

DENR seized exotic animals from Antipolo resident

Published May 6, 2020, 4:51 PM

By **Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz**

Four exotic animals, including Serval cats, have been confiscated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) from an exclusive subdivision in Antipolo city on May 5.



A team led by the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau's Task Force Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife (Task Force POGI), Rizal Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) Isidro Mercado, and the local governments of Antipolo and Cainta, seized two Serval cats (*Leptailurus serval*), one Ducorp's cockatoo (*Cacatua ducorpsii*), and one Blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*) from the house of Don Michael Perez.

Perez failed to immediately present the necessary permits to justify his possession of the wild animals.

The team has already turned over the seized animals to the BMB's Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon city.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, who personally received the seized animals, commended Mercado and his team for carrying out the operation despite the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) imposed in Metro Manila and nearby provinces to contain the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

He also thanked the residents of the subdivision for providing information about exotic animals being kept at the property of one of their neighbors.

The Republic Act (RA) 9147, also known as Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001, prohibits the killing, injuring, collection, selling and transport of threatened and endangered wildlife species.

The owners of exotic pets have to secure special permits from the DENR, including wildlife collector's permit and transport permit, otherwise their possession of these animals is considered illegal.

Serval cats are listed in the Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This means that the species is not necessarily threatened with extinction now, but may become so in the future unless trade is closely monitored.

Perez claimed the two Serval cats were sold to him by a holder of a certificate of wildlife registration, while the Ducorp's cockatoo was bought at a pet shop in Cartimar, Pasay City and the Blue-and-gold macaw came from Birds International Inc.

Due to the ECQ, Perez was given time to present the permits to the DENR.

However, his failure to do so will result in the filing of criminal charges against him for violating RA 9147.

Violators of the law could face a jail term of up to eight years and a fine ranging from P300,000 to P3 million.

Illegal wildlife trafficking blocked

Published 4 hours ago
on May 7, 2020 01:40 AM
By [Perseus Echeminada](#)



Confiscated cat Personnel from the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office and the Biodiversity Management Bureau of Rizal seized a serval cat (inset) after it escaped from the care of its owner in Antipolo City, Rizal which also led to the discovery of several other illegal exotic animals. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE DENR

More exotic animals were seized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in its intensified crackdown against illegal trafficking of wildlife animals during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

Acting on a tip from a concerned citizen, DENR operatives seized two serval cats, a Ducorps cockatoo and a blue-and-gold macao from a resident in Filinvest East Homes in Antipolo, Rizal on Wednesday.

DENR undersecretary Benny Antiporda emphasized that the recovered exotic animals and birds are endangered species that cannot be kept as pets.

“We won’t let our guard down on situations like the ECQ when it comes to our fight against illegal wildlife trafficking,” Antiporda said.

Initial investigation showed that the serval cats were bought by the suspect from holder of a Certificate of Wild life Registration in Pampanga, which is illegal since CWR holders cannot engage in selling or donating endangered wildlife.

The Ducorps cockatoo was sold from the Cartimar, Pasay market but the suspect failed to show proof of legal receipt and transport permit to Antipolo City.

Meanwhile, the macao was said to be under the suspect’s care for the last 10 years, yet he failed to present any valid documents for the sale and transport of the animal.

DENR team issued seizure receipts for the wildlife and cages, while the suspect may face charges for violation of Republic Act 9147 otherwise known as Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

BMB seeks sellers of wild cats, birds to café owner

By: [Maricar Cinco](#) - Reporter / [@maricarcincoINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:04 AM May 07, 2020



EXOTIC PETS A blue and gold macaw (below) and a serval, a type of wild cat, are among the exotic pets seized by government personnel from a café owner in Antipolo City. PHOTO COURTESY OF BMB-DENR

The Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) is on the trail of traders of illegal wildlife after two wild cats escaped in a residential subdivision in Antipolo City in Rizal province.

While no harm was reported and the servals (*Leptailurus serval*) eventually recaptured by the owner, Don Michael Perez, wildlife law enforcers still confiscated the cats, along with two exotic birds — a blue-and-gold macaw and a Ducorp's cockatoo. The animals were turned over to the BMB rescue center in Quezon City.

Rogelio Demelletes Jr., a senior ecosystem management specialist, said the bureau would file formal charges against Perez, an owner of a pet café that featured the serval cats in Quezon City, once local courts resume their regular schedule after the community quarantine.

Violation

He said the BMB was trying to locate Patrick Kelly of Pampanga province who sold the wild cats to Perez a couple of years back.

Records showed that Kelly had a government-issued certificate of wildlife registration for the cats, “but that did not mean (Kelly) was allowed to breed or sell them,” Demelletes said.

The serval, an African native feline, is listed as “endangered” by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Demelletes said Perez violated Republic Act No. 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act) when he moved the animals from Pampanga to his café in Quezon City, and just recently due to the lockdown, to his house in Antipolo “without any local transport permit.”

Perez also failed to show the BMB any document for possessing the exotic birds which, he said, he had bought from traders in Pasay City and Marikina City.



A blue-and-gold macaw —PHOTO COURTESY OF BMB-DENR

‘High-end’ collection

Homeowners at Filinvest East Homes in Antipolo sought the help of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources after seeing the cats on the loose on Monday. Servals, which can grow up to 2 feet (0.609 meter), are wild and bigger than lap cats, said Emerson Sy from the Philippine Center for Terrestrial and Aquatic Research, a private research center.

Demelletes, who likened the serval’s size to a cheetah, said there had been records of attacks on humans or other animals.

The BMB operation renewed calls against illegal wildlife trade in the Philippines, specifically the trade of servals, whose kittens are sold for P15,000 to P30,000 each, Sy said.

Sy and the BMB said “hundreds of undocumented servals” were often considered “high-end collection” of pet owners.

DENR urged: Shield Romblon monkeys from trappers,
lab experiments

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DENR urged: Shield Romblon monkeys from trappers, lab experiments

By: [Jheset O. Enano](#) - Reporter / [@JhesetEnanoINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:53 AM May 06, 2020



THEY BELONG TO THE FOREST Commonly known as “matsing” or “unggoy,” long-tailed macaques are a subspecies of the crab-eating macaques and are endemic to Philippine forests. —PHOTO FROM CRUELTY FREE INTERNATIONAL

MANILA, Philippines — Animal rights advocates have urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to refuse any permits seeking to trap wild long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis philippensis*) in Romblon province for research and export purposes amid the reported population boom of these monkeys on the island.

The call came after reports that the DENR would consider applications for permits to capture the primates for breeding farms, which supply animals for laboratory experiments and testing.

Trapping wild primates is cruel and taking them from their habitats and social groups can cause immense suffering in animals, said the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) and Action for Primates.

“One of the reasons given by the DENR for considering an application for the capture of the wild monkeys is conflict arising between people and the monkeys,” the groups said in a joint statement on Monday.

“Conflict issues, however, are usually due to human activities, such as the destruction and fragmentation of the natural habitat, forcing primates to compete with people over land and resources,” they added.

Endemic, near-threatened

Commonly known as “matsing” or “unggoy,” long-tailed macaques are a subspecies of the crab-eating macaques and are endemic to Philippine forests.

They were classified as near-threatened in the most recent assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2008.

In an interview, Henry Adornado, DENR director of Mimaropa region, confirmed the rising number of macaques in Romblon but said the agency had yet to estimate their total population.

Among the reasons for their increasing numbers are the absence of natural predators, such as the Philippine Eagle, and people leaving them alone in the wild.

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Relocation, education

With their growing numbers, the monkeys pose a threat to banana and coconut plantation of communities, Adornado said.

But Nedim Buyukmihci, an animal rights activist and representative of Action for Primates, said there were human approaches to population control to resolve conflicts without resorting to the capture and removal of wild macaques from their natural habitats.

These include reproduction control, relocation and educating communities so that monkeys would not be encouraged to rely on humans for food.

Protected area proposed

“At a time when there is increasing awareness of the devastating consequences that human activity is having on the natural world, including nonhuman primates, it is imperative that we learn to coexist with other species rather than just eliminate them when conflicts arise,” said Buyukmihci. Instead of seeing these animals as nuisance, a protected area for macaques should be established in Romblon, said PAWS executive director Anna Cabrera.

“We can set things right by taking immediate steps to establish a protected area for macaques and to develop eco-friendly systems within human communities to allow them to live in harmony with wildlife,” she said.

Ricardo Calderon, director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau, said his office had yet to receive any applications for the capture and breeding of macaques in Romblon.

“Any application for permit will have to undergo site assessment and evaluation as part of the due diligence being required under existing rules and regulation,” Calderon told the Inquirer.

Breeding

Breeding of wildlife for commercial purposes is allowed under the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act through the issuance of a wildlife farm-culture permit. Only offspring of those bred in captivity may be traded and exported.

Earlier reports cited the Philippines as among the world’s major exporters of laboratory monkeys. In 2015, however, macaque exports were suspended after an Ebola Reston virus killed 11 monkeys. This particular strain was nonfatal to humans.

In the late 1990s, these exports were similarly halted after a monkey shipped from a primate farm in Laguna province died in Texas, also of the Ebola virus. At least 49 other primates had to be put to death due to the virus. INQ

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1270395/denr-urged-shield-romblon-monkeys-from-trappers-lab-experiments#ixzz6LhQuhYIe>

Locals release mother-infant tarsiers back into wild

By Edwin Fernandez May 6, 2020, 1:14 pm



RESCUED. A mother (left) and infant tandem of tarsiers, one of the world's smallest primates, are rescued and later released back into the wild by residents of Aleosan, North Cotabato on Tuesday (May 5, 2020). Residents and village officials, in coordination with the provincial environment office, are pushing for Aleosan to be declared a protected habitat for tarsiers. *(Photos courtesy of DENR-12)*

COTABATO CITY – Villagers in the North Cotabato town of Aleosan on Tuesday released back into the wild two tarsiers (*Tarsius Syrictha*), one of the world's smallest primates.

Local environment officials said the latest example of a citizen-led rescue of wildlife animals, which took place in Sitio Simsiman of Barangay Tomado in Aleosan, showed that communities are becoming aware of the importance of biodiversity.

“Two tarsiers, a mother, and an infant were rescued Sunday and released on Tuesday,” Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer Badjury Mustapha said in an interview on Wednesday.

Mustapha said forester Nor Hassan Batugan was immediately sent to the village to check and verify the tarsiers found by Reynaldo Puerto who posted the endangered species on social media.

In his report, Batugan said the tarsiers were released back into the wild by the residents and local officials of Aleosan after they were found to be in good health.

He described the mother tarsier as 10-cm. long and has a 22-cm. tail, while the infant was 8-cm. tall and had a 12-cm. tail.

Mustapha said Aleosan officials told him that the local government was planning to declare the town as a wildlife sanctuary through a resolution to be passed once the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic is over.

Since January, five tarsiers have been found, rescued, and later released back into their natural habitat in North Cotabato. **(PNA)**

P1-million worth of illegal lumber seized in Northern Samar

Published May 6, 2020, 10:32 AM

By Marie Tonette Marticio

TACLOBAN CITY – Another P1 million worth of fresh-cut dipterocarp lumber was seized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) Northern Samar, DENR-8 Enforcement Division, and the Northern Samar Police Provincial Office (NSPPO) in an anti-timber poaching operation in San Isidro, Northern Samar.



