

04 JANUARY 2021, MONDAY



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Cimatu upbeat on Boracay's full rehab by May 2021

By DENR Published on January 3, 2021



QUEZON CITY, Jan. 3 -- The Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) is on track to meet all its targets by the time its term ends in May 2021, according to Secretary Roy A. Cimatu of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"The BIATF is capping 2020 on a high note, setting us off in 2021 with solid confidence that we will hit our targets within the remaining five months ahead of us," said Cimatu, who chairs the BIATF, which President Rodrigo Duterte created more than two years ago to supervise and manage Boracay's rehabilitation.

In its year-end report, the BIATF's implementing arm, the Boracay Inter-Agency Rehabilitation Management Group (BIARMG), revealed that the number of structures violating the easement rules in Boracay is now down to only 342, representing 21 percent of all 1,569 illegal structures on the island.

Of the 1,569 structures, 1,230 were inside the 12-meter road easement, while 339 establishments were inside the 25+5-meter beach easement limit.

Majority or 943 of these structures are commercial establishments with 212 violating the 25+5-meter easement rule and 731 within the 12-meter easement. This was followed by residential houses at 456 (117 and 339 in 25+5-meter and 12-meter easements, respectively).

In terms of compliance to the easement rule, 978 structures or 79 percent are now compliant with the 12-meter road easement rule.

For the 25+5-meter beach easement limit, 249 structures are now compliant or 73 percent. Only 90 establishments are non-compliant or 27 percent.

BIARMG General Manager Natividad Bernardino said the Boracay rehabilitation was successful in terms of compliance by hotels and other commercial establishments.

"The improved water quality of Boracay has been primarily the result of the enforcement of the 25+5-meter shoreline easement rule," Bernardino said.



She also noted that the average coliform level at the island's main tourism beach called "White Beach" is now down to 10 most probable number per 100 milliliters (MPN/100ml).

Per DENR Administrative Order No. 34, Series of 1990, the safe quality standard for Class SB water, which is suitable for seawater recreational activities like swimming and skin diving, is 100 MPN/100 ml.

The 2020 BIARMG report likewise cited the completion of Phases 1 and 2 circumferential road improvements covering up to 8.75 kilometers of paved and widened road.

Bernardino added that the relocation of some 113 illegal structures in Wetland No. 6 paved the way for its full rehabilitation. The 31 Tumandok families who previously occupied the wetland have transferred to lands covered by Certificates of Landownership Ownership Award issued to them by the Department of Agrarian Reform in March 2020.

"The indigenous peoples and natives of Boracay were awarded land through the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program as a strategy to relocate them from 'No Build Zones' in wetlands and forestlands," she explained.

This year, the DENR has filed 51 cases for illegal occupation of Boracay forestlands out of the 406 notices of violations issued for such offense. (DENR)



DENR begins planting nilad mangrove trees in Manila Bay

By DENR Published on January 3, 2021

QUEZON CITY, Jan. 3 -- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), in partnership with the Manila City government, is bringing the historic nilad mangrove trees back in Manila Bay through a project in support of its rehabilitation.

Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu on Tuesday (Dec. 29) led the planting of nilad mangrove trees around the BASECO lagoon to kick off the "Nilad for Maynila" project of the DENR's research arm, Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB).

The project aims to regrow along the Manila Bay shores the nilad mangrove plant, after which the country's capital city was named.

"Nowadays, we can hardly find nilad growing in this place. We lost nilad in Manila primarily because of massive urbanization," Cimatu said.

In the olden times, Cimatu said, the shores of Manila Bay were lined up with lush nilad trees, thus Manila or Maynila means "may nilad" or "there is nilad."

"This is what we hope to relive in Manila to allow this generation and the future ones to also experience the beauty and bounty of the bay," the DENR chief pointed out.

Mangrove species such as nilad has the capacity to sequester carbon three to five times more compared to forests in the mountains. During strong typhoons, an area with bountiful mangrove trees can protect coastal communities against storm surges as these will act as buffer.

"This is our new project cum study on the use of nilad mangrove in re-greening the coast of the city of Manila," said ERDB Director Henry Adornado. "It is also the ERDB's contribution and complementary activity to the ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts of the DENR."

According to Adornado, the project aims to revert nilad to where it used to thrive. Mangroves, he added, will also help in combating air pollution, provide defense against waves thereby increasing community resilience.

Around 150 planting materials consisting of earth-balled nilad from Quezon province, and its close associate, tawalis and the endangered gapas-gapas, were planted around the lagoon.

"We used earth-balled materials because these have higher survival rate compared to seedlings which grow in nurseries," said Adornado.

Aside from BASECO, ERDB has identified other possible planting sites for the nilad. These are the areas behind the sewage treatment facility in Roxas Boulevard and H2O Hotel.

Also present at the project launch were DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones, Manila City Vice Mayor Honey Lacuna Pangan representing Mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso, Manila Department of Public Services Director Kenneth Amurao, and Barangay 649, Zone 68 Chair Diana Espinosa. (DENR)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/press-releases/releases/1062913>



DENR plants nilad mangrove trees on Manila Bay

Published January 3, 2021, 2:38 PM

by [Ellalyn de Vera-Ruiz](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is hoping to bring the historic nilad mangrove plant back in Manila Bay as part of its rehabilitation.



(Ali Vicoy / MANILA BULLETIN)

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu led last Dec. 29 the planting of nilad mangrove trees around the Baseco lagoon in Tondo, Manila to kick off the “Nilad for Maynila” project of the DENR research arm Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB).

Mangrove species, such as nilad, has the capacity to sequester carbon three to five times more compared to forests in the mountains.

During strong typhoons, an area with bountiful mangrove trees can protect coastal communities against storm surges as these will act as buffer, the DENR said.

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“We used earth-balled materials because these have higher survival rate compared to seedlings which grow in nurseries,” Adornado said.

Aside from Baseco, ERDB has identified other possible planting sites for the nilad. These are the areas behind the sewage treatment facility on Roxas Boulevard and H20 Hotel both in Manila.



DENR to replace open dumps with sanitary landfills starting January

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#) January 4, 2021

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is targeting the establishment of 300 sanitary landfills through public-private partnership schemes as it bares the plan to “aggressively” start shutting down open dumpsites starting this year.

The establishment of landfills is expected to solve the country’s solid-waste management problem, which agency officials hope to address in the next two years, vowing to step up the campaign against the country’s garbage woes.

The DENR expects all the landfills built by the end of year 2022. Putting up landfills remains the primary long-term method of solid waste disposal allowed under Republic Act (RA) 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000).

There are currently 189 landfills in operation in 399 local government units (LGUs) across the country. This number is considered small two decades after RA 9003 took effect.

Meanwhile, the DENR is set to provide this year a total of 178 LGUs within the Manila Bay region with an industrial-grade shredder-composter machines to help them comply with RA 9003.

The first batch of shredder-composter equipment was recently turned over to the LGU of San Fernando City, Pampanga, and the towns of Apalit, Candaba, Guagua and Magalang also of that province.

The Manila Bay region is comprised of the National Capital Region and eight provinces from Regions III and 4A, namely, Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Laguna, Rizal and Cavite.

A shredder-composter set includes a brand-new composter that can process one ton of compost material within 24 hours, and a brand- new shredder with the capacity to process two tons of organic waste per day.

Statistics from the National Solid Waste Management Commission show that around 52 percent of the municipal wastes in the country is biodegradable.

Providing LGUs with the equipment will not only reduce the amount of waste that end up in sanitary landfills but will also transform the diverted wastes into assets as organic fertilizer, which is valuable to agriculture and horticulture.



DENR to provide 178 LGUs with shredder-composter machines

Sunday, January 3, 2021 Cory Martinez¹¹

TO help the 178 local government units (LGUs) located within the Manila Bay Region to strictly comply with Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will be providing them with industrial-grade shredder-composter machines.

Benny Antiporda, DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and LGUs Concerns, said these 178 LGUs can expect their equipment within the year.

Antiporda said the first batch of shredder-composter equipment was already turned over to Pampanga LGUs—San Fernando City and the towns of Apalit, Candaba, Guagua and Magalang.

The Manila Bay region is comprised of the National Capital Region and eight provinces from Regions III and IV-A, namely, Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Laguna, Rizal and Cavite.

During the recent turnover ceremony held at the DENR Central Office in Quezon City, Antiporda said the agency will continue to provide LGUs the necessary support to ensure their compliance with RA 9003.

“Sad to say, compliance is slow particularly where LGUs lack the means for full and prompt compliance. This is where the DENR steps in, in line with its mandate to provide technical assistance and other capability-building assistance to LGUs,” said Antiporda.

A shredder-composter set includes a brand new composter that can process one ton of compost material within 24 hours, and a brand new shredder with the capacity to process two tons of organic waste per day.

Senator Cynthia A. Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, was the keynote speaker during the event. It was highlighted by the signing of the project’s Memorandum of Agreement between the DENR and the LGUs represented by their respective local executives.

Citing statistics from the National Solid Waste Management Commission, Antiporda said around 52 percent of the municipal wastes in the country is biodegradable.

Antiporda added that providing LGUs with the equipment will not only reduce the amount of waste that end up in sanitary landfills but will also transform the diverted wastes into assets as organic fertilizer, which is valuable to agriculture and horticulture.

“Transportation na lang po ang gagastusin nila dito,” Antiporda added, referring to the cost for the farmers availing of the organic fertilizers from the equipment.

Antiporda disclosed that the provision of the equipment will also help increase the collection of recyclable materials, which account for some 28 percent of the country’s municipal wastes.

The difficulty in recovering recyclable materials has been largely blamed on contamination by biodegradable materials like food wastes.

