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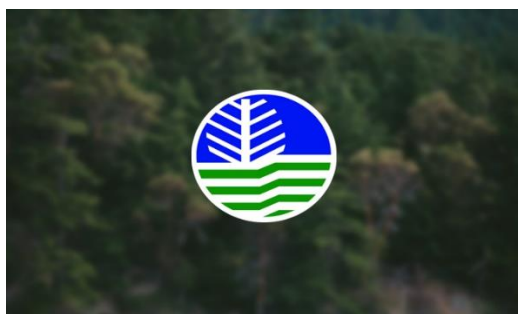
IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

DENR orders strict monitoring of mining activities in Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya

Published August 25, 2020, 2:33 PM
by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Region 2 (DENR-Cagayan Valley) has ordered environment officials in Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya provinces to conduct regular assessment of the mining companies under their jurisdiction if they are actually complying with the terms and conditions of the tree-cutting and earth-balling permits issued them.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
(MANILA BULLETIN)

DENR-Cagayan Valley Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan issued the order after she herself visited the mining project sites of OceanaGold Philippines Inc. and FCF Minerals last August 18-19.

Both mining firms presented to Bambalan certificate of their compliance with the terms stipulated on their tree-cutting permits that include the replacement of each tree cut with 100 seedlings of indigenous species and to rehabilitate two hectares for every hectare mined as contribution to the National Greening Program (NGP) and climate change initiatives of the government.

The seedlings will be planted by the permittee within non-mineable areas, mined out areas or other areas jointly identified by the mining companies and the DENR.

“To ensure better results, we proposed that instead of seedlings only, the DENR and mining companies can enter into agreement for the adoption of NGP areas without funding from our agency for maintenance and protection,” Bambalan said in a statement.

She added that the community environment and natural officers will identify the sites and the cost of seedlings, plantation establishment, and maintenance and protection to be borne by the mining companies.

“The planted seedlings will be maintained by the permittee for a period of three years with a survival rate of at least 80 percent,” she said.

Lifting of ban on new mining projects can help PH recover from recession

Published August 25, 2020, 3:01 PM
by [Madelaine B. Mirafior](#)

The immediate lifting of Executive Order (EO) 79, which is the moratorium on new mining projects imposed during the time of former President Benigno Aquino 3rd, can help the Philippine economy recover from the pandemic-triggered recession, a Department of Finance (DOF) official said.

An official at the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), an organization of some of the country's largest mining operations, thinks so too, but said the government should forego the conditions of EO 79. These conditions include the ban on the approval of new mineral agreements until a new tax regime in mining is passed because mining firms are already overburdened by taxes.

In an interview, Finance Assistant Secretary Maria Teresa Habitan said that she remained hopeful that a new mining tax will soon be passed despite the lack of progress in both houses of Congress.

DOF is the government agency leading the Duterte Administration's push for a new fiscal regime on mining.

In 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte has warned mining companies that he will tax them "to death" and even threatened to stop them from exporting minerals amid alleged violations of environmental laws.

"Yes, I think [new mining projects can help our economy recover from the pandemic]," Habitan told Business Bulletin, adding that the government only needs to make sure that mining companies are always compliant of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the global standard for the good governance of oil, gas and mineral resources.

She then said that the mining sector must also help push for the passage of the law that will pave the way for a new mining tax.

"The mining sector can also push for approval," Habitan said noting that "If they prefer the status quo, they can't have new projects."

For his part, Rocky Dimaculangan, vice president for corporate communications at COMP, said the mining industry believes "this is the best time to lift policy restrictions that have been preventing the industry from further contributing to the economy."

"In this time of great economic difficulty as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, the government needs all the support it can get to fund its social amelioration programs," Dimaculangan said in a text exchange on Tuesday.

Lifting of ban on new mining projects can help PH recover from recession

“Mining projects that will be allowed to operate will provide additional government revenues in the form of taxes and fees, royalty fees, and increase in export value, as well as employment opportunities for thousands of Filipinos, especially those in rural areas. Removing policy restrictions besetting the industry will result in a far higher tax take for the government than imposing more taxes on the relatively few that currently operate,” he added.

The discussion on a new fiscal regime in the mining sector has been going on for years. It formally started in 2012 when Aquino issued EO 79.

When the Duterte administration took over, the government wanted to make sure that the Philippines, one of the most highly mineralized countries in the world, would benefit more from the mining sector.

As a start, the Senate decided to include in the package one of Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) an increase in the excise tax rate for minerals from 2 percent to 4 percent.

Dimaculangan said this should already be enough to be considered a new fiscal regime on mining.

“That is already substantial. [But] if further tax increases are unavoidable, then it should be in accordance with the structure passed by the House Ways and Means Committee, which structure consists of a profits-based royalty and a windfall profits tax, with the rates thereon tied to operating margins. We believe this is an equitable structure,” Dimaculangan said.

He pointed out that a profits-based royalty is the same structure used in other mineral-rich countries such as Canada, Peru, Chile and South Africa and that by adopting this, the structure will help sustain existing mining operations.

“Hopefully [it can] encourage quality investments in the hugely untapped Philippine minerals sector,” he further said.

In another text exchange, Albay Representative Joey Salceda, who has filed House Bill (HB) 5022 or an act establishing a new fiscal regime for the mining industry last year, told Business Bulletin that it’s possible that a new mining tax will be passed this year but added that it’s still up to the priorities of the Duterte administration.

The country’s mineral resources have an estimated value of around \$1.4 trillion, but its total contribution to gross domestic product is only 0.85 percent.

Preserving the earth thru logging, mining

August 25, 2020

“WHAT? That’s a crazy idea”, is the most common reaction to this idea. The common thinking being that, in fact, logging and mining have contributed much to the problems of climate change, environmental degradation, frequent floods and such in the country. So how can they be the solution?

These major problems have been with us for many decades now. So many different solutions have been thought of and implemented by governments past and present but the problems not only remain, they even got worse. And, at the moment, there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel.

Big problems that have defied solutions for a long time need fresh out-of-the-box ideas. There must be a willingness to try out something new, something creative, something that has not been done previously. And the political will to implement what is initially unpopular to the general public.

Significance of trees, forests in water supply, environmental health

Among all factors contributing to water supply usable to man, trees are arguably one of the most important. Trees extract water from the soil (groundwater), store it in their barks, branches and leaves and then gradually release them back into the atmosphere in a process called Transpiration. These contribute to the formation of clouds that later fall as rain.

When large areas of forests are cut down, it reduces the water supply to the atmosphere brought about by Transpiration. Consequently, it reduces cloud formation and thus reduces rainfall.

Trees improve water quality by slowing rain as it falls to the Earth, and giving more time for the water to seep in the soil on the way to the underground reservoir.

The roots of trees help break up compacted soil and open up space so that more rainwater can be absorbed even deeper into the soil and into the underground reservoir.

The groundwater becomes available for pumping to the surface when needed and/or it slowly flows to the rivers via sub-surface flow; thus, maintaining higher levels of dependable surface water supply year-round in rivers and lakes for potable water supply, crop production and industrial-commercial use.

With fewer trees, whatever reduced rain that falls is largely wasted because of faster surface runoff. Such surface runoff goes fast to the rivers and then off to the sea—wasted freshwater that could have been used by man.

State of the country’s forests

In 1900, the country’s forests cover about 21 million hectares or 70% of the total land area of 30 million hectares. By 2003, it was down to 7.2 million hectares. By 2010, it was further down to 6.8 million hectares

Currently, the Philippines is losing its forest cover at a rate of around 50,000 hectares per year. On the other hand, the rapidly and consistently increasing population will continually require bigger supplies of water.

Preserving the earth thru logging, mining

Unless the government acts decisively, at the rate we are losing our forests, we will almost wipe out our remaining forests in a few decades. And with it goes our dependable water supply source. Are we ready to hand over such a bleak future to future generations?

