



Air pollution in Metro Manila lessened amid Luzon quarantine

Published March 24, 2020 12:20am

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/science/730976/air-pollution-in-metro-manila-lessened-amid-luzon-quarantine/story/>

The Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) threat in the country registered a "positive" effect in terms of the air quality in Metro Manila.



https://youtu.be/RdSLH7_qksQ

According to a 24 Oras report by Raffy Tima on Monday, with the restricted movement of the public and fewer vehicles plying the streets during the quarantine period, less air pollution was recorded in the metropolis.

In Antipolo, Jayson Villarma said the view of Metro Manila in the past few days had been breathtaking because of the clear skyline.

“Malabo ‘yan dati, mausok ‘yong mga building pero ngayon, kitang-kita na ‘yong view,” he said.



Polusyon sa hangin sa MM, nabawasan dahil sa Luzon quarantine – DENR Usec. Antiporda

March 24, 2020 @ 6:41 AM

<https://remate.ph/polusyon-sa-hangin-sa-mm-nabawasan-dahil-sa-luzon-quarantine-denr-usec-antiporda/>



Manila, Philippines – Nagdulot ng magandang epekto ang Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine sa kwalidad ng hangin sa Metro Manila na ipinatupad dahil sa banta ng coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Sa ulat, naitala ang mas maunting polusyon sa hangin dahil na rin sa iilang sasakyan ang bumibiyaha sa kalsada sa gitna ng quarantine period.

“Makikita natin talagang ‘yong drastic fall ng number when it comes to particulate matter, 10 noong ating pollution, ‘yong air quality natin. Would you imagine, umabot pa hanggang 85.18 percent ang drop ng numero dito sa may Marikina.” pahayag ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Benny Antiporda.

“But ‘yong iba, mayroong na-drop, average kung titingnan natin lahat is more than 50 percent talaga ‘yong na-drop,” dagdag pa nito.

Sa kabila ng positibong epekto ng mas kakaunting sasakyan, kinonsiderang ‘high time’ ni Antiporda ang proposal ng ‘carless days’ sa Metro Manila.

“Yong air quality natin, puwede pala natin ma-improve kung kahit papaano, once or twice a year eh gawin natin na itigil na muna natin ‘yong paggalaw ng mga sasakyan,” paliwanag pa ni Antiporda.

Remate News Team/FGDC



House OKs bill granting Duterte ‘necessary’ powers due to COVID-19 crisis

By: [Neil Arwin Mercado](#) - Reporter / [@NAMercadoINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:15 AM March 24, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1246872/house-approves-bill-declaring-national-emergency-due-to-coronavirus>

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives on Monday approved a bill declaring a national emergency due to the coronavirus pandemic and authorizing President Rodrigo Duterte “for a limited period and subject to restrictions, to exercise powers necessary and proper to carry out the declared national policy.”

During a special session, the lower chamber approved the Bayanihan Act of 2020 (House Bill No. 6616) in response to the threat of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which has infected 380 people in the country.

The House voted 284 for and 9 against the measure with no abstentions.

“In view of the continuing rise of confirmed cases of COVID-19, the serious threat to the health, safety, security, and lives of our countrymen, the long-term adverse effects on their means of livelihood, and the severe disruption of economic activities, a state of national emergency is hereby declared over the entire country,” the bill states.

“In order to optimize the efforts of the President to carry out the tasks needed to implement the aforementioned policy, it is imperative to grant him emergency powers subject to such limitations as hereinafter provided,” it added.

The bill allows the President to “issue such rules, regulations, and directives as may be necessary to carry out” his powers, which include implementation of measures to curb the transmission of the disease, hastening medical testing of persons under investigation (PUI) and persons under monitoring (PUM) and “immediate treatment” of COVID-19 patients.

Likewise, the President will also ensure that local government units (LGUs) are following directives from the national government in line with the pandemic response.

The President can also “reprogram, reallocate, and realign any appropriation” in the 2020 national budget “for whatever purpose the President may deem necessary and desirable to fund measures to address and respond to the COVID-19 emergency.”

Among other powers authorized for the President to perform include the following:

- When the public interest so requires, direct the operation of any privately-owned hospitals and medical and health facilities, hotels, and other similar establishments to house health workers, serve as quarantine areas, quarantine centers, medical relief and aid distribution locations, or other temporary medical facilities; and public transportation to ferry health, emergency, and frontline personnel and other persons
- Adopt measures to protect the people from hoarding, profiteering, injurious speculations, manipulation of prices, product deceptions, and cartels, monopolies or other combinations in restraint of trade, or other pernicious practices affecting the supply, distribution and movement of food, clothing, medicine and medical supplies, fuel, fertilizers, chemicals, building materials, implements, machinery equipment and spare parts required in agriculture, industry and other essential services, and other articles of prime necessity, whether imported or locally produced or manufactured
- If needed, undertake the procurement of goods and services as “in the most expeditious manner” in relation to COVID-19 response



