

Wildlife sightings rise in Calabarzon

By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#)

May 18, 2020

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has reported that there has been an increase in wildlife sightings in the Calabarzon Region during the coronavirus quarantines and lockdowns.

Calabarzon comprises Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon provinces.

In a statement, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the agency noted a rise in the number of people reporting wildlife sightings in the region since the entire Luzon was placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, the latest of which were the two juvenile species of Brahminy kite (*Haliastur indus*) spotted in Mabini, Batangas.

“With the increased sightings of wild animals occurring in the Calabarzon Region, it is important that we remind the public to leave them alone, unless they are sick, orphaned or injured as we have wildlife experts who can take care of them,” Cimatu said.

He attributed the latest development to restrained human activities resulting from the ECQ, helping nature and biodiversity rediscover their natural spaces.

Last May 10, a team from the head office of the DENR’s Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) in Quezon City went all the way to Batangas to retrieve the young Brahminy kites after receiving a call from a certain Christian Atienza to whom the hatchlings were turned over by Philip Ramos who found them near his house in Barangay SantoTomas.

Ramos reportedly tried to release the juvenile raptors back into the wild but they kept returning to his house, prompting him to turn them over to Atienza, his neighbor.

Atienza later decided to call the BMB after some people started taking interest in the animals and threatening him in exchange for the raptors.

The raptors were brought to the Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City where they will stay until they are ready to be released back into the wild.

The possession, transportation and importation of wild animals are regulated under Republic Act 9147 or the “Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.”

Kids rescue juvenile owl, victim of habitat loss

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

May 18, 2020



The rescued juvenile owl.

A JUVENILE Philippine scops owl, rescued by a group of children, was recently turned over by concerned residents to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The turnover was facilitated by officials of Barangay Tagpos, Binangonan, Rizal, led by Kagawad Donardo Funilas.

The owl was received by DENR officials led by Environmental Protection and Enforcement Task Force chief, Executive Director Nilo Tamera, Penro-Rizal Technical Assistant Leonardo Punzal and Penro-Cavite Forester Ma. Angela Tamera.

The endangered scops owl, scientifically known as *Otus Megalotis* is endemic to the Philippines. It could have been abandoned by its parents after the destruction of their local habitat, surmised Tamera.

“The scops owl was found perched at an alati tree by children playing at the foot of a hill that was once a forested area,” he said. He added that the area was recently developed into a human settlement area.

“Actually, the owl could have been abandoned. It’s a victim of habitat loss,” he said.

The children tried to set the bird free but it couldn’t fly. A certain Irma Diaz, a parent of one child and a resident of St. Anthony Subdivision, Barangay Tagpos, Binangonan, then took custody of the owl and reported it to the barangay.

Tamera lauded residents for heeding the call of Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu not to harm wild animals, as more sightings of wild animals were observed in many parts of the country since Covid-19 forced many parts of the country on lockdown.

Cimatu had appealed last week to the public not to harm wild animals if they show up in urban areas amid increasing reports of sightings, particularly in Region 4A or the Calabarzon region.

“With the increased sightings of wild animals occurring in the Calabarzon region, it is important that we remind the public to leave them alone, unless they are sick, orphaned or injured as we have wildlife experts who can take care of them,” Cimatu said in a statement.

Early this month, two juvenile species of Brahminy kite (*Haliastur indus*) were spotted and rescued in Barangay Santo Tomas, Mabini, Batangas.

The DENR chief said it appears that the restrained human activities resulting from the ECQ was helping nature and biodiversity rediscover their natural spaces.

“According to our wildlife experts, animals feel much more comfortable going around because there are fewer people in the streets and public spaces because of the continuing ECQ,” Cimatu pointed out.

Cimatu warned that human interference with wildlife could result in disease or injury, and taking the animal out of the wild limits its chances of surviving.

Where an animal is in need of help, Cimatu said it requires specialized care to recover and return to the wild, that is why it is important to report cases of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife to the BMB.

Possession, transportation and importation of wild animals are regulated under Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

Image Credits: [PHOTO COURTESY OF GAUDENCIO DELA CRUZ/DENR-SCIS](#)

 **ABS-CBN News** ✓
11 hrs · 🌐

TINGNAN: Isang puting paniki ang nakita sa San Remegio, Kaputian, Samal, Davao del Norte noong Mayo 10.

Ayon sa DENR XI, wala pang sightings ng puti o "albino" na paniki sa rehiyon at iniimbestigahan na nila ito sa ngayon. (📷 Gigi Senajonon) | via Hernel Tocmo, ABS-CBN News



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Mayor leads release of 200 baby turtles

By [Antonio P. Rimando](#)

May 18, 2020

ZAMBOANGA CITY: More than 200 baby turtles were released last Wednesday morning to the sea during a ceremonial program presided over by Tawi-Tawi's Taganak Islands town Mayor Mohammad Taisal Jamalal. The mayor said the eggs of the newly hatched turtles were earlier buried in the shorelines of Turtle Islands by their mothers that later left them until they cracked out of their shells. "Now, for the past several years, we have counted over thousands of green sea turtles nurtured and safely released back to the sea," Jamalul noted. He said the turtles' local nesting site has been officially recognized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and considered as wildlife sanctuary in Mindanao.

Misamis Oriental town releases nearly 300 baby

May 18, 2020

TITLE: turtles to sea amid quarantine

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Misamis Oriental town releases nearly 300 baby turtles to sea amid quarantine

INQUIRER.net / 06:17 PM May 17, 2020



Baby sea turtles. INQUIRER.net stock photo

A seaside barangay in Magsaysay, Misamis Oriental has overseen the hatching of almost 300 turtle eggs on their shores amid the community quarantine.

Barangay Candiis, along with the rest of Misamis Oriental, was put under general community quarantine in March. While they observe measures against the spread of the coronavirus, the villagers have helped release 299 turtle hatchlings into the sea, Mongabay reported on Friday, May 15.

The village helped deliver 144 hawksbill sea turtle hatchlings on May 1, and 155 on May 12. “Despite the limited work hours, we balance fishing and protecting our marine protected area here,” Rolando Pagara, a village council member, said in the report.

“That’s why we immediately noticed the turtle nesting sites on the beach ... the turtles leave their trails or marks, which we were trained to spot in the morning; mother turtles usually lay their eggs in the evening the previous day or at early dawn,” he added.

Other residents were also excited over the turtles’ births. According to the report, it was the first time that no eggs were spoiled, citing that the community has seen hatchlings decline by 50% in recent years due to rising sea levels which has caused eggs on the beach to spoil.

Pagara, who has been heading the turtle conservation program for over a decade, also mentioned that the second batch of eggs had hatched earlier than he expected. He noted that the hot temperature in the past weeks may be a factor in their hatching.

“Usually, it takes a hawksbill turtle egg to hatch between 60 to 65 days after they are laid in the sand,” Pagara explained.

Following the latest batch of 155 turtles, the community is expecting a third batch of 100 eggs to hatch in the third week of May, as per the report.

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The three batches make up the most number of hatchlings released into the sea in one month for the community in recent years.

Along with Candiis, other villages such as San Isidro and Damayohan also house nesting sites for the turtles. Magsaysay is home to a 612-hectare site that is declared a critical habitat for the animal.

The said species is one of the most trafficked turtles on the black market due to its shell, which is used to make ornaments. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified them as critically endangered. The report also noted that the animal's population has declined by 80% in the last decade.

In line with the IUCN's classification of the hawksbill turtle, hunting, killing and gathering of their eggs and destructions of their nests can be punishable under Republic Act No. 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act. Those who kill and destroy wildlife species can face imprisonment for up to 12 years and/or a fine of up to P1 million. **Ryan Arcadio/NVG**

Source: <https://technology.inquirer.net/99598/misamis-oriental-town-releases-nearly-300-baby-turtles-to-sea-amid-quarantine#ixzz6MjmGTfmX>

Crocodile trapped in cemented fishpond rescued in Palawan

Published May 17, 2020, 3:27 PM

By *Richa Noriega*

A saltwater crocodile was rescued after being trapped in a cemented fishpond in Balabac, Palawan.

In a Facebook post last May 14, Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) said a female saltwater crocodile, weighs 180 kilogram and measures six feet, was trapped in a cemented fishpond at Sitio Monsod Brgy. Melville, Balabac, Palawan.



According to the Brgy. Captain Jaberon Bacar, the crocodile was after its prey when it suddenly fell down the cemented fishpond.

Through the combined efforts of the Balabac Special Boat Unit (SBU), Maritime Group – 2nd Special Unit of Operation (SOU), Municipal Police of Balabac, Philippine Marines, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) – Balabac, Cagay Active Auxiliary (CAA), Special Civilian Armed Forces (SCAA), and PCSD, it was successfully lifted out using the handcuff method.

PCSD said after the rescuers measured and tagged the crocodile, it was immediately released back to its natural habitat.

PCSD Spokesperson Forester Jovic Fabello reminded the residents that if similar incidents encountered, it should be reported immediately to the agencies concerned.

Fabello underscored that the provision of right information when reporting an incident would not only save the life of the species but would also keep the residents secured.

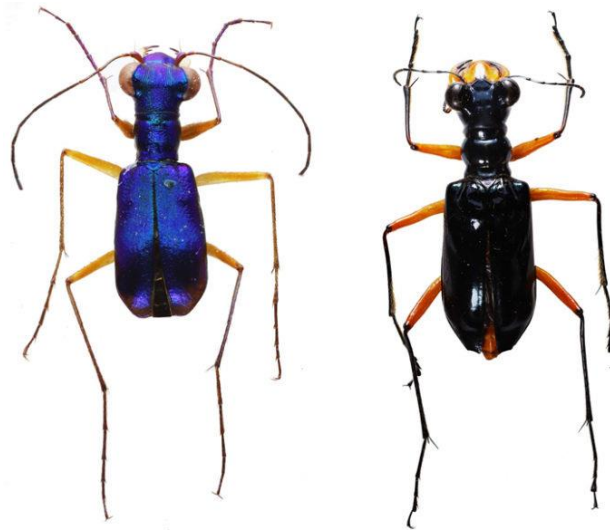
“It is better to keep calm and not to induce panic when you encounter trapped wildlife species. It is best to wait for the rescuers,” he added.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/17/crocodile-trapped-in-cemented-fishpond-rescued-in-palawan/>

The beetles of Calanasan

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

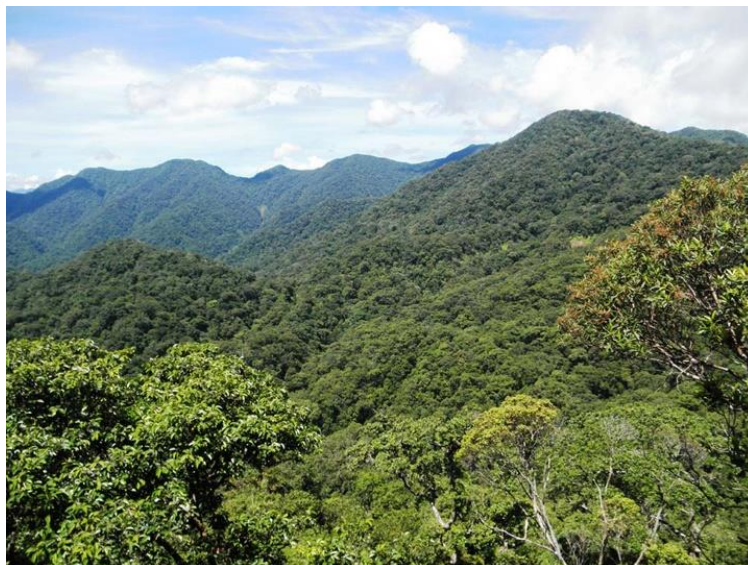
May 17, 2020



Cylindera genieri Cassola & Werner, 2003 and *Therates coracinus coracinus* Erichson, 1834

It's not your 1970s famous band. Just the same, the beetles of Calanasan, Apayao, are now getting the much-needed recognition.