Proposed solution No. 1: Revive and step-up logging operations

Yes, you read it right. But the recommendation is to implement it very different compared to how things were done in the past. In a nutshell, this was how it was done before:

1. After a logging concession was issued to a logging company, it got the permit to cut the trees for the whole concession area. They could then cut trees wantonly and continuously throughout their concession area anytime it pleased them until the whole concession area was logged over.
2. The company was supposed to be required to reforest all the areas they logged over but the proof that they have not done so is there for all to see up to today– bald mountains nationwide. Obviously done with the connivance of corrupt government people.
3. If only the loggers and the government took their responsibility to reforest religiously and seriously, we would still have huge tracts of forest lands with second-growth forest. And the loggers would still be in big business.

Here's how I propose the logging operations revival be done which will arrest the further denudation of our forest and, even better, exponentially doubling the forest cover every 25 years while at the same time contributing significantly to the economic wealth of the country and the people.

Let me present it via an illustration. Let's assume that forest still having trees has an area of 100,000 hectares and will be awarded as a logging concession to a responsible logging company. In the beginning, the DENR will not issue a cutting permit for the whole concession area. The issuance of such will be progressive, on a year-to-year basis.

We divide the total forest concession area into 25 parcels of equal areas, more or less. Let's call them Parcels A to Y with areas of around 4,000 hectares each.

In the first year, the DENR will issue a cutting permit only for Parcel A, good for one year operation. As a pre-condition for the issuance of a cutting permit for Parcel B in the following year, there should be complete reforestation of Parcel A, inspected and certified to as properly maintained, by a multi-sectoral body -- government, NGOs, church groups, etc.

In the event that the reforestation of a parcel under review is unsatisfactory, the issuance of the permit to cut for the succeeding parcel is withheld until the remedial measures are implemented by the logging company.

The same requirement and process will be followed for Parcels B to Y in succeeding years. All previously-reforested parcels shall likewise undergo annual review and assessment.

It may be asked why there are 25 parcels recommended. It takes about 25 years for forest trees like *lawaan*, narra, mahogany, etc. to mature into ready-to-harvest trees. So if you program the harvesting to be one year per parcel, by the time you are done harvesting in Parcel Y, your Parcel A

Preserving the earth thru logging, mining

should by then be ready for the second-growth harvesting. And the harvesting-replanting cycle in Parcels A to Y start all over again, ad infinitum.

Now here's the part that will double the existing forest cover. The logging company should be further required to "adopt" an equivalent area of denuded forest nearby. In our example, it is 100,000 hectares. As the company replants Parcel A in its original concession, it shall, at the same time, be required to reforest Parcel A in its "adopted" area. As it does the same in Parcel B of its concession, it shall likewise do the same in Parcel B of its "adopted" forest land. And so on and so forth, up to Parcel Y.

The "adopted" area shall, likewise, be awarded as an additional concession area of the logging company, and the planting-harvesting procedure followed in the original concession is likewise implemented there.

With this strategy, a logging area that starts with just 100,000 hectares of trees will slowly grow to 200,000 hectares in a period of 25 years; to 400,000 years in 50 years; to 800,000 hectares in 100 years, and so forth.

Currently, it is estimated that the country has about 7 million hectares of forest cover. Even if you start with this proposed strategy on only 20% of that area, your starting number is 700,000 hectares which will exponentially double every 25 years.

Proposed solution No. 2: Revive and step-up mining operations

Our country is one of the few countries in the world that have been blessed with minerals that are potentially rich sources of revenues for the government and the economic development of the places where those minerals are located in. It's such a waste and a pity if we can't benefit from such God-given natural bounty. But it is of paramount importance that the environment has to be protected against degradation in the process of mining those.

Here's how I propose it could be achieved:

1. As a pre-condition to the award of a mining claim and the authorization to operate such, the mining company shall be required to "adopt" a nearby forest and be required to reforest it similar to the logging strategy described above. It shall be issued the forest concession for such and be allowed to operate it as a regular logging business.
2. Before the mining company is given the go-signal to start mining operations, it shall have satisfactorily reforested Parcel A in its "adopted" forest concession.
3. In a similar manner to the logging strategy, the whole mining area is likewise, divided into parcels. If feasible and practical, it shall also be 25 parcels (Parcels 1 to 25) so that it is consistent with the planting-harvesting operation of its logging concession.

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4. In the first year of the mining operation, only Parcel 1 will be issued an authority to mine.
5. The issuance of an authority to mine Parcel 2 will be pre-conditioned on the satisfactory rehabilitation and reforestation of Parcel 1 and the reforestation of Parcel A of its logging concession. This is for open-pit mining. Another scheme may be needed for underground mining.
6. The same process will then be followed for the succeeding parcel 3-25.
8. After the whole mining area is mined out and only the logging concession remains, on the second cycle after 25 years, the surviving logging company shall be required to adopt another nearby denuded forest with the equivalent area to its original concession. Then both concessions areas shall be required to do the replanting-harvesting process similar to proposal no. 1 above. This then results in the doubling of its forest area every 25 years.
9. Further studies will need to be done to determine the appropriate size of the forest area to be reforested by each mining company in relation to the size of its mining operation.

Final recommendation: If these ideas merit the agreement and support of the government, the author believes that there is a need to come up with appropriate legislation so that succeeding administrations cannot whimsically change the rules which will be unfair to the investing logging and mining companies. For sure, no respectable logging or mining company will be willing to put up huge investments in this regard unless they are assured of long-term consistent policy.

Energy experts urge expedited transition to renewable power

August 25, 2020 | 6:57 pm
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VESTAS

THE Philippines must pick up the pace of its transition to clean power if it wants to make unacceptably risky for developers to build facilities running on fossil fuel, according to energy industry experts.

With renewable power now making up most of the Philippines' new generating capacity, the risk grows for builders of baseload coal-fired plants, whose facilities could become stranded assets over the next decades, according to Alberto R. Dalusung III, the energy transition advisor of non-profit group Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities.

"We have to move quickly and recognize that the (energy) transition is happening," he said in a virtual briefing.

In 2019, President Rodrigo R. Duterte ordered the Department of Energy (DoE) to accelerate the development of renewable energy. The department nevertheless maintained its technology-neutral stance in augmenting power capacity coming from various resources — from dirty ones to cleaner sources.

The grid is now being increasingly powered by clean energy, while the use of coal is dwindling, Sarah Jane Ahmed of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) noted.

"I believe we already are and we see many transitions taking place. We're seeing a transition in island grids to micro-grids with a portfolio of energy, including renewables. And on the main grid, we're seeing that coal utilization rates are going down because of renewables coming onto the grid," the analyst said.

"It is important that the government and the regulator get in front of this to help the country navigate this transition," Ms. Ahmed added.

Electricity tariffs in the Philippines are among the most expensive in Southeast Asia, IEEFA said. It blamed this on inflexible contracts with baseload fossil fuel-fired plants.

In 2019, coal still accounted for 10,417 megawatts (MW) with renewable power at around 7,400 MW or 29% of the total, which the DoE said is well above target for clean energy in the region. — **Adam J. Ang**

Boracay, balak buksan sa mga foreign tourist sa pamamagitan ng ‘travel bubble’

By [Bombo Radyo Kalibo](#)

-August 25, 2020 | 2:14 PM

KALIBO, Aklan – Nakatakdang magsumite ng rekomendasyon ang binuong technical working group sa Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force para sa isinusulong na pagbukas ng Boracay sa mga foreign tourist sa pamamagitan ng travel bubble.

Ayon kay Malay Mayor Frolibar Bautista, posible nila itong isumite sa darating na araw ng Huwebes o Biyernes.

Napag-alaman na target ng Provincial Government na buksan ang isla sa pamamagitan ng travel bubble sa mga taga-South Korea matapos na nagkaroon na ng direct flight sa Incheon at Kalibo International Airport ang ilang airline companies/

Ang technical working group ay itinalaga na tumalakay sa mga detalye ng kasunduan sa pagitan ng provincial government at Boracay stakeholders bago magpresenta ng mga plano sa task force .

