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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Cimatu lauds anti-illegal wildlife trade task force for receiving international prize

By DENR Published on February 27, 2021

QUEZON CITY, Feb. 27 -- Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu has cited the inter-agency task force Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife or POGI for winning the prestigious Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards given by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Cimatu said the award is "a testimony of the continuing commitment of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on upholding its mandate of protecting, conserving, and managing the environment and natural resources for the present and future generations."

"This serves as another feather on the cap of the agency on environmental law enforcement," the DENR chief said.

The POGI, chaired by Undersecretary Atty. Ernesto D. Adobo, Jr., is a composite team of wildlife enforcers from various agencies, including DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine National Police, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, Bureau of Customs, and DENR-National Capital Region—was recognized during the 5th Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards under Impact category on Feb. 17, 2021.

The award is given to individuals and/or government organizations or teams that demonstrate excellence and outstanding leadership in enforcement of national laws to combat transboundary environmental crime.

This year, UNEP awarded those who demonstrated excellence and leadership in one or more of the following categories: collaboration; impact; innovation; integrity; and gender leadership.

Task Force POGI was one of the eight winners mainly for its excellent collaboration and coordination framework among different enforcement agencies, thus enhancing the impact of operations against illegal trade in wildlife.

During the nomination period from June 2019 to May 2020, the task force has successfully apprehended high profile traffickers and confiscated illegally trafficked goods.

The key highlight was in August 2019 when the task force arrested Sharon Jonjon Lim, a notorious online wildlife trader who had been elusive for about five years, and recovered from him 13 rare animals worth around US\$5,000 or around Php250,000.

Adobo, who is the DENR Undersecretary for Legal, Administration, Human Resources and Legislative Affairs, received the award in a virtual ceremony.

"We are humbled and deeply grateful that our collective efforts and initiatives in combating environmental crimes, particularly crimes against wildlife, are recognized by no less than international experts from the United Nations and its partner agencies," Adobo said in his acceptance message.



"Rest assured that POGI will continue to work against illegal wildlife trade within the country, and we remain steadfast in our commitment as member of the ASEAN Wildlife Working Group, and to our international partners all engaged in combatting wildlife trafficking," he added.

This year's Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards, with the theme "Fighting transboundary environmental crime," was also in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, International Criminal Police Organization, and World Customs Organization. (DENR)



DENR inks 2 eco-park project agreements in Iloilo City

Published February 27, 2021, 12:23 PM

by [Tara Yap](#)

ILOILO CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Western Visayas (DENR Region 6) supports the creation of eco-parks in this city.



The design of the three-hectare park in Jaro, Iloilo City that is being built. (Iloilo City PIO / MANILA BULLETIN)

DENR Region 6 Regional Director Francisco Milla Jr. inked two separate Memoranda of Agreements (MOAs) with Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas for the creations of two eco-parks here.

“Iloilo City is indeed a vibrant and liveable city. It is not just rich in culture, but also with its coastal and marine resources,” said Milla.

Among the two eco-parks is the 35-hectare forestland area in Barangay Hinactacan in La Paz district. Dubbed as “Eco Park 2,” the project will showcase the natural mangrove forests in this city as a social laboratory for marine and other wildlife management researches.

A separate MOA was also inked for the development, management, protection, and conservation of a coastal area in Barangay Boulevard in Molo district to be known as the “Iloilo City Park.” It will be a botanical garden and biodiversity conservation park and showcase both marine and terrestrial biodiversity, especially species endemic in the area.

Meanwhile, the Iloilo City government has started the construction of a three-hectare forest park in Barangay Lanit in Jaro district.



Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape teeming with coastal, marine life

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

February 28, 2021



Sarangani Bay's scenic feature

Sarangani Bay was put in the spotlight recently when reports that hundreds of whales and dolphins showed up while a team from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the province was conducting a marine mammal census.

Little is known about Sarangani Bay. This magnificent seascape is a rich body of water and home to the tuna industry in the Philippines.

It is teeming with coastal and marine life, enough to be included as one of the 94 protected areas covered by the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System Act.

Protected seascape



Corals and fishes waiting to be discovered within the Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape

On March 5, the Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape (SBPS) will mark its 25th year.

In 1996, then-President Fidel V. Ramos signed Proclamation 756, establishing Sarangani Bay and a portion of the municipal waters of Maitum, Kiamba and Maasim in the province of Sarangani, as a protected seascape, in order to protect and maintain its coastal and marine resources for the benefit of the Filipino people.

The SBPS has a total of area of 215,950 hectares and is shared by a total of 68 coastal barangays from the towns of Maitium, Kiamba and Maasim, and the towns of Alabel, Malapatan, and Glan; and General Santos City,

The stretch of Sarangani Bay covers a total of 224 kilometers. It is host to the General Santos City Fish Port Complex, numerous fishing villages, beach resorts, a coal energy power plant, shipyards, marine parks and sanctuaries and aquaculture farms.



