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# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service

# DENR reports 20 wildlife rescue, releases in Region 9 during quarantine periods

Published August 16, 2020, 10:35 AM

by [Nonoy Lacson](#)

**ZAMBOANGA CITY** – The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic being experienced by our country has given a new focus on the conservation efforts of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 9, or the Zamboanga Peninsula.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (MANILA BULLETIN)

DENR-9 Regional Executive Director Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez said they noted an increase in wildlife rescue and releases from different provinces across the region during this period of lockdowns and house quarantines.

Based on records from the Protected Areas Management and Biodiversity Conservation Section of the Conservation and Development Division a total of 60 individual mammals like birds, reptiles, and marine turtles were rescued from January to date.

The office also recorded 12 mortalities of rescued wildlife due to injuries sustained by the animals were so extensive and, despite medical treatment, they still succumbed to their wounds.

DENR-9 also released to their habitat 942 marine turtle hatchlings, composed of 837 Olive Ridley Turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), and 105 Hawksbill Turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*).

One of the highlights of wildlife releases back to the wild was that of a juvenile Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) named Siocon, which was rescued recently in Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, and released after a month in Baliguian, Zamboanga del Norte

Rodriguez also noted an increase in the number of wildlife rescue, retrieval, and releases as compared to last year covering the same period.

Most of these occurred during the start of the pandemic in March up to June of this year, she said.

Even though communities were under lockdown due to the different community quarantines, DENR maintained a skeleton workforce that acted as a quick response team to deal with the enforcement of environmental laws which includes wildlife rescue and retrievals.

Rodriguez said Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act was the national law that governs the protection of the country's wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainability.

The law prescribes fines and imprisonment for acts against wildlife such as killing, inflicting injury, destruction of their habitat, illegal trade, collecting or possession, hunting, maltreatment and illegal transport.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/08/16/denr-reports-20-wildlife-rescue-releases-in-region-9-during-quarantine-periods/>



Philippine Star

10h

A man captured an owl atop a tent inside a residential area in Mandaluyong on Sunday.

Dennis Castaneda safely moved the owl into a cage. They said they already contacted the DENR for the turnover of the nocturnal bird. (Photos courtesy of Franz-Josef Javier/Poblacion Mandaluyong Fire Volunteer)



Bryan Bermejo and 9.2K others

735 Comments 1.5K Shares

# DENR seizes illegal lumber worth P250,000 in Angeles City

[IAN OCAMPO FLORA](#)

August 16, 2020

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO -- The ongoing pandemic has failed to halt illegal lumber trade here as operatives of the regional and provincial offices of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Penro) in Pampanga and the Philippine National Police seized 4,000 board feet of premium hardwood lumber worth over P250,000 in Angeles City.

Operatives swooped on the compound of Romar's Hardware located in Pandan village of Angeles City and owned by a certain Marita Yen, resulting in the seizure of the said contraband.

Penro head Laudemir Salac said that the operation is part of their regular inspection, monitoring and spot lumber inventory.

"And our team found out that suspicious forest products, which are banned timber hardwood species from the Philippine dipterocarp species such as Yakal, Tanguile and Lauan, were found hidden under those legitimate lumber stocks," Salac explained.

He said upon verification, the owner failed to show any legal documents or permits for keeping such lumber, and the team immediately seized the premium lumber.

"Possession of this species without necessary permit from the DENR is prohibited under forestry law," he added.

He also warned other hardware and lumber stores in the province not to attempt to store undocumented lumber or they may face the sanction of the law, and appealed to the public to report to the DENR any illegal forest activities.

The DENR-Penro Pampanga is now conducting administrative adjudication and preparing to file a criminal case against the offender for violating section 68 of the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines.

The seized lumber were temporarily stored at DENR regional office and PENRO for safekeeping.

## Garbage collector na walang PPEs aarestuhin



August 16, 2020 @ 2:18 PM 17 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Aarestuhin ang mga garbage collector (palero) na walang suot na Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) o protective gear sa Quezon City kung walang suot na protective gear ang mga ito kapag maghahakot ng basura sa lungsod.

