

DENR-10 donates logs to MisOcc for COVID-19 quarantine facilities

By DENR Misamis Occidental Published on May 18, 2020

OROQUIETA CITY, Misamis Occidental, May 18 (PIA)-- In response to the request of various local government units (LGUs) of Misamis Occidental, the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) of Oroquieta City has donated logs and lumbers for the construction of LGUs' coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) quarantine facilities and quarters.

These quarantine facilities and quarters shall be used to accommodate COVID-19 suspects who will undergo 14-day quarantine in Oroquieta City and in the municipalities of Aloran and Jimenez.

Oroquieta City received 859 pieces of lumbers (mahogany, falcata, marang and gmelina) with a total volume of 3,849.99 board feet last April 20 while Aloran town received logs and lumbers (mahogany and narra) with a volume of 4,240 bd. ft. last April 23.

Jimenez town was given 3,760.88 board feet of logs and lumbers (mahogany, gmelina and mangium) last April 28.

The said logs and lumbers given to the LGUs were derived from the trees affected by the road widening project of the DPWH.

DENR-10 remains committed to support the relentless efforts of the government to suppress the proliferation of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. (PENRO Misamis Occidental)

PENRO Apayao provides quarantine facility for returning employees

By DENR-CAR Published on May 18, 2020

LUNA, Apayao, May 18 -- The Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) Apayao has retrofitted its multi-purpose hall into a quarantine facility for its returning employees.

PENR Officer Atty. Romeo G. Bravo said that the Apayao PLGU guidelines require that all employees returning to Apayao from Enhanced Community Quarantine and General Community Quarantine areas with recorded local transmission of COVID 19 shall undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine.



To comply with this guideline, PENRO Apayao decided to have its own quarantine area to ease the logistical burden of the PLGU in maintaining the Provincial Quarantine facility at the Apayao Sports Complex. This could even afford better protection to returning PENRO Apayao employees considering the numerous persons under quarantine at the sports complex.

Prior to fixing the building, Bravo requested the Provincial Health Officer-Apayao and the Municipal Health Officer-Luna for an ocular assessment of the conference hall to ensure that it would pass the minimum criteria for a quarantine facility.

The quarantine facility is located approximately 50 meters away from the main office building and it can accommodate at least five individuals. The facility has the basic necessities with free wifi and mini-library. Bravo is the first occupant of the facility for his 14-day mandatory quarantine.

Apayao is one of the three provinces in the Cordillera region with no case of COVID-19.(DENR-CAR)



ABS-CBN News

5 hrs · 🌐

Isa ang Malabon Zoo sa mga nananawagan ng tulong upang patuloy na matugunan ang pangangailan ng mga hayop ngayong hindi pa rin alam kung kailan sila maaaring muling magbukas.

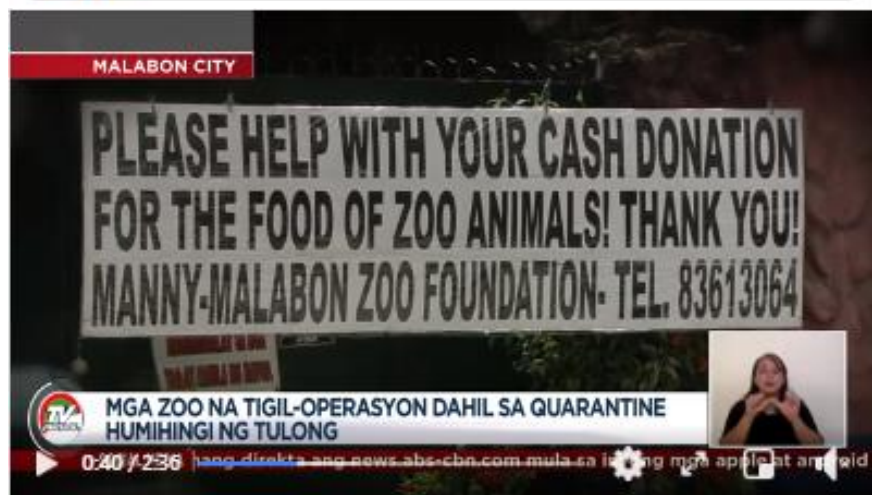
Nasa 600 hayop ang nasa pangangalaga ng Malabon Zoo.

Mapapanood ang #TVPatrol sa news.abs-cbn.com, facebook.com/abscbnnews, youtube.com/abscbnnews, Teleradyo, at ANC



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Puting paniki, namataan sa Samal Island

Berchan Angchay, ABS-CBN News

Posted at May 18 2020 10:33 PM



Larawan kuha ni Gigi Senajonon

SAMAL ISLAND - Ikinagulat ng pamilya Senajonon nang makakita sila ng puting paniki sa kanilang bakuran sa Barangay Remegio, Island Garden City of Samal, Davao del Norte noong Mayo 10.

Sa puti nito, tanaw na ang mga finger bone, tenga, at iba pang bahagi ng hayop kahit nasa malayo.

Ayon kay Barangay Captain Dominador Senajonon, unang beses niyang makakita ng puting paniki sa tanang buhay niya.

"Gitangag to siya sa uwak nakita sakong manghud karon nalooy siya kay nagtiyabaw man gipintik niya ang uwak nahulog tong kwaknit," aniya.

(Nakita umano ng kapatid ko na tinangay ng uwak ang paniki, tinirador nito ang uwak kaya nahulog ang paniki sa sanga ng puno.)

Dagdag ni Dominador, may sugat pa sa pakpak ang paniki.

Nakakain pa nga ng hinog na cardabang saging ang paniki. Di kalaunan ay lumipad na rin ito papalayo.

"Wala na sir gibuhian sakong manghud murag nangahadlok mi sir ba basin naay avian ba o unsa man kay pagka ugma gud ang iyang manok namatay nagtoo siya nga kato na ba ang dautan," ani Dominador.

(Nangamba rin kami sa presensya ng paniki dahil may manok na namatay ng namalagi ito sa aming lugar.)

Cynopterus brachyotis o lesser short-nosed fruit bat umano ang nakitang species ng paniki, ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region XI.

Bihira lang umano ang mga ganitong uri ng albino bats sa Pilipinas.

Sa tala ng ahensya, may 79 enlisted bat species ang Pilipinas at 26 nito ay mga pamilya ng fruit bats o tinatawag na flying foxes.

"Ang iyang status ana is least concern medyo daghan-daghan pa siya dapat protektahan pud nato," ani Jayvee Jude Agas, Chief Reg Public Affairs ng DENR-XI.

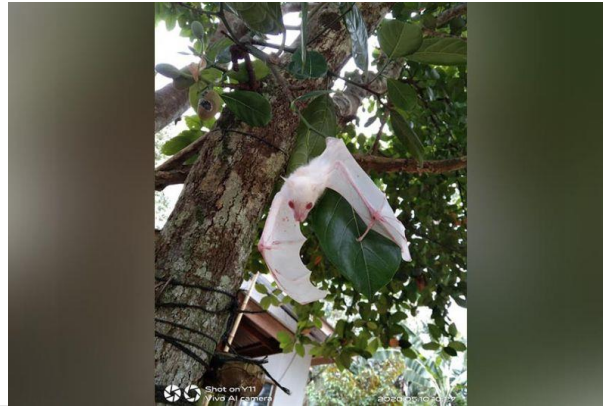
(Marami-rami pa ang bilang ng ganitong uri ng paniki at kinakailangang pangalagaan ito.)

Ayon sa DENR, may karampatang kasong kakaharapin ang sinumang manghuli ng ganitong uri ng hayop.

Matatagpuan din sa Samal Island ang Monfort Bat Sanctuary na may hawak ng Guinness World Record ng "largest known population of fruit bats" sa buong mundo, na may mahigit 1 milyong paniki.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/classified-odd/05/18/20/puting-paniki-namataan-sa-samal-island?fbclid=IwAR2zj1JSeRIfuPoG3btmlsfCeU3VLH1hnSk2plYVbpT2T1Ijp-SIIyIwrkw>

Albino bat spotted in Samal Island



DAVAO. An albino bat is spotted at San Remigio, Island Garden City of Samal. Albino bats are considered to be rare. For instance, in the Monfort Bat Cave Sanctuary, there are two albino bats among the over two million population of the colony. (Contributed by Didi Gigi Senajonan)

[JULIET C. REVITA](#)

May 17, 2020

BATS usually come in black or gray, that's why netizens were ecstatic when an albino bat was spotted in San Remigio, Island Garden City of Samal (Igacos), Davao del Norte.

On May 16, Facebook user Didi Gigi Senajonan posted the photo of a white bat with red eyes, she captured hanging on a tree in broad daylight. Her post garnered more than 4,000 reactions and over 18,000 shares.

Bats are no strangers to the residents of Samal Island. The island is the location of the 257-square-foot Monfort Bat Cave Sanctuary, which is within a 21-hectare estate in Barangay Tambo, Babak District, Island Garden City of Samal in Davao del Norte. It is the world's largest colony of Geoffrey's rousette fruit bats.

However, Monfort Bat Cave and Conservation Foundation, Inc. founder Norma "Bat Mama" Monfort said the albino bat spotted in San Remigio is a different species from what they have in their bat sanctuary.

Monfort is a known environmental advocate for her campaign on the conservation and protection of bats. In her campaigns, she points out the importance of the contribution of bats in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. Bats have been known as pollinators of various plants.

Monfort said in their cave, they also have the presence of two albino bats -- one is two-toned while the other is purely white.

At present, the cave sanctuary still holds the title as the largest single colony of Geoffrey's rousette fruit bat residing in one cave annex in the Guinness Book of World Records. The population is estimated to be around 2.3 million.

Monfort recalled that before there was proof of the existence of the rare bat, she's been hearing her caretakers of the Monfort property of the bat which they referred to as a "white lady", alleged to be the spiritual guardian of the bat cave.

It was said that the albino bat only showed herself to a privileged few. In 2010, a Manila-based photographer was able to capture shots of the rare albino bat - later nicknamed "Blanca Bella" or Beautiful white.

Monfort said that there was a time when the albino bat was sighted to be pregnant but the bat gave birth to a regular black bat.

Albinism in bats is rare but has been recorded before including in five species of Indian bats.

"Very rare ang albino and very fragile usually they die earlier pero ang akin matagal na," she added.

Source: <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1856773>

White bat spotted in Samal Island

Published May 18, 2020, 3:30 PM

By **Gabriela Baron**

An albino bat was spotted in San Remigio, Island Garden City of Samal (IGaCOS), Davao del Norte on Saturday, May 16.

The white bat with red eyes was captured hanging on a tree in broad daylight.



(Photo courtesy of Didi Gigi Senajonon DS)

According to a report by ABS-CBN News, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources XI said it is the first time a white or albino bat is seen in the region. Bats are no strangers to the residents of Samal.

The Monfort Bat Sanctuary, which has been housing a large colony of 2.3 million Rousette fruit bats, is located on Samal Island.

The sanctuary holds a Guinness World Record for being the largest single colony of Rousette fruit bats.

Meanwhile, pigmentary disorders such as albinism and leucism (partial loss of pigmentation in an animal) is rare in bats.

