

# Sec. Cimatu: Conserve water, electricity, be eco-friendly while on ECQ

Published March 31, 2020, 4:17 PM

By *Ellalyn de Vera-Ruiz*

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu on March 31, Tuesday, encouraged Filipinos to consider the enhanced community quarantine as an opportunity to develop a lasting commitment to eco-friendly habits.



Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu (RTVM / MANILA BULLETIN)

“Save water, use environment-friendly materials to minimize trash, and regulate the use of energy during the enhanced community quarantine,” Cimatu said.

He urged households to use water responsibly and avoid wastage especially with the expected increase in consumption because of frequent handwashing and use of drinking water.

“Though we are assured of enough water supply in the summer season and throughout the year, we do not want it to be depleted quickly given the current situation,” he added.

Moreover, following simple energy saving tips can reduce power consumption and conserve energy. Lesser power consumption also decreases toxic fumes and carbon emissions from power plants. This, in turn, helps abate global warming and protects ecosystems, Cimatu pointed out.

“We hope that after the 30-day quarantine period, people will have formed their earth-friendly habits and will commit to them. Only then will real behavior change, that will impact the environment, happen. Only then will people finally realize the urgency of saving the only planet we have,” he said.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda also emphasized the need to minimize trash and segregate used personal protective equipment to help garbage collectors in the collection and disposal of solid waste.

“If people minimize their waste, we prevent the accumulation of trash that need to be collected and sanitized by our already compromised garbage collectors and haulers,” Antiporda said.

He also advised garbage collectors to use disinfectants on collected waste before these are brought to disposal sites, and to disinfect trucks after each collection.

The DENR is closely coordinating with local government units and the Department of the Interior and Local Government to intensify garbage collection and ensure proper waste disposal.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/31/sec-cimatu-conserve-water-electricity-be-eco-friendly-while-on-ecq/>

## Be earth-friendly, DENR asks Pinoys amid crisis

*posted* March 31, 2020 at 10:00 pm

by [Rio N. Araja](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is urging the Filipino people to turn the coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) crisis as a chance to form “earth-friendly” habits. “Save water, use environment-friendly materials to minimize trash and regulate the use of energy during the enhanced community quarantine,” Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

He urged households to use water responsibly and avoid wastage, especially with the expected increase in consumption, because of frequent hand washing and use of drinking water.

Earlier, the National Water Resources Board, DENR’s attached agency, said there would be an increased the water allocation of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System’s two water concessionaires from 42 cubic meters per second to its normal allocation of 46 cubic meters per second to ensure a steady water supply for Metro Manila amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/320799>

Paalala ng DENR sa gitna ng COVID-19 crisis: Tubig,

TITLE: wag sayangin; mga basura maayos na paghiwalayin

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April 1, 2020

DATE



## Paalala ng DENR sa gitna ng COVID-19 crisis: Tubig, wag sayangin; mga basura maayos na paghiwalayin

March 31, 2020 @ 4:40 PM 13 hours ago

Views: 92

Manila, Philippines – Sa panahon ng krisis dulot ng coronavirus disease o COVID-19 hinikayat ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu ang mga Filipino na gamitin ang pagkakataon upang magkaroon ng oportunidad na makagawa ng earth-friendly habits na makatutulong na maisalba ang kalikasan.

“Save water, use environment-friendly materials to minimize trash and regulate the use of energy during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ),” sabi ni Cimatu.

Hinikayat din ni Cimatu ang mamamayan na maging responsable sa paggamit ng tubig at iwasan itong sayangin lalo’t inaasahan ang pagtaas ng gamit dahil sa madalas na paghuhugas ng kamay at pag-inom ng tubig.

Matatandaan na paulit-ulit na pinaaalalahanan ng Department of Health ang publiko na ang madalas at wastong paghugas ng kamay at pag-inom ng maraming tubig ay isang paraan upang labanan ang virus.

“Though we are assured of enough water supply in the summer season and throughout the year, we do not want it to be depleted quickly given the current situation,” dagdag pa ni Cimatu .

Noong Marso 12 nang itaas ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB) ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), ang alokasyon ng tubig ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS). Mula 42 cubic meters per second, ginawa itong 46 cubic meters per second. Ito ay upang matiyak na hindi kakapusin ang Metro Manila sa suplay ng tubig na isang paraan upang malabanan COVID-19. Ang tubig na ito ay nagmumula sa Angat Dam.

Idinagdag naman ni DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda na ang paglimita sa basura at ang tamang paghiwalay ng personal protective equipment (PPE) ay malaking tulong sa mga garbage collectors upang mapabilis ang paghahakot ng basura.

Paalala ng DENR sa gitna ng COVID-19 crisis: Tubig,

April 1, 2020

TITLE: wag sayangin; mga basura maayos na paghiwalayin

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“If people minimize their waste, we prevent the accumulation of trash that need to be collected and sanitized by our already compromised garbage collectors and haulers,” sabi ni Antiporda.

Noong nakaraan ay pinayuhan ni Antiporda ang mga garbage collectors na gamitan ng disinfectant solution ang mga nahakot na basura bago ito dalhin sa disposal sites gayundin ang mga truck pagkatapos ng bawat koleksyon.

Nakikipagtulungan ang DENR sa mga local government units at sa Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) upang mapadali ang paghahakot at pagdala ng basura sa mga waste disposal sites.

Sa kabilang dako, ang simpleng pagsunod sa energy saving tips sa tamang paggamit ng enerhiya ay makatutulong upang mapababa ang konsumo at mabawasan din ang “toxic fumes” tulad ng carbon at and emission mula sa power plant. Sa pamamagitan din nito ay napipigilan ang epekto ng global warming at napoprotektahan ang ating ecosystems.

“We hope that after the 30-day quarantine period, people will have formed their earth-friendly habits and will commit to them. Only then will real behavior change, that will impact the environment, happen. Only then will people finally realize the urgency of saving the only planet we have,” Cimatú said. **Santi Celario**

Source: <https://remate.ph/paalala-ng-denr-sa-gitna-ng-covid-19-crisis-tubig-wag-sayangin-mga-basura-maayos-na-paghiwalayin/>

# DENR operations in NCR offices suspended

March 30, 2020



Operation in all offices of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the National Capital Region (NCR) is temporarily suspended as an employee of the agency tested positive for COVID-19 today.

The DENR said it must conduct disinfection and sanitation in all of its offices in the NCR before they resume.

The agency promised it would help the said employee who was affected by the virus.

Due to the temporary suspension, the scheduled testing of Manila Bay's water has been delayed. The laboratory test will be handled by the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) for the meantime.

Meanwhile, the DENR has already figured out the origin of the said chemical that caused Manila Bay's discoloration.

As the agency's cleanup drive in drainages, rivers, and the bay itself continues amid the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine, the DENR has expressed dismay over residents who still throw garbage in Manila Bay.

