



DENR lifts suspension on transpo permit issuance for forest products, wildlife

By DENR-8 Published on May 7, 2020
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TACLOBAN CITY, May 7 -- With Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu having ordered the lifting of suspension on the issuance of transportation permit for all forest products and wildlife, the DENR in Eastern Visayas is now gearing up for the possible upsurge of applicants for transport permit and documents for all forest products and wildlife.

In a memorandum signed on May 1, 2020, Secretary Cimatu gave the instruction to all Regional Executive Directors of the Department to accept, process and issue transport-related permits or documents for all forest products and wildlife being issued by the DENR.

The instruction comes in consideration of the results of the assessment of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) on COVID-19 Recovery Plan which already allows social and economic activities to proceed.

However, DENR 8 Regional Executive Director Tirso Parian Jr. reminds everyone to observe precautionary measures so as to avoid the transmission of the deadly disease.

“While we will try to accommodate and expedite the process, we shall not also be complacent and lower our guards against the deadly virus as we will ensure the strict observance of health and safety protocols laid down by the IATF-EID and the Department of Health (DoH),” Director Parian said.

While easing down on the suspension, the applicant still needs to procure the needed documents which ranges from, but not limited to, Certificate of Timber Origin/Certificate of Lumber Origin (CTO/CLO) to ensure legitimacy of source.

Also prior to the transport of the forest products, the applicant needs to comply with other documentary requirements such as copy of valid harvesting permit, approved Wood Processing Plant (WPP) Permit/Certificate of Registration as Lumber Dealer, approved Log Supply Contracts or its equivalent, among others. The same information shall also be forwarded by the concerned CENRO/Implementing PENRO to the DENR field office who has jurisdiction of the destination or to the Regional Office itself.

It is noted that issuance of transport permits was suspended towards the end of March 2020 as an added protection against the spread of COVID-19 pursuant to Republic Act No. 11469 or the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act”. As a consequence, it resulted to the stoppage of businesses and industries that were dependent on the buying and transportation of forest products and wildlife.

The suspension has resulted to loss of government revenue from collection of fees on forestry-related services here in Region 8 amounting to more than P1 million from an average of P1.2 million revenue for the month of April in the previous years which was down to P590,555.23 for April 2020. This includes forest tenurial instruments/permits and other forest charges. Add to that the effect to seven (7) licensed lumber dealers in the region, their employees and other related businesses.

“It is our desire that the lifting of the suspension can help boost the economic recovery in the region after the economic lockdown and start getting back on our feet,” RED Parian added. (Idl/gtt/DENR-8)



A cleaner environment must be part of 'New Normal' – Villar

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By Vanne Elaine Terrazola

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/08/a-cleaner-environment-must-be-part-of-new-normal-villar/>



Sen. Cynthia Villar
(Senate of the Philippines / MANILA BULLETIN)

A cleaner environment should also be part of the “new normal” that the Philippines would adopt amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Cynthia Villar said on Friday.

Villar, chair of the Senate committee on environment and natural resources, said that besides health and hygiene, environment also plays a crucial role in curbing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

She said the improving air quality, for instance, is a “good start,” and should be sustained when the government decides to ease the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Metro Manila and other COVID-19 high-risk areas after May 15.

Villar cited reports showing that the Philippines’ air quality had dramatically improved since restrictions on mobility were imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on March 16.

Before the lockdowns, the Philippines ranked 57th out of 98 countries in IQAir AirVisual’s list of the “world’s most polluted countries” in 2019.

IQAir’s report said levels of particulate (PM2.5) pollution averaged 17.6 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) in the country last year, exceeding the World Health Organization’s safety limit of 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

PM2.5 is a fine particle found in smoke and haze, and can be emitted from sources such as forest fires, or the gases emitted from power plants, industries, and vehicles.

These particles are associated with the heart and respiratory illnesses.

In March, the University of the Philippines-Diliman’s Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology (IESM) reported a 180-percent decrease in Metro Manila’s PM2.5 since the ECQ took effect.

Experts, however, feared that air pollution will return to unhealthy levels once the community quarantine is lifted.

“We should keep this positive momentum going. It should be part of the ‘new normal’ that we are talking about. We should put in place post-lockdown environmental safeguards and strategies,” Villar said in a statement.

Villar said she plans to review the implementation of the Republic Act 8749, or the Clean Air Act, passed in 1999.

The law aimed to improve air quality throughout the country by improving gasoline quality and requiring factories to install anti-air pollution devices, among other provisions.

“The law was passed 21 years ago, just like other old laws, it needs to be reviewed, some of its provisions may need amending or updating,” she said.

Villar said she also seeks to find out the adverse effects of pollution in protected areas.



Spike in air pollution level feared after ECQ lifting

posted May 08, 2020 at 10:40 pm

by Macon Ramos-Araneta

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/323340>

Senator Cynthia Villar on Friday issued a warning raised by experts about a possible spike in air pollution level, which went down after the entire Metro Manila and other places in the country was placed under an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

She noted that experts are already worried that air pollution levels might increase once the ECQ is lifted on May 15.

“So we should keep this positive momentum going. It should be part of the “new normal” that we are talking about. We should put in place post-lockdown environmental safeguards and strategies,” said Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

Aside from health and hygiene, Villar noted that a clean and green environment also plays a crucial role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and minimizing its effects.

For a start, Villar said the government can pursue initiatives to improve air quality. She said emissions of a variety of gases related to energy and transport have been significantly reduced due to limited economic activity and mobility of people.

Before the ECQ, she said the Philippines ranked 57th out of 98 most polluted countries in the world in 2019 based on the IQAir AirVisual’s list.

She said the level of concentrations of particulate matter called PM2.5 averaged 17.6 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) in the country last year, an increase from 14.6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2018. These exceeded the World Health Organization’s (WHO) safety limit of 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

During the first week of the lockdown, PM2.5 concentration level went down to 7.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ from 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

PM2.5 is defined as particulate matter that is 2.5 micrometers or smaller in diameter. These particles, a mix of soot, smoke, metals, chemicals, dust and other elements, can easily be breathed in and are associated with respiratory illnesses.

Villar also said there are studies that link air pollution level to higher risks to contracting coronavirus.

A study by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health showed that higher levels of PM2.5 were associated with higher death rates from the Covid-19 disease. An increase of only one gram per cubic meter can cause an equivalent 15% increase in the COVID-19 death rate.

The senator also said she intends to review the implementation of the Clean Air Law or Republic Act 8749 passed in 1999. It includes among its provisions, improving gasoline quality by reducing the level of aromatics, and requiring factories to install anti-air pollution devices. “The law was passed 21 years ago, just like other old laws, it needs to be reviewed, some of its provisions may need amending or updating,” she said.



Air quality improves amid metro lockdown

May 8, 2020 | 7:27 pm

<https://www.bworldonline.com/air-quality-improves-amid-metro-lockdown/>



AIR QUALITY in the Philippine capital, Manila and nearby cities improved substantially after the main island of Luzon was locked down beginning March 17 to contain a novel coronavirus outbreak, according to a research group.

Metro Manila's nitrogen dioxide level fell by 45% as transport activities slowed and electricity consumption by shuttered

businesses declined, the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in a report.

The group looked at the impacts on air quality of the lockdowns imposed in Southeast Asian nations.

It said that among countries in the region, Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur saw the most drastic and sustained change in air quality with a 60% reduction in nitrogen dioxide, compared with 2019 levels, as manufacturing and transportation activities slowed.

CREA said the air quality improvements were just anomalies if left unchecked after the lockdowns.

"Current improvements to air quality are anomalies and if left unchecked following the lockdowns, air pollution will return swiftly and the threats to human health and well-being linked to it will persist," it said. — Adam J. Ang



Amidst ECQ, GCQ Tugade orders LTO to intensify anti-smoke belching

By Susan G. De Leon Published on May 7, 2020
<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1041214>

CALOOCAN CITY, May 7 (PIA)--Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Arthur P. Tugade instructed the Land Transportation Office-Philippines (LTO) to intensify and strictly implement anti-smoke belching initiatives, even as most parts of the country remain under the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), and the General Community Quarantine (GCQ).

Tugade tasked the LTO, together with concerned agencies, to strictly enforce Republic Act No.8749, also known as the Clean Air Act of 1999 and other relevant laws.

In an online meeting with the DOTr Road Sector on May 5, Secretary Tugade directed the LTO to ensure that vehicles on the country's roads comply with the emission standards of the country.

"Dapat siguruhin natin na ang lahat ng mga sasakyan sa kalye ay sumusunod sa pamantayan," Tugade said.

According to a recent study released by experts from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Institute of Environmental Science & Meteorology (IESM) at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, and Airtoday.ph, air quality in Metro Manila has improved significantly with the continued implementation of the ECQ. Majority of air pollution in the areas observed in the study come from vehicle emissions.

"Sayang naman ang pagbuti ng air quality, lalo na dito sa Metro Manila ngayong may ECQ, kung babalik lang din sa dati. Look at the aerial landscape now. It is very clean. It is very beautiful. Now, we can see from afar Corregidor and Bataan from Roxas Boulevard because of the very clear horizon," Tugade said.

"You can see the Sierra Madre Mountain Range as a backdrop of Metro Manila. Our skyline is now smog-free and very beautiful. Napakagandang pagmasdan. Kaya nararapat lamang na maging bahagi ang magandang kalidad ng hangin ng ating 'new normal,'" Tugade pointed out.

For his part, LTO Assistant Secretary Edgar C. Galvante said that the agency will intensify its anti-smoke belching enforcement.

"Magbubuo kami ng mga hakbang upang mapalawig at mapaingting ang implementasyon laban sa smoke-belching, alinsunod sa direktiba ni Secretary Tugade," the LTO Chief said.

"We will revisit the law and cite relevant provisions to intensify the implementation," LTO Galvante added.

Health experts say that air pollution is one of the major causes of respiratory problems and other ailments. Persons with existing health problems, and therefore, with weak immune system, have a higher risk of contracting and difficulty in overcoming COVID-19. (DOTr/PIA-NCR)



EDITORIAL - Magbabaha na naman dahil sa plastic na basura

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KAPAG natapos ang problema sa COVID-19, balik uli ang bansa sa mga dating problema kapag panahon ng tag-ulan – ang baha. Maraming sakit din ang dulot ng baha gaya ng dengue at leptospirosis. At sana bago manalasa ang baha, matapos na nang tuluyan ang pananalasa ng coronavirus na hindi lang sa Pilipinas nagpapahirap kundi sa mundo.

Sabi ng PAGASA, mga unang linggo ng Hunyo ay magsisimula na ang ulan. Mayroon nang namamataang low pressure area (LPA) pero malayo raw itong maging bagyo. Ang isang tiyak, kapag humataw na ang tag-ulan, problemang baha ang dadanasin ng mamamayan, lalo na sa Metro Manila.

Isang magandang pagkakataon naman para sa Department of Public Works (DPWH) at Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) ang paglilinis sa mga baradong imburnal o sewage sa Metro Manila habang may lockdown. Dahil wala pang biyahe ang mga pampublikong sasakyan, magandang samantalain ito ng DPWH at MMDA para malinis ang mga imburnal na may nakabarang basura.

Ang mga nakabarang basura ang dahilan kaya nagbabaha sa Metro Manila. Karamihan sa mga basura ay plastic. Karaniwang mga plastic shopping bags, sachet ng shampoo, coffee, catsup, cup ng noodles, botelya ng softdrinks at marami pang iba ang nakukuha sa mga drainage at estero. Ang mga estero ay namumutiktik sa basurang plastic.

Ang Pilipinas ay ikatlo sa mga bansa sa Asia na maraming plastic na basura. Nangunguna ang China at pumapangalawa ang Indonesia. Katibayan na maraming basurang plastic sa karagatan ng Pilipinas ay ang mga nakukuha sa Manila Bay. Galing ang mga basurang ito sa mga estero. Itinapon ng mga informal settlers at iba pang walang disiplina.

