

Metal output plunges

[Louise Maureen Simeon](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The country's metallic production declined by 11 percent to P25 billion in the first quarter as the limited movement of supplies and workforce affected the output.

Latest data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) showed that aggregate value of metal production decreased to P24.86 billion from P27.84 billion in 2019.

"The lackluster start was attributed mainly to the disruption in the mining operations of mining projects throughout the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic where movements of people and supplies were restricted," MGB said.

"There was also zero production of one of the country's major mining projects, Didipio Gold Project of OceanaGold Philippines located in Nueva Vizcaya. Last year, during the same period OceanaGold accounted for about P3.64 billion worth of copper, gold, and silver," it added.

OceanaGold's renewal of its financial and technical assistance agreement remains hanging as the Office of the President has yet to act on it.

Gold production took the spotlight, accounting for 43 percent of the total production value with aggregate earnings of P10.66 billion. The amount was 13 percent lower than the previous year.

Gold metal price accelerated to \$1,548.17 per troy ounce from \$1,304.15.

Direct shipping nickel ore and mixed nickel-cobalt sulfides grew two percent to P10.29 billion as nickel price accelerated to \$12,739.72 per MT from \$12,382.18 per MT.

The nickel group accounted for 41 percent of the total metallic production value in the first quarter. Revenues from copper production, which comprise 15 percent of the total, fell 27 percent to P3.69 billion.

The decline was attributed to the nine percent drop in copper price to \$5,651.25 per MT.

The production value of silver also decreased 22 percent to P170 million as production fell 25 percent to 6,335 kilos.

Moreover, the Philippine Gold Processing and Refining Corp. was the country's major gold producer during the period, accounting for 1,396 kilos valued at P3.61 billion.

Out 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.

Meanwhile, the Toledo Copper Project of Carmen Copper Corp. in Cebu dominated copper production period with 79 percent share of the total output.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/business/2020/05/24/2016042/metal-output-plunges>

Saving PHL native tree species

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

May 24, 2020



Kanining-peneras and mapilig trees

With the shrinking forest cover and years of planting fast-growing trees, some of the country's native trees were seriously threatened, if not having gone extinct.

Indeed, the country's forests have been devastated by decades of destructive development projects—from commercial logging to mining and quarrying, unsustainable agricultural practices like slash-and-burn, and the massive land-use conversion and human encroachment of forested areas, plus other factors like the proliferation of invasive alien tree species.

Reforestation program

To address the massive deforestation and as a mitigation and adaptation measure from 2011 to 2016, the government, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), implemented an ambitious reforestation program called the National Greening Program (NGP).

But in the early years of implementation of NGP, fast-growing trees were planted instead of native trees, thereby, failing to address the serious environmental problems the Philippines was confronting.

This was eventually corrected, through the planting of native trees, underscoring the importance of conserving the country's native tree species, particularly the dipterocarp, or tall hardwood tropical trees with two-winged fruit that are the source of valuable timber, aromatic oils and resins.

The NGP is now being sustained through the Expanded National Greening Program (E-NGP). The program is banking on partnerships with the private sector, which has various environmental protection programs—such as to help restore the country's open, degraded and denuded forests, and help save the country's native trees from extinction.

Private-sector initiative

Ongoing initiatives may help save some of the country's threatened tree species, most of which are endemic to the Philippines, and eventually help establish a reliable database of its native trees.

One such initiative is the Binhi Program—a species conservation program that focuses on native tree species—of the Lopez-led Energy Development Corp. (EDC), a leading renewable energy company.

EDC is a pioneer in geothermal energy in the Philippines. Its 1,475 MW total installed capacity generates 37 percent of the country's total renewable energy.

Its 1,181 MW geothermal portfolio, accounting for 61 percent of the country's total installed geothermal capacity, is putting the Philippines on the map as the world's third largest geothermal producer.

EDC has recently completed its population survey of 35 threatened native tree species under Binhi, a news release of the company said last week.

Saving native trees

DENR Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, concurrently its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) director, lauded EDC for its initiative in helping save the country's native tree species.

"The DENR has a good number of partnerships with the private sector," he said in a telephone interview on May 19.

With the EDC, the partnership includes the planting of native trees in some areas like in Northern Samar, near Mount Apo, Pantabangan in NuevaEcija and in Cotabato, he said.

These areas, according to Calderon, contain the country's natural gene pool. He emphasized that protecting and conserving native trees is also boosting wildlife conservation efforts.

The DENR provides capacity building training to the EDC work force on forest protection and conservation.

The company's advantage, he said, is having officials who have the passion for the environment, citing Atty. Allan Barcena, a former DENR official.

Native tree database

The Philippines, Calderon said, has established a native tree database, as a result of a long-standing partnership of the DENR's Forest Management Bureau and DENR-BMB with the University of the Philippines-College of Forestry and Natural Resources.

He acknowledged that EDC's survey is a big boost in updating the country's database, saying that some of the trees the company recorded were believed to have been extinct.

"It is a big help for us because in the DENR's listing, some of the trees they have surveyed were already extinct but were found to be still thriving," Calderon said.

He acknowledged that EDC's project sites are reservation areas that include vast environment protected areas.

Forest restoration

EDC has been pushing for the restoration of forests within its area of operation and other parts of the country for more than a decade now, according to company officials.

This is being implemented with the help of 177 project partners for over 11 years now.

The population survey of native tree species is in partnership with the DENR-BMB Adopt-a-Wildlife Species Program.

EDC has already reforested 9,372 hectares and has planted 6 million native tree seed seedlings since 2009.

Company's commitment

EDC President and Chief Operating Officer Richard B. Tantoco said in the news release that the completion of the target 35 tree species for the population survey, from 2016 to 2019, was consistent with the company's commitment to protect the environment, along with its effort to provide uninterrupted clean, renewable power.

EDC completed the population survey and data gathering of 10 of the priority native tree species in its pilot year in 2016, followed by 10 more in 2018, and eventually completing the list in end-2019.

Some of the tree species surveyed were already on the critically endangered list, if not already thought to be extinct, and have not been seen or recorded in other areas.

The 15 trees on the list were: kaladis narig, thick-leaf narig, pinulog, Mindanao narek, gisok-gisok, supa, kamatog, itom-itom, malinoag, tangile, yakal, narek, malayakal, piling-liitan and kamagong ponce.

After the population survey, the company recommended the updating of the species's conservation status through the DENR, the Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and the secretariat of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List for Tree Species.

Barcena, head of EDC's Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Relations, underscored the importance of conducting the survey of native trees species, saying it will help the company identify priority species for conservation.

"This population survey of native tree species enables us to improve the prioritization of [tree species] for biodiversity enhancement and conservation program in our areas of operation. This is crucial since the geothermal reservations that we manage is close to 1 percent of the country's total land area," he told the BusinessMirror in a text message on May 19, when asked how the company will help boost efforts to protect and conserve biodiversity.

In situ conservation

The EDC is now in the process of implementing an in situ conservation project, or natural habitat for selected threatened tree species—such as critically endangered or endangered—to continue their propagation, and the establishment of ex situ, or outside conservation with an arboretum or tree park for all priority species across the country.

In May 2019 last year, under Binhi, EDC was tapped as the first and sole partner of BGCI, a Europe-based plant conservation charity, to be its partner for Global Tree Assessment program for conservation status assessments of 800 Philippine endemic tree species for two years.

BGCI is part of the IUCN, an organization that formulates measures for the protection of the environment through data gathering, research, field projects, advocacy, and education.

Under the partnership, EDC received a grant of £16,160 or more than P1 million for the two-year period.

BGCI also trained the Binhi team and the DENR on the IUCN Red List methodology, a vigorous and internationally respected procedure following strict guidelines and data requirements on extinction risk assessments.

According to BGCI, only 25,000 of the world's 80,000 tree species have been assessed globally and nationally for their risk of extinction.

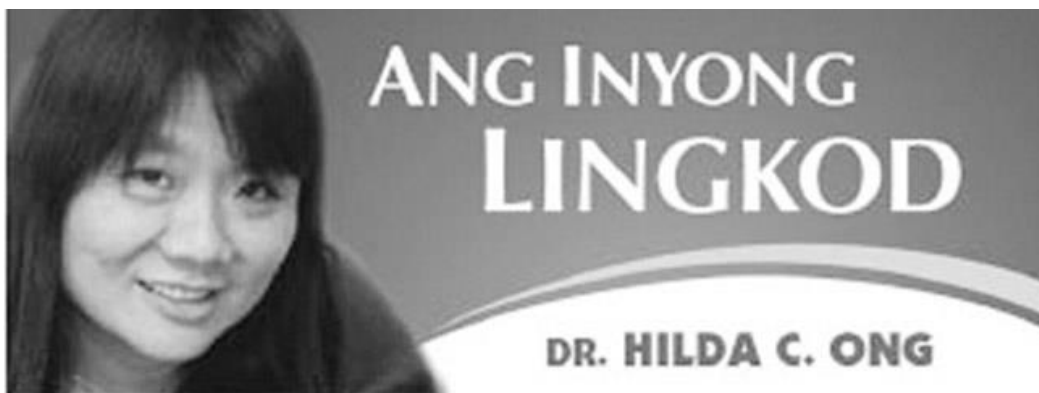
Updating IUCN's Red List

The EDC has already submitted its list of 200 species for updating on the Red List web site of IUCN.

“Our mandate is clear—to keep providing clean, reliable energy without causing damage to the environment, and to further protect and sustain those that remain for us to protect for the current and future generations,” Tantoco said.

For 2020, EDC said it will continue to pursue strategic partnerships to establish additional arboretum across its project sites, and continue to develop propagation protocols for its 96 priority threatened species, in partnership with academic institutions and the government.

Image Credits: [EDC](#)



BAGYONG AMBO, PINATAAS ANG TUBIG SA ANGAT DAM

May 24, 2020 @ 12:38 AM 7 hours ago

Bago tumama si Typhoon Ambo (international name, Vongfong), ang kauna-unahang bagyo sa bansa sa taong 2020, nasa 187.72 meters above sea level (masl) ang Angat Dam na siyang pangunahing pinagkukunan ng tubig ng mga nasa Metropolitan Manila at kalapit na mga lalawigan.

Matapos magbuhos ng malalakas na pag-ulan ang bagyo nitong Biyernes (May 15) hanggang Sabado (May 16) ng umaga, umangat sa 190.19 masl ang antas ng tubig.

Ayon kay Dr. Seville David, Jr. Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), sa ngayon (May 21), ang antas ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 190.77 masl, nadagdagan muli ng kaunti, bagama't malayo pa rin sa normal high level na 210 masl ay malaking tulong pa rin ang patuloy na pag-ulan sa may bahagi ng Bulacan.

Bilang suporta ng NWRB sa pagharap ng bansa sa Coronavirus Disease 2019, pinayagan nito ang alokasyon na 48 cubic meters per second (CMS) sa dalawang water concessionaires na Maynilad Water Services at Manila Water Company upang maseguro ang tuloy-tuloy na daloy ng tubig sa mga ospital at mga tahanan habang nasa ilalim ng Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) ang buong National Capital Region (NCR).

