

# DENR staff pool P1M to nip Covid

By [Leander C. Domingo, TMT](#)

May 4, 2020

**BAMBANG, Nueva Vizcaya:** From their own salaries, personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) have generated more than P1 million for health workers and frontliners in the region fighting the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

Lawyer Antonio Abawag, DENR-Region 2 executive director, said a total of P1,040,635 cash donations was voluntarily contributed by the DENR personnel across the region in response to a call of the DENR top management.

“Most of the personnel donated an amount equivalent to their one-day salary,” according to Abawag.

On April 29, Felix Taguba, DENR-Region 2 assistant director for technical services, turned over P300,000 cash to William Apostol, officer in charge and health education and promotion officer, and nurse educator Charise Mabborang of the Cagayan Valley Medical Center (CVMC), a Covid treatment facility in Region 2 located in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan.

Taguba said the cash assistance was donated by personnel of the DENR Regional Office and Environmental Management Bureau and the BFD Multi-purpose Cooperative.

“This will be used to purchase rice, groceries and other basic necessities for the medical center’s frontliners as suggested by CVMC chief Dr. Glenn Matthew Baggao,” he added.

Earlier, Abawag instructed the DENR-Region 2 technical services and Provincial Environment and Natural Resources (PENR) officers in Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino and the island province of Batanes to coordinate with heads of hospitals or institutions involved in Covid response to ensure that their assistance reaches the intended frontliners.

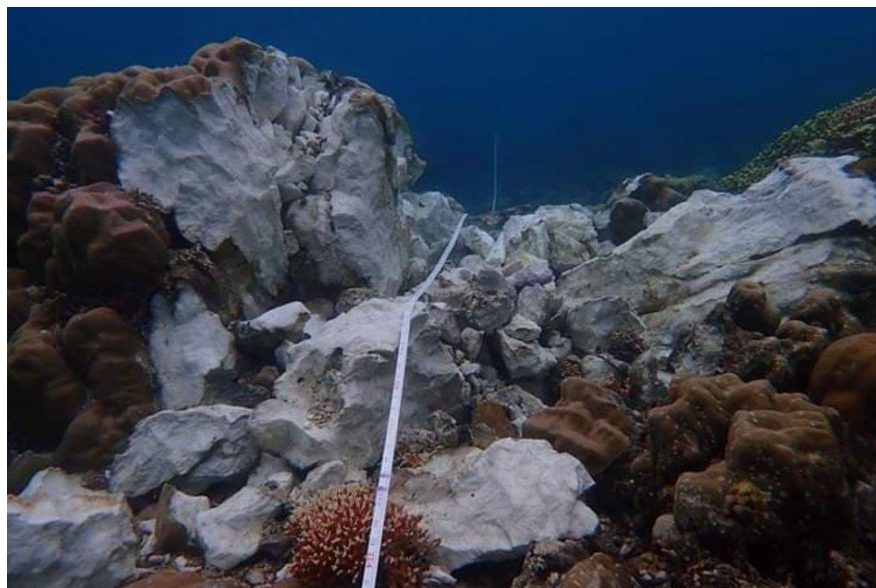
“We shall also prioritize the protection of our personnel. Those who will start reporting to offices this May shall also be provided with face masks,” he said.

The P740,635-cash donations from the PENR officers and the Community Environment and Natural Resources officers will be given to hospital workers and other frontliners in their respective areas of responsibility in the form of personal protective equipment and relief goods.

# Barko sumadsad sa Sarangani Bay; mga coral at reef dome napinsala

Kent Abrigana, ABS-CBN News

Posted at May 03 2020 10:56 PM



Sinabi ng Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape-Protected Area Management Office na magbabayad ng P500,000 ang kompanya ng fishing vessel dahil sa pinsala nito. *Photo Courtesy of SBPS-PAMO*

SARANGANI PROVINCE - Isang barkong pangisda ang sumadsad noong Biyernes sa Sarangani Bay, dahilan para maperwisyo ang ilang coral at coral reef dome sa lugar.

Ang F/B Mark Anthony 17 ay fish vessel na pagmamay-ari ng Rodrigo Lorna Gere Fishing Industry (RLGFI) Corporation.

Ayon sa kapitan ng barko, papunta na umano sila sa international waters matapos mag-deliver ng produkto sa General Santos City nang mangyari ang insidente, ilang metro malapit sa dalampasigan ng Batulaki.

Sinabi ng Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape-Protected Area Management Office (SBPS-PAMO) na magbabayad ng P500,000 ang kompanya ng fishing vessel dahil sa pinsala nito.

Mapapanagot ang barko sa ilalim ng Republic Act No. 11038 o Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS) Act of 2018.

Nakipag-areglo na umano ang RLGFI, ayon kay Sabdulla Abubacar, regional executive director ng ng DENR-12.

"The company made an assurance to pay for any difference and guarantees to deliver back the vessel when required." sabi ni Abubacar.

Ang perang makokolekta mula sa RLGFI ay idedeposito umano sa Integrated Area Protected Funds account ng SBPS na gagamitin para sa rehabilitasyon ng Sarangi Bay na makatutulong sa coastal communities.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/03/20/barko-sumadsad-sa-sarangani-bay-mga-coral-at-reef-dome-napinsala?fbclid=IwAR2fbOhsBTvWx1BoF9UiLNDzBn2xYpRuI4DPox7ISoASLRbW4K8t9rVvsDg>

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Dolphin, sea turtle die

BAGAC, Bataan – A bottlenose dolphin and a sea turtle died on Friday as an environmental group in the province tried to save the animals near the shores of this town.

According to the Eco Warriors, an environmental conservation organization, the Indo Pacific bottlenose dolphin was retrieved with several wounds in its body as fishing lines scratched its tail and its beak was shut by a tied line, rendering the animal unable to feed.

According to Ocean Adventure resident veterinarian Dr. Leo Suarez, the dolphin's death was due to stress myopathy for being entangled in the fishing lines. No major lesions were found in its organs.

Meanwhile, an adult Olive Ridley sea turtle died after being found floating at the Black Sand Beach Resort earlier that morning of the same day. The sea turtle, which had hook lodged in its mouth, was already weak when it was taken ashore.

A necropsy is being conducted to determine the cause of the death of the sea turtle.

JONAS REYES



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ECO WARRIORS/FB

**Marine casualties** A bottlenose dolphin and a sea turtle washed up on the shores of Bataan only to die from their injuries as fishing lines and hooks were seen to have caused wounds on the animals' bodies.



## ‘Balik Probinsya’ program should be divided into phases — Go

(The Philippine Star) - May 4, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Bong Go urged concerned government agencies to ensure that enough preparations are in order for the implementation of the proposed “Balik Probinsya” program.

During a virtual meeting held last Friday attended by Go and key government officials led by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, there was a consensus that Balik Probinsya will be divided into and implemented in three phases: immediate, medium and long-term.

For the immediate phase, Go said the main priority of the government must be to ensure that returning individuals or families will have a safe journey to their home provinces once travel restrictions are lifted and that necessary assistance like food, transportation and livelihood can be provided for their return.

He further suggested that “necessary quarantine measures, COVID-19 testing and certification from DOH must also be secured prior to any movement, similar to the process conducted on returning OFWs.”

For now, Go suggested that stranded citizens may coordinate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the “host LGU (local government unit)” where they are currently stranded, so that they can be listed accordingly and be provided relief assistance as well as temporary shelter if needed.

As for the medium-term phase, Go said the provision of stable work, land and housing, working institutions for health and education, as well as equipping local government units and local counterparts of national agencies to respond to the needs of communities and maintain peace and order should be prioritized to help returning individuals and families cope with their new environment.

Over the long-term, Go hopes the Balik Probinsya program will facilitate a more decentralized approach on governance; boost urban renewal and rural development; provide incentives to businesses relocating to provinces; and create a more sustainable environment to bring in progress to the countryside.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/04/2011642/balik-probinsya-program-should-be-divided-phases-go>

## DILG upbeat on metro 'graduation' from enhanced quarantine

posted May 04, 2020 at 02:20 am

by [Vito Barcelo and Maricel V. Cruz](#)

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said Sunday that some of the restrictions imposed on Metro Manila residents who are on lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19 might be relaxed after May 15.

DILG Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said under this scenario, Metro Manila could be placed under a general community quarantine (GCQ), after the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) expires.

"It looks like Metro Manila will 'graduate' by May 15," Malaya said in a GMA News TV interview. "By all indications, it looks like we will graduate to a GCQ."

But Malaya said some areas in Quezon City might remain under stricter ECQ restrictions because of the high number of COVID-19 cases there.

Meanwhile, Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar announced the partial resumption of the 'Build, Build, Build' projects, but only workers aged 21 to 59 without pre-existing health conditions will be allowed to work in government construction sites.

