

DENR pushes stiffer penalty, fine for wildlife trade offenders

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

-April 27, 2020

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is pushing to amend Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act that would impose a stiffer penalty and higher fines for environmental crimes, particularly offenses involving illegal wildlife trade.

This, as the DENR further stepped up its campaign against the illegal wildlife trade, which has been linked to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the disease caused by the novel coronavirus that is believed to have originated from a wet market selling live wild animals in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China.

Theresa M. Tenazas, officer in charge of the Wildlife Resources Division of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) said they are looking at increased jail term from the maximum of 12 years under the current law to a maximum of 20 years imprisonment for crimes related to the illegal wildlife trade.

The DENR, through the BMB, is enforcing Republic Act 9147, and is prohibiting the collection, hunting and possession of wildlife, its byproducts, and derivatives, including trading and transporting.

"We are also working on the amendment of the aforesaid law to impose the most stringent penalty of 20 years imprisonment as the maximum penalty for wildlife trafficking," Tenazas said.

The effort to amend the law, she said, is to deter wildlife crimes, together with a campaign to tighten regulation when it comes to import and export of wildlife and ensure full compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), of which the Philippines is a signatory.

Also, the DENR is now strengthening partnership with various law-enforcement agencies and tightening watch over the country's airports and seaports, Tenazas said.

"We also find indispensable the continued and intensified partnership with different law-enforcement agencies in the country that man airports and seaports and other borders to prevent wildlife crimes, to include other cross-collaborative activities," she said.

Meanwhile, to further build the capacity of the DENR and its partner-law enforcers, a total of 12 workshops are lined up for 2020 such as Online Trade Investigation, Financial Investigation on Wildlife Crimes Advance Prosecutor and Enforcement Workshop, to mention a few which are to be conducted in partnership with UNODC, USAID Protect Wildlife Project, BMB-ADB/GEF IWT Project, and the United States Department of Justice Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, & Training Counter Wildlife Trafficking.

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The target participants include DENR Regional Law Enforcement Units, DENR lawyers, Department of Justice, National Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Customs, among others.

“Lastly, our effort will also include escalation of the campaign to the public to raise awareness of the risks of wildlife consumption to public security and to public health with the end in view of furthering the enforcement efforts against trafficking of wildlife,” Tenazas said.

DENR Bicol workers donate P1.1-M worth of PPEs, relief goods to frontliners

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

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 11:07 PM April 27, 2020

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay, Philippines — The employees union of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Bicol has donated P1.1 million worth of relief goods and personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontliners and selected beneficiaries amid the implementation of an enhanced community quarantine.

Gil Aromin, regional executive director of DENR, said 233 PPE sets, 486 food packs, more than 600 bags of relief goods, and cash were distributed to health workers in several hospitals, and task force officials stationed at the local government units and barangays in the six provinces in the region — all of whom are fighting against the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The PPE sets are composed of washable hospital suits, shoe covers, N95 masks, disposable head caps, face masks, sterile gloves, medical goggles, and disinfectant alcohol.

Aromin said the fund was raised through the salary donations and personal contributions of the DENR Employees' Union, including the employees of the Environmental Management Bureau and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in the region.

“The donation paved way for the department to express its support and gratitude to the frontliners who are continually fighting against the COVID-19. We hope for the security and safety of the frontliners and communities who are at high risk from the virus,” Aromin said.

The Society of Filipino Foresters, Inc. Bicol and the DENR Bicol Multi-purpose Cooperative were also able to distribute 500 bags of relief goods to poor families in Barangay Mabinit, Legazpi City. The security guards, utility staff and drivers of the DENR offices were also given relief goods and cash.

/atm

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1265600/denr-bicol-workers-donate-p1-1-m-worth-of-ppes-relief-goods-to-frontliners#ixzz6Kr4z63yn>

'Pawikan' rescued by fisherman in Surigao Norte town

By Alexander Lopez April 27, 2020, 6:50 pm



RESCUED. Police and local residents in Bacuag, Surigao del Norte town release a hawksbill turtle after a fisherman found it on his net on Sunday. It was immediately released after the conduct of measurement and tagging, the report said. The specie is classified as a critically endangered sea turtle belonging to the Cheloniidae family. *(Photo courtesy of Bacuag Municipal Police Office)*

BUTUAN CITY – A hawksbill marine turtle locally known as "pawikan" was rescued by a local fisherman in Barangay Poblacion, Bacuag, Surigao del Norte, the Bacuag Municipal Police Office (BMPO) in Bacuag, Surigao del Norte posted in its Facebook account Monday (April 26).

Police said the turtle was rescued at around 7 a.m. Sunday (April 26) while the fisherman whom the report did not identify was checking his net upon his return to shore from an early morning fishing.

"The fisherman immediately informed the local police station about the "pawikan" trapped inside his fishing net," BMPO said.

Police S/Sgt. Ceasar N. Cagas and Roel I. Rivamonte of the Bacuag Coastal Resource Management (CRM) immediately proceeded to the area to check the condition of the hawksbill turtle.

Rivamonte said the rescued turtle is 40-centimeter in length from fore to tail and has 34-centimeter carapace length with a weight of five kilos.

BMPO said the local police are regularly conducting information drive on Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act with the support of the local government and the CRM.

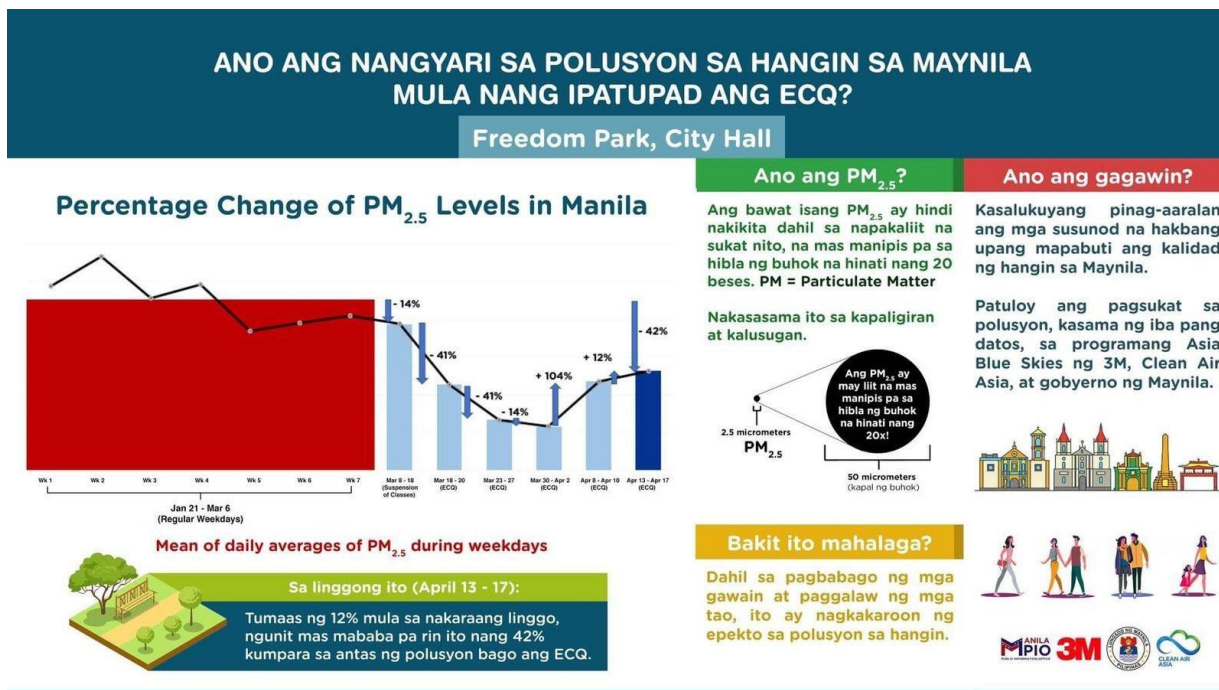
The hawksbill turtle, a critically endangered species, was immediately released after the conduct of measurement and tagging, the report said. **(PNA)**

Air pollution levels in the vicinity of Manila City Hall go down

Published April 27, 2020, 3:56 PM

By Minka Tiangco

The city of Manila continues to enjoy cleaner air after residents retreated indoors amid the threat of the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) and the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine, an environmental group said.



Asia Blue Skies Program, a partnership between the Manila city government, Clean Air Asia, and 3M, tracks air cleanliness in the city by measuring the amount of fine particulate matter or PM2.5.

PM2.5 is atmospheric particulate matter that have a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers. They come from power plants, motor vehicles, airplanes, burning of wood and plants, volcanic eruptions, and dust storms, among other sources.

Data from Asia Blue Skies Program showed that the average PM2.5 levels at the Manila City Hall dropped by 42 percent from April 13 to 17, as compared to measurements during regular work days before the quarantine was implemented.

However, other areas in the Philippine capital had slightly higher percentages of PM2.5 than before the enhanced community quarantine began.

For the same period last week, the average PM2.5 levels was two percent higher at Rizal Park in Ermita and was nine percent higher at Mendiola corner Concepcion Aguila Street as compared to the days before the quarantine started.

Earlier this month, a report by Clean Air Asia showed that air pollution has gone down by 74 percent at the Manila City Hall, 50 percent in Mendiola, and 61 percent at Rizal Park since the start of the enhanced community quarantine.

Asia Blue Skies Program said the collected air quality monitoring data, emissions inventory, and health mapping results will be used as basis for the development of Manila City's Clean Air Action Plan, which they are eyeing to finish by end of 2020.

Systemic, individual changes needed for climate justice – CHR

Published April 27, 2020, 11:38 AM

By *Czarina Nicole Ong Ki*

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) believes that “systemic and individual changes” are needed in order to protect the environment and achieve climate justice.



Commission on Human Rights (MANILA BULLETIN)

Even as the world is currently dealing with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, CHR Spokesperson Atty. Jacqueline Ann de Guia said that people should not wait too long in tackling both existing and impending damages to the climate.

De Guia said that the COVID-19 pandemic only proved how interconnected the world is and showed the “domino effect when one element in this interconnected system is damaged.”

“Climate change is one of the largest threats to sustainable development globally and is just one of many imbalances caused by unsustainable and excessive practices of humankind,” she said.

De Guia said that people need to come together with compassion and humility and take concrete actions to create a healthy and sustainable future. If not, the CHR warned that a future crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic might take place again.

What’s worse, De Guia said, is that the damaging effects of climate change and COVID-19 have made it clear how unequal and vulnerable the society and international community are.

