



Iloilo home cleanup vs. dengue urged

By Gail Momblan May 5, 2020, 9:25 pm

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1101928>



TIDYING UP. A resident of Iloilo province gets rid of water in a container, which can be a potential breeding place of dengue-carrying mosquitoes. The Iloilo Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office on Tuesday (May 5, 2020) urged Ilonggos to continue their cleanup activities at home as they observe enhanced community quarantine. (Photo courtesy of Nygiel Momblan)

ILOILO CITY – The Iloilo Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) on Tuesday encouraged Ilonggos to continue the “Limpyo Iloilo” (Clean Iloilo) program in their homes as they observe the enhanced community quarantine.

Lawyer Arturo Cangrejo, PENRO officer-in-charge, told the Philippine News Agency (PNA) that keeping the homes clean could prevent illnesses, such as dengue, from spreading.

“The province experienced rain in the past days and we are preparing against dengue, which can be spread through mosquitoes. It is important to always make our surroundings clean for the vectors not to thrive,” he said.

Last February, the province launched the “Limpyo Iloilo” 2020, or the simultaneous province-wide cleanup to be held every third Saturday of the month.

The program was conceptualized after a dengue outbreak was declared in the province on July 5 last year.

However, because of the ECQ, Cangrejo said they could not gather volunteers and Ilonggos to clean public places, roads, and coastal areas.

“We will find ways for the program to continue even indoors,” he said.

Cangrejo noted that each household is urged to follow the 4S strategy in fighting dengue – “Search and destroy” the breeding places of mosquitoes, “secure Self-protection” from mosquito bites, “Seek early consultation” when signs and symptoms of dengue occur, and “Say yes to fogging” as a last resort when there is a looming outbreak.

One of the goals of “Limpyo Iloilo” is to inculcate among Ilonggos the 4 p.m. cleaning habit.

This goal can still be achieved in homes, Cangrejo said.

“Four p.m. is the best time to take a break from gadgets, like most of the people use this quarantine period and allot time for cleaning,” he said, adding that the province plans to recognize outstanding families who uphold cleanliness during the ECQ.

“We are planning to surprise households and reward them for what they do to maintain their homes clean,” he said. (PNA)



Nakawalang serval cats, nagdulot ng takot sa isang private subdivision sa Cainta, Rizal

Mayo 4, 2020 11:54pm GMT+08:00

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/balitambayan/promdi/736816/nakawalang-serval-cats-nagdulot-ng-takot-sa-isang-private-subdivision-sa-cainta-rizal/story/>

Dalawang serval cat na itinuturing "wild cat" na tila maliit na tigre ang hitsura ang nagdulot ng takot sa isang residente nang makita niyang palakad-lakad sa bakod ng bahay sa isang private subdivision sa Cainta, Rizal.

Nakawala umano ang dalawang pusa sa may-ari nito na matagal na umanong inirereklamo ng mga residente sa kanilang homeowners' association dahil sa ingay at masamang amoy na dulot ng mga hayop, ayon sa ulat ni Cedric Castillo sa GMA News "24 Oras" nitong Lunes.

Ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources, maituturing wild cat ang serval cat at hindi dapat inaalagaan sa bahay.

limbestigahan umano nila ang naturang insidente.

Paliwanag naman ng may-ari ng mga pusa, mayroon permit ang kanilang mga pusa.

"We were able to retrieve the cat immediately and no one was harmed. This serval was born and raised here and has corresponding permits from DENR," ayon sa may-ari.

Atraksyon daw nila ang mga pusa, kasama ang Savannah at Bengal cats sa kanilang cat cafe sa Quezon City, nagsara noong nakaraang taon.

Dadalhin daw sana nila ang mga hayop sa kanilang farm sa Batangas pero hindi natuloy dahil sa pagputok ng bulkang Taal at nasundan ng implementasyon ng enhanced community quarantine.

"[W]e ask help from the authorities to grant us a pass so we can personally transport them to our farm in Batangas ASAP," ayon sa may-ari ng mga pusa, na humingi ng paumanhin sa idinulot na abala ng kanilang mga alaga.--FRJ, GMA News



Senate adopts Go's Balik Probinsya

(The Philippine Star) - May 6, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/06/2012095/senate-adopts-gos-balik-probinsya>



In his sponsorship speech last Monday, Go said the pandemic “has exposed and brought to the surface many of our country’s perennial problems, including congestion in urban centers, particularly in Metro Manila.”

Jeremy Pintolo, file

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate has adopted a resolution, mainly sponsored by Sen. Bong Go, for the executive department to formulate and implement a “Balik Probinsya” program aimed at decongesting Metro Manila, promoting more robust regional

development and encouraging equitable distribution of wealth, livelihood opportunities and economic growth nationwide.

The proposal also aims to better prepare the country in responding to future pandemics and other crises similar to what is being experienced at present due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) health emergency.

In his sponsorship speech last Monday, Go said the pandemic “has exposed and brought to the surface many of our country’s perennial problems, including congestion in urban centers, particularly in Metro Manila.”

“Such problem results in a whole lot of other issues, including poverty, economic inequality, traffic jams, environmental issues, among others,” Go said.

“More importantly, overcrowding in Metro Manila makes it more difficult to contain diseases here, putting us all at risk for future pandemics,” he added.

Go cited data from the Department of Health, which reveal that as of May 1, of the country’s 8,772 COVID-19 infection cases, NCR registered 5,968, representing 68 percent of the total.

Go’s resolution also cited a study of the Asian Development Bank tagging Metro Manila as the most congested natural city in Asia with a population greater than five million.

Traffic congestion alone costs the economy P3.5 billion a day and the situation can get worse at P5.4 billion a day by 2035 if interventions will not be made, according to another study conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Go explained that such overcrowding predisposes Metro Manila to disease outbreaks and makes it harder for the government to contain pandemics in the national capital.

“Given the nature of the virus and the manner by which it is spread between individuals, highly dense communities in Metro Manila explain why nearly seven out of ten infected Filipinos are found in the nation’s capital,” he said.

To alleviate congestion in the metropolis, the senator then highlighted the need to improve the quality of life in the country and improve access to quality social services, especially in rural areas, through a “Balik Probinsya” program.



Senate adopts Go's Balik Probinsya

“The proposed program is envisioned as a multi-sectoral comprehensive program to decongest Metro Manila by helping stranded workers and OFWs, assisting people who want to relocate to the provinces and encouraging people to settle down in the provinces for good,” Go said in his speech.

Go said that “Balik Probinsiya” will also encourage informal settlers and those living in danger areas to move out of Metro Manila and go back to their home provinces by providing them with decent housing, easier access to key services, nearby schools, job and livelihood opportunities and even small-business support in the grassroots level, among others.

He said provincianos like himself are “always fascinated” with Manila which has everything within reach. But he pointed out Sen. Richard Gordon’s observation that 8 out of the top 10 in the recent Bar exams came from the provinces.

He added that the delivery of social services was also adversely affected due to workers being stranded in Metro Manila during quarantine while their families are in the provinces. These included construction workers.

Gordon has manifested his support for the resolution.



City life costly from congestion

May 6, 2020 12:05 AM

By TDT

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/06/city-life-costly-from-congestion/>



As long as Metro Manila remains cramped due to its being the center of commerce and trade, costs on the economy and public health will continue to mount, Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go indicated even as the Senate on 4 May adopted a resolution urging the executive department to formulate and implement a “Balik Probinsya” Program (BPP).

The BPP, a brainchild of Go, aims to decongest Metro Manila, promote a more robust regional development and encourage equitable distribution of wealth, livelihood opportunities and economic growth nationwide.

The proposal also aims to better prepare the country in responding to future pandemics and other crises similar to what Filipinos are now experiencing due to the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) health emergency.

In his sponsorship speech, Go said the COVID-19 pandemic “has exposed and brought to the surface many of our country’s perennial problems, including congestion in our urban centers, particularly in Metro Manila.”

“Such problem results to a whole lot of other issues, including poverty, economic inequality, traffic jams, environmental issues, among others,” Go said.

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“More importantly, overcrowding in Metro Manila makes it more difficult to contain diseases here, putting us all at risk for future pandemics,” he added.

Ideal for contamination

Go cited data from the Department of Health which revealed that, as of 1 May 2020, of the total 8,772 COVID-19 infection cases, the National Capital Region registered a total of 5,968 cases, representing 68 percent of the country’s total.

Go’s resolution also cited a study of the Asian Development Bank tagging Metro Manila as the most congested city in Asia with a population greater than 5 million.

The traffic congestion alone punishes the economy which is deprived of an estimated P3.5 billion a day in terms of productivity which is expected to worsen to P5.4 billion a day in foregone business by 2035 if interventions will not be made, according to another study conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Go explained overcrowding in the capital city exposes residents to disease outbreaks and makes it harder for the government to contain pandemics.



City life costly from congestion

Bad for health

“Given the nature of the virus and the manner by which it is spread between individuals, highly dense communities in Metro Manila explain why nearly seven out of ten infected Filipinos are found in the nation’s capital,” he said.

To alleviate congestion in the metropolis, the Senator then highlighted the need to improve the quality of life in the country and improve access to quality social services, especially in rural areas, through a “Balik Probinsya” Program.

“The proposed program is envisioned as a multi-sectoral comprehensive program to decongest Metro Manila by helping stranded workers and overseas Filipino workers, assisting people who want to relocate to the provinces, and encouraging people to settle down in the provinces for good,” he said in his speech.

Go added the “Balik Probinsiya” program will also encourage informal settlers and those living in danger areas to move out of Metro Manila and go back to their home provinces by providing them with decent housing, easier access to key services, nearby schools, job and livelihood opportunities and even small-business support in the grassroots level.

Starry-eyed town folks

“People who reside in the provinces are always lured to Manila where they believe everything is available but now as Senator (Richard) Gordon has said, eight out of the top 10 in the recent Bar exams came from the provinces,” Go said.

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He added the delivery of social services was also adversely affected due to workers being stranded in Metro Manila during the enhanced community quarantine while their families are in the provinces.

“You know, one of the reasons that several poor Filipinos were not given Social Amelioration Program funds was that majority have families that have been left in the provinces while they work in Manila,” he said.

Go’s fellow Senator Richard Gordon has also manifested his support to the resolution.

“It is my hope that through the BPP, Filipinos will be given the chance to recover after the current crisis. Let us help each other,” he added.

“Together, let us heal as one and give Filipinos ‘hope’ for a better tomorrow,” Go ended.



PDU30, bukas sa ‘out-of-court settlement’ sa water concessionaires

May 5, 2020 @ 7:29 PM

<https://remate.ph/pdu30-bukas-sa-out-of-court-settlement-sa-water-concessionaires/>

Manila, Philippines – Bukas si Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte na idaan sa “out-of-court settlement” sa mga tycoons nasa likod ng water distribution utilities ng Pilipinas ang isyu na kinasasangkutan nito hmatapos na humingi siya ng paumanhin sa mga ito sa masasakit na salitang binitawan nya sa mga ito.