The little known family of bugs, scientifically known as *Coleoptera*, *Cicindelidae*, are thriving in the forests of Apayao province, one of the few remaining unexplored areas in the Cordillera Administrative Region in northern Philippines.



The beetle habitat in Calanasan, Apayao, is protected by the local government unit and Isnag indigenous communities through the Lapat system, an indigenous natural resource management practice.

Like other insects, the beetles have been existing for millions of years, yet very little is known about them.

The reason is that there are very few scientific researches that deal with the often considered noxious and annoying small animals.

Fortunately, scientists are now starting to discover and introduce them to the world, and to highlight their importance and reasons why they should be protected and conserved.

Scientific research

A group of scientists have started to look closer into the tiger beetles in the Philippines with the hope of highlighting the richness of the country's biological diversity.

In their paper, titled "Annotated list of tiger beetles [Coleoptera, Cicindelidae] in Calanasan, Apayao Province, Luzon, Philippines," authors—Milton Norman D. Medina, Analyn A. Cabras, Jayson Ibañez, Guiller Opiso and Reagan Joseph T. Villanueva—listed 12 species of tiger beetles found in Calanasan.

The paper was published in the *Check List*, a journal of biodiversity data that was published by Pensoft, an independent academic publishing company.

As Calanasan is seldom explored, so are its tiger beetles, which are mostly site-endemic.

Unesco Biosphere Reserve

The study was conducted as part of a biodiversity expedition in Calanasan in support of the area's bid to be recognized as a Biosphere Reserve of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

Medina, one of the senior authors of the paper and expert in tiger beetles, said the study is very timely for the bid for the prestigious title.

"It is very timely because the area is applying for Biosphere Reserve of Unesco. Tiger beetles are very good indicator species. Unlike other insect groups, they are habitat-specific. It means they can identify whether the area is disturbed or not. Hence, they [residents] can prioritize which areas need to be restored," he said.

Around 75 percent of the species the scientists collected were endemic, or can only be found in Calanasan, which shows the high value in preserving the forest of the area.

Learning place for sustainable development

Unesco defines biosphere reserves as "learning places for sustainable development."

"They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems," Unesco said.

Calanasan and its tiger beetles

The municipality of Calanasan is a first-class municipality and the largest in Apayao.

It has a huge tract of primary lowland forest, which remains poorly studied, especially for beetles, according to the paper.

Tiger beetles are often used as biological indicator of the health and disturbance of ecosystems because it is vulnerable to forest destruction.

As tiger beetles prey on small insects like mosquitoes, they can also be used as a biological control agent. Hence, they help prevent insect-borne diseases, like dengue and malaria.

A total of 80 tiger beetle individuals, representing two subtribes, seven genera, and 12 species were documented by the team.

High tiger beetle endemism

In their paper, the authors said the list is the first for Calanasan and includes nine of the 12 endemic tiger beetle species in the country.

They are confident that more species of the beetles are expected to occur in Calanasan, and additional thorough exploration in the area would likely add to the present list.

The team said the number of tiger beetle species in Calanasan is similar to that found in Compostela Valley province in the Davao region in Mindanao in southern Philippines. Based on a 2016 study, it reported 12 species and seven genera.

Moreover, the rate of endemism in Calanasan is higher (75 percent) than in Mainit Hot Spring Protected Landscape in Mindanao (62.5 percent) based on a 2016 study.

Meanwhile, the authors noted that a study in Northern Mindanao reported a similar rate of endemism of 77 percent among 12 species to their Calanasan study.

Healthy ecosystem

Medina said the ecosystem of Calanasan must be very pristine for the tiger beetles to thrive in an area.

Ibañez, a coauthor of the paper, agreed. “These beetles have many roles in an ecosystem. They are predators of smaller insects, hence, help maintain ecological balance.”

Like the dung beetles, the tiger beetles help break down animal manure, thereby, making the forest healthy.

“Some tiger beetles feed on mosquitoes, some feed on aphids. So they are also natural biological control agents,” he said. “Tiger beetles are beneficial to the environment.”

Ibañez said the health of Apayao’s forest, including Calanasan, can be attributed to the fact that the province has low population density, which make the environment sustain human pressure.

Indigenous practices

Another positive factor in Apayao, he said, are the indigenous practices of various indigenous peoples (IP) that protect the forests.

The Lapat system, an indigenous natural resource-management system of the Isnags of Apayao, is very strong.

When an area is declared as protected under the Lapat system, they become sites of rich biodiversity because the tribe protects it.

“There are penalties for trespassing a Lapat. They [Isnags] believe in bad omen. So the people are afraid to violate Lapat [or they will] be cursed or experience bad omen,” he said.

IPs and local laws

Also, the League of Peace Arbitrators (Lopa), composed of elders of the IP of Apayao, work together with local government units (LGUs) for the protection of Lapat areas. This help boost the sustainable management of the province's forest resources.

Lopa, Ibañez said, determines the penalties for the violators of Lapat, apart from the penalty imposed by the concerned LGU of Apayao.

“The diversity of the beetles in the area reflects on the success of the protection of the area because of the practices of the people,” he said.

Forest protection

Tribal leaders and local officials work hand-in-hand to protect Apayao's forest.

According to Ibañez, around 200 forest guards are currently employed by the provincial government.

“The LGU hired indigenous people, just like what they did for the protection of the Philippine eagle in Apayao, to help protect the forest,” he said.

Because of the rich biodiversity in Apayao, the needs of the people are met, he said.

“Because of the rich biodiversity, the province's agriculture is very productive, hence, poverty is not much of a problem,” he said.

He said unlike in other areas, Apayao's forest remains intact as the Lopa and LGU have declared the forests “off-limits” to destructive development activities like commercial logging.

Apayao's forest is among the very few areas where hunting is prohibited, thus, it continues to provide safe haven to deers and wild boars, Ibañez said.

So when you see a tiger beetle, remember Calanasan, remember Apayao and its rich biodiversity.

Image Credits: [Jayson Ibañez](#)



Tubig sa Angat dam tumaas ng 3 metro

Last updated May 17, 2020

Tumaas ng 3 metro ang tubig sa Angat Dam resulta ng pag-ulan hatid ng Bagyong Ambo.

Ayon sa Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) nasa 190.19 meters na ang water level sa Angat Dam na matatagpuan sa Norzagaray, Bulacan.

Mula noong ikalawang linggo ng buwan ng Enero ay tuloy- tuloy ang pagbaba ng tubig sa Angat Dam dahil sa kawalan ng ulan at nitong buwan ng Abril ay lalo itong bumaba dahil sa nararanasang sobrang init at mataas na demand ngayong summer.

Noong nakaraang Biyernes ay nasa 187 meters ang water level sa Angat.

Sinabi ng PAGASA na bagamat mababa pa rin sa 210 hanggang 212 meters na normal water level ang Angat Dam ay tiyak namang makakasapat na ang 190 meters na kasalukuyang supply nito ngayong summer season at para na rin sa pangangailangan sa irigasyon.

Samantala dahil sa mataas na demand sa tubig, itinaas ng National Water Resources Board(NWRB) sa 48 cubic meters per second o 4,147 million liters kada araw ang supply ng tubig para sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

Ipinaliwanag ng NWRB na dinagdagan nila ng 2 cubic meters mula sa dating 46 cubic meters ang supply sa water concessionaire dahil na rin sa mataas na demand.

Ang dagdag na alokasyon umano ay ipatutupad ngayong sa pagtatapos ng buwan ng Mayo.

“The additional 2 cubic meters per second raw water allocation from Angat Dam was intended to meet the demand of consumers in Metro Manila, and adjacent provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, and Cavite during the national health emergency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic”paliwanag ng NWRB.

Bagamat may sapat pang water supply para sa mga residente ng Metro Manila, nanawagan pa rin ang NWRB na ugaliin ang pagtitipid ng tubig. (Tina Mendoza)

'Ambo' rains raise Angat Dam level by 3 meters

By [Divina Nova Joy Dela Cruz](#)

May 18, 2020

The water level at Angat Dam, the main reservoir of Metro Manila, went up by 3 meters during the past two days after receiving rainfall from storm "Ambo" (international name: "Vongfong.")

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the level rose by 2.66 meters on Saturday and by 0.43 meters more on Sunday, bringing it to 190.62 meters as of 6 a.m.

Pagasa hydrologist Ailene Abelardo told The Manila Times the increase was a welcome break because the level had been dropping during the past few months.

The average monthly decrease was 0.09 meters in February, 0.18 meters in March, 0.20 meters in April and 0.21 meters in May.

Abelardo said Angat's level this month was far higher than last year's, when the country experienced a weak El Niño episode, causing water interruptions in Metro Manila.

On the same day last year, the level was 173.52m, which is 17.10m lower.

While Angat's level is higher this year, it is still below the normal high water level, which is 210m.

Abelardo said the present level falls within the 184.86m normal curve.

Research group says air quality gains during ECQ
TITLE: should be sustained

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Research group says air quality gains during ECQ should be sustained

Updated May 17, 2020, 4:13 PM
By Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

An international research group has pointed out that improvements in air quality must not be taken for granted after the lockdowns, as the return of air pollution may further threaten the human health during the coronavirus outbreak.



A general view of the skyline in Manila taken around 11:00 am shows clear skies on May 15, 2020, as Typhoon Vongfong is expected to brush past the capital city. – Typhoon Vongfong flattened flimsy coastal homes when it roared ashore on central Samar island on May 14, but then weakened into a severe tropical storm on its path north to the capital Manila. (Photo by Ted ALJIBE / AFP)

“Through the crisis, we have had a glimpse of what life can be like with more breathable air. But turning this into a daily reality can only be achieved by enforcing air quality standards and rapidly reducing fossil fuels in a sustained and sustainable way,” Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) analyst Isabella Suarez said.

She cited that Metro Manila had one of the most dramatic reductions in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution in the ASEAN region.

“The clear skies (in the past weeks) were a result of a 40 percent reduction in nitrogen dioxide around Metro Manila, which clearly confirms that transportation is the huge source of smog and air pollution in the capital. It also enforces earlier research that it’s responsible for about 65 percent of poor air quality in the country,” she pointed out.

Suarez explained to the Manila Bulletin that the level of NO₂ from March 1 to 14, 2020 or prior to the implementation of the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was within the range of previous years.

“There is no significant drop or difference in NO₂ between the two years and prior to ECQ,” she said, citing that pollution hotspots were around Quezon City, Manila, and San Juan City.

During the first two weeks of the ECQ, a significant drop of 60 percent in the NO₂ level was observed, attributing it to the changes in urban activities as a result of the ECQ. Transportation is a major contributor, but the coal plants along the Manila Bay is also a factor too, she pointed out.

“The following four weeks also showed similarly reduced levels although NO₂ levels picked up in certain areas around Manila and Quezon City. It has gone up a bit but still approximately 30 percent less than the 2019 levels,” Suarez said.



Research group says air quality gains during ECQ
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CREA said that the current improvements to air quality the ASEAN region 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.”

“Long-term air pollution could only exacerbate a human’s risk to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, which has significant implications for the country’s health sector, currently under stress from dealing with the virus, Suarez said.

“The reduction in air pollution due to COVID-19 in no way mitigates the disease’s catastrophic impact on peoples’ lives and livelihoods across Asia. However, blue skies above our major cities point to what we can achieve if we invest in clean energy as the crisis abates,” she added.

CLEAR SKIES

By [The Manila Times](#)

May 18, 2020



CLEAR SKIES A view of Metro Manila's skyline from Antipolo City on May 17, 2020. The Philippines ranks second in Southeast Asia, behind Malaysia, in terms of significant improvement in air quality, according to the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air, which focuses on trends, causes and health impact of, as well as solutions to air pollution. PHOTO BY RUY L. MARTINEZ

calamity fund after Catubig Mayor Galahad Vicencio submits the rapid damage assessment and needs analysis report on the effects of the typhoon.

