

Sa kabila ng Luzon-wide lockdown, DENR pinakilos ang skeletal workforce para sa mabilisang law enforcement

April 8, 2020 @ 7:24 PM 11 hours ago

Views: 104

Manila, Philippines – Para protektahan ang ating mga kagubatan at mga hayop habang ipinatutupad ang Luzon-wide Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) bumuo at pinakilos na ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang kanilang skeletal workforces sa lahat ng tanggapan ng ahensiya sa Luzon para sa mabilis na law enforcement and regulation.

“We expect forest and wildlife crimes because without a doubt, there will be those who will take advantage of the lockdown situation,” sabi ni Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu.

Ayon kay Cimatu ang ipinatutupad na ECQ na ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte ay upang mapigilan ang pagkalat ng coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) na naging dahilan upang mahirapan ang forest at wildlife protection field teams na gawin ang kanilang tungkulin.

Sinabi pa ni Cimatu, dahil maraming bilang ng militar at pulis ang nakabantay ngayon sa urban areas, ito ay maaring gamitin ng mga environmental criminal bilang pagkakataon upang samantalahin ang situwasyon partikular na sa mga lalawigan o probinsiya. Subalit, tiniyak ng kalihim na handa ang DENR quick response team na hulihin ang mga indibidwal at grupo na gagawa ng mga ilegal na gawain.

Batay sa Memorandum na inilabas ni Cimatu noong Marso 17, pinakikilos nito ang skeletal workforce sa mga tanggapan ng DENR sa buong Luzon partikular na ang mga nagsasagawa ng mahahalaga at “time-bound” na mga tungkulin tulad ng quick-response law enforcement at regulatory functions kabilang na ang ang pagmonitor sa pagbiyahe ng forest products at wildlife trafficking sa mga paliparan at daungan.

Magpapatuloy ang tungkulin ng mga quick response workforces na ito hanggang sa maitaas ang suspension sa sea and air inbound at outbound transportation.

Magsisilbing frontliners sa pagpapatupad ng environmental laws ang mga Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officers (PENROs) at Community Environment and Natural Resources Officers (CENROs) ng DENR regional offices. Kabilang din sa kanilang tungkulin ang pagmonitor ng forest at wildlife ng bansa.

“Our country’s biodiversity is known as one of the richest in the world, with abundant forests, varied wildlife, and endangered and threatened species. It is our utmost responsibility to conserve our environment and natural resources especially in this time of crisis,” dagdag pa ni Cimatu.

Ang kautusan na ito ng kalihim ng DENR ang naging dahilan ng pagkakakumpiska sa 880.28 board feet (bd. Ft.) ng amugis, lauan at banuyo lumber sa Sitio Anduyan at Sitio San Pablo sa Barangay Alipaoy, Paluan, Occidental Mindoro ng mga tauhan ng Monitoring and Enforcement Section ng CENRO sa Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro. Ang mga nakumpiskang kahoy ay tinuturing na premium species at kadalasang ginagamit sa construction at furniture-making.

Sa Romblon, 266 bd. ft. ng apitong lumber ang nakumpiska sa Barangay Espana, San Fernando. May 120 bd. ft. ng lauan naman ang nakuha ng mga tauhan ng DENR sa Sibuyan matapos itong iabandona sa Barangay Mabini, Occidental Mindoro sa magkahiwalay na operasyon noong Marso 23 at 24.

Sa kabilang dako, nakumpiska naman ng Forest Product Monitoring Station ng CENRO Taytay, Palawan ang sampung sako ng uling mula sa mangrove species sa Brgy. Aberawan, El Nido noong Marso 16. Natagpuan din ng grupo ang sampung sako ng uling galing naman sa forest tree species sa Sitio Talogon, Barangay Bagong-bayan sa Taytay noong Marso 21.

Nailigtas naman ng quick response workforce mula sa Conservation and Development Section ng CENRO-Puerto Princesa, Palawan ang na-istanded na Green Turtle (chelonian mydas) na mas kilala sa tawag na pawikan sa baybayin ng Puerto Princesa noong Marso 20. Kinabukasan ay ibinalik ito sa dagat matapos lapatan ng lunas ang tinamo nitong sugat na pinaghihinalang dulong ng boat propeller.

Kaugnay nito, hinikayat ni Cimatú ang publiko na ipagbigay alam ang kanilang makikitang wildlife poaching at iligal na pagpuputol at pagbebenta ng punong kahoy sa pamamagitan ng pagtawag sa DENR Hotline 8888 o kaya naman sa mobile number na 0917-868-3367 o 0917-885-3367 o magbigay ng mensahe sa DENR official social media accounts sa Facebook, Twitter at Instagram. **Santi Celario**

Source: <https://remate.ph/sa-kabila-ng-luzon-wide-lockdown-denr-pinakilos-ang-skeletal-workforce-para-sa-mabilisang-law-enforcement/>

Envi advocates accuse DENR of allowing burning of
TITLE: COVID-19 wastes

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April 9, 2020
DATE

Envi advocates accuse DENR of allowing burning of COVID-19 wastes

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 08:30 PM April 08, 2020

MANILA, Philippines – Several environment advocate groups have slammed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for allegedly allowing its regional offices to burn hazardous wastes used in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Break Free from Plastics (BFFP) Philippines Glenn Ymata said that this supposed memorandum which came from DENR’s Environment Management Bureau (EMB) is a dangerous way of ridding spent medical equipment, as pathogens may be released in the air.

But aside from this, Ymata noted that the move is a direct violation of Republic Act No. 8749 or the country’s Clean Air Act — which should be enforced by DENR in the first place. “The DENR’s proposal to incinerate and use crematoria to dispose of COVID-19 medical and hazardous waste is a blatant violation of our Clean Air Act, and will surely result in emitting toxic pollutants into our air and environment,” he said in a statement on Wednesday.

“Global health experts recognize that disinfection and sterilization are successful in killing COVID-19 pathogens. The DENR should not make this pandemic as an excuse to promote dangerous waste treatment practices,” he added.

BFFP and other groups claimed that the DENR’s EMB issued the memorandum last March 26, where regional offices were allowed to use crematoria to burn COVID-19 wastes. However, no report on the supposed memo has come out as of now.

DENR says ‘that’s unlikely’

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda has explained in a phone interview with [INQUIRER.net](#) that he was not aware of such order to burn the waste, saying that what they were doing instead was to disinfect these hazardous materials coming from the hospitals.

Antiporda emphasized that it was unlikely to burn waste through the crematoria, given that these establishments have their hands full due to the rising number of dead COVID-19 patients. Government procedures dictate that patients who die due to COVID-19 have to be cremated.

According to Health Care Without Harm Southeast Asia executive Director Ramon San Pascual, DENR knows that crematoria — whose original purpose is to incinerate bodies — are not designed to burn healthcare wastes.

“DENR is well aware that crematoria are not designed to treat municipal and healthcare wastes. This means they lack all of the necessary pollution control devices that genuine waste treatment facilities must have to protect people’s health,” San Pascual noted.

Envi advocates accuse DENR of allowing burning of
COVID-19 wastes

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“This said, DENR is now creating another health disaster on top of this COVID-19 pandemic,” he added. “Any health facility exercising best practices for infectious waste will sufficiently manage waste potentially infected with COVID-19. There’s no need to create fear nor a need to violate the Clean Air Act and push harmful false-solutions.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a myriad of problems — including the sheer number of disposed, used personal protective equipment from hospitals and health centers handling COVID-19 cases.

On Tuesday, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease was forced to [extend the ECO](#) all over Luzon until April 30 due to the rising number of patients with the latest coronavirus strain.

As of Wednesday, Department of Health officials said that there are now at [3,870 patients](#) infected with COVID-19, 182 of which have already died while at least 96 have recovered.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1255975/environment-advocates-accuse-denr-of-allowing-burning-of-covid-19-waste#ixzz6J3vss47f>

LOOK: Luzon lockdown brings clear skies to Metro Manila

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Apr 08 2020 11:12 PM | Updated as of Apr 08 2020 11:39 PM

Clearer skies and better air quality are a welcome side effect to the ongoing enhanced community quarantine which has been ongoing since March 16.

The rumble of car engines and honking horns have been replaced by chirping birds in the morning while smog, which up until three weeks ago was synonymous with living in the metro, have all but disappeared, gifting residents with views previously thought long gone.

Just last year, the country's air quality was considered unsafe according to various reports and yet the last few weeks of vehicle-free roads, plane-less skies, and widespread closings of factories have already done much to improve the quality not just in the Philippines but in other parts of the world.

As people under the quarantine wait for everything to return to normal, air quality is something that hopefully remains the same as it is now.

