

17 DECEMBER 2020, THURSDAY



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



## Wildlife conservation must continue amid pandemic —DENR

Aileen Cerrudo • December 16, 2020



**MANILA, Philippines** — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has reiterated the need to continue wildlife conservation even amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This was after a nesting sea turtle was sighted in Zambales province. DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu also reported several sightings of nesting sea turtles were in other areas.

“Even if we are faced with a difficult situation brought about by the threats of the disease, we must continue to strive to protect and preserve our endangered pawikan,” he said.

He added that the sightings prove that the efforts of conserving wildlife was not in vain.

The DENR’s Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) in Olongapo City also received a report that sea turtles laying eggs were spotted at a beach resort in San Antonio town.

The DENR said they will monitor the situation of these nests to protect them from poachers and illegal wildlife traders. — **AAC**





# DENR's wildlife law enforcement gets boost from USAID

Published December 16, 2020, 1:44 PM

by [Roy Mabasa](#)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has turned over to the Philippine government over P2.3 million (\$48,000) worth of tools and equipment which will be used for proper handling and management of wildlife, particularly those rescued from illegal trade.



DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Ricardo Calderon receives the complete WildALERT system and manuals from USAID

(US EMBASSY IN THE PHILIPPINES / MANILA BULLETIN)

In a statement on Wednesday, the USAID said the provision of essential equipment and supplies to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is part of its support to strengthen wildlife law enforcement and protection and to boost the department's work in combating wildlife trafficking and providing holistic care for rescued wildlife in its custody.

The items, which were formally turned over last Dec. 11, included conservation tags, armored gloves, snake tongs, forceps, and microchips for efficient handling and tagging of live animals which will be distributed to DENR wildlife rescue centers across the country.

These tools will aid DENR veterinarians and personnel to properly examine and care for rescued and injured wildlife and speed up their rehabilitation and recovery for subsequent release into natural habitats.

Aside from the tools, the USAID also handed over the complete components of the Wildlife Agency and Citizen Law Enforcement Reporting Tool (WildALERT) system, which was launched on World Wildlife Day last March.

WildALERT is an innovative solution jointly developed by the USAID and the Philippine environment office to help enforcers and frontliners in the field to curb wildlife crimes through real-time and centralized reporting.

Made up of a mobile app and a reporting management platform, the system helps users correctly identify rescued wildlife species and promptly submit digitized reports of wildlife law violations, and at the same time, help improve the daily enforcement operations of the DENR and partner agencies across the country.

DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Ricardo Calderon received the new sets of tools and the WildALERT system and manuals from Rebecca Paz of USAID's Protect Wildlife Project.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/12/16/denrs-wildlife-law-enforcement-gets-boost-from-usaid/>



## USAID's P2.3-million aid boosts wildlife protection

By Jonathan L. Mayuga

December 17, 2020

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) recently turned-over some P2.3 million worth of tools and equipment for the proper handling and management of rescued wildlife.

These include conservation tags, armored gloves, snake tongs, forceps, and microchips for efficient handling and tagging of live animals that will be distributed to Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) wildlife rescue centers across the country.

These tools will help DENR veterinarians and personnel properly examine and care for rescued and injured wildlife and speed up their rehabilitation and recovery for subsequent release into natural habitats, according to DENR Assistant Secretary and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Ricardo Calderon, who also received the complete Wildlife Agency and Citizen Law Enforcement Reporting Tool (WildALERT) system and manuals from USAID Protect Wildlife Chief of Party Rebecca Paz during a simple ceremony last December 11.

The donation is part of USAID's support to strengthen wildlife law enforcement and protection in the Philippines to boost its work in combating wildlife trafficking and providing holistic care for rescued wildlife under its custody.

The complete components of the WildALERT system, which was launched on World Wildlife Day last March, is an innovative solution developed by the DENR and USAID to help enforcers and frontliners in the field to curb wildlife crimes through real-time and centralized reporting.

The system, made up of a mobile app and a reporting management platform, helps users correctly identify rescued wildlife species and promptly submit digitized reports of wildlife law violations.

This can help improve the daily enforcement operations of the DENR and partner agencies across the country.

# BOC-NAIA, DENR-NCR, Office of the City Prosecutor of Pasay City successfully caused the conviction of a wildlife smuggler

By BOCPublished on December 16, 2020



PASAY CITY, Dec. 16 -- On 20 November 2020, Judge Allan B. Ariola, Branch 48, Metropolitan Trial Court of Pasay City, found guilty as charged the apprehended importer of 757 pieces of tarantulas in BOC-NAIA for violation of Section 27 of Republic Act No. 9147 otherwise known as the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001, and Section 1401 in relation to Section 117 of Republic Act No. 10863 otherwise known as the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act. He was sentenced to serve a straight penalty of six (6) months imprisonment and ordered to pay fine in the aggregate amount of One Hundred Twenty Thousand Pesos (P120,000.00).

It can be recalled that the convicted wildlife smuggler was apprehended by BOC-NAIA frontliners, ESS-NAIA, CIIS-NAIA and XIP-NAIA operatives, in collaboration with DENR-NCR operatives last April 1, 2019 while claiming the illegally imported 757 tarantulas concealed inside boxes of cookies and oatmeal from Poland, at the Central Mail Exchange Center, without the required import permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The seized tarantulas were immediately turned over to the Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Unit of the Department of Natural Resources.

District Collector Carmelita M. Talusan commended the efforts of BOC-NAIA frontliners, ESS-NAIA, CIIS-NAIA, and full support and active collaboration of DENR-NCR and the Office of the City Prosecutor of Pasay City in the successful conviction of the wildlife smuggler. She emphasized that the said conviction clearly manifests the seriousness and commitment of the Bureau of Customs under the leadership of Commissioner Rey Leonardo B. Guerrero to penalize smugglers of illegal goods and contrabands; and serve as a deterrent and warning to others engaging in similar illegal activities that the full force of law will eventually place them behind bars. (BOC)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/press-releases/releases/1061877>



## 6 MONTHS KULONG SA WILDLIFE SMUGGLER

15 hours ago [jake](#)



HINATULAN ng anim (6) na buwang pagkakakulong at multang 120,000 pisong halaga ni Judge Allan B. Ariola ng Pasay City Metropolitan Trial Court ang isang wildlife smuggler na kinasuhan ng Bureau of Customs noong nagdaang taon.

Ang nasabing wildlife smuggler ay napatunayang guilty sa pagi-import ng 757 piraso ng Tarantulas na paglabag sa Section 27 ng Republic Act No. 9147 o mas kilala bilang Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001 at Section 1401 na may kaugnayan naman sa Section 117 ng Republic Act No. 10863 o mas kilala bilang Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

Matatandaan na noong Abril 2019, ang BOC-NAIA operatives na kinabibilangan ng ESS-NAIA, CIIS-NAIA at XIP-NAIA sa tulong ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) ay nakasabat ng illegally imported 757 tarantulas na nakalagay sa loob ng mga karton ng cookies at oatmeal mula sa Poland sa Central Mail Exchange Center sa Pasay City.

Ang shipment ay ipinadala mula Poland ng isang nanggangalang Wojciech Pakasz at naka-consigned kay Jesse Camato, residente ng Caloocan City.

Agad namang naitinurnover ng BOC-NAIA sa Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Unit ng DENR ang nakumpiskang mga gagamba.

Pinupurihan naman ni District Collector Carmelita M. Talusan ang kaniyang mga tauhan at nagpasalamat sa buong suporta at aktibong pakikipagtulungan ng DENR-NCR at ang Office of the City Prosecutor of Pasay City sa matagumpay na pagpapakulong sa wildlife smuggler.

Binigyaan-diin pa ni Talusan na ang pagkakahatol sa wildlife smuggler ay isang malinaw na manipesto na seryoso sa pangako ang Bureau of Customs sa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero na maparusahan ang mga smuggler ng ilegal na kalakal at kontrabando.

Aniya, ito rin ay magsisilbing leksyon sa iba pang nasasangkot sa kaparehong ilegal na aktibidad at titiyakin nila na maipatutupad ng buong lakas ang batas para maipakulong sila.

### **BOC-PORT OF CDO KUMITA NG P6.95-M SA PUBLIC AUCTION**

Aabot sa mahigit na anim na milyong piso (P6.95-M) ang kinita ng Bureau of Customs Port of Cagayan de Oro sa kanilang isinagawang public auction sa kanilang Security Warehouse sa Brgy. Tablon noong Disyembre 10, 2020.

Ang kabuuang 13 shipments na ipina-auction sa 11 bidders ay kasama ng mga closed van truck, Ford Ranger truck, used truck parts, polished tiles, furniture, steel coils at copper ore.

Ang nasabing public auction ay base sa Customs Memorandum Order 10-2020 na kung saan ang mga cargoes na hindi nababawi o nakukuha ng mahigit sa 30-araw mula sa 'date of discharge' ay palatandaan na inabandona sa pamamagitan ng tinatawag na Decree of Abandonment kung kaya ang Bureau of Customs ang nakatakdang magpasya na sa kanilang disposisyon.





Ang kabuuang halaga na kinita sa isinagawang subasta ay umabot sa Php 6,951,990.00 na nagbigay ng malaking karagdagan sa kaban ng gobyerno sa kabila ng pakikipaglaban sa COVID-19.

Sinabi ni District Collector John Simon, ang isinagawang auction ay malaking tulong upang lumuwag ang kanilang bakuran upang maiwasan na rin ang pagsisikip ng port.

Bilang resulta ng auction, mahigit sa 70 overstaying containers ang naalis na sa nasabing pwerto. (Joel O. Amongo)

Source: [http://saksingayon.com/inside-aduana/6-months-kulong-sa-wildlife-smuggler/?utm\\_source=ReviveOldPost&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=ReviveOldPost&fbclid=IwAR0ORVGPxbArectt11V94ltqNal8tRpatP7vXxCpOoEY-xE7U92QWJxhb5I](http://saksingayon.com/inside-aduana/6-months-kulong-sa-wildlife-smuggler/?utm_source=ReviveOldPost&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=ReviveOldPost&fbclid=IwAR0ORVGPxbArectt11V94ltqNal8tRpatP7vXxCpOoEY-xE7U92QWJxhb5I)



# Seized lumber boosts Quirino residents' post-disaster recovery

By Jonathan L. Mayuga

December 17, 2020

Hundreds of families who lost their homes due to geological hazards will be receiving a much-needed boost from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The agency has been donating confiscated forest products, such as wood, which can be used to reconstruct school furniture like chairs and tables for years.