The town was one of those badly hit by "Ambo," the first typhoon to

area in the next 12 to 24 hours, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical

Puerto regu

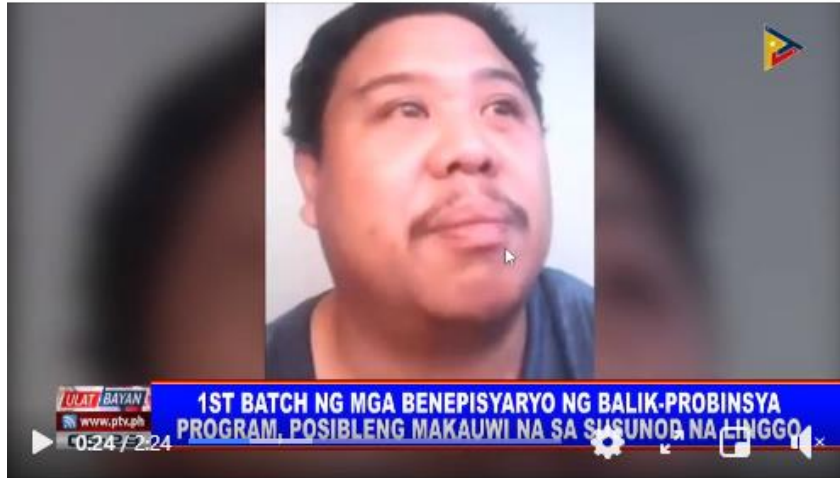


PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PONDNEWSASIA

Dirty load Along with the reopening of business establishments during the modified enhanced community quarantine, more garbage trucks are seeing busy days hauling the city's waste as activity stirs back in the metro.

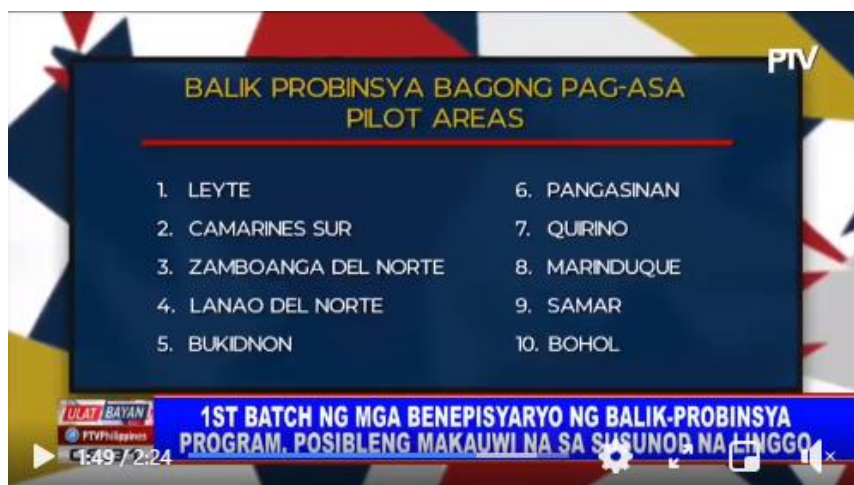


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79 Comments 98 Shares



Palace to public: Be vigilant, follow health protocols during MECQ, GCQ

By: [Cathrine Gonzales](#) - Reporter / [@cgonzalesINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 07:20 PM May 17, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang on Sunday advised the public not to be relaxed and still follow health protocols set to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The Palace made the statement after receiving reports that people flocked to shopping malls with “complete disregard” of physical distancing on the first day of the enforcement of the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) and the general community quarantine (GCQ).

“We advise the public not to be complacent and to follow health protocols set by authorities after we received reports of people who trooped to the malls with complete disregard of social/physical distancing measures on the first day of our shift from enhanced community quarantine to modified enhanced community quarantine and general community quarantine in Luzon,” presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement.

Roque stressed that the public must understand that the government has started to slowly ease quarantine restrictions in order to revitalize the country’s economy, and “not because we are safe.”

He said Filipinos must learn from the experience of other countries like South Korea which contained the spread of the new coronavirus but later experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases “when citizens became relaxed.”

“The Palace, therefore, asks for the cooperation of the public as the whole country remains in quarantine. We must not put to waste our collective efforts and sacrifices,” said the Palace official.

“Stay at home, go out to do essential work, or when authorized as we ramp up testing. We must continue to be vigilant of the risks of COVID-19, conduct proper hygiene, wear face masks or face shields, and observe social or physical distancing,” he added.

Based on the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease Resolution No. 37, Cebu City and Mandaue City will still be under ECQ until May 31.

Meanwhile, eight other high-risk areas will be under MECQ until the end of the month. These are Metro Manila, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Zambales, Angeles City, and Laguna.

Data from the Department of Health showed the number of COVID-19 cases in the country rose to [12,513 as of Sunday](#). The death toll is now at 824 while the number of patients who have recovered from the illness is at 2,635.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1276544/palace-to-public-be-vigilant-follow-health-protocols-during-mecq-gcq#ixzz6MjmiVYyd>

Stay course or face lockdown

Published 6 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 12:07 AM
By **Kristina Maralit**



As signs of a flattening of the curve in the country emerge except for Metro Manila where cases of infections of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) remain high, the government warned against laxity after noticing massive violations of protocols for areas under the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ).

The Department of Health (DoH) said it may recommend strict quarantine rules equivalent to a hard lockdown if the coming days show an increase in contaminations after the public broke out of their confines to flock to malls and other commercial establishments which were allowed to reopen.

As of 17 May 2020, the DoH reported 208 new cases with the National Capital Region comprising Metro Manila accounting for 174, to bring the total to 12,513 afflicted with COVID-19.

The DoH also announced 74 new recoveries or a total of 2,635 who have survived the onslaught of the pathogen.

Malacañang reminded the public that it is not yet the time to be complacent even as the metropolis which is considered the epicenter of the contagion shifted from ECQ to MECQ.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the government lamented the surge to the malls of individuals who completely disregarded physical distancing rules.

Roque said the shift in status for the metropolis was meant to revitalize the economy “and not because we are already safe from the pandemic.”

“We must learn from other countries like South Korea, which contained the spread of the virus but later experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases when citizens became relaxed,” he noted.

Don't go out yet

“The Palace therefore asks for the cooperation of the public as the whole country remains in quarantine. We must not put to waste our collective efforts and sacrifices. Stay at home, go out to do essential work or when authorized as we ramp up testing.”

“We must continue to be vigilant of the risks of COVID-19, conduct proper hygiene, wear face mask or face shield and observe social or physical distancing,” Roque added.

Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, said the government can no longer afford to address another wave of COVID-19 as it had already used most of available resources.

“The government had exhausted its resources for the Social Amelioration Program (SAP). If those infected overwhelms the current health facilities, our healthcare system will collapse,” he said.

Go added as long as there is no vaccine for COVID-19, the public should not be complacent and they must remain inside their houses to stop further transmission of the virus.

“I am urging everyone to work together to save our resources so that when the time comes that the vaccine is available, we will have enough funds for it,” he said.

“We should continue to be patient and follow the health protocols. Our cooperation is needed to prevent a second wave and allow us to get through this crisis,” Go admonished.

Not possible

DoH spokesman Maria Rosario Vergeire mentioned photos showing crowds flocking to malls in Metro Manila on Saturday and Sunday.

“If there will be a new surge in cases, there would be a huge possibility that we need to do another total lockdown,” she said.

Malls and other establishments also risk to be padlocked, Joint Task Force COVID Shield commander, PLt. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar if the violations continue.

“Hopefully people will consider the need to be in a particular place. The Department of Trade and Industry has released guidelines for malls for them to follow and not allow crowds to come in. So we are expecting mall operators and the local government units to enforce these minimum health standards,” she pleaded.

Vergeire said regardless of the classification that an area falls into, the whole country is still under quarantine since the health crisis remains.

Mall operators have assured government guidelines have been followed.

Vista Malls reopened with strengthened safety and security protocols following new community quarantine guidelines from the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF).

Pursuant to the new IATF community quarantine guidelines, mall hours were shortened, services and shops limited and more rigorous security and safety protocols were implemented.

Vista Mall said its priority is to continue serving the essential needs of its communities while protecting everyone from the potential spread of the virus.

Appeals from senators

Senate President Vicente Sotto III has nothing but frustration about the public defying lockdown protocols among reopened malls.

“There should be strict guidelines that local government units and Philippine National Police should enforce,” he said in a text message. “We are too hard headed.”

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said that the public should always wear masks, exercise proper hygiene and observe proper social distancing measures.

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto and Senator Panfilo Lacson also pointed out that the government has yet to address the first wave of the virus.

“I don’t think we’re done with the first wave. We haven’t tested much. The stats will speak for itself. But yes I expect more infections without proper social distancing and non-wearing of masks,” Recto said.

Palace to public: Stay at home; easing of restrictions
doesn't mean we're safe

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May 18, 2020
DATE

Palace to public: Stay at home; easing of restrictions doesn't mean we're safe

Published May 17, 2020 6:14pm

By JON VIKTOR D. CABUENAS, GMA News

Malacañang on Sunday reiterated the need for the public to stay at home, saying that easing restrictions was to revitalize the economy and not because the Philippines is now safe from the coronavirus disease.

In a statement, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque, Jr. appealed to the public to continue following quarantine measures even as several businesses have been allowed to restart operations.

"We must understand that we have started to slowly ease restrictions in order to revitalize the economy, and not because we are safe," he said.

"We must learn from other countries like South Korea, which contained the spread of the virus but later experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases when citizens became relaxes," added Roque.

Metro Manila, along with several "high-risk areas," [has been on lockdown since March 17](#). This has since shifted a modified enhanced community quarantine starting May 16, paving the way for more businesses to resume operations.

Economic managers [predict losses to reach as much as P2.0 trillion](#), as businesses were hit by restrictions that have been ongoing for two months as of writing.

With the reopening of malls, crowds were reported in several establishments [during the first day of the implementation of the MECQ](#).

"The Palace therefore asks for the cooperation of the public as the whole country remains in quarantine. We must not put to waste our collective efforts and sacrifices," said Roque.

"Stay at home, go out to do essential work or when authorized as we ramp up testing. We must continue to be vigilant of the risks of COVID-19, conduct proper hygiene, wear face masks or face shield, and observe social or physical distancing," he added.

Roque's statements were mirrored by lawmakers who also urged the public to refrain from going out as a "second wave" is likely should social distancing measures be ignored.

'Agencies, LGUs not prepared'

"What is worrisome is that when the IATF declared some areas as GCQ and MECQ, the LGUs—and even national agencies—are not even prepared, or even near in realizing the COVID T3 strategy which is supposed to be already in a satisfactory operational level by this time," Senator Nancy Binay said in a separate statement.

Palace to public: Stay at home; easing of restrictions
doesn't mean we're safe

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"Kaya yung sinasabing 'second wave,' we all know that it's not a question of if, but when. At kung pagbabatayan natin yung bugso ng mga tao kahapon (May 16), well, don't expect just a second wave--prepare for a tsunami!" she added.

Meanwhile, Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go warned that the health crisis could be extended as the public ignores health warnings.

"Naiintindihan ko na ang ating mga kababayan ay gustong gusto na makawala sa kanilang mga bahay. After around 60 days of community quarantine, gusto na nilang makalaya, makagalaw, makahinga at makita ang araw ng walang takot. Unti-unti rin po nating binubuksan ang mga establisimiyento para mabuhay muli ang ekonomiya. Pero huwag po natin biglain dahil tayo rin ang mahihirapan kapag lumala muli ang pagkalat ng sakit," he said in a separate statement.

