

DATE: JULY 18, 2020

DAY: SATURDAY

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service



## 80% seedling target, naabot ng DENR kahit may COVID-19

July 17, 2020 @ 11:24 AM 19 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Inanunsyo ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na napagtagumpayan nila ang 36 milyong seedlings para sa Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP) sa unang anim na buwan ng 2020 sa kabila ng coronavirus pandemic.

Tinatayang 80 porsyento na ito ng 45.2 milyong seedlings target sa buong taon, batay kay DENR Secretary Roy 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,” lahad ni Cimatu.

Sa datos nitong July 9, umabot na sa 20 milyon ang indigenous and plantation seedlings; bamboo na may 3.4 milyon; agroforestry na may 2.98 milyon; fruit trees na may 1.2 milyon; fuelwood na may 796,600; rubber na may 131,775; nipa na may 65,000; at llang-ilang na may 50,000.

Kasama rin dito ang cacao na may 598,907; kape na may 212,047; at iba pang high value crops na halos 837,525; mangrove na 163,500; at rattan na 262,000. **RNT/FGDC**



## Endangered turtles nasagip ng DENR

July 17, 2020 @ 5:41 PM 12 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Nasa pangangalaga ngayon ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang nasagip na critically -endangered turtles matapos makuha ito sa mga suspek sa Tondo, Maynila nitong nakalipas na Hulyo 10, 2020.

Ayon sa DENR, sinusuri na ngayon ni Dr. Esteven Toledo, resident veterinarian ng Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) ng DENR ang kondisyon ng 40 pagong na nasagip ng Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife Trade o Task Force POGI mula sa mga suspek na sina Eumir Rommel Raganit at Bruce Kenneth Tan.

Nabatid ng DENR na sa pagsusuri ng species at conservation status ng mga pagong, ilan sa mga ito ay black pond turtles (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*) na critically-endangered species.

Sinabi pa sa ulat na ang mga nasagip na pagong ay kasalukuyang nasa pangangalaga ng BMB Wildlife Rescue Center.

Ayon pa sa DENR, ipinagbabawal din ang pagbebenta sa mga black pond turtles dahil nanganganib na itong maubos. **Santi Celario**



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DENR

LIVE turtles are cared for by members of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources after they were seized from wildlife smugglers.

# 'Just let them be, stay away'

WITH REPORTS OF THE BUBONIC PLAGUE BEING DETECTED IN MONGOLIA AND THE U.S., EXPERTS RAISE THE ALERT ANEW AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WILD ANIMALS.

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

July 18, 2020



THE travel restrictions forced by the Covid-19 pandemic are serving as a blessing in disguise for efforts to protect the local population from diseases caused by smuggled wildlife or brought by travelers unknowingly infected with them.

These diseases could include even the bubonic plague, which killed 50 million people in Europe in a pandemic in the Middle Ages. It recently killed a teenage boy in Mongolia, who ate a rodent-like animal, and was also detected in squirrels in Colorado.



*This May 25, 2019, file photo shows the Tomohon traditional market selling meats of bats, pythons, dogs, cats, rats and wild boar in North Sulawesi, Indonesia.*

The risk of bubonic plague reaching Philippine shores is very slim, according to a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) expert interviewed by the BusinessMirror, citing climate and the pandemic's travel restrictions.

Still, the head of the Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB) aired a strong warning for Asean nations to cooperate more fully in enforcing the cross-border transfer of wildlife.

The warning is well understood: a bubonic plague outbreak at this time, when the world reels from Covid-19, is the last thing humans would want to see.

## There's a cure

Unlike Covid-19, for which there is neither vaccine nor cure yet, the good news about bubonic plague, though, is that it can be treated with antibiotics, as plague is caused by bacteria and not a virus, said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

“They discovered the treatment to this years ago. Treatment for Covid, on the other hand, is still being tested, and management is more symptomatic, meaning you give medication to the symptoms of the disease, as they appear,” Lim, a veterinarian, and expert in zoonotic diseases, said.

She maintained that in Southeast Asia, there are existing laws or similar regulations on poaching and illegal wildlife trade among Asean member-states, and a good level of awareness on the implications of wildlife trafficking.

“That is why even in 2018, there was already the Chiangmai Statement on illegal wildlife trade,” Lim, a former DENR-BMB director, told the BusinessMirror in a recent interview via Messenger.

## A threat, nonetheless

Still, she said, bubonic plague remains a threat because the pneumonic form of the plague can easily spread from person to person, and, if left untreated, is fatal.

“More people, expanding human habitation that provides more chances for interaction with wild animals, and increased global mobility give pathogens nowadays more opportunity to be transmitted compared to the olden days of the plague,” warned Lim.

To prevent the spread of bubonic plague, she said the guidance from the Asean Environmental Ministers needs to be operationalized at the regional level, with all the countries working together to improve border monitoring and patrol across Asean, against the smuggling of wild meat or live wild animals.

The eating of wild animals has been flagged anew since the reported outbreak in January of what is now known as Covid-19 (some quarters previously referred to it as the Wuhan virus, after the Chinese city where it was believed to have originated, in a market for exotic animals used as human food).

On a side note, Lim said ACB welcomes the Philippine government's call to enable the Asean body to support such a proactive initiative in the region.

Lastly, Lim recommended the implementation of measures to reduce the collection of wild animals from their natural habitats, not just through stricter enforcement, but address socioeconomic drivers as well.

Asean must work harder, Lim added, to “protect remaining natural habitats of wild indigenous species of rodents and implement measures to control domestic rats and mice.”

## Tiny risk—for now

Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, the concurrent director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, maintained that cases of bubonic plague happening hundreds or thousands of miles away from our shores are something that Filipinos should not worry about.

Because of Covid-19, where travel is restricted from one country to another, and even within one country such as the Philippines, transmission of bubonic plague is next to impossible, he said.

“Besides, our ports are under tight watch,” noted Calderon.

The official said the DENR is also strictly monitoring the ports to prevent attempts to smuggle in or smuggle out of the country wild animals amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

He added that the DENR-BMB has also stopped issuing special import or export permits for wild animals allowed under CITES or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, thereby effectively eliminating the chances of zoonosis (the transmission of diseases from animals to humans) affecting the Philippines or its trading partners.

The official said right now, Covid-19 is the more serious problem the government is focusing on, and the travel restrictions as well as community quarantines in effect in various parts of the country limit the risks of another disease like bubonic plague breaking out.

However, as a precaution, DENR field personnel were advised to be on the lookout for wild animals, particularly rodents, getting sick.

Calderon told the BusinessMirror in a telephone interview there is a very slim chance of transmission of bubonic plague that may cause a contagion or even pandemic here in the Philippines.

## Temperate climate

He noted that there's not even a report of bubonic plague case in the Philippines because it occurs only in temperate climates while the Philippines is a tropical country.

The official added that any report about zoonosis must first be verified, adding that what were reported in Inner Mongolia or Colorado merits a simple advisory to field personnel.

“We need to check if that report is true. It may be another fake news for all I know. The real problem right now is Covid-19,” said Calderon.

Calderon admitted that there are now squirrels in the wild, adding that even the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City, which houses the BMB office, is host to several squirrels. “I can see the squirrels around, but I am not afraid of them.”

He said squirrels, a potentially invasive species, are not harmful as long as their population is manageable, and as long as they are left alone in the wild. “What is important is for people to maintain proper hygiene and sanitation,” and avoid interacting with wild animals, because they are potential carriers of deadly viruses or diseases.

