



CV mining firms extend assistance to communities affected by pandemic

By: Irene R. Sino Cruz - CDN Digital Correspondent | April 28, 2020 - 08:54 PM

<https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/306161/cv-mining-firms-extend-assistance-to-communities-affected-by-pandemic>

CEBU CITY, Philippines — Mining companies in Central Visayas have extended assistance to communities affected by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) using the 2019 unspent Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) funds.

The SDMP funds amounting to P21 million was realigned after the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) issued a memorandum on April 1, 2020, which authorized regional directors to approve this action.

The decision was made to allow the mining companies to support affected impact and non-impact communities from the pandemic, according to a press release from the MGB-7.

The Community Development Program (CDP) can also be realigned following the same guidelines.

Carmen Copper Corporation (CCC) in Toledo City, Cebu realigned its SDMP funds to purchase food packs for the households in its host and neighboring communities. The company allotted P16 million for the 8,000 households in 17 barangays in Toledo City. The beneficiaries include households with persons with disabilities, wage earners, and frontliners.

“A lot of changes have already occurred. As we move forward, there will be changes in the manner we do things. But there is one thing constant, the imperative of unity. This is the time to be one. This cannot be won by a single individual,” CCC president and chief executive officer Roy Deveratura said.

Meanwhile, the Solid Earth Development Corporation (SEDC) in San Fernando, Cebu also allocated more than P400,000 from its SDMP funds to purchase food packs for distribution to various households and frontliners in 13 barangays of San Fernando and its neighboring town of Pinamungajan.

The company, which is functioning on a skeleton workforce, also provided personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectants, transportation and accommodation for its working employees.

On the other hand, JLR Construction and Aggregates Inc. spent almost P2.7 million in assistance to households and displaced workers from Minglanilla, Naga City, Talisay City and Mandaue City.

In Bohol province, Bohol Limestone Corporation has set aside P1 million for food packs to be given to more than 6,000 households in Garcia-Hernandez town.

According to MGB-7 director Loreto Alburo, the unused SDMP funds must be used first before the mining firms could use their 2020 funds.

“Subject to the approval of the MGB regional director, the 2020 Annual SDMP budget can be realigned with the utilization of 12 to 17 percent every week,” Alburo said.

Part of the SDMP are programs for the development of the companies’ host and neighboring communities, which are now suffering socioeconomic effects because of COVID-19, he explained.

“I’m thankful for the initiatives and efforts of the mining companies in helping the communities and protecting their employees through preventive measures to survive this crisis,” Alburo added.

The MGB-7 reminded mining companies to include required documents in their quarterly accomplishment report on the utilization of realigned SDMP funds. These documents include official receipts and proof of purchase of food and medical supplies./rcg



Mining firms pool funds to help host communities

[Michelle L. Palaubsanon](#) (The Freeman) - April 29, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/cebu-news/2020/04/29/2010623/mining-firms-pool-funds-help-host-communities>

CEBU, Philippines — At least P21 million funds from various mining companies in Central Visayas has been pooled to help their host communities cushion the impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Environmental Management Bureau-7 announced that the amount was realigned from the Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) funds of all mining companies operating in the region.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) issued on April 1, 2020 the guidelines for the realignment of unspent SDMP funds last year and authorized all its regional offices to approve SDMP fund realignments for programs, projects, and activities that can help combat the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 in the affected communities.

It likewise authorized the realignment of Community Development Program (CDP) following the same guidelines.

In response, Carmen Copper Corporation (CCC) in Toledo City realigned a total of P16M of SDMP funds. The money was used to buy food packs that were distributed to the households within its host community and neighboring areas.

“A lot of changes have already occurred. As we move forward, there will be changes in the manner we do things. But there is one thing constant, the imperative of unity. This is the time to be one. This cannot be won by a single individual,” CCC President and CEO Roy Deveratura said in a statement.

Solid Earth Development Corporation (SEDC) in San Fernando, Cebu also allotted more than P400,000 from its SDMP fund to provide food packs to various households and frontliners in 13 barangays of the town and its neighboring town of Pinamungajan.

The company also provided personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectants, transportation and accommodation to its skeletal working force.

Bohol Limestone Corporation has also set aside P1 million to provide food packs to more than 6,000 households in Garcia-Hernandez town.

According to MGB-7 Director Loreto Alburo, the unused SDMP funds from last year must be utilized first before the utilization of the 2020 funds.

“Subject to the approval of the MGB regional director, the 2020 Annual SDMP budget can be realigned with the utilization of 12 to 17 percent every week,” Alburo said.

Part of SDMP, he said, are programs for the development of the companies’ host and neighboring communities which are now suffering socioeconomic effects because of COVID-19.

“I’m thankful for the initiatives and efforts of the mining companies in helping the communities and protecting their employees through preventive measures to survive this crisis,” Alburo added.

For proper accounting, the companies must include all necessary documents on the utilization of realigned SDMP funds such as official receipts and proof of purchase of food and medical supplies in the quarterly accomplishment report to be submitted by the mining contractors.-- **FPL (FREEMAN)**



Environmental healing lies on changed practices based on ‘new normal’ — advocate

By [Danielle Nakpil, CNN Philippines](#)

Published Apr 28, 2020 11:46:48 PM

https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/28/Environmental-healing-changed-practices-Antoinette-Taus.html???&fbclid=IwAR18V3mSx31m_GNb05YVxRU6FFZzsvIPfrSCX2DEa5iPor1_5IPkqwbTf2w

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 28) — The planet has started to heal because of the economic changes that took place beginning at the outbreak of the coronavirus disease. However, continuous environmental healing highly depends on how countries will adapt their practices according to the new normal.

This is what United Nations Environment Programme Goodwill Ambassador Antoinette Taus said in her interview with CNN Philippines on Tuesday night.

She further emphasized the importance of changing personal and business practices permanently in order to continue environmental healing.

“At the moment, the environment is healing. But it is not something that will continue if we do not actually change our ways permanently, if we do not do business unusual. If we do not transition to the new normal.”

Taus also stressed that losing lives amid the pandemic is not something to celebrate even though it has caused the earth to heal.

“Saving the planet doesn’t have to cost lives. The planet may seem to be healing right now. It is not a cause for celebration, because losing lives doesn’t have to happen in order to save the planet,” she said.

According to the UN environment ambassador, history has shown that greenhouse gas emission becomes worse every time the economy starts rising again. This is called “revenge pollution,” Taus explained.

“History has shown that every single time that there has been a drop in the economy, greenhouse gas emissions also go down. And sadly, history has also shown that every single time that the economy has recovered, greenhouse gas emissions get worse. This is something environmental scientists are afraid of right now.”

She added that proper disposal of medical wastes is of high concern at the moment.

“When there’s a global pandemic, our main priority is first and foremost, health and safety. But that doesn’t mean us being irresponsible. When we speak of safety and health, it also means disposing of wastes properly,” Taus said.



HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE AT CHLOROQUINE DELIKADO

April 28, 2020 @ 2:40 PM

<https://remate.ph/hydroxychloroquine-at-chloroquine-delikado/>

MAHIGIT 3 milyon na ang kinapitan ng Corona Virus Disease-19 sa buong mundo, mahigit sa 212,000 ang namatay, at kulang-kulang sa 1 milyon naman ang gumaling habang tinitipa ito.

Ang United States of America pa lang ang may mahigit sa 1 milyong kinapitan o naimpeksyon na may patay na ring mahigit sa 56,000 habang 6 bansa na kinabibilangan ng Spain, Italy, France, Germany, United Kingdom at Turkey ang may pinagsama-samang mahigit ding isang milyong naimpeksyon at mahigit sa 100,000 patay.

Ang natitirang 1 milyong sinalakay ng sakit ay pinaghahati-hatian na ng ibang mga bansa, kasama na ang Pilipinas na may 7,777 naimpeksyon at 511 patay.

Nangunguna sa South East Asia ang Singapore na may 14,423 ngunit may 14 patay lamang, pangalawa ang South Korea na may 10,752 at 244 patay, at sumunod na rito ang Indonesia na may 9,096 naimpeksyon at 765 patay, Pilipinas, Bangladesh na may 5,913 naimpeksyon at 152 patay at Malaysia na may 5,820 naimpeksyon at 99 patay.

Ang China na pinagmulan ng pandemya ay pang-10 na lamang sa mga nangungunang bansa na pinakamalaking impeksyon sa bilang na China (mainland) 82,836 naimpeksyon at 4,633 patay.

Naging pandemya ang COVID-19 nang salakayin nito ang 210 bansa, kasama na ang mahigit 10 na tinatawag na teritoryo ng ibang bansa.

'YANG CHLOROQUINE AT HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE

Ang paghahanap o paggawa ng sakto o epektibong gamot laban sa COVID-19 ay lubhang kailangan sa laki ng perhuwisyo na dulot ng sakit na ito.

Kaugnay nito, idineklara ni American President Donald Trump na meron nang ganitong uri ng gamot at tinawag pa nga nitong game changer ang gamot na mga hydroxychloroquine at chloroquine na matagal nang ginagamit laban sa malaria.

'Yun bang === talo tiyak ang Covid-19 sa mga nasabing gamot.

At dahil naman dito, biglang lumobo ang produksyon, paggamit at presyo ng mga gamot na ito.

Pero bigla ring nagbabala ang US Federal Drugs Administration na delikado ang mga gamot na ito makaraang sabihin ng European Union drug regulator na dapat bantayan nang husto ng mga doktor at iba pang medical professional ang mga pasyente at mga gamot na ito na may masamang "side effects."

Bilang batayan ng US FDA na rin, napatunayan nang delikado ang mga nasabing gamot sa kanilang veterans hospital dahil nagdudulot ang mga ito ng sobrang pagpintig ng puso na nakamamatay naman.



HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE AT CHLOROQUINE DELIKADO

Kaya sinasabi ng US FDA na dapat sa mga kasong emergency lamang ginagamit ang mga ito at kung gagamitin man sa ibang kalagayan, dapat sa mga ospital at clinical trial lamang upang mabantayan ang mga pasyente na maaaring magkaroon ng kumplikasyon na nakamamamatay.

'Yung bang === hindi pupwedeng gamitin ang hydroxychloroquine at chloroquine sa mga outpatient at ireseta na lamang at bahala na ang mga pasyente na uminom o mag-iniksiyon ng sarili, kung may likidong anyo ang mga gamot na ito.

PAGSALI SA CLINICAL TRIAL

Kung matatandaan natin, sumama ang Pilipinas sa maraming bansa na magsagawa ng mga clinical trial gamit ang ilang gamot na sinasabi ng ibang mga bansa na epektibo laban sa COVID-19.