Simula kasi noong October 2019, mayroon nang scheduled water interruption na isinasagawa ang mga water companies upang maiwasan ang kakulangan sa tubig sa panahon ng tag-init.

Pero pagtitiyak ng NWRB sa pamumuno ni Dr. David, aabot hanggang sa katapusan ng taon ang operational water level ng Angat Dam.

Mabuti na lamang pala talaga at maagang nagsimulang magtipid ang National Capital Region kung hindi, hindi kakayanin ang 24-hour na suplay ng tubig sa mga bahay at ospital lalo pa't mainit ang panahon, nagsisiksikan sa loob ng bahay at marami ang gumagamit.

Mga waging district governor, FVDG, SVDG ng LCI-MD 301 Philippines, iprinoklama

May 24, 2020 @ 2:29 AM 5 hours ago

Views: 121

Manila, Philippines – Agad isinagawa ang proklamasyon sa mga nanalong district governor, first vice district governor at second vice district governor para sa Lion Year 2020-2021 ng Lions Clubs International-Multiple District 301 Philippines makaraan ang canvassing sa ginanap na online election, Sabado, Mayo 23, 2020.

Pinangunahan ni MD 301 Philippines Council Chairman, Past International Director Michael S. So, 451PMJF at Second Century Ambassador, ang proklamasyon na ginanap sa tanggapan ni MD 301 Council Secretary, District 301-D1 District Governor Santy B. Morante, Jr., PMJF, sa Kamuning, Quezon City na napanood sa buong Pilipinas via Facebook live.

Nanguna sa mga iprinoklama ang mga nanalong kandidato mula sa District 301-A2 na sina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Usec. Benny D. Antiporda, PMJF, ng Pasay City Host Lions Club, MJF, bilang district governor-elect; Ma. Jesusa W. Antiporda, PMJF, ng PCHLC, bilang first vice district governor-elect; at Commodore Amado Sanglay, MJF, ng Cavite Port San Felipe Lions Club, bilang second vice district governor-elect.



PORMAL nang iprinoklama ni Lions Clubs International Multiple District 301 Philippines Council Chairman, PID Michael S. So, 451PMJF at Second Century Ambassador, si DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda, PMJF, bilang District 301-A2 district governor-elect sa katatapos na district online election.



PINANGUNAHAN ni Lions Clubs International Multiple District 301 Philippines Council Chairman, PID Michael S. So, 451PMJF at Second Century Ambassador, ang proklamasyon ni Lion Ma. Jesusa Antiporda, PMJF, bilang District 301-A2 first vice district governor-elect.

Nabatid na sa naturang eleksyon, tanging ang District 301-A2 ang may labanan sa pagka-second vice district governor kung saan lumamang si Sanglay ng 49 boto laban sa kanyang katunggali na si Lion Wildy Tan ng Batangas MJF Lions Club.

Kasabay nito, inihayag din ni So ang resulta ng ginawang botohan hinggil sa mahalagang pagbabago o rebisyon sa District Constitution and By-Laws na sinang-ayunan ng 191 botante habang 62 ang 'di sumang-ayon at dalawa ang blangko.

Batay ito sa isinumiteng dokumento ni District 301-A2 Nomination Committee Chairperson PDG Ramon Cariño na pinatotohanan ni Cabinet Secretary Rosario Sarao sa pamamagitan ng email.

Sa District 301-A3, iprinoklama sina Paulina Tan bilang district governor-elect at Walter Santillan bilang FVDG-elect.

Habang sa District 301-A4, proklamado naman bilang district governor-elect si Alexander Sulu.

Sa District 301-B1, iprinoklara sina Alfonso de Ocampo, Jr., ng Iloilo City Metro Lions Club bilang district governor-elect; Ramon Manoj, MJF, ng Bacolod City Host Lions Club, FVDG-elect; at Roman Peñaranda ng Pototan Lions Club, SVDG-elect.

Samantala, iprinoklama rin ang iba pang nagsipagwagi sa naturang online election na ginamitan ng election runner na sina District 301-B2 District Governor-elect Jude Abenoja, 3PMJF, ng Ormoc City Lions Club; FVDG-elect Rogelio Alegarbes ng Cebu Magino-o Lions Club; at Rodolfo Juan ng Dumaguete City Host Lions Club bilang SVDG-elect.

Prinoklama rin para sa District 301-C sina District Governor-elect Robert Sanchez ng La Union Lions Club; FVDG-elect Ramil Lacambra, ng Hundred Island Lions Club; at SVDG-elect Mark Jefferson Ng, ng Baguio City Host Lions Club.

Sa District 301-D1 naman, iprinoklama rin sina Lion Librada Pingol, MJF, ng Valenzuela Host Lions Club, bilang district governor-elect; Bernardo Cruz, MJF, ng Angeles Lions Club, FVDG-elect; at Cesar Santiago, MJF, ng Olongapo New Horizon Lions Club bilang 2nd vice district governor-elect.



District 301-D1 District Governor-elect Librada Pingol

Sa District 301-D2, iprinoklama rin sina Raymundo Abuel, Jr., ng Marikina Valley Host Lions Club bilang district governor-elect; Tomas Gualberto Meneses, ng Pasig Host Lions Club bilang FVDG-elect; at Roehl Castro ng Quezon City Kawilihan Lions Club bilang SVDG-elect.

Mga waging district governor, FVDG, SVDG ng LCI-
MD 301 Philippines, iprinoklama

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May 24, 2020
DATE



Sina District 301-D2 SVDG-elect Roehl Castro at District 301-D2 District Governor-elect Raymundo Abuel, Jr.

Samantalang sa District 301-E, iprinoklama naman sina Jocelyn Tan-Malack Tan, ng Bukidnon Pulangui River Lions Club bilang district governor-elect; Charles Darwin Javellana, ng Davao City Host Lions Club, bilang FVDG-elect; at William To ng Zamboanga City Lions Club bilang SVDG-elect.



Kaugnay nito, iprinoklama rin ni So ang mga nanalong District 301-A2 Leo officers para sa LY 2020-2021 na sina Leo Benjamine Antiporda, ng Pasay City Leo Club, bilang district leo president-elect; Vanessa Sibya, ng Makati Leo Club bilang first vice president-elect; at Renzoval Rebucan Escanlar, ng San Pedro Sto. Sepulchro Leo Club bilang second vice president-elect. **LYDIA BUENO**

Hope amid uncertainties

“Filipinos have long waited for the government to provide them with a roof over their heads, which has become a life and death imperative.

Published 7 hours ago
on May 24, 2020 01:10 AM
By **TEB**



The Balik Probinsya, Balik Pag-asa (BP2) scheme can be the catalyst of a development momentum that will be spread throughout the nation after an expected economic boom that will happen when the world resolves the coronavirus pandemic.

The program which encourages Filipinos to go back to their roots and employ their skills for the development of their native communities backed up by the government had seen an encouraging start, helped along by the trials and tribulations from the coronavirus disease.

An initial batch of beneficiaries proved the soundness of the proposal as more agencies pitched in their share to the program.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, which already has a monitoring structure for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, was tasked to ensure that the recipients of BP2 incentives make a permanent living in their hometown.

The problem with relocation programs of the government usually involves the lack of follow-up support and guidance, particularly after a change in administration when past projects, even the good ones, become part of history.

A recent survey by the Philippine Commission on Urban Poor showed that many of those without a permanent residence in the city are willing to return to the provinces.

According to the National Housing Authority, the BP2 program has already drawn 10,000 applicants in the first four days of its online registration.

The outbreak of the virus in urban centers worldwide including Metro Manila, which became the epicenter of the blight, indicated the urgency of the program.

Among the assistance provided under the program are jobs and a decent lot. The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development is also preparing a housing package for the new agents of development.

The dispersing of people in the provinces, however, may breed a new dilemma, which developed countries are familiar with, and that is a likely shortage of labor for the expected rush of infrastructure development after the health crisis is resolved, which should be nearer than earlier projections.

Most nations faced with this problem, such as China, addressed this by putting up temporary facilities for workers, which prevent migrants from outside the urban development areas from becoming informal settlers.

Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, who envisioned the BP2, also saw the need for a massive housing program, while encouraging informal settlers to avail of incentives to return home.

Go wanted another program, which is contained in a bill he filed in July 2019, that aims to provide continuous funding support for a large scale pro-poor housing program in the country to complement the BP2.

Filipinos who will voluntarily return to their home provinces to start life anew after the coronavirus disease 2019 crisis shall need sufficient housing, he noted.

Also, Filipinos have long waited for the government to provide them with a roof over their heads, which has become a life and death imperative as a result of the spreading plague.

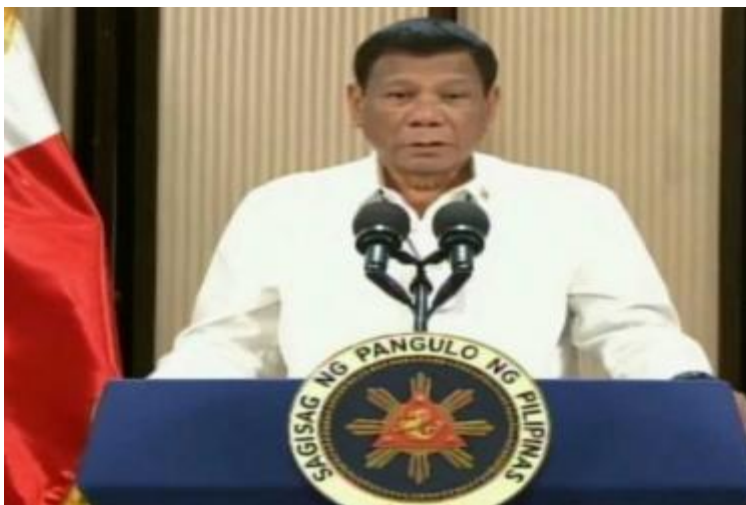
A revival of the economy anchored on BP2 is expected to be a restoration of the bright outlook that most Filipinos had before the menacing beast blew all optimism away.

Duterte: Be patient, resilient

May 23, 2020

By Efrén Montano

People's Tonight



PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has asked 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 Masidlwin 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.

IATF to meet next week to discuss fate of areas under ECQ, MECQ

Published May 23, 2020 12:02pm

The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) will discuss next week the fate of areas under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) when lockdown measures expire by the end of the month.

In an interview on Dabol sa News TV, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the IATF will meet on Monday and Wednesday.

The Palace official, who also serves as spokesman for the IATF, said the task force is now finalizing new guidelines on general community quarantine (GCQ) and modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) “kasi ang importante ngayon dapat malinaw kung ano ang GCQ at ang modified GCQ dahil doon nga papunta.”

The cities of Cebu and Mandaue were placed under ECQ, while [Metro Manila, Laguna, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, and Zambales are under MECQ](#) from May 16 to 31. [Ten barangays of Navotas City are also under ECQ](#) until the end of the month. The rest of the country are under GCQ.