This time, the DENR in Cagayan Valley decided to donate 3,338 board feet of common hardwood lumber for residents of Barangay San Pugo in Nagtipunan, Quirino province who lost their homes due to soil liquefaction.

The beneficiaries are among the estimated 190 Bugkalot families who lost their houses to soil liquefaction due to continuous heavy rains brought about by recent typhoons that peaked during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses on November 14.

In a news statement, the DENR Cagayan Valley Region said Gov. Dakila Carlo Cua received the lumber from DENR Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan through a deed of donation signed on December 15 in Cabarroguis, the province's capital.

In her message, Bambalan said the DENR will explore the possibility of increasing the volume of lumber for donation in line with the post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation under the government's Build Back Better Program.

The community environment and natural resources officers in the region were instructed to provide some confiscated lumber stockpiled in their jurisdictions.

Executive Order 120 mandates the Build Back Better Task Force to ensure availability and adequacy of key lifelines such as basic needs, medical services, electricity, water, telecommunication, and transportation that can be mobilized immediately after the typhoon. It shall also rebuild or repair houses to be more resilient to hazards and build safer sites for housing under the township approach.

"We pledge to commit our support to the local government in whatever undertaking especially on environmental conservation and protection," the regional environment chief said. The provincial chief executive considered the donation as "a wonderful way to celebrate Christmas," as he expressed gratitude to the DENR for the donated lumber.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/12/17/seized-lumber-boosts-quirino-residents-post-disaster-recovery/>





# 8M trees planted in Negros amid the pandemic

By Mary Judaline Partlow December 16, 2020, 10:44 pm



**8-M TREES PLANTED IN NEGROS.** A massive forest restoration project in Negros has already planted eight million trees in its fifth year in 2020 despite the Covid-19 pandemic. The Energy Development Corporation (EDC), which leads the movement along with DENR, cited its partners for such achievement. (Screen capture of Zoom anniversary event courtesy of EDC)

**DUMAGUETE CITY –** Despite the travel restrictions during the community quarantines, a massive joint government and non-government movement for the forest restoration of Negros Island has already planted eight million trees on its fifth year.

The 10 Million Trees in 10 Years (10M in 10) for a Greener Negros Movement was launched in 2015 by geothermal power leader Energy Development Corporation, in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), other line agencies, and civil society groups.

The aim was to plant and grow 10 million trees in 10 years across the island.

The movement honored its partners via a Zoom celebration recently with the theme “High Five at 5”, a media release from EDC said Tuesday.

In Negros Oriental, the movement paid tribute to one of its partners, Rene “Tatay Eti” Vendiola, who is known for being a “rainforestation” farmer and owner of the Liptong Woodland in Bacong town.

Bacong is dubbed as a “haven of Philippine native trees”.

“They call me Tatay not really because of my age but because I’m the father of endemic native trees in Liptong Woodlands,” Vendiola said in his short video played during the Zoom event.

“I didn’t hesitate to partner with 10M in 10 and with EDC because I see that their goal and dedication are true. I can see that 10M in 10 has a positive effect,” Vendiola said.

Meanwhile, Norreen G. Bautista, head of EDC’s Corporate Social Responsible (CSR) team in Negros that likewise manages the company’s 10M in 10 contributions, was quoted as saying “we are grateful to our partners whose unwavering commitment to our common goal of re-greening Negros island was proven as they helped us exceed our five million target number of seedlings to be planted and managed to maintain an average survival rate of 85 percent amid this challenging year.”

“The health crisis brought about by Covid-19 has put the spotlight even more on the need to keep our air clean through decarbonization, which entails planting and growing native trees as well as shifting to renewable energy for our source of power,” she added.

Bautista said there are 83 new partners this year for the greening movement of Negros.

These additional sign-ups brought to 252 the movement’s total number of partners as of December 2020, EDC said in its statement.



Among the top achievers that were cited was the Alliance of Mangrove Planting Organizations which was able to plant a total of 500,000 seedlings since it became one of the movement's founding members in 2015.

Another partner is Jeffrey "Jepoy" Palata and his organization, Edmund Rice Industries-Kabankalan, Negros Occidental chapter, one of three chapters of this international foundation supported by Edmund Rice Foundation Australia that was also engaged in mangrove and tree planting until Covid-19 initially crippled its activities that led to the chapter's closure.

To keep pursuing his passion for planting native trees, Jepoy came up with a climate change module that involved planting a total of 1,000 native tree seedlings in his area with the help of his friend, Fr. Jude Garceniego, head of Sharing with the Poor is Always a Grace- a HOPE (SPAG-ASA) Feeding Charity Work that is now also a 10M in 10 members, as well as other volunteers.

10M in 10 partner, Lawyer Henry Sy Yap, was likewise cited for his passion for environmental preservation that inspired him to include his 16-hectare Farmville de Bago into a reforestation area.

"I have committed to plant and grow native trees and to convince my family and friends to take the same path in their own little way to fight climate change," he said.

Over 100 partners graced the virtual event, representing various stakeholder groups such as government agencies, local government units, academic institutions, businesses, media, non-government organizations, and other concerned groups and individuals. (PNA)



# Young crocodile captured at Turtle islands in Tawi-Tawi

Published December 16, 2020, 1:38 PM

by [Nonoy Lacson](#)

**ZAMBOANGA CITY** — A young saltwater crocodile was captured along the coast of Turtle islands in Tawi-Tawi by local residents who failed to catch the elder crocodile after it swam into the deepest portion of the sea.



Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi town officials headed by Mayor Mohammad Faizal H. Jamalul (center in white shirt) showed the reptile to the local residents of the village before he ordered the release of the young crocodile to the sea. (Nonoy Lacson / MANILA BULLETIN)

Turtle Island municipal Mayor Mohammad Faizal H. Jamalul said on Wednesday that a local resident of Barangay Likud Bakkaw captured the young crocodile at about 7 a.m., Monday near the shoreline of the village.

The mayor said the elder crocodile immediately swam into the deep portion of the sea after seeing the local residents heading towards the area.

The crocodile, with scientific name *Crocodylus Porosus*, measures about 36 inches and is brackish, Jamalul told the Manila Bulletin.

He said the residents tried to catch the young reptile on four different occasions but failed due to the strength of the salt water crocodile.

“On Tuesday morning at about 7 a.m., the residents of the village were able to catch him but failed to catch the elder reptile,” the mayor said.

The mayor said the crocodile did not harm the people living along the village.

“Probably, the reptile was just looking for a new habitat where they could live,” he said.

Jamalul said he asked officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to release the reptile into the sea three hours after it was captured.

The release of the reptile into the sea was witnessed by Mayor Jamalul, DENR officials, town officials, and the chief of the Municipal Tourism Office Miss Abrille Yusop Oraiz.

Oraiz said it was the first time that local residents of the municipality saw a reptile visiting the shoreline of the town.

They normally witness turtles of different species visiting the shore to lay their eggs, Oraiz said.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/12/16/young-crocodile-captured-at-turtle-islands-in-tawi-tawi/>





# Biodiversity experts discuss need to act on impacts of climate change

Published December 16, 2020, 11:25 AM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

Recognizing the need to take immediate and concerted action to address the impacts of climate change, local and international biodiversity experts underscored the importance of nature-based solutions in building better climate change resilience for countries in the ASEAN region.



(Photo By Zaldy Comanda / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

“There is no denying that climate change and its severe impacts on the environment and our lives and well-being are already here. We can no longer keep this to our back burner as this issue cuts across the present challenges that hound us today. The far-reaching consequences of climate change disrupt our daily lives and stunt our development,” ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said at a virtual event titled “Biodiversity and Building Resilience to Impacts of Climate Change in ASEAN” that was held on Wednesday.

“ASEAN countries, especially in the past few months, have experienced stronger and more disruptive typhoons that came one after the other, leaving people dead and destroying millions worth of properties. Indeed, this climate crisis is one of the main culprits that drive the loss of nature,” she added.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Assistant Secretary and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Ricardo Calderon observed that the five strong cyclones that hit the country have caused massive flooding and river swelling “despite the well-managed protected areas with the average forest cover of 75 percent.”

“It simply means that our natural ecosystems cannot anymore absorb this kind of extreme rainfall-type events. And the impact, as far as the community is concerned, to the natural resources including the wildlife is very severe and very difficult to recover,” Calderon pointed out.

Filipino climate scientists of the Climate Change Commission (CCC) in an earlier statement confirmed that 2020 tropical cyclones, such as super typhoon Rolly and typhoon Ulysses, had certain characteristics that may have imprints of a changing climate.

The CCC National Panel of Technical Experts highlighted the need to conduct further studies on the changing behavior of tropical cyclones, translation of scientific data on climate change and its impacts on actionable information that will be useful on the ground, and enhanced cooperation among the national government agencies, local government units, and the scientific community on the implementation of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures, which are now more timely and relevant.

Also during the webinar last Wednesday, Dr. Isabelle de Lovinfosse, head of Southeast Asia 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) Strategy, British High Commission, discussed the United Kingdom’s planned key campaigns for COP26.



She talked about the country's plans on closing the ambition gap to address the Paris Agreement's three pillars—to increase the level of ambition by governments and non-government actors; to mobilize international climate finance from donor countries and the private sector to support other countries; and to increase efforts that are devoted to domestic and international acceleration in support of ASEAN economies and communities.

“Climate and biodiversity are forever closely interdependent. Climate change is already impacting biodiversity losses and ecosystem damage. And the same human activities are the drivers of both issues, like unsustainable land use, deforestation, intensive agriculture, and natural resource destruction. Nature-based solutions are not the only solutions to climate change problems, but they have a large role to play,” De Lovinfosse said.

Dr. Nagulendran Kangyatkarasu, Deputy Secretary-General of Malaysia's Ministry of Environment and Water said they are choosing to use this time as an opportunity to come up with more robust solutions to address the impacts of climate change in relation to biodiversity.



