



## Duterte signs law on additional powers for COVID-19 response

Arienne Merez, ABS-CBN News

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President Rodrigo Duterte has signed into law the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, Sen. Bong Go said early Wednesday. The measure declares a national emergency in the country and grants Duterte special powers to address the COVID-19 threat. *(Handout photo)*

MANILA- President Rodrigo Duterte signed into law early Wednesday a bill that gives him additional powers to strengthen government's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic after Congress urgently deliberated and passed the measure within a day.

For a limited time, Duterte, under the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act” will have more powers that includes the authority to reallocate government savings to coronavirus-related programs, control private businesses under special circumstances, and grant exemptions from procurement laws.

Malacañang on Tuesday said the law is a response to the “urgent need” to secure the “success of the measures established by the national government in eradicating the threat to our national survival.”

Congress held a special session on the measure on Monday.

“There is an urgent need to implement measures that will help address the health scare brought about by the spread of COVID-19 in our land,” Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

The new law also states that a subsidy will be provided to low-income households hit by the work stoppage due to the virus threat.

Duterte earlier placed the entire Philippines under a state of public health emergency and later a state of calamity to provide the government with enough leeway to tap into emergency funds for response to the pandemic.

The President was granted additional powers a week after Luzon, the Philippines' most populous island, was placed under a lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 which has infected 552 people in the country as of Tuesday afternoon. - with reports from Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN News



## Duterte: Government got your back Assures nation of shield against virus

posted March 25, 2020 at 02:35 am by **Macon Ramos-Araneta and Maricel V. Cruz**  
<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/320371/-we-ve-got-your-back-duterte.html>

(UPDATED AT 11:30 PM)

President Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday assured the nation of the government's protection against the COVID-19 coronavirus disease as he thanked Congress for passing the emergency bill that grants him powers to fight the pandemic.

In a short, televised address at 10 p.m., the President stopped short of saying he had already signed the bill into law but thanked Senate President Vicente Sotto III and lawmakers for passing the measure and House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano for his "decisive leadership" in pushing the administration proposal.



"To the members of both houses of Congress who sponsored and voted for this measure, I express my sincerest gratitude to all of you for granting our most urgent requests. Finally, the Executive Department can move, decide and act freely for the best interest of the Filipino people during this health crisis," Duterte said.

"I now call on every Filipino to participate in this war by following the guidelines. Nothing is more important than your

cooperation," the President said.

He said Filipinos could count on the government to work "hand in hand to safeguard your health, safety and well-being in the face of the threat of COVID-19."

"Let me reiterate our sincerest gratitude to all frontliners," the President said, adding he was saddened about news that doctors, nurses and other health workers have died fighting the disease.

He assures the distribution of food and financial assistance for Filipinos during the crisis, especially to the vulnerable and those in the margins.

The President repeated his plea for Filipinos to stay at home during the quarantine. "Nothing is more important than your safety. The outcome of this war depends largely on you as well," he said.

Duterte also pleaded with fellow public servants to "set aside our differences" in facing a common enemy in COVID-19. "Nothing is more formidable and resilient than the Filipino spirit. *Matindi ang kalaban*, but we will not surrender."

The President was expected to sign into law the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act" granting him extra powers to address the COVID-19 crisis, despite Sotto's insistence that these did not amount to emergency powers.

Sotto said Senator Christopher "Bong" Go, Duterte's erstwhile aide, had the President sign the Palace-backed measure at the Presidential Security Group compound in Manila at around 8 p.m.

"Today. Sen. Bong Go was telling me last night (Monday) *kung pwedeng maabutan nga niya si Presidente, papipirmahan niya na eh* (if he could catch the President to have him sign it)," Sotto told Senate reporters earlier in an interview.

Early Tuesday, the Senate voted 20-1 to approve Senate Bill No. 1418, which the House of Representatives adopted later in the day after congressmen approved Majority Leader Martin Romualdez's motion to adopt it as an amendment to House Bill 6616 (We Heal as One Act) .

The bill also put the entire country under a state of national emergency.

"We never talked about emergency powers. In fact, during the meeting [in the Palace], I was telling them not to use emergency powers because the people might not like it," Sotto said.

"Because there is an emergency situation, we are giving the President [the] authority... some financial powers because what we want to address is financial, since our people, especially those in the informal sector, have no jobs now," Sotto said.



## Duterte: Government got your back Assures nation of shield against virus

“That was what we said. If you said emergency powers, we are talking about a different thing here,” Sotto said, adding that safeguards were in place to thwart possible abuse.

“It even has a restriction on time. It’s within the two months and if the COVID-19 problem would be prolonged, we can approve it to three months,” he said.

The bill would provide financial assistance to 18 million low-income households that are reeling from the [Luzon-wide lockdown](#) that have kept people away from their jobs. An extension could be discussed, if need be, Sotto added.

Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano said the House version of the bill authorizes the President to “reprogram, reallocate, and realign” any appropriation in the 2020 General Appropriations Act (GAA) “as may be

necessary and beneficial to fund measures that will respond to the COVID-19 emergency, including social amelioration for affected communities and the recovery and rehabilitation.”

The President will also have the authority to “allocate cash, funds, and investments held by any government-owned or controlled corporation (GOCC) or any national government agency as necessary to address the COVID-19 crisis,” Cayetano said.

“Under the proposal, any unobligated amount, whether released or unreleased in the budget, shall be considered to have their purpose abandoned or fulfilled, as of the date of the declaration of the State of Emergency,” he added.

The measure also provides for an emergency subsidy for 18 million low-income households across the country amounting to P5,000 to P8,000 each for two months.

Among other powers given to the President is the authority to direct the operation of any privately-owned hospitals, medical and health facilities, including passenger vessels, as well as other establishments to house health workers, and to serve as quarantine facilities and distribution centers for medical relief and aid.

The President will also have the authority to direct the operation of public transportation to ferry health, emergency, and frontline personnel.

The senators also sought to give the Chief Executive authority to “expedite and streamline the accreditation of testing kits and facilitate prompt testing by public and designated private institutions of PUIs (patients under investigation) and PUMs (persons under monitoring) and compulsory and immediate isolation and treatment of patients.”

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said audit regulations on government agencies and the anti-graft law will remain in force despite the grant of additional powers to the President.

He said he hoped the bill would “give enough leeway” to the executive branch to do their job within three months.

He rejected what he called a bid to obtain the “perpetual exercise of emergency powers” by limiting them to three months unless Congress extends it.

Drilon said he proposed amendments to make the provisions of the bill compliant with the Supreme Court rulings that barred the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or pork barrel and the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP).

He said the power to realign funds should be in accordance with the regulations issued by the Supreme Court in the PDAF and DAP cases.

“We also made sure that the funds will be used to fund programs, projects, and activities that directly related to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic” he added.

Senator Francis Pangilinan said he voted ‘Yes’ but with serious reservations on the grant of special powers to the President.

He criticized the original draft bill as an attempt to get unlimited emergency powers and unlimited spending powers for the President.

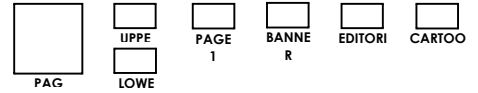
While it limited the exercise of these powers to two months, Pangilinan said the bill also also gives the President the power to extend it to however long he wants, and was quiet on how much and how

funds would be spent.

