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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



[DENR welcomes new Biodiversity Management Bureau chief](#)

OCT 1, 2021, 12:16 PM



Santiago Celario
Writer

Incoming Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Sultan Datu Tungko Saikol vowed to "uphold the mandate of the Bureau in conserving the country's biological diversity and realizing a Philippine biodiversity that provides natural resiliency and sustained benefits for all."

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources - Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) has a new chief in the person of Sultan Datu Tungko Saikol.



[DENR welcomes new Biodiversity Management Bureau chief](#)



NEW BMB CHIEF. Incoming Department of Environment and Natural Resources - Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Sultan Datu Tungko Saikol (right) receives the flag of the BMB from outgoing DENR-BMB chief Edilberto Leonardo (left), symbolizing his taking the helm of the office. SANTIAGO CELARIO

Saikol, the 12th director of the BMB, formally replaced outgoing Director Edilberto Leonardo in a simple ceremony held at the BMB Training Center on September 23.

Saikol vowed to "uphold the mandate of the Bureau in conserving the country's biological diversity and realizing a Philippine biodiversity that provides natural resiliency and sustained benefits for all."

Before his appointment at the DENR-BMB, Saikol served as DENR-Environmental Management Bureau-SOCCSKSARGEN Regional Director, DENR-SOCCSKSARGEN OIC Executive Director, and DENR-SOCCSKSARGEN Assistant Regional Director for Management Services.

He was also Deputy Minister-designate of the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

For his part, Leonardo thanked all the BMB staff who helped him in his four-month stint as the director of the bureau.

"I have relished the joy and triumph in the realization of my advocacies through project and program launch, successful enforcement operations, approval of policies, and the promotion and regularization of some BMB employees," Leonardo said.



[DENR welcomes new Biodiversity Management Bureau chief](#)

"I have also experienced the sorrow and grief of our employees as we mourn the loss of a colleague and some of their loved ones who succumbed to Covid-19," he added.

Leonardo will now assume the position of Undersecretary for Special Concerns and Protected Areas and will be the Supervising Undersecretary for BMB.

The outgoing director served as chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group Regional Field Unit in Region 11 before being assigned to the DENR as an undersecretary and BMB director.

In his message during the turnover ceremony, DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu emphasized that government service is a "matter of choice while deciding to stay in it is a matter of destiny."

"May our life's mission be in sync with our Department's mission of mobilizing the citizenry in protecting, conserving, and managing the environment and natural resources for the present and future generations," said Cimatu in his speech delivered by DENR Undersecretary for Legal, Administration, Human Resources and Legislative Affairs, Atty. Ernesto D. Adobo Jr., who is the outgoing Supervising Undersecretary for BMB.



DENR taps abaca exporter Newtech Pulp to buy abaca fiber

October 1, 2021



Natural Resource Management projects at Lake Lanao CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THE [Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#) (DENR) has linked forest communities in [Lake Lanao](#) with abaca (Manila hemp) exporter [Newtech Pulp Inc.](#), bringing hope of sustained livelihood while conserving the watershed that is the largest hydroelectric source in [Mindanao](#).

Three people's organizations (POs) are now partners of Newtech Pulp in the supply of abaca fiber.

Newtech Pulp has an abaca pulp manufacturing plant in [Maria Cristina Balo](#), Lanao del Norte.

The POs are [Sunrise Producer Association](#), Wato Balindong Farmers' Cooperative and [Sania Farmers Association](#). These POs operate in Piagapo, Balindong and Maguing all in the province of Lanao del [Sur](#).



DENR taps abaca exporter Newtech Pulp to buy abaca fiber

Newtech Pulp is sourcing abaca fiber from an estimated 200 hectares of abaca plantation that are under DENR's Integrated Natural Resources and [Environmental Management Project](#) (Inremp).

"These people's organizations used to harvest (rice and other crops like abaca, and banana) just once a year. Their production in abaca is being sustained because they are now supplying directly to Newtech Pulp Inc.," said Samsodin Taha, operations manager at Inremp's [Lake Lanao River Basin](#) (LLRB).

DENR is looking further in partnering with the [Ministry of Agriculture](#), Fisheries and Agrarian Reform, [Ministry of Environment](#), Natural Resources and Energy and [Department of Agriculture](#) for a future expansion of the abaca plantation.

If these three agencies will infuse investment into the abaca project, the LLRB abaca area can expand by three times more in the future, Taha said.



‘Demolisyon sa ilang istraktura sa forestland sa Boracay, ipapaubaya sa korte’

By [Bombo Radyo Kalibo](#)

-September 30, 2021 | 11:38 PM

KALIBO, Aklan – Ipauubaya na lamang sa korte ang desisyon sa pagtibag sa mga istrakturang nakatayo sa forestland sa isla ng Boracay.

Ayon kay Natividad Bernardino, general manager ng Boracay Inter-Agency Rehabilitation Management Group (BIARMG), ang korte ang magbibigay ng pinal na desisyon sa isyu dahil karamihan sa mga istraktura ay milyones ang halaga.

Nauna dito, sinabi ni NBI-Environmental Crime Division (ECD) executive officer Marvin Matamis, makikita sa Mount Luho sa kalagitnaan ng Barangay Balabag at Barangay Yapak ang nasa 12 malalaking istraktura na ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) aniya ay nagkakahalaga ang bawat isa ng P50 million hanggang P100 million.

Karamihan umano sa mga may-ari nito ay nasa labas ng bansa.

Dagdag pa ni Bernardino na kakasuhan at aarestuhin ang mga nakatira sa forestland kapag nagmatigas at hindi susunod sa ipinadalang notice to vacate.

Noong nakaraang linggo, inaresto ng mga operatiba ng National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) ang isang German national at tatlong Pilipino sa kasong paglabag sa Forestry Code of the Philippines dahil sa mga istrakturang nakatayo sa gubat ng isla.



Building a new generation of climate diplomats



By Ludwig Federigan

October 2, 2021

Below are excerpts of my response to the [Local Conference of Youth](#) (LCOY) Pilipinas on the presentation of the [National Youth Statement](#) during its culminating activity:

"As we all know, the latest [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) report reaffirms what many of us have known: climate change is real and it is moving faster than us and we need to respond even faster and bolder.

"The climate crisis affects food, water, settlement, jobs, livelihood, human welfare, safety and security, poverty reduction, economic growth and, consequently, our overall pursuit of sustainable development.

"Therefore, we must realize that if this crisis is a seemingly formidable, unstoppable force, then our solidarity, our sense of purpose, our will to survive and to thrive despite the odds must be even more unstoppable.

"This is the spirit that binds and drives the [Climate Change Commission](#) — to uphold and deliver on the [Climate Change Act](#) of 2009 that is — to mainstream climate change in the country's national development policies, plans and programs, and to build and strengthen the resilience of our local communities to climate change.

"Given the agency's mandate and mission under the law, it focused its capacity-building services on supporting local government units through the convergence of efforts with relevant national government agencies, institutions and civil society, and development partners.

"The Climate Change Commission is building the capacity of local government units and assisting them in developing, enhancing and implementing their Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAP).

