



DENR checks on extent of oil spill from power barge explosion in Iloilo City

Published July 4, 2020, 2:38 PM

by Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) in Western Visayas has collected water samples to determine the extent of oil spilled into the waters of Iloilo City after an explosion at a power barge occurred last Friday.

Based on initial reports that reached the DENR main office in Quezon City, an explosion occurred in the power barge 102 in the starboards side owned by AC Energy Corporation located at Zone 3, Brgy. Obrero, Lapuz, Iloilo City at around 3:20 p.m. on Friday.

No casualties were reported but 30 to 40 families were evacuated from the area due to the foul odor reported by the community.

Initial data from the Iloilo City Emergency Operation Center on the incident identified almost 48,000 liters of oil was spilled from the power barge with an estimated 200,000-liter content.

An estimated area of 1,200 square meters is affected, reports said. The spillage was being contained by the personnel of the power barge via spill boom, but a small amount of oil was identified to have escaped.

Latest available report has stated that the Philippine Coast Guard and barge personnel were trying to contain the oil spill, which has covered an area of more or less 300 meters.

The EMB-Western Visayas is also working on coordination with other agencies for the conduct of an investigation in the area.

It had already collected water samples to determine oil and grease concentrations off the coast of Iloilo City.

The area has been cordoned by the Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine Coast Guard, City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office and City Environment and Natural Resources Office to prevent the spread of oil in the affected area.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/04/denr-checks-on-extent-of-oil-spill-from-power-barge-explosion-in-iloilo-city/>

Residents flee from fumes of Iloilo oil spill

Published July 4, 2020, 6:54 PM

by Tara Yap

ILOILO CITY—Hundreds of coastal residents of Barrio Obrero in this city have evacuated from their homes, fearful of the fumes from the oil spill of a power barge that exploded that have already reached their homes.

Residents of Bo. Obrero are currently staying at the nearby school as they evacuated their homes due to fumes emitting from the oil spill caused by a power barge that exploded in Iloilo City. (TARA YAP/ MANILA BULLETIN)

As of 5 p.m., July 4, the Iloilo City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) facilitated the temporary stay of 105 families or 378 people at the Barrio Obrero Elementary School.

Evacuation of the residents, who were mostly informal settlers, started Friday night after bunker fuel started to leak out from Power Barge 102 of AC Energy Philippines earlier in the afternoon.

“We have established a team to closely coordinate with barangay [officials] so that we can provide the needed support,” said AC Energy in a statement.

But The Manila Bulletin found out Saturday that not all coastal residents left, and some still chose to stay in their homes despite the strong fumes emanating from the power barge.

Several residents who did not want to be named said they felt fine, and that they would rather stay home. They said they would not be comfortable if they were made to stay at the evacuation center where authorities also want to practice physical distancing due to threat of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

In a situational report, the Iloilo City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (Iloilo City DRRMO) said that the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has been leading the skimming and scooping of oil that leaked from the power barge that was carrying 200,000 liters of oil. It is estimated that 100,000 liters have already been retrieved.

AC Energy separately disclosed that it was working with the PCG, Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) and local disaster management teams to contain the spill. It added that an oil skimmer equipment from Shell Philippines also arrived Saturday while more equipment was set to arrive on Sunday, July 5.

Iloilo oil spill

posted July 04, 2020 at 08:15 pm



The Philippine Coast Guard and members of the Marine Environmental Protection Unit of Western Visayas inspect the extent of an oil spill off the port of Iloilo City on Saturday. One of the four oil tanks of Power Barge No. 102 off Zone 3 in Barrio Obrero, Lapuz, Iloilo burst, spilling about 48,000 liters of bunker oil, as the Coast Guard worked to contain the spill. PCG photos

48,000 liters ng langis kumalat sa karagatan ng Iloilo City

ni [Lolet Abania](#) | July 4, 2020

Tinatayang 48,000 liters ng langis ang kumalat sa karagatan ng Iloilo City matapos ang naganap na pagsabog sa isang power barge, ayon sa lokal na opisyal ng lugar.



Umabot sa 1,200 square meters ang estimated na lugar ang naapektuhan ng spillage, ayon sa awtoridad. Gayundin, sa pag-aanalisa ng Coast Guard mayroong 40,000 liters ang kumalat sa katubigan ng Iloilo.

“Current efforts involve scooping and skimming of spilt oil in order to contain the spill led by the Philippine Coast Guard,” sabi ng emergency operation center ng siyudad.

Naganap ang pagsabog kahapon sa AC Energy’s Power Barge 102 sa Barrio Obrero sa Lapuz district, ayon sa report ng opisyal. Agad namang naapula ang apoy subalit tinatayang may kapasidad na 200,000 liters ang barge.

Ayon sa AC Energy, nag-imbetiga na ang pamunuan tungkol sa sanhi ng pagsabog. Dagdag pa rito, nagsagawa na ng blockage ng mga structure sa paligid ng barge upang mapigilan ang oil spill subalit dahil sa high waves patuloy ang pagkalat nito sa tubig.

“We will do the needed cleanup once we are confident that we have done a good job containing the oil in the area,” ayon sa statement ng kumpanya. “We target completion of containment tonight, to be followed by skimming activities tomorrow.”

Oil spill mula sa sumabog na power barge sa Iloilo, umabot na hanggang Guimaras

By [Bombo Radyo Iloilo](#)

-July 4, 2020 | 8:25 PM

ILOILO CITY – Lumawak pa ang oil spill na tumagas mula sa sumabog na power barge ng AC Energy Corporation sa Zone 3, Bo. Obrero, Lapuz, Iloilo City.

Sa eksklusibong panayam ng Bombo Radyo Iloilo kay Dado Relles, porter ng pump boat at residente ng Guimaras, sinabi nito na maraming mga pasahero na bumabyahe mula Iloilo-Guimaras vice versa ang nagrereklamo dahil sa masangsang na amoy mula sa bunker oil.

Ang ikinababahala ni Relles na mangyari ulit ang sitwasyon sa Guimaras noong 2006 kung saan maraming hanapbuhay ang naapektuhan sa malawak na oil spill.

Sa ngayon, nakoleta na ang 130,000 liters sa 251,000 liters ng tumagas na langis sa Iloilo Strait.

News5 21 hrs · 🌐

Nasa 40,000 litro ng langis ang tumapon matapos pumutok ang isang tangke ng barge sa Iloilo City kahapon. Nakipag-tulungan ang Philippine Coast Guard at Marine Environmental Protection Unit ng Western Visayas para ma-contain ang bunker oil gamit ang boom. Naglatag na rin sila ng oil skimmer para sa operasyon.

📷: Philippine Coast Guard



👍👎👤 532 57 Comments 54 Shares

Source:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2081290018694408&id=163550757135020&fs=0&focus_composer=0



CNN Philippines ✓

July 3 at 6:43 PM · 🌐

BREAKING: Almost 48,000 liters of oil spilled into waters off Iloilo City after power barge explosion, local officials say. www.cnn.ph

📷: Leo Solinap



🙄👍🤔 6.3K

221 Comments 2K Shares

DENR bares assistance vs. COVID-19 pandemic

By Gene V. Baquiran Published on July 4, 2020

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan, July 4 (PIA) – Confiscated lumbers from the different Community Environment and Natural Resources Offices (CENROs) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) were donated to different local government units in the region for the construction of quarantine facilities.

Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan said some lumbers were also used in the construction of quarters of law enforcers manning checkpoints in the different entry points in the region.

This is aside from the P1.15 million-worth of assorted goods from the voluntary contributions of DENR employees here which were used for the purchase of goods given to hospital's medical workers, frontliners and less-privileged individuals of the region.

"We also volunteered some of our heavy equipment and other resources for the construction of quarantine facilities and quarters while some of our CENRO offices and other DENR-owned offices/structures served as quarantine facilities," Bambalan said.

She, however, said that the pandemic did not hamper the operation of the department especially in its drive against illegal logging, citing the two incidents of apprehension for the month of June. (BME/GVB PIA-2/Cagayan)

Lockdowns allows hawksbill turtles to thrive in

TITLE: Misamis Oriental

PAGE 1/ 1/2

July 05, 2020

DATE

Lockdown allows hawksbill turtles to thrive in Misamis Oriental

By: [Erwin M. Mascariñas](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:02 AM July 04, 2020



SEA BOUND A hawksbill sea turtle hatchling crawls toward the open waters of Gingoog Bay after villagers released it on the beach of Barangay Candiis, Magsaysay town, in Misamis Oriental province on June 21. —ERWIN MASCARIÑAS

BUTUAN CITY—The absence of beachgoers due to quarantine restrictions has allowed the critically endangered hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) to thrive in Magsaysay town, Misamis Oriental province, where they nested undisturbed during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In June alone, the coastal villages of Candiis and Bonifacio Aquino in Magsaysay released back to the sea a total of 246 turtle hatchlings, said Candiis Councilman Rolando Pagara, who leads the community's turtle conservation efforts.

