

31 MARCH 2021, WEDNESDAY



**DENR**

# NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



# DENR releases guidelines on disposition of lands

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

March 31, 2021

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has released a set of guidelines on the disposition of lands formed by accretion adjacent to agricultural areas and management of river islets and dried creeks and river beds.

According to DENR Administrative Order 2020-16, all islets, such as sandbars and delta, shall not be subjected to any mode of titling unless declared as open for disposition through a law enacted by the Congress or presidential proclamation.

The environment department defined islets as small islands formed by the actions of the sea, river, or other bodies of water, which are unstable and impermanent in nature.

Meanwhile, dried creeks and river beds shall not be alienated since these belong to the State as property of public dominion pursuant to Article 502 of the Civil Code of the Philippines.

The DENR regional office, through the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro), Mines and Geosciences Bureau, and designated divisions from the regional offices shall assess and determine the physical and biological conditions, including ecology, geology, topography, hydrology, soil quality and exposure to environmental and climate risks of the lands.

In extreme cases, these areas may be designated as no-build zone areas, it added.

Meanwhile, lands formed by accretion within a block classified as agricultural land may be opened for disposition in accordance with the provisions of Commonwealth Act 141, as amended, or the Public Land Act, and Section 2, Chapter 2 of Book II, Title II of the Civil Code of the Philippines.

The order also states that if the lot is already titled, the landowner shall have the land surveyed and approved, and proceed to the courts for acquisition.

However, if the lot is still untitled, the land shall be surveyed and approved for administrative titling. The claimant of the lot may opt to consolidate the untitled lot for the filing of public land application.

In addition, lands formed within nonnavigable or nonfloatable lakes and rivers “shall be governed by the provisions of Article 465 of the Civil Code.”

The order said the disposition of these lands shall be subject to additional clearance or certification from the MGB regional office.

The Cenro shall secure the clearance or certification to determine the physical and geological condition of the area and whether it is fit for habitation or human settlement.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/03/31/business/business-top/denr-releases-guidelines-on-disposition-of-lands/857814/>





# DENR-BMB releases study on economic value of marine turtles, blue-naped parrots

By DENR Published on March 30, 2021



QUEZON CITY, Mar. 30 -- The Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-BMB) has conducted an economic valuation study of threatened species to bring greater appreciation and attention to the economic benefit of wildlife conservation.

DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu is optimistic that the result of the study will allow "more people to be inspired in conserving and protecting our wildlife."

The report was released in time for the celebration of the World Wildlife Day on March 3.

"We hope that in popularizing the findings, we can entice more Filipinos to think about the long-term benefits of our wildlife such as marine turtles and blue-naped parrots, and not just short-time gains," Cimatu said.

The study, which was conducted under the DENR-Asian Development Bank (ADB)/Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project on Combating Environmental Organized Crime in the Philippines, aims "to recognize the bigger picture," as the protection of wildlife not only keeps ecosystems balanced, but eventually benefits human well-being.

Environmental economist and study leader Dr. Agustin Arcenas said "the economic valuation of resources is vital in monitoring whether steps to protect these resources are effective, as well as evaluating the efficiency of projects and programs geared toward managing the resources, especially in situations where no other feasible metric currently exists."

Based on the DENR-ADB/GEF study, one marine turtle is projected to have an economic use value of P4.80 million (estimated US\$95,900) throughout its 57-year lifetime.

This is based on its ecological role in coastal and marine ecosystems (P900,000 per turtle) and on the tourism value it generates (P3.90 million per turtle).

Meanwhile, the annual use value of the entire population of the Philippine marine turtle, which is conservatively estimated at 7,294 individuals by the DENR-BMB, ranged between P2.89 billion and P3.19 billion (US\$57.88-63.85 million) per year.

The study also showed that the blue-naped parrot (*Tanygnathus lucionensis*) is estimated to have an economic use value of P186,000 (US\$3,700) throughout its six-year lifetime.



This is based on its trade value and tourism value (P5,000/blue-naped parrot when combined) and its ecological role in forest ecosystems (P181,000/blue-naped parrot).

The entire Philippine parrot population was estimated at 8,500 individuals, according to wildlife conservation group Katala Foundation. Its annual use value ranged between P36.23 million and P295.19 million (US\$724,500-5.90 million) per year.

Complementing the study findings, a willingness to pay survey was conducted in Cebu and Manila by the DENR-ADB/GEF Project to estimate the non-use value of marine turtles and blue-naped parrots.

It amounted to an annual value of P9.30 billion for the Philippine marine turtle population and P33.38 billion for the local blue-naped parrot population.

This is in stark contrast to the traded value of one blue-naped parrot, which is only P5,000 (estimated at US\$100).

The buying price per blue-naped parrot in Brgy. Buliluyan, Bataraza town in Palawan, is even lower at only P200 (US\$ 4.1), the study pointed out.

"This just shows that when protecting the wildlife, we get more value in the long run," Cimatu said.

The DENR Administrative Order No. 2019-09 on the updated list of Philippine threatened fauna and their categories classifies the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) as "critically endangered" while the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) as "endangered".

The same Department Order classifies the blue-naped parrot as "critically endangered". Marine turtles and the blue-naped parrot are also listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendices, affording different levels of protection from over-exploitation.

They are likewise included in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of threatened species.

DENR-BMB Wildlife Resources Division OIC chief Theresa Tenazas explained that the economic valuation study will "support efforts to amend the 20-year-old Wildlife Act."

"The proposed Revised Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2021, which was filed by Senators Cynthia Villar and Juan Miguel Zubiri, aims to increase penalties to up to 20 years of jail time with maximum fines of P2 million or twice the value for traded species," she said.

Cimatu said the DENR is looking forward to conducting more studies on economic valuation for other species of wildlife in the coming years. (DENR)



# What useless animals? DENR highlights economic value of PH marine turtles, blue-naped parrots

Published March 30, 2021, 11:11 AM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

Here's a darn good reason for Filipinos to protect or conserve local wildlife: these animals have actual economic value.



(MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) recently released details of an “economic valuation study” of threatened species—specifically, marine turtles and blue-naped parrots—bring greater appreciation and attention to the economic benefit of wildlife conservation.

“We hope that in popularizing the findings, we can entice more Filipinos to think about the long-term benefits of our wildlife such as marine turtles and blue-naped parrots, and not just short-time gains,” DENR Sec. Roy A. Cimatu said in a statement Monday, March 29.

Based on the study, one marine turtle is projected to have an economic use value of P4.80 million (estimated US\$95,900) throughout its 57-year lifetime. This is based on its ecological role in coastal and marine ecosystems (P900,000 per turtle) and on the tourism value it generates (P3.90 million per turtle).

Meanwhile, the annual use value of the entire population of the Philippine marine turtle, which is conservatively estimated at 7,294 individuals by the DENR-BMB, ranged between P2.89 billion and P3.19 billion (US\$57.88-63.85 million) per year.

The study also showed that the blue-naped parrot (*Tanygnathus lucionensis*) is estimated to have an economic use value of P186,000 (US\$3,700) throughout its six-year lifetime. This sum was tallied from its trade value and tourism value (P5,000/blue-naped parrot when combined) and its ecological role in forest ecosystems (P181,000/blue-naped parrot).

The entire Philippine parrot population was estimated at 8,500 individuals, according to wildlife conservation group Katala Foundation. Its annual use value ranged between P36.23 million and P295.19 million (US\$724,500-5.90 million) per year.

