

DATE: JULY 15, 2020

DAY: WEDNESDAY

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

# Cimatu eyes more Covid-19 burial sites in Cebu City

By John Rey Saavedra July 14, 2020, 8:48 pm



**COVID-19 BURIAL SITE.** Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu leads the inspection by some officials of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) of an area in Barangay Sapangdaku, Cebu City which is a proposed burial site for Covid-19 fatalities on Monday (July 13, 2020). The IATF-EID commended the Cebu City government for its efforts to build a burial site in Sitio Catives II, Barangay Guba to address the backlog in cremation. *(Photo courtesy of IATF-EID)*

**CEBU CITY** – To address the backlog in cremation throughout the city due to coronavirus disease (Covid-19)-related deaths, Environment Secretary and Cebu Covid-19 response overseer Roy Cimatu is leading the search for areas that can be converted into burial sites.

Cimatu joined local environment officials in inspecting possible sites in the upland village of Sapangdaku where patients who died of coronavirus infection could be buried.

"We have to immediately identify burial sites that are outside protected areas, and will pose no harm to the immediate community," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

Earlier, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) commended the city government for the construction of a three-hectare burial site in Sitio Catives II in the hinterland village of Guba here.

The Cebu City Council and the barangay officials of Guba, Sirao, Paril and Agsungot approved the proposal for the site's use, acknowledging the need to safely manage the remains of Covid-19 patients and ensure the public's health and safety.

The burial site in Guba will be called the Cebu City Botanical Memorial Garden and is expected to create livelihood opportunities for the residents.

Councilor Dave Tumalak said the opening of the Guba facility "will bring jobs to the community as the people can sell goods by the roadside".

He assured residents of Barangay Guba and neighboring localities that the cemetery will not pose any health risk to the community, amid reports that Guba sits on a watershed area and is part of the Central Cebu Protected Landscape managed by the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB).

"I saw how they (funeral parlors) handled the dead bodies, and I am willing to stake my name that the process is very thorough to ensure safety," Tumalak was quoted as saying in an earlier statement from the IATF.

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Melquiades Feliciano, who is assisting Cimatu in Cebu, welcomed the initiative in scouting for Covid-19 burial sites after the city's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) adopted a more proactive response to the pandemic.

"Forward planning and swift implementation will give Cebu City the edge it needs to defeat Covid-19. There is an urgent public health risk posed by the lack of crematories, so we have to do what we can and do it quickly," Feliciano said. **(PNA)**

# Cimatu leads search for potential burial sites in Cebu City

By: Morexette Marie B. Erram - CDN Digital|July 14,2020 - 06:13 PM



DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu and retired Major General Mel Feliciano of the Inter-Agency Task Force inspect several potential locations in Cebu City that can be utilized as public cemeteries in a bid to have more burial sites as the city's COVID-19 mortalities reaches over 300 as of July 13, 2020. | Courtesy of PIA7 via Morexette Erram

(UPDATED as of 6:45 p.m.) CEBU CITY, Philippines – [Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu](#) led the search for properties in Cebu City that could be used as the final resting place for some of its residents on Monday, July 13, 2020.

The state-run Philippine Information Agency in Central Visayas (PIA-7), in an advisory, said Cimatu made the move in “a bid to address the backlog in crematories throughout the city due to deaths related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).”

“We have to immediately identify burial sites that are outside protected areas, and will pose no harm to the immediate community,” Cimatu was quoted on saying.

Based on the photos from PIA-7, Cimatu, a retired Army general who currently sits as the overseer of Cebu City's COVID-19 response, was also accompanied by retired Major General Mel Feliciano of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management on Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-MEID).

“Forward planning and swift implementation will give Cebu City the edge it needs to defeat COVID-19. There is an urgent public health risk posed by the lack of crematories, so we have to do what we can and do it quickly,” the advisory read, quoting Feliciano.

Both government officials were looking for possible cemeteries in the hinterland village of Sapangdaku last Monday.

On the other hand, the Cebu City Government is eyeing to use a city-owned lot in Barangay Guba, also a mountain barangay, as a future public cemetery.

The city has [defended its decision to cut down at least 300 mahogany trees in Barangay Guba](#) in preparation for its conversion into a burial site.

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Recent data from the Department of Health in Central Visayas (DOH-7) showed that Cebu City, tagged as the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in the region, has documented over 12,300 cases.

Of this number, at least 364 are considered mortalities or patients who tested positive for COVID-19 and have already passed away. /bmjo

# More COVID-19 burial sites eyed in Cebu City

By [Mitchelle L. Palaubsanon](#)(The Freeman)

- July 15, 2020 - 12:00am



"We have to immediately identify burial sites that are outside protected areas, and will pose no harm to the immediate community," Roy Cimatu said in a statement released by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) Visayas, CEBU, Philippines — In a bid to address the backlog in crematories in Cebu City due to coronavirus-related deaths, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary and Cebu overseer Roy Cimatu is leading the search for areas that can be immediately converted into burial sites.

Together with local environment officials, Cimatu inspected possible sites in Barangay Sapangdaku on Monday.

"We have to immediately identify burial sites that are outside protected areas, and will pose no harm to the immediate community," Cimatu said in a statement released by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) Visayas.

IATF deputy chief implementer in Cebu Mel Feliciano, who is assisting Cimatu, welcomed the initiative after the city's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) adopted a more proactive response to the pandemic.

"Forward planning and swift implementation will give Cebu City the edge it needs to defeat COVID-19. There is an urgent public health risk posed by the lack of crematories, so we have to do what we can and do it quickly," Feliciano said.

It can be recalled that the Cebu City government also announced its plan to develop a new burial site in the mountain barangay of Guba.

The city owned the 30-hectare property in the said barangay but it will only use about three to five hectares for the "Botanical Memorial Garden" which is just beside a Muslim cemetery. **KQD (FREEMAN)**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/cebu-news/2020/07/15/2028119/more-covid-19-burial-sites-eyed-cebu-city/amp/>

# Cebu City lockdown can now be relaxed: Cimatu

By [Jocelyn Montemayor](#) -July 15, 2020

THE enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) imposed in Cebu City can now be downgraded and relaxed due to the improving recovery rate and critical response of the city's health sector, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu yesterday said.

Cimatu, who was tasked by President Duterte to oversee the national government's campaign against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Cebu City, insisted the recovery rate in the metropolis has greatly improved in the past two weeks.

"I have repeated that, about my recommendation for a reduction of the classification from ECQ. There has been a drop because there is a significant change in the many different aspects in our efforts here," Cimatu said during the Laging Handa network briefing.

He said there had been an increase in the readiness and number of isolation and quarantine facilities, an improvement in critical care capability and capacity of hospitals, and an increase in the number of frontliners.

Morale of medical front liners was likewise given a boost by the city government's grant of additional incentives.

Cimatu said the people are also now more compliant with minimum health standards and quarantine protocols, unlike in the past month when people were seen walking without masks and not observing social distancing and even holding gatherings like gambling and street drinking or celebrating religious feasts.

Cimatu said while some hospitals are already at the critical level due to the increase in cases and bed occupancy, "it is still manageable."

Records from the Department of Health showed that Cebu City, as of July 13, has 6,220 confirmed cases with 2367 recoveries and 211 deaths.

Cimatu said one problem that they are now seeing is the overwhelming need for crematoriums and columbariums. He said the city needs to find and establish a burial ground for those who died of Covid-19.

Cebu City is the only area in the country remains under the ECQ until today.

President Duterte is expected to announce changes in community quarantine levels in different parts of the county on Wednesday night after his meeting with members of the Inter-agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the IATF would still decide the appeal of some local government units about their community quarantine levels.

Roque said one of those that appealed is Bacolod City which is under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) until July 15. He did not say what the IATF has proposed for Bacolod's quarantine level and if the city wants it relaxed or restricted.

In the case of Metro Manila, which is currently under general community quarantine (GCQ) until Wednesday, Roque said there was no discussion about lowering it to MGCQ.

He said current data on the doubling rate and critical care capacity in Metro Manila does not inspire a downgrade to MGCQ.

Cabinet Secretary and IATF co-chairman Karlo Nograles, over the weekend, said the capacity of a local government and the speed of response of the local official to contain the virus and treat the patients would be considered in deciding whether to downgrade or retain the current GCQ level in Metro Manila and the other areas in the country.

### NON-COMPLIANT

Twenty percent of business establishments in the National Capital Region (NCR) were found to be non-compliant to the Interim Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

In a statement, DOLE-NCR Regional Director Sarah Mirasol disclosed that out of the 5,049 companies they have monitored in the region from June 8 to July 1, they found an overall compliance rate of 80 percent.

“About 4,062 business establishments in the NCR have complied with our interim guidelines,” said Mirasol, adding: “When we say compliant, that means the employer has an established health and safety practices in their workplaces amid COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the interim guidelines.”

The protocols include wearing of face masks, maintaining physical distance of one meter at all times, checking and recording daily the temperature of their workers and visitors using health symptoms questionnaire, and ensuring sanitation and disinfection process inside their work areas and outside their office premises, among others.

The top five monitored industries in Metro Manila are accommodation and food services with a total of 18,641 workers from 1,581 establishments; other service activities with 30,959 workers from 1,098 establishments; wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles with 12,252 workers from 1,600 establishments; manufacturing with 17,308 workers from 172 establishments; and administrative and support services with 53,093 workers from 124 establishments.