Illegal lumber, fitches seized in Agusan del Sur

Published May 18, 2020, 10:48 AM

By Mike Crismundo

BUTUAN CITY – An anti-illegal logging task force in Agusan del Sur seized more than 4,745 board feet of illegally-cut Lauan fitches in Sitio Kosep, Barangay Bayugan 3, Rosario of the province.



Bunawan DENR-CENRO / MANILA BULLETIN

In a report to Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Executive Director Felix S. Alicer, Bunawan Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) Jerome H. Albia said the illegally-cut forest products were found during a search and retrieval operation conducted by the illegal logging task force.

“Backed by the police and military forces, the illegally-cut forest products were found when concerned villagers reported on Friday (May 15) the exact location to our task force,” said CENRO Albia, in his report also to Agusan del Sur Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) Joey Concha.

The confiscated forest products were valued at P118,625.

The CENRO Bunawan is still conducting thorough investigation to determine the owner of the seized abandoned forest products for filing of charges in violation of the Forestry Code of the Philippines. Meanwhile, the regional officer of the DENR reported the confiscation of 294,069.88 board feet of illegal logs and lumber products valued at P8,489,338.

Caraga Pulis Pio is with **Joselito Esquivel** and 44 others. 11 hrs · 🌐

PRESS RELEASE

Php125K hot logs seize, 2 suspects nab in Agusan Sur PNP checkpoint

Date: May 18, 2020

Camp Col Rafael C Rodriguez, Butuan City---- Police and environmental authorities arrested two individuals for transporting a truck loaded with Lauan sawn lumber in a checkpoint at Brgy. Ferdinand, Loreto Agusan del Sur yesterday May 17.

PNP Caraga director Brigadier General Joselito T. Esquivel Jr. disclosed that a Sadam Truck loaded with 400 pieces Lauan sawn lumber with an estimated volume of 5,000 board feet with market value of Php125,000.00, was confiscated by the PNP Agusan del Sur and Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The truck was driven by Roddy D. Lagoy, 29 years old, a resident of Brgy. Poblacion, Laak, Davao de Oro with his crew Sanny Boy G. Generlao, 19 years old, and a resident of Brgy. Bagong Silang, Laak Davao de Oro.

Confiscated forest products are now in the custody of Loreto Municipal Police Station while case for violation of PD 705 otherwise known as the Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines is being prepared for filing in court against the apprehended suspects.

RD Esquivel, Jr. assured the Caraganons that PNP Caraga in coordination with the DENR and other government agencies will go after small and large-scale environmental offenders and that the laws on environmental protection are strictly implemented even amidst the PNP's active participation in the fight against corona virus disease 2019 pandemic.



👍👎👤 29

15 Shares



Palawan Council for Sustainable Development



9 hrs · 🌐

4 VIOLATORS OF CHAINSAW ACT CAUGHT BY PCSDS ENFORCEMENT TEAM

Members of the PCSDS Enforcement Team apprehended 3 persons in El Nido and one in Puerto Princesa City for possession of chainsaw units without proper permit.

Last May 13, 2020, members of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS) Enforcement Team caught three residents in possession of a chainsaw with an expired permit in Brgy. Sibaltan, El Nido. The violators were identified as Urbano Montellano, Dolphy Lajallab and Arnold Gabo.

Afterwards, in May 16, 2020, a certain Antonio M. Dela Cruz was also caught by the PCSDS Enforcement Team in Sitio Candiz III, Brgy. Bacungan, Puerto Princesa City for possessing a chainsaw unit without a proper permit.

Section 7(1) of R.A. No. 9175, otherwise known as the Chainsaw Act of 2002, prohibits any person from selling, purchasing, transferring the ownership, distributing, or otherwise disposing or possessing a chainsaw without first securing the necessary permit from the proper authorities. In the Province of Palawan, the proper permit is to be issued by the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD).

Criminal and/or administrative charges against the violators/offenders will be filed by the PCSDS Investigator.

The chainsaw units are now in the custody of the PCSDS Evidence Custodian.

👍❤️😬 19

1 Comment

Villar seeks stricter implementation of NIPAS to

TITLE: protect biodiversity, stop spread of diseases

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May 19, 2020

DATE

Villar seeks stricter implementation of NIPAS to protect biodiversity, stop spread of diseases

Published May 18, 2020, 1:41 PM

By **Vanne Elaine Terrazola**

Senator Cynthia Villar has called for the stricter implementation of the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act to protect biodiversity and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.



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

The Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources chairman said the destruction of wildlife habitats and biodiversity loss have been linked to the spread of infectious diseases such as Ebola, HIV, swine fever, avian flu, and now the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The said diseases are called zoonotic, or those that originate from animals and can be transmitted to humans. Scientists have said that 70 percent of infectious diseases come from wild animals.

Last February, the World Health Organization (WHO) said it found increasing evidence showing the similarities between COVID-19 and other known coronaviruses in bats, specifically those of the *Rhinolophus* bat sub-species. Its transmission to humans, however, is not yet clear.

Researchers are looking at pangolins as the possible host of the novel coronavirus before it was passed on to humans.

Pangolins are considered as the world's most trafficked animal and are poached for their scales. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classified it as a critically-endangered animal.

The NIPAS, enacted in 1992, designated protected areas in the country to preserve and maintain biodiversity. The Expanded NIPAS Act was signed into law in 2018 to include more areas under government protection and impose stiffer penalties to violators.

"The fact that they are called protected areas should already warn people about their importance. They are the natural habitats of wildlife, which should not be damaged or destroyed, but protected instead, not only for the animals' sake but for our sake as well," Villar said.

Villar said that the Philippines is one of the world's mega-diverse or biodiversity-rich countries, hosting two-thirds of the earth's biodiversity and contains about 70 to 80 percent of the world's plant and animal species.

The country, at the same time, is also among the world's biodiversity hot spots or those areas experiencing high rates of habitat loss.

She said hot spots have lost around 86 percent of their original habitat and are also considered to be significantly threatened by extinctions caused by climate change.



Villar seeks stricter implementation of NIPAS to

May 19, 2020

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“The more natural habitats we protect, the lesser the loss in biodiversity and the better it is for wildlife. In turn, there are less chances or risks from zoonotic diseases. Wildlife protection can stop another virus outbreak or even a pandemic,” Villar said.

“We need to not only create awareness about biological diversity, but to take action about its protection because any damage or loss will cost too much for a country such as ours. There is so much at stake and we become vulnerable to the adverse side effects if we do not commit to taking care of our environment,” she added.

At present, there are a total 107 protected areas in the country. These include ASEAN Heritage Sites Mount Apo in Davao, Mount Timpoong-Hibok-Hibok in Camiguin, Mount Iglit-Baco in Mindoro, and Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary in Tawi-Tawi.

Water level sa mga dam,tumaas

[Angie dela Cruz](#) (Pang-masa) - May 19, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Tumaas ang water level sa iba't ibang dam sa bansa kabilang ang Angat dam na nagsusuplay ng tubig sa Metro Manila at karatig lalawigan dulot ng dalang ulan ng bagyong Ambo.

Sa latest dam monitoring ng PAGASA, alas-6:00 ng umaga kahapon, ang water level ng Angat dam ay tumaas at umabot sa 190.67 meters mula sa dating 190.62 meters, La Mesa dam - 76.21 meters ang water level mula sa dating 76.18 meters.

Tumaas din ang water level sa Ambuklao dam kahapon ng alas -6:00 ng umaga na umabot sa 742.98 meters mula sa dating 742.94 meters, Pantabangan dam -185.78 meters mula sa dating 185.32 meters, Magat dam-175.10 meters mula sa dating 174.10 meters at Caliraya dam-288.10 meters na water level mula sa dating 287.17 meters.

Dahil sa pagtaas ng water level partikular sa Angat dam ay patuloy naman ang sapat na suplay ng tubig sa Kalakhang Maynila at karatig lalawigan na sinusuplayan ng dalawang water concessionaires na Maynilad at Manila Water.

Magugunita na nitong panahon ng tag-init, maraming taga-Metro Manila ang nakaranas ng daily water service interruptions dahil sa bumababang water level sa Angat dam.

Back to the countryside

By [BusinessMirror Editorial](#)

May 19, 2020



Trending photos of crowded malls and congested roads in Metro Manila under modified enhanced community quarantine have elicited negative comments on social media against some people who ignore social distancing protocols.

There is little room to practice social distancing in the most densely populated city in the world. Metro Manila has over 42,000 inhabitants per square kilometer or 46,000 people per square mile, twice the density of New York City.

The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council said in a report: The proliferation of informal settlements in the Philippines has become a phenomenon associated with big cities. From the early 1970s to more recent years, estimates of the number of informal settlers in the country have varied, ranging from as low as 470,000 families to as high as 2.5 million families.

There has been a pervading assumption in the rural areas that life in the big city would give people greater access to basic services, better education and more livelihood opportunities. Yet, more and more people migrating to urban centers end up living in slums, under conditions that are worse than the countryside.

Slums in Metro Manila are growing at 8 percent a year, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies said in a study.

An Asian Development Bank study showed that population in Philippine slum areas will go up to 12 million people if nothing is done to stem the tide of rural-urban migration.

Telling people in the slums—where people live in an average area of only 4 square meters per person—to practice social distancing and stay at home is almost impossible.

Considering all these, there is nothing inherently wrong with a government program that seeks to reverse the continuing migration of the rural population to Metro Manila, like the Duterte administration's "Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa" program.

Critics of Balik Probinsya say there is nothing new in this program, which is true.

One of the first things Cory Aquino did when she became president in 1986 was to devolve and decentralize the government. She adopted a policy agenda for People Powered Development to bring about “growth with equity.” The Local Government Code was enacted into law under her administration precisely to reverse the centralism that resulted in underdevelopment and the lack of government services in the countryside.

In the succeeding administration of Fidel Ramos, other laws to help local governments and the countryside were enacted, like the Kalakalan 20 or the Magna Carta for Countryside Development, and the Magna Carta for Small Farmers.

Many more similar measures followed. If these laws and programs did not work, then we should revamp them, and make them work until they actually do.

The government needs to create conditions in the countryside that will lead to job creation and private-sector investments, whether by relaxing some regulations or reducing taxes or other measures.

The current technologies allow services to be performed anywhere and everywhere, as the IT-BPM sector has proven. With the right worker education and the right infrastructure, the service sector can thrive outside of the major cities.

One critic of Balik Probinsya said the government should prioritize urban housing for informal settlers instead of sending them back to the provinces.

But the national government has spent billions for new public housing every year. These billions have never been enough to solve the squatting problem. The government has relocated thousands of poor families living in the slums, particularly those in high-risk zones such as along waterways in Metro Manila, but they keep coming back, or others keep taking their place.

The government does not have enough money to relocate all squatters. It has to spend at least P250,000 for relocating every family of squatters, which runs into tens of billions every year.

The government would do better to help create jobs, lure investments and industries and disperse economic activity in the countryside than spend billions on relocation. If the recycled, rehashed Balik Probinsya program can successfully do that, then we should give it a chance to work.

