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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

Cimatu ‘thumbs-up’ Toledo reclamation project – report

By: Morexette Marie B. Erram - Multimedia Reporter - CDN Digital|August 22,2020 - 01:33 PM



Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu (third from the left) is flanked by officials from Toledo City and Cebu PENRO as they inspect the area in Barangay Poblacion for the planned 11-hectare reclamation project. | Photo courtesy of Toledo City PIO

CEBU CITY, Philippines – The country’s environmental secretary has given his approval on the reclamation project that is being proposed in Toledo City, a local government report stated.

Toledo City’s Public Information Office (PIO) on Friday, August 21, announced that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through Secretary Roy Cimatu already gave clearance for the multi-million reclamation project to proceed.

“Iyang nakita nga walay rason nga dili kini ipadayon kay ang tanan pinasikad sa balaod ang pagpangandam sa lokal nga pangagamhanan,” portions of the statement read.

(Cimatu saw that there were no reasons to delay project implementation since project preparations were made in accordance with the law and existing regulations.)

The PIO also said that Cimatu, city officials, and representatives of Toledo City’s Environmental and Natural Resources Office, and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), inspected the site for the proposed reclamation project on Friday.

Local officials in Toledo City, a third-class city that is located approximately 47 kilometers southwest of Cebu City, have been planning to proceed with the 11-hectare reclamation site off the coasts in Barangay Poblacion. The area will be utilized for mixed-use development, which includes the establishment of a port.

A brainchild of former Senator and Toledo City Mayor John Henry ‘Sonny’ Osmeña in 2015, the project that is estimated to cost P644 million has been met with widespread criticism, particularly from environmental advocates including Greenpeace.

Toledo City is directly facing Tañon Strait, one of the country’s largest marine protected area that covers more than 5,000 square kilometers.

In 2017, Osmeña signed a memorandum of understanding with the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) to give the proposal a ‘much-needed boost.’ / dcb

Source: <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/335350/cimatu-thumbs-up-on-toledo-reclamation-project-report>

DENR, PUP to train students to be 'environmental ambassadors'

Published August 22, 2020, 4:49 PM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) has partnered with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) for the creation of “environmental ambassadors” to help in the sustainable promotion of the environment and natural resources (ENR) of the country.



(DENR/ FACEBOOK/ MANILA BULLETIN)

A memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed last Aug. 19 by DENR-NCR Regional Executive Director Jacqueline Caanacan and PUP President Manuel Muhi to jointly train and develop selected students of the university as ENR ambassadors.

The selected ENR ambassadors will assist DENR in its information, education, and communication (IEC) and advocacy campaigns on the protection, conservation, and sustainable use of the environment and natural resources of Metro Manila.

They are expected, in particular, to help educate their fellow students on various environmental issues affecting the region, such as pollution, resource degradation, and climate change, among others, and galvanize the support of the youth sector in the cleanup, rehabilitation, and protection of Manila Bay.

In return, DENR-NCR will provide the necessary assistance to the students for them to effectively function as ENR ambassadors and help them with their studies at the same time.

To help them fulfill their roles, the DENR has initially turned over 100 units of pocket WiFi devices and tablets to the ENR ambassadors.

These communication devices will be used for online reporting and coordination with DENR. It will also aid them with their studies under the “new normal” situation.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda emphasized that the project will be an eye-opener that the government needs the support and actions from Filipino people to protect the environment.

Antiporda said he is also looking forward to having more ENR ambassadors not just in Metro Manila but in other regions as well.

Is your parrot or snake documented?

FIGHTING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#) August 23, 2020



A rescued North American serval cat awaits transfer to its new home at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center in Quezon City. Is your pet parrot, snake or turtle properly documented? Were they legally acquired or bred in authorized breeding facility?

Do you have a permit as private wildlife collector and breeder?

If the answers were no, then you might find yourself in trouble, not only of losing your pet, but you may spend time behind bars for illegal wildlife trade.

Continuous wildlife registration

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is coming up with a new guideline for Republic Act (RA) 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, to ensure the continuous wildlife registration.

This includes offspring or progenies of those bred in captivity, in the DENR's bid to properly regulate the collection and trade of wildlife and prevent illegal wildlife trade, including the lucrative pet trade that targets rare native species and exotic animals that are critically endangered or on the brink of extinction.

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon said they are also looking at imposing an annual renewal of Certificates of Wildlife Registration (CWR) in a bid to build a database of legally acquired wildlife, whether they are threatened, non-threatened, or exotic animals.

“Before, under the Wildlife Act, wildlife registration is a one-time activity. We want to change that. Also, we want to start issuing a certificate of wildlife registration for progenies of animals bred in captivity,” Calderon told the BusinessMirror during a telephone interview.

A remedial measure

Calderon, also the concurrent director of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), said they are now trying to correct what they believed to be a flaw in the existing guidelines for the implementation of the Wildlife Act.

The new guideline will come in the form of a new DENR Administrative Order (DAO) and a Technical Bulletin, both of which aims to remedy loopholes in previous DAOs.

Included in the orders to be remedied is DAO 2004-55, or DENR streamlining/procedural guidelines, pursuant to the Joint DENR-Department of Agriculture-Palawan Council for Sustainable Development implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act 9147, or the “Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.”

Another is DAO 2004-58, which pertains to the registration of threatened and exotic species of wild fauna in the possession of private persons and entities; and DAO 2004-62, which provides fees and other guidelines on the implementation of threatened, non-threatened and exotic faunal species under the jurisdiction of the DENR.

Theresa Tenazas, OIC of the Wildlife Bureau at the DENR-BMB, said the plan to formulate a new guideline came after questions on the legal possession of exotic wildlife was raised following viral social-media posts of a North American serval cat and two common ostriches, a species known to occur in Africa, were seen inside posh subdivisions in Antipolo City and Quezon City, respectively, recently.

The owners of the North American wildcat and the ostriches, one of which died of stress, are facing investigation for violation of RA 9147. They failed to show documents to prove their legal acquisition of the animals, including transport permits.

Among the required documents for the possession of wildlife is the proof of legal acquisition, receipt of the sale or a deed of donations, and the animal's CWR which may be issued by the DENR Regional Offices of the DENR-BMB.

Illegal wildlife trade

Rogelio Demelletes Jr., a DENR-BMB wildlife law enforcement specialist, said some of the suspects they arrested with the help of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) would show dubious documents for the animals that are being traded.

"Sometimes, a suspect would present a [genuine] certificate of wildlife registration for a wild-caught animal," Demelletes told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview on August 18.

Sometimes, he said, suspects would attempt to avoid arrest by showing fake CWRs.

Even with a legitimate CWR, a permittee, he said, is not allowed to sell the animal under the law, hence, a violation of the Wildlife Act for the illegal trade of wildlife is committed.

Duties and responsibilities

According to Tenazas, a lawyer, the new DAO will clearly distinguish threatened native species from non-threatened native species, and exotic animals that are allowed to be traded under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which the Philippines is a party and a signatory.

She said CWR holders have different obligations for non-threatened, threatened and exotic animals.

"We are distinguishing them now under the new DAO for clarity," she said in partly in English and Filipino in a telephone interview on August 10.

A CWR holder's privileges, she said, have limitations under the law and they will be clearly specified for the type of legally acquired animals in the new DAO.

The DAO, she added, will put more emphasis on the obligations of CWR holder rather than the privileges, such as the continuous registration of their acquired animals, annual renewal of CWR and reporting of inventory or status of the animals in their possession.

Commercial breeding

The DAO will also specify fees for CWR and the special permits needed for transporting the documented animals, which are often ignored by the sellers and the buyers to avoid the inconvenience of a site inspection, visit or detection, especially if the animals are of dubious origin, Tenazas said.

Current fees for special permits, she said, are reasonable, but to avoid DENR inspection, sellers, who are running an illegal breeding facility or wildlife farm often do not apply for a transport permit “because we will inspect their facility.”

“The law requires CWR or Wildlife Farm Permit [WFP] holders to have the financial and technical capacity,” Tenazas said.

She said that the continuous registration of wildlife will apply even to offsprings under the proposed DAO.

Transfer of ownership

“Even after selling, the sold animals’ [CWR] will have to be transferred to the new owner and registered with the DENR-BMB,” Tenazas said.

This, she said, will ensure that all wildlife, threatened, non-threatened, nonnative or exotic species are properly recorded.

The new DAO, she said, will also outline the guideline in trading locally and internationally, and the wildlife, depending on conservation status, will be identified.

Meanwhile, she said a Technical Bulletin will be issued by the DENR-BMB to serve as an official template or guide in the processing of CWR, including Wildlife Farm Permits.

This will help harmonize all documents pertaining to the application and issuance of CWR, she said.

Welcome move

Asean Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim, a former DENR-BMB director, welcomed the move to remedy the lapses in the Wildlife Act to ensure proper monitoring both of the CWR holder and the wildlife itself.

“There is really a need to regularly monitor the CWR holders. Through this [proposed] amendment, there will be a regular registration process, including of progenies, so that there is easy tracking of the movement of wild animals from one owner to another,” Lim told the BusinessMirror on August 18.

She underscored that in coming up with the DAO, there’s a need to consult the various stakeholders, particularly permittees, whether they are holders of a CWR or Wildlife Farm Permit.

Sought for reaction, Grace Diamante, executive director of the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc., said being a member of the party and a signatory to CITES, the Convention on Migratory Species and Convention on Biological Diversity, the Philippines need to revisit its existing guidelines and “strengthen the conservation advocacy campaign and its enforcement on the ground especially in Protected Areas where the majority of our wildlife are found.”

“We need more good, determined, trained, honest and brave individuals to implement and monitor that these are strictly enforced,” Diamante said via Messenger on August 18.

It is about time for the DENR to allocate more fund to environmental, habitat and biodiversity protection rather than infrastructure projects.

“We need to support our rangers out in the field—arm them with the proper information on species, law enforcement and proper handling of such cases in the field. The DENR cannot do this alone. We all need to support each other and play an important role in getting things done in the most righteous, safer, and ethical way,” Diamante added.

DENR rescues sick serpent eagle in Ecija

August 22, 2020 By [Steve A. Gosuico](#) [People's Tonight](#)

PALAYAN CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Nueva Ecija, through its Wildlife Rescue Center, has taken custody of a sick serpent eagle which was rescued by a local farmer in Rizal, Nueva Ecija amid the COVID-19 pandemic on Wednesday.

Joselito M. Blanco, Nueva Ecija provincial environment and natural resources officer, said they immediately provided medicine to the serpent eagle after it was brought to them by a staff member of the local government unit of Rizal.

Blanco added the rescued male serpent eagle (*Spilornis holospilus*-scientific name), aged about six to eight-months-old, was named “Paco Roman” after the place where it was found by the local farmer.

Blanco said the bird was so weak that it was immediately given a dose of Vitamin B complex to boost its energy and immune system while recuperating under the care of the wildlife center.

