

17 OCTOBER 2020, Saturday



NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR contest promotes behavior on climate change

By Catherine Teves October 16, 2020, 4:36 pm



MANILA – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will accept until Nov. 15 this year photo entries for its "Mga Kwentong KLIMA-likasan: A Photoblog Competition" for 15 to 21-year-old Filipinos nationwide.

The entries must show individual's and communities' behavior changes that help create a healthy environment and boost the fight against climate change, noted staffer Kathleen Cornejo from DENR's Climate Change Service which is running the competition.

"We recognize behavior change's impact on curbing climate change," she said.

She said riding bikes instead of cars and composting leaves instead of burning these are some of the behavior changes people can do to contribute towards such goal.

The transport sector and burning are among sources of carbon dioxide which is one of the greenhouse gases (GHGs) fueling climate change, DENR noted.

GHG emissions accumulate in the atmosphere and trap heat so global temperature rises, changing climate.

DENR noted people's collective shift to environment-friendly activities helps mitigate GHG emissions.

"Climate change needs behavior change," it said.

Earlier, international organization Rare identified 30 behavioral changes or solutions that can mitigate around 20 percent to 37 percent of global GHG emissions during the 2020-2050 period.

Aside from biking and composting, Rare said those solutions include reducing food waste, cleaning stoves, inter-cropping or growing trees and annual crops together, taking public transportation, using energy-efficient lighting as well as recycling paper, metal, plastic and glass materials.



DENR contest promotes behavior on climate change

Parties interested in joining 'Mga Kwentong KLIMA-likasan' competition can send their entries as well as corresponding entry forms and proof of their age to cco.denr@yahoo.com and ccs.denr@gmail.com, said DENR.

"Each contestant must submit a maximum of three photos in his/her entry," DENR continued.

Those photos must be related to each other, DENR project development officer Micah de Leon clarified.

Entries must be the participants' original works that have never been published in social and print media.

The submitted photos must not contain any copyrighted material including artwork and other photos, the DENR noted.

The DENR will announce the competition's winners during the annual National Climate Change Consciousness Week observance this November.

De Leon noted entries for the competition will be part of DENR's Climate Change Needs Behavior Change campaign.

She said DENR will also use the entries in its other advocacy programs. According to DENR, the competition's major prize is PHP5,000. DENR will also award nine consolation prizes of PHP2,000 each.

The public can contact the DENR regarding the competition's other details. Relatives of DENR Climate Change Service personnel up to the second level of consanguinity are not eligible to join the competition, the agency said. *(PNA)*



PACC starts fact-finding inquiry into Manila Bay rehab project

Published October 16, 2020, 6:49 PM

by [Genalyn Kabiling](#)

The Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) has started a fact-finding inquiry into the Manila Bay rehabilitation project that recently drew environmental and health concerns from some groups.

According to PACC Commissioner Greco Belgica, they have asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to submit relevant documents about the project to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

“Maraming mga bali-balita diyan na hindi naman na-ve-verify pa and sinimulan po namin ang pagtatanong at pag-aalam (There are many reports that have not been verified and we have started the inquiry),” he said during an online press briefing organized by the Presidential Communications Operations Office-Office of the Global Media and Public Affairs.

“Pinakukuha namin ‘yung mga dokumento at paliwanag ng mga nag-implement nito DPWH, DENR. Kasi ‘yung pera kasi diyan, ‘yung project is DENR but implemented by DPWH. So tinitingnan namin lahat yan and right now, hindi pa tapos ang aming fact finding (We have asked for the documents as well as the explanation from those implementing the project — the DPWH and DENR. Because the funds, the project is DENR but implemented by the DPWH. So we are looking into everything and right now, we are not finished with our fact-finding),” he said.

Belgica said they would look into the Manila Bay project implementation before deciding on whether or not to pursue a formal investigation.

“We will do our homework and look into it one by one bago kami magbigay ng final na komento recommendation na iinvestigahan (before we give a final comment, recommendation to investigate),” he added.

The cleanup and rehabilitation project of Manila Bay became subject to public scrutiny after authorities poured crushed dolomite rocks to transform the polluted stretch of shoreline into a white sand beach.

Some environmental advocates have questioned the overlaying of the artificial white sand over the Manila Bay shoreline, which they claimed focused on aesthetics instead of addressing the environmental problems.

Recently, marine scientists from the University of the Philippines said the use of crushed dolomite would not resolve the environmental problems in Manila Bay, adding it was just a costly and temporary beautification effort. They said the dolomite sand would wash away into the bay during heavy rainfall.

The local scientists instead proposed to authorities to address poor water quality and prevent erosion through wastewater treatment plants, proper garbage proposal, and transfer of informal settlers living in riverbanks, among others.



Science groups to Antiporda: Leave DENR

By: [Jhesset O. Enano](#) - Reporter / [@JhessetEnanoINQ](#)
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:32 AM October 16, 2020

Various groups from the local scientific community on Thursday demanded the resignation of Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda for his disparaging remarks against scientists from the University of the Philippines (UP), particularly its Marine Science Institute (MSI).

Antiporda on Wednesday called UP MSI researchers “bayaran” (paid hacks) who had no right to criticize the P389-million Manila Bay beach nourishment project, which includes overlaying a tiny strip of the kilometerslong shore with pulverized dolomite from Cebu.

His remarks raised questions about his credentials as an environmental official and drew attention to the state of scientific research in the country.

“When science proves inconvenient to Duterte and his lackeys, they are quick to attack and undermine Filipino scientists,” the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (Agham), a national organization of scientists, engineers, researchers and science educators, said in a statement.

“We demand that [Antiporda] be removed from his post due to unnecessary and vile antipathy he is courting against the local science community,” the group said, adding: “The Filipino science community direly needs support, not hostility, from the government.”

In a statement last month, UP MSI outlined the issues in Manila Bay and stressed that the dolomite “sand” would not solve the cause of the heavily polluted bay’s environmental problems.

‘Consultancy’

Citing his own “research,” Antiporda said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) had paid “half a billion pesos” to the UP MSI since 2016 for mere consultations. He added that even with that amount, no “infrastructure” was built.

But the country’s national institute for marine sciences said it received P364 million, not P500 million, for 10 projects with the DENR over the past decade.

It said the money supported projects involving the nationwide standardized assessments of the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems sites, enhancing capacity for management and rehabilitation of marine ecosystems and strengthening the understanding of Philippine waters, including the West Philippine Sea and the Benham Rise.

Laura David, the UP MSI director, said Antiporda might not have been familiar with the DENR’s contract with UP. “None of it is consultancy,” she said.

In various interviews on Thursday, Antiporda apologized to the UP community, but kept on taking swipes at MSI.

“This is not to destroy the good name of the university, but this is to send the message to UP MSI that we are partners here,” he said in a television interview.

“What we are expecting is for you to call us, or even text us or even write a letter to the secretary ... [but] you went straight to the media, destroying the good name of the DENR.”



Science groups to Antiporda: Leave DENR

The institute did not seek the media but only posted its statement on its website.

“Scientists stand by our science. Whatever we discover or learn, we share it to the public—that is part of being a scientist, and as part of the UP community,” David said.

Asked why the DENR did not consult UP MSI or other institutes in UP Diliman on the dolomite project, Antiporda said: “We are partners in projects where we pay them.”

The Geographic Society of the University of the Philippines said Antiporda’s behavior was unacceptable for a government official.

“Considering your ill-fitting background for the job as well as your disregard for the opinions of other Filipino scientists, we call on you to formally retract your statements against the UP MSI and to resign from your position as undersecretary, as both a form of accountability and to give way for other, better qualified candidates to work in the department,” the group said.

Only Duterte can decide

Antiporda, however, dismissed calls for his resignation, saying only President Duterte, who had appointed him, could make him quit.

One consequence of his rants against the marine scientists and critics of the Manila Bay beautification project was the renewed focus on the dire state of science and research and development in the country, with Filipino scientists sharing their experiences on social media.

“Currently, we have very little researchers per million Filipinos, well behind neighbors in the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations),” Agham said. “Gross expenditures in research and development stand at only 0.16 percent of the gross domestic product, very far from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization standard at 1 percent.”

Timothy James Cipriano, a graduate student at the UP Department of Geography, said that funds for research projects do not go directly to the researchers themselves.

‘Stages of hell’

“Our salaries are often delayed due to the institutional bureaucratic processes involved,” the former university researcher said on Twitter. “That process is what we jokingly call as the ‘stages of hell.’”

Meteorologist Ariel Rojas said that Antiporda’s comments were an attack, not just against UP MSI, but also against Filipino scientists and science itself.

“Do you know how much sacrifice the Filipino scientist makes? It entails sleep, blood, sweat, our own dreams, and money,” he said on Twitter. “The state of science in the country continues to go backwards because of people who insult the contributions of our scientists and of science to our society ... We have been left behind in the Philippines because of the government’s neglect.”



Science groups to Antiporda: Leave DENR

Since his appointment as undersecretary for solid waste management and local government concerns in 2018, Antiporda has emerged as a lead player in the DENR, often seen as a proxy and mouthpiece of Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu.

He has taken a major role in the cleanup and rehabilitation of Manila Bay, which began in January 2018.

Former tabloid publisher

The former National Press Club president was the publisher of tabloid Remate where he remains a regular columnist. He was also an anchor for the government-operated People's Television Network Inc. from 2009 to 2012.