Here are some scenes in and around the metro:



Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/life/multimedia/slideshow/04/08/20/look-luzon-lockdown-brings-clear-skies-to-metro-manila>

Nickel Asia, Global Ferronickel suspend Surigao mining operations



By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#)

April 9, 2020

The country's biggest nickel mining companies have voluntarily suspended their mining and exports operations in Surigao del Norte province after the government extended the enhanced community quarantine in Luzon to last until April 30.

According to separate disclosures on Wednesday, Nickel Asia Corp.'s operating arms Taganito Mining Corp. (TMC) and Hinatuan Mining Corp. (HMC) and Global Ferronickel Holdings Inc.'s Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC) decided to suspended operations in their sites in the municipalities of Claver, Tagana-an and Cagdianao.

The decision was made in response to appeals of provincial and municipal governments to defer their operations to prevent an increased risk of entry and transmission of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) in the province.

“As a good corporate citizen, we comply with all rules and regulations, and as a good neighbor, we listen to the concerns of the local community,” said Global Ferronickels President Dante Bravo.

“We also stand together with the Surigaonon people and the whole country in the fight against this pandemic,” he added.

As for Nickel Asia, its other mining subsidiaries — Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp., which operates in Bataraza town, Palawan province; and Cagdianao Mining Corp., which operates in the Dinagat Islands — will remain operational, the company said, “while observing health and safety protocols to ensure that the health and safety of their employees are not compromised and to minimize the risk of Covid-19 within their respective communities.”

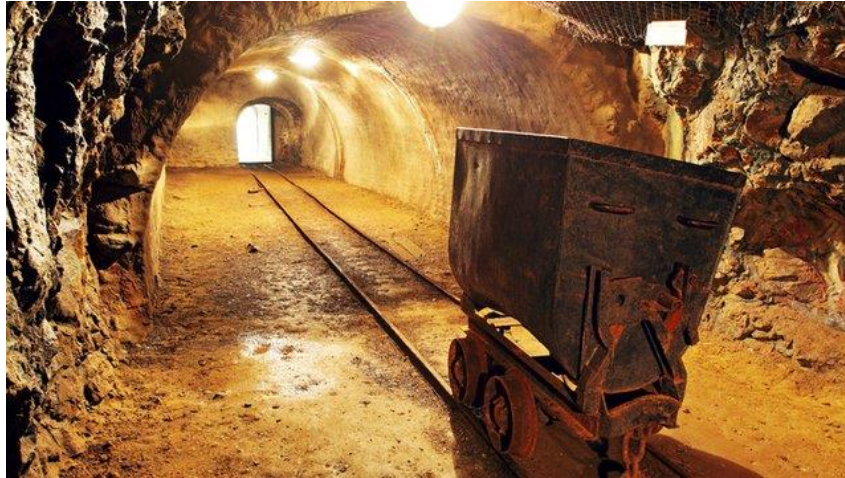
Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/09/business/business-top/nickel-asia-global-ferronickel-suspend-surigao-mining-operations/711575/>

BUSINESS

FNI suspends mining operations

Published 16 hours ago
on April 8, 2020 02:03 PM

By **TDI**



Following the government's strict protocol on social distancing and to allay concerns on the further spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Platinum Group Metals Corporation (PGMC), the operating arm of Global Ferronickel Holdings, Inc. (FNI), temporarily suspended operations in its Cagdianao site effective immediately.

The decision came after PGMC received last 6 April a message from Surigao del Norte Provincial Governor Francisco T. Matugas asking for the temporary halt in its operations.

Mayor Georgia D. Gokiangkee of the Municipality of Claver likewise asked for the deferment of operations to help keep Claver and Surigao del Norte and its people from the viral disease

"As a good corporate citizen, we comply with all rules and regulations, and as a good neighbor, we listen to the concerns of the local community," FNI president Dante R. Bravo said

"We also stand together with the Surigaonon people and the whole country in the fight against this pandemic," he added.

The company vowed to maintain a skeleton staff for the conduct of site maintenance and relief operations.

PGMC has provided relief assistance to the impact and non-impact communities from the 14 barangays of the Municipality of Claver.

To date, the company has distributed relief goods, disinfectants, face masks, meals, and other essential items to 10,995 individuals. The distribution to another 65,000 individual beneficiaries is underway.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/08/fni-suspends-mining-operations/>



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/134752476678442/posts/1729511967202477/>

Two new sea star species discovered in PH

By: [Ian Biong](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

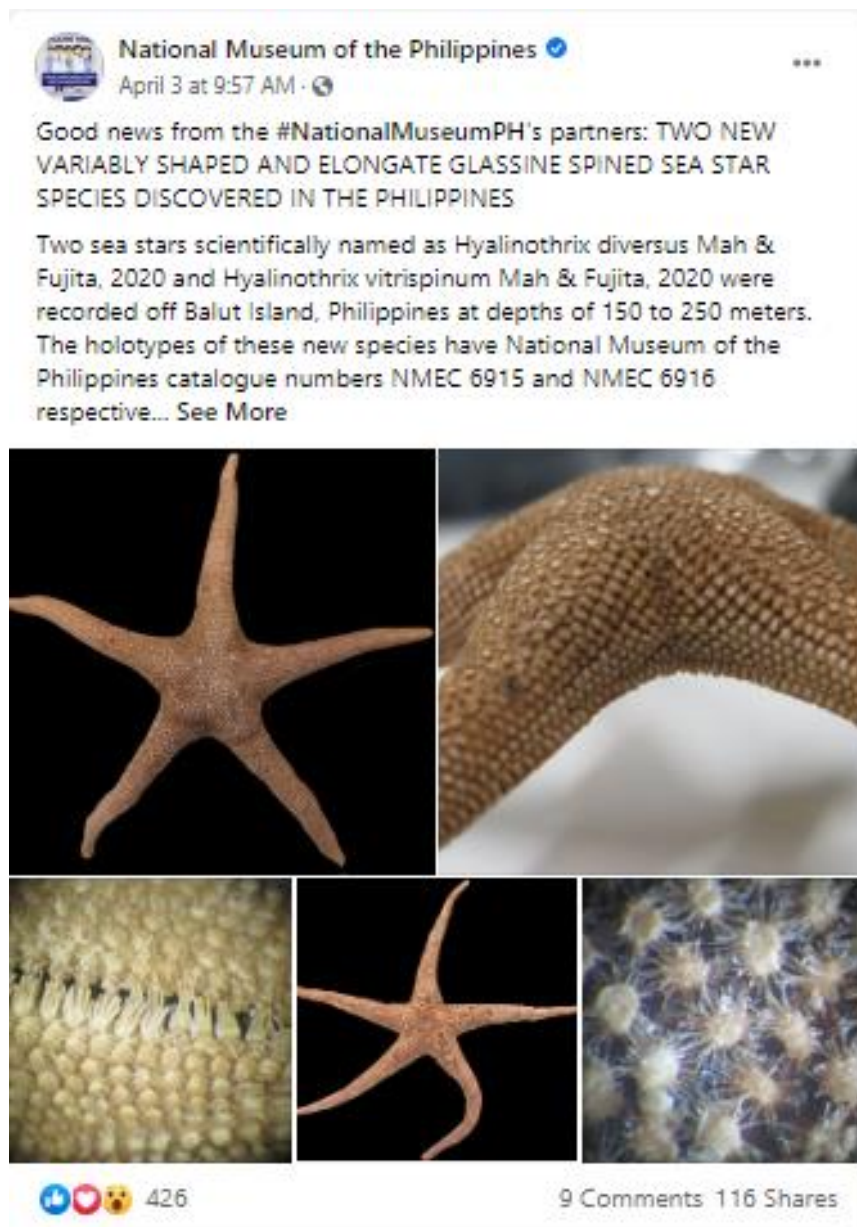
[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:55 PM April 08, 2020

MANILA, Philippines—Two new species of sea stars have been discovered in the Philippines, the National Museum announced last Friday.

The two species, scientifically named *Hyalinothrix diversus* and *Hyalinothrix vitrispinum*, were found off Balut Island at depths of around 150 to 250 meters.

The National Museum via Facebook described the new discoveries as “variably shaped and elongate glassine spined sea star species.”

The two have been included in the Zootaxa article “New species and occurrence records of Japanese Solasteridae and Ganeriidae including a new species of *Paralophaster* from the North Pacific with an overview of *Hyalinothrix*” described and authored by Dr. Christopher Mah of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. and Dr. Toshihiko Fujita of the National Museum of Nature and Science in Tsukuba, Japan.