The PENRO chief has asked the provincial veterinary office to check on the bird’s health status after it was found out that it got lost in another area before it was rescued in Rizal.

“Maaaring nakawala ito sa bukid habang inaalagaan domestically dahil makikita natin sa kanyang mga paa at pakpak na hindi siya lumaki sa kagubatan,” said Blanco.

“Kaya habang nandito siya pinapakain siya ng dagang bukid at kung ano ang available na karne para lumakas siya at gumaling bago natin siya pawalan sa kanyang natural habitat sa gubat,” added the PENRO chief.

Agilang hinabol ng mga uwak, na-rescue sa Agusan del Norte

By [Bombo Radyo Butuan](#)

-August 22, 2020 | 9:05 PM



BUTUAN CITY – Nai-turn over na ng pamilya Granada sa mg tauhan ng CENRO ang isang agila na natagpuan at nahuli nila kahapon ng alas-tres ng hapon sa kanilang farm sa Brgy. Del Pilar, Cabadbaran City sa lalawigan ng Agusan del Norte.

Sa eksklusibong panayam ng Bombo Radyo Butuan, inihayag ni Michelle Granada, residente ng Horizon Village sa Brgy. San Vicente nitong lungsod, na ang kanyang bunsong kapatid na si Gabriel ang nakakita sa agila na hinabol umano ng mga uwak sa may kawayang bahagi ng kanilang farm sa Brgy. Del Pilar, Cabadbaran City.

Dahil nanghihina na sa habulan kung kaya't madali itong nahuli ng kanyang kapatid na ayaw namang kumain. .

Dali silang tumawag sa mga personahe ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Caraga kung kaya't nakuha ito kaninang alas-8:30 ng umaga.

SPECIAL REPORT: COVID-19 lockdown a boon for 'pawikans' in Sarangani Bay

By [BONG S. SARMIENTO](#) -AUGUST 16, 2020 12:55 AM

ALABEL, Sarangani (MindaNews / 15 August) – On May 2 this year, at the height of the lockdown triggered by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a large *pawikan* (sea turtle) appeared at the doorstep of a cottage in a beach resort in Glan town, touted as the “Boracay of the South” due to its white sand shoreline.

Emerging from Sarangani Bay, the olive ridley found her way to the Kingkim Beach Resort to hatch eggs, undisturbed as the resort was closed to the public. It was a Saturday, and if it were not for the lockdown, the secluded resort would have been brimming with the weekend tourist crowd.



A mature sea turtle photographed swimming at the Sarangani Bay. Photo courtesy of Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape

Three weeks later, on May 27, another olive ridley nested also at the same resort located in Barangay Burias, when no tourists were around to swim in its turquoise waters or simply idle on its sandy white shore, again because of the lockdown.

“The sea turtles consider our coastal village their home apparently because they feel safe here and won’t be hurt,” Bazon Kingkim, the resort’s manager, told MindaNews.

Beach resorts in Sarangani were closed from mid-March to May 31 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the province. Starting June 1, the municipal government of Glan initially opened its beaches to residents of Sarangani and General Santos City only, with the local tourists required to book first at the resorts and present medical certificates upon entering the town.

The eggs of the first nesting olive ridley successfully hatched on June 27, with the locals releasing 46 hatchlings to the bay. It usually takes 45 to 60 days for the sea turtle eggs to hatch.

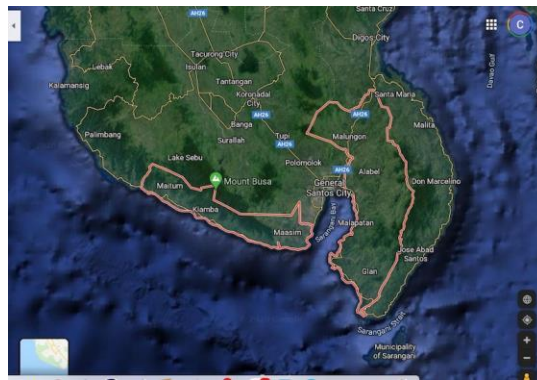
Protected seascape

Sarangani Bay has long been known for its rich biodiversity, harboring a wide variety of ecosystems ranging from mangroves, seagrasses and the varying depths of coral reefs. Some parts of the bay have been described as world-class diving spots.

In 1996, then President Fidel Ramos issued Proclamation 756 establishing the Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape (SBPS), covering 210,887-hectares across the towns of Glan, Malapatan, Alabel (the provincial capital), Maasim, Kiamba and Maitum, and the chartered city of General Santos.

The SBPS is home to some threatened species such as *dugong* (sea cow), *mameng* (Napoleon wrasse), and four kinds of marine turtles (hawksbill, olive ridley, loggerhead and green sea turtle). Across the bay, at least 411 reef species have flourished.

Other notable fauna found in Sarangani Bay are dolphins, whales, sun fish, giant clams and shore birds. There are at least 27 mangrove species dominated by pagatpat (*Sonneratiaceae*), bungalon (*Aviceniaceae*) and bakawan (*Rhizophoraceae*) and at least 11 species of seagrasses.



Sarangani province and bay. Courtesy of Google Maps

Other notable fauna found in Sarangani Bay are dolphins, whales, sun fish, giant clams and shore birds. There are at least 27 mangrove species dominated by pagatpat (*Sonneratiaceae*), bungalon (*Aviceniaceae*) and bakawan (*Rhizophoraceae*) and at least 11 species of seagrasses.

Thousands of families depend on their livelihood on Sarangani Bay, where pelagic species such as bilong-bilong (*Mene maculata*), tulay or matambaka (*Selar crumenophthalmus*), bolinao (*Encrasicholina punctifer*), bangsi (*Cypselurus opisthopus*), sambagon (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), are aplenty.

Bane and boon

Sarangani has been on extended modified general quarantine since June 1.

For majority of Filipinos, the lockdown triggered by COVID-19 was a bane especially with the restriction of movement and the shutting down of office and business operations that affected tens of thousands of workers nationwide.



File photo of the sea turtle hatchery in Maasim, Sarangani. MindaNews photo by BONG S. SARMIENTO

On August 6, the Philippine Statistics Authority revealed the country crashed into a recession as the economy shrank a record 16.5 percent during the second quarter.

President Rodrigo Duterte in mid-March ordered the lockdown in the National Capital Region, home to some 12 million people, to fight the virus, a move which local government units in the rest of the country eventually followed.

For Sarangani, its first confirmed COVID-19 case was recorded on May 18 and the second at the end of that month. With the easing of the lockdown in June that allowed locally stranded individuals and returning overseas Filipinos to go home to their provinces, the COVID-19 cases in Sarangani surged.

As of 6 p.m. on August 15, Sarangani recorded 72 COVID-19 cases, out of which 54 have recovered while 18 are still considered "active cases," according to the Department of Health's Center for Health Development in Region 12 (Soccsksargen).

But while COVID-19 clearly was a bane to humankind, it was a boon for marine biodiversity in Sarangani Bay.

Nesting haven

Sitting in her office in Alabel town with a large television screen showing the amazing underwater world with schools of fish swimming in corals, Joy Ologuin, SBPS superintendent, stressed the need to protect Sarangani Bay even more after the lockdown restrictions have been eased.

“The COVID-19 lockdown last March (to end of May) prevented tourists from going to our beaches. But it allowed the marine biodiversity to breathe and rest, especially the sea turtles that made a notable return to Glan and other parts of Sarangani province,” she told MindaNews.



oy Ologuin, Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape superintendent, at her office in Alabel, Sarangani. MindaNews photo by BONG S. SARMIENTO

For years, the towns of Maitum and Maasim have been the more popular nesting sites for endangered and threatened sea turtles. In fact, the two towns are home to government-funded pawikan hatcheries and learning sites

During the lockdown from mid-March to May 31, at least 8,751 hatchings were released to Sarangani Bay from the different parts of the province, according to SBPS data.

Majority of the sea turtle hatchlings remained in Maitum and Maasim towns but many were also recorded in Glan, Alabel and even Malapatan.

About a dozen hatchings were noted in Glan, five in Alabel and two in Malapatan.

For that same period SBPS logged over at least 100 hatchings in the adjoining towns of Maitum and Maasim.

For decades, Sarangani's shores have hosted the nesting of olive ridley, hawksbill, green sea and loggerhead sea turtles.

Olive ridley is the most common species found in the area.

Also known as Pacific ridley, olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is categorized as vulnerable, meaning its population is decreasing, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

The IUCN has also classified Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricate*) as critically endangered, green sea (*Chelonia mydas*) as endangered and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) as vulnerable.

“Most of the time, humans are the problem”

Reiterating that the COVID-19 lockdown reduced the stress and pressure on Sarangani Bay, Ologuin cited the need to continue the conservation awareness campaign in communities along the bay to conserve the sea turtles and other aquatic resources.

"Compared to a few years ago, the awareness on sea turtle conservation by residents in coastal communities has become better. It must be sustained," she said.



Sea turtle hatchlings released to the Sarangani Bay. Photo courtesy of Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape

Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act passed in 2001 punishes persons who, "willfully and knowingly exploit wildlife resources and their habitat" or kill and destroy wildlife species unless for allowed instances; collect, hunt, possess, trade wildlife and commit other acts the law enumerated as illegal.

The law imposes a jail term of six to 12 years and fines ranging from 100,000 to one million pesos for persons who undertake illegal acts against species listed as critical; four to six years imprisonment and a fine from 50,000 to 500,000 pesos if inflicted against endangered species; and two to four years imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 to 300,000 pesos if inflicted against vulnerable species.

In a study entitled "Environmental Issues and Mechanisms in Protecting Marine Turtle Nests in Maitum, Sarangani," Nannette Nacional, Maitum town's environment officer, stressed that sea turtles play a big role in the marine ecosystem, hence they need to be conserved and protected.

The study, submitted in June 2020 to the graduate faculty of the Mindanao State University in General Santos City, was part of Nacional's requirements for her Masters in Sustainable Development Studies Major in Community Development.

"Most of the time, humans are the problem," she said, referring to why sea turtles have either become endangered or threatened.

Despite the hefty fines and jail term for violators as well as awareness campaign, Nacional said some residents in town continue to hunt marine turtles and their eggs for consumption or business purposes. She recommended, among others, the need to strengthen the enforcement capacity of the local government's Bantay Dagat (Sea Watchers) and the prosecution of offenders.

"Sea turtles are worth saving. They are part of beaches and marine systems, which are essential ecosystems. If they go extinct, such essential ecosystems will deteriorate," Nacional stressed.

Ologuin said they have been regularly monitoring the bay's health, in partnership with other national government agencies and the local government units straddled by Sarangani Bay.

Sarangani Bay is still healthy

"The presence of sea turtles and other marine mammals within Sarangani Bay manifests that the bay is still healthy," she said.

