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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



## Oil spill cleanup 80% done

By ... -April 12, 2021

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it has completed 80 percent of the cleanup of the oil spill incident off the town of Jasaan, Misamis Oriental.

The oil spill last April 3 resulted from the sinking of cargo vessel MV Racal IV which has been docked in a shipyard in the coastal town for five years.

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said in a statement the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in Northern Mindanao is coordinating with the local government of Jasaan, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the owner of the affected vessel to prevent further contamination of coastal communities.

Based on the initial investigation of the EMB, three tons of bunker oil has contaminated one square kilometer portion of the bay, affecting five barangays including Lower Jasaan, Upper Jasaan, Luz Banzon, Kimaya and Solana.

Reynaldo Digamo, EMB-Misamis Oriental regional director, said a "faint odor" was noted from the spill along the coast of Barangay Luz Banzon.

Likewise, accumulation of oil debris was also seen in mangrove trees and docked boats which affected the livelihood of fisherfolk.

Digamo said the PCG commissioned Far East Fuel Corp., a registered transport, storage and disposal facility to remove and transport the collected oil and oil-contaminated materials. -Jed Macapagal



## DENR NAGLABAS NG PATAKARAN SA “IMPERMANENT LAND FORMS”



April 11, 2021 @ 1:20 AM 1 day ago

NILAGDAAN ni kalihim Roy Cimatu ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources ang Department Administrative Order No. 2020-16 na mga panibagong patakaran kaugnay sa disposisyon ng mga lupang nabuo dahil sa “accretion” na malapit sa agricultural areas at sa pamamahala sa mga river islet, dried creek at river bed at sa ‘public lands on stable and impermanent land forms.’

Ang kautusan ay nakaangkla sa Executive Order No. 192, Reorganization Act of DENR, Republic Act No. 9729, Climate Change Act at R.A. No. 10121, Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act at Public Land Act at Civil Code of the Philippines.

Ayon kay kalihim Cimatu, ang mga patakaran ay sumusuporta sa basic duty ng gobyerno upang matiyak ang efficient conservation, management, development, safety, security, equitable distribution and use of the country’s environment and natural resources.

Base sa nakasaad sa DENR guidelines, ang mga islet tulad ng sandbars at delta ay hindi maaaring dumaan sa kahit anomang paraan ng pagpapatitulo o “any mode of titling” maliban kung ito ay idineklarang “open for disposition” sa pamamagitan ng batas mula sa Kongreso o kaya naman ng isang presidential proclamation.

Base sa depinisyon ng DENR, ang islets ay maliliit na isla na nabuo dahil na rin sa galaw ng karagatan, ilog at iba pang anyong tubig. Ito ay hindi matatag at hindi permanente sa kaanyuan.

Samantala, ang dried creeks at river beds ay hindi maaaring sakupin dahil ito ay pag-aari ng estado bilang “property of public dominion” base na rin sa nakasaad sa Article 502 ng Civil Code of the Philippines.

Ang DENR regional office, sa pamamagitan ng Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO), Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) at iba pang naatasang dibisyon mula sa regional offices ay magsasagawa ng pag-aaral upang matukoy ang physical at biological conditions kabilang na rito ang ecology, geology, topography, hydrology, soil quality at ang exposure sa environmental at climate risks ng mga lupa.

Sa mga kasukdulang kondisyon, ang mga lugar na ito ay maaaring italagang “no-build zone areas.”



Samantala, ang mga lupang nabuo dahil sa “accretion” na nakapaloob sa isang bloke na naituring na agricultural land ay maaaring buksan para sa disposition batay na rin sa mga probisyon ng Commonwealth Act 141 (as amended) o ang Public Land Act at sa Section 2, Chapter 2 of Book II, Title II ng Civil Code of the Philippines.

Nakasaad din sa DAO 2020-16 na kung ang lote ay natituluhan na, kinakailangang maipa-survey at mapaaprubahan ito ng may-ari para sa administrative titling, at magtungo sa korte para ito ay makuha niya.

Ngunit kung ang lote naman ay wala pang titulo, ang nasabing lupa ay kinakailangang maipa-survey at maaprubahan para sa “administrative titling.”

Maaari rin na i-consolidate ito ng claimant ng lupa para sa “filing” ng public land application.

Bukod dito, “lands formed within non-navigable or non-floatable lakes and rivers ‘shall be governed by the provisions of Article 465 of the Civil Code.’

Nakasaad pa sa DAO na ang disposition ng mga lupang ito ay kinakailangang magkaroon ng karagdagang clearance o certification mula sa MGB regional office.

Ang CENRO ay kinakailangan ding makuha ang clearance o certification upang matukoy ang “physical” at “geological condition” ng lugar kung ito ay maaaring matirhan ng tao.

Ayon din sa implementasyon ng mga patakaran na ito, ang batas sa “easements” na nakasaad sa Article 51 ng Presidential Decree 1067 o ang Water Code of the Philippines at DAO 99-21 at 92-13 ay mahigpit din na ipatutupad.



## NWRB NAGPAPATUPAD NG ONLINE VIRTUAL INSPECTION SA PAG-ISYU NG CPC



April 12, 2021 @ 1:21 AM 5 hours ago

PATULOY pa ring magpapatupad ang National Water Resources Board (NWRB) ng Online Virtual Inspection sa pag-isyu ng Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) at Iba Pang Mga Kaugnay na Aplikasyon.

In line with Board Resolution No. 07-0720 of July 23, 2020, regarding the conduct of online virtual inspection, the NWRB will be implementing Memorandum Order No. 2021-01 in all applications for Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) and other CPC-related applications so that these may be processed despite travel restrictions.

Alinsunod sa Board Resolution No. 07-0720 ng Hulyo 23, 2020, patungkol sa pagsasagawa ng online virtual inspection, ipatutupad ng NWRB ang Memorandum Order No. 2021-01 sa lahat ng mga aplikasyon para sa Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) at iba pang aplikasyon na may kaugnay sa CPC upang ang mga ito ay maaaring maproseso sa kabila ng mga paghihigpit sa paglalakbay.

-ooOoo-

### US AT KOREA, NAGTULUNGAN PARA SA DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES NG PILIPINAS

Lumagda sa isang Memorandum of Understanding sina USAID Philippines mission director Lawrence Hardy II at KOICA Philippines acting country director Jasesang Hwang para sa pagtutulungan sa mga development priorities ng Pilipinas noong ika-7 ng April 2021

Sinaksihan ito nina US Embassy charge d' affaires John Law at Korean Ambassador to the Philippines Inchul Kim sa US Embassy sa Roxas Boulevard, Manila.