As host to one of the country's most important cities and ports, Sarangani Bay, from which the province was named when it was created in 1992, is one of the Soccsksargen Region's most economically important bodies of water.

Biological features



Sunset over mangrove area

According to the DENR-Region 12 and the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) of Sarangani, its coastline is teeming with diverse species of mangrove.

There are a total of 27 mangrove species and 9 associate species within the SBPS.

Among the most dominant species of mangroves in the area are the pagatpat, bungalon and bakawan. The SBPS also hosts a total of 11 species of seagrass, that is dominated by the locally known "miki." There are also 411 reef species in Sarangani Bay.

Socioeconomic and cultural profile

There are several indigenous tribes within the SBPS. These include the Blaan, Tagakaolo, T'boli, Manobo, Kalagan and Maguindanaos.

They are described as some of the most hospitable and fun-loving Sarangans or people of Sarangani.

They engage in indigenous music and cook a scrumptious feast of local delicacies. More importantly, the DENR said the intricate craftsmanship of their mat-weaving and beadwork is "marvelous."

Threatened species

The SBPS is home to many threatened species—such as dugong, mameng, or the Napoleon wrasse, and four species of marine turtles namely hawksbill, olive ridley, loggerhead and green sea turtle.

Other notable fauna include dolphins, whales, sunfish, giant clams, and shorebirds, most of which are threatened.

Despite that, the area is frequented by marine mammals, like whales and dolphins, which make it uniquely interesting.

Garbage woes

Sarangani Bay, like most coastal areas in various parts of the country, is affected by menacing garbage. "The garbage is not from the coastal communities but from inland," said Joy C. Ologuin, the Protected Area Superintendent of SBPS.

She said the tons of garbage indiscriminately dumped by irresponsible residents end up in waterways and, during heavy downpours, are swept away by the raging river down to the river deltas, accumulating in Sarangani Bay.



“That is why we are working with the LGUs and the private sector to do something about it,” she said. A proposal, she said, is to put up garbage traps in strategic locations along creeks and rivers so that the garbage will no longer reach the coastal area.

“The garbage traps will prevent garbage from going to the bay. The solid waste will just be collected from the traps,” she said partly in Filipino.

Awareness campaign

Ologuin said the DENR, in partnership with various stakeholders, continues to conduct information, education and communication campaigns in Sarangani to highlight the importance of protecting and conserving Sarangani Bay.

She said there is a need to strengthen the information drive in various parts of the province, especially those in communities along rivers that lead out to Sarangani Bay, to educate them about proper solid waste management that continue to threaten the livelihood of fishing communities and the coastal and marine ecosystem of the province.

If unchecked, she said the garbage problem, particularly plastic pollution in Sarangani Bay, will take its toll on the province’s precious marine wildlife—which include the mangroves, seagrass, and corals.

Tourism potential

The provincial government of Sarangani has high hopes in turning Sarangani Bay into a tourism hub, with whale- and dolphin-watching among the main attractions.

Little is known that Sarangani Bay has potential for diving and snorkelling, with unique species of corals and reef fishes, waiting to be discovered.

“That is why we really want to protect Sarangani Bay and keep its water as clean as possible all the time,” Ologuin said.

Simple celebration

Because of the pandemic, a simple but meaningful celebration of SBPS’s 25th year on March 5 is being prepared by the DENR along with the provincial government of Sarangani, towns and coastal barangays.

“It was decided by the Protected Area Management Board to make the celebration as simple as possible,” Ologuin told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview on February 22.

Nevertheless, she said the celebration, although it will have a limited number of participants, will be meaningful because all sectors will be appropriately represented. The events aim to encourage audience participation, especially among the coastal communities.

“We really want this to make it known to all that the Sarangani Bay is a protected seascape, because some people are still not aware of it,” she said.

Hopefully, she said the event will eventually see the declaration of March 5 as a local holiday in General Santos City and the entire Sarangani province.

Bike and Plant

This year’s celebration will kick off on February 28 with the launching of the “Bike and Plant” events at the Oval Plaza.

From General Santos City, there will be a bike tour with three different levels or categories, with the beginners’ bike tour ending in Glan.



Ologuin said another group of bikers will tour to Malapatan and the pro-level participants will go all the way up to Alabel, “the farthest area, where the beautiful beaches in Sarangani Bay can be found.”

Simultaneously, there will be an opening of an exhibit to showcase the various products, programs and activities of Sarangani’s various LGUs. The exhibit will run from March 1 to March 5 at the lobby of the City Hall in General Santos City.

To cap the event, on March 5, Ologuin said there will be a simultaneous coastal clean-up with all 68 coastal barangays within the SBPS taking part.

“We are very happy because we have the support of the LGUs in Sarangani. All LGUs and barangays are very cooperative,” she said.

