

DATE: JULY 17, 2020

DAY: FRIDAY

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

# DENR reaches 80% of full-year seedling target despite Covid-19

July 16, 2020, 7:19 pm



**MANILA** – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Thursday said it was able to raise some 36 million seedlings for the Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP) during the first half of 2020 despite the coronavirus pandemic.

The number already represents almost 80 percent of the 45.2 million seedlings targeted for the entire year under the government's flagship reforestation program, DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said in a media release, citing a report from the Forest Management Bureau (FMB).

"This speaks well of how the DENR and its partners have carried out the ENGP in the face of challenges and constraints created by the pandemic," Cimatu said.

With this development, Cimatu said, the DENR is "on track" with its ENGP seedling production "just in time for planting this rainy season."

In its report, the FMB said the seedling production covers both plantation species and indigenous species used for rehabilitation of denuded areas in watershed, mangrove and protected areas. It also includes commodity species used for the establishment of agroforestry plantations.

As of July 9, indigenous and plantation seedlings had reached 20 million; bamboo, 3.4 million; agroforestry, 2.98 million; fruit trees, 1.2 million; fuelwood, 796,600; rubber, 131,775; nipa, 65,000; and Ilang-ilang, 50,000.

Aside from bamboo, other commodity seedling species raised during the period include cacao, 598,907; coffee, 212,047; other high value crops, 837,525; mangrove, 163,500; and rattan, 262,000.

Another 537,638 seedlings came from DENR's partners in the private sector such as the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP), which is responsible for some 400,000 seedlings raised during the period.

On top of these, DENR said it also raised almost 4,265,662 seedlings at its modernized and mechanized forest nurseries (MMFN) operating in 10 regions.

As of May, these MMFNs have also produced almost 1 million vegetable seedlings, while they continue raising native and fast-growing forest tree seedlings for planting under the ENGP.

The vegetable seedling production is the DENR's contribution to the government's "Ahon Lahat, Pagkaing Sapat Laban sa Covid-19" program, which promotes urban agriculture amid the pandemic. **(PR)**

## DENR on target on full-year seedling project

posted July 16, 2020 at 10:50 pm

by [Rio N. Araja](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has already reached 80 percent of full-year seedling production target despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secretary Roy Cimatu said the agency was able to raise 36 million seedlings for the enhanced national greening program during the first half of 2020.

Based on a report from the Forest Management Bureau, the number represented close to 80 percent of the 45.2 million seedlings targeted for the entire year under the government's flagship reforestation program, he said.

"This speaks well of how the DENR and its partners have carried out the ENGP in the face of challenges and constraints created by the pandemic," he cited.

With such development, he said the DENR is "on track" with its enhanced national greening program seedling production "just in time for planting this rainy season."

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Kahit may COVID. Greening Program ng DENR, 'di

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## Kahit may COVID, Greening Program ng DENR, 'di nagpaawat

July 16, 2020 @ 5:09 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Nakapaghanda ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ng 36 na milyong binhi para sa Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP) sa unang kalahati ng taon 2020 sa kabila ito nang kinakaharap na krisis ang bansa dulot ng COVID-19 pandemic.

Ayon sa DENR na umabot na sa 80 porsyento ng target na 45.2 milyong binhi sa buong taon ang naipamahagi na sa ilalim ng flagship reforestation program ng pamahalaan, ayon kay DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu.

“This speaks well of how the DENR and its partners have carried out the ENGP in the face of challenges and constraints created by the pandemic,” ani Cimatu.

Ang DENR ay “on track” sa ENGP seedling production, na tatama ang pagtanim ng mga ito ngayong panahon ng tag-ulan, dagdag pa niya.

Nabatid sa ulat ng Forest Management Bureau, kasama sa seedling production ang paghahanda ng binhi ng plantation species at indigenous species dahil kasama ang pagtanim ng ganitong mga puno sa rehabilitasyon ng mga nakakalbong bahagi ng watershed, mangrove at protected areas. Kasama rin ang binhi ng commodity species na ginagamit sa pagtataguyod ng agroforestry plantations.

Ayon sa DENR noong Hulyo 9, ang naihandang mga binhi ay ang mga sumusunod: 20 milyon na binhi ng indigenous at plantation species; 3.4 milyon na binhi ng bamboo; 2.98 milyon na binhi para sa agroforestry; 1.2 milyon na binhi ng prutas; 796,600 binhi para sa fuelwood; 131,775 binhi ng rubber; 65,000 binhi ng nipa at 50,000 binhi ng llang-ilang.

Idinagdag pa ng DENR na bukod sa bamboo, ang iba pang commodity seedling species na naihanda ay 598,907 binhi ng cacao, 212,047 binhi ng kape; 837,525 binhi ng iba pang value crops; 163,500 binhi ng mangrove at 262,000 binhi ng rattan.

May 537,638 binhi rin na galing sa private sector na partner ng DENR katulad ng National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) na nakapagbigay ng 400,000 na binhi.

Kahit may COVID. Greening Program ng DENR, 'di

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Bahagi rin ang naitanim nu'ng Mayo na halos 1 milyong binhi ng gulay, habang patuloy ang paghahanda sa binhi ng mga native at mabilis na lumaking mga puno sa ilalim ng ENGP.

Ang vegetable seedling production ay kontribusyon ng DENR sa programa ng pamahalaan na "Ahon Lahat, Pagkaing Sapat Laban sa COVID-19" na nagkakampanya ng urban agriculture sa panahon ng pandemic. **Santi Celario**



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DENR, ngayon pa lang, naihanda na ang 80% ng 2020 seedling production target kahit may COVID-19

Bagama't nasa COVID-19 pandemic ang bansa, nakapaghanda naman ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ng 36 na milyong binhi para sa Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP) sa unang kalahati ng taon 2020.

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# DENR turns over air quality monitoring system to Manila City

By Marita Moaje July 16, 2020, 7:15 pm



**AIR QUALITY MONITORING.** The DENR-EMB turns over an air quality monitoring system to the city of Manila on Thursday (July 16, 2020). The system will help monitor and manage air quality in the country's capital. *(Photo grabbed from Isko Moreno Domagoso FB page)*

**MANILA** – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources - Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) on Thursday turned over a real-time air quality monitoring system (AQMS) in Manila City, as the two government institutions joined hands in establishing a continuous AQMS for monitoring and management of air quality.

DENR-EMB National Capital Region director, lawyer Domingo M. Clemente, Jr., in a signing of a memorandum of agreement on Thursday, said air pollution is considered as a leading worldwide "environmental risk".

Because of this, he said, it is very important for people to understand the cause and solution to air pollution.

"We have the Teledyne T640 PM analyzer, the first-ever in the Philippines. *Ito po ang makina na sumusukat sa kalidad ng hangin* (This measures air quality). There is a need to understand and improve our air quality," Clemente said.

Manila Mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso welcomed the pact, saying this is aligned with his goal for the city of Manila to expand and create more green spaces.

Domagoso said upon hearing that the DENR is eyeing Manila for their AQMS, he said: "*Walang kibit-balikat ang sabi ko, ilagay n'yo po sa Maynila. Para sa ganun nassuukat natin ang* (I said put that up in Manila so we can measure) the effort of the city to make more open green spaces and cleaner air through this first-ever-in-the-country machine donated by DENR".

Manila Department of Public Services (DPS) director Kenneth Amurao said they will cooperate with different government agencies as well as to the private sectors to be able to achieve cleaner air and a greener environment in the nation's capital.

Domagoso added that they will use the AQMS to have an updated air quality monitoring data for public information, identification of critical areas, and research studies, among others. **(PNA)**



## Maynila may sariling air quality monitoring station na

July 16, 2020 @ 7:22 PM 12 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Mayroon nang sariling real-time ambient air quality monitoring station ang pamahalaang lungsod ng Maynila na inilagay sa Mehan Garden malapit sa Manila City Hall.

Ayon kay Manila Mayor Isko Moreno Domagoso, gagamitin ang nasabing makinarya upang makapagbigay ng datos hinggil sa kalidad ng hangin na nalalanghap sa lungsod kung saan maaaring gamitin ito sa public information, pagtukoy sa mga critical area, research studies, at iba pa.

Ginanap ang turn-over ceremony at paglagda sa isang memorandum of agreement (MOA) sa nasabing monitoring station ngayong umaga sa lokal na pamahalaang lungsod sa pangunguna ni Domagoso kasama si Department of Public Services (DPS) Director Kenneth Amurao at ilang opisyal ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) gayundin sa Environmental Monitoring and Enforcement sa ilalim ng Environmental Management Bureau sa NCR.

Ibinahagi naman ni Domagoso sa mga kinatawan ng DENR na malaki ang pagpapahalaga ng lokal na pamahalaang lungsod na mapanatili ang malinis na hangin sa Maynila kung saan mapapansin ang mga ipinapalagay nitong mga “horizontal” at “vertical” gardens sa lungsod.

Bukod pa aniya dito, ang pagpasa sa isang batas na hindi maaaring ibenta ang itinuturing na “Baga ng Maynila”, ang Arroceros Forest park.

“Kapag malinis ang kapaligiran, maginhawa ang hangin, malinis lahat, kahit papaano ay maiiwasan ang pagdami ng pagkakasakit.” ani Domagoso. **Jay Reyes**



# DENR urges land buyers in Palawan to do proper due diligence

Jul 16, 2020 Palawan News

*Ferrer however advised those interested to purchase real property in Palawan to perform proper due diligence before making land deals.*



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is expecting a surge of land buying in Palawan as the province reasserted anew its global popularity as a tourist destination following its recent designation by T+L Magazine as the world's top island destination.

“The distinction enhances the value of land properties in Palawan, and we regard it as an opportunity to invigorate the real estate business, which at some point, got laid back due to the global health crisis we are all facing,” DENR MIMAROPA regional executive director Ma. Lourdes Ferrer said.

Ferrer however advised those interested to purchase real property in Palawan to perform proper due diligence before making land deals.

“Our first advice to land investors—check the status of the property you are eyeing for. Know which classifications of land can be occupied, and take note of legal proofs of ownership from the seller before buying the land,” she said.

Ferrer specifically pointed out the legal prohibition on the acquisition or occupation of forest land, a problem that has been commonly reported throughout the province.

She underscored the provisions of Presidential Decree 705 or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines issued on May 19, 1975, which specifies that no person may utilize, exploit, occupy, possess or conduct any activity within any forestland unless he has been authorized to do so under a license agreement, lease, license, or permit.

The DENR during the term of Sec. Ramon Paje at one point suspended the titling of lands in Palawan for several years, after noting numerous contentious land transactions.

As for lands classified as alienable and disposable (A & D), Ferrer explained that land titles could not be obtained by simply showing a certification from the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office of these areas' land classification as such, more so a tax declaration for both land and improvements (structure).

“We hope to enlighten the public as we often encounter this issue on the land title application. The certification issued by the CENRO as well as tax declarations is only requirements in showing proof of ownership. They are not in any way, tantamount to a clean title of ownership,” she pointed out.

Ferrer said that stakeholders may seek clarification or guidance on land application matters from the DENR MIMAROPA regional or provincial and community offices. While some of its stations are temporarily closed in observance of health standards against COVID-19, the agency may still be reached online through these contact details [mimaroparegion@denr.gov.ph](mailto:mimaroparegion@denr.gov.ph), and (02) 8428 – 3367, 8429-3367 local 2701.

