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**DENR**

# NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



## PANGASINAN FOREST IDINEKLARANG “MANGATAREM CRITICAL HABITAT” NG DENR



February 21, 2021 @ 12:15 AM 6 hours ago

ITINALAGA ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources ang 4,422.8-hectares forest sa Mangatarem, Pangasinan bilang bahagi ng “national efforts” upang maprotektahan ang nanganganib at endemic na wild animals at halaman sa bansa.

Base sa DENR Administrative Order na nilagdaan kamakailan ni Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, ang forest area ay tatawaging Mangatarem Critical Habitat.

Matatagpuan ito sa mga barangay ng Cacaoiten, Cabaluyan II, Calomboyan Sur, Lawak Langka, Catarataran, Pacalat at Malabobo.

“In doing this, we at the DENR can save habitats which are critical for the survival of threatened species or species at risk of extinction, including other associated wildlife, and at the same time provide this land area a legal framework to protect it from destructive uses,” saad ni Cimatu.

Ang Mangatarem Critical Habitat ay may sukat na 4,422.80-hectares na kagubatan na nagsisilbing tirahan ng mga nanganganib at endemic na fauna species tulad ng Philippine deer (*Rusa marianna*), Philippine warty pig (*Sus philippensis*), Philippine duck (*Anas luzonica*), Flame-breasted fruit dove (*Ptilinopus marchei*), Philippine eagle owl (*Bubo philippensis*), Luzon scops owl (*Otus longicornis*), at Rufous hornbill (*Buceros hydrocorax*).

Kabilang naman sa flora species na matatagpuan sa naturang kagubatan ang oi-ói (*Diospyros philippinensis*), kalíngag (*Cinnamomum mercadoi*), malabayábas (*Tristaniopsis decorticata*) at iba pang endemic species.

Ipinaliwanag ni Cimatu na sa pamamagitan ng DAO ay magkakatulungan ang DENR, local government units, komunidad at iba pang stakeholders na kasama sa “locally-driven ecosystems management approach.”

“We need to sustainably manage this certain area, as this is one of the most important and few remaining forest blocks in Pangasinan.

“Through this, we can both protect the endemic and threatened flora and fauna living in it, while sustaining the ecosystem services and community livelihood dependent on the forest,” sabi pa ni Cimatu.

Sa ilalim ng DAO, ang pangangasiwa ng Mangatarem Critical Habitat ay hahawakan ng DENR-Region 1 (Ilocos Region) katuwang ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Mangatarem at stakeholders.



Dagdag pa rito, responsibilidad din ng mga ito ang paghahanda ng Critical Habitat Management Plan upang matiyak na mapepreserba ang “existing ecosystems” sa critical habitat.

Mahigpit ding ipagbabawal ang mga sumusunod: Dumping of waste products detrimental to wildlife; squatting and/or occupying any portion of the critical habitat; mineral exploration and/or extraction; burning; logging; and quarrying.

Base na rin ito sa nakasaad sa Republic Act 9147 o ang Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

Ang Mangatarem Critical Habitat ang pang-siyam na isinama sa listahan ng mga idineklarang critical habitat sa buong bansa.

Kabilang dito ang *Rafflesia schadenbergiana* Critical Habitat, Cabusao Wetland Critical Habitat, Malasi Tree Park and Wildlife Sanctuary Critical Habitat, Carmen Critical Habitat, Adams Wildlife Critical Habitat, Magsaysay Critical Habitat for Hawksbill Turtles, Cleopatra’s Needle Critical Habitat, at Dumaran Critical Habitat.



## To burn or not to burn

By Jonathan L. Mayuga  
February 21, 2021



*Water that overflowed from Marikina River during Typhoon Ulysses submerges houses along the banks of the river in San Mateo, prompting calls for a congressional inquiry.*

ON February 5, 2021, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) trooped to a four-hectare open dumpsite in Santa Ana, Pampanga, operated by the local government unit (LGU).

Tasked by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu to shut down all the country's remaining open dumps by the end of March this year, DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda unmasked the open dumpsite masquerading as a recycling facility.



*Environment Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda (middle), padlocks the entrance to an open dumpsite disguised as a materials recovery facility at Barangay San Nicolas, Santa Ana, Pampanga, on February 5, 2021.*

The Santa Ana dumpsite is just one of the more than 200 open dumps all over the country that must be closed as mandated by Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, a two-decade-old law that remains poorly implemented on many fronts.

By the DENR's own account, the country needs to open at least 300 engineered sanitary landfills, or convert at least some of the open dumps into sanitary landfills to sufficiently cover the disposal of the huge volume of garbage the country produces every day.

## Huge garbage producer

WITH a population of over 100 million, the Philippines is undeniably one of the huge garbage producers in the world with an estimated 21 million metric tons of garbage being produced every day, according to the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC).



To ease the LGUs' burden of shouldering alone the establishment of their own sanitary landfills, the DENR is promoting the clustering of small municipalities to have a common sanitary landfill.

According to the NSWMC, in Luzon alone, the requirement is for an additional 140 sanitary landfills to serve a total of 772 LGUs. For the Visayas, 32 sanitary landfills more are needed to serve 408 LGUs; while for Mindanao, 337 LGUs would require the establishment of 34 additional sanitary landfills.

## No-burn WTE technologies

WHILE incineration is prohibited under the Clean Air Act, the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR), specifically Rule 28, allows non-burn technologies or its application in waste-to-energy (WTE) method.

"With due concern on the effects of climate change, the bureau shall promote the use of state-of-the-art, environmentally sound and safe thermal and non-burn technologies for the handling, treatment, thermal destruction, utilization and disposal of sorted, un-recycled, un-composted, biomedical and hazardous wastes," it stated.

The IRR defines non-burn technologies as technologies used for the destruction, decomposition or conversion of wastes other than through the use of combustion, with conditions.

## Desperate times, desperate measures

IN January, Marinduque Rep. and House Speaker Lord Allan Jay Velasco urged the Senate to pass the bill allowing the use of WTE technologies to help solve the country's perennial garbage problem.

Quoted in a Philippine News Agency (PNA) report, he said it is high time for the government to consider the adoption of WTE technologies in the treatment and disposal of solid waste, as many of the landfills in the country will soon be filled up.

On November 24, 2020, the House of Representatives approved on third and final reading House Bill (HB) 7829, or the proposed Waste Treatment Technology Act.

The measure was co-authored by close to 200 lawmakers, including Velasco.

In the Senate's version of the bill sponsored by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, which is currently pending for second reading, any WTE technology, including incineration, is allowed as it seeks to amend Republic Act 8749 or the Clean Air Act of 1999 by repealing Section 20 which prohibits incineration.

## Burning issue

PUTTING up WTE facilities that use incineration to burn garbage and produce power at the same time has been offered as a win-win solution to the country's growing garbage problem.

But existing laws prohibit the operation of WTE facilities, particularly those that use incineration that emits toxic fumes—Republic Act 9003, which promotes waste segregation, and Republic Act 8749, or the Philippine Clean Air Act, which bans the use of incinerators.

Citing these proposed measures, nongovernment organizations and environmental groups maintain their stiff opposition to the use of incineration to address the garbage problem, and insist on the so-called 3Rs—reduced, reuse and recycle—and follow RA 9003 to the letter.

## 'Dirtiest, most expensive waste disposal system'

WASTE and pollution watchdog EcoWaste Coalition, a member of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), supports the move to shut down the remaining open and controlled dumpsites in the country.



Sadly, EcoWaste said 21 years after the law took effect, the country is still swarming with open and controlled dumpsites, a clear violation of RA 9003.

The group also backs moves to promote compliance with waste prevention and reduction regulations enshrined in the law, and has condemned the passage of House Bill 7829 by the House of Representatives, saying it will allow waste incineration regardless of the potential harm to health and the environment.

“We condemn the action of our [congressional] representatives in railroading during this Covid-19 pandemic a legislation that promotes the use of garbage incinerators. In doing so, the legislators also ‘ambushed’ two of the country’s key environmental laws—the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and Philippine Clean Air,” Aileen Lucero, national coordinator of EcoWaste Coalition, said. Lucero said incineration is the dirtiest and most expensive way to manage solid waste.

“These facilities release huge amount of toxins into the air and environment. Incinerators will be an additional burden to the Filipinos and to the already struggling public-health sector,” she said.

Lucero maintains that existing laws such as the Clean Air Act and Solid Waste Management Act provide clear frameworks on how solid waste can be ecologically managed.

“All we need to do is to implement these laws. Allowing incinerators will bring us back to the highly polluting solid waste management practices.” At the end of the day, she added, it’s the taxpayers “who will shoulder the high costs of operating incinerator plants.”

## Future of WTE

ACCORDING to Antiporda, unless a new law is enacted amending the anti-waste incineration laws, or at least the provisions that prevent the government from pursuing incineration projects, WTE is facing a “bleak future” in the Philippines.