Image credits: [Penro Sarangani/SB PS2](#)



IP Groups, locals to plant 10,000 trees in Bukidnon for 2021

By Hedcor-AboitizPowerPublished on February 27, 2021

MANOLO FORTICH, Bukidnon, Feb. 26--In partnership with the locals of barangays Guilang-guilang and Santiago in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, Hedcor is set to plant 10,000 trees as part of its watershed management plan for 2021.

Since the beginning of the Manolo Fortich Hydros' construction six years ago, Hedcor has regularly collaborated with these reforestation partners to ensure that the organization's efforts are well-monitored and maintained.

These local reforestation partners, who are also members of the Higaonon and Bukidnon tribe, have been recommended by the Community Environmental and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) of Manolo Fortich.

"Aside from planting the trees, reforestation partners are also tapped by Hedcor to manage and maintain newly-reforested areas. The seedlings will be closely monitored by our reforestation partners for the next three years to assure high survival," explained Daryl Diestro, Hedcor's Environment Management Specialist.

The seedlings are to be planted in a reforestation area in barangay Guilang-guilang in order to rehabilitate denuded areas. This is also to protect open forests by planting seedlings that are endemic to the area.

Since the place is also an identified catchment area for bodies of water that Hedcor is permitted to utilize for its hydro facilities, the reforestation is also strategic for its renewable energy generation.

In addition to this reforestation initiative, Hedcor is also targeting to plant 25,000 seedlings in Davao del Sur and another 10,000 seedlings in Davao City.

In this pandemic, Hedcor was able to stay committed to its environmental initiatives through the help of its partners. Last 2020, Hedcor was able to plant a total of 60,000 trees across the country--many of which are led by reforestation partners.

This adds up to the 3.1 million trees planted by Hedcor since early '20s, with a survival rate of 89% as verified by Department of Environment and Natural Resources-CENRO.

In operating one of its largest hydro facilities in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, Hedcor has truly found a partner in its locals when it comes to materializing the greater goal of protecting the environment. (JJNDS, Hedcor-AboitizPower/PIA Bukidnon)



Dinagat cops plant 300 seedlings as part of 'Plant-A-Tree' program

Published on February 27, 2021

SAN JOSE, Dinagat Islands, Feb. 27 -- The personnel of the Police Provincial Office (PPO) in Dinagat Islands recently conducted a tree-planting program at Sitio Iring-iring, Barangay Wilson, San Jose, this province.

A total of 300 fruit-bearing seedlings were planted as part of their advocacy in environmental protection and preservation and exemplifying one of their core values of "Makakalikasan" and adopt a program dubbed as "PLANT-A-TREE PROGRAM: THE PNP's New Normal of Disaster Preparedness and Response."

The activity served as the contribution of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in promoting environmental protection and preservation and the new normal of disaster management and to showcase the importance of promoting environmental conservation in Dinagat Islands.

This also acknowledges the importance of cooperation in order to achieve the goals of PNP Chief PGen. Debold M. Sinas in the protection and preservation of the environment and natural resources.

Dinagat Islands Police Provincial Director PCol. Germano P. Mallari emphasized that through the conduct of the tree planting activities, the provincial office will be able to promote the preservation of the environment as it is equivalent to the protection of human life. (PPO-Dinagat Islands/PIA-Dinagat Islands)



Araw ng mga sawa? Mga higanteng ahas nahuli sa Cebu, CDO

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Feb 27 2021 10:00 PM



Ni-rescue sa Cagayan De Oro City ang isang sawa, at nai-turn over ito sa DENR. Pansamantala itong inalagaan sa Regional Wildlife Rescue Center. Pumulupot naman ang isa pang sawa sa gulong ng sasakyan sa Cebu. **TV Patrol, Sabado, 27 Pebrero 2021.**

Source: https://news.abs-cbn.com/video/classified-odd/02/27/21/araw-ng-mga-sawa-mga-higanteng-ahas-nahuli-sa-cebu-cdo?fbclid=IwAR06xJ_R8yjpaoCHbITeB0oOTThrRG_5yKEjrcVCC1dYoOo5hG9fkVVcrN4



In this file photo taken on Jan. 21, workers use a backhoe to clean the flooded villages after the Marikina River overflowed following a heavy downpour.

Boy Santos, file

DPWH starts dredging Marikina River

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#) (The Philippine Star) - February 28, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has started dredging the Marikina River.

The dredging operation started on Feb. 17 and is expected to last two to three months. The DPWH seeks to remove an estimated 50,000 cubic meters of soil, sand and silt from the river, Secretary Mark Villar said, citing a report by DPWH Bureau of Equipment director Toribio Noel Ilao.

“This operation will significantly help in preventing the events of flooding in Marikina City, which is considered a catchbasin of rainwater coming from upstream areas of San Mateo and Montalban in Rizal and the cities of Antipolo and Quezon,” Villar said.

Ilao said the DPWH sees the dredging operation as a prelude to “restoring the Marikina River to its pristine and natural state.”