Noong nakaraang taon, nagpahiwatig si President Duterte na balak niyang ipatigil o limitahan ang paggamit ng plastic. Sana magkatotoo ang kanyang balak sapagkat ang problema sa plastic pollution ay lumulubha. Dapat magkaroon nang mahigpit na batas ukol sa paggamit ng plastic at ganundin naman sa pagtatapon nito na nagpapabara sa waterways na nagdudulot ng baha.



Metro Manila water source dwindling again

By: Carmela Reyes-Estrope - Correspondent / @inquirerdotnet

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 03:24 PM May 08, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1271911/metro-manila-water-source-dwindling-again>

CITY OF MALOLOS -- The water level at Angat Dam dropped below 190 meters above sea level (masl), due to the extreme summer heat and the prolonged absence of rain.

The dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's drinking water, but reservoir water began to recede on May 3 when it reached 189.92 masl.

As of Friday, the reservoir contained 189.06 meters of water, just nine meters above the dam's low level of 180 masl, and way below its spilling level of 212 masl.

Two dams that catch Angat's runoff rainwater and its water discharges also reflected dwindling water levels.

Ipo Dam registered a low 99.87 meters, from 99.91 meters on May 3. Its spilling level is 101 masl.

Bustos Dam on May 3 had 15.41 meters of reservoir water, which was far below its 17.50-meter spilling level.

On Friday, its level dropped to 14.80 meters, while it undergoes repairs that were started on Thursday, said Felix Robles, officer-in-charge of the National Irrigation Administration water control coordinating unit in Bulacan.

Water supply for farmers tending northern plantations in Bulacan and Pampanga have been cut since April 30.

As much as 21,000 hectares of farmlands in 17 Bulacan towns and 4 towns in Pampanga rely on Angat for irrigation.

Irrigation was released to southern farms in Bulacan to de-clog waterways and canals, Robles said.

Early this year, the southern farms did not get any water when the National Water Resources Board prioritized supply to Manila.

The southern plantations would get irrigation on June 1, while northern farms would get irrigation supply on July 1, Robles said.



Manila Water expects gradual increase in consumption if GCQ is imposed in Metro Manila on May 16

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<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/metro/737443/manila-water-expects-gradual-increase-in-consumption-if-gcq-is-imposed-in-metro-manila-on-may-16/story/>

Manila Water expects consumption to increase if Metro Manila were to be placed in the general community quarantine on May 16.

In Cedric Castillo's report for "24 Oras," the concessionaire said the enhanced community quarantine lowered the water demand of the commercial and industrial sectors by 30 percent. Residential demand, meanwhile, did not see much change.

With loosened restrictions under the GCQ, water demand would increase as some businesses resume their operations. However, it would "still be less compared to the so-called normal times."

"It would be parang gradual increase in demand particularly for the commercial establishments, even 'yung schools," said Manila Water spokesperson Jeric Sevilla.

Other provinces have already been placed under GCQ, but Metro Manila mayors are looking at the possible extension of the ECQ until June 15.

During the summer months, water demand typically increases by 6 to 10 percent depending on the temperature, according to Manila Water.

The Philippines has been hit by high temperatures in May, but the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) assured that Metro Manila still has enough supply of water until June.

Data from NWRB showed that the current level of water in Angat Dam is 189.09 meters.

This is around 14 meters higher than the level of water on this day last year, which was 174.84 meters. The previous summer saw interruptions in the water supply.

The minimum operating level of Angat Dam is 180 meters.

"Medyo masasabi po natin na nasa normal pa ang lebel ng Angat Dam," said NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. "Buo pa 'yung binibigay po natin na alokasyon na 46 cubic meters per second." —MGP, GMA News



CSC sets alternative work arrangements for gov't agencies

May 8, 2020, 8:05 am

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1102239>



ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENT.

Government agencies can adopt alternative work arrangements while the country is placed under a state of public health emergency due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. Agencies are required to implement precautionary measures before the resumption of normal operations. *(File photo)*

MANILA – The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has made available multiple alternative work arrangements (AWA) that government agencies can adopt while the country is placed under a state of public health emergency due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

These are work-from-home arrangement, skeleton workforce, four-day or compressed workweek, and staggered working hours. An agency may also adopt work arrangements consisting of a combination of these, or other work arrangements appropriate and applicable to the agency considering the prevailing community quarantine in the area where it is located and the nature of work performed by its employees.

“These may be difficult times, but it is during these times that our citizens need our government to be effective and remain responsive to their needs. These interim guidelines would ensure that government agencies continue to fulfill their mandate amid the pandemic while protecting the health and safety of their workers,” CSC Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala said.

CSC Resolution No. 2000540 (Revised Interim Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements and Support Mechanisms for Workers in the Government During the Period of State of National Emergency Due to Covid-19 Pandemic), promulgated on May 7, 2020 and circularized via CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10, s. 2020, contains the complete set of guidelines for implementing the said AWA.

Work-from-home (WFH) refers to an output-oriented work arrangement that authorizes the worker to produce outputs or results and accomplishments outside of the office. This shall be adopted in areas placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) by the president. For agencies in areas placed under general community quarantine (GCQ), where public transportation is limited and physical/social distancing in the workplace is required, WFH is an option.

For areas placed under GCQ, employees aged below 21 and those who are 60 years old and above, as well as those with immunodeficiency, co-morbidities or other health risks, pregnant women, including those who reside with the aforementioned, shall be under WFH arrangement, except when their services are indispensable under the circumstances or when office work is permitted.



CSC sets alternative work arrangements for gov't agencies

Skeleton (skeletal) workforce pertains to a work arrangement where a minimum number of employees is required to man the office to render service when full staffing is not possible. Agencies in GCQ areas shall adopt a skeleton workforce as one of its AWA. During ECQ, on the other hand, a skeleton workforce may be allowed unless a different operational capacity is provided in agencies providing health and emergency frontline services, border control, and other critical services as identified in the IATF Omnibus Guidelines on Community Quarantine.

Employees designated as skeletal workforce shall be entitled to hazard pay on top of the compensatory time off or overtime pay granted for authorized services rendered outside of the employee's regular work hours.

In a four-day (compressed) workweek arrangement, the employees' workweek is compressed to four days each week. This may be adopted by agencies in areas placed under GCQ.

Agencies may also adopt staggered working Hours, which applies to offices or agencies that observe work shifting or flexible working time. For this purpose, staggered working hours refers to the existing 24/7 shifting schedule and the flexible working time schedule. This may be implemented as a means to limit the number of employees present at the workplace at any given time.

Agencies may use a combination of two or more aforementioned AWA, including any other type of work arrangement it has adopted. They shall formulate their internal rules and regulations to effectively implement the AWA they adopted. These guidelines must include the appropriate AWA for employees who travel to and from areas placed under different quarantine levels, e.g., from ECQ area to GCQ area and vice-versa or from quarantine-free area to ECQ or GCQ area.

To ensure that public service delivery is not prejudiced during the implementation of AWA, a monitoring mechanism, such as submission of daily or weekly accomplishment reports, must be implemented.

To protect government workers' health and safety, the CSC requires agencies to implement precautionary measures before the resumption of normal operations, such as disinfection and decontamination activities, the conduct of health status check among employees, and modification of workplace layout to ensure observance of physical distancing requirements.

Agencies are also mandated to enforce health standard protocol at all times such as wearing face masks, taking of body temperature, and set up sanitation stations.

Support mechanisms, such as health/psychosocial interventions, provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to employees, and reasonable transportation facilities and housing quarters, should be made available to government workers.

These revised interim guidelines shall take effect retroactively on March 16, 2020 and shall remain in force until the state of national emergency has been lifted by the president.

The complete text of CSC memorandum circular No. 10, s. 2020 may be accessed from the CSC website at www.csc.gov.ph. (CSC PR)



700 state workers heed call to volunteer in swab, care centers

By Kris Crismundo May 8, 2020, 12:42 pm
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1102254>

MEGA SWABBING CENTER. Cabinet officials lead the inspection of the mega swabbing center at the Enderun Tent in Taguig City on Wednesday (May 6, 2020). Malacañang has earlier called on government agencies to identify personnel who can serve as encoders, barcoders, and swabbers that can be deployed in four mega swabbing centers in Metro Manila. *(File photo)*

MANILA – At least 700 government employees responded to Malacañang's call to volunteer in the conduct of swabbing and in patient care centers as the country ramps up its testing capacity for the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), National Policy Against Covid-19 Deputy Chief Implementer Vivencio Dizon said on Friday.

During the Laging Handa public briefing, Dizon said there are 700 to 800 government employees that volunteered as encoders, barcoders, and swabbers that can be deployed in four mega swabbing centers in Metro Manila.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea earlier issued an order mandating all government agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations “to contribute their personnel” in the swabbing and testing efforts.

Dizon also reiterated the call of the government to the private sector, medical-related schools, medical professionals, and students to volunteer in swabbing, testing, and patient care centers.

“The Department of Health (DOH) will give compensation and hazard pay under the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, and we will give all the protection for our volunteer front-liners,” he said in Filipino.

He added that those interested may call the DOH hotline to inquire about the process of volunteering.

Under the “Trace, Test, Treat” or T3 Program, the government targets to ramp up testing capacity to 30,000 tests per day, by putting up more swabbing centers and laboratory testing centers in strategic parts of the country, Dizon said. *(PNA)*

Go: Balik Probinsya should be voluntary for Pinoys

May 08, 2020

People's Tonight

<https://journal.com.ph/news/nation/go-balik-probinsya-should-be-voluntary-pinoys>



Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go clarified in an interview on Thursday, May 7, that while the long-term goal of the “Balik Probinsya” program aims to encourage urban dwellers and businesses to relocate to the provinces to promote equitable distribution of opportunities and economic development throughout the country, it should still be implemented as “voluntary” for Filipinos who are willing to consider relocating to their respective home provinces.

“Walang pilitan ito, hindi pwedeng pilitin ‘yung mga tao na umuwi na ng probinsya. Hinanda po ito para sa mga may gustong lumipat o umuwi na. Bibigyan sila ng gobyerno ng magandang oportunidad na magsimula ng maayos na pamumuhay sa kanilang mga probinsya pagkatapos ng COVID-19 crisis,” Go said.

“Ngayon po ito pwedeng mangyari dahil maraming gustong umuwi so unahin natin ‘yung mga gustong umuwi. Kung gusto nila manirahan dito sa Maynila, respetuhin po natin. Sino ang gustong umuwi, ‘yun ang unahin,” Go reiterated, citing many Filipino families who have expressed willingness to relocate to their home provinces after their experiences during the current COVID-19 crisis.

In relation to this, Go also mentioned that initial talks with Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and other key officials of concerned government agencies had already resulted to the signing of Executive Order 114, signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on May 6, institutionalizing the “Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program” with the creation of its council to oversee its implementation.

“Nag-meeting sila Executive Secretary Medialdea along with other departments secretaries o undersecretaries po para paghandaan ang mga plano, tulad nung executive order na pinirmahan na po ni Pangulong Duterte para po magkaroon ng Balik Probinsya Bagong Pag-asa Council,” Go explained.

“Lahat ng agencies po mag-aalign ng kanilang mga programs, activities and projects na pwedeng makatulong sa mga kababayan nating nais umuwi at para rin ma-encourage ang iba na mag-relocate sa mga probinsya sa tamang panahon,” he added.

“Ang mga local government units ay naghahanda na rin po para tumanggap ng mga magsisibalikan para mabigyan sila ng sapat na tulong, pabahay, kabuhayan at iba pa,” he further emphasized.

Last Monday, May 4, Senator Go filed Senate Resolution No. 380, urging the Executive branch to formulate and implement a Balik Probinsya Program. It was adopted by the Senate on the same day. President Duterte’s order came days after the said resolution was adopted.

EO 114 was issued and will make the Balik Probinsya Program a priority after the national health crisis. Preparations for the long-term plan are underway while programs are also in place for



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immediate implementation for those who wish to move now, according to concerned officials from the Executive branch.

“Para sa mga gustong umuwi na ngayon, may nakahanda nang protocols daw ang gobyerno para siguraduhin na ligtas ang pagbyahe at hindi ito magdudulot ng lalong pagkalat ng sakit. May transportation assistance at transitory package na ipapamahagi,” Go said.