It is best to stay away from wild animals, he stressed, and to anyone who sees a dead animal, “I advise them to report it to the nearest DENR office for proper handling.”

In the case of the 15-year-old boy in Mongolia, he was reported to have hunted and eaten marmots, large ground squirrels implicated in plague outbreaks in the area.

Rodents have always been tagged as the primary vector of plague transmission from animals to humans, but one could also get it from the bite of fleas hosted by an infected animal.

On July 15 CNN reported:

“Authorities in the Chinese region of Inner Mongolia also confirmed a case of the plague in the city of Bayannur, northwest of Beijing, on July 7, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency.

“In 2019, a couple in Mongolia died after eating a raw marmot kidney, triggering a quarantine that left several tourists stranded in the region.”

The CNN report also cited the case of the squirrel in Colorado that tested positive for the plague.

“The US reports up to a few dozen cases every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Two people died in Colorado from the plague in 2015.

“The plague has recently made a comeback, and the World Health Organization has categorized it as a re-emerging disease,” added the CNN report.

“Anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 people get the plague every year, according to the WHO, but that estimate does not account for unreported cases,” it added.

Whatever the real number may be, it seems disease experts are now more wary and taking greater pains to monitor disease, what with the painful lessons from Covid-19 and Wuhan still haunting everyone—and killing people by the thousands each day.



# River restoration to boost Region 2 economy

By [Leander C. Domingo, TMT](#)

July 18, 2020

THE restoration of the Cagayan River and its tributaries is expected to open economic trade between the Philippines and neighboring countries in Southeast Asia.

This was the subject of a recent virtual public consultation hosted by the Cagayan provincial government.



*Cagayan Gov. Manuel Mamba*

Cagayan Gov. Manuel Mamba said the restoration of the Cagayan River would mean the restoration of one of the oldest ports in the country, the Port of Aparri, which is located in a town that was the main area for trading with Japan owing to its location at the northern tip of Luzon at the mouth of the river.

As far back as 1680, Aparri was made one of the major Spanish ports of the Galleon Trade. In the years before the outbreak of World War 2, it became a transshipment point for smuggled goods from China, Taiwan and other neighboring Southeast Asian nations.

Also chairman of the Regional Development Council's (RDC) Infrastructure Committee in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley), Mamba said the council has been eyeing the reopening of the Port of Aparri.

Earlier, the RDC approved a resolution for the reopening of the port. The resolution reads in part: "Aparri Port is recognized as a catalyst in unlocking the region's potential as a major transshipment facility, thereby realizing the region's development potential as an agro-industrial and tourism hub."

In 2006, Mamba said work was started to rebuild the Port in Aparri after the old pier deteriorated because of the rising level of water, common storms and poor construction. Its ruins were washed up on the beach.

Today, the governor said the Cagayan riverbed rose to a level that makes it difficult for vessels to go through the river's mouth and dock at the old wharf.

Mamba said Cagayan River was one of the major sources of livelihood and an economic driver of the province. However, siltation in its river bed is now a major concern that creates disaster during the rainy season.

"Our Cagayan River is a boon in our province. It is a source of livelihood but sometimes it becomes a bane that we suffer the loss of lives, properties and livelihood whenever it swells especially during heavy downpour and typhoons," he said.

To mitigate the effects of flooding, the governor proposed the conduct of dredging along the Cagayan River that he said will benefit the Cagayan Valley that comprises the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino and Batanes.

“In addition to dredging the river, we also want to reopen the Port of Aparri which has been the major seaport in Luzon in the early years but was closed due to the siltation of the mouth of the Cagayan River,” Mamba said.

He explained that reconstructing the Port of Aparri will make it a major point of entry and a contributor to the region’s economic progress and development.

In the past, there has been strong opposition to the conduct of dredging over fears of Chinese firms interested in black sand mining believed to be destructive to marine resources.

Mamba, however, assured the public that there will be no black sand mining activity that will happen when the river will be dredged.

“This is the very reason why we opened the virtual consultation to the public including officials of government regional and provincial offices, municipal and barangay levels, environmentalists, religious sector, media, academe and civil society organizations,” he added.

Mamba said stakeholders, especially those residing in Aparri town, have expressed their support to the proposed dredging project to help realize the economic benefits the project will bring to Cagayan Valley as a whole.

# Higit 700 residente na apektado ng oil spill sa Iloilo, humihingi ng bayad-danyos

Jennifer Garcia Hernandez, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jul 18 2020 03:28 AM | Updated as of Jul 18 2020 06:07 AM

ILOILO CITY - Aabot sa 761 na residente sa Barangay Barrio Obreo dito sa lungsod ang humihingi ng compensation sa AC Energy dahil sa naging epekto ng nakaraang oil spill sa kanilang kalusugan at kabuhayan.

Higit 40,000 litro ng langis ang tumapon sa karagatan sa Iloilo matapos sumabog ang tangke ng isang power barge noong Hulyo 3. Nasa 69 na pamilya mula sa Barrio Obrero ang inilikas.

Dahil dito, isang demand letter ang kanilang ipinadala nitong Biyernes sa pamunuan ng AC Energy na humihingi na bayaran sila sa perhuwisyong dala ng oil spill. Inaasahan na magtatagal pa ang epekto ng oil spill sa kanilang mga residente.

Ayon sa kanilang legal counsel na si Atty. Joshua Alim, magsasampa sila ng class suit kapag hindi pinakinggan ang kahilingan ng mga residente. Violation ng Quasi-Delict, Clean, at Water Act ang kanilang isasampa.

Pero hihintayin muna nila umano ang resulta ng pag-uusap.

Sa statement na pinadala ng spokesperson ng AC Energy na si Gabby Mejia, alam nila ang mga kahilingan ng mga residente at pinaguusapan na nila ito.

Nakikipag-ugnayan na rin umano sila sa city government para sa validation ng mga claims ng mga residente. Sa ngayon patuloy ang clean-up effort, relief operation, at rehabilitation plans.

# EDITORIAL - Unahin, batas na nagbabawal sa single-use plastic

(Pilipino Star Ngayon) - July 18, 2020 - 12:00am



MARAMING panukalang batas ang naiisip ngayon ng mga kongresista. Kabilang sa mga isinusulong ngayon ay ang pagpapalit ng pangalan ng Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) na inihain ni Presidential son at Deputy Speaker Paolo Duterte kasama sina Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco at ACT-CIS partylist Rep. Eric Go Yap. Gusto nilang palitan ang NAIA ng “Paliparang Pandaigdig ng Pilipinas”.

Walang masama sa panukalang ‘yan pero mas mainam kung ipaprayoridad ay panukalang batas nagbabawal sa produksiyon at paggamit ng single-use plastic.

Sa kasalukuyan, pawang ordinansa lamang ng iilang bayan at lungsod ang ipinatutupad sa pagbabawal sa paggamit ng single-use plastic at hindi pa rin ito ganap na naipasusunod. Tanging Parañaque City, Iloilo City at Cebu City ang nagbabawal sa paggamit ng plastic.

Dapat gayahin ng Pilipinas ang Thailand na sinimulan nang ibawal ang single-use plastic. Sa Bangkok, hindi na plastic ang lalagyan ng mga gulay, prutas at magagaan na grocery items kundi dahon at saha ng saging.

Nakapagbibigay naman ng inspirasyon ang ginawa ng local government unit ng Cebu noong Lunes dahil kinalampag nila ang National Solid Waste Management Commission para itigil na ang paggamit ng single-use plastic. Hindi lamang ang commission ang tinawagan nila ng pansin kundi pati na rin ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources at ang Department of Interior and Local Government. Ayon sa Cebu LGUs, dapat ipag-utos ng commission ang total ban sa paggamit at produksiyon ng single-use plastic.