Flood control structures such as concrete barriers, sewerage and drainage systems will be constructed along the river, Ilao added.



PHL urged to consolidate tracking of funds for climate change

By [Roderick Abad](#)

February 28, 2021

DEVELOPING countries like the Philippines are encouraged to have a consolidated approach in tracking climate finances to benefit more people affected by global warming and other catastrophes.

Deputy Executive Director Angelo Kairos de la Cruz of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC) made the call in a recent webinar, following over-reporting of funds meant to help countries respond to climate change.

Citing the global climate finance adaptation study report released last month by CARE International with ICSC and other groups in Southeast Asia and Africa, de la Cruz revealed that developed nations and the finance institutions they oversee have overstated climate finance from 2013 to 2017 by \$20 billion.

Based on the Climate Finance Adaptation Study Report for the Philippines, on the other hand, he bared that \$770 million (P38.5 billion), or 37 percent, can be considered as over-reported from the \$2.1 billion (P105 billion) of adaptation finance for the country reported by donors.

Such overstated amount of donations covers the 18 assessed projects, mainly arising in initiatives committed by Japan (\$425 million), the World Bank (\$156 million), France (\$98 million), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (\$54 million), and Korea (\$32 million).

“[So] we’re not talking measly amounts. We’re talking about billions of dollars, which, at some extent, we can still shape on how we will use them. So we still have some space to improve things. But we have to move fast,” de la Cruz said.

The latter research they conducted together with Accord and CARE in the Philippines, according to him, found out that the lack of an integrated system of managing climate-related portfolio is among the hindrances for accurate and independent analyses of adaptation and climate finances.

Accounting for climate finance, therefore, is a shared responsibility of the source and recipient, he said.

“Doing local tracking work and actually following where the money goes and trying to get a first hand feel of how it was actually used on the ground, and how it impacted people, that would require more coordination and, at some extent, a lot of resources as well,” de la Cruz explained.

Collaboration-wise, ICSC has always been clear in its position that whatever tracking report it produces could be part of the future initiatives of the government, particularly with the Climate Change Commission through the Climate Finance Systems and Services.

“We want to share our findings with the rest of the country, if not the rest of the developing countries,” he disclosed. “Within the year, ICSC would be able to bring out a toolkit to update our local tracking toolkit, which could be shared and could be followed by others who are looking into doing this kind of work.”

Since the Philippines is among the most vulnerable nations to climate change, he emphasized the importance of having a solid national plan on climate action, building back better and transition to a low-carbon economy.

“I think the financing will start flowing naturally toward those if we have a plan. If we basically have access to a lot of funds, but then we don’t have a plan on how to use it,” he noted.

“So we have, for example, agencies sitting on grant financing until it has to be given back to the source because they don’t have a plan on how to utilize it. So it’s a missed opportunity. I feel like ordinary Filipinos are missing out a lot instead of benefitting from this available resources,” de la Cruz explained.



“We are happy the Department of Finance is working on the country’s climate finance roadmap while working with the Climate Change Commission to deliver an ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement,” he said.

The CCC has also set up its Climate Finance Systems and Services, while the legislature, particularly the House climate committee, is exercising its oversight function and fills a massive gap in the accountability loop, he added.



Commitment to protect the environment

Published 3 hours ago on February 28, 2021 04:00 AM

By [Gabrielle Maria Consuelo Binaday](#)



A perching Philippine serpent eagle in Leyte. (Photograph courtesy of Neon Rosell)

The Energy Development Corporation (EDC) and the University of the Philippines (UP) have formally continued its partnership with the recent signing of the memorandum of agreement (MoA) for the expanded Biodiversity Conservation and Monitoring Program (BCMP) III.

The collaboration, which started over 10 years ago, was renewed in a video conference with EDC president and chief operating officer Richard B. Tantoco and UP Diliman chancellor Dr. Fidel R. Nemenzo.

Tantoco said EDC will continue to support UP in its endeavors especially for its science-based activities that aim to protect and conserve the environment.

“Now that we have such a propitious relationship, I am happy to extend and expand what we have into the future,” Tantoco said.

“Many discoveries have been made by our partnership and many more ‘best practices’ will be developed, (and it) all started with chance encounters. And if we continue to work collaboratively, to conserve and understand the biodiversity that surrounds us, I cannot emphasize enough how much good our partnership can bring as we continue to look for ways to help Mother Earth.”



Golden-crowned flying fox in Bacon-Manito, Bicol Region.
(Photograph courtesy of Mariano Duya)

The BCMP I and II, which started in 2008 and 2012, respectively, have so far resulted in greater knowledge and understanding of the rich flora and fauna that thrive within the EDC’s geothermal facilities including the golden flying fox in Negros Island and Bicol Region, the tarsiers in Leyte, and the Philippine eagle in Mount Apo.



