

08 NOVEMBER 2020, SUNDAY



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Pasay mayor nagpasalamat sa DENR sa water quality monitoring treatment



November 7, 2020 @ 12:20 PM 18 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Pinasalamatan kahapon ni Pasay City Mayor Emi Calixto-Rubiano ang kagawaran ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa paglalagay ng naturang ahensya ng pitong solar-powered water monitoring buoys sa baybayin na nasasakupan ng naturang lungsod.

Partikular na pinasalamatan ni Calixto-Rubiano si DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu at ang SM Prime Holding Company sa pagkakapili sa lungsod na mapanatiling malinis ang baybayin sa nasasakupang teritoryo at hurisdiksiyon ng Pasay.



Sinabi ni Calixto-Rubiano na ang layunin sa paglalagay ng water monitoring buoy upang makapagbigay ng real-time, tumpak at mapagkakatiwalaang kalidad ng pagsusukat sa nasasakop na baybayin ng lungsod.





Sa panig naman ni Cimatu, sinabi ng kalihim na malaki ang maitutulong ng mga monitoring buoys sa 13 ahensya ng gobyerno sa kanilang paglilinis, pagre-rehabilitate at pagpre-preserba ng Manila Bay base na rin sa mandamus na inisyu ng Korte Suprema noong 2016.

Ipinakita din ng DENR kay Calixto-Rubiano kung papaano makatutulong ang mga inilagay na water buoys sa pagmo-monitor ng temperatura ng tubig dagat, lebel ng oxygen nito, labo at lalim ng tubig gayundin ang pamamalagi ng kemikal sa tubig dagat na bahagi ng rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay. **(James I. Catapusan)**



Secretary Cimatu OKs lawyer's request to suspend transport permit for nipa, bamboo

November 7, 2020 3:20 PM by [DZRH News](#)



Lawyer Dante Adan in an interview with DZRH Special On Saturday (SOS) program on Saturday, November 7.

MANILA— Secretary Roy Cimatu has approved a request of a Bicolano lawyer to suspend the permit requirement from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in transporting nipa and bamboo in order to help the rehabilitation efforts in areas in Bicol devastated by Tropical Storm Quinta and Tropical Typhoon Rolly.

In an interview in DZRH Special On Saturday (SOS) program on November 7, Lawyer Dante Adan, who hails from San Jose, Camarines Sur and involved in the charity works of non-government organization Caritas Caceres, narrated the difficulty of obtaining nipa shingles and bamboo in their project to help poor families rebuild their houses made of light materials after two typhoons destroyed them.

Adan said he found out it will take so long before they can get a permit to transport nipa and bamboo following the procedures laid down by the DENR based on Marcos' Presidential Decree 705.

When he visited the offices of the DENR in Camarines Sur, he saw several trucks and vehicles loaded with nipa shingles and impounded because of the absence of the permit to transport them.

Adan said he told officials of the DENR in Camarines Sur to ask Cimatu to suspend the permit requirement in transporting nipa and bamboo since these materials are immediately needed in rebuilding the destroyed houses of poor families.

He later posted in his Facebook account a request to "the DENR officials in the Province (of Camarines Sur) and Region (V) to request from "DENR Secretary to issue an order waiving the requirement for transport permits for Nipa and bamboo at this time of rebuilding after Typhoon Rolly."

SOS program host Cesar Chavez, a classmate and a townmate of Adan, directly forwarded the request to Cimatu who responded positively to the request to suspend the permit requirement from the DENR in transporting nipa and bamboo for one month.

Responding to Chavez, Cimatu said he had ordered the regional director of the DENR in Bicol to issue the order to suspend the permit requirement in transporting nipa and bamboo.

Adan was grateful to the immediate action of the DENR secretary even as he intends to pursue advocacy for changes in the policy.

Source: <https://dzhnews.com.ph/secretary-cimatu-oks-lawyers-request-to-suspend-transport-permit-for-nipa-bamboo/>



Denr, Pldt-Smart Partner for the Peatlands in the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary

BY [VILLAGE CONNECT](#) ON NOVEMBER 7, 2020 [NEWS](#)

Denr, Pldt-Smart Partner for the Peatlands in the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary



Assistant Secretary for Climate Change and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Ricardo Calderon emphasizes during a virtual press conference that while peatlands are not that popular to the public, this type of wetland is very important because they “act like sponges or foams that absorb and hold large amounts of water, which many ecosystems rely, and hinder sudden release of water that cause flooding.” The BMB Director also cited the Caimpugan Peatland (inset), which serves as a carbon stock that can hold up to 22.9 million tons of carbon; hence, with “the voluntary carbon market of \$7 per ton, around \$160 million dollars can be gained from the carbon offsetting mechanism.” The virtual press conference held on November 6 is being facilitated by PLDT Inc., and Smart Communications, Inc., and is still a part of the DENR-PLDT Smart partnership conservation program for the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary wherein the Caimpugan Peatland serves as the pilot conservation site. Under the program, the DENR will be providing technical services to Bantay Danao Conservation Group volunteers, while PLDT-Smart will be equipping the volunteers with digital and communication tools such as radio devices, mobile phones, and drone equipment to support their enforcement activities.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has forged a partnership with leading telecoms and digital services provider PLDT, Inc. (PLDT) and its wireless subsidiary Smart Communications, Inc. (Smart) to protect one of the country’s most vital natural resources needed to combat climate change – its peatlands.



Under this agreement, the DENR, through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) and CARAGA Regional Office, will work with PLDT and Smart to set up a program to protect, conserve and restore the Caimpugan Peatland in the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS).

Located in Agusan del Sur, the Caimpugan Peatland holds the only recorded remaining intact peat swamp forest—the largest of its kind—in the Philippines.

The Memorandum of Agreement was signed by Ricardo L. Calderon, DENR OIC Assistant Secretary for Climate Change and concurrent Director of BMB; Hadja Didaw D. Piang-Brahim, OIC Regional Executive Director of DENR CARAGA Region; and Chaye A. Cabal-Revilla, Chief Sustainability Officer of PLDT.



What are peatlands?

Peatlands cover only 3% of the Earth's land surface. These are wetlands whose peat soils consist of carbon-rich dead and decaying plant matter. If kept wet, 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.

"Little is known about our country's peatlands. Now is the time to change the course of a conversation, as well as the conservation of this natural treasure and steer our collaborative efforts towards creating a climate-resilient future," ASec. Calderon said. "This peatland conservation partnership is our unique chance to secure that promising future for all."



Applying technology to peatland conservation

The three-year extendable project to be implemented by PLDT-Smart through its Chief Sustainability Office until 2023 aims to strengthen and support the AMWS-Protected Area Management Office and other concerned DENR offices in implementing peatland conservation and management strategies under the AMWS Management Plan.

Aside from applying various technologies for peatland assessment, monitoring and enforcement activities, PLDT and Smart through its Gabay Kalikasan program will implement Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) programs and activities to increase knowledge and appreciation of the value of these fragile ecosystems.

"As the first private company in the Philippines to engage with DENR on peatlands conservation, we at PLDT will contribute our expertise to produce innovations that can help conserve and restore these ecosystems," Cabal-Revilla said.

Community involvement for sustainable collaboration

Community involvement is a central theme in this long-term collaboration. Program activities under the agreement were jointly developed with the representatives from the Provincial Government of Agusan del Sur and the municipal government of San Francisco and Talacogon; barangay officials from Caimpugan, New Visayas, Causwagan, Maharlika, La Flora and Sabang Gibong; and members of the Caimpugan Native Farmers and Fisherfolks Multipurpose Cooperative (CANFFMULCO).



The project also aims to engage wetland-dependent communities in a sustainable and biodiversity-friendly livelihood program, which is only one of many community improvements to come with this new partnership.

“Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary is designated as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention, recognized as a Heritage Park by the ASEAN, and legislated as a National Park by the Philippine government. We must join hands and combine our efforts from local to international level to maintain the ecological integrity of our globally-important peatlands,” RED Piang-Brahim said.

The internationally-recognized environmental programs of PLDT and Smart include their partnership with the UP Marine Sciences Institute (UPMSI) and Marine Environment Resources Foundation (MERF) for the benefit of 24 marine protected areas in the Philippines.

Smart’s Rainforest Connection and Connected Mangroves programs, which both utilize the Internet of Things (IoT) solutions and artificial intelligence to protect natural resources, were recognized in the recently-released global report of GSMA’s “Digital Dividends in Natural Resource Management.”

“All these sustainability projects are in line with our commitment to become carbon neutral,” Cabal-Revilla added.

“The climate change clock is ticking. There is no better time than now and no better weapon than a healthy peat to help level up the fight against climate change and its impacts. Through this partnership between the DENR, PLDT and Smart, a bright future for peatland conservation awaits,” ASec. Calderon said.

CONSERVE OUR PHILIPPINE PEATLANDS, PROTECT THE PLANET TO SAVE OUR FUTURE



Nationwide peatland inventory in progress

By Catherine Teves **November 7, 2020, 2:46 pm**



MANILA – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking into the extent of peatlands in the country to better map out plans and programs for conserving and protecting this ecosystem.

"A nationwide inventory of peatlands is ongoing," Biodiversity Management Bureau director, Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, said Friday during the virtual press conference for the department's partnership with telecommunications giant PLDT, Inc. and its subsidiary Smart Communications, Inc. on conserving the Caimpugan Peatland in Agusan del Sur province's Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary.

Such an inventory is necessary as the country's only known peatlands are Caimpugan – so far the remaining local intact peat swamp forest – and the Leyte Sab-a Basin Peat Forest in Leyte Island, Calderon said.

"There may be other peatlands that remain unrecognized and undiscovered," he said.

PLDT-Smart will assist the DENR in the undertaking.

"Part of our collaboration would be to help map out all peatlands that we have in the country," PLDT-Smart Chief Sustainability Officer Chaye Cabal-Revilla said at the virtual press conference.

Peatlands are terrestrial wetland ecosystems where waterlogged conditions prevent plant material from fully decomposing, resulting in the net accumulation of peat.

Calderon is open to the possibility that other peatlands may exist in the country, noting that the physical appearance of this ecosystem could mislead people into thinking it is merely an area of little or no value.

"A peatland is not always a sight to behold, especially if it has no vegetation. That's why others think these are marginal lands," he said.

Calderon said a peatland's physical characteristics and lack of public awareness about it make the ecosystem vulnerable to over-exploitation, burning, land conversion, and mining for fuel purposes.

"Urgent action is needed to save our peatlands," he said, citing the need for protection, conservation, and rehabilitation measures.

"Communication, education, and public awareness should be a vital component of the undertaking," he added.