To complement the study findings, a “willingness to pay survey” was conducted in Cebu and Manila as a way to estimate the non-use value of marine turtles and blue-naped parrots. The survey bared an annual value of P9.30 billion for the Philippine marine turtle population and P33.38 billion for the local blue-naped parrot population.

This is in stark contrast to the traded value of one blue-naped parrot, which is only P5,000 (estimated at US\$100). The buying price per blue-naped parrot in Barangay Buliluyan, Bataraza town in Palawan, is even lower at only P200 (US\$ 4.1), the study pointed out.



“This just shows that when protecting the wildlife, we get more value in the long run,” Cimatú said.

Environmental economist and study leader Dr. Agustin Arcenas said “the economic valuation of resources is vital in monitoring whether steps to protect these resources are effective, as well as evaluating the efficiency of projects and programs geared toward managing the resources, especially in situations where no other feasible metric currently exists.”

The economic valuation study and willingness to pay survey were both carried out under the DENR-Asian Development Bank (ADB)/Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project on Combating Environmental Organized Crime in the Philippines.



## Economic value of marine turtles, parrots seen at \$70-M/year

March 30, 2021 | 8:14 pm



PHILSTAR

A RESOURCE valuation system has reckoned the economic worth of Philippine marine turtles and blue-naped parrots at up to \$69.8 million a year, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

Some marine turtles and the blue-naped parrot are included in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List of threatened species.

The paper, known as "Philippines: Protecting and Investing in Natural Capital in Asia and the Pacific," said economic use value considers the traded price generated in the sale of the animals based on government regulations, ecological services and contribution to tourism activity.

"Marine turtles generate a total use value ranging from around \$57.9 million to almost \$63.9 million per year, while the blue-naped parrots' total use value is around \$724,510... to \$5.9 million per year," according to a copy of the report obtained by *BusinessWorld*.

A marine turtle is estimated to have an economic use value of up to \$95,948 throughout its 57-year lifespan, while a blue-naped parrot is projected to have an economic use value of a maximum of \$3,719 in its 6-year lifetime.

"By calculating the economic value of the lost benefits should the species or even taxonomic group become extinct, members of society and policy makers can be informed of what the social, environmental, and economic costs of trade are, which is challenging but essential, especially for illegal and unregulated trade where information is scant," according to the study.

The report is not yet available online, but its findings were cited in a statement issued by the DENR on Monday.

"We hope that in popularizing the findings, we can entice more Filipinos to think about the long-term benefits of our wildlife such as marine turtles and blue-naped parrots, and not just short-time gains," DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu was quoted as saying.

Theresa M. Tenazas, the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau-Wildlife Resources Division OIC chief, said that the economic valuation study will "support efforts to amend the 20-year Wildlife Act."



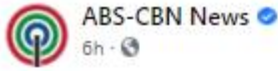


According to the DENR's updated list of threatened animals as of 2019, hawksbill and leatherback turtles are classified as critically endangered, while loggerhead, green and olive ridley turtles are endangered. Meanwhile, the blue-naped parrot is considered critically endangered.

The DENR said the study was conducted under the auspices of DENR-ADB/Global Environment Facility Project on Combating Environmental Organized Crime in the Philippines.

The study is a technical assistance consultant's report prepared by Environmental Economist Agustin L. Arcenas. — **Angelica Y. Yang**





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TINGNAN: Higit 70 baby olive ridley sea turtle ang pinakawalan sa Barangay Navitas, Panay, Capiz Martes.

Ayon sa Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, ito ang pinakaunang dokumentadong pagpapakawala ng mga pawikan sa lalawigan.

Ang olive ridley sea turtle ang isa sa pinakakaraniwang uri ng pawikan, ayon sa awtoridad. (📷: Capiz PENRO) | via Rolan Escaniel

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12 Comments 11 Shares



# Brahminy kite eagle rescued in Zamboanga City

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Mar 31 2021 03:33 AM

A brahminy kite eagle was rescued by residents in Barangay Tetuan, Zamboanga City on Monday.

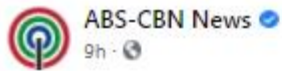
In a Facebook post of barangay chairman Walmart Atilano, he said residents of Holy Cross Community saw the bird seemingly alone.



They immediately went to the area and secured the animal.

The bird is now in the custody of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. — **Report from Leizle Lacastesantos**

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/31/21/brahminy-kite-eagle-rescued-in-zamboanga-city>



ABS-CBN News

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TINGNAN: Nasagip ang isang babaeng tarsier sa farm ng isang pulis sa Tagum City, Davao del Norte.

Inihatid ito ni P/Ssgt. Jovanie Solibio sa Tagum City Environment and Natural Resources Office Martes ng hapon at pinakawalan din sa Nature's Park sa Barangay San Agustin. Ito na ang ikaapat na tarsier na pinakawalan sa gubat sa lungsod. (📷: Tagum CIO) | via Hernel Tocmo

BASA HIN DITO ang kaugnay na ulat: <https://bit.ly/3cBWJDL>



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# Petron aiming for cleaner production process at Bataan refinery

[POWER PHILIPPINES NEWS](#)

on March 30, 2021 at 2:41 pm



Petron Corporation is set to build additional components in its 180,000 barrel-per-day refinery in Limay, Bataan as part of efforts to shift to cleaner technology and accelerate the transfer of goods, as stated in a project [description report](#) it submitted to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Based on the report, the oil giant is planning to develop phase three of its refinery solid fuel boiler, a 500-meter fuel transfer line that will connect to the nearby SL Harbor Bulk Terminal Corporation and six other support facilities collectively called the “Petron Refinery Special Projects.”

In its project description, Petron said the special projects target to “shift to cleaner technology in production of its steam and power requirements via replacing some of its old fuel [oil-fired] boilers.”

Petron also said that by building new transfer facilities, the transfer line they will use allows them to “alleviate the pier and tank utilization” within the Bataan refinery.

Nonetheless, the company explained that the installation of the new components will not increase its production capacity.

According to a [notice](#) from the DENR, Petron’s proposed refinery special projects will undergo public scoping on April 5. The public scoping is an early stage in the environment impact assessment process where the proponent will provide an overview of the proposed project, action, and other relevant information.

[Petron President and CEO Ramon Ang has committed to reopen the Bataan refinery in July despite the low fuel demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

[This may be well-expected as President Rodrigo Duterte retained the provision in Republic Act 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises \(CREATE\) law, which exempts local oil refineries from paying taxes and duties on crude oil imports.](#)

[This provision is seen to benefit Petron since the Bataan refinery — the country’s remaining facility of its kind — has been closed since February due to low margins triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and supposedly “unfair” taxation.](#)

Source: <http://powerphilippines.com/petron-aiming-for-cleaner-production-process-at-bataan-refinery/>





# Sukat ng Bayan: 4 out of 5 Filipinos back government action on climate change

By [BUSINESSMIRROR](#)

MARCH 31, 2021



The latest Sukat ng Bayan survey finds 89% of respondents believe that a government response to climate change is important. The research also revealed the following:

- Out of the total 2000 respondents, 92% expressed awareness of climate change.
- 92% say they believe that the Philippines is affected by climate change.
- 86% of respondents understand that climate change is bad for *both* the environment and the livelihood of Filipinos. *(Please refer to Table 1.)*
- 6% answered that they have insufficient knowledge about climate change to make a statement about its impact on the Philippines.

