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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

Mining firms mobilize P402M for Covid-19 aid

By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#)

July 27, 2020

The Philippine mining industry has raised P402 million from its Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) to help combat the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic in the country, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reported.

In a statement over the weekend, the DENR said mining firms have pooled together the remaining funds for their respective SDMP to assist their host and neighboring communities during the community quarantine imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19.

To date, the mining sector has extended assistance to more than 1.4 million households and frontliners across the country.

The DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) reported that as of July 8, some 1.2 million households have been provided with food packs, and vegetables and garden kits through the relief fund.

This exceeded the initial target of around 1.184 million beneficiaries by more than 16,000, the MGB said.

On top of this, the MGB said that close to 210,000 frontliners have been provided with personal protective equipment and medical supplies.

Acting MGB Director Wilfredo Moncano had authorized mining companies to realign their unutilized SDMP funds to help the national government in its fight against Covid-19.

“The SDMP fund has components that can be sacrificed and realigned to respond and assist the clamor of the government and the community for assistance,” Moncano said, adding that 90 percent of the pooled SDMP funds have been utilized so far.

Based on DENR Administrative Order 2010-21 or the Consolidated Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act 7942 or the “Philippine Mining Act of 1995,” mining companies are required to allocate at least 1 percent of their annual operation cost to their SDMP to assist host and neighboring communities and develop mining technology and geosciences.

With the supervision of MGB regional offices, mining companies nationwide simultaneously conducted a series of relief operations and donated medical equipment, including rapid Covid-19 testing kits.

The companies also provided logistical support such as service ambulance, trucks and boats to affected communities within their jurisdiction.

Moncano said the initiative, which has already benefited millions of individuals, was a result of “common agenda and objectives.”

“I am glad that through the collaboration of MGB and the mining companies, we were able to give assistance to our local government units and communities hosting mining operations,” he added.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/07/27/business/companies/mining-firms-mobilize-p402m-for-covid-19-aid/746431/>

Mining sector reports P402M COVID relief fund

July 26, 2020 By [Joel dela Torre](#) [People's Journal](#)

MINING firms pooled together their remaining funds for the crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and gathered the P402 million relief fund that were given to over 1.4 million households and frontliners nationwide.

According to the Philippine Mining Industry (PMI), the aid they shared are the remaining funds for their respective Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) intended for the host and neighboring communities during the entire quarantine period to contain the spread of the deadly virus.

Acting Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) director Wilfredo Moncono authorized the PMI to realign their unutilized SDMP funds to help the national government in its fight against COVID-19.

MGB, a line bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that oversees and regulates the mining sector, reported that as of July 8, some 1.2 million households have been provided with food packs, vegetables and garden kits through the relief fund.

This exceeded the initial target of around 1.184 million beneficiaries by more than 16,000, the MGB said.

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About 90 percent of the pooled SDMP funds have been utilized so far.

Mining companies are required under DENR Administrative Order 2010-21 to allocate at least one percent of their annual operation cost to their SDMP to assist host and neighboring communities and in developing mining technology and geosciences.



Explained

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Allowing mining companies suspended, closed by ex-Sec. Gina Lopez will yield "more revenues" - DENR Usec. Benny

Content Contributor: Jerico Alba

Information from: GMA News

See: [https://www.gmanetwork.com/.../mining-could-generate-.../story/...](https://www.gmanetwork.com/.../mining-could-generate-.../story/)

Allowing some mining companies earlier suspended or closed by the late former Environment Secretary Regina Lopez could help generate much-needed revenues for the government to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, a top official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

"Kailangan natin ang mining ngayon dahil sa sitwasyon natin," DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said in an interview on Dobol B sa News TV.

"Alam naman natin malaki rin ang nakukuha nating revenue dito sa mining na ito," Antiporda said.

The DENR official, however, could not provide an estimate how much the government could earn from mining.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, on Thursday, confirmed that some mining firms closed or suspended by Lopez in her controversial industry-wide environment audit would be allowed to resume operations after onsite inspections and reviews found that the miners have rectified their violations and complied with corrective measures.

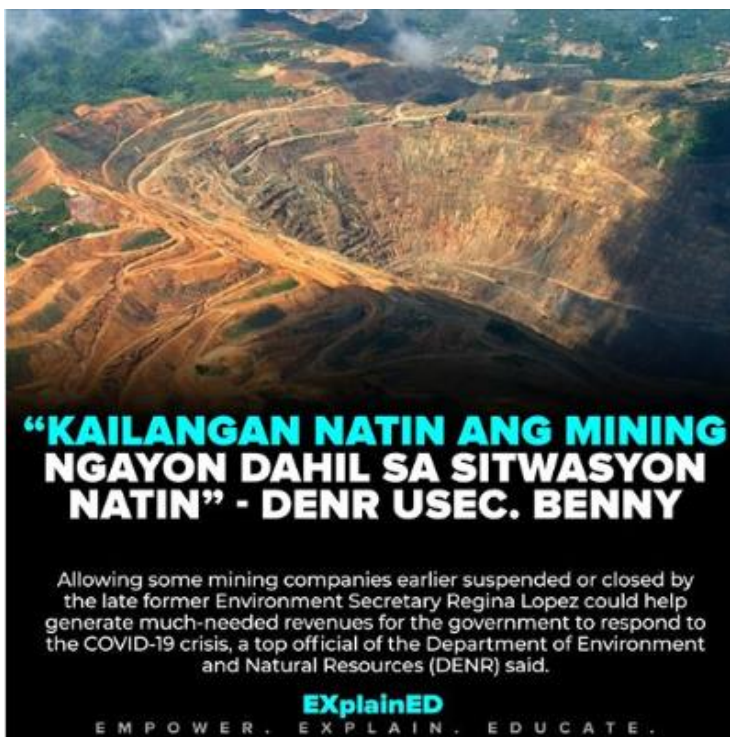
Antiporda said that while the mandate of the DENR was to ensure the preservation of the environment, the agency was also concerned how it could help the economy.

In 2017, Lopez, a staunch anti-mining advocate, ordered the closure and suspension of the mining activities of 26 firms as a result of the DENR's environmental audit.

In 2018, the DENR, under Cimatu, reviewed the closure and suspension orders of Lopez. He validated the suspension of AAMPFIL Natural Resources and Exploration and Development Corp., Carrascal Nickel Corp., Emir Mineral Resources, Krominco Inc., Libjo Mining Corp., Mt. Sinai Exploration and Development Corp., Strong Built Mining Development, Wellex Mining Corp. 1&2, and Zambales Diversified Metals Corp.

Cimatu also affirmed the closure of Claver Mineral Development Corp., Ore Mining and Development Corp., and Oriental Synergy Mining Corp.

The environment chief, during the Laging Handa briefing, assured that only those that rectified their violations and complied with corrective measures will be allowed to re-open their mine sites.



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In a forum, BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno said the price of gold in the world market continued to rise and “ it is about time” to reopen the shuttered mining companies.

STAR/File

BSP backs reopening of mining firms

[Lawrence Agcaoili](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 27, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) supports the reopening of mining companies shut down by the late environment secretary Gina Lopez as the government continues to beef up its foreign exchange buffers to protect the economy from external shocks.

In a forum, BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno said the price of gold in the world market continued to rise and “ it is about time” to reopen the shuttered mining companies.

Gold prices closed at a record high of \$1,900 per troy ounce as other safe assets such as benchmark government bonds have become less attractive as the pandemic deepens.

The BSP chief said gold accounts for about 10 percent of the country’s gross international reserves (GIR). Aside from helping beef up the foreign exchange buffer, Diokno said the resumption of mining operations could help augment the government coffers.

Diokno sees an increase in the central bank’s gold purchases this year as sales by small-scale miners are now exempted from paying excise and income taxes.

He also said there has been a pickup in gold purchases from small-scale miners after President Duterte signed Republic Act 11256 or an Act to strengthen the country’s Gross International Reserves last year.

The GIR is the sum of all foreign exchange flowing into the country and serves as buffer to ensure that it will not run out of foreign exchange that it could use in case of external shocks.

Diokno said the country’s GIR may reach an all-time high of \$ \$97 billion this year after reaching a record \$93.32 billion as of end-June.

The end-June figure is equivalent to 8.4 months’ worth of imports of goods and enough to cover 7.3 times the country’s short-term external debt based on original status.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) plans to reopen some of the mining companies to contribute to the struggling economy battered by the ongoing pandemic.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said operations of some of the mining companies would be allowed to resume after a complete review and audit.

“An audit was conducted by technical experts. There were recommendations made for the companies. They complied and applied corrective measures,” Cimatu said during a virtual press conference after the pre-State of the Nation Address forum earlier.

Lopez ordered the closure and suspension of 26 mining companies for alleged violation of environmental standards, including the Philippine Mining Act.

The inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council chaired by Cimatu ordered the review of the closure and suspension orders of the mining firms in 2018.

Environment tourism, revamp

Published 44 mins ago on July 27, 2020 06:10 AM

By [Maria Romero](#)



A year after President Rodrigo Duterte issued his marching order to rehabilitate major tourism spots in the country, a lot still needs to change. Some of his promises related to the protection and preservation of the environment made during his State of the Nation Address (SoNA) last year still hang in limbo.

“I am giving due notice to the LGU and other stakeholders, kayo po, of tourist destinations to take extra steps in the enforcement of our laws and the protection of our environment,” Duterte said last year.

“For the other tourist destinations, needing urgent rehabilitation and enforcement of environmental and other laws shall soon follow,” he added.

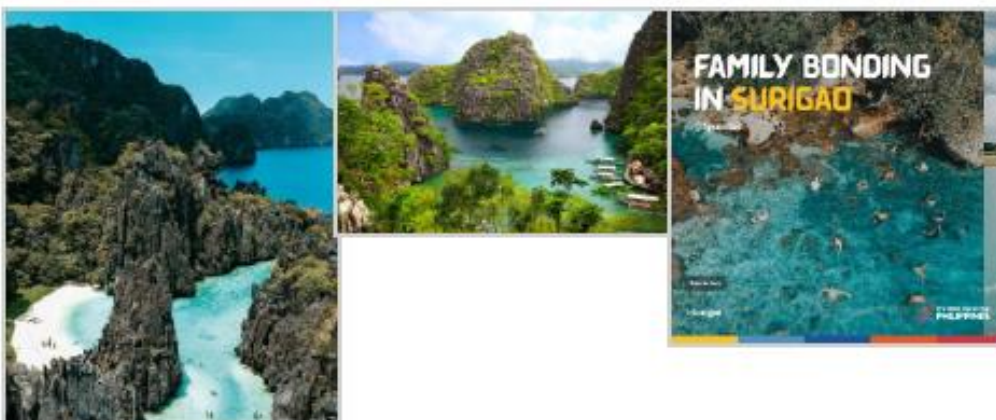
Less than a week after the order, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu declared three “no-swim” zones in El Nido due to high coliform count, though the beach was allowed to remain open amid ongoing rehabilitation efforts.

Cimatu also identified five priority ecotourism sites in various stages of rehabilitation efforts in El Nido, Palawan; Panglao, Bohol; Siargao, Surigao del Norte; and Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ordered the review and assessment of the environmental impacts of businesses in the aforementioned areas, as well as each location’s carrying capacity.

Last January, the DENR, Department of Tourism (DoT), and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) met to discuss updates on the supposed Baguio City rehabilitation program.

Significant efforts have also been put into developing renewable energy sources, rehabilitating Manila Bay and priority tourist destinations, and distributing land to indigenous communities in some provinces, especially in Boracay.



According to Conde Nast Traveler, Boracay went from being tagged by the President as a “cesspool” to bouncing back as the leading top Asian island destination last year. Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force head Cimatú said they remain on track to complete rehabilitation by May 2021.

However, the Duterte administration failed again to deliver on promises to pass a national land use act and to create a disaster agency, as well as the rehabilitation of the Carmona Sanitary Landfill and the Laguna Lake.

With the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic, both the tourism and environment sectors took a hard beating and even the government is unsure of when they will recover.

Recuperating losses

According to the DoT, the Philippines is projected to lose about P42.9 billion in revenues between February and April alone due to the pandemic. This was based on the government’s data over the past three years.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said the DoT will promote multi-destination and summer packages as soon as the outbreak calms down to recover the foregone revenues.

Puyat said the department has been working closely with major airlines to introduce more discounted accommodation rates, marked-down prices for domestic flights, and value-added tour packages.

The DoT, with a budget of about P14 billion for tourism recovery projects approved before the coronavirus pandemic, is currently hard at work in response to Covid-19’s heavy toll on the economy.

Puyat said a significant portion of the fund was set aside for the “ongoing projects, while others are in various stages of pre-procurement and procurement.”

Puyat cited the infrastructure and rehabilitation projects in Bohol, Pampanga, Iloilo, Corregidor Island, Pangasinan, Baguio City, Palawan, Puerto Galera, and other tourist spots.

“This crisis will pass but our sector is badly hurt. We must find ways to shorten the tourism industry’s recovery path while generating jobs in the meantime,” Puyat noted.

These ongoing and incoming projects are expected to provide thousands of jobs for Filipinos this year.

The regional tourism development plans also receive some P900 million in funding to “identify the tourism infrastructure needed to ensure sustainable development as well as promote the disaster resilience of tourist areas.”

P1.7-B rehab of Manila Zoo starts

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:14 AM July 26, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — The rehabilitation of the shuttered Manila Zoo — which was tagged a major pollutant of Manila Bay by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources — began on Saturday, the 61st anniversary of the zoo.

Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso led the groundbreaking ceremony of the revival of the decades-old attraction on Adriatico Street in Malate.

The rehabilitated zoo would feature a big cat enclosure, a Philippine endemic marsupial exhibit, a monkey enclosure and a restaurant. The P1.7-billion project is set to be completed in 19 months.

—*Nikka G. Valenzuela*

Barili to include dolphin watching, ATV adventure in
its tourism offering

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Barili to include dolphin watching, ATV adventure in its tourism offering

By: [Rosalie O. Abatayo](#) Multimedia Reporter - CDN Digital July 26, 2020



Dolphin watching is among the new new tourism offerings that the town of Barili will be offering as the province reopens its tourism industry. (Contributed Photo/ Barili Tourism Office)

CEBU CITY, Philippines — The sightings of dolphins off the coast of Barili town in the southwestern part of Cebu will be its newest tourism offering, along with all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails, as the town prepares to establish itself as an ecotourism destination in the province.

In a statement, the town said that with the continued sightings of dolphins in the waters of Barangays Japitan and Hilasgasan, the dolphin-watching activity would soon be offered as an “added experience” to ecotours travel.

Barili’s coast is part of the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, the body of water between Cebu province and Negros Island that has rich biodiversity.

Tañon Strait is also known to be a habitat for cetaceans and large marine mammals. |

The dolphin sightings begin from about 30 minutes after departing the wharf of Barangay Japitan, Garcia said.

The mayor said it the municipal tourism team two months to determine the spot where the spinners and Fraser’s dolphins appeal.



The dolphins that have been sighted in the waters off Barili town include the spinners and the Frasers dolphins. (Contributed Photo/Barili Tourism Office)

Municipal Tourism Officer Victor “JR” Vergara, in a site tour last Saturday, July 25, said the dolphin sightings that day were of many firsts.

Barili to include dolphin watching, ATV adventure in
its tourism offering

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Vergara said it was the first time that the dolphins began to show up within only five minutes from the boat's departure from the wharf.

“In our previous experiences, they come in two to four groups but this time, we counted at most eight groups,” Vergara said in Cebuano.

Vergara estimated that there are about 200 dolphins that show up in the municipal waters.

Mayor Garcia said the town is crafting a resolution to establish the guidelines for the balancing of ecotourism, economic opportunity, and conservation of the protected seascape.

Vergara, on the other hand, said frontliners for the tourism activity were set to be trained under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR-7) environmental management specialists this coming July 30 to 31.

“This will help our tourism team and guides to understand better the dos and don'ts in dolphin watching. We do not want to mess up with environmental regulations. Mao sad ni nga dili pa ni nato madali-dali og open to our tourists kay gusto nato nga i-comply from ordinance to permits, aron nga dili gyud ta makaligis og mga balaud sa protection aning mga dolphins,” Vergara said.

(We do not want to mess up with the environmental regulations. That is the reason we cannot just open it quickly to our tourists because we want to comply with all the requirements from ordinance to permits so that we will not violate laws on the protection of the dolphins.)

Vergara added that a marine biologist would also be a part of the tourism key staff to further improve their research, documentation, and information awareness on dolphins.

As the province is already under the modified general community quarantine since last July 10, the town's ATV Adventure offering is now open.

The all-terrain vehicle adventure is in the town's Barangay Nasipit covering a total of 12 kilometers of rough road, mud, cliff and limestone wall, and with a vantage view of Tañon Strait and the western skyline where picturesque sunsets can be seen.

The Barili ATV Adventure costs from around P600 to P800 per head depending on the level of difficulty. There are three phases to the finishing line which is at the Bangaglapus Cave, another tourist spot in the municipality.

The two new tourism offerings in the town are added to its other tour packages including “beachineering” experience in Sayaw and a sightseeing in Mantayupan Falls.