"On areas under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), construction workers accredited by the DPWH will be allowed to work on quarantine and isolation facilities, health facilities, emergency and maintenance works, flood control, and other disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation work," Villar said.

"In areas under the general community quarantine, private and public construction projects will be allowed to resume following compliance to the construction safety guidelines prescribed for the implementation of infrastructure projects during the COVID-19 public health crisis," he added.

"Prior to deployment, construction personnel shall be required to undergo COVID-19 test, as may be prescribed by DOH, and retested as the need arises," he said.

Construction quarantine passes will be issued to qualified personnel of concessionaires, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers, clearly stating the identification, designation, nature of work, validity, and destination, he added.

Villar said concessionaires, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers will provide for their personnel the necessary welfare facilities and amenities, such as employees' quarters for board and lodging, ensuring compliance to social distancing and proper hygiene.

"Employees shall be housed in their respective quarters for the entire duration of the project covered by the ECQ and GCQ. Otherwise, "prior to deployment" procedures shall be conducted at every instance of re-entry," he said.

"Errands to be conducted outside the construction site premises shall be kept to a minimum. Number of personnel running errands shall be limited and shall be properly disinfected and closely monitored for symptoms within 14 days upon re-entry," he added.

Villar said that daily monitoring of the pre- and post-work health conditions of workers shall be mandatory.

Also on Sunday, the chairman of the House committee on transportation asked the Department of Transportation to make sure that it is ready and well- equipped to implement the guidelines laid down by the Inter-agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) for the re-opening of public transportation as cities and provinces under ECQ transition to GCQ.

At the same time, Samar Rep. Edgar Sarmiento, the panel's chairman, rejected the use of the term "new normal," saying the prevailing situation is "absolutely abnormal."

"Our situation now should not be accepted as the new normal because we will fight and defeat this virus. This virus will not prevail over humanity and life as we know it would definitely go back to full normalcy once a vaccine is discovered. The more appropriate term should be temporary abnormality," Sarmiento said.

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quarantine

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Sarmiento said that to avoid any disastrous mistakes, he is recommending to the DoTr a five-day dry run before the anticipated lifting of the ECQ on May 16. This dry run should cover IATF-sanctioned public transports systems such as buses, trains, and tricycles for land transport, airplanes, and inter-island passenger vessels.

With the ECQ still in effect during the dry run, Sarmiento said that transportation officials can still easily evaluate the peculiar requirement of physical distancing and still allow adjustments "while the volume of passengers is still manageable."

At the same time, Deputy Speaker and Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte appealed to the IATV to draw up a rescue program for possibly hundreds of thousands of construction workers stranded in their urban job-sites who have "no money, no food and no hope of returning to their home-provinces amid the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak."

Villafuerte said "the IATF needs to work out a masterplan with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and provincial governors along with mayors of cities and municipalities where suspended construction projects are located on how to provide daily food packs to the stranded laborers until such time that they are able to go back to their provinces—which should be as soon as possible."

Such an undertaking for stranded construction laborers could be likened to the repatriation services that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) have been giving to overseas Filipino workers in distress in their respective host-countries, he said.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on Sunday said workers and employers in the private sector will be mandated to observe strict health protocols as work resumes on May 4 in areas declared under the GCQ.

In the Interim Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 signed by Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez and Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, workers and employers will be required to follow precautionary measures as the country grapples to contain COVID-19.

"Before entering the workplace, all employers and workers must have face masks, [which] must be worn at all times and removed... only when eating or drinking," Bello said.

Employers shall provide the appropriate face masks for workers, according to the guidelines.

All are also required to accomplish daily health symptoms form, undergo temperature check, and have them recorded in the health symptoms questionnaire.

The employer must provide the DOLE through its regional office, copy furnished DOH, the monthly reporting of illness, diseases, and injuries using a DOLE report form.

As a rule, if a worker has a temperature of greater than 37.5°C, even after a 5-minute rest, or if his response in the questionnaire needs further evaluation by the clinic staff, the person shall be isolated in an area identified by the company and will not be allowed to enter the workplace premises.

Clinic staff assigned to assess the workers held in the isolation area will be provided the appropriate medical grade personal protective equipment by the establishment which will include face masks, goggles or face shields, and gloves.

Disinfection must also be done for equipment or vehicles entering the establishments, including facilities, and touched objects, such as doorknobs and handles, at least once every two hours.

On top of observing at all times physical distancing, proper respiratory etiquette and disinfection protocols, eating in communal areas is also discouraged, and if this is not possible, the employer shall ensure a one worker per table and one-meter distance per worker scheme.

Workers are also discouraged from engaging in conversation, as well as prolonged face-to-face interaction with workers and clients.

Meetings needing physical presence must also be reduced or avoided.

Private establishments are also mandated to implement alternative work arrangements, such as working-hour shifts, work from home (WFH), where feasible, and on a rotation basis.

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If feasible, employers must also provide shuttle services or decent accommodation on near-site locations to lessen travel and people movement.

A worker suspected of having COVID-19 must be brought to the nearest hospital if needed.

Bello also said the guidelines mandate companies to put up a COVID-19 hotline and call center for employees.

"Employers may test workers for COVID-19. Testing kits used and procured shall be the responsibility of the employer," Bello said.

In the House, Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano proposed the construction of hospitals and health centers, particularly in the provinces, that would accommodate COVID-19 patients as part of a "new normal" in a post-ECQ or GCQ period.

Cayetano said the presence of health facilities, job opportunities, and other infrastructure in the regions, including a reliable Internet and mobile communications network, would encourage people to go back to the provinces, decongesting urban areas in the process.

Cayetano said health experts believe COVID-19 will linger for some time until a cure or vaccine is developed.

"Anyone who can adapt fast, innovate, and manage the situation all around the world will get ahead," Cayetano said.



## GCQ likely for Metro Manila after May 15 – DILG

[Romina Cabrera](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 4, 2020 - 12:00am

### But ECQ easing to be selective

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) yesterday expressed optimism that Metro Manila would be able to shift to a more lenient general community quarantine or GCQ after May 15.

The Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging Infectious Diseases is seeing good indicators that could merit the lifting of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in many parts of Metro Manila, according to DILG spokesman and Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya.

“It looks like Metro Manila will graduate from ECQ by May 15. Of course matagal-tagal pa ‘yan, that’s two weeks from now. But by all indications, mukha pong we will shift to GCQ,” Malaya said in an interview on dzBB.

He said the government is taking into consideration critical health care infrastructure, number of cases of the coronavirus disease 2019 and expanded COVID-19 testing facilities to see if the National Capital Region would be eligible for a GCQ.

Malaya, however, said the ECQ would still be implemented in some areas, including portions of Quezon City and Manila, where certain areas have been placed under “hard lockdown.”

In terms of social amelioration program, Malaya said close to 70 percent of local government units (LGUs) have accomplished and distributed cash assistance to their constituents as of yesterday.



Malaya said local executives in the metropolis are having a harder time in distributing cash subsidy due to larger population in some localities.

He assured qualified residents that LGUs are working double time to distribute the assistance, which has a deadline of May 7.

Gains in the pandemic have been uneven in Metro Manila. Mayor Rex Gatchalian of Valenzuela, for example, has said his city is ready for the lifting of the ECQ, but he stressed that he would abide by decisions of the national government.

On the other hand, Mayor Francis Zamora of San Juan has said his city, where the first case of local COVID transmission was reported, might not be ready by May 15, and he might seek an extension of the ECQ.

Mayor Marcelino Teodoro of Marikina is finally getting the city's COVID testing center operational, significantly boosting their capability for testing using the "gold standard" whose results need no further validation by the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine.

Marikina uses testing kits developed by the University of the Philippines-National Institutes of Health. Marikina could be ready to shift to GCQ after May 15.

# Most of Metro Manila likely out of ECQ after May 15, says DILG exec

By [Victor Reyes](#)

-May 4, 2020



THE Department of Interior and Local Government on Sunday said the status of Metro Manila, except for parts of Quezon City, will likely be downgraded to general community quarantine (GCQ), from the current enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), after May 15.

“It looks like na ga-graduate po ang Metro Manila sa May 15,” Interior Undersecretary and spokesman Jonathan Malaya said in a radio interview. “But of course, matagal-tagal pa ‘yan, that’s two weeks from now. Pero by all indications mukha pong ga-graduate na tayo at mag-GCQ na tayo (It looks like Metro Manila will graduate on May 15. But of course, that’s still two weeks from now. But by all indications, it appears we’re going to graduate and proceed to GCQ).”

Malaya did not say if other areas that are still under ECQ will also likely be placed under GCQ. As of Saturday afternoon, the NCR has registered 5,951 COVID-19 cases out of the total 8,928 cases nationwide.