Kapuwa sinabi nina Tycoons Manuel Pangilinan, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, at Fernando Zobel de Ayala na nagpapasalamat sila sa gesture ni Pangulong Duterte at committed na magpatuloy sa pagtulong sa pamahalaan sa ginagawang pagtugon sa COVID-19.

Ang Pangilinan, ng Metro Pacific Investments Corporation ang siyang kumokontrol sa Maynilad Water Services Inc habang ang mga Ayalas naman ang siyang namumuhunan sa Manila Water.

Inakusahan ng Pangulo ang mga nasabing utility companies na ginagatasan ang publiko ng bilyong piso na tumutukoy sa arbitration payments na sa kalaunan ay nabasura

“I think that’s an indication na kung pupwedeng out-of-court settlement, he (Duterte) would explore out-of-court settlement,” ayon kay Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

Lunes ng gabi nang pasalamatan ni Pangulong Duterte ang mga nasabing negosyante dahil sa naiambag ng mga itong tulong sa ginagawang pandemic response at pagkatapos ay humingi ng paumanhin sa mga Pangilinan at Ayalas.

“Yung mga masakit kong salita, to the Ayalas and to, si Pangilinan, I apologize for the hurting words. If you can find it in your heart to forgive me because if you do not, if you do not want to forgive me, I will undercut you, I will go direct to God,” ayon kay Pangulong Duterte.

Ang pamahalaan ay muling nire- renegotiate ang concession agreements sa Manila Water at Maynilad.

“Batas naman ang umiiral diyan. I’m sure the legal studies and legal examination will proceed. Kumbaga sa ordinaryong kasuhan, ‘usap muna tayo bago tayo magdemandahan.’ Siguro yun po ang ibig sabihin ng ating Presidente,” dagdag na pahayag ni Sec. Roque. Kris Jose



Gov't open to out-of-court settlement with two water concessionaires

Published May 5, 2020, 3:54 PM

By Genalyn Kabling

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/05/govt-open-to-out-of-court-settlement-with-two-water-concessionaires/>



The government is open to forging an out-of-court settlement with the two Metro Manila water concessionaires over their controversial water contracts.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque Jr. (CAMILLE ANTE / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

The possibility of settling out of court was raised by presidential spokesman Harry Roque a day after President Duterte apologized to the owners of the two water companies over his hurtful words in the past.

Duterte earlier threatened to sue for plunder the Ayala-led Manila Water Company Inc. and Manuel Pangilinan-led Maynilad Water Services over their alleged onerous water concession agreements.

According to Roque, the President has expressed willingness to talk to Maynilad and Manila Water on how to possibly address the contentious issues in the water concession agreements.

“Sabi naman niya puwedeng mag-usap sa mga issues between these companies and the government so I think that’s an indication kung pupuwedeng (He offered to talk about the issues between these companies and the government so I think that’s an indication that if it is possible for an) out-of-court settlement, he will explore out-of-court settlement,” Roque said during a virtual press briefing on Tuesday.

“Yung mga issues na nilabas ni President remain. Siguro ang pag-uusap ay kung paano babaguhin ang concession agreement nung dalawang kompanya na nagbibigay ng tubig sa atin (The issues raised by the President remain. Maybe they can talk about how to change the concession agreement with the two companies distributing water to us),” he added.

Asked if the two companies will be give a clean slate despite the alleged irregular water contracts, Roque maintained that the government is willing to talk for now.

“Kumbaga sa ordinaryong kasuhan, usap muna tayo bago tayo mag-demandahan. Siguro yun ang ibig sabihin ng ating Presidente (Like in an ordinary case, let’s talk before we file cases. Maybe that’s what the President means),” he said.

In his public address late Monday night, the President made a public apology to the Ayalas and Pangilinan over his past harsh remarks after thanking them for their assistance in the coronavirus response. Duterte said he is ready to talk to these business leaders and vowed to be “nice” and “reasonable” to them.

“The COVID humbled me. That with the kind of response that you gave, showed to the public, it’s a humbling experience also for me that, you know, baka kailangan mo rin sila balang araw,” he said.



Gov't open to out-of-court settlement with two water concessionaires

“Maybe there will be a lot of legal issues but we can talk. I’m ready to talk and I’d be reasonable. Iyong mga masakit kong salita to the Ayalas and to — si Pangilinan, I apologize for the hurting words. If you can find it in your heart to forgive me because if you do not then I will ask, if you do not want to forgive me, I will undercut you. I’ll go directly to God,” he added.

Back in January, the President threatened to cancel the government contracts with two Metro Manila water concessionaires, order the nationalization of their water distribution operations, and prosecute those involved in the alleged irregular deals if they won’t accept newly crafted contracts.

The draft new water deals that will replace the alleged constitutionally flawed water concessionaires agreements have been prepared by the Office of the Solicitor General and the Department of Justice, according to Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo.

President Duterte had earlier expressed outrage over the alleged irregular 25-year water concession contracts sealed in 1997 that supposedly bargained away the country’s sovereignty.

He previously threatened to sue and jail the persons involved in crafting the contract for economic plunder, and allow the military to take over the water operations for the meantime. The water contracts supposedly violated the country’s anti-graft laws so they are considered null and void from the start.

Among the provisions found onerous by the President are the prohibition on government interference in rate adjustments and the indemnity for losses in case of such interference. He was also furious over the extension of the contracts to 2037 that was granted several years before the concession agreement expires in 2022.



Apols launch bourse buying

May 6, 2020 12:05 AM

By AJ Bajo

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/06/apols-launch-bourse-buying/>

President Rodrigo Duterte's effort to patch up with business leaders who earlier crossed paths with him over poor water services last year won wide approval reflected in the stock market index which gained by a substantial 1.79 percent in yesterday's trading.

The tycoons expressed elation yesterday over the gesture of Mr. Duterte in reaching out to them during a late night address on Monday.

of the Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) group and brothers Jaime and Fernando Zobel de Ayala of the property-based conglomerate Ayala Corp. said they were impressed with the President's statement.

"To the Ayalas and to Pangilinan, I apologize for the hurting words. If you can find in your heart to forgive me because if you do not then I will undercut you. I'll go direct to God," Mr. Duterte indicated.

"I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping us, you know, to provide the necessities of the moment. I can promise you that I'll be nice and if you want to see me, we can talk," the President said in the recorded public address.

"I have gone past being mean because the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) made me humble. With the kind of response that you made, showed to the public, it's a humbling experience also for me that, you know, made me realize that we need each other at this time," the Chief Executive added.

Bourse finds energy

The President's initiative fueled the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) to close 99.58 points higher at 5,671.67.

The all shares index finished 1.14 percent higher, to 3,424.98, while the sub-indices closed in green with the exemption of the services index.

"Positive comments from President Duterte in his speech last night toward several business leaders improved the general sentiment and increased optimism, pushing the PSEi higher. He apologized for his harsh words and praised them for cooperating and providing relief during these trying times," head of research for AAA Equities, Christopher Mangun, said in a daily market note.

"Today's gains wiped out almost all its losses from yesterday. Investors cheered the renewed cooperation between government and the private sector which overshadowed concerns of geopolitical tensions abroad," he added.

Shares of Ayala Corp. finished with a 14.73 percent gain while MPIC shares chalked up a 13.55 percent increase. Shares of Manila Water also ended 12.05 percent higher. Maynilad's parents MPIC and DMCI Holdings also finished higher.

Head of sales for Regina Capital Development Corp. Luis Limlingan said overall, the stock market bounced back as signs of rebound in the oil, technology and utilities were observed across the globe.

At the PSE, trading volumes were higher albeit below average at P5.49 billion. Foreign investors switched to buying stance with P86.52 million worth of foreign inflows, cutting over 20 days of consecutive net-selling.



Apols launch bourse buying

Considering Tuesday's gains, Mangun said the benchmark index may move higher in the next days and test resistance at 5,850 to 6,000 level.

Sincere, kind

Pangilinan, in a social media post cited the President's "sincerity and kindness."

"I wish to assure him that our Group is fully committed to being a partner of government in addressing the heartbreaking moments of COVID-19 on our people in building a better tomorrow for them," the President noted.

"We are, and have always been here, for the country," Pangilinan assured Mr. Duterte.

Brothers Jaime and Fernando Zobel de Ayala indicated the same appreciation in a statement sent to media. "We are grateful for President Duterte's statement at the briefing last night. We have always believed in building a strong partnership between the private and public sectors in addressing our country's problems and in investing in the country to create jobs and improve the lives of Filipinos," the Ayalas indicated. Both said they appreciate "the recognition of the Ayala Group's efforts in supporting the administration as it faces the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Conciliatory mood

President Duterte, in his address, recognized that there would be "a lot of legal issues" between the government and the business owners but added he was willing to be "reasonable" the next time they had a chance to talk.

Water concessionaire Manila Water is a subsidiary of AC while Pangilinan's MPIC owns a controlling stake in Maynilad.

In December last year, Duterte threatened to file charges against the two water firms for allegedly entering into onerous agreements with the government.

His tiff with Ayala and Pangilinan started after the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Singapore, in its separate rulings, compelled the government to pay P7.39 billion and P3.4 billion to Manila Water and Maynilad, respectively, for supposed losses and damages suffered by the two water firms.

On 7 January, the President gave the two water firms the option to either accept the new water contracts or face cancellation of their present deals.

Since finding out that the contracts were "disadvantageous" to the government and the public, Duterte said he would not hesitate to have the tycoons detained over syndicated estafa or plunder raps and floated the possibility of asking the military to take over water operations.

In March, Duterte expressed willingness to resolve their conflicts with the two water firms.

Settlement in horizon

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque, however, said legal proceedings will continue with regards to the disputed contracts entered by the government with the water concessionaires.

Roque made the remark when asked during a virtual press briefing in Malacañang Palace if President Rodrigo Duterte apologizing to businessman Manuel Pangilinan and the Ayalas for his "hurtful words," will have any effect on the previous plan by the government to possibly pursue charges against them.

He, however, sees a strong partnership between the government and the private sector particularly in dealing with the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic

Roque, at the same time, said that an on-court settlement could also be explored by the President following his statement Monday night that he is open to talks with the two water firms.



Duterte unlikely to sue water firms after apology to Ayala, Pangilinan business groups – Roque

By [Melissa Luz Lopez, CNN Philippines](#)

Published May 5, 2020 1:54:22 PM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/5/Duterte-out-of-court-settlement-Maynilad-Manila-Water.html>



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 5) – President Rodrigo Duterte is unlikely to sue Maynilad and Manila Water over water supply deals following his apology to the Ayala Group and to Manny Pangilinan, his spokesperson Harry Roque said Tuesday.