Antiporda also was the director of the Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group from 2007 to 2008 and a director of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority from 2016 to 2018. —WITH A REPORT FROM KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1348542/science-groups-to-antiporda-leave-denr#ixzz6b4DfpoEF>

Follow us: [@inquirerdotnet on Twitter](#) | [inquirerdotnet on Facebook](#)

Si Benny at si Teddy

[Friday, October 16, 2020](#) [Paul M. Gutierrez](#)

BAGO ang lahat, narito ang isang importanteng ‘public announcement’ para sa ating kababaihan. Para sa inyo ito, ladies of the Philippines:

The 2021 search for the Outstanding Women in Law Enforcement and National Security (OWLENS) begins.

The Republic Defenders and San Miguel Corporation launched the second search for the ten outstanding women amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first OWLENS awarding ceremony happened at the Heroes Hall in Malacañan Palace on March 11, 2019 led by President Rodrigo Duterte. The celebration also coincided with International Women’s Month every March.

Awardees composed of the finest members from the PNP, LTO, PCG, MMDA, Army Cavalry and Artillery and the Philippine Air Force Attack Pilots who contributed in the national victory of the liberation of Marawi were all honored being a source of pride for Filipino Women throughout the nation.

OWLENS recognizes the achievements of women who are exemplars in their field of expertise.

We celebrate women and their roles in nation-building.

The next search will include civilians who are contributing to other forms of national security such as food and healthcare security.

The search is also on for the frontline heroes fighting against the COVID-19 crisis.

Project OWLENS spirit is all about championing women empowerment.

“*BIDANG-bida*” ngayon itong ating dating “*kasama*” sa kabataang makab, err, ‘youth sector’ na si ex-CEGP national president, Teddy Casiño.

At ang kanyang ‘10-second fame’ sa social media at twitter ay ang kanyang patuloy na pagbira kay ex-NPC president, Benny Antiporda, ngayon ay undersecretary at spokesman ng DENR.

Kung ang mga banat at hugot ni Casiño ay bilang matapat na pagsunod sa “*linya ng partido*,” siya lang ang makasasagot nyan.

Gusto kasi nating maniwala na marunong namang “tumanaw ng utang na loob” itong si Teddy kay Benny at sa National Press Club dahil kahit bukod sa pagbibigay noon ng libreng opisina sa CEGP sa gusali ng NPC, tumulong din naman sa kanya si Benny at ang NPC para sa kanyang mga krusada at kandidatura—kahit alam namin na wala naman siyang kapana-panalong kandidato sa Senado.

At ang pagtulong sa kanya ay dahil marunong tumanaw ng utang na loob si Benny dahil nga sa unang kilos protesta ng NPC hinggil sa Ampatuan Masaker noong Nobyembre 24, 2009 (isang araw matapos ang masaker), kasama pa naming nagmartsa si Casiño at NPC lifetime member at ex-NDFP chairman, Satur Ocampo, patungong Kampo Crame upang kondenahin ang krimen ng mga Ampatuan.

Si Benny at si Teddy

Mainam sana kung walang ‘skeleton in the closet’ itong si Casiño kung pagsusulong ng mga “karapatan” ang pag-uusapan; aber, kahit ang panalo nga niya noon bilang CEGP president, dekada '90, ay hindi dahil talagang mayroon siyang ‘leadership qualities.’

Tanda natin na CEGP regional president noon si Casiño na nag-aaral sa UPLB. At “*tiyak*” na ang kanyang panalo sa ginanap na general assembly ng CEGP dahil ito na ang napagkaisahan ng mga “kolektibo” sa loob ng CEGP.

Mas ‘senior’ tayo kay Teddy at ang “*kolektibo*” ko pa nga noon, kahit nasa CEGP-MLQU na ako ay sa STR (Southern Tagalog Region). Kaya hindi ko nasundan ang itinakbo ng GA na ginanap pa sa Boracay, ayon pa sa mga ‘juniors’ namin sa kolehiyo, na kasamang “*humilot*” sa kanyang panalo.

At ano naman ang kanyang naging “*sukli*?” Eh, tingnan ang nangyaring pagkalusaw ng mga campus papers dahil sa ipinasa noon na ‘Campus Journalism Act of 1991’ kung saan siya ang kausap ng mga mambabatas bilang presidente ng CEGP.

Dangan kasi, “*pinayagan*” ni Casiño na alisin sa batas ang orihinal na mandato sa lahat ng kolehiyo at unibersidad na ang pagkolekta sa “*butaw*” o kontribusyon ng mga estudyante para sa kani-kanilang ‘campus papers.’ Ang resulta? “*nalusaw*” ang halos lahat ng campus papers sa ‘Pinas sa kawalan ng pondo, huhuhu!

Aber, naalala ko pa tuloy na para lang makapaglimbag ng kopya noon ang ‘The Quezonian’ ng MLQU, kailangan pang “*mag-ambagan*” ang mga ‘seniors’ nito na katulad namin!

Kung “*nakaligtaan*” lang ni Casiño ang kahalagahan ng pondo para sa mga publikasyon o kung sadyang may “*kahinaan*” din ang kanyang pag-iisip bilang lider, eh, ‘water under the bridge’ na ito, mga kabayan.

Pero ang kanyang ginawa ay isang malaking “*kasalanan*” na hindi basta nakakalimutan ng mga “*tibak*” na naghirap noon para itaguyod ang ‘malayang pamamahayag’ sa campus. Kung hindi naman ito alam ng mga nasa CEGP ngayon, eh, ngayon siguro, alam na ninyo, hehehe!

Alam natin na kahit paano ay “*nasaktan*” si Benny sa mga batikos sa kanya nitong si Teddy; sino ba namang hindi masasaktan kung ang batikos ay galing sa itinuring mong “*kasama*” at kaibigan na “*tinulungan*” mo rin naman at ipinagtanggol kahit alam mong magkaiba kayo ng prinsipyo at paninindigan.

Kaya sakaling “*magpang-abot*” itong si Benny at Teddy saan mang lugar at “*masikwat*” ni Benny itong si Teddy, aba’y siguro, dapat lang naman, hehehe, ayy, huhuhu!

Oops! Hindi po ito pananakot o pagbabanta. Kilala rin kasi natin itong si Bentot, ehek, Benny sa napakatagal na ring panahon.

Wala itong inatrasan na laban. Kung usapang disente o pang-Malakanyang, puwede siya, kung usapang kanto na tila gustong mangyari nitong si Teddy at kanyang mga kabaro, puwede rin naman dahil, “*batang Tondo*” itong si Bentot, ehek, Benny! Abangan!



Pabahay sa mahihirap sa Maynila, kasado na

[Danilo Garcia](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - October 16, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Makaraang makatanggap ng ‘zero grade’ mula sa Manila Bay Clean-Up Rehabilitation and Preservation Program sa mga nakaraang taon, inaprubahan na ng Sangguniang Pangkonseho ng Maynila ang plano para mabigyan ng pabahay ang mga mahihirap na pamilya na naninirahan sa mga ‘critical zones’.

Sinabi ni Manila Mayor Isko Moreno na sa ilalim ng Local Shelter Plan, bibigyan ng disenteng pabahay na mas mura at kayang lumaban sa mga kalamidad ang mga mahihirap na maaari nilang ipagmalaki.

Nabatid na binuo ang plano makaraang tumanggap ang lungsod ng Maynila ng ‘zero grade’ mula sa Regio-nal Inter-Agency Committee ng Manila Bay Clean-Up Rehabilitation and Preservation Program dahil sa kawalan ng planong pabahay ng umano’y nakaraan pang administrasyon.

“I, too, personally experienced being an informal settler in Tondo during my younger years. This has been my drive to provide a comfortable shelter to every Manileño,” paliwanag ni Moreno.

Sa ilalim ng plano, nasa 191.05 ektarya ng lupain ang planong i-develop sa mga ‘socialized housing projects’ mula 2020 hanggang 2025.

May tatlo nang proyekto na natapos ang Pamahalaang Lungsod kabilang ang Tondominium 1, Tondomi-nium 2 at Binondominium.



Building a community of climate ambassadors during a crisis



By [Ludwig O. Federigan](#)
October 17, 2020

The realities of climate change are undeniable.

In observance of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction on October 13, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said that if we do not change course by 2020, we risk missing the point where we can avoid runaway climate change, with disastrous consequences for people and all the natural systems that sustain us.

In continuing the interview following last week's sharing, I sat down with a new climate warrior who was one of my mentees during the Climate Reality Leadership Corps' Global Training in July 2020: Janbern Lope Barel, a corporate social responsibility officer of First Gen.

On his inspiration to embracing environmental and climate advocacies and eventually motivated him to aspire to become a Climate Reality leader

“My consciousness and drive to contribute to safeguarding the environment and the climate was rooted during college days when I was engaged in a couple of extension work like on a project for the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System where we conducted several youth eco-camps for high school students and freshmen of the university. Looking back to one particular person that left a mark on me was Ms. Elisea ‘Bebet’ Gozun, a former secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and presidential adviser on climate change. In one of her keynote messages with business leaders and change-makers, she concluded her speech by grabbing a glass of water and saying, ‘water is life and we should care of what sustains our lives,’ then went on commanding everyone to finish the water on their glasses, to which everyone did – even the CEOs (chief executive officers) present in the room. After which I went to work further as a development worker on the environment, was able to meet a few climate reality leaders trained by Al Gore in 2016, and it dawned on me to be one of them where I can learn more and do more for the climate and the environment.”