According to Calderon, peatlands cover only about 3 percent of the Earth's surface but they can store more carbon than forests do.

He said a peatland's capability to store much carbon makes it vital in the fight against climate change.

Calderon said the Caimpugan Peatland alone sequesters and stores nearly 23 million tons of carbon dioxide.

"That's remarkably higher than any studied forest type in the country," he said.



Experts have raised the urgency of sequestering and storing carbon worldwide, noting that emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases accumulate in the atmosphere and trap heat, resulting in a rise in global temperature that is changing the climate.

Calderon thanked PLDT and Smart for partnering with the DENR on the Caimpugan Peatland.

"Saving and conserving peatlands seem like a big task but nothing is impossible if we work together to save this important ecosystem," he said.

PLDT-Smart is optimistic about the Caimpugan conservation partnership both companies sealed with the DENR last July.

"Through this landmark partnership with (the) DENR, we'll work together to help protect and conserve Caimpugan Peatland," Revilla said.

Acknowledging the danger of climate change and the need to mitigate carbon emissions, she assured PLDT-Smart's commitment to do business responsibly, resiliently, and sustainably. (PNA)



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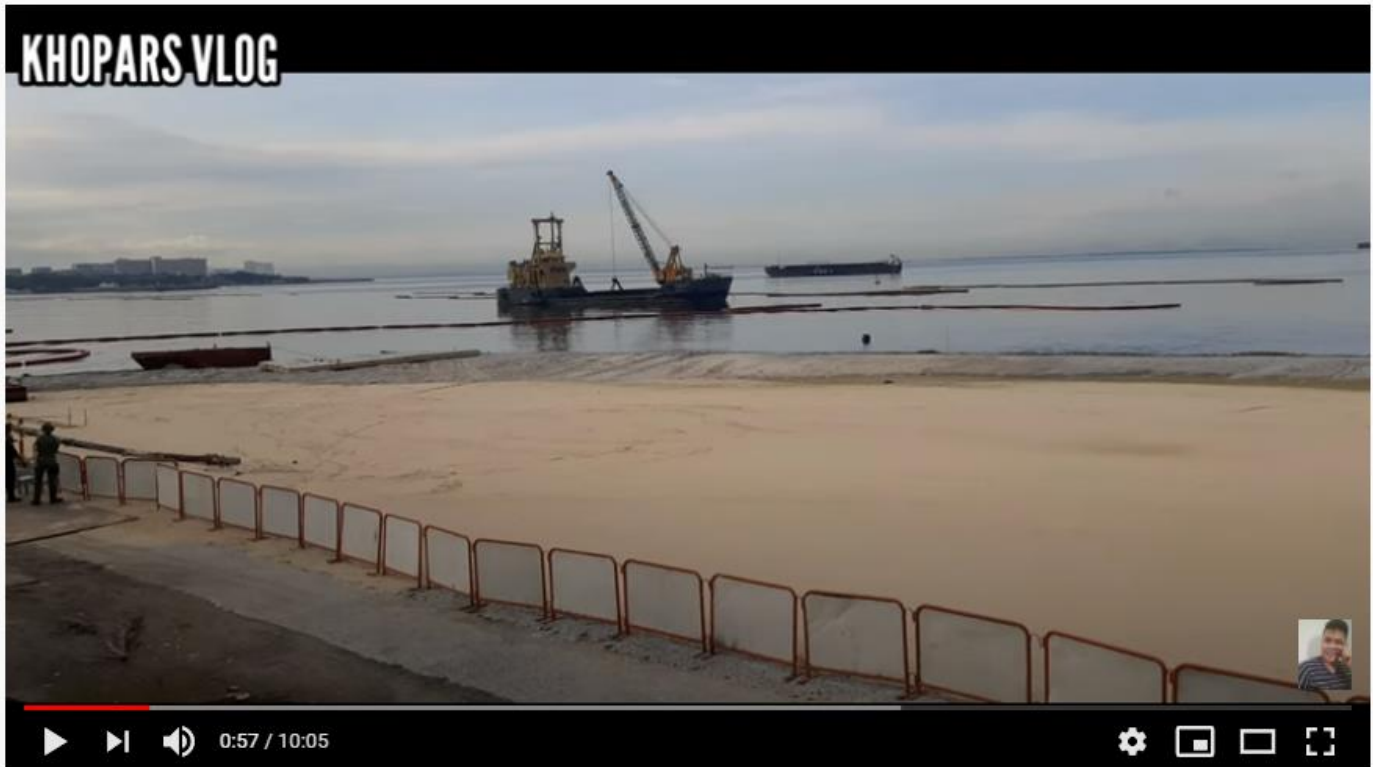
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Joseph Cortes, Editor

Sunday, 8 November 2020
Daily Tribune



PHOTOGRAPH BY AL PADILLA FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunephil_al

THE Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program has improved the ambient condition near the bay area, with the fresh air and clean water proving to be an attraction that families flock to this seaside mall for some quality time on weekends.



Inquirer Bandera ✓

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WATCH: Pagtatambak ng crushed dolomite sa Manila Bay nais paimbestigahan sa Senado



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P28 M sa white sand sa Manila Bay, sinayang lang...

Ilang opisyal ng gobyerno, pinaimbestigahan ni Sen. Kiko

ni [Lolet Abania](#) | November 6, 2020



Photo: Xinhua (left)

Nanawagan si Sen. Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan para sa isang imbestigasyon sa Senado kaugnay ng P389-million Manila Bay project kung saan gumamit ng dinurog na dolomite bilang white sand na ibinuhos sa gilid ng nasabing lugar dahil lumalabas na ang inisyatibong ito ay nasasayang lamang at may dalang panganib sa mga mamamayan.

“Napakaraming ibang dapat gastusan ng pera ng bayan, hindi ang white beach project sa Manila Bay. Lumampas na sa 380,000 ang COVID cases, marami nang dumaan na malalakas na bagyo, pero pinipilit pa rin na tama ito. Ang tanong: Kailangan ba talaga ito?” ayon sa pahayag ni Pangilinan ngayong Biyernes.

“This project is wasteful and unnecessary. Dapat ginamit ang milyun-milyong pondo para i-supplement ang ating pandemic health response, o kaya para sa distance learning gadgets at materials ng mga guro at estudyante. Puwede rin sanang cash aid para sa milyong mga Pilipino na nawalan ng trabaho ngayong pandemya,” dagdag ng senador.

Sa inihain ni Pangilinan na Senate Resolution No. 565, nakapaloob din dito ang tungkol sa pagpapanatili, legalidad at posibleng environmental at health hazards sa publiko na idudulot ng Manila Bay project.

Gayundin, nais ni Pangilinan na tingnan ang posibleng maging pananagutan ng mga opisyal ng gobyerno at maaaring paglabag sa mga sumusunod na batas:

- Local Government Code;
- Philippine Fisheries Code;
- Wildlife Conservation Act;
- Environmental Impact Assessment System;
- Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees; and/or
- Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.



“Hindi lang sa Manila Bay ang problema kundi pati na rin sa pagmimina ng mga dolomite sa Alcoy, Cebu na posibleng ikinasira ng mga coral reefs at pagkawala ng tirahan ng ilang endangered species. Sa madaling sabi, mas maraming problema pa itong dinala kesa solusyon,” sabi ni Pangilinan.

“Sayang ang pera, parang pinaanod lang sa dagat,” ayon pa sa kanya.

Samantala, dahil sa sunud-sunod na bagyo na tumama sa bansa, tinangay ng tubig ang ilang bahagi ng P28 million halaga ng dinurog na dolomite rocks na nakalagay sa baybayin ng Manila Bay, ayon sa lumabas na report.

Gayunman, patuloy ang ginagawang paliwanag ng Malacañang at Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) tungkol sa naturang proyekto.

Ayon kay DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu, ang pagsisikap na i-rehabilitate ang Manila Bay ay bilang tugon sa mandamus na inisyu ng Supreme Court (SC) sa gobyerno na linisin ang isang uri ng anyong tubig sa bansa.

Dagdag ni Cimatu, ang mga ginamit na dinurog na dolomite rocks ay hindi mapanganib at maaaring maka-treat sa pH level ng tubig na mula sa pagiging acidic nito ay maging alkaline.

Paliwanag pa ni Cimatu, ang pinagmulan ng pondo ay galing sa special purpose fund sa ilalim ng 2019 General Appropriations Act na nakalaan sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay.

Ayon naman kay Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, hindi maaaring kunin ng gobyerno ang pondong nakalaan na para sa Manila Bay “white sand” project at gamitin para sa COVID-19 response.

Gayundin, ayon kay Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Usec. Jonathan Malaya, ang nasabing proyekto ay inaprubahan ng Congress sa ilalim ng 2019 national budget, sumailalim sa competitive bidding, pumasa at in-award bago pa ang global pandemic.



UNTV News and Rescue

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Nais ng isang senador na maimbestigahan na sa Senado ang kontrobersiyal na Manila Bay white sand project. Handa naman ang DENR na humarap sa anumang imbestigasyon.



YOUTUBE.COM

Manila Bay white sand project, nais paimbestigahan sa Senado; DENR, handang humarap sa imbestigasyon



Cryptic Philippine pit vipers

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

November 8, 2020



Philippine pit vipers

Luzon is home to one of the most venomous snakes in the world. Yet, there is no antivenom for this endemic reptile.

A highly venomous lowland ambush predator, the Philippine pit viper is notorious to camouflage in its natural environment using its color or markings.



Besides, this snake has the ability to stay still for hours before attacking, or by hiding from potential predators in plain sight.

The bite of a Philippine pit viper transfers its deadly venom, causing excruciating pain. At the very least, the victim can lose a limb if untreated immediately, or worse, end up dead.

While there is no record of human death attributed to the bite of a Philippine pit viper, a researcher seeks to establish the cryptic diversity of this endemic reptile with the hope that life-saving antivenom can be developed someday.

USAID-funded research

Speaking during a webinar, dubbed “Connected to the Wild Biodiversity Research Series,” held on October 6, Yñigo del Prado, an MS Biological Science Student at the University of Santo Tomas, presented his study on Philippine pit viper and highlighted the country’s richness in terms of biological diversity and endemism.

The biodiversity research series features different researches funded and supported by the United States Agency for International Development under its Protect Wildlife Project and in cooperation with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB).



During his talk, del Prado said, “This rich biodiversity is explained partially by [the Philippines’s] equally rich geographic history and unique topography.”

Ecological importance

Snakes are ecologically important for being part of the food cycle in a particular ecosystem, said DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon.

In a telephone interview on October 21, Calderon said a healthy population of snakes, including the Philippine pit vipers, ensures a healthy or balanced ecology.