EDITORIAL – Unahin, batas na nagbabawal sa

July 18, 2020

TITLE: single-use plastic

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Kasama sa mga single-use plastic ay ang sachet ng 3-in-1-coffee, catsup, hair shampoo, hair conditioner, at ang mga plastic bag na gamit sa groceries at mga palengke. Ang mga plastic na ito ang nakikitang inaanod sa estero sapagkat itinapon ng mga walang disiplinang mamamayan.

Tatangayin ang mga ito patungo sa dagat at ang masakit, kakainin ng mga balyena na magiging dahilan ng kamatayan ng mga ito. Marami nang sperm whale ang sumadsad sa dalampasigan at namatay dahil nagbara sa bituka ang mga plastic.

Hindi lang tao at kapaligiran ang sinisira ng mga plastic kundi mga lamandagat man. Sana, may kongresista na makalikha ng batas na isusulong ang pagbabawal sa paggamit at produksiyon ng plastic. Sana, madaliin bago pa malunod ang bansa sa sangkatutak na plastic.

# Palace asserts quarantines work

Published 5 hours ago on July 18, 2020 12:05 AM

By [MJ Blancaflor](#)



The Palace insisted the government's quarantine strategies are "working" although the number of coronavirus cases in the Philippines is rising, pointing out on Friday the mortality rate remains low.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said millions of Filipinos could have acquired COVID-19 had the government not impose stringent lockdown measures to curb the virus transmission, citing a mathematical model created by a team of statisticians from the University of the Philippines (UP).

"This is working. If we did not act on it, millions could have died like the UP team had predicted. This is also working since only a few people die from this illness," Roque told reporters.

The Philippines has thus far recorded 61,266 coronavirus cases — 39,000 of which are active — with 21,440 recoveries and 1,643 deaths.

Critics note the Philippines has the second highest number of COVID-19 among countries in Asia, next to Indonesia, despite being having undergone a four-month lockdown.

Mathematics professor Guido David of the UP Institute of Mathematics, also a member of the university's Pandemic Response Team, recently said the coronavirus tally in the Philippines may breach the 80,000-mark by the end of July.

Guido also said the country is "unlikely" to flatten the coronavirus curve in July or August. He acknowledged this could happen in September if the new pandemic protocols work, including localized lockdowns and ramped up isolation measures for patients.

Sought for comment, Roque said how the general public behaves affects how the number add up.

"To my fellowmen, our health lies in our hands. We need to wash our hands, wear masks, and we need to stay at home," he said.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III earlier this week said the Philippines "successfully flattened the curve since April" but hours later retracted the statement and explained he meant a lull in cases in April following a Luzon-wide lockdown that began mid-March.

"It wasn't flattened. I want to clarify that. It got bent but not flattened. I made a mistake there and I want to clarify it," Duque said.

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said flattening the curve “is really quite difficult to interpret and explain” because this depends not just on whether or not COVID-19 cases are increasing, but also on the health care capacity and the time it takes for cases to double.

“When we say we have flattened the curve, we were able to prepare our health system just in case there will be a surge or increase in the number of cases in the country,” said Vergeire.

“When the Secretary said this, he was really meaning that we were able to prepare our health system and it’s quite evident right now that we have increased our testing capacity. We have established a lot of quarantine facilities already, we have upgraded our hospitals,” she added.

Several hospitals the past days reported full occupancy of their coronavirus wards. Some private hospitals committed to increase their COVID-19 capacity, Vergeire said.

**with ELMER N. MANUEL**  
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# DOH: Testing for coronavirus is not an immunity passport

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jul 17 2020 07:33 PM



Health workers from the Manila Health Department extract blood samples from motorists at a COVID-19 drive-thru testing center in front of the Andres Bonifacio Monument along Taft Avenue in Manila on July 15, 2020. The blood samples will be processed using serology testing machines, which has a capacity of 89,6000 tests per month. *Jonathan Cellona, ABS-CBN News*

MANILA - Getting tested for the coronavirus is not an "immunity passport," and the best way to avoid getting COVID-19 is to adhere to preventive measures, the Department of Health (DOH) said on Friday.

"We are still reminding the general public that prevention is still the best, and testing is not an immunity passport," Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said in a virtual press briefing after being asked that some cities have opened drive-through testing sites to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Preventive measures include frequent handwashing, wearing of face mask in public, and physical distancing.

"Hindi po because nag-test kayo ngayon ay hindi na po kayo magkakaroon ng sakit sa mga darating na araw dahil maaari pa rin tayong ma-expose pagkatapos nating magpa-test at maaaring magkaroon pa rin tayo ng impeksiyon pagkatapos nito," she added.

In April, the Taguig City Government set up testing areas for residents who may have symptoms of the novel coronavirus.

The Manila City Government later followed the footsteps of Taguig, offering drive-through testing even to non-residents.

Vergeire said the DOH has always maintained that testing protocols are risk-based.

"We prioritize groups who have the biggest risk of contracting the virus because they are part of the vulnerable population or had exposure to the virus or patients like our health care workers," she said.

The health official added the department will continue to expand the subgroups to include more people eligible for testing "as we delicately balance opening our economy while ensuring the safety and minimizing the risk of infection of the population."

To date, the number of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines surpassed 63,000, with 1,841 new infections reported Friday. The tally includes 1,660 fatalities and 21,748 recoveries.

Source: [https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/17/20/doh-testing-for-coronavirus-is-not-an-immunity-passport?fbclid=IwAR3TTzFTm6NGzeQOt1AMzGRjR8kfbUnB5KE3Y5Nraq\\_e4z9Isr2EejDZAxk](https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/17/20/doh-testing-for-coronavirus-is-not-an-immunity-passport?fbclid=IwAR3TTzFTm6NGzeQOt1AMzGRjR8kfbUnB5KE3Y5Nraq_e4z9Isr2EejDZAxk)



# More police quarantine, testing hubs ordered

Published 1 day ago on July 17, 2020 04:30 AM

By [Kristina Maralit](#)



Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, PGen. Archie Gamboa, ordered the establishment of more quarantine facilities and testing centers to further ramp up the organization's support to police frontliners, especially those manning checkpoints and quarantine control points (QCP).

"The PNP is now preparing to establish more quarantine centers and testing hubs as we improve our healthcare support mechanism for our police frontliners and personnel who are exposed to the risk of contamination while fulfilling their duties," Gamboa said in a statement released Wednesday night.

Gamboa's pronouncement came after latest data released by the PNP Health Service (PNPHS) showed 56 new confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infections among policemen to hike the total number at 1,298.

The PNPHS is also closely monitoring 1,387 suspected cases and 640 cases. The number of COVID-related deaths remain at 9.

The planned additional quarantine facilities and testing hubs, the top cop furthered, are on top the seven quarantine and testing centers the PNP is managing and operating as part of looking out for personnel tasked at the front lines of the government's fight against the viral respiratory illness.

# Moreno's free covid tests attract thousands

Published 1 day ago on July 17, 2020 03:00 AM

By [Pat C. Santos](#)



Drive-thru Manila health workers collect blood samples from motorists in the newly-opened drive-thru COVID-19 testing area in front of the Kartilya ng Katipunan in Manila Thursday PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB DUNGO JR. FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE@tribunephil\_bob

Around a thousand motorists, mostly in motorcycles, took advantage of the drive-through COVID-19 tests offered free by the city of Manila on Thursday and caused traffic to slow in areas around city hall.