Source: <https://journal.com.ph/news/metro/denr-to-provide-178-lgus-with-shredder-composter-machines/>



DENR reports lower air pollution levels in New Year revelries

January 3, 2021, 11:25 am



File photo

MANILA – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) recorded a substantial reduction in air pollution levels in the first day of 2021 in Metro Manila by as much as 59 percent compared to pollution levels recorded last year.

In a news release issued on Saturday, DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu cited the support of Metro Manila local executives and residents to the government's effective implementation of Executive Order 28 which limits the use of firecrackers to "community fireworks display" which has been in effect since 2017.

An average concentration of 87 micrograms per normal cubic meter (ug/Ncm) of Particulate Matter (PM 10) was obtained by DENR-Environmental Management based on the measured data between 12 midnight of Dec. 31, 2020 to Jan. 1, 2021 from its six air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) in Caloocan, Marikina, Navotas, Pasig, Parañaque and Taguig cities.

Last year, the six AQMS yielded an average of 213 ug/Ncm, thereby accounting for a 59-average percent drop compared to its New Year's Eve (NYE) data on Jan. 1, 2020

"This attests to the correctness of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's interest to put a nationwide total ban on firecrackers which I believe clearly speaks not only for the President's strong policy agenda for health and safety, but for sound environmental governance as well," Cimatu said.

The highest NYE percentage drop recorded are the stations in Naval Street in Navotas with 99 percent from 209 to 1.34 ug/Ncm; Oranbo, Pasig City, 95 percent (130 to 7 ug/Ncm); Bicutan, Taguig City, 78 percent (355 to 79 ug/Ncm); Marikina Justice Hall open compound, Marikina City, 34 percent (189 to 124 ug/Ncm); and Caloocan City Hall Annex, Caloocan City, 29 percent (332 to 235 ug/Ncm).

Only the station in Don Bosco Barangay Hall Compound, Parañaque showed a 21-percent increase from 62 to 75 ug/Ncm.

PM10 in firecrackers are mainly coming from residuals of the explosive powders wrapped in paper which consists of a mixture of sulfur (S), carbon (C), and potassium nitrate (saltpeter, KNO₃) and other fine minerals which contains heavy metals. The short-term limit for PM10 is 150 ug/Ncm under the National Ambient Air Quality Guideline Value (NAAQGV) of Republic Act 8749 or the Clean Air Act.

Likewise, the EMB report noted that "the NYE 2021 have significantly lower concentrations of PM2.5 compared to the NYE 2020," particularly for its station at the Muntinlupa Bilibid open ground in Muntinlupa City which posted a maximum concentration of 12 ug/Ncm between 12 midnight to 2 a.m. of Jan. 1, 2021. The reading accounts for a 43-percent drop from 22 ug/Ncm obtained for the same period in last year.

The report, however, noted its Manila City Station measured a high of 93.5 ug/Ncm around 1 a.m. of Jan. 1, 2021 from a reading of 40.9 ug/Ncm at 11 p.m. of Dec. 31, 2020. The short-term limit for PM2.5 is 35 ug/Ncm under the NAAQGV of DENR Administrative Order 2020-14 dated Oct. 21, 2020.



These are attributed to “the strict measures being implemented” by Metro Manila Mayors under Metro Manila Development Authority Resolution No. 20-17 "Prohibiting Individual and Household Use of Firecrackers and Other Pyrotechnic Devices During General Community Quarantine".

Compared to PM10, PM2.5 pollutants are finer particles usually emitted by vehicles and burning plants.

These particles can reach the lungs when inhaled, leading to respiratory and circulatory diseases, including brain damage and cancer. (**DENR PR**)



DENR: Polusyon sa Metro Manila malaki ang ibinaba sa pagpasok ng 2021

January 3, 2021 2 min read

MANILA— Malaki ang ibinaba ng antas ng polusyon sa hangin sa Metro Manila sa pagpasok ng 2021, ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Ayon sa DENR, bumaba ng average na 59 porsiyento ang antas ng polusyon, kung saan malaki ang naitulong ng ipinatupad na firecracker ban ng mga alkalde ng Metro Manila.

Batay sa ulat ng Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), nakapagtala ito ng average concentration na 87 micrograms bawat normal cubic meter (ug/Ncm) ng particulate matter (PM 10) mula hatinggabi ng Disyembre 31, 2020 hanggang Enero 1 sa anim na air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) sa Caloocan, Marikina, Navotas, Pasig, Parañaque at Taguig.

“Last year, the 6 AQMS yielded an average of 213 ug/Ncm, thereby accounting for a 59-average percent drop compared to its New Year’s Eve (NYE) data in January 1, 2020,” sabi ng DENR sa isang pahayag.

Malaki ang ibinaba ng antas ng polusyon sa hangin sa mga sumusunod na istasyon ng DENR.

Naval St., Navotas City (99 porsiyento) mula 209 ug/Ncm noong 2020 patungong 1.34 ug/Ncm ngayong 2021

Oranbo, Pasig City (95 porsiyento) mula 130 ug/Ncm noong 2020 patungong 7 ug/Ncm ngayong 2021

Bicutan, Taguig City (78 porsiyento) mula 355 ug/Ncm noong 2020 patungong 79 ug/Ncm ngayong 2021

Marikina Justice Hall open compound, Marikina City (34 porsiyento) mula 189 ug/Ncm noong 2020 patungong 124 ug/Ncm ngayong 2021

Caloocan City Hall Annex, Caloocan City (29 porsiyento) mula 332 ug/Ncm noong 2020 patungong 235 ug/Ncm ngayong 2021

Tanging istasyon lang sa Don Bosco barangay hall compound sa Parañaque City ang nakapagtala ng mataas na lebel mula 62 ug/Ncm noong 2020 patungong 75 ug/Ncm ngayong 2021. (AI/FC/MTVN)

Source: <https://maharlika.tv/2021/01/03/denr-polusyon-sa-metro-manila-malaki-ang-ibinaba-sa-pagpasok-ng-2021/?fbclid=IwAR1ciYAh4br4qc3HQ3NyvIXmYSeM7XHxcnpkoShgYqTjJ-D7XwhbIFQSGvE>



Lebel ng polusyon sa hangin sa Metro Manila, bumaba ng higit kalahating porsyento – DENR

By [RadyoMaN Manila](#) -Jan. 3, 2021 at 8:41 am



Inihayag ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na bumaba ang lebel ng polusyon sa hangin sa Metro Manila nang higit sa kalahating porsyento sa unang araw ng 2021.

Ayon sa DENR, nagbunga ang pagpapatupad ng mga alkalde sa Metro Manila ng firecracker ban at paglimita sa pagsasagawa ng fireworks display.

Kasunod nito, nakapagtala ang DENR ng Average Concentration na 87 micrograms kada normal cubic meter mula sa Particulate Matter na PM 10 sa hangin.

Ibig sabihin nito, mas mababa ng 59% ang air pollution ngayong taon kumpara noong pagsalubong sa 2020 kung saan nasa 213 micrograms per normal cubic meter ang kanilang naitala.

Ibinatay ng DENR ang kanilang mga datos mula sa mga Air Quality Monitoring Stations sa Caloocan, Marikina, Navotas, Pasig, Parañaque at Taguig.

Source: https://rmn.ph/lebel-ng-polusyon-sa-hangin-sa-metro-manila-bumaba-ng-higit-kalahating-porsyento-denr/?fbclid=IwAR3_B5n8vcgMtLLopDr-k-6CKJQDNvrrodtZ7mQ8IOv0IXEV2JzGtNQYkg



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There is a recorded 59% drop of particulate matter (PM 10) in year-on-year comparison.



one news

**LOWER AIR POLLUTION IN NCR
RECORDED IN
2021 'SALUBONG'—DENR**

DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu attributed the improvement to the firecracker ban in the region.

OneNews.ph | OneNewsPH | courtesy: The Philippine STAR

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DBP OKs P416-M credit line for offshore miner

By Bernadette D. Nicolas

January 4, 2021

STATE-owned Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) approved a P416-million credit line to the country's first large-scale offshore mining company to boost the local production efficiency of iron ore and meet the expected higher demand for the mineral.

In a statement, DBP President and CEO Emmanuel G. Herbosa said the bank's assistance to JDVC Resources Corp. is in line with their aim "to support businesses that are commercially-viable yet ecologically sound to deliver and usher in further economic growth in the country."

"We are confident about the long-term economic benefits that may be reaped from this notable project that will buttress the growth of the local steel industry," Herbosa was quoted in the statement as saying. "Rest assured that DBP will continue ensuring that its funded projects are always vetted in terms of potential environmental and economic impacts."

The JDVC is the country's first large-scale offshore iron sand (Fe₃O₄) mining company operating in Cagayan province. It holds a 25-year Mineral Production Sharing Agreement with the national government for a mining concession and commercial extraction of minerals such as magnetite iron sand, titanium, vanadium and other valuable minerals.

Unlike onshore mining that involves heavy earth movements, offshore mining makes use of an environmentally-safe and ecologically-balanced siphoning vessel with advanced technology system for mining minerals under the sea.

Moreover, Herbosa said JDVC is the first firm to be granted a Declaration of Mining Project Feasibility by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The declaration authorizes the extraction and commercial disposition of magnetite sand and associated minerals in an initial area of over 1,902 hectares in Cagayan.



NGO seeks additional assistance for families affected by landslide



File photo

January 03, 2021

THE Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) Cebu has called upon the Toledo City Government in southwestern Cebu to compel the Carmen Copper Corp. (CCC) to provide “enough” support to the families of Barangay Biga who have been evacuated after a deadly landslide occurred in a mining pit owned by the CCC in the barangay.

Teodorico Navea, PMCJ Cebu chapter convenor, said some evacuees complained about the “deplorable” state of the evacuation sites in Sitios Hag-it and Manokan.

“When we were there (on Dec. 31, 2020), many were insinuating that they might return to their homes because they could not sustain their lives there,” he said.

