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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



# Bicol River dredging, bamboo planting to begin March 23

March 21, 2021, 1:52 pm



Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu (File photo)

MANILA – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu said dredging of sandbars along a narrow section of the 94-kilometer Bicol River will start on March 23.

"TF BBB's rehabilitation efforts on the Bicol River completes the triumvirate targets to which we have committed ourselves to complete within the term of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte for Cagayan River, Marikina River, and Bicol River," Cimatu said in a news release on Sunday.

Cimatu, also chairman of the Task Force Build Back Better (TF BBB), said the task force has early on mounted activities, such as easement recovery and river bank stabilization efforts through planting and raising of bamboos, prior to the March 23 launch.

"In fact, 49,509 bamboo seedlings have already been planted by some 850 beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) which provided some 1,000 food packs for these planter-volunteers," Cimatu said.

The area planted with bamboo covers a total of 173 hectares located in 33 barangays -- one in Catanduanes, 24 in Camarines Sur, four in Camarines Norte, and four in Albay.

The DSWD is also expected to provide additional 1,000 food packs for its beneficiaries tapped for the planting activity through its food-for-work initiative under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.

The beneficiaries will receive family food packs on the last day of planting activities.

Cimatu said at least 171 lots have been identified by the National Housing Authority (NHA) for resettlement of informal settlers affected by the Bicol River flooding during the onslaught of Typhoons Ulysses and Rolly in 2020.

He said he will be represented by DENR Undersecretary Rodolfo Garcia during the ceremonial launch of dredging and massive bamboo planting activities in Camaligan, Camarines Sur.

Garcia will be joined by Camarines Sur Governor Miguel Luis Villafuerte and NHA General Manager Marcelino Escalada Jr., who also heads the TF BBB in Bicol Region.

The DPWH has estimated around 58,235 cubic meters of deposited sand materials will be dredged from the middle section of Bicol River.

Citing the DPWH figures, DENR Regional Executive Director for Region 5 (Bicol) Antonio Abawag said the Camaligan portion of Bicol River constricted from ideal width of 80 meters to current 31 meters.

DPWH-Bicol Region Assistant Director Gerald Pacanan said the dredging will also require a depth of five meters to restore the river's natural flow rate.



Pacanan reported that the dredging activity will require 281 days using two amphibious excavators, which have a capacity of 17.28 cubic meters per hour each, for a total of 1,686 working hours at six hours per day.

He said the completion can be achieved in 52 days if a bigger multi-purpose amphibious excavator with a capacity of 153 cubic meters per hour can be added to the two excavators, resulting in reduced total working hours of 311 hours at six hours per day.

The Bicol River is the 8th largest river in the country in terms of drainage basin size.

It encompasses 90 percent of Camarines Sur and Albay, while the rest lies in Camarines Norte. (PR)

Source:

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1134355?fbclid=IwAR2c9w9Lkh363bRekgtGC2nj8fTVvsPQyKlFEVER6-Yh9-WzvRvpp7dubNE>



## DENR to begin dredging of Bicol River on March 23

March 21, 2021 | 7:39 pm



### DENR

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said that it will begin dredging on Tuesday a section of the 94-kilometer Bicol River to restore the river's natural flow rate and minimize flood risk.

In a statement over the weekend, DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu was quoted as saying that the initiative is the last of the Task Force Build Back Better's targets for dredging the other two are the Cagayan and Marikina rivers.

Citing the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the DENR said that some 58,235 cubic meters of deposited sand will be removed from the middle portion of Bicol River in Camaligan, Camarines Sur.

DPWH-Bicol Region Assistant Director Gerald A. Pacanan said that the dredging can be completed in 52 days if bigger machinery is tapped, alongside the two excavators deployed to the project. With the current equipment, dredging will take 281 days, he said.

Mr. Pacanan added that the dredging will "require a depth of five meter" to restore the river's natural flow rate.

The Bicol River is the eighth-largest drainage basin in the country, according to the environment department.

Mr. Cimatu said that the task force has started various supporting activities in the Bicol region, such as easement recovery and the planting of bamboo along the river bank.

"In fact, 49,509 bamboo seedlings have been planted by some 850 beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development," he said.

The bamboo seedlings were planted on 173 hectares of land in 33 barangays in Catanduanes, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte and Albay. — **Angelica Y. Yang**



## Bicol River dredging, bamboo planting to begin March 23

March 21, 2021 13 min read

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## Bicol River rounds up DENR's trio of dredging targets

Published March 21, 2021, 11:41 AM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

Another river in the country is getting the dredging-bamboo planting rehabilitation treatment courtesy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).



(PIXABAY / FILE PHOTO)

On Tuesday, March 23, the DENR will start the dredging of sandbars along a narrow section of the 94-kilometer Bicol River starting March 23, agency secretary and Task Force Build Back Better (TF BBB) Chairman Roy A. Cimatú said.

“TF BBB’s rehabilitation efforts on the Bicol River completes the triumvirate targets to which we have committed ourselves to complete within the term of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte for Cagayan River, Marikina River, and Bicol River,” he noted.

The Bicol River is the eighth largest river in the country in terms of drainage basin size. It encompasses 90 percent of Camarines Sur and Albay, while the rest lies in Camarines Norte.

To prepare for the dredging launch, Cimatú said the task force had earlier carried out preparatory activities such as easement recovery and river bank stabilization efforts through planting and raising of bamboos.

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The area planted with bamboo covers a total of 173 hectares located in 33 barangays—one in Catanduanes, 24 in Camarines Sur, four in Camarines Norte, and four in Albay.

The Department of Public and Highways (DPWH) has estimated around 58,235 cubic meters of deposited sand materials that will be dredged from the middle section of Bicol River.

Citing the DPWH figures, DENR Regional Executive Director for Region 5 Antonio Abawag said the constricted portion of Bicol River in Camaligan is currently 31 meters wide. Its ideal width is 80 meters.

He said the sandbar to be dredged is about 49 meters wide and 500 meters long.

DPWH-Bicol Region Assistant Director Gerald Pacanan said the dredging will also require a depth of five meters to restore the river’s natural flow rate. He said the dredging activity will require 281 days using two amphibious excavators, which have a capacity of 17.28 cubic meters per hour each, for a total of 1,686 working hours at six hours per day.

He said the completion can be achieved in 52 days if a bigger multi-purpose amphibious excavator with a capacity of 153 cubic meters per hour can be added to the two excavators, resulting in reduced total working hours of 311 hours at six hours per day.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/21/bicol-river-rounds-up-denrs-trio-of-dredging-targets/>



# PH assessing cost of damage caused by China's reclamation in WPS

By: [Leila B. Salaverria](#) - Reporter / [@LeilasINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:48 AM March 21, 2021

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines is now assessing the cost of the damage caused by China's reclamation activities in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) so that it would have data to support its position should it decide to seek compensation, according to Environment Undersecretary Analiza Rebuelta Teh.

"What the government is doing is trying to document the resources that we have so that we can establish the baseline data, and together with that documentation is the valuation of these resources so that we can really know what are the value of those resources," Teh said on Friday in a Palace forum on marine science research in the West Philippine Sea.

"Once we know those data, we [will] actually be able to chart the next steps as to the legal actions that may be necessary," Teh added.

"We cannot just pursue an action without clear evidence that can support our position," she added.

Teh said the Philippines should also work with China to protect the marine environment in the West Philippine Sea, which is threatened by climate and ocean change.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration, in a ruling that invalidated Beijing's sweeping claim over the South China Sea, has already said China had harmed the coral reef environment and violated its obligation to protect fragile ecosystems when it created artificial islands in the disputed waters.

Teh said that even with the territorial dispute and the issue over the damage caused by China, the Philippines should still collaborate with Beijing on the protection of the marine ecosystem.

She said this could also help Philippine efforts to determine the extent of the damage in the area.

"We cannot stop cooperating with an important player or actor in the West Philippine Sea because of that conflict regarding the damages caused. In fact, while we build consensus and cooperation in determining the resources that are in there in the West Philippine Sea, we can be able to really also make them realize, or we can get the benefit of determining the data and then ensure the valuation and determine joint actions with them," she said.

The ecosystem, she said, does not recognize territorial disputes, so the Philippines should have discussions with China.

Source: <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/194400/ph-assessing-cost-of-damage-by-chinas-reclamation-in-wps>





# DENR defers Boracay waste projects

Published 4 hours ago on March 22, 2021 02:30 AM

By [Jun Aguirre](#)



BORACAY — San Miguel Corporation (SMC) is eyeing more projects for this resort island based on documents the company presented during the Boracay Island inter-agency task force (BIATF) principals' meeting here.

Among the projects in the pipeline are the 17-kilometer solid waste and sewage conveyance and the bulk water pipe conveyance systems.