On his two takeaways of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps' Global Training

“The global training was a great platform to sustain the movement on climate education – that no pandemic should stop us from taking a step closer to making a difference for our tomorrow. Thus it leads me to take part in creating that change – ‘climate action in the digital age and planetary health’ is not different from our health.

“With the fast-moving and wide-reaching sharing over the internet, it poses a great opportunity and also a challenge to create a substantial noise that would spark that action towards our climate.



Building a community of climate ambassadors during a crisis

Thus learning about how to take the fight in the digital space, I will be able to apply it in my current profession, to continue the momentum of our efforts to decarbonize our future. Through this, we don't just run our effort in one go, but it creates that ripple – building a community of change-makers.

“Second, one that made me nod greatly was the particular talk on planetary health. There was a discussion on social determinants of health, with a particular statement, that ‘why send back people to environments that will make them sick again’ – that simply gave me chills, completely agreeing that people will continue to suffer from recurring conditions of our climate and the environment. We need to be an agent of change, do away with destructive and sickening ways that will keep that cycles of sickness and poverty, which were primarily caused by our inaction, unconscious and irresponsible choices.”

Three environmental actions that he plans to adopt to start living a sustainable lifestyle

“Learning a lot from the global training and my experiences throughout my career led me to my advocacies — ‘actions to adopt a sustainable life,’ which include responsible water consumption, reduction of plastics, and wise energy usage.

“As a development worker in a company that advocates for renewable and cleaner sources of energy, turning off lights to campaigning for switching to cleaner alternatives and no coal is the whole ABC for me.

“Second, responsible water consumption is the need to manage our water demand. Water covers 75 percent of the earth but in reality, freshwater is a scarce resource. People may say it should not cause an alarm for someone like me living half of my year with rainy days, but the truth to the matter is that how much of these rains even fall to our dams and water reservoirs for it to replenish what we need to consume.

“The third is on reducing the usage of plastics. We might be unconscious of our weekly purchase or occasional ones of double-digit calendar date sales because of the ease of doing it through the booming e-commerce but we should also consider if our environment can catch up. Most purchases are overly plastic-packed including those from groceries.

Thus the next time we buy our favorite mocha-flavored biscuit sandwich, why don't we go for the bigger tub, and do away with individually plastic-packed serving. I am not saying that I can fully live a life without plastic but little-by-little a lifestyle change should start to benefit our only planet.”

On his plan to align climate advocacy with his current work

“The opportunity of learning much on what we can differently do gave me ammunition to do more for our environment and the climate. Thus, from my experience with Climate Reality, it inspires me to learn more through different like the Project Drawdown that will teach us ways to act that will ultimately lead to unified climate action.



Building a community of climate ambassadors during a crisis

“I am fortunate enough that my company is a staunch leader in decarbonizing our economy and creating a regenerative future. Together with my team performing our social responsibility, we will continue to deliver company-wide climate education, building a community of climate ambassadors. Once the pandemic is over, together with the community, transferring our knowledge to different local communities and schools hopefully builds a nation of climate leaders.”

It is truly admirable when young people step up and join in the cause to advance the national discourse on climate change – the time to translate our words into doable actions.

In a time when the multiple calls for the declaration of a climate emergency remain unanswered, we have to keep in our minds that loss of lives is not just statistical data.

They are real people that we should care about. We should continue to carry the torch and be the voice of the multitudes who cannot fight for themselves.

The author is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum and a nonresident fellow of the Stratbase ADR Institute. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom) and an executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University (USA). You can reach him at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.



PH gold, silver production dips

By Catherine Teves October 16, 2020, 3:14 pm



MANILA – January to June volume and value of locally produced precious metals, gold, and silver, have decreased this year as compared to the same period in 2019.

The Philippine gold production volume for the year totaled 8,246 kilograms (kg) only -- down by 27 percent from 11,252 kg. last year, based on the latest available data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Silver production volume also decreased by 30 percent to 11,764 kg. this year from 16,768 kg. in 2019.

MGB data further showed gold production value dipped amounting to PHP22.12 billion in 2020, 10 percent lower than last year's PHP24.52 billion.

The production value for silver also shrank by 26 percent to PHP309.58 million this year from 2019's PHP419.24 million. (*PNA*)



Hungary eyes Laguna Lake rehab, offers Philippines \$30-million credit

Published October 15, 2020 6:35pm

By [MICHAELA DEL CALLAR/](#)

Hungary has proposed a \$30-million assistance to the Philippine government for the rehabilitation and water treatment of Laguna Lake, its top diplomat said Thursday.

Speaking to GMA News Online in a one on one interview, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said a formal offer was made during his bilateral meeting with Philippine counterpart Secretary Teodoro Locsin.

“Water management is one of the main areas of our cooperation for the future. We have offered a \$30-million credit line to the Philippines in which Hungarian companies are ready to take part for the rehabilitation of the Laguna Lake,” said Szijarto, the first foreign senior government official to visit Manila in nearly eight months since the coronavirus pandemic.

“We have been in lengthy negotiations now with the Laguna Lake development agency,” he said.

Over the years, efforts to rehabilitate Laguna Lake - the biggest in the Philippines and the second biggest inland freshwater lake in Southeast Asia – have been delayed due to legal challenges and setbacks.

In 2012, former President Benigno Aquino junked an P18.7-billion rehabilitation deal entered into by his predecessor, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, with Belgian firm Baggerwerken Decloedt En Zoon (BDC), citing irregularities. The allegation was denied by BDC, while Aquino’s officials said the project is legally-binding.

Ruling in favor of BDC, the World Bank-attached tribunal International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) in 2017 ordered the Philippine government to pay P800 million compensation to the Belgian firm.

Szijarto said Hungary is known to have the expertise and capability in terms of water management and treatment.

Hungary has been credited for successfully improving water condition in Lake Balaton, a fresh water lake in the country’s western region and the largest in Central Europe. Lake Balaton has since been transformed into a bustling tourist destination.

Under the Hungary’s proposal, Szijarto said Hungarian companies in cooperation with the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) will conduct feasibility studies and establish measuring stations for water quality on 46 different spots of the lake.

“We are ready to deliver 16 water purification facilities in the country in order to ensure a sustainable potable water supply for the regions in the Philippines. So it’s a \$30-million package which we are ready to provide you,” he said.

Home to nearly 14 million people, Metro Manila’s major water supply comes from the 60-year old Angat Dam.



Hungary eyes Laguna Lake rehab, offers Philippines \$30-million credit

“We are ready to provide Hungarian expertise, provide experience. We hope we could start soon,” Szijarto said, adding the rehabilitation of Laguna Lake is likewise expected to boost tourism in the area.

Hungarian water management is not new to the Philippines, he said, noting that a major water company from Hungary has provided a mobile water purification equipment to the Philippine Department of National Defense.

“If we are successful with the negotiations about the Laguna Lake then we will be faced with these Hungarian water management solutions in a pretty frequent basis,” Szijarto said. -NB, GMA News



Groups call for e-waste imports ban



By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#)

October 17, 2020

In observation of International Electronic Waste (e-waste) Day on Wednesday, environmental health groups EcoWaste Coalition and Greenpeace Philippines urged the government to follow the example of Thailand and ban the importation of e-waste.

“The Thai policy banning the entry of e-waste was imposed to protect public health and the environment from toxic pollution resulting from the dirty recycling of these hazardous waste imports. It’s high time for our own government to follow in the footsteps of Thailand and enact a sweeping ban on the importation of e-waste, plastic waste and other wastes for environmental health and justice,” Thony Dizon, chemical safety campaigner of EcoWaste Coalition, said in a statement.

Marian Ledesma, campaigner of Greenpeace Philippines, said that “with our neighbors closing doors to all kinds of waste imports, our country is in danger of becoming the most preferred destination in the region for waste.”

“The Philippine government must plug all holes that allow our country to be a dumping ground by ratifying the Basel Convention Ban Amendment and enacting a total ban on waste imports,” she added.

EcoWaste Coalition and Greenpeace Philippines asserted that banning e-waste imports would serve as a strong deterrent against schemes to transfer hazardous waste and other wastes from other countries to the Philippines where such wastes can be cheaply processed, recycled or disposed of at the expense of people’s health and the environment.

They cited the botched smuggling of e-waste — falsely declared as “assorted electronic accessories” — from Hong Kong that was discovered at a port in Northern Mindanao in May 2019. As reported by customs officials, the shipment was intended as a “test cargo,” and that 70 more containers would have followed had it not been intercepted. The trash was returned quickly to the sender after its discovery.

The groups are pushing for the ratification by the Duterte administration of the Basel Convention Ban Amendment, an international law prohibiting the export of hazardous waste from developed to developing countries, and for the imposition of a more encompassing ban on waste importation.

Ratifying the Basel Convention Ban Amendment and banning waste importation, the groups stressed, will allow the Philippines to focus on its own waste management issues, fully enforce waste and pollution prevention laws, and improve clean recycling facilities with government support and possibly incentives.

CCC pitches moves vs. e-waste

By Catherine Teves October 16, 2020, 5:29 pm



(CCC logo grabbed from climate.gov.ph)

MANILA – The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is recommending measures to address the growing problem of discarded electrical and electronic equipment in the Philippines, one of Southeast Asia's top generators of this e-waste.

Government must develop a national policy and regulatory framework on e-waste management, said CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Emmanuel de Guzman.