Ito ang banta kanina ni Department of Public Order and Safety (DPOS) chief ret. Gen. Elmo San Diego matapos maiulat ang hindi pagsusuot ng PPEs at protective gear ng mga palero habang naghahakot ng basura.

“Aarestuhin namin sila (palero) dahil batas ‘yan dapat nakasuot sila ng protective gear habang naghahakot ng basura,” ani pa ni San Diego.

Sa telephone interview sinabi ni San Diego na upang maprotektahan ang mga garbage collector sa banta ng COVID-19 dapat umanong nakasuot ang mga ito ng PPEs at protective gear.

Ayon pa sa hepe ng DPOS marami ng ulat na nakarating sa kanyang tanggapan ang hindi pagsusuot ng PPEs at protective gear, face mask at iba pang proteksyon ng mga garbage collector habang naghahakot ng basura.

Nauna rito, inirekomenda ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na dapat nakasuot ng PPE at protective gear ang mga garbage collector bukod pa sa face mask habang naghahakot ng basura bilang proteksyon ng mga ito na isa sa ipinatutupad na health protocol.

Magugunitang sinabi ni DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda, Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns na dapat nakasuot ng Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) o protective gear ang mga garbage collector habang naghahakot ng basura bilang proteksyon ng mga ito laban sa COVID-19.

Samantala, kamakailan ay inihayag na rin ni Richard Santuile, action officer ng Quezon City Task Force Solid Waste Collection Cleaning and Disposal Services Management na posibleng pagmultahin ng mga local government unit (LGU) ang contractor ng garbage collector dahil sa hindi magpapasuot ng Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) o protective gear sa kanilang mga palero habang naghahakot ng basura. **Santi Celario**

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A surgical face mask washes up on the shore of so-called Baseco Beach in Manila.

Philstar.com/EC Toledo IV

## 'Lockdown litter': Can hospitals, homes reduce plastic use amid COVID-19 crisis?

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (Philstar.com) - August 16, 2020 - 9:30am

**Part 2 of a two-part feature. Read Part 1 [here](#).**

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is worried that large amounts of waste coming from hospitals handling coronavirus patients, if not managed soundly, might end up in seas and rivers.

This has not happened yet although surgical masks, gloves, and alcohol and hand sanitizer plastic bottles have washed up on so-called Baseco Beach in Manila and in coastal areas in the Philippines.

While others fear the pandemic could lead to an even larger environmental calamity in the future, Paeng Lopez, a campaigner at non-profit Health Care Without Harm, believes the health crisis “does not necessarily have to make things worse for us” in terms of managing healthcare waste.

"There are examples of hospitals actually that are able to reduce [healthcare] waste during the crisis. So that means the pandemic is not necessarily a reason for the volume of waste in households or hospitals to increase," Lopez told **Philstar.com** in an online interview.

One of these hospitals is St. Paul's Hospital of Iloilo, a tertiary hospital in the Western Visayas.



Medical frontliners of St. Paul's Hospital of Iloilo wear PPE suit, gown, head cap and booties made of taffeta cloth.

St. Paul's Hospital of Iloilo

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## Model hospital

St. Paul's Hospital of Iloilo was able to reduce the volume of medical waste generated in the facility with reusable protective gear although a decrease in the number of patients there has also helped.

Instead of using disposable PPEs, medical frontliners at St. Paul's wear gowns, head caps and booties made from taffeta cloth, which can be washed and safely reused. Hospital workers are also provided with cloth masks with filters where they can put their surgical or polypropylene masks.

Housekeeping personnel use laundry gloves, which are also reusable, instead of nitrile and latex gloves.

Single-use plastic can be an irresistible option for hospitals—it is cheap, durable and efficient in facilitating hygiene especially at this time when medical frontliners are battling an infectious disease. But Sr. Arcelita Sarnillo, SPC, the hospital administrator, believes there is a need to reduce their plastic waste to become better environmental stewards.