The DENR also warned it will not hesitate to file cases against people who keep throwing trash in the bay. – *Report from Louisa Erispe*

Source: [https://ptvnews.ph/denr-operations-in-ncr-offices-suspended/?fbclid=IwAR3\\_6Z7LxQ5pAoEUIO7pDUg6U-ARJkuk7uW1LL\\_ZJrBxFWlou62bAV7kwUY](https://ptvnews.ph/denr-operations-in-ncr-offices-suspended/?fbclid=IwAR3_6Z7LxQ5pAoEUIO7pDUg6U-ARJkuk7uW1LL_ZJrBxFWlou62bAV7kwUY)



# Swarms of jellyfish in Palawan ‘nothing out of the ordinary’ during dry season—DENR exec

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

-April 1, 2020

A swarm of jellyfish taking over El Nido, Palawan’s waters is nothing out of the ordinary, especially during the summer season, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

“Like in Boracay, there’s this natural phenomenon that happens every year—the algal bloom. In Palawan, it’s jellyfish. These jellyfish were brought by the ocean current and usually, they end up in Corong-Corong Bay,” according to Benny Antiporda, DENR’s undersecretary for Local Government Units (LGUs) and Solid Waste Management Concerns.

He added that the exceptional number of jellyfish caught on video by a netizen in El Nido is due to the fact that harvesting of jellyfish had stopped because of the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) following President Duterte’s declaration placing the entire country under a State of Public Health Emergency due to health threats brought about by Covid-19.

Antiporda, receiving reports of the awesome sight of a big swarm of jellyfish, immediately consulted DENR experts to explain the phenomenon.

“When the harvesting stopped, naturally, there was more jellyfish. But the jellyfish phenomenon is naturally occurring. After summer, they will migrate and leave Palawan,” Antiporda said.

The subject species of jellyfish is said to be edible and do not pose serious threats to humans, or other species, along with the ecosystem in the area.

But the official said swimming in the waters taken over by jellyfish is not advisable, especially because of the fact that the entire Luzon is still under ECQ.

“[But the real] reason, why it is also not advisable to swim in areas with jellyfish, is because they still sting and may cause skin irritation,” he said.

The DENR official advised the public to stay at home and avoid close contact with people to help the government’s effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19, which has so far claimed the lives of about 1,500 Filipinos since its outbreak in the country.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/04/01/swarms-of-jellyfish-in-palawan-nothing-out-of-the-ordinary-during-dry-season-denr-exec/>

**News5** 11 hrs · 🌐

Hindi raw dapat ikabahala ang pagdami ng jellyfish sa Corong-Corong Bay sa Palawan, ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Kasunod ito ng nag-viral na mga video nito lang nakaraang linggo kung saan punung-puno ng dikya ang tubig sa lugar. |

**NEWS 5**

**“**  
**Tinangay (ang mga jellyfish) ng current sa Corong-Corong Bay. Kaya dumami, kasi walang nagma-harvest because of the lockdown. (But) nothing to worry about (dahil) protected naman ang mga turista.**  
**”**

**USEC. BENNY ANTIPORDA**  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
MARCH 31, 2020

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Source: <https://www.facebook.com/163550757135020/posts/1939971186159626/>

# DENR imposes strict collection of fees on protected areas

Published  
12 hours ago

on March 31, 2020 06:40 PM  
By **Gabbie Parlade**



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Visayas will strictly implement the collection of fees in protected areas to address issues of non-collection and avoidance of some visitors to pay fees on areas managed by DENR.

“There is a need to strictly collect fees and charges, allowed by law, for those who visit and use the facilities and resources of our protected areas,” Tirso Parian Jr., the Regional Executive Director of DENR in Region 8, said.

“If we are to finance the projects and sustain the operation of these protected areas, we need to strictly impose the collection of entrance fees and other resource use fees,” he added.

Under Section 16 of Republic Act 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems Act of 1992 as amended by Republic Act 11038, it is stated that protected areas should have a trust fund for financing purposes of projects in those areas.

Parian also said that along with the issuance of fees, personnel should also disseminate the information among the public.

“In the collection of the standardized entrance fee, aggressive information dissemination must be conducted with the support and cooperation of local government units and barangay officials concerned to make the people understand the importance of the imposition fees,” he said.

Pursuant to DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2016-24, a minimum entrance fee of P30 Filipinos and P100 for foreigners will be collected.

On the other hand, students will have a discount of P15 and persons with disabilities together with senior citizens, children below seven years old, and indigenous peoples living in the area will be free of charge.

As of now, there are seven legislated protected areas across Eastern Visayas.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/03/31/denr-imposes-strict-collection-of-fees-on-protected-areas/>



# DENR to probe Manila Bay water discoloration

By [Jed Macapagal](#)

-March 31, 2020



*The turquoise color may indicate pollution.*

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered an investigation of hotels and establishments in the Manila Bay area after discoloration bay waters was observed last week.

“We suspect that this sudden color change from the previous dark blue to turquoise blue is caused by the direct discharge of wastewater from the treatment plants of buildings and establishments in the vicinity,” Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said in a statement.

Cimatu tasked Benny Antiporda, DENR undersecretary for solid waste management and local government units concerns, to oversee the investigation.

A team from the DENR over the weekend inspected the baywalk near the SM Mall of Asia and Outfall No. 3 in Pasay City to check their wastewater discharge.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System-Regulatory Office assured the public that drinking water in Metro Manila is safe from COVID-19.

“The water supply maintained in our distribution systems up to the customers’ taps has been disinfected with chlorine, as prescribed by the Philippine National Standard for Drinking Water set by the Department of Health. Our water is therefore free from bacteria and viruses (including the COVID-19 virus) and is safe for domestic consumption,” Patrick Ty, the agency’s chief regulator, said in a statement.

Ty said that wastewater discharged from sewage and septage treatment plants into water bodies has also been disinfected with chlorine, in accordance with the DENR Water Quality Guidelines and General Effluent Standards.

A technical brief on water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for the COVID-19 virus released by the World Health Organization showed chlorine disinfection has been proven to inactivate the coronavirus.

Source: [https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news\\_news/denr-to-probe-manila-bay-water-discoloration/](https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news_news/denr-to-probe-manila-bay-water-discoloration/)



## KARAMBOLA SA NAGPOSITIBO MAKARAANG MALIBING

March 31, 2020 @ 12:51 PM 17 hours ago  
Views: 120

DUMARAMI ang mga kaso na bago madeklara o makumpirmang positibo sa Corona Virus Disease-19 ang isang tao, patay na siya o kaya'y nakauwi at nagkalat na sa pamilya, kapitbahay at komunidad sa paligid niya.

Ano-ano nga ba ang dapat gawin sa ganitong mga kaso?

Ang mga awtoridad, lalo na ang mga nasa Department of Health, ang dapat na umaksyon nang husto sa ganitong mga pangyayari.

### NAKI-CONDOLENCE

May isang patay sa isang bayan sa Bulacan.

Senior citizen ang namatay at matagal nang iniinda ang mahinang baga at pag-ubo kaya naman inakala ng pamilya na normal na pneumonia ang ikinamatay nito.

At panahon na rin na kunin siya ni Lord.

'Yun pala, Covid-19 ang ikinamatay nito.