"It is also facilitating the country's commitment to transform to a greener economy while ensuring a just transition that maximizes beneficial outcomes for all sectors of society through the country's first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which will define our pathway for low-carbon development consistent with the 1.5 Paris goal and our national aspirations.

"The current NDC represents the cumulative policies and measures submitted by the lead sectoral agencies such as the Department of Agriculture (agriculture), [Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#) (waste, industry and forestry), Department of Transportation (transport) and the Department of Energy (energy). The National Economic and [Development Authority](#) also actively participated in the process to assist in the economic modeling and alignment of our NDC in the Ambisyon Natin 2040.



Building a new generation of climate diplomats

"The [Philippines](#)' NDC also upholds the importance of meaningful participation of women, children, youth, persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identity, differently abled, Indigenous Peoples, elderly, local communities, civil society, faith-based organizations, the private sector and the local governments in implementing climate actions.

"It aspires that, with the help of developed countries and development partners, our country will implement its ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets by 2030 from business as usual in the above-mentioned sectors as pledged with the [United Nations](#) Framework Convention on Climate Change and will pursue to undertake adaptation measures across but not limited to the sectors of agriculture, forestry, energy, coastal and marine ecosystem and biodiversity, and will sustain its adaptation planning and resilience-building, noting the mitigation co-benefits of these various measures.

"Aside from LCCAP and NDC, the Climate Change Commission is also implementing other programs and activities such as:

- Enhancing and sustaining awareness and understanding of all sectors on climate change and associated risks through all media platforms and as well as series of webinars.
- Supporting legislative initiatives on promoting a circular economy and regulating single-use plastic.
- Fast-tracking the development of standards and certification systems for providing incentives to enterprises that generate and sustain green jobs pursuant to the [Green Jobs Act](#) of 2016.
- Updating our national platform for data exchange on climate change called [National Integrated Climate Change Data](#) and Information Exchange or Niccdies.
- Engaging the youth, through climate reporting and filmmaking, to bring climate change closer to the younger generations and grassroots level.

"All these climate change initiatives and many more others are being undertaken in collaboration with different local and international partners — a clear indicator that an endeavor as massive as climate change will require all the help it could get from fellow advocates.

"This is why I am also extremely excited to get to meet all of you in this culminating event. This is the first Local Conference of Youth for the Philippines and, on behalf of the Climate Change Commission, I am deeply honored to receive the National Youth Statement, discuss its contents and eventually carry it as the country joins and participates in the historic United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) this November in Glasgow.

"Rest assured that the National Youth Statement will be circulated with the commissioners and the heads of every division.



Building a new generation of climate diplomats

"You are a new generation of climate diplomats — or climate justice warriors, if I may — all of whom I treat as our partners now and I expect to be working in advancing our nation's interests in the area of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

"In the future, when we retire from our work, you will be the ones to take over the responsibility of aligning our efforts in keeping with the 1.5-degree climate goal. You will be the one representing our country in future negotiations or will be the one addressing yet a new batch of climate diplomats.

"We are humbled that the message of urgency in climate action has bred an entirely new movement that finds its embodiment in the national statement you presented today. We are with you in this endeavor.

"Expect that the Climate Change Commission will continue to find more ways in attaining a safer, cleaner, healthier and greener tomorrow for the youth."

This first-ever LCOY in the Philippines — LCOY Pilipinas 2021 — was endorsed by the YOUNGO LCOY Working Group, the official youth and children constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was spearheaded by Parabukas, Living Laudato Si' and STEP Philippines. The recording of the full proceeding can be accessed through this link: <https://fb.watch/8icDhQw7Di/>.

The author is the executive director of the [Young Environmental Forum](#) and a Non-Resident Fellow of [Stratbase ADR Institute](#). He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia and an executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University. You can email him at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.

Dive town to adopt zero waste policy



BYBUSINESSMIRROR

OCTOBER 2, 2021

2 MINUTE READ



Apo Island in Dauin

Dauin town, the scuba diving and the resort capital of Negros Oriental, is set to adopt a municipality-wide zero waste policy in keeping with its thrust of being a sustainable tourism destination in Central Visayas.

This after the municipal government led by Mayor Galicano Truita recently held a coastal cleanup, which involved local officials and employees, and a simultaneous underwater cleanup by volunteer scuba divers.



Silver Reef Dive Resort managing partner Reggie Reyes and Apo Island barangay chairman Mario Pascobello at the turnover of organic bathroom implements.



Dive town to adopt zero waste policy

The event, which is part of the recent International Coastal Cleanup Day, included an educational component which integrated all the environmental, waste management and upcycling initiatives within the municipality.

The fourth-class municipality takes pride in its rich ridge to reef ecosystem because of its forested uplands and lush marine life.

Dauin is inspired by its tourism gem, Apo Island, which was recently awarded as the first “zero waste” island barangay in the Philippines by the Zero Waste Cities Project (ZWCP) because of its community-based upcycling livelihood projects.

The ZWCP is an initiative of the GAIA Asia Pacific and 10 member collaborators from India, Indonesia, and the Philippines and is funded by the Plastic Solutions Fund.

The project aims to push solid waste management at the grassroots level, enabling waste reduction policies, and creating income opportunities in the handling and processing of recyclable materials.

The island currently has four purok-level material recovery facilities which integrate solid wastes into construction aggregates, resort furnishings and decorative items.

One of the country’s sought-after scuba diving sites, Apo boasts of a lush marine biodiversity with lush coral gardens, sea turtles, school of jacks, and other aquatic resources. The 74-hectare island is also recognized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as a Protected Seascape and Landscape.

Earlier in 2019, the island also bagged the prestigious 7th Para El Mar Awards as the most outstanding marine protected area under the government’s National Integrated Protected Areas System.

Named by *Sport Diver Magazine* as among the world’s top 100 diving spots, it is habitat to over 650 documented species of fish and about 400 species of corals, from tiny bubbles to huge gorgonian sea fans and brain corals.

Taking its earth-friendly way of life a notch higher, Apo Island is pilot testing the use of organic shampoos and body wash, lime soap bars, organic liquid laundry and dishwashing solutions to gradually eliminate plastic waste sachets.

The social enterprise is a partnership with Silver Reef Dive Resort and PLS (Plastic Life Sucks) which will supply in pump bottles refillable and biodegradable bathroom and daily washing essentials.



OpinYon Laguna

September 30 at 6:22 PM · 🌐



For third straight year, 'algae' causing foul smell at Laguna de Bay

For the third year in a row, officials in charge of the Laguna de Bay have claimed "algae bloom" or the proliferation of "liya" in the lake is causing a bad smell along the lake's western shoreline.

This, as residents of Muntinlupa City once again complain of a "foul stench" emanating from the lake.

In a letter to Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi Thursday (September 30), Muntinlupa Lake Management Office head Herminio dela Cruz said environmental conditions in the lake have caused the algae, which is used as food by the fishes, to "grow at the very fast rate."

"Algae bloom, also known as Liya is a periodic occurrence in Laguna de Bay, particularly in the Central Bay and West Bay wherein Muntinlupa City is located. Those commonly found in Laguna Lake are blue-green algae, green algae and diatom.," the official said.