"Huwag muna po tayo maging kampante dahil habang sinusubukan nating matigil ang first wave, mas nakakatakot kung magkaroon pa ng second wave ng pagkalat ng sakit na ito," added Go. — **BM, GMA News**

Palace aghast at mall rats

13 hours ago

on May 17, 2020 06:14 PM

By [Francis Wakefield](#)



THE malls had been reopened but social distancing must be strictly followed, Secretary Harry Roque emphasized. Photograph by Rio Deluvio for Daily Tribune

(With a report by Hananeel Bordey)

Malacañang on Sunday asked the public not to be complacent and to follow health protocols set by authorities to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19.

Presidential spokesperson Secretary Harry Roque made the remark after they received reports of people who trooped to the malls with complete disregard of physical distancing measures on the first day Saturday of the downgrading of community quarantine in some areas.

In Metro Manila, the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was downgraded to a modified ECQ while some areas outside of it have been put under a more relaxed general community quarantine.

Roque said the people who go out and troop to malls must understand that the government has started to slowly ease restrictions to revitalize the economy and not because the country is already safe from the pandemic.

Learn from others

“We must learn from other countries like South Korea, which contained the spread of the virus but later experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases when citizens became relaxed,” Roque said in a statement.

“The Palace, therefore, asks for the cooperation of the public as the whole country remains in quarantine. We must not put to waste our collective efforts and sacrifices. Stay at home, go out to do essential work, or when authorized as we ramp up testing,” he said.

He said people must continue to be vigilant by observing proper hygiene, wearing face mask or face shield, and observing social or physical distancing.

Senators on Sunday also appealed to the public to observe proper social distancing as various reports showed people flock in supermarkets and public places on the first day of modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) in Metro Manila last Saturday.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III expressed frustration over reports that many people had defied lockdown protocols as some malls reopened last Saturday.

“There should be strict guidelines that local government units and Philippine National Police should enforce,” he said in a text message. *“Grabe ang tigas ng ulo natin.”*

Resources used up

Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, in a text message to the *Daily Tribune*, said that the government can no longer afford to address another wave of COVID-19 as it already used most of the resources.

“Exhausted na po ang ating government resources. Nahirapan na tayo sa first wave, at hindi na natin kakayanin pag nagka-second wave pa. Kung mas rumami pa ang mga pasyente at tuluyang malampasan ang bilang ng mga pasyenteng na kayang alagaan ng ating mga health facilities, babagsak po ang ating healthcare system,” he said.

Go said that as long as there is no vaccine for COVID-19, the public should not be complacent and they must remain inside their houses to stop further transmission of the novel coronavirus.

“I am urging everyone to work together to save our resources so that when the time comes that the vaccine is available, we will have enough funds for it,” he said. *“Magtiis po muna at sumunod sa mga patakaran ng gobyerno at ng health experts. Ang inyong kooperasyon ay malaking kontribusyon para maiwasan ang second wave at tuluyang malampasan natin ang krisis na ito.”* Go and Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said that the public should always wear masks, exercise proper hygiene and observe proper social distancing measures.

“Unti-unti rin po nating binubuksan ang mga establisimiyento para mabuhay muli ang ekonomiya. Pero huwag po natin biglain dahil tayo rin ang mahihirapan kapag lumala muli ang pagkalat ng sakit,” Drilon said.

First virus wave

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto and Senator Panfilo Lacson also pointed out that the government has yet to address the first wave of the virus.

“I don’t think we’re done with the first wave. We haven’t tested much. The stats will speak for itself. But yes I expect more infections without proper social distancing and non-wearing of masks,” Recto said.

Lacson appealed to the Inter-Agency Task Force to reconsider and re-evaluate the opening of malls and other establishments.

“We haven’t gone past the first wave yet, so I’m not sure about a second wave. I think the IATF should reconsider their decision on the opening of the malls and other similar establishments unless strict physical distancing and other protocols are observed,” he said.

'Grabe ang tigas ng ulo natin!'

Published 14 hours ago
on May 17, 2020 04:53 PM
By [Hananeel Bordey](#)



SENATE President Vicente Sotto III was fuming mad seeing how many people had trooped to the malls on Saturday. Photo from Senator Sotto's Facebook page

Senators on Sunday appealed to the public to observe proper social distancing as various reports showed people flock in supermarkets and public places on the first day of modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) in Metro Manila.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III expressed frustration over reports that many people had defied lockdown protocols as some malls reopened last Saturday.

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"We haven't gone past the first wave yet, so I'm not sure about a second wave. I think the IATF should reconsider their decision on the opening of the malls and other similar establishments unless strict physical distancing and other protocols are observed," he said.

Control crowds or face closure, malls warned

May 17, 2020 | Filed under: [Headlines, News](#) | Posted by: [Tempo Desk](#)

By AARON RECUENCO

The Joint Task Force COVID Shield warned yesterday that it will shut down malls that would continuously fail to strictly enforce physical distancing amid reports and social media posts showing glaring violations on the first day of operations of some malls in country.

Police Lt. Gen. Guillermo Lorenzo Eleazar, commander of the JTF COVID Shield, said that what happened in some malls on Saturday appeared to have not followed the guideline sets during the dialogues between the government and mall managers.



ELEAZAR (FB photo)

Eleazar said he had already coordinated with Philippine National Police chief Police Gen. Archie Gamboa in order for police commanders across the country to personally relay the warning to mall managers and other business establishment owners in their areas of responsibility.

“As per instruction of the SILG (Secretary of the Interior and Local Government Eduardo Año), we will not only facilitate the closure of these malls but will also initiate the filing of appropriate charges against the management,” said Eleazar.

Photos and videos of mallgoers violating the physical distancing inside the malls went viral in social media on Saturday.

Other netizens also narrated their experience about how the physical distancing is brazenly violated in malls.

The JTF COVID Shield had earlier said police visibility will be intensified outside the malls in order to ensure that the wearing of face masks and physical distancing are observed.

“While part of our efforts is police visibility in the said establishments, it is not our job to guard them,” said Eleazar.

Eleazar said they have already forwarded the names of the malls and other business establishments where the physical distancing was violated to the concerned police commanders.

“These commanders were instructed to warn the management of these malls and make sure that the warning be personally relayed to the mall management and other similar establishments,” said Eleazar.

“Other police commanders should also initiate meeting with the mall management to remind them of the protocol and warn them of the consequences if they would fail to observe the protocols,” he added.

THE RULES

Here are some of the agreed rules based on the dialogues before malls were allowed to resume their operations:

Based on the guidelines, mall security managers should have already computed how wide the mall common areas in order for them to have an idea on the maximum people that would be allowed inside.

The rule is that each two square meters of the common areas of the mall is limited to one person only. Shop owners inside the mall should also control the person going inside their shops to observe social distancing.

Security guards and mall employees should also be on a regular patrol inside the mall to observe and remind people of the rules on social distancing and wearing of face masks.

Those who could not be accommodated after the mall reaches the maximum capacity will have to queue up outside the mall and wait for their turn to replace those who would exit the mall. Physical distancing should be observed in the waiting area outside the mall.

MONITORING

Eleazar said all police commanders have been instructed to regularly monitor the movement of people inside the malls in order to ensure that the basic rules on physical distancing and wearing of face masks are observed.

He said that police commanders were also directed to familiarize with other protocols issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases and the Department of Trade and Industry for the resumption of mall operations and other businesses.

The JTF COVID Shield, composed of the PNP, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Coast Guard, and the Bureau of Fire Protection, is the enforcement arm of the IATF-MEID.

Eleazar also urged the public, particularly netizens, to continue informing the JTF COVID Shield of the violations inside the mall for appropriate and immediate actions.

“Let us work together to make sure that all the measures aimed at protecting each and everyone of us are strictly observed,” said Eleazar.



First wave ng coronavirus `di pa tapos – Ping

Last updated May 17, 2020

Hindi pa umano nakakalagpas ang Pilipinas sa first wave ng coronavirus disease 2019 o COVID-19 kaya't hindi dapat maging kampante ang publiko sa pagpunta sa mga mall at iba pang establisimiyento.

Ito ang panawagan ni Senador Panfilo `Ping' Lacson sa gitna ng mga ulat nang pagdagsa ng mga tao sa mga pampublikong lugar na isinailalim sa modified enhanced community quarantine at general community quarantine.

“We haven't gone past the first wave yet, so I'm not sure about a second wave,” pahayag ni Lacson sa kanyang text message sa mga reporter.

Dapat niyang ikonsidera ng Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases ang kanilang desisyon na payagang magbukas ang mga mall at iba pang kahalintulad ng mga establisimiyento.

“I think the IATF should reconsider their decision on the opening of the malls and other similar establishments unless, strict physical distancing and other protocols are observed,” sabi ni Lacson.

Sinang-ayunan din ni Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto ang pahayag ni Lacson at nangangamba itong maaring dumami pa ang mahahawa ng coronavirus kung hindi istriktong ipatutupad ang physical distancing at hindi pagsusuot ng face mask.

“I don't think we're done with the first wave. We haven't tested much. The stats will speak for itself,” sabi ni Recto.

Dagdag pa ng senador na dapat patuloy na paalalahanan ang mga tao na lumalabas lang sa kanilang tahanan kung ito'y kinakailangan ang talaga at sumunod sa physical distancing ganundin sa pagsusuot ng face mask.

Maging si Senador Bong Go nagpahayag na bagama't niluwagan na ang mga quarantine protocol, hindi pa rin masasabing tapos na ang laban kontra COVID-19.

“Huwag muna po tayo maging kampante dahil habang sinusubukan nating matigil ang first wave, mas nakakatakot kung magkaroon pa ng second wave ng pagkalat ng sakit na ito,” pahayag ng senador.

Binigyang-diin ito na kung hindi susunod sa patakaran ang publiko tiyak na tatagal pa ang COVID-19 crisis.

“Naiintindihan ko na ang ating mga kababayan ay gustong-gusto na makawala sa kanilang mga bahay. After around 60 days of community quarantine, gusto na nilang makalaya, makagalaw, makahinga at makita ang araw ng walang takot,” ani go.

“Kung mas rumami pa ang mga pasyente at tuluyang malampasan ang bilang ng mga pasyenteng na kayang alagaan ng ating mga health facilities, babagsak po ang ating healthcare system,” babala ni Go.

Binigyang-diin pa nito na wala pang bakuna o gamot kontra COVID-19 at hindi pa rin natin alam kung magkano ang kailangan kapag naging available na ito. (Dindo Matining)

kontribusyon para maiwasan ang second wave at tuluyang malampasan natin ang krisis na ito. (Dindo Matining)

Lawmaker says second wave of infections likely; cases at 12,513

May 17, 2020 | 9:32 pm



PHILSTAR

By Vann Marlo M. Villegas and Gillian M. Cortez
Reporters

THE COUNTRY should expect a second wave of coronavirus infections as more industries reopen under a relaxed lockdown, a congressman said on Sunday, as 208 new cases were reported, raising the total to 12,513.

“A second wave is expected and we’re preparing for it,” Albay Rep. Jose María Clemente S. Salceda told DZBB radio, adding that the government had to count the economic costs of a lockdown.

The country has lost about P1.2 trillion in economic output because of the Luzon-wide lockdown that started in mid-March.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte locked down the main island, suspending classes, work and public transportation to contain the pandemic. He extended the so-called enhanced community quarantine for the island twice until May 15, and thrice for Metro Manila, key cities and regions until the end of the month.

The presidential palace yesterday warned the public not to be complacent after receiving reports of crowded malls on the first day of relaxed lockdown rules in many parts of the country at the weekend.

“We advise the public not to be complacent and to follow health protocols set by authorities,” presidential spokesman Harry L. Roque said in a statement.

“We must understand that we have started to slowly ease restrictions in order to revitalize the economy, and not because we are safe,” he added.

Lawmaker says second wave of infections likely;
cases at 12, 513

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Also yesterday, the Department of Health (DoH) said the death toll from the virus rose to 824 after seven more patients died. Seventy-four more patients have gotten well, bringing the total recoveries to 2,635, it said in a bulletin.