Motorists started queuing at the Kartilya ni Bonifacio public park as early as seven in the morning but the line snaked as far up as the United Nations Avenue.

But Manila mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso made sure the congregation of anxious motorists was properly managed by the Metro Traffic and Parking Bureau.

The popular civil servant earlier announced the purchase of brand-new covid test machines each capable of processing 250 tests daily.

Still, he acknowledged having been overwhelmed by the response to the free service extended even to non-Manila residents.

Moreno convened an emergency council meeting on Thursday and vowed to come up with a more orderly delivery of the service in 48 hours.

Previously, Moreno said the Architect plus i1000 SR machines donated by Abbott Laboratories offer 99.6 specificity and 100 percent sensitivity to the feared virus that effectively rules out so-called false negative and false positive results that usually accompany other rapid test kits.

He also committed extending the free service to all who need it, even to non-Manila residents as a form of support for other less endowed local governments.

"The pandemic is a universal problem. We (in Manila) want to be inclusive in our approach," Moreno said, noting that some three million non-residents visit Manila everyday.

The free drive-thru tests, is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and accept all motorists who need to fill out forms and present a valid government-issued identification.

Manila medical staff takes blood samples as quickly as five minutes from each motorist and results are known within 24 hours.

"While living, working, passing by or doing business in Manila, we want you to have that level confidence that you are healthy and at the same time to be responsible toward others by making sure you are not carrying the virus and may be transmitting it unknowingly. This service is for free," Moreno said.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/07/17/morenos-free-covid-tests-attract-thousands/>

# 1,841 new Covid-19 cases, total now at 63K: DOH

By Raymond Carl Dela Cruz July 17, 2020, 7:49 pm



**MANILA** – Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) infections continued to rise with 1,841 new cases reported by the Department of Health (DOH) on Friday, bringing the country's total to 63,001.

In its daily Covid-19 case bulletin, the DOH said majority of the new cases were reported from the City of Manila with 441 new infections, followed by Quezon City (140), Mandaluyong City (96), Cebu City (87), and the City of Navotas (86).

Of the total cases, it said 39,593 were active — the total number of infections without deaths and recoveries from Covid-19 — 90 percent of which were showing mild symptoms.

The rest, it said, were asymptomatic at 8.8 percent, severe at 0.4 percent, and critical at 0.4 percent.

More recoveries were reported at 311, bringing the total number of recoveries to 21,748.

About 17 deaths were also reported, bringing the country's total number of casualties at 1,660.

As of Thursday, it said a total of 1,009,511 individual tests for Covid-19 have been conducted since the pandemic began.

Meanwhile, its data also showed that the country remains to have sufficient capacity to take care of the infected.

Out of the country's 1,661 beds at intensive care units (ICU), it said 685 or 41.2 percent are currently occupied with the rest available.

For isolation beds, it said the country has a total of 10,410 — with 5,036 or 48.4 percent currently occupied.

Of the 3,477 ward beds, it said 1,985 or 57.1 percent are currently occupied.

The country's ventilators number 1,938, with 499 or 25.7 percent currently in use. (**PNA**)



## COVID-19 cases sa bansa, 63,001 na

July 17, 2020 @ 4:33 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Sa pinakahuling datos ng Department of Health, umakyat na sa 63,001 ang kumpirmadong kaso sa bansa dahil sa karagdagang 1,841 na bagong mga kaso.

Ayon pa kay Health Usec Maria Rosario Vergeire, mula sa nasabing karagdagang mga kaso, 710 dito ang fresh cases habang 1,131 naman sa late cases.

Umabot na rin sa 39,593 ang aktibong mga kaso ng COVID-19 sa buong bansa.

Ang mga resultang iniulat sa DOH ay mula 76 sa 84 na licensed laboratories sa bansa.

Nakapagtala rin ang ahensya ng 311 recoveries kung saan umakyat na rin sa 21,748 ang mga gumaling sa sakit.

May 17 naman na nadagdag sa mga namatay sa coronavirus kung kaya't pumalo na sa 1,660 ang kabuuang COVID-19 related deaths.

Mula sa nasabing bilang ng pumanaw, siyam dito ay nangyari ngayong July, isa noong June at tig-1 noong May at April.

Galing naman sa NCR ang siyam na nasawi, dalawa sa Region 11, mayroon ding apat sa Region 10, isa sa Region 7 at isa sa repatriate.

Ayon sa datos ang age range ng pumanaw sa sakit ay 33 hanggang 82 years old habang 10 o 58 percent sa mga nasawi ay nasa edad 60 pataas. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

UP, UST researchers predict 85,000 COVID-19 cases  
in PH by end-July

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# UP, UST researchers predict 85,000 COVID-19 cases in PH by end-July

By [Carolyn Bonquin, CNN Philippines](#)

Published Jul 17, 2020 10:48:07 PM



**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, July 17)** - The number of COVID-19 cases in the country may surge to at least 85,000 by end of the month, with a total of 2,000 deaths, according to the projection by a group of researchers from the University of the Philippines (UP) and University of Santo Tomas.

UP OCTA Research noted that this is a 15,000 to 25,000 increase from the initial projection of [60,000 to 70,000 cases by end of July](#).

The group calculated the possible number of additional infections based on the R naught, or the reproduction rate of the virus. This represents the number of people who may be infected by a confirmed case. Ideally, this should be one or less, as anything higher means there is still significant community transmission.

UP OCTA Fellow Professor Guido David said the projection has changed when the reproduction rate of the virus increased in the past two weeks.

From 1.28 back in June, the reproduction rate jumped to 1.75. David said a small difference in R naught could cause a big impact.

“It may seem like 0.3, 0.4 pero (but) this could cause change of tens of thousands of cases,” David said.

“The main factor is increased transmission, community transmission in NCR and also some new hotspots, emerging hotspots like parts of CALABARZON nagiging hotspots ulit (becoming hotspots again), sa Leyte, nagiging hotspots (becoming hotspots again). NCR is the main driver of this.”

## Metro Manila projection

The researchers also presented scenarios to the government—if Metro Manila will remain under the General Community Quarantine (GCQ), or if it will revert to Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ).

Under GCQ, UP OCTA said the cases in Metro Manila may reach 40,000 by end of July and over 80,000 by end of the following month. Death toll could hit 2,800 by August 31.

But Metro Manila’s Covid-19 cases could be less if it is placed under a stricter quarantine like the MECQ. Researchers said the reproduction rate could go down to 1.1 by end of July, resulting in 35,000 cases by end of the month and 56,000 cases with only 1,900 deaths by end of August.

Researchers also warned that lifting the quarantine will very likely increase the community transmission. Without restrictions, cases in Metro Manila will hit 45,000 this month and over 120,000 with 4,200 deaths by end of August.

UP, UST researchers predict 85,000 COVID-19 cases

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“Kasi (because) in Cebu the R was about 2, thirty days ago, at ngayon nasa 1.14 na (it is already at 1.14). So they’re close to flattening the curve. So the surge is not happening now in Cebu, it’s actually slowing down. The surge is happening in NCR,” David said.

“We presented two scenarios: GCQ but with deaths and then we can have the economy running, or MECQ, we’ll slow it down but the economy will be compromised a little bit.”

In an interview with CNN Philippines’ News.PH, David noted that restricting the movement of people is not the only way to fight the spread of the virus.