For its third phase, which is scheduled to be implemented starting this year until 2024, the program will focus on biodiversity metrics, flagship species initiative, flora conservation, botanical treasures and the establishment of the UP-Institute of Biology (UPIB)-EDC Biodiversity Hub.

Nemenzo, for his part, acknowledged the fruitful collaboration between the two institutions and recognized the benefits it brought not only to EDC but also to UP.

Through the partnership, Nemenzo said that UP was able to contribute to its mandate as a research and public service university.



Apo Myna in Mindanao.



Luzon hornbill in Bacon-Manito, Bicol Region.

He likewise paid tribute to the pioneering works of three outstanding scientists — Dr. Perry Ong, Dr. Leonard Co. and Dr. Daniel Lagunsad — who paved the way for the partnership between UP and EDC and whose works are still of valuable contribution to the development of biodiversity conservation and monitoring.

“In the next year of this partnership, our hope is to honor what these pioneers have built and expand BCMP’s contribution to EDC, [to] UP, the science of biodiversity conservation and the wider Philippine society in general. Maraming salamat, EDC, for your faith and trust in UP. I am excited to see the fruits of this collaboration and look forward to at least four more years of partnership between UP and EDC,” Nemenzo said during the MoA signing.

EDC’s over 1,499MW total installed capacity accounts for 20 percent of the country’s total installed RE capacity while its 1,204.67MW geothermal portfolio accounts for 62 percent of the country’s total installed geothermal capacity and has put the Philippines on the map as the third-largest geothermal producer in the world.



A young Philippine wartypig in Leyte. (Photograph courtesy of Neon Rosell)



Common forest tree frog in Negros Island. (Photograph courtesy of Jason Fernandez.)



A Blue fantail in Mount Apo.



PUP holds online conference on biodiversity

Hotline 033: Buhay-Ilang: Ilang Buhay Kaya? is a one-day video conference held every 3rd of March in celebration of World Wildlife Day

Published 4 hours ago on February 28, 2021 02:30 AM

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



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PUP

The Polytechnic University of the Philippines' National Service Training Program (NSTP) culminating activity, "Hotline 033: Buhay-ilang: Ilang buhay kaya?," organized by BS Electronics and Communications Engineering 1-1, BS Civil Engineering 1-2 and BS Railway Engineering 1-2 CWTS students, under the guidance of Instructor Aljon G. Pada, was accepted by the United Nations General Assembly- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as an official event for World Wildlife Day 2021.

"Hotline 033: Buhay-Ilang: Ilang Buhay Kaya?" is a one-day video conference held every 3rd of March in celebration of World Wildlife Day.

The event, which is inspired by Ted Talks, seeks to shed light and awareness on the current state of biodiversity in the Philippines.

In this time of worsening climates, environmental degradation and extinction of plant and animal species, the event is a call for awareness and a reminder that people share the planet with others who are part of a rich biodiversity including wildlife.

Student advocates of environmentalism will relate their travels and personal experience on wildlife trade and wildlife consumption.

The conference will also showcase creative and artistic works and performances of students in various art fields such as photography, poetry and music.

The event is supported and endorsed by NSTP director Rovelina B. Jacolbia and CWTS chief Joey T. Danting.

Other events for the World Wildlife Day include those from New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Thailand, Pakistan and India. (www.wildlifeday.org/content/events).

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2021/02/28/pup-holds-online-conference-on-biodiversity/>



Dazzling

posted February 27, 2021 at 11:23 pm



Birds are seen at Diokno Boulevard in Pasay City over the weekend, with Manila Bay's breathtaking sunset as backdrop.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/348139>



Metro Manila stays under GCQ in March

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos **February 27, 2021, 11:12 am**



(PNA photo by Joey O. Razon)

MANILA – Metro Manila will remain under general community quarantine (GCQ) in March, Malacañang announced on Saturday.

President Rodrigo Duterte approved the new quarantine status that will be implemented next month, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in an announcement aired over state-run PTV-4.

Roque said GCQ would also be imposed in Apayao, Baguio City, Kalinga, Mt. Province, Batangas, Tacloban City, Iligan City, Davao City, and Lanao del Sur.

He said the rest of the country would stay under the least restrictive modified GCQ (MGCQ) from March 1 to 31.

“Lahat po ng mga lugar na hindi natin nabanggit ay nasa modified general community quarantine (All other areas we did not mention are placed under modified general community quarantine),” Roque said.

The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), as well as the Metro Manila mayors, initially recommended the imposition of the most relaxed MGCQ in the entire Philippines in March.

Duterte, however, turned down the proposed nationwide shift to MGCQ until the government starts the rollout of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) vaccines.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles on February 23 said the President is taking a “step-by-step” approach to the plan to place the entire country under MGCQ.

Nograles also said the Cabinet “100 percent” supports Duterte’s latest decision.

The IATF-EID would stick to the “month-to-month” assessment even if the government starts its mass immunization drive.