“The law itself, if you look at it, it’s a little dangerous. There’s a thin line on legality issues. RA 9003 says we need to segregate. This means, we have to take out the highly combustible materials, which is the plastic,” he said.

However, Antiporda explained that a dilemma in removing plastics is that the remaining waste, when burned, may not be able to generate enough heat to prevent the emission of toxic fumes, which means a potential violation of the Clean Air Act.

“If we burn plastic along with other waste, then we are violating RA 9003,” he said.

## Plastic as fuel

ACCORDING to Antiporda, unless plastic is declared in the law as fuel, thereby allowing its burning with other garbage altogether, WTE will have no future in the Philippines.

This, he said, will allow the use of incinerators to dispose of garbage and produce energy at the same time.

But Antiporda said with or without WTE, or the law that will allow waste incineration, the DENR is determined to address the garbage problem without compromising air quality or cause further environmental woes.

“We will continue our honest-to-goodness campaign against open dumpsites. Sanitary landfills will be encouraged but not for the garbage there to stay forever, but to serve as feedstock storage, for future technology that will solve the waste problem,” he said.

Image credits: [Climate Change Commission](#), [denr.gov.ph](#)



## Clark landfill firm eyes P300-M expansion

Facility will ensure continued service for the ever-growing waste management needs of not only its corporate locators but also those of local government units in Central Luzon

Published 4 hours ago on February 21, 2021 02:30 AM

By [Chito Lozada](#) @tribunephil\_cloz



New Clark City has lived up to its reputation as a “Green City” with a sustainable sewage system that Metro Clark Waste Management (MCWM) is developing.

At a cost of P300 million, MCWM is expanding an engineered sanitary landfill, set to be completed this year.

When completed, the facility will ensure continued service for the ever-growing waste management needs of not only its corporate locators but also those of local government units (LGU) in Central Luzon.

Local and international studies have projected that the volume of household waste is expected to far exceed available disposal capacity.

MCWM is developing an additional seven hectares where an additional leachate treatment plant to ensure proper treatment of waste by-products, as well as a separate disposal cell for industrial waste will be employed.

The company also said it was investing in additional vehicles, and other equipment and infrastructure.

It is the first and only waste management firm in the country that utilizes European environmental protection technology and equipment.

### Modern waste disposal

Its efficient waste management operations, relentless focus on client service, and strict compliance with Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) standards allowed MCWM to manage over 20 percent more waste in 2020 versus the previous year.

Local and international studies have projected that the volume of household waste is expected to far exceed available disposal capacity.

DENR recently reported its aim to close all open dumpsites, which are considered illegal, this year.



“At a time when many of our countrymen are facing so many challenges due to the pandemic, it is very gratifying to us that we can continue to provide such an essential service to our clients; and that they don’t need to worry about the proper disposal of their waste,” MCWM’s executive vice president and general manager Vicky Gaetos said.

#### Growing need

“We commit to effectively fulfill our role by investing in new technology, equipment, and infrastructure that will allow us to serve our LGU and industrial clients, all of whom also acknowledge the need for proper waste management that is safe for the public and the environment,” Gaetos indicated.

MCWM also continues to implement stricter on-site protocols to maintain regular operations and ensure its employees’ safety.

These measures include regular and frequent disinfection of its waste collection trucks and official company vehicles, deployment of personal protective equipment for all staff including hospital-grade gear for trained personnel inspecting medical waste, use of only company-provided footwear inside the premises, and implementation of comprehensive protocols for suspected, confirmed, and recovering cases.





## Time for lowly 'kawayan' to shine

By Jonathan L. Mayuga  
February 21, 2021



Rubison Macalalag, a father of four and a former tricycle driver before working for the Kanya-Kawayan supply facility in Nasugbu, Batangas, works on a huge bamboo pole for treatment and processing.

The bamboo, or *kawayan* in Filipino, is again put in the spotlight as a viable solution to the ever-increasing demand for a sustainable supply of raw materials.

Highly flexible and durable, the bamboo is sturdy giant grass species that have multiple uses.



A worker passes by a structure using bamboos in building an orphanage with an innovative bamboo-cement technology in Batangas. Photos from Base Bahay Foundation Inc.

### Ecosystem services

Natural bamboo forests provide very important ecosystem services, including functioning as a carbon sink, produce oxygen, prevent soil erosion, regulate water in watersheds and act as natural water purifier.

The bamboo shoots, or culms, that just sprouted on the ground, locally called *labong*, is edible and is sometimes the main, if not a key ingredient in many Filipino dishes.

In the wild, the bamboo leaf is food to a variety of animals. Even in farms, it is fed to cattle and carabaos, and small ruminants. The base or the roots are known to provide shelter or home to monitor lizards and even snakes.



Workers harvest bamboo for the Kanya-Kawayan supply facility in Nasugbu, Batangas.



## Construction material

Traditionally used for construction, its pole is perhaps the most economically important part of the towering bamboo.

A nipa hut is often constructed with bamboo poles. The poles are also used to make tables, chairs and other furniture.

Even in the construction of concrete structures, bamboo poles are used as support.

Lately, processed or engineered bamboo are becoming widely accepted in architectural and interior designs.

## Greening with bamboo

Recognizing the importance of bamboo, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is stepping up its use of bamboo as planting material for reforestation activities.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu led the symbolic bamboo planting activity in the Cagayan River during the launch of the Cagayan River Restoration Project during the World Wetlands Day, on February 2.

The DENR consider the use of bamboo as planting material in riverbanks as a flood-prevention measure. A total of 185 bamboo propagules of bayog, kawayan tinik, machiku, buddha belly, and Giant Bamboo species were planted in the 925-meter stretch of the riverbank along Barangay Bangag in Lal-lo town during the launch.

So far, 3,672 bamboo seedlings have been planted covering 18 hectares along the riverbank of Cagayan River.

Similarly, on February 17, with the launching of the Marikina River Restoration Project, the DENR chief highlighted the event with a bamboo-planting activity.

## Enabling policy

The Executive Order 879, signed on May 14, 2010, by former President and Pampanga legislator Gloria Arroyo, created the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council.

It aims to promote the bamboo industry development, and direct the use of bamboo for at least 25 percent of the desk and other furniture requirements of public elementary and secondary schools.

It also mandates government agencies to prioritize the use of bamboo in furniture, fixtures and other construction requirements of government facilities.

Moreover, Section 3 of EO 879 mandates "the use of bamboo as planting material for at least 20 percent of the DENR's annual reforestation and rehabilitation areas, especially in the provinces and towns which are engaged in or have the potential to engage in bamboo-based industries."

## Bamboo research facility

Base Bahay Foundation Inc. launched the Base Innovation Center (BIC) in Makati City on January 27 to highlights the potential of bamboo and other locally available indigenous materials through research and development. It will be for the benefit of the socialized housing sector.

The BIC is the first research and testing facility for sustainable and disaster-resilient construction technologies in the country.

Located in the foundation's Makati office, BIC houses a Universal Testing Machine, a Bamboo Wall Panel Reaction Frame, fabrication tables and a model house where new materials and building techniques are tested.



The launching of the BIC was a welcome development as the Philippines slowly recognizes bamboo as a workable alternative construction material that can help narrow the huge gap in the country's socialized and affordable housing sector.

## Housing sector gap

During the virtual launch on January 27, Maricen Jalandoni, president and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the foundation, highlighted the lack of affordable, safe and secure, and quality housing in many developing countries, including the Philippines.

"In the Philippines alone, the housing gap is estimated at 6.8 million units from 2017 to 2022. This means that 6.8 million families in the country do not have access to safe and adequate homes," she said.

She added that the pandemic that continues to affect the country made the need for safe and secure homes even more evident.

"Entire communities are left vulnerable and have no choice but to live in high-risk areas that offer little or no shelter during typhoons or storms. Many of them are subjected to other risks, such as health, safety and security," she added.

## Sustainable housing technologies

The foundation, a pioneer in providing alternative building technologies for socialized housing, is promoting sustainable housing technologies and is making the much-needed push for the use of the lowly bamboo in the socialized-housing sector.

The BIC said the research of Base Bahay Head of Technology Luis Felipe Lopez Munoz bamboo construction technology will be conducted to provide Filipinos with more affordable and resistant solutions to housing.

"A key part of our commitment to promoting sustainable housing technologies is constant innovation," he said in a taped video.

## 'Bamboo' partnerships

The foundation is partnering with Habitat for Humanity Philippines and the Hilti Foundation to optimize the bamboo construction technology and promote its widespread use in the country.

The partners are targeting to build 10,000 cement-bamboo houses by 2024, in response to the growing need for socialized housing in various disaster-prone areas in Luzon and Visayas.

In a statement, the foundation said that as of 2020, it has built over 800 houses, 10 communities, five supply facilities, and housed over 4,000 individuals across Luzon and Visayas.

