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MGB proposes lifting of quarry suspension around Mayon Volcano

December 4, 2020 3 min read

MANILA – The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has recommended the lifting of quarry suspension order around Mayon Volcano in Albay province to empty and restore the capacity of the river channels in the area.

MGB director Wilfredo Moncano on Thursday said the 91 quarry operators were found to be “compliant” following a probe by the MGB-led task force formed by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu.

Moncano said the same investigation showed that only 15 out of 106 suspended quarry operators have permit violations.

Cimatu earlier suspended all quarry operations around Mayon Volcano and formed a task force to look into the possible liability of quarry companies in the lahar flow during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Rolly last month.

Moncano said there is a need to lift the suspension order for “compliant” quarry firms.

“An increased rate of quarrying is needed to empty and restore the capacity of the river channels, so that when rain comes with eroded material from the slopes of Mayon Volcano, the restored river channel can serve as the pathway to accommodate and remobilize the eroded material,” Moncano said.

He said these companies may be allowed to continue their operations, subject to strict monitoring under the terms and conditions of their existing permits.

“These quarry firms were proven to have followed quarry regulations, such as not operating beyond their permit area and having an active Environmental Compliance Certificate,” Moncano said.

Moncano dismissed claims that quarrying operations around Mayon Volcano was largely to blame for the lahar flooding that buried some 180 houses and killed at least six people at the height of Super Typhoon Rolly.

He pointed out that lahar flow has “always been a likely occurrence in Mount Mayon whenever there is heavy rainfall, making the houses near the active volcano naturally prone to mudflows.”

“The quarrying has an insignificant contribution to the lahar flow devastation caused by Super Typhoon Rolly because it was a combination of huge volume of water, combined with stocked lahar that came from the slope and foot of Mayon Volcano,” he added.



Meanwhile, Moncano said his office will forward to the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) the case of the 15 erring quarry operators for “technical review and possible sanction or payment of penalty.”

He said immediate rehabilitation of the areas quarried by the violators will also be implemented. **(PNA)**

Source: https://maharlika.tv/2020/12/04/mgb-proposes-lifting-of-quarry-suspension-around-mayon-volcano/?fbclid=IwAR0ZTL29fRIBS96iAsUy8JvncF_fYGWz7_tG6DT_JT78dxtT_7qzz26e1WI



PAMILYANG MAHIHIRAP MAY CASH ASSISTANCE, RELOCATION SITES SA BORACAY – CIMATU



December 6, 2020 @ 12:05 AM 7 hours ago

TINIYAK ni Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na makatatanggap ng tulong ang mahihirap na pamilyang apektado ng patuloy na enforcement activities sa Boracay.

Ginawa ni Cimatu ang pangako nang pangunahan nito ang pulong ng Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) sa tinaguriang “world-renowned resort island” nitong Disyembre 2.

“We have to balance our duty to strictly enforce environmental laws on the island with the social aspect of our task,” sabi ni Cimatu na namumuno sa inter-agency task force na nakatoka sa rehabilitasyon ng Boracay.

“As the BIATF completes its rehabilitation targets pursuant to an executive order issued by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, it will make sure that aid will be given to indigent families affected by the implementation of the easement laws in Boracay,” dagdag pa nito.

Sinabi pa ni Cimatu na ang mga apektadong pamilya ay makatatanggap ng “cash assistance” at “relocation sites.”

Sa naturang pulong, iniulat ng hepe ng Boracay Inter-Agency Rehabilitation and Management Group (BIARMG) na mayroon pang 90 istraktura sa isla ang kinakailangang buwagin dahil sa paglabag ng mga ito sa 25+5-meter beachfront easement rule.

Base sa kanyang ulat, sinabi ni BIARMG General Manager Natividad Bernardino na kabilang sa nakaokupa sa mga ilegal na istraktura ang 40 indigent families.

Ayon pa kay Bernardino, pinag-aaralan na ng binuong working group kung anong social assistance ang ibibigay sa bawat apektadong indigent family partikular na sa relokasyon at cash assistance.

Kabilang sa bumubuo ng working group ang mga kinatawan mula sa BIARMG, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, municipal government ng Malay, Aklan at mga kapitan mula sa mga barangay ng Manoc-Manoc, Yapak at Balabag.

“We provided the group with a list of families for profiling to determine and identify the social assistance they need,” saad ni Bernardino.



Sinabi pa nito na tiniyak din ni Aklan Governor Florencio Miraflores na ang provincial government ay nakahandang tumulong sa mga apektadong pamilya.

Upang matiyak na matapos ang mga kritikal na proyekto sa Boracay, ang BIATF ay naatasang mangasiwa ng demolisyon sa mga establisimyento na pumasok sa forestlands at wetlands maging ang mahigpit na pagpapatupad ng beach at road easement rules.

Samantala, pinuri rin ni Cimatú ang National Bureau of Investigation sa magkakasunod na matagumpay na operasyon ng mga ito noong Oktubre at Nobyembre na naging dahilan upang mapaalis ang mga establisimyento na ilegal na nakatayo sa forestlands sa mga barangay ng Balabag at Manoc-Manoc.

Nakapaghain na rin ng reklamo ang NBI sa Office of the Provincial Prosecutor ng Aklan laban sa “illegal occupants” dahil sa mga paglabag sa Presidential Decree 705 o Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, PD 1067 o ang Water Code of the Philippines at Municipal Order 2000-131 na nagpapatupad sa pagpapatayo ng gusali at iba pang istraktura sa Boracay.



PLDT-Smart to deploy drones for peatlands preservation

By BusinessMirror
December 6, 2020



The Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary

The country's largest integrated telecommunications company PLDT and its wireless subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. (Smart) will soon deploy digital innovations to help protect key biodiversity areas throughout the Philippines.

PLDT-Smart's most recent initiative under its Gabay Kalikasan environmental stewardship program is for the protection of the Caimpugan Peatlands in the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS).

Named as a wetland of international importance by the Ramsar Convention, the area holds the only recorded remaining intact peat swamp forest—the largest of its kind—in the Philippines.

“We are committed to help curb the effects of climate change by protecting these fragile ecosystems, which people still know so little about,” said PLDT Chairman and CEO Manuel V. Pangilinan.

Made of carbon-rich soil derived from dead and decaying plant matter under high water saturation condition, peatlands can store twice as much carbon as all the world's forests combined.

However, its crucial role in mitigating climate change, as well as the huge costs that arise when these natural carbon sinks are damaged, remains largely overlooked.

The three-year peatlands conservation program will be implemented by PLDT and Smart in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through its Biodiversity Management Bureau and Caraga Regional Office.

PLDT is the first private company in the country to engage with DENR on peatlands conservation.

“We will share our expertise on innovations that can help protect peatlands, and will deploy solutions that leverage on digital technology and our network,” Pangilinan added.

PLDT and Smart will also support peatlands management strategies by equipping Bantay Danao volunteers with digital and communication tools such as radio devices, mobile phones, and drone equipment to support them in their enforcement activities.



Formed in 2017, the Conservation Group was deputized by DENR- Caraga to protect the AMWS. Guarding the rainforest

A similar tech-based environmental stewardship program of PLDT-Smart is a collaboration with US-based nongovernment organization Rainforest Connection for an Internet of Things (IoT) solution of the same name.

Launched in the first quarter of 2020, Rainforest Connection is a collaborative effort between Smart, the DENR and Huawei Technologies Philippines.

The program makes use of old cell phones, powered by solar panels and wireless technology, to monitor and record ambient sounds of DENR-identified priority forest areas.

The bio-acoustics are then uploaded to a cloud service using Smart's mobile network connectivity. The collected data are accessible to DENR forest rangers, who also receive real-time alerts on sounds of chainsaws, trucks, and other sounds of forest destruction.

Since the deployment, several alerts of illegal logging have so far been verified and foiled by the forest rangers.

Restoring mangroves

The PLDT Group's Chief Sustainability Office is also geared to scale up Smart's joint initiative with network vendor Ericsson for Connected Mangroves.

Deployed in the Bangkung Malapad Critical Habitat and Eco-tourism Area in Sasmuan, Pampanga, the IoT for mangroves protection uses wireless connectivity to collect critical data relevant to the survival of the plants, such as water level, temperature, soil moisture and other conditions in the mangrove area.

The information, which is being collected by the mangrove sensor system, is transmitted over a cloud system to a dashboard accessible to the fisherfolk communities and authorities.

Mangrove forests are deemed important in the protection of seaside communities from typhoons, flooding, erosion and other coastal hazards, and serve as a vital habitat for various aquatic life forms.

Innovating solutions for the environment

Both Rainforest Connection and Connected Mangroves were featured in the GSMA Digital Dividends report, released on World Environment Day 2020.

The latter was also lauded by GSMA in its Case for Change initiative in 2019, as one of the global mobile industry's contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

"Innovative approaches to environmental concerns are believed to contribute to at least 10 of the 17 UNSDGs, as natural resources, livelihoods and poverty are interlinked," explained PLDT-Smart Chief Sustainability Officer Chaye Cabal-Revilla, also concurrent PLDT SVP and Group Controller and Smart Chief Financial Officer.

Image credits: [PLDT-Smart](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/12/06/pldt-smart-to-deploy-drones-for-peatlands-preservation/>



Mining downplayed as cause of Cagayan landslide

By Leander C. Domingo, TMT

December 6, 2020

QUEZON, Nueva Vizcaya: The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) has downplayed reports that the landslide, which claimed 10 lives during the onslaught of Typhoon “Ulysses” (international name: “Vamco”), was due to small-scale mining.

MGB Region 2 Director Mario Ancheta said the landslide near a London-based mining operation was attributed to the saturation of the soil, caused by the excessive water brought by the series of typhoons and not by the small-scale mining.

At least 10 bodies were recovered from a hazard-prone area in the sitio (sub-villages) of Kinalabasa, Bit-ang and Compound in Runruno village near a large-scale mining firm, operated by London-based FCF Minerals Corp., which has a 25-year financial and technical assistance agreement or FTAA with the national government.