If Metro Manila is downgraded to GCQ, workers can go back to work subject to minimum health standards, like the wearing of face masks and the observance of social distancing.

Malaya said there are positive data about Metro Manila meeting two important parameters needed to be downgraded to GCQ – critical care infrastructure and doubling time.

Malaya said members of the technical working group on data analytics of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) are looking into the data “almost everyday so that our decision will be based on science and latest data from the ground.”

But Malaya said some areas in Quezon City will likely remain under ECQ after May 15 due to high number of COVID-19 cases.

“Posible po na May 16 ay ma-lift na natin ‘yung ECQ sa ibang lugar sa Metro Manila, ngunit may maiwang lugar sa Quezon City, not the entire Quezon City I think, but some portions of Quezon City will still remain under ECQ. (It’s possible that by May 16, we’ll lift the ECQ in some areas in Metro Manila but there will be areas in Quezon City, not the entire Quezon City I think, but some portions of Quezon City will still remain under ECQ),” he added.

Source: [https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news\\_news/most-of-metro-manila-likely-out-of-ecq-after-may-15-says-dilg-exec/](https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news_news/most-of-metro-manila-likely-out-of-ecq-after-may-15-says-dilg-exec/)

# NCR likely to be under GCQ after May 15, except some parts –DILG

Published May 3, 2020 3:00pm

By JOVILAND RITA, GMA News

The Department of the Interior and Local Government on Sunday hinted that the National Capital Region will be placed under general community quarantine (GCQ) after May 15.

Interviewed on Dabol sa News TV, DILG Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said that the COVID-19 data in Metro Manila suggest that the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) could be relaxed by then.

“It looks like ga-graduate na ang Metro Manila sa May 15. By all indications, mukhang ga-graduate na tayo at mag-GCQ na tayo,” Malaya said.

In lifting the ECQ, Malaya explained that the Inter-Agency Task Force considers the critical care infrastructure of hospitals and the case doubling time in the region.

Due to these, Malaya said that some areas in Quezon will remain under the strict measure of ECQ due to high number of COVID-19 cases.

As of Saturday, the Department of Health (DOH) reported 8,928 COVID-19 cases with 603 fatalities and 1,124 recoveries.

Of the total cases in the country, the [DOH–NCR said 5,144 came from Metro Manila](#), of which Quezon City recorded the most number at 1,312.

Barangay Batasan Hills has the most number of COVID-19 cases in Quezon City with 31 patients, [according to the city government](#). —**LBG, GMA News**

# Bayanihan law may be extended

By: [Marlon Ramos](#) - Reporter / [@MRamosINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:58 AM May 04, 2020



DISCHARGED Staff members of a hospital in Manila clap their hands as one of them wheels out a 70-year-old patient who has survived COVID-19. The number of infections in the country has surpassed 9,000 as experts continue to determine the characteristics of the virus. (Photo by RICHARD A. REYES / Philippine Daily Inquirer)

MANILA, Philippines — Congress may have to amend the law it passed on March 24 or introduce a new measure extending President Rodrigo Duterte’s special fiscal power in leading the government’s response to the new coronavirus pandemic, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said on Sunday.

The Senate and the House of Representatives resume their regular sessions on Monday as the country grapples with the economic fallout from quarantine restrictions Mr. Duterte imposed to stop the onslaught of the new coronavirus, which has infected more than 9,000 Filipinos.

Lacson pointed out that Republic Act No. 11469, known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, has a sunset clause that limits its effectivity to only three months after being signed into law by the President.

## Cash subsidy

Among the most significant provisions of the law is the distribution of cash subsidies of up to P8,000 to 18 million low-income households and the President’s authority to realign unused funds from last year’s national budget.

“We have to discuss further if a simple amendment to extend the effectivity [of the law] or pass a new law granting the President more or limited powers,” Lacson told the Inquirer.

“This law is timebound. It’s not forever,” he said in a separate radio interview.

Lacson said prolonging the law could be inevitable as “the health issue is not being addressed appropriately” by the concerned authorities.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III reiterated on Sunday that the Senate would resume its session on Monday requiring the physical presence of the majority of the 24 senators in compliance with the 1987 Constitution.

In the House of Representatives, only about 25 lawmakers would be physically present, according to an advisory from the chamber’s secretariat. The rest of the members would participate in the discussions through videoconferencing and vote through digital apps.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon had confirmed his attendance in the 3 p.m. session after he earlier expressed reservation about the safety of the senators who were already senior citizens like him attending the Senate proceedings.

### More time to fight virus

Lacson said the government would need more time to contain the spread of the coronavirus, warning that the health situation in the country might remain unchanged in the next two to three months.

He blamed the apparent stubbornness of Health Secretary Francisco Duque III in defying Mr. Duterte's order for the Department of Health (DOH) to conduct massive rapid tests to help speed up the government's efforts to isolate people infected with the coronavirus.

Lacson, one of the senators who signed a resolution demanding Duque's resignation over the health chief's supposed incompetence, also assailed the continued failure of the DOH to track down the contacts of the people who had COVID-19, the severe respiratory disease caused by the new coronavirus.



He said the DOH's negligence in locating the people who were on the same flight with the Chinese national who was the country's first confirmed coronavirus case doomed the government's response to the health crisis.

"It is incompetence that will kill us all. We still have not learned our lesson," Lacson said. "For me, contact tracing is an important element [because] without it, we will not have a [reliable] baseline data," he stressed, adding: "Contact tracing is nonexistent so there is no baseline data to rely on for testing purposes. While physical distancing seems to be working—quarantine, lockdown and all—the infection rate, based on a measly number of [people] tested so far, is quite alarming."

### Rapid tests

Lacson noted the dayslong backlog in the results of the polymerase chain reaction tests, which Duque favored over rapid tests, whose results are known within minutes by using the blood sample of an individual.

"How can we flatten the curve if we are not testing enough? Without an efficient contact tracing, how can we arrest the spread of the virus?" he said.

“At the rate we are going with this slow testing pace, the Philippines may probably be the biggest contributor in surpassing the Spanish flu of 1918, which lasted 36 months and [resulted in] up to 50 million deaths worldwide,” he said.

As of Sunday, the Philippines has 9,223 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with the DOH reporting 295 new infections. Four more patients died, bringing the toll to 607. But 40 more patients recovered, boosting the number of survivors to 1,214.

In a statement issued on Sunday, House Majority Leader Martin Romualdez said the 302-member chamber would give priority to measures the government would need to press the fight against the coronavirus.

High on the agenda is a disaster resilience bill that streamlines the government’s response to calamities, as well as a measure that reduces the income tax paid by businesses and rationalizes fiscal incentives.

Romualdez cited the P700-billion proposed Philippine economic recovery act, aimed at mitigating “the economic impact of COVID-19 and ensure business operations and support employment retention.”

#### Economic stimulus

The proposed economic stimulus law, he said, would fund a nationwide job creation program, including infrastructure development.

Another bill would lay down policies and regulations for life in the country after the pandemic, he said.

“The House will deliberate various pending COVID-related bills and resolutions to help government response in curbing the pandemic’s effect [on] the economy and the general public, especially [on] the labor force,” Romualdez said.

He said the House might also consider extending the validity of the 2020 national budget to deal with the delays in the implementation of infrastructure projects and other major programs due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Other House priorities include the creation of a department of water, modernization of fire protection, and a proposed solo parents law.

—WITH A REPORT FROM DJ YAP

# Duterte signs law expanding PhilHealth coverage to all Filipinos

By: [Christine O. Avendaño](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:36 AM February 21, 2019



HEALTH CARE FOR ALL Senate President Vicente Sotto III, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other legislators applaud President Duterte as he signs the Universal Health Care Act in Malacañang on Wednesday. —JOAN BONDOC

President Rodrigo Duterte on Wednesday signed a law giving all Filipinos access to health care services.

The Universal Health Care Act expands PhilHealth coverage to include all citizens of the Philippines, and its services to provide members free medical consultation, laboratory tests, and other diagnostic requirements.

The President hailed the new law, saying it “guarantee[s] equitable access to quality and affordable health care services for all Filipinos.”

The President also signed the Revised Corporation Code during an event in Malacañang that was attended by Senate President Vicente Sotto III, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the legislators who wrote the two laws.

The President also presented other newly signed laws, including the Social Security Act, Philippine Sports Training Center Act, new Central Bank Act and a measure dividing Southern Leyte into two legislative districts.

## **All are PhilHealth members**

The Universal Health Care Act enrolls all Filipino citizens in the National Health Insurance Program, either as “direct contributors” or as “indirect contributors.”

Direct contributors pay health premiums, while indirect contributors are sponsored members like senior citizens and indigents.

Under the new law, all Filipinos may seek primary health services even without PhilHealth identification cards.