“We have also witnessed how these phenomena systematically exclude and marginalize populations, especially those living in poverty who are mostly affected and at risk of the consequences,” she said. “Whether man-made or natural, these global emergencies also resulted in grave human rights violations that continue to challenge our social protection and justice systems.”

Regardless of which approach people decide to adopt to mitigate the harm inflicted on planet Earth, the CHR stressed that the welfare of the people – especially the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized – should be at the heart of any government response.

DUTERTE TEASES 'MODIFIED QUARANTINE' AFTER MAY 15

posted April 27, 2020 at 11:23 pm

by [Jimbo Owen B. Gulle](#)

The Philippines could soon shift to a "modified quarantine" mode amid the raging worldwide coronavirus pandemic, President Rodrigo Duterte told the nation Monday in a televised address.



Some sectors such as construction may be allowed to bring back their workers under such a setup, but Duterte asked the public to wait for the government to issue specific guidelines to bring the country gradually out of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Luzon and most provinces.

This was even as the President thanked Filipinos for heeding the measures enforced during the lockdown that he extended last week to May 15, giving his Cabinet enough time to ensure the balance between safety from the deadly COVID-19 disease and restarting the economy.

Duterte also touched on the following after meeting with the Inter-Agency Task Force:

- No more peace talks would be held with the New People's Army-Communist Party of the Philippines, after the President lamented attacks on soldiers delivering aid amid the lockdown.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) were authorized to employ "as many as may be required" such as medical technologists to help with mass coronavirus testing.
- The government was acquiring more personal protective equipment (PPE) to distribute to frontliners, as orders for them "will be completed in due time."
- Duterte encouraged people who have not yet received government aid to complain to their local government units, which would then tell Malacañang.
- The Philippine National Police should provide transportation for the elderly, women, and frontliners and bring them to their areas.
- The President announced the country maintained its BBB+ credit rating.

Duterte did not provide any specifics on how the current ECQ would be modified, as it covers Metro Manila, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Albay and Catanduanes until May 15.

All other low-risk and moderate-risk areas will be under a general community quarantine until mid-May, the President had announced last Friday.

"We might open partially, construction workers things like that. You wait for the... lalabas na po yung modified (quarantine guidelines)," Duterte said in his "Talk to the People."

"Modified ang quarantine natin so we will allow sectors of society na hindi talaga nagdidikit-dikitan (do not come close together)," he added.

The President also ordered those who would deliver medicines to combat COVID-19 to give them to IATF chief implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez, and not to city health offices as most LGUs "don't have the manpower to handle such things."

Health Secretary Francisco Duque also proposed to roll out mobile clinics to test patients through LGUs, while Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said the country remained closed to foreign tourists.

Duterte in COVID-19 address: We might partially open under modified quarantine

Published April 27, 2020 10:05pm

Updated April 27, 2020 11:18pm

By JULIA MARI ORNEDO, GMA News

President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday evening indicated that Metro Manila "might open partially" under a modified community quarantine scheme.

"We might open partially, construction workers things like that. You wait for the... lalabas na po yung modified," Duterte said in his televised address.

"Modified ang quarantine natin so we will allow sectors of society na hindi talaga nagdidikit-dikitan," he added.

"Kaya modified muna eh kasi kung magsiksikan kayo diyan sa LRT na naman, wala nang katapusan ang problema natin. It will never end," Duterte said.

Duterte earlier [extended the enhanced community quarantine \(ECQ\)](#) over Luzon and "high-risk" areas Benguet, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, Albay, and Catanduanes to May 15.

A presidential adviser expressed confidence that the ECQ will no longer be extended past May 15 but underscored the need to ramp up the country's testing capacity for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Meanwhile, areas at low risk for widespread COVID-19 transmission will be placed under a [general community quarantine \(GCQ\)](#) starting May 1.

In areas under GCQ, the agriculture, fisheries, food manufacturing, food retail, logistics, and media industries may resume full operations.

The manufacturing of electronics and exports, e-commerce and delivery, repair and maintenance services, housing, and office services may also resume 50 to 100 percent of their operations.

In the financial services, business process outsourcing, and other non-leisure wholesale and retail trade and services, a 50 percent onsite work and 50 percent work from home arrangement must be observed.

Public transportation may also resume at a reduced capacity in provinces under GCQ.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque earlier said that the GCQ will be [the "new normal" for Filipinos](#) for as long as there is no vaccine for COVID-19.

The [COVID-19 has claimed 511 lives and infected 7,777](#) people nationwide. **-NB/BAP, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/735806/duterte-in-covid-19-address-we-might-partially-open-under-modified-quarantine/story/>

PRRD urges malls, bazaars to ensure worker's safety vs.

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PRRD urges malls, bazaars to ensure workers' safety vs. Covid-19

By Azer Parrocha April 27, 2020, 11:40 pm



GOV'T EFFORTS VS. COVID-19. President Rodrigo Duterte gives updates on government efforts in containing the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), at the Malago Clubhouse in Malacañang on April 27, 2020. He thanked Filipinos for following the guidelines under the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) which will lapse on May 15. *(Karl Norman Alonzo/Presidential photo)*

MANILA — President Rodrigo Duterte urged owners of malls, bazaars, and other shopping centers to ensure the health and safety of their workers once the general community quarantine (GCQ) or the “new normal” starts on May 1.

“*Iyong mga tindahan* (Those stores), *'yung mga* (those) bazaars, mga malls — big or small — it behooves upon you to see to it that the workers are protected,” Duterte said in a televised public address on Monday night.

He said mall owners should also disinfect their workplaces and provide durable masks for their employees.

“The sanitation of the place must be guaranteed and that the employees are provided with durable and workable masks,” he said.

Duterte said since the government has granted the request for “non-leisure stores” in malls to partially open, they should also comply with quarantine protocols.

“When you asked us to open, we agreed but there are the protocols to be followed. Not immaculately clean but just sanitize it for Covid not to thrive,” he said.

Meanwhile, he also thanked Filipinos for following the guidelines under the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) which will lapse on May 15.

“*Nagpapasalamat ako sa inyo for heeding the warnings of government na mag-quarantine kayo para maprotektahan ninyo 'yung sarili ninyo at 'yung kapwa tao ninyo* (I am thanking you for heeding the warnings of government to observe quarantine to protect yourselves and others),” he said.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) said the number of people accosted for quarantine violations went down by 45 percent after the police beefed up its crackdown on individuals defying the guidelines.

Modified quarantine

Once the ECQ ends, Duterte was hopeful that priority construction projects may resume under a “modified” quarantine.

“We might open partially -- construction workers and things like that. You wait for the... *Lalabas na ho, lalabas na 'yung modified --- modified ang ano natin quarantine* (It will be released soon--the modified quarantine),” he said.

PRRD urges malls, bazaars to ensure worker's safety vs.

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On Thursday, President Rodrigo Duterte approved the IATF-EID's recommendations to extend the ECQ in high-risk areas for Covid-19 until May 15 and place the areas considered moderate-risk and low-risk of the coronavirus infections under GCQ from May 1 to 15.

Select workers in non-essential services are allowed to go to work, once areas that have low or moderate risk of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) infections are placed under GCQ.

Under the GCQ, non-leisure shops in malls operating in low-risk or moderate-risk areas are likewise allowed to resume their operations.

High-risk areas placed under ECQ until May 15 are Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Pangasinan, Benguet, Albay, Catanduanes, Davao del Norte, Davao City, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique, Iloilo, Cebu, and Cebu City.

Other areas classified as moderate-risk and low-risk of spreading Covid-19 were placed under GCQ. These areas are still subject to further evaluation.

If the infection rate does not progress, low-risk areas will no longer be placed under GCQ after May 15.

As of Monday, the Philippines has a total of 7,777 confirmed cases of Covid-19, 511 deaths, and 932 recoveries. **(PNA)**

Senators back gradual opening of economy

Published 4 hours ago
on April 28, 2020 03:20 AM
By **Hananeel Bordey**



Two Senate leaders have expressed support to calls suggesting resumption of work in some establishments after 30 April.

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto and Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon on Monday said that they agree with the suggestions permitting workers from agriculture, construction and manufacturing to go back to their jobs to prevent job loss and to ensure peace and order in the country.

“We will have to open the economy little by little. Employers must protect their workers and consumers by adopting protocols on disinfecting workplace, testing, social distancing and wearing masks,” Recto said in a text message.

However, he warned of a possible increase in unemployment in the country as consumer behavior is expected to change after the pandemic.

“Expect higher unemployment knowing that the consumer would have confidence issues. Investors will adopt a wait and see attitude. Government must improve its health capability to improve consumer and investor confidence as well,” the former National Economic Development Authority secretary said.

Identify them

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque however revealed Monday that employers in industries which will be allowed to resume partial or full operations starting 1 May must not require their employees residing in areas that are still under the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to report for work.

In a television interview, Roque said that the government is urging employers to identify employees who are residing in ECQ areas so that there will be no confusion on checkpoints as the extended quarantine is being implemented.

Last week, the Inter-Agency Task Force leading the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) response announced that some areas with low risks of having an outbreak will be under relaxed quarantine protocols.

These are the areas outside Metro Manila, Central Luzon, CALABARZON, and other high-risk provinces where the ECQ has been extended until 15 May and among the industries that could resume full operations in general community quarantine (GCQ) areas are agriculture, fisheries, food manufacturing, food retail, logistics and media.

Manufacturing of electronics and exports, e-commerce and delivery for essential and non-essential items, repair and maintenance services, housing and office services may operate at 50 to 100 percent capacity.

Public transportation, on the other hand, would also resume at reduced capacity in GCQ areas.

Social unrest

Meanwhile, Drilon echoed Recto's suggestion pushing the strict implementation of social distancing in case the said establishments and sectors resume operations after 30 April.

"The social unrest that could result from 2 million workers unemployed for the past 6 weeks is a reality we face. From the economic standpoint, I am extremely concerned of the further damage to our economy by the continued lockdown of the agriculture, manufacturing and construction sectors," he said.

Drilon noted that employees from these "essential industries" are mostly rated in a daily basis.

He suggested that these essential workers should be subject to rapid testing to ensure that they will not get infected with the deadly virus.

"From the health standpoint, those companies in the agricultural plantations, in the manufacturing and construction sectors should have rapid and mass testing of their workers to determine whether or not they are affected with the coronavirus."

**with Elmer Manuel
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NOLCO extension pushed

Foregone revenues of small businesses due to quarantine measures helping contain the virus totaled P465.3 billion.