While the next step for areas under MECQ is to shift to GCQ and those under GCQ will be MGCQ, Roque said the IATF still has to look into relevant data in deciding on lifting quarantine measures.

“Pero encouraging naman dahil may nabasa naman ako sa UP Research na nagpapakita na karamihan ng lugar sa Pilipinas ay mahigit kumulang ang doubling rate ng mga sakit ay napakatagal na. ‘Yung graph na nakita ko 30 days. ‘Yan po ang nagsasabi na puwede na nga siguro, pero titignan natin ang official na datos ng Department of Health,” he said.

Nevertheless, the Palace official said the public should observe “new normal” measures such as wearing masks and proper handwashing, and minimum health standards such as eating nutritious food, having enough sleep, and regular exercise. —**Ted Cordero/KG, GMA News**



Sinabi ni MMC Chairman at Parañaque Mayor Edwin Olivarez na naiipit ngayon ang mga alkalde sa kalakhang Maynila sa isyu ng economic side at health issue simula pa noong naging pulong nila noong Mayo 9, o limang araw matapos ang ipinatupad na MECQ sa buong National Capital Region (NCR), Laguna at Cebu City.

Rekomendasyon sa pagtatapos ng MECQ pagpupulungan ng MMC

[Ludy Bermudo](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nakatakdang magpulong sa Miyerkules ang Metro Manila Council (MMC) na binubuo ng 17 alkalde para sa gagawing rekomendasyon kung palalawigin ang modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) o ibaba sa general community quarantine (GCQ) ang Metro Manila.

Sinabi ni MMC Chairman at Parañaque Mayor Edwin Olivarez na naiipit ngayon ang mga alkalde sa kalakhang Maynila sa isyu ng economic side at health issue simula pa noong naging pulong nila noong Mayo 9, o limang araw matapos ang ipinatupad na MECQ sa buong National Capital Region (NCR), Laguna at Cebu City.

Sa sarili niyang pananaw, sinabi ni Olivarez na mas gusto niya na mailagay na sa GCQ ang Metro Manila simula sa Hunyo 1 dahil sa epekto sa ekonomiya ng COVID-19 pandemic.

“Preferably, we will have again an urgent meeting in Metro Manila Development Authority office on Wednesday, five days before the lifting to MECQ in the metropolis, “ ani Olivarez.

Sinabi ni Olivarez na, sa ilalim ng GCQ, maaaring magbukas ang mga shopping malls at shopping centers. Pero mananatiling sarado ang mga leisure establishment. Isang miyembro lang ng pamilya ang maaaring makapasok sa mall at dapat magpakita ng kanyang quarantine pass at identification card sa guwardiya bago pumasok sa mall. Kailangan din sa pagpasok ang pagsusuot ng face mask at temperature check.

Iminungkahi rin niya na payagang magbukas sa ilalim ng GCQ ang mga salon, barber shop at ibang personal care services na nasa ilalim ng category III industries.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/metro/2020/05/24/2016104/rekomendasyon-sa-pagtatapos-ng-mecq-pagpupulungan-ng-mmc>



A health worker gestures during COVID-19 testing procedures at the Rosario Maclang Bautista General Hospital in Quezon City.

'Government winning war vs COVID'

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The country is winning the war against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), according to the chief implementer of the government's response to the pandemic.

"For two months that we implemented the enhanced community quarantine, where are we now? I am happy to tell my beloved countrymen that we are winning in our continuous fight against this pandemic," Carlito Galvez Jr., chief implementer of the National Task Force on COVID-19 response, said on Friday.

Galvez said that based on results of earlier tests, the country recorded 250 new cases for every 11,509 daily tests conducted.

He said that between March and April, 13 percent of those tested turned out to be positive cases.

"If we will compare it to our data today, the number of cases decreased by eight percent," Galvez said.

"We also have 89 advanced stage 3 and 4. Our death rates also continue to decrease based on data. In April, we recorded 50 patients who died in one day. But in May, from double-digit death rates, it was reduced to a single digit. We are targeting to reduce it to zero deaths per day," Galvez said.

He said the country's testing capacity is also expected to further improve, with the accreditation of 39 laboratories all over the country.

"We are trying our best to increase this number. Of the present number of laboratories, 21 are in the National Capital Region, six in different parts of Luzon, seven in the Visayas and five in Mindanao," Galvez said. There are 119 pending applications for accreditation of testing labs, he added.

He also reported rising number of patient recoveries. "The highest number of patients recovered on May 13 was 145 in one day. We continue to strengthen our health facilities to address the needs of COVID-19 patients. As of May 20, we have 1,500 referral and treatment hospitals which have 10,572 total bed capacity," Galvez said.

He also disclosed that the government now has 3,146 “Ligtas COVID-19 centers” for persons under monitoring, suspect, probable and confirmed cases nationwide. The centers can accommodate 57,773 patients.

He said that based on Department of Health (DOH) report, the country now has 13,295 hospital beds nationwide for COVID-19 cases, 69.9 percent of which are isolation beds, 20.3 percent ward beds for confirmed COVID-19 cases and 9.7 percent dedicated ICU beds.

“As of May 20, 5,143 beds are occupied which means that the country’s hospitals are ready and enough for the treatment of confirmed COVID-19 cases which need immediate and serious medical attention,” Galvez said.

PPE supply stable

Galvez also revealed that as of May 14, the government has stabilized the supply and demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) in the country.

“In the entirety, we have distributed 700,000 level 4 PPEs in different COVID-19 referral hospitals nationwide. Aside from this, local government units are also buying their own PPEs while the private sector has distributed two million PPEs in different public and private hospitals in the country,” Galvez said.

As part of its preparation for 2021, the government is stockpiling 11 million complete PPE sets to ensure the safety of frontliners.

“We distributed 8,200 medical grade PPE sets, 200 sets of RT-PCR kits capable of testing 10,000 and 1,300 rapid test kits for the medical frontliners in the Cordillera Administrative Region,” Galvez said.

“To address the needs of OFWs, we will put testing laboratories in Clark, Pampanga and Davao. We are trying our best to have RT-PCR machines in each region for the incoming OFWs, especially in regions with direct international flights,” Galvez said.

He also thanked various groups like the MVP Group, Philippine National Red Cross, San Miguel Corp. and United Laboratories for their contribution to the government’s initiatives to combat COVID-19 and ease its impact on livelihood.

“The NCR has 16.5 million population with 843 deaths compared to Lombardy, Italy with 10.06 million population only but it has 32,330 deaths. New York which has 19 million population has 61,000 deaths,” Galvez said.

Declining cases

Like Galvez’s statement, a University of the Philippines report also showed declining COVID-19 cases in the country since the start of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

Based on Forecast No. 7 of UP’s COVID-19 Forecasts in the Philippines: Post-ECQ Report, “the value of R for the entire Philippines has been decreasing” since the ECQ was implemented last March 16. “R” pertains to rate of spread of the disease.

And in a number of provinces around the country, the report showed, the spread of COVID-19 is “either controlled or in a decelerating trend.”

“The ECQ has been working. The past ECQ has been critical in reducing transmission and deaths due to COVID-19 in the Philippines. We know this because the reproduction number R, which measures the rate of spread of the pandemic, has been decreasing since the beginning of ECQ,” the report stated.

The report further indicated that reproduction number R has been decreasing since April 1, from 2.5 to less than 1 currently.

“The decrease in the reproduction number may be solely attributed to the ECQ, despite some challenges the nation faced with regard to mass testing and contact tracing,” it showed.

The report, however, does not mean that the positive trend is “irreversible.”

According to the report, the nationwide trend only shows the average for the entire country. Trends vary according to region, province and local government unit (LGU).

The report said for NCR and Cebu City, the number of new COVID-19 cases is still very high, “so the risk level of the pandemic is still high.” This means the transmission of the virus in the country is “not yet controlled.”

“Mobility and proximity to other people are drivers of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering that NCR is one of the most densely populated areas in the world ... reducing mobility and proximity in NCR is a challenge,” it noted.

The report also noted “still significant” risk levels in Batangas, Davao City and Zamboanga City. These areas should be monitored closely in the next weeks.

It also pointed out the need to monitor Samar and Oriental Mindoro as new cases appeared in the two provinces recently.

“This means that we cannot afford to be complacent, even in areas where the pandemic appears to be contained, because it takes just one spreader to start a second wave of the pandemic,” the report added. **Sheila Crisostomo**

Trace, trace, trace

Published 5 hours ago
on May 24, 2020 01:10 AM

By **Elmer N. Manuel @tribunephl_Imer**



The government is planning to hire around 136,000 contact tracers to help track down the close contacts of people who have been tested positive for the coronavirus disease.

Department of the Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Bernardo Florence Jr. said contract tracers will primarily be deployed in Metro Manila, Laguna and Cebu and will be given minimum wage for compensation.

“The ideal, according to the World Health Organization and the Department of Health is that there should be one team per 800 persons, with the team to be composed of seven members,” Florence said.

“If we will compute the minimum wage for seven members each team, then we could come up with two point, something billion... that’s two billion for one month,” noted Florence, adding that the need for contact tracers will continue under the new normal.

“Contact tracing will become part of the new normal even after our lockdown and even if we’ll be normalized, we still need to have contact tracing. We can even use this for our template in the future,” he added.

Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua said that their estimate is that there are 136,000, more or less, contact tracers that may be needed.

“But that would, of course, depend on the amount that we are willing to pay,” he said.

Additional jobs

Deputy chief implementer against COVID-19 Vince Dizon, in his take on the subject, said this will also help give Filipinos employment.

The government, he said is seeking the help of other sectors and eyes to re-task the Philippine National Police to take the lead in contact tracing, an essential component in the public health response to COVID-19.

Through contact tracing, high-risk individuals would be identified and targeted for isolation or quarantine and in doing so, a complementary step is to mobilize, on a voluntary basis, students from medical, nursing and other allied health professions as contact tracers.

Each team could be composed of police and students but must be provided adequate support such as health insurance and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE).

The use of technology may also help in effective contact tracing by providing digital device to minimize errors in reporting.

Through effective contact tracing, infection transmission can be stemmed and the public may avoid reverting to enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) or unnecessarily prolonging transition to general community quarantine (GCQ).

Virus slowed down

National Action Plan on COVID-19 chief implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., in a related development, has announced that the Philippines' imposition of an ECQ in Metro Manila to control the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 has served the region well enough that it's better off than some cities in the United States and Europe.

In a statement, Galvez said that the ECQ was effective in slowing down the deadly pandemic, citing other highly-populated cities in the world that were having more problems in facing COVID-19.

Galvez noted that the National Capital Region, with a population of 16.5 million, had only reported 842 deaths while Lombardy in Italy, with a population of 10 million, had reported 32,330 fatalities.

"New York has 19 million population and it had 61,000 deaths.

The COVID-19 response chief implementer added that the country now has an average of 250 new cases per day despite the more than 11,000 daily tests conducted.