As the whole nation exults in Palawan’s reclaim of World’s Best Island title, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in MIMAROPA Region calls for stronger, concerted efforts to conserve the province’s natural beauty; and urges those wishing to have a piece of the island paradise, to exercise due diligence before sealing a deal on land investments.

Palawan bagged the title for the fourth time (2013, 2016, 2017) based on the survey conducted by international travel magazine, Travel + Leisure, among its readers. The province bested 24 other islands in the world in terms of natural attractions, resorts, and overall value.

Dubbed as the country’s last ecological frontier, Palawan often tops the A-list of tourist destinations because of its rich biodiversity, idyllic beaches, landscapes, and overall scenery. Only recently, another international travel publication, the Condé Nast Traveler, hailed the Hidden Beach in El Nido, Palawan, as one of the “30 Best Beaches in the World.”

The DENR anticipates that recent distinctions received by the province would attract more tourists once travel restriction due to the pandemic eases up. With this, the agency stated that the public may expect continuous and more stringent enforcement of laws to ensure the integrity of the environment amid the influx of tourists and other related activities.

Further, the DENR also urges the public, especially those who would want to acquire real properties for business or leisure purposes in the province, to exercise due diligence when dealing with land investments.

While this may signal the revival of the province’s economic status, the director cautioned land investors to bank on rightfully informed decisions to avoid getting entangled with illegal transactions or anomalous titling of real property.

Albeit lauded as one of the most sought after tourist attractions in the world, Palawan has its share of challenges in terms of illegal settling and unlawful occupation.

“We will always be proud of our very own Palawan because its beauty is recognized worldwide and its unique biodiversity propels social and economic progress. These are the very reasons why we are geared towards tougher protection and conservation efforts, and why we are calling on everybody to do their share in protecting this special piece of land, so that we may judiciously enjoy its most beneficial use, at present and in the future,” Ferrer said.

# DENR offices temporarily closed for disinfection

Published July 16, 2020, 11:20 AM

by Richa Noriega

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced on Wednesday that its offices in the Central Office, Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), and Forest Management Bureau (FMB) in Quezon City will be temporarily closed for disinfection.

The image shows a Facebook post from the official page of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The post features a graphic titled "PUBLIC ADVISORY" with a blue background and white text. The text of the advisory states that DENR offices (Central Office, BMB, and FMB) are closed from July 9 to 22, 2020, for disinfection. It provides contact information: Mobile (0917 868 3367, 0917 8853367) and Email (aksyonkalikasan@denr.gov.ph). It also mentions that the bureaus can be reached through their own contact services and Facebook pages. The graphic includes a megaphone icon and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Below the graphic, the text of the post is repeated, and engagement metrics show 61 likes, 1 comment, and 44 shares.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday

### PUBLIC ADVISORY

The DENR Central Office, Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), and Forest Management Bureau (FMB) located in Quezon City are temporarily closed from July 9 to July 22, 2020.

During this period, the DENR will conduct disinfection, and improve its screening and prevention protocols to ensure the safety of the public and employees.

All offices will be on a work-from-home setup in the meantime. For concerns and queries, the DENR Central Office can be contacted through the following hotlines:

Mobile: 0917 868 3367  
0917 8853367  
Email: aksyonkalikasan@denr.gov.ph

The bureaus can also be reached through their own contact services. Please visit the Facebook pages of BMB and FMB for details.

Thank you.

PUBLIC ADVISORY:  
The DENR Central Office, DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), and Forest Management Bureau (FMB) are closed from July 9 to 22.  
Please take note of the contact details for transactions.

61 likes, 1 comment, 44 shares

The DENR said the offices will be temporarily closed from July 9 to 22 to improve its screening and prevention protocols to ensure the safety of the public and its employees against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The department said all offices will be on a work from home setup for the meantime.

For concerns and queries, the DENR Central Office can be contacted through mobile at 09178683367 or 09178853367 and email at aksyonkalikasan@denr.gov.ph.

It added that the bureaus can also be reached through their own contact services on their official Facebook pages.

Source: [https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/16/denr-offices-temporarily-closed-for-disinfection/?fbclid=IwAR0CFtahiSvZ4o61VN8r4Hvezb\\_QZDewqEox9X2rYTLv\\_3Gzfiu9k8jG2eg](https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/16/denr-offices-temporarily-closed-for-disinfection/?fbclid=IwAR0CFtahiSvZ4o61VN8r4Hvezb_QZDewqEox9X2rYTLv_3Gzfiu9k8jG2eg)

# Fundraiser for tamaraw protectors launched

Published July 16, 2020, 3:53 PM

by Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

Rangers and wardens tasked to ensure the protection and conservation of the critically-endangered tamaraw in Mindoro Island could be rendered jobless due to the closure of Mts. Iglit-Baco National Park there.



biodiversityfinance.net / MANILA BULLETIN

Biodiversity Finance Initiative-Philippines (BIOFIN-Philippines) information and communications assistant Angelique Ogena identified in a virtual presser Wednesday a total of 32 Tawbuid Mangyan wardens and one Tamaraw Conservation Program (TCP) ranger among those facing possible unemployment with the closure of the park in compliance with community quarantine measures.

To help mitigate the unfortunate circumstance, a fundraising campaign called #TogetherforTamaraws was officially launched on July 15 as led by BIOFIN-Philippines with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Biodiversity Management Bureau and DENR-Region 4-A.

“We aim to raise a total of \$23,000 or ₱1.1 million in three months to cover half a years worth of field allowance and patrol assistance in the form of food packs for the affected tamaraw frontliners,” Ogena said, urging donors to send any amount they can through [bit.ly/TogetherforTamaraws](https://bit.ly/TogetherforTamaraws).

“This way we support our tamaraw frontliners and ensure that the protection of tamaraws from poachers and hunters will continue,” she said.

“Although (tamaraw) population has been slowly increasing, it is still significantly low at 480 as of March last year. Their existence depends on the tamaraw frontliners—the rangers and wardens,” Ogena added.

# #OustTheTurtle and sea turtles: Environmental org turns political hashtag into 'save pawikan' campaign

By Jeline Malasig

- July 16, 2020 - 4:45 PM



Left photo shows a sea turtle and the right photo shows teenagers scrolling their smartphones. (Photos from Pixabay/bphelan and Creative Commons, respectively)

The Twitter hashtag **#OustTheTurtle** made its way to the account of **Oceana Philippines** which used it as an opportunity to raise awareness on saving sea turtles from threats like illegal fishing and plastic pollution.

The organization on Wednesday night shared a GIF of what appeared to be a dancing sea turtle and tweeted: "We're relieved to find out that **#OustTheTurtle** is not for sea turtles, which already face many threats like illegal fishing and plastic pollution."

It [added](#) in the replies thread that the real sea turtles would be "so thankful" for the public's support and then called for them to sign an [online petition](#) to stop land reclamation projects in **Manila Bay**.

"Manila Bay extends to provinces like Bataan and Cavite and sea turtles can be found in these areas," Oceana said.

Sea turtles, also known locally as "pawikans" is an endangered marine animal.

Four out of five marine turtle species in the country were [reported](#) to be endangered and one of species, the hawksbill, is critically endangered. Collecting and trading them is against the law.

Oceana's original tweet has since gone viral with 1,100 retweets and 3,100 likes on the microblogging platform.



The petition, meanwhile, was created by the **UP Marine Biological Society** which calls on the **Department of Environment and Natural Resources** and the **Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources** to “comply with the mandates set by the law” in terms of the reclamation.

“Reclamation projects pose grave threats to our natural life support systems as these destroy our mangroves, seagrass beds, wetlands and other marine habitats which are sources of life to humans and non-humans alike,” part of it reads.

“Dumping and filling of critical marine support systems in Manila Bay are not only violating our environmental laws—these deprive our artisanal fisherfolk of their livelihood and sustenance. We enjoin you to strengthen our efforts to defend and protect our country’s natural resources,” it added.

Last April, Malacañang said that President **Rodrigo Duterte** is not “[inclined](#)” to give a permit to entities who wanted to conduct reclamation activities in the bay.

DENR in June [reportedly](#) gave clearance to a reclamation project “of around 320 hectares worth of outer and inner islands along the coast of Manila Bay in the waters of Bacoor City.”

## What’s with the #OustTheTurtle?

The #OustTheTurtle hashtag, although categorized by Twitter under “animals,” is a substitute to the “#OustDuterte” hashtag often used by the critics of the president.

The “#OustDuterte” hashtag previously gained [global traction](#) after the chief executive remarked in April that state forces “shoot” quarantine violators.

He said that the remark was meant for “leftists” who allegedly sabotaged the distribution of foods through street protests in Quezon City. Reports note that the individuals were from Barangay Pag-asa who reportedly demanded food and financial aid amid the enhanced community quarantine.

Some Filipinos slammed Duterte’s violent threats and urged him to focus on addressing the public health crisis at hand.

Other variations of the “#OustDuterte” hashtag have since emerged but one that recently gained [traction](#) was the “#OustTheTurtle” which landed on the local top trending list the night after “#OustKiko” trended.

“#OustKiko” came into consciousness on Tuesday night when some Twitter accounts said Sen. **Kiko Pangilinan** should leave his post as the chair of the **Senate Committee on Constitutional Amendments and Revisions Code**.

Senate President **Tito Sotto III** dismissed the allegations while Pangilinan said that he would vacate his post “if asked by the Senate leadership,” not by the clamor of “paid online trolls.”

Following the incident, some Twitter users called on the public to let other hashtags trend to counter the “#OustKiko” calls.

These include former senatorial candidate **Samira Gutoc** who quipped that people should tweet “#OustTheTurtle” instead.

She later on replied to Oceana’s post about sea turtles after they used the hashtag.

“Protect the real turtles,” Gutoc [tweeted](#) with a heart emoji.

Other hashtags that trended in counter of the “#OustKiko” were “#OustKoko” which called for Sen. **Koko Pimentel**’s resignation following his violation of quarantine protocols amid a public health crisis.

# Legarda seeks environmental sustainability initiatives at ASEAN

Published July 16, 2020, 10:28 AM

by Charissa Luci-Atienza

House Deputy Speaker Antique Rep. Loren Legarda has urged member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to vigorously push for initiatives seeking to promote environmental sustainability and resilience to sustain their socioeconomic gains and reduce poverty.



Deputy Speaker and Antique Rep. Loren Legarda (Congresswoman Loren Legarda Official Facebook Page / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

“I recognize the ASEAN’s potential contribution to shaping the overall direction of development cooperation. It is also time to boost initiatives in pursuing green growth and environmental resilience to sustain our economies’ socio-economic growth without compromising the natural environment,” Loren said at the recent virtual ASEAN Forum on Sub-Regional Development, hosted by Vietnam, the current ASEAN chairman.

“For the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) countries, economic success is anchored on the region’s rich natural resources. However, a steady depletion of natural stocks is resulting in the decline and degradation in ecosystem services and environmental quality, which threatens to undermine sustainable development. Thus, green growth should be pursued to provide greater opportunities for GMS countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,” Loren added.