This was not the first time residents have complained a foul odor along the lake's western edge, near the shorelines of Taguig City, Muntinlupa City, and the cities of San Pedro, Binan and Sta. Rosa in Laguna.

Similar incidents were also reported in June of 2020 and 2019, which were also attributed to "algae bloom."

Last June, in fact, the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) said the algae bloom "could have been triggered by the combination of various factors such as the prolonged hot weather and calm lake condition this summer followed by the heavy influx of nutrients into the lake particularly nitrate and phosphate from the tributaries after the rainy season started this June."

(OpinYon News)



#lagunadebay #lagunanews #opinyonnews #OpinyonLaguna



For third straight year, 'algae' causing foul smell at Laguna de Bay

opinyon



P365-K hot logs seized in Surigao City

By Alexander Lopez October 1, 2021, 6:51 pm



SEIZED HOT LOGS. A total of 4.85 cubic meters of illegally-gathered Magkono logs worth PHP365,000 are intercepted by personnel of the Surigao del Norte Maritime Police during a seaborne patrol in the waters of Talisay, Surigao City on Friday (Oct. 1, 2021). Four suspects were arrested and will be facing charges for violating the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines. *(Photo courtesy of SDN-MARPSTA)*

BUTUAN CITY – Four persons were arrested by personnel of the Surigao del Norte Maritime Police Station (SDN-MARPSTA) during a seaborne patrol in the waters of Barangay Talisay, Surigao City on Friday.

In a report, Lt. Robert Sorilla, SDN-MARPSTA chief, said their unit received a report on the transport of illegally gathered lumber products from Dinagat Islands toward mainland Surigao.

“The seaborne patrol intercepted a motor banca without outrigger known as ‘bote’ in the area loaded with 73 pieces of Magkono logs,” Sorilla said.

He added that the seized lumber products had a total volume of 4.85 cubic meters with a total market value of PHP365,000.

The motor banca used in the transport of the illegal logs, including its engine and accessories valued at PHP300,000, were also confiscated by the SDN-MARPSTA.

The four suspects arrested were not identified in the report and are now under the custody of the maritime police for documentation and filing of appropriate charges for violating Section 77 of Presidential Decree 705, or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines. **(PNA)**



De Lima calls for Senate probe on black sand mining in Lingayen Gulf

Published October 1, 2021, 3:03 PM
by [Mario Casayuran](#)

Opposition Senator Leila M. de Lima on Friday, Oct. 1 called for a Senate investigation on the detrimental and disastrous effects of the recently approved black sand mining project in Lingayen Gulf as critics tagged it as an “environmental disaster.”

De Lima filed Senate Resolution (SR) 920 directing the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change to investigate the negative environmental and socioeconomic impact of the project on the surrounding coastal areas in Pangasinan.

“The State is duty-bound to protect the lives and livelihood of its citizens and uphold existing environmental laws and polices over any and all transactions and contracts it has entered into with individuals and entities concerning these environmentally critical areas (ECAs),” she said.

“Activities which tend to negatively impact and destroy the environment must always be preceded by meticulous assessment of their consequences. Environmental impact studies should also be conducted to aid both the public and private sectors in chartering the course of the activities that involve and affect the environment,” she added.

The “massive” offshore black sand mining project that would run for the next 25 years in Lingayen Gulf was recently approved, stirring protests from the local communities in Pangasinan province, calling it an “environmental monster.”

Provincial Board Member Von Mark Mendoza expressed alarm after an official of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) informed provincial officials that the project’s proponent, Iron Ore, Gold and Vanadium Resources (Phils.) Inc., would be extracting 25 million tons of black sand annually.

According to a document posted on the EMB website, Malacañang approved the project, which is covered by Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement No. 07-2020-IOMR.

The agreement allows the conduct of large-scale exploration, development and commercial utilization of minerals found within the areas where Vanadium Resources has obtained the exclusive right to extract magnetite sand.

“There is need to ensure that any possible permit issued by the government takes into account the totality of impact of black sand mining to the eco-system and the community and that government officials who sign off on the permits undertake to hold themselves fully accountable for ignoring clear red flags in the mining projects,” she added.

In a 2016 study, entitled “Characterization of Black Sand Mining Activities and Their Environmental Impacts in the Philippines Using Remote Sensing,” researchers note that black sand mining disturbs marine and coastal ecosystems and increases erosion and associated geohazards and warn that coastal erosion often continued to affect the areas even decades after cessation of the mining activities.



De Lima calls for Senate probe on black sand mining in Lingayen Gulf

Further controversy surrounding the mining industry was stirred when, in a move intended to spur the pandemic-ridden economy, President Duterte issued Executive Order (EO) 130 last April 15 which lifted a nearly decade-long moratorium on new mining agreements.

Last May, De Lima filed SR 720 directing the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry into the said mining operation in Zambales as well as a systematic review of all pending and ongoing large-scale mining projects in the Philippines to determine their compliance with relevant environmental laws, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

During her stint as justice secretary, De Lima created a task force led by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to lead a crackdown on several illegal black sand mining operators in Cagayan and Ilocos Sur. The move led to the filing of charges against several individuals.

LRMC pushes forward with sustainability initiatives

Adopts 2 hectares for reforestation in Ipo Watershed



BYBMPLUS

OCTOBER 1, 2021

3 MINUTE READ



LRMC employee volunteers during the tree-planting activity for the company's 6th anniversary celebration

Private operator of LRT-1 Light Rail Manila Corporation (LRMC) pushes on with its sustainability journey by taking part in the fight against climate change and its impact.

LRMC has adopted a two hectare-site (equal to 800 trees) with one year maintenance as part of its support to the *Plant for Life*, the annual program of its MVP Group sister company Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad). *Plant for Life* was established in 2007 with the goal of planting 10,000 trees every year during the rainy season in Ipo Watershed, Bulacan. Prone to denudation due to illegal logging, forest fires, and kaingin deforestation, the 7250-hectare watershed is the source of 90% of Maynilad's raw water. Reforestation is crucial to secure its water supply, as well as ensure the quality and quantity for its service areas in Metro Manila. To date, Maynilad has already planted over 550,000 trees in Ipo Watershed, sequestering over 9,200 tons of carbon dioxide.

The support of LRMC for the adopted site includes hauling of seedlings, site clearing, hole digging, out-planting, firebreak establishment, weeding among others. As part of the company's 6th anniversary celebration, several LRMC employee volunteers participated in the tree planting activity held last 24 September 2021 at Sitio Balagbag, Norzagaray, Bulacan.



LRMC pushes forward with sustainability initiatives



Partners from Maynilad with members of the indigenous Dumagat community and Mt Balabag Farmers Association

“Sustainability is a business imperative for LRMC. As one of the cleanest and greenest high-volume modes of transport, rail is definitely part of the solution in creating sustainable lifestyles and economies. At LRMC, we are taking it a step further through initiatives such as this that promote environmental stewardship and partnership with local communities, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and *Gabay Kalikasan* advocacy of the MVP Group,” LRMC President and CEO Juan F. Alfonso shared.