(Northern Samar Press Corps / MANILA BULLETIN)

The joint DENR-PNP anti-timber poaching operations was staged in Km 9, Km 13, Km 15, and Km 17 of Brgy. Happy Valley and Brgy. Balite of San Isidro on Tuesday, May 4, and resulted in the seizure of an estimated 20,000 board feet of illegally sawn lumbers and assorted sizes and dimensions of boat keels.

Two weeks ago, a total of 39,500.75 board feet with an estimated value of P1,975,037.50 was also recovered in the area.

Report from PENRO Northern Samar Angelito Villanueva stated that the operations were aided by drones, which showed footages of stockpiles of lumber, flitches, and boat keels in separate locations in Barangays Balite and Happy Valley in San Isidro Northern Samar. The violators were able to evade arrest due to the terrain in the area.

Villanueva said they will continue to investigate, and administrative and criminal cases would be filed against perpetrators for violation of Section 77 of Presidential Decree 705.

DENR 8 Regional Executive Director Tirso Parian, Jr. said DENR 8 was actively on guard against illegal activities and threats to the environment even during the general community quarantine.

“Despite some restrictions due to the general community quarantine being implemented in the province due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, our work continues especially on law enforcement. We encourage the public to coordinate and cooperate with us against illegal activities even with this COVID-19 crisis,” he urged.

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu has earlier ordered the DENR field offices to strictly monitor illegal activities even with the enhanced community quarantine prevailing in most parts of the country.

He also assured the public that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, personnel from the regional offices would all the more continue to protect the forests from illegal activities.

Study: Air pollution level in parts of Manila drops amid lockdown

posted May 06, 2020 at 09:45 pm

by [Willie Casas](#)

The air quality in parts of Manila continued to improve amid the lockdown, the Manila Public Information Office (MPIO) said on Wednesday.

In tweets, the MPIO statement, basing it on a study done by the Asia Blue Skies Program, said that air pollution levels dropped by as high as 71 percent.

The study said this was recorded in Freedom Park at the Manila City Hall which saw an average of 2.5 particulate matter or the air quality from April 27 to May 1 from the period of January 21 to March 6 or before the enhanced community quarantine began.

The air quality in Rizal Park also showed an improvement as air pollution dropped by as much as 60 percent compared to the period before the lockdown.

The study also showed that air pollution went down by 51 percent in Mendiola compared to pre-quarantine period when classes and office work were still allowed.

The data plus emissions inventory and health mapping results are collected to help better understand the state of air quality in the city and how the local government unit can help maintain or further improve the state of air quality.

The challenge now is what the LGU will do once the enhanced community quarantine is lifted and more cars are allowed on the streets.

The Manila City Clean Air Action Plan is expected to be completed by the end of the year.



UP scientist: gov't should reconsider activities with adverse effects on air quality

Published May 6, 2020, 3:53 PM

By *Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz*

To maintain the “good air quality” as the “new normal,” a scientist from the University of the Philippines (UP) has appealed to all sectors to use the opportunity to reconsider activities that have adverse impacts on air quality.

“Clean air in cities has become a luxury. Normally, we need to go to the seaside or the lush provinces to breathe in cleaner air. And it took us a total lockdown, a number of frontliners (COVID-19 mortalities) to attain this. Not to mention the trillions lost in the stock market, and jobs lost by our fellowmen. LGU (local government units) funds are depleted to feed the people. We wouldn't want this scenario again to attain clean air,” said Dr. Mylene Cayetano, an associate professor from the UP Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology.

“If we wish to maintain good air quality to be the new normal, we have to make conscious choices in our activities pre-ECQ (enhanced community quarantine,” she said.

Cayetano, who advocates clean air for all, called on the government to strengthen the long-term and immediate solutions for inclusive mobility, mass transport system, green cities, urban planning, road space to non-motorized transport systems, fuel economy, and clean energy.

The UP expert also recommended more transparency in the emission testing system and proper and rightful apprehension to emission testing violators, as well as setting up of more motor vehicle inspection systems, and ensuring road worthiness compliance to all vehicles.

“Think about protecting our hospital zones, which are located along major thoroughfare with trucks and pre-euro vehicles fleeing along,” Cayetano said.

Legarda supports BSP's Sustainable Finance

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TITLE: Framework policy to attract 'green investments'

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Legarda supports BSP's Sustainable Finance Framework policy to attract 'green investments'

Updated May 7, 2020, 1:56 AM

By Charissa Luci-Atienza

Deputy Speaker and Antique lone district Rep. Loren Legarda is expecting more "green" investments in the country following the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) issuance of a circular on the Sustainable Finance Framework (SFF).



Antique Rep. Loren Legarda
(FACEBOOK / MANILA BULLETIN)

She threw her all-out support behind BSP Circular No. 1085, s. 2020, which states that the SFF aims to advance the country's growth towards a greener and more sustainable development path.

"I have long expressed the view that despite the Philippines being a highly vulnerable country to climate change, we have yet to fully unlock our massive potential for green investments. The BSP's circular on the Sustainable Finance Framework is a welcome policy direction for our banks and financial institutions to enshrine sustainability within their systems of governance and operations," Legarda said in a statement.

The BSP issued the circular after the Monetary Board, through Resolution No. 415 issued on March 19, 2020, approved the sustainable finance policy framework, she noted.

The policy framework sets out expectations on the integration of sustainability principles, including those covering environmental and social (E&S) risks in banks' corporate governance and risk management frameworks, as well as in their strategic objectives and operations, she said.

"As our country and the whole world slowly reopens the economy from closures [due] to the COVID-19 pandemic through financial stimulus packages, we hope that the new policy will lead to the financing of more investments on renewable energy, environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and other low-carbon and sustainable initiatives," Legarda said.

The former senator authored the Renewable Energy Act, Climate Change Act, and the People's Survival Fund Act.

Legarda said the issuance of the BSP circular prodded the inclusion of the SFF in the Manual of Regulations for Banks (MORB).

Under the MORB, the BSP recognizes "that climate change and other environmental and social risks could pose financial stability concerns" and that "physical and transition risks arising from climate change could result in significant societal, economic, and financial risks affecting the banks and their stakeholders."



Legarda supports BSP's Sustainable Finance

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The critical role of the financial industry in pursuing sustainable and resilient growth is also stressed in the manual, which also points to the need to enable environmentally and socially responsible business decisions consistent with the Philippine Development Plan.

Covered by the framework are all banks, while branches of foreign banks may adopt relevant policies and strategies of their head office that are consistent with the circular.

Legarda, a member of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board, said the SFF will pave the way for climate finance access.

She noted that last year, the Philippines secured approval for a P500-million grant for multi-hazard impact-based forecasting and early warning systems, which is the "very first country proposal to the GCF."

The Philippines was then included in a multi-country proposal to generate private sector investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

"Three readiness and preparatory support programs worth almost \$1.7 million are also underway to enhance the capacities of the Land Bank of the Philippines as [an] accredited entity and other stakeholders involved in securing climate finance once national approval processes are completed," Legarda noted.


She asked the Climate Change Commission, as the national designated authority to the GCF, to work closely with the BSP to help Philippine banks and financial institutions adopt the framework and transform the economy.

"Amid this COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis, as the world clamors for a healthier planet as the new normal, I remain optimistic that these efforts and many more can sustain our gains towards resilience," Legarda said.

ABS-CBN News 12 hrs · 🌐


SWIM FREE! Namataan ng rumorondang pulisya sa karagatan ng New Washington, Aklan ang mga dolphins na lumalangoy malapit sa kanilang motorbanca.

Ito ang kauna-unahang beses na namataan ang mga dolphins doon, ayon kay Capt. Benny Mendoza, na siya ring kumuha ng video. | Ulat ni Bea Espino, ABS-CBN News



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Duterte issues EO to institutionalize Balik Probinsya program

By [Samuel P. Medenilla](#)

May 6, 2020



File photo shows a vast corn field in the province of Bukidnon.

The government will come out with new guidelines next month to institutionalize its Balik Probinsiya, Bagong Pagasa (BPBP) program, which aims to decongest highly urbanized cities by encouraging people to relocate to their provinces.

On Wednesday, President Rodrigo R. Duterte issued Executive Order No. 114 creating the BPBP council, which will be tasked to come out with the necessary guidelines and framework within the next 30 days.

The BPBP council will be chaired by the Executive Secretary and will be vice chaired by the Secretary for Socio Economic Planning and Director General of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA).

Its members include the secretaries of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Department of Agriculture (DA); Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR); Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE); Department of Health (DOH); Department of Information and Technology (DICT); and Department of Finance (DOF).

Other members of the council are the secretaries of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM); Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH); Department of Transportation (DoTR); Department of Tourism (DOT); Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development (DHSUD); Department of Education (DepEd); and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Also included in the council are the chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED); director general of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); and chairperson of the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA).

The council's secretariat will be led by the general manager of the National Housing Authority (NHA).

Funding

The BPBP program will have provisions for empowering local industries; food security and agriculture productivity; social welfare, health, and employment; and development infrastructures.

Each framework will have a corresponding short-term, medium-term, and long-term plan.

Duterte issues EO to institutionalize Balik Probinsya

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To implement the BPBP program, the council is also tasked with local government units (LGU), Philippine Communication Operation Office (PCOO), and other stakeholders to craft the necessary guidelines and legislation for it.

DBM is tasked to fund BPBP program using the the budget of the member agencies of the council. “To the extent permitted by law, agency heads are hereby authorized to realign items in their respective appropriations to fund PAPs (programs, activities, or projects) approved as part of the BPBP program,” Duterte said in the 7-paged EO 114.

“Funding requirements for the succeeding years shall be included in the respective budgets of government agencies implementing the BPBO programs,” he added.

Image Credits: [Nonie Reyes](#)

Duterte institutionalizes Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 06:50 PM May 06, 2020



FARM WORK A farmer sifts through rice stalks to collect leftover grains during harvest in Tiwi, Albay. The government sees agriculture as one of the potential job generators in the provinces as plans to decongest Metro Manila, through the “Balik Probinsya” program, are discussed. —MARK ALVIC ESPLANA

MANILA, Philippines — President Rodrigo Duterte has issued an order institutionalizing the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program, which aims to decongest Metro Manila and promote more robust regional development.

“The State shall ensure balanced regional development and equitable distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities through policies and programs that boost countryside development and inclusive growth, provide adequate social services, and promote full employment, industrialization and an improved quality of life in rural areas,” Duterte’s Executive Order No. 114 signed Wednesday stated.

Under the EO, a Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Council was established to be chaired by the Executive Secretary and with the Socio-Economic Planning Secretary as vice-chairperson.

The council shall “identify legislative, regulatory, and policy changes to promote balanced regional development and recommend to Congress the enactment of such reforms into law.” It must also coordinate with local government units to formulate policies and implement the program’s components.

The program’s key areas are empowerment of local industries; food security and agricultural productivity; social welfare, health and employment; and development of infrastructure.

The funding requirements of its pipeline or existing programs, activities or projects (PAPs) shall be identified by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) or sourced from the agency heads’ respective appropriations.

The Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Council shall submit a bi-annual report on the implementation of the program to the President.

Duterte institutionalizes Balik Probinsya, Bagong

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TITLE: Pag-asa Program

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The Senate on Monday adopted a [resolution](#) sponsored by Duterte’s long-time aide-turned-Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, urging the executive department to formulate and implement a “Balik Probinsya” program.

Go reintroduced the program in a bid to decongest Metro Manila, which he said was a “long-term solution” to current problems that have affected the country’s ability to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Local government officials, however, raised concerns over the implementation of the program, saying it will not be easy amid the health crisis. Several of them stressed that providing jobs and housing will be key to enticing the public in returning to the provinces.

To recall, a Balik Probinsya program – under the National Convergence Initiatives for Sustainable Rural Development – was also implemented during the administration of former President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III to support urban poor and provide more opportunities to uplift their standards of living.

KGA

Retirement plan to complement ‘Balik Probinsya’

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:01 AM May 07, 2020

We laud the Balik Probinsya program that Sen. Bong Go proposed, and which will be implemented through interagency coordination.

In connection with this program, may we propose a five-year optional retirement plan whereby companies can offer optional retirement to any employee who has worked for at least five years. The company would grant one-month separation pay to any employee who opts to go for this early retirement plan. One-month separation pay would be given for every year of service that the employee has worked. As an illustrative example, if an employee’s monthly salary is P12,000 and he has worked for five years, he would have the option of retiring upon acceptance of separation pay amounting to P60,000; if he has worked for 10 years, he would receive P120,000.

The amount of P60,000 is not monumental but can add to other government assistance that may be available, and thus allow retired employees to set up a small business in the province.

This five-year optional retirement plan can also help reduce squatters in an already overpopulated Metro Manila. After all, most retired employees who hail from the province would likely want to go back to their hometowns and be near their families.

GODOFREDO V. ARQUIZA, member, House of Representatives, 14th and 15th Congresses
national president, Coalition of Associations of Senior Citizens/Elderly in the Philippines, Inc.
ROGELIO “WARAY” EVASCO, president, Evasco, Abinales & Coles Law Office

Rail operators to serve commuters with reduced
capacity once ECQ is lifted

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Rail operators to serve commuters with reduced capacity once ECQ is lifted

By DOTR Published on May 6, 2020

MANILA, May 6 -- In its continuous bid to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in public transport hubs, railway operators are ready to serve commuters in a reduced capacity once the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) is lifted in Metro Manila, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) has announced.

The implementation of a reduced capacity service is in accordance with health protocols, and social distancing measures being enforced by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID).

"We are ready to serve our commuters, in the event that the general community quarantine (GCQ) will be implemented in Metro Manila, and areas covered by our railway networks. We have to follow the social distancing guidelines, and health protocols set by the IATF, meaning, we have to limit our passenger capacity per trip. This is to prevent COVID-19 from spreading while our commuters are in transit," Transport Secretary Arthur Tugade said.

Undersecretary for Railways Timothy John Batan said each train set of LRT1 can ferry 12% or 158 passengers per trip, 10% or 160 passengers per trip for LRT2 train set, 13% or 153 passengers for MRT-3 train set, while, each PNR train car can carry an average of 148 passengers, with 20% of its average capacity in each trip.

The reduction in capacity per train car was based on physical simulations of passengers inside trains maintaining 1- meter social distancing.

"We have to remember that this protocol aims to prevent the virus from spreading. We want to put an end to this health crisis, as we want to help our frontliners, our essential workers in going to their places of destination during GCQ," Usec. Batan said.

The rail lines will also reduce passenger concentration in trains, station platforms, concourses, and elevators.

The strict enforcement of the Transport Health Safety Standard covers all LRT1, and MRT-3 stations, eight (8) LRT2 stations, and all PNR stations between Malabon and IRR1. Meanwhile, 34 PNR stations between Tutuban, and Legazpi will start cargo operations after 07 May.

Further, all rail lines shall have markings, signages, tarpaulins, and other forms of information materials to ensure the strict implementation of railway protocols.

"To guide our commuters in observing the required 1-meter social distancing, we are placing markers inside the trains and on station platforms, indicating the required spacing between and among passengers. We are also installing signages and other information materials to remind passengers of the health and safety protocols that are in place," Usec Batan stressed.

Rail operators to serve commuters with reduced
capacity once ECQ is lifted

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Meanwhile, pursuant to the guidelines mandated by the Department of Health (DOH), the following passengers are not allowed to enter the station: 1) Passengers who are not wearing the proper face mask; 2) Passengers showing COVID-19 symptoms or with a registered body temperature of 37.8°C or higher; and 3) senior citizens, passengers aged 0-20, and those pregnant, due to their susceptibility to COVID-19.

All station personnel are also required to wear face masks, and gloves, while security guards manning the bag inspection area, and the Commuter Welfare Desk (CWD) will have to wear face shields.

Regular disinfection and sanitation of train interiors, station premises and facilities will also be conducted. In addition, hand washing or disinfectant stations are in place in adherence to sanitary measures set by the DOH.

Meanwhile, the DOTr also noted that skip trains, or trains bypassing certain stations, may be implemented to manage passenger volumes, along with a block system for managing the entry of passengers into stations, platform, and into trains.

For his part, Philippine National Railways (PNR) General Manager Junn Magno said: "Rail operators will coordinate with road sector for possible provision of buses to ferry passengers from the train stations."

Prior to the health crisis, the LRT1 has a daily ridership of 500,000, LRT2 line has 200,000; while the MRT-3 line served around 300,000 passengers per day. (DOTR)

'Flattening of the curve' nakikita na - DOH

[Danilo Garcia](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - May 7, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Positibo ang Department of Health (DOH) na nagkakaroon na ng 'flattening of the curve' dahil sa pagbagal ng pagdoble ng mga nakukumpirmang kaso ng coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) at bilang ng mga nasasawing pasyente.

Iniulat rin ng DOH na nasa 41 probinsya ang walang naiulat na kaso ng COVID sa loob ng magkasunod na dalawang linggo kaya naniniwala ang kagawaran na nagiging epektibo na ang pagkontrol sa pagkalat ng virus.

"Ang case doubling time o panahon ng pagdoble ng kaso ay tumaas mula tatlong araw sa limang araw. Bagaman ito'y magandang balita para sa lahat, dapat natin alalahanin na napakaaga pa para sabihin natin na narating na natin ang rurok ng mga kaso," ayon kay Health Undersecretary Ma. Rosario Vergeire.

Nabatid pa buhat kay Dr. John Wong ng Epimetric Inc. ng Inter-Agency Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) na bumagal na ang antas ng pagdami ng mga nasasawi. Nagdodoble ngayon ang numero kada pitong araw mula sa dating kada tatlong araw.

"Dahil dito, agresibo nating dinadagdagan ang ating testing capacity upang makita ang totoong bilang ng mga kaso sa buong bansa," ani Vergeire.

Sa kabila nito, sinabi ng DOH na maaga pa rin para sabihin na nag-peak o umabot na sa rurok ang numero ng COVID sa Pilipinas lalo na't nalalapit ang posibleng kontroladong pagtanggap sa lockdown sa mga lugar na nasa ilalim ng ECQ.

Epidemiologist warns of '3rd wave' of infections

By: [Jovic Yee](#) - Reporter / [@jovicveeINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:32 AM May 07, 2020



Dr. John Wong INQUIRER PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

MANILA, Philippines — A third wave of infections can be expected after the government lifts the lockdown it has imposed on major urban areas to halt the spread of the new coronavirus in the country, an epidemiologist advising the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases said on Wednesday.

Dr. John Wong, founder of health research institution Epimetrics Inc. and a member of the task force's subtechnical working group on data analytics, said the first wave of infections came in January when the Philippines recorded imported coronavirus cases involving Chinese tourists.

The second wave is the current spread of the virus that has sickened more than 10,000 Filipinos. Wong said on Tuesday that infections had slowed nearly two months after President Duterte imposed the lockdown.

Mitigation measures

Extended twice since mid-April, the lockdown ends on May 15, to be followed by a phased easing of restrictions to prevent a resurgence of the virus that Wong called the third wave.

“To prevent that third wave, we have to observe all the mitigation measures, like physical distancing, hand hygiene, frequent cleaning,” Wong said.

“We can't say that we've won the battle until we have a vaccine. But at least for now, we've been able to control the outbreak and buy time for the health system to increase its capacity,” he said.

As the national and the local governments prepared to oversee how life would go after the lockdown, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire called on the people to cooperate as the virus continued to threaten the country.

“[T]he threat to our health remains. We may be better prepared, but without a cure, vaccine, or if we do not follow our health protocols, we could go back to where we started,” Vergeire said in her online press briefing.

“We are confident that we can implement a response to another outbreak that is safe and effective. Let us be mindful of each other. The way we choose to behave out in public in the coming weeks could save lives,” she said.

10,004 cases

On Wednesday, the Department of Health (DOH) reported 320 more infections, pushing the total number of COVID-19 cases to 10,004. It was the biggest single-day increase in cases in a month.

The last time the DOH reported a spike in cases was April 6, when 414 cases were added to the tally. New cases have since averaged at 211 a day.

Vergeire, however, did not explain the spike in new cases, just saying that more than half of them, or 179, were recorded in Metro Manila.

The DOH also reported the recovery of 98 more patients, bringing the total number of COVID-19 survivors to 1,506. But the death toll increased to 658 after 21 more patients died.

Health-care workers account for one of five infections, as the number of medical front-liners testing positive for SARS-CoV-2, the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, has reached 1,859. Of this total, 380 have recovered while 34 have died.

Apart from increasing the country’s testing capacity, Vergeire said there was also a need to ramp up the government’s ability to isolate cases. For this, she said the government had drawn up a “long-term plan” under which local governments would have at least one temporary treatment and monitoring center that would be equipped with one isolation bed per 2,500 population.

Currently, the local governments’ quarantines have a combined capacity of 36,546 patients, while national government quarantines can handle 1,348.

Mass testing

Calls for mass testing to suppress the spread of the coronavirus continued Wednesday with the chief physician of the Bureau of Corrections recommending rapid testing of inmates in the Correctional Institution for Women and New Bilibid Prison.

Dr. Henry Fabro, director of health services of the bureau and head of the Bilibid hospital, said mass rapid testing would help health authorities find and isolate prisoners infected with the virus.
—*WITH A REPORT FROM DEXTER CABALZA*



'COVID impact worse than expected'

[Mary Grace Padin](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 7, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19 pandemic on the economy may be worse than previously expected following the extension of the enhanced community quarantine and the imposition of general community quarantine in areas affected by the contagion, the Department of Finance (DOF) said yesterday.

In a press briefing, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth this year may settle even lower than the previous projection of zero to negative 0.8 percent.

"Might be," Dominguez said when asked if the pandemic's impact might be worse than previously projected. "Because we are monitoring reports from other countries and it looks like there is no magic medicine for this thing."

The finance chief also said that Luzon, including Metro Manila which is currently under a tighter lockdown, accounts for over 60 percent of the country's GDP.