**TABLE 1**

## ON CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECT ON THE PHILIPPINES

March 13-24, 2021 / National online survey

EFFECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON PH	Respondents (%)
<b>It is bad for the environment and livelihood of Filipinos</b>	<b>86%</b>
It is bad for the environment only	3%
It is bad for the livelihood of Filipinos only	2%
It is good for the environment and livelihood of Filipinos	2%
It is good for the environment only	0%
It is good for the livelihood of Filipinos only	0%
I do not have enough knowledge about this	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Q51. Sa iyong pagkakaintindi, anong epekto ng climate change sa Pilipinas?



## Climate change in the Philippines

Being located in the most typhoon-prone region in the world, the Philippines is particularly vulnerable to climate change, with [recent studies](#) ranking the country [within the top 3 most at risk to the climate crisis](#). The exposure to various natural disasters (typhoons, landslides, floods, droughts), the dependence on climate-sensitive resources, and the proximity of major cities and settlements to the coastlines [make the Philippines highly vulnerable](#). With the increase of global temperature and the rising of sea levels, natural disasters like typhoons and storm surges become stronger and thus more dangerous to the cities in their path. The Germanwatch 2020 Global Climate Risk Index reported that the Philippines was the second most affected country in 2018, with a death toll of almost 500 attributable to natural disasters exacerbated by climate change.

Meanwhile, [the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\) reports](#), while there has not been a significant increase in the frequency of tropical cyclones in the past 50 years, there is an increase in those “with maximum sustained winds of greater than 150kph and above (typhoon category) being exhibited during El Niño event”. [As pointed out by Dr. Jeff Masters](#), seven of the 10 strongest landfalls in recorded history occurred since 2006, five of which hit the Philippines. On top of this, the Philippines has experienced 20 category 5 supertyphoons since 1952. That the Philippines was struck by Typhoon Rolly, last year’s strongest storm and [the strongest landfalling tropical cyclone on record with one-minute sustained winds of 315 kph](#), is further evidence of the trend that storms have been getting stronger in the last few decades.

Aside from more catastrophic typhoons, climate change also brings about [other ecological and social threats](#). These include: coral bleaching, declining rice yields, longer droughts, water scarcity, rising sea level, higher incidences of disease, and increased violence against women and indigenous people. These, in turn, will lower labor productivity, compromise public health, force communities to relocate, and increase fatalities.

## Shared opinions: a brief glimpse of related studies

Other recent studies inquiring into Filipinos’ perception on climate change present similar and/or complementary insights. A 2020 research study published by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) shows [“71% of Filipinos believed that they would be at least “somewhat affected” by climate change. Among them, 46% reported that they would likely get harmed, injured, or ill due to climate change”](#). Another poll published by Statista in January 2020 shows that [65% of respondents believe that climate change is a serious and immediate threat](#) to the well-being of the country.

Interestingly, the HHI study — [the data for which was collected in 2017](#) — revealed low public awareness about climate change among Filipinos. On a national level, 60% reported to have not heard of climate change, or felt they lacked knowledge about it. While the Sukat ng Bayan polling is not a representative study, that 92% of respondents in the survey claimed to be aware of the issue can be hopefully indicative that awareness of climate change has risen in the last 3 years.

## Sukat ng Bayan Q1 2021

Sukat ng Bayan is a non-commissioned, quarterly nationwide opinion polling conducted by iOptions Ventures.

This survey reached and asked 2,000 respondents from all over the Philippines questions about their current economic situation and outlook, perceptions on current political and governance landscape, COVID-19 related concerns in the country, and other timely socio-political issues.

Sukat ng Bayan Q1 2021 was conducted online from March 13-24, 2021. With convenience sampling employed for this survey, the researchers used Facebook as its main recruitment channel in order to reach the widest audience. In view of this, results from this online survey shall not be construed as representative of the Filipino population.

Image credits: [Anton Medvedev | Dreamstime.com](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/31/sukat-ng-bayan-4-out-of-5-filipinos-back-government-action-on-climate-change/>



# ALAMIN: May kinalaman ba ang mga paniki sa pagkalat ng COVID-19?

By **Bombo Christian Yosores**

-March 30, 2021 | 8:21 AM



IMAGE | Bat ecologist and UP Los Baños associate professor Dr. Phillip Alviola/Bombo Radyo

**MANILA (SPECIAL REPORT)** – Isa ang paniki sa mga unang pinag-suspetsahan na nagdulot ng pandemic na coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

May mga pag-aaral na rin kasing nagsabi tungkol sa pagiging “carrier” ng mga ito ng iba’t-ibang virus.

Katunayan ang mga kumalat na sakit noon tulad ng Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) at Ebola ay iniugnay sa mga paniki.

Ayon sa bat ecologist at associate professor ng University of the Philippines – Los Baños (UPLB) na si Dr. Phillip Alviola, hindi tulad ng tao, mas malakas ang resistensya ng mga paniki sa virus.

“Most species of bats talagang parang may equilibrium with the virus. That’s why maraming napunta na virus (sa kanila) and it doesn’t affect them in such a way that would happen in human,” ani Dr. Alviola sa panayam ng *Bombo Radyo*.

Paliwanag ni Dr. Alviola, nagsisilbing depensa ng mga paniki sa pag-atake ng mga virus ang kanilang kakayahan na lumipad.

Bagamat ang kakayahang ito rin ang nagdudulot ng damage o pagkasira sa kanilang cells at tissues, pati na sa DNA at RNA, na siyang inaatake ng mga virus.

“When that happens, normally for example sa human, pag na-encounter nila ‘yung bits and pieces (of damage sa DNA/RNA), your whole system will react to that like (magkakaroon ng) high temperature, fever, respiratory track ailment, nagkakaroon ng overreaction ‘yung antibody, (pero) sa bats it doesn’t make sense.”

“Their (bats) immune system has developed, through millions of years of adaptation, na they don’t overreact (to the viruses),” dagdag ng award-winning scientist.

Ayon kay Dr. Alviola, kahit may panganib ang exposure sa virus na bitbit ng paniki, maliit ang tsansa na maging banta ito sa mga tao.

Sa mga pag-aaral sa ibang bansa, tinukoy ng mga scientists ang “intermediary species” na responsable sa pagkalat ng coronavirus na mula sa paniki.



Ang “intermediary species” ay mga hayop na nagkaroon ng contact sa isang kapwa hayop at tao na may sakit.

Kapag nagsama ang virus na galing sa infected na hayop at tao, maaari itong mag-mutate o mabago ng anyo at maging isang “zoonotic disease,” na mapanganib sa parehong hayop at tao.

Halimbawa sa 2003 SARS, tinurong intermediary species ng civet cats o musang. Habang camel ang sa MERS-CoV na pumutok noong 2012.

Naniniwala si Dr. Alviola na posibleng “overreaction” ng katawan ng tao sa SARS-CoV-2 ang pinagmulan ng COVID-19.

“Successful transmission from bats to humans is a very rare event. Maraming pagdadaan pa rin. It just so happened that the SARS-CoV-2 is really compatible when in terms of latching on to several cells in the body. (It has) very small chances of happening.”

## **BAT BIODIVERSITY SA PILIPINAS**



IMAGE | A closer view of these amazing bats called flying foxes hanging upside down on top of Rhizophora branches. These mega bats may play its greatest contribution to the health of forest ecosystems in Surigao del Norte and man-made plantations as well in the province./DENR-CENRO TUBOD, Facebook

Batay sa datos ng [Biodiversity Management Bureau](#) ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), mayroong higit 78 species o uri ng paniki sa Pilipinas. Karamihan daw sa mga ito ay dito pa lang sa bansa natatagpuan.