Duterte is set to lead the simple turnover rites of Covid-19 vaccines from China’s Sinovac Biotech on Sunday. (PNA)



“It’s a genuine increase and its rate the trajectory is similar to the increase that we saw in Cebu City and in the northern provinces,” OCTA Research fellow Guido David said in English and Filipino during the Laging Handa press briefing yesterday.

The STAR/Miguel de Guzman, file

Concern raised over surge in COVID-19 cases

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

MANILA, Philippines — The OCTA Research Group has expressed concern over the surge of new COVID-19 cases observed in Metro Manila over the past week.

“It’s a genuine increase and its rate the trajectory is similar to the increase that we saw in Cebu City and in the northern provinces,” OCTA Research fellow Guido David said in English and Filipino during the Laging Handa press briefing yesterday.

“This is actually very concerning. For the past two days, we’ve been getting 900 new cases in Metro Manila. The last time we were getting 900 cases per day in Metro Manila was in October,” he noted.

If this trend continues, he warned, the average number of new cases per day in the region may reach 2,500 or more by the end of March, a situation that “could overwhelm the health care system.”

“That is concerning because this is the level that we saw in August,” David said, referring to the month when record-high cases were recorded in the country and in Metro Manila.

“This is why it is important that we curb it immediately. This is not a prediction, it is a forecast. That’s why we are saying that we should be careful so that we can bring down the cases,” he added.

According to David, public complacency may have contributed in the surge of new cases, although it is also possible that a different variant of the coronavirus is spreading.

“This is similar in the rate of infection in Cebu and Mountain Province,” he said. “We are not saying that we are sure that there is a new variant... but we are saying that there is a possibility that is why it’s spreading fast.”

OCTA has repeatedly urged the government to intensify its bio-surveillance efforts to determine if new variants are spreading in areas where surges of new cases have been recorded.



During the briefing, David also stressed the need for strict border restrictions between provinces to prevent the spread of the viral illness. The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases has recently approved uniform protocols for local travel in the country.

While local government units can still require travelers to undergo COVID-19 testing, the new policy stated that no traveler shall be required to undergo quarantine unless they exhibit symptoms upon arrival at the destination.

While they are not against travel, David said border controls must be strictly implemented at all times.

“That is a bit concerning because some areas are doing well and some areas are not,” he said. “We have to be careful about border controls because most of those that experience second wave or another increase was because they were not strict with border controls.”



525.6K doses of AstraZeneca vax to arrive in PH March 1

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos February 27, 2021, 6:18 pm



(Anadolu photo)

MANILA – Around 525,600 doses of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) vaccine from United Kingdom's AstraZeneca will be delivered to the Philippines on Monday (March 1), Malacañang announced on Saturday.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the Philippines will receive the AstraZeneca vaccines through the Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility, a global initiative that guarantees access to Covid-19 vaccines worldwide.

"We are pleased to inform you that the Philippines will receive 525,600 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines on Monday, March 1, 2021, around noontime, as part of the first round of allocated doses from the COVAX facility," Roque said in a press statement.

The AstraZeneca vaccines that will arrive in the Philippines form part of the 44 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine from COVAX to inoculate 20 percent of the country's population, Roque said.

Roque thanked the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the delivery of Covid-19 vaccines developed by AstraZeneca.

The COVAX Facility is co-led by WHO, GAVI, and CEPI.

"We are grateful to everyone -- from our medical front-liners to our fellow Filipinos and foreign partners -- who stand by us in this challenging time. Together, we will heal and recover as one nation and one people," Roque said.

In a text message, Senator Christopher Lawrence Go said President Rodrigo Duterte will also lead the turnover ceremony for the AstraZeneca vaccines.

The Philippines is set to receive some 44 million Covid-19 vaccine doses allocated by the COVAX Facility within the year.

The country is also expected to have access to up to 9.2 million AstraZeneca vaccines.

The Covid-19 vaccines developed AstraZeneca vaccines will be delivered just a day after the country is also scheduled to receive the first batch of Covid-19 vaccines from China's Sinovac Biotech.

Duterte would lead on Sunday the simple turnover of 600,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine. (PNA)

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1132060>



This photo shows Philippine Coast Guard personnel assisting residents near the Taal Volcano Island in evacuation after increased seismic activity from the volcano

Release/Philippine Coast Guard

Phivolcs records more quakes at Taal Volcano as activity remains ‘abnormal’

(Philstar.com) - February 27, 2021 - 3:38pm

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology has recorded more volcanic quakes in the past 24 hours.

According to Phivolcs, they have recorded 28 volcanic quakes and 130 volcanic tremor episodes having durations of one to five minutes since yesterday.

The last time a volcanic quake was recorded at Taal Volcano was on February 23, when one quake was recorded.

Phivolcs also observed the volcano emitting weak steam-laden plumes.

Despite the marked increase in earthquakes, Phivolcs kept Alert Level 1 over the volcano, indicating “abnormal” activity. The volcano had been at that alert level since March 19, 2020.