"The reason we're being careful (with the easing of the lockdown) is because we don't want a relapse. Because the relapse could be worse and we've seen it in other countries who relaxed a bit too early. Their lockdown is even harder now. So I want to make sure that we are really clear before we do a more serious relaxation," he said.

Still, Dominguez expressed confidence that the first quarter economic performance would still be "more positive than negative."

"I don't have a number, but January looks okay, until we had a minor problem with Taal Volcano. And then starting late February there was the curtailment of tourists from China and in mid-March, there was the shutdown," Dominguez said.

“When we calculate it, it’s more positive than negative because the curtailment was less than one half of the quarter,” he said.

On the other hand, he said the GDP figures for the second quarter would be “quite bad.”

The government’s economic team earlier projected that the economy may contract to zero percent, or even contract by 0.8 percent due to the impact of the pandemic.

Economic managers also estimate that the country’s fiscal deficit may widen to as much as 5.3 percent of gross domestic product.

Nevertheless, Dominguez reiterated that the Philippines is in a good financial position to respond to COVID-19, thanks to the policies implemented by the Duterte administration.

He cited the assessment made by the London-based publication, The Economist, which ranked the Philippines 6th among 66 emerging market economies in facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

“That, I think, should assure people that we are very well capable of meeting the financial requirements of this COVID hit,” Dominguez said.

On top of having ample fiscal headroom, Dominguez said the Philippines also has a strong monetary position.

“Our total foreign reserves are more than our total debt. That’s why you’ve noticed that peso is the least depreciated among the ASEAN countries and in Asia. I think we are only second to Japan,” he said.



Economy to fall into recession in Q2, says FMIC

[Czeriza Valencia](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 7, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine economy can plunge into a recession starting in the second quarter and will take time to recover amid the uncertainties caused by the coronavirus pandemic, according to report of First Metro Investment Corp.

In the latest Market Call report with University of Asia and the Pacific's Capital Markets Research, the investment banking arm of the Metrobank Group said while some effects of the pandemic would be reflected in the first quarter growth performance, the larger impact would be seen in the second quarter during the first full month of the implementation of the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine.

“The biggest dent should occur in Q2, with Luzon’s full month of ECQ, supply chains just being restored, while consumers may opt to stay home. We think the economy will contract severely in Q2 and will thus have a difficult time rebounding quickly to positive territory for the full-year 2020,” the joint report said.

As such, FMIC and UA&P said a U-shaped economic recovery, which is characterized by a sharp recession with several quarters of decline before growth returns to positive territory, is likely.

A recession is defined as a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months or several quarters.

“The economy may instead see a U-type of recovery from a period of decline to a slow movement back to normalcy,” said the report.

The government will report today (May 7) the first quarter economic growth performance.

Market consensus points to slower growth, reflecting the multiple economic shocks during the quarter which include the eruption of Taal Volcano in January, the slowdown in tourism because of pandemic-related lockdowns, and the start of the community quarantine in mid-March.

The government is more optimistic of recovery prospects, with acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua saying on Tuesday that the Philippines has a good chance of a V-shaped economic recovery, which is characterized by a sharp decline followed by rapid recovery.

Under a V-shaped recovery scenario, he said recovery may start by July as quarantine restrictions are eased in more areas from the severity of the enhanced community quarantine still in effect in areas with high risk of transmission such as the National Capital Region.

Chua estimated that by this month, around two-thirds of the country will move toward general community quarantine, the less strict version of the severe community quarantine that will remain in effect in the National Capital Region and other areas with high risk of community transmission.

In areas under general community quarantine, businesses will be allowed to reopen and other economic activities allowed to resume but subject to health requirements and physical distancing measures.

Maynilad hopes for 'bankable' new water concession
deal after Duterte apology

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Maynilad hopes for 'bankable' new water concession deal after Duterte apology

Published May 6, 2020 6:49pm
By TED CORDERO, GMA News

Maynilad Water Services Inc., is hoping that the new water concession agreements which will be crafted by the government will be "bankable" amid the seemingly improving relations between President Rodrigo Duterte and the water concessionaires.

"What we are hoping and optimistic at the end of the day, the revised agreement will be bankable," Maynilad president Ramoncito Fernandez said in a virtual press conference.

Fernandez said that the water concessionaire is hoping that the new concession deals will enable the company to service its obligations to various banks.

For his part, Maynilad parent Pangilinan-led Metro Pacific Investment Corp. president and CEO Jose Ma. Lim said the company is still waiting for the terms to be discussed with the government.

"In the meantime, we are expecting a better relationship with Malacañang and water concessionaires now," Lim said, referring to the President's openness to discuss the water concession deals.

"We haven't received anything officially from the government, but we note that the President said he would be very reasonable."

Duterte, on Monday, [apologized](#) to the Ayalas and Manuel V. Pangilinan whom he criticized before the COVID-19 crisis for what he called onerous deals in the water distribution sector.

"I am ready to talk and I'd be reasonable. 'Yung mga masakit kong salita to the Ayalas and to Pangilinan, I apologize for the hurting words," Duterte said.

The President earlier threatened to go after the Ayalas and Pangilinan for alleged economic sabotage.

Pangilian, likewise, welcomed an out-of-court settlement with the government.

In December 2019, the Department of Justice found "onerous" or "disadvantageous" provisions in the government's 1997 concession agreements with Maynilad and Manila Water, including a prohibition on government interference in rate-setting and a provision for indemnity in case of interference.

Duterte has slammed the concessionaires in protest of the clause that holds the government liable and accountable to indemnify the companies for losses incurred as a result of government interference.

Maynilad hopes for 'bankable' new water concession
deal after Duterte apology

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The Permanent Court of Arbitration in Singapore ordered the Philippine government to pay Maynilad around P3.6 billion and Manila Water P7.4 billion as compensation for losses or damages the companies incurred based on the liability clause.

But the companies decided not to pursue their respective arbitral awards after Duterte unleashed a series of tirades against them.

The concession agreements that have been extended to 2037 were canceled by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

The MWSS revoked a resolution drawn during the Arroyo administration that approved the extension of the agreements. The resolution extended the concession deal by another 15 years from 2022.

The 25-year concession agreements (1997-2022) with Maynilad and Manila Water are "still valid and subsisting contracts." —LDF, GMA News

Duterte diplomacy in 'water war' welcome, but real

May 7, 2020

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EDITORIAL

Duterte diplomacy in 'water war' welcome, but real issues remain

By [The Manila Times](#)

May 7, 2020

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte earlier this week pleasantly surprised many people when he offered an olive branch to the Ayala-led Manila Water Co. Inc. and the Metro Pacific-led Maynilad Water Services Inc., apologizing to the two water concessionaires for his earlier verbal attacks and thanking them for contributing to the effort to stop the coronavirus pandemic.

The implication that Duterte is willing to work out an agreeable settlement to the government's long-running dispute with the water distributors for the Greater Manila Area is certainly very welcome and eliminates the risk of a calamitous loss of water services. The President should not, however, let his new "softer side" get in the way of resolving the deeply troubling issues that exist in the two concession agreements, and which sparked his anger in the first place.

In a public briefing on Monday night, President Duterte apologized to top Manila Water officials Fernando Zobel de Ayala and his elder brother Jaime Augusto, and Maynilad Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan for the "hurting words" he used against them in the past.

Duterte erupted at the water concessionaires late last year over the allegedly "onerous" contracts they signed with the government in 1997 to supply water to residents of Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

The President was outraged by the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Singapore, which had ordered the Philippine government to pay Manila Water P7.39 billion for the non-implementation of water rate increases for the years 2013 to 2017, based on the concession agreement requiring the government to indemnify the utility firm for losses resulting from regulatory action.

Maynilad had earlier won a similar ruling from arbitrators for a slightly lower amount of damages.

This news followed several months of controversy highlighted by a final ruling by the Supreme Court imposing stiff fines against both companies for not complying with the terms of the 2009 Clean Water Act, and several extended periods in which millions of consumers were left without water due to severe supply shortages.

Duterte threatened to charge the two concessionaires, their top executives, and former government officials responsible for crafting the concession agreements with economic plunder, and order the Department of Justice and regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to create new contracts to replace the "onerous" deals.

The crisis at least briefly raised the serious, disturbing possibility that water services to the more than 15 million customers served by Manila Water and Maynilad would be interrupted, and the Philippines would become a pariah in the eyes of potential big-ticket investors.

Duterte's willingness to find an amicable resolution avoids that disaster, but calm and goodwill alone does not resolve the parts of the concession agreements that are definitely disadvantageous to the government and the people.

Duterte diplomacy in 'water war' welcome, but real

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First, the issue that prompted MWSS to reject the rate increase and sent the two companies to arbitration was the inclusion of corporate income taxes in customer charges. Any new concession agreement must explicitly prohibit this.

Second, the issue behind the fines imposed late last year by the Supreme Court, the non-provision of sewerage system connections in spite of the concessionaire's collecting the money for those capital expenditures as part of customer rates must be resolved. Ideally, the companies must be obliged to carry out that work required by the 2009 Clean Water Act; alternatively, they should provide refunds to customers for the full amount collected over a more than 10-year period.

Finally, the dispute resolution mechanism which subjects Filipino public interests to the whims of foreign arbitrators managed by a business-backed organization (the International Chamber of Commerce, in this case) must be rejected in favor of competent authorities who can fairly carry out that role here in the Philippines. The Philippine Institute of Arbitrators and the Philippine Dispute Resolution Center Inc. are excellent organizations; if they cannot serve as the dispute resolution mechanism themselves for some reason, their knowledge and guidance in creating a just solution will be of great service to all concerned.



MAYOR BAYLON NG PAMPANGA TUNAY NA HULOG NG LANGIT

May 6, 2020 @ 2:04 PM 18 hours ago

Views: 115

Itong araw na ito, dumating sa National Press Club ang malaking tulong para sa mga mamamahayag at iba pang mamamayan galing sa isang mayor mula sa lalawigan ng Pampanga.

Si ex-Candaba, Pampanga Mayor Danilo Baylon at ang kanyang maybahay na si Apo Aniway Baylon ang naghatid ng tulong sa pamamagitan ng DanWay Missionaries na pinangunahan naman nina Ms. Gloria Vinuya at Pastor Lito Palasyo na chairman ng Candaba Christian Church Association.

Kasama rin sina Pastor Jun Asperas, Pastora Josie Giron at anim iba pa.

Galing ang mga nasabing produkto sa Dan Way Processing Corporation na nakabase sa Pampanga at umabot na ang kamay ng korporasyong ito sa iba't ibang bahagi ng bansa.

Nakatulong naman nang husto sa paghahatid-tulong ang brodkaster at NPC member na si Joel Gorospe, katulong si NPC member Gina Mape.

Tinanggap naman nang taos-puso ng NPC na pinamunuan ni President Rolando Lakay Gonzalo libreng handog.

Kasama sa mga tumanggap sina VP Paul Gutierrez, Sec. Lydia Bueno, Treas. Mina Navarro, Auditor Leonel Abasola at Directors Aya Yupangco, Jun Mendoza, Madelyn Dominguez, Benedicto Abaygar at Nats Taboy.

BIGAS, MANOK, ITLOG

Binubo ang tulong ng 50 kabang bigas, mahigit 500 pirasong dressed chicken, 5,000 double yolk na itlog.

