



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DENR

**COVID-ready** The Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force, led by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu (right), Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año (left) and Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat (middle), visit the Ciriaco S. Tirol Hospital in Boracay Island to check its readiness to respond to suspected, probable, and confirmed COVID-19 cases in the island as it reopens on 16 June 2020.

# Heavier penalty for illegal wildlife trade pushed

June 15, 2020

By Joel dela Torre

People's Journal

**REPEAT or habitual offenders of environmental laws should be meted out a much heavier or maximum punishment to give them a lesson and at the same time serve as warning to others, said an exasperated Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu following the arrest of an illegal wildlife trader who was apprehended last year and was again caught last week in Sta. Mesa, Manila.**

Cimatu was referring to 45-year-old Sharon Jonjon Lim who fell in an entrapment on June 6 in which he yielded two brahminy kites (*Haliastur indus*) locally known as lawin.

Lim sold the two raptors for P10,000 each to a policeman who posed as buyer of the endangered birds.

“This illegal wildlife trader probably thought he could do it again and get away with it. Now, I call on the police, the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) and government prosecutors to make sure this repeat offender of the country’s wildlife protection law will face heftier fine and spend more time in jail,” Cimatu said.

After his arrest, authorities conducted a follow-up operation at Lim’s residence where they also recovered a white-breasted sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), and a changeable hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*).

All four raptors seized from Lim were turned over to the BMB.

According to Cimatu, it was not the first time Lim got involved in illegal wildlife trade.

In August last year he was also nabbed for illegal possession and trading of 13 rare animals, including three peregrine falcons, worth P250,000 on the black market.

Lim is again facing criminal charges for violation of Republic Act 9147, otherwise known as the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

he was convicted in the previous offense and was sentenced to a jail term of up to two years and fined P40,000. Since his sentence was less than two years, Lim applied for probation.

## Puerto Princessa ‘incident’ calls for law creating enforcement unit–DENR

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

June 15, 2020

The brutality experienced by employees of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at the hands of policemen in Puerto Princessa City, Palawan, recently could have been avoided had the agency mandated to enforce environment laws has its own enforcement bureau.

This was stressed by Environment Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda who reiterated the appeal earlier made by Secretary Roy A. Cimatu for the enactment of a law creating an Enforcement Bureau within the DENR.

“We call on Congress to help fast-track the passage of a law that will give the DENR the power to create the Enforcement Bureau. We could have avoided that situation if ever that we are equally armed with perpetrators. Life is more important than anything else. So the main thing that you will do is avoid confrontation if there is an Enforcement Bureau. Since the DENR personnel and officers are unarmed, basically, they are easy targets on situations like this. At that point in time, we are expecting that the PNP was there as our partner but, as it turned out, they became the perpetrators,” Antiporda said.

DENR field personnel are easy targets, not by policemen, but by illegal loggers in Palawan. Several DENR personnel have been killed in Palawan, prompting Cimatu to arm forest protection officers and eventually, appeal to Congress for the creation of a separate Enforcement Bureau within the DENR.

But the incident involving Puerto Princessa City Police Director Col. Marion Balonglong and his men on June 10 was unexpected.

Instead of protecting the DENR employees as they investigated an alleged environmental crime being committed, Balonglong reportedly caused the unlawful arrest and detention of eight employees of the DENR and two others while they were doing fieldwork at Barangay Iwahig in Puerto Princessa City last June 10.

According to reports reaching the DENR Central Office in Quezon City, the DENR workers— together with a representative from the city government’s Bantay Bakawan and a barangay watchman—were conducting an investigation on the illegal occupation and massive mangrove cutting at Sitio Bucana when they were intercepted by Balonglong and his men.

Antiporda said such incident would never happen if the DENR, tasked to enforce various environmental laws, has its own environmental law enforcers who are armed and trained to defend themselves from so-called environmental criminals.

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Nevertheless, Antiporda said the incident in Puerto Princesa City was an isolated case and that the DENR maintains a good relationship with the Philippine National Police.

Fortunately, Antiporda said when the incident reached the knowledge of the DENR chief, he was in Boracay with Interior Secretary Eduardo Año.

“As Cimatu said, it was an isolated case and the DENR maintains a good working relationship with the PNP. It was very fortunate that at the time Cimatu received the information about what happened, he was in Boracay with Año. Immediately, the good DILG Secretary took action,” Antiporda said.

Antiporda said the DENR will not let the likes of Balonglong ruin the reputation of the PNP as an institution.

“He is just one bad egg and you now know, he was relieved and facing administrative charges,” Antiporda said.

The DENR official also said the DENR is not letting Balonglong and his men off the hook saying appropriate charges will be filed against him in due time, including alleged violation of the Wildlife Act.

Balonglong, sources said, may be charged in connection with the illegal cutting of mangroves in the area, which is allegedly being developed for the construction of structures without the necessary permit coming from the DENR.

“He is not getting away in case he is behind the illegal cutting of mangroves in that area. Our DENR field personnel are now conducting an assessment and we will definitely prepare and file charges against him for violation of environmental laws,” he said.



**NATION**

# Persona non grata tag dangles on Balonglong

Balonglong has no respect for the City Mayor, for the loss, for the agencies. It's just right for him to face legal charges, to be dismissed totally, and not to be assigned to other places and repeat the same things.

Published 11 hours ago on June 16, 2020 01:00 AM

By [Andrio Atienza](#)



The City Council of Puerto Princesa yesterday expressed its desire to declare former city police chief Col. Marion Balonglong a persona non-grata following an incident of illegal arrests and mauling of eight individuals, some of them from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), who were conducting operations regarding the cutting of mangrove trees in the city last week.

During the City Council's regular session, Association of Barangay Chairmen (ABC) President and ex-officio member of the City Council Francisco Gabuco said Balonglong must be declared an undesirable person in Puerto Princesa City considering the damage he had done to the environment and to the people.

City Councilor Patrick Hagedorn had supported Gabuco's declaration to ban Balonglong in the city, adding that Balonglong must be slapped with the appropriate legal charges for violation of criminal, administrative and environmental laws.

"Balonglong has no respect for the City Mayor, for the loss, for the agencies. It's just right for him to face legal charges, to be dismissed totally, and not to be assigned to other places and repeat the same things," Hagedorn said.

No less than Philippine National Police Chief PGen. Archie Gamboa himself ordered the administrative relief of Balonglong on Saturday and replaced him with PCol. Sergio Gumba Vivar Jr., former Police Regional Office MIMAROPA chief.

The DENR condemned the incident wherein seven of the individuals were ordered to lie face down on the ground, while Balonglong personally kicked, punched and pointed a gun at forest ranger Roldan Alvarez.

In a radio interview, DENR Undersecretary and spokesman Benny Antiporda said that the agency will be filing legal cases against him within the week insofar as the environmental aspect was concerned since the mangrove trees were discovered cut in a three-hectare area along the national highway which Balonglong allegedly "fenced" and claimed as his own.

Presidential Proclamation 2152 series of 1981 declares that the entire province of Palawan and certain parts of the country are mangrove swamp forest reserves which outlaws its illegal cutting.

“We are still getting information to file a legal case on the environmental violations that he has done,” Antiporda said, adding that the agency is still determining the number of mangroves cut since most of these have already lost their stamps.

He also alluded to Balonglong’s claim of ownership on the fenced land as unconfirmed reports point to him illegally selling the property, which sits in Sitio Bocana and is also the source of dispute between several groups of illegal settlers in the area.

“It really depends on whom this land is titled to previous to the presidential proclamation. They may have secured permits from the DENR. But this land is owned by the government and this cannot be sold or claimed by anyone,” Antiporda added.

# DENR calls for continuing care for the environment amid COVID

By Carlito C. DarPublished on June 15, 2020



DENR - CAR Officials (left to right) MGB Regional Director Fay Apil, Asst RED for Technical Services Augusto Lago, Regional Executive Director Ralph Pablo, Asst RED for Administration Cleo Sabado Andrada and EMB Regional Director Ma. Victoria Abrera give updates during the Environment Month Kapihan Sa Baguio Media Forum. (CCD/PIA CAR)

BAGUIO CITY, June 15 (PIA) - - The Department of Environment and Natural Resources Cordillera (DENR – CAR) reports a good environmental condition for the region amid the COVID pandemic and calls for a continuing partnership among the government, community and the people, in protecting the environment for a healthier Cordillera especially for the future generations.

DENR – CAR Assistant Regional Director for Technical Operations Augusto Lagon, in the kapihan on June 10, affirmed the good state of the environment in the region with the four major watersheds - the river basins of Agno, Abra, Apayao – Abulug and Cagayan under proper care of their respective watershed management councils.

Forest covers are also increasing with the continuing implementation of the National Greening Program and the strict enforcement of environment laws especially against agriculture settlement (farm expansion), land - use conversion and anti – illegal logging, Lagon added.

DENR - CAR Environmental Management Bureau Director Maria Victoria Abrera affirmed that the implementation of community quarantine helped in the improvement of air quality with lesser vehicles plying the streets.

From the air monitoring reading of 82 micrograms per cubic meter before the March 17 enforcement of Enhanced Community Quarantine, the air quality reading averages 42 microgram per cubic meter in April and May, Abrera reported.

With public utility vehicles slowly going back to the streets, Abrera enjoined local government units to ensure that the PUVs that will be given permits are compliant or pass the smoke emission standards so that good air quality will be maintained.

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DENR - CAR Regional Executive Director Ralph Pablo calls on the local communities and people of Cordillera to continue to help protect and preserve mother nature as protecting the environment is also important in protecting lives. (CCD/PIA CAR)

DENR - CAR Regional Executive Director Ralph Pablo encouraged local communities and people of Cordillera to continue to help protect and preserve mother nature as protecting the environment is important in protecting lives and sustaining the future.

With the community lockdowns, the environment heals on its own, so let us also help nature heals as we protect ourselves from the COVID pandemic by adhering to the prescribed health protocols, Pablo said.

In the kapihan promoting the observance of June as Environment Month and the 33rd anniversary celebration of the DENR – CAR regional office, Pablo bared that even with the COVID pandemic, DENR – CAR continues to pursue its mandate and priority programs are on track with the targets.

He presented DENR accomplishments on Clean Air; Clean Water; Solid Waste Management; Geo – hazard, ground water assessment and responsible mining; forest and Watershed Management; Intensified Forest Protection and anti – illegal mining; enhanced bio-diversity conservation; Scaling – up of Coastal and Marine eco system; improved land administration and Management; Forest Management Projects; Integrated Natural Resource and Environment Project.(JDP/CCD-PIA CAR )



# DENR orders Zobel de Ayala family to vacate timberland in Taytay

Jun 15, 2020 [Palawan News](#)

*In a statement it released Monday, the DENR MIMAROPA said the notice was signed by Taytay Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) chief Alan Valle on March 3, citing Zobel de Ayala and the others for violation of the provisions of Republic Act (RA) 7586 as amended by RA 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS) Act of 2018.*



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered Beatriz Zobel de Ayala and several other individuals to vacate a timberland area in Barangay Pancol, Taytay town, that is part of the Malampaya Sound Protected Landscape and Seascape (MSPLS).

In a statement it released Monday, the DENR MIMAROPA said the notice was signed by Taytay Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) chief Alan Valle on March 3, citing Zobel de Ayala and the others for violation of the provisions of Republic Act (RA) 7586 as amended by RA 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS) Act of 2018.

