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DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR rushes to close 200 open dumpsites by end of March

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)
January 28, 2021



File photo of Payatas dumpsite (CNN PHL)

AN official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) admitted on Wednesday that complying with Secretary Roy A. Cimatu's order to shut down at least 200 more open dumpsites may require a great amount of "political will."

"If there's a will, there's a way. If I have to go to the regions myself to close the open dumps, then I will do it," Benny Antiporda, the DENR's undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Unit (LGU) Concerns told reporters during a news briefing on Tuesday.

"If we are able to close 38 open dumps in one day, I am sure, we can close down the remaining 200 within a month," Antiporda said, confident that the DENR Regional Offices will not dilly-dally this time around in enforcing provisions of Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2001.

In his keynote speech during an event highlighting the celebration of Zero Waste Month, Cimatu said the agency's action against open dumpsites has been relentless and revealed that in one day, the DENR Regional Offices' were able to close down a total of 38 open dumps.

Commending Antiporda, his alternate chair in the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) in spearheading the closure of open dumpsites in Bataan, Pampanga and Tanza, Cavite, Cimatu said his decisive move is being followed by the agency's Environmental Management Bureau regional directors nationwide.

He reported that as of 7 p.m. Tuesday, reports reaching his office indicate that the DENR has closed down a total of 38 open dumpsites in the regions in one day.

The report states that Region 4B closed down the most number of open dumps with a total of 17, Region 6 followed with five, while the majority of the DENR Regional Offices were able to close down 2 open dumpsites each.



DENR rushes to close 200 open dumpsites by end of March

Cimatu said that the EMB will continuously to implement the closure of open dumpsites within their respective areas of jurisdiction with his directive to close all open dumpsites by the end of March.

While pursuing the closure of open dumps, Cimatu also ordered Antiporda to take charge in coming up with a design for "low-cost" sanitary landfill that will replace the open dumps.

Sought for reaction, Antiporda said such design is possible, for Category I Sanitary Landfill. DENR Administrative Order 10 issued in 2006 indicate that a Category I Sanitary Landfill is a final disposal facility applied to LGUs with net residual waste generated of less than or equal to 15 tons per day (TPD). It shall apply to a cluster of LGUs with a collective disposable residual waste of less than or equal to 15 TPD.

Antiporda said the DENR will work with local government units to ensure proper solid waste management starting with segregation at the source to reduce the volume of garbage produce daily.



Cimatu praises Filipinos' concern for distressed, abandoned wildlife

By DENR Published on January 28, 2021



An Oriental honey buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) was rescued by a concerned citizen in Bgy. Caburacan in Castilla, Sorsogon on January 16 and turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) in Sorsogon. (DENR)

QUEZON CITY, Jan. 28 -- Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu has lauded concerned citizens who continue to rescue and turn over wildlife species to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) despite the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Let not this pandemic hinder us from helping and rescuing wildlife because this will help maintain the balance in our ecosystems," Cimatu said.

Cimatu explained that it is important to report sighting of abandoned or injured wildlife species in order to provide them the proper treatment and care.

"We continue to encourage the public to turn over wildlife species to us, should these animals be immobilized," he said.

The DENR chief issued the statement following the turnover of a rescued Oriental honey buzzard in Sorsogon last January 16.

According to the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) in Sorsogon, the discovery of the wild bird in Barangay Caburacan in Castilla town was reported to them by a local, Romeo Ibañez, on January 15.

Ibañez said the bird appeared to be struggling to fly when it was found by his brother.

Due to the bird's condition, Ibañez sought the assistance of Jeson Libdan, a member of the Makati Eagles Club, who referred him to DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda.



Cimatu praises Filipinos' concern for distressed, abandoned wildlife

Antiporda immediately coordinated with PENR Officer Tito Migo to rescue the raptor. Personnel and wildlife handlers from the PENRO then personally went to the residence of Ibañez to retrieve the bird.

The rescued Oriental honey buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) has been transported to the Irosin Temporary Wildlife Rescue Center at Barangay Patag, Irosin, Sorsogon for proper treatment and care before it can be released back to the wild.

Also commonly known as crested honey buzzard, the raptor is currently listed as Other Wildlife Species under DENR Administrative Order No. 2019-09, which means the bird species is "not categorized as threatened."

DENR-Bicol Regional Executive Director Antonio A. Abawag echoed Cimatu's appeal to the public to report wild animals that need to be rescued to proper authorities for proper handling and release to its natural habitat.

"Owing to the continuous information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns being conducted by the DENR, there has been a steady increase in the number of public turnover of wildlife species to our field offices," Abawag said. (DENR)



Cimatu Praises Filipinos' concern for distressed, abandoned wildlife

BY [VILLAGE CONNECT](#) ON JANUARY 27, 2021



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Cimatu says DENR might not meet target completion date of Manila baywalk rehab

April Raffles, ABS-CBN News
Posted at Jan 28 2021 01:35 AM



Workers spread crushed dolomite on a portion of the Baywalk in Manila Bay on September 3, 2020 as part of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program by the DENR. Jonathan Cellona, ABS-CBN News/File

MANILA - Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu admitted Wednesday his department may not be able to meet its target date of completion of the Manila baywalk rehabilitation, after he inspected the area during the second anniversary of the program.

He said they are not in a hurry to finish the "centerpiece of the Manila Bay rehabilitation program" since it will be dependent on the completion of the beach nourishment, which includes the much-talked about dolomite white sand project and the treatment plant.

Four illegal outfalls were discovered recently, which the agency attributes to the high coliform level of the water at the Manila Bay.

Two of them have been sealed but the agency is still working on sealing the rest as they are covered by large boulders that need to be removed.

Improving the water quality is the hardest part in the goal to clean Manila Bay, said Cimatu.

"It is the water quality because this is the mission and objective given to us by the Mandamus of the Supreme Court. We will bring down the coliform level of this baywalk to make it swimmable with a coliform level not exceeding 100 MPN. So it's 'yung challenge natin,'" he explained.

Cimatu added that the agency may not be able to complete everything since pollutants are coming from all sources.

"Especially the estero but we will hand over to the next generation the continuation of the clean-up because that is really our main objective. The real causes of these is coming from the garbage, coming from the esteros, coming from the rivers," he said.



Cimatu says DENR might not meet target completion date of Manila baywalk rehab

The environmental department, with the Laguna Lake Development Authority, is still tracing the establishments that have been discharging wastewater into the Manila Bay through illegal pipes and outfalls.

However, Cimatu said they will give these establishments the benefit of the doubt.

“We will really check if they know that they are connected to the illegal pipes. Baka hindi rin nila alam, na baka akala nila, this is sanctioned by the government, so we will look into that. Hindi nga yata nila alam na nakakonekta sila sa illegal pipes,” he said.



DENR, sanitary landfill operators step up partnership for effective SWM

By DENR Published on January 28, 2021



QUEZON CITY, Jan. 28 -- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking forward to a greater collaboration with sanitary landfill (SLF) operators to improve the management of solid waste in the country.

"We always extend a welcoming hand to those sectors willing to work with us to solve our country's problems particularly those that concern our environment and natural resources," said DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu.

"Solid waste management is a concern for all Filipinos and anyone willing to do a good turn is appreciated," Cimatu said.

According to Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units (LGUs) Concerns Benny D. Antiporda, the members of the Solid Waste Management Service Providers have expressed their agreement to work more closely with the agency during the 3rd consultation meeting at the DENR Central Office in Quezon City on January 22.

The pronouncement of the SLF operators to unite is a big step in doing their part to take care of the environment, he pointed out.

"This is business on your part. But we want to be assured of that when you operate sanitary landfill, you are compliant", Antiporda said during the recent combined face-to-face and teleconference meeting with the SLF operators.

Antiporda instructed the SLF operators to submit regular reports to the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) to monitor the trash disposed by LGUs in their sanitary landfills.



DENR, sanitary landfill operators step up partnership for effective SWM

By doing this, he said, the DENR will easily determine if the LGUs are still disposing their solid waste in open dumpsites, which is strictly prohibited under Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

"In this way, we will not just solve the solid waste management problem of the country but we will protect the environment for the benefit of the Filipino people," Antiporda pointed out.