Filipinos living in slums and crowded cities would happily and gladly move back to their hometowns and provinces if they can have even just a semblance of the life they had always hoped for when they left the countryside.

Image Credits: [Jimbo Albano](#)

Back to the province

posted May 19, 2020 at 12:15 am by **Ernesto M. Hilario**



"Is this a long-term thing or a limited program only during the remainder of the Duterte administration? If so, it may have politics written all over it."

"Balik Probinsya" sounds to me like a Band-Aid solution to the congestion in Metro Manila that's readily apparent in the proliferation of informal settler communities along esteros and in the unmanageable traffic along city streets at all times, not just during rush hours.

It also looks like a knee-jerk reaction to the huge number of people, primarily from urban poor and lower middle-class communities, seeking cash assistance from the government amid the COVID-19 lockdown in almost the entire country.

In other words, if the goal is to send back to the provinces all those without the means to support themselves, that's tantamount to sending them off to exile in their home country, not as a punishment for crime or violation of laws, but simply because they're poor and a big burden to the government.

Who would want to go home to Sulu or Basilan, for instance, where the remnants of the dreaded Abu Sanyaf still manage to engage government troops in armed hostilities?

Who would want to be sent home to parts of Caraga region which is among the least developed in the country and where there are few jobs and livelihood opportunities?

We're told that those who would voluntarily avail themselves of the program would be given livelihood and even housing in their home provinces. This is too good to be true.

But we do have other questions. Is this a long-term thing or a limited program only during the remainder of the Duterte administration? If so, it may have politics written all over it.

We're wary of the Balik Probinsya program now touted by the this government as no other similar program in past administrations since the 1960s has yielded significant results, that is, led to a marked reduction in poverty levels in this country.

Free vaccine for COVID-19

Will this proposal see the light of day?

We're referring to the call made last week by more than 140 world leaders, experts and elders for guarantees that COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, tests and treatments should be provided free of charge to everyone, everywhere.

“Billions of people today await a vaccine that is our best hope of ending this pandemic,” said Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa. “We are resolute that the COVID-19 vaccine must be patent-free, rapidly made and distributed, and free for all. All the science must be shared between governments. Nobody should be pushed to the back of the vaccine queue because of where they live or what they earn.”

“We must work together to beat this virus. We must pool all the knowledge, experience and resources at our disposal for the good of all humanity,” according to Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan. “No leader can rest easy until every individual in every nation is able to rapidly access a vaccine free of charge.”

The leaders said they recognize that many countries and international organizations are cooperating on research and development, funding and access.

However, since any countries and companies are working to develop an effective vaccine, the leaders want concrete commitments to ensure that it is made affordable and available to all in the quickest possible time.

One, a mandatory worldwide pooling of patents and sharing of all COVID-19-related knowledge, data and technologies in order to ensure that any nation can produce or buy affordable doses of vaccines, treatments and tests.

Two, the rapid establishment of an equitable global manufacturing and distribution plan for all vaccines, treatments and tests that is fully funded by rich nations and which guarantees transparent “at true cost prices” and supplies in accordance with need rather than the ability to pay. This would involve massive increase in manufacturing capacity to produce the vaccines in sufficient quantities and train and recruit millions of health workers to distribute them.

Three, a guarantee that COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests are provided free of charge to everyone, everywhere, with priority given to frontline workers, vulnerable people and poor countries with the least capacity to save lives.

“Faced with this crisis, we cannot carry on business as usual. The health of each of us depends on the health of all of us,” said Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand. “The COVID-19 vaccine must not belong to anyone and must be free for everyone. Diplomatic platitudes are not enough—we need legal guarantees, and we need them now.”

All this is well and good. But will the big pharmaceutical firms and private laboratories engaged in medical research agree to give away for free the end-result of their frantic—and no doubt expensive—search for a free COVID-19 vaccine?

ernhil@yahoo.com

NATION

Gov't exceeds SAP target

Published 4 hours ago
on May 19, 2020 01:30 AM

By [Francis Wakefield](#)



Malacañang is looking at providing financial assistance to 20.3 million families under the second tranche of the cash aid for beneficiaries reeling from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a virtual press briefing at Malacañang Palace, presidential spokesman Harry Roque disclosed that of this number, still 4.9 million families had been “left out” of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

He assured that they will now be prioritized among the recipients of the next tranche.

Also to be aided are some 3.4 million people under the Small Business Wage Subsidy of the Department of Finance. An additional 12 million families will also receive SAP.

“So, how many will benefit from SAP? According to the law, there should be 18 million families to receive government support. But we now have 20,300,000 families to be aided by the government,” Roque said.

Under the Republic Act 11469 or the Bayanihan Act, a total of 18 million low income households shall be provided with cash aid amounting from P5, 000 to P8, 000 a month for two months.

The government exceeded this number as it was able to provide aid to 19,436,323 families.

“From 18 million beneficiaries, we also have DoLE’s (Department of Labor and Employment) COVID-19 Program (602,722); the DoLE’s AKAP (Abot Kamay sa Pagtulong) Program (73,352); and DoLE’s TUPAD (299,156).

“We also have financial subsidy for rice farmer through the Department of Agriculture (415,000 farmers). And the DSWD’s SAP.”

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/19/govt-exceeds-sap-target/>

Duterte thanks LGU, NGO

Published 7 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 11:10 PM
By **Keith A. Calayag**



RICE DONATION. Residents of Barangay Tatalon in Quezon City help unload rice donated by the non-profit organization Tzu Chi Foundation on 8 April 2020. Each family in the village will receive 25 kilos of rice. (Photo by Joey O. Razon/PNA)

President Rodrigo Duterte thanked local government units (LGU), non-government organizations (NGO) and the private sector for their donations now that the country is facing a crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic.

According to his report to the Congress on the use of his additional powers to address the coronavirus, the Department of Social Welfare and Development has recorded relief assistance ranging from canned goods, ready to eat food, hygiene kits, masks and alcohol provided by the LGU amounting to P10.875 billion.

The DSWD received P362.010 million worth of goods and essentials from NGO and P29.268 million from private sector.

“At this point, I express my appreciation of the efforts exerted by LGUs and the Bayanihan spirit overwhelmingly demonstrated by NGOs and the private sector, all of which have extended a helping hand to our countrymen during this critical time, above and beyond all expectations,” said Duterte.

“While not all may have been documented in official records, they are without doubt substantial and of immense benefit, both to our frontliners and the low-income families,” he added.

Duterte said the contributions have been critical in easing the impact of COVID-19.

p: wjg

Bill sets ‘new normal’ policies

May 18, 2020

By Jester P. Manalastas

People's Journal

DEPUTY Speaker and Antique Rep. Loren Legardais urging Congress to pass immediately a bill that introduces new normal policies to be enforced in the workplace and public places.

Legarda is one of the authors of House Bill 6623 or the New Normal for the Workplace and Public Spaces Act of 2020.

Other authors are Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, Majority Leader Martin Romualdez, Deputy Speaker Luis Raymund Villafuerte, Deputy Speaker Paolo Duterte and ACT-CIS Rep. Eric Go Yap.

The new normal scheme is being prepared amid expectation of the eventual ending of community quarantine adopted to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The bill recognizes the need for the establishment of mechanisms that will facilitate the resumption of economic and social activities without sacrificing the health and well-being of the Filipino people, while also subscribing to global development frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

HB 6623 seeks to establish safety measures and protocols in place as the country adjusts to the “new normal” in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It contains universal and mandatory guidelines, such as wearing of masks in public places and workplaces, physical and social distancing, as well as mandatory temperature checks in all closed and semi-closed areas.

It also provides for the monitoring of private workplaces, management of public transportation, and monitoring of schools and learning institutions.

Legarda will ensure that the bill integrates gender and social equity considerations, such as providing public reproductive health care services, strengthening capacity of maternal health clinics and midwives, and supporting women’s needs in the procurement of adequate protective gear and equity in wages.

Legarda said that the Subcommittee will examine HB 6623 so as to ensure that it is not too prescriptive, it is environmentally-friendly, and that reasonable flexibilities are provided.

“We should never go back to our old ways that brought us this COVID-19 crisis. We should start preparing ourselves and changing our mindset and behavior towards a healthier, more sustainable, and better new normal,” Legarda said.

Palace threatens to shut down crowded malls

“To malls who will not follow social distancing and crowd control, well, that would be easy – you will just be closed,” Secretary Harry Roque said.

Published 13 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 04:28 PM
By [Francis Wakefield](#)



A SCENE during the reopening of malls in Metro Manila Saturday taken by a netizen and which has gone viral on social media. CTTO, W. Commons

Malacañang on Monday warned that malls that will not follow government guidelines on social distancing will be immediately shut down following reports of mayhem in some establishments that were allowed to open.

Presidential spokesperson Secretary Harry Roque stressed that said commercial establishments must follow the conditions set by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) on their reopening.

The influx of people had been noted in malls in Metro Manila under the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) scheme, but more so in neighboring provinces under the more relaxed general community quarantine (GCQ) alert level.

Roque said that malls must limit the number of people they allow inside and that all other protocols should be enforced all the time.

“To mall owners, we have a rule: Two square meters in the common areas of the mall should be limited to just one person,” Roque said in Filipino in his video press conference.

He said there should be security guards and mall employees who will enforce the guidelines, including the wearing of face masks.

“To malls who will not follow social distancing and crowd control, well, that would be easy – you will just be closed,” Roque said.

Roque said that the 12,513 in coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases in the country will surely balloon past the country’s medical capacity with people not following social-distancing and other protocols.

He said the government eased restrictions not because the country is already safe from the COVID-19 pandemic but because there is a need to revitalize the economy.

On Sunday, Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go warned that government resources are drying up with the billions of pesos it had disbursed in cash to people affected by COVID-19.

President Rodrigo Duterte has already given the budget department the marching order to find funding for the second tranche of cash assistance to affected families.

In a separate statement, Roque said the Philippines “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.”

“The Palace, therefore, asks for the cooperation of the public as the whole country remains in quarantine,” he said.

“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.”

p/jhd

Relaxed quarantine measures may cause second wave of COVID-19 cases, health official warns

Published May 18, 2020 9:26pm

The easing of quarantine restrictions in most areas across the country may lead to a second wave of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, a health official warned on Monday.

Department of Health Director IV Eric Tayag, an epidemiologist and infectious disease expert, made the remark after Filipinos flocked to malls and other public areas over the weekend.

“Totoo na baka magkaroon tayo ng second wave sapagkat hindi pa gano’n karami ang nagkakasakit sa atin,” he said in a 24 Oras report by Lei Alviz.

“Pangalawa, wala pa tayong bakuna. Pangatlo, marami pang mga lugar na nagtatala ng maraming kaso,” he added.

ayag also urged those feeling any symptom or illness to stay at home.

Metro Manila was among the areas downgraded to a modified enhanced community quarantine on May 16.

Experts from the University of the Philippines earlier [warned](#) that COVID-19 cases could spike to 24,000 by June if quarantine measures are relaxed too soon.