The law prohibits (n) occupying or dwelling in any public land within the protected area without clearance from the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB).

The DENR said it also forbids (o) constructing, erecting, or maintaining any kind of structure, fence or enclosure, conducting any business enterprise within the protected area without prior clearance from the PAMB and permit from the DENR, or conducting these activities in a manner that is inconsistent with the management plan duly approved by the PAMB.

The PAMB, the sole policy-making and decision-making body of MSPLS pursuant to the provisions of the E-NIPAS Act of 2018 has neither accepted from the respondents, any application for tenurial instruments nor approved any construction of structures in the said area.

Also stated in the notices to vacate (NTV) was the respondents' violation of Presidential Decree 705 or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines which prohibits occupation of timberland areas without proper tenurial instrument issued by the DENR.

The release said Zobel de Ayala and the other illegal occupants only have 30 days upon receipt of the notices to comply or further legal actions will be taken against them

It said further that the DENR has been monitoring the respondents' compliance with the NTV, but was restricted due to the enhanced quarantine protocols implemented against the further spread of COVID-19.

DENR orders Zobel de Ayala family to vacate  
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The agency has likewise furnished a copy of the NTV to Felipe Valones in response to his letter dated May 18, 2020, which appealed for the agency to look into the alleged occupation and tree-cutting in the protected area.

Valones is the chieftain of the indigenous peoples (IPs) group Nagkakaisang Tribu Tandolanon Barangay Pancol.

In his letter to Valle on the said date, Valones said he sought the help of environment authorities to protect their ancestral land.

“Sa aming pag-iikot sa aming barangay ay napansin naming may mga permanenteng gusaling bato na naitayo sa Sitio Maypa, Barangay Pancol, Taytay na sinasakupan umano ni Gng. Beatriz Zobel de Ayala at ng mga tauhan niya,” Valones said.

“Ang pagkakaalam namin, isang ‘protected area’ ang lupain na ito at hindi maaaring magtayo ng mga permanenteng gusali dito, liban na lang kung pinahihintulutan ito ng inyong opisina,” he added.

Valones claimed in the letter that they also learned that centuries-old trees had been cut from the area, apparently without permits from the CENRO.

Valones had asked for an immediate investigation of the alleged illegal occupation, cease any activities in the area and remove the structures, stop the cutting of trees, and penalize the violators.

However, Valones had reportedly retracted his complaint to the CENRO.

### DENR clarifies

The release also said that the DENR MIMAROPA wished to shed light on some information in the article “DENR probe urged on El Nido reclamation,” which was published by The Manila Times on June 13, 2020.”

The news story said that Palawan-based Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC) headed by Atty. Grizelda Mayo-Anda has claimed that despite knowledge of the issue, the DENR has “not done any concrete actions to address these problems.

“Records and the date of the issued NTV show that even before receipt of the said letter from Mr. Valones, DENR has already conducted an investigation and has taken appropriate actions against the respondents, contrary to what was stated in the article,” regional executive director Henry Adornado explained.

“We earnestly hope that with the above-mentioned details, we have given ELAC and the general public, the clear course of actions that we have undertaken to address the matter. Our office is open for clarification so that confusion shall be avoided in publishing wrong information,” the Director remarked.

## Request to blacklist waste management firm rejected

By [Patrick Roxas, TMT](#)

June 16, 2020

**HERMOSA, Bataan:** The Environmental Management Bureau Region 3 (EMB-3) has denied a request by this town's chief executive to blacklist the operator of the waste management facility here.

EMB-3 Regional Director Wilson Trajeco, in a letter to Hermosa Mayor Jopet Inton, said the request to blacklist Econest Waste Management Corp. for alleged environmental violations cannot be granted.

“With regard to the blacklisting of Econest Waste Management Corp. and its officers from undertaking any waste management facility in the future, this office has no mandate,” according to Trajeco.

Econest was the operator of the Hermosa Sanitary Landfill under a public-private-partnership agreement.

In February this year, the local government of Hermosa padlocked the town's landfill being operated by Econest for purported violations of environmental laws.

The EMB-3 has also denied a request by Inton to revoke Econest's environmental compliance certificate (ECC) over the sanitary landfill and have the landfill rehabilitated at the expense of Econest.

“The request for relief of Econest's ECC cannot be granted. Based on the Revised Procedural Manual for DAO 2003-30,” Trajeco said, adding, “the ECC may only be suspended for violations of proponent to comply with any of the ECC conditions.”

Results of laboratory analysis, according to the EMB-3's reply to the Mayor, showed significant effluence parameters have high concentration, which must likely can be damaging to environment if care or maintenance or rehabilitation would not be undertaken.

The EMB-3 said it poses no objection to the issuance of order for immediate full rehabilitation of the landfill as it is deemed necessary.

On shouldering the cost, the agency recommended for Hermosa and Econest to revisit their agreement or to bring the issuance of a decision to the right forum.

# Pinatubo eruption remembered

[Ramon Efren Lazaro](#) (The Philippine Star) - June 16, 2020 - 12:00am

SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga, Philippines — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Central Luzon is reminding everyone to help protect the environment as it commemorated the 29th year of Mt. Pinatubo's eruption yesterday.

The volcano – which straddles Zambales, Tarlac and Pampanga – erupted on June 15, 1991.

President Duterte has declared June 15 this year as a special non-working day in Angeles City and Pampanga.

The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 was the second-largest volcanic eruption of the 20th century.

“The eruption generated mudflows that buried several villages in the three provinces, and hundreds of kilometers of clouds of volcanic ash,” Don Guevarra, information officer of the DENR-Central Luzon, said.

As years passed by, trekking to the crater of the volcano has become a popular tourist activity.

But with the current coronavirus 2019 or COVID-19 pandemic, remembering Mt. Pinatubo's eruption is being done only online or on social media, Guevarra added.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2020/06/16/2021192/pinatubo-eruption-remembered>





A picture of the rescued Tarsier that was released on the forest the same day it was rescued. (Salay LGU)

## Salay LGU to conduct IEC on wildlife protection amid COVID-19

By Salay Information Office Published on June 15, 2020

SALAY, MISAMIS ORIENTAL, June 15 - Mayor Jun Capistrano together with Municipal Environment Natural Resources (MENR) Officer, Greg Zulita plans to conduct an information drive to the residents of Barangay Alipuaton regarding Conservation and Habitat Protection of the Tarsier and other wildlife in the forest amid COVID-19 following protective measures.



In picture: (Left to Right) Mr. Nonon Abejuela, Mr. Nonoy Udarbe, turn over rescued a Tarsier from a minor in Brgy. Alipuaton to LGU of Salaya through Mayor Jun Capistrano. The Tarsier was carefully released in the wild immediately on the same day it was rescued. Note: The Tarsier was already caged when they rescued it from its captivity. (Salay LGU)

This after the local government found endangered tarsier in the forest of Sitio Salahon in Barangay Alipuaton, Salay, Misamis Oriental.

It was rescued from the captivity of a minor in Barangay Alipuaton.

It was carefully released afternoon, although it was not the first time that the Tarsiers were spotted in some part of the forest in Sitio Salahon.

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According to the DENR-Davao Region, "As tiny as the size of an adult palm, Philippine Tarsier is one of the smallest primates in the world with large goggling eyes as its arresting and prominent feature. They are endemic to a few areas in the Visayas, exacting in Bohol. But over the years, frequent sightings of these tiny primates suggest that they also found a home in Mindanao, one of which is Davao region."

"We are blessed here in Salay because we can still see lots of other wildlife including Philippine Tarsier which are actually one of the indicators that we have a good and healthy forest ecosystem," said Salay LGU.

Mayor Jun Capistrano said he is planning to propose that the forest in Sitio Salahon be considered a protected area so that the natural habitat of the Philippine Tarsier including other wildlife will be conserved.

The majority of Tarsier species are now endangered or threatened, and some are designated critically endangered so we must protect them.

The mayor extended his gratitude to Nonoy Udarbe and Nonon Abejuela for rescuing the said endangered Tarsier species.

Meanwhile, Local Government Unit of Salay assured its constituents that the people who rescued and handled the tarsier was aware of its duties and responsibilities in the conservation and protection of wildlife resources and their habitats as provided for in Republic Act No. 9147. (Salay Info Office)

# Pair of PH eagles ‘becoming comfortable’ in their new home at Jurong Bird Park

Published June 15, 2020, 6:33 PM

By *Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz*

A year after the first pair of captive-bred Philippine eagles were brought to Singapore, “Geothermica” and “Sambisig” are “becoming comfortable” in their new home at the Jurong Bird Park, according to the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF).

“They are both healthy and are eating well. They also groom themselves regularly by preening or cleaning their feathers with their beaks. They also like to bask in the sun and even in the rain,” the PEF said in its website.

“The pair is observed to be getting along better and are often seen perching close to each other,” it added. The Foundation assured that while the Jurong Bird Park has temporarily closed their facilities to the public due to the COVID-19, the birds remain safe and are well cared for.

“Geothermica” and “Sambisig” left for Singapore on June 4, 2019 through a 10-year international wildlife loan agreement, a first of such agreement for the critically endangered bird, as agreed upon by the Philippines’ Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS).

The program aims to ensure the survival of the species and as a fallback population in the event of catastrophic events, like disease outbreaks or extreme natural calamities, taking place in their Philippine habitat, DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

Aged 15 and 17 years old, respectively, male “Geothermica” and female “Sambisig” were loaned from the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City for conservation breeding and public education to promote global support for its conservation.

They are a pioneering pair of Philippine eagles to be placed under an international wildlife loan agreement. Since they left the Philippines, the two have been staying at Jurong Bird Park, the largest bird park in Asia that is home to close to 3,500 birds across 400 species, of which 20 percent is threatened.

“Geothermica seems to like his personal space neat and tidy and spends most of his time arranging his nest to his liking. He also likes observing people and buggies that pass by his enclosure from a high vantage point,” the PEF said.

Meanwhile, “Sambisig is a little more feisty than Geothermica and not into housekeeping much. As observed by her keeper, she likes to throw out the majority of her nesting materials,” the statement said.

“She also prefers bathing and knocking CCTV cameras out of alignment in her spare time. Like Geothermica, she likes to people-watch, but does so perched on the lower beam of her enclosure,” the PEF added.

Known as the largest of the extant eagles in the world in terms of length and wing surface, the Philippine eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) is listed as a “critically endangered” raptor in the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List and the country’s National List of Threatened Species under DENR Administrative Order 2004-15.

Wild population of the species throughout the archipelago remains precarious with an estimated number of at least 340 pairs.

Hunting and loss of forest habitat remain the primary threats to its survival.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/15/pair-of-ph-eagles-becoming-comfortable-in-their-new-home-at-jurong-bird-park/>





# Sea turtle captured, freed in Or.Mindoro

Share it!

Published June 15, 2020, 6:42 PM

By **Aaron Recuenco**

Two fishermen accidentally caught a sea turtle off the waters of Bongabong town in Oriental Mindoro but police said it was freed later after checking that it was not injured.



Lt. Col. Imelda Tolentino, spokesperson of the MIMAROPA (Mindoro Oriental and Occidental, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) regional police, said it was the fishermen themselves who sought the assistance of the local police to free the sea turtle.

He identified them as Arnel Detores and Mario Arellano.

“The sea turtle was accidentally trapped inside the fishing net of the two fishermen,” said Tolentino, adding that the incident happened at around 10:30 p.m. on Sunday.

