

DATE: August 1, 2020

DAY: Saturday

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

## Cimatu supports President's call for law to establish Boracay Island Dev't Authority

Published July 31, 2020, 8:20 PM

by [Chito Chavez](#)

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu is strongly supporting President Duterte's call for Congress to enact a law establishing the Boracay Island Development Authority (BIDA).



Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu (RTVM / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

He stressed that passing the measure would sustain the gains of the rehabilitation of the island resort.

Cimatu noted that the President's endorsement of the BIDA bill will help ensure the timely and full passage of the measure being pushed by the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) headed by the DENR.

"We express our sincerest gratitude to the President for his endorsement of the BIDA bill," Cimatu said.

He added that "this is the opportune time to pass a law creating a permanent agency to sustain the gains achieved by the BIATF, which term has been extended for only one year or until April 2021."

Duterte recently issued Executive Order (EO) number 115, extending the term of the BIATF by another year which was supposed to expire on May 8, 2020 two years after its creation through EO 53.

"It is the tacit duty of the task force to ensure that Boracay does not backslide and slip to a state of environmental degradation especially with all the hard work, cooperation and concern shown by all stakeholders," he added.

In the President's fifth State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 27, Duterte asked Congress to pass the BIDA measure to sustain what he called "remarkable emergence of the island back to its former glory."

"For the rest of my term, I hope to see concerted efforts in protecting the environment. The rehabilitation of Boracay island showcased our resolve to safeguard the environment," Duterte said in his fifth SONA.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/31/climatu-supports-presidents-call-for-law-to-establish-boracay-island-devt-authority/>

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## DENR unveils solar-powered sewage treatment plant in Manila Bay

By Cornelia P. Cepeda Published on July 31, 2020



At the inauguration of the solar-powered sewage treatment plant (STP) yesterday along Roxas Boulevard in Manila (Photo from DENR)

QUEZON CITY, July 31 (PIA) -- More than a year after the Manila Bay rehabilitation was launched, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) unveiled on July 30, a solar-powered sewage treatment plant (STP) adjacent to the Manila Yacht Club along Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

The solar-powered STP, which aims to address the problem with household wastewater discharge that contributes to the pollution in Manila Bay, is capable of treating 500,000 liters of wastewater per day from three major drainage outfalls along Roxas Boulevard, according to DENR.

The DENR installed 1.5-kilometer-long rubber pipe from the US Embassy to the Manila Yacht Club to divert untreated wastewater from outfalls in Padre Faura, Rajah Soliman/Remedios across Aristocrat Restaurant, and Manila Yacht Club.

Meanwhile, the newly inaugurated STP will then process and treat the domestic wastewater before it will be discharged to Manila Bay.

DENR Chief Roy A. Cimatu and Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chair Danilo Lim led the ribbon-cutting as part of the three-phased rehabilitation program dubbed, "Battle for Manila Bay."

The Duterte administration has allocated Php4.7 billion to expedite the rehabilitation and restoration of the Manila Bay coastal and marine ecosystem within seven years.

The DENR targets to restore the quality of waters of Manila Bay to Class SB, which is identified as Fishery Water Class II, Tourism Zone, and Recreational Water Class I.

The standard set for Class SB is at 100 most probable number (MPN)/100mL.

Prior to the rehabilitation, however, the DENR water quality test showed that the fecal coliform level in Manila Bay was at 330 million MPN/100mL.

Once rehabilitated, Manila Bay should be suitable for propagation of shellfish and a spawning area for milkfish. It should cater to eco-tourism and be intended for different forms of contact recreation such as swimming, skin-diving, and the likes. --(CPC/PIA-IDPD)

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## **Cimatu recommends placing Cebu City under GCQ starting August 1**

**Published** July 31, 2020 8:23am

Overseer Secretary Roy Cimatu has recommended downgrading of Cebu City's COVID-19 status to general community quarantine (GCQ) starting August 1, 2020.

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GMA News' "Unang Balita" reported Friday that Cimatu recommended to the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-EID) the downgrade of the quarantine status, citing improvements in some parameters.

Cimatu was quoted in the report as saying that the COVID-19 case doubling time in the city has become longer; the numbers of new cases, and fatalities have gone down, while recoveries have continued to rise.

Also he said that communities have been effectively placed under control and health facilities in the city have improved, the report said.

At present the city is under modified ECQ, the report added.

## **DENR: Kontrata ng garbage contractors na walang PPEs sa palero, kanselahin!**



July 31, 2020 @ 3:56 PM 13 hours ago

Views: 115

Manila, Philippines – Patuloy umanong iniisnab ng mga garbage collector contractor ang kautusan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) hinggil sa pagsusuot ng Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) o protective gear ng mga palero bilang proteksyon ng mga ito laban sa COVID-19 habang naghahakot ng basura.

Ayon sa ulat, kahit na ipinag-utos ng DENR ang pagsusuot ng PPE at protective gear ng mga garbage collector ay karamihan pa rin sa mga ito ang hindi sumusunod.

Kabilang sa health protocol na ipinatutupad ng pamahalaan ang pagsusuot ng PPE ng mga garbage collector habang naghahakot ng basura para maprotektahan ang mga ito sa banta ng COVID-19 dahil itinuturing ang mga itong frontliners.

Sinabi pa sa ulat na dapat din umanong kanselahin ng local government units (LGUs) ang kontrata ng mga contractor ng garbage collector na hindi magpapatupad ng health protocol ng pamahalaan sa pagsusuot ng PPE at protective gear ng mga palero habang naghahakot ng basura sa Kamaynilaan.

Malaki ang pananagutan ng LGUs sa Metro Manila na hindi nagpapatupad ng tamang health protocols para sa pangongolekta ng basura sa kanilang mga lugar.

Magugunitang inirekomenda ni DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda ang pagsusuot ng Personal protective equipment (PPE) ng mga garbage collector habang naghahakot ng basura.

Si Antiporda, Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns ay siyang nangangalaga sa maayos na pagpapatupad ng solid waste sa bansa. **Santi Celario**

## DENR, House kinalampag sa Bataan landfill

By [Angie dela Cruz](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon)

-August 1, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Pinaimbestigahan sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at Kongreso ng pamahalaang Panlalawigan ng Bataan ang umano’y mga paglabag ng isang kompanya sa landfill facility sa bayan ng Hermosa.

Sa kanyang liham, sinabi ni Bataan Gov. Albert S. Garcia, nais niyang busisiin ng DENR at ng congressional oversight committee ang umano’y bulto-bultong stockpile na mga electronic residual wastes mula sa mga imported na electronic wires at scraps na itinatapon sa landfill.

Ayon naman kay Hermosa Mayor Jopet Inton, ang naturang landfill ay inooperate ng kompanyang Econest Waste Management Corp. nang pumasok ang Hermosa LGU sa isang kasunduan noong 2017 para ito ang mag-operate sa Hermosa Sanitary Landfill Facility sa Barangay Mambog.

Nagkasundo ang Econest Waste at Pamahalaang Bayan Ng Hermosa na ipapagamit ang lupa ng LGU Hermosa Sanitary Landfill at ang private partner na Econest ang magbibigay ng technical expertise at kapital para i-rehabilitate, paunlarin at i-operate ang sanitary landfill facility sa Hermosa sa loob ng 20 taon.