Duterte made a [surprise public apology](#) to the Zobel brothers and Pangilinan – who run water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad, respectively – on Monday night after months of repeatedly berating these companies for their supposedly unfair concession agreements to supply water to Metro Manila.

"Sabi naman po niya (Duterte), pwedeng mag-usap sa mga issues between these companies and the government. I think that's an indication na kung pwedeng out-of-court settlement, he would explore out-of-court settlement. Pero 'yung mga issues na nilabas ng Presidente, lalung-lalo na sa water concessions, remain," Roque said in his press briefing.

"Siguro 'yung pag-uusap ay doon sa paano babaguhin 'yung concession agreements ng dalawang kumpanya," he added.

[Translation: The President said it's possible to sit down and discuss these issues between these companies and the government. I think that's an indication that if they can do it via out-of-court settlement, he would explore out-of-court settlement. But the issues which he raised against the water concessions remain. Maybe the talks will now focus on how they will amend the concession agreements with the two companies.]

Prior to the pandemic, the groups were in the middle of [negotiations for new deals](#) with the national government after Duterte complained that they have been unduly benefiting from what he called "onerous contracts" signed back in the 1990s.

The President earlier asked the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to [cancel the extended agreements](#) with the two companies, leaving business beyond 2022 uncertain.

He also threatened to sue the two groups for economic sabotage, [plunder](#), or "estafa on a large scale," even warning that a [government takeover](#) of the water concessions may be an option.

Duterte's tirade was triggered upon learning that the two firms wanted the state to them ₱10.8 billion to cover losses they incurred in the past decade, as ruled by an arbitral court in Singapore.

"Kumbaga sa ordinaryong kasuhan, usap muna tayo bago tayo mag-demandahan. Siguro 'yun po ang ibig sabihin ng ating Presidente [In terms of an ordinary legal process, they will talk first before filing any cases. Maybe that's what the President wanted to say]," Roque added.

On Monday, Duterte had a change of heart as he thanked the Zobel brothers and Pangilinan for their contributions in helping the local COVID-19 response.

"I apologize for the hurting words. If you can find in your heart to forgive me, because if you do not then if you do not want to forgive me I will undercut you I will go direct to God," the President said in a briefing on the government's COVID-19 response.

The two groups accepted the apology in separate statements, with pledges to continue to help in the local COVID-19 fight.



Duterte open to settlement with 2 water concessionaires

By Catherine S. Valente, TMT
May 6, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/06/news/top-stories/duterte-open-to-settlement-with-2-water-concessionaires/722853/>



President Rodrigo Duterte is open to an “out-of-court” settlement with the two Metro Manila water concessionaires, Malacañang said on Tuesday, following his apology to businessmen Manuel Pangilinan and the Ayala clan for his harsh words in the past.

MAN ON TOP President Rodrigo Duterte updates the nation on the government’s efforts in addressing Covid-19 at the Malago Clubhouse in Malacañang on Monday night. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said Duterte’s apology was an “indication” that the President was open to sit down with the businessmen and settle the issue without going to court.

“Sabi naman po niya (Duterte), pwedeng mag-usap sa mga issues between these companies and the government. I think that’s an indication that he would explore out-of-court settlement (The President said it is possible to sit down and discuss these issues between these companies and the government),” Roque said.

“Siguro po ‘yung pag-uusap eh d’un sa kung paapano babaguhin ang concession agreement ng dalawang kumpanya na nagbibigay ng tubig sa atin (Maybe, the talks will focus on how they will amend the concession agreements with the two companies),” he added.

Duterte had railed at the Ayala-led Manila Water Company Inc. and Pangilinan-led Maynilad Water Services Inc. over the alleged onerous water contracts between them and the government.

On Monday, Duterte thanked the Ayalas and Pangilinan for their contribution in helping the government respond to the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

“I apologize for the hurting words. If you can find in your heart to forgive me, because if you do not, I will ask, if you do not want to forgive me, I will undercut you and go directly to God,” Duterte said in his public address late Monday night.

“ I’d like to thank you for helping us provide the necessities of the moment,” he added.

The President admitted that he was humbled by the pandemic and how businesses have pitched in to help contain the spread of the coronavirus.

“I can promise you that I will be nice, and if you want to see we can talk and naubos na ‘yung pagkasuplado ko kasi dahil sa Covid (my arrogance has all been used up because of Covid). The Covid humbled me. With the kind of response that you gave to the public, it’s a humbling experience for me that you know, baka kailangan mo rin sila balang araw (you might need them someday),” he said.

“We can talk. I’m ready to talk and I’ll be reasonable,” the President added.

In a joint statement, the Ayala Group’s Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala and its President and Chief Operating Officer Fernando Zobel de Ayala acknowledged Duterte’s apology.



Duterte open to settlement with 2 water concessionaires

“We are grateful for President Duterte’s statement . We have always believed in building a strong partnership between the private and public sectors in addressing our country’s problems and in investing in the country to create jobs and improve the lives of Filipinos,” they said.

“We appreciate the recognition of the Ayala Group’s efforts in supporting the administration as it faces the challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic,” they added.

Duterte earlier threatened to sue for economic plunder water concessionaires and former government officials following the ruling of a tribunal that the Philippines should pay P7.39 billion to Manila Water.

The Ayala-owned firm brought the government to court for refusing rate hikes from 2013 to 2017, citing its concession deal which pushes the state to “indemnify” the utility firm against any losses that could result from regulatory actions.

Duterte has ordered the crafting of new and “better” concession agreements with the two water firms.



The power of humility

posted May 06, 2020 at 12:10 am

by Lito Banayo

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/323053>

"This is what nationhood is all about."

One cannot but admire the President's admission that he has been "humbled" by the toll of the Covid-19 outbreak into apologizing for the "hurtful words" that he had levelled against some big businessmen in the past, especially the Ayalas and Manny Pangilinan.

"There may be legal issues but I'm ready to talk and I'll be reasonable," the President said in his late night telecast, referring to his government's vow last year to rectify the onerous provisions in the Manila Water and Maynilad concessions to distribute water to Metro Manila residents.

"Yung mga masakit kong talk to Ayalas and Pangilinan, I apologize for the hurting words," adding in a rare show of humility --- "if you can find it in your hearts to forgive me," said Duterte.

When the issue of the one-sided contract that was supposedly disadvantageous to the government and the consumers broke out last year, this writer said that in the end, there must be a compromise between government and the water concessionaires, for we could not imagine ourselves going back to the bad old days when water hardly trickled from faucets and the government was in charge of providing the service.

President Fidel V. Ramos wisely privatized the water service distribution system, which succeeding governments continued. But surely there were onerous provisions in the contracts, and President Duterte balked at these, including the premature extension of the life of the agreements without correcting such provisions for the benefit of the consuming public.

In fairness, President Estrada refused to agree to the service fee increase the Ayalas and Lopezes (then the majority owners of Maynilad) wanted to charge on account of the currency devaluation brought about by the 1997-98 Asian recession. But his tenancy of Malacanang was cut short by Edsa Dos.

Still and all, as the Tagalogs would say, "andyan na iyan," and despite the higher bills, service has improved a hundred times more than when government, through the NAWASA monopoly, was providing the service. Which makes it unacceptable to revert the service provision to government, not even the "military" that President Duterte adverted to taking over.

Secretary Meynard Guevarra started putting the finishing touches on what would be fairer and much-improved agreements, even as the private service providers declared that they would waive the penalties imposed by the Singapore arbitration court which ruled in their favor. Then the country got entrapped into the worldwide pandemic, and all hands had to be on deck to protect the population from the viral contagion.

And despite the bumbling of functionaries, the private sector, from Ramon Ang of San Miguel to Enrique Razon of Bloomberry, the Sys of SM, the Tans and Gokongweis, Villar and Aboitiz, and the "hated" Ayalas and Pangilinan, and many more, helped in procuring the needed supplies and instant infrastructure to assist government in containing the spread of the disease, as well as helping the poorest of the poor in their daily food and basic requirements during the lockdown.



The power of humility

Seeing how crisis of great proportions momentarily unified the country and put legal and political tussles in the backburner, President Duterte took it upon himself to express the gratitude of the State to the private sector, and in a manner of speaking, “ate humble pie” even.

Indeed, there is never anything humiliating about being humble, and what the President expressed Monday night proved that he understands the power of humility.

It gives every Filipino inspiration that as we finally recover from this crisis of gargantuan proportions, the seeds of national unity will be watered, essential as it is to rehabilitating a hugely damaged economy.

But beyond the coronavirus tragedy and the crisis it has spawned, this public-private partnership in helping the nation should likewise focus on the rich helping the poor and marginalized, the most vulnerable sectors whether in crisis or normalcy in a land yet benighted by a history of failed policies and wrong leadership.

The most important lesson that we should collectively realize, seeing how the poor and marginalized have been the most affected by months of lockdown, is the social and economic inequality present in a population of more than a hundred million souls.

The recovery will be painful more to these marginalized sectors because while business profit will take a shelling, the rich have savings to see them through while the poor, burdened in the past by surviving in an unequal society, will have no fallback, except to rely on a government itself heavily burdened by loss of tax revenues and huge crisis expenditures.

President Rodrigo Duterte’s public expression of humility will hopefully inspire the private sector, from the titans listed by Forbes to the lesser known but still wealthy individuals and companies to be more mindful of their corporate social responsibilities and dedicate more of their efforts to doing more, much more, to creating a better social equilibrium as we learn from the lessons of the worst crisis that “invaded” us since the Pacific War which anyone below eighty years hardly experienced.

The power of humility shown by arguably the most powerful president since Marcos, is the wellspring from which all of us must learn what unity means, and what nationhood is all about.



ALAK NAKATUTULONG PARA SA SOCIAL DISTANCING?

May 5, 2020 @ 1:30 PM

<https://remate.ph/alak-nakatutulong-para-sa-social-distancing/>

NITONG nagdaang mga araw lamang, nagdeklara ang pamahalaan ng India ng kahawig ng ating sariling General Community Quarantine.

Ito'y makaraan ang matagal-tagal na pagpapairal nila ng pambansang community quarantine na mas istrikto sa GCQ.

Siyempre pa, nagsilabasan ang mga tao para bumili ng gusto nilang bilhin dahil marami-rami rin ang nagbukas na tindahan para sa sari-saring pangangailangan ng mga Bumbay.

Ito'y kahit na may 46,437 kumpirmadong positibo sa Corona Virus Disease-19, kasama na ang bagong 3,601 naimpeksyon sa nakalipas na 24 oras at 1,566 patay, kasama ang 171 kasasawi.

TINDAHAN NG ALAK DINUMOG

Ang naging kapuna-puna sa lahat ay nang dumugin ng mga mamamayan ang mga tindahan ng alak.