The area with the highest number of monitored establishments in NCR were in the MUNTAPARLAS (Muntinlupa, Taguig, Parañaque, Las Piñas) cluster with 1,415 covering 37,378 workers; followed by PAPAMAMARISAN (Pasig, Pateros, Mandaluyong, Marikina, San Juan) with 1,243 covering 68,835 workers; CAMANAVA (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela) with 946 covering 19,699 workers; Makati-Pasay with 548 covering 19,876 workers; Quezon City with 508 covering 18,894 workers; and Manila with 389 covering 5,048 workers.

But despite having non-compliant firms, the DOLE official hinted at not immediately slapping sanctions against them.

Instead, she said the DOLE would be extending assistance and technical support to all workplaces, employers, and workers in complying with the guidelines.

“The ongoing pandemic had posed major challenges and adjustments on business establishments. So our approach would be to continue providing employers with technical assistance,” said Mirasol.

### NAVOTAS LOCKDOWN

The Joint Task Force COVID Shield has tapped the services of 348 cops and soldiers to augment the local police in implementing a 14-day lockdown in Navotas City to limit non-essential movements of residents starting July 16, Thursday.

Lt. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar, JTF COVID Shield commander, said 100 policemen will come from the Northern Police District Mobile Force Battalion (MFB), another 100 cops will be from the National Capital Region Police Office-MFB, 81 from the Special Action Force, 42 from the Maritime Group, and 25 soldiers will come from the AFP’s Joint Task Force National Capital Region.



The deployment of additional troops to Navotas City was in connection with the order of Navotas City Mayor Toby Tiangco on Monday who complained that the city's residents continue to ignore minimum health protocols needed to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Tiangco said businesses will still be allowed to operate and people with jobs will still be permitted to go out of their houses.

Eleazar said he has already talked with Tiangco to map out plans on how to limit the movement of the city's residents.

“Our task is to contain the unnecessary movement of people and keep all residents at home except for the medical frontliners and other people who are authorized to go out. The task is to ensure that APORs (authorized people outside of residences) shall follow the health protocols,” Eleazar said. – ***With Gerard Naval and Raymond Africa***



## DENR 7 says it did not issue permit for tree-cutting in Cebu City's Barangay Guba

Published July 14, 2020 9:25pm

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Central Visayas on Tuesday said that it did not permit the Cebu City Government to cut down almost 400 mahogany trees for a construction project.

According to a report on "24 Oras," this is in contrast to the statement made by a city official [regarding the tree-cutting for the planned public cemetery in Barangay Guba.](#)

Councilor Dave TumulakTumulak previously said that the operation was covered by a permit issued by the DENR.

Though the site government project is considered urgent by the local government, the DENR said that the process should not be cut short due to environmental laws which must be followed.

Due to this, the local government is obligated to replace the trees.

Meanwhile, the administrative adjudication proceedings is set for July 27. — **Joahna Lei Casilao/BM, GMA News**

Balanseng nutrition “plant-based diet” vs climate  
change isinulong ng DENR

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## BALANSENG NUTRITION “PLANT-BASED DIET” VS CLIMATE CHANGE ISINULONG NG DENR

July 14, 2020 @ 11:28 AM 18 hours ago

Hinikayat ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang mga Filipino na labanan ang climate change sa pamamagitan ng pagtangkilik sa “plant-based diet” na napag-alaman na nakababawas ng “ecological footprint” ng “human food consumption.”

Ang DENR, sa pamamagitan ng Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), ay naglunsad ng isang buwang “public information drive” upang hikayatin ang publiko na iwasan ang pagkain ng animal-based products sa halip ay kumain na lamang ng prutas at gulay.

Ang “Plant-Based Solutions for Climate Change,” isang kampanya na nakapaloob sa pagdiriwang ng Nutrition Month ngayong Hulyo, ay nanghihikayat sa mga Filipino na kumain ng mas maraming prutas at gulay, alinsunod na rin sa rekomendasyon ng Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) na balanseng nutrisyon mula sa “three main food groups” – ang “go, grow and glow” na mga pagkain.

Ayon kay EMB Director William Cuñado, ang pagtangkilik sa plant-based diet ay isang paraan upang mabawasan ang environmental impact ng food consumption ng isang tao.

“Switching to a plant-based diet not only benefits one’s health, it can also help protect the environment due to the smaller environmental footprints plant-based diets tend to have,” sabi pa ni Cuñado.

Base sa obserbasyon ng inyong lingkod, isa sa maituturing na pinakamahalagang dapat nating gawin ay baguhin ang ating lifestyle sa pamamagitan ng pagkain ng mga sariwang prutas at gulay.

Ang mga bagong pitas at ligtas sa kemikal na mga bungang kahoy at gulay ay ang mga pinakamayamang mapagkukunan ng “antioxidants”, na nakatutulong sugpuin ang anomang pinsalang maidudulot ng “free radicals”. Ang mga ito rin ang nagtataglay ng mga mapangalagang “phytochemicals”, gaya ng “flavonoids” at “carotenoids”.

Base sa isinagawang pag-aaral ng United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization noong 2013, ang pagkain ng karne mula sa hayop partikular na ang karne ng baka, ay nakapagtatala ng 14.5 percent ng global greenhouse gases kada taon.

Ito ay halos katumbas ng pinaghalong emission ng mga kotse, truck, eroplano at mga barko sa buong mundo.

Ayon sa isang pag-aaral ng University of Oxford, ang pagtigil sa pagkain ng meat at dairy products ay nakapagpapabawas ng kanyang carbon footprint ng hanggang 73%.

Sinabi pa ni Cuñado, sa pamamagitan ng plant-based diet, na nababawasan ang greenhouse gas emission, water consumption at land used para sa factory farming, kung saan ang lahat ng ito ay mga sanhi ng global warming at environmental degradation.

“By gradually modifying our meals and shifting to balanced diets with more plant-based food, we have already taken part in reducing greenhouse gases, which in turn will help slow down the rise in global temperatures,” diin pa ni Cuñado.

Ang isang buwan na kampanyang ito ay isinasagawa sa pamamagitan ng virtual o online dahil na rin sa restriction dulot ng COVID-19 pandemic.

Ang EMB ay regular na naglalabas ng infographics patungkol sa plant-based diet bilang solusyon sa climate change sa official Facebook page nito upang madali itong maunawaan at sundin ng mga tao.

Naglunsad din ito ng online food photo contest na tatawaging #UOTD o Ulam of the Day, kung saan ang mga kalahok ay maaaring ipadala ang larawan ng kanilang pagkain base sa nakasaad sa Pinggang Pinoy food guide na inirerekomenda ng FNRI.

Ang Pinggang Pinoy ay isang madaling intindihin na food guide na gumagamit na pamilyar na food plate model ng tama at balanseng pagkain.

Layunin nito na matulungan ang mga Filipino na magkaroon ng tama at malusog na habit ng pagkain na kailangan para makuha ang pinakamataas na sustansya na kanilang makukuha sa pagkain.

Nagsimulang tumanggap ng entry ang EMB sa #UOTD noong Hulyo 4 sa pamamagitan ng kanilang email address na [eeidcentraloffice@gmail.com](mailto:eeidcentraloffice@gmail.com).

Matatapos ang patimpalak sa ika-20 ng Hulyo. Makikita ang ibang detalye ng patimpalak sa Facebook page ng EMB Central Office.

# DENR-EMB reviews rehab plan for Iloilo oil spill

Published July 14, 2020, 11:48 AM

by Tara Yap

ILOILO CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) is reviewing the rehabilitation plan of the energy firm that owned the damaged power barge that triggered an oil spill in Iloilo City last July 3.



Some of the oil-contaminated waste collected along a mangrove area in Iloilo City after the oil spill from a damaged power barge. (Tara Yap/Manila Bulletin)

“The rehabilitation plan is currently under review,” said DENR-EMB Western Visayas Chief Legal Officer Arjunn Calvo.

AC Energy Philippines submitted its rehabilitation plan to DENR-EMB after receiving a notice for violating the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, following the July 3 oil spill triggered by an explosion at one of the tanks of its Power Bare 102.

The rehabilitation plan will focus on completing the oil spill cleanup, correct removal and disposal of oil-contaminated wastes, ensuring safe level of water and air quality prior to allowing local residents to go back to their homes, and restoring damaged mangrove and fishery areas.

According to Calvo, personnel from DENR-EMB’s Environmental Monitoring and Enforcement Division were the ones looking at the specific steps laid out by AC Energy.

“They need to see if the rehabilitation plan is correct or if there needs to be additional steps,” Calvo told Manila Bulletin.

Gabby Mejia, head for plant operations of AC Energy, said the company was going to implement the recommendations that are going to be set by DENR-EMB.

“They are the experts. Of course, we will follow,” Mejia told Manila Bulletin in a separate interview.

# DENR: Desilting of Malandog River essential to ecosystem

By Pilar S. Mabaquiao Published on July 14, 2020

SAN JOSE, Antique, July 14 (PIA) - - The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has started the desilting of Malandog River as an essential undertaking to sustain the sound ecosystem in the area.

Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer Andres T. Undal underscored the necessity to remove the silt materials which block the natural flow of water from the downstream to estuarine area of the river.



Likewise, the desilting will be of great help in the improvement of discharge flow capacity and enhancement of river ecosystems.

Regional Executive Director Francisco E. Milla Jr. also said that under the leadership of DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu, more projects are in the pipeline for Antique such as new office building of DENR PENRO Antique with a budget of P25 million, and the Sunset View Park in Maybato Sur, San Jose.

Aside from the launching program, there was also a blessing of long-reach amphibious excavator which was done by Fr. Edione Febrero.