According to Ancheta, a geo-hazard assessment and inspection conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the MGB showed that the sitio of Bit-ang, Balcony, Compound and Kinalabasa are highly and critically susceptible to natural hazards such as flooding and landslide.

“Regardless of the mining activity there in Barangay Runruno, the areas where 10 have lost their lives and two others injured have a very high susceptibility to landslides,” Ancheta said.

Engineer Geoffrey Prado of MGB Region 2 noted that in the latter part of 2018 when the MGB conducted a geohazard assessment, they had issued warnings to residents in the area, regarding the dangers that it may cause them.

Prado said the geohazard study also recommended the evacuation of the local government-declared illegal dwellers and settlers as the area has very high susceptibility to natural hazards.

“We had already presented to them the geo-hazard assessment and findings and told residents to vacate the said sub-villages, particularly Bit-Ang, which is mostly highly susceptible to flooding and landslide,” Prado added.

The DENR, led by Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan of Region 2, and the MGB also inspected the landslide incident to assess the situation in the affected sub-villages.

Ancheta explained that the landslide during the onslaught of Typhoon “Ulysses” was triggered by the inclement weather conditions, resulting in ground saturation and eventual landslide and “not due to small scale mining activity” as earlier reported.

Meanwhile, some residents have refused to vacate the area, claiming they have not been fully compensated by FCF Minerals Corp. while some families were reportedly unsatisfied with the amount offered to them by the company.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/12/06/news/regions/mining-downplayed-as-cause-of-cagayan-landslide/805645/>



DENR-7, Cebu City join city-wide cleanup drive

By Carlo Lorenciana December 5, 2020, 6:11 pm



CLEANUP. Volunteers gather at the South Road Properties Tower in Mambaling, Cebu City for the citywide cleanup on Saturday (Dec. 5, 2020) in observance of the International Volunteer Day. This is the third time this year that the city government gathered volunteers and do a massive cleanup in nine sites. (Photo courtesy of DENR-7)

CEBU CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Visayas (DENR-7) and the city government here on Saturday joined global observance of the International Volunteer Day through a city-wide cleanup organized by the latter at the South Road Properties (SRP).

This is the third time this year that the city government gathered volunteers and do a massive cleanup in nine sites including Pasil, Ermita, Sawang Calero Coastals, SRP Tower, Mambaling near the mouth of Kinalumsan, Mahiga River, Tejero, Kawit Island, and Shell Island.

DENR-7 Regional Director Paquito Melicor Jr. in his message thanked the city government for making this move.

"DENR is always grateful for all the help that our partners are showing us especially in protecting the environment," he said.

The city government has committed to clean up the waterways and coastal areas in the city, following an order from Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu.

Melicor said the DENR continues to back an advocacy statement on clean environment, urging citizens to make cleaning a habitual chore every day.

Vice Mayor Michael Rama said there is a need to take care of the environment because this is the "only jewel we can give to our children's children."

"One thing we can do about is act on it, and that is the reason why we held this city-wide cleanup," he said. (PNA)

41.6 tons of garbage collected in Cebu City clean-up drive

By: Delta Dyrecka Letigio - CDN Digital Multi-Media Reporter | December 05, 2020 - 07:55 PM



Coastal clean-up on December 5, 2020. | Photo Courtesy of Cebu City PIO

CEBU CITY, Philippines — The Cebu City Department of Public Services (DPS) reported a total collection of 41.6 tons of garbage during the clean-up drive done today (December 5, 2020) in the coastal and river areas in Cebu City.

The city government conducted another coastal clean-up as a step to institutionalizing the drive and making it a quarterly activity for the city.

The garbage was collected within one hour and thirty minutes, as the time allowed to do such activities were limited by the Interagency Task Force (IATF).

Reymar Hijara, the subcommittee chairperson for operations of the Cebu City Coastal Management Task Force (CMT), said the volunteers did not start simultaneously allowing some areas to extend the clean-up beyond 7:30 a.m.

The teams were stationed at the Mahiga and Tejero Creeks including the Tejero Bridge; the mouth of the Guadalupe River, along the coastal areas of Pasil, Mambaling, and the South Road Properties (SRP); and the river systems passing through Sawang Calero and Colon Street. Approximately 2,500 volunteers joined the clean-up drive on Saturday aided by heavy equipment from the city's Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW).

The DPS reported that of the 41.6 tons of garbage collected, the majority of these were plastic bottles and styrofoam.

Furthermore, a team of divers, including a marine biologist from Cebu Technological University's Integrated Coastal Resources Management (CTU-ICRM) Center, took the time to check the coral reefs at Campanario Shoal along the South Road Properties (SRP).

Mayor Edgardo Labella said the team will be submitting a report regarding their findings by next week.

“Our city's urban development has been progressive over the years, with the reclamation of the SRP and the ongoing construction of a third bridge. That is why I am both glad and relieved to hear that certain people are still looking for our coral reefs amid the hustle and bustle of urban activities so that we can look after what is left of them as well,” said Labella.



The mayor expressed his support for the initiative to revive the marine ecosystem of the city and improve the marine life of seas around the city.

Here are some of the photos of the Saturday clean-up drive courtesy of the Cebu City PIO and the CMT:





This file photo shows package delivery
Image by RoseBox via Unsplash

Groups urge e-commerce platforms to incorporate zero-waste, reuse systems in packaging

[Rosette Adel](#) (Philstar.com) - December 5, 2020 - 6:03pm

MANILA, Philippines — Environmental advocates on Friday launched an online petition to call on e-shopping platforms to adopt practices that would reduce plastic packaging waste.

Several Filipinos turned to online shopping amid the implementation of the quarantine protocols that was imposed to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.

In its co-sponsored petition, environment group Youth Strike for Climate Philippines and sustainable shopping advocate The Good Trade PH, cited that the e-commerce industry in the Philippines grew by 2018, outpacing the global growth rate of 21%.

“This is apparent in the huge popularity of e-shopping platforms such as Lazada and Shopee, where we have come to expect to have big monthly sales,” the groups said.

They said this worsened the plastic waste problem with the higher amount of waste produced annually.

“Each person contributes around 12.4kg of packaging waste, most of which end up in landfills and left to decompose slowly for hundreds of years. This problem is only magnified because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, where plastic waste is projected to increase by as much as 300%,” the groups said.

Aside from these, they cited that it only takes an average of just 12 minutes for plastic packaging to transfer from consumer's hands to the trash bin.

For the petitioners, corporations should be held accountable for the plastic they end up producing, especially the unnecessary plastic packaging.

Some sellers have cited that they have been implementing reduction and reuse strategies on their own initiative.

Reveal, reduce, redesign

In view of this, the groups are seeking 8,000 signatures via an [online petition](#) titled: It's Time to Reveal, Reduce, and Redesign for Lazada and Shopee! The online petition was created on Bataris.org, a platform funded by Greenpeace SEA-Philippines



“If consumers and sellers are already doing their share for a healthier planet, why can’t corporations take on the same responsibility and accountability? We’re calling the largest E-Commerce Companies in the Philippines, Lazada and Shopee, to be part of the #BetterNormal,” the petitioners read.

Particularly, the groups are asking the e-commerce platforms to reveal the packaging waste generated, reduce the current numbers on packaging waste and redesign current practice to incorporate zero waste and reuse systems.

The groups said publishing these estimates publicly also helps build confidence that the e-commerce platforms are committed to curbing its plastic packaging waste.

Meanwhile, the groups are calling on these shopping platforms to develop policies “that ensure the rational reduction of unnecessary plastic packaging.”

Aside from these, since the sellers are already doing their part, the groups said the e-commerce companies should capacitate small-to-medium-sized eco-friendly vendors, citing that some stores are already doing such initiatives.

“What better way to show support than to incentivize eco-friendly vendors who practice no-plastics rules by adopting biodegradable and compostable packaging and encouraging home composting, or vendors who sell eco-friendly products themselves?” the groups said.

Retailers like The Good Trade PH have sustainable compostable packaging, beauty brand Garnier Philippines launched eco-friendly packaging while courier Fifth Express also uses compostable packaging.

RELATED: [Beauty brand’s eco-packaging does away with those wasteful bubble wraps](#)

Some retailers such as The Good Trade PH already have sustainable compostable packaging on hand such as compostable mailers and honeycomb bubble wrap, and Lazada and Shopee can tap and work with them for more sustainable packaging solutions and eco-friendly disposal schemes.

Companies such as Loop, Zippies, Repack, Fachpack and e@Box Solution also pioneered in alternative models for packaging, incorporating return stations for used packaging for reuse.

The groups said e-commerce companies should tap these companies to also redesign their packaging and make them environment-friendly.

The online petition will be sent to the companies via e-mail. The groups will also hold a press conference after it reached the 1,000th mark.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/12/05/2061724/groups-urge-e-commerce-platforms-incorporate-zero-waste-reuse-systems-packaging>



Republic Cement Launches Co-Processing Solution Amid PH Waste Management Crisis



By [Featuresdesk \(MD\)](#) December 4, 2020

Leading local cement manufacturing and distribution company Republic Cement has officially launched **ecoloop**, its resource recovery group that aims to help address the waste management crisis of the country.

Co-processing is the reuse or recovery of thermal and mineral properties of qualified waste materials while manufacturing cement in a single combined operation. Through co-processing and the use of waste, such as plastic or rice husk, as alternative fuels, Republic can manufacture cement with reduced dependence on fossil fuels, such as coal.

Co-processing continues to be a sustainable solution to the rise in the country's waste generation, which remains a major challenge even with the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA No. 9003) in place. The country has observed a steady increase in daily waste generated over the years, from over 37,000 tons in 2012 to 40,000 tons in 2016. In 2018, Metro Manila recorded an average of over 9,000 tons of waste per day. Whereas 85 percent of the total solid wastes were collected, 15 percent ended up in waterways and bodies of water.