Nauhaw sa alak ang mga manginginom.

Ang tindahan ng alak ang unang nauubusan ng paninda kaysa sa ibang mga pangangailangan.

'Yun pala, hawak ng India ang rekord na kalahati ng konsumo sa alak sa buong mundo ang sa kanila.

Imadyinin mo nga naman na may 1,351,122,408 Bumbay at sila ang susunod sa China na may pinakalamalaking populasyon sa bilang na 1,438,449,627.

PANLABAN SA COVID-19

Sabi ng mga Bumbay, panlaban umano sa Covid-19 ang alak.

Kung makabibili sila ng alak na konsumo nang matagal-tagal, makatutulong umano ito sa patakarang social distancing.

'Yun bang === hindi na maikikiamot ang isang taong manginginom sa kapitbahay na merong alak.

Hindi rin dadalo sa mga pagtitipon na nag-aalok ng alak bilang mahalagang sangkap ng okasyon.

Kanya-kanyang inom sa bahay at walang labasan.

Kaya nga, may social distancing na, may stay at home pa.



ALAK NAKATUTULONG PARA SA SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Kaya naman, dito umano nakatutulong ang alak laban sa nakamamatay na sakit.

Eh kung ito ang paniniwala nila, maaaring makatulong nga laban sa Covid-19.

MAGTUTUBA O MAGLALAMBANOG

Nitong nakaraang Biyernes, namatay ang apat katao sa Ragay, Camarines Sur makaraang mag-inuman ng tuba o lambanog mula sa Buli Palm.

Nakilala ang mga biktima na sina sina Armando Diaz Ollano, 56, kapatid na si Reynaldo, 63, Bertito Recomanta Casitas, 62 at isang Belen na pawang taga-Brgy. Upper Omon, Ragay at namatay sa Bicol Medical Center habang ginagamot.

Ang tatlong biktima na sina Maribel delos Santos, 50; Adriano Balmes, 44; Doroy de Torres at Rodolfo Abellada, 53, ay ginagamot din sa ospital.

Maaaring nalason umano ang mga biktima at galing ang lason sa isang halamang tinatawag na bayate na nakapulupot sa palm tree na ang bunga ay pinagkunan ng tuba o lambanog.

Maalaalang kasama ang Bicol Region sa Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine at nitong Mayo 1, idineklara na ng pamahalaan na under General Community Quarantine na lamang ito.

Kaya naisipan ng mga biktima ang mag-inuman marahil sa kanilang sariling bahay at bakuran?

Kahit kasi nasa GCQ ang isang lugar, bawal ang mag-inuman sa “public places” o labas ng mga tahanan at bakuran.

Pero hindi na yata bawal ang bumili ng alak kagaya ng nagaganap sa mga ECQ area.

Pahamak ang GCQ kaya may nagnanais na ibalik muna ang Bicol Region sa ECQ?

Ingat na lang sa mga adik sa alak at uhaaaaw na uhaaaaaw sa alak.

Baka magka-social distancing at stay at home forever sila.



New guidelines on ECQ out

May 6, 2020 03:16 AM

By Francis Wakefield

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/06/new-guidelines-on-ecq-out/>



Police man a quarantine checkpoint in the boundary of San Mateo, Rizal and Quezon City. (Photo by Analy Labor)

Malacañang announced Tuesday that the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID) has released the updated guidelines for the declaration, extension or lifting of community quarantine in cities and provinces.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the updated guidelines include the classification of

quarantine contained in the IATF-MEID Resolution Number 32 which was approved following task force's meeting on Monday.

“So mayroon na po tayong basehan kung kailan po mai-lift o magpapatuloy ang ECQ (enhanced community quarantine) sa mga probinsiya, highly urbanized cities and independent component cities,” Roque said during a virtual press briefing in Malacañang Palace on Tuesday.

Roque said the IATF also approved the creation of a Screening and Validation Committee composed of undersecretaries from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Health (DoH), Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and other agencies.

“And mandato po nitong Screening and Validation Committee ay para magkaroon po ng isang proseso kung saan iaapila o iba-validate iyong desisyon sa mga lugar na magpapatuloy ang ECQ o di naman kaya ay bababa na sa GCQ (general community quarantine),” Roque said.

“Nagkaroon din po nang pag-a-approve doon sa iba’t ibang mga aktibidades na ipaalam sa nasabing mga classification at decision tools,” he added.

Roque said the Omnibus Guidelines on the Quarantine and Testing of Repatriates as presented by the DoH, and as amended, was adopted by the IATF-MEID.

Roque said the NTF Sub-Task Group for the Repatriation of Overseas Filipino Workers is directed to refer to the guidelines in the issuance of the Interim Guidelines on the Management on the Returning Overseas Filipinos (ROFs) and Locally Stranded Individuals (LSIs).

“Nagkaroon din po ng approval iyong guidelines and quarantine and testing of repatriations as presented by the Department of Health. Ano ho ngayon ang ating patakaran? Lahat po ng Pilipino pagdating sa airport or sa puerto ay kinakailangan mag-PCR test,” Roque said.

“Habang hinihintay po ang resulta ng PCR tests, kinakailangan po manatili sa facility quarantine. Puwede po na manatili iyong ilan sa ating mga We Heal as One Center, pero karamihan po ng OFW ay babayaran po ng OWWA ang kanilang quarantine. Ito po ay hanggang dalawa o di naman kaya ay tatlong araw dahil hinihintayin lang po ang resulta. Kung negatibo naman po ang resulta, pupuwede na po silang umuwi sa kanilang mga tahanan pero kinakailangan pa rin mag-14-day home quarantine,” Roque said.



CSC recommends digital hiring, gov't transactions

By Oliver T. Baccay Published on May 5, 2020

<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1040997>

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan, May 5 (PIA) - - With the new normal situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) region 2 has recommended adaptation of digital platforms in hiring of personnel and other government related transactions.

Regional Director Nerissa Canguilan said the government agencies may opt to accept appointments and documents from applicants online, especially if the position is urgently needed.

"We can do virtual interview of applicants and even oath takings, it can be done virtual to avoid huge number of people transacting in the offices considering the situation we are now experiencing," Canguilan said.

She also urged government agencies to explore the possibility of implementing digital transactions among their clientele, especially those in the frontline services which have been catering to huge number of clients daily.

On the other hand, Canguilan also announced that the scheduled August paper and pencil professional and subprofessional examination is cancelled that is why application is still suspended.

Earlier, the examinations scheduled last March have been cancelled due to the global health pandemic. (MDCT/OTB/PIA-Cagayan)



'Hybrid' setup for SONA feasible, says Gatchalian

Published May 5, 2020 11:49am

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/736873/hybrid-setup-for-sona-feasible-says-gatchalian/story/>

A non-conventional setup for President Rodrigo Duterte's next State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July could be mounted amid the COVID-19 situation in the country, according to Senator Sherwin Gatchalian on Tuesday.

In an interview on ANC, Gatchalian said the current "hybrid" session and hearings in Congress could be adopted to ensure the safety of the 75-year-old Chief Executive.

"This will be definitely a feasible setup for the President, especially [as] the President is also at his advanced age and we need him to limit his movements also and to limit his interactions with people. So this is a feasible setup even for the SONA," the senator said.

Nonetheless, Gatchalian said the situation may still change in the next few weeks and plans could be made clearer by then.

"After May 15, we will be entering the GCQ (general community quarantine) hopefully. Hopefully, by that time also the situation will start to taper off and by SONA, we'll have a more or less normalized condition for the SONA," he added.

On Monday, Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri said he thinks "business as usual" at the upcoming SONA would be impossible.

The SONA is a constitutional obligation, required by Article VII, Section 23 of the 1987 Constitution. The President of the Philippines delivers the annual SONA at the Session Hall of the House of Representatives in Batasang Pambansa Complex, Quezon City. —Dona Magsino/KG, GMA News



Most renewable energy plants continue to operate during lockdown

May 5, 2020 | 8:25 pm

<https://www.bworldonline.com/most-renewable-energy-plants-continue-to-operate-during-lockdown/>



RENEWABLE energy power plants are still running with no impact from the disruptions caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) emergency, the industry's regulator said.

“Most if not all RE (renewable energy) plants have been operating in spite of the effects of COVID-19, and were not affected by (the) disruptions,” according to Monalisa C. Dimalanta, chairman of the National Renewable Energy Board (NREB).

“This is one key advantage of RE over non-RE plants, which is highlighted in our current situation,” she added.

The Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) rules for both on-grid and off-grid areas are due for full implementation this year. The standards require power utilities, including electric cooperatives, retail electricity suppliers, and generation companies with directly connected customers, to generate or source some of their electricity requirements from eligible renewable resources.

As of March 31, there are 127 eligible renewable power plants with a total capacity of 2,221.15 megawatts which are potential sources of clean power resources.

Eligible generators include facilities using biomass, waste-to-energy, wind energy, solar energy, run-of-river hydroelectric power systems, impounding hydroelectric power systems, ocean energy, geothermal energy, hybrid systems as defined by the Renewable Energy Act, and other renewable energy technologies that may be later identified by the DoE.

The RPS rules set an annual incremental percentage of electricity sold by power utilities at less than 1% of their annual energy demand.

Households in areas unserviceable by power grids are provided with electricity from renewable resources, the developers of which are entitled to a half of the collected universal charges for missionary electrification.

The NREB is still awaiting the decision of the Department of Energy (DoE) on some other facilities that applied for eligibility. — Adam J. Ang



Clinical trial set for Japanese drug Avigan — DoH

May 5, 2020 06:16 PM

By MJ Blancaflor

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/05/clinical-trial-set-for-japanese-drug-avigan-doh/>



AVIGAN is reportedly contra-indicated for pregnant women. W. Commons

The Philippines will launch a clinical trial to ensure the effectiveness and safety of Japanese anti-flu drug Avigan in treating patients with the new coronavirus disease (COVID19), the Department of Health (DoH) announced Tuesday.

“We would like to thank Japan for expressing its willingness to give free supply of anti-flu drug Avigan. This drug is showing hope that in the fight against COVID19,” DoH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said.

“We will immediately have a clinical trial to ensure it is effective and safe for Filipinos,” she added.

The drug reportedly yielded positive results in treating COVID19 patients in China, especially those with mild symptoms. It, however, was reported to have side effects on pregnant women.

Tokyo has vowed to provide Avigan for free to 38 countries and has requested the drug manufacturer, Fujifilm Toyama Chemical Co., to boost its production.

The Philippines is part of the COVID19 Solidarity Trial launched by the World Health Organization to test the effectiveness of litonavir, ritonavir, hydroxychloroquine, and remdesivir in treating patients.

The country has also been working on a clinical trial on convalescent plasma therapy, which involves blood plasma transfusion of a COVID19 patient who has recovered from the illness.