"While we can say that our response to the pandemic has been somewhat effective, we can't remain complacent," Galvez said. "We still need discipline because we have a responsibility."

In Southeast Asia, the Philippines has reported the most COVID-19 deaths after Indonesia with 857 and 1,326, respectively, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Malaysia, the next Southeast Asian country with the most fatalities, had only reported 115.

Vietnam, despite a long and porous border with China, has recorded just 268 virus cases and zero deaths, according to official tallies.

UP warning

As more establishments are expected to operate within the next few months, the University of the Philippines COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team, meanwhile, warned that 65 percent of the jobs in the country may be high-spreaders of the virus.

In the study, it was found that jobs with more risk of acquiring and spreading the virus are found among those required with close or regular interaction with people.

These industries include the food, agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors which are all highly dependent and may cause lasting effects on one another.

It was also found that 38 percent of these high-risk spreaders are also most likely to be exposed to the disease which on one hand, poses a threat to their health.

Sectors that are relatively not as critical in sustaining the economy but are still high-risk spreaders are found among the education and recreation sectors.

Despite the threat, only 10 percent of the current existing jobs may be done through work from home arrangements which is one of the methods being mostly promoted by the government.

This means that about 90 percent of the industries that will return to work are jobs found to be at a moderate to high infection risk.

With these findings, the team urged for measures to increase the protection levels in each sector in order to lower the level of risk such as the use of PPE in the workplace and building proper engineering controls to avoid the spread of the virus.

They also said that employers should look for ways to amplify their work from home arrangements as the study showed that there is a 99 percent protection if this measure is adopted.

Additionally, the team suggested postponing the education and other service sectors even under the GCQ to minimize the risk of infection with varying capacity found in each region.

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire had earlier stated that employers are not allowed to charge their employees with testing and are more advised to do “symptomatic screening” which regularly monitors employees showing any possible symptoms.

Likewise, several medical associations have said that Rapid Antibody tests are not feasible for employers to impose as a return to work policy due to its inaccuracies in results which may cause a false sense of security among employees.

with Gabbie Parlade

DBM orders agencies to align P4.335-T 2021 cash

May 24, 2020

TITLE: budget to COVID-19 'new normal'

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DBM orders agencies to align P4.335-T 2021 cash budget to COVID-19 'new normal'

By: [Ben O. de Vera](#) - Reporter / [@bendeveraINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 06:08 PM May 23, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has ordered agencies to align programs and projects under the proposed P4.335-trillion cash budget for 2021 to the “new normal” amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In view of the limited fiscal space, the entire budget for the fiscal year 2021 will need to be reviewed and reprioritized towards containing the spread and mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 virus, absent a vaccine; restarting the economy to be able to create jobs and attract investments; and transitioning to the ‘new normal’ environment post-pandemic as outlined in the National Economic and Development Authority’s (Neda) report ‘We Recover as One.’ The goal is to save lives and protect communities while making the different sectors of the economy stronger and more agile,” Budget Secretary Wendel E. Avisado said in National Budget Memorandum No. 136 issued on May 21.

DBM had set next year’s cash appropriations at P4.335 trillion, equivalent to 20.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 5.7-percent higher than this year’s P4.1-trillion budget.

Avisado said the 2021 budget proposal “included the estimated P318.5-billion obligations that will be paid in the succeeding year—this is treated as part of the cash-based budget since implementing agencies need to obligate them during the fiscal year but pay during the first quarter under the extended payment period [as] the actual cash requirements are included in the disbursement program for the next fiscal year.”

“Of the [proposed 2021] budget level, around 40.7 percent or P1.767 trillion is earmarked for the cost of ongoing programs and projects in tier one (forward estimates). Automatic appropriations and special purpose funds will account for another P1.726 trillion or 39.8 percent of the budget. This leaves a fiscal space of P841.7 billion for expanded and new programs and projects for tier two. Because of this very tight fiscal space, the prioritization of health care and food production, and the discontinuance of programs no longer in line with the ‘new normal,’ tier-one budget allocations will need to be reviewed and reprioritized,” Avisado said.

Citing Neda’s recommendations, Avisado said next year’s priority programs included health systems improvement in order to “strengthen the country’s capacity to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including the purchase of vaccine.”

The other top priorities for 2021 were food security, digitalization of the government and the economy, as well as the promotion of the “Balik Probinsya Program”—“these shall ensure a healthy population, a more agile workforce, and business resiliency,” Avisado said.

The 2021 budget must also fund the national government’s technical assistance to local government units (LGUs) to better deal with the COVID-19 crisis; interventions in conflict-affected areas; as well as achieving the United Nations’ (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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Likewise, Avisado said that “as a transition towards the implementation of the Supreme Court decision on the Mandanas-Garcia petition starting fiscal year 2022, agency programs shall be reviewed, reduced by at least half in the aggregate, and devolved to the LGUs that are evaluated to have sufficient resources and capacities.”

“Agencies implementing functions and services for devolution shall include in their budget proposals the funding requirements for capacitating their agencies and said LGUs to deliver the devolved services under agency supervision and/or monitoring,” Avisado added.

The Supreme Court had ruled that local government units’ (LGUs) internal revenue allotment (IRA) shares must come from 40 percent of collections of “all” national taxes or including collections from import duties and other levies by the Bureau of Customs (BOC), and not just from national internal revenue taxes collected by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) as being done at present.

Economic managers had warned that implementation of this Supreme Court ruling could “create a fiscal problem” as it would result in an “unmanageable budget deficit.”

As such, the economic team had proposed to pass on additional costs to LGUs, including spending on agriculture, education, healthcare, and infrastructure such as roads.

As for implementation-ready tier-two or new high-priority programs, activities, and projects under the “new normal,” Avisado said “importance will be given to infrastructure projects that will promote better health services, ease of transportation and mobility of essential goods, as well as IT infrastructure that will lead to the establishment of an ICT-enabled government.”

“With the continuing shift to cash budgeting, the tier-two proposals shall be limited to the programs/activities/projects or goods and services that are to be delivered and paid within the year.

Accordingly, the intended appropriations for these proposals shall only pertain to the cash requirements to be fully disbursed within the fiscal year, including their impact to the two out-years,” Avisado said.

More government agencies, LGUs allowing e-payments

[Lawrence Agcaoili](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — More agencies and local government units (LGUs) are now allowing individuals and businesses to pay taxes, permits and other obligations to the government digitally, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

In a virtual press briefing, BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno said more agencies are now participating in the government electronic-payment (EGov Pay) facility that was launched last November.

“Aside from providing convenience in receiving and making payments, digital payment initiatives pursued by the BSP will further enhance the country’s overall competitiveness as we begin to transition to the new economy,” Diokno said.

The BSP chief said around 180 government entities are expected to be onboard the facility by the end of this year. Participating agencies right now include the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Philippine National Police (PNP), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and various local government units.

Vicente de Villa III, managing director of the BSP’s Financial Technology Sub-Sector, told reporters around 65 government agencies are now using the electronic portal of state-run Land Bank of the Philippines, from only two when EGov was launched last November.

Likewise, Diok-no added a total of 21 more BSP-supervised financial institutions are set to join the existing seven participants now offering payments via the national quick response code standard or QR Ph.

The BSP chief said the adoption of QR Ph would accelerate digital payments with the efficiency of scanning a standard QR code instead of encoding a payee’s account details.

According to the central bank, person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions via QR Ph within the fourth quarter complementing the person-to-person (P2P) transactions launched last November.

“This will enable merchants, including micro and small vendors, to accept e-payments by merely displaying a standard QR Code for their customers to scan,” Diokno said.

The use of QR codes for payments has been gaining traction as an alternative to the traditional debit and credit card payments. The QR technology has emerged as the most expedient means of payment since it essentially entails code scanning which is faster and easier to do than bringing out a card, tapping, dipping or swiping it, and signing a charge slip in most cases.

Likewise, consumers benefit having faster, easier and cheaper payment options with greater convenience.

More government agencies, LGUs allowing e-
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Both EGov Pay and QR Ph uses fund transfers via PESONet and InstaPay, the automated clearing houses under the National Retail Payment System (NRPS) launched in December 2015.

Diokno reported nearly two million of the Social Security System's Small Business Wage Subsidy (SBWS) fund were disbursed through PESONet as of May 20.

The first tranche of SBWS covers 3.4 million eligible employees of small business affected by the enhanced community quarantine. It is expected that about 2.2 million beneficiaries with bank and e-money accounts will receive the SBWS through the PESONet.

Likewise, Landbank is expected to convert nearly 3.9 million Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) accounts into interoperable transaction accounts starting August.

Currently, deposits into the 4Ps accounts with the LandBank are limited to social aid from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

"These digital payment initiatives enhance coordinated government action and uplift the wellbeing of the Filipinos amid the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving forward, we shall continue to build pathways toward a cash-lite Philippine economy," the BSP chief said.

Diokno reiterated the central bank is committed to achieve at least 50 percent of retail payment transactions shifted to digital and 70 percent of adult Filipinos having and using a transaction account.

Travel authority for employees under MECQ is unnecessary –DILG exec

Published May 23, 2020 1:23pm

By JAMIL SANTOS, GMA News

The Department of the Interior and Local Government has reminded workers of business establishments allowed to operate during the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) that there is no need for them to seek a travel authority from their barangays.

"Lilinawin ko lang po na para po sa mga nagtatrabaho sa mga industriyang pinapagayan ng ating batas o pinapayagan ng IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force), ang kailangan niyo lang pong ipakita ay inyong company ID or certificate of employment. 'Yun lang po, hindi po kayo kailangang humingi ng travel authority," DILG undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said at the Laging Handa public briefing on Saturday.

"Ang travel authority ay para po 'yan sa mga stranded individuals. Kung kayo po ay nagtatrabaho sa isang establisyimento na pinapayagan ng IATF na mag-operate, ang kailangan niyo lang po ay inyong company ID," Malaya added.

Malaya made the statement following reports of some residents falling in long queues in Rodriguez, Rizal still asking for travel authority from the local government unit.

"Hindi po tama 'yan at kami po ay nakikipag-ugnayan na kahapon pa (Friday) sa munisipyo ng Rodriguez, Rizal para po pigilan nila ang ganoong klaseng sistema," Malaya said.

Earlier, The DILG undersecretary said [travel authority is only for those stranded individuals](#). —Jamil Santos/LBG, GMA News

Angara wants COVID-19 testing for people going back to work belonging to vulnerable sectors

Published May 23, 2020 11:04am

Updated May 23, 2020 11:15am

Senator Sonny Angara filed a Senate bill earlier this week which seeks to have COVID-19 testing for people going back to work and belonging to vulnerable sectors.

Under Senate Bill 1535 (Crushing COVID Act), Angara proposed that people returning to work and with medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, pulmonary diseases, cancer, renal failure, or are pregnant, of old age, obese and immunocompromised should be prioritized for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) swab testing to screen for the novel coronavirus.