Ang nasabing MOU ay bahagi ng US-Korean partnership for sustainable development na kanilang sinimulan noong pang taong 2019.

Kabilang sa mga proyektong pagtutulungan ng dalawang bansa ay ang poverty reduction in rural areas, empowerment of women and girls, water resource management, community rehabilitation in Marawi city, at climate change resilience.

Layunin ng mga proyektong ito ang pagkakaroon ng "sustainable and inclusive development" sa bansa na base sa konsepto ng "bayanihan" kung saan kilala ang mga Pilipino.



Ang US at ang Korea ay kabilang sa mga “largest bilateral donors” ng Pilipinas. Sa loob ng tatlong dekada, pinalawak pa ng Korea ang tulong nito sa bansa sa pamamagitan ng grants at budgetary support. Ito ang second-largest development assistance donor ng bansa.

Sa pamamagitan naman ng USAID, nakapaglaan na ang US ng halagang **five point one billion US dollars** (US\$ 5.1 billion) sa Pilipinas simula pa noon taong 1961.

Maraming salamat, USAID at KOICA sa patuloy na pagtulong at pagsuporta sa Pilipinas.



# Partnership eyes saving 470 near-endemic tree species

By ... -April 12, 2021



Europe-based Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) has extended its partnership grant with Lopez-led geothermal leader Energy Development Corp. (EDC) for two more years to assess and conserve additional 200 Philippine endemic tree species and 470 near-endemic species.

Near-endemic species are those that can be found not only in the Philippines but also in two or three more countries, while endemic species are those that can only be found in the Philippines.

Under the company's flagship BINHI greening program, EDC was tapped in May 2019 as the first and sole partner of BGCI for its Global Tree Assessment (GTA) program for the conduct of conservation status assessments of 800 Philippine endemic tree species for two years. BGCI is the secretariat of the IUCN for GTA, an organization that formulates measures for the protection of the environment through data gathering, research, field projects, advocacy and education.

Through the partnership, EDC received a grant of 16,160 pounds or more than P1 million. BGCI also trained the BINHI team, its partner organizations, and representatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the IUCN Red List methodology, a vigorous and globally respected procedure following strict guidelines and data requirements on extinction risk assessments.

According to Megan Barstow, conservation officer of BGCI, before 2019 only 248 assessments for trees native to the Philippines were published on the IUCN Red List. To date, there are now 1,225 assessments, 42 percent of which were contributed by EDC in collaboration with Pro-Seeds Development Association Inc., an organization based in the University of the Philippines–Los Banos (UPLB) composed of young professionals engaged primarily in various environmental research as well as the promotion and development of environmentally sound management strategies.

"There's not just tree assessments that we need to be doing to help save the world's tree species, we also need to be taking conservation actions. BINHI is already a great example of this, working with its community farmers and leading on protection and propagation of the 96 priority threatened tree species," said Barstow. "I think that the National List of Threatened Species for the Philippines is also going to be taking on the Philippine assessments for trees that have been produced by EDC, which hopefully means there will be more national attention to the tree assessment program already established."

Over 6 million trees have been planted and nearly 10,000 hectares of land have been reforested with the help of 88 farmer associations under the BINHI program. Additionally, 187 partnerships have produced 15 arboreta, and seven more are expected to be established. Four vegetative material reproduction (VMR) nurseries have also been established in different locations in Negros Island, Antipolo City and Mt. Apo in Davao.

Source: [https://malaya.com.ph/index.php/news\\_special\\_feature/partnership-eyes-saving-470-near-endemic-tree-species/](https://malaya.com.ph/index.php/news_special_feature/partnership-eyes-saving-470-near-endemic-tree-species/)



## Alminaza: God's mercy and ours



ALMINAZA, GERARDO

### [BISHOP GERARDO ALMINAZA](#)

#### Bes Chat With Bp G

April 11, 2021

LAST Sunday, we observed the Feast of Divine Mercy. We are encouraged to appreciate the nature of and seek God's loving mercy through meditation and prayer, as we ask the Lord to put an end to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has brought our people so much misery and sorrow.

The pandemic has proven to be no less than an existential threat to our population, with the number of infected individuals and deaths continuing to rise even as our national and local leaders have imposed strict travel restrictions and lockdowns. With the rollout of vaccinations being slower than what we had hoped, it also highlights the need for decisive leadership and people-centered governance in times of such crisis. It also highlights our role as citizens to do our part in ensuring not only our own safety and survival but also that of our families and our neighbors.

In the same way that we look to God for mercy in these trying times, we must also look at ourselves and our communities as to how we extend His mercy and love to our brothers and sisters. We are, after all, not just put here on this earth to be recipients of healing but also to be instruments of healing. Take, for example, our relationship with nature

Here in Negros, the Panay-Guimaras-Negros (PGN) Bridges Project is currently being proposed under the Administration's Build, Build, Build Program. The rationale for the said Project is to make transportation easier for pedestrians and vehicles and to facilitate economic growth in Western Visayas. For the past weeks, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have been conducting consultations and assessments in order to start construction on this massive project.

However, among the outcomes of these consultations and assessments is the threat the PGN Bridges pose to the environment and biodiversity in its impacted areas. It was found that such areas are part of the Negros Occidental Wetlands Conservation Area (NOWCA), recognized as a Wetland of International Importance by the global scientific community. It is home to global populations of protected species such as the Irrawaddy dolphins, dugongs and globally threatened sea turtles. Constructing exit or entry points to the PGN Bridge in the Municipalities of Pulupandan and Valladolid or the City of Bago will surely destroy the habitats of such endangered species. This, aside from the immediate environmental and safety hazards such constructions would pose to the populations in that area.

In the same way that the Covid-19 pandemic poses an existential threat to our population, the PGN Bridges' construction poses an existential threat to Mother Nature and our fellow creations. In the same way that we look to God to deliver us from the pandemic, these threatened species also look to us in exercising mercy to spare them from death and extinction. In both cases, we know the importance of leaders with the heart for the people and the capacity to exercise decisive and compassionate policies. Thus, it is my prayer that in the same way, we citizens exercise our role as instruments of God's mercy in sparing the lives of these vulnerable populations in our pursuit of economic growth.





