



PH metallic mine value drops 11%

By Jed Macapagal
-May 22, 2020

https://malaya.com.ph/index/index.php/news_business/ph-metallic-mine-value-drops-11/



THE country’s metallic mine production value dropped 10.69 percent to P24.86 billion in the first quarter of the year from P27.84 billion in the same period in 2019 due to the impact of the new coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) to the industry, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) said

Philippine Metallic Mineral Production
Q1 2020 vs Q1 2019

Mineral Commodity	Unit Used	JAN-MAR, 2020		JAN-MAR, 2019		% Change	
		Quantity	Value (P/P)	Quantity	Value (P/P)	Quantity	Value
PRECIOUS METALS							
Gold	KGS.	4,088	18,858,277,431	5,651	12,224,813,905	(27)	(13)
Silver	KGS.	6,335	185,687,685	8,469	217,291,534	(25)	(22)
BASE METALS							
Copper Concentrate	DMT	65,534	3,886,885,017	81,059	5,059,877,338	(19)	(23)
Copper Metal Equivalent	MT	16,035		19,360		(17)	
Mixed Nickel-Cobalt Sulfide	DMT	22,493	7,886,265,057	22,270	7,102,388,746	1	8
Mixed Nickel-Cobalt Sulfide (Metal)	MT	12,983		12,831		1	
Scandium Oxalate	Dry-Kg	3,364	90,158,352	3,081	87,368,418	10	4
Scandium Oxalate content	Dry-Kg	1,138		1,045		8	
Nickel Direct Shipping Ore	DMT	2,185,818	2,542,777,492	2,968,504	3,052,321,921	(26)	(17)
Nickel Content of Ore	MT	28,006		38,148		(27)	
Chromite	DMT	4,142	51,647,200	8,912	93,563,662	(54)	(45)
TOTAL			24,860,456,233		27,837,024,522		(10.69)

Source: Mines and Geosciences Bureau
As of May 2020

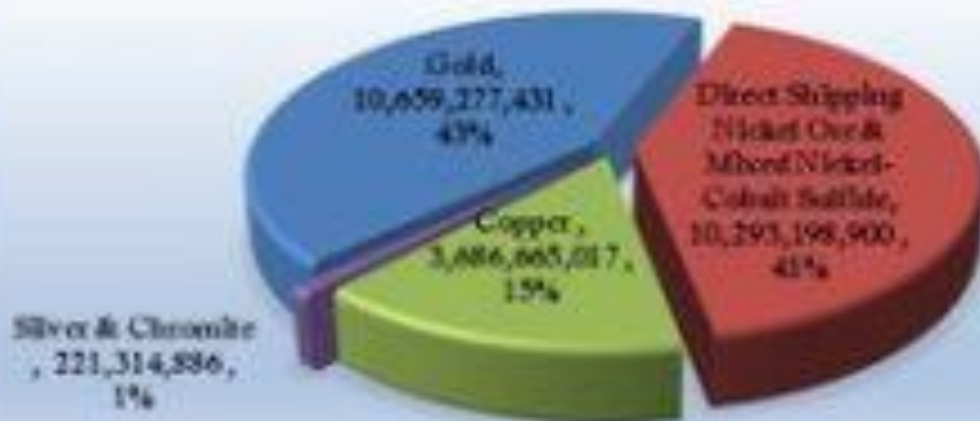
MGB said the zero contribution of OceanaGold Philippines Inc.’s (OGPI) Didipio gold project in Nueva Vizcaya also dragged production value. OGPI accounted for about 12 percent or P3.64 billion worth of copper, gold and silver in the production value in the first quarter of last year.

In terms of contribution to the total metal mineral production value, gold led with a share of 43 percent or P10.66 billion followed by nickel and its sub-products at 41 percent or P10.29 billion and copper with 15 percent or P3.69 billion. The remaining 0.90 percent or P220 million were from the combined value of silver and chromite.



PH metallic mine value drops 11%

FIGURE 1. CONTRIBUTION OF METALS TO TOTAL METALLIC MINERAL PRODUCTION VALUE, IN PESO VALUE AND IN PERCENTAGE JANUARY-MARCH 2020

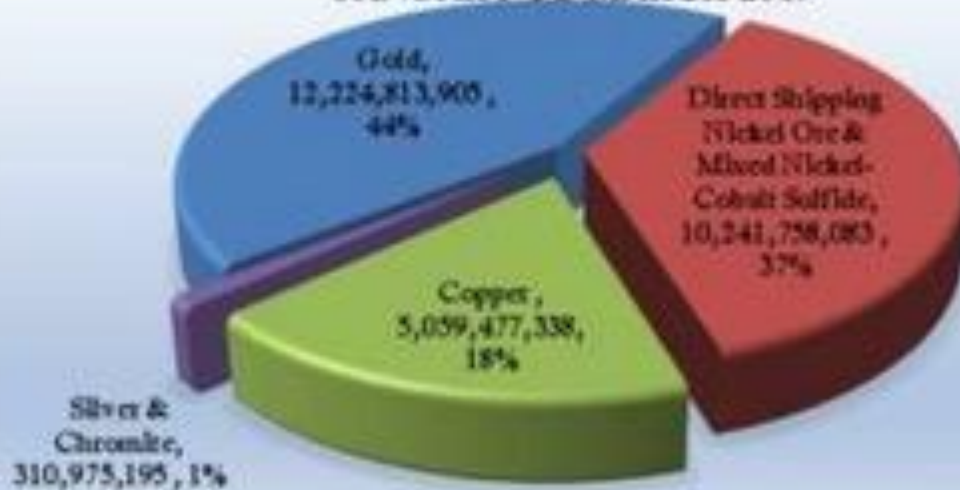


MGB said better prices in the first quarter of 2020 sustained gold’s share to the overall production value, rising \$280 per troy ounce (oz) from \$1,304.15 per troy oz to \$1,584.17 per troy oz year-on-year.

Gold’s total production was down from 5,651 kilograms (kgs) with an estimated value of P12.22 billion to 4,098 kgs with an estimated value of P10.66 billion, year-on-year.

The Masbate gold project of Filminera Mining Corp./Philippine Gold Processing and Refining Corp. led the production with 1,396 kgs valued at P3.61 billion or 34 percent of the country’s total gold mine output.

FIGURE 2. CONTRIBUTION OF METALS TO TOTAL METALLIC MINERAL PRODUCTION VALUE, IN PESO VALUE AND IN PERCENTAGE JANUARY TO MARCH 2019





PH metallic mine value drops 11%

Nickel prices grew from \$12,382.18 per ton to \$12,739.72 per ton, year-on-year, up by almost \$358 per ton.

Despite the good prices, nickel direct shipping ore incurred deficit both in volume and in value at 27 percent and 17 percent, respectively, from 38,146 metric tons (MT) valued at P3.05 billion to 28,006 MT valued at P2.54 billion, year-on-year.

MGB said of the 29 listed operating nickel mines, only 11 reported their metallic production while all the remaining 18 were either under care and maintenance program or reported zero production due to unfavorable weather conditions.

Copper suffered production setback both in volume and value of 3,315 MT and P1.37 billion, respectively. Recorded total mine output and value in the period was 16,035 MT with an estimated value of P3.67 billion from 19,350 MT with an estimated value of P5.06 billion in 2019.

MGB said the absence of a new player as well as of OGPI resulted to the sluggish performance of copper. From 2013 to 2018, OGPI accounted for about 2 percent up to 27 percent of the country's copper production.

The Toledo copper project of Carmen Copper Corp. in Cebu dominated the production with 79 percent and 77 percent of the total copper production volume and value in the quarter or 12,663 MT with an estimated value of P2.85 b



Q1 metal output drops amid mine closures

May 22, 2020 | 7:52 pm

<https://www.bworldonline.com/q1-metal-output-drops-amid-mine-closures/>



THE country's metal production value fell 10.69% to P24.86 billion in the first quarter from a year earlier as some mining operations were halted amid a coronavirus pandemic, according to the **Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB)**.

In a statement on Friday, the bureau traced the lackluster start mainly to zero production at the Didipio gold project of OceanaGold Phils. Inc. in Nueva Vizcaya, one of the country's major mines.

Gold led the total metal mineral production value with a 43% share at P10.66 billion, followed by direct-shipping nickel ore and mixed nickel cobalt sulfide at 41% or P10.29 billion, copper at 15% or P3.69 billion, and combined silver and chromite output with 0.9% or P221.31 million.

The price of gold rose 21.5% year on year to \$1,584.17 per troy ounce, while nickel price went up by 2.9% to \$12,739.72 a ton.

Gold output fell by 27.5% year on year to 4,098 kilos, while silver went down by a quarter to 6,335 kilos.

"The Masbate Gold Project of Filminera Mining Corp. and the Philippine Gold Processing and Refining Corp. in Masbate was at the forefront with 1,396 kilograms valued at P3.61 billion, accounting for 34% of the country's total gold mine output," MGB said.

The production of nickel content of ore fell 27% from a year earlier to 28,006 metric tons, it said.



Q1 metal output drops amid mine closures

Palawan-based Coral Bay Nickel Corp. and Taganito HPAL Nickel Corp. in Surigao del Norte, the only hydrometallurgical nickel processing plants in the country, both reported a combined total value of P7.75 billion.

Meanwhile, copper metal equivalent output in the first quarter fell by 17.1% to 16,035 metric tons, the bureau said.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte locked down the entire Luzon island in mid-March, suspending work, classes and public transportation to contain the pandemic. Metro Manila remains under an altered lockdown, although some businesses have been allowed to reopen with minimal workforce.

On May 13, MGB released guidelines letting mining companies resume their operations at full capacity as long as they follow safety measures. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**



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'Tiis-pilipit': Mangyan tribesmen, tamaraw threatened by hunger and disease

Gregg Yan, special to ABS-CBN News for Biodiversity Day 2020

Posted at May 22 2020 05:40 AM

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/spotlight/05/22/20/tiis-pilipit-mangyan-tribesmen-tamaraw-threatened-by-hunger-and-disease>



Tamaraws (*Bubalus mindorensis*) are endemic forest buffalo found only on the island of Mindoro in the Philippines. Numbering only about 600, they are considered critically-endangered by the IUCN. Adults stand a meter at the shoulder and weigh around 300 kilogrammes. Bulls are larger, darker and solitary, while cows tend their calves in close-knit groups. Lobbyists are pushing for it to become the country's national land animal. *Gregg Yan, special to ABS-CBN News for Biodiversity Day 2020*

Philippines – The old chief exhaled and the hut was enveloped in blue smoke. “I remember,” whispered Fausto Novelozo, chief of the Taw’buid tribe. “That a sickness drove us from the mountains. Measles we got from siganon or lowland visitors. Half our village of 200 died.”

We’re in the village of Tamisan Dos, one of two newly-established Mangyan communities at the foothills of the Iglit-Baco Natural Park in the province of Mindoro Occidental. Measles drove Fausto’s people closer to town, where they can have better access to western medicine.

Most people don’t consider disease a major threat to biodiversity. But diseases ranging from Coronavirus to African Swine Fever and Ebola have spread worldwide, taking thousands of lives and causing billions in economic damage.

For the reclusive Taw’buid, death and disease are part of life, hindering them from protecting an animal they revere – the critically-endangered tamaraw (*Bubalus mindorensis*), only 600 of which remain today.



'Tiis-pilipit': Mangyan tribesmen, tamaraw threatened by hunger and disease

Living deep in forests, tribal communities are plagued not just by blood-sucking leeches, malarial mosquitoes and venomous snakes – but a lack of clean water, poor sanitation, poor nutrition and inadequate medical knowledge. With hospitals often several days' journey away, many ailing tribesfolk die on their way to treatment.

Malaria, tuberculosis, measles and other diseases have always taken a steady toll on Mindoro's Mangyan population, estimated at 200,000. About 60% of Mangyan children are malnourished and almost all go hungry during the rainy season which lasts from June to October. With torrential rains turning Mindoro's streams into raging rivers, many cannot visit their upland ricefields and must hunt or gather whatever food they can.

"We call this period tiis-pilipit (to twist in hunger) and we must make do," says Taw'buid gatherer Robar, tiredly raising the day's catch. "We are lucky. We caught some rats and frogs today."

With limited healthcare access, tribesfolk have traditionally relied on medicinal plants to deal with cough, colds, fever, skin diseases, intestinal parasites, diarrhea and other common ailments. The Taw'buid for instance use bungarngar to treat stomachaches, pito-pito to relieve pain and salimbayong for healing open wounds. A 1984 study by Garan and Quintana identified 128 medicinal plant species used by various Mangyan tribes.

"Isolated communities are especially vulnerable to diseases from the outside world because immune responses have yet to be developed," says medical anthropologist Gideon Lasco. "Limited access to healthcare and fear of hospitals also keeps them from seeking treatment."



Taw'buid children in Tamisan Uno. About 60% of all Mangyan children are malnourished, especially during the rainy season. Gregg Yan/National Geographic Channel



'Tiis-pilipit': Mangyan tribesmen, tamaraw threatened by hunger and disease

People From Above

Taw'buid means 'people from above' and is among two names the tribe calls itself – the other being Batangan or 'felled forest.' Close to 20,000 inhabit Mindoro's central highlands, making them the largest of the eight tribes collectively called Mangyans by lowlanders – the others being the Alangan, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunuo, Iraya, Ratagnon and Tadyawan.

Many still sport loincloths called amakan, hunt game with spears called tulag, bows called gadun and spike traps called silo. Unlike other Mangyan who chew betel-nut, nearly all Taw'buid men smoke a combination of papaya and tobacco – children included.

Once occupying Mindoro's lowlands, they were pushed into the mountains by both Spanish colonizers and Filipino immigrants. Their home forests too have retreated – with thousands of hectares converted into grazing land or rice paddies. As a people, the Taw'buid are peaceful, secretive and deeply animistic – careful not to rouse the anger of their gods including Alulaba, lord of rivers and waterways, or Mangyan Muyod, lord of the mountains.

Contact with the Taw'buid has been established through missionary groups and the Tamaraw Conservation Programme (TCP), which employs tribesmen as trackers and rangers.

For the Taw'buid, serving as a ranger is an honor and a stepping-stone to become a fufu-ama or tribal elder – making them natural allies to conserve the world's most endangered buffalo. Fufu-amas Henry Timuyog, Fuldo Gonzales, Oskar Bongray and Pedro Salonga are some of the many Taw'buid who have served as TCP rangers. "We welcome them for their bushcraft and field skills," shares TCP head Neil Anthony Del Mundo as we trudge closer to the grassy peaks inhabited by herds of tamaraw.

Disease Outbreaks

A century ago, disease nearly wiped out the tamaraw – it's also disease which threatens its protectors.

The island of Mindoro has a long history of disease. The island was largely bereft of human settlement in the 1800s because of malaria but was home to an estimated 10,000 tamaraw, a small dwarf buffalo with distinctive V-shaped horns that roamed its dense forests and wide rolling fields. But a century later, the island became a prime pastureland and the forests and open fields turned into a hunting ground for poachers armed with high-caliber weapons like M14 and M16 rifles.