“They are the people who are most vulnerable to contracting severe COVID-19 and at higher risk of death so they should definitely be tested right away,” the senator said.

The bill also calls on prioritizing COVID-19 testing on the following:

- health care workers
- sales personnel in public markets, groceries and supermarkets
- food handlers
- factory workers
- construction workers
- security guards and drivers
- banks and transfer fund facilities personnel
- laundry shop workers
- house helpers
- caregivers
- pregnant women
- embalmers
- wellness and salon workers
- uniformed personnel
- media personnel
- barangay health workers
- family members whose households have dwellers who went abroad last December 2019 until the present time.

Angara said passengers arriving from abroad, including foreign nationals, should also undergo COVID-19 testing.

The senator said he expects Philippine Health Insurance Corporation or PhilHealth to cover most or the entire cost of the testing. Foreigners though would have to pay for the cost of the testing, Angara said.

Angara wants COVID-19 testing for people going
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Angara said unless more testing is done, "we can never be sure of our safety when we go out of our homes and get back to work."

The bill also provides for an emergency pandemic leave to cover the period an employee undergoes quarantine or treatment after testing positive for COVID-19.

"This is separate from the existing leave credits of the employee. With this provision, we will address the no work, no pay scenario they would most likely face if and when they test positive," the senator said.

The Department of Health said as of Friday, there have been [13,597 confirmed COVID-19 cases](#) recorded in the country.

Of this number, 857 have died while 3,092 recovered. —**KG, GMA News**

PUBLIC LIVES

Society and the science of COVID-19

By: [Randy David](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:25 AM May 24, 2020

The adjective “novel” was the first thing that struck most people about the early name given to the coronavirus that causes the disease we now call COVID-19. That word, in its common usage, is a synonym for “new.” But only a few were sure that that was all the scientists at the World Health Organization meant to convey. As things have turned out, apart from “corona,” referring to the crown-like spikes that adorn the virus, the term “novel” has become this virus’ defining characteristic.

To call it “novel” is a confession of the limits of science, a humbling recognition of the vastness and complexity of the microbial world it is attempting to chart. So new is this novel coronavirus that nearly five months after its first identification in Wuhan, China, a lot of things about its biology remain unknown.

Scientists have managed to map its genetic code, making it possible to design diagnostic tests to detect its presence in nasal swabs taken from infected hosts. But, other than that, scientists are still grappling with the complex ways it affects the human body.

Why it is fatal in some patients and benign in others remains a mystery. Why it sometimes tricks the immune system to go on overdrive and turn against the body, or how it is transmitted by people who have yet to show symptoms, or whether recovered patients develop enough antibodies to protect them against reinfection—these and many other questions continue to baffle scientists.

Without precise knowledge of its mode of action, it will take a while to develop a vaccine against this new coronavirus. The most hopeful estimate is anywhere between one and one-and-a-half years. The formulation of an effective cure for the disease itself is equally uncertain, even as a handful of drugs previously developed to combat similar viral diseases are currently being tried. It is amazing to watch how the science of COVID-19 progresses by drawing from the anecdotal and documented observations of frontline medical professionals in countless emergency rooms and ICUs all over the world. As imperfect as it is, the knowledge derived from this face-to-face encounter with the virus has become the basic touchstone for the frantic daily efforts to save lives. This knowledge, culled from the frontlines of the battle against the disease, has also served as a wellspring of insights and hunches in the tedious quest for new vaccines and therapeutic drugs.

But, no less complex is the way the rest of society has reacted to the pandemic itself. This, too, begs to be analyzed and understood. Unprecedented restrictions on the conduct of everyday life have become the norm. These restrictions have put much of social activity on pause, producing a trail of adaptations and contingencies that can neither be easily predicted nor managed.

The recent clash between presidential adviser Joey Concepcion, who represents the voice of the business community in the Duterte administration, and the various medical societies led by the Philippine Medical Association on the use of the rapid antibody test (RAT) exemplifies the breakdown in communication that results from this public health catastrophe.

Concepcion is leading an initiative to hasten the reopening of business establishments while ensuring that a new wave of infections is not unleashed in the process. He is convinced that the key lies in the use of the RAT, which detects the presence of antibodies in people who have had mild infections or recovered from COVID-19. In this equation, the presence of antibodies signifies immunity.

The medical scientific community, however, did not share his enthusiasm for this type of screening as a guarantee of fitness to return to work. The quality of the available antibody tests in the market simply does not offer this kind of assurance. These tests cannot match the reliability of actual diagnostic procedures that are performed by trained clinicians. The doctors warned against the greater danger of a false sense of security arising from the unwarranted use of these antibody tests.

Unable to find confirmation from the medical community for his belief in the efficacious use of the RAT, Concepcion exploded with an undeserved rant against the medical community: “The problem with these doctors is that they do nothing but talk and complain. What’s going to happen here is that if the economy remains closed, so many will lose their livelihood.”

The doctors angrily excoriated him for his remarks. They told him the truth as they saw it: For the kind of uses the business community had in mind, these rapid antibody tests are not only a waste of money, they are also unnecessary. The WHO itself issued a scientific brief in April that said: “There is not enough evidence about the effectiveness of antibody-mediated immunity to guarantee the accuracy of an ‘immunity passport’ or ‘risk-free certificate.’”

The way I see it, Concepcion misunderstood the role of science in society. He expected doctors to tell him exactly what to do so business could confidently reopen. Science tells us what things are like in the world. It warns us against the dangers lurking out there and what might happen if we behaved in particular ways. But, science cannot tell us how to live, or, in Concepcion’s case, when and how to emerge from a lockdown.

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A better world post COVID-19

[FROM A DISTANCE](#) - [Carmen N. Pedrosa](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

As we continue to confront the daily grim reality of the COVID-19 crisis, a collection of essays by the Global Risks Advisory Board of the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Initiative was brought to my attention. These essays look beyond the current crisis and discuss the potential challenges and opportunities in the post-COVID-19 world. This is not something I would usually read except that my son Eduardo, who is Secretary General of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council along with being a member of the Advisory Board is also a contributor to the collection of essays.

Some of the members include Al Gore, former Vice President, USA; Julie Bishop former Foreign Minister of Australia; Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation; Ngaire Woods, dean of the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford; and Winnie Byanyima, executive director, UNAIDS. There are other representatives from business, civil society and academic institutions around the world.

My daughter Veronica entitled a column "Our World War." In times of war we are not only forced to suspend our usual ways and norms of doing things but, if we are to beat our common enemy that is COVID-19, we must come together, not only within our own barangays, cities and countries but as a world. This is possible in spite of the frayed geopolitics because, more than any experience since World War 2, this is a shared experience.

This message also came through loud and clear in my son's article that was co-authored with Pascal Lamy, former director general of the World Trade Organization and now president of the Paris Peace Forum. In their article they argue that "The enemy is a virus that can only be defeated by concerted multilateral action. No matter how successful one country is at "flattening the curve," unless we flatten the curve globally, there is always the risk the virus will reinfect our populations. This is the absolute and clearest argument in favor of multilateral cooperation." Even if we are successful in reducing the infection rate in Metro Manila, it does us little good if the rest of our country is suffering. Then we must look beyond our own borders. Over 10 million Filipinos are living and working overseas. Eventually they will want to come home and see their relatives. Not to mention of course the thousands and thousands of Filipino seafarers still supporting their families here. Some countries are beginning to talk about "travel bubbles," my son's article suggests that "international travel must restart. This is an issue the international community should begin to address." As our country is so connected internationally this is an issue we must follow and pursue our interests.

One angle in the article I wanted to share with readers that I think important for our domestic debates is one use of export restrictions. According to the article "as of 27 March, 60 governments had placed some form of export curb on medical supplies, with accusations that some of these actions are tantamount to piracy and hijacking. There are risks that more countries adopt this approach, not only to medical supplies but also food." Personally I find this very worrying, especially for a developing country, should our trade partners restrict their trade with us it would seriously impair our ability to effectively respond to this crisis. We should therefore support efforts that keep trade and supply open.

Another interesting angle in this article is the point that “national security should not be equated with self-sufficiency they are far from the same thing.” For a long part of our history we had indeed done that to the detriment of our economy. In the pursuit of self-sufficiency we had encumbered our agriculture sector with policies that left it with among the lowest productivity growth in ASEAN. I was gratified by Secretary Dominguez setting the record straight on the Masagana-99 program. It is very hard to get facts nowadays. There is a deluge of information and misinformation. His first-hand experience in clearing up the mess was very useful. I’d like to see the same kind of information on other programs not because I am for this person or against this person but because we need a genuine policy debate. Were these policies good or bad for our people?

One additional point I wanted to underscore was the title of the article “Trade and Connectivity.” While emphasizing the need to avoid a return to the 1930s style tit-for-tat trade wars that led to the Second World War, the thought was it is not enough today to have open policies. You need to have the infrastructure to let things flow. To get critical medical and food supplies, the plane, trains and ultimately the supply chains have to work. They suggest that more countries join up to the “Joint Ministerial Statement on Supply Chain Connectivity.” This would be one way for smaller countries like ours to magnify our voices by joining in coalition with others with shared interests. This point about connecting trade and transport is not just an international issue, it is true domestically too. As we lift the ECQ, we need to get public transport working, it is simply not fair to ask people to walk miles to work if buses and trains are not working.

Another point I wanted to quote from the article “Out of every major crisis, new institutions have been born. The League of Nations came out of the destruction of the First World War; out of the Second World War the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions; There are clearly gaps in the international institutional architecture for dealing with emerging risks.” Such an organization would be of huge importance for our disaster-prone country. I hope that we can get behind this idea. But I shared this thought not in and off itself but to trigger thinking of what this crisis should mean for our own country and our social contract. We just passed the universal healthcare act. PhilHealth had a poorly thought out attempt to ask overseas Filipinos to contribute. We need a fully informed policy discussion on the issues that matter to us, maybe this COVID-19 crisis should be the trigger.

The end of globalization

[BREAKTHROUGH](#) - [Elfren S. Cruz](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

A few years ago, I wrote columns whose main message was that globalisation was harmful to the average citizen of the world. The world's leading business and financial publication the Economist has written a cover story with the title Goodbye Globalisation: A nationalistic and self-sufficient era beckons. It won't be richer or safer.

Today, the rise in income inequality has been attributed to globalization. We have reached a point where 67 individuals around the world have a total wealth equivalent to the bottom 50% of the world's population. Think about this: 67 individuals have as much wealth as 3.8 billion people.

Income inequality has been one of the main reasons for the rise of populism. We kept reading reports that economies were growing and that GDP was rising. The only problem was that a few people became fabulously rich; but, most of the population were experiencing a stagnant real income. The culprit is that there was a philosophy that as the wealthy became wealthier, their "wealth" would trickle down to the masses. This "trickle down," the essential defense for capitalism, never happened. Increased GDP growth did not translate into better lives for most people.