Tourism activities in the province, under Governor Gwendolyn Garcia's Executive Order No. 20-A, are availed through the online booking system that is now being developed by the Capitol./dbs



ABS-CBN News

10h ·

TINGNAN: Isang disposable face mask ang nakita sa ilalim ng dagat sa Mabini, Batangas ng divemaster at underwater photographer na si Danny Ocampo noong nakaraang linggo habang nagsasagawa ng clean up drive.

"Kinunan ko siya ng picture, tapos shinare ko bilang panawagan na sana 'yung gumagamit ng disposable facemask ay itapon nila nang mas maayos 'yung kanilang mga facemask or kung pwede lang gumamit sila ng mga reusable facemask," ani Danny Ocampo. | Ulat ni April Magpantay, ABS-CBN News



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Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/absbnNEWS/photos/a.84382255167/10158630530400168/?type=3&source=48>

Appointment with destiny

Published 6 hours ago on July 27, 2020 12:07 AM

By [Francis Wakefield](#)



LEADER with a purpose. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MALACAÑANG

Four years into his presidency, Rodrigo Duterte is making his penultimate address before Congress today with the highest mandate ever for a Philippine leader tucked under his belt.

Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCCO) Secretary Martin Andanar called on Filipinos to watch or listen to today's speech, which he said will be Mr. Duterte's most important yet.

"This is where Filipinos would know where the Chief Executive will take them in the next months amid the pandemic."

"We are making an appointment with destiny," he said.

"This is probably the most important SoNA in the last 50 to 60 years. Maybe this is the SoNA that people should watch and listen to because the future of each and every Filipino is at stake," he added.

"The Chief Executive will explain to us, how the country will rise from the suffering caused by the virus, how the government will assure overseas Filipino workers can return to countries they left as a result of the pandemic and most of all, the strategy for families to be able to have three square meals a day," Andanar said.

"This is the SoNA which will tell us how we can heal and move as one nation," he added.

Wellspring of gains

Through Mr. Duterte's leadership, the government has attained countless of achievements in various aspects in governance and provision of services to the people.

Two weeks ago, the Philippines defied the global trend of weakening economic standing after Moody's Investors Service affirmed its Baa2 or two notches above investment grade with a stable outlook on the country.

The country kept a stable outlook despite the quarantine measures in response the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that constricted movement of the population and derailed the strong growth potential.

Last June, the Japan Credit Rating Agency (JCR) even upgraded the country's credit rating to A- from BBB+ with a stable outlook.

Nonetheless, the fifth SoNA today will center on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Andanar disclosed.

At least 35 lawmakers will physically be at the House of Representatives for the SoNA.

According to a source, 27 members of the House of Representatives and three House officials will walk on the red carpet at Batasang Pambansa on Monday afternoon.

As of Sunday afternoon, the House members who will personally hear Duterte's address on Monday are House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, Majority Leader Martin Romualdez, Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante, Deputy Speakers Paolo Duterte, Aurelio Gonzales Jr., Johnny Pimentel, Luis Raymund Villafuerte, Rannie Abu, Dan Fernandez and Rodante Marcoleta.

High mandate

A more relevant gauge on the President's performance is the approval and trust ratings that both remained at all-time highs.

According to a Pulse Asia survey done in December of last year, Duterte's approval rating improved to 87 percent or nine percent higher from the previous quarter which is 78 percent. His trust rating, on the other hand, soared to 83 percent.

Meanwhile, the last Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey conducted on him which was also done in December, showed a satisfaction rating of 82 percent.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both Pulse Asia and SWS was unable to conduct their March and June surveys on the Chief Executive.

As proof to the President's stratospheric ratings, those that he endorsed during the midterm elections last year won considerable number of seats in both chambers of Congress, thereby increasing the likelihood of the President's pro-people reforms and laws be supported and passed at the soonest possible time.

No sacred cows

There are also no sacred cows in the administration as President Duterte fired military and high officials in the government for corruption or incompetence, even including his longtime friends and allies.

The Road Board was abolished through Republic Act 11239 which was signed by the President on 19 March 2019 due to allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds.

The President was also able to suspend all gaming operations with franchises, licenses or permits granted by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, such as Small-Town Lottery, Keno and Peryahan ng Bayan, pending the investigation of illegal activities and corrupt practices.

The Palace has also responded to all letters addressed to Malacañang by referring them to various departments, offices or agencies for immediate action. It also launched hotlines for emergencies (911) and citizens' complaints (8888), and reduced government spending by prohibiting the use of luxury cars and air travels in business class and scrapping junket foreign travels of government officials.

Service selfless

President Duterte has also proved and demonstrated time and time again that he is committed to the protection of the Filipino people and has staked his presidency, and even his life, in ensuring their general welfare through selfless public service.

Accordingly, faced with this new virus strain and its unpredictable and unprecedented nature, the President did not gamble with the lives of the Filipino people in dealing with the situation. The President issued a travel ban against travelers coming from Hubei and anywhere in China where there is a spread of COVID-19 in a timely manner – on the 31st of January, or the day after the country confirmed its first positive case of the virus.

He then imposed travel restrictions against people departing for and arriving from other countries with high cases of COVID-19. He also swiftly implemented strict and effective measures, including the imposition of community quarantine and strict social distancing protocols.

The government has established many quarantine centers which include the Philippine Arena Complex, Philippine Sports Complex, ASEAN Convention Center, Filinvest Tent, New Clark City Convention, Ninoy Aquino Stadium, PICC Forum, the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, World Trade Center Manila and Alonte Sports Arena. All these were built during the community quarantine.

The country, at present, have 69 certified COVID-testing laboratories all over the Philippines.

Landmark legislations

President Duterte has also signed landmark pieces of legislation and executive measures in the past three years, such as free tuition in state universities and colleges, free irrigation for farmers, free internet access in public places, institutionalization of feeding programs for public school students, free medicine and financial support to indigent patients, anti-hospital deposit law, mandatory PhilHealth coverage for persons with disabilities, and prohibition on illegal labor subcontracting resulting in the regularization of hundreds of thousands of workers.

In 2019 alone, the Chief Executive has approved more key legislative measures like the Universal Healthcare Act, Mobile Number Portability Act, the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave, the Magna Carta for the Poor, the Student Fare Discount Act, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, the SagipSaka Act, the Murang Kuryente Act and the National Integrated Cancer Act.

Peace and order

The Chief Executive also remained faithful to his campaign promises and continues to be adamant in his resolve to curb the illegal drug industry and apparatus in the country. With his firm messages against big and small-time drug lords, there have been voluntary surrenders in the thousands from drug users and pushers. Drug addicts have been given a chance to mend their ways.

Record show that more than 18,000 barangays across the country have already been cleared from illegal drugs; at least 18,582 out of the 42,045 barangays (villages) in the country have been declared drug-cleared as of 31 March; a total of 9,164 high-value targets (HVT) were arrested from 1 July 2016 to 31 March 2020; and authorities also arrested 235,030 individuals involved in illegal drugs during the said period.

President Duterte has likewise initiated strategies and measures to thwart the local communist rebellion from spreading as well. He, too, halted the spread of extremist ideas in the local soil, as well as those flourishing from different parts of the globe.

In addition, President Duterte, as Head of State, has pursued an independent foreign policy and removed our country's subservience to the West. Notable effects of which are the return of the historic Balangiga bells from the United States, and the reshipment of trash back to Canada, while improving our relations with all other countries, such as Russia, China and those belonging in the Southeast Asian region.

with HANANEEL BORDEY
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The coronavirus disease 2019, which has infected more than 80,000 people in the Philippines and has dragged the country into an economic recession, will be the dominant theme in Duterte's penultimate report to the nation.

Presidential photos/File

Duterte's SONA to focus on pandemic recovery

[Alexis Romero](#) (The Philippine Star) - July 27, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Measures to revive the pandemic-battered economy, and the bill that aims to help sectors affected by lockdown restrictions, are among the expected highlights of President Duterte's fifth State of the Nation Address that he will deliver today before a limited live audience.

The coronavirus disease 2019, which has infected more than 80,000 people in the Philippines and has dragged the country into an economic recession, will be the dominant theme in Duterte's penultimate report to the nation.

"According to his directive... only the important things should be included in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) because we are under a COVID-19 crisis. So most of the topics will be about COVID-19," Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Martin Andanar told radio station dzRH in Filipino yesterday.

"We are making an appointment with destiny," Andanar said. "We will know the message and where President Duterte intends to lead us to fight COVID-19 and to recover from the sufferings it caused."

Because of lockdown measures that limited business activity, the Philippine economy contracted by 0.2 percent in the first quarter, the first negative growth since El Niño and the Asian financial crisis in 1998. Officials have also predicted an economic slump in the second quarter, a scenario that will bring the economy in a recession, or two consecutive quarters of gross domestic product contraction.

