

DENR promotes earth-friendly habits

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on April 3, 2020 03:10 AM

By **Gabbie Parlade**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu encouraged Filipinos to practice earth-friendly habits as the country is contending with the current health crisis. Cimatu alluded to the public's proper water usage, energy conservation, and garbage disposal to be observed as households are confined in their homes.

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

He added that households should use water responsibly due to an increase in water consumption following the Department of Health (DoH) frequent handwashing protocol against the 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," Cimatu said.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda added that proper garbage disposal and segregation will somewhat help garbage collectors especially as their job exposes them to a lot of potentially contaminated waste.

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

He earlier pointed out that the amount of hospital waste has increased by four times since the pandemic started and requires incineration for proper disposal.

Antiporda also urged local government units to provide personal protective equipment for waste collectors due to the risk of exposure to the virus.

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

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/03/denr-promotes-earth-friendly-habits/>

Legarda hopes improving air quality in Metro Manila would be sustained

Published April 2, 2020, 9:23 AM

By Charissa Luci-Atienza

Deputy Speaker and Antique Rep. Loren Legarda has sought stricter implementation of environmental laws to ensure public safety and health amid the recorded “improving” air quality in Metro Manila.

The House leader expressed hope that substantial decrease in levels of particulate matter (PM) in Metro Manila will be sustained even after the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) is lifted by the government.



(PHOTO/ ALVIN KASIBAN)

“The improvement in our air quality may just be temporary and would likely see a reverse when industries, businesses, transportation, and daily activities resume. This health crisis, although truly unfortunate, provided us a glimpse on the quality of air we and our families could be enjoying if our economy utilizes more of the clean sources of energy and not fossil fuel,” Legarda said in a statement.

Legarda, a former senator, is the author of the Clean Air Act and Renewable Energy Act.

Citing the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), she noted that the air quality in Metro Manila is “improving”, recording “good” or “moderate/fair” levels of PM10 (inhalable particles 10 micrometers or smaller in diameter) in various cities.

Legarda said the national and local government have to step up as air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year and that nine out of ten people breathe air containing high levels of pollutants, quoting the World Health Organization (WHO).

In the Philippines alone, 120,000 Filipinos die every year because of air pollution, she said.

“Air pollution, which causes long-term ailments such as asthma, and impairs children’s cognitive development, costs societies across the globe US\$5 trillion annually,” the former chairperson of the Senate Committee on Finance said.

She voiced out the call made earlier by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for all the countries to address air pollutants, such as black carbon from diesel engines and trash burning to help alleviate global warming by up to 0.5 degrees Celsius over the next few decades.

“As we exert all efforts to contain this pandemic, let us also be reminded to pursue and embrace sustainable principles and practices in our communities and homes,” Legarda said.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/02/legarda-hopes-improving-air-quality-in-metro-manila-would-be-sustained/>

2 green sea turtles freed in waters off Tacloban's

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2 green sea turtles freed in waters off Tacloban's Cancabato Bay

By: [Joey Gabieta](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Inquirer Visayas](#) / 02:39 PM April 02, 2020

TACLOBAN CITY — Two green sea turtles were released back to their habitat after they got entangled in a fish net owned by a fisherman here.

Fisherman Florencio Amarilla, 63, found the two female turtles inside his fishnet while he was in the waters off Barangay San Jose, Tacloban City on March 29.

He informed the Philippine Coast Guard about it before the turtles were turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Eastern Visayas (DENR-8) last March 30. DENR officials subsequently released the two turtles, considered endangered species, at the Cancabato Bay in this city.

“The turnover of the two juvenile green sea turtles by a responsible fisherman to the proper authorities is a beacon of hope in these trying times,” said DENR executive director Tirso Parian Jr., in a statement.

One of the green sea turtles had a tag, which means that it was previously captured, and was released to Cancabato Bay last September 8, 2019.

The sea turtle's curved carapace length spanned 17 inches and 15 inches in width. The other turtle, which measures 17 inches in length and 16 inches in width, was untagged. The DENR gave her a 1727M identification number.

Green sea turtles have an average life span of up to 80 years and can grow to 5 feet and weigh up to more than 300 kilos.

Edited by LZB

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1252872/2-green-sea-turtles-freed-in-waters-off-taclobans-cancabato-bay#ixzz6IUupf3S6>



DENR facilitates release of captured Green Sea Turtles

DENR EASTERN VISAYAS · THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2020 · READING TIME: 3 MINUTES

“The call to stop illegal wildlife trade and poaching has never been as urgent as that of today,” says Tirso P. Parian, Jr., Regional Executive Director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Region VIII. Director Parian issued this statement with the recent release of marine turtles by the Department in coordination with its custodian, the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine National Police.

The two Green Sea Turtles were turned-over to the patrolling elements of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Regional Maritime Unit of the Philippine National Police under the command of Police Major Glenn Michael Amoyen on March 29, 2020 at Brgy. Anibong, Tacloban City. These were handed to them by a certain Florencio Amarillo who claimed that both sea turtles got tangled to his fishing net while fishing at Cancabato Bay on the same day.

“The turn-over of two (2) juvenile Green Sea Turtles by a responsible fisherman to the proper authorities is a beacon of hope in these trying times,” says Director Parian.

Upon assessment by DENR technical personnel, one of the Green Sea Turtles bore tag number 1315K. Records from the Conservation and Development Division show that it was previously captured, tagged and released to Cancabato Bay in September 8 of last year. Its Curved Carapace Length (CCL) was at 17 inches while the Curved Carapace Width (CCW) was at 15 inches. The other was untagged, and so a tag with 1727M identification number was pinned for identification and monitoring prior to its release. The Curved Carapace Length and Curved Carapace Width of this turtle measured 17 inches and 16 inches, respectively.

Having been assessed as fit to be released, members of the PCG, PNP Maritime Group and personnel from the DENR brought the sea turtles to an uninhabited coastline of Cancabato Bay, San Jose, Talcoban City and successfully released it back to the bay on March 30, 2020.

“The fact that the Green Sea Turtles were not butchered but turned-over to the authorities is highly commendable and speaks a lot about the maturity of some residents in supporting our wildlife conservation efforts. Both juvenile green sea turtles were female and so there is hope that their population will continue to increase,” says Gimelina L. Parnis, Zoology Technician of DENR who made the assessment of the captured Green Sea Turtles.

Under Sec. 27 and 28 of R.A. 9147 or the “Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act,” the injuring, killing, collection and trading of wildlife is prohibited and any violation thereof is punishable with a fine of as low as Php1, 000.00 to as high as Php5,000,000.00 and/or an imprisonment of 1 month to as long as twelve years, depending on the classification and status of the wildlife.

According to the World Wildlife Organization (WWF), Green Sea Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) are among those listed as endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). They are described as a large and weighty turtle with a wide and smooth carapace. They have an average life span of up to 80 years, can grow up to 5 feet and weigh up to more than 300 kilos. Adult Green Sea Turtles as herbivorous while as juveniles, they also eat invertebrates like crabs, jellyfish and sponges.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/denr-eastern-visayas/denr-facilitates-release-of-captured-green-sea-turtles/2550667825145898/?app=fbl>

DENR official sees revival of native monkey farming
amid global virus contagion

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DENR official sees revival of native monkey farming amid global virus contagion

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

-April 2, 2020

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking into the population boom of an “aggressive” disease-carrying native monkey species in Banton, Romblon, following the reported jump of the ape population in the island municipality.

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon said a team was sent by him to conduct preliminary investigation in the area and verified the report.

“We have already sent a team on the island and we verified the report that there was indeed an increase in the number of monkey population on the island,” Calderon reported.