“The Senate limited the powers to 90 days and any extension will require Congressional approval,” he said.



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He noted Senate version, now fully adopted by the House of Representatives, put some order, transparency, and accountability by prioritizing the distribution of medical supplies and the augmentation of the budget; limiting the President’s power to realign funds to “savings” within the executive branch, granting grace periods for loans and rental payments; including an expanded and more comprehensive dole program; providing P5,000 to P8,000 emergency subsidy a month, for a period of two months, to 18 million low-income families; exempting from import taxes equipment and supplies needed for the COVID-19 response; grants P100,000 or P1 million to public and private health workers who may contract or die from COVID-19; requiring the President to report to Congress weekly all acts performed as a result of the law; removing from the President the delegation of penal powers and specifies punishable acts under the law; clarifying that the Constitution prevails over any provision of the law; and making the effectivity of the law three months unless extended by Congress.

“And as we said in our phone-in verbal explanation of vote, our ‘Yes’ vote comes with both a warning and an admonition.”

“It is a warning and an admonition to the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) that our people deserve better from them. And that the incoherent and often confusing, conflicting, and haphazard policy

pronouncements in the past two weeks ought to be the last coming from IATF,” Pangilinan said.

Hontiveros said she voted no, because of the opportunity for abuse—and also because existing laws already grant the President the powers needed to deal with a pandemic.

House leaders said they were relieved that the bill passed at dawn Tuesday, setting the stage for the President’s signing of the bill soon.

“It’s been a long day, but it’s been worth it,” Cayetano said. “But we’re going to face many, many long days in the coming weeks, unless we find a way to work together as a nation to set aside politics, to take out this toxic environment that we had before COVID-19.”

The House approved its version of the measure under House Bill 6616 by a 284-9 vote.

Since the bill has been certified as urgent by the President, it was approved on second, and third and final reading on the same day without undergoing the normal three-day rule in between approvals.

Majority Leader Martin Romualdez said the bill would amply provide health care, including medical tests and treatments, to COVID-19 patients, persons under investigation, and persons under monitoring.

It also mandates the formulation of a program for recovery and rehabilitation, including social amelioration program and provision of safety nets to all affected sectors.

Deputy Speaker Luis Raymund Villafuerte assured the public that Congress would be exercising its oversight functions to ensure that all acts performed by the Duterte administration are within the bounds of the special but limited powers—and with restrictions—that the Congress has vested in President Duterte so his government could best deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

As a safeguard, the bill proposes the creation of a joint congressional oversight committee to closely monitor the actions of the executive branch, he said.

The House version of the bill requires the President to submit monthly reports to Congress on acts carried out to contain the spread of the virus.

The human rights group Karapatan, however, said the granting of emergency powers to the President would pave the way for martial law.

“With Duterte’s propensity to use and abuse his power as Chief Executive to violate people’s rights, this move, using the pandemic as an excuse, is one step closer to, if not already an embodiment of, martial rule. Duterte seems to be more than eager to use his emergency powers to give himself full, absolute and sole authority, and tighten his grip on power,” Karapatan said in a statement.

Karapatan said this bid for emergency powers is “a bid for potential abuse of power.”

Moreover, after actively downplaying the outbreak for the past weeks by bragging that we are a “model country,” the irony of this bid for emergency powers is that it is an admission of the administration’s failure to combat this pandemic, Karapatan said. **With Willie Casas**





## Prioritize poor, government urged

### SDG everybody's responsibility — UN

BY ELMER N. MANUEL @tribunephil\_Immer  
<https://www.pressreader.com/>



**Empty A lone motorcycle rider and a street urchin are what's left in this erstwhile busy street in Manila in the wake of the Luzon-wide lockdown.**

The Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-IED) called on local government units (LGU) anew to allow unimpeded passage of food and agricultural commodities and personnel to, from, and through their localities.

In its latest resolution No. 14 dated 20 March, the IATF-IED amended the government strategies to avert hunger

despite the threats of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In Section C, it reiterated its earlier resolution to ensure the unimpeded movement of all types of cargo — food and non-food — and allow the passage of personnel of business establishments permitted to operate during the enhanced community quarantine, subject to the presentation of proof of employment and residence.

According to Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary William Dar, the food department has been continuously appealing to LGU to help ensure unrestricted movements of all cargoes, agriculture and fishery inputs, food products, and agribusiness personnel nationwide.

"In the last 10 days, we have observed increasing prices in some agricultural commodities, mainly attributable to the

Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go has urged government agencies handling the coronavirus pandemic to prioritize the poor and marginalized sectors of society as he expressed support for a proposed measure granting the executive extra powers to handle the health crisis.

Go quoted a taxi driver interviewed on TV in voicing out his support for the measure intended to improve the plight of the poor in areas are under the enhanced community quarantine.

"It's hard to be poor. So let's not further burden them," he said during Congress' special session last Monday.

In his co-sponsorship speech of Senate Bill (SB) 1418, also known as the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act," Go emphasized that the measure aims to further equip government in providing immediate healthcare needs to solve the crisis and provide cash and food assistance to those who affected the most in the crisis.

Go reminded concerned agencies, particularly the Department of Social Welfare and Development, to make sure ordinary Filipinos are taken care of, especially those who need government attention.

He said that as much as the government would want everyone to stay home, concerned agencies have to make sure that government is able to sufficiently provide Filipinos with the necessary means to take care of their families and ensure the security they need in order to remain in their homes.

Go also appealed to Filipinos to put their trust in the government and follow the advice of authorities in containing the spread of the disease. Citing the situation in other countries, Go emphasized that COVID-19 spares no one. Therefore, cooperation from the public is needed to fight the contagion.

To recall, the DA has issued Memorandum Circulars (MC) 7 and 9 following the issuance of MC 77 by the Executive Secretary.



## Prioritize poor, government urged

### SDG everybody's responsibility — UN

MC 77 directed all government agencies including LGU to implement and ensure compliance to the issuance of the Department of Health and DA on the prices of essential emergency medicines and supplies and agri-fishery commodities.

Dar said the DA adopted MC 7 and 9 not only for the movement of agri-related cargoes and personnel but to also stabilize prices of agri-fishery inputs and products.

“This is equally important for

The 17 goals agreed by the global community to reduce poverty and create a sustainable planet are the responsibility of all people wherever they are in the world, according to the United Nations (UN).

The Sustainable Development Goals or SDG represent a boundarypushing blueprint for the future of the Earth and it's anticipated they will be realized by 2030 and recently, UN News joined the International Labor Organization on a visit to Hawaii where many people are already living aspects of the goals in their everyday work.

Mike Demotta, the Curator of Living Collections at Hawaii's National Tropical Botanical Garden on the island of Kauai, is passionate about his specialty — native plants and the important role they play in Hawaiian culture.

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“The majority of the plants that are grown here are native Hawaiian plants and many are federally listed as rare and endangered. One plant that the garden has been working with over decades is called alula in Hawaiian. It's generally found or was found mostly on the cliffs around the island of Kauai,” said Demotta.