“As we relax the quarantines and as mobility rises, the success of the quarantine will rely a lot more on individual efforts. What they do will not just save themselves but they will save other people,” assistant professor Ranjit Singh Rye said. —**Julia Mari Ornedo/LDF, GMA News**

Traffic returns to Metro Manila roads amid eased quarantine

Published May 18, 2020 9:53pm

Heavy traffic was observed on the first Monday in areas under the modified enhanced community quarantine.

According to Bernadette Reyes' 24 Oras report, the traffic buildup was due to the checkpoints in several main roads.

Meanwhile, many workers were also forced to walk amid the lack of public transportation.

In North Caloocan, heavy traffic was seen after private vehicles and motorcycles started plying the roads on Monday morning.

This was the same situation in España Boulevard, Ortigas Avenue and Marcos Highway.

With this, many employees were forced to walk or ride their bicycles on the way to work.

“Maglalakad na lang pa-Novaliches... Mahigit isang buwan na rin akong naglalakad ng balikan,” an employee, who was waiting for a public transportation in Commonwealth, said.

Several employees who live in general community quarantine areas and had to work in areas under MECQ also had a hard time going to work.

“Sobrang hirap po kasi ang layo na tapos wala pa masyadong masakyan unlike noong bago pa lang ECQ, may mga DOTr po na bus na medyo maraming bumabiyahe pero ngayon, madalang na po,” Leonida Rosalina, a frontliner, said.

On Saturday, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez asked private companies to provide transportation or dormitories for their employees.

“Dahil wala pa po tayong public transportation, ‘yong pagbigay po ng shuttle services ay kailangan pong i-provide ng kompanya kung mayroon po silang private vehicles, puwede rin pong gamitin ito,” he said. —**Ma. Angelica Garcia/LDF, GMA News**

Second wave of infection to stall recovery — Diokno

posted May 18, 2020 at 10:40 pm

by [Julito G. Rada](#)

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Benjamin Diokno said avoiding a second-wave or third-wave COVID-19 infection is key to a “U-shaped” economic recovery for the Philippines this year.

In an interview over ANC on Monday, Diokno expressed optimism the forecast of the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee of an economic contraction of between 2 percent and 3.4 percent this year might hold, unless there was a second or third wave of infection.

“A lot of things depend on the behavior of the Filipino people. If we can avoid a second wave or a third wave, the forecast will be steady. That means a U-shaped recovery...,” Diokno said.



BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno

“But in case there is a second wave, that could mean a W-shaped recovery. That will be much worse than the revised forecast,” he said.

Diokno also considered as “positive” a big chunk of the country was under a modified quarantine status.

“... Unless there is a deterioration in those hotspots, I think we are ready towards our move for normalization. So I am optimistic that the forecast right now of DBCC might hold, unless there is a serious second or third wave,” he said.

DBCC earlier this month predicted the economy to contract between 2 percent and 3.4 percent this year, a sharp reversal from the 6-percent expansion in 2019, due to the debilitating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The projection was way below the earlier forecast of a 6.5-percent to 7.5-percent growth for 2020 that was made before the onset of COVID-19 in the latter part of last year.

Diokno said the 2-percent contraction was based on the effectiveness and the early deployment of both fiscal and monetary responses to the pandemic. He said the BSP had done a lot of anticipatory measures in the monetary side and that it was looking at how it was easing the liquidity in the market.

“Whether it is helping what sector. In the fiscal side, they have also deployed a lot of initiatives so let’s see how it works,” he said.

Diokno further said amid the health crisis, the banking industry remained well capitalized and their asset quality was quite high.

“So in the banking industry, we don’t see any major problem. Except of course, there are some industries like the rice industry and the tourism industry that might be affected...,” he said.

Estimates of the National Economic and Development Authority show the potential impact of the pandemic on the economy could reach P2 trillion in losses or about 9.4 percent of the GDP this year.

The GDP in the first three months of the year contracted 0.2 percent, a reversal from 5.7 percent in the same period last year, and 6.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019, pulled down by the pandemic.

But Neda expressed optimism the economy will rebound strongly in 2021.

“Timely implementation of a well-targeted recovery program, alongside efforts of the private sector, will mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a program will help the country regain confidence, attain higher economic growth, and restore employment rates to pre-crisis levels,” it said.

“The DBCC thus expects the country to recover by fiscal year 2021 with GDP growth of 7.1 to 8.1 percent,” it said.

Palace: Employers should provide lodging, transport to employees

Published 8 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 09:06 PM
By **Francis Wakefield**



Malacañang on Monday said that it should not be taken against employees if some of them opted not to go work due to the absence of public transportation that will bring them to their respective work places following the placing of Metro Manila under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ).

In a briefing, Presidential spokesman Harry Roque made the remark due to the difficulty encountered by many workers who had to walk a number of kilometers and endure the heat just to get to work due to the inability of their employers to provide them with shuttle services.

Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez was quoted as saying over the weekend that “If an employee refuses to work, it doesn’t reflect well on his or her character and he or she also runs the risk of losing his or her job.”

The Palace official added that if employers will provide shuttles or vehicles for their employees, they should observe minimum health standards to ensure that they are protected from COVID-19.

Mandatory COVID-19 testing of returning workers urged

Published 15 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 02:44 PM
By **Raymart Lolo**



Relaxed quarantine measures saw a fraction of employees in Metro Manila go back to work on Monday. (Photo: entrepreneurhandbook)

A labor group and government officials called for mandatory testing of employees before they are allowed to go back to work to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Defend Jobs Philippines expressed concern over employees who will resume work without being tested first. It said easing quarantine restrictions in Metro Manila should not mean relaxed treatment on the health protocols.

“The Department of Health and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases must have stricter rules and guidelines to private employers to require its workers to undergo coronavirus testing and comply with various precautionary measures in ensuring the health and safety of their employees in this time of pandemic,” said Thadeus Ifurung, Defend Jobs Philippines spokesperson.

In San Juan, Mayor Francis Zamora required business establishments to have their employees tested.

“Napaka-importante talaga dyan na dapat ‘yung mga empleyadong papasok ay na-test na para sa COVID-19 at dapat ang resulta ay negative,” Zamora said in a statement.

“Hindi talaga natin papayagan na basta-basta lang papasok ‘yung mga empleyado na hindi nate-test sapagkat ayaw naman natin na tumaas ang bilang ng positibong pasyente dito sa lungsod ng San Juan.”

Businesses must also submit return-to-work plans to the Business Permits and Licensing Office for approval and issuance of certificates.

Senator Risa Hontiveros, meanwhile, is worried over asymptomatic patients infecting their fellow workers.

In a social media post, Hontiveros said the DOH should initiate the testing.

“We need to test workers returning to work. This needs to be arranged by employers & DOH. We can’t ease quarantine if we’re not doing mass testing,” Hontiveros stated. “Marami sa mga kaso walang sintomas. We cannot afford a second wave.”

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello previously said returning workers do not need to undergo mandatory COVID-19 test as only symptomatic individuals should be required to do so.

Under relaxed quarantine protocols, only 50 percent of a company’s workforce can be physically present. Still, Bello said, employers must comply with minimum health standards, including temperature check for the workers as well as implementing strict sanitation protocols. (Hana Bordey and Neil Alcober)

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/18/mandatory-covid-19-testing-of-returning-workers-urged/>

Labor group urges gov't to make COVID-19 testing of returning workers mandatory

Published May 18, 2020, 8:27 PM

By **Leslie Ann Aquino**

Labor group Defend Jobs Philippines on Monday said easing quarantine restrictions in Metro Manila must not mean a more relaxed treatment of the clamor for free mandatory COVID-19 tests for all Filipino workers and people.

In a statement, the group said the government must make testings mandatory for all returning workers and the rest of the workforce who are still not allowed to report back to work.

They said the lightened quarantine rules must equate to a “faster and wider” range of people being tested.

Defend Jobs Philippines expressed their dismay over a government official’s statement that “employees are not required to undergo a coronavirus test prior to returning to work.”

“Instead of dismissing proposals of testing all returning workers, the DOH (Department of Health) and the Inter-Agency Task Force on [the Management of] Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) must have stricter rules and guidelines to private employers to require its workers to undergo coronavirus testing and comply with various precautionary measures in ensuring the health and safety of their employees in this time of pandemic,” Defend Jobs Philippines Spokesperson Thadeus Ifurung said.

“While not making the tests as pre-conditions for workers to return back to work, the DOH and the IATF must use their authority to start making aggressive measures to conduct massive COVID-19 testings across the country as [an] initial measure to identify cases and resolve this national public health emergency,” he added.

Earlier, Defend Jobs Philippines had asked the government and private employers to secure the health and safety of workers inside their respective workplaces in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 workers’ organizations.

Backlogs due to limited personnel and machine capacity, experts say

Published 9 hours ago
on May 18, 2020 08:29 PM
By **Gabbie Parlade**



Medical health experts on Monday said that backlogs in the tests conducted are influenced by factors such as the limit in the personnel and machine capacity.

According to Dr. Marife Yap, the Senior Policy Adviser and Deputy Director for Health Financing for projects in the Philippines of Thinkwell, the processing of samples in a machine is maximized both for tests conducted and in verifying previous results.

Yap added that although Gene Xpert cartridges used for testing makes the process shorter, only a limited supply is available in the country and also, a factor in the limitation of tests conducted is the varying number of personnel handling the load of samples.

She explained that if the laboratory has no automated machine for extraction, health workers do it manually where the process of testing normally takes about eight hours and swab samples from local government units further increases the tests needed to be processed in laboratories.

Aside from this, Executive Director in the University of the Philippines, National Institutes of Health (UP-NIH) Dr. Eva Dela Paz also said that the personnel and laboratories who handle the test are only qualified when all safety hazards are met.

Dela Paz said that trained personnel handling the tests should be increased further as more laboratories are licensed for COVID-19 testing, while Yap noted that one of the few measures being considered are pop-up laboratories that can easily be set-up in other regions and provinces.

The DoH, meantime, has also sought the help of private sectors in further increasing the testing capacity in laboratories to meet the 30,000 tests by the end of May and to attend to the remaining backlogs.

Health Usec. Maria Rosario Vergeire said that as of the latest record last 15 May, the testing capacity has reached 11,127 tests in a day which is so far the highest attained since its supposed 8,000 goal last April 30.

The Health department has also 30 licensed RT-PCR laboratories in the country including six others that can conduct Gene Xpert testing.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/18/backlogs-due-to-limited-personnel-and-machine-capacity-experts-say/>



KALAYAAN SA GITNA NG COVID-19 'WAG ABUSUHIN

May 19, 2020 @ 12:10 AM 8 hours ago

Views: 67

NILUWAGAN na ang Metro Manila kaugnay ng Corona Virus Disease-19 at daan-daang libo kundi man milyong na mula sa 15 milyong residente ang nagsilabasan sa mga lansangan upang muling langhapin ang kalayaan mula sa mga lockdown at curfew, nagtrabaho, bumili ng pangangailangan nila, nagtinda upang kumita at iba pa.

Pero hindi lang mga residente ang lumabas sa kanilang mga tahanan kundi mga residente mula sa mga kalapit na lalawigan at marami rin sa mga ito ang nagsipasukan sa Metro Manila para sa iba't ibang kadahilanan, kasama na ang pagtatrabaho sa Kamaynilaan.

