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DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR, kumpiyansa na malalagpasan ang reforestation target nito pagpasok ng 2021

By [RadyoMaN Manila](#) - Dec. 26, 2020 at 12:11pm



Target ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu na malampasan ang nakamit ngayong 2020 sa ilalim ng flagship reforestation initiative ng gobyerno.

Sa ilalim ng 2020 Enhanced National Greening Program, abot sa 45,000 hectares ng nakalabong forestland ang nataniman ng 35.6 million seedlings o katumbas ng 95-percent accomplishment para sa 2020 target na 47,166 hectares.

Noong 2019, 19,617 hectares ang nataniman ng malalaking puno, 14 percent lang ng 2018 target na 136,466.

Ayon kay Cimatu, dinodoble na nila ang mga reforestation efforts ng ahensya para mapataas ang survival rates sa mga plantation sites.

Mula 2017 hanggang 2019, pinaigting pa ang protection and maintenance efforts sa may 369,371 ENGP plantations.

Mayroon namang 5,876 peoples' organizations na nagsisilbi partners upang mapangalagaan ang mga itinanim na puno.

Source: https://rmn.ph/denr-kumpiyansa-na-malalagpasan-ang-reforestation-target-nito-pagpasok-ng-2021/?fbclid=IwAR1Iasbl0MD3eBJS20Jv5ZWGwUEX6OhIZsTkDqrPO_s2GtH_PtonR57f9w4



49 PARTNER-ORGANIZATIONS GINAWARAN NG “SPECIAL AWARDS” NG DENR



December 27, 2020 @ 12:10 AM 7 hours ago

KASABAY ng pagdiriwang ng National Volunteer Month, kinilala ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa pamamagitan ng Strategic Communications and Initiatives Service (SCIS) ang 49 na organisasyon dahil sa patuloy na pagsuporta ng mga ito sa adhikain ng ahensya.

Ayon kay DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns at SCIS Supervising Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda, mapalad ang DENR dahil sa patuloy na pagsuporta ng mga ito sa mga programa, proyekto at aktibidad ng kagawaran.

“Indeed, we have seen a spectacular turnout of volunteers in our coastal and river cleanups, tree planting and other mobilization activities,” sabi pa ni Antiporda sa ginanap na awarding ceremony sa pamamagitan ng Zoom noong Disyembre 15, 2020.

Aniya, nakuha ng institusyon ang tiwala ng mga tao at ang bawat aksyon ay nakabase sa pangangailangan at aspirasyon ng bawat mamamayan.

Bagama’t patuloy pa rin ang COVID-19 pandemic, sinabi pa ni Antiporda na ipagpapatuloy ng DENR na gampanan ang tungkulin na pangalagaan ang kapaligiran at likas na yaman at upang kilalanin ang “loyal partners” nito dahil sa kanilang pagtulong.

Ipinaliwanag pa ni Antiporda na nagiging matapang ang DENR na ipaglaban ang mga proyekto laban sa mapagsamantala dahil na rin sa tulong ng mga stakeholder.

Sa ginanap na okasyon, siyam na DENR partner-organizations ang nakatanggap ng special awards.

Para ngayong taon, nagbigay ang ahensya ng limang sets ng special awards.

Ang Gawad Mapamaraan ay ipinagkaloob sa Junior Chamber International Manila, Rotary Club of Makati-Rockwell, Colegio de San Juan de Letran, National Bicycle Organization at UST-College of Science and Simbahayan.

Ang Masigasig Award naman ay ipinagkaloob kay Landbank of the Philippines (LBP) Corporate Affairs Specialist Arnold Aldaba dahil sa pagsisikap nito na maikonekta ang DENR sa kanilang environmental programs.



Gawad Kamanggagawa naman ang naipagkaloob sa Employees Compensation Commission at ang Gawad Kawanggawa sa Kalikasan ay napunta sa HSBC Electronic Data Processing, Philippines, Inc. at sa mga volunteer nito.

Kamagong Award naman ang nakuha ng Land Bank of the Philippines dahil sa implementasyon nito ng mga programa na sumusuporta upang protektahan at i-rehabilitate ang mga watershed at iangat ang livelihood ng partner community organizations.

Ang Kamagong (*Diospyros blancoi*) ay katumbas ng “Hall of Fame”, at isang uri ito ng puno na matatagpuan lamang sa Pilipinas.

Pinagkalooban ng award na ito ang matatatawag na “resilient, adaptable, relevant at important.”

Ang National Volunteer Month ay ipinagdiriwang tuwing Disyembre base na rin sa Proclamation No. 55 series of 1998 na nag-aatas sa lahat ng departamento, ahensya at iba pang sangay ng national government units, private sector at publiko na lumahok sa mga aktibidad na gaganapin ng isang buong buwan.



Rehab recovers 'lost' Boracay, Manila Bay

By Catherine Teves December 26, 2020, 12:14 pm

MANILA – The government further pursued this year rehabilitation of world-famous tourist destination Boracay Island and historic Manila Bay, recovering the areas lost to encroachment and trash.

The anti-encroachment crackdown amid the rehabilitation in Boracay has resulted in the recovery of illegally occupied forestland, easements, and wetlands there, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

"The rule of law is paramount and law enforcement is crucial and non-negotiable," he said in an earlier virtual presser on Boracay's DENR-led rehabilitation.



(PNA file photo of Boracay and Manila Bay)

He said operations against nine establishments illegally occupying protected forestland in Boracay resulted in the filing of cases against the encroachers for violating Presidential Decree 705 (Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines) and Presidential Decree 1067 (The Water Code of the Philippines).

About 73 percent of 339 structures in Boracay complied with easement regulations, he noted.

"Of the nine wetlands there, we have recovered five -- these are wetland numbers 2,3,4,6, and 8," he said.

Recovering and restoring the wetlands are part of activities in addressing Boracay's environmental degradation, he noted.

"Wetlands are important to the island because these help reduce soil erosion and store water to minimize impacts of flooding," he said.

In April 2018, the government began Boracay Island's six-month closure so rehabilitation work can start without much interference.

The government re-opened Boracay in October that year, drawing the public's praise for rehabilitation work done there so far.

According to DENR, the government targets to finish Boracay Island's rehabilitation by May 2021.

Rehabilitation remains on track despite Boracay's temporary closure again as a precaution against coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), DENR noted.

Meanwhile, the DENR-led rehabilitation for Manila Bay includes getting rid of the bay's accumulation of trash, recover the 500 meter-long stretch of the coast bordering the baywalk area to create a white sand beach.

That will give people the opportunity of experiencing an accessible white sand beach particularly if they cannot go to Boracay Island and other destinations having such natural features, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said.

"This is a positive action, a positive image for the country especially when many people are already experiencing anxiety attacks because of Covid-19," he said.

He said the government targets to finish the project this year.

Antiporda also allayed fears the white sand beach project will harm Manila Bay's marine environment.



The project poses no environmental harm since the white sand the government is using to create the beach is not synthetic material as critics alleged but crushed dolomite boulders, he noted.

"Dolomite's content is calcium carbonate which is also found in coral reefs so the sand we're using isn't foreign to Manila Bay's marine ecosystem," he said.

He also said the environment-friendly engineering intervention in the white sand beach area will prevent erosion of crushed boulders being laid.

Resorts have been using crushed dolomite for years to create white beaches, he said.

Antiporda believes nature is positively responding to the government's on-going rehabilitation work for Manila Bay.

The rehabilitation is making Manila Bay cleaner so the area is starting to become a haven for fish again, he said.

He said increasing the availability of fish is drawing to Manila Bay egrets searching for food.

"It's unlike before when fish hardly survived in Manila Bay because of too much pollution there," he added.
(PNA)