Based on the regular monitoring from last year up to July 2020, Gary John Cabinta, ecosystems management specialist of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office-Sarangani, said they recorded the presence of 40 to 60 spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) in Malapatan and Glan towns, 150 to 200 fraser's dolphins (*Lagenodelphis hosei*) in General Santos City and Glan, four pygmy killer whales (*Feresa attenuate*) in Malapatan and Glan, 16 risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) in Malapatan, and two dwarf/pygmy sperm whales (*Kogia sp.*) in Malapatan.



Children release sea turtle hatchlings in Maitum, Sarangani. MindaNews photo by BONG S. SARMIENTO

The sightings of these marine mammals were on top of the pawikans that thrived or hatched across the SBPS, he said.

“Marine mammals can be used as indicators of the health of marine ecosystems... The presence of these marine mammals maintains the balance of the ecosystem,” Cabinta said in a report.

Sadly, garbage, including non-biodegradables, continues to find their way into the bay.

Last month, the monitoring team documented a large patch of debris consisting of plastic bottles and wrappers, diapers, sacks, cellophanes and coconut husks floating at the heart of Sarangani Bay, Cabinta said.

Since the marine debris poses great threats to the environment, especially to the marine mammals and other organisms, the local government unit of each coastal barangays must strengthen the implementation of their solid waste management systems to help regulate the trash from entering the bay, he added.

According to the DENR-Soccksargen, there had been documented stranding and deaths of sea turtles and other marine species in the Sarangani Bay due to ingestion of plastic waste.

Cabinta also stressed the need to conduct a series of education awareness in coastal communities for the protection of the marine environment as well as regular clean-up across Sarangani Bay to lessen the threats of plastics ingestion among large marine organisms.

For Kingkim, the resort manager in Glan town, proper awareness is crucial in keeping the sea turtles from extinction.

“They will keep coming back if they feel they are not in danger,” he stressed.

Kingkim, whose resort sits next to a mosque, recalled that in his younger years, older folk in their community would perform a *sumbali* in order to slaughter the pawikan in conformity with Islamic rites.

“That was a long time ago. Most of us in the village now are largely aware about the need to protect the sea turtles,” he said.

(Bong S. Sarmiento of Koronadal City is Vice Chair of the Mindanao Institute of Journalism, which runs MindaNews. The production of this special report was made possible with support from Internews' Earth Journalism Network)

Sanitary landfill sa Sumilao, Bukidnon maayos, may treatment system



August 22, 2020 @ 3:56 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Tiniyak ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na nasa maayos ang itinayong bagong sanitary landfill sa Sumilao, Bukidnon at may treatment system ang naturang landfill.

Ayon sa isinagawang inspeksyon ni DENR-Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer Morito Estifano, napatunayang sumusunod sa alituntunin ng Republic Act 9003 o ang Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 ang naturang landfill.

Sinabi ng DENR na naaayon din sa Solid Waste Management Plan ng munisipyo ang bagong bukas na sanitary landfill facility (SLF) sa munisipalidad ng Sumilao, Bukidnon.

Nabatid pa sa DENR na ang dalawang ektaryang category 1 SLF na pinatatakbo ng munisipalidad ng Sumilao sa Northern Mindanao na nagbibigay serbisyo sa sampung barangay at mga pampublikong palengke nito ay mayroong maayos na “leachate collection at treatment system.

Ayon pa sa DENR ang compliant na sanitary landfill sa Sumilao, Bukidnon ay sumusunod sa alituntunin ng Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Nabatid pa sa ulat na hindi rin umano mapanganib sa kalikasan ang naturang sanitary landfill sa Sumilao, Bukidnon. **Santi Celario**

Hundreds of used rapid test kits dumped on Abuyog, Leyte roadside

Published August 21, 2020 8:34pm

Hundreds of used rapid test kits were merely dumped on the side of a highway in Abuyog, Leyte.

According to John Consulta's report on "24 Oras" on Friday, the local government said the test kits came from a private clinic in another district.

"Nalaman na lang namin na galing pala ito sa isang private clinic. Tinapon daw ng driver so hindi pa kami sure. The investigation is still ongoing," Abuyog, Leyte Mayor Lemuel Gintraya said.

"According sa investigation namin, it's from a different municipality actually so it's from a different district. Malayo talaga like mga 100 kilometers, more than 100 kilometers away," he added.

Gintraya said the Environment Management Bureau and the Department of Health are already investigating the matter.

Meanwhile, the test kits were gathered and disposed of properly following health standards, he added.

"Per advise ng EMB, lagyan daw ng concentrated chlorine, i-sanitize siya then ilagay sa plastic drum, 'yong blue na malaki na drum, tapos i-seal siya, huwag na siyang buksan kasi 'yon nga delikado kasi," Gintraya said.

So far, Abuyog has recorded a total of 24 cases of COVID-19 with nine recoveries. — **Ma. Angelica Garcia/DVM, GMA News**

10-hectare fruit orchard rises in Quirino



By LEANDER C. DOMINGO, TMT

August 23, 2020

NAGTIPUNAN, Quirino: A people's organization has bared its success in the development of a 10-hectare fruit orchard in this town in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) in support of the National Greening Program.

Donato Gammad, chairman of the 200-strong Kadikitan Association for Community Development (KAFCD), said with DENR's support, their rambutan plantation is growing, providing livelihood and income to member-beneficiaries

In 2011, DENR-Region 2 entered into a memorandum of agreement with KAFCD for the development of the 10-hectare fruit plantation within the 4,958-hectare Community-Based Forest Management area awarded to them in 1994.

"What we earn from these plantations is a great help to our families. Without this partnership with the DENR, sending our children to school would have been impossible," Gammad said.

During the recent site visit and interaction with Gwendolyn Bambalan, DENR Region 2 executive director, Gammad and other members of the organization shared how the initiative was able to uplift their socioeconomic condition.

"In 2018, I earned at least P120,000 for my family's basic needs especially the badly needed finances for the education of my children," Gammad added.

'Plant more native trees to promote ecosystem

August 23, 2020

TITLE: integrity, biodiversity', urge environment advocates

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'Plant more native trees to promote ecosystem integrity, biodiversity', urge environment advocates

Published August 22, 2020, 12:03 PM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

Native tree experts and enthusiasts have encouraged the public to plant more native trees in idle and private lands as they tend to adapt more naturally to their local surrounding.

During the 14th episode of "Stories for a Better Normal: Pandemic and Climate Pathways" organized by the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Office of Antique Rep. Loren Legarda, Tanggol Kalikasan legal adviser Asis Perez underscored the benefits of tree farms, as it promote ecosystems integrity and biodiversity.

"Over this period of 10 years, we (Tanggol Kalikasan) have these takeaways: Unang-una po, napakaraming private lands ang nakatiwangwang, wala pong tanim at available for planting trees. Pangalawa, what we saw is pwede sa isang lugar madami kang puno na itanim. And we also realized na maganda ang family-based approach, kaya ang ginawa po namin, talagang pami-pamilya ang kinakausap namin and they are the ones whom we deal directly," Perez said.

(First of all, a lot of private lands are vacant, there are no plants and they are available for planting trees. Second, what we saw is that in one place you can plant many trees. And we also realized that the family-based approach is good, so what we did, we really talked to families and they are the ones whom we deal with directly.)

Ephraim Cercado, a medical surgeon and manager of the Philippine Native Tree Enthusiasts, said that the country's biodiversity has so much to offer.

"Meron po tayong 3,600 tree species. We've been planting a lot of mahogany, gmelina, at falcata. Bakit po tayo nagti-tiyaga sa barya kung pwede naman tayong kumita nang mas malaki? Mas maganda kasi yung mao-offer sa atin ng native species. Kung tanim po tayo nang tanim ng puro exotic species, masisira po ang biodiversity hanggang sa microscopic level, at nagpro-promote po tayo ng mas maraming pandemic. That's why we need to plant native species," Cercado said.

(We have 3,600 tree species. We've been planting a lot of mahogany, gmelina, and falcata. Why would be satisfied with a little income when we can earn more? What the native species can offer us is better. If we only plant exotic species, biodiversity will be destroyed up to the microscopic level, and we will promote more pandemics. That's why we need to plant native species.)

Kaleekasann Nursery founder Lee Ann Canals-Silayan explained that some of the trees are good for urban landscaping.

"Nagsimula lang ako sa pagpulot ng mga buto kung saan-saan—sa campus, sa park, sa subdivision, lagi akong nakatingin sa kung ano-anong puno na nakatanim sa paligid. At pupulutin ko sila, aalamin ang pangalan nila, at paano sila itanim. Karamihan sa mga seeds natin, simpleng patong lang sa lupa tapos hihintayin mong umusbong siya, pero may ilan na kailangan ng kaunting preparation. Makakatulong na mayroong libro tungkol sa propagation ng puno at magtanong online sa Philippine Native Tree Enthusiasts, pati sa aking Instagram and Facebook accounts," she said.

(I just started picking seeds everywhere — on campus, in the park, in the subdivision, I was always looking at what trees were planted around me. And I will pick them up, find out their names, and how to plant them. Most of our seeds are just simply covered on the ground and then you wait for it to sprout, but there are some that need a little preparation. It would be helpful to have a book on tree propagation and ask questions online at Philippine Native Tree Enthusiasts, as well as on my Instagram and Facebook accounts.)



‘Plant more native trees to promote ecosystem

August 23, 2020

TITLE: integrity, biodiversity’, urge environment advocates

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DATE

Legarda noted that planting and maintaining green spaces have been vital in maintaining people’s mental and physical health through the coronavirus pandemic.

The planting of native trees should be prioritized in the tree-planting efforts of communities as these not only sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but also helps restore the natural biodiversity of landscapes, she added.

Creation of Boracay Development Council sought

Published 4 hours ago on August 23, 2020 01:20 AM

By [Keith A. Calayag](#)



BORACAY development a priority under President Duterte. PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN HENRY DODSON FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE

Parañaque Rep. Joy Myra Tambunting has filed a bill seeking the creation of a Boracay Development Council.

Creating an office that will oversee the Boracay island is one of the priority bills President Rodrigo Duterte mentioned in his State of the Nation Address last month.

Under House Bill 7294, the Boracay Development Council will have the power to operate, manage and develop the Boracay Island; accept any local or foreign investment; formulate short and long term strategies for eco-tourism development; approve or disapprove and issue necessary clearances for all plans, programs and projects by public and private corporations and local government offices.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the tourism, Boracay’s main source of income. In this regard, this proposed measure seeks to preserve and protect the island by creating a Boracay Development Authority which is tasked to foresee and regulate the utilization and development of Boracay,” Tambunting said in the bill’s explanatory note.

Aside from Tambunting, Reps. Luis Raymund Villafuerte, Rufus Rodriguez, Eric Olivarez, Carlito Marquez also filed this month their respective bills seeking the creation of a Boracay Development Council.

In April 2018, President Duterte ordered the closure of Boracay Island for purposes of rehabilitation and redevelopment. It was reopened in October.