This brought to 633 the total number of hatchlings released by the town in the first six months of the year, or double the 315 hatchlings set free last year.

Shorter hatching time

“If we combine the number of turtle hatchlings released in May and June this year, we come up with 573 turtle hatchlings,” he said. “We can say that this is the largest number of hatchlings released over the past five years and we are just in the first six months of 2020,” Pagara said.

Pagara also observed a faster incubation period for the hawksbill turtle eggs this year. “Hawksbill turtle eggs usually hatch between 60 and 65 days,” he said. “But the hatchlings we released on May 1 were nested on the beach on March 17, so their incubation only lasted 46 days. The same was true for all the other eggs that hatched in May and June,” he said.

Pagara said there could be other nesting areas in Magsaysay town, which had not yet been documented.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has classified the hawksbill turtle as a critically endangered species as its population had dwindled by as much as 80 percent in the last decade.

In the Philippines, the turtle species is among the most trafficked in the black market, coveted for its shell, which is carved into ornaments and baubles.

Lockdowns allows hawksbill turtles to thrive in

July 05, 2020

TITLE: Misamis Oriental

PAGE 1/ 2/2

DATE

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has declared 612 hectares in Magsaysay as critical habitat for hawksbill turtles, with Candiis, San Isidro and Dimayohan identified as nesting sites.

Republic Act No. 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, which aims to protect all wildlife, including the marine turtles, penalizes the hunting, killing, gathering of turtle eggs, and the destruction of their nests with a fine of P100,000 to P1 million and imprisonment of six to 12 years.

Commentary: COVID-19 pandemic an opportunity to change environmental policies

[Carlos Primo David](#) (Philstar.com) - July 4, 2020 - 1:24pm

As we reach for the economic reset button in the face of the continuing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, let's take a step back and reimagine what the country would and should look like in the new normal.

In a very meaningful sense, the COVID-19 disruption provides an opportunity for us to drastically change many things in the way we live. And these changes might actually be for the better.

This was the central theme of a virtual round table discussion hosted by the Stratbase Albert del Rosario (ADR) Institute last June 25. Government officials, civic sector champions, and leaders of the biggest Philippine companies weighed in on the topic, and unanimously agreed on the virtue of taking the path towards a green economy.

The basic tenets of a green economy are: (1) the efficient and sustainable use of resources; (2) the protection of the natural environment and corresponding reduction of climate risks; and, (3) justice and equity within and between generations.

A green economy puts an appropriate value on nature services beyond market principles, and strives to lessen our consumptive nature without compromising our happiness and well-being. While we may differ in approaches and strategies towards achieving these ideals, the path to a green economy has undoubtedly become clearer than ever.

The COVID-19 experience is compelling everyone to do things differently and to step out of their comfort zones. Many of these changes, not coincidentally, actually help achieve a green economy.

Whether it is a necessary response to COVID-19 or a slow-paced process of enlightenment, there are glimpses of positive change in government policies.

Central to a green economy is environmental protection, and it is gratifying to note that the DENR is stepping up to this challenge. A streamlined management of waste, brought about by the increase in hospital waste, has started with the building of new TSD (treatment, storage and disposal) facilities.

Rebooting the National Greening Program is a good opportunity to increase our forest cover and to provide needed employment in rural communities.

Finally, amendments to the Wildlife Act, that take into account the role of wild animals in the transmission of zoonotic pathogens, should bring broader and far-ranging benefits beyond the protection of human health.

These unexpected positive outcomes arising from an appreciation of the COVID-19 health crisis need to be sustained. As the saying goes, a crisis signifies both danger and opportunity.

The worldwide shutdown of industries, including aviation, has resulted in a significant decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.

With the shutdown of manufacturing and the reduction of vehicles on the road (as a result of work-from-home arrangements and the forced switch to online modes of communication and transaction), there has been a notable improvement in air quality in the metropolis.

Without public transport, the surge in the use of bicycles along major highways and the pedestrianization of local commerce centers have likewise helped improve air quality. Hopefully, policies can be put in place to maintain these positive green effects even as we gradually increase economic activity.

The limited mobility during the lockdown has renewed our focus on the development of sustainable communities. The local sourcing of daily necessities and services, the growing of food through urban farming, and the resort to e-commerce became practical necessities during the pandemic.

With appropriate policies, these could all become part of an enduring transformation of our society and culture. The shutdown of international trade was also a wake-up call for us to develop and be reliant on our own resources, whether these be in food, timber and forest products, or responsibly harnessing mineral resources.

The industry resource persons in the webinar unanimously agreed that the single biggest adjustment they had to make during the ECQ was to convert many of their work processes online. When asked for specifics, they said that work-from-home, Zoom meetings, and online management systems will now be staple processes in their companies even after COVID-19.

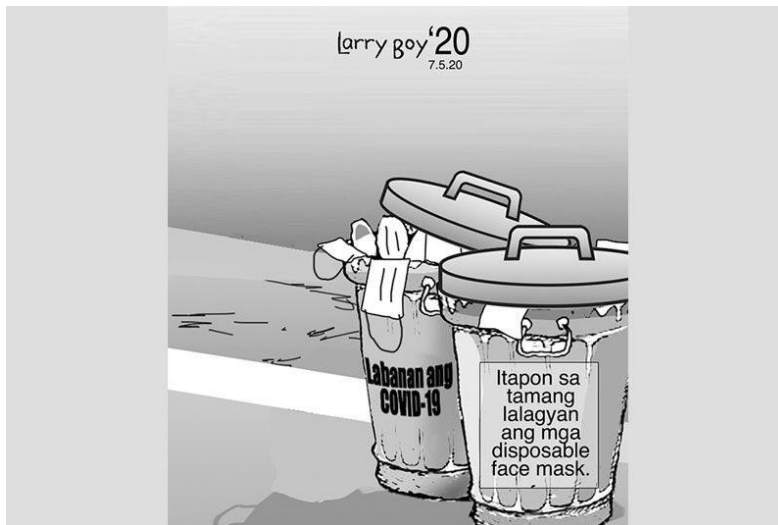
They also saw the urgent need to streamline their procedures by reducing waste, recycling and ensuring sustainability in their operations. In like manner, they also saw the necessity to continue corporate social responsibility programs notwithstanding the slowdown in commerce. Finally, they stressed the necessity to invest in longer term sustainability goals.

In the face of the pandemic, local governments and national agencies opened themselves to online transactions virtually overnight. Not only is this more efficient, it also eliminates many avenues for corruption. This is certainly a huge step in the right direction.

So are the proposals for increasing funding for research on healthcare and climate emergency; investments in low carbon infrastructure and transportation alternatives; sustainable travel initiatives; reduction in food wastage and a shift towards a circular economy. All these have become not only desirable but also doable.

When Pearce and others introduced the concept of a green economy in the UK in 1989, they never thought it could be activated by a pandemic. It is definitely time to view this pandemic as a global disruption that could actually lead to an urgent global transformative change. This pandemic has given humanity the opportunity to reimagine life and make it better.

Carlos Primo David is a trustee and convenor of the Global Energy and the Environment Program of think tank Stratbase ADR Institute. He is also a professor of Environmental Science and Geology at the University of the Philippines-Diliman and chairperson of the National Panel of Technical Experts-Climate Change Commission.



EDITORIAL - Huwag itapon sa kung saan-saan ang face masks

(Pang-masa) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MARAMI ang walang disiplina at mangmang sa kalinisan. At ang kawalan ng disiplina at kamangmangan ang naghuhulog para mapahamak. Ngayong nanalasa ang COVID-19 sa bansa, lalo pang lumutang ang kawalan ng disiplina at grabeng kamangmangan. Nakita ito sa walang patumanggang pagtatapon sa kung saan-saan ng mga ginamit na face mask. Sa halip na ibasura o itapon nang maayos sa isang lalagyan, kung saan-saan na lang itinatapon at karamihan ay makikita sa kalsada.