Malaruhat, *kupang*, and *batino* are among the endemic tree species planted in the adopted site to address the following objectives: reduce sedimentation, protect watershed resources, reduce turbidity of water, ensure sustainable water source, and integrate carbon sequestration. The reforestation effort is anchored on the UN Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 15 (Life on Land).

Gabay Kalikasan is one of the six *Gabay Advocacies for a Sustainable Philippines* launched by the Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC) and other MVP Group companies. These advocacies encapsulate the group’s efforts to attain the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for Filipinos: Livelihood, Youth and Leadership, Environment, Community Work, Health and Sports, and Education.

“While we remain steadfast in ensuring the safety and convenience of our commuters daily, our mission extends to the greater good which includes taking steps towards a cleaner, greener, and more resilient planet. LRMC has been religiously monitoring and reporting our CO₂ emissions to reduce carbon footprint and our environmental impact. We have been successful over the years in meeting our targets for greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in both Scope 1 (direct emissions) and



LRMC pushes forward with sustainability initiatives

Scope 2 (indirect emissions – owned),” said Dr. Louernie de Sales, LRMC Head of Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality Department.

LRMC has been a long-term advocate of sustainability, having established the *Live for the Rivers Movement* coalition in 2016 together with various local government units and partners. The coalition seeks to address river pollution along the *Estero de Tripa Gallina* in Pasay City through extensive cleaning, rehabilitation, production of Vetiver Grass and Mabuhay Balls. LRMC also performs regular clean-up activities in communities near LRT-1 such as the *Liwasang Bonifacio* in Manila. As part of its Bikeways Program, LRMC has installed bike racks in all stations and worked with the Pasay LGU for bike lanes in support of active mobility.

For more updates and info on the LRT-1, follow LRMC on Facebook at facebook.com/officialLRT1, Twitter at [@officialLRT1](https://twitter.com/officialLRT1), or download the *ikotMNL* mobile app for free on Google Play and App Store.



How tourism fuels Southeast Asia's wildlife trade

Tour operators and guides encourage visitors to buy illegal ivory, tiger "glue" and other products.



Seized illegal wildlife products. Tiger products are in such high demand that other big cat products are passed off as tiger. Image: [Ryan Moehring/USFWS, CC BY 2.0](#).

By Soraya Kishtwari, China Dialogue

Sept. 30, 2021

Tourist guides and information centres in Southeast Asia have been fuelling the illegal wildlife trade by facilitating consumption by tourists, several investigations show.

Prior to Covid-19, shops trading wildlife items, from ivory bangles to tortoise shells, relied heavily on tourists, forming partnerships with travel agents and tour guides.

Since the pandemic, and in many cases before it, traders have been moving their operations online, with more sellers springing up than being shut down.

Without a significant increase in effort from law enforcement agencies and online sales platforms, in-person sales are likely to pick up again once the pandemic recedes.

Aiding and abetting

Illegal wildlife traders will often pay guides and tourist offices a commission to send people their way, says Hong Hoang, founder and executive director of CHANGE, an environmental NGO based in Vietnam.

How tourism fuels Southeast Asia's wildlife trade

In 2018, Hong visited Mong Cai in northeastern Vietnam, on the border with China, as part of an undercover investigation with WildAid. Via a hidden camera, the team recorded shops selling ivory to buyers from China and Vietnam.

Vietnam banned trade in ivory in 1992, but selling specimens produced before this date remained legal, allowing some shopkeepers to [pass off recently carved ivory as old stock](#). Meanwhile, much illegal trade continues with impunity.

During Hong's visit to Mong Cai, many shoppers appeared to be escorted by guides. "It was happening in broad daylight right under the noses of the police," says Hong. The illegal wildlife trade within the tourism industry has "been there forever and everyone knows about it," she adds.

Although improved policing means [arrests](#) related to wildlife crime are on the rise in Vietnam, the country's reputation for patchy law enforcement endures.

Mong Cai, for example, is a notorious transit point for moving contraband across the border. After their 2018 trip, CHANGE and WildAid put up billboards and posters in the city, warning that buying, selling or possessing ivory carries a penalty of up to 15 years' imprisonment.

"[But] it's not just in the border town of Mong Cai," says Hong. Wherever tourists flock, the black market in wildlife thrives. "It's in Halong Bay, it's in Nha Trang, it's everywhere [in Vietnam]. We just don't have a good chunk of money that we can dedicate to conduct a decent survey," she adds.

Ivory still draws tourists

Until recently there has been little data on the scale of tourist sector complicity in the illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia.

Last year, WWF commissioned a [survey](#) on the ivory consumption of 3,000 Chinese travellers abroad. Respondents answered questions about their pre-pandemic trips to seven countries and territories, including Vietnam and Thailand, between August 2019 and January 2020. Of those who reported having visited a shop which sold ivory, 60 per cent said they were referred there via a local guide, while 37 per cent said tourist information centres had sent them there. In total, 6.8 per cent ended up purchasing an ivory product. More than half (57 per cent) of all respondents who visited an ivory retailer said the salesperson spoke Chinese.

Ivory is also popular among [Thai](#) and [Vietnamese](#) consumers. For some middle-class people with growing disposable income, ivory projects wealth and social status. [Spiritual beliefs](#) also play a part in its appeal.

The smaller the item, the more convenient it is for a tourist with a limited baggage allowance to travel with, and the more likely a seller will close a deal. Shipping companies and postal services also play a role by facilitating delivery, [with 44 per cent](#) of customers having their purchase sent to them at home in China by mail, the WWF survey found.

"People are smuggling small pieces and customs are basically overlooking it," said Yoganand Kandasamy, regional lead for wildlife and wildlife crime at WWF Greater Mekong. "In fact, that's what shops are marketing: when they sell an object to customers they say 'You know, a small piece and nobody will bother you when you're crossing the border.'"



How tourism fuels Southeast Asia's wildlife trade

He adds: “An individual buying an item weighing no more than 100 grams doesn’t sound like much. The problem is that we have something like 100 million travellers from mainland China coming to the region (Southeast Asia, as well as Hong Kong and Japan), even if it’s just 10 per cent of visitors buying these products, it adds up.”

Many unsuspecting tourists will inevitably be targeted by tour operators and tour guides in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. These people work with black-market traders, who are trained to sniff out potential buyers, not least to try and recover earnings lost to Covid lockdowns.

“People believe that ivory is bought by collectors. The reality is that most ivory is bought by tourists, by travellers – and it’s being pushed by the tourism industry,” said Wander Meijer, director at GlobeScan.

It is not just ivory that is marketed to tourists. “Items such as marine turtle combs and fans, small and popular as souvenirs ... have always [been] primarily targeted [at] tourists,” said Douglas Hendrie, enforcement director at [Education for Nature Vietnam](#) (ENV), a non-governmental organisation.

Online sales

E-commerce and social media help sell illegal wildlife products to tourists in Southeast Asia. Increasingly, tourist-focused businesses across the region are using these platforms to advertise and sell animal parts.

In the Laos capital of Vientiane, for example, illegal wildlife products are on open display in Sanjiang market, but much of the actual selling takes place online.