She cited the need to upgrade the management of common environmental resources in the Southeast Asian region, particularly in the GMS, which is a natural economic area bound together by the Mekong River with a combined population of around 326 million.

The GMS countries are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China, specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

“Sustainability must be viewed as the indivisibility and inseparability of the region’s environmental goals and actions from the socioeconomic ones. Our current paradigm of progress reflects our desire to uplift the quality of living in the region by boosting socio-economic growth, but neglecting to consider the other part of the sphere — which is the aspect of environmental management,” Loren said.

She hailed the ASEAN’s efforts to promote regional development initiatives which complement existing development cooperation frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), even as she urged the region to intensify action and continuously work together to attain sustainability and improve the region’s suitability for human living.

She noted that the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in its 2020 progress report on the SDGs raised concern that “the Asia-Pacific region cannot expect to achieve the SDGs by 2030 without accelerated action.”

In its report, the UNESCAP said while the region “is making good progress on SDG targets related to economic growth,” for it to grow more sustainably and equitably, “the current economic progress of the region must be coupled with human well-being and a healthy environment.”



Legarda seeks environmental sustainability initiatives  
at ASEAN

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“The cultural and political diversities and uneven economic status among the concerned countries are hurdles even if the sub-regions are governed by the same environmental and socioeconomic issues like pockets of poverty. External vested interests and the disparity of responses by the concerned ASEAN economies also undermine what could otherwise be pronounced common benefits for the ASEAN people,” Loren said.

“As one region, we must promote inclusive growth, equally boost competitiveness and connectivity, and seek to usher in more equitable development by linking less developed sub-regions with the more developed ones. Harmony and consistency must be constantly ensured between and among regional and national policies, plans, and programs focusing on the pursuit of sustainable development, so that progress in the region is equally extended to the sub-regions.”

The ASEAN Forum on Sub-Regional Development is a virtual gathering of ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) Leaders, Mekong SOM Leaders, representatives of relevant agencies from ASEAN countries, representatives from the Mekong River Commission, the United Nations, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and stakeholders from various countries.

# Digos City LGU to beef up greening and reforestation program

By Carina Cayon Published on July 16, 2020

DAVAO CITY, July 16 (PIA) – The local government of Digos City is gearing towards beefing up its greening and reforestation program as it is preparing for the passage of a new ordinance.

Digos City Mayor Josef Cagas bared that he has convened environmental groups in the city and discussed with them the proposed ordinance, “to see what is missing and to make implementation practical.”



Mayor Josef Cagas (right) with Vice Mayor Johari Bana (left) discussing the greening program of Digos City

The ordinance provides for a tree clonal facility where different species of wood which are found in the national park will be planted, Cagas explained during yesterday’s Laging Handa Network Briefing with PCOO Secretary Martin Andanar.

“We looked at the denuded areas in a portion of the Mt. Apo National Park which is part of Digos City, and we thought about what Digos City can do about it,” he stated.

The local chief executive mentioned that the greening and reforestation program will involve the participation and cooperation of the communities.

He said that all barangays and subdivisions will be asked to set aside ten to 20 per cent of their areas intended for greening and tree planting.

“At the Mt. Apo National Park, particularly in Barangay Binaton and Kapatagan, we will also ask them to allocate ten to 20% of their lands, so we can plant trees there,” he added.

Cagas said that another plan is to transfer residents living near the riverbanks to a safer area.

“We’ll plant bamboo along our riverbanks,” he stated. (PIA-XI/Carina L. Cayon)



## Oil spill sa Iloilo cleared na – Navy Forces Central

July 16, 2020 @ 7:10 AM 24 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Inanunsyong na-clear na ang oil spill na nakakontamina sa may karagatan ng Iloilo City at Guimaras province habang naabutan na rin ng tulong ang mga residenteng naapektuhan, ayon sa Naval Forces Central (NFC).

Sa pahayag, sinabi ng NFC na ang Naval Reserve Center-Western Visayas (NRCen-WV) at si Naval Task Group 1 commander Captain Stephen Tuballa sa tulong ng Coast Guard Station Iloilo ay naglaan ng response team para magsagawa ng oil spill recovery operation.

Pahayag pa ng NFC, nagtulong-tulong ang naval reservists mula NRCen-WV, naval-affiliated reserve squadron tugboat M/T Ana ng 502nd NARS (FF Cruz Inc.), patrol boat ng Philippine Navy (PB349) at Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) para sa skimming ng oil spill sa Iloilo/Guimaras Straits at sa shoreline ng Leganes at Dumangas.

Sa operasyon, pinangunahan ng navy vessel PB349 at coast guard floating assets ang survey at sweeping ng oil spill gamit ang sorbent boom sa kahabaan ng Muelle Loney Wharf, Iloilo City at Buenavista, Guimaras para matukoy ang contaminated coastal areas.

Kasama naman ng Philippine Navy ang local government units na magsasagawa ng coastal clean-up sa shoreline ng Guimaras.

Tinatayang nasa 40,000 litro ng bunker oil ang tumagas sa Zone 3, Barrio Obrero sa Lapuz, Iloilo. **RNT/FGDC**

# 18 dump trucks of illegal landfill materials seized in Bulacan

By Manny Balbin July 16, 2020, 7:43 pm



**SEIZED.** Eighteen dump trucks loaded with over 250 tons of illegally quarried and transported landfill materials were intercepted by personnel of the Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office (BENRO) in Barangay Pio Cruzcosa, Guiguinto, Bulacan on Wednesday, July 15, 2020. BENRO chief Elizabeth Apresto said the trucks loaded with bentonite landfill materials were intercepted by their office's watchmen. *(Photo by Manny Balbin)*

**GUIGUINTO, Bulacan** – A total of 18 dump trucks loaded with over 250 tons of illegally quarried and transported landfill materials were intercepted by personnel of the Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office (BENRO) in Barangay Pio Cruzcosa here Wednesday.

BENRO chief Elizabeth Apresto said on Thursday the trucks loaded with bentonite landfill materials were intercepted around 7 a.m. by their office's watchmen.

Governor Daniel Fernando ordered Apresto to immediately file charges against the truck owners Richard Cayetano, Roderick Cayetano and Rowena Cayetano.

Fernando said the confiscated landfill materials were found to be illegally quarried in San Miguel town as the owners of the truck failed to present a delivery receipt from the provincial government and other permits such as hauling and transport from the barangay and municipality.

The truck owners will be charged with the violation of provincial ordinance C-0052011 or the Revised Environment Code of 2011.

Apresto said the truck owners will be fined PHP10,000 for each truck and the materials intercepted would be confiscated. **(PNA)**

# 18 trucks of illegally quarried landfill materials stopped in Bulacan

By: [Carmela Reyes-Estrope](#) - Correspondent / [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Inquirer Central Luzon](#) / 04:57 PM July 15, 2020



Eighteen trucks loaded with illegally quarried and transported landfill materials worth P150,000 are flagged down in Bulacan. —  
CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE

**CITY OF MALOLOS** — Authorities here on Wednesday intercepted 18 trucks loaded with illegally quarried and transported landfill materials worth P150,000.

Elizabeth Apresto, Bulacan environment officer, said the landfill materials would be taken to a subdivision being developed in Barangay Pio Cruzcosa, Calumpit town.

Apresto said the materials were illegally quarried in San Miguel town because the truck owners failed to present quarry, hauling and transport permits.

Gov. Daniel Fernando ordered the immediate filing of charges against the truck owners and land developers.

LZB

# PH must defuse emissions-health connection

By: [Vinod Thomas](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:05 AM July 17, 2020

The prospect of a second, even deadlier wave of COVID-19 reinforces the need to act on alerts about diseases linked to air pollution and global warming. The Philippines is acutely vulnerable to airborne illnesses given the country's high population density, ecological fragility, and lack of preparedness to health crises. The decline in air pollution triggered by the COVID-19 lockdown—by a third in parts of Metro Manila—should be a powerful motivation to avert a return to the polluting ways of growing the economy.

Recent studies show a strong relation between air pollution and the impact of COVID-19. In China, the avoided number of early deaths from better air quality in recent months exceeded the number of those who have died from COVID-19. And there were 11,000 fewer deaths due to air pollution in Europe in the weeks of the lockdown. Southeast Asian cities like Jakarta, Bangkok, and Manila have some of the world's highest levels of urban air pollution.

The Philippines was 57th out of 98 in IQAir's list of countries ranked on air pollution last year. Fine particulate matter, known as PM 2.5, is the major air pollutant whose concentration in Metro Manila was 175 percent above the World Health Organization's safety limit last year. Air pollution in the Philippines is responsible for 45 deaths for every 100,000 people, the third highest in the world, according to a 2018 WHO study.

The lockdown has provided a respite from the heavy pollution hanging over the city, but this is likely to be short-lived. Traffic accounts for some 70 percent of air pollution in the skies of Manila. There is an urgent need to modernize urban transportation, encourage public transportation in place of the 3 million vehicles, expand railways, introduce electric buses, and provide interconnectivity between the metro and buses.

Adding to the noxious cocktail of PM 2.5 are greenhouse gases (GHG), notably carbon dioxide and methane, that are causing global warming and damaging human health. Slowing global warming would have a direct impact on health—for example, by reducing the incidence of heat waves that can worsen respiratory illnesses. There is also a link between global warming and new diseases, for example, mosquito-borne illnesses. Europe reported its first local transmissions of dengue in 2010. Global warming also has an indirect impact on health, for example, by hurting food security.

Spending on climate change prevention and adaption, by one estimate, provides health benefits of 1.4 to 2.5 times more than the financial cost of these actions. A green energy transition in Southeast Asia could reduce premature deaths by 70 percent. Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, needs to prioritize clean energy, reverse its plans to boost the use of fossil fuels, and make a drastic shift to renewable energy sources.

In managing health risks, emission reduction should be coupled with investments in a stronger public health system. Health care is too underfunded across Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, to be effective. Out-of-pocket health care expenses, estimated at 55 percent of the total in the Philippines, reflect the inequities of the system and the poverty impacts of epidemics and health emergencies. The Philippines has made progress with the universal health care act, but government and private spending on health, and the efficiency of spending, need to improve. Most countries, including the Philippines, fail the test of readiness for health disasters, according to the 2019 Global Health Security Index.

Scientific warnings do not indicate the exact time and place of calamities, but they signal that, in the absence of strong defenses, air pollution and global warming will aggravate health calamities. What's needed is a marked increase in investments in health care and health systems, government and private, to enable a better response to the next health emergency that is surely going to happen.

*Vinod Thomas (Twitter @vthomas14) is a distinguished Fellow in Development Management at the Asian Institute of Management, Manila.*

# Cebu City under MECQ until July 31

By: Delta Dyrecka Letigio - CDN Digital | July 16, 2020 - 12:31 AM

CEBU CITY, Philippines — Cebu City will be under Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) until July 31, 2020, presidential spokesperson Secretary Harry Roque [announced late Wednesday](#) evening, July 15, 2020.

Cebu City is the sole local government unit in the country placed under MECQ due to the continuing threats of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). It was under ECQ prior to the announcement.

The rest of the country has been placed either under General Community Quarantine (GCQ) or Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ).

Under MECQ, there will still be limited movement among residents but certain essential establishments will now be allowed to operate.

This include repair shops, clothing stores, flower shops, bookstores, school supplies shops, and others, which were not allowed to operate under ECQ.