Bago dumating ang confirmation na may Covid-19 ang biktima, siyempre ibinurol ito.

Dahil matanda at ugaling angkan-angkan ang paglalamay, marami ang nakilamay na miyembro ng angkan niya, kapitbahay at kabarangay.

May mga politiko ring pambayan ang nakilamay.

At may mga senior citizen group at religious group na nakiramay at nagdasal.

Inasikaso rin sila nina kapitan, kagawad at mga tanod,

Hindi man katulad noon na kumpol-kumpol ang mga nakikilamay, naging hindi maganda ang katapusan ng lahat nang dumating ang kumpirmasyon na namatay sa Covid-19 ang biktima.

## KARAMBOLA NA

Anak ng tokwa, karambola na ang sumunod makaraang malaman ng lahat na nagpositibo ang biktima.

At masaklap malaman ng lahat na dalawang araw makaraang mailibing pa dumating ang kumpirmasyong positibo.

Kabilang sa mga nataranta ang mga tauhan ng punerarya na nagserbisyo sa patay.

Siyempre pa, nataranta rin ang mga kamag-anak, kapitbahay, kabarangay, kasampalataya at ka-senior citizen nito at iba pa.

Kanino raw ba galing ang Covid-19 ng namatay at sino-sino ang mga nagbantay at nag-alaga habang nagkakasakit ito hanggang sa bawian ito ng buhay?

Ngayon, kumalat ang katanungan: sino ang susunod na magka-Covid-19 sa mga nakipaglamay at sino ang susunod na mamatay?

Sino ang hindi titindigan ng balahibo sa takot niyan?

## PATAY DUMARAMI

Noong Marso 25, 38 ang patay sa Covid-19 sa mahal kong Pinas.

Dumating ang Marso 26, 45 na ang namatay at sinundan ito ng 54 noong Marso 27; 68 noong Marso 28; 71 noong Marso 29; at 78 kahapon.

Hindi biro-biro ang namamatay araw-araw.

Hanggang kailan magtatagal ang ganitong sitwasyon na bukod sa araw-araw na may patay, palaki nang palaki rin ang bilang ng mga nahahawa?

Mabuti kung pinakamabilis na dumami ang mga nakare-recover o gumagaling.

## PUI PINAUUWI

Isa pang problema ang pagpapauwi sa mga Person Under Investigation.

May mga kaso ring ganito at kasama ang nangyari sa isang staff ng isang kongresman at isang mamamayan din ng Tagudin, Ilocos Sur.

Pinauwi ng mga ospital na pinagdalhan sa kanila ang mga biktima makaraang ituring silang “gumaling” na.

Anak ng pitong putakte, ‘yung staff ng kongresman, namatay pero itong isa, siyempre pa, nasa pangangalaga na ng kaukulang ospital.

Kahit pa inuutusan ang ganitong mga biktima na mag-self at mag-home quarantine, hindi maiwasang may kahalubilo ang mga ito na miyembro ng pamilya at komunidad, lalo't dineklara na silang “magaling” o naka-recover na.

Karambola ulit at ang mahahalagang tanong: sino-sino ang mga nahawa at sino-sino ang susunod na kunin ni Lord?

Nakupo!

## **RAPID TESTING KIT**

Ayon sa Department of Health, marami na ang dumating na mahuhusay na testing kit.

Inihihwalay na rin nila ang mga dumarating na testing kit na mahihinang klase gaya ng ilang napunta sa ibang mga bansa gaya ng Spain.

Ang Research Institute for Tropical Medicine ay inayos upang magkaroon ng kakayahang magsuri ng nasa 900 hanggang 1,000 na swab sampol ng mga pasyenteng PUI.

May dumating nang nasa 100,000 testing kit mula sa China at may nanggaling na rin sa Singapore na 43,000 piraso.

Ang World Health Organization, nauna nang nagpadala at maging ang South Korea

May sarili na rin tayong tagagawa ng testing kit gaya ng University of the Philippine National Institute of Health.

Pero may mga matagal pa ring proseso.

Ang dapat ngayon ay rapid testing kit na sa dalawang oras ay makikita na ang resulta.

Ang South Korea, nakapagsusuri ng 20,000 araw-araw dahil sa rapid testing kit.

Hindi ba natin magagawa ito?

## **KAYANG NATIN LABANAN**

Kaya nating labanan ang Covid-19 sa pamamagitan ng sistemang “by hook and by crook” o “santong dasalan at santong paspasn.”

‘Yun bang === kung hindi makukuha sa pakiusapan, gamitin ang pwersa.

Sa ibang bansa gaya ng China at South Korea na masasabing tagumpay ang laban sa sakit, ginamit ang sistemang “Great Wall” o istriktong lockdown at home quarantine at ginamit nila ang People’s Liberation Army at mga pulis para rito.

Pareho ang China at South Korea na inaaresto ang mga ayaw sumunod sa lockdown at home quarantine at nagtatago o ayaw magpa-test kung may mga sintomas na ang mga ito.

Sa China, sinisibak ang mga opisyal ng gobyerno na mahihina ang loob na magsagawa ng lahat ng paraan at magpatupad ng batas para maproteksyunan ang mga mamamayan sa Covid-19.

Ang maganda sa dalawang bansang nabanggit, higit na marami ang sumunod sa batas kaysa pasaway.

Source: <https://remate.ph/karambola-sa-nagpositibo-makaraang-malibing/>



# NWRB to begin low water allocation for C. Luzon irrigation on April 1

Published March 31, 2020, 1:15 PM

By *Ellalyn de Vera-Ruiz*

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) will be implementing lower water allocation for the irrigation requirements of some farmlands in Central Luzon starting April 1.

From 20 cubic meters per second (cms) of raw water coming from Angat Dam, the irrigation allocation for farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga will be reduced to 15 cms in April.



A part of Angat Dam is seen at Norzagaray, Bulacan. (JANSEN ROMERO / MANILA BULLETIN)

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. said the reduction in irrigation water may only bring minimal effect on farms in Bulacan and Pampanga as it is already harvesting season in these provinces. The allocation for domestic water will remain at a maximum amount of 46 cms, equivalent to around 4,000 million liters per day, David pointed out.

## Enough supply

There have been public concerns of possible water shortage during the warm and dry months as the Angat Dam did not reach its normal high water level of 212 meters last year. The dam's level was around 200 meters at the start of 2020.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration's (PAGASA) monitoring showed that the water level of Angat Dam was slightly down to 196.51 meters on Tuesday, from 196.62 meters last Monday.

The Angat Dam's water levels by the end of April and May will likely be slightly lower than the dam's rule curves, but will remain sufficient for the domestic, irrigation, and power needs of the facility's service areas, PAGASA hydrologist Sheila Schneider said.

She said that a rule curve is the minimum reservoir elevation needed to be maintained by dam operators to ensure the availability of water for irrigation, power generation, and domestic supply

Based on the PAGASA's rainfall projection over the Angat watershed in Bulacan and the current water allocation for its multi-requirements, Schneider said water supply will still be enough until May.

