

04 MARCH 2021, THURSDAY



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Pandemic brought new hurdles to curbing lucrative illegal wildlife trade

March 3, 2021 | 8:14 pm



Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu inspects confiscated sulfur crested cockatoos (Cacatua galerita) and other species at the Biodiversity Management Bureau Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City in this March 2018 photo. — DENR

THE GLOBAL health emergency made efforts to monitor and curb the lucrative illegal wildlife trade more challenging as fewer manpower could be deployed, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on March 3, observed as World Wildlife Day.

“The COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic has made it more difficult for us at the DENR to keep poachers and hunters at bay with less eyes and boots on the ground,” DENR Undersecretary Jim O. Sampulna said during the World Wildlife Day celebration on Wednesday.

Despite the challenges, however, collaborative programs kept wildlife protection active.

Last week, Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu lauded the inter-agency task force Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife (POGI) for winning the 2020 Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards conferred by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Mr. Sampulna, citing a 2019 Asian Development Bank (ADB) study, said wildlife crime was considered as the fourth most lucrative illegal business after the trafficking of weapons, drugs and people.

“Our country is losing an estimated 50 billion (pesos) yearly from wildlife crime alone (which is) not just destroying pristine habitats like our forests, lakes and coral reefs, but reducing their capacity to provide food, water, medicine, shelter and livelihoods for millions of our fellow Filipinos,” he said.

The ADB study identified the Philippines as a consumer, source and transit point for illegal wildlife trade, which posed a threat to economic development and biodiversity, among others.

Mr. Cimatu, in his keynote speech for the World Wildlife Day celebration delivered by DENR Undersecretary Ernesto D. Adobo, Jr., said the country must find ways to develop its economy while maintaining the integrity of its forest ecosystems.



“This step forward means effective collaboration by enforcement agencies... the creation of a sustainable model for managing our ecosystems; legislating pro-environmental rules; and establishing which would lead to efficient investigation and prosecution of environmental crimes,” Mr. Cimatú said.

In November, DENR Undersecretary for Environment and International Environment Affairs Jonas R. Leones said the department would continue efforts to stem illegal wildlife trade to prevent the spread of microbial infections from animals to humans. — **Angelica Y. Yang**



'Environmental police' needed to fight crimes vs nature, officials say

Anjo Bagaoisan, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Mar 03 2021 04:48 PM

MANILA - Amid the pandemic, the Philippines' environment department continues to push for a dedicated arm to enforce laws against environmental crimes such as littering and illegal logging.

Law enforcers such as police and soldiers currently aid the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in safeguarding the country's plant and wildlife.



This was seen at a coastal clean-up at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park protected area on Wednesday, where over 500 personnel of the Metro Manila police and Southern Police District (SPD), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Coast Guard, Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) joined.

The activity, which was originally scheduled for planting mangroves in the area, coincided with World Wildlife Day.

The 2-hour clean-up was able to haul in 4,769 kilos or nearly 5 tons of trash collected from the beach.

While these efforts help, they can only go so far, said DENR Undersecretary for Special Concerns Edilberto Leonardo, who led the clean-up.

Pending in Congress is the department's pet bill to create the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Bureau or EPEB—the agency's own "environmental police" that would focus on environmental crimes.

Since 2020, the DENR has urged Pres. Rodrigo Duterte to certify the bill as urgent.

"Mas marami ang environmental crimes na dapat nating i-address—kagaya nitong coastal areas natin, andaming environmental crimes na nangyayari dito," Leonardo told reporters.

(There are many more environmental crimes that need to be addressed—such as in these coastal areas where many of these are happening.)



'SELECTIVE'



Leonardo, a former policeman, admitted local law enforcers could not stem the increase in informal settlers at waterways, which contribute to pollution.

“Si DENR sa totoo lang, nagkulang din dahil wala rin siyang mga enforcers.”

(The DENR actually also failed on its part because it has no enforcers.)

Southern Police District director Police Brig. Gen. Eliseo Cruz agreed, adding that while police support their environmental mandate, they also have their hands full.

“Sa dami ng batas na ipinapatupad ng PNP, nagiging minsan selective tayo,” Cruz said.

(With the many laws the police have to enforce, there are times that we become selective in the ones we do.)

Should the EPEB law be passed, the DENR would still tap the police and Armed Forces to help with the transition.

Having a dedicated environmental force could also make the fight for the environment proactive, Leonardo said.

Instead of merely stopping illegal loggers from transporting already cut wood, the enforcers can prevent the trees from being cut down in the first place.

“I-identify natin ‘yong protected areas still intact, po-protektahan natin, lalagyan na ng gwardya. So iyon ang way forward natin,” he said.

(We will identify the protected areas that are still intact and protect them. We will deploy guards. That is our way forward.)

The DENR is set to conduct site inspections in these areas to determine what suitable interventions they and their partner agencies can do for now.

Coastal and waterway clean-up activities will also continue in other places in the country especially with the upcoming World Coastal Clean-up day.

Cruz and Leonardo added they hoped the public would also help in reporting and stopping environmental crimes they encounter in their community.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/03/21/environmental-police-needed-to-fight-crimes-vs-nature-officials-say?fbclid=IwAR2VCu2JipQCW1-bqVvaO63doQJyiy7jACh5mHOkU3g74vecxA1yR58LgcI>



Beach cleanup

posted March 03, 2021 at 10:37 pm

by [Norman Cruz](#)



Officials of different government agencies led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) collect beach trash during the coastal clean-up at the Las Piñas-Paranaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area on Wednesday in celebration of World Wildlife Day 2021.



LOOK | Nagsagawa ng cleanup drive ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources kasama ang NCRPO, BFP, BJMP, at BuCor sa Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park. Kasabay ito ng #WorldWildlifeDay na ipinagdiriwang ngayong araw. | via Justinne Punsalang



685

151 Comments 13 Shares

People collect rubbish along coastal area of Manila Bay in Las Pinas City

Source: Xinhua | 2021-03-03 18:56:54 | Editor: huaxia



Members of various government and private organizations collect rubbish along the coastal area of Manila Bay as they participate in a coastal cleanup activity in Las Pinas City, the Philippines on March 3, 2021. The coastal cleanup was organized to celebrate the World Wildlife Day and raise the awareness on the protection of the wildlife around the world. (Xinhua/Rouelle Umali)



Policemen from the Philippine National Police (PNP) collect rubbish as they join other members of various government and private organizations in a coastal cleanup activity along the coastal area of Manila Bay in Las Pinas City, the Philippines on March 3, 2021. The coastal cleanup was organized to celebrate the World Wildlife Day and raise the awareness on the protection of the wildlife around the world. (Xinhua/Rouelle Umali)

A man collects rubbish as he joins other members of various government and private organizations in a coastal cleanup activity along the coastal area of Manila Bay in Las Pinas City, the Philippines on March 3, 2021. The coastal cleanup was organized to celebrate the World Wildlife Day and raise the awareness on the protection of the wildlife around the world. (Xinhua/Rouelle Umali)



2 Asian Giant Softshell, 2 Asian box turtles released in Cabagan

By DENR-2Published on March 3, 2021



The Born to be Wild staff facilitates the injection of B vitamin supplements, which they donated, to the eight Long-tailed macaques (*Macaque f. philippensis*) housed at the RBBNPWC. They also provided protein pellets.

CABAGAN, Isabela, March 3 (PIA) - -Two Asian Giant Softshell turtles (*Pelochelys cantorii*) and two Asian Box turtles (*Cuora amboinensis*) were released earlier today at Malasi Lake in this town as part of the celebration of the World Wildlife Day.

The release of the turtles was led by DENR Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan, and Dr. Nielsen Donato, a wildlife veterinarian and host of the TV show Born to be Wild.

"We freed the turtles at Malasi Lake because it is a critical habitat, an ideal sanctuary for endangered species such as the Asian Giant Softshell turtles," Bambalan said.

The DENR Region 2 chief also reminded the public that collection, possession and trade of wildlife without proper permits are illegal and punishable by law under Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

"Let us protect and conserve these species by reporting illegal activities through our hotlines or to the nearest DENR office in your area," she added.

Prior to the release, Donato conducted health checkup of said species including the identification of the classifications of the turtles that were turned over to the DENR.

The Chinese Softshell turtle captured in Baggao, Cagayan remains under the custody of the DENR at the Rogelio B. Baggayan Nature Park and Wildlife Center (RBBNPWC) in Tuguegarao City.

Said turtle is an invasive species which cannot be released because it may cause harm to other species. (MDCT/PIA-2)



2 Asian Giant Softshell, 2 Asian box turtles released in Cabagan



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Source: <https://www.bignewsnetwork.com/news/267992101/2-asian-giant-softshell-2-asian-box-turtles-released-in-cabagan>



DENR fines Holcim Philippines after oil spill at La Union plant

March 3, 2021 | 7:37 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered Holcim Philippines, Inc. to pay a P400,000 fine for violating the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, following an oil spill at the company's La Union cement plant last year, the company said Wednesday.

"In connection with the oil spill incident at the Holcim La Union Plant which occurred on July 4, 2020, the Pollution Adjudication Board of the Environmental Management Bureau ordered Holcim Philippines, Inc. to pay a fine of P400,000 for violation of Republic Act No. 9275 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations," the company said in a filing to the bourse.

In a statement, Holcim Philippines said the clean-up was completed on July 6. The company added that it will seek a reconsideration of the fine, citing its "immediate and effective response" in addressing the oil spill, which it said was caused by heavy rains.