Published 5 hours ago
on April 28, 2020 03:05 AM

By [Joshua Lao](#)



Businesses are estimated to incur losses approaching almost half a trillion pesos as a result of the coronavirus disease or COVID-19, the Department of Finance (DoF) said on Monday.

This development has forced Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III to propose extending a tax mechanism known as NOLCO (net operating loss carry-over) to five years instead of three under the law to allow the various businesses to recover from the sudden dip in demand for services and goods.

The proposal, however, has the corollary impact of depressing its tax take by more or less P140 billion as the NOLCO, or net operating loss carry-over, is extended by two more years to five.

NOLCO allows businesses to report tax-deductible losses over a proposed five-year stretch instead of three at present so that they still have funds to sustain operations instead of giving them up as tax due the government.

The Tax Code allows corporations to “carry over” present year losses as a tax deduction for the subsequent five years as proposed by the Department of Finance.

Dominguez recognized that small businesses have lost a significant portion of their income with the restrictive quarantine measures adopted against the pandemic. He said the DoF will only need the approval of the Congress for the proposal to have the force of law.

“We will propose to Congress an extended NOLCO of five years for net losses that will be incurred in 2020. This means that a small business’ losses this year may be deducted from their income for up to the next five years for tax purposes,” Dominguez said.

“The purpose of extending NOLCO is to give them more time to recoup their losses arising from the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and other measures to contain the spread of COVID-19,” he added.

According to him, foregone revenues of small businesses due to quarantine measures helping contain the virus totaled P465.3 billion. For those operating in malls and other retail outlets, the DoF estimated P461 billion in income losses.

“The longer NOLCO period will have the effect of lowering the tax payments between 2021 and 2025 of affected small businesses by a combined estimated total of P139.6 billion,” the Finance chief explained. He said the relief measure forms part of a three-pronged rescue program helping businesses and their workers survive the pandemic.

The government earlier launched a subsidy program for 3.4 billion workers in the formal sector who were given P5,000 to P8,000 a month each for two months depending on wage levels in their area of employment.

Prolonged quarantine for MM, ECQ areas – Año

By [Victor Reyes](#)

-April 27, 2020



METRO Manila and areas under the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) will experience prolonged quarantine in accordance with health standards approved by the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said on Sunday.

President Duterte on Friday extended the ECQ to May 15 in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and Calabarzon; provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Occidental, Pangasinan, Benguet, Albay, Catanduanes, Antique, Iloilo, Cebu, Davao de Oro, and Davao del Norte; and Cebu and Davao cities. However, some of these areas will be subject to reevaluation on April 30. Duterte first imposed a Luzon-wide ECQ which was supposed to end originally on April 15 but extended to April 30.

Año, in a phone interview, said the ECQ in these areas will not be automatically lifted after May 15 even if their health situation improves.

He said the ECQ must first be lowered to “general community quarantine” (GCQ) to monitor the “gains’ from the ECQ.

“Under GCQ, many are already relaxed, including work which is already allowed, except going to mass, going to malls, large gatherings, dining in restaurants, jeepney transportation. But the rest is relaxed, people can already go to work,” he added.

Año said that while the COVID-19 situation has been improving, there is still a need to improve the country’s testing capacity to up to 13,000 tests a day.



Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the extended ECQ in areas with high cases of virus infection could last until June “at the earliest” when at least a cure is developed by Japan.

Lacson noted a statement of Health undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire that an agreement has been reached by the Philippines and Japanese governments for the potential testing of the Japanese flu drug Avigan to treat COVID-19 patients.

A report by Agence France-Presse said Avigan, the brand name of the drug favipiravir, has been approved for use in flu outbreaks and was also used to treat Ebola.

Duterte, after participating in a special virtual summit of the Association of Southeast Nations and its dialogue partners China, Japan and South Korea on COVID-19 on April 15, said the Philippines is ready to participate in clinical trials and medical studies of potential vaccines and medicines such as Avigan.

China's ministry of science and technology said a trial involving 80 cases conducted by a hospital in Shenzhen and a study of 120 cases led by Wuhan University's Zhongnan Hospital both showed the drug shortened the recovery time for patients.

In Japan, it was used for flu outbreaks not effectively addressed by other medications. It is not available on the market and can only be manufactured and distributed at the request of the Japanese government, the AFP report added.

"Ang sinasabi nila na medyo substantial ang results, kung makakagamot talaga ng COVID, June. 'Yan ang earliest. So kung 'yan ang pagbabatayan natin, I cannot see how we can lift the lockdown earlier than June," Lacson told radio dzBB.

MONDAY MEETING

The IATF-EID is set to meet again today to discuss policies and guidelines that would be implemented under the GCQ in several parts of the country starting May 1, presidential spokesman Harry Roque said.

He said social distancing, wearing of masks, and personal hygiene practices would continue to be observed under a GCQ.

He said the Department of Health would have guidelines for hospitals and testing in areas under the general quarantine, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) would present protocols in connection with the resumption of work and the employees' welfare and compensation, and the Department of Trade and Industry will submit protocols affecting businesses.

He said the Department of Transportation would come up with the guidelines on the resumption of public transportation, which would include reducing passengers down to 50 percent of the capacity of the vehicles. He added public utility jeepneys would not be allowed to operate yet due to social distancing and other personal hygiene practices that need to be observed.

Roque said communities under the ECQ would need to take note of protocols to be implemented in areas under the GCQ once their places they are in are reclassified as moderate or low-risk areas.

Duterte has extended the enhanced community quarantine from April 30 to May 15 in Metro Manila and Calabarzon regions, and the provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Albay, and Catanduanes which have been classified as "high-risk" areas.

The President also placed under the enhanced community quarantine the provinces of Benguet, Pangasinan, Tarlac, Zambales, Antique, Iloilo, Aklan, Capiz, Cebu, Davao del Norte, and Davao de Oro and the cities of Cebu and Davao until May 15 pending further review and assessment of the situation in the said areas until April 30. If the Covid-19 situation improves, the "high risk" classification can be reduced to "moderate risk" or "low risk."

Areas classified as "moderate risk" or "low risk" will be placed under general community quarantine starting May 1.

Under modified "general" quarantine, partial operations of the public transportation capacity would be allowed along with the resumption of work in certain industries and the partial operation of certain essential establishments in malls.

Stores included in the "amusement and entertainment sector" including those that cater to children, and those involved in the tourism industry will not be allowed to resume operations for now.

COVID-19 BUDGET

Roque said government is preparing the "first COVID-19 national budget" for 2021 along with a draft for another possible supplemental budget.

He said the 2021 budget would be the "medium-term solution" to cushion the impact of the coronavirus and would be known as the "first COVID-19 budget" of government.

Roque also said that this also means that certain programs and projects may be set aside in favor of measures that would address the impacts of the coronavirus crisis.

Roque said the President will also ask Congress to pass another supplemental budget to boost the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis this year.

He said a proposal for the additional budget proposal has already been readied but said he was not yet authorized to make it public.

President Duterte under the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act had been given access to more than P200 billion of funds and had been given authority to realign the 2020 budget if needed to address the coronavirus disease and ease its burden on the public through different forms of subsidy and aid.

Roque said discussions for the supplemental budget, along with the 2021 budget, would be discussed next week. He said the focus of the IATF this week are the different protocols on the general community quarantine and the "new normal" or practices and activities that can be expected starting May 1.

AMELIORATION AND AID



Social Welfare Secretary Rolando Bautista reassured the public that the government has funds set aside from the implementation of the social amelioration program for May.

Bautista admits that funds for the country's social amelioration program are now running low and there would be further discussions in the IATF on its implementation amid the extension of the lockdown in some areas until May 15 and its modification in certain areas.

Roque on Friday said poor families living in the areas under the enhanced community quarantine areas will continue to receive the SAP while those living in places where the general community quarantine will be implemented may no longer be eligible for the second wave of cash aid.

Bautista said there is nothing final yet but admitted that one option being discussed is limiting the implementation of the SAP only to beneficiaries in ECQ areas "in consideration with the budget availability."

He said that with the resumption of economic activities in the areas under the general community quarantine, people there would be able to resume work and earn a living for their families.

INFORMATION LEAK



Roque said the IATF will look into a "leak" of joint resolutions and internal memorandum to the public.

He said some documents had made it to the social media even before President Duterte had approved or announced it

"It's a management issue that the IATF will address," he said in mixed English and Filipino.

He added that these leaks are also one of the reasons why Malacanang had centralized the information system on the COVID-19.

Roque said when the government aired the recorded meeting of the IATF with the President, Duterte's instructions and his announcement on the decision about the lockdown on Friday, some parts of the IATF resolution on the extension of ECQ in some areas and its relaxing into a general community quarantine (GCQ) in other places had already went viral online on Thursday night. – **with Raymond Africa and Jocelyn Montemayor**

IATF finalizing guidelines of general community quarantine

By Azer Parrocha April 27, 2020, 7:50 pm



MANILA – The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) is finalizing the guidelines on the general community quarantine (GCQ) expected to start in low-risk areas on May 1.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the IATF is discussing the guidelines which he will be announcing once these have been finalized.

“The guidelines will be approved today and we will discuss them tomorrow,” he said in a virtual presser on Monday.

Roque said the IATF will also discuss whether barbershops and salons would be allowed to operate under the GCQ since it would be difficult to maintain social distancing.

“Iyan po ay dini-discuss kasi po ang problema diyan sa mga salons, barbero eh imposible po ang social distancing diyan (That is being discussed because the problem with salons and barbers is that it’s impossible to observe social distancing there),” he said.

Meanwhile, Roque thanked Filipinos for observing protocols under the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) following the report of the Philippine National Police (PNP) that quarantine violators have dropped by 45 percent.

“Nagpapasalamat po kami sa taumbayan dahil nakiusap naman po ang Presidente at mukhang pinakinggan naman po ang pakiusap. Sana po iyong mga patuloy na pasaway, makinig na kayo sa pakiusap ni Presidente (We want to thank the public because the President requested them to follow protocol and they granted his request. I hope those troublemakers will also listen to the President’s request),” he said.

He also expressed hope that once the GCQ is implemented, the public would still observe social distancing, personal hygiene, and other preventive measures to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

On Thursday, President Rodrigo Duterte approved the IATF-EID’s recommendations to extend the ECQ in high-risk areas for Covid-19 until May 15 and place the areas considered moderate-risk and low-risk of the coronavirus infections under GCQ from May 1 to 15.

Select workers in non-essential services are allowed to go to work, once areas that have low or moderate risk of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) infections are placed under GCQ.

