

25 DECEMBER 2020, FRIDAY



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



## DENR nagtanim ng bakawan sa Tondo

By Abante Tonite — Last updated Dec 24, 2020

NEWS



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Bilang bahagi ng patuloy na pagpapatupad ng rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay, nagsagawa ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ng 'mangrove planting activity' sa Baseco lagoon sa Tondo, Manila.

Ayon kay DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu, ang planting activity ay bilang pagsisimula lamang ng habitat restoration sa bahagi ng Manila Bay.

Magsasagawa din ng malawakang mangrove planting activities sa shoreline ng Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat at Ecotourism Area, Parola, at Pasig River.

Kasama ang Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) sa pagsasagawa ng pagtanim ng 'endangered mangrove species' o gapas-gapas, nipa, busain at nilad na nagmula sa Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau.

Anang Kalihim, wala umanong makakapigil sa kanila na buhaying muli ang Manila Bay kahit nakakatanggap sila ng pagbatikos mula sa iba't-ibang grupo. (Dolly B. Cabreza)



# DENR nagsagawa ng mangrove planting sa Baseco

[Angie dela Cruz](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - December 24, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nagsagawa ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ng mangrove planting activity sa Baseco lagoon sa Tondo, Manila bilang bahagi ng patuloy na pagpapatupad ng rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay.

“Our responsibility under the rehabilitation is not only confined in the physical rehabilitation, cleaning and dredging. Habitat restoration is also so much a part of the rehabilitation efforts,” pahayag ni DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu.

Sinabi ni Cimatu na ang planting activity ay bilang pagsisimula lamang ng habitat restoration sa bahagi ng Manila Bay.

Magsasagawa rin ng malawakang mangrove planting activities sa shoreline ng Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat at Ecotourism Area, Parola, at sa may Pasig River.

Kasama ang MMDA sa pagsasagawa ng pagtanim ng endangered mangrove species gapas-gapas na nagmula sa Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, mga nipa, busain at nilad.



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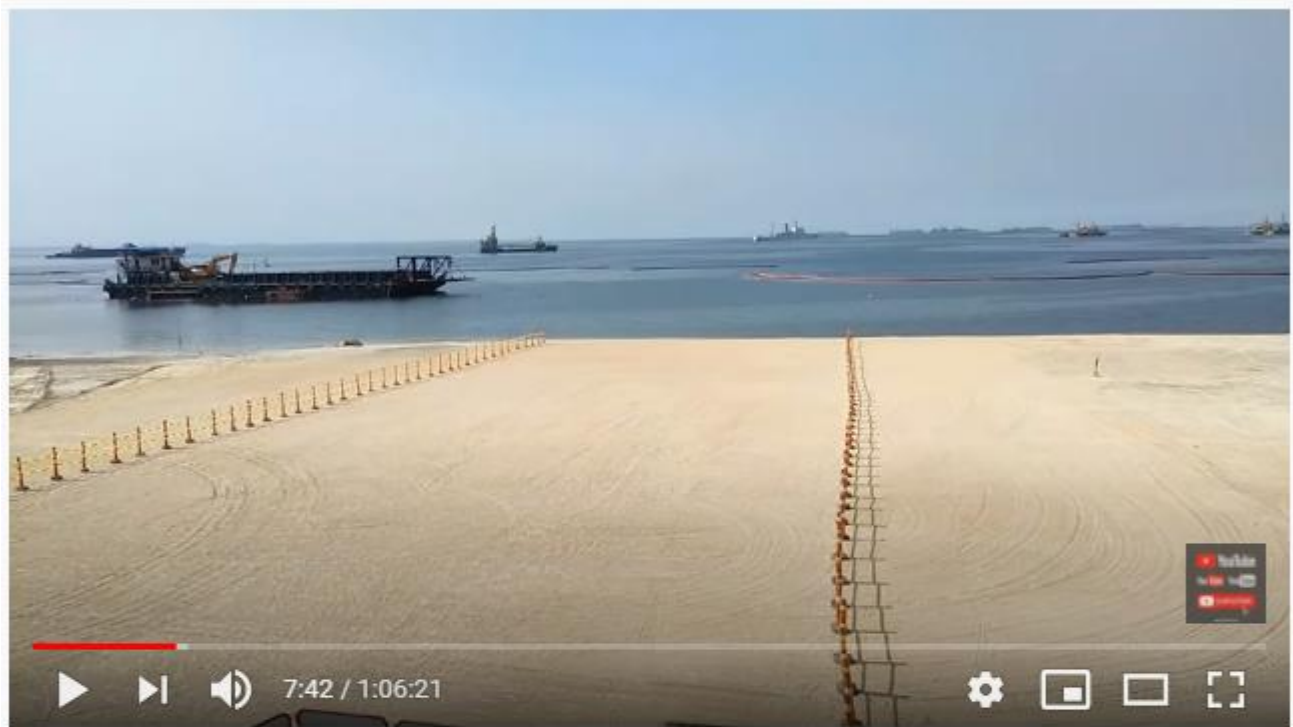
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# DENR reminds of proper management of holiday waste amid pandemic

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Dec 24, 2020 4:07:04 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, December 24) — Environment officials are asking the public to be mindful of their waste as families celebrate holidays amid a pandemic.

"[W]henever we buy, use, or consume something, it is always beneficial to consider if it saves landfill space, raw materials and natural resources such as energy, water, and money," said Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda in a statement Thursday.

The official enjoined the public to minimize waste as households prepare for Christmas and New Year. For instance, families may opt to shop for their own groceries and prepare food at home instead of getting food delivered or dining outside. They should also refrain from using disposable plates and cutlery, he added.

When it comes to purchasing goods, the official asked the public to refrain from buying in excess and choose products with little packaging. Shoppers are also encouraged to use reusable bags or eco-bags, buy local and in bulk, and purchase long-lasting goods and presents over disposable ones.

Meanwhile, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu reminded the public anew to segregate garbage made over celebrations held for the rest of the year.

Waste must be separated properly into compostable, recyclable, non-recyclable and special waste. Food waste should be thrown into the compostable garbage bin, food containers like glasses, cans and plastic bottles under recyclables, while plastic bags, used plastic or paper cups and tetra packs must be grouped under non-recyclable trash.

Special waste has two kinds: hazardous and healthcare. Used face masks, face shields and gloves are examples of healthcare wastes, while hazardous wastes include the likes of batteries, charging cables and other electrical and electronic equipment.

"As we hold a more intimate holiday celebration with our immediate families, let's be extra careful on the safety of our health and the environment by practicing responsibility and sustainability," said Cimatu.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/12/24/DENR-proper-waste-management-holidays.html>





## Public reminded to manage waste

posted December 24, 2020 at 10:55 pm

by [Rio N. Araja](#)

The Environment department on Friday reminded the public on the proper management of all kinds of waste amid the Christmas celebration despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Because of the pandemic, this holiday season is like no other,” Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

“As we hold a more intimate holiday celebration with our immediate families, let’s be extra careful on the safety of our health and the environment by practicing responsibility and sustainability.”

Cimatu underscored the importance of observing proper waste segregation in households during the time of merriment, gift-giving and feasting.

Waste that need to be segregated include those that are compostable, recyclable, non-recyclable and hazardous waste.

Cimatu says food waste should be under the biodegradable or compostable trash bin, while containers that come with it, such as glasses, cans and plastic bottles should be under the recyclable trash bin.

Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda says as online shopping and food delivery continue to rise due to the pandemic, product packaging such as plastic bags, as well as used plastic or paper cups and tetra packs should be segregated as non-recyclable materials.