“They are part of the food cycle. As much as possible, we don’t want to disrupt the hierarchy. Any disruption to the food cycle will result in an imbalance,” said Calderon, the concurrent director of the DENR-BMB.

Snakes, he said, feed on small animals, like rats. “When your snake population goes down, the population of rats increases,” he explained.

Biogeographic regions

According to del Prado, following the numerous biodiversity studies done in the Philippines, lower sea levels during the glacier period repeatedly connected adjacent islands forming the Pleistocene Aggregate Island Complexes (PAIC), which allowed animals to cross nearby islands.

He said the country has five PAIC, namely Luzon, Mindoro, Palawan, Greater Mindanao and Negros-Panay islands.

“Each of these PAIC contains unique animals and are now considered as primary regions of biodiversity hosting distinct sets of wildlife,” he said.

He added that the unique topography of each landmass has helped explain intra-island biodiversity. “Mountain ranges, such as [those] in Luzon, have been found to contain localized micro endemism found only on specific mountains or islands, further identifying them as biogeographic regions,” he added.

Biodiversity hot spot

While the Philippines is indeed rich in biodiversity, del Prado agreed with other biodiversity experts in saying that unfortunately the country is also recognized as a global biodiversity hot spot because of numerous threats that result in a rapid rate of biodiversity loss.

These threats include habitat loss, climate change, disease, invasive alien species that propels plants and animals toward extinction, he explained.

“This puts us in a race to identify and underscore each and every species to take appropriate conservation steps,” he said.

Species identification

However, he said that naming one species from another is easier said than done.



Philippine pit vipers, he said, are also known for different names: ahas tulog, dupong, hingunguto, mandadalag, ramuranon and arimuranon.

A lot of species are described solely on the basis of looks, measurement and unique features, he said.

However, he said two or more species that are superficially indistinguishable and exist in a separate region has been the cause of confusion for taxonomist.

“This so-called cryptic diversity has been discovered, distinguished through distribution, morphology and ecology,” he said.

To avoid the pitfalls of mistakenly naming a species, scientists rely on molecular technique, which he used along with morphological analysis.

Cryptic speciation

Notorious for cryptic speciation—a biological process that results in having a group of species that contain individuals which are morphologically identical to each other but belong to different species—is the Asian green pit viper, the most diverse group of venomous snakes in tropical Asia, del Prado said.

“It is also the most commonly encountered venomous snake in Southeast Asia. Its members are very difficult to classify because of their wide distribution range and very similar anatomy,” he said. According to del Prado, there are 50 different species of green pit vipers, with a number still increasing through reexamination using molecular techniques.

Common lowland snake

The Philippines, he said, has three species of pit vipers occurring in separate, nonoverlapping regions. They are common lowland snakes that can benefit from further studies to differentiate them from other species of pit vipers.

These are the *Trimeresurus schultzei* that is known to occur only in Palawan; the *Trimeresurus mcgregori* that occurs exclusively in Batanes, and *Trimeresurus flavomaculatus* found throughout the country.

T. schultzei, commonly known as Schultze’s pit viper that was named after *W. Schultze*, who collected the type specimen; *T. mcgregori*, is known as McGregor’s pit viper, McGregor’s Tree Viper or Batanes Bambusotter; while *T. flavomaculatus*, is more commonly known Philippine pit viper.

“The [Philippine pit viper] occurs in all major Philippine islands except in Palawan,” del Prado said. All three species belong to the Indo-Malayan pit vipers.

Complicated history

The Philippine pit viper’s wide distribution has led to complicated taxonomy history, del Prado said.

The species was earlier described as three distinct species, which was found to be one and the same in 1879.



It was split into three subspecies again in 1964. Between 2001 and 2004, eventually, it was split into two valid species with the reestablishment of the *T. mcgregori* as a separate species.

But del Prado, in an e-mail message to the BusinessMirror on November 2, said there are other pit vipers that are known to occur in the Philippines.

Study focus

“There are five species of pit vipers [meaning they belong to the subfamily *Crotalinae*] in the Philippines. These belong to two genera, *Trimeresurus* and *Tropidolaemus*,” he said.

According to del Prado, for his study, he focused on only one species, the Philippine pit viper, but included the other two species for the molecular analyses.

“With plans of covering the entire archipelago, here I first focused on comparing [viper] populations on Luzon island,” he said.

Initial findings

As a result of his study, del Prado found and described four morphotypes which refer to their color and pattern morphs for individuals of the species found on Luzon island.

“Interestingly, based on previous fieldwork, photos and publications, there appear to be a unique set of morphs for those on Mindanao although I still need to examine live specimens from the area and, hopefully, all Philippine islands for comparison,” he said.

He added that molecular analyses reveal what taxonomists call a species complex.

“We found that [McGregor’s pit viper], which has been described as a separate species based on morphological evidence, nested within the [Philippine pit viper] group, separating [Philippine pit vipers] of Mindanao and Luzon,” he said.

But he said more data, such as taxon sampling, morphological analyses and molecular analyses are needed to make considerable taxonomic decisions.

Hemotoxic venom

Philippine pit vipers are known to have hemotoxic venom, or venom that destroy red blood cells. It damages the circulatory system and muscle tissue and causes swelling, hemorrhage and necrosis, or death of a body tissue.

But del Prado said during the webinar that Philippine pit viper bites are very rare. If ever, a bite causes intense swelling of the arm followed by extreme pain and necrosis.

While there is no record of deaths caused by snake bites, he said it doesn’t mean there are zero incidents.

“Maybe it is just because people are not reporting it,” he said.



Ambush predator

What makes the Philippine pit viper deadly is that it is an ambush predator and has the ability not to move, which explains why many call it ahas tulog.

He said there are reports, especially among local hunters from the Agta tribe that hunt shrimps, having been bitten by ahas tulog.

This happens when the pit viper feels threatened.

“The first defense of pit viper is a bite,” he said.

Need for antivenom

According to del Prado, while the Philippines is known for having some of the world’s most venomous snakes, it has no antivenom to speak off.

“We still have no antivenom. We have 150 species of snakes, 33 species of which are venomous and dangerous, but [antivenom for] only 1 species, for the Philippine cobra, was produced,” he lamented.

“Antivenom are supposed to be species-specific because venom toxicity and effects vary for every species,” he said.

Image credits: [Yñigo del Prado](#)



P55B IN 'SUPPOSED TAXES' UNCOLLECTED, SAY STATE AUDITORS

Mining companies oppose COA call for more royalties

By: [Julie M. Aurelio](#), [Karl R. Ocampo](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM November 08, 2020

The country's biggest group of mining companies has opposed the recommendation of the Commission of Audit (COA) and the Department of Finance (DOF) to impose royalties on mining projects outside mineral reservations areas (MRAs).

The Chambers of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) issued the statement to the Inquirer on Friday after the COA reiterated its proposal to amend the country's mining and tax laws.

According to the state auditing agency, the government has lost over P55 billion in "supposed taxes" over the past decade as those laws do not cover mining operations outside MRAs.

"Imposing additional royalties on Philippine mining projects outside [MRAs] such as that being proposed will stunt the industry's growth and will only provide additional revenues in the near term, which we believe is shortsighted," said Rocky Dimaculangan, COMP vice president for communications.

"It will make the Philippine mining industry uncompetitive and will deter investors from coming in, thus preventing foreign capital influx and other socioeconomic benefits, such as development of the countryside where minerals are abundant, and employment for people in rural areas," he added.

Royalties are currently charged only for mining operations within MRAs since the government itself spends considerable amount of funds to explore these areas. Because of this, COMP believes that royalties should not be imposed in areas outside MRAs.

Dimaculangan said the government could "take a long hard look" at small-scale miners instead.

Report on MGB

"The portion of the small-scale mining sector in the country that is unregulated produces far more gold than the legitimate large-scale mining industry—yet this sector does not pay taxes and, for the most part, its output is not captured, which could otherwise form part of the country's international reserves," he added.

In its 2019 report on the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), an agency attached to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the COA said as much as P13.229 billion in possible government earnings were lost from 2018 to 2019, and up to P55.402 billion in the last decade.

These amounts could have been collected had the National Internal Revenue Code (NIRC) been amended, said the agency, which also pushed for royalty collection outside MRAs in its 2017 report on the MGB.

"The opportunity losses and/or forgone revenues from nonimposition of royalty fee to mining companies operating outside the MRAs will continue to surge until the bill seeking ... the amendment of Section 151 of the NIRC will be passed into law," the COA said.



“The supposed taxes that could have been collected had the bill been passed and signed into law can be used by the government to finance its priority programs and projects, especially in this time of financial crisis due to the pandemic,” it added.

There are several bills pending in the Senate to amend the NIRC.

DOF proposal

Under Republic Act No. 7942, or the 1995 Philippine Mining Act, mining companies are required to pay royalty taxes for operating in MRAs. The tax should not be less than 5 percent of the market value of the gross output of minerals or mineral products extracted from MRAs, exclusive of other taxes.

The DOF has appealed to the Senate to pass its original proposal of a uniform royalty rate of 5 percent for all mining operations.

State auditors have found the DOF proposal—which is applicable to all operations in and outside MRAs—to be “more advantageous to the government.”

They recommended that the MGB “support the stand of the DOF” and “make representations with the Senate to help in the early passage of the bill into law so that taxes can be collected when imposed for the benefit of our country and the people, when necessary.”

There are over 10 government-declared MRAs nationwide.

The state-owned Philippine Mining Development Corp. handles two MRAs in the Caraga region: the Diwalwal gold mine in Compostela Valley and the Dinagat Chromite-Nickel mining project.



Capitol to furnish Cimatú 'full report' on dolomite damage in Alcoy seabed

By: Morexette Marie B. Erram - 8 hours ago



Jerry Dueñas, a fisherman from Alcoy, Cebu, looks at the conveyor belt that juts out of a mineral-processing plant in Barangay Pugalo. Dueñas said despite the controversies involving their town's dolomite rocks, it has not severely impacted their source of livelihood. CDN Digital photo (Sept. 25, 2020) | Morexette Marie Erram

CEBU CITY, Philippines – The Cebu Provincial Government is expected to send the full and consolidated report of the environmental assessment made on suppliers and exporters of dolomite in Alcoy town to Environment Secretary Roy Cimatú.

Governor Gwendolyn Garcia made this announcement in a recent press conference, adding that the Capitol is also planning a 'two-pronged approach' in dealing with the issues arising from the processing and transporting of dolomite rocks by Philippine Mining Service Corporation (PMSC).

"I hope I should be able to report and give a copy of this (report) to Secretary Cimatú within the week," said Garcia.

PMSC, based in Barangay Pugalo, Alcoy town in southern Cebu, is the sole processor and exporter of dolomite rocks in Cebu.

