



DENR chief to oversee Cebu COVID response

Edith Regalado

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<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/06/24/2023149/denr-chief-oversee-cebu-covid-response?fbclid=IwAR2G7f50NLtkvaJRwurw0YyJ1QmlbcepbTsTG0JlgJuy418NFjGogJIXTo>

MANILA, Philippines — President Duterte has ordered Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to oversee the government’s response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Cebu City, now under strictest quarantine because of rising infections.

“To my brothers and sisters in Cebu, both in the city and the provinces, I will send over General Cimatu. General Cimatu is the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources,” the President said in a recorded televised address Monday night after meeting with the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF).

“So I cannot wait for the transmission of communication asking for approval then – that is the bane of bureaucracy, to be honest,” he said.

Duterte stressed that Cimatu would have an “adjunct office” under the IATF.

He added Cimatu may choose to stay in Cebu City or fly back immediately after giving him a “picture of how grave the situation is.”

The President also said Cimatu – in the discharge of his latest duties – may seek help from the Department of Health, Department of the Interior and Local Government, the National Task Force on COVID-19 and even the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

“I am sure Cimatu... he cannot solve the problem on his own. He has just to make recommendations and let us know what we should be doing and that is very important. It’s part really of the intelligence work of any organization to know what is ahead and behind and on the side so that you’d know how to prepare and go and fight the enemy – COVID,” he said.

Cimatu, meanwhile, said he is happy to accept his new appointment. “I fully accept the challenge you gave for Cebu, Mr. President,” he said. “Going to Cebu, Sen. Bong (Go)] talked to me and I said this is really an honor for me because probably this is fate or destiny, Mr. President, to be doing things to save the lives of some people in Cebu at this time of pandemic,” Cimatu said.

“We changed successfully the image of Boracay to what it is now. And you ordered me to clean the waters of Manila Bay and implement the mandamus of the Supreme Court. And your order for me to go to Iraq, and to go to Libya, I complied Mr. President, this one going to Cebu and to Sen. Bong who talked to me, this is really an honor for me,” he said.



DENR chief to oversee Cebu COVID response

Reacting to Cimatu's new appointment, fishers group Pamalakaya said the DENR chief cannot be expected to succeed in his new task as he could not even perform his original mandate.

"He is missing-in-action against the reclamation projects in Manila Bay. Now, he will get involved in an issue that does not concern his mandate," Pamalakaya national chairman Fernando Hicap said.

"If Secretary Cimatu wants to make himself useful on this public health crisis, he should ensure that Manila Bay is protected from any reclamation project and its fisherfolk, who are considered as food security frontliners, should not be displaced from their communities and livelihood," he said.

Hard headed

In his address, Duterte said he wanted to personally check developments in Cebu City if he would have his way, as its residents may have become complacent or stubborn. He announced plans to visit military camps instead.

"I will visit you when I get there. I will be frank with you again because you are hard headed," Duterte said, addressing Cebu City residents.

But his spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said a Cebu City visit would have to wait – at least until the number of cases go down.

"The President cannot be prevented from going around so he will be visiting military camps. As for Cebu, not yet in the near future. The President hails from Cebu so the President is confident that the people from Cebu will understand if he becomes frank with them and be frank about his sentiments," he said.

Roque said there may be no need to name a new DENR chief. "The President had given the secretary of DENR special missions a number of times and there was no need to name a successor in DENR," he said. Cimatu's latest assignment was "to beat COVID-19 in the city of Cebu."

Asked whether Cimatu would also be the Visayas deputy implementer of the COVID-19 national policy, Roque replied: "Maybe it would be him. His mandate covers the city of Cebu and he has to come up with a solution, and there is a need to contain the spread of COVID-19, enforce quarantines and increase the capacity to take care of the severe and critical cases."

In his address, Duterte said Cimatu can always turn to the military for help in enforcing rules, especially in case of lockdowns.



DENR chief to oversee Cebu COVID response

“If there is a lockdown, it has to be uniform and enforced by the police. If we lack personnel, then Secretary Cimatú has the liberty of calling upon the military guys to help,” the President said.

Cebu City reverted to the strictest enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) last June 15 because of rising COVID-19 cases, which have threatened to undermine the capability of its healthcare facilities.

The President also defended members of his Cabinet, particularly Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, from accusations of incompetence and corruption in dealing with the health crisis.

“The money was not squandered either, I’m sure of that. I am very sure and I place my reputation on Secretary Duque that there was no corruption that happened there,” he said.

Duterte admitted he also detested lockdowns but that they had to be implemented to protect the people. “I hate it. I do not want even myself. Pero ang sabi ko sa inyo, kung kayo hindi makatiis at tinamaan kayo, sorry na lang (But I’m telling you, if you can’t wait and you get infected, then sorry),” he said.

Meanwhile, the DOH said that while the health system in Cebu City vis-à-vis the COVID-19 crisis is not yet at critical level, it is now in the “warning zone.”

“They are now on ECQ because their critical care utilization rate is in the warning zone and we have to make sure that the (health) system will not be overwhelmed,” DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said at a briefing.

Vergeire said as of June 21, only 13 percent of the 19,718 “dedicated” community isolation beds in the city were occupied.

However, 58 percent of the 1,533 hospital beds assigned to COVID-19 patients were already being used then.

On the other hand, 56 percent of the intensive care unit beds for COVID-19 patients were also occupied while 37 percent of mechanical ventilators were in use.

She added the critical level is 70 percent “and up,” but the IATF found it necessary to take action to keep the city’s health capacity stable.

Based on DOH Tracker for COVID-19, there were a total of 3,987 cases in Cebu City as of June 22. Of the figure, 64 patients have died and 279 have recovered. Alexis Romero, Sheila Crisostomo, Christina Mendez, Rhodina Villanueva, Freeman



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Cimatu to serve as Duterte's eyes and ears in Cebu City—Palace

By: Darryl John Esguerra - Reporter / @DJEsguerraINQ

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<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1295962/cimatu-to-serve-as-dutertes-eyes-and-ears-in-cebu-city-palace>



Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu. File photo / ROBINSON NIÑAL / MALACANANG

MANILA, Philippines — Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu will serve as President Rodrigo Duterte's eyes and ears in Cebu City, the current COVID-19 hotspot, Malacañang said Tuesday.

Duterte on Monday night [tasked Cimatu](#), a former Armed Forces chief, to oversee the COVID-19 response in Cebu City which recently saw a surge in coronavirus infections.

“The marching order to Sec. Cimatu is doing what you must do,” Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in an interview over CNN Philippines’ The Source.

“Implement the policies of the IATF [Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases] You don’t need to ask permission from IATF, but perhaps he should give notice to the IATF. I want you to be my eyes and ears. Something has to be done to curtail the spread of the disease in Cebu City and he believes that Sec. Cimatu was the man to do it,” he added.



Cimatu to serve as Duterte's eyes and ears in Cebu City—Palace

Cimatu, during the IATF meeting with Duterte on Monday night, accepted the new designation given to him by the President.

“I fully accept the challenge you gave for Cebu, Mr. President. Just like the orders you gave to me before to go to Boracay and we changed the cesspool image of Boracay into what it is now,” Cimatu said, referring to his role in leading the cleanup of the world-famous island-resort in 2018.

The Environment chief will be the latest former military men to aid the government's coronavirus response, joining the likes of the National Task Force against COVID-19 chief implementer Carlito Galvez and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Earlier this year, Duterte tasked Cimatu to coordinate the evacuation of overseas Filipino workers from the Middle East amid US-Iran tensions.

To date, there are 30,682 [COVID-19 cases](#) nationwide, including 8,143 recoveries and 1,177 deaths.

Eased coronavirus lockdowns have been maintained nationwide except for Cebu City, which is placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and Talisay City, which is now under modified ECQ due to high transmission rate and the increasing demand for critical care.

The Queen City of the South is now the top city in the country with the most number of confirmed COVID-19 cases with 3,987, as of the latest data from the Department of Health.



Duterte tasks Cimatu to oversee COVID-19 response in Cebu

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By Argyll Geducos

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/23/duterte-tasks-cimatu-to-oversee-covid-19-response-in-cebu/>

President Duterte has ordered Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to fly to Cebu City and oversee the implementation of the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic and make recommendations on what should be done to contain the spread of the disease.



Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu joins the meeting with members of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) presided by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte at the Malago Clubhouse in Malacañang on June 22, 2020. (ROBINSON NIÑAL JR./PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO)

Duterte made the statement as the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the City reached 4,449 on Monday, of which 2,221 are still active cases.

In his public address on Monday, President Duterte said Cimatu's new role is an adjunct office of the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, allowing him to exercise all of the collegial body's powers.

"Itong office ni Secretary Cimatu (Secretary Cimatu's new office) will be an adjunct to that body (IATF). So he will exercise all the powers of that body," he said.

"All he has to do, not for permission, but just to advise Manila here that these things are being done, these things are not yet done, and these things must be done," he added.

According to Duterte, Cimatu can start his work as soon as possible and that the executive order detailing his new assignment will be issued later on.

"If you want to stay there, or you may want to fly back, but I must have the picture of how grave the situation is or the situations are," President Duterte told Cimatu.

"He has just to make the recommendation, let us know what we should be doing, and that is very important," he added.



Duterte tasks Cimatu to oversee COVID-19 response in Cebu

He called on members of the IATF to give their full support to Cimatu.

In response, Cimatu said he will do his best to carry out his new task.

“It’s an honor for me to be doing things to save the lives of some people in Cebu at this time of pandemic,” he told President Duterte.

Malacañang announced over the weekend that the IATF was eyeing the appointment of a deputy implementer of the government’s COVID-19 policies in the entire Visayas due to the rising number of cases there.

According to Presidential spokesman Harry Roque, the National Task Force (NTF) on COVID-19 will evaluate the ground-level response of the Cebu City local government units (LGUs) for a week beginning June 22, 2020.

Stop the blame game

President Duterte appealed to the people, particularly the local government officials of Cebu City to stop blaming each other about their situation.

“Wag nalang tayong magsisihan kasi nandyan na rin ‘yan (Let’s not blame each other because we’re already in this situation anyway),” he said.

The President, however, said Cebu City’s situation could have been avoided if only they listened to the warning of the government and followed the quarantine guidelines.

“Kayong mga taga-Cebu, bakit marami (To the people of Cebu. You’re wondering why you have so many cases)? [It’s] Because you were too confident and too complacent about it. Parang binalewala ninyo kaya dumating (It appears that you brushed it aside that’s why the disease was able to come in),” Duterte said.

