

DENR suspends restrictions on transfer of wood and forest products

Updated April 4, 2020, 1:42 PM

By Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

Wood materials that are needed for the construction of facilities for coronavirus cases and transport of food products will be exempted from the government's suspension of the transfer of forest products and wildlife species nationwide.



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

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu said wood pallets, boxes, and crates are exempted from the suspension, citing that “transport of wood pallets, boxes, and crates is not subject to any transport permit or document from the DENR.”

“Considering that these wood-based forest products are used for the transport of food products that are basic requirements during this time of crisis, movement of these should not be restricted,” Cimatu added.

Pursuant to Section 10.2 of DENR Administrative Order No. 1994-07 or the Revised Guidelines Governing the Issuance of Certificate of Origin of Logs, Lumber, and Non-Timber Forest Products, a delivery receipt or sales invoice, and tally sheet will suffice for the transport of these products.

Under the memorandum, the exempted wood products are to be sourced only from legitimate wood processing plants that operate with valid permits and are registered to produce semi-finished or finished wood pallets, boxes, or crates consistent with their respective DENR-approved current log supply inventory.

The available raw materials may also be used provided these have been issued the necessary permits/transport documents prior to March 26, 2020.

Falcata or *Falcataria moluccana* is the most commonly used tree species for making pallets, boxes, and crates. It is a fast-growing “softwood” tree, which can be harvested in just five years from planting.

In a separate memorandum dated March 26, Cimatu issued a nationwide suspension on the acceptance, processing, and issuance of all transport-related permits or documents for all forest products and wildlife, except for permit to transport confiscated lumber that will be used for the construction/expansion of COVID-19 facilities.

These confiscated lumber include white and red lauan, apitong, bagtikan, toog, molave, mangkono (iron wood), narra, yakal, and kamagong.

“The DENR supports the continuing and earnest work of the government to limit the movement of people and non-priority products at this time, and prevent the further spread of the virus,” Cimatu said.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/04/denr-suspends-restrictions-on-transfer-of-wood-and-forest-products/>



Air pollution has gone down as much as 74 percent in Manila

Updated April 4, 2020, 2:58 PM

By Rizal Obanil

An environmental group claims that the air pollution in the city of Manila was lessened dramatically as an indirect result of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ)



(MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

Based on data from Clean Air Asia, the air quality in Manila has improved since the ECQ was enforced.

The group said that in Mendiola for example, the particulate matter has gone down by 13 percent, since classes were suspended on March 9.

It further went down by 4 percent after the ECQ was implemented on March 16.

On the second week of implementation, air pollution in Mendiola has gone down by 36 percent.

Overall Mendiola's air pollution has gone down by 50 percent while Rizal Park's air pollution has gone down by 61 percent.

The most significant air pollution reduction happened in the area happened in front of the Manila City Hall which went down by 74 percent since the start of the ECQ.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/04/air-pollution-has-gone-down-as-much-as-74-percent-in-manila/>

Air pollution sa Maynila, nabawasan dahil sa lockdown

Jekki Pascual, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Apr 04 2020 10:27 AM

MAYNILA - Malaki ang ibinawas sa air pollution sa Maynila dahil nabawasan ang mga tao at sasakyan sa mga lansangan dulot ng lockdown.

Ayon sa datos ng Clean Air Asia na ipinamahagi ng Manila Public Information Office, gumanda ang kalidad ng hangin sa ilang parte ng kapital.

Ang particulate matter o tinatawag na PM 2.5 ay air pollutant na delikado kung dumarami.

Sa Mendiola, bumaba ito ng 13 porsiyento nang magsuspende ng klase noong Marso 9.

Bumaba pa ito ng 4 porsiyento noong nagsimula ang community quarantine noong Marso 16.

At sa ikalawang linggo ng lockdown, bumaba pa ito ng 36 porsiyento.

Sa kabuuan, bumaba ang air pollution sa Mendiola ng 50 porsiyento kumpara noong bago pa magkaroon ng lockdown.

Ito rin ang sitwasyon sa Rizal Park at sa Freedom Triangle sa may Manila City Hall noong Marso 9.

Bumaba ang air pollution level sa Rizal Park ng 61 porsiyento kumpara noong Pebrero. At bumaba naman ng 74 porsiyento ang air pollution level sa may Manila City Hall.

Nauna na ring sinabi ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources at mga environmental scientist ng UP na bumaba ang air pollution levels sa buong Metro Manila dahil sa quarantine.

Ayon pa kay Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, inaasahan na rin yan dahil mas kaunti ang emissions mula sa mga sasakyan at konti lang din ang basura sa kalsada dahil naka quarantine sa bahay ang mga tao.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/04/04/20/air-pollution-sa-maynila-nabawasan-dahil-sa-lockdown>

Bulacan intensifies proper waste disposal

By [Frederick Silverio](#)

April 5, 2020

BULACAN: Gov. Daniel Fernando instructed all the city and municipal mayors through a memorandum to observe proper waste management in each village. Fernando said there had been reports that the amount of domestic waste being collected from households has been increasing in the past weeks because of the strict home quarantine aimed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Vicky Gaetos, executive vice president of the Metro Clark Waste Management Corp. said that an engineered sanitary landfill based in Capas, Tarlac has been designated by as the waste collection and disposal area in Central Luzon by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease. Gaetos also assured the continuing garbage collection and disposal of garbage of municipal wastes for as long as their daily services remain unhampered, particularly at checkpoints along and within the boundaries of provinces in Central Luzon.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/05/news/regions/at-a-glance-regions/bulacan-intensifies-proper-waste-disposal/709755/>

NWRB orders all water providers to prioritize water supply of hospitals, facilities for COVID-19

Published April 4, 2020, 8:08 PM

By *Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz*

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has ordered all water utilities and service providers to prioritize the efficient supply of water to hospitals and other facilities that will be used to manage the spread of coronavirus disease.