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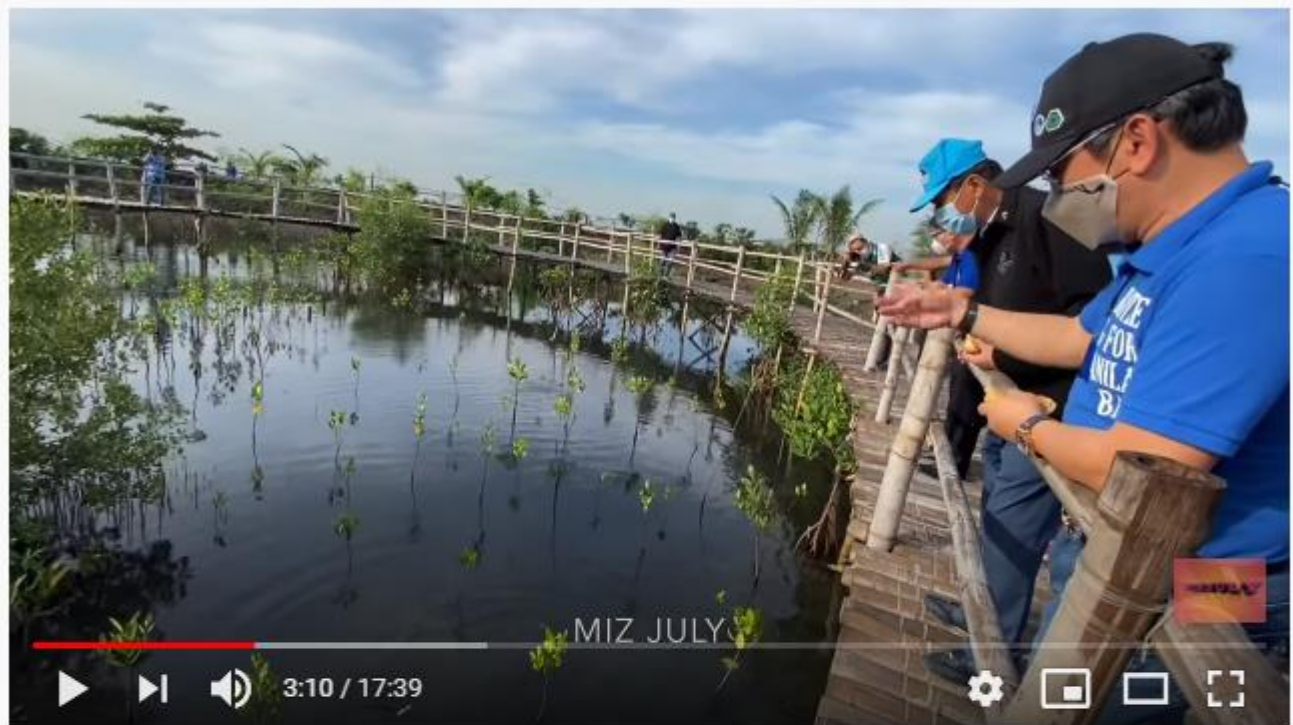


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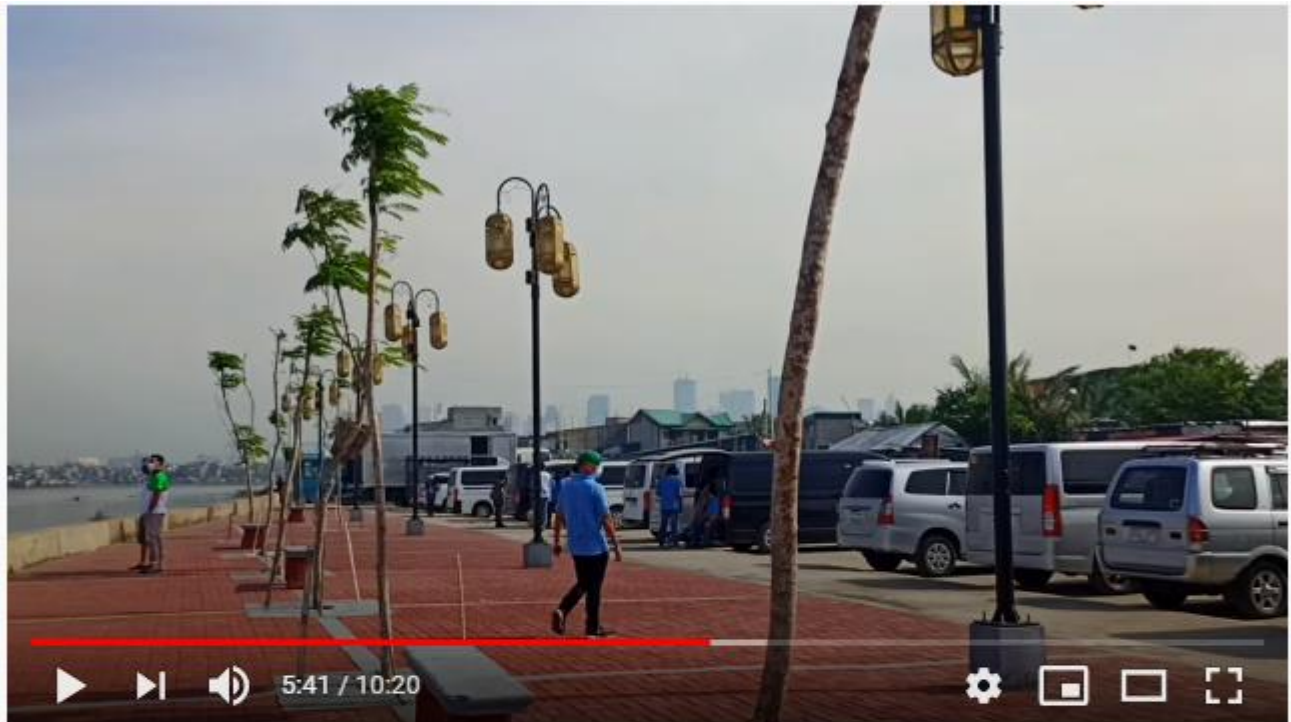
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Bodies of 6 miners yet to be found



File photo

December 27, 2020

FIVE days after the deadly landslide occurred in one of the mining pits of Carmen Copper Corp. (CCC) in Toledo City, emergency responders have decided to shift to “search and retrieval” to find the six miners who are still missing.

John Roseller Layan, Toledo City public information officer, said the search and retrieval operations began on Thursday, Dec. 25, 2020.

But as of Saturday, Dec. 26, the bodies of the missing miners had yet to be recovered, Layan said.

Still missing are Jose Carpentero, Jonwel Herediano, Simeon Laconas, John Paul Resuelo, Renante Sepada and Alfred C. Tautho.

The fatalities were identified as Junil Lagola, Ernesto Caspe, Juan Tapang and Dionisio Labang.

Meanwhile, Layan said the Toledo City Government will evacuate around 400 families or 2,000 individuals living within the 500-meter radius of the landslide site in Barangay Biga within next week.

Layan said they are now preparing the temporary evacuation center for affected families.

Aside from the evacuation center, help desks will be set up at the site to assist evacuees.

Layan said Mayor Marjorie Perales initiated evacuation efforts after geologists hired by the CCC informed them that new cracks found at the landslide site were getting bigger.

However, the cracks hadn’t expanded since then, he said, after they inspected the site on Saturday. **(ANV / JKV)**



Thousands of trees to reforest Ipo Watershed in 2021

By [BusinessMirror](#)
December 27, 2020



Ipo Watershed, together with the Angat and Umiray Watersheds, supplies 98 percent of the water requirements of Metro Manila, one of the world's most densely-populated cities with a daytime population of 20 million people.

Ipo Watershed, which supplies fresh water to 20 million people living or working in Metro Manila, will be bolstered with hundreds of thousands of new trees next year.

Through donations generated from GCash, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the United Nations Development Programme's Biodiversity Finance Initiative (Biofin) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) will plant the first of 365,000 native trees like narra, luan, kupang and yakal as soon as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted in 2021, a GCash news release said.



The DENR, GCash, Biofin and WWF aim to plant 365,000 new trees as soon as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted in 2021.

“We originally wanted to plant in mid-2020, but decided to heed lockdown guidelines to ensure public safety,” said Mabel Niala, Mynt public affairs and CSR head of GCash in the news release. GCash is the Philippines's top cashless service and serves a fifth of the country's population, plus 75,000 partner merchants and 75 nonprofits.

Using their mobile phones, users can plant trees through GCash Forest. Users earn Green Energy Points by reducing their individual carbon footprints.

Paying bills online for instance, eliminates the need to drive to a bank and consume paper for receipts and forms. More points can be garnered for walking to work, taking the stairs and avoiding single-use plastic items.

When users reach 20,560 points, his or her virtual tree will be fully-grown and a corresponding native tree shall be planted in Ipo Watershed.

Trees for water

Trees provide innumerable services for people and nature. They provide oxygen, shade, habitats, erosion-control, food, medicine and other benefits.



Sadly, they are being cut down at astronomical rates. The Philippines is losing at least 52,000 trees daily.

Logging, slash-and-burn-farming and land development are annually erasing 47,000 hectares of forestland—an area thrice the size of Quezon City. Just 7.168 million hectares of forestland remains in the Philippines.

Watersheds are zones which naturally collect and store water. They are typically heavily-vegetated because trees absorb rainwater which drains into streams, rivers and lakes.

Ipo Watershed, together with the Angat and Umiray watersheds, supplies 98 percent of Metro Manila's water needs.

Located northeast of the sprawling metropolis, it covers 7,236 hectares in Norzagaray and San Jose del Monte in Bulacan, plus Rodriguez in Rizal.

It is home to several species of charismatic animals, including the Philippine brown deer, Philippine warty pig, tarictic hornbill, grey-headed fish eagle and osprey.

Though protected by several proclamations, including a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title for the Indigenous Dumagat tribes of the watershed, Ipo Watershed is pockmarked by patches of burnt soil.

From 85 percent, forest cover plummeted to 40 percent in recent years, mostly due to slash-and-burn or kaingin farming and charcoal-making.