Used masks, gloves, face shields and other healthcare wastes should be separated as household healthcare waste, while batteries, charging cables and other electrical and electronic equipment should be under household hazardous waste.

“Let’s be more mindful of what we buy, eat and use and how it will affect the environment,” Antiporda said.



Photo taken on November 14, 2020, shows situation in Barangays Pacac and Logung, Amulung which were severely affected by the overflow of the Cagayan river.

Released by Cagayan PIO/Leon Antonio, Jr. and Kaycee Dumlao

## Dredging of Cagayan River seen to start soon

[Artemio Dumlao](#) (Philstar.com) - December 24, 2020 - 4:32pm

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines — Rehabilitation of the Cagayan River is seen to start soon with a Memorandum of Agreement already signed between the environment department and two operators.

The agreement was sealed on December 10 by DENR Cagayan Valley Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan with the Great River North Consortium represented by its managing head Antonio Talaue and Riverfront Construction Inc. led by its president, Feng Li.

Bambalan, vice chair of the Inter-agency Committee on the Restoration of the Cagayan River said that the dredging activities will be at no cost to the government as "the proponents will be shouldering all the expenses related to the dredging activities."

The MOA stipulates that the DENR shall conduct a survey of non-metallic and metallic resources in the River Dredging Zone to determine metallic and other valuable materials in economic quantities. It shall also monitor the operation of the operator-dredger to ensure faithful compliance with applicable environmental laws, rules and regulations.

The contractors — Great River North Consortium and the Riverfront Construction Inc. — shall dispose of the dredged materials and will not process them for disposition abroad.

They shall also report to the DENR any and all findings of precious metals or objects which they may inadvertently come across which may be of local or national interest.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau Regional Director Mario Ancheta has issued a certificate of accreditation to the two companies as dealer, trader and/ or retailer of minerals/mineral products and/or by-products. The accreditation is solely for the Cagayan River Restoration project and will be valid for two years.

President Rodrigo Duterte in 2017 ordered the dredging of heavily-silted rivers in the country including the Cagayan River, the country's longest and biggest river.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu issued DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2020-07 in February rationalizing dredging activities in heavily-silted river channels in the country to help restore them their natural state and water flow.

Rehabilitation is also seen to reduce flooding and to protect and properly manage the disposition of sand in those rivers.



The DAO also requires a holder of an approved dredging clearance to apply for an authority to dispose extracted material from the River Dredging Zone through a MOA with the DENR Regional Office.

It further states that in order to open up heavily-silted river channels, areas starting from the coastline of river deltas extending all the way upstream, in accordance with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Dredging Master Plan, shall be designated as exclusive River Dredging Zones by IAC.

Bambalan said Cagayan Gov. Manuel Mamba in June proposed river restoration through dredging activities. A week later, Cimatú approved the proposal.

The River Dredging Plan covers 30.8 kilometers as a River Dredging Zone.

Bambalan said the committee will make sure "all activities pertaining to dredging will be as compliant as possible to all the requirements imposed by the government particularly in ensuring environmental considerations."

All requirements, the DENR Region 2 said, were met such as the issuance of Dredging Clearance by the DPWH and the Environmental Compliance Certificate by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

Gov. Mamba, who chairs the IAC said "it is a dream come true" for Cagayan, citing dredging the river will mitigate the flooding in the Cagayan Valley region. He said dredging the river will also lead to the opening of the Port of Aparri, which, according to him, has been closed because of heavy siltation.



## Preps ongoing for evacuation of 400 households at risk after Toledo landslide

By: Morexette Marie B. Erram - CDN Digital | December 24, 2020 - 02:00 PM

CEBU CITY, Philippines—Hundreds of families in Toledo City could be celebrating the Holidays away from their homes.

This after the local government in this western city of Cebu confirmed that at least 400 households were identified to be at risk following the landslide that occurred in an open-pit mining site owned and operated by Carmen Copper Corporation (CCC) last December 21, 2020 that claimed the lives of four miners.

John Roseller Layan, Toledo City Public Information Officer, said the local government, led by Mayor Marjorie Perales, will be meeting with officials from the city's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Central Visayas (MGB-7), and representatives from CCC to discuss their evacuation plans on Thursday, December 24.

"During the meeting, we will be discussing guidelines on how the evacuation will be carried out," Layan told CDN Digital in a phone interview.

Layan also confirmed that they initially scheduled for the evacuation to take place on Christmas Eve, Thursday.

"But we have to thoroughly evaluate and talk this one. Nevertheless, the local government, together with barangay officials, have started disseminating and giving notices to affected residents," added Layan.

The proposal to relocate 400 households to safer places stemmed from findings of CCC's own geologists that cracks near the slopes of the landslide site widened in just a short amount of time.

"When the mayor inspected the area, and learned about this development, she immediately convened all concerned officials to come up with a response, and decided that evacuation for families living within a 500-meter radius from the landslide site was needed to avoid any untoward incidents especially that it's the Holidays," said Layan.

He added that they have already identified at least three areas where to relocate the affected families.

MGB-7 has earlier issued a notice to CCC to suspend operations following the landslide "until such time that the hazards are removed."

At least six other miners remain missing as of Thursday, and state geologists suspected that they could now be underwater.

CCC, in an earlier statement released, assured the public that "close coordination and communication with the affected immediate families are being conducted and will continue to extend the needed support and assistance." /bmjo

Source: <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/356407/preps-ongoing-for-evacuation-of-400-households-at-risk-after-toledo-landslide?fbclid=IwAR2ZugJxrVM3QwnlrxfoVmjZ14lcNVUPouurJd1lrfaO6ACetnGspMwF2m0>



## 400 households at risk face forced evacuation



File photo

[JUSTIN K. VESTIL](#)

December 24, 2020

AS CRACKS in the ground near the site of a landslide within the Toledo copper mines widened on Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020, the Toledo City Government decided to conduct forced evacuation of around 400 households living within a 500-meter radius.

John Roseller Layan, Toledo City public information officer, said Mayor Marjorie Perales ordered the forced evacuation to be conducted on Thursday, Dec. 24, to avert another disaster.

“Mayor Perales has ordered the evacuation as she fears that if the cracks would continue to expand, it might pose another disaster for residents living within the 500-meter radius of the landslide site. We don’t want that to happen, especially that these residents are eager to celebrate Christmas Day,” Layan said.

Search and rescue operations for six missing mine workers of Carmen Copper Corp. (CCC) were again halted Wednesday after a company geologist noticed that one-foot cracks found near the landslide site on the slopes of Carmen Pit widened to about 20 feet in just 30 minutes, from 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Layan said Perales, who inspected the site Wednesday, decided to convene the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (LDRRMC) and confer with CCC officials to determine an immediate course of action, especially for those living near the landslide site.

Four workers had died after a part of Carmen Pit’s slopes collapsed on Monday afternoon, Dec. 21. Six remained missing as of Wednesday.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau Central Visayas (MGB 7) Director Armando Malicse told SunStar Cebu that he will send some personnel to verify the cracks.

He said, however, that he saw no problem with the mayor’s order to implement forced evacuation.

“We see no problem since this is also considered preemptive evacuation. She is also concerned for her constituents,” Malicse said.

He also said they have yet to determine how the landslide occurred.

### Casualties

Meanwhile, CCC has released the names of the four workers who died and the six who are still missing due to the landslide.

In a spot report released by the Toledo Police Station based on information provided by CCC, the fatalities were identified as Junil S. Lagola, Ernesto G. Caspe, Juan M. Tapang and Dionisio Labang.