It looks almost cactus-like, with a very thick stem which is quite bulbous at the base. It produces fibrous roots which are able to penetrate fine cracks and hold itself to steep rocks; it has large flat rounded green leaves and looks almost like a cabbage. I love this plant because it has adapted to live and thrive in the harshest of environments that the islands can throw at it.

However, this plant is under threat due to habitat degradation, loss of pollinators and invasive species, like non-native grasses that choke out seedlings and goats which were brought here in the early 1800s and which eat them.

The last time a survey was done, by helicopter, just one alula plant was found in the wild which was growing out of a cave overlooking the ocean – and Demotta stressed that the alula was pollinated by what is probably now an extinct moth species that had a particularly long proboscis allowing it to feed off the nectar and carry pollen from plant to plant.

“Today, if we really want to produce seeds from these plants, we have to hand pollinate and that's what we do here. Ideally, we work with other conservation organizations to replant native species in the wild as resources become available,” Demotta said.

“I'm interested in native plants like alula because of the inseparable bond between these plants and early Hawaiian culture,” he added.

The early Polynesians discovered and colonized Hawaii over many generations and they understood the importance of conserving the islands' ecosystems, as without those ecosystems, they would not be able to survive.

“Nature was part of their ancient religion and so plants were representations of certain gods or deities which they cared for; this was an innate part of the Hawaiian belief system,” Demotta stressed.

“Today, without these plants, we would probably not be able to live here for very long. If there are too many invasive species, and if our forest systems collapse entirely, the islands could not hold any rainwater: our water supplies would literally evaporate and these islands would become uninhabitable,” he added.



## Earth Hour goes online this year

By Ellalyn de Vera-Ruiz

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/24/earth-hour-goes-online-this-year/>

The organizers of the annual Earth Hour event this year have made adjustments amid the global public health emergency.



(WWF/MANILA BULLETIN)

“Make health and safety your priority as we face this global pandemic,” the World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF-Philippines) said.

While the country observes “social distancing” and other measures to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus disease, WWF-Philippines urged Filipinos to still “help our planet recover from the inside of your homes, and be mindful of the impact you have, not just on the environment, but also on your fellow living beings.”

“We must do what we can for one another in these trying times,” it added.

This year’s Earth Hour event will be going digital on Saturday, March 28.

The annual event started as a “lights out” event in Sydney, Australia in 2007, then the Philippines joined the switch-off event in 2008.

This year, the movement will be inviting millions of supporters to showcase their support online through Voice for the Planet.

The e-signatures will then be presented at international forums, such as the United Nations General Assembly, to help secure a new deal for nature that addresses nature loss and environmental decline in order to safeguard shared futures.

“We want to be able to use Earth Hour to galvanize people, to bring our messages forward—that our own actions have an effect on our planet, and that our own actions are also the solution that will be able to provide for us and for our shared home,” said WWF-Philippines and Earth Hour Pilipinas national director Angela Ibay said.

“Our government is ready to partner with the rest of society to make sure that when we take care of the environment, we take care of society. The government, with its broad support, will help make things possible, to make sure that in this era of climate change, we will survive and thrive,” said Climate Change Commission policy research and development division chief, Jerome Ilagan.

Public support and the translation and mainstreaming of conservation science across all levels of Philippine government are crucial in addressing the country’s environmental issues, Ilagan added.

“There’s this whole digital space that we haven’t fully maximized yet. So, Earth Hour, in a lot of countries, is going online this year,” Ibay said.

WWF-Philippines’ campaign #ChangeTheEnding aims to show the public that there are current realities that must be dealt with, such as changes in rain patterns coupled with the country’s growing population that could result in severe water shortages before 2030.

The groups said these are obvious scenarios that could occur if nothing is done now.

They asked businesses, local governments, and individuals to help combat these issues by going beyond mere commitments and to start performing actions for the Earth.

More importantly, WWF-Philippines is encouraging individuals to take part in Earth Hour 2020 from their own homes, through actions as simple as closing and leaving off non-essential lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on March 28.

“This year, we decided to invest in a campaign that will reach beyond Earth Hour. This campaign will hopefully send a message that will show how everything that we’ve allowed to happen is affecting the generations after us. It’s us right now, however, who are in a position to make a change,” said WWF-Philippines and Earth Hour ambassador Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski.

“From one small water bottle that you don’t use, to trying to minimize your travel, to eliminating, even, food waste, even if it’s just a teaspoon of rice, all around—up, down, left, right, we can always save. By doing these little saves, we eventually end up saving our environment. This way, we can change the ending,” WWF-Philippines executive director Joel Palma pointed out.



## Plant food crops at home, in communities—Legarda

posted March 24, 2020 at 10:10 pm by [Maricel Cruz](#)

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/320345/plant-food-crops-at-home-in-communities-legarda.html>

Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda on Tuesday urged the planting of food crops in home gardens and backyards as well as community open spaces to promote food security and mitigate global warming.

Legarda, who represents Antique in the House of Representatives, said that national agencies, local governments, businesses, offices, industries, and households “can establish edible landscapes and community gardens in order to help ensure food supply and ecosystem services, which are key thematic areas in the country’s National Climate Change Action Plan.”

Legarda in a statement said that community gardens and edible landscapes were spaces in urban and rural areas, as well as in households, that have been transformed to fruit and vegetable gardens where community members can partake.

The planting of fruit and vegetable crops, she said, “could be one of the most effective ways to lessen the impacts of urbanization and climate change, especially in Metro Manila,” adding that community gardens and edible landscapes can reduce urban heat, provide various ecosystem services, and stabilize water runoff.

“For a climate vulnerable and developing country like the Philippines, we need more green infrastructure to raise climate change adaptation within our cities and municipalities. Various studies already show that green landscapes improve the quality of life and support economic growth due to a positive ambience influenced by a healthy environment,” she added.

Legarda authored the Food Forest Gardening bill or House Bill 637. The bill seeks to promote and institutionalize food forest gardening in the country as a sustainable land use system to address the limited resources for sustainable food production with minimal farming costs but increased harvests even in small plots of land.

As chairperson of the Committee on Finance during her time in the Senate, she included in the General Appropriations Act the “Gulayan sa Paaralan” program as a special provision in the budget of the Department of Education.

She also supported the “Green, Green, Green” program of the Department of Budget and Management, which aims to promote the development of public open space projects and create more sustainable and liveable cities all over the country through the expansion and rehabilitation of 143 projects, which include 13 institutional open spaces, 21 public squares and plazas, 60 parks, 16 streetscapes, 30 waterfronts, and two mangrove parks.

Legarda added that turning public spaces into green landscapes can also help alleviate hunger and malnutrition, as well as provide additional income and livelihood opportunities for poor families. She also mentioned that local authorities and residents play an important role in sustaining these initiatives.

“Local governments, businesses, the civil society, and all other stakeholders must converge to develop these green spaces for our people and society. Let us consider incorporating these landscapes into our offices and homes as we face and adapt to new challenges to our climate and public health,” Legarda said.





## China opens new research outposts in the West Philippine Sea

The new research centers are on Zamora and Kagitingan reefs, which China has turned into military bases

JC Gotinga Published 5:45 PM, March 23, 2020 Updated 1:18 AM, March 25, 2020

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/255587-china-opens-new-research-outposts-west-philippine-sea-march-2020>



KAGITINGAN REEF. This satellite image dated January 1, 2018, shows Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef in the West Philippine Sea. Photo courtesy of CSIS/AMTI/DigitalGlobe

MANILA, Philippines – China has opened two new new research outposts in the West Philippine Sea, on artificial islands that used to be submerged reefs and are claimed as territory by the Philippines.