He is also recommending formulation of a national strategy and action plan for institutionalizing e-waste recycling and collection.

There's need to likewise undertake relevant research and technology development aside from stopping illegal entry of hazardous e-waste into the country, he continued.

"Electronic gadgets become waste when their usefulness ends, causing an environmental problem locally and globally," he said in his 2020 International E-Waste Day message on Wednesday (Oct. 14).

Experts warned that while e-waste contains materials that are still usable, such trash also has elements harmful to health, the environment and climate.

De Guzman raised urgency for action, noting global e-waste already ballooned to nearly 54 million metric tonnes (MT) last year.

That's 21 percent more than the global e-waste level in 2014, he noted. Launched earlier this year, UN's 'The Global E-Waste Monitor 2020' report estimates e-waste generated worldwide will already exceed 74 million MT by 2030.

Higher consumption of electrical and electronic equipment, as well as short life cycle of and limited repair options for these, will likely fuel such increase, the report warned.



CCC pitches moves vs. e-waste

According to the report, the Philippines is among Southeast Asia's top e-waste generators.

It said the Philippines generated 3.9 kg of e-waste per capita last year but still lacks either national legislation, policy or regulation specifically on e-waste although the country already set regulations on hazardous waste.

Such regulations cover e-waste which is considered as hazardous, the report noted.

De Guzman said CCC acknowledges different sectors' efforts to help address the growing e-waste in the country.

"CCC lauds efforts of various stakeholders to raise awareness on the critical role of consumer electronic purchasing and recycling decisions in dealing with the growing problem of e-waste," he said.

He said public-private sector collaboration on the matter is vital in addressing the e-waste challenge.

"Cooperation among government and private business and manufacturers and consumers in driving innovations, and transition of sectors into a circular economy, are key to climate resilience and sustainable future of the Filipino nation," he said.

Circular economy is an economic system focused on sustainably using resources as long as possible to help minimize waste.

Such system is an alternative to the traditional linear economy of making, using and disposing products.

E-waste is also called waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), a term mainly used in Europe.

In April 2002, six WEEE producers with operations in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland founded the organization called WEEE Forum.

The organization aims to be the center of excellence in environmentally sound and efficient solutions for electronic waste collection, logistics and processing.

Around 40 WEEE producer responsibility organizations from various countries worldwide already comprise the organization.

WEEE Forum in 2018 came up with International E-Waste Day to raise public awareness about and action on e-waste. (*PNA*)



Plastik bawal sa Batanes

By Abante News Online — Last updated Oct 16, 2020

NEWS



Kokontrolin na ng Batanes provincial government ang paggamit ng single-use plastic sa lalawigan simula Enero 1, 2021.

Alinsunod ito sa Provincial Ordinance No. 302 na pirmado ni Governor Marilou Cayco, na may hangaring mapreserba ang ganda ng nasabing tourist spot.

Simula sa susunod na taon, ang mga plastik na papayagan para sa limitadong pagpasok, pagbebenta at paggamit ay mga PET bottle na mas malaki sa 500mL, plastic packaging para sa mga local condiment at tinapay, at styro foam box para sa cold storage.

Ipagbabawal na ang pagpasok, pagbebenta at paggamit ng mga PET drinking bottle na mas mababa sa 500mL, food cling wrapper, non-biodegradable plastic at garbage bag, plastic drinking straw, plastic stirrer, plastic na kutsara't tinidor, plastic cup at styrofoam na gamit sa food packaging.

Magpapatupad na rin ng 'Bring Your Own Bag' policy para sa mga mamimili o mamamalengke, at ang papayagan lang gamitin ay reusable o biodegradable plastic bag. (SDC)



Eased travel movement between GCQ, MGCQ areas welcomed

[October 16, 2020](#) 3 min read

MANILA – The Department of Tourism (DOT) on Friday welcomed the amended guidelines from the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) on the easing of movement of persons traveling between areas under general community quarantine (GCQ) and modified general community quarantine (MGCQ).

Under IATF Resolution No. 79, “the interzonal movement of non-authorized persons outside residences (non-APOR) between areas placed under GCQ and MGCQ for any purpose shall be permitted subject to the reasonable regulations imposed by the local government unit (LGU) concerned, if any, and which should be submitted to the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), or in the case of Boracay Island, subject to those imposed by the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF).”

During the 79th meeting of the task force, the body also approved the recommendation to gradually expand the age group allowing individuals from 15-years old to 65-years old to go out of their residence.

“These new policies, approved by the IATF, support the Department’s programs aimed at rebuilding the tourism industry to bring back lost jobs and livelihoods and stir local economies,” DOT Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said in a news release.

The amended guidelines will empower local government units to reopen their respective destinations to more areas outside their province or region with the minimum health and safety measures in place, Puyat said.

This will also complement the DOT’s strategy to develop tourism circuits and travel corridors, such as the Ridge and Reef Corridor Plan between Baguio City and the provinces of Region 1, to help revive tourism under the new normal.



Eased travel movement between GCQ, MGCQ areas welcomed

On October 15, Ilocos Norte welcomed residents of Luzon for leisure travel. Last October 1, Boracay Island extended its reopening to all local travelers, even those coming from GCQ areas.

Both areas have required a negative RT-PCR test before travel, online registration and health declaration at their respective LGU websites, and issuance of a QR code for contactless transactions and contact tracing purposes, from travelers before entry.

As stated in the amended guidelines, Boracay Island's regulations will still follow those set by the BIATF.

"The flexible travel movements, however, do not mean that we will be relaxing our health standards. We will continue to work with the LGUs in enforcing safety protocols and enhanced hygiene measures in all sectors of the tourism industry." Puyat said. *(DOT PR)*



Boracay tourists may take COVID-19 test 72 hours prior to trip -IATF

Published October 16, 2020 3:45pm
By VIRGIL LOPEZ, GMA News

People planning to visit Boracay may undergo COVID-19 swab test at least 72 hours before the trip, according to the new guidelines released by the government's pandemic task force on Friday.

"Pinahabaan po iyong period kung kailan pupuwedeng magpakuha ng PCR test bago bumiyahé patungo po ng Boracay," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said at the Laging Handa briefing.

Previously, the RT-PCR test must be taken within 48 hours prior to the date of travel. Only those with negative test results will be allowed to enter Boracay.

The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) also "strongly advised" travelers to observe strict quarantine immediately after undergoing the test until the date of travel to the island.

Boracay reopened to tourists outside Western Visayas beginning this month as the government sought to revive the tourism industry which suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.—AOL, GMA News

South Korean utility Kepco moves away from coal

In a year that has seen it commit hundreds of millions to coal ventures overseas, Kepco has announced it will no longer pursue further such projects. Activists have urged the firm to also reverse earlier planet-heating investment decisions.



Activists in Manila protest against the 1,000-MW Sual 2 coal power venture in the Philippines on Thursday (15 October). Image: Save Sual Movement

By [Tim Ha](#)
Oct. 16, 2020

South Korea's biggest electricity distribution company said on Friday (16 October) it will not invest in further new overseas coal power ventures and would either cancel or convert two out of four remaining projects in the pipeline to gas-powered ones.

Korea Electric Power Corporation (Kepco) "and its subsidiaries will not be pursuing new overseas coal power projects", said the firm's chief executive Kim Jong-gap at an annual governmental audit hearing by the Korean National Assembly.

The two planned projects affected by the turnaround are the 1,000-megawatt (MW) Sual 2 coal venture in the Philippines and the 630-MW Thabametsi coal-fired power plant in South Africa, which have both been [targeted](#) by [green groups](#) over their environmental impacts.



ACB chief calls for biodiversity considerations in food systems, gardening trends

By ACB Published on October 17, 2020

LAGUNA, Oct. 17 -- The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) on Friday called for creative and innovative ways to integrate nature considerations into agriculture, fisheries, and even in urban gardening, to simultaneously conserve nature and boost the resilience of food systems.

“Among the ecosystem services that humans derive from biodiversity are food and nourishment. However, coupled with the further deterioration of food security at the global level, agriculture remains one of the drivers of biodiversity loss... Indeed, it is necessary to consider biodiversity when crafting and implementing food programmes,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, said in her statement for the celebration of the World Food Day.

The ACB joins the international community in celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, reiterating the vital role that healthy and rich biodiversity plays in the current food systems.

Efforts to mainstream biodiversity considerations into the agriculture and fisheries sector’s development processes in the ASEAN are among the main thrusts of the ACB.

On 28 August, the ACB, with the European Union, through the Biodiversity Conservation Area Management Project (BCAMP), supported a forum on mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture in Thailand. The forum, organised by Thailand’s Office of the Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, highlighted measures to strengthen efforts in the country’s agriculture sector to mainstream biodiversity through strengthening action plans and developing and implementing biodiversity-responsive policies.

Citing the 2020 scoping study on biodiversity and health in the Region, conducted by the United Nations University-International Institute of Global Health and supported by the ACB and the EU, Lim highlighted the need to enhance agrobiodiversity or agricultural biodiversity, as well as to invest in germplasm conservation.

“This undertaking will ensure the conservation of identified climate-resilient crop varieties and the diversity of fish and livestock resources,” she said, noting that maximising effective agrobiodiversity practices will help improve crop diversity and address micronutrient deficiencies affecting the population.

Meanwhile, Lim also suggested improving access to user-friendly national public databases on native and endemic plant species to guide plant enthusiasts and agricultural experts alike on which plants to grow.