There is no specific treatment yet for COVID19 which can cause severe pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome in some patients, but many of the symptoms can be treated.



Redev't of parks begins as quarantine rejuvenates Baguio flowers, forests

By: [Vincent Cabreza](#) - Reporter / [@Inquirer Baguio](#)

[Inquirer Northern Luzon](#) / 05:19 PM May 05, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1270108/redevt-of-parks-begins-as-quarantine-rejuvenates-baguio-flowers-forests>



Baguio gardeners trim trees along Session Road in Baguio City on Tuesday, after discovering that the slowdown of human activity seemed to have rejuvenated Baguio's flora during the quarantine. Vincent Cabreza

BAGUIO CITY — The city's gardeners on Tuesday (May 5) began sprucing up roadside islands and Baguio parks, after observing that flowers and trees have been rejuvenated in the last two months of the Luzon quarantine, the city environment and parks management office (Cepmo) said.

Earlier on Monday (May 4), CEPMO resumed work on the Botanical Garden, part of a redevelopment initiative undertaken by Mayor Benjamin Magalong, said Rhenan Diwas, assistant city environment officer.

The revitalized parks would be featured in an online tour of Baguio called "Dream Now, Travel Later," which was developed by Tourism Officer Aloysius Mapalo to "whet the appetites of tourists about a return to Baguio," Diwas said.

Tourism remains at the bottom of a list of industries that have been prioritized for reopening in light of 24-hour curfew restrictions.

Mapalo has been posting online photographs and videos of popular Baguio destinations hoping to sustain interest in the country's summer capital.

The absence of park visitors appears to have benefited the environment.

Park management employees have noticed that the flowers planted in mini-parks along major streets have flourished because of the drop in human activity, Diwas said.

"We could not grow begonias at the mini-islands along Magsaysay Avenue in 2016 because of the vehicular smoke. Now they're blossoming," Diwas said.

Cepmo gardeners began preparation work on the Botanical Garden so they can lay out new flower beds in time for the monsoon season, he said. Rains have been falling in the city since last week.

After May 15 when the extended Baguio quarantine is lifted, many of the Cepmo staff would be put to work laying down new landscapes at the Botanical Garden, such as lush carpets filled with yellow margarets to accentuate a section filled with elephant statues donated by the Thai Royal Family.



Redev't of parks begins as quarantine rejuvenates Baguio flowers, forests

Diwas said Cepmo intends to plant new pine trees at an Arboretum that is being constructed near the Botanical Garden, as well as introduce decorative trees like the Jakaranda.

An arboretum is a tree garden, which would be augmented with elevated walkways that lead into the Garden.

A water system will also be installed at the Garden to sustain the flower beds that would be planted there.

Cepmo also plans to add more flowers at the Malcolm Square at the central business district.

He said flowers and trees have also become robust in major promenade areas like the iconic Burnham Park, which has not been visited by Baguio families nor tourists since March 17.

Burnham Park is being rehabilitated by the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority, but development work there slowed down due to the lockdown.

As of May 2, Baguio has recorded 30 patients infected with the coronavirus disease, 15 of them still undergoing treatment at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

The city health services office said the city has 372 patients suspected of having contracted the virus, while 1,294 people have been classified as probable COVID-19 cases.



More cruise ships park at Manila Bay

By Genivi Factao

May 6, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/06/business/maritime-business/more-cruise-ships-park-at-manila-bay/722951/>

International cruise line operators have included the Philippines in their Southeast Asian itineraries but this time, not to bring tourists but to send home Filipino crews brought on by the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said 13 cruise ships were at the Manila Bay anchorage area as of May 4 and eight more ships are expected to arrive, carrying thousands of Filipino seafarers.

PCG Commandant Admiral Joel Garcia said there were 4,179 Filipino seafarers onboard cruise ships at the Manila Bay anchorage area at the PCG National Headquarters.

A PCG medical team has administered rapid antibody testing for coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) to 2,780 Filipino seafarers aboard cruise ships. There were 532 seafarers onboard the Queen Elizabeth cruise ship; 229 in Sun Princess; 298 in Sapphire Princess; 467 in Voyagers of the Seas; 284 in Sea Princess; 314 in Pacific Explorer; 215 in Pacific Dawn; and 441 in Majestic Princess.

The rapid testing is a precautionary measure before their disembarkation in Manila.

PCG Acting Deputy Chief for Civil Relations Service Commodore Armando A. Balilo said they have ensured the safety and security of cruise ships at the Manila Bay anchorage area, while waiting for the go-signal to disembark hundreds of Filipino seafarers.

“The seafarers of cruise ships underwent swab tests. There were more cruise ships coming and some wanted to dock in Subic port. There were new protocols on disembarkation of seafarers,” Balilo said.

The result of the test can be seen after two days. If they will be tested positive for Covid-19, they will be brought to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine or another hospital.

The Filipino seafarers manning cruise ships, who were issued with a clean bill of health by the Bureau of Quarantine, would be allowed to forego the 14-day mandatory facility-based quarantine.

PCG would assist them in returning to their respective home provinces.

“It so fulfilling,” said one PCG medical technologist, after they finished the rapid antibody testing for Covid-19 for 532 Filipino seafarers of Queen Elizabeth that took them four hours to complete.

When the medical personnel disembarked to go back to the PCG headquarters, Filipino seafarers shouted to express gratitude and appreciation to the services rendered by the health workers. The medical service of the PCG also thanked them for the support and trust bestowed on them.

“We only wished for your continuous support to ensure safety of all against the threats of coronavirus 2019. Again, thank you very much,” a PCG medical personnel said.

Earlier, a total of 438 Filipino crew members of Grand Princess Cruise ship arrived in Clark Airbase in Pampanga. All the repatriates were brought to the Athletes’ Village in New Clark City and underwent 14-day quarantine.



IP leaders hit solon's 'absence' amid pandemic

By Alexander Lopez May 5, 2020, 10:27 pm
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1101961>



AID TO IP COMMUNITIES. Lianga town Mayor Novelita Sarmen (2nd from left); Lt. Col. Joey Baybayan, commander of the Army's 3rd Special Forces Battalion; and Dir. Rey Cueva of TESDA-Surigao del Sur; lead the distribution of food packs to nearly 100 Manobo families in Barangay Diatagon on Tuesday (May 5, 2020). Indigenous peoples (IP) leaders in the Surigao del Sur towns of Lianga and Marihatag are dismayed over the alleged neglect of Bayan Muna Party-list Rep. Eufemia Cullamat of the Manobo tribe. *(Photo courtesy of 3SFBn)*

BUTUAN CITY – Indigenous peoples' (IPs) leaders in the Surigao del Sur towns of Lianga and Marihatag are dismayed over the alleged neglect of Bayan Muna Party-list Rep. Eufemia Cullamat of the Manobo tribe amid the 2019 coronavirus disease (Covid-19) crisis.

"Eufemia Cullamat is homegrown and already in Congress but is selective in helping the IPs," said Hawudon Jumar Bucales, the Indigenous People Mandatory Representative (IPMR) in Lianga town, in a statement issued on Tuesday.

Cullamat and Bucales belong to the Manobo tribe in the area.

Bucales issued the criticism on the same day the local government units (LGUs) of Lianga and Marihatag distributed some 200 food packs among the Manobo families in both towns together with the Army's 3rd Special Forces Battalion (3SFBn) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

The distribution in Lianga was held at the Manobo community in Sitio Simuwao (Kilometer 9) in Barangay Diatagon, and in Sitio Lucnobon, Barangay Mahaba, in Marihatag.

Bucales accused Cullamat of playing favorites by prioritizing the members of MAPASU--a leftist IP organization--to the disadvantage of the majority of the Manobo tribe members in Surigao del Sur.

MAPASU, or the Malahutayong Pakigbisug Alang sa Sumusunod, has long been accused by the military as being influenced and infiltrated by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Lianga's tribal chieftain, Datu Constancio Duhac, shared Bucales's view, saying Cullamat failed to allocate anything for the establishment of IP schools and farm-to-market roads in the area.

Duhac said the Bayan Muna solon has not been seen by the majority of the Manobos in Surigao del Sur for a long time, nor did they hear any help from the lawmaker amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It would be good to see if Eufemia Cullamat would work together with the members of ELCAC (Ending Local Communist Armed Conflict) to end to the ordeals of the IPs in the hands of the communist NPA terrorists," Duhac said.



IP leaders hit solon's 'absence' amid pandemic

Bucales and Duhac expressed gratitude to the LGUs, national government agencies, and the Army for the "continued support" to the IP communities in the area.

The relief distribution to IP communities Tuesday was led by Mayor Novelita Sarmen of Lianga, Mayor Justine Marc Pelenio of Marihatag, Lt. Col. Joey B. Baybayan, 3SFBn commander, and Director Rey Cueva of TESDA-Surigao del Sur.

In a separate statement Tuesday, 1Lt. Krisjuper Andreo J. Punsalan, 3SFBn civil-military operations officer, said Sitio Simuwao in Lianga and Sitio Lucnodon in Marihatag are some of IP communities that have openly rejected the NPA and its alleged front--the MAPASU.

"As the IPs of Simuwao and Lucnobon stood their ground against the NPA, the government will not leave them especially during the time of the crisis brought about by the Covid-19," Punsalan added.

Brig. Gen. Allan Hambala, commander of the Army's 401st Infantry Brigade, vowed to continue holding relief efforts for the IP communities in Surigao del Sur.

"We have to remember that we do not only address the Covid-19 virus but also the Communist NPA Terrorist virus that corrupted our society for years. We have to put an end to both viruses," Hambala said. (PNA)



Factory output fell in March; drop in fuel products cited

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

May 6, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/06/business/business-top/factory-output-fell-in-march-drop-in-fuel-products-cited/722963/>

The country's manufacturing production, both in volume and value, fell in March, partly on the back of the decrease in petroleum products, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Tuesday.

Results of the statistics agency's latest Monthly Integrated Survey of Selected Industries showed that the volume of production index (VoPi) contracted by 6.3 percent in March from the revised 4.0-percent expansion in February. The March figure is also slower than the 8.8-percent drop posted a year earlier.

Industry groups that saw month-on-month declines included petroleum products (-34.3 from -32.9 percent); tobacco products (-33.9 from -29.3 percent); miscellaneous manufacturers (-29 from -22 percent); nonmetallic mineral products (-24.8 from 6.1 percent); paper and paper products (-22.8 from -6 percent); and electrical machinery (-20.1 from -5.7 percent).

Also declining were machinery, except electrical (-10.1 from 25.9 percent); beverages (-10.4 from 12.7 percent); food manufacturing (-2.3 from 5.8 percent); basic metals (-6.7 from -10.3 percent); textiles (-9.9 from -5.1 percent); rubber and plastic products (-4.4 from 3.6 percent); leather products (-15 from -13.3 percent); and fabricated metal products (-0.4 from 29.3 percent).