The Integrated Research Center for Islands and Reefs of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) officially launched research centers on [Zamora \(Subi\) Reef](#) and [Kagitingan \(Fiery Cross\) Reef](#), according to a [report by the Chinese state-run Xinhua news agency](#) on March 20.

“The Yongshu research station and Zhubi research station, with a number of laboratories on ecology, geology and environments, can support scientists in field investigation, sampling and scientific research on Nansha Islands, according to a source of the CAS,” the Xinhua report stated.

“Yongshu” refers to Kagitingan Reef, and “Zhubi,” to Zamora Reef. “Nansha Islands” is China’s term for the Spratly group of islands, which includes the Philippine-claimed Kalayaan Island Group (KIG).

China started reclaiming these and 5 other reefs in the West Philippine Sea in early 2015.

The West Philippine Sea is the area within the South China Sea that belongs to the Philippines, consisting of its international law-mandated exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the outlying portion of the KIG.

### A triangle of outposts

According to the Xinhua report, the research outpost on Kagitingan Reef “has built several real-time monitoring systems for coral reef ecosystem, vegetation ecology, and freshwater conservation,” while the one on Zamora Reef “has completed the project design of monitoring systems for geological disaster and freshwater conservation.”

The two new stations complement the CAS’ Meiji Research Center built earlier on [Panganiban \(Mischief\) Reef](#), which China calls “Meiji.” Together, the 3 outposts have formed an “integrated scientific research base” for China, the report said.



ZAMORA REEF. This satellite photo shows vessels inside the harbor of Zamora (Subi) Reef, reclaimed and built into a military base by China. Photo from AMTI-CSIS/DigitalGlobe

All 3 reclaimed islands are fitted with military facilities, including missile systems, naval harbors, and 3-km runways worthy of fighter jets.



## China opens new research outposts in the West Philippine Sea

Zamora Reef lies less than 26 km away from Pag-asa (Thitu) Island, the Philippines' main outpost in the KIG inhabited by some 250 people, mostly civilians.

The new research outposts on these militarized artificial islands will help Chinese oceanographers' "observation and experimental capabilities on ecology, geology, environments, materials and marine energy utilization in the tropical marine environment," the report said.

The facilities will be "further optimized" as China plans to "focus on research areas in the fields of ocean acidification, micro-plastic pollution, coral reef ecosystem conservation and marine disaster treatment," the report added.

The [July 12, 2016 ruling](#) by the United Nations-backed arbitral tribunal in the Hague stated that China's large-scale land reclamation in the West Philippine Sea has "caused severe harm to the coral reef environment and violated its obligation to preserve and protect fragile ecosystems."

The same ruling debunked China's spurious 9-dash line claim that eats up most of the West Philippine Sea, and affirmed the Philippines' sovereign rights in its EEZ.

### Vast resources

On March 2, the Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command based in Palawan reported that [136 Chinese vessels were spotted](#) around Pag-asa Island in January and February. The sightings were part of a now nearly yearlong deployment of seemingly fishing boats to waters surrounding the Philippine-held island.

Experts and Philippine defense officials suspect the vessels to be Chinese militias – a paramilitary force asserting China's presence in the contested area.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr said [the vessels were likely to remain](#) in the vicinity of Pag-asa Island because of its proximity to Zamora Reef, which he believes may serve as a harbor for the Chinese vessels.



PANGANIBAN REEF. Structures seen in a satellite image of Panganiban (Mischief) Reef on November 15, 2016, released December 13, 2016. Image courtesy of CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative/DigitalGlobe

In 2019, the [Department of National Defense reported](#) sighting 15 Chinese research vessels moving in Philippine waters, in at least some instances without prior permission from the Philippine government.

China's growing presence and control in the West Philippine Sea comes even as the Philippine government downplayed the Hague arbitral award in the hope of soothing China into stepping back from the contested waters.

The Philippines has agreed to bilateral talks to settle the dispute with China, and teams of diplomats from both countries meet roughly twice a year to begin what is expected to be a long drawn out negotiation.

The two countries have also begun the process of jointly exploring and exploiting Recto Bank in the West Philippine Sea off Palawan. Based on scientific estimates, the South China Sea may hold up to [130 billion barrels of oil and 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas](#) in its seabed, believed to be concentrated in the area of Recto Bank.

Meanwhile, Filipino artisanal fishermen have lost as much as 80% in the volume of their catch ever since Chinese vessels have forced them out of their traditional fishing grounds in the West Philippine Sea. – **Rappler.com**



## A breath of good news: QC air quality improving

Published March 24, 2020, 1:36 PM

By *Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz*

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/24/a-breath-of-good-news-qc-air-quality-improving/>

Air quality in Quezon City has been improving as people stay home during the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine in Luzon, according to an expert from the University of the Philippines Diliman (UP Diliman).



Quezon City (MANILA BULLETIN)23

The air quality index recorded by airtoday.ph monitoring stations in Quezon City found that air pollution was down by as much as 180 percent since the enhanced community quarantine was imposed in Metro Manila last March 16, UP Diliman College of Science's Environmental Pollution Studies Laboratory head Dr. Mylene Cayetano said.

An indicator of air pollution is the particulate matter or PM 2.5, a minute airborne dust that can penetrate the lungs, can cause shortness of breath, and may aggravate pre-existing respiratory conditions.

The monitoring station located at the Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP) compound has shown "decreasing" trends of PM 2.5, Cayetano said.

Comparing the levels of PM 2.5 pre- and while on community quarantine, the greatest improvement occurred during the window hours when the atmospheric ventilation is low, in the evening and early morning, by a reduction of 80 to 180 percent from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. at the LCP compound, she pointed out.

The same trend was observed in another airtoday.ph

monitoring station along EDSA-Muñoz at 70 to 90 percent reduction in PM 2.5 since the start of the enhanced community quarantine, she said.

"On ordinary Thursdays, the PM 2.5 would peak to 38 micrograms per cubic meter during evening rush hours, which can be unhealthy to sensitive groups," Cayetano, who also serves as technical adviser of airtoday.ph, said.

The improving air quality in the hospital zone is attributed to the 500-meter quarantine radius that was being carried out around the government-run hospitals in Quezon City, namely Philippine Heart Center, East Avenue Medical Center, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, and the Philippine Lung Center.

The area from East Avenue to BIR Road and Elliptical Road had been closed since March 18.

"Majority of the air pollution comes from vehicle emissions. Cordoning off East Avenue and Quezon Avenue, both hospital zones, brings positive feedback of cleaning the air," Cayetano said.

"The COVID-19 patients and the rest of the patients presenting in these Quezon City hospital-zone have either obstructive or restrictive breathing, thus, are in much need of clean air," she added.