Kung tapon lamang nang tapon ng masks at iba pang ginamit o sinuot na pamproteksiyon maaaring kumalat nang kumalat ang virus. Wala nang paghupa ito at maraming mahahawahan ng virus. Ang mga ginamit na disposable single-use masks at iba pang protective equipment ay nararapat nakahiwalay sa ibang mga lalagyan at itatapon nang maayos. Ang hindi maayos na pagdi-dispose ng mga ito ay maaa-ring maging dahilan nang pagkalat ng virus. Ang virus ay nagtatagal sa masks at iba pang protective equipment ng siyam na araw kaya posibleng dito magmula ang pagkalat ng sakit.

Kapansin-pansin ang mga nagkalat na single-use face masks sa kalsada sa maraming lugar sa Metro Manila. Dalawang dahilan kung bakit maraming nagkalat sa kalsada: una, maaaring itinatapon ng mga walang disiplina at mangmang; at ikalawa, maaaring nalaglag sa mga garbage truck at walang pakialam dito ang mga basurero.

Halos araw-araw ay may mga used face masks na makikita sa mga kalsada at tinatangay-tangay ito ng hangin kapag may dumaan na sasakyan. Kung may COVID-19 ang nagsuot ng mask, tiyak na patalun-talon din ang virus na taglay. Wala itong tigil sa paglipat-lipat.

Nagbabala ang mga environmentalists na ang hindi maayos na pagdi-dispose ng mga single-use face masks ay mako-contaminate ang kapaligiran at magkakaroon ng sakit ang mga tao. Ang mga itinatapon ng face masks ay source ng infection. Marami ang nakakakuha ng sakit sa mga itinatapon ng face masks at iba pang protective gears.

Maraming magkakasakit kapag hindi nagkaroon ng disiplina at talino sa pagtatapon ng ginamit na face masks. Halos alam naman ng lahat na bawal ang basta magtapon ng mga bagay na ginamit na lalo pa ngayong may pandemia. Maski bata ay nalalaman na hindi ito maganda. Paigtingin ng pamahalaan ang paghihigpit laban sa mga pasaway na nagtatapon ng basura.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pang-masa/punto-mo/2020/07/05/2025756/editorial-huwag-itapon-sa-kung-saan-saan-ang-face-masks>

Tax exempt accreditation for small- scale gold miners, traders starts

By Rudolph Ian AlamaPublished on July 4, 2020

DAVAO CITY (PIA) - Following the release of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act 11256, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has announced the accreditation of small-scale gold miners, traders, mining associations or cooperatives for subsequent tax exemption.

R.A. 11256 also known as An Act to Strengthen the Country's Gross International Reserves, Amending For the Purpose Sections 32 and 151 of the National internal Revenue Code, mandates the exemption from payment of income and excise taxes on the sale of gold to the BSP by registered small scale and accredited small scale miners and traders.

The BSP Davao Regional Office Gold Buying Station is now accepting accreditation of these small scale miners and traders. These entities can visit the BSP to obtain copies of the following documents, namely; the IRR, the new BSP Gold Buying Program Guidelines and the Checklist of Requirements for Accreditation with the BSP.

For questions or clarifications or additional information on the accreditation, concerned parties are advised to call Leonides Sumbi, director of BSP Davao Regional Office or Acting Deputy Director Nestor B. Bastereche with number (082) 227-9051 locals 3757 and 3759. Or in case of absence they can contact foal person Engineer Johannes Bantugan or his alternate Bank Officer II Dorothy Joy Diaz at (082) 227-9051 locals 3777 and 3760.

Or they can email at Lsumbi@bsp.gov.ph or nbastareche@bsp.gov.ph bantuganja@bsp.gov.ph and DiazD@bsp.gov.ph.

BSP Davao Regional Office is open Mondays to Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (PIA/RGAlama)

Semirara defers P3.7 billion capex

[Danessa Rivera](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Semirara Mining and Power Corp. (SMPC) is deferring its P3.7 billion capital expenditures for this year following the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on its business.

During the company's virtual stockholders' meeting, SMPC chairman and chief executive officer Isidro Consunji said the company is implementing cash preservation measures this year as the COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on its liquidity.

He said this year presents a more challenging business environment because of historically lower coal and energy prices.

"Our operations have been largely unaffected by the lockdown because of the essential nature of our business. However, like most companies, we are susceptible to weak demand and lower market prices," Consunji said.

"Consistent with our disciplined and prudent approach to managing our company, we are rescheduling P3.7 billion worth of capex to 2021," Consunji said.

Consunji said they would keep spending to a minimum without sacrificing operational integrity and business sustainability.

SMPC will also defer the hiring for non-core positions, reduce non-essential business expenses and dispose of non-core assets as part of its cash preservation measures.

"Implementing these measures will allow us to preserve and generate cash, which we intend to use to meet our stakeholder obligations," Consunji said.

The company paid out P5.3 billion in cash dividends to its shareholders at the start of the enhanced community quarantine.

"This is beyond our company's cash dividend policy of at least 20 percent of the prior year's audited net income at the parent level," he said.

For next year, the company can meet its minimum dividend obligation to shareholders as it remains cash flow positive despite difficulties.

"However, it will take some time before we can return to the profit and dividend levels that we are used to, given the prevailing conditions and continuing risks presented by COVID-19," he said.

SMPC is also eyeing to use internally generated cash to pare down its loans, composed of P5 billion in short-term loans and P16 billion in long-term debt.

The firm can also tap unused credit lines if the pandemic and economy worsen.

"Our company is well prepared for the challenges ahead. And while we have additional credit lines, we hope that there will be no need for us to use it," Consunji said.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/business/2020/07/05/2025648/semirara-defers-p37-billion-capex>



One of the 21 Dinagatnon carpenters who helped build 150 beds in five days.

STAR/File

Nickel Asia subsidiary donates for COVID facilities in Dinagat

(The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC), a subsidiary of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC), donated more than P500,000 to cover the cost of labor and materials for the provision of wooden beds to be used in COVID-19 quarantine facilities in Dinagat Islands province.

Primarily intended for the Municipal Care and Containment Center (MCCC) of Dinagat, a total of 150 beds built by 21 carpenters in five days will be distributed to all seven municipalities in the province, namely Cagdianao, San Jose, Tubajon, Libjo, Loreto, Basilisa and Dinagat.

Dinagat Islands remains COVID-free as the provincial government continues to closely monitor the health and safety of the communities. Likewise, CMC strictly abides by the stringent guidelines and protocols imposed by the government to maintain a safe and healthy workplace .

CMC, with operations in Barangay Valencia, donated P577,024 from its corporate social responsibility budget, said resident mine manager Arnilo Milaor.

Dinagat Islands Governor Arlene “Kaka” Bag-ao, together with the Dinagat Islands Inter-Agency Task Force for COVID-19, initiated the program called “Katre-Karpintero” to respond to the need for more beds for quarantine facilities in the province.

Group seeks mining ban in Magat River watershed

[Rainier Allan Ronda](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A consumer advocacy group has urged the government to immediately revoke the mining license and concessions of a British wholly owned company for engaging in gold mining in the Magat River forest watershed area.

The Action for Consumerism and Transparency in Nation Building (ACTION) said mining activities in protected areas are expressly prohibited under the Mining Act of 1995.

“We respectfully ask President Duterte to cancel the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) of FCF Minerals Corp., which is located within the Magat River watershed forest reserve. Not only is the company mining in a protected area which is clearly prohibited under the Mining Act of 1995, but the Magat River also feeds into the Magat Dam which is the source of irrigation for agricultural land in the Cagayan Valley,” ACTION said in a statement.

The group stressed that protected areas including watersheds are “strictly and absolutely beyond the commerce of man” as mandated by law.

The environment watchdog pointed out that the entire area covered by FCF’s mining permit is clearly “within the proclaimed Magat Watershed Area as provided for by Proclamation 573.”

Ram Baccay, ACTION spokesman, also cited the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) Act which proclaimed watersheds as protected areas where mining operations are prohibited under Section 19 of the mining law.

Fears were also raised about the possibility of mine tailings and other toxic materials spilling into the Magat River and other connecting waterways, thereby inflicting a wider swath of destruction to agribusiness and the ecosystem.

Completed in 1982, Magat Dam is one of the largest dams in the Philippines. A multi-purpose infrastructure, it is primarily used to irrigate about 85,000 hectares of agricultural land, as well as for flood control and hydroelectric power generation.

The dam has a lifespan of 50 years, but increased siltation and sedimentation due to slash-and-burn farming, illegal logging and fish-caging resulted in the rapid deterioration of the dam’s watershed.