Phivolcs said that with Alert Level 1 raised, sudden steam-driven explosions, volcanic quakes, minor ashfall and lethal accumulations or expulsions of volcanic gas can occur and threaten areas within the Taal Volcano island.

It added that entry into the island and Taal’s permanent danger zone should be strictly prohibited.

The continued volcanic activity seen at Taal recently has prompted a forced evacuation of residents living near Taal Volcano.

Taal erupted last Jan. 13, 2020, unleashing a kilometers-high ash column and lava fountain. The restive activity led to the evacuation of thousands living on the volcano island and high-risk areas and the destruction of houses and establishments in Batangas. — **Xave Gregorio**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/02/27/2080776/phivolcs-records-more-quakes-taal-volcano-activity-remains-abnormal>



Thailand's Khao Sok National Park is 50th Asean Heritage Park

By [BusinessMirror](#)

February 28, 2021



A protected area in Thailand, touted as the world's oldest tropical evergreen forest, Khao Sok National Park, was declared an Asean Heritage Park (AHP), the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) announced in a news release.

The environment ministers of the Asean approved the nomination of Khao Sok National Park as the 50th Asean Heritage Park as endorsed and recommended virtually by the 31st Meeting of the Asean Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) and the 22nd meeting of the governing board of the ACB, hosted by Vietnam on November 24 and 25, 2020.

"We are pleased to share the news that Khao Sok National Park has joined the list of designated Asean Heritage Parks. These remarkable parks are areas of high conservation value that best represent the region's rich natural resources and cultural identity," said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim.

The ACB, as the secretariat of the Asean Heritage Parks (AHP) Programme, facilitates the rigorous evaluation process of the nominated protected areas to be declared as an AHP.

An evaluation team, led by Robert Mather, technical assistance team leader of the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in Asean (BCAMP) Project, together with two Thai evaluators, Dr. Dachanee Emphandhu and Dr. Petch Manopawitr, visited Khao Sok in October 2020. BCAMP is an ongoing project being implemented by the ACB with support from the European Union. Khao Sok National Park is a 740-square kilometer terrestrial national park located in the Suratthani province of Thailand. It consists of diverse ecosystems, including evergreen forest, swamp forest and limestone forest.

Wildlife species thriving in the park, include the vulnerable species mainland serow and the endangered Malayan tapir, as well as the largest flower *Rafflesia Kerrii* Meijer and the endemic flowering plant species *Khaosokia caricoides*.

Khao Sok is adjacent to the Ratchaprapha Dam that generates power supply to its surrounding communities.

Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), the agency responsible for protected area conservation and management in the country, welcomed the announcement, saying it gives the department "a feeling of accomplishment."

"On behalf of the Thai people, DNP is delighted and proud of Khao Sok National Park becoming the 50th Asean Heritage Park," Thanya Netithammakun, director-general of DNP said.



Chonlathorn Chamnankid, Thailand's AHP representative and director of National Park Research and Innovation Centre, National Parks Office of DNP, said Khao Sok National Park, situated in the middle of Klong Saeng Khao Sok Forest Complex, has been a tourism destination for its ancient rainforest, limestone landscapes, and wildlife, "[providing] income and enhancing quality of life for the locals."

Khao Sok National Park is the seventh AHP in Thailand. Other AHPs are Khao Yai National Park, Tarutao National Park, Ao Phang-Nga-Mu Ko Surin-Mu Ko Similan National Park, Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex, Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park and Hat Chao Mai National Park-Mu Ko Libong Non hunting Area.

"The designation of Khao Sok comes at an opportune time as the Asean region gears toward the recovery of the tourism sector, which is one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. The Asean Heritage Parks, apart from showcasing the rich biodiversity in the region, can also be prime nature tourism destinations," Lim said.

On February 4, following the 24th Meeting of Asean Tourism Ministers through a video conference hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Asean ministers issued a joint statement expressing commitment to the recovery of the tourism sector, highlighting three priority areas—the "Road to Recovery"; "Towards Asean as a Single Tourism Destination"; and "Realising Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Tourism Development."



WORLD

Miami puts billions in flood fight

Published 4 hours ago on February 28, 2021 02:30 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



MIAMI, Florida (AFP) — The US city of Miami is to invest billions of dollars to tackle its vulnerability to rising sea levels, a reality that already affects the daily lives of residents used to constant flooding.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine-Cava said Friday she will protect communities hardest hit by rising sea levels, which eat away at beaches and leave residents particularly vulnerable to flooding during hurricane season.

“We must continue to focus on restoration, preservation and protection of this sacred space,” she told a news conference.

“And so we will be together investing billions of dollars... in our infrastructure so that we can lift this community and others that are so affected by sea level rise,” she added.

We must continue to focus on restoration, preservation and protection of this sacred space.