Under the GCQ, non-leisure shops in malls operating in low-risk or moderate-risk areas are likewise allowed to resume their operations.

Roque explained that GCQ would also be eventually implemented in areas that are still under ECQ.

Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Pangasinan, Benguet, Albay, Catanduanes, Davao del Norte, Davao City, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique, Iloilo, Cebu, and Cebu City are placed under ECQ until May 15 since these are considered as high-risk areas.

IATF finalizing guidelines of general community

April 28, 2020

TITLE: quarantine

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DATE

The IATF-EID also classified areas into moderate-risk and low-risk of spreading Covid-19 and placed them under GCQ.

High-risk and moderate-risk areas are still subject to further evaluation.

Low-risk areas will no longer be placed under GCQ after May 15 “if there is no deterioration.”

As of Monday, health authorities reported a total of 7,777 confirmed cases of Covid-19, 511 deaths, and 932 recoveries. **(PNA)**

Duterte adviser confident ECQ will be lifted on May 15

Published April 27, 2020 2:30pm

By JON VIKTOR D. CABUENAS, GMA News

Presidential Adviser on Entrepreneurship Jose Ma. "Joey" Concepcion on Monday said he is confident that the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) would be lifted on May 15, but added this could only be realized if testing for COVID-19 is optimized.

According to Concepcion, it is likely that the ECQ -- which has already been extended two times -- will lapse on May 15, two months after it was [first ordered](#) on March 17.

"We want the ECQ to be lifted on May 15. I think 'yung chance na mangyari 'yan mataas. I'm confident na mangyayari 'yan. I believe we will lift the ECQ, I personally," he said in an interview on Dobol B sa News TV.

According to Concepcion, even China -- which first detected COVID-19 -- was under quarantine for only two months. He said restarting the economy by then should happen.

"This is only my guess. I'm not saying it's 100% [but] I believe it will happen," he said, but noted that "we might be the first country to hit more than two months, but sa tingin ko hindi."

Concepcion said for this to be realized, mass testing for the coronavirus should be increased to an optimal 28,000 tests per day using the real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR).

"At 28,000 a day of testing using the RT-PCR, then they can allow maximum already economic activities, pero no leisure activities," he said, noting mass gatherings.

Concepcion said this is achievable given that imports of the private sector covering some 300,000 to 500,000 test kits are scheduled to arrive by May 15.

"To me, dapat even the non-essentials dapat mag-restart na rin 'yan. Marami rin 'yan and then 'yung construction rin, 'yung mga hindi naman delikado kasi open area naman, so we should allow them to start construction, that's important," he said. --**KBK, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/735737/duterte-adviser-confident-ecq-will-be-lifted-on-may-15/story/>



Hydroxychloroquine vs COVID-19, nakamamatay – Atayde

April 27, 2020 @ 11:58 PM 9 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Itinuturing na mas marami ang namamatay kaysa nabubuhay sa gamot na Hydroxychloroquine na ginagamit ng karamihan ng ospital sa bansa laban sa coronavirus disease 2019.

Sa mga nakapanayam ng Remate, nabatid na ang side effect o ang unang sinisira nito ay ang puso ng tao.

Ganito ang dinanas ng artistang si Sylvia Sanchez, kung saan sinabi ni Art Atayde na asawa nito na makaraang bigyan ng Hydroxychloroquine si Sanchez ay nagkaroon umano ito ng myocarditis o pamamaga ng puso.

Si Art Atayde ay binigyan umano ng nasabing gamot kung saan makaraan ang ilang oras ay kinumbulsyon naman ito at muntik mamatay makaraang magkaroon ng double heart block.

Nabatid na alas-2 ng madaling araw nang mangyari ang nasabing insidente kung saan tandang-tanda umano ni Atayde na napakaraming makinang dala ng mga doktor at nars nang pasukin ang kanyang silid sa ospital.

“Akala ko talaga mamamatay na ako, buti na lang natanggal kaagad ‘yung bara ko sa puso,” dagdag pa nito.

“Wala naman akong dating sakit sa puso, eh, matapos akong bigyan ng Hydroxychloroquine, hayun kinumbulsyon bigla ako,” aniya pa.

Nang makapanayam naman natin ang mamamahayag ng Manila Bulletin na si Ben Rosario na una ring tinamaan ng COVID-19 kasama ang kanyang may bahay, sinabi nito na ang kanyang asawa ay unang naging clear sa COVID-19, ngunit hindi ito pinalabas ng doktor sa ospital dahil sa may tama umano ito sa puso.

Malinaw na sinabi ni Rosario na walang sakit sa puso ang kanyang may bahay kung kaya’t nagtataka siya bakit nagkaproblema ito?

Kaya ang tanong ni Rosario ay “Hindi kaya dahil sa side effect ng Hydroxychloroquine yun?”

Sa isang panayam kay Dr. Jonas Del Rosario ng Philippine General Hospital, sinabi nito na maingat ang pagbibigay ng nasabing gamot sa mga pasyente kung saan isinasailalim sa ECG ang bawat pasyenteng binibigyan nito para masiguradong hindi maaapektuhan ang kanilang mga puso.

Matatandaang ang Hydroxychloroquine ay gamot laban sa sakit na malaria na hanggang sa kasalukuyan ay hindi pa napatutunayang epektibo laban sa sakit na COVID-19.

Kaugnay nito, nanawagan si Dr. Del Rosario sa mga nagkakasakit na huwag gamitin ang nasabing gamot na walang pangangalaga ng isang doktor dahil sa sensitibong paggamit nito.

“Marami kasi ang bumili kaagad ng gamot na ‘yan nang mapaulat na makapagpapagaling ito sa COVID-19 pero ang hindi nila alam ay may side effect din ‘yan,” dagdag pa ni Del Rosario.

Napag-alaman na ito rin umano ang inirerekumenda ng Pangulo ng Estados Unidos na si Donald Trump para sa mga may COVID-19 kaya marahil lalong dumarami ang namamatay sa kanilang bansa. **Remate Reportorial Team**



AYAW SA SOCIAL DISTANCING, STAY AT HOME, 30 PASTOR PATAY

April 27, 2020 @ 3:04 PM 16 hours ago

MALAKING kapahamakan ang naghihintay sa mga taong ayaw sumunod sa mga batas laban sa Coronavirus Disease-19.

Nagaganap ito sa Amerika na kinatatagpuan ng maraming pasaway o laging gumigiit ng ganap nilang kalayaan na gumawa nang gusto nila.

Kasama sa mga pasaway ang mga pastor ng mga relihiyon na nagigiit ng kalayaan nilang magsamba nang sama-sama, dikitan, magkahawak-kamay at iba pa.

Dahil dito, mabilis na nasasama ang mga pastor sa mga mabilisang inililibing o kine-cremate araw-araw dahil sa kamatayang iwinawasiwas ng COVID-19.

30 PASTOR PATAY AT STILL COUNTING

NASA 30 pastor na Amerikano ang namatay na dahil sa pagsuway sa patakaran ng gobyerno na social distancing, stay at home at maramihang pagtitipon kaugnay ng Coronavirus Disease-19.

Ayon sa ulat ng Independent.co, pinakamarami sa mga pastor ang nakapaloob sa mga American African denomination, lalo na ang Church of God in Christ.

Katuwiran ng mga pastor, mas makapangyarihan ang kanilang Diyos kaysa ang COVID-19 kaya naman laging nagtitipon-tipon ang kanilang mga pastor at mananampalataya para isagawa ang kanilang pagsamba, pagtanggap ng grasya mula sa kanilang Diyos at pagdarasal na rin laban sa nasabing sakit.

Lumilitaw na kahit may mga pang-aaresto at pagbuwag ng mga awtoridad sa kanilang maramihang mga pagtitipon, ipinipilit pa rin ng mga pastor na isang pangunahin nilang karapatan bilang mamamayang Amerikano ang magtitipon-tipon at magsamba.

Paliwanag ng mga awtoridad, bukod sa pagtitipon para magsamba, pinanatili umano ng mga pastor ang karaniwang gawaing pagdalo sa mga paglalamay at paglilibing at body contact sa pagdarasal sa mga may sakit at pamimigay ng blessing sa mga ulo sa pamamagitan ng kamay.

Lahat umano ng mga aksyon o gawaing ito ay taliwas sa patakaran sa social distancing, stay at home at maramihang pagtitipon.

Isa pa, nilalabag din umano ang mga patakaran upang masiguro ng mga pastor na magbibigay ng tithe o ikapu ng kita at alay ang kanilang mga mananampalataya sa kanilang pagtitipon para hindi mabangkrap ang kanilang mga simbahan.

72 PARI PATAY RIN

Hanggang Marso 29, umabot na rin 68 ang bilang ng patay na paring Katoliko sa bansang Italya.

Ngayon araw na ito, Abril 27, o halos isang buwan ang nakalipas, naghihintay pa tayo ng mga ulat kung may dagdag nang patay na pari.

At heto nga, kabilang sa mga pinakahuling namatay si Fr. Giuseppe Berardelli, 72, ng Lombardy na isa sa mga lugar sa Italy na pinakamatinding tinamaan ng COVID-19.

Pinakabatang paring namatay si Paolo Camminati, 53, at parish priest ng Our Lady of Lourdes in Piacenza.

Ngunit hindi lang sa Italy may pinapatay ang mabagsik na sakit kundi sa United States of America rin.

Unang namatay si Franciscan Brother John-Sebastian Laird-Hammond na binawian ng buhay noong Marso 20, 2020 sa New York.

May sakit itong leukemia at nang tamaan ng COVID-19, namatay ito makaraan ang isang linggo.

Makaraan ang isang linggo Marso 27, sumunod ding kinitil ng virus ang buhay ni Fr. Jorge Ortiz-Garay, coordinator ng Mexican immigrants sa Diocese ng Brooklyn, N.Y.

Marami sa mga pari ang namatay dahil sa kautusan mismo ni Pope Francis noong una na kailangang sumama ang mga pari sa mga health worker na nag-aasikaso sa mga may Covid-19 at namamatay upang basbasan at ipagmisa o ipagdasal ang mga ito.

Sa kalaunan, nagdeklara na rin mismo si Pope Francis ng social distancing, stay at home, pagsimba at pagsasagawa ng ilang sakramento sa pamamagitan lamang ng internet, radyo at telebisyon.

Mahigpit na ring nakikipagtulungan ang Vatican City sa gobyernong Italya kung paano pigilin ang pagkalat at pagmasaker ng virus at nagmimisa at naglalakad na ring nag-iisa habang nagwawagayway ng krus laban sa sakit 'pag meron siyang time.