In response to the evacuees’ claim, John Roseller Layan, public information officer of the Toledo City Government, said maybe they were still in the process of delivering assistance, adding that they encountered resistance from some residents.

The landslide on Dec. 21 that killed four CCC workers and left six others missing prompted the Toledo City Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council to meet with personnel of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) 7.

During the meeting, the MGB 7 recommend the immediate preemptive evacuation of families living in danger zone, or within the 600-meter radius from the mine tailing pipeline.

On Dec. 25, Mayor Marjorie Perales advised Biga Barangay Captain Pedro Sepada Jr. to implement the preemptive evacuation.

Navea said the group was with lawyers connected with the Cebu Action Group and the Philippine Earth Justice Center when they visited the evacuation sites.

He said they wanted to check on the families of the missing six miners and to have updates on the families of the four casualties.

He said only a few tents were set up in the evacuation sites in Sitios Hag-it and Manokan.

The site in Sitio Manokan, which is a former poultry farm, houses 116 families, or more than 400 individuals, he said.

It is “more than worse” than the site in Sitio Hag-it, which accommodates 134 households, or around 500 individuals, Navea added.



“This number of people and only a few tents were being set up and then the poultry farm which they occupied in Sitio Manokan. It’s really inhuman in terms of how the people were treated.. using the tarima and trapal,” Navea told SunStar Cebu.

He said evacuees also claimed that they were only visited by a government doctor once, but even during that time, no checkup happened.

After the group’s dialogue with the evacuees, he said, they also met with barangay officials.

Sepada, he said, told them that allegedly all the movements of the corporation are not being coordinated with the barangay.

He said the group statement is also an indirect appeal to the public to help the affected residents of Barangay Biga in the spirit of solidarity.

Layan said they cannot be at “full blast” in helping affected residents because there are some individuals who “interfere” with the City’s procedures.

“We’ve been doing our best to help them, but they don’t seem to appreciate it. We’ve tried to explain to the affected families that we cannot provide in evacuation centers the same comfort they enjoyed in their own homes,” he said in Cebuano.

He said the CCC, like the local government, has also encountered “blockage” of help supposedly intended for the evacuees, although he did not elaborate.

Layan said a 10-man team from MGB 7 is expected to conduct an independent survey in the affected area by Jan. 6 to determine if it is still habitable.

He said the search and retrieval operations of the City and the rescue personnel of the CCC are still ongoing for the six missing persons.

He said a dewatering process on ground zero was started three days ago.

“Maybe the missing persons are in the bottom of the mining pit,” Layan said in Cebuano.

However, the process may take some time, he said.

Meanwhile, MGB 7 Director Armando Malicse Jr., in a text message to SunStar Cebu said they still do not have final findings on what caused the Dec. 21 landslide.

The PMCJ is a national coalition of various nongovernment organizations which endeavor on programs against the further degradation of the environment and of the climate. The group, among their other advocacies, opposes destructive activities of mining companies in the country. **(WBS)**



While the Philippines' economic recovery is projected to be slower than most Asian nations due to its COVID response, the government is already counting on some industries to lead the country back to pre-pandemic levels.

[Philstar.com/stock](https://philstar.com/stock)

Mining sector to help economy recover

[Louise Maureen Simeon](#) (The Philippine Star) - January 4, 2021 - 12:00am

Yearender

MANILA, Philippines — The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social and economic life to a standstill and plunged the world into a recession far worse than the global financial crisis a decade ago.

While the Philippines' economic recovery is projected to be slower than most Asian nations due to its COVID response, the government is already counting on some industries to lead the country back to pre-pandemic levels.

The mining sector, which has been fighting for its life for years, is expected to help the Philippines get back on the growth track.

"There is a keen and renewed interest to see what it has to offer to the Philippines. Only two percent of the country's territory is currently covered by mining contracts," Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) executive director Ronald Recidoro said.

But for the sector to aid recovery and rebuilding efforts, several policy changes must be made.

"We have made several representations with the government in light of the pandemic. They are looking into the policies and issues that we have been raising and, hopefully, we get word from policy makers in the future," COMP spokesperson Rocky Dimaculangan said.

To show that it really means business, the government has renegotiated the contract of Australian-Canadian firm OceanaGold, lifted the suspension of several mine sites upon thorough review, and moved toward the privatization of several state-owned mining assets to shore up revenues.

It is also considering lifting the controversial open pit ban and the moratorium on new mining projects.

Additional revenue streams

The mining industry contributes to government coffers through exports, taxes and employment.

Larry Heradez, mining tenements management division chief of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), said the lifting of the moratorium on new mining projects would provide the government at least P20 billion in annual revenues, create 41,250 new jobs and directly benefit 800,000 individuals.



Heradez said the provision of a new mining tax regime should be amended to allow the government to grant new contracts.

In the first tranche of the tax reform program of the Duterte administration, the excise tax on mining doubled to four percent of gross output while the moratorium remains in place.

Heradez said the government would still pursue its legislative agenda in restructuring the fiscal regime by providing for revenue sharing.

The opening of more Minahang Bayan is seen providing P16 billion in annual revenues and 702,000 employment opportunities.

Minahang Bayan is a government-regulated cooperative of small-scale miners organized in a certain area or region.

The lifting of the controversial ban on open pit mining will also provide the government with some P11 billion in annual revenues, benefiting half a billion people and creating 28,500 additional jobs.

“We have recommended the lifting of the ban and promoting alternative methods for new mining applications, as far as practicable and feasible, or when particularly inapplicable, strict environmental safeguards shall be imposed,” Heradez said.

“We are also formulating appropriate measures to enhance environmental protection for the upcoming, current and post open pit mining projects,” he said.

Open-pit mining remains to be an internationally accepted method for mining and in the country, it is legal in accordance with the Mining Act of the Philippines. The Constitution even gives the state the duty to explore, develop, and utilize the country’s mineral resources.

The lifting of suspension orders against 13 mining firms under the watch of then Environment chief Gina Lopez will yield another P7.23 billion in revenues for the government, with nearly 30,000 job beneficiaries.

The fate of these mines are still hanging pending payment of penalties and compliance with the corrective measures recommended by the Mining Industry Coordinating Council.

Another potential source of government revenues is the renewal of the financial or technical assistance agreement (FTAA) of OceanaGold Philippines Inc. which can provide P2.8 billion annually and another P1.8 billion in taxes, fees and other obligations.

It is poised to employ around 10,000 workers on top of the 37,000 direct beneficiaries of the mine project.

The Office of the President has already directed the Philippine negotiation panel to start negotiating with OceanaGold on the terms and condition of its FTAA.

Apart from this, the Diwalwal Mineral Reservation Area (DMRA) can potentially provide almost 15,000 mining and small-scale mineral processing jobs and P609 million annual revenues.

River restoration through dredging and quarrying can also yield P25 billion in additional government revenue.



Global recovery for 2021

The mining industry saw global prices skyrocket this year. Gold, for one, achieved extreme heights not seen in the history of the commodity after prices reached nearly \$2,000 per ounce.

In its 2021 outlook report, Fitch Solutions said miners should expect more favorable pricing next year for almost all minerals as these will be supported by broader global economic recovery as COVID-19 vaccines become more widely available.

Demand for minerals will further pick up as China's consumption will remain strong as infrastructure projects continue to make progress, supported by its stimulus policies.

Approximately 90 percent of the country's nickel exports goes to China.

Demand for some metals used in renewable infrastructure and electric-vehicle batteries including copper, nickel and aluminum should also expect a better 2021.

Fitch noted that mining capital expenditures would improve next year after firms postponed projects this year to focus on post-pandemic programs.

The Philippines could take advantage of better prices next year if more output can be produced.

The sector's contribution in terms of revenues has been increasing in the last three years from P170 billion in 2017 to P179 billion in 2018 and P189 billion in 2019.

Its contribution to the overall gross domestic product, however, has remained at 0.6 percent while its share to total exports has also been stagnant at six percent over the last three years.

While the national impact of mining is small, the industry maintained that in certain regions that host large-scale mining, the impact is large in terms of regional GDP.

The metallic mining industry is also contributing to local economies and communities that host their operations including P4.7 billion in taxes and fees to local government units, P5.5 billion in environmental protection and enhancement programs, and P5.1 billion in social development projects.

Currently, there are 51 metallic operations in the country. Of these, 30 comprised nickel mines, 11 gold, four chromite and three for copper and iron.

Sleeping giant

Surigao del Norte Rep. Ace Barbers pointed out that the mining sector is the best and only solution to keep the economy going forward.

"The mining industry is a sleeping giant waiting to be tapped and harnessed and taken care of so it can grow as big as it could be," Barbers said.

"Only if we have a firm and stable mining policy, this would invite a lot of investors to come and infuse capital and thereby create jobs and revenues for the country," he said.

Ateneo School of Government dean Ronald Mendoza echoed the same sentiment, saying the sector is one of the key ingredients of that inclusive recovery that the Philippines is eyeing



Mendoza said the sector has more flexibility unlike the services or manufacturing, which are the traditional drivers of the economy, as mine sites are located in remote areas where not much intense human interaction is needed and can still operate amid health protocols.

“The tax revenue potential of the industry is huge. This is not the time to cripple the industry with further uncertainties,” Mendoza said.

“We can bank on mining if we actually focus on growing the industry in a sustainable way and using those revenues to invest for our nation’s future,” he said.

Environment group Alyansa Tigil Mina, one of the most vocal groups, maintained that reopening of mine sites in the country at the height of the pandemic is dangerous and would pose more risks to mining communities.

ATM believes that mining operations endanger the health of local residents in communities and that the government’s militaristic approach in addressing the pandemic also emboldened state forces and increased human rights abuses against environmental activists.

A report from the International Council on Mining and Metals showed that the global mining industry is a significant contributor of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

The Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of climate-related disasters. It is also the second most dangerous country for environmental defenders.