It is estimated that for 2021, Metro Manila's water demands will overtake supply by as much as 13 percent during peak days, meaning more dry faucets and unserved households—but taking care of watersheds can avert this, the news release said.

“GCash Forest has proven that mobile technology can generate real change for our forests,” Niala said. “Everyone can now get a chance to plant a tree through the click of a button. If you haven't tried GCash Forest yet, please download the app and help restore our forests today.”

Image credits: [Gregg Yan](#)

'With no healthy biodiversity, the fight against climate change is impossible'

By Jonathan L. Mayuga
December 27, 2020



A screenshot of the panelists at the recent ACB-Climate Change Commission webinar.

Southeast Asia is fortunate to have been blessed with rich biological diversity. Had it not been for the region's rich biodiversity and healthy ecosystem, the fight against climate change and its impacts would not have been possible.

At a recent webinar, Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) said there is no denying that climate change and its severe impacts on the environment, to people's lives and well-being are already being strongly felt in the region.

Co-organized by the ACB and the Philippines's Climate Change Commissions the webinar, dubbed "Biodiversity and Building Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change in Asean," coincided with the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement.

Highlights and relevance

Supported by the Swedbio, a program of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the webinar sought to highlight the need to incorporate nature-based solutions as part of the approach in addressing climate change. The discourse on nature-based solutions, as well as the ecosystem-based approach to climate-change adaptation, has been gaining more ground in light of the current ecological and health crises.

During the webinar, the panelists noted the discussion's relevance as the global community is developing post-2020 biodiversity targets.

The upcoming 15th Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place in 2021.

Far-reaching effect

"We can no longer keep this [climate change] to the backburner as this issue cuts across the present challenges that hound us today. The far-reaching consequences of climate change disrupt our daily lives and spank our development," Lim said.

Lim, who advocates the mainstreaming of biodiversity, said Asean countries, most especially in the past few months, have experienced stronger and more disruptive typhoons that came one after the other, leaving people dead and destroying millions worth of property.

"Climate change is one of the main culprits that drive the loss of nature," Lim said, recalling the recent climate-related disasters that hit several Asean member states.



“However, the main paradox here is that biodiversity and its ecosystem services underpin our principal solutions and efforts to tackle climate change and its impacts. Without healthy biodiversity, our fight against climate change would be an impossible feat,” she said.

Biodiversity-rich region

Lim said, fortunately, the Asean is one of the richest in terms of biological diversity.

“Occupying only 3 percent of the world’s total surface, yet it is home to almost 20 percent of the known animals and plant species in the planet,” she said.

Lim added that diverse ecosystems, such as forest and coral reefs, serve as buffers against stronger winds and weather disturbances.

“Sustainably managed mangroves and coastal areas help defend communities against storm surges. All these support livelihood, health and well-being, and build resilience of the people of the Asean,” she said.

Lim said the webinar is an excellent opportunity to exchange perspectives, insight and knowledge on ecosystem-based adaptation and biodiversity as nature-based solution to climate change.

Well-timed event

UK Ambassador to Asean Jon Lambe said the webinar is a well-timed event and equally crucial to the next year’s events—the 15th Conference of the Convention on Biodiversity and later in the UK, the 26th Conference of the Parties.

Lambe said the UK is “incredibly committed” to next year’s events and has created the Global Ocean Alliance, spearheading the call of 30 countries for greater ocean protection.

The Global Ocean Alliance is championing an international commitment for a minimum 30 percent of the global ocean to be protected through Marine Protected Areas by 2030.

Important region

Lambe said Asean is a particularly important region given its relatively small area in the planet.

“It is an incredibly vibrant and biodiversity-rich part of the world. Three of the most biodiversity-rich countries, and four of the world’s biodiversity hot spots are here,” he said.

Lambe underscored the need for government and leaders across the globe to work together to protect and conserve biodiversity, particularly in the Asean.

“There is a huge need for us to work together to protect the biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change in this region,” he said.

Highly vulnerable

The Philippines remain highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, experiencing an average of 20 typhoons every year. It is also experiencing heavy rainfall that trigger geological hazards, such as floods and landslides.

Assistant Secretary for Climate Change Ricardo Calderon said the Philippines is already experiencing what experts have predicted to happen because of climate change.



“Five typhoons hit the country. Despite the well-managed protected areas with an average forest cover of 75 percent, there is still flooding, there is swelling of the rivers, which simply means that our natural ecosystem cannot anymore absorb this kind of extreme rainfall and typhoon events,” said Calderon, a forestry expert and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) director.

The impact to the community, to the natural resources, including wildlife, is very severe and very difficult to recover, he added.

Rich biodiversity, healthy ecosystems

According to Calderon, Asean hosts 20 percent of the world’s biodiversity and possesses exceptionally healthy and beautiful ecosystems.

“We have 49 Asean heritage parks and five Unesco [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] World Heritage Sites all over the region. The region’s biodiversity serves as the most important gene pool of rare and endemic species,” he said.

As such, he said the Asean, including the Philippines, stands to lose these resources as they are constantly being threatened by climate change.

“Climate change has seriously impacted our biodiversity. Basically the collapse of this natural ecosystem threatens our sources of food, our sources of clean water, our clean air, including medicines, our defense against natural hazards, our natural defense mangroves forests and reefs,” Calderon said.

“Once they are damaged, they would practically put our lives in danger and that is what we have experienced in the last series of typhoons,” he said.

Catastrophic events

According to Calderon, the 1.5-degree global threshold set by leaders under the Paris Agreement, a point of no return as the world will be experiencing catastrophic weather and climate events, are already being felt as far as the Philippines is concerned.

“Are we doing the right thing as far as adaptation and mitigation that we are currently implementing? To both the government and the private sector, the [answer] is we should,” he said.

Calderon added: “We should be moving more than enough on the intervention on the mitigation that is currently ongoing. We need the investment coming from the private sector along this line.”

“Are we ready to declare a climate emergency? In my personal opinion, we are already in the middle of a climate emergency,” he pointed out.

Under immense pressure

Von Sok, head of Environment Division, assistant director of the Sustainable Development Directorate, Asean Socio-Cultural Community Department of the Asean Secretariat, said while the region is rich in biodiversity it is also under immense pressure and threat over land use, invasion of exotic species and of the increasingly devastating impact of climate change.

This underpins the need to look at the linkage between biodiversity and climate change, he said.



“Climate change becomes a significant driver of biodiversity loss by the end of the century,” he warned.

He added that such interconnection between biodiversity and climate change is reciprocal.

“Several interactions result in degradation. One adversely affects the other caused by the human-induced factor or stress factor,” he said.

In recognition of these linkages, the global community has focused on how to incorporate biodiversity protection to climate action and vice versa, he said.

“The discourse around the nature-based solution and ecosystem-based adaptation has subsequently emerged as a possible solution toward climate sustainability and one of the main focused area of upcoming future meetings,” he said.

Wrong way

Tristan Tyrrell, program officer of SwedBio at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, said recent reports are showing that “trends are going in the wrong way when it comes to climate change,” as the gaps between commitments and action to achieve the Paris targets of reducing greenhouse-gases (GHG) emissions are widening.

“As devastating as the impacts of Covid-19 have been, some scenarios suggest that it will have a positive impact in terms of global GHG emissions,” Tyrrell said.

“We could use this opportunity as what has been called, ‘the great reset,’ to ramp up positive ecosystem-based actions in climate-change adaptation and mitigation,” he said.

Inclusive global economy

Dr. Isabelle de Lovinfosse, head of Southeast Asia Conference of the Parties to the 26th meeting of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of the British High Commission Strategy, mentioned that “as the world recovers from the coronavirus pandemic, we owe it to future generations to base our recovery on solid foundations.”

This includes “a greener, more resilient and inclusive global economy,” he said.

Appropriate and effective national policies and programs on climate actions are central to building resilience, he said.

In a recorded presentation, Dr. Nagulendran Kangayatkarasu, deputy secretary-general of Malaysia Ministry of Environment and Water, discussed how Malaysia has prioritized its Nationally Determined Contributions, and how the country is working toward them through supporting various adaptation measures.

In Indonesia, Krissusandi Gunui, executive director of Institut Dayakologi, shared that the knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples and local communities are significant in strengthening climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation.

Image credits: [ACB](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/12/27/with-no-healthy-biodiversity-the-fight-against-climate-change-is-impossible/>



Turtle hatchlings released to sea in Noveleta, Cavite

By [Dennis Abrina](#)

December 27, 2020

NOVELETA, Cavite: The Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (Menro) here has released 58 turtle hatchlings to the sea from Sitio Longbeach, Barangay San Rafael 4 on December 24.



Cavite First District Board member Davey Chua and his two sons lead the release of the 58 newly hatched sea turtles at Sitio Longbeach, San Rafael 4, Noveleta, Cavite on Dec. 24, 2020. PHOTO BY DENNIS ABRINA

Ed Chavez, head of Noveleta Menro, led the release of the turtle hatchlings with Cavite First District Board Member Davey Chua and Arriane Mugol from the Cavite Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office.