Ayon kay Dr. Alviola, na kabilang sa roster of experts ng DENR, mas maliit ang bilang ng bat species sa Pilipinas kumpara sa mga bansang nasa mainland Asia tulad ng China, at Europe.

Nahahati sa dalawang sub-groups ang mga uri ng paniki: ang fruit-eating bats at micro bats.

“Fruit bats usually rely on sight and smell. For insect eating bats (micro bats), ang main sense nils ay gumagamit sila ng ‘echolocation calls,’ parang sonar like dolphins. Ultrasonic beyond human hearing. They can navigate using their sound from their bodies, mouths, and throat; and they can locate prey using that.”

Ang microbat na “horseshoe bat” sa China ang sinasabing pinagmulan ng SARS-CoV-2. Nakita raw kasi ng mga scientist ang pagkakapareho ng SARS-CoV-2 sa coronavirus na nakita sa nabanggit na paniki.





“We also have that kind of bat in the Philippines, yung Rhinolophus (or horseshoe bat). Siguro around 12 or 13 species all in all; and we’ve also found coronavirus sa mga paniki na ito... (pero hindi sila dapat katakutan).”

Hindi tulad ng mga paniki sa Amerika at Europe, wala raw ebidensya na ang mga paniki sa Pilipinas ay nagma-migrate o lumilipat sa iba’t-ibang lugar. Ito ay kahit pa may kapasidad ang mga ito na lumipad ng malalayong distansya.

“At most mga 10 hanggang 50 kilometers pero hindi yung talagang cyclical due to season. Seasonal kasi yung migration eh, pero here in the Philippines they don’t do that.”

### **BENEPISYO NG MGA PANIKI**



IMAGE | Mexican Long-Tongued Bat (*Choeronycteris mexicana*)/Steve Buchmann, USDA Forest Service

Kahit kilalang “carrier” ng mga nakakahawang sakit ang mga paniki, hindi naman matatawaran ang kanilang ambag sa kalikasan.

Ayon kay Dr. Alviola, malaki ang papel na ginagampanan ng mga paniki lalo na sa industriya ng mga prutas.

“They pollenate mga flowers so that magkakaroon ng fertilization so thereby nagiging fruits. For example (on industries of) durian and mangoes. Its a billion dollar industries that are highly reliant on bats.”

Nakakatulong din daw ang pagpapakalat ng mga paniki ng binhi para umusbong ang mga halaman at iba pang pananim.

“Yung mga kinakain nilang prutas they defecate, dinu-dumi nila kasama yung mga seeds. (With that) mas mataas ang germination success, mas sisibol ang mga seeds kapag dumaan sa bituka ng paniki.”

Dagdag pa ni Dr. Alviola, nakakatulong din ang mga paniki para labanan ang mga peste ng pananim na palay at mga insektong nagdudulot ng delikadong sakit.

Pinapanatili rin umano ng mga paniki ang balanse ng mga hayop sa kagubatan.

“Bats can act as a biological control that has implications on agriculture, public health, and biodiversity conservation.”



## 'VIRUS HUNTER'



IMAGE | Scientists wear equipment to protect themselves from exposure to bats, as they set up a mist net in front of a building with a bat roost at the University of the Philippines at Los Baños on February 19, 2021./Eloisa Lopez, Reuters

Higit dalawang dekada na ang kasanayan ni Dr. Alviola sa pag-aaral sa mga paniki.

Ngayong taon, isang panibagong pananaliksik ang sinimulan ng tinaguriang “Philippine batman” para makabuo ng “simulation model” na tutulong sa pagtukoy at pagsugpo ng posibleng susunod na pandemya.

Katuwang ni Dr. Alviola ang iba pang bat ecologist ng UPLB, at mga dalubhasa sa Japan at Vietnam. Ang pag-aaral ay suportado sa ilalim ng e-ASIA Joint Research Program.

Tinawag na “virus hunters” ang grupo ni Dr. Alviola na nag-umpisang manaliksik sa mga paniki ng Mt. Makiling sa Laguna.

“We capture different kinds (of bats) using mga technique or equipment. Primary to this is the mist net o parang volleball net; and once we capture it, we measure body weight, (then we) swab orally and on anal region, then we put these (samples) in a reagent and store sa -80 degree refrigerator for future analysis.”

Ayon kay Dr. Alviola mahalaga ang tuloy-tuloy na pag-aaral sa mga paniki dahil sa pagiging “natural reservoir” ng mga ito sa coronavirus at iba pang nakakahawang sakit.

Sa mga nakalipas na taon, naging kapansin-pansin daw ang mas mabilis nang pagkalat ng mga nakakahawang sakit mula sa hayop papuntang tao.

Binigyang diin ng Pinoy scientist na kasing-halaga ng mga pag-aaral ang pananatiling balanse ng kalikasan. Maaabot lang daw ito kung mayroong disiplina at respeto ang mga tao sa bawat hayop na nabubuhay sa mundo.

“This is a classic textbook example na kung ano ‘yung ginawa natin sa kalikasan ay siyang babalik sa atin... it will happen if the exploitation of our nature resources will continue, the wildlife trade, persecuting wild animal population. If we don’t talagang malilintikan tayo in the next few years.”

Source: <https://www.bomboradyo.com/alamin-may-kinalaman-ba-ang-mga-paniki-sa-pagkalat-ng-covid-19/>



## 50-50 chance for ECQ extension in 'NCR Plus'

By Azer Parrocha March 30, 2021, 3:59 pm



**LAST RESORT.** Members of the Inter-Agency Council for Traffic (IACT) and Highway Patrol Group (HPG) conduct anti-overloading and anti-colorum operations along Marcos Highway in Antipolo City on Tuesday (March 30, 2021). Malacañang said extending enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) over Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal beyond April 4 would be a last resort. (PNA photo by Joey O. Razon)

MANILA – Malacañang on Tuesday said there is a “50-50” chance that the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) imposed in the National Capital Region and four nearby provinces (NCR Plus) to curb the spike in Covid-19 cases will be extended beyond April 4.

In a Palace press briefing, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the decision will depend on whether new infections have slowed down.

“I would say it’s a 50-50. We’re hoping na yung one-week bubble natin at saka ang one-week ECQ natin (that the one-week bubble and one-week ECQ) would lead to lower numbers,” he said.

Roque said members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) will be meeting on Black Saturday to finalize the quarantine classification.

“*Pinag-iisipan* po ito ng mabuti ng inyong IATF at sa Black Saturday ay meron po kaming muling pagpupulong para po isapinal kung ano nga po ang mangyayari. But another week or two weeks of ECQ *‘yan po ay* magiging absolute last resort (The IATF is assessing it thoroughly and on Black Saturday we will have another meeting where we will finalize what will happen. But another week or two weeks of ECQ would be an absolute last resort),” he added.

He expressed hope that a week-long ECQ accompanied by the strict adherence to minimum health and safety standards would result in a drop in new infections.

“*Inaasahan po natin na dahil nga po* sa isang linggong ECQ kasama po ng mask, hugas, iwas, at kasama po yung maigting na CODE, yung pagbabahay-bahay para maghanap ng merong sintomas at mas pinaigting pa nating testing at isolation umaasa po tayo na sana po hindi na kinakailangan mag-ECQ (We are hoping that after a week-long ECQ accompanied by mask, wash, physical distancing, and accompanied by strict CODE or house-to-house visits to look for symptomatic patients and enhanced testing and isolation we are hoping that there would not be a need for an ECQ extension),” he said.