Of the 208 new cases, 174 came from Metro Manila, one from Central Visayas and 33 were from the other regions, it added.

Thirty laboratories have been licensed to test COVID-19 samples, DoH said.

Meanwhile, the agency released return-to-work rules for places not under the enhanced community quarantine.

Under a memo dated May 11, employers must cut the number of people in the workplace by adopting work-from-home arrangements.

Employers must also measure the body temperature of their workers and monitor symptoms. Workers must wear protective equipment depending on work settings.

Companies must also check the travel history or exposure in the past 14 days of employees reporting for work.

The memo also includes quarantine guidelines for workers.

Under the rules, employers who choose to test employees may do so “in a representative sample of those who have returned to work physically and have a high risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the work,” citing frontliners as an example.

An inter- agency made up of Cabinet secretaries kept the cities of Cebu and Mandaue under an enhanced community quarantine.

Metro Manila — where the virus is concentrated — along with the provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Zambales and Laguna were placed under a modified lockdown until May 31.

The modified lockdown allows more sectors to reopen with a 50% skeletal workforce.

About 2% or 191,963 of more than 100 million Filipinos have been tested, according to DoH.

The government seeks to boost its testing capacity to 30,000 samples daily by the end of the month, as it more than doubles accredited labs 66.

The government will buy more than a million polymerase chain reaction and rapid antibody test kits, apart from receiving kits from donor countries including China.

Source: <https://www.bworldonline.com/lawmaker-says-second-wave-of-infections-likely-cases-at-12513/>

COVID-19 test not a requirement to return to work, says DOH

By [Gerard Naval](#)

-May 18, 2020



THE Department of Health on Sunday reminded companies and employers that workers are not required to undergo testing for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) before they return to work.

The DOH issued the reminder on the eve of the first working day under a modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ), and as the number of COVID-19 cases in the country continue to rise.

As of Sunday, there were 208 new cases, or a total of 12,513 infections; seven more fatalities, or a total of 824 deaths; and 74 new cases of patients having recovered from COVID-19, or a total of 2,635 recoveries.

The virus that causes COVID-19 originated in China, has spread to 216 countries, infected some 4.4 million persons, and killed at least 302,000 individuals as of May 16, according to the World Health Organization.

Metro Manila, Laguna, and Cebu City transitioned from enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) on Saturday to MECQ wherein some industries are allowed to resume operations.

“The IATF resolution stated that in no case shall testing be a condition for return to work,” Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said in a Viber message to reporters.

She noted the DOH has long advocated that COVID-19 testing be limited to symptomatic workers, in accordance with testing guidelines of the DOH.

“We have emphasized that symptomatic screening is ideal, or test only when symptomatic,” she said.

For employers still opting to test asymptomatic workers, DOH guidelines state that the companies may do a “representative sample” testing.

“Employers, who opt to conduct testing, may do so in a representative sample of those who have returned to work physically and have a high risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the work,” said DOH Department Memorandum No. 2020-220.

The DOH said the costs of such testing will not be covered by PhilHealth, and will be shouldered by the employers.

For companies using the reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests, workers who test positive for COVID-19 must be immediately isolated and referred to a medical facility, with all his/her close contacts to be isolated and tested.

COVID-19 test not a requirement to return to work,

TITLE: says DOH

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If found negative in RT-PCR tests, the employee can continue working with usual safety precautions.

The RT-PCR test is considered the “gold standard” in identifying COVID-19.

The DOH said those undergoing accredited rapid antibody-based test kits, and who will test IgM negative and IgG negative, or IgG positive regardless of IgM results, may continue to work.

But if an employee tests IgM positive but IgG negative on the first test, he/she shall be isolated for 14 days with repeat testing on the 14th day.

If subsequent test results are still IgM positive and IgG negative, the quarantine will be extended by seven-day increments with repeat testing; and if persistently IgM positive but IgG negative for two consecutive re-testings after the first 14-day period, consider potential false positives and confer with infectious diseases specialists.

FILIPINOS ABROAD

The Department of Foreign Affairs said 37 more overseas Filipinos were infected with COVID-19, bringing the total since its outbreak last December to 2,397.

Data provided by the DFA showed there were also two new recoveries and three new deaths recorded in the Americas, Europe, and Middle East and African regions.

The DFA said “no new reports were received from the Asia-Pacific region.”

Of the 2,397 in 46 countries afflicted with COVID-19, the DFA said 1,294 were still undergoing treatment while 826 have recovered.

The death toll among overseas Filipinos now stood at 277 with the Americas leading with 149 followed by Europe with 85, Middle East and African regions with 41, and only two in the Asia-Pacific region. — *With Ashzel Hachero*



Labor group urges employers to follow health protocols involving workers

Published May 17, 2020, 12:59 PM

By *Leslie Ann Aquino*

Defend Jobs Philippines has asked the government and private employers to secure the health and safety of workers inside their respective workplaces.

To do this, the group said there must be clear policies and protocols to contain COVID-19 in the workplace, in consultation with workers and their organizations.

Defend Jobs Philippines said there is also a need to ensure working and adequately stocked and manned clinics, infirmaries and health facilities in the workplace.

Appointing safety officers and health committees in the workplace, the group said will also be of help.

Workers, Defend Jobs said should be required to undergo COVID-19 testing, regular check-ups, thermal scanning, disinfection and sanitation procedures.

The group said the health insurance coverage and other health benefits of workers must also be ensured and improved.

Employers, Defend Jobs said should also provide accommodation and transportation for workers.

The group also called for the establishment of a COVID-19 hotline for workers who need information and advice; as well as the launching of information and education drives among workers, supervisors and management.

Lastly, Defend Jobs said there must be strict enforcement of health measures, including penalties for employers who fail to comply.

The group issued the call as 50 percent of workforces in selected industries and establishments return to work in areas under the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine and General Community Quarantine.#

Labor group insists gov't provide rides for those returning to work under MECQ

Published May 17, 2020, 12:53 AM

By **Chito Chavez**

After the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) took effect in Metro Manila and other provinces on May 16, labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) on Saturday said the government should provide rides to workers as more businesses are now allowed to resume operations, without, however, the restoration of public transportation.

KMU secretary-general Jerome Adonis insisted the government should assume this responsibility as “the workers cannot be made to suffer from walking for hours over long distances.”

“We want to work to contribute to economy, get the economy running again, and because there is no or very little aid coming to our families. But returning to work in this epidemic is hazardous and workers should be provided with safe transportation,” he said.

Adonis noted the government should recognize that the current MECQ situation will be difficult for workers because public transportation is still banned.

He acknowledged that firms should provide rides to the workers, but asserted that public transportation “is really the key to enable workers to traverse major thoroughfares of Metro Manila.” “Aside from trains and buses, public utility jeepneys are also needed at least for collector roads,” he added.

Earlier, the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) stated that there is no assurance that companies will provide transportation or that they cannot provide sufficient transportation for their employees.

In April, KMU said that MAP already asked the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) and the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to allow the operations of the current fleets of buses and trains that are capable of transporting 250,000 workers or the estimated skeletal workforce in Metro Manila.

KMU also demanded the operation of public transportation provided with operational guidelines for safety and health, and for companies to provide supplemental transportation.

Adonis noted that transportation is one of KMU’s demands along with mass testing, hazard pay, strict safety and health measures at workplaces, and free medical treatment as workers return to work in area under MECQ and general community quarantine (GCQ).

The group also said the government should give financial aid for transport workers as they lost their livelihood during the two-month lockdown, adding that the community quarantines and the health crisis should not be used as excuses to phase out jeepneys.

Manila builds own COVID-19 testing lab

May 17, 2020 | Filed under: [Headlines, News](#) | Posted by: [Tempo Desk](#)

Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso bared Saturday night that the city government is already building its own coronavirus disease (COVID-19) testing laboratory.

In a “situation report” he delivered through his Facebook page, Moreno said that this is part of the “long-term” plan that is being taken by the local officials as they strengthen their efforts to stem the outbreak in the city.

As of press time, Manila has already had 997 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 89 deaths and 163 recoveries.

“Habang tayo ay nakikipag-partner sa national government, sa mga private sectors, medical institutions, tayo rin ay magtatayo ng sariling testing laboratory na ilalagak sa [second floor ng] Santa Ana Hospital ,” he said.

He added that the local government will also purchase eight mobile digital X-ray machines dedicated for COVID-19 patients, which will complement the two already existing analog X-ray machines of the city.

“Bakit po walo? Anim lang ang ating hospital? Para po ‘yung dalawa, atin pong pang-abang... Ayaw ko, in the middle of everything, masira ‘yung machine, wala tayong extra. I really wanted to prepare our city, to empower our medical institutions and front liners in our health sector,” the mayor said.

Moreno explained that he preferred buying portable machines to be able to attend to COVID-19 patients, who are undergoing X-ray examinations, inside their own rooms.

“[Ito ay] bilang paghahanda ng inyong pamahalaang lungsod sa mga darating na buwan ng buhay natin na kabahagi natin si COVID-19,” he said.

The local chief executive also announced that the Manila government has already adopted the use of StaySafe.ph mobile application, which will allow the residents to report their health condition and facilitate the government in contact tracing.

“Dito po palalakasin natin ang ating contact tracing, health condition reporting and social distancing,” Moreno said.

Through visiting the website manila.staysafe.ph, Manila residents can download the application and register themselves and their families to know their risk of exposure.

They will also become updated about the COVID-19 situation in the city through informing them of nearby areas with positive patients.

“Pwede nyong i-report ‘yung oras-oras nyong nararamdaman... para nang sa ganoon, malalaman ng pamahalaan kung ano ang iyong katayuan sa iyong kalusugan at pwede mo isama ang iyong pamilya,” Moreno said.

Moreno also bared that some 607,586 families will once again receive P1,000 cash aid from the local government in the second tranche of financial assistance for those financially affected by the crisis. **(Joseph Pedrajas)**

Time to shake lockdown-blues away in Baguio City

Published May 17, 2020, 9:59 AM

By **Zaldy Comanda**

BAGUIO CITY – The city government here has opened public places, particularly the famous Burnham Park, to Zumba, jogging, and other exercises starting Sunday, May 17.

This, as the city transitioned from enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to the more permissive general community quarantine (GCQ) on Saturday, May 16.

Mayor Benjamin Magalong, however, clarified that the conduct of the health activities must be in line with the “new normal” where observation of social distancing and wearing of face masks would be strictly enforced.

He tasked city managers to firm up guidelines to ensure safety of health buffs from the dangers of COVID-19.

The time allowed for such activities will be from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m., from Monday to Saturday, with promenaders observing physical distancing of at least five meters from each other, and the wearing of face mask.

They will also be required to secure fitness passes from City Environment and Parks Management Office (CEPMO).

Those aged 21 years old and below, and 60 years old and above will not be allowed to join the health activities at the parks, except on Sundays.

The mayor said, guidelines governing the GCQ on the conduct of various activities, including sports and leisure, will undergo appropriate adjustments to comply with national policies aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19.

He also cautioned the promenaders to be conscious of the three-hour time limit at the parks.

The City Environment and Parks Management Office, City Sports Office and the local police are charged with strictly enforcing guidelines in the conduct of the health activities.

Under the GCQ, there shall be a gradual resumption of select businesses, services and other activities in the city. The measured transition is geared towards preventing a possible “second wave” of the dreaded COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the local government is likewise working on guidelines for other sports activities that may be allowed during the GCQ. This was in response to the growing clamor of sports enthusiasts for the resumption of events where social distancing may be observed.

For now, sports enthusiasts are advised by the local government to closely monitor announcements regarding the conduct of health activities.