By 1969, the outbreak of rinderpest and avid sport hunting drove the tamaraw population below 100, prompting the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to declare the species as critically endangered.

Decades of conservation led by the Tamaraw Conservation Programme (TCP), Biodiversity Management Bureau, Mounts Iglit-Baco Natural Park (MIBNP) and a host of allies including the **Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) of the United Nations Development Programme and Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Incorporated, D'Aboville Foundation, Global Wildlife Conservation, World Wide Fund for Nature, Far Eastern University, Eco Explorations and the Taw'buid people led by chief Fausto Novelozo**, prevented the bovine's extinction, helping tamaraw numbers recover to around 600.



'Tiis-pilipit': Mangyan tribesmen, tamaraw threatened by hunger and disease

Today the animals are confined to four isolated areas in Mindoro, all vulnerable to disease. “Bovine tuberculosis, hemosep and anthrax can enter Mindoro if we’re not careful,” explains Dr. Mikko Angelo Reyes, a Mindoro-based veterinarian. “The key is biosecurity, the prevention of disease through quarantine, inoculation and immunization. We should ensure that at the very least, animals entering the island are checked for sickness. We should also establish and respect buffer zones around protected areas, which are often rung by farms and livestock.”

Like the siganon visitors to chief Fausto’s village, imported cattle can spread diseases which tamaraw have not developed immunities to. The Mounts Iglit-Baco Natural Park (MIBNP) spans 106,655 hectares. It is currently surrounded by 3000 cattle belonging to 30 ranchers.

Preventing Outbreaks

Together, TCP and MIBNP rangers work to ward off poachers, dismantle spring-loaded balatik and deadly silo snare traps while keeping disease outbreaks to a minimum – preventing cattle from intruding into the park and giving the park’s indigenous people medicine and employment so they can buy supplies.

To gather much-needed resources for this, BIOFIN is helping raise funds via donations. “A little help goes a long way. We ask fellow Pinoys to donate just a bit to save the Taw’buid, tamaraw and the rangers keeping everything working,” says BIOFIN Philippines project manager Anabelle Plantilla.

The nationwide lockdowns spurred by COVID-19 is also taking a toll on communities and institutions dependent on ecotourism revenues. UNDP is preparing crowdfunding campaigns in the Philippines and other nations to keep these communities afloat – especially as government funds are being redirected to fight the growing pandemic.

Since its inception in 2012, BIOFIN has worked with both the public and private sectors to enhance protection for the country’s biodiversity hotspots by helping secure funds to implement sound biodiversity programs. BIOFIN’s second phase in the Philippines runs from 2018 to 2022 and includes the implementation of finance solutions to raise resources for the tamaraw and other endangered species through creative crowdfunding from corporations, government units, schools and individuals.

* * *

Back in the Iglit-Baco Park, a weathered man in a loincloth emerged from a field of upland corn. “Help us. We need medicine,” coughed Ben Mitra, a Taw’buid fufu-ama. Our column, already returning to the lowlands, stops to dig out whatever medicine we have left.

“Fadi-fadi,” he says in Taw’buid, accepting our goods. Thank you. As we trek back down, I pray they’ll be spared from disease and the fate of chief Fausto’s now-abandoned forest village. Like many of the country’s protected areas, the Iglit-Baco Natural Park exists in a fragile balance. One outbreak is all it takes – but we can all pitch in to prevent it. Contact biofin.ph@undp.org to know more.



May 22: International Day of Biodiversity

May 23, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/opinion/2020/05/23/2015956/may-22-international-day-biodiversity>

Now, regardless of age, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, the present pandemic has made survival and protection urgent goals, not just for the poor, but for all.

The pandemic has also shown the limitations of human beings and institutions to assure our survival and protection. Despite best efforts to provide essentials, especially to the needy, thousands or more aren't reached, or served appropriately.

Should the pandemic continue, healthy, sustainable supply of food, water, and effective services for all will be important challenges.

Yesterday, May 22, the celebration of the International Day of Biodiversity (IBD) reminded us all that nature is a vital source of solutions to global challenges.

Nature's biological diversity resources have been, are, and will continue to be indispensable, invaluable sources of life for individuals, societies, civilizations.

We stay alive if we protect biodiversity.

Biological diversity or biodiversity includes "the wide variety of plants, animals and microorganisms and the variety of ecosystems (lakes, forest, deserts, agricultural landscapes) that host multiple kinds of interactions among their members (humans, plants, animals).

"Our solutions are in nature."

This overall theme for IBD has never been so apt and on target. The United Nations further reminds us:

"As the global community re-examines, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, its relationship with the natural world, one thing is certain: despite our technological advances, humans are completely dependent on healthy and vibrant ecosystems for our health, water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel, shelter and energy, to name a few.

This year's IBD theme, "Our solutions are in nature", emphasizes the importance of working together at all levels to build a future of life in harmony with nature.

2020 is a year of reflection, opportunity and solutions. All of us have the opportunity to reflect on how we can "Build back better" to increase the resilience of nations and communities as we recover from this pandemic.

2020 is also the year when the world can signal a strong will for adapting as well as adopting, in 2021, a robust and ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework that will "bend the curve" on biodiversity loss for the benefit of all life on Earth.



May 22: International Day of Biodiversity

“Biodiversity loss is a direct result of our short-sighted human activities including uncontrolled mining and infrastructure development, unsustainable farming and deforestation, said Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Acting Executive Secretary. “All these have degraded ecosystems and have created the conditions that lead to events like possibly the pandemic.”

“While the world is striving to end this pandemic, we all need to take urgent concerted and collaborative actions to build a resilient and sustainable global economy that incorporates nature at its heart, even as we build back from the crisis.”

As early as today, constructing the new normal and building back better should recognize, respect, and protect “the crucial role of nature in addressing climate change, food security, health and life.”

How can we all contribute, as individuals, households, communities, nations, and as a global community, to “bend the curve” on biodiversity loss so we can save life- of our planet, of people, including ours?

First priority is to have secure, sustainable healthy food and water. Let food gardens and rain harvesters abound in every home and community soonest!

Support farming, fishing, forest communities as sustainable food sources and centers with food production, processing and alternative ways of preserving resources immediately encouraged and assisted.

Implement effective linkages among producers, distributors, and consumers through barter and alternative exchange/sharing mechanisms and systems.

Be reminded that responsible personal, household, community water and waste management protect biodiversity.

Always remember; stay safe, help produce food, protect nature and protect lives!



<https://www.facebook.com/349475605261824/posts/1331894987019876/>



Palawan Council for Sustainable Development

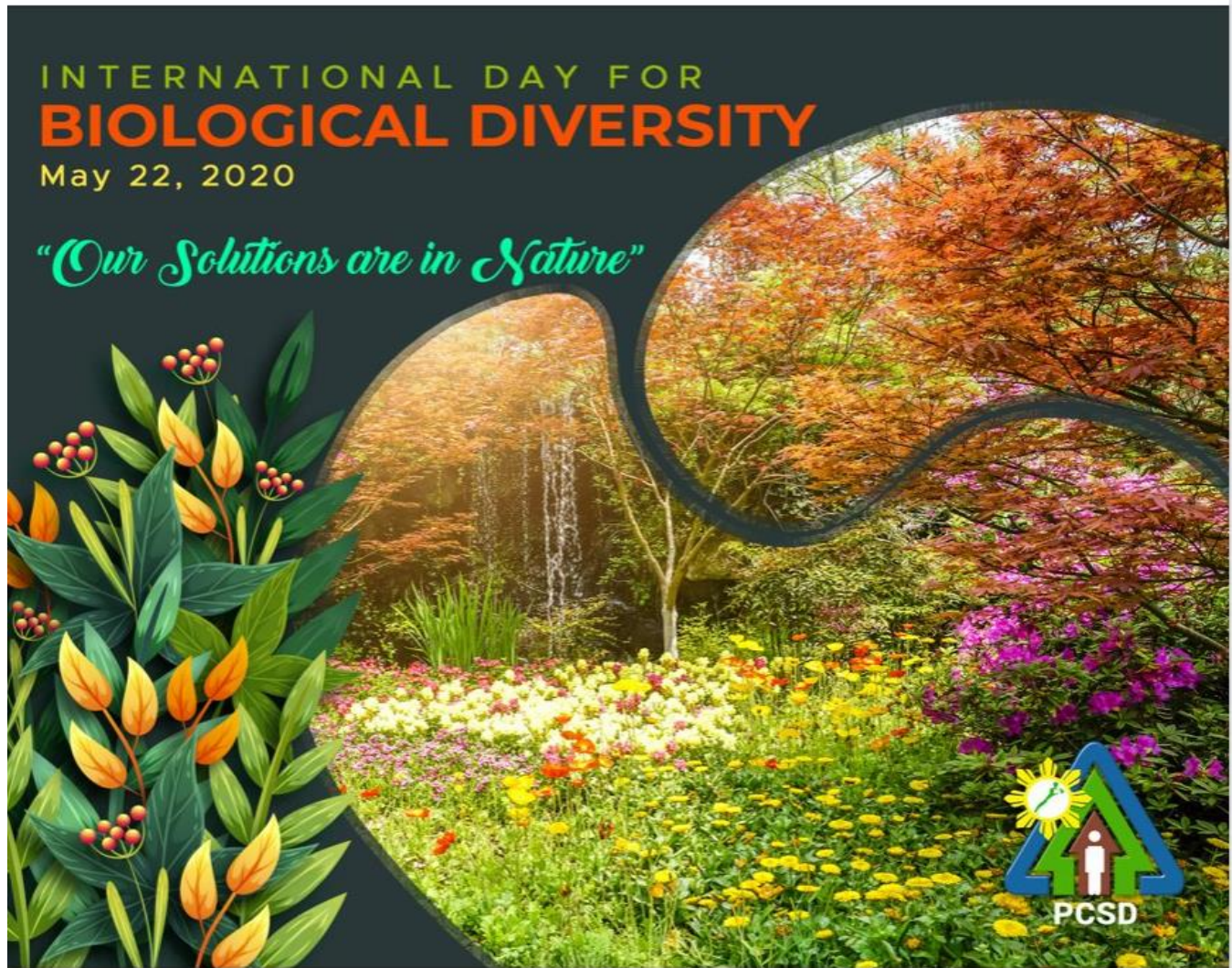
19 hrs · 🌐



International Day for Biological Diversity

The theme of this year's celebration is "Our solutions are in nature".

Biodiversity sustains our life here on Earth. It provides us with valuable resources such as food and medicine. We also rely on functioning ecosystems for our supply of clean air and water, and many other biological resources.... [See More](#)



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PPUR park ranger shot and wounded by illegal loggers

May 22, 2020 Aira Genesa Magdayao

https://palawan-news.com/ppur-park-ranger-shot-and-wounded-by-illegal-loggers/?fbclid=IwAR0S2ZdjsS_I5n5jaMAD19PVrw5H89PY2JJ4Qa7DKyKcpDjhbVS_4CmrXR0

PPUR spokesperson Jan Elmer Badilla told Palawan News their rangers were investigating a reported illegal logging activity at an area of the park in Barangay Tagabenit when they came upon two men who were trying to haul illegally cut trees.

A park ranger of the Puerto Princesa Underground River (PPUR) was wounded after he was shot by suspected illegal loggers while patrolling an area of the national park Thursday.

PPUR spokesperson Jan Elmer Badilla told Palawan News their rangers were investigating a reported illegal logging activity at an area of the park in Barangay Tagabenit when they came upon two men who were trying to haul illegally cut trees.

The two, later identified as Fernando Mameng Sr. and his son and namesake, were reportedly armed with a home-made pistol “sumpak” and shot one of the rangers, identified as Guillermo Celino, wounding him in the leg.

“Siguro nagkainitan at binaril nila gamit ang sumpak, improvise na baril at natamaan sa right leg ang ating ranger,” Badilla said.

“Nahuli nila sa akto na nagta-transport ng mga lumber itong dalawa, mag-ama sila,” he added.

The son reportedly escaped following the shooting while authorities were able to arrest the father.

Criminal charges will be filed against the two men for violation of PD 705 or the Forestry Code of the Philippines; RA 10591 or the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act; Physical assault resulting in serious physical injury; RA 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as one Act and frustrated murder.

Badilla said that Celino is currently in stable condition.

“Nahuli agad ‘yong tatay at nainquest na kahapon (Thursday). Ang anak naman nya ay nakatakas. Pero pareho ang magiging kaso nilang dalawa. Sa huling update ay okay na siya [Celino] although medyo sensitive ang tama nya kasi sa baba banda,” he said.



Albay's Kawa-Kawa Natural Park to open to visitors amid GCQ

By: Michael B. Jaucian - Correspondent / @mbjaucianINQ

Inquirer Southern Luzon / 09:57 PM May 22, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1279579/albays-kawa-kawa-natural-park-to-open-to-visitors-amid-gcq>

LIGAO CITY – After two months of closure to public due to threat of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Kawa-Kawa Natural Park at California Village in Tuburan in this city will open again to welcome visitors starting Saturday, May 23, or a week after the province shifted to general community quarantine from the stricter enhanced community quarantine.

“The Kawa-Kawa Natural Park may now be used by visitors for purpose of exercising and physical activity. It will be open at 5 a.m. and will closed at 6 p.m.,” former Albay Rep. Fernando Gonzalez, owner of the park said.

Kawa-Kawa, one of Albay's key tourist destinations, offers a perfect view of Mt. Mayon and the Buhi Lake in Camarines Sur.

A mini zoo is also found in the area with a sunflower plantation.

The park is also a known pilgrimage site during Holy Week with its life-sized statues depicting Biblical events.



Iloilo applies '5S' in new normal cleanup drive

By Gail Momblan May 22, 2020, 7:21 pm
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1103679>



LIMPYO GCQ. Residents of Iloilo province, in this undated photo, conduct a cleanup drive before the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak. Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Jr. on Thursday (May 21, 2020) signed Executive Order 121 implementing “Limpyo GCQ”, an environmental cleanup while the province is under general community quarantine. (PNA file photo)

ILOILO CITY – The quarantine protocols set against the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) have failed to stop Iloilo province in its "Clean province" campaign.

Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Jr. signed on Thursday Executive Order 121 implementing “Limpyo GCQ”, an environmental cleanup while the province is under general community quarantine (GCQ).

With the slogan “Ang Bag-ong Normal: Mas Malimpyo nga Iloilo” (The New Normal: Cleaner Iloilo), Defensor said on Friday that the “Limpyo GCQ” is a pursuit for a clean province for health, tourism, and progress in a new normal under GCQ.

He said the cleanup is timely with the onset of the rainy season that comes with diseases, such as dengue, and also with the prevalent Covid-19.

“We will clean up during the GCQ. We will implement this with our mayors and all sectors,” Defensor said.

Due to Covid-19, the province has made adjustments to maintain the cleanup campaign launched last February.

He said the previous 4S strategy against dengue would become five.