An alternative waste management system is of utmost priority and as such, Republic has taken the opportunity to share the technology and innovation it has been using since the early 2000s for wider scope and greater nationwide impact. "Co-processing is a vital alternative that manufacturing industries can and should take toward the long-term goals of waste management as well as ultimately building our nation's resilience against climate change challenges through sustainable practices," says **ecoloop** Director Angela Edralin-Valencia.

With **ecoloop**, residual wastes can effectively be diverted away from landfills and waterways, and the plastic pollution crisis can also be addressed by capturing pre- and post-consumer waste in direct partnership with manufacturers including fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies as well as local government units (LGUs). At present, **ecoloop** counts more than 30 public and private partnerships across the country. "As long as these wastes are deemed acceptable for co-processing and acceptable under the guidelines issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through DAO 2010-6, co-processing should be prioritized over other unsustainable disposal methods that are more harmful to the environment in the long run," adds Valencia.

While co-processing involves the application of heat to destroy waste, it is distinct from the traditional waste management practice of incineration, according to Valencia. **ecoloop** utilizes the cement kiln co-processing method, where emissions are contained and managed within the kiln and any ash produced fully integrated into the stable microstructure of clinker, a key ingredient of cement. On the other hand, some forms of incineration are purely for waste disposal without any energy or material recovery aspects. "There is a higher chance of noxious gases being released into the atmosphere and the ash byproduct usually still ends up in landfills," explains Valencia.



Further, co-processing promotes the conservation of non-renewable energy sources and raw materials. The recovered heat content from the qualified wastes partially replaces the heat from traditional fossil fuels such as coal and petcoke. Recovered minerals similar to the chemical composition of sand and clay also replace raw materials used in cement production.

“In the waste management hierarchy, methods such as prevention, minimization, and recovery of materials through recycling and reusing are still preferred over co-processing. However, when these options are no longer available, co-processing remains preferred over unsustainable methods such as incineration, chemical and physical treatment of waste, and landfilling,” adds Valencia.

“Republic is proud to do its part in providing a viable waste management solution while continuously working towards a greener and more sustainable cement manufacturing process,” says Republic Cement CEO Nabil Francis. “Through this, we are confident that we are on the right path in moving towards a greener, stronger Republic.”

Source: http://thephilippinepost.com/republic-cement-launches-co-processing-solution-amid-ph-waste-management-crisis/?fbclid=IwAR1WQeBkeBzPKY4-DsDhPndb_yWbAE-SeeL-TdX1VHiAevDanVA48ThneFA



Groups renew call for strong law to ban importation of waste

Published December 5, 2020, 3:23 PM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

Green groups have renewed their calls for a strong and comprehensive law to ban waste importation, simultaneous with the ratification of an international treaty to effectively stop foreign wastes from being dumped in the Philippines.

Greenpeace Philippines and EcoWaste Coalition lamented the slow progress on crafting a comprehensive law against waste importation and ratifying the Basel Convention Ban Amendment.

“It’s time the government made the move to finally stop the country from being the world’s dumping ground,” said Greenpeace campaigner Marian Ledesma.

“The only way to stop waste trade is to ban it outright. Current laws put exceptions on certain kinds of wastes, and this has created major holes that have been exploited by illegal and hazardous waste traders. Our laws need to have teeth in order to be effective. We urge the congress to pass a comprehensive waste importation ban that recognizes all trade in waste as illegal,” she added.

Aside from calling for a comprehensive waste ban, the groups stated that the Philippines is being left behind by other countries because of the slow progress in ratifying the Basel Convention Ban Amendment, an international treaty that prohibits export of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries.

The Philippines currently allows the entry of waste labeled for recycling.

However, Greenpeace And EcoWaste pointed out that there have been several cases of waste shipments purportedly for recycling that have been found to be highly contaminated or were actually mixed municipal waste mislabeled as recyclable.

“Without strong policies to protect our borders from waste, richer countries will continue to prey on the Philippines’ weak systems that will ultimately expose Filipinos to health and environment hazards. We strongly urge the government to immediately ratify the Basel Convention Ban Amendment,” Ecowaste national coordinator Aileen Lucero said.

The call coincides with the anniversary of the Basel Ban Convention Amendment, which entered into force on December 5, 2019.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/12/05/groups-renew-call-for-strong-law-to-ban-importation-of-waste/>



Here comes a family of otters

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)
December 6, 2020



Otters on Taganak Island, Turtle Islands.

Meet the otter family on Taganak Island of the Turtle Islands. This family of five smooth-coated otters (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), composed of a couple and their three pups, have come to live on the island for quite some time now.

First thought to be among Asian small-clawed otters (*Aonyx cinereus*), the couple was first spotted in May taking shelter in the crevices near a command post of the local police in the area. Until one day in August, three more members of the family were seen playing on the beach.

The sighting of the otters was the first record of the species in the Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary (TIWS), a protected area.

This group of otters was the second otter species to occur in the Philippines. The first is the endemic Palawan otter.

Carnivorous mammals, a threatened species

Part of the Mustelidae family, which is composed of carnivorous mammals, otters are closely related to skunks, weasels, wolverines and badgers.

There are 13 extant otter species that are semiaquatic, aquatic, or marine with diets based on fish and invertebrates, according to *BBC Wildlife Magazine*.

The smooth-coated otters, *BBC* said, occur throughout much of the Indian Subcontinent in Java, Sumatra and Borneo, northward to south-western China, east through Nepal and Bhutan and India to Pakistan, excluding the Indus Valley.

Otters are targeted by illegal wildlife traders, Emerson Y. Sy, a researcher at the wildlife trade watchdog Traffic, told the BusinessMirror via Messenger on November 19.

Otter pups have a big market in Japan and Indonesia, he said.

“Especially in Japan, where customers play with them in otter cafés. Most of them are caught in the wild. In Indonesia, they are considered as are pets,” he said.

Young otters can be trained to perform tricks and become domesticated, Sy added.



Mysterious visitors

As they come to live on the islands, these adorable creatures are an awesome addition to the biodiversity of Turtle Islands.

Wildlife experts, however, are mystified by their emergence on the island.

Crisanta Marlene Rodriguez, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region 9 executive director, explained that the otter couple may have been brought to the Philippine shores by the ocean current at the height of a storm in May.

She told the BusinessMirror via Messenger on November 18 that upon consultation with the Otters Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in the Philippines, the proximity from where the otters may have come from and Taganak Island is close enough for them to swim across and survive the journey.

Little-known creatures

In the Philippines, not much is known about otters, especially their feeding and breeding habit, their habitat or even population and distribution in the wild.

Jessa Garibay-Yayen, an IUCN Otter Specialist, said otters are indicators of a healthy river ecosystems, which is just one of the many ecological benefits or functions of the species.

“However, as predators, they impact in the populations of species that they prey upon,” she told the BusinessMirror in an interview via Whatsapp on November 18.

Garibay-Yayen, who also works for the Centre for Sustainability Philippines, said the Philippines has the Palawan otter which was the subject of a study of the Otters Specialist Group of the IUCN in the past.

Yet, she said, even for the Palawan otters, a limited papers are available because there is very little study on the shy and elusive mammals.

As for the otters found on Taganak Island, there is no evidence that they actually migrated or even swam across from Malaysia to Taganak, Garibay-Yayen said.

A need for investigation

For her part, Asean Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim said otters are excellent swimmers.

She said the Philippine government has the option to return them to their known natural habitat, which could be a good way forward as their progenies will eventually need to breed with otters unrelated to their family.

However, Lim said there’s a need to understand what brought them to Taganak.

“Was their habitat disturbed or they just accidentally migrated? Are they fit to be transported, based on the state of health of the family?” asked Lim, a licensed veterinarian, replied the BusinessMirror via Messenger on November 21.

She said these are some of the important factors to consider on deciding and planning to relocate the otters, to avoid human-wildlife conflict considering that Taganak is a densely populated island.



Avoid human-otter contact

“Another option is setting aside an area in Taganak where they can have minimum contact with humans. But this could mean enclosing them, which will limit their opportunities to feed themselves, and affect their welfare and survival,” Lim added.

Finally, Lim said a third option is for the community to try to live with the otters harmoniously. She pointed out, however, the need to establish guidelines to protect the mammals and allow researches and observations to be undertaken to better understand their behavior, their movement, and the circumstances behind their presence on Taganak.

She said this could offer a deeper sense of how much more interconnected man and wildlife have in terms of biodiversity.

It could “encourage more joint initiatives for species and ecosystems protection, transcending political boundaries,” she said.

Chances of survival

While Lim said individual otters could probably survive on the island, seeing the population thriving is a remote possibility, even if they have enough of their source of food in the wild. “As for the survival of the species on Taganak, a pair of otters will not make a viable population,” she said.

She said the only way for the otters’ population to grow is through genetic infusion, or when more otters will, by chance, find their way to Taganak.

Marine turtles’ haven

Taganak Island, the largest and most populated island in the municipality of Turtle Islands, in Tawi-Tawi province in Mindanao, may not be the best place for otters as the area is the habitat of marine turtles.

The Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area (TIHPA), the first transboundary protected area of sea turtles in the world, was established through a memorandum of agreement signed by the governments of the Philippines and of Malaysia on May 31, 1996.

Proclaimed as a wildlife sanctuary under Proclamation 171 on August 26, 1999, the TIWS is the only major nesting habitat of the green marine turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in the Philippines and the only major nesting ground in the whole Asean region.

Well adjusted, settled in

TIWS Protected Area Superintendent Minda Bairula said otters, while generally shy and elusive at first, have already adjusted to people near them.

So far, TIWS see no serious threat to the existence of the otters on the island, Bairula told the BusinessMirror in an online interview on November 18.

They appear to be healthy and are often seen playing.

“So far, based on our monitoring, we have not observed any threat. Their activities are more on searching for food, eating fish, rolling and playing on the sandy beach,” she said.



Bairula added that while there are several biting incidents involving the mother, she described it as natural and a mother's protective instinct to her three cubs.