# Flood mitigation plans for Cagayan, Marikina City approved

By Azer Parrocha December 16, 2020, 2:17 pm



**FLOOD MITIGATION PLANS.** Aerial shot shows the aftermath of Typhoon Ulysses that submerged many areas in Cagayan province on Nov. 11, 2020. Malacañang Wednesday (Dec. 16, 2020) said President Rodrigo Duterte has approved flood mitigation and management plans for Cagayan Province and Marikina City, (Presidential photo)

MANILA – President Rodrigo Duterte has approved flood mitigation and management plans for Cagayan Province and Marikina City, Malacañang said Wednesday.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said Duterte approved the plans of the Task Force Build Back Better (TFBB) as presented by TFBB Chair and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu.

Roque did not elaborate the plans but, last month, Cimatu proposed the immediate dredging and strict enforcement of the 20-meter easement rule along the Cagayan River to prevent a repeat of the massive flooding in the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses on Nov. 11, 2020.

Four governors and 31 mayors in Cagayan Valley warmly received Cimatu's plans for the Cagayan River.

Aside from the immediate dredging of the heavily silted Cagayan River, Cimatu said strict implementation of the easement rule along its riverbanks should also be done.

Cimatu has also recommended the widening of Marikina River to increase its flood carrying capacity after Marikina City and nearby areas submerged in deep flood waters during the onslaught of the typhoon.

Since the river channel was narrow, he called for a strict imposition of easement requirements pertaining to rivers.

He said the TFBB will evaluate the changes in the width of Marikina River based on the data from the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority.

The task force will also look into the complaint of the Marikina City government over the alleged reclamation project along Marikina River, which has not secured an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) from the environment department, he added.

Duterte earlier issued Executive Order No. 120, strengthening rehabilitation and recovery efforts in typhoon-hit areas through the creation of the Build Back Better Task Force.

Under EO 120, the task force will also be in charge of ensuring availability and adequacy of key lifelines such as basic needs, medical services, electricity, water, telecommunication and transportation that can be mobilized immediately after the typhoon.

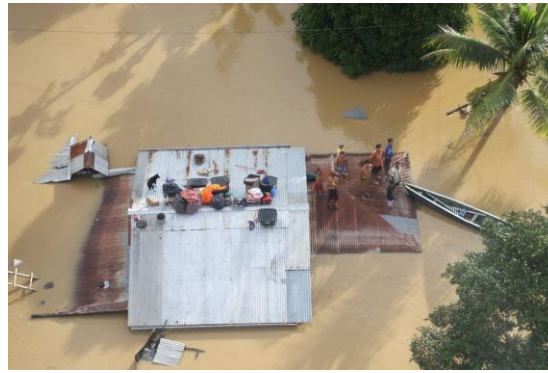
Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Mark Villar will be Cimatu's co-chair.





Members of the task force include the chairperson of National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and secretary of Defense; secretaries of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, National Economic and Development Authority, Transportation, Interior and Local Government, Energy, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Budget and Management, Finance, Education, Health, Social Welfare and Development, Labor and Employment, and Science and Technology; and General Manager of the National Housing Authority.

Administrators of the Land Registration Authority; Local Water Utilities Administration; National Electrification Administration; National Irrigation Administration; Philippine Coconut Authority; and Chair of the Cooperative Development Authority will also be among the members. (PNA)



## Duterte approves flood mitigation plans for Cagayan, Marikina

**Published** December 16, 2020 2:12pm

By VIRGIL LOPEZ, GMA News

President Rodrigo Duterte and his Cabinet approved the flood mitigation measures for Cagayan province and Marikina City, Malacañang said Wednesday.

Duterte's spokesperson Harry Roque did not specify the plans that were prepared by the Build Back Better Task Force headed by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu.

Cagayan and Marikina suffered widespread flooding following the onslaught of typhoons last month.

The President later created the task force to ensure whole-of-government implementation and monitoring of post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

The inter-agency body must also strengthen the institutional knowledge and expertise of the local government units on disaster recovery and rehabilitation and build safer sites for housing as well as restore or expand economic activities in typhoon-hit areas.

The task force was mandated to give a quarterly report to the Office of the President, and publish an annual report on its accomplishments, including projects and programs implemented and budget utilized.—**AOL, GMA News**



## Digong inaprub plano kontra baha sa Cagayan, Marikina

By Abante Tonite — Last updated Dec 16, 2020

NEWS



Inaprubahan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang planong iprinisinta ng Task Force Build Back Better para mabawasan ang matinding mga pagbaha sa Cagayan at Marikina City, ayon kay Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque sa isang pahayag nito.

Hindi dinetalye ni Roque ang buong plano subalit matatandaan na noong nakaraang buwan ay minungkahi ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu na hukayin at palawakin pa ang gilid ng Cagayan River para hindi na maulit ang malawakang pagbaha na naranasan ng mga taga-Cagayan at Isabela matapos hagupitin ng bagyong 'Ulysses' noong Nobyembre 11, 2020.

Nirekomenda rin ni Cimatu na palawakin pa ang Marikina River para madagdagan ang kapasidad nito sa pagbaha.

Matatandaang nag-isyu si Pangulong Duterte ng Executive Order no. 120 na para sa rehabilitasyon at pagbangon ng mga lugar na matinding napinsala ng mga kalamidad sa pamamagitan ng Task Force Build Back Better. (Aileen Taliping)





## Firms 'exploiting' Antipolo IPs over ancestral lands—Masungi

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)  
December 17, 2020



In file photo: Illegal structures and fences/enclosures erected by a fraternity inside the upper Marikina Watershed and Masungi Wildlife Sanctuary in KM 45 Marcos Highway, Pinugay, Baras, Rizal, were demolished on July 30. The team was led by Executive Director Nilo Tamera (left) of the DENR's Environmental Protection and Enforcement Task Force and Undesecretary Jim O. Sampulna (center).

The Masungi Georeserve Foundation, which runs an award-winning ecological park in Baras, Rizal, lashed at Rublou Inc. and Green Atom for allegedly "hiring" Indigenous Peoples (IP) for its private interests.

In a news statement issued on Wednesday, the Masungi Georeserve Foundation said hiring marginalized people as a front for destructive interests is a classic tactic for encroachments into Protected Areas (PA) and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Masungi is reacting to allegations made by tribal leaders of Dumagat-Remontados of Antipolo City, who defended retired Gen. Luizo Ticman, president and CEO of Rublou and Green Atom and accused Masungi of land grabbing for allegedly encroaching in their ancestral lands without their consent and approval.

The 26,000-hectare Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL) where Masungi and Rublou and its subsidiary, Green Atom are both situated is within the 67,000-hectare Marikina River Basin, the sorry state of which is being blamed for the massive flood that submerged Marikina City and other parts of Metro Manila and low-lying areas in Rizal province.

Masungi Georeserve Foundation reiterated that it respects the rights of IPs in reforestation under the Masungi Geopark Project which was found to be covered by ancestral domain claims and clarified that it is the "shameless exploitation of indigenous groups for private interests" that they deplore.

The Masungi Geopark Project, recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Commission on Protected Areas, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, seeks to restore some 3,000 hectares of degraded and illegally logged land around the Masungi limestone formations within the Upper Marikina Watershed, Kaliwa Watershed, and the Masungi Strict Nature Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

Such work helps protect millions of Filipinos from floods and disasters, restore clean and accessible water for surrounding communities and address climate change, Masungi's statement read.

Conservation groups and indigenous peoples are natural and key allies in the environment protection and restoration, and not adversaries as some interests wish to set up, the statement added.



“We strongly condemn any attempt to sow discord and orchestrate conflicts between conservation and indigenous groups especially at a time when strong collaborations are needed,” the statement said.

Masungi Georeserve Foundation maintains that former Gen. Ticman and his companies, Rublou Inc. and Green Atom Renewable Energy Corp., entered and occupied declared protected area and watershed without any permission from or agreements with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which administers the land.

“The Masungi Georeserve Foundation sought the help of authorities against Rublou Inc.’s entry, occupation, and continuous deployment of armed guards, who have been harassing and intimidating our park rangers and officers,” Masungi Georeserve Foundation added.

Masungi Georeserve said they never complained of the Dumagat-Remontados of Antipolo and said it was former Gen. Ticman’s party that dragged the Dumagat tribe into the issue.

“Fake news and misinformation may have been peddled to influence certain members of the tribe and sow discontent against Masungi. Sadly, we have also received reports of corruption, bribery, and political pressure, which we fear may compromise the integrity of certain individuals at the expense of the entire tribe, in an attempt to exploit the ancestral domain in favor of outside private business interests,” Masungi Georeserve Foundation added.

The foundation said the fact that Ticman illegally bought land from the Dumagat-Remontados is proof of his vested interest.

“Whether under forest land laws or the IPRA [Indigenous Peoples Right Act] law, commerce of land to non-tribe members is prohibited,” Masungi said, referring to Ticman camp’s claims of having purchased some 300 hectares of the watershed at P5 per sq m sometime in the 1990s.

“If it is true that he is buying land within the protected area and ancestral domain, then he is openly violating the law. The area has been a watershed reservation since 1904 and was strengthened by multiple protected area declarations and policies prohibiting settlement and sale,” the statement said.

Moreover, Masungi Georeserve said IPs are also prohibited from selling ancestral land to non-tribe members as it defeats the purpose of protecting their rights and culture.

Last, Masungi Georeserve Foundation appealed to leaders and the public not to indulge in the machinations and diversions from the main issues, which are the large-scale illegal and destructive activities and interests inside the Upper Marikina Watershed.

“We need to solve these urgently and courageously to protect the future of millions of Filipinos,” the foundation stated.

Image credits: [EPETF](#)



# Senate approves bill simplifying grant of land titles to farmers

Published December 16, 2020, 3:42 PM

by [Mario Casayuran](#)

The Senate passed on Tuesday Senator Richard J. Gordon's bill that simplifies the procedure and requirements in granting land titles to help rural farmers secure land certificates easily.



(MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)nate-hall

Senate Bill 1931 was certified as urgent by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on December 15 "to allow the continuous titling of public alienable and disposable agricultural lands beyond December 31, 2020 and ultimately preserve the security of tenure of land claimants and farmers."

The certification authorized the Senate to approve the bill on second and third reading on the same day, allowing for faster passage of the measure.

"We want to manifest that we have reviewed the proposed measure. We find it necessary and urgent, and we have no questions and interpellations," Senate Minority Floor Leader Franklin Drilon said.

Drilon was among those who expressed intention of co-authoring the bill.