She cited “adaptation action areas” as a first priority to be studied, which would include raising low-lying roads, and waterproofing and converting southern Florida’s widely used septic tanks into sewage systems.

The area, with extensive wetlands and sitting on porous stone that acts like a sponge, makes the state one of the most at risk from rising sea levels.

The problem is so visible that, during the summer rainy season, it is common to see Miamians kayaking along flooded avenues and cars sunk up to their windows.



UN climate report 'red alert' for planet

Decision makers must walk the talk.

Published 4 hours ago on February 28, 2021 02:30 AM

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



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF UN Global temperature rise could lead to more frequent and more intense extreme weather events, such as prolonged droughts or devastating floods.

Nations are “nowhere close” to the level of action needed to fight global warming, a United Nations (UN) climate action report said, urging countries to adopt stronger and more ambitious plans to reach the Paris Agreement goals, and limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, by the end of the century.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)’s Initial NDC Synthesis Report measures the progress of national climate action plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDC, ahead of the 26th session of Conference of its Parties this November in Glasgow.

It found that even with increased efforts by some countries, the combined impact falls far short of what is needed.

“Today’s interim report from the UNFCCC is a red alert for our planet. It shows governments are nowhere close to the level of ambition needed to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement,” secretary-general António Guterres said on the report’s findings.

He said 2021 is a “make or break year” to confront the global climate emergency.

“The science is clear, to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, we must cut global emission by 45 percent by 2030, from 2010 levels,” he stressed.

The secretary-general called on major emitters to “step up with much more ambitious emissions reductions” targets for 2030 in their NDC highlighting that Covid-19 recovery plans offered the opportunity to “build back greener and cleaner.”

“Decision makers must walk the talk. Long-term commitments must be matched by immediate actions to launch the decade of transformation that people and planet so desperately need,” Guterres urged.

The UNFCCC report covered submissions from countries up to 31 December 2020, showing that 75 Parties to the Framework Convention communicated a new or updated NDC, representing approximately 30 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Source: https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2021/02/28/un-climate-report-red-alert-for-planet/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=un-climate-report-red-alert-for-planet



A huge iceberg that's bigger than New York City broke off near a UK base in Antarctica

By [David Williams](#), CNN

Updated 1958 GMT (0358 HKT) February 27, 2021



An airplane flies over the North Rift crack in the Brunt Ice Shelf in January.

(CNN) A giant iceberg broke off the Brunt Ice Shelf in Antarctica on Friday, not far from a British scientific outpost.

The 490 square miles (1270 square kilometers) chunk of ice is bigger than New York City and broke free in a process called calving, [according to a statement from the British Antarctic Survey \(BAS\)](#).

The BAS's Halley Research Station, located on the Brunt Ice Shelf, is closed for the Antarctic winter and its 12-person staff left earlier this month.

Scientists have been expecting a large iceberg to break away for years because of vast cracks that have formed in the 150-meter-thick floating ice shelf, according to the BAS.

A new chasm, known as the North Rift, started moving toward another large crack in November and grew a kilometer a day in January.

Aerial video taken in mid-February shows the North Rift stretching as far as the eye can see.

The crack widened to several hundred meters on Friday morning -- freeing it from the rest of the ice shelf, the BAS said.

"Our teams at BAS have been prepared for the calving of an iceberg from Brunt Ice Shelf for years," said [BAS Director Jane Francis](#) in the statement.

She said they get daily updates on the ice shelf from an automated network of high-precision GPS instruments as well as satellite images.

"All the data are sent back to Cambridge for analysis, so we know what's happening even in the Antarctic winter, when there are no staff on the station, it's pitch black, and the temperature falls below minus 50 degrees C (or -58F)," she said.

The BAS moved the Halley Research Station farther inland in 2016 as a precaution and staff have only worked there during the Antarctic summer since 2017 because evacuations would be difficult during the dark winter.

"This is a dynamic situation. Four years ago, we moved Halley Research Station inland to ensure that it would not be carried away when an iceberg eventually formed. That was a wise decision," BAS Director of Operations Simon Garrod said in the statement. "Our job now is to keep a close eye on the situation and assess any potential impact of the present calving on the remaining ice shelf."



An even bigger iceberg broke away from [the Larsen C Ice Shelf in 2017](#) and floated into the open ocean late last year.

There have been six Halley Research Stations in place on the Brunt Ice Shelf since 1956 to make atmospheric and space weather observations.

The ice shelf flows toward the sea at a rate of about 2 kilometers per year and icebergs break off at irregular intervals.

"Change in the ice at Halley is a natural process and there is no connection to the calving events seen on Larsen C Ice Shelf, and no evidence that climate change has played a significant role," according to the BAS.

Scientists are now watching the iceberg to see what it will do next.

"Over coming weeks or months, the iceberg may move away; or it could run aground and remain close to Brunt Ice Shelf," Francis said in the statement.

28 FEBRUARY 2021, SUNDAY



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