- Ensure the availability of credit to the productive sectors of the economy especially in the countryside through measures such as, but not limited to, lowering the effective lending rates of interest and reserve requirements of lending institutions
 - Liberalize the grant of incentives for the manufacture or importation of critical or needed equipment or supplies for the carrying-out of the policy declared herein, including healthcare equipment and supplies
 - Require businesses to prioritize and accept contracts, subject to fair and reasonable terms, for materials and services necessary to promote the herein declared national policy
 - Regulate and limit the operation of all sectors of transportation through land, sea or air, whether private or public
 - Regulate traffic on all roads, streets, and bridges, and access thereto; prohibit putting up of encroachments or obstacles; authorize the removal of encroachments and illegal constructions in public places; and perform all other related acts
 - Continue to authorize alternative working arrangements for employees and workers in the Executive Branch, and whenever it becomes necessary, in other independent branches of government and constitutional bodies, and the private sector
 - Conserve and regulate the distribution and use of power, fuel, energy, and water, and ensure an adequate supply of the same
 - Move statutory deadlines and timelines for the filing and submission of any document, the payment of taxes, fees, and other charges required by law, and the grant of any benefit, in order to ease the burden on individuals under community quarantine
- The measure requires the President to submit a monthly report to Congress within the first 10 days of the month. The report shall contain acts performed in accordance with the bill.

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Violations

Those violating the regulations and directives of the national government will be meted a penalty of not less than P10,000 but not more than P1 million and/or imprisonment of two months. If the offender is a public official, he/she will be meted the same punishment on top of perpetual or temporary absolute disqualification from office.

“Provided, however, that if the offender is a corporation, association, partnership or any other juridical person, the penalty shall be imposed upon the president, directors, managers, managing partners, as the case may be, who participated in the commission of the offense or who shall have knowingly permitted or failed to prevent the commission of the same,” the bill states.

“If the offender is an alien, he shall, in addition to the penalties herein prescribed, be deported without further proceedings,” the bill further notes.



House approves 'Bayanihan' bill on 3rd reading in historic virtual special session; grants PRRD 'necessary' powers to handle COVID-19 crisis

Published March 24, 2020, 1:23 AM

By Charissa Luci-Atienza

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/24/house-approves-bayanihan-bill-on-3rd-reading-in-historic-virtual-special-session-grants-prrd-necessary-powers-to-handle-covid-19-crisis/>

The House of Representatives, in a historic virtual special session, on Monday night (March 23) approved on second reading a bill seeking to declare the existence of a national emergency and to authorize President Duterte for "only three months", unless extended by Congress, to exercise "necessary" powers to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.



House of the Representatives (Facebook/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Among these are the powers to realign as much as P275 billion in government funds and direct the operation of any privately-owned hospitals, medical and health facilities, and other similar establishments to serve as quarantine areas, and medical relief and distribution locations.

Voting 284 against nine with no abstention, the Lower Chamber approved substitute House Bill (HB) No. 6616 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act of 2020, giving in to President Duterte's request to immediately grant him the special authority to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.

It took 14 hours for the chamber to pass the measure.

It was Deputy Majority Leader and Pampanga 2nd district Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, acting Floor Leader, who moved for the approval of the bill.

At past 10 p.m., the House opened the period of individual amendments to the substitute bill HB 6616.

It was Bulacan Rep. Jonathan Sy-Alvarado who introduced the first and sole amendment to Section 6 of the bill. He proposed that the violators of "directives issued strictly in accordance with provisions" shall be slapped with a penalty of imprisonment for two months and a fine ranging from P10,000 to P1 million.

Last week, President Duterte called for a special session for Congress to pass a supplemental budget to strengthen the government's capacity to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Funding power

HB 6616 authorizes President Duterte to "reprogram, reallocate, and realign from savings on other items of appropriations in the fiscal Year 2020 GAA (General Appropriations Act) in the Executive Department, as may be necessary and beneficial to fund measures to address and respond to the COVID-19 emergency, including social amelioration for affected communities, and the recovery and the recovery of areas, sectors, and industries severely affected."

"All amounts so reprogrammed, reallocated or realigned shall be deemed automatically appropriated for such measures to address the COVID-19 situation," the bill also provides.

Duration of law

The proposed Act "shall be in full force and effect only for three months, unless extended by Congress."

It also provides that the powers granted under this Act may be withdrawn sooner by means of a concurrent resolution of Congress or ended by Presidential proclamation.

Direction of operations of private facilities

HB 6616 specifically provides that "when the public interest so requires," the President is authorized "to direct the operation of any privately-owned hospitals, medical and health facilities, including passenger vessels, and other establishments, to house health workers, serve as quarantine areas and centers, medical relief and aid distribution locations, or other temporary medical facilities; and public transportation to ferry health, emergency, and frontline personnel and other persons."

However, the management and operation of such enterprises shall be retained by the owners of the public service or enterprise, who shall render full accounting to the President or his duly authorized representative of the operations of the utility or business as basis for appropriate compensation, the bill provides.