“There were rules imposed hoping that at least not everybody, but a majority will honor the rules and regulations promulgated by the government for your own good,” he added.

The President likewise said the situation will only get worse if he will leave the local government officials of Cebu City to address the situation on their own.

“If you solve the problem locally amongst the officials there, there’s bound to be a derailment in the programs of government because they will start to blame each other,” Duterte said.

“Kayong mga taga-Cebu (To the people of Cebu), it’s not that I do not trust your ability, but rather it’s the penchant to go into a sort of a... Yung sisihan nga tapos (blaming each other and then) nobody would answer for anything,” he continued.

Duterte, however, expressed confidence that Cebu City will be able to overcome the challenge it is facing.

“I’m just sad that Cebu has to undergo that kind of painful situation now. But nonetheless, kaya natin ‘yan (we can make it),” he said.



No need to replace Cimatu as DENR chief despite COVID-19 task —Palace

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By VIRGIL LOPEZ, GMA New

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/743805/no-need-to-replace-cimatu-as-denr-chief-despite-covid-19-task-palace/story/>

Secretary Roy Cimatu will continue to function as the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) even after President Rodrigo Duterte tasked him to oversee government efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Cebu City.

Duterte's spokesperson Harry Roque said the Palace did not see the need to replace Cimatu, who was instructed by the President on Monday to [identify what needs to be done to improve the COVID-19 situation](#) in the city.

"Maraming beses na po na binigyan ng special mission ang ating Secretary of DENR at hindi naman po kinailangan na magtalaga ng kapalit sa DENR. So status quo po. He remains Secretary of DENR," Roque said in a televised briefing on Tuesday.

A former military chief, Cimatu previously handled the repatriation of Filipinos in the Middle East following tensions between the United States and Iran early this year.

Roque also expressed hope that Cimatu's new assignment will be brief.

"Hopefully po the assignment will be as short as possible para po bumalik sa GCQ [general community quarantine] man lang ang Cebu City at ang Talisay," he said.

Cebu City has the highest number of COVID-19 cases nationwide at 3,733 as of June 21, while Central Visayas has the second-highest number of infections among all regions with 5,667, according to the Department of Health (DOH).

In the last 14 days alone, the DOH logged 1,277 new cases in Cebu City and 2,030 in the entire Region VII.

The DOH also earlier identified 13 new clusters of infection in Cebu City.

Duterte on Monday [took to task the Cebuanos](#) for being too slow in complying with the national government's measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

He described the Cebuanos as hardheaded and said they were too confident and complacent about the situation.

Cebu City is currently [under enhanced community quarantine](#). —KG, GMA News



Cimatu dumating na sa Cebu para pangunahan ang laban sa COVID-19

Jude Torres, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jun 23 2020 07:03 PM

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/06/23/20/cimatu-dumating-na-sa-cebu-para-pangunahan-ang-laban-sa-covid-19?>

Matapos italaga ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte para pangunahan ang paglaban sa coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) sa Cebu, dumating na sa lalawigan si Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu nitong Martes.

Kasama ni Cimatu ang ibang Cabinet secretaries mula sa Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases: Presidential Peace Adviser Secretary Carlito Galvez, na hepe din ng National Task Force on COVID-19 response, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, Health Secretary Francisco Duque at ang Presidential Assistant for the Visayas Secretary Michael Dino.

Sa isang virtual press briefing, sinabi ni Cimatu na tinatanggap niya ang hamon ng pangulo na tumulong sa pagbibigay solusyon sa patuloy na pagtaas ng kaso ng COVID-19 sa Cebu.

Ayon din kay Cimatu, isa sa kaniyang gagawin ang pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga barangay chairman para alamin mula sa kanila ang problema sa kani-kanilang lugar at para rin matukoy ang tulong na maibibigay nila.

"I would like to go down to the barangays, especially barangay captains in Cebu City to ask what they should do as barangay captains. I am very interested in finding out from them how they can help in this problem in Cebu City," aniya.

Dagdag ni Cimatu, patuloy pa siyang kumukuha ng impormasyon sa mga COVID-19 cases sa Cebu para matugonan nila ito.

Tututukan din nila ang Cebu City na kasalukuyang nasa enhanced community quarantine dahil sa mataas na kaso ng COVID-19.

Ipinaalam din ni Año na maaring magpatupad ng localized o focused lockdown ang mga mayor sa mga barangay o mga establisimyento na may maraming kaso ng COVID-19.

Sa ngayon, nangunguna ang Cebu City sa mga lugar sa bansa na may pinakaraming kaso ng COVID-19. Ayon sa datos ng Department of Health, nasa 3,987 kaso na ng coronavirus ang naitala sa siyudad pa lamang.

Nagpapasalamat naman sina Cebu City Mayor Edgardo Labella at Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia sa pagtatalaga kay Cimatu na tutulong sa pagsugpo sa COVID-19 sa Cebu.

Ibinalik ang Cebu City sa enhanced community quarantine, ang pinakamahigpit na lebel ng quarantine, noong Hunyo 16 matapos ang 2 linggong general quarantine sa lugar dahil sa patuloy na pagdami ng mga kaso ng COVID-19. Ang Talisay City naman sa lalawigan ng Cebu rin ay nasa modified ECQ.



Cimatu eyes lockdown of certain areas in Cebu amid ECQ

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<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/743891/cimatu-eyes-lockdown-of-certain-areas-in-cebu-amid-ecq/story/>

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu is planning to place some areas in Cebu City under lockdown amid the enhanced community quarantine due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) threat.

According to Lou-Anne Mae Rondina's report on "24 Oras," Cimatu, who was tasked by President Rodrigo Duterte to be the COVID-19 overseer for Central Visayas, arrived in the city on Tuesday.

He was accompanied by Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, and Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., the chief implementer of the national plan against the virus.

Cimatu said they will not yet implement changes in the city as they first need to assess the situation on the ground.

However, they will implement a gradual lockdown on selected areas starting Wednesday, if necessary. One of the areas the authorities will check is Barangay Mambaling, which has reported the highest number of COVID-19 cases.

"If really, hindi na natin talaga ma-contain ng husto 'yon, we have to further lock down doon sa lugar na 'yan. Meaning, it is a lockdown within an ECQ," Cimatu said.

"Parang ano lang muna doon, ma-emphasize the gravity of the ano, para mai-stop ba 'yung bleeding doon. And I was told that the Mambaling is the highest," he added.

The officials will also check hospitals, quarantine facilities, and testing facilities.

"Yung mga hindi sumusunod, ito ngayon 'yun. 'Yung mga sinasabi natin na kailangan pag-sabihan na they have to comply with the protocol, that they have to comply, really, with the regulation na bina-ban ng IATF," Cimatu said.

"Kasi ginagawa naman ito...for the benefit," he added. — **Joahna Lei Casilao/BM, GMA News**



Sec. Cimatu, magsisilbing mata at tenga ni PDU30 sa Cebu City

June 23, 2020 @ 1:38 PM

<https://remate.ph/sec-cimatu-magsisilbing-mata-at-tenga-ni-pdu30-sa-cebu-city/>

Manila, Philippines – Si Environmental Secretary Roy Cimatu ang magiging mata at tenga ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte sa Cebu City na kasalukuyang itinuturing na COVID-19 hotspot.

Ito ang inihayag ni Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque makaraang ianunsyo ng Chief Executive sa kanyang public address, araw ng Lunes, Hunyo 22 na ang dating Armed Forces chief ang mangangasiwa ng COVID-19 response sa Cebu City kung saan mayroong pagsipa ng COVID-19 infections.

Ani Sec. Roque, ang marching order kay Cimatu ay gawin ang nararapat nitong gawin.

Ito aniya ay ang ipatupad ang mga polisiya ng Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, at di na kailangang humingi ng permiso sa task force kundi ipaalam na lamang ang gagawin nitong mga hakbang para malabanan ang pagkalat ng COVID-19 sa lugar.

Napag-alaman na sa IATF meeting kasama ang Pangulo ay tinanggap ni Cimatu ang bagong papel na ibinigay sa kanya tulad ng pagtanggap nya sa order na i-rehabilitate ang Boracay.

Samantala, pumalo na sa 30,682 ang COVID-19 cases sa buong bansa, kabilang ang 8,143 recoveries, habang 1,177 na ang mga namatay. Kris Jose



Cimatu, trouble-shooter lagi ang peg

AKSYON NGAYON - AL G. Pederoche

June 24, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2020/06/24/2023047/cimatu-trouble-shooter-lagi-ang-peg>

Bilib ako kay Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu. Kahit anong krisis ang kaharapin ng bansa, laging siya ang itinatalagang “trouble shooter” ng pamahalaan.

Sa ngayon, ang nagiging sentro ng COVID-19 pandemic sa Pilipinas ay ang Cebu City at ang itinalaga ng Pangulong Duterte para manguna sa kampanya sa pagbaka sa pandemya doon ay si Cimatu.

Panahon pa ni Presidente Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ay may reputasyon na sa pagiging jack of many trades iyang si Cimatu. Siya ay naging Armed Forces Chief noong panahon ni Arroyo na kalaunan ay naging embahador nang magretiro sa military.

Siya ngayon ang itinalaga ng Pangulong Duterte upang mamuno sa sangay ng Inter-Agency Task Force of Emerging Infectious Diseases sa Cebu City.

Palibhasa ay “utak sundalo” walang assignment na hindi hinihindian itong si Cimatu, at base sa mga nagawa na niya noon pa, napatunayan niyang kaya niya ang mga gawaing ipinapatong sa kanyang balikat. Kilala kasi ang kakayahan niya at dedikasyon sa maraming bagay.

Magugunita na noong magkaroon ng krisis sa Middle East sa simula ng taong ito, si Cimatu ang Hinirang ng Pangulo bilang special envoy ng Pilipinas para mangasiwa sa pagpapabalik sa Pilipinas ng mga OFW na apektado ng gulo sa nabanggit na rehiyon. Matagumpay niyang nagampanan ang kanyang tungkulin doon.

Sa ngayon ay umaabot na sa mahigit apatna libo ang naitatalang positibo sa COVID-19 sa Cebu City, bagay na nakaaalarma. Buo ang tiwala ng Pangulo na sa pangunguna ni Cimatu ay magtatagumpay ang inilunsad na programa laban sa pandemya sa naturang lungsod.

Dapat siguro, bigyan ng karagdagang titulo si Cimatu bilang Presidential Chief Troubleshooter.