The Philippines’s long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis philippensis*) is a subspecies of the crab-eating macaque. Aside from being a potential carrier of a deadly virus such as Ebola, they are also known to be very aggressive as they tend to be protective of their troop.

Although there are still no recorded, or reported unprovoked attacks on the human population, so far, these monkeys that became highly dependent on food handouts by tourists sometimes go out to raid houses for morsels.

In Romblon, Calderon said, there are reports that they are not only raiding houses but are destroying farms—targeting small banana and cassava farms, including those planted by subsistence farmers.

With the increasing number of monkeys on the island, Calderon said the DENR is now mulling over to start issuing special permits that will allow the capture of these monkey for research and development and purposes.

“Monkeys are usually exported for purpose of scientific research to produce a cure to diseases, or vaccines, because monkeys are closely associated with humans,” he said.

In the Philippines, he said, there are at least seven monkey farms with special permits to breed native species of monkeys.

“These monkey farms suddenly stopped operation because of the reported spread of the Ebola virus disease several years back, but their permits are still active,” he said, adding that he believes that with the increasing demand for a live specimen for the conduct of scientific research, these farms would soon revive their captive breeding program.

DENR official sees revival of native monkey farming
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The DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) allows farming of monkeys, recognizing their important role in scientific research to fight deadly viruses that could cause global pandemic, such as the novel coronavirus that causes Covid-19.

These farms are strictly regulated.

"They export the progeny, or the offspring of captive monkeys, to laboratories conducting scientific research in search of vaccines," Calderon said.

He said that while the DENR-BMB also issues special permits for wild animals as pets, monkeys are discouraged because of the threat of the Ebola virus. Monkeys may be imported and exported under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora or CITES.

A signatory to CITES, the Philippines strictly adhere to its policy to prohibit the export of species on the endangered list. Native monkeys in the Philippines are considered a "least concern species," which means they do not qualify as threatened, or near threatened.

"So far, there's one permit application that I came across with for harvesting monkeys," Calderon said. Before issuing a special permit, the DENR-BMB looks into the conservation status and conduct a background investigation of the applicants, he added.

Usually, these applicants work for monkey farms whose business is to breed monkeys and sell the offspring, usually to foreign buyers, Calderon said.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/04/02/denr-official-sees-revival-of-native-monkey-farming-amid-global-virus-contagion/>

DENR, communities in MIMAROPA keep eye on

TITLE: forest protection amid COVID-19

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DENR, communities in MIMAROPA keep eye on forest protection amid COVID-19

Apr 1, 2020 Press Release

The group also apprehended 10 sacks of charcoal of forest tree species abandoned at Sitio Talogon, Brgy. Bagong Bayan in Taytay on March 21, according to a report by Taytay CENR officer Alan Valle.



CENRO Sablayan in Occidental Mindoro hauled 880.28 board feet of Amugis, Lauan, and Banuyo, premium species of trees which were believed to be illegally cut just as the country undergoes enhanced community quarantine to fight COVID-19. (Photos from CENRO Sablayan, CENRO Taytay, and PENRO Romblon)

The Forest Product Monitoring Station (FPMS) of CENRO Taytay recovered 10 sacks of charcoal of mangrove species in Barangay Aberawan, El Nido on March 16.

The group also apprehended 10 sacks of charcoal of forest tree species abandoned at Sitio Talogon, Brgy. Bagong Bayan in Taytay on March 21, according to a report by Taytay CENR officer Alan Valle.

“Our team likewise responded to a slash and burn (kaingin) cultivation in Sitio Sablayan, Brgy. Pancol, also in Taytay on March 23. The incident shall be under further investigation as we have already identified the owner of the lot, as well as those who initiated the activity,” Valle reported.

In other parts of MIMAROPA, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in MIMAROPA has also apprehended in separate locations, abandoned lumber which were believed to be illegally cut while the entire country was observing extreme measures to fight COVID-19.

On March 22, the Monitoring and Enforcement Section of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro apprehended and hauled at Sitios Anduyan and San Pablo in Brgy. Alipaoy, Paluan town a total of 880.28 board feet of Amugis, Lauan, and Banuyo, premium species of trees that are used to build structures and make furniture.

“We have to retrieve the lumber immediately, otherwise, the perpetrators would get them back, or other people might take them for personal use,” Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) in Occidental Mindoro, Ernesto Tañada said.

As part of administrative proceedings, a notice was left in the area for any claimant to show proof of ownership of the apprehended lumber. The items were then transported to CENRO Sablayan Coordinating Office in Mamburao for documentation and seizure, and for said office to take custody of the lumber.

Similarly, DENR employees in Sibuyan, Romblon, apprehended from March 23 – 24, Apitong lumber with a total volume of 266 bd ft in Brgy. Espana in San Fernando town. Two days after, with the help of the Philippine National Police, the team also retrieved abandoned 120 bd ft of red Lauan in Brgy. Mabini.

“It is difficult at these times, but we maintain to be on call 24/7 to protect our forests,” Romblon PENR Officer Maximo Landrito expressed.

In light of the imposition of ECQ, government workers in the executive branch were ordered to work from home and maintain skeleton force to respond to essential and urgent services. DENR MIMAROPA, in consonance with the pronouncements of Civil Service Commission and Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, has arranged for alternative working arrangements to ensure continuous delivery of service and safety of personnel at the same time.

“While most of us are at home, that does not stop us from being on the lookout on anyone violating nature,” DENR MIMAROPA regional executive director Henry Adornado said.

“We know that illegal loggers would take advantage of the situation so we strengthen our monitoring and enforcement teams through the LGUs and communities to prevent them (violators) from succeeding in their unlawful activities,” he added.

Adornado thanked the communities for keeping a watchful eye on the environment. CENRO Sablayan received a tip on the abandoned lumber from a concerned citizen, while CENRO Taytay was informed of the illegal activities through social media.

The director clarified that DENR MIMAROPA takes precautionary measures whenever it deploys quick response teams to ensure the health and safety of its personnel as well as the community they are responding to.

“Defending nature is a daunting task, especially during these times. That is why we laud our personnel in the field for doing their job in the midst of this ECQ. We are also grateful knowing that as we all grapple with this dreaded disease, the public remains our constant partner in protecting our environment and natural resources,” he said.

Source: <https://palawan-news.com/denr-communities-in-mimaropa-keep-eye-on-forest-protection-amid-covid-19/>



Deforestation linked to emergence of new diseases

Published April 2, 2020, 1:50 PM

By Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

The continuing deforestation in the country could put the Philippines at risk from the emergence of new infectious diseases, as it loses one of its main protective barriers from possible outbreaks.

Citing various studies from the United Nations and other non-government organizations, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF-Philippines) noted that emerging infectious diseases in tropical countries, like the Philippines, are aggravated, if not caused, by changes in land and forest cover, particularly deforestation and forest fragmentation.

It pointed out that without forests, more and more diseases that could potentially be harmful or fatal to humans will emerge.

There is a need to act fast to prevent this from happening, it said.

“The Philippines has one of the fastest deforestation rates in the world, and yet our forests house two thirds of the planet’s biodiversity, which supports a wide spectrum of flora and fauna. If we continue to allow our forests to be denuded, we will lose our forests in the next two decades and we open ourselves up to risks of emerging diseases,” WWF-Philippines president and CEO Joel Palma said.

The group cited a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) estimates that 47,000 hectares of forest cover is lost each year, attributed mainly to rampant illegal logging and lack of security in protected areas.

This is an alarmingly huge figure that not only affects wildlife in those areas, but also affects the quality of air that humans breathe, lessens the protection that humans get from natural disasters, and dampens the natural prevention of emerging diseases, WWF-Philippines said.