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all Filipinos

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The law also requires all graduates of health-related courses whose studies were funded through government scholarships to serve for at least three years in public hospitals.

Implementation of the law requires P257 billion in the first year, but it is given only P217 billion in the proposed P2019 national budget that the President has yet to sign.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III earlier said the funding gap of P40 billion meant that not all the hospitals or health centers planned under the new law would be built.

### **Village health centers**

Priority would be given to building village health centers so that residents would not need to go to hospitals for treatment of minor illnesses, Duque said.

Funds for implementation of the new law would come from taxes on sin products, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., Department of Health (DOH), government subsidy to PhilHealth and contributions of PhilHealth members.

In a statement released in Malacañang on Wednesday, the DOH said it was “actively working” for higher excise on tobacco and alcohol to ensure funds for the implementation of universal health care.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said gradual implementation of the new law was likely due to the funding gap.

“But there are many ways to augment the resources. I’m sure the government will know how to source funds in accordance with the Constitution,” Panelo told reporters.

Describing the other newly signed laws, the President said the Revised Corporation Code “simplif[ies] corporate governance standards and establish[es] a more business friendly environment that will enable corporations and other judicial entities to thrive.”

### **Bigger SSS income**

The Social Security Act expands the investing capacity of the Social Security Commission, enabling it to generate bigger income for SSS members and pensioners, the President said.

The amended Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) charter, he said, strengthens the central bank’s financial capability and makes it more flexible in using its regulatory powers.

During the ceremony, the President also oversaw the turnover of a check for P4 billion in BSP dividends to the National Treasury. —*With a report from Daphne Galvez*



Railways to resume operations with limited  
passengers on May 16

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# Railways to resume operations with limited passengers on May 16

By [Glee Jalea, CNN Philippines](#)

Published May 3, 2020 10:01:25 AM



**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 3)** — Major train lines in Metro Manila will resume operations with limited passengers by May 16, or after the the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) is lifted in the region.

In a statement on Saturday, The Department of Transportation announced that the Light Rail Transits 1 and 2 (LRT-1 and LRT-2), the Metro Rail Transit-3 (MRT-3) and the Philippine National Railways (PNR) will operate at a reduced capacity to allow passengers to practice social distancing.

The LRT-1 will only operate with 43 passengers per train car (12 percent capacity), the LRT-2 with only 40 passengers (10 percent capacity), MRT-3 with 51 (13 percent capacity), and the PNR with 148 passengers (20 percent capacity), based on the Transportation Department's simulation of passengers inside trains maintaining one-meter social distancing.

Department of Transportation - Philippines WeHealAsO

**GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATIONS**  
(FOR AREAS UNDER GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE)

**HEALTH CHECK** RAIL SECTOR

Pursuant to DOH guidelines, passengers who exhibit the following will not be allowed to enter the station:

- Passengers who are not wearing appropriate face masks
- Passengers exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or has a registered body temperature of 37.8°C or higher. In such cases, the concerned station personnel shall observe DOH guidelines on COVID-19 response procedure
- Senior citizens, persons aged 0-20, and pregnant women due to their susceptibility to COVID-19

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"Social distancing of one meter should be strictly observed inside the trains and stations. Presence of markings, signages, tarpaulins and other logistics will be utilized to ensure its firm implementation," the DOTr said in its statement.

Railways to resume operations with limited  
passengers on May 16

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"Social distancing of one meter should be strictly observed inside the trains and stations. Presence of markings, signages, tarpaulins and other logistics will be utilized to ensure its firm implementation," the DOTr said in its statement.

Pursuant to the guidelines of the Department of Health, passengers who are not wearing appropriate face masks, are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, and have a registered body temperature of 37.8 °C will not be allowed to enter train stations.

Senior citizens, persons aged 0-20, and pregnant women will also not be allowed entry "due to their susceptibility to COVID-19."

The DOTr added that regular disinfection and sanitation of train interiors, station premises and facilities will be conducted. Handwashing and disinfectant stations will also be installed to adhere to sanitary measures set by the DOH.

The DOTr and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases covering road, transport, aviation, maritime and railway sectors previously issued its omnibus guidelines for transportation vehicles that may operate in areas under the general community quarantine while still allowing passengers to observe physical distancing measures.

On May 1, [the government allowed some public transport vehicles to operate again](#) in low to moderate-risk areas.

For the aviation sector, only government and military flights, international flights subject to IATF protocols, air ambulance and medical supplies, flight check and weather mitigation flights, maintenance and utility flights, emergency flights, and domestic flights coming to and from provinces and cities under the general community quarantine are allowed.

Walk through x-ray machines, portable scanners and handheld metal detectors will be part of the airports' security screening of authorized passengers. COVID-19 rapid testing facilities are also present.

For the maritime sector, passenger capacity in ships and other passenger vessels has been reduced to 50 percent.

Wearing of personal protective equipment is mandatory upon entry of ports, terminals, and passengers vessels.

Meanwhile, for permitted public utility vehicles, drivers are required to use gloves and face masks.

Passenger load for buses and jeepneys should not exceed 50 percent of the vehicles' capacity. For UV Express and taxis, passenger load should not exceed two passengers per row.

Tricycles must not exceed one passenger in the side-car and backriding is not allowed.

Only private cars and motorcycles operating for the purpose of essential travels are allowed outside, with cars only allowing one passenger in the front seat.

Motorcycles are prohibited from having backride passengers, while the use of bicycles is highly encouraged.

DOTr Assistant Secretary for Road Transport and Infrastructure Mark Richmond De Leon told CNN Philippines on Saturday that public transportation in the road sector will be allowed, but they "will strictly impose health safety standards at all times to ensure the safety of [their] drivers and passengers."

President Rodrigo Duterte has placed the entire Luzon under the enhanced community quarantine last March 17 in a bid to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the region. All necessary modes of public transportation were put to a halt and non-essential establishments were ordered to close down to limit movement.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/3/railways-lrt-mrt-resume-operations-May-16.html>

# Tugade tells CAAP, authorities to consider opening airports in areas under GCQ

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published May 2, 2020 2:21:22 PM



*Department of Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade*

**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 2)** — Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade has told the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) and other airport officials to consider opening airports in areas under general community quarantine.

The DOTr said doing so would make commercial flights available to passengers.

Tugade made the statement at a video conference on April 30.

“The reopening of airports in GCQ areas to commercial aviation will gradually jump-start airline operations now hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This will plant the seeds for domestic tourism. This should seriously be considered,” he said.

At the meeting CAAP Director General Capt. Jim Sydiongco said airlines already have route networks within the Visayas and Mindanao and these can be used to enforce Tugade's instructions.

“Some airlines are readily capable of mounting inter island flights to serve communities from one GCQ area to another GCQ area using the inter Visayas and/or Inter Mindanao air routes,” he said.

The practice, Sydiongco said, is called the Hub and Spoke model where carriers can use regional airports as alternative hubs while other airports are closed and cannot operate regularly.

“We want to operationalize this approach before the end of next week, but of course without compromising health and safety protocols set by the IATF and the Department of Health. Pag-iisipan namin kung paano ito maisasagawa ng maayos at mabilis,” Secretary Tugade said.

Meanwhile, Malacañang said [some ride-hailing services will be allowed to operate at reduced capacity in areas under general community quarantine](#).

“Sa GCQ, pwede po ang taxi; pero 'yun nga po, limitado po ang pasahero. 'Yung mga TNVS po, mga Grab, limitado po ang pasahero, pero [sa] GCQ lang po, hindi sa ECQ,” Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a televised briefing on Friday.

[Translation: Taxis will be permitted, but their passengers will be limited. The same applies to TNVS or Grab. But again, these will only be allowed during the GCQ, and not the ECQ.]

Roque maintained that motorcycle taxis will remain prohibited, as they violate social distancing rules.