“We are also afraid that the catastrophic environmental disasters that happened in Marinduque and Benguet where thousands of hectares of agricultural land were damaged might also occur in Nueva Vizcaya and the rest of the Cagayan Valley because the Runruno tailings facility is built near the Sulong River, a tributary which joins the Magat River downstream onto the Cagayan River. The risk of earthquakes, landslides, or weather-related disasters could cause major spillage of hazardous materials into the Magat River and create serious damage to the supported irrigation networks of the Magat Dam,” Baccay said.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/business/2020/07/05/2025646/group-seeks-mining-ban-magat-river-watershed>

ADB joins financial greening network

[Czeriza Valencia](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has joined the Paris-formed Central Banks and Supervisors Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) as an observer.

The Manila-based multilateral bank joined the network effective June 23.

NGFS, launched at the Paris One Planet Summit on Dec. 12, 2017, is a group of central banks and supervisors willing to share best practices on environment and climate risk management in the financial sector, while mobilizing mainstream finance to support the transition of countries toward a sustainable economy.

ADB chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada said “NGFS is a valuable network to share ADB’s approaches and experience in addressing climate risk management in the financial sector.”

“We look forward to learning from and contributing to the network as we continue our pursuit of a more green and sustainable future,” he said.

ADB joins the ranks of the World Bank, the International Finance Corp., the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as NGFS observers.

Its inclusion to the NGFS is aligned with the goals in its Strategy 2030, particularly in tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience and enhancing environmental sustainability.

It is likewise aligned with the goals of fostering regional cooperation and integration; and strengthening governance and institutional capacity under the long-term corporate strategy.



Flowers bloom in Cagsawa Ruins

Published July 4, 2020 8:46pm

It looks like a new attraction has risen in the Cagsawa Ruins in Daraga, Albay.

A report on "24 Oras" Saturday showed that flowers had bloomed in the popular tourist destination, where the Mayon Volcano may be viewed.

The flowers grew while the park was closed to the public due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Tourists were surprised to find the beautiful sight when the park reopened last month.

The Daraga local government has assured that strict health protocols are put in place at the park to avoid the spread of COVID-19. – **RC, GMA News**

Religious activities, travel agency operations allowed

Published 1 day ago on July 4, 2020 03:50 AM

By [MJ Blancaflor](#)



Restrictions are further eased in areas under the general community quarantine (GCQ) after the government allowed religious activities and limited operations of travel agencies in these places, the Palace announced Friday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the Inter-Agency Task Force (ATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases approved Resolution 51 in its meeting Thursday which allowed additional activities in GCQ areas.

After 10 July, religious gatherings in these areas are allowed but only up to 10 percent of the seating capacity or up to 10 persons, whichever is higher.

The resolution, however, noted that religious activities should not be opposed by the local government unit (LGU) in that area.

Groups should likewise observe minimum public health standards, particularly distancing measures, wearing of face masks, and availability of hand hygiene necessities in the premises.

The IATF also approved the recommendation to allow skeleton workforce of travel agencies in GCQ areas to facilitate the processing of refunds and payment to suppliers.

The task force also decided to lift its restrictions on the resumption of partial operations of barbershops and salons in GCQ areas by removing the clause which states that the grooming services of these establishments would be "limited to basic haircutting services."

It means that treatments like waxing, shaving, eyelash extensions, as well as manicure and pedicure services, are now allowed in GCQ zones.

Roque, however, said the Department of Trade and Industry needs to first issue guidelines that will govern the gradual resumption of other services provided by barbershops and salons.

From 1 to 15 July, GCQ was imposed in Metro Manila, Benguet, Cavite, Rizal, Lapu-Lapu City, Mandaue City, Ormoc, Leyte, Southern Leyte and Cebu's Talisay City, Minglanilla and Consolacion.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/07/04/religious-activities-travel-agency-operations-allowed/>

DoH adopting new reporting format

Published 8 hours ago on July 5, 2020 12:05 AM

By [Gabbie Parlade](#)



The Department of Health (DoH) on Saturday announced that it will soon be adopting yet again another format of reporting COVID-19 cases.

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the new format may be released within the following week where only fresh or recent cases will be reported.

“We are developing a new format in how we are going to report to the public, it may be released in a week where it will not include the late cases and only fresh cases for a day will be released,” she said in a radio interview.

Vergeire said the cases will also be drafted in a graph to show the trend noting a lesser tally of late cases to be reported.

“We will put that in a graph where they will see the trend within the past three days and what other few late cases are still there,” she said.

Yesterday, DoH reported 1,531 new cases which were notably higher than the 294 additional cases on Thursday.

Vergeire explained that it was part of the shift in system implemented where on Thursday only 19 hours’ worth of data was extracted by 12 noon instead of the usual cut off time at 5 p.m.

“Before we usually retrieve data by 5 in the afternoon (but) we retrieved it earlier making it at 12 noon,” she said.

“Before yesterday we were only able to recover 19 hours of data so it means we got fewer data. What we did is, those that were not reported in the tally have been included in our data yesterday,” Vergeire added.

She disclosed that it has been difficult for the DoH to retrieve data from all levels of the government even from the communities, local government units, hospitals and other swabbing areas.

“It’s really a challenge for us to get all of this data nationwide and to put it into our system in just a matter of 24 hours,” she said.

However, she said that this new strategy has been adopted to attend to the evolving situation of the pandemic.

“We are continuously improving on our system. Others may see it as something too late, but if we don’t do it now then we may not be able to cope up and have timely (and) accurate data for all,” Vergeire added.

The DoH earlier drew criticism from the public and other officials after it initially used a new format of case tally due to the number of backlogs needed for validation leading to fresh and late cases.

As of Friday afternoon, the Philippines has recorded over 40,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with recoveries at 11,073 and a death toll of 1,280.

with Elmer N. Manuel
@tribuneph1_lmer



According to DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, the department is now working with medical experts from various specialty societies and the technical advisory group to look into the possible long-term complications of COVID-19.

pna.gov.ph

DOH to monitor long-term effects on COVID infected

[Sheila Crisostomo](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Health (DOH) is closely evaluating the long-term effects of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on those who got infected, already numbering over 41,000 individuals as of July 4.

According to DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, the department is now working with medical experts from various specialty societies and the technical advisory group to look into the possible long-term complications of COVID-19.

So far, she said the complications seen in “some patients or survivors of COVID-19 such as heart, kidney and lung problems are mainly due to the hyper-inflammatory response of our body.”

Vergeire noted this means that the “symptoms or complications are not really caused by the virus.”

“The symptoms and complications that we see are only signs that the body is resisting the virus,” she added.

In other countries, there were reports that the virus can penetrate the major organs of the bodies and can cause long-term effects like heart ailment, kidney scarring and even mental health conditions.

But since the disease is primarily a respiratory illness, health experts are looking at possible post-COVID lung disease in those who recovered from the infection.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/07/05/2025721/doh-monitor-long-term-effects-covid-infected>

QC barangays told to enforce GCQ guidelines

Published 6 hours ago on July 5, 2020 03:10 AM

By [Paula Antolin](#)



The Quezon City local government reminded barangay officials to strictly enforce the general community quarantine (GCQ) guidelines after clustering and possible community transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases were observed in some areas.

On Thursday, the city mayor met separately with the barangay captains from all 142 barangays, according to district, to reiterate their responsibility in enforcing national and local GCQ regulations to control the spread of the virus.

“We have been informed that most of the causes for the spread of COVID-19 cases in areas that were recently placed under special concern lockdown (SCL) were due to various unauthorized activities, which were regrettably preventable,” the official said.

“There were reports that residents in the said areas had drinking sessions, boodle fights, wakes that exceeded limitations in duration and number of attendees, and even played basketball and volleyball,” the official added.

In some cases, videoke sessions and birthday parties have been traced to have caused the transmission in certain areas.

The additional number of COVID-19 cases found in SCL areas were reportedly alarming. This was revealed after the conduct of intensive contact tracing, rapid testing and PCR testing, as part of the health interventions being done by City Hall during the implementation of the lockdown period.

During the meetings, barangay captains were apprised of their responsibilities in strictly enforcing within their respective jurisdictions the wearing of masks, physical distancing and the prohibition on mass gatherings.

Barangays were also directed to apprehend violators, conduct foot patrols to disseminate information to residents, enforce the public safety hours from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., and strictly regulate the sale of liquor, which is allowed only between 1 to 5 p.m.

“We also remind barangay officials that the Department of the Interior and Local Government is constantly monitoring if they are cooperating with the city government. Failure to do so may lead to the filing of administrative cases against both local and barangay officials,” the official added.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/07/05/qc-barangays-told-to-enforce-gcq-guidelines/>

Cebu City running out of burial spots

Published 22 hours ago on July 4, 2020 10:27 AM

By [Rico Osmeña](#)



CEBU City's NOAH (New Normal Oasis for Adaptation and a Home), a quarantine facility for Covid-19 patients. (Cebu City Mayor Facebook)

The Cebu City Council, in a virtual regular session on Friday, passed a resolution to establish a new public cemetery as existing ones can no longer accommodate additional burials in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Most of the existing public cemeteries in Cebu City, mostly owned and managed by the Archdiocese of Cebu, are full and can no longer accommodate additional burials, South District City Councilor David Tumulak told the Daily Tribune.