Kaya naman nagkaroon ng mga trapik, lalo na sa umaga at oras ng uwian sa dakong hapon.

Nagkatrapik-trapik kahit hindi pa gumana ang mga pampublikong sasakyan na bantulot na bumiyaye, kahit payagan pa sila, dahil lugi ang mga tsuper at operator sa patakarang kalahati lang ang kargang pasahero ng mga ito.

IKALAWANG SIGWADA

Nasa isipan natin, mga Bro, ang muling pagwawala ng COVID-19.

'Yun bang === pagkalat nito nang malawakan at pagkakasakit ng marami at pagdami rin ng mga mamamatay rito.

Sa nakaraang mga araw, bagama't naglalaro sa 200 daan ang natatagpuang naging positibo, magandang balita naman ang rekord sa namamatay na kulang-kulang sa 10 sa nakaraang dalawang araw halimbawa.

Ngayong nagsilabasan ang milyong tao sa tahanan sa Kamaynilalaan at dinagdagan ito ng maaaring daang libong taga-labas saka nagsiuwian kinahapunan o kinagabihan, mangyayari kaya ang pinangangambahang second wave ng pananalasa ng Covid-19?

Malamang kaysa hindi pero sino ang hindi nananalangin na hindi sana mangyari ito?

Malalaman natin ang kasagutan, mga Bro, sa mga susunod na araw.

Lalo na sa loob ng 14 o higit pang araw na paglitaw ng mga sintomas ng nasabing nakamamatay na sakit at wala pang malinaw na gamot.

MAGBANTAY LAHAT

Ang isa sa mga pangunahing dahilan kung bakit niluwagan ang Metro Manila at kalapit na mga lalawigan o rehiyon ay para muling mabuhay ang ekonomiya ng bansa.

Kailangang magtrabaho para gumawa ng mga produkto at serbisyo ang mga mamamayan at taong gobyerno para kumita ang lahat.

Hindi kayang balikatin ng gobyerno ang mga mamamayan sa kanilang mga pangangailangan at pagkabangkrap ang aabutin nito kung mananatiling walang produksyon at serbisyo na lilikhain ng mga mamamayan.

Sa mga nililikhang produkto at serbisyo kasi ng mamamayan pangunahing umaasa ang pamahalaan ng buwis at iba pang pinagkakakitaan nito.

Ngunit habang nagaganap ang lahat ng ito, dapat magbantay ang lahat para hindi mabigyan ng pagkakataon ang COVID-19 na muling raragasa at sagasaan ang lahat.

Kung hindi, babalik tayo sa mga lockdown, curfew, kawalan ng trabaho sa pamahalaan at pribadong sektor hanggang sa magkandahetot-hetot ang lahat.

At maaaring babagsak tayo lahat sa kawalan, lalong paghihirap at gutom at kawalan ng kinabukasan.

MALAYANG RESPONSABLE

Ang gusto nating ipunto, mga Bro, habang binubuksan ng pamahalaan ang pintuan para sa lahat upang magkaron ng pamumuhay sa iba't ibang paraan, dapat maging responsable tayo at dapat na bahagi ng pagtutuunan ng pansin ang pagharang sa paglaganap ng COVID-19.

'Yun bang === panatilihin natin ang pagsusuot ng face mask, social distancing, pagiging malinis sa mga kamay at katawan gamit ang lahat ng paraan, kasama ang mga disinfectant, pagiging alerto sa pagkakaroon ng mga sintomas ng sakit at pagtutulongan na iulat ang mga maaaring may dala ng sakit upang maayudahan ang mga ito ng mga kinaukulan at mapigilan ang mga ito na makahawa.

TESTING NA TULOY-TULOY

Sa ngayon, may namumuong malaking problema sa isang malaking hakbang laban sa COVID-19.

Paniniwala ng lahat dahil napatunayan namang mahalaga, dapat magkaroon ng mga test sa mamamayan, lalo na sa mga obrero.

Ang mga local government unit sa Metro Manila na sentro ng ekonomiya ng bansa ay nagsasagawa ng mga testing sa mga mamamayan.

Sa paglitaw ng mga obrero sa eksena, lumitaw ang problema kung sino ang dapat na magsagawa ng testing sa mga ito.

Sa mga araw na ito, nagtuturuan ang pamahalaan at nasa pribadong sektor kung sino ang babalik sa gastusin dito.

WALANG TESTING AT DISIPLINA

Kapag nagsama-sama ang kawalan o kakulangan ng testing at kawalan ng disiplina sa pagsunod sa lahat ng patakaran ng pamahalaan laban sa COVID-19, aba, maghanda-handa na tayo sa muling pananalasa ng nasabing sakit.

At kalakip nito ang pagbabalik natin sa nakapaparalisa sa buhay nating lahat na enhanced community quarantine.

Muling paiiralin ang mga napakaistrikong lockdown, curfew, kawalan ng trabaho o anomang pagkakitaan, pagkabilanggo sa sariling tahanan sa patakarang stay at home, pagkakaharang ng nalalapit nang pagbubukas ng mga eskwelahan, pagsasara ng mga paliparan at pier at paghinto ng mga transportasyon kahit pa sa malaking bahagi ng mga pribadong tao.

Wala ring papayagang mangibang-bansa at maaaring maharang pati ang mga puhunan mula sa ibang bansa.

Sana naman, huwag nating abusuhin ang pagkakataon nating muling maging malaya ngunit sa bagong kalagayan o new normal kung tawagin nila.

Para sa kabutihan naman nating lahat ang lahat ng patakarang pinaiiral ng gobyerno at kung susunod tayo nang maayos, makakayanan nating pagtagumpayan ang diyaskeng COVID-19 na ito.

We test, we trace, we treat, we will conquer!

We are also building up our tracing capability by getting more people involved in tracing activities.

Published 5 hours ago
on May 19, 2020 12:40 AM

By [Harry Roque](#)



Test, trace and treat. This is our government's strategy to beat COVID-19!

To put that strategy in action, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has designated Vivencio "Vince" Dizon as COVID-19 testing czar. Dizon, who is president and CEO of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority and Presidential Adviser for Flagship Programs and Projects, was also appointed as Deputy Chief Implementer of the Philippines' Declared National Policy Against COVID-19.

In his new role as Task Force T3 (Test, Trace and Treat) chief implementer, Dizon will ensure that the government's testing strategy will be up to reaching its goal of 30,000 tests per day — a target modelled after countries with successful testing strategies.

With the easing of some quarantine restrictions, and with more people going out of their homes to go back to work or for some, to access essential services, or to visit the malls and other commercial establishments that were allowed to open under the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ), it is imperative that we test, test, test!

An increased movement of people would guarantee a sure spike in COVID-19 cases, and we will lose the gains we have achieved in two months of ECQ implementation. We do not want that to happen! This is why massive and aggressive expanded testing is key to prevent the further spread of infections.

The good news is that our testing capacity is improving: 8,700 actual tests per day are being done as of 10 May 2020 — a 74 percent increase from the previous 5,000 tests per day (as of 2 May).

Testing capacity per day also increased by 70.6 percent from 8,500 tests (as of 2 May) to 14,500 tests (as of 10 May).

It was also reported that as of 14 May, there are now 30 COVID-19 testing laboratories nationwide. By the end of the month, there will be a total of 66 laboratories nationwide.

Aside from the COVID-19 testing laboratories, several swabbing facilities have been built nationwide, including four mega swabbing facilities. These mega swabbing facilities are located in Enderun Colleges in Taguig, Philippine Arena in Bulacan, Mall of Asia in Pasay and Palacio de Maynila in Manila.

To accommodate more patients, suspected patients and repatriated overseas Filipinos and overseas Filipino workers, we have also ramped up our COVID-19 isolation capacity in the National Capital Region and Luzon. From zero beds by 13 April 2020, there is now a 3,000 isolation bed capacity, with additional isolation facilities being constructed in Visayas and Mindanao, according to Dizon.

These quarantine facilities were built in partnership with the private sector. Patients with mild to moderate symptoms and those who are required to undergo the 14-day mandatory quarantine are accommodated in these quarantine facilities.

Again, test, trace and treat. This strategy is the meat and bone of our government's National Action Plan on COVID-19.

We are ramping up our testing capacity and testing more people. Accordingly, we are also building up our tracing capability by getting more people involved in tracing activities. After testing and tracing comes isolation. Those who were traced and found to have confirmed contact with COVID-19 positive persons will be isolated either in their own homes or in quarantine facilities. COVID-19 positive individuals will be treated accordingly before reintegration in the community, and adapting to the new normal.

Step by step, gradually but surely, we will beat COVID-19.

Moving forward — a suggestion for regions

Published May 18, 2020, 11:00 PM

#MINDANAO

By JOHN TRIA



John Tria

As many areas transition into general community quarantine, the obvious question being asked is: What now? How do we move forward? The questions matter because it looks like we will continue to live under the spectre of new infections such as the ones we are seeing in some countries.

The capability to quickly impose measures to keep the curve flat, or even lower the peaks as elucidated by the government early last week will be necessary at the regional level and efficiently implemented. all while keeping the economy moving.

This is just in case the feared second waves or new clusters such as those we are seeing in other countries do erupt. We are nonetheless confident that there are many lessons learned from our own experience and that of other countries that will serve us in the coming months.

For one, the clamor for increased testing cannot exist alone, nor should it be an end in itself, which is why it will need to be taken along with an enhanced capability to trace and treat being pushed by government. The establishment of new PCR labs such as that set up with ADB assistance in Pampanga that can process some 3,000 per day and those in the regions particularly, private hospitals investing in that capacity. This also means hiring more tracers and personnel to care for those infected.

On top of that, programs to spur economic activity, decongest our urban areas, and spread economic development, and activities to generate the necessary incomes for people and revenues for government will need to be pushed. New legislative proposals to introduce new economic stimulus measures at the local level are being proposed, along with new measures such as the enactment of the long-awaited National Land Use Act (NALUA), and the CITIRA Law to spur local investments, not to mention the Balik Probinsya program.

These only mean one thing: the work to keep the virus at bay is never done until a consistent treatment protocol is established. Resilience, or a capacity to control new infections while keeping the economy moving is critical. This, in my view, is what will increase business and consumer confidence that has been battered by infection fears even as some restrictions are relaxed. This will necessarily need to start in the regions, especially in areas where infections are lower than that of the NCR.

A further question being asked is: what mechanisms can coordinate the implementation the necessary measures to ensure this resilience?

A few quarters are raising the possibility that their respective regional development councils (RDCs) coordinate efforts to build economic resilience and long term infection management in their regions. Article 10, Section 14 of the Philippine Constitution provides RDCs as a body for “administrative decentralization to strengthen the autonomy of units therein and to accelerate the economic and social development of the units in the region.”



The RDC includes all government agency regional heads and local chief executives on the Council, and private sector representatives. This creates a mechanism for policy and programs to develop, especially those with long-term impact like ensuring that allocated funds for vital health facilities and necessary infrastructure that can help manage new infections are implemented at the ground, activities that can spur trade and food production and distribution within the regions, the removal of bottlenecks that hamper these programs are pushed.