Mga magbabalik-Maynila, kailangang magpa-swab test

By [Danilo Garcia](#)(Pilipino Star Ngayon) - January 4, 2021 - 12:00am



Sa direktibang inilabas ni Manila Health Department-City Health officer Dr. Arnold Pangan, kailangang sumailalim sa RT-PCR test umpisa nitong Sabado ang mga magbabalik ng Maynila na buhat sa mga probinsya.

MANILA, Philippines — Kailangang sumailalim sa mandatory COVID-19 swab test ang mga residente ng lungsod ng Maynila na galing sa mga probinsya bago tuluyang makabalik sa kanilang mga tahanan.

Sa direktibang inilabas ni Manila Health Department-City Health officer Dr. Arnold Pangan, kailangang sumailalim sa RT-PCR test umpisa nitong Sabado ang mga magbabalik ng Maynila na buhat sa mga probinsya.

“Upang maiwasan ang muling pagtaas ng kaso ng Covid-19 sa Lungsod ng Maynila pagkatapos ng panahon ng kapaskuhan, ang lahat ng tao na babalik sa ating lungsod simula Enero 2, 2021 ay kinakailangan na sumailalim sa RT-PCR o swab test bago tanggapin sa kanilang barangay,” ayon sa memo.

Ang mga manggagaling naman sa mga karating-lungsod sa Metro Manila ay maaaring boluntaryo na magpasailalim sa swab test na libre umanong ibibigay ng lokal na pamahalaan.

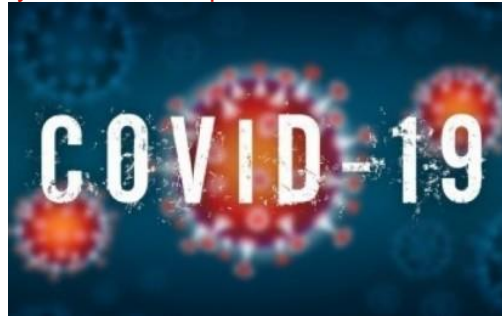
Pagdating sa Maynila, kailangang magtungo muna ang residente na galing probinsya sa swabbing center at sumailalim sa quarantine ng isang araw habang hinihintay ang resulta ng kanilang test.

Ang mga magne-negatibo ay bibigyan ng medical certificate ng kanilang resulta na ipakikita sa kanilang mga opisyal ng barangay para payagang makabalik sa kanilang mga tahanan.



PH Covid-19 recoveries rise by 8K to 448,258

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor January 3, 2021, 5:06 pm



MANILA – The country's total number of recovered cases from the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) climbed to 448,258, after 8,316 more recovered from the disease, the Department of Health (DOH) on Sunday said.

In its 4 p.m. case bulletin, the DOH said the figures represent 93.8 percent of those who tested positive for the virus that have so far beaten the illness.

The agency also reported 891 new confirmed cases and four new deaths.

These figures brought the overall tally of active cases to 20,292 and the death toll to 9,257.

The DOH said about 80.9 percent of the active cases are mild, 8.2 percent are asymptomatic, 3.6 percent are severe, 0.58 percent are moderate, and 6.7 percent are in critical condition.

"No duplicates were removed from the total case count. About 11 labs were not able to submit their data to the COVID-19 Data Repository System on January 2, 2021," it added.

Davao City topped the list of places that logged the most number of new cases with 65 infections.

It was followed by Rizal with 55; Isabela with 50; City of Manila with 40; and Quezon City with 37.

DOH data on Jan. 2 showed that 675 or 5.8 percent of 11,705 who were tested turned out positive for Covid-19.

"The DOH has noted a decrease in the number of cases reported today, at 896 new cases. This is due to a decrease in the number of patients seen in COVID-19 laboratories during the New Year," the agency said.

Currently, there is a 24,800-bed capacity dedicated to patients with Covid-19.

Available are 61 percent of 2,000 intensive care unit beds, 70 percent of 15,500 isolation beds, and 78 percent of 7,300 ward beds.

About 78 percent of 2,000 ventilators are available for Covid-19 patients' use.

The DOH reminded the public to be cautious in interpreting these numbers as an increase in cases in the coming weeks is still possible.

The DOH continues to assess the extent of the effects of the holiday season on Covid-19 transmission.

It also asked all stakeholders to be vigilant and should not be complacent in the fight against Covid-19. **(PNA)**



Vaccination road map in 2021

By ... -January 4, 2021

'As it is, this road map has already been breached even before it was given the opportunity to be implemented.'

MANY Filipinos heaved a sigh of relief as the year 2020 came to a close, with the last three quarters of that year punishing not just the nation but also the rest of the world with a noxious coronavirus that caused a catastrophic pandemic.

The epidemic has not waned in its virulence, although the country's health care system has prevailed over the initial shock, and important lessons on cooperation, preparedness and coordination were painfully learned. This resulted in a decrease in the number of new COVID-19 cases and increase in recoveries, but just the same this public health problem will extend to a good part of 2021 as the government rollout of the vaccine has not even started.

Starting the year right with optimism, President Duterte rallied all Filipinos in his New Year message that 2021 is a time for new beginnings and a time to be hopeful. He stressed that now, we march on to a new year wiser, stronger and more prepared for the challenges ahead.

The President affirmed, "Let our grateful hearts guide and inspire us to always do good and make a difference in the world. I am confident that all of us will see brighter days ahead because we believe in the indomitable spirit of the Filipino."

It warms the heart to hear the leader of the nation verbalize these reassurances, but more than the affirmations of hope, the nation needs concrete action rather than promises and plans on how to finally win against the epidemic.

Only in achieving victory over COVID-19 can we fully recover from the economic downturn this public health challenge had inflicted on the people. This level of confidence in the government may be achieved, even this early when not a single COVID-19 vaccine has received approval of the Food and Drug Administration, by credible affirmations that when these safe and efficacious vaccines do arrive, the government will follow its own publicized National Vaccination Road Map that details the priority order of vaccine recipients.

As it is, this road map has already been breached even before it was given the opportunity to be implemented. This was when the first batch of vaccines that arrived in the Philippines – illegally smuggled from China at that according to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana – were injected to close-in security personnel of President Duterte and one Cabinet member.

This act violates a number of laws, medical procedures and basic rules of logic, for the Presidential Security Group is gambling on the efficacy of a vaccine that did not pass government experts at FDA. This means it could do more harm than good to its recipients, and to the President, ultimately. The objective of securing the life and health of President Duterte will be jeopardized by such shortcut, aside from opening the Palace to criticisms about favoritism and entitlements.

The Armed Forces, the NBI and the Senate are all itching to conduct probes on the controversial inoculation of PSG soldiers, but because Palace officials are the ones involved, there is serious reason to doubt if anything can come out of these initiatives.



Ayon sa BI spokesperson Dana Sandoval, kahit na may sertipikasyon na ang nagbabalik na mga overseas Filipino na nabigyan sila ng bakuna at negatibo sa swab test ay kailangan pa ring sumailalim sila sa 14-araw na quarantine paglapag sa mga paliparan.

AFP/Joel Saget

Pinoy na nabakunahan sa ibang bansa, kailangang mag-quarantine sa Pinas

[Danilo Garcia](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - January 4, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Kailangan pa ring mag-quarantine paglapag sa Pilipinas ng mga Pilipino na nakatanggap na ng COVID-19 vaccine sa ibang bansa bago tuluyang makabalik sa kanilang mga tahanan.

Ito ang inilabas na bagong polisiya ng Bureau of Immigration (BI) makaraan na 50 bansa na ang nag-umpisa ng kanilang vaccination program.

Ayon sa BI spokesperson Dana Sandoval, kahit na may sertipikasyon na ang nagbabalik na mga overseas Filipino na nabigyan sila ng bakuna at negatibo sa swab test ay kailangan pa ring sumailalim sila sa 14-araw na quarantine paglapag sa mga paliparan.

Una nang ipinagbawal ng IATF at BI ang pagpasok sa bansa ng mga dayuhan mula sa 21 bansa na nakitaan ng bagong variant ng COVID-19.

Ang mga Pilipino na galing sa mga bansang ito ay papapasukin ngunit kailangang sumailalim sa swab test at 14-quarantine gayundin ang mga pasahero na nag-lay-over o dumaan ngunit hindi bumaba ng eroplano sa mga bansang ito.

Hindi rin papapasukin sa bansa ang asawang dayuhan ng isang Pinoy maging ang kanilang anak na buhat sa 21 bansa.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2021/01/04/2068010/pinoy-na-nabakunahan-sa-ibang-bansa-kailangang-mag-quarantine-sa-pinas>



BATALYONG PULIS NA NAGDODROGA, ISAPUBLIKO



January 4, 2021 @ 12:30 AM 6 hours ago

HALOS isang batalyon o 500 pulis ang natagpuan nang gumagamit ng ilegal na droga simula noong umupo si Mayor Rodrigo Duterte bilang Pangulo noong Hulyo 2016.

Kung hindi tayo nagkakamali, sa rekord ng Philippine National Police-Internal Affairs Service (PNP-IAS), 461 police officers at 10 non-uniformed personnel ang napatunayan nang gumagamit ng droga.

May kabuuang kasong 476 na isinampa sa PNP-IAS at mula rito, 461 nga ang napatunayang gumagamit ng droga habang lima ang namatay sa serbisyo at 12 ang nakabinbin o kaya'y napadala na sa PNP Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management.

Kaya naman dalawa na lang umano sa nakabinbing kaso ang reresolbahin ng PNP-IAS ngayong buwan.

Pagkasibak sa pulisya ang parusa sa mga natatagpuang gumagamit ng mga droga mula shabu hanggang sa party drugs, marijuana, cocaine at iba pa.

Ang tanong: Ilan na ba sa mga ito ang totoong nasibak na sa serbisyo at hindi na pupwedeng magdala ng tsapa, baril, sasakyang pulis at magsuot ng uniporme?