“We can solve this in other ways like having social cooperation. We all do our parts. Wearing face masks is important, it is not just a government advise, but it is important to protect ourselves and in case we carry the virus, it helps us not spread the virus to other people,” he said.

# Balancing act: Health and the economy

By: [Guillermo M. Luz](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:03 AM July 18, 2020

We have just finished our fourth month of quarantine, and the questions on everyone's mind are: "Is it safe to go back to work?" and "Are we getting any closer to opening up the economy?" Sadly, not quite yet. What has started as a public health crisis has evolved into an economic crisis and may escalate into a social crisis.

While there have been improvements introduced in the last three months, we are not yet out of the woods. We will need to muster greater coordination and cooperation to pull together to get us out of this problem. Opening up the economy safely to enable more people to regain their livelihoods and income will require a delicate balancing act.

Central to this will be our ability to test whether people are COVID-19 positive. In this regard, there have been improvements. Before Task Force T3 (for Test, Trace, and Treat) was formed on April 24, the entire country's testing capacity was only 4,500 PCR tests per day. Today, there are over 80 public and private labs operating with a combined capacity of roughly 80,000 tests per day. Last May, less than 9,000 actual tests were performed daily. That number now runs between 17,000 and 25,000 tests daily. There's plenty of room for expansion.

Two key developments should lead to wider testing. The first is a new Expanded Community Testing protocol recently released by the Department of Health. When capacity was low, testing was limited to those who were symptomatic, had exposure to a COVID-19-positive, or who had a travel history to a country with COVID-19. Medical frontliners were also given priority for testing. The new protocol now opens the door for nonmedical frontliners and asymptomatics to be tested.

The second development is Pooled Testing, the practice of pooling 5, 10, or 20 samples into a single test. If the pooled sample tests negative, then all persons in the pool are negative. If the pooled sample tests positive, then all persons in the pool will need to be tested individually. A protocol is being tested. If this is successful, this will reduce test costs and increase the number of people tested. Both developments would have an impact on opening the economy up safely.

More testing, however, will mean that we spot more cases. This has certainly been the case recently. One key number to look for is the "positivity" rate, or the number of positive cases as a percentage of tests given for that day. That number has been rising lately in some parts of the country, most notably Metro Manila and Cebu. Nationally, the positivity rate peaked at 23.8 percent back in April and dropped to average 8 percent up to this week. On a daily basis, however, in the last few days it has been running at 11.8 to 13.5 percent.

Expanded testing is just one aspect of the health equation necessary for enabling the safe opening of the economy. Contact tracing, quarantine and isolation, and treatment are also part of that equation. Of these three items, contact tracing needs the most work. There seems to be a disconnect between the good contact training practice of Baguio City (where direct and indirect contacts of positives are traced) and a recent announcement where police will go house-to-house in search of cases. Doesn't inspire confidence.

The bottom line is that for the economy to open up safely, the public—particularly workers—will need some reassurance that they will be safe. We can't afford to have the economy moving at this pace for much longer. All but two weeks of the second quarter this year has been under some form of quarantine. If Singapore's performance is any indication, its economy contracted almost 40 percent quarter-on-quarter and 12.6 percent versus year-ago levels. It's a level of loss we can ill afford. We will need to find a way to tackle this health crisis before we see it escalate into an economic and social crisis as well.

*Guillermo M. Luz is chief resilience officer of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation. Business Matters is a project of the Makati Business Club ([makatibusinessclub@mbc.com.ph](mailto:makatibusinessclub@mbc.com.ph)).*

Source: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/131873/balancing-act-health-and-the-economy>

## Testing clamor

posted July 18, 2020 at 12:40 am

Given the choice, any reasonable Filipino would want to be tested for COVID-19, especially if he or she is experiencing symptoms of the disease.

### **EDITORIAL**

**“Any reasonable person would want to know.”**

### **Testing clamor**

Knowing whether one has the coronavirus or whether the symptoms are caused by other illnesses is key to making choices on what to do next.

For example, would resting at home be enough, or does the need to physically see a medical professional outweigh the risk of going to the hospital and potentially getting exposed to the virus?

Should the patient recall everybody he or she has been with and warn them that they could possibly be infected, as well?

Certainty about one's condition does away with searching the internet and reading all sorts of articles that may simply increase one's stress levels.

It also removes the anxiety that one may have passed on the disease to friends, colleagues and loved ones.

However, despite the increased capacity for COVID-19 testing, many are still at a loss on where they could get themselves tested, how, and how much they have to shell out for their peace of mind.

Barangay leaders may be able to provide some guidance, but the test remains costly for the average Filipino, and often there is confusion as to the process between suspecting you may have the virus and actually getting tested for it. The agonizing wait for the results is another story.

Because of this, local governments who offer free testing for their constituents must be lauded.

Employers who provide free testing must also be acknowledged—this is the least they can do to help their people navigate these trying times. People are worried that they might lose their jobs, or that they may contract the disease, likely both. They should at least be free from the burden of paying for the knowledge.

We have neither flattened nor bent the curve, and the virus will not go away however we try to dismiss it or pretend that the threat is not there. The numbers continue to soar every day.

This is a fight that is far from over. The people need to know that they are not left to their own devices during these perilous days.



# Gov't entices W. Visayas residents to visit Boracay Island

Published July 17, 2020, 11:37 AM

by Genalyn Kabling

The government has encouraged Western Visayas residents to visit Boracay Island after authorities recorded a drop in tourism arrival amid the pandemic.



(MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said tourism operations are allowed to resume at half capacity in areas under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) like Boracay but subject to health measures to prevent any spread of the coronavirus disease.

The Boracay rehabilitation task force has approved Aklan local government's recommendation to reopen Boracay last June 16 but only for residents from the Western Visayas region in a bid to boost the local economy.

“So, pagdating po sa turismo, ang MGCQ po ay puwede na silang 50 percent capacity sa turismo bagamat kanina po eh pinadalhan ako ng aking mga kaibigan sa Boracay na nagpapakita na bagamat bukas na po ang Boracay sa turismo, napaka-kaunti pa rin po ng mga nagpupunta sa Boracay (On tourism, those in MGCQ are allowed to operate at 50 percent tourism capacity. I received information from my friends in Boracay that showed only a few people are going to Boracay despite its reopening for tourism),” he said during a televised briefing Thursday.

According to Roque, travel for tourism purposes is permitted between places under modified general community quarantine.

Under the government' guidelines on MGCQ, the movement of persons for any purpose across areas placed under MGCQ and areas where no community quarantine is in place shall be permitted.

Among the businesses and activities allowed to operate at 50 percent capacity in MGCQ areas are beaches, water parks and other tourist destinations, travel agencies, tour operators, karaoke bars, libraries, cultural centers, museums, gyms/fitness studios and sports facilities. For hotels and other accommodation establishments, only those accredited by the Department of Tourism and Department of Interior and Local Government may operate.

The country is largely under MGCQ, the least stringent lockdown level imposed by the government, until the end of the month.

Cebu City has been downgraded to modified enhanced community quarantine while Metro Manila kept its general community quarantine status. Other areas under GCQ are Laguna, Cavite, Rizal, Lapu Lapu City, Mandaue City, Ormoc City, Southern Leyte, Zamboanga City, Butuan City, Agusan del Norte, Basilan, Talisay City, and municipalities of Minglanilla and Consolacion in Cebu province.

# Mt. Bulusan continues to show abnormalities: Phivolcs

By Mar Serrano July 17, 2020, 2:54 pm



**LEGAZPI CITY** – The series of volcanic quakes that rocked Mount Bulusan in the past two weeks could be a precursor of a “phreatic” eruption, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) in Sorsogon province said on Friday.