National Museum of the Philippines

April 3 at 9:57 AM · 🌐

Good news from the #NationalMuseumPH's partners: TWO NEW VARIABLY SHAPED AND ELONGATE GLASSINE SPINED SEA STAR SPECIES DISCOVERED IN THE PHILIPPINES

Two sea stars scientifically named as *Hyalinothrix diversus* Mah & Fujita, 2020 and *Hyalinothrix vitrispinum* Mah & Fujita, 2020 were recorded off Balut Island, Philippines at depths of 150 to 250 meters. The holotypes of these new species have National Museum of the Philippines catalogue numbers NMEC 6915 and NMEC 6916 respectively... See More



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The name *H. diversus* stemmed from the Latin word “diversus,” for the species displays an “unusually diverse morphology of the plates on the body surface” which is known as “paxillae,” according to the National Museum.

H. vitrispinum meanwhile was derived from the Latin word “vitrum,” meaning glass or glassy, and “spinum” for the elongate glassine spines covering the surface plates present on this species.

“The article’s main focus is the discovery of six new records and four undescribed species of sea stars from Japanese waters with records of occurrence in the Philippines resulting from the study of the asteroid collections at the National Museum of Nature and Science (NSMT) in Tsukuba, Japan,” the National Museum noted.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1255891/two-new-sea-star-species-discovered-in-ph#ixzz6J3z1wNNW>



MEDICAL SCHOLARS NG CHED, DOH NASAAN?

April 8, 2020 @ 4:32 PM 14 hours ago

Views: 63

Habang tinitipa natin ito, may kabuuang biktima na ang Covid-19 na halos 1.5 milyon o 1,430,590 at 82,025.

Ang Big 3 countries sa Covid-19 ay binubuo ng Italy na may patay na 17,127; Spain -14,045; United States of America – 12,844

Sa tatlong ito, USA ang may pinakamaraming kaso sa bilang na 400,335 at sinundan ito ng Spain – 141,942 at ng Italy – 135,586.

Siyempre pa, kasama sa may libo-libong patay ang mga bansang France na may patay na 10,328; United Kingdom – 6,159; Iran – 3,872; at China – 3,333.

Ang mahal kong Pinas?

Pang-33 lamang sa maliit na bilang ng patay na 177.

PASASALAMAT

Sa pagkakataong ito, ating inihahayag ang walang sukatan na pasasalamat sa Poong Maykapal at kahit papaano, hindi kasing sama ang ating kalagayan sa iba.

Pero hindi rin natin kinakaligtaan ang interbensyon ng ating mga awtoridad, sa pangunguna ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, na nag-isip na sa pinakamaagang panahon ay harangin na ang pandemic na manalasa sa ating bansa.

Kaya nga nariryan ang enhanced community quarantine na kakambal ng kautusang “stay at home” bilang kabilang sa mga mabibisang hakbang laban sa Covid-19.

Nariryan din ang pagsusumikap ng lahat na magtulungan upang maibsan ang malawak na paghihirap at gutom bunga ng ECQ at stay at home na kinambalan ng paghinto ng mga trabaho at transportasyon.

PASASALAMAT PA RIN

Pinasasalaman din natin ang lahat ng nag-aalay ng kanilang mga sarili para lang maisulong ang giyera sa Covid-19, mula sa mga hanay ng doktor, nars at iba pang medical professional hanggang sa mga pulis, militar, barangay tanod at lahat ng opisyal ng pamahalaan na kumikilos dito.

Siyempre pa, naririyang din ang pagkakabuo ng Bayanihan Act na may kasamang bilyon-bilyong pisong pondo na pansagip sa mga talaga namang hirap na hirap sa buhay, partikulara ang halos 17 milyong pamilya mula sa 22 milyong kabuuang pamilya sa mahal kong Pinas.

Hindi rin natin kinalilimutan ang mga bansang nagdodonasyon ng mga kailangan natin gaya ng mga testing kit at sari-saring gamit para sa personal protective equipment, disinfectant at iba pa.

Ang China, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, World Health Organization at iba pa.

Kumikilos na rin ang mga ahensya ng pamahalaan at mga pribadong kompanya para gumawa ng mga testing kit, PPE at iba pang gamit laban sa Covid-19.

Salamat din sa kanila.

KURSONG DOKTOR

Dito natin naalaala na may mga programa ang Commission on Higher Education at Department of Health para sa pagpaparami ng mga doktor sa Pilipinas.

Sa alaala natin, nagsimula ang CHED na magpaaral ng mga doktor na manggagaling sa mga mahihirap na pamilya, indigenous people at iba pa noon pang school year 2017-2018.

Kasabay nito ang pagpapairal ng libreng edukasyon sa kolehiyo, lalo na sa mga pampublikong kolehiyo at unibersidad.

Meron ding scholarship na inilunsad ng DOH at kukunin ang mga estudyante mula sa mga mahihirap na pamilya, 20 pinakamahihirap na bayan at lungsod, indigenous peoples, dependent ng government employees at aktibo sa serbisyo na mga pulis at sundalo, biktima ng kalamidad, barangay health workers at hilot.

Kumusta kaya ang mga programang ito?

Naalala natin sila dahil sa panawagan mismo ng DOH sa mga hindi pa pasado sa board examinations na tumulong sa giyera laban sa Covid-19.

Kung iisipin, wala pang gradweyt sa mga pumasok o nag-avail sa mga programa ng CHED at DOH.

Pero kung may makaisip na sumali sa giyera, bakit hindi pasalihin ang mga ito sa abot ng kanilang kaya?

HINDI MAGANDA

Ang totoo, kung sakaling makalusot nang makalusot ang Covid-19 sa ating hanay at pruweda rito ang pagdami ng namamatay sa atin at natatagpuang positibo araw-araw, hindi maganda ang ating patutunguhan.

Sana naman, hindi tayo aabot sa nagaganap sa nabanggit na nating mga bansa na sobrang dami ang nagiging positibo at namamatay.

Ang mga iskolar ng CHED at DOH ay maaaring kasangga ng lahat ng sangay ng DOH at pribadong ospital na ngayo'y lumalaban sa Covid-19.

Kahit sabihin nating kaunti pa lang ang mga kaalaman at training nila sa panggagamot, marahil ay may alam na sila sa paggawa ng first aid at makatutulong din sa pagtakbo sa ospital ng mga PUI o Person Under Monitoring sa mga barangay o gusaling kanilang tinitirhan.

Kaya lang, dapat din silang bigyan ng mga kaukulang proteksyon sa paggampan ng tungkulin gaya ng PPE at iba pa.

At hindi rin sila dapat iitsapwera sa mga pondong inilalaan sa mga pangunahing health worker na nasa kalagitnaan na ng giyera sa salot na Covid-19.

Source: <https://remate.ph/medical-scholars-ng-ched-doh-nasaan/>

Manila Water, Maynilad pledge free water for quarantine facilities, tanks for vehicular disinfection

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Apr 8, 2020 4:46:33 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 8) — Water firms Manila Water and Maynilad are providing services and allocating resources to help the government in its fight against the coronavirus disease.

West zone concessionaire Maynilad said it is supplying water at no cost to the [three sites](#) being converted into quarantine facilities for people who are confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19.

These are the Philippine International Convention Center Forum Tent, the World Trade Center in Pasay City, and the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Manila City. The three facilities are projected to accommodate close to 1,000 patients and seen to decongest hospitals now working at maximum capacity.

“Maynilad is donating the water requirements of these facilities for the entire duration of its operations as quarantine centers,” it said in a statement on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, east zone concessionaire Manila Water said it has installed static water tanks in six locations in Metro Manila for use in disinfecting vehicles plying major roads.

It said the static tanks are installed in the following locations:

- * Ortigas Avenue extension/SM East in Cainta, Rizal
- * C5 Road near the Centennial Village in Taguig City
- * J.P. Rizal Street at the Marikina City-San Mateo, Rizal boundary
- * Marcos Highway near corner Gil Fernando Avenue in Cainta, Rizal
- * San Mateo-Batasan Road in Marikina City
- * Elliptical Road corner West Avenue in Quezon City

“The water used to refill these tanks already has disinfection solution ready to be used in the sanitation gantries installed by Department of Public Works and Highways-National Capital Region along national roads,” it said in a statement.

Maynilad said it is also providing water to select disinfection stations of the DPWH in the national capital region.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/business/2020/4/8/maynilad-manila-water-water-services-coronavirus.html?fbclid=IwAR06jdrDgA-zYNI7LyNeILercXxRIo16Sm5NZZszcFpY19cem9m7oJtSBxU>

Water supply sufficient amid health crisis

According to MWSS, the country has enough water supply during the Luzon-wide community quarantine.