"They've also trained over 100 Tesda [Technical Education and Skills Development Authority]-certified workers on masonry, carpentry, and in the application of cement bamboo technology in the country," it added.

## Research and development

Currently, the foundation has ongoing research projects with the De La Salle University which focuses on determining the strength and mechanical properties of various bamboo species.

Base Bahay General Manager Dr. Pablo Jorillo said the studies aim to guide the development of a local structural code for bamboo, aligned with the Philippine National Standard (PNS) 22157.

It is meant to institutionalize the use of bamboo in structural design, and the proposed International Organization for Standardization's ISO 22156, which determines the specific testing procedures for bamboo culms, Jorillo said.



“As leaders in the field of sustainable housing technologies, we recognize that we play a pivotal role in ensuring that every Filipino has access to a home,” he added.

“Through the Base Innovation Center, we are looking to open more doors with our partners so that we may continue to provide Filipino families strong cement-bamboo structures for their homes, intensive research that will encourage innovation, and comprehensive technical training,” he pointed out.

## Welcome development

Philippine Bamboo Foundation Inc. President Edgar Manda said the promotion of bamboo as planting material for the government’s reforestation program and the establishment of a nongovernment research facility on bamboo in the Philippines is a welcome development.

In a telephone interview on January 30, Manda weighed in on the future of the Philippine bamboo industry and its use in reforestation and its potential positive impact on the environment.

He said that as a material for reforestation, bamboo has a huge impact in areas where there is deforestation.

“It will provide climate change impact, for example, on carbon sequestration. One hectare of bamboo can capture 600 tons of carbon dioxide per year,” he said.

Moreover, it will also have positive economic impact, added.

The bamboo pole, he said, can be transformed into many products, it being a viable wood substitute.

## Supply shortage, lack of direction

Unfortunately, he said the Philippines lack bamboo pole supply, hence, the need to establish bamboo plantations in commercial or industrial scales.

“We don’t have a commercial or industrial plantation yet,” Manda said, but added that there are known natural bamboo forests in Pangasinan.

The reason behind the stunted growth of the bamboo industry, or the evolution of bamboo as a commodity in the country, is the fact that the development of bamboo is not among the government’s priorities.

Bamboo, he said, is not even considered a commodity. He said that like other economic commodities, bamboo should get the much-needed government support in terms of policy, programs, projects and budget.

Current initiatives on bamboo are unconsolidated, Manda said, expressing doubt that they will make a positive impact enough for the bamboo industry or the bamboo itself as a precious commodity to evolve.

## Policy gap

Besides the DENR, he said the Departments of Science and Technology (DOST), and of Agriculture (DA) and other government agencies, including some local government units (LGUs) have their own bamboo initiatives, but are not interlinked or harmonized.

While there is already an enabling policy with the creation of the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council, such is not enough to realize the bamboo’s full economic potential as the next-generation raw material and wood substitute, blaming the lack of needed policy direction.

Current DENR initiatives on bamboo, he said, need further study and planning.



On top of developing commercial or industrial level bamboo plantations, research and development, a comprehensive plan on how to establish bamboo communities who will make bamboo a way of life are needed.

Lagging behind its Southeast Asian and Asian neighbors, the Philippines, he said, has the potential to catch up as bamboo is part of the Filipinos' DNA.

But this means that the bamboo initiatives should not stop with just planting *kawayan*. There needs to be a comprehensive planning and program with dedicated people who will work on it to ensure the growth and development of the bamboo industry.

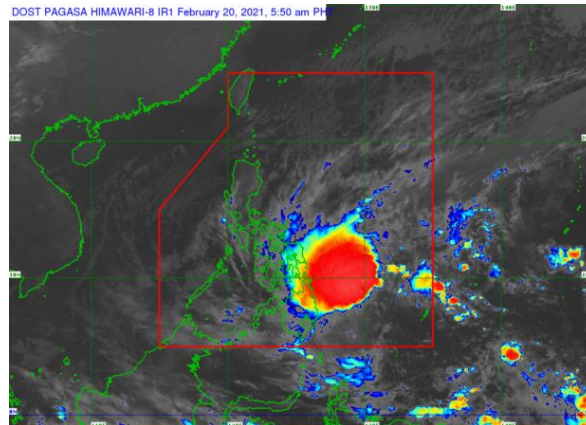
Afterall, it is time for the lowly *kawayan* to shine, he said.

Image credits: [Base Bahay Foundation Inc.](#)



## MGB-7 to LGUs: Use geohazard maps to prepare for TS Auring

By: Delta Dyrecka Letigio - CDN Digital Multi-Media Reporter|February 20,2021 - 05:35 PM



As Tropical Storm Auring nears Cebu and the Visayas, local government units (LGUs) are advised to refer to the geohazard maps to effectively map out contingency measures against the first weather disturbance to enter the country.

CEBU CITY, Philippines — The Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Central Visayas (MGB-7) is urging local government units (LGUs) to refer to the geohazard map to identify areas that need more attention for the incoming Tropical Storm Auring.

The geohazard map can be accessed at [www.mgb.gov.ph](http://www.mgb.gov.ph) and will show the landslide and flood-prone areas in each locality, which can be used as a guide on whether or not to evacuate residents of a certain barangay or sitio.

The LGUs already have a copy of the map since 2015, and MGB-7 said it is continually conducting an update on the vulnerability and risk assessment related to geohazard mapping.

MGB is also updating the scale of the geohazard map to provide local government units (LGUs) and development planners with a more detailed and higher resolution image.

“Our ultimate goal is zero casualty. The geohazard maps can greatly help and guide our officials to conduct appropriate precautionary measures to achieve that,” Armando L. Malicse, OIC-Regional Director MGB-7 said.

Even though Auring has slightly weakened, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said in its 5:00 a.m. weather bulletin that it will bring moderate to heavy rains in Visayas and Mindanao.

Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal (TCWS) No. 1 has been raised in the Visayas as around 30 to 60 kilometers per hour (kph) of wind is expected in the next 36 hours.

MGB 7 also urged residents in high-risk areas such as coastlines, near riverbanks and steep slopes to follow advisories on possible evacuation from their mayors or barangay officials to avoid any casualties.

Auring is expected to pass Cebu on Sunday, February 21, 2021. Cebu has already been placed under Signal No. 1. /rcg

Source: <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/364334/mgb-7-to-lgus-use-geohazard-maps-to-prepare-for-ts-auring>



## BOC intercepts 25 live reptiles bound for Taiwan

By Ferdinand Patinio February 20, 2021, 4:24 pm



'LIVE' PACKAGE. A pit viper is among the 25 live reptiles concealed native purses of the bamboo chimes and lanterns intercepted by Customs officers at a warehouse in Pasay City on Feb. 18, 2021. The live reptiles were consigned to a certain Ryan Su in Taiwan. (Photo courtesy of BOC)

MANILA – Bureau of Customs (BOC) officials seized a package containing 25 live reptiles worth PHP300,000 in Pasay City.

In a statement Saturday, district collector Carmelita Talusan reported that two venomous spitting cobras, eight pit vipers, and 15 sailfin lizards were concealed in native purses of the bamboo chimes and lanterns when it was discovered inside the DHL warehouse at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) on February 18.

The BOC added that the package declared by a certain Adrian Lim as souvenir items was consigned to a certain Ryan Su in Taiwan.

The wildlife species were apprehended through the efforts of the port's Export Division, Enforcement and Security Service (ESS), Environmental Protection and Compliance Division (EPCD), X-Ray Inspection Project (XIP), Customs Intelligence and Inspection Service (CIIS), and DHL in close coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The seized reptiles were immediately turned over to the DENR for proper handling and disposition, including the consequent profiling and case build-up against the shipper and co-conspirators for illegal wildlife trade in violation of Republic Act 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act) and Republic Act 10863 (Customs Modernization and Tariff Act).

In March 2019 and September 2020, the Port of NAIA was commended by Traffic Asia for the confiscation of 1,529 freshwater turtles and tortoises concealed in suitcases.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service also lauded the port for the interception of a reticulated python concealed in a rattan basket last year.

Talusan said the BOC remains committed to the campaign against the illegal wildlife trade. (PNA)



## BOC-NAIA intercepts 25 assorted live reptiles

February 20, 2021 2 min read

MANILA — The Bureau of Customs Port of NAIA has intercepted assorted reptiles that were declared as souvenir items.

Closer scrutiny by the customs personnel revealed two (2) venomous spitting cobras, eight (8) pit vipers, and 15 sailfin lizards.

The “ready souvenir items” were concealed inside bamboo chimes and lanterns intended for export to Taiwan last February 18, 2021, in a DHL warehouse.

The package was declared as “souvenir items” by a certain “Adrian Lim” from Pasig City and consigned to a certain “Ryan Su” of Taiwan.