The undertakings are lumped together under the Boracay Environmental Infrastructure Project, which aims to provide a sustainable environment program to address solid and liquid waste management issues.

However, Secretary Roy Cimatu of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered the deferment of projects to see if they will “contribute or compliment our rehabilitation programs in the island.”

The SMC projects have been approved by local environment committees.

Cimatu chairs the BIATF which was created to spearhead the rehabilitation of the resort island dubbed as one of the best in the world.

The government closed Boracay for six months in 2018 to allow it to recover from the despoliation caused by untrammled tourism activities.

Prior to the closure, the water surrounding the island was found to have high levels of coliforms.

In 2019, SMC proposed to build a bridge linking Boracay to the main island of Aklan, but the project was opposed by several stakeholders since it was seen to bring in more tourists than the island can handle.

“The Boracay bridge project proposal is still there. We are still awaiting results of the study of its possible environmental impact,” Cimatu said.



**M**anila Mayor Isko Moreno was talking crap.

"In the days of yore, in squatter areas like ours, we were 'wrapper boys'", he snorted.

In the cheerful part of the crowd he was addressing, someone laughed — a bark almost, the kind that felt good and hurt at the same time.

"What you'd do is you get a newspaper, and carefully lay it out beneath you. When that's done..."

He demonstrated the next step by packing the imaginary thing into a creative

a cowboy might a lasso before he flicked it off his finger.

"And that's just one way to go," Mr. Moreno said.

It's easy to figure where he's getting at, if you happen to pass through the anals of Manila. Somewhere not very far from some narrow road traversing a shantytown is a murky pool of water, with a view of someone directing his lower business end to the river, squat-style (perhaps the reason they're called "squatters"), thinking too hard or just staring blankly for effect.

These are mostly children, naked as the day they were born unlike the Chinese who have

with a slit on the rear.

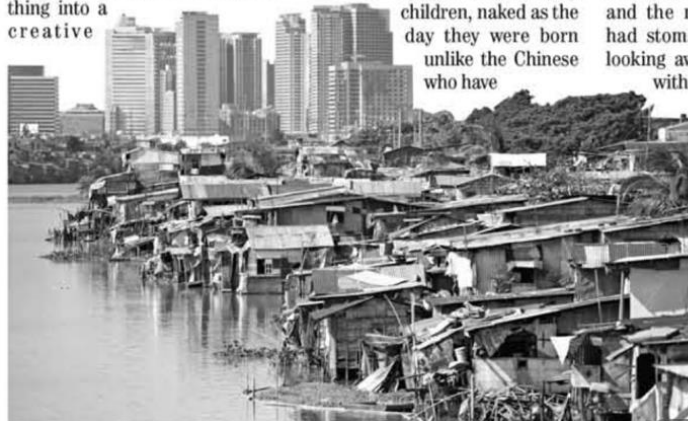
If you live in a squatter house with no access to toilet and running water, the wrong question to ask is "Where are you going to put that?" Perhaps the right question to ask, it seems, is "Where aren't you going to put that?"

Leave the creeks be. What overrides everything for most is that they don't shit where they eat. At least that's the argument.

Mr. Moreno was installed in office with a vow to rid Manila of the unsavory connotation that makes the tourists skip Manila, and the mire his predecessors had stomached to live with by looking away, distracting people with other grand plans that

are easier to discuss in polite company. In one fell swoop, Moreno barreled into the city's besmirched streets to make the space flow, and manicured Manila history lawns.

Then the marching orders to revive Manila Bay began in earnest. What the local government



rehabilitate the polluted waterway.

Open defecation is a worthy place for discourse. Weed it out straight at the source.

A recent Social Weather Station survey suggests that 4 percent of Philippine households still do not have toilets. That's the whole country. Unsure of Manila's share, the high levels of fecal coliform bacteria in Manila Bay, the potty in the fecal potluck, could be a decent proxy for its magnitude.

Recently, the city government and the Environment and Natural Resources department (DENR) ventured into a mission: install portable toilets in Manila's informal settlers' households, with the initiative of the British Embassy and the funding of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Four-hundred Loowatt toilets will be installed in these houses, which huddle around Manila Bay's main tributaries.

It employs a container-based sanitation system with a waterless film flush, eliminating the need of water pipes or connection to sewerage systems.

The toilets do not just prevent feces from reaching the body of water, but make productive Manila citizens out of the beneficiaries

of civilization.

"This, I always say to you," Mr. Moreno said in his speech, "there is dignity in being poor by eliminating filth in our lifestyle".

Amen, Mr. Moreno. All that is filthy is meant to be eliminated — and discarded into proper places.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu stressed that these toilets are only a makeshift solution to the city's pollution problems, which can be addressed long-term with the construction of a sewerage system and relocation.

**"This, I always say to you," Mr. Moreno said in his speech, "there is dignity in being poor by eliminating filth in our lifestyle".**

Manila Bay is a far-cry from the sad state of affairs it was in since the DENR rallied the massive cleanup

goes without saying what miracles you can do with political will. If Jesus could turn water into wine, Filipinos can turn shit into a world-class destination.





# Celebrate International Day of Forests – March 21

By DENR-8Published on March 21, 2021

TACLOBAN CITY, March 21, -- International Day of Forests, March 21, highlights the importance of forests to people and their vital role in poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, and food security.

Observed this year with the theme “Forest Restoration: A path to recovery and well-being,” the celebration promotes the valuable benefits of forests in terms of human health, food security, environmental and climatic condition, provision of green jobs, stakeholder engagement, and healing.

In Region VIII, the Department of Environment and Natural and Resources (DENR) promotes the importance of forests by improving the remaining unproductive, denuded, and degraded forestlands through the Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP).

DENR VIII Regional Executive Director Tirso P. Parian Jr. disclosed that in 2020 alone, the DENR in partnership with local stakeholders produced a total of 2,612,189 planting materials and developed 4,021 hectares ENGP plantation. The ENGP also provided jobs to 69 Forest Extension Officers and more members of people’s organizations and local communities last year.

Director Parian also added that in order to encourage wider stakeholders’ engagement in forest restoration, the Department is now directly involving families as immediate beneficiaries and implementers of the Enhanced National Greening Program.

“Restoring our degraded forests is possible if we work hand in hand and contribute to greening efforts in any way we can”, RED Parian said.

“The advocacy of the International Day of Forests reminds us that every tree counts. Let us take part in this celebration and be reminded that our health and well-being depends so much on the condition of our forests. Healthy forests is a formidable shield against our changing climate and the threats that comes with it,” he stressed.

The United Nations General Assembly in 2012 proclaimed March 21 as the International Day of Forests to celebrate and raise awareness on the importance of all types of forests. It encourages countries to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns. (Maita Sugang/DENR-8)



# DENR-CENRO Palo engages over 120 families for greening program

By DENR-8Published on March 21, 2021

TACLOBAN CITY, March 21 -- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is now adopting the "family approach" as one of the modes in implementing the Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP).

Under this program, families are allowed to establish forest plantations composed of timber and non-timber species like rattan. Within production zones, beneficiary families can also establish agroforestry plantations composed of timber, non-timber, and high-value crops such as coffee, cacao, rubber, and other fruit trees, provided that the area must be planted with more forestry species than high-value crops.

"In adopting the family approach, the families themselves will directly benefit from the program. Implementing this approach is guided by Technical Bulletin No. 30 issued by the Forest Management Bureau (FMB)," says Forester Crisostomo E. Badeo Jr., Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) of Palo.

Technical Bulletin No. 30 was issued by the FMB to facilitate the participation of families in the National Greening Program as partners of the Department when developing plantation or rehabilitating qualified areas.

Recently CENRO Palo, identified 122 families as beneficiaries of this program. They will be planting an aggregate area of 763 hectares with different commodities. This is divided into 200 hectares for bamboo trees, 63 hectares for fruit-bearing trees and another 469 hectares for indigenous species.

"We encourage the family-beneficiaries to put to heart the implementation of this program and for our part, the DENR commits to provide the technical and financial assistance as long as your claim is valid and with complete requirements. Let us help each other on this program," says Moises de la Cruz, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer of Leyte who affixed his signature on the LOAs for the Department. (Maita Reina Sucgang/DENR-8)



# DENR identifies tree planting sites, seedlings for LTFRB franchise applicants

By DENR-8Published on March 21, 2021

TACLOBAN CITY, March 21 -- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has identified potential tree planting sites in the region for those who will be complying with a recent policy of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) in support to government's greening program.

The LTFRB, in its Memorandum Circular issued onlast November 20, 2020, requires operators of public utility vehicles who will apply for an issuance or renewal of Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) to plant one tree for every unit applied for.