There are those who will say that in order for profit and ease to be achieved, some lives must be sacrificed. But that is not what we are called to do. We are not called for a life of profit and ease, but of mercy and stewardship. And given our history with man-made calamities and climate-related disasters, it should be clear to us that we do not only help the Environment by being good stewards, we are also ensuring our own survival.

As we seek God's mercy in the context of the pandemic, I hope we see that we can be the mercy others seek for their safety and survival: whether it is for the sake of our poorest neighbors, or for the sake of our Common Home. My hope is that in these dark times where the need for God's mercy is painfully apparent, that we also look inward and ask ourselves how we are faring in exercising God's love and mercy.



The project will assist 30 developing countries, including the Philippines, in preventing and reducing marine litter from the maritime transport and fisheries sectors.

Pixabay/Stock

## Philippines joins global initiative tackling marine litter scourge

[Pia Lee-Brago](#) (The Philippine Star) - April 12, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines is taking part in the GloLitter Partnerships Project, a major United Nations-backed initiative to tackle marine litter scourge, clean up the oceans and decrease the use of plastics in industries.

The project will assist 30 developing countries, including the Philippines, in preventing and reducing marine litter from the maritime transport and fisheries sectors.

Partnering in this endeavor are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The project was launched last Thursday with initial funding from the government of Norway through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

The new project is in line with the global development goal on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources.

It seeks to prevent and reduce plastic litter such as lost or discarded fishing gear and campaigns for decreased use of plastics and recycling in the fisheries and maritime transport industries.

The FAO and IMO intend to better protect the fragile marine environment, as well as lives and livelihoods, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 that is committed to prevent and reduce marine pollution and conserve and use the oceans sustainably.

Five regions will be represented in this global effort: Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific.

Ten countries have been confirmed as Lead Partnering Countries (LPCs) and another 20 countries have been selected as Partnering Countries (PCs) of the GloLitter Project.

LPCs will take lead roles in their respective regions to champion national actions which support the IMO Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear. The LPCs and PCs will work together, via a twinning working arrangement, to build regional support for the project.



The 10 LPCs are Brazil, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria and Vanuatu.

The 20 PCs are Argentina, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Ecuador, Gambia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga and Vietnam.

They will also receive technical assistance and training as well as guidance documents and other tools to help enforce existing regulations.

The project will promote compliance with relevant international instruments, including the Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, which contains regulations against discharging plastics into the sea.

“Plastic litter has a devastating impact on marine life and human health,” said Manuel Barange, FAO’s director of Fisheries and Aquaculture. “This initiative is an important step in tackling the issue and will help protect the ocean ecosystem as well as the livelihoods of those who depend on it.”

“Marine litter is a scourge on the oceans and on the planet,” said Jose Matheickal, head of the IMO’s Department for Partnerships and Projects. “I am delighted that we have more than 30 countries committed to this initiative and working with IMO and FAO to address this issue.”

#### Phil, UAE sign MOU

Meanwhile, the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the establishment of a joint consular committee to create a bilateral mechanism for the protection of the interest of their nationals by mutually providing timely and effective assistance on a whole range of consular matters.

The signatories on behalf of their respective governments were Philippine Ambassador to the UAE Hjayceelyn Quintana and UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Assistant Undersecretary for consular affairs Faisal Eissa Lutfi.

“Excellent people-to-people relations are the bedrock of Phil-UAE bilateral relations and the MOU,” said Quintana, hailing the agreement as another milestone further strengthening Philippine-UAE cooperation.

The virtual inaugural joint consular committee meeting under the MOU was convened after the signing ceremony where the delegations of both countries discussed concrete ways to enhance the assistance given to their nationals in coordination with respective local authorities of each country.



## Plastic trash swamps Davao City after flood

Published April 11, 2021, 6:08 PM

by [Antonio Colina IV](#)

DAVAO CITY – A Davao City-based environmental group called on policymakers to come up with stricter regulations to address plastic pollution as various single-use plastic (SUP) wastes were left on the streets in the aftermath of the flooding here Saturday.



PLASTIC trash scattered on a street after a flood caused by a heavy downpour in Davao City. (Photo courtesy of Sustainable Development Movement/MANILA BULLETIN)

Interface Development Interventions for Sustainability (IDIS) Executive Director Atty. Mark Peñalver said in a statement Sunday that he hoped that it would serve as an eye opener for the public and policymakers to adopt more sustainable, resilient, disaster-adaptive development, and environment-responsive policies for this city.

“The flooding last night is heartbreaking and a very unfortunate situation to look at. The aftermath is no different,” he said.

He added that seeing a lot of wastes, many of which plastic, carried by the flood was problematic and only showed how these contributed to the flooding situation here.

Penalver said it also showed how much plastic wastes are being generated and the failure of the city and the community to effectively manage them.

“With the current policy environment, the policy makers should come up with a stricter policy that would address plastic pollution. But let us not also forget to make those who produce these plastic wastes accountable and responsible.

They are as guilty for the effects that brought about by their unsustainable practices,” he said.

The City Council of Davao passed last March 2 an ordinance regulating the sale, distribution, and use of SUPs such as “drinking cups, ice cream cups, condiments or gravy containers, cup lids, stirrers, cutleries, straws, meal boxes, pastry or cake boxes, egg containers or clamshells, balloon sticks, and hand gloves.”

One year after the effectivity of the ordinance, the selling of the SUPs will not be allowed without a “special permit to sell” issued by the City Mayor’s Office, and upon showing that there are no commercially available alternatives.



However, Peñalver said the ordinance does not prohibit the usage, distribution, and selling of sando bags, labo bags, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles.

“The ordinance may not be what we expected it to be, nonetheless, this is a step closer to addressing the plastic wastes issue in the City. We just hope that this ordinance will stir behavioral and attitude change to Dabawenyos and, also, for the business sectors to also do their part in impacting that change,” he said.

The heavy rain Saturday night inundated several low-lying areas in the city, including downtown Davao.

The City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDDRMO), in an advisory released at 1:05 p.m., said areas within the city are experiencing mostly cloudy skies while all river channels are monitored within the safe level.



## Environmental groups push for disaster-resilient policies



File Photo

[RALPH LAWRENCE G. LLEMIT](#)

April 11, 2021

DAVAO City-based environmentalists are urging policymakers to integrate "more sustainable, resilient, disaster-adaptive development, and more environment-responsive" policies, following the flooding in the city brought by heavy rain on Saturday evening, April 10, 2021.