As I have written previously, recovery and thus resilience moving forward will essentially be regional, with some regions getting ahead of others. The RDC will thus play a big role. These are among other ways forward worth discussing among government and private sector actors in the regions. Fighting this virus while keeping the economy moving will need the efforts of all.

For reactions: [facebook.com/johntriapage](https://www.facebook.com/johntriapage)

Farmers, fisherfolk to bear brunt of latest oil-price hike, group says

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

May 18, 2020



Farmers in Buguias, Benguet, are rushing to harvest their white radish in this photo.

The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Monday warned against the domino effect of the recent oil-price hike that will hit small fishermen and farmers.

The group lamented that the oil-price hike could not come at a worse time because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The group was reacting to last week's increase in the price of diesel, and petroleum products between P1-P2 per liter.

In a news statement, the fisherfolk group questioned the timing of the price increase when people are enduring the impacts of the Covid-19 to public health and economic lives of the people.

“The oil-price hike is an additional burden to poor families who barely make ends meet caused by the restrictive community quarantine. It is detrimental to small fisherfolks, who regularly consume gasoline for fishing operations, as petroleum products eat up almost 80 percent of our production costs. An increase to prices of oil products means an increase to our production expenses to another all-time high,” Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya national chairman said.

The fisherfolk group lamented that the fishing sector is already “battered by the skyrocketing oil prices caused by the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion [TRAIN] law,” which since its implementation in 2018, has increased the prices of diesel and gasoline by around P6 and P10, respectively.

Pamalakaya added that the price hike could trigger price shocks on basic goods and services, which will worsen the suffering of the already distressed families caused by the lockdown and the government's slow and inadequate social support.

“Fishers and farmers will be hard hit by the recent fuel price hike and its potential drastic domino effect to prices of other goods and commodities. The government has yet to aid all the rural folks affected by the lockdown, and yet we have to bear the brunt of another oil-price increase. We need production subsidy and economic aid, not another costly production that will further our hardship,” said Hicap.

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/05/18/farmers-fisherfolk-to-bear-brunt-of-latest-oil-price-hike-group-says/>

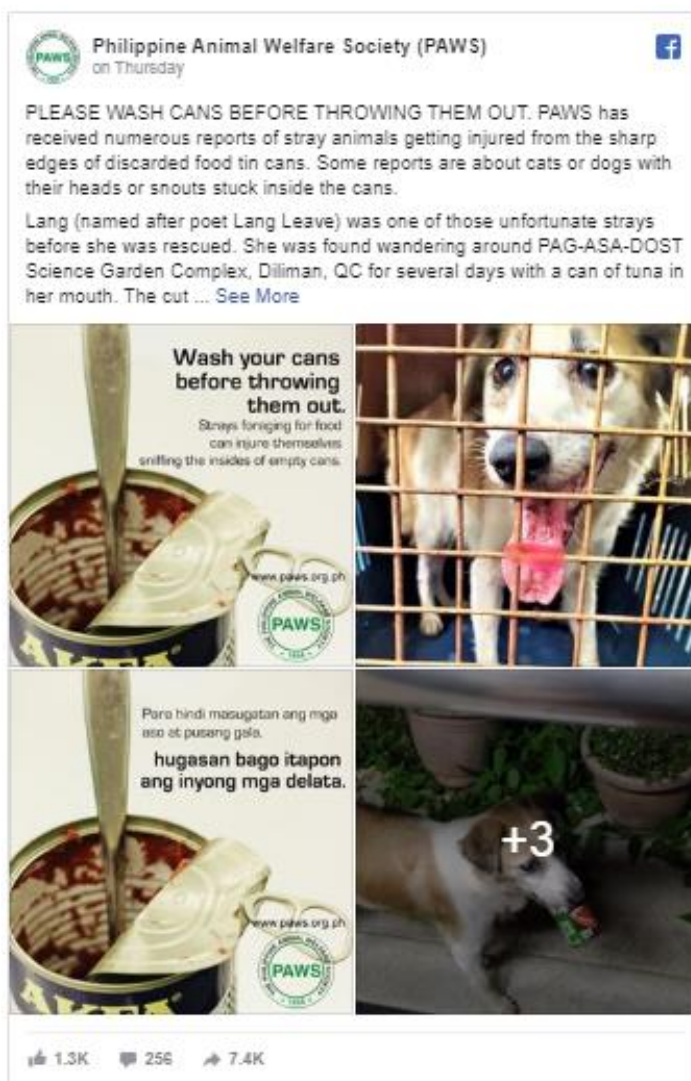
PAWS appeals to public to wash empty food cans before throwing them out

Published May 18, 2020, 1:49 PM

By **Gabriela Baron**

The Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) appealed to the public to wash food cans before throwing them out to prevent stray animals from injuring themselves sniffing the insides of empty cans.

PAWS said that it has received numerous reports of stray animals getting injured from the sharp edges of discarded food tin cans.



“Some reports are about cats or dogs with their heads or snouts stuck inside the cans,” the animal welfare group said.

The appeal came after PAWS found “Lang,” an injured dog, wandering around PAGASA-DOST Science Garden Complex in Diliman, Quezon City for several days with a can of tuna in her mouth.

Lang sustained deep cuts on her tongue, which eventually got infected. The stray is now being treated by a PAWS veterinarian who had to give her strong antibiotics.

“Not all dogs are going to be as lucky as Lang. As the situation of stray dogs becomes more desperate during these times, let us make sure we do not cause any harm by responsibly washing empty food cans before throwing them away,” PAWS said. “On behalf of Lang and all strays who will be saved from future harm, thank you.”

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/18/paws-appeals-to-public-to-wash-empty-food-cans-before-throwing-them-out/>

Meralco customers seek an explanation for shockingly-high May bills

Published May 18, 2020 9:52pm

Customers of the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) complained that their bills had substantially increased during the month of May, according to a 24 Oras report by Sandra Aguinaldo.

When several establishments opened up on Monday morning amid the loosened quarantine protocols, Quezon City residents started visiting their Meralco branches to ask about their high electricity bill.

Richard Fillomeno said he was worried that he might not be able to pay their bill because it was higher than the usual.

“Akin pong iko-complain kung bakit ganiyan kalaki. Parang ‘di po tama ‘yan kasi nagbi-bill lang kami ng P2,000 mahigit tapos ngayon, naging P13,000,” he said.

Meanwhile, Maribel Felizardo said she was willing to pay the high bill if Meralco could explain the reason behind it.

“Kasi nag-reduce pa nga po kami ng gamit instead na electric fan na malalaki ang gamit, bumili kami ng clip fan kasi matipid po ‘yon, ‘yon ‘yong maliit na electric fan,” she said.

Meanwhile, Meralco assured its customers that it would not disconnect anyone during the quarantine.

“Wala naman kaming gagawing anumang disconnection ngayong panahon ng ECQ,” Meralco spokesperson Joe Zaldarriaga said.

Earlier, Meralco also explained that the latest bills [reflected the full impact of the enhanced community quarantine](#), while the previous months were based on average consumption.

Zaldarriaga said the March and April bills were based on the previous three months consumption before the ECQ, when consumption was lower.

“Yong estimated based on the rule we followed ay mababa. Hindi na-capture ‘yong actual consumption kaya pumunta ‘yong dapat ‘yon sana eh pumasok at nabasa doon sa March at April doon sa May bill kaya ‘yon ‘yong lumaki sobra ‘yong sa pananaw nila,” he said.

“But actually, if we will really look into it very closely, that is already the actual consumption that has been consumed for three months,” Zaldarriaga added. — **DVM, GMA News**

Science City of Muñoz records Monday's highest heat index at 47°C

Published May 18, 2020 8:20pm

A heat index of 47°C, the day's highest, was recorded at PAGASA's synoptic station in Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija, [the state weather bureau said Monday](#).

This high point is followed by Sangley Point in Cavite City and Tuguegarao City with 45°C, and Legazpi City, Ninoy Aquino international Airport in Pasay City and Roxas City with 44°C.

The heat index, or init factor, is the measure of the temperature that a person feels in contrast to the actual air temperature. It is computed by factoring in the humidity as well as the air temperature.

It measures "human discomfort" and is the apparent temperature felt by the human body.

PAGASA warned anew that a heat index ranging from 41°C to 54°C may lead to heat cramps and exhaustion. Heat stroke is also possible amid continuous physical activity.

EFFECTS OF HEAT INDEX IN OUR BODY		
T in Celsius	T in Fahrenheit	Heat Index (Human Discomfort Index)
27 – 32°C	80 – 90°F	Caution Fatigue is possible with prolonged exposure and activity. Continuing activity could result heat cramps.
32 – 41°C	90 – 105°F	Extreme Caution Heat Cramps and Heat exhaustion are possible. Continuing activity could result heat stroke.
41 – 54°C	105 -130°F	Danger Heat Cramps and Heat exhaustion are likely; Heat stroke is probable with continued activity.
Over 54°C	Over 130°F	Extreme Danger Heat Stroke is imminent.

Meanwhile, the heat index reached 42°C at the Science Garden in Quezon City at 11 a.m. on Monday.

PAGASA [also recorded a maximum temperature of 34°C in the area at 1:50 p.m.](#)

The agency reminded the public to stay indoors and stay hydrated. — **Ma. Angelica Garcia/BM, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/weather/738732/science-city-of-munoz-records-monday-s-highest-heat-index-at-47-deg-c/story/>

Ambo impact, dengue outbreak, COVID-19 threat challenge Eastern Samar —governor

Published May 18, 2020 5:05pm

By JOVILAND RITA, GMA News

Eastern Samar governor Ben Evardone lamented the challenges the province is facing addressing the impact of Typhoon Ambo as well as the emergence of dengue cases and the threat of COVID-19, all at the same time.

Interviewed on Dabol B sa News TV on Monday, Evardone said the simultaneous calamities have resulted in the depletion of the province's funds.

“Medyo problematic talaga. Talagang depleted na, halos ubos na rin ‘yung pondo namin sa calamity fund,” Evardone said.

Typhoon Ambo made landfall in Eastern Samar on Thursday and battered the province.

Citing the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council, Evardone said initial reports estimate around P928 million worth of damage to infrastructure and agriculture, of which P912 million in damage to agriculture. He said even the stocks stored after harvest were affected.

“Maraming inanod na kalabaw, baboy, lahat. Siyempre, mga pananim, sira, niyog, palayan. Lahat pati ‘yung mga na-harvest—harvest season kasi sa amin ngayon—inabot din ng baha. So sira ‘yung mga palay nila” he said.

Evardone said it was rare for a typhoon to hit the province in May during the dry season.

Appeal for donations

The Eastern Samar government is coordinating with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Agriculture for relief goods and assistance to 47,000 affected families.

“Yung mga mga munisipyo at tsaka mga barangay, said na rin sila sa pondo para sa relief funds kahit naman ang province kasi naka-ilang wave na kami na nagbigay para sa COVID [relief],” Evardone said.