Ilan naman ang pumalag sa desisyon ng PNP-IAS at nagreklamo sa mga hukuman kaya hindi sila pupwedeng tanggalan ng anomang meron sa pulisya, kasama ang sahod at benepisyo?

ILABAS SA PUBLIKO GAYA NG GINAGAWA NI PANG. DIGONG

Marahil, pinakamagandang ilabas ng PNP-IAS sa publiko ang ngalan at ranggo ng mga napatunayan nang gumagamit ng droga at mga sibak na talaga sa serbisyo bilang babala sa publiko at sa mga kasapi na rin ng PNP mismo para huwag silang tumulad.

Ang espasyo ng ULTIMATUM ay handang ibigay para sa lalabas na ngalan, ranggo at destino ng mga iskalawag na pulis na 'yan.

Isang malaking hamon sa PNP ang pagsasapubliko ng mga napatunayang nagkasala sa droga at hangga't wala ito, mananatili ang pagdududa sa mga kinalalabasan ng mga kaso.



Isa pa, kung gaano kasipag ang paglalabas ng PNP ng ngalan ng mga sibilyan, lokal at dayuhan, with matching larawan, na nahuhuli nila, dapat ganito rin ang gawin ng PNP-IAS sa mga napatunayan nang nagkasala.

Si Pangulong Duterte mismo ay naglalabas ng ngalan ng mga sangkot sa droga, maging opisyal ng pamahalaan at pulis, kaya naman, walang dahilan ang PNP-IAS na ilabas ang pagkakilanlan sa mga napatunayan nang nagkasala.

HINDI IKASISIRA NG PNP

Hindi ikasisira ng PNP ang paglalabas ng PNP-IAS na isang batalyong pulis ang napatunayang nagdodroga.

Sa halip, karangalan nito ang pangyayari dahil nangangahulugang siniseryoso nito ang paglilinis sa sarili nitong bakuran.

Sa pamamagitan ng paglalabas ng katotohanan sa droga na kinasasangkutan ng mga pulis, pinaigting ng PNP ang respeto at pagtitiwala ng mga tao sa pulisya.

Kung nasibak na kasi ang karamihan o lahat ng napatunayang adik na pulis, wala nang nagrorondang adik na pulis na karaniwang pinagmumulan ng mga gawaing kriminal mula sa pulisya mismo.

Ang mga natitirang pulis ay masasabing matitino na at wala nang bugok o iskalawag sa mga ito at makaaasa ang mamamayan na maipatutupad ang tatak ng pulisya na sila'y tagapaglingkod at tagapagtanggol ng mga mamamayan.

Kasama sa mga bawas na malaki ng pagkakasibak ng mga pulis ang pagtatanim ng ebidensya sa mga hinuhuli sa droga, pangongotong kapalit ng paglaya sa kulungan ng mga ito, pangunguwarta para hindi magpakita sa mga paglilitis sa mga hukuman ng mga kasong droga, pagteterorista sa mga komunidad kapag naka-high at bilang protektor ng mga adik, druglord at narco-politician.

SAMPOL SA REGION 3

Sa mga araw na ito, nag-ulat si PNP Region 3 Director Gen. Valeriano T. de Leon na 441 pulis ang nasibak sa serbisyo, 411 ang nasuspende at may 42 ang na-demote o pinababa ang ranggo at 5 sa nahiwalay sa serbisyo ngunit nasibak pa rin simula noong 2016 hanggang sa katapusan ng 2020.

Gusto nating malaman kung ang mga napatunayang gumagamit ng droga ng PNP-IAS ay may ibang parusa bukod sa pagkakasibak sa serbisyo.

'Yun bang === meron din bang nasuspende, na-demote o nasermunan lang?

Nais nating malaman kung ang mga nasibak sa PNP Region 3 sa paggamit ng droga ay kasama sa mga sinibak din ng PNP-IAS...kung umapela ang mga ito.

Ang problema kasi, gaya ng report ng PNP-IAS na pinamumunuan ni IAS inspector general Alfegar Triambulo, hindi rin naglalabas ng ngalan ng mga nasibak at napatawan ng iba pang parusa si General De Leon.

May presumption of regularity sa paglalabas nina Sirs Triambulo at De Leon ng mga resolusyon sa mga kaso.



Pero mungkahi ng ULTIMATUM na higit na kapani-paniwala ang mga ulat kung ilabas sa publiko, sa online news, social media, diaryo at iba pang pampublikong pamahayagan ang ngalan ng mga pulis, ranggo, destino at litrato ng mga nagkasala at nasibak na pulis.

Malaki ang maitutulong ng mga mamamayan laban sa mga iskalawag na nasa aktibong serbisyo at absent without official leave o AWOL at kriminal kung magagawa ito.

Huwag nating hayaan na manatiling kahalubilo at manatili sa mga istasyon ng pulisya ng mga matitinong pulis ang mga iskalawag nilang kabaro na humahalakhak lang sa mga pagbabalita sa media ukol sa kanila.

PNP, PNP-IAS TULARAN SI DIGONG

Dapat tularan ng PNP at PNP-IAS si Pangulong Digong na kung kinakailangang ilabas at pangalanan sa publiko ang mga korap sa pamahalaan ay gawin anomang oras para sa kapakanan ng taumbayan at pamahalaan.

Ang PNP ang isa sa mga mukha ng pamahalaan na dapat malinis at walang mantsa sa serbisyo sa publiko at makatutulong para rito ang paglalabas sa publiko ng kanilang mga bugok na itlog.

Kung mapanatili ng PNP ang imahe nito na tunay na protektor at tagapagtanggol ng mga mamamayan, darating ang araw na hindi tatawaging Hapon o pulis-patola ang mga pulis at kinatatakutan at iniismiran.

Sa halip, ang respeto at pagtitiwala sa kanila ay hindi lang magbubunga ng maganda sa PNP bilang institusyon kundi maging sa pamahalaan na nadudungisan din ang imahe dahil lamang sa nagdodroga at iskalawag na pulis.



New game plan

[COMMONSENSE](#) - [Marichu A. Villanueva](#) (The Philippine Star) - January 4, 2021 - 12:00am

It was with hopeful optimism to note our country finished the year 2020 missing just by a few thousands the half a million cases of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) that were previously projected by the OCTA research group of the University of the Philippines (UP). Surely, this would be highlighted by presidential spokesman Harry Roque. That is, if Roque has not done so far yet.

Roque has sort of engaged OCTA to a running numbers' game over the latter's projection at the rate of COVID-19 cases increases in the Philippines. By year-end, OCTA feared its total may reach 500,000 cases. This research group closely monitors COVID-19 cases independent from the Department of Health (DOH). From the official tally of the DOH, the COVID cases reached 476,796 and sadly with 9,244 deaths total by the last day of 2020.

Based from the World Health Organization (WHO) monitoring of COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines ranked 29th among the 223 most affected countries and territories. This, despite having the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of the Emerging and Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID) – in charge of the Philippine government's pandemic response measures – regularly calibrating community quarantines and health protocols against the COVID-19 contagion.

Just last week, President Rodrigo Duterte approved the IATF recommendation to re-impose travel restrictions on 20 countries led by the United Kingdom (UK) where the latest COVID-19 variant has caused a resurgence of the deadly virus. The IATF last Friday subsequently added the United States (US) after reporting two COVID patients that were found infected with UK variant. Both the US and UK remain in the top three list of the WHO with highest COVID cases.

This is not surprising given the laxity of the American people to use face masks, and ignore other anti-COVID protocols. I had a balikbayan friend from New York who flew to Manila two weeks before New Year. Living in the epicenter of the COVID pandemic in the US, my friend told me that he observes at his New York home the minimum health protocols being implemented in the Philippines.

In fact, it was the first time he got swab testing upon arrival at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. While waiting for his swab test, he checked in to a designated quarantine hotel in Metro Manila to isolate self. It was only on the next day that he got a negative result for COVID-19 that he met with his family here. But he has never undergone any COVID testing while in New York, not even before he boarded the aircraft that took him back to Manila for 16 hours of flight.

So really, there is clear and present danger of local transmissions from these countries of origin of foreign travellers like those coming from the US.

This is rather unfair to us in the Philippines. We strictly implement anti-COVID protocols while the other countries could not care less if their nationals travel elsewhere without first checking if they are pandemic carriers. The travel restriction on these 21 countries, however, does not apply to returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). But they must go through the mandatory 14-day isolation whether or not tested negative for COVID-19 free of charge at the government-run quarantine facility at New Clark Athletes Village in Angeles City, Pampanga.



Nonetheless, DOH Secretary Francisco Duque III, who chairs the IATF, has not ruled out yet the possible resurgence of COVID-19 cases. The IATF has yet to account the direct results of the feared holiday spreader events from Christmas to New Year celebrations. The pandemic obviously did not stop us Filipinos from our traditional family reunions despite IATF's advisory against gathering of more than ten people in one enclosed place at a prolonged period of time.

On the second day of the new year, there were 1,097 confirmed cases with five deaths reported. The seeming downtrend in COVID numbers is largely due to fewer people being tested and some laboratories temporarily closing their services during the holiday period. So this is rather artificial.

The real test comes in within the next two weeks or 14 days after the incubation period of the COVID-19 virus or its mutation.

Since there is no confirmed case here yet of the UK variant, President Duterte has retained the general community quarantine (GCQ) all over Metro Manila and similarly situated areas around the country up to Jan. 31. This is because COVID-19 cases in these areas remain high.

During the emergency IATF meeting held at Malacañang last Dec. 26, invited health and medical expert told the President it is not a question of "if" the UK variant might arise in the Philippines but more of a question of "when" it breaks out. One of them, Dr. Edsel Salvaña from the UP-National Institute of Health, recalled the Philippines had the surge of COVID cases in June last year that was actually traced to a new variant D614G from Europe. "And this was actually worse. It was three to nine times more infectious than the original virus," Salvaña noted.