A total of 233 open dumpsites are still operating in the country. The most number of open dumpsites are in Western Visayas (48 dumpsites), MIMAROPA (35), Central Visayas (27), Bicol region (23), and Davao region (20).

Meanwhile, there are already 189 established sanitary landfills in the country. The top five regions with the highest number of sanitary landfills are in CALABARZON (36), followed by Cagayan Valley (35), Ilocos region (33), Northern Mindanao (18), and Central Visayas (15). (DENR)



San Juan City, Manila Water, DENR launch program to clean San Juan waterways

Published January 27, 2021, 3:40 PM

by [Patrick Garcia](#)

The San Juan City government, in partnership with Manila Water and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) launched Wednesday its Adopt-an-Estero program to mitigate the city's growing waterway problems.



Mayor Francis Zamora together with DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu and Manila Water President and CEO Jose Rene Almendras throw Mabuhay Balls, a mixture formed into balls which are infused with microorganisms that will eat harmful bacteria to help fight the bad odor of the creek during the start of the activation of the Adopt-an-Estero program at Hoover St. Brgy Addition Hills, San Juan City. Last year, Manila Water signed a memorandum of agreement with San Juan City and DENR to rehabilitate San Juan River. (Mark Balmores)

The program is said to improve the water quality of San Juan River, specifically in Maytunas Creek and Ermitanyo Creek.

"We are happy to partner with Manila Water in this endeavor and are grateful for all their efforts in helping clean up the San Juan River. This is just one of the things that we are currently doing in creating a greener city and taking care of the environment. San Juan is also a staunch advocate of biking and waste segregation, which are both in effect in our barangays," San Juan City Mayor Francisco Zamora said.

"I'm very optimistic that by partnering with Manila Water, our environmental projects will continue here in San Juan," he added.

Zamora, together with Manila Water President and CEO Jose Rene Gregory Almendras, Manila Water COO Engr. Abelardo Basilio, MWSS CO Ronald Abrigo, MWSS-RO Chief Regulator Atty. Patrick Ty, and DENR Secretary Ret. Gen. Roy Cimatu led the ceremonial dropping of 1,000 Mabuhay Balls into Maytunas Creek.



San Juan City, Manila Water, DENR launch program to clean San Juan waterways

The Mabuhay Balls are bokashi balls that are proven to help neutralize toxic water by eating away coliform bacteria and removing foul odors in the waterways. Each ball is the size of a tennis ball composed of clay soil, effective microorganisms, and Mabuhay mix (rice bran, sugar, and salt).

Aside from the throwing of Mabuhay Balls into the river, Manila Water also installed an aerator at Ermitaño Creek to generate activity in the stagnant water and allow it to flow.

The city will also implement a program together with the Asian Social Institute to conduct Mabuhay Balls Livelihood Tutorial for Communities wherein out-of-school youth and/or displaced workers in San Juan will get training on how to make these balls.

The program will also include studies and seminars to identify strategies and techniques that can be used to allow stable flow of water movement in the creek and to prevent stagnation.

"We look forward to the training of our communities in creating the Mabuhay Balls not just to clean up our rivers and tributaries but also as a livelihood to our unemployed. Our constituents will be more invested in the cleanup of our creeks and the San Juan River if they are part of the solution," Mayor Zamora said.

Manila Water President and CEO Jose Rene Gregory Almendras said that they are employing technologies in different areas depending on the situation and the studies that they made from the water samples from the river.

Meanwhile, DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said he is hopeful that if the agency succeeded in rehabilitating Boracay, then the same can also be done in San Juan.

Cimatu also challenged San Juan to "remove the smell and black water" of its waterway in which Zamora gladly accepted.

"We accept the challenge. I am giving my 100% commitment to DENR, Manila Water, and MWSS." Zamora said.

The mayor also appealed to his constituents to be disciplined in throwing away their garbage and help in maintaining the cleanliness of San Juan waterways.

Zamora added that the Adopt-an-Estero program will also be implemented in Mandaluyong City in February and Quezon City in March.



MAGIC BALLS



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



Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora and Manila Water President and CEO Jose Rene Almendras drop 'Mabuhay Balls' into a creek in Barangay Addition Hills during the launch of the adopt an estero program on Jan. 27, 2021. The balls are infused with microorganisms that eat harmful bacteria, greatly reducing the creek's reek.

PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE



Manila Water pangungunahan ang paglilinis ng mga estero sa San Juan City

[January 27, 2021](#) 2 min read

MANILA — Nagkusa na ang Manila Water Company na tulungan ang lokal na pamahalaan para linisin ang mga estero sa San Juan City.

Kasunod nito ng kanilang sariling insyatibo para mapanatili ang maayos na kalagayan ng mga tubig sa mga estero hanggang Manila Bay.

Sa isang simpleng seremonya kanina, pinangunahan nina MWC President Jose Rene Almendras, Environment and Natural Resources Sec. Ruy Cimatú at San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora ang pagsisimula ng paglilinis sa Maytunas at Ermitanyo Creek sa Brgy. Addition Hills San Juan City.





Manila Water pangungunahan ang paglilinis ng mga estero sa San Juan City

Nagtapon ng Mabuhay Balls ang DENR, MWC at San Juan City sa Maytunas creek bilang simbolo ng paglilinis ng nasabing kanal.

Ang Mabuhay Balls ay pinaghalong putik na mayroong micro-organisms na kakain sa mga nakalalasong bacteria na nagiging sanhi ng pagdumi ng ilog.

Samantala, hinamon naman ni Secretary Cimatú si Mayor Zamora na linisin nito ang lahat ng estero at kanal sa buong Siyudad ng San Juan tulad ng pagsisikap ng pamahalaan na maibalik aa dating ganda at sigla ang maraming ilog sa buong bansa.

Sabi ng Kalihim, dapat umanong tularan ni Zamora ang ginagawang mga hakbang ng ibang LGU na nililinis ang mga mga kanal sa kabila ng pagtutok sa pagresolba sa pandemya. (AI/MTVN)



Manila Water Company, pangungunahan ang paglilinis ng mga estero sa San Juan City

By: ReyoMahn Manila | Jan 27, 2021 at 1:46pm

23



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Nagtapon ng Mabuhay Balls ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), MWC at San Juan City sa Maytunas creek bilang simbolo ng paglilinis ng nasabing kanal.



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San Juan City cleans river with 'Mabuhay Balls'

Angel Movido, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jan 27 2021 05:42 PM | Updated as of Jan 27 2021 05:56 PM



"Mabuhay Balls" or bokashi balls that help neutralize toxic water. Mark Demayo, ABS-CBN News

MANILA - As part of efforts to curb water pollution in Metro Manila, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) together with Manila Water launched the Mabuhay balls initiative Wednesday, as part of the Adopt-A-Estero project to rehabilitate waterways and rivers.

Derived from Japan's "Bokashi balls", Mabuhay balls are made up of mud, microorganisms, sugar and salt which are proven to help neutralize toxic water.

"Para doon mabubuhay yung bacteria. So, 'pag binato natin siya sa creek, or maduming tubig, magdi-dissipate siya. Tapos, kakainin yung pollutants doon sa tubig. 'Yun ang effect niya," Engr. Jennifer Chan told the media.

The Mabuhay balls initiative was earlier started by the non-government organization, Social Asian Institute, according to Manila Water.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu lauded efforts of the San Juan LGU to rehabilitate the San Juan River through the estero clean-up, as he directed the Environment Management Bureau to take water samples from creeks in the city.

A total of 1,000 mabuhay balls were thrown into the Maytunas creek, which is among five creeks that drain water into the San Juan River.

The San Juan river is about 9 kilometers long, of which 1.8 km is within San Juan City and the rest traversing Quezon City and Mandaluyong City.

"This is the first time, and this is really a solution that I was looking for while we can clean the water, we can clean the quality of the water," Cimatu said.



San Juan City cleans river with 'Mabuhay Balls'

The DENR chief is looking to implement the initiative along creeks in Binondo Manila.