The city government will have the final decision on which establishments may open.

Public gathering of more than five individuals is also prohibited, and public transport, except for government-commissioned point-to-point services, will still not be allowed.

This will be the second time the city has been downgraded from ECQ since it was first placed under the strictest classification on March 28 to May 31.

The first downgrade was on June 1, when the city was placed under GCQ for two weeks only to be placed under ECQ again on June 15, after a sudden rise of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the city.

ECQ was maintained until July 15 as the Interagency Task Force (IATF) focused its efforts on Cebu City by sending Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to oversee the operations here.

After two weeks under Cimatu's leadership, the city finally saw an [improvement in critical utilization rate](#) in hospitals, an improvement in the coordination between the national agencies and barangays, and a stricter implementation of ECQ guidelines.

In previous statements, Cimatu said he expected the city to be placed under GCQ, but also said there are still many things to be done about the city's COVID-19 response.

The IATF already said they will remain in Cebu City to facilitate the slow downgrading of its quarantine classification.

Cebu City currently has a total of 7,685 cases of the COVID-19 with 3,155 active cases, 4,141 recoveries, and 389 deaths, according to a [report](#) from the Department of Health in Central Visayas as of 5 p.m. of July 15, 2020. /bmjo



# Duterte to deliver SONA at Batasan

Published 15 hours ago on July 16, 2020 03:02 PM

By [Hananeel Bordey](#)



Senate President Vicente Sotto III is among the eight senators who will attend the SONA. (Facebook grab)

President Rodrigo Duterte will deliver his fifth State of the Nation Address (SONA) at the Batasan Pambansa in Quezon City on 27 July, Senate President Vicente Sotto III announced on Thursday.

“I just received a word today that the President has decided to deliver his SONA at the Batasan Pambansa or in the House of Representatives on July 27,” Sotto said in a video teleconference with reporters.

However, the Presidential Security Group will only allow 50 people maximum inside the Batasan Complex during the SONA.

The Senate leader said 25 people will be coming from the Legislative department. Of the said number, 13 will be coming from the House of Representatives and 12 will come from the Senate.

The number of people from both chambers will include staff members from the secretariat and sergeant-at-arms, Sotto added.

Sotto said that only eight senators are expected to attend on 27 July. The initial list includes Sotto, Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, Senators Christopher Lawrence Go, Ronald Dela Rosa, Francis Tolentino, Pia Cayetano, Panfilo Lacson, and Sherwin Gatchalian.

*p: wjg*



## Ikalimang SONA ni PDU30, sa Batasang Pambansa pa rin – SP Sotto

July 16, 2020 @ 2:12 PM 17 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Sa Batasang Pambansa gaganapin ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang ikalawang State of the Nation Address nito sa Hulyo 27, base sa pagkumpirma ni Senate President Vicente Sotto III ngayong Huwebes.

“I just received word that the President will deliver his SONA in Batasang Pambansa, House of Representatives on July 27. Preparations are underway,” pagkumpirma ni Sotto.

Dagdag pa ng Senate President na tanging nasa 50 katao lamang ang papayagang makapasok ng Batasan para personal na saksihan ang ikalimang SONA ng pangulo.

Ang 50 katao ito ay hahatiin base sa delegasyon mula sa Executive department, sa Senado at sa House of Representatives.

Ayon sa Senador na ang pagkasa ng ganitong klase ng SONA ay ipakita sa taumbayan na handang magtrabaho ang gobyerno at hindi sila papagapi sa takot sa COVID-19. **RNT**

# NCR still under GCQ, Cebu City eases to MECQ

July 16, 2020

People's Tonight



President Rodrigo Duterte talks to the people after holding a meeting with the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) core members at the Malago Clubhouse in Malacañang on July 15, 2020. SIMEON CELI JR./PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO

**AFTER a month of being under the most restrictive enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) due to a spike in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases, Cebu City has eased to a less restrictive modified ECQ from July 16 to 31.**

President Rodrigo Duterte decided to downgrade the quarantine classification in Cebu City, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a televised meeting with members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) aired late Wednesday night.

According to Roque, the National Capital Region (NCR) or Metro Manila will remain under general community quarantine (GCQ).

He said the President initially agreed with the recommendation of the University of the Philippines (UP) to revert NCR to modified ECQ but changed his mind after Metro Manila mayors vowed to implement more proactive restrictions under GCQ.

"There was a recommendation from UP to revert Metro Manila to MECQ to slow down the spread of the disease. At first, the President agreed but our chief implementer (Carlito Galvez Jr.) and our Secretary of Interior (Eduardo Año) appealed to reconsider because our Metro Manila mayors vowed to strictly enforce localized lockdowns, enhance testing, tracing, and treatment, and implement expanded restrictions under GCQ. So the President agreed not to revert Metro Manila to MECQ for the next two weeks," Roque said in Filipino.

He warned that there is still a possibility that Metro Manila could revert to MECQ if the situation worsens.

He also urged the public to help the government prove that Covid-19 cases in the country would not swell to 80,000 by July 31 as indicated by UP researchers.

"It's correct to encourage each other to take all steps to make sure the 80,000 Covid-19 cases projection doesn't come true by July 31," he said.

Duterte also placed the following areas under GCQ: Laguna, Cavite, and Rizal for Region 4-A (Calabarzon); Lapu Lapu City, Mandaue City for Region 7 (Central Visayas), Ormoc City, Southern Leyte, Zamboanga City, Butuan City, Agusan del Norte and Basilan.

The cities of Talisay, Minglanilla, and Consolacion in Cebu province will also be under GCQ.

Areas under “medium-risk” modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) are: Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) – Benguet, Baguio City; Region 1 (Ilocos region) – Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, La Union, Dagupan City; Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) – Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya; Region 3 (Central Luzon) – Bataan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan, Tarlac, Zambales, Angeles City; Region 4-A (Calabarzon) – Batangas, Quezon, Lucena City; Region 4-B (Mimaropa) – Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, and Puerto Princesa City.

Also under medium-risk MGCQ are: Albay, Masbate, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Naga City for Region 5 (Bicol); Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Capiz, Antique, Aklan, Guimaras, Iloilo City, Bacolod City for Region 6 (Western Visayas); Negros Oriental, Bohol, Cebu Province for Region 7 (Central Visayas); Western Samar, Leyte, Biliran, Tacloban City for Region 8 (Eastern Visayas); Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte for Region 9 (Zamboanga); Misamis Occidental, Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte, Cagayan de Oro City, Iligan City for Region 10 (Northern Mindanao); Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao de Oro, Davao City for Region 11 (Davao region); Sultan Kudarat, Cotabato, South Cotabato, General Santos City for Region 12 (Soccsksargen); Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao for BARMM.

The rest of the country will remain under “low-risk” MGCQ until July 31.

Earlier, Roque said present data shows that Metro Manila may not downgrade to the MGCQ as case doubling rate and critical care capacity of the region do not suggest an easing of quarantine protocols.

Metro Manila mayors have recommended that NCR be placed under “hybrid” GCQ amid the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the past weeks.

In a hybrid GCQ, movement of people will be restricted but economic activity will continue, provided that the private sector will take “equal responsibility” for containing the spread of the virus.

The public is still encouraged to strictly observe minimum health and safety standards such as physical distancing, wearing of face masks, and frequent handwashing to minimize the risk of catching or spreading the disease.

As of July 14, there are a total of 58,850 confirmed Covid-19 cases in the country, of which 20,976 are recoveries and 1,614 are deaths. PNA

# 'Metro to revert to MECQ if COVID spike continues'

By [Jocelyn Montemayor](#)

-July 17, 2020



*President Duterte is considering GCQ for Metro Manila. (PHOTO BY: SIMEON CELI JR./ PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO)*

MALACAÑANG yesterday rallied Metro Manila residents to strictly follow quarantine and safety protocols as it warned the National Capital Region (NCR) may revert back to the stricter modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) by the end of July if it fails to bring down the number of cases and transmission of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the region.

Metro Manila will stay under the general community quarantine (GCQ) classification until July 31, presidential spokesman Harry Roque announced late Wednesday night.

President Duterte on Wednesday night approved the retaining of Metro Manila and several regions, cities and provinces under GCQ and the downgrading of Cebu City to modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) from July 16 to 31.

Roque said the President agreed to retain GCQ in Metro Manila following the appeal made by National Action Plan against COVID-19 chief implementer Carlito Galvez Jr. and Interior Secretary Eduardo Año on behalf of Metro Manila mayors.

Roque said Duterte had initially said yes into placing Metro Manila under MECQ on the recommendation of health experts and members of the scientific community who said the region should be placed under stricter quarantine rules to slow down the spread of the COVID-19.

The President, according to Roque, changed his mind after Galvez and Año assured him that Metro Manila mayors would strictly implement localized lockdowns in areas with high cases of COVID-19 and intensify their testing, tracing, and treatment (T3) activities, among others.

“So pumayag po ang ating Presidente na huwag munang ibalik ang Metro Manila sa MECQ sa susunod na dalawang linggo,” Roque said.

He warned, though: “Pero malinaw po sa diskusyon na kapag hindi pa rin po napabagal an ang pagkalat ng COVID sa Metro Manila, posible pong bumalik sa MECQ pagkatapos po nitong dalawang linggo (It is clear in the discussions that if spread of the COVID is not slowed down in Metro Manila, it will be reverted back to MECQ after two weeks).”

To better monitor the situation in Metro Manila and other areas under GCQ under, local governments units are directed to submit daily trend of active cases, number, and percent of population; cases in community isolation facility versus health facility; percent of close contacts traced and percent of contacts in quarantine; number and utilization of isolation beds; accomplished health system capacity targets and utilization; and COVID Special Teams investigations and results.

Roque said at present the case doubling rate in NCR is between seven to nine days while the intensive care unit (ICU) bed utilization remains at dangerous level.

He urged the public, especially those in Metro Manila to cooperate with government if they want to retain the GCQ level.

### METRO MANILA

Año said Metro Manila residents should be prepared for stricter implementation of quarantine protocols even with the retention of the region's GCQ classification.

Año said Metro Manila mayors, during a meeting last Sunday with the IATF, committed to be stricter in their implementation of stay-home guidelines and safety protocols if their proposal to retain GCQ is approved by the President.

"Nakita kasi ng ating Pangulo 'yung patuloy na pagtaas ng numero ng mga bagong cases at ito pa rin 'yung National Capital Region ang pinaka nangunguna. At sabi nga ng Pangulo ay gusto nyang maghigpit (The President saw the continuing rise of the number of new cases and National Capital Region remains to be the frontrunner. And the President said he wants to be stricter)," he said.

Año said he told the President of the commitment made by metro mayors, who also vowed to give businesses the chance to reopen while strictly observing quarantine protocols.

He said the mayors promised to let workers go to work but they will be strict against people who are out in the streets without essential missions.

"Kaya ekspekin natin na magkakaroon tayo ng paghihigpit dito sa National Capital Region at pinaalalahanan na natin yung ating mga kababayan natin dito na sumunod sila sa mga panuntunan (So expect that we will be stricter here in National Capital Region and we are reminding our people here to follow the rules)," said Año.