At isa ang hydroxychloroquine sa mga gamot na pupwedeng itesting sa mga pasyenteng may COVID-19 sa Pilipinas sa clinical trial na gagawin sa mahal kong Pinas.

Gagawin ang clinical trial sa mismong mga pasyente at hindi sa hayop para masubukan ang epekto ng nasabing mga gamot sa pinakamadaling panahon.

Wala kasing nakaaalam kung kailan magwawakas ang salot na COVID-19 na hindi lang pumapatay ng libo-libong tao araw-araw kundi sumisira na rin sa ekonomiya ng buong mundo na nagbubunga na ng malawakan at maramihang paghihirap at kagutuman at pagbagsak ng mga negosyo at hanapbuhay at pagkaparalisa ng mga pamahalaan.

Pero sa pagsali, nariryan ang mahigpit na pagbantay sa lahat ng hakbang mula sa pagsusuri ng pasyente hanggang sa paggamit ng mga gamot at pagpayag mismo ng mga pasyente.

Mahalagang sangkap ang pagpayag ng pasyente dahil hindi pupwedeng ipilit na gamitin ang mga gamot, maging ang pagsasalin ng dugo na tinatawag na convalescent plasma therapy kung wala ang nasabing pahintulot.

Sana, sa pagmamadali ng lahat na matalo na sa giyera ang COVID-19, masunod nang husto ang lahat ng hakbang para maingatan ang kalusugan at buhay ng mga pasyente na sasali sa mga clinical trial.

Good luck sa lahat at sana, hindi kamatayan kundi paggaling o recovery ang ating maibabalita sa mga susunod na araw.

Sana makamit natin ang ilang araw nang zero death na rekord sa Wuhan City, Hubei, China na itinuring na pinagmulan ng COVID-19.



SM Cares celebrates Earth Day 2020

By [The Manila Times](#)

April 29, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/04/29/public-square/sm-cares-celebrates-earth-day-2020/720340/>



IN line with the 50th celebration of Earth Day on April 22, SM Cares has partnered with Earth Day Network Philippines for a social media campaign that aims to promote eco-friendly and sustainable practices among Filipinos.

SM Cares' #LoveEarth campaign is a social media initiative centered around the message of "Healing the Earth," which calls for positive change in behavior and mindset in caring for the environment. The campaign encourages individuals to be more appreciative, mindful and moderate in their consumption of Earth's resources such as food, water and energy; even while staying at home for the period of the

Covid-19 pandemic.

"Through this campaign, we want to encourage everyone to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle and work together toward caring for the only planet that we all call home, even in our own little way," said Liza Silerio, VP of Corporate Compliance of SM Supermalls.

#LoveEarth campaign supports Earth Day Network's recently launched digital campaign Earthrise, a youth-led digital movement whose goal is to mobilize organizations, communities, and individuals all over the world on Earth Day to demand immediate action on climate change from the world's leaders and policy makers.

Earth Day is an annual celebration led by the Earth Day Network that puts the spotlight on issues that are affecting the environment. Earth Day's theme centers on climate action. "The enormous challenge — but also the vast opportunities — of action on climate change have distinguished the issue as the most pressing topic of the 50th anniversary," Earth Day Network says in its website. "Climate change represents the biggest challenge to the future of humanity and the life-support systems that make our world habitable."

The #LoveEarth campaign is just one of the numerous ways that SM is promoting sustainable living among Filipinos, and the company has other programs aimed at helping care for the environment. These are the Regular Trash to Cash Recycling Market that is held every first Friday and Saturday of the month; daily water recycling systems, and environmental campaigns such as the Green Film Festival and Green Retail Agenda, just to name a few.



LG launches new line of commercial air-conditioners designed to combat air pollution

By [Reni Salvador](#)

April 28, 2020

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/04/28/lg-launches-new-line-of-commercial-air-conditioners-designed-to-combat-air-pollution/>

As technology, innovation, and industry continue to grow at a steady pace, companies have set their focus on proactively combatting environmental issues and climate change, both for their customers, as well as their corporate social responsibility. One of the biggest, perhaps most dangerous issue is air pollution. In fact, the European Heart Journal announced 8.8 million annual premature deaths from air pollution. This number is more than 6 million deaths caused by smoking each year.

In May 2018, WHO reported that 9 out of 10 people breathe air containing high levels of pollutants while in January 2019, Unicef announced that over 130,000 children die every year because of air pollution. In particular, Asean member-states, such as Vietnam and Indonesia are suffering from fine dust. According to the “World Air Quality 2018 Report” published by AirVisual, an air quality monitoring web site, Indonesia ranked 10th and Hanoi ranked 12th in the overall global ranking for air pollution in Asean. On the local front, the volcanic particles from Taal Volcano’s recent phreatic explosion have greatly impacted the air quality in Luzon for the worse.

Recognizing the immediate need for clean air, especially in institutions where there’s always large groups of people for long periods of time, LG launches their new air purifying cassettes that have exercised the company’s technological capabilities and enable to filter out the smallest particles among the conventional products in the market. LG’s new air purifying cassettes will be good news not only for hospitals, schools, kindergartens, and nursing facilities for air purification but also for building owners of retail shops and restaurants. LG offers more choices to building owners and consultants with the new 1 Way and 4 Way cassette options, which gives them the versatility to pick based on design or budget considerations.

Both of the new LG cassettes feature the 4-step air purification process: pre-filter, dust electrification, ultrafine dust filter, and deodorization filter. In the first step, the multilayer structure of pre-filter removes the particle, which has 2.5x higher efficiency than general pre-filters. Next up, dust electrification increases the electrostatic force of particles, improving the filter’s collecting efficiency. Third is eliminating even the slightest dust level of PM1.0 ultrafine particles with the ultrafine dust filter. Last, deodorization filter removes odor and harmful gases with high-efficiency gas absorption technology.

To find out more about the new 4 Way cassette, please visit LG’s Global Air Solutions microsite.



IATF-EID endorses reopening of more services under ECQ, GCQ

By Azer Parrocha April 28, 2020, 5:14 pm

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1101240>

MANILA – More services will be allowed to reopen under the prevailing enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) until May 15 and the general community quarantine (GCQ), which will start on May 1.

In a virtual presser on Tuesday, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has recommended a list of sectors that may reopen and those that will remain closed during both the ECQ and the GCQ.

Roque said the IATF's recommendation is still subject to the approval of President Rodrigo Duterte.

He said stringent measures would still be imposed in areas where the ECQ was extended up to May 15 while areas under the GCQ beginning May 1 will have relaxed quarantine measures.

In areas placed under ECQ, the public transportation system remains suspended and only essential businesses and services will be allowed to operate.

On the other hand, the IATF recommended the resumption of public transport "but in reduced capacity" and the 50 percent to 100 percent reopening of select establishments "subject to minimum health standards" in areas under GCQ.

Roque said the GCQ would be relaxed once the rate of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) infection slows down.

The sectors allowed in both ECQ and GCQ:

- agriculture;
- industry (e.g. manufacturing and processing plants and the entire value chain);
- hospitals and medical clinics;
- dental and EENT clinics (with strict health standards);
- retail establishments (e.g. groceries, supermarkets, convenience stores);
- food preparation and water refilling stations;
- logistics service providers (e.g. cargo handling, warehousing, trucking);
- delivery services;
- banks and capital markets;
- power, energy, water, IT, and telecommunications supplies and facilities;
- electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply;
- postal and courier activities;
- water collection;
- waste collection;
- sewerage (except emptying of septic tanks);
- veterinary activities;
- repair and installation of machinery and equipment;
- repair of computers and personal and household goods;
- service to buildings and landscape activities (except landscape care);
- employment activities;
- security and investigation activities;
- programming and broadcasting activities;
- rental leasing activities (except for entertainment/mass gathering purposes);
- accommodation (used as quarantine facilities for OFWs and workers of essential industries);
- services to buildings and landscape activities;
- extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas;
- gasoline stations;
- laundry shops (including self-service);
- funeral services;
- export companies (with temporary accommodation and shuttle services; work from home);
- business process outsourcing companies (with temporary accommodation and shuttle services; WFH); and
- mining and quarrying



IATF-EID endorses reopening of more services under ECQ, GCQ

Sectors allowed during GCQ only:

- other manufacturing activities (e.g. beverages, cement and steel, electrical machinery);
- malls and commercial centers (e.g. hardware stores, clothing and accessories, and non-leisure stores);
- barbershops, salon, spas, and other personal care industries (with strict health standards);
- wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles;
- construction and Build, Build, Build;
- forestry and logging;
- publishing activities;
- motion picture, video, and television program production, sound recording, and music publishing activities;
- advertising and market research;
- real estate activities (except real estate buying and selling);
- office administrative, office support, and other business activities;
- legal and accounting;
- insurance, reinsurance, and pension funding, except compulsory social security;
- architecture and engineering activities, technical testing and analysis;
- scientific and research development;
- other professional, scientific, and technical activities;
- social work activities without accommodation; and
- government office-frontline offices

Sectors not allowed in both the GCQ and the ECQ:

- gym/fitness studios and sports facilities;
- entertainment-related mass gatherings (e.g. theaters, cinemas, large concerts);
- business-related mass gatherings (e.g. trade shows, conferences, conventions);
- politically-related mass gatherings (e.g. election rallies, polling centers, parades);
- sports-related mass gatherings (e.g. training, games, tournaments, championships);
- libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural activities;
- gambling and betting activities;
- travel agency, tour operator, reservation service, and related activities; and
- activities of membership organizations

Roque said the IATF approved Resolution 29 revising the list of areas that will remain under ECQ from May 1 to 15.

Among the areas are the National Capital Region, Central Luzon except Aurora province, Calabarzon, Pangasinan, Benguet, Baguio City, Iloilo province, Cebu province, Cebu City, and Davao City, which are considered "high-risk areas".

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

On the last day of the ECQ on May 15, Roque said the IATF would decide whether more areas may be placed under GCQ. **(PNA)**



LIST: Businesses allowed to operate in areas under ECQ and GCQ

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:30 PM April 28, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1266066/list-businesses-allowed-to-operate-in-areas-under-ecq-and-gcq>

MANILA, Philippines — As the government prepares to ease some restrictions in areas that are considered low-risk for the coronavirus transmission, a list of businesses allowed to operate under the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and general community quarantine (GCQ) was released Tuesday.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) recommended the reopening of several sectors in quarantine areas during an earlier meeting with President Rodrigo Duterte, Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in an online press conference.