Sa Russia, nag-collapse si Fr. Aleksandr Agejkin, ng Catholic Orthodox Church sa kanyang pinaglilingkurang Cathedral of the Epiphany sa Elokhovo noong Abril 20 at kinabukasan, namatay na siya.

Ngayon, lahat ng kasamahan niya, kasama ang kanyang pinaka-Kardinal ay isinailalim agad sa mahigpit na quarantine.

Kamamatay naman kamakalawa ang babaeng pari na si Rev. Andrea Bowman ng Grace Episcopal Church sa Seattle, USA dahil din sa COVID-19.

SA PILIPINAS?

Magpapasalamat tayo sa Pilipinas at natutunang sumunod ang mga relihiyoso sa mga patakaran ng pamahalaan sa social distancing, stay at home at pagsamba sa pamamagitan ng electronics, radio, telebisyon at internet.

Nagsara sila ng mga simbahan o church upang mapigil ang pagpunta-punta ng mga mananampalataya sa loob at magdasal.

Ang maganda pa, sa kasagsagan ng COVID-19, may mga simbhang binuksan para tirahan ng mga doktor, nars at iba pang tinatawag na frontliners laban sa sakit o para maging quarantine area ng mga tinatamaan na hindi pupwedeng umuwi sa kanilang mga bahay-bahay.

Ang Philippine Arena na pinakamalaking sports arena sa mundo na pag-aari ng Iglesia ni Cristo ay inialok din ng ni kapatid na Eduardo Manalo at mga ministro niya na maging quarantine area ng mga may COVID-19, kasunod ang pagsuspende nila ng pagsamba sa mga kapilya bilang tugon sa Enhanced Community Quarantine.

Nagpapasalamat tayo sa mga aksyon ng mga relihiyoso sa Pilipinas at sa pakikipagtulungan nila sa pamahalaang Duterte na gumagawa ng lahat ng paraan na maligtas ang sambayanang Filipino mula sa mabagsik na sakit.

At nagpapasalamat din tayo sa Maykapal na walang pang nababalitaang nasasawi na pari, pastor at iba pa dahil pagsunod nila sa mga patakaran laban sa COVID-19.

5 things Duterte got right

By: [Richard Heydarian](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:05 AM April 28, 2020

Across the world, the impact of the pandemic that originated from China has been far from uniform. Many elements mediate the extent to which the COVID-19 virus affects a specific nation, so before pointing out what Philippine President Duterte got right, let me first lay out these important qualifiers. First, there is the element of geography, and likely climate, playing an important role.

In the European Union, where travel restrictions were close to nonexistent, Italy's neighbors, including Belgium, were hit hard, despite having among the most sophisticated policy interventions.

Latest studies show that the virus, not dissimilar to SARS almost two decades ago, has a shorter lifespan outside the human body in hot and humid locations. University of Connecticut researchers Cory Merow and Mark Urban argue that "ultraviolet light was most strongly associated with lower COVID-19 growth rates," and that, in the absence of policy intervention, "COVID-19 will decrease temporarily during summer, rebound by autumn, and peak next winter."

Then there is the "super spreader" phenomenon, with Italy football team Atalanta's return game against Spain's Valencia likely contributing to, among other major events and factors, the massive spread of the plague to neighboring Spain. Moreover, as demographic experts at Oxford University have shown, high fatality rates in Italy were partly a function of the proportion of elderly, smoking men, as well as the high frequency of social interaction between the young and elderly.

As the crisis in global cities such as New York and, increasingly even Singapore, has shown, high-density megacities could be also particularly vulnerable. Nonetheless, comprehensive studies such as the multivariable survey by Hong-Kong-based Deep Knowledge Group show that so far the most successful policy responses have come from democracies such as Germany, South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Australia.

Interestingly, none of these "model nations" are led by populists. New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen, and Germany's Angela Merkel are widely seen as among the most competent leaders amid the ongoing pandemic.

Practically all populists have overseen among the worst outbreaks in their regions, from Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro to Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the United States' Donald Trump, who has overseen officially the world's worst outbreak. The Philippines and Indonesia, both led by populists, have not fared well by regional standards.

The notable exception is Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose illiberal populism has been built on a toxic cocktail of xenophobia and border closures. This time, Orbán's penchant for travel restrictions on foreigners may have worked in his country's favor.

The common strain among practically all these populists is their far-too-long dismissiveness toward the crisis and, in the case of Bolsonaro, the outright denial and reckless firing of the country's health minister. Up until the second week of March, President Duterte mocked anxieties over the pandemic with characteristic chutzpah: "Naniwala pala kayo!"

But as in life, politics also offers a chance for redemption. First of all, there has been an encouraging shift in the President's language and policy toward the crisis. He has become frank about the true extent of the crisis, making it clear that unless we have reliable, mass-produced vaccine, there is no return to "normal": "Ang COVID, hindi matatapos 'yan. It will be here, it will stay until kingdom come pero kung may bakuna na, baka sakaling mauna tayo."

Second, Mr. Duterte has shown the political will to extend a difficult and economically devastating lockdown in order to protect public health. This stands in stark contrast to Trump's itch to restart the American economic engine.

Third, the President has shown a growing spirit of collaboration with scientists, most notable during his recent dialogue with former health secretaries, including at least one from the opposition.

Fourth, while Trump and Bolsonaro have been busy firing competent officials, Mr. Duterte has recruited competent and young technocrats to assist his ongoing efforts, such as Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles and new Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua.

And finally, the President, in a rare sign of national unity, has rightly shown due respect and appreciation for Vice President Leni Robredo, who has been an epitome of quiet dedication to frontliners and the country's most vulnerable sectors in recent months. There is so much room for improvement, but there is also reason to hope.

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What the public deserves

posted April 28, 2020 at 12:30 am

The lockdown in Metro Manila and other high-risk provinces has been extended until May 15 in an effort to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The extension has been widely seen as prudent and necessary, as new cases of COVID-19 and deaths as a result of the disease continue to be reported daily. By April 27, there were 7,579 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 501 deaths reported—and nobody wants to see a flare-up of new infections.

But this was the second extension of the lockdown, officially referred to as the Enhanced Community Quarantine, which aims to limit the spread of the deadly virus by keeping people home.



Imposed on March 16, the ECQ was supposed to end on April 12, but acting on the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, the President extended it to April 30. As that deadline drew near, the President again extended the lockdown to May 15.

For the millions of Filipinos, this means that the shelter-in-place restrictions will have been in force for two full months by the time the lockdown expires again. This is long time for people to lose their freedom of movement, but particularly disastrous for the vast majority of those who, because of the nature of their jobs, simply cannot work from home.

From the start, it was clear that if the anti-COVID-19 measures were to succeed, the public needed to understand that this was a necessary sacrifice. Also, the authorities would have to be honest about the situation and present a reasonable plan and timetable to return to normal—albeit a new normal.

What we do not need are recurring threats to impose martial law because a small minority of people are too stubborn to abide by the stay-at-home restrictions. What we do not need is to see police shoot dead a mentally challenged lockdown violator. What we do not need is to hear government officials dodge responsibility for the infection and deaths of health workers, simply because they don't want to acknowledge their failure to provide an adequate supply of personal protective equipment against COVID-19 to medical frontliners.

What the locked down public needs is some transparency and honesty in COVID-19 reporting. What the public needs to hear is a detailed plan of testing, isolation and treatment, do that by the end of two months, we will have a better idea of how we can reasonably deal with this public health emergency.

Finally, the President needs to address the vast majority of Filipinos who are staying home because they want what is best for everyone. What the public needs and deserves is not more threats and warnings, but congratulation for coming this far, and words of encouragement that will take us to the new normal.

Guide book for the new normal

By [Malaya Business Insight](#)

-April 28, 2020



THE government has been saying that the coronavirus that causes the disease called COVID-19 will be with us for some time, and that there will be changes in social and individual behaviors to cope with the “new normal.”

But what exactly is this new normal? How will it impact on our daily lives? What will mass transportation look like when it opens? How do we implement social distancing? How many people will comprise a “gathering” — will it be like in the UK and in Sweden where a “gathering” has a limit of 50 or less individuals?

There are many questions that baffle the mind of the average citizen. And the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) managing the government’s official response to the COVID-19 pandemic has no easy, cut-and-dried answers just yet.

This is the reason why Sen. Nancy Binay yesterday urged the Inter-Agency Task Force to hasten crafting an “easy-to-follow” guide book that would help the public adjust to “new normal” practices once the enhanced community quarantine is lifted on May 15.

Binay said such exit plan is needed to manage people’s expectations of how the government responds to the COVID-19 crisis.

We are asking the people to embrace the new normal. But this begs the question: are the government and the private sector ready for the new normal?

The senator said a comprehensive, yet easy-to-follow “blue book” for the public, local government units (LGUs) and essential businesses in the private sector would serve as a guide on what to do and expect once the ECQ is relaxed or lifted in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

It’s about guiding the public on what to expect once restrictions in traveling and going to work are relaxed, and how to manage people’s expectations.

What Binay is proposing is for the government to reach out to the people, especially the poor who do not have access to the internet, to explain what to do after the ECQ.

The publication can even be in an illustrated format that can serve as a handbook for public transport operators, building management firms, schools, restaurants, hotels, shops, amusement and entertainment centers, the lady senator said. She added that the government should have released by now infomercials on TV and social media, downloadable pamphlets, and posters about the expected changes in a new normal world.

If the IATF has a roadmap in transitioning to the new normal, the Filipino public has the right to know, and to know in advance.

We'll never return to normal

posted April 28, 2020 at 12:25 am

by [Emil Jurado](#)

People more or less expected President Duterte's announcement that he was extending, to May 15, the enhanced community quarantine in critical areas. These include Metro Manila, Calabarzon and Central Luzon.

Other places will be under general community quarantine. Duterte, however, did not specify what GCQ meant, exactly.

The President did not stop there. He went on to threaten the communists. He said they should stop their acts of lawlessness like committing atrocities and killing soldiers who were just carrying supplies. Or else, he said, he would declare martial law nationwide.

To make matters worse, Duterte's words were echoed by Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces.

No word came, however, from Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, who should normally react.

I also expected the President to extend the ECQ given that we still have not flattened the curve of the infection. But the good news is that recoveries are far outpacing deaths.

As a journalist, I know the implications of a martial law declaration. I was there when the same declaration was made in 1972. But while martial law targeted the communists, it also meant the suppression of basic freedoms. If Duterte is thinking of a Marcos-style martial law declaration, he should take another look at Section 19 of Article VII of the 1987 Constitution.