The ACB’s ASEAN Clearing House Mechanism, which provides information on plant species, including their endemism and conservation status, may likewise be accessed by the public.

“With the right information and awareness-raising on propagating native plant species and its short and long-term ecological and economic benefits, this growing trend on urban gardening may be guided to be more biodiversity-friendly, serving both the public and the environment,” Lim said. (ACB)



Healthy biodiversity boosts resilience of food systems

By Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim-ACB Published on October 16, 2020

LAGUNA, Oct. 16 -- Among the ecosystem services that humans derive from biodiversity are food and nourishment. However, coupled with the further deterioration of food security at the global level, agriculture remains one of the drivers of biodiversity loss. Can agriculture and biodiversity truly work together?

This year's World Food Day, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) takes part in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, reiterating the vital role that healthy and rich biodiversity plays in our current food systems. As the celebration focuses on the theme, "Grow, nourish, sustain. Together. Our actions are our future," the ACB takes the opportunity to promote the integration of biodiversity considerations into the agriculture and fisheries sector's development processes in the Region.

The ASEAN region has the world's most productive agriculture sector, accounting for more than 25 per cent of the gross domestic product of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar (ASEAN Secretariat, 2013); and likewise catering to the world food market. Seven ASEAN member states (AMS) are among the top 20 producers of rice in the world, according to the 2015 figures of the FAO. However, ensuring food and nutrition security of the population remains an area of concern for the region as its population is expected to increase to 717 million in 2030 from 633 million in 2015. With the looming population growth, rapid urbanisation, and dwindling natural resource base, achieving food security becomes even more challenging against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

Indeed, it is necessary to consider biodiversity when crafting and implementing food programmes. With mainstreaming biodiversity as one of the main thrusts of the ACB, working closely with the agriculture sector is among the priority convergences determined by the ACB and the AMS. On 28 August, the ACB with the European Union, through the Biodiversity Conservation Area Management Project (BCAMP), supported a forum on mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture in Thailand. The forum, organised by Thailand's Office of the Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, highlighted measures to strengthen efforts in the country's agriculture sector to mainstream biodiversity through strengthening action plans and developing and implementing biodiversity-responsive policies.

In the first few months of the health crisis, the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) issued a Joint Statement, urging member states to implement measures, projects, and programmes to meet the food needs of the ASEAN population, particularly the vulnerable segments of the society. The AMAF highlighted the need to boost information campaigns, social protection programmes, and capacity development initiatives for smallholder farmers, and micro, small and medium enterprises.

Based on the 2020 scoping study on biodiversity and health in the Region, which was conducted by the United Nations University-International Institute of Global Health (UNU-IIGH) and supported by the ACB and the EU Across the ASEAN, all countries highlight that agrobiodiversity or agricultural biodiversity needs to be enhanced.



Healthy biodiversity boosts resilience of food systems

The study also stressed the need for member states to invest in germplasm conservation. This undertaking will ensure the conservation of identified climate-resilient crop varieties and the diversity of fish and livestock resources. The study also underlined maximising effective agrobiodiversity practices to improve crop diversity and address micronutrient deficiencies affecting the population. In this endeavour, assessing existing databases and digital libraries of nutritional resources in ASEAN and integrating these into existing public health systems to promote dietary diversity and nutritional security will be advantageous.

Similarly, improving access to user-friendly national public databases on native and endemic plant species will be most useful for plant enthusiasts. For one, the ACB manages the ASEAN Clearing House Mechanism, which provides information on plant species, including their endemism and conservation status. With the right information and awareness-raising on propagating native plant species and its short and long-term ecological and economic benefits, this growing trend on urban gardening may be guided to be more biodiversity-friendly, serving both the public and the environment.

As we pave the path towards food security and post-COVID-19 recovery, the more we should understand that biodiversity is inseparable from our nourishment and well-being. It is fundamental for thriving ecosystems on which we depend for food. As the Secretary-General of the ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi said: "ASEAN's COVID-19 recovery must, therefore, look at strategies to mainstream sustainability considerations into all dimensions of our work, from energy and agriculture to disaster management and financing."

The celebration of the World Food Day today is calling us to look for creative and innovative ways to boost the agriculture and fisheries sector while tackling the decline of our biodiversity and natural resources. This requires the concerted efforts of all levels of society, from the small corners of our homes to the spaces where regional and national decisions are made.

Happy World Food Day!



7-ft long saltwater croc strays into Tawi-Tawi town

By: [Julie S. Alipala](#) - Reporter / [@alipalajulieINQ](#)
[Inquirer Mindanao](#) / 09:06 PM October 16, 2020



Fishermen at a village in Simunul town, Tawi-Tawi province capture a saltwater crocodile, the town's fourth reptile migrant since 2017. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A saltwater crocodile bigger than a car found its way into the waters of Simunul town, Tawi-Tawi province on Wednesday (Oct. 15).

Ruben Valcorza, Simunul disaster risk reduction management and officer, said the reptile was found in waters between the fishing villages Manuk Mangkaw and Taytay.

The crocodile measured 17 feet and 10 inches, longer than an average car which measures up to 15 feet, although Valcorza said he would leave the measurement, the croc's gender and species to the environment department.

According to Valcorza, it was the fourth croc to find its way in Simunul. The first, which measured 16 feet and 11 inches, was found in Sokah Bulan in September 2017. It had been given the name Papa Bulls.

The second and third crocs that were found in the town measured less than six feet in length, Valcorza added.

The latest "migrant" to Simunul was initially named David, the first name of the man who captured it.

Valcorza said he found it unusual for crocodiles to end up in Simunul which has very limited patches of mangroves, where crocodiles are known to stay.

The municipal government placed the crocs in a seawater pond to simulate their natural habitat, Valcorza said.

TSB

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1348950/17-ft-long-saltwater-croc-strays-into-tawi-tawi-town#ixzz6b4e2N18d>

Follow us: [@inquirerdotnet on Twitter](#) | [inquirerdotnet on Facebook](#)



Environmental group helps provide clean and accessible water to indigenous community in Palawan

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Oct 16, 2020 11:57:39 PM



Photo courtesy: Conservation International Philippines/Facebook

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, October 16) — As water is essential to man's body, so is the need to have it clean and accessible even in the most remote communities of the country.

Environmental group Conservation International Philippines values that need for every Filipino community as they provide clean water access to a remote indigenous community living at the foot of Mount Mantalingahan in Palawan.

The organization's country executive director Enrique Nuñez shared that local communities have to move on from getting their water from wells and rivers, with its dirty state that may cause water-borne diseases to persons like diarrhea.

To solve this problem, the group installed hydro panels to generate clean water source for the Palawan community through sunlight and air.

"It is the only off-the-grid technology that can generate pure, high-quality drinking water without the need for a water well or electricity," Nuñez told CNN Philippines' Rico Hizon on Friday.

Nuñez added the pure water captured went through filtration, mineralization, and ozonation in the hydro panels itself, resulting in cleaner and tastier water.

Through clean water, Nuñez said this will lead to the reduction of sick residents due to water-borne diseases and increased productivity among mothers.

"We will see happy faces as we continue working in that area," the group's country executive director said.

The hydro panels installed in the Palawan community can produce up to 40,000 liters of water and may last for years, Nuñez said.

The Conservation International Philippines targets other islands in the country with vulnerable communities as the next beneficiaries of the clean water-producing hydro panels.



Green thumb heaven at Green Centrale

posted October 16, 2020 at 06:30 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

Gardening, whether in an urban or rural setting, is the way to go nowadays. Whatever one's reasons are, there is no harm in flexing that green thumb. With community quarantine paving the way for many to discover new hobbies and interests, a lot of people have turned to becoming "plant parents".



Green Centrale, a plant retail shop that started as an online shop, has found a way for more people to be touched by its advocacy to bring healthy and beautiful plants from its humble plant nursery in Sta. Rosa into more people's homes.

Green Centrale is formed under Greenscapes Plus Philippines Inc., an established landscaping company incorporated in 2009. Greenscapes conceptualizes, designs, and implements landscaping projects and provides technical support in landscaping and tree care management.

In 2015, Greenscapes was able to secure the business of country's leading real estate developer Vista Land and its various companies namely Brittany, Crown Asia, Camella, Lumina, and its condominium brands, Vista Residences and COHO. Greenscapes is also the landscape developer of the Villar Group's premium commercial centers—Vista Malls, Evia Lifestyle Center in Vista Alabang, and NOMO – A Vista Lifestyle Center at Bacoor City.

Going beyond selling plants

Greenscapes is made up of professional horticulturists, foresters, and skilled workers equipped with adequate knowledge of technology in tree care and landscaping operations. Green Centrale's affiliation to Greenscapes ensures that everything Green Centrale offers are cultivated responsibly by professionals that are experts in their field.

Green Centrale advocates for the proper knowledge and care of plants among their clients. The company shares plant care tips regularly on their social media accounts to help guide customers in their journey towards becoming successful plant parents.



Green thumb heaven at Green Centrale

Green Centrale sells indoor plants, outdoor plants, air plants, and hanging plants. It also offer various products related to gardening and plant care such as plant racks and a variety of pots which include decorative pots that are hand painted by their in-house artists.

Gearing up for the holidays

The company also puts together gift baskets that are curated to ensure that every aspiring plant parent is sufficiently provided with their plant care needs especially during this pandemic.