National Water Resources Board logo (Photo courtesy of River Basin Control Office – DENR)

Under the April 1 memorandum order issued by NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr., all water utility operators and service providers nationwide were asked to maintain and ensure the sustained and efficient supply of safe water to all hospitals or institutions, whether government-run or privately-owned or -managed, including makeshift structures/tents, especially those that are used for the treatment or as quarantine/holding areas for COVID-19 patients and/or health personnel or workers.

The agency also asked service providers to facilitate and immediately act on requests for the connection of water supply to all structures or facilities, whether permanent or otherwise, used in the fight against COVID-19, giving due consideration to the essential need of safe water in the operation of such facilities.

The NWRB likewise ordered the provision of all available means possible to provide water, in support of the operation of hospitals and similar medical or quarantine facilities.

Last March 12, the NWRB increased the raw water allocation of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) from 42 cubic meters per second (cms) to 46 cms, equivalent to around 4,000 million liters per day, in view of the requirement for high standards of cleanliness and public hygiene amid the coronavirus threat.

The decision to allocate additional raw water to MWSS ensures the steady supply of water supply to Metro Manila, considering the government's declaration of a state of public health emergency and the importance of water in undertaking preventive measures against COVID-19.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/04/nwrbs-orders-all-water-providers-to-prioritize-water-supply-of-hospitals-facilities-for-covid-19/>

Enough water supply in Metro Manila – MWSS

Published April 4, 2020 3:18pm

By TED CORDERO, GMA News

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage (MWSS) on Saturday said on Saturday Metro Manila had adequate water supplies and that service interruptions had been reduced during the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine.

“We are assuring the public na may sapat tayo na tubig,” MWSS Administrator Emmanuel Salamat said during the Laging Hand public briefing on Saturday.

Salamat added that they had earlier requested the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to increase the raw water allocation from Angat Dam, which would be shared by Manila Water and Maynilad.

“We have requested the NWRB na itaas ang aming water allocation from 42 cubic meters per second (cms) to 46 cms since March 16 pa po ‘yung start ng enhanced community quarantine. ‘Yan po ang contribution ng water utilities natin para makapag hugas po tayo, patubig para sa sanitation,” Salamat said.

The MWSS official also said water service interruptions had also been significantly reduced.

“Na-reduce po ‘yung water service interruption natin from 67% to 87%. Nakakapagservice tayo kesa dati with increased allocation natin from Angat Dam,” Salamat said.

The MWSS’s Regulatory Office also ordered concessionaires to give a 30-day grace period in paying water bills which were due within the enhanced community quarantine. — **DVM, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/732656/enough-water-supply-in-metro-manila-mwss/story/>



LWUA guarantees sufficient water supply during quarantine period

Published April 4, 2020, 3:03 PM

By *Alexandria San Juan*

The Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) assured that there will be a sufficient supply of safe water for every household in the country during the quarantine period despite the ongoing dry season.

“Hindi natin nakikita na magkakaroon tayo ng mahigpit na pangangailangan sa tubig. Ang ating mga water district ay talagang tinutugunan ang pagbibigay ng tubig sa mga bahay-bahay,” LWUA Administrator Jeci Lapus said on Saturday.

(We do not see that we would be in dire need of water. Our water districts really address the provision of water to every household)

According to Lapus, some of the 530 water districts nationwide are now operating round-the-clock to monitor continuous water service and ensure that there are no damages to the water lines.

“Yung ating mga tao ay pinipilit na tugunan ag pangangailangan ng tubig ng mga mamayan. Sila ay 530 water districts at ‘yung iba ay 24/7 na nagbabantay upang kung masira ang mga daluyan ng tubig ay agad na makukumpuni,” he added.

(Our people are doing their best to meet the public’s water needs. There are 530 water districts and others are on watch 24/7 so that if the waterways are damaged, they will be repaired immediately.)

The administration head also bared that household water consumption increased in the past weeks, which he attributed to the continuing need for sanitation during the ongoing enhanced community quarantine in Luzon. With this, Lapus reminds the public to still observe water conservation such as adjusting bath habits, closing the faucet when not in use, and practicing water recycling.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/04/lwua-guarantees-sufficient-water-supply-during-quarantine-period/>

Gov't mulling quarantine period extension of 15-20 more days

By: [Katrina Hallare](#) - Reporter / [@KHallareINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 07:11 PM April 04, 2020



Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. FILE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — The government is mulling of a “big possibility” that the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine may be extended from 15 to 20 more days due to surging cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the National Task Force (NTF) COVID-19 chief implementor Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. said Saturday.

Galvez, also the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, first said that based on “scientific analysis,” the enhanced community quarantine has effectively slowed down the spread of the disease.

“Gusto ko po ipaalam sa publiko na maganda po ang nagawa ng lockdown,” he said in an interview over radio station DZBB. “Nagkaroon po kami ng scientific analysis na nai-slowdown ng lockdown ang spread ng virus.”

(I just want to inform the public that the lockdown has had good results. We had a scientific analysis that this slowed down the spread of the virus.)

“So with that, ang nakita po namin, isa sa mga malaking possibility na magkaroon po tayo ng extension ng 15 days or maybe 20 days para po masustain natin sa ngayon po, medyo umaakyat pa po,” he added.

(So with that, what we see is big possibility of an extension of 15 days or maybe 20 days so we can sustain it because as of now, cases are still increasing.)

Gov't mulling quarantine period extension of 15-20

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As of Saturday, the Department of Health [reported 3,094 cases](#) of the viral disease, of which 57 recovered while 144 succumbed to the disease.

To contain the spread of the virus, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered to place the entire Luzon under a period of enhanced community quarantine.

The lifting of the quarantine period is scheduled on the midnight of April 13.