Officials previously said the President would unveil a COVID-19 recovery map, which contains measures designed to spur economic activity while preventing the further spread of the virus. One of the recovery measures being eyed is the Bayanihan 2 bill, an extension of a law that granted Duterte emergency powers to respond to the pandemic.

"I'm sure since he (Duterte) will talk to Congress, he will seek the help of Congress in terms of the passage of Bayanihan To Heal As One Act phase two. Phase two will focus on balancing health and economy," Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles told radio station dzBB last Saturday.

While the first phase of the law focused on the immediate response to COVID-19, the second phase would zero in on reopening the economy and providing employment and aid to affected industries like transportation, tourism, micro, small and medium enterprises, he added.

Another recovery measure being considered is a stimulus package that will boost domestic demand but details are still being finalized. Presidential spokesman Harry Roque previously said the government can only spend up to P140 billion for the package, noting that state revenues have taken a hit due to the closure of thousands of businesses.

Palace readies back-up plan

The 75-year-old Duterte would deliver his SONA at the Batasang Pambansa "as planned," Malacañang said this weekend, even if the number of persons at the House of Representatives who have caught COVID-19 continues to rise.

Unlike previous addresses which had jam-packed audiences, only about 50 lawmakers and 15 Cabinet members will be allowed inside the venue to ensure safe distancing. The President, lawmakers, guests, and members of the technical staff will also be required to undergo swab tests as a precautionary measure.

"The difference now is we are under a new normal. It won't be the usual address that we see every year," Andanar said.

"The PSG (Presidential Security Group) is really very strict. We know that the President is a senior citizen and some senior citizens have caught COVID-19. So we have to take care of the health of all senior citizens," he added.

The PSG shall reportedly have the final say as to where the SONA will be held.

While preparations in Batasan have been threshed out, officials are not discarding the possibility that the President would have to deliver his address in Malacañang.

"The agreement was there would be same day swabbing. There's a type of swabbing wherein you would know the result in 45 minutes. If someone tests positive, there's a huge chance that we would go to option B, we will just hold it in the Rizal Hall (in Malacañang)," Andanar said.

"If the address is transferred to Malacañang, fewer people can attend. Instead of 25 each from the Senate and House and a few cabinet members, the attendees will be fewer," he added.

Another plan would be for the President to give his SONA at the Malago guest house inside the PSG compound to limit the number of people in close proximity to the President.

Other plans have also been laid out with the concerned personnel of the PSG, Presidential Photographers Department, Radio Television Malacañang and other agencies properly deployed.

The PCOO has organized Zoom viewing rooms for Cabinet members to prevent crowding at the Batasan. Separate rooms will be dedicated to local governments, youth leaders and overseas Filipino workers.

Despite the changes in physical arrangements, Andanar said guests would still be required to wear formal attire or Filipiniana "out of respect for the State of the Nation Address."

Cops on full alert

Philippine National Police (PNP) Deputy Director for Operations Lt. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar yesterday said the police organization has not detected any threats to public safety and to that of the President, noting that all security preparations have been laid out.

The only threat that the PNP said it was wary of was the pandemic, he said.

“The only threat that we have is the COVID threat. Our challenge now is the pandemic we are facing. That’s why it will be the point of our focus,” Eleazar said in an interview aired over dzBB.

PNP spokesman Brig. Gen. Bernard Banac also assured the public that the “peace and order situation now is very stable and crime rates are low.”

Groups have expressed their intention to mount protests today inside the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City after the government barred them from holding their traditional SONA rallies on Commonwealth Avenue, the highway that leads to Batasang Pambansa where Duterte is expected to deliver his SONA.

The PNP had said that the protests inside the university were allowed as the government “respects academic freedom.”

Banac assured the groups mounting protests that police would only be detailed outside the premises of the university.

“But in public spaces, no one is really allowed to do protests. Our local governments did not issue permits,” Banac explained.

Metro Manila police chief Maj. Gen. Debold Sinas – who earlier landed in hot water for breach of quarantine protocols, particularly on mass gatherings – bared last Friday a memorandum from the Department of the Interior and Local Government that reiterated the ban on mass gatherings in light of the upcoming SONA.

Banac said the ban on mass gatherings was imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, especially considering the “critical stage” of Metro Manila, noting how some hospitals have started to declare full capacity in their COVID-19 wards.

The protesters expected to flock to UP Diliman today, according to Banac, have been directed to observe health protocols. Eleazar said the Quezon City Police District was in constant talks with the protesters.

“We are deferring the implementation (of safety protocols) to the organizers. It is their responsibility to maintain health safeguards,” he added when asked if arrests would be made during the protests.

Eleazar, also commander of the Joint Task Force COVID Shield, said around 5,400 PNP personnel would be deployed in Quezon City and around 1,900 more personnel would be coming from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and AFP Joint Task Force-National Capital Region. – **Edith Regalado, Neil Jayson Servallos**

EDITORIAL - SONA sa panahon ng pandemia

(Pilipino Star Ngayon) - July 27, 2020 - 12:00am



Ngayon ang ikalimang State of the Nation Address (SONA) ni President Rodrigo Duterte. Hindi malilimutan ang SONA na ito sapagkat inihayag sa panahon na nagdaranas ang bansa sa bangis ng coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) na lubhang nakaapekto sa mamamayan. Mara-ming nawalan ng trabaho at nakakaranas ng gutom sa kasalukuyan. Sa loob nang mahigit apat na buwan mula nang manalasa ang COVID-19, binago nito ang mga dapat ay sasabihin o iuulat ng Presidente sa bayan.

Maaaring ang mga sasabihin ngayon ng Presidente ay may kinalaman lahat sa nananalasang pandemia. Magbubuhos siya nang atensiyon sa problemang ito sapagkat ito ang nagpapahirap sa bansa at wala nang iba.

Maaaring ilalahad niya ang mga balak ng pamahalaan para malutas ang mga problemang dulot ng pandcmia. Mga mahahalagang gagawin kung paano ibabangon ang lumuhod na ekonomiya. Maaaring ilahad din ang mga solusyon kung paano maipagpapatuloy na mabigyan ng ayudang SAP ang mga nagugutom na mamamayan at paano ito maipapamamahagi nang maayos.

Nakita ang kabiguan sa pamamahagi ng ayuda sapagkat marami ang hindi nakatanggap. Marami rin naman ang nakurakot sa pinamahaging SAP. Pawang mga barangay official at pamilya nito ang nakinabang.

Inaasahan din naman sa SONA ngayon na bubuo ng batas para masigurong mayroong kahandaan sa pandemia gaya nang nararanasan ngayon. Kung mayroong batas ukol dito, hindi kakapa-kapa ang pamahalaan na kung kailan nariyan na ang pandemia saka nagkukumahog. Nasa pintuan na ng bansa ang salot pero wala pang hakbang na ginagawa. Hinintay pang dumami ang problema saka lamang kumilos.

Sana, magawa ang mga ito para hindi na ma-ging kawawa ang mamamayan. Magkaroon na sana nang matibay at tiyak na plano sa panahon ng krisis.

Phl Red Cross explains testing price

Published 3 hours ago on July 27, 2020 02:50 AM

By [Michelle R. Guillang](#)



The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) so far offers the cheapest reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test or more commonly known as swab testing for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the country, its chairman Sen. Richard Gordon stated on Sunday.

COVID-19 testing at the PRC costs P3,500, which is lower than testing in other testing centers which can reach as high as P12,000.

Gordon clarified that the PRC only charges P3,500 per test for its partnered local government units (LGU) such as Quezon City, Mandaluyong, Caloocan, Parañaque, Makati, San Juan, Las Piñas, Navotas and Pasay through an existing memorandum of agreement.

This cost does not yet include collection of swab samples as he explained that the said price is exclusive for LGU or organizations who have already taken the swab samples within their jurisdictions.

Meanwhile, private individuals who intend to get tested at a PRC facility itself will be charged higher.

It will cost them about P4,000 per test as medical technologists from the PRC have to perform both the collection of swab samples and the actual testing.

However, this price is still lower than the cost of COVID-19 testing at other public and private facilities which range from P3,600 to P12,000.

Lee Seung Eun, Director of PRC Fund Generation and Business Development, stressed that the PRC is a non-governmental and self-sustaining organization which would require payments to fund the processing of swab samples needed for COVID-19 testing.

Lee compared the processing of COVID-19 tests at PRC to its blood bank where the donated blood gets tested to check if this would be safe to be transfused to the patient needing it.

“We have to make sure the blood is free from any diseases like malaria and HIV. Like in COVID testing, there are operational costs for the part of Red Cross,” Lee said.

She explained that PRC also needs to pay for the electricity consumption of the machines from PRC’s molecular laboratories like the PCR, Natch, computers and biomedical freezers.