However, Lim cautioned that biting incidence should not be taken lightly as otters can also have rabies that can infect humans.

Tourist attraction

According to Bairula, on the Taganak Island and the entire Turtle Islands, the otters will be an added tourist attraction when tourism activities finally resume.

However, she acknowledged that there will be a need to maintain distance from the otters. "We are still observing how long the mother's instinct will last. We estimate that the cubs are already four months old already," she said.

Besides eating fish, they were once seen feeding on a sea snake.

The otters are often seen playing on the beach.

Otters-turtle conflict

Asked whether the otters pose a threat to the turtles on the island, Bairula said they are still in the process of observing the feeding habit of the island's famous guests.

"We are continuously monitoring. We have only one report that the otters chased a turtle at sea," she added.

She said even dogs or water monitor lizards, which are natural predators of turtles, pose no threat to the otters.

In fact, it could be the other way around. They could eventually pose as threats to turtling hatchings that are struggling to make their way to the ocean from their nests in the beach.

With the family of otters being a welcome addition to the island's biodiversity and tourist attraction, Rodriguez appealed to the people on the island to help protect them and let them be as they survive and thrive on the island.

"We encourage the local community of Taganak Island in Turtle Islands, to let our otters be, do them no harm, and allow them to live freely without interference. Let us work together to create massive steps toward wildlife conservation that will create an impact not just in Tawi-Tawi but in the global community as well," she said.

Image credits: [Adzmie Herrera/Emerson Sy](#)

Desiltation eyed as ‘immediate solution’ to floodings in province

By: Morexette Marie B. Erram - CDN Digital Multi-Media Reporter | December 05, 2020 - 05:53 PM



Combado River in Balamban, is the town’s largest river in terms of the volume of water flowing through it. The river on December 2, 2020, overflowed which resulted in floods in Barangays Nangka and Cantuod. | CDN DIGITAL PHOTO by Morexette Marie Erram

CEBU CITY, Philippines – The Cebu Provincial Government is planning to conduct desiltation in some of the largest tributaries here as part of their ‘immediate solutions’ to floodings.

Governor Gwendolyn Garcia, together with local chief executives and officials from the Department of Public Works and Highways in Central Visayas (DPWH-7), conducted a post-flooding assessment on December 4, 2020, in three towns severely affected by floodings last Wednesday (December 2, 2020).

Garcia and government officials agreed to remove silt deposits in riverbeds of major tributaries in Balamban, Asturias, and Tuburan towns as soon as possible.

“We have to desilt immediately,” said Garcia.

She said she has instructed the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) to conduct surveys in rivers subject to dredging.

“We will also be meeting with DPWH here this Wednesday (December 9) so we can pool what equipment is available from the province, from the DPWH, and think about which contractors to hire,” said Garcia.

To recall, heavy and incessant rains due to the combined presence of two weather systems resulted in floods in several towns and cities in central Cebu.

One casualty was reported – a 27-year-old man from Danao City who was swept away by torrential currents while attempting to cross a spillway.

In Tuburan alone, damages worth P55 million in infrastructure and agriculture were recorded, and over 2,200 families were affected. These figures were also feared to increase as the days progress.

During the Capitol’s inspection last December 4, flood-control structures in Combado River in Balamban, Guinabasan River in Asturias, and Languyon River in Tuburan suffered partial damages.



According to Garcia, repairing these structures formed part of their ‘long-term solutions’ however, she pointed out that these take time.

“We (stressed) the importance of having an immediate action. We cannot have the same situation (to happen again) and another downpour will occur but the riverbeds remain heavily silted,” explained Garcia.

On December 4, the Capitol also distributed relief packs and other assistance to the families affected by the floods, particularly those from Tuburan.

The governor vowed that the provincial government will be providing additional aid if the need arises. /rcg



SMC is hiring former residents of Barangay Taliptip in Bulacan, site of its upcoming P740-billion Manila International Airport project—as heavy equipment operators for the dredging project.

Marc Jayson Cayabyab, file

SMC pursues dredging works in Tullahan River

[Iris Gonzales](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 6, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — San Miguel Corp (SMC) is pursuing a P1 billion dredging project of the Tullahan River, a river that spans Quezon City, Navotas, Malabon and Valenzuela.

SMC is hiring former residents of Barangay Taliptip in Bulacan, site of its upcoming P740-billion Manila International Airport project—as heavy equipment operators for the dredging project.

The dredging project will start from Barangay Tanong in Malabon City, to the mouth of the river leading to Manila Bay in Navotas City.

Also in the pipeline is the river channel improvement of tributaries belonging to the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System (MMORS) in Bulacan, which was recently hit by heavy flooding caused by the recent typhoons.

Ang said SMC's plan is to dredge, widen, and deepen the Alipit or Taliptip River, Sta. Maria River, and the Meycauayan River as part of its flood mitigation strategy for the Manila International Airport that will also benefit the whole of Bulacan.

The initial batch of former Taliptip residents underwent an SMC-funded training with the Technical Education Development and Skills Authority (TESDA) on heavy equipment operation.

SMC president and COO Ramon Ang said that with the river cleanup project, the initial batch of Taliptip graduates would be able to earn income and get additional training in preparation for the airport project.

“For the 12 that graduated the heavy equipment operations course, this will be their practical, on-the-job training. They can put the things they learned into actual practice. This will allow them to further hone their skills and prepare them for airport construction. More significantly, this means they will now start earning from the skills they just acquired while making a difference,” Ang said.

The graduates are part of a larger group of residents that enrolled in, and graduated from various SMC-funded courses designed by TESDA to equip former residents of Taliptip with skills to gain employment or put up their own small businesses.



SMC also provided financial assistance for the relocation of the affected residents and construction of new, concrete houses.

Residents in the area previously raised concerns on losing their homes and livelihood because of SMC's airport project but Ang said the company is committed to helping the former residents of Taliptip, many of whom used to live in houses on stilts.

SMC said 35 graduates of airport construction-related courses, including heavy equipment/hydraulic excavator operations, electrical installation and maintenance, and shielded metal arc welding, would be referred to SMC Aerocity, which will handle the airport development.



Circumferential road project seen to minimize Boracay flooding



Photo by Jun N. Aguirre

JUN N. AGUIRRE

December 5, 2020

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is expecting that flooding in Boracay Island will now be minimized with the formal opening Friday, December 4, of the Boracay circumferential road project phase 2.

In a ribbon cutting ceremony Friday afternoon, DPWH Secretary Mark Villar said they had observed that flooding in some areas in the resort island during the series of typhoons that affected the island was so far minimal.

"We noted that recent heavy downpour of rains has minimized flooding especially on flood-prone areas of Boracay," he said.

He said the phase 2 project, which is about 3.362 kilometers, has a funding of P300 million. The phase 1 of the project, which cost P540 million for the 4.57 kilometers, was inaugurated in 2019.

"We still have another two years to finish the remaining phase 3 of the project which is around 11 kilometers," said Villar.

Drainage systems were also integrated in the circumferential road project in coordination with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority, the Boracay Island Rehabilitation Management Group, and Department of the Interior and Local Government, among others.

"Tourists could maximize their enjoyment in Boracay with the minimize flooding," Villar added. **(SunStar Philippines)**

Source: <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1879086/ILOILO/Local-News/Circumferential-road-project-seen-to-minimize-Boracay-flooding>



LIVING SPACES

Saving turtles at Pico de Loro

The active protection of olive ridley sea turtles at Pico de Loro Cove, one of only five turtle species found in the Philippines, is an initiative of the Bantay Dagat community-based volunteer program, which engages fisherfolk in coastal villages to safeguard Marine Protected Areas.

Published 6 hours ago on December 6, 2020 12:40 AM

By [Vernon Velasco](#)



NATURAL habitat. (Inset) an olive ridley sea turtle is a usual and endearing sight along Hamilo Coast. Turtle release was recently initiated by Hamilo Coast's Sustainability Team. / Photos courtesy of Hamilo Coast

An olive ridley turtle (*lepidochelys olivacea*) that accidentally got entangled in the snares of a fisherman's net was turned over to Hamilo Coast's Sustainability Team.

Named for the olive color of its heart-shaped carapace, olive ridley sea turtles contribute to the health of coral reefs, which is the first line of defense against storm surges.

The healthy 1.5-foot-long juvenile olive ridley turtle was safely released as it flipped its way through the warm sands of Pico Beach, toward the cerulean waters of the West Philippine Sea. Pico Beach is located in Nasugbu, Batangas.

The turtle release was spearheaded by Jan Catherine Sy, a staunch animal welfare advocate and eldest daughter of the Chairman of SM Prime Henry Sy Jr., accompanied by the chairman's wife, Jasmin T. Sy. Consistent with Jan's love for animals, the accomplished equestrienne is an integral voice in the various environmental conservation measures that Hamilo Coast implements.

The active protection of olive ridley sea turtles at Pico de Loro Cove, one of only five turtle species found in the Philippines, is an initiative of the Bantay Dagat community-based volunteer program, which engages fisherfolk in coastal villages to safeguard Marine Protected Areas. Since 2008, Hamilo Coast has been a proud partner of the World Wide Fund for Nature Philippines and this turtle release is a simple yet significant testament to Hamilo Coast's unwavering commitment to practice environmental sustainability and preservation in its operations.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/12/06/saving-turtles-at-pico-de-loro/#:~:text=The%20active%20protection%20of%20olive,to%20safeguard%20Marine%20Protected%20Areas>.



Experts: Biotech crops benefit agricultural biodiversity

By [BusinessMirror](#)

December 6, 2020



Bt corn farm

A UK-based agricultural economist and scientists from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) reported that using crop biotechnology has reduced pesticide use associated with environmental impact and has been found to be beneficial for agricultural biodiversity.

The experts discussed these during an online technical forum on “Greener Greens: Environmental Impact of Biotech Crops” convened by the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) in partnership with the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines, CropLife Asia, Program for Biosafety Systems, International Rice Research Institute, Philippine Rice Research Institute, Department of Agriculture-Biotechnology Program Office, UPLB-Institute of Plant Breeding, and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications.