Boracay residents question swimming ban

By: [Nestor P. Burgos Jr.](#) - Correspondent / [@nestorburgosINQ](#)

[Inquirer Visayas](#) / 04:17 AM May 18, 2020



NO DIPPING Taking a dip in the sea off the beach of Boracay Island and scenes like in this photo taken in 2019 remain prohibited even under relaxed quarantine. —INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — As many areas shift to loosened quarantine measures, several residents of Boracay have questioned the continued ban on swimming along the island’s famous white beach.

They called on the local government of Malay town in Aklan province to allow swimming even with regulations. Swimming is allowed by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging Infectious Diseases in areas under general community quarantine (GCQ) like Aklan, they pointed out.

“The [World Health Organization] says that staying healthy and building up our immune system through exercise and swimming are the best prevention for COVID-19. The majority [of Boracay residents] do not have private pools, the resorts are obviously closed,” Freida Dario-Santiago, one of the residents and a community newspaper editor, said on Facebook.

“For the poor families living on the island, the beach is the only outdoor area to get much-needed sun and exercise, outside of their cramped living spaces,” she said.

Acting Mayor Frolibar Bautista of Malay, which has jurisdiction over Boracay, earlier said swimming remained prohibited to avoid the congestion of people on the beach and to maintain physical distancing.

But islanders said the ban should only cover tourists and not residents, especially children.

“The kids have been cooped up for two months and we have no parks for them to play and schools are obviously closed ... Tell us why you can’t allow us this freedom when there are zero (COVID-19) cases, no tourists, and when [we can regulate] beach use with social distancing,” Santiago said.

She pointed out that social distancing could still be maintained with the island's 4.5-kilometer stretch of white beach.

Other residents said walking and swimming on the beach were essential for both physical and mental health amid severe economic difficulties and months of restrictions.

Adjustment

Elsewhere in Western Visayas, residents are adjusting to relaxed quarantine measures.

A limited number of jeepneys and buses will ply their routes again on Monday in Iloilo province and Iloilo City, but the number of passengers will be reduced. Only those wearing masks will be allowed to ride the vehicles.

More establishments have been allowed to open, including department stores, barbershops and hair salons.

But according to Iloilo Mayor Jerry Treñas, manicure and pedicure services will still not be allowed.

The ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages will remain in Iloilo and Antique provinces. It was, however, lifted in Iloilo City and the provinces of Aklan and Capiz, though drinking in public areas is prohibited.

In Iloilo City, those buying alcoholic beverages should present identification cards, with purchases limited to only two liters per person per day.

A balancing act

posted May 18, 2020 at 12:30 am

May 15 marked the end of a period for millions of Filipinos especially those in Metro Manila. It was the last day of the Enhanced Community Quarantine. The following day, Saturday, saw the start of the so-called modified ECQ where some businesses were allowed to reopen albeit in a limited capacity.

Make no mistake about it: After two months of ECQ, the number of new cases has not seemed to decline, hovering above 200, even as the number of recovered patients is now three times the number of deaths. Still, businesses and self-employed workers were bleeding, and the economy was headed for a disaster.

Something had to be done. Some easing was allowed not because the environment was any safer, but because an economic standstill threatened to close down small businesses, and plunge even more poor Filipinos into desolation.

Notwithstanding this crucial nuance, photos circulating over social media showed people flocking to just-opened malls, hardly observing social distancing even if many of them were wearing masks. This prompted the lament that Filipinos indeed lacked discipline, and spurred talk of a second wave of infections even if the first curve had not yet been flattened.

But who is to say whether there has been any improvement in the numbers at all? Last week, the University of the Philippines came out with a policy note that pointed out inaccuracies in the reporting system of the Department of Health. The analysts said that numbers from the DOH and the local government units are difficult to reconcile. They noticed changes in sex, age and location among the patients. Given these, can we even take comfort in the numbers enough to be confident to venture out?

Perhaps more than waiting for the announcement of quarantine easing, the public stays tuned to the daily announcements of the DOH with regard to the current level of COVID-19 infections. Some context would be helpful: By how much has mass testing improved since the start of the lockdown period? What is the percentage of people testing positive relative to the aggregate number of those tested? What are our targets with regard to testing, and how are we doing in terms of attaining them? How much help do we still need and in what areas?

Without this information, the reopening of businesses and easing of restrictions will only be seen as risky moves that sacrifice the health and safety of millions for economic gain.

This either-or mindset is not healthy when we ponder how basic survival is the main issue for many Filipinos who, unlike a privileged few, cannot continue earning while working from home.

Indeed before we or any member of our family think of stepping out of the house, we need to ask: Is the trip at all essential, or can it wait a day or two?

There is great need to balance our concerns for safety on one hand, and for economic sustainability on the other. We need mass testing so we can get grasp of how widespread the virus really is. We need solid information to serve as basis for future policies. Decisions should be made in delicate balance of the equally critical objectives of safety and viability, with reliable numbers – not misplaced hope or crippling fear – as basis.

We must be careful lest we lose our balance, and fall.

'New normal' unti-unti nang nararamdaman!

[RESPONDE](#) - [Gus Abelgas](#) (Pang-masa) - May 18, 2020 - 12:00am

Unti-unti nang nararamdaman ang mga pagbabago nga-yong nakasailalim na ang Metro Manila sa modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ).

Mula sa mga lansangan, kapansin-pasin ang lubhang pagdami na uli ng mga sasakyan. Sa ilang lugar aba'y talagang naranasan ang masikip na trapik.

Pinag-uusapan pa lang natin dito ay mga pribadong sasakyan, wala pa ang mga pampubliko dahil nga sa hindi pa sila pinapayagan sa ilalim ng MECQ. Maliban lang sa mga tricycle at pedicab na pinayagan na ng ilang LGUs sa kanilang lugar.

Baka nga sa araw na ito, mas lalo pang mararamdaman ang pagtungo na natin sa tinatawag na 'new normal'.

May ilang malls at negosyo na rin na nagbukas, na talagang nakakapanibago.

Mahaba-habang panahon kasi na nasumpungan na nagmistulang 'ghost town' ang maraming lugar dahil sa lockdown.

Unti-unti nang nakikita at nararamdaman ang komersyo, na ito ay lubha na talagang kailangan para makabawi sa mga nalugi sa nagdaan.

Sa kabila ng lahat ng ito, lagi sanang isa-isip na nandiyan pa rin ang COVID-19 kaya dapat na masunod ang mga safety measure na lagi nang ipinaaalala ng mga kinauukulan. Partikular dito ang pagsusuot lagi ng face mask at pagsunod sa social distancing.

Ngayong unti-unti nang bumabalik sa normal, sana ay mabigyang pansin na rin ng mga kinauukulan lalo na ng LGUs na malinis na ang mga paligid, partikular sa mga basura na iniwan at patuloy na dulot ng biglaang pagsulpot ng homeless o palaboy.

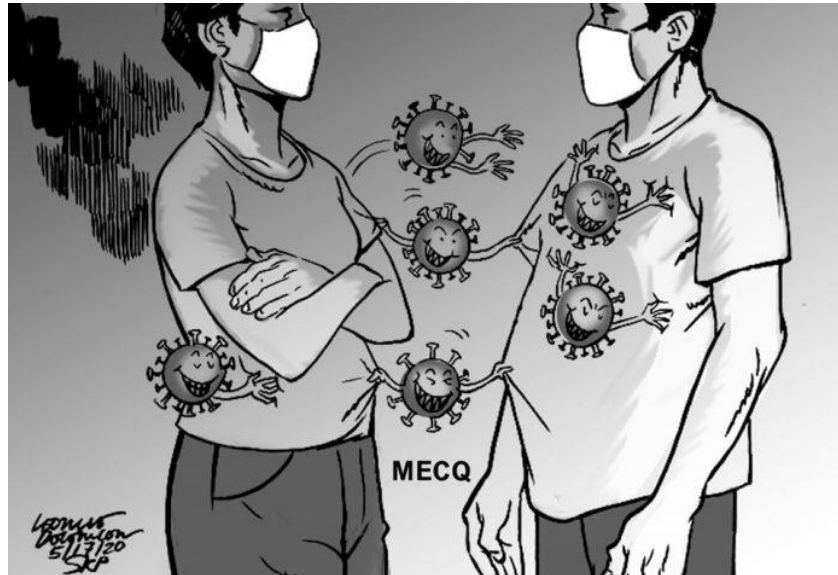
Naku, kung mag-iikot lamang ang mga opisyal sa mga lungsod o bayan makikita ang dumi at basurang nagkalat sa maraming lugar sa Kalakhang Maynila. Baka nga ito pa ang pagmulan na naman ng ibang uri ng mga karamdaman.

Dito dapat madisiplina ang marami, dahil baka na naman tayo bumalik sa dati!

Huge challenges for the economic team

By [Malaya Business Insight](#)

-May 18, 2020



'THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO USE THE FINANCIAL SECTOR TO PROVIDE LIQUIDITY AND PREVENT INSOLVENCY OF BIG BUSINESSES.'

AS the nation goes through the transition from enhanced community quarantine to general community quarantine, the people now see a glimmer of hope that the nation is on its way to recovery — both from the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic meltdown that its ECQ solution ruefully entailed.

The expansive pandemic and the lockdowns here and abroad imposed by most governments to stem the tide of contagion have taken their toll not just in human lives but also in plunging GDPs (gross national product).

In the Philippines, the first-quarter GDP went south to 0.02 percent, its lowest in 20 years, with an even bleaker estimate for the second quarter, the months that bore the brunt of the ravaging coronavirus. Economists had to redo growth estimates for PH since clearly, we can no longer hold on to the average 1.19 percent growth rate from 1998 to present. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), meanwhile, had to cut interest rates, postpone the increase of its capitalization and do some qualitative easing. The unemployment figure may hit double digit and rise to a 15-year high, according to NEDA.

We feel it is late in the day to plan, but it looks like President Duterte's economic team, led by Finance Secretary Sonny Dominguez and acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua, are up to the challenge at least in coming up with concrete recovery plans.

Chua said they will propose three measures to Congress. "The first is on spending and capital support which will be the Bayanihan 2. The second is to give firms, especially the small ones, tax incentives, and we call that CREATE (Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act). The third is to prepare the 2021 GAA (General Appropriations Act) so that we can respond to the virus better," the new NEDA chief said.

Dominguez summarized this by talking about a stimulus package that would increase the PH fiscal deficit by nine-tenths of one percent, or almost 2 percent, and is worth P130 billion to P160 billion.

The finance secretary believes that if you put this amount in the right place, the actual value, the "actual economic activity that kind of investment can make is probably P800 billion to a trillion pesos, because of the multiplier effect that you can get by putting it as bank capital, and as capital of Philippine Guarantee Corp."

In simple terms, Dominguez would want to use the bulk of this money to increase the capitalization of banks and boost their capability to lend out loans, perhaps to the top corporations listed in the Philippine Stock Exchange, or to the big three local airlines which recently requested subsidies or assistance from the Senate to help them get to their feet and fly again.

The government intends to use the financial sector to provide liquidity and prevent insolvency (of big businesses). Then for the micro firms, they will ask microfinance, cooperatives, rural and thrift banks to lend them and they will use government banks to buy some of their loans so that they can be freed up of more capital to lend, and help the small businesses. There is also a plan to cut corporate taxes across the board — from 30 to 25 percent.

We certainly hope that these measures will be able to mitigate the hardship and suffering of the people in their daunting — but necessary — trek towards the new normal.

Water interruptions to hit Metro Manila, Cavite

By [Jordeene B. Lagare](#)

May 18, 2020

Portions of Metro Manila and Cavite province will have little to no water supply for about 10 hours next week because of the repair work to be undertaken by Maynilad Water Services Inc. at its treatment plant in Muntinlupa City.

In an advisory on Sunday, Maynilad said its customers in parts of Las Piñas, Parañaque, and Imus and Bacoor in Cavite would experience temporary water service interruption from 6 p.m. on May 21 until 4 a.m. on May 22.

The service interruption will allow the repair of the discharge line at the Putatan Water Treatment Plant 2 as part of Maynilad's efforts to improve water services in the West Zone concession area.