"The company will move for a reconsideration of the penalty based on the plant's immediate and effective response to prevent adverse impact on the environment. These included fast containment of the spill through reinforced sand barriers, siphoning of the water in the creek, and retrieval of debris to prevent seepage into the sea," Holcim Philippines said.

It added that its La Union plant "has strengthened its pollution control facilities to ensure that the incident does not happen again."

The company has four other cement manufacturing facilities in Bulacan, Batangas, Misamis Oriental and Davao, as well as facilities focusing on aggregates, the dry mix business and technical support. — **Angelica Y. Yang**

Source: <https://www.bworldonline.com/denr-fines-holcim-philippines-after-oil-spill-at-la-union-plant/>



Water supply judged adequate for dry season

March 3, 2021 | 7:39 pm



THE SUPPLY of water for Metro Manila will be sufficient to get the capital region through the dry months, water regulators said.

National Water Resources Board Executive Director Seville D. David, Jr. said in a mobile phone message that Metro Manila will be adequately supplied with water, judging from the current levels at its main water source, Angat Dam in Bulacan.

As of Wednesday morning, the water level at Angat was 210.62 meters, according to the government weather service, which is known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration).

The normal operating level of Angat Dam is 212 meters.

“Based on the current level, there will be sufficient water supply for Metro Manila until the onset of the rainy season,” Mr. David said.

Metro Manila’s two water concession holders also said that water is sufficient to meet demand from their customers.

Jennifer C. Rufo, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. Head of Corporate Communications, said: “Given the current high elevation of raw water stored in Angat Dam and the sustained production of our treatment plants that get raw water from Laguna Lake, we have enough water to sustain our customers’ needs throughout the summer of 2021,” Ms. Rufo said in a mobile phone message.

She added that the west zone concessionaire is ready to increase water supply once needed with augmentation measures such as the operation of the company’s modular treatment plants and network maintenance activities.

Nestor Jeric T. Sevilla, Jr., Manila Water Co., Inc. Corporate Strategic Affairs Group Head, said the company is projecting sufficient supply for the east zone concession area.

“We have better water supply coming from Angat Dam compared to last year. The level of Angat Dam is... 8.72 meters higher compared to the same period last year,” Mr. Sevilla said in a mobile phone message.

Mr. Sevilla said Manila Water has standby deep wells and treatment plants should more water be needed.

“We are also operating our Cardona water treatment plant which has a capacity to produce 100 million liters a day as well as the Marikina treatment plant with a capacity of about 17 million liters a day in case supply augmentation during summer is necessary,” Mr. Sevilla said.



Metro Pacific Investments Corp., which has a majority stake in Maynilad, is one of three Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT, Inc.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has an interest in BusinessWorld through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**



PSE wants mineral reporting to include environment, health plans

March 4, 2021 | 12:06 am



By **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**, *Reporter*

THE Stock Exchange, Inc. (PSE) has proposed changes to the 2007 Philippine Mineral Reporting Code (PMRC) to meet international reporting standards.

In a memorandum dated March 2 uploaded on its website, the stock market operator said it proposed to include a discussion on the mitigation and remediation plans to address environmental, social, and health and safety impacts.

Another proposal is the addition of a statement that verifies the compliance of an accredited competent person or the report with the 2020 PRMC version.

The PSE also recommended other revisions such as the accredited competent person's consent to the public disclosure of the report; editorial revisions; and the disclosure of any potential conflict of interest with the issuer's related parties as defined in the PSE's consolidated listing and disclosure rules.

According to the PSE, the 2007 mineral reporting code outlines the minimum standards needed to be followed by stakeholders for the public reporting of exploration results, mineral resources, and ore reserves.

However, the Philippine Mineral Reporting Code Committee (PMRCC) initiated the review of the reporting code in Feb. 2019 to make it compatible with global reporting standards.

The PSE said the proposed 2020 code was "modeled substantially after the 2019 International Reporting Template of the Committee for Mineral Reserves International Reporting Standards and the 2012 Australasian Code for Reporting of Exploration Results, Mineral Resources, and Ore Reserves of the Australasian Joint Ore Reserves Committee."

Meanwhile, the committee has also proposed changes to the 2007 code such as changing the term "competent person" to "accredited competent person"; modifying reporting terminology from ore reserve to mineral reserve; requiring the reporting of metal equivalents; prohibiting of in ground valuations; and introducing technical studies, including the scoping, pre-feasibility, and feasibility.

"Another proposed revision is the inclusion of a transitory provision, which states that the 2020 PMRC shall be fully implemented two years after SEC approval and that during said two-year transitory period, the reporting company shall comply with the 2007 PMRC but may choose to comply with the 2020 PMRC," the memorandum said.



Ronald S. Recidoro, executive director of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said in a mobile phone message that the group fully supports the proposed amendments to the PMRC.

He said the chamber is working closely with the PMRCC and lead professional associations to upgrade the country's mineral reporting code and match it with leading global reporting codes.

"Once approved, the PMRC will give due recognition to the work being done by Filipino geologists, mining engineers, and metallurgists in determining and reporting on mineral resources and reserves," Mr. Recidoro said.

In a mobile phone message, PMRCC Chairperson Ciceron A. Angeles, Jr. said he is hopeful that the 2020 PMRC will be approved as soon as possible.

"Our current PMRC 2007 edition is no longer compatible with the international mineral reporting codes recognized by stock exchanges other than the PSE," Mr. Angeles said.

BusinessWorld sought the comment of Mines and Geosciences Bureau regarding the proposed revisions, but it has not responded as of press time.

The PSE is asking concerned parties to send their comments on the proposed amendments until March 16.



Photo taken in the Rodriguez part of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape.

Wikimedia Commons, Arius1998

Duterte urged to make Upper Marikina Watershed quarry-free

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (Philstar.com) - March 3, 2021 - 10:32am

MANILA, Philippines — Environmental groups called on President Rodrigo Duterte to cancel mining agreements inside the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL) in Rizal province to protect threatened flora and fauna and mitigate the impacts of climate crisis.

In a statement released on World Wildlife Day Wednesday, the Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition asked Duterte to urgently rescind all existing Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSAs) inside the 26,126-hectare UMRBPL and nearby protected and conserved areas before his term ends next year.

MPSAs, which are issued by the government, give contractors the right to mine within a contract area. The coalition said these pose threats to the integrity of the watershed and all life forms within it.

It said there are at least six MPSAs existing or overlapping with the UMRBPL, covering about 1,500 hectares of protected forestland. Another 658 hectares appear to be under MPSAs in adjacent protected and conserved sites.

The Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018 prohibits mineral exploration or extraction within protected areas.

“Quarrying will permanently destroy sensitive habitats of threatened flora and fauna,” the coalition said.

These species include narra, red and white lauan, kamagong, molave, Philippine hawk-eagle, jungle fowl, Philippine deer, Philippine warty pig, Philippine monkey and Northern Luzon cloud rat.

Flood, climate change mitigation

According to the Forest Management Bureau, the UMRBPL, along with the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve, plays a vital role in regulating the flow of water toward the densely populated Metro Manila.

The coalition said the massive flooding that submerged communities in Marikina City and Rizal following the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses (Vamco) late last year showed the urgency to stop destructive activities within the watershed cannot be undermined. Experts said the inability of watersheds to absorb and hold rainfall contributed to the severe flooding.



The status of the Upper Marikina Watershed—which covers Antipolo City and the towns of Baras, Rodriguez, San Mateo and Tanay in Rizal—was upgraded to “protected landscape” from “reservation” in 2011.

“Some government offices have argued that even without quarrying in the Upper Marikina Watershed, flooding, erosion and siltation will still occur. While these are indeed natural processes, it is by protecting and restoring designated protected areas that we are able to mitigate their increasingly adverse effects,” the groups said.

“Protected areas are also off-limits to extractive industries not just to help reduce the risk of flooding and other forms of disasters, but also to conserve precious wildlife and habitats and preserve ecosystem services such as clean and healthy soil, water and air,” they added.

The coalition also pointed out that protecting the Upper Marikina Watershed plays an important part in climate change adaptation and mitigation as it acts as a defense against extreme weather events and a natural carbon sink.

“With less than 500 days left before the end of President Rodrigo Duterte’s term in office, there is no better time than now to leave a lasting legacy for Filipinos,” it said.

Among the signatories are Greenpeace Philippines, Masungi Georeserve Foundation, Center for Energy and Ecology Development and Living Laudato Si.



RIVER REHAB

By The Manila Times

March 3, 2021



Personnel of the Department of Public Works and Highways resume dredging work to restore the beauty of the Marikina River and address the flooding problem in the city. PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE



MGDC gets clearance to proceed on Manila Bay reclamation project

Published March 3, 2021, 5:30 AM

by [Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat](#)

Manila Goldcoast Development Corporation (MGDC) said the issuance of a Notice to Proceed (NTM) by the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) as well as a Notice to Commence Actual Reclamation Works (NTCARW) has cleared the way for its 148-hectare Manila Bay reclamation project.

In a statement, the company said that the NTM and NTCARW were issued last February 22 by the PRA, through PRA Governing Board Resolution No. 5265 series of 2021, to the consortium of the MGDC and the City of Manila to build the Manila Solar City project at the reclaimed area. PRA's issuance of NTM and NTCARW followed the "no objection" clearance from the Office of the President, the company said.



Photo credit: <https://manilagoldcoast.com/>

The PRA, in the resolution, said it issued the NTM and the NTCARW pursuant to the issuance of a clearance by no less than Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Jr., to the Manila Bay reclamation project.