Green Centrale is getting ready to offer special products such as Capiz pots, Christmas tree shelves, and even Poinsettias.

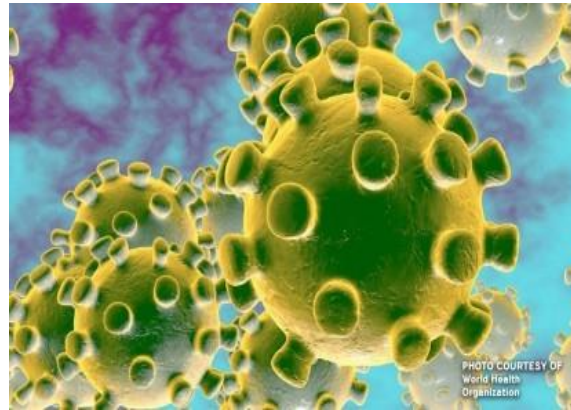
Aspiring plant parents can check out Green Centrale's plant selection on their online catalog, uploaded on their social media accounts-- Facebook and on Instagram, @greencentraleph.

Green Centrale also has pop-up stores at AllHome Evia, AllHome Nomo, and Vista Mall Sta Rosa.



786 new Covid-19 recoveries, active cases at 50K: DOH

By Raymond Carl Dela Cruz October 16, 2020, 5:16 pm



MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Friday reported 786 new recoveries from the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), bringing the country's total now at 294,865.

In its daily Covid-19 bulletin, the DOH also reported 3,139 new cases of Covid-19, with total active cases at 50,354.

The country's total Covid-19 cases is now at 351,750.

The National Capital Region (NCR) reported the highest number of new infections at 1,003, followed by Cavite with 206, Rizal with 175, Laguna with 138, and Iloilo with 126.

Of the active cases, majority or 84.7 percent are showing mild symptoms, followed by those without symptoms at 10.8 percent, those in critical condition at 3 percent, and those showing severe symptoms at 1.5 percent.

The DOH also reported 34 new deaths caused by Covid-19, bringing the country's total casualties against Covid-19 at 6,531.

There are still a healthy amount of beds and ventilators available for Covid-19 cases nationwide, with the country's 2,000 beds in intensive care units (ICU) at 47 percent occupancy, 13,300 isolation beds at 44 percent occupancy, 5,400 ward beds at 42 percent occupancy, while only 25 percent of the country's 2,000 ventilators are in use.

In NCR, 55 percent of its ICU beds are occupied, 51 percent of 3,800 isolation beds are occupied, 52 percent of 1,600 ward beds are occupied, and 28 percent of the region's 829 ventilators are in use.

(PNA)



Philippines' COVID-19 cases exceed 350,000 with 3,139 new infections

Published October 16, 2020 4:04pm
By JOAHNA LEI CASILAO, GMA News

The number of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases in the Philippines reached 351,750 on Friday with 3,139 new infections, according to the Department of Health (DOH).

Most of the new cases came from the National Capital Region with 1,003, followed by Cavite with 206, Rizal with 175, Laguna with 138, and Iloilo with 126.

Sixty-four percent or 2,023 acquired the virus in the past 14 days. A total of 87 cases were also removed from the total case count.

The DOH also announced that total recoveries rose to 294,865 after 786 more patients recovered from the illness.

Meanwhile, 34 new fatalities brought the death toll to 6,531. Among the new deaths, 17 occurred in October, nine in September, four in August, three in July, and one in May.

Of the remaining 50,354 active cases undergoing treatment or quarantine, 84.7 percent are mild, 10.8 percent are asymptomatic, 1.5 percent are severe, and 3 percent are in critical condition.

The DOH said 15 laboratories were unable to submit their data.

At present, the country has 147 licensed laboratories that have tested over 4 million individuals. 47 percent of the country's intensive care unit beds are occupied while 25 percent of the mechanical ventilators are in use.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque has suggested that hospitals to give health workers a [break](#) if the utilization rate for facilities dedicated to COVID-19 patients is at a manageable level.

Meanwhile, the country's testing capacity is expected to [decrease](#) after the Philippine Red Cross announced its decision to stop COVID-19 testing chargeable to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation.—LDF, GMA News



Death toll from Covid-19 surpasses 1.1M worldwide

October 16, 2020, 8:34 am



People wearing protective suit in Bizerte, Tunisia (*Nacer Talel/Anadolu photo*)

ANKARA – The number of people worldwide who has succumbed to the novel coronavirus exceeded 1.1 million Thursday, according to Worldometer, which compiles Covid-19 data from around the globe.

Its website reported that the death toll from the virus has reached 1,101,420, while the number of cases across the world currently stands at 39,105,472.

The highest number of fatalities has been recorded in the US, with 222,656.

It is followed by Brazil with 152,460 deaths, India with 112,144, Mexico with 84,898, the UK with 43,293, Italy with 36,372, Spain with 33,553, Peru with 33,512, France with 33,125, and Iran with 29,605.

Covid-19, which was first detected in December in China's Wuhan province, has spread to 189 countries and regions.

More than 29.3 million people worldwide have recovered from the virus. (*Anadolu*)



Bigger budget for COVID vaccine pushed

[Friday, October 16, 2020](#) [Jester P. Manalastas](#)

THE government should allocate at least P1,000 for every poor Filipino for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine.

Anakalusugan party-list Rep. Mike Defensor pushed for additional budget allocation for the procurement of vaccines next year.

The target of the government is to vaccinate an initial 20 million poor Filipinos.

Defensor, chairman of the House committee on public accounts, said that to meet this target, the budget for the procuring COVID-19 vaccines should be P20 billion at least.

Under the proposed 2021 national budget, only P2.5 billion is being allocated for the purchase of the vaccines.

“That means an average of P1,000 per Filipino to be inoculated. Health professionals are saying one would need two to three doses to fight the infectious new coronavirus. If that is so, P1,000 would translate to P500 per dose, if two doses are needed, and P333, if three doses are required,” he said.

“Since what rich countries and drug companies are developing is a new vaccine, “we will be lucky if we could get it at less than P500 per dose,” Defensor added.

He added that the P2.5 billion included in the proposed 2021 national budget for Covid-19 vaccine procurement “is just a small fraction of what the government needs to vaccinate an initial target of 20 million poor Filipinos.”

He pointed out that the initial target is only roughly one-fifth or 20 percent of the country’s entire population.

He said assuming the vaccine would cost P500 per dose and one would require two doses, the P2.5 billion in next year’s budget would be good only for 2.5 million Filipinos.

“And President Duterte is aiming to inoculate all 113 million Filipinos. Clearly, there is a need for us to provide sufficient funds. There is still time to do it because the proposed budget is still with us in Congress,” the solon stressed.

Defensor noted that the Department of Health has estimated its funding requirement for 20 million poor Filipinos at P12.9 billion, or P645 per vaccinee.



Habagat magpapaulan sa 5 lugar



October 16, 2020 @ 7:16 PM 9 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Inaasahang magpapaulan ang hanging Habagat sa MIMAROPA, Western Visayas, Northern Mindanao, Zamboanga Peninsula, at BARMM, batay sa PAGASA.

Habang makaaapekto naman ang northeasterly surface windflow sa Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera Administrative Region, at Central Luzon.

Sinabi ng PAGASA na wala itong ‘significant impact’ sa bansa.

Nagbabala rin ang ahensya sa posibilidad ng pagbaha o pagguho ng lupa sa kasagsagan ng buhos ng ulan, kulog, at kidlat. RNT/FGDC



Magnitude 4.5 earthquake rocks Iloilo



By [Arlie O. Calalo](#)
October 17, 2020

A magnitude 4.5 earthquake, which was followed by two strong aftershocks in minutes, rocked the town of San Joaquin, Iloilo province on Friday morning, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

In an interview with The Manila Times, Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum said the epicenter was located 14 kilometers southwest of San Joaquin at 8:27 a.m.

Some five minutes later, a 4.4 aftershock was recorded in the same town and nine minutes later, another 4.4 aftershock was reported also in San Joaquin, said the Phivolcs chief.

With a depth of 6 kilometers, the quake was tectonic in origin, added Solidum.

He said Intensity 4 was recorded in Miagao, Iloilo while Intensity 3 was reported in the towns of Aniniy and Hamtic in Antique.

Meanwhile, Intensity 2 was reported in Bago City and Sipalay City in Negros Occidental and San Jose de Buenavista, Antique; and Intensity 1 in Iloilo City and Valderama, Antique.

Saying the quake would not cause a tsunami, Solidum added that damage was unlikely but aftershocks may occur.

Philippines lifts ban on South China Sea energy exploration



October 16, 2020

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has approved the lifting of a ban on oil and gas exploration in or near disputed areas of the South China Sea that was imposed six years ago because of escalating territorial tensions with China, an official said Thursday, October 15.

Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said companies awarded contracts to explore for oil and gas in three sprawling areas off the western Philippines have been asked to resume their search operations, including in a potentially oil- and gas-rich region called Reed Bank.

Chinese ships tried to shoo away a Filipino exploration vessel in Reed Bank at least once in the past, and it was not immediately clear if China was aware of the Philippine decision.

Duterte has nurtured closer ties with Beijing since taking office in 2016 and put the territorial rift on the backburner in his initial years in power to avoid offending China.

“We need to explore so we may address the country’s energy security,” Cusi said in a statement.

He thanked Duterte for approving the energy department’s recommendation to lift the yearslong moratorium on energy exploration.