The fishermen took the sea turtle to the shore and reported the incident to the 2nd Provincial Mobile Force Company, which in turn, coordinated with the local office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

During the inspection, police found a metal tag bearing the mark PH1641L on the sea turtle.

The tagging of sea turtles is part of the data-gathering of marine scientists in a move to protect them from extinction. The population of the sea turtles are dwindling due to the demand for their meat, eggs and shells.

“The sea turtle was freed by our local police force after ensuring that it was not injured,” said Tolentino.



# Pawikan nangitlog sa dalampasigan sa Davao Oriental

Claire Cornelio, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jun 15 2020 06:41 PM



Photo courtesy of Wawie Blas

MANAY, Davao Oriental - Namangha ang mga residente sa Barangay Zaragoza sa bayan ng Manay sa Davao Oriental nang makita nilang nangitlog ang isang pawikan Linggo ng umaga.

Ayon kay Barangay Chairman Alma Bangkailan, hindi naman ito ang unang pawikan na nangitlog sa kanilang dalampasigan. Pero unang pagkakataon ito na matunghayan ng mga residente ang aktuwal na pangangitlog ng isang pawikan.

"Blessing talaga sa amin sa barangay dahil sa lahat ng 17 barangays sa amin, kami lang ang pinunpuntahan ng mga sea turtle para mangitlog," aniya.

Ayon kay Manay Municipal Administrator Jan Mae Llavore, dahil sa mga bato sa dalampasigan ay natagalang makaahon sa dagat ang pawikan para makarating sa buhangin at mangitlog, kaya naabutan ito ng umaga at nakita ng mga tao.

Nasa mahigit isang metro ang haba ng pawikan at may bigat na 300 kilos.

"With the instruction of our Mayor, magpapa-executive agenda siya sa Sanggunian Bayan o SB office para po magkaroon tayo ng resolution for the proposal na the whole coastal area ng Barangay Zaragoza will be declared protected area for wildlife hatchery," ani Llavore.

Naka-cordon na ang lugar na pinangingitlogan ng pawikan at may bantay na rin na mga residente at personnel ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang nasabing lugar.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/06/15/20/pawikan-nangitlog-sa-dalampasigan-sa-davao-oriental?fbclid=IwAR0ajpjFbS8OcMDs6A5p8ywzOhg-B525otr2xsXDblonTt2MPVhxSNU-IR0>

# Kawani ng DENR at 11 turista nag-swimming sa resort, arestado

By [Raymund Catindig](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon)

- June 16, 2020 - 12:00am

## Lumabag sa quarantine protocols

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan, Philippines — Bagsak kalaboso ang isang kawani ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at 11 pang lokal na turista matapos umanong lumabag sa quarantine protocols nang mahuling nagtatampisaw sa pamosong Blue Water Paradise sa Barangay San Jose, Baggao, Cagayan noong Linggo.

Sinabi ni Captain Reynaldo Viernes, hepe ng Baggao Police Station na dakong alas-4:30 ng hapon nila nadatnan ang mga turista na kinabibilangan ng kawani ng DENR na si Richard Belica sa pamosong pristine lagoon and caves resort sa paanan ng Sierra Madre matapos silang isuplong ng isang impormante.

Sa ilalim ng umiiral na modified general community quarantine sa lugar, ipinagbabawal muna ang pag-iral ng turismo at outing na nilabag ng mga inaresto bukod pa sa kabiguan nilang magsuot ng facemask, ayon sa pulisya.

Dinala ng awtoridad ang mga lokal na turista sa presinto saka sila kinasuhan ng paglabag sa R.A. 11332 o Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

# Boracay open to guests from Western Visayas

Updated June 15, 2020, 10:45 PM

By Hanah Tabios

Expect a “contactless” Boracay experience on its resumption of domestic tourism, according to Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, as the island is ready to take in guests from the Western Visayas region beginning Tuesday (June 16) after months of closure due to COVID-19.



Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo- Puyat (ALBERT GARCIA / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

In an interview with Manila Bulletin, Puyat said the “no hotel reservation, no entry policy” remains in effect, but tourists will now be required to fill out the digital health declaration form through the Aklan Border Control Management Application prior to the entry in Caticlan airport.

This will be sent by the tourist’s hotel of choice, along with the receipt of the accommodation reservation and a QR code, as a move to strengthen the COVID-19 contact tracing efforts of the local government of Aklan that has jurisdiction over the area.

“So yung telepono mo [gagamitin mo]. Wala ka ng hahawakan [dahil] idadaan mo nalang sa system nila at makapasok ka na [sa hotel]. Iscan na nila yung code (You will use your phone. You will no longer touch anything because you just have to go through their system to get inside the hotel. They will scan the code),” she said.

The scanned QR code, Puyat said, would include pertinent information regarding the check-in details, including the list of personnel who are on duty and whom the tourists could ask for help in case COVID-19 symptoms would manifest after.

She said during the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) inspection last Friday, all accommodation establishments have been gearing up for the island’s reopening, with “contactless” transaction and service are now in place.

During the pre-COVID phase, Boracay has 390 DOT-accredited establishments, 92 are applying for accreditation, while three tourism establishments have already been accredited recently, Puyat said.

If before, “welcome drinks” are given, now, every hotel in the island will rather provide guests with a face mask, a pack of anti-bacterial wipes, and hand sanitizer.

“Lahat nakafaceshield at nakamask. Makikita mo pa rin iba pa rin ang Filipino brand of COVID (All are wearing face shields and face masks. You will see that that Filipino brand of COVID is still different,” she said in a separate interview aired over DZBB.

But despite the contactless interaction, Puyat assured that the spirit of the DOT’s brand campaign “It’s More Fun in the Philippines” is still there, while taking safety for all on top of their priority.

To recall, the island itself remains COVID-free for over a month now, hence, the decision of the BIATF to reopen the world-famous tourist destination to Western Visayas locals for a “trial period.”

They lauded the efforts of the Aklan and Malay LGUs for their aggressive efforts to keep the island safe from the dreaded coronavirus disease.

She said if the reopening would be successful, the local officials of Aklan and Malay town will later decide on the next steps of the resumption of tourism activities in Boracay, but still with the guidance of BIATF.

Meanwhile, she said that despite the easement in quarantine protocols, the local governments of Bohol and El Nido in Palawan want to settle first their own COVID-19 measures before they decide on their domestic tourism reopening.

Many local travelers have also been anticipating the reopening of other tourist hotspots, including the ones in Central and Northern Luzon such as Baler town in Aurora and La Union province, which are both ideal for surfing activities.

“Gusto nila yung may swab test to ensure na may papasok negative (They want to have a swab test ensure that all visiting tourists are negative),” she said.

Puyat expressed confidence that despite the “slow but sure approach”, the industry will recover from the wrath of the pandemic.

In 2018, the tourism sector’s contribution to the country’s GDP was estimated at 12.7 percent, in which 11.1 percent of the figures came from domestic tourism. This translates to P1.9 trillion revenue collection, according to Puyat. This was because, during the same year, 111 million Filipinos have traveled across the Philippines.

“Kaya ang message ko sana sa lahat, dapat talaga tangkilikin ang sariling atin, buy local, and support local para matulungan natin ang ating mga kababayan (So my message for all is to support what is ours, buy local, and support local to help our fellow Filipinos),” she added.



# Boracay establishments will strictly follow health protocols when it reopens on June 16, Puyat assures

Published June 15, 2020 3:46pm

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat on Monday assured that hotels and other establishments in Boracay will strictly follow health protocols as it reopens to tourists from Western Visayas provinces starting Tue

Interviewed on Dabol B sa News TV, Puyat said local authorities will ensure that employees and tourists will observe physical distancing, wearing of face masks and face shields. There will also be frequent temperature checks and sanitation.

Arriving tourists will have to sign health declaration forms, Puyat added.

There will also be QR code scanners for the health declaration forms for contactless transactions, she added.

“Very impressed ako sa ginagawa ng Boracay ngayon kasi talagang yung pinakita nila, contactless, walang hinahawakan,” Puyat said.

She added that the hotels and establishments that will operate were inspected and accredited by the Department of Tourism.

Puyat also assured that the hotels will follow the health standards of the Department of Health and the World Health Organization.

Earlier, the Boracay Inter-agency Task Force said Boracay is ready to receive local tourists anew, after it was placed under modified general community quarantine.

Those above 60 years old and below 21, however, are still not allowed to travel to the tourist destination.

“Gusto lang daw muna nila Western Visayas kasi parang ida-dry run muna nila at anyway daw ‘yong mga tiga Western Visayas, modified GCQ naman daw sila so puwede na sila pumunta Boracay,” Puyat said.

She also said the department will still talk to local officials in two weeks to discuss when the island will open to tourists from other parts of the country

Meanwhile, Malay, Aklan acting mayor Frolibar Bautista said not all hotels will operate because some have not yet received their certificate of authority to operate from the DOT.

Bautista added the reopening of the island will be of great help to them.

“Kailangan na kasi ang Malay, sa Boracay, dependent kami sa tourists. ‘Pag wala kaming turista, wala kaming income kaya kailangan na rin naming makapag-operate,” he said.

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protocols when it reopens on June 16, Puyat assures

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Bautista also ensured that minimum health protocols will be strictly observed and there will be a two-meter distance between tourists swimming in the beach.

A maximum of two persons per room will also be implemented in hotels, he said.

As part of their monitoring, Bautista also said there will be a separate entrance for workers, residents and tourists.

So far, Boracay has remained free of COVID-19 and [has allowed swimming among residents in the beginning of June](#). — **Ma. Angelica Garcia/LA, GMA News**

# Western Visayas cops ready for Boracay reopening

June 15, 2020

People's Tonight

**ILOILO CITY – The Police Regional Office (PRO) 6 (Western Visayas) is prepared for the reopening of the world-famous Boracay Island on June 16.**

Brig. Gen. Rene Pamuspusan, PRO-6 director, said in a statement on Saturday that security preparations have been set to welcome local tourists.

Boracay's inter-agency task force has approved the reopening of the popular beach destination to Western Visayas travelers.

"We are now ready to secure Boracay Island but we will ensure strict implementation of protocols and guidelines established by the inter-agency task force," Pamuspusan said, noting that they recently established the Boracay Operation Command Center with 25 CCTVs to centralize security measures and monitor the area on top of regular police visibility.

He added that the Malay municipal police, in coordination with other law enforcement and emergency response team, also conducted a series of training sessions in preparation for the opening and implementation of the health protocols for the new normal.

On Thursday, the local police also launched the "e-Reklamo" to reduce the people's risk of exposure to the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19).

"(The) Malay Municipal Police Station is now accepting complaints without having you to physically appear in the police station. Just login to your Facebook account and reach us through our Facebook Messenger," the police said in its advisory.

The PRO-6 also reminded the public that local tourists below 21 years old and above 60 years old are still prohibited from visiting the island.

The regional police appealed for the public's cooperation and discipline amid the threat posed by the pandemic. (PNA)

# 1 day bago ‘soft reopening’ ng Boracay: Halos 100 beach guard at 300 pulis, nakadeploy na

By [Bombo Radyo Kalibo](#) -June 15, 2020 | 7:59 AM

KALIBO, Aklan – Handang-handa na ang Police Regional Office (PRO)-6, isang araw bago ang soft re-opening ng Boracay makalipas ang ilang buwan na pamamahinga ng isla dulot ng Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.