The “souvenir items” were discovered and apprehended thru the joint efforts of the Port of NAIA and offices under; Export Division, Enforcement and Security Service (ESS), Environmental Protection and Compliance Division (EPCD), X-Ray Inspection Project (XIP), Customs Intelligence and Inspection Service (CIIS) and DHL in close coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The said items can fetch as high as P300K each customs examiners said.



The Port of NAIA remains vigilant not only in the interception of illegal drugs but also against the shipment of illegal wildlife trade.

Furthermore, the Port of NAIA, last March 2019 and September 2020, was commended by the Traffic Asia for the confiscation of 1,529 freshwater turtles and tortoises concealed in suitcases and by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the interception of a reticulated python concealed in a rattan basket.

The BOC, under the leadership of Commissioner Rey Leonardo B. Guerrero, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and other concerned government and regulatory agencies, is committed to strengthening collaboration against illegal wildlife trade for the protection of wildlife, according to Port of NAIA District Collector Carmelita M. Talusan.

The seized cobras, pit vipers, and sailfin lizards were immediately turned over to the DENR for proper handling and disposition, including the consequent profiling and case build-up against the shipper and co-conspirators for illegal wildlife trade in violation of RA 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act) and RA 10863 (Customs Modernization and Tariff Act). (KIARA LAUREN IBANEZ/AI/MTVN)

Source: <https://maharlika.tv/2021/02/20/boc-naia-intercepts-25-assorted-live-reptiles/?fbclid=IwAR3RUZx8u89S3qoTFQpdm-CI1M13X1rbQFnbV3ctIDwPznID11Aa78YLT7c>



## 25 BUHAY NA AHAS NAKUMPISKA NG BOC SA NAIA

written by **Gilbert Perdez** February 20, 2021



Nasabat ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) ang 25 buhay na ahas na nagkakahalaga ng P300,000 sa Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) sa Pasay City.

Ayon kay district collector Carmelita Talusan, kabilang sa mga nadiskubre sa DHL warehouse ang dalawang makamandag na cobra, walong pit vipers, at 15 Sailfin Lizards.

Sinasabing idineklara ng isang Adrian Lim bilang souvenir items ang kargamento na nakapangalan o naka-consign sa isang Ryan Su sa Taiwan.

Binigyang diin ni Talusan na magpapatuloy ang kanilang matinding kampanya laban sa illegal wildlife trade.

Sasampahan ng mga kaukulang kaso ang mga suspek.





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Nasa 25 reptiles kabilang ang dalawang venomous spitting cobras, walong pit vipers at 15 sailfin lizards ang nasabat ng Bureau of Customs Port of NAIA nitong Huwebes, Feb. 18.

Nakatago ang mga ito sa bamboo chimes at lanterns na nakatakda sanang ipadala sa Taiwan ng isang "Adrian Lim" mula sa Pasig City. Idineklara ang package bilang "souvenir items" at tinatayang may market value na P300,000.

👤: Bureau of Customs



👍👎👏 2.6K

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Nasabat ng Bureau of Customs sa Ninoy Aquino International Airport ang iba't ibang klase ng buhay na reptiles na tinangkang ipuslit patungo ng Taiwan.



YOUTUBE.COM

P300,000 halaga ng iba't ibang reptiles na tinangkang ipuslit, nasabat ng Bureau of Customs

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# ACB: Conserving tarantulas, scorpions helps prevent diseases

By [BusinessMirror](#)  
February 21, 2021



Mexican adult female pink tarantula

Tarantulas and scorpions as pets? Think again.

The head of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) expressed concern over the recent cases of illegal wildlife trafficking seemingly influenced by trends of keeping these threatened species as pets, an ACB news release said. The Philippines's Bureau of Customs (BOC) recently reported the seizure of a package containing 20 endangered tarantula spiders and eight scorpions at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport last month.

Records showed the package, which came from Samut Prakarn, Thailand, was misdeclared as "teaching equipment," and imported without the necessary permits.

In 2019, the BOC intercepted 757 tarantulas at a mail exchange center near Manila's international airport and later arrested a man who tried to claim the tarantulas declared as "collection items."

In October last year, 119 tarantulas from Poland concealed in a pair of rubber shoes were also seized.

Lauding the work of the BOC, Lim emphasized the importance of strengthening wildlife law enforcement, particularly at seaports and airports, and fostering regional and transboundary coordination to combat illicit wildlife trade.

"We acknowledge the authorities' vigilance against illegal wildlife trafficking and their close coordination with environmental agencies in the pursuit to conserve and protect threatened wildlife species. The covert nature of the trade makes this a huge challenge for authorities and requires a whole-of-government approach," Therese Mundita Lim said.

Tarantulas comprise a group of large and hairy spiders under the family *Theraphosidae*. Of the 39 species listed in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List global database, 11 are categorized as either critically endangered or endangered, five are vulnerable, and five are near-threatened.

Scorpions, on the other hand, can be found in six of the seven continents of the world. A species found in the Asean, *Isometrus deharvengi*, however, is listed as an endangered arachnid in the IUCN Red List.

Lim noted that these arachnids play important roles in ecosystems by helping control insect populations, thus, helping prevent the spread of insect-borne diseases.

Also, the venoms of tarantulas and scorpions may have medicinal properties that can be valuable in the development of new drugs.

Apart from their contributions to maintaining ecological balance, Lim said these arachnids may provide solutions to modern-day ailments.

"Many hobbyists and collectors, however, are willing to buy these at high prices. This demand contributes to the rampant poaching of these species from the wild, smuggling and illegal trade. Poaching to the point of extinction may have profound impacts on the environment and eventually on human health," Lim said.



Inadvertent release or escape of exotic animals, especially poisonous ones, into the wild and ecologically sensitive places with high endemism, could result in an ecological imbalance and potentially harm other species in the ecosystems, the ACB head explained.

She warned the public to be compliant with national laws concerning the trade, transportation and possession of these heavily trafficked animals.

In the Philippines, under Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Protection and Conservation Act, those engaged in illegal importation, collection and trade of endangered wildlife are meted six years of imprisonment and a fine of P200,000 (around \$4,100).

Also, given the transboundary nature of most illegal wildlife trade, Lim cited the need for greater coordination and cooperation among neighboring countries, in accordance with the commitment of the Asean member states.

In 2019, Asean ministers—responsible for Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and Wildlife Enforcement during the Special Asean Ministerial Meeting on Illegal Wildlife Trade in Chiang Mai, Thailand—agreed to scale up their efforts to strengthen cooperation in addressing illegal wildlife trade in the region by collaborating with international organizations, private sector, academia, and civil society.

“With a better understanding of the human-wildlife interface amid the Covid-19 pandemic, our collaboration is highly timely and relevant,” Lim said.

Image credits: [Wikimedia Commons](#)



# ACB chief lauds ASEAN winners of the UN's Environmental Enforcement Awards

By ACB Published on February 20, 2021

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna, Feb. 20 -- The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) congratulates the winners of the 5th Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards held on 17 February 2021, which were conferred by the UN Environment Programme on government officials and teams that have excelled in enforcing laws against environmental crimes, such as illegal wildlife trafficking.

Illegal wildlife trafficking is reported as one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss and destruction of habitats in the ASEAN region. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), wildlife and forest crime in the East Asia and Pacific region is generating around USD 19.5 billion every year, making it a 'lucrative business' that is often hard to detect.

In 2020, government institutions and officials from the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia successfully completed investigations and seizure operations against notorious wildlife traders, as well as illegal waste smuggling.

Under the Impact Category, the Philippines Operation Group on Ivory and the Illegal Wildlife Trade (POGI) comprised with representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources - Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) and the National Bureau of Investigation - Environmental Crime Division (NBI-ECD) was recognised after it arrested a number of illegal traders and recovered 13 rare animals in a single operation. At the same time, the Operasi Bersepadu Khazanah taskforce in Malaysia, composed of officials from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) Peninsular Malaysia under the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (KeTSA) together with the Royal Malaysia Police, was also cited for arresting "87 wildlife criminals, destroying 460 wire snares, with total seizure amounting to MYR 2.7 million (USD 670,000)."

Meanwhile, John Simon, district customs collector of the Philippines Bureau of Customs was given an award under the Impact and Integrity category for busting an illegal waste smuggling operation, seizing 10,000 tons of illegal waste and initiating legal proceedings against the smugglers, and to repatriate the waste back to the country of origin.

UNEP likewise recognised inter-agency and bilateral collaborations, such as the efforts of the Enforcement Division, Department of Environment, Malaysia, currently under the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA), which worked closely with the authorities from the United Kingdom to repatriate 42 containers of smuggled plastic waste; and Indonesia's Police Chief Commissioner Adi Karya Tobing, Police Commissioner Sugeng Irianto, and Rasio Ridho Sani, Director General for Law Enforcement in the Ministry of Environment and Forestry who worked with Dutch authorities to crack down on a large-scale wildlife network that trafficks body parts of endangered species.