Graham Brookes, an agricultural economist at the UK-based PG Economics Ltd, presented the cumulative impact of using genetically modified (GM) crop technology in agriculture from 1996 to 2018.

Besides significant net economic benefits at the farm level amounting to more than \$200 billion over a period of 22 years, he also presented key environmental impacts associated with using crop biotechnology, such as reduced pesticide application by 775.4 million kg (8.3 percent). He said this resulted in the decreased environmental impact associated with herbicide and insecticide use on crops.

“Genetic modification is an important contribution to increasing world production of soybeans, corn, canola and cotton—resulting in higher yields, higher incomes, more reliable food supply, adoption of more sustainable farming systems, more environmentally-friendly farming methods, and reduction in carbon emissions,” Brookes said.

This was affirmed by a study on *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) corn and arthropod biodiversity in corn fields presented by Dr. Merdelyn Caasi-Lit and Dr. Ireneo L. Lit Jr., both professors and scientists at UPLB.

Their study showed that as Bt corn ensures good yield by protecting the crop against corn borer infestation and reducing farm inputs for pesticide use, it has also proven to be beneficial for agrobiodiversity.

“Increased arthropod diversity should be considered precious bonuses added to the economic gains of planting Bt corn. They make Bt corn farming more ecologically sound and environmentally sustainable,” Dr. Caasi-Lit explained.



he three experts also addressed questions and concerns from participants that ranged from mitigating possible environmental impact of unauthorized GM seeds to recommendations on existing regulatory policies, status of CRISPR-Cas9 projects in the country, and effective means of promoting knowledge about the advantages of GMOs in agriculture and economy.

The forum was as part of the 16th National Biotechnology Week led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. More than a thousand participants from Asia, Europe, and South America attended the forum, including a big turnout of students and teachers from different universities in the Philippines.

In co-organizing the forum, Searca affirms its commitment to promote credible, science-based innovations said its Director Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio.

“As current global pandemic and recent calamities put more pressure on every sector of society to be innovative, it is high time to emphasize the positive impacts of biotechnology on the various sectors especially in the area of environmental protection and sustainability, which also encompasses food production and consumption,” Gregorio pointed out.

Image credits: [ISAAA web site](#)



3 clan members hacked, shot dead over CamSur land dispute

By: [Mar S. Arguelles](#) - Correspondent / [@msarguellesINO](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 01:44 PM December 05, 2020



LEGAZPI CITY – Three members of a family were killed in a hacking and shooting incident that stemmed from a land dispute on Saturday morning in San Fernando, Camarines Sur.

Killed were Alexander, 62, Miral, 54, and Noel, 38, all surnamed Rentoria and residents of Barangay Beberon, according to Police Major Maria Luisa Calubaquib, Bicol regional police spokesperson.

The suspects, who eluded arrest, were identified as Lauro, 70, and Larry, 38, also surnamed Rentoria and residents of Barangay Bocal of the same town.

Initial investigation disclosed that the victims and the suspects had a heated argument over a parcel of land at around 7 a.m.

The arguments escalated into the suspects hacking and shooting the victims who according to investigators died on the spot.

Police have issued an all-points bulletin for the possible arrest of the suspects.

gsg

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1368362/3-killed-in-hacking-shooting-incident-over-land-dispute-in-camsur>



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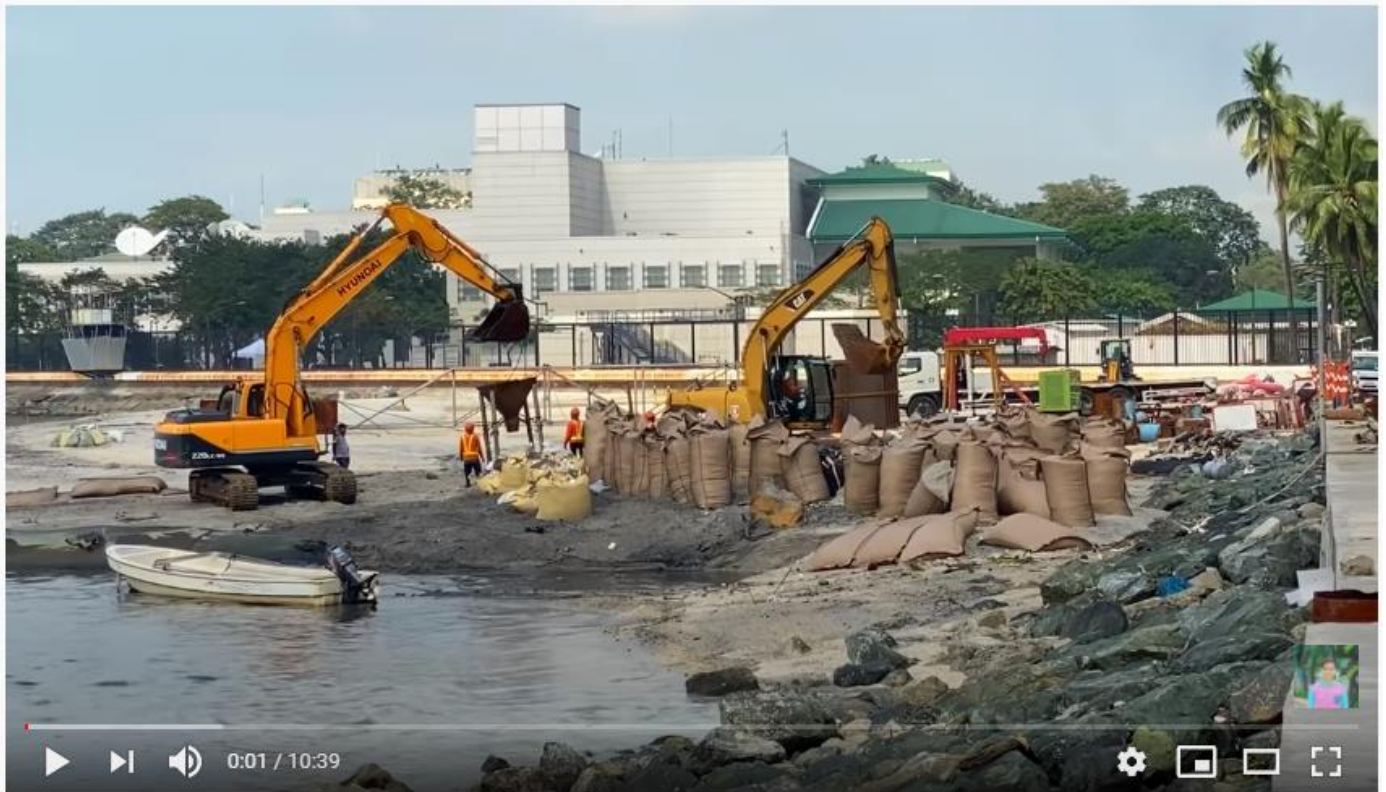
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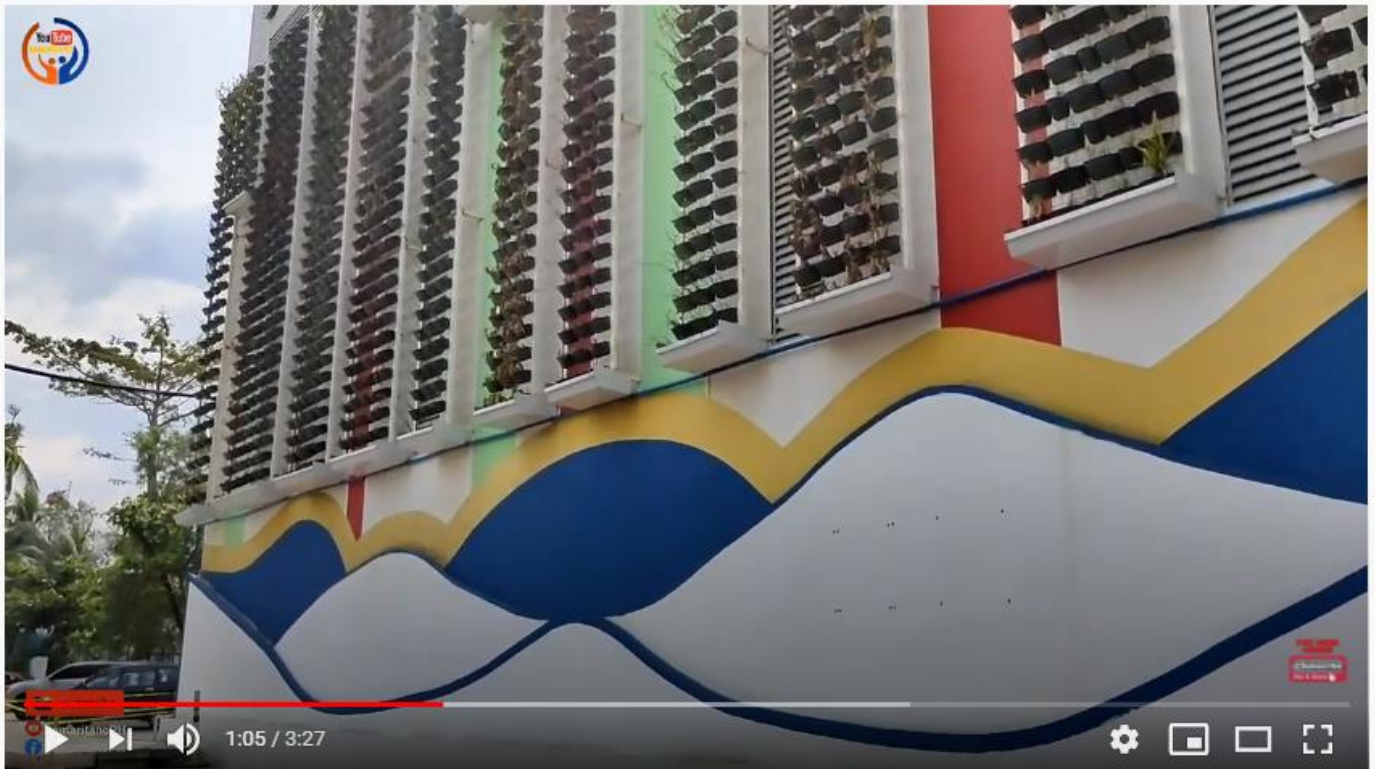
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MANILA BAY

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People shop at a market during a government imposed enhanced quarantine as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 novel coronavirus in Manila on April 21, 2020.