The EO will constitute the creation of the Balik Probinsya Bagong Pag-asa Council which tackles policies for balanced regional development. Go cited the EO saying that the body will provide an over-all direction for all the policies and implementation for the Balik Probinsya Program, especially in developing regions.

Go also emphasized that as a legislator, he will help formulate long-term plans and push for key legislative measures necessary to encourage more Filipinos to go home to the provinces and start their lives anew. He said in the interview that he is studying proposed laws that will encourage investors and businesses to expand their operations in the provinces and grant them incentives to boost development and availability of economic opportunities in the countryside.

“Bilang isang mambabatas ay isusulong ko po ang iba’t ibang batas na makakatulong... halimbawa ‘yung mga negosyante at businesses, to encourage them at bigyan sila ng incentives. (This is) to encourage them to put up businesses dun sa probinsya para pag maraming trabaho, maraming negosyo, plantasyon, factory at iba pang kabuhayan ay maraming trabahong pwede nating ibigay sa mga Pilipino sa probinsya,” he explained.

With regard to the issues of land use, Go also mentioned that concerned government departments and agencies, such as the National Economic and Development Authority and the National Housing Authority, will help in planning out available land that can be converted for the use of the beneficiaries for housing, businesses and agriculture.

“Halimbawa, hindi lang po lupa gaya dun sa mga farmers o sa mga agrarian reform na kasalukuyang ginagawa ng gobyerno. Marami pa palang lupa para dito sa mga urban dwellers (na magrerelocate). Halimbawa, may mga government lands tayo sa mga probinsya, in coordination with NHA, na pwede nilang pagtayan ng murang pabahay to encourage yung mga nagbalik-probinsya na mabigyan sila ng pag-asa na magkaroon sila ng sariling pamamahay,” Go said.



‘Balik Probinsya’ program suportado ng DILG sa pagpapalakas ng economic growth sa mga lalawigan

May 8, 2020 @ 7:41 PM

<https://remate.ph/balik-probinsya-program-suportado-ng-dilg-sa-pagpapalakas-ng-economic-growth-sa-mga-lalawigan/>

Manila, Philippines – Tinanggap ng Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) nitong Biyernes ang institutionalization ng “Balik Probinsiya, Bagong Pag-asa” (BP2) program upang isulong ang pagpapalakas ng mga lalawigan.

Tutulong din ang programang ito na i-decongest at i-address ang mga isyu kagaya ng lumalalang traffic sa Metro Manila, ayon sa pahayag ni Interior Secretary Eduardo Año.

“It has been a fact that development is lopsided in favor of Metro Manila. Panahon na para ikalat ang kaunlaran sa ibat ibang rehiyon ng ating bansa,” aniya.

Aniya, ang “Balik Probinsya” program ay magiging dahilan din upang makapaghanda ang pamahalaan para sa mga krisis sa hinaharap.

“What we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic is over population in highly urbanized cities will not play to our advantage but on the contrary, may lead to more cases of coronavirus transmission,” aniya.

Hinimok ng DILG chief ang local government units (LGUs) na makiisa sa pagbuo ng mga polisiya ng “Balik Probinsya” program.

“...We urge them to be partners as well in ensuring that this program will succeed. Suportahan natin ito sapagkat para po ito sa ating mga kababayan,” sabi pa nito.

Nakatuon ang BP2 program sa pagbuo ng imprastruktura, social welfare at health services, agrikultura, at lokal na industriya sa iba’t ibang rehiyon sa bansa.

Nahahati ang “Balik Probinsya” sa short-term, medium-term at long-term projects na may short-term activities na handang ipatupad habang umiiral ang community quarantine period.

Dapat tukuyin ng Department of Budget and Management (DBM) ang funding requirements para sa umiiral o short-term projects o ng source mula sa appropriations. RNT/MM



Metro mayors to meet on quarantine options

Ralph Edwin Villanueva (The Philippine Star) - May 9, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/09/2012793/metro-mayors-meet-quarantine-options>



Parañaque City Mayor Edwin Olivarez said yesterday that Metro Manila mayors are leaning toward another 15-day extension of the ECQ.

STAR/ File

MANILA, Philippines — Metro Manila mayors will meet again today via video conference to finalize details on what to recommend to authorities – whether to extend or downgrade the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in the metropolis to curb the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).?

Parañaque City Mayor Edwin Olivarez said yesterday that Metro Manila mayors are leaning toward another 15-day extension of the ECQ.

Olivarez, concurrent chairman of the Metro Manila Council (MMC) composed of 17 mayors, said some of them are pushing for extension while others are asking for an easing of the lockdown and downgrade into general community quarantine (GCQ) status.

He said the MMC meeting hopes to come up with a recommendation to the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, which would make the final decision.

Under GCQ, some forms of mass transport and establishments would be allowed to resume operations, but at reduced capacity.

Several areas in the country have been placed under GCQ.

Olivarez said some mayors also favor a metro-wide ECQ extension since the cities and the municipality of Pateros in the metropolis are interconnected.

“We are afraid of the second wave (of the virus) and our momentum has been great so far,” Olivarez said. Quezon City, Manila, Parañaque and Makati are among the cities with high number of positive COVID-19 cases.

Health officials earlier reported that San Juan and Valenzuela City are among Metro Manila cities that have shown a slowing down of COVID cases. Despite this, Olivarez said in the interview that the mayors’ stand would be unified. He said it would be impossible to implement anything if one city is under the more relaxed GCQ and other cities would still be under ECQ.

“We cannot have one city under ECQ, while another is under GCQ. That would be complicated. If there is an ECQ, every city should be placed under ECQ,” Olivarez said. The final decision, however, rests solely with the IATF as the MMC is merely a recommendatory body, he emphasized.

Experts’ warning

Various experts have warned the people against premature lifting of the ECQ in high-risk areas such as Metro Manila without safeguards in place to prevent further transmission of COVID-19.



Metro mayors to meet on quarantine options

Guido David, mathematics professor at the University of the Philippines, said their latest models show a possible increase of COVID-19 cases to 24,000 in Metro Manila alone if the ECQ is lifted on May 15.

“If we continue the ECQ and if it improves somewhat, total number of cases in NCR (National Capital Region) would be around 11,000 cases by June 15 – 11,000 with around 800 deaths,” he told The Chiefs aired over Cignal TV’s One News on Thursday night.

Currently, there are almost 6,000 confirmed COVID cases in the metropolis.

Political science professor Ranjit Rye stressed the need to look at specific areas given the archipelagic nature of the Philippines.

While there are some places where the spread of cases appears to have been contained, Rye noted the continuing increase in some cities such as those in Metro Manila, Calabarzon and Cebu.

“We caution the government with regards to relaxing the ECQ in the areas that are now under ECQ without adequate data and safeguards in place,” he said, highlighting the need for massive randomized testing and contact tracing.

“Those that are successful in managing this pandemic took testing, tracing and supportive isolation very seriously. That’s a very big problem in the Philippines,” he added.

Rye said it would be catastrophic to open some cities prematurely, especially as the guidelines being set by the government for a relaxed quarantine setup are still a work in progress.

“Our basic argument is that it’s too early to relax the ECQ. We need time to roll out these safeguards, we need time to do mass testing, we need time as researchers get the data,” he said.

Epidemiologist Troy Gepte echoed the position of the academics, citing the increasing trend in some cities.

He said a partial lifting of ECQ in some cities especially in Metro Manila might not be practical unless there is a system that would monitor movement of people.

Gepte also stressed the need to look into the data down to the barangay level to contain the spread of the disease.

“We’re trying to deal with cases as they come to the health facilities or the hospitals. We’ve always thought of the frontline being in the hospitals, but our actual frontline is among the public health responders down to the level of barangay,” he said.

“We are not detecting enough cases in the community, what we call the asymptomatic (cases). This may be the driving force of the epidemic,” he added.

Gepte said the country has yet to maximize the use of technology to conduct contact tracing.

“With technology, we hope that we’d be able to trace them early so we can somehow outpace the virus. If we detect them early, we can see how we can prevent its spread,” he added.

The Senate has postponed its committee hearings next week until new guidelines are issued with the expected lifting of ECQ on May 15.



Metro mayors to meet on quarantine options

The Senate, acting as the committee of the whole, was scheduled to hold a series of hearings on the COVID-19 crisis starting Monday with the aim of coming up with legislation to help the battered economy get back on its feet.

“The executive department requested for a postponement because they will be very busy in the next few days to convene and present to the President the updates and reports for the President’s decision before the 15th (of May),” Senate President Vicente Sotto III told reporters on Thursday.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri said Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea had called Sotto and pleaded that “we move our meeting with them by a week.”

He said IATF officials and most department heads “are super busy over this weekend preparing and giving reports” for President Duterte, who he said is expected to make an announcement on May 13 regarding the ECQ.

Emergency quarantine

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) engineering units have completed construction of 29 emergency quarantine facilities in Luzon and other regions.

The facilities were built through the efforts of the Office of the Chief Engineer headed by Maj. Gen. William Ilagan in partnership with the WTA Architecture and Design group, San Miguel Foundation and other donors.

The AFP said each quarantine facility was built by 20 soldiers within five to six days using power tools and around four truckloads of materials.

Some of the quarantine facilities are located at the Manila Naval Hospital, GHQ Dispensary, CGEA, QC, Phil Air Force Hospital, Pasay City, Fernando Air Base, Batangas, Cavite Naval Hospital, Army General Hospital, V. Luna General Hospital and Libingan ng mga Bayani, Taguig City with four of the sites completed by soldiers from various Army, Air Force and Navy engineering units.

The other facilities are now at the Quezon City General Hospital; Ospital ng Muntinlupa, Muntinlupa City; Bulacan Medical Center, Malolos; Sacred Heart Hospital, Bulacan; Caloocan City Medical Center; La Consolation University General Hospital, Bulacan; Sta. Ana General Hospital, Manila; Emmanuel Hospital, San Miguel, Bulacan; and Baliuag District Hospital, Bulacan.

The other projects were constructed at the Eastern Mindanao Command Hospital in Davao City, Central Command Hospital in Cebu City, Western Mindanao Command Hospital in Zamboanga City and Western Command Hospital in Palawan.

The facilities are designed for hospitals and institutions that are at maximum capacity to provide proper facility for patients who need to be quarantined.

The AFP said the temporary structures are meant to increase the capacity of hospitals and house patients suspected with COVID-19 to keep them from spreading the infection.- Janvic Mateo, Paolo Romero, Michael Punongbayan, Ghio Ong



Phl performs well in global virus response survey

May 9, 2020 12:05 AM

By Francis Wakefield

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/09/phl-performs-well-in-global-virus-response-survey/>

Malacañang on Friday welcomed the results of the Toluna Blackbox Index of Global Crisis Perceptions showing Filipinos are satisfied with the country's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19 pandemic.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, said the global survey conducted by a leading social research agency in Singapore, measure citizen sentiment on the handling of the health crisis by the nation's political leaders.

Roque said 23 countries were assessed and their index score computed as the mean average of such indicators as national political leadership, corporate leadership, community and media.

The April 2020 survey show the Philippines obtaining an index score of 49, higher than the global average of 45 and ahead of such countries as Australia (43), Germany (41), USA (41), the United Kingdom (37), Mexico (37), Italy (36), Thailand (36), Iran (36), France (26) and Japan (16).

"Fighting COVID-19 is indeed a collective effort, as the survey indicated. Government cannot do it alone and we are therefore grateful to the private sector, the media, and the community in general for demonstrating the true Filipino bayanihan spirit in this extraordinary situation," Roque said in a statement.

"Let us continue to show our solidarity with our people and cooperation with authorities, so together, we can truly heal as one nation," he added.

Blackbox Research and Toluna carried out an online nationally representative survey of 12,592 respondents across 23 countries, aged between 18 to 80. Quotas were applied for gender, age and socio-economic criteria, including education and household type to ensure representative coverage.