In the past 24 hours, Phivolcs seismic instruments have logged 39 volcanic quakes causing hydrothermal pressure beneath the volcano’s edifice.

The latest reported volcanic earthquake event has brought to 228 the total number of earthquake episodes since the raising of Alert Level 1.

In a phone interview on Friday, Phivolcs resident volcanologist in Sorsogon, April Dominguiano, said the series of quakes could possibly lead to a “steam-laden or phreatic” eruption.

“This is normal for Bulusan under Alert Level 1 status,” Dominguiano said.

A phreatic eruption, a steam eruption without lava caused by groundwater mixing with heated magma, is a common precursor of volcanic activity.

She warned that if these quake episodes continue to intensify, Phivolcs could recommend the extension of the Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ) from 4 km. to 6 km.

The Phivolcs monitoring network has also observed bulging at the volcano’s middle to lower slopes due to hydrothermal pressure or magma intrusion.

Alert Level I (Abnormal) remained hoisted over Mount Bulusan, meaning the volcano continues to show signs of abnormal conditions.

When asked if there are plans to raise the alert status due to the intense signs being shown by the volcano, Dominguiano said there is no scientific basis to raise the volcano’s alert status.

“Historically, eruptive events normally happened during Alert level 1. The last recorded Bulusan eruption was on June 5, 2017 (when) it had a phreatic eruption,” she said.

On June 8, 2006, volcanologists raised Alert Level to 2 (moderate level of seismic unrest) after it spewed ash.

Bulusan has six crater vents around the main crater.

Entry into the 4-km. radius of the PDZ is strictly prohibited and vigilance within the 2-km. Extended Danger Zone (EDZ) in the southeastern sector must be exercised due to the increased possibility of sudden and hazardous phreatic eruptions. (**PNA**)

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1109281>



## Alert status ng Bulkang Mayon, ibinaba sa level 1

July 17, 2020 @ 11:52 AM 18 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Inanunsyo ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) na ibinaba na nito sa Level 1 ang alert status ng Bulkang Mayon mula sa Level 2.

Sa 9:30 a.m. bulletin nito, sinabi ng PHIVOLCS na may patuloy na pagbaba sa binabantayang parameters ng bulkan, katulad ng daily average ng isang pagyanigbsa nakaraang anim na buwan at mababang lebel ng sulfur dioxide emission.

“The overall low-level seismicity indicates that there is currently no active transport of eruptible magma to the shallow levels of the volcano,” pahayag nito.

Subalit nagbabala ang PHIVOLCS na ang pagbaba ng alert status ay hindi nangangahulugang bumaba na rin ang pag-aalburoto ng bulkan.

Kapag nagkaroon ng pagtaas muli sa alinman o sa pinagsama-samang parameters na binabantayan, maari ulit itong itaas sa Level 2.

Sa kabilang banda, kung mayroong kapansin-pansing pagbabalik sa baseline levels ng ground deformation at patuloy na low levels ng iba pang monitoring parameters, maaari pang bumaba ang Alert Level.

Nagpaalala ang ahensya sa publiko na hindi pa rin papayagan ang pagpasok sa six-kilometer Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ) dahil sa banta ng pagbagsak ng bato, ash puff, at biglaang steam-driven o phreatic eruption sa summit area.

Pinaalalahanan din ng mga ito ang mga nakatira sa lambak at aktibong river channels na maging vigilante sa sediment-laden streamflows at lahar. **RNT/MM**



# Mild tremor hits Davao del Sur

Published July 17, 2020, 9:20 AM

by Mike Crismundo

**BUTUAN CITY** – The Philippine Institute Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) recorded a magnitude-4.3 earthquake in Davao del Sur province on Thursday, July 16.

In its bulletin, Phivolcs said the epicenter of the tremor was spotted six kilometers southwest of Kiblawan town, Davao del Sur at 8:34 a.m.

The tectonic earthquake had a shallow depth of only 6 kms from the surface.

Intensity III was registered at the town proper of Kiblawan, in nearby Sulop, Hagonoy, Sta. Cruz and Digos City, all of Davao Del Sur while Intensity II also recorded in Kidapawan City, North Cotabato province.

In its Instrumental Intensities, Phivolcs also reported that Intensity II was registered in Kidapawan City and Malungon, Sarangani while Intensity I in Tupi, South Cotabato province.

Phivolcs said it was not expecting any damage or even aftershocks.



## ITCZ magdadala ng ulan, kidlat sa ilang bahagi ng bansa

July 17, 2020 @ 6:24 PM 12 hours ago

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

Sa 24-hour forecast nito, nagbabala ang weather bureau sa posibleng pagbaha o pagguho ng lupa kapag lumakas pa ang mga pag-ulan.

liral naman sa Metro Manila at sa nalalabing bahagi ng bansa ang pulo-pulong pag-ulan dahil sa localized thunderstorms. **RNT/MM**

# Elephant mystery: Botswana study shows sudden deaths

By [BusinessMirror](#)

July 17, 2020

The mystery of unexplained death of 356 elephants in northwest Botswana deepened, with a study of the carcasses of hundreds of the animals indicating a rapid demise.

Since early May, 356 elephants have been found dead in the Okavango Panhandle, Elephants Without Borders said in a report submitted to the Botswana government. Poaching has been ruled out as their ivory tusks have been left intact.

“Many carcasses were near natural waterholes,” according to the nonprofit group, which conducted an aerial survey by helicopter. “Elephant carcasses also occurred along trails and died in a sternal position on their chests, suggesting a fast and sudden death.”

With about 135,000 elephants, Botswana has the world’s biggest population of the animals.

Still, they have become a political issue, with President Mokgweetsi Masisi last year lifting a hunting ban and saying more needed to be done to stop the animals from damaging crops and occasionally trampling villagers.

That caused a global backlash from conservation organizations, including threats of travel boycotts. Tourism accounts for a fifth of Botswana’s gross domestic product.

Elephants Without Borders said its attempts to work with the government have been rebuffed. The organization confirmed the report but officials weren’t immediately available to comment.

“We reiterate our numerous efforts to support the Department of Wildlife and National Parks to address this escalating and concerning mass elephant mortality,” it said in the document. “Swift action and disclosure are needed to avert a potential public relations fiasco.”

## Not poisoned

The acting director of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Cyril Taolo, and the regional wildlife director in the area, Dimakatso Ntshebe, didn’t answer calls made to their mobile phones.

“Three laboratories in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Canada have been identified to process the samples taken from the dead elephants,” Botswana’s environment ministry said in a statement.

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The carcasses didn't show signs of poisoning as no dead vultures and other scavengers were seen nearby, the group said. The 97-page report contained photos of 187 elephant carcasses.

Elephants Without Borders also recorded a number of live elephants that "appeared to be weak, lethargic and emaciated," it said. "Some elephants appeared disorientated, had difficulty walking, showed signs of partial paralysis or a limp in their legs. One elephant was observed walking in circles, unable to change direction although being encouraged by other herd members."

*Bloomberg News*

Is nature conservation a drain or contributor to global  
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# Is nature conservation a drain or contributor to global economy?

By [BusinessMirror](#)

July 17, 2020

Carving out 30 percent of the Earth's surface for protection can be the wisest economic decision that the world will ever make as the nature sector drives the global economy, experts said.

The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HACNP), with the National Geographic Society's Campaign for Nature and the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), recently organized a webinar, titled "Making the case for protecting at least 30 percent of the planet by 2030: the biodiversity, climate, and economics of 30by30," that was attended by officials and representatives of the Asean member-states.