San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora estimates that results from the launching of the Mabuhay balls initiative will most likely be seen after 3-6 months.

"Habang siya tinatamaan ng tubig, nalulusaw siya. And yung pagkalusaw na yun, doon kumakalat yung bacteria and microorganisms niya which will eventually clean up the water and remove the odor," he said.

Zamora again urged all those living near waterways to practice proper waste disposal and segregation. He said penalties await violators.

"Ako, nananawagan sa ating mamamayan na maging disiplinado tayo at huwag magtatapon ng basura lalo na sa ating water waste. Meron tamang lugar ng pag dispose ng basura. Kailangan disiplinang." "

The San Juan LGU is considering a livelihood project on mabuhay balls making, Zamora said.

Read More: [water pollution](#) [Metro Manila](#) [San Juan City](#) [estero clean up](#) [adopt a estero](#) [DENR](#) [mabuhay balls](#) _



ADB: Metro Manila daily medical waste up by 280 tons due to pandemic

Published January 27, 2021 10:23pm

Medical waste in Metro Manila increased by 280 tons per day due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, a report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations showed Wednesday.

According to Tina Panganiban-Perez's report on "24 Oras," each person in a health care facility produces about 3.5 kilograms of health care waste due to COVID-19 per day.

"[Disposable face masks] ang madalas nating makita dahil wala pong malinaw na tapunan ang ating mga kababayan," Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said.

Due to this, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ordered the production of yellow trash bins for household healthcare waste.

One hundred yellow trash bins have been distributed in Manila while thousands more are set to be distributed in other local government units in the following months.

"We are calling all the LGUs, including the barangay leaders, to please come up with the yellow bin. 'Yung kulay dilaw na basurahan basta't nakamamatay na basura, itapon sa dilaw na basurahan," Antiporda said.

"So we are calling their attention na maglagay lang kayo ng isa kada isang barangay," he added.

The trash bins must be labeled properly and separated from normal trash bins. The infectious waste must also be brought to a place far from patients and public areas. — Joahna Lei Casilao/BM, GMA News



Medical waste sa Metro Manila umakyat ng 280 tonelada kada araw dahil sa COVID-19 pandemic – ADB

By [Bombo Dave Vincent Pasit](#)

-January 27, 2021 | 11:05 PM

Tumaas ng 280 tonelada kada araw ang medical waste sa Metro Manila dahil sa COVID-19 pandemic.

Base sa report ng Asian Development Bank at ng United Nations, umaabot sa 3.5 kilo ang health care waste ng bawat tao sa isang health care facility kada araw dahil sa pandemya.

Ayon kay Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, face masks ang madalas nilang nakikita dahil walang malinaw na tapunan ang publiko.

Kaya naman ipinag-utos na ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang paglalagay ng yellow trash bins para sa household healthcare waste.

Aabot na sa 100 na yellow trash bins ang naipamahagi sa Manila habang ilang libo pa ang nakatak dang ipamigay naman sa iba pang local government units sa mga susunod na buwan.

Mahalagang maayos aniya ang pagkakalabel sa mga basurahan na ito at dapat na ihiwalay sa ibang normal na trash bins.

Ang infectious waste na makokolekta mula sa mga ito ay dapat na dalhin din aniya sa lugar na malayo sa mga pasyente at pampublikong lugar.



DENR lifts suspension on ATN's crushing plant operations in Rizal

January 28, 2021 | 12:04 am



THE ENVIRONMENT department has lifted the suspension of ATN Holdings, Inc.'s crushing plant operations in Rizal province, allowing the company to resume work, the listed firm told the local bourse on Wednesday.

ATN, which operated one of the country's largest rock-extraction sites, said in a press release that it is ready to fully resume operations after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through its Mining and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) in Calabarzon, reinstated the firm's mineral processing permit.

The bureau's regional director earlier temporarily halted certain quarrying and crushing plant operations along the Marikina River Basin in Rizal. ATN was one of the six firms whose mineral processing permits were suspended. MGB also suspended the mineral production sharing agreements of five firms.

Last month, the bureau said that the permits would remain suspended until the DENR composite team completed a joint assessment, and until the cause of flooding in Rizal province and Marikina City was identified.

On Wednesday, ATN shared the contents of MGB's letter in its latest disclosure, saying that its mining operations was the not the cause of flooding in Marikina.

"In an official written correspondence, the MGB-Regional Office No. IV stated that quarrying operations in the Rizal Province was not the proximate cause of the flooding incident in Marikina City on November 12, 2020. In the same letter, and after due validation, ATN has been deemed compliant with all indicated recommended actions," ATN said, citing MGB's letter.

During the downtime, ATN said that it conducted equipment maintenance work, roadside clearing and site improvement activities. It added that it extended assistance to flood-stricken areas brought about by heavy rainfall from Typhoon Ulysses (international name Vamco).



DENR lifts suspension on ATN's crushing plant operations in Rizal

"This timely move (of reinstating our mineral processing permit) by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will allow us to move forward with our plans to support infrastructure-related projects. At ATN, we share in the belief that the multiplier effect generated by a massive infrastructure push is key to rebuilding our economy," ATN's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Arsenio T. Ng was quoted as saying in a statement.

In a regulatory filing on Dec. 15, ATN said that its crushing plant did not contribute to the pollution in Marikina River Basin because it used a "dry crushing process, where all the by-products were mixed back into the soil as a form of nourishment." It added that its dry crushing process was meant to minimize the contamination of water.

In a Viber message to *BusinessWorld* on Wednesday, MGB Acting Director Wilfredo G. Moncano said that DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu gave clearance to the regional office to lift the suspension of compliant companies.

"As to the content of the Order lifting their suspension, I still have to see one, but the context of the Secretary's order is to lift the suspension to those companies (that) are compliant to the laws, rules and regulations and (were) not a factor to the flooding and siltation of the low lying areas," he said.

In a separate regulatory filing on Wednesday, MacroAsia Corp. announced that the DENR granted the firm a mineral production sharing agreement (MPSA) that covers 1.11 million hectares at Brooke's Point in Palawan. In its disclosure, the company shared the letter that it received from the MGB Mimaropa office.

MacroAsia's MPSA was suspended by MGB on April 4, 2019, until the "situation became favorable for the company to continue mining operations in the area."

Shares in ATN on Wednesday improved 14.47% to close at P0.87 apiece. Meanwhile, MacroAsia shares inched up 0.36% to end at P5.55 each. — Angelica Y. Yang



DENR lifts suspension of ATN Holdings' mineral processing permit

6 hours ago



Businessman Arsenio T. Ng's ATN Holdings is set to fully resume operations after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources lifted the suspension of the company's crushing plant permit.

ATN, which operates one of the country's largest rock-extraction sites, said it received a letter from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau saying quarrying operations in the Rizal province were not the cause of the flooding incident in Marikina City on November 12, 2020.

The MGB ordered the temporary suspension of all quarrying and crushing plant operations in Rizal within the coverage of the Marikina River basin.

"As a responsible operator, we are cognizant of the importance of safeguarding our natural environment and ensuring the welfare of host communities. From our end, we will continuously invest on enhancing our operations through the use of modern sustainable technology, proper waste treatment facilities in accordance to best industry practices," said Ng, chairman and CEO of ATN Holdings.

During the downtime period, ATN strategically conducted equipment maintenance work, roadside clearing and other site improvement activities. It also extended immediate assistance to areas that were affected by the flooding caused by the heavy rainfall brought about by Typhoon Ulysses.



Putting things right

January 27, 2021 | 6:26 pm



Static
By Marvin Tort



PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat led the tree planting activity held at Legacy Trail at Masungi Georeserve in Tanay, Rizal. The activity was part of the New Normal Reopening of Masungi where visitors are welcome in the area and get to plant trees as their legacy for the forest restoration, Nov. 25, 2020. — PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS

It is sad that the Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal is now the subject of controversy, considering its operator's effort to reforest hundreds of hectares in the Sierra Madre range. The private company running the popular eco-tourism park has also been helping protect the Upper Marikina watershed against quarrying and logging, to help mitigate flooding in Metro Manila.