Local Government department Memorandum Circular No. 2020-063 (Interim Guidelines on the Management of Human Remains for Patient under Investigation and Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 cases) states that burial, preferably through cremation, of deceased persons who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID shall be done within 12 hours after death.

The Department of Health and the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board are urged by the regulation to fast-track approval for the additional public cemetery.

In Mandaue, the city council approved the purchase of mortuary freezer vans, free of charge for indigent victims.

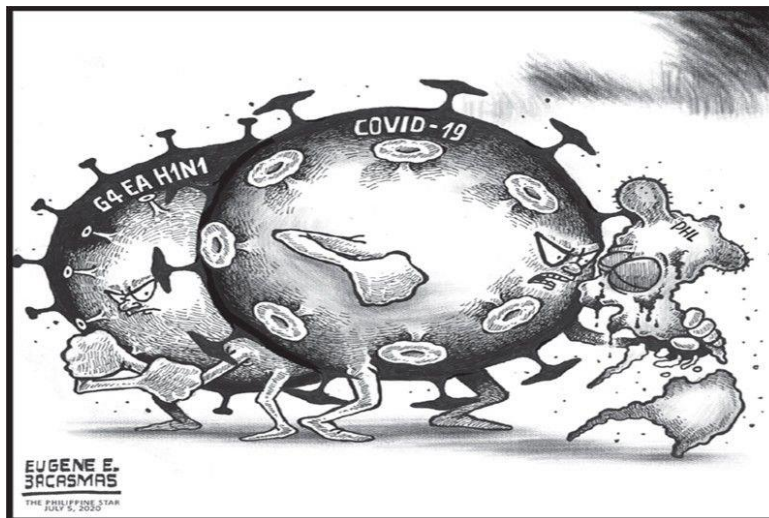
City spokesperson Edu Ybanez said there is a “long wait” for bodies to be cremated and Mandaue’s only crematorium, operated by Rolling Hills Funeral Homes, is overwhelmed.

Normally, the crematorium handles four bodies daily, with three to four hours consumed for each body. With a full capacity, survivors have to pay for the services of mortuary freezers in private hospitals.

Rolling Hills provides free cremation services to indigent residents who succumbed to COVID-19.

As of 2 July, Cebu City has 3,481 active cases while Mandaue has 635.

Cebu City is still under enhanced community quarantine until 15 July.



EDITORIAL - Another potential pandemic

(The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

Even before the country can be completely free of African swine fever, a new type of virus has been detected in hogs in China. Scientists have warned that it has the potential to jump to humans and create another pandemic.

Called G4 EA H1N1, researchers say the virus is similar to the one that caused the swine flu outbreak in 2009. The H1N1 strain could multiply in the cells that line the human airways, like the SARS-coronavirus-2 that causes the killer coronavirus disease now raging around the planet.

Experts from China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention and several Chinese universities have warned that G4 has "all the essential hallmarks of being highly adapted to infect humans."

Even if the newest strain of swine influenza does not have adverse effects on human health, it could wreak further havoc on the Philippine hog industry, which continues to grapple with African swine fever.

Since the ASF outbreak last year, the Philippine government has banned the entry of pork and other meat products from China and other countries where swine flu cases have been reported. Amid recent reports of the emergence of G4, Customs authorities have been placed on alert for the illegal entry of pork from China.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry have said they are monitoring G4, which reportedly mutates and spreads rapidly. People presumably have learned their lessons from the ASF outbreak, when the careless disposal of diseased pig carcasses contaminated rivers and allowed the virus to spread rapidly, decimating many hog farms. Pork and pork products from ASF-hit countries were also able to enter the Philippines before the ban was imposed.

The hog industry not yet recovered from ASF, and the country is still struggling to contain the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. The last thing we need is another virus that not only further threatens the swine industry but also poses the possibility of jumping to humans. With quarantine protocols imposed for COVID-19, and with the experience from the ASF outbreak, the country should be able to do a better job of preventing the entry of the G4 virus.

Opening up the economy: We must proceed with caution

[BABE'S EYE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON D.C. - Ambassador B. Romualdez](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 5, 2020 - 12:00am

Secretary Sonny Dominguez is strongly recommending that we must make a firm decision in opening up the economy sooner than soon to prevent an economic collapse and save jobs. I totally agree, but we should proceed with extreme caution since the virus is still very much around with the latest recorded 1,531 additional cases nationwide last Friday coming from different parts of the country especially in Cebu City.

Many countries in Europe are starting to lift lockdowns to revive shuttered economies, slowly opening up more businesses in various industries. If anything, New York has turned out to be the best example on how to manage and control the virus. Governor Andrew Cuomo has done a magnificent job in flattening the curve. The state of New York was the epicenter of the virus in the United States last March but is now opening up cautiously.

There is optimism a vaccine would be available by the last quarter of this year, with the Philippines hopefully one of the early recipients. But even with the availability of a vaccine, people should still continue to observe minimum health precautions such as the frequent washing of hands and wearing of masks.

Companies should take it upon themselves to impose health and safety precautions in the workplace. Workstations should be disinfected, alcohol dispensers should be placed in strategic areas, hand soap and sanitizers must be made available in restrooms to ensure hygiene, the number of people allowed in elevators should be limited to ensure that social distancing is observed, and people must have their temperature checked before they are allowed to enter the building. Of course, the wearing of masks should be mandatory.

We agree with Secretary Dominguez that companies or businesses that do not follow strict protocols should remain closed or may have their business licenses canceled. Inessential establishments such as bars and party places should still be banned from operating especially with the recent news that over 100 people including a celebrity host and his wife were arrested in a Makati bar for violating social distancing protocols. Restaurants may be opened, but on a case-to-case basis if ventilation is good and with limited capacity to make sure that social distancing is strictly followed.

While many businesses were forced to close as a consequence of the pandemic, those in the information technology-business process management (IT-BPM) industry are proving to be resilient and able to maintain their global competitiveness. This became apparent during the IT-BPM webinar titled "Philippine IT-Business Outsourcing Opportunities: Global Business Processes Powered by the Philippines," organized by the Department of Trade and Industry with the Philippine embassy in Washington, that was attended by investors and key industry players in the US.

According to Information Technology and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP) president Rey Untal, who was one of the presenters during the webinar, the sector was able to remain productive despite the restrictive measures that needed to be implemented, and without compromising on the health and safety of the workforce.

Healthcare Information Management Association of the Philippines (HIMAP) president Roger Salazar also disclosed that while other industries were laying off people, hiring and training continued for the healthcare industry. More of the workforce are also doing work from home, with high levels of productivity also achieved despite quarantine restrictions, Roger said.

Opening up the economy; We3 must proceed with
caution

PAGE 1/ 2/2

July 05, 2020
DATE

The work from home setup is proving to be a very good idea even in the future when restrictions are relaxed because we want to minimize the number of people traveling not only to cut down on the traffic but prevent the congestion and pollution that are compromising the health of people.

We should learn from the mistakes of other countries especially in several states in the US where the situation continues to be alarming with confirmed cases increasing in 40 states, with a record-high single-day increase of positive cases reaching 51,200 last Wednesday. First of all, not only did they open too soon, but they either eased or did not impose restrictions in areas that would be prone to the spread of infection such as bars and even beaches, with people also refusing to wear masks and disregarding social distancing protocols.

The surge of infections and the appearance of new clusters in several states like Alabama for instance are being blamed on some reckless and irresponsible young people who throw these so-called "COVID parties" where people infected with the coronavirus are present. Apparently, the first person who gets confirmed by a doctor that he has contracted the virus will win a payout coming from ticket sales from the party.

In Mississippi, new outbreaks are being attributed to fraternity rush parties that violated state guidelines imposing a 20-person limit to indoor gatherings. In Texas, hundreds of high school students were exposed to the virus after attending a drinking party known as a "pong fest" where some of the attendees had COVID-19 symptoms and were waiting for test results. In Rockland County, an estimated 50-100 people were exposed after attending a party hosted by an individual who was already displaying COVID-19 symptoms.

Clearly, the behavior of these people is not only totally irresponsible but criminal because they are endangering the lives of others, which is why many want them to be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

While opening up the economy is essential, and that people need to go back to work, we still have to exercise patience and proceed with extreme caution to avoid far worse consequences in the end.