Dahil sa rami ng donasyon, naisipan ng mga opisyal ng NPC ba muling maghatid ng pagkain sa mga kapus-palad sa paligid upang maihatid ang magandang balita na dumating sa NPC hindi lang sa hanay ng mga mamamahayag kundi maging sa iba pang nangangailangan.

Kung matatandaan po ninyo, naibalita ang pagbibigay-pagkain o pa-goto ng NPC sa nasa 1,000 residente na sakop ng Brgy. 654 ng Maynila at naganap ito dahil din sa bigay ng iba't ibang donor sa samahan ng mga mamamahayag.

Naging katulong sa pa-goto sa mga residenteng kapus-palad at ilang frontliner versus Corona Virus Disease-10 ang mga kagawad, barangay tanod at volunteers na pinadala ni Brgy. Chairman Salvador Fuentes.

SALAMAT SA PAGTITIWALA

Bilang dating Pangulo rin ng NPC at isang hamak ng miyembro nito ngayon, pinasasalamatan natin ang mag-asawang ex-Mayor Engr. Danilo Baylon at Apo Aniway.

Ang masasabi natin, hindi mapupunta sa wala o kaya'y mapunta sa maruming kamay ang inyong taos-pusong ibinigay na ayuda sa panahong nagkakagipitan ang lahat dahil sa Covid-19.

Bawat butil ng 50 kabang bagas, bawat piraso ng 5,000 itlog at bawat himaymay ng mahigit 500 manok ay mapakikinabangan ng maraming nahihirapan at nagugutom ngayon.

Ang totoo, karamihan sa NPC officials ang namangha sa kusang-loob na pamamahagi ng tulong ng mga Baylon sa labas ng kanilang teritoryo sa Candaba.

Hindi kumatok ang NPC sa pintuan ng mga Baylon ngunit dumating ang mga palad ng mga Baylon para mamahagi ng pangangailangan ng mga nagigipit at nangangailangan sa mga araw na ito.

Hindi ito masusukat ng kahit sino at masasabi nating Hulog ng Diyos ang mag-asawa na walang sawa ring pinagmamalasakitan ng mga pastor na hindi yata napapagod sa kahahatid sa iba ng tulong ngayong araw na may labis na pangangailangan ng mga mamayan.

Taos-puso po kaming nagpapasalamat sa inyo and may God bless you always!

'A crisis for all'

[Titon Mitra, Resident Representative, UNDP Philippines](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 7, 2020 - 12:00am

With the COVID-19 wave about to engulf us, our response needs to be nuanced to the huge disparities in this country. The enhanced community quarantine, while certainly warranted, has markedly different impacts depending on where we sit on the income ladder. There is no doubt we all suffer from these measures, but we suffer to a greatly different extent.

For the 2.5 million people in Metro Manila who reside in crowded slums, or the 15.1 million poor households nationwide, community quarantining and social distancing have entirely different implications. Lost income from restricted movement matters greatly, not just to the income earner but also to the whole family dependent on those earnings. There are no savings to draw upon. Crowded in one room that may be 3 sqm, it is unrealistic to think that social distancing is possible. Collecting water or washing at communal points, walking through narrow alley ways, just stepping out to get some sunlight and less fetid air, or walking 3 hours to and from work because of the absence of public transport presents a whole set of risks.

Certainly, efforts to suppress transmission with strict community quarantine measures need to be in place. But what are the complementary policies and programs for the poor? Can the Administration increase the amount and frequency of social safety net payments? Can we, as we would in the aftermath of a destructive typhoon, provide emergency water, sanitation, and food aid? These are preventative and alleviation measures. But there is also a looming crisis that requires a viable contingency plan. National epidemiologists are estimating that the number of people infected could rise to 75,000 within a few months (what about the projected fatality rate?) and that is likely a conservative figure. A significant proportion could be the poor living in crowded slums.

Local governments will need to run the numbers and develop the worst-case scenarios for planning. Personal protective equipment for frontline workers, testing kits (and the WHO tells us we must test, test, test), ventilators, sanitizers, ICU beds and alternative bed space (for hospitals that may quickly reach their limits to house the sick), etc., will need to be provided and quickly. Much of this will be challenging given the huge demand on global supply. Health facilities will need to be accessible and ideally testing and health services taken directly to poor communities. Innovative approaches to tracing and isolation in crowded slums areas will need to be implemented. Assignment of health workers needs to be calibrated to where the greatest numbers are likely to be.

The President is calling for a special session to pass a supplemental budget to manage the crisis and contend with its (social) and economic impact. This stimulus is urgently required, as is an adjustment of existing programs. Spending the full budget allotment in any one year has been a problem, so a rapid review based on realistic projections of expenditure could be undertaken to realign savings to pro-poor interventions.

This is now a matter of both the quantum and quality of expenditure. At all costs, we need to avoid the ethical dilemma of choosing whose life to save or care for. Income should certainly not be the defining factor. We are about to head into not only a health crisis but a humanitarian crisis. We need to act accordingly and leave no one behind.

Comparisons

posted May 07, 2020 at 12:30 am

by [Florencio Fianza](#)

We are a week from ending the enhanced community quarantine. Yet, COVID-19 infections are still on the rise. The government nonetheless has started to reopen part of the economy because of the realization that the country must restart part of the economy; otherwise, the country's entire economy might simply collapse. It is a calculated risk because of the danger that infections will spike when people start to mix again.

There is no denying that the lockdown which started last March 15, no matter how imperfect the implementation is being done, somehow slowed what could have been a much higher rate of infection. Still, a lockdown is also supposed to bring down the increase in infection until the virus disappears or the infection rate at least drastically goes down – and this obviously has not yet happened. Why?

We must be doing some things wrong. In spite of a government statement saying that the curve has started to flatten, the data does not appear to back this up. Daily infection increase is still hovering at a little over 200. More than 50 days into the quarantine, we should have been able to achieve two weeks of continuous decrease in infections, but we have not done this up to now. The country is now third in the ASEAN region when it comes to the number of infections. First is Singapore followed by Indonesia then us. Malaysia and Thailand, two neighbors with more infections when the pandemic started, have now been able to control the increase of their infections and are now way below us.

When the pandemic started, most countries went into high gear implementing measures to stop the spread of the virus. China, where the virus started, implemented severe measures that eventually significantly slowed the spread of the virus. South Korea is also another country that acted promptly by implementing a no-nonsense testing, tracing and a quarantine program that halted the rapid spread of the virus outside the city of Daegu the epicenter of the disease in that country. South Korea demonstrated to the world how to do it right.

How about us? How did we react to the situation and how do we compare with the way other countries in the region are handling their COVID-19 problems?

In the absence of an existing agency to handle the situation, the Inter Agency Task Force for infectious disease was organized. Since it was basically a medical problem, the Department of Health called the shots. In hindsight, it is probably one decision the government wished it did differently because more than a month was wasted due to the slowness in ramping up testing. DOH was so inflexible in its insistence on following a so-called gold standard testing procedure. The DOH should have known better that there will always be false negatives and positives in any testing used. Now the government is scrambling to increase its testing capacity. We now have a new deputy implementer tasked principally to increase testing and tracing.

I just hope that protocols will be revised to include testing anyone who wants to be tested. The reason for this is that there are simply too many asymptomatic infected people out on the streets. They do not even know that they are infected.

We have lost precious time. We simply have to make up for it – and fast. This problem after all, is not going away anytime soon. What this pandemic also revealed is the fragility of our social and government institutions. Notwithstanding the hard work that everyone is doing, we are now having a difficult time because of the inadequacy of our government bureaucracy. For instance, the problems being encountered in the distribution of social amelioration funds is because we do not have a ready list of the true number of families and those who are on a daily wage basis who are now needing financial support. We have so many lists when we should only have one. The list in government hands is not complete, that is why there is a lot of confusion and complaints.

Fifty days on, many people have not yet received any form of financial or food aid. The government also may not have prepared adequately, or it may have underestimated the difficulty of enforcing a lockdown in Metro Manila, one of the most congested metropolitan areas in the world.

How can there be a traffic jam when everyone is supposed to be at home under quarantine or impose social distancing in the places where informal settlers are living? Eight people living in a confined area of 25 square meters cannot obviously practice social distancing. The pandemic also brought into the open the inadequacy and weakness of our country's medical capability.

Perhaps when this is all over, the government will invest more on health and pay medical professionals a decent wage so they do not have to go overseas in search of greener pastures. The government cannot prevent them from leaving if they are not paid adequately because like everyone else, they want decent wages. Most people understand a crisis as a serious problem. In technical terms however, a crisis is a situation that is waiting to turn for the better or worse.

For the past 50 days, we have all been waiting for the light at the end of the tunnel. We will have to wait longer and hope that what the government is doing will make the situation turn for the better real fast.

Sounding like a leader

posted May 07, 2020 at 01:00 am

The contrast could not have been more stark.

As the COVID-19 pandemic brought the number of deaths in his country hurtling past 70,000, former US President George W. Bush released a brief, inspiring video message that appealed to the best in his people.

“In this type of testing we need to remember a few things,” Mr. Bush said.

“First, let us remember we have faced times of testing before. Following 9-11 I saw a great nation rise as one to honor the brave, to grieve with the grieving and to embrace unavoidable new duties, and I have no doubt, none at all, that this spirit of service and sacrifice is alive and well in America. Second, let us remember that empathy and simple kindness are essential powerful tools of national recovery. Even at an appropriate social distance, we can find ways to be present in the lives of others, to ease their anxiety and share their burdens. Third, let’s remember that the suffering we experience as a nation does not fall evenly. In the days to come it will be especially important to care in practical ways for the elderly, the ill and the unemployed. Finally, let us remember how small our differences are in the face of this shared threat. In the final analysis, we are not partisan combatants, we are human beings, equally vulnerable and equally wonderful in the sight of God. We rise or fall together and we are determined to rise. God bless you all.”

It was a welcome change to the baseless braggadocio, outright lies and psychotic ramblings of the current occupant of the White House.

Stung by the inevitable comparison, President Donald Trump attacked Bush on Twitter, in a series of tweets that praised his own performance during the pandemic and blamed the former president for failing to support him during his impeachment last year.

The stark difference between Bush and Trump did not escape Renato Mariotti, a former federal prosecutor, who tweeted: "In the face of a crisis that requires leadership, empathy, and trust in science, Trump has come up short. Bush’s video should remind Republicans that they can do better.”

The example of what real leadership sounds like should not be lost on our own leaders. Instead of issuing threats of martial law and curses, why not appeal to the best in Filipinos and offer a clear and coherent blueprint of how we will get through this ordeal together? That’s what leadership should sound like.

LPA may enter PAR in two days

Published May 6, 2020 8:44pm

A low-pressure area (LPA) has formed and may enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) in two days, GMA's resident meteorologist Nathaniel Cruz said Wednesday.

In a report on 24 Oras, Cruz said that the LPA was last estimated at 1,375 kilometers east of Davao City.

Based on the wind map of the MetraWeather, the LPA may enter PAR on Thursday night or Friday morning. It may also come near eastern Mindanao or Eastern Visayas during the weekend.

Meanwhile, Cruz said that rains may prevail over parts of Cordillera region and the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya and Aurora.

