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Owners of sunken cargo vessel to take full responsibility for oil spill in Misamis Oriental

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 10:16 PM April 27, 2021

MANILA, Philippines — The owners of a cargo vessel that sank off Jasaan town in Misamis Oriental town will take full responsibility for the oil spill that the ship caused, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Tuesday.

According to DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu, the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in Northern Mindanao has already held a meeting with the shipowners of M/V Racal IV.

“[DENR] has assured that the owners of the MV Racal IV that sank off the town of Jasaan will take full responsibility for the oil spill incident in Misamis Oriental last April 3,” the department said in a statement.

“The incident should serve as a lesson for business owners to take full responsibility for the damages brought about by their operations near the country’s rich ecosystems,” Cimatu added.



Secretary Roy Cimatu says the owners of a cargo vessel will take full responsibility for the oil spill
INQUIRER PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

Cimatu explained that during the meeting between EMB-Region 10 Director Reynaldo Digamo with government agencies concerned and vessel owners Sherwin Doctora and Lord Sanny Salvaña last April 13, the latter agreed to compensate for all the expenses — from the water cleanup to the transportation of contaminated debris.

Also, Digamo added that the owners should also be held liable for the opportunities that fishermen and other stakeholders lost.

“It was agreed upon in the meeting that the owners should compensate all the expenses, including the cleanup activities, as well as the transportation of the contaminated debris to the accredited treatment, storage, and disposal facility,” Digamo said in his report.

“We commend the people behind this successful dialogue with our stakeholders to ensure that the oil spill will be controlled and thoroughly cleaned to protect our vast oceans and seas,” Cimatu added.

Reports last April 5 showed that residents of Lower Jasaan — which appears to be one of the areas most affected by the oil spill — have expressed concern over the harmful effects of the oil on marine biodiversity.



M/V Racal IV was docked for five years in a local shipyard before a breach in the hull caused water to seep into the vessel. Oil and other harmful fluids were supposed to be pumped out from the vessel before it would be salvaged, but it sank first before the salvaging company could do it.

EMB-Region 10 has conducted ambient water sampling in five barangays near the oil spill site, including Lower Jasaan, Upper Jasaan, Luz Banzon, Kimaya, and Solana, to assess the water quality.

The EMB office claimed that test results showed that the concentrations of ammonia, color, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, oil and grease, pH, phosphates, and total suspended solids and temperature are all within the Water Quality Guidelines for Class SC Water pursuant to DENR Administrative Order 2016-08.

“Class SC water body includes Fishery Water Class III, which is intended for the propagation and growth of fish and other aquatic resources, and intended for commercial and sustenance fishing,” DENR said.

“As of its April 6 report, the PCG said it has recovered approximately 80 percent of the oil spill including oil-contaminated debris and materials along the shorelines of the affected areas, declaring that the situation is ‘already under control,’” it assured the public.

This is not the first time that an oil spill occurred in Jasaan town. Last November 2020, barangay officials from Lower Jasaan noticed a black substance floating on along the coast, which eventually turned to be bilge oil, accumulating from a ship’s engine room. PCG said back then that 200 liters of the oil have been recovered.



DENR: Cargo vessel owners will take full responsibility for Misamis Oriental oil spill

By DENR Published on April 27, 2021

QUEZON CITY, Apr. 27 -- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has assured that the owners of the MV Racal IV that sank off the town of Jasaan will take full responsibility for the oil spill incident in Misamis Oriental last April 3.

Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in Region 10 (Northern Mindanao) has held a meeting with the shipowners to demand them to shoulder the full cost of damages brought about by the incident.

"The incident should serve as a lesson for business owners to take full responsibility for the damages brought about by their operations near the country's rich ecosystems," Cimatu said, citing the report from EMB-Region 10 Director Reynaldo Digamo submitted to the DENR Central Office.

Digamo held the meeting with vessel owners Sherwin Doctora and Lord Sanny Salvaña, together with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the local government of Jasaan last April 13.

"It was agreed upon in the meeting that the owners should compensate all the expenses, including the cleanup activities, as well as the transportation of the contaminated debris to the accredited treatment, storage, and disposal facility," Digamo said in his report.

In the report, Digamo emphasized that the owners should also be accountable for the environmental damage the incident has caused and the lost opportunity of the fishermen and other stakeholders.

The EMB-Region 10 has also conducted ambient water sampling in the five affected barangays namely, Lower Jasaan, Upper Jasaan, Luz Banzon, Kimaya, and Solana, to assess the water quality, which includes dissolved oxygen, oil and grease, pH, and temperature as parameters.

Based on the test results, it showed that the concentrations of ammonia, color, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, oil and grease, pH, phosphates, and total suspended solids and temperature are all within the Water Quality Guidelines for Class SC Water pursuant to DENR Administrative Order 2016-08.

Class SC water body includes Fishery Water Class III, which is intended for the propagation and growth of fish and other aquatic resources, and intended for commercial and sustenance fishing.

"We commend the people behind this successful dialogue with our stakeholders to ensure that the oil spill will be controlled and thoroughly cleaned to protect our vast oceans and seas," Cimatu said.

As of its April 6 report, the PCG said it has recovered approximately 80 percent of the oil spill including oil-contaminated debris and materials along the shorelines of the affected areas, declaring that the situation is "already under control." (DENR)



 **ONE News** April 26 at 3:10 PM

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources prohibits sea vessels from entering 2.5 km from the coast of Manila Bay, unless it is for the beach nourishment project, following reports of liquid waste dumped in the water. (via News/Shyla Francisco)



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DENR, Army beef up Bulacan forest protection

The MoA aims to have a proactive approach as the Army and the Environment department prevent the actual cutting of trees instead of the traditional approach of apprehending suspected illegal loggers while transporting or selling forest contrabands

Published 3 hours ago on April 28, 2021 02:30 AM By [Jonas Reyes](#)



SAN MIGUEL, BULACAN — The Philippine Army (PA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) recently signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) to intensify efforts to protect and develop remaining forest areas in this province.

In a statement, DENR Central Luzon executive director Paquito Moreno Jr., the PA's First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR) in Camp Tecson in San Miguel town in Bulacan will coordinate with the DENR in its campaign against anti-illegal logging in the Sierra Madre mountain range portion of the province including the development of an area under the National Greening Program (NGP).

"The support of the Philippine Army is a big boost in our anti-illegal logging campaign. They have been our steady and reliable partner in the enforcement of forestry laws. And this time they will also assist us in the protection and maintenance of established NGP plantations," Moreno said.

The agreement also aims to have a proactive approach as the Army and the Environment department prevent the actual cutting of trees instead of the traditional approach of apprehending suspected illegal loggers while transporting or selling forest contrabands.

"Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu's order to us is to prevent the cutting of trees to ensure the survival of our forest," Moreno said.

The MoA states that the DENR is tasked to survey the identified 14-hectare land for the jungle-based and training detachment (JBTD) of the FSRR in Kalawakan village in the town of Dona Remedios Trinidad (DRT).

The agency will also train the FSRR in the implementation of the NGP that includes seedling production and plantation protection and maintenance, while the FSRR will provide protection and maintenance of the JBTD area and assist the DENR in their campaign against illegal logging.

Meantime, the Environment department awarded the PA a special patent for the 49-hectares in Camp Tecson as part of the "Handog Titulo" program of the government. The awarding of patent is also strengthened under the DENR Administrative Order 2016-21 also known as the guidelines governing the processing of the request for proclamation and issuance of Special patents over agricultural lands.

Since 2011, DENR Region 3 has already established more than 122,000 hectares of forest plantations within degraded watersheds and forestlands in the region.

Source: https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2021/04/28/denr-army-beef-up-bulacan-forest-protection/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=denr-army-beef-up-bulacan-forest-protection



DENR forges pact with Philippine Army for forest protection

[IAN OCAMPO FLORA](#) April 27, 2021

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) recently entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Philippine Army (PA) to further boost the protection and development of the remaining forests area in Bulacan.

DENR-Central Luzon Executive Director Paquito Moreno Jr. said the PA, particularly the First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR) based in Camp Tecson in San Miguel, Bulacan, will aid the DENR in its campaign against anti-illegal logging in the Sierra Madre mountain range portion of the province, including the development of an area under the National Greening Program (NGP).

"The support of the Philippine Army is a big boost in our anti-illegal logging campaign. They have been our steady and reliable partner in the enforcement of forestry laws. And this time they will also assist us in the protection and maintenance of established NGP plantations," he said.

He said the partnership will surely help prevent the actual cutting of trees in the forest instead of the traditional approach of apprehending suspected illegal loggers while transporting forest contrabands.

"Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu's order to us is to prevent the cutting of trees to ensure the survival of our forest," he noted.

Under the agreement, the DENR will survey the identified 14-hectare land for the jungle-based and training detachment (JBTD) of the FSRR in Kalawakan village in Dona Remedios Trinidad (DRT) town.

The DENR will also provide the FSRR the necessary training in the implementation of NGP including seedling production and plantation protection and maintenance.

On the other hand, the FSRR will ensure the protection and maintenance of the JBTD area and assist the DENR in the campaign against illegal logging.

For his part, Lieutenant General Jose C. Faustino Jr., commanding general of the PA, vowed to strengthen the forest protection efforts and further develop the NGP plantations in the province.

"The agreement will further strengthen the alliance between the DENR and FSRR to foster environmental protection and end once and for all the illegal logging here in Bulacan," he said.

Moreno expressed his gratitude to the PA for their support in the government's forest protection and greening program.

Meanwhile, the DENR also awarded a special patent covering some 49 hectares to the Camp Tecson of the PA as part of the "Handog Ti tulo" program of the government and under the DENR administrative order (DAO) 2016-21, also known as the guidelines governing the processing of the request for proclamation and issuance of Special patents over agricultural lands.

Earlier, the DENR in Tarlac forged a MOA with 10 local Philippine National Police (PNP) and the 2nd Provincial Mobile Force Company in the province to further protect and develop the 20-hectare established forest plantations in Tarlac under the National Greening Program (NGP).

Since 2011, DENR-Central Luzon has established more than 122,000 hectares of forest plantations within degraded watersheds and forestlands in the region.

Source: <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1892938>



Campaign vs open dumpsites to cut down waste volume in Central Luzon

April 27, 2021

THE ongoing “no nonsense” campaign against open dumpsites by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environment Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) will be sustained to cut down and sustain the program in regulating waste management down to the municipal and barangay levels.

This was disclosed by Andresito Cabalar of the DENR-EMB-Central Luzon Solid Waste Management Office, who noted that Central Luzon produces more than 5,000 tons of garbage daily, including domestic (municipal), agricultural, industrial, commercial and medical wastes collected daily in seven provinces and two cities.

The amount of wastes includes recyclables and non-biodegradable materials.

The residual wastes are common in open dumpsites, which are the subject of complaints due to foul smell and the ever-increasing volume of wastes in Central Luzon could have resulted in massive pollution and damage to the environment, Cabalar said.

“In fact, there were five LGUs (local government units) in Central Luzon have been held liable due to existence of open dumpsites, a prohibited garbage depository area which were recently shutdown by the DENR-EMB,” Cabalar said.

“It's for this reason why our office has to shutdown open dumpsite due to pollution and violation of the Ecological and Solid Waste Management Act,” he added.