Sa loob lamang ng maikling panahon, nadiskubre ang maraming paglabag ng Econest sa ECC gaya ng pagpapabaya sa mga solid wastes sa landfill dahil walang sapat na daily soil cover at nagmistulang gabundok na basura tulad ng Payatas na anumang oras ay maaaring gumuho at tumapon sa Mambog Creek na ilang metro lamang ang layo.


Hinayaan lang din umano na tumagas ang katas ng basura papunta sa Mambog Creek na dumadaan sa mga pamayanan patungo sa Manila Bay na maaari ring tumagos sa ilalim ng lupa at maapektuhan ang tubig sa ilalim nito.

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Umabot na daw sa sukduhan ang pagtitimpi ni Mayor Inton nang matuklasan niya sa loob ng sanitary landfill ang gabundok na residual waste ng mga electronic/electrical materials na nagmula sa ibat-ibang recyclers sa Subic Freeport.

## DENR at Kongreso pinabubusisi ang operasyon ng landfill sa Bataan

[Angie dela Cruz](#) (Pang-masa)  - August 1, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Lumiham si Bataan Gov. Albert S. Garcia sa pamunuan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at sa congressional oversight committee na busisiin ang umano'y bulto-bultong stockpile na mga electronic residual wastes mula sa mga imported na electronic wires at scraps na itinatapon sa landfill ng isang kumpanya.

Sinabi ni Hermosa Mayor Jopet Inton, ang naturang landfill ay inooperate ng kompanyang Econest Waste Management Corporation nang pumasok ang Hermosa LGU sa isang kasunduan noong 2017 para ito ang mag-operate sa Hermosa Sanitary Landfill Facility sa Barangay Mambog.

Sa ilalim ng Public-Private Partnership, nagkaroon ng kasunduan ang Econest Waste Management Corporation at ang Pamahalaang Bayan Ng Hermosa na ipapagamit ang lupa ng LGU Hermosa Sanitary Landfill at ang private partner na Econest ang magbibigay ng technical expertise at kapital para i-rehabilitate, paunlarin at i-operate ang sanitary landfill facility sa bayan ng Hermosa sa loob ng 20 taon.

Subalit, sa loob lamang ng maikling panahon, nadiskubre ang maraming paglabag umano ng Econest sa ECC at ilan dito ay ang pagpapabaya sa mga solid wastes sa landfill dahil walang sapat na daily soil cover at nagmistulang gabundok na basura tulad ng Payatas na anumang oras ay maaaring gumuho at tumapon sa Mambog Creek na ilang metro lamang ang layo.

Hinayaan lang din umano na tumagas ang katas ng basura papunta sa Mambog Creek na dumadaan sa mga pamayanan patungo sa Manila Bay na maaari ring tumagos sa ilalim ng lupa at maapektuhan ang tubig sa ilalim nito.

Hindi rin umano sinusunod ang itinakdang disenyo ng mga tubo para sa katas ng basura kung saan gumamit lang ng PVC pipes gayung ang dapat ay HDPE pipes na mas matibay at pangmatagalan.

## PH world's second deadliest country for environmental defenders

Published July 31, 2020, 1:28 PM

[by Madelaine B. Miraflor](#)

The Philippines, next to Colombia, rose as the world's deadliest country for land and environment defenders and things are about to get worse amid the persistence of COVID-19 pandemic.

This was according to a Global Witness report, which has declared 2019 as the deadliest year on record for people defending their homes, forests, and rivers against climate-destructive industries, with 212 murdered land and environmental defenders while countless people were silenced by violent attacks, arrests, death threats, sexual violence and lawsuits.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have intensified the problems land and environmental defenders face. Governments around the world – from the US to Brazil and Colombia to the Philippines – have used the crisis to strengthen draconian measures to control citizens and roll back hard-fought environmental regulations,” Global Witness said.

The Global Witness report showed that over half of all reported killings last year occurred in just two countries, which are Colombia and the Philippines.

“The Philippines has become even deadlier for activists. It has been consistently named as one of the worst places in Asia for attacks against defenders, and had the highest number of recorded killings – 30 – globally in 2018. But things got even worse in 2019, with the number of reported murders rising to 43,” Global Witness said.

“The relentless vilification of defenders by the government and widespread impunity for their attackers may well be driving the increase,” it added.

The report linked most of the murders to the mining industry, with 50 anti-mining defenders all over the world killed in 2019. Again, the Philippines has most mining-related killings, with 16 deaths.

Attacks, murders and massacres were also used to clear the path for commodities like palm oil and sugar, the report showed. In 2019, Global Witness documented 34 global killings linked to large-scale agriculture, an increase of over 60 percent since 2018.



## PH world's second deadliest country for environmental defenders

The report also showed that government employees whose task is to look after land and environment were also not spared in the killings.

Last year, across the world, 19 government employees and park rangers responsible for protecting the environment were killed. Of these murders, eight took place in the Philippines alone, also making it the country with the highest number of documented state-employee killings.

Reacting to the report, the Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said over the phone that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is now asking the country's lawmakers to pass a law that will strengthen the legal mandate of the agency for the enforcement of environmental laws.

"The DENR is asking for the understanding of the legislative body to come up with a law creating the enforcement bureau for the DENR," Antiporda said. "We need that legal mandate for stronger enforcement of environmental laws."

Antiporda said that right now, with limited resources and enforcement mandate, DENR's forest rangers can only be given shotguns for precautionary measures, while illegal loggers are complete with high power rifles and dynamites.

Meanwhile, civil society organization Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) is "extremely distressed" with the Duterte administration for allowing the aforementioned killings to happen.

The group also feared that with the implementation of Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, more harassment, threats, and killings will happen, especially when local communities continue and intensify their resistance against destructive mining in the Philippines.

The alliance noted that red-tagging and legal harassments of anti-mining leaders were recently recorded in Nueva Vizcaya, Palawan, Masbate, Leyte and South Cotabato.

Most of these increased resistance activities were allegedly traced to the reversal of the suspension and closure orders issued by late and former Environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez.

To recall, Environment Roy Cimatu has recently recommended the lifting of the suspension orders to at least nine mining projects.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/31/ph-worlds-second-deadliest-country-for-environmental-defenders/>

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## Tagalog News: National Greening Program, tinututukan ng CENRO Calaca

By Bhaby De Castro Published on July 31, 2020

LUNGSOD NG BATANGAS, Hulyo 30 (PIA)-Isa sa mga programang mahigpit na tinututukan ng Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO)-Calaca ang National Greening Program (NGP).

Sa panayam kay Forester Isagani Amatorio, OIC-CENRO Calaca sinabi nito na ang NGP ay nagsimula noong 2011 at ito ay isangistratehiya ng pamahalaang nasyunal upang mapanumbalik at muling mapasigla ang mga kalbo o napabayaang forest lands sa iba't-ibang lugar sa bansa.