## Makati City residents urged to practice 'Otso-Otso' cleaning habit to combat COVID-19

Updated March 24, 2020, 10:25 PM

By Jel Santos

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/24/makati-city-residents-urged-to-practice-otso-otso-cleaning-habit-to-combat-covid-19/>



Makati Mayor Abby Binay (My Makati / MANILA BULLETIN)

"Mayroon po tayong gustong ipauso sa lahat ng mga taga-Makati. Ang tawag po natin ay 'Otso Otso.' Hindi ho 'yung sayaw. 'Yung 'Otso-Otso' ho ay 'yung alas-otso ng umaga, tayo po ay magdi-disinfect ng ating mga bahay at alas-otcho ng gabi, magdi-disinfect ho tayo ulit," she said.

(We want to advocate this to residents of Makati. We are calling it 'Otso-Otso.' This is not the dance. The 'Otso-Otso' is the conduct of cleaning and disinfection of the house at eight in the morning and at eight in the evening.)

"Otso-Otso" is the title of a popular dance song from 2004 performed by Bayani Agbayani and composed by Lito Camo.

Binay said business establishments in the city which are still operating are enjoined to practice the disinfection habit.

"Let us clean our common areas, disinfect them well; the escalator handrails, the elevator buttons, let us strictly do this at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.," she said in Filipino.

Meanwhile, Binay reminded her constituents that observing proper social distancing is also important in battling COVID-19.

"Please stay at home and do not panic. If you have something important to do outside, always practice social distancing," she said.

Health experts all over the world have urged people to regularly disinfect their homes and common areas to kill the coronavirus and end the transmission of the disease.

Since February this year, Binay said the city government has been disinfecting public areas as well as the locations of COVID-19 patients in Makati.

Binay assured her constituents that the local government is geared up for the fight against COVID-19 and the City Hall's skeletal forces will always be available to serve the public.





## WHO: DIY face masks, PPE better than no protection

By: [Krissy Aguilar](#) - Reporter / [@KAguilarINO](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:56 PM March 24, 2020

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1247544/who-diy-face-masks-ppe-better-than-no-protection?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook#Echobox=1585031280](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1247544/who-diy-face-masks-ppe-better-than-no-protection?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1585031280)



MANILA, Philippines — While do-it-yourself face masks or personal protective equipment (PPE) do not guarantee a 100 percent protection, the World Health Organization (WHO) said this is better than no protection at all.

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“Unfortunately, we are in a situation where there is a shortage of masks and PPE and so we have seen in many situations people using do-it-yourself kits,” WHO’s representative in the Philippines Rabindra Abeyasinghe said Tuesday in a press briefing.

“The issue with that is that they cannot 100% protect you. But they will provide some degree of protection,” he added.

Due to a shortage in medical supplies, [several hospitals and healthcare facilities have been asking for donations](#) as they address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation in the country.

This prompted some individuals to create [improvised face masks and even face shields](#) for hospital workers to prevent their exposure to COVID-19 while in line of duty.

“In these circumstances, any protection will be better than no protection,” Abeyasinghe noted.

He also reiterated WHO’s call that face masks be reserved to frontline health workers.

“Because if the health workers are falling sick, there will be no one to provide support and care for the sick people,” he said.

Abeyasinghe said WHO is closely working with the Philippine government in trying to access PPEs, and at the same time guiding health workers on how to properly manage the existing ones.

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“We are helping health workers to manage the existing PPEs so that we reduce wastage but at the same time we recognize there is a limited supply and so we need to try to access larger quantities of PPEs to deal with this ongoing outbreak,” he said.

WHO has declared COVID-19 a pandemic since it has already infected more than 340,000 people worldwide and killed more than 14,000 mostly in China and Italy.

In the Philippines, COVID-19 cases swelled to [501 on Tuesday morning](#), of which 33 have already died.



## EcoWaste nagbabala vs 'di rehistradong hygiene, sanitation products

March 24, 2020 @ 1:02 PM

<https://remate.ph/ecowaste-nagbabala-vs-di-rehistradong-hygiene-sanitation-products/>

Manila, Philippines — Nagbabala ang pro-environment group na EcoWaste Coalition sa mga mamimili tungkol sa mga 'di rehistradong produkto kagaya ng rubbing alcohol at hand sanitizer sa mga pamilihan at online shopping sites.

Sa isang pahayag, hinimok ng EcoWaste ang publiko na maging vigilante kapag bibili ng mga rubbing alcohol at hand sanitizer products sa gitna ng public health crisis na sanhi ng COVID-19.

"Consumers should be on their guard against the spread of unregistered rubbing alcohol and unnotified hand sanitizers in the market, including online stores, as the COVID-19 crisis deepens," giit EcoWaste chemical safety campaigner Thony Dizon.

Nagmula ang paalalang ito ng grupo matapos maglabas ng dalawang magkasunod na abiso si Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Director General Rolando Enrique Domingo laban sa paggamit ng topical antiseptics at antibacterials na walang kaukulang Certificate of Product Registration, at hand sanitizers na walang Certificate of Product Notification.

Sa pamamagitan ng FDA Advisory 2020-422, sinabihan ng ahensya ang mga mamimili na "to be vigilant in the purchase and use of these types of products in light of proliferation of unregistered/unnotified products during this time when a state of calamity has been declared due to COVID-19 threat in the country."

Kalakip din ng naturang abiso ang pagbibigay ng mga updated na listahan ng mga hand sanitizers at rehistradong topical antiseptics at antibacterials, kabilang na ang rubbing alcohol, upang tulungan ang mga mamimili na magkaroon ng kaalama sa pagbili ng ilang produkto.

Bago nito, nag-abiso ang FDA sa mga konsyumer "to be mindful of (online) transactions" as it warned of "unscrupulous individuals who are taking advantage of this situation for personal gain."

"Among those reported to be sold online are products that are unregistered/unnotified hand sanitizers, antiseptics, antibacterials, and other toxic chemicals with unverified claims regarding the elimination of COVID-19," ayon pa sa FDA.

Nag-abiso rin ang abiso sa mga maminmili na maingat na suriin ang product labeling information, kabilang ang bansang pinagnula, pangalan at address ng kumpanyang nakalagay sa pamilihan, manufacturing o expiry date, product batch number, listahan ng mga sangkap, instructions para sa paggamit at precautionary warnings.

Nauna nang inalerto ng EcoWaste ang FDA tungkol sa hindi makatarungang bentahan sa Paco, Manila ng mga hindi sapat na hand sanitizers na mali ang pagkakalabel at unnotified na itinawag na sa Regulatory Enforcement Unit para aksyunan.

Sumulat na rin ang grupo noong Marso 12 sa FDA upang gawing available sa publiko ang summary list ng mga rehistrado o notified antiseptic at disinfectant products na epektibo at ligtas gamitin, kabilang ang rubbing alcohol (ethyl and isopropyl), alcohol spray, "alcogel," "alcologne," hand sanitizing gel, disinfecting wipes, at iba pang kaparehong produkto. s

Isinagawa ng EcoWaste ang pakiusap na ito bilang kahanay ng state policy sa ilalim ng Consumer Act of the Philippines na naglalayong "to protect the interests of the consumer and promote his general welfare," partikular na ang karapatan ng mga kostumer na magkaroon ng kaalaman at maprotektahan laban sa panganib sa kaligtasan at kalusugan. **Remate News Team/MM**



## 'Di man inirerekomenda ng WHO: DIY face masks, PPEs, mas mabuti nang mayroon kaysa wala

March 24, 2020 @ 2:21 PM

<https://remate.ph/di-man-inirerekomenda-ng-who-diy-face-masks-ppes-mas-mabuti-nang-mayroon-kaysa-wala/>



Manila, Philippines — “WHO (World Health Organization) does not encourage this, but this is a stop gap measure as we address the global shortage.”