Putting things right

There is no law prohibiting the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) from asking for private sector help in reforestation and conservation efforts. After all, not just the State but all of us have the responsibility to protect the environment. However, soliciting private sector support in this regard can become problematic if not done right.

The DENR first ceded control over the Masungi Georeserve, a conservation area of about 300 hectares, to a private group maybe about six years ago. An eco-tourism park for public use started operating in the area in 2015. In 2017, the private group was said to have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with then DENR Secretary Gina Lopez for conservation efforts to reportedly cover 2,700 hectares. That's about the size of the City of Makati.

The Georeserve has become very popular since then, particularly among conservationists, and local and foreign tourists. In the area are caves, stalactite and stalagmite formations, limestone peaks, and rainforests. Masungi is also said to host a large selection of flora and fauna including a cycad (palm-like plant) endemic to Luzon, and a new subspecies of microsnail that lives only on its limestone boulders.

Despite the laudable intention of DENR, I am unsure how it can actually cede control, authority, and management over 2,700 hectares of public land to a private entity just on the basis of a Memorandum of Agreement, with benefits and proceeds from the "use" of that land seemingly going only to the private group. And, all in exchange for reforesting the area and guarding it from loggers and poachers?

Also, the area turned over to the private sector reportedly includes the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, which I believe should always remain under government control. It also reportedly includes a portion of land said to be claimed by Dumagats of Antipolo as their Ancestral Domain. If only for these, and given the sheer size of public land involved, I think the DENR MoA deserves scrutiny and thorough review.

Also requiring scrutiny is how DENR has exercised oversight in Masungi since 2017, and whether the interest of the government, and, more importantly, the public, is protected by said MoA. No private group or interest should be accorded undue accommodation or advantage even in conservation efforts. After all, the responsibility of protecting forests and forest lands should not be a source of profit or advantage for anyone.

There should also be clear parameters for the DENR to "measure" whether the MoA, the continued control over the area by a private group since 2017, and all conservation efforts to date, have actually benefited Masungi and have contributed to either reversing environmental damage or contributed significantly to environmental repair and sustainable management of resources. This measure should not be based simply on the number of trees planted, or size of area reforested.

Moreover, there should be clear accounting of how much the private group makes from the operation of the Georeserve and where these earnings are spent; if taxes are being paid, if any are due; and how local and foreign donations, if any, have been spent and how these have actually contributed to conservation effort. Again, environmental protection and conservation efforts — on behalf of the government, and on government land — should not profit any private group.



Putting things right

A number of arguments have been raised publicly for and against the continued control by a private entity of the Masungi Georeserve. Like I said, I am not against the concept, provided it is done on the up and up. The entire process should be legal, transparent, and accountable. More important, it should not disadvantage anyone, nor provide undue advantage to its proponents.

For one, the rights of the Dumagats over their Ancestral Domain must be respected.

Two, the government should always retain authority and control over the management of protected areas; and that the private sector is only its extension.

Three, DENR should always exercise effective oversight to ensure that government interests are protected.

Four, there should always be transparency and clear accountability as to who should do what.

And five, all “profits” from the allowable “use” of the land — net of justified expenses — should go to the government and must be earmarked for conservation efforts.

Another issue is why Masungi Georeserve has been allowed to operate as an eco-tourism park? If the intention is conservation, and the effort is reforestation, then shouldn't we keep the area pristine by keeping people out rather than inviting them in?

Reforest the area, then guard it against logging. End of story. There are many other places that can be turned into “nature parks” for tourists. Why do it in an important watershed area like Masungi?

In this line, maybe Congress can also consider creating a National Park Service like in the United States, which can be placed under the DENR. This agency can manage national parks and wildlife and forest reserves, and other conservation areas. And, as the agency implements conservation efforts, it can also operate some areas as eco-tourism parks for public use and enjoyment. All “profits” from such operations go to the government, to pay for the maintenance of these parks.

Without such an agency, and given DENR's broad mandate and limited resources, the government will have to continue relying on private sector help and support for many of its conservation efforts. But, unless the rules are very clear, and the process clearly transparent and accountable, the government might again find itself troubled, like in the case of Masungi.

Marvin Tort is a former managing editor of BusinessWorld, and a former chairman of the Philippines Press Council



Katutubong Dumagat pumalag sa pagsakop sa kanilang ancestral lands

[Danilo Garcia](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - January 28, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nagsampa ng kasong graft sa Rizal Prosecutor's Office ang dalawang nagpakilalang katutubong Dumagat laban sa mga operators ng Masungi Georeserve dahil sa umano'y iligal na pag-okupa sa kanilang 'ancestral land' sa Baras, Rizal.

Sa 10-pahinang reklamo, iginiit nina Rolando Vertudez at Leonardo Doroteo na nakatira sila sa kanilang ancestral land mula pa sa kanilang mga ninuno.

Kinikilala umano sila na may-ari ng lupain sa ilalim ng Republic Act 8371 o ang Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA Law). May sertipikasyon din sila buhat sa National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) para okupahin ang kanilang ancestral lands.

Ngunit pinasok umano ng mga opisyal ng Masungi Georeserve ang isang bahagi ng kanilang ancestral domain noong Oktubre 2020 at ikinatwiran ang isang 'memorandum of agreement (MOA)' sa pagitan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Una nang sinabi nitong Dis. 19, 2020 ni DENR Assistant Secretary for Climate Change Director Ricardo Calderon na hindi makapangyayari ang isang MOA sa Expanded National Protected Areas (E-NIPAS) law.

Ipinunto niya na agrabyado ang pamahalaan sa naturang MOA na nagbibigay awtoridad sa operasyon at pag-okupa ng Masungi Georeserve sa naturang protektadong lupain.



Sa 10-pahinang reklamo na isinampa noong Disyembre 14, 2020, iginiit nina Vertudez at Doroteo na nakatira sila sa kanilang ancestral land mula pa sa kanilang mga ninuno kaya't kinikilala umano sila na may-ari ng lupain sa ilalim ng Republic Act 8371 o ang Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA Law).

Philstar.com/Efigenio Christopher Toledo IV, file

Ancestral lands ng mga katutubong Dumagat sinakop

[Danilo Garcia](#) (Pang-masa) - January 28, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Dahil umano sa ilegal na pag-okupa sa kanilang 'ancestral land' sa Baras, Rizal ay nagsampa ng kaso sa Rizal Prosecutor's Office ang dalawang nagpakilalang katutubong Dumagat laban sa higit limang indibidwal.

Sinampahan ng kasong graft nina Rolando Vertudez at Leonardo Doroteo sina Masungi Georeserve operators Ben Dumaliang, Lilian Dumaliang, Anne Adeline Dumaliang, Billie Crystal Dumaliang, Sonia G. Oliveros, at ilan pang John Does at Jane Does.

Sa 10-pahinang reklamo na isinampa noong Disyembre 14, 2020, iginiit nina Vertudez at Doroteo na nakatira sila sa kanilang ancestral land mula pa sa kanilang mga ninuno kaya't kinikilala umano sila na may-ari ng lupain sa ilalim ng Republic Act 8371 o ang Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA Law).

Ngunit pinasok umano ng mga opisyal ng Masungi Georeserve ang isang bahagi ng kanilang ancestral domain noong Oktubre 2020 at ikinatwiran ang isang 'memorandum of agreement (MOA)' sa pagitan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Sa ilalim ng naturang MOA, pamamahalaan ng Masungi Georeserve Foundation ang bahagi ng lupain ng Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL).

Iginiit ng mga Dumagat na kinikilala at may sertipikasyon sila buhat sa National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) para okupahin ang kanilang mga ancestral lands.



Ancestral lands ng mga katutubong Dumagat sinakop

Inakusa rin ng mga complainant na hindi nagbabayad ng sapat ang Masungi Georeserve Foundation sa pamahalaan sa paggamit nila ng libu-libong ektaryang lupain sa Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL) gayung sumisingil umano ng mula P1,500-P1,800 entrance fee ang pribadong kumpanya sa mga turistang pumapasok dito.