Ang CENRO Calaca ang sumasakop sa may 13 bayan na bahagi ng District 1, 2 at 3 kabilang ang mga bayan ng Nasugbu, Lian, Tuy, Calatagan, Balayan, Calaca, Lemery, Taal, San Nicolas, Agoncillo, Laurel, San Luis, at Sta. Teresita.

“Noong 2011 hanggang 2018 may mahigit 200 NGP sites ang binabantayan ng aming tanggapan kabilang ang 181 NGP sites sa District 1, siyam sa District 2 at 31 sa District 3 kung saan nakapagtanim na ng 4,184,223 seedlings sa may 4,909.6 ektaryang lupa. Para sa taong 2019-2020, walang bagong site na na-identify,” ani Amatorio.

Dagdag pa nito ang survival rate ng mga seedlings na ito ay 84.29% kung kaya't patuloy ang kanilang koordinasyon at pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga lokal na pamahalaan, peoples organization (PO's), lokal na komunidad at mga pribadong kumpanya at indibidwal.

Layon ng programa na mabawasan ang kahirapan, food security, environmental stability at biodiversity.

Iba't-ibangistratehiya ang ginagawa ng CENRO upang mas maipalaganap ang programa tulad ng pakikipag-ugnayan sa lokal na pamahalaan at peoples organization (PO's), pagsasagawa ng IEC sa mga benepisaryo at pag-hire ng Forest Protection Officer na magiging katuwang sa pamamahala at pangangalaga ng mga planting sites.

Nagsasagawa din ng Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) sa mga pribadong kumpanya na nasasakupan ng CENRO Calaca upang hikayatin silang maging responsable sa kanilang mga lugar na nasasakupan.

Sa huli, nanawagan si Amatorio sa lahat lalo na sa mga pribadong indibidwal o kumpanya na makibahagi at makipag-ugnayan sa kanilang tanggapan para sa posibleng kolaborasyon sa patuloy na pangangalaga at pagpapayabong ng mga kagubatan at likas na yaman sa lalawigan ng Batangas. (BHABY P. DE CASTRO-PIA Batangas)

## Tagalog News: 300 mangrove saplings, itinanim sa baybaying bahagi ng San Juan

By Bhaby De Castro Published on July 31, 2020

LUNGSOD NG BATANGAS, Hulyo 31 (PIA) --Nagtanim ng may 300 iba't-ibang uri ng bakawan ang mga kawani ng Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO)-Lipa sa mga barangay ng Pinagbayanan at Catmon sa bayan ng San Juan noong ika-29 ng Hulyo.

Ang aktibidad ay bahagi ng pagdiriwang ng International Day for the Conservation of Mangrove kung saan layon nitong mapalaganap at mapalawak ang kaalaman sa kahalagahan ng mangrove forests o bakawan na siyang nagbabalanse ng diverse ecosystem sa bansa.

Nagsama-sama ang mga kawani ng CENRO Lipa sa pangunguna ni OIC Januel Peras at Senior Environment Management Specialist Josefa Lozada sa pakikipagtulungan ng lokal na pamahalaan ng San Juan at Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO), mga opisyal ng Brgy. Pinagbayanan at Catmon at mga miyembro ng Bantay Dagat.

Sa kabila ng pagsasailalim sa Modified General Community Quarantine sa naturang bayan, siniguro ng pamunuan ng CENRO na isinagawa ang mga minimum health protocols tulad ng pagsusuot ng face mask at social distancing habang isinasagawa ang naturang aktibidad. (BHABY P. DE CASTRO-PIA Batangas with report from CENRO Lipa)

## Mga narra flitches na ipinaanod sa ilog, nasamsam ng mga otoridad

By [Bombo Radyo Naga](#)

-August 1, 2020 | 2:38 AM

CAUAYAN CITY – Nasabat ng mga awtoridad ang humigit kumulang 2,000 board feet ng narra sa isang ilog sa sa Cabisera 10-21, Ilagan City.

Sa nakuhang impormasyon ng Bombo Radyo Cauayan sa mga kawani ng Provincial Environment and Natural Resources, kaagad silang nagtungo sa ilog upang kumpirmahin ang ipinadalang impormasyon ng isang concerned citizen na may ipinapaanod na mga illegal na pinutol na kahoy sa ilog.

Nasamsam ng mga kasapi ng Provincial Task Force ang mga narra flitches na ipinaaanog sa ilog na hinihinalang galing sa kabundukan ng San Mariano, Isabela.

Hindi ito ang unang beses na nagkaroon ng operasyon ang PENRO sa nabanggit na lugar ngunit kaagad na nakakatakas ang mga taong sangkot sa illegal logging.

## First sightings of 5 migratory birds recorded in Batanes

Published July 31, 2020, 12:34 PM

[by Jhon Dave Ablat](#)

BATANES – A flyway of migratory birds has recorded first sightings of five bird species from August 2019 to January 2020 in Batanes, making it the first observation of such species in the Philippines.



Common Myna



Black faced Bunting



Buff-bellied Pipit



Light vented Bulbul



Verditer Flycatcher

## First sightings of 5 migratory birds recorded in Batanes

According to Charls Lee Ibanes, an Ivatan member of the Robert S. Kennedy Bird Conservancy and the primary observant of the sighting, five migratory birds from the countries north of the Philippines landed in Batanes as part of their nature of moving south during northern winter, and moving north during southern summer.

In the given data, the observant witnessed a common myna (*acridotheres tritis*), black-faced bunting (*emberiza spodecephala*), buff-bellied pipit (*anthus rubescens*), light vented bulbul (*pycnonotus sinensis*), and Verditer flycatcher (*eumymias thalassinus*), mostly in Basco and in the island of Itbayat.

Moreover, Ibanes tagged these sightings as very rare observations as these bird species were not usual in the Philippine environment and biodiversity.

“It was important and fulfilling to contribute in recording these very rare sightings,” Ibanes said.

“My findings only add to the already recognized rich biodiversity that the province of Batanes have,” he added.

Ibanes also cited that this event might improve the birding tourism since most of the visitors who come to the place for bird watching were conservationists. The sightings have been verified by the Philippine Bird Rarities Committee and was already recognized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/31/first-sightings-of-5-migratory-birds-recorded-in-batanes/>

## Construction of Mount Pulag access road continues despite pandemic

Published July 31, 2020, 4:06 PM

[by Liezle Basa Iñigo](#)

CAGAYAN— The construction of the access road leading to Mt. Pulag National Park has continued under the implementation of the Department of Public Works and Highways – Nueva Vizcaya First District Engineering Office (DPWH-NV1st DEO) despite the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.



On-going Construction of Access Road to Mt. Pulag at Brgy. Ammoweg, Ambaguio, Nueva Vizcaya (DPWH / MANILA BULLETIN)

Wilzon Valdez, DPWH regional information officer said, the project was being funded under the Tourism Road Infrastructure Project (TRIP) Program.

The annual funding of the project started last 2018 and all the remaining sections are expected to be completed by 2022, as part of the “Build, Build, Build” Program of the administration.

With the completion of the project, it will also support the efforts of the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in stimulating and boosting local travels.

It will also attract Filipino consumers to patronize Philippine-owned and operated facilities and services amid the COVID 19 pandemic.