Ground deformation found in several areas of Cataingan, Masbate days after 6.6-magnitude quake

Published August 22, 2020, 4:27 PM
by [Alexandria Dennise San Juan](#)

Ground deformation was found in several areas of Cataingan town in Masbate days after a destructive magnitude 6.6 earthquake struck the province, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said on Saturday, August 22.

According to Phivolcs, its Differential Interferometric Satellite Aperture Radar (DInSAR) analysis of the quake revealed ground deformation in different areas of the municipality.

Through satellite data taken on August 14 and 20, Phivolcs said the ground deformations found are maybe a “combination of vertical and horizontal ground displacements, between 20 to 30 centimeters to the west of the epicenter.”

The state seismology bureau said the result of its DInSAR analysis complements the field verified ground rupture documented by the PHIVOLCS Quick Response Team.

Field personnel from the Masbate Seismic Station found that the Masbate-Cataingan Placer Road in Barangay Gahit was transacted by the Philippine Fault-Masbate Segment.

In Sitio Alimango in Barangay Concepcion, rice paddies were displaced and moletracks were found which are caused by the movement of the fault with an approximate horizontal displacement between 30 to 40 centimeters.

The tremor jolted the town of Cataingan on Tuesday morning, where Intensity VII, characterized by Phivolcs as “destructive” shaking, was felt. The quake was also felt in parts of Luzon and Visayas.

As of Friday, Phivolcs said 324 aftershocks with magnitudes ranging from 1.6 to 5.1 were recorded.

With this, the agency reiterated its call for the inspection of buildings and houses that were damaged by the quake.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/08/22/ground-deformation-found-in-several-areas-of-cataingan-masbate-days-after-6-6-magnitude-quake/>

Public projects to spur economic activities — Roque

Published 12 hours ago on August 22, 2020 05:56 PM

By **TDI**



SECRETARY ROQUE

Malacañang acknowledged on Saturday that the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns have adversely affected the finances of many Filipinos as reflected in a Social Weather Station (SWS) survey.

In that survey, 36 percent of the respondents said they expect their quality of life to deteriorate in the next 12 months.

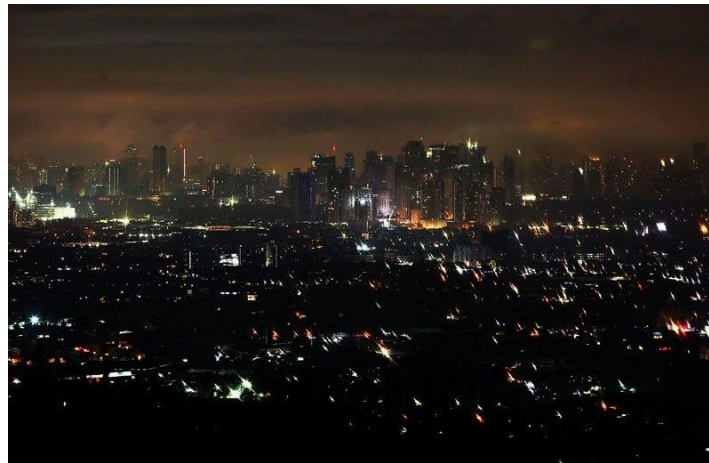
“It is for this reason that government economists have prepared a whole-of-society program in our recovery plan called Recharge PH to mitigate its impact,” Roque said, referring to COVID-19.

Roque said the government is resuming infrastructure projects like those under Build, Build, Build and the capacity building activities for the health sector, in order to create jobs and spur economic activities.

“We hope to revitalize the economy and stimulate growth for the betterment of the lives of our people,” the palace official said.

The survey was conducted on 3 to 6 of July, in which 30 percent said they expect their quality of life to stay the same and 26 percent expect theirs to improve.

p/jd



House leaders said this yesterday as they pushed for more measures to complement Bayanihan 2 in jumpstarting the economy. Miguel De Guzman, file

'Bayanihan 2 not enough stimulus for recovery'

[Edu Punay](#) (The Philippine Star) - August 23, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The P165-billion Bayanihan to Recover as One Act, or the Bayanihan 2 Law, would not suffice to sustain the needed economic recovery from recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

House leaders said this yesterday as they pushed for more measures to complement Bayanihan 2 in jumpstarting the economy.

Deputy Speaker LRay Villafuerte and assistant minority leader Stella Quimbo both pushed for the passage of the proposed COVID-19 Unemployment Reduction Economic Stimulus Act (CURES) and Accelerated Recovery and Investments Stimulus for the Economy Act (ARISE), which will provide P1.5 trillion and P1.3 trillion in funds, respectively, for various economic recovery programs.

"We are hoping the P165-billion outlay set in this consolidated version that will be ratified by both chambers of the Congress would just be an initial stimulus package, given the huge amount that we legislators in the House believe is needed to spell a strong and early recovery for the sectors reeling from the global economic crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic," Villafuerte said in a statement.

With this, he appealed to Malacañang "to raise more resources in the months ahead to fund further stimulus packages needed for an early and strong economic rebound," particularly the House-approved CURES and ARISE.

The Camarines Sur representative explained that both measures would provide aggressive spending to energize the economy and ease the pandemic's impact on its worst-hit sectors.

Quimbo made the same appeal, saying the expected P2.4-trillion revenue losses in the country's economy this year could be turned around if the government comes up with a stimulus program worth at least P1.5 trillion.

"Under ARISE, we have a comprehensive plan to address the economic crisis. ARISE proposes P1.3 trillion over three years. Special attention is given to our small businesses who are most in need of resources in order to stay afloat, with P60 billion allocated for MSME (micro, small, and medium enterprises) loans and assistance under DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) and SBC (Small Business Corp.)," the Marikina lawmaker explained.

Quimbo likened the Bayanihan 1 law to a “first aid” for the economy, while Bayanihan 2 was the “emergency room,” adding that the proposed ARISE will be the needed “surgery.”

Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, for his part, said the 2021 General Appropriations Act (GAA) will also be crucial in reviving the economy.

He said the House would propose a COVID-19 fund amounting to P500 billion under the national budget next year.

“All our energy for the whole month of August will be used for the 2021 budget. It’s hard enough to make a budget when times are certain; how much more now when there is a lot of uncertainty. That’s why one of the things Congress will push for is to have a P250 billion to P500 billion fund for anti-COVID or COVID-related programs,” the Taguig-Pateros representative revealed.

Cayetano had earlier proposed the allocation of funds for the procurement and distribution of vaccines in the 2021 budget.

Trading barbs

Behind the approval of the reconciled bill of the proposed Bayanihan 2 Law was apparently a rift between House and Senate leaders in the bicameral conference committee.

Deputy Speakers Villafuerte and Dan Fernandez traded barbs with Senate Majority Leader Migs Zuribi and Minority Leader Franklin Drilon over the controversial P10-billion funding infrastructure projects proposed in the House version of the measure, following the approval of the consolidated version of the measure last Thursday.

Villafuerte hit back at Drilon, who reportedly insinuated that the House contingent had pushed for the P10-billion funding for tourism infrastructure under the Bayanihan 2 law allegedly “for personal gain.”

Drilon said their Senate contingent had “blocked” the House contingent’s plan to have the funding for the construction of comfort rooms in tourist spots as well as roads en route to tourism destinations amid the COVID-19 pandemic, even if tourist destinations remain largely closed.

“We did not agree to use the P10 billion for building toilets in tourist areas because we believed that this will not help tourism enterprises and displaced workers in the tourism industry,” Drilon was quoted as saying in Filipino in an interview.

In response, Villafuerte dismissed the opposition senator’s insinuation as “pure grandstanding” and “sourgraping.”

Villafuerte believed that Drilon’s comments were inappropriate because they were made after Bayanihan 2 was ratified.

“This is the first time that our counterparts are sourgraping after a bicameral panel discussion where both chambers already agreed and signed the report,” he pointed out.

“May we humbly request which exact provisions they are insinuating regarding ‘personal gains?’ The House (contingent) would gladly address any concern. It is very unprofessional to question a report they signed and approved,” he added.

The Camarines Sur representative also labeled as “fake news” Drilon’s claim that the insistence of the House contingent delayed the approval of the reconciled bill.

“With all due respect to our Senate counterparts, it’s best just to release the transcripts even the video recording of the whole proceedings so the people can determine who’s telling the truth and who actually delayed the approval of the measure,” Villafuerte said.

Fernandez, for his part, questioned why Zubiri and other senators were scoffing at the consolidated Bayanihan 2 bill when the chamber’s contingent to the bicam panel had given its nod to the measure.

Fernandez accused the senators of “showboating in aid of reelection.”

“If our high and mighty senators feel that the consolidated Bayanihan 2 bill was not up to their standards, then why did they approve it during the bicam talks? The truth is a majority of the good features of Bayanihan 2 were actually introduced by the House and were only adopted by the Senate,” the Laguna representative stressed.

“These senators appear conflicted. They want to make it appear that they did their part in passing Bayanihan 2, obviously to worm their way into the good graces of an overwhelming majority of our people who support President Duterte and are appreciative of his Administration’s comprehensive COVID-19 response measures, but they are at the same time distancing themselves from the bill, obviously to please the ragtag band of anti-government critics,” Fernandez added.

Villafuerte, who headed the House contingent in the bicam, also turned the tables on Drilon.

“Why is Senator Drilon strongly against the P10-billion infrastructure for tourism (that) we wanted when he strongly pushed for billions of infrastructure funding for Iloilo, particularly (for) the construction of the P800 million Iloilo Convention Center and the P8.8-billion Iloilo International Airport, among others?” Villafuerte stressed.

“If he pushed for almost P9 billion worth of infrastructure funding in Iloilo to promote tourism, why can’t the whole country avail of P10 billion for tourism infrastructure? We can cite more areas where billions have been spent for infrastructure projects to promote tourism?” the House leader argued.

Faster vaccine procurement okayed

posted August 23, 2020 at 01:10 am

by [Manila Standard](#)

PH records 4,933 new cases

DILG to hire 50,000 contact tracers

Congress has approved a provision waiving a Phase 4 clinical trial requirement to hasten the procurement of a coronavirus vaccine under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act 2 that was ratified by the Senate last week as infections continue to surge, with the total reaching 187,249 on Saturday with 4,933 new cases.

“Once the medication and vaccine are available, we will do everything and we will really go out of our way to make sure that our kababayans can access them. We can’t allow the medication and vaccine to be affordable only to the rich and well-to-do,” said Speaker Alan Cayetano.

The Department of Health said it will do away with the fourth and final phase of clinical trials for COVID-19 drugs and vaccines, a requirement set by the Universal Healthcare Law.

The approved provision of Bayanihan 2 waives the Phase 4 trials under the following conditions:

- the medication and vaccine are recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and/or other internationally recognized health agencies; and

- minimum standards for the distribution shall be set by the Food and Drug Authority (FDA) and the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC), as may be applicable.

The provision shall remain in effect three months after December 19, 2020.