Sa isang panayam, sinabi ni PRO-6 director B/Gen. Rene Pamuspusan, plantsado na ang seguridad para sa inaasahang pagsidatingan ng mga lokal na turista kasabay ang istriktong implementasyon ng health protocols at guidelines na inilatag ng Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF).

Una rito, sa assessment ng BIATF na pinangunahan nina Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año at Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat sa ginanap na dry run ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Malay ay pinayagan nang buksan muli ang Boracay.

Gayunpaman, kailangan na taga-Western Visayas muna ang puwedeng makatawid sa isla na kinabibilangan ng mga residente ng Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, at Bacolod.

Maliban dito, mahigpit na ipapatupad ang “no booking, no entry policy” upang malimitahan sa 50% ang tourist arrival.

Sa kasalukuyan, 98 beach guards ang naka-standby sa front beach at 300 police personnel ang nakadeploy sa buong isla upang mag-secure ng kapayapaan at kaayusan sa gitna ng pakikipaglaban sa pandemya.

Samantala, inaasahan ng Aklan provincial government na mapunan ang nasa P12 bilyon na lugi nila sa ekonomiya partikular sa industriya ng turismo.

Nabatid na nasa P47 bilyon naman ang lugi sa mga negosyo na nagdulot ng kawalan ng trabaho sa mga empleyado kasunod ng pagsara ng mga establishment.

Sa muling pagbukas ng Boracay ay hinikayat ni Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat ang mga accommodation establishments na magsumite ng letter of intent to operate.

Kaugnay nito, hanggang noong araw ng Huwebes ay 90 letters of intent pa lamang ang natanggap ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Malay mula sa kabuuang 390 accredited establishments na mayroon sa isla.

Una rito, iginiit ng alkalde na mahigpit na ipapatupad ang minimum health protocols gaya ng mandatory na pagsuot ng face mask, pag-obserba ng physical at social distancing gayundin ang proper hygiene para makaiwas sa nakakamatay na sakit.

Source: <https://www.bomboradyo.com/1-day-bago-soft-reopening-ng-boracay-halos-100-beach-guard-at-300-pulis-nakadeploy-na/>



Pagkontra ni PDU30 sa Manila Bay reclamation,  
isang encouragement sa pro-environment-Villar

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## Pagkontra ni PDU30 sa Manila Bay reclamation, isang encouragement sa pro-environment – Villar

June 15, 2020 @ 12:06 PM 21 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Ikinatuwa ni Senador Cynthia Villar ang pagkontra ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa mga lobbyist na gustong magsagawa ng reclamation sa Manila Bay dahil pabor ito pro-environment sa new normal.

Sa pahayag, sinabi ni Villar na ipinakikita lamang ni Pangulong Duterte ang kanyang commitment na ayusin at pangalagaan ang Manila Bay sa kanyang paulit-ulit na pahayag laban sa reklamasyon nito.

Igniit ni Villar, chairperson ng Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, na sa kanyang mga public address briefing sa kalagayan ng bansa sa ilalim ng quarantine, tiniyak ng Pangulo na hindi niya papayagan ang reklamasyon ng Manila Bay sa kabila ng kailangang pondohan ang COVID-19 pandemic response.

Binanggit din ni Duterte na pinayuhan niya ang mga pribadong indibiduwal na nagla-lobby sa mga reclamation project na maghintay na lamang sa susunod na pangulo.

“Going into the new normal, there are a lot of things that will have to cease to exist but I am glad the policies that will help us achieve our goals for the preservation of our biodiversity, especially the protection and the rehabilitation of Manila Bay will continue,” ayon kay Villar.

Noong January 27, 2019, inilunsad ang “Battle for Manila Bay” para ipatupad ang Supreme Court continuing mandamus na ipinalabas noong December 2008.

Inaatasan nito ang 13 agencies at private entities na linisin, ayusin at papanatilihin ang tubig ng Manila Bay sa lebel na maaaring maglangoy, scuba-diving, at magsagawa ng iba pang uri ng contact-recreation.

Bass rin sa continuing mandamus, nilagdaan ni Duterte ang Administrative Order No. 16 na bumuo sa Manila Bay Task Force noong February 19, 2019.

Bago pa siya nahalal bilang senator, pinangungunahan na ni Villar ang pagtutol sa Manila Bay reclamation.

Noong 2012, kasama ang 315,000 residente ng Las Pinas, Paranaque at Cavite, naghain siya ng petisyon para sa Writ of Kalikasan upang harangin ang reclamation ng Las Pinas-Paranaque Wetland Park, Ramsar-listed Wetland of International Importance.

Pagkontra ni PDU30 sa Manila Bay reclamation,  
TITLE: isang encouragement sa pro-environment-Villar

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Inaasahan din ni Villar na ang 175-hectare critical habitat ay magiging pangunahing 'learning environment' sa urban wetlands sa Pilipinas at modelo ng sustainable eco-tourism.

Dahil dito, inayos ng senador ang park at nagpaggawa ng Wetland Center, Visitors' Center, bird hides, boardwalk at view towers.

Bilang ambag para mapabuti ang dekalidad ng tubig sa Manila Bay na may pinakamataas na coliform levels, bukod sa regular coastal clean-ups, sinimulan ni Villar ang proyekto para mapatigil ang 'open defecation' sa Baseco Compound sa Manila.

Kasama ang Department of Health, nagbibigay siya ng toilet facilities sa mga residente. *Ernie Reyes*

# Villar confident in Duterte vow to protect Manila Bay

June 15, 2020

By Marlon Purificacion

People's Tonight

## SENATOR Cynthia Villar on Monday expressed confidence that President Rodrigo Duterte remains true to his commitment to rehabilitate and protect Manila Bay.

Villar said this was evident in Duterte's repeated announcement expressing his stance against the bay's reclamation.

The chairperson of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources noted that in various times during his public address briefing the people on the state of the country under quarantine, the President gave the assurance that he will not allow the reclamation of Manila Bay even in the face of the urgent need to fund the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Villar also noted that the President has advised private individuals lobbying for these reclamation projects to wait for the next presidency.

"Going into the new normal, there are a lot of things that will have to cease to exist but I am glad the policies that will help us achieve our goals for the preservation of our biodiversity, especially the protection and the rehabilitation of Manila Bay will continue," Villar said.

On January 27, 2019, the "Battle for Manila Bay" was launched to reinforce the Supreme Court continuing mandamus issued on December 2008, which directs 13 agencies and private entities to clean up, rehabilitate, preserve, restore, and maintain the waters of Manila Bay to a level that is fit for swimming, skin-diving, and other forms of contact-recreation.

Also on the basis of the continuing mandamus, Duterte signed Administrative Order No. 16 creating the Manila Bay Task Force on February 19, 2019.

Even before her election as senator, Villar has been in the forefront of the fight against Manila Bay reclamation. In 2012, together with more than 315,000 residents of Las Pinas, Paranaque and Cavite, she petitioned for a Writ of Kalikasan to block the reclamation of the Las Pinas-Paranaque Wetland Park, a Ramsar-listed Wetland of International Importance.

Villar said reclamation of Manila Bay will exacerbate flooding in nearby areas and will destroy the source of fish supply of NCR and parts of Cavite and Central Luzon. It will also affect the livelihood of over 300,000 fisher folk.

"After successfully protecting the wetland from the threat of reclamation, we are now highlighting its natural biodiversity and creating awareness on the park's importance as a sanctuary of migratory birds and haven of flora and fauna," Villar said.

Villar also envisions making the 175-hectare critical habitat the premiere learning environment for urban wetlands in the Philippines and a model of sustainable eco-tourism. Towards this end, the senator developed the park and built the Wetland Center, Visitors' Center, bird hides, boardwalk and view towers.

As her contribution to improve water quality in the areas of Manila Bay with the highest coliform levels, aside from the holding of regular coastal clean-ups, Villar initiated a project to stop open defecation at Baseco Compound in Manila. Together with the Department of Health, she worked to provide toilet facilities to residents.

Source: <https://journal.com.ph/news/nation/villar-confident-duterte-vow-protect-manila-bay>

# Army, power company plant Narra trees in Lagonglong town

By 58 Infantry Battalion Published on June 15, 2020



About 250 Narra trees planted at Sitio Kamansi, Banglay, Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental as part of tree growing activity held on June 11, 2020.

CLAVERIA, Misamis Oriental, June 15 - The 58th Infantry "Dimalulupig" Battalion in partnership with Minergy Power Corporation (MPC) planted about 250 Narra trees at Sitio Kamansi, Banglay, Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental as part of tree growing activity held on June 11, 2020.

With the theme, "Protect Nature, sustain our Future", the environmental preservation aims to improve the area's natural vegetation against climate change and conserve the natural resources of the community. The program is designed to provide alternative income-generating project for marginalized upland and lowland households as vanguards for sustainment.

Lt. Col. Ricky L Canatoy, Commanding Officer of 58IB and Jonathan Rizalda, Environmental officer of MPC lead the tree growing activity with 250 Narra trees to show strong alliance of the government and NGO in environmental preservation campaign.

Aside from the environmental preservation activity, MPC also distributed food packs, clothes, and toys to the local populace.

"Dako ang among pasasalamat sa gobyerno labi na sa 58IB ug MPC gumikan sa ilang nagpadayon nga suporta sa pagbag-o niining among dapit. Dili na mi makalimot niining inyong mga gipagdala ug serbisyo kanamo. Dal-on namo kini ang inyong maayong mga binuhatan dinhi kanamo," said Rosalie Langka, PO Secretary of Farmers of Kamansi Association (FAKAA).

(We are very thankful to our government, especially for the 58IB and MPC for their continuing support for the community development of our beloved place. We will always remember and forever thankful for your kindness and generosity.)

Lt. Col. Canatoy commended the activity as essential in supporting the environmental preservation campaign, "This activity of working with NGOs is an affirmation of our commitment to the nation-building. Our dedication is not only focused in promoting patriotism, but also includes advocating the protection of our environment to mitigate the looming effects of climate change." (58IB)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1044771>



# One of world's tallest flowers found in Baras, Rizal

Published June 15, 2020, 12:05 PM

By *Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz*

An 8-foot-7 endemic *Amorphophallus* flower species has been spotted in Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal last week.



Masungi Georeserve Foundation / MANILA BULLETIN

The Masungi Georeserve Foundation in a Facebook post identified the flower species as *Amorphophallus rostratus*, “one of the world’s tallest flowers.”

“Park rangers saw the 8’7” tall *Amorphophallus rostratus*, while doing maintenance work last week. They reported the sighting to our site officers who confirmed the native species with friends from the academe,” the post read.

The park rangers also noticed a slightly unpleasant smell when the flower bloomed.

The *Amorphophallus rostratus* is a species endemic to the Philippines and is seen mostly in thickets and low elevation forest. It is known to bear the tallest flower but is also famous for having a bad smell especially when it starts to decay, which in turn attracts insects.

An indigenous ranger who lived in the upland mountains told the Masungi Georeserve Foundation that the flower was locally called “biga,” which “they cut and cook the stalk in boiling water before eating it.

The foundation noted that at least three species *Amorphophallus* of varying sizes have been documented in Masungi.

“Truly this is another native wonder that must be conserved from quarrying and other harmful activities in our forests and protected areas,” the environment advocate said.