Cimatu to visit Cebu City barangays to assess COVID-19 situation

By: Delta Dyrecka Letigio - CDN Digital | June 23,2020 - 07:00 PM

Read more: <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/320958/cimatu-to-visit-cebu-city-barangays-to-assess-covid-19-situation#ixzz6QER6fOvk>



Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu (right most) arrives in Cebu City to assess the COVID-19 situation in the city. | Photo courtesy of OPAV

CEBU CITY, Philippines — Secretary Roy Cimatu of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), who was sent to oversee the Interagency Task Force (IATF) operations in Cebu City, said he will be going to the barangays (villages) to assess the situation in the ground.

Cimatu addressed the Cebuanos on June 23, 2020, as he began his new task of ensuring that the COVID-19 strategic operation are being properly implemented in the highly affected city.

“I would like to go down to the barangays, especially to the barangay captains in the city to ask what they should. I want to ask them what they can do, how they can help this problem in the city,” said Cimatu.

One of the barangays that Cimatu will visit is Barangay Mambaling, which recorded more than 600 cases of the COVID-19, although only 14 are left active.

Cimatu, who was once assigned in Cebu during his time as a lieutenant in the army, said the area is a major cause of concern because it has always been a depressed and overpopulated area.



Cimatu to visit Cebu City barangays to assess COVID-19 situation

He said he would like to check the situation in the area, the configuration of the barangay, for a basic assessment if the area will need to remain under hard lockdown.

“The President acknowledges that there is a crisis and we are instructed to help alleviate the situation of the people. When we have the full cooperation of the people, we can stop the bleeding, ihintong natin ang pagrise ng infection, then we have flattened the curve,” said Cimatu.

He will also be looking into the health situation, the quarantine, the testing, and the implementation of the ECQ guidelines.

Detect, test, isolate, treat

Cimatu said that the IATF is trying to avoid letting the situation get out of hand, which will force the national government to step in and implement the ECQ guidelines.

He said the situation does not call for force from the police or intervention of the army yet, and based on experience, he trusts Cebuanos will comply with a little prodding.

Secretary Eduardo Año of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) said that what the IATF will be doing in Cebu is to ensure that the ECQ is properly implemented as well as ensure that the many concerns of the city’s COVID-19 situation will be addressed.

The strategy remains: detect, test, isolate, and treat.

Año said the strategy worked for the National Capital Region, and with proper implementation, they expect it to work for Cebu City as well.

“We have to control the movement, so we need to place Cebu City under ECQ. We need to focus on areas with largest number of cases, isolate the positive cases and treat them. If we can do that, we can let Cebu City graduate to a lower quarantine status. This strategy worked in the National Capital Region, but we will adapt to the need of the region,” said Año. /bmjo



IATF to look into Covid-19 status of Cebu City villages

By John Rey Saavedra June 23, 2020, 9:08 pm

read://<https://www.pna.gov.ph/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pna.gov.ph%2Farticles%2F1106790>



COVID-19 RESPONSE. Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu answers queries from Cebu media during a virtual presser held on Tuesday (June 23, 2020) at the Seda Hotel in Cebu City. Cimatu, who was appointed by President Rodrigo Duterte as overseer of government response against Covid-19 in Cebu, said the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) will go down to barangays in the city to help in containing the contagion. (Screengrab from OPAV video)

CEBU CITY – Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu on Tuesday said the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) will be “going down to the barangays to find out the totality of the problem” in implementing quarantine protocols.

Cimatu, along with Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and IATF chief implementer, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. and his deputy, Undersecretary Vivencio Dizon, met with Mayor Edgardo Labella and Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia to find out the gravity of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) situation here.

“I would like to go down to the barangays, especially the barangay captains in Cebu to ask what they should do as barangay captains. I’m very interested in finding out from them how they can help in this problem in Cebu City,” Cimatu said during a virtual presser.

He said the national IATF will work with its regional counterpart in assessing compliance with quarantine protocols and guidelines from the national government if they are “followed by each citizen”.

President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday appointed Cimatu as overseer of the national government’s response against Covid-19 in the Visayas, particularly in the city where the coronavirus cases continue to increase.



IATF to look into Covid-19 status of Cebu City villages

In Tuesday's data of the Cebu City Health Department, the locality has a total of 4,479 Covid-19 cases with 2,213 active cases, 2,177 recoveries and 89 deaths.

Cimatu, however, dismissed the possibility of sending uniformed Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines personnel down to the villages to arrest quarantine protocol violators.

“Not all people here are like that (violating protocols), to be fair to those who are complying. For the violators, we just need to tell them that it is necessary that they have to comply with the protocols and regulations of the IATF. We are doing this for benefit of the health of the people,” he said in mixed English and Filipino.

He said he does not want to resort to “forceful implementation” of the regulations to address the rising coronavirus cases.

Cimatu specifically mentioned Barangay Mambaling which is considered as the city's Covid-19 epicenter as one village that needs to be focused on by the IATF.

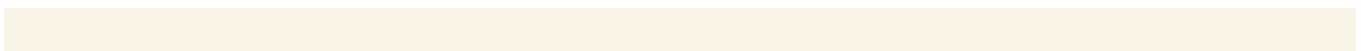
Labella, meanwhile, said city officials are happy that President Duterte assigned Cimatu to oversee the coordinated response against coronavirus crisis.

He told Cimatu and other IATF officials that Sitio Alaska in Barangay Mambaling, which used to have 697 Covid-19 cases, of which 90 percent was asymptomatic, now only has 17 active cases, while Sitio Zapatera in Barangay Luz, which previously had 700 cases, now only has 15 patients.

Secretary Michael Lloyd Dino, presidential assistant for the Visayas, cited city residents' lack of discipline which may be the reason for the increasing number of individuals tested positive for Covid-19.

Duque said the IATF would also want to assist hospitals in their medical interventions to Covid-19 patients.

He said the IATF brought here 6,000 personal protective equipment, 10,000 N95 masks, three polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machines and other equipment as well as 25 high-flow nasal canula to aid confined Covid-19 patients. (PNA)





Vice Mayor Rama: Cebu City welcomes help from national gov't

By: Delta Dyrecka Letigio - CDN Digital | June 23,2020 - 03:15 PM

<https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/320853/vice-mayor-rama-cebu-city-welcomes-help-from-national-govt>



Cebu City vice mayor Mike Rama. | CDN Digital file

CEBU CITY, Philippines — Cebu City welcomes the help of the national government in curbing the cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

This was the statement of Vice Mayor Michael Rama, who chairs the City Council's committee on health, over President Rodrigo Duterte's move in [sending Secretary Roy Cimatu](#) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to assess the COVID-19 situation in Cebu City.

Cimatu will now be the Interagency Task Force's (IATF) representative to oversee the COVID-19 operations here.

Rama said that Cebu City can only accept the national government's guidance in this dire situation as cases continue to rise, and amidst underreporting of actual cases.

"Pagbisita sa IATF diri, impressive. Pero pag-abot sa ground, dismal," the vice mayor said.

(When the IATF came here, it was impressive. But when it came to the situation on the ground, it was dismal).



Vice Mayor Rama: Cebu City welcomes help from national gov't

“We are underreporting our cases and we don’t know if how many really is our COVID cases here,” he added.

Rama said Cebuanos are not inherently hard-headed as President Rodrigo Duterte said in [his statement](#) to the public on Monday evening, June 22, 2020.

Rama said that Cebuanos have the determination of Lapulapu, the first Filipino hero, and this determination remains, albeit there may be a lack of unity among the people now.

The vice mayor also said the national government dipping into the city’s situation should also be a reminder that the city should have a more focused strategy to solving the pandemic.

“Sige na mig balik-balik ana sa konseho. Unsa ang masterplan sa syudad? Asa ang masterplan? Dapat naa tay masterplan unsaon nato pag go about aning COVID,” said Rama.

(We have been repeating this concern in the council. What is the masterplan? Where is the masterplan. We need a masterplan to go about the COVID operations.) /bmjo



DENR seizes P3.2-M worth of threatened wood species

June 23, 2020, 7:49 pm

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1106774>

MANILA – Joint operatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested four individuals after they were caught transporting several kilos of agarwood, a threatened and much sought-after tree species.

In a press release Tuesday, DENR said environmental enforcers seized from the suspects almost 20 kilos of agarwood valued at PHP3.2 million.

The suspects, identified as Ramil Ong, Bernie Bagay, Rizal Mofar and Arjhun Gaviola, were apprehended in two separate operations conducted by the DENR's Environmental Protection and Enforcement Task Force (EPETF) and the NBI-Environmental Crime Division in Pasig City and Cainta, Rizal last June 8.

Agarwood is one of the most expensive raw materials used in perfumery, costing at least PHP160,000 per kilo in the Philippines.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu lauded the DENR and NBI enforcers for their unrelenting efforts to go after environmental criminals despite the quarantine restrictions and other measures imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19.

"This clearly sends out the message that the government's campaign against environmental offenders remains unrelenting despite a pandemic that is wreaking havoc worldwide," Cimatu said.

The four suspects were charged with violations of Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources and Protection Act and Presidential Decree 705, otherwise known as the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines.

They are detained at the NBI detention facility in Manila while awaiting court proceedings.

Rogelio Demelletes Jr., a senior ecosystems management specialist and member of EPETF, said initial investigation showed that the seized agarwood shipments were of high-grade quality and likely poached from the forests of Mindanao, particularly Surigao and Agusan provinces.

Agarwood is extracted from host trees locally known as Lapnisan and Lanete, which are both included in the national list of threatened Philippine plants per DENR Administrative Order 2007-01.

According to Demelletes, a high-grade agarwood can be sold for as high as USD30,000 per kilo and its trafficking has spawned indiscriminate cutting of Lanete and Lapnisan trees. (PR)



Trader nabbed for 'hot' wood

June 24, 2020 01:10 AM

By Alvin Murcia

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/06/24/trader-nabbed-for-hot-wood/>

NBI Officer-In-Charge Eric Distor identified the suspect as Niño Paulo Manalo, the owner of NP Manalo Woodworks which is engaged in the lumber and furniture business.



Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested a trader for unlawful possession and selling of lumber and furniture made from different wood species without the necessary permits during a buy-bust operation in Amadeo, Cavite last 18 June.

NBI Officer-In-Charge Eric Distor identified the suspect as Niño Paulo Manalo, the owner of NP Manalo Woodworks which is engaged in the lumber and furniture business.

Operatives of the NBI-EnCD and PENR-PENRO served the search warrant against the firm, which led to the seizure of numerous wood species with an estimated value of P3,499,183.91 and finished furniture with an estimated value of P323,000.