Ito ang pahayag ni WHO representative to the Philippines Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe sa isinagawang Laging Handa briefing sa Malakanyang ukol sa mga sariling gawa o DIY na face masks para sa COVID-19 dahil sa mataas na demand nito sa ngayon, kung kaya’t gumagawa na lamang ng paraan ang mga Pinoy upang may magamit.

May mga litrato ding kumakalat online kung saan nakasuot ng trash bags at iba pang sariling gawang personal protective equipment (PPE) ang mga health workers dahil nagsisimula nang maubusan ng suplay ang mga ospital.

Paliwanag pa ni Abeyasinghe, “They are not 100 percent protected, but they will provide some degree of protection,” he explained.

“Any protection will be better than no protection.”

Iginiit ni Abeyasinghe na mayroong malaking kahalagahan sa pagpritekta sa kalusugan ng mga health workers dahil sila ang lumalaban sa COVID-19 pandemic.

“Because if health workers are falling sick, there will be no one to provide support and care for the sick people,” aniya.

Kinumpirma ni Abeyasinghe na mayroon nang global shortage sa PPEs. Nanawagan siya sa mga pribadong sektor na tumulong sa pagsuporta sa “government efforts in procuring and supplying personal protective equipment.”

“In the meantime, it is unfortunate but people have to adapt and use do-it-yourself kits,” saad pa nito.

The WHO official said they are already helping the Philippine government rationalize the use of existing PPEs.

“We are helping health workers better manage existing PPEs to reduce wastage,” paliwanag pa ni Abeyasinghe.

Ngunit sinabi niyang mayroong “access larger quantities of PPEs to deal with this ongoing outbreak.”

Nitong Lunes, ibinunyag ng Lung Center of the Philippines na malapit na silang maubusan ng PPE suits, na mahalaga sa paghawak ng mga pasyenteng nayroong COVID-19.

Sinabi ng isang opisyal na naubusan na ng stock ang mga government suppliers at kailangan pa nilang bumili sa mga black market suppliers na nagbebenta ng PPE suits sa halagang P3,000 kada piraso mula sa halagang P500 bago magsimula ang pandemya. Dahil dito, kailangan nilang makalikom ng pribadong pondo upang makabili ng suits mula sa ibang distributors. **Remate News Team/MM**



## No pets left unattended to at Cartimar – Pasay City Hall

Published March 24, 2020, 4:00 PM

By MB Online

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/24/no-pets-left-unattended-to-at-cartimar-pasay-city-hall/>

The Pasay City veterinarian office on Tuesday clarified the rumors about the alleged negligence by pet owners in a pet market in the city.



Cartimar Pet Center (Photo courtesy of Yhantz De La Cruz / Facebook / MANILA BULLETIN)

The office inspected Cartimar pet center in Pasay City and later on verified that there were no animals left unattended to in the area, according to a report from ABS-CBN News.

A post went viral claiming that pet shops in the area left the animals unattended to as people were busy observing the enhanced community quarantine.

The Animal Kingdom Foundation, a non-government organization, received a plea of action about the situation and coordinated with the veterinarian office for verification.

The owners of the pet shops said that although their shop was closed due to the lockdown they still have caretakers inside to take care of the animals.

The entire Luzon was placed on enhanced community quarantine due to the rapid surge of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases in the country.





## PETA: Free access for animal rescuers

posted March 24, 2020 at 09:30 pm by **Willie Casas**

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/320337/peta-free-access-for-animal-rescuers.html>

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on Tuesday asked that veterinarians and animal rescuers be considered “essential workers” and granted access to move freely across Luzon and the rest of the Philippines to continue helping animals in need.

The group rushed an urgent letter to President Rodrigo Duterte and other government officials as currently, because of travel restrictions and checkpoints, several veterinarians cannot reach their clinics.

“Similarly, PETA receives calls about dying and sick animals all the time, but right now, its rescue team is unable to go to their aid,” PETA said in a statement.

“Veterinarians and animal rescuers are involved in lifesaving efforts, and their help is desperately needed by animals such as dogs and cats, especially during this national health emergency,” said PETA Senior Vice President of International Campaigns Jason Baker, in a letter to Duterte.

“Not allowing these workers to provide animals with vital assistance could lead members of the public to take matters into their own hands without professional help, which could be disastrous for humans, animals, and the community at large,” he added.

PETA said they hope that the restrictions will be lifted immediately. Their emergency response line to call is 0999-888-7382.



## Bats started it all—researchers

posted March 24, 2020 at 02:05 am

by Manila Standard

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/320290>

Where and when did the novel coronavirus, which had threatening ripples and been on a rampage in more than 100 countries, start waving its threat?

While a lot about the virus is still unknown, part of the answer to that mystery, according to several researchers in an article in Women's Health published online by Yahoo, may have to do with an animal more commonly thought of as an important part of any good Halloween decoration display—the bat.

The novel SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus that emerged in Wuhan City in the central province of Hubei in China has spread across the globe, including Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, and is described as the product of natural evolution, according to findings them, quoting the journal Nature Medicine.

Word from researchers

How did bats get the novel coronavirus in the first place? It's unclear exactly how bats picked up novel coronavirus, but researchers do know they carry it and are the reason it's been passed on to humans.

COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease, which means it is caused by an animal virus that has been picked up by humans, explains Richard J. Kuhn, PhD, a professor of biological sciences at Purdue University.

By Kuhn's estimate, about 80 percent of viruses that exist are zoonotic viruses, and they work in both directions: animals can pass them to humans, and humans can pass them back to animals.

The novel coronavirus that caused this current outbreak comes from a family of zoonotic viruses. Viruses from this family have been passed to humans from animals before and usually result in cold- and flu-like respiratory symptoms for humans.

But the illnesses they cause can also lead to death in animals, according to a study from the University of California, Berkeley.

However, researchers have found that when bats contract these viruses, their particularly strong immune systems prevent them from getting sick or dying from the infections.

This means they can continue to carry and pass on the virus, whereas other animals that contract it may get sick and die, and therefore are less likely to pass it on.

The analysis of public genome sequence data from SARS-CoV-2 and related viruses also found no evidence that the virus was made in a laboratory or otherwise engineered.

Bat's immune system strong

The UC Berkeley researchers found that a bat's immune system is so strong, in fact, that when a virus infects a bat, the animal's immune system response is thought to cause the virus to adapt and replicate even faster.

That means when the virus infects an animal with a weaker immune system (let's say a human), the virus is able to wreak havoc.

One of the reasons bats have such strong immune systems is thought to be the fact that they can fly, according to the UC Berkeley study.

When they fly, bats elevate their metabolic rates to a level that would hurt other mammals, but for bats, helped them develop an immune system that is able to quickly repair the cell damage caused by flight, the researchers found.

How did novel coronavirus spread from bats to humans, then?