PRA had received a memorandum from Executive Secretary Medialdea last February 18 where the official assured that the OP has no objection to the start of the project.

"This refers to your Memorandum dated 07 December 2020, requesting authority from the Office of the President to issue the Notice to Mobilize (NTM) and the Notice to Commence Actual Reclamation Works (NTCARW) for the Manila Solar City Project, as well as the confirmation of the PRA Board Resolution relative thereto," Medialdea said in the Feb. 18, 2021 memorandum.

"Pursuant to Executive Order Nos. 543 (s. 2006) and 74 (s.2019), considering the Memorandum of this Office dated 01 February 2019 granting clearance to proceed with the Solar City Project, and upon the representations of the PRA on the completion of the documentary requirements and concurrences of the relevant government agencies, please be informed that this Office interposes NO OBJECTION in the grant of the NTM and NTCARW for the Manila Solar City Project, subject to compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations," Medialdea said.

"The PRA's request for NTMs and NTCARWs relative to the Horizon Manila Reclamation Project and Manila Waterfront Reclamation shall be acted upon separately," Medialdea noted.

The MGDC is part of the Solar Group of the Tieng family that is into entertainment, satellite communications, logistics, distribution and property landbanking and development.

The Solar City Manila project had been proposed way back more than 30 years ago as the Manila Goldcoast Reclamation Project (MGRP), which secured in 1991 a greenlight from the then Public Estates Authority (PEA), predecessor of the PRA, to pursue the project as the Manila-Cavite Coastal Road Reclamation-North Sector Reclamation Project (MCCR-North Sector Reclamation).

On March 31, 2011, the PRA Board affirmed the "previous award of the MCCR-North Sector Reclamation Project to Manila Goldcoast Development Corp."

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/03/mgdc-gets-clearance-to-proceed-on-manila-bay-reclamation-project/>



Maynilad to finish building STPs this year

By Jordeene B. Lagare March 4, 2021

Maynilad Water Services Inc. aims to finish building three sewage treatment plants (STPs) and their conveyance systems in the National Capital Region this year.

In a statement on Wednesday, the West Zone concessionaire said it had invested P7.15 billion in developing these facilities in Cupang and Tunasan villages in Muntinlupa City and Marulas village in Valenzuela City.

The STPs can treat up to 126,000 cubic meters of wastewater daily and render sewerage services to nearly 700,000 residents of those cities. They can also help reduce pollution in Manila Bay.

Maynilad President and Chief Executive Officer Ramoncito Fernandez is glad the facilities are almost done, saying in the statement that “while pandemic-related constraints continue to hinder our manpower deployment, we will strive to get these new facilities running and serving communities within the year.”

To date, Maynilad operates 22 wastewater facilities with a combined treatment capacity of approximately 664,000 cubic meters a day after investing about P 42 billion in them.

The water company of tycoon Manuel V. Pangilinan serves parts of the cities of Manila, Quezon and Makati; and Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon cities.

It also serves the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario, all in Cavite province.



Villar files Bill to strengthen wildlife protection in PH

By OSCV Published on March 3, 2021

PASAY CITY, Mar. 3 -- Senator Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, filed a bill to strengthen wildlife protection and conservation in the country, just in time for the observance of World Wildlife Day today (March 3).

Senate Bill No. 2078 or "An Act Strengthening The Wildlife Conservation And Protection Mechanism In The Philippines" will amend Republic Act No. 9147, Otherwise Known As The "Wildlife Resources Conservation And Protection Act Of 2001".

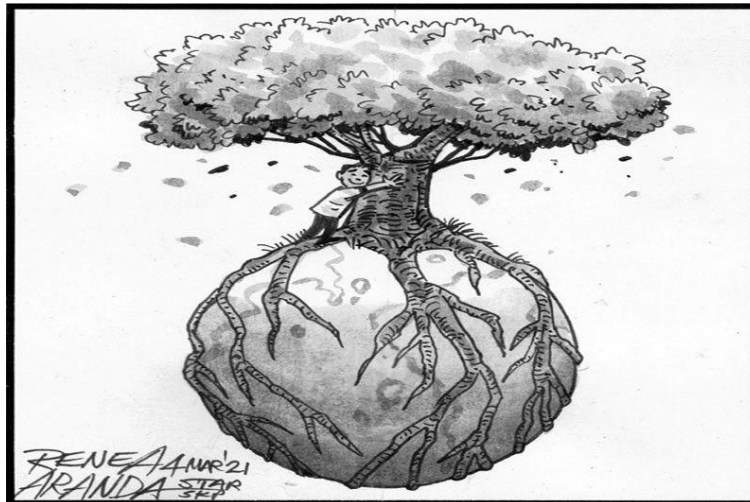
RA No. 9147 is as a measure that provided the necessary environmental policy enabling Philippine government to manage and conserve the wildlife resources of the country comprehensively. But according to Villar, the 20-year old law needs to be amended violations remain rampant and many are even undetected.

"Wildlife crimes have also evolved, violators have become more equipped, organized, and syndicated or with international connections. Likewise, the trade and transport of wildlife species have become wide-scale and transnational in nature. Thus, we need to give more "teeth" so to speak to existing policies and laws to help enforcement authorities", said Villar. The senator added that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic intensifies the need to protect wildlife resources to prevent the risks of zoonotic diseases or the transmission of disease from animal to human. According to the Wildlife Conservation Society, habitat loss forces animals to move to areas populated by people, who become exposed to the pathogens of animals that in turn spread viruses. "Destruction of natural habitats has been linked to the spread of infectious diseases such as Ebola, HIV, swine fever and avian flu. More than two thirds of these diseases originate in animals, and about 70% come from wild animals, or what is referred to as zoonotic diseases.

There were studies also suggesting that COVID-19 virus may have originated from bats and that the first people infected were traders in bat meat, who may have subsequently visited the Huanan seafood market, where the virus spread was first traced.

The Philippines is one of the world's 17 megadiverse or biodiversity-rich countries, which hosts two-thirds of the Earth's biodiversity and contain about 70 to 80 percent of the world's plant and animal species. So, wildlife protection is crucial.

"We need to not only create awareness but to take action because any damage or loss will cost too much for a country such as ours. There is so much at stake and we become vulnerable to the adverse side effects if we do not act fast. Thus a stronger law and an even stronger enforcement of it is crucial. Senate Bill 2058 which I filed yesterday will provide timely or relevant amendments to RA 9047" Villar said. (OSCV)



EDITORIAL - Wildlife in the pandemic

(The Philippine Star) - March 4, 2021 - 12:00am

World Wildlife Day was marked yesterday as the global community continued to grapple with a deadly, economically crippling pandemic.

An upside of the COVID-19 pestilence is greater awareness of wildlife conservation. The coronavirus is believed to have emanated from a market in China's Wuhan City where various species of wildlife were sold for food, traditional medicine and other purposes. Scientists believe bats are the most likely source of the coronavirus, with pangolins also being eyed as transmitters of the pathogen.

In 2003, the virus that caused the epidemic of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome was also traced to civets sold at food markets in China's Guangdong province. While Beijing cracked down on the wildlife trade after the SARS epidemic, the emergence of COVID in late 2019 clearly showed that more needed to be done.

Apart from killer diseases traced to animals, the world continues to confront the many problems that are endangering both plant and animal wildlife. This year the theme of World Wildlife Day on March 3 is "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet." The focus is on the estimated 200 million to 350 million people living within or near forested areas worldwide, and who rely on forest resources for their livelihoods and basic needs including food, shelter, energy and medicine.

Special focus is also on the indigenous peoples who manage an estimated 28 percent of the planet's land surface. These areas, many of them forested, are now threatened by climate change, biodiversity loss and the social, economic and public health impacts of COVID-19. Preserving the environment also means preserving indigenous cultures.

Illegal trafficking in wildlife also continues to drive many species to endangered status and even extinction. The coronavirus pandemic, believed to have sprung from this illegal trade, should spur greater action to protect wild flora and fauna.



Binay cites hazards of COVID-19 vaccine scraps, seeks safe waste disposal plan

Published March 3, 2021, 9:55 PM

by [Hannah Torregoza](#)

Senator Nancy Binay on Wednesday urged the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and local government units (LGUs) to immediately come up with a comprehensive medical waste disposal plan now that the COVID-19 vaccination program has begun.



Sen. Nancy Binay (Alex Nueva España/Senate PRIB)

Binay said it is imperative to ensure that medical wastes would be disposed of properly in order to prevent harmful health risks, noting that while the Department of Health (DOH) has already provided “interim guidelines” for vaccine waste disposal, this might not be enough “because this isn’t a temporary problem.” “We’re dealing with infectious medical wastes here magnified in millions of used vials... yung basta na lang itatapon sa basurahan, kukunin ng truck ng basura at itatambak kung saan (the fact they can just throw it in the garbage bin, and collected by garbage trucks and would be left in some place) elevates public health risks,” Binay warned in a statement.

What is worrying, she said, is the capacity and capability of LGUs, especially from geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, to approach and tackle medical wastes concerns.

“I’m worried about the LGUs. Does everyone have a local vaccination plan and comprehensive medical waste disposal plan? Are our LGUs ready to come up with one once they start rolling out the vaccination program?” she pointed out. “Without a local vaccination plan, these concerns could get out of hand, and we should be anticipatory rather than reactive regarding what threatens to be an environmental and public health hazard,” Binay said.