Per directive from the DENR-Forest Management Bureau, the regional office has drawn up a list of potential areas per province and the seedlings to be planted. A total of 7, 177 hectares were identified in around fifty eight (58) municipalities.

"The potential areas identified were the sites with established plantations under the National Greening Program (NGP) with low survival rates. These will be replaced by the seedlings that will be planted by the franchise applicants from the LTFRB," says Forester Mirasol Melgazo, Forest Management Specialist II.

"The applicants are advised to coordinate with their respective Community Environment and Natural Resources Offices (CENROs) for the planting site and the appropriate seedlings to be planted. They are likewise advised to secure their own planting materials which will not be provided by the DENR" added Melgazo.

The LTFRB Circular requires the operators to coordinate with the concerned local government unit where they hold business or the concerned DENR office on the area allowed for tree-planting activity and shall secure proof of compliance from the LGU or DENR. Said proof and corresponding photographs shall be attached to their application for issuance or extension of CPC. Failure to attach said requirement shall cause non-acceptance of their application.

"We welcome this laudable initiative of the LTFRB which supports the greening program of the government. May this practice become a habit for everyone even if not required by any government agency," says Regional Executive Director, Tirso P. Parian Jr. (Maita Reina Sucgang/DENR-8)



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GO Bulacan

March 20 at 4:18 PM · 🌐

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The deforestation in Sierra Madre has stopped the benefits of the National Greening Program (NGP), as said by experts who monitored satellite data to evaluate the results of the government's major reforestation project.

According to the scientists from the University of the Philippines (UP) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the United States, the consistent forest loss amid reforestation projects stressed the importance to enact environmental laws to protect the country's forests.

The study indicated that despite the deforestation lessened from 2011 to 2015, it increased from 2016 to 2018, which led to "no significant gain" from the NGP.

"While there is an effort to reforest, we saw that deforestation continues and its rate is higher," Dr. Gay Jane Perez, one of the study's authors and the deputy director of the UP Institute for Environmental Science and Meteorology, said.

"Hence, it sort of cancels [the reforestation] out," he added.

Through satellite data, researchers saw a slight increase in deforestation in 2009 and 2019, followed by a declining trend in 2014.

"These results are disturbing since the goal of a very visible program like [the] NGP that is intended to do reforestation were being negated concurrently by deforestation activities that are likely illegal and executed by unscrupulous entrepreneurs and other entities," as stated in the study.

With this, the researchers underscored the importance of continuously monitoring the seedlings being planted under the NGP to ensure their development.

Source: Jhesset O. Enano/Inquirer.net

📌 Forest Foundation Philippines

#GoBulacan



## SIERRA MADRE DEFORESTATION CANCELS GAINS OF GREENING PROJECT

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## Let forestry be our future

March 21, 2021 | 7:01 pm

**Introspective** By Calixto V. Chikiamco



FREEPIK

On Oct. 27, 2019, I came out with a *BusinessWorld* article, “Why Not Forestry?,” arguing that forestry development should be a national priority and should be a focus for generating jobs, protecting the environment, and addressing the insurgency.

Forestry development had been neglected far too long. Nay, not just neglected but abandoned and subjected to all sorts of wrong policies to the extent that the country is now importing most of its wood requirements where once it used to be a major exporter. What a waste and lost opportunity!

Being a tropical country, the Philippines could be a major wood producer and exporter. As a Finnish expert said, Finland, a wood superpower in Europe, can only produce five to 15 cubic meters of wood per hectare while the Philippines could very well produce 100 cubic meters of wood per hectare. We have the climate and the geography but have chosen to waste what God has given us with wrong-headed man-made policies and an uncertain property rights regime.

One of these wrong policies, formulated during the time of former President Aquino, was a total log ban. It can be argued that the government is a poor steward of the forest and that the private sector has better incentives to sustain the forests with the right incentives. Moreover, the other problem with that policy was that it didn’t make a distinction between natural forests and planted forests.

In other words, the regulatory overreach was applied even to what normally would be tree farms. Permits would be required for everything — to plant, to inventory, to harvest, to transport. The result was more extortion and difficulty in doing business. Also, wood processing plants were given only short licenses to operate, with threats of raids and shutdowns, causing tremendous uncertainty among investors. As a result, in the CARAGA region, the number of wood processing plants fell from 23 to three, causing demand for trees to fall, impoverishing tree farmers and contributing to the unrest in the uplands.

However, I’m pleased to report that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) under Secretary Roy Cimatu has seen the light, and, due to the support of several sectors, has issued DAO (Department Administrative Order) 2020-18, titled “Promoting Tree Plantation Development and Liberalizing Harvesting and Transport of Planted Trees and Tree Derivatives for Inclusive Growth and Development.”

The DAO liberalizes the rules on tree plantation, from inventorying and transport, allows qualified foresters to make certifications, and encourages tree farmers to integrate and set up their own wood processing plants.



This DAO is a good first step in attracting more private investments in tree plantation. However, for the forestry sector to truly boom and see the reforestation of millions of hectares of denuded lands, the uncertainty over property rights must be settled. Investment in forestry is truly long term — it takes anywhere from nine to 20 years, depending on the species, to grow trees to maturity. However, no investor in his right mind will invest if just before harvesting, he would not be allowed to harvest. His property rights must be secure.

The first problem is that the DAO doesn't have the stability of a law. It could very well be that the next DENR Secretary may reverse the Department Administrative Order. Therefore, a new law must be passed to codify the DAO and provide assurances to investors that the policies won't be easily reversed.

The other huge problem is that there's a giant cloud of uncertainty governing rights in forestlands. For one thing, the government has been issuing forest tenurial instruments — IFMAs (Integrated Forest Management Agreements), Community-based Forest Agreement (CBFA), Socialized Forest Management Agreement, Private Land Timber Permit — right and left but there's no central registry of those tenurial instruments. For another, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples has also been issuing Certificate of Ancestral Domain (CAD) titles with no survey and no due diligence on existing rights over the same area. Imagine, you are an investor and tree plantation owner, and then suddenly there's this ex-military claiming to be from this and that tribe brandishing his CAD title and staking a right over your plantation. You will flee like Speedy Gonzales and abandon the farm to the elements.

What is happening now in the uplands is property rights mayhem, triggering conflicts. In the process, there's no development and no livelihood, but rather conflicts and unrest. This is one big reason why the NPA has moved into the uplands and is actively recruiting among the *Iumads*. The agrarian unrest that used to stalk the plains of Luzon has been calmed by the land reform program, but social unrest, because of the government's mishandling of property rights in forestry, has moved into the uplands.

One solution, according to attorney Erwin Tiamson, former head of the Land Management Bureau and a property rights lawyer, is the establishment of a forest cadastre. While a cadastre exists for agricultural and alienable lands in the country, administered by the Lands Registration Authority under the Department of Justice, no such system exists for forest lands. A cadastre is a comprehensive record of all rights, claims, and ownership over a property, in this case, the forest. While theoretically the government owns all forest lands, in reality, it has been using tenurial instruments given to communities and individuals over forest lands and CAD titles as well. CAD titles are qualified titles, i.e., their validity is subject to prior rights, but the holders treat them as absolute.

If a forestry cadastre exists, the whole world would know who has claims over what. It makes forest tenurial instruments bankable because there will be an official public record of all claims and titles. Financial institutions will have access to information to weigh financial risk.

According to Mr. Tiamson, "In addition to the establishment of a forest cadastre, some means of adjudicating claims must also be established in order to resolve conflicting rights. Conflict of rights in forest lands caused by the different policies and issuance of different tenure instruments had caused uncertainty that paralyzed economic activities in the forest. Courts should be the last resort as these are expensive and time-consuming. As the absolute owner of forestlands, the government must be able to adjudicate the claims without judicial intervention."

Another possible temporary solution prior to the establishment of a forestry cadastre is for the government to pinpoint certain areas and declare them special forest economic development zones. These zones must be cleared by the government of any conflicting claims so that investors can just come in and plant trees.





The future doesn't belong only to the IT industry, but to forestry as well. Why? Climate change is making forests more critical in environmental sustainability. Forests are carbon sinks, capturing large swaths of carbon emissions. With the US rejoining the Climate Pact, the trading in carbon credits is expected to accelerate. Forests, including planted forests, will become more valuable for the carbon credits that they will generate.

Moreover, forests, for enabling the conservation of water, are vital to agriculture and to life itself. Forest regeneration is also a way to protect the entire planet from future pandemics because denudation exposes the general population to viruses from wild animals which it comes into contact with.

As for fighting rural insurgency, instead of the government spending P16 billion to fund the National Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict (NTF-ELAC), it should instead focus on developing the forestry sector and generating livelihood for upland dwellers.