The 4S strategy against dengue refers to “search and destroy” breeding places of mosquitoes, “secure self-protection”, “seek early consultation”, and “support fogging or spraying only in hotspot areas”.



Iloilo applies '5S' in new normal cleanup drive

“It will become 5S now with (the implementation of) 'social distancing',” Defensor said.

Limpyo GCQ participants shall maintain safe physical distance as required under Resolution 37 of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, the order states.

He also said that the 3 Ms that stand for “magsmaskara, magdistansiya, manghinaw” (put on a face mask, observe physical distance, wash hands) will also be implemented during the cleanup.

The cleanup drive encourages the participation of the local government units and non-government agencies in their respective premises; state universities and colleges in their respective campuses; the religious sector in its respective worship venue premises; the media in their respective station premises; and the business sector in their work areas, among others.

The province will also have an online challenge for participants to post their cleanup photos on social media “to exemplify a clean province in the new normal,” Defensor said. (PNA)



Environment, health groups back DOH ban vs. mercury-filled dental amalgam

“This sets a remarkable precedent and really pushes the agenda further for international negotiations where it can be shown that mercury-free dental healthcare is possible,” said Lee Bell, Mercury policy adviser, International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN).

“The enforcement of this policy will also restrict the flow of mercury that might be unlawfully diverted from dentistry to artisanal and small-scale gold mining,” added Bell who is based in Australia.

Under the order, Dizon explained that dental amalgam capsules in combined, pre-dosed encapsulated form and for single use only will be allowed during the phase-out period for use by government dental units, local dental schools and private industrial dental clinics.

All manufacturers, importers, exporters, distributors, retailers, waste generators and users, including dentists, dental schools and researchers, are required to phase out dental amalgam during the designated three-year period.

The DOH order also noted that dental amalgam waste in dental clinics and dental schools will be collected, stored and disposed of in accordance with the rules and regulations for the management of hazardous waste and by an accredited waste transporter and treatment, storage and disposal facility.

DOH A.O. 2020-0020 takes effect 15 days after its posting in the official website, its publication in a newspaper of general circulation and submission of a copy to the Office of the National Registry of the University of the Philippines Law Center.



DOH: Asymptomatic individuals are not contagious based on WHO definition

May 22, 2020

<https://ptvnews.ph/asymptomatic-individuals-are-not-contagious-based-on-who-definition/?fbclid=IwAR02W8waAXfHN2ldB9KjiCOtK8RHRWRPRGsHqYb56bnjaCqzd7ORwtFOpy4>

The Department of Health (DOH) clarified that individuals who are asymptomatic are not contagious based on the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO initially stated that there are no hard evidences that prove the transmission of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) through an asymptomatic person. The study on the subject is still ongoing.

DOH said that symptomatic patients remain the most active spreader of COVID-19, one of the reasons why the department believes that individuals with no symptoms must not be tested.

“Meron po tayong tinatawag na pre-symptomatic individuals. Ito po ‘yung mga tao na maaaring meron na ho silang virus sa kanila at maaaring magkaroon ng sakit in how many days, mag-uumpisa na. At ito po ‘yung maaaring nakikita ng ating mga kababayan na nagpopositibo pagkatapos. (We have the so-called pre-symptomatic individuals who are possibly carrying the virus and will get sick in how many days. These may be seen by our citizens who would eventually turn out to be positive.)”

Usec. Vergeire added that the RT-PCR test kits can only detect the virus two days before the symptoms show. If an asymptomatic person will be tested, it might give a result of false negative.

Based on the DOH guidelines, the symptomatic, returning OFWs, close contacts of COVID-19 patients and those who tested positive in the rapid antibody test kits are the priority for the COVID-19 testing.

Report from Mark Fetalco



45-day ECQ cost PH economy P1.1 trillion, says Neda

By: Ben O. de Vera - Reporter / @bendeveraINQ
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:36 PM May 22, 2020

<https://business.inquirer.net/297960/45-day-ecq-cost-ph-economy-p1-1-trillion-says-neda>

The Philippine economy lost an estimated P1.1 trillion in the agriculture, industry and services sectors during the first 45 days of COVID-19 lockdowns, according to the state planning agency National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

The losses, equivalent to 5.6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), were most felt in the National Capital Region (NCR) as it was the country's services hub, as well as in Calabarzon where industrial activity ground to a halt when enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was imposed in Luzon and other parts of the country since mid-March to contain the spread of the COVID-19 disease.

Luzon was home to 56 percent of the nationwide population, and accounted for 73 percent of GDP, Neda noted in a report.

Neda estimates showed that under a 45-day ECQ, the country's agriculture sector suffered P94.3 million in losses; the industry sector, P537.7 billion; and services, P589.7 billion.

The initial one-month ECQ was extended until end-April, and prolonged until mid-May in areas with high COVID-19 cases.

A less restrictive general community quarantine (GCQ) setup covered areas with fewer COVID-19 patients since early May, while a modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) was declared in COVID-19 hotspots to resume some economic activity while supposedly keeping strict physical and social distancing since mid-May.

In Metro Manila—the Philippines' political and commercial center—economic losses amounted to P589.3 billion, with the biggest chunk of forgone revenues coming from the services sector, at P454.8 billion.

Calabarzon suffered the second biggest output losses among the country's 17 regions, with P265.1 billion.

Since it hosted sprawling economic zones whose operations were halted during ECQ, industry losses in Calabarzon reached P244.5 billion, exceeding NCR's P134.4 billion.

Total losses across the agriculture, industry and services sectors in the 15 other regions were as follows: Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), P9.6 billion; Ilocos, P13.7 billion; Cagayan Valley, P12.9 billion; Central Luzon, P83.6 billion; Mimaropa, P9.2 billion; Bicol, P14.6 billion; Western Visayas, P17.6 billion; Central Visayas, P37.7 billion;



45-day ECQ cost PH economy P1.1 trillion, says Neda

Eastern Visayas, P9.5 billion; Zamboanga Peninsula, P4.9 billion; Northern Mindanao, P10.1 billion; Davao, P13.5 billion; Soccsksargen, P8.27 billion; Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), P890 million; and Caraga, P7.2 billion.

Citing results of online surveys among consumers, small businesses, farmers and fishermen that Neda conducted with the Department of Finance (DOF) last April, Neda said that “during the ECQ, some families had to depend on the assistance provided by the national government and local government units (LGUs) just to cope.”

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, the government gave away P5,000-8,000 to 18 million poor households under its social amelioration program (SAP), as well as the same range of wage subsidies to temporarily displaced employees of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Among MSMEs, “many had zero sales, but maintained their payroll,” Neda said.

“To cope, others had to resort to borrowing or using up their savings. The losses experienced will need to be mitigated to accelerate the resumption of economic activities,” Neda added.

The Neda estimates for industry losses included forgone revenues in manufacturing, mining and quarrying, and construction. Losses in services covered retail trade, tourism, private education, as well as the banking sector.

“The estimate assumes only a 45-day lockdown period in Luzon. For Visayas and Mindanao, the number of days of ECQ varies per province. Moreover, the losses in the transport sector have not been included,” Neda said.

First-quarter GDP already shrank by 0.2 percent and the extended COVID-19 lockdown during the second quarter was expected to bring the Philippines into recession, with the economy projected by economic managers to decline by 2-3.4 percent for the entire year.

Last week, acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and Neda chief Karl Kendrick T. Chua said the recession would likely bring the unemployment rate to double-digits during this quarter.

A double-digit unemployment rate shall be the highest in 15 years or since April 2005’s 8.4 percent, the year that the government adopted the current metrics in measuring employment, National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa had told the Inquirer.



45-day ECQ cost PH economy P1.1 trillion, says Neda

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) will release official employment data through the results of the April labor force survey (LFS) on June 5, but Chua said the government addressed temporary job losses by providing the SAP dole-outs on top of wage subsidies to beneficiary families and workers.

Department of Labor and Employment (Dole) estimates as of mid-May showed that 2.5 million workers had been stricken by work suspension, flexible working arrangements and business closures due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The pandemic reversed the latest labor gains when the jobless rate was only 5.3 percent in January.

Chua had been nonetheless optimistic about a quick or “V-shaped” recovery by the second half of 2020, noting that while 80 percent of the economy stopped at the start of the lockdown, more than half had already resumed activity this month.

By next month, two-thirds of the economic engine will be humming under relaxed restrictions poised to become the new normal during the second half, according to Chua.



House warms up to stimulus package

May 23, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/23/news/headlines/house-warms-up-to-stimulus-package/726567/>

The proposed P568-billion stimulus package to rejuvenate the economy that has taken a beating from the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic continues to gain more supporters at the House of Representatives ahead of plenary deliberations.

Defeat Covid-19 Committee subpanel Co-chairman Rep. Sharon Garin said 250 lawmakers, or 83 percent of the House members, had signed up for the authorship of the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act (PESA) of 2020.

“Truly an unprecedented feat of a Congress that cares. Hats off to all the authors and members!” Ang Asosasyon Sang Mangunguma Nga Bisaya-OWA party-list Representative Garin said.

The still-unnumbered bill, consolidating 10 proposals, including those from principal authors and economist-lawmakers Joey Salceda of Albay and Stella Quimbo, is up for second reading at the plenary next week.

Aside from the initial P568 billion to cover 2020, at least P700 billion more will be rolled out in the next three years.

PESA allocates P20 billion for mass testing to alleviate the “fear factor” of workers and customers and facilitate the reopening of the economy.

The bill also includes transitional, financial and structural interventions to assist businesses.

The transitional interventions amount to at least P140 billion for wage subsidies; cash for work assistance under the Department of Labor and Employment’s Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Displaced/Disadvantaged Workers; assistance for tertiary students in private higher education institutions; economic relief for overseas Filipino workers and loan extension for employees; regulatory relief for business entities; and relaxing of regulations and waiving of registration fees for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

There is also at least P185 billion for loan programs for MSMEs, interest-free loan programs under the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines, credit mediation and refinancing service under the Department of Trade and Industry, and government loan guarantees.

A total of P238 billion will go to different sectors. P10 billion will be set aside for MSMEs, P58 billion for tourism, P44 billion for industry and service sectors, P70 billion for transportation, and P56 billion for agriculture and fisheries.

Structural interventions include P50 billion for programs under the National Development Corp. and P650 billion for the Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program for the next three years.



Duterte flags overpriced test kits, PPE

on May 23, 2020 01:10 AM

By Francis Wakefield

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/23/news/headlines/house-warms-up-to-stimulus-package/726567/>

Malacañang on Friday said President Duterte is concerned by the wide disparity in the price of testing kits purchased by the Department of Health (DoH) and those procured by the private sector and wants the gap investigated.

There is also the collateral issue of allegedly overpriced personal protective equipment (PPE).

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Duterte needs clarity as he is puzzled by the discrepancy in the prices.

Roque said private sector testing kit purchases cost only P1.75 million whereas government purchases of the same cost taxpayers P4 million.

“The President needs answers,” he said in Filipino in a broadcast interview.

“He, along with the rest of us in the country, needs clarity as to the wide disparity in price,” Roque added.

At the same time, three senators stood firm in their call for Duque to resign over missteps that erode the government’s credibility in the war against the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I don’t think the latest statements of the health secretary will make the 14 senators who passed a resolution weeks ago asking for his resignation, change their mind,” Senator Sonny Angara, previously infected by the coronavirus, said.

“Sad to say, his statements have hurt the department and the government since his remarks caused confusion among the public,” he added.

Senator Risa Hontiveros pointed out the DoH is losing its credibility in terms of giving out data in the fight against the pandemic.

“DoH has to make sure we can rely on the data they provide. We have to ground our policies on the real situation. We cannot afford a divergent interpretation of terms. The DoH has to communicate clearly,” she said.

Hontiveros further explained the government lost the people’s trust following allegations of overpricing in COVID-19 tests and other medical supplies.

“Altogether, these gaffes do not inspire confidence in the health department’s program to address the pandemic. Lives are at stake. The Secretary has to shape up or ship out,” she said.

For Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, Duque’s blunders are “grave and unforgivable.”



Duterte flags overpriced test kits, PPE

“They cannot deny that these are grave and unforgivable lapses made by Secretary Duque being at the forefront of this fight against COVID-19. He was negligent. He did not exercise the due diligence expected of him as PhilHealth chairman. These issues affect the credibility of the DoH to lead this fight,” he said.

Drilon, however, emphasized only President Duterte can decide on Duque’s fate.

The Palace noted reports PhilHealth could lose P8.3 billion allegedly for coronavirus test ‘overpayments’

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque helped craft the Universal Health Care Law and has filed complaints against PhilHealth officials. He referred the matter to Undersecretary Jesus Quitain instead who previously investigated the various allegations and who knows the PhilHealth landscape far more than Roque does.

Earlier on Tuesday, Senator Panfilo Lacson told the Senate Committee of the Whole hearing that with the help of the Department of Budget and Management-Procurement Service, the Department of Health purchased 10 King Fisher nucleic acid extractor machines for P4 million for each unit.

Lacson compared the purchase against the Sansure nucleic acid extractors bought by the private sector, Project ARK, costing only P1.75 million per unit.

Department Budget and Management Undersecretary Lloyd Lao explained Project ARK’s machines were from China while the DoH and the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) specifically requested the US brand Thermo Science King Fisher.

Department of Health (DoH) Secretary Francisco Duque III explained to the Senate panel that the procurement of the more expensive US-made machines was deliberate for reasons of compatibility with existing machines used by the DOH and the RITM.

Lacson, however, remained unconvinced and explained the Sansure brand is being used by the Philippine Red Cross in their polymerase chain reaction or PCR-based tests and that Duque’s justification was “false information.”

“They are claiming Sansure is a closed system, which is not true. Because yesterday I confronted Sec. Duque who claimed the reason the agency did not purchase Sansure was because it is a closed system, which is not true,” Lacson explained.

“Giving us false information does not help him.”

Lacson also claimed the DoH also procured PPE priced at P1,979 compared to the PPE that may be purchased for only P1,079.

Drilon on Wednesday said PhilHealth may lose P8.3 billion over alleged ‘overpayment’ of coronavirus tests.



Duterte flags overpriced test kits, PPE

In a broadcast interview, the lawmaker said issue of “overpayment” was raised at the Senate Committee of the Whole on Tuesday.

“The PhilHealth has a package to test. The package is P8,150 per test. In other words, you go to a hospital and have yourself tested and PhilHealth pays the hospital P8,150. Now, what is the cost of the test kits?” Drilon said.

According to the lawmaker, their research shows the kits from China costs P1,500 per test.

Additional overhead and cost of materials cost approximately P2,000 plus a margin of income roughly equal P500.

Drilon said a “reasonable” testing cost is around P4,000. The amount is the same value charged by the Philippine Red Cross for their own tests.

“The PhilHealth is reimbursing the hospital for the same work for P8,150. In other words, the overpayment by PhilHealth is P4,150 per test,” he said.