“Like I always say, we have to adapt, innovate, and manage in the new normal. So, this early we are preparing for the vaccine. We can’t start looking for the funding only when the vaccine becomes available. We have to be equipped,” Cayetano said.

Phase IV clinical trial involves the post-market monitoring of the effects of a new drug and is usually done to a few thousand patients.

The DOH said waiving the Phase 4 trial requirement “is not without historical precedent.”

“Accelerated clinical trials and regulatory approvals in response to threats such as Ebola and Meningitis contributed to mitigating the spread of Ebola and decline in the incidence of Meningitis in the sub-Saharan belt,” the department said in a statement.

When the Dengvaxia anti-dengue vaccine was administered to Filipinos, mostly children, during the past administration, it was still on Phase 4 clinical trial.

The vaccine had already been administered to the close to a million people, the manufacturer, Sanofi Pasteur of France, found out that instead of preventing dengue, Dengvaxia will exacerbate symptoms of people who were injected the drug but have not had dengue fever before.

The country on Saturday reported 4,933 new COVID-19 cases, the fifth consecutive day where more than 4,000 cases have been reported.

The National Capital Region reported the highest number of new cases with 2,845 cases, followed by Cavite with 461, Laguna with 288, Rizal with 167, and Bulacan with 152.

Total recoveries rose to 114,921 after 436 more patients recovered from the illness while the death toll stood at 2,966.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government said it is targeting to start the hiring of 50,000 contact tracers in September once the additional P5-billion appropriation under the Bayanihan 2 is released.

Interior Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said the mass hiring will allow the government to meet the recommended ratio for contact tracing of Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong, the country’s contact tracing czar, of a 1:30 or 1:37.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/332146>

Duque tags pandemic Universal Health Care 'blessing'

Published 1 day ago on August 22, 2020 04:58 AM

By [Gabbie Parlade](#)



Despite its drastic effect on lives and the economy, the health crisis being faced by the country is a “blessing in disguise” as it opened doors towards the acceleration of the Universal Health Care (UHC), Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said Friday.

“For me personally, this can somehow be like a blessing in disguise; serendipitous. It has accelerated Universal Health Care because of the COVID-19, it’s a catalyst,” he said in a town hall meeting with hospital directors.

Duque said the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic exposed the weaker aspects of the country’s health system and brought more attention to the UHC.

“Although COVID-19 has exposed the fissures, weaknesses of our Philippine health system, it has brought to the fore the areas, the provisions of Universal Health Care that need to be accelerated in terms of its implementation,” he said.

The Health chief also said that he is not regretting any of his decisions and is instead urging the public to help in further strengthening the government’s COVID-19 response.

“So, for me, no regrets. It’s already there so let’s just do our best. Let’s broaden the context by which we are responding to the pandemic and that context is in the Universal Healthcare,” he stated.

To recall, at the onset of the disease in the country back in January, Duque told lawmakers that it would be ‘tricky and difficult’ to ban the entry of mainland Chinese visitors despite reports of the viral respiratory disease already starting to spread that time.

Duque then appealed to healthcare workers to prioritize their ‘patriotism’ and serve in the country instead of working abroad as initially only 25 had signed up on their call for more medical front liners to help in fighting the contagion.

“We are in a war, let’s help each other. Who else is going to take care of our fellow Filipinos but us? Let us be selfless,” he expressed.

Last Thursday, the Filipino Nurses United urged the national government to completely lift the ban on the deployment of healthcare workers stating that it is ‘unfair’ to suppress them of opportunities abroad.

The Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease, eventually heeded the call but only for those with existing contracts as of 8 March.

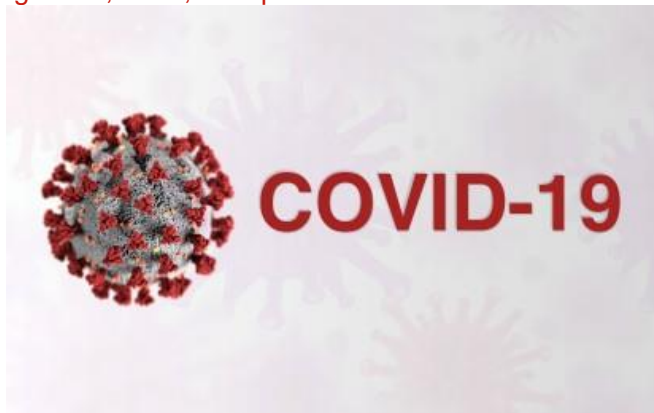
To date, the Philippines has reported nearly 170,000 cases of COVID-19 soaring past China and Indonesia in the Western Pacific Region as seen in the World Health Organization tally.

Worldwide, infections have gone beyond 22 million with deaths nearly at 800,000 as the United States still takes the lead at 5 million cases based on the latest data from the Johns Hopkins University.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/08/22/duque-tags-pandemic-universal-health-care-blessing/>

DOH tallies 4,933 new Covid-19 cases; total exceeds 187K

By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora August 22, 2020, 5:34 pm



MANILA – A total of 4,933 confirmed cases were added to the overall coronavirus disease (Covid-19) tally in the country, bringing the total to 187,249.

In its case bulletin released on Saturday, the Department of Health (DOH) said of these cases, 69,362 are active, 114,921 are recoveries, and 2,966 are deaths.

In its latest bulletin, the DOH said about 91.5 percent of the active cases have mild symptoms, 6.6 are asymptomatic, 0.8 are severe, and 1.1 percent are in critical condition.

It also reported some 439 new recoveries as well as 26 additional fatalities, 13 of whom passed away within August, 10 in July, and one each in the months of June, May, and April.

"Deaths were from NCR (17 or 65 percent), Region 3 (three or 12 percent), Caraga (two or 8 percent), Region 9 (one or 4 percent), Region 6 (one or 4 percent), Region 4A (1 or 4 percent), and Region 1 (1 or 4 percent)," it said.

The Health department clarified that about 49 duplicates were removed from the total case count, 15 of which were earlier tagged as recovered cases.

It noted that at least 19 cases were previously reported as recovered but after final validation, they were death (one) and active (18) cases.

The country's hospitals have a total bed capacity of 19,300 for Covid-19 patients, of which 1,700 are intensive care unit (ICU) beds, 12,600 are isolation beds, and 5,000 are ward beds.

The DOH said the ICU and isolation beds are both 48 percent in use as of August 21, while the ward beds are 51 percent in use.

About 69 percent of the 2,200 ventilators for Covid-19 patients remain available.

To date, some 2,118,227 individuals have been tested for SARS-CoV-2 by some 82 licensed RT-PCR laboratories and 27 licensed GeneXpert laboratories. **(PNA)**

COVID-19 sa Pinas higit 187K na: 4,933 may impeksyon, 26 patay, 436 gumaling



August 22, 2020 @ 4:29 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Umakyat na sa 187,249 ang kumpirmadong kaso ng coronavirus disease 2019 o COVID-19 sa bansa, ayon sa inilabas na datos ng Department of Health (DOH) ngayong Sabado, Agosto 22.

Ito ay makaraang maitala ang 4,933 bagong kaso kung saan pumalo naman sa 69,362 ang aktibong COVID-19 cases.

Giit ng DOH, hango ang mga kumpirmadong kaso sa isinumiteng resulta ng 97 mula sa 109 na lisensyadong laboratoryo sa bansa.

Umabot na rin sa 114,921 ang kabuuang recoveries dahil sa bagong 436 pasyente na gumaling sa sakit.

Sa bilang ng bagong mga kaso, 3,702 ang naitala sa pagitan ng August 9 hanggang 22 kung saan nanatiling nasa una ang National Capital Region o NCR na may 2,316; Region 4A, 826; Region 3, 242.

Sa nasawi naman ay 26 ang nadagdag kung saan ang 13 ay pumanaw ngayong August at tig-iisa naman noong July, June, May at April.

Sa mga pumanaw na ito, karamihan din ay mula sa NCR na nasa 17; Region 3, tatlo; CARAGA, dalawa at tig-isa naman sa Region 6, Region 4A at Region 1.

Samantala, ang 49 na naitalang duplicates ay inalis din sa total case counts kung saan 15 dito ang inalis na recovered. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

Source: <https://www.remate.ph/covid-19-sa-pinas-higit-187k-na-4933-may-impeksyon-26-patay-436-gumaling/>

China tells Philippines to stop provocations amid new West PH Sea dispute

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Aug 22 2020 07:18 PM

China called on the the Philippines to "immediately stop illegal provocative activities" after Manila filed a diplomatic protest over the Chinese Coast Guard's confiscation of Filipino fishermen's devices in the West Philippine Sea.

In a press briefing, Chinese Foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Li Jian said the Chinese Coast Guard merely acted "in accordance to the law."

"China's maritime police have carried out law enforcement activities in the waters of China's Huangyan Island in accordance with the law," said Zhao.

He also accused the Philippines of damaging China's sovereignty and security by sending military aircraft into the airspace "adjacent to China's Nansha Islands and reefs."

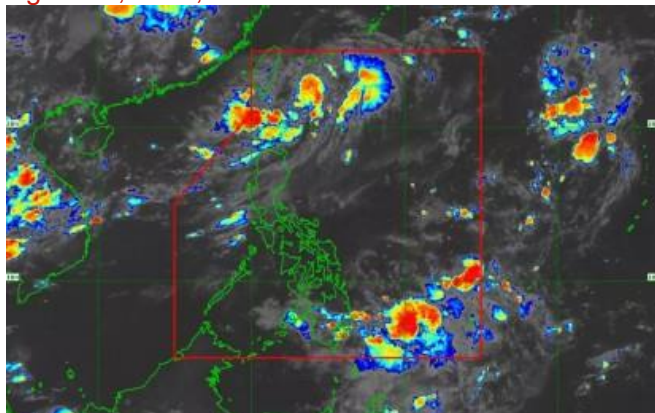
"China urges the Philippines to immediately stop illegal provocative activities," said Zhao.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) previously said it has lodged another diplomatic protest against China over the Chinese Coast Guard's allegedly illegal confiscation of Filipino fishermen's fish aggregating devices (payaos) in Bajo de Masinloc in May.

"The Philippines also resolutely objected to China's continuing illicit issuances of radio challenges [to] Philippine aircraft conducting legitimate regular maritime patrols in the West Philippine Sea," the DFA added.

'Igme' brings scattered rains over PH Saturday

By Raymond Carl Dela Cruz August 22, 2020, 9:38 am



(Satellite image from PAGASA)

MANILA – The low pressure area spotted near Batanes has developed into tropical depression Igme and will bring some rains in most parts of the country on Saturday.

In its daily weather bulletin, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the center of Igme was estimated at 285 kilometers (km) northeast of Basco, Batanes with maximum sustained winds of 55 km per hour (kph) near the center and gustiness of up to 70 kph.

Igme, moving north at 15 kph, is unlikely to directly hit the country and is expected to leave the Philippine Area of Responsibility by Sunday evening as it heads toward southern Japan.