When we in the Foundation for Economic Freedom met with the Board of Investments (BoI) to discuss putting tree plantation under the Investment Priorities Plan, the BoI officials pointed out that there's a worldwide shift from plastic packaging, which is non-biodegradable, toward paper packaging and cartons. However, paper comes from trees, but we don't have enough trees to produce pulp and paper for our own needs, much more, for export.

Let our government leaders, from the President on down, start focusing on forestry. Not just on tourism or rice or car manufacturing. Let forestry be our future.

Calixto V. Chikiamco is a board director of the Institute for Development and Econometric Analysis.

[idea.introspectiv@gmail.com](mailto:idea.introspectiv@gmail.com)

[www.idea.org.ph](http://www.idea.org.ph)



## Volunteers plant 600 trees in Angeles City

By Frederick Silverio

March 21, 2021

As part of the celebration of Women's Month, 113 female city hall employees and volunteers planted 600 trees at the Barangay Sapangbato Watershed on Friday.

The tree-planting activity was also in line with the ongoing programs of the city government for the environment and the rehabilitation of the Sapangbato Watershed.

Mayor Carmelo Lazatin Jr. recognized the significant role of women in the development of our society, particularly in the protection and the preservation of the environment.

“Kinikilala natin ang mahalagang kontribusyon ng ating mga kababaihan sa pag-unlad ng ating lipunan, lalo na sa pangangalaga ng kalikasan (We recognize the invaluable contribution of women towards the progress of our society, especially in the caring of the environment),” Lazatin said.

The group planted narra, molave, dau, poay and other fruit-bearing trees donated by the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office and Community Environment and Natural Resources Office.

In recognition of their hard work for the day, the participants brought home a “tree certificate” and Beatederm products, including soap, skin-soothing oil, balm and Belle Powder.

As part of the city's safety and health protocols against Covid-19, all the participants in the tree planting activity underwent rapid antigen testing a day before the event and were all declared negative from the virus.

Health protocols were also observed during the tree planting event.



# BETTER THAN COCONUTS, PAPAYA, AND MAHOGANY

Published March 22, 2021, 12:12 AM

by [Jaime Laya](#)

Wala Lang

(PART I)

Salad bowls, giant spoons and forks, man-in-a-barrel, anyone? Our handicraft shops have plenty. Carved from our best woods, they attest not only to our ignorance of the value of what we have but also to our low regard for our natural endowment.



Native forest tree seedlings ready for shipment and planting, hopefully to flourish on a Batangas mountainside.

The late Osmundo Esguerra, master wood artist, once told me that David Linley (world-renowned furniture maker and nephew of Queen Elizabeth II) was interested in his marvelous boxes but wanted proof that they were made from farmed and not from virgin forest wood. That was the end of that.

It is tragic how forests are slashed and burned, cleared to make way for camote and maize; how forest protectors are murdered, and cultural communities ejected. Much of our forests, including supposedly protected national parks and watersheds, are defenseless against loggers, both legal and illegal. The former generally spare nothing, not even the rarest of trees and, if at all they replant, they do so with the most common varieties, including aliens hostile to our native species. For their part, illegal loggers single out the same rare trees precisely because they're more valuable. The late Gina Lopez, as DENR secretary, tried to do something but, regretfully, failed.

In the West, beautiful woods are traditionally sliced thinly to veneer furniture made with a carcass of common wood. Here, advertisements are common (check Facebook's Buy and Sell Sites) touting plebeian benches, wastebaskets hollowed out of large blocks, and floor planks of our most beautiful, endangered and theoretically protected kamagong, molave, tindalo, and other super rare woods. Homeowners and builders of yore had a wide selection and they were choosy.

A Makati house I know has wood recycled from the homeowner's 1890s home formerly in Trozo (now part of Santa Cruz, Manila). The sala is floored with three-foot-wide dark red ipil framed by light brown molave planks; the dining room floor is wine-dark tindalo; and bedrooms have narra and yakal. The front door is a solid ipil plank almost four feet wide. Exterior walls are ipil panels.

My own pride and joy is a corridor of wide supa planks that I found in a Laon-Laon Street pre-loved wood dealer. It's dark red with narrow yellow stripes. Naturally oily, supa is smooth and shiny even when unwaxed.

Furniture were works of art made from carefully selected and matched woods taking into account durability, beauty, grain, color, and other characteristics. Woods of choice were black kamagong and dark red tindalo. They were lightly waxed to show off the wood, unlike today's practice of tinting front, top, and sides in walnut brown.



Fate has taken me to other fields so to speak but as a kid, I wanted to be a farmer. That's why already thinking of retirement 25 years ago, I bought me a couple of hectares of Batangas hillside already planted with coconuts, Bolivian mahogany, and the goliath of a pajo mango tree.

My experience has been mixed. The coconuts were old and produced nuts reluctantly while the pajo was good for pickling, not earning. Fate also zapped the mango tree in a typhoon and killed off the coconuts in some pandemic. I sold the coconut lumber but their replacements—dwarf coconuts, papaya, rambutan, and calamansi—were not doing well. My caretaker blamed the “mainitnasiñgaw” of the mahogany trees. I therefore chopped down the mahoganies and sold the lumber. I made more money on the coconut and mahogany trees dead than alive.

I had half-decided to proceed with more dwarf coconuts and rambutan when an advertisement popped up on my computer screen. A Facebook post of the Philippine Native Hardwood Tree Seedlings Site announced, “RARE & HARD TO FIND PHILIPPINE NATIVE HARDWOOD TREE SEEDLINGS FOR SALE !!!” followed by an enumeration of 31 strange names like malibato, manggachapui, malabayabas, and urung.

It was a “Eureka” moment and I messaged the Facebook site immediately for a price list, method of payment, and delivery arrangements. It was action *agad*. That was the other Saturday and on Wednesday Geff's Nursery of Sariaya, Quezon delivered to my place in Batangas, foot-high seedlings of about 60 different Philippine native trees.

(To be continued)

*Comments are cordially invited, addressed to [walangwala888@gmail.com](mailto:walangwala888@gmail.com)*



## WHAT'S LEFT OF IT?

By The Manila Times

March 22, 2021



The International Day of the Forests aims to raise awareness on saving and protecting what remains of the world's forests on March 21, 2021. In Cavite, however, celebration was muted as top tourist draw Buhay Forest in Magallanes town was declared off-limits to nonresidents of the province from March 23 to April 6, 2021, over a surge in Covid-19 cases the past few days. PHOTO BY DENNIS ABRINA



# 'Boracay bubble' planned for these specific foreign tourists

Published March 19, 2021, 9:00 PM

by [Alexandria Dennise San Juan](#)

How about a "travel bubble" for Boracay-bound tourists?

This set up is being eyed by the provincial government of Aklan and the Department of Tourism (DOT) in hopes of being able to welcome back foreign tourists to Boracay Island—the province's top attraction—within the year.

Aklan Governor Florencio Miraflores said the local government has been working with the DOT for the possibility getting South Korean and Chinese tourists inside such bubble.

"However, this is still subject to the travel protocols of the concerned countries, the Philippines and our prospective foreign tourists," Miraflores said in a recent press conference.

As vaccines against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are being rolled out around the globe, Miraflores is optimistic that international arrivals will resume "anytime within the year."

"Our Korean market is actually already preparing to come back. I was informed that they have been negotiating with the hotels in Boracay for their eventual return," Miraflores shared.

"But of course, this is still subject to the BIATF (Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force) rules and regulations especially on DOT national for the entry of tourists," he explained.

While discussions on the possibility of allowing foreign tourists in the country have yet to take place, domestic tourist arrivals in Boracay Island have been on the rise the past few weeks.

According to Miraflores, the increase in the number of local tourists coming to the island is noticeable especially when compared to when it first opened in October last year.

"Before, when we opened in October, we had around 40 or, at most, a hundred tourists coming to the island. Right now, the statistics show that we are registering almost a thousand tourist arrivals a day — mostly coming from Metro Manila," the provincial governor said.

"We hope to sustain this in the near future especially now that the vaccines are here already. We hope that soon, the number of tourists that we have been entertaining before (the pandemic) will come back," Miraflores added.

The BIATF allowed on Thursday, March 18, the use of cheaper and faster saliva-based COVID-19 test as one of the entry requirements for tourists bound for Boracay.

The move is seen to expedite the recovery of the tourism industry on the island, which is under a modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) — the most relaxed quarantine status in the country.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/19/boracay-bubble-planned-for-these-specific-foreign-tourists/>



# City-wide cleanup yields over 13T tons of garbage

By [Sanden J. Anadia](#)(The Freeman) - March 22, 2021 - 12:00am



Reymar Hijara, subcommittee chairperson for operations at Cebu City Coastal Management Task Force (CMTF), said at least 2,700 volunteers, City Hall employees, barangay workers, and personnel from private firms and civic organizations joined the simultaneous three-hour cleanup in 20 coastal and riverside areas.