Cabinet Secretary and Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for Emerging Infectious Diseases spokesperson Karlo Nograles, in a press briefing, bared the [parameters on the possible total or partial lifting](#), or extension of the enhanced community quarantine.

However, Galvez added that the final decision for an extension will still be up to President Rodrigo Duterte.

“Yun po ang pinag-uusapan po sa taas pero hindi po natin pwedeng i-preempt yung desisyon ng ating mahal na Presidente [That is what being talked about, but we should not pre-empt the decision of the President],” he said.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1253871/govt-mulling-quarantine-period-extension-of-15-20-more-days#ixzz6Igjhu7Rz>

Speaker Cayetano appeals to public to trust IATF on

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TITLE: lifting or extending quarantine

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Speaker Cayetano appeals to public to trust IATF on lifting or extending quarantine

Published April 4, 2020 2:36pm

Updated April 4, 2020 2:59pm

Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano on Friday urged the public to trust the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) on whether or not the enhanced community quarantine in Luzon will be lifted as scheduled on April 14.

Cayetano made the appeal as lawmakers and other sectors gave their opinions on the lifting of the lockdown or its extension.

"Yes, as soon as we can open more areas or sectors of our economy, we should do that. But I think let's give Secretary (Eduardo) Año and Secretary (Carlito) Galvez the time to explain the numbers, the strategy... Let's trust the IATF," Cayetano said in a statement issued on Saturday.

The Speaker said all the measures taken to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 — the quarantine, social distancing, provision of personal protective equipment to frontline health care workers, and restrictions on travel and movement — are meant to save lives.

"And Secretary Galvez has started talking about the curve, which means that there are statistical models showing that at a certain point of time, COVID-19 cases will peak, then plateau or flatten, and then will start to go down. When they are decreasing, usually, the quarantine would be lifted," Cayetano said.

On Saturday, [Galvez, chief implementer of the national action plan against COVID-19, said it is still premature to announce whether or not the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine will be extended or lifted.](#) He however added that should it be extended, it would be for 15 days.

"Pinag-aaralan pa natin (kung mae-extend). Premature po kung mag-a-announce tayo ngayon, pero i-involve natin ang mga scientists natin, and ating mga doktor, specialists na titingnan po ang mga reference model ng ibang bansa. Mahirap na mag-rush tayo sa normalcy tapos babalik sa lockdown. May mga countries, dalawa, tatlong lockdown sila kasi pag nare-relax, bumabalik ang surge ng new cases. Pag-aaralan natin na isang bagsak na lang na ma-extend natin ng 15 days para ma-sustain natin 'yung magandang nagawa ng lockdown," he said.

Galvez said the lockdown has so far slowed the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country.

Speaker Cayetano appeals to public to trust IATF on

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"Maganda po ang nagawa ng lockdown. Na-slow down ng lockdown ang spread ng virus. With that, nakita namin na malaki ang possibility na magkakaroon ng lockdown ng 15 more days," he added.

Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) spokesperson and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles in a virtual press briefing on Saturday said the [government has set parameters](#) on whether the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine will be lifted or extended.

These parameters are trends in the COVID-19 epidemiological curve, which include, among others, the doubling time, acceleration, or deceleration of new cases; capacity of the health care system, which includes, among others, the number and availability of quarantine, isolation, and treatment facilities; the capability to mount contact tracing; availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to frontliners, and the testing capacity of the country; social factors; economic factors; and security factors.

Cayetano said if the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise, the government has to keep implementing measures set in place to prevent its further increase.

The Speaker also said the economic managers of the administration are in touch with businessmen regarding the COVID-19 situation.

"Mall owners, for example, lose money every day that they are closed due to the enhanced community quarantine. But they care for their customers. They don't want anyone to die or get severely sick just because they want to open up. I think we are all in the same level of balancing," he said. —**KG, GMA News**

Go'vt execs who donated salaries to Covid-19 funds lauded

By Ferdinand Patinio April 4, 2020, 6:36 pm



MANILA – A labor group on Saturday applauded the decision of the majority of Cabinet officials to donate 75 percent of their salaries as additional funds to contain coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19).

Sonny Matula, Federation of Free Workers (FFW) president, said they appreciate the efforts of top government officials as they are also hoping that other officials will follow suit.

“The Federation of Free Workers welcomes with high appreciation the announcement that majority of the Cabinet members have volunteered to take 75 percent monthly pay cuts to help the government contain the Covid-19 outbreak, he said in a statement.

Matula said they learned that Senator Sonny Angara also committed to doing the same.

“Their generosity will surely be remembered by a grateful nation,” he added.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles earlier announced that members of the Cabinet, including himself, will donate 75 percent of their monthly salaries during the effectivity of the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

He did not give the names of the other government officials, as he would like them to identify themselves. **(PNA)**

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1098850>



In this undated photo shows Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles.

The STAR/Geremy Pintolo, File

Cabinet members to donate 75% of salary to help government's COVID-19 efforts

[Ratziel San Juan](#) (Philstar.com) - April 4, 2020 - 11:03am

MANILA, Philippines (**Update 1, 11:23 a.m.**) — Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles on Saturday said that members of the Cabinet will donate 75% of their monthly salaries while the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act is in effect in order to help combat the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in the Philippines.

“Nais din nating ipagbigay alam na karamihan, majority, ng mga miyembro ng gabinete ni Pangulong Duterte ay boluntaryong ibibigay ang malaking bahagi, 75% ng kanilang buwanang sahod, upang ilaan sa mga programa ng gobyerno upang sugpuin ang COVID-19 sa loob ng panahong pinapatupad ang Bayanihan Law,” Nograles said during the Saturday morning IATF virtual press briefer.

(We would also like to inform you that the majority of the members of President Rodrigo Duterte’s Cabinet will voluntarily donate a large portion of their monthly salary, 75%, to the government’s programs against COVID-19 while under the Bayanihan Law’s implementation.)