As presented by the Palace official, the following businesses are allowed to operate in areas under ECQ and GCQ:

- Agriculture and fisheries and the entire value chain including manufacturing of feeds, fertilizers, and pesticides
- Manufacturing and processing plants of basic food products, essential products, medicines, and medical supplies including:
 - All food
 - Essential hygiene products such as soaps, detergents shampoo, conditioners, diapers, feminine hygiene products, tissue, wipes and toilet papers
 - Disinfectants
 - Medicines and vitamins
 - Medical products such as PPEs, masks, gloves
 - Pet food
- Hospitals and medical clinics
- Dental and EENT clinics (with strict health standards)
- Retail establishments (groceries, supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores, public markets, pharmacies, and drug stores)
- Food preparations and water refilling stations
- Logistics service providers (cargo handling, warehousing, trucking, freight forwarding, and shipping line)
- Delivery services, whether or not e-commerce platform, in-house or outsourced, transporting only food, water, medicine, pet food, hardware products or other basic necessities
- Banks and capital markets, per section 5 of IATF Resolution No. 13 dated March 17, 2020
- Power, energy, water, IT and telecommunications supplies and facilities, waste disposal services and technical services to above utilities
- Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply
- Postal and courier activities
- Water collection, treatment, and supply
- Waste collection, treatment, and disposal activities (except materials recovery – junk shop)
- Sewerage (except emptying of septic tanks)
- Veterinary activities
- Repair and installation of machinery and equipment
- Repair of computers and personal household goods
- Services to buildings and landscape activities (except landscape care)
- Employment activities (manpower services for essential activities)
- Security and investigation activities
- Programming and broadcasting activities
- Rental and leasing activities (except for entertainment and mass gathering purposes)
- Accommodations used as quarantine facilities for OFW and overseas Filipinos, as well as temporary accommodation for essential industries such as healthcare facilities, banks, BPOs, exporters and other frontline service sectors
- Services to buildings and landscape activities
- Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas



LIST: Businesses allowed to operate in areas under ECQ and GCQ

- Gasoline stations
- Laundry shops (including self-service)
- Funeral services
- Export companies (with temporary accommodation and shuttle services)
- Business process outsourcing companies (with temporary accommodation and shuttle services, work from home)
- Mining and quarrying

According to Roque, DTI also recommended the resumption of certain businesses in areas under GCQ but will remain prohibited in areas under ECQ. The said businesses are the following:

- Other manufacturing activities:
 - Beverages
 - Cement and steel
 - Electrical machinery
 - Wood products, furniture
 - Non-metallic products
 - Textile/wearing apparels
 - Tobacco products
 - Paper and paper products
 - Rubber and plastic products
 - Coke and refined petroleum products
 - Other non-metallic mineral products
 - Computer, electronic and optical products
 - Electrical equipment
 - Machinery and equipment
 - Motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers
 - Other transport equipment
- Malls and commercial centers (including hardware stores, clothing, and accessories and non-leisure stores)
- Barbershops, salons, spas, and other personal care industries (with strict health standards)
- Wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- Construction and Build, Build, Build
- Forestry and logging
- Publishing activities
- Motion picture, video and television program production, sound recording and music publishing activities
- Advertising and market research
- Real estate activities (except real estate buying and selling)
- Office administrative, office support and other business activities
- Legal and accounting
- Insurance, reinsurance, and pension funding except for compulsory social security
- Architecture and engineering activities, technical testing analysis
- Scientific and research development
- Other professional, scientific and technical activities
- Social work activities without accommodation
- Government office (frontline offices)



Gov't lists sectors still not allowed under GCQ

By Kris Crismundo **April 28, 2020, 7:17 pm**
DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1101293>

MANILA – As some parts of the country will ease the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) after April 30, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has identified sectors that will remain closed under general community quarantine (GCQ).

During the Online Talakayan of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and Local Government Academy (LGA) Tuesday, DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez said gyms, fitness studios, and sports facilities will not be allowed during GCQ.

Lopez cited that the government will still prohibit entertainment-related mass gatherings, including but not limited to theaters, cinemas, large concerts, festivals, carnivals, conventions, shows, pubs, and bars as well as business-related mass gatherings such as trade shows, conferences, conventions, workshops, and retreats.

Establishments with gambling and betting activities shall remain closed even after the ECQ will be lifted in some areas in the country at the end of the month.

Services catering to the tourism sector including travel agencies, tour operators, reservation services, and related services will still not be allowed to operate, Lopez said.

The DTI chief clarified that hotels are allowed to operate but not for tourism purposes.

“Also hotels [are] allowed but for the special purpose of providing accommodations for workers [of] BPOs (business process outsourcing), exporters, banks, etc. At any rate, [we] expected that travel tourism will still be very weak,” he told reporters in a Viber message.

Moreover, libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural activities are still closed during the GCQ.

The government also identified mass gathering events that will remain prohibited during GCQ, which include politically-related mass gatherings like election rallies, polling centers, parades, speeches, and addresses.

Sports-related mass gatherings such as training, games, tournaments, and championships will not yet resume even after the ECQ will be lifted.

Activities of member organizations are still not allowed in areas under GCQ.

Meanwhile, as the government eases the quarantine measures in some areas, Lopez said manufacturing activities that were closed during ECQ can return to their operation starting May 1.

However, firms shall implement minimum health standards like physical distancing in the work area, wearing face masks, and providing alcohol and sanitizers.

Malls will be allowed to open except for non-leisure stores, Lopez said.

Services such as barbershops, salons, spas, and other personal care industries can resume their operation but must maintain strict health standards.

Other sectors that were forced to close during ECQ but will be allowed to operate under GCQ include wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, forestry and logging, publishing activities, motion picture, video and television program production, sound recording and music publishing activities, and advertising and market research.

The government also eyes to resume construction activities, particularly for its ‘Build, Build, Build’ program.

In the same virtual briefing, acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and National Economic and Development Authority Director General Karl Kendrick Chua said the Inter-Agency Task Force will give special analysis on the reopening of the construction sector and malls.

One of the key points that Chua cited is the risk of virus transmission once activities in the construction sector resume as most of the workers are migrants.

But he said it is an opportune time to roll out these projects to speed up the ‘Build, Build, Build’ program. **(PNA)**



Philippines revises list of areas under ECQ from May 1 to 15

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By VIRGIL LOPEZ, GMA News

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/735883/gov-t-revises-list-of-areas-under-ecq-from-may-1-to-15/story/>

The government has revised the list of areas that will remain under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) from May 1 to 15, Malacañang said Tuesday.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque released the list following a meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases on Monday.

Areas under ECQ:

- National Capital Region
- Central Luzon except Aurora
- CALABARZON
- Pangasinan
- Benguet
- Baguio City
- Iloilo province
- Cebu province
- Cebu City
- Davao City

The IATF said the rest of the country will be under a general community quarantine provided that “minimum health standards are achieved and continuously observed.”

GCQ in low-risk areas may be lifted after May 15 should no deterioration in their risk level occur, according to the task force.

Last week, the IATF included Antique, Aklan, Capiz, Davao del Norte and Davao de Oro in the list of ECQ areas subject to reassessment by the body.

For GCQ areas, public transportation would resume at reduced capacity, some workers would be allowed to work, and some establishments would partially open but subject to minimum health standards.

However, areas with a high risk of COVID-19 transmissions such as Metro Manila and Central Luzon would remain under strict confinement measures until May 15 under the ECQ.

Beginning May 16, only the IATF should make decisions whether to impose, lift, or extend community quarantine in provinces, highly urbanized cities (HUCs) and independent component cities (ICCs).

“This notwithstanding, provincial governors shall be authorized to impose enhanced community quarantine in component cities, municipalities and barangays upon the concurrence of their respective regional inter-agency task groups,” the IATF said.

“Chief executives of HUCs and ICCs are likewise authorized to impose enhanced community quarantine in barangays upon the concurrence of their respective regional inter-agency task groups. No LGU [local government unit] shall declare their own community quarantine regardless of nomenclature without observing the foregoing procedure.” --**KBK, GMA News**



Lawmakers file bill on ‘new normal’

[Edu Punay](#) (The Philippine Star
) - April 29, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/29/2010534/lawmakers-file-bill-new-normal>

MANILA, Philippines — House leaders yesterday filed a bill that would institutionalize new norms of physical distancing in public places and other safety measures such as wearing of face masks after the lifting of the enhanced community quarantine and resumption of businesses.

House Bill 6623 or the proposed New Normal for the Workplace and Public Spaces Act of 2020 sets protocols to be implemented once social and economic activities resume.

The proponents of the measure are Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano; Deputy Speakers LRay Villafuerte, Paolo Duterte and Loren Legarda; Majority Leader Martin Romualdez and committee heads Eric Yap of the appropriations, Jose Antonio Alvarado of good government and Mike Defensor of public accounts.

The bill prescribes new norms of physical distancing and safety measures in government and private offices, schools, commercial establishments and other public spaces to prevent the transmission of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The measure seeks the mandatory wearing of face masks, availability of handwashing or sanitizing stations in public areas, temperature checks and physical distancing of at least one meter in all public spaces.

Physical distancing will apply during queueing for tickets and in the interiors of public utility vehicles (PUVs). Contactless payment scheme will be implemented and passengers will be required to wash their hands or sanitize before boarding PUVs.

The operations of motorcycle taxis will remain suspended to curb the spread of the virus through the use of common helmets and close contact between driver and passenger.

For schools and other learning institutions, on-site classes, sports and other extracurricular activities will remain suspended subject to consultations with the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education.

Online learning platforms will, in the meantime, be the primary mode of learning for students in public and private schools.

Once on-site classes resume, the number of classes should be reduced and staggered days should be implemented to enable students and teachers to comply with physical distancing and other safety measures.

Under the measure, restaurants and other food businesses may resume operations under a new normal, but only for take-out and delivery.



Lawmakers file bill on ‘new normal’

Buffets and salad bars would be prohibited once dine-in services are gradually introduced. Two-meter distancing between diners should be strictly followed and disposable or non-shareable menu booklets and cutlery should be used.

As for banks, supermarkets, malls and commercial spaces, the entry of people will be limited and online transactions and shopping services as well as cashless and contactless payments should be encouraged.

Salons, parlors and spas – once allowed to reopen – would be required to strictly observe frequent handwashing, disinfecting and cleaning practices, including the sanitizing of scissors and other tools.

Applicable safety and distancing measures should also be applied at construction sites, industrial workplaces, offices, call centers and other public spaces.

The bill seeks to impose fines and prison terms on violators.

Villafuerte said these new normal measures would be in place for three years or less while COVID-19 remains a global health crisis.