CEBU, Philippines — A total of 13,615 metric tons of garbage were hauled from Cebu City waterways during Saturday's cleanup drive.

Reymar Hijara, subcommittee chairperson for operations at Cebu City Coastal Management Task Force (CMTF), said at least 2,700 volunteers, City Hall employees, barangay workers, and personnel from private firms and civic organizations joined the simultaneous three-hour cleanup in 20 coastal and riverside areas.

Some scuba divers also joined the cleanup. They collected garbage in a portion of the Mactan Channel near the South Road Properties (SRP).

Other areas included Tejero Bridge, Guadalupe River, Mahiga Creek, Pasil coast, Bulacao River, SRP coast, and waterways in Sawang Calero and in downtown areas.

He said 70 percent or 9,530.5 metric tons of the collected garbage were plastic bottles and bags.

Bulk of the garbage was collected from the Mahiga Creek and SRP.

With the theme "Clean Cities, Healthy Citizens", the activity is in compliance with city ordinance entitled, "An Ordinance Institutionalizing the Cleanups of Rivers, Natural Waterways and Coastal Areas within the Jurisdiction of the City of Cebu".

The city government conducts cleanup drive quarterly. — **KQD (FREEMAN)**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/cebu-news/2021/03/22/2086128/city-wide-cleanup-yields-over-13t-tons-garbage/amp/>



# 13,615 metric tons of garbage collected during cleanup drive

March 21, 2021

THE Cebu City Coastal Management Task Force (CMTF) collected 13,615 metric tons of garbage during a cleanup drive on Saturday, March 20, 2021.

Reymar Hijara, CMTF subcommittee chairman, said 70 percent of the garbage were composed of plastic products.

Most of the garbage were collected from Mahiga Creek and near the South Road Properties Tower.

He said most of the heavy equipment were deployed in these areas.

They also cleaned the waterways near the Tisa Elementary School and Pahina Central, he said.

They also conducted cleanup activities near Innodata; portion of Kamputhaw River at the Tinago-Tejero Bridge; portion of Kamputhaw River near T. Padilla Market; Ermita coast; Guadalupe River mouth; Pasil coast; Sawang Calero; portion of Guadalupe River near Pahina San Nicolas Barangay Hall; another portion of Guadalupe River near University of San Carlos (USC)-South in Sambag 1; portion of Kamputhaw River at Sudlon Bridge; Arabal River at Kinalumsan Bridge in Mambaling; Alaska, Mambaling; Mananga River at Bulacao upriver portion; Jansen Church in Basak San Nicolas; Hiway 77; Corner F. Jaca St. and White Rd.; Il Corso coast; and Campanario Shoal.

Hijara said around 2,700 volunteers from various government agencies and the private sector participated in the activity.

Hijara said the CMTF will conduct another cleanup in June.

Vice Mayor Michael Rama, in a previous press conference, said activities such as river and coastal cleanups would be held every quarter.

The ordinance entitled "An Ordinance Institutionalizing the Cleanups of Rivers, Natural Waterways and Coastal Areas within the Jurisdiction of the City of Cebu," which Rama authored, was approved by the council on Dec. 2, 2020.

In previous cleanups, the City Government, through the CMTF, collected 41.6 tons of garbage in December, while in September, it collected 163.15 tons of garbage. **(JIL)**





## Brgy. Captain collects residents' garbages while community is under lockdown

[News](#)



A Barangay captain from Manila captured not only the hearts of his constituents but also the netizens after a picture of him collecting garbage on their community surfaced online.

The said official was identified as Chairman Bong Viray of Barangay 374.

According to Facebook user Janeel Basco Abrea who shared the story, the official was knocking on every house in their place to collect their garbage since the residents cannot go out of their home due to community lockdown.

In the photos posted by Abrea, it can be seen that Chairman Viray is pushing a trash bin with a trash bag on the streets so that trash will not pile up in their barangay.

It can also be noticed that residents are following the strict community lockdown because it is only the chairman who is in their evidently clean street.

With this, the residents of Barangay 374 feel very proud of their chairman. Some even proudly exclaimed in the comment section of Abrea's post that their barangay leader is Viray.

Meanwhile, people from other barangay wish that their leader will also do the same kind of initiative to eliminate their problems with proper waste disposal in their respective community.

By E-FilEditor at [March 18, 2021](#)

Source: <https://www.e-storyph.com/2021/03/brgy-captain-collects-residents.html?fbclid=IwAR1P3yMQVwJ5aqTKAPqbS2JCSYWEKyHlrYkSn-ZJ5uSjDIYWtDirrDGN4RY>



## EDC adopts Ormoc for climate resilience

posted March 21, 2021 at 06:20 pm

by [Alena Mae S. Flores](#)

Energy Development Corp. said over the weekend it is adopting Ormoc City through the National Resilience Council and the Carlos P. Romulo Foundation's Adopt-a-City program.

The four parties, in a virtual signing of memorandum of agreement, vowed to work together and leverage each other's capabilities and strengths to help Ormoc become the country's model city for resilience and disaster preparedness.

EDC president and chief operating officer Richard Tantoco committed to keep helping Ormoc become resilient in the wake of worsening climate change.

"Climate change is going to worsen, and we really need to be more and more prepared, which is why we are proud of this partnership with NRC and Ormoc City," Tantoco said.

The agreement includes the formation of a multi-sectoral forest protection task force, the creation of 10 pilot barangay emergency response teams and the rollout of a city-wide disaster risk preparedness and response information campaign.



# WORLD WATER DAY 2021

By The Manila Times

March 22, 2021

## WORLD WATER DAY 2021





# NCR, 4 nearby provinces back to 2-week GCQ until April 4

By Azer Parrocha **March 21, 2021, 7:15 pm**



MANILA – The national government will be imposing additional restrictions in Metro Manila and other areas under general community quarantine (GCQ) status from March 22 to April 4, 2021, Malacañang announced Sunday.

In a virtual presser, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said additional restrictions were approved by President Rodrigo Duterte through Inter-Agency Task Force Resolution No. 104 due to a spike in coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) cases in the country.

Starting Monday, Roque said Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal will be joining Metro Manila under the GCQ classification.

He dismissed as “fake news” that there would be hard lockdown in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces.

“Wala po tayong lockdown. Fake news po yung sinasabi na magkakaroon tayo ng circuit breaker. Hindi po *totoo ‘yan*. Ang Metro Manila po ay manananitili under GCQ kasama po ang mga probinsya ng Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, at Rizal (We won’t have a lockdown. Reports about a circuit breaker lockdown are fake news. That’s not true. Metro Manila will remain under GCQ along with the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal),” he said.

Under IATF Resolution No. 104, he said only essential travel into and out of Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal will be allowed.

Roque described this as a “travel bubble” where residents will only be allowed to travel within their respective provinces.

“*Bawal po ang pagbibiyaha papunta sa Metro Manila at mga probinsya ng Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal at bawal din po lumabas ng Metro Manila at ng Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal. Magkakaroon po tayo ng parang bubble dito sa NCR at probinsya ng Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal (Traveling into and out of Metro Manila and the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal will be prohibited. We will have a sort of bubble in NCR, and the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal),”* he said.

Travel of authorized persons outside their residences (APORs) such as essential workers, health and emergency frontline services personnel; government officials and government frontline personnel; duly-authorized humanitarian assistance actors; persons traveling for medical or humanitarian reasons; persons going to the airport for travel abroad, returning overseas Filipinos and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) will be unimpeded for as long as they show their respective work identification cards.

Individuals crossing zones for work or business and going back home will also be allowed to travel to and from the said areas.

“*Kung kayo ay uuwi, essential travel po ‘yun. Kailangan lang magpakita ng ID kung saan ka talaga nakatira (If you’re going back home that’s essential travel. All you need to do is show your ID to prove that you live there),”* he said.



He expressed hope the public would understand that additional restrictions in the said areas were being done “for the common good.”

#### Public transpo retains capacity

Despite these additional restrictions, Roque said public transportation will retain current capacity subject to minimum health standards.

“*Wala pong pagbabawas sa* public transportation (There will be no limit to public transportation),” he said.

Biking and walking, he said, will also be encouraged.

Scheduled flights will not be canceled, however, he said non-essential travel including that for tourism, will be prohibited.

#### Public gatherings limited

All public gatherings, including religious gatherings, will be prohibited but weddings, baptism, and funerals will be allowed but must observe a 10-person venue capacity.

Current operational capacities of essential and non-essential services and industries will remain.

However, face-to-face meetings, group meals in workplaces will be prohibited. Instead, work-from-home and virtual meetings are encouraged.

Roque said the IATF resolution also enjoins the private sector to adopt similar alternative working arrangements as those in place in the executive branch of government such as operating on a 30 to 50 capacity.