“We thought we need to devise something that has to be sustainable so it can be economical on our part and less impact on the waste, on the environment. We just have to reprocess it,” Sarnillo told **Philstar.com** in an online interview.

St. Paul had been reducing its plastic waste even before the pandemic struck. In a plastic audit conducted in January, St. Paul's found that only 30% of the waste disposed of in the hospital were essential medical waste such as IV bottles and IV tubings. The remaining 70% were general or non-hazardous waste such as coffee sachets, plastic bottles and juice beverages. Some of these can be recycled and are sold to junk shops.

The hospital also returns packaging containers to suppliers during scheduled deliveries to minimize the generation of plastic waste.

While avoiding plastic in facilities awash with pathogens such as the novel coronavirus seems impossible, at least for now, cutting down on its use can be attainable.

“What we found out [in plastic audits] is that a lot of plastic waste that hospitals are producing belong actually to non-essential plastics, meaning these are the types of plastics in hospitals that they can really do away with,” Lopez said, referring to plastic water bottles and coffee sachets.

## Plastic pandemic



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The use of disposable masks, latex and nitrile gloves and other protective gear made of plastic has seen a sudden increase as the number of coronavirus cases continues to skyrocket.

The public is also turning to plastic items such as face masks and face shields as affordable and reliable personal protection.

According to an estimate by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, global sales of disposable masks will reach some \$166 billion this year, up from around \$800 million in 2019.

Environmentalists warned that the coronavirus pandemic threatens to exacerbate the proliferation of plastic waste and its pollution of bodies of water, which were already a major environmental problem in the Philippines even before the coronavirus pandemic.

Licensed diver Danny Ocampo told **Philstar.com** he saw single-use face masks along the coastline of Anilao Bay in Mabini, Batangas and even underwater—on a seagrass bed.

Ocampo, who also works for non-profit Oceana Philippines, expressed concern over how things will be once the government further eases quarantine measures and allows tourism to return.

“My worry is when Anilao is reopened for tourism. Maybe that’s when we can see more disposable plastics and face masks [littered by people],” he said.

According to a 2020 study of The Pew Charitable Trusts and SYSTEMIQ on ocean plastic pollution, the amount of plastics dumped into the ocean will triple by 2040—from 11 million metric tons in 2016 to 29 million metric tons two decades from now—if no action is taken.

This is equivalent to 50 kilograms of plastic per meter of coastline around the world.

The Philippines—along with China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand—accounted for up to 60% of the plastic waste leaking into the world’s ocean, according to a 2015 report by environmental campaigner Ocean Conservancy.

A 2018 study of Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives found that Filipinos throw away around 59.8 billion pieces of plastic sachets and more than 17 billion shopping bags every year.

Filipinos also discard around 16.5 billion pieces of “labo” bags. The bags, which are smaller, thinner and are often transparent, are commonly used by neighborhood stores and eateries.

With the absence of a national policy on plastics, some local governments in the country have instituted regulations on plastic bags and other single-use items. However, sachets and other primary packaging are not covered by the bans.

Plastic pollution is wreaking havoc on marine wildlife, fisheries and costing at least \$8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems, according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

Plastic that ends up in marine environments breaks down into tiny particles called microplastics, whose harmful effects on humans are not yet determined. Fossil fuels required to produce plastic items can also pollute air and water.



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A single-use face mask is seen on a seagrass bed in Anilao Bay.

Danny Ocampo

### Gaps in implementing laws

Environmental lawyer Gloria Estenzo-Ramos told **Philstar.com** the lack of proper implementation of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 and RA 6969 or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 2000 is aggravating the country's plastic problem.

RA 9003 mandates local government units to divert at least 25% of all solid waste from waste disposal activities through re-use, recycling and composting activities. Such waste diversion goals must be increased every three years.

Another salient point of the law is the mandatory segregation of solid waste, which is largely unimplemented.