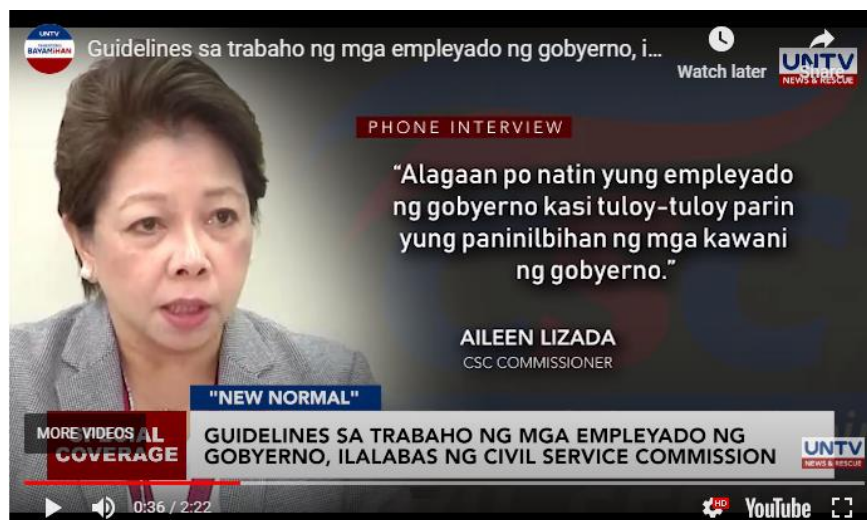
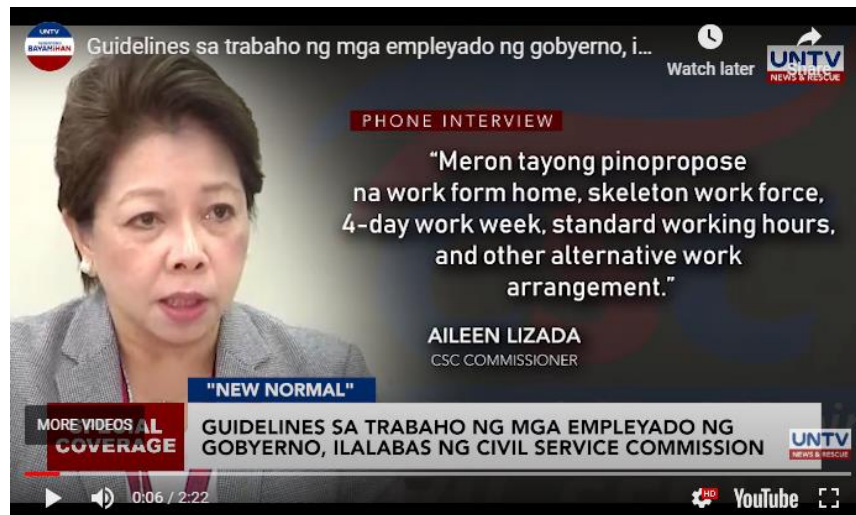
Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/2/tugade-airprot-reopen-general-community-quarantine.html>

# Guidelines sa trabaho ng mga empleyado ng gobyerno, ilalabas ng Civil Service Commission

May 3, 2020 • UNTV News

Maglalabas ng guidelines ang Civil Service Commission na ipatutupad sa mga empleyado ng gobyerno.

Samantala, pinalawig ng ahensya ang termino ng ilang mga health worker sa bansa.



# Economic liberalization laws to aid in recovery

[Czeriza Valencia](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 4, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) will push for Congress' approval of key economic bills that will help the country attract more foreign investments especially those fleeing from China in the wake of the coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19 pandemic.

In an interview with DWIZ radio station Saturday night, Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua said the key bills, along with the remaining three packages of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP), would enable the economy to recover faster from the onslaught of the contagion.

NEDA has been supporting the passage of several bills that will ease restrictions on foreign investment such as the amendments to the Foreign Investments Act, Retail Trade Liberalization Act, and Public Service Act.

“These amendments will be of great help in attracting new foreign direct investments especially those that are flowing out of China. If we get these, more jobs will be created in our country,” Chua said.

The proposed amendments to the Retail Trade Act seeks to ease the equity and capitalization requirements for foreign entrants in the retail sector.

Amendments to the Public Service Act, meanwhile, proposes that all transmission of electricity, distribution of electricity, and water works and sewerage systems shall make up the exclusive list of public utilities. It likewise raises the foreign ownership limit in public utilities.

The proposed amendments to the Foreign Investments Act, meanwhile, covers the lowering of capital requirements for foreign investments subject to certain conditions on technology and employment.

“All these were among the priorities in the last State of the Nation Address (SONA). So these should be continued,” Chua said.

The remaining three tax reform bills, he said, would enable more small business to participate in the economy because these would make the tax system fairer and more efficient.

After the passage into law in 2017 of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) – which lowered personal income taxes, but increased taxes on cars, tobacco, sugar-sweetened beverages and fuel – economic managers are pushing for the passage of the Corporate Income Tax and Incentives Rationalization Act (CITIRA), which will reduce the corporate income tax, but rationalize the tax incentives given by the government to businesses.

Other pending tax bills are Package 3, which deals with property valuation and Package 4, which will rationalize income from financial instruments.

Passing the CITIRA into law is also expected to end the climate of uncertainty which prevented businesses from making investment decisions.

Among Chua's marching orders from President Duterte is to craft a detailed recovery plan for the economy as it emerges from the ravages of the pandemic.

Most of Luzon, the country's economic powerhouse which accounts for 70 percent of total economic output, remains under quarantine until May 15.

Quarantine rules have been eased in areas with lower risk of virus transmission and some economic activities have been allowed to resume.

Most affected by the restrictions in mobility were the tourism and retail trade sectors.

Chua said the right timing on lifting the lockdown and policy response would be the cornerstones of economic recovery amid the possibility of a recession this year.

"What's important is how fast we will be able to recover and this depends on two things: our decision to be cautious about the health of the population and the policies that we will implement to speed up recovery," he said.

Other than the passage of economic liberalization laws, Chua said it would be crucial to implement and resume priority projects under the Build Build Build program to create more jobs and sustain gains on poverty reduction.

‘Second tragedy’: Cremation traumatizes in virus-hit

TITLE: Philippines

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DATE

# ‘Second tragedy’: Cremation traumatizes in virus-hit Philippines

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 02:17 PM May 03, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — Families of coronavirus victims in the Philippines are being denied traditional death rites in favour of hurried, impersonal cremations, with virus restrictions often meaning they are forbidden a last look at their loved ones.

It is a painful and disorienting process for both the families and crematory workers that has upended the Philippines’ intimate rituals of laying the dead to rest.

Burial is the norm in the Catholic-majority nation, and it usually follows a days-long display of the embalmed body at home or in a chapel.

But due to the pandemic authorities are encouraging rapid cremations — though quick burials are still allowed — of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 deaths.

Wakes are barred in these cases and hospitals must seal remains in plastic and send them directly to crematories or funeral homes.

Before the virus struck, families opting for cremation were able to have one last look at their loved one before the body was consigned to the flames.

Now workers have to gently explain the regulations denying even that to distraught relatives. “We tell them we can’t do it because it’s dangerous. We could all get infected,” 54-year old worker Romeo Uson, sweat-soaked in a protective suit at a Manila crematorium, told AFP.

“It’s also painful for us,” he added. “We can’t let the families mourn the dead like before.” His facility has been conducting six to seven cremations a day, double the usual number, since contagion from the virus started to take off in March.

The Philippines has detected nearly 9,000 infections and officially recorded 603 deaths, though due to a limited testing capacity the numbers are thought to be higher.



A worker in a protective suit, used due to the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, checks the cremation chamber through a small peephole in the furnace at a crematorium facility in Manila on April 29, 2020. – Most of the Philippines is under quarantine to contain the spread of the coronavirus that has infected over 7,000 people and killed at least 500 in the country. (Photo by Maria TAN / AFP)

‘Second tragedy’: Cremation traumatizes in virus-hit

May 4, 2020

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## ‘Second tragedy’

Leandro Resurreccion IV, 26, wasn’t allowed to visit his father as he was dying from the virus in hospital, and never saw his corpse — just the plastic he was wrapped in.

“I think the fact that... my family wasn’t able to say goodbye could probably be the second most tragic thing that happened after my dad’s death,” he said.

“It makes the grief slower,” he added.

The anonymous process — all the body bags look alike — has even fed doubts that the urn at home contains his father’s ashes.

To his knowledge, Resurreccion’s family had always buried its dead, and the cremation of his father led to disagreement among relatives about whether the urn should be kept at home or interred.

The distant and impersonal process means crematory workers have to help comfort relatives who would normally have mourning rituals like wakes and family gatherings for support.

“I tell them to pray. You should pray because that is the vitamins of the dead,” said worker Romeo Elevaso.

His colleague, Uson, said they apologise to the families for the restrictions and try to lighten the atmosphere with stories and smiles.

Relatives understand the extraordinary nature of the pandemic, and accept that they won’t ever see their loved one’s faces again, he said.

As well as the tough work of consoling relatives, the crematory workers also live with the fear of getting sick themselves.

Local authorities have urged them to take the hottest baths they can stand after work and to take vitamins and ginseng, which they claim can boost their immune systems.

Elevaso follows that advice and also scrubs his body with rubbing alcohol before returning to his family after every shift.

“For us, taking vitamins and saying prayers are important,” he said.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1268792/second-tragedy-cremation-traumatizes-in-virus-hit-philippines#ixzz6LPv7lMY>



# Cremation traumatizes virus-hit Filipinos

posted May 04, 2020 at 02:30 am

by [AFP](#)

Families of coronavirus victims in the Philippines are being denied traditional death rites in favor of hurried, impersonal cremations, with virus restrictions often meaning they are forbidden to have a last look at their loved ones.