In a forwarded statement, Interfacing Development Interventions (Idis) Executive Director Mark Penalver said the incident "serves as an eye-opener for the public and our policymakers" to integrate policies that would be responsive in addressing the longtime flooding problem in the city.

He said plastics had a contribution to the city's flooding problem.

"The flooding last night is heartbreaking and a very unfortunate situation to look at. The aftermath is no different. Seeing a lot of wastes (mostly plastics) carried by the flood is definitely problematic," Penalver said.

He added, "It shows how plastic contributes to the flooding situation in the city. More so, it reflects how much plastics are being generated by the city and how the city and the community is failing in managing its wastes."

With the current policy environment, Penalver encouraged policymakers to come up with a "stricter" policy that would address plastic pollution.

"Let us not also forget to make those who produce these plastic wastes accountable and responsible. They are as guilty for the effects that brought about by their unsustainable practices," he said.

Sustainable Davao Movement (SDM), in a separate statement issued on Sunday, April 11, also said the city's "insatiable appetite for single-use plastics, combined with a poor track record of recycling, poorly maintained drains, decreasing trees in urban areas, shrinking open spaces, and climate change contributing to accumulation of water on roads after a heavy downpour."

"Davao City has long been fighting floods and last night is proof that the city has still a long way to go," SDM said.

The group also cited the "lackadaisical attitude" of the public and authorities as factors that contribute to cities experiencing standstill after heavy rains.

They said banning single-use plastics, increasing urban greenery, and rainwater harvesting will help tackle flooding in cities after rains.



"In addition, citizens also have to behave responsibly and ensure that plastics are not thrown in the open or in the neighborhood drains," SDM said.

SDM is a coalition of environmental multi-sectoral organizations in Davao City and is composed of Idis, Ecoteneo, Limadol, Break free from Plastic, and Ecowaste Coalition.

In a report from the Davao City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office posted on the Davao City government Facebook page at 5:46 p.m., the city experienced moderate to heavy rains in some areas of Talomo, Toril, and Poblacion districts and also other nearby areas, while light rains to moderate rains were being experienced in some areas of Baguio, Tugbok, and Calinan Districts.

No forced evacuation was reported, although below-knee water level was reported by some residents online.

Some parts of the downtown area also experienced below-knee flood levels right after the heavy rain.

SunStar Davao reached out to CDRRMO Head Alfredo Baluran for updates on the aftermath of the flooding incident, but he has not responded as of press time.

The City Information Office has also not issued any press release on Saturday's flooding.

### **Flooding in other areas**

The Municipal Government of Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte reported a waist-deep flooding incident as early as 3 a.m. Sunday, April 11 in Barangay San Miguel.

In a press release, 1,130 families were affected by the flash floods in Barangay San Miguel.

Relief efforts for the affected families are ongoing.

Meanwhile, six families with 22 individuals were severely affected by another flash flood in Barangay Macambol in Mati City on Saturday evening, April 10.

Reports from the Mati City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office on Sunday showed that the flooding affected Purok Proper and Sitio Tambak of Barangay Macambol.

Four houses are said to be the most affected by the flooding damaging their house and personal belongings.

Thirty more houses were also affected by the flooding but there was no damage reported in the said household.

# Climate change: The other crisis we can't ignore



By DIANE YAP April 12, 2021

It is difficult to concern ourselves with the effects of climate change, observable and tangible as they are, when so many are struggling to find medical care for their loved ones during this resurgent coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. The challenge of our time is having to face two equally serious crises, both with tremendous impact on human lives and no quick, easy fixes. And yet it is imperative that we keep an eye on our climate-related goals even as we work to manage the current health crisis because the problem is too big to set aside.

Over the last few years, businesses have increasingly prioritized their sustainability initiatives as climate-related disasters drove home the magnitude of the crisis. Their efforts will continue to be crucial in mitigating the worst impacts of climate change. Recently, for example, news came out that only three companies are responsible for 46 percent of packaging waste found in the Philippines following a global brand audit of plastic wastes. And 91 percent of the waste are non-recyclable.

Deloitte has been tracking how businesses are approaching the climate crisis in order to get a better reading on the changing sentiments surrounding this threat, and to support the conversation on the business case for tackling climate change. In January and February this year, Deloitte surveyed 750 executives worldwide on their biggest concerns when it comes to climate change and how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected their efforts at securing a more sustainable future. Here are some of the key findings from that study.

## **Executives are concerned about climate change**

Executives are concerned about the issue but admit the pandemic has stalled their sustainability efforts. An overwhelming 82 percent of the respondents said their organizations are either “concerned” or “very concerned” about climate change, and 60 percent believe the world is at a tipping point for responding to the climate crisis. Despite the gravity of the situation, however, 65 percent of executives admitted they have had to cut back on their environmental sustainability initiatives in some way due to the pandemic. Thankfully, though, none of the respondents said they would stop their efforts completely with no plans to resume. In fact, 68 percent of the respondents said they would continue some of the personal behavior changes they have made to limit their own impact on the environment, including reducing personal travel.

## **Organizations are moving beyond awareness**

Organizations are moving beyond awareness to more substantial environmental sustainability actions, and the shift is having a positive impact on stakeholder satisfaction and the bottom line.

In the past decade, actions regarding climate change have focused on education and awareness. This time around, when respondents were asked about their organizations' environmental sustainability efforts, the top three actions were more concrete: adopt public policy positions that promote sustainability; encourage or require suppliers to meet specific environmental-sustainability criteria; and use more sustainable materials. All surveyed organizations reported seeing positive benefits, most notably in the areas of customer satisfaction (49 percent), employee recruitment and retention (47 percent), and financial metrics such as profitability and revenue growth (46 percent). Considering these positive outcomes, we expect more leaders to weave their sustainability pledges into their organizational culture and brand identity moving forward.





## Most executives feel businesses and governments can do more

Even as the private sector struggles with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, particularly here in the Philippines where as of this writing the capital is once again under enhanced community quarantine or ECQ, 81 percent of executives who were surveyed believe businesses should make even greater efforts to protect the environment. Seventy-two percent said governments should do the same, and it looks like the public sector is on the same page. Looking at climate change concerns by industry, the Deloitte survey revealed that executives from government and public services were most concerned about climate change, with 89 percent of them saying their organizations were either “concerned” or “extremely concerned.” This was followed by the consumer (88 percent) and life sciences and health care (81 percent) industries.