All were residents of Toledo City, except for Labang who resided in Naga City.

Lagola, 44, was a mine open pit leadman and a resident of Brgy. Don Andres Soriano, Toledo City.

Caspe, 54, was a mine open pit checker and resident of Dasmamac, Lutopan.

Tapang, 44, was a heavy equipment operator and resident of Don Andres Soriano Village.

Labang was a backhoe operator from Anseca Contractor and resident of Brgy. Uling, City of Naga.

They were brought to the CCC hospital, where they were pronounced dead.

The missing persons, all residents of Toledo City, are Jose B. Carpentero, 31, a heavy equipment operator and resident of Brgy. Biga; Jonwel S. Herediano, 33, pump operator from Brgy. Don Andres Soriano; Simeon B. Laconas, 33, leadman from Brgy. Biga; John Paul L. Resuelo, 27, heavy equipment operator from Brgy. Biga; Renante F. Sepada, 35, pump operator from Brgy. Bagakay; and Alfred C. Tautho, 33, welder from Brgy. Mainggit.

The Toledo City Government has assured their families of assistance.

### **Warning**

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque extended his condolences to the families of the casualties even as he reiterated the warning of President Rodrigo Duterte against open pit mining.

He said the President has long wanted to prohibit open pit mining. However, he also has to consider the thousands of families who stand to lose their livelihood.

“The President has long been studying the ban for open pit mining. He knows that the revenue from open pit mining is very important, but he also takes into consideration its damage on the lives of people and the environment. Even if there were efforts to balance it, from the start, the President stood pat that it is time to study its banning,” he said.

“We are calling out to the firms that while open pit mining is still not prohibited, we urge mining companies to be responsible and take care of the welfare and the lives of their workers,” he said.

CCC, a subsidiary of Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp., has suspended operations at the Carmen Pit, its only active open pit mine, to ensure the safety of its employees and contractors. **(ANV / JOB)**



# Vietnamese nabbed for selling agarwood in N. Samar

By Gerico Sabalza December 24, 2020, 2:05 pm

TACLOBAN CITY – Authorities have arrested a Vietnamese woman for illegal possession of agarwood in an entrapment operation in Allen, Northern Samar on Wednesday afternoon.

The Philippine National Police regional office here identified the suspect as Hong Dinh Thi Bich, 39, a resident of H. Dong Hoa, Phu Yen province in Vietnam.

An unidentified male person, believed to be the live-in partner of the suspect, was able to elude, according to a police report released Wednesday night.



Map of Allen, Northern Samar. (Google image)

Confiscated from the suspect were 10.9 kilos of agarwood with an estimated value of PHP763,000, a half kilo of bird's nest with an estimated worth of PHP750, accessories in making agar beads, and the buy-bust money.

The operating units were from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group Northern Samar Field Unit (CIDG-NSFU), the Regional Special Operations Group (SOG), the provincial SOG, the 1st Northern Samar Provincial Mobile Force Company, 803rd Coy, Regional Mobile Force Battalion, and Allen Municipal Police Station.

The arrested suspect was brought to CIDG-NSFU and will face charges for violation of Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, police said in the report.

Agarwood is a fragrant dark resinous wood used as incense, perfume ingredient, and also in small carvings.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, many traders have been coming to the region to buy one of the world's most expensive natural raw materials, extracted from host trees locally known as Lapnisan and Lanete.

This lucrative trade resulted in indiscriminate poaching of potential host trees. (PNA)



# Vietnamese nabbed for illegal trade of agarwood

Published December 24, 2020, 10:19 AM

by [Marie Tonette Marticio](#)

TACLOBAN CITY – A Vietnam national was apprehended in an entrapment operation for the illegal trade of agarwood, locally known as lapnisan or lanete on Wednesday in Brgy. Jubasan, Allen, Northern Samar.

Police identified the suspect as Hong Dinh Thi Bich, 39, while her live-in partner who evaded arrest remains unidentified.

The authorities seized 10.9 kgs. of agarwood with an estimated value of P760,000; 1/2 kgs. birds nest with an estimated value of P750; accessories in making agar beads worth P15,000, and the marked money.

The suspect was brought to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit Northern Samar Provincial Field Office together with the seized pieces of evidence for documentation and proper disposition

She will be charged for Violation of Section 77 of Presidential Decree 705, and Section 27 paragraph (f) of Republic Act 9147.





# Reclaim your rights: Defend Indigenous Peoples' lands

By [The Manila Times](#)

December 24, 2020

RIGHTS are earned through hard-fought struggles. And for Indigenous Peoples (IPs), its fulfillment comes from the collective and continuous defense of ancestral land and territory, and assertion of their ways of life and the right to self-determination.

As the pandemic ravages and the global crisis deepens, the world's superpowers and the oppressive governments and systems continue to intensify widening inequality. Exacerbated neglect and discrimination to their access to health and basic services has been a grave threat to the 476 million IPs across the globe — the tip of the iceberg of today's social and economic inequities.

For those already faced with food insecurity due to loss of ancestral lands, access to food and livelihood became everyday challenges. And while the mobility of indigenous villages are limited, there are no breaks for extractives, logging, government and private projects, and militarization in indigenous territories.

Wealth outpours to secure corporate profit at the expense of indigenous rights to land and environment protection. Imperialist plunder dominates over people's health and lives.

The railroading of public hearings for the Teesta Dam, a China-funded hydropower project approximately worth \$1 billion, poses a threat to the earthquake-prone environment and customary rights of the Lepcha people in Sikkim, Northeast India.

The \$700-million Papar Dam in Sabah, Malaysia remains a threat to indigenous communities of Papar and Penampang. In the Philippines, contractors of the \$250-million China-funded Kaliwa Dam have resumed operations despite the lockdown.

Mining in ancestral lands is now the key economic driver in Amazonian countries as the price of gold rises in time of the pandemic. An estimated 1.5 million IPs depending on Amazon forest faces the attacks of criminal groups and illegal miners.

The oil spills the Coca and Napo River in Ecuador affecting 200,000 Kichwa and Shuar people remains. In India's Assam and Manipur, permits for coal and mineral mining and exploration in wildlife centers and IP lands are hastened in the name of "seamless economic growth."

Five-star Marriott Hotels and Resort is on its way to displace around 11,000 Juma cultivators and six villages of the indigenous Mro community in Chittagong Hill Crest, Bangladesh. Arguing the Kenyan government's forest conservation programs, the Kenya Forest Services has demolished over 300 Ogiek homes in the Mau forest and burned 28 homes in the Embobut forest.

In countries with most aggressive projects encroaching ancestral lands, fear and terror have been the weapon of the state's laws and armed forces to silence all resistance.

Around 40 percent of land defenders killed around the world belong to indigenous communities even though they make up only 5 percent of the world's population. And with fascists and autocrats spewing racism, IPs are in greater danger.

The call grows to pull out heavy military deployment in indigenous lands, which has resulted in a wide array of human rights violations. Militarization not only enables plunder and land encroachments, it erodes all safeguards to protect the collective rights and rights to self-determination and governance.



In the Karen territory in Burma, 1,500 villagers mobilized after Burmese soldiers killed and robbed an indigenous Karen woman in July. The murder of West Papuan in a palm oil plantation by the Indonesian military this May added to the at least 100,000 West Papuans who have been killed since the Indonesian takeover in the 1960s. Militarization in lumad communities in the Philippines has aggravated forced evacuation and closure of indigenous lumad schools.

Indigenous elders and vocal anti-mining leaders, such as Domingo Chock Che from Guatemala and Bae Milda Ansabo from Mindanao, were brutally murdered with impunity.