Published 9 hours ago
on April 8, 2020 10:46 PM
By [Maria Romero](#)



Despite water service interruptions due to the depleting supply at the capital's reservoirs, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System's (MWSS) top official said the country will not face another water crisis while it is facing the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

According to MWSS administrator Emmanuel Salamat, the country has enough water supply during the Luzon-wide community quarantine.

"We are assuring the public that we have sufficient water supply. We have also requested the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to increase our water allocation," Salamat said.

"Ensuring enough water supply is our contribution to fight this health crisis by proper sanitation. We make sure that our water is safe and complies with the Philippine National Drinking Standard," he added.

MWSS is seeking an additional water allocation from the current 42 cubic meters per second (cms) to 46 cms as water consumption is seen hiking up in the coming days.

Based on the MWSS monitoring, the rate of water service interruptions of the two water concessionaires — Manila Water Company and Maynilad Services Inc. — was reduced from 67 percent to 87 percent.

Nevertheless, the water concessionaires will still continue to implement water service interruption in some areas to prevent a widespread and serious shortage.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/08/water-supply-sufficient-amid-health-crisis/>



Born to Be Wild

April 7 at 12:34 PM · 🌐



Nagpunta si Doc Ferds sa Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro para idokumento ang isang thresher shark na nasalabit o napasama sa lambat ng mga mangingisda. Panoorin 'yan sa video na ito! #BornToBeWild



Source: https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2979574678731536&id=334045496617814

Mga naninigarilyo, vapors mas mataas ang tsyansang

TITLE: mahawa sa COVID-19 DOH

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April 9, 2020

DATE



Mga naninigarilyo, vapors mas mataas ang tsyansang mahawa sa COVID-19: DOH

April 8, 2020 @ 8:20 PM 11 hours ago
Views: 172

Manila, Philippines – Hinimok ng Department of Health o DOH ang mga naninigarilyo at vapors na tigilan na ang paninigarilyo dahil mas malaki ang tsyansa nitong mahawa sa coronavirus disease o COVID-19.

Ayon kay Dr. Beverly Ho, special assistant to the health secretary sa isang virtual presser, karamihan na apektado ng COVID-19 na gumagamit ng ventilators kapag naa-admit sa ospital ay mga smokers at vapors.

Paliwanag ni Ho, nakakapagpahina ng resistensya ang paninigarilyo na ayon aniya sa World Health Organization, ang mga naninigarilyo ay nagdudulot ng maraming karamdaman sa paghinga kabilang ang sipon na isa sa sintomas ng COVID-19

Ayon pa kay Ho, may mga pag-aaral na ang mga naninigarilyo ay higit na nasa peligro kaugnay sa pagkalat ng virus.

Base rin aniya sa pag-aaral ng COVID-19 patients sa Tsina, higit 25 porsyento sa mga nangangailangan ng mechanical ventilators ay mga smokers at kailangang dalhin sa intensive care unit o ang kadalasang namamatay.

“Exhaled air through smoking and vaping is not safe,” ayon pa kay Ho.

Dagdag pa nito na base sa mga laboratory experiments sinasabi ng mga siyentipiko na sa hangin kumakalat at dahilan ng pagtransmit ng virus.

Binigyan din din ni Ho na karamihan sa mga kumpirmadong kaso ng COVID-19 ay mga kalalakhian may edad na.

Mga naninigarilyo, vapers mas mataas ang tsyansang

TITLE: mahawa sa COVID-19 DOH

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Base sa datos ng DOH, 42 porsyento ang Filipino adult na lalaki ay naninigarilyo.

Habang milyong Filipino ang gumaganit ng e-cigarettes o vape.

Sinabi rin ng WHO mas malaki ang posibilidad na maipasa ang virus sa mga naninigarilyo dahil sa paghawak at sa pamamagitan ng bibig kung saan itinuturing silang mga vulnerable sa COVID-19.

Dahil dito, nanawagan ang DOH sa mga smokers na itigil na ang paninigarilyo upang maprotektahan ang kanilang kalusogan.

Pinayuhan din ang publiko na iwasan ang second-hand smoke mula sa vape o regular na sigarilyo

Maaalala na ipinagbawal na sa bansa ang paninigarilyo at paggamit ng vape sa pampublikong lugar. Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden

Source: <https://remate.ph/mga-naninigarilyo-vapers-mas-mataas-ang-tsyansang-mahawa-sa-covid-19-doh/>



“Our priority right now is the testing capacity, our healthcare capacity, health facilities, isolation. Once we accomplish these things, we can talk about the modified community quarantine,” Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said in a press briefing yesterday.

Boy Santos/File

IATF: Too early for modified quarantine

[Alexis Romero](#) (The Philippine Star) - April 9, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Despite what it described as “encouraging developments,” the government is not easing the quarantine measures and would not implement a “modified lockdown” in Luzon until the capacity to handle cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has improved.

“Our priority right now is the testing capacity, our healthcare capacity, health facilities, isolation. Once we accomplish these things, we can talk about the modified community quarantine,” Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said in a press briefing yesterday.

Earlier, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia called for a modified lockdown, saying some restrictions on transportation and the movement of food sources should be eased.

He also called on the government to consider allowing retail shops that sell basic needs to resume operations.

“Hindi pa po tapos ang boksing (The bout with COVID-19 is not yet over). There are encouraging developments and signs that we have made inroads to containing this outbreak. But as we enter a critical period in our efforts to comprehensively assess the extent of this outbreak, we urge everyone to continue to be vigilant and do their part to prevent the spread of this disease,” he added.

Nograles, also the spokesman for the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, said social distancing should be observed even after the end of the quarantine period, which started last March 17 and was supposed to end on April 13. President Duterte extended the quarantine until April 30 to give the government more time to conduct tests.

“But again, just to manage everybody’s expectations, social distancing will be a constant, social distancing, the wearing of face masks, the washing of hands, disinfection, all these will be part of the new normal until we find a vaccine,” he said.

Nograles said the National Economic and Development Authority would study measures to be implemented once the Luzon-wide quarantine is lifted – something he described as “forward planning.”

Asked if there is an assurance that the quarantine would end on April 30, Nograles replied: “I can’t say. Again, we will take one day at a time. For now, we are increasing our testing capacity, we are isolating PUIs (persons under investigation) and patients with COVID-19.

“If we are successful in the two aspects, then that will help us make a decision when April 30 is approaching,” he added.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo defended President Duterte from critics who claimed that he had issued contradicting statements about the impact of COVID-19, saying his earlier remarks were based on previous developments.

Duterte drew flak after he claimed in an address last Monday that he had warned the country about the risks of COVID-19 from the start.

Some critics pointed out that the President had tried to belittle the coronavirus in his previous speeches, citing his remark that there was “nothing really to be extra scared of.”

Some people also recalled Duterte saying that everything was “well” in the country and there was no need for a “hysterical” response to the virus that “would die a natural death.”

Panelo said Duterte’s previous statements were based on developments at the time. “In other words, it depends on the situation. The President was just following the guidelines of the World Health Organization and (his actions) were based on what he was seeing around him,” Panelo said.

The country should develop telemedicine as a viable alternative to physical visits to doctors, Sen. Sonny Angara said yesterday.

“We have seen in the past weeks that consults with medical professionals have become very difficult. Clinics and hospitals are struggling to cope with the surge in patients seeking medical attention. With COVID-19 being highly contagious, physical visits to physicians are discouraged, which makes the situation even more difficult for the public,” Angara said.

“Patients with COVID-19 could easily spread the virus to the health professionals and the latter could then infect other patients. It’s a vicious cycle which could prove to be fatal not only for the patients, but the health professionals as well. During these times, the use of telemedicine could help bring the necessary health care to our people and more importantly, save lives,” said Angara who was discharged from a hospital in Metro Manila this week after having recovered from COVID-19.

The pandemic is now be wreaking havoc in the country’s healthcare sector but this could also be an opportunity to improve the system.

This was the opinions of doctors Jason Ligot, health communication specialist and director of Organic Intelligence and Albert Domingo, independent health system and public policy consultant in an interview with The Chiefs on OneNews Signal TV Tuesday night.

According to Ligot, the “important roles of local government units have been highlighted by COVID-19.

“Some cities outperformed others because they have pro-active local government leaders who planned or, at the very least, knew how to respond and mobilize resources. I will give credit to local government units who at the onset were able to organize and mobilize resources,” he said.

For his part, Domingo noted that the government has been “adapting quite fast” with its response to the pandemic.