The equipment was provided by the Department of Public Works and Highways Central Office - Bureau of Equipment under the supervision of Engr. Nonito Singgo and Engr. Gladwyn Ledesma and Dredge Masters III of DPWH Region VI.

The desilting activity is one of the undertakings under the implementation of Malandog River Rehabilitation and Development Program (MaRiReDeP).

Other stakeholders in attendance during the activity were CENR Officer Louie L. Laud of CENRO Belison, San Jose mayor Elmer C. Untaran, Provincial Planning and Development Officer Juliana O. Cepe and Ms. Annie Camilo of the Office of Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda. (JBG/DENR/PSM-PIA Antique)



Philippine Star

14 hrs ·

An injured Philippine serpent eagle was rescued by DENR in Mahayag, Zamboanga del Sur on July 9.

According to the DENR Zamboanga Peninsula, the injured eagle, locally known as "Banog," was retrieved with the help of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office of Ramon Magsaysay.

Based on their investigation, a local resident caught the bird in a rice field near their house on July 9 and asked his neighbor to inform the DENR about the captured wildlife.

It was also found that the Banog had a bent inner right wing, and a trace of an old injury. Its left tarsus was wounded and its right eye was partially blind.

The serpent eagle was brought to a veterinary clinic for treatment and is currently kept at the Wildlife Rescue Center of Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office in the province.

The Philippine serpent eagles are currently listed under "least concern" by BirdLife International, which means that they have low extinction risk. They are endemic in the Philippines and are mostly found in Luzon and Mindanao. Although they are capable of adapting to changing environment, they are threatened by habitat loss. (Facebook/DENR Zamboanga Peninsula)





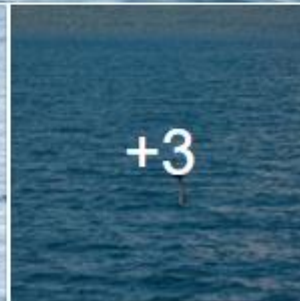
News5

11 hrs · 🌐

#Spotted ang iba't-ibang species ng dolphins sa Sarangani Bay sa ginawang marine mammal monitoring ng mga otoridad noong isang linggo. 🐬🐬🐬

Kasama rito ang 16 na Risso's Dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) at tinatayang 10-15 na Spinner Dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*).

📍: DENR Soccsksargen, PAMO-SBPS



👍❤️😮 468

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**Palawan Council for Sustainable Development**

13 hrs ·

**1 DUGONG FOUND DEAD IN ABORLAN, PALAWAN**

**JULY 14, 2020** – One (1) dead female Dugong (Dugong Dugon) was found dead yesterday in Bgy. Tagpait, Aborlan, Palawan.

Local residents found the lifeless dugong floating near the mangrove area in the said Barangay last July 13, 2020 at around 9:30 AM. It was brought to the Fish Landing Area so it can be properly inspected by the authorities assigned therein. It was reported to the Bantay Palawan task Force within the area after which the Bantay Palawan immediately reported it to the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) and Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) to conduct biometrics and post-mortem investigation.

Based on the inspection of the MAO, the dugong suffered from a possible head trauma accompanied by blood trickling from the nose. This may have been caused by a boat strike as there were many small boats or fishing vessels in the area which sail fast when it happened. It must have suffered a head injury, causing an internal hemorrhage that led to its death.

This was also brought to the attention of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS) which in turn advised the Local Government Unit of Aborlan to properly bury the said mammal.

The PCSDS requested that the carcass of the dugong be buried so that in the future its bones might be retrieved as the PCSDS plans to display it in the Palawan Biosphere Reserve Center (PBRC) museum.

The lifeless mammal was buried at the premises of the Municipal Agriculture Office under the supervision of Municipal Mayor, Hon. Celsa B. Adier, Municipal Agriculturist, Clemente G. Cacatian, and a representative from the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office, Godofredo S. Ferriol.

The deceased female dugong had a total length of 2.5 meters (8.2 feet) and weighed more or less 250 kilograms.

The Dugong is listed as an "Critically Endangered" species under PCSD Resolution No. 15-521 and it is classified as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

If you happen to find any wildlife creature within your vicinity, please report it immediately to our office thru hotline numbers 0935-116-2336 (Globe/TM) and 0948-937-2200 (Smart/TNT). You may also send a message to our Facebook page for your concerns.



199

4 Comments 26 Shares

# Agapan ang pagbaho ng Sta. Maria, Bulacan!

July 13, 2020

By [Marlon Purificacion](#)

[People's Tonight](#)

## MAUNLAD nang bayan ang Sta. Maria, Bulacan!

Isa itong 1st class municipality na may kabuuang 256,454 populasyon, base na rin sa 2015 census ng National Statistics Office (NSO).

Ito rin ang sinasabing 'Chicharon capital' dahil dito matitikman ang pinakamasarap na chicharon na ubod ng lutong at malinamnam na puwedeng ulamin o pulutan.

Nahahati sa 24 na barangay, pang 'Top 5' sa kabuuang 'ranking' ng mga munisipalidad sa buong Pilipinas ang Sta. Maria town.

Ang kanilang assets ay aabot sa P1.5 billion na pinakauna sa ranking sa 'assets on bank' sa buong lalawigan.

Kaya kahit sabihin nating ikalawa sila sa may pinakamaraming populasyon sa Bulacan – sunod sa San Jose Del Monte City – kahanga-hanga ang paglago ng negosyo at kabuhayan sa Sta. Maria.

Salamat sa maayos na pamamalakad nina Mayor Russel Pleyto, Vice-Mayor Quirino Bueneventura at sa buong Sangguniang Bayan.

May panawagan lang po tayo sa kanila. Baka po puwede n'yong silipin uli ang tapunan ng inyong basura sa Camachile St., Bgy. Tierra.

Malapit po ito sa eskuwelahan na halos likod lamang ng paradahan ng Del Carmen Bus na pag-aari ng ating butihing Bise-Alkalde.

Ang sumbong po kasi sa atin, nangangamoy ang itinatapong basura rito. Patuloy na dumarami ang langaw at lamok, hindi lamang sa Bgy. Tierra, kundi pati na rin sa mga katabi pang barangay.

Hindi ko masabi kung iyon na ba talaga ang 'dumpsite', ngunit labas-pasok dito ang 'garbage truck' para magtapon ng gabundok na basura.

Ayon sa sumbong, hinuhukay ang lupa rito para doon itapon ang basura at muling tatakpan ng lupa.

Sa pagkaalam ko, bawal ito base na rin sa itinatadhana ng Republic Act 9003 o ang tinatawag na 'systematic, comprehensive and ecological solid waste management program na nasa ilalim ng pamamahala ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Sec. Roy Cimatu.

Matagal nang gustong magreklamo ng mga residente ng Sta. Maria, ngunit natatakot sila dahil baka sila pag-initan ng lokal na pamahalaan.

Sinabi ng mga residente na wala silang masabing masama sa liderato nina Mayor Pleyto at Vice-Mayor Buenaventura dahil parehong magaling ang dalawang opisyal.

Ngunit baka lamang anila nakalilimutang malaman ang tunay na sitwasyon ngayon sa lugar ng tapunan ng kanilang basura.

Sa tuwing may dumaraang trak ng basura, may mga natatapong maruruming bagay sa kanilang kalsada.

Bukod pa sa katotohanang nangangamoy na rin ang naturang lugar at nakalalanghap na sila ng masamang hangin.

Ang mabigat pa, iyong katas ng basura ay napupunta na rin sa katabing ilog.

At alam nating ngayong panahon ng tag-ulan, isa sa malapit na pagmumulan ng sakit ang hindi magandang 'waste management' ng isang lugar.

Nariyan ang paglipana ng langaw sa umaga, lamok sa gabi. Ang masaklap, hindi na rin makatulog sa gabi ang ating mga kababayan dahil sa masangsang na amoy na minsan ay masakit sa baga, hirap sa paghinga at nagiging sanhi ng paminsan-minsang pag-ubo.

Ilan sa sintomas ng taong may COVID-19 ay ang hirap sa paghinga at pag-ubo kaya 'vulnerable' na kapitan ng nakamamatay na virus na 'to ang mga taong mahihina ang baga at pulmon.

'Wag sanang magtampo sina Mayor Pleyto sa atin dahil wala po tayong dahilan upang siraan ang bayan ng Sta. Maria, Bulacan.

Ituring n'yo pong pagtapik lamang ito sa inyong mga balikat na baka nga sa sobrang 'busy' ninyo sa pagkalinga sa ating mga kababayan ay hindi na ninyo namamalayan na baka tumaas ang bilang ng magkakasakit na taga-Sta. Maria – hindi sa COVID19 -- kundi sa dengue, malaria, sakit sa baga at 'skin disease.'

Maigi pong hangga't maaga ay masagip natin sa ganitong uri ng sakit ang pinakamamahal ninyong bayan

Gusto ko ring idirekta ang sumbong na ito kay DENR Spokesman at Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Unit Concern Benny Antiporda.

Pareng Benny, baka puwede mong papasyalan ang bayan ng Sta. Maria, Bulacan at sakaling may mapatunayan na may mali sa sistema ng pagtatapon ng basura ay maturuan sila ng tamang 'waste disposal system.'

May mga pictures ako rito na puwede kong ipadala sa office mo Usec. Benny, anytime!

Batid kong sa ganda ng 'performance' n'yong dalawa ni Sec. Cimatuu-- lalo na ang Duterte's legacy na paglinis sa Boracay island at Manila Bay rehabilitation -- ay hindi mapupunta sa 'waste of time' ang ganitong uri ng ating panawagan.