External pressure plays a key role in driving environmental sustainability actions

When it comes to intensified action on climate change, respondents are looking to stakeholders for their cues. Asked what would motivate their organization to increase sustainability efforts, 38 percent of respondents cited “investor” or “shareholder demands,” while 35 percent said “increased societal and employee activism.” Thirty-two percent would be motivated by the intensification of climate-related disasters, while only 15 percent would be motivated by boycotts of their business. This should be encouraging for businesses that are already embedding sustainability in their evaluation of partnerships, alliances, and vendor relations. The effort is making an impact and needs to be sustained in order to lead to bigger, more meaningful gains in altering the course of climate change.

Overall, Deloitte’s climate check survey paints a picture of determination within the business community to act now to address the climate crisis. And while the coronavirus pandemic has stalled some of the sustainability efforts of organizations, it has also highlighted the importance of large-scale collective action in making a positive impact on the environment. Big as the twin crises the world now faces, there is hope among leaders that there is still a path towards a more sustainable future.

*The author is the financial advisory leader of Navarro Amper & Co., a member of the Deloitte Asia Pacific Network. For questions or comments, email [dyap@deloitte.com](mailto:dyap@deloitte.com). Deloitte Asia Pacific Ltd. is a company limited by guarantee and a member firm of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Ltd. Members of Deloitte Asia Pacific Ltd. and their related entities, each of which are separate and independent legal entities, provide services from more than 100 cities across the region, including Auckland, Bangkok, Beijing, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Melbourne, Osaka, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei, Tokyo and Yangon.*



## Bellevue Bohol stays true to promise to protect nature



By The Manila Times  
April 12, 2021



Bellevue Bohol's Earth Hour 60-km cycling

AS a recipient of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Green hotel awards for two consecutive years, the Bellevue Resort Bohol vowed to continuously launch new and sustainable green initiatives. Gathering as early as 4 a.m. on March 27, 68 volunteer bikers from the locality assembled at The Bellevue Pavilion to kick off Earth Hour with a 60-km ride around Panglao Island in an effort to promote fitness and awareness to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change.

Earth Hour (60+) is a collective effort to rehabilitate and preserve our planet. The worldwide campaign is supported by volunteers from across the globe. This year, Bellevue Bohol organized "60KM for 60+," a cycling and tree-growing event as part of its beyond-the-hour participation in partnership with the Department of Tourism; the provincial government of Bohol, led by Gov. Arthur Yap; and representatives of the local government of Panglao and Dauis, Globe Telecom and Clean Code. The resort strictly implemented health and safety measures throughout the event to ensure everyone's safety.

The 1000-tree-planting initiative for a greener Bohol was also achieved during the event with the help of 119 dedicated volunteers, including bikers, in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Bohol Environment Management Office and the Provincial Youth Development Office. The native tree seedlings have found its new home at the Mahogany Water Reservoir in Barangay Lourdes, Panglao.



# Vaccines aren't supposed to make you 'Iron Man', says Antiporda

Published April 11, 2021, 11:50 AM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

Receiving anti-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) shots won't necessarily make you invincible like "Iron Man", Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Usec. Benny Antiporda said.



(Photo by SPENCER PLATT / GETTY IMAGES NORTH AMERICA / Getty Images via AFP)

In a Facebook post Saturday, April 10 wherein he addressed what he called the "vaccine backlash", Antiporda told his followers that receiving the vaccine wasn't supposed to make a person 100 percent COVID-proof, as if his or her body had been encased in an impenetrable suit of armor.

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10159542793213653&id=751863652](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10159542793213653&id=751863652)

'HINDI KA MAGIGING IRONMAN KAPAG NABAKUNAHAN KA NA (Being vaccinated won't turn you into Iron Man),' Antiporda wrote in the emotionally-charged post.

The DENR official has been grappling with COVID-19 himself, although he has yet to be administered with the vaccine. Currently on medical home care, Antiporda first tested positive on March 22, and again on April 8.

Antiporda advised those who have been vaccinated to continue adhering to minimum health protocols, if they don't want to get one-upped by COVID.

"MARAMI NA PO TAYONG KILALA NA MATAPOS ANG UNANG BAKUNA AY HAYUN NAGRELAKS NA, TSK TSK TSK SAD TO SAY POSITIVE NA PO SILA NGAYON SA COVID (I know a lot of people who, after getting their first shot, have chosen to relax. Tsk tsk tsk said to say they're positive now)," he said.

He echoed the opinion of experts that the vaccine simply serves as a safety net that would prevent COVID cases from turning severe or life-threatening.

"SA MADALING SALITA TATAMAAN KA PA RIN! AGAIN PARA MALINAW! HINDI KA PA RIN EXEMPTED DAHIL SA BAKUNA!!! (In other words you can still get afflicted! Again to be clear! The vaccine won't exempt you from COVID!!!)" Antiporda said.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/04/11/vaccines-werent-supposed-to-make-you-iron-man-says-antiporda/>



# Metro Manila, six provinces to shift to MECQ

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Apr 11, 2021 2:03:52 PM

Updated Apr 11, 2021 7:36:00 PM

43



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 10) — Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal will transition to a more relaxed quarantine status beginning April 12 after being placed under the tightest restrictions for two weeks due to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

The Greater Manila area will be placed under the modified enhanced community quarantine until April 30, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque announced on Sunday.

The provinces of Quirino and Abra, and Santiago City in Isabela, will also be placed under MECQ starting tomorrow until end of April.

The country recorded its deadliest day of the pandemic on Friday as the government reported the death of 401 people due to COVID-19. On Saturday, the Philippines logged a new record of 190,245 active cases, its highest number for the third consecutive day.

The nationwide COVID-19 case tally is at 864,868, including 11,681 new cases on Sunday. The number of survivors, meanwhile, surged to a new high with 55,204 more recoveries.

The government first imposed [MECQ in Metro Manila and Laguna from May 16 to 31](#) last year after two months of ECQ. The rest of Greater Manila, meanwhile, shifted to the more relaxed general community quarantine during the same period.

Metro Manila and Laguna joined nearby provinces under [GCQ in June](#) of the same year to slowly revive the economy.