"Affected customers are encouraged to store enough water for the duration of the service interruption. Maynilad has water tankers on standby, ready to deliver water to affected areas as needed," the company said.

Upon resumption of water service, customers should let the water flow out briefly until it clears, it added.

Maynilad apologized for the inconvenience and appealed for customers' understanding.

In April last year, Maynilad inaugurated its P5.4-billion Putatan treatment plant that sources raw water from the Laguna Lake. It produces 100 million liters per day of potable water for about 1 million Maynilad customers.

The plant uses a multi-stage process of dissolved air flotation, biological aerated filter, ultrafiltration, reverse osmosis and chlorination to treat the lake water and convert it into potable water, which complies with the Department of Health's Philippine National Standards for drinking water.

Maynilad, majority owned by Manny Pangilinan-led Metro Pacific Investments Corp., services portions of the cities of Manila, Quezon and Makati as well as the cities of Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon in Metro Manila.

Over 70,000 people evacuated due to Ambo; measures vs. COVID-19 observed —NDRRMC

Published May 17, 2020 11:48am

More than 70,000 people evacuated from their homes due to the threat of Ambo, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said on Sunday.

NDRRMC spokesperson Mark Timbal said in an interview on Dobo B sa News TV that the measures in light of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) threat were observed during evacuation.

“Ito po ‘yung mga inalis mula sa landslide, flood, at tsaka storm surge-prone areas,” Timbal said.

According to Timbal, most of the evacuees wore face masks while government personnel who assisted them were clad in personal protective equipment (PPE).

Timbal said local government units (LGUs) did not use as evacuation centers the facilities utilized for the isolation of COVID-19 cases.

He added that the number of families that were allowed to stay inside a room in evacuation centers were limited to two to three only.

“Kung basta magkasya ang ilang pamilya sa isang kuwarto sa evacuation center, puwede. Pero ngayon po, hindi na po puwede ‘yan,” he said.

“Ang ginawa po ng ating LGUs, dinala po nila sa evacuation centers na hindi po ginamit for COVID-19 isolation ang mga kababayan natin,” he added.

The NDRRMC is still consolidating information on the damage and effects due to Ambo from different regions.

So far, NDRRMC received information that 40,980 people were affected by Ambo in six provinces of CALABARZON and Eastern Visayas where Ambo traversed, Timbal said.

Damage to agriculture is estimated to reach almost P80 million in CALABARZON, Eastern Visayas, Bicol, and Cordillera.

Ambo became a typhoon but has since weakened into a tropical depression.

As of 11 a.m. on Sunday, [Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1 remains hoisted over Batanes](#) as Ambo accelerates moving north.

Ambo is expected to become a low pressure area in 12-24 hours. —**KG, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/738549/over-70-000-people-evacuated-due-to-ambo-measures-vs-covid-19-observed-ndrrmc/story/>

PNP: Health measures missed in evacuation centers amid typhoon

Published May 17, 2020 2:31pm

The Philippine National Police said Sunday that implementing COVID-19 health measures, including social distancing, was a challenge in some evacuation centers during the onslaught of Typhoon Ambo.

In a statement, PNP spokesperson Police Brigadier General Bernard Banac cited the experiences of some police frontliners saying that face masks got wet, or blown away due to rains and strong winds.

He added that social distancing was not observed inside evacuation areas housing evacuees.

But, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) spokesperson Mark Timbal said health measures were observed during evacuation.

According to Timbal, most of the evacuees wore face masks while government personnel who assisted them were clad in personal protective equipment (PPE).

More than 70,000 people evacuated from their homes due to the threat of Ambo, NDRRMC said. —**Joviland Rita**

'Double whammy': Eastern Samar pleads for food, housing materials as Ambo kills 4

ABS-CBN News

Posted at May 17 2020 12:10 PM

MANILA - Eastern Samar is in need of food, water, and housing materials after the country's first storm Ambo killed 4 residents, displaced thousands, and destroyed evacuation and quarantine facilities in the province, its governor said Sunday.

Governor Ben Evardone said 2 residents died due to injuries, while 2 others died of shock. Some 47,000 families were affected by Ambo, which first hit land in [San Policarpo town](#), Eastern Samar as a typhoon on Thursday.

"Medyo malaking damage po ang dinulot nitong bagyong Ambo sa amin. Hindi po namin inakala na ganun kalakas," he told ABS-CBN's Teleradyo.

(Ambo caused great damage to our province. We did not expect it to be that strong.)

"Said na po ang pondo... calamity funds. In fact, nag-realign na kami ng other programs and projects namin... para pandagdag dito sa COVID-19 facilities. Kaya nga po, pati pagkain kulang na ho kami."

(Our calamity funds have been exhausted. In fact, we have realigned other programs and projects... for COVID-19 facilities. That's why our food is not enough.)

The province will send some 2,500 food packs to the town of Jipadpad on Sunday, while the Department of Social Welfare and Development released Saturday some 4,500 relief packs to Artech town, according to the governor.

"Tuloy-tuloy po ang repacking ng province. Nagpapakain din kami ng frontliners. Medyo problematic po kami ngayon sa food packs atsaka sa pondo po," he said.

(We continue to repack food. We also feed frontliners. We're having problems with food packs and funds.)

"Pinaka-immediate po ang kailangan po namin is food packs po, atsaka tubig, gamot, housing materials, trapal. Kasi ang bubong ng mga bahay, sira-sira po. Trapal o yero."

(Our most immediate needs are food packs, water, medicine, housing materials because the roofs of our homes were damaged.)

Evardone also appealed to the national government to activate relevant state agencies's quick response fund to help the province recover from the storm amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

QUARANTINE FACILITIES

Nearly half of quarantine facilities in the province, which has yet to record a case of the novel coronavirus, was damaged by Ambo, the governor said.

"Isa pang naka-compound sa problema namin, karamihan ng evacuation center namin kinonvert namin into COVID isolation facilities, ay nasira," he said.

(Another thing that compounded our problems, most of our evacuations that were converted into COVID isolation facilities were damaged.)

"So talagang double whammy kami dito. Pinaghandaan namin to, in fact hanggang ngayon zero COVID pa rin kami. Yung mga COVID facilities namin, halos kalahati ay nasira."

(We suffered a double whammy here. We prepared for COVID-19, in fact up to now we have zero cases. Nearly half of our COVID facilities were destroyed.)

TITLE: 'Double whammy': Eastern Samar pleads for food,
housing materials as Ambo kills 4

PAGE 1/ 2/2

May 18, 2020
DATE

The province has asked the government's task force on COVID-19 to extend the general community quarantine until June 30 as it expects some 20,000 residents in Metro Manila to return to Eastern Samar once lockdown measures there were further eased, Evardone said.

"Pagdating ng May 31, baka mag-open up na Manila, di kami sigurado kung carrier sila o hindi, yan ang kinakatakutan namin," he said.

(Come May 31, Manila might open up, we're not sure if returning residents are carriers or not, that's what we fear.)

Metro Manila, Laguna, and 6 areas in Central Luzon were placed under a modified enhanced community quarantine from Saturday in a bid to restart the economy following the pandemic's disruption.

Ambo is forecast to leave the Philippine area of responsibility by Monday.

NDRRMC: Agri damage from Typhoon ‘Ambo’ hits P79 million

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:00 PM May 17, 2020



HARDEST HIT A solitary cross stands amid the debris of this roofless Catholic church in Arteche, Eastern Samar, the province hardest hit by Typhoon “Ambo” (international name: Vongfong). —PHOTO COURTESY OF EASTERN SAMAR GOV. BEN EVARDONE

MANILA, Philippines — The running total of agricultural damage from Typhoon “Ambo,” which has since weakened into a tropical depression, has reached P79 million, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said.

The damage recorded only covered the Bicol region. Hardest hit were Masbate with around P36 million and Camarines Sur with around P33 million.

Albay reported nearly P4.6 million worth of damage, while Sorsogon and Catanduanes incurred around P2.6 million each. Camarines Norte had around P85,000 worth of damage.

Around 70,000 persons or 18,780 families were pre-emptively evacuated in Calabarzon, Bicol region, Eastern Visayas and Cordillera region because of Ambo, the NDRRMC said.

On Saturday afternoon, a Philippine Air Force C-130 aircraft transported relief goods to Catarman, Samar, one of the areas affected by Ambo.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1276445/ndrrmc-agri-damage-from-typhoon-ambo-hits-p79-million#ixzz6Mk3DTKev>

Ambo destroys Albay's lone COVID-19 testing machine

Published May 17, 2020 9:57pm

Typhoon Ambo destroyed Albay's lone COVID-19 testing machine, according to John Consulta's Sunday report on 24 Oras.

Due to the damage to the machine in the Bicol Diagnostic Laboratory, the province will have to send about 100 remaining samples from the region to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine in Metro Manila.

Meanwhile, in Eastern Samar, Typhoon Ambo destroyed COVID-19 isolation rooms in the towns of Jipapad, Arteche, Maslog and San Policarpo.

Governor Ben Evardone said the provincial government will have a hard time to reconstruct the facilities because of their limited calamity fund.

In Jipapad, a church was also destroyed by the typhoon.

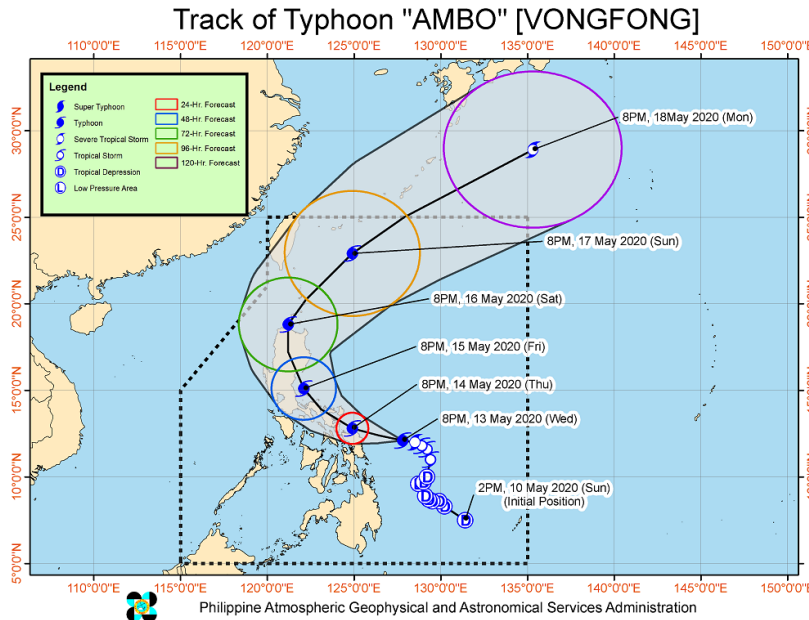
Residents even used a boat to cross the road due to the flood left by Ambo.

The typhoon also destroyed several homes in Arteche, Eastern Samar and Las Navas, Northern Samar.

Meanwhile, the GMA Kapuso Foundation, with the help of the 803rd Brigade of the Philippine Army, will start distributing relief packs to the typhoon victims on Monday. —
Ma. Angelica Garcia/BM, GMA News

N. Samar town declares state of calamity

Published 5 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 01:40 AM
By **Trina Ibarle Orquiza**



The municipality of Catubig in the province of Northern Samar has declared a state of calamity due to the aftermath of typhoon “Ambo” which battered the Eastern Visayas region on Thursday.

In a special session held yesterday, the Sangguniang Bayan of Catubig passed a resolution that intends to use the town’s calamity fund after Catubig Mayor Galahad Vicencio submits the rapid damage assessment and needs analysis report on the effects of the typhoon.

The town was one of those badly hit by “Ambo,” the first typhoon to enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility this year, which brought violent winds and heavy rains to the Eastern Visayas and Bicol provinces which were placed under Storm Signal No. 3.