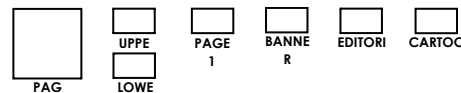
“We will test 2 percent of our population or roughly 2 million Filipinos. If you multiply 2 million by P4,150.00, the potential loss is P8.3 billion to PhilHealth. There is a potential overprice of P8.3 billion,” Drilon added.

The minority leader, in a separate radio interview, warned this may be a “criminal act” as the overpayments were done in the midst of pandemic where the country’s economy has a hard time restarting.

with Hananeel Bordey
@tribunephil_hana



Strategic Communication
and Initiatives Service



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23 May 2020
Date

Number of hungry families double during pandemic — survey

May 23, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/23/2015897/number-hungry-families-double-during-pandemic-survey>

MANILA, Philippines — The number of Filipino families that went hungry nearly doubled in the past three months amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, according to the latest survey by the Social Weather Stations (SWS).

The SWS COVID-19 mobile phone survey, taken from May 4 to 10, showed that 16.7 percent, or an estimated 4.2 million families, experienced involuntary hunger – due to lack of food – in May this year, up from 8.8 percent, or around 2.1 million families, in December 2019.

The May 2020 hunger rate was the highest since the 22 percent, or an estimated 4.8 million families, in September 2014, the SWS noted.

Hunger rose in Metro Manila to 20.8 percent, or about 693,000 families, in May 2020, from 9.3 percent (estimated 307,000 families) in December 2019.

It increased from 6.3 percent, or around 688,000 families, to 12.6 percent, or about 1.4 million families, in balance Luzon.

Hunger incidence also went up in the Visayas to 14.6 percent, or an estimated 685,000 families, from 9.3 percent, or approximately 436,000 families in December last year.

In Mindanao, it grew to 24.2 percent, or about 1.4 million families, from 12.7 percent or an estimated 709,000 families.

SWS said hunger was higher among those who had fewer years of formal schooling: it was 21.1 percent among non-elementary graduates and 24.4 percent among elementary graduates, compared to 16.5 percent among high school graduates and 6.9 percent among college graduates.

Meanwhile, the survey also found that almost all families, or 99 percent, received food-help since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, most commonly from the government.

Government was the most common source of food-help at 99 percent, followed by relatives at 22 percent, private groups or institutions like churches and non-government organizations at 16 percent, friends at 10 percent and private individuals at eight percent, the SWS said.

The SWS May 2020 COVID-19 mobile phone survey was conducted using mobile phones and computer assisted telephone interviewing of 4,010 working-age Filipinos, 15 years old and above, nationwide.



Number of hungry families double during pandemic — survey

There were 294 respondents from the National Capital Region, 1,645 from balance Luzon (or outside Metro Manila), 792 in the Visayas and 1,279 in Mindanao.

Palace ‘saddened’

Malacañang is saddened by the survey results showing millions of Filipinos have gone hungry during the worldwide pandemic.

“We are saddened by that, and that’s why we are doing everything to help our citizens. We wish to avoid that kind of sad news,” presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said in Filipino yesterday.

Roque said the government is doing its best to provide some relief and cash assistance to millions of Filipinos affected during the pandemic.

He was referring to the social amelioration program that was intended to cover 18 to 23 million families for the first tranche of assistance. Christina Mendez



'Second wave' of COVID-19 cases possible with influx of OFWs — Galvez

By Pilar Manuel, CNN Philippines

Published May 22, 2020 3:48:16 PM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/22/ofws-influx-possible-second-wave-COVID-19.html>

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Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 22) — The huge number of returning overseas Filipino workers might cause a spike in country's coronavirus cases, National Task Force on COVID-19 Chief Implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez said on Friday.

"Sa nakita natin ngayon, ang ating OFWs, we are receiving more than 30,000 and they came from affected areas na katulad ng U.S., Italy, Spain and other parts of Middle East. So yun ang tinitignan natin na dun magkakaroon tayo ng tinatawag na possible, ano, ng second wave," explained Galvez in a Laging Handa virtual briefing.

[Translation: What we are seeing now is we are receiving more than 30,000 OFWs and they came from affected areas like the U.S., Italy, Spain and other parts of Middle East. From there, we could have what we call a possible second wave.

Of this number, 600 have tested positive for COVID-19, he added.

Galvez also reported that the government estimates 150,000 to 500,000 overseas workers will be coming home for the rest of the year.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque initially announced that the Philippines is already experiencing its second wave of coronavirus infections, but has since said the country is at the "first major wave of sustained community transmission" instead.

The Health Department has also [apologized for the confusion](#) Duque's remarks have caused.

The Philippines currently has 13,434 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Some 846 have died from the illness, while 3,000 have recovered.



HAGUPIT NG COVID-19, MALALAMPASAN NATIN

May 22, 2020 @ 11:11 AM

<https://remate.ph/hagupit-ng-covid-19-malalampasan-natin/>



BINABAYBAY ng ULTIMATUM ang iba't ibang lugar para alamin ang nagaganap sa Social Amelioration Program at iba pang ayuda ng pamahalaang Duterte sa mga mamamayan sa gitna ng Coronavirus Disease-19 pandemic.

Nakatutuwang-isipin na lahat ay kumikilos, hindi lang ang pamahalaan kundi ang mga mamamayan din.

Matatandaang lahat ng ahensya o sangay ng pamahalaan, mula pambansa hanggang sa mga panrehiyon at local government unit ay pinakilos ng pamahalaan upang lumahok sa giyera sa pandemic.

At sa kabila ng mga pagkukulang o kahinaan, masasabing nagiging matagumpay ang lahat sa pangkalahatan para protektahan at pagsilbihan ang mga mamamayan.

Ang pakikipagkapit-bisig naman ng mga mamamayan at pribadong sektor sa pamahalaan ay hindi matatawaran.

Ang isang napakahalagang tanong ay kung hanggang kailan magtatagal ang giyera sa COVID-19 at kung hanggang kailan makakayanan ng higit na nakararami ang pakikibaka sa hindi nakikitang kalaban na kung pumatay o umatake ay gayun na lamang?

Pumapatay ang COVID-19 at nilulunod din nito sa matinding krisis ang mga tao at maging ang pamahalaan mismo, lalo na sa ekonomiya, kaya ganito katindi ang ating sitwasyon.

LAMAN NG TIYAN AT BULSA

Kwento ng mga mamamayan, nagsimulang nakatatakot ang COVID-19 nang magdeklara na mismo si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ng Community Quarantine sa Metro Manila at matapos ang isang linggo, isinunod naman ang Enhanced Community Quarantine para sa buong Luzon at nahagip na rin ang ilang lugar sa Kabisayaan at Mindanao na may COVID-19.

Naging nakatatakot dahil hindi na lang ang pumapatay na COVID-19 ang kalaban kundi mismo ang napakabilis na pagdating ng kalam ng sikmura at kawalan ng laman ng balsa ng higit na nakararaming mamamayan.



HAGUPIT NG COVID-19, MALALAMPASAN NATIN

Hindi nga biro-biro ang mga lockdown, checkpoint curfew, stay at home at iba pang kumitil sa kalayaan ng mga mamamayan na kalakip ng pagtigil ng lahat ng pampublikong transportasyon at pagsasara ng halos lahat ng negosyo at pagkakitaan ng mga mamamayan at pamahalaan.

Hindi lang ang mga pribadong mamamayan kundi maraming taong pamahalaan din ang nahagip ng krisis sa bulsa at kalam ng sikmura at kitang-kita ito sa malaganap na kalagayang “no work, no pay.”

MGA INISYATIBA

Isa sa kauna-unahang hakbang ng pamahalaan ang pagdedeklara ni Pang. Digong ng State of Calamity para sa buong bansa upang may magamit agad ang pamahalaan na pang-ayuda sa mga mamamayan sa pamamagitan ng pagsalok sa pondong pangkalamidad.

Alam ng lahat na nag-iyakan ang higit na nakararaming lokal na opisyal, lalo na sa hanay nina kapitan at kagawad sa mga barangay, sa pagiging kapos na kapos sa calamity fund para pang-ayuda sa mga mamamayan na nahaharap sa gutom at kawalan ng panggastos.

Dito na naramdaman ang pagbuhos ng ayuda mula mismo sa mga mamamayan, maliliit man o mayayaman, kasama na ang pagtanggap ng mga nakaririwasa sa pagbibigay-ayuda ng pamahalaan at ituro ang mga daloy ng ayuda sa mga nangangailangan.

Dito na rin nagkaroon ng malinaw na mabilis na pag-ayuda ng mga nakatataas na organo ng pamahalaan mula sa mga munisipyo, lungsod at lalawigan sa mga barangay.

Marami ring opisyal ng gobyerno ang humugot sa kanilang bulsa o nagdonasyon ng kanilang mga sahod para lang may maipantustos sa mga nangangailangan at gipit na mamamayan.

At ang ibang pribado at organisasyong mamamayan ay nagsikilos din nang todo sa pagbunot ng kani-kanilang pondo o pagkalap ng ayuda para sa iba.

Kasama rito, halimbawa, ang National Press Club, ang mga Lions Clubs International, ang mga Rotarian, ang Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry at marami pang iba.

Kaya naman masasabi nating dumating sa ating mga hapag kainan ang mga bigas, sardinas, noodles, kape, itlog, asukal, tubig, gamot, vitamins at iba pang pangangailangan para makaraos ang lahat bagama’t kapos pa rin sa kabila ng pinagsama-samang ayuda ng lahat.



HAGUPIT NG COVID-19, MALALAMPASAN NATIN

ANG PAMBANSANG PAMAHALAAN

Habang nagaganap ang nasa itaas, nagsimula na ring maramdaman ng milyon-milyong mamamayan ang ayuda ng pambansang pamahalaan.

Unang inihiwalay ang nasa 18 milyong pamilyang mahihirap mula sa nakaririwasang pamilyang Pinoy bilang target ng unang sigwada ng ayuda sa iba't ibang anyo.

Kasama rito ang mahigpit na tagubilin mismo ni Pang. Digong na huwag korapin kahit sentimo ang mga ayudang pamahalaan.

Anak ng pitong putakte, kung bakit naman kasi na kung may nagaganap na krisis, eh, naiisip pa ng mga korap kung paano kumikbak.

Dito na dumating ang Social Amelioration Program at iba pang anyo nito mula sa mga pambansang ahensya ng pamahalaan.

Kumilos ang mga departamento ng Social Welfare and Development, Interior and Local Government, Transportation and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, Labor and Employment, Agriculture, Social Security System, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Customs, Environment and Natural Resources, mga bangko ng pamahalaan at iba pa.

HAPPY NA RIN

Hindi maikakaila na hindi talaga kayang itawid sa matagalang gutom at krisis sa balsa ang ayuda ng pambansang pamahalaan sa mga biktima ng COVID-19.

Subalit sa pakikipanayam ng ULTIMATUM sa mga nakatanggap, kahit papaano happy na rin sila.

Ang SAP at iba pang subsidy ay nagkakahalaga ng P5,370 hanggang P8,000 habang ang ayuda sa mga magsasaka ay P5,000 at may pa-binhi mula sa DA at mga lokal na opisyal.

Hindi mabilang sa daliri na mga vendor, nangangalakal ng basura, tsuper, obrero sa pabrika, konstruksyon, piggery, manukan, maggugulay, magsasaka, mangingisda, kontraktuwal sa gobyerno na nasibak sa trabaho, maliliit na negosyante, senior citizen na hindi pensyonado, person with disability at iba pa mula sa Metro Manila, Calabarzon, Central Luzon, Cagayan Valley at Ilocos Region na nakatanggap ay nagsabing happy na rin sila.

Kung may First Wave, Second Wave at parating na Third Wave ang Covid-19, aba, mas maraming wave ang ginagawa ng mga lokal at pambansang pamahalaan, kasama ang mga nakaririwasang mamamayan, pribadong kumpanya at mga organisasyong ng mga mamamayan, kasama na ang media.



HAGUPIT NG COVID-19, MALALAMPASAN NATIN

Naipakita ng gobyernong Duterte na tinutupad nito ang tungkuling protektahan at pagsilbihan ang mga mamamayan sa mga oras ng pangangailangan at kagipitan at napakikilos nito ng matino ang lahat, bagama't may mga pasaway pa rin.

WE WILL SURVIVE

Kaya natin ang COVID-19.

We will survive, malalampasan natin ang salot na ito.

Basta sama-sama tayong lahat at magtutulungan sa abot ng ating makakaya at kung kinakailangan ang matinding sakripisyo.

Ang palatandaan, mga Bro, na napagtatagumpayan natin, maliit na lang ang namamatay bagama't daan-daan pa rin ang naitatalang kaso.

Sa mga magkakasunod na ilang araw, kulang na lang sa 10 ang namamatay at kahapon, 4 lamang habang 68 ang gumaling at 213 ang bagong kaso kahit pa umabot na sa 13, 434 ang kabuuang bilang ng kaso simula noong Enero 2020 na kinamatayan ng kabuuang bilang na 846.

Basta tatandaan natin, naging mabisa ang social distancing, pagsusuot ng face mask, curfew, lockdown, covid testing, quarantine, stay at home at kontroladong transportasyon.

Sinabayan pa ito ng istriktong pagpapatupad ng mga ito mula sa Palasyo hanggang barangay at mamamayan bagama't may mangilan-ngilang nambubuwisit sa atin gaya ng pasaway o matitigas ang ulo.

Sumali tayo lahat sa mga Modified Enhanced Community Quarantin at Modified General Community Quarantine nang may lubos na pag-iingat upang makapaghanapbuhay tayong lahat nang walang panganib o banta sa ating buhay.

Pagkakataon natin ito na matulungan din ang ating mga sarili para makalanghap man lang ng ginhawa mula sa krisis at kamatayan.

Pero, muli, sasabihin nating huwag nating abusuhin ang kahit papaano'y paglaya natin sa kamay na bakal laban sa COVID-19.

Tatandaan, mapanganib ang COVID-19 hangga't wala pang sakto at mabisang gamot dito.



EDITORIAL - Tracing COVID cases

May 23, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2020/05/23/2015875/editorial-tracing-covid-cases>



As countries grapple with the coronavirus disease 2019 contagion, a digital innovation is increasingly being adopted for contact tracing of COVID-19 cases. South Korea and Taiwan were among the first to use digital apps to detect COVID patients and trace the individuals they have come in contact with even before the confirmed cases began manifesting symptoms.

Now the Philippines is reportedly seeking access to a similar Exposure Notification technology jointly developed by tech giants Apple and Google. To be incorporated into the StaySafe.ph project developed by Multisys Technologies Corp., the app is meant to complement traditional contact tracing conducted by people. The government has admitted that it needs more personnel to carry out actual COVID contact tracing.

Concerns have been raised about privacy breaches and the vulnerability to hacking of tracing apps that use Bluetooth and GPS. But the companies behind the Exposure Notification project say such concerns are being addressed in the new system, which will not collect or use location from the device, and will allow users to decide whether or not to opt in to virus exposure notifications.

Versions of the app are being developed for both iPhones and Androids. An obvious problem in the Philippines is that many people still lack even the most rudimentary mobile phones, and cyber connectivity is not universal or reliable, unlike in high-tech Taiwan and South Korea.