Mt. Pulag National Park is the highest peak in Luzon, and is the second highest mountain in the Philippines with an elevation of 2,922 m. above sea level.

Valdez noted that the Ambaguio trail in Nueva Vizcaya was just among the four major trails up the summit. The other three are the Ambangeg trail in Bokod Benguet and Akiki and Tawangangan trails in Kabayan, Benguet. These trails are managed by the Mount Pulag National Park, under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/31/construction-of-mount-pulag-access-road-continues-despite-pandemic/>

## Bohol eyes tourists by 4Q 2020



By [Ma. Stella F. Arnaldo](#)

July 31, 2020



*A view of the Bohol Sea from Panglao Island. The Bohol government is looking to reopen the province to tourists by the last quarter of 2020. (Photo courtesy BE Grand Resort)*

BOHOL has targeted to reopen tourism by the last quarter of 2020.

Gov. Arthur Yap made this announcement in a briefing with Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat and Interior Secretary Eduardo M. Año, who visited the province on Friday to inspect the province's Covid-19 testing laboratory and the world-famous Alona Beach. "The last quarter is a moving target," said Yap, even as the province implements several projects that are targeted to enhance the tourism experience.

He said, however, he was still discussing with Romulo Puyat which countries Bohol will have bilateral travel agreements with for a "travel bubble." The Tourism chief, for her part, said, "Everything is fluid, but then we've already been talking, once travel restrictions have been lifted, we can already talk about direct flights." She said her agency has already discussed this with Korea, Japan and Australia, which have very low Covid-19 cases.

Yap said, he is eyeing Panglao Island and the municipality of Dauis as the first to reopen to tourism. As such, the province has created its own Unique Bohol Experience (UBE), an accreditation program for local tourism stakeholders, "riding on the back" of the Department of Tourism's accreditation program. He said, "We don't see it as a double burden [on tourism stakeholders] because we have a unique situation in Bohol. We have certain conditions that we want to be fulfilled because we want to make our tourism extra-sustainable." Under UBE, he explained, the province will check the ratio of



parking lot, sewerage treatment plant, carrying capacity, wastewater management, ratio of renewable energy, among others.

Yap noted a study by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has determined Bohol's carrying capacity to be 2,400 tourists at any given time, per day, "and based on our records, we are around that area right now."

In 2019, visitor arrivals in Bohol reached 1.58 million in 2019, up 5.6 percent from the arrivals in 2018. Of the total arrivals in the province, 854,853 were domestic tourists, and 727,051 were foreign tourists, according to data provided by DOT-Central Visayas.

Año, on his end, praised Yap and other local government representatives of the province for being proactive and efficient in dealing with its Covid-19 cases, "that we are able to concentrate on other places that have high cases such as Cebu, Laguna and Metro Manila." As of July 30, the province reported they only have 22 active cases, 60 recovered cases, and four deaths. Bohol was the first province, on its own, which implemented a total lockdown following the enhanced community quarantine implemented in Luzon on March 16.

Año suggested that RT-PCR swab tests be conducted on those arriving at the airport. Taking off from the Davao experience, he said the Bohol government can pay for the swab tests of their returning residents who had been stranded abroad or in other regions, while tourists and businessmen pay for their own tests.

Meanwhile, Romulo Puyat said Bohol is expected to receive \$62 million (P3.1 billion) in funding from the World Bank by the first quarter of 2021, for various tourism projects. Among these are the Assistance to Reinvigorate Tourism (ART) Value Chain, the Palengke Program, and tourism sites enhancement and management and enhancement of hygiene preparedness in tourist sites.

In particular, Yap said the World Bank will fund the Bohol Water and Sanitation Project. He said the province has also partnered with the DOT's Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (Tieza) for an STP project for Balicasag Island and the rehabilitation of Panglao Island, which includes a P400-million sanitary landfill.

He added, "We have started to demolish illegal structures in Alona Beach," as part of the rehabilitation of Panglao Island. The demolition of illegal structures had been required by the Inter-Agency Task Force monitoring Boracay and other island tourism destinations since 2018. However, issues with the municipal government have delayed the island's rehabilitation.

Yap also reiterated the province's request to establish a local office for the DOT's Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving. "As we all know, Bohol is really the center of the best dive sports in the Philippines. This has been a decade-long clamor. A PCSSD in Bohol will allow us to regulate the diving industry in Bohol, including protecting the dive sites."

## Asean environmental diplomacy – fire, smoke and haze



By [Amado S. Tolentino, JR.](#) August 1, 2020

ORIGINALLY, forest and land fires in Southeast Asia were associated with the practice of swidden agriculture and to help in hunting pursuits. Nowadays, fires set or spread accidentally or intentionally are still linked to subsistence livelihood but more so with commercial activities. These include conversion of forestland to other land uses (i.e., industrial plantations, kaingin or traditional slash-and-burn agriculture).

The ecological impact of forest or land fires includes, but is not limited to, degradation of vegetation quality, reduction of wildlife habitat, loss of biodiversity, pollution in rivers and estuaries, danger to human health and even loss of life. Fires contribute also to climate change and global warming. These destroy important sinks for carbon while biomass burning is acknowledged as a global source of emissions.

The Asean transboundary haze began to be significantly felt in 1982 as a result of land-clearing operations mainly to give way to palm oil and rubber tree plantations and the practice of kaingin on peatlands in Indonesia. Since then, fire, smoke and haze formation and its negative impacts became an annual occurrence, aggravated by the El Niño every two to four years which results in delayed rainfall for adversely affected crops and unexpected strong typhoons. The member states of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) severely affected aside from Indonesia are Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines.

(By the way, when fire breaks out, it emits smoke, but when the smoke gets suspended in the atmosphere, it is called haze. If the haze crosses political borders it is called transboundary haze pollution.)

### ATHP

While aware of the significant human and economic impacts of the haze problem in the region, it was only in 2003 when Asean adopted a legally binding regional agreement to prevent, monitor and mitigate land and forest fires and eventually, haze pollution in the Asean region through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation. Referred to as the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (ATHP), it provides a legal framework for the 1997 Asean Regional Haze Action Plan, a soft law instrument and a non-binding regional agreement.

Briefly, the ATHP relies on self-regulation and decentralized operations. For one, it calls on each Party to designate a competent authority, a focal point and a national monitoring center to coordinate with the Asean Coordinating Center for Transboundary Haze Pollution based in Jakarta. Response by the Asean Center, however, presupposes action on the part of a National Authority to put out the fires. Second, an Asean Secretariat serves as ATHPs clearinghouse, responsible for meetings/conferences, notification and response transmission, consultations among ATHP Parties as well as coordination with relevant international organizations and funding institutions for effective implementation of the agreement.

## Asean environmental diplomacy – fire, smoke and haze Page 2/2

Notable is the mention of “zero burning” as the best method to deal with forest or land fires but at the same time, calls for the development of techniques on “controlled burning” for the benefit of shifting cultivators. Controlled burning requires national laws, regulations and guidelines to

ensure that the fire does not cause transboundary haze pollution.