Garcia said while they are waiting for the official inter-agency report on the dolomite firms' environmental impact in Alcoy's seabeds, they are currently working to lodge formal complaints related to alleged tax violations against PMSC.

"I'm saying, this is a two-pronged approach. We're dealing with their financial obligations to the Province of Cebu and the environmental damages," she explained.

The governor said the provincial government has already issued a demand letter to the company, asking them to explain why they were not able to comply with an existing Provincial Ordinance that mandates operators doing businesses in Cebu province to pay 10 percent of the fair market value of their products as tax.



“We will first start with their tax obligations since we have already sent them a demand letter. [It will be a tax case](#),” said Garcia in a mix of English and Cebuano.

Garcia, quoting findings from the Provincial Treasurer’s Office, said PMSC should have paid a total of P1.9 billion in tax when the ordinance took effect last 2011.

“They have been assessed based on the tax volumes from 2012 to 2020... Under our Provincial Revenue Code, Section 124, they should be paying tax amounting to 10 percent of the fair market value and the amount does not include surcharges and penalties yet,” she added.

Issues surrounding and tied to dolomite processing in Cebu surfaced when government officials earlier confirmed that processed dolomite rocks used as the artificial, white-sand beach component of Manila Bay’s rehabilitation project were sourced from Alcoy, a fifth-class municipality located more than 110 kilometers southeast of Cebu City. /rcg



Probe of quarrying operations in Albay sought

Published November 7, 2020, 4:11 PM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

Environment group Kalikasan has called for an independent investigation on the quarrying operations that allegedly caused the lahar flow in Guinobatan, Albay during the onslaught of super typhoon “Rolly” last week.

The group issued the call as presidential spokesperson Harry Roque downplayed the effects of quarrying as beneficial, despite the destruction it might have caused.

“The flow of lahar in the community of Barangay San Francisco in Guinobatan tells a tale of probable mismanagement, or even illegal quarrying activities, as some residents doubt that quarrying is not involved,” said Kalikasan Peoples’ Network for Environment national coordinator Leon Dulce.

“While Gov. (Al Francis) Bichara claims that the lahar that submerged the village is not due to quarrying, no stone should be left unturned in checking if there was negligence or illegal activities in Mayon,” Dulce said.

“It’s about time the environmental ombudsman take a look at possible accountability in the non-implementation of laws, or failure of the government to mitigate the impact that displaced hundreds of families by the lahar flow,” he added.

Kalikasan noted that the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology had warned of the chances of lahar in the province before Rolly plowed into Albay but Guinobatan was not included in the list of municipalities at risk.

The lahar from Mayon Volcano left hundreds of families homeless with millions of losses in livelihood.

For Kalikasan, considering the warnings issued by Phivolcs, the failure to implement strong measures to cushion the impact of natural disasters reflects the lack of planning of the Duterte administration.

Given the high vulnerability of the Philippines to climate-related disasters, the damages become bigger every time a calamity hits, it added.

“Under the Duterte administration, the country remains among the worst in climate vulnerability and refuses to learn from the mistakes of previous natural disasters. It raises urgency to respond to climate change, yet damages are never mitigated,” Dulce said.

“Until a solid plan to respond to climate change, including putting a premium on environmental conservation, this cycle of disasters will continue,” he added.

‘Demise of land’ in Albay blamed on quarrying

By Rhaydz B. Barcia, TMT

November 8, 2020

First of a series

LEGAZPI CITY: An avalanche of volcanic rocks and other materials in Guinobatan town buried the villages of San Rafael and San Francisco during the height of Super Typhoon “Rolly,” Mayor Noel Rosal said.



This photo taken on November 2, 2020 shows residents shovel ling mud and clearing debris in an area where houses were buried by boulders and lahar washed from the slopes of nearby Mayon Volcano in the village of Cagsawa in Daraga town, Albay province, after super Typhoon Goni made landfall in the Philippines on November 1. (Photo by Charism SAYAT / AFP)

Mayor Rosal said this could have been prevented if quarrying activities were regulated and current quarrying activities around the Mayon Volcano were immediately suspended for further assessment.

The Guinobatan mayor asked Albay Gov. Al Francis Bichara to suspend the quarrying activities at the southeast quadrant of the Mayon Volcano that covers the villages of Mabinit, Matanag, Bonga, Buyuan and Padang.

In a letter sent to Bichara on Friday, Rosal expressed the sentiment of residents of Mayon’s southeast quadrant, which centers on fear of further loss of lives and property should more typhoons and natural calamities beset the town.

These villages, Rosal said, are at higher risk of lahar flows during excessive rains. A lahar flow consists of a mixture of water and volcanic materials that cascades and rampages in low lying areas, destroying houses and infrastructure on its path. It could reach as far as 10 kilometers or more.

At the height of Rolly (international name: “Goni”) on November 1, lahar flows and flash floods smashed through the villages of Guinobatan, Daraga and Camalig. The multimillion dike constructed by the government did not prevent the lahar and flash floods from the residential areas.

Rosal said he pleaded with Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to suspend all quarrying around Mayon Volcano.

He and the residents are blaming the unregulated quarrying in the area.

On November 1, Rosal checked out the southern villages of Legazpi, where a mudslide occurred as reported by residents. After he conducted an inspection with the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office, he discovered traces of lahar flows on the village of Matanag, which swept through at the height of Rolly.



The City Council of Legazpi, he said, will conduct a thorough investigation with the assistance of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources central office staff, who visited the province to help in the probe.

Albay province's wealth of nonmetallic deposits include high grade aggregates mined from Mount Mayon. These debris from Mount Mayon, now deposited within the slopes, riverbanks and tributaries, are lucrative sources of construction materials and are quarried for its high-grade content.

The Albay sand and gravel sites are located at the villages of Basag, Tambo, Nasisi, Pinit and Batang in Ligao City; Tandarora and Maninila in Guinobatan town; Quirangay in Camalig town; Salvacion, Malabog and Budiao in Daraga town; Nagas in Tiwi, Albay; San Antonio in Tabaco City; Barangay San Jose and Binitayan in Malilipot town; Mabinit, Matanag, Bonga, Buyuan and Padang in Legazpi City.

Governor Bichara told The Manila Times that income from quarrying operations rose from P10 million during Gov. Jose Maria "Joey" Salceda's term to P200 million under his watch.

(To be continued)



Albay temporarily suspends quarry operations around Mayon Volcano

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Nov 7, 2020 3:31:48 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, November 7) — Quarry operations in select barangay at the foot of Mayon Volcano were temporarily suspended pending a hazard assessment in the aftermath of a strong typhoon.

Albay Governor Al Francis Bichara issued Executive Order 35 on the suspension in response to appeals from people in Mabinit, Bonga, Matanag, Buyuan, and Padang in Legazpi City. They fear that quarrying activities endanger their lives.

The executive order took effect Saturday. It did not indicate an end date.

Albay has granted more than 200 permits to quarry operators around Mayon.

Board Member Dante Arandia, chairman of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan committee on environment and natural resources, said each operator has three to five hectares of quarry area.

CNN Philippines correspondent Rosas Olarte contributed to this report.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/regional/2020/11/7/Albay-temporarily-suspends-quarry-operations-Mayon-Volcano--.html>



Quarry truckers block Pampanga exits

posted November 08, 2020 at 12:20 am

by [Jess Malabanan](#)

City of San Fernando, Pampanga—Traffic flow along the Pampanga section of the North Luzon Expressway was paralyzed for almost an hour, creating a long queue of vehicles, after quarry truckers blocked at least eight toll gates at dawn on Saturday.



NO WAY IN. In this drone camera footage, a barricade of quarry trucks causes monstrous traffic along the Pampanga section of the North Luzon Expressway at dawn Saturday. PIO Pampanga

“Movement of vehicles, mostly carrying goods for Metro Manila, have been blocked by trucks that barricaded the entry and exits of NLEX toll gates Pampanga section, creating heavy traffic at least for one hour,” said Col. Andres Simbajon, acting director of the Pampanga Provincial Police Office.

Toll gates closed by truckers included Sta. Ines, Dau, and Mabiga, all in Mabalacat City; San Fernando Exit; San Simon Exit; Mexico; Floridablanca; and Porac where quarrying operations thrive in these areas.

The barricade was a show of protest to the management of NLEX because of what they called its insensitivity to the plight of sand and lahar haulers. Another issue raised was the unabated mulcting activities by NLEX patrol and illegal collection of exorbitant fees.

More than 2,000 truckers are plying the Pampanga area via NLEX to haul good quality sands and washed down from upstream of different waterways in the event of heavy rains.

Simbajon said truck drivers only cleared the toll gates after Pampanga Governor Dennis Pineda appealed to members of the truckers association.

Haulers put up the barricades to protest against the policy of NLEX Corp. prohibiting the entry of 12-wheeler and 14-wheeler trucks on the tollway since late August.

NLEX Corp officials also snubbed the Nov. 6 meeting with quarry trucking firms to finalize the allowable load of cargo, said Lennard Lansang, president of the Porac Truckers and Haulers Association.

Lansang said they ended the protest at 7:20 a.m. after Pineda committed to take the issue to national leaders.

“All that its management does is talk. It does not provide solutions,” Pineda said, adding he was worried for the 4,000 drivers and helpers who do not earn income as the ban entered its third month.

The daily rates of drivers and helpers are P1,000 and P500, respectively. Haulers get a profit of P2,000 after operational expenses and amortization on vehicles.

Pineda said during the latest dialogue, haulers informed him they had reduced the sidings of their trucks to be able to comply with the allowable load on NLEX.

“They cannot use the MacArthur Highway because it is busy and the road condition is bad,” he explained. The governor said the prohibition was not being enforced squarely because information reaching him showed that some patrol guards allowed heavier trucks in exchange for P1,000.



Pineda also slammed the management of NLEX Corp. after two of its patrol guards arrested a protesting driver at gunpoint.

NLEX will file criminal charges against the truckers association, informed sources said.



Quarry operators hinarangan ng trak NLEX entry, exit points

Saturday, November 7, 2020 Jun I. Legaspi22

INIHARANG ng mga Pampanga hauling and quarry operators ang kanilang mga dump truck sa entry at exit points ng North Luzon Expressway na naging sanhi ng heavy traffic sa buong lalawigan Sabado ng umaga.

Ayon sa mga operators, sila ay nagpo-protesta sa kautusan ng NLEX na ipagbawal sa mga lampas sa 12-wheeler truck ang paggamit ng expressway.

Kabilang sa mga apektadong entry at exit point ay ang San Fernando, San Simon, Mexico, Angeles, Mabalacat, Dau at Sta. Ines at ng mga entry at exit point ng SCTEX sa Porac at FloridaBlanca.