The governor appealed for the private sector to donate food packs, medicines, and construction materials for the families affected by Ambo.

“Dalawang buwan na kaming naka-lockdown, hanggang ngayon naka-general community quarantine pa kami,” he added.

COVID-19 watch and dengue cases

After Ambo’s onslaught, only 243 of the 641 isolation facilities dedicated to suspected patients of COVID-19 were left, with the rest destroyed or damaged, according to Evardone.

Ambo impact, dengue outbreak, COVID-19 threat

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The governor stressed that they need the isolation facilities because they are expecting around 20,000 people will return to the province after the enhanced community quarantine in Metro Manila.

“Yun ang kailangan matulungan kami ng national government, ma-set up 'yun agad-gagaran kasi oras, minuto ang laban natin sa COVID,” he said.

“Kung meron halimbawa maging symptomatic diyan, maging suspect, saan namin dadalhin sa bayan niya? Hindi naman papayag ‘yung ibang bayan. Magagalit ‘yung tao sa ibang town,” he said.

So far, Evardone said, no confirmed case of COVID-19 has been reported yet in Eastern Samar. More than 4,000 people already finished quarantine.

Those who are still undergoing quarantine came from other parts of the country. “Yung iba nakakalusot ng Metro Manila,” he said.

Meanwhile, Evardone said, a provincial health officer informed him a couple of weeks ago of emerging cases of dengue in the area.

“Meron din kaming outbreak ng dengue...May mga casualties na kami. Halos sumabay nitong pag-lockdown namin may mga dengue,” he said.

Everdone pointed out that highlighting the dengue outbreak in the province may trigger panic among his constituents. — **Joviland Rita/BM, GMA News**

'Ambo' delays test for OFWs on ships moored at

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'Ambo' delays test for OFWs on ships moored at Manila Bay

By [Recto Mercene](#)

May 18, 2020



Royal Caribbean's Spectrum of the Seas cruise ship, Asia's largest, is seen at Manila Bay on Sunday, April 26, 2020. Nine cruise ships began arriving in Manila on April 22, with some 4,000 Filipino crew members onboard—among the thousands of cruise-ship employees affected when the Covid-induced lockdowns in dozens of countries left their vessels float at sea, unable to get berthing rights from governments fearing the contagion.

TYPHOON Ambo drove away 22 cruise ships out of their mooring spots near the Philippine Navy Shipyard in Cavite to deeper anchorage in Mariveles, Bataan, delaying further the Covid-19 tests that had been ongoing since their arrival in April.

Although the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has reported that majority of the 8,000 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) quarantined onboard these ships have tested negative of the deadly virus, “they were unable to go ashore last weekend because the big waves from Typhoon Ambo forced the ships to leave Manila Bay to prevent any mishaps among the ships.”

“The PCG was in the process of taking the seafarers to South Harbor aboard tenders last Friday but the Signal No. 2 in Metro Manila from Typhoon Ambo stopped their evacuation efforts,” according to local manning agencies.

Fearing that the shallow harbor would pose danger to ships when strong gust from the typhoon whip up the bay, “the ship captains ordered the 20 cruise ships to lift anchors and headed out to the deeper waters off the coasts of Mariveles, Bataan, near Corregidor.”

Typhoon Ambo occurred just when the seafarers were undergoing mass testing by the Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ) and the PCG for the Covid-19 reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test. It is administered by boarding the ships and testing each Filipino crew member.

The manning agents said the cruise ships will return to the bay once the typhoon passes “and hopefully, the repatriation effort will be able to proceed without any interruptions.”

According to the PCG more than 7,100 seafarers have been tested negative and all were set to go home to their cities and provinces. The Department of Transportation (DOTr) will provide the sea transportation for those going to the Visayas or Mindanao.

All seafarers who tested negative are to receive an “all clear” certificate from the Philippine Red Cross so that they need not undergo another 14-day quarantine in their hometowns.

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Meanwhile, the manning agencies and the recruitment sectors are urging the PCG and BOQ to speed up the transmittal of Covid-19 tests results to seafarers who are quarantined in hotels.

“This is to avoid any more OFWs from leaving quarantine facilities who tried to escape due to their lengthy stay of more than two weeks at their facilities,” said recruitment consultant Manny Geslani.

The PCG on Sunday said some OFWs who escaped from their quarantine facilities without waiting for the test results were later found to be positive for the coronavirus.

PCG spokesman Commodore Armand Balilo said on television that the OFWs “escaped from hotels and could be with their families already.”

“This could have been avoided if the Coast Guard and Bureau of Quarantine monitor the quarantine facilities and speed up tests results,” Geslani said.

“The OFWs who arrived in April had to endure the 14-day quarantine and the swab test recently ordered by the Inter-Agency Task Force [IATF] that further delayed their departure from the facilities to return home.”

He added that the OFWs who arrived in April “continued to stay in quarantine facilities and this has prevented the earlier arrival of 30,000 seafarers from all parts of the world aboard chartered flights.”

This was exacerbated by the limitation imposed by the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, limiting the number of repatriates to 400 per day, or 2,800 OFWs each week.

The matter was forwarded to Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., who said the IATF should reconsider its cap on returning OFW at the premier airport.

'Retrieved'

MEANWHILE, an OFW tested positive for the novel coronavirus but who has left a quarantine facility has been located and turned over to a treatment facility, the Philippine Coast Guard said on Monday.

The patient, a 49-year-old male, who is from Quezon City, were among the eight OFWs who were reported to have left their designated quarantine facilities while waiting for the results of their Covid-19 tests.

“Immediately, the Sub-Task Group for the Repatriation of OFWs conducted a search operation and yesterday, 17 May 2020, he was immediately brought to a Covid-19 treatment facility,” the Coast Guard said in a news statement.

“His family members and other persons he had personal contact with, on the other hand, were put in isolation and are now undergoing Covid-19 RT-PCR testing,” it added.

The Coast Guard said that the eight OFWs have left their quarantine facilities prior to their receipt of their swab test results.

“The search operations for the seven other OFWs are ongoing. They shall be arrested and shall face charges for violating quarantine protocols and for compromising the health and safety of their families and communities,” Commodore Armando Balilo said.

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“The PCG appeals for public cooperation and understanding, especially from OFWs and their families, as the stringent protocols for repatriated OFWs are intended to promote public health and safety amid Covid-19 pandemic,” he added.

Meanwhile, the Joint Task Force Covid Shield has urged the public to exercise self-restraint amid temptation to go out of their houses with the partial reopening of some malls and other business establishments.

JTF Covid Shield commander Lt. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar made the appeal following reports that some people are taking advantage of the government’s decision to ease some restrictions on quarantine rules that include opening of business establishments like malls. ***With Rene Acosta***

Endangered pygmy hippo born at zoo for first time in
TITLE: over 30 years

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Endangered pygmy hippo born at zoo for first time in over 30 years

By: [Ryan Arcadio](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 06:01 PM May 18, 2020



The new male pygmy hippopotamus calf. Image: San Diego Zoo

An endangered pygmy hippopotamus welcomed a male calf in San Diego Zoo in California, United States last month, marking the zoo's first successful pygmy hippo birth in over 30 years.

The baby was born to a 4-year-old mother named Mabel, the zoo said in a [statement](#) last Friday, May 15, which is also celebrated as the annual Endangered Species Day.

Pygmy hippos are classified as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

Mabel gave birth to the male calf in an indoor habitat for pygmy hippos, in a forest area in the zoo. The baby weighed 12.4 pounds at birth.

“Typically, a pygmy hippo calf is tucked into a safe place before it begins to walk and follow its mother,” the zoo stated. “Wildlife care specialists report that the calf, which has not been named, stood, walked and followed Mabel around within just a few hours of being born.”

The calf is also surpassing milestones that wildlife care specialists look for in a young pygmy hippo, such as the ability to go underwater.



Mabel with her male calf. Image: San Diego Zoo

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The experts helped the animal prepare for exploration in the water by placing a small, shallow tub in its indoor habitat. They also installed a fence in another outdoor habitat to ensure it would not wander into deep waters when the mother and baby were transferred there.

“The calf demonstrated the natural adaptations and instincts of pygmy hippos—to close their nostrils and to hold their breath [underwater] — and today, both Mabel and the calf have full access to the pool in the maternity yard,” the zoo stated.

Meanwhile, Mabel and her baby, who now weighs 25 pounds, will be given access to the main hippo habitat in about a month.

“When this happens, wildlife care specialists will rotate mom and calf with the 13-year-old male pygmy hippo, Elgon,” the zoo explained. “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.”

The staff also noted that Mabel and her calf “are doing very well” and he is getting “lots of attention from the first-time mother.”

Less than 2,500 pygmy hippos still live in Africa, where they usually reside in rivers and streams located in forests in Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. The zoo noted that “the primary threats to this species’ population are logging, farming and human settlement” in their habitats. **JB**

Where bats are still on the menu, if no longer the best
seller

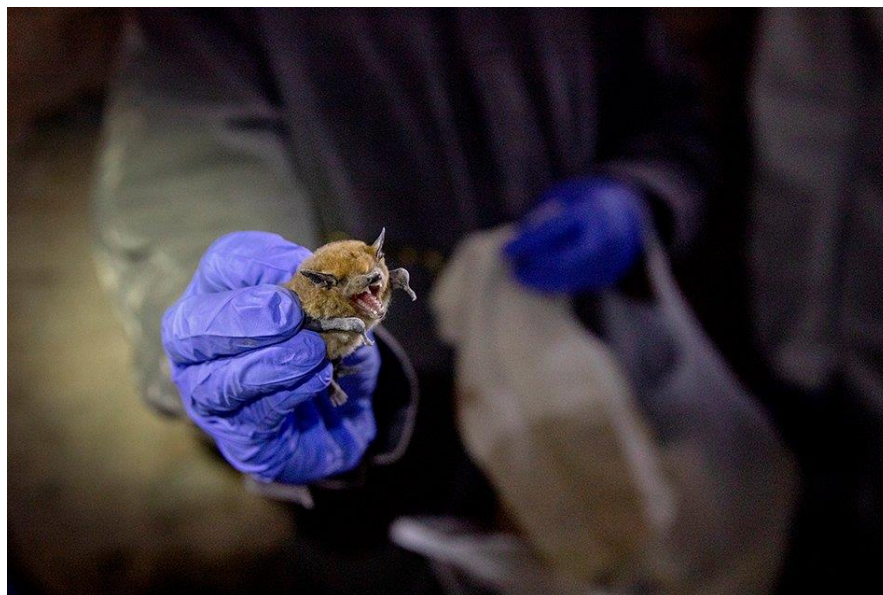
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Where bats are still on the menu, if no longer the best seller

Richard C. Paddock and Dera Menra Sijabat, *The New York Times*

Posted at May 13 2020 11:51 PM



A big brown bat collected by researchers in a cave near Ely, Nev., Nov. 5, 2018. Bats are considered the probable source of the coronavirus outbreak spreading from China. It turns out that they may have an immune system that lets them coexist with many disease-causing viruses. *Kim Raff/The New York Times/file photo*

BANGKOK — Six days a week, the butchers of Tomohon gather at Indonesia’s most notorious market and cut up bats, rats, snakes and lizards that were taken from the wilds of Sulawesi island.