In Indonesia, indigenous farmers Dilik Bin Asap and land rights activist James Watt are now jailed for harvesting fruits from a plantation company that has encroached on their lands.

Charges of illegal possession of firearms is an old trick that the police use, as happened to Betty Belen, an indigenous leader who led a barricade against the entry of the Chevron Energy Co.'s geothermal power project in her village.

The United Nations has identified criminalization and repressive counter-insurgency laws as the tools used against IP defending and exercising rights to their lands. Indigenous leaders and members of Cordillera Peoples Alliance have hit on the systematic and fully funded state terror to smash any dissent and resistance using online and public vilification, terrorist-tagging and harassment.

Together with massive disinformation and fake news, all this fuels ethnic divide and discrimination toward IPs and their struggles.

On the commemoration of the annual International Human Rights Day, the painful state of IPs brought about by imperialist powers with tyrants and militarized governments benefiting from plunder, need to be challenged.

Let us build our movement for international solidarity to defend IP lands and life from imperialist plunder and state terror. To honor our brave ancestors who paved the way, and to build a better future for the next generation, let us unite to reclaim our rights. IPS

Beverly L. Longid is the global coordinator of the Philippine-based International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL). She is also the international officer of Katribu-National Alliance of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, and co-chair of CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness.



LIKE IT IS

## A reflection (2)

By: [Peter Wallace](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:04 AM December 24, 2020

It's the night before Christmas, and all through the house....

Governance. "In this life you get what you pay for. Buy cheap, you get cheap. You have to pay for quality. Republic Act No. 9184, or the Government Procurement Reform Act, doesn't seem to understand this... I'm all for getting the best deal, but price alone doesn't determine the best deal. A whole host of factors do." ("Cheap isn't cheap," 3/19/20)

"The DENR should be split. You just can't find one person who is, first, a strict environmentalist and, second, a supporter of responsible extraction of the natural resources we must have in the modern world... The two areas are in conflict. Both are hugely complex and require considerable effort and time devoted to properly manage them." ("Split it," 5/11/17)

"A new constitution must also consider the future. Some of the failings of the 1987 Constitution are that the world has changed and the terms set then are no longer applicable. The restriction on foreign investments is a prime case... A constitution is the lifeblood of a nation. You don't change a constitution to suit a particular moment; you do it to set the foundation of a society—for a hundred years." ("Should we amend the Constitution?" 3/15/18)

"The secret to combating plunder is transparency. So if the President is serious (I think he is in his intent), he has to force the passage of laws that would strengthen the country's anti-corruption measures and improve transparency in government transactions." ("Put big guys in jail (1)," 11/12/20)

Doing business. "In the main, sovereign contracts (contracts with a government) must be inviolate. That's why contracts are entered into. If at a later time change would seem desirable, it must be change that is willingly entered into by both parties." ("Muddy waters," 3/5/20)

"We need an Ease of Doing Everything Authority. And the simplest, most effective, and quickest way is to just amend the EODB law with a new title and put its operations under Arta, which has more than proved itself capable." ("EODE," 5/14/20)

"Permit renewals are burdensome for businesses. They have to comply with innumerable requirements just to process the permits, and wait interminably just to submit all the documents demanded. Then there are the fines when they get it wrong. It's this convoluted bureaucracy that hinders the Philippines from moving up the global ranking in terms of ease of doing business." ("Cut the tape," 4/7/16)

Labor. "Global competitiveness surveys show that the Philippines is a laggard in terms of labor market flexibility... Businessmen don't go where they can't adjust their labor force as the business requires. They won't go where mediocre performance, or worse, is protected. They won't go where a legal case can be brought against them at the drop of a hat by a disgruntled employee." ("Flexibility," 6/11/20)



Mining. “It’s irresponsible mining that must be stopped. Mining is not an industry that allows for exploitation done by hand. Mines, the large-scale ones, bring wealth to rural communities where it is most needed, develop those communities, and employ lots of people.” (“Why not mining?” 8/27/20)

Infrastructure. “It’s time for Congress to listen to their silent voices and relieve their sufferings. I want the bridges, roads, and trains the administration has identified built before I die or before my kids die if the progress of the past is replicated. Time for PEP: priority emergency powers.” (“Priority emergency powers,” 5/3/18)

“The government’s massive program to build infrastructure desperately needs all the help it can get. Asking the private sector to help just makes good practical sense... Shifting to PPP should be revived to ensure that all 75 programmed projects actually get started before President Duterte bows out.” (“Revive PPP,” 9/19/19)

“One thing the Department of Public Works and Highways and the Department of Transportation could do with little effort to speed things up is to outsource. Contract truly independent contractors to help the government develop the details of a project and prepare the terms of reference and requests for proposals.” (“A dismal failure,” 11/28/19)

So that’s it, I hope you enjoyed the romp through history through the eyes of this columnist.

Merry Christmas!

Email: [wallace\\_likeitis@wbf.ph](mailto:wallace_likeitis@wbf.ph)



Under CCBPI and Indorama Ventures' plan, PETValue would be located in the Gateway Business Park in Gen. Trias in Cavite.

STAR/File

## BOI OKs Coca-Cola's PET recycling facility project

[Louella Desiderio](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 25, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Board of Investments (BOI) has approved the P2.3 billion PETValue recycling facility project of Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines Inc. (CCBPI) and Indorama Ventures Packaging Corp. in Cavite.

Lanie Dormiendo, officer-in-charge and director for International Investment Promotions Service at the BOI, said the project involves the manufacturer of recycled PET (polyethylene terephthalate) resin.

"This was approved as a pioneering project as the company would use a proprietary and state-of-the-art recycling process that would transform used PET bottles back to food-grade recycled PET resin," she said.

Trade Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo said PETValue's project cost is P2.3 billion. The project was endorsed for approval by the Department of Science and Technology.

Under CCBPI and Indorama Ventures' plan, PETValue would be located in the Gateway Business Park in Gen. Trias in Cavite.

The facility will make use of cutting-edge technologies and best practices for the safe and most advanced recycling process for plastic bottles from PET materials.

Through PETValue, PET plastic bottles would be used again and again after being collected and processed within the circular economy.

CCBPI said the facility is expected to be operational by the fourth quarter of next year.

Projects approved by the BOI can enjoy incentives including income tax holidays.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/business/2020/12/25/2066146/boi-oks-coca-colas-pet-recycling-facility-project>



## Plastic-free gift ideas from sustainable companies

By [The Manila Times](#)  
December 25, 2020



The expression, “Going zero-waste,” has exploded over the last few years, but can people really commit to this way of life?

Some may find it daunting, judging by the amount of plastic found in the landfills and the country’s waters, most especially our ocean and seas.

How big is the plastic pollution problem? Almost all plastic produced after 1950 is still sitting in wasteyards. Single-use plastics use a material made to last forever but are designed to be thrown away. Over time, these fragment into smaller pieces and become microscopic that last for centuries on end.

While news organizations have shown how deadly plastic can be for marine wildlife — particularly fish, dolphins, seabirds, seals, and turtles — that mistake them for food, people are also consuming these waste plastics.

Studies found traces of microplastics in danggit, galunggong, talaba, tahong and other seafood that are caught for human consumption. These were found to degrade into smaller pieces called nanoplastics that can migrate and enter a man’s body resulting in internal risks to health.

Zero waste does not happen overnight. Small steps need to be taken. So why don’t we start with sending out plastic-free gifts this Christmas?