Thunderstorms may also prevail over Eastern and Western Visayas, Caraga, Davao, Northern Mindanao, and SOCCSKSARGEN. — **Joahna Lei Casilao/BM, GMA News**

Metro Manila swelters as heat index hits 43 degrees

By [Franz Lewin Embudo](#)

May 6, 2020



A few number of vehicles can be seen at the EDSA- Magallanes flyover on Wednesday, May 6, 2020. Metro Manila heat index on Wednesday reached 43 degrees, the highest for the year according to the weather bureau. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA

THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) recorded the highest heat on Wednesday, May 6 — 43 degrees — the highest for the year.

Pagasa registered a temperature of 36.5°C and a relative humidity of 46.2 percent at the Pagasa Science Garden weather station in Diliman, Quezon City at 3 p.m.

High heat indexes were also felt in Northern and Central Luzon, with Echague, Isabela at 40°C, Tuguegarao City at 39.6°C, Camiling, Tarlac at 39.4°C, Science City of Muñoz at 38°C, and Clark, Pampanga at 37.9°C.

Pagasa classifies heat index, which is the temperature felt by the human body, between 32°C and 41°C as “extreme caution” and 41°C to 54°C as “dangerous” because it could lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke with continuous activity.

The weather bureau has advised the public to avoid the outdoor heat from 12 noon to 4 p.m, use sun protection for outdoor activities and stay hydrated.

Heat index hits 52°C in Butuan - PAGASA

Published May 6, 2020 6:11pm
By JOAHNA LEI CASILAO, GMA News

PAGASA on Wednesday reported a record-high heat index of 53 degrees celcius heat index in Butuan City.

The high human perceived temperature was recorded at 2 p.m.

This was followed by Ambulong, Tanauan City which reported a 51 degrees celcius heat index, Sangley Point, Cavite City with 51 degrees celcius, Clark, Pampanga with 46 degrees celcius, and Maasin City with 46 degrees celcius.

The weather bureau warned of dangers brought by a 41 degrees celcius to 54 degrees celcius heat index.

"Posible ang heat cramps at heat exhaustion na maaaring mauwi sa heat stroke kapag tuluy-tuloy ang physical activity," PAGASA said.

PAGASA-DOST @dost_pagasa

TINGNAN: Top 7 PAGASA Synoptic Stations na nakapagtala ng pinakamaalinsangang panahon ngayong Miyerkules, 6 Mayo.

Panganib ang dulot ng 41-54°C na heat index. Posible ang heat cramps at heat exhaustion na maaaring mauwi sa heat stroke kapag tuluy-tuloy ang physical activity.

PAGASA STATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST RECORDED HEAT INDEX		
WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY 2020		
BUTUAN CITY	53°C	2:00 PM
AMBULONG, TANAUAN CITY	51°C	2:00 PM
SANGLEY POINT, CAVITE CITY	51°C	2:00 PM
CLARK, PAMPANGA	46°C	2:00 PM
MAASIN CITY	46°C	11:00 AM
SCIENCE CITY OF MUÑOZ	46°C	2:00 PM
NAIA, PASAY CITY	46°C	12:00 PM

460 5:17 PM - May 6, 2020

190 people are talking about this

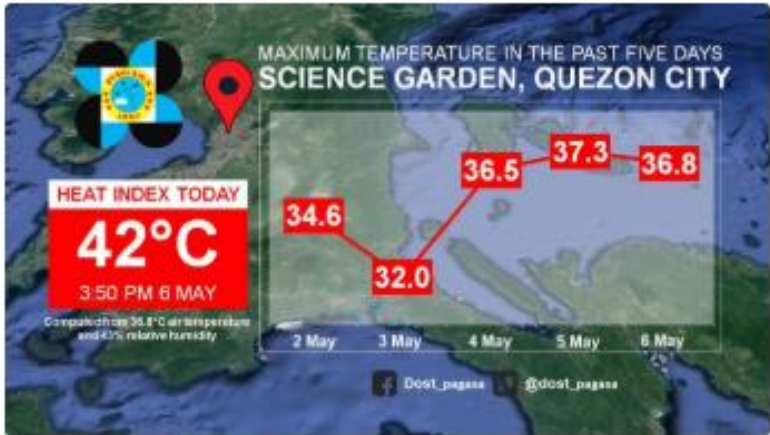
The heat index recorded at the Science Garden in Quezon City, meanwhile, hit 42 degrees celcius at 3:50 p.m.

PAGASA also recorded a 36.8 degrees celcius air temperature at the same time.

PAGASA-DOST @dost_pagasa

Umabot sa 36.8°C ang air temperature sa Science Garden, QC kaninang 3:50 PM ngayong Miyerkules, 6 Mayo. Pumalo naman sa 42°C ang katumbas na heat index o alinsangang naramdaman sa parehong oras.

Stay home, stay hydrated, at stay safe po!



MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE IN THE PAST FIVE DAYS
SCIENCE GARDEN, QUEZON CITY

HEAT INDEX TODAY
42°C
3:50 PM 6 MAY

Computed from 35.8°C air temperature and 43% relative humidity

2 May 3 May 4 May 5 May 6 May

101 5:13 PM - May 6, 2020

44 people are talking about this

Easterlies, the ridge of a high-pressure area, and localized thunderstorms may bring partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers over Metro Manila and the rest of the country, according to PAGASA.

However, this has "no significant impact" on the country. **-NB, GMA News**

Heat index in Dagupan City soars to record 51°C

Published May 6, 2020 5:27pm
By JOAHNA LEI CASILAO, GMA News

Dagupan City experienced a scorching afternoon on Tuesday as heat index rose to 51 degrees Celcius, the highest to be recorded since the dry season, PAGASA said.

Dagupan earlier [recorded](#) a heat index of 50 degrees Celsius.

The weather bureau cautioned that heat cramps and heat exhaustion may be possible amid a heat index between 41 to 51 degrees celsius while a heat stroke is possible with continued physical activity.

Meanwhile, the top five PAGASA stations that recorded the highest temperature in the country on Tuesday was in Northern and Central Luzon, the state weather bureau said.

Echague in Isabela recorded 40°C; Tuguegarao City recorded 39.6°C; Camiling, Tarlac recorded 39.4°C; Science City of Munoz recorded 38°C; and Clark, Pampanga recorded 37.9°C.

PAGASA-DOST @dost_pagasa

TINGNAN: Nasa Northern at Central Luzon ang Top 5 PAGASA stations na nakapagtala ng pinakamatataas na temperatura kahapon, 5 Mayo (Martes).

PAALALA: Dalasan ang pag-inom ng tubig at bawasan ang physical activities sa tanghali at hapon para maiwasan ang heat stress. Ingat po!

PAGASA STATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST RECORDED TEMPERATURE
TUESDAY, 5 MAY 2020

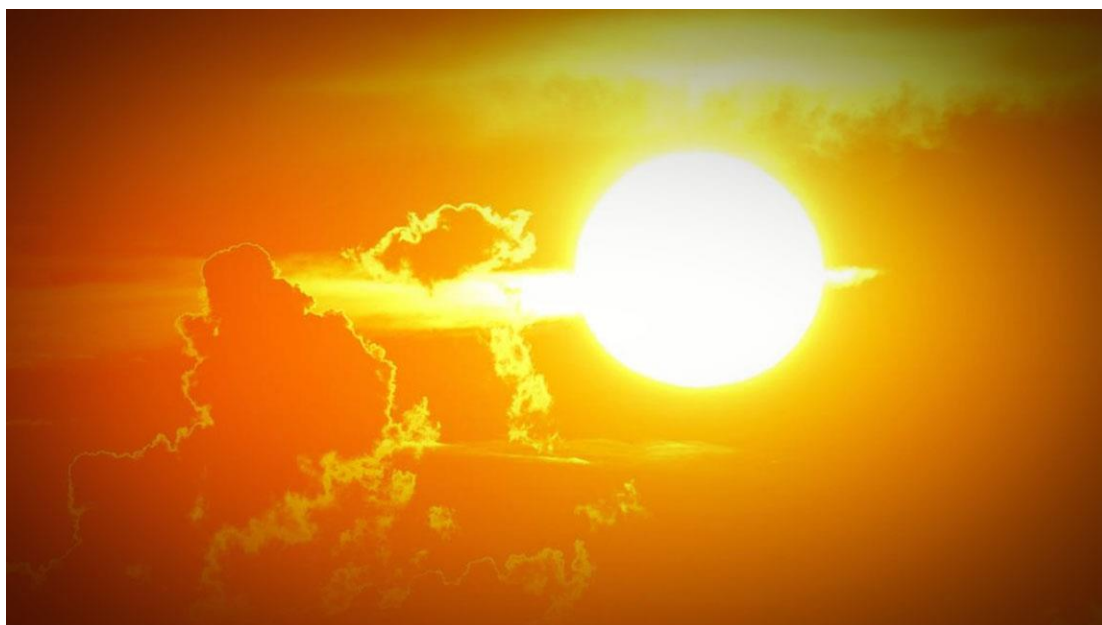
ECHAGUE, ISABELA*	40.0°C
TUGUEGARAO CITY	39.6°C
CAMILING, TARLAC*	39.4°C
SCIENCE CITY OF MUÑOZ	38.0°C
CLARK, PAMPANGA	37.9°C

115 2:15 PM - May 6, 2020

52 people are talking about this

PAGASA reminded residents to drink water and refrain from physical activities at noon and in the afternoon to avoid heat stress. —LDF, GMA News

Source: https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/weather/737100/heat-index-in-dagupan-city-soars-to-record-51-deg-c/story/?just_in



51°C heat index lumagablab sa Dagupan City

May 6, 2020 @ 6:17 PM 14 hours ago
Views: 109

Pangasinan, Philippines – Napakainit at maalinsangang panahon ang naramdaman sa Dagupan City matapos na umabot sa 51 degrees Celcius ang heat index sa syudad, ito na ang pinakamataas na naitala simula nang umarangkada ang dry season, ayon sa PAGASA.

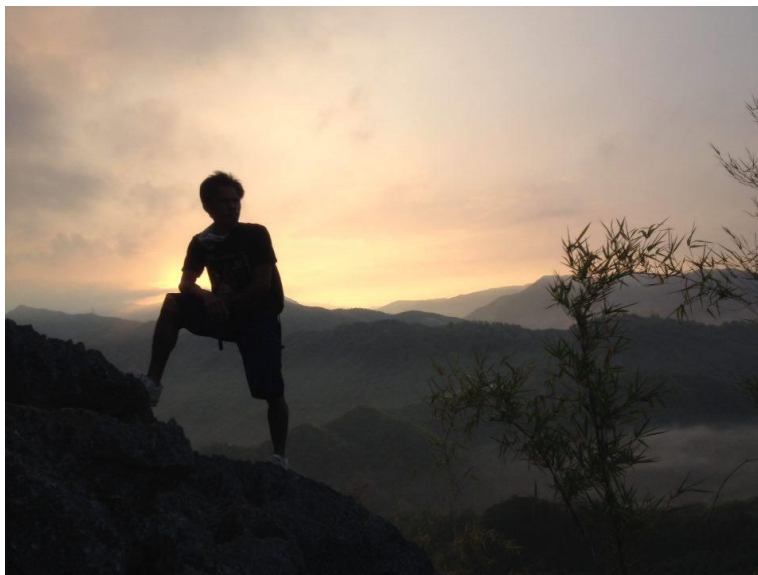
Nauna nang naitala ang degrees Celsius na heat index sa Dagupan

Ibinabala naman ng weather bureau ang heat cramps at heat exhaustion na maaring maranasan sa heat index na 41 hanggang 51 degrees Celsius, habang pinag-iingat din ang publiko sa heat stroke.