Ayon kay Lennard Lansang, pangulo ng Porac Truckers Association, dalawang buwan na umanong hindi pinapayagan ng NLEX na dumaan ang mga truck sa mga expressway.

Sabi ni Lansang, milyong piso na ang nawawala sa kita ng mga hauling operators at maging sa quarrying collection ng Pampanga.

Humingi na daw sila ng dialogue sa Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation ngunit makailang beses na silang hindi hinarap para pag-usapan ang kanilang concern.

Inilapit na daw nila kay Gov. Dennis Pineda ang kanilang hinaing at agad naman itong umaksyon subalit hindi rin daw ito pinansin ng MPTC.

Kaya nagdesisyon ang mga truckers na iharang sa lahat ng entry at exit points ng NLEX ang kanilang mga truck para sila ay mapansin ng MPTC.



NLEX to continue dialogue with Pampanga quarry truckers

By Marna Dagumbay Del Rosario November 7, 2020, 4:40 pm



CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga – The North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) Corporation is assuring the motoring public that concerns about legal load limits being raised by motorists and truckers are taken seriously by the management.

The statement came after Pampanga quarry-based haulers barricaded several NLEX interchanges on Saturday morning in protest of the temporary rerouting of 12-wheeler dump trucks.

The NLEX, in its statement, said it compelled to temporarily regulate the entry of perennially overloaded 12-wheeler dump trucks for safety reasons while major rehabilitation of the five-kilometer Candaba Viaduct is ongoing.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of the 35-year-old Manila-bound carriageway of the Candaba Viaduct started last August.

Before the project's implementation, the tollway company said it reached out to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), Pampanga Governor Dennis Pineda's office, and the mayors of San Fernando, San Simon, Apalit in Pampanga, Calumpit, Pulilan, Malolos, and Guiguinto in Bulacan, the affected trucking groups, and the Pampanga Chamber of Commerce to highlight the urgency of repairing the Candaba Viaduct to assure its long-term viability as a vital road link between North and Central Luzon and Metro Manila.

The NLEX also said that it issued public advisories that the reconstruction will require the closure of certain lanes and the implementation of temporary counter-flow traffic measures.

To assuage the concerns of the affected quarry-based truckers and haulers, the NLEX said dialogues are ongoing to demonstrate proper and compliant procedures for loading their trucks.

The NLEX currently implements the load limits provisions of R.A. 8794 and the Joint DOTr-DPWH Implementing Rules and Regulations revised in 2012 which sets the maximum load limits for trucks nationwide. (PNA)

NLEX to continue dialogues with Pampanga quarry truckers on safe and proper loading

November 7, 2020



NLEX PR

NLEX Corporation is assuring the motoring public that concerns on legal load limits being raised by motorists and truckers alike are being taken seriously by the management.

The statement comes after 150 Pampanga quarry-based haulers barricaded several NLEX interchanges early this morning in protest of the temporary rerouting of 12-wheeler dump trucks while the major rehabilitation of the 5-kilometer Candaba Viaduct is ongoing.

Last August 2020, NLEX commenced the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the 35-year-old Manila-bound carriageway of the Candaba Viaduct and was compelled to temporarily regulate the entry of perennially overloaded 12-wheeler dump trucks for safety reasons.

Prior to the project's implementation, the tollway company reached out to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), Pampanga Governor Dennis Pineda's office and the mayors of San Fernando City, Angeles City, Mabalacat City, San Simon, Apalit in Pampanga, Calumpit, Pulilan, Malolos City, and Guiguinto in Bulacan, the affected trucking groups, and the Pampanga Chamber of Commerce to highlight the urgency of repairing the Candaba Viaduct to assure its long-term viability as a vital road link between North and Central Luzon and Metro Manila.

The NLEX also issued public advisories that the reconstruction will require closure of certain lanes and the implementation of temporary counterflow traffic measures.

Meanwhile, to assuage the concerns of the affected quarry-based truckers and haulers, dialogues are ongoing to demonstrate proper and compliant procedures for loading their trucks.

The NLEX currently implements the load limits provisions of R.A. 8794 and the Joint DOTR-DPWH Implementing Rules and Regulations revised in 2012 which sets the maximum load limits for trucks nationwide.

Meanwhile, NLEX continues to implement other road safety rules required under RA 4136 or The Land Transportation and Traffic Code of the Philippines which provide standard criteria for apprehending unsafe and improper loading.



Several communication, education and enforcement programs are ongoing to ensure awareness and compliance of road safety measures by the truckers and haulers.

With the recent programs, reports show that load limit compliance has increased indicating that the trucking sector is supporting the road safety programs and appreciating the value of promoting the safety of the expressway users.



Bill promotes enhanced environmental protection

Saturday, November 7, 2020 Ryan Ponce Pacpaco5

A HOUSE leader has filed a bill to enhance environmental protection, uplift the lives and natural resources personnel and better equipped agencies in the management and development of environmental related projects and programs.

"The State shall instill environment consciousness among our people to effectively carry out the different environmental programs and projects of the government essential for the protection, preservation and revival of the quality of the environment and natural resources of the country," said House Deputy Speaker and 1-PACMAN party-list Rep. Mikee Romero, President of the 54-strong Party-list Coalition Foundation Inc. (PCFI), in filing House Bill (HB) 1334.

HB 1334 also known as "Magna Carta for Environment and Natural Resources Personnel" aims to promote and improve the health, physical safety, social and economic well-being of the environment and natural resources personnel, their living and working conditions, security and terms of employment; to develop their skills and capabilities in order that they will be more responsive and better equipped to deliver environmental management functions and sustainable development of natural resources in their attainment of projects and programs; and to encourage those with proper qualifications and excellent abilities to join, contribute their expertise and remain in government service and in the country.

"Section 16, Article II of the Constitution laid down the framework for the protection and advancement/promotion of the people's right to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature. The right to a clean environment is recognized as a human right in the country, it being a duty imposed upon the State and responsibility required of individuals," Romero pointed out.

The lawmaker added that the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) personnel includes but is not limited to the personnel of the DENR, its Bureaus, Regional Offices and attached agencies, environmental units in the other government agencies; the ecological solid waste management and climate change adaptation and disaster risk management departments of the local government units; and units of other government agencies that are involved in environmental management, pollution prevention and rehabilitation works.

This includes forest rangers and park rangers that look after the forest and protected areas. However, their salary, is not as large as the area he is protecting where a forest ranger has jurisdiction over a very large forest area, around 5,000 to 10,000 hectares.

Romero is pushing for the immediate passage of HB1334 to encourage those with proper qualifications and excellent abilities to remain in government service and in the country to work together for a clean and healthy environment.



Pushing the global launch of 'trillion trees'

Published November 7, 2020, 6:37 PM

by [Former House Speaker Jose C. De Venecia Jr.](#)

PEACE-MAKER



Jose de Venecia Jr.
Former Speaker of the House

We are still pushing our old "Billion Trees" program for the Philippines and hopefully for other countries which we launched when we had the good fortune, by God's grace, to be elected five times as speaker of the House of Representatives.

Our dream at the time was for a worldwide launch of a "Trillion Trees" to green the countries and the communities of the world, provide timber, housing, and fruits for all peoples, and save our environment at the same time.

Although, rightfully, our attention and efforts are now focused on stamping out the raging coronavirus pandemic, let us not negate other threats of nature that have been besetting our country and the world for many years now and for which we have been warned about.

One of those is environmental degradation which, sadly, most of us have been taking for granted, if not completely ignore. While this columnist is not an environmental expert, we believe this clear and present danger could explode in the near future.

This global threat is becoming more and more serious that the World Economic Forum last January, 2020, launched a program to "grow, restore, and conserve one trillion trees around the world and in a bid to restore biodiversity and help fight climate change."

As we mentioned in our column much earlier, we were elated by the same initiative by the World Economic Forum as we have been advocating a "Trillion Trees Program" in the international community since our earlier years as speaker of the House of Representatives and as founding chairman of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), as well as in the various international organizations which we are privileged to serve.

We believe reforestation and tree farming, on the scale and intensity the planet needs, can and must become a significant jobs-creating economic stimulus for developing countries, if not all countries, that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the regional banks, parliaments, political parties, and civil society should champion.

Massive tree planting can become a virtuous circle — of planting, cultivating, harvesting, processing timber, and replanting, a forever cycle that can generate tens of millions of jobs worldwide for poor young men and young women in the emerging countries, apart from addressing food shortage and expanding upland agriculture, and especially, perhaps more importantly, contributing in a most significant way to the battle against climate change and environmental degradation.



For just as valuable, these new forests control mountain erosion, prevent the silting of streams and rivers, save human life from destructive floods that overflow the rivers, destroying crops, fish farms, livestock, cities, townships, villages, and hard-won economic gains.

We proposed these programs can be organized through what we might call “Billions of Trees Foundations” managed by civil-society groupings, and strongly supported by governments, parliaments, and political parties, or perhaps, even better, undertaken by governments themselves, and actively supported even managed by the private sector.

We wish to note that in 1933, during the Great Depression, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt formed the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), composed of 6 million young jobless Americans, mostly from the East, which, in less than 10 years, built more than 800 parks and planted 3 billion trees nationwide.

Roosevelt put the then younger Douglas MacArthur, before he became the legendary World War II hero, in charge of the CCC — or Roosevelt’s Tree Army.

Our country should support and be in the forefront of the global effort to plant trillions of trees to save the present and future generation and insure the longevity of our planet Earth.



Refinitiv joins global reforestation campaign

By [BusinessMirror](#)

November 8, 2020



Refinitiv Philippines completed a reforestation project at the La Mesa Dam and Reservoir as part of the company's global reforestation initiative called the "Refinitiv Global Forest."

Through the project, led by its Sustainability Action Team, Refinitiv aims to help combat climate change by planting and conserving 1 million trees across the world by 2030 through its identified sites.

The activity served as a prelude to the identification of a third Refinitiv Global Forest site, to be unveiled in the Philippines in 2021. The first two sites were launched this year in Scotland and Tanzania, respectively.

The Refinitiv Global Forest mirrors Refinitiv's 2020 sustainability goals, which are guided by three core pledges on environment, social impact and sustainable initiatives—all in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Early this year, the global provider of financial markets and data also announced the early achievement of these targets and is already moving forward with a new set of goals for 2025 and 2030.