[MECQ was reimposed in the Greater Manila area](#) from Aug. 4 to 18, 2020 in response to a call by the medical community to tighten quarantine restrictions amid an overwhelmed healthcare system and "burned out" frontline medical workers.

After months of eased restrictions, the area reverted to ECQ starting March 29 due to another surge in COVID-19 cases.

Roque said Metro Manila hospitals have committed to providing an additional 164 ICU beds and 1,157 regular beds for COVID-19 patients as of Sunday morning.

This commitment to boost the bed capacity for coronavirus cases, Roque said, prompted the government to ease restrictions to MECQ.

Meanwhile, more details of the new quarantine classifications will be discussed in Roque's briefing tomorrow, April 12.



In a separate statement, Metro Manila mayors will be implementing unified curfew hours from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. beginning tomorrow until the end of MECQ on April 30.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chairman Benhur Abalos said local chief executives, under the new rules approved by the IATF, have the power to adjust curfew hours in the National Capital Region.

Authorized persons outside of residence remain exempted from the curfew, the council said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Trade and Industry said outdoor dining will be allowed in areas under MECQ but only at 50% capacity. It added that diagonal seating or tables with acrylic dividers shall be implemented.



Residents of Batasan Hills in Quezon City line up to receive their financial assistance from the government on the second day of distribution on April 8, 2021.

The STAR/Michael Varcas

## DOH logs 11,681 new COVID-19 cases as 'NCR Plus' shifts to MECQ

(Philstar.com) - April 11, 2021 - 4:01pm

MANILA, Philippines — Health authorities on Sunday reported 11,681 new coronavirus cases, two weeks after the Enhanced Community Quarantine in 'NCR Plus' that will see a shift to less stricter restrictions by April 12.

Sunday's count pushed the Philippines' overall tally to 864,868. The government's decision for the quarantine bubble came as the country continued to report significant increases in cases. Active cases: 145,519 or 16.9% of the total

- Recoveries: 55,204, bringing the number to 703,404
- Deaths: 201, or now 14,945 in total

What's new today?

- Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal and Bulacan will shift to [modified ECQ](#) beginning April 12 until the end of the month. Malacañang, however, said the changes will be discussed on Monday, or on the day the quarantine classification takes effect.
- The Philippines saw an increase of 69,938 COVID-19 cases last week, or from April 5 to 11. Fatalities also grew by 1,510.
- More cases from COVID-19 variants were [detected](#) from genome sequencing, according to the Department of Health. This includes 19 more individuals infected with the P.3, or the variant detected here in the Philippines.
- The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group is now monitoring the trade of the anti-parasitic drug [Ivermectin](#), after some lawmakers floated it as a possible COVID-19 treatment despite warnings from health agencies. — **Christian Deiparine**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/04/11/2090398/doh-logs-11681-new-covid-19-cases-ncr-plus-shifts-mecq>



Members of the Manila Police District set up a checkpoint along an almost empty España Boulevard in Manila as the modified enhanced community quarantine takes effect on August 4, 2020.

The STAR/Miguel de Guzman

## Why 'NCR Plus' is shifting to Modified ECQ and what that means

[Alexis Romero](#) (Philstar.com) - April 11, 2021 - 6:54pm

MANILA, Philippines — Metro Manila and the nearby provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal will be under a more relaxed quarantine status this month despite the suggestion of some experts to extend the lockdown by one more week to further slow the spread of COVID-19.

President Rodrigo Duterte on Sunday approved the recommendation of the government's pandemic task force to place the capital region and the four provinces — collectively known as National Capital Region (NCR) Plus — under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) from April 12 to 30, the Palace announced.

The NCR Plus areas were placed under the strictest enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) last March 29 as the surge in COVID-19 infections threatened to overwhelm hospitals. The enforcement of the lockdown was supposed to end last April 4 but it was extended by a week to ensure a sustained reduction in infections.

Santiago City in Isabela, and Abra and Quirino provinces will also be classified as MECQ areas until the end of the month.

On Saturday, the OCTA Research group suggested a week-long extension of the ECQ in NCR Plus, saying the lockdown has been effective in reducing the COVID-19 growth rate and reproduction number in Metro Manila.

The reproduction number in the capital region went down to 1.23 from April 3 to 9 from 1.88 the week before the implementation of the strictest quarantine, OCTA said. The extension of the ECQ would also decongest hospitals and relieve the pressure on the country's health workers, the group added.

### More hospital beds available

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the commitment of hospitals to increase the number of beds dedicated to COVID-19 patients was one of the factors that convinced the government to relax the quarantine restriction in NCR Plus.

"Because of the directive of the president for PhilHealth (Philippine Health Insurance Corp.) to pay hospitals with unpaid COVID-19 claims, many of our private, national government, and LGU (local government units) hospitals committed to increase the COVID-19 beds especially the ICU (intensive care unit) beds in NCR Plus," Roque said.



"This is one of the critical basis of the IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases) to slightly recommend the MECQ classification in NCR Plus," he added.

Roque said as of April 11, hospitals in NCR Plus areas have committed an additional 164 critical ICU beds and 1,157 regular beds for moderate and severe cases.

The institutions that have vowed to allocate more beds for COVID-19 patients are Quezon Institute (110 beds for moderate and severe cases), National Center for Mental Health (960 beds for moderate cases), Manila Times College in Subic (300 beds for mild and asymptomatic cases), New Clark City Tarlac (165 beds for mild and asymptomatic), Eva Macapagal Terminal in Manila (200 beds for mild and asymptomatic), and Orion Bataan Port Terminal (100 beds for mild and asymptomatic).

Roque said a total of 3,156 beds (164 ICU beds for critical cases, 2,227 regular beds for moderate and severe cases, and 765 isolation beds for mild and asymptomatic cases) have been added to the NCR Plus healthcare capacity while the area was on lockdown.

For Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and CALABARZON, the utilization rate for ICU beds stood at 74.34% for ICU beds, 46.04 for ward beds, and 59.56% for isolation beds.

### **MECQ rules**

Under MECQ, establishments, persons, or activities not permitted to operate, work, or be undertaken during ECQ are allowed to operate at 50% on-site capacity, according to the latest quarantine guidelines issued by the government.

However, work-from-home and other flexible work arrangements are still encouraged when applicable.