“Ilan sa ating kasamahan ay boluntaryong babawasan ang kanilang mga sahod hanggang Disyembre pa ngayong taon para sa mga programang ito,” he said.

(Some of our colleagues even volunteered to reduce their salaries until December for the benefit of the said programs.)

Asked who among the Cabinet officials offered to donate three-quarters of their salary, Nograles said that he was one of them but would leave it to the others to disclose their participation in the initiative.

“Yung mga ibang opisyaes, sila na lang po sigurong magsabi kung sinu-sino sila (The other officials, they can reveal who they are).”

Source: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/04/2005448/cabinet-members-donate-75-salary-help-governments-covid-19-efforts?fbclid=IwARofFFUu7gUF6ZX8moXmQ6hTnZ_wpBbytpmIjKgNKwBT8BrLmlEJE9lvteY

 News5
15 hrs · 🌐

Kinumpirma ito ni Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases spokesperson Karlo Nograles sa virtual press briefing ng IATF kaninang umaga.



CABINET MEMBERS WILLING TO CUT SALARY TO SUPPORT GOV'T BATTLE VS COVID-19

Handa ang ilang miyembro ng Gabinete na ibigay ang 75% ng kanilang sweldo para makatulong sa mga programa ng pamahalaan laban sa COVID-19, ayon kay IATF Spokesperson at Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles.

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Source: <https://www.facebook.com/163550757135020/posts/1945920245564720/>

Nutritionist shares what to eat to improve your immune system amid COVID-19 threat

Published March 26, 2020 8:53am

It's more important than ever to make sure we're fit and healthy amid the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Luckily, nutritionist Deza Delica Tibayan gave tips on what we should and should not be eating to boost our immune system.

1. Eat your fruits and vegetables

In an episode of "Sumbungan ng Bayan," Tibayan said fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber content.

Dark green and yellow vegetables have a good amount of Vitamin A, while dark green and leafy veggies are high in iron, calcium, and Vitamin C.

So it's a yes for malunggay, kangkong, and saluyot, among others.

2. Stay hydrated

Tibayan stressed that we should be drinking enough water daily.

"Kailangan po nating makainom ng walo hanggang sampung baso kada araw upang makaiwas tayo na ma-dehydrate lalo na po ngayong tag-init," she said.

You can also make fruit shakes or juices like calamansi juice, carrot juice, and mango shake, which have the added bonus of boosting our immunity.

3. Avoid instant or ready-to-eat foods

Tibayan said consuming instant and ready-to-eat foods too often could lead to illnesses like UTI, heart problems, kidney problems, and one of the worst case scenarios, even cancer.

However, this tip is easy to say but harder to do especially since Luzon was placed under enhanced community quarantine and supplies are hard to come by.

The nutritionist advised to eat them in moderation, and add some organic elements to it.

Mix some malunggay, carrots, or cabbage in your pancit canton, and maybe some patatas and kangkong in your de lata!

"Tayo ay dapat maging malusog upang makaiwas sa anumang sakit," she said.

—JCB, GMA News

Source: https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/healthandwellness/731330/nutritionist-shares-what-to-eat-to-improve-your-immune-system-amid-covid-19-threat/story/?utm_source=GMANews&utm_medium=Facebook

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Enacting, implementing 'Bayanihan to Heal'

By: [Artemio V. Panganiban](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:40 AM April 05, 2020

Laudable how the 6-page Malacañang-drafted "Bayanihan Act of 2020" was scrutinized, modified, and fine-tuned by Congress to become the 14-page "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act," and promptly signed by the President as Republic Act No. 11469, all within a record 24 hours.

Though allowed by the Constitution (Art. XII, Sec. 17), the Palace draft did not include the feared "take over... of any privately owned public utility or business affected with public interest." Executive Secretary Salvador C. Medialdea stressed that this was unnecessary as the private sector was fully united with the government in the war on COVID-19.

To be especially commended is the Senate which worked continuously till late evening, making sure the bill was marginalized-focused, safeguards-laden, and free of constitutionally prohibited provisions.

As a super senior, Senate Minority Leader Franklin M. Drilon (and his wife Mila) was on voluntary self-quarantine but he emailed a letter to his colleagues carefully explaining his amendments, justifying what needed to be deleted or added, and laying out the exact wordings of his proposals.

Having been in consultation with him during that time, I personally know, after comparing the enrolled bill with his letter, that almost all of his recommendations were adopted, particularly those that urged compliance with *David v. Arroyo* (May 3, 2006) specifying the four essentials of a valid national emergency law, and *Araullo v. Aquino* (July 1, 2014) stating how "unobligated allotments" could be declared as "savings" and thereafter legally "realigned" to be used solely and transparently during the emergency, and only for the purposes provided in the new law.

I think these safeguards quieted down libertarian anxieties that the law could be utilized by unscrupulous politicians to resurrect the hated pork barrel and the disbursement acceleration program or DAP.

Instead of granting open-ended authority to the President "to issue rules, regulations and directives" under the original draft, Sec. 4 of the new law enumerated the specific powers that the President could "adopt... to respond to the crisis..." The original draft, in my humble opinion, constituted an undue delegation of legislative power which is prohibited by the Constitution.

Some of these specific powers are: (1) "Following (WHO) guidelines and best practices, adopt and implement measures to prevent or suppress further transmission and spread of COVID-19 through effective education, detection, protection and treatment."

(2) Provide a cash subsidy of P5,000-P8,000 a month for two months to 18 million low income households; pay "special risk allowance" in addition to "hazard pay" already allowed by existing law to all public health workers; and shoulder via PhilHealth "all medical expenses of public and private health workers" and all other COVID-19 patients.

(3) Pay P100,000 to public and private health workers who “may contract severe COVID-19 infection” plus P1 million to said public and private health workers “who may die while fighting...the pandemic,” retroactive to Feb. 1, 2020.