Oceana curated gift ideas from its #DiNaSingle partner establishments The Eco Shift: Plastic Free Essentials @ <https://theecoshift.online/>, KatHa Lifestyle Store @ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGpnaUohq6t/?igshid=155rhmd7wyr43>, The Bamboo Company @ <https://www.thebamboocompany.ph/products/lakbawayan-bamboo-tumbler-2-0-with-handle> and Lush @ <https://lush.com.ph/products/fairy-christmas-gift-set>.

“Let’s make this holiday season even more memorable in a positive light. Sharing precious moments even virtually with our loved ones can also be a chance to render our own way of keeping our oceans healthy, vibrant, and sustainable. This is for our young loved ones who will tend to our planet for the next generation to come,” Oceana Vice President Gloria Estenzo Ramos expressed.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/12/25/public-square/plastic-free-gift-ideas-from-sustainable-companies/817081/>



## PRC honors ‘responsible miner’ Anievas

posted December 24, 2020 at 10:30 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

The Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) has virtually honored their picks for the 2020 Outstanding Professionals, and this year’s honorees include a “responsible miner” – Engr. Jose Bermudez Anievas, the pride of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC).



*Engr. Jose B. Anievas*

PRC, the government agency tasked to enforce the laws regulating various professions in the country, deliberates yearly to select exemplary individuals who have displayed competency to the highest degree in their chosen profession.

Jobby or JBA, as he is known in the mining industry, was chosen as the “2020 Outstanding Professional of the Year in the Field of Mining Engineering” – the highest award by the Commission given to a professional as recommended by peers for demonstrating competence in the highest degree and integrity in the exercise of his profession.

Serving the mining industry for 45 years, Anievas brings pride to NAC where he started as Resident Mine Manager for Taganito Mining, a NAC subsidiary, and moving up to become the company’s Chief Operating Officer.

Also, to all the companies he served in his long career including Philex Mining, where he started as Safety Officer and Underground Mining Engineer and where he had written a manuscript on the standard procedure on technical writing and reporting, a document later adopted as a recommended reading in a mining school.

Anievas also worked at Carrascal Nickel Corporation where he first developed organizations of young professionals in the field of exploration and mining with strong emphasis on environmental protection and responsible and sustainable mining.

“Our actions are the foundation of our character that frame our mind as a leader,” says “JBA.”



# Promote farm tourism amid the pandemic

The Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016 is aimed at helping farmers and other stakeholders to increase their income by providing alternative sources of revenues

Published 3 hours ago on December 25, 2020 03:00 AM

By [Jun Yap](#)



The Philippines — a country fortunate to have abundant natural resources, biological diversity and cultural heritage — has a strong lead to become among the best farm tourism destinations.

But the current pandemic drastically affected the tourism destinations in the country, forcing some to fold, even without turning their sights on a looming rebound with the development of vaccines against the coronavirus disease.

With the apparent availability of the vaccine in sight, it is now the perfect time to look into and seize the numerous opportunities available from the country's farm tourism destinations.

Farm tourism is fun in Phl

A lawmaker once said that, "Spread the word to the world that farm tourism is more fun in the Philippines!"

Under Republic Act (RA) 10816, farm tourism is the practice of attracting visitors and tourists to farm areas for production, educational and recreational purposes that involves any agricultural or fishery-based operation or activity, which may also provide a venue for outdoor recreation and accessible family outings.

The law provides the policy and enabling environment for the encouragement, development, and promotion of farm tourism in the country, and recognizes the importance of agriculture in making available food and other products necessary to sustain and enhance human life and in providing livelihood to a major portion of the population.

The Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016 is aimed at helping farmers and other stakeholders to increase their income by providing alternative sources of revenues.

After all, the key essence of the Farm Tourism Development Law is for the government to "recognize that tourism, coupled with agriculture extension services, can disseminate the value of agriculture in the economic and cultural development of the country, which serves as a catalyst for the development of agriculture and fishery communities, and provide additional income for farmers, farm workers and fisherfolk.





The ultimate beneficiaries of the law are, of course, the Filipino farmers who are still among the poorest in our country, and the law provides them with alternative sources of income from their harvest and farms.

In synch with DA goals

Farm tourism is also in synch with the goals of Department of Agriculture Secretary William Dar through his “Masaganang Ani at Mataas na Kita” initiative.

That makes farm tourism to be part of the development plan of the agriculture sector as well as the promotion strategy of tourism in our country.

Farm tourism practitioners or stakeholders also have ample support not just from the private sector or among themselves but from the government itself.

It has already become a sunshine industry in many parts of the country, and farm tourism sites have been mushrooming everywhere, attracting even non-farmers like overseas Filipino workers, showing interest in investing on it.

Through farm tourism, young people can also be enticed to go into farming or practice agriculture.

It can be noted that following the passage of RA 10816, the Department of Tourism, with the support of the DA and other stakeholders from the government and private sectors, have been promoting farm tourism.

Among the salient features of the law is to attract young people to venture into farming because the average age of Filipino farmers is 57 years old.

Aside from enticing the young generation, farm tourism can also improve the income of farmers as they are given the opportunity to have a new source of income aside from the produce of their farms.

With this, farmers can develop value-added products made from their produce and sell it to the tourists as “pasalubongs.”

Additional source of income

Establishment of farm schools can also provide an additional source of income for the farmers.

On the other hand, even the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) under chairman J. Prospero de Vera III has included agriculture and other related fields as among the priority courses for the coming years.

This prompted some state universities and colleges (SUC) to become aggressive in promoting agriculture to their students.

It can also be noted that CHED has launched its first SUC Expo dubbed “The Art of SUCcess: 2020 State Universities and Colleges Expo” at the activity center of Trinoma Mall in Quezon City.

The expo is an initiative to recognize the passion of SUC in innovating products and connect with Filipinos outside the confines of the academic community.



# BFAR issues red tide warning in 11 provinces

Published December 23, 2020, 3:36 PM

by [Richa Noriega](#)

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) issued a red tide warning on Wednesday in some coastal areas where shellfish are positive for paralytic shellfish poison in quantities that are beyond the regulatory limit.



Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)  
(MANILA BULLETIN)

The BFAR said that all types of shellfish and acetes or alamang (tiny shrimps) gathered from the following areas are not safe for human consumption:

- Bohol (Daius and Tagbilaran City)
- Biliran Islands
- Davao Oriental (Balite Bay and Mati City)
- Eastern Samar (Guiuan) and Western Samar (Zumarraga)
- Leyte (Calubian and Cancabato Bay, Tacloban City)
- Masbate (Milagros)
- Negros Oriental (Tambobo Bay and Siaton)
- Palawan (Honda, Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay, and Puerto Princesa City)
- Sorsogon Bay
- Surigao del Sur (Liang Bay and Hinatuan)
- Zamboanga del Sur (Dumanquillas)

“Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking,” BFAR said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the coastal waters of Bataan; Daram Island, Cambatutay, Irong-irong, Maqueda and Villareal Bays in Western Samar; and Carigara Bay in Leyte are now free of the toxic red tides, it added.



# THROWBACK: The Filipinos' experience of climate change Part 2

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Dec 24 2020 04:03 PM



"Mga Kwento ng Klima" tells the story of climate in the context of the Filipino experience--from the destruction it has caused to taking control of the situation by pursuing resilient projects.

Co-produced with the Oscar M. Lopez Center, this ABS-CBN documentary clinched a Silver Screen Award during the US International Film & Video Festival this year.

Watch the second part here.