On Monday, Malacañang encouraged businesses to have their employees tested for the virus and to disinfect their stores before resuming operations.

Some businesses will be allowed to resume operations in areas under general community quarantine, but are still required to observe social distancing and other health measures.

Meanwhile, workers will not be stopped from mounting protests on Labor Day despite the Luzon-wide lockdowns.

Julius Cainglet, vice president of the Federation of Free Workers, said labor unions would stage protests through social media on May 1.

“This will be first time to be done in the country. We will be mounting online mobilization to mark Labor Day,” Cainglet said. “Workers from different parts of the country can join the protests through Facebook, Zoom and other social media platforms.” – With Alexis Romero, Mayen Jaymalin



House Speaker, solons file 'new normal' bill

By Xianne Arcangel, CNN Philippines

Published Apr 28, 2020 10:25:18 AM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/28/House-bill-new-normal-coronavirus-COVID-19.html>



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 28) — What will be the "new normal" in the Philippines as the threat of COVID-19 persists?

For Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano and seven other House leaders, it will involve the mandatory wearing of face masks in public places and observing physical distancing. There will also be drastic changes in how people work and move.

Cayetano and his colleagues on Monday filed House Bill 6623 or the proposed "New Normal for the Workplace and Public Spaces Act," which seeks to institutionalize a new way of life amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the bill, persons who fail to wear a mask in public will be fined P1,000.

There should also be a distance of at least one meter between persons in all public places. The operation of motorcycle taxis will remain suspended since the rider and passenger are too close to each other.

Passengers in other forms of public transportation should be seated one seat apart from each other and be made to pay through "contact-less" methods.

The bill also proposes the suspension of classes and other school activities until further notice, though without prejudice to the academic freedom and levels of autonomy enjoyed by institutions of higher learning.

However, both private and public schools should come up with online platforms to allow students to learn online.

The bill also requires malls and other commercial establishments to limit the number of people inside their premises. Restaurants can no longer offer buffets or salad bars. Their menu booklets should also be disposable.

HB 6623 also requires all private businesses to come up with a management plan for the "new normal." This should contain, among others, the total number of employees allowed to work inside the office and the overall strategy for reporting of the workforce.

Private employers should also state their plans for managing employees who exhibit symptoms and/or confirmed to have tested for COVID-19.

Gatherings in government-managed public spaces as well as privately-managed spaces will be highly regulated. Privately-organized gatherings may be dispersed by the local government if it is established that the persons involved are not following mandatory safety measures, including social distancing and wearing of face masks.

The bill also orders the Philippine Statistics Authority to fast-track the implementation of the national ID system. The Department of Information and Communications Technology should also expedite the rollout of the national broadband program.

Other government agencies will also be required to create online platforms so the public can do their transactions on the internet.

If passed into law, HB 6623 will be effective for three years or shorter if the national government declares that the threat of COVID-19 has been eradicated.

Joining Cayetano as co-authors of the bill are Deputy Speaker Luis Raymund Villafuerte, Loren Legarda and Paolo Duterte, House Majority Leader Martin Romualdez, ACT-CIS party-list Rep. Eric Yap, Anakalusugan party-list Rep. Mike Defensor and Bulacan Rep. Jonathan Sy-Alvarado.



DOH: Wearing of face masks will always be part of 'new normal' to defeat COVID-19

Published April 28, 2020 11:27am

By DONA MAGSINO, GMA News

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/735867/doh-wearing-of-face-masks-will-always-be-part-of-new-normal-to-defeat-covid-19/story/>

Wearing face masks outdoors, regardless of what type of community quarantine protocols are in place, will always be part of the new normal in the Philippines as the fight against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues, according to the Department of Health (DOH) on Tuesday.

"Itong pagsusuot ng mask ay hindi na mawawala sa ating mga patakaran. We are going into this new normal already kung saan whatever state of quarantine your area is in, ang mask ay palagi nang andiyan," Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said in a virtual conference.

"It's part of the new normal. Masks will always be part of our protocol," she added.

She made the reminder as some areas outside Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, and other high-risk provinces are scheduled to enter a relaxed general community quarantine starting May 1.

Vergeire said wearing of face masks, as well as regular handwashing, cough etiquette, and physical distancing must be imbibed among the public.

Before COVID-19 became a global pandemic, the World Health Organization in January said that [people who do not exhibit flu-like symptoms do not need to wear face masks](#).

More than two months later, the Philippine government [mandated residents in areas covered by the enhanced community quarantine to wear face masks](#) in public spaces to help slow the spread of the virus.

[Improvised face masks](#) may be used by individuals who are not inside health care facilities to ensure that supplies of surgical and N95 masks will not run out for the medical workers who have higher risks of being exposed to the novel coronavirus.



Duterte: P10B realigned from 2019, 2020 budgets for COVID response

By Jocelyn Montemayor

April 28, 2020

https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news_news/duterte-p10b-realigned-from-2019-2020-budgets-for-covid-response/

PRESIDENT Duterte on Monday told lawmakers at least P10.441 billion had been realigned or reprogrammed, including more than P8 billion from the 2019 budget, to fund government measures to address the health, social and economic impacts of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis.

In his fifth report to Congress, the President said the amount is on top of the P246.283 billion that was pooled from savings from discontinued programs, activities, and projects and abandoned Special Purpose Funds. Of this, P245.126 billion had already been released as of last week.

Duterte said that as of April 23, P5.065 billion worth of funds sourced from the 2019 and 2020 budgets was realigned to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE); P3.908 billion (2019 and 2020 budgets) reallocated to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); P230.817 million (2019 budget) reprogrammed to the Department of National Defense (DND); and P41.09 million worth of trust receipts reprogrammed to the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Other programmed funds under the 2020 budget were also reallocated to the Department of Health (DOH) (P600 million), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) (P520.6 million), Department of Science and Technology (DOST) (P53.23 million), and Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) (P21.629 million).

To prevent unnecessary expenses while the country battles the infectious virus, Duterte said the DBM has issued a memorandum ordering the observance of austerity measures, including the discontinuance of "at least 10 percent of the total released allotments for Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses and Capital Outlay earmarked for certain items effective 01 April 2020."

UPDATES

The realignment of the budget is in pursuant of Republic Act 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, which empowered the President to realign the current budget for the purpose of addressing the COVID 19 pandemic.

As of April 23, government had already released P196 billion of the P246 billion COVID fund to DSWD, P1.5 billion to DOLE, P30.82 billion to the Bayanihan grant to cities and municipalities, P6.197 billion to the Bayanihan grant to provinces, P1.816 billion to DOH, P8.5 billion to the Department of Agriculture (DA), P93 million to DILG-Philippine National Police, and P150 million to the DND-Armed Forces of the Philippines. ,

The President also said that as of April 24, the government had already distributed more than P33 billion worth of cash aid through different department programs, the biggest of which is the P31.123 billion under the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) of the DSWD, which includes the P5,000 to P8,000 cash aid for low income households, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries and public utility drivers been affected by the Luzon lockdown.

Also included are the more than P2.4 billion distributed by the DOLE for formal and informal sector workers, and overseas Filipino workers; and the P645 million released by the DA to rice farmers.

UNUSED FUNDS

Prior to the release of the report to Congress, Presidential spokesman Harry Roque clarified that the national government only has P77 billion worth of unused funds from the 2019 budget, contrary to the claim of Sen. Panfilo Lacson that there is over P900 billion of available unused budget that can be tapped for COVID programs.

Roque said Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado had told him that the amount is only around P77 billion, and that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is now coordinating with different agencies to determine the exact amount that is available to the national government.

Roque said the DBM would know by April 30 how much more funding it can realign to COVID-19 efforts.



Duterte: P10B realigned from 2019, 2020 budgets for COVID response

“Let me clear it, the total unreleased from the 2019 budget is not P900 billion, it is only P77 billion, and by April 30 we will know how much the uncommitted funds that we can realign from the different agencies and departments,” he said.

Lacson, reacting to Roque’s statement, said: “My reference is always the SAAOB (Statement of Allotments, Obligations and Balances) coming from the DBM. They only have as of Q3 and that’s where I based my data – P989B unused appropriations and that’s for the executive department only. We requested for an updated SAAOB or ending Q4 only this morning. As per DBM, wala pa daw.”

Roque said Avisado also told him that the government had already spent some P350 billion of the close to P400 billion COVID-related funds.

Lacson has questioned Malacañang’s plan to seek a second supplemental budget from Congress, pointing out that it can tap available funds from the 2019 unused funds of different branches of government and constitutional offices which he said could reach P989 billion.

The DBM raised the possible second supplemental budget after President Duterte extended the enhanced community quarantine until May 15 in Metro Manila, CALABARZON and , Central Luzon regions, and in the provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Albay, Catanduanes.

Duterte had 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.”

ADB LOAN

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$200 million loan to support the Philippine government’s efforts to provide emergency cash subsidies to vulnerable households.

“This global pandemic, of a kind not seen in the last century, has disrupted the livelihoods of millions of Filipinos and could set back the very substantial gains the country has made in reducing poverty in recent years,” Ahmed Saeed, ADB vice president, said in a statement.

“The new loan supports the government’s emergency subsidy program, which was designed to help vulnerable households get through this very difficult period and avoid falling into poverty,” he added.

ADB said that its \$200 million loan, under the Social Protection Support Project–Second Additional Financing, will contribute to the \$726 million required to provide emergency subsidies to 4Ps households in April and May 2020.

The loan comes after the signing of the \$1.5 billion loan from the ADB’s COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Program last Thursday.

The multilateral agency said two grants approved in March totaling \$8 million are supporting the delivery of food baskets to at least 140,000 vulnerable households in Metro Manila and nearby provinces, purchase of emergency medical supplies, and setting up of a new laboratory that will increase the country’s COVID-19 testing capacity by 3,000 tests a day.

ADB is also preparing an Expanded Social Assistance Project to support the government’s medium-term financing of the 4Ps program. – **With Raymond Africa and Angela Celis**



First in PH history: Labor Day protest to go online amid COVID-19 pandemic

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lulu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLuluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 08:55 PM April 28, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1266226/first-in-ph-history-labor-day-protest-to-go-online-amid-covid-19-pandemic>

In this May 1, 2017, photo, KMU members gather at Mendiola to protest unfair work practices on Labor Day. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO/ ALEXIS CORPUZ

MANILA, Philippines — The COVID-19 pandemic has surely been changing systems and lifestyles this year, even how activists intend to hold their Labor Day protest.

For the very first time, the usually massive assembly of workers on May 1 will take their demonstration in cyberspace amid the prevailing enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) over Luzon due to the viral outbreak.