(4) Assist displaced regular and contractual workers in the public and private sectors by the (a) implementation of alternative work arrangements like work-from-home or WFH (discussed in this space last Sunday) and reduced work hours; and (b) grant of health emergency leave, early release of the 13th month pay, and increase in GSIS and SSS benefits.

Now, the huge challenge is how to identify speedily, without partisanship and without corruption, the 18 million households mentioned in item 2, and distribute to them the P5,000-P8,000 per month per household cash subsidy granted by RA 11469. A similar challenge is how to identify and assist the 500,000 displaced workers mentioned in item 4.

As of this writing, the identification of the 18 million households and distribution of the cash assistance to them has begun with the 4Ps beneficiaries. And Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III has asked employers to submit their lists of intended beneficiaries.

To the complaints of cumbersome red tape, delay, discrimination, and favoritism, the President pleaded for patience. More patience is indeed needed, but even more needed is the speedy, fair, and no-nonsense implementation of the nobly-conceived, bipartisanly-enacted, pro-poor provisions of the “Bayanihan to Heal as One” Law.

Source: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/128621/enacting-implementing-bayanihan-to-heal#ixzz6IgXtXsSI>

Luzon ECQ lifting likely



Published 6 hours ago
on April 5, 2020 12:07 AM
By **Chito Lozada**



A consensus has evolved on the possible extension of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) but only in Metro Manila after 14 April when the policy is lifted for the entire of Luzon island.

Proposals, some harsh, took shape on Friday for the way forward in the battle against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) during a meeting among members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), bankers and other business executives.

The chief implementer of the government's national policy on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Carlito Galvez Jr. disclosed on Saturday that should the ecq being implemented be extended, it may possibly only be for a maximum of 15 days.

In a statement, Galvez said that they are studying the situation thoroughly because it will be premature if they announce an extension, saying that they will involve scientists, doctors and specialists that are studying reference models in other countries.

Most cases in Metro

The Department of Health (DoH) had earlier reported that 75 percent of the cases of contamination from the COVID-19 is found in the metropolis of 12.8 million.

A Daily Tribune source privy to the meeting said it was recommended that the best option for the government after 14 April, when the ECQ over Luzon island ends, will be a two-week extension of the isolation policy in Metro Manila "to avoid a second wave of infections."

Health officials gave a projection that the peak in the number of infected will be known sometime after 14 April when mass testing is scheduled to start.

They estimated 23,000 as the peak in the number of carriers of the virus mainly as a result of the wider scope of testing where 19 percent will need hospitalization, 5 percent will have to be confined at intensive care and two percent will die.

Government representatives said 300,000 testing kits are now available that would be enough to test 120,000 individuals.

The IATF, however, is having a hard time firming up a recommendation on the ECQ, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said.

The task force, however, could not decide on the fate of the community quarantine yet because there is still no “conclusive” data about the COVID-19 cases in the country, Nograles said in a virtual press briefing aired on state-run PTV-4.

Prudence needed

As the cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the country continue to rise with the appropriated testing kits by the DoH doing its job of detecting the infected, Galvez stressed that it would be prudent not to rush to normalcy just to be back on lockdown.

“There are other countries that implement two, three or more lockdowns because once they relax, there are new cases surging again,” Galvez said. “So we need to study this better and extend it may be for at least 15 days to sustain the positive effects of the lockdown,” he added.

He stressed that the ECQ placed over Luzon and other areas in the country has led to a slower increase in the number of COVID-19 cases.

“The lockdown is effective, since it slowed down the spread of the virus. With that, we are seeing the possibility of having a lockdown for 15 more days,” Galvez said. “The number of infected is rising and some areas in the country registered a big number of COVID-19 cases.”

“Metro Manila, especially in Quezon City and areas in Regions III and IV have high contamination,” he added.

Over 1,500 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Metro Manila.

Nograles said scientists, epidemiologists, doctors, and the academe are still analyzing the available data.

He said the IATF-EID needs to be “very careful” in making a decision on what would be its recommendation to President Rodrigo Duterte.

The country’s young median age or the so-called demographic sweet spot that economic managers say would maintain the strong course of growth is also considered an asset in the battle against the effects of the virus.

“We have on our side the young median age of 23.9 years and the fact that the Philippines is an archipelago that helped the slowdown of the spread of COVID unlike in the United States and Italy,” according to health officials.

Also in the meeting, it came out that the government would permit the budget deficit to balloon to about seven percent of the gross domestic product which is double the current shortfall of about 3.5 percent of GDP.

A bigger budget gap, for which the government will likely use domestic and foreign borrowings to cover, will allow more spendings and will pave the way for the launch of a stimulus package for business and the nation as a whole to speed up recovery.

Stimuli focused on MSME

The main goal of the stimulus plan would be to assist small firms to prevent massive layoffs. Economic managers also proposed the floating of a “10-year negative yielding loans” for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) that will be a form of subsidy in which the government will assume 10 percent of a loan’s total amount.

“Banks will play a major part in rolling these out but no concrete detail has been released yet. In (Albay Representative Joey) Salceda’s example, if a P100,000 loan is given out, the borrower will only need to pay P90,000,” according to minutes of the meeting.

The balance will be shouldered by the government, through an appropriation in future budgets, it added.

Among the biggest concern that came out in the meeting was the expected influx of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) that will pose a double whammy to the economy in terms of reduced remittances and added pressure in the jobs market.

The government estimate is that some 230,000 to 240,000 OFW will return to the country as foreign markets as the effect of the contagion intensifies.

Salceda, who attended the meeting, also estimates that locally, 1.1 million workers will be displaced.