The statistical margin of error of the study is 3-6 percent.

The survey was conducted between 3 to 19 April. The field work was staggered through April starting first in Asia and completed in Iran.

In a separate development, the Department of Health (DoH) acknowledged the country's case fatality rate or CFR is comparably higher than its neighbors in the region and attributed the disparity to a number of influences.

Data from the John Hopkins University shows the Philippines has a CFR of 6.6 percent given the latest COVID-19-related deaths of 658 as of Thursday.

"We do recognize that relative to our neighbors we face some challenges," said Health Spokesperson Maria Rosario Vergeire who said that except for Indonesia which has 7.2 percent, other Southeast Asian countries have mortality rates of only 0.1 up to 1.8 percent.

"Many factors contribute to this disparity; for example, demographics and health system capacity," she said, emphasizing countries have varying conditions contributing to the differences in mortality rates.



Phl performs well in global virus response survey

Dr. Anna Ong-Lim, the President of the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines, said the increase of positive cases is not the sole basis for determining a country’s capacity to handle COVID-19 patients.

Lim explained the number of tests done and the increase in cases are both considered in determining whether a country is improving or not and that the Philippines rates a seven of the World Health Organization-determined 10-percent global standard.

“So, we are actually not below the mark and that means good performance,” she said.

As of 7 May, the DoH reported testing 4,661 or way above 7,000 tested on Wednesday and has tested 130,701 unique individuals where only 10 percent proved positive of the virus.

Vergeire also gave assurance health capacity in terms of ventilators and intensive care unit are numerically sufficient to handle the health emergency although she also acknowledged the National Capital Region may at some point hit its maximum capacity.

Latest data show of the total bed capacity of 12,929 only 5,353 are in fact occupied. Also, 434 mechanical ventilators are currently in use while 1,457 others are available.

To date, John Hopkins University report that over 3.8 million people around the world have been infected with the virus and over 200,000 have died.



Community gardens can help feed people post-pandemic

Gaea Katreena Cabico (Philstar.com) - May 8, 2020 - 9:17am

<https://www.philstar.com/business/agriculture/2020/05/08/2012553/community-gardens-can-help-feed-people-post-pandemic>



A backyard garden in Lupao, Nueva Ecija.
Tresalin Cabico

LUPAO, Nueva Ecija — With movement in many parts of the Philippines restricted to slow the transmission of the new coronavirus, the government has renewed a call for people to plant at home as an alternative food source.

Confinement measures in the Philippines began in mid-March as the number of COVID-19 cases piled up and the outbreak spread relentlessly across the archipelago. Metro Manila and other major urban areas at high risk of virus transmission will remain under strict virus lockdown at least until May 15, followed by a gradual easing of restrictions.

A Nueva Ecija-based agriculturist said community quarantines could provide a boost to urban farming and backyard gardening, which he said could address the stability of food supply during the coronavirus crisis and even in the long run.

"If you know how to plant, how to produce, you will be confident that you have food to eat even during a crisis or an event when there is food insecurity," Jaypee Estigoy, an agriculture professor at the Central Luzon State University in Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, told Philstar.com in Filipino.

In an interview for Earth Day in April, community gardening was among the "easy but essential local community solutions" that Greenpeace Philippines country director Lea Guerrero said should be supported in anticipation of similar future crises.

Urban agriculture

In March, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said there is a need to promote proper implementation of urban agriculture to ensure a continuous supply of produce in the metropolis even when there is tightening of food supply from rural areas.

People in major urban centers such as Metro Manila generally rely on agricultural products produced in provinces or imported into the country.

"It will be very helpful if people in urbanized areas are taught to plant. They tend to forget about farming because they depend on farmers to provide their food. So, in their heads, they say 'I have a job, I have money to buy produce from farmers,'" Estigoy said in Filipino.

But money to buy goods is not as useful when supply chains are disrupted and there are less goods to buy.

In 2012, the United Nations said 67% of the world's population is forecast to live in cities. A study published in journal Earth's Future projected that urban agriculture can be an important part of keeping them fed, potentially producing between 100 and 180 million tons of food a year.

Community gardens can help feed people post-pandemic

Urban farming can help urban dwellers save on food purchases and ensure that produce are healthier for human consumption. It can also shorten food miles, which means less use of fuel and therefore less greenhouse gas emission.

Urban agriculture can also create employment and generate income for the urban poor.

"Urban and peri-urban agriculture provides an opportunity for the social and economic integration of women, urban newcomers and youth. It helps reduce their vulnerability by diversifying livelihood opportunities and acting as a safety net for the less privileged and less educated sections of the population that often have no other job opportunities," the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization said.

Vertical farming

Estigoy said vertical gardening—or the practice of growing produce in vertically stacked layers—is the key to maximizing limited space in highly-urbanized areas.

"If you have one square meter, you can grow about 400 leafy vegetables layer by layer. If you plant on land, you can only fit around 25 leafy vegetables in the same area. Vertical gardening can increase production," the agriculturist said.



A vertical garden in Central Luzon State University. CLSU Hydroponics Aquaponics/Facebook

He urged condominium managers or owners of apartment buildings in Metro Manila to consider putting up gardens on rooftops where tenants can grow agricultural crops.

With the incorporation of hydroponics—or the technology of growing plants without soil—communities can use a space of as little as 8x16 square meters to produce 1,000 honeydew melons or 5,000 leafy vegetables, Estigoy said.

But hydroponic system is highly technical and could be costly to adopt, especially for urban poor communities, which are the least food secure.

A less costly system of vertical farming that urban poor communities can adopt is using recycled containers with soil or compost to grow crops. They can also engage in vermiculture activities to produce quality organic products.

Agriculturists suggest planting leafy vegetables since they have a shorter production cycle and can be harvested between 20 and 25 days.

Residents of rural areas should also adopt vertical gardening but the technique is often disregarded because there is more space in the provinces, Estigoy said.



Community gardens can help feed people post-pandemic

He said that rural communities might not see the need to adopt vertical farming "until they realize that the farmlands are gone or have been converted to subdivisions."

Community farming will still be useful in rural areas, though, according to Leon Dulce, national coordinator of Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment.

"If we promote agro-ecological food forests and urban gardens to benefit and to be managed by vulnerable communities, we also address the malnutrition crisis that makes our population at risk of succumbing to the pandemic," he said in an interview in April.

Backyard gardening programs

The DA, through the Bureau of Plant Industry, is distributing planting materials and free vegetable seeds such as eggplant, tomato, upland kangkong, pechay, string beans and upo in urban areas to ensure that food productivity and sufficiency is attained.

Seeds are available through the BPI's offices, through regional field offices of the DA, and through an online request form.

The BPI said it is establishing community gardens in barangays that have idle plots of land. The gardens are meant to sustain the initiative even after the coronavirus pandemic.

"We urge the public to join us in promoting this urban agriculture program to ensure a continuous supply of homegrown nutritious vegetables on the table of every Filipino household," Dar said in March.

The Joy of Urban Farming—an urban agriculture project of Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte—is also giving away seeds for the city's residents.

Even before the coronavirus reached the Philippines, the provincial government of Albay had already been implementing a backyard gardening program, which seeks to ensure that families will have enough food supply.

"This program helps and ensure sustainable food supply for Albayanos," Gov. Al Francis Bichara said in a Facebook post.



Army receives agri kits for urban gardening initiative

By Priam Nepomuceno May 8, 2020, 9:29 am
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1102238>



URBAN GARDENING. Army troops receive agriculture kits from the Department of Agriculture in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City on Wednesday (May 6, 2020). The initiative encourages Army personnel to plant vegetables inside the camp and in their homes to ensure adequate food supply amid the enhanced community quarantine. (Photo courtesy of Army Chief Public Affairs Office)

MANILA – The Philippine Army (PA) received agriculture kits from the Department of Agriculture (DA) that will allow it to jumpstart urban gardening efforts at its headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City on Wednesday.

In a statement late Thursday, Army spokesperson Col. Ramon Zagala said the initiative aims to encourage PA personnel to plant vegetables inside the camp and in their backyards, as a way of producing sustainable and adequate food supply while the enhanced community quarantine in Metro Manila is still in effect, he added.

"We are thankful to the Department of Agriculture for helping us pursue this project. Finding ways to generate sustainable food resources is always a welcome idea especially in our current situation," Zagala said.

He added that the PA Personnel Management Command received the starter kits composed of vegetable seeds, garden soil, compost, poly bags, seedling, tray and information, education, and communication materials.

He added the DA's Crop Research and Production Support Division also visited the camp's community garden to assess the needs in the area. (PNA)



Le Tour de Filipinas suportado ang paggamit ng bisikleta sa 'new normal'

May 8, 2020 @ 8:34 PM

<https://remate.ph/le-tour-de-filipinas-suportado-ang-paggamit-ng-bisikleta-sa-new-normal/>



Manila, Philippines – Hinihikayat ng mga organizer ng Le Tour de Filipinas (LTdF) ang lahat ng cycling advocates sa bansa na magbalangkas ng unified na plano upang gawing “preferred mode” ng transportasyon ag bisikleta sa “new normal.”

Ayon kay LTdF founder Alberto Lina at president Donna Lina, ang planong ito ay magiging kadikit ng protocols na itinakda ng pamahalaan sakaling pagaanin na ang enhanced community quarantine patungong general community quarantine.

“Using the bicycle or similar two-wheeled vehicles is advocated globally. The experts are correct, there is physical distancing when you are riding your bicycle,” ayon kay Alberto Lina, na chairman din ng PhilCycling.

“It has always been our advocacy for cycling not only as a competitive sport, but a healthy mode of transportation,” ayon naman kay Donna Lina, na pangulo ng UBE Media, ang organizer ng LTdF.

Ayon sa mga Lina, dapat nang magkaroon ng msa malaking “share” sa kalsada ang mga bisikleta.

“There is no guarantee for a virus-free public transportation system. Many people, if not all, would be reluctant to ride jeepneys, buses and trains, even taxis,” giit ni Alberto Lina.

Ang unified action na ito aniya ay dapat ikonsidera ng Palasyo lalo na sa pamamagitan ng Department of Transportation at local government units kung saan may mabibigay na volume ng mga komyuter. RNT/MM



Bisikleta malaki ang magiging papel sa 'New normal'

Russell Cadayona (Pilipino Star Ngayon - May 9, 2020 - 12:00am)

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/palaro/2020/05/09/2012715/bisikleta-malaki-ang-magiging-papel-sa-new-normal>



Kaya naman hinikayat kahapon nina Le Tour de Filipinas (LTdF) founder Alberto Lina at president Donna Lina ang lahat ng cycling advocates sa bansa na maglatag ng unified plan para maging isang paraan ng transportasyon ang pagbibisikleta.

STAR/Micheal Varcas, file

MANILA, Philippines — Magiging 'New normal' na ang buhay ng mga Pinoy matapos ang coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Kaya naman hinikayat kahapon nina Le Tour de Filipinas (LTdF) founder Alberto Lina at president Donna Lina ang lahat ng cycling advocates sa bansa na maglatag ng unified plan para maging isang paraan ng transportasyon ang pagbibisikleta.

Ang mabubuong plano ay susunod sa itatakdang protocols ng gobyerno sa oras na palitan ang Enhanced Community Quarantine ng General Community Quarantine na magbibigay-daan sa "New normal".

"Using the bicycle or similar two-wheeled vehicles is advocated globally. The experts are correct, there is physical distancing when you are riding your bicycle," ani Alberto Lina, ang chairman ng PhilCycling.

Dahil sa ECQ sa Luzon at ibang probinsya bunga ng COVID-19 pandemic ay napilitan si Donna Lina na kanselahin ang taunang Le Tour de Filipinas.

Ang nasabing ika-11 edisyon ng Category 2.2 race sa International Cycling Union calendar ay pumadyak sana noong Mayo 1-5 sa Ilocos.

"It has always been our advocacy for cycling not only as a competitive sport, but a healthy mode of transportation," ani Donna Lina, ang pangulo ng UBE Media na nag-oorganisa ng Le Tour.