*ANOTHER TRAGEDY.* Workers clean a crematory chamber at a facility in Manila on April 29, 2020. Luzon and parts of Visayas and Mindanao have been placed under quarantine to stem the outbreak of coronavirus that has infected more than 9,000 and killed 607 people. AFP

It is a painful and disorienting process for both the families and crematory workers that has upended the Philippines' intimate rituals of laying the dead to rest.

Burial is the norm in the Catholic-majority nation of 108 million people, and it usually follows a days-long display of the embalmed body at home or in a chapel.

But due to the pandemic authorities are encouraging rapid cremations—though quick burials are still allowed—of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 deaths.

Wakes are barred in these cases and hospitals must seal remains in plastic and send them directly to crematories or funeral homes.

Before the virus struck, families opting for cremation were able to have one last look at their loved one before the body was consigned to the flames.

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"We tell them we can't do it because it's dangerous. We could all get infected," 54-year old worker Romeo Uson, sweat-soaked in a protective suit at a Manila crematorium, told AFP.

"It's also painful for us," he added. "We can't let the families mourn the dead like before."

His facility has been conducting six to seven cremations a day, double the usual number, since contagion from the virus started to take off in March.

The Philippines has detected 8,928 infections, 1,124 recoveries, and officially recorded 603 deaths, though due to a limited testing capacity the numbers are thought to be higher.

'Second tragedy'

Leandro Resurreccion IV, 26, wasn't allowed to visit his father as he was dying from the virus in hospital, and never saw his corpse—just the plastic he was wrapped in.

"I think the fact that... my family wasn't able to say goodbye could probably be the second most tragic thing that happened after my dad's death," he said.

“It makes the grief slower,” he added.

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## Strategic intent

By [Siegfred Bueno Mison, Esq.](#)

May 4, 2020



Worldwide, the common strategic intent of any coordinated fight against the ongoing pandemic is to protect the welfare of the people. Wherever we may be, all efforts are geared toward that end. Thus, the goals, enumerated in Republic Act (RA) 11469 (Bayanihan to Heal as One Act), such as to “mitigate and contain the transmission of Covid-19, immediately mobilize assistance for the provision of basic necessities to families and individuals affected by the enhanced community quarantine, especially the poor; undertake a recovery and rehabilitation program as well as social amelioration program and other social safety nets to all affected sectors,” among other lofty goals, are aligned with the overall strategic intent—protect the welfare of the people. Government policies, such as emergency procurement of goods and services, social amelioration program, military and police checkpoints, mandatory wearing of face masks when outside, stay-at-home orders, were seen by many as necessary, acceptable, and reasonable, since these measures protect the welfare of the people.

Knowing and understanding how the military mind works, I am confident that those in the higher echelons of government who served in the armed forces are aware of this singular purpose of what they have been trying to do since the enactment of RA 11469. Applying US Army Field Manual 100-15, (1993) which states that “the commander’s intent describes the desired end state, the single unifying focus for the entire government machinery implementing RA 11469 is the welfare of the people. The command guidance seems simple and clear—protect the people. But as a leadership principle, clarity also requires flexibility. Author Bob Johansen, in his book *Leaders Make the Future*, wrote, “The best leaders will be clear about their long term intentions, but very flexible about how to get there. As with jazz, the structure sets the limits within which improvisation is encouraged.”

Different government agencies have issued several implementing rules and regulations in line with RA 11469. The objectives of the various directives coming from the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), directed to address the public health emergency caused by Covid-19, have one thing in common—protect the welfare of the people. Leaders of local government units are expected to align their efforts with this strategic intent, such that ordinances and other rules of local application ought to protect one thing, pardon the redundancy, welfare of the people. All units must work together under one clear strategic intent but would exercise some amount of flexibility.

For instance, what works in Baguio City may not work in Pasig City and vice-versa owing to the cultural differences in their respective constituents. The travel restrictions in Masbate may not be effective in Cavite owing to its difference in geographical characteristics. The hard lockdown of certain areas in Manila and Quezon City may work there but not in the other districts of the same cities owing to the differences in urban density. What remains constant, however, regardless of locality or the extent of the viral contamination, or the partisan politics, is the strategic intent. Hence, if the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) distribution guidelines regarding social amelioration packages or the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) regulation extending the deadline for filing of income taxes or the Department of Finance-imposed mandatory grace period for loans maturing during the lockdown or the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) advisory to charge the employee absence during this lockdown to accrued leaves are aligned with the strategic intent of protecting the welfare of the people, then we should be all for it.

Fortunately, in alignment with the strategic intent but exercising some degree of flexibility, some private entities give or do more than what is prescribed. Despite being entitled under DSWD guidelines, a street sweeper in Marikina and a few condominium unit owners I know opted to return the food packs given by government, realizing that other Filipinos are in greater need for such assistance. A huge conglomerate, despite the BIR extension of the payment of income taxes, opted to pay taxes early in its obvious attempt to give government more ammunition in this fight against the virus. Another reputable company, way before the DOF-imposed grace period, opted to relax loan deadlines of their customers. My current employer, SM, went beyond the DOLE advisory and chose not to charge employee leave credits during this stoppage of work, among other voluntary initiatives. Community generosity is at its finest hour during these trying times, showing how we are all organically wired to truly protect each other.

God-fearing believers, in government and in the private sector, already know what they should be doing. Their actions need not be guided by any government directive but by the God-given strategic intent, which is to love God and love others. After all, love seems to be the underlying premise or core foundation of any government response to this pandemic. In the *Bible*, *Mark 12:30-31* tells us, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these. This strategic intent can be as simple to understand yet difficult to implement in our lives. Pressures from a mortally thinking society can make this mandate of love difficult to do and subject to different interpretations.

All of us, government included, may have various ways of implementing the clear strategic intent, coming from the law (RA 11469) and from the *Bible*. There lies the beauty of flexibility, and, unfortunately, its ugliness as well. Reports of physical violence against persons for not obeying quarantine restrictions, verbal abuse and utter disrespect of some individuals against law enforcers, hoarding of essential goods, blanket application of travel restrictions, and selling of quarantine passes are just some of the disheartening news, not aligned with our strategic intent, as a Filipino and a human being. In the *Bible*, *Ecclesiastes 12:13-14* tells us, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." No need for media to share the good and expose the bad, the Main Man is always watching over us.

*A former infantry and intelligence officer in the Army, Siegfred Mison showcased his servant leadership philosophy in organizations such as the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Malcolm Law Offices, Infogix Inc., University of the East, Bureau of Immigration, and Philippine Airlines. He is a graduate of West Point in New York, Ateneo Law School, and University of Southern California. A corporate lawyer by profession, he is an inspirational teacher and a Spirit-filled writer with a mission.*

*For questions and comments, please e-mail me at [sbmison@gmail.com](mailto:sbmison@gmail.com).*

## No need for martial law

posted May 04, 2020 at 12:20 am

by [Ernesto G. Banawis](#)

There is no need for President Rodrigo Duterte to declare martial law. He has been practically an absolute ruler or dictator since he assumed the highest and most powerful public office.

Yet he did not employ or harness the military and the police to have his decisions followed and respected. And in the recent special session of Congress, he was given emergency powers which will be terrifying if misused or abused.

Since he took his oath as president, he has been running the country by himself.

He stripped Congress of its importance an equal and third branch of the government. He made the Senate and the House of Representatives mere satellites of the executive department.

Senators Koko Pimentel and Tito Sotto would not have been senate presidents without his blessings. When he put Senator Leila de Lima in jail, not even a whimper was heard from most of the senators.

When two of his allies in the House could not give way to each other for the speakership, the president split the term of the presiding officer because he could not disappoint either one of them. He made both beholden and subservient to him.

When Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez was thrown out of his chair in the last Congress, the President did not lift a finger to prevent his ouster. Former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo could not have grabbed the speakership without the help of the President's daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, and Malacanang's blessings.

President Duterte figuratively put the Supreme Court in his pocket. Most of the justices always upheld the President's decisions every time they were challenged. He even had a chief justice kicked out for standing up to him.

The President's relationship with Vice President Leni Robredo has been amusing were it not degrading to the woman who is first in line to succeed him. Twice, he gave the widowed VP positions in his administration; twice, she was unceremoniously dismissed.

He described a former senator who has been his most vocal critic as a nuisance. Senator Trillanes has not been heard or seen around for some time now.

He has made decisions which were clearly outrageous and exasperating but he simply ignored the brickbats and laughed off the indictments. Why should he be bothered? The opinion surveys show that he enjoys very high acceptance and performance ratings. This means that most of the people approve what he has been doing. They like him because he thinks, talks, and hurls insults and dirty jokes like most of them.

