:30 p.m. from Fuente Osmeña to Plaza Independencia, both in Cebu City.

The Persimmon Plus, the first community developed by the Aboitizland, Inc., hosted an event called the Switch Off, which featured a musical fashion show that showcased the designs of local designer Bernardo Flores, fire dancers and commitment signing, showcasing the works of a local designer, Bernardo Flores and a concert.

The Mactan Economic Zone 2, another AboitizLand industrial development, also participated the Earth Hour.

On the other hand, Ayala Center Cebu aimed to save a combined 3,887.14 kilowatts, which is equivalent to a reduction of 1,343.78 in carbon dioxide emission.

The Cebu Park District, the integrated brand identity of Cebu Business Park and Cebu IT Park, held the Earth Hour at the Terraces of Ayala Center Cebu. Before the switch off, Bio Challenge, an open-for-all kids' obstacle run and lantern making, were held within Cebu Business Park.

Ayala Center Cebu will also launch an environment-friendly campaign called Green Fridays, which will encourage shoppers to use recyclable bags every Friday.

At SM City Cebu, guests and customers were treated to a program that featured a drumbeating session by Lupon Anduyo and a musical presentation by the Close to Nature Choir, a group of indigent children.

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During the Earth Hour last year, SM City generated a 2.5 percent or 3,400 kilowatt hours savings in electricity consumption.