Inaasahang magkakaroon ng malaking papel ang bisikleta sa pagpasok ng 'New normal' kung saan hindi pinapayagan ang pagkakadikit-dikit ng mga tao.

"There is no guarantee for a virus-free public transportation system. Many people, if not all, would be reluctant to ride jeepneys, buses and trains, even taxis," ani Alberto Lina.

Inaasahan ng mag-amang Lina na ikukunsidera ng Malacañang ang sinasabi nilang unified plan para sa paggamit ng bisikleta sa kalsada.

Ang PhilCycling ay pinamuunuan ni Cavite (8th District) Representative Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino na presidente rin ng Philippine Olympic Committee.

"This new advocacy could go deep into the government's 'build, build, build program,' which should incorporate the use of bicycles, even the electric bikes," ani Donna Lina.



Lockdown, hot weather caused high surge in electricity use: Meralco

ABS-CBN News

Posted at May 08 2020 10:33 PM

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/business/05/08/20/lockdown-hot-weather-caused-high-surge-in-electricity-use-meralco>

MANILA - Meralco said Friday that the enhanced community quarantine and the hot weather "caused a very high surge" in electric consumption among its consumers.

Joe Zaldariagga, spokesman of Meralco, said in an interview that due to the lockdown and the weather, demand for electricity went up in residential areas, leading to power outages.

"Siyempre, ang behavior ng tao 'pag nasa bahay at ganito kainit, unang-unang instinct is to turn on 'yung cooling devices," he told DZMM Teleradyo.

"Ang nangyayari ngayon, it is spiking o tumataas siya beyond the usual range."

Zaldariagga confirmed 52 areas covered by Meralco have experienced brownouts since March 6. More than 55,000 consumers of the Philippines' largest power distributor have been affected by the outages.

Of the 55,000, more than 32,000 live in Metro Manila. Quezon City, Pasig, Las Piñas, Taguig, Makati reported outages on Thursday.

The remaining consumers affected live in Bulacan, Laguna, Rizal and areas nearby the capital region.

Other factors leading to the surge are reported incidents of residents who illegally connect to Meralco's power lines.

"We are now correcting that," Zaldariagga said.

Energy Undersecretary Wimpy Fuentebella earlier ordered the distributor to conduct regular maintenance checks.

"Para kahit magbrownout man 2 to 3 hours at least masisiguro na hindi mahabaan kasi aayusin na ang linya bago pa man magka brownout, iimprove na mga linya," said Fuentebella.



Power consumption before ECQ needs to be settled, won't be paid in installments –Meralco

Published May 8, 2020 11:38am

By TED CORDERO, GMA News

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/money/companies/737379/power-consumption-before-ecq-needs-to-be-settled-won-t-be-paid-in-installments-meralco/story/>

Electricity consumed by customers of the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) before the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine should be settled once the situation eased.

In an interview on Dabol B sa News TV, Meralco spokesperson Joe Zaldarriaga said electricity bills due before the entire Luzon was placed under lockdown in March are not covered by the Energy Regulatory Commission's (ERC) order to stagger bills payment in four monthly installments.

The ERC ordered power distributors to stagger the payments electricity consumed during the ECQ.

"Yung February bill nila... 'yung hindi umabot sa ECQ ay wala sa order ng ERC," Zaldarriaga said.

"Kailangan siguro i-settle 'yan once we go back to normal," he said.

According to the ERC, the bills incurred and staggered in four succeeding billing months after the ECQ will be "reflected as a separate item in the electricity bill due on those succeeding months."

Nevertheless, Zaldarriaga said that Meralco will not disconnect those with unsettled bills while lockdown measures are in place.

He noted that unpaid bills before the ECQ was implemented were not voluminous since many have opted to pay online.

Brownouts

The Meralco spokesperson also explained that power interruptions occur in some residential areas due to system overload caused by high consumption during the hot dry season.

"Ang taas ng konsumo, ang taas ng demand, 'yung system natin minsan nago-overload," Zaldarriaga said.

The system overload was also aggravated by illegal connections.

"Sa ibang mga areas, 'yung mga culprit, mga illegal service connectors," he said.

"Yung concentration kasi natin ngayon is to respond to emergency cases so 'yung mga illegal service operations hindi natin napa-priority," he added.—AOL, GMA News



Meralco to give consumers four months to complete bill payments during ECQ

By CNN Philippines Staff

Published May 8, 2020 7:25:02 PM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/8/Meralco-four-months-bill-payments-ECQ---.html>



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 8) — The consumers of the Manila Electric Company do not have to worry about unpaid bills during the enhanced community quarantine, as the company allows its customers to settle it via four monthly payments.

According to Meralco spokesperson Joe Zaldarriaga, they established the installment system in order to assist their consumers during this global pandemic.

“Yong hindi nabayaran because of ECQ, may hulugan na sistema. It will be divided to four monthly

payments. Ito ay ginawa nga para maka agapay naman sa consumers,” he told CNN Philippines on Friday.

[Translation: There will be an installment system for unpaid dues during the ECQ. It will be divided to four monthly payments. We did this to assist customers.]

Zaldarriaga said that the payment for the unpaid dues will be added to the customer’s current bill until it gets completed in four months.

He added that the power distributing company will not conduct any disconnection operations during this time of ECQ.

Current billing method

At the moment, Meralco is averaging every consumer’s kilowatt-hour consumption for the last three months, as basis for their current bill.

“Ang naging advice at order sa amin ng regulator which is part of the magna carta, ay i-apply muna ‘yong three months’ previous average,” said Zaldarriaga

[Translation: The advice and order to us by the regulator is to apply the three months’ previous average, as according to the magna carta]

He added that the system will automatically correct the electricity bills according to the consumption of consumers, once Meralco is already allowed to physically read meters.

Because of this, some customers will get a refund if they did not consume as much electricity, while some will have to pay an additional amount.

Power outage

Various areas have been reporting power outages and Zaldarriaga said that they are closely monitoring these reports.

“Because of the sudden surge of demand, we are kind of monitoring the situation very closely. May instances po talaga na matagal ‘yong restoration efforts. But we are working on that,” he said.

[Translation: Because of the sudden surge of demand, we are kind of monitoring the situation very closely.

There are instances that that the restoration efforts may take a while, but we are working on that]

Zaldarriaga assured the public that there is enough supply of electricity, and what’s causing the brownouts are localized problems such as explosion of transmitters and wires.



Transition period needed after lifting ECQ, QC gov't says

Published May 9, 2020 12:15am

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/metro/737472/transition-period-needed-after-lifting-ecq-qc-gov-t-says/story/>

The Quezon City government propose to prepare business establishments and residents before ending the period of enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) that was implemented to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The local government acknowledges that the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) will decide to downgrade the protocol imposed on the city from ECQ to General Community Quarantine (GCQ).

A transition period, the LGU says, will allow business establishments to adapt to localized guidelines currently being developed in anticipation of a "new normal" setting.

In a statement, Mayor Joy Belmonte said the guidelines intend to jumpstart the revival of the local economy while ensuring the safety of the residents through the implementation of strict health protocols in business establishments.

"Necessary preventive measures should be in place and the health and safety of workers and customers must be guaranteed before we allow them to operate again," she said.

The proposal will be discussed at the meeting of Metro Manila mayors set on Saturday May 9, 2020.

As of May 08, the Quezon City has recorded 1,156 positive COVID cases as confirmed by the Quezon City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (QC-ESU), 337 recoveries, and 134 deaths in a total population closer to approximately four million, that includes transients and those stranded as a result of the ECQ.

The city has three local government hospitals and hosts more than thirty private and national government hospitals and healthcare facilities that may contribute to the City Government's COVID related response.

"While the health of our residents remains our primary priority, we also need to look after the local economy, which has been affected severely by the dreaded virus," Belmonte said.

The guidelines for the transition period include requiring business establishments to report production capacities and commensurate workforce requirements, check the health conditions of their workforce prior to allowing return to work, facilitate testing of workers, quarantine workers as needed, implement thermal scanning and social distancing in the workplace, and institute disinfection schedules.

Assistant City Administrator for Operations Alberto Kimpo said penalties will be imposed to those who will fail submit their reports.

"Businesses must also implement mandatory temperature check at all entry points while dividers must be installed between work stations to prevent physical contact," he added.

Kimpo added that no 24-hour operation will be allowed to give way to regular disinfection except establishments that provide health services.

Business establishments will also be required a one-day closure for disinfection.

Barangays also have the option to re-implement ECQ that are found to have high COVID-19 infection rates. This option will be subject to the approval of the IATF-NCR.

The city government assured the continued distribution of various financial aid, such as the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), the local government's SAP, and the Kalingang QC.

"Checkpoints will be retained and may be made stricter in priority areas, community testing will continue and contact tracing will be beefed up to help control the virus. These are among the initial recommendations we have gathered from the different concerned departments, most crucial of all from the Quezon City Health Department and its Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit," Kimpo said. -- BAP, GMA News'



MAY COVID-19, 4M NA; HALOS 300K NA ANG PATAY

May 8, 2020 @ 5:23 PM

<https://remate.ph/may-covid-19-4m-na-halos-300k-na-ang-patay/>

SA kabila ng sari-saring clinical trial ng mga gamot at pamamaraan para masugpo na ang Corona Virus Disease-19 sa mahal kong Pinas at iba pang mga bansa, mabilis pa ring dumarami ang nagkakasakit at namamatay sa nasabing sakit.

Heto nga't umabot na sa apat milyon ang kumpirmadong tinamaan, halos 300,000 na ang namamatay at katlo lang ng kabuuang biktima ang gumagaling.

Sa Pilipinas, malungkot tingnan na hindi rin humuhupa ang sakit, bagama't may isinailalim na sa General Community Quarantine ngunit may mahigpit na pagbabantay.

Umakyat na sa 10,343 ang kumpirmadong may Covid-19, 685 ang patay at 1,618 ang nakarekober sa araw na ito.

PAGPAPALAWIG NG ECQ

Seryoso talagang sakit ang Covid-19 kaya hindi dapat balewalain o ipagwalang-bahala.

Kaya naiisipan ng Metro Manila mayors na palawigin pa ang Enhanced Community Quarantine na mas istrikto ang mga patakaran kumpara sa mga patakaran sa GCQ hanggang sa katapusan ng Mayo.

Kabilang sa mga patakaran sa ECQ ang buong pagtigil ng transportasyong pampubliko kumpara sa nasa GCQ na papayagan ang biyahe ngunit kakaunting bilang lamang.

Sa ECQ, walang pasok sa trabaho samantalang sa GCQ, pinapayagan ang unti-unting pagbubukas ng mga kompanya.

Sabi ng mga mayor, rekomendasyon lang ang kanilang magagawa at ang Inter-Agency Task Force ang magpapasya pa rin kung paiiralin ang ECQ.

May kuro-kuro kasing maaaring isailalim ang ilang bahagi ng Metro Manila na GCQ ngunit tutol ang mga mayor dahil magkakaugnay-ugnay ang mga lungsod at bayan dito.

Halimbawa, kung isasailalim ang Makati sa GCQ ngunit nasa ECQ ang mga nakapaligid nito, paano makalabas ang mga obrero sa loob at labas ng Makati at sa paligid nito para magtrabaho?

MAGANDANG BALITA

Sa gitna na lahat, magandang balita ang pagkakaroon natin ng kontribusyon sa mga dinidiskubre at inilalapat na gamot laban sa sakit, gaya ng ating virgin coconut oil.

May parte o sangkap ang niyog natin na "monolaurin at lauric acid" na pamatay ng virus.

Ang Covid-19 virus umano ay nababalot sa taba at kayang sirain ng monolaurin at lauric acid ang taba, kasama na ang lamad na proteksyon mismo ng virus.

Matagal nang nadiskubre ito sa mga pag-aaral noon pang 1979 at 1982.



MAY COVID-19, 4M NA; HALOS 300K NA ANG PATAY

Sa ngayon, ginagamit ng sa Philippine General Ospital sa mga clinical trial nito ang VCO bilang food supplement para sa mga pasyenteng naospital rito na kumpirmadong tinamaan at maging ang mga nasa seryosong kalagayan.