“We give utmost importance to nature and the animals that live in its natural habitat. With the help of Mayor Dino Chua here at Sitio Longbeach, the coastal waters remain clean and could even breed the rare sea turtles that we now release to the sea.” Chavez said in Filipino.

On December 5, village residents discovered 128 sea turtle eggs on the shore and informed the local authorities for its safe keeping. Early this year, 44 leatherback sea turtles were also released to the sea.



Conserve and protect Antique Rice Terraces, Legarda urges NCCA

Published December 26, 2020, 9:46 AM

by [Charissa Luci-Atienza](#)

Antique Lone District Rep. Loren Legarda has called on the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) to ensure the conservation and preservation of the Antique Rice Terraces of the Iraynon-Bukidnon as country's important cultural heritage.



Deputy Speaker and Antique Rep. Loren Legarda (Congresswoman Loren Legarda Official Facebook Page / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

Legarda, also a House deputy speaker, said the government should ensure that the Antique Rice Terraces, which is located in the central mountain areas in her home province, is protected and preserved "for the sake of current and future generations."

"Antique Rice Terraces, its flora and fauna, and the cultural heritage therein can be considered as one of the national cultural treasures of the country that deserves conservation and protection of the State," she said.

The House leader filed House Resolution No. 1435 directing the NCCA and other relevant government agencies to ensure the conservation and preservation of the terraces.

She noted that Iraynon-Bukidnon, one of the indigenous peoples' groups in the province and which has a rich cultural heritage, remains the steward of the Antique Rice Terraces.

"They are able to keep and practice their unique agricultural practices, which they continue to pass on to the younger generation of their community," she said.

Legarda said that under Republic Act No. 10066, the National Heritage Act of 2009, the NCCA and its attached cultural agencies are mandated to "protect, preserve, conserve, and promote the nation's cultural heritage, its property and histories, and the ethnicity of local communities."

"While the public attention to Antique Rice Terraces will entail progress and development in the field of tourism and economy in the area, it may however endanger its environmental and cultural state," the former senator said.

"The Antique Rice Terraces, together with the ethnicity of Iraynon-Bukidnon, are part of our cultural heritage that deserve our recognition, protection, preservation, and conservation through the appropriate government agencies," she said.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/12/26/conserv-and-protect-antique-rice-terraces-legarda-urges-ncca/>



UP researchers develop low-cost air-quality monitor

By [BusinessMirror](#)
December 27, 2020



The latest version of aerosol monitor unit developed by the University of the Philippines Diliman.

A low-cost, high-quality aerosol monitors to help find ways in minimizing air pollution in the cities was developed in the Philippines.

Spearheaded by Dr. Len Herald V. Lim of University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD), the Robust Optical Aerosol Monitor (Project ROAM) was initiated to measure particulate matter concentration in the air.

It provides crucial information for policies and programs for environmental protection.

“ROAM units use a different method in detecting particles that does not require the manufacture/fabrication of specialized parts typical of contemporary commercial instrumentation. This allows a much lower production cost, smaller maintenance requirement, and an exclusive research chain,” Lim said.

Lim and other researchers from UPD, in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development, have developed the project, the DOST-PCIEERD said in a news release.

The team has already produced 10 optical aerosol monitors. Four of them have been verified for performance through collocation experiments with aerosol equipment used by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its agency, the Environment management Bureau.

The remaining six optical aerosol monitors are being tested for performance and will be subject for stricter collocation experiments.

The ROAM team is currently exploring the creation of a spin-off company through DOST-PCIEERD's Funding Assistance for Spinoff and Translation of Research in Advancing Commercialization program to help advance the commercialization of their technology and bring this citizen science project to the community.

DOST-PCIEERD executive director Dr. Enrico C. Paringit expressed hope that the technology can be adopted by local government units who want to improve their area's air quality through scientific means, the news release said.



“As leader and partner in enabling innovations, we encourage our researchers for coming up with cutting-edge solutions to solve major environmental and societal issues. This technology is one significant stride in our path towards improving air quality. Now is a good time to cooperation with our innovators, adopt this solution to protect our future,” Paringit said.

Image credits: [PCIEERD photo](#)



CSOs express dismay over PH commitment vs GHG emissions

Published December 26, 2020, 12:50 PM

by [Ellalyn de Vera-Ruiz](#)

Civil society organizations have expressed their discontent on the country's unambitious proposed commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to address climate change.

They were citing the Climate Change Commission's (CCC) presentation of the country's three-page draft Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) text on Dec. 23.

In the latest version, the Philippines aims to reduce its GHG emissions by 30 percent by 2040 from its business-as-usual scenario (2020-2040), with at least two percent of these reductions to be done unconditionally.

The groups highlighted that the reduction of 30 percent of GHG by 2040 is much lower than what it has committed to reduce in its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution or INDC in 2015. The Philippines then had committed to reduce by 70 percent its carbon emissions by 2030 to achieve a below two degrees Celsius increase in global temperatures.

The draft NDC also presented aspirational targets of emissions peaking by 2030 and at least 15,000 megawatts of additional renewable energy capacity by 2030.

"We express our extreme concern, disappointment, and collective scorn with the latest draft NDC text, as it does not indicate sufficiently high ambition for the Philippines' climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and undermines the 'whole-of-government-and-society' approach that the Philippine government itself has been implementing in pursuit of sustainable development," said Aksyon Klima Pilipinas convenor Rodne Galicha.

"After hearing the presentations during the NDC consultation, we realized that there are many aspects of the NDC that we need to understand with our members. Hence, we are requesting a copy of the full NDC and we ask to be given more time to study it more thoroughly," said Dr. Angelina Galang, president of Green Convergence for Safe Food, Healthy Environment and Sustainable Economy.

Meanwhile, Global Catholic Climate Movement-Pilipinas (GCCM-Pilipinas) reminded the Philippine government of its moral duty to the Filipino people in inclusively engaging the marginalized and vulnerable sectors in the finalization process of the NDC.

"Collective action is indeed necessary but it is on a higher moral ground to genuinely consult and hear the voices of grassroots communities and peoples organizations who were and will be affected by the climate crisis," said Bro. John Din, national coordinator of GCCM-Pilipinas.

Aksyon Klima, Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ), Youth Strike 4 Climate Philippines (YS4CPh), Green Convergence, Green Thumb Coalition (GTC), and Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) outlined calls to a meaningful and highly ambitious commitment.

"Not to compromise quality, we demand that the final version of the NDC be made public before submission after undergoing an inclusive and transparent process with stakeholders in the remaining time for finalization with a peaking year for the Philippines's GHG emissions to be set way before 2030," Galicha said.

The groups also called for setting "target limits to the production and consumption of fossil fuels by 2030 and 2050, with a peaking year for coal being set much earlier than other fossil fuels."



Furthermore, they called “for the integration of the interlinkages between climate change mitigation options and cross-cutting issues with implications on enhancing adaptation, such as poverty alleviation, gender, health, education, biodiversity loss, pandemic, and youth development into the finalized first NDC.”

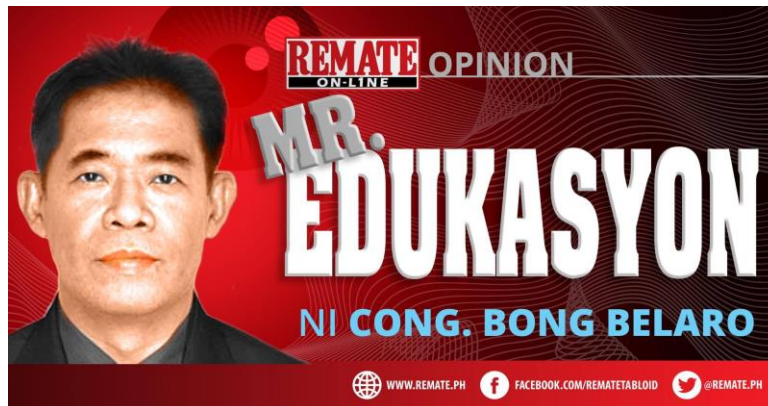
When the Philippines ratified the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, the Philippine government set forth a country-defined timeline to submit the first NDC before 2020.

Pursuant to the mandates under the Climate Change Act, as amended, and the General Appropriations Act, the CCC is leading and coordinating the development and finalization process of the country’s NDC.

NDCs are actions that parties to the Paris Agreement plan to undertake to address climate change, most importantly to limit global temperature rise to well below two degrees and even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.



SUPPORTAHAN ANG KAPAKANAN NG SIKLISTA



December 27, 2020 @ 12:15 AM 7 hours ago

NAIS ko munang bigyang-pugay ang Sangguniang Panglunsod ng Quezon City sa kanilang hangaring mapaganda ang kalagayan ng ating mga kababayang siklista sa pamamagitan ng kanilang QC Safe Cycling and Active Transport Ordinance na inakda ni 2nd District Councilor Fernando Miguel “Mikey” Belmonte.