Labor groups led by Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and Nagkaisa Labor Coalition said Tuesday that they are already gearing up for the May 1 demonstrations by shifting to an online protest and localized protests, instead of the traditional gathering and march towards the Mendiola Peace Arch.

For this year, the Labor Day theme would focus on the demands for the government to adopt a medical-based solution to the pandemic instead of a militarist stance, as well as the health and financial needs of workers amid the pandemic.

“We can’t emphasize enough the urgency of government to provide immediate relief to all workers. From the President’s report on the 5th week of ECQ, only about 300,000 were given financial aid out of 2million displaced workers,” KMU chairperson Elmer Labog said in a statement.

“This is the first time in history our Labor Day protest will be like this, we are ready to go online! Despite the ECQ we will make sure Duterte hears our battle cry,” Nagkaisa chair and lawyer Sonny Matula added.

The labor groups apparently discussed their movement through an online meeting, in observance of physical distancing measures under ECQ. But they assured that they will still conduct noise barrages in their respective homes so the ECQ’s travel restrictions would not be violated.

According to Nagkaisa Women’s Judy Miranda, the government should adopt measures that would help workers, including the continuation of the COVID-19 Adjustment Measure Program (CAMP) for workers displaced by the lockdown, instead of the Small Business Wage Subsidy (SWBS) program.

Several workers prefer the Department of Labor and Employment’s CAMP as it is more convenient for workers compared to SWBS which requires companies to register first with the Social Security System.

Meanwhile, business process outsourcing (BPO) workers have also slammed DOLE for leaving them to operate on their own.

“We urge the government to strengthen CAMP instead of changing to SBWS. In CAMP, there is flexibility on the part of workers. All you need is an ID and payslip to avail of the financial aid, while in SBWS, your employer has to be compliant first with SSS and BIR. It’s very restrictive” Miranda explained.

“This is a manifestation that our efforts to keep the economy alive means nothing to this government. We are neglected and DOLE has admitted they are not aware of the working conditions of BPO workers” BPO Industry Employees Network (BIEN) president Mylene Cabalona added.

Work for all sectors except those in essential frontline services have been suspended with the ECQ. This has forced workers who rely on daily wages and those whose jobs cannot adjust to a work-from-home scheme without any income through the lockdown.

In the past years, workers from various sectors assembled at different points in Quezon City and Manila, and marched simultaneously towards Mendiola Arch, where a program would be held and effigies would be burned. However, the groups have not yet clarified how these events would translate in an online protest.

As of now, the Department of Health said there are now 7,958 patients infected with the coronavirus nationwide, of which 530 have died and 975 have recovered.

Worldwide, over 3.04 million individuals have been infected, while at least 210,913 have died from the disease and over 889,406 have recovered from it.



‘Balik Probinsiya’ addressing decentralization

Let us work together to assure Filipinos that there is hope of a better tomorrow after COVID-19.

April 29, 2020 02:30 AM

By **MBA**

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/29/balik-probinsiya-addressing-decentralization/>

Addressing livelihood opportunities in the countryside is what Senator Christopher Lawrence Bong Go sees as a major step in encouraging city dwellers and businesses to move to the provinces and decentralize Metro Manila.

Go reiterated his push for a “*Balik Probinsya*” program after the COVID-19 crisis to even out economic development and stimulate additional job creations in different regions of the country.

“When all of this health crisis is over, let us give hope to Filipinos by helping them relocate back to the countryside and start all over,” he said while echoing President Rodrigo Duterte’s sentiments.

“While we are doing our best to overcome this crisis, let us work together to assure Filipinos that there is hope of a better tomorrow after COVID-19. We can do this by providing them opportunities to rebuild their lives in their home provinces,” he added.

Go said that one of the first steps to motivate Filipinos to move back to the provinces is to address the lack of livelihood opportunities in the countryside by providing jobs and boosting rural development. He added that for decades, Filipinos move to Metro Manila to seek opportunities that are lacking in their hometowns.

The Senator lamented the current situation of those from provinces who move to Metro Manila expecting a better future but ending up living in poorer conditions with no choice but to stay just to earn a living. He said that these settlers are faced with more problems as only low-paying jobs are available to them.

“A lot of them has regretted their situation but they don’t have a choice anymore,” Go stressed as he narrated his encounters visiting fire victims in Metro Manila and asking those who would like to go back to their provinces.

City dwellers, he pointed out, are willing to return to their provinces if livelihood opportunities are available.

Go said that as early as now, preparations must be made for the implementation of a “*Balik Probinsya*” program as a tool to empower the countryside, decongest Metro Manila, and address the adverse socio-economic impact caused by COVID-19.

Following Go’s proposal, a virtual meeting was held this Monday with concerned government officials led by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea. Initial plans regarding short-term and long-term goals were discussed.

The Executive Secretary, with the help of the National Housing Authority and the National Economic and Development Authority, will initially lead the planning stages of the “*Balik Probinsiya*” program.

Concerned agencies like the Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture, among others, will also be involved.

The government will initially prepare a plan to assist stranded workers in Metro Manila who wish to return to their home provinces once the enhanced community quarantine is lifted. The possible provision of transportation, food and financial assistance for these beneficiaries are being prepared.

Motivating city dwellers and incentivizing businesses to relocate to the provinces will be the long-term goal. Budgetary needs for existing programs of different agencies that can help promote the “*Balik Probinsya*” initiative will be identified in the planning stages.

Go said he will study possible legislative measures needed to support the “*Balik Probinsya*” initiatives. He further emphasized the need to develop the countryside consistent with the policy direction of President Duterte to create robust economic activities and wealth generation outside Metro Manila or other urban centers.



SC guidelines on ECQ extension

Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta issued Administrative Circular 36-2020 addressed to all litigants, justices, judges and court personnel of the judiciary and members of the Bar.

April 29, 2020 02:20 AM

By **Alvin Murcia**

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/04/29/sc-guidelines-on-ecq-extension/>

The Supreme Court (SC) has issued new guidelines for the judiciary in the light of the extension of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in certain areas until 15 May.

Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta issued Administrative Circular (AC) 36-2020 addressed to all litigants, justices, judges and court personnel of the judiciary and members of the Bar.

Courts in areas placed under general community quarantine (GCQ) from 1 to 15 May, are mandated to operate as follows in the said period:

All branches of courts in the GCQ areas shall be open beginning 4 May 2020, but shall function only with a skeleton-staff to assist the judge, and shall act only on urgent matters.

In exceptional circumstances, judges and court personnel who are more than fifty-nine (59) years of age, and those with medical conditions making them vulnerable to be easily infected by Covid-19, may report to the courts to act on urgent matters. Otherwise, they shall work from their respective residences, e.g., draft orders and decisions, do legal research, transcribe stenographic notes, etc., but no court records may be taken out of the court.

In the same manner, lawyers who are more than 59 years of age may attend their hearings on urgent matters, except those suffering from any illness, or those who appear sickly and weak. If available, younger lawyers should be sent instead, since their appearances anyway will be limited to urgent matters and not for trial proper.

All courts in the GCQ areas shall operate from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Night courts and Saturday courts, however, shall remain suspended until 15 May 2020.

Areas placed under GCQ are (LUZON: CAR (except Benguet); Region I (except Pangasinan); Region II; Region III — Aurora; Region IV-B — (except Oriental Mindoro & Occidental Mindoro); and Region V — (except Albay & Catanduanes); VISAYAS: Region VI — (except Aklan, Antique, Capiz & Iloilo); Region VII — (except Cebu & Cebu City); and, Region VIII; and MINDANAO: Regions IX, X, XI (except Davao del Norte, Davao City & Davao de Oro), XII and ARMM).

Peralta in his guidelines said hearings in the GCQ areas remain suspended until 15 May 2020, except hearings on urgent matters, such as those mentioned in AC 31-2020. The judges in the GCQ areas, in the exercise of their sound discretion, may set for hearing other urgent matters or concerns to expedite the proceedings or the disposition of the cases pending before their courts.

The on-line filing of criminal complaints and information, posting of bail, and the submission of other urgent pleadings in the GCQ areas may be availed of until 15 May 2020. For this purpose, the hotlines, email addresses and/or other accounts of the courts in the GCQ areas posted on the website of the SC shall be utilized.

The filing of petitions, appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings and other court submissions that fall due up to 15 May 2020 in the GCQ areas is extended for 30 calendar days, counted from 16 May 2020, but pleadings and other court submissions may still be filed by the parties within the reglementary period on or before 15 May 2020 through electronic means, if preferred and able.

The raffle of newly-filed cases shall be conducted beginning 4 May 2020 in accordance with the regular schedule of raffle, and shall be attended only by the members of the Raffle Committee. The private lawyers and the general public shall be excluded during this period of public health emergency.

The periods for court actions with prescribed periods in the GCQ areas are also extended for 30 calendar days counted from 16 May 2020, except court actions on urgent matters.



Duterte security adviser says joint patrols OK if not hostile to China

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 08:10 PM April 28, 2020

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/187299/duterte-security-adviser-says-joint-patrols-ok-if-not-hostile-to-china>

MANILA, Philippines—President Rodrigo Duterte’s national security adviser agreed with joint patrols among countries surrounding the South China Sea but not primarily to deter Chinese aggression but to strengthen cooperation.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, former military chief, was responding to remarks made by retired Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio recommending joint patrols between the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam in the South China Sea to show a united front against China, which has been using the coronavirus pandemic as a smokescreen for escalated aggression in the disputed area.

Esperon said he would agree to joint patrols if these meant enforcement of maritime laws and checking violations “in the maritime seas.”

“But if what Justice Carpio was thinking is to wage war, he should just leave it to the defense (establishment),” Esperon said in Filipino.

“We recognize him in the arena of justice but he shouldn’t be dipping his hands on waging war,” added Esperon at an online briefing.

Carpio had also suggested that if joint patrols with Malaysia and Vietnam didn’t stop Chinese intrusion, the Philippines should consider joining maritime patrols of the United States.

“We’re sending a message to China that it cannot pick us out one by one. We are united,” the retired justice said.

Palace spokesperson Harry Roque said the Executive would look into Carpio’s recommendation but does not agree with the retired justice’s opinions about the South China Sea dispute.

Esperon said he will also call for a meeting of the National Task Force on West Philippine Sea on Tuesday (April 28) to discuss recent developments in the resource-rich waters, including the aiming of guns by a Chinese warship at a Philippine Navy vessel in Philippine territory.

He said the task force, which he chairs, meets weekly.

Last week, the Philippine government filed a diplomatic protest against China for getting its weapons systems ready to fire at a Philippine Navy ship near the 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 it owned the entire South China Sea and all its sea lanes.