The NBI acted on an intelligence report received by its Environmental Crime Division (NBI-EnCD) that a certain individual in Barangay Pangli, Amadeo, Cavite is allegedly in possession of undetermined quantity of lumber and fitches of different wood species which includes akle, narra, acacia and other fruit-bearing trees.



Trader nabbed for ‘hot’ wood

Surveillance operations conducted by NBI-EnCD revealed that the firm had lumbers and fitches of different wood species in its possession, including furniture displayed in the shop of the establishment.

Meanwhile, cyber-surveillance in Facebook also showed that Manalo is a seller of lumber, wood products and furniture in the Marketplace.

Upon verification with Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office-Cavite, the NBI also discovered that the firm did not have the necessary permits such as lumber dealer permit, cutting permit, transport permit, wood importation permit, wood processing permit, monitoring compliance certificate and chainsaw registration.

The NBI-EnCD was granted a search warrant by the Regional Trial Court Branch 20 of Imus, Cavite which led to the operation.

Manalo is facing charges for violation of Section 77 (formerly Section 68) of Presidential Decree 705 as amended by Executive Order 277, or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines.



DENR adopts 'family approach' in National Greening program

Published June 23, 2020, 11:30 AM

By Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/23/denr-adopts-family-approach-in-national-greening-program/>

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is now adopting the "family approach" as one of the modes of engaging Filipino families in the National Greening Program (NGP) in relation to a memorandum signed by DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu last May 6, 2020.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (MANILA BULLETIN)

Under a technical bulletin issued by the DENR-Forest Management Bureau (FMB) last June 19, a family is defined as a group of persons usually living together consisting of the head and other persons related to him or her by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Under the program, families are allowed to establish forest plantations composed of timber and non-timber species like bamboo and rattan.

The DENR encourages the use of fast-growing indigenous species within these plantations to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and the integrity of the forest ecosystem

Families can also establish agroforestry plantations within production forest zones. These plantations can be composed of a combination of timber, non-timber, and high-value crops such as coffee, cacao, rubber, and other fruit trees, provided that the area must be planted with more forestry species than high-value crops.

The program also allows families to rehabilitate a specific parcel of a given production or protection forest zone using endemic timber and non-timber species indigenous to the area.



DENR adopts 'family approach' in National Greening program

Families can also rehabilitate specific areas of mangrove and beach forests that are either denuded or degraded. Cutting, gathering, or collecting of forest products within these areas shall not be allowed.

FMB's bulletin cited that the schedule of payments shall be observed by the DENR for compensating services rendered in the implementation of the program.

A retention fee amounting to 10 percent of the total project cost for three years, which is the whole duration of contract, shall be released upon the conduct and submission of the final acceptance and inspection report three months after the second payment for the third year.

NGP is a convergence initiative of the DENR, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Agrarian Reform, with the DENR as the lead agency.

To increase the country's forest cover, the government, by virtue of Executive Order (EO) 26, implemented the NGP, which aimed to cover 1.5 million hectares of land with 1.5 billion trees from 2011 to 2016.

In 2015, EO 193 was issued extending the NGP until 2028 in a bid to rehabilitate the remaining unproductive, denuded, and degraded forestlands estimated at 7.1 million hectares.



June 24, 2020 5:00AM

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2059356704221073&id=163550757135020&fs=0&focus_composer=0

← Ibinida ng DENR na nasa 122,000 hectares na ng lupain sa Gitn...

NEWS 5 News5
7 hrs · 🌐



Ibinida ng DENR na nasa 122,000 hectares na ng lupain sa Gitnang Luzon ang natamnan nila ng fruit-bearing trees sa ilalim ng National Greening Program.

Paalala ng DENR, "When our forests and its wildlife remain #wildandalive and protected, people are always on the winning end!"

📷: DENR Central Luzon





SNAP-Benguet celebrates World Environment Month planting 2,500 seedlings

ByThe Manila Times

June 24, 2020

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/06/24/public-square/snap-benguet-celebrates-world-environment-month-planting-2500-seedlings/734106/>

RENEWABLE energy provider SN Aboitiz Power-Benguet (SNAP-Benguet) overcame Covid 19 associated challenges to conclude successful tree planting activities in celebration of World Environment Month.



Volunteers shared the same commitment with SNAP —protecting the community and the environment amid the pandemic.

Through its partnership with Tinongdan Indigenous Peoples Organization, Inc. (Tinpo), SNAP-Benguet facilitated tree planting activities in Camaya, Binga and Tinongdan in Itogon, Benguet. Twenty five volunteers from the community were able to plant 2,500 coffee seedlings from June 5 to 11. For the health and safety of planters, physical distancing, regular sanitizing and wearing of face masks were observed.

Tinpo has been SNAP-Benguet's CSR project stakeholder since 2008. In 2019, an agreement was signed making TINPO an official sustainability partner of SNAP-Benguet in the restoration and protection of the Ambuklao-Binga watersheds.



SNAP-Benguet celebrates World Environment Month planting 2,500 seedlings

SNAP President and Chief Executive Officer Joseph Yu said SNAP aims to contribute to the long-term protection of the watersheds in its host communities through various environmental programs and partnerships such as the Aboitiz flagship program Apark or Aboitiz Passion on Reforestation and Agroforestry to Keep, as well as tree planting activities with sustainability partners in the community.

“SNAP believes that if we ‘nurture nature’ we ‘nurture life’. Even in these challenging times, SNAP looks for ways to create positive action for the environment,” Yu added.

To date, SNAP-Benguet has planted over 146,000 seedlings of various species for reforestation and agroforestry covering approximately 131 has. of land within the Ambuklao-Binga watershed in Benguet with an 87 percent survival rate since 2008.

Due to the constraints posed by Covid-19, only 27 percent of the planned 9,000 seedlings for the year have been planted. The remaining 6,500 seedlings are underway for distribution to SNAP-Benguet’s other long-time partners, the Ambuklao Coffee Growers Association (ACGA) and Shakilan ni Ikulos Indigenous Peoples Organization (Snipo).



Protected areas, bioersity challenges tackled

Published June 23, 2020, 5:44 PM

By Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/23/protected-areas-bioersity-challenges-tackled/>

Efforts to preserve and protect the country's legislated protected areas from environmental degradation, adverse effects of climate change, and other threats were the focal points of discussion in the first monthly Protected Area (PA) webinar series held Monday, June 22.

Six protected areas formed part of the first batch of featured areas in a virtual discussion led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) and the Office of Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda, together with the Climate Change Commission (CCC).

It has also marked the second anniversary of the passage of the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS) Act of 2018, which coincides with the celebration of the Philippine Environment Month.

Legarda convened the virtual discussion, assisted by DENR-BMB Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, Dr. Rex Cruz of the CCC National Panel of Technical Experts (NPTE), and DENR lawyer Ipat Luna.

Featured were stories and insights from Regional Executive Directors (RED), and Protected Area Superintendents (PASU) from the first batch of six featured protected areas, namely Mt. Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary in Davao Oriental; Siargao Island Protected Landscape and Seascape in Surigao del Norte; Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park in Negros Oriental; Peñablanca Protected Landscape and Seascape in Cagayan; Mt. Isarog Natural Park in Camarines Sur; and Mts. Iglit-Baco Natural Park in Oriental Mindoro and Occidental Mindoro.

Calderon emphasized that with the ENIPAS Act, there are now 107 legislated protected areas, covering around 7.76 million hectares, from just 13 areas before the enactment of the ENIPAS.

"As you can see, in terms of land area, we have 15.7 percent of our land set aside for protected area and we have 1.4 percent of territorial waters set aside as protected area," he said.

"It is in accordance with our Convention on Biological Diversity that our biodiversity and our protected areas must be in order. We should have 17 percent of our land area as protected area and 10 percent of our marine waters should be declared as protected area, to ensure the continuous supply of food, and at the same time, continuous management of our biodiversity," he added.



Protected areas, bioersity challenges tackled

DENR-Davao Executive Director Ruth Tawantawan, and City and Environment and Natural Resources Officer and PASU Martiniano Rotol highlighted how mossy-pygmy forests represent a complete set of an intact mountain ecosystem.

They also showed “camera trapping” or surveillance cameras placed along the trails of Mt. Hamiguitan to document the movement of wild animals or human intruders.

For Mts. Iglit-Baco Natural Park, Executive Director Ma. Lourdes Ferrer and PASU Roberto Duquil also showed the Tamaraw core zone habitat and how the indigenous peoples living within are contributing to the conservation of the protected area.

DENR-Central Visayas Executive Director Paquito Melicor Jr., and Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer and PASU Nestor Canda highlighted the 427 flora and fauna species that are found in the Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park, which include critically endangered and vulnerable species of plants and animals.

This makes the park the second most biodiverse area in the country next to Palawan. The park is also a popular venue for trekking and bird watching.

DENR-Cagayan Valley Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan and PASU Tito Mangantulao shared accounts of how their law enforcement team maintains security to prevent illegal activities in the Peñablanca Protected Landscape and Seascape, which houses unique and endangered species of eagles.

Meanwhile, DENR-Bicol Executive Director Antonio Abawag and PASU Vicencio Cabanayan Jr. shared how the Mt. Isarog Natural Park, nicknamed as “Vulcan de Agua,” provides an abundant water supply to its surrounding communities.

They also discussed the challenges they faced in terms of forest protection because of kaingin, encroachment and hunting, and seeking approval for Special Use Agreement in Protected Areas.

DENR-Caraga officer-in-charge Hadja Didaw Piang-Brahim and PASU Joseph Langanlangan said they have an existing Ecotourism Management Plan in all of the ecotourism sites within Siargao, including the Siargao Island Protected Landscape and Seascape.

They are also collaborating with the concerned local government units to make sure that the conservation of biodiversity in the protected area is balanced with sustainable tourism and livelihood activities.



Protected areas, bioersity challenges tackled

Dr. Rex Cruz, as an expert on Environment and Ecology, gave insights on the impacts of climate change in protected areas.

“Consequences of climate change related to biodiversity include species migration, pest and disease outbreaks, deforestation, forest and habitat degradation, and species extinction. There are also impacts of geohazards, like landslides and floods, in addition to the impacts of increasing temperature and variability of rainfall,” he said.

He suggested expanding the network of protected areas, which had earlier started through government funding with the aim of monitoring long-term climate impacts on ecosystems and watersheds in the country.

Legarda also reiterated the importance of knowing the carrying capacity of the country’s 107 protected areas and ensuring the strict implementation of environmental laws, such as the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

The PA Talk is a monthly webinar series that aims to feature the country’s 107 legislated protected areas.