“The government, overall, is doing quite well. There are some areas of improvement and we are seeing it. For instance, if more testing should be done,” he added.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday the Filipino people are united and will win the battle and overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lorenzana also called on Catholics to reflect on the true essence of Christian values in the observance of Holy Week

April 9, 2020

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TITLE: IATF: Too early for modified quarantine

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“This sacred season is a time to reflect on our faith and the essence of our Christian values,” Lorenzana said. – **With Jaime Laude, Paolo Romero, Sheila Crisostomo**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/09/2006489/iatf-too-early-modified-quarantine>

COVID-19 crisis could last up to two years, says Duterte

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:56 AM April 09, 2020

MANILA, Philippines— President Rodrigo Duterte called on the public to not rush in solving the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, saying it could last for two years.

“Kapag hindi naayos itong COVID-19, mapunada talaga tayong lahat. Huwag ninyong madaliin. Sabihin ko sa inyo, think of COVID-19 sa ganitong sitwasyon: Tatakbo ito ng two years,” Duterte said in an address aired early Thursday.

[If the COVID-19 problem is not fixed, we have all failed. Don’t rush it. Let me tell you, think of COVID-19 in this situation: It could run for two years.]

Duterte said he already saw this coming, claiming he was the first to place a lockdown to combat the virus.

“Ito nakikita ko na noon pa. Itong COVID na ‘to sinsusundan ko talaga. Ako ang pinakaunang lahat naglockdown kasi nasusundan ko na ang storya,” he said.

[I saw this coming long before. I’ve been following this COVID. I’m the first to place a lockdown because I’ve been following the story.]

“Sabi ko nagbabasa naman ako, different sources of knowledge — Facebook, everything, lahat ng what i can get my hands on to study the matter because presidente ako. Dumating nga,” he added.

[I said I’ve been reading about it from different sources of knowledge — Facebook, everything that I can get my hands on to study the matter because I’m the President. And so it came.]

The President then noted the importance of a vaccine to solve the problem, saying the crisis would not end without it.

“COVID, anong sagot? Vaccine. Walang vaccine? COVID stays,” he said.

[COVID, what’s the answer? Vaccine? No vaccine? COVID stays.]

The government has placed the entire Luzon under an enhanced community quarantine until April 30.

The extreme measure suspended public transportation, prohibited mass gatherings, and even ordered the temporary closure of some businesses — excluding hospitals, groceries and drug stores, and other essential establishments.

This is to limit the public’s movement and flatten the curve of [COVID-19 cases which has so far reached 3,870, with 182 fatalities and 96 recoveries.](#)

/atm

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1256096/covid-19-crisis-could-last-up-to-two-years#ixzz6J4PTHku8>

A three-pronged war on Covid-19: ECQ. Test. Heal.



By [Ricardo Saludo](#)

April 9, 2020

WITH Luzon's enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) extended to April 30, six weeks from its start on the ides of March, it's time to take stock of the nation's battle against the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19).

With cases and deaths still surging and those getting well way behind those killed, the virus is clearly not on the retreat.

Rather, despite crushing burdens on the economy and the poor, ECQ has barely kept infections within what strained hospitals and health care workers (HCWs) can cope with. And, as the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on the pandemic admits, the contagion could explode to Italy's decimating proportions if lockdown ends now.

Is ECQ working? Yes and no

So, is the island-wide quarantine failing? Yes and no.

ECQ is helping keep the epidemic from gushing out of Metro Manila, where four-fifths of cases are. The Visayas and Mindanao have much fewer cases and deaths, as bodies of water and travel bans keep virus carriers away. Like Metro Manila in Luzon, the most urbanized areas in the south, Davao and Central Visayas, have the most infections. And the trajectory of Philippine cases has kept significantly below steeper slopes in China, America, Italy, Spain and other harder-hit nations.

But our seemingly better-than-worst numbers should give no great comfort. For starters, Philippine cases are artificially lower because of the lack of testing kits, which keeps dozens, if not hundreds or thousands, of cases off official statistics. The Philippines has done about 23,000 Covid-19 tests since January. South Korea administers 20,000 a day in its effective test-and-trace strategy.

Even if our Covid-19 cases are substantially below the hardest-hit nations, so are our medical facilities. If Covid-19 cases in the country were truly far below Italy's, our hospitals and HCWs would still be overwhelmed, leading to countless deaths.

The other big ECQ problem is its debilitating impact on the economy and the poor. The Luzon lockdown squeezes 70 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), our annual economic output. Hence, from more than 6 percent GDP growth in 2020, the Asian Development Bank expects expansion of just 2 percent, destroying jobs and incomes.

Hardest hit are the poor, especially millions of daily wage earners, vendors and itinerant service workers idled by ECQ. Earning nothing, they and their families desperately need food and funds aid.

But despite the P200-billion assistance announced by President Rodrigo Duterte, many, if not most, barangay (villages) don't get prompt help. The state simply isn't geared to instantly serve the 18 million low-income households promised help. It must join hands with religious, charitable and private sector groups to accelerate aid.

Yet, even with joint efforts, full-scale ECQ cannot last many months without collapsing the economy and triggering widespread unrest and crime.

Time to test and trace

With lockdown unsustainable, the IATF is set to shift to the test-and-trace strategy adopted by South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, which contained the disease without full lockdown. By May, the government aims for mass testing to find and isolate infected people in sports and convention centers, schools and other facilities being equipped for treatment.

As Covid-19-positive or -suspected people go under isolation and care, more and more of Metro Manila can resume normal activity, while maintaining physical distancing and health precautions, including face masks for all.

Can this modified ECQ, focusing on the sick and the highly exposed barangay, keep coronavirus cases from spiking beyond what health facilities and workers can handle? Only if testing covers most Filipinos, at least in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

With not much more than 300,000 kits available by May, however, Covid-19 testing will still be far below the numbers done in South Korea. Hence, there is need to augment and target testing with other measures.

One is to assess barangay infection risk by requiring families to answer online questions on Covid-19 symptoms among members, and their exposure to areas and people with the coronavirus. For households without smartphones, barangay personnel and social workers can gather and transmit data.

Apple.com has one such questionnaire, while local software firm Multisys has created an emergency website, Staysafe.ph, to track community infections and exposure. Responses can be sent to a secure IATF server, with or without names, numbers and addresses, depending on privacy restrictions. But all data must include barangay location, based on transmitting cell sites.

With this information, health and local government authorities can zero in on high-risk barangays for mass testing. Priority treatment will be given to households that disclose names and addresses. Our limited number of kits can then be most efficiently deployed to find the infected.

Enter the Covid-19 cures

Even with successful test-and-trace, health experts see this strategy and ECQ as temporary measures. The burdens of lockdown, isolation and precautionary regimens remain formidable, especially for nations lacking the rigid discipline of South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, where neighboring threats have built staunch unity and obedience toward authorities for decades.

Hence, the long-term solution to Covid-19 has to be remedy and vaccine. About 35 companies and academic institutions are working on vaccines. At least four are already being tested on animals, including one by Boston, United States' Moderna Inc., due for human trials soon. But mass immunization will probably happen only next year.

Remedies can, hopefully, cure the ill without prolonged hospitalization, easing the burden on health facilities and HCWs. Four are undergoing trials under the World Health Organization solidarity research by universities worldwide, including our own University of the Philippines.

This column discussed three other formulations last Thursday

(<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/02/opinion/columnists/has-fda-rejected-a-philippine-cure-for-covid-19/708691/>): hydroxychloroquine with azithromycin, successfully used by the Makati Medical Center; the antiviral favipiravir, made and being tested by Japan's Fujifilm; and Prodex-B, a Filipino-developed mixture of the anesthetic procaine and the steroid dexamethasone said to heal influenza, human immunodeficiency virus-acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, dengue, chikungunya, leptospirosis and, most recently, patients with Covid-19 symptoms, including one tested positive.

The government should accelerate drug trials and, if warranted, production and dissemination. Once widely deployed, effective anti-coronavirus medicine would avoid or quicken treatment and avoid straining hospitals. Then lockdown and death can end.

(Ric Saludo heads the Center for Strategy, Enterprise and Intelligence: ric.saludo@censei.asia.)

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/09/opinion/columnists/a-three-pronged-war-on-covid-19-ecq-test-heal/711550/>

Pandemic deals blow to plastic bag bans, plastic reduction

Associated Press / 05:37 PM April 08, 2020



A sign posted at an entrance to a 365 Whole Foods store advises customers not to use their own bags while shopping in Lake Oswego, Ore. Just weeks earlier, cities and even states across the U.S. were busy banning straws, limiting takeout containers and mandating that shoppers bring reusable bags or pay a small fee. Grocery clerks are nervous that the virus could linger on reusable fabric bags and their unions are backing them up with demands to end plastic bag fees and suspend bag bans. The plastics industry has seized the moment, lobbying to overturn existing bans on single-use plastics. AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus

PORTLAND, Ore. — Just weeks ago, cities and even states across the U.S. were busy banning straws, limiting takeout containers and mandating that shoppers bring reusable bags or pay a small fee as the movement to eliminate single-use plastics took hold in mainstream America. What a difference a pandemic makes.