“They have QR codes you scan to friend them on WeChat. That opens up a whole album of products, which you can buy online through WeChat Pay and they arrange the delivery to your address in China,” says Debbie Banks, tigers and wildlife crime campaign lead for the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA). EIA have documented ivory bracelets, tiger teeth, tiger bone wine, helmeted hornbill casques (“red ivory”), bear bile pills, and rhino horn trinkets for sale in the market.

Digitally savvy sellers have been able to withstand the in-person sales slump caused by Covid-19 better than most.

For Hendrie, daily successes in suppressing wildlife crime are not keeping up with sales growth. “We are essentially throwing sand at an internet tide of sales,” he says.

Trade in tiger products ‘out of control’

In Vietnam, the sale and advertising of tiger parts and products is prohibited by law, but tiger bone “glue” — a thick paste made by boiling tiger bones with other ingredients — remains stubbornly popular, marketed as a cure for joint problems and a virility booster.

This too is marketed directly to tourists in Southeast Asia. In a [report](#) published last year, EIA reproduced adverts from a tour operator and shipping specialist promoting tiger bone glue on



How tourism fuels Southeast Asia's wildlife trade

its [website](#) to Vietnamese visitors to Thailand, making clear the operator could organise delivery for buyers.

Another operator [advertised](#) the opportunity to buy tiger bone glue as a reason to visit a “butterfly garden” near Bangkok. In a 2019 investigation, EIA [documented](#) how tourists visiting a retail park in Thailand were presented with sales pitches marketing tiger bone glue. Salespersons told coachloads of tourists, mostly from China and Vietnam, that “Going to Thailand without buying tiger bone glue is like you haven’t gone [to Thailand]”. This ignores the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna) ban on all international commercial trade in tigers and tiger parts.

“We know that Thailand caters to Vietnamese tour groups looking to purchase tiger bone traditional medicine. That’s part of the appeal — the opportunity to purchase ‘exotic’ products,” says Hendrie.

According to Banks, appetite for tiger products is increasingly endangering other cat species too: “African lion bone, teeth and claws are being sold as tiger; likewise jaguar teeth and claws.”

Wildlife restaurants

Southeast Asia’s special economic zones, such as the Golden Triangle where the borders of Laos, Myanmar and Thailand meet, and which are popular with tourists, remain “key hotspots for the illegal wildlife trade”, according to a survey by NGO [TRAFFIC](#).

Certain restaurants have long been known to cater to tourists in search of exotic wild meat, according to Nguyen Van Thai, founding director of Save Vietnam’s Wildlife and [recipient](#) of this year’s Goldman Environmental Prize for his work to protect pangolins. “When people are travelling to remote places, near forests, they want to eat something special from that region, and that often involves bushmeat,” Nguyen told China Dialogue.

Hong agrees. “Bushmeat is a huge issue we are dealing with, with tourists,” she says. “From government officials travelling to [rural] provinces on business, to tourists eating civets, pangolins and porcupines, people don’t understand that they are supporting the illegal wildlife trade by consuming these protected species.”

Even well-meaning travel guides and websites contribute to the problem by writing about animal-infused wines and other “exotic” local delicacies as a “must-try” experience for any seasoned world traveller. In many cases, they make no mention of the steep cost to locally endangered wildlife of such experiences.

Could ongoing public health concerns related to the link between zoonotic diseases and wildlife trade offer a chance to change consumer behaviour? Nguyen isn’t convinced: “People have been concerned about the health issues regarding eating wild meat since Covid, but people were also concerned before. Sars, HIV, avian influenza — it’s all related to wildlife consumption.”

Signs for the future

There were some promising developments last year. Twenty-one Chinese entities signed a pledge with WWF and the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#) to tackle the interconnected issues of wildlife trafficking, plastic waste and food waste.



How tourism fuels Southeast Asia's wildlife trade

Then, in December, 30 representatives from Vietnam's travel industry [committed](#) to supporting responsible tourism, including by protecting wildlife. They had been brought together by People and Nature Reconciliation, a Vietnamese NGO, and Vietnam's Responsible Travel Club.

Vietnam has also "made great strides in the way it deals with wildlife crime," says Hendrie. "Younger generations are less inclined to consume wildlife or use wildlife traditional medicine. Ivory is the exception to the rule, however." At the lower end of the market, the sale of jewellery and carvings is increasing across all age groups, particularly online, he adds. Tiger and bear claws are also popular.

Research from China reveals a slightly different picture on ivory. In April, WWF revealed in its [fourth annual ivory survey](#) that Chinese consumer demand was at its lowest level since the ivory ban came into force, with the proportion of the population defined as "diehard buyers" dropping to 8 per cent in 2020 — less than half of the 2017 pre-ban level. Yet demand among those who travel regularly abroad has not waned; individuals who travelled just before the pandemic closed borders purchased ivory in larger quantities than in 2017.

When the chance to travel opens up the evidence suggests there will be ample opportunities, often revealed by tour operators, to buy wildlife illegally once again.

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What's at stake for India and South Asia at COP26?

In just over a month, the most important climate talks since the Paris Agreement was signed will decide the fate of global climate action.



Activists and youth from Fridays for Future India strike to demand climate justice as part of the global climate strike day of action. Image: [350.org](https://www.350.org/), [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/).

By Lou Dell Bello, The Third Pole
Oct. 1, 2021

South Asia is home to nearly [a quarter of the world's population](#), and to some of the countries [most vulnerable](#) to the impacts of climate change. With just over a month to go until COP26, the next round of global climate talks under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), South Asian nations are preparing to make the case for putting their development needs at the centre of their carbon-reduction pathways.

The 26th Conference of Parties, known as COP26, which will run from 31 October to 12 November in Glasgow, the UK, is considered the most important meeting in global climate diplomacy since 2015, when the Paris Agreement was thrashed out by the 197 members of the UNFCCC. In Paris, countries vowed to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels and with the aspirational target of keeping warming within 1.5C, through a series of individual emission-reduction pledges known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs.

On the agenda at COP26

Five years down the line, countries were scheduled to return to the forum and finalise a rulebook on how to implement the Paris Agreement. Some industrialised countries and civil society groups



What's at stake for India and South Asia at COP26?

also hoped that all countries would submit more ambitious NDCs. The UNFCCC secretariat pushed for this by asking all countries to update their NDCs.

None of this happened in 2020 due to the Covid-19 crisis, which led the UN to postpone the meeting, and negotiations are resuming this year with the same agenda. Nations will need to reach consensus on how to measure and potentially trade their carbon-reduction achievements, a sticking point that prevented them from finalising the rulebook in previous years. They will also need to ratchet up their national pledges for a chance to keep global warming within 1.5C.

Current pledges combined put the world on track for [2.7C degrees of warming](#), which would lead to a slew of irreversible environmental changes and [extreme weather events](#) such as floods, heatwaves, cyclones, abnormal rains and more. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN scientific body on climate change, the world is currently well [on track to reach 1.5C](#) of warming by 2040, and South Asian economies are among the vast majority of countries that are not doing enough to improve on this.