Bahagi po ng ordinansang isinusulong ni Kon. Belmonte ang pagnanais na ipatupad ng sanggunian ang malawakang polisiyang susuporta sa active transport.

Sa pamamagitan po nito, mabibigyan ng convenience at karampatang suporta ang mga siklista na madalas maglibot sa Quezon City at upang ma-promote ang pagpapalakas ng katawan gayundin na maibsan ang paglala ng polusyon para protektahan ang lungsod.

Bukod pa rito, lilikha rin ng ordinansa ang Bicycle and Active Transport Section o BATS sa ilalim ng Department of Public Order and Safety-Green Transport Office.

Mangunguna po ang BATS sa pagsusuri at pagdidisenyo ng mainam na “network” ng mga daanan para sa mga bisikleta at para sa mga naglalakad upang mapabuti ang imprastruktura at traffic engineering sa lungsod at pagdisenyo ng mobile app sa pag-navigate ng mga siklista.

Kabilang din sa nasabing ordinansa ang pagpapatayo ng mga karagdang 90 kilometrong bike lanes sa lungsod, gayundin ang paglalagay ng hydration facilities, rest at repair stations, at parking stations sa mga rutang ito.

Sa naturang panukala, na inaprubahan sa 3rd reading, magpapatayo rin ng mga changing room at shower facility sa buong lungsod bilang suporta sa ating mga siklista.

Kasalukuyan po ang masusing pakikipag-ugnayan ng lokal na pamahalaan sa iba’t ibang cycling group katulad na lamang ng Cycling Matters, Electric Kick Scooter PH, United Bikers’ Marshalls, Greenpeace Philippines, at Kalyetista upang magdevelop ng mga nasabing plano at upang maisakatuparan nang maayos ang nabanggit na panukala.

Nawa’y mapalawak at gayahin pa ng ibang mga siyudad ang magandang hangarin ng lokal na pamahalaan ng QC na maiangat ang kapakanan ng ating mga siklista bilang suporta sa kanilang hanay ngayong patuloy silang dumarami sa buong bansa.



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Para sa inyong komento o sumbong, maaari po kayong tumawag o mag-text sa ating 1-Ang Edukasyon Party-list Hotline: 0927.930.25.81 at makakaasa po kayo sa agarang tugon ng inyong mga mensahe.



Malabon Zoo humingi ng tulong ngayong pandemic



December 26, 2020 @ 5:00 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Humingi ng tulong at donasyon ang Malabon Zoo para pakainin ang mga hayop na naapektuhan din ng pandemya.

Ayon kay Malabon Zoo Founder Manny Tangco, nauubusan na ng pondo ang zoo mula nang magsara ito 10 buwan na ang nakaraan dahil sa COVID-19 pandemic. **Jojo Rabulan**





Ideally, it should be medical persons that should focus on the new strain, President Rodrigo Duterte said during a meeting with Cabinet members and infectious disease experts at Malacañang yesterday.

Ace Morandante/Presidential Photo

Duterte wants new task force on COVID-19 variant

[Christina Mendez](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 27, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — President Duterte yesterday said he wants the creation of a new task force composed of medical experts to deal with the new coronavirus strain.

“Ideally, it should be medical persons that should focus on the new strain, Duterte said during a meeting with Cabinet members and infectious disease experts at Malacañang yesterday.

He added that the government should not be complacent and that it should “treat the virus as a deadly disease that could be entering the Philippines.”

During the meeting, health experts said that while the new strain is more contagious, there is still no evidence that it is more virulent.

Placing the country under the strictest lockdown measures is also possible if the new COVID strain from the UK spreads in the Philippines, according to the President.

“We will treat the new strain like we treat COVID-19. If it is toxic and virulent, we will respond accordingly and it might be a lockdown if things get worse,” he said.

Duterte added that the decision would depend on the severity of the cases and the number of people infected by the new variant.

‘No vaccine, no VFA’

Meanwhile, the President challenged the US government to facilitate the Philippines’ acquisition of vaccines from Pfizer.

Duterte demanded at least 20 million doses of coronavirus vaccines from the US to stop the termination of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

“If they don’t deliver, then they better get out,” he said during the same meeting.

Duterte ordered the abrogation of the long-standing defense agreement between the Philippines and the US last February.

“No vaccine, no stay here,” he said.

Duterte later extended the suspension of the termination of the VFA until the end of the year.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/12/27/2066481/duterte-wants-new-task-force-covid-19-variant>



Pinas babalik sa mas mahigpit na quarantine

By [Ludy Bermudo](#)(Pilipino Star Ngayon) - December 27, 2020 - 12:00am



Dahil dito ipinanukala na ng OCTA research team sa pamahalaan na kapag pumalo sa 4,000 ang COVID case sa isang araw ay kailangang ibalik sa mas mahigpit na quarantine protocols ang mga lugar na makikitaan ng mataas na kaso ng nakamamatay na virus.

Kung papalo ang COVID-19 case sa 4K/araw

MANILA, Philippines — Nagbabala na ang grupo ng mga eksperto na posibleng bumalik ang Pilipinas sa mas mahigpit na quarantine classification dahil sa pinangangambahang tumaas pa ang COVID-19 pagkatapos ng kapaskuhan.

Dahil dito ipinanukala na ng OCTA research team sa pamahalaan na kapag pumalo sa 4,000 ang COVID case sa isang araw ay kailangang ibalik sa mas mahigpit na quarantine protocols ang mga lugar na makikitaan ng mataas na kaso ng nakamamatay na virus.

Una rito, sinabi ni Philippine College of Physicians vice president Dr. Maricar Limpin na aminado raw ang grupo ng mga doktor kasama ang Department of Health (DoH) at OCTA Research team na pagkatapos ng holiday season ay posibleng umakyat sa mahigit 4,000 ang magiging kaso ng COVID araw-araw.

Paliwanag ni Limpin, sa mga nakaraang linggo kasi ay kitang-kita ang pagbuhos ng mga tao sa mga pasyalan, simbahan, maging sa mga malls.

Aniya, hindi raw nasusunod ang mga health protocols sa mga matataong lugar lalo na ang physical distancing.

Para kay Limpin, kahit ibalik sana sa modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) sa loob ng dalawang linggo pagkatapos ng holiday season ang quarantine protocol para matiyak na hindi na kakalat ang virus.

“Siguro two weeks para medyo lang maano natin sa mga tao na kailangan bumalik tayo sa standards natin, kasi nakakalimot ang mga tao. Akala nila sa Pasko ay safe na para tayo magsama-sama muli,” aniya.

Kasalukuyang nakalagay sa GCQ ang Metro Manila, Batangas, Iloilo City, Tacloban, Iligan, Lanao del Sur, Davao City at Isabela habang ang iba pang lugar ay nasa MGCQ.



Kung maalala noong Agosto 4 hanggang 18 nang ibalik sa MECQ ang Metro Manila matapos umangal noon ang mga medical frontliners dahil sa rami ng kanilang mga pasyente araw-araw na tinamaan ng nakamamatay na sakit.

Samantala, sinabi naman ni Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, magpupulong muna ang Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) para pag-usapan kung ibabalik na sa mas mahigpit na quarantine level ang bansa.



LGUs maaaring bumili ng sariling suplay ng bakuna

By [Mer Layson](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - December 27, 2020 - 12:00am



Kinumpirma ni Department of the Interior and Local Government Undersecretary at Spokesperson Jonathan Malaya, na may ilang LGUs na ang naglalaan ng sarili nilang pondo upang makabili rin ng bakuna laban sa COVID-19.

MANILA, Philippines — Maaari umanong bumili ang mga local government units (LGUs) ng sarili nilang suplay ng COVID-19 vaccines para sa kanilang mga constituents na hindi kasama sa priority population ng ikinakasang vaccination program ng national government sa susunod na taon.

Kinumpirma ni Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary at Spokesperson Jonathan Malaya, na may ilang LGUs na ang naglalaan ng sarili nilang pondo upang makabili rin ng bakuna laban sa COVID-19.

Sinabi ni Malaya na maaari naman itong gawin ng mga LGUs ngunit dapat siguruhing ang mga mabibili nilang bakuna ay aprubado ng Food and Drugs Administration (FDA).

“Kumabaga kung gusto pa nila ng dagdag na constituents nila na hindi priority, puwede po silang bumili at i-vaccinate ang kanilang constituents,” paliwanag pa ni Malaya.

Kabilang sa mga prayoridad na mabigyan ng bakuna laban sa COVID-19 ay medical frontliners, senior citizens, vulnerable individuals, indigents at mga uniformed personnel.

Sa kasalukuyan ay nakapag-secure na ang pamahalaan ng 2.6 milyong doses ng bakuna mula sa British drugmaker na AstraZeneca, at inaasahang darating ito sa bansa sa ikalawang bahagi ng 2021.