### **Flexible engagement**

An interesting development in the implementation of the ATHP was when Singapore raised the matter of transboundary haze pollution in the Asean region before the United Nations General Assembly sometime in 2006 to which Indonesia invoked the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. (A word must be said about the “Asean Way” of doing things through consensus. There is no Asean parliament to issue laws and directives to its members and no enforcement agencies. Non-interference in the domestic affairs of a member state is the rule of conduct.)

The controversy illustrates the complex political and economic dimensions of the haze problem as well as the conflict between national and regional interests confronting the Asean. The adoption of ATHP attests to Asean’s growing stature as a transnational environmental lawmaker. But, at the same time, the controversy demonstrates the obstacles in Asean’s path towards environmental regulatory effectiveness.

Perhaps, it is time for Asean to take a strong stand that the principle of sovereignty be modified in the context of environmental law. Far from undermining state sovereignty, enhanced cooperation in the area of environment will strengthen the state’s sustainable development. By adopting a flexible engagement approach to transboundary environmental issues, Asean states could discuss complex problems such as the Indonesian fire, smoke and haze without being accused of interfering with the internal affairs of the country.

Flexible engagement is not yet an accepted principle in Asean, but its application to transboundary environmental issues is relevant. Flexible engagement is an attempt to delimit the range of situations in which individual member states would be justified in appealing to non-interference to ward off outside involvement in their internal affairs. As serious threats to sustainable development and human security more broadly, transboundary environmental issues would be classified as beyond the scope of “internal affairs” and would be subject to regional governance despite sovereignty.

### **NOSA**

Under the ATHP, all Asean countries, whether polluting or victim-countries, shall be invited to cooperate to solve the transboundary haze pollution problem in the region. They shall be requested to provide their expertise or any form of assistance voluntarily for identified activities, plans or strategies to ensure effective implementation of the Asean agreement.

It should be borne in mind, however, that not all states could be held responsible for Asean’s annual transboundary haze problem, which can be easily tracked by remote-sensing satellites to serve as evidence against any effort to compel them to provide non-voluntary assistance to the polluting state or states. Furthermore, faultfinding could antagonize the polluting state whose cooperation is crucial to stop the transboundary pollution. In short, further animosities between the polluting and victim states

should be avoided. Be it noted that the 2006 Singapore-Indonesia incident at the UN General Assembly was put on hold by the Asean Way of “non-interference in the internal affairs of another.”

In that connection, a way out is the principle of nonobligatory specialized assistance (NOSA) proposed by Ebinezer Florano, a researcher and lecturer at the UP National College of Public Administration and Governance. He argues that, “as a principle of environmental cooperation, NOSA being voluntary should be based on existing expertise and/or capability of the cooperating states. In fact, it would be best if the strategies to solve the environmental problem have already been laid out in an environmental agreement so that the cooperating states will just match their technical expertise and/or capability.”

Indeed, the principle of non-obligatory specialized assistance would enhance respect for sovereignty, not undermine it. The inability to avert an environmental disaster is a greater loss of sovereign authority than cooperation in agreed programs to control transboundary haze pollution. It would also be in furtherance of Principle 21 of the UN Declaration on the Human Environment in which all States acknowledge that each must act so as not to harm the environment of each other.

(N.B. Transboundary haze pollution has been a yearly occurrence in some parts of Asean countries since 1982. Long before the onset of the current health crisis, wearing masks in the streets of the city state of Singapore as well as in certain areas in Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and the Philippines had become a yearly sight. It usually happens during the months of July, August and September.

As the places mentioned above grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, some are asking if the residents of those transboundary haze pollution affected countries can expect a cleaner and greener year without haze.)

Ambassador Amado Tolentino served as coordinator of the Asean Experts Group on the Environment (now Asean Senior Officials on the Environment).

## Phl breaches 93,000-mark in COVID-19 cases; surpasses China



Published 11 hours ago on July 31, 2020 05:32 PM

By [Gabbie Parlade](#)



The total number of coronavirus disease cases in the country has breached the 93,000-mark, surpassing China—the epicenter of the virus, after it posted 4,063 new cases on Friday.

The Department of Health said the figure has brought to 93,354 the total number of cases, surpassing China's 87,457 total confirmed cases.

The department said, of the total number of cases, 26,153 were recorded as active while 87.8 percent are experiencing mild symptoms.

Other classifications such as asymptomatic cases rose to 10 percent while severe cases are now pegged at 1.3 percent.

Among the regions with the highest number of newly-announced cases include the National Capital Region (NCR), Region VII, and Region IV-A.

Meanwhile, the total number of recoveries have also increased to 65,178 with 165 additional survivors while the death toll is now at 2,023 with 40 more fatalities reported.

On Friday morning, Malacanang ordered that Metro Manila and other areas be placed under the general community quarantine despite continued rise in the number of COVID-19 cases.

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## New UP, UST research: 150,000 virus cases, 3,000 deaths by end-August

By [Carolyn Bonquin, CNN Philippines](#)

Published Jul 31, 2020 8:38:12 PM



**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, July 31)** — Researchers from the University of the Philippines and University of Santo Tomas see coronavirus cases possibly reaching 150,000 with 3,000 deaths by August 31.

The UP OCTA Research Team said this is the likely scenario under current anti-COVID measures.

“This is important because a less effective implementation of the general community quarantine (GCQ) may lead to an additional 20,000 cases more,” UP OCTA Research Team said in its recent report.

As of July 31, COVID-19 cases [already reached 93,354, with 2,023 deaths.](#)

The group calculated the possible number of additional infections based on what is called 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 significant community transmission.

The R naught in the Philippines is 1.4 as of July 30. This is relatively lower than 1.75 R during the first week of the month, but still higher than 1.28 in June.

**[RELATED: UP, UST researchers predict 85,000 COVID-19 cases in PH by end-July](#)**

Epinceters, high-risk areas

The three epicenters of the pandemic are Metro Manila, Cebu and Calabarzon, the researchers said.

“It is important that we maintain our efforts in these three regions,” the researchers said, calling them “the main battleground against the pandemic.”

Professor Guido David, a UP OCTA fellow, said Calabarzon recorded a surge in infections in July, particularly in Laguna, Cavite and Rizal. There are at least 100 cases in these provinces from July 22 to 28.

*“Medyo maraming cases sa Laguna ngayon and pati sa Rizal and Cavite. We have to take extra precaution sa mga province na ito because we don’t want to let the numbers to go out of hand – na hindi na natin macontrol at ma-overwhelm ang system natin,”* he said.

[Translation: There are many cases in Laguna now, as well as Rizal and Cavite. We have to take extra precaution in these provinces because we don’t want to let the numbers to go out of hand – to the point that we can no longer control it and our system is overwhelmed.]

As of June 30, over half or 60 percent of the total coronavirus cases are from Metro Manila, 18 percent from Cebu province and 10 percent from Calabarzon. The remaining 11% are from other regions.

The researchers tagged the following provinces as high-risk areas:

Laguna

Cavite

Rizal

Bulacan

Negros Occidental

Davao del Sur (including Davao City)

Zamboanga del Sur

Meanwhile, the following are medium-risk areas:

Batangas

Quezon

Camarines Sur

Pampanga

Pangasinan

Bohol

Iloilo province

Leyte

Davao del Norte

Lanao del Norte

Misamis Oriental

Researchers said Nueva Ecija is already a low-risk area with only less than two cases per day per million population.