An offshore gas field called Malampaya, which is closer to the western Philippine province of Palawan and supplies about 40 percent of the power needs of the country’s northern Luzon region, may be depleted of its reserves in the near future, worrying Philippine officials.

“With the impending depletion of our natural gas reserve in Malampaya ... there is an urgent imperative to resume exploration, development, and production activities within our exclusive economic zone to ensure continuity of supply of indigenous resources in the country,” Cusi said.



Philippines lifts ban on South China Sea energy exploration

The Philippine decision to lift the ban places the exploration companies “under legal obligation to put capital into the contract areas and hire Filipino engineers and technical workers to resume exploration,” Cusi said.

That, along with foreign investment in the exploration, will help boost an economy that has been battered by the coronavirus pandemic, he said.

The Duterte administration has been in talks with China in recent years on possible joint exploration involving Philippine and Chinese energy companies, including in Reed Bank. But no agreement has been reached, largely because of the territorial issues, according to Philippine officials.

The Philippine lifting of the ban “was arrived at in good faith and with full regard of the ongoing negotiations between the Philippines and China,” along with Philippine and Chinese energy companies, Cusi said, without elaborating.

Former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III’s administration halted oil and gas exploration in or near the disputed waters around 2014, a year after it brought escalating disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea to international arbitration.

The Philippines largely won that arbitration case in 2016 with a UN-backed tribunal declaring China’s historic claims to virtually the entire South China Sea were invalid under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The tribunal upheld the Philippines’ exclusive right to exploit marine and fuel resources in its exclusive economic zone, but China refused to participate in the arbitration and dismissed its outcome as a “sham.”

The Trump administration has repeatedly raised alarm over China’s increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waters. Beijing has responded by warning Washington to stay out of what it says is a purely Asian dispute. (AP)



House OKs 2021 national budget on third, final reading



Published 9 hours ago
on October 16, 2020 08:32 PM
By [Michelle R. Guillang](#) [@tribunephil_mish](#)



Voting 267 against six, the House of Representatives approved the proposed P4.5-trillion national budget on third and final reading Friday night or the last day of the special session called by President Rodrigo Duterte.

House Speaker Lord Allan Velasco presided over the deliberations that led to the nominal voting of the House Bill No. 7727 or the 2021 General Appropriations Bill.

Presiding Deputy Speaker Conrado Estrella III announced that there was a correction in the final votes. The earlier vote was 257 affirmative.

Certified as urgent by the president, the budget was passed after four days of rigorous deliberation.

Earlier, the Senate has reiterated its call for the House to submit the GAB on or before the end of the month to ensure the passage of the bill before the end of the year.



A healthy Earth needs indigenous peoples

By: [Terry Teegee](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

05:01 AM October 17, 2020

Vancouver—In May 2019, a landmark report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services painted a bleak picture of our planet’s health. Around one million animal and plant species—more than ever before in human history—are now threatened with extinction, many within decades. Pollution is proliferating, land degradation is accelerating, and we are nowhere near on track to achieve global goals for protecting biodiversity and achieving sustainability.

But, even as media touted the report’s dire warnings, they largely missed another of its key findings: lands and waters that are owned, managed, and used by indigenous peoples and local communities are much healthier than those that aren’t. A growing body of research supports the clear implication that indigenous peoples have a vital role to play in addressing the biodiversity crisis.

Only recently have international discussions about environmental issues begun to acknowledge the role of indigenous communities. Over the last year, delegates of the 196 parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) participated in countless workshops aimed at producing a new international agreement setting common goals and targets for reversing biodiversity decline, using ecosystems sustainably, and ensuring that the benefits they confer are shared equally. And in their most recent discussions of the initial draft of the post-2020 framework, the parties recognized the importance of including indigenous peoples in the process. This was an apparent nod to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which promotes our full and effective participation in all matters that concern us.

Yet, in practice, indigenous peoples continue to play a very limited role in biodiversity discussions. The second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, held in Rome in February, is a case in point. We sat at the back of the room listening to delegates tout the benefits of indigenous knowledge for protecting nature and debate the legitimacy of our rights to our biodiversity-rich territories. We worked tirelessly to persuade the parties to include our proposed text in the official meeting record. Though some progress was ultimately made, it will not be nearly enough to address the biodiversity crisis. In fact, we did not hear a single proposal that would spur the paradigm shift that our planet so desperately needs.

In my previous career as a professional forester in British Columbia, I saw firsthand the destruction wrought by unsustainable forestry practices, which reflect a utilitarian approach to nature: The planet and its ecosystems are little more than a source of material wealth. This approach is anathema to indigenous knowledge, culture, and laws—the very factors that explain our superior record of environmental stewardship.

Indigenous peoples’ connection to our lands, waters, air, and other natural resources is deeply embedded in our cultures and traditions. We hold ceremonies to show our gratitude and respect for the natural gifts on which our survival depends. This instills in us a deep understanding of—and commitment to—our duties and responsibilities as nature’s stewards and guardians. We know that we need nature as much as it needs us.



A healthy Earth needs indigenous peoples

I believe that the world's failure to embrace such a holistic perspective lies at the root of the imbalances that are propelling our planet's destruction. We cannot continue to make the same mistakes. And that means following through and building on the commitments contained in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect our rights and engage us fully in discussions of issues affecting us.

Canada offers a promising example. Last November, the government of British Columbia enacted legislation to implement the UN declaration, enshrining our rights to our lands and waters, our resources, and our self-determination. It is now required in the province to move toward consent-based decision-making and further collaborate with indigenous peoples on any legislative or policy changes that affect our rights. The federal government is set to replicate this legislation at the national level at the end of this year.

More countries should follow this example, enshrining in legal frameworks the rights of indigenous peoples to govern our own territories and practice our knowledge. This means recognizing our governments and laws, which are essential to ensure that our knowledge is transmitted through generations for the benefit of biodiversity.

It also means repealing racist laws designed to oppress indigenous peoples. Such protections will go a long way toward strengthening our communities' resilience and defending the ecosystems we have long protected—sometimes with our lives.

But, if we are truly to protect biodiversity, this approach must also be reflected at the international level. The parties to the CBD will be meeting, either online or in person, next May to finalize a global biodiversity framework for the next decade and beyond. This will determine the fate of the world's remaining biodiversity—80 percent of which is protected by indigenous peoples.

Rather than relegate us, yet again, to observer status, the meeting's chairs, with the support of the parties, must allow indigenous peoples to make written submissions that, unless openly opposed by a party, will be included in UN documents. We are the original stewards and guardians of this planet. We know how to protect it. It is time for world leaders to listen to us. Project Syndicate

Terry Teegee, a member of Takla Lake First Nation, is the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations regional chief and a former registered professional forester.

Read more: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/134507/a-healthy-earth-needs-indigenous-peoples#ixzz6b4wrWLrc>

Follow us: [@inquirerdotnet on Twitter](#) | [inquirerdotnet on Facebook](#)



Climate change hits harder



Published 6 hours ago
on October 17, 2020 01:00 AM
By [TDT @tribunephl](#)



Children and adults make their way, on foot and in rafts, through flooded streets to higher ground at a highway median, in eastern Jakarta, Indonesia. / Photograph courtesy of UN

Extreme weather and climate events have increased in frequency, intensity and severity as a result of climate change, hitting vulnerable communities disproportionately hard, a new UN report has revealed, calling for greater investment in effective early warning systems.

The State of Climate Services 2020 Report: Move from Early Warnings to Early Action, released on Tuesday by the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO), underscored the need to switch to impact-based forecasting — an evolution from “what the weather will be” to “what the weather will do” so that people and businesses can act early, based on the warnings.

“Early warning systems constitute a prerequisite for effective disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Being prepared and able to react at the right time, in the right place, can save many lives and protect the livelihoods of communities everywhere,” Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of WMO, said.

He also highlighted that while it could take years to recover from the human and economic toll of the coronavirus disease pandemic, it is crucial to remember that climate change will continue to pose an ongoing and increasing threat to human lives, ecosystems, economies and societies for centuries to come.



EU to decide tougher climate target for '30



By [Agence France-Presse](#)
October 17, 2020

BRUSSELS: European Union leaders on Thursday (Friday in Manila) said they would decide on a more stringent climate target for 2030 at a summit in December, leaving more time to forge a united response to climate change.

Ambitious climate goals are backed by big EU powers, including France and Germany as well as many major businesses, but face resistance from eastern member states still dependent on coal for energy.

The 27 leaders meeting in Brussels said they would return to the issue “with the aim of agreeing on a new emission reduction target for 2030,” conclusions from the summit said.

As part of its commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU has pledged to being climate-neutral by 2050 when it would offset or capture more greenhouse gas than it emits.

However, the current interim target for 2030 — a 40-percent reduction in CO₂ emissions compared to 1990 — is not sufficient to achieve the goal.

The European Commission, the EU’s executive arm, has therefore proposed a target of at least 55 percent, while the European Parliament has gone even further with 60 percent.

Germany, which holds the rotating EU presidency, decided to postpone a possible agreement to the summit on December 10. Eleven countries, including France, Spain and the Netherlands, expressed their support for a reduction of “at least 55 percent” in a joint letter on Wednesday.

But several Eastern European countries are opposed, including Poland, which is still heavily dependent on coal and refuses to commit to carbon neutrality.