Mabuhay po kayo, Mayor Pleyto at mabuhay din ang mga taga-DENR!

# Groups call for phase-out of plastic sachets in 3 years

Jaehwa Bernardo, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jul 14 2020 05:28 PM | Updated as of Jul 14 2020 06:26 PM

MANILA (UPDATE) — Environmental groups on Tuesday called on government to ban companies from using sachets to package their products to reduce plastic waste in the country.

While some companies have made efforts to stop using plastic packaging, government regulation would be more effective to address the problem rather than relying on voluntary commitments, said Miko Aliño, program manager of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Asia Pacific.

"We're recommending the government to phase out the use of sachets ideally in 3 years. Hopefully that would give time for businesses to rethink and put more investments in redesigning products and delivery systems," Aliño said in a virtual press briefing.

Some 164 million sachets are used and thrown away each day by Filipinos, or 59.8 billion per year, according to a 2019 GAIA report.

GAIA and environmental network Break Free From Plastic also urged government to support alternative delivery schemes, such as zero-waste stores and refilling stations, where customers can bring their own reusable containers so they could get refills on basic commodities such as oil and soy sauce, among others.

Zero-waste stores that reject sachets and promote refilling have already been established in some parts of the country, according to Break Free From Plastic national coordinator Rei Panaligan.

These include stores in Quezon City, Taguig, Makati, Cebu City, Davao City, Baguio City, and Dumingag in Zamboanga del Sur.

A survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations in 2019 showed that 6 out of 10 Filipinos support a nationwide ban on sachets while 7 out of 10 are in favor of buying condiments in recyclable containers instead of sachets.

## ADDRESS THE PRODUCTION SIDE OF THE PLASTIC PROBLEM

Aliño noted how most efforts in addressing plastic pollution focused on collecting waste rather than reducing the production of plastics.

"If we don't produce these materials in the first place then we don't have to deal with the leakage, we don't have to deal with lots of cleanups," he said.

The groups also called on government to pass a law on extended producer responsibility (EPR), which will hold companies accountable for the disposal and recycling of their products.

"People are being blamed for the plastic waste, especially consumers. And the burden and responsibility on managing the plastic waste falls [on] the cities and the local government units," said Panaligan, as he explained that there should be a "change in narrative" in addressing plastic pollution.

"The burden of that should fall into the industry and the manufacturing because that's the waste of the product," he added.

Sen. Cynthia Villar has filed a bill on EPR, which remains pending at the committee level.

The groups also recommended that companies fully disclose the amount of plastics they use, and for government to come up with guidelines on safe disposal of sachets and environmentally-friendly packaging.

Source: [https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/14/20/groups-call-for-phase-out-of-plastic-sachets-in-3-years?fbclid=IwAR2vcj5rq\\_LDYngJyRYyv8rgglCjfJqh-1Oc5YsnrVbAC4KaVG EK4TmQHjk](https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/14/20/groups-call-for-phase-out-of-plastic-sachets-in-3-years?fbclid=IwAR2vcj5rq_LDYngJyRYyv8rgglCjfJqh-1Oc5YsnrVbAC4KaVG EK4TmQHjk)

Siquijor continues to gear for #ZeroWaste amid Covid-

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Waste segregation of collected waste from households. This photo is from the waste collection in Brgy. Calunasan, Larena. (rac/PIA-Siquijor with photo from MJ Banglos/Zero Waste Foundation)

## Siquijor continues to gear for #ZeroWaste amid COVID-19

By Mary Jane S. BanglosPublished on July 14, 2020

SIQUIJOR, July 14 (PIA) -- Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Province of Siquijor continues to strengthen its efforts to campaign towards zero waste.

Notably, the province has been strongly advocating for a zero-waste province and passed an ordinance regulating and banning the use of single-use plastics since last year.

Just recently, it has amended this ordinance which now strengthens plastic use regulation and prohibitions.



**BAYANIHAN.** Construction of MRF by barangay councilors and other officials and volunteers of Barangay Basac in Larena, Siquijor using only indigenous materials and madre de cacao as fence trees as as fence. (rac/PIA-Siquijor with photo from MJ Banglos/Zero Waste Foundation)

Under the amended ordinance numbered 005-2019, all plastic bags are prohibited all days of the week, including the so called "oxo-degradable" or bio-degradable bags.

Selling of styrofoam and other single-use plastic disposable containers are strictly prohibited.

Two more days are declared as plastic holidays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, in addition to Sundays.

Pre-packed fruits and vegetables are also prohibited in the market and fruit stands and shall not be allowed to display unless these items are stripped of its plastic wrap.

The ordinance also promotes the "Bring Your Own Eco-Kit Program" that consists of reusable bags, reusable drinking containers, plate, spoon, fork, and reusable containers for food.

To address the serious problems on waste management, the province has also partnered with Mother Earth Foundation (MEF), a non-profit organization that specializes in waste management.

"We are very happy with this 'Bring Your Own Eco-Kit Program' because it can significantly reduce the amount of wastes thrown every day. People shouldn't be too dependent on throw-away items because it's convenient, but rather invest in reusable items because it saves them more money in the long run. More than that, it keeps our earth free from trash and pollution. Bringing your own tumbler instead of buying bottled waters can already make a significant difference," Mother Earth Foundation (MEF) said in a statement.



Waste segregation done from the household in Brgy. Calunasan, Larena. (rac/PIA-Siquijor with photo from MJ Banglos/Zero Waste Foundation)

The province, through the organization, has been working closely at the barangay level to educate households on proper waste segregation and offering technical assistance to barangay councils on how to manage these wastes.

Aside from being busy building quarantine facilities to address the increasing number of locally stranded individuals and OFWs, barangays have also been addressing the problem of wastes through building materials recovery facility (MRF) and arrange its waste collection system.

The council of different barangays have also been working closely with MEF Siquijor to conduct massive information and education campaign via "bandillo" through which households are taught how to do segregation at source.

"We really encourage the households to segregate their waste at home properly *para dili hazardous sa mag segregate sa MRF* (so that it won't be hazardous to those working and segregating in the materials recovery facility.) Siquijor is a paradise that needs to be protected. In order to preserve its natural beauty and cleanliness, the people living in the island should protect it themselves by learning how to manage their wastes," the MEF said.

Siquijor is the first island in the Philippines to adapt the zero waste program. (rac/PIA7-Siquijor/MJBanglos/Communication Officer MEF Siquijor)

# Mineral firm spends P19-M for Covid response in Surigao Norte

July 14, 2020, 4:34 pm



**RESPONSIBLE MINING.** Surigao del Norte Vice Governor Eddie Gokiangkee Jr. receives the 5,000 rapid test kits donated by Taganito Mining Corporation, represented by its resident mine manager Artemio Valeroso, sometime in June 2020. As of early July, the company has so far spent some PHP19.1 million for various coronavirus disease response in the province. *(Contributed Photo)*

**CLAVER, Surigao del Norte** – Taganito Mining Corporation (TMC) said it has already spent some PHP19.1 million for coronavirus disease (Covid-19) response in Surigao del Norte province.

TMC said the amount is part of the company's sector's initiative to ease the impact of the health crisis on poor residents while helping equip medical front-liners with the necessary tools to combat the virus.

Based on its latest report to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), the company said it has already used some PHP17.9 million from its Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) funds and over PHP1.1 million from its corporate social responsibility funds for Covid-related relief operations and activities.

"The relief operations aim to support the communities and the province's frontliners, in solidarity with the people of Surigao del Norte," TMC--a subsidiary of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC)--said in a statement to the Philippine News Agency Tuesday,

TMC said it has also donated early this month some 5,000 rapid test kits to Surigao del Norte to help detect possible cases of Covid-19 throughout the province.

"The donation was received by Vice Governor Eddie Gokiangkee Jr. who said that the test kits will be utilized in detecting asymptomatic Covid-19 cases especially with the return of Locally Stranded Individuals (LSIs) in the province," said TMC, which mines export-grade nickel in Claver town.

"We know for a fact that we don't still have a vaccine (against Covid-19). Let us thank TMC for giving us rapid testing kits. This is really needed by our province. We know for a fact that we still don't have a vaccine," Gokiangkee was quoted as saying in the dialect.

Gokiangkee said he is looking forward to the establishment of the Philippine Red Cross molecular testing laboratory through joint PHP18-million funding from TMC, Cagdianao Mining Corporation, and the Taganito HPAL Nickel Corporation.

TMC said as of the first week of July, it already has distributed 3,810 sacks of rice, 14,168 face masks, and other food items, as well as medical supplies both to Claver local government and for the Province's "Hatud Hinabang Program," which is expected to benefit over 150,000 families.

It said it has also donated 1,000 rapid test kits to Claver and Surigao City local government units, as well as to the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples in Caraga Region.

Mining firm spends P19-M for Covid response in

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The Philippine Red Cross-Surigao del Norte Chapter also received 1,000 face masks for its front-liners and six handwashing facilities from the company.

"The donations are only the other half of the big story of TMC's efforts to protect the mining communities against the threat of Covid-19," TMC resident mine manager Artemio Valeroso was quoted as saying.

On top of these, Valeroso said TMC has established quarantine and isolation that are regularly inspected by the local Inter-Agency Task Force on Covid-19 to help protect the employees and the communities from the virus.

Meanwhile, Claver Mayor Georgia Gokiangke has thanked the TMC's contributions" as the community's partner in the fight against Covid-19."