"Kailangan talaga ay magbantay tayo dahil pagka hindi tayo maging maingat at hindi tayo sumunod, baka bumalik tayo sa ECQ nito (We have to be vigilant because if we are not careful and if we don't follow the rules, we may go back to ECQ)," he added.

### QUARANTINE LEVELS

Other areas that are under GCQ are the provinces of Laguna, Cavite, Rizal, Southern Leyte, Agusan del Norte and Basilan; the cities of Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue, Ormoc, Zamboanga, Butuan, and Talisay; and the towns of Minglanilla and Concepcion in Cebu province.

Placed under the medium risk modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) are Benguet, Baguio City, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, La Union and Dagupan City, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Bataan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan, Tarlac, Zambales, Angeles City, Batangas, Quezon, Lucena City, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Puerto Princesa City, Albay, Masbate, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, and Naga City in Luzon.

Under the medium risk MGCQ in the Visayas are Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Capiz, Antique, Aklan, Guimaras, Iloilo City, Bacolod City, Negros Oriental, Bohol, Cebu Province, Western Samar, Leyte, Biliran, and Tacloban City.

In Mindanao, under the medium risk MGCQ are Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte, Misamis Occidental, Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte, Cagayan de Oro City, Iligan City, Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao de Oro, Davao City, Sultan Kudarat, Cotabato, South Cotabato, General Santos City, Agusan del Sur, Dinagat Island, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao.

The rest of the country, which is described to have low rate of infection, is under low-risk MGCQ.

## MECQ IN CEBU CITY

Roque said Cebu City was downgraded to the MECQ following a slowdown of cases, local transmission and deaths.

He said the recommendations of Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Galvez and Año were considered.

“Although case doubling rate... has declined in Cebu and critical care more or less has eased... It was deemed best to put it only on MECQ and not yet on GCQ, because we don't know if the trend will hold. Because if you look at the data of Cebu, it's almost like a roller coaster, sometimes the death will shoot up, sometimes it will not. Meaning, that intense community transmission is still ongoing in Cebu,” he said.

He added that the situation in Cebu City and other areas in the country would be reassessed after two weeks.

Roque and Health Secretary Francisco III said minimum health standards such as wearing of masks, frequent hand washing and social distancing shall be strictly implemented in all areas including areas that are under the low risk MGCQ.

Roque said the President had inquired with experts, some of them from the University of the Philippines (UP) who were invited as resource persons, if the economy can already be opened amidst the rising number of COVID-19 cases.

He said the UP team said it is possible provided that strict localized lockdowns are implemented, intensified testing, tracing, and treatment are done; and people belonging to vulnerable sectors stay as “home-liners.”

## DOS AND DON'TS

The Interagency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, through Resolution 55-A, said areas under GCQ should observe zoning containment strategies, strict enforcement of minimum health standards, and intensified tracing and quarantine of close contacts and isolation of confirmed cases.

The IATF also approved the recommendation to ensure the complementary increase of the business sector's capacity vis-a-vis available transportation to revitalize the economy in the NCR and the Calabarzon, with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Transportation as lead agencies.

Roque said in areas under GCQ, malls are allowed to continue to operate but still subject to health protocols while dine in operations in restaurants would be increased from 30 percent to 50 percent starting July 21.

He said public gathering is still limited to a maximum of 10 persons in GCQ areas while churches are allowed to open up to 10 percent of its venue capacity.

Roque said in areas under MGCQ, inter-region travel should be allowed to boost the reopening of the tourism industry. – *With Victor Reyes*



## COVID-19 sa Pinas lagpas 61,000 na

July 16, 2020 @ 4:40 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines -Umabot na sa 61,266 ang kaso ng coronavirus disease sa bansa matapos na makapagtala ng 2,498 bagong kaso ang Department of Health ngayong Hulyo 16.

Sa nasabing bilang, nasa 38,183 ang active cases kung saan sa National Capital Region naitala ang pinakamaraming kaso na sinundan ng Cebu, Cavite, Davao del Sur at Laguna province.

Mataas pa rin ang naitatalang gumagaling sa sakit na umanot sa 467 kung saan nasa 21,440 na ang kabuuang bilang ng nakarerekober.

Nasa 29 naman ang naidagdag sa mga pumanaw sanhi para umabot na sa 1,643 ang COVID-19 related deaths sa bansa.

Sa deaths na ito, 16 ang galing sa Region 7, siyam sa NCR, tatlo ang galing sa Region 11 at 1 sa CARAGA.

Ayon din sa datos ang mga tinamaan ng sakit ay 18 hanggang 80 taong gulang.

Habang 14 o 48 percent ng mga namatay ay edad 60 pataas. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

Source: <https://remate.ph/covid-19-sa-pinas-lagpas-61000-na/>



# Why virus patients end up in quarantine facilities

Published 3 hours ago on July 17, 2020 03:10 AM

By [Elmer N. Manuel @tribunephl Imer](#)



COVID-positive patients are brought to designated quarantine facilities so they can be provided with medical treatment and assistance and reduce community transmission of the virus, according to Secretary Vince Dizon.

“In order to curb the spread of the virus in our communities, especially in densely populated communities, which is a significant portion of our area in our big cities like Metro Manila, we need to make sure that those who test positive for the virus are isolated from other people especially their loved ones who can easily be infected,” said Dizon, deputy chief implementer of the National Action Plan Against COVID-19.

Under the government’s “Oplan Kalinga,” Dizon said apart from the infected individuals, their loved ones and the community at large are being taken care of.

He said Oplan Kalinga was already implemented in Navotas and Malabon where almost 100 COVID-positive patients are now in quarantine facilities.

Dizon said local government units and barangay health workers are the ones who will be referring and transporting COVID-positive patients to designated quarantine facilities, with the assistance of law enforcement units.

“It’s not true that the way this will be implemented is for policemen to be knocking on doors and picking people up from their homes. That is absolutely false. I want to assure everybody that that is not what’s going to happen,” he said.

COVID-positive patients with mild symptoms or are asymptomatic can undergo home quarantine provided that they can be isolated in a separate bedroom, they have their own bathroom, and they are not living with vulnerable individuals, according to Dizon.

He also emphasized that one of the most important factors in the fight against COVID-19 is still basic discipline in wearing masks, good hygiene, and practicing physical distancing.

“We have to enforce these standards on our people and we have to communicate with them that we need to do this. Our people have to take the responsibility of fighting COVID-19 to ourselves.

We have to be responsible in really making sure that we protect ourselves and other people, especially the vulnerable,” he said.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/07/17/why-virus-patients-end-up-in-quarantine-facilities/>

## Isolation centers

*posted July 17, 2020 at 01:10 am*

The spike in local COVID-19 cases is largely caused by poor monitoring and looser implementation of quarantine rules. Many local government units down to the barangay level have been remiss of their duty in preventing the spread of the virus.

In Metro Manila, especially the nation's capital Manila, you can see people walking nonchalantly on the sidewalks without face masks. Many minors while away their time outside of their homes, oblivious to the dangers of getting infected with COVID-19. A child without face mask tags along with her parent on their way home or begging on the streets.

The police, meanwhile, are indifferent to the violation of the health rules spelled out in Republic Act No. 11469, or the Bayanihan Act. Some of these law enforcers manning Metro Manila's intersections are more interested in apprehending would-be traffic violators than arresting minors who violate curfew ordinances. The police can do their share in preventing the virus' spread by reminding people of the need to wear face masks and by bringing minors to the custody of their parents.

The police, barangay tanods and health authorities are at the forefront of curbing the COVID-19 spread. They, along with executives of local government units, should pursue a more aggressive approach in dealing with the disease.

The police, for one, will have a major role in ensuring people, who test positive for COVID-19 and cannot self-isolate at home, are taken to government-run quarantine facilities. The government has built a number of quarantine centers within and outside the capital region to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases.

The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, amid the rapid rise in virus cases, finally deployed the police to accompany health workers to the homes of people who have tested positive and take them to government facilities if their residences are inadequate for self-isolation.

"We prefer that the asymptomatics and the mild cases voluntarily surrender and confine themselves in isolation centers," said Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Science is teaching us that now.



In a report, Capital Economics placed the pace of economic recovery in the Philippines alongside that of Indonesia and most of Southeast Asia where the number of reported COVID-19 cases is still rising. [Philstar.com/Irish Lising](https://www.philstar.com/Irish-Lising)

## 'Philippines economic recovery among slowest in Asia'

[Czeriza Valencia](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 17, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A prolonged lockdown that has now been in place for four months will cause the Philippine economy to contract by eight percent this year and make it among the slowest to recover in Asia, a London-based think tank said.

In a report, Capital Economics placed the pace of economic recovery in the Philippines alongside that of Indonesia and most of Southeast Asia where the number of reported COVID-19 cases is still rising.

The latest forecast for the domestic economy falls well below the government's expectation of a contraction of two percent to 3.4 percent this year.

"These countries are trying to reopen their economies, which has led to an initial increase in activity. But social distancing will continue for much longer and recoveries are likely to be gradual," Capital Economics said.

"A long lockdown, which has now been in place for four months, and inadequate fiscal support, will delay the recovery in the Philippines."

In contrast, recovery in China, Vietnam and Taiwan will be fastest in the region as daily life has largely returned to normal because of early success in containing the spread of the coronavirus.

With still diminished economic activity in the country, inflation can be expected to average 2.2 percent this year, at the lower end of the government's forecast of two to four percent.

The economy is already widely expected to have entered a technical recession in the second quarter of the year after a 0.2 percent decline in output in the first quarter.

Economic managers have already conceded that second quarter performance will be worse but hopes a rebound will occur in the last two quarters of the year.

Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua said last week that the economy is already showing signs of recovery – via a slower decline in trade performance and manufacturing output in May – but remains in "a very difficult position."

Alongside limitations in business activity, economic stimulus measures meant to jumpstart key industries, provide wage support to workers, and strengthen the country's health system among others, also remain pending in Congress.

A further threat to recovery would be the reimposition of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in the National Capital Region as the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases continue to rise and hospitals become overburdened.

Metro Manila, the country's economic powerhouse, remains under general community quarantine, the less severe version of the enhanced quarantine.

As seen in the effect of the severe two-month lockdown in the second quarter, particularly on trade and manufacturing data as well as on employment, Chua said the reimposition of ECQ will necessitate a new review of macroeconomic assumptions for the year.



## ALAK PA MORE AT TAGUAN PONG SA CURFEW

July 16, 2020 @ 1:43 PM 17 hours ago

Balik sa dating gawi ang marami nating kababayan makaraang pairalin ang general community quarantine.

Nakasasakal naman kasi talaga ang enhanced community quarantine na halos bawal ang lahat, lalo na sa mga hindi marunong umintindi sa layunin ng pagpapairal ng quarantine bilang isang epektibong panlaban sa coronavirus disease-19.

Kaya naman, nang lumuwag ang lahat sa pagpapairal ng GCQ, balik sa dating gawi ang lahat ng Pinoy.

Kung umasta sila, parang wala ng COVID-19 at lahat na lang ginagawa kahit labag pa sa kapakanan ng higit na nakararami at batas.

### ALAK PA MORE

May mga natuto namang hindi na uminom ng alak makaraang masanay sa ilang buwan nang quarantine na nagbabawal ng pagbili, pagtinda at pag-inom ng alak sa mga pampublikong lugar.