He said violation of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act against two of the LGUs in Central Luzon, including Sta. Ana in Pampanga and Malolos City in Bulacan, have been endorsed to the Department of Interior and Local Government for immediate action.

Cabalar said other areas with open dumpsites are the towns of Talavera in Nueva Ecija, Angeles City and Dipaculao, Aurora.

The three LGUs were issued Safe Closure and Rehabilitation Plan.

“We made sure that these dumpsites will cease and desist from operation by regularly monitoring the concerned areas,” he said.

The LGUs, he said, must have an approved 10-year Solid Waste Management Plan to address the mounting garbage problem.

Cabalar added that only 12 sanitary landfills exist to accommodate these garbage and more than half of these volumes are being disposed in the lone engineered sanitary landfill, the Metro Clark Waste disposal facilities located in Capas, Tarlac, which is a big help in preventing a widespread garbage crisis in the region. (JTD)



Pro-environment entities assemble to set sustainability goals; find out who they are

Published April 27, 2021, 10:31 AM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

Who says business giants and civil society groups can't see eye to eye when it comes to environmental concerns and sustainability goals?



ON THE SAME PAGE—Environmental advocates from civil society and business groups called for stronger partnerships with the private sector and government to address environment issues and climate change during a virtual forum last April 21, 2021. The online event was organized by Stratbase Albert del Rosario Institute (ADRI). (Photo courtesy of ADRI)

The opposite was demonstrated during a recent virtual forum organized by Stratbase Albert del Rosario Institute (ADRI) and the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) on the subject of how to achieve a sustainable future through Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles.

“The largest sustainability issues we are currently facing are COVID (coronavirus disease) and climate change. During these highly unusual times, the role of businesses and even of CSOs (civil society organizations) are most needed,” Dr. Carlos Primo David, ADRI trustee and PBEST convenor reckoned during the event last April 21.

The online meeting, which was attended by the sustainability officers of major companies like Globe Telecommunications and Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC), took place two days ahead of the annual celebration of Earth Day.

“We’ve up[ped] the ante and we’ve actually committed to adhere to global sustainability standards and frameworks,” said MPIC Chief Finance Officer and Chief Sustainability Officer June Cheryl Cabal-Revilla.

“We’ve put sustainability pillars across the businesses which include exceptional service, operational efficiency, environmental stewardship, human capital excellence, positive community impact, governance, and business ethics. We’ve also put our focus on enabling genuine progress and development,” she said.

Yoly Crisanto, senior vice president for corporate communications and chief sustainability officer of Globe Telecommunication, spoke about the environment-friendly policies from government that allow the country to be resilient.

“Even without incentives, the drive of the government to keep pushing for opening up the marketplace for more investments that will bring about sustainability-driven businesses, like electric cars, renewable energy the things that are useful and even digital transformation are the things that allow us to be resilient,” Crisanto said.



ADRi President Dindo Manhit said that the government, with the help of civil society, “should set the much-needed responsive policies and frameworks that are conducive to doing business while ensuring compliance with ESG principles.”

“We believe that the private sector, through ESG, plays a vital role in advancing the country’s sustainable development. The interconnected challenges in public health, the economy, and the environment cannot be ignored,” he added.

To this, Young Environmental Forum Executive Director Ludwig Federigan said: “CSOs can help build the political will for a new approach to development that integrates environmental and social goals.”

On the other hand, non-government organizations (NGOs) “can serve as alternative to weak or inadequate democratic institutions, as avenues for more inclusive dialogues, and as conduits for disseminating information on activities and issues within the system,” Federigan said.

Renato Redentor Constantino, executive director of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, agreed with Crisanto’s view. “Businesses would agree that the incentives are not as important as predictability and other measures that allow businesses to thrive,” he said.

“There is the bigger incentive – cut red tape, make things more predictable, show us where the directions are, what is the ultimate investment strategy, and we will respond,” he added.

For her part, Nazrin Castro of The Climate Reality Project Philippines said that “economic recovery programs of the government and the private sector should channel massive investments not only on our short-term goal of reviving our industries and creating jobs, but also on programs, projects, and initiatives that will achieve our long-term resilience and sustainability objectives.”

“This shouldn’t be a problem because the current climate crisis also unlocks many opportunities for investments,” she noted.



1 milyong puno itatanim sa Tuguegarao

By Abante News Online — Last updated Apr 27, 2021

METRO



Photo courtesy of vintagetreecare.com



Sa pagdiriwang ng 'World Earth Day,' naglunsad ang Tuguegarao City local government unit (LGU) ng One Million Trees Movement (OMTM) sa isinagawang Trees Summit.

Ayon kay Tuguegarao City Mayor Jefferson Soriano, ang OMTM ay pinasiyahan ng government sector at mga LGU gaya ng Tuguegarao City government, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Cagayan State University, Schools Division of Tuguegarao City, at Northern Natural Resource Conservation, Inc.

Sinabi ng alkalde na ang layunin ng OMTM ay para hikayatin ang mga residente ng Tuguegarao at environment advocates na buhaying muli ang 'natural state' sa pamamagitan ng pagtatamin ng isang milyong puno sa susunod na tatlong taon para abatan ang epekto ng climate change.

"In Tuguegarao City, the effects of climate change are highly evident. It is time to act. The Tuguegarao City government aims to address this reality through the One Million Trees Movement," ani Soriano sa kanyang welcome remarks.

Nagkaroon din ng summit sa paglunsad ng proyekto na dinaluhan ng mga regional line agency, civil society organizations, barangay captains, Sangguniang Kabataan officials, business establishments, at iba pang pribadong indibiduwal. (Allan Bergonia)



Group: Redirect dolomite sand dumping fund towards virus response

• Tuesday, 27 Apr 2021

A group of scientists, engineers and researchers renewed their call to stop the dumping of crushed dolomite rocks along the shoreline of Manila Bay, and instead realign the funds allocated for the project to the government's pandemic response.

In a statement, the Agham – Advocates of Science and Technology for the People – said the beach nourishment project should be stopped while the government studied its environmental implications on the bay and its ecosystem.

The group said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) continued to ignore the calls of the scientific community to halt and review the project.

“DENR’s action is completely lacking in scientific integrity.

“Competent scientists are more than willing to participate in a genuine Manila Bay rehabilitation plan, but the DENR (has been) ignoring our pleas, ” the group said.

Cebu governor Gwendolyn Garcia confirmed that the shipment, which contained 8,600 cubic meters of dolomite sand and 6,600 cubic meters of dolomite pebbles, came from the mountains in Alcoy town in the southern part of the province. “DENR, the agency that is supposed to implement the Environmental Impact Statement system, is violating its own policies by failing to produce one for this project, ” Agham said, adding that there was also no public consultation for the project.

“It has yet to produce a research study on the environmental impact of introducing foreign materials in a vulnerable ecosystem like Manila Bay.” — Philippine Daily Inquirer/ANN



Mining and logging threaten a wildlife wonderland on a Philippine mountain

by [Bong S. Sarmiento](#) on 27 April 2021



- *Mount Busa on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao is among the most biodiverse and most threatened ecological areas in the country.*
- *It's a key biodiversity area and a known bird conservation area, considered one of the last remaining strongholds of the critically endangered and nationally important Philippine eagle (*Phitecophaga jefferyi*).*
- *Despite its ecological importance, the mountain has enjoyed little protection, with only the topmost slopes falling under a local conservation zone.*
- *To protect the area, environmentalists and local officials are pushing to legalize and strengthen the mountain's protection by including it in the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas Systems (E-NIPAS).*

MINDANAO, Philippines — Rising 2,064 meters, or nearly 6,800 feet, above sea level, Mount Busa is the tallest peak in the Philippines' Sarangani province and home to one of the last verdant primary forests on the southern island of Mindanao.

Busa is known as Bulul Tembob to the T'boli tribe, who consider it hallowed ground, a place where they worship their deities, connect with the spirits of their ancestors and commune with nature.

The mountain, located in the town of Kiamba, some 1,700 kilometers (nearly 1,100 miles) southeast of the capital Manila, was designated a key biodiversity area (KBA) and bird conservation area in 2001, and is considered a high-priority site for conservation in the Philippines.

Overlooking Moro Gulf, Busa enjoys a marginal level of protection: The northern slopes are part of the larger Allah Valley Protected Landscape (AVPL), but the 114,000-hectare (282,000-acre) mountain, known globally for its rich biodiversity and bird sightings, has yet to be declared a protected area.

A growing number of species sighted and surveys conducted in recent years have led to a deluge of new species being described from the mountain, prompting the local government to declare its massif, the principal mountain mass, a local conservation area in March 2020. Under this designation, the mountain — or at least the upper slopes — are one step closer to being under a legal protective framework.



View from Mount Busa peak overlooking the Celebes Sea. Image by Kier Michael E. Pitogo.

However, the designation still falls short of stopping the growing pressure the mountain faces from mining, logging, hunting and poaching.

Environmentalists and local officials have called for Busa to be formally, and legally, declared a protected landscape under the country's Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS), a 2018 regulation that aims to ensure the ecological integrity of protected areas and mandates the creation of management boards for declared protected areas.

Treasure trove

Mt. Busa is home to the rare [Guttman's stream frog](#) (*Pulchrana guttmanni*), an endemic shiny frog that was not seen between 1993 and 2020, leading scientists to believe that it had gone extinct. It is also known to host the Philippine eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*), the country's rare national bird. In the past three years, at least two Philippine eagles have been rescued in the vicinity of the mountain.

An avian [survey](#) of the mountain's southern slope, which has never been assessed by biologists in the past, was carried out by the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the past year. The results sealed the mountain's ecological importance; Busa, experts say, is one of the remaining strongholds of the Philippine eagle and other birds.

"Despite the limited survey effort, the results clearly indicate that the Busa Mountain Range harbors a rich assemblage of bird species hinting at the substantial level of biodiversity this mountain range hosts," the study notes. "More importantly, this area houses a significant number of species threatened with extinction which is of high priority for conservation."

Busa is also gaining recognition for its plant biodiversity; at least 108 species of flowering orchids from 51 genera, of which 53 species are endemic to the Philippines and 15 species are known only to occur on Mindanao Island, have been discovered in its forests.

Since 2018, biologists Kier Mitchel Pitogo and Aljhon Jay Saavedra have been conducting a biodiversity assessment at Busa, recording more than 600 wildlife species thriving in its forests, including the [Guttman's stream frog](#) and an [abundant array of orchids](#).



Mossy forest in Mindanao. Mount Busa is gaining recognition for its plant biodiversity with many species of flowering orchids endemic to only Mindanao Island. Image by Kier Michael E. Pitogo.

"[The] results [of the assessment] suggest a relatively rich and distinct orchid diversity among different forest types in Mt. Busa that reinforces the high conservation value of the mountain range," the authors wrote.

"It is very likely that there are more unknown orchid species within Mt. Busa; that's why it is very important to declare it as a protected landscape," Pitogo told Mongabay.

Of the newly documented species of orchids on Busa, at least four are putatively new and undescribed species: *Bulbophyllum* sp. 3, *Calanthe* sp., *Coelogyne* sp., and *Dendrochilum* sp. 2. At least nine species are also new island records for Mindanao, having been recorded in the two other main islands of Luzon and the Visayas, the authors said.

Many of these species are already being collected for ornamental use by the four tribal communities in the vicinity of the mountain.