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The measure provides that after the situation has stabilized or at the soonest time practicable, reasonable compensation for any additional damage or costs incurred by the owner of the subject property solely on account of complying with the directive shall be given.

"Finally, that if the foregoing enterprises unjustifiably refuse or signified that they are no longer capable of operating their enterprises for the purpose stated herein, the President may take over their operations subject to the limits and safeguards enshrined in the Constitution," Section 4 of HB 6616 provides.

Unutilized or unreleased balance

HB 6616 also provides that any unutilized or unreleased balance in a special purpose fund, as of the date of declaration of a state of emergency, shall be considered to have their purpose abandoned for the duration of the state of emergency.

"All such unspent, unutilized, or unreleased money or funds sourced from collections or receipts, including future collections and receipts, shall be utilized and are hereby appropriated for such measures to address the COVID-19 situation and accomplish the declared national policy herein," it said.

Under the bill, the President is also authorized to allocate cash, funds, investments, including unutilized or unreleased subsidies and transfers, held by any government-owned or -controlled corporation (GOCC) or any national government agency in order to address the COVID-19 emergency.

Discontinuance of programs, projects, activities

HB 6616 also empowers President Duterte to direct the discontinuance of appropriated programs, projects, or activities (P/A/P) of any agency of the Executive Department, including GOCCs in the FYs 2019 and 2020 General Appropriations Act (GAA), whether released or unreleased the allotments for which remain obligated.

It provides that the savings generated therefrom will be used to "augment the allocation for any item for support operations, response measures, which are necessary, or beneficial in order to address the COVID-19 emergency."

Priorities for augmentation

The following items in the budget shall be prioritized for augmentation:

Under the Department of Health (DOH) — operational budgets of government hospitals, primarily those identified for treatment of COVID-19; prevention and control of other infectious diseases; emergency preparedness and response;

Under the University of the Philippines — the operational budget of the Philippine General Hospital (PGH);

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Fund or Calamity Fund;

Programs of the Department of Labor and Employment, such as but not limited to Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) and COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program (CAMP);

Under the Department of Trade and Industry — Livelihood Seeding Program and Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay;

Under the Department of Agriculture — Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program;

Under various programs of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), such as, but not limited to, assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS), distribution of food and non-food items, and livelihood assistance grants;

Under Allocations to the Local Government Units; and Quick Response Funds lodged in the various relevant departments, such as, but not limited to, the DOH and DSWD.

The discontinued program activity or project may be revived at any time after the national emergency has ceased, HB 6616 provides.

Local government units

HB 6616 also authorizes President Duterte "to ensure all Local Government Units (LGUs) are acting in line with the rules, regulations, and directives issued by the national government, and are implementing standards of community quarantine that are neither more nor less restrictive than what the national government has laid down for the subject area."



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Testing kits

The bill also empowers the Chief Executive to expedite and streamline the accreditation of testing kits and facilitate prompt testing by public and designated private institutions of persons under investigation (PUIs) and persons under monitoring (PUMs), and the compulsory isolation and treatment of patients.

Procurement of goods

Under HB 6616, President Duterte is also authorized to undertake the procurement of the following goods— which may include personal protective equipment such as gloves, gowns, masks, goggles, face shields; surgical equipment and supplies; laboratory equipment; medical supplies; common medicines; and testing kits “as the need arises, in the most expeditious manner, as exemptions from the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 or the “Government Procurement Reform Act” and other relevant laws.”

Other exemptions from procurement laws

Also exempt from the procurement laws are the goods and services for social amelioration measures in favor of affected communities; the lease of real property or venue for use to house health workers or serve as quarantine centers, medical relief and aid distribution locations, or temporary medical facilities; the establishment, construction, and operation of temporary medical facilities; utilities, telecommunications, and other critical services in relation to operation of quarantine centers, medical relief and aid distribution centers, and temporary medical facilities; and ancillary services.

Importation of critical supplies

HB 6616 also seeks to liberalize the grant of incentives for the manufacture or importation of critical or needed equipment or supplies, including healthcare equipment and supplies.

Under the bill, the importation of these equipment and supplies shall be exempt from import duties, taxes, and other fees.

Private businesses

The bill also authorizes the President to require businesses to prioritize and accept contracts for materials and services necessary to promote the declared national policy.

Hoarding, profiteering

HB 6616 also empowers the President to continue to adopt measures to protect the people from hoarding, profiteering, injurious speculations, manipulation of prices, product deceptions, and cartels, monopolies, or other combinations in restraint of trade, or other pernicious practices affecting the supply, distribution, and movement of food, clothing, medicine and medical supplies, fuel, fertilizers, chemicals, building materials, implements, machinery equipment and spare parts required in agriculture, industry and other essential services, and other articles of prime necessity, whether imported or locally produced or manufactured.

Philippine Red Cross

Under the bill, the President may engage the services of the Philippine Red Cross as the primary humanitarian agency that is auxiliary to the government in giving aid to the people, subject to reimbursement, in the distribution of goods and services incidental in the fight against COVID-19.