Some industries are also expected to need bail out funds from the government such as hotels, airline firms and tourism-related industries.

with Elmer Manuel

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/05/luzon-ecq-lifting-likely/>

Covid-19 brings unexpected environmental consequences

By [BusinessMirror](#) -April 5, 2020

Global shelter-in-place orders to battle the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in a widely-reported climate benefit: cleaner air in China and Europe. But the fallout from the global health crisis hasn't been uniformly positive for the environment.

In the US, some cities have halted recycling programs as officials worry about the risk of spreading the virus in recycling centers.

In particularly hard-hit European nations, waste disposal options have been rolled back. Italy has banned infected residents from sorting their waste at all.

Industry has seized the opportunity to overturn disposable bag bans, despite the fact that environmental experts say single-use plastics can still harbor viruses and bacteria.

Businesses that once encouraged consumers to bring their own bags or containers have increasingly switched to single-use packaging. In early March, Starbucks announced a temporary ban on using reusable cups.

With China's consumers stuck at home, there's been a surge in the amount of household garbage as people increasingly shop online and order meals to be delivered, which come with a lot of packaging.

Medical waste is also on the rise. Hospitals in Wuhan produced an average of over 200 tons of such waste per day during the outbreak, up from its previous average of less than 50 tons.

China has asked sewage treatment plants to strengthen their disinfection routines to prevent coronavirus from spreading through sewage, mostly through increased use of chlorine.

Some amount of that toxic chemical has found its way into the nation's drinking water, though the government says the concentration is under the current allowable limit of 0.3 milligrams per liter.

"The ones that are celebrating the environmental improvements during the Covid-19 crisis are shortsighted," said Li Shuo, senior global policy adviser at Greenpeace in Beijing.

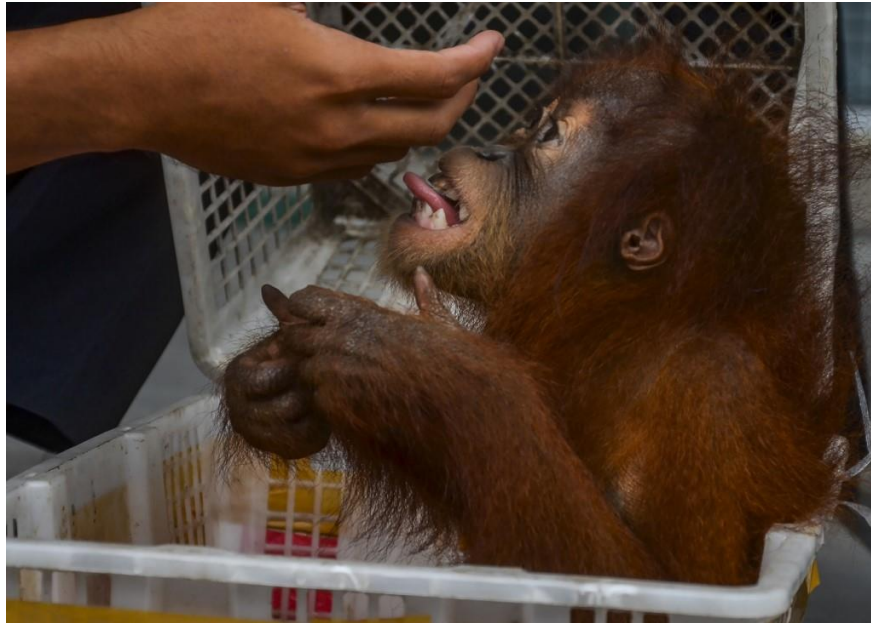
"Pollution may temporarily decline, but this is hardly a sustainable way of cleaning up our environment. Meanwhile, the virus crisis brings other environmental problems that might last for a longer time and are harder to deal with," he said. *Bloomberg News*

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/04/05/covid-19-brings-unexpected-environmental-consequences/>

Indonesia protects orangutans from virus threat



Published 9 hours ago
on April 4, 2020 08:31 PM
By **Agence France-Presse**



Poaching and habitat loss have decimated Indonesia's orangutan population, but now coronavirus has emerged as another potential deadly threat to the critically endangered species.

While there have been no confirmed cases of transmission from humans to the fuzzy-haired apes, they share 97 percent of our DNA.

And staff at a rehabilitation center in jungle-covered Borneo are not taking any chances.

The Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation has closed its doors to visitors and told staff to step up precautions to avoid passing on infection, including by wearing masks and protective gloves.

"There haven't been any confirmed cases of direct transmission, but it's caused other issues like a shortage of masks and disinfectant supplies for our orangutan caretakers," said foundation veterinarian Agus Irwanto.

For the apes, however, there hasn't been much change in their daily jungle jaunts.

"While the humans at our rehabilitation centers work hard to adjust to these new measures, the orangutans are going about their usual business," the foundation said.

Human-to-primate transmission fears are not limited to Indonesia.

France is taking precautions at its zoos, with caretakers keeping their distance from gorillas and chimpanzees.

Last month the forest-covered African nation of Gabon said it would stop allowing tourists to see its great apes over fears that humans could give them the virus.

The Ebola epidemic killed gorillas and chimpanzees as well as humans.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/04/indonesia-protects-orangutans-from-virus-threat/>

Whales face more fatal ship collisions as waters warm

By [BusinessMirror](#) -April 5, 2020



A North Atlantic right whale feeds on the surface of Cape Cod Bay off the coast of Plymouth, Massachusetts, in this photo on March 28. ship strikes are one of the biggest causes of mortality for large whales, and scientists say the problem is getting worse because of the warming of the oceans.

PORTLAND, Maine—Climate change is imperiling the world's largest animals by increasing the likelihood of fatal collisions between whales and big ships that ply the same waters.

Warming ocean temperatures are causing some species of whales in pursuit of food to stray more frequently into shipping lanes, scientists say.

The phenomenon already has increased ship strikes involving rare North Atlantic right whales on the East Coast and giant blue whales on the West Coast, researchers say.