Gordon thanked the senators for backing the proposed act and expressed gratitude for the support of the Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) that advocates for tenure security, agricultural productivity and well-defined property rights.

On the other hand, FEF President Calixto Chikiamco conveyed his appreciation to Gordon thru a text message.

"Thank you so much. The country salutes you for another landmark law," he said.

Senate Bill 1931 aims to address the difficulties encountered in proving ownership since 1945 by removing the need for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary's certification and the barriers of proving ownership.

It also synchronizes and shortens the period of possession required for perfection of imperfect titles from 74 years to 30 years.

Another objective of the bill is to disregard the deadline set on December 31, 2020 for the filing of application of agricultural free patents.

"If no law is passed to extend or remove the period of application, no new agricultural free patent will be issued by DENR and poor rural farmers may not be able to title their lands. If we allow our farmers to have property rights by securing land titles, we are giving them an opportunity to improve their lives as they can use land as collateral in order to borrow more capital and further improve their lot," Gordon said.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/12/16/senate-approves-bill-simplifying-grant-of-land-titles-to-farmers/>





# Senate OKs bill simplifying land titling process to help farmers

Robie de Guzman • December 16, 2020



**MANILA, Philippines** – The Senate has approved on third and final reading a bill seeking to simplify the procedure and requirement in granting land titles to farmers.

Senate Bill No. 1931 aims to address the difficulties encountered in proving land ownership by removing the need for a certification from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The bill amends provisions of Presidential Decree No. 1529 (Property Registration Decree), Commonwealth Act no. 141 (Public Land Act), and Republic Act 9176.

The current law requires the submission of a copy of the original classification approved by the DENR, a certification from the City Environment and Natural Resources Office and an official publication of the DENR Secretary's issuance declaring that the land title is alienable and disposable.

The proposed measure also synchronizes and shortens the period of possession required for perfection of imperfect titles from 74 years to 30 years.

The bill likewise seeks to disregard the deadline set on December 31, 2020 for the filing of application of agricultural free patents as stated Republic Act 9176.



# Severe

[FIRST PERSON](#) - [Alex Magno](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 17, 2020 - 12:00am

The numbers do paint a distressing picture. The Philippine economy is among the worst hit countries in this year of the pandemic.

We will close this horrible year with the economy contracting between -8 percent and -10 percent. Our economy has never taken a hit as severe as this one. The scarring will be deep and many of the jobs lost will likely never return.

In the midst of a pandemic, the Philippine economy may be compared to a person with numerous co-morbidities. Those will make us vulnerable to every infection and magnify all the symptoms.

The Economist magazine puts the Philippines at the top of the list of severely affected countries. The assessment takes into account not only the extent of decline in GDP but also labor market vulnerability, the structure of the economy, health related belief scarring, financial imbalances and the efficacy of policy offsets.

The National Statistics Office of Moody's Analytics puts the Philippines as second only to India in the severity of GDP contraction compared to 2019. We were worse than India in the third quarter 2020 numbers.

In the ASEAN region, the Philippines and Indonesia are about tied when it comes to declines in exports for the first nine months of this year. We have the worst declines in industrial production as of October 2020 among the Western Pacific economies.

As for returning the economy to its pre-pandemic peak, the Philippines is expected to linger in the doldrums far longer than anyone else in the region. China bounced back to its peak in Q2 2020. Taiwan and Vietnam bounced back in Q3 2020. South Korea, Australia and Indonesia are expected to bounce back in Q2 2021. New Zealand, Malaysia and Japan bounce back in Q4 2021. India is expected to bounce back Q1 2022.

The Philippines will be the laggard in this race to recover. Our economy is expected to bounce back Q4 2022.

We will not only be the last to recover economically. The country, along with Singapore, will be among the last to acquire COVID-19 vaccines.

According to the Duke Global Health Innovation Center and Moody's Analytics, countries such as Canada, the US and the UK have vaccine purchase agreements that will deliver dosages many times the size of their populations through next year. Many poor countries, the Philippines included, will not have enough to contain the spread of infections over the next two years.

Because of a stupid provision in our law that prohibits government from making a pre-payment for anything, we can expect to have vaccine supplies only by the second quarter of next year – and even then, too few to make a dent. The first vaccine dosages we will be able to administer are those donated by Australia from its surplus orders. Our vaccine czar estimates the vaccination program will stretch from two to five years before any sort of herd immunity is achieved.



Why are we in this pitiful state?

It is easy to assign blame on bureaucratic inertia or incompetence. But the general weakness of our economy and governance has been many decades in the making.

The onset of the pandemic unveiled the weakness of our health care system. While the country exports thousands of health care professionals every year, we do not have the capacity to deliver preventive care to the grassroots. The last time we had a major vaccination program (against dengue), it produced a calamity that only heightened vaccine hesitance among our people.

As I pointed out in the previous column, we have an educational system seriously mismatched with the skills the economy needs moving forward. It is a system that produced substandard graduates, guaranteeing high unemployment and many missed business opportunities.

Many years ago, our brilliant legislators, thinking it would avert a public backlash to the VAT measures they had to pass, decided to raise corporate tax rates as a means to appease public opinion. As a result, we had the highest corporate tax rates in a region competing for investments. Therefore, we received far less investments than everybody else.

Compounding that, we enshrined in our Constitution a negative list for foreign investors. That limits the scope of investments we could receive. That has proven to be a serious handicap in the race to attract new technologies and new capital.

For decades, we have been buying and selling the same tracts of land. It is an exercise that is inherently inflationary. We call it the land reform program. It resulted in breaking up our farms into small “family-sized” plots against all the wisdom of economies of scale. That grossly undermined agricultural productivity, proved a hindrance to mechanization and guaranteed poverty for the “beneficiaries.”

The outcome of this has been a largely stagnant agricultural sector and a shortage of land for industrial, commercial and residential use. The latter inflated the costs of housing, leaving a yawning shortfall of about 4 million housing units. The tedious process of “conversion” resulted in a shortage of land that hampered growth of our manufacturing sector.

For over two decades, we have had a land use plan under legislative consideration. It would have rationalized land use and curtailed settlements in hazard zones. Congress never acted on this.

We have restrictive (but thoroughly politicized) labor regulations that protected those already employed but never encouraged new employment. We have a chaotic tax incentives system that preserved inefficient industries while discouraging new competitors.

In a word, our economy has never been nimble. Therefore, it will take us longer just to get back to where we were pre-pandemic.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2020/12/17/2064335/severe>





# Dutch firm to start preparation work for Bulacan airport in Q1

December 16, 2020 | 12:32 am



By Arjay L. Balinbin, *Senior Reporter*

CONSTRUCTION of the P740-billion airport project in Bulacan is set to begin in the first quarter of 2021, San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said on Tuesday, with land development work to be undertaken by a Dutch company.

The Manila International Airport project “is set to take off in the first quarter of 2021, after it awarded global firm Boskalis a \$1.73-billion contract” to restore the land where it will be built, SMC said in an e-mailed statement.

The company in October said groundbreaking for the Bulacan airport would take place “by the end of the year.”

SMC said it selected Dutch firm Royal Boskalis Westminster N.V., through its local unit Boskalis Philippines, Inc., to undertake land development work for the project, which will be built in the coastal areas of Bulakan town, Bulacan.

“Our selection of a global giant in dredging shows how ready, willing, and committed we are to do everything necessary to make sure this airport project is developed properly and sustainably,” SMC President and Chief Operating Officer Ramon S. Ang said in the statement.

Mr. Ang said the mega-airport is expected to be fully completed by 2024.

He noted the Dutch dredging firm, which has been involved in development projects in South Korea, Panama, Indonesia, and Amsterdam, will prepare the area to “withstand potential large earthquakes, local typhoon conditions, and even future sea level rise.”

To recall, SMC’s airport project has faced criticism from various groups over its environmental impact.





The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said during a Senate hearing in September that the airport project is at risk of flooding and ground shaking.

Mr. Ang said the company will use engineering intervention to avoid the risks that come with building an airport in a coastal area.

To address such concerns, SMC has tapped Groupe ADP (Aeroports de Paris), Meinhardt Group and Jacobs Engineering Group for the construction of the airport. These firms are behind Singapore's Changi airport, France's Charles de Gaulle airport, and the United States' Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International airport.

## WRIT OF *KALIKASAN*

Meanwhile, Oceana Philippines in a statement said fisherfolk and civil society groups filed a petition for a Writ of *Kalikasan* against SMC's airport project before the Supreme Court.

The petitioners included Bulacan-based fishermen Teodoro Bacon and Rodel Alvarez, Oceana Philippines Vice-President Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Archbishop Roger Martinez of the Archdiocese of San Jose del Monte, and Aniban ng mga Mangagawa sa Agrikultura led by Renato de la Cruz.

Oceana Philippines said the petition was filed to stop the reclamation of Manila Bay in order to save marine life, endangered birds and mangroves and ecosystems. They also claimed that the airport project did not have an environmental compliance certificate (ECC), as it was SMC's contractor Silvertides Holdings that was issued an ECC on June 14 last year.

"We have to keep on working together in the protection, rehabilitation, and conservation of Manila Bay, not only for its economic importance and contribution to national food security, and for its historical, cultural, and aesthetic value but to make ecosystems and people resilient to the impacts of climate change," Oceana's Ms. Ramos said.

The case respondents include Mr. Ang, Silvertides President Hercules V. Galicia, Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, Environmental Management Bureau Region III Regional Director Wilson L. Trajeco, and Transportation Secretary Arthur P. Tugade.

A Writ of *Kalikasan* is a legal remedy that protects the people's constitutional right to a healthy environment.

As of press time, SMC has not yet replied to *BusinessWorld's* query for comment.

SMC shares closed 1.08% lower at P137.70 apiece on Tuesday. — *with Angelica Y. Yang*

Source: [https://www.bworldonline.com/dutch-firm-to-start-preparation-work-for-bulacan-airport-in-q1/?fbclid=IwAR1IfyXy-O4\\_yyR1KTRqrywoljn7Aqv9JA400AbZC\\_2xKjCD-qPw\\_mHLDA](https://www.bworldonline.com/dutch-firm-to-start-preparation-work-for-bulacan-airport-in-q1/?fbclid=IwAR1IfyXy-O4_yyR1KTRqrywoljn7Aqv9JA400AbZC_2xKjCD-qPw_mHLDA)



# Pasay City 3rd most compliant city in Manila Bay cleanup drive

Published December 16, 2020, 5:42 PM

by [Jean Fernando](#)

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) ranked the Pasay City government the third most compliant city in Metro Manila in terms of implementing the Manila Bay Clean-Up Rehabilitation and Preservation (MBCRP) Program.