Source: [https://news.abs-cbn.com/video/life/12/24/20/throwback-the-filipinos-experience-of-climate-change-part-2?fbclid=IwAR314-7TGcW3kDh941NRaEWr1PVVBNTOf8jec\\_lz6m92YfET99IH0SpMF0](https://news.abs-cbn.com/video/life/12/24/20/throwback-the-filipinos-experience-of-climate-change-part-2?fbclid=IwAR314-7TGcW3kDh941NRaEWr1PVVBNTOf8jec_lz6m92YfET99IH0SpMF0)



In this undated photo, a hotel employee places a Christmas wreath on the door of a room at The Manor at Camp John Hay in Baguio City.

The STAR/Andy Zapata Jr.

## COVID-19 cases reach 465,724 with 1,776 new infections

(Philstar.com) - December 24, 2020 - 4:06pm

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Health on Thursday, Christmas eve, reported 1,776 new COVID-19 infections, pushing national tally to 465,724.

In the days leading to Christmas, the government has been reminding the public to continue observing health protocols as they flag indications of possible surge in cases.

The highest daily increase in COVID-19 cases was traced trace to Quezon City with 128 new infections, followed by Davao City with 121, Rizal with 94, Samar (Western Samar) with 57, and Bulacan with 56.

Death toll rose to 9,055, with seven more people succumbing to COVID-19. Meanwhile recoveries went up to 430,490 with 533 new additions.

This leaves 26,179 active cases in the country or 5.6% of the total recorded infections. Of these, 81.4% exhibit mild symptoms, 10.3% are asymptomatic, 5.2% are in critical condition, 2.7% are severe cases and 0.43% have moderate symptoms.

### No Christmas parties

Early in December, the government announced a ban on Christmas parties in Metro Manila which remains under General Community Quarantine until the end of the year.

Authorities instead urged the public to hold virtual Christmas parties inside of physical get-togethers.

President Rodrigo Duterte has also ordered the suspension of flights from the United Kingdom from December 24 to December 31 amid mounting concerns over a new strain of the virus that is said to be more contagious.

The DOH said that although the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine had not detected any new variant of the coronavirus, surveillance of circulating strains will be ramped up.— **Kristine Joy Patag**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/12/24/2066054/covid-19-cases-reach-465724-1776-new-infections>



Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Martin Andanar urged families to limit physical celebrations this Christmas and instead go for virtual merrymaking with family, relatives and friends.

Miguel De Guzman, file

## Public urged: Celebrate with caution

[Christina Mendez](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 25, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang reminded the public yesterday to strictly observe health protocols while celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Martin Andanar urged families to limit physical celebrations this Christmas and instead go for virtual merrymaking with family, relatives and friends.

He said it is better to err on the side of caution than be sorry afterwards.

“Christmas is the time of the year when we remember and celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” he said.

“This joyous occasion is often spent celebrating with families, loved ones and friends, but the current situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic calls for us to virtually celebrate this holiday season or have our gatherings at a limited capacity,” Andanar said.

He said the public should always maintain social distancing and wear masks and face shields whenever they engage in conversations, especially outside of their homes.

“May everyone keep in mind and observe the necessary health protocols and minimum health standards during the Yuletide season, in line with our fight against COVID-19, for us to heal and recover as one nation,” he said.

At the same time, Andanar also urged everyone to have a meaningful celebration of the holidays by reflecting on humility and compassion which is the embodiment of celebrating Christ’s birth.

“Let us also take time from our merrymaking to solemnly reflect and ponder over the lessons and morals we can learn from the Bible about Christ’s birth, and practice the humility, compassion, and kindness Christ has displayed,” he said.

“Let us impart His love and blessings to others through the spirit of bayanihan and by giving to those in need,” Andanar added.

Andanar also extended his and the PCOO team’s “warmest greetings to all the Filipinos here and around the world as we celebrate Christmas today.”



The Department of Health (DOH) has advised those who will be traveling this Christmas season to avoid talking and eating while inside the vehicle.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque also reminded last minute shoppers to observe physical distancing and other health protocols.

“Let’s not bring the virus home. A COVID-free holiday is one of the best gifts we can give to our loved ones,” Duque said while noting that he saw lot of shoppers forgetting to observe minimum health protocols when he visited a shopping mall in Taguig Wednesday.

DOH urged the public to stay at home, but if traveling cannot be avoided, proper health protocol must be complied with.

“Travelling increases risk of transmission of the virus. However, if travel is unavoidable, health and safety must be prioritized,” DOH said in an advisory.

Those who have flu-like symptoms must not travel anymore, it said.

Prior to traveling, people are advised to isolate themselves and book their ticket online to reduce risk of acquiring the infection.

Face mask and face shield should be used always and properly during travel. One-meter distance from other travelers must also be observed.

“Avoid talking or eating while inside the vehicles and remember to always sanitize hands,” DOH said while stressing the need to observe proper cough and sneezing etiquette.

Travel crew must be informed and immediately isolate oneself from other passengers if one develops symptoms while travelling.

DOH said those who are experiencing symptoms of the illness must consult doctors and share their complete travel history.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Debold Sinas yesterday appealed for unity as the country is still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I can only ask that we all continue to pray for a united Philippines. Let us set aside what divides us and with resolute hearts, work towards our progressive and peaceful future,” Sinas said.

Despite the uncertainty brought by the COVID-19 outbreak and other calamities in 2020, Sinas said Filipinos are still striving to survive and find opportunities to rebuild their lives.

“I have no doubt that once again, we as Filipinos, are showing our indomitable spirit as we respond with efficiency and as we prepare and look forward to our recovery,” he said. — **Mayen Jaymalin, Emmanuel Tupas**



**DOST EXEC SAYS**

## **Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna COVID-19 vaccines possibly Philippines' first**

**Published** December 24, 2020 1:18pm

By JOVILAND RITA, GMA News

COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna could be the first ones to be made available in the country if negotiations prosper, an official of the Department of Science and Technology said Thursday.

In a public briefing, DOST–Philippine Council for Health Research Development executive director Jaime Montoya said the possibility of making available the vaccines from the two firms was based on their application for "emergency use authorization (EUA)."

“If they are going to pursue their application for the EUA in the Philippines, malamang sila ang mauuna na maging available,” Montoya said.

“That means, kung na-approve siya ng Food and Drug Administration natin, puwede na siyang maging available sa ating bansa,” he added.

Considering the negotiation process, these vaccines will be available by the second quarter of 2021 if the EUA will be issued to them on the same period, he added.

The availability of the vaccines could be earlier depending on the efforts of the negotiating teams, he noted.

Montoya said that only these two vaccine products already have the approval of a stringent regulatory authority, in this case, the US government.

Earlier, vaccine czar Carlito Galvez Jr. said that [government is targeting to secure a deal with various manufacturers by the end of 2020](#) and early January in 2021. —**LBG, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/769255/pfizer-biontech-moderna-covid-vaccines-possibly-philippines-first/story/>



Now, the health crisis threatens to undo years of gains in improving employment, reducing poverty and developing human capital as the country remains under the world's longest continuing lockdown.

Miguel De Guzman, file

## Pandemic erodes Philippine economic gains

[Czeriza Valencia](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 25, 2020 - 12:00am

### YEARENDER

MANILA, Philippines — Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine economy was already considered a rising star – one of the fastest-growing markets in Asia, with strong growth prospects, a vibrant consumption culture, and a young, skilled workforce.

Now, the health crisis threatens to undo years of gains in improving employment, reducing poverty and developing human capital as the country remains under the world's longest continuing lockdown.

Almost a year into the pandemic, the nation is still reeling from a high level of unemployment and businesses are struggling to transition to the so-called new normal.