Noong Agosto 13, nasa 164 na accommodation establishments sa Boracay ang nabigyan na ng certificates of authority to operate, kung saan anim sa mga ito ang may provisional na CAO.

Ang nasabing 164 establishments ay may 3, 377 rooms base sa datus ng Department of Tourism-Western Visayas.

Pagpapalawig sa Malampaya Gas Project suportado ng mga mambabatas



August 25, 2020 @ 5:25 PM 11 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Isinusulong ng mga mambabatas ang pagpapalawig pa sa Malampaya Gas Project sa Palawan sa katwirang 30% ng power requirements sa Luzon ay nakadepende dito at kritikal ang pagpapatuloy ng operasyon ng power plant para matiyak na magkakaroon ng stable at secure na pagkukunan ng enerhiya ang bansa.

Sa isang joint statement sinabi nina PHILRECA Rep. Presley De Jesus, APEC Sergio Dagooc, Ako Padayon Pilipino Rep. Adriano Ebcas at RECOBODA Rep. Godofredo Guya (RECOBODA) na ang Malampaya ay long-term national partner ng bansa lalo na ngayong panahon ng pandemic kung saan 98% ng demand para sa domestic oil at gas production sa bansa partikular na sa mga hospitals at health care centers ay dito nanggagaling.

“The continuation of the operations of Malampaya is critical and urgent, both for our pandemic-filled present and the future of this country when it comes to our energy security and our healthcare industry,” paliwanag ni de Jesus.

Una na ding naghain ng House Resolution No. 1063 ang power bloc ng Kamara para sa pagpapalawig pa ng Malampaya Gas Project.

Hinimok pa ni de Jesus ang pamahalaan na agad na aksyunan ang pagpapalawig ng operasyon ng Malampaya upang hindi magkaroon ng problema sa supply ng enerhiya.

“Malampaya does not just provide power to our hospitals and health care systems at a time like this. However, time is running out for Malampaya. A resolution in its favor will solidify the integral role of energy security in the country, while ensuring the survival of our healthcare system—in the present and in a challenging future which is laden with so much economic and medical uncertainties,” giit pa nito.

Nagbabala naman si Ebcas na kung hindi agad aaksyunan ng Department of Energy(DOE) ang nalalapit na pagtatapos ng kontrata ng Malampaya ay maaaring magkaroon ng power shortage.

Pagpapalawig sa Malampaya Gas Project suportado ng mga mambabatas

“unless the government quickly addresses all these energy issues and rising demands, the Philippines may face an acute power shortage. These power shortages can have far-reaching effects—from access to energy and high energy cost, to livelihood, education, and of course, national security,” ani Ebcas.

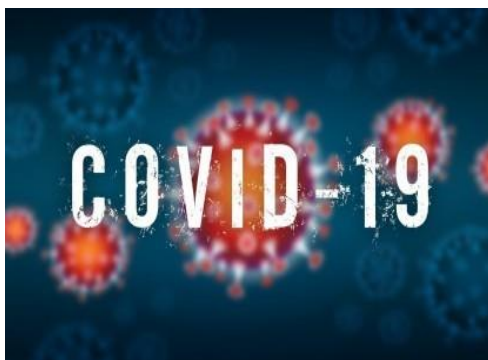
Ang Malampaya ay kasalukuyang inooperate ng Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. (SPEX) sa ilalim ng Royal Dutch Shell, ito ay isang joint venture project sa pagitan ng Chevron Malampaya LLC at Philippine National Oil Company Exploration Corporation, ang Service Contract para sa Malampaya ay nakatakdang magexpire sa 2024.

Ang pagpapalawig sa kontrata ng Malampaya sa loob pa ng 15 taon ay nakabinbin mula pa noong 2008 sa DOE.

Una nang sinabi ng DOE na isa sa opsyon nila sa Malampaya Gas Project sakaling matapos ang joint partnership sa Shell Philippines ay ibigay na lamang sa PNOC-EC ang pangangasiwa dito subalit tinututulan naman ito ng mga mambabatas sa katwirang mas naging epektibo ang public-private partnership sa pangangasiwa sa Malampaya. **Gail Mendoza**

PH logs 2,965 new Covid-19 cases; recoveries now 132,396

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor August 25, 2020, 6:28 pm



MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Tuesday reported 2,965 new coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) infections, raising the country's overall tally to 197,164 with 61,730 active cases.

According to the DOH, the additional cases were based on the total Covid-19 tests done by 95 out of 109 operational laboratories.

Of the active cases, the health authorities said 91.6 percent were mild cases, 6.1 percent were asymptomatic, 0.9 percent were severe cases, and 1.4 percent were critical.

The majority of the new cases were from the National Capital Region (NCR) with 1,575 cases, Negros Occidental with 237, Laguna with 151, Cavite with 129, and Batangas with 95.

Of the 2,965 infections reported, 2,434 or 82 percent occurred within the past 14 days (August 12 to 25) and the top regions with cases in the past two weeks were NCR with 1,430 or 59 percent, Region 4-A (Calabarzon) with 395 or 16 percent, and Region 3 (Central Luzon) with 218 or 9 percent, the DOH said.

The department also reported 368 new recoveries and 34 deaths, bringing the total number of recoveries to 132,396 and the number of deaths to 3,038.

"Of the 34 deaths, 26 or 76 percent were in August, seven or 21 percent were in July, and one or 3 percent (was) in June and the deaths were from NCR with 22 or 65 percent, Region 7 (Central Visayas) with four or 12 percent, Region 4-A (Calabarzon) with three or 9 percent, Region 5 (Bicol) with two or 6 percent, Region 4-B (Mimaropa) with one or 3 percent, Region 10 (Northern Mindanao) with one or 3 percent, and one repatriate or 3 percent," the DOH said.

It added that some 53 duplicates were removed from the total case count and of these, 13 recovered cases and one death were removed.

"Moreover, we have updated the outcomes of seven cases – six were previously reported as deaths, of which five have been updated as recovered, and one case was previously reported as recovered but updated as death after final validation. These were already included in the count of new deaths and recoveries," the DOH said.



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PH logs 2,965 new Covid-19 cases; recoveries now 132,396

As of Monday, the 83 licensed reverse transcription - polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) laboratories and 27 licensed GeneXpert laboratories have conducted a total of 2,207,267 tests nationwide.

The DOH said it has a 19,700 total bed capacity dedicated to Covid-19 patients.

Occupied are about 49 percent of 1,700 intensive care unit beds; 48 percent of 12,800 isolation beds; and 51 percent of 5,200 ward beds.

About 27 percent of 2,200 ventilators are in use. **(PNA)**

No magic bullet to solve Covid-19 pandemic: PRRD

By Azer Parrocha August 25, 2020, 1:26 pm



NO MAGIC BULLET. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte talks to the people after holding a meeting with the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) core members at the Matina Enclaves in Davao City on August 24, 2020. Duterte said there is no “magic bullet” to solve the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic as he sought for more patience until a vaccine is made available. *(Presidential photo by Robinson Niñal Jr.)*

MANILA – President Rodrigo Duterte said there is no “magic bullet” to solve the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) health crisis as he sought for more patience until a vaccine is made available.

In a taped public address aired Tuesday, Duterte assured the public that the government continues to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic by recalibrating its health system strategies.

He admitted that the government is “not perfect” in addressing the challenges that arise from the pandemic but noted that it was also doing its best.

“There is no magic wand or if you want a stronger statement a --- the magic bullet, a silver bullet, that will solve our problems. *May sinubukan tayo* (We are trying) since we are not perfect,” he said.

Duterte, meanwhile, expressed hope that either China or Russia would provide the Philippines with their respective vaccines once clinical trials are completed.

“*Malapit na ‘yan*. Russia, China, I dunno if anybody, *alam ko lang yung dalawa, nag-announce na meron sila at* (It’s nearly complete. Russia and China have both announced that they have it and they’re) ready and they’re willing to help. Both countries *lumabas ng statement na tulungan nila ako* (released a statement that they will help me),” he said.