Manila Bay (ALI VICOY / MANILA BULLETIN)

In a simple awarding ceremony, the DILG said Pasay successfully passed scrutiny in terms of liquid waste management, solid waste management, informal settler families as well as information, education and communication materials, and institutional arrangements.

The award was based on the assessment of LGU compliance to the MBCRP. It is done every year to monitor and ensure compliance of LGUs to the Supreme Court continuing mandamus to clean, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay.

Mayor Emi Calixto-Rubiano said the award reflects the city's unrelenting efforts to improve the quality of water in the bay.

"We will constantly implement and even improve our efforts in keeping Manila Bay clean," Rubiano said. Rubiano said the city got a grade of 94.6% in liquid waste management, 97% in solid waste management, 100% in informal settler families and 90% in information, education and communication.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/12/16/pasay-city-3rd-most-compliant-city-in-manila-bay-cleanup-drive/>



# Cebu mayors create council for marine resource protection

By Carlo Lorenciana December 16, 2020, 5:05 pm



**MARINE PROTECTION.** Seven town mayors of the second district of Cebu on Tuesday (Dec. 15, 2020) signed a memorandum of agreement creating the Southeast Cebu Coastal Resource Management Council. The body aims to protect the marine resources of the province's southeast towns. (Photo courtesy of Cebu Provincial Capitol PIO)

**CEBU CITY** – Second district mayors of Cebu province have created the Southeast Cebu Coastal Resource Management Council (SCCRMC) that aims to protect the coastal resources here.

The mayors on Tuesday signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to create the council.

Governor Gwen Garcia welcomed the development as she was the one who inspired the council's creation in 2005 during her first gubernatorial term.

The MOA was signed by Mayors Michael Angelo Sestoso of Alcoy town; Jose Tumulak Jr. of Oslob; Merlou Derama of Boljoon; Marites Buscato of Santander; Allan Sesaldo of Argao; Jeffrey Belcina of Dalaguete; and Emerito Calderon Sr. of Samboan.

SCCRMC's creation adheres to the policy declared in Republic Act 10654 or the amended Philippine Fisheries Code wherein overriding consideration in the utilization, management and development of coastal and marine resources is needed to achieve food security.

The council recognizes that the seven southeast Cebu towns have municipal waters that cover a portion of two of the important fisheries ecosystems in Central Visayas which are the Cebu-Bohol Strait and Tañon Strait Protected Seascape.

The council enables local government units (LGUs) to attain genuine and meaningful local autonomy in their responsibility of managing the environment and natural resources within their territorial jurisdiction.

Through the MOA, the southeast Cebu towns agreed to work together within their common coastal ecosystem in order to maximize resources and benefits to be gained from a meaningful collaboration on habitat and fisheries protection and management, coastal tourism and management, and coastal protection and management, among others.

Garcia said that coastal resources are a source of wealth to Cebu's southeast towns.

The seven Cebu mayors have already agreed to contribute annual funds worth PHP50,000 each for the council. (PNA)



## 4.28 TONS NA 'DI REHISTRADO AT NAKALALASONG KALAKAL WINASAK NG BOC-NAIA

15 hours ago [jake](#)



Winasak o sinira ng Bureau of Customs (BOC NAIA) ang mahigit sa apat (4.28 tons) na toneladang kalakal na nakasasama at hindi maaaring gamitin ng tao noong Disyembre 7, 2020.

Ang pagwasak sa mga unregistered and hazardous goods ay bahagi ng pagsisikap ng BOC na protektahan ang publiko mula sa mga kalakal na nakasasama at hindi maaaring gamitin.

Kabilang sa mga winasak ng BOC-NAIA ay ang hindi mga rehistradong cosmetics at ibat-ibang mga produktong pagkain na bahagi na rin ng kanilang pagbibigay proteksyon sa publiko laban sa mga hindi ligtas at nakalalasang mga produkto.

Ang pagsira ay sa pamamagitan ng Thermal Decomposer (Pyrolysis) Facility ng Integrated Waste Management Inc. (IWMI) para tiyakin na ang nasabing items ay hindi na maibenta at mapunta pa sa mga pamilihan.

Para sa taong 2020, ang Port of NAIA ay nakapagpatala na ng kabuuang 371.42 tons ng unregistered and hazardous goods.

Ito ay pagsunod sa direktiba ni Commissioner Rey Leonardo B. Guerrero na paluwagin ang lahat ng pwerto at warehouses sa buong bansa.

Bilang promosyon ng tinatawag na public safety ngayong covid-19 pandemic, nangako naman ang pamunuan ng BOC-NAIA sa pangunguna ni District Collector Carmelita Talusan na patuloy sila sa kanilang pagbabantay laban sa pagdagsa ng 'dangerous drugs, anti-social goods and hazardous substances.' (Joel O. Amongo)

Source: [http://saksingayon.com/inside-aduana/4-28-tons-na-di-rehistrado-at-nakalalasang-kalakal-winasak-ng-boc-naia/?utm\\_source=ReviveOldPost&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=ReviveOldPost&fbclid=IwAR1QNg8SnfklvmUZOBQGzGmZN1CzuShfHo\\_vxqJQy3jl01NGKOBQZqRyhnk](http://saksingayon.com/inside-aduana/4-28-tons-na-di-rehistrado-at-nakalalasang-kalakal-winasak-ng-boc-naia/?utm_source=ReviveOldPost&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=ReviveOldPost&fbclid=IwAR1QNg8SnfklvmUZOBQGzGmZN1CzuShfHo_vxqJQy3jl01NGKOBQZqRyhnk)





# Trash



BAGUIO. Lower Rock Quarry (LRQ) Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (Tupad) beneficiaries clean the lagoon sinkhole of trash and debris after heavy rains. LRQ Punong Barangay Benigno Marzan is asking 14 other adjoining barangays around Lower Rock Quarry that their Tupad beneficiaries should dispose of their trash properly after cleaning their respective barangays so it will not accumulate at the mouth of the sinkhole. (Photo by JJ Landingin)

December 16, 2020

BAGUIO. Lower Rock Quarry (LRQ) Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (Tupad) beneficiaries clean the lagoon sinkhole of trash and debris after heavy rains. LRQ Punong Barangay Benigno Marzan is asking 14 other adjoining barangays around Lower Rock Quarry that their Tupad beneficiaries should dispose of their trash properly after cleaning their respective barangays so it will not accumulate at the mouth of the sinkhole. (Photo by JJ Landingin)



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A woman checks her own temperature on this October 25, 2020 photo.

The STAR/Edd Gumban, file

## COVID-19 transmission rate rising in Metro Manila – DOH

[Sheila Crisostomo](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 17, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The reproduction rate of COVID-19 cases has increased in 12 localities in the National Capital Region, according to the Department of Health (DOH).

At a press briefing yesterday, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the expected surge in COVID-19 infections in Metro Manila is happening.

The DOH noted that COVID-19 cases are registering a reproduction rate of more than one.

“The surge in COVID cases is evident. We are seeing it now,” Duque said.

He warned the public to refrain from holding parties and other mass gatherings during the Christmas season.

According to Duque, the rise in cases reflected on “more than one in average attack rate and the two-week growth rate.”

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire reported that COVID-19 cases in some areas are hitting a plateau.

“Because we are seeing a flattening of cases in other cities, it means that the decrease in infections is not continuing,” Vergeire said.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2020/12/17/2064311/covid-19-transmission-rate-rising-metro-manila-doh>



# 'Wag muna ngayon,' Duterte appeals to public as Christmas shoppers flock to markets amid pandemic

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Dec 17, 2020 1:42:21 AM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, December 17) – President Rodrigo Duterte has urged Filipinos to refrain from leaving their homes this holiday season, including to buy Christmas presents, as the threat of a post-holiday surge in COVID-19 cases looms.

In his address to the nation on Wednesday night, the President lamented the apparent lack of physical distancing as shoppers flock to public markets, especially Divisoria, despite warnings from authorities of a possible spike in infections.

"Sabihin mo bakit walang katapusan? Tignan mo naman ang tao," Duterte said. "Tignan mo sa TV, fini-feature nila ang tao sa Divisoria napakarami."

[Translation: You ask why there seems to be no end? Look at the people and their social distancing. Watch the TV; they feature crowds of people in Divisoria.]

"Wag muna ngayon. There will always be a time," he added, as he stressed that holding on to a little more patience now would help save lives. "Kalma muna. Tatal marami pa namang Pasko eh."

[Translation: Not now. Keep calm. Anyway, there's always next Christmas.]

Authorities and experts have urged the public to do their holiday shopping online instead of leaving the house.

The government has also repeatedly discouraged people from joining or organizing social gatherings amid the Christmas season, noting that evidence showed "social mixing" among households led to the second wave of infections in Europe and North America.

To date, at least a thousand new cases are still being logged in the country daily by the Department of Health. Its latest data showed the virus has killed 8,833 people in the country, out of nearly 453,000 infected, since the pandemic started.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/12/17/-Wag-muna-ngayon---Duterte-appeals-to-public-as-Christmas-shoppers-flock-to-markets-amid-pandemic.html>





## Bayanihan III bill worth P485B filed in Senate

December 16, 2020 | 7:47 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

A THIRD stimulus package worth P485 billion to help the economy recover from the pandemic and the late-year typhoons has been filed in the Senate.

The Bayanihan III stimulus package formally known as Senate Bill (SB) No. 1953 or the proposed Bayanihan to Rebuild as One Act, does not contain a grant of special powers to President Rodrigo R. Duterte, unlike the first and second rounds of stimulus.

The Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, or Republic Act No. 11469, and the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act, RA 11494, respectively authorized packages of P375 billion, and P140 billion with P25.5 billion in standby funding.

“Notwithstanding these measures which cushion the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, our agony is not yet over as three typhoons which hit the Philippines in October and November 2020 had exacerbated the disastrous impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019),” Senator Ralph G. Recto said in the bill’s explanatory note.

He said SB 1953 is the counterpart measure of House Bill No. 8031, written by Marikina Representative Stella Luz A. Quimbo.