AFP/Maria Tan

Surge in COVID-19 cases seen from overcrowding

[Janvic Mateo](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 6, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — With more people out of their homes during the holiday season, overcrowding in public places may lead to an uptick in COVID-19 cases, an expert from the OCTA Research Group warned yesterday.

In an interview with Teleradyo, University of the Philippines (UP) professor Guido David reminded Filipinos to continue following health protocols to minimize transmission of COVID-19 amid the holiday rush.

The research expert said more Filipinos may be inclined to go out as the economy further reopens, citing pandemic fatigue due to the months of being locked down in their homes.

“We are closely monitoring overcrowding, especially if we allow minors (to go out),” he said in Filipino. “One of the high risks is overcrowding in malls and restaurants.”

David noted the need to limit the movement of minors, citing a study showing that they have a high potential in spreading the virus.

Metro Manila mayors last week decided to retain the ban on minors in malls, citing experts who warned of its impact on the spread of the virus.

The OCTA Research Group, composed of academic experts from UP and the University of Santo Tomas, projected that the number of cases in the country may reach between 470,000 and 500,000 by the end of the month.

In an earlier interview with “The Chiefs” aired on One News/TV 5, David said reaching the 500,000 mark would mean that the “curve is already unflattening and we’re starting on an upward trend” anew.

In its latest report released last week, the OCTA Research Group appealed to the public to avoid not just crowded and enclosed areas but also to refrain from joining or organizing social gatherings this Christmas season.

“There is evidence from Europe and North America that increased social mixing among households is driving the second wave of COVID-19 in these parts of the world,” it said.



It urged the government to enforce the limit on gathering to 10 persons in areas under general community quarantine (GCQ) such as Metro Manila, as well as discourage office parties and other social events.

“Family gatherings should be limited in size and should be celebrated outside to mitigate transmission,” it said.

“Moving forward, we believe that what citizens do will be more important than any intervention the government does in the fight against COVID-19. Hence, we appeal to our citizens to continue to do their share by being vigilant and disciplined in following the minimum health standards,” added the research group.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) urged the public to continue the strict observance of health protocols to prevent a second surge in COVID-19 transmission during the holidays.

Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya, DILG spokesman, said that all individuals should cooperate to sustain the slowdown in COVID-19 transmissions during the Christmas and New Year break.

He said the government is already preparing in case of a spike in COVID-19 cases, including ramping up healthcare and testing capacity and the deployment of more contact tracers.

“We are prepared for it. However, to ensure the prevention of a second wave or surge (of infections), everyone must cooperate,” he said in Filipino in an interview on CNN Philippines.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III aired the same call as he vowed preparedness on the part of the Department of Health (DOH).

“We are unequivocally prepared for any circumstances that this Yuletide season may bring. We have also increased our COVID-19 bed capacity in different regions with high-risk classifications to prevent saturation in our hospitals,” Duque said.

Malaya said the government is slowly reopening up more industries to jumpstart the economy, which saw a recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We are as ready as we can be, we have been preparing for a long time. This last quarter is to slowly reopen the economy,” he said, adding that restrictions cannot be prolonged or economic hardships will grip the whole nation.

President Duterte announced that the GCQ status shall be maintained in the National Capital Region or Metro Manila, Davao City and six other areas until the end of the year.

The DOH assured the public that the country’s health system continues to strengthen its capability to respond to the pandemic, with Duque placing the number of beds and equipment for COVID-19 patients at 22,242.

“We are continuously strengthening our health system as part of our COVID-19 response. We want to make sure that we can provide the medical needs of the public given the health crisis that we face,” he said.

DOH data showed that as of Dec. 3, the critical care utilization rate of the country is at 36 percent and this is considered low risk. This pertains to the use of ICU beds, isolation beds and ward beds and mechanical ventilators.



At a 50 percent occupancy rate of COVID-19 beds and equipment, the DOH raises a warning zone; at 70 percent, it is a danger zone.

The DOH has allocated an additional 235 COVID-19 beds for Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, Davao region and NCR as these areas have the highest number of cases in the country at present. – **Romina Cabrera, Sheila Crisostomo**



PHL targets country-wide MGCQ by 2021

December 5, 2020 11:56 PM by [Kristan Carag](#)



*FILE PHOTO: Stranded workers wait for shuttle services in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, August 4, 2020.
REUTERS/Eloisa Lopez*

The Philippine government seeks to place the whole country under modified general community quarantine, the lowest community quarantine status, by the second quarter of 2021.

In order to attain that target, Department of Health (DOH) Usec. Maria Rosario Vergeire said that all local government units should achieve their gate-keeping indicators by the end of 2020.

“*What are these gate-keeping indicators? Surveillance, contact-tracing, isolation, testing, and all,*” Vergeire said on Friday, December 4, during an online forum.

“*Kapag nakita natin na ang isang local government capable na siya with all of these gate-keeping components of their system, ibig sabihin capable na siya to be able to manage any kind of increase in (2019 Coronavirus Disease) cases in their area,*” she explained.

DOH also hopes that the Philippines can shift to the new normal in 2021.



Proposed 2022 national budget could reach P5.024T -DBCC

Published December 5, 2020 3:44pm

By JAMIL SANTOS, GMA News

The proposed 2022 budget could reach P5.024 trillion, according to the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), as economic managers expect the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to bounce back by as much as 10 percent that year.

"Consistent with the macroeconomic assumptions and foregoing fiscal targets, the proposed FY 2022 cash budget is pegged at P5.024 trillion," the Department of Budget and Management said in a joint statement at the 178th DBCC meeting.

At the Laging Handa briefing on Saturday, Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado said the amount will be higher than the 2021 proposed budget. "Kaya naman ginagawa po lahat ng ating pamahalaan at ng economic team at sa 2022 nga hinahanda na natin 'yung budget call natin. Aangat ng about 11.5 percent ang level ng ating proposed budget for 2022... That is about 22.2 percent of GDP."

The proposed national budget for 2021 is P4.506 trillion.

Avisado made the statement as economic managers expect the GDP to bounce back from between 6.5% and 7.5% percent in 2021 to between 8% and 10% in 2022.

The Philippine economy contracted by 11.5% in the third quarter, -16.9% in the second quarter, and by -0.7% in the first quarter, bringing the year-to-date average to -10%.

"Hopefully it will further go down pa. For next year ang inaasahan natin ay instead, sa ngayon negative tayo, babalik tayo sa positive. Hopefully between 6.5 to 7.5 ang ating economic growth next year. At tataas 'yan ng from 8 to 10 sa 2021," Avisado said.

Meanwhile, the country's economic performance in 2020 is [expected to contract deeper than earlier projected](#) due to lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting community quarantines to contain its spread, according to the revised macroeconomic assumptions of the Philippines' economic managers.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) said in a joint statement that "the emerging Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate assumption for 2020 has been adjusted to -8.5 to -9.5 percent, following the prolonged imposition of community quarantines in various regions in the country."

The revised full-year 2020 GDP outlook is worse than the -5.5% earlier projected by the economic team in August. **-MDM, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/money/economy/766912/2022-national-budget-could-reach-p5-024t-dbm/story/>



Residents slog through mud and debris as they retrieve belongings from their flood-damaged homes in Southville subdivision in Rodriguez, Rizal on Nov. 13, 2020. Thick mud coated several barangays in Marikina City and Rizal province after Typhoon Ulysses spawned extensive flooding which sent residents fleeing to their roofs.

The STAR/KJ Rosales

Damage wrought by 'Ulysses' on agri, infra now over P19 billion — NDRRMC

(Philstar.com) - December 5, 2020 - 11:07am

MANILA, Philippines — The destruction left by Typhoon Ulysses in its wake is now estimated to have cost over P19 billion in agriculture and infrastructure, latest data from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council showed.

The NDRRMC's 24th situation report on the typhoon showed latest estimates as of 8 a.m., Friday.

Based on the report, the damage to infrastructure across the country is now priced at P12.01 billion.

Cagayan Valley leads the NDRRMC's regional breakdown with P4.91 billion in infrastructure losses.

REGION	AMOUNT (P)
GRAND TOTAL	12,014,206,676.28
I	654,295,000.00
II	4,915,917,825.00
III	1,879,509,651.28
CALABARZON	2,340,700,200.00
MIMAROPA	113,029,000.00
V	1,987,705,000.00
CAR	106,050,000.00
NCR	17,000,000.00

Screen grab shows portion of NDRRMC report logging cost of damage to infrastructure as of Dec. 4, 2020, 8 a.m.

With less than half of Region II's losses, Calabarzon comes in at a far second with P2.34 billion. Bicol and Central Luzon trail close behind with P1.98 billion and P1.87 billion in infrastructure damage, respectively.

Meanwhile, the NDRRMC said the estimated cost of damages on agriculture is currently at 7.25 billion.

Cagayan Valley took the hardest hit, incurring P2.12 billion in agricultural losses.



REGION	TOTAL
GRAND TOTAL	7,251,561,122.00
CAR	646,221,401.00
I	443,762,500.00
II	2,129,596,097.00
III	1,379,824,325.00
CALABARZON	1,265,452,031.00
MIMAROPA	57,041,500.00
V	629,185,763.00
NCR	700,477,505.00

Screen grab shows portion of NDRRMC report logging cost of damage to agriculture as of Dec. 4, 2020, 8.a.m.