Of the 32 orchid species used as ornamental plants by local people, the study noted that five species are on the DENR's list of threatened plants. Of the five, one is listed as critically endangered (*Grammatophyllum wallisii*), three as endangered (*Phalaenopsis sanderiana*, *Phalaenopsis reichenbachiana* and *Renanthera monachica*), and one as vulnerable (*Phalaenopsis mariae*).

Pitogo says the orchids recorded on Busa might become extinct if they're not guarded against poachers and people who visit the mountain range for trekking or to commune with nature.

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out early last year, interest in plants surged across the Philippines, giving rise to so-called *plantitas* and *plantitos*, often middle-aged women and men who became instant plant lovers. The craze, which extended through Mindanao, prompted the DENR to issue a warning against poachers.

"Because most of these orchids are beautiful with their vibrant colors, visitors are tempted to bring them down not knowing they might be exterminating the last of their kind," Pitogo said.

Compounding the threat to the orchids thriving in Busa is the lack of knowledge among the law enforcers at the various highway checkpoints ostensibly set up to check that wild plants and animals aren't being smuggled out.

Of the more than 100 orchid species that have been recorded on Busa, only four are included among the reference photographs used by officials at these checkpoints, according to Pitogo.



Persistent threats

The area faces threats from more than just plant enthusiasts, though.

Deforestation arrived much later to this area than in the rest of the Philippines, in part due to armed conflicts that served to keep both poachers and business interests at bay. In the early 1990s, authorities handed out logging concessions for the mountain's lower slopes, which paved the way for slash-and-burn farming, or *kaingin* to locals, illegal logging activity, mining, and wildlife hunting, Pitogo said.

Among these, small-scale gold mining, mostly illegal, has beckoned outsiders. Records from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau showed there have been applications for copper, gold and iron ventures in the area.

In 2010, Sarangani province had 154,000 hectares (380,500 acres) of natural forests, covering 64% of its total land area. But over the next 10 years, it lost 437 hectares (1,080 acres), according to Global Forest Watch.

The orchids, eagles and other wildlife that depend on this ecosystem will have greater chances of thriving if the Busa mountain range is declared a protected area under the E-NIPAS law, Pitogo and other local environmentalists say.

Such a declaration would immediately prohibit a range of ongoing activities: poaching or disturbing the wildlife; hunting, taking or collecting any wildlife or byproducts; and cutting, gathering or removing timber without a permit. Violators would face fines ranging from 50,000 to 5 million pesos (\$1,034 to \$103,400), and prison terms ranging from six to 12 years.

In March 2021, the Task Force for Mt. Busa Conservation passed a measure endorsing the declaration of the mountain and the adjacent watersheds as a protected area under the E-NIPAS law. Stakeholders, through a series of meetings, proposed naming the protected area the Mt. Busa-MAKIMA Sarangani Protected Landscape. MAKIMA stands for Maasim, Kiamba and Maitum, the towns that are straddled by the Busa mountain range.

"This is the fruit of the concerted efforts of the people who believed in the importance of the protection and conservation of globally threatened flora and fauna that are present in Mt. Busa, which are vulnerable, unique and irreplaceable," says Cornelio Ramirez, Jr., head of the Sarangani Environmental Protection and Conservation Center.



Stream at the base of Mount Busa. Image by Kier Michael E. Pitogo.



Pitogo, whose study highlighted habitat destruction and unsustainable harvesting as major threats to orchids not just in the Philippines but the rest of the world, said he welcomed local efforts to declare Busa a protected area for the conservation of the mountain's rich biodiversity. He also called for massive education awareness campaigns to be conducted among locals to help conserve not just the orchids but also the whole of Busa as a home to a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna.

With the assistance of the tribal members, Pitogo said, they are looking forward to more explorations within Busa to document other species thriving in its forests.

"There's a dearth of biodiversity assessment in Mt. Busa," he said, "particularly orchids, which my team is trying to fill up to help the local government units and the DENR in monitoring the trafficking of these charismatic plants."

Citations:

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Mining ban lifting dismays Borongan prelate

Published April 27, 2021, 12:38 PM

by [Leslie Ann Aquino](#)

Borongan Bishop Crispin Varquez said the lifting of the moratorium on new mining projects would further “exploit our already much-wounded land.”



BORONGAN CATHEDRAL/MB

“New mining operations will only worsen our environmental crisis on top of this health pandemic,” CBCP News quoted Varquez’ pastoral letter released Monday, April 26.

The prelate issued the pastoral letter following President Duterte’s lifting of the moratorium on new mining deals to boost state revenue and prop up the pandemic-hit economy.

The decision ended the policy imposed in 2012 by then President Benigno Aquino.

Eastern Samar hosts decades-old chromite and nickel mining operations on the historic Homonhon Island in Guiuan town.

Efforts are also reportedly being made to revive the nickel mining operation on Manicani Island, also in Guiuan, that the government shutdown in 2002 over human rights and environmental issues.

Abandoned 26 years ago, the Bagacay mine spill disaster in Wester Samar’s Hinabangan town still haunts the affected communities, especially those along the Taft River in Easter Samar.

For the diocese, the island has no history of responsible mining.

“Our local experience provides enough evidence,” Varquez said. “Bagacay, Homonhon and Manicani cry out this truth”.

Samar, the country’s third largest island, is hilly and mountainous. Mining in this area, he added, means lowland communities become more susceptible to flooding and pollution from mining operations.

“Locals may be temporarily employed or benefited. But the long-term consequence of a devastated landscape is also incalculable and irreversible,” Varquez said.

He then called on President Duterte to issue again an Executive Order for mining moratorium in the country.



Usok at masangsang na amoy sa Muntinlupa Public Crematorium, inirereklamo

On Apr 27, 2021



ISANG public crematorium sa Muntinlupa City ang inirereklamo ng mga residente dahil sa makapal na usok at masangsang na amoy na nanggagaling daw dito.

Giit naman ng local government unit, walang dapat ikabahala ang mga residente usok dahil hindi raw ito banta sa kalusugan.

Bagama't may pader sa pagitan ng crematorium at sa mga bahayan, mababa lang ito. Ang chimneyay halos ka-level lang ng ibang bahay kaya nakakapasok sa mga ito ang usok. Ilang residente na ang lumipat ng bahay dahil sa perwisyong ito.

Pumayag nanaman ang lokal na pamahalaan na taasan ang chimney sa lalong madaling panahon, pero ang pagtataas ng pader ay pag-uusapan pa raw.

"Wala naman daw po itong banta dahil mayroon namang nilalagay na kemikal doon sa pagsusunog atsaka ito po ay may disinfection, every after ng kini-cremate. Yung sinasabi nilang masangsang na amoy, pinaimbestigahan pa rin yan," sabi ni Tess Navarro, pinuno ng Public Information Office ng Muntinlupa City.

"Pero according to the technician, ang tao o ang namatay pagka nasusunog po, wala hong amoy yan, maliban sa...nilalagyan ho kasi ng chemicals yan para di po siya umamoy," dagdag pa niya. Humihingi ng pang-unawa ang LGU sa mga apektadong residente. Ayon dito, tatlong bangkay ang kini-cremate sa lugar kada araw. (Gaynor Bonilla)

Source: <https://www.policefilestonite.net/2021/04/27/usok-at-masangsang-na-amoy-sa-muntinlupa-public-crematorium-inirereklamo/?fbclid=IwAR2FsCgLr91R0FatxmoB9oIVVA64q1II1ADLFGLSYihquFMzk0CrRoX79e4>



Bukidnon villagers seek closure of foul odor-emitting plant

By Jigger Jerusalem April 27, 2021, 8:56 pm



Google map of Manolo Fortich in Bukidnon.

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY – Village officials in a Bukidnon town have brought their complaint against a processing company that emits foul odor for the third time in six years to the city government here.

Armed with a petition signed by hundreds of residents, the barangay council of Mambatangan, Manolo Fortich town, sought the intervention of the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office (CLENRO) to close the Misamis Oriental Rendering Corp. (MORC), a facility that processes discarded chicken parts into agricultural feeds.

MORC is located in Purok 7, Barangay Puerto here, just several meters away from Mambatangan.

The village officials of the said town said the residents could not stand the stench coming from the plant and demanded the CLENRO to order the closure of the manufacturing facility.

“We want CLENRO to act on it as it is within their jurisdiction. They must close MORC for our sake. We cannot take it anymore,” Junrey Lagat, Mambatangan village councilor and chair of the environment committee, said Tuesday.

According to Angelie Roa, Mambatangan barangay chairperson, this is not the first time that they called the attention of CLENRO regarding the foul odor that emanates from the MORC plant.

In fact, she said, the office had issued two cease and desist orders against the company, first in 2015 and then in 2018.

In the order, Edwin Dael, former CLENRO chief, said they were able to confirm the “unabated foul and offensive odor” coming from the MORC plant, prompting the agency to direct the company to shut down its processing facility.

The stench, he said, “really provides unbearable discomfort among the complainants thereat as manifested in their letter of complaints,” referring to the residents’ petition.

Lagat said MORC, however, resumed its operations six months after the first cease and desist order came out and noted that the company also changed management when it resumed to process feeds.

The second cease and desist order was issued by Armen Cuenca, the CLENRO chief at present, who cited the same reason for the plant’s closure, in 2018.

Three years after the second order, the residents of Mambatangan have once again lodged their complaint against the plant.

Lagat said the stench coming the facility has gotten worse and the emission of odor became more frequent in the past few months.

The local media tried to reach the management of MORC for comment, but to no avail. (PNA)

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1138179>



Dominguez: CCC to lead global movement for climate justice from international community

By [The Manila Times](#)

April 28, 2021

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III to put the Climate Change Commission (CCC) at the forefront of the global movement to seek climate justice from the international community, with an eye to drastically cutting carbon emissions and escalating efforts to contain the changing climatic conditions. Dominguez said that with the Philippines' National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement, which sets an ambitious 75-percent greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction and avoidance by 2030, "we hope to challenge other countries to act with determination and cohesion to reverse this greatest challenge facing the Earth today."

As chairman-designate of the CCC, Dominguez said he will also strive to make Filipinos aware that as individuals, each of them plays an indispensable role in helping win the battle against the climate crisis even through simple behavioral changes, such as giving up single-use plastics.

"We have only one planet. All of us must act decisively today in order to save it," Dominguez said in his remarks at the opening of the Oceana Philippines Wavemakers Wednesday Online Forum. The forum aims to serve as a platform for civil society groups, the youth and fisherfolk to dialogue with government officials and other stakeholders to push the ban on single-use plastics nationwide, as well as the full implementation of Republic Act (RA) 9003, or the law providing for an Ecological Solid Waste Management Program.

In November last year during the virtual 37th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit, President Duterte renewed his call to his fellow Southeast Asian leaders to demand climate justice from developed economies most responsible for the climate crisis wracking the world today.

"I will also ensure that the Climate Change Commission will be at the forefront of the global movement seeking climate justice from the international community. President Rodrigo Duterte has already led the way. We, in government, must stand firmly behind the President in this fight," said Dominguez during the online forum.

"As I have said on many occasions, I am determined to set the Philippines as an example for all nations in setting the standards for mitigating the impact of climate change. I want us to be a world leader in this area through our ambition," Dominguez added.

Dominguez said to spur greater action among Filipinos in the fight against climate change, he is determined to lobby the passage of a law banning single-use plastics and ensure that the Philippines strictly adhere to its NDC commitments.