The President said he is willing to borrow money to pay for the vaccines if they will not be given for free.

“*Kung may bayad, dahil marami masyado, utangin natin*. Credit *nalang or hanap tayo ng loan* (If we have to pay for it because it’s too much, let’s borrow money. Credit or let’s get a loan) but if it’s not, I’m sure that they are willing to give us that privilege of borrowing from them,” he said.

Duterte also reassured that the 20 million poorest of the poor will receive a free Covid-19 vaccine despite the cost.

No magic bullet to solve Covid-19 pandemic: PRRD

“Ang mauna sa bakuna, ulitin ko, ay yung mga tao na nasa sa listahan ng gobyerno na tumatanggap ng Pantawid. Ito yung mga mahirap. Ang sunod yun, yung mga tao na hindi nakalista at mahirap (The first to receive vaccine will be those in the Pantawid list. Next will be those not in the list but are also poor),” he said.

Law enforcement officers, he said, will also be among the first to be inoculated with the vaccine.

“Pero mauna sa lahat ang mga military pati pulis kasi kung walang pulis pati military, babagsak tayo. Sino guguardiya sa’tin (But the military and police will be first because without them, we will fall. Who will guard us)?” he said.

As for government officials and workers, Duterte said he is still willing to be the first person injected with the vaccine but doesn’t mind being the last one either.

“Yung mga taga gobyerno, kung gusto ninyo ako ang mauna para magkaroon kayo ng or I could be the last Filipino to get, unahin kayong lahat, pahuli kami kumpiyansa (For government workers, if you want I can be the first one to be injected to erase all doubts or I could be the last Filipino to get, you’ll go first, we’ll be the last),” he said.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque earlier said the government can allocate PHP20 billion to buy the vaccine with the help of the Philippine International Trading Corp., Land Bank of the Philippines, and the Development Bank of the Philippines.

“We are scheduled to buy for 20 million people at two doses so that’s 40 million no. Forty million ang bibilhin natin (We will purchase 40 million vaccine doses),” Roque said.

Last August 17, Duterte said he will seek a discount from China and Russia on the Covid-19 vaccines that each of the two countries have developed and promise to supply the Philippines with.

He said the government would borrow money or sell public properties to purchase a Covid-19 vaccine once it is developed.

Besides China and Russia, the Philippine government is also in talks with several Covid-19 vaccine developers from the United States and the United Kingdom for possible purchases. **(PNA)**

All Covid-19 funds will be accounted for, vows Duterte



By Samuel Medenilla
August 25, 2020



Philippine Army soldiers escort volunteers delivering essential food supplies in Barangay Batasan in Quezon City from the food aid program “Bayan Bayanihan,” a partnership between the Asian Development Bank, the government and the private sector in coordination with the Army, for families affected by Covid-19.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte vowed to account for all the government expenditures and transactions in its response against the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

He made the announcement in his public address on Monday amid concerns that public funds are being lost to corrupt practices during the crisis because of the recent reported anomalies in the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth).

“I will hold myself responsible for this sole and solemn duty of answering for and in behalf of the executive department of all the funds that were spent in the fight against Covid,” Duterte said.

To ensure the public will be able to keep track of the said expenditures, he ordered all concerned government agencies to regularly release reports on the funds they used for their Covid-related measures.

“So they must prepare well in advance because I would require them to publish in the newspaper, in three newspapers of general circulation,” Duterte said.

Among the agencies covered by the instruction PhilHealth, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of National Defense (DND), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

All Covid-19 funds will be accounted for, vows Duterte

Oversight committee

Duterte also called on Congress to create an oversight committee to monitor the use of public funds during the pandemic.

He said he is ready to instruct members of the Cabinet to present regular reports to the said committee.

“I’m ready to order that. It is not a matter of separation of powers. This is just like an expanded oversight... It is never illegal to know where your money is going,” Duterte said.

However, he noted this may “cost a lot of time for the bureaucracy.”

Duterte stressed the reported anomalies in PhilHealth is not related to the government’s anti-Covid measures, which he maintains is free from any irregularities.

PhilHealth is currently being investigated by an inter-agency task force led by the Department of Justice (DOJ) as well as by the Senate and House of Representatives because of the alleged anomalies in its operations.

‘Saving the economy or saving lives: an unnecessary choice’

[Titon Mitra, Resident Representative, UNDP Philippines](#) (The Philippine Star) - August 26, 2020 - 12:00am

With the decision made in the very early morning of 18 August to revert to the General Community Quarantine (GCQ) in Metro Manila, we are again seeing social media light up with polarized views on whether we should prioritize the health of citizens or the health of the economy. Presented as a binary choice and wrapped in understandable emotion, it represents a conundrum of considerable significance to policy makers. It may take more than the wisdom of Solomon to balance the legitimate concerns of exhausted health workers and those who are seeing their livelihoods vanish before their eyes. But need it be so? Can more rigorous analysis of at least the key numbers underlining an issue of such importance help make an informed decision?

As the first application of UNDP’s new Pintig (heartbeat in Filipino) data Lab, we worked with the Ateneo de Manila University Department of Economics’ FASSSTER socioeconomic modelling working group to take a closer look at the critical figures that could help resolve what we consider to be a false dichotomy between the economy and saving lives. We adopted a multivariate approach, combining health data with a socioeconomic analysis of estimated costs in terms of lives, livelihoods, and revenues. This data was then used to project the health and socioeconomic impacts on Metro Manila under different quarantine scenarios over the period of 4 to 31 August 2020.

To account for the socioeconomic impact of different lockdown scenarios over this period, we broadly examined the health costs and economic losses associated with the different quarantine levels. Specifically, we zeroed-in on treatment costs for the infected and sick, and the additional personnel and equipment costs. We also estimated the short- and long-term economic losses. We derived our figures on COVID-19 cases and health system requirements from the FASSSTER Susceptible-Exposed-Infected-Recovered model for COVID-19. However, compared to reported cases for ‘deaths’, we assumed that projected ‘critical cases’ beyond maximum available ICU facilities for COVID-19 patients among Metro Manila hospitals are likely to be added to the count of the deceased. Secondly, we estimated the share of displaced workers in Metro Manila for each community quarantine scenario from the Philippine Statistics Authority’s (PSA) Labor Force Surveys, and thereafter used these labor force displacement rates to estimate the lost economic output of different lockdown levels.

The findings suggest that the adoption of a Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) has only a temporary effect on containing the spread of the virus and will most certainly continue to devastate the economy. A return to GCQ however can be more effective IF combined with significantly strengthened testing, tracing, isolation and treatment. Compliance of the general public to health guidance is also critical.

While an MECQ applied over a month and based on current health facility capacity will have reduced COVID cases by around 28,722 persons by the end of August, it would have a scarring effect on the economy, with an additional 461,000 workers projected to be displaced. These labor losses, in turn, will cost the NCR economy approximately 10.7 billion pesos per day. With an economy already contracting by 16.6 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, these are numbers we cannot afford. However, we equally do not need to put more lives at risk. (To be continued)

Covid-19 shows importance of investing in health: WHO

August 25, 2020, 9:07 pm



YAOUNDE, Cameroon/ANKARA – The coronavirus pandemic has shown the importance of investing in health systems that will improve readiness to prevent and control outbreaks, World Health Organization's (WHO) regional director for Africa said Tuesday.

Matshidiso Moeti made the comments at a virtual session of the 70th WHO Regional Committee for Africa. At the virtual session, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, African health ministers and stakeholders addressed Africa's pertinent health issues, including the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

"Covid-19 has proven once again the importance of investing in health systems, enhancing equitable access to care, improving readiness to prevent and control outbreaks... and enabling communities to play their role in realizing better health," Moeti said.

"More than 100,000 health workers have been trained in surveillance, case management and infection prevention and control, and millions of items of essential supplies have been shipped and replenished.