Credit availability

The President shall also ensure the availability of credit to the productive sectors of the economy, especially in the countryside, through measures such as, but not limited to, lowering the effective lending rates of interest and reserve requirements of lending institutions, under the proposed Act.

Moving deadlines

Under HB 6616, the President can move statutory deadlines and timelines for the filing and submission of any document, the payment of taxes, fees, and other charges required by law, and the grant of any benefit, in order to ease the burden on individuals under community quarantine.



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Grace period for loan, credit card payments

The bill also empowers the Chief Executive to direct all banks, quasi-banks, financing and lending companies, and other financial institutions, public or private, including the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), Social Security System (SSS), and Pag-Ibig Fund, to implement a minimum of a 30-day grace period for the payment of all loans. These include, but are not limited to, salary, personal, housing, and motor vehicle loans, as well as credit card payments falling due within the period from March 16 to April 15, 2020, without incurring interest, penalties, fees, or other charges.

Grace period for rent payments

The measure also authorizes the President to provide a 30-day grace period on residential rents falling due within the period from March 16 to April 15, 2020, without incurring interest, penalties, fees, and other charges.

Transportation, power, fuel

Other "authorized" powers of the Chief Executive under the bill are: regulate and limit the operation of all sectors of transportation through land, sea, or air, whether private or public; regulate traffic on all roads, streets, and bridges, and access thereto; prohibit putting up of encroachments or obstacles; authorize the removal of encroachments and illegal constructions in public places; and perform all other related acts; and conserve and regulate the distribution and use of power, fuel, energy, and water, and ensure adequate supply of the same.

Alternative working arrangements

The bill also provides that President Duterte shall continue to authorize alternative working arrangements for employees and workers in the Executive Branch, and whenever it becomes necessary, in other independent branches of government and constitutional bodies, and the private sector.

President's report

HB 6616 mandates the President, during Monday of every week, to submit a monthly report to Congress of all acts performed pursuant to this Act during the preceding week. The report shall include the amount and corresponding utilization of the funds used, augmented, reprogrammed, reallocated, and realigned pursuant to the proposed Act.

Oversight committee

The bill calls for the establishment of an eight-man Joint Congressional Oversight Committee to determine whether such acts, orders, rules, and regulations are within the restrictions provided under the proposed Act.

Important legislation

At the start of the session on Monday, Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano assured the public that the Lower Chamber would pass an important legislation that would address the national health emergency.

"Today, we want to show the world that there will be unprecedented cooperation between the executive and the legislative, that there will be unprecedented cooperation internationally, that today you will see congressmen, governors and mayors working hand in hand, this is our part, we will do our part, we will help the mayors, we will help the LGUs (local government units) deliver these resources into the hands of each and every households," he said in his speech.

He declared the presence of a quorum after a total of 299 House members were in attendance during the special session, 20 of whom were physically present at the Plenary Hall.

The 279 other House members were declared on official business and joined the deliberations through teleconferencing.

It was Majority Leader and Leyte 1st district Rep. Martin Romualdez who moved for the adoption of the motion allowing "members to participate via live streaming, to register their attendance and vote on any matter presented to the body by voice chat, text message, Viber, or other electronic channels using their contact numbers pre-registered by the members and verified by the Secretary General."

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea had asked lawmakers to favorably act on the President's request for emergency powers, even as he assured them that there is no intent to overstep the 1987 Constitution and to "abuse" the proposed special powers.



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"We assure Congress and our countrymen that this administration has no intent to abuse the powers we are asking of you today," he told the lawmakers.

Joining Medialdea were Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary (DILG) Eduardo Año and Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado.

Approval

HB 6616 was first approved by the Committee of the Whole, led by Majority Leader and Leyte 1st district Rep. Martin Romualdez. The committee recommended the plenary approval of the bill, which seeks to declare a state of national emergency over the entire country and grant special authority to President Duterte to address the crisis spawned by the novel coronavirus.

"Such authority is needed not only to control the COVID-19 pandemic now gripping the country, but also to immediately mobilize resources for the provision of basic necessities to families and individuals affected by the imposition of community quarantine, especially indigents and their families," Romualdez said in his sponsorship speech.

He said that once approved, the measure "will immediately and amply provide healthcare, including medical tests and treatments, to COVID-19 patients, persons under investigation, and persons under monitoring."

Recovery and rehabilitation

HB 6616 also mandates formulation of a program for recovery and rehabilitation, including a social amelioration program and provision of safety nets to all affected sectors, he said.

Powers

"Specifically, the bill seeks to empower the President to order the purchase of goods like testing kits, to lease properties and to construct temporary medical facilities without going through the rules on procurement, as well as require businesses to prioritize and accept contracts for materials and services in connection with the fight against COVID-19," Romualdez said.

Funding

During the plenary deliberation, Deputy Speaker and Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. Luis Raymund "LRay" Villafuerte Jr. cited the need for Congress to realign P275 billion in government funds to respond to the pandemic crisis.