Roque reiterated that extending the ECQ would only be done “as a last resort” to prevent a collapse of the country’s healthcare system.

“*Ang pinaka*-importante is our critical care capacity. Kaya po tayo nage-ECQ is to prepare our healthcare system to treat yung mga seryosong mga magkakasakit (Critical care capacity is the most important. We reverted to ECQ to prepare our healthcare system to treat serious cases),” he said.

The ability of hospitals to attend to severe and critical Covid-19 cases, he said, will be among the primary considerations for changing the quarantine status implemented in NCR Plus.

President Rodrigo Duterte, he said, also directed concerned agencies to ensure that emergency subsidy, whether in cash or in-kind would be provided to the residents to be affected by the ECQ.



*"Basta ang nasa isipan ng Presidente kung mag-e-ECQ siguraduhing mayroon tayong assistance na ilalabas para sa ating mga kababayan (The President said that if there would be an ECQ, make sure there is assistance distributed for our countrymen),"* he said.

Open to recommendation

In the same Palace briefing, National Task Force (NTF) Against Covid-19 chief implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. said the government will consider the possible ECQ extension.

"We are open to the recommendation of our expert na i-extend natin ng 14 days kasi iyon ang sinasabi nga nila na iyong inoculation period noong virus is 14 days, so isa pa rin pong open na recommendations ng mga expert po natin (We are open to the recommendation of our experts to extend another 14 days because they say the inoculation period of the virus is within 14 days, so we are open to the recommendations of our experts)," Galvez said.

He said the government will observe the Covid-19 cases during ECQ and if an exponential increase of infections will remain, intervention "that we are having" will continue.

"I think with the recommendation of the experts that we have to extend, we will look seriously at the recommendation of the experts," he said.

Galvez said since many workers in Metro Manila reside in nearby regions of Central Luzon and Calabarzon, "same intervention" should also be considered in the provinces near the NCR.

On Monday night, Duterte retained the ECQ status over Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal until April 4.

From April 1 to 30, Santiago City in Isabela will also be placed under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ).

Similarly, Quirino Province will be under MECQ from April 1 to April 15.

The entire Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR); Cagayan, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya in Region 2; and Batangas will be placed under general community quarantine (GCQ) until April 30.

Tacloban City; and Iligan City, Davao City, and Lanao del Sur will also be under GCQ for the whole month of April.

All other areas will be placed under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ), the most relaxed quarantine classification, for the month of April.

The country has recorded a new record for single-day increases in Covid-19 cases with 10,016 new infections on Monday, increasing the overall tally to 731,894 cases of which 13,186 are deaths and 603,213 are recoveries. (with reports from Lade Jean Kabagani/PNA)





# Palace hopes to see drop in COVID-19 cases after one-week ECQ in NCR+

March 30, 2021 6:16 PM by [DZRH News Online](#)



Photo by DZRH Val Gonzales

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque hopes that the number of active 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) cases in the Philippines will drop after the week-long enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal reverted to the most stringent community quarantine status starting Monday, March 29, after a recent surge in new COVID-19 cases.

Metro Manila, and the four provinces, dubbed as NCR+ area, will remain under ECQ until Sunday, April 4.

*“Ito ang unang araw ng Enhanced Community Quarantine or ECQ sa National Capital Region, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna at Rizal, kaya magbayanihan po tayo,”* said Roque as he called for cooperation from the public on Monday during a virtual press briefing.

While under ECQ, people younger than 18-years old, older than 65 years old, with comorbidities, or pregnant cannot leave their residence except if they need to obtain essential goods and services.

The national government also enforces curfew, from 6:00PM to 5:00AM, in areas under ECQ.

*“Mayroong uniform curfew sa lugar nang nasa ilalim ng ECQ pero hindi kasama ang mga manggagawa, cargo vehicles, pampublikong transportasyon at operating hours ng pinapayagang establisyimento,”* Roque said.

Staycation, face-to-face classes, and mass gatherings outside of residences will be prohibited.

Public utility bus, UV express service, public utility jeepney, shuttle service, tricycle, taxi, and transport network vehicle service units can continue to operate but can only accommodate up to 50 percent of their maximum passenger capacity.

Airplanes, and sea vessels will also continue to operate but subject to certain limitations.

*“Iyong mga pinapayagan lang magbiyahe ang pinapayagang sumakay ng eroplano o barko – sila iyong mga APORs or Authorized Persons Outside the Residences at kailangan essential travel ito,”* Roque explained.

On Monday, the Department of Health logged 10,016 new COVID-19 infections, the highest number of new cases recorded by the Philippines in a single day since the start of the pandemic.

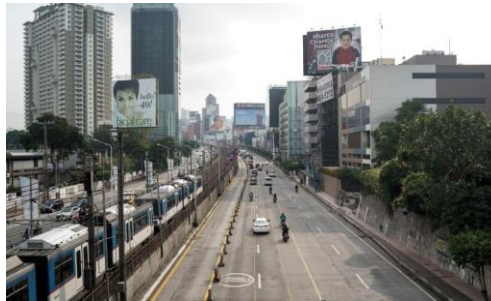
Source: <https://dzhnews.com.ph/palace-hopes-to-see-drop-in-covid-19-cases-after-one-week-ecq-in-ncr/>



# DOH recommends another week of ECQ in Metro Manila, four other provinces

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Mar 30, 2021 10:13:41 AM



(FILE PHOTO)

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, March 30) — The Department of Health is proposing to extend the declaration of enhanced community quarantine in Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, and Bulacan for one more week.

“Extension for another week was recommended but nothing is final and IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force) works in a whole of government approach,” the DOH said Tuesday in a statement.

DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said separately that the IATF will discuss the possible one-week ECQ extension before April 4, which is the supposed end date of the stringent quarantine status.

“We start to assess before April 4,” Vergeire told CNN Philippines’ New Day.

The ECQ in Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, and Bulacan has been in effect since Monday. Vergeire noted they are not ruling out the possibility of extending the ECQ declaration because a week of strict lockdown is “really not enough” to see a significant drop in COVID-19 cases and hospital admissions.

“One week is really not enough. Usually, the ideal for us would be about two weeks. We have to understand that even after one week of this strict lockdown, we really cannot see any change in the numbers, or any change in the healthcare utilization [rate] because that is just a short time,” she pointed out.

“Our doors are not closed [to] this extension of ECQ if we see that the hospitals cannot still manage the number of cases,” she reiterated.

Aside from fresh mobility restrictions, the government is strengthening the country’s capacity to test, quarantine, contact trace, and isolate patients, Vergeire said.

In the past few weeks, the country has been breaking its records in terms of new COVID-19 cases. On Monday, the Philippines recorded 10,016 more COVID-19 cases — its highest single-day tally yet. The newly confirmed infections pushed the total count to 731,894, of which 115,495 are active cases.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/3/30/DOH-recommends-another-week-of-ECQ-Metro-Manila.html>

# Hundreds of economists seek drastic climate action

By [Agence France-Presse](#)

March 31, 2021

**NEW YORK:** The cost of global warming will far outweigh the cost of rapidly cutting greenhouse gas emissions, more than 700 economists from around the world said Tuesday in an unprecedented call to climate action.

A major international survey found that nearly three-quarters of the economists responding believed that “immediate and drastic” action was needed to limit the fallout of climate change, warning that the costs of failing to slash carbon pollution would rapidly balloon to reach trillions of dollars every year.