Inaasahan din ng pamahalaan na makakabili ng bakuna mula sa Sinovac Biotech ng China at posibleng una umano itong dumating sa bansa sa unang bahagi ng 2021.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2020/12/27/2066474/lgus-maaaring-bumili-ng-sariling-suplay-ng-bakuna/amp/>



Pfizer, nag-apply ng emergency use ng COVID-19 vaccine sa PH – Palasyo

By **Bombo Bam Orpilla** -December 27, 2020 | 1:13 AM

Inanunsyo ng Malacañang na naghain na ng aplikasyon ang Pfizer-BioNTech ng emergency use authorization (EUA) para sa kanilang bakuna sa Pilipinas.

Sa isang pahayag, sinabi ni Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque na kinumpirma ni Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Director-General Eric Domingo na naghain na ng EUA ang Pfizer noong Disyembre 23.

Aabutin naman aniya ng 21 araw ang isasagawang ebalwasyon ng FDA bago aprubahan ang naturang aplikasyon.

“It will take FDA 21 days to evaluate and approve the EUA but vaccination would start as soon as stocks become available,” ani Roque.

Ang American pharmaceutical firm ang kauna-unahang naghain ng EUA sa bansa makaraang ihayag noon ng FDA na wala pang nag-a-apply sa kanila para sa COVID-19 vaccine.

Samantala, sa naging ulat naman nito sa Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, ipinaliwanag ni Domingo na ang mga bakunang inaprubahan ng stringent regulatory authority ay kinakailangan na lamang magsumite ng kaunting mga requirements.

“Pag naman po galing sa stringent regulatory authority... minimal na lang po ‘yung additional requirements natin. Ano na lang po stability sa Pilipinas, sa kilima natin, and of course some information lang po sa clinical trial nila... na ‘yung efficacy niya and safety in an Asian population is also similar to the general population,” anang opisyal.



Catholic faithfuls fall in line while filling up contact tracing forms as they celebrate the anticipated Christmas mass at the San Felipe Neri Parish in Mandaluyong City on Dec. 24, 2020.

The STAR/Miguel de Guzman

Coronavirus cases in the Philippines top 469,000 with 1,406 new infections

(Philstar.com) - December 26, 2020 - 4:00pm

MANILA, Philippines — The health department on Saturday reported another 1,406 COVID-19 infections, pushing the national caseload to a grim 469,005.

Of the total cases recorded, 28,883 — or 6.2% are active, which means these patients are still undergoing quarantine or treatment.

Recovered patients are at 431,055, after 266 more people were reported to have survived the deadly virus.

However, health authorities logged 5 new fatalities, bringing the country's total death toll to 9,067.

The Philippines' positivity rate currently stands 6.6%. This is based on the 10,336 number of people tested before 12 p.m. the day previous, 680 of whom tested positive.

The following areas posted the most number of cases per the health department's latest bulletin:

- Bulacan with 100 new cases
- Quezon City with 98 more infections
- Rizal with 88 new cases
- Laguna with 73 more infections
- Batangas with 69 new cases

In a push to curb the predicted spike in cases amid the holiday season, government officials have been urging the public to avoid traditional holiday gatherings and hold virtual parties instead.

On Christmas Day, the DOH logged 1,885 new coronavirus infections — the highest of the week.

President Rodrigo Duterte on Wednesday ordered the suspension of flights from the United Kingdom from December 24 to December 31 amid mounting concerns over a new strain of coronavirus that emerged in the United Kingdom which experts fear to be more contagious than the original. Duterte will also hold a meeting with the COVID-19 task force on Saturday to discuss the alarming development.

The DOH said that while the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine had not detected any new variant of the coronavirus, surveillance of circulating strains will be ramped up.



The British virus variant — which Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said "may be up to 70% more transmissible than the original version of the disease" — has already been detected in Rome, Denmark, Netherlands, Australia, and most recently in France. More than 50 countries have imposed travel restrictions on the UK.

Worldwide, 79.79 million people have contracted coronavirus, a stunning 1.74 million of whom have died as a result.

It has been 286 days since parts of the Philippines were first placed under lockdown.

— **Bella Perez-Rubio with reports from Xave Gregorio and Agence France-Press**



Prioritize water security in pandemic recovery

[Czeriza Valencia](#) (The Philippine Star) - December 26, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Economies in Asia and the Pacific are urged to put water security at the top of their pandemic recovery agenda as it is the one of the first lines of defenses against the transmission of COVID-19 and other diseases, according to a new flagship report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The Asian Water Development Outlook 2020 (AWDO) said despite achievements in the water sector in the region over the last few decades, 1.5 billion people living in rural areas and 600 million in urban areas still lack adequate water supply and sanitation.

Of the 49 ADB regional members, 27 face serious water constraints on economic development, and 18 are yet to sufficiently protect their inhabitants against water-related disasters.

The report noted improvements in the Philippine water system in the past several years, but noted that it is among the countries in the region where water service availability is an issue as there are some cities where water tariffs represent more than 10 percent of annual income of middle quintile households.

“The need for water security is even more urgent due to the COVID-19 pandemic because access to water, sanitation, and hygiene offers the primary line of defense against the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases. Far too many people across Asia and the Pacific continue to suffer from limited access to these vital services,” said ADB president Masatsugu Asakawa.

“The new AWDO edition serves as a tangible and reliable knowledge resource for ADB’s developing members as they address the multifaceted challenges of water security,” he said.

The report cited the need for countries to drastically increase their investment in water, sanitation, and other water-related infrastructure and services by mobilizing all public, private and innovative financing.

Financing is also needed to enable and sustain good governance, which requires efficient water-related organizations with sufficient capacity and financial resources to enable them to provide coherent policies, monitor and evaluate progress.

The report also urges countries to put water supply at the center of sustainable rural development by promoting water-effective irrigation agriculture, community-based water and sanitation services.

Countries are also urged to achieve urban water security by investing in water, sanitation, and disaster risk reduction infrastructure services not only in cities, but also in slums and peripheral areas.

To improve the region’s water security, ADB has programmed more than \$6 billion in financial and technical assistance between 2020 and 2022 to support safe water supply, sanitation and wastewater measures.

More than \$2 billion, meanwhile, is programmed for flood risk management in the same period—together with tailored knowledge services that promote innovation and forge partnerships.



The National Economic and Development Authority announced recently that the list of flagship infrastructure projects is now recalibrated with the intention of moving more flood control and water supply projects forward.

The Public-Private Partnership Center also announced that more bulk water supply PPPs are progressing at the local level.



Duterte to sign 2021 budget bill on Monday – Go

By Javier Joe Ismael

December 26, 2020

SEN. Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go has assured that President Rodrigo Duterte will sign the P4.5-trillion national budget for 2021 on Monday, Dec. 28, 2020, in Malacañang but disclosed that he was expected to veto some items.

“So, siya [President Duterte] mismo po ay very much concerned na mapasa po ‘yong budget at mapirmahan na po niya na by January 1 meron na po tayong working budget (So he [President Duterte] himself is very concerned that the budget is signed, so that by January 1 we would have a working budget),” said Go, a long-time ally of the President and former top Palace aide.

He said the President is himself in a hurry to have the budget before January 1, so we can fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic, help the people, buy things, medical equipment, and the vaccine.

The Chief Executive was supposed to sign the budget measure in Davao City but cut short his stay to be back in Manila to meet members of the pandemic task force and other health experts on Saturday.

The 2021 national budget is expected to provide more funds for the government’s pandemic response as well as for efforts to bounce back from the harsh economic impact of the public health crisis.

Go, vice chairman of the Senate finance committee, said the 2021 national budget includes allocations for the procurement of medicines and vaccines against SARS-CoV-2, the virus strain that causes Covid-19.

Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. shared that Duterte has vetoed some items but refused to disclose what these were. According to Roque, the Department of Budget and Management has long prepared its recommendations to the President regarding the 2021 budget.

Sen. Juan Edgardo “Sonny” Angara said the 2021 budget includes a P70-billion allocation for the purchase of vaccines, its storage, transportation and distribution.

The Department of Education gets the biggest chunk of the 2021 national budget with P708.18 billion, followed by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) with P694.82 billion.

The Department of Health, which is tasked to procure the vaccines next year, will get the third largest share of the budget with P287.47 billion.

The other agencies that complete the top 10 recipients of public funds next year are as follows: Department of the Interior and Local Government, P247.50 billion; Department of National Defense, P205.47 billion; Department of Social Welfare and Development, P176.65 billion; Department of Transportation, P87.44 billion; Judiciary, P44.10 billion; and Department of Labor and Employment, P36.60 billion.

Among the senators, only Sen. Panfilo Lacson voted against the bicameral committee report on the 2021 national budget, citing the questionable increase in the DPWH’s budget.



LPA to bring rains, thunderstorms over Metro Manila, other areas

Published December 26, 2020 5:05pm

By JOAHNA LEI CASILAO, GMA News

The trough of a low pressure area (LPA) is expected to bring cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms over Metro Manila and seven other areas, according to PAGASA on Saturday.