Pero sa mga sugapa sa alak, anak ng tokwa, mas inuuna pa ang bumili ng alak kaysa ng mga pangunahing pangangailangan ng pamilya at para sa magandang kalusugan.

Kaya naman, sa nakatanggap ng Social Amelioration Program na nagkakahalaga ng mula P6,500 hanggang P8,000, marami ang kumupit para sa pambili ng alak bukod sa bigas at iba pang pagkain, gamot at iba pa.

'Yung iba naman na adik sa sugal, ipinusta o nagsilbing bangka sa sugal sa pag-asang mananalo sila.

Ang siste, mga Bro, ang mga nahuli sa paglalak ng alak at iligal na sugal, sa piyansa pa napunta ang SAP nila.

Mabuti na lang at may mga gumagawa naman ng alak na nakaisip na sa halip na gumawa ng nakalalasing, alcohol na lang ang ginawa nila para ibigay nang libre sa mga frontliner ng pamahalaan, ospital na pribado at pampubliko at mamamayan na nangangailangan nito.

Kudos sa iyo, Kuya Ramon Ang, ng San Miguel Corporation na gumawa nito.

### KAMAY NA BAKAL SA CURFEW

Kung mamasyal kayo sa mga barangay, ang daming lumalabag sa curfew.

Mga bata, maysakit, senior citizen at iba pang inuutusan o pinakikiusapang mag-stay at home kung wala namang mahalagang gagawin sa labas ng tahanan.

Lalong lumalabas ang iba na hindi gaanong saklaw ng patakaran sa quarantine.

Sila ang mga sugapa sa alak, sugal at iba pang bisyo na parang mamamatay kung walang matatagay at walang malalaro na baraha.

Ngayong nagkakandaheto't hetot ang dami ng mga may impeksyon, makikita ninyo ang matinding panawagan para pairalin ang kamay na bakal sa curfew.

Paniniwala ng marami, ang hindi pagsunod sa mga batas sa quarantine ang isang malaking dahilan ng hawaan sa COVID-19 at ito umano ang ginagawa ng mga sugapa sa mga bisyo at lumalabag sa curfew.

Ang dami ng panawagan para sa mahigpit o kamay na bakal sa curfew sa mga barangay at maging sa social media at media.

### PANAGUTIN ANG DAPAT MANAGOT

Sabi ng marami, hindi takot sa mga batas sa quarantine ang mga pasaway kundi sa mga nanghuhuli.

Kaya marami ang lumalabag sa batas sa quarantine at kunwari, masunurin lang ang mga pasaway kung may bantay gaya ni kapitan at mga tanod niya, ang mga pulis at sundalo.

Anak ng tokwa, kung ganito nang ganito ang mangyayari, kakalat at kakalat nga ang COVID-19.

Dapat na matutunan nating lahat ang buo na pagtitiwala sa mga batas na kaya ginawa ang mga ito ay para na rin sa ating kaligtasan sa sakit at kamatayan.

Hindi natin dapat bantayan ang mga nanghuhuli na kung dumating sila, lahat tayo ay magtago at pagtalikod ng mga ito, lahat na ay lalabag sa batas.

Ngayon naman, mga Bro, may mga Local Government Unit na ang mga magulang ng mga pasaway na mendor-de-edad ang pinananagot na gaya ni Mayor Isko ng Maynila.

Ngayon, umaatungal ang mga magulang habang kinukwestyon kung saang batas daw galing ang kapangyarihan ng mga LGU na magpanagot sa mga magulang sa mga pasaway nilang mga anak, apo o pamangkin.

Anak ng pitong putakte, naging pabaya o sila mismo ang lumalabag at kung pananagutin na sila sa batas, maghahanap sila ngayon ng proteksyon mula sa batas.

### SUMUNOD SA BATAS

Kung susunod lang lahat sa batas, partikular ang batas sa quarantine at kaugnay na batas para sa proteksyon ng ating kalusugan, buhay at paghahanapbuhay, magagawa nating lahat na bawasan man lang kung hindi mapigilan ang pagsalanta ng COVID-19 sa ating bansa.

Hindi dapat na kailangan ang mga tanod, pulis, military at iba pa para bantayan tayo sa ating mga paglabag.

Ang pagsunod sa batas bilang personal, pampamilya at pangkomunidad na disiplina ay lubhang mahalaga.

Makalalaya rin ang mga tanod, pulis, military para humarap sa ibang mga problema gaya ng mga kriminal, terorista at iba pa na problema, may COVID-19 man o wala.

Sa rami ng paraan na ginagamit nating lahat upang maipaabot ang mga nilalaman ng batas, imposibleng wala tayong alam at ignorante tayo sa batas.

Isa sigurong tatandaan natin, kapag may umiiral na batas, ang pagiging ignorante rito ay hindi dahilan upang gumawa tayo ng hindi kasiya-siya sa sarili at kapwa.

Hindi libre sa pananagutan sa batas kahit ang mga ignorante rito.

# COVID-19 and our 'Blue Economy'

By: [Cielito F. Habito](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:20 AM July 17, 2020

With water making up the bulk of Philippine territory—four-fifths, counting our exclusive economic zones as defined by the United Nations—why is very little of our gross domestic product contributed by our water-based economy (the “Blue Economy”)? Fisheries and water transport contribute a mere 1.5 percent of incomes in our economy, measured as GDP.

Adding water-based recreation, offshore natural gas and other miscellaneous economic activities based or dependent on our waters won't bring the share much beyond that. And yet I've always maintained that a square kilometer of our inland or marine waters could well contain at least as much if not more potential economic wealth than a similar area of our undeveloped lands.

For many years, we've heard it argued that our development planning must be premised on our being an archipelagic economy. Still, our plans and public investment programs appear to have remained dominantly focused on our land-based resources. But it is well known that fishers, especially artisanal fishers along our coasts, have traditionally been among the nation's poorest. Poverty incidence in the sector as of 2018 was 26.2 percent, against the national poverty incidence of 16.7 percent of Filipinos.

Already highly vulnerable as they are, how have workers in the sector been hit by the economic standstill caused by the lockdowns imposed to control spread of the virus? What stresses have our fishers and their families endured in the wake of the pandemic? They have shared a similar fate with counterparts overseas, but that is no consolation for those who are already among the most disadvantaged in our society. The livelihoods on which our coastal populations depend have been adversely impacted in various ways. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the international body overseeing and monitoring the food sector worldwide, has assessed COVID-19's impacts on the fisheries sector, and makes several observations, which we sum up here.

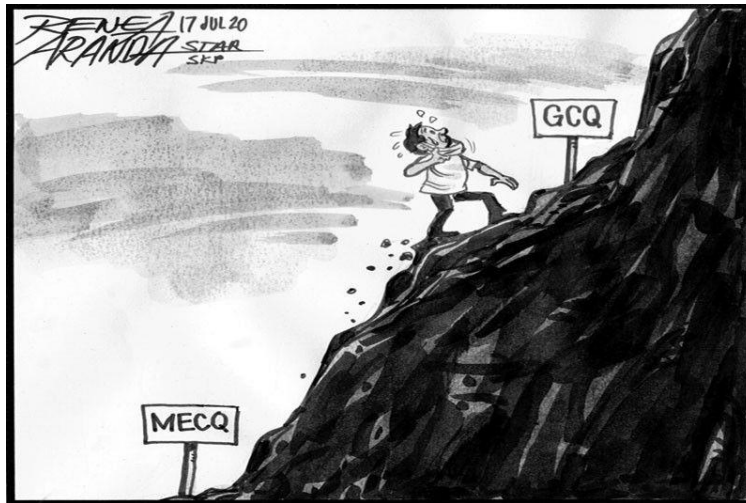
Globally, the slump in overall international trade has similarly reduced trade in the products of the fishery sector, where 38 percent of total production enters world trade. The trade showdown had already been happening prior to the pandemic due to the US-China trade war, but took a turn for the worse as the coronavirus moved across national boundaries as well. Meanwhile, closure of the food service sectors—restaurants, hotels, food stalls, and other food service businesses—drastically impacted on supply chains for fresh fish and shellfish, which account for nearly half (45 percent) of all fish consumed. In some areas, these closures in restaurants and food service outlets shifted sales to fish retail establishments. There were some initial benefits to canned and preserved seafood products, which profited from panic buying early in the crisis. But overall reduction in consumer demand caused by reduced incomes of workers who found themselves without jobs in the economic freeze led to closures in the fish- and seafood-processing sector.

The logistics sector was also significantly hampered by the economic lockdowns, impacting on the movement of various fishery products, most prominently salmon and tuna, which are often transported by air over long distances. Also affected is the movement of seeds, feeds, vaccines, and other aquaculture-related items. This puts a double squeeze on the aquaculture sector, which, with reduced demand and falling prices, has had to contend with increased live fish stocks, hence raising their need for feeds and raising risk of mortalities as well. Capture fisheries, meanwhile, have been brought to a halt or significantly cut by the same reduced demands. The silver lining is that this helps renew and replenish stocks in fishing grounds.

How the COVID crisis may impel us to pursue a “bluer new normal” is the subject of an ongoing three-part webinar series by the USAID Fish Right Program (check out <https://www.facebook.com/kumustamangingisda/> to know more). It's time we all realized that there's so much more wealth in our midst than we have perhaps cared to know, appreciate, and defend from intruders. [cielito.habito@gmail.com](mailto:cielito.habito@gmail.com)

Source: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/131839/covid-19-and-our-blue-economy>





## EDITORIAL - Longer quarantine

(The Philippine Star) - July 17, 2020 - 12:00am

As most people expected, Metro Manila remains under general community quarantine in the latest classifications announced by Malacañang Wednesday night. Cebu City, previously reverted to the strictest enhanced community quarantine, has been eased into a modified ECQ, allowing the resumption of certain economic activities.

In many other parts of the country, quarantine restrictions are being eased, prompting some quarters to suggest the holding of face-to-face classes in areas with zero cases of coronavirus disease 2019. Restrictions, however, remain in place throughout the country as the COVID-19 threat persists in the absence of a cure or vaccine.

Officials disclosed that President Duterte had initially agreed to revert Metro Manila to a tighter quarantine classification as COVID-19 cases surge. But other officials, worried about the ruinous impact on the economy, reportedly prevailed as Metro mayors gave assurance that localized lockdowns would instead be imposed in areas where a spike in COVID infections is reported.

The country has now imposed one of the longest COVID lockdowns in the world. Inevitably, those who have suffered from the restrictions are asking if the community quarantines have been maximized to reduce the risk of coexisting or “dancing” with the coronavirus. The secretary of health had to correct himself and clarify that the COVID curve had been “bent” but has yet to be flattened.

After four months of economically crippling lockdowns, the government still needs to ramp up capabilities for COVID testing, contact tracing, isolation and treatment. Hospitals are running out of facilities for COVID patients. With the economy reopening, it becomes even more important for people to observe basic health safety protocols: wear a mask in public places, wash hands regularly with soap and water or use alcohol or sanitizer, observe physical distancing as well as cough and sneeze etiquette. If we want our sacrifices in the past four months to be worth it, we all have to do our part.