According to Palma, the Philippines could have prevented this from happening, if only it had been more stringent in the implementation of laws that protect forests, as well as implemented programs that aim to further nourish the existing ones. “The time to act now has already passed. We should have acted yesterday to prevent further damage in the future. But this reality is a reminder for us that the severity of this situation calls for collaborative action—everyone must participate to win this war against deforestation,” Palma said.

In partnership with GCash, WWF-Philippines, Biodiversity Finance Initiative of the United Nations Development Programme and the DENR have agreed to virtually plant and nourish 365,000 trees starting July 2020.

Through the GCash Forest program, Filipino mobile phone users can earn green energy points by reducing their individual carbon footprint, such as by paying bills online, which eliminates the need to drive to a bank and consume paper for receipts and forms.

GCash Forest interfaces with existing mobile fitness apps to accurately measure not only the energy saved, but how much carbon emissions are reduced.

Each green energy point corresponds to a gram of carbon saved. The points are then used to nourish a virtual tree in GCash Forest. When users reach 20,560 points, his or her virtual tree will be fully-grown.

“The program calls for the participation of individuals to join hands with us as we rehabilitate the watersheds. We have seen an encouraging number of people willingly volunteering with us as we move on with this project,” Palma said.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/02/deforestation-linked-to-emergence-of-new-diseases/>

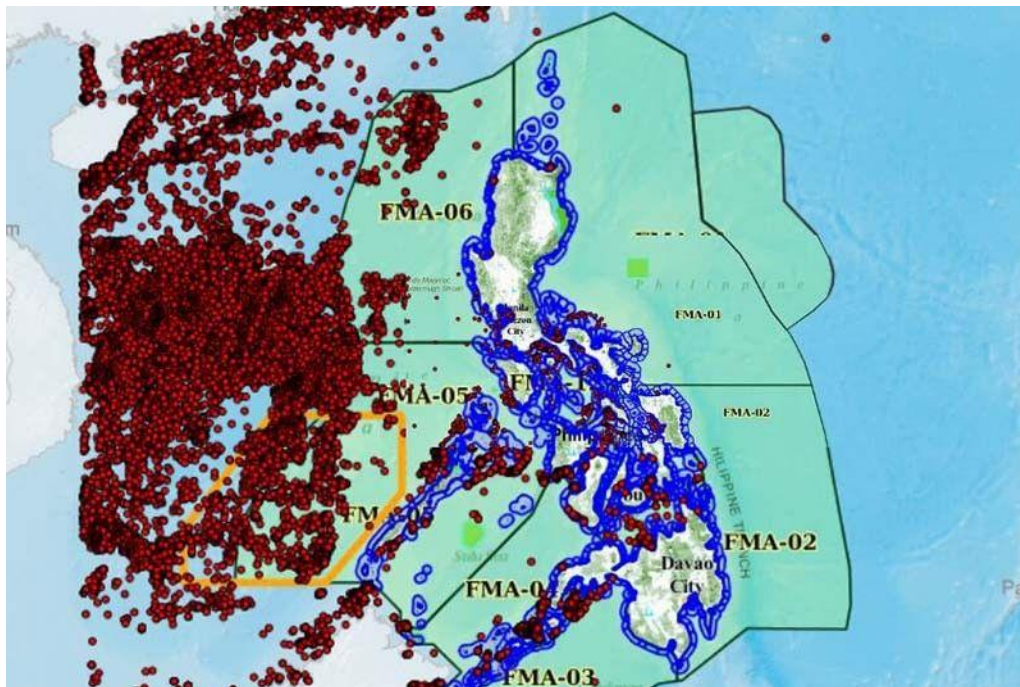
Oceana: Commercial fishing boats seen in municipal

TITLE: waters as gov't preoccupied with COVID-19 fight

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Screengrab from Karagatan Patrol website.

Oceana: Commercial fishing boats seen in municipal waters as gov't preoccupied with COVID-19 fight

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (Philstar.com) - April 2, 2020 - 7:18pm

MANILA, Philippines — Commercial fishing operators have taken advantage of the government agencies' preoccupation with combating the spread of the new coronavirus in the country by entering areas meant for small-scale fishermen, a non-government organization said.

In a statement, Oceana called on national government agencies and on local government units to intensify their maritime patrols to stop commercial fishing boats from entering municipal waters.

Under Republic Act 8550, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, municipal waters extend only up to 15 kilometers from the coastline and also include streams, lake, inland bodies of water, public forest, timber lands, forest reserves or fishery reserves.

These waters are supposed to be for municipal fishing, or "fishing within municipal waters using fishing vessels of three gross tons or less, or fishing not requiring the use of fishing vessels."

Lawyer Gloria Ramos, Oceana vice president, said that "while national and local government agencies are busy performing frontline duties to combat the COVID-19 crisis, it was observed that some commercial fishing operators are exploiting it as an opportunity to violate the law."

Oceana: Commercial fishing boats seen in municipal

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Activities of commercial fishing boats

According to Karagatan Patrol, an online platform for reporting illegal fishing established by Oceana and the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, more than 500 of the vessels detected in the municipal waters in some towns of Palawan, Masbate, Quezon and in the Zamboanga Peninsula between March 22 and 28 were possibly commercial fishing boats.

At the top of the list is Milagros, Masbate in the Visayan Sea with 72 detections of fishing boats of commercial scale. Last year, the weekly average number of commercial fishing vessels detected in Milagros was only 34.

The biggest increase was recorded in Busuanga, Palawan from a weekly average of only five commercial fishing vessels to 53 between March 22 and 28.

City or Municipality	March 22 to 28, 2020	Weekly average in 2019
Milagros, Masbate	72	37
Tongkil, Sulu	67	66
Cuyo, Palawan	64	19
Zamboanga City	60	66
San Jose, Occidental Mindoro	59	11
Busuanga, Palawan	53	5
Magsaysay, Palawan	48	14
Calauag, Quezon	40	21
Aroroy, Masbate	33	11
Unisan, Quezon	30	11

Karapatan Patrol monitors commercial fishing vessels' behavior using a satellite-based surveillance technology called Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite.

But the VIRRS shows only lights emitted by fishing boats at night. The technology does not capture fishing boats that fish during the day.

"Heartened by local chief executives who continue to enforce our fisheries laws amid the crisis, we request more coastal local authorities to keep their fishery enforcers alert while closely watching over cases of COVID-19 among their constituents," Ramos said.

She added: "Our municipal waters provide food for our people including many marginalized sectors, more so at this time."

The inter-agency task force coordinating response to the COVID-19 threat announced on March 25 that healthy fishers and farmers would be exempted from quarantine restrictions since they are essential in ensuring food security.

The coronavirus outbreak in the Philippines has so far infected 2,633 people—107 of who have died.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2020/04/02/2005101/oceana-commercial-fishing-boats-seen-municipal-waters-govt-preoccupied-covid-19-fight>

Wearing of masks mandatory – Palace



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

April 3, 2020

The government has ordered all those living in areas placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to wear face masks in public spaces to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), a Palace official said on Thursday.



LADIES IN WAITING Women wearing face masks line up to enter a grocery store in Quezon City on Thursday, the day Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles ordered the wearing of such masks in public mandatory. PHOTO BY RUY MARTINEZ

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Alexei Nograles said the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases approved the mandatory wearing of face masks to help counter the spread of the virus.

“For areas placed under ECQ, the IATF hereby adopts the policy of mandatory wearing by all residents of face masks, earloop masks, indigenous, reusable or do-it-yourself masks, face shields, handkerchiefs, or such other protective equipment that can effectively lessen the transmission of Covid-19, whenever allowed to go out of their residences,” he added.