"The concerted actions of countries, with support from WHO and other partners, have averted the catastrophe foretold in early projections of how this virus would affect the African Region," she added.

Meanwhile, Tedros said, the number of cases has doubled just in the past six weeks.

"Since the earliest days of the pandemic, the WHO has been working round the clock at all three levels to support you, our African member states," he added.

Need for global health solidarity

Amira Elfadil, commissioner of African Union social affairs, said the coronavirus pandemic has reignited the need for global health solidarity and partnerships, in order to arrive at collective and decisive solutions that will advance global public health security and safety.

Jacqueline Lydia Mikolo, health minister of the Republic of Congo, urged the Africa Region to "continue and intensify its mobilization in solidarity to produce inputs and other protective materials, share experiences and research results, and pool resources for screening and care."

Moustafa Mijiyawa, Togolese health minister, said the humanity has been hit by this terrible pandemic with devastating effects on economies and societies.

Covid-19 shows importance of investing in health: WHO

“Yet, the momentum of collaboration and international solidarity generated by Covid-19 rightly reminds us of our common destiny,” Mijiyawa added.

Coronavirus cases in Africa are now close to 1.2 million and the death toll on the continent is nearing 28,000 with 921,783 recoveries, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said in an update Tuesday. (*Anadolu*)

August 26, 2020

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Pandemic pace slows worldwide except for southeast Asia, eastern Med -WHO

Published August 25, 2020 4:35pm

GENEVA - The COVID-19 pandemic is still expanding, but the rise in cases and deaths has slowed globally, except for southeast Asia and the eastern Mediterranean regions, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

In its latest epidemiological update, issued on Monday night, it said that the Americas remains the hardest-hit region, accounting for half of newly reported cases and 62% of the 39,240 deaths worldwide in the past week.

More than 23.65 million people have been reported to be infected by the coronavirus globally and 811,895 have died, according to a Reuters tally on Tuesday.

"Over 1.7 million new COVID-19 cases and 39,000 new deaths were reported to WHO for the week ending 23 August, a 4% decrease in the number of cases and (a 12% decrease) in the number of deaths compared to the previous week," the WHO said.

Southeast Asia, the second most affected region, reported a jump accounting for 28% of new cases and 15% of deaths, it said. India continues to report the majority of cases, but the virus is also spreading rapidly in Nepal.

In WHO's eastern Mediterranean region, the number of reported cases rose by 4%, but the number of reported deaths has consistently dropped over the last six weeks, the WHO said. Lebanon, Tunisia and Jordan reported the highest increase in cases compared to the previous week.

The number of cases and deaths reported across Africa decreased by 8% and 11% respectively in the past week, "primarily due to a decrease in cases reported in Algeria, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal and South Africa", it said.

"In the European region, the number of cases reported has consistently increased over the last three weeks," it said. "However, only a slight decrease (1%) was reported in the most recent week, and the number of deaths have continued to decrease across the region."

In WHO's western Pacific region, the number of new cases dropped by 5%, driven by less spread in Japan, Australia, Singapore, China and Vietnam. South Korea reported an 180% jump in cases, "mainly due to an increase in cases associated with religious gatherings". -Reuters

Malacanang submits P4.5 trillion 2021 national budget to House



Published 9 hours ago
on August 25, 2020 06:54 PM
By [Keith A. Calayag](#)



Malacanang on Tuesday submitted to the House of Representatives its proposed national budget for 2021 amounting to P4.506 trillion.

This will pave the way for the lower chamber to start hearing the budget proposal which is 9.9 percent higher than this year's budget of P4.1 trillion.

In his speech during the ceremonial submission of the proposed 2021 budget, Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado said the proposed 2021 budget aims to sustain the government's efforts to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Fiscal year (FY) 2021 NEP will sustain the government's efforts in effectively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on government spending, on improving health care systems, ensuring food security, creating more jobs by investing on labor intensive projects, enabling a digital government and economy as well as helping communities cope and prevail in these trying times," Avisado said.

The lion's share of next year's budget will go to the social services sector that would fund health-related programs to address continuing threat of COVID-19 pandemic.

Avisado said the Department of Education will get the biggest chunk with total allocation of P754.4 billion.

"The education sector will not be neglected. DepEd remains to be top agency with biggest allocation — with budgetary support provided for universal access to quality tertiary education and basic education learning continuity plan programs to ensure educational continuity amid the health crisis."



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Malacanang submits P4.5 trillion 2021 national budget to House

This is followed by the Department of Public Works and Highways with a proposed budget of P667.3 billion; the Department of Interior and Local Government, P246.1 billion; the Department of National Defense, P209.1 billion; the Department of Health, P203.1 billion; the Department of Social Welfare and Development, P171.2 billion; the Department of Transportation, P143.6 billion; the Department of Agriculture, P66.4 billion; the Judiciary, P43.5 billion; and the Department of Labor and Employment, P27.5 billion.

House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano said the House of Representatives will begin its deliberations on the 2021 budget in September.

2021 budget focuses on health, food, jobs



By [Jovee Marie de la Cruz](#)

August 26, 2020



City workers try out different modes of transportation, as public transportation remains limited amid the steady increase in Covid-19 cases, especially in Metro Manila.

THE Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on Tuesday submitted for congressional scrutiny the 2021 P4.506-trillion National Expenditure Program (NEP), which will prioritize health-related response programs while restarting the economy amid the continuing crisis from the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the theme, “Reset, Rebound and Recover: Investing for Resiliency and Sustainability,” the proposed 2021 national budget, according to Budget and Management Secretary Wendel Avisado, will sustain government efforts to improve the health-care system, ensure food security, create jobs and enable digital infrastructure while protecting the most vulnerable sectors.



With their clothes hanging from the gate, 23 locally stranded individuals (LSIs), including four children, make the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Taguig City a temporary shelter. The government is targeting to bring all LSIs back to their home provinces before Christmas.

The 2021 expenditure plan is higher than this year’s budget by 9.9 percent and equivalent to 21.8 percent of GDP.

2021 budget focuses on health, food, jobs

According to Avisado, the 2021 P4.506-trillion NEP went through numerous budget hearings and consultations with the agencies.

The DBM has also adopted a Cash Budgeting System (CBS) for the 2021 national budget to promote the faster implementation of government programs by ensuring that funding requirements for priority programs and projects are sufficient, maximized by agencies, and, even more important, delivered on time.

“Allow me to emphasize to you that every peso of the P4.506 trillion in fiscal year 2021 NEP is geared toward saving lives and protecting communities, while making various sectors of the economy stronger and more agile. It is based on the sound fiscal policy of spending within means on the right priorities, and with measurable results under a regime of transparent, accountable and participatory governance,” Avisado said in a speech during the proposed budget’s submission at the House of Representatives.

“Budgetary support will be provided for the national health insurance program, medical assistance to indigent patients, human resources for health program, and health facilities enhancement program, among others. The fiscal year 2021 NEP will also set aside funds for the procurement of the Covid-19 vaccine, and the provision of personal protective equipment to DOH [Department of Health] hospitals, laboratories and centers,” he said.

Nevertheless, he said the agencies in the education sector will not be neglected and will get the biggest allocation so as to ensure educational continuity amid the crisis.

The Executive branch is proposing a total budget of P754.4 billion this year for education, 16.03 percent higher than DepEd’s budget this year of P650.2 billion.

Avisado said the government will also support the “Build, Build, Build” program to boost infrastructure development and promote employment.

“Funding support will also be provided for information and communications technology expenditures to improve the country’s broadband infrastructures, develop e-program or platform and sustain online systems to support the efforts of the different departments for the new normal,” he said.

Other government priorities under the 2021 NEP include programs and strategies to help improve the productivity of the agriculture and fishery sector, accelerate the recovery of micro, small and medium enterprises, develop e-competitiveness of local industries or programs to promote digital upskilling, training and retooling of workers and digitalization of the government and the economy.