Campaign for Nature Director Brian O'Donnell gave a preview of the groundbreaking global report, which lays out the economic costs and benefits of protecting 30 percent of the planet by 2030.

The report on the comprehensive study, led by Anthony Waldron of Oxford University and 100 other experts, was published on July 8.

The zero draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which was released in January 2020, calls for the protection of 30 percent of the Earth's surface in 10 years, touted as "30by30."

"Most people think that protected areas are going to be a drain on the global economy. But this report showed that the nature sector is, in fact, a net contributor, not a drain," O'Donnell said.

The tourism sector, which includes nature-based tourism, is one of the drivers of global economic growth, outweighing the impacts of other sectors, such as agriculture, timber, or fisheries.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism was growing at 4 percent to 6 percent annually, while agriculture and timber industries have been growing by less than 1 percent and the fisheries sector posting negative growth, O'Donnell explained.

Besides these economic benefits, "30by30" also provides nonmonetary benefits, such as climate change mitigation, flood protection, clean water, and soil conservation.

O'Donnell said according to the report, which ran different scenarios of biodiversity conservation for terrestrial and marine areas, the financial and economic benefits of protecting 30 percent of the planet exceed its costs "by a factor of 5 to 1."

This means that for every dollar cost of nature conservation, the economic benefit is equivalent to \$5.

To meet the proposed target of protection, \$140 billion globally every year should be set aside.

## Small fraction of global GDP

Costa Rica Minister of Environment and Energy Carlos Manuel Rodriguez pointed out that while the figures sounded like a huge sum of money, the amount is a mere 0.16 percent of the global GDP, the combined gross national income of all the countries in the world.



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“There is no excuse for us not to mobilize resources to be able to achieve our goal in the next 10 years,” said Rodriguez, who has been selected as the next CEO and chairman of the Global Environment Facility.

The governments of Costa Rica and France are leading the HACNP, a grouping of nations championing for the proposed “30by30” global target.

Rodriguez said Costa Rica doubled the size of its forest cover and at the same time tripled its economic growth in 30 years.

“I come from a country that has systematically invested in policy development, institutional solutions that balance nature conservation, human well-being, and economic development,” he said, emphasizing the “short window of opportunity to address the biodiversity collapse.”

Rodriguez underlined the correlation between establishing ecotourism protected areas and efforts to restore degraded landscapes, and the growth of the country’s economy and income per capita.

In Costa Rica’s case, 2.5 million tourists visit the country every year and spend around \$3.5 billion in total, according to Rodriguez.

## Effective management

National Geographic Society Explorer in Residence Dr. Enric Sala, meanwhile, pointed the importance of effectively managing protected areas, saying only 5 percent of the world’s terrestrial protected areas and 1 percent of the marine protected areas are considered to be effectively managed.

“When protected areas have higher budget and number of personnel, and active and effective management, they not only restore biodiversity effectively, they provide benefits including jobs for local people through tourism, fisheries; they bring in more economic revenues,” Sala said.

In her opening remarks, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said the online discussion on the science and the rationale behind the proposed target will help the Asean region determine its own contributions to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and define its priority actions to ensure the agreed targets are met.

Lim noted that setting aside protected areas still remains as one of the most effective ways to tackle biodiversity decline.

“Although we are crafting the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, we are not reinventing the wheel. The Asean member-states, all of which are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, have shown considerable commitment to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, particularly Target 11, which calls for the protection of at least 17 percent of terrestrial and 10 percent of marine areas by 2020,” Lim said.

Professor Zakri Abdul Hamid, founding chairman of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, on the other hand, noted some of the challenges of biodiversity conservation in the Asean region, such as poaching, lack of conservation staff, the need for coordinated efforts in transboundary protected areas, and funding for conservation program. Zakri is also the co-chairman of Secretariat of Malaysia’s Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council.

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The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in its 15th meeting, which was originally scheduled to take place in October in Kunming, China.

The meeting is tentatively expected to take place during the second quarter of 2021, according to the announcement of the CBD Secretariat.

# World temperature now warmer; lifestyle changes now crucial

By [Ludwig O. Federigan](#)

New climate predictions released by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) a few days ago revealed that “annual global temperature is likely to be at least 1.0 degree Celsius warmer than preindustrial levels (defined as the 1850-1900 average) in each of the coming five years (2020-2024) and is very likely to be within the range 0.91 to 1.59 degree Celsius.”

The study titled “Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update” provides a climate outlook for the next five years and is updated annually. The annual report harnesses the expertise of internationally acclaimed climate scientists and the best computer models from leading climate centers around the world to produce actionable information for decision-makers, according to the press statement published in the WMO website.

It further revealed that there is a 20-percent chance that one of the next five years will be at least 1.5 degree Celsius warmer than pre-industrial levels and this chance is increasing with time. Moreover, there is a 70-percent chance that one or more months during the next five years will be at least 1.5 degree Celsius warmer than pre-industrial levels.

At this current time, we know that the Earth’s average temperature is already over 1-degree Celsius above the pre-industrial period. The last decade was the hottest ever recorded in human history. And 2015 to 2019 are the hottest five.

We also know that an increase in average temperature leads to an increase in the number of hot days that pose significant risks to human health especially to the most vulnerable members of society.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change agreed in 2016 to have a central objective to hold global average temperature increase to “well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels” and the new study shows the enormous challenge in meeting the goals of the agreement.

Drastic efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to achieve the principal objective of the Paris Agreement are urgently needed. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C released in October 2018 reinforced the need to urgently and drastically reduce GHG emissions in order to achieve the 1.5 degree Celsius target.

While we continue to wait for governments to collect their acts together, the importance of behavioral change as one of the solutions to climate change should be given emphasis. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Fifth Assessment Report (IPCC AR5) actually highlights the considerable influence of behavior, lifestyles and culture including consumption patterns and dietary changes on GHG emissions.

## Lifestyle changes now crucial, indispensable

Changes in consumption patterns and dominant lifestyles are a critical and integral part of the solutions package to addressing climate change, according to the Technical Report on 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Targets and Options for Reducing Lifestyle Carbon Footprints.

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Focusing our efforts to change lifestyles in relation to the three identified hotspots (domains) would have the largest impact. These are meat and dairy consumption (nutrition), fossil-fuel based energy (housing), and car use and air travel (mobility). The report said these are the major causes of climate change from the perspective of household consumption — contributing approximately 75 percent of our total lifestyle carbon footprints — and addressing these areas can be impactful in a low carbon lifestyle that is compatible with the Paris Agreement.

Small amount of meat and dairy consumption contribute a considerable portion in our footprints. Alternatively, the consumption of beans, vegetables and fruits, which are low carbon but can be nutritious food items, is relatively small.

Fossil-fuel based electricity, such as from coal and liquefied natural gas, and non-electricity fossil fuel use are major contributors to our footprints.

The high use of private vehicles is the largest contributor to our footprints, followed by flights.

Although the study focused on consumption patterns and how we can reduce our lifestyle carbon footprints, the report emphasized the need for actions from other related stakeholders such as the roles of governments and businesses, which are essential in shifting infrastructure and ensuring the continued availability of products and services.

National and local governments can improve public transport and promote cycling through low-carbon urban planning, as well as facilitate switching the energy supply system to renewables, the report cited. It added that taxation, subsidies and other policy instruments can be used to incentivize low-carbon lifestyles.