The guidelines barred some sectors from operating or working during MECQ namely:

- entertainment venues with live performers
- recreational venues such as internet cafes, billiard halls, and amusement arcades
- amusement or theme parks
- outdoor and indoor sports courts or venues, fitness studios, gyms, spas or other indoor leisure centers or facilities, and swimming pools
- gaming establishments except for draws conducted by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office
- indoor and outdoor tourist attractions
- venues for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions
- personal care services including beauty salons and medical aesthetic clinics
- indoor dine-in services of food preparation establishments.

All establishments, persons, or activities that were allowed to operate during ECQ may now do so at full on-site capacity.

Persons below 18 years old, those who are over 65 years old, individuals with health risks, and pregnant women will be required to remain in their residences except when accessing essential goods and services or reporting for work in permitted offices or establishments.

Local government units may relax the minimum age range down to 15 years old, depending on the COVID-19 situation in their respective areas.





According to the Metro Manila Development Authority, the curfew in Metro Manila from April 12 to 30 will be from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. from the 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. imposed during ECQ.

### Updated classifications

The Cordillera Administrative Region except Abra, the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya in Cagayan Valley region, Batangas and Quezon provinces in CALABARZON, Tacloban City in the Eastern Visayas, Iligan City in Northern Mindanao, Davao City in Davao region, and Lanao del Sur in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will be under the lenient general community quarantine (GCQ) from April 12 to 30.

Under GCQ, about 50% of industries are allowed to operate but social gatherings remain limited.

The rest of the Philippines will be under the most lenient modified general community quarantine (MGCQ), where virtually all businesses can operate and gatherings are permitted as long as only up to half of the venues' capacities are filled up.

Roque said dedicated COVID-19 beds in isolation, quarantine and health facilities in NCR Plus and other MECQ areas must be increased through the joint effort of the Department of Education, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, the Department of Public Works and Highways, and the Department of Health.

"There must be an adequate number of COVID-19 dedicated beds, complementary health human resources, and well-coordinated triage and referral systems in place at the local government units, isolation and quarantine facilities, and health facilities," Roque said in a statement.

"Hospitals must also be decongested through the partnership of hospitals with temporary treatment and monitoring facilities, step-down facilities for mild and moderate care or home care, provided there is proof of capacity to do adequate quarantine or isolation," he added.

Roque said local governments in the NCR Plus are also enjoined to set-up their respective local telehealth triaging systems equipped with sufficient medical personnel available to provide immediate medical and patient referral advice. PhilHealth must ensure the continued responsive and timely payment of reimbursement claims for COVID-19, he added.

Roque also called on NCR Plus local governments to prioritize those with highest risk for severe disease and death, particularly senior citizens and those with comorbidities, in their vaccination plan.

"The Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry are directed to ascertain the number of employees who may undertake alternative work arrangements and its impact on the maximum carrying capacity of the subject area," he added.



# 71 families displaced by flashflood in North Cotabato

Published April 11, 2021, 5:17 PM

by [Philippine News Agency](#)

MAKILALA, North Cotabato – Seventy-one families were displaced by a flashflood brought by heavy rains in three low-lying villages here Saturday, officials said.

Eric Sarabia, Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (MDRRMO) planning officer, said Sunday that the affected families are currently sheltered at designated evacuation centers in the municipality.

The flooded areas included parts of Barangay Luayon with 37 affected families; Sta. Filomena with 32 affected families; and Bulacanon, two families.

“Personnel from our office, together with social welfare workers, are now in the area conducting assessment and relief operations to the affected families,” Sarabia said.

Based on the initial MDRRMC report, a portion of the newly built dike on Malasila River in Barangay Bulacanon collapsed, resulting in the water overflow and submerged portions of the three adjoining barangays.

“At 6 p.m. on Saturday, we received calls that the level of Malasila River was rising due to heavy rains,” Sarabia said.

Upon responding, he said they also found out that three hanging bridges were partially damaged by rampaging floodwaters.

Mayor Armando Quibod said the town government is currently assessing the overall damage to crops and properties due to the flooding and has sent more relief aid to the affected families.

Quibod urged constituents, particularly those residing near riverbanks, to stay on alert and keep out of landslide-prone areas.



## Taal Volcano restive once more after a week of quiet



By Arlie O. Calalo

April 12, 2021

AFTER nearly a week of being quiet, Taal Volcano in Batangas province is again on active mode as more than 200 volcanic earthquakes and almost 2,000 tons of gas emissions were recorded by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) in the past 24 hours.

The Taal Volcano Network has monitored 216 volcanic earthquakes including 177 tremor episodes having durations of 1 minute to 32 minutes, 39 low frequency volcanic earthquakes and low-level background tremor.

Sulfur dioxide emission averaged 1,932 tons as measured in the past 24 hours, according to Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum.

Ground deformation parameters from electronic tilt, continuous data analysis indicated a very slow and steady inflation and expansion of the Taal region since after the January 2020 eruption, Phivolcs said.

“These parameters indicate persistent magmatic activity at shallow depths beneath the edifice,” according to Solidum, who reiterated his warning for people near the Taal Volcano Island (TVI) to remain vigilant and should not go to TVI or go boating around the island.

The Phivolcs chief said Taal Volcano remains at alert level 2, “indicating an increased unrest and that the current activity may lead to a magmatic eruption.”

When asked about the possibility of raising the alert status, Solidum replied they are still closely monitoring the volcano’s behavior.

“We have not seen minor steam-driven or phreatic eruptions yet but we have monitored short duration steam emission. We are recording slow but steady ground deformation but no sudden change in rate of deformation,” he said.

Phivolcs has maintained that entering TVI and its permanent danger zone is strictly prohibited.

Concerned local government units have been advised to continuously assess and strengthen the preparedness of previously evacuated villages around Taal Lake in case of renewed unrest.

Furthermore, civil aviation authorities must advise pilots to avoid flying close to the volcano as airborne ash and ballistic fragments may pose hazards to aircraft.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/04/12/news/regions/taal-volcano-restive-once-more-after-a-week-of-quiet/863090/>



# PH, US start war games amid China's military build-up in South China Sea

Published April 11, 2021, 3:31 PM

by [Martin Sadongdong](#)

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced on Sunday, April 11, that it will hold military exercises with its United States counterparts, even as tension remains high in the West Philippine Sea as China continues to assert its claims over almost the entire South China Sea.