Still, anything that will boost contact tracing capability is a welcome development in this country. Apart from keeping track of local virus transmissions, special focus is needed on overseas Filipino workers who are returning in droves from abroad and chafing against their required 14-day quarantine on ships and other special facilities. The government also needs to keep track of foreigners, particularly Chinese who are turning to their own health facilities for dealing with the coronavirus.



Water concessionaires extend payment deadline till August, urban poor communities can pay in September

By CNN Philippines Staff

Published May 22, 2020 7:41:12 PM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/22/Manila-Water-Maynilad-extend-payment-deadlines.html>

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 22) — Manila Water and Maynilad assured the public there will be no water disconnection until August, as they extend the payment deadline to September for “lifeline customers,” or those who belong to urban poor communities, as verified by local government units.

Manila Water Communications Manager Dittie Galang told CNN Philippines’ Newsroom Ngayon that they will not issue disconnection notices until August.

“Sixty days po ‘yong normal na grace period,” Galang said on Friday. “Magsisimula pong magbilang yan from May 16.”

[Translation: The normal grace period is within 60 days. This will start on May 16.]

The payment can also be via installment basis, according to Galang.

Maynilad Business Area Spokesperson Zmel Grabillo said customers who cannot pay in full can submit a promissory note and start paying in staggered.

Just like Meralco, the two water concessionaires also based their billing on a three-month average of a consumer’s water consumption.

“Ang ginawa natin dahil hindi makapasok ang ating meter readers sa mga barangay dito sa Metro Manila, ginawa naming average ang kanilang billing while the ECQ was being enforced,” Galang explained.

[Translation: Since our meter readers cannot easily get into barangays in Metro Manila, we based the billing on their average consumption while the ECQ was being enforced.]

Grabillo added Maynilad will resume with physical meter reading starting June.



Duterte: End of COVID-19 crisis 'months and months away still'

Published May 22, 2020 8:36pm

By VIRGIL LOPEZ, GMA News

https://cnnphilippines.com/business/2020/5/22/global-growth-fueled-by-China-India-stalled-.html?fbclid=IwAR2ULWIXBYQuZnrP0eOL3xYd_yg_1ArymLiHmVVYa1h5JABd5PhKLyUfDdo

President Rodrigo Duterte on Friday asked Filipinos to be patient and resilient as the country continued to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Duterte expressed hope that a cure for COVID-19 will be developed soon even as he warned the public of “dangerous and abnormal times” due to the global health crisis.

“Sadly, its end appears to be months and months away still,” the President said in his message to the graduates of the Philippine Military Academy’s Masidlawin Class of 2020 and the Philippine National Police Academy’s Mandayug Class of 2020.

“In the meantime, we can take measures to alleviate or mitigate the hardships wrought upon us and raise our hopes that sooner or later the cure [that] will set us free from COVID-19 shall be made available to all of us.”

Duterte delivered his message in Malacañang for the first simultaneous virtual commencement exercises attended by the President in light of the pandemic.

Early this week, Duterte said that a vaccine for COVID-19 may become available as early as January next year, citing the recent news about American biotech firm Moderna, which reportedly produced “positive interim” results in its first clinical tests.

Duterte also cited reported successes of Chinese researchers in developing a vaccine.

“Patience, perseverance and resiliency are the crying need of the moment. I trust that every Filipino has this in his person and virtues abundant,” the President said in his speech.

The Philippines has so far reported 13,597 COVID-19 cases, with 857 deaths and 3,092 recoveries. **-NB, GMA News**



ECQ 'successful' despite limited testing: UP report

By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora May 22, 2020, 4:38 pm
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1103667>



QUARANTINE CHECKPOINT. A motorist stops to have his temperature taken by personnel manning the checkpoint along Felix Avenue in Cainta, Rizal in March during the early days of the enhanced community quarantine. A University of the Philippines report showed that the ECQ had been successful in reducing transmission and deaths due to Covid-19. (PNA photo by Joey Razon)

MANILA – The imposition of enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), which shuttered businesses, schools, and upended daily life, has been critical in reducing transmission and deaths due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), according to a report published by the University of the Philippines (UP).

The Covid-19 forecasts in the Philippines: Post-ECQ Report said the rate of virus transmission has been "decreasing" since the beginning of the quarantine in March until May.

"ECQ was successful despite limited testing and contact tracing in the country," the report read.

However, the experts that published the report noted that such a positive trend is "irreversible" and that the spread of the virus in the country is "not yet controlled" despite other provinces displaying "decelerating trend".

Citing data from the Department of Health, the report said that for the National Capital Region (NCR) and Cebu City, the number of new confirmed cases remains "very high". The pandemic risk levels in Batangas, Davao City, and Zamboanga City are also "still significant".

Experts urged the government to continue significant restrictions in the NCR -- one of the most densely populated areas in the world -- and Cebu City, and expand the same as necessary to other high-risk areas.



ECQ 'successful' despite limited testing: UP report

"Even in areas under GCQ (general community quarantine) or those not under community quarantine, vigilance is still needed in order to ensure that any new cases are immediately detected and new outbreaks prevented. Our goal ultimately is not just to flatten the curve but to bend it downwards," the report said.

Even as there are areas where the pandemic seems to be contained, complacency should be out of the question because it would take "just one spreader to start a second wave of the pandemic".

The experts warned that the likelihood of a resurgence is not a question of "if" but "where and how bad".

"The virus is still with us and we have not yet developed herd immunity. In order to sustain the gains from the last ECQ and to build momentum towards pandemic deceleration, the government must ensure that health systems are capable of detecting, testing, isolating, and treating every case of Covid-19, as well as tracing every contact," the report read.

Should a threat of a pandemic become significant, the experts said a mechanism should be set for placing a province or a local government unit back in ECQ.

"The threat of Covid-19 will still remain unless a vaccine is widely available. We need to provide criteria or a set of triggers not only for de-escalation but also to escalate restrictions that are clearly explained to the public," it said.

'Expand testing capacity'

The experts reiterated a previous recommendation to further expand testing capacity as the country reopens certain sectors of the economy.

A priority is the testing of employees in the economic sectors initially reopened, followed by other sectors.

In addition, the government should also study the use of local trials of group testing protocols. Group testing is the method where swab specimens from multiple individuals are tested using a single test kit, according to the report.

They also suggested the trial of randomized testing, possibly using group testing, saying this may provide "a more reliable basis for determining prevalence rates and may be potentially used for smarter workplace-based infection control policies".

Nevertheless, it lauded the government for ramping up testing to up to 10,000 tests per day. Currently, the goal is to conduct 30,000 tests by the end of May.



ECQ 'successful' despite limited testing: UP report

"While this arguably may have caused an increase in the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases, it has given us a better picture of the state of the pandemic in the country that could serve as basis for the recalibration of the restrictions in the next few days," the report read.

'Fund more research'

The experts also suggested commissioning studies on people's mobilities in areas under quarantine as a basis for policy decisions.

"These studies, using mobile (location) data and drilling down to the barangay level, could provide scientific evidence on what has changed when we moved from ECQ to GCQ or MECQ (modified)," the report said.

At the same time, they called on the Congress to allocate funds to government and other higher education institutions such as UP for further research on Covid-19 that include developing effective treatment methods and cheaper platforms of testing.

"These and other strategic concerns need focused study given the duration before a vaccine, if any, could be deployed. The best minds in the country from all institutions should come together instead of working in silos and exchange and test ideas," they said.

An aggressive government information drive is also recommended to raise awareness on citizens' and businesses' "responsibilities" in the new normal.

"We exhort government to further refine and harmonize the various guidelines regarding the MECQ and ensure that they are cascaded to stakeholders. It also is important that government messaging should be made clearer and guidelines are localized effectively," they said.

The report was written by UP professors and OCTA research fellows/associate Guido David, Ranjit Singh Rye, and Ma. Patricia Agbulos, with contributions from UP professors Erwin Alampay, Rodrigo Angelo Ong, Benjamin Vallejo Jr., Ideacorp Inc. CEO Emmanuel Lallana, and Civika Asian Development Academy Managing Director Elmer Soriano.
(PNA)



Restarting the SWS surveys

By: [Mahar Mangahas](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:06 AM May 23, 2020

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/130087/restarting-the-sws-surveys>

There was no Social Weather Survey in the first quarter this year, for the very first time since 1992. Just as SWS was about to go to the field in mid-March, the office lockdown and public transportation shutdown began. It interrupted the 28-year-long stream of SWS quarterly surveys, all done on nationwide probability samples by the mode of face-to-face (F2F) interviews, which is the gold standard in survey research. Field workers normally go to 240 or more sample spots (barangays) across the country, in teams of two. The barangays are pre-selected at headquarters, by probability sampling; then dwellings, and respondents within the dwellings, are sampled in the field by systematic walking and listing techniques.

The market research industry has long had protocols for minimizing F2F health hazards, to both interviewers and respondents, by means of personal protective equipment and sanitizing techniques. The main impediment to standard F2F operations is not COVID-19 itself, but the present restraint on public transportation. Once the transport problem is solved—but no one can predict when—SWS will endeavor to resume its tried-and-true operations again.

Scientific surveying by mobile phone. In the meantime, SWS has just completed its first Social Weather Survey for 2020, by mobile phone mode (“SWS Mobile Phone Survey on COVID-19, May 4-10, 2020,” www.sws.org.ph, 5/21/20). This is a non-commissioned survey, funded internally by SWS as a public service at this critical time. It focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but maintains prime well-being indicators such as Hunger, for linkage to historical SWS series.

For some time, SWS had been preparing for the contingency of surveying by mobile phone. Since 2019Q4, it has been compiling a database of mobile numbers of respondents, in regular quarterly surveys and ad hoc survey projects, who gave permission to survey them again in the future, by phone. This database grew to 31,661 numbers, corresponding to households in all 17 regions of the country.

From the database, SWS aimed to survey as many respondents as possible—sampling one working-age adult per household by the last-birthday method—during the period May 4-10, 2020. It succeeded in completing 4,010 interviews, consisting of 294 in the National Capital Region, 1,645 in Balance Luzon, 792 in Visayas, and 1,279 in Mindanao. Within each area, data were weighted by sex (50-50 males-females) and regional population. This gives sampling error margins of plus/minus 1.6 percent for the Philippines as a whole, and 5.7 percent for NCR, 2.4 percent for Balance Luzon, 3.4 percent for Visayas, and 2.7 percent for Mindanao.



Restarting the SWS surveys

Families suffering from hunger doubled from December 2019 to May 2020. The May 4-10, 2020 survey found that 16.7 percent of families nationwide (estimated 4.2 million families) suffered involuntary hunger at least once in the last three months. Hunger was Moderate (suffered only once or a few times) for 13.9 percent, and Severe (suffered often or always) for 2.8 percent. Every percentage point amounts to over 200,000 families.

The national Hunger rate doubled from the 8.8 percent of families hungry (estimated 2.1 million families) in the Social Weather Survey of December 2019. It is at its highest since the 22.0 percent hunger in September 2014.

The reason for the hunger is not a shortage of food, but the severe disruption of families' earning capacity. The survey found almost all families receiving some assistance, but obviously the assistance was not enough to prevent the increase in hunger.

For more details, see: "SWS May 2020 COVID-19 Mobile Phone Survey: Hunger among families doubles to 16.7%," www.sws.org.ph, 5/21/20.

Contact mahar.mangahas@sws.org.ph.



Hold the line

on May 23, 2020 01:10 AM

By [TEB](#)

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/23/hold-the-line/>

“Our findings indicate that had control measures and reductions in the US been implemented at a similar time... substantially fewer cases and deaths would have occurred to date.”



Lately, the government is under pressure from groups which are complaining of being under a lockdown for so long in exchange for a meager subsidy of P5,000 to P8,000 in cash aid, specifically for food purchases.

The social amelioration program under the Bayanihan Act was meant to tide over a Filipino family during the days of quarantine to stop the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus.

Those affected by the lockdown and the limited movement of people in areas under relaxed measures, mainly public transport operators and drivers, are becoming desperate as their means of livelihood are lost, forever to some.

Still the government stood firm that it will have to do what is needed to be done.

A recent Columbia University study showed how valuable are the clear-cut and bold decisions from leaders when the outbreak first manifested.

The study conducted by the university's Mailman School of Public Health showed if strict measures including stay-at-home orders had been implemented in the United States a week earlier, 36,000 or 55 percent of the deaths associated with COVID-19 on 3 May could have been avoided. The action could have also prevented more than 700,000 cases of the virus.

Action taken two weeks earlier could have prevented 900,000 cases and about 54,000 deaths or about 83 percent of the fatalities.



Hold the line

The researchers said the study applies to metropolitan areas with dense populations. It examined the behavior of the virus in counties in New York, New Jersey, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and Miami.

Taken in the context of the Philippine situation, the quick imposition of the strict quarantine period has saved more than 100,000 lives.

As of 21 May 2020, the Department of Health had reported 13,434 as having tested positive for the virus.

The research warned governments succumbing to pressures for the premature opening of their economies, stating “that since COVID-19 is established as a global pandemic, rapid response remains essential to avoid large-scale resurgences of infections and deaths in locations with reopening plans.”

“These findings highlight the dramatic effect that early, coordinated interventions have on the COVID-19 pandemic,” the study said. “Efforts to further raise public awareness of the ongoing high transmissibility and explosive growth potential of COVID-19 are still needed at this critical time,” it added.

Researchers acknowledge the study was based on models that exist in simplified and ideal situations and that stay-at-home orders involve complicated decision making that can take time and relies on citizens to participate.

On 12 March, days after cases of local transmissions of the virus had picked up and a pandemic was already evident, President Rody Duterte ordered Metro Manila to be placed on quarantine and, amid the massive violations of health protocols primarily physical distancing, the quarantine was extended to the entire Luzon island.

“We note that by the end of February 2020, a number of other countries, including South Korea and Italy, were already aggressively responding to the virus,” the study said.

“Our findings indicate that had control measures and reductions in the US been implemented at a similar time, just one to two weeks earlier, substantially fewer cases and deaths would have occurred to date,” the study noted.

The research also showed that lifting restrictions one week earlier could result in more than 200,000 cases and 23,000 deaths more by 1 July across the United States with an assumption of restrictions being relaxed starting 4 May.

Two months of confinement is testing the resolve of many in the long-drawn war, but the trade off in terms of giving in to demands to lift restrictions, against the advice of experts, affects lives that the unseen beast is just too willing to take.



'Balik Probinsya' targets informal settlers

posted May 23, 2020 at 01:00 am by Rio Cahambing/Jeff Marailhac

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/324358/-balik-probinsya-targets-informal-settlers.html>

The government's Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pagasa Program is open not only to those from Metro Manila who would want to return to their home provinces but also to those who would wish to go to other provinces for job opportunities.

In a dzBB radio interview, National Housing Authority general manager Marcelino Escalada Jr., the program's executive director, however, said informal settler families will be prioritized.