Una nang sinabi noong Disyembre 19, 2020 ni DENR Assistant Secretary for Climate Change and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Ricardo Calderon na hindi makapangyayari ang isang MOA sa Expanded National Protected Areas (E-NIPAS) law.



Over 2,000 mangroves planted at Iloilo River



Photo by Iloilo City Environment and Natural Resources Office

January 27, 2021

A TOTAL of 2,107 mangroves were planted at the banks of Iloilo River along the new sections of Esplanade recently.

Mayor Jerry Treñas thanked private partners for actively participating in the massive reforestation program of the waterway at the heart of the city.

These partners included electricity provider Panay Energy Development Corp. with 1,400 mangroves at Esplanade 8, SM City Iloilo mall with 300 mangroves at Esplanade 9, RMN Iloilo radio station with 207 mangroves at Esplanade 5, and distributor More Power Iloilo with 200 mangroves at Esplanade 7.

University of Iloilo Phinma and Globe are expected to conduct the greening initiative in February.

Iloilo City Environment and Natural Resources Office personnel assisted in the planting activities. Mangroves serve as sanctuary to fishes and home to other marine life. (PR)



Soccsksargen cops, partners plant 35K trees

By Richelyn Gubalani January 27, 2021, 8:17 pm



TREE PLANTING. Personnel of Glan municipal police station in Sarangani province plant tree seedlings at a portion of Sitio Buli, Barangay Pangyan as part of a simultaneous tree planting activity in Region 12 (Soccsksargen) on Tuesday (Jan. 26, 2021). Police personnel and community stakeholders are able to plant around 35,000 tree seedlings during the activity. *(Photo courtesy of the Glan municipal government)*

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – Police personnel and community stakeholders in Region 12 (Soccsksargen) planted around 35,000 tree seedlings on Tuesday in a massive tree-planting activity in different parts of the region.

Brig. Gen. Michael John Dubria, director of the Police Regional Office-12, said Wednesday the activity is part of their continuing enhanced community engagement program, which is being conducted in partnership with local government units (LGUs) and concerned agencies.

He said all police units in the region's four provinces and four cities took part in the simultaneous tree planting in selected sites within their areas of responsibility.

In this city, the Regional Mobile Force Battalion-12 and the city police office conducted the activity at a portion of Sitio Asfang in Barangay San Jose.

"We were able to acquire around PHP1.75 million worth of seedlings through donations from our partners," Dubria told reporters.

He said the seedlings comprised indigenous trees like lauan and narra, as well as various fruit-bearing and plantation trees like guyabano and coffee.

The tree-planting sites were chosen through recommendations from LGUs and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

These included areas under the government's Enhanced National Greening Program and indigenous peoples' communities covered by convergence initiatives under Executive Order 70 of President Rodrigo Duterte.



Soccksargen cops, partners plant 35K trees

EO 70 sets the implementation of the “whole-of-nation” strategy to “end local communist armed conflict.”

Dubria said the trees planted in these areas, which are previously influenced by the communist terrorist New People’s Army, were intended to help provide livelihood to residents.

“This is just the start. We’re planning to plant more trees and engage with people in these communities in the coming months,” he said. (PNA)



Philippine forest trees threatened by deforestation and climate change

by [National University of Singapore](#)



Figure 1: A large *Shorea guiso* (Dipterocarpaceae) in Mount Makiling in Laguna Province, Philippines. Credit: Ma. Rovelyn and Roven D. TUMANENG

The tree species in the Dipterocarpaceae family dominate many tropical forest formations in Southeast Asia (see Figure 1). The Philippines is home to more than 50 dipterocarp tree species, of which 25 cannot be found anywhere else on Earth. About 97% of the Philippines' tropical forest have been subjected to logging activities, and are often converted to other land uses such as for agriculture. Hence, many of these important and unique tree species are under severe threat. Apart from this, climate change may further threaten the survival of these tree species as environmental conditions become increasingly inhospitable, driving potential shifts in their population ranges.

A study by Prof Edward WEBB and his Ph.D. student, Mr Sean PANG, both from the Department of Biological Sciences, NUS combined land cover maps obtained from PhilGIS, a repository for geospatial data in the Philippines, with [species](#) distribution modeling to assess the dual threats of land cover change and climate change on the Philippine dipterocarps. Their study found that most of the dipterocarps have already had their geographical ranges reduced by more than 50% due to deforestation (see Figure 2). Model projections until year 2070 incorporating climate change scenarios showed that the combination of possible species range shifts and present day deforestation will further reduce the land area of future [suitable habitats](#) for these [tree species](#). This may potentially push many of the dipterocarps tree species closer to extinction.



Philippine forest trees threatened by deforestation and climate change

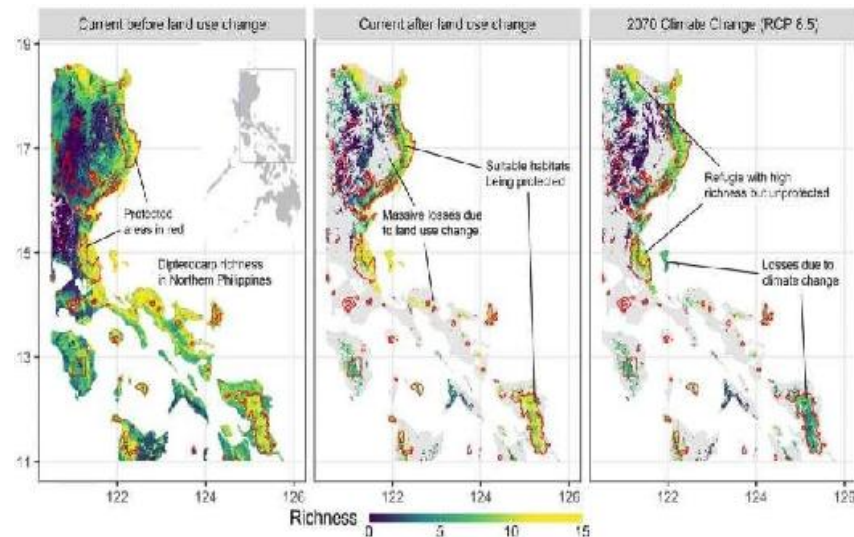


Figure 2: Model prediction of Dipterocarpaceae richness in Luzon, Philippines for 19 dipterocarps. Left: the initial model output showing total species richness based on climate suitability only. Middle: the predicted species richness when removing already deforested areas. Right: Projections of species richness in the year 2070, considering only forested areas. Red polygons show the current protected area network. The figure shows huge losses of dipterocarp ranges owing to deforestation and that much of the most species-rich areas projected in 2070 remain outside of the current protected area network. Credit: *Scientific Reports*

As part of the conservation efforts, [protected areas](#) such as national parks are often established to maintain the population of vulnerable tree species by taking into account the current distribution of species and richness. The team found that the existing network of protected areas was not adequate in providing sufficient coverage to areas of stable and suitable habitat under climate change effects (also known as "climate macrorefugia"). The team suggests that the designated protected area should incorporate potential shifts in the geographical range of the dipterocarp species under climate change conditions, so that areas that remain suitable for these [trees](#) can be safeguarded. This will help ensure the survival of the dipterocarps trees and their constituent species. The researchers hope that their model predictions will be useful in developing better conservation plans for the protected areas by providing glimpses into the future of the geographical distributions of the dipterocarp trees.

Pang said, "Our models offer insights into how the dual threats of deforestation and climate change may threaten an iconic tree family in the Philippines. The outcome from our study suggests incorporating climate change scenarios when planning for protected areas as environmentally suitable conditions may shift with [climate change](#). Those species which are being guarded by protected areas now, may no longer be there in the future."



Duterte administration touts citizen participation in climate change measures

Published January 27, 2021, 9:45 PM

by [Genalyn Kabilig](#)

The government is determined to take measures to further mitigate the impact of climate change but will need the help of the public, Malacañang said Wednesday.



Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque Jr. (YANCY LIM/PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque tackled the need for collective action after claiming the Palace was no longer surprised the Philippines is among the top 10 most affected countries by extreme weather events.

"The Philippines has long been identified as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate hazards, such as typhoons, floodings, landslides, and droughts. We are therefore not surprised that we are number 4 in terms of long-term climate risk index (CRI) from a study done from 1999 to 2018," Roque said.

"The government is taking all necessary steps to strengthen our capacities to mitigate and address the effects of climate change. For us to accomplish this task, we need the cooperation of all citizens," he said.

According to Roque, adaptive and resilient communities could be built if the government and the public would work together. "This would be our gift to the future generations of Filipinos," he said.

In a study related by environmental think tank Germanwatch, the Philippine ranked fourth out of 180 countries that have suffered the most from extreme weather events from 2000 to 2019. The Philippines had a climate risk index score of 18.17 with 317 events recorded in the given period.

Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti ranked highest from 2000 to 2019.



Duterte administration touts citizen participation in climate change measures

Given the challenges posed by climate crisis, Roque said President Duterte has already signed the Paris agreement on climate change in 2017.

The 2015 landmark Paris accord aims to limit temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius by committing the signatories to reduce carbon emissions by 2030. It also seeks to enhance the ability of countries to deal with climate change impact and support them in their efforts.

When he addressed the United Nations General Assembly last year, the President asked nations to support climate action and meet their carbon-cutting goals.

"The President 'called on all parties to make good and honor their commitment to fight climate change, and strengthen communities and peoples for preparedness and resilience,'" Roque said.

"As the Chief Executive underscored, climate change is 'a global challenge that has worsened existing inequalities and vulnerabilities from within and between nations,'" he said.

He said the government also crated a climate change adaption and mitigation roadmap for 2018 to 2022 "to mainstream climate change and disaster risk reduction to identified climate vulnerable provinces and major urban centers such as Metro Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Davao."



Gov't taking steps to mitigate effects of climate change

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos January 27, 2021, 9:39 pm



File photo

MANILA – President Rodrigo Duterte's administration is stepping up its mitigation efforts to address the impacts of climate change in the Philippines, Malacañang said on Wednesday.

"The government is taking all necessary steps to strengthen our capacities to mitigate and address the effects of climate change," Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a press statement.

Roque issued the statement in response to a study by a German environmental policy think tank which showed the Philippines is among the nations that have been most affected by extreme weather from 2000 to 2019.

Germanwatch, in its Global Climate Risk Index 2020 report released Monday, found that the Philippines ranked fourth out of 180 countries most affected by extreme weather in the last two decades.

The study revealed that around 317 extreme weather events have been recorded in the Philippines, the highest among the top 10 nations with high scores in the climate risk index. The scores indicate the countries' levels of exposure and vulnerabilities to extreme weather.

Roque said the Philippines ranking fourth in terms of long-term climate risk index no longer came as a surprise.

"The Philippines has long been identified as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate hazards, such as typhoons, floodings, landslides, and droughts," he said.



Gov't taking steps to mitigate effects of climate change

Roque said the country's vulnerability to extreme weather prompted Duterte to sign in 2017 the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, a global pact that aims to keep temperature from rising two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial level.

The Philippines in March 2017 ratified the Paris climate deal.

Duterte, during the General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly last year, also urged all parties to "make good and honor their commitment to fight climate change, and strengthen communities and peoples for preparedness and resilience," Roque stressed.

"As the Chief Executive underscored, climate change is 'a global challenge that has worsened existing inequalities and vulnerabilities from within and between nations,'" Roque said.

Roque said the Duterte government also formulated a Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction Roadmap for 2018 to 2022 to mainstream climate change and disaster risk reduction to identified climate vulnerable provinces and major urban centers like Metro Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Davao.

He expressed hope that the public would help the government fight the effects of climate change.

"For us to accomplish this task, we need the cooperation of all citizens. Through our collective action, we can build adaptive and resilient communities across the archipelago. This would be our gift to the future generations of Filipinos," Roque said. (PNA)



Damage from Typhoon Rolly in Catanduanes is seen in this aerial photo taken by the Armed Forces of the Philippines in November 2020.

Gov't not surprised with Philippines' high ranking in climate risk index

Published January 27, 2021 10:38pm

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque on Wednesday said Malacañang was not surprised that the Philippines was [ranked fourth in the list of countries most affected by extreme weather across the globe](#).

"The Philippines has long been identified as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate hazards, such as typhoons, floodings, landslides, and droughts," Roque said in a statement.

"We are therefore not surprised that we are number 4 in terms of long-term climate risk index from a study done from 1999 to 2018," he added.

Research Group Germanwatch's [Global Climate Risk Index Report for 2021](#) showed that the Philippines ranked fourth in the list of countries most affected by extreme weather from 1999 to 2018.

The report said that the worst-hit countries can be classified into two groups: those that were most affected due to "exceptional catastrophes" and those that are affected by extreme events "on an ongoing basis."

The Philippines falls in the latter category, "continuously rank[ing] among the most affected countries both in the long-term index and in the index for each respective year."



Gov't not surprised with Philippines' high ranking in climate risk index

Furthermore, the Philippines is also among the countries "still in the process of recovering from the previous year's impacts."

Roque said this was the reason why President Rodrigo Duterte [signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in March 2017](#).

"As the Chief Executive underscored, climate change is 'a global challenge that has worsened existing inequalities and vulnerabilities from within and between nations,'" Roque said.

Roque said the government has formulated a Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCAM-DRR) Roadmap for 2018 to 2022 for areas such as Metro Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, and Davao.

"The government is taking all necessary steps to strengthen our capacities to mitigate and address the effects of climate change. For us to accomplish this task, we need the cooperation of all citizens," he said.

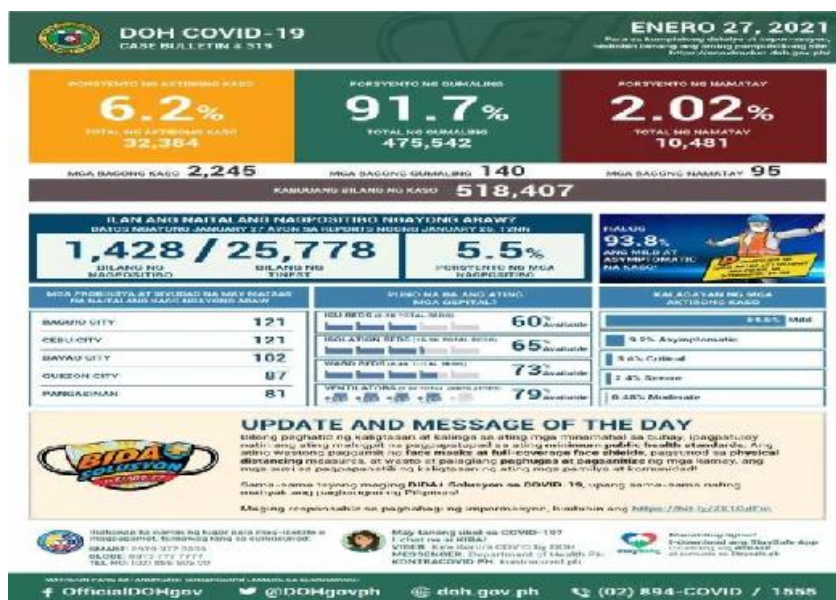
"Through our collective action, we can build adaptive and resilient communities across the archipelago. This would be our gift to the future generations of Filipinos," he added. — Joahna Lei Casilao/BM, GMA News



- Headline
- Editorial
- Column
- Opinion
- Feature Article

BREAKING: Mga kaso ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas, umakyat na sa higit 518,000

By Angellic Jordan January 27, 2021 - 04:10 PM



Lapas 2,000 ang panibagong kaso ng Coronavirus Disease o COVID-19 sa Pilipinas.

Sa huling datos ng Department of Health (DOH) bandang araw ng Miyerkules (January 27), umabot na sa 518,407 confirmed cases ng nakakahawang sakit sa bansa.