“If it’s a median target for the EU as a whole, there’s no problem — some countries could reduce (their emissions) more. But we, the Czech Republic, will not achieve it,” Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said on Thursday.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borissov pointed to the economic cost to his country’s mining sector: “Our preliminary calculations suggest that a 40 percent cut is a ceiling,” he warned.

The holdout states are expected to ask for additional funding, through something called the EU Just Transition Fund.

“All member states will participate in this effort, taking into account national circumstances and considerations of fairness and solidarity,” the summit’s conclusions said.



Melting Alpine glaciers yield archaeological treasures, but clock ticking

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 04:27 PM October 16, 2020



A picture taken on October 6, 2020 in Bern at the Archaeological Service of the Swiss canton of Bern shows curator Johanna Kluegl removing a sheet of plastic protecting a blackened bast-fibre, braided basket from Neolithic discovered at the Schnidejoch pass, a lofty trail in the Bernese Alps 2,756 meters (9,000 feet) above sea level. – While archaeologists lament the devastating toll of climate change, many acknowledge that it has created “an opportunity” to dramatically expand understanding of mountain life millennia ago. (Photo by Fabrice COFFRINI / AFP)

SION, Switzerland — The group climbed the steep mountainside, clambering across an Alpine glacier, before finding what they were seeking: a crystal vein filled with the precious rocks needed to sculpt their tools.

That is what archaeologists have deduced after the discovery of traces of an ancient hunt for crystals by hunters and gatherers in the Mesolithic era, some 9,500 years ago.

It is one of many valuable archaeological sites to emerge in recent decades from rapidly melting glacier ice, sparking a brand new field of research: glacier archaeology.

Amid surging temperatures, glaciologists predict that 95 percent of some 4,000 glaciers dotted throughout the Alps could disappear by the end of this century.

While archaeologists lament the devastating toll of climate change, many acknowledge it has created “an opportunity” to dramatically expand understanding of mountain life millennia ago.

“We are making very fascinating finds that open up a window into a part of archaeology that we don’t normally get,” said Marcel Cornelissen, who headed an excavation trip last month to the remote crystal site near the Brunifirm glacier in the eastern Swiss canton of Uri, at an altitude of 2,800 meters (9,100 feet).

‘Truly exceptional’

Up until the early 1990s, it was widely believed that people in prehistoric times steered clear of towering and intimidating mountains.



Melting Alpine glaciers yield archaeological troves, but clock ticking

But a number of startling finds have since emerged from melting ice indicating that mountain ranges like the Alps have been bustling with human activity for thousands of years.

Early humans are now believed to have hiked up into the mountains to travel to nearby valleys, hunt or put animals out to pastures, and to search for raw materials.

Christian auf der Maur, an archaeologist with Uri canton who participated in the crystal site expedition said the find there was “truly exceptional”.

“We know now that people were hiking up to the mountains to up to 3,000 metres altitude, looking for crystals and other primary materials.”

The first major ancient Alpine find to emerge from the melting ice was the discovery in 1991 of “Oetzi”, a 5,300-year-old warrior whose body had been preserved inside an Alpine glacier in the Italian Tyrol region.

Theories that he may have been a rare example of a prehistoric human venturing into the Alps have been belied by findings since of numerous ancient traces of people crossing high altitude mountain passes.

Rare organic materials

The Schnidejoch pass, a lofty trail in the Bernese Alps 2,756 meters (9,000 feet) above sea level, has for instance been a boon to scientists since 2003, with the find of a birch bark quiver — a case for arrows — dating as far back as 3,000 B.C.

Later, leather trousers and shoes, likely from the same ill-fated person, were also discovered, along with hundreds of other objects, dating as far back as about 4,500 B.C.

“It is exciting because we find stuff that we don’t normally find in excavations,” archaeologist Regula Gubler told AFP.

She pointed to organic materials like leather, wood, birch bark, and textiles, which are usually lost to erosion but here have been preserved intact in the ice.

Just last month, she led a team to excavate a fresh finding in Schnidejoch: a knotted string of bast — or plant — fibers believed to be over 6,000 years old.

It resembles the fragile remains of a blackened bast-fibre, braided basket from the same period, brought back last year.

While climate change has made possible such extraordinary finds, it is also a threat: if not found quickly, organic materials freed from the ice rapidly disintegrate and disappear.

‘Very short window’

“It is a very short window in time. In 20 years, these finds will be gone and these ice patches will be gone,” Gubler said. “It is a bit stressful.”

China still making pangolin-based treatments despite banning use of scales: Study

The only legal way for pharmaceutical companies to obtain pangolin scales is through government-registered stockpiles, but conservationists say these stockpiles are poorly regulated and allow for the possibility of illegal trade.



A ground pangolin in defensive posture. Certain traditional Chinese medicines utilise pangolin scales. Image: [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, CC BY 2.0](#) via Wikimedia Commons

By Elizabeth Claire Alberts, Mongabay.com

Oct. 16, 2020

Pangolin scales — armor-like, keratin-based plates that cover a pangolin's body — are still being used in medicines sold and produced by Chinese companies, a new report has found.

This is being done despite the Chinese government [banning pangolin scales](#) from the official list of approved ingredients in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and even giving the highest level of national protection to three species — the Chinese (*Manis pentadactyla*), Sunda (*M. javanica*) and Indian (*M. crassicaudata*) pangolins — back in June.



Investigators cast doubt on China's ban on the pangolin trade

China still making pangolin-based treatments despite banning use of scales: Study

In the days following the pangolin scale ban, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), a London-based nonprofit, [reported](#) that pangolin scales were still present in eight patent medicines in China's 2020 pharmacopoeia, a reference book for TCM practitioners, although scales had been removed from the list of raw ingredients. On Oct. 13, EIA released a new [report](#) that expands upon these earlier findings.

It reveals that 56 Chinese companies are actively producing and advertising 64 medicines containing pangolin scales, and that a further 165 companies and 713 hospitals are currently licensed to manufacture and sell these products.

One company selling pangolin-based medicine is China Beijing Tong Ren Tang Group Co. Ltd., the country's largest TCM pharmaceutical company, which has subsidiaries in many parts of the world, as well as shareholders from major European and US investment funds, the report says.

Many of these pangolin-based products are available for sale on the various companies' websites, as well as e-commerce platforms such as eBay, according to the report.

"This is further evidence that China is maintaining its legal market, and that pharmaceutical companies are able to sell these products," Chris Hamley, senior pangolin campaigner at EIA, told Mongabay. "The trade has not been banned."

The EIA report also suggests that China's national insurance scheme continues to cover pangolin scale medicines, despite the Chinese government's 2019 [announcement](#) that insurance would cease this coverage.

"While the *yin pian* — the semi-processed scale — had been removed from coverage, actually five [medicines containing pangolin scales] are remaining on there," Hamley said. "Four of those remained on the list that had been published ... in 2017, and a new one was actually added in 2019. It's almost the opposite of what was widely believed to have been the case ... it shows that the Chinese government is endorsing use of pangolin scales and stimulating demand by actually paying for TCM consumers in China to use pangolin scale medications."

However, the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF), an environmental nonprofit that has helped facilitate protective measures for pangolins in China, says the removal of *yin pian* from national insurance coverage was still a positive move.

"This is a big progress as it gives a heavy blow to the pangolin scale market which now is severely limited and even stopped by this newly announced decision on shrinking the medicine insurance coverage," Cyan Wang, international coordinator of CBCGDF, told Mongabay in an emailed statement. "In addition, the market TCM with the ingredients of pangolin and its parts is further influenced. A ... [lot of] progress [has been made] in the reduction and even eradication of the usage of pangolin in medicine is foreseeable."

China still making pangolin-based treatments despite banning use of scales: Study

She added that the national insurance scheme has rolled out new interim measures that will place further restrictions on pangolin scale medications, forbidding any medicines containing parts of endangered or rare wildlife.

Pharmaceutical companies and hospitals wishing to produce pangolin-based medication are only able to source scales from government-registered stockpiles, Hamley said. While there are some regulations on how these stockpiles are managed, the legal origin does not need to be verified, according to the EIA report.

“The Chinese Government claims its wildlife product traceability scheme ensures pangolin scales used in approved medicines originate only from old verified stockpiles, but there is a mismatch between availability and demand,” the report says. “Lacking traceability and transparency, the regulatory system has pervasive opportunities for laundering pangolin scales illegally sourced from throughout Asia and Africa.”

Wang says the current stockpile management system does have its pitfalls, but that illegally sourced pangolin scales could be stamped out with stricter recording efforts, DNA testing, and harsher penalties for those involved in the illegal trade.

All eight species of pangolins are protected under CITES Appendix I, which prohibits trade except in exceptional circumstances, but this regulation does not forbid domestic trade within China itself.

A recent [report](#) by the Washington, D.C.-based Center For Advanced Defense (C4ADS) found that the international pangolin trade is growing at a rapid rate. Between 2015 and 2019, the report says, 253 metric tonnes of pangolin scales were confiscated, and the annual amount of pangolin scales seized had increased by almost 400 per cent.

While the EIA report suggests that the pangolin trade is persisting in China, and that any regulatory measures have so far been ineffective, the team at CBCGDF says there has still been major progress in pangolin conservation in China.

“We hold the positive attitude that the global pangolin smuggling trade will encounter a major turning point and greatly decrease,” Wang said. “Facts will prove that our estimation is reasonable.”

This story was published with permission from [Mongabay.com](https://www.mongabay.com).