Sana, magpatuloy ang clinical trial gamit ang VCO at sana mapatunayan ito na talagang epektibo hindi lang bilang food supplement kundi tunay na gamot laban sa Covid-19 at sa katulad na sakit.

MAKIPAGTULUNGAN AT MAGTIIS-TIIS

Kabilang sa mga dahilan ng pagkakaroon ng Metro Manila ng malawak at maramihang pagkakasakit sa Covid-19 ang paglabag sa mga patakaran sa stay at home, social distancing, paghuhugas ng kamay, transportation lockdown at iba pang paraan para kumalat ang sakit.

Akalain ba nating kailangan pa ang extreme enhanced community quarantine o total lockdown sa loob ng 2-3 araw para iparamdam sa lahat ang kahalagahan ng kwarantina laban nasabing sakit.

Dapat makipagtulungan ang lahat sa lahat ng patakaran laban sa sakit.

At magtiis-tiis sa hirap, gutom at iba pang bunga ng kagipitan.

Dahil kung hindi natin gawin ito at hiniling natin ang pagluluwag, baka maganap ang nararanasan sa ibang bansa na pagbalik ng mga pagluluwag, saka naman lumala ang Covid-19 sa kanila.

Kabilang sa mga sinasalakay nang husto ang United States at United Kingdom dahil sa kagustuhan ng mga mamamayan na laging malaya sa lahat ng gusto nila.

Ang US ay may 77,000 nang patay habang ang UK na pumapangalawa ay may patay nang nasa 33,000, kasama na ang mga patay sa Ireland.

Ang masama, pati mga doktor at nurse na Pinoy na naglilingkod sa bansang ito ay nadadamay na rin sa kamatayan gaya ng may 30 nars natin an namatay na sa UK at ilan naman sa US.



Guv mulls 'Limpyo Iloilo Home Quarantine Clean-up'

By Leonard T. Pineda, | Published on May 8, 2020

<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1041315>

ILOILO CITY, May 8 (PIA6) -- The Iloilo Provincial Government is planning to launch the "Limpyo Iloilo Home Quarantine Clean-up" as a prevention measure against dengue.

This is amidst the battle against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which has placed the entire province under the enhanced community quarantine status until May 15.

In a media interview, Governor Arthur Defensor, Jr. said he will issue an executive order for the simultaneous clean-up drive in the province.

"Mangayo kita sang clean-up sa aton kasimanwa, sa balay nila, kay naka home quarantine sila, kag in preparation for dengue (We will ask a clean-up from our constituents, in their respective households, since they are in home quarantine, and in preparation for dengue)," he said.

Defensor said he sought the support of the mayors with the implementation of this provincewide clean-up campaign.

The clean-up drive is a modified version of "Limpyo Iloilo" which was launched last February 21, 2020. (JBG/LTP/PIA-Iloilo)



Brace for dangerous heat levels, Pagasa warns

Published May 8, 2020, 1:17 PM

By Alexandria Dennise San Juan

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/08/brace-for-dangerous-heat-levels-pagasa-warns/>



Hot and humid weather will prevail in most parts of the country today due to easterlies or warm winds from the Pacific Ocean, while a low pressure area entered the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) on Friday, the state weather bureau said.

(JANSEN ROMERO / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

In its latest weather update, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said it continued to monitor the LPA, which was last

spotted off 1,015 kilometers east of Davao City.

PAGASA Weather Specialist Ariel Rojas said the LPA has a slim chance to develop into a tropical depression but is expected to bring rains in Eastern Visayas in the coming days.

Rojas added that partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers will prevail in Metro Manila and the rest of the country today due to easterlies and localized thunderstorms.

Despite the expected rains, PAGASA said that a scorching 45 degrees Celsius (°C) heat index is forecast to be felt at Sangley Point in Cavite also on Friday. This was the highest heat index expected by the bureau followed by Dagupan City in Pangasinan at 41.5 °C.

According to PAGASA, heat index refers to the actual feel of temperature, as opposed to the temperature measured by a thermometer. The high air temperatures and high relative humidity are the factors considered in heat index, which give high apparent temperatures or indices.

PAGASA considered heat indices of 41°C to 54°C as “dangerous,” meaning heat cramps and heat exhaustion are likely, and a heat stroke is probable with continued activity.”

On Thursday, May 7, PAGASA has recorded several dangerous levels of heat index in the country, the highest was observed at Sangley Point in Cavite with a sizzling 49 °C.

In Metro Manila, other cities also experienced dangerous levels of heat index with 43 °C in Port Area, Manila and Science Garden in Quezon City, and 44 °C at the NAIA Station in Pasay City.

Dangerous levels of temperature were also recorded in Alabat, Quezon; Butuan City, Agusan Del Norte; Cotabato City, Maguindanao; General Santos City, South Cotabato; and Tacloban City, Leyte, all at 41 °C; Cubi Pt., Subic Bay in Olongapo City; Dipolog, Zamboanga Del Norte; Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental; Itbayat, Batanes; and Masbate City, Masbate, at 42 °C; Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, and Tayabas City, Quezon at 44 °C; Tuguegarao City, Cagayan at 45 °C; Clark, Pampanga; Davao City, Davao Del Sur, and Iba, Zambales, at 46 °C; Calapan, Oriental Mindoro; Legazpi City, Albay; and San Jose City, Occidental Mindoro, at 47 °C; and Munoz, Nueva Ecija at 48 °C.

Based on the data from PAGASA, San Jose City in Occidental Mindoro has recorded this year’s highest heat index so far in the country with a sizzling 58 °C observed on April 20, followed by the 51 °C in Dagupan City, Pangasinan on May 5.

The state weather agency advised the public to stay indoors as much as possible, wear lightweight and light colored clothing, and to drink plenty of water regularly.



Magnitude 4.1 lindol yumanig sa Agusan

By Leifbilly Begas May 08, 2020

<https://bandera.inquirer.net/252305/magnitude-4-1-lindol-yumanig-sa-agusan?fbclid=IwAR0qd4wh1p04b9XeJLGcJfUR47HhVgICMmePs66cVFDt9nG2araA30mBNlc#ixzz6LrATeW1Z>



NIYANIG ng magnitude 4.1 lindol ang Agusan del Norte kanina, ayon sa Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

Ang epicenter ng lindol ay 11 kilometro sa bayan ng Remedios Romualdez. May lalim itong 12 kilometro.

Naramdaman ang lindol alas-3:12 ng hapon.

Nagdulot ito ng Intensity IV na paggalaw sa Cabadbaran, Agusan del Norte.

Intensity III naman sa Magallanes, Agusan del Norte at Butuan City.



Looking forward to lockdown's end

EDITORIAL

Published May 9, 2020, 12:05 AM

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/09/looking-forward-to-lockdowns-end/>



On May 15, it will be two months since Metro Manila – along with the whole of Luzon – was locked down with an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) that closed down all business and industry operations and offices, mass transportation, and kept everyone in their homes. It was the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The original lockdown for Metro Manila was for one month – until April 15. It was extended by two weeks to April 30, then by another two weeks to May 15. The lockdown has probably kept the virus from spreading as much as it has in many other countries, such as the United States, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. But the lockdowns have had serious economic consequences – companies filing for bankruptcy, millions losing their jobs, nations facing problems of recovery from plunging GDPs.

The Philippines has fared relatively well in keeping the number of COVID-19 deaths down. It is one of the countries doing well in mitigating the impact on the national economy. But after two months of lockdown, the people of Metro Manila are looking forward to the end of ECQ inactivity. The poor may welcome the food aid and the cash aid distributed by the national government through local government units, but they really would rather fend for themselves as they did before the lockdown.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has now issued guidelines for malls and shopping centers that are expected to reopen under a General Community Quarantine (GCQ), a step down from the total Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). In a memorandum issued last Monday, the DTI said people in a mall must be limited to one per square meter of area. Individuals must be one meter apart at all times. Air-conditioning must be set at 26 degrees maximum. There should be no WiFi service, as this encourages loitering.

The Department of Health has its own requirements – use of face masks, disinfection of mall equipment and vehicles in operation areas, physical distancing in queues, etc.

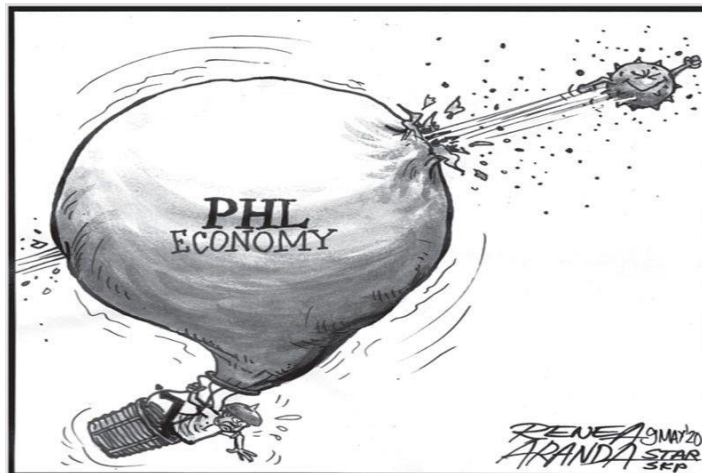
The Department of Transportation has issued illustrations of required passenger positions in buses and rail coaches to maintain the proper one-meter distance. Trains will be allowed to carry only 25 percent of their regular capacity. Before the COVID-19 restrictions, Metro Manila's rail systems were known for long lines of people just to enter train stations as well as extreme overcrowding in the coaches themselves.

There will still be some restrictions after May 15, but no longer the total lockdown of the last two months. It is time to reopen the offices and the factories and the malls. The people, we are sure, can be trusted to maintain their distance from one another, to keep washing their hands thoroughly, to continue wearing face masks until the world declares an end to the pandemic. Some may continue to do so for months afterwards.



EDITORIAL - Contraction

(The Philippine Star - May 9, 2020 - 12:00am
<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2020/05/09/2012744/editorial-contraction>



After 84 straight quarters of robust growth, the Philippine economy contracted in the first three months of the year, posting its worst performance since the Asian financial crisis in 1998.

Gross domestic product shrank to just 0.2 percent from January to March, plummeting from the 6.7 percent in the last quarter of 2019. Finance officials warn that the worst isn't over and the economy could shrink further for the rest of this year, as measures to contain the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic continue to dampen business activity.

Around the world, governments are struggling to balance the protection of lives and preservation of livelihoods amid the COVID-19 contagion. In the absence of a vaccine or cure, the uncertainty is expected to persist for months. For the Philippines, the year got off to a bad start, with the disruption caused by the powerful explosion of Taal Volcano in January.

The economic contraction has given urgency to easing COVID-19 quarantine measures, especially in Metro Manila, which accounts for the bulk of national production. Both national and local government agencies must ensure that any easing will not cause the worst fears of health experts to materialize: a resurgence of the coronavirus following a flattening of the curve.

By now, the world has an idea of how to curb the contagion even before a vaccine or cure becomes commercially available. Mass testing with speedy results is critical. So is efficient contact tracing, preferably supported by digital apps. There must be sufficient quarantine and isolation facilities, preferably away from regular medical institutions whose services are needed for other health afflictions. Equally important is sustaining several health safety practices long after any form of quarantine has been lifted. These practices include physical distancing, the use of face masks, regular hand washing, and the use of thermal scans and sanitized foot baths.

Reviving the economy will require the provision of safety nets not just for the impoverished but also for the hardest hit sectors such as the travel and tourism industry. After two months of quarantine, many enterprises are folding and millions have been rendered jobless or underemployed. Overseas Filipino workers are returning home in droves, making job creation even more urgent. The government cannot do this alone; the situation calls for all hands on deck. The nation must recover as one from this economic crisis.