Beijing based its claims on its mythical nine-dash line which had been rejected in 2016 by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in a case filed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei which have claims in the area.



DND chief says Chinese warship aiming guns at PH vessel could just be a 'test' of Philippine reaction

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:23 PM April 28, 2020

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/187285/dnd-chief-says-chinese-warship-aiming-guns-at-ph-vessel-could-just-be-a-test-of-philippine-reaction>

MANILA, Philippines — The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy may have just been testing Philippine reaction when a Chinese warship aimed its weapons at a Philippine Navy ship in Philippine territory in the West Philippine Sea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Tuesday (April 28).

"Parang ano lang ito, sinusubukan lang nila kung ano ang reaksiyon natin. (It's like they are just testing what our reaction would be)," Lorenzana said at an online press briefing.

A Chinese corvette readied its gun control director at BRP Conrado Yap (PS-39) near Rizal (Commodore) Reef in the West Philippine Sea in mid-February.

The incident was belatedly reported to the public last week when the Philippine government filed a diplomatic protest against China.

Lorenzana said the Chinese may have no intention of hurting the sailors aboard the Philippine Navy ship, although he described it as "medyo (a bit) offensive."

"Sabi ko naman sa ating mga Navy at saka Air Force ay parang ang katulad nyan hindi naman siguro nila papuputukan ng missile yung ating mga barko at saka eroplano," he said.

(I told our Navy and Air Force that just like that, I doubt they would fire missiles at our ships and planes.)

"Ito lang ay katulad ng kanilang ginagawa tuwing tayo ay dadaan diyan sa West Philippine Sea within our EEZ at tsina-challenge tayo na ang sabi eh 'You are traversing Chinese territory,'" he explained.

(This is similar to what they do every time we pass by the West Philippine Sea within our EEZ and we are challenge by the message 'You are traversing Chinese territory.)

"Ang sinasagot naman ng ating barko at eroplano ay 'we are traversing within our EEZ.' So sagutan lang ng sagutan ang mga 'yan. Every time na dumaan ang ating barko at eroplano, nagkakaroon ng ganyang exchange," he said.

(Our ships and planes answer 'we are traversing within our EEZ. So they just exchange messages. Every time our ships or planes pass by, there's that kind of exchange," he said.)

The Western Command in Palawan province, the military unit in charge of the West Philippine Sea, called the February action by the Chinese warship as a "a hostile act on the part of the Chinese government."



Palace disagrees China using COVID-19 crisis to advance territorial ambitions

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 02:01 PM April 28, 2020

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/187283/fwd-palace-disagrees-china-using-covid-19-to-advance-territorial-ambitions>

MANILA, Philippines — While saying it will consider the suggestion to go on a joint patrol with other claimant states in the South China Sea, Malacañang said Tuesday it does not agree with the observation that China is taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to ramp up its activities over the disputed waters.

It was retired Senior Associate Supreme Court Justice [Antonio Carpio](#) who said the Philippines should join forces with Malaysia and Vietnam to counter China, which appeared to use the coronavirus crisis to advance its territorial ambitions in the South China Sea.

“Suggestion well-taken, although we do not agree po with the personal opinions of Justice Carpio on what China is doing. But the suggestion on joint patrol is well-taken, it will be considered,” Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in an online press conference.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also earlier reportedly accused China of pushing its territorial ambitions while its Southeast Asian counterparts grappled in addressing the coronavirus pandemic.

Roque reiterated that the government will assert its [sovereign rights](#) over its national territory against China.

“We do not agree with that conclusion, although the current policy is that we will defend all our national territory and our sovereign rights,” he said.

Earlier, the Philippines lodged two [diplomatic protests](#) concerning China’s alleged pointing of a radar gun at a Philippine Navy ship, and the establishment of two administrative units covering Philippine territories as part of the disputed South China Sea.

China has been insisting that its nine-dash claim showed that it owns the entire South China Sea.

This claim, however, had been rejected as without basis by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2016.

EDV



What now?

posted April 29, 2020 at 12:10 am

by [Lito Banayo](#)

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/322554>

"The impact on the macro-economy of the 60-day lockdown has already been quite damaging."

As all unfortunate things come to an end, "this too shall pass" as it is often said, the coronavirus pandemic will eventually abate. In other countries, particularly where it originated, the danger signs have been lifted. Some of course did not even have to engage their territories into lockdowns, partial or complete.

While it is comforting to take note of signals from the Palace that the Enhanced Community Quarantine may soon be "modified," the impact on the macro-economy of the 60-day lockdown has already been quite damaging. It gets worse when we consider the effect on the lives of the marginalized, from the poorest of the poor to the lower middle class.

What now? What next?

Many have been talking about the "new normal," of how our lives have been changed by the pandemic, but that is something for the "haves" to chew upon. For those who live below the poverty line, and even those in the margins, the "isang kahig, isang tuka," there will be no new normal. The problems will remain, and because the government's resources have been diminished greatly by the unprecedented response to the pandemic, succor from above will be below even the normal.

Even the long-presumed saving graces of our economy, the OFWs, whether land-based or maritime, are on exodus-mode. The entire world is reeling from the effects of the pandemic, their own economies crippled, whether these are based on natural resources like oil, or manufacturing whose supply chains have been disrupted, and will take some time to recover.

There are thousands of oil tankers dormant in piers around the world, unable to disgorge what once was such a precious commodity, because demand for such "lifeblood" has dried up. So our sailors are returning, their savings just enough to tide their families over if at all for the rest of the year, but with disposable incomes and purchasing power limited to the basics. Our consumption-driven economy will be negatively affected, and so will taxes, VAT revenues being one of the major sources of government means.

My friend Doc Ernie Pernia must be relieved that he is no longer in charge of planning what and how government must react to control the damage. And the new kid on the block, Karl Kendrick Chua, has youthful energy at least as an ally in looking for the ways and means. One can only wish him well.

* * *

Our agriculture secretary, Willy Dar, hastens to assure us all that there is no need to worry about the supply of rice, despite concerns triggered by the recent action of the Vietnamese government to limit exports of its major cash crop in order to ensure the country's own food security. Vietnam, while being a major rice exporter, also has to grapple with the enormity of a 96-million population to feed. Its production has been steadily declining over the past few years with farmers shifting to high-value crops with less dependence on the waters of the Mekong River.

Private sector importers already given permits by the Bureau of Plant Industry are having problems of fulfilling their import commitments at the prices they forecast. While this has created a favorable impact on our domestic palay farmers, the previous year's rice tariffication impact, followed by the lockdown, does not augur well for better summer harvests.

And though present inventory levels are comfortable enough, a major typhoon at the wrong time later in the year may create price and supply problems for our heavy rice-consuming population.



What now?

Though difficult, especially with the lifting of quantitative restrictions on rice importation, the need for ensuring food security at all times is essential. In fact more than essential, because food security IS a matter of national security.

Long-term solutions have to be crafted and properly implemented. In the case of Malaysia, a policy decision made way back was to ensure local production of its rice needs for up to 70 percent of consumer demand, while using its land for higher-value crops with export demand, such as oil palm and rubber.

To respond to the 30 percent consumer requirement, they import. But they have a strategy which we cannot employ on account of our procurement laws, which requires contracting such imports on the basis of actual need. Malaysia financed milling facilities in producing countries premised on assured supply contracts which thus inures them from the volatilities of the market.

Still, there is no substitute for domestic self-reliance, not necessarily targeted at 100 percent self-sufficiency, but reasonably adequate for our high consumer demand. And the key is assured good prices for our palay farmers, the great majority of whom are agrarian reform beneficiaries tilling small, un-economic parcels of land. They cannot mechanize because their plots are too small, and cooperatives have been a failure in local practice.

It is a very complicated problem, and has been left unattended to for the longest time, such that the offspring of our farmers no longer want to work in their parents' "emancipated" farm plots, preferring instead to migrate to the cities for better-paying jobs, and ultimately join the "Filipino dream" of overseas work.

But as we have seen, this hegira poses complicated problems, too, "kawing-kawing," the Tagalogs describe.

In a future article, we would propose a possible solution, occasioned by the inspiring story of what private businessmen like Ramon S. Ang have done in the midst of the coronavirus crisis.

A lengthy explanation requires another column.

* * *

Once again we are deeply saddened by the death of a friend—a titan in the advertising industry and tourism as well, from which sectors I have also been involved.

I first met Ramon Jimenez through a common friend, former Senator Orly Mercado in whose previous political career I was active upon. Both products of the University of the Philippines, Mon was Orly's creative marketing "guru."

Thereafter, I collaborated with Mon and his secret weapon—his wife Abby, in crafting the ads for the successful presidential campaign of Cory Aquino's son, Noyonoy in 2010. I crafted the message; Mon and Abby executed the creatives.

We were on different sides of the political fence in 2016. But P-Noy wisely chose him to be tourism secretary in 2010, and his initiatives were a smashing success, particularly centered on the slogan "It's More Fun in the Philippines!"

In the immediate wake of President Rodrigo Duterte's victory in 2016, I wanted to recommend that the president retain Mon Jimenez as tourism secretary. So I asked a common friend to first ask Mon about whether he would consider remaining in the tourism portfolio.

At the time, his loving partner Abby had just left him after a long bout with the Big C, and Mon was still disconsolate. He begged off.

It is to Mon's credit that the present secretary, Berna Romulo-Puyat, chose to maintain the tourism slogan which he crafted, "It's More Fun in the Philippines." Unlike predecessors whose first wont is to change everything, and reproduce policies in their new image, Secretary Berna wisely maintained the national tourism come-on.

Friends as well as the entire tourism sector will miss Ramon Jimenez. He is now having more fun in heaven with Abby.



Ten things about the coronavirus (2)

posted April 29, 2020 at 12:15 am

by [Tony Lopez](#)

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/322555>

"How come more generals are employed than scientists, when the issue is science, not security?"

The following is the second part of my column last Friday, April 24, 2020:

Seven, under the Bayanihan Heal as One Act, Republic Act 11469 of March 23, 2020, the President of the Philippines has the power to “ensure the availability of credit to productive sectors of the economy especially in the countryside, through measures such as, but not limited to, lowering the effective lending rates of interest and reserve requirement of lending institutions.”

Under the same Act, the President can “direct all banks, quasi-banks, financing companies, lending companies, and other financial institutions, public and private, including the Government Service Insurance System, the Social Security System and Pag-IBIG, to implement a minimum of a 30-day grace period for the payment of all loans, including but not limited to salary, personal, housing, and motor vehicle loans, as well as credit card payments, falling due within the period of the Enhanced Community Quarantine without incurring interests, penalties, fees and other charges...”