Economic managers are pinning their hopes on the traditional increased household consumption during the holiday season to help bring the economy back to a positive growth trajectory by the first quarter of next year.

Learning from the repercussions of the reimposition of a severe lockdown in August, the government has committed to continually reopen the economy and avoid a reversal to strict quarantine.

In an effort to salvage eroding productivity and development of the country's future workforce, President Duterte also approved recently a pilot run of the resumption of face-to-face learning in areas with a low risk of viral transmission.

As the availability of a vaccine against COVID-19 for the majority of the population remains uncertain next year, Filipinos are bracing for another full year of restricted mobility, although a more lenient one, that will make recovery possible, but at great sacrifice.

Fortunately, the Philippines entered a turbulent year with a fundamentally sound economy as indicated by robust growth prospects, low unemployment and falling poverty incidence.

Likewise, a strong fiscal position, easing debt levels and respectable credit ratings gave the country enough borrowing power amid the crisis.

Economic growth averaged 6.6 percent from 2016 to 2019, positioning the country to graduate to an upper-middle income economy within the year.

However, it was not only the pandemic that contributed to the undoing of these gains on the economic front.

In January, the eruption of Taal Volcano in Batangas devastated industrial and tourism-oriented provinces south of Metro Manila.





Travel restrictions imposed worldwide to contain the new coronavirus outbreak dealt the domestic tourism sector a sharp blow when arrivals of foreign visitors contracted sharply.

And then, 75 percent of the economy was brought to a screeching halt when the country's main island of Luzon was placed under a strict lockdown for three months beginning March 16.

The enforcement of the severe enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in the country's economic powerhouse during those three months left scars that will take years to erase.

In April, unemployment reached a record high of 17.7 percent following stringent lockdown measures, translating to around 7.3 million Filipinos suddenly left without work.

By the end of the second quarter, the Philippines suffered its first recession in 29 years when the economy shrank by a record 16.9 percent.

Even when quarantine restrictions were eased by June, around 40 percent of businesses remained closed, having little financial power to continue operations or adapt to the new normal of doing business.

In August, just as surviving businesses have reopened and complied with minimum public health standards, the stricter modified ECQ was re-imposed in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal at the request of exhausted medical sector workers.

By the third quarter, the economy had contracted at a less severe but still dismal pace of 11.5 percent.

As a consequence, the country went into recession with three consecutive quarters of contraction, averaging 10 percent, prompting the government to recast in December its expectation of economic performance this year to a shrinkage of 8.5 to 9.5 percent.

In the early part of the lockdown, the government responded by providing subsidies to low-income households and wage subsidies to distressed firms.

As restrictions are eased, small firms were given access to credit and guarantees, while consumers were also given moratorium on payments for rent, utilities and consumer loans.

Awaiting passage is a law that will reduce corporate income tax and rationalize the provision of tax incentives for firms which is meant to encourage investment and job creation.

Other pending pieces of legislation intended to provide stimulus to the weary economy include those that will help banks dispose of bad loans and assets to free up money for lending, and provide equity support to strategic businesses facing insolvency.

### **Meager stimulus**

The government's economic stimulus program has been called rather "stingy" by several observers.

Several economists have commented that the country's COVID-19 response spending at \$21.65 billion as of November remains the lowest among five other economies in the region - Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The country's spending in response to the pandemic is equivalent to 5.88 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) at \$202 per capita (around P9,700) for a population of just over 100 million. The Philippine economy is worth around P18 trillion.



And indeed, the government is relying on policy, structural reform, and infrastructure development instead of aggressive stimulus to usher in recovery.

One of the reasons put forward by economic managers for prudence is the need to conserve resources because of the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic, particularly its duration and possible setbacks in vaccine development and distribution.

Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua has, in fact, described the pandemic response as being akin to “marathon” rather than a race.

Another is that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the economy and that “the economy is strong enough to recover if we enable it to do so.”

“All economic indicators reveal that with the safe relaxation of the economy, incomes and jobs come back, while with more restrictions, the reverse happens,” said Chua.

### **As if the pandemic was not enough....**

Around six powerful typhoons pummeled the country in quick succession in November, displacing thousands and causing severe flooding in some provinces that led to several deaths.

While this will not make a substantial dent on the economy, the effect manifested in rising food prices that erode the purchasing power of the poorest households.

The destruction to lives and property brought about by these floods prompted the government to consider moving more flood control projects forward as it recalibrates the list of flagship infrastructure projects.

With less than two years left for the Duterte administration’s push for its ambitious Build Build Build program, only 26 projects among the 104 in the Infrastructure Flagship Project (IFP) list are now under various preparation processes.

In July, eight slow-moving projects have already been shelved and replaced with 13 projects for connectivity, transportation, health, and those that address flooding.

The 2021 proposed national budget of P4.506 trillion— around 21.4 percent of GDP— includes P1.121 trillion for infrastructure spending. This level of spending on infrastructure will continue to raise spending in infrastructure to 5.4 percent of GDP which, Chua said, “is sufficient to make sure that the economy will rebound strongly.”

Increased spending for the government’s infrastructure build up program is seen to restore the net job loss of 1.2 million since the start of the lockdown through the creation of 1.7 million direct and indirect jobs.

### **Road to recovery**

Realizing that repeated returns to strict lockdowns significantly prevent the economy from moving forward, the government resolved to continually reopen the economy under a risk management strategy as opposed to a risk aversion strategy implemented in the early part of the pandemic.

This means that the reimposition of hard lockdowns will only be used as a last resort. In the event of spikes in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in a certain area, a localized lockdown will be enforced and health standards will be raised.

Alongside this, the capacity of the health system will be continually strengthened to restore confidence.



By next year, it is expected that the whole country will be under the modified general community quarantine (MGCQ), the most lenient among quarantine classifications.

In January, the resumption of face-to-face classes in areas with low-risk of viral transmission will be piloted with the goal of gradually restoring physical classes when restrictions are lowered.

Prolonging the use of distant learning methods such as the use of self-learning modules is seen to affect national productivity in the short and long-term as some parents stay out of the job market longer to help their children go through schooling and students themselves do not learn at the optimum level.

Also now tabled for discussion is the eventual relaxation of the age group that can be allowed to go out to help revive consumption, which was found out to be largely family-driven.

As the economy opens more and people get used to adherence to strict minimum public health standards, it is assumed that there will also be an eventual improvement in the country's labor market and poverty incidence.

Despite the still dismal unemployment level and expected spike in poverty this year, the government maintains that the target of reducing the incidence to a level of only 14 percent of the population will still be possible by 2022.

This year, poverty incidence is expected to have risen by as much as 17.5 percent. This will be confirmed when the next Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) is conducted in 2021.

Results of the last FIES in 2018 showed that poverty incidence fell to 16.6 percent in 2018 from the revised 23.3 percent in 2015. This meant some six million Filipinos were lifted out of poverty during this time.

This pertains to the proportion of Filipinos whose per capita income is not enough to meet basic food and non-food needs.

In turn, this translates to 17.6 million Filipinos living below the poverty threshold of P10,727 monthly for a family of five in 2018, the minimum income needed to satisfy basic food and non-food needs.

"The target to lift six million Filipinos out of poverty by 2022 was attained in 2018 so we had a good headstart. So we will still achieve our original target of 14 percent by 2022," said Chua.

Unemployment, meanwhile, eased to 8.7 percent in October from 10 percent in July. This was equivalent to 3.8 million Filipinos without jobs nor livelihood in October, 800,000 fewer compared with 4.6 million in July when the country was just emerging from strict lockdowns.