There was a time when the same "trickle down" was believed to be applicable to nations. As certain nations became richer they were expected to share their wealth with the poorer countries of the world. This was the dream of international organizations like the United Nations. Instead, the rich Western nations continued to enrich by further exploitation of poor countries. The Third World countries were developed solely as sources of raw materials for the goods and services of the Western imperial powers.

Today China – the new economic giant – is following the same imperial pattern of the Western powers. It's Belt and Road initiatives are aimed at securing reliable sources of raw materials and markets for its economy. The primary objective is to continue the economic growth of China.

This was my second message in my globalization articles years ago. I wrote that I did not believe China could sustain its economic growth through the exploitation of globalization. China had become the manufacturing center of the world.

I used to call China a "parasite" economy because it thrived at the expense of others. The country created jobs, not through new technologies or exploiting raw materials, but by offering wages lower than those in other countries. The jobs created in China came from the flight of jobs from other countries to China.

I once wrote that this "parasitic" economic practice surely could not be tolerated by other countries for too long. As GDP growth accelerated, real income continued to stagnate not only in countries like the Philippines; but, even in rich countries like the United States.

In the poor countries, business leaders were able to keep wage low by repeatedly warning that in the age of globalization, the nation had to keep wages low to be able to remain competitive. In the meantime, many of these same business leaders were outsourcing their manufacturing to China.

The classic example is the footwear industry where manufacturing was hard hit by Chinese low cost competition. The few footwear companies outsourced their manufacturing to China and were able to continue marketing their brand.

When I would write and advocate about the need to protect local industries to protect local jobs, I was told that I was still advocating protectionism and economic nationalism. These concepts were supposedly anti-business and obsolete in this globalized world. I would argue that this “trickle down” theory did not work and business was losing jobs in our economy. This was the time when the overseas workers became “heroes.” My question then was why were jobs being created abroad and not here in the Philippines?

China was once a heavily protected economy until it was able to build an industrial and financial base that could compete with the rest of the world. Now it has suddenly become the champion of open markets and globalization. The United States and Japan were once champions of globalization and open markets. But now that they are losing their competitive edge, these two countries, along with many other countries, have elected governments that are advocating economic nationalism and protectionism. The United States has launched a trade war with China. This is not just Trump. I hear the same rhetoric from Democrats. This is what I expected to happen; but, I thought it would happen sooner. In the meantime Japan is offering financial incentives to hundreds of Japanese companies in China to return to Japan.

The article in the recent issue of the Economist about globalization actually does not attack nor condemn globalization. Its theme is apparently that for better or for worst globalization is coming to an end. It says:

“Even before the pandemic, globalization was in trouble. The open system of trade that had dominated the world economy for decades had been damaged by the {2008} financial crash and the Sino-American trade war.... As economies reopen, activity will recover, but don’t expect a quick return to a carefree world of unfettered movement and free trade. “It concludes that this new world of nationalism will “enfeeble the recovery, leave the economy vulnerable, and spread geopolitical instability.”

Three years ago, the Economist had an article entitled: **“Left Behind: How to Help the Places Left Behind by Globalization.”**

I fail to see how any system – like globalization – can be beneficial if it leads to terrible income inequality and the rise of populism.

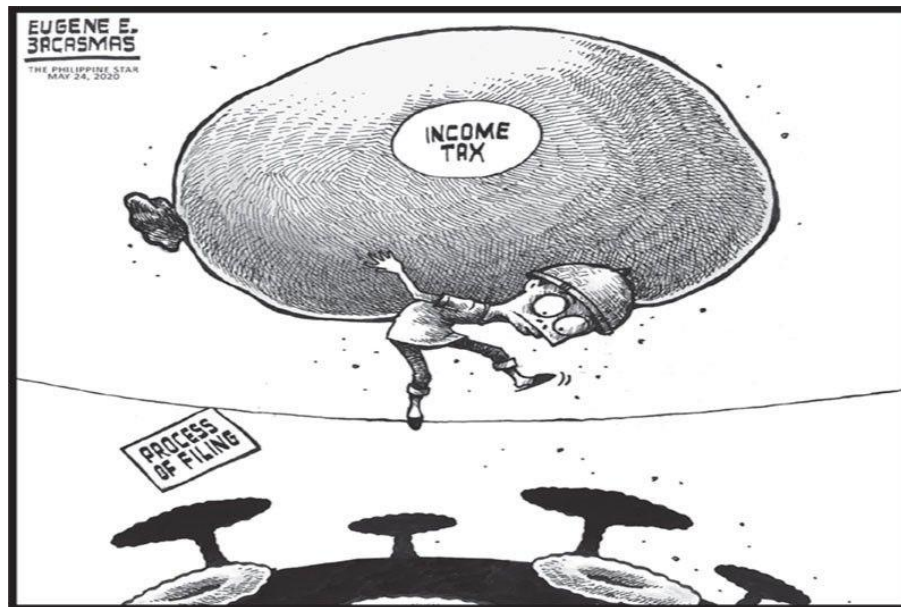
Creative writing classes for writers of all ages

While Write Things is in hiatus from its regular Saturday sessions at Fully Booked BGC , it has tried to keep its clientele busy with weekly writing topics and prompts disseminated every week to its mailing list. If you should wish to avail of these writing ideas, please message us your email address at [Facebook.com/writethingsph](https://www.facebook.com/writethingsph) or email writethingsph@gmail.com.

* * *

Email: elfrencruz@gmail.com

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2020/05/24/2016093/end-globalization>



EDITORIAL - No more extension

(The Philippine Star) - May 24, 2020 - 12:00am

After three extensions, the government can no longer afford to postpone the collection of annual taxes. Individual and corporate taxpayers have until June 14 to file their income tax returns. For those availing themselves of the amnesty on tax delinquencies, the deadline is June 22, with no more extension.

Officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue explained that despite the pandemic and consequent restrictions on public mobility, the government urgently needs funds to finance responses to the coronavirus disease 2019 crisis, particularly for the social amelioration program for the hardest hit sectors.

Since mid-March, the government has already lost a substantial amount of revenue as a result of the economically crippling quarantine – not the taxes whose payment has simply been deferred, but significant amounts of value-added and excise taxes. The Bureau of Customs also lost revenue as airports and seaports slowed down or stopped operations.

Amid the need for physical distancing, and with large areas of the country including Metro Manila still under various levels of quarantine and lockdown, online payments are encouraged. Obviously, this is impossible in areas with weak or no digital connectivity, and for people without the necessary gadgets. The government may have to provide facilities and support personnel to assist people in electronic tax filing.

The BIR will have to specify how taxpayers can meet the deadline in the most efficient way, with the least hassle in this pandemic and the least risk to coronavirus infection. It must ensure that the procedures are as simplified as possible. Filipino taxpayers have a tendency to file at the last minute, so there must be measures in place to prevent the e-filing system from crashing in the final week, and especially on the deadline itself.

Tax payments were deferred to prevent COVID contagion. Now that the government feels it is left with no choice but to push through with tax collections, every effort must be made to make the process as safe and stress-free as possible.

Phivolcs nagbigay muli ng update kaugnay ng lindol sa Aurora

Balita

By Leifbilly Begas May 23, 2020



MULING naglabas ng update ang Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology kaugnay ng lindol kaninang umaga sa Aurora.

Ibinaba ng Phivolcs sa magnitude 5.1 ang lindol mula sa magnitude 5.4 sa ikalawang update nito. Naramdaman ito alas-10:10 ng umaga.

Ang epicenter nito [ay 16](#) kilometro sa kanluran ng San Luis at may lalim na pitong kilometro.

Naramdaman ang:

Intensity VI – San Luis at Baler, Aurora

Intensity V – Dipaculao, at Maria Aurora, Aurora

Intensity IV – Casiguran, at Dingalan, Aurora; Gabaldon, at Palayan City, Nueva Ecija

Intensity III – Pantabangan, at Rizal, Nueva Ecija; Obando, Bulacan; Mabalacat City, Pampanga; Nagtipunan, Quirino; Villasis, Pangasinan; Paranaque City;

Antipolo City, Rizal

Intensity II – Cabanatuan City, Santa Rosa, at Santo Domingo, Nueva Ecija; Malolos City, at

Plaridel, Bulacan; Baguio City; Manila City; Malabon City; Navotas City; Quezon City;

Valenzuela City; Makati City; General Nakar, Quezon

Intensity I – Gapan City, Nueva Ecija; Guinayangan, Quezon; Binangonan, Rizal

Instrumental Intensities:

Intensity IV – City of Palayan, Nueva Ecija

Intensity III – San Ildefonso, Bulacan; City of Santiago, Isabela;

Intensity II – City of Cabanatuan, & San Jose City, Nueva Ecija; City of Malolos, Bulacan; City of Baguio; City of Navotas

Intensity I – Guagua, Pampanga; City of Dagupan; City of Malabon; City of Marikina; Quezon City; Guinayangan, & Mauban, Quezon; City of Iriga, Camarines Sur

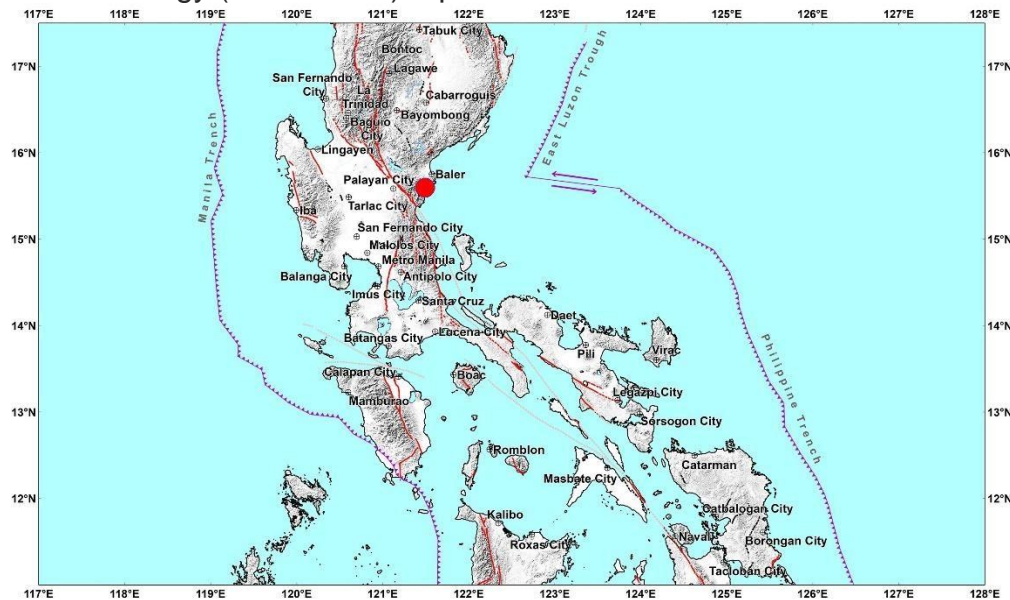
Source: <https://bandera.inquirer.net/254363/phivolcs-nagbigay-muli-ng-update-kaugnay-ng-lindol-sa-aurora#ixzz6NIyjt998>

5.1- magnitude quake jolts Aurora

Published May 23, 2020, 10:42 AM

By MB Online

A magnitude 5.1 earthquake struck San Luis, Aurora Saturday morning, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) reported.