"Through citizens' groups and networks such as the Oceana Philippines, I hope to reach the greatest number of Filipinos with a clear message that climate change is a threat to our livelihoods and our economy. I am sure that this meeting will convey that message and will determine courses of action to translate these into actual mitigation," he said.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/04/28/public-square/dominguez-ccc-to-lead-global-movement-for-climate-justice-from-international-community/868141/>



Algo: Nature-based solutions must anchor the Philippines's climate action

[JOHN LEO ALGO](#) April 27, 2021

THE importance of planetary health has never been more evident than today. Global and national actions are currently working on addressing the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, both of which are traced to environmental neglect by human activities.

Consequently, nature-based solutions (NBS) are at the forefront of the upcoming 2021 UN climate conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland. With less than a decade to go to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures, countries are already discussing on how to raise their ambition while pursuing national sustainable development.

For the Philippines, one of the most vulnerable nations to the climate crisis, its wealth of biodiversity and natural resources present tremendous potential for enhancing national and local resilience to its numerous impacts. This is why nature-based solutions must be placed as a center of its strategies for the upcoming climate negotiations and at the domestic level.

The significance of NBS is indirectly referenced in the nation's recently-submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). Under this self-determined pledge, the Philippines commits to uphold "the importance of ensuring ecosystems integrity and promoting the country's obligations on human rights and the rights of its indigenous peoples." This is in recognition that these solutions do not just involve ecosystems and biodiversity, but also nearby communities and their well-being.

This would be largely accomplished through adaptation measures in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, coastal and marine ecosystems, and biodiversity. A special emphasis was placed on forest protection, forest restoration, and reforestation, in recognition of its vital role in both reducing greenhouse (GHG) emissions and strengthening adaptive capacities.

There is no specific statement on when the country aims to reach net-zero, or a point when it does not add GHG emissions to the environment. However, it aspires for its emissions to peak by 2030 before declining, indicating a willingness to join its Asean neighbors and the rest of the world in achieving the net-zero level by 2050 and halt global warming.

Next policy steps

One of the key issues to be discussed at COP26 is on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which provides the framework for establishing non-market mechanisms and international carbon markets. The latter would provide modalities on how mitigation projects in one country will be counted as emissions reductions for another.

This issue is especially crucial for the Philippines, as it plans to secure means of implementation (e.g., finance, technology transfer, capacity-building) to implement its mitigation measures under the NDC. Hence, the country must take a strong stance on Article 6 to acquire the necessary support from developed nations in implementing its proposed actions, including NBS.

To further secure more support, the Philippines should also pursue public-private partnerships to maximize NBS development and its benefits for communities, especially the most vulnerable. However, national and local government units must avoid falling for potential greenwashing and false solutions that undermine its climate goals.

For instance, around one-fifth of the world's 2000 largest public companies have net-zero commitments by 2030, many of whom have a significant presence in the Philippines. However, most of these entities have not outlined their long-term strategies to achieve their targets. Many of them, especially fossil fuel companies, are opting to offset the pollution that they themselves emitted by investing in NBS, such as developing vast monoculture tree plantations.



This approach presents several issues that undermine climate action. Firstly, it indicates that high-emitting businesses avoid changing their business models and phasing out fossil fuels to keep making profits, effectively maintaining the business-as-usual culture that prevents sustainability.

Secondly, actions that fail to fully account for their cost-effectiveness and reliability are false solutions that could do more harm for ecosystems and communities. For instance, afforestation with non-native species stores less GHGs than natural forests and has less-impactful co-benefits, such as livelihood opportunities and protection from storms, flash floods, and other climate-related hazards.

A study reports that NBS have the potential to provide 37 percent of the needed GHG mitigation by 2030 to limit global warming below 2 degrees Celsius. While a significant finding, this also shows that relying solely on NBS without avoiding more emissions is unsustainable. Without decarbonization, climate change impacts will worsen, which lowers the capacity of forests, wetlands, and other natural sinks to absorb carbon dioxide and reduce their resilience to other potential hazards.

As such, it is imperative for the Philippines to resolve existing issues with climate and environmental governance. Unfortunately, there remains incoherence and gaps with policies and programs from different government agencies. For instance, there is a lack of a clear decarbonization strategy in its NDC. The recent decision of President Rodrigo Duterte to lift the moratorium on new mining agreements also increases risk many areas to pollution, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.

Moving forward, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Climate Change Commission must lead in continuing to mainstream NBS, especially those involving ecosystems-based adaptation, into policies and programs at the national and local levels. These measures should not only protect and conserve aquatic or terrestrial ecosystems and wildlife, but also involve local communities and indigenous peoples, with respect to their rights, knowledge, and cultures.

Now that the NDC has been submitted, the next step is to present a clear roadmap for achieving its climate targets. Nature-based solutions must serve as an anchor of the Philippines's vision of a sustainable future.

John Leo is the Deputy Executive Director for Programs and Campaigns of Living Laudato Si' Philippines and a member of the Interim Secretariat of Aksyon Klima Pilipinas. He has represented Philippine civil society in UN climate and environment conferences since 2017.



How to ensure a green recovery from the pandemic

April 27, 2021 | 6:29 pm

Thinking Beyond Politics

By Nazrin Camille D. Castro



JCOMP-FREEPIK

The world, as we know it, is changing. The coronavirus disease has upended our lives in more ways than we can imagine.

On the one hand, the resolute and urgent response to the pandemic has shown humanity's remarkable capacity to unite as one and drastically implement policy and systemic changes for the greater good.

On the other, the unprecedented impacts of the pandemic have reaffirmed what environmental and climate advocates have been saying: Sustainability is the new reality for governments, businesses, and all sectors of society.

Science, common sense, and futures thinking tell us that now is the opportunity to build back better and forge a more sustainable path by ensuring a green economic recovery from the pandemic.

But what exactly is green recovery, and how has the Philippines responded to calls to green economic stimulus packages?

Green recovery refers to designing economic recovery programs that will channel massive investments on the short-term goal of reviving industries and creating jobs and on projects and initiatives that will help achieve long-term resilience and sustainability objectives.

In the Philippines, talks about a green recovery have been primarily brought forward by the development sector and civil society organizations working on climate and environmental issues. The government, albeit fragmentary, has responded to these calls.

Three months into the pandemic, the Interagency Task Force Technical Workgroup on Anticipatory and Forward Planning prepared the "We Recover As One" report. Its recommendations, however, did not include critical green recovery measures and the greening of manufacturing and packaging systems.

Fortunately, in September 2020, lawmakers enacted the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, which allotted 1.1 billion to build bike lanes in metropolitan areas. In the last quarter of 2020, the Department of Energy announced a moratorium on all new coal projects and announced critical programs such as the Green Energy Option Program (GEOP), which will provide consumers at least 100 kilowatts of power and the opportunity to source their supply from renewable energy resources. Another initiative, the Green Energy Auction Program (GEAP), will provide renewable energy developers the capacity to supply electricity to distribution utilities and retail suppliers.



If implemented properly and aggressively, these programs will promote competitiveness in the power market, resulting in lower electricity prices and an increased share of renewables in the energy mix.

Also groundbreaking is the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' sustainability finance framework, which directs all banks and financial institutions to fully incorporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG), and sustainability principles into their corporate strategy, risk management, and bank operations.

Moreover, the Department of Finance and the Climate Change Commission have announced their support to ban single-use plastics nationwide as a way to advance sustainable solid waste practices, curb plastic pollution, and promote sustainable production.

These policy wins must be supported through the full implementation of environmental and climate change laws in one cohesive plan that will chart our country's pathway towards climate resilience and low-carbon economic development.

The impending development of an implementation plan for the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement offers a golden opportunity to do this. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, 2.71% of which is unconditional (or will be funded by domestic resources) while the rest will be conditional (or dependent on support from developed countries).

The NDC Implementation Plan is envisioned to substantiate the 75% target with specific sectoral policies and measures and clear finance and investment components. It will be a roadmap that will modernize and green our energy, agriculture, waste, industry, and transport sectors.

In developing this plan, the government must engage both the private business sector and civil society to facilitate the convergence from all stakeholders. Individually, these sectors have initiatives, expertise, and resources to make a positive societal impact. By bringing them together, this will enable us to achieve our emissions avoidance and reduction goal and increase our conditional target.

We need more open dialogue and knowledge exchange sessions among key stakeholders from the public, private, and civil society sectors, to ensure that the momentum for sustainability will keep going in the coming months and years. The Stratbase Albert Del Rosario Institute for Strategic and International Studies, for instance, launched a series of virtual town hall discussions on sustainability and climate action, starting with Moving Towards A Sustainable Future Through ESG. It enjoined business, government, and civil society leaders to discuss the challenge at hand — build synergies, identify gaps, and attain integration, balance, and inclusion of a broad mix of perspectives and actions.

Given all these, can we truly ensure a green recovery from the pandemic?

The answer is yes. If all stakeholders will work in unison; if public and private sector leaders will align their short-term pandemic recovery plans with the country's long-term sustainable development goals; and if the government will enact more well-defined and predictable policies that will further enhance the capacity of businesses to thrive sooner in this new era of sustainability.

The sooner we are able to act together, the sooner we will deliver green and decent jobs, cleaner air, a healthier and safer environment, and a better reality for the Filipino people.

Source: <https://www.bworldonline.com/how-to-ensure-a-green-recovery-from-the-pandemic/>



Assistant City Local Environment and Natural Resources Elvsa "Bing" Mabelin of the Cagayan de Oro Local Environment and Natural Resources (CLENRO) shares the city's initiatives for the Earth Month celebration. (JAKA/PIA10)

CLENRO bats for proper garbage management

By Vincent Philip S. BautistaPublished on April 27, 2021

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, April 26 (PIA)-- In celebration of the Earth Month, the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office (CLENRO) here reaffirms its commitment to a healthy environment, as it strives to balance economic development with sustainability and environmental protection.

"It is a challenge for the environment sector when tackling economic growth, but we cannot avoid it as it is how we thrive. There needs to be a balancing act when it comes to environment protection and economic growth," Assistant City Local Environment and Natural Resources Officer, Elvsa 'Bing' Mabelin said.

Despite the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mabelin disclosed that CLENRO has still continued its programs on solid waste management, forest resource management, ocean resource management, regulation of mining, and air and water quality management.

She noted, however, that the greatest current concern is tackling the city's garbage problems, as Cagayan de Oro is the region's center for health, education, and logistics. The city has a population of 650,000 at night and more than 1 million during day time, with each individual generating around .76 kilograms of garbage.

In response to this, the CLENRO in coordination with the city leadership implemented City Ordinance 11378 or "Ecological Solid Waste Management" ordinance to boost proper garbage collection, management, and disposal capabilities.

In addition, the city also constructing its Treatment and Storage Disposal (TSD) facility in barangay Pagalungan wherein it can cater to 150 kilos of waste per day.

It also pushes for proper segregation of residual wastes in both household and hospital levels.

Aside from the city's interventions for waste management, Mabelin emphasizes the importance of individual accountability to truly answer the city's garbage issues, saying, everyone is stakeholder when it comes to environmental issues. (VPSB/PIA10)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1073408>



EcoWaste Coalition pushes for waste segregation at source to promote OSH among waste workers

By EcoWaste Coalition Published on April 27, 2021

QUEZON CITY, Apr. 27 -- As COVID-19 cases in the country breached the one million mark (with 914,952 recoveries, 16,853 deaths and 74,623 active cases), a waste and pollution watchdog group called attention to the necessity of segregating waste at source to protect waste workers from getting infected.