Stop Bacoor reclamation plan, Sen. Villar asks DENR

Updated June 23, 2020, 7:09 PM

By Vanne Elaine Terrazola

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/23/stop-bacoor-reclamation-plan-sen-villar-asks-denr/>

Senator Cynthia Villar on Tuesday asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to stop the reclamation plan in Bacoor City, Cavite due to its threats to the protected area and the communities along the coast of Manila Bay.



Sen. Cynthia Villar

(Senate of the Philippines / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, told the DENR to recall the environment compliance certificate (ECC) it issued to the 320-hectare Bacoor Reclamation and Development Project.

“The reclamation project will potentially cause irreparable damage to the Las Pinas-Parañaque Wetland Park. The project will be building on the buffer zone of this protected area and will destroy the landscape in which the wetland now thrives,” Villar said.

The senator said that under Republic Act 11038, the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS) Act, which she sponsored, the 175-hectare wetland park was a declared protected area.

It was also recognized as one of the seven areas in the country listed as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention “because of its critical role in the survival of threatened, restricted-range, and congregatory bird species,” she said.

Villar also warned about “massive flooding” as she recalled the Department of Public Works and Highways saying that reclamation in this part of Manila Bay will cause flooding as high as eight meters in Las Piñas City.

She added that if the reclamation project pushes through, the flood-control projects in Bacoor and Imus worth P1.47 billion will be wasted.



Stop Bacoor reclamation plan, Sen. Villar asks DENR

Villar said flooding was one of the grounds that she, along with 315,000 residents of Las Piñas City, Parañaque City, and Cavite, cited when they petitioned for Writ of Kalikasan against the planned reclamation of Manila Bay in 2012.

In 2017, the DENR cancelled the ECC issued to a similar reclamation plan in Parañaque and Las Piñas coastal bay for its potential harm to the environment.

Villar said the DENR's approval of the Bacoor reclamation project also contradicts the government's P1.3-billion Manila Bay rehabilitation project.

In January, 2019, the "Battle for Manila Bay" was launched to reinforce the Supreme Court's December, 2008, mandamus directing 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.

This was the basis of the creation of the Manila Bay Task Force the following month.

"If we allow reclamation to proceed in Manila Bay, what happens now to our rehabilitation efforts? Our government has already poured precious resources into this campaign and many have already sacrificed to comply. Are we now losing the battle for Manila Bay?" Villar asked.

The DENR recently granted the ECC to the Bacoor Reclamation and Development Project, after Bacoor City Mayor Lani Mercado-Revilla, the project's main proponent, satisfied the requirements of the DENR's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) Review Committee.

With the ECC, the proponents are given the go-signal to start dredging activity, filling the project area with reclamation materials and construction of road networks and drainage system.

"With the issuance of the ECC, you are expected to fully implement the measures presented in the EIS intended to protect and mitigate the project's predicted adverse impact on community health, welfare, and the environment. Environmental considerations shall be incorporated in all phases and aspects of the project," the ECC stated.

Militant fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) also opposed the project, fearing that more than 700 fishing and coastal families will be ejected from their houses to give way to the project.

President Duterte has been consistent in his stance against any reclamation projects at the Manila Bay.



‘Recall ECC on Bacoor reclamation project’

posted June 23, 2020 at 10:40 pm

by Macon Ramos-Araneta

<https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/326858>

Warning about several serious problems, Senator Cynthia Villar on Tuesday asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to recall the issuance of the environment compliance certificate (ECC) to the 320-hectare Bacoor reclamation project.

The Bacoor project was initiated by Bacoor City government together with the owner of Erabelle Fishing Corporation.

Villar, chair of the Senate environment committee, cautioned that the reclamation would destroy legislated protected area and cause massive flooding in communities surrounding Manila Bay.

“The reclamation project will potentially cause irreparable damage to the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park. The project will be building on the buffer zone of this protected area and will destroy the landscape in which the wetland now thrives,” she said.

Under Republic Act 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act or E-NIPAS Act, the 175-hectare Las Piñas-Parannaque Wetland Park is a declared protected area. It is also one of the seven areas in the Philippines listed as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention because of its critical role in the survival of threatened, restricted-range and congregatory bird species.



Villar, hinikayat ang DENR na itigil ang Bacoor reclamation project

June 23, 2020 @ 11:04 AM

<https://remate.ph/villar-hinikayat-ang-denr-na-itigil-ang-bacoor-reclamation-project/>

“The reclamation project will potentially cause irreparable damage to the Las Pinas-Paranaque Wetland Park. The project will be building on the buffer zone of this protected area and will destroy the landscape in which the wetland now thrives,” ani Villar.

Ang wetland park ay idineklarang protected area sa ilalim ng Republic Act 11038 o ang Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

Sinabi rin ni Villar na ang 320-hectare reclamation project na hawak ng Bacoor LGU kasama ang Frabelle Fishing Corporation ay nag-render ng P1.47 bilyong halaga ng flood control efforts sa Bacoor at Imus.

Dapat aniya bawiin ng DENR ang environment compliance certificate na inisyu ng Environmental Management Bureau noong March 5.

Giit ni Villar, hindi sakop ng naturang reclamation project ang ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation project ng national government. RNT/FGDC



Bacoor reclamation project, magpapalala ng baha – Villar

By Gemma Garcia(Pilipino Star Ngayon)

June 24, 2020 - 12:00am

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2020/06/24/2023116/bacoor-reclamation-project-magpapalala-ng-baha-villar/amp/>

MANILA, Philippines — Dahil sa posibleng masamang epekto sa mga protected area at komunidad na nakapaligid sa Manila Bay, pinatitigil ni Sen. Cynthia Villar sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang reclamation project na ginagawa ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Bacoor City.

Ayon kay Villar, ang reclamation project ay makakasira sa Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park dahil ito ay itatayo sa buffer zone ng mga protected area kaya makakasira ito sa landscape nito.

Pahayag pa ng senadora na chairman ng Senate Committee on environment, na ang wetland ay idineklara bilang protected area sa ilalim ng Republic Act 11038 o ang Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

Nangangamba rin si Villar na mawawalan ng kabuluhan ang P1.47 billion na flood-control project sa Bacoor at Imus kung ipipilit ang Bacoor reclamation project na siyang lalong magpapalala ng pagbaha.

Kapag nangyari umano ang matinding pagbaha ay maapektuhan ang 315,000 residente ng Las Piñas, Parañaque at Cavite.

Noong 2017, kinansela ng DENR ang environment compliance certificate (ECC) na ibinigay sa Alltech Contractors, Inc. para sa Parañaque-Las Piñas Coastal Bay Project Land Reclamation dahil sa potensya nitong pagsira sa kalikasan.



Reclamation project brings jobs, livelihood

June 24, 2020 01:00 AM

By Trina Ibarle Orquiza

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/06/24/reclamation-project-brings-jobs-livelihood/>

In these times when many of our countrymen, including thousands of overseas Filipino workers who lost their jobs, we need this proposed reclamation project.

The proposed 420-hectare reclamation project in Bacoor City will generate jobs and livelihood opportunities to people in adjacent areas who lost their work due to the coronavirus pandemic, Bacoor City Mayor Lani Mercado-Revilla said on Tuesday.

In a statement, Revilla said the proposed reclamation project would generate at least 700,000 jobs for the residents of Bacoor, the entire province of Cavite, and its adjacent areas and will provide the city with at least P1.8 billion in additional income from tourism alone.

“In these times when many of our countrymen, including thousands of overseas Filipino workers who lost their jobs, we need this proposed reclamation project,” Revilla said.

Her remark came hours after Sen. Cynthia Villar asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to recall the certificate issued to the project, citing threats of flooding in communities along the coast of Manila Bay and in her bailiwick Las Piñas City.

The project was fiercely opposed by Villar as well as fishermen’s groups as they expressed fears that the reclamation efforts would destroy fishponds and mangroves in the villages of Maliksi and would displace at least 700 fisherfolk families — a violation of the Fisheries Code which states that public lands such as mangroves “shall not be disposed.”

For her part, Villar claimed the reclamation efforts would cause “irreparable damage” to the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park since the project would be built on the buffer zone of this protected area.

In February, the fishermen’s group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) filed a complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman against the reclamation plan.



Reclamation project brings jobs, livelihood

Revilla, however, said the proposed project are located within the Bacoor's jurisdictional water and far from the buffer zone of the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area.

The mayor also gave her commitment that the city's mussels and oyster industry would continue to thrive along with the reclamation project.

The proposed reclamation project would also serve as a coastal defense against destructive storm surges and tsunami that could threaten the Bacoor, she said.

Revilla added that the project would incorporate efficient canals and waterways connected to the sea to complement anti-flood measures implemented by both local and national government.

The project, according to Revilla, also includes "upgrading informal settlement through access to safe, affordable, and formal housing with access to basic services and economic opportunities."

Recently, President Rodrigo Duterte said he would prohibit massive reclamation activities until the end of his term in 2022 unless these are "connected with the government project."

In 2019, the President transferred the power to approve reclamation projects back to the Philippine Reclamation Authority and placed it under the Office of the President.



Fisherfolk chide DENR for its failure to rehabilitate Manila Bay

Published June 23, 2020, 12:25 PM

By Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/06/23/fisherfolk-chide-denr-for-its-failure-to-rehabilitate-manila-bay/>

A local fisherfolk group on Tuesday chided the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its “unfulfilled” job to rehabilitate the Manila Bay and protect its marine resources against reclamation projects.



Migratory birds wander in Manila Bay (Rio Leonelle Deluvio / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

“The health safety of people in Cebu City that has the highest cases of coronavirus is important to be addressed, but it lies on the functions of health officials and pharmaceutical interventions, and distant to the environment chief who is seen by various environmental organizations as ‘missing in action’ against projects that destroy the environment and biodiversity,” Pamalakaya national chairperson Fernando Hicap said in a statement.

The fisherfolk group said DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu should instead closely monitor the state of the Philippine environment, which is currently threatened by destructive projects, such as reclamation, mining, and construction of mega dams, among others.

Pamalakaya accused the DENR of granting an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to the 320-hectare reclamation project in Manila Bay covering the municipal waters of Bacoor City, Cavite.



Fisherfolk chide DENR for its failure to rehabilitate Manila Bay

The group claimed the project, which was proposed by City Mayor Lani Mercado-Revilla and Frabelle Fishing Corp., threatens at least 700 fishing and urban poor families in the town with displacement.