“Ambo” remained almost stationary over the Luzon Strait on Sunday morning and is expected to weaken into a low-pressure area in the next 12 to 24 hours, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

In its 5 a.m. weather bulletin yesterday, PAGASA said the center of tropical storm was estimated at 125 kilometers west northwest of Calayan, Cagayan at 4 a.m.

It had maximum winds of up to 45 kilometers per hour (kph) near the center and gustiness of up to 55 kph.

Light to moderate and sometimes heavy rains are expected over Batanes and Babuyan Islands in the next 24 hours.

Sea travel is risky especially for small seacraft over the seaboard of areas under the Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1.

In 24 hours, Ambo is expected to move to 180 km north northeast of Basco, Batanes.

PAGASA advised the public and the disaster risk reduction and management councils concerned to take precautions and appropriate actions.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/18/n-samar-town-declares-state-of-calamity/>

'Ambo' weakens into LPA

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor May 17, 2020, 5:58 pm



Track of formerly Tropical Depression "Ambo". (Courtesy of PAGASA)

MANILA – Tropical Depression Ambo weakens into a low pressure area (LPA) while moving generally northeastward over the Bashi Channel, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said Sunday.

In its 5 p.m. weather bulletin, PAGASA said the center of LPA was estimated based on all available data at 125 kilometers northwest of Basco, Batanes.

It added that Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1 over Batanes is now lifted but the province will experience light to moderate with at times heavy rains until Sunday night.

PAGASA also said moderate to rough seas will be experienced over Batanes and Babuyan Islands.

It advised fisherfolk and those with small seacraft not to venture out in the said areas. **(PNA)**

Endangered pygmy hippo born at San Diego Zoo, first time in over 30 years

Published May 17, 2020, 3:49 PM

By *Richa Noriega*

The [San Diego Zoo](#) announced on Friday the birth of an endangered pygmy hippopotamus, the first for the zoo after 30 years.



Endangered pygmy hippo born at San Diego Zoo (SAN DIEGO ZOO WEBSITE / MANILA BULLETIN)

Mabel, a four-year-old pygmy hippopotamus, gave birth to a 12.4-pound male calf on April 9. The zoo said, the calf, which has not been named, already stood, walked, and followed its mother within just a few hours of being born.

“Mom and calf are doing very well, they said—and the calf is nursing and getting lots of attention from the first-time mother,” the zoo said in a statement.

According to the zoo, pygmy hippos are listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, and live in rivers and streams in the forests of West Africa.

Fewer than 2,500 pygmy hippos now remain in Africa, however, and are now only found in four countries such as Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, the zoo said.

“It will be approximately a month before Mabel and her calf, who now weighs 25 pounds, will have access to the main habitat,” the zoo said.

The zoo added that the calf will not be introduced to his father because pygmy hippos do not live in family groups, and males do not play a role in the rearing of offspring.

Leopards spotted in Pakistan capital's park as virus

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Leopards spotted in Pakistan capital's park as virus clears way

Agence France-Presse / 02:20 PM May 17, 2020



A leopard reacts as he walks inside the Dachigam National Park during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, on the outskirts of Srinagar on April 10, 2020. Image: Tauseef MUSTAFA / AFP

Leopards, jackals and other creatures living in Islamabad's tree-covered hills have been enjoying a rare respite from the throngs of hikers and joggers that normally pack the trails.

Rangers in the Pakistani capital's Margalla Hills National Park saw animal activity increase soon after the city was locked down in March to counter the coronavirus.

Islamabad's normally reclusive leopards have been roaming onto deserted pathways, and social networks are rife with talk of purported sightings.

Motion-triggered wildlife cameras have been clicking away as animals explore areas they had long been nervous to visit.

"There is a big increase in the number of animals (seen) in the national park," ranger Imran Khan — not to be confused with the namesake prime minister — told AFP.

Images the park provided to AFP include pictures of leopards padding along paths, an inquisitive jackal and a muddy boar.

"Wildlife is comfortable as there are no visitors here. They are wandering here comfortably, which is a good sign for the jungle," Khan said.

The park was locked down for about a month and foot traffic remains light as families, picnickers and walkers stay away during the fasting period of Ramadan.

Sakhwat Ali, Islamabad's assistant wildlife director, said the space is home to 38 mammal species, 350 bird species and 34 reptile species including 27 types of snake.

Ali added that rangers are conducting a survey and had already noticed new creatures.

"There are some species of butterfly which were not reported earlier, but these are visible now," Ali said.

Leopards spotted in Pakistan capital's park as virus
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Rangers in Pakistan's Margalla Hills National Park have seen animal activity increase since a coronavirus lockdown was introduced. Image: Farooq NAEEM – AFP

Lockdowns in various cities around the world have seen urban wildlife grow bolder as people stay home. A gang of goats was spotted in a Welsh town and coyotes were seen exploring deserted streets in San Francisco. **NVG**

Source: <https://technology.inquirer.net/99587/leopards-spotted-in-pakistan-capitals-park-as-virus-clears-way#ixzz6MjtMxPJU>

U.N.: Live animal markets shouldn't be closed despite Covid-19 scourge

By [BusinessMirror](#)

May 17, 2020



Health officials inspect bats to be confiscated and culled in the wake of coronavirus outbreak at a live animal market in Solo, Central Java, Indonesia, on March 14.

LONDON—The World Health Organization (WHO) said last week that although a market in the Chinese city of Wuhan selling live animals likely played a significant role in the emergence of the new coronavirus, it does not recommend that such markets be shut down globally.

In a news briefing, WHO food safety and animal diseases expert Peter Ben Embarek said live animal markets are critical to providing food and livelihoods for millions of people globally and that authorities should focus on improving them rather than outlawing them—even though they can sometimes spark epidemics in humans.

“Food safety in these environments is rather difficult and therefore it’s not surprising that sometimes we also have these events happening within markets,” Ben Embarek said.

He said reducing the risk of disease transmission from animals to humans in these often overcrowded markets could be addressed in many cases by improving hygiene and food safety standards, including separating live animals from humans.

He added that it is still unclear whether the market in Wuhan linked to the first several dozens of coronavirus cases in China was the actual source of the virus or merely played a role in spreading the disease further.

Ben Embarek said investigations are continuing in China to pinpoint the animal source from which Covid-19 jumped into humans but that studies have since found other species are susceptible to the disease, including cats, tigers, ferrets and dogs.

Identifying other vulnerable species will allow certain interventions to be put in place to prevent future outbreaks.

“We don’t want to create a new reservoir in animals that could continue to create infections in humans,” he said.

Ben Embarek said it might take considerable time to identify the original animal source for the new coronavirus, explaining that extensive studies need to occur first, involving health officials carefully interviewing many of those infected in the early stages of the outbreak, to narrow down what their interactions with animals were before they fell sick.

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Scientists would then need to take samples from animals to find a close match to the coronavirus circulating in humans.

To date, China has not invited WHO or other external experts to be part of that investigation.

Ben Embarek said China likely has the necessary expertise to conduct such studies and WHO has not noted any problems in China's willingness to collaborate with others. **AP**

Spraying disinfectants can be 'harmful' — WHO

Updated May 18, 2020, 12:39 AM

By Agence France-Press

GENEVA — Spraying disinfectant on streets, as practiced in some countries, does not eliminate the new coronavirus and even poses a health risk, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Saturday.

In a document on cleaning and disinfecting surfaces as part of the response to the virus, the WHO says spraying can be ineffective.

“Spraying or fumigation of outdoor spaces, such as streets or marketplaces, is... not recommended to kill the COVID19 virus or other pathogens because disinfectant is inactivated by dirt and debris,” explains the WHO.

“Even in the absence of organic matter, chemical spraying is unlikely to adequately cover all surfaces for the duration of the required contact time needed to inactivate pathogens.”

The WHO said that streets and pavements are not considered as “reservoirs of infection” of COVID19, adding that spraying disinfectants, even outside, can be “dangerous for human health.” The document also stresses that spraying individuals with disinfectants is “not recommended under any circumstances.”

“This could be physically and psychologically harmful and would not reduce an infected person’s ability to spread the virus through droplets or contact,” said the document.

Spraying chlorine or other toxic chemicals on people can cause eye and skin irritation, bronchospasm, and gastrointestinal effects, it added

The organization is also warning against the systematic spraying and fumigating of disinfectants on to surfaces in indoor spaces, citing a study that has shown it to be ineffective outside direct spraying areas.

“If disinfectants are to be applied, this should be done with a cloth or wipe that has been soaked in disinfectant,” it says.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, the cause of the pandemic that has killed more than 300,000 people worldwide since its appearance in late December in China, can attach itself to surfaces and objects.

However, no precise information is currently available for the period during which the viruses remain infectious on the various surfaces.

Studies have shown that the virus can stay on several types of surfaces for several days. However, these maximum durations are only theoretical because they are recorded under laboratory conditions and should be “interpreted with caution” in the real-world environment.

Spraying disinfectants on streets can be ‘harmful’, says WHO

Published May 17, 2020 1:30pm

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Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/world/738560/spraying-disinfectants-on-streets-can-be-harmful-says-who/story/>

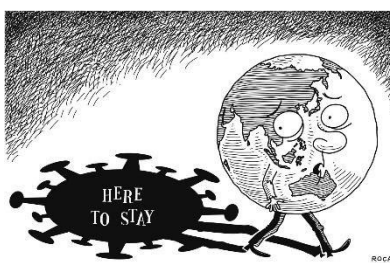
COVID-19, like HIV, may never go away — WHO

EDITORIAL

Published May 17, 2020, 11:11 PM

It seems the attention and interest of the whole world today is focused on one issue — the COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the coronavirus may never go away and the world will have to learn to live with it, like HIV — human immunodeficiency virus — which first came in the 1980s and remains with us to this day.



The world continues to pin its hopes on a coronavirus vaccine, with more than 100 being developed in laboratories in several countries around the world, but none of them is close to final testing and approval. France's Sanofi said the United States was due to get the first shipment of its vaccine, drawing a rebuke from French President Emanuel Macron who said any COVID-19 vaccine must not be subject to market forces.

In Asia, where the coronavirus first emerged in December, 2019, China and South Korea reported some new cases after they started lifting restrictions but immediately responded with new restrictions. Japan experienced new cases after lifting a state of emergency in March, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has now extended the state of emergency to May 31.

In Africa, Senegal reopened its mosques and churches despite a rise in cases. Algeria reported it had started producing rapid test kits with a detection time of 15 minutes.

In Europe, the death toll in the United Kingdom exceeded 40,000, the worst in Europe, raising questions about the leadership of Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Germany reported a rise in new infections after earlier steps to ease its lockdown. In Russia, President Vladimir Putin said people in some sectors would return to work, but restrictions on public gatherings remain.

In the United States, two White House officials fell ill from COVID-19, and all those working in the West Wing were directed to start wearing face masks. But President Donald Trump himself continued to refuse to wear one. He also continued to insist on an early economic reopening of the US, including schools, even as his advisers urged caution.

President Trump appeared determined to restore the country to normalcy as early as possible, as he is facing reelection in November. Events, however, seem to be going against him as the US continues to register more virus infections and deaths. On a nationwide broadcast last Friday, US infections rose by over 200 – from 1,411,466 to 1,413,012 — and deaths rose by over 90, from 85,489 to 85,581 – all within a period of only 20 minutes.

These are only some of the countless developments in some of the countries around the world these last few days. And they are likely to continue in the coming weeks and months, maybe years. The HIV which the WHO cited in its latest statement began in the 1980s and it continues to affect millions around the world today. At the end of 2018, a total of 74.9 million infections had been reported, with 32 million dead, while 24.5 million were getting therapy.

COVID-19 has now infected over 4.4 million and killed over 300,000 globally. That is still way off the HIV record. But then, according to WHO, COVID-19 is just beginning and may never go away.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/17/covid-19-like-hiv-may-never-go-away-who/>