* * *

Email: babeseyevew@gmail.com

Restarting tourism: Industrial change and travel bubbles

Published July 4, 2020, 11:37 PM

by Senator Sonny Angara

BETTER DAYS



Tourism in the Philippines is a significant industry. In 2000, tourism only had a 5.6% share in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP); now it stands at 12.7%. The tourism industry generated P465 billion in 2019 and currently employs 5.71 million people, or 14 out of every 100 employed in our country.

Unfortunately, according to the National Economic and Development Authority and the Department of Finance, tourism is the second hardest hit industry by the pandemic. This is reflected in the revenues of the first four months of 2020 — P79.8 billion, down from P180.5 billion from the same period in 2019. Because of this development, we must rethink, reorganize, and restructure tourism in our country.

Thankfully, under the decisive leadership of Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat, the Department of Tourism (DOT) already has plans on how to address the fundamental changes that the new normal will require. Secretary Romulo Puyat shared these plans during a Learning Session on Economic Stimulus for Business Continuity and Recovery that was held this past week, which I attended as a guest speaker.

Their Response and Recovery Plan addresses how to mitigate the expenses of tourism establishments by having a moratorium on accreditation fees, facilitating wage subsidy programs for tourism workers, deferment of contributions to SSS, PhilHealth, and other similar programs. The DOT is also pushing for actions that will protect tourism-oriented MSMEs, such as interest-free loans or the issuance of loan guarantees with terms of up to five years, and credit facilities for upgrading tourism establishments to be compliant with COVID-19 guidelines, all through government financial institutions. There will also be marketing and product development programs, grants for education and training for new alternative livelihood programs, the use of information technology to improve tourism and tourist tracking services, and other relevant programs.

The Board of Investments (BOI), following discussions with the DOT, has also crafted the following policies. The BOI will grant income tax holidays for a period of three years, and duty-free importation of capital equipment for tourism projects that will enhance health and safety features and processes. It is also encouraged that improvements to make tourism facilities COVID-proof be registered as modernization projects subject to qualification requirements. Hotels, resorts, MICE (Meetings, International Conventions, and Events) facilities, and tourist transport companies are also eligible to apply for investment incentives.

These preparations by the DOT and BOI will help upgrade our tourist destinations. However, it also asks the question of how our country will restart international tourism. One mechanism that is gaining ground is the concept of a "travel bubble." Travel bubbles are the shorthand term for renewed tourist travel between countries that have the COVID-19 pandemic in sufficient control. HSBC recently came out with a report that Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia were potential candidates, as many travel bubbles are still being set up as of mid-June.

Restarting tourism: Industrial change and travel

July 05, 2020

TITLE: bubbles

PAGE 1/ 2/2

DATE

Thailand, for example, is considering travel bubbles with nations where COVID-19 is largely contained such as China, South Korea, and Vietnam, although initial travel may be focused more on medical and business purposes. Vietnam is planning to bring in international visitors on a trial basis, with Phu Quoc island as the test destination. International tourists will have to undergo COVID-19 tests, but they will be able to move freely on the island – but only there. Other countries that are also developing travel bubbles are Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

The coordination and operation of travel bubbles, however, will not be easy. It requires that medical facilities be set up or upgraded in the tourist destinations themselves. And in order for other nations to trust us, we have to conduct mass testing, and put an effective contact tracing system in place. Only by showing that we are bringing our COVID-19 numbers down can we convince potential travel bubble partners that we are ready. We have to efficiently use our resources – and that's why we have to study and our planned stimulus programs, and allocate budgets properly.

The post-COVID world, the New Normal, or whatever else it will be called, requires that we open our minds, master our resources, and adapt. We must show the world that we can handle and minimize the pandemic, that we are prepared to keep tourists safe and sound.

Email: sonnyangara@yahoo.com | Facebook, Twitter & Instagram: @sonnyangara

Senator Sonny Angara has been in public service for 15 years—9 years as Representative of the Lone District of Aurora, and 6 as Senator. He has authored and sponsored more than 200 laws. He is currently serving his second term in the Senate.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/04/restarting-tourism-industrial-change-and-travel-bubbles/>



ITCZ, localized thunderstorm makaaapekto sa bansa

July 4, 2020 @ 8:26 AM 1 day ago

Manila, Philippines – Makaaapekto ang Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) sa Mindanao ngayong Sabado, June 4, ayon sa PAGASA.

Dulot nito, makararanas ang Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Western Visayas, at MIMAROPA ng pag-ulan at maulap na kalangitan.

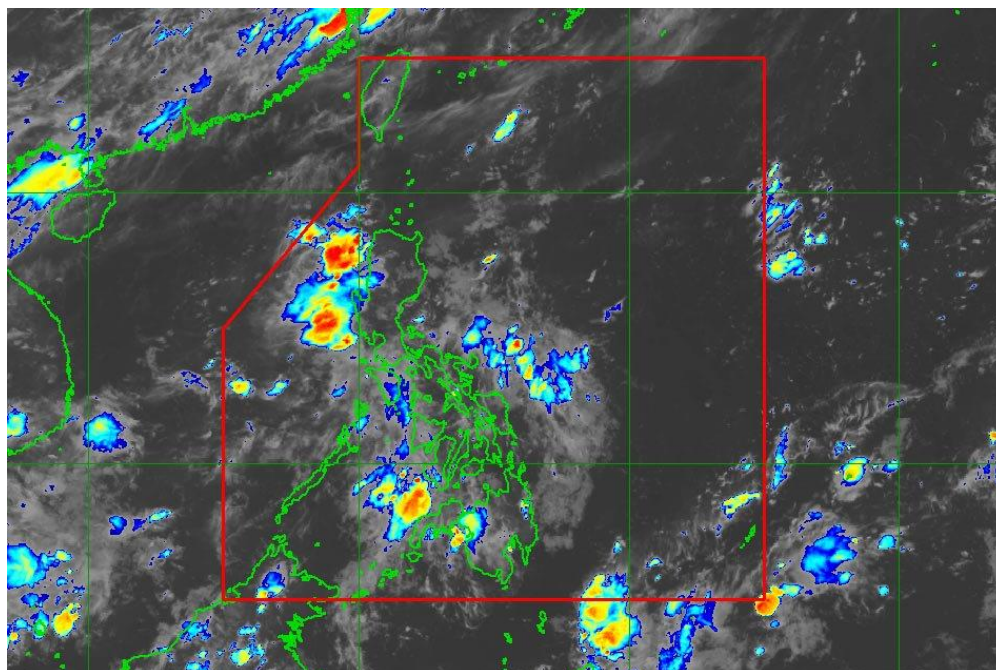
Habang iiral naman ang localized thunderstorm sa Metro Manila at nalalabing bahagi ng bansa na magdadala ng bahagyang pag-ulan.

Samantala, nagbabala na ang PAGASA sa posibleng pagbaha o pagguho ng lupa sa kasagsagan ng buhos ng ulan, kulog, at kidlat. **RNT/FGDC**

PAGASA: Up to 3 storms could enter PAR in July

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jul 04 2020 10:20 PM



MANILA--Two to 3 tropical cyclones are expected to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) this month, state weather bureau PAGASA said Saturday.

"Two to 3 na bagyo na maaaring pumasok sa ating PAR," weather specialist Samuel Duran told Teleradyo.

The peak of the typhoon season is July through October, in which nearly 70 percent of all typhoon develop, the PAGASA said on its website.

"More tropical cyclones are entering the Philippine area of responsibility than anywhere else in the world. With the average of 20 tropical cyclones in this region per year, with about 8 or 9 of them crossing the Philippines," it added.

The country's wet season started in June, with the entry of tropical storm Butchoy. The succeeding cyclones will be named Carina, Dindo and Enteng.

On Saturday, Zamboanga Peninsula, Western Visayas, Mindoro and Palawan experienced cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms due to the intertropical convergence zone (ICTZ).

Meanwhile, localized thunderstorms brought partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers over Metro Manila and the rest of the country.

Climate change caused havoc 2,000 years ago

An Alaskan volcano once spurred climate change, darkening Mediterranean skies, launching a famine and possibly changing history.



The crater of Okmok, the Alaskan volcano whose eruption in 43 BCE caused a distinct chill across the northern hemisphere. Image: [J. Reeder, USGS, CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

By Tim Radford, Climate News Network

July 3, 2020

The trigger for that cold shadow over the Mediterranean theatre of history? Summer and autumn temperatures fell to as much as 7°C below normal because on the far side of the hemisphere an Alaskan volcano erupted in 43 BCE to hurl colossal quantities of soot and sulphates into the stratosphere and dim the sun's radiation for much of the next decade.