Refinitiv is one of the world's largest providers of financial markets data and infrastructure, serving over 40,000 institutions in over 190 countries.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/11/08/refinitiv-joins-global-reforestation-campaign/>



EU Delegation discuss green recovery and sustainable reporting in webinar

By [BusinessMirror](#)

November 8, 2020

Environmental, science and business journalists, government communications officers and journalism students from across the country participated recently in “State of Play: Green Recovery and Sustainable Reporting,” a webinar mounted by the European Delegation to the Philippines that discussed issues and actions in dealing with climate change and environmental degradation.

The European Union is implementing a new growth strategy called the “European Green Deal” to build back better green policies, programs, investments, and commitment to green, digital and resilient recovery.

The European Green Deal outlines an action plan to boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy, restore biodiversity, and cut pollution to become a climate-neutral economy by 2050.

Part of the EU’s agenda is helping other countries, such as the Philippines, in sustainability efforts—from financing to addressing climate change, to technology and research collaboration. Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, in his videotaped address, thanked the EU for being a dependable partner in taking action against the climate crisis as the country shifts its investments to clean energy resources and green technologies.

“There is no Planet B. We either save the Earth or perish with it,” Dominguez said.

“There is no quick solution to the climate crisis. We need to act together now and EU has helped us expand our sustainable energy generation capacity to meet our economy’s growing needs. We hope to learn more from the European Union’s technological innovations in water management and conservation, sustainable energy, and modern agriculture,” he added.

He said the world can address the climate emergency “with a better and more informed approach.” “We have a wealth of information and innovative solutions on how to best deal with the climate crisis. We should be more prepared to save lives and prevent the worst possible outcomes,” he added.

Thomas Wiersing, Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of the EU Delegation to the Philippines, said the EU is ready to continue its engagement with the Philippines in approaches to ensure environmentally sustainable economic activities.

“The EU also supports the Philippines in making energy efficiency and conservation a national way of life,” he said.

The EU Delegation to the Philippines hosted the webinar to foster greater awareness among journalists about the effects of climate change and how the EU and the Philippines cope with these challenges.

“The EU recognizes that journalists play a critical role in creating awareness to help the public know how to act against climate change and governments to make informed decisions,” Wiersing said.



The Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists (PNEJ) President Imelda Abano discussed the important role journalists play in solving the world's environment crisis in her talk "Reporting Beyond Disasters and Climate Change."

"As journalists, we need to build increasingly compelling stories so we can act decisively, with urgency. It can save lives, formulate plans, change policy and empower people to make informed choices. We can push our governments to do more by writing solution-oriented stories," Abano shared.

In his talk on "Climate Change Disinformation," Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Manny Mogato advocated for fact-checking and accuracy in news reports to counter rampant disinformation in environment reportage.

"In the Philippines, false information easily spreads because Filipinos rely on social-media platforms to get information. As journalists, we cannot allow disinformation to win. We have to fight back by becoming more accurate, fair, impartial, and transparent, and we can achieve this with available tools we have at our disposal," he said.

Other speakers included Finance Assistant Secretary Paola Alvarez; GA Circular's Head of Operations Tam Nguyen; Republic Cement's EcoLoop Director Atty. Angela Edralin-Valencia; EU Delegation to the Philippines's Programme Manager Giovanni Serritella and International Relations Officer for Southeast Asia, DG Environment, European Commission Katarina Grgas Brus.



‘Untapped potential exists for animal biotechnology’

By [BusinessMirror](#)

November 8, 2020

A more progressive regulation on animal biotechnology may hold the potential to contribute to food security and a more sustainable agriculture, according to an Argentinian expert in regulation and policymaking for biotechnology.

“If the Philippines has the opportunity to revise regulations on animal biotechnology, it can provide the capacity to assess if these technologies may be used for food production in the country and contribute to food security and a more sustainable agriculture,” Dr. Martin Lema of the University of Quilmes in Argentina said.

Lema spoke at the recent Searca Online Learning and Virtual Engagement (SOLVE) webinar of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca).

He provided a broad perspective on regulatory frameworks applied to the genetic improvement of animals using innovative breeding tools like marker-assisted breeding, cloning, transgenesis and genome editing.

He also emphasized the need for a sound regulatory framework on animal biotech.

The SOLVE webinar was jointly organized by Searca in collaboration with the United States Embassy Manila and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) to provide unbiased science-based information.

US Embassy Manila Chargé d'affaires John Law affirmed the shared commitment of the United States and the Philippines to a science-based approach to agriculture.

Both countries, together with a diverse group of nations, strongly support safe technologies by co-sponsoring an international statement on precision biotechnology at the World Trade Organization.

“The Philippines is continuing to demonstrate its commitment and leadership in the global stage in providing farmers the tools they need to address the array of challenges we face in producing safe, sustainable, and abundant food, feed, and energy,” Law said.

He added that the 10-year Science and Technology Agreement between US and the Philippines “celebrates the strong cooperation between US and Philippine research institutions and expands our joint activities in agricultural, environmental, and health sciences.”

Besides Lema, experts from the United Kingdom and the Philippines shared their expertise on global and local animal biotech applications as well as the regulations and challenges in the field.

Dr. Simon Lilico of the University of Edinburgh presented the global state of animal biotechnology and introduced current initiatives being done and technologies being explored in other countries.

Dr. Claro Mingala of the Philippine Carabao Center gave updates on initiatives being done locally.



He said that since the use of genetically modified organisms in the Philippines is still confined to biotech crops, the benefits from animal biotechnologies in the country are in the developed rapid animal disease test kits, reproductive biotechnologies, and product development.

Mingala also cited potential benefits of animal biotechnologies for Filipino farmers in conjunction with proper animal management, such as increased income of livestock food producers, doubled food production to meet the supply in demand, creation of climate change and disease resilient or resistant animal and development of rapid diagnostics and modern animal disease surveillance.

He said the Philippines is not far behind in terms of animal biotechnology applications.

Mingala pointed out that “biotech has a lot of potential in increasing our livestock production, but it is only one of the options.”

He added that “biotech does not take your freedom of choice. We agree what biotechnology offers to farming communities—to sustain supply of food and food security. As scientists, we are here to help achieve a food secure community.”

The experts also addressed the participants’ questions on animal welfare, food security and safety, benefits of animal biotech, future of animal biotech research in the Philippines, and regulatory policies.

Since 2000, Searca has been a partner of ISAAA in responding to information needs and promoting and advancing a broader public understanding of crop biotechnology.

The webinar on the “Unrealized Potential of Animal Biotechnology” is an effort in monitoring the local agri-biotech environment and within Searca’s priority focus on food and nutrition security under its current five-year strategic plan (2020-2025), which is intent on Accelerating Transformation Through Agricultural Innovation.



DAR-to-Door Service

Agrarian reform chief personally delivers land titles to farmer-beneficiaries to speed up implementation of CARP Phase 2

By Jonathan L. Mayuga

November 8, 2020



Secretary John R. Castriciones personally hands over a Certificate of Land Ownership Award to agrarian reform beneficiary Anthony delos Reyes in the middle of his farm in Barangay Pagolingan, Palauig, Zambales, on July 2, 2020. Delos Reyes, who had been a tenant and farming the land for 30 years, received his land title comprising a total of 7,500 square meters agricultural land.

AMID the onslaught of the 2019 coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the Duterte administration, through the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), has stepped up the implementation of various programs to help Filipino farmers who belong to the “poorest of the poor” sector in the country cope with the times.

Despite travel restrictions with the imposition of community quarantines to control the spread of the virus since March, the DAR continued to distribute certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs) and provide support services to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) through various ARB organizations (ARBOs).



DAR Secretary Castriciones hands over a land title to a CARP agrarian reform beneficiary.

Aside from the land acquisition and distribution backlog it inherited from the previous administrations, DAR is also implementing the Duterte administration’s version of agrarian reform, or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) Phase 2, targeting the distribution of public agricultural lands to qualified farmer-beneficiaries.

The DAR is also on its toes in implementing agrarian justice delivery (AJD), addressing legal conflicts arising from the implementation of the land acquisition and distribution (LAD) component of the program, while providing vital support services, including access to credit and/or finance to boost farmers’ capacity.

Tedious legal battles

IN distributing CLOAs to 605 ARBs in San Narciso, Quezon, last month, DAR Secretary John R. Castriciones said the process went through tedious legal battles that even reached the level of the Supreme Court before the DAR was finally able to implement land acquisition and distribution.

During a brief message highlighting the CLOA distribution, Castricones declared: “We will not stop distributing land titles, help and support to our farmers.”



Castricones: “We, in the Department of Agrarian Reform, are bringing the message of hope for our farmers. We are going around the country, bringing to them the good news that the Department of Agrarian Reform will always be there to support them and to extend to them the much-needed assistance at this point in time.”

Land distribution, or CLOA distribution, under Castricones is marked by “Serbisyong DAR-to-Door” wherein the official takes time to personally hand over CLOAs to select farmer-beneficiaries, mostly aging, if not ailing farmers, who have long been waiting to receive the CLOA from the DAR, before proceeding to a designated venue for the ceremonial CLOA distribution and turnover of the package of support services to ARBOs.

“We, in the Department of Agrarian Reform, are bringing the message of hope for our farmers. We are going around the country, bringing to them the good news that the Department of Agrarian Reform will always be there to support them and to extend to them the much-needed assistance at this point in time,” Castricones said during a virtual news conference held a week after distributing CLOAs in Arakan Valley in North Cotabato, comprising 4,663 hectares of land to 3,035 ARBs last month.

More CLOAs registered

THE DAR, CARP’s lead implementing agency, has always been criticized for its backlog in terms of land acquisition and distribution. Undersecretary for Field Operations David D. Erro reported that DAR’s backlog remains at 523,000 hectares.

Reporting on the performance of the agency under the Duterte administration, Erro however said that from July 2016 to June 31, 2020, CLOAs for 124,648 hectares benefiting 103,450 beneficiaries have been registered.

“It can be observed that while CLOA registration targets were reduced annually since 2016, accomplishments increase from 2018 to 2019. For the calendar year 2019, DAR accomplished 32,241 hectares out of its target of 41,077 hectares, or this is 78-percent performance, the highest since 2016,” he reported.

‘Lockdown’ effect

THE DAR accomplishment as of August 31, 2020, is 8,366 hectares, benefiting 5,993 ARBs. “This accomplishment is only 28 percent of DAR’s annual target. The primary reason for low accomplishment was the nationwide lockdown with the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine due to the Covid-19 pandemic from mid-March 2020 to date,” he said.

Although the community quarantine was lowered in some provinces starting April 2020, he reported that CARP-partner agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, LandBank, and Registry of Deeds/Land Registration Authority were implementing skeletal deployment of personnel.



For calendar year (CY) 2020, he reported that the DAR was able to distribute 12,684 hectares to 9,043 recipient-agrarian reform beneficiaries, or 61 percent of DAR's annual target in terms of area and 46 percent in terms of ARBs.