"We are prioritizing the informal settlers. Aside from decongesting (the metro), that will also impact the environment and the waterways," he said.

"We are not only trying to decongest Metro Manila, but we will try to give job opportunities (in the countryside)," he said.

Under Executive Order 114, President Rodrigo Duterte institutionalized the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program Council to decongest the National Capital Region – where there are nearly 13 million of the country's population of 108 million people – and promote robust regional development.

According to Escalada, the council had been flooded with at least 33,000 applicants who wish to return to their provinces and those who would want to work in the countryside.

Among those who applied are 4,000 Leyteños "who want to depart from Metro Manila."

Under the program, Bataan can offer 1,000 new jobs under the program, while Palayan City (Nueva Ecija) can employ 500 people, he said.

Once an applicant is approved, it would only take 10 to 15 days for her or his relocation, he added.

"By end of the year, 60,000 (applicants) will be a challenging figure for 2020," he said.

The provinces to participate in the program are Leyte, Bohol, Samar, Camarines Sur and six others, of which five are from Mindanao.

"We have redefined the meaning of balik probinsya. It does not necessarily mean the provinces where one came from but speaking of provinces where there are established opportunities," Escalada said.

Those seeking employment in the provinces may apply and enroll in the program, he stressed.

He assured the program's uprooted beneficiaries that the council had partnered with different agencies to help respond to the needs of their family members, including transfer of voter's registration.



‘Balik Probinsya’ targets informal settlers

In its pilot test, 112 beneficiaries have to be relocated to the provinces with only two of them having no homes to live in, he said.

“Those without any house where they would be taken would be provided with a 24-month rental subsidy. That period would be enough for them and for the NHA to position to build homes for them,” he said.

The council is expecting one million metro residents to join the program.

Most of the applicants were from Samar, Bohol, Leyte, Negros provinces, and southern and eastern Samar who could have migrated to the metro after super typhoon “Yolanda” flattened Eastern Samar in November 2013.

The other metro’s residents who availed themselves of the program were from Bukidnon, Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte who could have been affected by insurgency.



Over 30,000 NCR folk enlist in Balik Probinsya program

By: Cathrine Gonzales - Reporter / @cgonzalesINQ

INQUIRER.net / 08:51 AM May 22, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1279216/over-30000-ncr-folk-enlist-in-balik-probinsya-program>



The man-made forest in Loboc and Bilar towns in the province of Bohol. (Photo by Helen Castaño)

MANILA, Philippines — Around 33,000 Metro Manila residents have already enrolled in the government’s [“Balik Probinsya” program](#) which is aimed at decongesting the National Capital Region and promote more robust regional development, the National Housing Authority (NHA) announced on Friday.

“There are already 33,000 enrolled in the system and the highest is Leyte which is 4,000 [enrollees] already as of yesterday,” NHA General Manager Marcelino Escalada Jr. said in an interview on ABS-CBN’s Teleradyo.

The NHA official noted that five of the top 10 preferred provinces for the “Balik Probinsya” program are located in Visayas.

“My reading is that these were the people who left their provinces after [typhoon] Yolanda and after the Bohol earthquake kasi seven years nasa Maynila sila eh (because they were here in Metro Manila for seven years). ‘Yun ang analysis ko (That’s my analysis),” he said.’

Last May 13, 2020, Escalada said there were around [10,000 individuals](#) who have already enrolled in the program.



Over 30,000 NCR folk enlist in Balik Probinsya program

Secretary Eduardo Del Rosario of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development earlier said the department is ready to offer housing units to qualified individuals who will return to provinces, saying there is an available inventory of units through the NHA which are unoccupied and unawarded.

Around [one million residents of Metro Manila](#) are expected to join the “Balik Probinsya” program in the next six months.

On Wednesday afternoon, 116 individuals who enrolled in the program online left for Leyte province.

This is the first batch of send-off for qualified beneficiaries of the program.

Escalada said the next batch of “Balik Probinsya” beneficiaries may depart from Metro Manila by Friday next week.



Kuryente ng mga magbabalik-probinsya, siniguro ng Energy Chief

May 22, 2020 @ 7:13 PM

<https://remate.ph/kuryente-ng-mga-magbabalik-probinsya-siniguro-ng-energy-chief/>



Manila, Philippines – Susuportahan ng Department of Energy (DOE) ang umarangkada nang Balik Probinsiya, Bagong Pag-asa Program ng gobyerno sa pamamagitan ng pagsisiguro ng magkakaroon ng kuryente ang mga magbabalik-probinsya.

“The DOE fully supports the Balik-Probinsiya program... Of course, we have to assure them that they would have connection of electricity immediately,” ani Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi sa Joint Congressional Energy Commission hearing.

Tugon ito ni Cusi sa pangamba ni PHILRECA party-List Representative Presely de Jesus sa pagtaas ng demand sa residential at commercial electricity sa rural areas sa full-blown na implementasyon ng Balik Probinsiya program.

Bukod pa sa pagsisiguro sa kuryente ng mga ito ay sinabi ni Cusi na nakikipagtulungan na sila sa Department of Trade and Industry sa kung paano ang maaring gawin ng Pilipinas para makahabol sa post-pandemic investments. RNT



<https://www.facebook.com/143947355665943/posts/3536915376369107/>



PTV 15 hrs · 🌐



'BALIK PROBINSYA' SENDS OFF FIRST BATCH OF BENEFICIARIES

121 beneficiaries returned to their hometowns in Palo, Leyte, in the launch of the Balik-Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa (BP2) program.

They were given free transportation, P5,000 cash assistance, and P15,000 livelihood assistance.



#WorkingPCOO

#COVID19PH

#BalikProbinsya

#WeHealAsOne

www.pcoo.gov.ph



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Presidential Communications (Government of the Philippines) ✓

17 hrs · 🌐

On May 20, 2020, the national government launched the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa (BP2) Program which aims to decongest Metro Manila and promote growth in t... [See More](#)

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Corporate responsibility bill inaprubahan ng Kamara

By Leifbilly BegasMay 22,2020

<https://bandera.inquirer.net/254225/corporate-responsibility-bill-inaprubahan-ng-kamara>

INAPRUBAHAN ng Kamara de Representantes sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa ang panukalang Corporate Social Responsibility Act upang hikayatin ang pribadong korporasyon na tumulong sa nangangailangang publiko.

Sa botong 209-0 at walang abstain, inaprubahan ang House bill 6137.

Ang mga CSR-related activities na maaaring gawin ng korporasyon ay pagkakaroon ng charitable projects at programs, scientific research, youth and sports development, cultural o education promotion, serbisyo sa beterano at senior citizens, social welfare, environmental sustainability, health development, disaster relief and assistance at employee and worker welfare CSR-related activities.

Aamyendahan ng panukala ang Revised Corporation Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 11232) upang makasama ang CSR sa maaaring pondohan ng isang stock corporation.

Ikinatuwa naman nina House Deputy Speaker at 1Pacman Rep. Mikee Romero at House Committee on Labor and Employment chairman Enrico Pineda ang pag-apruba sa kanilang panukala.

“Plowing back corporate resources to communities, especially those underserved by the government, would help cure the deficit in state spending in areas that cry out for development,” ani Romero.

Sinabi ni Romero na sa panahon ng coronavirus disease 2019 ay nakita ang pagtulong ng mga malalaking kompanya sa lipunan.

“Majority, if not all, of the country’s leading corporations have demonstrated sincere social responsibility concern especially by contributing much needed PPE’s (personal protection equipment) for the medical frontliners and by financing testing centers,” ani Romero.

Kikilalanin at pararangalan ng Department of Trade and Industry ang mga kompanya na makagagawa ng “outstanding, innovative and world-class CSR-Related services, projects and programs”.



Food growers clamor for return of Marcos-era Masagana 99

By: Yolanda Sotelo - Correspondent / @yzsoteloINQ

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 10:51 AM May 22, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1279278/food-growers-clamor-for-return-of-marcos-era-masagana-99>

DAGUPAN CITY -- The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) asked the national government to draw up a rice production program similar to the Masagana 99, which “more than doubled the country’s palay production” during the Martial Law era of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos.

In a statement, Sinag said there was a surplus of 89,000 metric tons that were exported to neighboring countries in Asia when Masagana 99 was implemented in 1975-1978.

Sinag Chair Rosendo So, also the chair of Abono Partylist group, said the farmers were then supported with high-yielding rice varieties, augmented by timely releases of fertilizers, and other farm inputs to sustain their production.

“In fact, many farmers are clamoring for the Masagana 99 program to support the agriculture industry. It could be a program that would stop the country from being dependent on rice importation,” he said.

Citing figures from former director of Bureau of Agriculture Economics Jesus Alix, So said the country attained self-sufficiency in rice production and established a 90-day buffer stock for food security purposes during crop year 1975-1976.

“There was an increase of 10-percent yield per hectare during the wet season and 25-percent increase yield per hectare during the dry season under the Masagana 99 from 1974 to 1978, as compared to pre-Masagana from 1969 to 1974,” So said, quoting figures from Alix.

So said the country was not rice import-oriented during that period, unlike today when the government frequently imports rice from other countries, notably Vietnam and Thailand.



Binhing pananim, tulong para sa kabuhayan sa panahon ng krisis

By Gene Ace Sapit Published on May 22, 2020

<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1042626>



Isa ang pamilya ni Rodel Parreño, construction worker mula sa Brgy. Puras, Boac, Marinduque sa maraming manggagawang nawalan ng kabuhayan dahil sa Enhanced Community Quarantine at ngayo'y patuloy na kumikita mula sa mga butong pananim na nagmula sa Plant, Plant, Plant Program ng Department of Agriculture (DA). (Litrato mula sa DA Mimaropa)

Isa ang pamilya ni Rodel Parreño, construction worker mula sa Brgy. Puras, Boac, Marinduque, sa maraming manggagawang nawalan ng kabuhayan dahil sa Enhanced Community Quarantine at ngayo'y patuloy na kumikita mula sa mga butong pananim na nagmula sa Plant, Plant, Plant Program ng Department of Agriculture (DA).

Ang "Plant, Plant, Plant Program" ay inilunsad upang hikayatin ang mga mamamayan na magtanim ng gulay na maaaring anihin sa loob ng isa o dalawang buwan lamang. Layunin din nitong siguruhing may sapat pa ring pagkain ang bawat mamamayan ngayong may krisis dahil sa COVID-19.

Matapos mawalan ng trabaho si Rodel noong Marso, kasama ang kanyang asawa na si Gloria, agad silang nagtungo sa Agricultural Program Coordinating Office (APCO) ng DA na matatagpuan sa Boac upang humingi ng binhi. Kabilang sa mga nakuhang binhi ay upo, kalabasa, petsay, mustasa, sitaw, talong, at okra. Ito ay kanilang itinanim sa kanilang bakuran na may sukat na 200 sq.m.

"Petsay at mustasa ay madali lang mapagkakitaan dahil ilang linggo lang ay pwede na ma-harvest," sabi ni Rodel Parreño.



Binhing pananim, tulong para sa kabuhayan sa panahon ng krisis

Dalawa hanggang tatlong beses sa isang linggo kung maglako ng gulay si Gloria. Ito ay kaniyang ibinibenta sa kanilang lugar at sa mga kalapit na barangay. Kumikita sila ng P150 hanggang P300 upang maibili ng kanilang pangangailangan sa bahay katulad ng bigas, asukal, kape at sabon.

"Malaki pong tulong ang binhi mula sa DA dahil dito namin nakukuha ang aming pangulam at pangbenta. Malaki po ang nagagawang tulong nito dahil simula noong mag-lockdown ay dito po talaga kami kumukuha ng pang-kain," ani Gloria.

"Enjoy pong magtanim dahil nawawala 'yung inip ko sa paghihintay na makabalik sa construction na pinagkukunan ko dati ng hanap-buhay. Nagbubungkal ako ng lupa at naglilinis ng taniman tapos ngayon may pinagkukunan na ng pagkain sa araw-araw," sabi naman ni Rodel.

Tulong-tulong ang buong pamilya upang mapayabong ang kanilang tanim na gulay. Silang mag-asawa ang nagtanim gamit ang kusot ng kahoy at tuyong dumi ng hayop bilang pataba. Samantala, ang kanilang pitong mga anak, maliban sa bunso ang tumutulong sa pagdidilig at pag-iigib ng tubig gamit ang refilling bottles sa poso ng kanilang kapitbahay.

Ayon sa pamilya Parreño, patuloy pa rin ang kanilang pagtanim ng gulay kahit matapos na ang lockdown dahil ito ay malaking tulong sa kanilang pamilya at dahil mahilig rin sa gulay ang kanilang mga anak.

"Malaki po ang tulong ang gulay sa mga bata dahil hindi po nagkakasakit ang mga bata at malalakas po ang kanilang pangangatawan," dadag ni Gloria.

Namahagi rin ang Kagawaran ng mga libreng binhi sa bawat munisipyo. Ito ay makukuha sa Municipal Agriculture Office ng mga mamamayang gustong magtanim ng gulay sa kanilang bakuran. (GATS/PIA MIMAROPA)



‘Give farmers a chance!’

May 22, 2020

[People's Journal](#)

<https://journal.com.ph/editorial/opinion/give-farmers-chance>

It is bad enough that state assistance to the strategic sector is negligible, but please do not belittle the contribution of agriculture to economic growth and national development.

After all, of all the pillars of the economy, the farming-fishery sector is the one actually generating food and feeding the population through crises and the good times.

Many disparage the sector as having “marginal productivity”.

But could this nominal performance be on account precisely of the sheer lack of government support to the sector?

Most other countries heavily subsidize their respective farm sectors.

And so can we blame a thoroughly upset Sen. Imee Marcos for denouncing Finance Sec. Carlos Dominguez's attempt to downplay the present lack of government aid to farmers when he claimed that the country never exported rice in the 70's under the Masagana 99 program?

"Shame on you, Secretary Dominguez, give the Filipino farmer some credit! When supported by sound government policy and defended against rampant importation, we can feed ourselves. Give the Filipino farmer a chance!" Marcos said.

The Finance chief "lost his cool" during the Senate's hearing Wednesday when Marcos asked him why large cash infusions were being made to Land Bank of the Philippines, the Development Bank of the Philippines, and Philguarantee instead of giving direct assistance to marginalized sectors through a network of commercial, rural, and cooperative banks similar to that in Masagana 99.

"Even President Duterte already warned Land Bank during his last State-of-the-Nation Address, since they were only lending to big business at the expense of farmers, who are supposed to be the primary customers," the feisty lady lawmaker said..



‘Give farmers a chance!’

Contrary to Dominguez's claim, the country did export rice to neighboring countries when farmers under Masagana 99 produced a surplus of some 89,000 metric tons in 1977 to 1978, according to Dr. Emil Q. Javier, an agronomist and former president of the University of the Philippines.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute also reported that rice exportation in 2013 was only the second time it took place since Masagana 99 was launched by Marcos's father, then President Ferdinand Marcos.