(AFP / MANILA BULLETIN)

Lt. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, AFP Chief of Staff said the opening ceremonies will be held at the AFP General Headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City on Monday, April 12. It will not be opened to the public as part of safety precautions due to the prevailing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

“This will be different from previous Balikatan exercises because of the pandemic. Some portions of the exercises will be virtual but we also have minimal physical contact,” Sobejana said.

“There will also be actual field training exercises but not as big as those done in the previous years,” he added.

This year's iteration of the joint military drills will last for two weeks with the participation of around 700 US soldiers and 1,100 Filipino soldiers, Sobejana bared.

The AFP Chief's revelation came after Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana held a phone conference with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III on Sunday.

The two defense chiefs discussed the continuation of the Balikatan exercises amid the increased aggression of China in the South China Sea.

Balikatan, which was part of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), was suspended last year due to the pandemic.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/04/11/ph-us-start-war-games-amid-chinas-military-build-up-in-south-china-sea/>



## Rhino population in Nepal grows in conservation boost

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 06:07 PM April 11, 2021



(FILES) In this file photo taken on January 1, 2020, a one-horned rhinoceros walks on the banks of the Rapati River in Sauraha Chitwan, some 150 km southwest of Kathmandu. – Nepal’s population of endangered one-horned rhinoceros has grown by more than a hundred over the past six years, officials said on April 10, 2021, with campaigners hailing the increase as a conservation “milestone”. (Photo by PRAKASH MATHEMA / AFP)

KATHMANDU — Nepal’s population of endangered one-horned rhinoceros has grown by more than a hundred over the past six years, officials said, with campaigners hailing the increase as a conservation “milestone”.

The population rose to 752 across four national parks in the southern plains, up from 645 in 2015, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation said Saturday.

“The increase of rhinos is exciting news for us,” the department’s information officer, Haribhadra Acharya, told AFP on Sunday.

“But we have challenges ahead to expand the habitat areas of this animal to maintain the growth.”

Thousands of one-horned rhinos once roamed the southern plains, but rampant poaching and human encroachment on their habitat reduced their numbers to around 100 in Nepal in the 1960s.

Since 1994, the Himalayan nation has conducted a rhino census once every five years, as authorities stepped up their efforts to boost population numbers for the species listed as vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation for Nature.

In the first census in 1994, 466 rhinos were counted.

Some 250 personnel — including enumerators, soldiers and veterinarians — rode on 57 elephants for nearly three weeks from late March to count the rhinos.

The census — delayed for a year due to the coronavirus pandemic — was carried out using GPS equipment, binoculars and cameras.

“Rhinos were counted through a direct observation method, where the counting team reached as close as 100 meters (330 feet) from the wild animal,” Acharya added.

During the census, an elephant mahout was attacked and killed by a tiger, authorities said. Another official was injured when a wild elephant attacked the team.



Global conservation group the World Wildlife Fund — which provides financial and technical assistance for the census — called the population increase a “milestone” for Nepal.

“The overall growth in population size is indicative of ongoing protection and habitat management efforts by protected area authorities despite challenging contexts these past years,” the WWF’s Nepal representative, Ghana Gurung, said in a statement.

The rhino population has climbed in recent years amid the government’s anti-poaching and conservation initiatives.

But the illegal trade of rhino horns — prized in China and Southeast Asia for their supposed medicinal properties — remains a threat.

Some 26 rhinos died in Nepal last year, including four from poaching, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation said.



## Debt swap pushed for green projects



OPINION

By [The Manila Times](#)

April 12, 2021

**WASHINGTON, D.C.:** The idea of forgiving debt held by poor countries in exchange for “green” investments gained ground this week during the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, with concrete proposals expected in time for a global climate summit this fall.

Low-income countries face a double crisis — they are under pressure to pay down their debt while also confronting environmental problems.

That makes them “highly, highly vulnerable,” Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the IMF, said this week, adding that it thus “makes sense” for the world to pursue so-called “green debt swaps.” A World Bank spokeswoman underscored that point.

“The Covid-19 crisis has made it significantly harder for developing countries to tackle the rising risks posed by climate change” and environmental disasters, said the spokeswoman, who declined to be named.

With already tight budgets, these countries have had to use emergency financial assistance to address the severe impact of the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis.

“By enlarging the debt burdens of governments — which were already at record levels on the eve of the crisis — it has left them with fewer resources to invest in a recovery that will also put the planet on a more sustainable footing,” the spokeswoman told Agence France-Presse.

### ‘Creative options’

A technical working group — bringing together representatives not only of the IMF and World Bank but also of the United Nations and the OECD — was launched this week to examine “creative options to help countries tackle these simultaneous challenges,” the World Bank spokeswoman said.

“This work has only just begun,” she said, “but we think a proactive approach is essential: we must look closely at how potential solutions to the challenges of climate and debt can be integrated to address the key development issues of our time.”

While there is no timeline yet for announcing concrete measures, all parties involved are clearly pointing toward the COP26 climate summit to be held in November in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

“We are going to work with the World Bank. And by COP26 we will advance that option” of a debt swap, Georgieva said, adding that it will then be up to creditors and debtors to decide whether to take part.

For Thierry Deau, the founder and CEO of the Paris-based Meridiam group, which specializes in developing and financing infrastructure projects, if the green debt-swap option is pursued, it will have to be linked to clear “conditionalities” to ensure that debt relief in fact leads to the launching of green projects.

### Job opportunities

“The primary responsibility there on this debt relief is between the countries that are on both sides,” he said. “There’s a lot of politeness about this topic, and I think we have to stop that and create real true partnerships.”



The IMF and World Bank will also have to consider the plight of several island nations with middle-income economies that receive less economic support but face daunting environmental challenges. Their heavily tourism-dependent economies have seen revenues dry up as the coronavirus pandemic severely curtails world travel.

At the same time, their low-lying territories are often the victims of extreme weather events, including devastating cyclones or hurricanes.

Georgieva said this week that vulnerability to climate shocks should be taken into account when the international agencies allocate financial aid.

She also stressed that countries launching “green” projects can see the added benefit of heightened employment.

“There are opportunities for job creation,” she said. “Just take, for example, renewable energy — seven jobs to one in the traditional coal energy sector,” even if some training is required.

“Similarly, reforestation, taking care of land degradation, resilience to climate shocks, these are all labor-intensive activities,” Georgieva said.

“Policymakers need to think about it now.” AFP



12 APRIL 2021, MONDAY



**DENR**

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