Samantala, nakapagtala ng 40°C sa Echague, Isabela; 39.6°C sa Tuguegarao City recorded; 39.4°C sa Camiling, Tarlac; 38°C sa Science City of Munoz; at sa Clark, Pampanga naman ay nakapagtala ng 37.9°C. **RNT**

Echague nakapagtala rin ng pinakamataas na temperatura ngayong taon

By: [Leifbilly Begas](#) - 05/06/2020



NATAPATAN ng Echague, Isabela ang pinakamainit na temperatura na naitala sa bansa mula noong 2018.

Ayon sa Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration nakapagtala ng 40.0 degrees Celsius ang bayan ng Echague kahapon (Mayo 5).

Ganito ang temperatura na naitala sa Tuguegarao City sa Cagayan Valley noong Mayo 4.

Bago ito ang huling pinakamataas na temperatura na naitala sa bansa ay 40.0 degrees Celsius sa Echague noong 2018, ayon sa PAGASA.

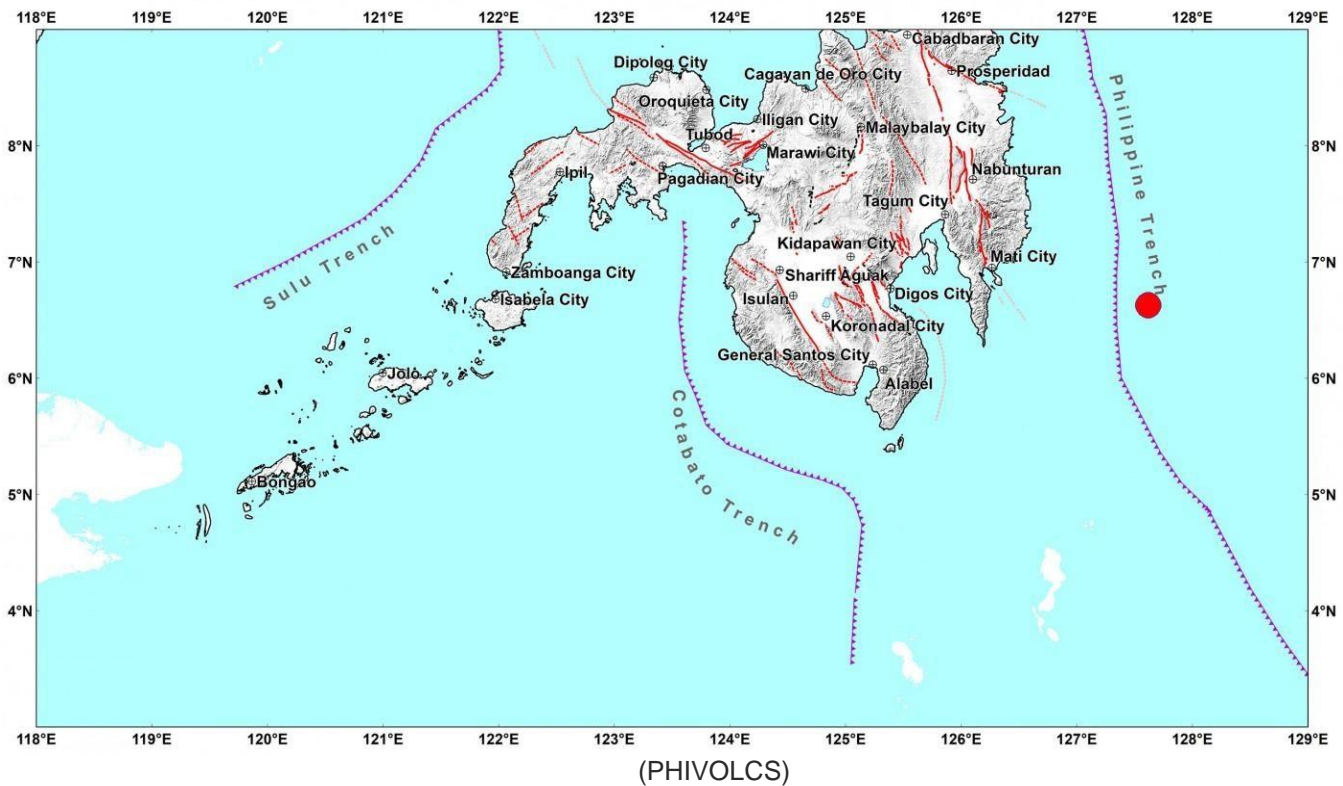
Kahapon ay naitala naman ang 39.6 degrees Celsius temperatura sa Tuguegarao. Sa Camiling, Tarlac ay naitala naman ang 39.4 degrees Celsius.

Sa Science City of Muñoz naman ay naitala ang 38.0 degrees Celsius at 37.9 degrees Celsius naman sa Clark, Pampanga.

4.7-magnitude quake hits Davao Oriental

Updated May 6, 2020, 12:05 PM
By MB Online

A 4.7-magnitude earthquake hit Manay, Davao Oriental Wednesday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) reported.



The earthquake, which occurred at 10:53 a.m., was tectonic in origin and was traced 136 kilometers southeast of Manay, Davao Oriental. It had a depth of 51 km.

No aftershocks and damages are reported from the tremor.

'There can be no going back to business as usual' even when pandemic ends, WHO head says

By Jacqueline Howard, CNN

Published May 7, 2020 1:15:38 AM



(CNN) - Even once the coronavirus pandemic ends, the world cannot go "back to business as usual," World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned.

"The Covid-19 pandemic will eventually recede, but there can be no going back to business as usual. We cannot continue to rush to fund panic but let preparedness go by the wayside," Tedros said during a media briefing in Geneva.

"As we work on responding to the pandemic, we must also work harder to prepare for the next one. Now is an opportunity to lay the foundations for resilient health systems around the world," Tedros said, adding that "investing in health now will save lives later."

"That includes systems to prepare, prevent and respond to emerging pathogens," Tedros said.

The Wuhan lab at the heart of the US-China virus spat

posted May 06, 2020 at 02:56 pm

by [AFP](#)

BEIJING - The Chinese laboratory accused by top American officials of being the source of the coronavirus pandemic conducts research on the world's most dangerous diseases.



(FILES) This file photo taken on April 17, 2020 shows an aerial view of the P4 laboratory (L) at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province. - The Chinese biosafety laboratory accused by top US officials of being at the origin of the coronavirus pandemic studies the world's most dangerous diseases, with researchers who investigate viruses that live in bats. (Photo by Hector RETAMAL / AFP)

US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have both claimed that there is evidence the pathogen came from the lab in Wuhan -- the city where the disease was first detected late last year.

But the World Health Organization said Washington had offered no evidence to support the "speculative" claims, and scientists believe the coronavirus jumped from animals to humans, possibly at a Wuhan market selling wild animals.

The top US epidemiologist Anthony Fauci has echoed the WHO's statement, telling National Geographic that all evidence so far "strongly indicates" a natural origin.

China has strongly denied the allegations, but speculation and conspiracy theories have persisted. Here are some key questions about the Wuhan Institute of Virology:

WHAT DO ITS RESEARCHERS DO?

Work by the lab's scientists helped to shed light on the COVID-19 pathogen in the early days of the outbreak in Wuhan.

In February, they published work concluding that the new virus shared a 79.6 percent sequence identity to the SARS coronavirus, and that it was 96 percent identical at the whole-genome level to a coronavirus found in bats.

The lab's researchers had already conducted extensive investigations on the links between bats and disease outbreaks in China, and had highlighted the need to prepare for viruses potentially spreading out of their natural reservoirs into human communities.

Scientists think COVID-19 originated in bats and could have been transmitted to people via another mammal like a pangolin, but there is no definitive answer so far.

WHAT DOES IT HANDLE?

The Wuhan institute houses the largest virus bank in Asia which preserves more than 1,500 strains. The complex contains Asia's first maximum-security lab equipped to handle Class 4 pathogens (P4) such as Ebola.

The 300-million-yuan (\$42 million) P4 lab opened in 2018. A P3 lab has been in operation since 2012.

While the US intelligence community said it had concluded the coronavirus was not human-made, it added that it would continue to investigate if the outbreak started from contact with infected animals or from "an accident" at the Wuhan lab.

COULD THERE BE A LEAK?

US diplomatic cables seen by The Washington Post earlier said that officials were concerned about inadequate safety standards related to researchers' handling of SARS-like bat coronaviruses in the high-security lab.

The institute has said it received samples of the then-unknown virus on December 30, determined the viral genome sequence on January 2 and submitted information on the pathogen to the WHO on January 11.

Shi Zhengli, one of China's leading experts on bat coronaviruses and deputy director of the Wuhan P4 lab, said she would "bet her life that (the new coronavirus) had nothing to do with the lab", according to Chinese state media.

And in an interview with Scientific American, Shi said the SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence did not match any of the bat coronaviruses her laboratory had previously collected and studied.

WHAT DO SCIENTISTS KNOW ABOUT THE VIRUS?

Researchers have noted that while there is no proof for the lab accident theory, there is also no clear evidence that the virus came from the Wuhan market.

A study by a group of Chinese scientists published in The Lancet in January found that the first COVID-19 patient had no connection to the market, and neither did 13 of the first 41 confirmed cases.

Professor Leo Poon of The University of Hong Kong said the scientific community's consensus was that the virus is not human-made.

"We need to look at the origin of this virus. It is important, because from a public health point of view, we want to know how it happened, and (if we can) learn from this," he said.

David Heymann, professor of infectious disease epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, added: "We have a hypothesis that it came from a live animal market, and I haven't seen anybody provide evidence that shows to the contrary." AFP

Biotech stocks to watch during COVID-19 vaccine race

posted May 06, 2020 at 07:10 pm

by [Manila Standard](#)

The corona situation is getting worse day by day in the world. Lockdown continues in many countries across the globe. The virus has infected more than 2 million people leaving around 120,000 people dead. Currently, a lot of companies are involved in the development of a coronavirus vaccine. The pharmaceutical companies continue the race to be the first to license a COVID-19 vaccine and some of them have already made great progress, while others are at the very beginning of the race. Every company is using different technology platforms to create experimental vaccines. Biotech stocks have been consistently profitable over the last few weeks as there is a hope the drug makers may be close to finding a treatment for a coronavirus. According to WHO, there are 70 vaccines under development at the moment.

Here are the six important Biotech stocks that we think the investors should watch now. We expect huge volatility in these stocks as investors will continue to speculate as to whether these companies will, as for the vaccine, come out on top.