#### Only outdoor dining allowed

As for dining, Roque said only outdoor dining will be allowed in areas under GCQ while indoor dining will be strictly prohibited.

“*Pagdating po sa mga* restaurants, ang papayagan lang po yung mga outdoor dining (When it comes to restaurants, we will only allow those with outdoor dining),” he said.

Outdoor dining must observe a maximum of 50 percent venue capacity.

Take out and delivery is encouraged, he added.

#### Wear masks at home

Although the economy will stay open, Roque said the IATF resolution will require persons below 18-years-old and above 65-years-old, those with comorbidities, and pregnant women to remain inside their residences at all times.

The IATF resolution also advises the wearing of face mask at home especially when living with elderly and vulnerable.

Accepting of visitors outside immediate family or household is strongly discouraged.

Operations of driving schools, traditional cinemas and video and interactive game arcades, libraries, archives, museums, and cultural centers, limited social events at accredited tourism establishments and limited tourism attractions will be temporarily suspended except open-air tourism attractions. (PNA)



# Non-essential travel banned into, from NCR, Cavite, Rizal, Bulacan, Laguna

**Published** March 21, 2021 4:50pm

By JON VIKTOR D. CABUENAS, GMA News

The banning of non-essential travel into and from Metro Manila, Rizal, Bulacan, Cavite, and Laguna were among the sterner COVID-19 restrictions President Rodrigo Duterte approved for the capital region and its surrounding areas.

The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) on Sunday endorsed the implementation of the new regulations, which were prompted by the surge in cases, on the National Capital Region (NCR), Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal from Monday, March 22, until April 4, 2021.

On top of the general community quarantine (GCQ), Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque Jr. said the following restrictions will be put in place in these areas:

- Only individuals aged 18 to 65 will be allowed outside. Those aged below 18 and over 65, and those with health risks, pregnant, or with immunodeficiencies are required to remain in residences. Person over 65 may be allowed outside for non-contact sports and outdoor exercise. Persons with disability may likewise be allowed outside, but also for therapy upon the presentation of a prescription or a PWD ID.
- Only essential travel in and out of the areas will be allowed. Public transportation will be operational, subject to guidelines of the Department of Transportation (DOTr). The use of active transportation, such as bicycles, shall be promoted.
- Visiting other households is strongly discouraged. Wearing of face masks is encouraged even at home.
- Common curfew to be imposed from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Workers, cargo vehicles, and public transportation exempted.
- All mass gatherings, including religious gatherings, will be prohibited. Face-to-face meetings are highly discouraged, virtual meetings encouraged.
- Weddings, baptisms, and funeral services limited to 10 persons.
- Operational capacities of essential and non-essential services/industries will be maintained, subject to safety protocols and minimum public health standards, with 30-50% operational or on-site capacity where applicable. Personal care service establishments are limited to 50% of venue capacity.
- Dine-in restaurants, cafes, and establishments limited to delivery. Take-out and al fresco dining allowed. However, engineering and administrative controls, such as dividers, limiting diners to two per table sitting diagonally and a seat apart, is required for al fresco dining. Also, al fresco dining is limited to 50% of capacity.
- Driving schools, traditional cinemas, video, and interactive game arcades, libraries, archives, museums, and cultural centers, limited social events at DOT-accredited establishments temporarily suspended. Open-air tourist attractions exempted.
- Cockfighting and cockpit operations suspended under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ).

Also, authorized persons outside of their residences would be limited to:



- essential workers, who would need to show their work ID
- health and emergency frontline services personnel
- government officials and government frontline personnel
- duly-authorized humanitarian assistance actors
- persons traveling for medical or humanitarian reasons
- persons going to the airport for travel abroad
- anyone crossing zones for work or business and going back home, and
- ROFS and OFWs

Meanwhile, the IATF also directed the Department of the Interior and Local Government to ensure that all local governments enforce isolation and quarantine measures, and minimum public health standards.

Specifically, LGUs were instructed to:

- distribute face masks and shields, especially to the vulnerable sectors, with the Barangay Health Emergency Response Teams and other barangay officials to monitor and ensure compliance of households, and
- implement other alternative working arrangements, with the Labor Department and Trade Department to monitor compliance of workplaces to minimum health standards.

LGUS were also instructed to activate the following surge responses:

- actively find cases in barangays with the highest cases using the Coordinated Operations to Defeat the Epidemic visits
- increase and improve facility based quarantine and isolation through Oplan Kalinga
- ensure appropriate patient care navigation through the use of One Hospital Command Center, Oplan Kalinga, and local government unit call centers with referral of mild and moderate cases to available temporary treatment and monitoring facilities
- Increase dedicated beds to surge capacity {30% for private and 50 % for public) to increase health system capacity.

The measures were signed by Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Alexi Nograles on Saturday, March 20 when the Philippines reported **7,999 new confirmed cases of COVID-19** its highest daily tally to date. This brings the total to 656,056 which includes 80,642 active cases; 562,484 recoveries; and 12,930 deaths. — **DVM, GMA News**

Source: [https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/780566/sterner-covid-19-restrictions-imposed-on-metro-manila-nearby-provinces/story/?utm\\_source=GMANews&utm\\_medium=Facebook](https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/780566/sterner-covid-19-restrictions-imposed-on-metro-manila-nearby-provinces/story/?utm_source=GMANews&utm_medium=Facebook)



# PHL says 200 Chinese ships at disputed reef

By [RENE ACOSTA](#) and [THE ASSOCIATED PRESS](#)

MARCH 22, 2021



Photo of a Chinese vessel from the national task force for the West Philippine Sea

NATIONAL Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said on Sunday that eight Chinese fishing vessels were spotted in the Pagasa Island area last week just as the government reported the presence of at least 220 Chinese maritime militia vessels near Bataraza, Palawan.

The military said it was continuing to monitor the presence of the Chinese ships in the country's maritime waters as the government mulls over its response, including the possible lodging of a diplomatic protest by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The presence of Chinese fishing vessels at Pagasa, just 50 nautical miles from the Whitsun Reef where the Chinese maritime militias were spotted, was disclosed by Esperon, and it came just two days after the Philippine Navy commissioned into service its newest frigate.

Whitsun Reef is located 175 nautical miles from Bataraza, Palawan.

Esperon said the eight Chinese fishing vessels were seen in Pagasa on Tuesday last week, but he could not say whether the fishing vessels are still there. He said they were considering actions over the vessels' presence in the country's maritime waters.

Over the weekend, the Philippine Coast Guard reported the presence of the 220 maritime militia vessels at the Whitsun Reef on March 7, a report that was confirmed by the National Task Force on the West Philippine Sea, also headed by Esperon.

The large numbers of Chinese boats are "a concern due to the possible overfishing and destruction of the marine environment, as well as risks to safety of navigation," the task force said, although it added that the vessels were not fishing when sighted.

## Frigate commissioned

The sightings of the Chinese vessels at the reef and in Pagasa came as BRP Antonio Luna (FF 151), the last of the two brand new and missile-capable frigate ordered from South Korea, was commissioned into the service of the Navy on Friday.

"As we christen and commission the FF 151, we expect to raise our capacity to protect our nation's vast maritime interests. We also expect to improve our approaches in securing our sovereignty, especially in the South China Sea," said Acting Navy Flag Officer in Command Rear Admiral Adeluis Bordado during the commissioning.

Military spokesman Major Gen. Edgard Arevalo said the Armed Forces of the Philippines has sent assets to the areas where the Chinese ships are seen, both to validate and document their presence.

"The AFP's Western Command has dispatched Air Force and Navy assets to conduct air and maritime sovereignty patrols to further validate the report," Arevalo said on Sunday.

"Appropriate reports were made and forwarded to other agencies of government through the General Headquarters of such monitored number of CMM. These reports are made bases of filing appropriate actions not limited to filing diplomatic protests," he added.





Arevalo said the military “will not renege” on its commitment to “protect and defend our maritime interest within the bounds of the law.”

## Beijing: No comment

Chinese Embassy officials did not immediately issue any comment. China, the Philippines and four other governments have been locked in a tense territorial standoff over the resource-rich and busy waterway for decades.

Critics have repeatedly called out President Duterte, who has nurtured friendly ties with Beijing since taking office in 2016, for not standing up to China’s aggressive behavior and deciding not to immediately seek Chinese compliance with an international arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing’s historic claims to virtually the entire sea. China has refused to recognize the 2016 ruling and continues to defy it.

The arbitration body also ruled that China had breached its duty to respect the traditional fishing rights of Filipinos when Chinese forces blocked them from Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines in 2012. The Philippines, however, could also not deny Chinese fishermen access to Scarborough, according to the ruling. The decision did not specify any other traditional fishing areas within the Philippines’s exclusive zone where fishermen from China and other countries could be allowed to fish.