In its 24-hour forecast, the weather agency said CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, the Bicol Region, the Zamboanga Peninsula, Caraga, and Eastern and Western Visayas are also affected.

PAGASA warned affected residents of possible flash floods or landslides during moderate to heavy rains.

At 3 p.m. on Saturday, an LPA was estimated at 185 kilometers east of Guiuan, Eastern Samar while another LPA was estimated at 135 kilometers north-northwest of Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur.

PAGASA previously said both LPAs are [not likely to become tropical depressions](#).

Meanwhile, the northeast monsoon is expected to bring cloudy skies with light rains over the Cagayan Valley, the Cordillera Administrative Region, and Aurora.

It may also bring partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated light rains over the Ilocos Region and the rest of Central Luzon.

The rest of the country may, meanwhile, experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

[PAGASA](#) said flash floods or landslides are also possible during severe thunderstorms.

The synoptic station at the Science Garden, Quezon City recorded a minimum temperature of 22.8°C at 6:40 a.m. and a maximum temperature of 32.6°C at 1:50 p.m. **-MDM, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/weather/769455/lpa-to-bring-rains-thunderstorms-over-metro-manila-other-areas/story/>



LATEST

NIA: Magat Dam not fully responsible in Cagayan flooding

Published 17 hours ago on December 26, 2020 01:35 PM

By [TDT](#) [@tribunephil](#)



The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) on Saturday disclosed that the recent flooding in Cagayan Valley is not wholly attributed to Magat Dam located in the Municipality of Ramon, Isabela.

To recall, the dam was pinpointed as the culprit in the widespread flooding within the Cagayan Valley Region especially in Central Isabela and in the entire stretch of the lower Cagayan River System down to Aparri, Cagayan during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses in Luzon in November.

The NIA stressed that the recent flooding in some parts of Cagayan Province cannot be wholly attributed to Magat Dam because it was an effect of the Frontal System and Amihan enhanced by Tropical Depression Vicky.

It added that the inflow and outflow experienced on 19 December 2020 is lesser by half of the inflow and outflow of Typhoon Ulysses and even without spillage from the Magat Dam, flooding was already experienced in portions of Cagayan, which affected 219 farmers comprising 213 hectares of agricultural land in Cagayan Province, while MARIIS recorded 2,670 hectares of the affected area.

NIA Administrator Ricardo R. Visaya stood firm that the recent flooding in the Province of Cagayan and some portions of Isabela was caused by natural calamities that are beyond human control, contrary to the statements of Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura which accused NIA of failing twice in dam water release.

Magat River Basin is only one of the 20 river systems within the Cagayan River Basin and studies have shown that Magat Dam contributes only 15 percent of the river basin's total water storage capacity and 21 percent if the considered control point will be in Buntun Bridge, Tuguegarao City.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/12/26/nia-magat-dam-not-fully-responsible-in-cagayan-flooding/>



4 lindol naitala sa Bulkang Mayon



December 26, 2020 @ 1:03 PM 18 hours ago

Manila, Philippines — Naitala ang apat na lindol sa bisinidad ng Bulkang Mayon sa nakalipas na 24 oras habang nananatili ito sa Alert Level 1 status, batay sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

“Mayon Volcano’s monitoring network recorded four (4) volcanic earthquakes during the 24-hour observation period,” saad sa pahayag.

Sinabi rin na mayroong “moderate emission of white steam-laden plumes that crept downslope” sa naturang bulkan.

“Although this means that presently no magmatic eruption is imminent, it is strongly advised that the public refrain from entering the 6-kilometer radius Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ) due to the perennial life-threatening dangers of rockfalls, landslides/avalanches at the middle to upper slope, sudden ash puffs and steam-driven or phreatic eruptions from the summit,” lahad ng Phivolcs.

“Active stream/river channels and those identified as perennially lahar-prone areas on all sectors of the volcano should also be avoided especially during extreme weather conditions when there is heavy and prolonged rainfall.” **RNT/FGDC**

Scientists discover a new species of snake hiding in plain sight

By Francesca Giuliani-Hoffman, CNN

Updated 0800 GMT (1600 HKT) December 26, 2020



The newly identified *Levitonius mirus*, also known as Waray dwarf burrowing snake, is native to the islands of Samar and Leyte in the Philippines, an exceptionally biodiverse archipelago that includes at least 112 land snake species.

(CNN) Sometimes, looking at things we thought we knew with fresh eyes (and new tools) can lead to incredible discoveries.

That's what happened when Jeff Weinell, a graduate research assistant at the University of Kansas' Biodiversity Institute, found out that three specimens of snakes preserved in the institute's biodiversity collection, found in field missions between 2006 and 2012 and overlooked up to this point, belonged in a category of their own.

The three snake specimens are the only known members of a new snake genus, called *Levitonius*, and a new snake species, called *Levitonius mirus*.

The findings by Weinell and colleagues, based on methods including DNA analysis and CT scans looking at the snakes' bone structure, were [published](#) Wednesday in the peer-reviewed journal *Copeia*.

The newly identified *Levitonius mirus*, also known as Waray dwarf burrowing snake, is native to the islands of Samar and Leyte in the Philippines, an exceptionally biodiverse archipelago that includes at least 112 land snake species, according to the study.

The snake has among the fewest number of vertebrae of any snake species in the world, according to the study, and has a long and narrow skull relative to its size, Weinell explained in a conversation with CNN. Its scales are highly iridescent, and it is likely that its diet is based on earthworms.

Weinell emphasized the importance of collaboration between US-based scientists and scientists in the Philippines, furthering the understanding of biodiversity in the region.

A serendipitous discovery

Originally, Weinell was interested in learning more about a group of snakes called *Pseudorabdion*.

"I sequenced DNA from a bunch of specimens of that group, and this one was actually misidentified as belonging to (*Pseudorabdion*)," Weinell told CNN.

"When I got the DNA results back, at first I thought it was just an error on my part, or contamination from the samples," Weinell said.

Further analysis of the snakes' scales and CT scans illuminating their bone structure revealed that Weinell had stumbled onto something new.

The snake is described as a "miniaturized" genus and species, much smaller than its closest relatives, Weinell said. While *Levitonius mirus* reaches at most 6.7 inches in length, "the size of a



"That has a lot of consequences, like reduction of the number of bones, a sort of simplification of the body," Weinell said.

"Miniaturization hasn't been observed that often, at least in snakes," the KU graduate research assistant said, and this snake represents one of the most extreme cases within the larger clade it belongs in, called Elapoidea. That clade also includes larger and venomous snakes such as cobras and mambas. Weinell said *Levitonius mirus* is unlikely to be venomous.

An elusive burrower

The three specimens that were examined in the study are the only known ones ever found, and the snake has never been photographed alive, Weinell told CNN.

He tried to accomplish that in 2017, by traveling to the Philippines, but his expedition was unsuccessful.

"There's still good habitat there for them to be there, but they live underground, so it's hard to find them unless you have the perfect conditions that might make them come out above the ground," Weinell explained.

The findings extend beyond a species, to a whole genus of snakes.

"We described the snake as not only a new species but as a new genus because it is very different morphologically from its closest relative, *Oxyrhabdium*, and because the amount of genetic divergence between *Levitonius* and *Oxyrhabdium* is as high as what is usually observed between different genera," Weinell explained.

Weinell anticipates that more species in the genus will eventually be found in the Philippines, although the fact that these snakes adapted to life underground might complicate the scientists' task.

Naming new things

An especially exciting aspect of this study for Weinell was the ability to name a new genus and a new species.

The snake's common name honors the Waray-waray people who inhabit the area where the specimens were found. The scientific name, *Levitonius mirus*, honors Alan Leviton, a researcher at the California Academy of Sciences who spent decades studying snakes in the Philippines, and continues to do so to this day.

"He doesn't know, so this will be a surprise," Weinell said, speaking ahead of the findings' publication.

The word *mirus*, Latin for "extraordinary," speaks to the nature of Weinell's discovery.

"I was looking for something else and we got this, which is even cooler than what I was looking for," he said.

The importance of biodiversity collections

The fact that scientists could identify a new genus and species of snake based on specimens in a collection speaks to the importance of maintaining biodiversity repositories in research institutions and universities, according to study co-author Rafe Brown, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology and curator-in-charge of the KU Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum.

"In this case, the trained 'expert field biologists' misidentified specimens -- and we did so repeatedly, over years -- failing to recognize the significance of our finds, which were preserved and assumed to be somewhat unremarkable, nondescript juveniles of common snakes," Brown is quoted saying in a release.



"A lot of times the people who are in the field, including myself even, we may not know what we're looking at at the time when we could have made the discovery -- no one can really be the expert in all of it," Weinell said.

Biodiversity collections allow scientists to return to the specimens and continue studying them in new ways.

There is a lot more to be discovered, or rediscovered, especially as technology advances and new data becomes available to the scientists.