Pamalakaya and the fisherfolk in Cavite in November, 2019, submitted a letter of complaint to the DENR against the reclamation project in Cavite, the Chinese POGO project in Kawit, the Sangley International Airport in Cavite City, and the Revilla-sponsored Bacoor Reclamation and Development Project.

The fisherfolk group said it has yet to receive any formal reply from the DENR.

“Secretary Cimatú should ensure that the Manila Bay is protected from any reclamation project and its fisherfolks who are considered as food security frontliners should not be displaced from their communities and livelihood,” he added.



Tagalog News: Mga ilog sa Bulacan, itutuloy ang pagpapalalim

By Vinson F. Concepcion Published on June 23, 2020
<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1045622>



Masusing binabantayan ng mga tauhan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources ang ginagawang paglilinis sa mga estero, sapa at pagpapalalim ng kailugan sa Bulacan upang mapanumbalik sa dati ang natural na kalagayan ng daloy ng tubig. (Shane F. Velasco/PIA 3)

LUNGSOD NG MALOLOS, Hunyo 23 (PIA) -- Itutuloy ang pagpapalalim ng mga kailugan sa Bulacan.

Ito ay matapos ang pagpupulong nina Gobernador Daniel Fernando kasama ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources o DENR, Environment Management Bureau o EMB, Department of Public Works and Highways o DPWH, Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office at Torejas Construction Supply Corporation o TCSC.

Dito tinalakay ang DENR Administrative Order No. 2020-07 o ang Rationalizing Dredging Activities in Heavily Silted River Channels upang maibalik sa dati nitong anyo ang mga katubigan sa probinsiya.

Ayon kay EMB Regional Director Wilson Trajeco, ang nasabing atas ay alinsunod sa Joint Memorandum Circular No.1 Series of 2019 ng DENR, DPWH, Department of the Interior and Local Government at Department of Transportation upang mapangalagaan at maisaayos ang pamamahala sa buhangin at maibalik sa dati ang natural na kalagayan ng daloy ng tubig sa mga mapuputik nang kailugan sa bansa.



Tagalog News: Mga ilog sa Bulacan, itutuloy ang pagpapalalim

Inilatag din ng TCSC ang kanilang plano sa kung saan at paano nila maisasagawa ang paghuhukay sa ilang bahagi sa Bulacan ng libre.

Ayon kay TCSC Geologist Delfin Bagon, tukoy na nila ang mga lugar sa lalawigan kung saan sila magsasagawa ng dredging mula Hagonoy hanggang Bulakan at Paombong hanggang Malolos.

Saklaw nito ang upstream hanggang sa delta. Base sa pag-aaral ng TCSC, ito ang mga highly susceptible sa pagbaha tuwing tag-ulan.

Ayon kay Fernando, hindi dapat tumigil sa paggawa ng maganda para sa kalikasan kahit na panahon ng pandemya. Hihilingin din ng gobernador sa DENR na magawa ang ibang lugar na kinakailangan ma-dredge.

Iniharap naman nina Raymund Borlongan at Abraham Dolores ng Provincial Engineers' Office ang kanilang mga natapos nang gawain sa paghuhukay sa lalawigan at ipinakita ang mga lugar na nangangailangan pa ng higit na paghuhukay partikular ang lahat ng ilog patungo sa Manila Bay. (CLJD/VFC-PIA 3)



DENR NCR's Online Appointment System now ready to assist clients

By Ma. Allaine P. AllaniguePublished on June 23, 2020
<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1045620>

QUEZON CITY, June 23 (PIA) -- The regional office of the Department of Environment & Natural Resources in the National Capital Region has launched the Online Appointment System to assist clients with their transactions.

According to Regional Executive Director Jacqueline A. Caancan, the system is meant to rationalize the allocation of manpower resources to service demands and ensure that clients are attended to when they do visit the regional office.

“As a matter of principle”, RED Caancan explains, “we’re much inclined to discourage walk-in clients, given the prevailing public health crisis caused by COVID-19. We don’t want people going out of their houses unnecessarily, which is why we’ve also launched our Hotline Connect Numbers in tandem with our online appointment system,”Caancan said.

“For simple inquiries, our clients can call our Hotline Connect Numbers or send us a message via our Facebook page. But for transactions that need face-to-face interaction with our officers, we encourage them to book their appointments first through the online appointment system,” Caancan added.

Caancan said citizens may now book their visit to the regional office via the DENR-NCR Online Appointment System by simply setting the browser to the URL: <http://denrncrsys.online:8097>

In compliance with quarantine protocols, the regional office has limited its operations to frontline services to ensure unimpeded service delivery and reduce the risks posed on the health of its clients and employees whenever they go out. (DENR-NCR/PIA-NCR)



Pagtataas ng environmental fee sa Boracay, pinag-aaralan na

By Bombo Radyo Kalibo

June 24, 2020 | 2:27 AM

<https://www.bomboradyo.com/pagtataas-ng-environmental-fee-sa-boracay-pinag-aaralan-na/>

KALIBO, Aklan — Ibinalik ng Aklan Provincial Board sa Sangguniang Bayan ng Malay upang muling mapag-aralan ang panukalang ordinansa kaugnay sa balaking taasan ang environmental fee ng mga turista na bibisita sa Boracay.

Ang kasalukuyang P75 environmental fee ay posibleng tumaas ng P300 para sa foreign tourist, P150 sa domestic tourist at kahit ang mga Aklanon na hindi residente ng bayan ng Malay, Aklan ay magbabayad na ng P50.

Ayon kay Sangguniang Bayan member Maylynn Aguirre-Graf, may akda ng Municipal Ordinance No. 414 series of 2020 na layunin nito na magastusan ang bayarin sa pagkolekta ng basura at pangangalaga sa kalikasan ng isla.

Maliban sa environmental fee, may P100 pang babayaranang terminal fee ang mga foreign at domestic tourists.

Nabatid na noong nakaraang taon lamang ipinatupad ng LGU-Malay ang P75 na singil sa environmental fee mula sa P50, kung saan, sinuportahan ito ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) upang mapanatili ang rehabilitasyong isinasagawa sa isla.

Ang Boracay ay isinailalim sa anim na buwang rehabilitasyon simula Abril hanggang Oktubre 2018.

Nasa P14.258-million ang utang ng LGU Malay para sa tipping fees at P92.041 sa hauling services noong 2019 sa ECOS Sanitary Landfill and Waste Management Corporation, ang naka-kontratang kompanyang naghahakot ng basura sa Boracay.



Philippine Red Cross to mount COVID-19 testing centers in Boracay, other tourist spots

Katrina Domingo, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jun 23 2020 04:56 PM

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/06/23/20/philippine-red-cross-to-mount-covid-19-testing-centers-in-boracay-other-tourist-spots>



Two children frolick along the white sand shores of Boracay Island on January 20, 2020 before parts of the Philippines were placed on lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. ABS-CBN News/file

MANILA - The Philippine Red Cross on Tuesday said it would put up coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) testing centers in Boracay and other tourism hubs to "advertise" to tourists that these areas have enough safeguards against the disease.

The PRC will open COVID-19 testing centers in Boracay, Bohol, Palawan and Siargao "to advertise that workers and residents there have been tested and cleared of infection," the organization's chair Sen. Richard Gordon said in a statement.

Boracay resumed tourism operations on June 16, but only for travelers from within Western Visayas.

"We can advertise to the whole world [that] we have tested all the employees here, we have tested everybody here so now you are welcome to come down, and jobs can be generated right away," said Gordon, a former Tourism secretary.

Once recreational flights resume, tourists can proceed to PRC's COVID-19 testing centers as soon as they arrive, Gordon said.

Fireflies light up Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Puerto Princesa



Strong tourism recovery seen

June 23, 2020 01:06 AM

By Raymart Lolo

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/06/23/strong-tourism-recovery-seen/>



The Department of Tourism (DoT) is seeing a strong recovery for the tourism sector following the industry's recorded increase in contribution to the country's economy.

In a statement on Monday, the Department of Tourism (DoT) highlighted the 12.7 percent growth of tourism's contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019.

According to Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, this confirms the industry's vital role in the country's recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the strong support of stakeholders and partners, Puyat expressed optimism that the tourism industry would "recover and emerge stronger."

"Coming at a time when the country is grappling with the most devastating impact of this pandemic, we are inspired by this report as it affirms the vital role of our tourism sector in contributing to the economic recovery of our nation," Puyat said.

The tourism secretary added that the Philippine Statistics Authority report validates the tourism industry's crucial contribution to the economy in terms of productivity and employment generation.

"I have high hopes that the Philippine tourism industry will recover, and we will come out better from the current challenges that we face with the strong support from our stakeholders and partners," said Puyat.



Fireflies light up Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Puerto Princesa

Published June 23, 2020 9:32pm

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/743901/fireflies-light-up-iwahig-prison-and-penal-farm-in-puerto-princesa/story/?fbclid=IwAR02RMcx9NV62KJzSnSkFuu6i1SiTxqNHJldBQ6EY-pRt4-MVYtMSoheN4s>

Fireflies, who are among the creatures threatened by the destruction of mangrove forests, have started to light up anew over the Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Puerto Princesa City in Palawan.

According to Chino Gaston's report on "24 Oras" on Tuesday, fireflies indicate that the ecosystem in the farm is starting to build up anew after some illegal activities.

For former tour guide Jasper Camacho, he might have lost his job due to the closing of the firefly tour last year, but he said it was all worth it because he gave nature a chance to recover.

"During the time na nag-o-operate ang firefly watching, lahat ng mga safety, lahat ng mga pag-prevent kung anumang masisira sa biodiversity, sa river, sa mga fireflies, sa mangroves isa na rin, nako-control. Sa other side naman ng pagkawala ng fireflies, nakahinga naman ang environment," Camacho said.

However, last month, the Bureau of Customs discovered that over 100 hectares of lowland forest were cleared by kaingin farmers within the penal colony.

"Malaki 'yong impact niya kasi we know naman... Unahin natin sa mga endangered species like the Philippine cockatoo, alam naman natin na lowland forest sila tumitira and since the area is a lowland one so talagang malaking impact noon para lalong maging critically endangered ang mga cockatoo," Iwahig Jail Supt. Raul Levita said.

"Ang another impact pa is 'yong water shed natin so sa ngayon ang pinagkukuhaan ng tubig ng Puerto Princesa City ay ang Iwahig. So kung patuloy natin kakalbuhan ang kagubatan ng Iwahig, mawawala ang tubig ng Puerto Princesa," he added.