As a virus jumps from species to species, it mutates, which means that researchers won't see an exact copy in animals of the novel coronavirus found in humans.

But scientists have found a 96 percent genetic match between the virus that's currently infecting humans and a coronavirus that is found in bats, according to a study published in Nature in February.



## Smart supports Siargao Island’s bid to protect the environment

posted March 23, 2020 at 10:40 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/320252>

Spectacular waves, beautiful spots, and sunset views have made Siargao one of the favorite spots for many professional and amateur surfers, as well as local and foreign tourists in the Philippines.



**SMART MOVE.** Government officials, locals, tourists, and volunteers participated in the coastal cleanup drive at General Luna in the island of Siargao in partnership with Smart Communications. Smart also donated material recovery facilities to be deployed in different barangays and tourist sites in General Luna. These will help the local government maintain cleanliness and encourage proper waste disposal.

With the island’s booming tourism, the local government units have been taking measures to mitigate any harmful impact to the environment in the long run.

In the municipality of General Luna where the renowned Cloud 9 is located, one of the environmental initiatives was a cleanup drive where almost a thousand volunteers consisting of employees from the public and private sector, students, and tourists participated in picking up trash from the coastal areas.

Smart Communications, Inc (Smart) supported this initiative by sending employee volunteers, just like Community Development Officer Josh Dael.

Dael is no stranger to volunteer work. “I started with volunteer work in high school. I took the lead in the environmental organization we had back then. When I got into college, I became one of the facilitators of the Ridge to Reef Young Leaders Camp, a program for young environmentalists on mountain, reef and river protection.”

That’s why participating in this cleanup drive was an opportunity he could not miss. “I have been an advocate of environmental preservation, encouraging friends to engage more in environment-friendly activities. As a Smart employee, I am glad that even at work, I am able to practice my personal advocacy,” said Dael.

Employees from Smart’s sales team and provincial distributor also helped in the coastal cleanup activity.

“We thank Smart for working with us. I hope you will help us to continue our environmental protection campaigns,” said General Luna Mayor Cecilia Rusillon.

“Most of the people’s livelihood here in Siargao are dependent on tourism. That is why the government of General Luna is eager to sustain it through partnerships with organizations that will also strengthen our environmental campaigns,” said Councilor Van Harold Dolera.

As part of its environmental conservation advocacy, Smart also donated material recovery facilities to be deployed in different barangays and tourist sites in General Luna. These will help the local government maintain cleanliness and encourage proper waste disposal.

Jeremy Naylor, tourist and founder of the Seventh Sea Conservation who co-organized the event, said, “The clean-up drive sets an example for the community. The local government unit has made efforts and they have come a long way in communicating to other people on what needs to be done in terms of proper segregation and making this island cleaner.”



PLDT-Smart’s Sustainability pillars are aimed at future-proofing PLDT’s business through environmental stewardship, continuous innovation, responsible and efficient operations, awesome customer experience and quality of service, corporate social responsibility and community relations, good labor practice and people management, good governance and ethical business practices.

All these seven pillars reinforce and contribute to the triple bottomline espoused by sustainability: profit or progress, people, and planet.

PLDT-Smart’s sustainability efforts have been ongoing since 2015, long before the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) mandated all Philippine-listed companies to publish its Sustainability Reports for year-end 2019 in 2020.



## EMERGENCY POWER KAILANGANG-KAILANGAN

March 24, 2020 @ 1:02 PM

<https://remate.ph/emergency-power-kailangang-kailangan/>

INAPRUBAHAN na ng Kamara at Senado ang pagkakaroon ng 'emergency power' ng Pangulo ng Pilipinas laban sa Corona Virus Disease-19.

Isa sa mga sentro ng emergency power ang paggastos ng pamahalaan ng nasa P300 bilyong pondo hindi lang para ayudahan ang mga front liner sa giyera sa Covid-19 at paghahanap at paggamit ng lahat ng bagay laban sa nasabing sakit gaya ng mga gamot, test kit, mask at iba pa kundi para tulungan din ang mahihirap na mamamayan na tumawid sa krisis sa kabuhayan na nagsimula nang maramdaman ng milyon-milyong Filipino.

Kabilang din sa mga posibleng gawin ng pamahalaan ang pag-takeover o paghawak sa mga mahahalagang industriya upang magamit laban sa COVID-19.

### KALAYAAN AT COVID

Grabe ang pagsakay ng COVID -19 sa kalayaan nating maglakbay at pumunta kahit saan sa loob at labas ng mahal kong Pinas.

Isang kinatatakutan ng lahat ang paglaganap ng sakit dahil sa pag-uwi ng libo-libong Pinoy na natakot sa COVID -19 o nawalan ng trabaho sa ibang mga bansang sinasalakay ng COVID -19 na umaabot na sa 192 bansa at mga teritoryo.

Hindi bawal sa mga Pinoy na umuwi sa atin, kasama ang kanilang mga pamilya kahit dayuhan.

At hindi rin bawal ang umalis ng bansa patungo sa iba at pagkatapos, bumalik pa rin.

Kabilang sa mga pinatutunguhan at pinanggagalingan ng mga Pinoy ang United States, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Iran, South Korea, France, The Netherlands, Germany, China at iba pa na talaga namang sinasalakay ng sakit na nakamamatay.

Habang sinusulat ito, may 352,000 nang positibo at halos 16,000 ang patay sa buong mundo at nangunguna sa namamatayan ngayon ang Italy sa bilang na halos 6,000 dahil sa nasa 600-700 namamatay araw-araw sa nakalipas na tatlong araw.

May patay ang China na 3,270; Spain – 2,206; Iran – mahigit 1,800; USA – 450; UK -289; France – 674; South Korea – 111; Netherlands – 179; at Germany – 111.

Sa ating mga paglalakbay nagaganap ang malawakang paglaganap ng sakit kaya hindi lang pamilya ang nahahawa kundi mga , komunidad at buong bansa.

Ngayon nga ay may patay na rin tayong mahigit 33, kasama ang apat na doktor at nagpositibong halos 500.

### LAYUNIN NG EMERGENCY POWER

Nakikini-kinita na mismo ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang mangyayari sa buong bansa, batay sa mga nabanggit natin sa itaas, kaya naman hiniling nito sa buong Kongreso ang sabihin na nating emergency power.

Bilang paglilinaw pa sa P300B pondong anti- COVID -19, mga Bro, pangunahing paggamitan nito ang pagsalba sa gutom at iba pang paghihirap sa mahigit 16 milyong pamilya mula sa 22 milyong Pamilyang Pinoy.





## EMERGENCY POWER KAILANGANG-KAILANGAN

Kung kinakailangan, hahawakan at imamaneho ng gobyerno ang mga industriya ng kuryente, tubig, gamot, transportasyon at telepono upang walang papalya sa mga ito sa oras ng krisis.

Maging ang mga paggawa at distribusyon ng mga pagkain ay dapat ding matiyak ng pamahalaan na gagana.

Kung mananatili ang operasyon ng lahat ng ito sa kamay ng mga may-arang pribado tao at kompanya, maaaring titigil ang lahat sa oras na makararamdam na ang huli ng mga pagkalugi at pagbagsak.