"So basically, what I am saying is this not the first time we're facing a variant. We know how to deal with it. And also, that surveillance is really key to making sure that our vaccines, once they get here, remain effective," Salvaña cited.

The surveillance job that will be given to the new task force of epidemiologists and other infectious disease experts that President Duterte will create and announce its composition in tonight's IATF regular meeting. "It's not intervention. It's really interdiction (and) how the local governments would also help us," the President pointed out.

As of this writing though, the new game plan is still a work in progress.



Brace yourselves

“Such apparent delays in government action in the battle against Covid-19 had, in fact, been noted from the time the virus had landed on our shores.

Published 6 hours ago on January 4, 2021 12:20 AM

By [Dinah S. Ventura](#) @tribuneph1_dina



Think positive, but stay negative.

This might as well be our resolution for this year, following a harrowing one filled with calamities and a rampaging disease.

Subdued was the word commonly used to describe New Year celebrations the world over. The fireworks and noisemakers colored the skies and filled the air, not with the usual jubilation, but almost a collective sigh — of relief for having survived 2020, and of intense prayer for a kinder, better 2021.

What is there to look forward to this year? More of the same, some say with grim precision.

After all, the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) remains a threat to health and life. Businesses are still in the process of recovery, and economic forecasts are “cautiously optimistic.”

At the start of 2021, talk of vaccines heated up even more following a revelation from the President himself, in a televised meeting with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging and Infectious Diseases, or IATF. President Rodrigo Duterte said the Presidential Security Group had already received vaccine doses developed by China’s Sinopharm.

Almost immediately a ripple of reaction came from a public that asked HOW, and WHY. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has yet to approve any vaccine for public use.

How did the military get the vaccines? Who approved it? What about the medical frontliners? Shouldn’t they also be given utmost priority for such “emergency” doses? Like fireworks and firecrackers, these questions came.

The Defense chief admitted the vaccines had been smuggled. The Health chief said medical practitioners caught administering vaccines pre-FDA approval will have their licenses revoked.

Meanwhile, the Philippine distributor of Sinopharm products denied the vaccines came from them, and in fact added that they never got a reply from the government for their letter proposing clinical trials in the Philippines.

It’s certainly a puzzler for those who believe the military is our first line of defense against smuggling.



Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DoH) Secretary was referring to rumors that some lawmakers have been going on stealth mode and getting vaccine shots in secret, too. And the Sinopharm clinical trials in question seem to have suffered from communication problems because the DoH says one thing, and they say another.

Is there a vaccine for discombobulation? Maybe some people need a dose or two.

What we are sure of is that vaccines will be available to a portion of the Philippine population this year.

Government plans to buy 25 million doses from China's Sinovac Biotech for delivery by March. The private sector has pitched in, ordering 2.6 million shots from AstraZeneca. It is said to be the country's first supply deal for a coronavirus vaccine.

Before 2020 ended, we got wind of allegations that we had missed out on an opportunity to buy 10 million doses of Pfizer's vaccine supposedly for delivery in January.

It was a furor over Health Secretary Francisco Duque's alleged slowness to react — something that the Philippine Sinopharm distributors hinted at when the brouhaha over the unauthorized vaccines for the PSG came out.

Such apparent delays in government action in the battle against Covid-19 had, in fact, been noted from the time the virus had landed on our shores. From the first case and the lack of contact tracing measures, the DoH chief had gotten flak for perceived inefficiency against a threat so insidious, we now have over 450,000 infections and almost 9,000 deaths.

Now, based on recent events, we can consider what's in (inaction, inefficiency, indolence?) and who should be out.

If, after over nine months we are still seeing some of the "in" things happening, we should brace ourselves for more.

When the vaccine was not yet available, we all wondered mainly about two things: will it be available to all, and will we want to be inoculated?

Now we are also grappling with two more: will we end up fighting for doses, and could things get any worse?

Yes, it can.

It has — COVID-19 has new mutations, and experts say it is now 70 percent more infectious. Hello, 2021.



Tubig at MWSS

On Jan 3, 2021



TEKA MUNA

BAMBI PURISIMA

TULAD ng katuwaan o kapayapaan, ang lungkot at ligalig ay patunay na tayo ay buhay na buhay.

Hindi kahiya-hiya ang pagluha. Natural lamang kung manahimik, maging mapag-isa kung may nararamdamang kalungkutan at kirot sa dibdib.

Hayaang lumuha, magdamdam, pero ang buhay ay patuloy na gagalaw, hindi hihinto ang mundo dahil may kabiguan ayaw nating tanggapin. Isuko natin ang sarili sa katotohanan. Hindi na mababago pa ang lahat sa pagluha, sa pagmumumok. Kumilos na para baguhin ang nangyari na. Kung hindi tatanggapin ang kabiguan, hindi matatamo ang tagumpay na tiyak darating sa patuloy na pagbangon at paglaban sa mga hamon at pagsubok sa buhay.

Sabi nga: No pain, no loss is to great for us to overcome. Let's love thyself.

Isang maligaya, masagana at mapagpalang Bagong Taon a ating lahat!

Taon-taon na lang ay nagkakaroon tayo ng suliranin kaugnay ng kakulangan ng suplay ng tubig sa Metro Manila at mga kalapit na lalawigan.

Nariyan halimbawa ang sasabihing, kapos na raw, kokonti na lang ang tubig sa Angat dam, at kungdi uulan, at hindi madaragdagan ang tubig, titindi raw ang water shortage.

Palagi na lang, ganito tayo, pero hindi naman bobo at tanga ang nagpapatatko ng National Water Resources Board, isang inter-agency body – na siyang may kapangyarihan na magpatupad ng mga batas at gumawa ng mga patakaran upang hindi tayo kapusin sa tubig.

Kakatwa ang sitwasyon natin lagi: Nalulunod tayo sa apaw ng tubig pag tag-ulan, at kay hihina ng kukote ng taong gobyerno sa pambansa at lokal na hanapan ng solusyon kung paano maiimbak ang sobrang tubig na ito.

Kahit grade one, alam kung paano ito gagawin: Gumawa ng imbakan ng tubig tulad ng dam, mini-dam at iba pang istruktura upang magawa ito, pero pagkakakitaan lamang sa mga proyektong bilyong piso ang inuubos ang pinagkakaabalahan ng marami.

Kapag hinihingan ng paliwanag, kayraming statistics, mga problema at panukalang solusyon ang mga tinamaan ng lintek, pero asan ang resulta: wala rin at kayraming “nangangamoy” sa hindi pagligo, at ang mga pananim sa bukid ay namamatay dahil sa walang tubig!

Kay raming istruktura ang ginagawa sa Metro Manila pero wala ni isa na makaisip na gumawa ng isang dam rito upang ang tubig baha o ang tubig sa kalapit na Laguna de Bay ay gawing pondohan ng tubig upang sa tag-init, maging sagana ang tubig.



Kung may kahihyan ang mga taga-NWRB, at iba pang opisyal ng ating gobyerno na may (mandato para gumawa ng mini-dam at small water impounding facilities) at mga lokal na opisyal, dapat ang unang ginawa nila ay mag-resign sa tungkulin.

Mula kay Tita Cory at hanggang sa kasalukuyang gobyerno, walang naging matinong hakbang ang nasa NRWB at iba pang opisyal upang ang tubig na sagana tuwing tag-ulan ay magamit sa panahon ng water crisis.

Kung tawagin pa naman ang mga pinutukan ng lintek ay mga “honorable” at may mga libreng sasakyang gamit, may tsuper pa, may representation allowances pa, pero ano ang serbisyong kapalit: Krisis sa tubig!

Sa kanyang mga public announcements sa telebisyon at radio at iba pang pahayagan palaging sinasabi at binabalaan ni Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte na pananagutin niya ang mga opisyal ng MWSS na nagsamantala at patuloy na nagpapasasa sa pera ng bayan.

Uusigin nila ang mga “walanghiya” at walang konsiyensiya.

Sana ay matugunan na sa lalong madaling panahon ng mga pinagkatiwalaang ahensiya at departamento ng pamahalaang Duterte ang problemang ito – na alam naman natin na madaling sana na malulutas kung may political will lang ang mga nakaraang administrasyon.

Pero hindi lamang sapat na suplay ng tubig ang kailangan.

Malaki rin ang kasalanan ng taumbayan: Tayo ay bayan ng Asiong Aksaya.

Marami sa atin ay alam ang mga paraan upang makatipid sa tubig at alam kung paano magrecycle ng tubig na gamit na, pero dahil nga sa walang pakialam, sige lang tayo sa pag-aaksaya sa tubig sa katwirang hindi naman mauubos ang kayamanang ito na bigay sa atin ng kalikasan.

Magbago na tayong lahat!

Kung magpapatuloy ang ganitong kapabayaang, magiging impiyerno tayo sa panahon ng tag-init at delubyo sa panahon ng tag-ulan.

Kayamanan ang tubig: ‘wag nating aksayahin!

Para sa inyong suhestyon, reaksyon at opinyon ay mag-email lang sa bampurisima@yahoo.com.



NCR, Luzon areas, makakaranas ng ulan dahil sa ‘buntot’ ng Habagat, easterlies – PAGASA

By **Bombo Christian Yosores** -January 3, 2021 | 1:28 PM



MANILA – Asahan daw ang patuloy na pagbuhos ng ulan sa Metro Manila at ibang bahagi ng bansa sa maghapon dahil sa “tail-end of a cold front” o buntot ng pinagsamang hanging Amihan at hangin na galing sa Pacific Ocean.

Ayon sa weather advisory ng PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), makakaranas ng katamtaman hanggang malakas na ulan ang Bicol at Quezon province, kabilang na ang Polilio Islands.