The region is trailed by Central Luzon which lost 1.37 billion, followed by Calabarzon with 1.26 billion.

"A total of 73 dead, 85 injured and 19 missing persons were reported in Regions II, III, CALABARZON, V, CAR, and NCR," NDRRMC's report read.

According to the agency, 4,816,741 individuals — over 1.77 million families — were affected by the typhoon. Of these, 92,667 persons — over 22,943 families — are still spread out across 411 evacuation centers.

Typhoon Quinta, Super Typhoon Rolly and Ulysses lashed Luzon for three consecutive weeks, beginning in late October and ending mid November, causing President Rodrigo Duterte to place the entire island under a state of calamity.

— **Bella Perez-Rubio**



Netherlands announces P55.5-M disaster relief fund for PH

By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora December 5, 2020, 6:08 pm



(Photo grabbed from the Dutch Embassy in Manila Facebook page)

MANILA – The Dutch Embassy in Manila on Friday announced a EUR950,000 (approximately PHP55.5 million) disaster relief fund to help the Philippines weeks after typhoons Rolly and Ulysses battered the country.

Of the total aid, some EUR600,000 (around PHP35 million) will be provided by the Netherlands government while the additional EUR350,000 (approximately PHP24.4 million) was collected from the Dutch people by the Netherlands' Red Cross.

The Embassy said the fund will be channeled through the Netherlands' Red Cross and will focus on rebuilding damaged houses, basic needs and livelihood support, disaster risk reduction, health, sanitation and hygiene, and restoring family links.

"On behalf of the Netherlands government, I would like to convey our heartfelt condolences to the people of the government of the Philippines over the losses of lives, displacement of families, and the widespread damages to property and infrastructure," said the Netherlands Ambassador to the Philippines Saskia De Lang.

The envoy said both countries are similarly vulnerable to extreme weather and noted that climate change worsens the situation.

"We stand with the Philippines in these difficult times and we will continue to cooperate on climate adaptation, water management, and disaster risk reduction. But for now, we focus on the immediate humanitarian response," she said.

The Netherlands had previously partnered with Manila to address its multiple water challenges, including coastal protection, land use planning, drinking water management, and the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Management Plan.

"The aim of the Dutch-Philippine cooperation is to turn vulnerabilities into resilience and sustainable, inclusive development," the Embassy said.

"The Netherlands government is actively engaging the Dutch private sector to collaborate in these efforts. Aid and trade go together and reinforce each other," it ended. (PNA)



Qatar nagbigay ng P12M sa 'Ulysses' victims



December 5, 2020 @ 9:48 AM 21 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Namahagi ang mga mamamayan ng Qatar sa pamamagitan ng Qatar Red Crescent ng 12 milyong pisong halaga ng relief goods para sa mga nasalanta ng bagyong Ulysses (Vamco).

Lulan ito ng Qatar Emiri Air Force C-17 plane na lumapag sa Ninoy Aquino International Airport kahapon.

Batay sa Qatar Embassy in Manila, naihatid ang naturang ayuda sa ilalim ng direktiba ni Qatar's Emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani para sa "bid to help friends in the Republic of the Philippines".

Sinabi naman ni Abdelmonaim Mhindate, head ng Qatar Red Crescent Philippine mission na ididiretso ang mga donasyon sa typhoon-stricken families partikular na sa probinsya ng Rizal at Cagayan.

"There is a very long, historic diplomatic relationship between the State of Qatar and the Republic of the Philippines. The Qatar Red Crescent and the PRC, we also have longstanding cooperation and partnership so we have always been interested to support PRC and the Filipino people especially those who have been affected by natural disasters," aniya.

Tiniyak pa ni Mhindate na magpapatuloy ang Qatar sa pagsuporta sa Pilipinas sa tuwing nasasalanta ng sakuna. **RNT/FGDC**



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MDRRMO ALLACAPAN

ALLACAPAN town in northeastern Cagayan experienced flooding on Friday after continuous heavy rainfall that also affected Claveria, Pamplona, Santa Praxedes and Sanchez Mira towns.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF POND NEWS ASIA

WORKERS reinforce the riprapping of a creek in Barangay Calazada, Taguig City to prevent flooding in the area.



Maynilad nag-anunsiyo ng walang tubig mula Dec. 5-7



December 5, 2020 @ 11:29 AM 20 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Inanunsiyo ng Maynilad Water Services Inc. na mawawalan ng tubig simula ngayong Sabado, Dec. 5 hanggang sa Lunes, December 7.

Sa ulat, dahil ito sa maintenance work sa La Mesa Treatment Plant 2.

“Pansamantalang ibababa ang water production ng La Mesa Treatment Plant 2 simula mamayang gabi upang bigyang-daan ang urgent maintenance works na ipinagpaliban matapos ang naging epekto ng Bagyong Ulysses sa aming operasyon,” saad ng Maynilad sa Facebook post at Twitter.

Sakop nito ang Caloocan, Valenzuela, Quezon City, Meycauayan at Obando na epektibo ngayong alas-10 a.m. ng Dec. 5 hanggang 4 a.m. of Dec. 7.

Ibinahagi naman sa social media ng Maynilad ang rotational water service interruption. **RNT/FGDC**



China expands West Philippine Sea patrols amid pandemic –AMTI

Published December 5, 2020 10:52pm

According to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI), the COVID-19 pandemic failed to dampen Chinese efforts to claim West Philippine Sea territories, including areas within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

According to JP Soriano's Saturday 24 Oras Weekend report, the AMTI found that China continued to patrol the West Philippine Sea from December 2019 to November 2020, even increasing the frequency of its patrols in the Ayungin and Scarborough Shoals.

“There was at least one [Chinese coast guard] vessel, and often two, broadcasting [an Automatic Identification Signal] from the Scarborough Shoal on 287 of the last 366 days – a substantial increase from last year's 162 days,” the AMTI reported.

Atty. Jay Batongbacal of the University of the Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea said that this behavior spoke volumes on China's true intentions.

“Kahit na may pandemya, wala pa rin silang patawad. Patuloy pa rin ang pag-assert nila ng kanilang illegitimate claims nila sa atin,” said Batongbacal.

He added that China was making it clear to everyone that they had full control of the disputed territories.

While it was not illegal for foreign vessels to sail across the West Philippine Sea, harassing or accosting Filipino fishermen in the Philippines' EEZ would be a violation of the country's exclusive sovereign rights and a diplomatic protest by the Philippine government would not be out of place.

“Dapat we should still have regular patrols to the area to show na talagang itong ginagawa ng China ay illegitimate,” urged Batongbacal.

While the Foreign Affairs Department had yet to comment on the AMTI's findings, Sec. Teddy Boy Locsin had said that the Philippines had filed several diplomatic protests over Chinese violations of international law and Philippine sovereignty.

The Philippine Navy had also said that it would mount its own West Philippine Sea patrols despite its commitment to the country's COVID-19 response effort.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Embassy in Manila had yet to comment on the AMTI report. — **DVM, GMA News**

Source: https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/766932/china-expands-west-philippine-sea-patrols-amid-pandemic-anti/story/?utm_source=GMANews&utm_medium=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR1YoYJXabncm6



The State of the Planet

By Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

December 6, 2020

Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at Columbia University on Dec. 2, 2020

1st of 3 parts

President Bollinger,

Dear friends,

I thank Columbia University for hosting this gathering — and I welcome those joining online around the world.

We meet in this unusual way as we enter the last month of this most unusual year.

We are facing a devastating pandemic, new heights of global heating, new lows of ecological degradation and new setbacks in our work toward global goals for more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

To put it simply, the state of the planet is broken.

Dear friends,

Humanity is waging war on nature.

This is suicidal.

Nature always strikes back — and it is already doing so with growing force and fury.

Biodiversity is collapsing. One million species are at risk of extinction.

Ecosystems are disappearing before our eyes.

Deserts are spreading.

Wetlands are being lost.

Every year, we lose 10 million hectares of forests.

Oceans are overfished — and choking with plastic waste. The carbon dioxide they absorb is acidifying the seas.

Coral reefs are bleached and dying.

Air and water pollution are killing 9 million people annually — more than six times the current toll of the pandemic.

And with people and livestock encroaching further into animal habitats and disrupting wild spaces, we could see more viruses and other disease-causing agents jump from animals to humans.

Let's not forget that 75 percent of new and emerging human infectious diseases are zoonotic.

Today, two new authoritative reports from the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program spell out how close we are to climate catastrophe.



2020 is on track to be one of the three warmest years on record globally — even with the cooling effect of this year’s La Nina.

The past decade was the hottest in human history.

Ocean heat is at record levels.

This year more than 80 percent of the world’s oceans experienced marine heatwaves.

In the Arctic, 2020 has seen exceptional warmth, with temperatures more than 3 degrees Celsius above average — and more than 5 degrees in northern Siberia.

Arctic sea ice in October was the lowest on record — and now refreezing has been the slowest on record.

Greenland ice has continued its long-term decline, losing an average of 278 gigatons a year.

Permafrost is melting and so releasing methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

Apocalyptic fires and floods, cyclones and hurricanes are increasingly the new normal.

The North Atlantic hurricane season has seen 30 storms, more than double the long-term average and breaking the record for a full season.

Central America is still reeling from two back-to-back hurricanes, part of the most intense period for such storms in recent years.

Last year, such disasters cost the world \$150 billion.

Covid-19 lockdowns have temporarily reduced emissions and pollution.

But carbon dioxide levels are still at record highs—and rising.

In 2019, carbon dioxide levels reached 148 percent of pre-industrial levels.

In 2020, the upward trend has continued despite the pandemic.

Methane soared even higher — to 260 percent.

Nitrous oxide, a powerful greenhouse gas but also a gas that harms the ozone layer, has escalated by 123 percent.

Meanwhile, climate policies have yet to rise to the challenge.

Emissions are 62 percent higher now than when international climate negotiations began in 1990. Every tenth of a degree of warming matters.