Health insurance

Avisado said budgetary support will be provided for the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (P71.4 billion), Medical Assistance to Indigent Patients (P17.3 billion), and Human Resources for Health Program (P16.6 billion), among others.

2021 budget focuses on health, food, jobs

Around P6.1 billion will go to upgrading of equipment, laboratories and isolation facilities in the different regions; and some P2.7 billion is set aside for the provision of personal protective equipment to DOH hospitals, laboratories and centers.

He said an initial P2.5 billion and P283.5 million will be used to buy Covid-19 vaccine and the establishment of a Virology Center, respectively.

The DBM chief said DOH will also be supported with P1.03 billion for the purchase of about 861,720 GeneXpert cartridges to be used in GeneXpert machines for Covid-19 testing.

To improve health data systems, he said P51.56 million will be allotted under the DOH for disease surveillance and monitoring of Covid-19 and other similar respiratory infections.

Infra development

Avisado said a total of P1.107 trillion for Public Infrastructure Program or a total 5.4 percent of GDP is embedded in the proposed budget for strategic infrastructure development and to create jobs and catalyze business activities all over the country.

The FY 2021 NEP will support the DPWH Network Development Program (P157.5 billion), Flood Management Program (P125.9 billion), Asset Preservation Program (P59.0 billion), and Bridge Program (P44.4 billion), among others.

For the DOTr, the Rail Transport Program (P106.3 billion), Land Public Transportation Program (P16.2 billion), and Maritime Infrastructure Program (P166.4 million) will also be funded. Some P21.4 billion will go to Information and Communications Technology expenditures to improve the country's Wi-Fi and broadband infrastructure and develop e-platform and online systems to support the e-governance initiatives of different departments.

The 2021 NEP will prioritize programs improving the productivity of the agriculture and fishery sector, such as the irrigation services activities of the National Irrigation Authority (P31.5 billion), the National Rice Program (P15.7 billion) and the Rice Competitive Enhancement Program (P10.0 billion) pursuant to Republic Act 11203.

The proposed budget will also support the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Program (P2.3 billion) for the recovery of MSMEs, Avisado said.

Promoting digital upskilling, training and retooling of workers through the Training for Work Scholarship Program (P3.6 billion) and the Tulong Trabaho Scholarship Program (P1.0 billion) will also be prioritized.

The government will keep aiding vulnerable groups by funding programs such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (P113.8 billion), Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens (P23.2 billion), Sustainable Livelihood Program (P4.3 billion) and the Supplementary Feeding Program (P3.7 billion), among many others.

2021 budget focuses on health, food, jobs

The government priorities in education have been reshaped to respond to the challenges that require flexible and blended learning.

Avisado said this will be achieved through a two-pronged strategy: expanding and institutionalizing flexible and multi-modal learning and teaching options (P15.2 billion); and by funding the expansion of DepEd's Computerization Program (P9.0 billion).

By class

By expense class, personnel services will receive the bulk (29.2 percent) of 2021 allocation, reaching P1.32 trillion. This level considers the huge additional hiring of health workers under the Human Resource for Health Program of the Department of Health, the second tranche implementation of the Salary Standardization Law of 2019, and the increased pension requirements of military and uniformed personnel.

Capital outlays come in second with P920.5 billion, or 20.4 percent of the proposed budget and growing by 12.9 percent. The increase in capital outlays is owed mainly to infrastructure programs of the DPWH (14.7 percent) and the DOTr (42.6 percent).

Maintenance, operating and other expenditures will amount to P699.4 billion, debt burden with P560.2 billion, support to government-owned and -controlled corporations with P157.5 billion, and tax expenditures with P14.5 billion.

Top 10 agencies

The top 10 agencies getting bulk of the budget are:

- The education sector, including DepEd, state universities and colleges, the Commission on Higher Education, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, remains the top agency with P754.4 billion next year from P650.2 billion this year;
- The DPWH, with P667.3 billion in 2021 from P438.9 billion in 2020;
- The Department of the Interior and Local Government, with P246.1 billion in 2021 from P235.9 billion in 2020;
- The Department of National Defense, with P209.1 billion in 2021 from P179.7 billion in 2020;
- The Department of Health, with P203.1 billion in 2021 from P177.7 billion in 2020;
- The Department of Social Welfare and Development, with P171.2 billion in 2021 from P366.5 billion in 2020;
- The Department of Transportation, with P143.6 billion in 2021 from P84.2 billion in 2020;
- The Department of Agriculture with P66.4 billion in 2021 from P70.8 billion in 2020;
- The Judiciary with P43.5 billion in 2021 from P41.2 billion in 2020;
- The Department of Labor and Employment with P27.5 billion in 2021 from P23.5 billion in 2020.

2021 budget focuses on health, food, jobs

By November

Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano said the House will immediately schedule deliberations of the House Committee on Appropriations chaired by ACT-CIS Rep. Eric Yap.

“We will try to finish the budget before the end of September, very ambitious schedule, to send it right away to the Senate because we hope for the first time in history, we can sign the budget maybe late November or mid-November as a sign of unity by our country,” he said.

Cayetano vowed to give all lawmakers equal time to scrutinize the proposed budget.

“We will be very transparent, and the members of the opposition in this House, we will give you first a copy of the budget and listen to you first and given more time

sa budget deliberations *para itong* budget will be a product of the whole of Congress, [not just of the administration],” he said.

With Bernadette D. Nicolas

Southwest monsoon seen to bring rains in Luzon



Published 21 hours ago
On August 25, 2020 07:34 AM
By [TDI](#)



The tropical cyclone Bavi, formerly Igme, will continue to induce the Southwest Monsoon today and bring rains in Luzon, according to PAGASA.

Bavi was seen pulling the southwest monsoon which will continue to affect northern and central Luzon.

It was last spotted at 990 kilometers north-northeast of extreme northern Luzon with winds of 140 kilometers per hour and heading to southern Japan.

Ilocos provinces, Batanes and Babuyan Islands will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms.

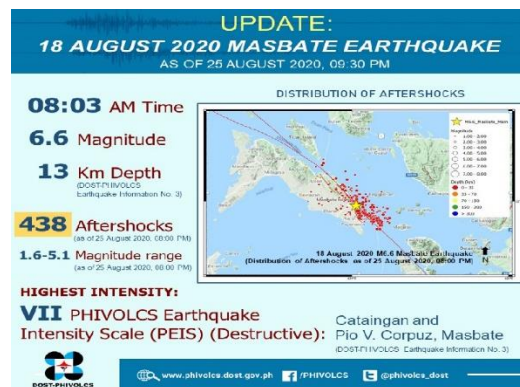
Metro Manila and the rest of the country will be partly cloudy with isolated rain showers.

Maximum temperature may hit 32.6 degrees Celsius while the coolest it may get during the day is 26.2 degrees Celsius.

p/jd

Naitalang aftershocks matapos ang magnitude 6.6 na lindol sa Masbate, umabot na sa 438

By Angellic Jordan August 25, 2020 - 11:56 PM



Umabot na sa 438 ang naitalang aftershocks sa Masbate.

Ito ay matapos ang tumamang magnitude 6.6 na lindol sa bayan ng Cataingan noong August 18.

Ang nasabing bilang ng aftershocks ay naitala hanggang 8:00, Martes ng gabi (August 25).

Umaabot sa magnitude 1.6 hanggang 5.1 ang lakas ng mga naitatalang aftershocks.

Read more: <https://radio.inquirer.net/261218/naitalang-aftershocks-matapos-ang-magnitude-6-6-na-lindol-sa-masbate-umabot-na-sa-438#ixzz6WASg1Cpr>

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4.1-magnitude quake hits Davao Occidental

Published August 25, 2020, 6:47 AM

by [Mike Crismundo](#)

BUTUAN CITY – A 4.1-magnitude earthquake hit Davao Occidental province in Southern Mindanao region early Tuesday morning, August 25, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

In its bulletin, Phivolcs said the tremor was recorded at 4:43 a.m.