He said face masks could either be store-bought or improvised, given the global shortage of face masks.

“Kung kailangan po nating lumabas ng bahay, kailangan po mag-mask. Kahit improvised ito o panyo, basta po may pangtakip tayo ng bibig at ilong (If you need to leave your homes, you need to wear masks. Even if they are improvised or handkerchiefs so long as you cover your mouths and noses),” Nograles added.

“Concerned LGUs (local government units) are hereby enjoined to issue the necessary executive order or ordinance to that effect, and impose such penalties as may be appropriate,” he said.

Nograles noted that the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Textile Research Institute was spearheading the production of 500,000 reuseable and washable face masks.

Quarantine sites

Meanwhile, Nograles bared that the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City and the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Malate, Manila would start accepting Covid-19 patients on April 10.

“We would like to report that the PICC will be ready by April 10. The facilities are being prepared by the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways) and EEI Corp.,” he said.

“The Rizal Memorial Sports Complex being readied by Prime-BMD or Razon Group will be ready by April 10, as well,” he added.

The World Trade Center in Pasay City, which could accommodate 650 potential Covid-19 carriers, would be operational on April 12.

“Together, these three structures can accommodate a total of 1,950 individuals,” Nograles said.

The government has identified other facilities that can be used as quarantine areas, among them the Quezon Institute, Amoranto Stadium, Quezon Memorial Circle Complex, Veterans Memorial Medical Center, all in Quezon City; Philippine Sports Complex in Pasig; and Duty Free Philippines in Parañaque.

Government facilities, including public schools, would also be transformed as quarantine sites to arrest the spread of Covid-19.

Masks everywhere

The use of face masks in Asia during the coronavirus pandemic has been far more widespread than in the West, where governments have urged people to reserve supplies for frontline medical staff, so have they helped limit infections?

Experts agree that the ordinary surgical masks commonly worn in parts of Asia during cold and hayfever seasons are not a foolproof way to prevent coronavirus infection.

But people infected with the virus are advised to wear them to stop the spread to others, and there is evidence that transmission can happen before a person knows they are sick. That has bolstered the argument of mask supporters who believe they can help limit the outbreak.

In parts of Asia, mask-wearing has been a key response to the outbreak, with Japan's government announcing each household would get two reusable cloth versions and Hong Kongers not only wearing them, but sending them to relatives abroad.

Keiji Fukuda, director and clinical professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health, said people in the city see wearing a mask "as a way that the individual is trying to protect both the larger society as well as the self."

The use of masks in parts of Asia with relatively low numbers of infections and deaths from the virus, including Japan and Hong Kong, has led some to theorize mask-wearing is making the difference. But experts are skeptical.

Ben Cowling, a professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health, instead credits a range of public health measures implemented in these countries.

These include "identifying cases and isolating them, tracing and quarantining their contacts, and also implementing social distancing in the community."

WITH AFP

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/03/news/top-stories/wearing-of-masks-mandatory-palace/709145/>



Pagpapalawig sa lockdown, pinaboran ng Pinoy Scientist; 2-3 buwan gugugulin para mapababa ang COVID-19 case

April 2, 2020 @ 6:21 PM 13 hours ago
Views: 186

Manila, Philippines – Pabor ang isang Pinoy scientist na palawigin pa ang Luzon-wide lockdown, dahil maari pang abutin ng 2 hanggang 3 buwan ang Pilipinas para mapababa ang pagtaas ng bilang ng nagpopositibo sa coronavirus disease o COVID-19.

Sa isang interbyu kay Dr. Darwin Bandoy, Assistant Professor sa University of California, maari pa umanong umabot sa 250,000 kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa lalo na kung walang gagawin ukol dito.

“My model is a do-nothing scenario, meaning we don’t implement lockdown, the peak number of cases in my estimate is around 250,000, that includes the asymptomatics but the approximate estimate is 1 to 3 percent of the 250,000 would be severe cases,” paliwanag niya.

Dahil dito ang pagpapahaba ng enhanced community quarantine ay sagot para mabawasan naman ang bilang ng nahahawa sa virus.

“If we remove the enhanced community quarantine on April 13 and will resume to normal activity at April 14, the epidemic curve would rise again. So, based on these predictive models, I wouldn’t recommend removing it so it should be extended...”

Suhestyon naman ng scientist na nararapat na ipatupad ang mahigpit na physical distancing procedures sa public transportation, pagsasagawa ng disinfection, mass testing, at ang pagdadagdag sa bilang ng ventilators.

Makatutulong din ang pagpapahaba ng ECQ sa mga healthcare para hindi na mas lalong magkulang pa ang kanilang mga kagamitan sa pagresponde sa COVID-19 cases.

“My estimate is that to prevent the current trajectory, we need a few more weeks and months to reduce that so that we will not overburden our healthcare, which is already struggling as of the moment,” aniya pa.

Tintulan niya rin ang pagbubukas ng iskul sa ngayon “because based on several studies, opening schools would promote further spread of the disease.”

“The estimate would be around 2 to 3 months before we could really flatten the curve but I’m still waiting for the current data,” aniya pa. **RNT**

Source: <https://remate.ph/pagpapalawig-sa-lockdown-pinaboran-ng-pinoy-scientist-2-3-buwan-gugugulin-para-mapababa-ang-covid-19-case/>



GOV'T EXECS KINAKATAY NA NG COVID-19, MGA MADRE RIN

April 2, 2020 @ 12:50 PM 18 hours ago
Views: 68

NAGSIMULA nang manalasa ang corona virus disease (Covid)-19 sa hanay ng mga opisyal ng ating pamahalaan. At hinid na rin pinalalampas ng Covid-19 maging ang mga madre.

Kaya naman, pairalin natin ang kasabihan mismo sa Biblia na "faith without works is dead."

'Yun bang === hindi lahat ay nakukuha sa pananampalataya at kailangan ang pagkilos mismo ng tao para magkabunga ang isang bagay, gaya ng kaligtasan sa sakuna o kamatayan gaya ng dala-dala ng Covid-19.

Katumbas din ito ng kasabihang, kung hindi makuha sa 'santong dasalan', kunin sa 'santong paspasan.'

MGA BIKTIMA

Naunang namatay si Jala-jala, Rizal Vice Mayor Jala-jala, Rizal Vice Mayor Jose 'Jolet' delos Santos nitong Marso 31.

Sumunod naman kaninang umaga ang pagkamatay ni Philippine Ambassador to Lebanon Bernardita Catalla.

Mismong sa Beirut, Lebanon naabutan ng kamatayan si Amb. Catalla.

Opkors, nabalita na ring may namatay na municipal councilor sa Tayasan, Negros Oriental noong kalagitnaan ng Marso 2020.

Medyo lumapit ang kalawit ng Covid-19 sa higit na matataas na opisyal ng pamahalaan nang mamatay ang isang staff ni Senator Bong Revilla at isang staff din ng isang kongresman.

Siyempre pa, nag-self-quarantine sina senador at kongresman at nagpagamot na rin.

MADRE AT DOKTOR

Ayon mismo sa Department of Health, 12 doktor at 1 nurse na rin ang namatay dahil sa Covid-19.

Napakasakit isiping tila mas marami pa tayong namatay na doktor kumpara sa bilang ng mga doktor na namatay sa China na nasa 8 lamang.

Akalain ba nating mamamatayan tayo ng 12 doktor sa gitna na ng kakaunti pa lang biktima sa Pilipinas, ang namatay na 96 at kumpirmadong 2,311.

Malungkot ding isipin na isang madreng Pinay ang namatay na rin sa Spain, si Benedictine Sister Maria Gratia Balagot

Itinayo ni Sister Balagot ang Babaylan Europa na nakikipaglaban sa mga karapatan ng mga kababaihang Pinay sa Europa at naging superior missionary sa India.