Today, we are at 1.2 degrees of warming and already witnessing unprecedented climate extremes and volatility in every region and on every continent.

We are headed for a thundering temperature rise of 3 to 5 degrees Celsius this century.

The science is crystal clear: to limit temperature rise to 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels, the world needs to decrease fossil fuel production by roughly 6 percent every year between now and 2030.



Instead, the world is going in the opposite direction — planning an annual increase of 2 percent.

The fallout of the assault on our planet is impeding our efforts to eliminate poverty and imperiling food security.

And it is making our work for peace even more difficult, as the disruptions drive instability, displacement and conflict.

It is no coincidence that seventy percent of the most climate vulnerable countries are also among the most politically and economically fragile.

It is not happenstance that of the 15 countries most susceptible to climate risks, eight host a United Nations peacekeeping or special political mission.

As always, the impacts fall most heavily on the world's most vulnerable people.

Those who have done the least to cause the problem are suffering the most.

Even in the developed world, the marginalized are the first victims of disasters and the last to recover.

Dear friends,

Let's be clear: human activities are at the root of our descent toward chaos.

But that means human action can help solve it.

Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere.

In this context, the recovery from the pandemic is an opportunity. We can see rays of hope in the form of a vaccine.

But there is no vaccine for the planet.

Nature needs a bailout.

In overcoming the pandemic, we can also avert climate cataclysm and restore our planet. This is an epic policy test. But ultimately this is a moral test.

The trillions of dollars needed for Covid recovery is money that we are borrowing from future generations. Every last penny.

We cannot use those resources to lock in policies that burden them with a mountain of debt on a broken planet.

It is time to flick the "green switch." We have a chance to not simply reset the world economy but to transform it.

A sustainable economy driven by renewable energies will create new jobs, cleaner infrastructure and a resilient future.

An inclusive world will help ensure that people can enjoy better health and the full respect of their human rights and live with dignity on a healthy planet.

Covid recovery and our planet's repair must be the two sides of the same coin.



Dear friends,

Let me start with the climate emergency. We face three imperatives in addressing the climate crisis:

First, we need to achieve global carbon neutrality within the next three decades.

Second, we have to align global finance behind the Paris Agreement, the world's blueprint for climate action.

Third, we must deliver a breakthrough on adaptation to protect the world — and especially the most vulnerable people and countries — from climate impacts.

Let me take these in turn.

First, carbon neutrality — net zero emissions of greenhouse gases.

In recent weeks, we have seen important positive developments.

The European Union has committed to become the first climate neutral continent by 2050 — and I expect it will decide to reduce its emissions to at least 55 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

The United Kingdom, Japan, the Republic of Korea and more than 110 countries have committed to carbon neutrality by 2050.

The incoming United States administration has announced exactly the same goal. China has committed to get there before 2060.

This means that by early next year, countries representing more than 65 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions and more than 70 percent of the world economy will have made ambitious commitments to carbon neutrality.

We must turn this momentum into a movement.

The central objective of the United Nations for 2021 is to build a truly Global Coalition for Carbon Neutrality.

I firmly believe that 2021 can be a new kind of leap year — the year of a quantum leap toward carbon neutrality.

Every country, city, financial institution and company should adopt plans for transitioning to net zero emissions by 2050 — and I encourage the main emitters to lead the way in taking decisive action now to get on the right path and to achieve this vision, which means cutting global emissions by 45 percent by 2030 compared with 2010 levels. And this must be clear in the Nationally Determined Contributions.

Every individual must also do their part — as consumers, as producers, as investors. Technology is on our side.

Sound economic analysis is our ally.

More than half the coal plants operating today cost more to run than building new renewables from scratch.

The coal business is going up in smoke.



The International Labor Organization estimates that, despite inevitable job losses, the clean energy transition will result in the creation of 18 million jobs by 2030.

But a just transition is absolutely critical.

We must recognize the human costs of the energy shift.

Social protection, temporary basic income, re-skilling and up-skilling can support workers and ease the changes caused by decarbonization.

Dear friends,

Renewable energy is now the first choice not just for the environment, but for the economy. But there are worrying signs.

Some countries have used the crisis to roll back environmental protections.

Others are expanding natural resource exploitation and retreating from climate ambition.

The G20 members, in their rescue packages, are now spending 50 percent more on sectors linked to fossil fuel production and consumption, than on low-carbon energy.

And beyond announcements, all must pass a credibility test.

Let me take one example, the example of shipping.

If the shipping sector were a country, it would be the world's sixth biggest greenhouse gas emitter.

At last year's Climate Action Summit, we launched the Getting to Zero Shipping Coalition to push for zero emissions deep sea vessels by 2030.

Yet current policies are not in line with those pledges.

We need to see enforceable regulatory and fiscal steps so that the shipping industry can deliver its commitments.

Otherwise, the net zero ship will have sailed.

Exactly the same applies to aviation.



Persons with disabilities among worst affected by coronavirus

By [Simone Galimberti](#)

December 6, 2020

KATHMANDU, Nepal: The 13th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) that was initially supposed to be held in New York back in June recently wrapped up with the final session coinciding with the International Day of People with Disabilities, whose theme, this year was on the issue of building back better inclusively.

In the context of Covid -19, this means creating accessible and sustainable post pandemic pathways of self-realization and prosperity for persons with disabilities. More than what it is normally thought, disabilities are not really isolated conditions affecting the few but rather the opposite.

Millions of people worldwide have their lives adversely impacted by them, often with ailments that are apparently invisible, if you think, for example, to all of us suffering from mental health.

The COSP therefore is very important for many of us and is undoubtedly the premier annual event centered on disabilities.

Its focus this year was on three related topics: inclusive job markets, the need to address the needs of older persons with disabilities and the promotion of inclusive environments for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These are big topics that should be found appropriate space on the major news outlets but instead the same COSP is just an “expert” meeting, a niche forum that is very far from receiving the due coverage that it really deserves.

At the moment of writing, no major news outlets have been reporting about it and neither other “powerful” organizations with global outreach seemed to care about it.

For example, on the main homepage of the influential World Economic Forum, I found a vast array of issues from the need to have leadership and trust to fight corruption to an op-ed piece by Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan about leading by doing in climate action.

Yes, quite understandably climate change is big for the World Economic Forum together with a focus on work diversity, a consequence of Black Lives Matter protests. Unfortunately, I could not find anything about disabilities.

The problem is the inability to connect the threads of social problems affecting the world.

For example, it is a huge, missed opportunity not linking the ongoing debate on how to make working places more diverse and inclusive of minority groups to the wider debate on the rights of persons with disabilities to employment and job security.

After all a global job market that is truly inclusive refers to wide opportunities for all members of minority groups, not just those who are more vocal and louder.

The idea of building back better that normally refers to more sustainable and eco-friendly solutions, from more environmentally friendly means of transportations to more efficient and cleaner energies, is set to play a determinant role if we want to achieve net zero emissions in the decades ahead.



While the 13th COSP focused on its last day on inclusive reconstruction and more accessible environment for persons with disabilities, there is an urgent need to link the rethinking of urban places with the overall prominence disability rights should receive in this global “building back better” movement.

It is not just about redesigning urban spaces that are fully accessible while being eco-friendly and it is not only about better approaches to have more persons with disabilities in the workplaces everywhere, from developed nations to those still developing.

We need instead to frame one comprehensive and holistic strategy, from transportations to energy to jobs to affordable housing that is truly inclusive for all citizens, especially members of minority groups that have been so far often excluded from the economic gains of this world economic order.

Connecting the dots is the only way to really provide persons with disabilities and, very importantly, members of other vulnerable groups, with the opportunities to have fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Employment is so central in this equation and consequentially, only after achieving it, persons with disabilities and their “invisible” peers will become equal actors in the post pandemic order.

Some examples of disconnected approaches. In relation to better urban patterns, the global network of major global cities, C40 has led a progressive agenda to reinvent urban spaces but again, accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities is not on their radar.

Also, within the United Nations, the New Urban Agenda is promising for its holistic inclusiveness that covers also the economic sphere but again we need major efforts to connect the dots, including such an agenda with broader development priorities, rather than keeping such strategy as standing alone framework in an already very fragmented development agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, should help in this tactical exercise to frame and organize issues according to different priorities and agendas, linking together issues that only apparently seem disconnected.

How many of us are really aware of the New Urban Agenda? How many times did you read about it in the last 6 to 8 months?

As per Joan Clos I Matheu, the former Executive Director of UN Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development, Habitat III held in Quito in 2016 from where the New Urban Agenda stems from, we were supposed to moving towards “a new sustainable urban paradigm” back then.

Four years forward, only the most devastating pandemic of the century is forcing us to rethink our priorities and the way we want to live.

Yet no matter how inclusive urban spaces will be, real inclusion will only happen when minority groups without much of a voice on the world stage, will be able to reclaim their rights to participation and economic prosperity.

Inclusion is only one and multifaceted, let’s not forget it. That’s why events like COSP should have a much stronger visibility on the world stage. That’s why the International Disability Alliance should be supported to establish new partnerships with influential businesses and other lobbying organizations across the sectors.

Disability, after all, should not be just an “UN agenda” targeting diplomats and experts.



For example, the World Economic Forum's Platform for Shaping the Future of the New Economy and Society is a unique initiative that should be better resourced and highlighted 365 days a year, not just occasionally.

All of us interested and engaged in the disability sector, we need better public relations and better connections with the international media.

That's why Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility and Professor Gerard Quinn, the recently appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities have their work cut out.

For them to succeed and become visible, they will need support, extensive resources to raise the issues of persons with disabilities on the global stage.

The goal is to make the next COSP a truly big deal for the world.

Simone Galimberti is co-founder of Engage, a not for profit NGO in Nepal, and writes on volunteerism, social inclusion, youth development and regional integration as an engine to improve people's lives.

The UN commemorated International Day of Persons with Disabilities December 3. In his message for the Day, the Secretary-General noted that when crises such as Covid-19 grip communities, persons with disabilities are among the worst affected.