The number of strikes off California increased threefold in 2018—to at least 10—compared to previous years.

When whales are killed in a ship collision, they often sink and don't always wash ashore. So scientists and conservationists say fatal ship strikes are dramatically underreported.

Vessels strikes are among the most frequent causes of accidental death in large whales, along with entanglement in fishing gear.

Conservationists, scientists and animal lovers have pushed for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to step up to protect the whales, but it won't happen without cooperation from the worldwide shipping industry.

For the right whales—which number only about 400 and have lost more than 10 percent of their population in just a few years—the death toll is driving them closer to extinction, said Nick Record, senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, Maine.

At least three right whales died from ship strikes [in 2019](#)—a small number, but still dangerously high for so small a population.

All three deaths were documented in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence off Canada, where scientists have said the whales are spending more time feeding as waters off New England warm.

Scientists say the changing ocean environment with global warming is causing right whales and some other species to stray outside protected zones designed to keep them safe from ships.

“When one of their main food resources goes away, it means they start exploring new areas for food,” Record said. “And that means they’re encountering all new sources of mortality because they are going into these places where they are not protected.”

On the West Coast, where there was increase in whale ship strike deaths, scientists [reported that the risk of such accidents has been growing in the 2000s as the blue whale population shifted northward in the North Pacific.](#)

The increased ship strikes could necessitate “a broader area where ships don’t travel,” said Jessica Redfern, an ecologist with New England Aquarium’s Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life and lead author of a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science* in February.

Moving shipping lanes, and the possibility of enforcing slower speeds for large ships, is a subject of much debate among conservation groups, international regulators and the shipping industry.

Shippers say they have made attempts to work with conservationists, such as an ongoing effort to move a shipping lane in Sri Lankan waters to protect blue whales.

In a statement to The Associated Press, the World Shipping Council expressed a willingness to keep working to keep shipping activity away from whales, but expressed skepticism about whether slowing vessels would help.

“Reduced ship speeds also increase the residence time of a ship in a given area where whales are active,” the council said. “Given those factors, there is some notable uncertainty about how effective reducing ship speeds is in lowering the risk of whale strikes.”

Changes to international shipping laws would have to go before the IMO, which regulates shipping. The organization has taken numerous steps to protect whales in the past, including agreeing in 2014 to a recommendation for ships to reduce speed to 10 knots (11.5 miles per hour) off the Pacific coast of Panama for four months every summer and fall.

A spokesman for the organization declined to comment on the role of warming seas in increased ship strikes. But the subject has caught the attention of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which oversees marine issues in the US.

Right whales, in particular, began showing a change in migratory behavior around 2010, said Vince Saba, a fisheries biologist with NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center. That happened as warm Gulf Stream water has entered the Gulf of Maine, a key habitat for the whales, he said.

“With that redistribution, the animals have moved into areas where there weren’t management rules in place to protect them. In a sense, the deck got reshuffled,” said Sean Hayes, head of the protected species branch for the fisheries science center.

Whales also face increased threat because ships now can travel in parts of the sea that were previously ice, said Regina Asmutis-Silvia, a scientist with Massachusetts-based Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

As waters continue to warm, the whales will need more protections or the number of deaths will only grow, she said.

“The reality is that it’s time to actually implement the mitigation and that’s going to mean expanding areas where the speed rules would be in place,” she said. **AP**

Image Credits: [AP/Michael Dwyer](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/04/05/whales-face-more-fatal-ship-collisions-as-waters-warm/>



The pangolin is considered the most trafficked animal on the planet and over one million have been snatched from Asian and African forests in the past decade, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Photo

Eating of pangolin and bats banned amid COVID-19 pandemic

(Agence France-Presse) - April 4, 2020 - 11:48am

LIBREVILLE, Gabon — Gabon on Friday banned the sale and eating of bats and pangolins, which are suspected of sparking the novel coronavirus in China where they are highly prized in traditional medicine.

President Ali Bongo Ondimba also announced the government was planning to lock down the capital Libreville and unveiled an emergency package for those hard hit by the pandemic.

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

Pangolins are critically endangered and have long been protected, but they are sold in the markets of the capital Libreville, as are bats, and their meat is popular.

The central African nation is 88 percent covered in forest and hunting and bush meat have long been a way of life.

The water and forest ministry said the novel coronavirus was a "combination of two different viruses, one close to bats and the other closer to pangolins", and claimed to be quoting a scientific study published in Nature.

Gabon has declared 21 COVID-19 infections, but none from animals, the ministry said.

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"A similar decision was taken by the authorities when our country was affected by the Ebola virus -- a ban on eating primates," Forestry Minister Lee White said.

The national parks agency ANPN announced in mid-March that tourists would no longer be allowed to interact with great apes to avoid any risk of contamination by the coronavirus.

The pangolin, the world's most heavily trafficked mammal, also called the scaly anteater, is believed to have possibly been a vector in the leap of the novel coronavirus from animal to human at a market in China's Wuhan city last year.

Its body parts fetch a high price on the black market as they are commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine, although scientists say they have no therapeutic value.

Gabon has also put in place a raft of measures such as grounding international flights, closing schools and ordering a night curfew to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

On Friday, Bongo said Libreville would be put under lockdown "in the coming days" but gave no precise date.

All but one of Gabon's reported 21 cases are in the city, where a large proportion of the country's two million residents live.

Bongo also announced an aid package of 250 billion CFA francs (380 million euros) to help both individuals and businesses whose livelihoods have suffered because of the crisis.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/world/2020/04/04/2005449/eating-pangolin-and-bats-banned-amid-covid-19-pandemic?fbclid=IwAR2SC-1o7LT9CJTfQ7IL46Z3ifsB-zyl4pQG2iK8GxGXckGH7T24kCvM2DU>

Covid-19 to slow the global shift to renewables, but
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Covid-19 to slow the global shift to renewables, but can't stop it

By [BusinessMirror](#) -April 5, 2020

The renewable-energy industry, which until recently was projected to enjoy [rapid growth](#), has run into stiff headwinds as a result of three era-defining events: the [Covid-19 pandemic](#), the resulting [global financial contraction](#) and a [collapse in oil prices](#).