The value of production index (VaPi), meanwhile, slid by 11.3 percent, faster than the revised 1-percent decrease in February and the 4.4-percent drop in March 2019.

The PSA attributed the month-on-month fall in the indices of 17 major industry groups. Of these, three sank by at least 30 percent: petroleum products (-40.5 from -32.3 percent), tobacco products (-30.9 from -26.1 percent) and miscellaneous manufactures (-30.2 from -23.8 percent).

Decreases were also seen in electrical machinery (-24.5 from -8.9 percent); machinery except electrical (-12.7 from 21.6 percent); nonmetallic mineral products (-27.5 from 2.7 percent); footwear and wearing apparel (-20.1 from -4.4 percent); basic metals (-13.3 from -14.9 percent); and paper and paper products (-25.7 from -9.7 percent).



Pilipinas Shell to suspend Batangas refinery operations

By Jordeene B. Lagare

May 6, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/06/business/companies/pilipinas-shell-to-suspend-batangas-refinery-operations/722957/>

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. is suspending the operations of its Tabangao crude oil refinery in Batangas province for about a month starting mid-May while grappling with low fuel demand.

In a disclosure on Tuesday, the listed oil firm said the temporary shutdown was a response “to the drastic decline in local product demand and the significant deterioration of regional refining margins brought about [by] the Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic.”

Pilipinas Shell will also use this opportunity “to conduct proactive maintenance activities in the refinery while we re-assure the public that we comply with the minimum inventory requirements of the government,” it added.

“The temporary shutdown will help insulate the company from further potential drops in refining margins and will also aid in its cash conservation initiatives.”

Pilipinas Shell said the refinery — which is capable of producing 110,000 barrels a day — can resume operations immediately should market and demand conditions improve and stabilize.

Since March, several parts of the country, including Luzon, have been placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to curb the spread of the virus. The lockdown is expected to be lifted on May 15.

While the island was under quarantine, Pilipinas Shell prepared itself by developing the flexibility to switch from refinery production to full import of petroleum products, thereby safeguarding the continuous and cost-effective supply of high-quality fuels to the country.

“Pilipinas Shell will continue to reinforce its financial resilience through cash conservation measures to position the company for the subsequent economic recovery of the Philippines from the crisis,” it said.

Earlier, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order 113, which imposed an additional 10-percent import duty on crude oil and refined petroleum products to fund the government’s Social Amelioration Program.

Proceeds from these levies shall augment government resources to sufficiently finance the programs and measures to mitigate the effects of the health crisis, and launch the country toward “recovery and rehabilitation.”

Pilipinas Shell shares grew by 22 centavos or 1.19 percent to close at P18.74 each on Tuesday.



Ready or not for lifting of COVID-19 lockdown?

GOTCHA - Jarius Bondoc (The Philippine Star) - May 6, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2020/05/06/2012090/ready-or-not-lifting-covid-19-lockdown>

Community lockdown was not to end the COVID-19 pandemic. It was only to buy us time.

Did we gear up for return to semi-normal?

Even with precautions, tens of millions of workers will be taking their chances against deadly infection. Vital is to detect, test, isolate, treat every suspected case, as WHO prescribes. It's unclear if DOH already has enough of its preferred Polymerase Chain Reaction test kits. Flagship Projects chief Vince Dizon is rushing to build 61 processing labs to bolster the present 17. National Action Plan chief Carlito Galvez had wanted 30,000 tests a day, or a million a month, starting last Apr. 15. Hailed by epidemiologist as a modest doable, it had to be moved to May 15. From DOH data last week only 4,674 persons were tested; 5,182 if retests are counted, as infectees need up to three or four times.

Dearth of kits and labs sullies the reports. Test results are a week late, infectious disease specialist Dr. Benjamin Co notes in his blog, relativejoyforyou.wordpress.com. If not real-time, reports throw off decision makers.

DOH is unable to capture all data, another medical leader adds. No one knows if recent deaths in homes and small hospitals from TB, pneumonia, COPD and other respiratory ailments – among the top six causes of Filipino mortality this decade – were hastened by COVID-19. (China and New York had to redo pandemic figures on belated analyses of fatalities.) DOH counts only 623 pandemic deaths since Jan. Recorded Philippine deaths from all causes and age groups in 2013 was 531,280. If that average 44,000 deaths a month persists today, how many are induced by COVID-19 infection?

"We are not bending the curve," warns Dr. Co, a pharmacologist as well. DOH's website has a linear graph of daily new cases, recoveries and deaths. In Dr. Co's blog a logarithmic scale shows the doubling time of infectees. From an exponential growth every 7.2 days as of May 1, decision makers can plot weeks ahead.

Dr. Co advocates wider testing. Limiting it to "only patients with severe symptoms [will] miss the majority – those with mild or no symptoms" who can be spreading disease, he says. "The quality of these numbers ... has ramifications on contact tracing, isolation and workup of patients."

But contact tracing is inexistent, Sen. Sonny Angara has said. Other than going after critics of the administration in Jan.-Mar., elite investigation agencies have not trained volunteers. Amply reported was Wuhan's 1,800 teams of five members each seeking out every exposed person. Too, that South Korea and Taiwan ably used tracking apps. Newly appointed Galvez has to take on that work himself.

Sleaze and neglect mar the effort. Five state facilities swiftly were refurbished to quarantine and treat mild infectees for free. Yet labor bureaucrats leased for manning contractors inapt hotels and resorts in Manila and Batangas to house repatriated overseas workers. There the "guests" mixed with staff untrained for COVID-19 and unsuspecting neighbors. Police squads were made to guard round the clock handfuls of repatriates. Still sly ones managed to shorten their hotel quarantine by getting "special clearance." (Government sources have provided documents.) Some of them sneaked into hometowns. Alert health officers in Cebu city and province detected and tested them to be infected.



Ready or not for lifting of COVID-19 lockdown?

Not all provinces and cities are as prepared as Cebu, Valenzuela, or Marikina. Those local governments built and fund their own isolation, testing, and treatment centers for mild cases. They stockpiled medicines and supplies, and recruited healthcare workers to free nearby hospitals for severe and critical cases. Most LGUs have overlooked the advice of infectious disease physician Dr. Dennis Garcia to rely on own resources.

The national government is short on support for private hospitals that bear bulk of the anti-COVID-19 work. The University of Santo Tomas Hospital announced a layoff of employees since PhilHealth has not reimbursed it P180 million in patient-care advances for six months. PhilHealth denies the UST claim. Yet it pays hospitals only P43,997, P143,267, P333,519, and P786,384 per mild, moderate, severe, and critical COVID-19 case. Those are but fractions of true treatment cost. One PCR test alone is P6,000-P8,000, plus P2,000-P4,000 per set of personal protective equipment of attending doctors, nurses, x-ray and lab technicians, and orderlies. Hospitals are barred from charging any more than PhilHealth's limits. There has been no help from government for hospitals to acquire additional ventilators and ICU gear.

The rains have come. Brace for dengue, seasonal flu, and measles, warns Dr. Tony Leachon, special adviser to Galvez.

DOH reports that 1,772 health workers have been infected as of May 3 – 19.2 percent of confirmed COVID-19 cases. The state's premiere Research Institute for Tropical Medicine has suffered cluster outbreak. So have frontline Lung Center, San Lazaro, two other public, and possibly private hospitals too. If that can happen to health professionals, then more so to ordinary folk when lockdown ends.

Retrofitted quarantine and treatment facility, the Manila South Harbor passenger terminal is now fully occupied. All 211 beds are devoted to Filipino seafarers and cruise staff repatriated last week. The state property is the first to be converted to pandemic emergency use. Initiated by Ports Authority general manager Jay Daniel Santiago, rush work was funded by the Lopez Group under First Pacific Holdings chairman Federico Lopez. The latter's P100-million donation is for other transport department anti-pandemic supplies as well.

Water is provided by Maynilad, electricity including 24/7 air-conditioning by Meralco, Wi-Fi by Asian Terminals Inc., food by the Philippine Coast Guard. Defense Sec. and Task Force head Delfin Lorenzana noted the facility was better than many he has visited in Asia.



Hot and hotter in Metro Manila

Helen Flores (The Philippine Star) - May 6, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/06/2012092/hot-and-hotter-metro-manila>



This was recorded at the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) Science Garden in Quezon City at 2:45 p.m. Meanwhile, the state weather bureau said the Philippines registered on Monday its hottest temperature since 2018.

Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The temperature in Metro Manila hit 37.3 degrees Celsius yesterday, the hottest recorded so far this year.

This was recorded at the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) Science Garden in Quezon City at 2:45 p.m. Meanwhile, the state weather bureau said the Philippines registered on Monday its hottest temperature since 2018.

The temperature hit 40 degrees Celsius in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, PAGASA reported yesterday.



10 to 13 tropical storms to enter or develop inside PAR from May to October — Duterte report

Published May 5, 2020 12:26pm

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/weather/736881/10-to-13-tropical-storms-to-enter-or-develop-inside-par-from-may-to-october-duterte-report/story/>

Around 10 to 13 tropical storms may enter or develop within the Philippine Area of Responsibility during the wet season this year, President Rodrigo Duterte told Congress.

Duterte made the statement as he updated lawmakers on the water level at Angat Dam, which supplies 96% of Metro Manila's water needs.

“Based on forecasts of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, the water level in the Angat Dam will not fall below the minimum operating level (180 meters) in June of this year as the country expects 10 to 13 tropical cyclones to enter or develop inside the Philippine Area of Responsibility from May to October 2020,” he said.

An average of 20 tropical cyclones lash the Philippines each year, killing hundreds of people and destroying homes, infrastructure and other properties. — Virgil Lopez/RSJ, GMA News



4.3-magnitude quake jolts Zamboanga del Sur

Published May 5, 2020, 8:36 AM

By Mike Crismundo

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/05/4-3-magnitude-quake-jolts-zamboanga-del-sur/>

BUTUAN CITY – A 4.3-magnitude earthquake jolted Zamboanga del Sur province on Tuesday morning, May 5, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

In its bulletin, Phivolcs said the tremor was recorded at 5:43 a.m.

The epicenter was plotted five kilometers (kms) northeast of Domingag, Zamboanga del Sur province.

The earthquake had a shallow depth of two kms, Phivolcs said.

The earthquake was tectonic in origin, and no aftershock or tsunami alert was raised by the state agency.

The Zamboanga Peninsula office of Civil Defense and provincial disaster risk reduction and management council there reported no damage or injury.

Coronavirus is causing a flurry of plastic waste. Campaigners fear it may be permanent

By Rob Picheta, CNN

Published May 5, 2020 1:19:44 PM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/5/coronavirus-plastic-waste-pollution.html>



Discarded masks and gloves have become a common sight in cities around the world.