Metro Manila's virus cases may double

As of July 30, the research said Metro Manila has the highest number of infections with 48,389 COVID-19 cases.

But the UP OCTA Research Team said this may double up to 100,000 by August 31 under GCQ.

If Metro Manila reverted to a stricter modified enhanced community quarantine, the total projection would be lower at 75,000 to 80,000.

But when restrictions are relaxed, such as a modified GCQ, Metro Manila alone might have a total of 120,000 cases by next month, researchers said.

The high positivity rate in NCR indicates that the pandemic is “far from controlled,” the researchers noted.

## New UP, UST research: 150,000 virus cases, 3,000 deaths by end-August

“We’re far from passing the danger zone. Even ngayon even if may 1.3 it is still a significant transmission. We are still getting 1,000 cases per day in NCR and that is a lot. The problem is really the healthcare system natin baka ma-overwhelm,” David said.

UP OCTA warned that NCR hospitals face an “imminent danger of becoming overwhelmed in the next two weeks.”

[READ: Metro Manila hospitals could be overwhelmed in the next two weeks as COVID-19 cases continue to surge, UP research team warns](#)

Cebu projections

Cebu province already seems to be flattening the epidemic curve of COVID-19, the researchers said. Virus reproduction rate in the province is less than one, which is ideal in managing and fighting the pandemic.

The positivity rate in the province has also gone down to less than 10%. The target positivity rate is 5%.

“Although the curve is flattening in Cebu, it should be noted that eliminating the pandemic in a region with a high number of new cases will take a while,” the UP OCTA Research Team’s forecast report read. “Given the current rate of transmission, for example, it will require at least 30 days before the number of new cases is reduced to less than 100 per day.”

Despite the positive outcome of anti-coronavirus measures in the province, David said Cebuanos should remain vigilant. Current efforts to contain the virus should also continue.

“The reproduction number has decreased less than one, that is a positive result for Cebu. Kaya lang it doesn’t mean na pwede na tayo maging kampante sa Cebu kasi (But it doesn’t mean that we can be complacent in Cebu because) we are still seeing 200 new cases,” David said.

UP OCTA projects the coronavirus cases in Cebu province would reach 20,000 to 25,000 by end of August.



## Virus wreaks economic havoc as global cases top 17 million

posted July 31, 2020 at 04:00 pm by [AFP and Heather Scott](#)

The scale of economic devastation from the pandemic was laid bare on Thursday as Western economies recorded historic slumps, just as resurgent caseloads forced many countries into agonising new trade-offs between health and financial stability.

Six months after the World Health Organization declared a global emergency, the novel coronavirus has infected more than 17 million people worldwide.

The WHO warned Thursday that young people are "not invincible" and were helping to drive resurgences in many places that had largely curbed the disease.

"Spikes of cases in some countries are being driven in part by younger people letting down their guard during the northern hemisphere summer," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

COVID-19 has killed more than 668,000 people and is forcing governments into a persistent balancing act between saving lives and preventing economic devastation.

Nowhere is that challenge more evident than the world's hardest-hit nation -- also the world's biggest economy -- with the United States posting a second-quarter loss of 9.5 percent compared with the same period a year ago, the worst figure on record.

If that trajectory carried through the entire year, its economy would collapse by nearly a third (32.9 percent), the data showed.

Historic contractions were additionally recorded in Germany (10.1 percent), Belgium (12.2 percent), Austria (10.7 percent) and Mexico (17 percent).

Across the globe, companies were also taking a hit with Volkswagen, oil producer Shell, UK bank Lloyds and Japanese consumer electronics giant Panasonic all reporting huge losses.

With travel down to a trickle, aerospace giant Airbus said it burned through more than 12 billion euros in cash in the first half of the year, with a net loss of 1.9 billion euros (\$1.4 billion) and plans to cut production by 40 percent.

But several Big Tech firms delivered better-than-expected results Thursday, underscoring growing consumer reliance on giants like Amazon during the pandemic as well as their extraordinary economic power.

Apple profits rose eight percent to \$11.2 billion, Amazon meanwhile said profits nearly doubled to \$5.2 billion and Facebook said its profits doubled to \$5.2 billion compared with the same period last year.

Global daily cases are now approaching the 300,000 mark, with the curve showing no sign of flattening -- it took just 100 hours for one million new cases to be recorded.

The US counted 1,379 new deaths in the 24 hours before 8:30 pm Thursday (0030 GMT Friday), plus another 72,238 new infections.

And the country also recorded another grim milestone: the death of Buddy, the first US pet dog to test positive for the virus. The seven-year-old German shepherd died after suffering from difficulty breathing and other symptoms for several months.

In Japan, Tokyo's governor called for restaurants, bars and karaoke parlours to shut earlier as the capital reported a record number of new infections.

Sweden, whose controversial softer approach to curbing coronavirus has received worldwide attention, said it would encourage people to keep working from home into next year where possible, as the country passed 80,000 recorded cases.

And Mexico became the world's third hardest-hit country in terms of deaths as it notched more than 46,000 fatalities, according to a tally maintained by AFP.

Island resurgences

Two island countries that were early poster children for containing the virus offered warnings against complacency on Thursday.

In Australia, there were 723 positive tests in the southeastern state of Victoria alone, well beyond the previous nationwide record of 549 cases set on Monday.

And Iceland recorded its first hospitalisation since mid-May, as well as 31 new cases, forcing the government to reimpose social distancing and masks, and limit the size of gatherings to 100.

Hong Kong, which was also initially lauded for its coronavirus response, is struggling to balance fears of a third wave among its 7.5 million residents, which authorities fear could cripple the healthcare system, against anger at new restrictions.

Just a day after restaurants were banned from serving customers indoors, the decision was reversed following a torrent of online criticism over images of mostly blue-collar workers forced to eat on pavements and in parks -- and even inside public toilets to escape a torrential downpour.

South Africa faces a similar dilemma and pushed back its nighttime curfew by an hour to 10 pm to help the devastated restaurant sector, despite a recent surge in cases.

Ivory Coast however bucked the trend, announcing that bars, nightclubs and cinemas would reopen on Friday.

The EU meanwhile carried out its fortnightly update to its list of safe countries. US travellers are still barred and Algeria was removed after a spike in cases.

The safe list currently consists of Australia, Canada, Georgia, Japan, Morocco, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia and Uruguay -- and would also include China if Beijing reciprocated.

**Topics:** [coronavirus disease](#) , [economy](#) , [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#) , [World Health Organization](#)

## 5.8 magnitude quake hits Surigao Sur town



Published 10 hours ago  
on July 31, 2020 06:17 PM  
By [TDT](#)



A 5.8-magnitude earthquake hit Hinatuan town in Surigao del Sur on Friday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

The quake struck 34 kilometers northeast of Hinatuan at 2:06 p.m, Pagasa said, adding that it tectonic in origin with a depth of 45 kilometers.