The quake, which was tectonic in its origin, was traced 15 kilometers (km) southwest of San Luis, Aurora, and occurred at 10:10 a.m. It had a depth of 7 km.

The state agency recorded the following instrumental intensities: Intensity VI – Baler, Aurora; Intensity IV – Palayan City; Dingalan, Aurora; Intensity II – Quezon City; Intensity IV – Palayan City PHIVOLCS warned of expected damages and possible aftershocks.

Residents in provinces complain of higher electricity,
TITLE: water bills

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Residents in provinces complain of higher electricity, water bills

Published May 23, 2020 10:42pm

Residents in the provinces complained of their higher electricity and water bills as the country experiences the summer season amid the community quarantine.

According to a 24 Oras Online Exclusive by JP Soriano on Saturday, Shaila from Bolinao, Pangasinan was surprised when her electric bill went up to more than P23,000 for the months of April and May, when she usually only pays P6,000 per month.

Pangasinan I Electric Cooperative Inc. (PANELCO I) however explained that the bill was an average, where the April billing was based on January to March 2020 consumption in accordance with the Energy Regulatory Commission's order to all electric cooperatives in the country.

The May billing meanwhile was based on the actual meter reading.

PANELCO I said billings might be higher due to higher temperatures, and with many consumers at their homes due to the community quarantine.

PANELCO I added that electricity prices were usually higher during the dry season when hydroelectric power plants were non-operational.

However, Shaila was not convinced with the explanation.

"Taon-taon mainit. Eh noong wala namang ECQ noon ganoon pa rin 'yung bill namin eh, ngayong lang ECQ tumaas. Eh wala naman kaming umuwing kamag-anak dito," Shaila said.

"Ang bigat-bigat siyempre," Shaila said regarding her electricity bills.

Residents in Camarines Sur also complained of high electricity bill charges. Vladimir, a consumer member, was charged more than P16,000.

"Noong nagbigay sila ng bill after hindi mag-reading noong past months, paglabas 'yung actual na babayaran namin na P12,000 tapos meron pang P4,000," Vladimir said.

The Camarines Sur Electric Cooperative III insisted there were no problems with Vladimir's charges.

CASURECO III said Vladimir's bills were based on November 2019 to February 2020 billings.

"In-add natin 'yun, dinivide sa tatlo, ang kinalabasan po ay 365 kilowatts, that is P4,384.34. Noong nag-actual reading tayo for the month of April, 'yung kilowatt-hour consumption niya umabot po ng 990 kilowatts," a CASURECO III representative said.

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Neither was Vladimir convinced with the clarification, but said he could do nothing but pay to avoid their power getting cut off.

"Konti lang talaga kami ngayon sa bahay, hindi rin katulad ng mga ibang bakasyon na limang pamilya na halos nandito. Binayaran kasi puputulan ka rin eh," Vladimir said.

Naga residents also complained of their high water bills.

A male Naga resident had a P4,238 bill this May.

"Pag sinumatotal mo lahat ng monthly bill ko, konsumo ko na ito ng mahigit isang taon dapat. Less than P300 or P300 plus lang ang monthly bill ko," the male resident said.

The Metropolitan Naga Water District will investigate the matter.

However, they promised there was no service charge or increase in the charges this May.

"Pag duda kayo na hindi tama, pumunta lang po dito sa opisina para makita natin 'yung record," an Metropolitan Naga Water District executive said. — **Jamil Santos/DVM, GMA News**

Zamboanga City slams water rate hike

By [Al Jacinto, TMT](#)

May 22, 2020

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Mayor Isabel Climaco-Salazar has rejected anew the proposed water rate increase by the Zamboanga City Water District (ZCWD) amid the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Climaco wrote a letter to Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) Acting Administrator Jeci Lapus regarding the untimely water rate increase sought by the ZCWD.

“Our people need economic support at this time for them to be able to get back on their feet. Increasing the minimum water rate at P278.00 is a heavy burden to the consumers,” she said.

The ZCWD — through Board Resolution 036— seeks to pursue an upward adjustment in water tariffs and sewerage rates now pending approval of the LWUA.

Climaco said this is uncalled for because the city government is set to sign a memorandum of agreement with the ZCWD regarding a one-time grant of P500 water bill subsidy as assistance to water consumers, to be shouldered by the LGU.

“It is for these reasons that the City Government of Zamboanga strongly opposes favorable action by LWUA on ZCWD’s Board Resolution 036. Thank you for taking into consideration the welfare and interest of our water consumers, especially in this trying times,” Climaco’s letter to Lapus indicated.

Complaints

In March prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, Climaco also rejected ZCWD’s insistence for a water hike, saying, it has to first improve utility services and ensure clean supply of potable water to residents, among other woes locals have raised against the ZCWD – a government owned and controlled corporation.

ZCWD executives wanted to raise water rates to improve its services. But residents have long complained of inefficient services and yearly water rationing, and wasted water from broken or leaking pipes in different villages that largely contributed to the non-revenue water or losses to the ZCWD.

Sangley Point records day's highest heat index at 46°C

Published May 23, 2020 8:57pm

By JOAHNA LEI CASILAO, GMA News

Sangley Point, Cavite City on Saturday recorded the day's highest heat index, the human-perceived temperature, at 46°C, according to PAGASA.

This is followed by Ambulong, Tanauan City with 45°C while Legazpi City, NAIA in Pasay, and Roxas City recorded 44°C each.

PAGASA warned of possible heat cramps and heat exhaustion which may lead to heat stroke amid continued physical activity.

TINGNAN: Top 5 PAGASA Synoptic Stations na may pinakamataas na kalkuladong heat index ngayong Sabado, 23 Mayo.

PANGANIB (41-54°C na heat index): Posible ang heat cramps at heat exhaustion na maaaring mauwi sa heat stroke kapag tuluy-tuloy ang physical activity. pic.twitter.com/rlr0Z461fG

— PAGASA-DOST (@dost_pagasa) [May 23, 2020](#)

Meanwhile, the PAGASA station at the Science Garden, Quezon City recorded a heat index of 41°C at 1:50 p.m.

A maximum temperature of 34.4°C was also recorded in the area at the same time.

34.4°C ang naitalang pinakamataas temperatura sa Science Garden, Quezon City kaninang 1:50 PM ngayong Sabado, 23 Mayo. Sa parehong oras, nakalkula ang 41°C na heat index o alinsangan.

Stay home, stay hydrated, and stay safe po! pic.twitter.com/TKowN3kA3u

— PAGASA-DOST (@dost_pagasa) [May 23, 2020](#)

- MDM, GMA News

Going beyond business as usual in saving endangered

May 24, 2020

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Going beyond business as usual in saving endangered species

By [BusinessMirror](#)

May 24, 2020



The endangered hawksbill turtle is among the wildlife species traded illegally.

By Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim

The Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) joined the international community in observing the Endangered Species Day last week, and urged reflections on the actions to be taken to reverse biodiversity decline across the region and the rest of the world.

The Asean region is rich in biodiversity, which include wildlife, and enjoys high endemism of flora and fauna.

The region has the highest mean proportion of country-endemic bird (9 percent) and mammal species (11 percent), and the second-highest proportion of country-endemic vascular plant species (25 percent) compared to the other tropical regions of the world, based on the Asean Biodiversity Outlook, 2017.

Unfortunately, the region is also known as a biodiversity hot spot. Data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species in 2019 show that 3,875 species or 13 percent of the species threatened with extinction globally are found in the region.

Wildlife trade and consumption is not only a national concern, but a regional and global concern as well. Several communities rely on wildlife for a number of reasons. Some are rooted in socio cultural practices.

Others look for alternative sources of nutrition and medicine, symbols of luxury and status, and/or keep them as pets.

According to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites) database, reptiles are the most commonly confiscated species, followed by birds, mammals, fish and amphibians.

The disturbance of natural habitats have far-reaching consequences to ecological balance, including the spillover of zoonotic diseases from nonwildlife hosts, triggering more outbreaks of infectious diseases.

The Covid-19 pandemic has even made this connection more obvious.

The loss of wildlife species could also mean the narrowing of sources for possible cure and treatment of these diseases, which is among the ecosystems services that they provide.

Going beyond business as usual in saving endangered

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To conserve endangered species on the brink of extinction, the ACB has been facilitating a wide range of activities spearheaded by Asean Member States.

Rigorous monitoring, evaluation and assessments of the status of wildlife species, especially the endangered ones, are conducted regularly.

The data and information obtained supports the development of the national Red List of endangered species in Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Community-led monitoring and law enforcement are initiated through education and capacity-building activities.

Forest managers and rangers in Lao PDR and Malaysia have been equipped with cameras and information technology to help monitor poaching and other illegal activities, and enforce wildlife protection laws.

In the Philippines, for instance, community participation has been instrumental in the recent seizures of illegally traded wildlife.

International and regional cooperation is key to information sharing and apprehension of illegal wildlife traders to end the poaching and trafficking of protected species.

Apart from being parties to the Cites, the 10 Asean member-states issued the Chiang Mai Statement of Asean Ministers on Illegal Wildlife Trade in March 2019.

The bigger challenge rests on instinctively adopting sustainable practices to protect our endangered species, reverse the destruction and restore their natural habitats.

As humanity grapples with climate change impacts and the current pandemic, the only way we can ensure our own existence is by going beyond business-as-usual in the way we treat the other creatures with which we share this planet. The time for transformative change is now.

Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim is the executive director of Asean Centre for Biodiversity.

Image Credits: [ACB](#)

Making masssks from Florida python skin

Published May 23, 2020, 8:59 AM

By *Agence France-Presse*

A Florida craftsman has come up with a novel way of tackling both the coronavirus pandemic and the problem of invasive pythons and iguanas that damage the state's fragile ecosystem.



Brian Wood makes face masks from python skin in his workshop in Delray Beach, Florida (AFP Photo/CHANDAN KHANNA)

Brian Woods, the 63-year-old owner of All American Gator Products, has turned his hand to designing face masks made out reptile skin.

"I took something that's very serious and turned it into a fashion statement," he said at his workshop in Dania Beach, 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Miami.

Woods got his inspiration from a curious source — a meme he saw of a horse wearing a woman's bra as a face mask. He asked his wife if he could borrow one of hers to test if the concept would work.

He now sells python skin face masks on his Facebook page for \$90.

Snake hunter Amy Siewe arrived at Woods' home with a giant python for skinning.

"They're wreaking havoc on the Everglades," she said, referring to the vast wetlands that occupy much of southern Florida.

"They get to be between 18 and 20 feet (5.5 to 6 meters) long and they eat everything from rats to deer."

The pythons were probably introduced to Florida as exotic pets toward the end of the last century and released into the Everglades, where they have no predators.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission pays hunters a bounty to capture the snakes.