**WILDLIFE CONSERVATION.** Fermin Edillon of Davao Light (left) assists a veterinary team after a hawksbill turtle was discovered in a fishing accident. For Edillon and his team at AboitizPower distribution unit Davao Light, their energy is directed toward the pawikans, or sea turtles, as they spearhead the activities at the Aboitiz Cleanergy Park in Davao. The park, located at the coastal area of Punta Dumalag, serves as a sanctuary for the pawikans and also for dozens of rare bird species that are able to thrive in a safe and secure environment.

# NCR remains under GCQ; Cebu City back to ECQ

By Azer Parrocha [June 16, 2020, 12:42 am](#)



President Rodrigo Duterte (*file photo*)

**MANILA** – President Rodrigo Duterte has retained the general community quarantine (GCQ) classification in Metro Manila and reverted Cebu City to enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) until June 30.

In streamed meeting late Monday night, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III announced the new community quarantine classifications based on the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID).

The IATF's recommendation to retain, relax, or tighten community quarantines in the country was decided on the basis of case doubling rate of Covid-19 infections and the critical health care capacity.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, in a statement, confirmed that the IATF recommendation has been approved by the President.

Aside from Metro Manila, other Luzon areas that will be under GCQ are Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Santiago City in Region II; Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Tarlac, Olongapo City in Region III; Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, and Occidental Mindoro in Region IV-A for Luzon.

For the Visayas, Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Mandaue City, Lau-Lapu City in Region VII will be placed under GCQ.

Davao City and Zamboanga City will be the only two areas in Mindanao that will be under GCQ.

Cebu City was “escalated” back to ECQ because of the increasing number of new coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases.

“The increasing number of new cases and widespread community transmission in majority of barangays in the city, as well as consistent case doubling time of less than seven days and significant increase in critical care utilization against critical care capacity were the reasons cited why Cebu City reverted back to ECQ,” Roque said.

Talisay City, a component city under the province of Cebu, will be placed under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) for the same reasons.

The rest of the country will remain under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) also until June 30.

Duterte, meanwhile, reminded the public to observe minimum health standards despite relaxed quarantine restrictions such as physical distancing, wearing of face masks, and hand washing.

"We are gradually easing restrictions to make way for our economic viability as individuals and as a nation. But it does not mean that we will forget our minimum health standards," he said.

Earlier, Duterte warned that the return to a stricter community quarantine is possible in areas with rising number of Covid-19 cases.

The Department of Health (DOH) said it is aiming to test 1.5 percent of the Philippine population for Covid-19 by the end of July.

As of Monday (June 15), there are a total of 26,420 confirmed Covid-19 cases in the country, of which 1,098 are deaths and 6,252 are recoveries. **(PNA)**

# Metro Manila GCQ extended until June 30; Cebu City put on ECQ

(Philstar.com) - June 16, 2020 - 12:18am

MANILA, Philippines (**Updated 12:42 a.m.**) — Metro Manila will remain under a general community quarantine until the end of June, two weeks after the GCQ was announced to help restart the country's economy.

Cebu City has meanwhile been placed under enhanced community quarantine, the Palace said.

"[President Rodrigo Roa Duterte] places Cebu City under ECQ; Metro Manila remains GCQ. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, in his Talk to the People Address on June 15, placed Cebu City under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) starting June 16," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in a report by News5 AKSYON.

In a statement, Roque said that Talisay City in Cebu will be on Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine.

The following areas in the Visayas will be under GCQ until the end of the month:

## Luzon

- Santiago City
- Cagayan
- Isabela
- Nueva Vizcaya
- Quirino
- Aurora
- Bataan
- Bulacan
- Tarlac
- Olongapo City
- Cavite
- Laguna
- Batangas
- Rizal
- Quezon
- Occidental Mindoro

## Visayas

- Mandaue City
- Lapu-Lapu City
- Cebu province
- Bohol
- Negros Oriental

Davao City and Zamboanga City in Mindanao will also be under GCQ.

"The rest of the country remains under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) until June 30, 2020," he added.

Metro Manila GCQ extended until June 30; Cebu City

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The announcement, which the Palace made in a statement, comes after the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases recommended quarantine levels for areas in the Philippines.

A pre-recorded video of the IATF meeting was airing when Roque made the announcement past midnight on Tuesday, June 16.



Duterte himself earlier warned the public that a return to ECQ was in the realm of possibility should the rate of infection speed up.

According to the president's report to Congress on June 8, only 366,423 persons have been tested for the new pathogen, good for 0.0003% percent of the country's population.

Under the 'Bayanihan' Act, the president is supposed to give Congress a report on how he has used the powers granted him to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The report has yet to be released as of this post.

The health department has said it was aiming to test 1.5% of the population amid calls for mass testing, which the Palace has claimed meant testing everyone in the country.

The first fifteen days of GCQ have seen commuters suffer a severe lack of mass transportation options.

This, while the World Health Organization has said the contact tracing efforts in the country were slow.

Researchers from the University of Santo Tomas have said that this stage of the pandemic requires a "testing capacity of 15,000 tests per day and 1,800 contact tracers" in Metro Manila.

Earlier, experts from the University of the Philippines warned that a premature graduation to general community quarantine would result in 24,000 cases and 1,700 deaths by June 15.

That case toll had already been breached by June 11, after GCQ was still implemented at the start of the month.

As of this writing, over 26,000 Filipinos have been infected with the coronavirus.

Almost 2,000 have died. — **Franco Luna with reports from Gaea Katreena Cabico**



## NCR remains under GCQ

Cebu City returns to ECQ; Several provinces also stay under GCQ until June 30

posted June 16, 2020 at 12:50 am

by [Joyce Pangco Panares and Willie Casas](#)

While Metro Manila and other areas will remain under general community quarantine (GCQ) until June 30, President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday night placed Cebu City under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) starting today, June 16.

"The increasing number of new cases and widespread community transmission in majority of barangays in the city, as well as consistent case doubling time of less than seven (7) days and significant increase in critical care utilization against critical care capacity were the reasons cited why Cebu City reverted back to ECQ," Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said.

Talisay City, a component city under the province of Cebu, was placed under Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) for the same reasons, Roque added.

"We are easing quarantine restrictions to manage the economy. Hindi ko kayo mapipigilan lumabas (I cannot stop you from going out)," Duterte said.

The President likewise placed under GCQ until the end of the month Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, and Santiago City in Region II; Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Tarlac, and Olongapo City in Region III; Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, and Occidental Mindoro in Region IV-A for Luzon.

For the Visayas, Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Mandaue City, and Lapu-Lapu City in Region VII were placed under GCQ.

For Mindanao, Davao City and Zamboanga City in Mindanao are under GCQ.

The rest of the country remains under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) until June 30.

This developed as the Philippines on Monday reported its highest number of new recoveries from the COVID-19 pandemic in a single day at 298 — even as its total confirmed infections reached 26,420 ahead of the expected adjustments of quarantine measures.

The total recoveries stood at 6,252, while the death toll rose by 10 to 1,098.

It was the fifth straight day that the new recoveries numbered more than 240.

Among the fresh cases, 131 were from Metro Manila and 79 from Region VII, while the remaining 138 were spread out across the country.

Among the late cases, 21 were from Metro Manila, five were from Region VII while the 116 other patients were from various areas nationwide.

As of June 13, the Philippines had 44 certified polymerase chain reaction (PCR) facilities and 15 GeneXpert laboratories that had tested a total of 467,564 individuals.

Several local government units had appealed the recommended community quarantine classification of their respective jurisdictions ahead of President Rodrigo Duterte's decision on the restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19, Malacañang said.

Roque said Cebu City had appealed to be placed under the stricter MECQ from the prevailing GCQ.

The Department of Health earlier said that Cebu City was a hot spot for the COVID-19 outbreak. Roque said the following areas wanted to be placed under the general community quarantine from June 16 until the end of the month: Quezon province, Abra, Apayao, Caraga, and Lanao del Sur.

The following areas, meanwhile, wanted to be placed under the modified general community quarantine or the most relaxed type of community quarantine: Pangasinan, Angeles City, Nueva Ecija, Zambales, Pampanga, Cavite, and Cebu.

The LGUs of Dagupan City, Batanes, Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao Occidental, Davao Oriental, and Davao del Sur appealed for the "de-escalation" of the prevailing community quarantine protocols in their respective jurisdictions, Roque said.

He said the government's inter-agency task force on pandemic response met on Monday to discuss the appeals ahead of the President's expected announcement.

"The IATF is still discussing these appeals," Roque said.

"When the President makes an announcement later, the decision and recommendation of the IATF on these appeals will also be announced."



President Rodrigo Duterte holds a meeting with members of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) at the Malago Clubhouse in Malacañang on June 15, 2020. *Simeon Celi Jr., Presidential Photo/handout*

MANILA - President Rodrigo Duterte late Monday night reiterated his warning to Filipinos against going outside their homes amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), stressing that the country's fight against the pandemic "is not over."

"Hindi ko kayo mapigilan na lumabas. Hindi ko kayo mahuli lahat. Ang problema pati mga bata...you allow children to go out when the place is not yet ready for them outside, at nagkasakit [sila], 'wag ninyo kaming sisihin. Do not forget that we warned you about the grave consequences," he said in a streamed meeting in Malacañang.

"Madami pa ang namamatay," he added, noting of tallies of coronavirus-linked fatalities across the world.

Duterte called on the public to continue observing COVID-19 policies, like physical distancing and wearing face masks.

The Philippines, as of Monday, has recorded 26,420 COVID-19 cases with 1,098 deaths and 6,252 recoveries.

Duterte said he's not sure if the Philippines is now on a second wave of COVID-19 infections as cases "are still increasing."

He however noted the country's recovery and death ratio, which he said was a "good record compared to other countries."

His health secretary, Francisco Duque III, earlier claimed the Philippines was already on the second wave even though coronavirus cases in the country has not yet been flattened. The Department of Health later retracted his statement.

Due to the coronavirus threat, Duterte again warned against holding physical classes, promoting the Department of Education's implementation of online enrollment policies and "blended" learning for students, which involves mixed-use of online platforms, printed or digital modules, and radio and television.

"In your desire to resume classes, ang kapalit niyan is really... the COVID is still here. Instead, we will follow a blended learning approach. Part of this learning strategy is distance and online learning using communications technology and digital devices," the President said.

He earlier said he would not allow the resumption of physical classes without a vaccine against COVID-19.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/06/16/20/covid-19-is-still-here-duterte-again-warns-public-vs-going-outside-amid-pandemic>

Philippines COVID-19 cases rose after shift from

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# Philippines COVID-19 cases rose after shift from ECQ to GCQ -UP experts

**Published** June 15, 2020 6:40pm

By JULIA MARI ORNEDO, GMA News

The number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in the Philippines increased slightly after the government relaxed community quarantines in parts of the country, experts from the University of the Philippines said on Monday.

Epidemiologist Dr. Emmanuel Baja said the new cases included those from the Department of Health's backlogs of results.

"Noong tayo po ay naglipat ng strategy po mula sa ECQ patungo sa GCQ... nagkaroon po ng kaunting pagtaas ng mga kaso," Baja said in a news briefing.

"Kasama na rin po sa pagtaas ng mga kaso ang pagdami po ng backlogs na ngayon po naman ay ina-aaddress na po ng DOH," he added.

Baja said the country's health care system could handle the still growing number of infections.

"Ayon po sa pagtaya ng UP COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team, pataas pa ang bilang ng mga taong may kumpirmadong COVID-19," Baja said.