The interest that need not be paid by borrowers of the commercial banking system if this law were applied to the letter would have been P73 billion for one month of no-interest payment.

However, in the DOF’s implementing rules and regulations, what was waived as interest was only the interest on the P73-billion interest. Assuming annual interest of 8 percent, the waived interest on interest would only be P480 million.

Borrowers lost P73 billion. The banks saved P72.52 billion—P73 billion minus P480 million. The banks made P72.152 billion in windfall profits.

This P72.52 billion should now be given out by the banks as additional loans to MSMEs.

Eight, there are four Ts—to cope with the coronavirus: Testing, Tracing contacts or those possibly infected by COVID-19 patients; Treatment, and Trust.

The Department of Health cannot get a passing grade for all four Ts.

To do honest-to-goodness testing, the Philippines must scale up testing to the level of 10,000 tests a day.

Wuhan, the epicenter of the original COVID-19 outbreak, has a population of 11 million, one-fifth of the population of Luzon. Yet, they conducted 10,000 tests daily. The Philippines, after 38 days of lockdown, has conducted 60,000 tests—the equivalent of six days.

Wuhan also deployed 1,800 contact tracing teams; each team had five members. These teams traced tens of thousands of people every day. They did nothing but trace the people who might have been in contact with the patient infected with COVID-19. These people included relatives, friends, colleagues, anyone who might have been within six feet of the infected.

The Chinese record is 99 to 100 percent of contacts were traced. Most of those contacted had to be tested. And one to five percent of the tested contacts were found positive for COVID-19.

Treatment refers to Manila having at least 100,000 new hospital beds. This is to treat the COVID-19 patients and to quarantine suspects whose COVID-19 is not yet confirmed. So far, only about 6,000 new hospital beds have been assembled.

We also need easily 300,000 additional medical personnel—doctors, nurses, assistants, and cleaning crews. We don’t have them.

And then Trust—do you trust the DOH under Secretary Duque to bring us to the plateau, with curve bended or flattened so we can return to normalcy?



Ten things about the coronavirus (2)

Basic to having the four Ts is having the science behind the coronavirus. Where are our scientists? What do they say about the pandemic and its course? How come more generals are employed than scientists, when the issue is science, not security?

Nine. According to the Joint WHO-China Report on the Wuhan Coronavirus Epidemic, the coronavirus was first discovered on Dec. 30, 2019 when samples were taken from a patient with pneumonia of unknown origin, at the Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital. The virus had 96 percent similarity with the SARS coronavirus strain from bats.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are non-specific and the disease presentation can range from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe pneumonia and death. As of Feb. 20, 2020 and based on 55,924 laboratory confirmed cases, typical signs and symptoms include: fever (87.9 percent), dry cough (67.7 percent), fatigue (38.1 percent), sputum production (33.4 percent), shortness of breath (18.6 percent), sore throat (13.9 percent), headache (13.6 percent), myalgia or arthralgia (14.8 percent), chills (11.4 percent), nausea or vomiting (5.0 percent), nasal congestion (4.8 percent), diarrhea (3.7 percent), and hemoptysis (0.9 percent), and conjunctival congestion (0.8 percent).

People with COVID-19 generally develop signs and symptoms, including mild respiratory symptoms and fever, on an average of 5-6 days after infection (mean incubation period 5-6 days; range 1-14 days).

Most people infected with COVID-19 virus have mild disease and recover. Approximately 80 percent of laboratory confirmed patients have had mild to moderate disease, which includes non-pneumonia and pneumonia cases.

Mortality increases with age. The crude fatality ratio (CFR) is 21.9 percent for people over 80. If you have no other diseases (what they call comorbidity), the CFR is only 1.4 percent. Patients with cardiovascular diseases have CFR of 13.2 percent; diabetes 9.2 percent; hypertension 8.4 percent; chronic respiratory disease 8 percent; and cancer 7.6 percent.

Recovery for mild cases is two weeks; three to six weeks for patients with severe or critical disease. A critical patient could die within one week. In China, of those who died, the period from first appearance of symptoms to the time a patient dies could be two weeks to eight weeks.

Ten, the coronavirus has no brain, is invisible, and is a dead matter.

It operates by denying you that one thing which made Nike best selling and famous Air. You die of COVID-19 because the virus denies you oxygen. The oxygen level in your blood plummets and you cannot breathe. You are connected to a ventilator. Still, many die.

Please note, the world has been conquered by a speck of matter that has no brain and is even dead, defeating the combined brain power of 7.8 billion people on earth.

How does the coronavirus do it? Well, it is smart. It kills only five percent of its victims, leaving each of the 95 to go on infecting two to four other people each of which in turn will infect two to four other people on their own. Hence, the pandemic.



Pandemics in history, Part II: Mankind will survive Covid-19

Published April 29, 2020, 12:06 AM

THE LEGAL FRONT

BY JUSTICE ART D. BRION (RET.)

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/29/pandemics-in-history-part-ii-mankind-will-survive-covid-19/>

In Part I, I outlined two great pandemics in our recorded history. The first was the bubonic plague or Black Death that initially killed 50 million people and, in its recurrence, decimated European population by a third.

The 2nd pandemic was the Spanish flu which came in two waves, infecting 500 million people worldwide and killing as many as 50 million from 1918 to 1920.

I lay great stress on these past events as they serve as the premises of my main message in this article: [*Mankind survived these past plagues and will survive Covid-19.*](#)

Survival has a price, however, and we must pay the price.

The price includes, among others, *better discipline* as a people; the *reform of our negative ways*, and the supportive efforts of a *trusting and undivided community*.

Science, too, has to be there and must be given primacy; Covid-19, more than anything else, is a health and science issue and must accordingly be addressed.

These are our lessons from the past and they should now be foremost in our minds.

To continue with my recital of history, a **pneumonic plague** – the Great Manchurian Plague- broke out in 1911 in Manchuria. The illness came from the Tarbagan Marmot, a Mongolian rodent whose fur was a marketed in the fur trade. The plague killed 63,000 people in various parts of China without affecting the country nationwide.

The whole of China was saved due to the lockdowns, quarantine measures, the widespread use of masks, travel restrictions, the mass cremation of victims, and the border controls that the Chinese government used, sometimes harshly. Even before the creation of the World Health Organization (WHO), China convened an international conference for the study of the plague.

Interestingly, these are the same measures we are using today and we now have the WHO, although governments have not at all really acted together in a common front for lack of effective international leadership.

After the Mongolian plague came **Polio**, an old neurologic infectious disease that became the first major public health concern soon after World War II. The disease is caused by the poliomyelitis virus that infects the spinal nerve, causing paralysis. Transmission is person-to-person through exposure to infected fecal matter.

The world held polio in check beginning in the 1950s through science (the development of effective vaccines) and international cooperation. By the turn of the 21st century, it was present only in specific countries in the Middle East and was largely under control.

The next public health concern, **Ebola**, was first identified in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks – one in [Nzara in South Sudan](#) and in [Yambuku](#), a village in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), near the [Ebola River](#) from which the disease took its name.

It is a [viral hemorrhagic fever](#) affecting humans and other [primates](#), and is caused by the [Ebola virus](#). The disease carried a high risk of death, killing at an average rate of about 50%.

The outbreaks, however, were largely confined to Africa. Between 1976 and 2013, the WHO reported 24 outbreaks involving [2,387 cases with 1,590 deaths](#). The largest outbreak was the [epidemic in West Africa](#), which occurred from December, 2013, to January, 2016, with 28,646 cases and 11,323 deaths.

While there is no approved treatment for Ebola, two treatments have been associated with improved outcomes as of 2019. A vaccine was approved in the United States in December 2019, although the WHO had declared as early as March 2016 that Ebola no longer involved an emergency.



Pandemics in history, Part II: Mankind will survive Covid-19

The **SARS** (*Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome*), the **MERS** (*Middle East Respiratory Syndrome*) and the **Covid-19** (*Coronavirus Disease 2019*) that successively followed Ebola, are all caused by the Coronavirus family of viruses which affect both humans and animals.

SARS, the 1st pandemic of the 21st century, started in Guangdong, China. It came in 2002 *via* the horseshoe bats which contaminated civet cats, which in turn infected humans.

Due to delay in China's notification (and consequently in the WHO's alerts and advisories), the disease spread to other parts of China, Taiwan, Hong kong, and other parts of the world, in particular, to Canada and the U.S. But the plague was otherwise short-lived and was not as widespread as Covid-19.

Its key initial symptoms were [cough, fever, and diarrhea](#). It was transmitted through droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, talking, or breathing. People with [underlying medical conditions](#) and the elderly were particularly at risk.

The total number of infected cases in SARS' short life reached [8,439](#), [21%](#) of whom were healthcare workers. The Philippines suffered two infections but had no fatalities.

Eight Hundred and twelve ([812](#)) people died for a fatality rate of [9.6%](#). Since this tally, no SARS cases have been reported, although the WHO did not discount its recurrence.

MERS came in 2012. It originated from Saudi Arabia; was transmitted through camels; and was mainly confined to the Middle East. Hence, it was more of an epidemic rather than a pandemic. To date, isolated live cases still exists mostly in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Transmission was person-to-person by droplets and through [camels](#). Its initial symptoms were [fever](#), cough and shortness of breath. [Men](#) above the age of 60, particularly those with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and kidney failure, were particularly at risk.

The disease infected a total of [2,519](#) people, 866 of whom died for a high fatality rate of 34.3%. No specific treatment or vaccine has been developed, although the disease is now considered under control.

Covid-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that is closely related to the SARS-CoV-1 virus of SARS. They share the same zoonotic origins, symptoms, and many other characteristics (such as similarity of at-risk groups – the elderly and those with underlying health conditions; the lack of established treatment so far and the lack of vaccines).

But they are significantly dissimilar in two important respects – in transmissibility and severity.

Covid-19 appears to be more transmissible and hence has a higher rate of incidence. Its viral load is highest at the nose and throat soon after symptoms develop, and can be transmitted even by people who outwardly show no symptoms.

The transmission of SARS occurs at a later stage when the illness is already advanced and the viral load is heaviest.

In terms of severity, SARS mortality is at 10% and is therefore deadlier, while Covid-19's so far ranges from 0.25 to 3% but could be higher if people let down their guard; fail to act; or fail to observe the required discipline.

From these perspectives, Covid-19 – properly handled in terms of the preventive and remedial measures now applied by government; with the observance of discipline; and given the scientific initiatives of many governments – may soon fade away like SARS.