"These well-deserved awards recognising efforts of the ASEAN Member States in stemming the illegal wildlife trade in the region, as well as in curbing environmental waste pollution contribute to the protection and conservation of vital wildlife species, which support livelihood and ecosystem services necessary for well-being and survival," said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim.



"In light of the ongoing global crisis, addressing illegal wildlife trade and other environmental crimes will contribute significantly to keeping our forests healthy, and securing the lives of more than 650 million people in the ASEAN that depend on these. The commendations come at an opportune time as the World celebrates this year's Wildlife Day, on 3 March, under the theme 'Forest and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet'," she said.

Lim added that the awardees have also shown that regional collaboration and international cooperation among the various agencies and the public can make a difference in law enforcement.

"Every action that protects species and strengthens collaboration benefits biodiversity and the people. The awardees embody success stories worthy of being emulated in the region," she said.

Other recipients of the 5th Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards are Nepal's Sudarshan Panthee and Birendra Singh Johari; and India's Sashimita Lenka, Divisional Forest Officer and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

The annual award for achievement in combating environmental crime is presented by the UNEP in partnership with the UN Development Programme, the UNODC, INTERPOL, the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the World Customs Organization. (ACB)



# ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity lauds winners of UN's Environmental Enforcement Awards

By Ma. Alaine P. Allanigue Published on February 20, 2021

QUEZON CITY, Feb. 20 (PIA) -- The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) has lauded the winners of the 5th Environmental Enforcement Awards, which were conferred by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on government officials and teams that have excelled in enforcing laws against environmental crimes, such as illegal wildlife trafficking.

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## Environmental Enforcement Awards winners lauded

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Simon  
STAR/File

## BOC collector gets Environmental Justice Award

[Evelyn Macairan](#) (The Philippine Star) - February 21, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A Bureau of Customs (BOC) collector, who worked on sending back over 7,600 metric tons of illegal waste from South Korea in 2018, is one of the seven winners of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards.

BOC Collection District 10 Collector John Simon was cited as one of eight AEEA awardees for fighting transboundary environmental crime in a virtual ceremony held last Feb. 17.

In a letter sent to Simon, dated Dec. 2, 2020, the UNEP informed him that his “excellent work in combatting transboundary environmental crime has been recognized by a panel of international experts from the United Nations and partner agencies.”

“This award means so much to me. This is a recognition that provides the apex of my career serving the government, serving our country and now serving humanity. This is a recognition that I will cherish and treasure all my life,” he said.

In July 2018, a huge shipment of garbage arrived from South Korea and was stored at the Mindanao International Container Port (MICP) in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, where it posed health and environmental hazards.

When Simon was appointed as the new Customs collector in the area in October 2018, he revealed that it was not only 5,000 metric tons of garbage but more than 7,000 metric tons.

He said the shipment was issued with a re-exportation order back to its country of origin. However, “the process of repatriation was not an easy one because there are many issues to be resolved to make it compliant to the provisions of the Basel Convention.”

Simon also had to solve the issue of logistics or putting the garbage in tonner bags and loading them in 40-foot containers 360 in total, which is equivalent to over 7,600 metric tons.



When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, the BOC had to make eight trips in order to return all the waste back to Korea. The voyages took place from January 2020 to September 2020.

Simon named the reported importer as Charles Cho of Verde Soko and who, upon verification with the Interpol, was allegedly the subject of a warrant of arrest in Korea since 2016 for economic crimes.

Reportedly in hiding, Cho now has a pending case before a regional trial court in Cagayan de Oro City and an arrest warrant issued against him.

The seven other UNEP-AEEA awardees are the Philippine Operation Group on Ivory and the Illegal Wildlife Trade (POGI); the Police Central Investigation Bureau in Nepal; Department of Wildlife Peninsula Malaysia & Royal Malaysia Police Task Force in Malaysia; Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) in India; Enforcement Division, Department of Environment in Malaysia; Indonesia National Police & Ministry of Environment & Forestry in Indonesia and the Athgarh Forest Division in India.



# Protecting the 'little guardians of the forests'

By ACB Published on February 20, 2021



All three species of pangolins in the ASEAN region are critically endangered. Photo courtesy of Gregg Yan

LAGUNA, Feb. 20 -- This year's World Pangolin Day, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity joins the global community in raising awareness about the pangolins, their roles in the health of the ecosystems and the people, and their rapidly declining population.

Southeast Asia is indeed a haven for the pangolins, being home to three of its eight species— the Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*), the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*), and the Philippine pangolin (*Manis culionensis*), with its common name derived from the Malay word “penggulung,” which means roller, describing how the animal rolls up into a ball when threatened. All three species in the region are critically endangered according to the IUCN Red List.

However, the ASEAN region also continues to be a critical hotspot for pangolins, being reported as the source, transit, and destination of its trafficking. To date, pangolins remain to be among the list of most poached mammals as their meat and scales are believed to have medicinal value and they have poor survival rates in captivity.

Pangolins have been in the limelight, especially during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, following suspicions that these scaly ant-eating mammals are among the intermediate hosts for the 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Although the exact origins of the pandemic still remain a mystery, studies have already determined that pangolins and bats harbor viruses related to the causative agent of COVID-19.

Most recently, scientists from Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore, and Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, found high levels of neutralising antibodies of SARS-CoV-2-related coronaviruses (SC2r-CoVs) in bats and pangolins in Thailand. The study, which was published on Nature Communications, provides a strong basis on how the region can be a potentially valuable research area to better understand and prevent pandemics that could originate from wildlife such as pangolins and from large and diverse bat populations.

By feeding on ants, termites, and other insects, pangolins play a crucial role in disease regulation. Keeping pangolin populations in healthy numbers and their habitats intact contributes to maintaining the delicate ecological balance. With the increasing human-wildlife interactions spawned by illegal wildlife trade and the continuous degradation of pangolin habitats, the spillover of the zoonotic disease-causing viruses becomes increasingly real. Our attention and action must then be focused on addressing these threats not just for nature but also for human health.



The aftermath of the global health crisis compels the region to drum up a whole-of-society approach in protecting these elusive, fast-disappearing species. Aside from stopping wildlife trafficking, it is crucial that we continue to conserve and protect the natural habitats of pangolins, while improving the socioeconomic conditions of the communities living in and around these areas.

Today, we should be reminded that our wellbeing and health largely depends on these species known as the “little guardians of the forests.

Happy World Pangolin Day! (TMLim/ACB)



## 5K board feet of illegal lumber seized in Cagayan

February 20, 2021 1 min read

TUGUEGARAO CITY – Authorities seized at least 5,000 board feet of undocumented hardwood lumber in an anti-illegal logging operation in Cagayan on Friday.

In a statement Saturday, Police Regional Office 2 (Cagayan Valley) director, Brig. Gen. Crizaldo Nieves said members of the local police, 4th Maneuver Force Platoon, and Cagayan Mobile Force Company-Casambalangan Patrol Base seized narra and kamagong sawn lumber stockpiled in a lot in Sitio Canigim, Barangay Patunungan in Sta. Ana town.

Three suspects were arrested in the operation — Boy Damaso, Johny Damaso, and Rodel Abaya.

The lot was traced to a company owned by a certain “Mr. Alingog” of Cauayan City, Isabela.

The seized contraband was brought to the Sta. Ana police for documentation and disposition.

The suspects will be charged with violation of the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines. (PNA)

Source: <https://maharlika.tv/2021/02/20/5k-board-feet-of-illegal-lumber-seized-in-cagayan/?fbclid=IwAR0xSUKYOFg3jFOXmJxkEqnM4hbM3p5Crm385qWvHX31W75g5k7wuUqMnz0>



# Lupa

[IKAW AT ANG BATAS!](#) - [Atty. Jose C. Sison](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - February 21, 2021 - 12:00am

Kung may titulo na ang lupa sa pangalan ng isang tao, maaari pa kaya itong maagaw ng iba na sinasabing mas may karapatan doon sa pamamagitan ng pagsasampa ng kaso na tinatawag na “accion publiciana” pagkalipas ng isang taon? Ito ang ipinaliliwanag sa kaso ng mga naulila nina Eusebio at Domingo Castro.

Ang kaso ay tungkol sa pagbawi ng posesyon at danyos na sinampa ni Domingo Castro laban sa mga naulila nina Eusebio na sina Marcia, Josue, Randy at Pete sa RTC sa probinsiya kung saan naroon ang lupang pinag-aagawan. Ang lupa ay sakop ng titulo (OCT No. P-6710) na nakarehistro sa pangalan ni Domingo at may sukat na 35,000 metro kuwadrado. Ang tax declaration ay nasa pangalan niya at may assessed value na P57,000 at market value na P15,000.