# DFA files diplomatic protest vs. China over latest incursion in West PH Sea

Published March 21, 2021, 9:39 PM

by [Roy Mabasa](#)

The Philippines has filed a diplomatic protest against China over reports of the alleged presence of about 220 of its militia vessels at Julian Felipe Reef (Whitsun Reef) which is within the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said Sunday night.



Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. (PCOO / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

“Diplomatic protest fired off tonight, can’t wait for first light,” Locsin said in a tweet.

Locsin made this announcement over social media after awaiting an order from National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. who also chairs the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS).

“So recommended by General Esperon this noon by Whats App. I got the coordinates, so to speak. And relayed to my legal artillery, ‘Fire at will.’ Shell should be flying at first light. I don’t usually announce maneuvers but it seems everybody is baring his chest,” the foreign secretary said in another tweet.

Earlier, the country’s top diplomat questioned the authority of the NTF-WPS for issuing a press release over the weekend where it expressed its concern over the latest Chinese intrusion in the Philippines’ EEZ.

“The NTF does not issue press releases. It is a secret group. I’m the trigger and the gun. And I’ve never responded to press releases. The refuge of nobodies,” he said.



## Let's show them!

Baby elephant gives hope for elephant conservation in Indonesia's ASEAN park

By ASEAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY

MARCH 21, 2021



Boni, a female elephant calf, uplifts the spirits of the park personnel of Gunung Leuser National Park and their stakeholders.

The birth of a Sumatran elephant calf within the protected area of Indonesia's **Gunung Leuser National Park** is cause for double celebration, according to conservation advocates, an auspicious timing as the world celebrates International Day of Forests on March 21.

Weighing 69 kg and with a body circumference of 90 cm, a female elephant calf was born at the Special Animal Training Center of GLNP on 1 February 2021.

Indonesia's Director General of Conservation of Natural Resources and Ecosystems (MoEF) Ir. Wiratno named the baby elephant "Boni."

"The baby and the mother Sari are both in good health. We are regularly monitoring their conditions, apart from overseeing the feeding and the mother's vitamin injections", Ir. Jefry Susyafrianto, M.M. head of the GLNP Office, said.

GLNP is a designated ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP) and part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra. Covering an area of about 830,000 hectares, GLNP straddles the border of the provinces of North Sumatra and Aceh.

The national park has a high conservation value as it serves as home to iconic wild animals, such as orangutans, tigers, rhinoceros, leopards and elephants.

### Dwindling population

Under its care, the Special Animal Training Centre of GNLP has nine elephants in total, including Boni and Sari. Sari was among the wild elephants captured in the 1990s as part of the government's efforts to support in situ elephant conservation.

Sumatran elephants have been placed on the list of critically endangered species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List due to their rapidly dwindling population.

It is against Indonesian laws to keep, hunt, trade and smuggle these. According to the Law Number 5 of 1990, which concerns the *Conservation of Living Natural Resources and Ecosystems*, a sentence of five years in prison and a fine of IDR 100,000,000 are meted out on violators.

Before Boni, three elephant calves, namely Christ, Albertina and Eropa, were born in 2015.

"The birth of Boni is very meaningful to the park management and conservation advocates, including our local guides. These recent births demonstrate how the elephants' living environment has significantly improved. We are likewise hopeful this will have a positive contribution to the park's tourism," Susyafrianto said.



Female elephants give birth every five years on average and continue to mate until about the age of 50. Each pregnancy lasts up to 23 months.

## Proper veterinary care

With the assistance of civil society organization **Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation** (VSSWIC) under the Small Grants Programme, a partnership between the **ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity** (ACB) and the German Development Bank (KfW), the GLNP Office is likewise ensuring that the baby elephant is properly cared for and nurtured.

“Special care must be provided to the young, especially because they are at risk of contracting the Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV), which attacks and infects elephants under five years old,” Dr. Muhammad Wahyu, director of VSSWIC, said.

VSSWIC has been helping the park in the routine health monitoring of captive elephants and training of mahouts, or persons tending the elephants.

Last year, the organization conducted an analysis to check cortisol levels in the stools of the elephants in order to determine their stress levels, along with a series of diagnostic tests to detect diseases, such as EEHV and tuberculosis.

“We are happy to hear this news. The timing is auspicious as we celebrate this year’s International Day of Forests on March 21,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

On the International Day of Forests under the theme “Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being,” the ACB is joining the call to raise awareness and recognize the importance of forests to humankind.

“Taking care of the Sumatran elephants’ health at the ASEAN Heritage Park is part of our holistic and integrated approach in protecting and conserving wildlife and their habitats. Caring for Boni highlights wildlife protection as an important aspect of protected area management,” Dr. Lim said.

She explained that the Sumatran elephants as seed dispersers positively contribute to healthy and balanced ecosystems. In forest ecotourism sites like GLNP, protecting wildlife likewise ensures the sustainability of livelihoods for communities, as well.

Image credits: [Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/21/baby-elephant-boni-gives-hope-for-elephant-conservation-in-indonesias-asean-park-as-the-world-celebrates-international-day-of-forests/>

## Canadian opposition pins on tough climate

By [Agence France-Presse](#)

March 21, 2021

**TORONTO:** Canada's opposition leader on Friday (Saturday in Manila) urged his Conservative party to unite behind "new ideas" and stop ignoring climate change if they hope to defeat Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals in looming snap elections.

Erin O'Toole was speaking at a virtual party policy convention — his first since becoming leader last August — attended by 5,500 delegates.

He said the party "has to change" to appeal to a broader electorate, noting that the Tories had lost two elections in the last five years, in part because "voters did not think we were serious about addressing climate change."



Ottawa, Ontario: In this file photo taken on August 25, 2020 Conservative Party of Canada leader Erin O'Toole speaks during a news conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario. Canada's opposition leader on March 19, 2021 urged his Conservative party to unite behind "new ideas" and stop ignoring climate change if they hope to defeat Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals in looming snap elections. AFP PHOTO

"We must present new ideas, not make the same arguments hoping that maybe this time more Canadians will come around to our position," he said, adding that Conservatives can no longer "ignore the reality of climate change."

O'Toole vowed to bring forth a bold new climate plan to replace a federal carbon tax, but offered no details.

He said a Conservative government would provide help for sectors of the economy hardest-hit by Covid-19, build domestic vaccine production capacity, and balance the federal budget within a decade.

Although all of Canada's federal political parties have said they do not want to go to the polls in the midst of a pandemic, speculation about a snap election in May or June has recently ramped up.

According to an Abacus Data poll released Friday, the Liberals have 33-percent support, a 4-point lead over the Conservatives. Smaller parties such as the New Democratic Party (19 percent) and Greens (8 percent) gained backing mostly from younger voters.

Several high-profile Tories, including provincial leaders and party co-founder Peter MacKay were conspicuously absent from the three-day party gathering.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/03/21/news/world/canadian-opposition-pins-on-tough-climate/853842/>



## China, US sanib-pwersa para solusyonan climate change

By Abante News Online — Last updated Mar 21, 2021

NEWS



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Matapos ang naging mainit na pagpupulong sa Alaska, nagkasundo ang United States at China na magtulungan para sa isyu ng climate change.

Ayon sa Xinhua news agency, bubuo ng grupo ang dalawang bansa na siyang tutugon sa mga solusyon para sa climate change.

Batay pa sa ulat, mariing sinabi ng China na wala itong intensyon para makialam sa politika ng US, gayunman giniit nitong hindi dapat makialam ang Amerika sa internal affair ng China sa Taiwan at Hong Kong.

Bukod dito, pinag-usapan pa ng dalawang bansa ang isyu hinggil sa COVID-19 travel at visa policy ng mga journalist ng bawat panig.

Source: <https://www.abante.com.ph/china-us-sanib-pwersa-para-solusyonan-climate-change/>



# World's 3 biggest coal users get ready to burn even more

By [BLOOMBERG NEWS](#)  
MARCH 21, 2021



The world's three biggest consumers of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, are getting ready to boost usage so much that it'll almost be as if the pandemic-induced drop in emissions never happened.

US power plants are going to consume 16 percent more coal this year than in 2020, and then another 3 percent in 2022, the Energy Information Administration said last week. China and India, which together account for almost two-thirds of demand, have no plans to cut back in the near term.

This means higher emissions, a setback for climate action ahead of international talks this year intended to raise the level of ambition from commitments under the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gases. In the US, the gains may undermine President Joe Biden's push to reestablish America as an environmental leader and raise pressure on him to quickly implement his climate agenda.