"You are really doing something to support our operation against Covid-19. Thank you very much TMC," Gokiangkee was quoted as saying in vernacular. **(Press Release/PNA)**



# Duterte's coal trade plan, a 'losing proposition', says climate action advocate

Published July 14, 2020, 5:23 PM

by Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC) executive director Renato Redentor Constantino on Tuesday said President Duterte's plan to open up the country's borders to coal trade a "losing proposition."



President Rodrigo Roa Duterte

(ALBERT ALCAIN / PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

Constantino maintained "new coal is a threat to grid stability and public interest" noting the "terminal decline of coal as a power source."

"If companies are foolish enough to pursue this course, the company itself, rather than working families and small businesses, should wholly bear the risks," he added.

"As things stand today, any additional costs and risks are simply passed along to the consumer without regulatory intervention, and imported coal prices will likely continue to rise, as they have largely done for the past two years," Constantino said.

He went on to cite how global capital has been fleeing the thermal coal sector even before the pandemic. "Ayala recently announced that it will fully exit coal by 2030, and Bloomberg forecasts no more coal power will likely be built in the country past 2023, if at all. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas also released its new Sustainable Finance Framework last April, which sets the stage not only for pricing climate and transition risk, but also for valuing climate-resilient and low-carbon opportunities," he said.

As an alternative, he pointed out speeding the shift to renewable and decentralized energy would improve energy access, lower power bills, and avoid pollution in the long run, "all of which would help families cope with the impacts of the lockdown and usher in a better normal."

"It would also attract investments and create new jobs, and reduce our reliance on expensive, polluting and imported coal and diesel," he said.

In a recorded speech aired on television on Tuesday, President Duterte told military troops in Jolo that he was "ready to open the borders" for trade, including coal.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/14/dutertes-coal-trade-plan-a-losing-proposition-says-climate-action-advocate/>



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ALDWIN QUITASOL ALFONSO FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE

BAGUIO'S tree-lined environment is threatened by another wave of cutting of pine trees to give way to a construction project by an influential developer.



ABS-CBN News

10 hrs ·

TINGNAN: Nakararanas ng malawak na coral bleaching sa Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, ayon sa pamunuan nito.

Ang coral bleaching ay ang unti-unting pagkamatay ng corals dahil sa stress dulot ng pagbabago ng kondisyon ng lugar gaya ng temperatura, light, at nutrients.

Malaki ang epekto ng coral bleaching sa iba pang mga buhay-ilang sa Tubbataha. Ngayon lang din nararanas dito ang ganito kalawak na coral bleaching, ayon sa isang opisyal. Aniya, dulot din ito ng mga ginagawa ng mga tao. (🏠: Tubbataha Management Office) | ulat ni Lynette dela Cruz, ABS-CBN News

Abangan ang buong detalye sa <https://news.abs-cbn.com/>.



👍👍 6.2K

164 Comments 546 Shares



ABS-CBN News

14 hrs ·

TINGNAN: Dugong natagpuang patay sa dalampasigan sa Barangay Tagpait sa Aborlan, Palawan nitong Lunes ng umaga. May timbang itong 250 kilo at nakitaan ng pagdurugo sa ilong. May internal injuries din ito, ayon sa lokal na pamahalaan.

Inililing naman ito agad para hindi magdulot ng masangsang na amoy sa paligid. Rex Ruta, ABS-CBN News (Photo: Avien Hasan)



Angel Villaflores and 20K others

1.6K Comments 3.2K Shares

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[https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10158583450885168&id=27254475167&fs=0&focus\\_comp\\_oser=0](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10158583450885168&id=27254475167&fs=0&focus_comp_oser=0)

# No 'final' quarantine classifications yet after July 15

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos July 14, 2020, 4:58 pm



**MANILA** – The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has yet to make “final” recommendations on the fate of the nationwide community quarantine after July 15, Malacañang said on Tuesday.

In a virtual press briefing, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said members of the IATF-EID would meet on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the possible retention of or changes in the quarantine status in the country.

He said the meeting of IATF-EID members would take some hours to discuss the proposed quarantine classifications that would be imposed in the country after July 15.

“*Pag-uusapan pa lang mamaya ‘yung mga apela* (The IATF-EID will still discuss the appeals [made by local governments]),” said Roque, who is also spokesperson of the IATF-EID.

So far, only Bacolod City has appealed, he said, noting that he, however, was not privy as to whether the appeal was to impose a stricter or more relaxed community quarantine in the city.

The current quarantine classifications in the country are set to expire on July 15.

Roque said Duterte would announce the new quarantine status on Wednesday because the IATF-EID has yet to come up with final recommendations.

“*Wala pa pong pinal na rekomendasyon kay Presidente* (There is still no final recommendation to the President),” he said. “*Bukas pa po ma-anunsiyo ni Presidente dahil mamaya pa po mapa-finalize yung recommendations* (The President will make the announcement tomorrow because the recommendations will be finalized later).”

Roque reiterated that the classification of community quarantine beginning July 16 would be based on the case doubling rate and critical health care capacity.

To date, only Cebu City is under an enhanced community quarantine, the most stringent quarantine classification.

Under the general community quarantine (GCQ) are Metro Manila, Benguet, Cavite, Rizal, Lapu-Lapu City, Mandaue City, Ormoc City, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Cebu’s Talisay City, Minglanilla, and Consolacion.

A stricter modified GCQ (MGCQ) is imposed in Abra, Baguio City, Ifugao, Kalinga, Ilocos Norte, La Union, Pangasinan, Cagayan, Isabela, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Angeles City, Batangas, Laguna, Quezon, Lucena City, Palawan, Puerto Princesa, Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Naga City Capiz, Iloilo City, Negros Occidental, Bacolod City, and Cebu province.

Also under a stricter MGCQ are Bohol, Negros Oriental, Tacloban City, Western Samar, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur, Bukidnon, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Cagayan de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao City, Davao de Oro, Cotabato, South Cotabato, Agusan del Norte, Butuan City, Lanao del Sur, and Maguindanao.

The rest of the country is under a more relaxed MGCQ. **(PNA)**

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1108897>

# Metro Manila mayors recommend GCQ extension

July 14, 2020 | Filed under: Headlines,News | Posted by: Tempo Desk

BY JEL SANTOS

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The extension of the General Community Quarantine (GCQ) in the National Capital Region (NCR) is being recommended by the Metro Manila Council (MMC) to the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF), officials said on Tuesday.

The council made the recommendation amid the continuous rise of COVID-19 cases in the country.

As of 4 p.m. of July 13, 2020, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has reached 57, 006.

According to MMC Chairman and Parañaque City Mayor Edwin Olivarez, the mayors in the metropolis have unanimously agreed to recommend the extension of the GCQ during a recent meeting.

The IATF, he said, is looking into allowing food establishments to operate at 50 percent seating capacity for dine-in customers.

“Pinag-aaralan po ng ating IATF ‘yung paano po ang pagbubukas ng economy pero not sacrificing ‘yung ating health protocol. ‘Yan po ang tinatawag na hybrid na GCQ na mayroon pong kaunting bubuksan para naman po magkaroon ng hanapbuhay or ekonomiya ang atin pong Metro Manila,” he said during an interview over DZBB.

Olivarez said the mayors will be able to implement the “Hybrid GCQ” because of the authority given to them by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the IATF, saying areas not affected should continue with their economic activities.

Assistant Secretary Celine Pialago, MMDA spokesperson, stressed that the MMC is just a recommendatory body. The decision on quarantine status will still be up to the IATF.

# High infection areas must remain in GCQ — experts

We strongly recommend the national government restricts the movement of all LSI and returning OFW who wish to leave the NCR until the current surge in the pandemic has been brought under control.

Published 5 hours ago on July 15, 2020 01:00 AM

By [Gabbie Parlade](#)



As COVID-19 cases surge, experts from the University of Santo Tomas (UST) urged the national government to keep in place the general community quarantine (GCQ) status over areas with high rates of transmission and increasing the utilization in hospitals.

UST Experts Dr. Bernhard Egwolf and Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. said only areas such as the National Capital Region (NCR) that have shown proof of a decrease in infections and hospitalization rate should quarantine protocols ease.

“Positivity rates should also be stable, below 10 percent and ideally below five percent. And hospitalization occupancy rates should also be below 50 percent,” the experts said.

They have identified that most cases reported in the NCR were from unspecified or unknown areas.

Experts said this suggests the local government units might be withholding information on the location of some of their reported cases.

“Without proper geographical identification of positive cases, it will be difficult for public health authorities to properly understand the extent of the surge and to control the pandemic through contact tracing, tracking, and isolation.”

Experts also found the positivity rate in NCR, indicating the extent of community transmission in the area, has gradually increased over the past two weeks.

“Just over two weeks ago, the positivity rate hovered between six percent to eight percent of tests. Today, the positivity rate is around 12 percent and has exceeded 10 percent for the past week or so,” the experts said.

To help control the cases, the World Health Organization (WHO) urged countries to reduce the positivity rate to below five percent.

WHO representative to the Philippines, Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe, earlier said the increased transmission was already expected as the same scenario also happened in several areas abroad after easing the restrictions.

But he said more strict protocols be implemented instead in place of more relaxed protocols for the national government to reignite the economy as well as guard the health system.

Meanwhile, UST experts said the continued surge has likewise caused an increase in the hospital utilization rate, mainly in the NCR or the epicenter of the virus.

“The rise in the positivity rate and hospitalization rate indicates that the NCR is undergoing a real surge in the pandemic which needs to be addressed immediately by public health authorities,” the experts said.

Egwolf and Austriaco said the utilization rate of hospitals in some cities were found to possibly exceed the ‘danger zone’ of having more than 70 percent occupancy rate.