MADRE SA IBANG BANSA

Namatay na rin ang mga madre sa ibang bansa, partikular sa Italia.

Nitong nagdaang mga araw lang, ayon sa Catholic Herald, halos sabay-sabay na namatay ang 6 madre na miyembro ng Missionary Sisters of Charity Mother House sa bayan ng Tortona sa northern Italy.

Nauna rito ang mas maraming pari sa Italia na namatay dahil sa kautusan ni Pope Francis na puntahan ang mga maysakit at basbasan ang mga patay.

E-LAMAY

Hindi akalain ng ating Uzi na aabutin nating lahat ang matagal-tagal na ring gawaing Electronic Lamay o E-Lamay kung tawagin.

Pinauso ito ng mga punerarya para sa mga overseas Filipino worker at kung imposibleng magsama-sama ang mga magkakamag-anak sa isang burol dahil sa layo sa isa't isa at iba pang kadahilanan. Ngayon nauuso ito at kinakailangan sa panahon ng Covid-19 na bawal nang makilamay sa mga namamatay sa nasabing sakit upang maiwasan ang hawaan at posibleng karagdanga kamatayan. Hanggang paghahayag na lang tayo condolence sa internet, sa social media at sa mga tawag at text na rin sa cellphone.

Mahigpit nang ipinagbabawal ng pulisya at ng pamahalaan ang dikitang pakikipaglamay kahait gaano natin kamahal ang pumanaw.

Source: <https://remate.ph/govt-execs-kinakatay-na-ng-covid-19-mga-madre-rin/>

Funds for social amelioration released to agencies

TITLE: 'within 24 to 72 hours'-DBM

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April 3, 2020

DATE



Funds for social amelioration released to agencies 'within 24 to 72 hours' –DBM

[Prinz Magtulis](#) (Philstar.com) - April 2, 2020 - 5:23pm

MANILA, Philippines – Funds for the government’s social amelioration program during the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak will be made available to agencies within one to three days following submission of complete documents, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said.

“Once we receive the request, within 24 to 72 hours at the latest, we can credit the funds, for as long as complete documents and requirements,” Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado said in a text message.

On Thursday morning, DBM already credited to the bank account of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) P100 billion, representing half of the P200-billion budget for the program meant to financially support people who lost their jobs and livelihood due to the outbreak.

The program would grant between P5,000 and P8,000 to 18 million families estimated to have been displaced by work stoppage brought by the outbreak and the month-long Luzon community quarantine intended to stem the virus’ spread. The quarantine, which lapses on April 12 unless extended, was already halfway through when President Duterte announced the assistance last Monday.

“Specifically, the released amount shall be used for the protective services for individuals and families in especially difficult circumstances or assistance to individuals in crisis situations,” DBM said in a statement.

“(This) shall be extended to the target low-income household beneficiaries in the form of cash,” it added.

Funds for social amelioration released to agencies

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As it is, Avisado said DBM does not anticipate any delays in fund releases to agencies, but rather on how agencies like DSWD quickly disburse the money. This is especially crucial on the cash subsidy, which has to be coursed through local government units, which in turn, are in charge of distributing funds to their constituents.

“The distribution system is the one that needs to be efficient and fast because there are many people who need to be assisted,” the budget chief said.

DBM and the Department of Finance (DOF) issued Joint Circular No. 1, which laid out the guidelines for the fund release on what the government dubbed as the largest social protection program in Philippine history.

Specifically, the guidelines tasked the Bureau of the Treasury to identify idle funds within state agencies, corporations and other institutions which will be primarily used to fund the social amelioration program. DOF earlier said within state corporations alone, around P100 billion can be raised.

Available funds would then be pooled, and for frontline agencies like DSWD, a “special budget request” would have to be submitted to the DBM to access funding. An allotment order and notice of cash allocation— documents needed for cash release— would then be issued.

“All budgetary accounting and auditing rules and regulations shall still be applied,” the circular said.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/business/2020/04/02/2005056/funds-social-amelioration-released-agencies-within-24-72-hours-dbm>



Duterte stops patronage politics in COVID aid

[Alexis Romero](#) (The Philippine Star) - April 3, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Citing the need to shield relief efforts from politicking, President Duterte has barred politicians from distributing aid coming from the national government to households affected by the Luzon lockdown, which has been in force since March 17 as part of efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Duterte said he has to issue the order after receiving numerous complaints about the way food and cash assistance are distributed, with some individuals even stealing from donations. The lockdown is until April 12.

“I’ve removed the responsibility from politicians because there are a lot of complaints. I stripped politicians of the responsibility to distribute money and rice,” the President said in a televised address Wednesday night.

“Some people in charge of distribution do some cuts. Instead of seven, they cut them to five in repacking,” he said.

He explained that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) would undertake the task of distributing assistance, even cash.

Duterte said social welfare chief Rolando Bautista, a former military general, would take charge of the distribution of food and cash assistance to low-income households during the quarantine period.

Peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr., the chief implementer of the policy in the fight against COVID-19, would assist in the distribution of goods, he added.

“He (Duterte) won’t allow it to be marred by politics or political patronage,” Nograles said in a televised press briefing yesterday.

“He wants beneficiaries to receive help, aid from the national government. Since the DSWD, the national government will lead the distribution, we will use existing platforms to reach the beneficiaries,” he added.

Nograles clarified that LGUs may still be tapped to assist in the distribution – but under the supervision of the DSWD, the military and the police.

He said LGUs deputized for aid distribution would be required to submit liquidation reports immediately.

Local governments may also continue to use their quick response funds to provide aid to their constituents, Nograles added.

He assured the public that local officials found taking advantage of the health crisis by stealing from donations would be held accountable.

The Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases recently approved the emergency subsidy program, which seeks to provide cash benefits to about 18 million households. The amount of cash assistance ranges from P5,000 to P8,000, depending on the minimum wage in the region where the beneficiaries are based.

Qualified beneficiaries are families with at least one member belonging to vulnerable or disadvantaged sectors, including senior citizens, persons with disability, pregnant and lactating women, solo parents, indigents, indigenous people, public transportation drivers, informal economy workers, house helpers, operators of small stores and vendors.

No stopping private donations

Malacañang also clarified that the government is not stopping private groups from donating to hospitals of their choice.

Duterte recently issued Administrative Order No. 27, which enumerated policies on handling of donations for the government’s campaign against COVID-19.

“The national government is not dissuading private organizations and individuals to receive or give donations to hospitals of their choice, as well as to their local government units,” presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

For lawmakers, distribution of cash aid should begin within the week. Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano and Deputy Speaker LRay Villafuerte, members of the congressional oversight committee on implementation of the Bayanihan to Win as One Act, said the DSWD can do away with the tedious process of validating all 18 million family-beneficiaries by simply referring to its current list of recipients of existing assistance programs.

Sen. Grace Poe said the prompt release of cash assistance would prevent “mass hunger from turning into mass anger.”

Rep. Joey Salceda, chairman of the House ways and means committee, suggested that barangay officials be “given frontliner status and be made eligible for frontliner benefits.”

“This is because the challenge is to keep everyone on the boat during the crisis. The emerging reality is that barangay officials and workers, including tanods, are performing frontline work,” he said.

Minority senators, meanwhile, lambasted politicians who are exploiting the situation to advance their political agenda.

In a joint statement, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, Sens. Francis Pangilinan and Risa Hontiveros said 2022 political campaign is hampering the immediate distribution of relief to millions of poor families.