"Now that we're getting data from whole genomes of snakes, which is really changing our way of understanding evolution as a whole, really, how we define species is still continuing to change. How that affects things in the future is not yet clear," Weinell said.



Scientists focus on bats for clues to prevent next pandemic

By [The Associated Press](#)
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A researcher for Brazil's state-run Fiocruz Institute holds a bat captured in the Atlantic Forest, at Pedra Branca state park, near Rio de Janeiro, on November 17. Researchers at the institute collect and study viruses present in wild animals, including bats, which many scientists believe were linked to the outbreak of Covid-19.

RIO DE JANEIRO—Night began to fall in Rio de Janeiro's Pedra Branca state park as four Brazilian scientists switched on their flashlights to traipse along a narrow trail of mud through dense rainforest.

The researchers were on a mission: capture bats and help prevent the next pandemic.

A few meters ahead, nearly invisible in the darkness, a bat made high-pitched squeaks as it strained its wings against the thin nylon net that had ensnared it.

One of the researchers removed the bat, which used its pointed teeth to bite her gloved fingers.

The November nighttime outing was part of a project at Brazil's state-run Fiocruz Institute to collect and study viruses present in wild animals—including bats, which many scientists believe were linked to the outbreak of Covid-19.

The goal now is to identify other viruses that may be highly contagious and lethal in humans, and to use that information to devise plans to stop them from ever infecting people—to forestall the next potential global disease outbreak before it gets started.

In a highly connected world, an outbreak in one place endangers the entire globe, just as the coronavirus did. And the Brazilian team is just one among many worldwide racing to minimize the risk of a second pandemic this century.

To some, it might seem too soon to contemplate the next global outbreak, with the world still grappling with the devastating fallout of the ongoing one.

But scientists say it's highly likely that, without savvy intervention, another novel virus will jump from animal to human host and find the conditions to spread like wildfire.

As this pandemic has shown, modern transport can disperse the pathogen to all corners of the globe in a matter of hours and spread easily in densely populated cities.

It's not a question of if, but of when, according to Dr. Gagandeep Kang, an infectious diseases expert at Christian Medical College at Vellore in southern India.



She pointed to previous research that found India was among the most likely places in the world for such a “spillover” event to occur, due to population density and increasing human and livestock incursion into its dense tropical forests teeming with wildlife.

It’s no coincidence that many scientists are focusing attention on the world’s only flying mammals—bats.

Why bats?

Bats are thought to be the original or intermediary hosts for multiple viruses that have spawned recent epidemics, including Covid-19, severe acute respiratory syndrome, Middle East respiratory syndrome, Ebola, Nipah virus, Hendra virus and Marburg virus.

A 2019 study found that of viruses originating from the five most common mammalian sources—primates, rodents, carnivores, ungulates and bats—those from bats are the most virulent in humans.

Bats are a diverse group, with more than 1,400 species flitting across every continent except Antarctica.

But what many have in common are adaptations that allow them to carry viruses that are deadly in humans and livestock while exhibiting minimal symptoms themselves—meaning they are able to travel and shed those viruses, instead of being quickly hobbled.

“The secret is that bats have unusual immune systems, and that’s related to their ability to fly,” said Raina Plowright, an epidemiologist who studies bats at Montana State University.

To get off the ground and sustain flight requires an incredible amount of energy, with bats’ metabolic rate increasing sixteen-fold, Plowright said.

“You’d expect them to get cell damage from all that metabolic exertion,” she said.

But that doesn’t happen. Instead, bats are remarkably resilient, with many species living more than 30 years—highly unusual for such small mammals.

Evolution of bats

Plowright and other bat scientists believe evolutionary tweaks that help bats recover from the stress of flying also give them extra protection against pathogens.

“Bats seem to have evolved a collateral benefit of flight—resistance to deal with some of the nastiest viruses known to science,” said Arinjay Banerjee, a virologist at McMaster University in Canada.

While scientists are still untangling the mystery, two leading theories are that bats may have evolved what Banerjee called “an efficient DNA repair mechanism,” or that their bodies may tightly regulate inflammation triggers and not overreact to viral infections.

Probing the secrets of bat immune systems may help scientists understand more about when bats do shed viruses, as well as providing hints for possible future medical treatment strategies, he said.



Bats and other animals that carry pathogens don't innately pose a risk to humans—unless conditions are right for a spillover event.

“The virus has to come out of the host for us to get infected,” said Cara Brook, a disease ecologist at the University of California, Berkeley.

The bad news: Increasing destruction and fragmentation of habitats worldwide—especially biodiverse areas like tropical forests—means “we are seeing higher rates of contact between wildlife and humans, creating more opportunities for spillover,” she said.

That's why the Brazilian researchers chose Pedra Branca park.

As one of the world's largest forests within an urban area, it offers a constant interaction of wild animals with the thousands of humans and domestic animals in surrounding communities.

Studying other primates

The scientists are studying not just bats, but also small primates, wild cats and domestic cats in homes with confirmed Covid-19 cases.

Scientists and governments would stand a better chance at containing future outbreaks if they had faster notice of when and where they begin, said Ian Mackay, a virologist at Australia's University of Queensland.

“Ongoing, constant, nonstop surveillance,” along the lines of the flu labs set up by the World Health Organization across the globe, could help researchers be better prepared, he said. He also suggested that labs for virus discovery could regularly sample waste water or materials from hospitals.

In India, a National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being has been pending since 2018 and will likely be launched next year.

Abi Tamim Vanak, a conservation scientist at Ashok Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment in Bengaluru, said that a core part of the plan is to set up 25 sentinel surveillance sites across the country in both rural and urban areas.

“They will be the first line of defense,” he said.

A varied patchwork of virus surveillance programs exists in several countries, but funding tends to wax and wane with the political climate and sense of urgency.

Among the most ambitious endeavors is the Global Virome Project, which aims to discover 500,000 new viruses over 10 years.

The US Agency for International Development recently announced the launch of the \$100 million STOP Spillover project, an effort led by scientists at Tufts University and including global partners to study zoonotic diseases in Africa and Asia.

Treating bats as enemy won't help

One approach that won't help, scientists say, is treating bats as the enemy—vilifying them, throwing stones or trying to burn them out of caves.



This spring, villagers in the Indian state of Rajasthan identified bat colonies in abandoned forts and palaces and killed hundreds with bats and sticks.

They also sealed some crevices where the bats lived, effectively trapping them. In the Indian state of Karnataka, villagers cut down old trees where bats tend to roost.

Scientists say those tactics are likely to backfire.

An investigation by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Ugandan health authorities found that, after a mining operation attempted to exterminate bats from a cave in Uganda, the remaining bats exhibited higher infection levels of Marburg virus.

This led to Uganda's most severe outbreak of Marburg hemorrhagic fever, caused by the virus, in 2012.

"Stress is a huge factor in upsetting the natural balance that bats have with their viruses—the more you stress bats, the more they shed viruses," said Vikram Misra, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

Although orders issued by Indian forest officials reiterating the complete ban on killing of wildlife and information campaigns to dispel myths were largely successful, convincing people not to attack bats means dispelling long-running cultural assumptions.

"People have a lot of misconceptions about bats. They're nocturnal and look a little weird flying, and there's a lot of literature and culture built around bats being scary," said Hannah Kim Frank, a biologist at Tulane University. "But bats aren't aggressive—and attacking bats doesn't help control diseases."

Vital roles in ecosystems

Bats also play vital roles in ecosystems: They consume insects like mosquitos, pollinate plants like agave, and disperse seeds.

"We actually need bats in the wild to consume insects that otherwise destroy cotton, corn and pecan harvests," said Kristen Lear, an ecologist at Bat Conservational International.

A better approach to minimize disease risk, Frank said, is simply to minimize contact between wild bats and people and livestock.

She suggested that research on when bats migrate, and when new pups are born, could inform decisions about when people should avoid certain areas or keep their livestock penned up.

In North America, some scientists advocate restricting public access to caves where bats roost.

"Cave gating—bat-friendly gates, built with iron crossbars—can keep humans out and allow bats to move freely," said Kate Langwig, an infectious disease ecologist at Virginia Tech.

"If we leave the bats alone, and don't try to hurt or exterminate them, they are going to be healthier," Langwig said.



Destruction of habitat

Perhaps the most significant factor bringing bats into more frequent contact with people and domestic animals is the destruction of habitat, which forces bats to seek out new foraging and roosting grounds.

In Australia, widespread destruction of winter flowering eucalyptus trees that provide nectar for fruit bats—known locally as “flying foxes”—prompted the bats to move into areas closer to human settlements looking for alternate meals, including to a suburb of Brisbane called Hendra.

There, the bats transmitted a virus to horses, which in turn infected people.

First identified in 1994 and named Hendra virus, it is highly lethal, killing 60 percent of people and 75 percent of horses infected.

Image credits: [AP/Silvia Izquierdo](#)

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