Among the cities that may be ‘crushed’ by the growing pandemic in NCR include Navotas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Las Piñas, Manila, Pateros, Muntinlupa, Quezon City, Pasig and Taguig, based on COVID-19 data as of 12 July.

Experts further suggested that local government units should strengthen local and targeted lockdowns that should be maintained for at least two weeks to decrease possible transmissions. The national government is likewise advised to properly supervise and monitor these areas regularly to ensure it is enacted in a timely manner.

“It is troubling to read news reports that reveal that some of the targeted lockdowns have only been kept in place for several days. This is not enough time to allow asymptomatic carriers to become non-infectious,” they said.

“If localized lockdowns are unable to slow the spread in the NCR, the government must be ready to return the component cities of the NCR to an MECQ or even an ECQ to protect our health care system and to minimize cases and deaths,”

Experts also suggest restricting their movement to protect other areas.

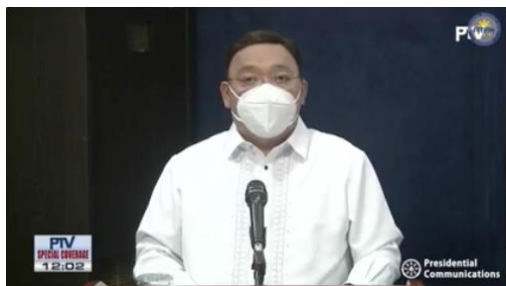
“We strongly recommend the national government restricts the movement of all LSI and returning OFW who wish to leave the NCR until the current surge in the pandemic has been brought under control,” they said, noting that a 14-mandatory quarantine should likewise be strictly imposed.

At present, the Philippines reported over 57,000 cases as it nears the projection of experts from the University of the Philippines the infection cases may reach over 60,000 by the end of July.



# Malacañang assures public: Recent spike in COVID-19 cases in PH can be controlled

By Jerome Carlo R. Paunan Published on July 14, 2020



CALOOCAN CITY, July 14 (PIA) -- Presidential Spokesperson Secretary Harry Roque on Monday assured the public that it is still possible to bring the COVID-19 outbreak in the Philippines under control, despite the recent spike in coronavirus cases in the country during the past few weeks.

"The government recognizes the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in the country and assured the public that the situation can be controlled," Roque said during the Malacañang press briefing.

"Hindi lang po tayo nag-iisa rito. Sa nakaraan na anim na linggo, dumoble po ang kaso sa iba't ibang parte ng mundo, ayon sa World Health Organization," said the Palace's spokesperson and concurrent spokesman of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases.

The WHO has confirmed that in the last six weeks, cases have more than doubled across the globe. While according to official sources compiled by media on Friday, the virus has killed at least 555,000 individuals and has infected nearly 12.3 million people in 196 countries and territories.

Quoting media reports of the WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Roque said, "There are many examples from around the world that have shown that even if the outbreak is intense, it can still be brought back under control."

The WHO chief earlier cited the countries of Italy, Spain, South Korea and Dharavi—a densely packed slum area in the megacity of Mumbai in India that all broke the chains of transmission and suppressed the virus by having "a strong focus on community engagement and the basics of testing, tracing, isolating and treating all those that are sick."

On the other hand, in the Philippines as of Monday, the Department of Health recorded 57,006 COVID-19 cases nationwide with 1,599 deaths and 20,371 recoveries.

Roque said in order to bring COVID-19 back under control is the main reason for the designation of the anti-COVID czars, each of whom presented the current status of each of the government's COVID-19 response strategy.

During the same briefing, the official introduced Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong as "Chief Tracing Czar," Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar as "Chief Isolation Czar," and Health Undersecretary Leopoldo "Bong" Vega as "Chief Treatment Czar" along with Secretary Vivencio "Vince" Dizon who was earlier introduced as "Chief Testing Czar" when the country intensified its testing capacity efforts.

"All four anti-COVID czars will be directly under the National Task Force Against COVID-19 (NTF) led by Chief Implementer Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr.," Roque said. (PIA NCR)

Source: <https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1047512>

# Bed capacity para sa COVID-19 patients sa Metro Manila, nasa 'danger zone' na

By Angellic Jordan July 14, 2020 - 09:16 PM



Umabot na sa 'danger zone' ang bed capacity para sa pasyenteng apektado ng COVID-19 sa Metro Manila, ayon sa Department of Health (DOH).

Sa press briefing, sinabi ni Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire na nasa 73.7 porsyento na ang utilization rate sa COVID-19 isolation beds sa National Capital Region (NCR).

Nasa 77.4 porsyento naman ang occupancy rate sa ward beds.

Ipinaliwanag ni Vergeire kung paano napagbabatayan ng kagawaran ang naitatalang datos kung nasa 'danger zone' na.

"Ang mga percentages na ginagamit ng DOH upang malaman kung nasa 'safe', 'warning' at 'danger' zone ay base po dito: 'Safe zone' kung nasa zero to 30 percent pa lang ng COVID-19-dedicated facilities ang kasalukuyang nagagamit, 'warning zone' naman kung nasa 30-70 percent na ang nagagamit, at 'danger zone' kung 70 to 100 percent na po ang nagagamit," ani Vergeire.

"Binabantayan po ito ng DOH upang mapaghandaan kung magkakaroon man ng surge," dagdag pa nito.

Sa huling datos ng DOH, nasa 57,545 na ang confirmed COVID-19 cases sa bansa hanggang 4:00, Martes ng hapon (July 14).



## EDITORIAL - Danger zone

(The Philippine Star) - July 15, 2020 - 12:00am

Malacañang stressed yesterday that the critical health care capacity of the country remains “manageable,” as it sought to allay public fears that hospitals are becoming overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases.

The reassurance, however, does not reflect the concerns aired by hospital operators themselves, and the report of the Department of Health that the critical care capacity of hospitals for coronavirus disease 2019 cases has hit the “danger zone.”

As of last Monday, three of the country’s biggest hospital facilities – St. Luke’s Medical Center in Quezon City and Bonifacio Global City as well as Makati Medical Center – announced that they could no longer accept more COVID cases as their isolation and intensive care unit beds were already fully occupied. The National Kidney Transplant Institute, for its part, said its critical care capacity had reached the danger zone.

Similar situations were emerging in other parts of the country, the DOH reported yesterday. The Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines Inc. said most of the hospitals in Metro Manila and the cities of Cebu and Iloilo were nearing full capacity for COVID-19 cases.

The situation is not as dire as it seems; officials in charge of the pandemic response have attributed the problem to increased COVID testing as businesses and mass transport facilities resume operations. Hospital managers say the problem can be remedied if mild and asymptomatic COVID patients can be moved to quarantine facilities outside hospitals. ICU and isolation beds can then be reserved for patients requiring critical care.

This isn’t an impossible remedy to the problem, but speed is needed in setting up the isolation facilities. With quarantine measures gradually being eased and more testing being conducted as economic activities resume, COVID cases can be expected to keep rising. For mild and asymptomatic cases, isolation can be enough. Critical care facilities, as the phrase implies, can be reserved for those needing critical care.

# Poor patients get free plasma

Convalescent plasma therapy includes the transfusion of the survivor's plasma that is believed to have antibodies to fight off the coronavirus to a patient presently battling COVID-19.

Published 6 hours ago on July 15, 2020 12:10 AM

By [Michelle R. Guillang](#)



The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) will launch a Samaritan Program that will give convalescent plasma free to underprivileged COVID-19 patients.

Now that blood plasma produced by COVID-19 survivors appears to be a COVID-19 patients, the PRC officially opened on Monday its own convalescent plasma center in Port Area, Manila.

Convalescent plasma therapy includes the transfusion of the survivor's plasma that is believed to have antibodies to fight off the coronavirus to a patient presently battling COVID-19.

The therapy boosts the patients' immune system, enabling it to fight COVID-19, some medical studies claimed.

However, due to the small number of recovered COVID-19 patients who are donating plasma, only a limited supply is available, especially in the Philippines.

Moreover, as the blood undergoes a series of testing and processing to ensure its safety and quality, its cost ranges from P30,000 to P50,000 per unit of bag of convalescent plasma apheresis product in government hospitals. These are more expensive in private hospitals.

Senator Richard Gordon, who is also the chairman of the PRC, said the Samaritan Program will provide hope to the poor COVID-19 patients who can't afford to purchase the potential treatment for their illness.

"We will launch a Samaritan Program for the convalescent plasma for the poor. It should not be limited to the rich. The funds we will be able to collect will be for them, to help our fellow Filipinos prolong their lives. This is a huge thing for the patients who are hoping to be cured," Gordon said.

# Sotto lauds US stand vs China's territorial claims

By: [Marlon Ramos](#) - Reporter / [@MRamosINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 08:41 PM July 14, 2020

Senate President Vicente Sotto III on Tuesday (July 14) lauded the “clear-thinking stand” of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on China’s sweeping ownership claims in the South China Sea as he urged the Duterte administration to “never waver in its defense” of the country’s territory.

“We shall never and should not shut up into giving up our offshore treasures,” Sotto said in a Viber message.

“Let us continue to hold hands in our fight for our sovereign rights,” Sotto said.

Stopping short of asking the government to rally behind Pompeo’s verbal tirades against Beijing, the Senate leader said the Philippines should keep fighting for “what is legally ours.”

“We should never cower in fear from the harassment and political intimidation that foreign governments impose on us,” he said.

“We should stand firm and prove that we, as a nation, remain united in our common desire to claim and protect our sovereign jurisdiction,” he added.