Source: https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/07/27/phl-red-cross-explains-testing-price/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=phl-red-cross-explains-testing-price

Transparency for COVID situation urged

Published 4 hours ago on July 27, 2020 02:10 AM

By [MJ Blancaflor](#)



The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has called for “transparency and openness” in the government’s reporting of COVID-19 situation inside jails following the reported deaths of persons deprived of liberty (PDL) due to respiratory illness.

In a statement, the CHR underscored that the disclosure of information on the PDL deaths would allow government agencies to establish safeguards in prisons to prevent more deaths.

The commission also vowed to probe the complaints it had received from families of PDL, saying it has a Constitutional mandate to exercise visitorial powers over detention facilities to ensure the protection of prisoners’ human rights.

“Public interest in the face of alleged deaths of high-profile inmates due to Covid-19, necessitates disclosure of relevant information about their deaths — both in the interest of justice, as well as in crafting sensible ways forward in preventing further deaths in prisons and detention facilities,” the CHR said.

“Devising or improving strategies to mitigate the spread of the virus becomes all the more imperative and, in this case, it is crucial to understand where the existing protocols and initiatives might have failed to curb the spread of the virus,” it added.

The statement came after nine high-profile inmates — including Jaybee Sebastian who was known for running a prison gang and was allegedly involved in the illegal drug trade — have died of COVID-19 inside the New Bilibid Prison.

The Bureau of Corrections has refused to release the names of all prisoners who died of the respiratory disease, citing the Data Privacy Act. The National Privacy Commission, however, said the law was not applicable on information regarding public figures like high-profile inmates.

The CHR said it has yet to receive a response from the Department of Justice after it asked the agency for a list of PDL confined at Site Harry, the BuCor’s isolation facility for COVID-19 patients.

Cases rising to UP experts' danger level

posted July 27, 2020 at 01:30 am

by [Rey E. Requejo and Maricel V. Cruz](#)

Health officials reported 2,110 new cases of COVID-19 Sunday, bringing total infections to 80,448.



The total number of cases is just a little less than 4,600 short of the 85,000 cases estimate of UP experts by August 1.

The UP forecast represents a danger level as it will place Metro Manila under tighter lockdown protocols, raising the level from General Community Quarantine to Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine.

As of Sunday, Metro Manila had the most number of new cases at 1,345, followed by Cebu province with 304, Laguan with 109, Negros Occidental with 66 and Rizal with 40.

The Department of Health said there were 39 more deaths, bringing total fatalities to 1,932.

On the other hand, 382 new recoveries were reported, bring the total number of patients who recovered from COVID-19 TO 26,110.

This left 52,406 active cases in which patients were being treated or placed under quarantine.

Of these cases, 89.83 percent were mild, 9.25 percent were asymptomatic, 0.49 percent were severe and 0.42 percent were critical.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), meanwhile, said more than 102,000 Filipinos abroad have been repatriated since the Philippines recognized the public emergency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

These consisted of 43,893 sea-based Filipinos (42.8 percent) and 58,626 land-based Filipinos (57.2 percent) who were stranded or lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

Last week alone, 12,022 overseas Filipinos were brought home from the Netherlands, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

In the House, a lawmaker called on senators to pass three measures that would help Filipinos adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deputy Speaker and Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte was referring to House Bill (HB) 6864 prescribing a 'whole-of-society' approach to strict mandatory safety and physical distancing protocols, HB 1248 on e-government and HB 1297 authorizing cash agents to help serve the banking needs of people in faraway villages without banks.

"Our senators could help Filipinos best adapt to the new world order by passing their own versions of these three House-approved measures, more so now when the World Health Organization (WHO) itself is bracing for a protracted pandemic and has called on countries to safeguard against what it called 'a new and dangerous phase' of the COVID-19 contagion," said Villafuerte.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said earlier there will be no return to the "old normal" for the foreseeable future, as the world is now in "a new and dangerous phase" with countries starting to reopen their societies and economies even as the virus is still spreading fast.

For Tedros, the pandemic has already changed the way people live their lives and that part of adjusting is “finding ways to live our lives safely.”

Villafuerte said that these three measures acted upon by the House before the Congress adjourned sine die last June 5 would equip Filipinos to live their lives safely over the next year at the least, when a vaccine or cure for COVID-19 is not expected to be developed yet for commercial production and sale.

COVID-19 cases sa bansa, pumalo na sa 80,448

July 26, 2020 @ 4:31 PM 15 hours ago



Manila, Philippines – Pumalo na sa mahigit 80,000 ang kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa batay sa pinakahuling datos na inilabas ngayong July 26 ng Department of Health (DOH).

Sa datos, karagdagang 2,110 ang naidagdag sa mga kaso dahilang para umakyat na sa 80,448 ang kabuuan.

Ang nai-report na kaso ay galing sa 66 mula sa 90 current operational laboratories.

Mayroon namang 382 bagong recoveries sanhi upang maging 26,110 na ang mga gumagaling sa sakit sa bansa.

Karagdagang 39 deaths naman ang naitala kaya umabot na sa kabuuang 1,932 ang mga binawian ng buhay sa coronavirus.

Sa 39 na ito, 35 (90 porsyento) ay nangyari ngayong July, 2 (5 porsyento) noong June at 2 (5 porsyento) pa noong April.

Mula naman sa NCR ang 17 na pumanaw o 44 porsyento, 14 sa Region 7 (36 porsyento) at 2 naman sa Region 4A (5 porsyento), Region 9 na may 2 (5 porsyento), Region 11 na may 2 (5 porsyento), Region 1 at CARAGA na may tig-1 (3 porsyento).

Nasa 74 duplicates naman ang tinanggal mula sa total case count.

Sa nasabing bilang, 22 ang nakarekober at 3 ang pumanaw ang inalis.

Bukod dito, na-update rin ang mga kinalabasan ng tatlong (3) kaso.

Ang isa ay naiulat na namatay ngunit na-update na nakarekober at dalawang kaso ang naiulat na nakarekober ngunit na-update bilang pumanaw matapos ang validation at sila ay nakasama na sa bilang ng mga bagong nasawi at nakarekober.

Ayon sa DOH, ang nasabing mga numero o bilang ay dumaraan pa sa paglilinis at validation. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

Six areas in five Cebu City barangays placed under
lockdown

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Six areas in five Cebu City barangays placed under lockdown

By: Delta Dyrecka Letigio - Multimedia Reporter - CDN Digital|July 25,2020 - 09:22 PM



An area in Barangay Labangon is also under lockdown. This is from Balaga Drive to Sitio Cecalco. | CDN file photo

CEBU CITY, Philippines — Six sitios or areas in five barangays in Cebu City have been placed under lockdown by Mayor Edgardo Labella on Saturday, July 25, 2020.

Labella reposted the copy of his Executive Order No. 85 detailing the guidelines of the granular lockdown, or sitio-targeted lockdowns in the barangays on Saturday evening, hours after the documents were prematurely posted.

The affected areas remain the same including Sitio Eyha in Barangay Guadalupe, Balaga Drive to Sitio Cecalco in Barangay Labangon, Tuada Compound in Barangay Tisa, Sitio San Isidro and Abellanosa Compound in Barangay Quiot, and C. Mina Extension of Barangay Mabolo.

The lockdown has been set before the reposting of the EO No. 84.

The Regional Inter-Agency Task Force in Central Visayas (RIATF-7) has decided to place the affected areas on lockdown prior to revealing them to the public to ensure that the residents remain calm prior to the lockdown.

This will make the closing of the areas easier for the Philippine National Police (PNP), Armed Forces in the Philippines (AFP), and barangays to implement the order.

Labella has ordered a stay-at-home order for all residents in the sitios under lockdown and even the Authorized Persons Outside Residence (APORS) are not allowed to leave.

The lockdown may run from 3 to 14 days depending on the cases being monitored in the sitio or until the active cases and his or her contacts prove negative to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

All households will be provided provisions as well, not food packs, but food supplies such as rice, canned goods, meat, vegetables, fish, and seasoning.

For areas where the water supply is low, the city government assures they will be provided with enough water by deploying water tankers.

Six areas in five Cebu City barangays placed under

TITLE: lockdown

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“All individuals within the areas under strict lockdown are prohibited from leaving their residences. The City Government will distribute food packs and other necessities to all families affected,” said Labella.

While the areas are under lockdown, the contact tracers will be going around to swab the residents as well especially those living nearest to or within the vicinity of the active case.

The barangay will designate entry and exit points as well to ensure that the movement of government workers, police, and contact tracers are smooth in the area.

The lifting of the lockdowns will be ordered by the mayor in concurrence with the RIATF-7. Other barangays may also request or order for their own lockdowns if a positive case is confirmed in an area./dbs

Time for Phl economy to be on offensive mode

Published 13 hours ago on July 26, 2020 04:43 PM

By **TDI**



TAX reform measures will boost the economy ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic, suggested a lawmaker.