And the evidence? Deposits of volcanic ash in the Arctic ice cores that can be linked directly to one once-smoking crater in the Aleutian islands now known as Okmok, according to new research in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

Average temperatures fell dramatically. Summer rainfall in southern Europe rose by 50 per cent to 120 per cent above normal. Autumn rainfall rose fourfold.

The rest is history: literally. Roman and Chinese chronicles surviving from that time record what scientists call “unusual atmospheric phenomena” as well as “widespread famine.”

Less directly, records of lead pollution preserved in the annual layers of ice in Greenland tell a story of economic decline, reflected in what might be the reduction of mining and smelting of lead and silver during the last years of the Roman Republic.

And the effect on the hemisphere's climate was also recorded in the annual flow and flood of the River Nile, a regular inundation that enriched the grain harvest of the Nile Valley, and supplied bread for Rome and its sister cities.

The research was led by [Joe McConnell of the US Desert Research Institute](#) in Nevada. “To find a volcano on the other side of the Earth erupted and effectively contributed to the demise of the Romans and the Egyptians and the rise of the Roman Empire is fascinating,” he said. “It certainly shows how interconnected the world was even 2000 years ago.”

And one of his co-authors, [Joseph Manning of Yale University](#), said: “We know that the Nile River did not flood in 43 BCE and 42 BCE – and now we know why. The volcanic eruption greatly affected the Nile watershed.”

Climate's role

That mass migration, conflict and the collapse of once-stable regimes can be linked to climate change is not news: researchers have repeatedly found that drought, cold and harvest failure can be matched with [the collapse of ancient empires in the Middle East](#) and in [the Bronze Age Mediterranean](#).

Just 1500 years ago volcanic eruptions have been timed to the famine, the Plague of Justinian, and other turmoil in the Byzantine empire. Professor Manning had already [linked a failure of the Nile flood to the collapse of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt](#).

Neither the volcanic eruption nor the consequent climate disruption can be said to have “caused” ancient power struggles. But [a backdrop of instability, hunger and famine](#) can be linked to conflict, and climate is now seen as an inseparable factor. Cold, heavy rain at the wrong season can ruin any harvest.

“In the Mediterranean region, these wet and extremely cold conditions during the agriculturally important spring through autumn seasons probably reduced crop yields and compounded supply problems during the ongoing political upheavals of the period,” said [Andrew Wilson of the University of Oxford](#), another author.

“These findings lend credibility to reports of cold, famine, food shortage and disease described by ancient sources.”

This story was published with permission from [Climate News Network](#).

Sea turtles find protection from Senegal fishermen

Published 16 hours ago on July 4, 2020 04:41 PM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



Senegalese fishermen rescue a sea turtle from their nets and return it to the sea. (Yahoo)

In a classic case of “poacher turning gamekeeper”, the fishermen of Senegal have joined forces to protect one of the ocean’s most endangered species — the sea turtle.

Three species can be found on the Senegal coast in west Africa. The most populous is the green turtle and they are joined by the loggerhead and leatherhead which can weigh over 600 kilograms.

They are all beautiful creatures but each is threatened by pollution, poaching, and, even now, the fishing net.

“Once we were the biggest eaters of turtles, now we have become their biggest protectors,” says Abdou Karim Sall, a fisherman who is now the manager of a protected marine zone through which the turtles pass.

Some 30 years ago, turtle meat was sold in the streets of Joal, one of the most important fishing ports in Senegal, and in Fadiouth, the port’s sister village built on an artificial island made from heaps of shells.

“We ate them in the street, we cooked them at home,” says the 56-year-old Sall who leads the management committee for the Marine Protected Area (MPA) of Joal-Fadiouth, two hours south of Dakar.

Founded in 2004, and backed by the government, local authorities and several associations, the MPA stretches over 147 square kilometers (57 square miles) and is made up of sandy beaches along a marine strip eight kilometers wide, as well as a network of mangroves and an area of savannah.

It is an area for the protection of endangered migratory species, such as the sea turtle.

Its objectives are the conservation of biodiversity, as well as the improvement of fishing yields and socio-economic benefits for the local population.

The sea turtles navigate their way along this tropical stretch of the Atlantic during their migration of more than a thousand kilometers between the volcanic archipelago of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, just south of Senegal, where they return to lay eggs when they reach sexual maturity.

The green turtles are predominantly herbivorous while the other species like to snack on crab and sea urchin.

They all graze on the sea grass beds that grow abundantly in the shallow waters of the Senegalese “Petite cote” (small coast), especially in front of Joal.

Through their presence, the turtles help maintain a fragile biotope, a breeding ground, and nursery for many species of fish, and this, in turns, boosts the economy — the fishing sector directly or indirectly supports about 500,000 Senegalese.

Trapped in a net

The sea turtles’ long voyage is not without risk.

Plastic is an increasing danger as they often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish which is one of their favorite foods, even for the green turtle. And, in spite of the efforts of Sall and the other protectors, they also get caught in fishermen’s nets.

On a dugout canoe with a multicolored hull at the limit of the protected area, four young bare-chested lads haul in their nets. It is the start of the migration period and they have snagged a 100-kilogram turtle.

It takes a big pull to haul it in. They untangle the turtle from the nets and release it back into the water.

“It’s not to our advantage to eat them, because they help save marine species. Wherever you find turtles you will find shrimp and octopus in abundance,” explains the boss Gamar Kane.

Since 2000, Sall, as head of the local fishermen’s association and manager of the MPA, has made local populations aware of the protection of turtles, in particular by organizing “cinema debates”.

Even former turtle sellers have been “converted” by receiving “three small canoes to take tourists to sea,” he said.

According to Sall, turtle numbers have “decreased by around 30 percent in the past 20 years” but the 500-odd visitors who come each year are almost guaranteed a memorable photo of some of the thousands that still line the coast. With luck, they might also spot a manatee (sea cow) grazing peacefully in the depths.

Rather than imposing restrictions, the MPA is trying to educate the communities in the economic benefits so that they join the project.

“It’s after they are told: ‘It’s an endangered species’,” he says.

Protect the nests

From June to October, a few dozen turtles stop to lay eggs on the beaches of Joal. About 20 MPA agents and village volunteers protect their nests with fences.

About 45 days later, “people come at 6:00 am so that predators do not take the young”, says Sall.

The danger lies largely at the feet of monitor lizards who like the eggs, the birds who swoop down just after the young turtles have hatched and the monkfish who move in once they enter the sea. The chances of survival for a young turtle are no greater than one in a thousand, says Sall.

But the fisherman-conservator agrees, “awareness has not worked 100 percent”.

“Not all fishermen have turned away from turtles and when the fishing is not good, some even hunt them,” he says.

They can take dozens a day, or more, to pay for fuel for their outboard engines. And there remains a taste among the human population for turtle flesh — and other parts.

At the end of June, the corpse of a young green turtle was found on a beach in Dakar, its belly cut down its entire length.

“Its tail and reproductive system were removed for ‘medicinal’ reasons,” said Charlotte Thomas, an official with the Senegalese NGO Oceanium.

The struggle to protect the sea turtle goes on.



This image provided on July 3, 2020 courtesy of the National Park Rescue charity shows the carcass of one of the many elephants which have died mysteriously in the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Hundreds of elephants have died mysteriously in Botswana's famed Okavango Delta, the wildlife department said on July 2, 2020, ruling out poaching as the tusks were found intact. The landlocked southern African country has the world's largest elephant population, estimated to be around 130,000.

AFP/National Park Rescue

Hundreds of elephants mysteriously die in Botswana

(Agence France-Presse) - July 4, 2020 - 12:01pm

GABORONE, Botswana — Hundreds of elephants have died mysteriously in Botswana's famed Okavango Delta, the wildlife department said Thursday, ruling out poaching as the tusks were found intact.

The landlocked southern African country has the world's largest elephant population, estimated to be around 130,000.

"We have had a report of 356 dead elephants in the area north of the Okavango Delta and we have confirmed 275 so far," Cyril Taolo, the acting director of the department of Wildlife and National Parks, told AFP in a text message.

He said the cause of the deaths was yet to be established with anthrax having been ruled out.

"We do not suspect poaching since (the) animals were found with tusks," he said.

Samples have been collected and sent to specialised laboratories in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Canada for testing.

Similar deaths were first reported in May when authorities found 12 carcasses in just a week in two villages in the northwest of the country.