Meanwhile, Levita said if there is a possibility to reopen the farm to tourists, legal battles regarding it should be solved first.

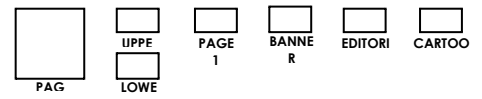
Tourists should also be limited, he added.

Moreover, forest rangers should also be present to protect, not only the mangrove forest, but also the other 27,000-hectare land of the farm. – Ma. Angelica Garcia/RC, GMA News



Strategic Communication
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24 June 2020
Date

Batang nangongolekta ng basura hinangaan dahil sa kagandahang asal

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jun 23 2020 08:47 PM

https://news.abs-cbn.com/video/news/06/23/20/batang-nangongolekta-ng-basura-hinangaan-dahil-sa-kagandahang-asal?fbclid=IwAR0SZ0fZ0j04RHLS2AWaQD9Z5ja9SduBO3C6lBiRVf_wFWMqWFrKSibUekk



Hinangaan at kinagiliwan ng mga netizen ang isang batang nangongolekta ng basura dahil sa ipinakita niyang kagandahang asal mula sa mga turo sa kaniya ng kaniyang tatay at nanay. Nagpa-Patrol, Kevin Manalo. TV Patrol, Martes, 23 Hunyo 2020

Reusable containers don't increase risk of virus transmission, say scientists

By Robin Hicks

June 24, 2020

<https://www.eco-business.com/news/reusable-containers-dont-increase-risk-of-virus-transmission-say-scientists/>

Reusable containers such as carrier bags, lunchboxes and water bottles do not pose a risk of viral contagion if basic hygiene rules are followed, according to a study that aims to counter a surge in single-use plastic use amid the coronavirus pandemic.



Reusable drink containers on the counter at a Starbucks store in Singapore. The coffee chain has stopped accepting customers' own containers, citing the risk of spread of the Covid-19. Image: Robin Hicks/Eco-Business

Reusable containers such as carrier bags, lunchboxes and water bottles do not pose a viral contagion risk if basic hygiene rules are followed, more than 100 health experts and scientists have said.

Their statement, released on Monday, sought to reassure consumers and retailers that bring-your-own (BYO) container schemes are not a public health threat, and can still be used as an alternative to disposables.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a resurgence in single-use plastic waste as countries rescinded plastic bans and retailers scrapped BYO schemes. Lockdowns and heightened hygiene measures have led to a sharp increase in food delivery trash and disposable personal protective equipment use.

Environmental groups including Greenpeace have said the plastics industry has exploited the crisis by lobbying against bans on single-use plastic, claiming that disposable plastic products help stop the spread of the virus.



Reuseable containers don't increase risk of virus transmission, say scientists

The statement, signed by 115 scientists from 18 countries including Taiwan, the Philippines and Malaysia, said reusable systems can be used safely by employing basic hygiene such as ware-washing at high temperatures and using contact-free systems for customers' containers.

It pointed to research that shows that the virus is transmitted mainly through droplets in the air, rather than through contact on surfaces, and that reusable objects present the same potential for viral spreading as disposable materials. "Single-use plastic is not inherently safer than reusables, and causes additional public health concerns once it is discarded," the health experts said.

Mixed messages

Retailers have taken a confused approach to Covid-19 prevention in recent months. In a shopping mall in Singapore visited by Eco-Business on Tuesday, two US-headquartered coffee chain outlets located within 20 metres of each other, Starbucks and The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, have completely different BYO policies; the former does not accept reusable cups, the latter does.

At SaladStop!, a healthy eating chain with outlets in Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines, BYO is available to customers only in the latter three markets.

Co-founder Katherine Desbaillets said that there have been "no concerns" about Covid-19 transmission in these markets as customers' reusable containers are not allowed to touch other items on the food preparation bar, and a designated area for BYO bowls is disinfected after every BYO order.

Desbaillets said that there have been no complaints about any perceived contagion risk from BYO because "customers are aware of how the process works and how we keep BYO items separate."

There have been no reported cases of reusable containers causing the spread of the virus, or outbreak hotspots at retail outlets that offer BYO.

Greenpeace campaigner Marian Ledesma said that as governments allow businesses to reopen, "reusable systems and single-use plastic bans must be implemented to ensure the protection of the environment, workers, and consumers".

Thanks for reading to the end of this story!

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WHO: 'Poor adherence' to rules raised PH virus cases among stranded persons

INQUIRER.net / 10:30 PM June 23, 2020

By: Gabriel Pabico Lalu - Reporter / @GabrielLaluINQ

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1296354/who-ignoring-protocols-led-to-spike-in-ph-virus-cases-among-stranded-persons>

MANILA, Philippines — Disregard of health protocols by some stranded individuals and returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) contributed to the increase in coronavirus infections in the Philippines, a World Health Organization (WHO) report has found.

In its 41st Situation Report on the Philippines' COVID-19 response published Tuesday, WHO stressed that precautionary measures issued by health authorities should be followed, especially after quarantine restrictions have been relaxed in many areas.

"Many new cases reported among repatriated [OFWs] and Locally Stranded Individuals (LSI) [was] due to poor adherence to proper prevention measures during the mandatory quarantine period," WHO said.

"Department of Health (DOH) [is] emphasizing the need for increased control of proper implementation of guidelines at LGU level [...] the importance of adherence to minimum precautionary measures, as one of the recurrent sources of infection among new cases [in] the country," they added.

Recently, there are reports that some LSIs are carriers of coronavirus – although only confirmed by the time they have reached their home provinces through the government's Balik Probinsya and Hatid Probinsya programs.

According to estimates from research firm Social Weather Stations, almost 4.1 million Filipinos have been stranded, one way or another, during the community quarantine periods.

In Bohol, nine LSIs who returned last June 7 were found to have COVID-19 – including the first case for the province's Inabanga town.

READ: Driver, stranded persons are latest COVID-19 cases in Negros Occidental

Prior to that, three persons who availed of the government's Balik Probinsya program and went back to Isabela were found positive for the novel coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2, which causes respiratory ailment COVID-19.

READ: 3 'Balik Probinsya' returnees test positive for coronavirus in Isabela town



WHO: 'Poor adherence' to rules raised PH virus cases among stranded persons

Due to these incidents of infections among LSIs, some local government units (LGUs) have decided to prevent people from entering their cities like in the case of Cebu and Talisay.

READ: Stranded persons barred to enter, leave Cebu and Talisay cities for now

As of Tuesday, the Philippines has one of the highest COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia, currently at 31,825 with 1,186 patients dead and 8,442 recoveries. Metro Manila – where most of the quarantine facilities for returning OFWs and LSIs are located – remains to have the biggest share of COVID-19 cases at 50.4 percent.

This was followed by Central Visayas (19.4 percent), Calabarzon (7.4 percent), and Central Luzon (2.6 percent).

According to WHO, the Philippines remains to be in the Stage 2 level of transmissions, which means that there are local transmissions although these are confined to a specific geographical area, and not widespread.

Stage 2 is the third level in WHO's COVID-19 pandemic classification, as the other "stages" are as follows: Stage 0 means there are no cases, Stage 1 means the majority of cases are imported, and Stage 3 means there is no clear link for infection origin.

"The Philippines remains in Stage 2, localized community transmission, with data indicating an increasing trend and likely higher transmission in the NCR and Central Visayas with evidence of cases exported from these two Regions to other areas with lower levels of transmission," WHO said.

Before the Balik Probinsya program gained steam, many groups have warned that this initiative – which is being pushed by President Rodrigo Duterte's longtime aide-turned-legislator, Senator Bong Go – will only bring more problems to provinces that have suffered from weak healthcare systems.

Still, Go believes that Balik Probinsya is the answer to decongesting Metro Manila while providing more opportunities for those in the countryside.



DoH eyes ‘pooled testing’ method

June 23, 2020 07:32 PM

By Gabbie Parlade

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/06/23/doh-eyes-pooled-testing-method/>

The Department of Health (DoH) on Tuesday disclosed that it is considering a new method as means to fast-track testing among coronavirus disease (COVID-19) patients.

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said that the “pooled testing” strategy uses an algorithm that will only require a limited number of specimens for testing and will serve as a result for a set of samples.

“Pooled testing is a method that uses algorithms so that only a few specimens will need to be tested,” said Vergeire. “All specimens will be combined and if one pooled sample negative it means that all the specimens in that sample are negative.”

According to a paper released on 5 May by the University of Southern Carolina Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics, pooled testing was seen as a “potentially cost-effective means” of testing COVID-19 and in prevention future virus outbreaks.

Vergeire, however, said that it is still undergoing ethics review where the limit of samples will be determined before launching its pilot testing at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM).

The DoH is also in the process of identifying laboratories that can pursue the testing operation.

“We’re trying to find out which of our laboratories can feasibly do this based on their capacity and also on their health human resources as well as the number of specimens to be tested daily,” said Vergeire.

Vergeire also said that with the method’s approval, the nationwide capacity will likewise increase.



‘Filter travels, ensure safety’

By Francis Wakefield

June 24, 2020 12:05 AM

<https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/06/24/filter-travels-ensure-safety/>

Malacañang on Tuesday claimed no lapses in the Balik Probinsya and Hatid Probinsya programs although a review is called to strengthen the health and safety protocols in their implementation.

Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go asked the Executive branch to scrutinize both programs’ implementation to help appease the Central Visayas leaders who raised concerns over the projects.

The local government units (LGU) have suspected the recent COVID-19 infections in their localities were spread by the recently returned overseas Filipino workers and formerly stranded individuals who availed of the government’s programs.

“Even though we have eased some of the restrictions under the quarantine measures, we should implement strict rules in transporting these persons to their provinces so we can stop the spread of the infections,” he said.

Go echoed the recommendation of various stakeholders that all flights, bus and vessel travels and fast craft ships from one province to another must be limited to shorter periods.

These should also comply with the health and safety protocols aside from having to secure clearances from the authorities.

“Both are organized programs. We are giving LGU more time to prepare their communities for the return of the BP2 beneficiaries,” Go said.

President Rodrigo Duterte, however, expressed his displeasure over the chaotic handling of the COVID-19 cases by Cebu City officials.

“You’ve been too confident, too complacent. That’s why there’s plenty of cases there,” the President said during his televised report late Monday night.



‘Filter travels, ensure safety’

The Chief Executive sent Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu to administer the city’s response to the local spread of the pandemic in Cebu City.

He also ordered the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Health (DoH) to assist Cimatu.

The DoH on Tuesday warned that the city’s critical care capacity has reached its “warning zone.”