"We're going to see a really marked increase in emissions," with coal consumption at US power plants returning almost to 2019 levels, said Amanda Levin, policy analyst at the New York-based National Resources Defense Council. But if Biden implements green-energy policies as expected, "we could actually see changes pretty quickly." The US increase stems from higher natural gas prices and the recovery from the pandemic. For China and India, it's a reflection of rising electricity demand that's keeping coal as the dominant source of power generation even as they add vast amounts of solar and wind capacity.

While Biden's Covid stimulus didn't focus on green energy, a pending infrastructure bill is expected to include plans to fulfill his campaign pledges on climate change, making the US best poised to salvage progress in reducing global emissions. Biden has said the US will target carbon neutrality by 2050, and is convening an April meeting that's expected to include China and India.

China's President Xi Jinping surprised the world with his promise last year to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060. India has yet to make any similar commitment.

In China's latest five-year plan announced March 5, Premier Li Keqiang didn't set a hard target for emissions reduction, and said coal would remain a key component of the electricity strategy. More detailed energy plans to be published later in the year could include specific steps on curbing fossil fuel consumption.

While Beijing has reduced coal's share in the nation's energy mix in recent years, total power consumption has risen, so its usage has also climbed. Complicating the picture is that China also has the world's biggest fleet of coal-fired power plants, and more than half of them are less than 10 years old. Because they can run for several more decades, it'll be tough to shift to alternatives.

"All of that installed capacity doesn't go away overnight," said Dennis Wamsted, an analyst for the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Though a recovery in energy-intensive sectors like construction and metal production is currently boosting short-term coal demand, consumption will fall in the years ahead as China acts on climate promises, said Tang Daqian, an associate director at Fitch Bohua.

India too is a very long way from a clean grid, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this month he's ahead of schedule for meeting the initial carbon-reduction pledges under the Paris Agreement, reducing emissions intensity 33 percent to 35 percent from 2005 levels by 2030.



While the country has implemented an ambitious rollout of solar power, coal continues to account for around 70 percent of its electricity generation. Consumption at power plants will rise 10 percent this year, and is set to increase every year through at least 2027, according to Bloomberg Intelligence.

In the US, coal is rebounding after the coronavirus pandemic curtailed electricity usage and cut demand for the fuel by 19 percent last year. It's also the result of gains in natural gas prices, which are up more than 40 percent from a year ago. When gas gets more expensive, utilities will often start burning more coal to bring down costs, even though it puts out twice the emissions. The EIA expects gas prices to remain high into 2022, pointing to strong demand for coal next year.

In the longer term, coal's prospects are bleaker. While top users' consumption might be rising in 2021, emerging markets that once seemed like the brightest spot for long-term demand are turning their back on the fuel as financing becomes more difficult and alternatives like gas and renewables are getting more accessible and cheaper. Bangladesh is abandoning almost all of its planned projects and the Philippines last year declared a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants.

"The trend is down, down and continuing to go down," said IEEFA's Wamsted.

But first, the fuel is poised for a revival that'll lift overall global demand this year after two successive annual declines, according to the International Energy Agency. Its projection for a 2.6-percent increase in consumption this year reflects expectations for a pickup in every region of the world.

Coal India, the world's largest producer, expects consumption will be boosted as industries including steel, cement and aluminum return to pre-virus levels of output. The company this month approved more than \$6 billion in investments in new mines and expansions.

"There are climate-change issues about coal, but India's energy needs won't allow it to dump the fuel instantly," said Binay Dayal, the firm's technical director.

Michael Bloomberg, the founder and majority owner of Bloomberg LP, the parent company of Bloomberg News, has committed \$500 million to launch Beyond Carbon, a campaign aimed at closing the remaining coal-powered plants in the US by 2030.—With assistance from James Thornhill, Rajesh Kumar Singh, Dan Murtaugh, Ronan Martin and Krystal Chia.

Image credits: [Bloomberg](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/21/worlds-3-biggest-coal-users-get-ready-to-burn-even-more/>





## Amidst the Covid pandemic, there could be a global ‘water crisis’—UNICEF

March 21, 2021 15 min read

Drought in Southeast Asia may become even more frequent and intense if countries do not take steps to reduce its impact, according to a joint study from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). File photo shows a farmer’s son at the family’s drought-hit rice field in Laos in 2010, when a severe drought in Southeast Asia and southern China caused the Mekong River to drop to a 50-year low. (Photo courtesy by Agence France-Press)

Sourced from the net by Tracy Cabrera

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND — Today, about 1.42 billion people—including 450 million children—live in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability and freshwater that is merely 3 percent of the world’s water resources is growing increasingly—and rapidly—scarce.

According to the United Nations International Children’s Educational Fund (UNICEF), this could be blamed on decades of misuse, poor management and over-extraction of groundwater and contamination of freshwater supplies which all have exacerbated water stress.

At the same time, demand for water is rising due to rapid population growth, urbanization and increasing water needs from a range of sectors, the UN body added.

“Climate change and extreme weather events are compounding water stress. The resulting impact on children’s health, development, and safety threaten the significant progress made in child survival and sustainable development over the past several decades. It is putting children’s lives at risk today and threatens future generations,” UNICEF executive director Henrietta Fore underscored in a statement.

She outlined what drives water insecurity, the impact on children, and the actions we need to take now to achieve water security for all.

Globally, more than 1.42 billion people, including 450 million children live in areas of high, or extremely high, water vulnerability, according to a new analysis released by UNICEF. This means that 1 in 5 children worldwide does not have enough water to meet their everyday needs.

The analysis, part of the UN’s Water Security for All initiative, identifies areas where physical water scarcity risks overlap with poor water service levels. Communities living in these areas depend on surface water, unimproved sources, or water which can take more than 30 minutes to collect.

“The world’s water crisis is not simply coming, it is here, and climate change will only make it worse,” Fore revealed.

“Children are the biggest victims. When wells dry-up, children are the ones missing school to fetch water. When droughts diminish food supplies, children suffer from malnutrition and stunting.



When floods hit, children fall ill from waterborne illnesses. And when water resources decline, children cannot wash their hands to fight off diseases,” she lamented.

UN data shows that children in more than 80 countries live in areas with high or extremely high water vulnerability. Eastern and Southern Africa has the highest proportion of children living in such areas, with more than half of children—58 percent—facing difficulty accessing sufficient water every day. It is followed by West and Central Africa (31 percent), South Asia (25 percent), and the Middle East (23 percent). South Asia is home to the largest number of children living in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability—more than 155 million children.

Children in 37 ‘hotspot’ countries face especially dire circumstances in terms of absolute numbers, the proportions of children affected, and where global resources, support and urgent action must be mobilized. This list includes Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Tanzania and Yemen.

Demand for water continues to increase dramatically while resources are dwindling. In addition to rapid population growth, urbanization, water misuse and mismanagement, climate change and extreme weather events reduce available quantities of safe water, exacerbating water stress. Based on a UNICEF report from 2017, almost 1 in 4 children globally will live in areas of extremely high water stress by 2040.

While the impact of water scarcity can be felt by all, no one suffers more than the most vulnerable children. Children and families living in vulnerable communities face the double-edged sword of coping with high water scarcity levels while having the lowest water services, making access to sufficient water especially susceptible to climate shocks and extreme events.

In response, UNICEF launched the Water Security for All initiative to ensure every child has access to sustainable and climate-resilient water services. The initiative aims to mobilize resources, partnerships, innovation and global response to identified hotspots where the need for safe, resilient and sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene services is the greatest and most urgent.

UNICEF is now working to provide safe and affordable drinking water services—access to safe and affordable water services that are sustainable, close to home and managed professionally. Aside from this, the UN agency is likewise pushing to provide climate-resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene services to communities and these include water sanitation and hygiene services that withstand climate shocks operate using low carbon energy sources and strengthen communities’ resilience and adaptive capacities.

Moreover, early action to prevent water scarcity is also being done with resource assessments, sustainable water withdrawal, efficient use, and early warning and early preventative measures being set in place.

Finally, UNICEF is initiating water cooperation for peace and stability which will support communities and key stakeholders so that equitable management of water, sanitation and hygiene services, increased social cohesion, political stability and peace is reached—and these are targeted in conflict zones to prevent attacks on water and sanitation infrastructure and personnel.

“We have to act now both to address the water crisis and to prevent it from getting any worse. We can only achieve water security for every child through innovation, investment and collaboration, and by ensuring services are sustainable and resilient to climate shocks. For our children and our planet, we have to act,” Fore advised in conclusion. (AI/MTVN)

Source: <https://maharlika.tv/2021/03/21/amidst-the-covid-pandemic-there-could-be-a-global-water-crisis-unicef/?fbclid=IwAR1c5SZYgxYlJwMaNagVzF--mtt7tqUXYMUgVMF-WZ6zzwqe9B7U6P24y1k>

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