Where South Asia stands before COP26

India's climate pledges involve a reduction in the carbon intensity of its GDP, meaning that emissions are expected to grow together with the country's economy, albeit at a slower pace. The country's pledges and carbon-reduction policies have recently been deemed '[highly insufficient](#)' by the thinktank Climate Action Tracker, which analyses countries' climate pledges against the global 1.5C goal.

[Bangladesh](#) and [Pakistan](#) have promised significant reductions in their carbon emissions, but both countries continue to invest in and rely on fossil fuel infrastructure, particularly coal and gas. Bangladesh has said it can reduce emissions a lot more if it gets money from rich nations to do so.

"All countries have already agreed to prevent runaway climate change," says economist Ulka Kelkar, who is director of the climate programme at the thinktank World Resources Institute in India. "What we need at [this year's] COP is action plans to rapidly cut greenhouse emissions and finance to adapt to climatic hazards."

According to [a note](#) circulated by the COP26 presidency, the meeting's priorities will include a push towards raising USD 100 billion per year in climate finance to help developing nations decarbonise and adapt to climate change, a goal that is still a distant prospect nearly two years [after its deadline](#). Parties will also be expected to address the gap between their NDC plans and the 1.5C goal, the note says, encouraging all countries to develop strategies "pointing the way to net-zero".

The net-zero debate

In South Asia, India has been under the spotlight as the world's potential next biggest polluter in the second half of this century, if China and the US reduce their carbon emissions as they have promised. International partners [have been putting pressure](#) on the Modi administration to set a 2050 deadline for India's emissions to reach '[net-zero](#)', meaning it is able to absorb all the emissions it produces. As COP26 approaches, observers are waiting for the country to take a stand on this expectation, following other major economies such as [China](#), Japan, South Korea, France and the UK.



What's at stake for India and South Asia at COP26?

However, Kelkar says, the example set by rich countries is not enough to inspire confidence among developing nations. While net-zero targets address a distant future, she says, “what we need is immediate and tangible emission cuts over the next few years”. At this year’s COP, she says, “we need to meet the [long-overdue climate finance target](#) of USD 100 billion per year, [and] we need to close years of pending negotiations on international carbon trading”.

Reaching net-zero is “absolutely critical for all countries, including India and its South Asian counterparts”, says Vaibhav Chaturvedi, an economist at the thinktank Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), who specialises in the study of low-carbon pathways. “But it can’t be by 2050 for all the countries. Countries should be given time to choose a net-zero year depending on their national circumstances.” Negotiators from South Asia, he says, “have to ensure that they push for equity in the net-zero debate, along with enhanced financial flows to aid climate mitigation and [adaptation](#) to this part of the world”.

The Indian government has not yet finalised its COP26 strategy, but recent speeches by environment minister Bhupender Yadav have focused on the need for industrialised countries to cut their own emissions, and to do so in this decade instead of setting a distant mid-century goal.

What can South Asia bring to the table at COP26?

While a net-zero commitment by mid-century may be unfeasible for countries in South Asia, [Bangladesh](#) and [Nepal](#) have submitted updates to their climate pledges prior to COP26, increasing their mitigation efforts in line with the principles of the Paris Agreement. India is yet to decide whether it will come forward with a fresh set of promises at COP26, but so far lawmakers have made it clear that [they won’t raise climate ambitions](#) under pressure from developed countries. The country, they point out, already has some of the most ambitious clean energy goals, with [450GW of clean energy capacity](#) to be installed by 2030.

Despite its renewable targets, [80 per cent of India’s energy needs](#) are currently met by fossil fuels, particularly coal, a figure that will likely face scrutiny in Glasgow. “It’s important to understand the risks [of certain energy policy choices] as much as the opportunities,” says Christopher Beaton, who leads the Sustainable Energy Consumption programme at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). “I think that it’s less about trying to force countries to commit to stop building coal, and more about assessing the risks that come with it.”

In the case of India, Beaton says, there’s already an oversupply of coal power capacity, which means many of these assets will eventually become stranded. Holding on to too much coal also means that adding a lot of new renewable energy capacity may not necessarily help decarbonise the economy.

“Committing to shifting public financial flows away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy is a proposition that almost every country can back,” he says. “It’s something that will definitely support a lot of the bigger picture ambitions that will be key at the COP26 table, also increasing the pace of change.”

This story was published with permission from [The Third Pole](#).



Europe's energy fiasco: An inconvenient moment for climate policy and green energy

By Yen Makabenta
October 2, 2021

BEFORE foreign propagandists in our midst preach one more word to our people and government on the importance of green energy and the evils of fossil fuels, they should first explain why they are foisting on our country climate and energy policies that have plunged Europe into crisis and will undoubtedly also plunge the Philippines into the mire if we don't watch out.

There are major reports in international media today that discuss in detail the crisis in Europe and the role that wrongheaded climate and energy policies have played in bringing about the energy disaster.

First is an article in the September 27 issue of the Wall Street Journal, "Climate policy meets cold reality in Europe." It details how Europe today is reeling from an energy shortage and surging energy prices as a result of betting big on renewables.

Second is an article by Andrew Stuttaford in the National Review's September 2021 issue, "ESG's inconvenient truths and green energy's inconvenient moment," which contends that green energy faces today an inconvenient moment because of foolish climate policy.

The burning and flooding of the planet

Europe's current distress is highly ironic because no region or group of states has been more assiduous than Europe in dictating and prescribing the United Nations agenda for climate change, advocating zero carbon emissions and demanding the shutdown of the fossil fuel industry. No one has pressed the UN more to issue its highly debated climate assessment reports.

Now, it's the turn of Europe to be perched on the hot seat.

Europe grapples with energy crisis

The Wall Street Journal article by Allysia Findly squarely blames the rush to renewables for the severe energy price spikes and shortages in Europe. It warned that President Joe Biden's policies in the US are headed to the same ditch. Findly wrote:



Europe's energy fiasco: An inconvenient moment for climate policy and green energy

China urges global effort vs emission

"European leaders at the United Nations last week applauded themselves as they doubled down on their pledges to slash CO₂ emissions...Such vows of carbon chastity are, to say the least, ironic as Europe grapples with a severe energy shortage and surging prices wrought by its green industrial revolution.

"In the past decade the UK and Europe have shut down hundreds of coal plants, and Britain has only two remaining. Spain shut down half of its coal plants last summer. European countries have spent trillions of dollars subsidizing renewables, which last year for the first time exceeded fossil fuels as a share of electricity production. But renewables don't provide reliable power around the clock, and wind power this summer has waned across Europe and in the UK, forcing them to turn to gas and coal for backup power. Yet demand for these fossil fuels is also surging across Asia and South America, where drought has crimped hydropower. Manufacturers there are also consuming more energy to supply Western countries with goods.

"Japan has become especially dependent on liquefied natural gas imports since it shut down most of its nuclear power plants after Fukushima in 2011. Even China has been forced to ration electricity to energy-hungry aluminum smelters because of a coal power shortfall. This has sent global aluminum prices soaring.

"Increased global demand has caused the price of coal to triple and the price of natural gas to increase fivefold over the past year. Europe's cap-and-trade scheme has pushed prices even higher...