The bill allocates P55 billion for COVID-19 vaccines and other medications and another P20 billion for vaccine storage. At present, a total of P82 billion in programmed and unprogrammed funds has been allotted for the vaccine rollout.



It will also provide an additional P35 billion to hire contact tracers, fund testing and treatment, and provide hazard pay.

Some P100 billion will be earmarked each for worker subsidies and capacity-building in hard-hit sectors; P70 billion in cash assistance to households under the social amelioration program, and P20 billion for households affected by the typhoons.

Some P30 billion will be provided for displaced workers, P50 billion for the rehabilitation of typhoon-hit areas, and a P5-billion internet allowance for teachers and students via the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education.

The government placed Luzon on lockdown in mid-March to contain the spread of the virus. Quarantine rules remain in force at varying levels of severity across the country.

The economy contracted 10% in the first nine months, which could worsen due to the impact of five typhoons in October and November. The National Economic and Development Authority has estimated that the storms caused P90 billion worth of output to be lost. — **Charmaine A. Tadalán**



## P4.5 trillion national budget: Good news and bad news

By [Atty. Josephus Jimenez](#) (The Freeman) - December 17, 2020 - 12:00am

The biggest national budget since 1935 is the national appropriation for 2021, which is a whopping figure of P4.5 trillion. The good news is the government's concern for the people. The bad news is the tremendous burdens to be borne again by the taxpayers.

The top 10 slices of the national financial pie are: Dep-Education, P782.2B; DPWH, P694.8B; DOH, P287.5B; DILG, P247.5B; DND, P205B; DSWD, P176.7B; DOTr, P87.4B; DA, P68.6B; Judiciary, P44.1B; and DOLE, P36.6B. The administration defends this budget as the government's appropriate response to the confluence of challenges posed by the pandemic and the worsening poverty incidence among our people. The critics are questioning the administration's sources of revenues and debts to fund this huge budget. Many are voicing their concern on what fractions of this gargantuan financial moola will end up in the pockets of corrupt politicians and the usual suspects among their cohorts, the contractors, suppliers and other predators.

In education, the poor public school teachers will most probably continue spending their own money, or go on begging for donations to buy reams and reams of bond papers and to pay for printing of modules to be distributed to their pupils in far flung mountain villages and valleys. These poor education frontliners are facing daily risks and carrying heavy burdens while their national and regional officials are dealing with suppliers using the budget in most extravagant and at various ways and times, in dishonest ways. In public works, the regional directors and district engineers will have control of billions of funds, which may not be spent in the most prudent and honest manners. Kickbacks and grease money continue to be practiced even in the face of strong warning by the president himself.

In the health sector, there should be better and more prudent and honest ways in the purchase of medicines and equipment even as we bewail why many of our government doctors, nurses and other medical professionals are overworked, underpaid and neglected by their immediate superiors and higher officials. These poor frontliners are often lauded for their heroic fidelity to duty, and yet the government is not putting money where their hearts are, and not walking their talk on the care for the medical practitioners in the public and private sectors. Covid vaccines are allocated P72.5 billion, which was reported increased at the last minute to more than 100 billion. The DILG should use their budget to help financially strapped LGUs who are not able to cope with the crisis. Not all local government units are as rich as Makati, Taguig, Pasig and the province of Davao de Oro.





There are some questions why the DND has a huge allocation of P205 billion, while we give the DA only P87.4 billion, or just a little more than one-third for sustenance of life than for killing. Is the government buying more guns and bullets and less rice and other prime commodities for food? Is national defense more primordial than food security? We can well appreciate the P176.7B for DSWD but why are dole-outs much, much more than the P36.6B for DOLE's job generation? Why are we funding mendicancy much more than we fund employment and workers' protection? I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the government is funding dole-outs with such huge amount and only one-fourth of that for generation of jobs and for the protection of the working class.

This government may have to reexamine its priorities. For a struggling third world economy, we are paying billions to more than 300 congressmen who do nothing, but stay at home, enjoying life, while millions are starving in the pandemic. They do not even participate actively in discussions of very important issues, even when sessions and committee hearings are being done via digital platforms. The government pays for their wifi and even buys for them and for their hundreds of consultants the softwares and the hardwares to do their jobs. What have these trapos done to help alleviate the sufferings of the people? They keep on showing off by coming up with a budget without a clear source of funding. And why does a small congress in a small country have to be governed by 29 deputy speakers with higher perks and allowances and budgets?

The P4.5 trillion budget for 2021 is another evidence showing that the Philippines is a poor country trying its very best to look rich and to spend money beyond its means.





## Time to change

By Glenn S. Banaguas

December 17, 2020

THE unforeseen colossal devastation brought by the three hydro-meteorological hazards — tropical cyclones “Quinta”-“Rolly”-“Ulysses” (QRU), have created issues and corollaries of criticism, bias, faultfinding and animadversion.

And people cannot be blamed because thousands were affected and displaced. Assets, infrastructure, buildings and houses were heavily damaged. And economic losses were deeply felt.

However, this is not the right time to condemn an individual or institution for the actions and decisions that were as clear as night and day. Certainly, it will not help the Philippines.

No one wants these turmoils to happen.

No one wishes our people to suffer.

No one wants their houses to be submerged.

And no one wants their livelihoods to be ravaged.

The people want to know the root cause why these impacts unceasingly occur despite the strong campaign and implementation of the current disaster risk management schemes.

They want to understand how people will respond in the most practical and effective way to save their families and loved ones.

They also want to experience how the community will be empowered to cope with the adverse effects and recover from the peril.

So, it is time to:

1. Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that will identify the gaps and constraints between the current status of the region/province/city/municipality and its vision/mission/goal/targets.
2. Revisit and enhance the comprehensive land use plans, or CLUPs, and forest land use plan, or FLUP, that will regulate the use of land and forestland to promote social and environmental initiatives.
3. Revisit and enhance the comprehensive development plans that will identify the road map of the socio-economic and spatial development and progress of the city/municipality.
4. Conduct a detailed risk assessment that will predict probable biological, environmental, technological and man-made hazards, and will evaluate the magnitude of potential damages and losses.
5. Strengthen local action plans (e.g., local climate change action plan, local disaster risk reduction and management plan) that will ensure the community’s resilience.
6. Apply participatory multistakeholder mechanism that will develop and implement the science and evidence-based policy solutions, gender-responsive measures, and sustainable programs and projects.

These stakeholders are as follows:

- Academe, experts, scientists, researchers and science diplomats
- Government agencies and institutions, provincial governments and local government units
- Civil society organizations and nongovernment organizations



- People’s organizations such as the community of farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous people, church leaders, youth, women, PWDs
- Private sector and service providers.

This participatory multistakeholders approach is going to be challenging but it will help our stakeholders to know the extent:

- They are affected by the problem
- They contribute to the problem
- They may be affected by the solution
- They may influence the solution of the problem.

7. Organize training workshops, scientific capacity and capability programs that will strengthen confidence skills, knowledge, and resources as well as institutional structures, dynamics, and processes.

8. Develop and implement programs and projects that will address the impacts and risks of disasters to human security, food security, sustainable energy, water sufficiency, biodiversity, health and nutrition, and infrastructures.

9. Mobilize resources in partnership with the development partners such as the United States Agency for International Development, United Nations, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Global Green Growth Institute and other international organizations that will provide support in accordance with the national action plans.

Given the identified list that may be considered as a holy grail, it can be boiled down to a single phrase — “Time to change” — a change that will focus on concrete elucidations and strategies for enhancing resilience from the local to the national level; a change that will integrate natural, social, and economic approaches in order to identify a range of options for management and policy reforms; a change that will serve as a platform for managers and policy-makers in the society at large; and a change that will establish strong collaboration among stakeholders to provide scientific and political support for the development of effective science-based governance stratagems that are needed to position vulnerable sectors for an improved future.

Though change will take some time because different forms of obstruction, rejection, doubt, and exclusion will be encountered. But with passion, perseverance, optimism and commitment, the real essence of change will be captured, and the true destination will be reached.

*Sci. Dpl. Glenn S. Banaguas is an honoree of The Outstanding Filipino (ToFil) Laureate, NAST Outstanding Young Scientist of the Philippines, United States-Association of Southeast Nations (US-Asean) Science and Technology Fellow; European Union-Asia Climate Diplomat, Asean Science Diplomat, Royal Society-The World Academy of Sciences Awardee; and Asia’s Sustainability Leader Awardee.*



# Radioactivity in West Philippine Sea a cause for concern, says Hontiveros

**Published** December 16, 2020 10:19pm

By DONA MAGSINO, GMA News

Senator Risa Hontiveros on Wednesday called for further investigation on the findings of the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI) that there are high levels of radioactive materials in the West Philippine Sea.

"Let us be on guard. The PNRI needs to investigate the source of this radioactive material further, as this might be from nuclear-powered warships patrolling the area," she said in a statement.

"Alam natin na ang Tsina at Amerika ay nagpapatrol sa WPS. The tension between the US and China poses a serious threat to security and peace in the Philippines and the ASEAN region. We must not allow the WPS to become a battleground of these great powers," she added.

Citing information from PNRI Director Carlo Arcilla, the senator said the radioactive material iodine-129 was found in corals in the West Philippine Sea.

Most iodine-129 in the environment around the world came from nuclear weapons testing which were conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, Hontiveros said, and is now found at very low levels.

She stressed, however, that the PNRI observed the presence of higher iodine-129 level in the West Philippine Sea than the surrounding areas.

Hontiveros said that militarization of the waters within the territory of the Philippines must stop before it's too late.

China is expected to [seize control](#) of some of the Philippines' waterways if a war emerges between Beijing and Washington, former Philippine Armed Forces chief Emmanuel Bautista said last October.—**LDF, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/768310/radioactivity-in-west-philippine-sea-a-cause-for-concern-says-hontiveros/story/>



## Bicol Region, Eastern Visayas uulanin sa tail-end of the frontal system



December 16, 2020 @ 6:31 AM 24 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Makararanas ng maulap na papawirin na may kalat-kalat na pag-ulan ang Bicol Region, at Eastern Visayas dahil sa Tail-End of a Frontal System (Shear Line) ayon sa Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Magiging maulap na may mga pag-ulan naman sa Cagayan Valley, Cordillera Administrative Region, Aurora at Quezon bunsod ng amihan.