The national government must resort to “offensive” strategies that will focus on revitalization to reverse the economic downturn the coronavirus pandemic has triggered.

Economic opportunities are created by attracting new industries and investments, jobs and opportunities, streams of revenue and approaches to boosting market confidence.

“The government should be on attack and not on the defensive mode,” said Albay (2nd district) Representative Joey Salceda.

To be on the offensive side, Salceda called anew for the enactment of the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act, which has long been pending in Congress, and the implementation of the enhanced “Build, Build, Build” program.

Salceda issued a 34-point manifesto aimed to help President Duterte’s defeat COVID-19 program and rescue the economy, points which the Chief Executive are expected to be included in fifth State of the Nation Address (SoNA) on Monday.

“These times call for courage. We cannot defeat this virus, nor the slump it has created in the economy, by hiding. We have done what are necessary to keep this pandemic from growing exponentially,” Salceda said.

Despite serious constraints and limitations of our own means, epidemiological models suggest we may have prevented as much as much as 3.5 million infections by taking the necessary lockdown measures, noted Salceda.

“We cannot defeat the economic recession which will very likely happen, by trying to stop change,” said Salceda. “We can’t save every job. The economy has changed too much, but we can try to create more than one new job for every old job lost. And we can train people to fit these new jobs.”

Moody’s Investor Service recently maintained its “Baa2” rating, in effect since December 2014, for the Philippines’ long-term local and foreign currency issuers and senior unsecured debts. Outlook was maintained at “stable” despite downgrading 18 other countries and revising outlooks to “negative” for 27 others.

Baa2 means a “high ability or acceptable ability to repay short term debts.”

The credit rating is seen as a vote of confidence on the country’s strong macroeconomic fundamentals amid unprecedented collapse of the global economy due to the health crisis.

Salceda said Moody's report cites "proposed changes to the Foreign Investments Act, the Public Service Act and the Retail Trade Liberalization Act, as well as the remaining thrusts of the government's Comprehensive Tax Reform Program" as reforms they are watching.

As principal author of the reform measures, Salceda said "we have to keep thinking hard about how to improve our systems and how to build an ecosystem that is conducive to economic innovation."

He emphasized that the latest development is a sign that the Philippines will "bounce back very strongly" from the pandemic, but these "fundamentals are not enough in a country's long-term prospects, and reversal of reforms that have supported prior gains in economic and fiscal strength would also likely lead to a downgrade."

'PHL must fortify health system via higher budget'

By [Cai Ordinario](#)

July 27, 2020

The Philippines should increase its spending on health care to cope in a post-Covid-19 world, according to a director of the Philippine College of Surgeons.

In a webinar on Friday, Dr. Manuel Francisco T. Roxas, who is also an advisor of Ayala Corp. unit ACHealth, said health expenditures should increase to around 8 percent to 12 percent of GDP.

In 2018, Roxas said total health expenditures only amounted to 4.6 percent of GDP. This already represented a growth of 8.3 percent.

“What do we see beyond the Covid-19 pandemic? Now understanding what the pandemic has exposed, we do need to increase total health expenditures by 2 to 3 times the current level, perhaps to 8 to 12 percent of GDP,” Roxas said.

The additional resources will help the country implement the Universal Health Care (UHC) Law and boost primary care services.

Roxas said there is a need to strengthen the capabilities of Department of Health (DOH) particularly in its ability to orchestrate hospital response and allocate health-care manpower.

He also said the DOH should have more resources to improve and increase critical care facilities and programs after the pandemic as well as in terms of testing, contact tracing, data gathering and analytics.

Roxas said more resources should be set aside for the creation of specialty hospitals for continuity of care for high-mortality conditions like cardiovascular, renal, cancer, and neurologic diseases, “which have been sidelined during the pandemic.”

The pandemic, he said, exposed the problems of the Philippine healthcare system such as the lack of centralized and coordinated inter-hospital response.

Roxas noted there is a limited capacity for testing and contact tracing. The pandemic, he said, posed a significant strain on hospital manpower resources, supply-chain delivery, and finances.

No water disconnection till end-Sept

By ... -July 27, 2020



The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) said the two water concessionaires in Metro Manila will be asked to hold the issuance of disconnection notices until the end of September to ease burden of consumers reeling from the impact of the new coronavirus disease 201-19.

Emmanuel Salamat, MWSS administrator, said the extension of the reprieve from August as originally planned was “decided by the board” and “is already effective.”

However, MWSS-Regulatory Office (MWSS-RO) chief regulator, Patrick Ty, said he has yet to receive a formal copy of the decision that was finalized during a July 9 board meeting.

“This is good news for consumers, but I can only implement that if I have a copy of the board resolution,” Ty daid.

He said there has not been any water rate adjustment for this year except for the quarterly foreign currency differential adjustment.

Laban Konsyumer Inc. earlier issued an appeal to the MWSS-RO that water rates should have gone down at the beginning of this year as part of the consumer price index (CPI) adjustment, which happens every January.

Ty said CPI adjustment as well as the supposed adjustments under rate rebasing were both deferred in January.



Magnitude-5.5 quake hits parts of Mindanao

Published July 26, 2020, 12:36 PM

by [Antonio Colina IV](#)

DAVAO CITY – A magnitude 5.5-earthquake jolted parts of Mindanao on Sunday morning, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Based on its earthquake bulletin released at 11:25 a.m., the epicenter was plotted at 96 kilometers east of Manay, Davao Oriental, and had a depth of 101 kilometers.

The earthquake was tectonic in origin.

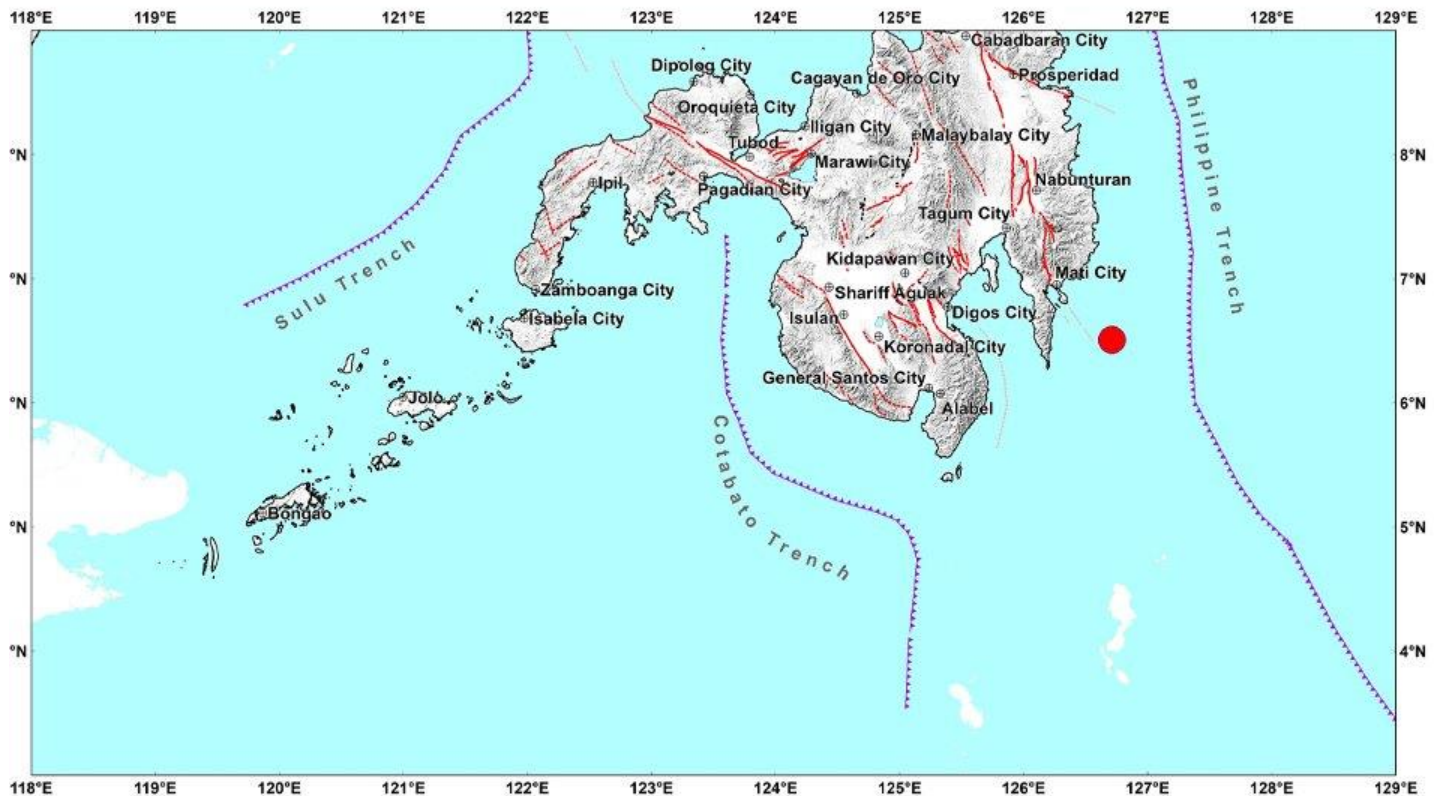
Intensity III was felt in Malungon, Sarangani; Intensity II in Alabal and Kiamba, Sarangani; Intensity I in Koronadal City and Tupi in South Cotabato.