The Philippines' [COVID-19 tally topped 26,000 on Monday](#) after the DOH reported 490 new cases, bringing the total to 26,420.

The experts earlier predicted that COVID-19 cases nationwide [could spike to 40,000 by June 30](#) based on the current trend of transmission.

The UP team on Monday said the country's health care system had not been overwhelmed.

There are still vacant beds in intensive care units and other equipment like ventilators and personal protective equipment are still available, the experts said.

"Samakatuwid, kinakaya ng ating healthcare system ang bilang mga pasyenteng may sakit sa COVID-19. Hindi po lubusang na-o-overwhelm ang ating mga ospital sa ngayon at ito po ay isang patunay na nagfa-flatten na po ang curve," Baja said.

The UP experts also backed the DOH's report on Sunday that the [Philippines' COVID-19 case fatality rate was on a downtrend](#).

To combat COVID-19, the UP team urged the public and government to strengthen the implementation of the trace-test-isolate-treat strategy, encouraged work from home arrangements, physical school closures, acceptance of social distancing measures and proper hygiene, and advocated for open data for better science and policy making.

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“Kung hindi tayo mag-iingat ngayong nasa general community quarantine na po tayo, kung saan pinapayagan na po ang mga bagay na dating hindi pinapayagan ng ating gobyerno, maaari pong dumami ulit ang magkakasakit sa COVID-19,” Baja said.

“Pero kung hindi po tayo masyadong dadami ang may sakit ng COVID-19, kakayanin ng healthcare system natin alagaan ang mga taong may sakit ng COVID-19, gayundin po ang ibang pasyente sa ospital,” he added. **-NB, GMA News**



# Safety first before sending LSIs home

Published 18 hours ago on June 15, 2020 12:45 PM

By **TDT**



Sen. Bong Go says health protocols must be followed at all times to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Government agencies and local government units must work together to assist Locally Stranded Individuals (LSIs) and bring them home without risk of spreading the disease to communities.

Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, whose office recently extended aid to individuals stranded outside the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, said health protocols should be followed at all costs.

"Tulungan natin ang ating mga kababayan na naghahanap ng paraan makauwi. Bigyan natin sila ng maayos na sistema para hindi sila nakaabang lang sa mga transportation terminals. Alagaan rin natin sila, bigyan ng pagkain, maayos na masisilungan, at huwag hayaang magkumpol-kumpol para rin maiwasan ang lalong pagkalat ng sakit," Go said.

"Umaapela po ako sa mga ahensya ng gobyerno na ipaliwanag ang iba't ibang programa ng gobyerno na pwedeng makatulong sa mga gustong umuwi sa kanilang mga probinsya at kung ano ang proseso na kailangang sundin."

Go's office also sought assistance from the Pasay City local government, which promptly sent tents and chairs.

The senator's staff likewise arranged with concerned agencies and an airline company for a flight that brought home 162 passengers to General Santos City and Davao City on Friday, Independence Day.

"They are tired and frightened but also extremely grateful for the efforts of both the government and private individuals who helped so that they can return to their families," Go said.

General Santos City Mayor Ronnel Rivera issued a certificate permitting the airline to land at the General Santos International Airport where 76 individuals bound for Davao City were fetched by the local government.

All returning passengers underwent rapid testing for COVID-19 at Villamor Air Base before being allowed to travel. They went through a second screening in General Santos upon arrival and were asked to observe the mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Go's office previously assisted LSIs, including 45 who were stuck in Cebu City for two months.

More LSIs are waiting for their rescheduled flights and are temporarily sheltered at the Villamor Air Base Elementary School in Pasay City and at the Philippine Army Wellness Center in Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City.

As a matter of protocol, they shall also undergo health screening procedures before they are transferred.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/06/15/safety-first-before-sending-lsis-home/>

## HEADLINES

# Bike lanes new normal at EDSA

Published 6 hours ago on June 16, 2020 12:05 AM

By [Alvin Murcia](#)



The “new normal” will see more of a vintage form of transportation as the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) encouraged the use of bicycles to ensure the people’s movement while the public transport system remains limited.

And for this, the MMDA has allocated a long stretch of the 24-kilometer Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) as a bike lane, a first in the highway’s history.

The traffic management agency reported painting a long stretch of the lane to accommodate bikers, especially those going to and from work.

Celine Pialago, MMDA Assistant Secretary, announced the dedication of a portion of EDSA to the bikers.

Painted portions will serve an imaginary line for the riders. It will also guide private motorists to be careful and treat the bikers in the same way pedestrians are treated.

The MMDA is planning to put concrete or steel barriers for the protection of the bikers in the lane soon.

Pialago said the bike lane along EDSA is just a temporary solution. There is a plan to erect an elevated bike area to serve as a permanent bike lane.

The MMDA initiative was hailed by the Move as One Coalition, which asked that international standards be followed to ensure the safety of the riders.

The group said the bike lane should be 1.5 meters from the gutter to give the cyclists enough room for movement.

# Bring back all public transport now

posted June 16, 2020 at 12:30 am

by [Ernesto M. Hilario](#)

## "The government should also look into more sustainable transportation modes."

Can we revive the Philippine economy without bringing back all the various modes of public transport that we had before COVID-19?

Economic recovery, after all, will depend on all sectors working at full throttle as before, if not at feverish pace, and you cannot do that if workers in both private and public sectors cannot find the means to go to their jobs.

We therefore fully support the call of the business sector, among them the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), to bring back public transportation, as many workers continue to have little to no means of getting a ride to work in areas under the current general community quarantine or GCQ.

According to the group, the government "should allow the operation of mass public transportation including buses and jeepneys" but with strict adherence to the highest standards in health and safety.

At the same time, it said, the government should look into more sustainable transportation modes and open more and wider pedestrian and bike lanes within the year.

Sen. Ralph Recto thinks along the same line. He wants the immediate return of jeepneys and other public utility vehicles (PUVs) with the required health protocols in place, because the lack of adequate public transportation is detrimental to efforts to reduce joblessness and shore up the economy.

But more than this, the lawmaker suggests that the government subsidize their operations since it now subsidizes the MRT to the tune of P6 billion this year.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is also asking the government to work toward implementing people-centered and sustainable transportation policies, as the country eases itself out of the community quarantine and toward a post-coronavirus world.

"To alleviate the already dire situation of Filipino workers who are struggling to make ends meet, the commission calls on the government to ensure the operation of a sufficient number of public transportation," the CHR said in a recent statement.

We fully agree with their recommendations.

At the same time, we support the joint initiative of the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to put up bike lanes along the whole length of Edsa and other major thoroughfares.

This is actually a long overdue move. A few cities in Metro Manila, such as Marikina, have already put up their own bike lanes. This has enhanced the mobility of their residents, apart from reducing pollution levels.

An earlier proposal was for sidewalks to be expanded and shared by pedestrians and bicycles. But this was turned down as impractical as pedestrians and cyclists simply cannot co-exist; they would encroach on each other's space and jeopardize their safety.

The DOTr and MMDA said they would start construction of the bike lanes last Saturday, June 13 amid the growing number of cyclists as COVID-19 quarantine and health protocols resulted in a shortage of public transportation units and options.

The CHR approves of the bike lanes as well: "As people are already adopting alternative and non-motorized modes of transportation such as biking, the government must provide short and long-term interventions to protect bikers during their commute," the agency said.

Another thing, urban planner, architect Jun Palafox, has also suggested putting up an overhead covered pedestrian walkway as one other alternative to traffic congestion along Edsa. Makati City has pioneered in the use of these pedestrian walkways in the Central Business District, and has proven its worth in facilitating movement of people within the area. This can be built in phases, perhaps with private sector support, as business establishments can put up advertising materials there.

#### Community-led public safety system

In the wake of the recent murder of George Floyd by cops in Minneapolis, the City Council has unanimously voted to disband its police force and replace it with a community-led public safety system.

According to the veto-proof resolution, the city council will begin a year-long process of engaging "with every willing community member in Minneapolis" to develop a new public safety model.

"The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, by Minneapolis police officers is a tragedy that shows that no amount of reforms will prevent lethal violence and abuse by some members of the Police Department against members of our community, especially Black people and people of color," five council members wrote in the resolution.

"We acknowledge that the current system is not reformable—that we would like to end the current policing system as we know it," another council member said.

The council declared it would create a "transformative new model" of public safety in the city. The "Future of Community Safety Work Group" will include staff from city departments, including the offices of violence prevention and civil rights.

Although the city mayor said he does not endorse the full abolition of the police, he supported "massive structural reform to revise a structurally racist system."

The concept of community policing is not new as it had been discussed in the Philippine National Police as far back as 2003 during the Arroyo administration. Its main proponent was then Police Deputy Director General Ricardo F. de Leon, now retired and head of the Philippine Public Safety College. He wrote a book, "Community Policing—Pathway to Good Governance" that came out in 2005. It proposed concrete steps to make the PNP truly live up to its mission "to serve and protect" rather than a thorough overhaul of the police force as in the Minneapolis case. But more on this later.

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## Department of Pain

*posted* June 16, 2020 at 01:00 am

If there were a Department of Pain—an agency dedicated to inflicting the greatest amount of discomfort on ordinary working people—it would certainly have no shortage of officials to run it.

For example, there is a cockalorum in Congress who is pushing for a tax on digital services. To make up for the loss of revenue once the government cuts corporate income taxes to 25 percent and “to soothe the pain inflicted by COVID-19 on businesses,” this lawmaker wants to turn the tax screws on subscriptions to video and music streaming services and ads on social media sites. He also wants to make online sales platforms withholding tax agents for the government. He proposes to call these measures a “Netflix tax,” a “Facebook ad tax,” and a “Lazada tax.”

But it is a little odd to hear this lawmaker complain about the loss of government revenue, since he was a vocal supporter of the Tax Reform and Acceleration and Inclusion or TRAIN Act or TRAIN, which mandates the cut in corporate taxes to spur investments and economic growth. If he did not worry at the time he signed the TRAIN law about the loss of government revenue, why should he do so now?

His second rationale—“to soothe the pain inflicted by COVID-19 on businesses”—is pure balderdash. How specifically will a tax on streaming services or online merchants benefit say, restaurants that have closed down because of a nearly three-month lockdown? Or barbershops and salons that have only been able to reopen now? Or musicians who have been unable to perform live because of quarantine restrictions?

In the last three months, we have seen so many impositions attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of them are justified; this one is clearly not. Rather, it is a bald-faced excuse to gain easy money for the government, without offering anything in return to those being taxed.

In the end, this lawmaker’s taxes will be paid, not by the corporations that provide digital services, but by us, their customers. How does that soothe the pain?

Also in the running for the Department of Pain are Finance officials who are chafing at the bit to cash in on the “bonanza” that online sellers are said to be realizing as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. Never mind that most of these sellers are small-time entrepreneurs trying to get by selling homemade baked goods, clothes or trinkets on social media. These Finance officials insist that anyone selling things online register and pay a tax—imposing an unwarranted burden on fledgling ventures that might not even last.

Senate Majority Leader Miguel Zubiri on Sunday proposed to “heavily” impose taxes on Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGO) instead of small-time online sellers.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri is right on the nose when he says the move by the Bureau of Internal Revenue is “not only insensitive but totally unnecessary.”

“First of all, many of these online sellers are trying to survive during this time of a pandemic and to harass them on their last means of income is heartless to say the least,” he said.