He said of the P275 billion "off budget available," P200 billion will be allocated for the implementation of emergency subsidy program to benefit 18 million poor households for a period of two months, and P75 billion to "fund health requirements and other services."

"This measure will also authorize the transfer of funds intended for non-essential expenditures to essential ones, particularly the emergency subsidies for the marginalized and vulnerable, as well as relief and recovery programs for affected workers and small- and medium-sized businesses," he said.

"This bill will also allow the government to adequately equip and protect our countless health practitioners who are at the frontlines of our battle against COVID-19," he added.

20 solons physically present

The chamber allowed only 20 House members, aside from the Speaker, to be physically present at the Batasan Complex in order to strictly adhere to the social distancing protocols issued by the government as part of the safety measures against the spread of COVID-19.

They were Deputy Speakers Raneo Abu (2nd District, Batangas), Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. (2nd District, Camarines Sur), Roberto Puno (1st District, Antipolo City) and Aurelio Gonzales Jr. (3rd District, Pampanga), Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (1st District, Leyte), Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante Jr. (6th District, Manila);

Reps. Wilter Wee Palma II (1st District, Zamboanga Sibugay), Precious Hipolito-Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), Juan Miguel Macapagal-Arroyo (2nd District, Pampanga), Jesus Suntay (4th District, Quezon City), Romeo Jalosjos Jr. (1st District, Zamboanga del Norte) and Antonio Albano (1st District, Isabela);

Metro Manila Development Committee Chair Manuel Luis Lopez (1st District, Manila), Good Government and Public Accountability Committee Chair Jose Antonio Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), Accounts Committee Chair Abraham Tolentino (8th District, Cavite), Bases Conversion Committee Chair Francis Gerald Aguinaldo Abaya (1st District, Cavite), Public Accounts Committee Chair Michael Defensor (Party-list, ANAKALUSUGAN), Appropriations Committee Chair Eric Go Yap (Party-list, ACT-CIS), Reps. France Castro (Party-list, ACT TEACHERS), and Janette Garin (1st District, Iloilo).



Maynilad, MWC defer meter reading

Published March 23, 2020, 10:00 PM

By **Madelaine B. Miraflor**

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/24/house-approves-bayanihan-bill-on-3rd-reading-in-historic-virtual-special-session-grants-prrd-necessary-powers-to-handle-covid-19-crisis/>

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System's (MWSS) Regulatory Office (RO) has allowed Manila Water Company Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. to delay their meter reading until April 14 and to instead charge their customers based on their average water consumption during the past three months.

MWSS-RO said that in light of the implementation of the lockdown or the so-called enhanced community quarantine over Luzon, it has authorized its concessionaires to suspend their meter reading operations and implement average billing, based on the customer's average water consumption during the past three months.

However, the agency noted that upon resumption of regular operations, Maynilad and Manila Water will also be allowed to adjust charges on subsequent water bills based on the customer's actual meter registration.

"The next Maynilad water bills that will be issued to affected customers will be computed based on their average consumption for the past three months. Corrections will just be applied to subsequent bills once Maynilad is able to resume the actual reading of meters," Maynilad said.

As for Manila Water customers, the company said that "any difference versus actual consumption will be reflected and charges will be adjusted on the customers' next bill when Manila Water resumes read-and-bill operations".

"Normal billing process will be observed when the government authorities officially confirm the end of the enhanced community quarantine," the company said.

Maynilad and Manila Water are now both encouraging their customers to pay their bills via online banks or mobile fund transfer channels.

Meanwhile, Manila Water assured its customers in the East Zone that water supply is sufficient even amid the threat of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

This is due mainly to the augmentation sources the company has started putting in place beginning last year, such as the Cardona Water Treatment Plant in Rizal and deep wells, as well as non-revenue-water recovery.

Skeleton workforces are also on duty at every water supply and wastewater facility to ensure that service delivery remains unhampered, Manila Water said.



Filipinos' ingenuity produces improvised face masks for health workers in the regions

<https://www.pressreader.com/>



SWIMSUIT DESIGNER DONATES MASKS – Health workers pose with their new face masks donated by popular swimsuit designer Domz Ramos who has turned small pieces of cloth into face masks. So far, Ramos has distributed some 2,000 masks to the Philippine General Hospital, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Children's Hospital, and Qualimed Hospital. Ramos is the official swimsuit designer for Bb. Pilipinas beauty pageant. (Contributed photo)

If necessity is the mother of invention, ingenuity is surely its father. In these times of the coronavirus crisis, when front line health workers are running out of masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) to use, items like garbage bags and tissue papers commonly used to dispose dirt are shielding them against the virus in the most innovative way they can. Erica Jane De Leon, a doctor to the barrio assigned to the Rural Health Unit (RHU) in Virac, Catanduanes, made an appeal online in hopes to help her fellow front liners in Bicol Region.

If others were improvising surgical or N95 masks from cloth, their situation is different – masks were instead made from pieces of tissue papers assembled using push pins and rubber bands.