Apparently referring to China’s rejection of the arbitral ruling in favor of the Philippines, Sotto said illegal actions “can never be made lawful by the whims and caprices of a foreign power, which treats the entire South China Sea as its territory.”

Edited by TSB

# China's remarks on arbitration ruling an insult to int'l community – Bayan

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 11:25 PM July 14, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — China's insistence on the alleged invalidity of the 2016 arbitral ruling junking its nine-dash line claim on the West Philippine Sea is an affront to the international community that subscribes to such laws, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), an activist group, said on Tuesday.

Bayan said the Chinese embassy's response to Manila's call for respect of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling showed a blatant disregard of international law.

China said on Monday, through a tweet by its embassy here that it remained firm in its belief that the "South China arbitration and so-called award are illegal and invalid."

The Chinese embassy made the tweet, now deleted, after Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. commemorated the anniversary of the PCA ruling.

"It shows blatant disregard of international law and is an insult to the community of nations that abide by such law," Bayan Secretary-General Renato Reyes said in a message to reporters.

"China wants the Philippines to abandon the ruling and instead engage in arrangements approved by Xi and Duterte, which will ultimately result in the loss of our sovereign rights and the solidification of China's illegal claims," he added.

In a message last July 12, Locsin insisted that the Philippines' victory in the Hague tribunal was [non-negotiable](#) — amid several issues plaguing China's alleged intrusion into Philippine waters.

During the early days of President Rodrigo Duterte's administration, the PCA ruled as [invalid and without historical basis](#) China's nine-dash line claim — a series of lines that show their supposed territory within the South China Sea but also includes a huge part of the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

The [Hague ruling](#) also found out that China violated the Philippines' sovereign rights by intruding into its exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

"China cannot claim the entire South China Sea," Reyes said. "It cannot claim the West Philippine Sea. The Filipino people will not allow it. Atin ang Pinas."

The complaint before PCA was filed by Duterte's predecessor, then President Benigno Aquino III. The case damaged ties between the two countries. However, Duterte, on assuming office, adopted an independent foreign policy that repaired the relationship.

This is not the first time that China insisted on its rights over parts of the WPS. In 2018, Locsin himself admitted that China [would not recognize the arbitral ruling](#) during discussions for a memorandum of understanding between the two countries regarding a joint oil and gas exploration.

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Previously, Beijing tightened its grip on the West Philippine Sea by establishing [two Chinese districts](#) in Paracel and Spratly Islands, which are well within the Philippines' EEZ.

To counter that move, the municipality of [Kalayaan](#) sought the power to name three sandbars between Pag-asa (Thitu) Island and Chinese-occupied Zamora (Subi) Reef.

—*With a report from Jim Mendoza (trainee)*

# Maynilad: La Mesa plants' upgrade picks up pace

By [Jordeene B. Lagare](#)

July 15, 2020

Maynilad Water Services Inc. is speeding up its P7.9-billion project to upgrade its La Mesa treatment plants in Quezon City after the government eased quarantine restrictions in Metro Manila.

In a statement on Tuesday, the West Zone concessionaire said more than 400 workers had been deployed to the La Mesa Treatment Plants 1 and 2 for their “massive” improvement. This involves increasing the facilities’ capacity to treat higher raw water turbidity, retrofitting structures to improved its earthquake resiliency and automating processes.

The workers passed antibody screening tests prior to redeployment and are now required to follow stricter safety protocols while the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic rages.

“Completion of this project is essential to ensuring water-service reliability for our customers, given the challenges posed by increasingly variable raw water quality from Angat Dam,” Maynilad Chief Operating Officer Randolph Estrellado said in the statement.

The upgrade, which started in 2017, is being implemented in phases so that the facilities can operate without interrupting water services for Maynilad customers.

Both plants produce 2,400 million liters of water a day and serves around 90 percent of the company’s 9.7 million customers.

Besides upgrading existing treatment facilities, Maynilad’s roadmap toward addressing water security challenges include building new treatment plants, pumping stations and reservoirs; sustaining network enhancements through pipe replacements and leak repairs; and developing smaller alternative raw water sources to accommodate a growing population.

Majority owned by Metro Pacific Investments Corp., Maynilad services the cities of Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Manila, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Quezon and Valenzuela.

It also services the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario in Cavite province.



# Red tide recurs in 3 Eastern Visayas bays

By Sarwell Meniano July 14, 2020, 4:19 pm



**RED TIDE.** Seaweed farmers of Matarinao Bay in General Macarthur, Eastern Samar. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on Tuesday (July 14, 2020) raised red tide alert over Cancabato Bay in Tacloban City; Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar; and Carigara Bay in Leyte. *(Photo courtesy of FishCORAL Project)*

**TACLOBAN CITY** – A shellfish ban is up in three bays in Eastern Visayas due to the presence of red tide toxins in coastal waters, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said on Tuesday.

In its alert, BFAR informed the public that red tide toxins were found in Cancabato Bay in Tacloban City; Matarinao Bay stretching across the towns of General MacArthur, Hernani, Quinapondan, and Salcedo in Eastern Samar; and Carigara Bay in Leyte.

Through initial tests, BFAR found the toxins present in both seawater and shellfish meat beyond the regulatory limit, said regional director Juan Albaladejo in a phone interview.

The maximum regulatory limit of toxins is 60 micrograms for every 100 grams of shellfish meat. Above that, the government strictly prohibits shellfish harvesting in affected areas.

Albaladejo said the prevailing weather condition in Eastern Visayas contributed to the recurring red tide phenomenon in these bays.

“Long dry out period then sudden downpour produces series of upwelling moving the sediments laden with cyst stages of red tide microorganisms and exposing it high densities organic matter causing red blooms. If areas previously have episodes of red tide occurrence, there’s a likelihood that these natural events will recur,” Albaladejo said.

To safeguard human lives, the BFAR has issued the red tide alert as precautionary advice to the public to refrain from gathering, selling, and eating all types of shellfish.

The fisheries bureau also banned the trading and consumption of *Acetes* sp. locally known as "alamang" harvested from the bay to avoid possible poisoning.

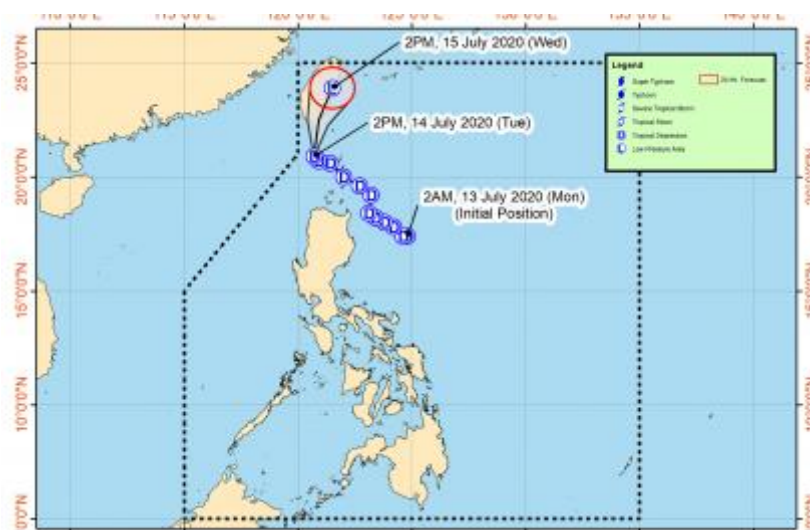
Local government units are advised to regulate gathering, marketing, and transporting of shellfish in infested areas.

Fish, squid, shrimp, and crab are safe to eat “provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking”, BFAR said.

Red tide is a term used to describe a phenomenon where the water is discolored by high algal biomass or the concentration of algae. **(PNA)**

# 'Carina' brings rain showers, thunderstorms over 3 Luzon areas

By Ma. Cristina Arayata July 14, 2020, 6:43 pm



(Image grabbed from PAGASA's Facebook page)

**MANILA** – Ilocos Norte, Batanes, and the Babuyan Islands will continue to experience rain showers and thunderstorms due to Tropical Depression Carina, the weather bureau said Tuesday afternoon.

"Carina was last eyed 140 km. west-northwest of Basco, Batanes and is slowly moving northwestward. It packs a maximum sustained winds of 45 kph near the center, and gustiness of up to 55 kph," it said.

As of 5 p.m., the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said all tropical cyclone warning signals have been lifted.

However, coastal areas in extreme Northern Luzon may experience intermittent gusts.

The rest of the country may also experience isolated rain showers caused by localized thunderstorms.

PAGASA warned that flash floods or landslides are possible during severe thunderstorms.

Meanwhile, moderate to rough seas will prevail over the seaboards of Batanes, Ilocos Norte, Cagayan, including the Babuyan Islands, and Isabela in the next 24 hours.

Those with small seacraft are advised not to venture out to sea.

Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate with slight to moderate seas.

PAGASA expects "Carina" to weaken to a low-pressure area either Tuesday night or Wednesday. (**PNA**)

New Zealand, united States... Which country is the  
TITLE: most optimistic on climate change?

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# New Zealand, United States... Which country is the most optimistic on climate change?

AFP Relaxnews / 06:13 PM July 14, 2020



An activist holds a placard depicting planet Earth during a “Youth Strike 4 Climate” protest march in Bristol, south west England on February 28, 2020. Image: Geoff Caddick/AFP

The International Energy Agency has recently estimated that 2.6 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions will never be emitted into the atmosphere due to the coronavirus pandemic. While the long-term impact of the pandemic on climate change is still uncertain, a recent study suggests that citizens are optimistic in our ability to overcome this challenge.