Ayon kay Domingo, walang paalam na pinasok ng grupo ni Marcia ang lupa may 12 taon na ang nakararaan at nagtanim ng mga puno at inangkin ang lupa. Inutos daw niya na umalis ang grupo pero kahit anong pakiusap niya ay hindi siya pinakinggan kaya napilitan na siyang magsampa ng reklamo.

Ayon naman sa grupo ni Marcia, base lang sa isang free patent na inilabas ng DENR ang titulo ni Domingo. Hiniling nila na ipawalambisa ang dokumento. Nakabinbin pa raw sa DENR ang kaso at ito ay dapat ituring na “prejudicial question” o isang tanong na dapat munang iresolba. Isa pa, sa loob daw ng 41 taon ay hawak nila ang posesyon ng lupa mula pa nang ideklara ng DENR na puwede itong makuha ng mga tao. Katunayan nga, nauna pa nilang hinawakan ang lupa kaysa sa aplikasyon ni Domingo sa DENR.

Matapos ang pagdinig, naglabas ng desisyon ang RTC. Binasura nito ang reklamo ni Domingo dahil sa kawalan ng basehan. Napansin nito na hindi man lang nga hawak ni Domingo ang posesyon ng lupa at mukhang may kaduda-duda sa paglabas ng titulo niya. Ayon pa sa RTC, kahit hawak ni Domingo ang titulo ng lupa ay hindi naman awtomatiko na kanya na ang posesyon ng lupa dahil nga gumamit siya ng pandaraya para makuha ito. Hindi rin daw ito nagsumite ng ebidensiya tungkol sa posesyon niya nang pasukin nina Marcia ang ari-arian.

Pero binaliktad ng Court of Appeals ang desisyon ng RTC at dineklara na si Domingo ang may karapatan sa posesyon sa lupa sa bisa ng kanyang titulo (OCT No. P-6710). Ayon pa sa CA, ang isang taong may hawak ng titulo ng lupa ay may karapatan sa lahat ng kapangyarihan na kalakip ng pagmamay-ari niya tulad ng posesyon nito. Ang isang titulo ay pinapalagay na legal at tama kaya ang bisa nito ay hindi puwedeng atakihin ng basta. Tama ba ang CA?

Ayon sa SC, mali ang CA sa deklarasyon nito. Ang mga naulila raw ni Eusebio ang mas may karapatan sa lupa dahil sa tinatawag na “acquisitive prescription”. Ibig sabihin, matagal na nilang nakuha ang karapatan dahil sa tagal ng panahon na hawak nila ang lupa. Sila ang tunay na may-ari nito dahil lantaran, hayagan, tuluy-tuloy at eksklusibo nilang hawak ang lupa na kanilang tinataniman at ginawang tirahan sa loob ng 30 taon.





Ang kanilang karapatan ay inagaw lang ng mapanlinlang na pagsakop ng free patent ni Domingo na naging resulta ng free patent application nito at ng paglalabas ng OCT P-6710. Sa katunayan nga, nagsampa ng petisyon ang mga anak ni Eusebio para ipawalambisa ang free patent habang nakabinbin naman ang kaso ni Domingo sa pagbawi ng posesyon ng lupa.

Nagkaroon na rin ng resolusyon (G.R. 231304) ang SC kung saan niresolba nito at kinansela ang free patent ni Domingo pati ibinigay sa kanila. Ang naunang desisyon na ito ay nananaig sa kaso ngayon at dapat igalang alinsunod sa doktrina ng res judicata (Heirs of Elliot etc. vs. Corcuera, G.R. 233767, August 27, 2020).



## Hidden environmental cost of working from home

By [Ben Kritz](#) February 21, 2021

That the coronavirus pandemic has permanently changed the way we do business is taken as an article of faith these days. Remote work, online commerce, and digital rather than physical interactions were already growing parts of the economic landscape before the pandemic made them obligatory. Even if compulsion has not caused the enthusiasm for “working from home” to increase for many of us, we have at least had a year to get used to it, to the extent that completely reverting back to old habits once it is actually safe to do so would probably be more trouble than it’s worth.

Not that there aren’t some benefits to the new digital economy, as advocates and those trying to put the best face on the new normal situation do not fail to point out. Reduced use of physical facilities, such as offices and stores, has reduced operating costs for businesses, and the costs in both time and money for workers who are now spared from commuting daily. Likewise, the carbon footprint of all that movement has correspondingly also been reduced, easing environmental damage at a time when it has become painfully obvious to everyone that any form of climate change mitigation, no matter how modest, is absolutely critical.

Throughout human history, however, humans have done a poor job of recognizing unintended consequences of large-scale, outwardly beneficial technological changes. Or as the authors of a recently published study put it: “The environmental costs of adopting new technologies and habits are often recognized too late, typically when changing the adopted technologies and behavioral norms is difficult.” That certainly is the case with one of the more unappealing aspects of work interaction in the new normal: the widespread adoption of videoconferencing.

That brief study, titled “The overlooked environmental footprint of increasing Internet use,” was published in the journal *Resource, Conservation & Recycling* on January 8. The researchers, who are variously affiliated with the University of Maryland, Purdue University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale University and Imperial College London, did two things in their investigation: First, they compared the energy use and environmental impact of global internet activity before and after the imposition of pandemic-induced lockdowns (which occurred between January and March, depending on the country); and second, they studied the specific energy use and corresponding environmental impact of different configurations of videoconferencing for one user for one hour.

Environmental footprint can be expressed using three fairly conventional metrics: emissions, measured in grams or kilograms CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent; water use, measured in liters or cubic meters; and land footprint, measured in square centimeters or square meters. All forms of energy generation, except for wind and hydroelectric power, have some emissions (solar has a little, in the form of reflected heat); all except solar and wind use prodigious quantities of water; and power plants, electricity distribution networks, and computer data centers all require physical space. Before the pandemic, global internet use accounted for about 1.0 percent of global energy demand, and its environmental footprint averaged 32g CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of emissions, 0.74 liters of water, and 11.07 square centimeters of land per gigabyte of data.

Depending on the country, internet use after lockdowns began increasing by 15 to 40 percent. This translates to an additional 42,600 gigawatts of electricity annually (for comparison, the total installed capacity of the Philippines is a little over 20 GW); 3.2 million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in emissions; 1.8 billion cubic meters of water; and 100 square kilometers of land area.

The reason the researchers focused on videoconferencing is that, along with video streaming, it accounts for the biggest part of total internet usage, with videoconferencing particularly registering the fastest increase in most countries. The research determined that one hour of videoconferencing by a single user on a typical platform, like Zoom, has an environmental footprint of 157.34 grams CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, 1.86 liters of water and 27.67 square centimeters of land space. Since it’s not a conference until at least two people are involved, those figures are, at a minimum, doubled for every online meeting that takes place.



Thus, the videoconference that “could have been an email” turns out to be not just mildly annoying, but an irresponsible extravagance at the expense of the environment.

For their part, the study’s authors recommend one simple fix: if a videoconference must be conducted, then leave out the “video” part. Turning the camera off, their tests showed, reduces the environmental footprint by some 96 percent.

For you youngsters who might not be familiar with the term, that’s something called a “conference call,” something those of us who started our careers during the Stone Age used to do regularly, using ordinary speakerphones. Sometimes “new” doesn’t necessarily mean the same thing as “better.”

*ben.kritz@manilatimes.net*

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Park-goers enjoy the morning sunlight while jogging and biking around the vicinity of the Rizal Park and the Quirino Grandstand in Manila on Feb. 20, 2021.

The STAR/Miguel de Guzman

# Philippines coronavirus caseload rises to 559,288 with 2,240 new infections

(Philstar.com) - February 20, 2021 - 4:00pm

MANILA, Philippines — **(Updated 4:20 p.m.)** Another 2,240 people contracted coronavirus in the Philippines, the Department of Health said Saturday, pushing the national caseload past 559,000.