Nantes, Loire-Atlantique, France: A child hold a sign that reads, ‘A real project’ as thousands of people take part in a demonstration called by youth for climate and several NGOs and unions for a “true” law on climate, in Nantes, western France, on March 28, 2021. AFP PHOTO

Nearly nine out of 10 (89 percent) said they believed that climate change would worsen global inequality, and they were nearly unanimous in believing that the benefits of net-zero emissions by mid-century would vastly outweigh the costs.

“People who spend their careers studying our economy are in widespread agreement that climate change will be expensive, potentially devastatingly so,” said Peter Howard, economics director at the Institute for Policy Integrity at NYU School of Law, which conducted the survey. “These findings show a clear economic case for urgent climate action.”

For years economists have been divided on the cost-benefit equation involved in funding climate action, with even Nobel Prize-winning academics such as William Nordhaus arguing that strong actions should be balanced against costs.

Most traditional models of climate cost focus on changes to gross domestic product in a specific year — that is, a so-called “level impact.” But more and more research has shown that climate change will reduce economic growth below what has been projected globally.

The consensus reached by survey respondents suggested that the projected economic fallout from climate change would reach \$1.7 trillion annually by 2025 and roughly \$30 trillion per year by 2075. By contrast, 65 percent of respondents said that the costs of renewable energy technology such as wind and solar would continue to fall over the next decade and estimated that half of the world’s energy mix would be green by 2050.

Two-thirds of economists surveyed agreed with the idea that the benefits of reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century — as several major emitters have promised to achieve — would outweigh the spending needed to get there.

Nealey 80 percent of respondents said that their level of concern over climate had increased during the last five years.



When asked to cite why, the most common response was that they had “observed extreme weather events attributed to climate change.”

Authors of the survey said they hoped the findings would help inform policymakers when they come to costing their future climate mitigation efforts.





# Benefits of 'drastic' climate action outweigh costs: economists

[Tuesday, March 30, 2021](#) [People's Journal](#) 26

**PARIS, March 30, 2021 (AFP)** – The cost of global warming will far outweigh the cost of rapidly cutting greenhouse gas emissions, more than 700 economists from around the world said Tuesday in an unprecedented call to climate action.

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Source: <https://journal.com.ph/news/world/benefits-of-drastic-climate-action-outweigh-costs-economists/>



# 'Immediate and drastic.' The climate crisis is seriously spooking economists

By Matt Egan, CNN Business

Published Mar 31, 2021 1:00:13 AM



Photo courtesy: Dane Rhys/Bloomberg/Getty Images

(CNN) -- Worsening inequality, trillions of dollars in economic damage and depressed economic growth. Those are the outcomes that economists fear we will face unless the world aggressively confronts the climate crisis.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of economists agree "immediate and drastic" action is warranted to curb emissions, according to a survey released Tuesday from the Institute for Policy Integrity at the NYU School of Law.

That's up sharply from 50% in 2015. Since that time, the United States has been hit by an onslaught of extreme and deadly weather events including Hurricane Maria, massive wildfires in California and this year's deep freeze in Texas.

With those floods, wildfires and hurricanes occurring more frequently, the financial toll from the climate crisis is expected to rise dramatically: Economic damage from climate change is projected to reach \$1.7 trillion per year by 2025 and surge to roughly \$30 trillion annually by 2075 under most scenarios, according to consensus forecasts included in the survey.

That's why economists broadly agree with what scientists have been saying for years: The costs of doing nothing are far higher than the price of breaking the world's addiction to fossil fuels. About two-thirds of the NYU survey respondents said the benefits of reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century are likely to outweigh the costs.

"People who spend their careers studying our economy are in widespread agreement that climate change will be expensive, potentially devastatingly so," Peter Howard, economics director at the Institute for Policy Integrity, said in a statement.

The institute said the survey is likely the largest of its kind. The authors reached out to 2,169 economists who have published articles related to climate change in a highly-rated economic journal. Among the 738 who responded, nearly 80% reported an increase in concern about climate change.

## Biden makes his climate pitch

The report comes as President Joe Biden prepares to pitch a sweeping infrastructure and jobs package Wednesday that includes major investments in climate infrastructure, research and development. The Biden proposals will total between \$3 trillion and \$4 trillion, senior administration officials previously told CNN.



The White House is hoping to convince the public and lawmakers that bold action on the climate crisis will pay off in the long run — and create good-paying jobs that can help the fossil fuel workers whose careers are threatened by the shift to clean energy.

Seventy-six percent of economists in the NYU survey expect climate change to hurt not just economic output, but the growth rate of the global economy.

At the same time, 70% of respondents say climate change will increase inequality within most countries, expanding the already-alarming gap between the richest and poorest populations.

## Investors are betting on clean energy

As Washington deliberates next steps, Corporate America and Wall Street are stepping up efforts to address the climate crisis.

In a bid to reduce drivers' environmental footprint, Google Maps announced Tuesday that its driving directions will soon default to the most fuel-efficient route.

Volkswagen is so serious about its big bet on electric vehicles that the auto maker's US arm is changing its name to "Voltswagen."

That move makes sense given the staggering sums of money investors are pouring into clean energy solutions, with the skyrocketing share price of Tesla making Elon Musk the world's second-richest person.

The fossil fuels industry, by contrast, is in disarray. Coal companies are grappling with falling sales, mass layoffs and bankruptcies. The S&P 500's energy sector, dominated by oil-and-gas companies, lost more than a third of its value last year, continuing more than a decade of weak performance. The energy industry has rebounded somewhat this year, boosted by higher oil prices.

Meanwhile BlackRock and Vanguard, the world's two largest asset managers, announced Monday that they are joining an effort to limit greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The Net Zero Asset Managers initiative is now backed by funds with \$32 trillion in total assets.

"Helping investors prepare their portfolios and capture investment opportunities on the path to net zero is one of our greatest responsibilities," BlackRock CEO Larry Fink said in a statement.

In recent months, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, Citigroup and other major banks have also announced net zero goals, including from the companies and projects they finance.

"It doesn't take a scientist to notice our clients are affected by changes in climate," Jon Weiss, CEO of corporate and investment banking at Wells Fargo, told CNN Business earlier this month.

This story was first published on CNN.com, ["Immediate and drastic.' The climate crisis is seriously spooking economists"](https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/31/business/2021/3/31/climate-crisis-seriously-spooking-economists)

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/business/2021/3/31/climate-crisis-seriously-spooking-economists.html>



## SCB study: Asean firms slow to meet climate goals

By [BUSINESSMIRROR](#)

MARCH 31, 2021

THREE in five companies based in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) region are not transitioning to net zero fast enough, leaving them in danger of missing the Paris Agreement target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, new research from Standard Chartered Plc. (SCB) has revealed.

“Zeronomics,” a study into the financing of a net zero world, surveyed the senior leadership of 250 large companies and 100 investment specialists around the world between September and October last year, the British multinational lender said.

The bank added the survey revealed that:

- 60 percent of Asean-based business leaders believe their companies are not transitioning fast enough (55 percent of companies globally)
- Lack of support from their own investors is the biggest barrier to progress for companies in this region, cited as a significant obstacle by 73 percent (60 percent globally)
- Carbon-intensive industries and companies based in emerging markets are struggling most with the transition
- Just 40 percent of Asean-based companies fully support the aims of the Paris Agreement (47 percent globally)

What are the top accelerators of net-zero transition?	ASEAN %	Globally %
Increased operational efficiency/cost savings from sustainable practices	90	81
Inclusion of net zero as a key part of investors' fiduciary duties	87	74
Standardised global net-zero transition measurement, disclosure and rating frameworks	83	81
Increased demand for net-zero operations, products and services from net-zero trading partners	83	79
An effective global carbon tax	83	77

According to Standard Chartered, many Asean-based companies are looking to delay significant action to after 2030, with the 2020s looking set to be a lost decade. Just 20 percent of business leaders (34 percent globally) said their companies will make the most progress between 2030 and 2040, while 53 percent (37 percent globally) said they will take most action between 2040 and 2050.