These are interrelated, mutually reinforcing events. It's much too early to be able to assess how large their economic, environmental and policy impacts will be. But as someone who has worked on energy policy in [academia, the industry, the federal government and Wall Street](#), I expect a significant short-run contraction followed by a catch-up period over the next few years that returns us to the same long-term path—perhaps even a better one.

Falling energy demand

The most obvious result of these shocks is clear: Economic contractions reduce power demand, because every form of economic activity requires electricity, directly or indirectly.

The 2008-09 recession reduced power demand in the United States by about 10 years' worth of growth. Put another way, national utility sales [did not exceed 2008 levels until 2018](#).

US electricity use on March 27 was 3 percent lower than on March 27, 2029. That difference represents a loss of about three years of sales growth.

Electricity use will trace the same path as total economic output as the crisis unfolds, but will drop much less in percentage terms. That's because electricity use is a necessity, and essential services and households will continue to use power. Some, like health care, will use much more.

Industry revenues will also suffer, because most utilities are voluntarily halting shutoffs due to bill nonpayment and deferring planned or proposed rate increases.

Economy-driven demand reductions, which are likely worldwide, will hurt new renewable installations.

Utilities will tighten their budgets and defer building new plants. Companies that make solar cells, wind turbines and other green energy technologies will shelve their growth plans and adopt austerity measures.

For example, Morgan Stanley's highly respected clean tech-analysts project declines of 48 percent, 28 percent and 17 percent in US solar photovoltaic installations in the second, third and fourth quarters of 2020, respectively.

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Clean energy has momentum

Countervailing factors will partly offset this decline, at least in wealthy countries.

Many renewable plants are being installed for reasons other than demand growth, such as clean power targets in state laws and regulations, and are already under contract or construction.

Government policies and public pressure are also forcing utilities to retire coal-fired power plants.

Since 2010, 102,000 megawatts of coal generating capacity have been retired—[nearly one-third](#) of the total US coal fleet—and [at least 17,000 megawatts more](#) are expected to retire by 2025.

Most of this will likely be replaced by wind, solar and hydropower.

Despite the current crisis, there is long-term pressure from many directions to add carbon-free energy. Fifty US utilities have already committed to carbon reduction goals, including 21 companies that pledge to [become carbon-free by 2050](#).

Voluntary green energy purchases by US companies increased by almost 50 percent in the last year, to 9,300 megawatts—almost 1 percent of all US power capacity. And residential customers are choosing to buy more renewable energy through options such as [community solar programs](#).

Defaulting to dirty fuels?

Since early 2019 crude oil prices have collapsed, declining almost 64 percent. As oil market guru [Daniel Yergin](#) recently observed, this drop is [likely to be steep and prolonged](#):

“[I]t’s a problem of an oil price war in the middle of a constricting market when the walls are closing in. Normally demand would solve the problem in a way, because you would have lower prices that act like a tax cut and it would be a stimulus. But not in this case because of the freezing up of economic activity.”

This oil price collapse has also reduced US natural gas prices by about one-third from year-ago levels.

Like electricity and oil, natural gas use rises and falls with economic activity; it is somewhat less sensitive to economic trends than the highly reactive oil sector, and more sensitive than comparatively stable electricity use.

Ordinarily, cheaper natural gas—which is widely used for generating electricity—would stimulate electricity demand by reducing the price of power, thus, increasing economic growth.

But in this unusual era, the effects of lower oil and gas prices on renewables will be somewhat murky and complex, and will probably differ substantially by market and region.

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For some new plants in places where policies do not effectively mandate renewable energy, continued or even new use of oil and gas generation will look cheaper.

For example, replacing dirty diesel generation with solar power plus some form of energy storage will not look nearly as attractive now as it did a year ago.

This is especially worrisome in emerging nations, where the overwhelming imperative is to expand electricity supply as cheaply as possible.

These economies are always short on capital and highly sensitive to energy costs. If they opt for cheap fossil fuels instead of renewables, it will be bad for air quality and climate policy.

The fact that central banks are promoting ultralow or even negative interest rates to respond to the economic crisis could mitigate this risk by making renewables, which have high capital costs, cheaper to install. The key is avoiding a wholesale shift to new fossil fuel generation.

Parts shortages

The most significant near-term impacts on renewable plants that are already contracted or under construction may be felt through supply chains. Renewable industry executives are anticipating delivery and construction slowdowns, either because nations [shutter industries](#) to slow the spread of coronavirus or because workers start getting sick.

Many parts for large-scale renewable projects come entirely or partially from China, other parts of Asia or the United States. These are specialized supply chains with few ready substitutes.

The Covid-19 outbreak has already slowed Chinese production of [solar panels](#) and materials, delaying projects in countries including [India and Australia](#). Manufacturing disruptions in China could contribute to a significant one- or two-year dip in renewable additions.

All in all, I expect that a slowdown in renewable-energy growth will be one of many deeply tragic effects of the virus-plus-contraction double whammy. Impacts in emerging markets, where a new fossil-fueled plant locks in decades of new carbon-dioxide emissions, are especially concerning.

But these effects will not be uniformly negative, and nothing about this crisis will change the [long-term trend toward carbon-free energy](#).

Once the global economy bounces back, perhaps this episode will convince world leaders to accelerate climate policy efforts, before the next climate-induced disease vector or weather event triggers yet another global economic shock. [Peter Fox-Penner](#)/*The Conversation* (CC)