Poverty can be expected to rise faster in cities but the increase is expected to be tempered in the rural areas where mobility restrictions are less severe.

Falling unemployment and poverty incidence matter to businesses because this is seen as an indicator of the strength of consumption which comprises around 70 percent of the economic output.

### **Lessons from the crisis**

The pandemic has forced the fast-tracking of aggressive reforms that would have otherwise been relegated to the back burner has the crisis not happened.

The public and private sector, for instance, recognize the importance of digital transformation and have been moving to integrate it into business processes.



In the area of social assistance, the implementation of the National ID System, a foundational identification system, is now underway with around nine million Filipinos belonging to low-income households pre-registered into the system.

Having a national ID addresses one of the major barriers to financial inclusion among poor households and aids in the distribution of government assistance to target households.

It also now being discussed now it can be used in the efficient targeting and distribution of vaccines.

The pandemic also exposed the weakness of the country's health system and amplified the weakness of the transport system.

Severe lockdowns had to be prolonged and repeatedly enforced to prevent the healthcare system from collapsing.

Economic recovery in major cities, meanwhile, have been slow because of lack of sufficient public transportation.

Several projects long supported by multilateral institutions can be expected to be rolled out in the next few years to address these concerns.

With still elevated levels of infection, the Philippines is now among the countries that are highly dependent on vaccines to return to normal in contrast to others that have managed to contain the transmission and managed to return to a growth path this year.

"This Christmas season, the government has been proactive in advising people to be more careful so that we do not reverse the gains we painstakingly worked for this year," said Chua.



# Avisado assures government readiness to provide financial assistance to LGUs stricken by calamities

By DBM Published on December 24, 2020

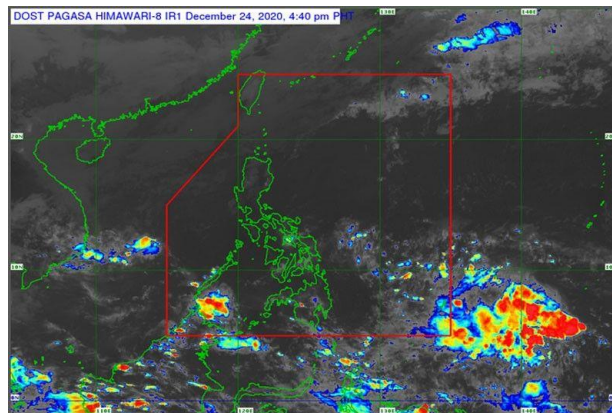
MANILA, Dec. 24 -- The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Wendel E. Avisado expressed the national government's readiness to extend help to local government units stricken by disasters and calamities. He clarified that the local calamity fund can be tapped by local government units (LGUs) for their respective rescue, relief, and rehabilitation efforts—which are derived from the Quick Response Funds—but will still be subject to request from the DBM. The local calamity fund is chargeable against the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund (NDRRMF).

"Base sa report ng Office of Civil Defense (OCD) at ng DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development) po, kukuha tayo ng pondo doon sa tinatawag na National Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Fund," he said.

The budget chief said that the financial assistance will be released to the LGUs as soon as their localities are declared under a state of calamity by the President. He added that this will go through a swift and due process as the DBM will work closely with agencies such as the OCD and the DSWD to facilitate the processing of the said requests. Should LGUs provide complete documents, the release of funds can be done within 24 hours.

"Finally dito sa level naman ng Pangulo ay aaprubahan nya tulad nung nangyari sa Quinta, Rolly, Ulysses, at bibigyan ng additional funding support ang ating mga lokal na pamahalaan," he said.

Avisado's statement came after Typhoon Vicky made landfall in Davao Oriental, which brought severe floods and landslides that heavily affected several areas in the Visayas and Mindanao and as the country continues to suffer from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. (DBM)



The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said cloud clusters in the area could form into a low-pressure area by tomorrow.

PAGASA

## Rainy Christmas in Visayas, Mindanao

[Romina Cabrera](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 25, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A low-pressure area (LPA) may develop in southern Mindanao over the weekend, the state weather bureau said yesterday.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said cloud clusters in the area could form into a low-pressure area by tomorrow.

PAGASA said the easterlies and the tail-end of a frontal system would also bring rains over parts of Mindanao, the Visayas and Palawan.

It warned the public of floods and landslides due to prolonged rains.

“Let’s be careful amid the Christmas revelry. Be alert and ready at all times,” PAGASA weather specialist Ariel Rojas said.

Davao and Cebu will experience cloudy skies and rains by weekend.

Fair weather with isolated light rains due to the northeastern monsoon or amihan will prevail in Metro Manila.

Temperature forecast is between 24 to 31 degrees Celsius.

The northeastern monsoon is affecting parts of extreme Northern Luzon. It will bring light rains over Baguio City today and tomorrow.

Fair weather is expected on Sunday.

Meanwhile, damage to agriculture in areas affected by Tropical Depression Vicky has reached P130 million.

In its latest bulletin, the Department of Agriculture-Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center said 21,008 hectares of agricultural land were damaged.

At least 16,761 farmers in Cagayan Valley, Davao and Caraga were affected. – **Louise Maureen Simeon**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2020/12/25/2066154/rainy-christmas-visayas-mindanao>



## Animal rescue

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By [WJG](#)



Rescuing abandoned cats and dogs is not easy. It entails cost, especially when the pets have injuries or medical conditions that require veterinary intervention.

So, imagine rescuing wild animals in distress.

It entails someone really resourceful. Like American pop star Cher.

The singer, actress, TV personality and animal rights campaigner recently shouldered the transfer of a 36-year-old Asian elephant languishing in the Marghazar Zoo in Islamabad, Pakistan to an elephant sanctuary in Cambodia.

It was actually a rescue as the animal named Kaavan was dubbed the world's loneliest elephant since its partner died in 2012.

Aside from living without a companion in the zoo, Kaavan was also not in good shape due to its small enclosure.

Moreover, it needed a new home as the court had ordered the zoo closed because it was being poorly maintained and thus endangering the lives of the animals.

When Cher found out, she held a fundraising concert and the proceeds she used to cover the logistics cost of Kaavan's relocation.

On 30 November, the elephant was flown to Cambodia to start its new and better life.

It was not only Kaavan that needed to be rescued.

The zoo also has resident Himalayan brown bears named Suzie and Bubaloo that were in bad health.

The bears also needed to be relocated, but this time another rich philanthropist, Princess Alia, the eldest daughter of Jordan's late King Hussein, took care of the tab.

Suzie and Bubaloo have been maltreated during training as dancers at Marghazar.

One bear's teeth were removed because it bit handlers, so it is malnourished.

Their poor living condition ended last Wednesday, 23 December, when they were flown to Jordan to live in a sanctuary 1,100 meters above sea level, so they can have a place close to their natural habitat.



And because the sanctuary has snowy and cold condition, they can hibernate in the winter.

There's another animal rescuer who amazingly did not spend a lot to save an elephant's life unlike Cher and Princess Alia.

The baby pachyderm was hit hard by a motorcycle in a rural road in Thailand last Sunday and was left lying without a heartbeat.

First responder Mana Srivate, 26, and his co-rescuers were called to the scene to help.

Srivate performed CPR on the elephant by pumping its heart.

The outcome was surprising in three ways.

First, the elephant was revived and got up 10 minutes later to be treated.

Soon, it was reunited with its mother.

Second, it was the first time that Srivate performed CPR on an elephant.

Lastly, he has performed CPR on a lot of persons and the animal was the only one that he successfully revived.