In one of the webinars that I attended on sustainable urban mobility, it was shared that only 12 percent Metro Manila's population have access to private cars as a mode of transportation and bicycles have become a necessity for most workers including frontliners.

In a separate gathering but on the same subject, a development executive said that in terms of climate impact, cycling is a good option for the economy and climate because it uses zero fuel and improves air quality. Also, the amount of carbon emissions that we can reduce through cycling is really substantial.

Furthermore, businesses can help increase numbers and types of low-carbon options such as for telecommuting, food loss reduction, alternatives to meat and dairy products, and other decarbonized product and service options, the report stated. There is also a need for the private sector to incorporate the 1.5-degree Celsius business model into their strategic planning and investment decisions.

As for us, citizens, we should start exploring opportunities to shift our consumption habits such as — in mobility by shifting to public transport, use of bicycles, reducing private car use and limiting air travel; in housing by investing in solar roof tops and efficient appliances and equipment; and in nutrition by adopting and transitioning to plant-based diets, reducing the consumption of meat and dairy, and eliminating food waste.

These suggestions may sound complicated at first, but when done dutifully and consistently, we can contribute to our collective efforts to save humanity.

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The Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update can be accessed and downloaded through this link: [https://hadleyserver.metoffice.gov.uk/wmolc/WMO\\_GADCU\\_2019.pdf](https://hadleyserver.metoffice.gov.uk/wmolc/WMO_GADCU_2019.pdf).

The Technical Report on 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Targets and Options for Reducing Lifestyle Carbon Footprints can be accessed and downloaded through this link: <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/pub/15-degrees-lifestyles-2019/en>.

*The author is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum and a non-resident fellow of Stratbase ADR Institute. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom) and executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University (USA). He was one of the Climate Reality Leaders selected globally to mentor during The Climate Reality Leadership Corps Global Training last July 18 to 26. He can be emailed at [ludwig.federigan@gmail.com](mailto:ludwig.federigan@gmail.com).*

Museums preserve specimens to help scientists predict,  
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# Museums preserve specimens to help scientists predict, analyze pandemics

By [BusinessMirror](#)

July 17, 2020

In less than 20 years, communities around the globe have been hit by a string of major disease outbreaks: SARS, MERS, Ebola, Zika and now, Covid-19.

Nearly all emerging infectious diseases in humans originate from microorganisms that are harbored by wildlife and subsequently “jump,” either directly or indirectly—for example, through mosquitoes or ticks—to humans.

One factor driving the increase in zoonotic disease outbreaks is that human activities—including population growth, migration and consumption of wild animals—are leading to increased encounters with wildlife.

At the same time, genetic mutations in viruses and other microbes are creating new opportunities for disease emergence.

But humans remain largely ignorant of our planet’s biodiversity and its natural ecosystems.

Only 2 million species—about 20 percent of all the estimated species on Earth—have even been named.

In our view, this fundamental ignorance of nearly all aspects of biodiversity has resulted in an inefficient, poorly coordinated and minimally science-based response to key aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have diverse backgrounds in plant and mammal evolution and emerging infectious diseases.

In a newly published commentary that we wrote with colleagues from across the US and in six other countries, we identify a largely untapped resource for predicting future pandemics—natural history collections in museums around the world.

These collections preserve specimens of animals, plants and other organisms that illustrate the diversity of life on Earth. They are reservoirs of information and samples that can help scientists identify likely pathogen sources, hosts and transmission pathways.

We believe that leveraging collections in this way will require more resources and more collaboration between biodiversity scientists and disease outbreak sleuths.

## Archives of life on Earth

Research shows that zoonotic diseases have increased due to human intrusion into animal habitats.

In particular, destruction of tropical rain forests throughout the world has brought us face to face with microbes that occur naturally in wild animals and can cause disease in our own species.

Earth’s biodiversity is connected through a family tree. Viruses, bacteria and other microbes have evolved with their hosts for millions of years.

Museums preserve specimens to help scientists predict,  
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As a result, a virus that resides in a wild animal host—such as a bat without causing disease—can be highly pathogenic when transmitted to humans.

This is the case with zoonotic diseases.

Unfortunately, national responses to disease outbreaks are often based on very limited knowledge of the basic biology, or even the identity, of the pathogen and its wild host.

As scientists, we believe that harnessing centuries of biological knowledge and resources from natural history collections can provide an informed road map to identify the origin and transmission of disease outbreaks.

These collections of animals, plants and fungi date back centuries and are the richest sources of information available about life on Earth. They are housed in museums ranging from the Smithsonian Institution to small colleges.

Together, the world's natural history collections are estimated to contain more than 3 billion specimens, including preserved specimens of possible hosts of the coronaviruses that have led to SARS, MERS and Covid-19.

They provide a powerful distribution map of our planet's biodiversity over space and through time.

## Preserved pathogens

How can researchers channel these collections toward disease discovery?

Each specimen—say, a species of pitcher plant from Florida or a deer mouse from arid New Mexico—is catalogued with a scientific name, a collection date and the place where it was collected, and often with other relevant information.

These records underpin scientists' understanding of where host species and their associated pathogens are found and when they occurred there.

Connecting the site of a disease outbreak to potential pathogen hosts that occur in that area can help to pinpoint likely hosts, sources of pathogens, and pathways of transmission from hosts to humans and from one human to another.

These natural history collections are connected worldwide through massive online databases, so a researcher anywhere in the world can find information on potential hosts in far-off regions.

But that's just the beginning.

A preserved specimen of a rodent, a bat or any other potential host animal in a collection also carries preserved pathogens, such as coronaviruses.

This means that researchers can quickly survey microbes using specimens that were collected decades or more before for an entirely different purpose.

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They can use this information to quickly identify a pathogen, associate it with particular wild hosts, and then reconstruct the past distributions and evolution of disease-causing microbes and hosts across geographic space.

Many collections contain frozen samples of animal specimens stored in special low-temperature freezers.

These materials can be quickly surveyed for microbes and possible human pathogens using genetic analysis.

Scientists can compare DNA sequences of the pathogens found in animal specimens with the disease-causing agent to identify and track pathways of transmission.

For example, museum specimens of deer mice at the University of New Mexico were key to the rapid identification of a newly discovered species of hantavirus that caused 13 deaths in the southwest United States in 1993.

Subsequent studies of preserved specimens have revealed many new species and variants of hantaviruses in other rodents, shrews, moles and, recently, bats worldwide.

## Equipping museums and connecting scientists

Natural history collections have the potential to help revolutionize studies of epidemics and pandemics. But to do this, they will need more support.

Even though they play a foundational role in biology, collections are generally underfunded and understaffed.

Many of them lack recent specimens or associated frozen tissues for genetic analyses. Many regions of our planet have been poorly sampled, especially the most biodiverse countries near the tropics.

To leverage biodiversity science for biomedical research and public health, museums will need more field sampling; new facilities to house collections, especially in biodiverse countries; and expanded databases for scientists who collect the samples, analyze DNA sequences and track transmission routes.

These investments will require increased funding and innovations in biomedical and biodiversity sciences.

Another challenge is that natural history curators and pathobiologists who study the mechanisms of disease work in separate scientific communities and are only vaguely aware of each other's resources, despite clear benefits for both basic and clinical research.

We believe now is the time to reflect on how to leverage diverse resources and build stronger ties between natural history museums, pathobiologists and public health institutions. Collaboration will be key to our ability to predict, and perhaps forestall, future pandemics.

***Pamela Soltis/The Conversation***

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/07/17/museums-preserve-specimens-to-help-scientists-predict-analyze-pandemics/>