Sa nasabing bilang, 32,384 o 6.2 porsyento ang aktibong kaso.

Sinabi ng kagawaran na 2,245 ang bagong napaulat na kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa.

84.5 porsyento sa active COVID-19 cases ang mild; 9.2 porsyento ang asymptomatic; 0.48 porsyento ang moderate; 2.4 porsyento ang severe habang 3.4 porsyento ang nasa kritikal na kondisyon.

Nasa 95 naman ang napaulat na nasawi.

Dahil dito, umakyat na sa 10,481 o 2.02 porsyento ang COVID-19 related deaths sa bansa.

Ayon pa sa DOH, 140 naman ang gumaling pa sa COVID-19.

Dahil dito, umakyat na sa 475,542 o 91.7 porsyento ang total recoveries ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas.



Global coronavirus cases surpass 100 million

January 27, 2021, 1:26 pm



ANKARA – The number of novel coronavirus cases surpassed the 100 million mark Tuesday, according to the latest data from Johns Hopkins University.

More than 25.3 million cases were recorded in the US since the start of the pandemic. India has almost 10.7 million infections and Brazil exceeds 8.8 million.

The global death toll was at more than 2.1 million, of which 423,000 have been recorded in the US. Brazil is second on that list with some 217,000 fatalities, followed by more than 153,000 in India.

Despite several vaccines that have been developed, new strains of the virus that recently emerged in the United Kingdom and South Africa have created uncertainty about whether the world will soon put the pandemic in the rearview mirror.

US pharmaceutical company Moderna announced Monday that its vaccine appears to work against a strain found in the UK, B.1.1.7, however, it said it could be less effective against the one in South Africa, B.1.351.

The vaccine developed by American pharmaceutical firm Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech works against 15 possible virus mutations. However, E484K, another mutation in South Africa, is not among those tested, according to a study released Jan. 7.

United State's top infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said in January that vaccines are designed to recognize multiple parts of the spike protein, which makes it unlikely a single mutation could be enough to prevent them from being effective, but he said last Thursday that current vaccines may not be as effective in protecting against the new and more contagious strains.

In the US, out of 44,394,075 doses of vaccines distributed, 23,540,994 were administered as of 6 a.m. EDT (1100GMT) Tuesday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data.

While 19,902,237 people received at least one dose of a vaccine, 3,481,921 have received two doses, CDC data showed. (*Anadolu*)

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1128663>



Almost two-thirds of people believe climate change is a global emergency, UN poll finds

By Laura Smith-Spark, CNN

Published Jan 28, 2021 12:15:54 AM



Photo courtesy: Andre Penner/AP

(CNN) -- Nearly two-thirds of respondents believe that climate change is a "global emergency," according to a survey of 1.2 million people in dozens of countries around the globe -- and many want urgent action to tackle the problem.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which ran the poll with Oxford University, described it as the largest survey of public opinion on climate change ever conducted. Unusually, it captured the views of more than half a million people under the age of 18, a key but typically hard-to-reach constituency, the organization said.

The "Peoples' Climate Vote" was undertaken late last year in 50 high, middle and low income countries that together account for more than half of the world's population, according to the UNDP report.

Across those countries, 64% of people said climate change was an emergency, "presenting a clear and convincing call for decision-makers to step up on ambition," the report said.

"Of the people that said climate change is a global emergency, 59% said that the world should do everything necessary and urgently in response," it added. A further 20% backed acting slowly, while 10% thought the world was already doing enough.

While younger people showed the greatest concern over climate change, with 69% of those aged 14-18 saying there is a climate emergency, around two-thirds of those aged 18 to 60 and 58% of those over 60 agreed. This illustrates "how widely held this view has become," the UNDP said.



Almost two-thirds of people believe climate change is a global emergency, UN poll finds

Its polling also indicated that majorities backed climate action even when it would have a significant impact on their own country, at a time when much of the world is reeling from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

'Broad support' for action

Respondents were asked where they would most like to see action, with questions on support for 18 policy options across six areas -- energy, economy, transportation, farms and food, protecting people, and nature.

Four climate policies emerged as the most popular globally, with 54% of those surveyed favoring conservation of forests and land, 53% choosing increased use of renewable energy, 52% supporting climate-friendly farming techniques and 50% wanting more investment in green businesses and jobs. The promotion of plant-based diets was the least popular, with only 30% support.

There were "clear calls" for renewable energy even in higher emitting countries such as the United States, Australia and Canada, the UNDP report said.

It also found "strong backing" for action to conserve forests and land in countries with high emissions from deforestation and land-use change, such as Brazil, Indonesia and Argentina.

"The results of the survey clearly illustrate that urgent climate action has broad support amongst people around the globe, across nationalities, age, gender and education level," Achim Steiner, UNDP administrator, said in a news release.

"From climate-friendly farming to protecting nature, and investing in a green recovery from Covid-19, the survey brings the voice of the people to the forefront of the climate debate. It signals ways in which countries can move forward with public support as we work together to tackle this enormous challenge," he said.

The publication of the survey comes as many countries are preparing for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (also known as COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.

In the United States, President Joe Biden has put action to combat climate change high on his agenda. He is expected to sign several executive actions related to climate on Wednesday, including issuing a moratorium on new oil and gas leases on federal lands, according to a person familiar with his plans.

This follows on from a series of steps last week aimed at reprioritizing environmental issues. Biden halted more than 100 regulatory actions taken by the Trump administration, announced the US would rejoin the Paris climate agreement and canceled the Keystone XL pipeline.

'Unconventional approach'

The UNDP poll was undertaken as part of a wider UN campaign to educate people about climate change solutions and ask their opinions on actions to address the climate crisis.



Almost two-thirds of people believe climate change is a global emergency, UN poll finds

Global average temperatures last year were tied for the hottest on record, capping what was also the planet's hottest decade ever recorded, according to data analysis released earlier this month. The last six years are now the hottest six on record, with 2020 on par with 2016 as the hottest year ever recorded.

The highest level of support for climate action, at 74%, was found in people living in small island developing states, the UNDP report said, followed by people in high income countries (72%). It stood at 62% in middle income countries, while the least developed countries saw the lowest level of support, at 58%.

A majority across all regions said climate change was a global emergency, with the highest level of agreement in Western Europe and North America, at 72%, and the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa, at 61%.

The UNDP poll sought to reach people under the age of 18 by distributing its questions through adverts in game apps on mobile phones. This "new and unconventional approach to polling" allowed its authors to reach "a huge, unique, and random sample of people of all genders, ages, and educational backgrounds," the UNDP said.

The poll found that the more education a person had completed, the more likely they were to think there was a climate emergency, regardless of where they lived.

"With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the Peoples' Climate Vote took on added meaning by providing insight into perceptions about the climate crisis in the context of a global pandemic," the report said.

"Many of the policy choices in the Peoples' Climate Vote -- whether relating to jobs, energy, protecting nature or company regulation -- speak to issues that countries are facing as they chart their recoveries."

This story was first published on CNN.com, ["Almost two-thirds of people believe climate change is a global emergency, UN poll finds"](#)



A global-scale scandal in climate finance



By [Ben Kritz](#)
January 28, 2021

Have you noticed how much development in climate change mitigation and adaptation the Philippines, considered one of the most environmentally at-risk countries in the world, has been able to achieve, thanks to funding from developed countries?

No? Well, neither did CARE International, or more properly, the global nongovernmental organization's (NGO) member offices in Denmark and The Netherlands, so they decided to do a bit of investigating with the help of local partners in six particularly climate-vulnerable countries: Ghana, Uganda and Ethiopia in Africa; and Nepal, Vietnam and the Philippines in Asia.

What they discovered was that, in spite of developed economies' grandiose claims of large-scale financial support for climate mitigation, about half of the funding actually had nothing to do with climate change adaptation. This obviously has some serious negative implications, both for the subject countries and the larger global policy efforts toward fighting climate change.

This issue first came to my attention about a week ago with the publication of CARE's findings, which are detailed in one overall report, as well as in separate reports for each of the countries studied. My initial reaction, "This is alarming, and I should write an article about it," quickly turned into "This is going to keep me busy for at least a couple of months," so for today I'll simply try to summarize the key points of what is a very complex and potentially explosive scandal.