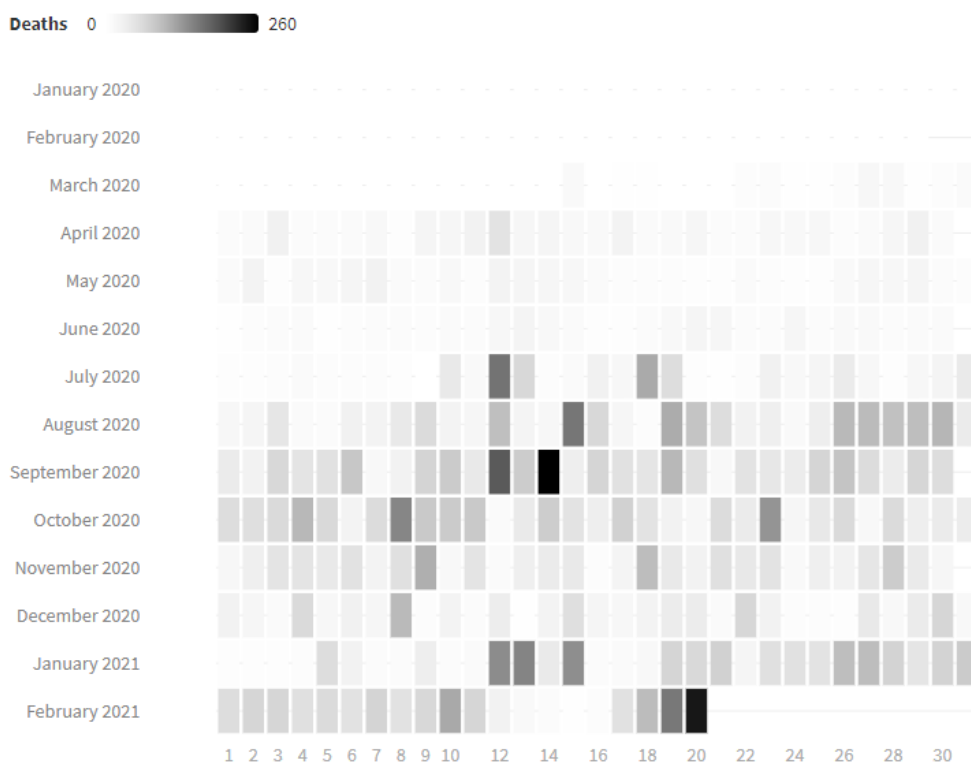
DOH also recorded 239 new fatalities, the highest number of new entries in months, bringing the death toll to a grim 12,068.

Of the total 559,288 confirmed cases, 34,100 or 6.1% are marked by the DOH as active.

Recoveries rose to 513,120 after 504 more people were reported to have beat the respiratory disease.

## COVID-19 deaths in the Philippines

The Philippines recorded the most number of COVID-19 deaths in a single day on September 14, 2020.



Source: Department of Health • As of February 20, 2021, 4 p.m.



## What's new today?

- Saturday's deaths are the highest recorded since Sept. 14, 2020, when the DOH reported 259 new fatalities. On Friday, the agency reported 159 new deaths.
- DOH on Saturday [sought to quell fears over two "mutations of concern"](#) detected in Central Visayas, saying that it is still conducting further studies.
- [Thousands have been evacuated in Caraga](#) as Tropical Storm Auring (international name: Djuan) inches closer to land.
- Disaster risk reduction experts, senators and the DOH last year warned that evacuation centers could act as "super spreader" venues for COVID-19 given the challenge they pose to the enforcement of social distancing and minimum health standards.
- [Deaths among Filipinos abroad breached 1,000](#) after the Department of Foreign Affairs on Friday added 11 new entries, bringing the death toll to a grim 1,009.

**READ:** [Experts urge more gov't funding for evacuation centers to prevent casualties, COVID-19 spread](#)

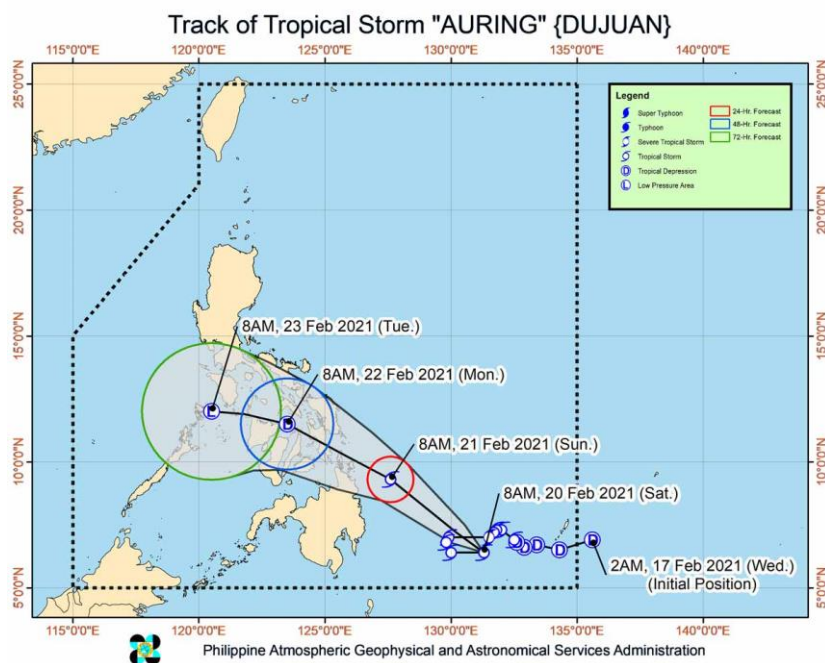
— **Bella Perez-Rubio with reports from Xave Gregorio**

# ‘Auring’ weakens into tropical storm but Signal No. 1 remains in parts of Visayas, Mindanao—Pagasa

By Arlie O. Calalo

February 20, 2021

“AURING” has weakened into a tropical storm but Signal No. 1 remains up in parts of Visayas and Mindanao, the state-run Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Saturday.



In its 11 a.m. advisory, Pagasa said Auring was estimated at 595 kilometers east of southeast of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur.

Moving eastward at a speed of 15 kilometers per hour (kph), the tropical storm has maximum sustained winds of 75kph near the center and gustiness of up to 90kph, Pagasa said.

In Visayas, Signal No. 1 was still up over Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, Samar, Biliran, Leyte, Southern Leyte, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Bohol and Siquijor while same storm signal was raised in parts of Mindanao, namely, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Davao Oriental, Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao City, Camiguin, Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Bukidnon and Lanao del Sur.

“Auring is forecast to make landfall over the eastern coast of Caraga Region on Sunday afternoon or evening, then cross Visayas and Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) throughout the remainder of Sunday until Monday,” the weather bureau said.

It further said that Auring may weaken into a tropical depression before making landfall.

Nevertheless, this storm will likely weaken considerably due to “significant terrain interaction and persistent vertical wind shear during this passage over the archipelago and may reach tropical depression category by Monday,” Pagasa said.

It said the combined effects of the surge of the northeast monsoon (“amihan”) and Auring will bring strong to gale-force winds over the areas where the storm signal is in effect in the next 24 hours as well as over the rest of Visayas, Bicol Region, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), and Mindoro Provinces, Marinduque, Romblon, and the northern portion of Palawan (including Calamian, Cuyo, and Kalayaan Islands).



Pagasa said Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Dinagat Islands, and Eastern Visayas will experience heavy to intense rains while Misamis Oriental, Camiguin and the rest of Caraga will experience moderate to heavy with at times intense rains on Saturday and Sunday.

Meanwhile, light to moderate with at times heavy rains will be experienced over Central Visayas, Davao Oriental, Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte and the rest of Eastern Visayas and Northern Mindanao, it said.



# Making peace with nature is possible — if we start now

By INGER ANDERSEN

February 21, 2021

Even amid a pandemic, 2021 can go down as the year we made peace with nature and set the planet to healing.

As Covid-19 upends our lives, a more persistent crisis demands urgent action on a global scale. Three environmental crises — climate change, nature loss and the collapse of nature and the pollution of air, soil and water — add up to a planetary emergency that will cause far more pain than Covid-19 in the long term.

For years, scientists have detailed how humanity is degrading Earth and its natural systems. Yet the actions we are taking — from governments and financial institutions to businesses and individuals — fall far short of what is needed to protect current and future generations from a hothouse Earth, beset by mass species extinctions and poisonous air and water.

In 2020, the UN Environment Program (UNEP) announced that, despite a dip in greenhouse gas emissions caused by the pandemic, the world is still headed for global warming of more than 3 degrees Celsius this century.

This month, the Dasgupta review reminded us what UNEP has long warned: the per capita stock of natural capital — the resources and services nature provides to humanity — has fallen 40 percent in just over two decades. And we know that a staggering 9 out of 10 people worldwide breathe polluted air.

Finding answers to such daunting problems is complex. It takes time. But experts have developed solutions. The economic rationale is clear. And the mechanisms and institutions to implement them are already in place. There are no more excuses.

This year, the UN will bring governments and other players together for crunch talks on climate action, biodiversity and land degradation. Covid-19 has delayed these summits and complicated their preparation. Again, this is no excuse for inaction. These summits must show that the world is finally serious about tackling our planetary emergency.

To guide decision-makers toward the action required, the UN has released the Making Peace with Nature report. The report pulls together all the evidence of environmental decline from major global scientific assessments, with the most advanced ideas on how to reverse it. The result is a blueprint for a sustainable future that can secure human well-being on a healthy planet.

Our environmental, social and economic challenges are interlinked. They must be tackled together. For example, we cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including ending poverty, by 2030 if climate change and ecosystem collapse are undermining food and water supplies in the world's poorest countries. We have no choice but to transform our economies and societies by valuing nature and putting its health at the heart of all our decisions.

If we did this, banks and investors would stop financing fossil fuels. Governments would shift trillions of dollars in subsidies to nature-positive farming and clean energy and water.