However, the official is optimistic that the target will be surpassed by the end of December 2020. If emancipation patents (EPs) and CLOAs from LandBank were to be included in the total accomplishment, distribution is pegged at 455,094 hectares, benefiting 365,169 ARBs.

EPs and CLOAs from LandBank are turned over to the DAR by virtue of DAR MC 5, Series of 2019.

CARP Phase 2

UNDER CARP Phase 2 under the Duterte administration's agrarian reform program, Erro said, government-owned land under Executive Order 75, Series of 2019 is ongoing.

There are 217,120.98 hectares of government-owned land (GOL) that can be covered under Executive Order 75, Series of 2019, he said.

However, Erro said out of 217,120.98 hectares of GOL identified for coverage and eventual distribution, only the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority had executed a Deed of Transfer for over 289 hectares (Davao de Oro) in favor of the department.

"Other agencies of the government are not cooperative but the department is exerting all efforts, including legal confrontations, to cover these GOLs," he reported.

Meanwhile, Erro said the DAR is working to further subdivide collective CLOAs under the Project Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) Project.

According to Erro, a total of 1,380,420 hectares nationwide will be parceled and issued individual titles.

Swift, efficient agrarian justice

FOR his part, DAR Legal Affairs Office Undersecretary Luis Meinrado Pañgulayan said the implementation of a swift and efficient agrarian justice delivery program is on the right track. DAR's agrarian justice delivery program, he said, gives life to the DAR's mandate.

As of June 30, 2020, the DAR Adjudication Board (DARAB) Central Office, which had 4,183 as the total number of cases for the action of the secretary from 1988 to 2020, now only has 6 pending cases.

The Bureau of Agrarian Legal Assistance (BALA) Central Office, on the other hand, which has a total of 1,469 total number of cases for the action of the secretary from 1988 to 2020, now only has 41 total number of pending cases.

For Agrarian Law Implementation (ALI), as of June 30, 2020, from 1988 to 2020, the backlog was recorded at 132,233. Now it has only a remaining 3,760 total number of pending cases.

Special ALI cases, which had a total of 2,808 backlog for the same period, now only has a total number of 196 pending cases.



Pañgulayan said the cancellation cases, which reached a total of 11,064 from 1988 to 2020, now only has 454 total number of pending cases as of June 30, 2020.

Zero backlog program

THE DAR's zero-backlog program was launched in January 2019. It covers the two prongs of the agency's Agrarian Legal Services: first is the agrarian legal assistance of BALA, which handles the resolution of agrarian cases, representation of beneficiaries before judicial and quasi-judicial bodies, and mediation and consultation; second is the adjudication of agrarian cases of the DAR Adjudication Board (DARAB), which handles regular cases (ejectment, declaration of tenancy status, termination of leasehold relation, etc.) and determination of land valuation.

The zero-backlog program aims to achieve a 100-percent accomplishment rate in the resolution of the beginning balance of cases in 2019, or the resolution of all cases from 2018 and the preceding years.

"I believe that we will all resolve them before the year ends," Pañgulayan said.

Package of support

MEANWHILE, the DAR continues to provide support services to ARBs. The latest beneficiaries of the package of support services are more than 1,000 farmers from the Province of Pangasinan, who received more than P7 million worth of assistance and interventions extended by DAR through its Support Services Office.

The bulk of the assistance comprised of farm machinery and equipment was distributed to 11 ARBOs. Castriciones, who led the turnover of farm equipment on October 28, 2020, handed over five farm tractors, 80 backpack sprayers, and one unit each rice thresher, soybean grinder and pulverizer. Also, turned over by DAR are 1,000 kilos of soybean seeds, 1,173 bags of fertilizers, 176 boxes of foliar-bio fertilizers, 464 bags of palay seeds, and 64 cans of onion seeds.

Financial services

Meanwhile, the DAR vowed to intensify access to financial services of ARBOs and production clusters under the agro-enterprise development approach of the Linking Smallholder Farmers to Markets with Microfinance (LinkSFarMM) to help uplift the lives of ARBs and smallholder farmers and farmer organizations.

In a statement issued by DAR on November 3, Undersecretary for Support Services Office Atty. Emily O. Padilla said the goal is to continuously provide financial services to 48,000 ARBs or 50 percent of the targeted 90,000 cluster ARB-members until calendar year 2022.

As of December 2019, the project's total accomplishment showed big opportunities for the agri-credit programs to expand its outreach, since only 11 percent, or 5,222, out its 484,000 ARBs and smallholder farmers cluster-members have been provided with production loans by the 85 (52 percent) ARBOs from the 118 target sites.

There are still 89 percent, or 478,778 cluster ARB-members, who can still be provided with financial assistance to enable them to comply with the production requirements of their identified institutional buyers.



Padilla said that the specific objective of LinkSFarMM is to make smallholder farmers increase agricultural productivity. The agro-enterprise development approach is adopted by the DAR to identify supply, demand and access to market chains of products.

Image credits: dar.gov.ph



Sunday, 8 November 2020
Daily Tribune



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF WWF

WWF-Philippines launches the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme Assessment together with the partners from business sector and the government.

WWF continues fight vs plastic pollution

Building on its No Plastics in Nature initiative, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines releases a report entitled “Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme Assessment for Plastic Packaging Waste in the Philippines.”

This report, undertaken with cyclos GmbH and AMH Philippines Inc., highlights EPR as a critical and effective policy tool in holding manufacturers accountable for the end-of-life impacts of their plastic products and packaging.

EPR as a policy instrument also encourages adoption of holistic eco-design among the business sector. The proposed EPR scheme has been based on the findings of the first Material Flow Analysis of plastic packaging waste in the Philippines.

In response to this, Cagayan de

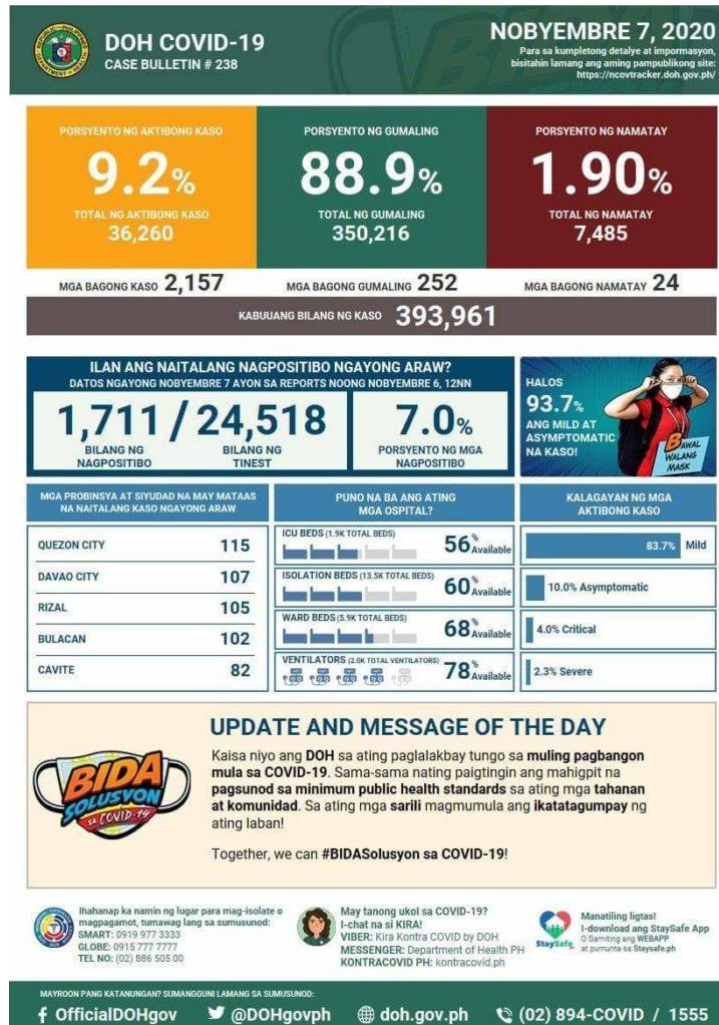
Oro City 2nd District Representative Rufus Rodriguez filed the House Bill 6279 or the Extended Producers Responsibility for Plastic Waste Act that establishes the legal framework and policy for the EPR scheme in the Philippines.

“Addressing plastic pollution requires both upstream (production/pre-consumption) and downstream measures (consumption and post consumption). Working on the entirety of the plastic life cycle, stakeholder collaboration is important in both reducing the production and the consumption of unnecessary plastic, and also in managing plastic products and packaging, ensuring that materials are used as long as possible in our society,” said WWF-Philippines executive director Joel Palma.



BREAKING: Kaso ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas, umabot na sa 393,961 na

By Angellic Jordan November 07, 2020 - 04:07 PM



Hindi bababa sa 2,000 ang panibagong kaso ng Coronavirus Disease o COVID-19 sa Pilipinas.

Sa huling datos ng Department of Health (DOH) bandang araw ng Sabado (November 7), umabot na sa 393,961 ang confirmed cases ng nakakahawang sakit sa bansa.

Sa nasabing bilang, 36,260 o 9.2 porsyento ang aktibong kaso.

Sinabi ng kagawaran na 2,157 ang bagong napaulat na kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa.

83.7 porsyento sa active COVID-19 cases ang mild; 10.0 porsyento ang asymptomatic; 2.3 porsyento ang severe habang 4.0 porsyento ang nasa kritikal na kondisyon.

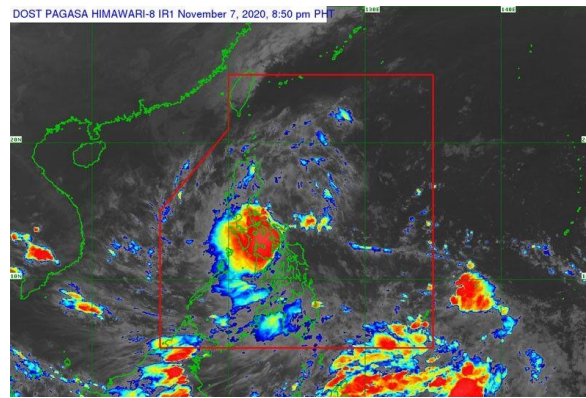
Nasa 24 muli ang napaulat na nasawi.

Dahil dito, umakyat na sa 7,485 o 1.90 porsyento ang COVID-19 related deaths sa bansa.

Ayon pa sa DOH, 252 naman ang gumaling pa sa COVID-19.

Dahil dito, umakyat na sa 350,216 o 88.9 porsyento ang total recoveries ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas.