Measuring the 2020 crash

By: Mahar Mangahas - @inquirerdotnet
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:05 AM May 09, 2020
<https://opinion.inquirer.net/129639/measuring-the-2020-crash>

The new report (5/7/20) of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020Q1 was 0.2 percent less than in 2019Q1 gives only an inkling of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of the Filipino people. The concept of a people's well-being has many dimensions. A very useful list of the dimensions is that of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are intended for achievement by the year 2030. At least five of them are particularly relevant: 1. No poverty, 2. Zero hunger, 3. Good health and well-being, 8. Decent work and economic growth, and 10. Reduced inequalities.

The economic production crash (SDG8). Let us start here, on account of the new PSA report. It is very, very seldom that GDP falls. It needs to rise by 1.2 percent per year, just to keep up with population growth. Zero growth is already bad; a 1 percent fall is a crash. The government shares responsibility for the crash since it ordered a lockdown.

GDP growth pertains to only a part of SDG8, which states in full: "to promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all." Thus, Labor Force Survey figures for 2020 on unemployment, underemployment, and wages are needed in order to monitor the entirety of SDG8.

The economic distribution crash (SDG10). An economy is measured not only by the size of its production but also by the fairness of sharing it, hence SDG10: "reduce inequality within and among countries." From late 2013 up to the end of 2019, more Filipinos were getting better off than getting worse off, as shown by both the Social Weather Surveys and the Bangko Sentral's Consumer Confidence Surveys. In December 2019, the SWS score of Gainers minus Losers was a very high net +18 percentage points.

But in 2020, the economic distribution crashed. A preliminary report of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) Technical Working Group for Anticipatory and Forward Planning, titled "We recover as one," has April 2020 data from a Neda survey pointing to a net gainers score of -50 or worse among private sector workers, and -10 or worse among government workers. Much of this is the government's own doing, by ordering the closure of most private companies and stoppage of public transportation (see my columns "Restore jeepneys and tricycles," 3/21/20, and "Allow people the freedom to earn a living," 4/18/20).

The economic deprivation crash (SDG1, SDG2). The Neda survey states that more than 40 percent of Filipinos now lack sufficient income to meet their basic needs. The IATF report has a table on the regional number of "poor/near poor/informal sector households" to be given cash assistance for two months by the government. It adds up to 17.96 million households—a staggering four-fifths of all households in the entire country—and a budget of P106.9 billion.

Incidentally, the latest official poverty incidence is for 2018: 12.1 percent of households. The latest from SWS is for December 2019: Self-Rated Poverty at 54 percent, and Hunger at 8.8 percent, of households ("Fourth Quarter 2019 Social Weather Survey: Self-Rated Poverty rises by 12 points to 5-year high 54%," and "Quarterly Hunger decreases to 8.8%," www.sws.org.ph, 1/23/20 and 1/24/20).

How is health (SDG3)? It seems to me that the Philippines is not doing poorly, relative to neighboring countries—calling into question the need for the severity of the lockdown and the suffering it has caused.

Here are the number of cases and number of deaths, per million of the population, by country, as of 5/8/20, arranged by number of cases: Singapore 3,579 cases, 3 deaths; South Korea 211 cases, 5 deaths; Malaysia 200 cases, 3 deaths; Japan 122 cases, 5 deaths; Philippines 94 cases, 6 deaths; Indonesia 47 cases, 3 deaths; Thailand 43 cases, 0.8 deaths (www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/; Vietnam omitted because deaths not reported). (These are all medical cases of individual persons; there are no estimates of infection rates of the general population.)



Tourism in a crisis

HIDDEN AGENDA - Mary Ann LL. Reyes (The Philippine Star)

May 9, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2020/05/09/2012690/tourism-crisis>

This is definitely one summer we will never, ever forget.

Many of us used to look forward to long weekends. In fact, many have booked flights and room accommodations as early as last year in anticipation of this year's summer months and the long weekends of 2020 due to the spate of promos both in terms of airline tickets as well as hotel stays.

Unfortunately, these same people are the ones that had to find a way to cancel these flights and hotel accommodations, or if cancellation is not allowed, to book at a later date this year if permitted by the airline company and the hotel.

International tourism is one of those sectors that has suffered tremendously from this pandemic. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, international tourism fell by 22 percent during the first quarter of 2020 and could in fact decline by as much as 60 to 80 percent for the whole year compared to last year.

The UNWTO, in a just released report, said that 67 million fewer international tourists up to March 2020 translates into \$80 billion in lost exports and places millions of livelihoods at risk.

In a statement, UNWTO secretary general Zurab Pololikashvili said that the world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis, with tourism being hit hard, and with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labor-intensive sectors of the economy.

According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, arrivals in March 2020 alone dropped sharply by 57 percent following the start of a lockdown in many countries, as well as the widespread introduction of travel restrictions and the closure of airports and national borders. This translates into a loss of 67 million international arrivals and about \$80 billion in receipts or exports from tourism.

The UNWTO report revealed that although Asia and the Pacific showed the highest impact in relative and absolute terms as minus 33 million arrivals, the impact in Europe, though lower in percentage with a drop of 22 million, is quite high in volume.

It said that current scenarios point to possible declines in arrivals of 58 to 78 percent for the year, depending on the speed of containment and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders.

Three possible scenarios for 2020 were presented. First, a 58 percent drop is expected based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions in early July. Second, if there is a gradual opening, the drop would be higher at 70 percent. The third scenario looks at a 78 percent decline if the easing of travel restrictions happens only in early December.

The UNWTO said that under these scenarios, the impact of the loss of demand in international travel could translate into loss of 850 million to 1.1 billion international tourists, decline of \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism, and 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk.

The report noted that this is by far the worst crisis that international tourism has faced since records began in 1950, with the impact to be felt to varying degrees in the different global regions and at overlapping times, with Asia and the Pacific expected to rebound first.

The good news, though, is a rebound is expected to happen in 2021.



Tourism in a crisis

It said that domestic demand is expected to recover faster than international demand according to the UNWTO Panel of Experts survey. The majority expects to see signs of recovery by the final quarter of 2020 but mostly in 2021. Based on previous crises, leisure travel is expected to recover quicker, particularly travel for visiting friends and relatives, than business travel, it added.

The UNWTO pointed out that the estimates regarding the recovery of international travel is more positive in Africa and the Middle East with most experts foreseeing recovery still in 2020. Experts in the Americas are the least optimistic and least likely to believe in recovery in 2020, while in Europe and Asia the outlook is mixed, with half of the experts expecting to see recovery within this year, it explained.

Helping physical distancing

Another sector whose performance has a huge multiplier effect on the economy is housing.

But as we all know, construction has stopped following the start of the government-mandated quarantine. Not only are there fewer houses, condominiums and other buildings being constructed, but the worst part of it all is that millions have lost their only source of income. I am talking about construction workers and even workers of allied and support industries such as suppliers of construction materials, to name a few.

It is for this reason that the Organization of Socialized and Economic Housing Developers of the Philippines (OSHDP) has called on President Duterte, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and Congress to integrate the development and construction, particularly of socialized and economic housing units, into the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act.

OSHDP noted that aside from the economic multiplier effect of housing to stimulate other businesses in its many upstream and downstream value chains, as well as its contribution to job generation, providing housing is needed to maintain social distancing under the new normal by addressing unhealthy congestion and confinement to limited spaces of extended family members.

OSHDP, together with other major housing stakeholder groups, earlier appealed for the resumption of housing production, including real estate buying and selling, under strict health and work conditions.

The group also called on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Infectious Diseases (IATF) to allow real estate buying and selling even under or post-ECQ/GCQ environments, as these can be safely done through strict conditions, and through the use of electronic means.

It explained that real estate transactions, including buying and selling, has been safely done virtually or through online media like Facebook Messenger, video conferencing, as proven by such online selling platforms Lamudi, SWOOP and Dot Property. It added that even Pag-IBIG Fund had launched electronic loan availment while in the private sector, there are firms that conduct online mortgage brokering transactions with private financial institutions.

In a letter to DHSUD Secretary Eduardo del Rosario, OSHDP president Jefferson Bongat and chairman Marcelino Mendoza called for housing industry-specific incentives and financial stimulus under the Philippine Economic Stimulus bill now being deliberated by the Defeat COVID-19 Special Committee in Congress.

They said government can lower interest rates in institutional loans to housing developers, set at three percent per annum, cushioned by channeling stimulus funds through banks or financial intermediaries to answer for the difference between the lowered rate and the market rate, so that developers will continue to develop their subdivision projects even if there are no or few buyers in the meantime, for purposes of job creation and producing the sector's multiplier effect on the rest of the economy.



UN chief says pandemic is unleashing a 'tsunami of hate'

Associated Press / 02:23 PM May 08, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1271867/un-chief-says-pandemic-is-unleashing-a-tsunami-of-hate>

UNITED NATIONS — United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday the coronavirus pandemic keeps unleashing “a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scaremongering” and appealed for “an all-out effort to end hate speech globally.”

The U.N. chief said that “anti-foreigner sentiment has surged online and in the streets, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories have spread, and COVID-19-related anti-Muslim attacks have occurred.”

Guterres said migrants and refugees “have been vilified as a source of the virus — and then denied access to medical treatment.”

“With older persons among the most vulnerable, contemptible memes have emerged suggesting they are also the most expendable,” he said. “And journalists, whistleblowers, health professionals, aid workers, and human rights defenders are being targeted simply for doing their jobs.”

Guterres called on political leaders to show solidarity with all people, on educational institutions to focus on “digital literacy” at a time when “extremists are seeking to prey on captive and potentially despairing audiences.”

He called on the media, especially social media, to “remove racist, misogynist, and other harmful content,” on civil society to strengthen their outreach to vulnerable people, and on religious figures to serve as “models of mutual respect.”

“And I ask everyone, everywhere, to stand up against hate, treat each other with dignity, and take every opportunity to spread kindness,” Guterres said.

The secretary-general stressed that COVID-19 “does not care who we are, where we live, what we believe, or about any other distinction.”

His global appeal to address and counter COVID-19-related hate speech follows his April 23 message calling the coronavirus pandemic “a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis.”

Guterres said then that the pandemic has seen “disproportionate effects on certain communities, the rise of hate speech, the targeting of vulnerable groups, and the risks of heavy-handed security responses undermining the health response.”

With “rising ethnonationalism, populism, authoritarianism, and a push back against human rights in some countries, the crisis can provide a pretext to adopt repressive measures for purposes unrelated to the pandemic,” he warned.

In February, Guterres issued a call to action to countries, businesses, and people to help renew and revive human rights across the globe, laying out a seven-point plan amid concerns about climate change, conflict, and repression.



China smog returns after pandemic cleared the air

Agence France-Press / 08:42 PM May 08, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1272056/china-smog-returns-after-pandemic-cleared-the-air>

The coronavirus pandemic had cleared smog from China's skies for months, but air pollution has returned with a vengeance as factories rush to ramp up output after going idle during the outbreak.

Levels of toxic pollutants including nitrogen dioxide and tiny particles known as PM2.5 were all higher in April compared with the same period last year, data released by Greenpeace China on Friday showed.

"What is interesting is how rapidly the emissions have rebounded after the sharp fall seen in the first three months of the year," Li Shuo, a climate and energy expert at Greenpeace China, told AFP.

"This may be an early sign that the positive trends seen during the epidemic period might be quickly reversed."

Levels of PM2.5 across China fell by more than 18 percent between January 20 and April 4 amid city-wide lockdowns and strict travel restrictions, according to the environment ministry.

Satellite images released earlier by NASA and the European Space Agency showed that nitrogen dioxide emissions in major Chinese cities in central and eastern China -- where most chemical, steel and cement plants are located -- were down by 30 percent in the first two months of the year.

But the level of PM2.5 particles in a cubic meter of air in April was 33.93, a slight increase from 33.2 in the same period last year.

The level of nitrogen dioxide in a cubic meter of air in April was 25.4 compared with 24.6 in the same month last year.

Both pollutants are toxic by-products of burning coal, oil and gas and can cause asthma, heart diseases and can even weaken the immune system, making people more susceptible to contracting other illnesses.

Exposure to chronic air pollution has shortened China's average life expectancy by more than four years, according to the World Health Organization.