Paalala ng PAGASA na posible ang mga pagbaha at pagguho ng lupa tuwing lalakas ang buhos ng ulan.

Sa Metro Manila at nalalabing parte ng Luzon ay magiging bahagya hanggang sa maulap na may hiwa-hiwalay na mahihinang pag-ulan dala ng amihan.

Ang nalalabing bahagi ng Visayas at Mindanao at magiging katamtaman hanggang sa maulap na may hiwa-hiwalay na pag-ulan at thunderstorm dahil sa easterlies na may posibilidad ang pagbaha at pagguho ng lupa sa tuwing lalakas ang buhos ng ulan.

Samantala ang Luzon at silangang bahagi ng Visayas ay magiging bahagya hanggang sa mahangin na ihip sa hilagang-silangan habang katamtaman hanggang sa maalon ang mga baybayin.

Ang nalalabing bahagi naman ng bansa ay makararanas ng mahina hanggang sa bahagyang lakas ng hangin sa silangan patungong hilagang-silangan habang mahina hanggang sa katamtaman ang mga alon sa mga baybayin. **RNT/ELM**





## Magnitude 6.2 quake hits Davao Occidental



By Arlie O. Calalo

December 16, 2020

A magnitude 6.2 earthquake rocked a Davao Occidental province on Wednesday morning, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum told The Manila Times that the quake happened around 7:21 a.m.

The quake's epicenter was 86 kilometers southeast of Sarangani province. It had a depth of 16 kilometers and was tectonic in origin, Solidum said.

Intensity 5 was reported in General Santos City and South Cotabato while Intensity 4 was recorded in Kiamba, Alabel, Maasim, Glan, Malungon and Malapatan, Sarangani; Lebak, Sultan Kudarat; Datu Blah Sinsuat, Maguindanao; Koronadal City, Polomolok, Tampakan and Tupi, South Cotabato.

Meanwhile, Intensity 3 was reported in Maitum, Sarangani; Cotabato City, Maguindanao; Davao City; Kidapawan City, North Cotabato; Tandingan and Santo Nino, South Cotabato.

Intensity 2 was recorded in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat; Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat; and Magpet, North Cotabato while Intensity 1 was reported in Zamboanga City.

The Phivolcs chief said damage and aftershocks are expected.

“But this would not cause a tsunami,” he said.

The latest quake has been classified as strong, Phivolcs said.



## Lady guards seal Indon forests

By Agence France-Presse

December 17, 2020

**SUMATRA:** Sumini gets up at dawn to do her household chores — then leads a team of women into the jungles of Indonesia’s Sumatra island, on a mission to battle rampant deforestation and wildlife poaching.

The 45-year-old mother of five heads a unique team of female rangers taking on illegal loggers and hunters threatening Sumatran tigers, pangolins and other at-risk wildlife.

The culprits are mostly men, including neighbors or even the husbands of team members, who live together in Damaran Baru village in the north of Sumatra.



*Bener Meriah, Indonesia: This picture taken on November 25, 2020 shows a woman forest ranger carrying her grandson after a patrol in the forest of Bener Meriah, Aceh province. AFP PHOTO*

Along the way, the 30-member team grapples with sexist stereotypes in ultra-conservative Aceh province, and authorities who are indifferent to the environmental destruction wrought by illegal logging and land clearance for the region’s many coffee plantations.

Deforestation and habitat loss have long been a problem across the vast Southeast Asian archipelago, which is among the most biodiverse nations on Earth.

“The forest has always been associated with men,” said Sumini, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

“But we want to change that and say it’s also about women. Women who are angry about environmental destruction and who are taking action to fix the problem.”

The group, which now includes one of Sumini’s sons and his wife, got its start in 2015 after a flash flood destroyed a dozen houses in the community of about 1,000 residents.

Sumini’s husband relented after repeated demands that he show her why so much wood and debris was mixed in with the floodwaters barrelling down from a nearby volcano. “When we got there, I saw the mountain had been deforested,” she said.

“I said to my husband ‘Well, so this is the reason. The forest has been destroyed by men.’ I was so angry that, from that moment on, I told myself I’d take on the role of protecting the forest.”

The fledgling squad got no help from authorities when they complained about hillsides scarred by tree loss. “They thought we made it up. That is why we established the team,” Sumini said.

Twice a month, the hijab-clad women strap on floppy hats and rubber boots before setting off for about five days at a time, navigating the steep, mountainous terrain.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/12/17/news/world/lady-guards-seal-indon-forests/812173/>



# How sewage sludge could be used to make the plastics of tomorrow

[AFP Relaxnews](#) / 05:01 PM December 16, 2020



Waste sewage sludge could be used to make biodegradable plastics. Image: EyeEm/Mikhail Mikheev via AFP Relaxnews.

Researchers in the United States have discovered an efficient, cost-effective way to make biodegradable plastics from unused and potentially polluting waste. The process makes use of bacteria found in the salt water of mangroves.

The starting point for the study was a simple observation: the U.S. generates seven million tons of sewage sludge annually, enough to fill 2,500 Olympic-sized swimming pools. While some of this waste is repurposed for manure and other land applications, a large quantity is sent to landfill. Now, after several attempts, a team of researchers from Texas A&M University has discovered an efficient and cost-effective way of using leftover sludge to produce biodegradable plastics.

[Published](#) in the journal American Chemical Society (ACS) Omega last Sept. 17, the research centers around a strain of bacteria found in mangroves, called *Zobellella denitrificans* ZD1. The scientists discovered that this bacterium was capable of consuming sludge and wastewater to produce polyhydroxybutyrate, a type of biopolymer that can be used to substitute petroleum-based plastics.

“The price of raw materials to cultivate biopolymer-producing bacteria accounts for 25-45% of the total production cost of manufacturing bioplastics. Certainly, this cost can be greatly reduced if we can tap into an alternate resource that is cheaper and readily obtainable. We have demonstrated a potential way to use municipal wastewater-activated sludge and agri- and aqua-culture industrial wastewater to make biodegradable plastics,” said Dr. Kung-Hui Chu, one of the study’s co-authors.

While the findings may contribute to reducing the environmental impact of waste, they could also help make the cost of bioplastics more competitive than ordinary plastics.

For the study, the researchers focused on the *Zobellella denitrificans* ZD1 bacterium, usually found in the salt waters of mangroves. They tested the growth and the ability of the bacteria to produce polyhydroxybutyrate in three conditions: in pure glycerol; in glycerol containing salt and fatty acids; and in wastewater-activated sludge. They found that the bacteria were capable of producing polyhydroxybutyrate in all three cases, although at quantities lower in sludge than in crude glycerol.

According to the researchers, their discovery offers “a low cost, sustainable method to make bioplastics and another way to repurpose biowastes that are costly to dispose of.” *CC*

Source: <https://technology.inquirer.net/106562/how-sewage-sludge-could-be-used-to-make-the-plastics-of-tomorrow>



# Record climate disasters in Asia-Pacific push millions to 'breaking point'

Beh Lih Yi, Thomson Reuters Foundation

Posted at Dec 16 2020 01:23 PM



Farmers in Barangay Baculud in Ilagan, Isabela till and plant vegetables that grow around a month for a quicker harvest on November 21, 2020, after flooding brought by Typhoon Ulysses inundated the area and destroyed growing crops. Mark Demayo, ABS-CBN News

KUALA LUMPUR - Asia-Pacific has faced a record number of climate-related disasters in 2020, affecting tens of millions of vulnerable people already hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Red Cross said on Wednesday.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said it had responded to 24 climate-linked crises this year in the world's most disaster-prone region - up from 18 in 2019 - including floods, typhoons, extreme cold and drought.

"COVID-19 has of course aggravated these impacts, with a taste of the compound shocks we're expecting in a changing climate," Maarten van Aalst, director of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The pandemic has not only complicated evacuations and disaster response, but also aggravates the economic impact of disasters, especially for the poorest people," he added.

Southeast Asia was the IFRC's busiest region in 2020, with 15 emergency responses to disasters including severe floods, storms and landslides in the Philippines and Vietnam that affected more than 31 million people.

Jess Letch, the IFRC's emergency operations manager, said the challenge had been to help communities with relief aid while also taking the steps needed to halt the spread of COVID-19.

Mary Joy Gonzales, a resilience project manager with CARE in the Philippines, said her aid agency had worked to provide additional shelter to enable social distancing after one person contracted COVID-19 in an evacuation center it was supporting.

Women have suffered a triple blow, she added, with the pandemic fueling violence at home just as many lost their jobs and had to look after out-of-school children and elderly relatives while the country was pummeled by destructive storms.

The agency expected that such impacts "will get worse due to climate change", she told journalists earlier this month.

"We have seen the trend in the past 10 years: typhoons have been becoming stronger and we have lost thousands of lives already," she said.

Last year, more than 94 million people in the Asia-Pacific region were hit by climate-related disasters, with the area experiencing twice as many emergencies as the Americas or Africa, according to the IFRC's latest World Disasters Report.

The total number of people affected in 2020 has not yet been released.



## INCOMES SUFFER

Home to about 60% of the world's population, the Asia-Pacific region has borne the brunt of climate disasters, with many people living in vulnerable conditions due to poverty and poor urban planning.

Van Aalst said countries had become better prepared and equipped to save lives but were still failing to protect the livelihoods of vulnerable communities struck by disasters.

He cited the example of Cyclone Amphan that battered India and Bangladesh in May. Mass evacuations before the storm made landfall prevented a large number of deaths.

But the impact on economic well-being was harsh, especially for the poorest, he noted, with total damages estimated at more than \$13 billion.

In Vietnam, CARE's country director Le Kim Dung said the pandemic had made it harder to bounce back, particularly in rural areas, from widespread floods that had inundated many provinces hit by heavy rains and a series of typhoons since early October.

COVID-19 restrictions also prevented some farmers from selling their produce, while migrants in cities - many of them care workers or street traders - lost their jobs and could not send money back home to keep their families afloat, she added.

"People are used to storms and floods right across Asia, but this year has tested the resilience of tens of millions of people to breaking point," said the IFRC's Letch.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/spotlight/12/16/20/record-climate-disasters-in-asia-pacific-push-millions-to-breaking-point>

# Air pollution a cause of UK girl's death, finds global landmark ruling

By Emma Reynolds, CNN

Updated 1813 GMT (0213 HKT) December 16, 2020



Coroner: Ella Kissi-Debrah died as a result of asthma worsened by exposure to excessive air pollution.