How many archipelagos will be required for PH's energy transition?

"Russia is exploiting Europe's energy difficulties by reducing gas deliveries, perhaps to pressure Germany to complete certification of its Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which bypasses Ukraine. Russia's Gazprom has booked only a third of the available transportation capacity through its Yamal pipeline for October and no additional deliveries via its Ukraine pipeline.

"Europe has become ever more dependent on Russia — the world's second largest gas producer, after the US — for energy because the UK and Germany have banned hydraulic fracturing, letting their rich gas shale resources go to waste. Meantime, the Netherlands is shutting down Europe's biggest gas field.



Europe's energy fiasco: An inconvenient moment for climate policy and green energy

"In short, all of Europe's green chickens are coming home to roost. Several UK retail electricity providers have collapsed in recent weeks because of the surging price of gas. Energy experts warn that some German power suppliers are in danger of going insolvent. Germany's electricity prices, which were already the highest in Europe because of heavy reliance on renewables, have more than doubled since February.

How many archipelagos will be required for PH's energy transition?

"Skyrocketing power prices have caused UK steel makers to suspend production. A former energy adviser to the UK government warned last week that the country's energy shortage this winter could prompt a 'three-day working week.'

"The European Steel Association has warned that the Continent's producers are becoming globally uncompetitive...

"Europe offers a portent of the havoc to come under the Biden administration's policies that aim to shut down fossil-fuel production and power the US grid exclusively with renewables. Democrats won't succeed in banishing fossil fuels. Instead, the US, like Europe, will need more gas and coal to back up renewables, and the US will become dependent on adversaries like Russia for energy."

'Foolish energy policy'

In the National Review article, "ESG's inconvenient truths and green energy's inconvenient moment," author Andrew Stuttaford underscored the baleful effect of irresponsible and poorly thought out climate policies in the crisis. Playing on Al Gore's book, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Stuttaford called the present an inconvenient moment for green energy. He wrote:

"'Europe's experience is the product of foolish energy policy,' says Gordon Tomb, senior fellow for Pennsylvania-based Commonwealth Foundation. 'Germany, for example, moved away from fossil fuels and nuclear in favor of wind and solar and its electricity now costs twice that of France's nuclear-generated power.'

"'Reliability and affordability of the electric system has to be paramount, even as we look at how we're making this energy transition, which our members are fully engaged in,' Todd Snitchler of Electric Power Supply Association (EPSA) told InsideSources. 'Europe is not identical to the United



Europe's energy fiasco: An inconvenient moment for climate policy and green energy

States but it's constructive that consumers are sensitive to price increases, especially at a time when there is peak demand.'...

"The worsening situation in Europe has gotten worse. The epicenter of the crisis continues to be the UK.

"It is, perhaps, unkind to note that in November, the UK will be hosting COP 26, the next big climate jamboree, a fact about which any British prime minister capable of feeling shame ought, under any circumstances, to be mortified — and these are not any circumstances. Unfortunately, the UK's prime minister, Boris Johnson, who has embraced climate fundamentalism with an intensity all too typical of converts to a new faith, is as shameless as he is incompetent. He is now busy shambling around proclaiming the importance of this miserable event, which will do little or nothing to help the climate, but a great deal to trash the economy, and will further empower Xi, Putin, and OPEC.

"Some wicked types appear to be hoping that this historic meeting/last chance to save humanity will be marred by a power cut."

yenobserver@gmail.com

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/10/02/opinion/columns/europes-energy-fiasco-an-inconvenient-moment-for-climate-policy-and-green-energy/1816788>

SMC, govt break ground on Pasig River hybrid expressway project

October 1, 2021



SMC President Ramon Ang, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade and Public Works and Highways Undersecretary for Planning and Public-Private Partnership Service Maria Catalina Cabral lead the Pasig River Expressway groundbreaking rites along the Pasig River in Pandacan, Manila.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

IT'S all systems go for the much-anticipated [Pasig River Expressway \(Parex\)](#), touted to be the country's first green, hybrid expressway as proponent [San Miguel Corp. \(SMC\)](#), together with the government, broke ground recently for the 19.37-kilometer project.

The project, a P95-billion investment by SMC, will be a six-lane elevated expressway that will run along the banks of the river, from [Radial Road 10](#) in [Manila](#) to [C-6 Road](#) or the South [East Metro Manila Expressway](#) in Taguig.

SMC President [Ramon Ang](#) said Parex will feature, among others, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system for a comfortable, safe and reliable alternative to commuting anywhere in the [metro](#) that will benefit commuters all over Metro Manila

Once operational, Parex will link the eastern and western cities of Metro Manila and will connect to the Skyway system — realizing the vision of an integrated elevated road network that will link the north, south, east and west corridors of the capital.



SMC, govt break ground on Pasig River hybrid expressway project

On behalf of Public Works and Highways Secretary [Mark Villar](#), Undersecretary for Planning and PPP Service [Maria Catalina Cabral](#) said, "We in the DPWH, led by Secretary Mark Villar, believe that this will be a monumental and significant project as it will serve as the east-west connection from R-10 in Manila all the way to Taytay, Rizal. It will complete the network of expressways within the Metro Manila area and will provide a solution to the growing traffic problem within the metropolis. The travel time from Manila to Pasig will be reduced to just about 15 to 20 minutes, once this project is finished," she said.

Transportation Secretary [Tugade](#) said after working with SMC and Ang on a number of projects, he is sure the Parex will not only benefit the public but also the environment.

The expressway will also have dedicated bike lanes to encourage healthy, environment-friendly modes of personal transportation as well as pedestrian walkways to encourage walking or exercise.

02 OCTOBER 2021, Saturday



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DOH justifies extension of Alert Level 4 in Metro Manila

By [Sheila Crisostomo](#) (The Philippine Star)
- October 2, 2021 - 12:00am



A giant mural with theme of new normal wearing face mask and face shield as the people passersby at the East wood in Libis Quezon City (September 29, 2021).

Boy Santos

MANILA, Philippines — Authorities need more evidence to downgrade the Alert Level 4 status in the National Capital Region (NCR), which has been extended until Oct. 15, the Department of Health (DOH) said yesterday.

Since the new alert level system is still on pilot implementation, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) needs to “further assess and analyze the processes and strategies undertaken by local government units (LGUs).”

She said the assessment will be done weekly to determine the impact of the pilot testing, which started last Sept. 16.

Consequently, the rollout of the alert level system in the rest of the country has been put off “until the complete evaluation of the pilot implementation and monitoring system across all LGUs are set in place,” Vergeire said.

At present, the NCR or Metro Manila is under moderate risk case classification, but its intensive care unit (ICU) bed utilization rate of 76.8 percent is classified as high risk. The total COVID-19 bed utilization rate is at 62.6 percent.



DOH justifies extension of Alert Level 4 in Metro Manila

Based on protocols, areas under Alert Level 4, the second-highest alert level in the system, show high and increasing case counts with total COVID-19 bed and intensive care beds at increasing utilization rates.