He suggests, not without cause, that the taxman go after the online gambling hubs that this government has wooed and protected—and which owed at least P27 billion in unpaid tax liabilities in 2019. You’d have to harass a whole lot of Facebook sellers to scare up that amount of cash.

Finally, we could also see a lateral move to a Department of Pain for a Cabinet secretary whose expertise it is to blame his subordinates for his failure to swiftly and effectively deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Duterte likes to say he wants a comfortable life for all Filipinos. We agree, but at this point, forget comfort—please get that knee off our necks.

# Magnitude 5 quake hits Davao Occidental

By Ma. Cristina Arayata June 15, 2020, 9:37 am



(Image grabbed from Phivolcs website)

**MANILA** – A magnitude 5 earthquake hit Davao Occidental on Sunday night, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported.

The tectonic quake struck 394 kilometers southeast of Sarangani at 9:25 p.m. It had a depth of 230 kilometers.

There were no reported intensities, and Phivolcs is not expecting damage from the earthquake.

Aftershocks are possible, it added. **(PNA)**

# 4.6 magnitude earthquake hits Zamboanga

By Teofilo Garcia, Jr. June 15, 2020, 3:57 pm



A map provided by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology shows the location of the magnitude 4.6 earthquake that shook parts of Zamboanga Peninsula early Monday morning (June 15).

**ZAMBOANGA CITY**--An earthquake of magnitude 4.6 shook parts of Zamboanga Peninsula early Monday morning, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

Engr. Allan Rommel Labayog, Phivolcs-Zamboanga science research analyst, said the epicenter of the earthquake is 35 kilometers northwest of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte.

The source of the earthquake, which took place around 6:29 a.m. Monday, was of tectonic origin, he said, adding that intensity four was felt in this city.

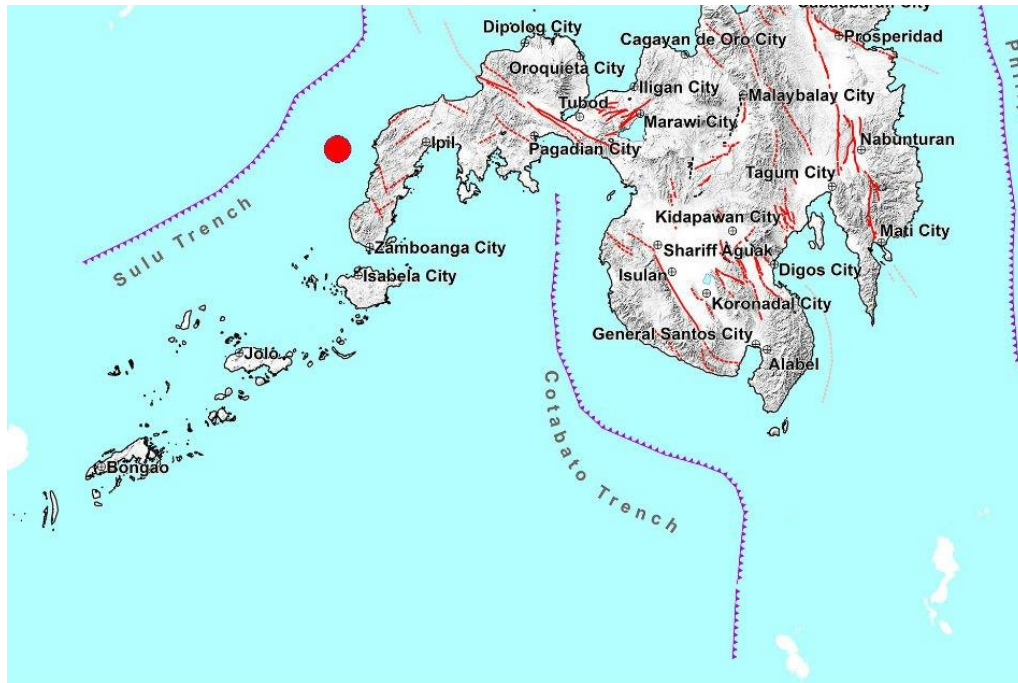
Labayog said intensity four earthquake is moderately strong and the closest source is the Sulu trench, one of the two major fault zones; the other is the Cotabato trench.

However, he said Phivolcs didn't expect any possible damage, including aftershocks. **(PNA)**

# Magnitude 4.9 quake strikes off Zamboanga del Norte

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jun 15 2020 07:26 AM | Updated as of Jun 15 2020 04:04 PM



MANILA (UPDATE) — A magnitude 4.9 earthquake struck off Zamboanga del Norte early Monday, Phivolcs said.

The tremor initially recorded at magnitude 4.6, happened at 6:29 a.m., 35 kilometers northwest of Siocon town.

It was tectonic in origin and had a depth of 25 kilometers, according to Phivolcs.

The tremor was not expected to cause damage and aftershocks.

Intensity IV was felt in Zamboanga City, and Sipocot and Sirawai towns in Zamboanga del Norte, while Intensity III was felt in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay.

Instrumental Intensity III was also reported in Zamboanga City.



# Pag-asa Island carries on, but China's presence looms large

Published June 15, 2020 10:07pm

By CHINO GASTON, GMA News



The Kalayaan Municipal boat is seen berthed in Pag-asa Island's newly constructed Sheltered Port. Chino Gaston

Night is falling on Pag-asa Island, a slow, drawn out march to darkness unlike any other place in this country. I can still make out the Chinese fishing boats, hovering about the sandbars of Sandy Cay. They sit on the water, unmoving, no sign of life onboard save for the flickering of the odd utility light or an occasional rubber boat moving between them.

The sea and sky soon succumb to the inevitable dark, banishing the horizon into the stygian night. Yet everybody on Pag-asa Island knows where the Chinese will be in the darkened sea.

Powerful lights from the man-made island of Subi Reef blink to life and bathe the clouds in shades of yellow. More lights at the far end of the island fortress glow a shade of blue, illuminating the sky. At the center of these incandescent pockets of light, the silhouettes of huge cranes and buildings can be seen.

There is a span of emptiness between the lights, fallow ground in between the concentrations of industry and function. Yet a few days later that emptiness would be filled with two lines stretching for several kilometers—runway lights to welcome the Chinese planes or drones whose lights can be seen lingering over Pag-asa at night.

Every few seconds the giant eye of a lighthouse on the Chinese island completes a turn, a spark in the dark, warning of the perils of shallow water and the danger of coming too near the heavily guarded facility.

When the sun rises, the lights fade and the emerald sea around Pag-asa fills the horizon. The Chinese boats with blue hulls and white pilothouses remain painted in their places. The fishermen and the soldiers stationed on the island tell us these boats are part of the Chinese fishing militia; military-controlled vessels masquerading as fishing boats scattered all across the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG).

These boats have never left the area between Subi Reef and Pag-asa since they first appeared in 2017.

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This video screen grab shows the Chinese lighthouse on Subi Reef, with a Chinese Coast Guard ship in the foreground.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana would confirm the presence of the militia around Pag-asa Island when he flew in last week [to inaugurate a concrete beaching ramp](#), one of the many government infrastructure projects being undertaken on Pag-asa.

As the secretary spoke to journalists after the ceremonies, the very same military-controlled fishing boats floated on the sea behind him.

“Ang cover nila ay fishermen, but we know they are militias. I think they are there. Basta huwag lang nila molestyahin ang ating mga fishermen,” Lorenzana said.

On the day of his visit, the navy counted no fewer than 16 fishing boats and one Chinese Coast Guard ship in the area.

Despite the permanent presence of the Chinese over Sandy Cay, local fishermen tell us that things have become better with the Chinese in recent months. Gone are the days when Chinese boats would surround Pag-asa and impede the passage of fishermen.

Despite this development, the Chinese seem to have drawn new borders around the island.

When we went to a nearby sandbar forming part of Sandy Cay, a Chinese Coast Guard ship went near to investigate. The hulking white ship came near enough for us to see the markings on its side and its empty decks. Oddly enough it just floated near the sandbar, silent, its bow pointing at us for over ten minutes. Other journalists who have come this close to similar ships elsewhere in the West Philippine Sea have been approached and warned off by Chinese Coast Guard personnel in rubber boats.

The merciless sun eventually forced us to leave the sandbar and with it the Chinese ship that stood guard over it.

The locals tell us that the features of Sandy Cay used to be camping grounds for fishermen and their children, who would swim in the morning and feast on fresh fish caught just a few meters from shore. But now this seems no longer possible.

Later that day fishermen would tell us they were warned by the military to not go to the sandbar anymore.

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**A journalist waves at a Chinese Coast Guard vessel from a sandbar near Pag-asa Island**

The locals tell us that the features of Sandy Cay used to be camping grounds for fishermen and their children, who would swim in the morning and feast on fresh fish caught just a few meters from shore. But now this seems no longer possible.

Later that day fishermen would tell us they were warned by the military to not go to the sandbar anymore.

“Masakit sa loob na mapagsabihang huwag na tayo doon, pero at least alam na natin ngayon na bawal na,” one of the fishermen tells me, his voice choked with emotion.

Another resident only had bitter words for the government: “Dapat sila nga ang matapang na magtatanggol sa amin diyan!”

Lorenzana had earlier acknowledged the perils the fishermen faced in the Chinese occupied areas saying fishermen should fish elsewhere around the island lest their actions be misinterpreted by the Chinese.

“Hindi naman tayo pwede sumali diyan; baka akala nila nakiki-agaw tayo ng isda. Anyway napakalaki naman nitong Spratly Islands, and it is teeming with fish. Our fishermen can go to another sector also,” Lorenzana said.

Commodore Allan Corpuz, the Philippine Coast Guard's Palawan District Commander, says the PCG has been conducting regular patrols throughout the KIG using the Japanese-built Parola class patrol boats. He says the PCG's relationship with both Vietnamese and Chinese Coast Guards in the KIG has been nothing but positive.

Corpuz says he is aware of the situation facing the fishermen in Pag-asa, but calls for calm and understanding in the face of the complex nature of the territorial dispute with both the Vietnamese and the Chinese.

“Minsan 'yung mga fishermen natin nakapasok na doon sa 12-nautical mile limit ng occupied feature, kaya sinusugod sila. Huwag na lang tayo magsawa sa kakapaalala sa mga kababayan natin tungkol diyan at galangin mga limits.”

During the Independence Day celebration on the island, Kalayaan Mayor Roberto De Mundo would thank the national government for the improvements on Pag-asa. Besides the newly built beaching ramp and a sheltered port for fishermen, the construction of additional electric generators are currently underway.

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The Department of Transportation also plans to put up a fish freezing facility on the island, while the Defense Department has funds to cement and repair the runway.

Yet in the same speech, the mayor would also voice his frustration over government's seeming inaction over the challenges to his constituents' right to the rich fishing grounds around Pag-asa Island.

“Napakalungkot po kasi nasa tabi natin 'yung gumawa ng napakagandang isla, 'yung Subi Reef ng mga Chinese, kaya wala tayong magawa. Diplomasya lang—ang ating presidente ayaw ng giyera makipag-usap na lang tayo; magkasundo na lang tayo na walang giyera,” he said.

The days seem to last forever on Pag-asa, daylight resisting the inevitable coming of night. It is already past seven in the evening yet the sun lingers just above the sea.