She noted that the way infectious healthcare waste is being processed and handled at a snail’s pace since the pandemic started has been alarming.

Binay has filed Senate Resolution No. 656 urging the IATF, in consultation with relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors, to come up with a concrete plan on the proper handling and management of COVID-19 vaccination medical wastes in order to prevent harmful health risks.

“Whereas, based on the Philippine National Development and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccines (Interim Plan, January 2021), waste generated at the health care facilities after vaccination may pose harm and risks to the health care workers and communities if not properly managed,” she said in the explanatory note of her resolution.

In her resolution, Binay further emphasized that proper planning and implementation of managing wastes generated in the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination is required, considering the complexity of the nature of the vaccines.

She noted that the cause of delay is due to the lack of capacity that waste treatment and disposal facilities have.



“And partly because waste haulers need permits so the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) can keep track of where hospital wastes go,” Binay said.

She reiterated the Philippines cannot afford to play catch-up, especially as the plan to vaccinate around 60 to 70 million Filipinos would generate massive amounts of waste.

“Our appeal then is for the IATF to make it part of the checklist for LGUs their comprehensive local vaccination plan and infectious medical/healthcare waste plan,” she said.

“In a span of two to five years, we expect more than 70 million Filipinos to get vaccinated, because these are double-doses and that would mean over 140 million units for the vaccine paraphernalia alone.

We haven’t counted how much tons of concomitant waste would be there,” she said.

“I really hope that the IATF and LGUs are prepared once the vaccines start arriving. I hope the IATF would be serious on this too and not to forget it,” she added.



Binay: Proper waste disposal needed amid vaccine rollout

posted March 03, 2021 at 09:50 pm

by [Macon Ramos-Araneta](#)

To avert any harmful health risks, Senator Nancy Binay on Wednesday urged the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, local government units, and the private sector to ensure the proper disposal of medical wastes as the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines began Monday.

“I’m worried about the LGUs. Do they have a local vaccination plan and a comprehensive medical waste disposal plan?” she said.

“Without a local vaccination plan, these concerns could get out of hand, and we should be anticipatory rather than reactive regarding what threatens to be an environmental and public health hazard,” Binay added.

In filing Senate Resolution No. 656, Binay said a concrete plan on the proper handling and management of COVID-19 vaccination medical wastes must be put in place.

Proper handling, storage, collection, and disposal of the wastes shall be followed to ensure the protection of the environment and the general public, she added.

While the Department of Health has issued interim guidelines on vaccine waste disposal, Binay said a comprehensive implementable plan is still necessary.

“We are dealing with infectious medical wastes here, magnified in millions of used vials. These medical wastes cannot just be thrown away, taken by garbage trucks and dumped anywhere since this would elevate public health risks,” Binay said.



Lawmaker pushes passage of zero waste lifestyle bill

By Jovee Marie de la Cruz March 4, 2021



In file photo: Collected waste in Batangas, where Nestlé Philippines and the marine conservation social enterprise Pure Oceans have entered into a partnership to design, procure, and operate a prototype boat called Basura Bangka that will transport plastic waste from coastal and island communities to recycling facilities.

A leader of the House of Representatives is pushing for the passage of a bill seeking to advocate a zero waste lifestyle by institutionalizing the practice of extended producer responsibility (EPR).

In House Bill 8691, or the proposed Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2021, Deputy Speaker and Las Piñas Rep. Camille Villar said her proposal aims to require producers to manage the impacts of their products throughout their entire life cycle, including take-back, recycling and proper disposal.

The bill seeks to amend Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

The EPR concept shifts the responsibility to importers and brand owners for the environmental impacts of their plastic products and packaging, which will effectively tackle the plastic pollution problem.

“This may be a new concept for us but this practice has already been observed by several organizations worldwide. As we introduce this concept, we heighten the importance of waste segregation among households and hold manufacturers accountable for their post-consumer items and packaging,” said Villar.

“Through this measure, we intend to advance awareness on EPR programs although some private organizations and business entities have already adopted such mechanisms in some areas. Also, we are hopeful that Filipinos will pool their used plastic and packaging materials and learn to increase the recycling rate, reuse, or dispose of them at the cost of the manufacturers,” Villar added.

According to Villar, the recycling rate of post-consumption plastic packaging among Filipinos is also relatively low. Plastic waste makes up a significant share of the overall generated waste in the Philippines. In fact, the Philippines is the third-biggest polluter next to China and Indonesia. It produces 2.7 million metric tons of plastic waste each year.

Under the measure, producers are required to adopt producer responsibility schemes for the proper management of wastes generated from their discarded containers and packaging materials. Incentives also await firms that adopt extended producer schemes.

Villar added that the measure, if passed into law, will also help local governments that pay hefty amounts annually for solid waste disposal, and such funds could be used for more social programs.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/04/lawmaker-pushes-passage-of-zero-waste-lifestyle-bill/>



Taytay shuts down illegal trash dumps

posted March 03, 2021 at 11:18 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

Acting on complaints lodged by residents, the Taytay local government has shut down a four-hectare open-pit dumpsite that has been clandestinely operating for the last 10 years.



Vic Badaguas, chief of the Taytay LGU's general services office, said they are seriously considering filing charges against the operator on the open-pit trash dump, concealed behind a huge building along the Manila East Road in Sitio Bato-Bato in Barangay Dolores.

Badaguas who led the LGU team's inspection following complaints filed by sitio residents, said they were shocked upon seeing the area. He said the place has been elevated by as much as 1.7 meters (about 5 feet 6 inches) by the thousands of tons of garbage dumped in the area.

Citing testimonies from the sitio residents, Badaguas claims the open-pit trash dump has been in operation since 2011.

"Ang nakita namin ay isang kubling tambakan na basura sa dati-rating malalim na bahagi ng Sitio Bato-bato. Sa dami siguro ng naitapon na basura dito at tagal nang operasyon ng illegal dumpsite na ito, mas mataas pa siya ngayon kaysa sa level ng mga kabahayan," Badaguas averred.

Sitio Bato-bato residents earlier sought the help of Mayor Joric Gacula for the immediate closure of the open-pit trash dump, claiming that the facility has started showing signs of accumulating methane gas, which makes their community vulnerable to fire.

"Minsan nga po, pag sobrang init ng panahon, napapansin na naming umuusok ung pinagtatambakan ng basura kaya minabuti na naming lumapit sa munisipyo," said one of the complaining residents who requested anonymity.

Badaguas also took a swipe at the barangay authorities.

"Shout out sa `yo ParengKap, unahin mo muna siguro sa iyong mga itineraries ang pagbisita sa iyong nasasakupang sitios kasi malaking problema po itong inyong kakaharapin. Kawawa naman ang kalusugan ng iyong mga residente lalo na ang mga bata... puwedeng pagmulan ng malaking sunog pati ito sir," said the GSO chief in his Facebook post, referring to Barangay Dolores barangay chair Allan de Leon.

Gacula has already ordered a full-scale investigation to determine the liabilities of the private operator and "whoever is protecting the illegal operation of the trash dump, no matter whose toes they would step on."

"We are definitely filing charges against them," added Gacula.

Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, strictly prohibits the operation of open-pit dumpsites.

Amid online shopping sale, calls to reduce plastic packaging waste continue

By Catalina Ricci S. Madarang - March 3, 2021 - 8:34 PM



Image by Stux via Pixabay

Bubble wraps, cartons and other packaging materials keep products safe during delivery but at the expense of environmental damage.

Amid another e-commerce shopping event on March 3, a local environmental group reminded the public of the harmful effects of “excessive” plastic packaging used by online stores.

Greenpeace Philippines shared a graphic that featured juxtaposed meme of John Lloyd in tears and a slice of what appears to be an onion.

The inside of an onion represented different plastic materials used for packaging such as a courier plastic, bubble wrap and a box of carton.

“Sa dami ng layers maiiyak ka talaga. (crying emoji) Kaya ngayong 3.3 sale, let’s continue the call for Lazada & Shopee to reduce their packaging waste. [#PlasticFreeShopping](#) now (earth emoji),” the post read.

 Greenpeace Philippines
17 hours ago

Sa dami ng layers maiiyak ka talaga. 🥲
Kaya ngayong 3.3 sale, let's continue the call for Lazada & Shopee to reduce their packaging waste. [#PlasticFreeShopping](#) now 🌍 >>
act.gp/2VOWdOl
[#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#)

UNWRAPPING PACKAGES FROM LAZADA & SHOPEE BE LIKE:



BATARIS.ORG.PH
It's Time to Reveal, Reduce, and Redesign for Lazada and Sh
The E-Commerce industry has been growing at an exponential rate, proje



Greenpeace and other environmental groups had been calling on e-commerce businesses to reduce their plastic packaging as part of their efforts to help save the environment.

Bubble wrap packaging can't be helped?

Some Filipino online users, however, argued in the comments section that thick wrapping of goods can't be helped sometimes, citing courier mishandling and customer demands.

One Facebook user pointed out that less packaging means less costs for the seller.

“Syempre pabor kay seller ang less balot para less expense sa packaging. Pero dahil nais ng seller na maging maayos at safe ang item pagdating kay buyer, napipilitan nalang si seller ibalot ng makapal para hindi masira ang item. To sum it all, dapat ayusin ng courier ang paghandle ng package para less balot nalang,” a Facebook user [said](#).

Another user echoed that bubble wrapping is often preferred because some couriers are not careful with handling their items.