**London (CNN)** A 9-year-old girl who died after an asthma attack is thought to be the first person in the world to have air pollution listed as a cause of death in a landmark coroner's ruling.

Ella Kissi-Debrah lived in Lewisham, southeast London, near [one of the UK capital's busiest roads](#), the South Circular. She died in hospital in February 2013 after suffering a cardiac arrest from which she could not be resuscitated, the coroner reported on Wednesday.

The girl suffered from severe asthma that caused episodes of cardiac and respiratory arrest, and frequent emergency hospital admissions over three years.

Her medical cause of death was listed as acute respiratory failure, severe asthma and air pollution exposure. The coroner's conclusion was that Ella "died of asthma contributed to by exposure to excessive air pollution."



Ella, who died in February 2013, is thought to be the first person in the world to have air pollution listed as a cause of death.

The charities Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation said Ella was the first person in world history to have air pollution listed as a cause of death on her death certificate.

Assistant coroner Philip Barlow said that Ella's mother had not been given information about air pollution and asthma that could have led to her take steps which "might" have prevented her daughter's death, according to PA Media.

"Air pollution was a significant contributory factor to both the induction and exacerbation of her asthma," said Barlow as he gave his conclusions at Southwark Coroner's Court after a two-week inquest.

"During the course of her illness between 2010 and 2013 she was exposed to levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter in excess of World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines."



"The principal source of her exposure was traffic emissions," he said, according to PA.

Barlow said there was a failure in this period to reduce the level of nitrogen dioxide to within the limits set by EU and domestic law.

"We've got the justice for her which she so deserved," Ella's mother, Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, said after the ruling.

But she added: "Also it's about other children still as we walk around our city of high levels of air pollution."

"Her legacy would be to bring in a new Clean Air Act and for governments -- I'm not just talking about the UK government -- governments around the world to take this matter seriously," said Kissi-Debrah, reported PA.

"I still think there's a lack of understanding about the damage it does to young lungs, especially that are not truly formed."



Ella's mother, Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, said her daughter got the justice she deserved.

Kissi-Debrah said she would prefer to see a public awareness campaign about the damage air pollution can do "rather than a blame game."

A previous inquest ruling from 2014, which concluded Ella died of acute respiratory failure, was quashed by the High Court following new evidence about the dangerous levels of air pollution close to her home, PA reported.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan called it a "landmark moment" and praised Ella's mother for her "extraordinary" courage and years of campaigning.

"Toxic air pollution is a public health crisis, especially for our children," he [said in a statement](#). "Today must be a turning point so that other families do not have to suffer the same heartbreak as Ella's family."

A 2018 report by Stephen Holgate, a professor at the University of Southampton, found air pollution levels at the Catford monitoring station a mile from where Ella lived "consistently" exceeded lawful EU limits over the three years before her death, according to PA.

"If we want a healthy generation to come into the world, we are going to have to clean up our environment," Holgate told a news briefing after the inquest.

He said the health and medical profession must start "taking ownership of some of these problems" as they had with smoking.

"Our hearts go out to Ella's family who have fought tirelessly for today's landmark outcome," said Sarah Woolnough, chief executive of Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation.

"Ella's legacy has firmly put the spotlight on the invisible dangers of breathing dirty air," particularly for those with asthma or lung diseases, she said, criticizing "inadequate air quality laws and policies."



"Today's verdict sets the precedent for a seismic shift in the pace and extent to which the government, local authorities and clinicians must now work together to tackle the country's air pollution health crisis," she added.

A UK government spokesperson said: "Our thoughts remain with Ella's family and friends."

The spokesperson said the government was delivering a £3.8 billion plan to clean up transport, tackle NO<sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide) pollution and go further in protecting communities from air pollution, as well as setting "ambitious new air quality targets."



View of a damaged area of the Amazon rainforest after illegal mining took place near Puerto Maldonado, Tambopata province, Madre de Dios region, in southeastern Peru, on September 02, 2019. The Amahuaca indigenous people, who were enslaved and displaced by the rubber boom in the 19th century, are now besieged by gold miners and loggers, who already consumed thousands of rainforest hectares. Ernesto Benavides/AFP

## Bid to make 'ecocide' a crime gains new momentum

**Published** December 16, 2020 6:21pm

By AMELIE BOTTOLLIER-DEPOIS, Agence France-Presse

PARIS — Climate change, oil spills, deforestation. The injuries caused to the natural world by states and companies threaten whole ecosystems and imperil the environment that sustains life itself.

But are they crimes?

Many think that they are and the idea of criminalizing "ecocide" is beginning to gain ground.

"People are starting to realize that if we don't get serious about climate change and the threats to biodiversity, then we'll have nothing for ourselves, nothing for our children and grand-children," said Rob White, professor of criminology at the Australian University of Tasmania.

Deliberate environmental destruction in war has a long history and it was a conflict—the United States intervention in Vietnam—that shaped the concept of ecocide.

During its operations in the country in the 1960s and 70s, the American army dropped tens of millions of liters of toxic herbicides, including Agent Orange, on to Vietnamese forests and crops.

The health and environmental impacts continue to this day—and so do campaigns to recognize environmental destruction as a specific atrocity.

Under its description of war crimes the Rome statute—which formed the basis of the 2002 International Criminal Court—describes "widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive" in relation to military goals.

But activists want ecocide to be a crime in peacetime as well.





In the last year their campaign has gathered new momentum, with the support of Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, French President Emmanuel Macron and Pope Francis.

At the end of 2019, Francis said "an elementary sense of justice" demands that conduct, often by corporations, does not go unpunished.

He highlighted actions "that can be considered as 'ecocide': the massive contamination of air, land and water resources, the large-scale destruction of flora and fauna, and any action capable of producing an ecological disaster or destroying an ecosystem."

### **'Like genocide'**

One stumbling block is that there is currently no internationally agreed characterization of ecocide.

"We use a kind of working definition of mass damage and destruction to an ecosystem, serious harm to nature which is widespread or severe or systematic, and which is committed with knowledge of the risks," said Jojo Mehta, president of the Stop Ecocide Foundation.

The group has recently set up a panel of lawyers and international judges to draft a definition and hopes that ecocide will be added to the crimes prosecuted by the ICC, alongside genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The issue was raised by the Maldives and Vanuatu at the ICC general assembly in December 2019.

"The idea can no longer be ignored by leaders," Dreli Solomon, a Vanuatu diplomat in Brussels, told AFP, welcoming a "growing social movement" on the subject.

He said this was against a backdrop of the "woefully inadequate" global response to climate change and the consequent suffering of his cyclone-battered fellow citizens.

But questions remain.

Should a crime of ecocide only refer to damage knowingly caused? There is currently no consensus. How great does the damage need to be to be termed ecocide?

Campaigners say it should be "large scale," like the massive deforestation of the Amazon, global climate change, oil spills, industrial fishing, oil and mining extraction, or air pollution.

If ecocide were delineated activists say it would need to stretch the parameters of the ICC, allowing the court to prosecute companies and states rather than just people.

"Ecocide is not intended to punish the little guy," Mehta told AFP.



"Like with genocide you don't punish the foot soldiers—you punish the ones who gave the command."

### **Shame and share price**

Some worry the ICC itself is too limited, weakened by the absence of large states such as the US. But this does not discourage campaigners.

"That the institution does not function well, does not stop it from taking up an issue of vital importance," said lawyer and activist Valerie Cabanes.

"Just because an issue is complicated does not mean we should give up," she said, adding that the abolition of slavery and voting rights for women were also considered challenging at the time.

An ecocide crime could act to demonstrate the seriousness of ecological damage "in a way that is intended to shame governments" or to pressure them to stop harmful activities, said White.

It would not be to see "particular bad guys in a dock," said Mehta, but to change practice.

She said existing civil laws covering corporate negligence or damage could be brushed off by firms with big legal budgets, but criminal law is "a deterrent on a different level," with executives held more personally accountable.

"If you are a genocidal maniac, you're not going to care what people think of you," she said.

"If you are the CEO of a corporation committing ecocide you care very much because your reputation depends on it, and therefore your share price and the success of your company depends upon it." — **AFP**



# U.S. says monarch butterflies deserve protection, but must wait in line

Reuters / 09:27 PM December 16, 202



FILE PHOTO: A monarch butterfly is seen at El Rosario sanctuary for monarch butterflies in the western state of Michoacan, near Ocampo, Mexico February 3, 2020. REUTERS/Alan Ortega

Monarch butterflies deserve federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, President Donald Trump's administration said Tuesday, but the black-and-orange insects must wait in line behind 161 other species facing more imminent threats.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said it expects to list these winged pollinators for protection under the landmark conservation law in fiscal 2024, which begins on Oct. 1, 2023.

Monarch butterflies, known for migrating thousands of miles (km) across North America, have experienced a decades-long U.S. population decline due to habitat loss caused by human activities such as farming and urban development, the widespread use of pesticides, and climate change, the agency said.

Environmental groups criticized the administration's move, saying it has prioritized herbicide users in the agriculture industry over the butterflies.

"Protection for monarchs is needed – and warranted – now," George Kimbrell, legal director at the Center for Food Safety, said in a statement.



FILE PHOTO: Monarch butterflies are seen in a puddle at El Rosario sanctuary for monarch butterflies in the western state of Michoacan, near Ocampo, Mexico February 3, 2020. REUTERS/Alan Ortega

Between 1997 and 2019, their population in the western United States slid more than 97% to fewer than 30,000, the agency said, while their population in the eastern United States declined by 84% over a similar time period.

The agency was first petitioned to list monarch butterflies as threatened in 2014 by several conservation groups. It began a status assessment two years later and on Tuesday announced that the species meets listing criteria under the Endangered Species Act.

The agency said it lacks the resources to address the monarch butterfly's listing status immediately. The species is being added to a waitlist and its priority status will be reviewed annually until the fiscal 2024 target date, it added.





Species with higher priority for review include the Illinois chorus frog, Plains spotted skunk, and Golden-winged warbler, the agency said, adding that litigation can affect its priority system.

Monarch butterflies received a lower priority finding in part due to widespread conservation efforts to address threats to the popular species, the agency said.