Marcos based his martial law on the 1935 Constitution which did not have limitations like the 1987 charter has. My gulay, under the 1987 Constitution, martial law would be a toothless tiger. It has so many restrictions!

In the first place, the condition Duterte mentioned as his basis for declaring martial law does not exist. Communists may be committing atrocities in the countryside, but that is not enough basis. Neither does it qualify as lawless violence that endangers public safety.

While what the New People's Army is doing can qualify under "rebellion," these rebels are mostly bandits collecting "revolutionary taxes" for their own purposes. The AFP can still suppress their activities. As a lawyer, surely Duterte must be aware of this.

* * *

Meanwhile, my attention was caught by the statement of presidential spokesman Harry Roque that the rate of infection is starting to flatten. I think it is premature to say that. It's almost speculation. He should take note of the World Health Organization's statement that the cure for COVID-19 may take weeks, even months! Hence, we still have a long journey ahead of us!

People should realize the need for greater sacrifice and discipline. It's all for the common good. But, my gulay, how can you tell that to those who are out of jobs? Businesses and the economy are losing so much—I am lucky I still have my job, being able to write this column three times a week.

What really worries me is what will happen to this country once we return to normal. The National Economic and Development Authority says initial losses due to the pandemic now amount to P800 billion. Indeed we will never be the same again.

* * *

While we were not looking, there were reports that China continued to militarize the West Philippine Sea. Reports also have it that Chinese Coast Guard vessels have been making incursions into our territory. They say there has been a confrontation between Chinese and Philippine coast guard vessels. Antique Rep. and former Senator Loren Legarda was even complaining about the entry of China's vessels near Semirara Island in Panay.

My gulay, all we could do was file a diplomatic protest, thanks to the Department of Foreign Affairs. What China is doing to us is short of criminal. This leads me to ask—Can we still trust China to be our friend given the way it has been bullying us?

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights, in a bid to make its presence felt, wants the police and military to respect the human rights of citizens.

The CHR must remember that the country is in a state of national emergency in the wake of the pandemic. The common good and national interest prevail over individual freedoms and rights.

Still, it does not mean that anybody can just trample over human rights. The end cannot justify the means.

* * *

The repatriation of thousands of Overseas Filipino Workers is a big economic issue. For decades, remittances have shored up our economy. With the specter of a global recession upon us, I am afraid our economic future is grave danger. My gulay, who can help us?

Water bill ng mga kostumer ng Manila Water, maaaring malaman sa SMS

[Angie dela Cruz](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - April 28, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Maaari nang makuha ng mga kostumer ng Manila Water ang kanilang kasalukuyang bayarin sa pamamagitan ng SMS o text message.

Sa pamamagitan ng serbisyo, makukuha rin ng kostumer ang listahan ng mga payment facilities, partikular na ang mga online payment channels upang makapagbayad pa rin ang mga customer nang hindi umaalis ng kanilang tahanan dahil na rin sa ECQ.

Ang hakbang ay bilang tugon sa kahilingan ng mga kostumer para sa mas mabilis at madaling paraan upang malaman ang kanilang bayarin para sa seribsyo ng tubig.

Sa ilalim ng inilunsad ng 'bill inquiry' ng Manila Water, gamit ang kanilang mobile phones, ipapadala lang ng kostumer ang mga sumusunod na detalye sa 225600:

MW<space>BILL<space>CAN<space>huling 8 digits ng contract account number

Sa pamamagitan nito, makatatanggap naman ang kostumer ng text message kung saan nakalahad ang anumang outstanding balance, kung mayroon man, kasama na rin ang isang link para sa listahan ng mga pasilidad kung saan maaaring magbayad ang customer nang hindi na kailangan pang lumabas ng kanilang tahanan.

Maaari ring ang matatanggap na sagot ng kostumer ay impormasyon ukol sa overpayment o kawalan ng outstanding balance, kung ganito man ang sitwasyon.

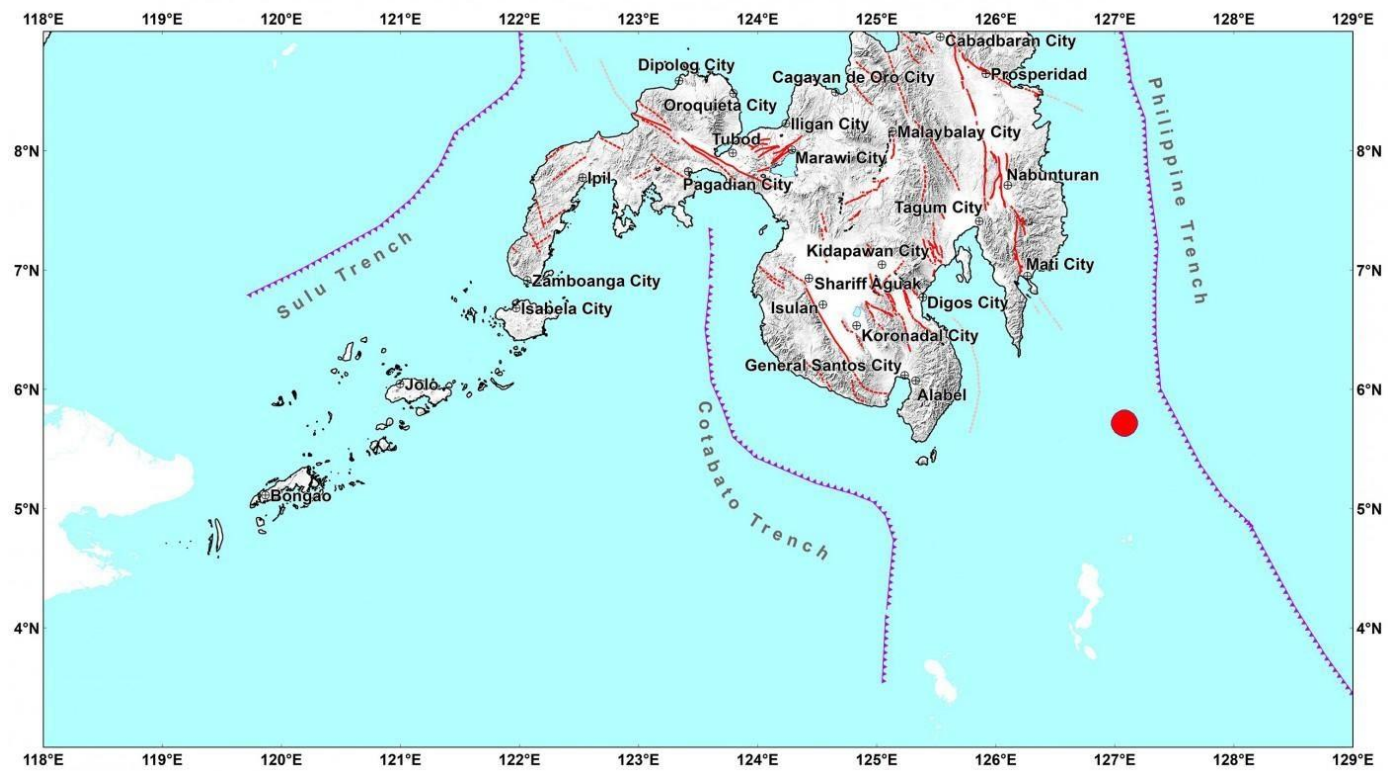
Una nang naanunsyo ng Manila Water ang extension ng pagbabayad ng bill ng mga kostumer ng 30 araw dulot ng epekto sa kabuhayan ng enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

Magnitude 5.2 quake jolts Davao Occidental

Published April 27, 2020, 9:08 AM

By MB Online

A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Jose Abad Santos, Davao Occidental at 7:48 a.m. Monday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported.



(PHIVOLCS / MANILA BULLETIN)

The earthquake was tectonic in origin and its epicenter traced 164 kilometers southeast of Jose Abad Santos with a depth of 64 kilometers.

PHIVOLCS said the quake was also felt under the following Instrumental Intensities: Intensity I – Malungon and Alabel, Sarangan

Due to its depth, Phivolcs said it was not expected to cause any damage to property. No casualties were reported as a result of the tremor.

Magnitude 5.2 earthquake hits waters off Davao Occidental

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Apr 27, 2020 8:30:09 AM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 27)— A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck off Davao Occidental on Monday morning, the the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology [said](#).



The tectonic quake that hit at 7:48 a.m had a depth of 64 kilometers. Its epicenter was 164 kilometers southeast of Jose Abad Santos town.

Intensity I shaking was recorded at Malungon and Alabel towns in Sarangani province.

Phivolcs said aftershocks and damage were not expected.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/regional/2020/4/27/Magnitude-5-2-earthquake-hits-waters-Davao-Occidental.html>

PH urged to go on joint patrols with Malaysia, Vietnam to show united front vs China

By: [Frances Mangosing](#) - Reporter / [@FMangosingINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 06:27 PM April 27, 2020

MANILA, Philippines—The Philippines should carry out joint patrols with Malaysia and Vietnam in the South China Sea to push back against China, which seemed to be using the COVID-19 pandemic as a smokescreen for its continued aggression in the disputed waters, according to retired Senior Associate Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio.

“I suggest we join patrols with Vietnam and Malaysia,” said Carpio on Monday (April 27).

“That’s the only way China will understand that we are united,” he said at an online forum with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (Focap).

Last week, the Philippine government filed a diplomatic protest against China after a Chinese warship got its weapons ready for firing at a Philippine Navy ship in Philippine territory near Rizal (Commodore) Reef in the West Philippine Sea.

China also had recent brushes with Vietnam and Malaysia—the sinking of a Vietnamese fishing boat in the Paracel Islands and the deployment of a Chinese survey ship to Malaysian waters.

China has been insisting that its nine-dash line claim showed that it owned the entire South China Sea, parts of which are tens of thousands of kilometers away from the Chinese mainland.

The mythical nine-dash line, however, had been rejected as fraudulent and without basis in 2016 by the Permanent Arbitration Court in a case filed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, which also have claims in the area.

Carpio said the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia should conduct joint patrols in their respective exclusive economic zones to show a united front against the Asian behemoth.

“We’re sending a message to China that it cannot pick us out one by one. We are united,” he said. If China kept up its incursions, the Philippines should consider joining naval patrols of the United States in the South China Sea, he said.