Obviously, the materials used were not durable, especially in sustaining long hours of duty, but difficult times require “resourceful” solutions to partly resolve the problem.

We hope to serve our constituents very well, but we also need to protect ourselves because we have families waiting for us at home,” she said in a post.

The same ordeal was observed at St. Jude Hospital in Los Baños Laguna, where the post of hospital worker Maria Theresa Depano gained mixed reactions, most of which were urging the government, as well as the private sector, to intervene immediately.

With the scarcity of PPEs, the health workers and other essential personnel at the said hospital improvised their suit using plastics and trash bags.

“We are calling the attention of DOH or any agency that could provide us with personal protective equipment. We ran out of PPEs and we couldn't purchase the item anywhere that's why we improvised to protect our staff, Depano said..

While it gathered most sympathies, the message from social media users was clear – “act now to save them.” Dr. De Leon said those who wish to donate may contact her at 0943091-4841.

While those who wish to drop their donations at St. Jude Hospital, may contact the landline number (049) 536-1982. Since Sunday, hundreds of medical front line workers have been placed under quarantine due to their exposure to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) patients, according to reports.

‘Retaso’ for face masks Meanwhile, popular swimsuit designer Domz Ramos has turned small pieces of cloth (retaso) into face masks which his team has distributed to barangays and frontliners for the fight against COVID-19.

“So far, we have given some 2,000 face masks. Gumagawa pa rin kami (We are making more),” said Ramos, who is the official swimsuit designer for the Bb. Pilipinas beauty pageant, in an online interview Monday.

Made of cotton fabric, some of these face masks have been distributed to the Philippine General Hospital, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Children's Hospital, and Qualimed Hospital.

Ramos said his staff members at DR Styles Fashion, relatives, and neighbors helped him make the face masks in Taguig City. “While producing these face masks, we also practiced social distancing. We sanitized, that's why these face masks are clean,” he said.

Ramos also donated face masks to frontliners during Taal Volcano eruption in January.

Ramos has been active in charity missions. He is behind the popular Christmas gift-giving activity for children dubbed “MaBarbie Doll ang Pasko Caravan” which is on its fourth year now.

His team and sponsors give away toys, dolls, and food to street children in Metro Manila and nearby areas during the holidays.



MGA DOKTOR, PARI PATAY SA COVID-19

March 23, 2020 @ 4:12 PM 3 hours ago

<https://remate.ph/mga-doktor-pari-patay-sa-covid-19/>

NAPAKABIGAT sa dibdib ang bawat balita ukol sa mga namamatay sa Corona Virus Disease.

Wala tayong masambit kundi “Our Deepest Condolences” sa mga pamilya ng mga biktima, kasama ang mga kaukulang pagdarasal.

May 23 nang patay sa ating bansa habang nasa 380 na ang kumpirmadong dinapuan ng COVID-19 sa iba’t ibang bahagi ng mahal kong Pinas.

Tiyak na kabilang sa mga namatay ang apat na doktor na nag-aasikaso sa mga maysakit.

May 30 pari na rin ang namamatay sa bansang Italy.

Habang mabilis na dumarami ang biktima ng sakit, dumarami naman ang mga nagpapadala ng tulong na panlaban natin dito.

Dapat natin silang pasalamatang nang lubos.

MGA DOKTOR NATING MAHAL

Nagbuwis na ng buhay laban sa sakit at para maproteksyunan tayo rito sina Dr. Israel Bactol, cardiology fellow-in-training sa Philippine Heart Center; Dr. Rose Pulido, medical oncologist, San Juan de Dios Hospital; Dr. Greg Macasaet, anesthesiologist, Manila Doctors; at isang Dr. Fernandez.

Katulad din sila ni Dr. Roberto Stela, chief medical officer ng Northern Italy at Dr. Marcello Natali, sa bayan ng Codogno.

Namatay si Natali dahil sa kawalan na ng glove na magamit at iniulat niyag 14 sa 35 doktor na kasama niya ang naospital din dahil sa kawalan na personnel protective equipment sa Italy.

Nauna nang nagbuwis ng buhay ang pitong doktor at anim na nurse at iba pang medical professional sa China. Kasama sa mga namatay sina Liu Zhiming, director ng Wuhan Wuchang Hospital at Dr. Li Wenliang.

Buong puso kaming sumasaludo sa inyo, mahal naming mga doktor sa inyong kabayanihan para lang iligtas kaming lahat na sinasalaky ng COVID-19 ngayon.

FORGIVE ME, FATHER

Hindi rin sinanto ng Covid-19 ang mga lider ng simbahan, particular ang mga pari sa bansang Italy. Umabot na sa 30 paring Katoliko roon ang namatay dahil sa Covid-19.

Ayon sa Avvenire, pahayagan ng Catholic Bishops Conference ng Italy, kabilang sa mga pinakahuling namatay sina Father Guido Mortari at Giorgio Bosini.

Nauna nang sumakabilang buhay sina Frs. Andrea Avnzini, Remo Rota, Franco Minardi, Nicola Masi, Mario Boselli, Giovani Boselli at iba pa.