Source: <https://radyo.inquirer.net/274059/breaking-kaso-ng-covid-19-sa-pilipinas-umabot-na-sa-393961-na>



Siony left the Philippine Area of Responsibility at midnight yesterday and is turning southwestward towards the West Philippine Sea. It is forecast to weaken into a low pressure area in the next 24 to 36 hours.

PAGASA

As storm Siony exits, new LPA slowly moves in

[Romina Cabrera](#) (The Philippine Star) - November 8, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Severe Tropical Storm Siony left minimal damage as it passed near Batanes province, according to Gov. Marilou Cayco.

Cayco said that the tropical cyclone left an estimated P4.9 million worth of agricultural damage in the province and did not affect any infrastructure.

“Fortunately, it did not affect our constituents. No damage to roads or infrastructure. No damage to water, electric and communication,” she said in Filipino at a Laging Handa press briefing.

Siony left the Philippine Area of Responsibility at midnight yesterday and is turning southwestward towards the West Philippine Sea. It is forecast to weaken into a low pressure area in the next 24 to 36 hours.

Cayco attributed the minimal effects of the cyclone to early preparations by the local government units and their residents.

“As you know about Batanes, we are the playground of storms. The disaster risk reduction management council met immediately and quickly prepared, and concerned agencies were mobilized,” she added.

In a related development, a low-pressure area off of Eastern Visayas will bring rains over the Bicol Region and Samar, and could develop into Tropical Depression Tonyo before making landfall.

In its weather advisory yesterday, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said that the low-pressure area could develop into Tonyo over the next 36 hours when it is near or over the Philippine landmass.

Tropical cyclone wind signal No. 1 will be hoisted over areas in its track once it develops.

PAGASA said that moderate to heavy with at times intense rains will be experienced over the Bicol Region, Northern Samar, Eastern Samar and Samar.



Meanwhile, moderate, with at times heavy rains, may be seen over CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Mindanao and the rest of Visayas.

This could cause flooding, rain-induced landslides or sediment streamflows during heavy or prolonged rainfall, especially in high-hazard areas.

The low-pressure area was spotted 205 km east of Guluan, Eastern Samar at 10 a.m. yesterday.



Veganism no cure for climate change – study

By [Agence France-Presse](#)

November 8, 2020

SALT LAKE CITY: The world likely can't keep global warming to a relatively safe minimum unless we change how we grow, eat and throw away our food, but we don't need to all go vegan, a new study says.

Researchers looked at five types of broad fixes to the food system and calculated how much they fight warming. They found that sampling a buffet of partial fixes for all five, instead of just diving into the salad bar, can get the job done, according to a study published in journal Science.

If the world food system keeps on current trajectories, it will produce near 1.5 trillion tons of greenhouse gases (almost 1.4 trillion metric tons) over the next 80 years, the study found.

That's coming from belching cows, fertilizer, mismanaged soil and food waste. That much emissions — even if the globe stops burning fossil fuels which produce twice as much carbon pollution as food — is enough to likely warm Earth by more than the goals set in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

“The whole world doesn't have to give up meat for us to meet our climate goals,” said study co-author Jason Hill, a biosystems engineering professor at the University of Minnesota. “We can eat better, healthier foods. We can improve how we grow foods. And we can waste less food.”

The researchers from the United States and the United Kingdom found:

- A nearly complete switch to a plant-rich diet around the world could slash almost 720 billion tons of greenhouse gases (650 billion metric tons).
- If almost everyone ate the right number of calories based on their age, around 2,100 calories a day for many adults, it would cut about 450 billion tons of greenhouse gases (410 billion metric tons).
- If farming got more carbon efficient — by using less fertilizer, managing soil better and doing better crop rotation — it would slice nearly 600 billion tons of greenhouse gases (540 billion metric tons).
- If farms could increase yield through genetics and other methods, it would trim almost 210 billion tons of greenhouse gases (190 billion metric tons).
- If people waste less food either on their plates, in restaurants or by getting it to people in poorer countries, that will eliminate nearly 400 billion tons of greenhouse gases (360 billion metric tons).

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/11/08/news/world/veganism-no-cure-for-climate-change-study/792729/>



Dead mink are pictured at the farm of Henrik Nordgaard Hansen and Ann-Mona Kulsoe Larsen as they have to kill off their herd, which consists of 3000 mother mink and their cubs on their farm near Naestved, Denmark, on November 6, 2020. Denmark announced special restrictions for more than 280,000 people in the country's northwest after a mutated version of the new coronavirus linked to mink farms was found in humans.

AFP/Mads Claus Rasmussen/Ritzau Scanpix

Denmark defends virus measures after mink mutation

(Agence France-Presse) - November 7, 2020 - 1:06pm

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Denmark on Friday defended the strict measures it has imposed on the north of the country after a mutated version of the new coronavirus linked to mink farms was found in humans.

Copenhagen has warned that the mutation could threaten the effectiveness of any future vaccine, and has ordered the slaughter of all of the country's minks, estimated at up to 17 million.

"These are timely and necessary measures" amid a "worrying" development, Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod said at a press conference for foreign press.

The Scandinavian country on Wednesday announced the mutation had jumped from minks to humans and infected 12 people.

Those cases were all detected in the North Jutland region, officials said Friday, correcting earlier information that the region was home to 11 of the 12 cases.

In seven North Jutland municipalities, the estimated 280,000 residents were on Thursday urged to stay within their municipal borders to limit the spread of infection.

Public transport in the region has been halted and bars and restaurants ordered shut, and some schoolchildren will also have classes online in restrictions that are due to last a month.

Scientists say virus mutations are common and often harmless, and this one doesn't cause a more severe illness in humans.

But Danish health authorities have expressed concern that this strain, known as "Cluster 5", is not inhibited by antibodies to the same degree as the normal virus, which they fear could threaten the efficacy of vaccines that are being developed across the globe.



Scientists around the world have noted that little is known about "Cluster 5", urging Danish authorities to share their research.

In addition, the 12 human cases date back to September with no new cases reported since, raising questions Friday about whether Denmark had overreacted.

"We'd rather take a step too far than a step too little," Kofod told reporters.

Further research on "Cluster 5" is ongoing, Danish officials said.

The Stockholm-based European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said Friday it was "in close contact" with Danish health authorities on the issue.

"The possibility of an antigenic mutation in SARS-CoV-2 may have potential implications for immunity, reinfections and the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, but there is currently high uncertainty. Further analyses and scientific studies are needed to better understand the identified mutations and their potential implications," it said.

On Friday, more than 100 mink farmers protested against the mink slaughter, which is due to be completed in a few weeks.



6 countries reported coronavirus on mink farms, WHO says

Published November 7, 2020 6:58pm

Denmark and the United States are among six countries that have reported new coronavirus cases linked to mink farms, the World Health Organization said.

Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden are the other nations to have discovered SARS-CoV-2 in minks, WHO said in a statement.

Denmark has imposed strict measures on the north of the country after warning that a mutation of the virus had jumped from minks to humans and infected 12 people.

Copenhagen has warned the mutation could threaten the effectiveness of any future vaccine and has ordered the slaughter of all the estimated 15-17 million minks in the country.

Britain on Saturday banned entry to all non-resident foreigners coming from Denmark after the mutation linked to mink farms was found in humans.

Scientists say virus mutations are common and often harmless, and this one doesn't cause a more severe illness in humans.

But Danish health authorities have expressed concern this strain, known as "Cluster 5", is not inhibited by antibodies to the same degree as the normal virus, which they fear could threaten the efficacy of vaccines that are being developed across the globe.

"Initial observations suggest that the clinical presentation, severity and transmission among those infected are similar to that of other circulating SARS-CoV-2 viruses," the WHO statement said on Friday.

"However, this variant... the 'cluster 5' variant, had a combination of mutations, or changes that have not been previously observed. The implications of the identified changes in this variant are not yet well understood," WHO warned.

The UN agency said preliminary findings indicated this mink-associated variant has "moderately decreased sensitivity to neutralizing antibodies".

WHO called for further studies to verify the preliminary findings and "to understand any potential implications of this finding in terms of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines in development".



"Although the virus is believed to be ancestrally linked to bats, its origin and intermediate host(s) of SARS-CoV-2 have not yet been identified," WHO noted.

Since June 2020, 214 human cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Denmark with SARS-CoV-2 variants associated with farmed minks, including 12 cases with a unique variant, reported on 5 November. **-Agence France-Presse**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/world/763190/6-countries-reported-coronavirus-on-mink-farms-who-says/story/>



STUDY CAN IMPROVE CARE OF ANIMALS KEPT IN ZOOS

Research: Captive monkeys prefer traffic to jungle noise

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 05:02 AM November 08, 2020

HELSINKI—They may be naturally suited to swinging in rain forests, but monkeys in a Finnish zoo have demonstrated a “significant” preference for traffic sounds instead of the noises of the jungle, researchers have found.

As part of an experiment to see how technology could improve the well-being of captive animals, researchers installed a tunnel fitted with sensors in the enclosure of the monkeys at Helsinki’s Korkeasaari Zoo, giving the primates the chance to choose to listen to the sounds of rain, traffic, zen sounds or dance music.

“We thought they would enjoy more calming sounds, such as zen music, but actually they triggered the traffic sounds more,” Ilyena Hirskyj-Douglas, a researcher at Finland’s Aalto University, told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Mimics monkey sounds

The soundtrack of vehicles rumbling past proved overwhelmingly the most popular choice for the animals, who sometimes slept or groomed themselves and each other inside the sound tunnel—something they did not do for any of the other sounds, Hirskyj-Douglas said.

The zoo’s research coordinator, Kirsi Pynnonen, said she believes the road sounds in fact mimic some of the monkeys’ natural means of communication.

“In the wild, these monkeys use high-pitched hissing, squeaking and croaking to stay in contact,” she said of the noises made by the animals which they may also hear in the traffic noise.

Extra stimuli

Sound experiments have been performed on animals in captivity before, but the scientists say this was the first attempt to try and give the creatures full control over what they want to listen to.

In the future, it could enable zoos to provide animals with extra stimuli in their enclosures. Hirskyj-Douglas said the animals could, for instance, control their lighting, heat or the temperature or even play games.

“The technology is very much open and we’re just starting to bridge into this area.” Other zoos around Europe have shown interest in the research findings, Pynnonen said, and the team will look next at installing screens inside the tunnel for the monkeys to watch if they choose.

White-faced saki monkeys are midsize primates native to the northern countries of South America, where they are “relatively numerous” but threatened by the destruction of the rain forest, Pynnonen said.

“Despite what many people think, they don’t eat bananas at all, but seeds, insects and some fruits,” she added.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1357798/research-captive-monkeys-prefer-traffic-to-jungle-noise>