“The Tail-End of a Frontal System is affecting Southern Luzon.”

“Scattered light to moderate rains may prevail over Metro Manila, MIMAROPA, Visayas, Mindanao, Aurora, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, and the rest of CALABARZON.”

Nagpaalala ang state-weather bureau na mag-ingat ang mga nakatira sa flood at landslide prone areas dahil sa banta ng pagbaha at pagguho ng lupa.

“Adjacent or nearby areas may also experience flooding in the absence of such rainfall occurrence due to surface runoff or swelling of river channels.”

Tinawag din ng PAGASA ang pansin ng disaster risk reduction and management offices ng bawat lokal na pamahalaan para bantayan ang sitwasyon ng kanilang mga lugar.

“PAGASA Regional Services Divisions will issue local thunderstorm/rainfall advisories and heavy rainfall warnings in their respective areas of responsibility while the Hydrometeorology Division and River Basing Flood Forecasting and Warning Centers will issue general flood advisories and river basin flood advisories/bulletins as appropriate.”

Source: <https://www.bomboradyo.com/ncr-luzon-areas-makakaranas-ng-ulan-dahil-sa-buntot-ng-habagat-easterlies-pagasa/>



Flood in Bulan, Sorsogon due to rains from the tail-end of a frontal system. 24 Oras screenshot

More than 9,000 individuals affected by flooding from tail-end of frontal system

Published January 3, 2021 1:14pm

A total of 9,158 persons or 2,409 families were affected by the flooding and landslides due to the tail-end of a frontal system, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said in a report on Sunday.

The affected persons were from 70 barangays in MIMAROPA, Region V and Region VI.

Of the total number of affected individuals, 2,067 persons or 562 families are staying in 13 evacuation centres.

Meanwhile, 1,224 persons or 450 families are staying with relatives.

The [death toll remained at two](#) and the number of missing persons was still four. The fatalities and missing persons were reported in Region V.

The NDRRMC said 30 flooding incidents were reported in Region II (Cagayan), MIMAROPA (Palawan and Oriental Mindoro), Region V (Camarines Sur, Sorsogon) and Region VI (Capiz).

One boat capsized on Dec. 30 in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro with five persons onboard. The passengers were all rescued on Dec. 31 by the Philippine Coast Guard.

A total of 19 road sections and three bridges in Regions II, MIMAROPA, V, and VI were not passable due to flooding.

Meanwhile, 12 barangays in Silay City, Negros Occidental had power interruptions since January 1.

The NDRRMC said 54 houses in Regions V and VI were damaged, of which 31 were totally damaged and 23 were partially damaged.

The Inocencio V. Ferrer School of Fisheries in Talisay City, Negros Occidental suffered damage when its wall collapsed due to the flooding.

The tail-end of a frontal system [continues to affect Southern Luzon](#) on Sunday, bringing rains to at least 10 areas in different parts of the country, state weather bureau PAGASA said. —**KG, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/770239/more-than-9-000-individuals-affected-by-flooding-from-tail-end-of-frontal-system/story/>



1 dead, 15K families affected by floods in north Negros

By Nanette Guadalquiver **January 3, 2021, 3:28 pm**



INSPECTION. Silay City Mayor Mark Golez conducts an inspection of a flooded river on Friday (Jan. 1, 2021) after heavy rains on New Year's Day brought floods to 13 villages in the city. Thousands of families in Silay and three neighboring localities in northern Negros Occidental were affected by the flash floods. *(Photo from Mayor Mark J. Golez Facebook page)*

BACOLOD CITY – At least one person died while almost 15,000 families were affected by flash floods caused by heavy rains in four localities in northern Negros Occidental early morning on Jan. 1.

Data released by the Negros Occidental Provincial Command Center on Saturday night showed that floods were monitored in cities of Victorias, Silay and Talisay, and E.B. Magalona town, all located in the third district.

The fatality was reported in Victorias City, but there were no details yet on the identity of the person. In said city, some 8,976 families in 17 barangays experienced flooding in the early hours on Friday.

A total of 37 houses were washed out or totally damaged, while 127 others were partially damaged.

In Silay City, floods were reported in 13 villages, affecting 2,114 individuals from 706 families.

Some five houses were listed as partially damaged, and about 100 heads of livestock were also affected.

As of 5 p.m. on Saturday, there were no more evacuees and all roads were already passable in Silay.

In neighboring Talisay City, just north of Bacolod, about 3,990 families in 12 barangays were affected by floods.

According to the report, 17 houses were totally damaged while 31 were partially damaged.

In Barangay Zone 3, a pump boat was destroyed while three others were damaged, and the concrete wall of Inocencio V. Ferrer School of Fisheries also collapsed.

As of Saturday afternoon, the floodwaters subsided and all those who sought shelter already left the evacuation centers in Talisay.

In E.B. Magalona, several villages were also hit by floods, affecting more than 1,200 families.

Meanwhile, the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office distributed food assistance, including rice, sardines and bottled water to affected families in Talisay and E.B. Magalona. **(PNA)**



2 dead, 4 missing due to floods in Bicol

By Connie Calipay January 3, 2021, 11:39 am



Google map of Bicol Region

LEGAZPI CITY – Floods due to the tail-end of a frontal system left two dead while four others went missing in Bicol, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in the region said Sunday.

The two fatalities were identified as Ceejay Raro, 3, of Sitio Budal Mangawayan, Canaman town in Camarines Sur, and Jonel Monterde Medinilla, 28, of Sitio Dangray, Abucay, Pilar town in Sorsogon, a report said.

OCD spokesperson Gremil Alexis Naz said the Management of the Dead and Missing Persons Cluster of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has yet to verify the circumstances that resulted in the two deaths.

“(And) three missing individuals from Garchitorena, Camarines Sur whose names will still be identified, and one from Bulan, Sorsogon,” Naz said in an interview.

The tail-end, which brought heavy and torrential rains across Bicol, affected 40 families or 138 persons in various evacuation centers.

As of 5 p.m. January 2, 106 flooding incidents were reported in 26 towns and three cities triggered by swollen rivers due to weather disturbance.

Some 24 landslides were also reported in the towns of Bulusan, Gubat, Juban, Matnog, Barcelona, Donsol, Magallanes, Sta. Magdalena, Bulan and Sorsogon City in Sorsogon; Libmanan, Lagonoy, Buhi, Balatan and Sagnay in Camarines Sur; and Bato in Catanduanes and Legazpi City in Albay.

There were two canceled flights at Naga City Airport.

The Estanza-Daraga road likewise incurred damages as inspected by the Legazpi City Engineering office due to heavy rains. **(PNA)**



Living with natural hazards

By: [Mario A. Aurelio](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM January 03, 202



MUDDY PATH Residents wade through mud to retrieve their belongings from their houses at Barangay San Jose in Rodriguez, Rizal, after their subdivision was hit by floods from the swollen Marikina River when Typhoon “Ulysses” (international name: Vamco) battered Luzon in November last year. —RICHARD A. REYES

Filipinos have been through a lot the past year, having suffered the earthquake-volcanic eruption-typhoon disaster triad within what everyone wanted to be a perfect 2020.

Indeed, the year literally started with a bang. Taal erupted on Jan. 12, forcing the evacuation of residents not only from the island volcano but also from towns surrounding its lake. Lockdowns in affected communities lasted for weeks as the volcano’s wrath was slow to subside. By mid-March, while residents were just starting to doff their face masks as protection from inhaling volcanic dust, they were forced anew to wear them when the coronavirus pandemic struck.

On Aug. 18, a 6.6-magnitude earthquake jolted Masbate when a segment of the Philippine fault zone ruptured, the seventh major event to hit the country in only 16 months and defying the once-every-five-years average for destructive temblors.

Earlier, on April 22, 2019, Zambales shook from a 6.1-magnitude quake, which wreaked havoc mostly in liquefaction-prone Pampanga. A series of five quakes of magnitudes greater than 6 struck South Cotabato and Davao del Sur only within two months—from Oct. 16 to Dec. 15—which seems to defy known theories in earthquake science.

On Christmas Day, Batangas was jolted by a 6.3-magnitude tremor, but residents should be thankful the focus was very deep (more than 100 kilometers) as it could have caused damage as did the series of four much weaker (magnitude 5.6 and less) but shallower earthquakes in April 2017 that toppled a portion of the façade of Taal Cathedral.

This only follows the 4.9-magnitude quake on Dec. 22 centered in General Nakar, Quezon, which was at least 40 times weaker than the Christmas Day event but felt by many, including Metro Manila residents, because of its shallow focus. In November, four tropical cyclones swept the Philippines in 12 days, starting with Supertyphoon “Rolly” (international name: Goni), which made landfall in Bicol region on a day reserved for the saints. Registering record-breaking one-minute wind speeds (faster than 2013’s Supertyphoon “Yolanda”), Rolly was succeeded by three more typhoons largely exceeding the rainy season average.

Typhoon “Ulysses” (Vamco) closed out the flurry and dumped the heaviest of rains over Metro Manila and Cagayan Valley. Marikina River spilled with record-high floods despite precipitation lower than that of Typhoon “Ondoy” (Ketsana) 11 years earlier.

Even virtual classes for students had to be canceled for the entire month as the successive typhoons rendered internet infrastructure nonoperational over an area spanning more than 700 km. Some students are still not able to attend online classes or access the web due to the absence of electricity in their areas.



HELP IS COMING A rescue team helps evacuate residents from Barangay Tumana, Marikina City, as rain dumped by Typhoon “Ulysses” in November trigger floods that submerged houses and cars in low-lying areas in the village. —RICHARD A. REYES

Disaster-resilient

But how disaster-resilient really is the Filipino?