“Mahal naman kase ang carton kesa plastic. As buyer ng mga online shop, dinadami ko pag order sa isang store tapos para i-box na lang lahat. Gusto ko rin na naka bubble wrap kasi ang courier walang pake sa gamit or package na kanilang hinahandle,” the user [said](#).

Others also explained that delivery personnel normally carry many items, thus the need for proper packaging.

“Di kasi maiiwasan yan. Di nmn pwedeng lagyan ng sariling upuan yan o mg isa lang mag byahe para lng hindi ma-damage. Dahil sa bulk yung cargo na dala, dapat talaga balutin maigi yong item,” a Facebook user [commented](#).

“Yung mga customers din kasi mareklamo kung hindi naka bubble wrap sabihin hindi well-packaged,” another [added](#).

Packaging expert **Ranpak Philippines**, however, countered these arguments and said that there are alternatives to bubble wrap packaging.

In 2020, the packaging expert company said it has helped 315 businesses in the Philippines shift to eco-friendly packaging.

“That’s equivalent to 173,188 meters of plastic bubble wrap replaced by biodegradable paper,” [it said](#).

“Imagine twelve 40-ft containers filled plastic bubble wrap. That’s how much plastic we avoided,” RanPak added.

It offers cushioning, eco-friendly, recyclable, biodegradable alternative to bubble wraps. These are made of honeycomb, cassava starch and other biodegradable materials to promote sustainable packaging.



Some stores and brands in the Philippines like cosmetic brand Garnier Philippines have adopted this environment-friendly practice.

RanPak is also supporting some local environmental groups' collective call to reduce the amount of plastic packaging for delivery of items.

During the shopping event 9.9 last year, various environmental groups [collectively called on](#) Lazada and Shopee to shift to sustainable and eco-friendly packaging.

This initiative was part of the **#Breakfreefromplastic Philippines project**, which comprises EcoWaste Coalition, GAIA Asia Pacific, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Health Care without Harm Southeast Asia, and Mother Earth Foundation in partnership with No Burn Pilipinas and Oceana International Philippines.



QC waste-for-groceries tack starts

posted March 03, 2021 at 11:30 pm

by [Rio N. Araja](#)

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte has spearheaded the launch of a plastic waste trading program allowing residents to exchange their recyclables for groceries.

She tasked the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department to supervise the trash to cashback program, the city's initiative in partnership with Basic Environmental Systems and Technologies or BEST that trades recyclables into environmental points which in turn could be exchanged for basic commodities such as rice, eggs and vegetables.

"The program's main objective is to promote to our QCitizens the importance of recycling and proper waste segregation. Kapag dinala nila sa ating Trash to Cashback kiosk ang kanilang recyclable materials, pwede nila itong ipalit sa grocery," Belmonte said.

A My Basurero Eco-Community or MBE-C kiosk has been set up at the QC Hall Risen Garden where employees can exchange their recyclable waste (plastic, paper, and metal) to environmental points, which could also be traded for groceries. It will soon be rolled out in barangays.

Interested traders have to create and register their email to BeepXTRA Philippines, BEST's Cashback Loyalty Platform partner, to earn EPs.

Apart from groceries, EPs could also be used in bXTRA food deliveries. A complete list of partner stores and establishments could be accessed through bXTRA.com.ph and bXTRAoutlet.delivery.

EPWMD head Andrea Villaroman said talks are under way with the city's Small Business Cooperatives Development and Promotions Office for the registration of micro and small businesses as partner merchants of bXTRA.



Australian gov't to invest P630-M for disaster & climate resilience efforts in PH

Published March 3, 2021, 11:30 AM

by [Madelaine B. Miraflor](#)

The Australian Government will invest P630 million over the next six years to support disaster and climate resilience efforts in the Philippines.

This is part of its newly signed agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which involves the initiative that will strengthen the disaster and climate resilience of targeted local governments in the Philippines.

UNDP is the leading UN organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change.



Australian Ambassador to the Philippines H.E. Steven J. Robinson AO (left) and UNDP Philippines Resident Representative Selva Ramachandran (right) at the ceremonial signing of the partnership between the Australian Government and the United Nations Development Programme which aims to strengthen disaster resilience of targeted local governments in the next six years.

UNDP works with a broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, including the Philippines.

Dubbed as the Strengthening Institutions and Empowering Localities against Disasters and Climate Change (SHIELD) program, the initiative will particularly work with local governments, as the first responders to emergencies, by building their institutional and community resilience capacities against natural hazards and climate change.

SHIELD will be implemented by UNDP, together with consortium partners UN-Habitat, Philippine Business for Social Progress, National Resilience Council, and the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society.

It is a six-year program that will be done across ten of the country's most vulnerable provinces to disaster and climate change impacts.

At the same time, the project will also cover Metro Manila, given its vulnerability to earthquakes and its economic significance, along with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), with the increasing disaster and climate vulnerability of conflict-affected areas.

While significant progress has been made in disaster risk reduction and management and climate action, the Philippines remains among the countries most vulnerable to natural hazards and climate change impacts globally, UNDP said.

"The cost of disasters to the country is significantly high, with local governments and communities bearing the brunt," it added.



Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Steven J. Robinson AO said this new investment affirms Australia's continued commitment to the Philippines as a dependable partner in building the long-term disaster and climate resilience of its institutions and its people.

"Enhancing resilience remains a high priority for Australia, particularly in the Philippines, which is extremely vulnerable to disasters and the impacts of climate change. Through SHIELD, we will work with governments, private sector, civil society and academic institutions to enhance and sustain community resilience," Ambassador Robinson further added.

The SHIELD program endeavors to accelerate resilience-building efforts in the Philippines by collaborating with multiple stakeholders to unlock financing and implement risk-informed and inclusive resilience actions at the local level.

The initiative will also support the national government establish the needed enabling environment and work with Philippine scientific agencies to produce tailored and accessible information that will inform local resilience actions.

"Through SHIELD, our ultimate aim is for our target communities to be safer and more resilient to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change, taking also into account the lessons brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic," UNDP Philippines Resident Representative Selva Ramachandran said.



Australia to invest ₱630M to augment PH LGUs' disaster, climate resilience efforts

By [Pilar Manuel, CNN Philippines](#)

Published Mar 3, 2021 2:14:25 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, March 3) — The Australian government will invest hundreds of million pesos through a new initiative that will boost disaster and climate resilience of Philippine local governments vulnerable to calamities.

In a statement on Tuesday, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Philippines said it inked a deal with Australian authorities on an initiative called SHIELD, which will involve an investment of 18 million Australian dollars (about ₱630 million) executed over the next six years.

SHIELD, which means Strengthening Institutions and Empowering Localities against Disasters and Climate Change, shall work with local government units in “building their institutional and community resilience capacities against natural hazards and climate change.”

"The cost of disasters to the country is significantly high, with local governments and communities bearing the brunt," noted the UNDP.

The program shall cover Metro Manila and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, read the statement. It will also be implemented in 10 of the country's most vulnerable provinces to the impacts of disaster and climate change.

“Through SHIELD, our ultimate aim is for our target communities to be safer and more resilient to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change, taking also into account the lessons brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr. Selva Ramachandran, resident representative of UNDP Philippines.

Meanwhile, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Steven Robinson AO noted they will be working with governments, private sector, civil society and academic institutions to strengthen and sustain community resilience.

He said this investment affirms Australia's continued commitment to the Philippines as a “dependable partner” in building its institutions' and people's long-term disaster and climate resilience.

Aside from the coronavirus pandemic, natural disasters pummeled the Philippines in 2020 including the eruption of Taal Volcano in January and back-to-back typhoons in October and November.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/3/3/Australia-P630-million-investment-PH-six-year-SHIELD-initiative.html>



A baby olive ridley sea turtle heads to the sea in this undated photo.
via The STAR/Artemio Dumlao

La Union conservationists see all-time high in olive ridley sea turtle hatchlings

[Artemio Dumlao](#) (Philstar.com) - March 3, 2021 - 6:20pm

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines — Lockdowns and movement restrictions during the pandemic have brought despair across the world, but not for olive ridley sea turtles.

During the pandemic, nesting of the vulnerable olive ridley sea turtles in La Union reached an all-time high, said conservation group Coastal Underwater Resource Management Actions (CURMA) coordinator Carlos Tamayo.

The group is even anticipating seeing the most number of hatchlings this season (October-March), with 5,255 already hatched and released to the sea and with more of the 65 nests still to hatch in coming days.

CURMA is a Science of Identity Foundation (SIF-CARE) assisted pawikan conservation and protection program started by Tamayo's family several years ago at Barangay Ili Norte in San Juan.

What excites Tamayo is that the 65 nests at the hatchery are still growing because olive ridley turtle mothers keep returning to shores stretching from San Juan to Bacnotan to lay their eggs.

"We see 6,500 to over 7,000 hatchlings (at the end of the season this March)," Tamayo said.

Last season, only 3,362 hatchlings from 38 nests were released to the sea.

Carlos' father Toby, a former professor at the Philippine Military Academy, a veteran environmentalist and an accomplished beekeeper of the famous Tobee's Apiary in Baguio City, is CURMA's founder.

He explains "sea turtles are a keystone species" and are one of very few creatures — manatees are another — that eat seagrass. Seagrass needs to be constantly cut short to help it grow across the sea floor. Sea turtle grazing helps maintain the health of the seagrass beds, he said.

Sea grass beds provide breeding and development grounds for numerous marine animals. Without seagrass beds, many marine species humans harvest would be lost, as would the lower levels of the food chain. The reactions could result in many more marine species eventually becoming endangered or extinct.