Angat Dam supplies the domestic water requirements of at least 16.5 million consumers in Metro Manila and some parts of Rizal, Laguna, Cavite, and Bulacan; irrigation needs of 28,000 hectares of agricultural land in Bulacan and Pampanga; and hydropower generation from its by-product water releases.

The NWRB appealed to the public to avoid wastage and utilize water responsibly.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/31/nwr-b-to-begin-low-water-allocation-for-c-luzon-irrigation-on-april-1/>

# Sen. Marcos: Inefficient water firms adding problem in fight vs COVID-19

By: [Daphne Galvez](#) - Reporter / [@DYGalvezINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:00 PM March 31, 2020



Sen. Imee Marcos. INQUIRER.net file photo / CATHY MIRANDA

MANILA, Philippines — Continued water service interruptions in Metro Manila reduce the effectiveness of the enhanced community quarantine imposed over Luzon due to the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.

Such was the sentiment of Senator Imee Marcos as she chided water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water for their failure to provide 24/7 water service in all areas in the metropolis.

Marcos said the water interruptions make it difficult for people to do the most basic anti-contamination measures against COVID-19 such as frequent hand washing, bathing upon returning home and the thorough cleaning of utensils, laundry, and surfaces.

“Nasanay na lang tayo sa kapabayaan ng Maynilad at Manila Water. Ngayon na tag-init at bumubuwelo pa lamang ang COVID-19, parang nilalaro ng dalawang kumpanya ang kalusugan at mismong buhay natin,” Marcos said.

(We became used to the negligence of Maynilad and Manila Water. Now that it is dry season and the COVID-19 outbreak is still in its early stage and it appears that the two water concessionaires are playing with our health and our lives.)

“Marami nang problema ang taongbayan, at sana naman maging bahagi ng solusyon ang Maynilad at Manila Water laban sa COVID-19. Pero sa nangyayari, mukhang tubo lang ang inaatupag nila,” Marcos said.

(Our countrymen are enduring a lot of problems already, I hope Maynilad and Manila Water become part of the solution against COVID-19. But apparently, they are just mindful of their earnings.)

She added that water concessionaires should not “brag” about suspending meter readings and on-site billings due to the quarantine period since customers will eventually pay for them.

“Josko, parang may utang na loob pa ang mga customers sa Maynilad at Manila Water, e babayaran din naman nila ang kanilang nakunsumong tubig. Kung tutulong din lang sila, sana lubos-lubusin na nila at wag nang pagbayarin ang mga customers,” the senator said.

(They make it appear that customers owe Maynilad and Manila Water but people will eventually pay for the water they consumed. If they really want to help, they should not charge their customers.)

Edited by JPV

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1251816/sen-marcos-inefficient-water-firms-adding-problem-in-fight-vs-covid-19>

# Decontaminate medical equipment, items before disposal, Masbate City orders

By: [Ma. April Mier-Manjares](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 04:48 PM March 31, 2020

LEGAZPI CITY — The city government of Masbate has required all offices to decontaminate all medical equipment and items before disposal as a preventive measure against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

In an executive order signed on Tuesday, Mayor Rowena Tuason said all personal protective equipment, face masks, and gloves must be decontaminated first by establishments, clinics, public markets, households, and other offices before the collection of the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro).

Tuason has directed the Cenro to devise a plan on proper disposal of the said equipment. The City Health Office was also tasked to conduct an information campaign.

Edited by LZB

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1251804/decontaminate-medical-equipment-items-before-disposal-masbate-city-orders>

# Health frontliners ibinahagi kung paano mag-disinfect bago umuwi sa pamilya

Maan Macapagal, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Mar 31 2020 07:56 PM

MAYNILA — Sa gitna ng krisis dahil sa COVID-19, maraming health frontliners ang nangangamba, hindi lamang para sa kanilang sarili kundi para na rin sa kanilang inuuwiang pamilya.

Marami sa healthcare workers ngayon, sari-saring seremonyas ang ginagawa bago tumapak sa kanilang mga tahanan mula sa ospital na pinagtatrabahuhan.

Ang internist at rheumatologist si Dr. Geraldine Zamora, pagkagaling sa ospital ay sinisiguro niyang wala siyang germs na naiuwi sa bahay.

"Pag-uwi ko sa bahay, pumupunta ako agad sa sarili kong banyo, iwan lahat ng sapatos. Ang damit nakababad agad sa tubig na may detergent, minsan may chlorine, sinasabayan ko ng ligo.

Binibilad din niya sa araw ang mga gamit niya sa bag.

Importante rin para sa kanilang exposed sa iba-ibang klase ng pasyente ang palagiang pagsusuot ng mask kahit nasa bahay na.

"Pag-uwi ko, kapag may mga kasama ako, naka-mask pa rin ako para lang sure," ani Zamora.

Samantala, mula naman sa pamilya ng mga doktor si Jopie Sanchez at ayon sa kaniya ay matindi rin ang kanilang safety protocol sa bahay.

Bago pumasok ng bahay, tanggal agad sila ng mga sinuot at doon ay may mga nakaabang nang mga pang-disinfect.

"Kung sa pasyente nga nila maalaga sila what more sa mga tao na nasa bahay nila," ani Sanchez.

Ayon naman sa nurse na si Anabel Julian, pagdating ng bahay ay naliligo na muna siya sa kanilang garahe.

"Pagdating sa bahay, kailangan 'yung shoes mo, damit mo, iwanan sa labas, babad agad sa tubig saka maliligo," pagbabahagi niya.

Ayon sa Philippine Medical Association (PMA), bukod sa tamang paghuhugas ng kamay, ilan sa health guidelines nila ang hindi pagsusuot ng alahas at iba pang accessories sa ospital.

"It could be a potential space for the virus to go to, kase mga metal surfaces 'yan," ani PMA president Dr. Jose Santiago Jr.

Dagdag pa rito ang pagkukuskos ng paa sa basahang may chlorine at tubig; pag-iwas sa pagsusuot ng make-up; at pagtatali ng buhok.

Ang iba naman, gumagawa ng tila decontamination chamber sa kanilang mga tahanan para doon magbihis at mag-disinfect ng mga gamit.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/31/20/health-frontliners-ibinahagi-kung-paano-mag-disinfect-bago-umuwi-sa-pamilya>



# Govt to set guidelines on lifting, extension of quarantine



By [Catherine S. Valente, TMT](#)

April 1, 2020

The government is readying the parameters on the possible lifting, extension or expansion of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Luzon, a Palace official said on Tuesday.



*Cabinet Secretary Karlo Alexei Nograles*

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Alexei Nograles said the technical working group led by the Department of Health (DoH) has been ordered to prepare the guidelines.

“The IATF [EID] Technical Working Group (Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases TWG) to be led by the DoH is directed to convene and finalize the parameters for deciding on the eventual total or partial lifting of the ECQ in Luzon, the possible extension of its duration, or its expansion to other areas outside the contained area, subject to the approval, amendment or modification by the IATF,” Nograles said.