# Meralco reports actions on billing complaints

Published 20 hours ago on July 16, 2020 10:10 AM

By **TDI**



Virtual Meralco agents in select Bayad Center outlets address customer concerns. (BC image)

Manila Electric Company (Meralco) has informed the Department of Energy (DoE) that it has sent 4.1 million letters to customers clarifying their May 2020 bills based on actual meter reading.

In a letter to DoE Secretary Alfonso Cusi dated 14 July 2020, Meralco President and CEO Ray C. Espinosa also said the electricity distributor has deployed virtual customer complaints agents in select Bayad Center outlets within its franchise area. Affected customers can talk to the Meralco agent about their billing concerns via computer set up.

Further, Meralco shouldered the convenience fee charged by the payment gateway provider for online payments of bill until the end of the General Community Quarantine in Metro Manila.

The delivery of the letters which were more laymanized than the June billing, commenced on 10 July 2020, and will be completed by 16 July 2020, according to Espinosa.

As to the convenience fee, Espinosa said Meralco paid P 12.6 million for approximately 268,000 payment transactions made through its online app or website between 15 March to 16 May.

“We welcome Meralco’s assurance that they have been acting upon the various issues being raised by consumers,” DoE Secretary Alfonso Cusi said in a press statement.

“In this time of pandemic, our people are plagued with concerns about their health and safety, as well as their job and financial security. The government and private sector should work hand-in-hand to alleviate, and not add to their burdens,” Cusi added.

Cusi said the DoE continues to receive a high volume of consumer complaints regarding their May/June Meralco bills, so the update was a welcome development.

Last May, Cusi advised Meralco to re-issue electricity bills based on actual meter readings and disregard previous bills that were made on estimated consumption.

“We met again in June to discuss their implementation plan, and at that time, I underscored the importance of properly and clearly communicating with their consumers,” said Cusi.

Meralco also sent the same compliance status report to the Energy Regulatory Commission, the Joint Congressional Energy Commission, the Senate and House Committees on Energy and the House Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability.

p: wjg

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/07/16/meralco-reports-actions-on-billing-complaints/>



## ITCZ magdadala ng pag-ulan, pagkidlat sa ilang lugar

July 16, 2020 @ 6:34 PM 13 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Inaasahang magdadala ng maulap na papawirin na may kalat-kalat na pag-ulan at pakidlat sa MIMAROPA, Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, at Caraga ang Inter-tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), ayon sa PAGASA.

Sa 24-hour forecast, nagbabala ang weather agency sa mga apektadong residente ng posibleng pagbaha o pagguho ng lupa kapag lumakas pa ang thunderstorms.

Samantala, magdadala ng bahagyang maulap hanggang sa maulap na papawirin na may pulo-pulog pag-ulan ang localized thunderstorms sa Metro Manila at sa nalalabing bahagi ng bansa. **RNT/MM**



# 4.0-magnitude quake jolts Davao Oriental

Published July 16, 2020, 7:53 AM

by Mike Crismundo

**BUTUAN CITY** – A 4.0-magnitude earthquake hit Davao Oriental province in Southern Mindanao region before midnight Wednesday, July 15, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

In its bulletin, Phivolcs said the tremor was recorded at 11:13 p.m.

The epicenter was plotted 100 kilometers (kms) southeast of Tarragona town, Davao Oriental province.

The tremor had a depth of 49 kms, Phivolcs said.

The earthquake was tectonic in origin and no aftershock was raised by the state agency.

The regional office of the Southern Mindanao Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and Davao Oriental provincial disaster risk reduction and management council (PDRRMC) there reported no damage or injury.

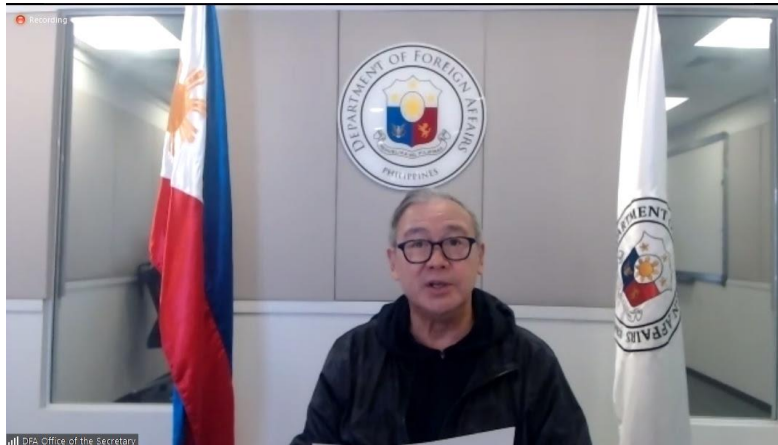
Meanwhile, a 3.5-magnitude tectonic earthquake was also registered at 2:49 a.m. on Thursday, July 16, and its epicenter traced 56 kms southeast of Sarangani, Davao Occidental province, with a depth of 65 kms, Phivolcs also said, in its latest advisory.

No aftershock was raised by the state agency and the Davao Occidental PDRRMC there also no reported damage or injury.

# Phl-China reaffirm bond despite maritime issues

Published 1 day ago on July 16, 2020 03:30 AM

By [Gabbie Parlade](#)



The Philippines reaffirmed its strong bilateral relationship with the People's Republic of China despite nagging maritime issues centering on the West Philippine Sea.

In a virtual conference Tuesday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. met with Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to discuss cooperative endeavors under the new normal.

Even with the dispute, the foreign ministers said mutual trust remains and joint development efforts will still push through.

They likewise agreed to further strengthen the strategic cooperation of the countries even during a pandemic.

Nonetheless, China aired its rejection of the Philippines' arbitral rights over the West Philippine Sea as granted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The envoy said the 2016 decision was 'illegal' and 'invalid' and that under no circumstances will China's stance over it be affected.

The United States earlier said China has made a series of 'completely unlawful' acts over claims on resources already decided by higher governing agencies.

With this, the US bared their continued support for the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia.

# Climate change boiling Siberia

Published 3 hours ago on July 17, 2020 03:43 AM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



AFP Photo.

PARIS, France (AFP) — A recent heatwave in Siberia that saw temperature records tumble as the region sweltered in 38-Celsius highs was “almost impossible” without the influence of manmade climate change, leading scientists said Wednesday.

An international team of researchers found that the record-breaking warm period was more than 2C hotter than it would have been if humans had not warmed the planet through decades of greenhouse gas emissions.

The five hottest years in history have occurred in the last five years and there’s a better-than-even chance that 2020 will be the hottest ever recorded.

Earth’s poles are warming faster than the rest of the planet, and temperatures in Siberia — home to much of the world’s carbon-rich permafrost — were more than 5C hotter than average between January and June.

One town, Verkhoyansk, recorded a temperature of 38C — smashing previous records.

Andrew Ciavarella, senior detection and attribution scientist at Britain’s Met Office, described the findings as “staggering.”

G20 carbon 'food-print' highest in meat-loving

TITLE: nations-report

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# G20 carbon 'food-print' highest in meat-loving nations – report

Published July 16, 2020, 9:36 AM  
by Agence France-Presse

If everyone alive ate steaks and dairy the way Brazilians and Americans do, we would need an extra five planets to feed the world, according to the first report to compare the carbon emissions from food consumption in G20 nations, released Thursday.



Producing food for Earth's 7.7 billion people is responsible for a quarter of the global carbon emissions that drive climate change

Among the world's top economies, only the per capita carbon "food-prints" in India and Indonesia are low enough to ensure the Paris climate target of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, according to the Diet for a Better Future report.

In China, where sustained economic growth has boosted consumption of meat and imported foods, the average diet — on a planetary scale — would exceed the 1.5C threshold by nearly two-fold.

Producing food for Earth's 7.7 billion people is responsible for a quarter of the global carbon emissions that drive climate change.

About 40 percent of that comes from livestock production and food waste, with the rest generated by rice production, fertiliser use, land conversion and deforestation to accommodate commercial crops.

"Currently, individuals in a handful of countries are eating way too much of the wrong foods at the expense of the rest of the world," Brent Loken, global food lead at WWF and lead author of the report, told AFP.

These imbalanced diets by a relative handful of rich countries are "to the detriment of climate, health and economies," he said.

The report by EAT — an Oslo-based non-profit that has led peer-reviewed research on the nexus of diet, health and climate change — also rated G20 national dietary guidelines, projecting the carbon footprint they would produce if followed.

## – A 'broken food system' –

Interestingly, this ranking roughly mirrors actual consumption.

Argentina tops the list with a diet exceeding climate thresholds nearly five-fold, followed by Canada, Brazil, the United States, Russia and Australia.

At the other end of the spectrum, the countries with the most climate-friendly dietary guidelines are Indonesia, India, South Korea, China and Japan.

"This report makes it possible for the first time to compare and track the carbon emissions baked into each country's national guidelines," said Corina Hawkes, director of the University of London's Centre for Food Policy.



G20 carbon 'food-print' highest in meat-loving

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How the world sources food also has an impact on disease, including viral outbreaks such as the new coronavirus, the authors said.

“The current pandemic has highlighted just how broken our food system is,” said Loken.

“The food that we eat and how we produce it are also key drivers in the emergence of deadly viruses such as the one that leads to COVID-19.”

Deforestation in particular erases the boundary between human settlements and natural reservoirs of disease in wild animals.

The problem of waste is concentrated in wealthy nations, Loken said.

“It’s an issue mainly because rich people throw away too much food,” he said.

The report argues that there are sweeping benefits — both for health and economies — to shifting toward healthier diets rich in legumes, vegetables, fruits and nuts, and light on dairy and meats, especially beef and lamb.

Earlier research has calculated that an overhaul of the global food system could unleash trillions of dollars each year in new business opportunities, and save even more in reduced damages to people’s health and the planet.



# Air pollution exposure linked to higher COVID-19 cases and deaths - new study

By Matt Cole, Ceren Ozgen, and Eric Strobl via The Conversation

- July 16, 2020 - 6:03 PM



Workers wearing protective masks stand by to hitch a ride as some industries resume operations with limited public transportation available, amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, May 18, 2020. (Reuters/Eloisa Lopez)

The global death toll from COVID-19 has now passed [half a million](#). To slow the spread of the disease, we need to better understand why some places have higher numbers of cases and deaths than others.

One factor that could partially explain this is air pollution. Research has shown that long term exposure to pollutants such as fine particulate matter (often called PM2.5, as these are particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) can [reduce lung function](#) and [cause respiratory illness](#). These pollutants have also been shown to cause a [persistent inflammatory response](#) even [in the relatively young](#) and to increase the risk of infection by viruses that target the respiratory tract.

The pathogen that causes COVID-19 - SARS-CoV-2 - is one such virus. [Several studies](#) have already suggested that poor air quality can leave people at greater risk of contracting the virus, and at greater risk of serious illness and death. A [study of the US](#) found that even a small increase in PM2.5 concentrations of 1 microgram per cubic metre is associated with an 8% increase in the COVID-19 death rate. Our [new research](#) looked at the relationship between COVID-19 cases and exposure to air pollution in the Netherlands and found that the equivalent figure for that country could be up to 16.6%.

## The unusual case of the Netherlands

After analyzing data for 355 Dutch municipalities, we found that an increase in fine particulate matter concentrations of 1 microgram per cubic metre was linked with an increase of up to 15 COVID-19 cases, four hospital admissions and three deaths.