Igme, however, will enhance the southwest monsoon, bringing cloudy skies with isolated rain showers and thunderstorms over Metro Manila, the Ilocos Region, the Cordillera Administrative Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, and the province of Rizal.

For the rest of the country, it said there will be partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rains showers brought by localized thunderstorms.

In the western and northern sections of Northern Luzon, there will be moderate to strong winds head southwest, causing moderate to rough coastal water conditions at 1.2 to 3.1 meters.

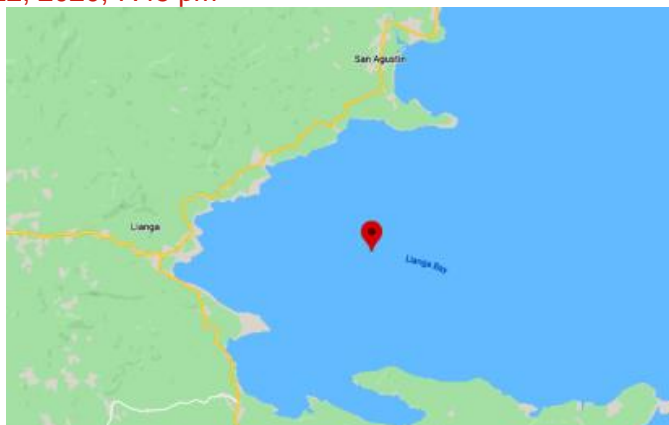
For the rest of Luzon, there will be moderate winds headed southwest to south, resulting in moderate coastal waters at 1.2 to 2.5 meters.

For the rest of the country, there will be light to moderate winds going southeast to south, causing slight to moderate coastal waters at 0.6 to 2.1 meters.

Temperature in Metro Manila will range from 24° C to 30° C; Puerto Princesa City, 26° C to 32° C; Metro Cebu, 24° C to 33° C; Cagayan de Oro City, 23° C to 32° C; and Metro Davao, 23° C to 33° C. **(PNA)**

Local red tide warning issued in Surigao Sur town

By Alexander Lopez August 22, 2020, 7:45 pm



Google map of Lianga Bay.

BUTUAN CITY – The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in the Caraga Region (BFAR-13) has issued a local red tide warning in the town of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur.

Laboratory test done by BFAR-13 on water samples from Barangay Baculin, Hinatuan resulted in positive for *Pyrodinium bahamense* var. *compressum*, a toxic microorganism that causes Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP), BFAR-13 chief Visa Tan-Dimeren said in a red tide warning issued on Aug. 21.

“To safeguard human lives while waiting for the confirmatory test of shellfish samples to be conducted by BFAR National Fisheries Laboratory Division (NFLD), this warning is issued as precautionary advice to the consuming public to refrain from gathering, selling and eating all types of shellfish and *Acetes* sp. locally known as “alamang” or “hipon” from the coastal waters of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur to avoid possible shellfish poisoning,” Tan-Dimeren said in the advisory.

However, she clarified that fish, crab, and shrimp can be eaten but all entrails must be removed and washed thoroughly before cooking.

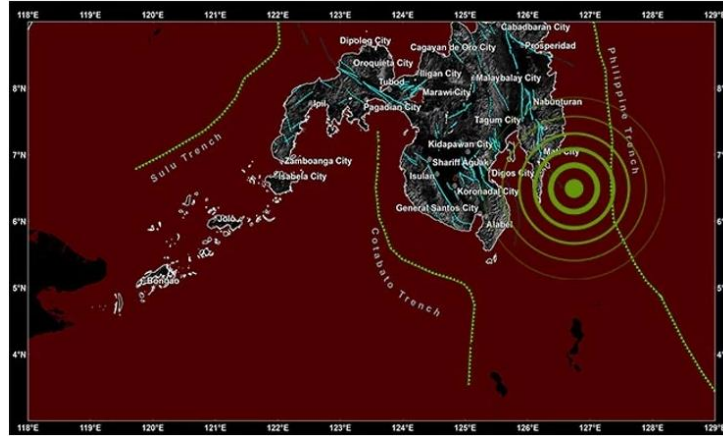
“BFAR and the local government unit (LGU) will continue to monitor the above-mentioned area to safeguard public health and protect the shellfish industry,” Tan-Dimeren said.

Aside from Hinatuan, Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur is also under red tide alert for months as issued by BFAR.

In its August 18, 2020 Shellfish Bulletin No. 15, BFAR said shellfish collected in Lianga Bay are still positive for PSP that is beyond the regulatory limit. **(PNA)**

Niyanig ng 4.5-magnitude na lindol ang Tarragona, Davao Oriental

ni [Lolet Abania](#) | August 22, 2020



Niyanig ng 4.5-magnitude na lindol sa Tarragona, Davao Oriental, ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Naramdaman ang paggalaw ng lupa bandang alas-12:26 ngayong tanghali, August 22 sa Tarragona, Davao Oriental.

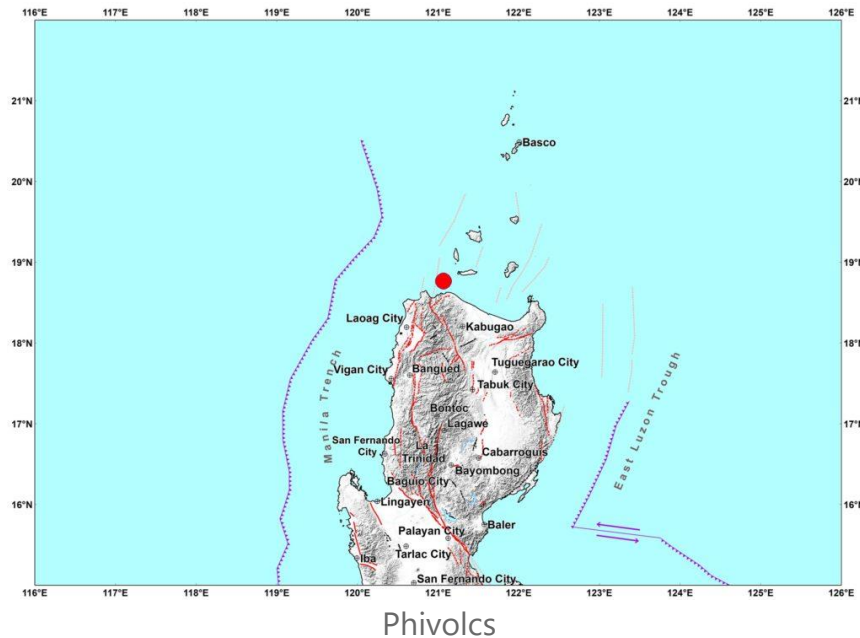
Ayon sa Phivolcs, ang epicenter ng pagyanig ay tumama 68 kilometers sa southeast ng Tarragona. Ang lindol ay tectonic in origin at may lalim na 28 kilometers.

Gayunman, walang naiulat na nasirang gusali o aftershock matapos ang pagyanig.

Patuloy na pinapayuhan ng Phivolcs, ang publiko na manatiling mapagmatyag at maging maingat sa anumang oras.

Ilocos Norte niyanig ng 4.5 lindol

By Karlos Bautista August 21, 2020 - 11:36 PM



Niyanig ng 4.5 magnitude na lindol ang lalawigan ng Ilocos Norte sa ganap na 9:41 ng gabi ngayong Biyernes, ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

Sumentro ang lindol 18 kilometro hilagang-kanluran ng bayan ng Claveria sa Cagayan. May lalim itong 26 kilometro.

Walang naiulat na nasaktan o pinsala sa lindol na tumama karagatan.

Naramdaman ito sa sumusunod na lugar:

Reported Intensity

Intensity II – Bacarra, Ilocos Norte

Instrumental Intensities:

Intensity IV – Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte

Intensity I – Vigan City

4.6 lindol tumama sa karagatan ng Davao Oriental

Surviving Climate Change In ASEAN's Cities

The ASEAN Post Team

22 August 2020



A boy plays on a flooded road after heavy rain in Jakarta. (AFP Photo)

According to the World Bank, the global population is projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030 with two-thirds of this number living in cities. From that, an estimated 90 million people will move to cities in the ASEAN region.

This means that urban dwellers would reflect 45 percent of ASEAN's population where millions of people, especially those living in vulnerable places along river banks, canals and hill sides, will be exposed to the harmful effects of environmental damage. This vulnerable portion of the ASEAN population is expected to increase by 50 percent in the region's major cities.

A few days ago, it was reported that a 6.6 magnitude quake hit central Philippines, killing one person and injuring dozens in the aftermath. Earlier this year, flash floods occurred throughout the Indonesian capital of Jakarta and its metropolitan area where at least 66 people were killed. It was reported that 60,000 were displaced as a result of the disaster, dubbed the [worst flooding](#) in the area since 2007.

When disasters hit, it is always the poor who are most affected, as they are more exposed to environmental hazards and take longer to bounce back from a crisis – especially in the current [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Indonesia's urban population is estimated to account for more than 50 percent of its total population and is projected to increase 65 percent by 2025. The fast-sinking city, Jakarta will be 95 percent submerged by then.