In 2017, CURMA volunteers freed 8,700 young olive ridley hatchlings. In the 2009-2010 laying season, almost 15,000 hatchlings were freed in the sea. The next season, 12,000, then 9,000, then 6,000.



There are seven species of sea turtles and all, including the Olive Ridley, are listed on the IUCN Red List as either critically endangered or vulnerable.

According to the younger Tamayo, they are consulting marine biologists to shed light on the increase in the nesting. He suspects that "most likely (the cause is) beaches are quiet and dark in these COVID-19 times."

Mother olive ridley turtles lay their eggs on dimly-lit and undisturbed shores.

Marine biologists are also checking weather and wave patters that may have contributed to the hike in the number of nests this season, Tamayo said.

Enlisting fisherfolks' help

When the conservation program started,, local fisherfolk resisted efforts to protect the sea turtles, the younger Tamayo explained. "Olive ridleys were food to them. If not money."

But, since the community has been engaged as active partners in wildlife conservation through various education campaigns, many are now CURMA volunteers who go on beach patrols for nests.

Lobby work meanwhile spelled out support from the San Juan local government, which shelled out a P1,500 per-catch-incentive to fishermen who find olive ridley adults at sea or along the beach.

Beach resort owners have also partnered with CURMA to harmonize tourism and care for the olive ridleys.



Farmer earns more than P300K in 3 months from Cagdianao Mining's greening program

By The Manila Times March 4, 2021



Bernie Fruta earns more than P300K by simply growing seedlings for CMC. He's shown here in his nursery with Jean Litang, community development coordinator of CMC's Community Relations Department.

IN 2019, the year before the pandemic hit hard on the communities, Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC), a subsidiary of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC), initiated a seedling production program that continues to benefit residents in the Dinagat Islands financially and proves that there is money in 'greening' and in environment protection activities.

To date, CMC's "ECOMmunity Program" has already paid up some P4.4M to participants of this livelihood program from the mining company's five host barangays — Boa, Cuarinta, Diegas, Legaspi and Valencia — who produced more than 1 million seedlings and planting materials that CMC uses for its various mine rehabilitation and greening programs.

One of the participants to the program is 38 year old Bernie Fruta from barangay Diegas, who received P326,340.00 for producing 37,000 seedlings, mostly fruit trees and native shrubs, which he and his sub-contractor, Diosdado Duhiling, 48, grew in their own nursery over a period of three months.

"We are reaching out to the communities for this program where residents operate their own seedling nurseries from where they grow planting materials that they will provide for our reforestation and rehabilitation needs, we buy each seedling for P9 pesos each and the residents can grow thousands of them in a few months," says Engr. Arnilo Milaor, CMC's resident mine manager.

Nathalie Radaza, CMC's community output-based program coordinator, testifies that many "ECOMmunity" participants have not had the chance before to hold in their hands such huge amounts of money.

The CMC mine site is located in the municipality of Cagdianao, at the Northeastern side of the province of Dinagat Islands. Its area of operations is within the Surigao Mineral Reservation.



PH to see new native varieties of Gumamela, Hoya in 3 years

Published March 3, 2021, 6:52 PM

by [Charissa Luci-Atienza](#)

The Philippines will have its new varieties and interspecific hybrids of ornamental plants, particularly Gumamela and Hoya, within the next three years.



(Photo from Wikipedia)

The Philippine Council for Agriculture Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PCAARRD) announced that the development of new Gumamela (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) and Hoya are “underway” as it launched two new breeding projects on the two ornamental plants.

The first project focused on the development of new *Hibiscus* varieties through hybridization and embryo rescue. It was aimed at producing locally-adapted gumamela plants that can bloom well even under hot or tropical conditions, the DOST-PCAARRD said.

“In the Philippines, there is a preference for imported or international varieties of Gumamela because of their large, multi-colored petals. However, these varieties do not bloom well in low and hot areas of the country,” it noted.

Agripina O. Rasco and Dr. Pablito M. Magdalita of the Institute of Plant Breeding of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (IPB-UPLB) were pursuing the project. “At least six new NSIC (National Seed Industry Council)-approved gumamela varieties and two interspecific hybrids are expected to be delivered by 2024,” the Council said.

Meanwhile, the second project focused on varietal development in the country’s native Hoyas. “Hoya is one of the country’s most outstanding endemic ornamental plants with high commercial value but has been given very limited research attention,” PCAARRD said.

New varieties of Hoya with new color or form, profuse flowering, and longer blooming period were expected to be introduced.

“The team targets five potential varieties with new flower color or form and good blooming habit and at least five propagated materials of each potential variety, among many other outputs,” the PCAARRD said. Maria Luisa D. Guevarra of the IPB-UPLB, is leading the project.

The two projects were part of DOST-PCAARRD’s Industry Strategic S&T Program (ISP) for Ornamental Plants.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/03/ph-to-see-new-native-varieties-of-gumamela-hoya-in-3-years/>

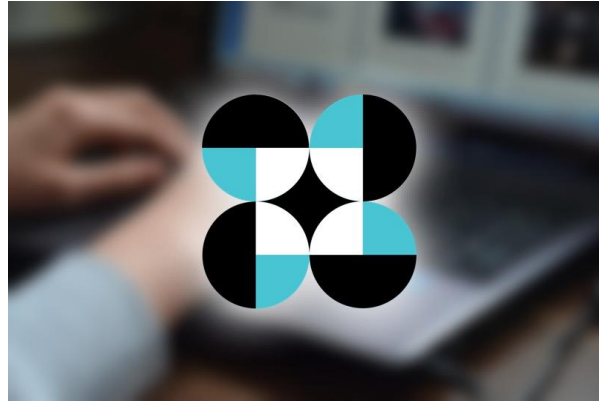


'We are not anti-environment': DOST's Forest Products Research and Dev't Institute assures public

Published March 3, 2021, 4:22 PM

by [Charissa Luci-Atienza](#)

The Department of Science and Technology's Forest Products Research and Development Institute (DOST-FPRDI) has clarified that it was not anti-environment and was not endorsing deforestation.



(MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

DOST-FPRDI Director Romulo T. Aggangan lamented that because of its name, the FPRDI was misunderstood as being anti-environment and an advocate of deforestation, which was identified as major reason behind that devastating floods that hit the country last year.

"Because of our name, our work has sometimes been misunderstood by the public, and even by policy makers," he said in a statement.

"During Senate budget hearings, some lawmakers would ask about the relevance of what we do, considering that the country has very little forest cover left, and these have already been made off-limits to all kinds of logging. We then have to explain to them what we do and what we have done so far," Aggangan said.

The Institute noted that while it conducted a conduct on premium timber, catering to the needs of the forest-using industries during its earlier years, it started looking into other related natural products in the 1980s.

Citing the country's dwindling wood supply due to reckless logging, the agency had to look for substitute raw materials for its clients in the housing, pulp and paper, handicrafts and furniture sectors, it said.

"Over the next decades, the DOST-FPRDI researchers have probed all kinds of possible replacement to forest timber," the FPRDI said.

These include bamboo industrial tree plantation species (ITPS); senile coconut wood and rubber wood; abaca; and agricultural residues such as coconut coir, tobacco stalks, tea leaves, corn stalk and rice straw.

The Institute also studied fiber plants, dye plants, forest woody vines, as well as tree gums, resins, oils and exudates, among others.

The properties and uses of 15 kinds of industrial tree plantation species (ITPS), such as falcata and gmelina were also studied by the DOST-FPRDI wood anatomists, chemists, and forest products engineers over the years.

"Because of this, many managers in the wood-based industries now understand how to saw, machine, dry, finish, and treat these non-forest raw materials. Fast-cycle trees grown in plantations are good substitutes to forest timber for construction and many other industrial uses."



The Institute also cited that its studies on tree plantation species led to the establishment of tree farms and the use of products harvested from them.

Aggangan said one of the Institute's contribution is the furnace-type lumber dryer (FTLD). "This is like a big oven which can dry natural raw materials fast and right, resulting in quality wooden furniture which don't shrink or crack, and handicrafts which are not attacked by molds," he said.

The DOST-FPRDI was cited in 2018 by Connor Group, one of the world's top merchandise-sourcing firms, for its role in raising the quality of Philippine handicraft exports thru the FTLD.

"Another helpful technology is the low-cost wood moisture meter which helps our clients know how much water a piece wood contains. This is important to ensure the quality finished product," he added.

Aggangan said the Institute is also looking into how to optimize the abaca fiber for making high-end industrial products, how to upgrade our bamboo musical instruments, how to make the most of forest woody vines as handicraft raw materials, among others, and how to develop fragrances and flavors from forest products.

"Come to think of it, our name is a misnomer," says Aggangan. "It doesn't exactly reflect who we are, because we do so much more than study 'forest products'. We do not study forest timber anymore, but instead look for ways to wisely use many native plants and related natural materials to meet our clients' needs. Much of what we do shows our aim to help protect – and not destroy – the planet."

He cited that the DOST-FPRDI researchers are conducting a study on more earth-friendly ways and more energy-efficient sawmilling, drying and machining methods; and less toxic methods of preserving wood.

"In the coming years, we will continue to work towards the competitiveness of our client industries while promoting sustainability. These two things – competitiveness and sustainability – should always go together. No matter how fantastic, scientific innovations will mean nothing if they damage the environment."