“Sila po ang magse-set ng parameters in order for us to determine kung naging maganda ba ‘yung mga hakbang na ginagawa natin (The TWG will set the parameters in order for us to determine whether the measures we took [against the coronavirus disease 2019 or Covid-19] are effective),” he added.

Nograles, who also serves as spokesman for the IATF-EID, denied anew rumors that the quarantine period will be extended.

Nograles said it was too early to tell if the strict quarantine protocols have flattened the Covid-19 curve.

“There are many ways we can help one another as we work to overcome this crisis together — but it all begins with staying home and taking all the necessary precautions to avoid spreading the virus,” he said.

Meanwhile, Nograles said the IATF-EID TWG has also been directed to formulate and present a decision tool for the management of overseas Filipino workers who might be repatriated through the efforts of the national government.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/01/news/top-stories/govt-to-set-guidelines-on-lifting-extension-of-quarantine/708398/>



# NGCP gives P1B assistance to govt anti-virus efforts



By [Rhaydz B. Barcia, TMT](#)

April 1, 2020

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay: The National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) will be giving a P1-billion aid in support of President Rodrigo Duterte and the national government's efforts to combat the outbreak of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in the country.

In a statement, Nilda Somera, NGCP regional corporate communications and public affairs lead specialist, said the grid operator and transmission service provider would be donating the amount to help medical frontliners fighting the deadly disease.

"The NGCP will be supporting the ongoing battle against the pandemic with a P 500-million donation in the form of goods and medical equipment and another P500 million for the procurement of other Covid-19 response measures, as may be determined by the Office of the President," Somera added.

She said the P1-billion donation is over and above earlier NGCP assistance, including personal protective equipment (PPE), face masks, meal and other supplies for the frontline workers in the health industry, and the Meals on Wheels program that distributes hot meals to indigent members of the community.

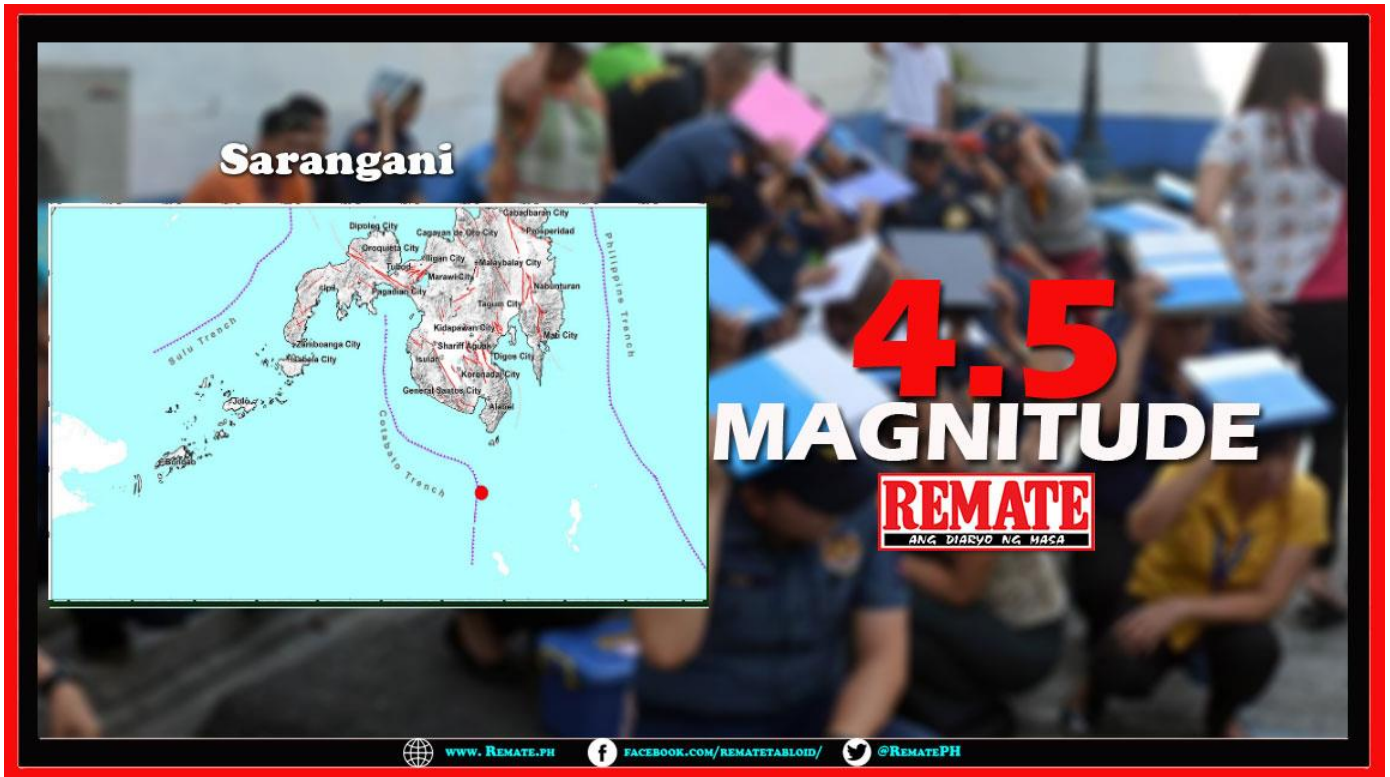
"Through our initial coordination with the Office of the President, we were instructed to donate entirely in the form of medical equipment, with specific items such as video laryngoscopes, ventilators and total face masks," Somera added.

The NGCP's technical partner, the State Grid Corp. of China, also donated 500,000 face masks through the Philippine Red Cross.

"Our stakeholders, particularly the public, can be assured that the NGCP will continue to look for opportunities to support the government I in battling this pandemic. We recognize that the only way to defeat this global health threat is through our collective efforts," the statement said.

The NGCP is a Filipino-led, privately owned company in charge of operating, maintaining and developing the country's power grid, led by majority shareholders Henry Sy Jr. and Robert Coyiuto.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/01/news/regions/ngcp-gives-p1b-assistance-to-govt-anti-virus-efforts/708498/>



## M-4.5-magnitude na lindol yumanig sa Davao Occidental: Phivolcs

March 31, 2020 @ 4:28 PM 13 hours ago  
Views: 58

Manila, Philippines – Niyang ng 4.5-magnitude na lindo ang probinsya ng Davao Occidental, Martes ng hapon, Marso 31, ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

Naitala ang pagyanig bandang 3:27 ng hapon sa layong 94 kilometers southwest ng Sarangani.

Tectoni ang origin na lindol na may lalim na 15 kilometers.

Ayon sa Phivolcs na hindi naman magdudulot ng pagkasira o aftershock ang pagyanig. RNT

Source: <https://remate.ph/m-4-5-magnitude-na-lindol-yumanig-sa-davao-occidental-phivolcs/>

# 4.5-magnitude quake jolts Davao Occidental; no damage expected

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Mar 31 2020 05:15 PM



MANILA - A 4.5-magnitude earthquake struck Davao Occidental province Tuesday afternoon, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

The tectonic tremor occurred at 3:27 p.m. some 94 kilometers southwest of Sarangani town. It had a depth of 15 kilometers.