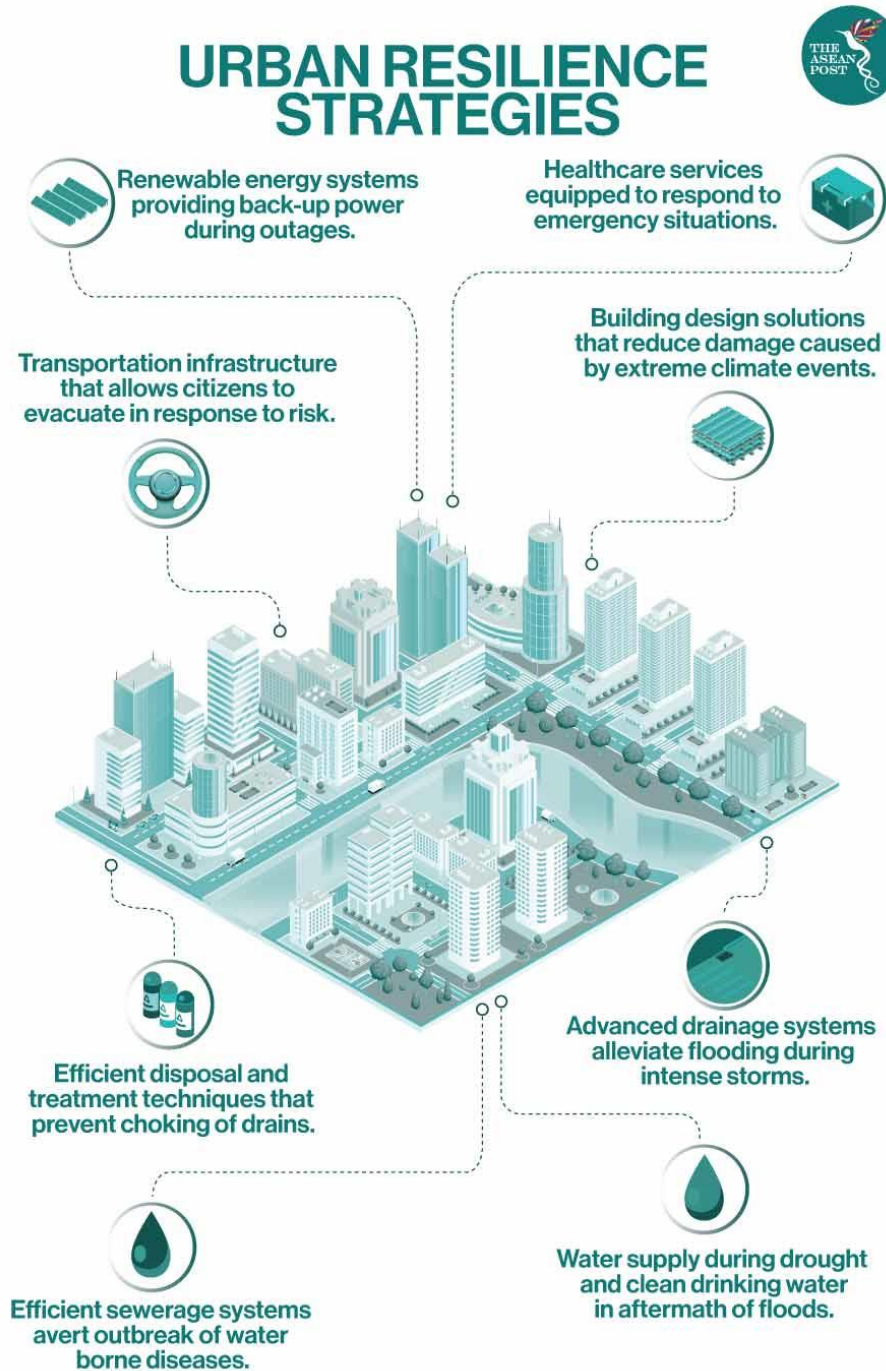
Hundreds of cities and communities are struggling with the impact of environmental crisis as well as human threats – including conflicts, failures in governance and economic stress.

Although scientists made accurate predictions about climate change as early as in 1982, millions of dollars have been spent since on misinformation campaigns to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of the general public. Doubt is harmful as it often leads to inaction. And human inaction has led to our current predicament.

Urban Resilience

Urban resiliency means the strengthening of city systems to reduce risks posed by climate crisis with specialised tools such as building capable social agents to anticipate and develop adaptive responses and maintain access to supportive urban infrastructure. Building strong infrastructure also requires strong economic, social and governance systems to support physical and intangible resiliency.

In 2019, the United Nations (UN) issued workplans for infrastructure and cities to ensure carbon neutrality by 2050, decarbonisation of the transport sector, localised/decentralised finance, resilient and zero-carbon buildings standards and codes and urban climate resilience for the most vulnerable.



Source: The Rockefeller Foundation

The “world is facing major challenges in sustainable development,” said Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat at the FutureChina Global Forum held last year, as part of the Ecosperity Conference 2019. He continued by suggesting ways to combat climate change through the collaborations of all segments of society; the government, businesses and individuals.

He also invited companies to participate with Singapore in research and development efforts (R&D) to “create new knowledge and solutions in areas such as food resilience, water, energy and land management.”

Climate crisis disasters can undermine decades of growth through a single catastrophic event, and supporting cities to be resilient is imperative in order to absorb the impact of such hazards. Yet, it is also vital to change the way we build and manage our cities.

City Smart

For many, there is great promise in new technologies offering effective urban solutions. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said that “smart grids and district energy solutions, or real-time traffic management, to waste management and water systems, and smart technologies will enable our future cities to operate more effectively.”

Smart cities, energy systems and transportation solutions, along with changes in technology and citizen participation are offering alternatives to protect cities and the environment as well as reducing their contribution to global warming.

A new effort to build sustainable cities is degrowth, that focuses on transforming the city rather than consuming more. Scholars and activists have argued that degrowth in developed nations will need to be part of a global effort to tackle climate change, and to preserve the conditions to satisfy the basic needs of future generations.

Climate change, global warming or extreme weather – whatever the name you prefer – will have the same negative impact on cities. The downside of not investing in city resiliency is the detrimental effect not only on the environment but on the economy, society and political structure as well. The devastation will be unimaginable.

California fires spread, fouling air and spurring evacuations

About 119,000 people have been evacuated, with many struggling to find shelter and hesitating to go to centers set up by authorities because of coronavirus risks.

Published 20 hours ago on August 22, 2020 10:06 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



Los Angeles, United States — Thick smoke blanketed large areas of central and northern California on Friday as more people fled some of the biggest fires in the state's history which have raged largely uncontrolled throughout the week.

One of the largest group of fires, dubbed the LNU Lightning Complex, has scorched nearly 220,000 acres (89,000 hectares), burned nearly 500 structures and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people.

By midday Friday, the fire, which erupted on Monday and is now the 10th largest in the state's history, was just seven percent contained.

Some of the fires in that complex threatened wineries in the famed Napa and Sonoma regions which are still reeling from similar deadly blazes in recent years.

Officials said five deaths have been linked to the latest fires, ignited by more than 12,000 lightning strikes.

Four bodies were recovered on Thursday, including three from a burned house in a rural area of Napa County.

Fire officials said lightning strikes had ignited 560 fires in the past week, the largest of which are the LNU, the SCU and CZU complex fires in the Bay Area.

Daniel Berlant, Cal Fire's assistant deputy director, said although firefighters had made progress in the last 24 hours, ongoing triple-digit temperatures and bone dry conditions were not helping.

He added that although temperatures were expected to cool slightly at the weekend, there is the potential of more dry lightning as early as Sunday evening.

"We could again experience a lightning storm so that has us remaining on high alert," Berlant said.

About 119,000 people have been evacuated, with many struggling to find shelter and hesitating to go to centers set up by authorities because of coronavirus risks.

Some in San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties, south of San Francisco, opted to sleep in trailers in parking lots or on beaches along the Pacific Ocean as they fled the CZU Lightning Complex, the seventh-largest fire in the state's history.

California fires spread, fouling air and spurring

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Tourists in Santa Cruz County were urged to leave to free up accommodations for people fleeing the blazes.

Governor Gavin Newsom told reporters in an update Friday that most of the fires are burning in unpopulated areas and statewide have chewed through some 771,000 acres — an area the size of the state of Rhode Island.

He also walked back his criticism of President Donald Trump from Thursday.

Newsom had taken aim at the US leader in a pre-taped speech to the Democratic National Convention, saying Trump had threatened to pull California's funding for wildfire suppression for alleged poor forest management.

"There is not one phone call I have made to the president where he hasn't quickly responded, and almost in every instance has responded favorably ... as it related to these wildfires," Newsom said.

"He may make statements publicly, but the working relationship privately has been a very effective one," he added.

Several states, including Oregon, New Mexico and Texas, had sent fire crews to help battle the flames and more states were expected to provide assistance, Newsom said.

Meanwhile, the smell of smoke lingered in San Francisco and other regions for the third consecutive day on Friday, with authorities urging residents to stay indoors.

"The many fire complexes burning around the Bay Area and Central Coast will keep skies hazy and smoky, at least in the short term," the National Weather Service said.

Authorities in the Bay Area, which encompasses seven counties, issued an air quality alert in effect through Sunday.

Washington zoo welcomes new baby panda

The new mother was exhibiting typical panda mom behaviors like “nursing her cub and cuddling it close,” the Smithsonian’s National Zoo said on Twitter.

Published 21 hours ago on August 22, 2020 08:55 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



Washington, United States — Washington zoo officials heralded the arrival of “a precious giant panda cub” Friday, following the much-watched birth of panda Mei Xiang’s latest baby, four years after her last pregnancy.

The new mother was exhibiting typical panda mom behaviors like “nursing her cub and cuddling it close,” the Smithsonian’s National Zoo said on Twitter.

“We’re overjoyed to share that Mei Xiang gave birth at 6:35 pm and is caring for her newborn attentively,” it added.

Fans of the panda were able to follow her labor live thanks to a “panda cam” accessible on the zoo’s website 24 hours a day — although high interest caused the feature to crash at some points.

Mei Xiang, who is 22 years old, was artificially inseminated on March 22 with the frozen semen of Tian Tian, another resident giant panda who will turn 23 later this month, according to the zoo.

Since the two pandas’ arrival in 2000, Mei Xiang has given birth to three surviving cubs: males Tai Shan in 2005 and Bei Bei in 2015, and a female, Bao Bao, in 2013.

The three were returned to China on their fourth birthdays under a partnership contract in which China owns the pandas.

Mei Xiang and Tian Tian themselves will be returned to China next December.

Under the US-China agreement, the National Zoo pays \$500,000 per year towards panda conservation efforts in China.

Beyond orangutans: Indonesia's national park stakeholders craft conservation plan

By [BusinessMirror](#) August 23, 2020



A mother orangutan and her baby in Indonesia's Gunung Leuser National Park.

Fiery-furred orangutans swing effortlessly from tree to tree using their long arms. Yearly, trekkers and tourists visit the lush rainforest of Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) for a close encounter with these mighty tree-dwelling mammals.

Due to its rich biodiversity and critical ecological value, the park has been classified as an Asean Heritage Park (AHP) and part of the Unesco World Heritage Site Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra.

GLNP is the only forest in the world where four iconic species live: the Sumatran orangutan, Sumatran tiger, Sumatran elephant and the Sumatran rhinoceros, said a news release from the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

Besides these, the park is abundant with fauna and flora species: 130 mammal species, up to 380 bird species, and iconic plants like the world's largest flower species *Rafflesia arnoldii*, and the tallest flower, *Amorphophallus titanum*.

Other known wildlife animals inhabiting the 800,000-hectare park are the slow loris, pig-tailed and long-tailed macaques, siamangs, white-handed gibbons, Thomas's leaf-monkeys, Griffith's silver leaf-monkeys, clouded leopards, Malay sunbears and sambar deer.

Illegal logging, poaching

Gunung Leuser and its rich biodiversity, however, are persistently hounded by threats such as illegal logging and poaching.

As it spearheaded the drafting of the collaborative management plan of GLNP, the Yayasan Orangutan Sumatera Lestari-Orangutan Information Centre delved into these threats through a series of workshops, consultations and visits.

The plan, which was completed in 2019, serves as a three-fold guide for park authorities and the local community alike to: conserve the park, create livelihood opportunities and increase community involvement.

Beyond orangutans: Indonesia's national park

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The crafting of the plan was supported by the partnership between the ACB and the German Development Bank, or Kreditanstalt Für Wiederaufbau (KfW), through the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

Early this year, the ACB and KfW awarded civil society organisations in GLNP and Way Kambas National Park, another AHP in Indonesia, a total of €446,227 in grants.