"So everything goes to the landfill. There's no system when the law requires such a system. This reduction of waste at source, there's a solution for that and the law has provided for it," Estenzo-Ramos, Oceana Philippines vice president, said.

Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, who oversees local government units and solid waste management, acknowledged there are lapses in the implementation of the law.

"Contrary to their objectives, all they (garbage collectors) need to do is fill up their trucks and haul the waste to the sanitary landfill segregated or not. They will just fast track the collection without the check and balance of local government if indeed proper segregation was implemented or not," Antiporda said in a virtual forum organized by Eco-Business in May.

Antiporda also lamented the absence of proper funding for local governments, especially poor municipalities, to implement the measure.

"The law said they need to stop open dumping and yet we don't give support to local governments on opening sanitary landfills... So what happens is they don't have a choice but to dispose of their trash here and there," he told **Philstar.com**.

The proposed Better Normal for the Workplace, Communities and Public Spaces bill that the House of Representatives [passed this month](#) seeks the strict monitoring of RA 9003.

House Bill 6864 also proposes that the government implement regulations on the manufacture and importation of single-use plastics, and develop single-use plastic packaging alternatives and provide incentives to plastic industries that will shift to other manufacturing activities.

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### Reusables or disposables?

Aside from the surge in the use of protective equipment often made of plastic, the coronavirus pandemic is also setting back efforts to reduce the country's dependency on plastic.

Movement restrictions and fear of getting infected forced many people to turn to online deliveries. Some food and beverage establishments also temporarily paused the use of reusable cups and utensils over virus fears.

"There's a lot of disruption in terms of the developments that were made previously for single-use plastic bans and a lot of policies that were supposed to be implemented had to be postponed," Greenpeace zero waste campaigner Marian Ledesma said.

"There's also the intervention of the plastic industry and how they took advantage of this pandemic to really advance their agenda," she added. "Together, [they] disrupted the gains of the anti-plastic movement in the past three years or so."

For environmental groups, more plastics does not always mean safer practices.

"We need to take a step back and realize that if we stay on the track of disposable materials, disposable masks, disposable PPEs, disposable gloves, then definitely we're putting ourselves in a position where it will be problematic for us to deal with the tons of waste that are coming out of hospitals," Lopez said.

Green groups have been urging the public to utilize reusable masks as safe and cost-effective alternatives, while leaving medical-grade masks to health workers and other frontliners.

A group of researchers from Duke University in the United States found that N95 masks—hospital-grade protection worn by medical frontliners—reduced droplet transmission to less than 0.1%. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.

Surgical masks brought down droplet transmission by 90%, while cotton face coverings reduced droplet transmission by 70% to 90%.

Last June, more than 100 scientists issued a statement saying that reusable items can be used safely by "employing basic hygiene," noting detergent or soap and hot water can be used to clean reusable items.

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## Green facilities

Lopez of HCWH said the case of St. Paul's Hospital of Iloilo shows other medical facilities can actually go green and stay true to their promise of doing no harm to their patients and environment.

In order to do this, hospitals should “use their economic muscle” and demand that manufacturers supply them with reusable items, Lopez said.

For Sarnillo, who vows to turn hospitals she is assigned to lead into green health facilities and models of sustainability, it was the Payatas dumpsite incident in July 2000 that prompted her to practice environmental awareness and rely on reusables.

More than 200 people were killed when an avalanche of garbage in Payatas dumpsite in Quezon City collapsed due to incessant rains, while more than 655 families were rendered homeless because of the incident.

“I thought we should not wait for the same incident to happen in any other place before we get to act,” she said.

***Reporting for this story was supported by Internews' Earth Journalism Network.***

# EDITORIAL - Lumulutang na used face masks

(Pilipino Star Ngayon) - August 17, 2020 - 12:00am



Nagdudulot ng pangamba ang mga palutang-lutang na used face masks sa mga baybaying dagat hindi lamang sa Metro Manila kundi pati sa iba pang bahagi ng bansa. Hindi lamang face masks ang nakitang palutang-lutang kundi mayroon ding gloves, plastic na bote ng alcohol at sanitizer. Sa Baseco Beach sa Tondo, Maynila, may face mask na inanod sa dalampasigan. Kamakailan, kinunan pa ng mga diver at environmentalist sa isang probinsiya ang nasisid nilang face mask.