Pagasa recorded Intensity 3 in Bislig City while Intensity 2 was posted in Gingoog City of Misamis Oriental, and Intensity 1 in Surigao City, Cagayan de Oro and Kidapawan; and in Tupi, South Cotabato and the towns of Malungon and Alabel in Sarangani province.

## Cebu province re-opens tourism in whale shark watching town

By Carlo Lorenciana and John Rey Saavedra July 31, 2020, 6:39 pm



**CEBU TOURISM RE-OPENS.** Governor Gwendolyn Garcia leads other officials in re-opening the tourism activities in Cebu at the whale shark watching town of Oslob on Friday (July 31, 2020). Garcia said Oslob lost around PHP100 million in revenues -- almost equivalent to a year's internal revenue allotment (IRA) -- after Covid-19 forced tourism activities in Cebu to stop. (*Screengrab from Cebu Provincial Capitol PIO's video*)

**CEBU CITY** — The provincial government of Cebu has reopened the tourism industry in the whale shark watching town of Oslob on Friday, marking the start of the gradual recovery of one of the hardest-hit industries by the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

"We are hopeful to revive the tourism industry in the province. Let us join together to revive our economy.," Governor Gwen Garcia said in Cebuano during the ceremonial launching attended by various tourism stakeholders in Barangay Tan-awan, one of the famous tourist destinations here.

Among the tourism activities the province now allows include whale shark watching, snorkeling, trekking, diving, and island-hopping.

"We were finding ways to revive our tourism industry. We were doing consultations. We will ensure that health protocols are in place," the governor said, noting that guidelines and protocols for tourism operations have been laid out for implementation across the province," Garcia said.

Garcia, together with Department of Tourism (DOT) in Central Visayas Director Shalimar Tamano, has been consulting with resort owners in southern Cebu, which is home to most of the famous tourist outdoor activities in the province.

The town of Oslob, she said, is famous for its whale shark watching, which has incurred millions of revenue losses for the past months due to the community quarantine.

Garcia said tourism activities must reopen even as the fight against the Covid-19 crisis continues. The province of Cebu has been placed under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) since July and will persist through August.



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## Cebu province re-opens tourism in whale shark watching town

Under MGCQ, non-essential work gatherings and leisure activities are allowed so long as social distancing measures and established safety protocols are followed.

Garcia said reopening the tourism industry in the province will help bring back the lost jobs of Cebuanos, particularly the boatmen and tour guides, who depend on tourism activities as their livelihood.

As tourism reopens, establishments would still have to limit their accommodations to 50 percent of their original capacity.

The governor also hailed the tourism activities of Oslob that substantially uplift the lives of the town's residents, saying that many families have sent their children to different universities here, their homes renovated, while many others can buy cars.

She prodded the Cebuanos to live with the new normal, with Covid-19 being part of the daily threats that should be managed, rather than making it a reason to stop the livelihood of the people.

"Are we going to open the economy when we have zero Covid-19 cases? Let me tell everyone here and now, accept it as a way of life, Covid-19 is here," Garcia told the officials and stakeholders attending the opening program. (*PNA*)

## NCR, Cebu City keep GCQ status



Published 4 hours ago on August 1, 2020 12:05 AM

By [Francis Wakefield](#)



President Duterte on Friday approved the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) placing the National Capital Region (NCR) still under general community quarantine (GCQ) starting today, 1 August, even with the continued rise in COVID-19 cases in the metropolis.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the President, in his Talk to the People Address, also placed Cebu City under GCQ.

Other areas under GCQ include Bulacan, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal in Luzon; Lapu-Lapu City, Mandaue City, Talisay City, Minglanilla and Consolacion in the Visayas; and Zamboanga City in Mindanao.

Roque said the rest of the country is under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) until 15 August 2020.

In order for the NCR and Region IV-A to keep its GCQ classification, Roque said the National Task Force, the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Coordinated Operations to Defeat Epidemic teams will implement in areas with high community transmission a strictly localized lockdown/ECQ in barangays where 80 percent of cases are located.

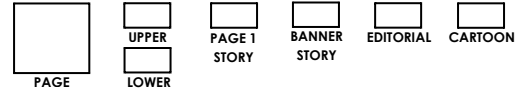
These same barangays also have to be identified.

Also forming part of the measures include strict enforcement of minimum health standards, massive targeted testing, intensified tracing and quarantine of close contacts, isolation of confirmed cases and strict adherence to Oplan Kalinga.

Roque said government hospitals in the NCR and Region IV-A are directed to increase the hospital beds meant for COVID-19 patients from 30 percent to 50 percent while private hospitals need to increase their COVID beds from 20 percent to 30 percent.

Health Undersecretary Leopoldo Vega, also NTF Treatment Czar, is directed to monitor the

compliance of hospitals in these areas and to the One Hospital Command System in NCR, Region III, and Region IV-A.



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## NCR, Cebu City keep GCQ status Page 2/2

“Finally, the local government units (LGU) are directed to submit daily updates and weekly comprehensive reports containing the daily trend of active cases, number and percent of population, cases in community isolation facility versus health facility versus home for priority areas or barangays under localized lockdown,” Roque said.

Included metrics to be submitted by LGU are close contacts traced and contacts in quarantine; utilization of community isolation beds; met health system capacity targets utilization; and COVID special team investigations and results,” he added.

## Trade barriers are slowing action on plastic pollution. Here's how to fix that.

With cross-border frictions preventing economies of scale in tackling plastic pollution, facilitating trade can help the world reduce, re-use and recycle. This calls for better collaboration between governments and firms.



From 2021, plastic waste that is sorted, clean, uncontaminated and effectively designed for recycling can be traded freely. This could help improve plastic waste management and reduce leakage into the environment. Image: Pikist



By [Kristin Hughes](#) and [Kimberley Botwright](#) July 30, 2020

Plastic pollution action has been slowed down considerably by the Covid-19 pandemic – but there's a new emerging angle that could help rebuild momentum behind our transition to a greener and more circular society. Governments at the World Trade Organization (WTO) are showing [increased interest](#) in tackling plastic pollution.

In a world of global value chains and integrated markets, there is an important cross-border component, both existing and potential, to ramping up efforts on plastic action. Until recently, limited plastics recycling efforts often involved exports, the overwhelming majority of which flowed to China. These flows have become a source of controversy due to waste dumping and inadequate infrastructure for proper disposal.





## Trade barriers are slowing action on plastic pollution. Here's how to fix that. Page 2/2

### Developing countries turn away from plastic waste imports

In 2018, China introduced a ban on certain plastic waste imports, a move followed by several other countries. Subsequently, in May 2019, the 187 parties to the Basel Convention—a treaty on the transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous and other wastes—added most types of plastic waste to the list of controlled wastes. From 2021, plastic waste that is sorted, clean, uncontaminated and effectively designed for recycling can be traded freely, while other types will require the consent of importing and transit countries.

These changes could prove positive to improve plastic waste management and reduce leakage into the environment. Yet, without additional implementation efforts, a risk of increased trade frictions develops that could stymie global plastics recycling markets. Such frictions have not developed to date, but trade facilitation measures to aid reduction and re-use have also not been enough in focus.