Addressing threats

Data from the GLNP collaborative management plan show that encroachment, illegal logging and disasters have damaged 143,735 hectares of the park, the ACB said.

It should be noted that the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra, to which GLNP is part of, has been listed in the Unesco's World Heritage Site in Danger.

Factors aggravating these concerns were the opening of forest roads coupled with encroachment, land-use conversions and the lack of long-term planning.

The existing management plan was established around the vision of the park's conservation and sustainable development.

However, notable gaps in its implementation, including limited community involvement, have been observed.

Thus, the management and stakeholders of the park decided that community awareness and participation has to be improved to address threats to the park.

"Local communities are a crucial partner in conserving biodiversity," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said. "Considering their familiarity with the area and their experiences living in biodiversity-rich areas, local communities usually already are, or can be, the Asean Heritage Parks' natural stewards."

The plan has also given attention to community outreach and conservation awareness.

Findings in the GLNP plan show that issues like the removal and damage of park boundary signs are brought about by the lack of public awareness and appreciation of the park.

Key solutions have been proposed to address this: establishing a center of conservation for community development and environmental education, conducting a conservation education series for stakeholders and for students, and rolling out online media promotional activities.

Good collaboration among stakeholders is expected to positively contribute to the park rehabilitation and wildlife conservation. The plan recommended shared responsibility between GLNP staff and community leaders in the park management and law enforcement.

Members of the community are tapped to conduct patrols, monitor biodiversity, and identify flora and fauna for conservation and tourism purposes.

Other proposed ecosystem-restoration activities in encroached and degraded areas in the park were also built around strengthening partnerships with various local nongovernment and civil society organizations.

Penabulu Foundation, an organization that assists the grantees, reported that wildlife monitoring and research informed the implementation of SGP-supported initiatives, such as improving the conservation of important species in these two parks.

Livelihood opportunities

The plan's livelihood component, meanwhile, focuses on community development and ecotourism.

Among the proposed activities are tree planting, establishing sustainable forest enterprises like beekeeping and medicinal plants, and developing other products like crafts and delicacies, ACB said.

The goal for ecotourism, on the other hand, is to diversify tourism experiences in GLNP.

Tourism, especially orangutan and elephant tours, serves as a significant source of livelihood. Currently, visits are concentrated in areas with established tourism packages focused on orangutan and elephant tours.

For example, Langkat District, where the orangutan and elephant tours operate, reported 18,600 international and domestic tourist arrivals in 2016.

Designing tourism plans and packages, and training the local community to implement tour offerings in other areas with potential will provide more attractions for visitors and additional income for the communities in these areas.

This shows that experiencing the wonders of Gunung Leuser goes beyond watching orangutans and elephant.

Jefry Susyafrianto, head of the GLNP, envisions the positive effects of the programs on the communities living around the park.

“These programs would develop sustainable livelihood and increase their awareness, which can encourage them to become involved in GLNP management, specifically in protecting the park resources as their livelihood source,” he said.

The implementation of the overall plan will be piloted in a pre-identified 205,355-hectare area in the park. The established plan can then be replicated in other areas of GLNP.

Covid-19 pandemic

The management of GLNP and their communities remained sanguine about the future of the park despite the ongoing health crisis. Routine patrolling and monitoring in the park continue despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Susyafrianto said.

While the park remains temporarily closed to tourists, conservation partnership activities for ecosystem restoration, and sustainable land use for livelihood are still being implemented. Thus, all park activities are carried out while following the health and safety protocols set by the government.

“With the recently awarded SGP grants and the ongoing conservation initiatives, the park and the local communities will be more prepared when GLNP opens again for tourism,” Lim said.

“As long as communication and collaboration among the stakeholders are sustained and the local communities are empowered to participate in decision-making and implementation, the SGP projects will contribute not just to the good of the park's wealth of biodiversity that goes beyond orangutans, but also to the good of the communities who call the areas around GLNP their home.”

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/08/23/beyond-orangutans-indonesias-national-park-stakeholders-craft-conservation-plan/>

Turkey taps big gas deposit in Black Sea

By [Agence France-Presse](#)

August 23, 2020

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said Turkey had made a historic discovery of a very big gas deposit in the Black Sea, but would still speed up contentious exploration in the Mediterranean that has pitted it against Greece and the European Union.



EUREKA Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced that their navigational ship Our Fatih has discovered around 320 billion cubic meters of gas deposit, the biggest in almost 100 years, at the Black Sea. GLOBAL TIMES PHOTO

Turkey hopes the discovery can help wean it off imported energy, including from Russia, which comes at a high cost at a time when the local currency is weakening and the economy is more fragile because of the coronavirus.

Erdogan said the 320-billion-cubic-meter deep-sea find was made at a site Turkish vessel Our Fatih began exploring last month.

He added that he hoped to see the first gas reach Turkish consumers in 2023, the 100th anniversary of the birth of the modern republic. “Turkey made the biggest discovery of natural gas in its history in the Black Sea,” a delighted Erdogan said during a speech in Istanbul’s Dolmabahce Palace.

“My Lord has opened the door to unprecedented wealth for us,” he enthused. The Fatih, Turkey’s first drilling vessel, is named after Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the Ottoman Sultan who conquered Constantinople — current-day Istanbul — in 1453.

The vessel made the discovery in the Tuna-1 field off the coast of Ereğli town in the northern province of Zonguldak after beginning the search on July 20, Erdogan said.

The Turkish lira gained value against the dollar on Erdogan’s promise on Wednesday to report “good news” on Friday, but fell after the size of the find was less than half of that suggested in initial reports.

Analysts were also wary of overplaying the discovery’s significance, pointing out that deep-sea drilling is expensive and takes time. “There are reasons to be cautious,” said Jason Tuvey, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics.

“For one thing, it will take time for the necessary infrastructure to be put in place before the gas can be extracted,” he said in a research note. Tuvey added that “the boost to Turkey’s external position may only be temporary.”

Ozgur Unlu Hisarcik, Ankara director of the German Marshall Fund, tweeted the discovery was “not bad at all [but] not a game-changer either.” The volume of gas announced by Erdogan would cover Turkey’s total natural gas needs for six years, at current consumption rates.

Turkish Finance Minister and Erdogan’s son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, speaking aboard the Our Fatih, said the discovery and future potential finds could reduce Turkey’s import-heavy trade balance by cutting its high energy import bill.

Turkey's energy import bill corresponded to two percent of total economic output last year, according to Capital Economics, with most purchases coming from Russia, Iran and Iraq.

Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Authority said in January that the country's annual cost of energy imports was between \$12 billion and \$13 billion (10.2-11.1 billion euros).

This month, Erdogan ordered the resumption of controversial energy exploration off the southern coast close to a Greek island in disputed eastern Mediterranean waters.

WHO hopes pandemic over in two years as Europe

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WHO hopes pandemic over in two years as Europe battles rising cases

posted August 22, 2020 at 08:09 am

by [AFP and Nina LARSON with Alice Hackman](#)

The world should be able to rein in the coronavirus pandemic in less than two years, the World Health Organization said on Friday, as European nations battled rising numbers of new cases.

Western Europe has been enduring the kind of infection levels not seen in many months, particularly in Germany, France, Spain and Italy -- sparking fears of a full-fledged second wave.

In the Spanish capital Madrid, officials recommended people in the most affected areas stay at home to help curb the spread as the country registered more than 8,000 new cases in 24 hours.

France also reported a second consecutive day of more than 4,000 new cases -- numbers not seen since May -- with metropolitan areas accounting for most of those infections.

But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sought to draw favourable comparisons with the notorious flu pandemic of 1918.

"We have a disadvantage of globalisation, closeness, connectedness, but an advantage of better technology, so we hope to finish this pandemic before less than two years," he told reporters.

By "utilising the available tools to the maximum and hoping that we can have additional tools like vaccines, I think we can finish it in a shorter time than the 1918 flu", he said.

The WHO also recommended children over 12 years old now use masks in the same situations as adults as the use of face coverings increases to stop the virus spread.

With no usable vaccine yet available, the most prominent tool governments have at their disposal is to confine their populations or enforce social distancing.

Lebanon is the latest country to reintroduce severe restrictions, beginning two weeks of measures on Friday including nighttime curfews to tamp down a rise in infections, which comes as the country is still dealing with the shock from a huge explosion in the capital Beirut that killed dozens earlier this month.

"What now? On top of this disaster, a coronavirus catastrophe?" said 55-year-old Roxane Moukarzel in Beirut.

Officials fear Lebanon's fragile health system would struggle to cope with a further spike in COVID-19 cases, especially after some hospitals near the port were damaged in the explosion.

- 'We lead the world in deaths' -

The Americas have borne the brunt of the virus in health terms, accounting for more than half of the world's fatalities.

"We lead the world in deaths," said Joe Biden while accepting the Democratic nomination for the US presidential election late on Thursday.

He said he would implement a national plan to fight the pandemic on his first day in office if elected in November.

"We'll take the muzzle off our experts so the public gets the information they need and deserve -- honest, unvarnished truth," he said.

Still, new daily cases of the coronavirus have been dropping sharply in the United States for weeks -- but experts are unsure if Americans will have the discipline to bring the epidemic under control.

After exceeding 70,000 confirmed infections per day in July, the country recorded 43,000 cases on Thursday.

WHO hopes pandemic over in two years as Europe

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Further south, Latin American countries were counting the wider costs of the pandemic -- the region not only suffering the most deaths, but also an expansion of criminal activity and rising poverty.

Without an effective political reaction, "at a regional level we can talk about a regression of up to 10 years in the levels of multidimensional poverty", Luis Felipe Lopez-Calva of the UN Development Programme told AFP.

But the WHO said the coronavirus pandemic appeared to be stabilising in Brazil -- one of the world's worst hit countries -- and any reversal of its rampant spread in the vast country would be "a success for the world".

- Economic fallout -

Economies around the globe have been ravaged by the pandemic, which has infected more than 22 million and killed nearly 800,000 since it emerged in China late last year.

New financial figures laid bear the huge cost of the pandemic in Britain, where government debt soared past £2 trillion (\$2.6 trillion) for the first time in the UK after a massive programme of state borrowing for furlough schemes and other measures designed to prop up the economy.

"Without that support things would have been far worse," said Finance Minister Rishi Sunak.

Even Germany, famed for its financial prudence, was waking up to a new reality with Finance Minister Olaf Scholz conceding his country would need to continue borrowing at a high level next year to deal with the virus fallout.

Western European politicians are also beginning to ramp up restrictions to tackle infections that are rising to levels not seen for months.

While Spain has responded with confinement measures and Germany with updated travel guidelines, putting Brussels on its list of risk zones, the UK is now watching clusters in northern England and suggesting some towns could soon face lockdown.

"To prevent a second peak and keep Covid-19 under control, we need robust, targeted intervention where we see a spike in cases," said health secretary Matt Hancock.