The epicenter was plotted 402 kilometers (kms) southeast of Sarangani, Davao Occidental province.

The tremor had a depth of 85 kms, Phivolcs said.

The earthquake was tectonic in origin and no aftershock was raised by the state agency.

The regional office of the Southern Mindanao Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and Davao Occidental provincial disaster risk reduction and management council (PDRRMC) there reported no damage or injury.

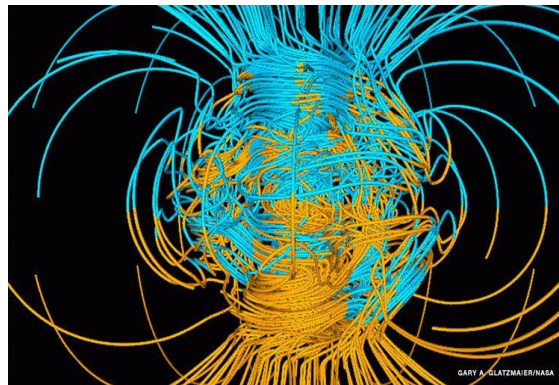
Meanwhile, a 4.1-magnitude tectonic earthquake was also registered at 4:59 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 24, and its epicenter traced 64 kms northeast of Bayabas town, Surigao del Sur province, with a shallow depth of only 4 kms, Phivolcs also said, in its advisory.

No aftershock was raised by the state agency and the Surigao del Sur PDRRMC there also no reported damage or injury.

The Earth's core is younger than previously believed, according to new research

By Allen Kim, CNN

Published Aug 25, 2020 7:35:46 AM



A computer simulation shows the Earth's magnetic field, which is generated by heat transfer in the Earth's core.

(CNN) — A billion years may not sound young, but researchers estimating the age of the Earth's core say it could be between 1 and 1.3 billion years old — which is at the lower end of previous estimates.

Researchers from the University of Texas were able to estimate the core's age by recreating conditions similar to the center of the Earth inside of a laboratory chamber.

It took the researchers two years to attain suitable results, and they were able to recreate these conditions by squeezing laser-heated samples of iron -- the Earth's core is made primarily of iron -- between two diamond anvils.

The researchers estimate that the Earth's core is between 1 to 1.3 billion years old, which is on the lower end of the spectrum of what was previously believed, the researchers said. The Earth's core was previously estimated to be between 1.3 to 4.5 billion years old, with one recent estimate putting it even lower at 565 million years, according to the researchers.

The research was published earlier this month in the *Physical Review Journals*, a peer-reviewed journal from the American Physical Society.

The experiments also give the researchers a clearer picture of how the core conducts heat and the energy sources that power the Earth's geodynamo.

The planet's geodynamo is the mechanism that sustains the Earth's magnetic field, which protects the planet from harmful cosmic rays and helps compasses point North, according to the researchers.

"People are really curious and excited about knowing about the origin of the geodynamo, the strength of the magnetic field, because they all contribute to a planet's habitability," said lead researcher Jung-Fu Lin, a professor at The University of Texas at Austin's Jackson School of Geosciences.

The Earth's core is younger than previously believed, according to new research

With the Earth's core being made mostly of iron -- the inner core is solid and the outer core is liquid - - the researchers believe that the effectiveness of the iron in transferring heat through thermal conductivity is one of the key factors in determining a number of attributes about the core, including when the inner core may have formed.

By recreating the conditions of the core, where the pressure is greater than 1 million atmosphere and the temperature can approach those found on the surface of the sun, it allowed the researchers to measure the conductivity of iron.

"Once you actually know how much of that heat flux from the outer core to the lower mantle, you can actually think about when did the Earth cool sufficiently to the point that the inner core starts to crystalize," Lin said.

Using this information on conductivity and heat transfer over time, it allowed the researchers to make what they believe is a more precise estimate of the age of the inner core. It also suggests that the formation of the inner core played a pivotal role in creating Earth's magnetic fields.



Animals are seen in Cobargo, as bushfires continue in New South Wales, Australia on Sunday, January 5, 2020.

REUTERS/Tracey Nearmy

Climate change ‘clearly’ fueled Australia bushfires —inquest

Published August 25, 2020 5:35pm

By ANDREW BEATTY, Agence France-Presse

SYDNEY, Australia — Australia's devastating 2019-2020 bushfires were "clearly" fueled by climate change, a government inquiry reported Tuesday following some of the largest forest fires ever recorded worldwide.

With this year's fire season already underway, authorities recommended urgent action to limit the impact of extreme blazes, expected "to become more frequent" in future.

The deadly bushfires raged for nine months to March and were most severe in New South Wales state, where 11,000 fires burned over 5.5 million hectares (13 million acres)—the size of many countries.

After months of consultation and expert testimony, the New South Wales government on Tuesday published a 436-page report on the crisis that destroyed more than 2,400 homes in the state and left 26 people dead.

The text included dozens of recommendations and featured a blunt rebuke of those who insisted the fires were nothing to do with climate change.

"Climate change as a result of increased greenhouse gas emissions clearly played a role in the conditions that lead up to the fires and in the unrelenting conditions that supported the fires to spread," it read.

The report noted it was impossible to say what precise role climate change had played in producing the complex range of climatic conditions that helped fuel the fires.

Those conditions included a years-long drought, high winds, thunderstorms and low humidity.

While cautioning that "climate change does not explain everything that happened", the authors noted that the catastrophic conditions were "consistent with what climate change projections have been saying will happen."

Climate change ‘clearly’ fueled Australia bushfires —inquest

Lightning strikes

"Extreme fires and fire seasons are likely to become more frequent," they warned.

The report also rubbished suggestions by those opposing action on climate change—including some inside Australia's conservative government—that arson and insufficient forest clearance were to blame.

Only 11 of the blazes in New South Wales were found to have been the work of an arsonist deliberately trying to start a bushfire.

Many of the largest fires were caused by lightning strikes in remote areas, the document said.

The report's recommendations largely focused on disaster response and mitigation, including the use of technology to detect remote fires more quickly, and increased aerial water-bombing to stop them growing beyond control.

"We couldn't get to all the new fires quickly enough, many of which were started by lightning in remote or rugged terrain," the report said.

"The scale of the fires stretched the capacity of the fire authorities and the underpinning systems to respond."

But there was also a warning that Australians may have to come to terms with "new extreme" conditions.

Bushfire-prone Australia has seen dozens of inquests into the causes of bushfires and steps that could be taken to mitigate them.

But many measures recommended by inquiries going back to the 1930s have still not been implemented.

A national-level Royal Commission is expected to produce its findings about the crisis by the end of the month. — AFP

Toronto seeks to save oak tree older than Canada

Published August 25, 2020, 10:17 AM
[by Agence France-Presse](#)

In the shadow of Canada's largest cluster of skyscrapers, Toronto is looking to preserve a majestic, centuries-old oak tree — but efforts have been complicated by the pandemic.



An oak tree estimated to be about 300 years old, or twice as old as modern Canada itself is viewed on July 12, 2020 in North York, Ontario. (Photo by Olivier MONNIER / AFP)

The towering 24-meter (79-feet) high Northern Red Oak is one of the oldest trees in these parts, having sprouted an estimated 300 years ago, around the time that French explorers set up a trading post on the nearby shores of Lake Ontario.

The tree now finds itself in the back yard of a nondescript bungalow on a winding street in the heart of a residential North York neighborhood.

Its huge trunk has a circumference of five meters and brushes up against the back of the 1960s house. In summer, its long leafy branches shade the entire lot from the sun's rays.

But in recent years, a new homeowner expressed concerns about being able to afford proper tree maintenance and its roots cracking the house's foundation.

Neighbors also worry that this awesome specimen may one day be damaged by strong winds or felled in a storm.

To protect it and make it accessible to everyone in this city of six million people, Toronto's city council voted in 2018 to buy the property, raze the house and turn the land into a small public park.