Hindi malayong magkaroon ng pagkalugi at pagbagsak ng mga industriya at komersyo kung may mga lockdown, pagtigil ng operasyon ng mga ito, kawalan ng kakayahan ng tao, kasama ang mga pamilyang overseas Filipino worker, na bumili, magproduksyon at magtinda.

Magkaroon man ng malawakan at matagalang krisis, tanging ang gobyerno ang may paninindigang panatiling buhay ang mga industriya at komersyo dahil itinayo ito para sa proteksyon ng lahat, lalo na ang mga walang kakayahang mamuhay sa pagtigil o pagdapa ng ekonomiya ng bansa.

### MAKITID NA PANINIWALA

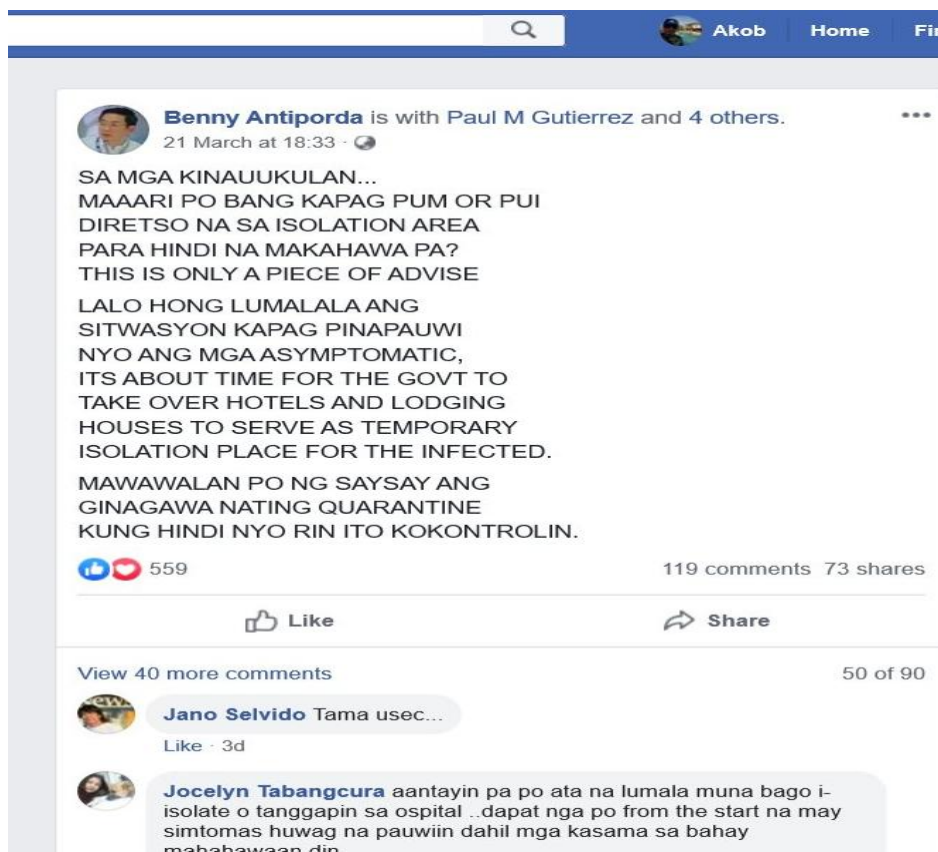
Makitid ang paniniwala ng iba, lalo na ang sa mga kritiko ng administrasyong Duterte, na masosolb ang problema sa COVID -19 sa pamamagitan ng malawakang testing sa mga may COVID -19 at pag-ayuda sa mga frontliner sa giyera gaya ng mga doktor, pulis, military, tauhan ng mga local government unit at iba pa.

Sapagkat ang nilikha na krisis ng COVID -19 ay hindi lang pangkalusugan kundi pangkabuhayan at pamamahala sa buong lipunan.

Sa ibang mga bansa, pinaniniwalaan nilang nasa gilid na ng bangin ng depresyon ang buong mundo sa pagtigil ng industriya at komersyo, kasama ang pagbagsak ng agrikultura o produksyon ng pagkain at mga serbisyo.

Ang pamahalaan lang ang may kakayahang manguna laban sa malawakan, malaliman at matagalang krisis at lalong lalakas ito kung kakambal nito sa pagkilos ang sambayanang Filipino.

### SA MGA KINAUUKULAN





# A crisis for all

By: [Titon Mitra](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

04:03 AM March 25, 2020

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/128313/a-crisis-for-all>

With the COVID-19 wave about to engulf us, our response needs to be nuanced to the huge disparities in this country. The enhanced community quarantine, while certainly warranted, has markedly different impacts depending on where we sit on the income ladder. There is no doubt we all suffer from these measures, but we suffer to a greatly different extent.

For the 2.5 million people in Metro Manila who reside in crowded slums, or the 15.1 million poor households nationwide, community quarantining and social distancing have entirely different implications. Lost income from restricted movement matters greatly, not just to the income earner but also to the whole family dependent on those earnings. There are no savings to draw upon. Because they're crowded in one room that may be 3 square meters, it is unrealistic to think that social distancing is possible. Collecting water or washing at communal points, walking through narrow alleyways, just stepping out to get some sunlight and less fetid air, or walking three hours to and from work because of the absence of public transport—all these present a whole set of risks.

Certainly, efforts to suppress transmission with strict community quarantine measures need to be in place. But what are the complementary policies and programs for the poor? Can the administration increase the amount and frequency of social safety net payments? Can we, as we would in the aftermath of a destructive typhoon, provide emergency water, sanitation, and food aid? These are preventative and alleviation measures. But there is also a looming crisis that requires a viable contingency plan. National epidemiologists are estimating that the number of people infected could rise to 75,000 within a few months (what about the projected fatality rate?), and that is likely a conservative figure. A significant proportion could be the poor living in crowded slums.

Local governments will need to run the numbers and develop the worst-case scenarios for planning. Personal protective equipment for frontline workers, testing kits (the World Health Organization tells us we must “test, test, test”), ventilators, sanitizers, ICU beds, and alternative bed space (for hospitals that may quickly reach their limits to house the sick), etc., need to be provided quickly. Much of this will be challenging given the huge demand on global supply. Health facilities have to be accessible, and ideally, testing and health services should be taken directly to poor communities. Innovative approaches to tracing and isolation in crowded slums areas will have to be implemented. The assignment of health workers needs to be calibrated to where the greatest numbers are likely to be.

The Senate and the House of Representatives approved early Tuesday morning the “Bayanihan To Heal As One Act,” which grants President Duterte expanded powers to address the COVID-19 health crisis, including reprogramming and reallocating savings from appropriations under the Executive branch in the 2020 General Appropriations Act, providing for a 30-day grace period for payment of loans and residential rents, moving the deadline for payment of taxes, expanding the Pantawid Pamilya program, and exempting from import taxes the importation of equipment and supplies needed for the fight against COVID-19.

This is now a matter of both the quantum and quality of expenditure. At all costs, we need to avoid the ethical dilemma of choosing whose life to save or care for. Income should certainly not be the defining factor. We are about to head into not only a health crisis, but also a humanitarian crisis. We need to act accordingly and leave no one behind.

*Titon Mitra is the resident representative of the United Nations Development Program-Philippines.*