Phivolcs said aftershocks are expected.

Magnitude 5.6 quake strikes off Davao Oriental

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Jul 26 2020 12:40 PM



MANILA - A magnitude 5.6 earthquake struck off Davao Oriental on Sunday morning, Phivolcs said.

The tremor struck 81 kilometers southeast of Manay town at 11:12 a.m., state seismologists said.

It was tectonic in origin and had a depth of 59 kilometers, according to Phivolcs.

"Weak" shaking at Intensity III was felt in Manay town, while it was "slightly felt" at Intensity II in Davao City, Phivolcs added.

The following instrumental intensities were reported:

- Intensity III - Malungon, Sarangani
- Intensity II - Alabel, and Kiamba, Sarangani
- Intensity I - General Santos City; Koronadal City, and Tupi, South Cotabato

The tremor was not expected to cause damage but may spawn aftershocks.

Australia kampi sa US: China iligal pag-angkin sa dagat

By Abante News Online — Last updated Jul 26, 2020

FEATURED NEWS



Photo courtesy of [histresshadow.wordpress.com](https://www.histresshadow.wordpress.com)



Sinuportahan ng Australia ang Amerika sa pagsasabing walang legal na basehan ang South China Sea claims ng China.

“Australia rejects China’s claim to ‘historic rights’ or ‘maritime rights and interests’ as established in the ‘long course of historical practice’ in the South China Sea,” sabi sa pahayag ng Australia sa ulat ng Al Jazeera.

LOOK: Photographer captures rare image of leopard
and black panther couple in forest

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LOOK: Photographer captures rare image of leopard and black panther couple in forest

INQUIRER.net / 06:12 PM July 26, 2020

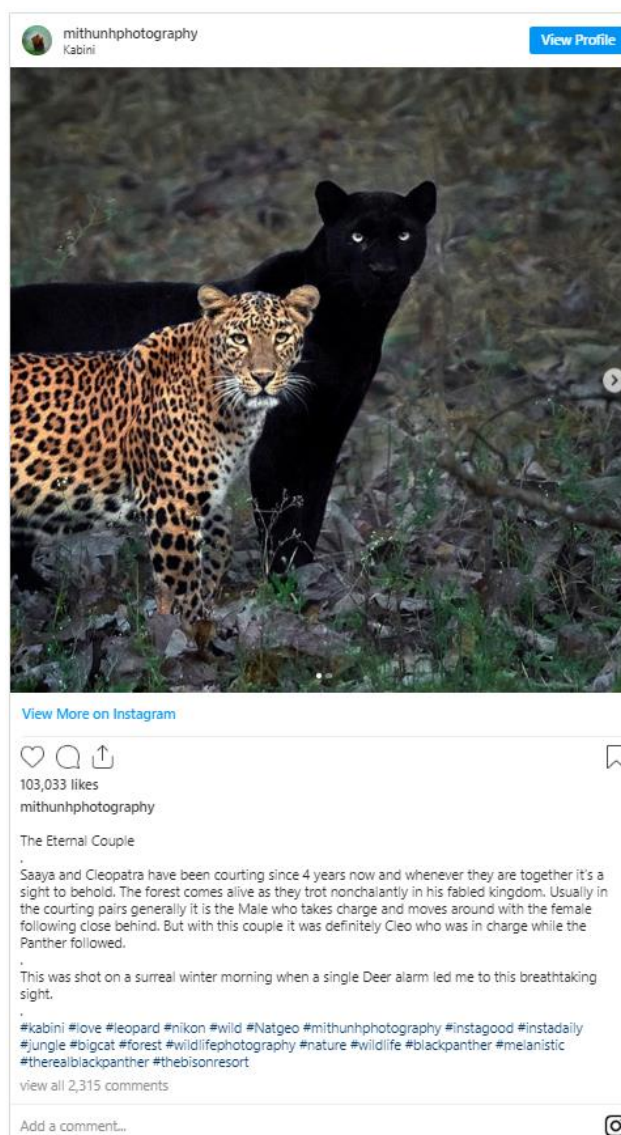


The black panther Saaya and leopard Cleopatra. Image: Instagram/@mithunphotography

A photographer managed to take a rare photo of a leopard and black panther walking together in a forest in Karnataka, India.

The photographer, referred to as Mithun H, captured the awesome moment at the Kabini Forest Reserve during the winter season last year, as per *The Indian Express* yesterday, July 25.

The image shows the black panther standing behind the leopard while they face the camera, as seen on Mithun's Instagram page on July 19.



LOOK: Photographer captures rare image of leopard
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Mithun dubbed the photo as “The Eternal Couple”, explaining that the leopard named Cleopatra, and Saaya the panther, have been courting for already four years.

“Usually in the courting pairs generally it is the [m]ale who takes charge and moves around with the female following close behind,” he noted. “But with this couple it was definitely Cleo who was in charge while the [p]anther followed.”

Mithun later told the publication that he stayed in the same spot for six days to capture the image. He noted that he could hear the two animals mating about 100 meters away but could not spot them due to limited visibility.

“They had made a large kill and would not move until it was over,” Mithun, with 12 years of wildlife photography, explained.

Following the successful hunt of the couple, Mithun waited at a spot at the edge of the panther’s territory where the male feline would take the leopard after consuming their prey.

“It was a fruitful wait though,” Mithun said in the report. “I could wait for [six] years for a moment like this.”

He also pointed out that Cleopatra has been in the reserve since 2009 while Saaya arrived in 2014 “as a [sub-adult] shy cat trying to establish territory.” However, the two only began courting when Saaya finally managed to assert his dominance in 2016. Mithun has been following the two animals since.

While Mithun has already photographed the couple in the past, he stated that it was the animals’ gaze into the camera that made the said image go viral.

Mithun has also worked with *National Geographic* on the documentary “The Real Black Panther”, as per report, which centers on Saaya and his life in the reserve. **Ryan Arcadio/JB**

Your used mask needs to make it to the trash can

Marie Fazio, The New York Times

Posted at Jul 26 2020 07:34 AM

Helen Lowman looks at litter a lot. It's her job. But while walking her dog in Westport, Connecticut, in March, she noticed an alarming trend. First she passed some dirty wipes on the ground. Then there were gloves. And finally a mask. Four months later, she said the litter of personal protective gear has only gotten worse.

As more people wear masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, more personal protective equipment, or PPE, has been found as litter around the world.

The issue has prompted environmental organizations, including the Environmental Protection Agency, to sound the alarm. Some local governments, like Suffolk County in New York, have instituted fines for littering involving masks and gloves, and police departments, like the one in Swampscott, Massachusetts, have warned that improperly discarding PPE is a crime.

"This pandemic is causing the face of litter to change," said Lowman, chief executive of Keep America Beautiful, a nonprofit group that organizes cleanups. "We're seeing a real shift in what is in the litter stream."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that the general public wear reusable cloth face coverings, but disposable masks are readily available; a pack of 50 can be purchased for around \$30.

Experts say the risk of catching coronavirus from a discarded mask is minimal, but the litter is causing concern for other reasons: Used masks and gloves, which cannot be recycled, pose a problem for the environment.

OCEAN TRASH

Disposable masks and gloves aren't necessarily better or worse than any other kind of litter, according to experts.

Like other waste, a mask could be mistaken for food by wildlife. Or a heavy rain could wash it into a storm drain or a river and eventually the ocean, posing a risk for marine ecosystems.

"It's quite alarming where these are ending up," said Gary Stokes, founder of OceansAsia, a marine conservation group. "It's not just the beaches. We're getting them out in nature, but also downtown; you see them on the streets, in the gutter, on public transport."

In February, on a routine trip to the uninhabited Soko Islands off the coast of Hong Kong, Stokes collected around 70 masks along roughly 100 yards of beach.

"We've seen it already with whales and turtles with plastic bags, and with masks it's the same thing," he said. "Another piece of trash for the next generation."