Edited by TSB

Source: <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/187256/ph-urged-to-go-on-joint-patrols-with-malaysia-vietnam-to-show-united-front-vs-china#ixzz6KqyOQuV2>

Music video 'Save our Seas' takes on new life amid outrage over China's 'Iisang Dagat'

By: [Frances Mangosing](#) - Reporter / [@FMangosingINO](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:54 PM April 27, 2020

MANILA, Philippines—A months-old music video produced by Filipino, Vietnamese and Malaysian artists is being breathed new life, putting into song the struggle for sovereignty in Southeast Asian waters and appearing to counter a Chinese embassy music video that has drawn outrage for its subtle message about China owning the entire South China Sea.

The music video, "Save Our Seas," is a collaboration of Vietnamese and Filipino rappers Tu P and Marx Sickmind and Malaysian singer Mei Lee.

Set to a hip hop beat, it tells about the fight for sovereignty in the South China Sea.

Though it was first released late in 2019, the collaborative work made the rounds on social media again after the Chinese embassy in Manila released "Iisang Dagat (One Sea)" which was purportedly to promote cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lyrics of Save Our Seas appeared to be directed at Chinese actions in the South China Sea. Some of the song's lyrics read:

They claim reclamation, but how can you reclaim what never belonged to your nation?

The UN court of arbitration state condemnation of continued aggravation
by the ones who want to take it

Historically there was freedom of the seas but no ownership
Now you wanna own the waters, even own the fish
Taking the food, causing destruction to our environment

The 2016 decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled that Beijing's claims have no basis and its South China Sea construction frenzy was illegal.

An old Philippine Navy institutional video is also making the rounds on social media following the backlash against Iisang Dagat.

The Philippine Navy video, released in time for its 110th anniversary in 2008, showcased its capabilities with the song "Iisang Bangka (One Boat)" by the band The Dawn as background music.

The Chinese embassy's Iisang Dagat was released a few days after the Philippine government filed diplomatic protest over a Chinese warship's hostile act against a Philippine Navy ship in Philippine territory in the West Philippine Sea.

The Chinese warship aimed its weapons at the BRP Conrado Yap (PS-39) after the Philippine vessel radioed the Chinese warship for intrusion into Philippine territory.

Music video 'Save our Seas' takes on new life amid

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The Chinese embassy production, according to maritime expert Prof. Jay Batongbacal, "is seen very clearly by most of our people as propaganda."

Batongbacal, director of the UP Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, said in an interview with ANC that while Iisang Dagat "supposedly highlights cooperation over COVID-19" it highlighted "the so-called Iisang Dagat which everyone knows is contested."

"Everyone knows that China, in the eyes of the Filipino people, is taking away the West Philippine Sea," Batongbacal said.

It was as if China was saying that despite the pandemic, it cannot be stopped from setting foot in all of the West Philippine Sea, he said.

Retired Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, who played a crucial role in securing the Philippines' historic victory against China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, said "China's propaganda is on overdrive."

"China is not letting the COVID-19 crisis go to waste. As it donates PPE (personal protective equipment) to us, China strengthens its hold on the islands it seized from us," he told INQUIRER.net.

Edited by TSB

Source: <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/187235/music-video-save-our-seas-takes-on-new-life-amid-outrage-over-chinas-iisang-dagat#ixzz6KqzkRMQW>

'Iisang Dagat' video connected to China's claims in West Philippine Sea -Carpio

Published April 27, 2020 9:49pm

Retired Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio said on Monday that the Chinese Embassy's [controversial music video](#) must be seen in light of the maritime disputes concerning the West Philippine Sea.

Titled "Iisang Dagat," the video showed the help that the Philippines received from the government of China in response to the COVID-19 threat.

According to Camarines Sur Vice Governor Imelda Papin, one of the artists who performed in the music video, the song's message was only that of helping each other amid the health crisis.

Carpio, however, is more wary and said that China is taking advantage of the pandemic situation.

"You have to connect that [video] with their official position that they own the South China Sea," he said in Jun Veneracion's report for "24 Oras."

The music video was released one day after the Department of Foreign Affairs [filed a diplomatic protest](#) over the [incident involving a Philippine Navy vessel and Chinese warship](#).

The commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command (Wescom) confirmed that the Chinese ship pointed a radar gun at the Navy vessel in February.

"It's a hostile act under the rules of naval engagement. Because it's just one step away from firing," Carpio said. "Navies really do not do that unless you want to bully another country."

The retired justice suggested holding joint patrols with Vietnam and Malaysia in the disputed waters.

"I think we have to join forces now because this will continue to escalate. And it's very unfortunate that China is doing this during this pandemic," he said.

The music video, meanwhile, drew flak online and angered many Filipino netizens. As of writing, it has over 161,000 "dislikes" and only around 2,400 "likes" on YouTube.

"You can just see that it has boomeranged on China," Carpio said. —**MGP, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/735801/iisang-dagat-video-connected-to-china-s-claims-in-west-philippine-sea-carpio/story/>

'World should have listened to WHO' on virus: director

Published April 28, 2020 1:46am

GENEVA, Switzerland - The World Health Organization's director-general said Monday that the agency had sounded the highest level of alarm over the novel coronavirus early on, but lamented that not all countries had heeded its advice.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus pointed out that the WHO warned the COVID-19 outbreak constituted a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern" on January 30, when there were no deaths and only 82 cases registered outside China.

"The world should have listened to WHO then, carefully," he told a virtual press briefing.

The organisation has faced scathing criticism from US President Donald Trump, who earlier this month suspended Washington's funding after accusing WHO of downplaying the seriousness of the outbreak and kowtowing to China, where the novel coronavirus first surfaced late last year.

Trump has provided no evidence to support his claims.

Tedros insisted that the UN health agency had provided sound advice from the beginning "based on the best science and evidence".

But he stressed though that "we do not have any mandate to force countries... to take our advice."

When the WHO announced on January 30 that the novel coronavirus represented "the highest level of emergency... every country could have triggered all its public health measures," Tedros pointed out.

"I think that suffices the importance of listening to WHO's advice."

"We advised the whole world to implement a comprehensive public health approach, and we said find, test, isolate, and do contact tracing," he said.

"You can check for yourselves: countries who followed that are in a better position than others. This is fact."

"It is up to the countries to reject or accept," he said.

"Each country takes its own responsibility."

The pandemic has claimed more than 206,000 lives and infected nearly three million people, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP Monday.

The United States has the highest number of deaths at nearly 55,000, out of close to one million registered cases. -- **Agence France-Presse**

The virus hunters who search bat caves to predict the

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The virus hunters who search bat caves to predict the next pandemic

By Julie Zaugg, for CNN

Published Apr 27, 2020 9:43:49 AM



In the case of COVID-19, knowing where it originated will help scientists understand how it mutated to become infectious to humans and hopefully prevent future outbreaks.

(CNN) — Before entering the cave, the small team of scientists pull on hazmat suits, face masks and thick gloves to cover every inch of their skin. Contact with bat droppings or urine could expose them to some of the world's deadliest unknown viruses.

Equipped with headlights, they set their nets up at the entrance of the dark opening overhung with bamboo trees, which is part of a vast system of limestone caves in China's south-western Yunnan province.

Then they patiently wait for dusk. When the sun sets, thousands of bats fly out of the caves, looking for food -- and straight into their nets.

The scientists collect the nets and carefully put the bats to sleep with a mild anesthetic, before delicately extracting blood from a vein on their wings. "We also carry out oral and faecal swabs and gather droppings," says Peter Daszak, who presides over EcoHealth Alliance, an American NGO which specializes in detecting new viruses and pandemic prevention.

Daszak is a virus hunter. Over the past 10 years, he has visited over 20 countries trying to prevent the next big pandemic by searching bat caves for new pathogens. More specifically, new coronaviruses.

The findings of Daszak, and others like him, inform an open-source library of all known animal viruses, from which scientists can forecast which strains are most likely to spill over to humans, in order to ready the world for a new pandemic like COVID-19.

"We (have) collected more than 15,000 bat samples, which led to the identification of around 500 new coronaviruses," he says.

And one of those, found in a cave in China in 2013, was a possible ancestor of COVID-19.

Coronavirus research

Before the 2003 SARS epidemic, research into coronaviruses didn't attract much attention. "It wasn't seen as a sexy branch of medical research," says Wang Linfa, a virologist from Duke-NUS in Singapore, who develops the tools used to analyze the samples collected by EcoHealth Alliance.

Only two human coronaviruses had been identified back then, both discovered in the 1960s.

The virus hunters who search bat caves to predict the

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In 2009, Predict was founded. Funded by USAID, it is led by University of California Davis, alongside EcoHealth Alliance, the Smithsonian Institution, the Wildlife Conservation Society and Metabiota, a Californian company which has developed an epidemic tracker.

The initiative was tasked with identifying and responding to new zoonotic diseases -- including coronaviruses -- before they spread to humans. Over the course of its 10 years in operation, it was awarded around \$200 million dollars.

Since its founding, five more human coronaviruses have been identified, including COVID-19. Daszak estimates that bats harbor up to 15,000 coronaviruses, only a few hundred of which are currently known.

Daszak's organization focuses on southwest China, more specifically on the aforementioned limestone cave system in Yunnan province, known for its large bat population.

"We targeted China initially because we were looking for the origins of SARS," he explains. "But then we realized that there were hundreds of other dangerous coronaviruses there so we decided to shift our attention to finding them."

Predict operates in 31 countries. Another team of virus hunters, belonging to the Smithsonian Institution, has started focusing on Myanmar and Kenya. "So far, we were able to identify six novel coronaviruses in Myanmar," says Suzan Murray, who leads the Smithsonian Institution's Global Health Program.

"These are areas with lots of wildlife biodiversity, a growing human population encroaching on the natural habitat, good travel networks and a large amount of livestock, which means there is a high potential for virus spillovers between species," says Dawn Zimmerman, who leads some of the Smithsonian Institution's virus sampling expeditions.

Bats to humans

Southeast Asia and China are of particular interest as large swathes of their populations make regular contact with wildlife, by hunting it, selling it -- often live -- in wet markets and eating it, according to Daszak.

After analyzing blood samples of people living near two bat caves in Jinning County, Yunnan province in 2015, Daszak's team found that 3 percent had antibodies for viruses normally only found in bats -- meaning they had already been exposed to them.

"They might have unknowingly contracted these pathogens and recovered or only had a few body cells infected," he says.

To make the jump to humans, coronaviruses need to be able to bind to their cell receptors, which usually requires an intermediate animal host, explains Wang. This can be a civet cat, a camel, a pangolin or another mammal closely related to humans, he said.