No one of national stature appears capable of challenging the leadership of the incumbent President. Keen observers of the political scene in the country share the prognosis that since he cannot seek another term, Duterte will decide who will succeed him. As yet, however, no one among those close to the President appears to enjoy a rarefied political ascendancy as to be beyond the reach of the others.

Whoever he chooses to step into his shoes will ascend to Malacanang, even if he lacks the credentials for the high office.

But now, President Rodrigo Duterte is confronted with an insidious and treacherous enemy which is toying with his wit and wisdom, and testing his courage and resilience. This enemy is fearless of his power and authority.

The pandemic is ravaging the nation with impunity. It has claimed the lives of hundreds of people and keeps spreading – no antidote has yet been found.

The president has to put threatened communities under quarantine or locked down. This has crippled the national economy and rendered millions immobile, jobless and destitute.

While the administration is racing against time in setting up much-needed medical facilities and attending to thousands of patients, efforts to address and cushion the economic impact of the crisis have bogged down, mainly for insufficiency in funds, inefficiency, mishandling and corruption in the distribution of good packages and cash dole.

Protests and complaints are coming out every day. Many are getting restless, desperate, hungry and angry.

If the social disorder becomes goes out of hand, the government will be confronted a far more serious crisis than the deadly virus infestation.

President Duterte can and should raise P200 billion to P300 billion to finance the cash amelioration program and complete the facilities needed to contain and eventually wipe out COVID-19.

Now is the time for President to exercise his emergency powers. He should ask and demand from the richest families that they lend him at least ten percent of their wealth. The 50 Filipinos listed in Forbes magazine's roster of billionaires has a combined wealth of over \$27 billion or P1.6 trillion.

The loans will be paid from the sale of government properties, treasury bills and future revenues.

These wealthy citizens should emulate the president of San Miguel Brewery, Ramon S. Ang who has voluntarily extended billions worth of food assistance and paid the salaries of thousands of his employees.

The President can now show his authoritarian disposition by boldly exercising his emergency powers and authority. The wealthy Filipinos cannot refuse to lend him the money. He can confiscate their wealth if he is forced to do so. If before he can ride roughshod over anybody and get away with it, now he can be authoritarian and make himself a dictator and no one will dare howl.

Today, at this perilous and trying times, there is no one in the country to whom the people can look up to for salvation and succor than to the man who holds in his hands their lives and their souls.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, for all his braggadocio, high-handedness and shortcomings, has been given the privilege to be revered rather than loathed and the rare opportunity to be great and noble. Let us pray he makes the right choice.

*Mr. Ernesto G. Banawis is a student of government and history.*

# On World Press Freedom Day, Palace cites crucial role of ‘fair and democratic media’

By: [Christia Marie Ramos](#) - Reporter / [@CMRamosINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 08:24 PM May 03, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — As the country marked World Press Freedom Day on Wednesday, Malacañang underscored the crucial role of “a fair and democratic media,” adding that the Philippines “enjoys a free and vibrant press.”

“Today, May 3, we join media workers around the world in observing World Press Freedom Day,” Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement.

“The Philippines enjoys a free and vibrant press, and this Administration places great importance to the vital role of a fair and democratic media in having a well-informed and empowered citizenry,” he added.

Roque said the role of the press has become “more relevant” as the country confronts the crisis brought about by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which has so far infected over [9,000 and killed more than 600 people in the country](#).

“Filipino households need to get timely, accurate, and transparent reporting of this global health emergency and the action or intervention the government has made to address this situation thereby promoting public awareness and engagement and accountability in public service,” Roque said.

“As media workers continue reporting in the frontlines, we pray for everyone’s safety as we laud all those in front of and behind the scenes in bringing truthful information to the homes of every Filipino family,” the Palace official added.

In a separate statement, Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar vowed [to continue promoting the rights and liberty of the media](#).

In 2020, the Philippines dropped two places in the World Press Freedom Index, [sliding to the 136th place out of 180 countries and regions](#).

The annual press freedom list by the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders noted how state troll armies in some countries, including the Philippines, used the weapon of disinformation on social media.

The information brief on the Philippines also cited the Duterte administration’s response to critical journalism such as the harassment of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, ABS-CBN, and Rappler and its CEO Maria Ressa.

“The persecution has been accompanied by online harassment campaigns waged by pro-Duterte troll armies, which also launched cyber-attacks on alternative news websites and the site of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, in order to block them,” it said.

/MUF/ATM

# Govt vows to promote media rights as PH marks World Press Freedom Day

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:51 PM May 03, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine government has vowed to continue to promote the rights and liberty of media on Sunday, World Press Freedom Day.

Palace Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said a free press has allowed the continued delivery of news reports to all Filipinos as the country battles the coronavirus pandemic.

“It has also helped voice out the public’s pulse and serve as an avenue for the government to increase public awareness of its policies and report its activities with complete transparency,” he said in a statement.

He called on the media to work together with the government to eradicate biased information, misinformation, disinformation that continue to damage the trust and relation between and government and the people.

“With these in mind, we pray for the safety of everyone, especially the journalists and media workers currently reporting from the frontlines despite the pandemic. We salute your heroism, bravery, and your service,” he said.

The Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG), also joined journalists and media workers in celebration of World Press Freedom Day.

The existence of a free and responsible press is absolutely essential for a truly transparent, accountable, and democratic government.

“A free press is not an optional extra but an integral part of the liberty to enjoy all other freedoms,” the FLAG said in a statement.

Freedom of the press, however, is “continually threatened by existing laws that criminalize content, such as laws on libel, cyber libel, sedition and inciting to sedition.

“It is a protection that becomes illusory when the press is viewed as prey rather than partners,” it said.

/MUF

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1268852/govt-vows-to-promote-media-rights-as-ph-marks-world-press-freedom-day#ixzz6LQGtBa8q>





## EDITORIAL - Pandemic of misinformation

(The Philippine Star) - May 4, 2020 - 12:00am

World Press Freedom Day was marked on May 3 amid the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. Various sectors have warned that the COVID-19 crisis has also given rise to what United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described as “a second pandemic of misinformation, from harmful health advice to wild conspiracy theories.”

The press, Guterres notes, “provides the antidote: verified, scientific, fact-based news and analysis.” A more accurate statement is that the press strives to provide that antidote, while pursuing the theme of World Press Freedom Day 2020: “Journalism without fear or favor.”

This mission is not as simple as it sounds. The Philippines should know: it has consistently ranked among the most dangerous and stressful places in the world for media workers. The restoration of democracy in 1986 did not put an end to the murder and harassment of journalists in this country, with the weakness of the criminal justice system allowing perpetrators to get away with permanently silencing the press. Since the UN General Assembly proclaimed World Press Freedom Day in 1993, Philippine journalists continued to be subjected to threats, harassment and outright murder.

The sub-themes of the special day resonate with members of the Philippine press: the safety of both male and female media workers as well as gender equality in all aspects of mass media, and the pursuit of independent and professional journalism free from political and commercial influence.

These days, Filipino journalists must also contend with laws against cyber libel and trolls unleashed by public officials who have no tolerance for criticism. These are on top of traditional libel laws, wherein litigation costs can lead to the bankruptcy of smaller media outfits, and official resistance to the passage of a Freedom of Information Act.

While governments are reminded about their commitments to press freedom, journalists are also reminded about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. Media licentiousness weakens the credibility of the press.

Unlike anonymous commentators on social media, members of so-called legacy media are properly identified and can be held accountable for their journalism, putting greater pressure on the need for accurate, fair and fearless reporting and analysis. This is of utmost importance especially in this confusing period of a deadly pandemic.

# The press and the pandemic

*posted* May 04, 2020 at 01:00 am

World Press Freedom Day was commemorated Sunday. In ordinary times, this means a series of activities around the world that pay tribute to the contribution of journalists, make people aware of the injustices done to them, encourage and develop initiatives in favor of press freedom, and assess the state of news media worldwide.

But these times are anything but ordinary.

COVID-19 has altered practically every aspect of our individual, community and national lives. With billions of people all over the world on lockdown, with public transportation and “normal” business operations paused, journalists have to make major adjustments to the way we carry out our profession.

Foremost, there is the constant threat to the truth. Sometimes in a desperate desire to find some sense in a complex, mysterious disease, people circulate alleged cures or remedies. In the intention to make themselves look good before the public, some take credit for a collective effort while diminishing the contribution of others. Some attempt to revise history by saying this was what they did, when they did not do anything or worse, did the complete opposite. Some malign their political opponents, turning a national emergency into an opportunity for gain.

In all this, it is the duty of the press to set the record straight and not allow anybody to turn the situation into his or her political advantage at the expense of the truth.