There is still enough light to see the unpaved runway and the crumbling concrete communication tower beside it. At the far end of the island the beaching ramp shines white in the light of the docked military transport ship and the fisheries research vessel. And in the distance the Chinese lighthouse blinks to life and the Chinese militia ships turn on their lights for the night. — **BM, GMA News**



# Rethinking business and human rights in transboundary river governance in South Asia

The transboundary rivers of South Asia are seeing increased business investments and infrastructure development. There is a growing need for the integration of businesses and human rights frameworks in water governance decision-making.



Labourers load river aggregates on a tractor, Mahakali River, Nepal. Photo: Jyotiraj Patra/Oxfam

By [Jyotiraj Patra](#) and [Christina Hill](#)

June 15, 2020

While the need for recognising and upholding human rights in transboundary river governance systems has been highlighted, ways businesses impact human rights in these systems is least explored.

The transboundary rivers of South Asia, such as the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna (GBM) and Indus, and the riverine communities dependent on these rivers for their livelihoods are facing unprecedented changes due to large scale infrastructure development in and around these rivers to meet the increasing demands for water, energy, food and trade in the region.

This is in addition to climate-induced changes and other natural hazards, like floods and droughts, in many of these basins.

Businesses play a critical role in many of these infrastructure development, including those to mitigate and reduce the risks of natural hazards, such as the construction of flood protection embankments or reservoirs to mitigate drought risks.

**Transboundary river systems provide a variety of ecosystem services and through this connect countries and communities across political boundaries.**

Growing demands for sand and aggregates for construction and real estate sector in the region has been fueling unsustainable and unregulated sand and river bed mining on many of the river basins in the region.

A complex nexus of corruption and crimes operate in the sand mining enterprise in many of these basins, including threats to lives of environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs), river activists and journalists. For example, many activists and journalists trying to expose the sand mining violation and corruption in India are being targeted, threatened and attacked.

Governments and businesses in the region are currently investing in various regional trade and connectivity projects, and many of these are directly or indirectly linked to shared rivers and riverine resources. For example, Nepal, Bangladesh and India are jointly working to further improve inland water transport (IWT) in the transboundary rivers of Ganges and Brahmaputra to boost trade through as part of multi-modal regional connectivity.

Recently, India and Bangladesh [signed](#) the Second Addendum on Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade between India and Bangladesh (20 May 2020). With this, the number of Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) routes and Ports of Call has been increased and new opportunities for cargo movement explored.

It is in this emerging context of increased business investments to extract and use river resources and the need to ensure the protection of human rights, that we need to collectively work towards better integration of business and human rights in transboundary river governance in South Asia.

As part of our on-going TROSA initiative, we recently conducted a regional analysis of water, business and human rights in the basins we work. Based on the findings, we suggest the following five areas of action and encourage governments and businesses to integrate and build more business and human rights elements in transboundary river governance in South Asia:

### **1. Improve businesses' awareness and engagement on human rights in transboundary water issues**

To ensure more participation, buy-in and leadership of the businesses and private investors, it is important to improve understanding and awareness on various international human rights standards and emerging initiatives on responsible business, particularly those related to the environment such as land use and water.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)—which outline the various obligations of governments and business with regards to human right—is a useful starting point, as is the UN's Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) and other human rights network can play a facilitatory role by working with industry associations, SME clusters and private investors at the country and regional levels in South Asia. More action on awareness-raising and engagement are needed across value chains and in ancillary services around large infrastructure projects.

Many South Asia countries are currently working on their National Action Plans (NAPs) on business and human rights developed to guide government alignment with the UNGPs. These are unique opportunities for such awareness generation and participation, and to determine priorities for action.

New insights and skills can also be gathered through initiatives like the [CEO Water Mandate](#) and the newly launched [Water Resilience Coalition](#). For example, major apparel brands such as Gap Inc., Levi Strauss & Co, and PVH Corp, have established a [location-based water stewardship initiative](#) in India's Cauvery basin where they operate and source from.

In addition to setting up examples on corporate water stewardship, this has triggered collaboration on water quality, groundwater management and other water challenges in the basin.

### **2. Integrate more human rights-based approach (HRBAs) and gender equality in regulatory frameworks such as Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)**

Infrastructure developers, investors and regulators should work together to revise some of the existing EIA guidelines to include more human rights-based and gender equality dimensions.

These should be more context-specific and take into account the rights of indigenous communities and differential needs and aspirations of women and men concerning water use in these basins.

Large infrastructure projects in and around the rivers, some of which pass through biodiverse rich regions such as protected areas inhabited by indigenous communities, involve dredging, deforestation, water diversion, blasting and mining. For comprehensive impact assessments at basin levels, inclusive and participatory Strategic Environment Assessments (SEAs) should be conducted.

The EIAs, SEAs and other project appraisal and approval mechanisms by governments and financiers should ensure human rights and gender equality aspects are integrated into the social and economic impact analyses, and the mitigation measures are put in place in consultation with the stakeholders.

For example, AIIB's [water sector analysis](#) and the resulting Water Sector Strategy recognise the need to include gender dimensions and its interaction with other factors like class, ethnicity and geography while investing in water projects.

A detailed analysis of [the inclusion of gender in EIA](#) by India's Center for Science and Environment (CSE, 2018) highlights the benefits of gender inclusion in EIA and presents use cases from around the world. The new [Hydropower Benefit Sharing](#) guide developed by the International Hydropower Association (IHA) provides tools and approaches for developers and operators to meet good practices.

Nepal has shown ways by institutionalising such measures in the form of the purchase of local shares which gives communities a constitutional right to invest in hydropower companies developing a project in their area.

According to IFC's [estimates](#), so far more than \$10 million in equity has been raised in last three years and it is projected to raise \$439 million in equity from project-affected communities in next ten years.

### ***3. Initiate multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) at the basin, sub-regional and regional levels on responsible and inclusive business***

Partnership is key to mobilise more collective action and stimulate political commitment among businesses, financiers and governments for responsible business practices in water governance. Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) could be thematic such as MSPs on responsible fisheries, sustainable sand mining, river tourism or inland water trade. Business investment impacts are often cross-sectoral.

For example, investments in large river tourism infrastructure development could have negative impacts on water quality or fish habitat or threaten local cultural practices. And most of these impacts are transboundary in shared water systems. Basin, sub-regional and regional MSPs could help better understand and address some of these transboundary inter-linkages and impacts.

South Asia is one of the least connected and integrated regions in the world. But with growing intra-regional trade initiatives and cooperation on energy, connectivity and tourism, there is an urgent need for regional and other sub-regional initiatives like the Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal (BBIN), the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation ([SASEC](#)), and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation ([BIMSETC](#)) to explore and integrate more responsible and inclusive business practices in cross-border investments and trade agreements.

Multilateral development banks like the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other bilateral donors could play a role in some of the regional level MSPs on responsible business.

One such example is the recently launched [Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia](#) project led by the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme ([SACEP](#))—an inter-governmental organisation. Among others, it aims to leverage private sector engagement and solutions to reduce plastic pollution through multi-sector dialogues and partnerships in South Asia.

### ***4. Institutionalise frameworks for high-quality regulation including transparency and commitment to fight corruption***

Regulatory frameworks around private sector activity, environmental protection and water resource management must prioritise public access to environmental information, and public participation in decision-making. Too often affected communities and CSOs are excluded from the decision-making process, and dialogues on private sector activity and development.

Women's understanding of the use, sharing and conservation of water resources is key to better water governance, yet their voices are rarely heard in decision-making forums. Decision-making processes must be inclusive of affected communities, including women, Indigenous Peoples and human rights defenders, and be based on a commitment to transparency.

Irresponsible business practice is often enabled by corruption. Fighting corruption must be part of how all stakeholders rethink business and human rights in transboundary river governance in South Asia. The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights is currently undertaking work aimed at better connecting the business and human rights and anti-corruption agendas.

The outcomes of this work may usefully inform policy responses to business and human rights issues in South Asia, particularly in sectors where corruption is prevalent.

### ***5. Incentivise and increase private finance towards the sustainable river and water governance***

Transboundary river systems provide a variety of ecosystem services and through this connect countries and communities across political boundaries. Impacts, as well as benefits, from businesses and investments in these river systems, are mostly transboundary in nature.

Harmful business practice in one part of the basin can have negative downstream impacts such as pollution and threat to livelihoods. Riparian basin states should work with businesses to support and incentivise responsible business practices that take in to account such cross-border impacts and put in place required risk mitigation measures.

For example, the European Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences ([GSP+](#)) offers special trade incentives for countries that implement 27 international conventions related to human rights, labour rights, protection of the environment and good governance South Asia countries are already benefiting from this.

With growing traction among commercial and investment banks for sustainability performance, businesses can improve their capacity and commitment to social and environmental standards in their business practices, including the commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 targets on improving water quality (Target 6.3), increasing water use efficient (Target 6.4) and implementing Integrated Water Resources Management, IWRM (Target 6.5).

Banks and investors from South Asia should also take advantage of the opportunities through the recently launched [Principles of Responsible Banking](#) and the [Global Investors for Sustainable Development \(GISD\)](#)

Oxfam and partners have long encouraged more multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnerships to strengthen responsible and inclusive business that respect human rights and other environmental needs in these river systems.

As governments, businesses, civil society and human rights organisations convene for the [United Nations Virtual Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights](#) we hope the needs and opportunities for inclusion and advancement of business and human rights in transboundary river governance are recognised and collective action initiated.



# India landowner bequeaths land to elephants

Mohd Imran Khan, Agence France-Presse

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This picture taken on June 9, 2020 shows Indian landowner Akhtar Imam with one of his elephant at Murgia Chai village, in Janipur near Patna. Imam has willed most of his land to two elephants he said saved his life from gun-toting criminals, a decision that has upset his wife and children. *Agence France-Presse*

PATNA, India - An Indian landowner has willed most of his land to two elephants he said saved his life from gun-toting criminals, a decision that has upset his wife and children.

Akhtar Imam, from a village in the eastern state of Bihar, said he changed his will to bequeath 2.5 hectares (6.2 acres) to gentle giants Moti (pearl) and Rani (queen).

"I simply don't want hardship for my Moti and Rani, who are no less my family," Imam, 50, told AFP as he bathed the pachyderms on a swelteringly hot day.

"I don't want my elephants to face the fate of orphaned or abandoned captive elephants who die on the streets or in deserted fields due to lack of proper care."

Imam, who runs a wildlife trust, raised Moti, aged 20, and Rani, aged 15, from when they were born to another domesticated jumbo that has since died.

Each elephant has two staff looking after them day and night, and roam his property freely.

He said his love for the pair grew even more when they saved him from "gun-carrying criminals" who he said tried to kill him last year while he slept.

"When I opened my door to see why the elephants were trumpeting, I saw they were chasing criminals nearby," he said.

"I am alive due to my elephants who had worked like bodyguards to me."

Imam said he would also bequeath a smaller amount of land and his house to his wife and children, but they weren't entirely happy.

"They don't understand that the elephants are not a showpiece for me... My relationship with elephants is life-long. We love each other."

He added: "Human greed is endless, even if you give them the whole world it's not enough."

His wife and children declined to speak to AFP.

Imam's gesture came as controversy raged in India over the recent death of a pregnant elephant after eating fruit laced with explosives in the southern state of Kerala.

Asian elephants -- *Elephas maximus* -- used to roam across most of Asia, but are today restricted to 15 percent of their original range.

The species is listed as endangered on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List.

Of the 45,000 remaining, about a third live in captivity. Some Asian elephants live well into their 70s.

**str/grk/stu/fox/rbu**

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