The World Economic Forum recently gathered a group of experts from consumer goods brands, industries, governments and civil society to discuss the role that trade could play in advancing action on plastic pollution. The result of that initial cross-sector discussion—as well as the many that followed—have led to a new community paper that outlines trade barriers to accelerating action on plastic pollution.

We hope that trade policymakers and environment practitioners alike will find this paper a helpful resource to aid their discussions and promote new supportive actions for the 3Rs—reduce, re-use and recycle.

#### 1. Domestic bans and slow approvals curb recycled plastic use

Countries' regulations determine which items can be brought into a market. In addition to bans on plastic waste imports, several countries have implemented more complex rules on high-quality recycling plastic imports, which limits the use of recycled plastic packaging. Further, in other cases, manufacturers have had to switch to virgin plastic inputs for certain consumer goods, as the same quality of recycled plastic could not be sourced in the domestic market. Some markets have slow regulatory approval processes regarding the use of recycled plastic products.

#### 2. Diverse standards and limited data are complicating circular supply chains

In a world of value chains, differences in standards create challenges – whether on recycled plastic production, use or labelling. Varying grades of plastic by producers require recyclers to create different recycled plastic grades that add to costs. Missing information on materials' properties complicates recycling processes since certain additives can pose risks to human or ecological health during the mechanical recycling process.

The absence of traceability and data shortages, meanwhile, creates uncertainty on what materials are where in the market—especially for recycled content.

#### 3. More efforts are needed to facilitate circular plastics investments worldwide

Part of the challenge in building a circular plastics economy lies in insufficient investment upstream and downstream in emerging and advanced economies alike. There is a need to incubate and scale innovations and new ventures – including new material design and new businesses models – and to close the operational financing gap for city-level waste collection and recycling systems while mobilising capital investments for circular options and waste management more broadly.

Circular plastics investments can be slowed down or sped up based on several factors, not least the regulatory environment, local infrastructure and skills, incentives, government procurement policies and overall investment assistance. Facilitating and attracting investment in sustainable plastic solutions by matching solution providers with public and private funding opportunities will also help to close this gap.

#### **4. Processes**

From 2021, most plastic waste trade will be subject to the Basel Convention prior informed consent ([PIC procedure](#)) as controlled waste. Interviews with companies highlighted that to date some countries lack the capacity to efficiently review and process PIC notifications. In many cases, documents are still in paper format causing long delays in shipments.

So, what role can trade policy and capacity building play in tackling these challenges? Our community put forward ideas for further exploration in three areas, complemented by regulatory cooperation:

## Wildfire forces dozens to evacuate French surfing hotspot

Published July 31, 2020, 5:08 PM

[by Agence France-Presse](#)

A dramatic forest fire in the middle of a French coastal resort was contained early Friday after destroying nearly a dozen homes and forcing around 100 people to evacuate overnight, officials said.



The blaze erupted late Thursday in the Chiberta forest park at Anglet in southwest France, whose beaches just north of Biarritz draw surfers from around the world. (AFP Photo/GAIZKA IROZ)

The blaze erupted late Thursday in the Chiberta forest park at Anglet in southwest France, whose beaches just north of Biarritz draw surfers from around the world.

Soaring temperatures that reached nearly 42 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit) fanned the flames that burned 165 hectares (400 acres) in total.

“The fire is under control, things have improved since last night though there are still two or three hot spots, so there’s still a risk it could flare up again,” Anglet’s mayor, Claude Olive, told AFP.

The local prefecture said 11 homes were destroyed and five more rendered uninhabitable, and 16 people were treated for smoke inhalation, including one firefighter and several police officers.

Acrid smoke enveloped the city as around 130 firefighters battled the blaze, whose cause remains unknown, Olive said.

Residents described an inferno that spread quickly through the closely packed pine trees, which like much of France’s Basque Country had seen extremely dry conditions this summer.



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## Wildfire forces dozens to evacuate French surfing hotspot

“At the end of my street the flames were approaching the homes and they were very strong — we all jumped in our cars,” one local told AFP.

A young woman evacuated from her boyfriend’s apartment said everything appeared fine at 8 pm.

“Then at 8.30 pm we were told ‘Everyone come out! The tide has turned’,” she recalled in tears.

“I had the flames 10 metres (33 feet) away!” said another resident, adding that “usually there is never strong wind here.”

The blaze was the latest of several that erupted in southern and central France this week, kicking off the annual fire season which officials warn could be worsened by the drought and dry heat.

Last year, some 15,000 acres went up in flames across France, “and now the entire country is regularly affected,” Gregory Allione of the FNSPF firefighters’ association said in early July.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/31/wildfire-forces-dozens-to-evacuate-french-surfing-hotspot/>

## Nepal reopens Everest despite pandemic uncertainty

Published July 31, 2020, 5:05 PM

[by Agence France-Presse](#)

Nepal has reopened its mountains — including Everest — for the autumn trekking and climbing season in a bid to boost the struggling tourism sector, officials said Friday, despite coronavirus uncertainty.



Mount Everest and other Nepali peaks will re-open for the autumn trekking and climbing season after authorities lifted a nationwide virus lockdown (AFP Photo/Jewel SAMAD)

The Himalayan country shut its borders in March just ahead of the busy spring season when hundreds of mountaineers usually flock to the country, costing jobs and millions of dollars in revenue.

A nationwide lockdown was lifted last week, and Nepal is now open “for tourism activities, including mountaineering and trekking.” Mira Acharya of the tourism department told AFP.

The government will permit international flights to land in the country from August 17.

The decision comes despite over 1,000 new coronavirus infections reported this week, with a total of 19,547 cases.

Officials were “working on” safety protocols Acharya added, including for how long visitors would have to quarantine on arrival.

Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, one of the biggest Nepali expedition organisers, said that clients were calling, but were waiting to find out how long arrivals will have to quarantine for.

“It would be a relief for mountaineering workers if we can run expeditions after an empty spring season,” Sherpa said.

Tent cities grow at the foot of Everest and other peaks in the climbing seasons, with climbers and support staff all living in close quarters.



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## Nepal reopens Everest despite pandemic uncertainty

Breathing is already difficult at higher altitude — adding to medical risks if there is an outbreak of any kind among climbers.

Lukas Furtenbach of Furtenbach Adventures said that they had cancelled all expeditions.

“I think running an expedition now would be trial and error. Trial and error was never our strategy for expeditions, where we are responsible for the lives of our staff and our clients,” he said.

Mountaineering experts say the September-November season is more dangerous due to high winds and lower temperatures, and the world’s highest mountains see only a handful attempt to climb them.

Autumn summits on Everest last year were thwarted by a serac — a block of glacial ice — hanging dangerously above the already treacherous Khumbu icefall that climbers have to cross to reach Camp 1.

Last year’s traffic-clogged spring climbing season saw a record 885 people summit Everest, 644 of them from the south and 241 from the northern flank in Tibet.

The season ended with 11 deaths on the mountain, with at least four blamed on overcrowding.

Only a Chinese team reached the summit of Everest from its northern Tibetan side this year after all other expeditions were barred.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/31/nepal-reopens-everest-despite-pandemic-uncertainty/>