(CNN) — All of the defining images of the coronavirus pandemic seem to feature one thing: plastic.

Surgical masks, gloves, protective equipment, body bags -- the Covid-19 crisis has spurred a rapid expansion in the production of desperately-needed plastic products, with governments racing to boost their stockpiles and regular citizens clamoring for their share

of supplies.

Such production is necessary. But all that plastic ends up somewhere — and environmental campaigners fear it is just the tip of a looming iceberg, with the pandemic causing a number of serious challenges to their efforts to reduce plastic pollution.

From people discarding plastic gloves and masks in cities across the world to important regulations on the use of plastic being scrapped, rolled back or delayed, the problem has taken a back seat during one of the most significant public health crises of modern times.

The implications of those trends could spell years of trouble for our already polluted oceans.

"We know that plastic pollution is a global problem — it existed before the pandemic," Nick Mallos of US-based NGO Ocean Conservancy tells CNN. "(But) we've seen a lot of industry efforts to roll back some of the great progress that's been made.

"We need to be quite cautious about where we go, post-pandemic," Mallos adds.

PPE adding to oceans' plastic burden

The coronavirus crisis has sparked a personal protective equipment (PPE) arms race around the world as governments rush to stockpile masks, gloves, visors and gowns. The battle has proven so intense that some have resorted to international mudslinging.

It comes as a growing number of countries encourage or order their citizens to wear face coverings in public — once seen as a personal preference with minimal benefit, but now the preferred guidance in the US and much of Europe.

And while the moves are important from a public health perspective, one immediate impact is clear on streets around the world.

"Right outside my house there are discarded gloves and masks all over the neighborhood," says John Hovecar, oceans campaign director at Greenpeace USA.



Coronavirus is causing a flurry of plastic waste. Campaigners fear it may be permanent

PPE has become an additional threat to the world's oceans, which have been choking under the weight of plastic at a rapidly increasing rate.

Global plastic production has quadrupled over the past four decades, a 2019 study found, with its authors warning that if that trend continues, the making of plastics will make up 15% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. By comparison, all of the world's forms of transportation now account for 15% of emissions.

Other studies have estimated that some 8 million tons of plastic trash leak into the ocean annually, with the rate getting worse every year.

But PPE presents very unique problems. "The structure of PPE will make it particularly hazardous for marine life," says Hocevar. "Gloves, like plastic bags, can appear to be jellyfish or other types of foods for sea turtles, for example. The straps on masks can present entangling hazards."

Over time, those products break down and add to the vast collections of microplastics in our seas, air and food. And the irony is that, while we produce and discard plastic to fight one public health crisis, we may be slowly contributing to another.

The risks of microplastics to human health are still being studied. One stems from the fact that microplastics passing through wastewater plants can pick up harmful bacteria, which they can carry with them. If we ingest the plastics, we may ingest the bacteria.

Another is that plastics have a number of chemicals added at the manufacturing stage, and it's possible that these are released in the body.

"First and foremost, this is a time of public health and safety being the main priority," says Mallos. "But we also have to realize that the broader waste issue that is being highlighted by this pandemic really matters."

"We know many places around the world don't have this capacity to manage this waste," he adds. "This is harmful to human health, and to the oceans and the environment."

There's little that can be done, given the timespan of this crisis, to reduce the amount of plastic involved in countering coronavirus. But campaigners hope changes will come.

"We are seeing some people experimenting with disinfecting PPE now, but that's largely out of necessity — we just don't have enough," says Hocevar.

"Longer term, we'll want to be a little bit more intentional about that, and develop reusable, disinfectable PPE."

Legislative setbacks

While PPE production causes a plastics problem visible in the streets and gutters of nearly every major city, another is playing out more quietly.

A number of restrictions on single-use plastics have been paused or rolled back as authorities scramble to fight the crisis.

In the UK, a much heralded charge on plastic bags has been suspended. A ban on such items has been put on hold in US states such as Maine, while retailers including Starbucks have banned reusable products to protect against the spread of Covid-19.



Coronavirus is causing a flurry of plastic waste. Campaigners fear it may be permanent

The pattern has prompted concern from organizations including the World Bank. "These measures have all been announced as temporary, but how long will they stick, fed by anxiety around health concerns?" Grzegorz Peszko, a lead economist at the organization, asked in a blog post last month.

"As Covid-19 hits, it seems to be shifting the tide toward single-use plastics," Peszko concluded.

Driving that concern is a feeling among conservationists that the plastics industry is seizing its moment to capitalize on public health concerns by promoting the use of its products.

"Parts of the plastic industry have worked really hard to exploit fears around Covid," Hocevar says.

"It's disappointing that lobbying groups are taking advantage of this climate of fear and uncertainty," Mallos adds. "Using this opportunity to sell disposable plastics as the safe option is one of our challenges."

In March, the Plastics Industry Association wrote to the US Department of Health, asking it to "make a public statement on the health and safety benefits seen in single-use plastics."

The pandemic is "forcing many Americans, businesses and government officials to realize that single-use plastics are often the safest choice," the group said.

Conservation groups criticized studies cited by the body, and have talked up others which suggest that Covid-19 lives for longer on plastic than on most other surfaces. CNN has contacted the Plastics Industry Association for comment.

Hocevar remains confident that rollbacks will be temporary, and notes that some progress in his organization's cause has been made even during the pandemic — citing new restrictions against single-use plastic in Orange County unveiled in April.

But Mallos fears the daily onslaught of coronavirus developments means important setbacks are going under the radar.

"We are oversaturated daily with news around the pandemic ... there is so much information streaming to us daily that many of these types of messages can be missed," he says. "It may not seem like a significant action at the moment, but it will manifest in very dangerous ways down the road."



WHO says has no proof from US on 'speculative' Wuhan lab claims

posted May 05, 2020 at 11:00 am

by [AFP and Nina Larson](#)

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/323028>

The World Health Organization said Monday that Washington had provided no evidence to support "speculative" claims by the US president that the new coronavirus originated in a Chinese lab.

"We have not received any data or specific evidence from the United States government relating to the purported origin of the virus -- so from our perspective, this remains speculative," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told a virtual briefing.

Scientists believe the killer virus jumped from animals to humans, emerging in China late last year, possibly from a market in Wuhan selling exotic animals for meat.

But US President Donald Trump, increasingly critical of China's management of the first outbreak, claims to have proof it started in a Wuhan laboratory.

And US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday said "enormous evidence" backed up that claim, which China has vehemently denied.

"Like any evidence-based organisation, we would be very willing to receive any information that purports to the origin of the virus," Ryan said, stressing that this was "a very important piece of public health information for future control.

"If that data and evidence is available, then it will be for the United States government to decide whether and when it can be shared, but it is difficult for the WHO to operate in an information vacuum in that regard," he added.

Science at the centre

The UN health agency -- which has also faced scathing criticism from Trump over accusations it initially downplayed the seriousness of the outbreak to shield China -- has repeatedly said the virus clearly appears to have originated naturally from an animal source.

WHO expert Maria Van Kerkhove stressed during Monday's briefing that there were some 15,000 full genome sequences of the novel coronavirus available, and "from all of the evidence that we have seen... this virus is of natural origin".

While coronaviruses generally originate in bats, both Van Kerkhove and Ryan stressed the importance of discovering how the virus that causes COVID-19 crossed over to humans, and what animal served as an "intermediary host" along the way.

"We need to understand more about that natural origin, and particularly about intermediate hosts," Ryan said.

It was important to know "so that we can put in place the right public health and animal-human interface policies that will prevent this happening again", he stressed.

The WHO said last week it wanted to be invited to take part in Chinese investigations into the animal origins of the pandemic, which in a matter of months has killed nearly 250,000 people worldwide.

"We have offered, as we do with every case in every country, assistance with carrying out those investigations," Ryan said Monday.

"We can learn from Chinese scientists," he said.

But he warned that if questions about the virus origin were "projected as aggressive investigation of wrongdoing, than I believe that's much more difficult to deal with. That is a political issue.

"Science needs to be at the centre," he said.

"If we have a science-based investigation and a science-based enquiry as to what the origin species and the intermediate species are, then that will benefit everybody on the planet."



Billions of people could live in areas too hot for humans by 2070, study says

By Helen Regan, CNN

Published May 5, 2020 4:33:56 PM

https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/5/People-could-live-in-hot-places-2070-.html?fbclid=IwAR3IY_PXxQtI3Wca0fAZTcTNgNDeLXMrK6t55xkv4mvW-CGunbAJjg9zYm0



(CNN) -- If the planet continues to warm at current levels over the next 50 years, up to 3 billion people could be living in areas that are too hot for humans, a new study has found.

For thousands of years, humans have lived within a narrow "climate niche" where average temperatures are ideal for society to flourish, and conditions favorable to grow food and keep livestock.

In findings published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on Monday, an international team of archaeologists, climate

scientists and ecologists said that if heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current pace, by 2070 billions of people will be living in conditions hotter than those that have allowed life to thrive for the past 6,000 years.

For every 1°C (1.8°F) of warming, 1 billion people will either have to migrate to cooler regions or adapt to extreme heat conditions, the study found.

Tim Kohler, an archaeologist at the University of Washington and co-author of the study said that these findings can be viewed as a worst case or "business-as-usual" scenario of "what could happen if we don't change our ways."

Temperatures changing more than in past 6,000 years

Using data on historical global temperatures and the distribution of human populations, the researchers found that just like other species of animals, humans thrive best within a narrow "climatic envelope" around the world.

Most of the world's population live in areas with a mean annual temperature of between 11 and 15 degrees Celsius (51.8 to 59 degrees Fahrenheit). A smaller band of between 20 to 25 °C (68 to 77°F) encompasses areas in South Asia that are affected by the Indian monsoon -- the annual rains that irrigates large swathes of cropland vital for food production.

Surprisingly, the scientists said, humans have favored living in these conditions for the past 6,000 years -- that's despite recent technological advances such as air conditioning that have allowed us to push this boundary.

"As an archaeologist I always tell my students that our technology, our minds, and our cumulative culture have enabled us to live anywhere," Kohler said. "That's true of course. But it turns out that there is a distinct climate zone in which our numbers are greatest, and within which we have also been most economically productive."

But change could soon be forced upon us.



Billions of people could live in areas too hot for humans by 2070, study says

The Earth is currently on track for 3°C of warming by 2100. The study suggests that because land areas are warming faster than the oceans, temperatures experienced by humans are likely to rise by about 7.5°C by 2070.

As our planet rapidly heats up due to rising emissions, the temperature experienced by an average person is projected to change more in the coming decades than it has over the past 6,000 years, the study found.

And it could have severe consequences for food production, access to water sources, conflict and disruption caused by migration.

"It's reasonable to conclude that if something has been reasonably stable for 6000 years, we're not going to change it painlessly or quickly," Kohler said.