The first confirmed COVID-19 case in the Netherlands occurred in late February and by late June [over 50,000 cases](#) had been identified. The national spread of COVID-19 cases shows a greater number in the south-eastern regions.

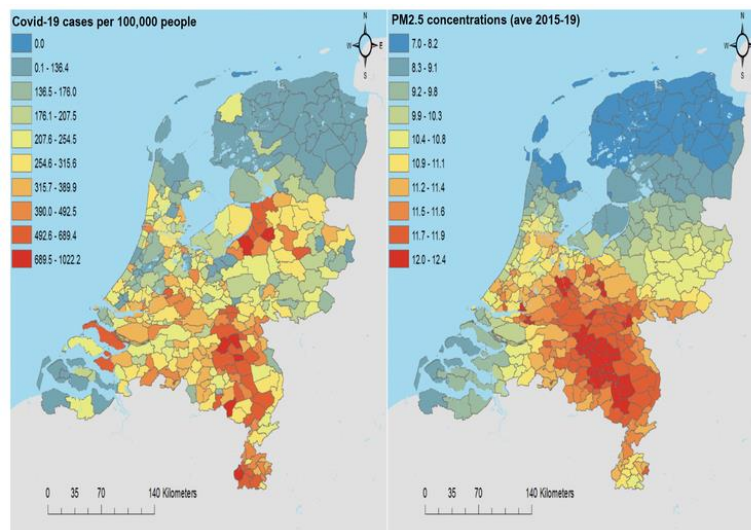
Air pollution exposure linked to higher COVID-19

July 17, 2020

TITLE: cases and deaths – new study

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COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people and annual concentrations of PM2.5 (averaged over the period 2015-19) in the Netherlands.

Matt Cole, Author provided

Unusually, these hotspots of disease transmission are in relatively rural regions where there are fewer people living close together. The Dutch media offered one potential explanation. In late February and early March each year, these areas hold carnival celebrations which attract thousands of people to street parties and parades - 2020 was no exception, so does that explain the rapid spread of COVID-19 there?

While it's likely that the carnival celebrations played a role, the pattern of cases across these regions suggest other factors may be at least as important.

The south-eastern provinces of North Brabant and Limburg [house](#) over 63% of the country's 12 million pigs and 42% of its 101 million chickens. Intensive livestock production produces large amounts of ammonia. These particles often form a [significant proportion](#) of fine particulate matter in air pollution. Concentrations of this are at their highest in air samples from the south-east of the Netherlands.

The correlation between these indicators of air pollution and cases of COVID-19 is clear to see, but is it just a coincidence?

## Pollutants associated with COVID-19

Our analysis used COVID-19 data up to June 5 2020, capturing almost the entire known course of the Dutch epidemic. The relationship we found between pollution and COVID-19 exists even after controlling for other contributing factors, such as the carnival, age, health, income, population density and others.

To put our results in context, the highest annual average concentration of fine particulate matter in a Dutch municipality is 12.3 micrograms per cubic metre, while the lowest is 6.9. If concentrations in the most polluted municipality fell to the level of the least polluted, our results suggest this would lead to 82 fewer disease cases, 24 fewer hospital admissions and 19 fewer deaths, purely as a result of the change in pollution.

Air pollution exposure linked to higher COVID-19

July 17, 2020

TITLE: cases and deaths – new study

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The correlation we found between exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 is not simply a result of disease cases being clustered in large cities where pollution may be higher. After all, COVID-19 hotspots in the Netherlands were in relatively rural regions. Still, region-level data can only get us so far. Within regions, pollution levels and COVID-19 cases can vary considerably from place to place, making it hard to estimate the precise relationship between the two.

Being able to study this link among individual people would allow us to more precisely eliminate the influence of age and health conditions. But until this kind of data is available, the evidence of a relationship between pollution and COVID-19 can never be conclusive.

*[Matt Cole](#), Professor of Environmental Economics, [University of Birmingham](#); [Ceren Ozgen](#), Assistant Professor in Economics, [University of Birmingham](#), and [Eric Strobl](#), Professor of Economics, [Université de Berne](#). This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).*

# Eating fish could help protect aging brains from air pollution, study finds

By Lauren Kent, CNN

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(FILE PHOTO)

**(CNN)**— You may have purchased an air filter to put in your car or even an air purifier for your home. But what about something to put in your body to protect from air pollution?

You can skip the hardware store and head straight to the grocery store for that, new research has suggested.

Eating more than one to two servings a week of fish or shellfish may allow older women to consume enough omega-3 fatty acids to counteract the effects of air pollution on the brain, according to a study published today in [Neurology](#), the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

"Omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to fight inflammation and maintain brain structure in aging brains. They have also been found to reduce brain damage caused by neurotoxins like lead and mercury," said study author Dr. Ka Kahe, a professor of epidemiology and obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University in New York, in a press release.

"So we explored if omega-3 fatty acids have a protective effect against another neurotoxin, the fine particulate matter found in air pollution."

## Connections between food and brain health

The study observed white women over 70 who live in areas with high air pollution levels. Those who had the lowest levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood had the highest amount of brain shrinkage.

To conduct the study, researchers calculated how much fish the women consumed on average each week, measured the amount of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood and determined the women's three-year average exposure to air pollution based on their home addresses.

Then they gave participants brain scans to measure the hippocampus area, which is the part of the brain associated with memory, and the white matter, which helps send signals throughout the brain.

The benefits of omega-3s from fish consumption, the researchers found, may preserve volume of white matter and size of hippocampus as women age and possibly protect against the potential toxic effects of air pollution.

The study's lead author Cheng Chen, a postdoctoral researcher at Columbia University's Irving Medical Center, told CNN that more research is needed to see if these results can be generalized to the wider population.

"Our study is one of many that provides helpful insights regarding a healthy lifestyle, like a healthy diet, to reduce the adverse impacts of air pollution," Chen said. "The general population still needs to follow the general recommendations of the government. But I can say a very small increase in omega-3s or fish intake can be beneficial for the populations in the study."

Before you head to the seafood section, the researchers also suggested talking to your doctor prior to adding more fish to your diet.

Eating fish could help protect aging brains from air

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Fatty fish that's baked or broiled, such as wild salmon, mackerel, sardines and tuna are some of the best sources for omega-3s. Unfortunately, fried fish doesn't make the cut because prior research has shown deep frying damages omega-3 fatty acids.

## Air pollution goes beyond the lungs

Chen said the research is part of a broader Women's Health Initiative Memory Study, which previously found that older women living in locations with higher levels of fine particles in the outdoor air had a smaller volume of white matter.

Brain volume loss and white matter loss occurs naturally in aging, but environmental toxins can compound the problem. That's because fine particulate matter emitted into the air is a neurotoxin -- bad news for the brain.

"The key with air pollution is that particles are so small they can be taken into the lungs," said neurologist Dr. Richard Isaacson, an Alzheimer's specialist at NewYork-Presbyterian and Weill Cornell Medical Center, who was not involved in the study.

Isaacson explained that it's "not entirely clear why air pollution specifically impacts cognitive function," but previous studies have found that after entering the lungs, the toxins in air pollutants can be distributed throughout the body via the bloodstream.

Typically, the brain is protected by what scientists call the blood-brain barrier, which is essentially the brain's emergency gate system that protects it from toxins circulating in the blood. But air pollution can slip through that barrier.

"These toxic particles are so small they can make it past this barrier, or this gate, and cause neuroinflammation and cognitive decline," Isaacson said.

The brain's white matter is essential for organizing communication between the various parts of the brain's gray matter -- similar to telephone lines. When the brain experiences white matter loss or inflammation, those communication pathways breakdown.

Because of omega-3s anti-inflammatory properties and protective effect on white matter in the brain, Isaacson said, a diet rich in omega-3s is "sensible for people who want to protect their brain health over time."

He added that further studies are necessary to ensure that these findings can be replicated in people of all ages and genders.

People have different risk factors for cognitive decline, so "depending on their risk omega-3s may not be enough to be impactful," Isaacson said. "There's no one magic thing or amount of omega-3s or fish oil pill that a person can do to prevent cognitive decline."

*This story was first published on CNN.com, ["Eating fish could help protect aging brains from air pollution, study finds."](https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/16/eating-fish-protect-brain-air-pollution-study.html)*

# Rare twin red-ruffed lemurs born at Singapore zoo

Agence France-Presse / 06:30 PM July 16, 2020



One of the twins is given a full medical check-up by a vet in Singapore (AFP Photo/Handout)

SINGAPORE — Twin red-ruffed lemurs have been born at Singapore zoo, officials said Thursday, a rare double delivery that is a boost for the endangered saucer-eyed primates.

It was the first birth at the zoo of the endangered creatures, which are native to Madagascar, in over a decade, Wildlife Reserves Singapore said.

The arrival of the yet-to-be-named twins was “particularly special” because the creatures breed only once a year, it said.



The twin red-ruffed lemurs are moved in a pet-carrier to a vet for a check-up in this picture released by Wildlife Reserves Singapore (AFP Photo/Handout)

The fluffy lemurs are a distinctive rust color, with black faces, hands, feet and tails, and a distinctive white patch on their heads.

The last of the species to be born at the zoo was the twins’ father, Bosco, 11 years ago. The mother is eight-year-old Minnie, who arrived in Singapore from a Japanese zoo in 2016.

Although the twins were born earlier this year, they have only recently become an attraction as the zoo was closed for months as a result of a coronavirus lockdown.



Red-ruffed lemurs in their enclosure at Singapore Zoo (AFP Photo/Handout)

Red-ruffed lemurs are classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature due to logging and hunting.

Of the 107 surviving lemur species on Madagascar, some 103 are threatened, including 33 that are critically endangered – the last stop before “extinct in the wild”, the group said earlier this month.

## COVID-19 WATCH

# Fresh trials raise virus vaccine hopes

Published 9 hours ago on July 16, 2020 09:30 PM

By [Agence France-Presse](#)



AMERICAN biotech company Moderna will start final stage of Covid-19 vaccine trial this month. (Getty)

Hopes of an effective COVID-19 vaccine being developed in the near future have been raised after two separate studies showed potential positive results, British media reported Thursday.

A University of Oxford trial showed its prototype vaccine generated an immune response against the virus, the reports said.

Blood samples taken from a group of some 1,000 volunteers who were given the vaccine stimulated antibodies and “killer T-cells”, according to the Daily Telegraph newspaper.

Previous research has shown that T-cells can remain in the body for years and help fight viruses.

The potential development comes after US biotech firm Moderna said on Tuesday it would start the final stage of human trials for its vaccine candidate on July 27.

It said it had had promising results from earlier testing. Up to 30,000 Americans are expected to take part in the trials.

Moderna is considered to be in a leading position in the global race for a vaccine. Its study is set to run until October 2022 but preliminary results should be available before then.

The top US infectious diseases official, Anthony Fauci, has called the Moderna results “really quite good news.”

The studies are the latest to inspire hopes of developing a vaccine after nearly 600,000 deaths and 13.4 millions cases worldwide since the outbreak began in China last year.

Meanwhile, a third group, BioNTech, a German company in partnership with US pharma giant Pfizer, plans to carry out its own trials on a vaccine involving 30,00 people.