“It saddens us that there are people who could be so heartless and power-hungry as to take advantage of this crisis to advance their political ambition,” they said. “When charity is politicized, it stinks. In times like this, it kills,” they said. – **With Edu Punay, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Delon Porcalla**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/03/2005137/duterte-stops-patronage-politics-covid-aid>

Metro Manila remains PH epicenter of coronavirus crisis - Galvez

Davinci Maru, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Apr 02 2020 09:31 PM | Updated as of Apr 02 2020 10:30 PM



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Facebook page

MANILA - Metro Manila, home to nearly 13 million people, remains the hardest-hit by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the country, a government official said Thursday.

More than half of the country's coronavirus infections are in the Philippine capital region, which has 1,511 reported cases, said Carlito Galvez Jr., chief implementer of the government's national policy against the COVID-19.

South of Metro Manila, Calabarzon has the second highest number of coronavirus cases with 178, said Galvez, who is also the president's peace adviser.

It is followed by Central Luzon with 65, Davao Region with 61, and Central Visayas with 36.

Bicol Region and Eastern Visayas, meanwhile, are the least affected by the crisis with each 1 reported coronavirus case.

In Metro Manila, Quezon City, the country's most populous city, reported the most number of coronavirus infections at 439, with 27 deaths.

It is followed by Manila with 180 cases, including 10 deaths; Makati City with 144 cases, including 4 deaths; San Juan City with 119 cases, including 8 deaths; and Pasig City with 112 cases, including 6 deaths.

The least affected localities in Metro Manila are Pateros and Navotas, recording 6 and 1 cases, respectively.

As of Thursday, April 2, the Philippines has recorded 2,633 COVID-19 cases.

The total figure includes 107 deaths and 51 people who recovered from the virus, which originated last year in Wuhan City in Hubei province, China.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/04/02/20/metro-manila-remains-ph-epicenter-of-coronavirus-crisis-galvez>

World Bank to rollout \$160-billion emergency aid over

TITLE: 15 months

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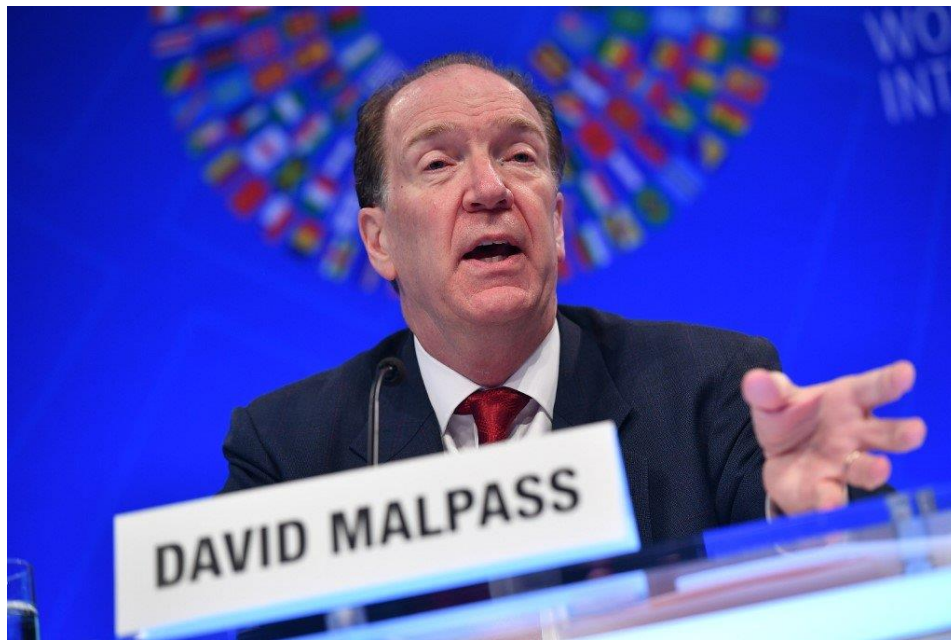
April 3, 2020

DATE

ECONOMY

World Bank to roll out \$160-billion emergency aid over 15 months

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 04:57 AM April 03, 2020



World Bank President David Malpass. AFP file photo

UNITED States — The World Bank on Thursday approved the first steps in a plan to roll out \$160 billion in emergency aid over 15 months to help countries deal with the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

The board of the Washington-based development lender approved the first set of fast-track crisis projects, with an initial \$1.9 billion going to 25 countries, and operations moving forward in another 40 nations, the bank said in a statement.

“The goal of the World Bank in this crisis has been to take broad, fast action, that makes it most effective if we can have a broad response that helps individual countries but that helps the group as a whole,” World Bank President David Malpass told reporters.

“The poorest and most vulnerable countries will likely be hit the hardest, and our teams around the world remain focused on country-level and regional solutions to address the ongoing crisis.” India will be the largest beneficiary of the first wave of programs with a facility for \$1 billion, followed by Pakistan with \$200 million and Afghanistan with a little over \$100 million, but funding is going to countries on nearly every continent, the bank said.

Included in that \$160 billion total is approximately \$14 billion in debt repayments from 76 poor countries to other governments that the bank, along with the International Monetary Fund, has asked rich nations to suspend.

Malpass told reporters the organizations are calling for “a standstill in their repayment expectations,” to begin May 1 and extend through June 2021.

World Bank to rollout \$160-billion emergency aid over

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That “provides new financing to the poorest countries to meet healthcare needs and many of their other needs,” he said, adding that there appeared to be a willingness among G20 nation but each country would have to negotiate individually.

The bank also is working to redeploy \$1.7 billion of existing funding, including the use of “catastrophic deferred drawdowns,” a type of emergency credit line.

In addition, the World Bank’s private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation, is providing \$8 billion in financing “to help private companies affected by the pandemic and preserve jobs.”

The bank is helping countries to purchase medical supplies, train personnel, establish labs and isolation and treatment centers, as well as to help support the most vulnerable households.

Source: <https://business.inquirer.net/294027/world-bank-to-roll-out-160-billion-emergency-aid-over-15-months#ixzz6IVMwINi7>

GMA Network takes part in Earth Hour 2020

posted April 02, 2020 at 07:00 pm

by [Manila Standard Showbiz](#)

GMA Network, through its environmental corporate social responsibility initiative Kapuso ng Kalikasan, recently joined the Earth Hour 2020 in unity with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines' response to the growing need for environmental action.



GMA Network has joined millions of people around the world in switching off their lights in support of nature and our planet.