People everywhere would prioritize health and well-being over consumption and shrink their environmental footprint.

There are signs of progress, but the problems are escalating faster than our responses. We all need to not step up but leap up in 2021.





The number of countries promising to work toward net-zero emissions stands at 126. The task is for all countries to deliver stretched nationally determined contributions ahead of the COP (Climate Change Conference) and immediately kickstart the transitions to net-zero. At the climate COP, governments must also finally agree on the rules for a global carbon trading market. The \$100 billion that developed countries promised to provide every year to help developing nations cope with the impacts of climate change must finally flow.

As we also seek to agree on an ambitious post-2020 biodiversity framework that ends fragmentation of our ecosystems, the task is for us is to feed the world without destroying nature, felling forests and emptying our oceans.

We can create an amazing economy by moving to circular economic systems that reuse resources, reduce emissions and weed out the chemicals and toxins that are causing millions of premature deaths — all while creating jobs.

Addressing our planetary emergency is a whole-of-society effort. But governments must take the lead, starting with a smart and sustainable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic that invests in the right places. They must create opportunities for future industries that generate prosperity. They must ensure that transitions are fair and equitable, creating jobs for those who lose out. They must give citizens a voice in these far-reaching decisions, even if it is virtual.

We can do it. The pandemic has shown humanity's incredible ability to innovate and respond to threats, guided by science. In the three planetary crises of climate change, nature loss and pollution, we face an even greater threat than Covid-19. This year, we must make peace with nature and, in every subsequent year, we must make sure that this peace lasts.

Inger Andersen is the executive director of the United Nations Environment Program.



## EDITORIAL - A step in the right direction

(The Freeman) - February 21, 2021 - 12:00am



One of the first things that US President Joe Biden did after he assumed office was bring the United States back into the Paris climate accord. This after his predecessor, former US president Donald Trump, pulled the US out of the pact convinced that climate change was just a hoax.

After all the formalities, that rejoining of the climate accord --which has the overall goal of stopping the global temperature rise by reducing greenhouse gas emissions-- became official only yesterday.

This is good news for the worldwide movement to reduce harmful emissions that cause climate change.

We cannot deny the fact that the US remains one of the most influential nations in the world. Where its leader goes, others tend to follow. It has the power to make other world leaders see its point of view and, if necessary, impose sanctions or encourage the imposition of sanctions from international bodies or even other world leaders.

So the departure of the US from the climate accord in 2017 was really a blow to the efforts to reduce carbon emissions that are being blamed for not just climate change but also extreme weather.

Thankfully, it has been that long. But we can imagine the damage that has been done to the global movement against harmful emissions --as well as to the environment-- since then. Let's remember that what nature took millions of years to make, a safe environment, we have managed to undo in just a few generations.

Make no mistake about this, this will not immediately fix what is wrong with the world climate-wise. It's not a magic wand that will make everything right with just one tap. We should not even delude ourselves into thinking that way when it comes to changing the climate.

However, with all things considered, this is a step in the right direction for the world's most powerful and influential country. Because the truth remains that there is still a lot that has to be done to save the world, literally.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/opinion/2021/02/21/2079280/editorial-step-right-direction/amp/>

# Air pollution is killing thousands more people than Covid in the world's biggest cities

In Delhi, filthy air killed five times more people than Covid-19 in 2020, a year when lockdowns helped improve air quality in many cities.



Air pollution in Tokyo. Tokyo, which for an Asian city has relatively clean air — with PM2.5 levels 70 per cent above the limit deemed clean by the World Health Organisation — registered 40,000 deaths to bad air in 2020.

Image: Flickr/Derek Marshall

By [Robin Hicks](#)

Feb. 18, 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a temporary fall in air pollution in many parts of the world, as economic activity has ebbed and movement restrictions have de-clogged congested cities. But smog was still a big killer in 2020, according to analysis from environmental group Greenpeace and Swiss air quality technology firm IQAir.

In the world's five biggest cities, Shanghai, Tokyo, Delhi, Mexico City, and São Paulo, small particulate matter in the air known as PM2.5, which penetrates deep into the lungs, killed 160,000 people prematurely in 2020.

Particulate pollution causes health problems such as lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, and even diabetes.

Delhi, the world's most polluted city, sustained an estimated 54,000 avoidable deaths due to PM2.5 air pollution in 2020 — more than five times the [reported deaths from Covid-19 to date](#).

Jakarta, which [overtook Beijing in a ranking of the world's smoggiest urban centres](#) last year, lost 13,000 lives to air pollution in 2020, more than double the Covid casualty rate in the Indonesian capital.

Tokyo, which for an Asian city has relatively clean air — with PM2.5 levels about 70 per cent above the limit deemed safe to breathe by the World Health Organisation — registered 40,000 deaths from bad air in 2020, while losing 1,180 people to the coronavirus.

Name	Population	Estimated Deaths	Estimated Cost (USD)
Delhi	30 million	54,000	8.1 billion
Mexico City	22 million	15,000	8.0 billion
São Paulo	22 million	15,000	7.0 billion
Shanghai	26 million	39,000	19 billion
Tokyo	37 million	40,000	43 billion

Deaths from air pollution in the world's five biggest cities [click to enlarge]. Source: IQAir and Greenpeace



Greenpeace's study also recorded the economic cost of air pollution in a year in which the global economy went into recession.

No city in the study suffered as big an economic contraction as Tokyo, which lost US\$43 billion to smog in 2020. Shanghai lost US\$19 billion to air pollution.

The cost of air pollution is calculated based on healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Los Angeles recorded the highest financial cost of PM2.5 air pollution per capita, at US\$2,700 per resident, while Jakarta lost the equivalent of 8.2 per cent of the city's total GDP to poor air quality.

"The fact that poor air quality claimed an estimated 160,000 lives in the five largest cities alone should give us pause, especially in a year when many cities were seeing lower air pollution levels due to less economic activity," said Frank Hammes, chief executive of IQAir.

Aidan Farrow, air quality scientist at Greenpeace Research Laboratories, the environmental group's science unit in the United Kingdom, told Eco-Business that the research demonstrates the need to urgently scale up clean energy, build electrified, accessible transport systems and end reliance on polluting fossil fuels.

"The chance that improving air quality could reduce our susceptibility to diseases like Covid is a strong argument in favour of action that will improve air quality and another reason to shift from fossil fuel to clean renewable technology," he said.

Some studies have shown that air pollution makes it easier for people to contract the coronavirus, as well as develop more severe symptoms. [One paper](#) suggested that 15 per cent of Covid deaths worldwide, and up to 27 per cent of Covid deaths in East Asia, could be attributed to long-term exposure to air pollution.



## 49 beached whales die

Published 4 hours ago on February 21, 2021 02:30 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



JAKARTA, Indonesia (AFP)

— Forty-six small whales stranded on a beach in Indonesia have died, after rescue efforts succeeded in saving three others, local officials said Friday.

Starting Thursday, at least 49 short-finned pilot whales arrived at a beach on Madura Island in northern Java, authorities said in a statement.

Large crowds gathered as a rescue operation was launched, with volunteers using tarpaulins or just their bare hands to try to push the pod back out to sea.

Curious onlookers took pictures and touched the whales, while others tried to splash water on them.

In the end, only three of the animals survived.

Large crowds gathered as a rescue operation was launched, with volunteers using tarpaulins or just their bare hands to try to push the pod back out to sea.

“The live whales had to be released together as they live in a group,” said East Java governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa in the statement.

Parawansa said that officials had taken samples of the carcasses for further investigation into the cause of death.

He added that the corpses, which measure from three to five meters each, would be buried on the beach at low tide.

Offshore cross-currents in the area pose a danger to whales, as they can get caught between reefs close to land.



## 4K pawikan sinalba sa nagyeyelong tubig

By Abante News Online — Last updated Feb 20, 2021

NEWS



PHOTO COURTESY OF TWITTER.COM/TEXASGAMEWARDEN



11 0

Sinagip ng mga volunteer sa Texas, USA ang mahigit 4,500 pawikan mula sa nagyeyelong tubig dulot ng winter storm na nararanasan ng nasabing estado.

Sa ulat, kabilang sa nag-rescue sa mga pawikan ang Sea Turtle Inc. at Texas Game Wardens.

Anang isang opisyal mula Sea Turtle Inc, maaaring magtagal pa ang malamig na panahon sa Texas kaya mas kakailanganin pa nila ng mga pasilidad para pansamantalang maging tuluyan ng mga pawikan.

Bawal pa kasi aniyang pakawalan ang mga ito dahil nagyeyelo pa rin sa lamig ang tubig doon.

Base sa pag-aaral, maaaring maging 'cold-stunned' o manigas ang pawikan kapag nailagay ito sa lugar na may mababang temperatura, na posibleng magdulot ng kanilang pagkamatay. (Vienne Angeles)

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