Like drinking bottles, fast-food containers and other plastic material that ends up in the ocean, masks collect algae, attracting small fish that in turn attract larger fish, he said. A dolphin or whale could mistake a mask for food, and the mask could get caught in the animal's digestive tract, which could result in death.

Over time, plastics in the ocean can break down into smaller particles known as microplastics. Those particles become coated in toxic substances and are eaten or absorbed by marine life and could eventually make their way into human food, experts say.

Around 8 million metric tons of plastics enter the ocean annually, according to research, and environmentalists fear that PPE litter, as well as more home delivery packaging, will worsen the situation.

A University College London study found that if everyone in the United Kingdom wore a new disposable mask every day for a year, it would result in 66,000 metric tons of plastic waste, plus 57,000 metric tons of packaging.

After seeing an alarming number of masks washed ashore over the last few months, Stokes and his team have been advocating for reusable masks: "We're all starting to realize this virus is here to stay, and we've got to start thinking about this in a sustainable way."

ASSESSING RISK

Though everything a human touches is probably covered with bacteria and viruses, most used masks don't pose a risk, said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a researcher at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. Masks used by the public are not considered biohazardous, as masks used in a hospital or litter such as bloody bandages or syringes would be.

"This is more of an etiquette issue," Adalja said.

It's not guaranteed that mask litter contains infectious pathogens, said Seema S. Lakdawala, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine whose research focuses on the transmission of influenza viruses.

Lakdawala said she carries a plastic bag in her purse for easy disposal of her mask when she isn't near a trash can.

The coronavirus can't survive for long on a surface like a mask, said Linsey Marr, of Virginia Tech, an expert in the transmission of viruses by aerosol. A recent study found that the virus has a half-life of around seven hours on solid plastic — meaning half of the virus will die in that time — but the survival time would most likely be shorter on a mask because of its porous material, she said.

In order to become infected through a used mask, the person would have to pick up an infected mask minutes after it had been discarded and transfer a substantial amount of the live virus to the eyes, nose or mouth.

The virus is fragile, and if the mask has been exposed to the sun, transmission is highly unlikely, Marr said, noting that the virus could survive longer if an infected mask was in a shady area or had been dropped at night.

Airborne transmission from a mask dropped as litter would be equally slim.

"Once something that size gets onto a surface, it's not going to come off spontaneously," Marr said. "It would take someone shaking it around."

A Coast-to-Coast Effort

Shelter-in-place orders put a pause on some regular community cleanups, but groups across the country have begun gathering again, with volunteers wearing masks and collecting trash 6 feet apart from one another.

Save Our Shores, a group that cleans litter from beaches in Santa Cruz, California, takes maximum precautions: Members go alone or in small groups, bring hand sanitizer and wear disposable gloves for safety, even though it creates more plastic waste, said Katherine O'Dea, executive director of the organization.

"The bigger message is, 'Come on, people; don't litter that stuff,'" O'Dea said. "Good for you that you're following the guidelines and wearing masks and being considerate of others, but you've just blown it if you throw it on the ground or leave it in your shopping cart or at the beach."

Some organizations, including the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, based in New York and Connecticut, have urged grocery stores to put trash cans in parking lots.

On a recent trip to the beach, Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, noticed fewer masks scattered in the sand than she had over the past few months. Efforts to encourage proper disposal have helped, she said, but lots of litter remains.

"The bottom line is we don't want a public health crisis to add to the plastic pollution crisis," she said. "The answer is simple and the act is easy: Just throw out your PPE."

UN: No return to 'old normal'

Published 3 hours ago on July 27, 2020 02:40 AM

By [Elmer N. Manuel @tribuneph1_Imer](#)



ANIMALS, too A pig's head appears like wearing a plastic mask as per safety protocols against the dreaded coronavirus while a vendor is busy selling his meat items at a public market. PHOTOGRAPH BY RIO DELUVIO FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribuneph1_rio

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases worldwide have surpassed 15 million and nearly 620,000 deaths and as such, the World Health Organization (WHO) urged people everywhere to play a part in preventing further spread of the disease, warning that there will be no return to "the old normal."

Most cases — or 10 million — were in just 10 countries, with the United States, Brazil and India accounting for nearly half. On 23 July, the US passed the milestone of four million infections.

"We're asking everyone to treat the decisions about where they go, what they do, and who they meet with, as life-and-death decisions — because they are," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, speaking from Geneva.

"It may not be your life, but your choices could be the difference between life and death for someone you love, or for a complete stranger," he added.

COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of billions across the globe and Tedros said it is understandable that people want to get on with their lives.

"But we will not be going back to the 'old normal.' The pandemic has already changed the way we live our lives. Part of adjusting to the 'new normal' is finding ways to live our lives safely," he advised.

In recent weeks, outbreaks associated with nightclubs and other places where people gather have been reported, even in locations where virus transmission has been suppressed.

"We must remember that most people are still susceptible to this virus. As long as it's circulating, everyone is at risk", said Tedros. "Just because cases might be at a low level where you live, that doesn't make it safe to let down your guard."

Tedros underlined that anyone, regardless of age or where they live, can help lead efforts to beat the pandemic and build back better.

"In recent years we've seen young people leading grassroots movements for climate change and racial equality. Now we need young people to start a global movement for health — for a world in which health is a human right, not a privilege," he said.

Separately, the UN health agency underscored the threat COVID-19 is posing to health workers in Africa, more than 10,000 of whom have been infected so far.

There have been more than 750,000 cases of the disease on the continent, with more than 15,000 deaths.

“The growth we are seeing in COVID-19 cases in Africa is placing an ever-greater strain on health services across the continent,” said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

“This has very real consequences for the individuals who work in them, and there is no more sobering example of this, than the rising number of health worker infections.”

Globally, around 10 percent of COVID-19 cases are among health professionals, though rates differ between individual countries and information on health worker infections in Africa is still limited, WHO said, though preliminary data reveals they comprise more than five percent of cases in sub-Saharan Africa alone.

2020's first hurricane, Hanna, roars ashore in virus-hit

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2020's first hurricane, Hanna, roars ashore in virus-hit Texas

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by [Agence France-Presse](#)

Hanna, the first Atlantic hurricane of 2020, slammed into the coast of coronavirus-hit Texas on Saturday, bringing heavy rain, storm surge and potentially life-threatening flash flooding.



This RAMMB/NOAA satellite image obtained on June 25, 2020 shows Hurricane Hanna in the Gulf of Mexico. (AFP / MANILA BULLETIN)

The Category 1 storm packed winds of around 90 miles (145 kilometers) per hour as it came ashore at Padre Island at 5 pm (2200 GMT), the US National Hurricane Center said.

“Hanna is expected to produce heavy rains across portions of southern Texas and northeastern Mexico. These rains will result in life-threatening flash flooding,” and some river flooding, the meteorologists said.

“Life-threatening storm surge” could potentially reach 6 feet (1.8 meters) in some areas, while the hurricane was forecast to drop up to 18 inches (45 centimeters) of rain through Monday on south Texas and the Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and northern Tamaulipas.

“My Administration is closely monitoring Hurricane Douglas off Hawaii & Hurricane Hanna, which has now made landfall in Texas,” President Donald Trump tweeted.

“We continue to coordinate closely with both states — listen to your emergency management officials ... to protect your family & property!”

Damage appeared to be limited in the immediate aftermath of Hanna's landfall, with some isolated flooding and power outages.

Images shared by the National Weather Service office in Corpus Christi showed water lapping at the city's bayfront Art Museum of South Texas.

Hanna roared ashore as Texas is facing a huge surge in coronavirus infections, with officials instituting a state-wide mask mandate to try to curb the spread of the disease.

Hanna was about 70 miles south of Corpus Christi when it made landfall, with the city of 325,000 home to one of Texas's virus hotspots.

The US is the hardest-hit country in the coronavirus pandemic, with some 4.2 million cases, and authorities will have to figure out how to safely shelter residents forced out of their homes by future hurricanes this season.

Hanna was forecast to move inland over south Texas on Saturday night, and into northeastern Mexico on Sunday.

Two other storm systems were churning Saturday: Pacific Hurricane Douglas, bearing down on the Hawaiian islands, and Tropical Storm Gonzalo in the Atlantic, near the Windward Islands.



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Douglas — at one point a powerful Category 4 hurricane — has weakened to a Category 1 storm with wind speeds of 90 miles per hour.

The NHC said Saturday the storm “will be near the main Hawaiian Islands late tonight and will move over parts of the state Sunday and Monday,” bringing high winds, heavy surf, and rainfall of up to 10 inches.

A hurricane warning was in effect in Oahu.

Meanwhile, Venezuela’s government warned of heavy rains and gusting winds as Gonzalo moved west across the Caribbean.

Big waves have already started to pound the coast in eastern Venezuela and power was knocked out in some areas Saturday, Venezuelan media reported.