In a matter of days, hard-won bans to reduce the use of plastics — and particularly plastic shopping sacks — across the U.S. have come under fire amid worries about the virus clinging to reusable bags, cups and straws.

Governors in Massachusetts and Illinois have banned or strongly discouraged the use of reusable grocery bags. Oregon suspended its brand-new ban on plastic bags this week, and cities from Bellingham, Washington, to Albuquerque, New Mexico, have announced a hiatus on plastic bag bans as the coronavirus rages.

Add to that a rise in takeout and a ban on reusable cups and straws at the few coffee stores that remain open, and environmentalists worry COVID-19 could set back their efforts to tackle plastic pollution for years.

“People are scared for their lives, their livelihood, the economy, feeding their loved ones, so the environment is taking a back seat,” said Glen Quadros, owner of the Great American Diner & Bar in Seattle.

Quadros has laid off 15 employees and seen a 60% decline in business since Seattle all but shut down to slow the pandemic. For now, he’s using biodegradable containers for takeout and delivery, but those products cost up to three times more than plastic — and they’re getting hard to find because of the surge in takeout, he said.

“The problem is, we don’t know what’s in store,” Quadros said. “Everyone is in the same situation.”

The plastics industry has seized the moment and is lobbying hard to overturn bans on single-use plastics by arguing disposable plastics are the safest option amid the crisis. California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon and Vermont have statewide bans on plastic bags, and Oregon and California have laws limiting the use of plastic straws.

New York's statewide plastic bag ban is on hold because of a lawsuit.

The Plastics Industry Association recently sent a letter to Alex Azar, head of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and asked him to speak out against plastic bag bans because they put consumers and workers at risk. And the American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance is doubling down on its opposition to plastic bag bans under a preexisting campaign titled Bag the Ban.

Grocery worker unions, too, have joined the chorus. The union that represents Oregon supermarket workers is lobbying for a ban on reusable bags, and a Chicago union called for an "end to the disease-transmitting bag tax."

Critics argue people with reusable bags don't regularly wash them.

"If those bags coming into the store are contaminated with anything, they get put on the conveyor belt, the counter, and you're putting yourself in a bad spot," said Matt Seaholm, executive director of the American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance. "It's an unnecessary risk."

A study by the U.S. National Institutes of Health found the novel coronavirus can remain on plastics and stainless steel for up to three days, and on cardboard for up to one day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it appears possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes — but it's not thought that's the main way the virus spreads.

More studies are needed to fully assess the dangers posed by reusable bags, which are mostly made of fabric, said Dr. Jennifer Vines, lead health officer for the Portland metropolitan area.

"It's not clear that a virus that you can find on a surface — whether it's cloth or something else — is viable and can actually make you sick," she said.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Some stores such as Trader Joe's and Target are letting customers use their own bags if they sack their groceries themselves, while others are banning them.

In Oregon, temporary rules now allow disposable "T-shirt" plastic bags with no fee to customers. Many stores ran out of paper bags amid a run on groceries, accelerating the move to ease plastic restrictions, said Joe Gilliam, president of the Northwest Grocery Association, which represents 1,000 retail locations in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

"There are some stores out there that are saying, 'For the time being, please don't bring those in.' Other stores are allowing them, but ... right now we're asking that only freshly laundered ones come in," he said.

Environmental groups, well aware of the nation's current priorities, were at first unusually silent on moves to temporarily roll back plastic bag bans. But they responded forcefully after the plastics industry asserted bag bans could worsen the pandemic's toll.

"The fear-driven gains the industry was able to win this month are likely to be extremely short-lived," said John Hocevar, of Greenpeace USA. "The movement away from throwaway plastic is the kind of awakening that is not going to be that easy for the plastic industry to stop."

In the meantime, some consumers are getting taken by surprise

Paul McNamara, who has used his own bags for a decade, said he was stopped at the entrance of his regular market in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, after the state enacted a temporary ban on reusable shopping sacks. His ratty bags have corners reinforced with duct tape from years of use; he instead left with his groceries in plastic bags.

“My question would be, will it become permanent?” McNamara said. “I’m fine with the restrictions on reusable plastics. It makes a lot of sense, and that’s the way to go for the environment. But if it’s a public health issue, we’ve got to figure out some way to deal with it.”

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1255866/pandemic-deals-blow-to-plastic-bag-bans-plastic-reduction#ixzz6J4CFqvwN>

Pandemic deals blow to plastic bag bans, plastic reduction

AP By [Associated Press](#)

April 8, 2020

PORTLAND, Oregon: Just weeks ago, cities and even states across the US were busy banning straws, limiting takeout containers and mandating that shoppers bring reusable bags or pay a small fee as the movement to eliminate single-use plastics took hold in mainstream America.

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In this Tuesday, March 31, 2020, photo, Glen Quadros, right, owner of the Great American Diner & Bar, checks a takeout order as cook Arturo Aguilar looks on in Seattle. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

“If those bags coming into the store are contaminated with anything, they get put on the conveyor belt, the counter, and you’re putting yourself in a bad spot,” said Matt Seaholm, executive director of the American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance. “It’s an unnecessary risk.”

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“The fear-driven gains the industry was able to win this month are likely to be extremely short-lived,” said John Hocevar, of Greenpeace USA. “The movement away from throwaway plastic is the kind of awakening that is not going to be that easy for the plastic industry to stop.”



In this Sunday, March 29, 2020, photo, groceries loaded in plastic bags are seen after a shopping trip in Portland, Oregon. (AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus)

In the meantime, some consumers are getting taken by surprise.

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Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/08/news/latest-stories/pandemic-deals-blow-to-plastic-bag-bans-plastic-reduction/711348/>

Human activity to blame for virus spread: study

posted April 08, 2020 at 08:00 pm by **AFP**

Paris, France | AFP |by Patrick GALEY

Diseases such as the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the globe could become more common as human activity destroys habitats and forces disease-carrying wild animals into ever-closer proximity with us, a major study showed on Wednesday.



A pheasant walks in a farmer's field in Bethune, northern France on April 8, 2020. Pheasants have been reintroduced into the wild and are taking advantage of the calm due to the confinement of citizens since March 17 because of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19,
DENIS CHARLET / AFP

Illegal poaching, mechanised farming and increasingly urbanised lifestyles have all led to mass biodiversity loss in recent decades, devastating populations of wild animals and increasing the abundance of domesticated livestock.

Around 70 percent of human pathogens are zoonotic, meaning they at some point make the leap from animals to humans as with COVID-19.

US-based researchers looked at more than 140 viruses known to have been transmitted from animals to humans, and cross-referenced them with the IUCN's Red List of endangered species. They found that domesticated animals, primates, bats and rats carried the most zoonotic viruses -- around 75 percent.

But they also concluded that the risk of spillover from animal to human populations was highest when a species is threatened by over-consumption and habitat loss.

"Our data highlight how exploitation of wildlife and destruction of natural habitat in particular, underlie disease spillover events, putting us at risk for emerging infectious diseases," said Christine Johnson, from the University of California's School of Veterinary Medicine, lead author of the research.

Last year the United Nations panel on biodiversity warned that up to one million species faced extinction as a result of human activity.

The landmark assessment showed that 75 percent of land and 40 percent of oceans on Earth have already been severely degraded by mankind

Deforestation, in particular, is placing increasing pressure on wild mammals, which struggle to adapt to dwindling habitats.

And as we encroach further on their territory, wild animals are being forced into increasing contact with humans, heightening the risk of another COVID-19.

"We alter the landscape through deforestation, conversion of land for growing crops or raising livestock, or building up communities," Johnson told AFP.

"This also increases the frequency and intensity of contact between humans and wildlife -- creating the perfect conditions for virus spillover."

- Trade ban urged -

Scientists are still trying to pin down the species that passed COVID-19 to humans -- suspects include bats and pangolins, both considered delicacies in China, where the outbreak emerged.

Conservationists have called for a global ban on wildlife trading in the wake of the pandemic and China has prohibited the consumption of wild animals.

Greenpeace on Wednesday urged the European Union to push for a worldwide ban "in order to protect public health and biodiversity across the globe".

But COVID-19 has also seen crucial UN biodiversity talks postponed and several indigenous groups are reporting greater encroachment from illegal miners and poachers into tropical forests.

The study, published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B, also showed the prevalence of zoonotic disease in animals that are mass-produced for agriculture.