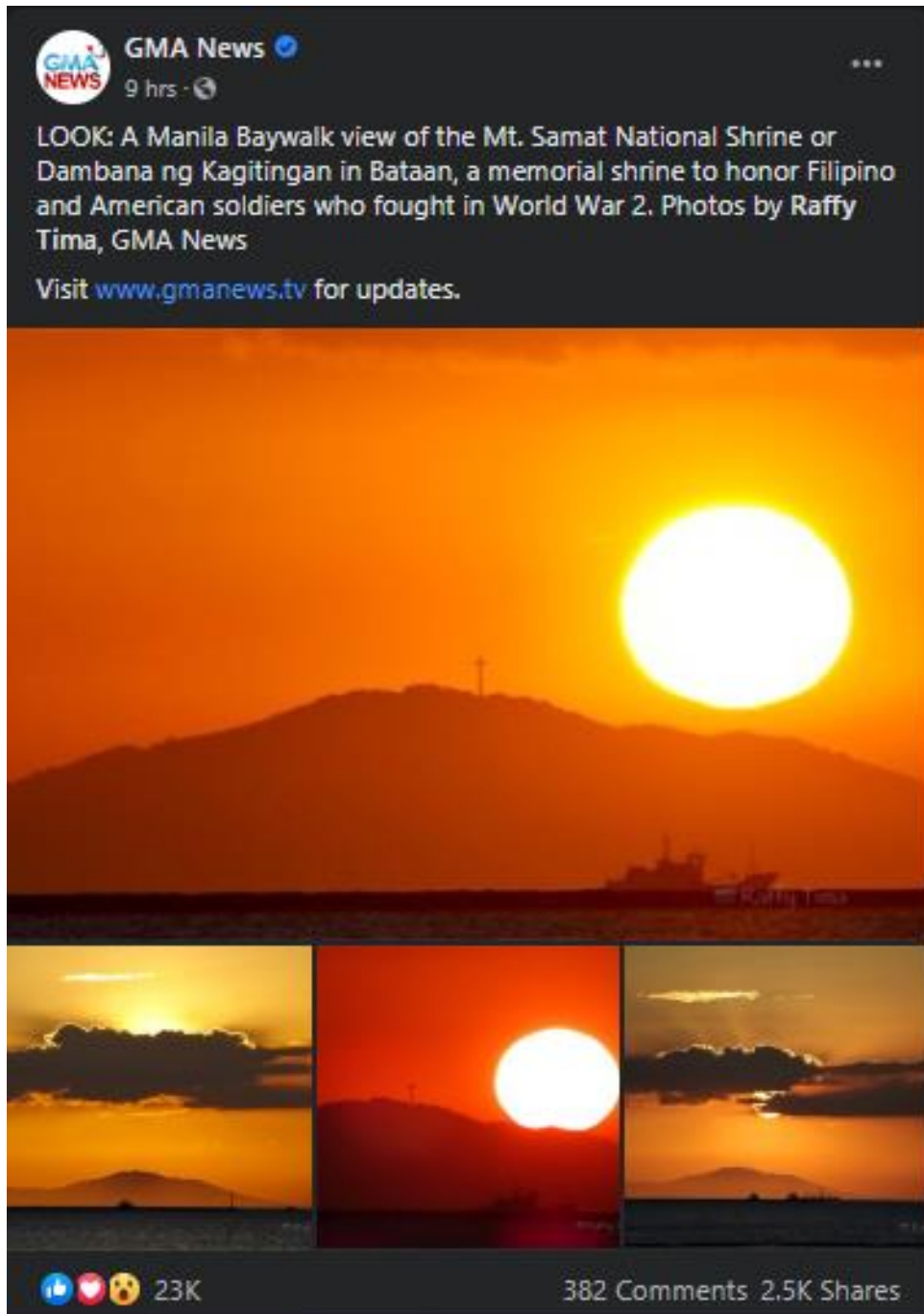
Held last March 28, the Kapuso Network took part in encouraging Filipinos to switch their lights off from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

GMA likewise switched off non-essential lights in certain areas in its Quezon City headquarters as well as in its regional stations on the said day.

Also known as the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment, the Earth Hour is an effort to bring together millions of people around the world in a show of commitment for the planet.

WWF-Philippines used this year's celebration as an opportunity to launch its newest campaign nationwide dubbed #ChangeTheEnding, which shows the public that there is now a great need for awareness on the importance of nature and a healthy planet, and for long-term solutions to the current environmental crisis.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/320918>






Source: <https://www.facebook.com/116724526976/posts/10158597778066977/>



GMA News 7 hrs · 🌐

LOOK: A lone fisherman casts his line as the sun sets in Manila Bay. He says he has no money to buy food and depends on what the polluted bay can provide, hopes he will not be arrested saying this is an essential activity for him and his family. Photos and text by Raffy Tima, GMA News

Visit www.gmanews.tv for updates.

👍👎❤️ 3.5K 227 Comments 234 Shares

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/116724526976/posts/10158598299346977/>



GMA News 6 hrs · 🌐

Pawikan, natagpuang basag ang carapace, may malalim na sugat sa ulo at nanghihina!



Courtesy: Uga Bocanar

0:29 / 6:05

Born to Be Wild April 1 at 2:39 PM · 🌐

Basag ang carapace, may malalim na sugat sa ulo at nanghihina ang katawan. Ito ang kalagayan ng isang olive ridley sea turtle nang madatnan ni Doc Ferds sa San Juan, Batangas. Ano kaya ang nangyari sa pawikan na ito? #BornToBeWild

👍👎👏 332 13 Comments 12 Shares

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/116724526976/posts/10158597851061977/>

LOOK: Birds claim Peru beach emptied by virus

April 3, 2020

DATE

TITLE: outbreak

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LOOK: Birds claim Peru beach emptied by virus outbreak

[Associated Press](#) / 01:40 PM April 01, 2020



This Feb. 16, 2020 photo shows the Agua Dulce public beach packed with thousands of beachgoers in Lima, Peru. On some weekends during the Southern Hemisphere summer, which runs from December until March, as many as 40,000 people a day visit the half-mile-long strip of Agua Dulce. AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd

LIMA, Peru — Agua Dulce beach is usually a sea of humanity, packed with as many as 40,000 people a day at the height of Peru's Southern Hemisphere summer, which runs from December to March.

The new coronavirus pandemic has changed all that. Peru's President Martín Vizcarra declared a state of emergency as deaths began to mount and ordered people to stay home, largely emptying the beach of people.

The half-mile-long (kilometer-long) strip of grayish-brown sand 12 miles (20 kilometers) south of central Lima is normally a haven for the working classes, a place where visitors from the Andean highlands first dip a toe in the sea.

But in recent days, an army of seabirds has claimed the sandy territory abandoned by people. Densely thronged pedestrian bridges are all but empty. Instead of chaotic human footprints, the beach is tattooed with the tracks of gulls and pelicans.

Police officers who recently monitored the beach for unlicensed vendors catering to the crowds now walk along the empty beach to warn off would-be swimmers. Those caught out are usually let go with a warning.

LOOK: Birds claim Peru beach emptied by virus

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Thousands of birds flock to Agua Dulce beach now largely absent of beachgoers in Lima, Peru. The birds began swarming the empty shores since Peru's president declared a state emergency and ordered people to stay home to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Peru confirmed its first coronavirus case on March 6. AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd

Police officers who recently monitored the beach for unlicensed vendors catering to the crowds now walk along the empty beach to warn off would-be swimmers. Those caught out are usually let go with a warning.

Among the few defying the order was Tomas Cabrera, 86, who sat on a jetty enjoying the rare solitude.

"There are no people in the streets, no cars circulating, no factories running," he said.

EDV

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1252222/look-birds-claim-peru-beach-emptied-by-virus-outbreak#ixzz6IUzISA3L>

Activists slam China's use of bear bile in virus treatment



Published 16 hours ago
on April 2, 2020 02:04 PM
By **Agence France-Presse**



China has approved the use of bear bile to treat coronavirus patients, angering activists and raising fears it could undermine efforts to stop the illegal animal trade which is blamed for the emergence of the new disease sweeping the globe.

The move comes just weeks after China banned the sale of wild animals for food, citing the risk of diseases spreading from animals to humans.

But the National Health Commission in March issued guidelines recommending the use of “Tan Re Qing” -- an injection that contains bear bile powder, goat horn, and three other medicinal herbs -- to treat critically ill coronavirus patients.

It is one of six traditional Chinese medicine products included in the directive.

President Xi Jinping has been keen to promote traditional medicine, calling it a “treasure of Chinese civilization” and saying it should be given as much weight as other treatments.

The active ingredient in bear bile, ursodeoxycholic acid, is used to dissolve gallstones and treat liver disease but has no proven effectiveness in treating COVID-19.

China has used both traditional and Western medicine in its battle against the novel coronavirus, which has killed more than 3,000 and infected more than 82,000.