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire cited this as one of the reasons why the region had to revert to strict enhanced community quarantine.

“It’s not at a critical level because that would be in 70 percent and above. But it is in the warning zone already, that’s why they were put in ECQ last time because their critical care utilization is already in that warning zone,” Vergeire said.

Data from 21 June placed the highest percentage of occupancies in Cebu include 58 percent of patients among its 1,533 available hospital beds and 56 percent occupancy in intensive care units.

Thirteen percent of the total 19,718 community isolation beds are likewise occupied along with 37 percent of patients using mechanical ventilators.

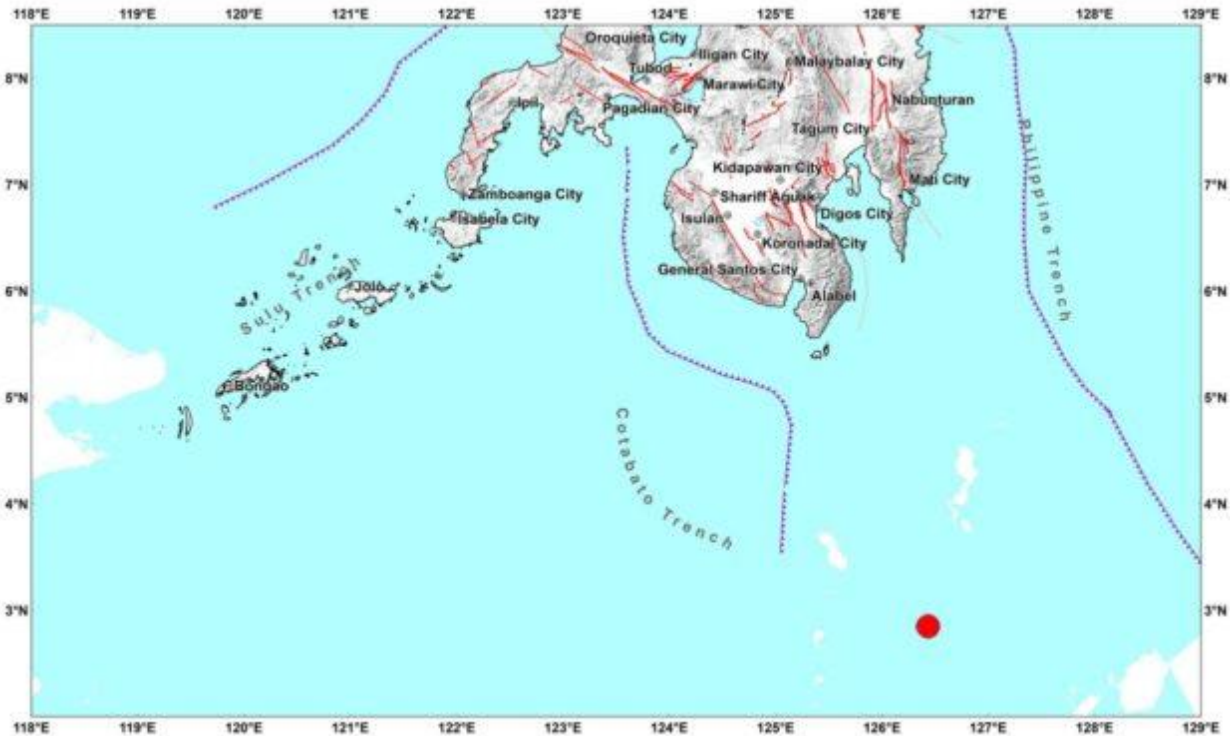


4.1-magnitude quake jolts Davao Occidental

By: Daphne Galvez - Reporter / @DYGalvezINQ

INQUIRER.net / 02:51 PM June 23, 2020

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1296100/4-1-magnitude-quake-jolts-davao-occidental>



This photo shows the epicenter of the 4.1-magnitude quake that hit Davao Occidental at 1:55 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23, 2020. Photo from Phivolcs website

MANILA, Philippines — A 4.1-magnitude earthquake rocked Davao Occidental on Tuesday afternoon, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

In its initial earthquake bulletin, Phivolcs said the temblor hit 304 kilometers (km) southeast of Sarangani, Davao Occidental, at 1:55 p.m.

It had a depth of 33 km and was tectonic in origin.

No aftershocks nor damage could be expected from the tremor, Phivolcs said.



No tsunami warning in PH despite magnitude 7.7 quake in Mexico – Phivolcs

By: Gabriel Pabico Lalu - Reporter / @GabrielLaluINQ

INQUIRER.net / 02:11 AM June 24, 2020

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1296389/no-tsunami-warning-despite-strong-magnitude-7-7-quake-in-mexico-phivolcs#ixzz6QETd9vjf>

MANILA, Philippines — No tsunami warning was issued for the Philippines despite a magnitude 7.7 earthquake recorded near Mexico’s coastline facing the Pacific Ocean, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said on Tuesday night.

Earlier, at 11: 29 p.m. (Philippine Standard Time), the major earthquake was recorded at a depth of 33 kilometers near the coast of Oaxaca in Mexico.

“No destructive tsunami threat exists based on available data. This is for information purposes only and there is no tsunami threat to the Philippines from this earthquake,” [Phivolcs](#) added.

According to the United States Geological Survey the earthquake was initially recorded as magnitude 7.4.



WMO seeks to verify 'worrying' reports of Arctic temperature reaching record 100°F

Published June 23, 2020 7:38pm

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/world/743880/wmo-seeks-to-verify-worrying-reports-of-arctic-temperature-reaching-record-100-deg-f/story/>

GENEVA - The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Tuesday it was seeking to confirm reports of a record temperature reading of more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit in Siberia, saying they were "worrying" but appeared to be consistent with warming trends.

The WMO has asked Russian authorities to confirm the reading of 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 Fahrenheit) reported in the Russian town of Verkhoyansk, north of the Arctic Circle, on June 21.

"We've seen satellite images this morning and it's just one mass of red. It's striking and worrying," WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis told a Geneva briefing.

The Arctic is warming at twice the speed of the global average and this year an unusually hot Siberian spring has melted ground snow and broken up river ice early.

Professor Randall Cerveny, WMO Rapporteur on Weather and Climate Extremes, said that a team had "given tentative acceptance of this observation as a legitimate observation", which he said was consistent with other regional data.

Siberia has experienced "exceptional heat" in recent weeks, the WMO added.

The Geneva-based U.N. agency expects to hear back from Russia's meteorological agency within days and will then start its own verification process to check whether the reading, which is more typical of the tropics, is an all-time record.

In February, the WMO said a research base in the Antarctic had recorded the hottest temperature ever for that continent.

"Month after month we are surprised, concerned by temperature readings that we see," Nullis said. -Reuters



China dog meat festival goes ahead but virus takes a toll

Laurie Chen, Agence France-Presse

Posted at Jun 23 2020 03:52 PM

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/06/23/20/china-dog-meat-festival-goes-ahead-but-virus-takes-a-toll?fbclid=IwAR3vrIZT4MXPssNRitjhR2uwMa0UPJVy3MqT7NLgoCPnIDLAj3etmpZI32o>



Dogs are seen in a cage at a dog meat market in Yulin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China June 2020 in this handout provided on June 22, 2020. Humane Society International/Handout via Reuters

BEIJING - Volunteers at a Beijing dog shelter hand out treats to dozens of rescued animals which had been bound for a controversial dog meat festival under way this week in southern China.

The annual event in Yulin city always provokes outrage from animal rights activists, but this year they hope the coronavirus epidemic will be the death knell of a tradition they see as cruel.

It is "inhumane and barbaric", said Jeffrey Bari, founder of the No Dogs Left Behind organization, which keeps around 200 canines in large wire enclosures on the outskirts of the Chinese capital and re-homes them.

Activists save hundreds of dogs every year by raiding slaughterhouses and intercepting trucks. They say traders steal pets and strays and transport them long distances, mostly to the country's south.

"You feel a kind of achievement because you've changed some dog's life," said Ling, who volunteers at the center.

Dog meat is traditionally believed to be good for the health in certain parts of China, but the habit has been in steady decline as more and more affluent urban dwellers choose to keep the animals as pets.



China dog meat festival goes ahead but virus takes a toll

The COVID-19 outbreak appears to have further reduced the appetite for dog meat after the disease was linked to a market in the central city of Wuhan selling animals for food.

Amid growing concerns about hygiene, China fast-tracked laws banning the consumption and trade of wildlife.

While the law does not apply to dog meat, Shenzhen and Zhuhai -- southern cities not far from Yulin -- banned the consumption of dogs in April, becoming the first cities in China to do so.

And last month, the agriculture ministry reclassified dogs as companion animals, not livestock, though it did not explicitly prohibit eating them.

FALLING ATTENDANCE

Video footage of this year's Yulin dog meat festival verified by AFP shows dozens of animals crammed in small, dirty cages and butchers at several large stalls piled high with dog carcasses.

But restaurant workers involved in the week-long event, which they say started Sunday and has been renamed the "Yulin Summer Solstice Festival", told AFP that attendance was down.

"The number of arriving customers has dropped a lot," said a man surnamed Chen.

He said the dog meat restaurant where he works would open as normal this festival without any special events or pricing like in past years.

Some posts on the Chinese social network Weibo called for the festival to be cancelled entirely after COVID-19 and a recent fresh outbreak of the disease in Beijing linked to a wholesale food market.

"Is it not enough that (the festival) is infamous throughout the world? Where will food safety become a reality... Stop this damn festival at once," one user wrote.

Experts pointed to a shift in public attitudes towards dog meat consumption and food safety in the wake of the virus.



China dog meat festival goes ahead but virus takes a toll

A proposal for China's first nationwide law banning animal cruelty received wide public support during the annual parliamentary session in May, while a viral video of a Chinese university student torturing a cat sparked mass public outcry in April.

Chen said neither police nor the government had ordered his restaurant to stop selling dog meat as a result of the animal's reclassification as pets.

"I would say that (the rule) impacted the rest of the country and people were talking about it, but I did not see it having an immediate impact on the dog meat trade in Yulin," said Peter Li of the animal rights group Humane Society International.

Despite the efforts of activists and concerns about hygiene, the Yulin event has persisted with the local government's tacit permission.

"Most of the activities related to the sale of dog meat there are in violation of existing Chinese food safety regulations," said Deborah Cao, professor of animal law and ethics at Griffith University in Australia.

But she said "existing food safety laws in China are not enforced in most instances" and there is "no accountability."