We have heard success stories, including Mt. Pinatubo’s 1991 eruption, which was touted as the greatest in the 20th century but resulted in a minimal death toll. Some references in disaster risk reduction and management cite this as the result of a successful scientific exercise involving preeruption, painstaking data gathering and analysis, and a cooperative citizenry that generally heeded warnings. Destructive lahars persisted decades after, but the communities around learned quickly to recover.

But many communities still remain vulnerable. In the many natural disaster areas I had visited, two constraints still persist and pose a challenge to disaster risk managers. One is the culture of “dito kami pinanganak, dito na kami mamamatay” (We were born here and will die here). The other is the victims of circumstance: “Wala naman kaming ibang mapupuntahan” (We have no other place to go). The science of identifying hazard-prone areas in the Philippines, whether related to earthquakes, volcanic activity or extreme weather conditions, has made great advances in the last decades and Filipino experts in this field are known and cited the world over. But identifying hazard-prone areas is one thing, convincing the populace to avoid them is another.

In one instance when I was in a quake-stricken area, my team of geologists was instructed by a local government unit that was about to forcibly evacuate residents in a mountain village threatened by a landslide to explain to them that aftershocks could trigger the danger. While discussing, the religious leader of the village cut my impromptu field lecture by questioning who was I to claim that I can “predict” the recurrence of earthquakes there.

In another instance, my research team had documented the effects of liquefaction around a church built right over the roof of a former church that was buried by lahar 28 years earlier. The findings indicated that some communities still tended to stick to their roots despite being aware that the same disasters can happen again in the same place.



NO MAN'S LAND Taal Volcano Island, "Pulo" to the community of fishermen, farmers and tourism workers once thriving in the area, has turned into a no man's land after the volcanic eruption in January last year. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

Who to listen to

In times of disasters and emergencies, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council is responsible for ensuring the protection and welfare of the people. It is a working group of many agencies, including those mandated to conduct scientific studies of natural phenomena that can lead to disasters. These agencies are also tasked with guiding the government in formulating strategies to respond to the impacts of disasters to communities.

The populace is advised to listen to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology on matters of earthquakes and volcanic activities, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration on weather disturbances, and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau on geological hazards not related to quakes and volcanoes, like landslides, sinkholes and groundwater-induced processes.

The scope of studies of these agencies sometimes overlaps, such that interaction between and among them is crucial. The academe plays a vital role in supplementing and complementing the results of agency studies.



TAAL AWAKENS The eruption of Taal Volcano in Batangas province is among the major natural disasters that struck the country in 2020. —NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Ecological succession

Almost a year after the January eruption, our multidisciplinary team of biologists, geochemists and a DNA microbiologist visited Taal Volcano Island. The climb was steeper and more challenging on the eastern face this time. While worrying about the nonliving elements of the volcano, we managed to reach the crater rim.

Surprisingly, the trek was easy despite the deep gullies carved out in the still fresh pyroclastics. From the midslope to the rim, there was no sign of plant life, yet. What was once a canopy of trees about two stories tall were a few protruding, lifeless, burnt upper tree branches. The landscape was akin to a desert but surrounded by the waters of Taal Lake.

The life scientists stayed close to shore, making their way through the earliest forms of plant regrowth. Tree biologist Lillian Rodriguez and her team said they were able to identify at least 30 plant species and 16 bird species, unexpectedly large numbers and probably an indication that posteruption recovery of biodiversity in the island was rather fast.



DNA microbiologist Alexander Young collected pyroclastic materials along a grid from the lakeshore to the crater rim that will be used in aquarium experiments to see how the recent volcanic sand can affect aquatic life. This was significant in determining how the fish resources of the lake, like cultured tilapias and the endemic “tawilis,” are responding after eruption.

Young also intends to understand how nitrogen-fixing and sulphur-eating bacteria can repopulate the island. Such creatures will be crucial in the recovery of the lost forest of Taal Volcano.

Rodriguez, Young and their life science colleagues are initiating a study best performed after a disaster: an ecological succession study meant to determine which species are most resilient and which ones are able to recolonize the fastest. The results will guide efforts to plan for a sustainable development strategy for the island volcano, which, whether we like it or not, is expected to erupt again.

As the island recovers, residents have not been allowed to go back and spend Christmas and New Year the way they have anticipated, but the birds and the trees certainly are starting to celebrate. They seem to know better than humans on how to live with natural hazards.

—**CONTRIBUTED**

* * *

Mario A. Aurelio, Ph.D. is a professor at the University of the Philippines (UP) and currently director of the National Institute of Geological Sciences in UP Diliman. He is the main author of a Commission on Higher Education-sponsored guide book for senior high school teachers on disaster risk reduction and management.



A rescue helicopter view shows the aftermath of a landslide at a residential area in Ask village, about 40km north of Oslo, Norway December 30, 2020. Norwegian Rescue Service/NTB/via REUTERS

Fifth body found in Norway mudslide, five still missing

Published January 3, 2021 5:00pm

OSLO, Norway — Rescue workers have uncovered a fifth body four days after [a landslide buried homes near Norway's capital](#), police said Sunday, as the search goes on for five people still missing.

The tragedy occurred in the early hours of Wednesday when houses were destroyed and shifted hundreds of meters under a torrent of mud at the village of Ask, 25 kilometers (15 miles) northeast of Oslo.

"Just before six am a deceased person was found," a police statement said.

The discovery of a fourth body had been made Saturday after three were recovered the day before at the bleak, snow-covered scene at Ask, in Gjerdrum municipality.

Police on Saturday identified the body of the first person found on Friday as 31-year-old Eirik Grønolen.

The identities of the four other dead have not been released.

But police on Friday published a list of the names of all the eight adults, a two-year-old and a 13-year-old child who went missing on Wednesday.

Ten people were also injured in the landslide, including one seriously who was transferred to Oslo for treatment.

About a thousand people have been evacuated out of a local population of 5,000, because of fears for the safety of their homes as the land continues to move.

Search and rescue teams have been using sniffer dogs, helicopters and drones in a bid to find survivors.

The search teams were also digging channels in the ground to evacuate casualties.

Experts say the disaster was a "quick clay slide" of approximately 300 by 800 meters.



Quick clay is found in Norway and Sweden and notorious for collapsing after turning to fluid when overstressed.

Prime Minister Erna Solberg described it as one of the biggest landslides the country had ever experienced.

The royal court said in a statement that King Harald, his wife Sonja and Crown Prince Haakon were to visit the disaster area later Sunday morning. — **Agence France-Presse**

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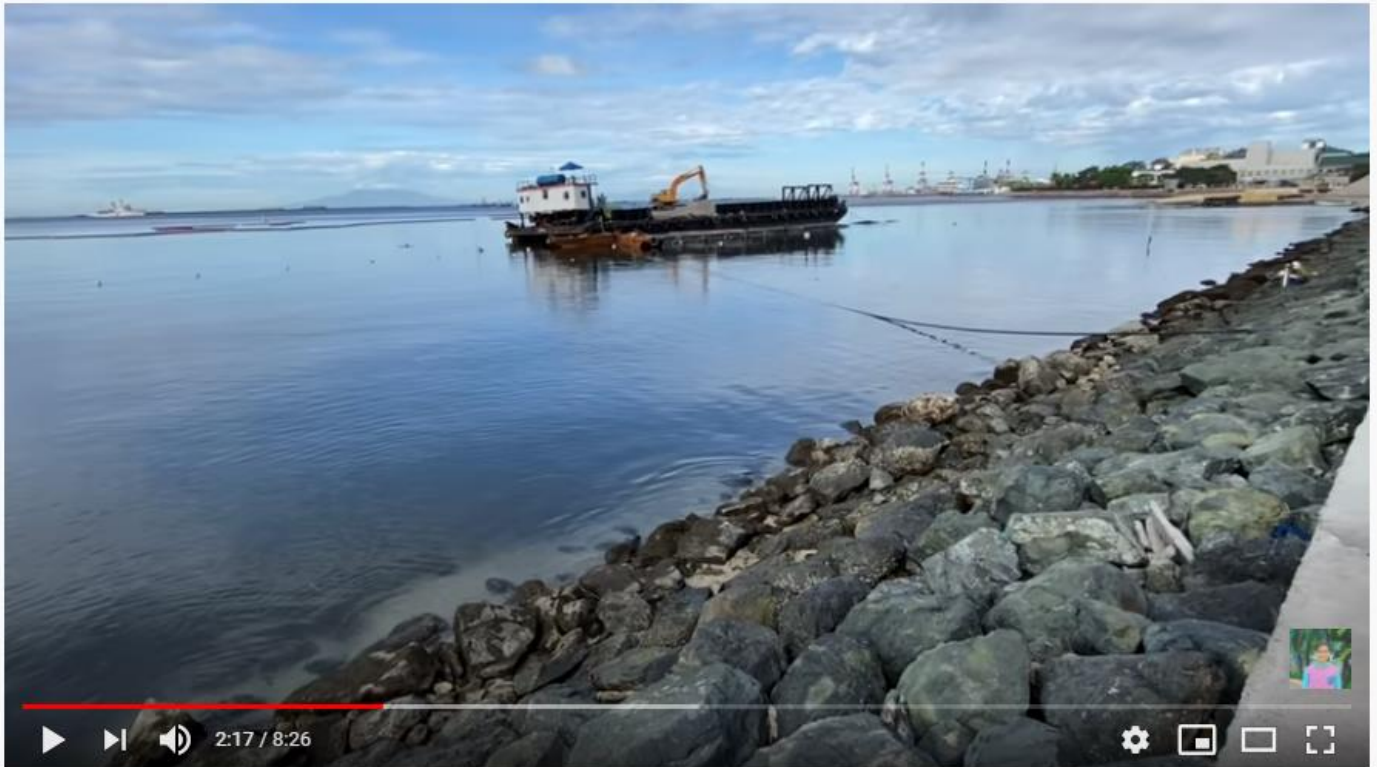
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