'Takes your breath away'

A deal was reached with the homeowner last year to sell the property to the city.

That outcome delighted Edith George, a local resident who lobbied over 14 years to preserve the oak tree, whose beauty she says "just takes your breath away."

"It's the Rolls-Royce of heritage trees. No other tree in Canada has the heritage value that this tree has," the 68-year-old retiree told AFP.

Toronto seeks to save oak tree older than Canada

Experts say that with care and under the right conditions, the tree could live another 200 years or more.

“A tree like this is expensive to maintain. If the lot is a public space, the city will be able to take care of it better than I can,” says Ali Simaga, who purchased the home in 2015.

“I don’t want to be selfish and keep it to myself, either,” he adds.

The deal, however, is not done yet. The city’s purchase offer is conditional on private donations to cover half of the price tag for the property.

Fund-raising started in December 2019, with a target of raising Can\$430,000 (US\$325,000) by the end of this year.

After a promising start, including a Can\$100,000 pledge by a couple of local philanthropists, contributions slowed to a trickle during the pandemic.

As of mid-July, about Can\$125,000, or nearly 30 percent of the goal, had been collected. If the target is missed by the deadline, without an extension, the monies collected would be used to support tree planting across the city while the future of the historic oak tree would be in doubt.

Canadian heritage

The tree sits along a former Humber Valley trail used by indigenous peoples and later by European fur traders portaging between lakes Ontario and Simcoe — a leg of a trade route that spanned the continent from the Gulf of Mexico to the north shore of Lake Superior, according to historian Madeleine McDowell.

Travellers used large trees as landmarks, she said. This oak was probably already pretty big when the French lost the territory to the British, who established the Town of York — which would later become Toronto — in 1793.

It is “a wonderful tree,” commented Manjit Jheeta, director of the City of Toronto Partnership Office.

“It is part of Toronto’s heritage, it is part of Canada’s heritage and it tells the story of our country,” she said.

Last year, the city unveiled a plaque in its honor, a first for a single tree in the nation’s largest metropolis.

Its ecological value is no less: the oak tree has absorbed and stored more than 11 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.

“When bad things happen,” said George, “I don’t go to church, I come here because this is like my cathedral.

“It’s a survivor and it gives us hope for a planet that’s in peril.”

Toronto seeks to save oak tree older than Canada



Published 16 hours ago
on August 25, 2020 12:16 PM
By [TDI](#)



THE tree towers at 79 feet.

In the shadow of Canada's largest cluster of skyscrapers, Toronto is looking to preserve a majestic, centuries-old oak tree — but efforts have been complicated by the pandemic.

The towering 24-meter (79-foot) high Northern Red Oak is one of the oldest trees in these parts, having sprouted an estimated 300 years ago, around the time that French explorers set up a trading post on the nearby shores of Lake Ontario.

The tree now finds itself in the back yard of a nondescript bungalow on a winding street in the heart of a residential North York neighborhood.

Its huge trunk has a circumference of five meters and brushes up against the back of the 1960s house. In summer, its long leafy branches shade the entire lot from the sun's rays.

But in recent years, a new homeowner expressed concerns about being able to afford proper tree maintenance and its roots cracking the house's foundation.

Neighbors also worry that this awesome specimen may one day be damaged by strong winds or felled in a storm.

To protect it and make it accessible to everyone in this city of six million people, Toronto's city council voted in 2018 to buy the property, raze the house and turn the land into a small public park.

A deal was reached with the homeowner last year to sell the property to the city.

That outcome delighted Edith George, a local resident who lobbied over 14 years to preserve the oak tree, whose beauty she says "just takes your breath away."

Toronto seeks to save oak tree older than Canada

“It’s the Rolls-Royce of heritage trees. No other tree in Canada has the heritage value that this tree has,” the 68-year-old retiree told AFP.

Experts say that with care and under the right conditions, the tree could live another 200 years or more.

“A tree like this is expensive to maintain. If the lot is a public space, the city will be able to take care of it better than I can,” says Ali Simaga, who purchased the home in 2015.

“I don’t want to be selfish and keep it to myself, either,” he adds.

The deal, however, is not done yet. The city’s purchase offer is conditional on private donations to cover half of the price tag for the property.

Fund-raising started in December 2019, with a target of raising Can\$430,000 (US\$325,000) by the end of this year.

After a promising start, including a Can\$100,000 pledge by a couple of local philanthropists, contributions slowed to a trickle during the pandemic.

As of mid-July, about Can\$125,000, or nearly 30 percent of the goal, had been collected. If the target is missed by the deadline, without an extension, the monies collected would be used to support tree planting across the city while the future of the historic oak tree would be in doubt.

The tree sits along a former Humber Valley trail used by indigenous peoples and later by European fur traders portaging between lakes Ontario and Simcoe — a leg of a trade route that spanned the continent from the Gulf of Mexico to the north shore of Lake Superior, according to historian Madeleine McDowell.

Travellers used large trees as landmarks, she said. This oak was probably already pretty big when the French lost the territory to the British, who established the Town of York — which would later become Toronto — in 1793.

It is “a wonderful tree,” commented Manjit Jheeta, director of the City of Toronto Partnership Office.

“It is part of Toronto’s heritage, it is part of Canada’s heritage and it tells the story of our country,” she said.

Last year, the city unveiled a plaque in its honor, a first for a single tree in the nation’s largest metropolis.

Its ecological value is no less: the oak tree has absorbed and stored more than 11 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.

“When bad things happen,” said George, “I don’t go to church, I come here because this is like my cathedral.

“It’s a survivor and it gives us hope for a planet that’s in peril.”

p/jd

Tropical songbirds stop breeding to survive drought

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[by Agence France-Presse](#)

Songbirds in tropical rainforests curtail their reproduction to help them survive droughts, according to a study Monday.



Biodiversity is already threatened by human encroachment on habitats ROMEO GACAD AFP/File

Species with longer lifespans were better able to cope with this environmental volatility than previously thought, researchers found.

With more record hot spells gripping parts of the planet and biodiversity threatened by human encroachment on habitats, a crucial question is whether species can adapt to these ever-harsher conditions.

Droughts — expected to become more common because of climate change — confront birds with a trade-off between reproduction and their own survival, researchers said, because producing eggs and feeding chicks requires additional energy even as food becomes scarcer.

But the study, published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, found that instead of trying to juggle the demands of new offspring and harsh environmental conditions, most of the songbird species studied opted to reduce their reproduction during drought.

The research used data on 38 species in Venezuela and Malaysia from 17 years of fieldwork, including a period of drought in each country.

It found that reproduction was reduced by an average of 36 percent in the 20 Malaysian species and 52 percent in the 18 Venezuelan species.

Birds with a longer lifespan had the biggest slowdown in breeding during dry spells.

“In general, species that greatly decreased breeding during the drought (that is, longer-lived species) experienced increased adult survival,” co-author James Mouton, of the University of Montana, told AFP.

“This was surprising as we were expecting droughts to reduce survival to some degree in all species.”

Birds with shorter lifespans — which could less easily afford to curtail reproduction — either kept breeding or only made minor cut backs.

Tropical songbirds stop breeding to survive drought

But they were also less likely to survive.

The authors then modelled how certain species might fare under three different climate change scenarios.

They estimated that, while an increase in the frequency of droughts would reduce all bird populations studied, the longer-lived species were more resilient.

Mouton said the research suggests that “populations of longer-lived species of tropical songbirds may be better able to mitigate the effects of droughts than previously thought”.

But he cautioned drought was only one aspect of climate change that would be a potential threat to bird populations, and that these act alongside other risks, particularly the degrading or fragmentation of habitats.

In a commentary on the study also published in Nature, Goncalo Ferraz, of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, said species’ ability to adapt may not be enough to ensure their survival.

He said the study “offers an exciting contribution to understanding the dynamics of animal populations under environmental stress, but it does not change the central importance of habitat availability for species survival.”