There is also the lingering threat of financial viability. Even before this crisis, media have had to suffer economic disadvantages and threats to the sustainability of the trade. Now, with revenues shrinking even further, those who work in media organizations are even more at risk of financial displacement. It is a great sacrifice for them to continue doing their jobs in this environment of heightened health risk, while keeping body and soul together.

Finally, democracy thrives in assent and dissent. In delivering the news and encouraging the people to think critically and form their own informed opinion on various issues, many journalists are being pilloried for “complaining” and “not helping.” But this is exactly the contribution – to make leaders accountable for their action and inaction. Being critical of others does not mean wishing them to fail; on the contrary, it is a continued expression of hope that much can still be done.

The coming weeks and months will be crucial, and the press plays a vital role in ensuring that we get out of this healthier, stronger, and better able to appreciate free discourse and yes, constructive criticism. It is neither a task for the faint-hearted – nor the apathetic.

Americans turn to hunting for food, renewal during

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# Americans turn to hunting for food, renewal during pandemic

**Published** May 3, 2020 7:31pm

By ANDREW HAY, Reuters

TAOS, New Mexico — David Elliot first thought of shooting an elk to help feed family and friends back in January when the United States reported its first novel coronavirus case.

Elliot, emergency manager at Holy Cross Hospital in Taos, New Mexico, had always wanted to go big game hunting and, with the pandemic spreading, there seemed no better time to try to fill his freezer with free-range, super-lean meat.

So for the first time in his life, despite not owning a rifle or ever having hunted large animals, he put his name in for New Mexico's annual elk permit draw.

With some US meat processors halting operations as workers fall ill, stoking fears of shortages, and people having more time on their hands and possibly less money due to shutdowns and layoffs, he is among a growing number of Americans turning to hunting for food, according to state data and hunting groups.

"I understand some people might be driven by like antlers or some sort of glory. I don't want to do that," said Elliot, 37, who received a prized permit to shoot a female elk in an area of Taos County where herds of the animal graze in vast plains studded with extinct volcanoes.

Elliot plans to borrow a rifle and maybe even a horse to carry the elk back to his vehicle after the hunt in November. "I want to make sure it's a clean, humane shot, as much as possible, and get a bunch of food."

Game and fish agencies from Minnesota to New Mexico have reported an increase in either hunting license sales, permit applications, or both this spring.

Indiana saw a 28% jump in turkey license sales during the first week of the season as hunters likely had more time to get out into the woods, said Marty Benson, a spokesman for the state's department of natural resources.

Firearm manufacturers have reported sales increases, and the FBI carried out 3.74 million background checks in March, a record for any month.

That followed a 255,000 fall in the number of hunters between 2016 and 2020, based on US Fish and Wildlife Service license data, a 2% fall, as fewer young people took up the activity, hunting advocates say.

Hank Forester of Quality Deer Management Association expects a resurgence after many Americans saw empty meat shelves at the grocery store for the first time during March and April.

"People are starting to consider self-reliance and where their food comes from," said Forester of the hunter research and training group. "I think we're all born hunters."

## 'Mental cleanse'

Teachers Brian Van Nevel and Nathaniel Evans get up at 4 a.m. to try to be first into the forests around Taos, New Mexico to hunt wild turkey.

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Evans, a middle school teacher, has seen a lot more people stalking the male birds known as "gobblers" this year.

A town councilor as well, he is hunting not just for food but to reconnect with himself at a time when he is guiding Taos' response to the pandemic as well as teaching online classes.

"It's been so important for me, being able to go out and kind of cleanse my mental card and just go and be present, you really have to be present, and quiet and listening," said Evans, 38, who in April shot a 17-pound (7.7 kg) bird.

Some states such as Washington and Illinois closed state lands as the virus spread, prompting the National Rifle Association to lobby governors to keep them open to allow people to hunt for food.

Officials in Washington issued 10 poaching charges between March 25 and April 26, more than three times the number handed out during the same period a year ago, the state's fish and wildlife department reported.

### 'A good idea'

Nina Stafford, 42, a building contractor from Fayetteville, Georgia, killed her first deer in January. She described the experience as "thrilling, exciting and remorseful for the deer."

"The coronavirus has only made me want to go and do it more so that I don't have that scared feeling of where's my next meal going to come from," said Stafford, who also grows vegetables and fruit.

To be sure, stocks of species like wild turkey can only sustain so many hunters. Wildlife ecologists Michael Chamberlain and Brett Collier fear the turkey's existing population decline will steepen this spring.

Turkey hunter numbers in wildlife management areas in Georgia increased 47% this year from 2019 while turkeys killed during the first 23 days of the season rose 26%, despite no recent increase in bird numbers, the ecologists wrote in a report, citing state department of natural resources preliminary data.

Not all states have reported an increase in hunting license applications, both California and Florida seeing declines.

Still, big game such as deer and antelope could see similar pressure in the fall as hunters have more time to reach kill limits, which in the case of Louisiana is 6 deer per season, and 12 in Georgia, the ecologists said.

Elk hunts are controlled by permit limits in most states and Elliott sees no downside to paying \$60 for a tag that could allow him to get close to 200 pounds (91 kg) of meat, if he can get a cow elk.

"It's not just because what's going on in the world right now. Frankly I don't make that much money, so like this is just a good idea anyway," said Elliott, who plans to split the meat with an experienced-hunter friend who will accompany him. — Reuters

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/world/736641/americans-turn-to-hunting-for-food-renewal-during-pandemic/story/>

# New disinfectant to kill coronavirus for 90 days

The Korea Herald/Asia News Network / 01:38 PM May 03, 2020

SEOUL — Scientists at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology have developed “MAP-1,” a new disinfectant spray that can kill viruses — including the novel coronavirus — and bacteria for up to 90 days.

Unlike alcohol or bleach-based solutions, MAP-1 remains effective in disrupting existing bacteria and preventing new bacteria from spreading even after it has dried. A special blend of heat-

The coating can be used on different surfaces, including wood and leather, without changing their texture. It is also nontoxic and thus safe for the environment and skin.

It took 10 years for professor Yeung Kinglun’s research team to introduce MAP-1 to the public.

MAP-1 has already been used in facilities in Hong Kong, such as nursing homes, shopping malls, school buses and churches. The spray is set to hit shelves in May for consumer use.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1268780/new-disinfectant-to-kill-coronavirus-for-90-days#ixzz6LPvWySiU>

Invasive giant hornets have been spotted in the US for  
the first time

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# Invasive giant hornets have been spotted in the US for the first time

By Faith Karimi, CNN

Published May 3, 2020 3:15:10 PM



**(CNN)** — Just when you thought 2020 could not get any worse, there are giant hornets with a venomous sting to add to the list of worries this year.

The insects known as the Asian giant hornets have been spotted in the United States for the first time, specifically in Washington state, scientists say. Beekeepers have reported piles of dead bees with their heads ripped off, an alarming sight in a country with a rapidly declining bee population.

At more than two inches long, they're the world's largest hornets with a sting that can kill humans if bitten multiple times, according to experts at the Washington State University. Researchers have nicknamed them "murder hornets."

"They're like something out of a monster cartoon with this huge yellow-orange face," Susan Cobey, a bee breeder at the Washington State University's department of entomology, said recently.

## How did they come to the US?

Scientists don't know how the hornets native to Asia ended up in Washington state.

They're sometimes transported in international cargo -- in some cases deliberately, said Seth Truscott with WSU's college of agricultural, human and natural resource sciences.

The giant hornet was first spotted in the state in December, and scientists believe it started becoming active again last month, when queens emerge from hibernation to build nests and form colonies.

"Hornets are most destructive in the late summer and early fall, when they are on the hunt for sources of protein to raise next year's queens," Truscott said.

"They attack honey bee hives, killing adult bees and devouring bee larvae and pupae, while aggressively defending the occupied colony," he added. "Their stings are big and painful, with a potent neurotoxin. Multiple stings can kill humans, even if they are not allergic."

## What should you do if you spot one?

Washington state agricultural officials are asking beekeepers and residents to report any sightings of the giant hornets. But don't get too close. Its sting can penetrate a regular beekeeper's suit, and state scientists had to order special reinforced suits.

"Don't try to take them out yourself if you see them," said entomologist Chris Looney of the state Department of Agriculture. "If you get into them, run away, then call us! It is really important for us to know of every sighting, if we're going to have any hope of eradication."

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### When are they most destructive?

The giant hornets especially target bees between late summer and the fall.

"The most likely time to catch Asian giant hornets is from July through October -- when colonies are established and workers are out foraging," the Washington State Department of Agriculture said in a statement. "Traps can be hung as early as April if attempting to trap queens, but since there are significantly fewer queens than workers, catching a queen isn't very likely."

Bees pollinate plants producing fruit, nuts and vegetables, and are crucial for the nation's food industry. Attack by the hornet is alarming because the number of bees have declined in the US, putting them on endangered lists.