The DOH called on LGUs under Alert Level 4 to ramp up active case finding, conduct risk-based testing using RT-PCR, fast-track vaccination among high-risk groups and ensure timely submission of data to decongest hospitals and reduce the number of severe infections and deaths.

LGUs should also implement granular lockdowns from the barangay down to the household level to contain the transmission of COVID-19.

224 areas under lockdown

As of yesterday, a total of 224 areas in the NCR were under granular lockdown, the Philippine National Police (PNP)'s Command Center said.

The figure was lower than the 291 lockdown areas recorded the previous week ending Sept. 24.

The Manila Police District (MPD) listed the biggest number of places under lockdown with 61, composed of 52 houses, three floors of residential buildings, a village and five streets or compounds.

Down the line are the Eastern Police District (EPD) with 60 areas under lockdown; Quezon City Police District (QCPD) with 43, Northern Police District (NPD) with 42 and the Southern Police District (SPD) with 18.

Under heavy guard, these lockdown areas affect a total of 2,323 households, equivalent to 7,299 individuals.

'Expect spike in cases'

The Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines Inc. (PHAPi) is expecting COVID-19 cases to increase in the next two weeks as a result of Metro Manila's shift from modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) to the alert level system since Sept. 16.

In an interview with "The Chiefs" on Cignal TV's One News, PHAPI president Jose Rene de Grano said it would take two weeks for the effects of the Alert Level 4 in NCR to manifest.

De Grano cited the current downward trend in cases "is supposed to be an effect" of the MECQ implemented in NCR earlier last month.

Since the alert level system is "more relaxed" than MECQ, he said more COVID-19 cases could be expected.

"There are more commercial establishments open now under Alert Level 4. We will see the effects of this in the next two weeks," he said.

Capacity increased

The Department of Tourism (DOT) lauded the IATF's decision to approve the expansion of the seating capacity of restaurants in Metro Manila.



DOH justifies extension of Alert Level 4 in Metro Manila

Based on the Guidelines on the Pilot Implementation of Alert Levels System for COVID-19 Response in Metro Manila, indoor dine-in service has been increased to 20 percent seating capacity for fully vaccinated individuals.

It also provides an additional 10 percent capacity for tourism establishments granted a Safety Seal by the government.

Meanwhile, al fresco dine-in services shall remain at 30 percent of the restaurant's outdoor seating capacity, also with additional 10 percent if the establishment has a Safety Seal.

"It is worth noting that the IATF backed the proposal as 99 percent of tourism workers employed in DOT-accredited hotels and restaurants in Metro Manila have been inoculated against COVID-19," Tourism Secretary Berna Romulo-Puyat said.

The DOT and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) recently released a Joint Memorandum Circular detailing the health and safety guidelines governing the operations of indoor and outdoor dine-in services under the alert levels system.

Puyat has been encouraging the public to patronize DOT-accredited establishments as their employees are already vaccinated and their operations are strictly monitored by the DOT to ensure the observance of health and safety protocols. – **Michael Punongbayan, Ghio Ong**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/10/02/2131195/doh-justifies-extension-alert-level-4-metro-manila/amp/>

Kaso ng COVID-19 sa mundo, sumampa na sa higit 234.60 milyon

By Angellic Jordan October 01, 2021 - 02:41 PM



Reuters photo

Pumalo na sa 234.60 milyon ang bilang ng kumpirmadong kaso ng COVID-19 sa buong mundo.

Batay sa huling tala, pumalo na sa kabuuang 234,608,477 ang tinamaan ng nakakahawang sakit sa iba't ibang bansa.

Nangunguna pa rin sa may pinakamaraming naitalang kaso ng COVID-19 ang Estados Unidos na may 44,314,424 cases.

Sumunod na rito ang India na may 33,766,707 na nagpositibo sa pandemiya.

Nasa 21,427,073 naman ang kaso sa Brazil habang 7,807,036 ang napaulat na kaso sa United Kingdom.

Narito naman ang naitalang COVID-19 cases sa iba pang bansa at teritoryo:

- Russia - 7,511,026
- Turkey - 7,154,070
- France - 7,013,432
- Iran - 5,587,040
- Argentina - 5,256,902
- Spain - 4,959,091
- Colombia - 4,957,277
- Italy - 4,672,355
- Germany - 4,241,706
- Indonesia - 4,215,104
- Mexico - 3,664,223



Kaso ng COVID-19 sa mundo, sumampa na sa higit 234.60 milyon

Samantala, lumabas din sa pinakahuling datos na umakyat na sa kabuuang 4,798,478 ang bilang ng nasawi sa iba't ibang bansa.

Nasa 211,391,978 naman ang total recoveries ng COVID-19 pandemic sa buong mundo.

Read more: <https://radio.inquirer.net/301706/kaso-ng-covid-19-sa-mundo-sumampa-na-sa-higit-234-60-milyon#ixzz785IAeT57>

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
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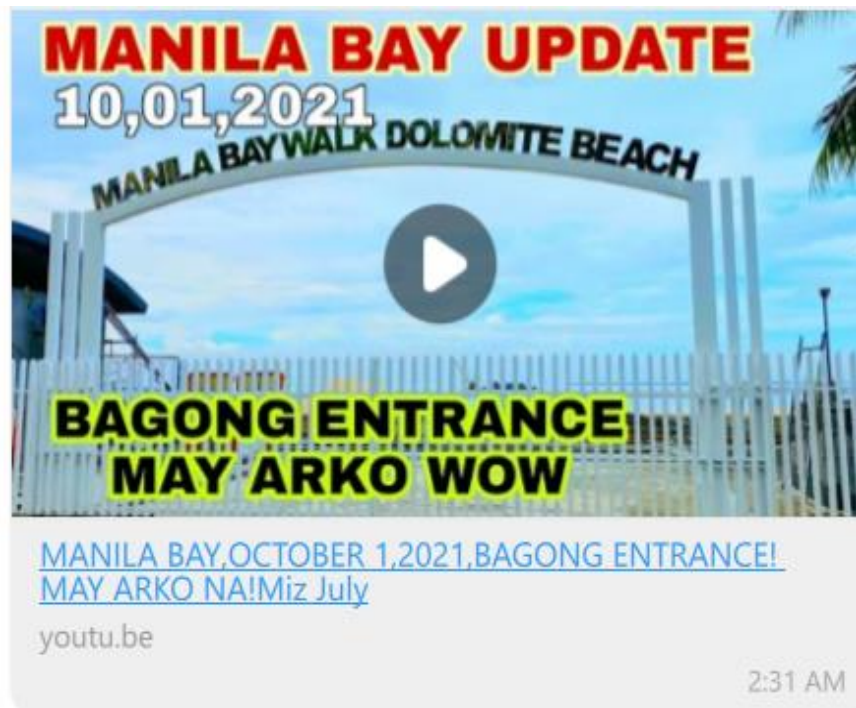


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Bilang bahagi ng ika-5 taong anibersaryo ng isang non-government organization na ACCERT o Anti-Crime Community Emergency Responce Team, nagsagawa ito ng iba't ibang aktibidad gaya nalang coastal clean-up na sinamahan pa ng Scubasurero.

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