“Most companies are delaying transition because they do not feel they are currently equipped to meet the target,” the lender said. “Some 60 percent (59 percent globally) said they need extensive organizational change before tackling net zero.”

A lack of investor support isn't the only hurdle companies in Asean face, the bank said in a statement.

The British financial institution explained that about 70 percent (67 percent globally) of business leaders believe a lack of finance is hampering transition, while seven in ten (60 percent globally) believe that a lack of support from executive leadership is a significant obstacle.

Meanwhile, Covid-19 is forcing many businesses in the region to focus on immediate survival: “A whopping 97 percent (85 percent globally) of senior executives say the pandemic has delayed their company's net-zero transition.”

Bill Winters, Group Chief Executive of Standard Chartered, was quoted in the statement as saying their survey reveals that most companies intend to transition to net-zero by 2050 “but have yet to take the action needed to get there.”





“A majority cite funding as an obstacle and carbon-intensive industries and emerging-market companies struggle the most,” Winters added. “A successful net-zero transition must be just, leaving no nation, region or community behind and, despite the hurdles, action needs to be swift.”

He urged entities to “act now” and “act together: companies, consumers, governments, regulators and the finance industry must collaborate to develop sustainable solutions, technologies and infrastructure.”

“Zeronomics” examines the economics of transitioning to a net-zero carbon future, the bank explained.

The financial intermediary added it commissioned the study “to understand how far companies have come on their journey to decarbonize and it reveals a gulf between words and action.”

“Reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 will be a considerable challenge,” SCB said. “Every organization in every sector has a critical role to play in limiting global warming. Commitment to this agenda must be top of mind for all companies—public and private, large and small—and to succeed they must undergo major transformation.”



# Uganda climate change: The people under threat from a melting glacier

By Pablo Uchoa BBC World Service

Published 23 hours ago



The ice and snow at the top of the Rwenzori Mountains, seen here in 2016, are slowly melting

**Ronah Masika remembers when she could still see the snowy caps of the Rwenzori mountains, a Unesco World Heritage site on the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

The view was stunning every time she travelled from her home in Kasese town to the Ugandan capital, Kampala - and it was not even that long ago.

But now she cannot even catch a glimpse of the ice because the glacier is receding. And it is not only the view that has changed.



Communities living on the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains are facing both floods and drought

Ms Masika recalls her grandmother used to grow beans to feed her family, and they would last until a new crop was ready to be harvested.

"Now I and other people find it difficult to sustain ourselves with what we plant at home, because everything gets destroyed by floods or drought. It's either too much drought or too much rain.

"It's making me uncomfortable, thinking of how the next generation is going to survive this horrible situation," says Ms Masika, who now works on a project to mitigate the impact of the shifting environment.

Climate change is affecting the Rwenzori Mountains in different ways.

The most visible is the rapid loss of the ice field, which shrunk from 6.5 sq km in 1906 to less than one sq km in 2003, and could completely disappear before the end of this decade, research shows.



In 2012, forest fires reached altitudes above 4,000m, which would have been inconceivable in the past, devastating vegetation that controlled the flow of the rivers downstream.

Since then, the communities living at the foot of the Rwenzori have suffered some of the most destructive floods the area has ever seen, coupled with a pattern of less frequent but heavier rainfall.



IMAGE COPYRIGHT KISA KASIFA/CCFU

image caption Violent floods in May 2020 destroyed about 25,000 houses

In May last year, five local rivers burst their banks after heavy rains. The waters came down the mountain carrying large boulders, sweeping away houses and schools and razing the entire town of Kalembe to the ground.

Around 25,000 houses were destroyed and 173,000 people were affected.

While science may provide an explanation for these events, the local Bakonzo culture has another way of framing them - according to their beliefs, they happen because the gods are angry.

"The Bakonzo have a very strong attachment to the snow and the water," says Simon Musasizi, a programme manager at the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU).

"They believe that their god, Kithasamba, lives in the snow, and that the snow is actually the frozen sperm of their god."



The name Rwenzori comes from rwe nzururu, which means "place of snow" in the Bakonzo language. There are 30 gods associated with different natural resources living on the mountain, according to Bakonzo cosmology.

But deforestation and rapid population growth around the sacred mountain, as well as the melting glacier, are changing things.

During last year's floods, the water submerged hot springs and washed away the vegetation around a waterfall that was used as a place for rituals. Since then, spiritual leaders have been unable to perform those ceremonies.

Other spiritual sites are getting eroded or filled up with silt and the destruction of the vegetation has weakened the banks in many areas.



All this is threatening centuries-old rituals.

"Most likely, many of these customs will gradually become rare or they won't happen any more, because everything is shifting," Mr Musasizi says.



The Ekisalhalha Kya Kororo waterfall has been affected by recent floods

The Bakonzo community is made up of around one million people living on both sides of the border between Uganda and DR Congo, and their heritage could be lost as a result of climate change.

"The consequences of climate change are particularly acute at the tropics," says Richard Taylor, a geographer at University College London, who has led research on the Rwenzori Mountains.

"One or two degrees of warming at the Equator has a much bigger impact on climate and water budgets than one or two degrees of warming in London, Paris or New York."

The intensification of weather patterns observed in the mountains is happening throughout the tropics.

Prof Taylor, who co-led expeditions from 2003 to 2007 to measure the changes in the Rwenzori glaciers, says the loss of ice fields in the tropics is a tell-tale signal of global warming.

Restoring and protecting areas affected by climate change is key to preserving cultural heritage too.

As part of a project to do this, Mr Musasizi says there is an agreement with the community about which trees are going to be planted to best reinforce the riverbanks, including bamboos and native trees.



The Bakonzo's knowledge of their environment has helped devise some policies to help combat climate change

Ms Masika, whose job it is to liaise with the local people, says the community already had answers for some of the problems.

"For example, they know what type of vegetation should be planted at what level on the mountain. They know which ones are strong enough to be planted along the river to stop the floods.





"They know they are supposed to plant along the riverbank because it is food to the water god. And when the water god is fine, he doesn't cause floods.

"Climate change is understood in the culture, and they have some suggestions that can help us mitigate this situation."

The lessons are being shared with other institutions working to protect cultural heritage from climate change, mainly in East and North Africa and the Middle East.



IMAGE COPYRIGHT KISA KASIFA/CCFU

image caption The Embugha or Rwagimba hot springs are believed to have physical and spiritual healing powers, particularly for skin diseases

Finding solutions that highlight the close link between the Bakonzo culture and the natural environment has been a surprise for Ms Masika, who grew up in a Christian household where little was said about it.

Now one of her favourite spots is the Embugha or Rwagimba hot springs, that the Bakonzo believe have physical and spiritual healing powers, particularly for skin diseases.

"When we started this project, my skin was itching all over. But every time I visited the springs, I made sure I bathed in the water," she said.

"It's so hot when you sit there, you feel like you're burning. Then you go to the river, which is just next to the hot pool, and the water is so cold you feel like you're freezing.

"By the time you leave, your body is feeling light, and since then I no longer feel itchy."