But they usually originate in bats, which carry an extremely high proportion of viruses capable of infecting humans, such as Marburg, Nipah, Ebola and SARS, according to Daszak, who co-authored a study in Nature on this topic in 2017.

"Because bats are flying mammals, their body is exposed to a lot of stress, which would normally generate an immune system response," he explains. "To deal with this, they have to tone down their immune systems, which in turn makes them more susceptible to viruses and capable of tolerating a higher viral load."

Bats also make up roughly 20 percent of all mammal species and congregate in huge colonies in crowded caves, making the spread of viruses among them more likely.

The coronavirus library

Once Daszak's team has collected their samples, they store them in liquid nitrogen and send to partner labs around the world for analysis.

"We usually choose to work with the best labs in the country and if there aren't any, we build up local capacity," says Daszak. The strands of virus DNA found in the sample are then compared to the profiles in GenBank, an open access database maintained by the US National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) containing all known human and animal viruses. That determines "if we are dealing with a new virus or not," says Zimmerman.

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The answer is not always clear-cut.

"A virus is considered new if more than 20 percent of its DNA differs from that of known viruses," explains Supaporn Watcharapruksadee, who studies emerging diseases, independently from Predict, in a lab linked to Chulalongkorn university in Bangkok.

Researchers also sometimes think they have found a new virus when it has, in fact, been spreading in a community for several years already. Less than half of all viruses causing pneumonias are identified, according to Patrick Woo, an expert on emerging diseases from Hong Kong University. Often, the patient just gets better and his case isn't investigated further, he said.

In 2005, Woo found a new coronavirus in two patients hospitalized in Hong Kong, which he called HKU1. But he subsequently discovered that the same virus had already infected patients in the US, Australia and France.

Another virus which might have spread to humans without anyone noticing is Nipah. Daszak believes that this virus, which surfaced in 1998 during an epidemic in Malaysia linked to 105 deaths, had in fact been jumping from bats to humans long before in rural areas of Bangladesh.

"Every year, there were a few outbreaks classified as aberrant measles," he explains. "We carried out a study on these patients and found that they had actually contracted Nipah virus." These transmissions went undetected because most people living in those areas were too poor to seek out medical treatment or lived too far from a hospital, he adds.

The samples he and the other Predict teams collect are meant to plug some of the gaps in this knowledge.

COVID-19

When COVID-19 appeared, Shi Zhengli, a virologist at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, immediately compared it to the database she had compiled with the 500 new coronaviruses identified by EcoHealth Alliance.

There was a hit. "The new coronavirus matched a sample taken from a horseshoe bat in a cave in Yunnan in 2013," says Daszak. "It was 96.2 percent identical."

That means the virus was either the ancestor of the virus causing the current epidemic or a close relative. "It is highly likely that an intermediate animal host was involved and transmitted the virus to humans, accounting for the 3.8 percent difference in genome," he says.

Knowing where a new virus came from and how it was transmitted to humans is a crucial piece of information. It can enable early detection of an epidemic and a timely introduction of measures to contain its spread, says Watcharapruksadee.

In the case of COVID-19, knowing where it originated will help scientists understand how it mutated to become infectious to humans and hopefully prevent future outbreaks, said Daszak.

There is a precedent. In January 2019, Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and EcoHealth Alliance announced they had found a bat in Liberia carrying the Zaire strain of Ebola, which caused the 2013-16 outbreak in West-Africa, meaning they had found the probable source of the epidemic which caused over 11,000 deaths.

The next big thing

Beyond providing insight into the origins of Covid-19 and Ebola, virus hunters also help to predict where the next big epidemic will emerge -- and hope to prevent it. By detailing where the viruses posing the biggest risks to humans lurk, they can map their progression and minimize transmissions, the thinking goes.

"Our team of virologists use the samples collected in the field to determine which viruses are most likely to spill over to humans and classify them according to their risk profile," says Murray.

Coronaviruses closely affiliated to SARS or MERS are especially dangerous, because they are capable of jumping to humans. "We found 50 new pathogens related to SARS alone during the course of our research," says Daszak. "It would make sense to focus our prevention efforts on these high-risk viruses."

In one cave, his team identified all the building needed to make SARS.

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If they combined, the resulting virus would be capable of direct transmission to humans, without the need for an intermediate host, according to a paper published in PLoS Pathogens.

There are a range of preventative measures which can be taken to prevent that happening. Community education in areas with a high prevalence of dangerous viruses is especially important. "In some parts of Kenya, we have been teaching people to plug holes in their roofs to prevent bats from entering or teaching them to boil camel's milk before drinking it to kill off the pathogens," says Zimmerman.

EcoHealth Alliance has also been raising awareness about the risks of trafficking species like pangolins, which can harbor viruses, and educating locals about the need to avoid fruits a bat might have bitten into.

Bats and other wildlife are also sometimes fitted with trackers to understand patterns of transmission by analyzing their movements and how often they come into contact with livestock and humans, she adds.

The local capabilities built by Predict's teams could also play a crucial role in preventing the spread of an epidemic. "The labs we work with on the ground now all know how to identify a new pathogen," explains Zimmerman. Predict has built or reinforced about 60 labs in Asia and Africa.

This knowledge could be used to develop a vaccine or a treatment against a new pathogen.

"The blood samples taken from the bats contain antibodies, which they produced to fight off the virus," says Wang. "These could serve as the basis for the development of a vaccine or a plasma treatment against a new pathogen."

Just before the pandemic hit, the future of Predict was looking uncertain, as its funding was set to expire at the end of March 2020.

But Covid-19 has shown how essential the virus hunters' work is and it has now received a six-month extension worth \$2.26 million, according to a press release by UC Davis.

While virus hunters have had to hang up their hazmat suits and cancel their sampling expeditions, they are providing emergency support to test for Covid-19 cases in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, as well as helping shape public health responses to the pandemic in those countries, according to a notice by UC Davis.

"We hope to get back out there again as soon as possible," says Daszak. "And then we will focus all our efforts on finding out where exactly Covid-19 came from."

COVID calm reveals flourishing Venice Lagoon ecosystem

“Most likely these few months of lockdown won’t suffice to really change the quality of our ecosystem.

Published 7 hours ago
on April 28, 2020 12:20 AM
By [Agence France-Presse](#)



AFP Photo.

VENICE, Italy (AFP) — “The flora and fauna of the lagoon have not changed during lockdown. What has changed is our chance to see them,” says zoologist Andrea Mangoni, plunging his camera into Venice’s normally murky waters to observe life.

A crab tries to grab the intruding lens, jellyfish propel themselves along near the surface, schools of fish swim peacefully by, crustaceans cling to the city’s famous jetties and seaweed of every color wafts gently on the current.

The coronavirus has emptied Venice of millions of tourists since the beginning of March and its waters are no longer stirred by the thousands of boats, taxis, vaporetti and gondolas that usually cross it.

For Mangoni, this is an opportunity to rediscover the very diverse ecosystem that populates the Venice Lagoon. His film of a jellyfish swimming slowly through translucent canal water has gone viral on social media.

“Now we can see 50 or 60 centimeters, and sometimes even a meter from the surface. As a result, we can see animals that were literally hidden in the murky waters.” Mangoni says he has never seen such clear waters in the 20 years he has worked in Venice.

“The only difference is that some animals that before were relegated to bigger or wider canals in the lagoon, can now go as far as in the city center since the traffic of gondolas, motorboats and smaller boats has ceased,” he said.

Urban jelly fish

Marco Sigovini, researcher at the Institute of Marine Sciences of Venice (ISMAR-CNR), says he has seen marine species in the center of the former city state for the first time.

“Fauna and flora of Venice Lagoon are much more diversified and interesting than what one might think,” he said.

COVID calm reveals flourishing Venice Lagoon

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“What decreased in the city is not only traffic with pollution produced by boats, but also the noise, which is another kind of pollution and disturbs many lagoon organisms.”

Nevertheless, he is not surprised at how many jellyfish are being observed.

“Over the last 20 to 30 years, jellyfish have increased in numbers generally. They come into the lagoon more and more frequently, particularly at certain times of the year, perhaps carried by the current,” he said.

“Normally, there’s a lot of traffic, so it’s likely many of them are often killed.”

Mangoni takes pictures and videos on his way to work and says life in Venice these days is “like being on a coral reef.”

“The number of colors and life-forms is extraordinary, which makes the lagoon unique,” he said.

But Sigovini does not think much will change long-term for Venetian fauna.

“Most likely these few months of lockdown won’t suffice to really change the quality of our ecosystem,” he said.

Rhino poaching in Africa continues despite suspension

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Rhino poaching in Africa continues despite suspension of wildlife safaris

By [Kathreena Gabaldon](#)

April 27th, 2020

Just like elephants, rhinoceros are classified as the “umbrella” species which makes them crucial to the environment. However, the conservation status of rhinos has been threatened again because of the continuous illegal wildlife trade in some countries.

If these animals become extinct, the biological community will experience drastic changes— affecting other species in the ecosystem. The importance of Rhinos also impacts the economic growth and development of the tourism sector which basically creates job opportunities for many locals. In 2015, there is a [prediction](#) that African rhinos might probably face extinction by the year 2020 since its “conservation status is endangered.”

This begs to question: has the 2015 prediction already happened?

Recently, the [Daily Mail](#) reported that the poaching of wild animals (including rhinos and elephants) continues in spite of this ongoing health pandemic. In fact, it was reported that there were at least six rhinos killed in Southern Africa. This is surprising since the region’s tourism industry was suspended and entering the country is strictly prohibited for non-citizens.

This also means that non-profit groups outside Africa—whose mission is to stop poaching—won’t be able to monitor these illegal activities.

However, not all these cases go unpunished as security units in Botswana apprehended and supposedly killed five suspected poachers this month.



Rhino poaching in Africa continues despite suspension

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Why does poaching continue to happen?

Although many jobs in Africa rely on national parks, a lot of people still participate in domestic poaching as it pays more and allows them to better provide their families.

Moreover, the founder of a nonprofit organization called Rhino Conservation Botswana told CNBC that these illegal activities because it's convenient and beneficial to their personal agendas. "The poachers have been emboldened because the playing field is in their favor and they won't have as many problems moving around."



via Unsplash

In simple ways, we can inform others about the threats that rhinos are facing by spreading the word on social media. Let's do our part in helping save these animals!

Source: <https://pop.inquirer.net/92773/rhino-poaching-in-africa-continues-despite-suspension-of-wildlife-safaris#ixzz6KqwER900>