Gilead Sciences Inc. (NASDAQ: GILD)—Gilead's remdesivir

Gilead's shares surged last week after a report showing early data suggested that coronavirus patients are responding to its remdesivir. Remdesivir has shown a promise in treating SARS and MERS, which are also caused by coronaviruses. According to science and medical news website STAT suggesting that Gilead's remdesivir may be effective in treating patients hospitalized with severe cases of COVID-19. Gilead has already been ramping up the production of remdesivir. The data released by the company earlier this month indicated that it had targeted 1.5 million individual dosages of the IV-drug that could treat more than 140,000 patients.

Gilead's stock climbed 12% higher on Friday, April 18 to \$85.79 after an encouraging report from STAT. The stock closed Friday at \$83.85.

Johnson & Johnson, Inc. (NYSE: JNJ)

J&J shares trade higher in the last few weeks after the recent reports that the company is expected to enter human trials by September. The investors are very much confident that the healthcare giant is moving quickly to reach the result. Johnson & Johnson says it aims to have more than half a billion coronavirus vaccines ready early next year. The pharmaceutical giant will have 600 million to 800 million vaccines available in early 2021.

The lab developed a vaccine in collaboration with Janssen Pharmaceutical Cos., the drug-making arm of Johnson & Johnson. It plans to launch clinical trials in the fall as part of a joint \$1 billion collaboration agreement announced by the U.S. government and Johnson & Johnson on March 30. J&J also plans to set up a new manufacturing facility in the US to supplement the company's plant in the Netherlands that can produce up to 300 million doses.

Last Tuesday, April 14, Johnson & Johnson shares climbed 4.5% after reporting a stronger profit for the first three months of the year than Wall Street expected.

GlaxoSmithKline plc. (LON: GSK) and Sanofi (EPA: SAN)

Pharmaceutical giants Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) joined hands to speed up and develop an adjuvanted vaccine for a COVID-19 disease. Sanofi will contribute its S-protein COVID-19 antigen, which is based on recombinant DNA technology while GSK will contribute its proven pandemic adjuvant technology.

The vaccine is expected to enter clinical trials in the second half of 2020. If successful, it would be available in the second half of 2021, the two companies said in a statement. Shares of Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline rose 3.6% and 3.7%, respectively, following the announcement.

Pfizer, Inc. (NYSE: PFE)

Pfizer (NYSE: PFE) shares ended higher last week after the company announced that it identified a lead drug to treat COVID-19. Pfizer announced in March that it's teaming up with BioNTech on the development of the mRNA vaccine for immunizing against the novel coronavirus. Following this March 17 announcement, BioNTech (NASDAQ: BNTX) stock soared 66.5%, while Pfizer surged 6.6%. As per the recent update, they're pushing up their schedule with BioNTech and possibly starting human trials in August.

Moderna, Inc. (NASDAQ: MRNA)

Shares of Moderna Inc. (NASDAQ: MRNA) rose 15% last Thursday after they received \$483 million funding to speed up the development of a coronavirus vaccine. MRNA shares hiked 15% and the stock hit an all-time intraday high of \$49. As few of you already know, Moderna became the first drug maker with an experimental COVID-19 vaccine to begin clinical testing in humans in the U.S.

Moderna began Phase 1 human trials of its potential vaccine on March 16 in the Seattle area. They partnered with NIH (the National Institutes of Health) for the development of its COVID-19 vaccine; Moderna recently completed an enrollment in Phase 2 study for the vaccine. It hopes to report interim results from the study in the third quarter of 2020.

Inovio Pharmaceuticals (NASDAQ: INO)

Inovio Pharmaceuticals (NASDAQ: INO) shares have surged 109% since the beginning of the year due to an optimism about the company's work on a vaccine for COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus. The company partnered with the Beijing Advaccine Biotechnology Company to develop its COVID-19 vaccine, INO-4800, which is now being tested on humans.

According to a press release from INO, the company just received \$6.9 million in funding to work with the Korea National Institute of Health for Phase 1 and Phase 2 trials of its COVID-19 vaccine. "Medical companies worldwide are tirelessly working to develop vaccines and treatment for COVID-19. We expect a further upside strength in the biotech and pharmaceutical sectors during this crisis. But as we know, these experimental drugs are in the early stages and there is no guarantee that these drugs will achieve the FDA approval. The good news is that a number of biotech firms have already received the support of government funding," Syam K.P., Chief Analyst, Gulf Brokers.

Penguins chill at HK Ocean Park, carers busy amid
TITLE: pandemic

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May 7, 2020
DATE

Penguins chill at HK Ocean Park, carers busy amid pandemic

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 05:10 AM May 07, 2020



This picture, taken on May 4, 2020, shows king penguins getting fed in their enclosure at the Ocean Park theme park, which is currently closed due to the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, in Hong Kong. — Save for an absence of gawping crowds, life for the penguins of Hong Kong’s Ocean Park has been much the same during the coronavirus pandemic — but their carers have worked long shifts to keep the monochrome troupe healthy. (Photo by Richard A. Brooks / AFP)

Save for an absence of gawping crowds, life for the penguins of Hong Kong’s Ocean Park has been much the same during the coronavirus pandemic — but their carers have worked long shifts to keep the monochrome troupe healthy.

Piles of fresh snow have been laid out as some 100 penguins excitedly gather for the midmorning feeding session.

Usually, this daily ritual at the South Pole Spectacular would be a major draw. But the park is still shut because of the coronavirus outbreak.

“If the guests are here, certainly they would be more interactive with the guests through the window, but without guests, we can do... more enrichment sessions with the penguins,” explained Frank Chau, the park’s senior marine mammal supervisor.

Specialist care

“They can still have fun,” he told Agence France Presse (AFP).

Since the pandemic began, Chau and his colleagues have split into two teams working three-day shifts to look after the penguins.

Both teams have been strictly separated from each other— a measure to ensure that if one team was quarantined because of a positive test result, the other group could continue to give specialist care.

“The manpower for each team is lower... Now we got only three to four people every day to take care of all the penguins and make sure every penguin is still living happily and healthily both mentally and physically,” Chau said.

Penguins chill at HK Ocean Park, carers busy amid

May 7, 2020

TITLE: pandemic

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DATE

On a typical day, Chau starts with cleaning and disinfection before firing up the snow machines that help recreate the Antarctic conditions in warm and humid Hong Kong. He then prepares food and conducts health checks like weighing the birds and trimming their claws.

Run in the park

To keep the penguins entertained, the team builds toys, including floating ice boards and a perforated box filled with fish and krill to encourage underwater foraging.

Last month, a zoo in Singapore used the pandemic lockdown to give their troupe of African penguins the run of the park in a video that quickly went viral.

But Chau said Ocean Park's penguins cannot leave their frigid enclosure.

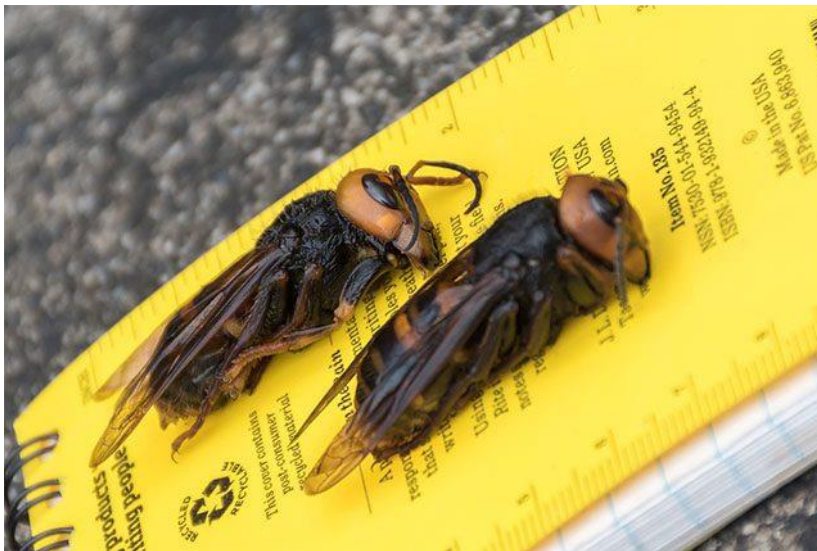
"The species here are mainly from the sub-Antarctica region, they need a cooler environment... especially during the summertime in Hong Kong, [when] we will have a very high temperature," he said.

Hong Kong is in the midst of a deep recession, initially caused by the trade war and months of prodemocracy protests last year. The virus has deepened those economic woes, hammering the tourist industry further.

Discovery of 'Murder Hornet' in U.S. Pacific Northwest worries agriculture officials

By Reuters

- May 6, 2020 - 11:09 AM



A pair of Asian Giant Hornet caught in a trap by Washington State Department of Agriculture entomologist Chris Looney lie on a notepad near Blaine, Washington, U.S. April 23, 2020. Picture taken April 23, 2020. (Karla Salp/Washington State Department of Agriculture/Handout via Reuters)

Hundreds of Asian giant hornets, an invasive, predatory insect dubbed the “murder hornet,” have turned up in Washington state near the Canadian border, where they pose a threat to humans and the beekeeping industry, state agriculture officials said on Monday.

The stinging *Vespa mandarinia* can grow as large as 2-1/2 inches (6.35 cm) in length and is native to Southeast Asia, China and Taiwan. It was first discovered in Blaine, Washington, in December by a homeowner, according to Sven-Erik Spichiger, managing entomologist at the Washington state Agriculture Department.

“An Asian giant hornet can sting you multiple times and deliver larger doses of venom just because of the size of them. The venom itself is fairly toxic and creates localized necrosis around the wound so you’ll see melting flesh around the wound,” Spichiger told Reuters.

“What we’re told from the literature is that most people can survive one or two stings,” he said. “But if you sustain multiple stings, the necrosis and the venom will actually start getting into your bloodstream and will start working on your organs. And multiple stings could literally be fatal.”

Aside from the danger to humans, the Murder Hornet presents a danger to agriculture and the apiary industry, Spichiger said, because the insect is known to attack honey bees, with a few of the hornets capable of wiping out an entire hive in hours.

“The hornets enter a ‘slaughter phase’ where they kill bees by decapitating them. They then defend the hive as their own, taking the brood to feed their own young,” according to the Washington state Department of Agriculture website.

“Pollination is a huge part of agriculture and the agricultural systems we have here in the United States. And so if this were to become well-established and then start spreading, it could be pretty catastrophic,” Spichiger said.

Discovery of 'Murder Hornet' in U.S. Pacific Northwest

May 7, 2020

TITLE: worries agriculture officials

PAGE 1/ 2/2

DATE

Scientists don't know for sure how the Murder Hornet made its way to Blaine. The most likely scenario is that it arrived on a container ship docking at one of Washington's ports. Intentional transport of the killer bug into the United States would violate federal law.

Following the discovery of the first hornet, a web page set up by Washington state agriculture officials to report additional sightings of the insect has received several hundred reports, Spichiger said.

Anyone coming across a nest should immediately alert authorities. While the hornets do not generally target people or pets, they can attack when threatened.

"We really don't want any private citizen trying to mess with an Asian giant hornet nest. Typical beekeeping attire will simply not protect you. The stinger on this insect is six millimeters long and will go readily through most clothes," Spichiger said. —**Reporting by Omar Younis; Writing by Dan Whitcomb; Editing by Bill Tarrant and Sandra Maler**