"Once we move past this public health emergency, we hope policy makers can focus on pandemic preparedness and prevention of zoonotic disease risk, especially when developing environmental, land management, and animal resource policies," said Johnson.

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Source: <https://manilastandard.net/news/special-feature/321309/human-activity-to-blame-for-virus-spread-study.html?fbclid=IwAR2bmN9eDQUhzN-d79O7r6jZzMyZDuZnZWPoUPk-sFlp78PMNSDah hiLfw>

China snake village scales down as coronavirus

TITLE: prompts wildlife ban

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China snake village scales down as coronavirus prompts wildlife trade ban

David Stanway, Reuters

Posted at Apr 08 2020 05:22 PM



A snake farm with empty wooden slats is pictured after a ban on the trade and consumption of wildlife following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Zisiqiao village, Zhejiang province, China, April 7, 2020. *Xihao Jiang, Reuters*

ZISIQIAO, China - Since China began frantic efforts to curb a coronavirus epidemic in late January, residents in the tiny snake breeding village of Zisiqiao have had to come to terms with a ban on wildlife trading, its lifeline for decades.

Zisiqiao employed hundreds of people to breed 3 million snakes a year. Now, the rows of wooden slats that housed the captive reptiles stand empty, and abandoned.

The Chinese character for "snake" has even been removed from the sign on the front wall of a specialty snake meat restaurant on the village's edge.

"In the village now, there's definitely no one breeding snakes," said Yang Heyong, a 71-year-old former breeder. "It must be because of the epidemic. Zhong Nanshan (China's top medical adviser) has already said it is related to bats and snakes!"

Zisiqiao has been an unlikely center of China's snake industry for nearly 4 decades. It is dotted with small factory farms and its "snake culture" museum is a tourist attraction.

Snakes also form part of the village's informal economy, with families keeping them in backyard holds to sell to restaurants or traditional medicine traders.

The global coronavirus pandemic is believed to have originated in exotic animals on sale in the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan.

The broad consensus suggests SARS-CoV-2 originated in bats, and early research suggested it reached humans via snakes, but many say pangolin - also on sale in the Wuhan market - are a more likely culprit.

China issued a temporary ban on the trade and consumption of wildlife on Jan. 23 and vowed to amend animal protection and epidemic prevention legislation to make that ban permanent. Thirteen provinces have implemented their own local regulations to ban wildlife consumption.

China snake village scales down as coronavirus

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In Zisiqiao, built along the edge of a canal about 200 kilometers (120 miles) from Shanghai, snake breeding permits were canceled in January. Winter is the off-season and breeding normally begins in April or May, so the economic impact hasn't yet hit home.

While some residents said they expected restrictions to be relaxed once the crisis ends, government officials insisted they were permanent, and even if new licenses are issued later this year, the criteria will be far stricter.

"At the end of the epidemic, it still won't be permitted," said Lu Jinliang, vice-chief of the local village Communist Party. "They will have to switch professions, raise other species."

A HUMAN PROBLEM?

Even before the coronavirus outbreak, the snake trade was under scrutiny.

A study by Wuhan University published last December looked at snakes collected from the city's seafood markets, including the one blamed for the coronavirus pandemic.

China trades 7,000 to 9,000 tons of snake a year, and intensive farming may have enhanced the transmission of parasites and other infectious diseases, the study said.

However, Yu Xuejie, professor of the School of Health Sciences at Wuhan University and one of the study's authors, told Reuters that he did not believe snakes were the origin of the coronavirus.

Another paper published last month said that while the virus originated in bats, genetic evidence suggests snakes may have been the intermediary species. However, its findings have been disputed, said Patrick Aust, research associate with the Department of Zoology at the University of Oxford.

"The source is most likely mammalian, probably bats but other suspects too, including pangolins," he told Reuters, adding that there was no reason for snakes to be singled out as a health risk.

Animal welfare organizations have welcomed China's wildlife ban, including the snake farming restrictions, and are urging the government to make it permanent. But no species should be singled out for blame, they said.

"This is a disease issue: it is not just one animal's problem or responsibility," said Aili Kang, executive director of the Asia Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society, a non-government organization

"This is not one species' problem: it is a human problem."

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/04/08/20/china-snake-village-scales-down-as-coronavirus-prompts-wildlife-trade-ban>

Monkeys, elephants and dogs reclaim India's street in

April 9, 2020

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Monkeys, elephants and dogs reclaim India's streets in virus lockdown

Agence France-Presse

Posted at Apr 08 2020 11:06 PM



A monkey crosses the road near India's Presidential Palace during a 14-hour long curfew to limit the spreading of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the country, New Delhi, India, March 22, 2020. *Anushree Fadnavis, Reuters*

NEW DELHI - Hundreds of monkeys have taken over the streets around India's presidential palace, leading an animal offensive taking advantage of deserted streets as the country remains under a coronavirus lockdown.

With India's 1.3 billion population and tens of millions of cars conspicuous by their absence, stray domestic animals and wildlife has moved to fill the void, while also suffering from the pandemic fallout.

In the financial capital Mumbai, peacocks have been seen perched on top of parked cars, displaying their spectacular trains.

In Delhi, troops of monkeys now scamper over the walls of the Rashtrapati Bhawan presidential compound, past military guards and into the grounds of ministries and other official buildings.

"They are stealing a lot more, but not yet threatening humans," said one officer on duty at the palace entrance.

The Rhesus macaque monkeys -- who often snatch food from shoppers' bags -- have long been a problem in the capital, but there have been reports of some getting into office buildings during the lockdown.

Other animals have also been emboldened by the coronavirus restrictions on humans, who are only allowed out for food and essential items.

A Himalayan black bear last week wandered into Gangtok, capital of the northeastern state of Sikkim, entering a telecoms office and injuring an engineer, media reported.

HUNGRY STRAYS

Indian Forest Service officers, meanwhile, have shared videos on social media of elephants trundling past shuttered shops along deserted streets.

But the lockdown has also been deadly for some animals.

Four horses normally employed for tourist carriage rides near Kolkata's landmark Victoria Memorial have died from starvation in recent days, animal rights activists said.

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Some 115 horses, which make their living pulling carriages bedecked with flowers and balloons, were left to fend for themselves after the government ordered the shutdown, Sushmita Roy, spokeswoman for the Love and Care for Animals group told AFP.

"They are becoming sick. We fear many more will die in coming days if they do not get food," she said.

The owners of the carriages say they have no money for the horses after being ordered off the streets.

"We are finding it difficult to feed our family. How can we feed our horses?" said one owner, Sunny.

India's army of stray cows and dogs have also found new freedom to take over city intersections and forage in waste bins, but even those scraps have disappeared as restaurants and shops have closed.

Aditi Badam of the Posh Foundation in Noida, outside Delhi, said shelters like his were struggling to feed its animals and other strays during the lockdown.

Her foundation has been receiving increasing numbers of calls about abandoned dogs and pets, which he said had become a "major issue."

"It getting tougher day by day here," Badam told AFP, adding that strays near the office blocks of multinational companies and outsourcing firms in the city were starving as all had closed down.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/04/08/20/monkeys-elephants-and-dogs-reclaim-indias-streets-in-virus-lockdown>

Tropical forests' damage spreads catastrophically

By Tim Radford, Climate News Network

April 8, 2020

Human inroads into tropical forests stretch far beyond oil plantations or the edge of cattle ranches and are a wider threat to conservation.



A house in the middle of a forest in the Amazon riverbank, Brazil. Settlements can damage forests' ability to moderate global heating.
Image: [CIFOR, CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Tropical forests are vital in the campaign to limit global heating. Here's how to blunt them as a force – just put [a clearing, or a plantation, a road or a ranch in the pristine wilderness](#). And then, as absorbers of atmospheric carbon, the trees up to 100 metres deep into the jungle will lose their edge.

Along that 100 metre width, the canopy height, leaf mass and phosphorus levels per square metre will begin to change. All three are measures of a tree's capacity to grow vigorously and store carbon.

Researchers call this the edge effect. It matters. The world now has 1.2bn hectares of remaining tropical forest. This is an area far bigger than Canada.

But invasion of what, just one lifetime ago, were still unmapped wildernesses is now so aggressive that almost one fifth of the area of the world's tropical forest is within 100 metres of a non-forest edge.

And about half of all the forest is within 500 metres of a ranch, road, settlement or plantation.

Scientists from the US report in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) that they mapped change in the forests of Malaysian Borneo, looking closely at the sites where forest and commercial palm oil plantation co-exist.

They report that the levels of carbon stored “above ground” – that is, in the trunk and canopy – fell by an average of 22 per cent along the forest edges, to a depth of 100 metres. The older this forest edge, the greater the fall in stored carbon.