'Cocoon' protective gear sa new normal, idinisenyo ng isang Pinoy

May 22, 2020 @ 7:35 PM

<https://remate.ph/cocoon-protective-gear-sa-new-normal-idinisenyo-ng-isang-pinoy/>



Manila, Philippines – Ipinakilala ng isang Pinoy designer ang outfit na inspired sa “new normal” bunsod ng novel coronavirus.

Sa isang pahayag, sinabi ni Jerome Salaya Ang na ang “Cocoon” protective gear ang kanyang pananaw sa COVID-19 fashion, gamit ang lightweight at washable na materyales kagaya ng nylon screen mesh.

“We are now living at the edge of a new era. The design philosophy was aimed to be more sporty and flexible so that there is more movability factor when it is worn,” aniya.

Pagpapatuloy pa ni Ang: “And, the sizing is meant to be ‘free’ and genderless. After all, this is what the future is — it’s all about mobility. We also considered our weather here so we opted the usage of lightweight material which is of utmost importance.”

Hinihikayat ang mga kostumer na nais magtanong tungkol sa “Cocoon” outfit na makipag-usap kay Ang sa pamamagitan ng kanyang Facebook at Instagram pages.

Ayon sa kanya, ipagpapatuloy nito ang paggamit ng iba pang fabric upang masigurong kumportable at “stylish” ang protective gear. RNT/MM



Bicycle riders should be fit, strong to ride, says MMDA

posted May 22, 2020 at 11:00 pm by Randy Caluag

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/324349/bicycle-riders-should-be-fit-strong-to-ride-says-mmda.html>

Bicycle is becoming the favorite mode of transportation during the COVID-19 quarantine, but bikers need something to check first before hitting the road.



SUDDEN DEATH. A biker died after collapsing in EDSA-Magallanes early Friday. Photo courtesy of Bong Nebrija

Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) traffic chief Bong Nebrija urged bikers to make sure they are healthy and strong enough to tackle the scorching summer heat.

“To all fellow bikers out there, please make sure you’re fit enough to endure the distance and heat while pedaling to work,” said Nebrija on his social medial wall.

He issued the statement following the death of a male biker who “suddenly collapsed while plying the Magallanes southbound” in EDSA.

The biker was pronounced dead on arrival at the Makati Medical Center.

Nebrija personally checked on the rider who was suspected to have suffered from heatstroke. The MMDA official also found out later that the deceased was a former MMDA employee.

Nebrija also asked the brother-in-law of the victim how they found out about the incident.

“May kamag-anak po kaming nakabasa ng post niyo sa FB nakita po yung bike kaya tinawagan yung kapatid nya para i-check. Buhos na rin lang po ng damdamin,” Nebrija quoting the relative as saying.



Heat index sa Cavite, Camarines Norte, pumalo sa 47°C

May 22, 2020 @ 7:43 PM

<https://remate.ph/heat-index-sa-cavite-camarines-norte-pumalo-sa-47c/>



Manila, Philippines – Naitala sa Daet, Camarines Norte at Sangley Point sa Cavite City nitong Biyernes, Mayo 22, ang pinakamataas na heat index ngayong araw, sa 47°C, ayon sa PAGASA.

Samantala, naitala naman sa Legazpi City at Science City of Munoz, ang heat index na 46°C habang nasa 44°C naman ang nasa Iba, Zambales at Infanta, Quezon.

Nagbabala ang PAGASA sa posibleng heat cramps at heat exhaustion na maaaring magresulta sa heat stroke sa gitna ng patuloy na physical activity.

Samantala, umabot naman sa 41°C ang heat index na naitala sa PAGASA station sa Science Garden, Quezon City bandang alas-12 ng tanghali.

Naitala din sa kaparehas na oras ang maximum temperature na 35°C.

RNT/MM



Here's another beautiful sunset captured by netizen from Lapu-Lapu

By: Raul Constantine L. Tabanao - CDN Digital | May 22, 2020 - 10:41 AM

<https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/312085/heres-another-beautiful-sunset-captured-by-netizen-from-lapu-lapu>

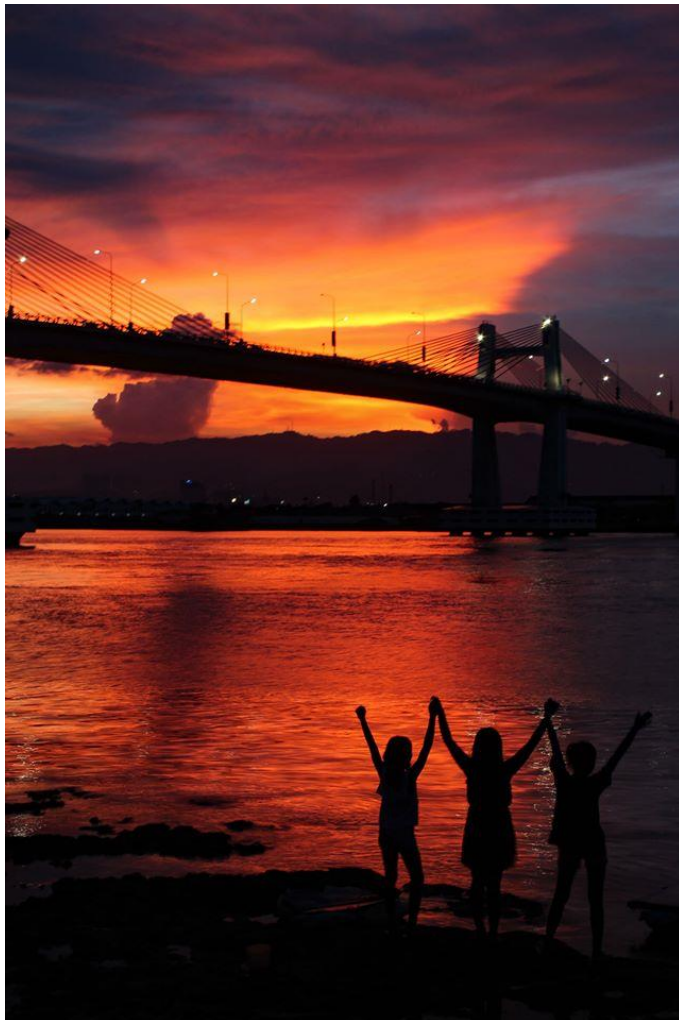


Photo courtesy of Netizen Arlito D. Sanopao Jr.

MOALBOAL, CEBU — A photo of a sunset from any part of the globe is always stunning.

We've seen a lot of beautiful sunset photos recently such as [this one](#) taken from Maryhills, Barangay Antipolo, Medellin last May 14, 2020, this [one taken by a netizen](#) from Dumaguete on May 16, and [this one](#) taken by a photographer from Dipolog City which was shared on May 16.

This time, a netizen from Barangay San Roque, Lapu-Lapu City is sharing his stunning sunset photo taken near the Marcelo Fernan Bridge.

Arlito D. Sanopao Jr., 25, told CDN Digital that he was amazed by the scenery near the bridge and decided to grab his DSLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera to take some photos.

He said that he captured the sunset view which also features the outline of the bridge that connects mainland Cebu to Mactan island on the afternoon of May 20, 2020.

"Dili permanente ang sunset diri sir na nindot, depende sa weather," he said.

(It's not always that we see a good sunset here, it depends on the weather.)

Believing he took a beautiful photo, Sanopao decided to upload his shots on his social media account to "share its beauty" to others.



Here's another beautiful sunset captured by netizen from Lapu-Lapu

'Represents hope'

For him, the sunset had meaning behind its beauty.

"Everytime na naay nindot na sunset diri sa amoa, para nako it represents hope despite sa atong gi atubang karon na crisis tungod sa NCOV 19 pandemic," he said.

(Everytime there's a beautiful sunset here, for me, it represents hope despite the challenges we've faced now amid the coronavirus pandemic.)

Sanopao added that he was surprised that his post went viral.

"Dili ko photographer, passion lang jud nako ang pag photography....chef ko.. wa ko mag expect na mo viral ni," he said.

(I'm not a photographer, it's just that I have a passion in photography. I'm a chef [in a hotel here in Lapu-Lapu City]...I didn't expect that [my photos] would go viral.)

Sanopao's viral post has garnered 1,164 reactions and 3,354 shares as of 10 a.m. Monday, May 22. /bmjo



4.4-magnitude quake jolts Davao Occidental

Published May 22, 2020, 10:30 AM

By Mike Crismundo

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/22/4-4-magnitude-quake-jolts-davao-occidental/>

BUTUAN CITY – A 4.4-magnitude earthquake jolted Davao Occidental province on early Friday morning, May 22, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

In its bulletin, Phivolcs said the tremor was recorded at 3 a.m., with the epicenter plotted 264 kilometers (kms) southeast of Sarangani, Davao Occidental province.

The tremor had a depth of 38 kms, Phivolcs said.

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

The regional office of the Southern Mindanao Office of Civil Defense and provincial disaster risk reduction and management council there reported no damage or injury.

Meanwhile, a 2.5-magnitude tectonic earthquake was also registered at 6:54 a.m. on the same day, and its epicenter was traced 24 kms northeast of Burgos town, Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte province, with a depth of 14 kms, Phivolcs also said, in its latest bulletin.

No aftershock or tsunami alert was raised by the state agency.

The Surigao del Norte provincial disaster risk reduction and management council there also reported no damage or injury.



Second wave fiction

posted May 22, 2020 at 12:25 am by [Tony Lopez](#)

<https://manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/virtual-reality-by-tony-lopez/324245/second-wave-fiction.html>

"The DOH, under Duque's stewardship and the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging Infectious Diseases, under his chairmanship, never were able to bend the curve to create a plateau or flatten the curve."

Health Secretary Francisco Duque claimed before the Senate the other day that the second wave of upsurge in the spread in cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, has begun.

This is pure science fiction.

If there has been a second wave, when did the first wave start? When did the first wave end?

Data produced by the Department of Health daily does not support the claim of a second wave.

So the fiction of a second wave is a coverup for the Department of Health's abject failure to flatten the curve.

The general understanding is that a second wave starts when after we flatten the curve, that is, brought down considerably the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths compared with the most recent comparable period, we ease up or reopen the economy. We allow people who had been cooped up in their cramped accesorias-cum-homes for months to go out and businesses which had been padlocked to reopen, although on a calibrated basis.

But due to carelessness and exuberance, people and companies let down their defenses. People don't wear masks, lessen the number of times they wash their hands, and gather in groups of two, ten, and then hundreds inside malls or spreader events, without keeping the minimum six-foot physical distance, then the virus stages a comeback and infects nearly everyone in its wake. What results then is the so-called second wave. There is an upsurge of cases to begin a new rising wave.

The best way to measure if the virus has been under control and thus the first wave has ended is when there are no outbreaks for 14 consecutive days (because the gestation period of COVID-19 is up to 14 days). Then you can say you have flattened the curve.

In the case of the Philippines, the DOH, under Duque's stewardship and the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging Infectious Diseases, under his chairmanship, never were able to bend the curve to create a plateau or flatten the curve.

It was a massive failure, a failure that cost the economy a minimum of P2 trillion, the loss of jobs of 32 million workers, the impoverishment of half of the total population (that's 50 million), and widespread hunger and misery on an unprecedented scale as economic growth nose-dived to its worst rate in 36 years.

Thanks to Duque's criminal negligence and incompetence, COVID-19 cases have just kept on surging without letup at nearly 300 cases per day. From seven to 25 Filipinos die from COVID-19 every day.



Second wave fiction

This is based on data that a group of University of the Philippines experts has found to be being manipulated. A COVID victim was declared dead yesterday only to be declared alive today. The sex of victims was changed, from male to female, from female to male. Their residence addresses were also manipulated, moved from one town to another.

Duque has haughtily defended the errors saying they constitute only one percent of the totals. One percent, however, constitutes many lives and families.

At this writing, there are now 13,221 confirmed COVID-19 cases, per Johns Hopkins. One percent of that is 132 people. Deaths are now 842. One percent of that is eight people.

What if in those eight, you had a power-tripping senator, an innocent cabinet member, or a nasty and recalcitrant general? Sure, they would not change the total outcome significantly (the Philippines is No. 39 in COVID-19 cases, worldwide, among more than 200 countries), but they will make the difference between sadness and joy, sense of triumph and defeat among the people.

Good riddance, you would exclaim to the power-tripping senator, or to the nasty general. Kawawa naman - you will pray for the innocent cabinet member.

Monitoring COVID-19 cases is not like conducting a survey where you allow for a margin of error, say of two to five percent, or of counting scalawags in the Philippine National Police of say, two percent.

By the way, two percent of the PNP force is not insignificant. Two percent is easily 4,000 policemen. Imagine if all of them behaved like NCR police chief Debold Sinas? The CIC would run out of excuses to coddle them.

Secretary Duque has failed in all four pillars of fighting covid: testing, tracing, treatment and TRUST. If Duque gets away with lies, no wonder General Sinas gets away with his birth date violations of legal health protocols.

Good thing Duterte is probably in no mood to reimpose another Luzon-wide lockdown because the cost has been tremendous and beyond belief. And it could destroy his presidency, so far the best of the last 60 years.

The first wave for the Philippines should have started when lockdown was imposed, March 17. Since then, things have worsened in number of cases and in number of deaths daily.

On March 17, there were only 45 cases a day. There were 224 new cases and 279 on May 20. On March 17 there were only 14 deaths daily. Up to May 12 deaths were still in double digits at 25 although in recent days deaths were suddenly single digit of 5 to 7 per day.

But remember, DOH figures are not dynamic and not reported as deaths happen. So since end April deaths have been seesawing from 28 on April 29 then suddenly to 11 on May 1 only to go up to 27 on May 7 then down to 7 on May 11 then up to 25 on May 12, only to drop to 5 on May 20. Maybe this what Duque refers to as "waves." There is a wave nearly every other day.

In such a situation best response is go surfing. The waves are good.



Will pandemic push humans into a healthier relationship with nature?

By [Reuters](#)

May 22, 2020 - 11:36 AM

<https://www.interaksyon.com/politics-issues/2020/05/22/169040/will-pandemic-push-humans-into-a-healthier-relationship-with-nature/>

ROME (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – Daniel Wanjama had everything ready for this year’s first seed fair in the Kenyan town of Gilgil, an important event where poor farmers exchange seeds of nutritious, hardy local crops they cannot easily buy in shops or markets.

But a week before the fair Wanjama had organised for late March, the government banned gatherings in a bid to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

“Farmers who were ready to deliver seeds are stranded with them, and those who were to obtain seeds have not planted (their crops),” he said by email.

“This is a serious situation because not planting means not having food,” added the founder of Seed Savers Network-Kenya, a social enterprise based in Gilgil, about 120 km (75 miles) north of Nairobi.

Wanjama also worries that the cancellation of seed fairs could hasten the demise of resilient crops that may help farmers adapt to worsening wild weather as the planet warms.

A 2019 survey by his organisation showed 34 varieties had disappeared over 20 years in Nakuru County alone, as traders spurned local varieties of yam, arrowroot, sorghum and millet in favour of more profitable crops.