Nakatalaga ang karamihan sa mga ito sa mga diocese sa Bergamo, Parma, Cremonia, Milan, Lodi, Brescia, Casale Monterrato at Tortona.



MGA DOKTOR, PARI PATAY SA COVID-19

Nahawa sila sa pagbabasbas at pagbibigay ng extreme unctio n o pagbabasbas sa mga naghihingalo at sa mga inilililing.

Hindi umubra ang kanilang lakas ng loob bilang mga pari at alagad ng Panginoon sa walang kinikilala at 'di makitang killer disease.

Gumagawa na ng mga hakbang mismo si Pope Francis at mga Obispo nito para maligtas ang iba pang mga pari gaya ng pagsasara ng mga simbahan at paghinto ng lahat ng kanilang mga gawaing karaniwang dinadaluhan ng maraming mananampalataya.

Kasama sa mga ipinagbabawal ang pagmimisa at ginawa na lang itong online o sa pamamagitan ng internet, radio at telebisyon.

Mahigpit na ring nakikipag-ugnayan ang Vatican City sa pamahalaang Italy para labanan ang COVID-19.

WHO: TESTING KAILANGAN

Ayon sa World Health Organization, isang susi laban sa sakit ang pagsasagawa ng testing o pagsusuri sa lahat ng may sintomas ng COVID-19.

Kakambal kasi ng test na maglalabas ng mga positibo ang paghihiwalay ng mga ito sa mga miyembro ng pamilya at komunidad upang maiwasan o mapigilan ang pagkalat ng sakit.

Kung walang pagsusuri, mapababayaan ang mga may dala ng sakit na manghawa nang manghawa at dito na nagkakaroon ng mga maramihang pagkakasakit at kamatayan.

Naranasan na ito ng China at Italy na mga pangunahing bansa na sinasalakay ng sakit.

Nang makagawa at magkaroon na ang China ng maraming test kit at makatanggap ng iba pa mula sa ibang mga bansa, mabilis nilang nakontrol ang sakit.

Ang Italy, labis ngayon itong kinukulang ng mga test kit kaya gayun na lamang din ang maramihang kamatayan sa nasabing bansa.

SALAMAT SA MGA TUMUTULONG

Maraming-maraming salamat sa mga tumutulong sa Pinas para magkaroon ng maraming test kits na noong una ay kailangang bilhin ng gobyerno sa Japan sa halagang P20,000-P30,000 bawat piraso o unit.

Ngayon naman, mga Bro, nakagawa na rin ang University of the Philippines-National Institute of Health ng test kit na mabilis o dalawang oras lang aabutin bago malaman ang resulta ngunit kulang pa rin ang produksyon nito sa halagang P1,500 bawat piraso.

Bago nito, nagdonasyon na ang China ng 2,000 piraso at sinundan itong 100,000 piraso sa mga araw na ito.

Kararating lang din ang panibagong donasyon ng China na 100,000 test kit, 100,000 surgical mask, 10,000 n95 masks at 10,000 personal protective equipment.

Nagdonasyon din ang Singapore ng 3,000 test kit.

Sinasabing nagbigay na rin si Jack Ma at ang kanyang Alibaba Foundation, kasama ang Pacquiao Foundation ng 50,000 test kits at libo-libong face masks.

Mismong si Sen. Manny Pacquiao ay namimigay na rin ng 700,000 face masks, lalo na sa mga front liner gaya ng mga doktor, laban sa sakit.

Ngayon, makakayanan na ng pamahalaang Duterte na isalang ang mga may sintomas ng COVID-19 sa bong bansa.

Maaaring kukulangin pa rin pero kahit papaano, makagagawa na ang pamahalaan ng mga mabilis na aksyon para mahiwalay at magamot nang maaga ang mga person under investigation at tinamaan talaga ng sakit sa loob lamang ng 2-3 oras na testing.



COMMENTARY

Heed Mother Nature

March 24, 2020 12:23 AM

By **Chito Lozada**

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/03/24/heed-mother-nature/>

“Both China and Northern Italy... have also recorded significant falls in nitrogen dioxide, which is related to reduced car journeys and industrial activity.

Among the many theories popping up in an unprecedented sequestered world as a result of the virus invasion, the most fascinating was that the situation humanity is now in was dealt by nature.

For years, nations have debated and fought over measures to free the world of an impending disaster as a result of air pollution that had progressively raised global temperatures resulting in weather catastrophes, such as typhoon “Yolanda” that swept away an estimated 10,000 lives in a matter of a few hours.

Environment experts now say that air pollutants and warming gases over some cities and regions have dropped significantly as the coronavirus impacts on commerce and travel.

Researchers in New York bared early results showing carbon monoxide mainly from cars had been reduced by nearly 50 percent compared with last year.

The study was done when most developed countries had yet to impose restrictions on travel.

Emissions of the planet-heating gas carbon dioxide (CO₂) have also fallen sharply. The problem, according to experts, is that pollution levels could rise rapidly after the pandemic as nations try to cover lost ground.