Phivolcs said the quake would not cause damage nor spawn aftershocks.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/31/20/45-magnitude-quake-jolts-davao-occidental-no-damage-expected>

In an African forest, a fight to save the endangered

TITLE: pangolin

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# In an African forest, a fight to save the endangered pangolin

Updated March 31, 2020, 11:20 PM

By Agence France-Presse

The prehistoric shape is hard to make out as it moves slowly through the gloomy forest, so trackers listen for the rustle of scales against the leaves to pick up its trail.

Pangolins in Asia, like this Formosan pangolin, are also under threat from the illegal trade (AFP Photo/Sam YEH/MANILA BULLETIN)



Their target is the long-tailed pangolin — a little mammal also called the scaly anteater, which will be lucky to survive to the end of this century.

The harmless creature has no defence against predators apart from its small size and a camouflage of brown scales covering its body.

Today, the world's pangolin species are listed as either vulnerable or critically endangered.

The pangolin is considered the most-trafficked animal on the planet — the victim of mass poaching for bushmeat and sales of its scales, especially to China.

According to a study published in 2017 by the Conservation Letters journal, between 400,000 and 2.7 million of the animals are hunted each year in central African forests.

Their plight has leapt to worldwide prominence as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The microbe is believed to have leapt the species barrier in markets in China, where pangolins and other wild animals are killed for their meat.

After testing more than 1,000 samples from wild animals, scientists at the South China Agricultural University found the genome sequences of viruses found on pangolins to be 99 percent identical to those on coronavirus patients.

Anecdotal evidence from Gabon suggests that the bushmeat trade in pangolins has plummeted since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic — but wildlife experts say it is too early to say whether this decline will last, and what impact this will have on the creatures' survival.

## 'No data exists'

The Dzanga-Sangha National Park, in the far southwest of the CAR, is the last sanctuary for animal life in a poor country ravaged by civil war. Its dense forest offers one of the world's few refuges for a species facing extinction. In this haven, pangolin trackers have no interest in the creature's meat or taking the scales that sell at phenomenal prices in Chinese traditional medicine for their supposed therapeutic qualities — claims that are scientifically unproven and strongly contested.

Researcher Maja Gudehus is leading a team in Dzanga-Sangha to study pangolins in their natural habitat, the better to understand their ways and to protect them.



In an African forest, a fight to save the endangered

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The project is unique in Africa. While their meat is prized, little is known about pangolins scientifically. Gudehus wants to unlock knowledge about their longevity, territory, food, life habits and reproductive cycle.

“Virtually no data exists about the long-tailed pangolin and not much more about the other African species,” the Swiss scientist explained while watching her protege clamber in the branches overhead.

### Helped by Pygmies

The animal is particularly easy to capture. When it senses danger, it curls up into a ball, which humans have but to pick up. But in captivity, it is one of the most difficult creatures to study.

“You can’t keep them more than a few days. They don’t eat, die from stress, gastritis, and other problems we don’t know yet,” Gudehus said.

The only solution is to monitor a few clearly identified specimens, with the help of Pygmies in the region. The knowledge of the Baka people, fine guides to the forest, is essential in tracking the fragile and fearful animals.

Of three creatures recently under observation, one has vanished and another was the victim of a hitherto unknown parasite

“Normally one can tell when an animal is not well. But pangolins can die in half an hour without giving you time to notice,” said Gudehus.

Gudehus uses whatever she can to provide necessary treatment. Her laboratory is also her home, a tiny shack besieged by vegetation, where scientific literature and boxes of medical supplies are packed in between her microscope and a camp bed.

### ‘Difficult to follow’

“We used to see many pangolins,” said Didon, one of the most respected Baka trackers in the region. “Today, they’ve become rare.”

While all four African species of pangolin are present in the CAR and officially protected, the law is very hard to enforce. Two-thirds of the country are still in the hands of armed groups following a succession of conflicts.

“Unlike elephants, pangolins are very difficult to track, and it’s rare to be able to arrest poachers in the act,” said Luis Arranz, the national park representative of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

“We have to rely on seizures on the road and on our informers.”

In the park’s offices, Arranz opened a metal door to give an idea of the scale of trafficking. Crates on shelves are overflowing with scales that had been destined for the Chinese market. The collection is valued at several hundred thousand euros (dollars).

“Here, many people do that,” said a local hunter, asking not to be named. “A pot of pangolin scales sells for about 30,000 CFA francs (46 euros / \$50). If there was work here, people wouldn’t hunt.”

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/31/in-an-african-forest-a-fight-to-save-the-endangered-pangolin/>



# The pandemic isn't fixing climate change

By John Sutter (Opinion)

Published Mar 31, 2020 1:45:36 PM



The internet has deemed 2020 canceled. And now everyone's looking for a silver lining. But you know what's not a silver lining of this pandemic? Fixing the climate crisis. (FILE PHOTO)

**(CNN)** — The internet has deemed 2020 canceled. And now everyone's looking for a silver lining.

But you know what's not a silver lining of this pandemic? Fixing the climate crisis. We haven't fixed it, aren't fixing it, and the way we're talking about all of this is gross.

You've probably seen these headlines — that air pollution and heat-trapping emissions appear to be down as the world economy sits idle. Millions of people are trapped at home while Covid-19, the novel coronavirus, sweeps the globe. We're not consuming in the way that we normally would. We're not flying, driving, gathering, meeting — basically, we're not "doing" at all.

And yes, all of these inactions curb pollution — a bit.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

The public conversation, online and off, has been too quick to celebrate the unintended consequences of a pandemic that, remember, is killing thousands of people.

One Twitter user wrote: "-Venice Canal has become clear

"-Italy Coasts have dolphins coming nearer

"-Japan has deers (sic) roaming the streets

"-Thailand has monkeys doing the same

"-China has record-breaking pollution cuts,

"The Earth is healing."

Um, no.

"It is amazing how a very complex system that is ruling our climate — how quickly that can change, how rapidly," Alexander Verbeek, a Dutch environmentalist, said in an interview with TRT World. "For instance, in New York City, there was a study that because of less cars, the carbon monoxide — not the carbon dioxide — is down 50%, and carbon dioxide is down something like 5% to 10% just because of the reductions of cars in New York ... We saw in China a reduction of 25% in the CO2 emissions. So, it proves that it can be done."

Verbeek is someone I respect. He and others are careful to say they're not celebrating the loss of life, or that we've solved the climate crisis because pollution is down.

But a brief pause on our normal emission levels related to Covid-19 does not prove we are going to reduce emissions in the longer term, as we must.

And real solutions to the climate crisis don't look like this.

Others are troubled by these associations, too.

"[I]t doesn't feel right to celebrate [a reduction in CO2 emissions] when it comes at the high cost of the lives of people — elders, sick and disabled people, and an increase in racist attacks against the Asian community worldwide," Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, wrote on Facebook recently. She is a poet, artist and activist from the Marshall Islands, a country in the Pacific that could disappear beneath rising seas because of climate change. "Real, meaningful climate action is all about being inclusive, and it doesn't leave our most vulnerable community members behind."