Now, lockdowns and other measures worldwide to contain the virus are hampering efforts to conserve traditional food crops like those Wanjama wants to save, as well as forests, wetlands and their native species, scientists and environmentalists say.

Green groups and international organisations had billed 2020 as a “super year” for the biodiversity of the planet’s plants and animals, as new global agreements were due to be sealed.

But key U.N. negotiations have been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic which many environmentalists blame, at least partly, on a failure to protect nature that has facilitated the transition of viruses from animals to humans.



Will pandemic push humans into a healthier relationship with nature?

Meanwhile, a relaxation of surveillance and monitoring in many countries has led to more poaching and illegal, unregulated fishing, said ecologist Sandra Diaz.

Popular videos of animals taking over empty beaches, parks and public squares may give the impression “we are witnessing some sort of ‘resurgence’ of nature”, but that is not the case, she said.

“It is an extremely short truce,” said Diaz, a professor at Argentina’s National University of Cordoba and co-chair of a landmark science report last year that found human activities risk the extinction of a million animal and plant species.

Last month, Diaz and other top scientists behind that report warned of worsening future pandemics due to activities such as deforestation, farming, mining and infrastructure development.

‘Super year’ on ice

The coronavirus pandemic has now dashed hopes 2020 would see new international accords to halt shocking declines in animal and plant species, including a global framework to safeguard ecosystems under the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and a treaty to protect oceans.

Key summits to seal those pacts, originally scheduled for the autumn, have been postponed, with new dates yet to be fixed.

But Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, the CBD’s acting executive secretary, said the pandemic was an “opportunity to reset... our relationship with nature”.

“COVID-19 has... reaffirmed what we already knew - namely, that biodiversity is fundamental for human health,” she said in a phone interview.

Governments are now recognising this, she added, pointing to a joint call by mayors of powerful cities for economic recovery to be low-carbon and sustainable, and formal requests from Chile and Germany for scientific help to help avert future pandemics.

On Wednesday, the European Commission pledged to protect 30% of the EU’s land and sea, cut the use of pesticides by 50% and put a quarter of its farmland under organic production by 2030.



Will pandemic push humans into a healthier relationship with nature?

A two-day Biodiversity Summit to be held at the start of September's U.N. General Assembly will also give the issue a boost, Mrema said.

On a personal level, shop closures and restrictions on travel have led many people to reconnect with nature through walks in the park and local countryside, she said.

Lauren Baker, programmes director for the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, said consumers had also become more aware of the links between the environment and their food as lockdowns led them to cook more at home.

The pandemic was a chance to reform how the world produces food – a major driver of biodiversity loss – as the health crisis has highlighted the interdependence between supply chains and nature, she added.

Good examples to follow include a state-backed farming system in southeast India that reduces water usage and boosts soil fertility, and a non-profit in Zambia that helps hungry villagers quit poaching, she said.

Such initiatives show that food production and diets could be aligned “with our goals around preserving nature and natural environments”, she noted.

Aha! moment

Ercilia Sahores, Latin America director of Regeneration International, which supports low-carbon agriculture that revives ecosystems, said people were reaching out to her group from around the Americas to find out more about local food.

“People are starting to finally connect the dots between the climate crisis, food crisis and health crisis,” she said. “This has been a big ‘aha!’ moment for plenty of people.”

In Kenya, policy makers are telling citizens to grow their own vegetables and debating the sustainability of relying on foreign seeds and fertilisers, said Seed Savers' Wanjama.

Ahead of the International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22, environmentalists expressed hope that such changes would be long-lasting and that biodiversity does not take a backseat once again when countries reopen after the pandemic.

“I’ve heard politicians saying that we must only focus now on jobs – but look at how many jobs have been lost because we didn’t focus on nature and wildlife,” said Brian O’Donnell, director of the U.S.-based Campaign for Nature.

The CBD’s Mrema said the environment could suffer if governments focused too narrowly on rebooting their economies.

Before COVID-19, financing for conservation was already inadequate, even though nature provides the world with essential services including food, fuel and water, she said.

“If we are protecting nature today, it means we are avoiding the pandemics of tomorrow,” she added. —Reporting By Thin Lei Win @thinink, Editing by Megan Rowling



Coronavirus has changed the way the world looks at hand hygiene, UNICEF says

By Amanda Watts, CNN

Published May 23, 2020 1:17:49 AM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/23/coronavirus-hand-hygiene-unicef.html>



(CNN) - COVID-19 has changed the way the world looks at the importance of hand hygiene – for the better, Henrietta Fore, executive director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said Friday.

“The idea of hygiene has changed in all of our minds in developed countries and developing countries,” Fore said during a World Health Organization briefing.

“How often we wash our hands, how we use soap,” she said. “This is not available everywhere in the world, so if we can focus on getting good ... wash systems for water and soap around the developing world it will have a lasting impact and it will change both what healthcare workers can do, but also how communities can keep themselves safe.”



US instructs WHO to immediately begin work on coronavirus inquiry: 'There is no time to waste'

By Simon Cullen, CNN

Published May 23, 2020 12:11:35 AM

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/5/23/united-states-who-inquiry.html?fbclid=IwAR2>

2



(CNN) - The United States is calling on the World Health Organization (WHO) to immediately begin work on an investigation into the source of the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent timeline of events.

In a letter to the WHO's executive board meeting in Geneva on Friday, US Assistant Secretary for Health Brett P. Giroir wrote: "As President Trump just made clear in his May 18 letter to Director-General Tedros, there is no time to waste to begin on the reforms needed to ensure such a pandemic never happens again."

"We applaud the call for an impartial, independent, and comprehensive review, to be undertaken in consultation with member states, and urge that work begin now," Giroir wrote.

He said that such a review will ensure there is a thorough understanding of the "source, timeline of events, and decision-making process for the WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic."

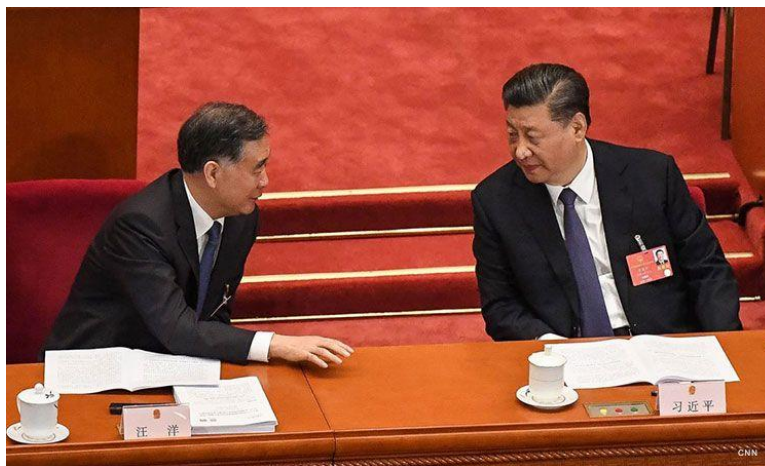


China and India have fueled global growth for years. That engine has stalled

By Julia Horowitz, CNN Business

Published May 22, 2020 8:47:19 PM

https://cnnphilippines.com/business/2020/5/22/global-growth-fueled-by-China-India-stalled-.html?fbclid=IwAR2ULWIXBYQuZnrP0eOL3xYd_yg_1ArymLiHmVVYa1h5JABd5PhKLyUfDdo



(CNN) -- Since the Great Recession following the 2008 financial crisis, China and India have powered much of the world's economic growth. Now, activity in both countries has plunged, raising the risk of a prolonged global slump.

What's happening: China said Friday that it **could not set a target** for economic growth this year — a sign of how much uncertainty the coronavirus pandemic has caused the world's second largest economy.

China has set such targets for decades. Last year, Beijing targeted growth in the range of 6% to 6.5%. GDP grew 6.1%, its slowest pace in nearly 30 years.

Meanwhile, Shaktikanta Das, the governor of the Reserve Bank of India, said Friday that the country's economy **wouldn't grow at all** in the current fiscal year, which ends in March 2021. The last time India's economy shrank over the course of a year was in 1979.

These announcements cast further doubt on the ability of the global economy to recover from its deepest downturn since the Great Depression.

Bank of America continues to slash its economic forecasts, it told clients Friday. The bank now predicts that the global economy will shrink by 4.2% this year, down from a 2.7% contraction it forecast six weeks ago. The IMF predicted in April that global output would contract by 3% in 2020.

The deteriorating relationship between the United States and China is giving investors even more reason to worry.



Cyclone kills at least 82 in India and Bangladesh, flooding lowlands

Published May 22, 2020 12:32am

By RUMA PAUL, SUBRATA NAGCHOUDRY, Reuters

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/world/739275/cyclone-kills-at-least-82-in-india-and-bangladesh-flooding-lowlands/story/>



A woman clears her house that was demolished by the cyclone Amphan in Satkhira, Bangladesh May 21, 2020. REUTERS/Km Asad

KOLKATA/DHAKA - The most powerful cyclone to strike eastern India and Bangladesh in over a decade killed at least 82 people, officials said, as rescue teams scoured devastated coastal villages on Thursday, hampered by torn down power lines and widespread flooding.

Mass evacuations before Cyclone Amphan made landfall undoubtedly saved countless lives, but the full extent of the casualties and damage will only be known once communications are restored, officials said.

In the Indian state of West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said at least 72 people had perished - most of them either electrocuted or killed by trees uprooted by winds gusting up to 185 km per hour (115 mph).

She said the storm had carved a 400-km long swathe through the state and announced a 10 billion rupee (\$130 million) emergency fund to rebuild roads, water and health systems. "These areas have been devastated," she said.

In neighboring Bangladesh, the initial death toll was put at 10.

"I have never seen such a cyclone in my life. It seemed like the end of the world," said Azgar Ali, 49, a resident of Satkhira district on the Bangladeshi coast. "All I could do was to pray ... Almighty Allah saved us."



Cyclone kills at least 82 in India and Bangladesh, flooding lowlands

When the cyclone barrelled in from the Bay of Bengal on Wednesday, a storm surge of around five meters caused flooding across low-lying coastal areas.

Reuters' and other television footage showed people wading through knee-deep water and buses that had been smashed into each other.

Villagers could be seen trying to lift fallen electricity poles, fishermen hauling their boats out of a choppy sea, and uprooted trees lying strewn across the countryside.

"Have been seeing visuals from West Bengal on the devastation caused by Cyclone Amphan," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted. "In this challenging hour, the entire nation stands in solidarity with West Bengal."

Designated a super cyclone, Amphan weakened after making landfall. Moving inland through Bangladesh, it was downgraded to a cyclonic storm by the Indian weather office, and it was expected to subside into a depression later.

Low-lying Bangladesh has a history of cyclones, but even by those standards Amphan was powerful, said Mostak Hussain, humanitarian director for Save the Children in Bangladesh.

"We've received reports that more than 5 million people were disconnected from the electricity grid for their own safety as winds of 150 kph smashed into power lines, destroying homes and uprooting trees," he said.

Concern was also growing over flooding in the Sundarbans, an ecologically fragile region straddling the Indian-Bangladesh border, best known for its thick mangrove forests and tiger reserve.

"The tidal surge submerged part of the forest," said Belayet Hossain, a forest official on the Bangladeshi side. "We have seen trees uprooted, the tin roofs of the guard towers blown off."

On the Indian side, village official Sanjib Sagar said embankments protecting a low-lying island where some 5,000 people live had been washed away, and he had been unable to contact authorities for help.

Authorities in both countries managed to evacuate more than 3 million people to storm shelters before Amphan struck. But the effort was focused on communities that lay directly in the cyclone's path, leaving villages on the flanks still vulnerable.

The two countries are already battling to stop the spread of the coronavirus, and some evacuees were initially reluctant to leave home for fear of infection in packed storm shelters. (\$1 = 75.4740 Indian rupees) – **Reuters**



China and India have fueled global growth for years. That engine has stalled

Eye on Hong Kong: Global stocks tumbled Friday after news broke that Beijing would pass a [controversial national security law](#), the biggest blow to the city's autonomy since its handover to China in 1997. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index notched its [worst performance](#) since July 2015.

The US State Department has condemned the move, warning that "any effort to impose national security legislation that does not reflect the will of the people of Hong Kong" would be met with an international response.

Tensions had already been running high, with Beijing and Washington trading criticism over the handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Watch this space: Chinese stocks have [become a flashpoint](#). On Wednesday, the US Senate unanimously passed a bill that would prevent companies that refuse to open their books from listing on Wall Street. The bill's bipartisan cosponsors said the goal is to "kick deceitful Chinese companies off US exchanges."

Coronavirus could end Silicon Valley as we know it

The Silicon Valley of the past decade may be on its way out as remote work becomes the new normal.

First came Twitter's pronouncement earlier this month that some employees would be able to continue [working from home "forever."](#)

The company said the experience of working from home during the pandemic has shown that it can be adopted at scale.

"If our employees are in a role and situation that enables them to work from home and they want to continue to do so forever, we will make that happen," Twitter's vice president of people, Jennifer Christie, in a statement to CNN Business. "If not, our offices will be their warm and welcoming selves, with some additional precautions, when we feel it's safe to return."

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Thursday that [as many as 50% of employees](#) could be working remotely within the next five to 10 years.

Zuckerberg pitched the idea as both a matter of keeping employees happy and creating "more broad-based economic prosperity."

"When you limit hiring to people who live in a small number of big cities, or who are willing to move there, that cuts out a lot of people who live in different communities, have different backgrounds, have different perspectives," Zuckerberg said on a livestream.



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What it means: US tech companies have fared far better than most firms during the pandemic. Demand for cloud services has shot up, and employees were already used to working from home. Now tech leaders may reconsider all the money they spend maintaining their high-end campuses, which had been a key perk for employees — and a symbol of Silicon Valley's prosperity.

Remember Brexit? Why the UK recession could be really bad

As nations around the world attempt to dig their way out of a cataclysmic global recession, Britain is in a [particularly tight spot](#) of its own making.

The country is in the middle of an economic disaster and a health crisis. The Bank of England has predicted that the United Kingdom is heading for its worst economic crash in more than 300 years, while its death toll from Covid-19 is the highest in Europe.

Yet the United Kingdom is also racing toward a self-imposed deadline to construct a post-Brexit trade agreement with the European Union, its single biggest market for exports, by the end of the year. Talks are not going well — raising the possibility of another major shock just as the expected economic recovery gains momentum.

"The whole of the advanced world is in recession because of the coronavirus," Kallum Pickering, senior economist at Berenberg Bank, told me. "But the UK has an additional problem of the UK-EU negotiations in the second half of the year."

Concerns about Brexit could weigh on household spending, which accounts for around 70% of GDP in the UK, Pickering said. That could limit the impact of government relief efforts.

This just in: Attempting to stem the vast economic damage, the UK government borrowed £62.1 billion (\$75.7 billion) in April, the highest level since records began in 1993.

Up next

Alibaba and Foot Locker report results before US markets open.

Coming next week: US and UK markets are closed Monday.