PARQUE NACIONAL GALAPAGOS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARK ranger registers one of 185 seized baby giant tortoises, in Puerto Ayora, Galapagos, Ecuador.

## Suitcase yields 185 baby tortoises

QUITO, Ecuador (AFP) – An Ecuadorian policeman has been arrested after airport officials in the Galapagos Islands discovered 185 baby giant tortoises stuffed in a suitcase to be trafficked, prosecutors said Monday.

The reptiles, no more than three months old, were found in luggage destined for Guayaquil in mainland Ecuador during a routine inspection on Baltra island Sunday, authorities said.

The juvenile critters had been wrapped in plastic, and ten of them had died by the time the suitcase was opened.

Another five have died since, possibly due to stress, the environment ministry reported Monday.

The policeman will be charged with crimes against wildlife and risks a three-year prison sentence, the prosecutor's office in Ecuador tweeted.

The Galapagos Islands, some 1,000

kilometers (600 miles) off the coast of Ecuador, are a protected wildlife area and home to unique species of flora and fauna.

The Galapagos are where Charles Darwin's observation of birds and tortoises on different islands gave rise to his theory of natural selection.

The reptiles – the largest living tortoises in the world – are the volcanic islands' star attraction, but are listed as endangered.

The environment ministry said the surviving tortoises were taken to a breeding center on the neighboring Santa Cruz island.

"The veterinary evaluation found that they are not in good health," it added.

According to the Galapagos Conservation Trust, the giant tortoise arrived in Galapagos from mainland South America some two to three million years ago, diversifying into 14 species on different islands.





# 185 tortoises found in suitcase at Galapagos airport

Agence France-Presse

Posted at Mar 29 2021 07:28 AM

Staff at an airport on the Galapagos Islands found 185 tortoises in a suitcase that was heading for Ecuador's mainland, environment authorities said on Sunday.

The discovery was made "during a routine inspection," the environment ministry said on Twitter, adding that police were investigating.



Trafficking fauna off the Galapagos Islands is a crime punishable by between one and three years in prison.

The islands are a protected wildlife area and home to unique species of flora and fauna.

They lie 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) west of Ecuador.

On Twitter, Environment Minister Marcelo Mata blasted "these crimes against Ecuadorans' wild fauna and natural heritage."

The Galapagos Islands' star attraction are their giant tortoises, which arrived on the volcanic islands between three and four million years ago.

It is believed that ocean currents deposited them on the islands after which they developed into 15 separate species, three of which are extinct.

The archipelago was made famous by British geologist and naturalist Charles Darwin's observations on evolution after visiting the islands.

Source: [https://news.abs-cbn.com/classified-odd/03/29/21/185-tortoises-found-in-suitcase-at-galapagos-airport?fbclid=IwAR368AXAiFrNJtlaQZaLNBzRrIV6rdIHfbp1iLnwyO\\_EW0sJ4RWL0y3APZ0](https://news.abs-cbn.com/classified-odd/03/29/21/185-tortoises-found-in-suitcase-at-galapagos-airport?fbclid=IwAR368AXAiFrNJtlaQZaLNBzRrIV6rdIHfbp1iLnwyO_EW0sJ4RWL0y3APZ0)



## Trash scavengers who help keep cities clean plea for vaccine



Trash collectors look for recyclables at Bhalswa landfill on the outskirts of New Delhi, India, Wednesday, March 10, 2021. An estimated 20 million people around the world help keep cities clean by scavenging through landfills and dumps. Experts say these trash pickers, who sometimes toil alongside paid municipal sanitation workers, provide a vital service, yet they usually are not on a priority list for vaccines against the coronavirus. (AP Photo)

March 30, 2021

NEW DELHI — The scavengers wait patiently for a dump truck to tip the trash on the summit of the landfill outside New Delhi. Armed with plastic bags, they plunge their bare hands into the garbage and start sorting it.

Every day, more than 2,300 tons of garbage is dumped at the landfill at Bhalswa that covers an area bigger than 50 football fields, with a pile taller than a 17-story building. And every day, thousands of these informal workers climb the precarious slopes to pick through what can be salvaged.

They are among the estimated 20 million people around the world — in rich nations and poor — who are pivotal in keeping cities clean, alongside paid sanitation employees. But unlike those municipal workers, they usually are not eligible for the coronavirus vaccine and are finding it hard to get the shots.

The pandemic has amplified the risks that these informal workers face. Few have their own protective gear or even clean water to wash their hands, said Chitra Mukherjee of Chintan, a nonprofit environmental research group in New Delhi.

“If they are not vaccinated, then the cities will suffer,” Mukherjee said.

Manuwara Begun, 46, lives in a cardboard hut behind a five-star hotel in the heart of New Delhi and feels the inequity keenly. Chintan estimates that each year, those like her save the local government over \$50 million and eliminate over 900,000 tons of carbon dioxide by diverting waste away from landfills.

Still, they are they not considered “essential workers” and thus are ineligible for vaccinations.

Begun has started an online petition pleading for vaccines and asking, “Are we not human?”

Sanitation workers employed by local governments in South Africa and Zimbabwe are likely to be in line for the COVID-19 vaccine after health workers, unlike those who sort through the trash. At the Dandora landfill in Kenya’s capital of Nairobi, some of the scavengers who are not eligible for a shot wear medical gear discarded by hospitals and health clinics, saying it especially protects them from the weather during the rainy season.

There is no doubt that these people provide an essential service, says Louise Guibrunet, a researcher at National Autonomous University of Mexico who has studied the issue.





In Mexico, scavengers help municipal workers on garbage trucks and often collect trash from neighborhoods not served by authorities. The work is dangerous, and injuries are common, so governments have an incentive to not recognize them or provide benefits like health care, she said.

They often are already poor, moving to unfamiliar cities to eke out a living by sorting garbage, says Robin Jeffrey, a professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. That many of these workers in India belong to poor Muslim or Dalit communities, who once were known as “untouchables” at the bottom of the country's caste system, adds a layer of prejudice.

“The vaccine is just another, and very dramatic, example of an exclusion that has prevailed before COVID-19 came on the horizon,” said Jeffrey, who co-authored a book on waste in India in 2018.

India said it will give vaccines to everyone over 45 starting April 1. At private hospitals, each shot is sold for 250 rupees (\$3.45), but they are free at government hospitals.

Because the pandemic sent the price of oil crashing, it became cheaper to make new plastic than to recycle it. In many countries, closed borders brought recycling markets to a halt, lowering demand for reused materials that the workers collect.

In New Delhi, a pound of plastic bottles sells for the equivalent of 11 U.S. cents, half of what it brought before the pandemic. Sahra Bano, 37, who lives near the Bhalswa landfill and sells what she can scavenge, says she used to earn about 400 rupees (\$5) per day. Now, getting even half that is difficult.

Toxic runoff from the landfill infiltrates the groundwater, so she must spend 40 rupees (5 cents) per day on bottled water; the rest of what she earns goes for food. To earn enough to get one shot of the vaccine, she said she would have to collect and sell an additional 31 pounds of plastic bottles.

“We are struggling to feed our family. How can we buy vaccines?” she asks.

To get the free vaccine from an overburdened public hospital, she would have to wait there for days, and each day away from work is one without food on the table. Moreover, the stigma associated with waste workers in India means they are often turned away from such facilities.

“They don’t treat us well,” Bano says.

Any illness means visiting a drugstore, not a doctor, for medicine.

If they’re lucky, the person recovers, she says, adding: “If not, what can we do?” **(AP)**

31 MARCH 2021, WEDNESDAY



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
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