There are already reports that degradation of the rainforest in the Amazon and Congo, amplified by the impact of climate change in the form of extreme heat and drought, is so advanced that within a decade or two these forests could [cease to be “sinks” for atmospheric carbon](#), and instead start adding to the world’s burden of greenhouse gases that threaten to accelerate climate change, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

The world’s forests are vital in the global plans to [contain or limit climate change](#) driven by profligate combustion of fossil fuels that release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Research has repeatedly confirmed that undisturbed forest is [an efficient absorber and permanent store of atmospheric carbon](#) and that [almost any human transgression could damage the capacity of the rainforest](#) to absorb carbon.

Road web spreads

And yet all the signs are ominous: humans will go on making inroads into natural wilderness, in the most literal sense: by 2050, there could be [25 million km new road lanes, most of them in the developing world](#), to carry timber trucks, livestock and minerals through the world’s forests.

The threat to the remaining forests is now so pronounced that the researchers simply point out, in the kind of understatement that comes naturally to scientists, that such changes have “far-reaching implications” for the conservation of forest biodiversity and carbon stocks.

They see their research as a potential guide to government and local authorities on the management of the remaining wild woodland.

“Not all forest-agriculture boundaries are created equal, and most remaining forests change for many years following the original land conversion that takes place nearby,” said [Greg Asner of Arizona State University](#), one of the researchers.

“The importance of this discovery trickles all the way down to how conservation managers work to mitigate biodiversity losses associated with agricultural expansion.”

Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/tropical-forests-damage-spreads-catastrophically/>

Nuclear bomb test helped determine the ages of whale

TITLE: sharks for the first time

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Nuclear bomb tests helped determine the ages of whale sharks for the first time

By Scottie Andrew, CNN

Published Apr 8, 2020 4:25:42 PM



CNN -- We know that whale sharks are the largest fish in the seas, reaching up to nearly 60 feet in length. But that's one of the few things we know about the endangered species.

Because of the whale shark's elusiveness, marine researchers were left to guess at its age and lifespan, which conservationists use to develop species survival plans.

New findings end those guesses: A coterie of international researchers confirmed the ages of two whale sharks for the first time -- by sampling the carbon in vertebrae, left over from nuclear bomb tests during the Cold War.

And by learning how long the species can live, conservationists know a bit more about how to protect them in the wild.

The findings were published in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*.

The evasive whale shark

Whale sharks aren't whales at all -- they're a species of carpet sharks, and they can live in every tropical ocean on Earth. But despite their wide range, whale sharks are endangered, says the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Their status and unique body structure has made it difficult to study them, which in turn makes it difficult to create an effective survival plan. Progress in improving whale shark populations reversed in 2016, when the species was reclassified from vulnerable to endangered.

"I've been working on whale sharks for 20 years," said Mark Meekan, senior principal research scientist at the Australian Institute of Marine Science and study co-author. "Over that time, we've learned about their movements and behaviors, but some very basic information is still a mystery to researchers."

Their lifespan was an essential piece that's been missing for decades -- until Meekan and the team took a novel approach to dating the fish.

How to age the world's largest fish

Previous attempts at aging whale sharks were mixed. To do it, researchers need to slice into vertebrae that, when cut, reveal growth bands -- similar to the rings in tree trunks -- that could prove how old they are.

Nuclear bomb test helped determine the ages of whale

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But researchers could never decide whether the bands were formed once or twice a year, a distinction that made it difficult to determine how long they live.

So Meekan, lead author Joyce Ong and the team set out to settle the growth band debate -- using leftover carbon from bomb tests.

Carbon-14 is a naturally occurring radioactive isotope frequently used by archaeologists and historians to date fossils and artifacts because of its constant rate of decay, said Ong, a postdoctoral associate in the Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences at Rutgers University.

But nuclear weapons testing throughout the '50s and '60s caused levels of Carbon-14 to temporarily elevate. Those levels first saturated the atmosphere, then oceans, then entered the food web and into animals -- and that's how elevated levels of the isotope ended up in the vertebrae of some of the world's largest fish.

So Ong, Meekan and their colleagues started their dating of animals the traditional way: Sectioning a vertebrae -- the samples belonged to a 32-foot-long shark that was stranded in Pakistan in 2012 and a smaller shark collected in Taiwan in 2005 -- then counting the growth bands.

Then, they extracted material from the vertebrae and sampled the amount of radiocarbon in it. They compared that amount to the level of Carbon-14 in a material that they knew the age of -- and that's how they determined that the whale sharks they sampled were 50 and 35 years old, respectively.

And that debate among researchers about what a whale shark's growth band rings meant? This study settled that, too -- the radiocarbon dating proved that growth bands formed once a year instead of twice.

The significance

Now that we know the growth bands generate once a year, we know whale sharks grow slowly, which means populations likely won't survive high losses in fisheries, Meekan said.

That's a key conservationists can use to more accurately model their populations, which can aid in their conservation.

Previously, researchers believed whale sharks may live up to 100 years. That still could be true -- because the whale shark collected in Pakistan was only 32 feet in length, which is smaller than average, there's evidence that perhaps it would've continued to grow and mature, he said.

"We still can't say for certain if these sharks live to be 100 years old, but it now seems much more likely," he said.

This story was first published on CNN.com, "*Nuclear bomb tests helped determine the ages of whale sharks for the first time*"

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/4/8/nuclear-bomb-tests-determine-the-age-whale-sharks-.html?fbclid=IwAR2r8Cg9EP2BKI3HO9yy8bOvMEeCA9JM6M27dGphnlaJOxWAMFUBLEd4MDU>

Pandas use lockdown privacy to mate after a decade of

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Pandas use lockdown privacy to mate after a decade of trying

posted April 08, 2020 at 07:33 pm

by [AFP](#)

Stuck at home with no visitors and not much else to do, a pair of pandas in Hong Kong finally decided to give mating a go after a decade of dodging the issue.



This handout photo provided by Ocean Park Hong Kong on April 7, 2020 shows giant pandas Ying Ying and Le Le before mating at Ocean Park in Hong Kong on April 6, 2020. Stuck at home with no visitors and not much else to do, a pair of pandas in Hong Kong finally decided to give mating a go after a decade of dodging the issue. Handout / Ocean Park Hong Kong / AFP

Like half the planet, Ying Ying and Le Le have only really had each other for company since coronavirus-caused lockdowns shut off the flow of guests to their themepark pad.

And like couples everywhere, they've been making the best of the time on their own.

"Since Ying Ying and Le Le's arrival in Hong Kong in 2007 and attempts at natural mating since 2010, they unfortunately have yet to succeed until this year upon years of trial and learning," said Ocean Park conservation official Michael Boos.

The park released photos of the pair embracing in an enclosure uncharacteristically free from prying eyes and cameraphones.

Pandas are notoriously bad at reproducing, especially in captivity.

But vets had their hopes up when the monochromatic lovers started showing an interest in each other during the short spring mating season.

For those who knew where to look for the tell-tale signs, ursine love was in the air.

"Since late March, Ying Ying began spending more time playing in the water, while Le Le has been leaving scent-markings around his habitat and searching the area for Ying Ying's scent," the park said.

"Such behaviours are consistent with those common during breeding season, which occurs once every year between March to May," it added.

Pandas use lockdown privacy to mate after a decade of

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Experts will now monitor Ying Ying for signs of pregnancy, but it may be quite some wait as the gestation period for giant pandas ranges from 72 to 324 days.

The park said confirmation of pregnancy can only be detected by an ultrasound scan some 14 to 17 days before birth.

But Ying Ying might exhibit hormonal fluctuations and behavioural changes as early as June if fertilisation has occurred.

The announcement was a rare bit of good news as Hong Kong reels under a recession and movement restrictions caused by the coronavirus.

Ocean Park, which is earmarked for a HK\$10.6 billion (\$1.4 billion) bailout from the city government, has been shuttered since late January because of the pandemic.

Many Facebook commenters speculated that the absence of crowds might have boosted Ying Ying and Le Le's confidence.

"It's a good time to make baby bear when you are on holiday and have no pressure," wrote Janet Mok. Chan Fong added: "It's no pressure when no one is watching."

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Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/321308>

Pandas go amorous with gawkers gone

Published 18 hours ago
on April 8, 2020 11:10 AM
By **TDT**



ALL the pandas needed were some alone time to be going at it. AFP Photo

Stuck at home with no visitors and not much else to do, a pair of pandas in Hong Kong finally decided to give mating a go after a decade of dodging the issue.

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p/jhd

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/08/pandas-go-amorous-with-gawkers-gone/>