My beef with the corona-climate chatter goes beyond decorum.

There are a couple of odd associations at play here.

Policy wonks have spent years debunking the myth that economic growth and fossil fuel pollution march in lockstep. They don't. There have been periods of time when emissions declined while economies continued to grow. How exactly to curb global warming pollution is the source of healthy debate, but it's clear society can be prosperous — and healthy — and also avoid existential collapse in the form of climate apocalypse. It's not either-or.

The truth is that fixing global warming will not be easy, but it will not look like this. It will look like cleaner technologies, different sources of power — wind, not coal — cleaner, denser, more-walkable cities. It will look like plant-based diets, more trees, electric planes, and so on. It looks like carbon taxes and regulating (and prosecuting) of still-powerful fossil fuel interests.

It looks like action, not inaction; taking to the streets, not staying home.

I've also seen smart writers draw parallels between the urgency with which many individuals (thankfully) are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and the urgency that's needed to respond to the climate crisis.

Yes, we need urgent action on climate. But motivation matters. I see no reason to believe that the pollution-reductions associated with the pandemic will last beyond the duration of this public-health crisis. We need the public to see and be motivated by the very real and very clear dangers of the climate crisis — and for that motivation to continue in the long-haul, well beyond coronavirus, well beyond the decade, in fact.

If anything, the Covid-climate talk may fool some people into thinking we've already "fixed" global warming — that a slight leveling-off of some pollutants means we bought more time.

We haven't. We're already on borrowed time. The climate crisis is an emergency, too, and has been for decades. A NASA scientist, James Hansen, testified about global warming in the US Senate in 1988, saying the era of global warming had begun. Alarm bells have continued to ring throughout the years from scientists, from the UN, and from many world leaders. We now have only a matter of years not just to slow fossil fuel pollution but to eliminate it.

If there's one tiny silver lining that I take from the way individuals are responding to the coronavirus pandemic, it's that social norms can and do change on a dime.

Elbow bumps, video chats, social-distanced picnics, hanging out the window and banging pots at 8 p.m. in support of medical workers and others on the front lines — all of these have become not just normal but expected behaviors in many peer groups, seemingly overnight.

We can and should make the same shift in attitudes toward fossil fuels — stigmatizing flying, driving gas-guzzlers, eating beef, and so on.

And, more importantly, because climate change is a system problem, not just an individual one, we can change our attitudes toward politicians who enable the status quo.

We can — and must — choose to fix global warming.

But it won't happen on the coattails of a deadly pandemic.

**Editor's note:** John D. Sutter is a CNN contributor and a National Geographic Explorer. He is director of the forthcoming *BASELINE* series, which is visiting four locations on the front lines of the climate crisis every five years until 2050. Visit the project's website or follow him on Instagram. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own. View more opinion at CNN.

This story was first published on CNN.com "[The pandemic isn't fixing climate change](#)"

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/3/31/pandemic-not-fixing-climate-change.html?fbclid=IwAR3MEddYkd3naQ8foIMdMf7KljuYZM6tb5D704A5CG4x2BTsPSaiBj6MZck>

## Huge forest fire in China kills 19

*posted* April 01, 2020 at 12:05 am

by [AFP](#)

Eighteen firefighters and one forestry guide died while fighting a huge forest fire in southwestern China, the local government said Tuesday.

State television footage showed large flames shooting into the sky from the mountains above the city of Xichang in Sichuan province, turning the sky orange.

Heavy clouds of smoke billowed above the buildings and roads of the city, which has a population of some 700,000 people.

The blaze started near Xichang in the southwestern province's mountainous Liangshan prefecture at 3:00 pm (0700 GMT) on Monday, "directly threatening the safety of Xichang city", the city government said in a Weibo statement on Tuesday morning.

More than 140 fire engines, four helicopters and nearly 900 firefighters have been sent to tackle the blaze, according to local officials.

In total, over two thousand emergency workers are involved in rescue efforts to contain the blaze and more than 1,200 local people have been evacuated.

Helicopters were still battling the blaze Tuesday morning.

Several forest fires have broken out in the same prefecture in recent days, reported state news agency Xinhua.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/320765>

# Nineteen killed in massive China forest fire



Published  
17 hours ago

on March 31, 2020 02:06 PM  
By **Agence France-Presse**



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Last April, twenty-seven firefighters were killed in a huge forest fire in Muli County in the same prefecture. Authorities deployed 700 firefighters to the scene.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/03/31/nineteen-killed-in-massive-china-forest-fire/>



# Hungry and in chains, Thailand's tourist elephants face crisis

Published March 31, 2020, 4:19 PM

By *Agence France-Presse*

Underfed and chained up for endless hours, many elephants working in Thailand's tourism sector may starve, be sold to zoos or be shifted into the illegal logging trade, campaigners warn, as the coronavirus decimates visitor numbers.



This handout photo from the Thai Elephant Alliance Association taken on March 28, 2020 and released on March 29, 2020 shows an elephant foraging for food next to the Patara Elephant Farm in an area affected by drought near Chiang Mai, where many camps have been shuttered by the government due to fears of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus spreading.

(AFP PHOTO / THAI ELEPHANT ALLIANCE ASSOCIATION / MANILA BULLETIN)

Before the virus, life for the kingdom's estimated 2,000 elephants working in tourism was already stressful, with abusive methods often used to 'break them' into giving rides and performing tricks at money-spinning animal shows.

With global travel paralyzed the animals are unable to pay their way, including the 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of food a day a captive elephant needs to survive.

Elephant camps and conservationists warn hunger and the threat of renewed exploitation lie ahead, without an urgent bailout.

"My boss is doing what he can but we have no money," Kosin, a mahout — or elephant handler — says of the Chiang Mai camp where his elephant Ekkasit is living on a restricted diet.

Chiang Mai is Thailand's northern tourist hub, an area of rolling hills dotted by elephant camps and sanctuaries ranging from the exploitative to the humane.

Footage sent to AFP from another camp in the area shows lines of elephants tethered by a foot to wooden poles, some visibly distressed, rocking their heads back and forth.

Around 2,000 elephants are currently "unemployed" as the virus eviscerates Thailand's tourist industry, says Theerapat Trungprakan, president of the Thai Elephant Alliance Association.

The lack of cash is limiting the fibrous food available to the elephants "which will have a physical effect", he added. Wages for the mahouts who look after them have dropped by 70 percent.

Theerapat fears the creatures could soon be used in illegal logging activities along the Thai-Myanmar border — in breach of a 30-year-old law banning the use of elephants to transport wood.

Others "could be forced (to beg) on the streets," he said.

It is yet another twist in the saga of the exploitation of elephants, which animal rights campaigners have long been fighting to protect from the abusive tourism industry.

Hungry and in chains, Thailand's tourist elephants

April 1, 2020

TITLE: face crisis

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### 'Crisis point'

For those hawking a once-in-a-lifetime experience with the giant creatures — whether from afar or up close — the slump began in late January.

Chinese visitors, who make up the majority of Thailand's 40 million tourists, plunged by more than 80 percent in February as China locked down cities hard-hit by the virus and banned external travel.