"It seems they were dying very suddenly in some cases," conservation biologist, Keith Lindsay told AFP, adding that the deaths were sudden.

"The carcasses were animals that had fallen down while walking... right on their sternum which is very unusual," said Lindsay.

"Up to now there doesn't seem to be any clear sign of the reason for it. When something like this happens it is alarming."

'All ages and sex'

The latest discoveries were flagged by a wildlife conservation charity, Elephants Without Borders (EWB), whose confidential report referring to the 356 dead elephants, was leaked to the media on Wednesday.

EWB suspects the elephants have been dying in the area for about three months.

According to the report dated June 19, 2020, "70 percent of elephant carcasses were considered recent, having died about a month ago, and 30 percent of the carcasses appeared fresh, ranging from one day to two weeks old".

"There was good evidence to show elephants of all ages and sex appear to be dying," said the report penned by EWB director Mike Chase.

Several live elephants appeared to have been weak, lethargic and emaciated, with some showing signs of disorientation, difficulty in walking or limping, EWB said.

"One elephant was observed walking in circles, unable to change direction although being encouraged by other herd members," said the report.

For conservationist Neil Fritt the strange phenomenon is "tragic" but appears to be "more like a natural occurrence as opposed to direct human cause," he told AFP.

Botswana has an overpopulation of elephants which President Mokgweetsi Masisi has flagged as the source for much of the human-animal conflict in the country.

In February the southern African country held its first major auction for trophy elephant hunting quotas since controversially scrapping a hunting ban last year. But the hunting season was suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic

Germany ends coal, nuclear use

By [Associated Press](#)

July 5, 2020

BERLIN: German lawmakers have finalized the country's long-awaited phase-out of coal as an energy source, backing a plan that environmental groups say isn't ambitious enough and free marketeers criticize as a waste of taxpayers' money.

Bills approved by both houses of parliament Friday envision shutting down the last coal-fired power plant by 2038 and spending some 40 billion euros (\$45 billion) to help affected regions cope with the transition.

The plan is part of Germany's "energy transition" — an effort to wean Europe's biggest economy off planet-warming fossil fuels and generate all of the country's considerable energy needs from renewable sources.

Achieving that goal is made harder than in comparable countries such as France and Britain because of Germany's existing commitment to also phase out nuclear power by the end of 2022.

"The days of coal are numbered in Germany," Environment Minister Svenja Schulze said. "Germany is the first industrialized country that leaves behind both nuclear energy and coal."

Greenpeace and other environmental groups have staged vocal protests against the plan, including by dropping a banner down the front of the Reichstag building Friday. They argue that the government's road map won't reduce Germany's greenhouse gas emissions fast enough to meet the targets set out in the Paris climate accord.

"Germany, the country that burns the greatest amount of lignite coal worldwide, will burden the next generation with 18 more years of carbon dioxide," Greenpeace Germany's executive director Martin Kaiser told The Associated Press.

Kaiser, who was part of a government-appointed expert commission, accused Chancellor Angela Merkel of making a "historic mistake," saying an end date for coal of 2030 would have sent a strong signal for European and global climate policy. Merkel has said she wants Europe to be the first continent to end its greenhouse gas emissions, by 2050.

Germany closed its last black coal mine in 2018, but it continues to import the fuel and extract its own reserves of lignite, a brownish coal that is abundant in the west and east of the country.

Officials warn that the loss of mining jobs could hurt those economically fragile regions, though efforts are already under way to turn the vast lignite mines into nature reserves and lakeside resorts.

When hydro power is unwanted

Published 4 hours ago on July 5, 2020 04:02 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



SAFET Sarajlic says he is ready to spill his “blood” to defend the Neretvica waterway from a hydropower project threatening its vital ecosystem. ELVIS BARUKCIC/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Parsovići, Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFP) — Looking out over the clear cascades of the Neretvica river in the heart of Bosnia, Safet Sarajlic says he is ready to spill his blood to defend the waterway from a hydropower project threatening its vital ecosystem.

In a country criss-crossed by hundreds of rivers and their tributaries, the hydro sector is booming in Bosnia but so is resistance against it: locals have declared war on the industry, leading to the abandonment of several projects.

The latest flashpoint is the Neretvica, which springs from a source 1,800 meters high in central Bosnia before threading through dozens of hamlets for some 27 kilometers (17 miles).

“For us, this river is life. It’s the artery of the valley,” says 50-year-old Sarajlic, one of the leaders of the “Pusti me da tecem” (“Let me flow”) protest movement.

Clean enough to drink, the river is also hailed for its biodiversity, hosting eight types of fish, including two endangered species, plus the protected white-clawed crayfish, according to a 2017 study by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Ecologists say the planned construction — which would see 15 small plants installed across the Neretvica and its tributaries — would threaten this delicate ecosystem and the livelihoods of villagers.

In June, protests by locals prevented the building of the first two plants by blocking the road to their village and forcing representatives from the state-owned company behind the project into talks.

“There are 20 young men here ready to give their lives for the Neretvica,” Sead Hakalovic, another protest leader, said before the company agreed to retreat.

Tomatoes and raspberries

Home to some 2,000 people, the Neretvica valley is known for its top quality tomatoes. Bountiful raspberry plantations also line the river banks.

“Agriculture provides a living for most of the people here. If the power stations are built, there will be an exodus,” warns Hakalovic.

Over the past 15 years or so, 106 mini plants have been built in Bosnia and “at least 340 more are planned, under preparation or under construction,” Anes Podic, head of the environmental campaign group “Eko akcija” (“Ecological action”), told AFP.

Faced with the resistance, regional authorities have announced a three-month moratorium on the construction of new plants and new legislation to “protect the rivers.”

But activists are calling for the projects to be scrapped entirely, arguing that the environmental damage far outweighs the “tiny” quantities of electricity produced by plants with a capacity of 10 MW.

According to Anes Podic, the small hydro plants accounted for only three percent of Bosnia’s total electricity production last year, while some 60 percent was drawn from coal.

And yet some of the stations, which divert water through a pipe into a turbine two or three kilometers downstream, are drying out the rivers to dangerous levels, according to Podic.

The “biological minimum” needed to sustain the rivers is often not respected, says Podic.

“They redirect the last drop of water to produce electricity and increase their profits.”

Wake up, WHO urges nations

Published 4 hours ago on July 5, 2020 04:25 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



GENEVA, Switzerland (AFP) — The World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday urged countries hit by serious coronavirus outbreaks to “wake up” to the realities on the ground instead of bickering, and to “take control.”

“People need to wake up. The data is not lying. The situation on the ground is not lying,” WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told journalists at a briefing hosted by the UN correspondents’ association in Geneva.

Touching almost every country on Earth since it emerged in China late last year, the coronavirus has hit at least 10.8 million people and killed 521,000 worldwide.

The Americas are the hardest-hit region, with most cases and deaths registered in the United States, and with numbers skyrocketing in a several countries in Latin America.

Asked about the dire situations in nations like Brazil and Mexico, which have been moving away from lockdowns despite ballooning numbers of infections and deaths, Ryan cautioned that “too many countries are ignoring what the data is telling them.”

“There are good economic reasons that the countries need to bring their economies back online,” he said.

“It’s understandable, but you can’t ignore the problem either. The problem will not magically go away.”

While he acknowledged that countries facing explosive outbreaks had some “pretty stark choices” ahead, he insisted that “it is never too late in an epidemic to take control.”

‘Worst case scenario’

Instead of placing an entire nation under lockdown, he suggested that countries could try to break down the problem.

It could be possible to loosen restrictions in areas with lower transmission rates and still contain the outbreak through things like physical distancing, hand-washing, testing, isolating cases and contact tracing.

But in areas where the virus is spreading uncontrollably, strict measures could be unavoidable, he said.

“If countries proceed with opening up without the capacity to cope with the likely caseload, then you end up in a worst-case scenario,” Ryan warned.

“If the health system stops coping, more people will die.”

He said there could be places in Mexico and in other countries “where it may be important to slow down or to reverse some of the measures aimed at opening up society.”

“It is looking at: can you control transmission by any other means other than transmission? If you can’t, you may not have an alternative” to lockdown.

In the case of Brazil, which counts almost 1.5 million confirmed cases, second only to the United States, Ryan meanwhile said that the numbers had “stabilized,” meaning they are no longer rising as steeply, but they are “still rising.”

He also stressed that despite “fighting a large number of cases for a long time now,” Brazil’s hospitals and intensive care units had not yet been overwhelmed.

“We want to see them intensify efforts and we want to see more progress,” he said, “but we also have to pay credit to the health system in Brazil for its capacity to cope for what has been a long battle against this virus.”