Illegal lumber recovered

By Jerico J. Kahulugan

March 3, 2021

Authorities have recovered illegally sawn lumber with a value of more than P700,000 in Barangay Lucban in Abulug town, Cagayan on Saturday, February 27. According to the Cagayan Police Provincial Office (CPPO), the intelligence on the alleged illegal lumber was tipped by a reliable source. “Sinasabi sa amin na mayroong mga kahoy na nakatambak sa isang compound sa Barangay Lucban, which we tried to verify kung totoo (We were told that there was a lot of timber piled inside a compound in Lucban village, which we tried to verify if true),” CPPO officials said. Upon verification, around 11,000 board feet were recovered inside a compound owned by a certain Tomas Uy.



17 held for illegal fishing in Surigao del Norte

[Ben Serrano](#) (The Philippine Star) - March 4, 2021 - 12:00am

BUTUAN CITY, Philippines — Seventeen people were arrested for illegal fishing in the waters off Surigao del Norte on Tuesday.

The Caraga police said a boat, fishing paraphernalia and boxes of various marine species worth P1.04 million were seized from the suspects.

Regional police director Brig. Gen. Romeo Caramat Jr. said nine of the suspects are residents of Dinagat Islands and eight of Pintuyan town in Southern Leyte.

Caramat said the police operation is part of Oplan Sangyaman drive, which aims to protect and preserve the environment, cultural properties and natural resources.

The suspects face charges for violation of the Philippine Fisheries Code and local ordinances against illegal fishing.



Philippines reports first cases of COVID-19 South African variant

March 3, 2021 1:17 PM by [DZRH News Online](#)



Local officials wearing face masks and face shields as protection against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) stand near a community quarantine checkpoint in a village under local lockdown, in Pasay, Metro Manila, Philippines, February 25, 2021. REUTERS/Lisa Marie David

MANILA (Reuters) – The Philippines has documented six cases of the South African coronavirus variant, its health ministry said on Tuesday, raising concern among its experts that the current vaccines might be less effective.

The Philippines started its COVID-19 vaccination campaign on Monday, an important milestone for a country among the hardest hit by the pandemic in Asia, but the discovery of another variant could complicate its recovery effort.

“While there is no evidence that this variant causes more severe disease, the pattern of mutations within this variant suggests higher transmissibility and may have an impact on vaccine efficacy,” the health ministry said in a statement.

Of the six cases with the South African variant, three were detected locally and two were Filipinos returning from overseas. The origin of the other case was still being verified.

The Philippines has so far found 87 cases with the more transmissible variant.

President Rodrigo Duterte has said he would lift restrictions on businesses and public transport in the capital Manila once the government has secured 20 to 40 million doses of coronavirus vaccines.

Although the Philippines has been in talks with most major manufacturers of coronavirus vaccines to buy a combined 161 million doses, it has struggled to conclude deals, while stiff competition has tightened supply.

Its first shipment of 600,000 doses of Sinovac vaccines on Sunday was a donation from China, part of which will be used to inoculate military personnel.

It is expecting delivery of 1 million more doses of Sinovac shots this month, which according to a Brazil institute is effective against the British and South African variants.

(Reporting by Karen Lema; Editing by Martin Petty)

Source: <https://dzhnews.com.ph/philippines-reports-first-cases-of-covid-19-south-african-variant/>



Roque says AstraZeneca vaccines arriving on March 4

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos March 3, 2021, 3:27 pm



MANILA – The Philippines is scheduled to receive the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) vaccines from United Kingdom’s (UK) AstraZeneca on Thursday, Malacañang announced on Wednesday.

“This is to confirm that the initial shipment of Astra Zeneca is set to arrive tomorrow,” Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a press statement.

The Philippines was supposed to receive on March 1 around 525,600 doses of Covid-19 shots developed by AstraZeneca under Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility.

However, the arrival of AstraZeneca vaccines was delayed due to global supply issues.

In an interview, Senator Christopher Lawrence Go said around 487,000 doses of UK-manufactured vaccine is expected to arrive at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City at around 7:30 p.m. of Thursday.

Go said Duterte would lead the turnover rites for AstraZeneca vaccines.

“*Sasalubungin po namin ito ni Pangulong Duterte mismo po sa Villamor Air Base. Para naman po makita ng taumbayan na si Pangulong Duterte mismo ay nagtitiwala na ang bakuna lamang po ang tanging susi para makabalik tayo sa normal na pamumuhay (President Duterte and I will witness the delivery of the vaccines at the Villamor Air Base. This is to show the public that President Duterte believes that the vaccines are key to restore our normal lives),*” Go said.

The Philippines is set receive about 44 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine allocated by the COVAX Facility within the year.

The country is also expected to have access to up to 9.2 million AstraZeneca vaccines.

On Sunday, Duterte led the turnover ceremony for 600,000 doses of Sinovac Biotech’s CoronaVac vaccine donated by China to the Philippines.

The government’s goal is to vaccinate 50 million to 70 million Filipinos by the end of the year.

Go said Filipinos, especially front-liners, now have the option to choose between Sinovac and AstraZeneca.

“*May good news na tayo, at least may choice na po ang mga Pilipino. May pagpipilian na sila. Halimbawa ikaw ay front-liner, ayaw mo ng Sinovac, meron nang AstraZeneca (It’s good news. Filipinos now have the choice to pick what vaccine they want. If you are front-liner and you want AstraZeneca, not Sinovac, you can do that),*” he said. (PNA)



Conservation of wildlife, forests is our vaccine, too

By Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim

March 4, 2021

The unprecedented rate by which we are losing our wildlife had hit much closer to home when the Covid-19 pandemic and its global consequences affected our ways of living and brought suffering to many places in the world. While the rollout of vaccines boosts confidence, this does not fully protect and immunize us from new and emerging diseases that result from the many human-driven activities in our midst.

In celebrating World Wildlife Day, the Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB) likewise takes the opportunity to direct attention to the role of wildlife habitats, most especially forests. The theme of this year's celebration—"Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet"—is a timely reminder of the life support that forest ecosystems provide.

The high species diversity and endemism in Asean forests makes the region one of the world's critical habitats. However, according to the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization, from 2.18 million square kilometers in 2000, the total forest areas in the 10 Asean member-states contracted to 2.07 million sq km in 2020. Inevitably, this decline has been causing fragmentation and habitat loss for important animals and plants, not to mention the displacement of indigenous peoples and the reduction of natural buffers for calamities.

This ongoing health crisis has brought about deeper reflection and discussion on the repercussions of our relationship with wildlife and the many pathways to safeguard nature.

In a recent webinar on preventing pandemics hosted by World Wildlife Fund, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Cornell Atkinson Centre for Sustainability, and moderated by Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, the ACB emphasized that apart from enforcing laws against wildlife crimes at the national and regional levels, it is crucial to stop emerging diseases at the source, meaning actions should begin before animals are taken out of their natural habitats. Increasing the coverage and improving the management of protected areas will reduce threats on ecosystems and lessen opportunities for viruses originating from wildlife to spill over to domestic animals and humans.

Indeed, protecting our wildlife species contributes to increasing our resiliency. They not only contain and regulate diseases, but they also contribute to the ecological balance and expansion of forests. Wildlife supplies raw materials to sustain the livelihoods of communities living in and around their habitats, and provides basic necessities, such as food and natural cure for various ailments. As we face one crisis after another, we need to take into account the importance of the diversity of flora and fauna in our response and recovery efforts.

The Asean Comprehensive Recovery Framework, which was adopted by the Asean leaders in November 2020, calls for a whole-of-community participation and collaboration among sectors. The ACB is optimistic that an integrated approach in protecting and conserving wildlife, along with effective immunization programs, are concrete steps toward Asean's recovery as well as in building resilience against future pandemics.

In this year's celebrations of World Wildlife Day, we are encouraged to value the interconnectedness of wildlife and people, and appreciate the significant contribution of healthy forests to livelihood and public health. In the long run, protecting wildlife and their habitats somehow also acts as a vaccine that can help build our capacity to withstand socioeconomic challenges and ensure a sustainable future.

Happy World Wildlife Day!

Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim is the executive director of the Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB). A veterinarian and wildlife management expert, she was the director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines prior to joining the ACB. She also chaired the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) from 2017 to 2018.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/04/conservation-of-wildlife-forests-is-our-vaccine-too/>



Wildlife, forests are our vaccines — ACB

While the roll-out of vaccines boosts confidence, this does not fully protect and immunize us from new and emerging diseases that result from the many human-driven activities in our midst.

Published 1 hour ago on March 4, 2021 05:00 AM

By [TDT](#) [@tribunephil](#)



The ACB expresses optimism that an integrated approach in protecting and conserving wildlife, along with effective immunization programs, are concrete steps towards ASEAN's recovery as well as in building resilience against future pandemics. / PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THOMAS@SWAN PYAE LYNN

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) said the unprecedented rate by which we are losing our wildlife had hit much closer to home when the Covid-19 pandemic and its global consequences affected our ways of living and brought suffering to many places in the world.

While the roll-out of vaccines boosts confidence, this does not fully protect and immunize us from new and emerging diseases that result from the many human-driven activities in our midst.

In celebrating World Wildlife Day, the ACB takes the opportunity to direct attention to the role of wildlife habitats, most especially forests.

It said the theme of this year's celebration, "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet," is a timely reminder of the life support that forest ecosystems provide, amid the global heal pandemic.

The high species diversity and endemism in ASEAN forests makes the region one of the world's critical habitats.