Some of the butchers also slaughter dogs — many of them pets snatched from city streets — by clubbing them to death and burning off their fur with blowtorches.

For years, animal lovers and wildlife activists have urged officials to close the bazaar, boastfully known as the Tomohon Extreme Market. Now, the coronavirus pandemic is putting renewed pressure on the officials to finally take action.

“The market is like a cafeteria for animal pathogens,” said the lead expert for Indonesia’s coronavirus task force, Wiku Adisasmito, who has urged the government to close the country’s wildlife markets. “Consuming wild animals is the same as playing with fire.”

The earliest cluster of coronavirus cases in the global outbreak was linked to a market in Wuhan, China, where live animals were kept close together, creating an opportunity for the virus to jump to humans. The SARS virus, which killed 800 people worldwide, is believed to have originated in bats before spreading to civets in a wildlife market in China, and ultimately infecting people in 2002.

China ordered the closure of all its wildlife markets after the Wuhan outbreak in December. Now Indonesia’s Tomohon market is one of the region’s largest to sell wildlife for food.

Most of the wild animals at Tomohon are slaughtered before they reach the market. It is mainly dogs that are kept alive in cages and killed on the spot for customers who say that they taste better when freshly killed.

“It is like a time bomb,” said Billy Gustafianto Lolowang, manager of the Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Center in the nearby town of Bitung. “We can only wait until we become the epicenter of a pandemic like Wuhan.”

Local residents believe some animals have medicinal properties, including bats, which are said to cure asthma. In North Sulawesi, the largely Christian province that includes Tomohon, bush meat is such a big part of the local diet that snake and bat meat are often sold in supermarkets.

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“Before the virus, bats were the most popular, followed by rats and pythons,” said Roy Nangka, 40, who has worked as a butcher in Tomohon since 1999. “Now people mostly buy the meat of pigs and boars.”

Indonesia, which has the world’s fourth-largest population, was slow to acknowledge the threat of the coronavirus pandemic and lags far behind other nations in testing. It belatedly imposed travel and social distancing restrictions, and the virus has spread to every province.

As of Wednesday, Indonesia had recorded 15,438 cases and 1,028 deaths, the second-highest number of fatalities in East Asia after China. Some officials say many more cases and deaths have gone undetected and unreported.

On Tuesday, a coalition of animal rights groups called Dog Meat Free Indonesia urged the nation’s president, Joko Widodo, to close wildlife markets to prevent the possible emergence of a new pathogen.

“It is shocking to see markets selling wildlife and domesticated animals in full operation,” the group said in a letter to Joko. “If we do not act, the question is not whether another similar pandemic will emerge, but when.”

Any decision to shutter Indonesia’s wildlife markets is the responsibility of local officials, said Indra Exploitasia, director of biodiversity conservation for Indonesia’s Ministry of Environment and Forestry. She said the ministry had encouraged local officials to close them.

Research shows that bats, rats and snakes “play a role as a reservoir” for diseases that can cause illness in humans, she said.

Her office identified seven large markets on the islands of Java, Sumatra, Bali and Sulawesi that sell wildlife for consumption. Activists say many smaller markets also sell wildlife meat.

Many of the markets are best known for selling birds taken from the wild in a thriving illicit trade that strips Indonesia’s forests of an estimated 20 million songbirds a year.

At Depok Market, a popular bird and wildlife market in the city of Solo, local authorities ordered the culling of nearly 200 bats over coronavirus fears.

The bats were killed in March by drugging and burning them alive, said the Solo city secretary and COVID-19 task force leader, Ahyani, who like many Indonesians uses one name. The Depok Market remains open, but no longer sells bats.

Officials in Tomohon and other localities have resisted calls to close the sections of markets selling wildlife because they provide an important source of traditional food and income.

The quality of a meal in the region is determined by the diversity of animals being served, so local residents are keen to offer guests a variety of meats. Bush meat often costs as much as or more than farm-raised meat.

The Tomohon Extreme Market is part of a much larger market — the Tomohon Faithful Wilken Market, named for a German missionary — that sells all kinds of items, including fruits and vegetables, hardware, clothing and cellphones.

Tomohon city officials, in response to the coronavirus, cut the market’s hours by more than half in March to reduce social contact.

In the wildlife section, about 120 butchers work in the equatorial heat to carve up the various species they offer, including pythons measuring up to 20 feet long, monitor lizards, whitetail rats, wild boars and rice-field frogs.

In addition to promoting the bush meat trade, the market has also come under attack for the way some sellers procure and kill cats and dogs.

Many of the animals are kidnapped pets, activists say. A 2016 survey by the nonprofit group Animal Friends Manado Indonesia found that 90% of North Sulawesi pet owners reported having a dog or cat stolen.

The local police rarely pursue pet theft cases because they do not consider it a serious crime, said Frank Delano Manus, the group’s program manager.

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Manus and Lolowang of the Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Center said animals sometimes sold for meat at Tomohon and other markets in North Sulawesi belonged to protected species, such as the dwarf cuscus, a large-eyed marsupial; the anoa, a midget buffalo; the Sulawesi crested black macaque, locally known as yaki; and the babirusa, or deer-pig, which is renowned for its large tusks.

He said he hoped that the pandemic would alert people to the risks of consuming bush meat and help them realize that killing wildlife for food is not a sustainable practice.

But he does not expect them to abandon their tradition easily.

“The majority of people in North Sulawesi consume wild animal meats,” he said. “There will be a public outcry if they shut down the wildlife market totally.”

Climate activists line London's Trafalgar Square with kids' shoes

Updated May 18, 2020, 8:41 PM

By Reuters

LONDON – Climate activists placed more than 2,000 pairs of children's shoes in neat rows across London's Trafalgar Square on Monday to demand the British government stop bailing out carbon intensive industries that pollute the environment.



Civil disobedience group Extinction Rebellion lay out 1,500 pairs of children's shoes in Trafalgar Square in central London in a protest to demand the government adopts a climate-friendly economic recovery plan, following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), London, Britain May 18, 2020. (REUTERS/Simon Dawson/MANILA BULLETIN)

In the shadow of Nelson's Column, Extinction Rebellion activists lined up the shoes across the square and unfurled a banner reading "Covid Today > Climate Tomorrow > Act Now."

"Extinction Rebellion are calling on the government to act on the climate crisis during the coronavirus recovery so children and young people aren't left to suffer a deeper crisis," the group said.

The shoes, arranged across the paving of the near-deserted central London tourist attraction, were donated by people across the city and will be given to Shoe Aid following the action.

Extinction Rebellion wants to bring major change to the political, economic and social structure of the modern world in time to avert the devastation predicted by scientists studying climate change.

It says it wants non-violent civil disobedience to force governments to cut carbon emissions and avert a climate crisis it says will bring starvation and social collapse.

"Many young people feel suffocated by fear of what is to come, and now with this pandemic, maybe others will start to understand our fear for the future," said Poppy Silk, a 19-year-old activist from Extinction Rebellion.

"Even whilst healing from the pandemic, we must move towards a green transition to prevent future crises," Silk said.

Zimbabweans go hungry as coronavirus compounds

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Zimbabweans go hungry as coronavirus compounds climate woes

Published May 18, 2020, 9:03 PM

By Reuters

HARARE – Rosemary Pamire struggled to feed her family well before Zimbabwe entered lockdown in March to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Now she can hardly put together a meal a day as the country faces a deepening food crisis.



Rosemary Pamire cleans her home during a nationwide lockdown to help curb the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spread in Harare, Zimbabwe, May 9, 2020. Picture taken May 9, 2020. (REUTERS/Philimon Bulawayo/FILE PHOTO/MANILA BULLETIN)

Sitting on a bed in her two-room lodgings in Harare's poor Mbare township, Pamire told Reuters she had exhausted the little food she had stocked up during the first 21 days of an extended seven-week lockdown.

"We just eat once a day now. I wish the government could give us food to feed my family," Pamire said.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, 7.7 million Zimbabweans faced food shortages after a drought and cyclone in 2019 and patchy rains this year, linked to climate change and worsened by rampant inflation and a foreign exchange shortage.

Now it faces a triple threat of climate breakdown, monetary woes and a new economic crisis caused by the lockdown.

The government's latest figures show that 8.5 million Zimbabweans are now food insecure, while international aid agencies say up to 45 million people face hunger in southern Africa due to climate-induced food shortages.

The government has promised a food grant of \$2.4 billion Zimbabwe dollars (\$96 million) targeting 1 million people for six months, without saying where it would get the money.

It is pleading with donors, who would normally be reluctant to help because of its debt arrears, and this month it received \$7 million from the World Bank.

Pamire said she had registered with social welfare officials but she, like many others, has yet to receive anything.

That has left the burden to fend for the family with her 19-year-old daughter Anna, who sells ice lollies and bottled water at Mbare vegetable market at the risk of arrest by police because it is illegal.

"At times in the evening when we don't have maize-meal, mum will just tell us to have the ice lollies and water and we will just go to sleep," said Anna.



Zimbabweans go hungry as coronavirus compounds

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On a good day Anna sells a pack of ice lollies for 110 Zimbabwe dollars (\$4.40). After buying new stock, only \$1 is left for the family of seven to buy food, including the staple maize-meal and sugar and cooking oil.

Pamire, who lives with her four grown children and two grandchildren, used to buy clothes and shoes from Zambia for resell at home and earned \$100 after a good trip. But the border is closed, her passport expired, and she does not have money to renew it.

The market where Pamire's two adult sons carted goods around for a fee has been shut for six weeks, just like all informal markets from where millions of Zimbabweans were earning a living.

Climbing season at Mount Fuji cancelled due to coronavirus

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By Reuters

The climbing season for Mount Fuji, Japan's highest peak, is cancelled for this year, after local officials announced on Monday that the mountain trails leading up to the summit will stay closed throughout the summer due to the novel coronavirus.



Mount Fuji is seen from a plane in Japan, November 24, 2019. (REUTERS/Remo Casilli/MANILA BULLETIN)

Shizuoka Prefecture, which manages three of the four trails that lead to the peak, made the announcement on Monday, following a similar announcement made by a neighbouring prefecture that manages the fourth trail.

Shizuoka made the decision to keep the trails shut because “we cannot guarantee the safety of the climbers”, as mountain lodges and first-aid centers will be closed to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, said Yoshinari Nushida, a section chief for the Mount Fuji public work office.

This is the first time since record-keeping started that Shizuoka did not open its trails for the climbing season, he added.

Located about 130 km (81 miles) west of Tokyo, Mount Fuji rises to 3,776 meters (12,388 feet) and attracts multitudes of hikers and tourists during its climbing season, which runs from July to September.

Some 236,000 people climbed the mountain last year, according to the Environment Ministry. Japan has seen about 170,000 cases and 769 deaths from the novel coronavirus as of Monday. The daily number of new cases has dropped in recent days, with new cases in Tokyo down to the single digits.

The government lifted its state of emergency last Thursday for most of the country, save for eight prefectures including Tokyo, but is still urging people to remain vigilant against spreading the virus.