But activists say greenlighting a treatment that uses an animal product is “both tragic and ironic” given that the origin of the deadly coronavirus is linked to the trade and consumption of wild animals.

“We shouldn’t be relying on wildlife products like bear bile as the solution to combat a deadly virus that appears to have originated from wildlife,” Brian Daly, a spokesman for the Animals Asia Foundation, told AFP.

The novel coronavirus is believed to have come from bats, but researchers think it might have spread to humans via an intermediate host mammal species.

Cruel trade

Chinese disease control officials have previously identified wild animals sold in a market in Wuhan market as the source of the coronavirus pandemic.

Conservationists have long accused China of tolerating a cruel trade in wild animals as exotic menu items or for use in traditional medicines whose efficacy is not confirmed by science.

Scientists say Severe Acute Respiratory System (SARS) — another deadly coronavirus — likely originated in bats, later reaching humans via civet cats.

“Promotion of bear bile has the propensity to increase the amount used, affecting not only captive bears, but also those in the wild, potentially compromising an already endangered species in Asia and across the world,” Daly said.

There are about 20,000 bears being held in tiny cages under cruel conditions across China to cater to the demand from traditional medicine suppliers, said Kirsty Warren, a spokeswoman for World Animal Protection.

“We estimate the entire market value of bear bile pharmaceuticals to be more than \$1 billion,” Warren added.

Bile farming is legal in China — but exports of the product or treatments made from it are banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which China is a signatory to.

“Across Asia, bear bile trade is widespread, although it is illegal in most countries,” said Richard Thomas from animal rights NGO Traffic.

“But the active ingredient in bear bile — ursodeoxycholic acid — is readily synthesized in laboratories, so even if it did prove to be popular, there should be no need for bear bile to be included (in medicines).”

China in February declared an immediate and “comprehensive” ban on the trade and consumption of wild animals that was welcomed by environmentalists.

Beijing implemented similar measures following the SARS outbreak in the early 2000s, but the trade and consumption of wild animals, including bats and snakes, made a comeback.

But in signs that the measures are being taken more seriously this time, the southern city of Shenzhen also passed a law this week banning the consumption of wild animals — including cat and dog meat.

The move was welcomed by animal rights activists, with Humane Society International saying the trade kills an estimated 10 million dogs and four million cats in China every year.

Evidence of ancient rainforests found in Antarctica

By Ashley Strickland, CNN

Published Apr 2, 2020 6:21:24 AM



(CNN) -- When dinosaurs roamed the Earth 90 million years ago, the planet was much warmer, including Antarctica at the South Pole. But in a surprising twist, researchers have discovered evidence that Antarctica also supported a swampy rainforest at the time, according to a new study.

Researchers captured a slice of the seafloor using a drill rig aboard a polar research vessel on West Antarctica's Amundsen Sea between February and March in 2017. The sediment core sample was taken near the Pine Island and Thwaites glaciers.

CT scans of the sediment core revealed pristine samples of forest soil, pollen, spores and even root systems so well preserved that they could identify cell structures. The soil included examples of pollen from the first flowering plants found this close to the South Pole.

They dated the soil, its fine-grained clay and silt to 90 million years ago. Their study published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

"During the initial shipboard assessments, the unusual coloration of the sediment layer quickly caught our attention; it clearly differed from the layers above it," said Johann Klages, study author and geologist at the Alfred Wegener Institute. "We had found a layer originally formed on land, not in the ocean."

Scientists know that during the age of the dinosaurs, conditions were warmer. The mid-Cretaceous era, from 80 million to 115 million years ago, was the warmest period for Earth in the past 140 million years, the researchers said. The surface of the sea likely reached 95 degrees Fahrenheit in tropical areas. And the sea level was 558 feet higher than it is now.

But there has been no evidence about what conditions were like at the South Pole. This is the southernmost sample of the Cretaceous period collected so far, revealing what Antarctica was like between 83 and 93 million years ago.

"The preservation of this 90-million-year-old forest is exceptional, but even more surprising is the world it reveals," said Tina van de Flierdt, study co-author and professor in the Imperial College London's Department of Earth Science and Engineering. "Even during months of darkness, swampy temperate rainforests were able to grow close to the South Pole, revealing an even warmer climate than we expected."

Sediment cores can record a lot of information about climate, acting like a time capsule for average temperature, rainfall and vegetation.

"To get a better idea of what the climate was like in this warmest phase of the Cretaceous, we first assessed the climatic conditions under which the plants' modern descendants live," Klages said.

The findings paint an unusual portrait of the South Pole, where West Antarctica's coast was free of the ice caps that cover it now and swampy rainforests covered the area instead.

The average daytime temperature was 53 degrees Fahrenheit. While that sounds mild to us, this is incredibly warm for a location near the South Pole, where current daytime temperatures hover between negative 76 degrees to 14 degrees Fahrenheit. And, as the researchers point out, it's only two degrees warmer than Germany at the moment in March.

The Antarctic ice sheet didn't exist at the time. River and swamp temperatures were likely around 68 degrees Fahrenheit. And the Antarctic summer temperature was likely around 66 degrees Fahrenheit. They estimate rainfall reached about 97 inches per year -- about the same as Wales today.

The forests were similar to those now found on New Zealand's South Island, the researchers said.

But how did Antarctica sustain temperate rainforests without year-round sunlight? Even millions of years ago, the South Pole endured what's known as a four-month polar night when no sunlight can be seen.

The researchers investigated the levels of carbon dioxide that would have been in the atmosphere at the time.

They found atmospheric carbon dioxide was much higher than expected based on existing climate models. Carbon dioxide has a warming effect on the atmosphere and the planet, creating a greenhouse effect by trapping heat from the sun.

The high amount of carbon dioxide, combined with an ice sheet-less Antarctica covered in vegetation created the right conditions for a rainforest environment.

"We now know that there could easily be four straight months without sunlight in the Cretaceous. But because the carbon dioxide concentration was so high, the climate around the South Pole was nevertheless temperate, without ice masses," said Torsten Bickert, study co-author and geoscientist at the University of Bremen's MARUM research center.

But the scientists still don't know what caused Antarctica to cool off enough to form ice sheets, which leads them to their next challenge.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/4/2/ancient-rainforest-antarctica.html?fbclid=IwAR0YMQt3RU9NnnQnu7CSDwDM0bMOEIUFoQ4Tf6hpnoBeyIsU9M7d1fLyVG8>

Ecuador's largest waterfall has disappeared

By Lauren M. Johnson, CNN

Published Apr 2, 2020 2:04:45 PM



The San Rafael waterfall was the largest waterfall in Ecuador.

(CNN) — The largest waterfall in Ecuador has seemingly vanished after a sinkhole swallowed part of its water source.

San Rafael Waterfall on the Coca River was a prominent tourist attraction for the country, and according to NASA, drew tens of thousands of people every year. The water dropped 150 feet into a crater-like opening on the other side.

Now, the iconic waterfall is gone, replaced by three streams, NASA said. All tourism to the site has been closed and it no longer appears on the country's travel website.

Experts at the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in Ecuador believe the event happened in early February upstream, and diverted the current river pattern underground.

Shortly after, MOE technicians said they inspected the waterfall and reported "possible undermining of the river's path, prior to the fall of the waterfall."

However, they could not determine an exact cause at the time.

There is some discrepancy over if it was a natural phenomenon, or caused by construction of a hydroplant on the river.

The Ministry of Tourism does not plan to reconstruct the falls, NASA said.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/4/2/san-rafael-ecuador-waterfall-gone.html?fbclid=IwAR2O1T7Gc3VV7tT86DrIqKHdxgD1NLh9sQHgIgsagqkQyeikxUWtbe8mJY>