However, according to the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization, from 2.18 million square kilometers (sq.km.) in 2000, the total forest areas in the 10 ASEAN member states contracted to 2.07 million sq.km. in 2020.

Inevitably, this decline has been causing fragmentation and habitat loss for important animals and plants, not to mention the displacement of indigenous peoples and the reduction of natural buffers for calamities.

That ACB stressed that this ongoing global health crisis has brought about deeper reflection and discussion on the repercussions of our relationship with wildlife and the many pathways to safeguard nature.

In a recent webinar on preventing pandemics hosted by World Wildlife Fund, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Cornell Atkinson Centre for Sustainability, and moderated by Thomas Friedman of The New York Times, it emphasized that apart from enforcing laws against wildlife crimes at the national and regional levels, it is crucial to stop emerging diseases at the source, meaning actions should begin before animals are taken out of their natural habitats.



Increasing the coverage and improving the management of protected areas will reduce threats on ecosystems and lessen opportunities for viruses originating from wildlife to spill over to domestic animals and humans.

“Indeed, protecting our wildlife species contributes to increasing our resiliency,” the ACB stressed.

“They not only contain and regulate diseases, but they also contribute to the ecological balance and expansion of forests,” it emphasized.

According to the ACB, wildlife supplies raw materials to sustain the livelihoods of communities living in and around their habitats, and provides basic necessities, such as food and natural cure for various ailments, particularly now that the people are directly affected.

“As we face one crisis after another, we need to take into account the importance of the diversity of flora and fauna in our response and recovery efforts,” it explained.

Following this development, it said that the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, which was adopted by the ASEAN leaders in November 2020, calls for a whole-of-community participation and collaboration among sectors.

The ACB is optimistic that an integrated approach in protecting and conserving wildlife, along with effective immunization programs, are concrete steps towards ASEAN’s recovery as well as in building resilience against future pandemics.



The sun sets behind power-generating turbines of a local wind farm in the settlement of Mirnyi, Crimea June 1, 2018.

REUTERS/Pavel Rebrov

Social tipping points: World slouches toward climate salvation

Published March 3, 2021 10:17pm

By MARLOWE HOOD, Agence France-Presse

PARIS — The world appears to have finally woken up to the existential threat of global warming, and the drive to fix the problem is accelerating across the board.

The planet's biggest carbon polluters—China, US, EU—vow carbon neutrality by mid-century; solar and wind power continued to surge even as global GDP shrank five percent last year; two-thirds of humanity see a "climate emergency"; a top-five automaker says it will only make zero-emissions vehicles after 2035; major investors recoil from coal, while fossil fuels companies shrivel in value.

Climate action cheerleaders are past masters at stringing together whatever signs of progress are at hand to conjure a glass half full, so good news laundry lists must be viewed skeptically.

There are arguably just as many reasons for pessimism.

Last week UN chief Antonio Guterres noted that, net-zero promises notwithstanding, "governments are nowhere close to the level of ambition needed to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees Celsius and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement."

The 2015 treaty calls for capping global warming at "well below" 2°C compared to preindustrial levels, and the world is currently on track for double that.

On Tuesday, the International Energy Agency reported that global CO2 emissions have returned to pre-pandemic levels, and then some.

But in all sectors—energy, industry, geopolitics, finance, public opinion—a flurry of activity has experts wondering whether the world is, at long last, turning the corner on climate.

"Is the pendulum swinging hard in the right direction? Absolutely," said Gernot Wagner, a climate economist at New York University.

"In the US, it's Washington, it's Detroit, it's Silicon Valley, it's Wall Street," he added. "They didn't wait for one another, it is all happening at the same time."



The term for this sunny scenario is "social tipping point," defined as a threshold leading irreversibly to a new state or paradigm, whether it be a shift to meat-free diets or—the ultimate goal—a global carbon-neutral economy.

Or electric vehicles.

A decade ago, EVs barely registered in terms of market share, and a rapid phase out of the internal combustion engine seemed chimerical. Today, the EV revolution is well underway and, by most accounts, unstoppable.

Locking in tipping points

Leading the charge is Norway, where electric vehicles accounted for 54 percent of new car sales last year—three-quarters if plug-in hybrids are included in the tally.

The only other country in double digits is Iceland, and globally the EV market share in 2020 was less than five percent.

"A global tipping point will come when EVs cost the same to manufacture as conventional cars," said Tim Lenton, an Earth system scientist at the University of Exeter and lead author of recent research that takes Norway's EV saga as a tipping points case study.

Rapid uptake is also helped by an about-face in consumer attitudes from wariness to wanting what others have, an example of "social contagion."

By itself, Norway will never move the dial on global carbon emissions. But its pathbreaking example—including a ban on new carbon polluting cars after 2025—has an outside influence and adds to gathering global momentum, Lenton and others say.

Britain and California will only allow the sale of emissions free vehicles from 2035, while China—already the largest EV market in the world—has said it will ban petrol- and diesel-fueled cars from that date.

Industry has its leaders too.

Last month GM, the world's fourth biggest carmaker, announced it would only sell emissions-free vehicles starting in 2035.

The soaring share value of EV pure player Tesla has recently made its CEO Elon Musk the richest person in the world.

"To see it coming both from the government side, and from major auto companies, this really signals that change is coming," said Lenton.

Sometimes a "critical minority" is enough to lock in a tipping point, which can occur before its broader impact is visible.

Slavery and fossil fuels

Grassroots pressure on fund managers and their clients to unload fossil fuel stocks is a text-book example, Ilona Otto, head of the social complexity and system transformation research group at the University of Graz's Wegener Center for Climate and Global Change, told AFP.



"In the beginning it does matter why they do it, but later it matters less," said Otto, lead author of a study on the social tipping dynamics needed to stabilize Earth's climate by 2050.

"Simulations show that if about nine percent of investors divest, the rest will follow suit because they will be afraid of being left behind and losing money."

The climate divestment movement, intertwined with social justice goals, can be compared to the drive to abolish slavery in late 18th and early 19th century, she said.

Both involved deeply rooted economic systems that actively resisted change. In the case of chattel slavery, a long unchallenged system came unraveled quickly and was soon seen as morally indefensible.

"We will get to a point where it will seem as unthinkable to use fossil fuel energy as it is to have slaves," Otto said.

Meanwhile, the grassroots global climate movement that surged onto the world stage in 2019—led, in part, by a then 16-year Greta Thunberg of Sweden—is still gaining momentum, even if a raging pandemic has obscured its scope.

"Concern about the climate emergency is far more widespread than we knew before," Stephen Fisher, a sociologist at Oxford who helped design a survey of 1.2 million people across 50 countries, told AFP.

"And the large majority of those who do recognize a climate emergency want urgent and comprehensive action."

Beyond morality, there comes a point in major social transitions when rejecting the status quo and adopting new norms becomes the most rational option economically.

"Even in red [Republican] states, solar panels are popular," noted James Williams, a professor at the University of San Francisco and lead author of a recent study outlining plausible pathways for US carbon neutrality by 2050.

Not long ago, the Chinese government viewed the concept of carbon neutrality as an economic burden, Pan Jiahua, the director of the Institute of Eco-civilization Studies at Beijing University of Technology, told the Atlantic Council last month.

Today, however, "we have a consensus that it's an opportunity for employment, growth, and the transformation of society."

Part of this expanding consensus recognizes that powering the world economy with fossil fuels is no longer compatible with civilization as we know it.

A race we can't afford to lose

But that hard truth clashes with another: coal, oil and gas still account for nearly 85 percent of global energy supply, and are subsidized to the tune of half-a-trillion dollars every year, both for consumers and producers, according to the OECD.



How that tension will be played out—and how quickly—remains to be seen, but there can be no doubt that fossil fuel companies are feeling the heat.

"The cyclical shock of COVID has brought forward a structural peak in emissions, which was going to happen anyway," Kingsmill Bond, senior energy analyst at financial think tank Carbon Tracker, told AFP.

"Before the crisis, renewables had almost reached a tipping point and now, in future, all growth in demand for energy can be satisfied with renewable sources," said Bond, a former sell-side equity analyst at major banks.

"As soon as this happens, you by definition get peak fossil fuel demand, and therefore peak emissions," he added, raising the possibility that 2019—the last year unaffected by the COVID crisis—may be that peak.

Ultimately, the separate strands of climate action must coalesce into a greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts whole.

"A synergy is needed for large-scale change to unfold," said Jonathan Donges, co-leader of the FutureLab of Earth Resilience in the Anthropocene at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Social tipping points have an evil twin in the climate system, where Lenton and other Earth system scientists have identified 15 temperature trip wires for irreversible and potentially catastrophic change.

A world that has warmed two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels could push the melting of ice sheets atop Greenland and West Antarctic—with enough frozen water to lift oceans 13 meters—past a point of no return.

Other tipping points could see the Amazon basin turn from tropical forest to savannah; billions of metric tons of carbon leech from Siberia's permafrost; the disappearance of the polar ice cap in summer.

Taken together, these changes could punch a one-way ticket to what scientists call "hothouse Earth," a profoundly inhospitable state the planet has not known for tens of millions of years.

"But of course there's a fundamental difference between ice sheets and social systems," said Lenton. "We have the foresight to change our course of action."

In a very real sense, then, humanity is in a race it cannot afford to lose.

"If we want to avoid the bad tipping points, we need to trigger the good, or social tipping points," Lenton added.

"We have left it too late to tackle climate change incrementally." — **AFP**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/science/778236/social-tipping-points-world-slouches-toward-climate-salvation/story/>

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