In a statement issued on the eve of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on April 28, the EcoWaste Coalition emphasized the need to separate COVID-19 waste and other pathogenic waste from recyclable and compostable materials to keep waste workers, especially the informal recyclers, safe from harm caused by exposure to the novel coronavirus and other pathogens.

"We reiterate our plea to all waste generators to separate discarded materials at the point of generation to keep our environmental frontliners such as the waste workers safe from COVID-19 and other diseases," stated Jove Benosa, Zero Waste Campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition.

"Used face masks, tissues, wipes and other potentially infectious waste should not be mixed with other discards and should be properly disposed of to avoid them from polluting our streets and the oceans," he said.

While SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is mainly passed on from person-to-person through respiratory droplets, studies suggest that the virus can remain on some materials for varying amounts of time, the group said.

"For waste collectors and recyclers," according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "potential sources of exposure include having close contact with a coworker or member of the public with COVID-19, or by contacting surfaces touched or handled by a person with COVID-19."

"We therefore need to keep COVID-contaminated waste materials separate from recyclables and compostables to reduce risk of exposure among waste collectors and recyclers who often handle trash with minimal protection," he pointed out.

The lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as protective garments, gloves, glasses and shoes, the lack of access to water and soap or hand sanitizers, and the poor compliance to mandatory waste segregation at source makes the job of waste workers prone to occupational hazards, the group emphasized.

"To prevent and reduce occupational hazards, we request the public to make waste segregation a habit, while we ask the local governments and disposal sites to ensure waste workers' access to PPE and to hand washing stations with water and soap or hand sanitizers," Benosa said.

Recognizing the vulnerability of waste workers to COVID-19 and other diseases, the EcoWaste Coalition and other environmental groups have come together to request the government to include waste workers as a priority population group for the ongoing vaccination program

"Ensuring early access to COVID-19 vaccine will undeniably provide health and economic benefits to our waste workers and their families," they insisted. (EcoWaste Coalition)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1073524>

MONDELEZ PHILIPPINES FOR ZERO WASTE TO NATURE

By ... -April 27, 2021



Committed to ensure no plastic waste ends up in landfills or oceans THE Philippines is among the countries noted as having the most amount of plastic waste in their waters. According to the ADR Institute-cited Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Report on the Ocean Conservancy (2017), the Philippines alone produces “2.7 million metric tons of plastic waste and half a million metric tons of plastic waste leakage annually.” This, even when the country has a surprisingly high collection waste. The irony is lost following another study (Jambeck, et al, 2015) which indicated the Philippines has one of the highest percentages of waste, mismanaged waste, and total mismanaged plastic waste.

Concerns have been raised even by no less than manufacturers themselves whose ultimate goal has always been to serve the public in ways most beneficial to the community. Anything that jeopardizes this goal cannot be embraced by the industry. Most concerning is that the use of plastic has been taking all the blame, yet plastic itself need not be the cause of the trouble; at the heart of the problem lies improper waste management. And a misguided clamor for ending the use of something that immensely helps the consumer can be counterproductive.

Pro-consumer

“Remember that single-use packaging is designed with the consumer in mind,” said a packaging expert who has partnered with marketing minds on strategies that work best for the marketplace. “The great thing about single-use packaging is that food spoilage and staleness becomes much less of a concern as the product is finished off in one sitting,” he added. More importantly, in a country like the Philippines, small single-use packets allow those in the lowest income bracket to buy products they would otherwise be unable to purchase in bigger containers. This is the driving force behind the ‘tingi’ economy which thrives on fast-moving goods that fly off the shelves of sari-sari stores most frequented by lower-income families.

These consumers do not plan on buying a month’s—much less a week’s—supply for anything, because they can’t. They buy things as they need them, which means daily.

The advantages of plastics over traditional materials are what has made it the material of choice over the decades. “Plastics are a vital part of the drive to lightweight products to save energy across all industry sectors. It makes sense to exploit their range of physical properties and processability, combined with lightweight capabilities, enabling many valuable products,” said Professor Phil Coates of the University of Bradford in the UK.

According to Packaging in Perspective, a paper prepared by the Packaging Advisory Council in the UK, “Plastic packaging is one of the most important contributors to protecting food from spoiling. Food waste has a significantly higher environmental impact, particularly in the form of its carbon footprint than packaging waste.” The paper further said that with plastic packaging, food can travel farther distances and stay longer on the shelves. And because the food itself requires considerably more resources invested to create, protecting it from wastage makes more environmental sense.



Global trade has dictated that special items like liquids, gels, powders, out-of-season produce, among others, are safely protected when they reach the market, thus creating a role that plastics efficiently and effectively play. Without plastics, shelves would be empty of a wide range of products that people rely on every day. Without single-use plastic including sachets, millions of Filipinos would be denied the benefits of quality products in affordable servings.

Taking action

In response to the problem of improper waste management, which leads to plastic ending up in oceans and landfills, the Philippine Alliance for Recycling and Materials Sustainability (PARMS) and its member companies have committed to build and execute a strategy to manage plastic wastes. This will help ensure that by 2030, none of the members' plastic packaging waste will end up in nature.

Launched in January 2020, PARMS members, along with affiliates and partners, formally signed a "Zero Waste to Nature Ambisyon 2030 (ZWTN 2030)" commitment.

Years before the declaration, individual corporate members have been taking concrete action to address this problem including shifts to recyclable packaging and engaging in post-consumer waste recovery projects in partnership with local governments, NGOs, and community members. Most of the members have set targets that by 2025 or 2030, all their packaging will be recyclable, including snacks maker Mondelez Philippines.



"Plastic is a highly efficient material used in developing packaging that provides the right levels of safety, quality, product protection, and preservation while enabling us to meet our packaging elimination goals. Switching from plastic to other less efficient materials risks creating more food waste, or much more packaging material, with increased environmental and climate change impact. We want to contribute to a circular economy where packaging material is recycled or reused, while minimizing food waste and the overall environmental impact of packaging, including on climate change," said Crispian Lao, co-convenor and founding president of PARMS.

Mondelez Philippines, maker of Filipino favorites Eden Cheese, Cheez Whiz and Toblerone, in line with the committed goal to make 100% of its packaging recycle-ready, has recently pledged that by 2025, it will reduce its global use of virgin plastic for rigid packaging by 25% or reduce virgin plastic use in overall plastic packaging by 5% in 2025. This goes hand in hand with targeting to have 5% recycled content by weight across plastic packaging globally by the same period.

"More recently, we have launched our global Sustainable Futures platform," shares Atty. Joseph Fabul, country manager for Corporate and Government Affairs of Mondelez Philippines. "Through this we aim to incubate, finance, and build partnerships in the impact investment space through co-funded climate projects and a new social venture fund. We aim to partner with like-minded investors, increase our impact on the world and support self-sustaining projects. Locally we have started exploring this platform through our project with The Plastic Flamingo to collect and recycle 40,000 kilograms of plastic into lumber to turn into shelters."

The PARMS ZWTN 2030 Pledge is one of the ways the Company is tracking its performance versus its commitments.



The first step towards ZWTN is building a strategy to gain a thorough understanding of the types of wastes that end up in nature, their generation quantities, as well as their plastic components and structures. PARMS has engaged a credible think tank, Business for Sustainable Development (BSD) to undertake this study.

“One of the things we have confirmed is that plastic packaging leaks to the environment due to the limited capacity of solid waste management infrastructure across the Philippines and the small size of the recycled plastic industry, or those who produce and use recycled plastic content,” explains Lao. He outlines that major ZWTN strategy is anchored on five actions:



(1) Shift to recyclable packaging and labeling where FMCG brand owners, along with plastic manufacturers and packaging converters, will re-design both rigid and flexible plastic packaging to maximize its recycling value. (2) Reduction through alternative delivery systems where brand owners will innovate to reduce their plastic packaging use by shifting to a reuse model. (3) Strengthening on-ground recovery levels of plastic waste where PARMS, in partnership with BSD and funding partners build pilot scale models for recovery and recycling of flexible packaging to serve as examples for wide-scale implementation. (4) Output-based extended producer’s responsibility (EPR) where FMCGs and other footprint owners financially support waste recovery and diversion entities and take responsibility for plastic in their operations; and (5) Driving up investment in recycling infrastructure where investors, LGUs, and local stakeholders will be brought together to plan for setting-up recycling infrastructures and establish markets for recycled products. Each company will set targets for recycled content in their packaging materials to increase demand for products of the recycling industry.

“What the roadmap shows is that we know the most common types of plastic that our PARMS members make, and more importantly, what we should do as a collective to ensure we are zero waste to nature by 2030,” ends Lao. “We now have confirmed that it is possible to live with plastic, being as it is a valuable resource and offers many protection properties that other packaging materials do not. Lastly, we have confirmed that our members, who are made up of some of the biggest names in the manufacturing industry, are ready and are in fact already taking actions to reduce their plastic waste together with governments, NGOs and the community.”



Saving The Seas From Plastic Pollution



BYDENNIS GORECHO

APRIL 28, 2021



Dennis Gorecho

Pinoy Marino Rights

The video of a marine biologist removing a plastic straw stuck in a sea turtle's nose in August 2015 catalyzed a larger movement to eliminate single-use plastics, like plastic straws, from our day-to-day lives.

Marine litter, specifically plastic pollution, was discussed as part of Earth Day celebration during the recent episodes of Amigos Marino weekly online show by Von Hernandez of Break Free From Plastic movement and Chief Mate Aries Damian of Mariners Polytechnic Colleges of Bicol.

Marine litter is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded directly or indirectly into the sea, rivers or on beaches.

Marine litter poses threats to human health, food security, economy and environment, including degradation of marine and coastal habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity.

A major source of pollution are single-use disposable plastics that come in various forms such as straws, sachet packs, bags, cutleries, cups, and plastic bottles that are meant to be used only once, before being thrown away.

If there are no drastic interventions, by 2050 there will be more plastics than fish in the ocean. Plastic bags take 10-20 years to decompose, while plastic bottles take 450 years.

These items tend to shrink into smaller pieces (called microplastics), which never achieve full decomposition and return to the food cycle through ingestion by fish and other animals as "false food," causing digestive failure, suffocation, starvation, drowning and eventually death. Some animals become fatalities due to entanglement.

The Philippines, which disposes 2.7 million tons of plastics per year, is considered the third-largest global contributor to the 8 million tons of plastics that are estimated to flood our oceans each year.

More than 163 million plastic sachet packets, as well as 48 million shopping bags and 45 million thin-film bags are used and disposed of daily in the country.

The more visible manifestations of the problem due to single-use plastics include the clogging up of waterways, drainage systems, and therefore contributing to floods.

Hernandez echoed the call of environmental groups for the passage of a comprehensive Single-Use Plastic Ban as an essential policy tool to stop plastic pollution by shifting corporate dependence on throwaway packaging models to more sustainable reuse and refill systems.

They seek to apply pressure throughout each step along the plastic supply chain, from production to disposal.



Single-use plastic is not a clean-up problem but a pollution problem, Hernandez stressed, adding that the only way to prevent it is to stop its production and avoid using them in the first place.