If man should have anxieties at all, these fears should lie elsewhere, specifically, on the **potential causes of extinction** to which we are now recklessly exposing ourselves. These are in the imbalances we are creating on earth's interconnected systems through our thoughtless ways, resulting in air, water and soil pollution; temperature imbalances; and irreversible loss of our flora, fauna, water and other precious resources. These losses and imbalances may yet be humankind's undoing if they are not properly and timely addressed.

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Tech innovators partner to use AI to save coral reefs

By [Gregory E. Bautista](#)

-April 29, 2020

https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news_special_feature/tech-innovators-partner-to-use-ai-to-save-coral-reefs/



CORAL reefs are also affected by COVID-19.

Before COVID-19 however, thousands of coral reefs and reef-rich areas have been destroyed by man's encroachment, including marine accidents such as that in the Tubataha Reef involving a U.S. warship. With the reduction of tourists flocking to dive sites and coral reefs, due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is expected that these wonderful marine ecosystems will flourish again.

Since last year, [Accenture](#), [Intel](#) and the [Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation](#) came together to develop a new artificial intelligence (AI) powered solution to monitor, characterize and analyze coral reef resiliency. They call it Project: CORail, and it has been collecting data needed to make decisions on how to best manage the reefs since May 2019.

Project: CORail is an example of how AI and edge computing can be used to help researchers monitor and restore the coral reef.

"We are very proud to partner with Accenture and the Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation on this important effort to protect our planet," said Rose Schooler, corporate vice president in Intel's sales and marketing group.

Engineers from the three companies implemented an artificial, concrete reef—called a Sulu-Reef Prosthesis (SRP)—to provide support for unstable coral fragments underwater. Designed by Sulubaaï, the SRP was placed in the reef surrounding the Pangatalan Island in the Philippines. Fragments of living coral were planted on it and will grow and expand, providing a hybrid habitat for fish and marine life.

"Artificial intelligence provides unprecedented opportunities to solve some of society's most vexing problems," said Jason Mitchell, a managing director in Accenture's Communications, Media & Technology practice and the company's client lead for Intel.

A critical element of Project: CORail was to identify the number and variety of fish around a reef, which serve as an important indicator of overall reef health.

Traditional coral reef monitoring efforts involve time-intensive, disruptive and even dangerous, human divers manually capturing video footage and photos. Now using AI, engineers strategically placed intelligent underwater video cameras around the SRP.

Equipped with the [Accenture Applied Intelligence](#) Video Analytics Services Platform (VASP), the AI cameras detect and photograph fish as they pass by. Powered by Intel technologies Xeon, FPGA Programmable Acceleration Cards and Movidius VPU, it can accurately count and classify marine life.

The data is then sent to a surface dashboard, providing analytics and trends to researchers on the ground in real-time. Since the solution was deployed, it has collected roughly 40,000 images, which researchers have used to gauge reef health in real-time, enabling them to make data-driven decisions that will help the reef develop.

"The value of your data depends on how quickly you can glean insights to make decisions from it. With the ability to do real-time analysis on streaming video, VASP enables us to tap into a rich data source — in effect doing 'hands on' monitoring without disrupting the underwater environment" said Athina Kanioura, Accenture's chief analytics officer and Accenture Applied Intelligence lead.

"Our ecosystem of corporate and social partners for this 'AI for social good' project proves that strength in numbers can make a positive environmental impact," Mitchell said emphasizing the collaboration between the two technology companies and social impact organization.

Engineers from Accenture and Intel are already at work on the next-gen Project: CORail prototype.

This new automated marine device will include an optimized "convolutional neural network" (basically an independent AI device) and a backup power supply. The team is also looking into using infra-red cameras which will enable videos at night to create a complete picture of the coral ecosystem. Additional uses could include studying the migration rate of tropical fish to colder countries and monitoring intrusion in protected or restricted underwater areas.

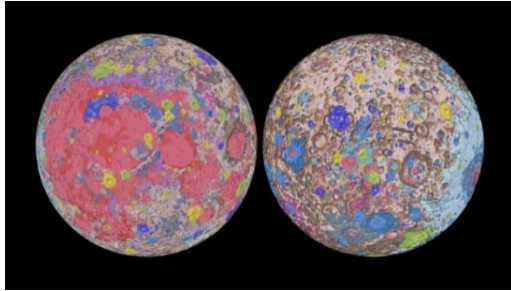


LOOK: First complete geological map of the moon released by scientists

By: [Ryan Arcadio](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:31 PM April 28, 2020

<https://technology.inquirer.net/98846/look-first-complete-geological-map-of-the-moon-released-by-scientists>



This geologic map is a synthesis of six Apollo-era regional geologic maps, updated based on data from recent satellite missions. Image: NASA/GSFC/USGS

The first comprehensive geologic map of the moon that shows its surface in “incredible detail” was released by scientists from the United States Geology Survey (USGS) Astrogeology Science Center.

The map, dubbed the “Unified Geologic Map of the Moon,” was created with researchers from NASA and the Lunar Planetary Institute, as per a USGS statement on April 20.

The scientists pointed out that it will serve as the “definitive blueprint of the moon’s surface geology” for future missions, showing its exterior at a 1:5,000,000 scale. The center also said that the map will be “invaluable” to the public-at-large and the international scientific community.

The team created the map using information from six “Apollo-era” regional maps, referring to the Project Apollo human spaceflight program by NASA from 1961 to 1972.

Researchers also used updated information from recent satellite missions to the moon to complete the map. Among the included missions was the Selenological and Engineering Explorer mission led by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

The existing maps were then redrawn to align them with modern data sets to preserve previous findings. It was also supplemented with data from NASA’s Lunar Orbiter Laser Altimeter.

“This map is a culmination of a decades-long project,” USGS geologist and lead author Corey Fortezzo said. “It provides vital information for new scientific studies by connecting the exploration of specific sites on the moon with the rest of the lunar surface.”

Besides the map, the team also produced a “unified description” of the rock layers of the moon, which resolved inconsistent information in previous maps. /ra

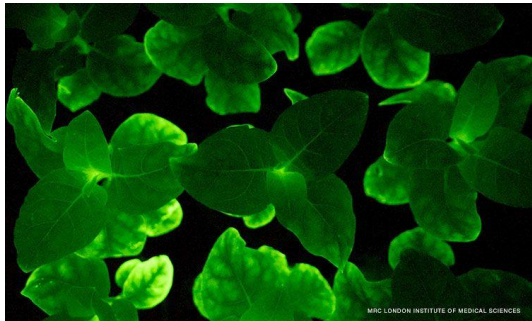


Scientists create glow-in-the-dark plants

By Amy Woodyatt, CNN

Published Apr 28, 2020 4:01:06 PM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/4/28/Scientists-glow-in-the-dark-plants.html>



By inserting DNA obtained from bioluminescent mushrooms, the scientists were able to create plants that sustained a greenish glow.

(CNN) -- Fans of the "Avatar" movie will have long dreamed of lush jungles teeming with glowing plants.

But fluorescent foliage may no longer be the stuff of science fiction, as scientists have found a way to grow glow-in-the-dark plants, which radiate and maintain a mysterious green gleam for

their whole life cycle.

Bioluminescence -- the emission of light by an organism -- occurs in a wide range of animals and microorganisms, including some fungi, insects, fish, marine invertebrates and bacteria.

Some of the most famous examples of the phenomena include the flickering of fireflies, or the crashing of electric blue waves in tropical seas.

After discovering that the bioluminescence found in some mushrooms was metabolically similar to some of the natural processes found in plants, scientists were able transfer DNA sequences into tobacco plants, causing them to give off a bright green glow. Researchers found that this glow lasted for the whole of the plant's life cycle, from seedling to maturity.

"We show that you can transfer four genes from these glowing mushrooms into the plants -- and wire them into plant metabolisms -- so that the plants start to glow in the dark," Karen Sarkisyan, one of the lead authors of a study published in the journal *Nature Biotechnology* on Monday, told CNN.

Unlike other luminescence technologies, he told CNN, the team's recent discovery would allow plants to glow in the dark without having to use external chemicals.

The technology could be used for a variety of purposes, including the creation of decorative glowing plants and flowers, researchers said.

Light radiating from the plants could also be used to study their inner workings -- researchers noticed flickering patterns and waves of light in the organisms, revealing plant behavior not usually seen.

While bioluminescence occurs across the natural world, Sarkisyan told CNN that plants have not previously exhibited the phenomena.

"We tend to overlook plants, we tend to not appreciate how complex or how alive they are. They send a lot of different signals, they integrate and make a lot of developmental decisions, and we don't really appreciate them," he said.

"Making them glow somehow builds a new relationship with the plants, and you can appreciate much easier how alive they are," he added.

In collaborative research, the scientists say they have been able to create plants that glow "ten-fold" brighter, without harming the foliage.

They say that other plants -- including petunias, roses and periwinkles -- could be adapted to make them glow, and that in future, plants could even be adapted to change their color, brightness, or even to respond to their surroundings.

This story was first published on CNN.com, "[Scientists create glow-in-the-dark plants](#)"



Mga taga-Iceland, pinayuhang yakapin ang mga puno upang labanan ang pangungulila

[MGA PANGYAYARING KAGILA-GILALAS - Arnel Medina](https://www.philstar.com/pang-masa/punto-mo/2020/04/29/2010530/mga-tag-a-iceland-pinayuhang-yakapin-ang-mga-puno-upang-labanan-ang-pangungulila) (Pang-masa) - April 29, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/pang-masa/punto-mo/2020/04/29/2010530/mga-tag-a-iceland-pinayuhang-yakapin-ang-mga-puno-upang-labanan-ang-pangungulila>

SA halip na mga mahal sa buhay ay puno ang akapin – ito ang mensahe ng mga forest rangers sa Iceland para sa mga mamamayan nilang nakakaramdam ng pangungulila bunsod ng ipinapatupad na social distancing at quarantine.

Dahil dito ay nilinis na ng mga forest rangers ang mga daan papunta sa mga puno upang maging madali sa mga tao ang pagyakap sa mga ito.

Ayon kay Thor Thorfinnsson, punong tagapamahala ng mga kakahuyan sa silangang Iceland, ay sapat na ang limang minutong pagyakap sa mga puno upang bumuti ang pakiramdam ng pangungulila na nararamdaman ng isang tao.

Gayunpaman, sa kabila ng mabuting maidudulot ng pag-akap sa mga puno ay pinapayuhan pa rin ang mga taong mag-ingat dahil may mga pag-aaral nang isinagawa na nagsasabing kayang mabuhay ng coronavirus ng ilang araw sa kahoy.