Extreme heat areas will expand

Among the hottest places on Earth is the Sahara region of Africa, which experiences annual mean temperatures above 29°C (84.2°F). These extreme conditions cover 0.8% of the earth's land area.

However, researchers said that those extreme heat areas are expected to spread to 19% of the Earth's surface, affecting 3.5 billion people by 2070.

Regions that stand to be affected include parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, India, Southeast Asia, Arabian Peninsula and Australia -- regions with fast-growing populations, said Chi Xu, from Nanjing University's School of Life Sciences, and another co-author of the report.

"Those countries are mostly in global south, with the fastest population growing rate, such as India and Nigeria. These two countries are projected to accommodate the largest populations under extreme temperature conditions," Chi said.

The study's projection of 3.5 billion possible climate migrants goes far beyond the World Bank estimates, which suggested 143 million people across South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America were at risk of being displaced.

It's a dire warning of what could happen if the climate crisis is left unchecked.

But there is hope. The scientists said that by rapidly and substantially reducing global carbon emissions, the number of people exposed to brutally hot conditions could be halved.

The authors explain that there are a number of uncertainties with how the climate crisis will fuel displacement and to what extent, and said the study can't be used as a prediction of migration.

The figures are also based on worst case projections and there are questions over how actions to mitigate against climate change, including "political developments, institutional changes, and socioeconomic conditions" may affect these outcomes.

"The worst case scenario can be largely avoided if effective cut of greenhouse gas emissions is achieved," Chi said. "Many effective measures of climate mitigation and local adaptation would help to alleviate the negative influence of climate change on human societies."

This story was first published on CNN.com, "Billions of people could live in areas too hot for humans by 2070, study says"



WHO expert: They may never be vaccine for pandemic

posted May 06, 2020 at 01:10 am

by Manila Standard

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/323089>

An effective vaccine to protect against coronavirus may never be developed, a special envoy to the World Health Organization (WHO) on COVID-19 has said.

An effective vaccine is regarded as crucial to stopping the spread of the virus – but it is unknown how long it could take to produce one, Yahoo News UK reported Tuesday.

Human trials of a vaccine developed by Oxford University began last month, with scientists aiming to have a million doses ready by September if tests go well.

US health experts have repeatedly said a vaccine is probably a year to 18 months away, though the White House said late last month that a vaccine could conceivably be in wide distribution as early as January.

"There are some viruses that we still do not have vaccines against," said Dr. David Nabarro, a professor of global health at Imperial College London, who is also serving as a special envoy to the WHO during the coronavirus pandemic.

"We can't make an absolute assumption that a vaccine will appear at all, or if it does appear, whether it will pass all the tests of efficacy and safety.

"It's absolutely essential that all societies everywhere get themselves into a position where they are able to defend against the coronavirus as a constant threat, and to be able to go about social life and economic activity with the virus in our midst."

Dr. Nabarro spoke to CNN after Donald Trump appeared to claim on Sunday that America would have an effective vaccine by the end of 2020.

In a virtual town hall with Fox News at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington on Sunday, Trump said: "We are very confident we are going to have a vaccine by the end of the year."

Scientists have previously warned that a vaccine may take 12-18 months, or longer.

The comments came as Boris Johnson prepared to describe the race to develop a coronavirus vaccine as the "most urgent shared endeavor of our lifetimes" and call on nations to "pull together" in response to the pandemic.

Johnson is expected to tell an online pledging conference on Monday—co-hosted by the UK and eight other countries and organizations – that the sooner states share their expertise, the faster scientists will succeed in defeating the disease.

Nabarro's concerns echo those of Sir Patrick Vallance, the government's chief scientific adviser, who said he was hopeful a vaccine will be developed but warned it would not be available any time soon.

"All new vaccines that come into development are long shots; only some end up being successful, and the whole process requires experimentation," he wrote in The Guardian.

"Coronavirus will be no different and presents new challenges for vaccine development. This will take time, and we should be clear it is not a certainty."

The prime minister will set out his government's strategy to ease the country out of lockdown in a public address on Sunday.

New measures could include advising people to wear face coverings in public, allowing people a "social bubble" of no more than 10 people until 2021, and bringing in one-way routes through train stations to avoid a second peak of the virus.



World leaders raise \$8B for Covid-19 vaccine development

May 5, 2020 08:16 AM

By Agence France-Presse

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/05/world-leaders-raise-8b-for-covid-19-vaccine-development/>



An internal US government estimate forecast the daily COVID-19 death toll will almost double in the country by the end of May, as global leaders raised \$8 billion on Monday toward efforts to develop a coronavirus vaccine.

Restaurants in Italy partially reopened and Germans queued for haircuts in a Europe edging gingerly out of lockdown, after the virus left more than 130,000 dead across the continent over the past four months.

Half of the planet has been under lockdown and much of the world remained cautious even as countries from India to Nigeria sought to ease some restrictions to allow businesses to remain afloat and workers to bring home income.

“Today is wonderful,” Lagos fruit and vegetable vendor Adewale Oluwa said, opening his stall in Africa’s largest city after a five-week lockdown.

Global toll passes a quarter-million

Not every country was showing as much confidence. The global coronavirus toll passed 250,000 Monday, and confirmed cases since the disease surfaced in China late last year rose to almost 3.6 million across 195 countries and territories.

Infections continued to surge in Russia, now adding more than 10,000 a day.

“The threat is apparently on the rise,” Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyenin told citizens.

But the United States remains far more severely affected than any other nation.

An internal study by the US government’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicted that new coronavirus cases will surge more than eight-fold to 200,000 per day by June 1, and the toll could rise to 3,000 a day, up from the current 1,500-2,000.

That could more than double the number of US coronavirus deaths, now at about 68,000, over the next few months, according to the study first reported by The New York Times and The Washington Post.

That outlook was much more dire than forecasts by President Donald Trump’s Coronavirus Task Force.

It underscored the tough, politically-tinged debate over reopening that pits Trump and his allies against many governors and community leaders worried that social distancing and quarantines need to remain in place longer.

The study suggested that the surge in infections could come from mid-May in states and localities that had not implemented tough distancing measures or were loosening up too early.



World leaders raise \$8B for Covid-19 vaccine development

“There remains a large number of counties whose burden continues to grow or are in an elevated incidence plateau, including in the Great Lakes region, parts of the Southeast, Northeast, and around southern California,” the study reportedly said.

On Sunday Trump acknowledged that deaths would go beyond his earlier prediction of 60,000, saying “we’re going to lose anywhere from 75, 80 to 100,000 people.”

The White House downplayed the CDC forecast as an “internal” document which had not been vetted by the task force, which is led by Vice President Mike Pence.

‘Joy and fear’

In Europe there was still caution as countries allowed people to return to the streets and some businesses to open up. But governments believe they have passed the peak of the disease with death tolls in Europe’s worst affected countries having dropped as a result of nearly two months of confinement.

“We are feeling a mix of joy and fear,” 40-year-old Stefano Milano said in Rome as Italian restaurants reopened for takeaway orders — though bars and ice cream parlours will remain shut.

Spain and Portugal made face masks mandatory on public transport starting Monday as they further eased their lockdowns.

Slovenia, Poland and Hungary also allowed public spaces and businesses to partially reopen.

“I looked like Robinson Crusoe,” joked 87-year-old Helmut Wichter, emerging clean shaven from a barber in Berlin.

Vaccine telethon

A special telethon backed by the World Health Organization but snubbed by Washington pulled in 7.4 billion euros (\$8.1 billion) to support international efforts to develop and manufacture a vaccine to slow the coronavirus spread.

Leaders of major European powers, Japan and Canada made the biggest pledges, along with philanthropists including Bill and Melinda Gates, at the videoconference hosted by European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen.

They called for cooperation and not competition in the search for a cure that could not only be potentially lucrative but also spark fights over who gets access to a vaccine first.

“This was a powerful and inspiring demonstration of global solidarity,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said of the donations.

Seeming to defend its non-participation, the US State Department issued a statement declaring that the United States is “leading” the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and said it has spent more than \$1 billion together with US drug companies to work on a vaccine.

Trump claimed Sunday that the United States will have a coronavirus vaccine ready by the end of the year.

The war of words between the United States and China over responsibility for the pandemic continued, with China’s state broadcaster attacking US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for “insane” remarks in which he said the virus originated at a laboratory in Wuhan, the city where the pandemic first emerged.



Potential coronavirus vaccine tested in Germany could supply 'many millions' by end of year

By Fred Pleitgen, CNN

Published May 6, 2020 2:31:38 AM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/6/potential-coronavirus-vaccine-germany-supply-many-millions.html>

(CNN) - An experimental coronavirus vaccine entering human trials in the US may be available in many millions of doses by the end of 2020, the CEO of BioNTech has told CNN.

The German drug maker has partnered with US giant Pfizer to distribute a potential vaccine which is already in human trials in Germany.

CEO Ugur Şahin believes the regulatory approval process could be sped up from what is historically an 18-month time frame due to the global pandemic.

"The benefit of a vaccine in a pandemic situation is much greater and therefore an approval or an authorization of a vaccine in a pandemic situation has to follow other rules than we have seen in the past," Şahin told CNN's Fred Pleitgen.

Şahin believes Covid-19 will be responsive to a vaccine which is he calls the "most important aspect" of vaccine development. He said the second aspect is the "very encouraging" pre-clinical data.

"We see vaccine responses, we see strong vaccine responses at even low doses. And we believe that this vaccine response, since we have seen that in different animal models will also translate into vaccine responses in human subjects," Şahin said.

If it is approved by the regulators, Şahin said the partners are "prepared to go as fast as possible" to get the vaccine to the population.



India doubles down on solar, gas at coal's expense as electricity use falls

Published May 5, 2020, 7:20 PM

By Reuters

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/05/india-doubles-down-on-solar-gas-at-coals-expense-as-electricity-use-falls/>



CHENNAI – India's solar and gas-fired electricity generation rose in April even as overall power demand fell at the steepest monthly rate in at least thirteen years, a Reuters analysis of provisional government data showed.

Workers clean photovoltaic panels inside a solar power plant in Gujarat, India, July 2, 2015. (REUTERS/Amit Dave / MANILA BULLETIN)

Solar-powered electricity generation rose 16.9%, accounting for a record 5.6% of the country's total output, while gas-fired power output was 13.7% higher, an analysis of daily load despatch data from state-run power operator POSOCO showed. However, wind-powered electricity generation fell 11.4%.

Electricity generation from coal – India's primary source of electricity – fell 32.3% to 1.91 billion units per day, the data showed, with its contribution to overall electricity generation falling to 65.5%, compared with an average of over 73.7% last year.

"Solar production was ramped up in the southern states, while gas-fired power plant operators in the west used cheap imported gas to address peak demand," a senior power ministry official said, adding that many coal-fired utilities were shut for maintenance.