This means looking at plastic at the different stages of the life-cycle, and not just treating it as a waste management or consumer responsibility issue, which is what the plastic industry wants.

Looking at it that way, Hernandez added, takes the industry off the hook and allows it to continue producing even more plastics.

On the other hand, CM Damian noted that the Annex V regulations of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), as first drafted in 1973 and amended in 1978, address marine pollution including handling of garbage from ships.

MARPOL seeks to ensure that the marine environment is preserved by the elimination of pollution by all harmful substance that can be discharged from the ship.

Annex V, which came into force on December 31, 1988, expressly prohibits all ships from discharging garbage, which includes all kinds of food, domestic and operational waste, all plastics, cargo residues, incinerator ashes, cooking oil, fishing gear, and animal carcasses generated during the normal operation of the ship and liable to be disposed of continuously or periodically.

The most important feature of the Annex is the complete ban imposed on the disposal into the sea of all forms of plastics, including but not limited to synthetic ropes, synthetic fishing nets, plastic garbage bags and incinerator ashes from plastic products, which may contain toxic or heavy metal residues.

It specifies the distances from land in which materials may be disposed of and subdivides different types of garbage and marine debris.

The requirements are much stricter in a number of “special areas.”

There must be a garbage management plan which is a complete guideline that comprises of a written procedure for collecting, storing, processing, and disposing of garbage generated onboard ship.

Vessels are obliged to deposit plastic waste at reception facilities ashore as port state signatories are required to provide adequate and appropriate reception facilities.

Atty. Gorecho heads the seafarers' division of the Sapalo Velez Bundang Bulilan law offices. For comments, e-mail info@sapalovelez.com, or call 0917-5025808 or 0908-8665786.



LOOK | Community Pantry Accepts Recyclables As ‘Payment’ For Food



BY BERNARD TESTA

APRIL 27, 2021



Residents of Barangay Addition Hills exchange their recycled trash for vegetables and food packs as part of the barangay community pantry. In exchange for the food items, the barangay requires residents to bring recyclable trash consisting of snack and candy wrappers, food containers, and other similar items.

Since young entrepreneur Ana Patricia Non began to open her Maginhawa Community Pantry in Diliman, Quezon City, over 300 community pantries have sprouted all over Metro Manila and perhaps even beyond.

When it first began, the Maginhawa Community Pantry consisted only mostly of basic food items like vegetables, eggs and, “tsitserya” snacks. Reminiscent of the Filipino tradition of “bayanihan,” the fundamental concept behind the initiative was to simply “take only what you need and give what you can spare.”

Non’s initiative have since inspired other well-meaning individuals and groups to set up their own community pantries in their areas. Several permutations have since emerged and there are even some that have focused on non-food items such as one in Marikina that specializes in basic footwear.

In Mandaluyong, however, one community pantry merits a second look. There, in Barangay Addition Hills, in particular, authorities are encouraging people to “pay” for their desired food items such as squash or calabasa and other vegetables, not with money but instead recyclable materials or things that are considered as “*basura*” in the household.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/04/27/look-community-pantry-accepts-recyclables-as-payment-for-food/>



From left: Globe's E-waste Zero program encourages people to donate their old, non-working electronic devices via participating Globe Stores, select malls and offices of partner organizations; English Tea Shop believes in the concept of sustainable farming and how using organic leaves helps bring better wellness benefits for its customers.

Globe, English Tea Shop/Released

Earth Month 2021: Companies with green practices that inspire

[Kathleen A. Llemit](#) (Philstar.com) - April 26, 2021 - 2:25pm

MANILA, Philippines — In time for the 51st year of the world celebrating Earth Day last April 22, the one time when there is a concerted effort to pay respect and give Mother Nature its due, **Philstar.com** lists some of the best practices companies have come up to protect the world and the environment amid the onslaught of COVID-19.

'Pinasiglang Mundo'

The Department of Finance and the [Climate Change Commission](#) packed a full-day of web casts for Earth Day. With the theme "Pinasiglang Mundo" inspired by this year's global theme "Restore Our Earth," talks are centered on climate change education, the global plastic-free movement, governments and policymaking, and sustainability.

EarthDay.org listed activities

Other activities and their details can be found [here](#). Guests can just check out their preferred location, time and activities they would want to know about anywhere in the world.

Support sustainable farming with organic tea

To highlight the positive properties of organic tea, English Tea Shop introduces a serene mandala on its new packaging.

The new-look emphasizes the organic label of the teas, as the company firmly believes in the concept of sustainable farming and how using organic leaves helps bring better wellness benefits for its customers.

Represented in the Philippines by Clever Cats International Company, with their teas exclusively available at Robinsons Supermarket, The Marketplace and Shopwise stores nationwide, English Tea Shop is a favorite among tea enthusiasts for its blends of organic and sustainably-sourced ingredients that come together to produce sensational brews.



Coming from the previously more playful and light-hearted teapot emblem, the brand is now introducing a mandala-inspired brand element. A geometric figure representing the universe in Hindu and Buddhist symbolism also means circle in ancient Sanskrit language. For the brand, the mandala represents the virtuous support system the brand aims to build between small businesses, society and the environment at large, which is at the heart of everything they do.

Additionally, to make it even more appealing to the wellness-conscious audience, the word "organic" is now front and centered to emphasize the brand's commitment to being 100% free from synthetic chemicals.

With the distinction of receiving the SGS Covid-19 Control Program Certification, the brand is committed to providing quality products that have passed the standards of the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. This means that the warehouse and production facilities of the brand have been found to adhere to the highest standards of safety while protecting their employees and teas.

Spotlight on Philippine water pollution

Discovery is putting the sounds of nature in the spotlight with its regional campaign "#StartWith1Thing: [Compose for the Earth](#)." The sobering reality that the beautiful sounds of nature are diminishing due to human activity and must be resolved is the guiding principle of this campaign. Discovery addresses one environmental issue per country across the region including light pollution in Malaysia, illegal fishing in Singapore, and water pollution in the Philippines.

The overarching idea is that with collective effort, even focusing on improving one issue at a time will allow the awesome sounds of the planet to be heard again and be preserved and appreciated for generations to come. This applies to simple acts that people can do in their daily routine like using reusable items such as water bottles, utensils and eco bags.

United Nations Environment Programme Goodwill Ambassador and Founder of CORA and The Sustainable Planet Founder Antoinette Taus lead the campaign launch in the Philippines. Hear her message for this year's Earth Day on Discovery's Facebook and Instagram.

Google pushes for carbon-free energy

Google announced several updates and initiatives this Earth Day week including its progress towards its goal to operate entirely on 24/7 carbon-free energy by 2030, a powerful Google and Arts Culture project, and an animated video Google Doodle.

Google and Alphabet chief executive officer Sundar Pichai said, "This commitment goes beyond being carbon neutral--which we've been since 2007--and matching our operations with 100% renewable energy, which we've now done over four consecutive years."

Sundar continued, "Within a decade, we aim for every Google data center, cloud region, and office campus to run on clean electricity every hour of every day. And today I'm proud to announce that five of our data center sites — in Denmark, Finland, Iowa, Oklahoma and Oregon — are now operating near or at 90% carbon-free energy."

Google has committed approximately \$4 billion to purchase clean energy from more than 50 wind and solar projects globally through 2034. Last year, many of those projects came online, including hundreds of new wind turbines and hundreds of thousands of solar panels, which are helping to improve carbon-free energy performance at several Google data centers.

In 2020, Google Arts & Culture and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) launched “Heartbeat of the Earth”--four interactive and educational experiments by artists exploring scientific climate data to make them more understandable by people.

The project added a new set of climate experiments created by artists Giorgia Lupi, Felicity Hammond, Cristina Tarquini, and Sey Min.

The Lagoon (g.co/thelagoon) is one of the newest additions to the project. It is an immersive and durational video collage work by Felicity Hammond depicting an imaginary coastal city slowly submerging in water over 80 years. Over 8 minutes, a series of photographs shows the landscape being erased by water until completely submerged. There are also six online animations of the Southeast Asian coastal cities.

For its annual Earth Day Doodle, Google launched an animated video.

The video Doodle tells a story of reforestation and planting trees across generations, showing how doing a small part can lead to a positive impact for the planet. It links to a page that shows a brief description of the concept, a highlight for the Sustainability Collections page launched in honor of Earth Day, and a personal write-up from the Doodler herself Sophie Diao on her creative process developing the Doodle.

“I knew I wanted to create a narrative about the importance of trees, so I started by researching everything I could about reforestation techniques and best practices. I was inspired by the stories of people who had planted trees when they were very young and cared for them throughout their lives, and people—sometimes as a community, other times working individually—who made it a goal to reforest a place, whether it be one the densest cities in the world or an arid desert that used to be lush and green,” Sophie shared.

Globe, WWF develop environmentally friendly digital platform



Source: "Banning single-use plastic: lessons and experiences from countries" UN Environment Programme report (2018)

Single-use plastics to avoid

UNEP.org via Globe Philippines/Released



Globe has partnered with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines in the development of a digital platform dedicated for environmental education for students, the youth, teachers and the general public. The web-based and mobile application will feature multimedia content such as animated videos, films, stories, digital modules, quizzes and puzzles and other educational resources. It will also have an environmental footprint calculator and calendar, and interactive educational games.

"Through this collaboration with WWF-Philippines, we hope to raise knowledge and awareness among the public on the significance of environmental conservation and sustainable practices that will help combat climate change, which is a global issue that Earth Day looks to address," said Yoly Crisanto, Globe Chief Sustainability Officer and SVP for Corporate Communications.

"The intensity of our environmental problems coupled with the worsening effects of climate change underscores the need for all of us to come together, and the first step to being part of the solution is through awareness and education. Our actions, big and small, are important in ensuring a livable and healthy planet for future generations," said Katherine Custodio, Executive Director, WWF-Philippines.

The giant telecommunications company recognizes that the protection and preservation of the environment are the responsibility of all. Thus, it encourages its customers to do their part.

Here are ways they can participate in the movement:

1) Donate old, non-working electronic gadgets through Globe's E-waste Zero program. It encourages people to donate their old, non-working electronic devices via participating Globe Stores, select malls and offices of partner organizations.

To date, more than 1.4 million kilograms of ewaste were donated, collected and recycled responsibly. To see the full list of drop off points or request for free door-to-door pickups, go to Globe's Sustainability [website](#).

2) Prevent single-use plastics from entering the ocean. Bring reusables everywhere as this eliminates the need for plastic spoons, forks, straws, cups and stirrers. Cloth bags may also be used when buying items. Properly segregating plastic waste also helps.

Globe's 'Wag Sa Single Use Plastic (WasSUP) campaign stands against single-use plastics within its main corporate office. This program is in collaboration with Green Antz Builders Inc. where clean and dry plastics are shredded and brought to the latter's facility in Arca South, Taguig for further processing and conversion to eco-bricks and eco pavers. The program also advocates a zero waste lifestyle and educates Globe employees on how avoidance of single-use plastics can protect the environment.

3) Decrease carbon footprint by supporting reforestation programs. Globe's partnership with Hineleban Foundation and The Mead Foundation allows the public to help safeguard our forests through the use of Globe Rewards and GCash. To date, a combined 159 hectares have been planted with pioneer species Calliandra and indigenous tree species such as Narra, White and Red Lauaan, Mamalis, Bitag in Bukidnon and Lanao del Sur, as well as, Vetiver grass and various native tree species in Iba, Zambales. These efforts lead to a conservative estimate of 25,083.13 metric



tons of carbon dioxide sequestered.