Scientists said that by May, when CO₂ emissions are at their peak due to the decomposition of leaves, the levels recorded might be the lowest since the financial crisis over a decade ago.

Traffic levels in the Big Apple were estimated to be down 35 percent compared with a year ago. Emissions of carbon monoxide, mainly due to cars and trucks, have fallen by around 50 percent for a couple of days, according to researchers at Columbia University.

There was a five to 10 percent drop in CO₂ over New York and a solid drop in methane as well.

“New York has had exceptionally high carbon monoxide numbers for the last year and a half,” said Columbia University Prof. Róisín Commane, who carried out the New York air monitoring work.

“And this is the cleanest I have ever seen it. It’s less than half of what we normally see in March.”

Those brave souls who go out in the morning in Manila bare the same experience of breathing in an unusually clean air and at night, a brighter sky with stars unseen for some time.

An analysis carried out for the climate website Carbon Brief suggested there had been a 25 percent drop in energy use and emissions in China over a two-week period. This is likely to lead to an overall fall of about one percent in China’s carbon emissions this year, according experts.

Both China and Northern Italy, which are the regions hardest hit by the virus, have also recorded significant falls in nitrogen dioxide, which is related to reduced car journeys and industrial activity. The gas is both a serious air pollutant and a powerful warming chemical.

Experts said with aviation grinding to a halt and millions of people working from home, a range of emissions across many countries are also in the downtrend.

“If the pandemic lasts another three of four months, certainly we could see some reduction,” according to an expert.

Such length of isolation as a result of the pandemic would prove disastrous to the human species.

A possible takeaway from the global crisis is that the price of the failure of humanity to come together to address problems facing its existence may have to be Mother Nature providing the harsh but needed solution.



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Wanted: A government that stands up

By: [Joel Ruiz Butuyan](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:06 AM March 23, 2020

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/128269/wanted-a-government-that-stands-up>

It is the height of extreme irony that the most advanced species to ever walk on earth is now cowering in fear of the most primitive entity on this planet.

Mankind has traveled to outer space, and he has built extensions of himself that go to the ends of the universe. He has expanded his reality by creating a cyberworld that now surpasses the immensity of the physical world. He has even arrogated unto himself the powers of god by cloning animals and re-engineering plants and organisms to create new living things.

For all his intellectual prowess, for all his inventions and discoveries, mankind has been brought down to his knees by a simple virus that is considered to be merely on “the edge of life.” A virus is not a living organism, scientists say, but only an entity consisting of “structural proteins” bound together, without even a cell. It must enter the cell of a living thing in order to multiply.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, life all over the world is grinding almost to a complete halt. As a result, the value of money has been reduced to its barest minimum. Money has been stripped of its magical powers to bestow the many leisure pursuits in life—travel, watching performances, dining, and drinking in restaurants and bars, and congregating in parties and festivities. Our lives have also been stripped of vanities as the frills and luxuries we garb or surround ourselves with—branded apparels, jewelry, fancy cars, and the many other trappings that lend us the air of self-importance—have all been divested of glitter.

Money has been unable to save the lives of those who have enough or excess of it, as we see from the initial toll of casualties. Even powerful politicians and renowned actors have not been insulated from infection. In fact, the virus is likely being passed from the top to the bottom of economic and social classes, as some surmise. The virus originated from overseas and it could have only reached our shores via those who have the luxury of foreign travel or those who hobnobbed with them. The virus is spreading from urban centers to our rural provinces.

But the essentiality of money among those who are in dire shortage of it has been rendered stark by the solution of governments to order a complete lockdown of cities and even entire countries. To be fair, the extreme solution of a lockdown is desperately needed for our very own sake. But this solution threatens our survival from a different front. It imperils our access to food and basic services. And even more heartbreaking, it endangers the very survival of the most vulnerable of our people who need to toil every single day to put food on the table.



Strategic Communication
and Initiatives Service



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EDITORIAL



CARTOON

Wanted: A government that stands up

Our own government deserves complete support for the difficult decision it made to enforce a lockdown. But at the same time, it justly deserves censure for washing its hands of responsibility to come up with a firmly laid-out plan on the proper transportation of people who ensure that our groceries are open, our utility services are functioning, our hospitals are operating, and the trucks that move essential goods are smoothly running.

It has been six days (as of this writing) since President Duterte imposed a Luzon-wide lockdown last March 16. We've not heard of a national guideline on how the daily transportation of essential workers should be provided across cities, despite vast executive powers to requisition bus services; of directives to local health personnel on the protocols and supplies to deal with COVID-19 patients and casualties, considering the severe shortage of hospitals nationwide, among other indispensable needs that cut across local boundaries.

Our national government has assumed a stance of standing down and shoving immense responsibilities to local governments and business conglomerates. We need our national government to step up from merely reciting a litany of do's and don'ts, as we face the biggest crisis in our country's history.

We need our national government to stand up for its people.