The climate finance grand scheme

First, a bit of background about the type of financing involved. At the international climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009 — the long name of the meeting was the "15th session of the Conference of Parties [COP15] to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC]" — the world's developed economies, primarily members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), pledged to contribute heavily to climate change mitigation. From an initial \$30 billion for 2010 to 2012, the goal was to gradually increase spending to \$100 billion a year by 2020, with at least half of that being spent for the benefit of the world's most vulnerable countries and populations. The total climate financing, regardless of where it was directed, was supposed to be equally divided between climate mitigation — for example, investing in renewable energy or better waste management systems — and climate adaptation, which includes flood control systems and relocating vulnerable populations. To keep track of progress toward the goal, the countries report their climate adaptation spending to the UNFCCC and the OECD.

As the agreement is not binding, it comes as no real surprise that actual contributions have fallen far short of the lofty funding target. This naturally provoked intense scrutiny from a wide variety of environmental researchers, policy analysts and activists; the recent study produced under the



A global-scale scandal in climate finance

aeigis of CARE International is one of the most thorough and focused analyses to be produced since the climate financing aspiration was first announced in 2009.

CARE and the climate finance study

CARE International is one of the world's oldest international NGOs, and chiefly concerns itself with poverty and inequality reduction efforts. Climate adaptation naturally fits in its wheelhouse, and so CARE has been monitoring the progress of climate mitigation financing from the very beginning. CARE — it originally stands for “Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe” — was founded in the US in 1945 in the aftermath of World War 2, and its first major activity was soliciting donations for packages of relief goods to be sent on behalf of American individuals and families to people in war-torn Europe. This was the origin of the now-familiar generic term “care package.”

The organization now is a decentralized group of 14 national member offices, with headquarter offices in Geneva, Brussels and New York, in close proximity to UN and European Union officialdom. When CARE evolved from being a US-based organization to a legitimately international one beginning in the 1980s, the meaning of its acronymous name was changed to “Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.”

The recently published country-specific assessment overseen by CARE Denmark and CARE Netherlands is just a part of the group's larger effort to monitor climate mitigation actions, and focused specifically on 112 separate projects in the aforementioned six countries between 2013 and 2017. The goal of the analysis, as explained by CARE, was to determine “whether rich countries' reporting of adaptation finance is accurate, and whether the reported amounts genuinely contribute to climate adaptation. In addition, we investigated whether the funded projects are gender-responsive and prioritize the poorest and most vulnerable members of the target populations.”

The short answer to all that is “no.” Overall, the 112 projects corresponded to \$6.2 billion in reported climate financing, but the CARE study found that at least \$2.6 billion of that was spurious, funding that was reported as having a climate-related objective but had nothing at all to do with climate mitigation and adaptation, or described as connected to climate mitigation or adaptation in such an indirect way that the purported resulting activities or any impact could not be measured, or in most cases even vaguely defined.

A second, more insidious problem discovered by the CARE team and its partners was that a significant portion of the \$6.2 billion was in the form of nonconcessional loans, or loans that did not have the typically mild terms of concessional loans with long grace periods and repayment schedules and very low interest rates. These loans, which will result in the lending countries' getting their money back at a profit (albeit a modest one) logically should not be included as “contributions,” meaning that the real amount of overreporting is substantially higher than \$2.6 billion.



A global-scale scandal in climate finance

Details of what the researchers discovered in the Philippines will follow in subsequent columns; as I said, this is a big, complex topic that takes some time to properly investigate, but even a brief summary of them is discouraging. The local study, conducted by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development Inc., and CARE in the Philippines looked at 18 projects between 2013 and 2017 totaling \$2.1 billion in reported climate financing. Of that, at least \$770 million, or about 37 percent, was determined to be overreported, with the biggest offenders being Japan (\$425 million), the World Bank (\$156 million), France (\$98 million), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (\$54 million) and South Korea (\$32 million).

All of these concerned parties are going to be getting some hard questions over the coming weeks. I expect that the answers to those ought to be pretty interesting.

ben.kritz@manilatimes.net

28 JANUARY 2021, Thursday



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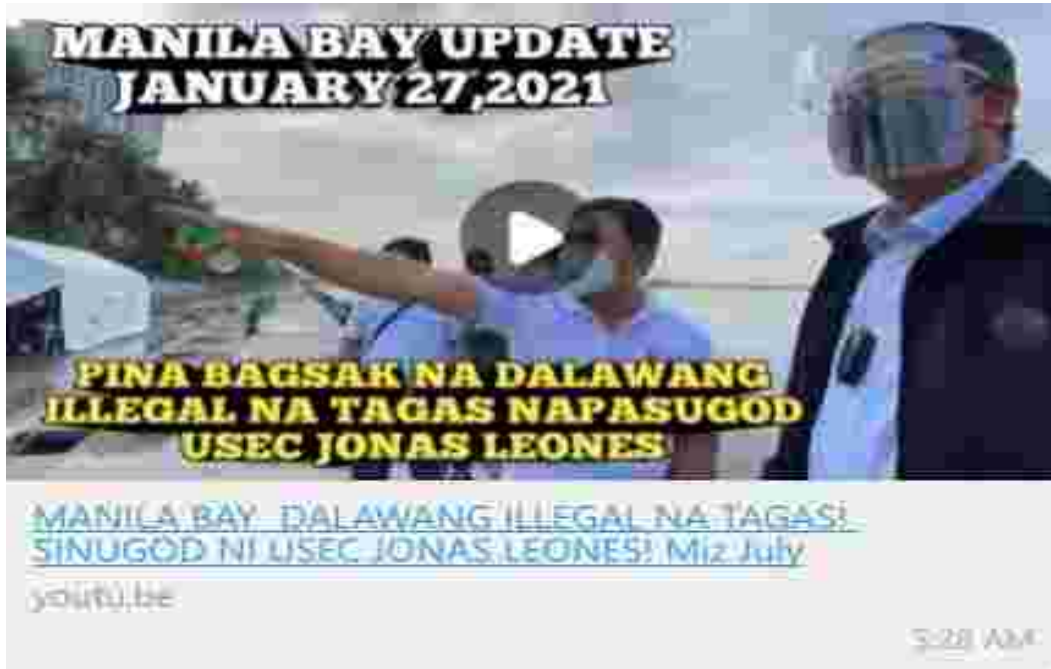
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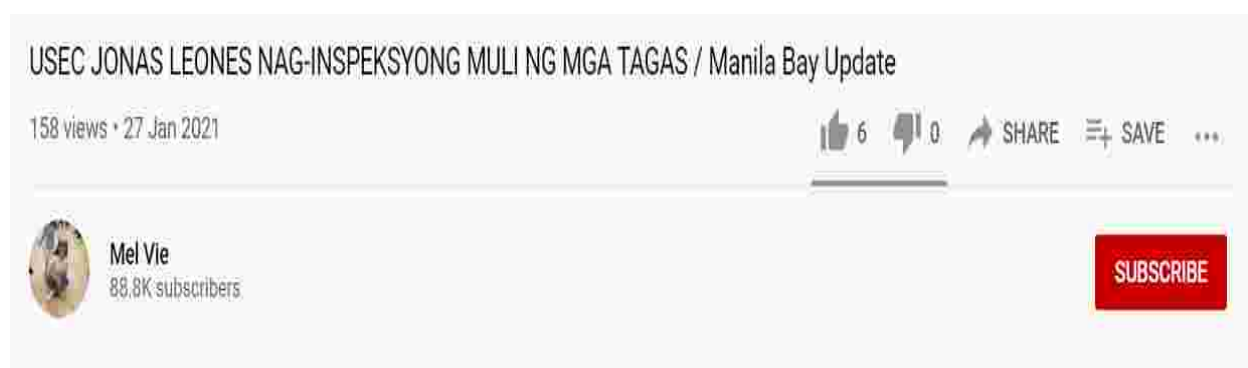
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