Every 100 Rewards points donation is equivalent to one tree. To donate to Hineleban, download the Globe Rewards app (<https://www.globe.com.ph/rewards.html#GRewardsApp>) and click the “DONATE” banner. Tap “HINELEBAN100” and press “REDEEM.” To support the Mead Foundation, go to <https://mead-foundation.org/trees/> and scan the QR code using the GCASH app. Every P100 donation is equivalent to one native tree planted.

4) Reduce your personal environmental footprint. Shift to electronic billing to help reduce paper consumption and conserve natural resources. Use online financial platforms like GCash to send money to other GCash users, transfer money to a bank, save money, invest, pay bills, pay for food, goods and other services all from the safety and comfort of your homes. Telehealth services such as KonsultaMD also give you immediate access to a team of Filipino doctors without the need to go to the nearest medical facility. Konsulta MD can be accessed via its 24/7 hotline (02-7798 8000).



Study confirms extinction of 3 giant rodents in the Philippines

By [The Manila Times](#) April 28, 2021



Artist's conception of the three extinct cloud rats, based on their living relatives. From the top, Crateromys, Carpomys, and Batomys.

A new study published in the *Journal of Mammalogy* on April 23 confirmed the recent extinction of three previously unknown species of giant rodents that live only in the Philippines.

Locally known as buot or bugkon, the giant cloud rats live in trees and eat leaves, buds, and seeds. They have furry or fluffy tails and striking fur color. These giant rats and their relatives are members of an ancient branch on the tree of life that arrived from the Asian mainland about 14 million years ago. All three of these newly discovered species are thought by the authors to be extinct.

The largest of the fossil cloud rat is the *Carpomys dakal*, named so because it is much larger compared to the known living species in the same genus, *Carpomys melanurus* and *Carpomys phaeurus*. Dakal means big or large in several languages in northern Luzon, including in the Itawes, Ibanag and Agta languages. The second fossil species, *Crateromys ballik*, is slightly smaller than the living *Crateromys* species on Luzon, *Crateromys schadenbergi*. Ballik means small in the Dupanangan Agta language. The third species, *Batomys cagayanensis*, is named after the place where the archaeological sites are located, the Cagayan region of northeastern Luzon. The scientific names of the three new species of fossil cloud rats were chosen using vernacular terms from Philippine languages.

Dr. Janine Ochoa, lead author and an assistant professor of Anthropology at the University of the Philippines – Diliman, said the smaller-sized mammals were understudied probably because researches were focused on open-air sites where the large fossil mammal faunas were known to have been preserved, rather than the careful sieving of cave deposits that preserve a broader size-range of vertebrates including the teeth and bones of rodents.

“We have had evidence of extinct large mammals on Luzon for a long time, but there has been virtually no information about fossil of smaller-sized mammals,” said Dr. Ochoa.

The extinct mammals previously known from Luzon include two types of elephants, a species of rhinoceros, a giant hog, and relatives of the living dwarf water buffalo called the tamaraw.

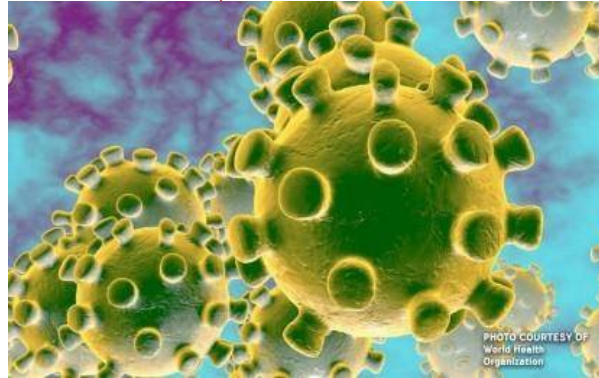


Marian Reyes, a zooarcheologist at the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) and one of the authors, said that some of the fossils that were excavated in the 1970s and 1980s were in the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) awaiting detailed studies.



PH Covid-19 recoveries account for 91.3% of total cases

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor April 27, 2021, 5:35 pm



MANILA – An additional 10,109 patients have beaten the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), pushing the country's overall recovery count to 925,027 on Tuesday.

In its case bulletin, the Department of Health (DOH) said those who have beaten the illness account for 91.3 percent of the Philippines' total case tally which has reached 1,013,618.

The agency also reported 7,204 new confirmed cases and 63 new deaths.

These figures bring the overall tally of active cases to 71,675 and the death toll to 16,916.

The DOH said about 95.2 percent of the active cases are mild, 1.5 percent are asymptomatic, 1.3 percent are severe, 0.90 percent are moderate, and 1.1 percent are in critical condition.

"There were 14 duplicates removed from the total case count as eight of these are recoveries. Moreover, 64 cases previously tagged as recovered were reclassified as deaths after final validation," it said.

DOH data on April 25 showed that 15.8 percent of 39,941 who were tested turned out positive for Covid-19.

Two laboratories were not operational on April 25 while 22 laboratories were not able to submit their data to the Covid-19 Document Repository System.

To date, 63 percent of 1,900 intensive care unit beds, 47 percent of 13,500 isolation beds, 53 percent of 6,000 ward beds, and 46 percent of 2,000 ventilators dedicated to patients with Covid-19 are in use nationwide.

Meanwhile, 69 percent of 700 intensive care unit beds, 59 percent of 3,800 isolation beds, 64 percent of 2,200 ward beds, and 58 percent of 800 ventilators dedicated to patients with Covid-19 are used in the National Capital Region.

The public is reminded to stay at home and to observe minimum health standards when going out.

The DOH urged those experiencing Covid-19 symptoms to immediately isolate and contact the Barangay Health Emergency Response Teams. *(PNA)*



Police officers stop a motorcycle rider at a checkpoint along Sto. Domingo street in Quezon City yesterday.

Michael Varcas, file

‘Extended MECQ to help decongest hospitals’

[Janvic Mateo](#) (The Philippine Star) - April 28, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Extending the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) in the National Capital Region (NCR) Plus bubble will allow the ongoing decrease in new cases to stabilize and help in decongesting hospitals, according to the OCTA Research Group.

In its latest report released yesterday, the group noted that several local government units (LGUs) still do not have sustained decreases in the number of new cases.

“Our concern is that a premature return to GCQ (general community quarantine) would trigger spikes in some LGUs that would overflow into adjacent cities and municipalities,” the group said.

“One more week of an MECQ will continue to force down the reproduction number to decongest our hospitals more quickly. Despite the gradual decrease in the number of new COVID-19 cases, the hospitals of the NCR remain at critical capacity,” it added.

Citing data from the Department of Health, OCTA said 43 hospitals and infirmaries in Metro Manila were still at 100 percent capacity, while 59 were above critical risk as of April 24.

With the current reproduction number of 0.9, the research group projected hospital bed occupancy will not drop to pre-surge numbers until sometime in June, while it will do so by the third week of May if Metro Manila can attain a reproduction number of 0.8.

“Once the NCR Plus bubble is moved from MECQ to GCQ, we can expect viral transmissions to increase as people begin to interact with each other again. To prevent the surge from re-surfing, we will need to enhance our testing, contact tracing and quarantine and isolation procedures to mitigate this transmission,” it said.

“One more week of an MECQ will give the national government additional time to enhance our contact tracing capacity,” it added.

The number of new daily cases in Metro Manila – currently averaging around 3,500 – has to be around 2,688 or below to avoid overwhelming the hospital system, according to OCTA.

“Our estimation is we will decrease to less than 2,688 new COVID-19 cases per day in one to two weeks, based on the current trends,” it said.

An additional week of MECQ, it added, would allow the government to complete the construction of new quarantine and isolation facilities and complete the hiring and training of new contact tracers.



Unlike last year, when a two-week MECQ was enough to reverse a surge, OCTA said it is still unclear if the presence of more transmissible COVID-19 variants will replicate this trend.

The group urged the national government to identify and publish trigger levels for daily cases and health care utilization rates in order for a circuit-breaker lockdown to be imposed.

“We want to emphasize that the downward trend in the pandemic is always reversible. If we do not ensure that our testing, isolation and quarantine capacities are sufficient, we will see the surge re-surge,” it warned.

DILG backs MECQ extension

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año is backing an extension of the MECQ in NCR Plus.

“To continue with the good trend, let us extend the MECQ a bit,” Año said in Filipino in an interview over Teleradyo.

While the daily average of active COVID-19 cases has gone down, he said the number is still not enough to downgrade to the less stringent GCQ.

“We have 8,000 to 10,000 new cases a day. We hope we can bring it down to 3,000 below,” he added.

The interior chief pointed out that the health care utilization rate is still at 70 percent, which means hospitals are still dealing with a surge in COVID-19 cases.

As the one who has supervision over LGUs and in charge of public safety, Año said he would choose a conservative outlook.

He pointed out, however, that the decision on whether to extend the MECQ or not is up to President Duterte, adding that they would just give a recommendation based on their consultation with other government agencies and local chief executives.

Año also expressed support for the homecare package of private hospitals for COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms.

He said the move would give hospitals more room to treat those with severe symptoms of the virus.

Economic activities

If Metro Manila’s MECQ is extended, Marikina Mayor Marcelino Teodoro said restrictions on certain economic activities should at least be lifted to allow local economies to thrive.

Teodoro said while he was backing the extension of MECQ imposed in the Greater Manila area after it lapses on May 1, the government should consider residents who have been languishing over the strict health protocols while the second strictest lockdown level is in effect.

“So many are going hungry nowadays. So many have been losing jobs. My take on this is MECQ can be extended but open with more economic activities,” he said in an interview aired over ANC.

For example, the mayor suggested that the government could allow more retail establishments and restaurants to resume operating in order to make up for the great losses they faced during the quarantine restrictions.



Several Metro Manila mayors have voiced the need for their cities to remain under MECQ, considering that while there was a slight drop in cases, it would not be an assurance that this trend would continue if the government decides to loosen restrictions.

Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite, Laguna and Bulacan have been under MECQ since April 12, after two weeks of being under ECQ. The tightening of health protocols was seen as a solution to the surge of COVID-19 cases last month.

While the average daily number of cases in Marikina has improved, Teodoro said the hospital utilization rate in the city is still high.

“Current consideration being proposed with the Metro Manila mayors is to extend the MECQ for another two weeks. After which, it can be assessed and evaluated if we could further downgrade it to GCQ,” he added.

Latest available figures for Marikina showed there were at least 878 active cases in the city, compared to active cases during the second week of April which reached over 1,100.

Slight improvement

Shifting to GCQ with only a slight improvement in daily infections in Metro Manila could pose risks for another surge of cases, San Juan Mayor Francis Zamora said yesterday.

Zamora said he favors for Metro Manila to remain under MECQ for two more weeks, which he sees as an opportunity for LGUs to further contain the spread of COVID-19.

Citing San Juan’s own pandemic response, the mayor said the city was able to trim down active cases from over 1,000 to 741 as of yesterday.

“We saw that it decreased, but what I’m concerned about is if we rush reopening already, it’s possible that cases might increase again, especially since the hospital utilization rate is still high, our quarantine facilities are still almost full,” Zamora said over Teleradyo.