Iguanas likely also came to Florida as pets before being released into the wild, where they thrive in the balmy climate.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/23/making-masssks-from-florida-python-skin/>

Endangered tigers face growing threats from Asian road building

By [BusinessMirror](#)

May 24, 2020



Tigers are one of the world's most iconic wild species, but today they are endangered throughout Asia. They once roamed across much of this region, but widespread habitat loss, prey depletion and poaching have reduced their numbers to only about 4,000 individuals.

They live in small pockets of habitat across South and Southeast Asia, as well as the Russian Far East—an area spanning 13 countries and 450,000 square miles (1,160,000 square kilometers).

Today Asia is experiencing a road-building boom. To maintain economic growth, development experts estimate that the region will need to invest about \$8.4 trillion in transportation infrastructure between 2016 and 2030.

Major investment projects, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative—one of the largest infrastructure projects of all time—are fueling this growth.

While roads can reduce poverty, especially in rural areas, many of Asia's new roads also are likely to traverse regions that are home to diverse plants and animals.

To protect tigers from this surge of road building, conservation scientists like me need to know where the greatest risks are. That information, in turn, can improve road planning in the future.

In a newly published study, I worked with researchers at the University of Michigan, Boise State University and the University of British Columbia to examine how existing and planned Asian roads encroach on tiger habitats.

We forecast that nearly 15,000 miles (24,000 kilometers) of new roads will be built in tiger habitats by 2050, and call for bold new planning strategies that prioritize biodiversity conservation and sustainable road development across large landscapes.

Letting humans in

Road construction worsens existing threats to tigers, such as poaching and development, by paving the way for human intrusion into the heart of the tiger's range.

For example, in the Russian Far East, roads have led to higher tiger mortality due to increased collisions with vehicles and more encounters with poachers.

To assess this threat across Asia, we focused on areas called Tiger Conservation Landscapes—76 zones, scattered across the tiger's range, which conservationists see as crucial for the species' recovery.

For each zone we calculated road density, distance to the nearest road and relative mean species abundance, which estimates the numbers of mammals in areas near roads compared to areas far from roads.

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Mean species abundance is our best proxy for estimating how roads affect numbers of mammals, like tigers and their prey, across broad scales.

We also used future projections of road building in each country to forecast the length of new roads that might be built in tiger habitats by 2050.

More roads, fewer animals

We estimated that more than 83,300 miles (134,000 kilometers) of roads already exist within tiger habitats. This is likely an underestimate, since many logging or local roads are missing from the global data set that we used.

Road densities in tiger habitat are one-third greater outside of protected areas, such as national parks and tiger reserves, than inside of protected areas.

Nonprotected areas averaged 1,300 feet of road per square mile (154 meters per square kilometer), while protected areas averaged 980 feet per square mile (115 meters per square kilometer).

For tiger populations to grow, they will need to use the forests outside protected areas. However, the high density of roads in those forests will jeopardize tiger recovery.

Protected areas and priority conservation sites—areas with large populations of tigers—are not immune either. For example, in India—home to over 70 percent of the world's tigers—we estimate that a protected area of 500 square miles, or 1,300 square kilometers, contains about 200 miles (320 kilometers) of road.

Road networks are expansive. Over 40 percent of areas where tiger breeding has recently been detected—crucial to tiger population growth—is within just 3 miles (5 kilometers) of a nearby road. This is problematic because mammals often are less abundant this close to roads.

In fact, we estimate that current road networks within tiger habitats may be reducing local populations of tigers and their prey by about 20 percent. That's a major decrease for a species on the brink of extinction. And the threats from roads are likely to become more severe.

Making infrastructure tiger-friendly

Our findings underscore the need for planning development in ways that interfere as minimally as possible with tiger habitat.

Multilateral development banks and massive ventures like the Belt and Road Initiative can be important partners in this endeavor.

For example, they could help establish an international network of protected areas and habitat corridors to safeguard tigers and many other wild species from road impacts.

National laws can also do more to promote tiger-friendly infrastructure planning. This includes keeping road development away from priority tiger populations and other “no go” zones, such as tiger reserves or habitat corridors.

Zoning can be used around infrastructure to prevent settlement growth and forest loss.

Environmental impact assessments for road projects can do a better job of assessing how new roads might exacerbate hunting and poaching pressure on tigers and their prey.

Neil Carter/The Conversation

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/05/24/endangered-tigers-face-growing-threats-from-asian-road-building/>

Dolphin madalas bumisita sa mga tao, laging may dalang ‘regalo’

By: [Djan Magbanua](#) - 05/22/2020

MAPAGLARONG mga nature ang mga dolphin.

Dahil siguro namimiss na ang mga taong regular nilang nakikita, isang humpback dolphin ang madalas bumisita sa mga volunteers ng Barnacles Cafe & Dolphin Feeding center sa Tin Can Bay, Queensland, Australia at lagi itong may dalang regalo.

Sa dalas niyang bumisita sa mga volunteers binigyan siya ng pangalang Mystique ng mga ito.



Ilan sa mga dinadala ni Mystique ay mga lumang bote, corrals, at kahoy na dala-dala niya sa kaniyang bibig.



Dahil sa tuwa, madalas binibigyan siya ng isda ng mga volunteers sa center. Ayon sa isang [interview](#), hindi trained si Mystique para gawin ito.

“Since we’ve been closed to the public he has been doing it more and more. Sometimes he will bring 10, one at a time, and he will line them up as he has to get fish.” ayon sa interview kay Lyn McPherson, isang volunteer sa center.

Ang feeding center na ito ay isang tourist attraction kung saan pwedeng makihalubilo ang mga bisita sa mga dolphins habang pinapakain ito. Dahil sa coronavirus pandemic ay isinara pansamantala ito sa publiko.

Source: <https://libre.inquirer.net/20754/dolphin-madalas-bumisita-sa-mga-tao-laging-may-dalang-regalo#ixzz6NJ5HbJn>

Most endangered bird's nest found



By [KHMER TIMES](#)

May 24, 2020

RATTANAKIRI: Ten nests of white-shouldered ibis, considered as the most endangered animal, have been found at the northeastern Rattanakiri province in Cambodia.

The team of BirdLife International Cambodia Program, according to its recent press release, spotted the nests of the rare bird. Six of them carry 12 already hatched young ibises.

Half of identified nests with newborn ibises, according to the source, are located outside Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary.

In comparison to the last five years, the number of the found ibis nests has dropped due to less forestland, poaching and other disruptions.

The trend indicates the need for more joint efforts to protect Cambodia's ibises.

Hydroxychloroquine shows no virus benefit, raises
death risk: study

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Hydroxychloroquine shows no virus benefit, raises death risk: study

Published May 23, 2020, 6:43 PM

By *Agence France-Presse*

A study of nearly 100,000 coronavirus patients has shown no benefit in treating them with anti-viral drugs hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine and even increased the likelihood of them dying in hospital.



(AFP/MANILA BULLETIN)

Hydroxychloroquine is normally used to treat arthritis but pronouncement from public figures including US President Donald Trump — who announced this week he is taking the drug — has prompted governments to bulk buy the medicine.

Chloroquine is an anti-malarial. Both drugs can produce potentially serious side effects, particularly heart arrhythmia.

And neither drug benefitted patients hospitalised with COVID-19, according to a study published on Friday in *The Lancet*.

Looking at the records of 96,000 patients across hundreds of hospitals, they found that administering the drugs actually increased the risk of dying.

They compared outcomes from four groups: those treated with hydroxychloroquine alone, with chloroquine alone, and then two groups given the respective drugs in combination with antibiotics. There was also a control group of patients not given these treatments.

At the end of the study period around nine percent of those in the control group had died. Of those treated with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine alone, 18 percent and 16.4 percent respectively had died.

And those given each drug in combination with antibiotics were even more likely to die: 22.8 percent with chloroquine and 23.8 percent with hydroxychloroquine.

The authors estimated that the drugs put patients at up to 45 percent higher risk of dying from COVID-19 compared with underlying health issues.

“Treatment with chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine does not benefit patients with COVID-19,” said Mandeep Mehra, lead author of the study and executive director of the Brigham and Women’s Hospital Center for Advanced Heart Disease in Boston.

Hydroxychloroquine shows no virus benefit, raises
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“Instead, our findings suggest it may be associated with an increased risk of serious heart problems and increased risk of death.”

– ‘Landmark for treatment’ –

Despite Trump’s enthusiasm for using hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 treatment, his own government’s Food and Drug Administration warns against it.

Brazil’s health minister on Wednesday recommended using chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine to treat even mild COVID-19 cases.

Britain has ordered £35 million (\$42 million) worth of hydroxychloroquine, despite numerous studies showing it is ineffective in treating COVID-19 and may even be more dangerous than doing nothing.

“Several countries have advocated use of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, either alone or in combination, as potential treatments for COVID-19,” said Frank Ruschitzka, director of the Heart Center at University Hospital Zurich and co-author of the study.

“We now know from our study that the chance that these medications improve outcomes in COVID-19 is quite low.”

Stephen Griffin, associate professor at the University of Leeds’ School of Medicine said the Lancet research was “potentially a landmark study for COVID-19 therapy”.

“The indications are that these drugs certainly ought not to be used outside of a trial setting where patients can be monitored for complications,” said Griffin, who was not involved in the study.

“It is clear that high profile endorsements of taking these drugs without clinical oversight is both misguided and irresponsible.”

Anti-viral drug effective against coronavirus, study finds

posted May 23, 2020 at 06:40 pm

by [AFP](#)

Anti-viral drug remdesivir cuts recovery times in coronavirus patients, according to the full results of a trial published Friday night, three weeks after America's top infectious diseases expert said the study showed the medication has "clear-cut" benefits.

Complete results from the research, which was carried out by US government agency the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), were published by leading medical periodical the New England Journal of Medicine.

The United States authorized the emergency use of remdesivir in hospitals on May 1, followed by Japan, while Europe is considering following suit.

The study found that remdesivir, injected intravenously daily for 10 days, accelerated the recovery of hospitalized COVID-19 patients compared to a placebo in clinical tests on just over a thousand patients across 10 countries.

On April 29, NIAID director Anthony Fauci, who has become the US government's trusted face on the coronavirus pandemic, said preliminary evidence indicated remdesivir had a "clear-cut, significant and positive effect in diminishing the time to recovery."

The National Institutes of Health, of which the NIAID is a part, said Friday in a statement online that investigators found "remdesivir was most beneficial for hospitalized patients with severe disease who required supplemental oxygen."

But the authors of the trial wrote that the drug did not prevent all deaths.

"Given high mortality despite the use of remdesivir, it is clear that treatment with an anti-viral drug alone is not likely to be sufficient," they said.

About 7.1 percent of patients given remdesivir in the trial group died within 14 days -- compared with 11.9 percent in the placebo group.

However, the result is just below the statistical reliability threshold, meaning it could be down to chance rather than the capability of the drug.