An uptick in industrial production and adverse weather patterns have worsened air pollution in April, Li said.

Electricity production was up 1.2 percent in April. China relies on coal for most of its energy, he said.

Illegal emissions

Local governments were also turning a blind eye towards factories flouting emissions standards as they rushed to increase production.

The environment ministry said Friday that local officials in the coastal province of Fujian -- a textile and electronics equipment manufacturing hub -- have failed to take "strict and correct" measures to curb illegal emissions and even accepted bribes from companies.



China smog returns after pandemic cleared the air

Some heavy polluters have also been faking emissions data submitted to the government's online monitoring system over the last two months, the ministry said in a separate statement Friday.

In March, a packaging materials company in Shandong province was fined one million yuan (\$141,000) for emitting 12 times more sulphur dioxide than what was earlier reported.

A company in the eastern city of Wenzhou that was helping the local government collect online emissions data had "tampered with the figures more than 100 times between March 24 and April 9", the ministry said.

Polluting stimulus

Environmentalists are worried that a stimulus to kick-start the ailing economy, which shrank 6.8 percent in the first quarter, would worsen air pollution woes.

After the 2008 financial crisis, Beijing launched a four trillion yuan (\$567.6 billion) stimulus package that included massive infrastructure investment.

In the years that followed, air pollution rose to record highs and sparked a public backlash.

China has refrained from an all-out stimulus this time around, and has pushed for investments in high-tech sectors such as 5G telecom networks, smart manufacturing, data centers and electric vehicles.

But in early March, Chinese regulators approved 7.9 gigawatts of new coal-fired power plants — more than the approved projects in the entire year of 2019, Li said.

"Depending on how the economic situation unfolds, the government may still retrieve its old playbook and invest in traditional infrastructure projects that took a toll on the environment," Li said.



China says it supports WHO-led review of global pandemic response

May 08, 2020

by AFP

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/323309>

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/world/737424/china-says-it-supports-who-led-review-of-global-pandemic-response/story/>

Beijing - China said Friday it supports a World Health Organization-led review into the global response to the coronavirus outbreak, but "after the pandemic is over".

The comments from foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying came as China has faced increasing global pressure in recent weeks to allow an international investigation into the origins of the pandemic.

The review should be conducted in an "open, transparent and inclusive manner" under the leadership of World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Hua said at a briefing.

But she added that it should be at an "appropriate time after the pandemic is over".

China also stressed that any inquiry should be based on the International Health Regulations, and be authorised by the World Health Assembly or Executive Committee – the WHO's dual governing bodies.

Numerous countries including France, Germany and Britain have urged greater transparency from China over its handling of the virus, while the US and Australia have also led calls for an international inquiry into the origins of the pandemic.

China has previously rejected similar calls for an investigation, accusing the US of "politicising the issue".

China has strenuously denied accusations it concealed information relating to the initial outbreak, insisting it has always shared information with the WHO and other countries in a timely manner.

To mask or not to mask? World leaders scrutinized over face coverings

posted May 08, 2020 at 05:49 pm

by AFP

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/323315>



A woman pushes a pram past a giant mask and eye display stuck to a tree in Melbourne on May 8, 2020, as Australia's government unveiled a three-stage plan to get the economy back to a new "COVID-safe" normal by the end of July. - The first stage of the plan will allow groups of up to 10 people to gather in cafes and restaurants, for weddings and to take part in outdoor sports. (Photo by William WEST / AFP)

Paris - Donald Trump has not donned one. Emmanuel Macron boasted a small French flag on his. Slovakia's president made a fashion statement by sporting a fuchsia-coloured one to match her outfit.

As the world starts emerging from coronavirus lockdowns, political leaders are being closely scrutinised over their choice to wear a mask -- or not -- as many people question seemingly mixed messages about the value of face coverings as infection barriers.

Many Western governments counselled against face masks for the general public at the start of the outbreak, which has now claimed more than a quarter of a million lives worldwide.

But as people start returning to work despite the absence of a treatment or vaccine, masks are now being encouraged or even required as a critical anti-virus tool, along with hand washing and social distancing.

As government advice has changed, leaders have had to decide: to cover up or not?

"The decision to wear or forgo a mask in public is based on what message the leader wants to convey," behavioural scientist Jacqueline Gollan of Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois, told AFP.

"They are more likely to wear a mask if the leader believes in promoting public health. They may forgo the mask if the leader believes that they should convey that the risk of transmission is low and things are normalised," she said.

Some have started to appear in public in simple medical masks or more protective N95 or FFP2 masks, others are opting for the washable fabric ones that many governments are encouraging the public to wear.

But a handful, including US President Trump and Brazil's leader Jair Bolsonaro, are bucking the trend and going about bare-faced.



To mask or not to mask? World leaders scrutinized over face coverings

- 'Complex message' -

Whatever a leader's motivation, "it sets an example that many people will follow, whether that is to comply with or ignore the advice" on mask-wearing, said Claudia Pagliari, an eHealth researcher at the University of Edinburgh.

Over 50 countries now require people to cover their faces when they leave home, especially on public transport and in shops.

But in many places, there are still not enough medical-grade masks to go around without eating into stocks needed to shield frontline doctors and nurses.

This has caused many -- more than three quarters in France according to a recent poll -- to suspect their governments lied about the efficacy of mask-wearing at the outset to avoid a run on stocks.

"Certainly public officials are guilty of thinking the public is... dumb and incapable of understanding a complex message," said Matthew Lesh, a public policy expert at the Adam Smith Institute in London.

"Therefore they simplify the message in order to get it across," in this case "a very simple message that masks don't really work."

KK Cheng, director of the Institute of Applied Health Research at Birmingham University, said politicians' initial stance was largely based on the lack of clinical trials to prove that masks do work.

The World Health Organization also does not recommend compulsory mask-wearing by all.

- 'Simple physics' -

Governments "misunderstood, or haven't appreciated... the nature of evidence needed for an intervention like this," said Cheng, an early proponent of the role of masks in combating the epidemic who insists: "It's simple physics."

"If it doesn't work, why on Earth do we ask people to cover their mouth when they cough? There's no clinical trials on that either but we've never questioned that," he said.

As a consensus has emerged that masks, even homemade ones, do help -- though levels of protection vary -- political leaders have had to adjust their messaging.

Among those embracing the change is French President Macron, who met primary school children this week in a dark blue fabric mask that matched his suit and featured a label in the red, white and blue colours of the national flag.

He admitted he was still getting used to the item as he explained its role in preventing asymptomatic virus-carriers passing on the virus.

"I'm going to clean my hands now because I keep touching my mask," the president told the youngsters as he reached for a large bottle of sanitising hand gel.

Last month, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa provoked ridicule when he fumbled with his mask, made of an African-print fabric, at a briefing -- awkwardly pulling it over his eyes at one point.



To mask or not to mask? World leaders scrutinized over face coverings

But some commentators said the fumble made him endearingly human.

- Not for me -

In March, Slovakian leader Zuzana Caputova stole the limelight when she swore in a new government sporting a stylish fabric mask that matched her dress and shoes.

Trump, in contrast, has consistently flouted the advice of the US Centers for Disease Control to cover up in public.

This week, he visited a factory that makes masks but pointedly ignored signs at the facility urging: "Please wear your mask at all times."

Instead he sported a pair of clear goggles.

In April, the president said about masks: "Somehow, I don't see it for myself."

"Unfortunately the coronavirus pandemic is taking place alongside a global populist movement, which has brought a generation of political 'hard men' into power," Pagliari said.

"Sadly, masks have become the latest totem of this populist movement, as they did during the Spanish Flu of 1919-20, where they were seen by protestors as symbols of heavy-handed state control."



WHO says world could face 'significant alteration to our lifestyles' until there is a vaccine

By CNN

Published May 9, 2020 1:23:33 AM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/9/who-world-face-significant-alteration-lifestyles-vaccine.html>

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(CNN) - Dr. Mike Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization health emergencies program, said the lives of people across the world could face "significant alteration" until a coronavirus vaccine is developed.

Speaking on Friday during a briefing, Ryan said, "There is a path out, but we must remain ever vigilant. And we may have to have a significant alteration to our lifestyles, until we get to a point where we have an effective vaccine, or an effective treatments."

Ryan said the team at WHO feels the effects of physical distancing, just like the rest of the world.

"We haven't shaken hands or hugged our friends in 18 weeks either," he said.

To reopen, "many countries are taking a very careful stepwise approach, relying on the patience and perseverance of their citizens to continue to suffer what is a difficult process both socially psychologically and economically for many people," he said. "I think everyone is doing that because we want to protect those we love."

Ryan sees the path out involving partial school openings, partial returns to workplaces and careful measures in-place to those who work in high-density areas.

But for things like concerts and sports, he said, "it's going to be much more difficult to make those perfectly safe."

"Life is life," he said, "there's no zero risk."

This story was first published on CNN.com, "WHO says world could face "significant alteration to our lifestyles" until there is a vaccine"



WHO: 'We need to go back to the basic principles of how we control this disease'

By Amanda Watts, CNN

Published May 9, 2020 12:24:50 AM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/9/who-we-need-to-go-back-to-basics-dealing-disease.html>

(CNN) - The World Health Organization said efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic need to go back to the basics.

"We seem also to be avoiding the uncomfortable reality that we need to get back to public health surveillance," Dr. Mike Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization health emergencies program, said on Friday during a briefing.

"We need to go back where we should have been months ago: finding cases, tracking cases, testing cases, isolating people who are tested positive, doing quarantine for contacts," Ryan said.

"We sometimes look for the answers where they are not. We need to go back to the basic principles of how we control this disease, a comprehensive strategy that matches basic public health surveillance." he added.

Ryan said there is a lot of other information and science out there, "but we need to stick to the core strategy, or else we really will risk looking for answers, where the answers are not."



Life-threatening extreme heat set to trap millions indoors by 2060

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By THIN LEI WIN, Reuters

https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/science/737481/life-threatening-extreme-heat-set-to-trap-millions-indoors-by-2060/story/?just_in

ROME, Italy – Extreme heat and humidity are increasing across the globe, threatening millions of lives and economies in places where it could become fatal to work outdoors, scientists said on Friday.

Parts of Australia, India, Bangladesh, the Persian Gulf, China, Mexico and the United States have experienced hundreds of previously rare incidents of extreme heat and humidity since 1979, said the study in the journal Science Advances.

These punishing conditions have lasted only one to two hours but climate change is likely to prolong them to about six hours at a time by 2060 and expand the affected areas, lead author Colin Raymond told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"That's kind of a conservative estimate but that's still earlier than anyone else had projected," said Raymond, who did the research as a PhD student at Columbia University and now works for NASA.

Moist, humid conditions make it harder for people to sweat away excess heat, leading to health risks including heat stroke, which can kill or disable victims who go untreated, according to the

Many scientists are examining the potential increase in extreme heat and its impact on economies and health, with mental health problems set to soar as people have trouble sleeping and working.

Limiting warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial times is the most ambitious goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change and world temperatures have already risen by 1.2C.

A separate paper published this week by the Netherland's Wageningen University warned of "near-unlivable" heat of above 29 degrees Celsius (84.2°F) for a third of humanity by 2070.

In the Columbia University-led study, data from nearly 8,000 weather stations showed readings approaching or exceeding 30C have doubled since 1979, and two – in the Persian Gulf and Pakistan's Indus River Valley – reported values above 35C.

"We may be closer to a real tipping point on this than we think," Radley Horton, co-author and climate scientist at Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, said in a statement.

The highest readings were in parts of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, home to some 3 million people.

Surviving in these conditions would require adapting buildings to provide shade and cooling and human behavior, which includes minimising outdoor labour, said Raymond.

This could severely disrupt farming and commerce, with many poor people unable to afford air conditioning, said Horton.

The study focused on "wet bulb" temperatures, which scientists say reflect the combined effects of temperature and humidity, a more useful indicator of heat stress.

Russian heatwaves in 2010, with temperatures of nearly 40C which killed tens of thousands of people, experienced wet bulb temperatures "no greater than 28C", the paper said. – Reuters