Aside from the health care utilization rate, the vaccination rollout is still not consistent as supplies have remained limited due to snags that the government faces in procurement and deliveries, according to Zamora.

“In fact, in San Juan we have run out of the first doses. The vaccines we’re injecting now are almost 6,000 units of the second dose. We’re still waiting for deliveries of more doses,” he said.

He added that while he understands the need to reopen the economy, the risks of shifting to GCQ was greater.

“Let’s say we shifted to GCQ and the cases surged once more, what if we can’t fit more patients in hospitals and quarantine facilities?” he said.

“We both need economy and health and safety of our people. So we need to balance them. When we went under MECQ the last time, there were additional industries that were allowed to reopen. This is a possibility I’m seeing, that certain businesses can be allowed as long as they don’t pose too much of a risk,” he added. – **Emmanuel Tupas, Neil Jayson Servillos, Marc Jayson Cayabyab, Christina Mendez, Louella Desiderio**



Taal Volcano emits more gas – Phivolcs

By Arlie O. Calalo

April 28, 2021

TAAL Volcano has recorded the highest gas emission at 2,272 tons in the past 24 hours as the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said it was consistent with its continued state of increased unrest.

On one hand, the Taal Volcano Network (TVN) did not detect any single volcanic earthquake, however, low-level background tremor was recorded, according to Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum.

He said the TVN has recorded sulfur dioxide emission which was measured at 2,272 tons on April 26, 2021.

Asked about the current behavior of the volcano from the Batangas province which recorded the highest gas emission since the Alert Level 2 status was raised but there was no single volcanic earthquake in the past 24 hours, Solidum told The Manila Times adding eruption remains possible.

“Alert Level 2 remains at Taal (Volcano) because of the continued background tremor consistent with active degassing as supported by the high sulfur dioxide measurement. Inflation is continuous but slow,” he said.

At the same time, Solidum said, the high sulfur dioxide emission rate measured in Taal was consistent with its continued state of increased unrest.

“The possibility of steam-driven or phreatic eruption was high,” said Solidum as he reiterated his warning people need to remain vigilant and should refrain from going to Taal Volcano Island. Solidum had said another “big one” was possible after its last eruption in January last year.

It is possible to have eruptions after a year in Taal and this was manifested after the 1965 eruption, followed by eruptions in 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1970, he said.



China insists sovereignty over Panatag Shoal, Pag-asa Island amid Philippine coast guard drills

By [Patricia Lourdes Viray](#)(Philstar.com) - April 27, 2021 - 12:53pm



In this undated handout photo received from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) on April 25, 2021, coast guard personnel conduct maritime exercise near Pag-asa island in the West Philippine Sea.

MANILA, Philippines — Beijing on Monday insisted that it has jurisdiction over the West Philippine Sea following maritime exercises of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in the area.

Last Saturday, ships of the PCG and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) conducted maritime exercises near Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal or Bajo de Masinloc.

Coast guard vessels have also been deployed near Pag-asa (Thitu) Island for their interoperability training.

The Chinese foreign ministry, however, called on the Philippines to stop such actions. "China enjoys sovereignty over Nansha (Spratly) Islands including Zhongye (Thitu) Island and Zhongsha Islands including Huangyan Island (Scarborough Shoal) and their adjacent waters, and exercises jurisdiction in relevant waters," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in a [press briefing](#) on Monday.

Wang was referring to Panatag Shoal, which the Chinese call Huangyan Island, and Pag-asa Island, which they call Zhongye Island, where the PCG recently conducted drills.

Panatag Shoal is a traditional fishing ground off the coast of Zambales while Pag-asa Island is under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Kalayaan in Palawan.

"We urge the relevant side to respect China's sovereignty and rights and interests, and stop actions complicating the situation and escalating disputes," Wang said.

In a media release, the PCG said the exercises were intended to intensify their training on navigation, small boat operations, maintenance and logistical operations.

READ: PCG, BFAR STEP UP MARITIME EXERCISES IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA Utilizing eight capital ships of the national...

Posted by [Philippine Coast Guard](#) on [Saturday, 24 April 2021](#)



BRP Gabriela Silang (OPV-8301) and BRP Sindangan (MRRV-4407) were deployed to Panatag Shoal while BRP Cabra (MRRV-4409), BRP Malapascua (MRRV-4403) and coast guard-manned BFAR were sent to Pag-asa Island.

"We are supporting the whole-of-nation approach in securing our maritime jurisdiction, especially the efforts of the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) to undertake maritime security, maritime safety, maritime law enforcement, maritime search and rescue, and marine environmental protection roles in our country's waters," PCG spokesperson Commodore Armand Balilo earlier said.

On April 21, the Department of Foreign Affairs filed two more diplomatic protests against the continuing presence of at least 160 Chinese fishing vessels and maritime militia vessels in the West Philippine Sea.

The new protests were in addition to the daily protests that the DFA files for every day that Chinese ships remain at Julian Felipe (Whitsun) Reef.



Global cooperation on climate change gains new momentum

Published April 28, 2021, 12:13 AM

by [Manila Bulletin](#)



US President Joe Biden heralded America's return to the center stage of global diplomacy as he hosted 40 leaders in a summit on climate change to mark this year's celebration of Earth Day. He declared the US' goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50 to 52 percent by 2030 based on 2005 levels, a target described by World Resources Institute (WRI) as "ambitious, achievable, affordable, necessary, foundational, and inspirational." Climate resilient infrastructure and leadership of the world's electric vehicle market are two initiatives that are highlighted in his \$2 trillion America Jobs Plan.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) agenda includes: "Increasing electric cars' share of annual sales to more than 50 percent from three percent currently, raising low-carbon hydrogen production to 40 million metric tons from just 450,000, and increasing investment in clean electricity to \$1.6 trillion from \$380 billion."

A proposal by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to impose a carbon tax on activities that bring about the highest levels of GHG emission is aimed at reshaping consumer behavior toward using electric vehicles and more energy-efficient household products. The IMF estimates that "a carbon tax of at least \$50 a ton in 2030 for G20 countries, and \$25 a ton for emerging economies, would double emissions reductions compared to current commitments." It also projects a minimum carbon price for the largest emitters that would cover up to 80 percent of global emissions; but "differentiated pricing for countries at different levels of economic development."

One of the priority items in the agenda of the Conference of Parties (COP) 26 climate summit in Glasgow later this year is a proposal to reduce the debt of poor countries in exchange for green investments. The UN Green Climate Fund is intended to transfer wealth from affluent countries to poor countries that are more heavily affected by global warming that triggers catastrophic natural disasters.

Carbon tax and carbon pricing proposals are meeting strong headwinds from academe based advocates of a "sustainability transition policy." Writing for the PNAS Journal of the National Academy of Sciences, they deplored the myopic limitations of carbon pricing that they criticize for framing "climate change as a market failure rather than a fundamental system problem." They emphasize the need for a context-sensitive policy approach that reflects political realities.



Singapore and Indonesia represented the ASEAN countries in the US climate summit. Echoing the pitch for sustainability, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted that on account of its size and limited resources, Singapore is opting for innovative and technology-driven strategies. He bared plans to quadruple solar energy production and operate the world's largest floating solar energy system. Indonesian President Joko Widodo underlined the development of biofuels, the lithium battery industry and electric vehicles. He vowed that Indonesia's presidency of the G20 in 2022 will emphasize "strengthened global cooperation on climate change and sustainable development."

Global cooperation on reining in climate change has significantly gained new momentum.



Shame on us!

By: [Luis H. Francia](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

INQUIRER.NET U.S. Bureau / 08:34 AM April 27, 2021



Climate change activist Greta Thunberg speaks at the High-Level event on Climate Emergency during the U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Madrid, Spain December 11, 2019. REUTERS/Susana Vera

NEW YORK—The child is the mother of man.

I refer to Greta Thunberg who first held a one-person sit-down strike outside the Swedish Parliament in 2018, with a sign reading *Skolstrejk för klimatet* (School Strike for Climate). She was all of 15 years.

In what the media has tagged the “Greta Effect,” other students were quick to follow, not just in Scandinavia but globally, engaging in similar protests. By the very next year, organized multi-city protests with over a million students each, were being held, and smaller student strikes occurred every week in different parts of the world.

Invited in 2019 to speak at the UN headquarters in New York City, on the occasion of the UN Climate Action Summit, to avoid flying, she sailed from Plymouth in the UK—no doubt a nod to the 1620 New World voyage of the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower*—to Gotham. Addressing the assembly on September 23, 2019, Thunberg opened her statement by speaking truth to power: “This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope? How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction. And all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!”

Thunberg has since become internationally known, awarded various honors, including chosen in 2019 as *Time*’s youngest Person of the Year, and being nominated three years in a row—2019 to 2021—for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Is Greta Thunberg the Joan of Arc of the environmental movement, leading the charge against inaction and apathy, and being regarded with skepticism by many global leaders?

In spite of claims to the contrary, especially coming from those with vested interests in the fossil fuels industries, climate change is palpably real, *the* existential threat to our very survival and the planet’s.

Fortunately, President Biden takes the threat seriously, rejoining the Paris Accord, from which the former guy withdrew. (It bears repeating that the latter’s four-year presidency was an unmitigated disaster.) The Biden plan takes much-needed steps, the aim being for the US to reduce its carbon footprint by 50 percent by 2030. It is ambitious but necessarily so. Hopefully it will prompt other state actors to undertake similar efforts. That will take some heavy lifting.



What might get the global shakers and movers off their asses to undertake meaningful action would be the sudden drop in their profit margins. According to a *New York Times* article, “Climate Change Could Slash Global Wealth, an Insurance Giant Warns,” Swiss Re has calculated that “[I]f countries succeed at holding average global temperature increases to less than two degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels — the goal set by the 2015 Paris accord, an agreement among nations to fight climate change — economic losses by midcentury would be marginal, ... The company found that most countries’ economies would be no more than 5 percent smaller than would otherwise be the case.”

However, if nothing significant is undertaken, by 2050, “global temperatures are likely to increase as much 2.6 degrees.” Thus, “For poorer nations, which tend to be more exposed to warmer temperatures but have less ability to adapt their infrastructure and economies in response, the consequences would be far more dire.”

Interestingly, Swiss Re singled out Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, predicting that their wealth would be reduced by a third. Consider the economic damage wrought by Typhoon Haiyan on the Philippines in 2013: Between \$12 to \$15 billion in losses, with major rice- and sugar-producing areas devastated.

Annually the archipelago is hit on the average by 20 typhoons. According to the Asian Development Bank, typhoons and earthquakes cost the Philippines around \$1.6 billion each year. One realizes how truly enormous was the damage wrought by Haiyan.

Even more disturbing, “Swiss Re also modeled the economic impacts of a 3.2-degree increase by 2050, which it described as the ‘severe case’ for temperature gains. If that happened, levels of wealth in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand would drop almost by half compared with a world with no climate change. The economy of Indonesia would be 40 percent smaller. India’s would be 35 percent smaller.”

The poor will get even poorer, even as their ranks expand because of the increase in poverty levels. The rising tide, literally, will float so many boats, but only those big and sturdy enough. Most of the smaller craft won’t make it, and those without boats—the majority of humankind—will perish.

Shame on us, if we fail to act now. – *Copyright L.H. Francia 2021*

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