By March, the travel restrictions into Thailand — which has 1,388 confirmed cases of the virus — had extended to Western countries.

With elephants increasingly malnourished due to the loss of income, the situation is "at a crisis point," says Saengduean Chailert, owner of Elephant Nature Park.

Her sanctuary for around 80 rescued pachyderms only allows visitors to observe the creatures, a philosophy at odds with venues that have them performing tricks and offering rides.

She has organized a fund to feed elephants and help mahouts in almost 50 camps nationwide, fearing the only options will soon be limited to zoos, starvation or logging work.

For those restrained by short chains all day, the stress could lead to fights breaking out, says Saengduean, of camps that can no longer afford medical treatment for the creatures.

Calls are mounting for the government to fund stricken camps to ensure the welfare of elephants. "We need 1,000 baht a day (about \$30) for each elephant," says Apichet Duangdee, who runs the Elephant Rescue Park.

Freeing his eight mammals rescued from circuses and loggers into the forests is out of the question as they would likely be killed in territorial fights with wild elephants.

He is planning to take out a two million baht (\$61,000) loan soon to keep his elephants fed. "I will not abandon them," he added.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/31/hungry-and-in-chains-thailands-tourist-elephants-face-crisis/>

# Extreme isolation: World's last virus-free corners hold tight

**Bernadette Carreon, Agence France-Presse**

Posted at Mar 31 2020 03:47 PM



This handout photo taken in February 6, 2020 and released on March 31, 2020 by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) shows expeditioners cruising past icebergs in an inflatable boat near the ADD's Mawson Station in Antarctica. © Adam Fulton, Australian Antarctic Division via AFP

KOROR, Palau - A coronavirus-free tropical island nestled in the northern Pacific may seem the perfect place to ride out a pandemic -- but residents on Palau say life right now is far from idyllic.

The microstate of 18,000 people is among a dwindling number of places on Earth that still report zero cases of COVID-19 as figures mount daily elsewhere.

The disparate group also includes Samoa, Turkmenistan, North Korea and bases on the frozen continent of Antarctica.

A dot in the ocean hundreds of kilometers from its nearest neighbors, Palau is surrounded by the vast Pacific, which has acted as a buffer against the virus.

Along with strict travel restrictions, this seems to have kept infections at bay for a number of nations including Tonga, the Solomons Islands, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia.

But remoteness is not certain to stop the relentless march of the new disease. The Northern Mariana Islands confirmed its first cases over the weekend, followed by a suspected death on Monday.

Klamiokl Tulop, a 28-year-old artist and single mum, is hopeful Palau can avoid the fate of Wuhan, New York or Madrid -- where better-resourced health services were overrun.

But she describes a growing sense of dread, a fear that the virus is coming or could already be on the island undetected.

"You can feel a rising tension and anxiety just shopping," she told AFP. "Stores are crowded even more during non-payday weeks."

There have been several scares on Palau, including a potential case that saw one person placed into quarantine this week as authorities await test results.

## ANTARCTIC SECLUSION

Inside Australia's 4 remote Antarctic research bases, around 90 people have found themselves ensconced on the only virus-free continent as they watch their old home transform beyond recognition.

There is no need for social distancing in the tundra.

"They're probably the only Australians at the moment that can have a large dinner together or have the bar still open or the gym still open," Antarctic Division Operations manager Robb Clifton told AFP.

The bases are now isolated until November, so the group is safe, but Clifton admits "the main thing that's on the mind of expeditioners is how their loved ones are going back home."

In some places, reporting no cases does not always mean there are no cases to report.

North Korea has portrayed emergency measures as an unqualified success in keeping COVID-19 out, despite sustained epidemics in neighboring China and South Korea.

But state media also appears to have doctored images to give ordinary North Koreans face masks -- handing skeptics reason to believe the world's most secretive government may not be telling the whole truth.

### 'WAITING FOR THE INEVITABLE?'

While Palau has no confirmed cases, it has still been gripped by the society-altering fears and economic paralysis that have affected the rest of the world.

Supermarket aisles in the country's largest town Koror have seen panic buying and there are shortages of hand sanitizers, masks and alcohol.

The islands depend heavily on goods being shipped or flown in, meaning supplies can quickly run low.

United Airlines used to fly six times a week from nearby Guam -- which has seen more than 50 cases -- but now there is just one flight a week.

"Look at how bad we coped when shipments were late before this pandemic happened," Tulop said. "Everyone was practically in uproar."

Residents have been practicing social distancing. Doctors are waiting for test kits to arrive from Taiwan. The government is building five isolation rooms that will be able to hold up to 14 patients.

It all feels like waiting for the inevitable.

"I would like to be optimistic we won't get the virus," Tulop said. "But Palau would most definitely get it. We rely heavily on tourism and most of us even need to travel for work."

Rondy Ronny's job is to host big tourist events, but work has already dried up, and he admits to being "very anxious".

"I have loans and bills and payments due," he said. "This will definitely put me back, I hope the government will do something about our economy too, to help it recover."

Palau's biggest test may yet come with the first positive case.

But even in the most remote corners of the world, the impact of this truly global pandemic is already being felt.

Nowhere, it seems, is truly virus-free.

© Agence France-Presse

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/03/31/20/extreme-isolation-worlds-last-virus-free-corners-hold-tight>



# Palau: Virus-free paradise



By [Agence France-Presse](#)

April 1, 2020

A coronavirus-free tropical island nestled in the northern Pacific may seem the perfect place to ride out a pandemic — but residents on Palau say life right now is far from idyllic.

The microstate of 18,000 people is among a dwindling number of places on Earth that still report zero cases of Covid-19 — coronavirus disease 2019 — as figures mount daily elsewhere.



*Mawson Station, Antarctica: This handout photo taken on February 20, 2020 and released on March 31 by the Australian Antarctic Division shows the Aurora Australis leaving the winter team of 19 expeditioners at Mawson research station for the rest of the 2020. Inside Australia's four remote Antarctic research bases, some 89 people find themselves ensconced on the only COVID-19 coronavirus-free continent as they watch their old home transform beyond recognition. AFP PHOTO / MATT WILLIAMS / AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC DIVISION*

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Along with strict travel restrictions, this seems to have kept infections at bay for a number of nations including Tonga, the Solomons Islands, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia.

But remoteness is not certain to stop the relentless march of the new disease. The Northern Mariana Islands confirmed its first cases over the weekend, followed by a suspected death on Monday.

Klamiokl Tulop, a 28-year-old artist and single mum, is hopeful Palau can avoid the fate of Wuhan, New York or Madrid — where better-resourced health services were overrun.

But she describes a growing sense of dread, a fear that the virus is coming or could already be on the island undetected.



“You can feel a rising tension and anxiety just shopping,” she told Agence France-Presse “Stores are crowded even more during non-payday weeks.”

There have been several scares on Palau, including a potential case that saw one person placed into quarantine this week as authorities await test results.

*AFP*

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/01/news/world/palau-virus-free-paradise/708482/>