For this new report, Australian research platform Glow questioned 5,256 citizens across Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. about their level of trust and satisfaction with governmental response to climate change.

More than half of American respondents are optimistic about our ability to address the threat of climate change (60%), while just 18% of people believe that humanity cannot overcome this challenge.

Australians and Canadians are similarly upbeat, with almost three in five surveyors believing that we can collectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight the additional effects of climate change.

Meanwhile, Britons are the most pessimistic about climate change, with nearly one in four residents of the UK (26%) expressing doubts about our ability to overcome the challenges posed by climate change.

Despite these encouraging figures, a vast majority of citizens in all nations state that their respective governments are not doing enough on climate action (74%).

A large portion of respondents in all countries are in support of nuclear power as an alternative to carbon, with the exception of nuclear-free New Zealand.

According to the study, New Zealanders would rather educate citizens about the environmental impact of products and services they purchase and increase funding for planting trees in their country (79%).

New Zealand, united States... Which country is the  
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Meanwhile, 46% of Americans state that they are in favor of nuclear power, echoing President Donald Trump's recent budget proposal for 2021 that notably increases spending on nuclear energy research and development.

This figure is surprising at a time when an increasing number of nations across the world are shifting away from atomic power over safety concerns.

While Japan shut down all its plants in 2011 after a tsunami caused a nuclear meltdown at three reactors in Fukushima, Germany announced that it was planning on shuttering its nuclear power fleet by 2022.

Findings also suggest that most surveyed citizens favor soft measures like education (53%), research (53%) and planting trees (56%). *NVG*

Paradise regained then lost: Med mammals mourn

TITLE: lockdown end

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# Paradise regained then lost: Med mammals mourn lockdown end

posted July 14, 2020 at 02:00 pm

by [AFP and Julie Pacorel](#)

When Europeans retreated into their homes to observe strict stay-at-home rules to contain the coronavirus, dolphins and whales on the Mediterranean coast basked and thrived in a hitherto unknown calm.

But the return of tourists, noisy boats, and heavy sea transport with the end of lockdowns in France and other Mediterranean littoral countries has signalled the return of danger and harm caused by human activity for underwater creatures.

Nowhere is this more true than in the crystalline waters outside France's second-biggest city of Marseille, a nature reserve important for wildlife but also thronged with day-trippers in the summer season.

"As soon as the pleasure boaters came back, we saw footage that really annoyed us," said Marion Leclerc from the conservationist organisation Souffleurs d'Ecume (Sea Foam Blowers).

In one video, three teenagers jump from a boat close to a finback whale while wearing snorkelling masks, which is dangerous for both animal and human, said Leclerc.

"We're speaking of an animal that weighs 70 tons," she lamented.

"Many forget that the Mediterranean is also a home, where animals rest, feed and reproduce," Leclerc said.

The Mediterranean Sea is home to more than 10,000 species, despite only amounting to 1 percent of the Earth's oceans.

But the sea which separates Africa from Europe draws 25 percent of marine traffic.

Heavy traffic increases the risk of fatal collision with the sea mammals.

"It's the first cause of non-natural mortality for big cetaceans," said Leclerc.

## Reduce speed

Out of the 87 marine mammals in the world registered by the UN, 21 have been spotted in the Mediterranean. Most of them are considered at risk of extinction.

On a bright summer's morning, a group of fifty striped dolphins splash around an inflatable blue speedboat off La Ciotat bay a short boat ride from Marseille.

"We need to reduce our speed and place ourselves parallel to their trajectory to avoid cutting their path. They come and play if they want to," said Laurene Trudelle, at the helm of the boat belonging to the scientific research group GIS3M.

The lockdown brought maritime traffic to an almost complete standstill, giving dolphins and whales the opportunity to explore areas from which they are normally kept at bay by tourists.

All scientific studies were put on hold in the Mediterranean during lockdown, but marine drone manufacturer Sea Proven got the necessary authorisation and funds from Prince Albert II of Monaco to continue observations in the Pelagos Sanctuary, a marine area protected by Italy, Monaco, and France.

## 'Reversible pollution'

Bioacoustics researchers from a Toulon University team who analysed Sea Proven's data observed a 30-decibel decrease in noise on the coastal areas as a result of the total lack of pleasure boaters.

And the silence allowed the aquatic creatures to interact in areas between two and six times as large, said researcher Herve Glotin.

Paradise regained then lost: Med mammals mourn

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"The lockdown period showed that we really are responsible for the noise in the bays and that this pollution is completely reversible," Glotin said.

"When you think that reducing boats' speed by 10 percent in areas highly populated with marine mammals would be enough to significantly decrease sound pollution and the risk of collision" Glotin added.

The Quiet Sea research project also saw the amount of hydrocarbon -- the principal component of petrol -- halve during lockdown.

"It's really good for biodiversity, so indirectly for all of the food chain," said Glotin.

No binding international law obliges ship-owners to preserve marine mammals' natural habitat.

But since 2017, France requires boats that are over 24 metres (78 feet) in the Pelagos Sanctuary to have onboard equipment which detects the animals.

## Back to basics from plastics

By [Ei Sun Oh](#)

July 15, 2020

I HAVE written previously about the rampant ubiquity of plastic wastes in both the urban and the rural parts, the riverine and the coastal regions of my home state of Sabah. I saw similar plastic scraps and heaps at least in some of those areas of Manila, which I visited early last year. All these testify to the fact that plastic wastes constitute a common environmental and public health problem in many parts of the developing world.

Inadequate or inefficient municipal waste disposal services make up, of course, part of the challenge in developing countries, where the priority of the national narrative is, not surprisingly, development, often at all costs, with the (plastic) detritus left by the blazing trail of development as tailing second thoughts. One of the most common municipal disposal methods for plastics and other wastes is landfilling and landfill sites are rapidly, well, filling up and depleting in availability, as they have to compete with the equally, if not more, voracious appetite for land due to rapid urbanization, an apt manifestation of the traditional notion of development in most developing countries.

Yet waste disposal services are in most circumstances confined to municipal limits. In the more remote parts of most of the developing world, not only telecommunications coverage is sketchy at best — as vividly illustrated by the story I relayed about the university student having to climb up to tall trees in her remote village to hook on to better data signals during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown — but public waste disposal services, too. So, residents have to resort to self-dug mini-landfill sites, open-air burning or even just dumping their wastes into rivers or seas.

And when the wastes in question are plastic in nature, the almost irreparable environmental harm and public health hazards thus engendered cannot bear further thought. Yet, how can we blame these hapless residents, as they have to devise ad hoc solutions to their waste disposal problems. And solutions, both short- and long-term, are what we need to all put our heads together to devise, and hopefully improve, the livelihood of the residents concerned in the process, as well.

One crucial element in this whole often painful picture — and perhaps an important step toward attempting to address the plastic wastes problem — is public and private awareness, especially the raising of it. It was not so long ago when most durable goods were sold in metallic cans or wooden drums or other, well, durable containers that could be repurposed by the consumers. Cookies and biscuits, for example, were sold in large tins that could be used by the consumers for storing other stuff. But that sort of nostalgic practice gave way to the often far from more durable versions of plastic containers, but single-use ones, with the expectation that the consumers would dispose of the single-use plastic packaging after consuming the products. Hence, the plastic litter in both the streets of the cities and the streams of the countryside.

I venture to call myself a foodie and sometimes in my various outings in developing countries, I also come across many indigenous food items or perishable food items that would appeal to my appetite, be it the salivating smell or the sight of the delicious colors. But as I take a second look, these food items are often already pre-wrapped or are about to be wrapped in (often transparent) plastic packages. I would be immediately repelled by such packaging and despite the apparent deliciousness of such food items contained therein, I would not patronize the vendor concerned. It was not so long ago, when perishable goods such as fresh food were wrapped in, for example, the leaves of banana trees.

In Malaysia, some Indian restaurants still serve what we call banana-leaf rice. When you sit down at table in such restaurants, the waiter would lay down a piece of banana leaf in front of you, and scoop onto it as much rice as you would like. Then come drums of various curry sauces and chutneys, again generously ladled onto the heap of rice on top of the banana leaf. It could be as vegetarian or as meaty as you like. Whenever I go eat at such places, in addition to the sumptuous food which I salivate over, I would always feel a sense of relief, that the food is not served on single-use plastic plates but banana leaves that are at least biodegradable. The same goes for those pies and cakes and various other sweet and savory items. I would always grant them priority if they were wrapped in more natural packaging materials and not plastic, even if their taste may lose out to those wrapped in plastic packaging.

From the commercial or supply side's point of view, I fully understand the economic necessity of single-use plastic versus more traditional, durable or biodegradable materials for packaging in this age of mass consumerism. But can we not work out some sort of loyalty scheme, such that the packaging container could be reused for a new batch of the same or similar products by the same merchants such as offering discounts for doing so? The cookies could be dispensed in bulk quantities, with the customers bringing back the particular merchant's durable cookie container to pack those cookies. Yes, some sort of discount would have to be offered, but your product brand would gain loyalty and sustained following, as well. I also understand that this cannot be done for all kinds of goods and products, but as with most of the efforts in environmental protection, to do something about it in even just one small segment is better than doing nothing.

And as consumers we should also make the conscious effort to avoid single-use plastics. Simple things such as bring our own so-called eco-bags for grocery shopping would help, declining the offer of plastic bags at check-out counters. Bringing our own containers and even utensils for food and other products would help too. It takes more than a village to better our living environment; it takes each and everyone of us.