Patuloy sa pananalasa ang COVID-19 at tumataas pa ang bilang ng infected. Sa pagdami ng kaso, lumulutang din ang kawalan ng disiplina at kamangmangan ng mga tao sa pagtatapon ng used face masks. Sa halip ilagay nang maayos sa isang basurahan, kung saan-saan na lang itinatapon at nakakalat sa kalsada.

Kung tapon lamang nang tapon ng masks at iba pang ginamit o sinuot na pamproteksiyon, maaa-ring kumalat nang kumalat ang virus. Wala nang paghupa at maraming mahahawahan ng virus. Ang mga ginamit na disposable single-use masks at iba pang protective equipment ay nararapat nakahiwalay sa ibang mga lalagyan at itatapon nang maayos. Ang hindi maayos na pagdi-dispose ng mga ito ay maaaring maging dahilan nang pagkalat ng virus. Ang virus ay nagtatagal sa masks at iba pang protective equipment ng siyam na araw kaya posibleng dito magmula ang pagkalat ng sakit.

Halos araw-araw, may mga used face masks na makikita sa mga kalsada at tinatangay-tangay ng hangin kapag may dumaan na sasakyan. Kung may COVID ang nagsuot ng mask, tiyak na patalun-talon din ang virus at patuloy sa pagkalat.

Nagbabala ang environmentalists na ang hindi maayos na pagdi-dispose ng mga single-use face masks ay mako-contaminate ang kapaligiran at magkakasakit ang mga tao dahil source ito ng infection.

Maraming magkakasakit kapag hindi nagkaroon ng disiplina at talino sa pagtatapon ng ginamit na face masks. Halos alam naman ng lahat na bawal ang magtapon ng mga bagay na ginamit lalo sa panahong ito. Magkaroon ng disiplina ang lahat sa pagtatapon ng basura na may kaugnayan sa pandemia.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2020/08/17/2035910/editorial-lumulutang-na-used-face-masks/amp/>

# EDITORIAL - Proper disposal of used masks, PPE is necessary

(The Freeman) - August 17, 2020 - 12:00am



Consolacion Mayor Joannes Alegado plans to make it his policy to fine residents who do not properly dispose of their used face masks.

Alegado said he observed how some of his constituents just threw their discarded face masks anywhere.

"Ang uban ipanglabay bisa'g asa lang and isagol sa ubang basura and mag-pose og risgo sa katawhan. Ang mask isul-ob sa nawong, sa baba, bisa'g di positibo sa COVID, pero naa gihapoy kagaw ning mask. Atong malikayan ang pag-transmit sa kagaw through (proper) garbage disposal," Alegado is quoted as saying in a report in this newspaper.

Now those who do may soon face penalties ranging from community service to a P500 fine.

Not so long ago we wrote about how this current health crisis will also spawn another one of entirely new nature down the road; an environmental crisis resulting from the safety equipment that has been used then discarded, that will litter our landfills and even our seas.

Because these material are designed and built to protect users from bacteria, recycling them is not advisable. Because these materials were also made to be durable, at least for the duration of their use, they also cannot easily biodegrade.

Aside from the threat to the environment, discarded used face masks and Personal Protective Equipment may also pose a health threat, as some of these may have actually been used by COVID-19 patients or exposed to droplets from them.

It has been proven that the virus that causes COVID-19 can stay alive in some surfaces for an extended period of time. While studies have not proven that humans can contract COVID-19 in this method, this is something we would rather not find out for ourselves.

With any luck, other local executives will follow the example of Alegado or, better yet, go the extra mile and make sure that used face masks, PPEs, and other hazardous materials that are produced as a result of our fight against the coronavirus are disposed of safely and properly.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/opinion/2020/08/17/2035880/editorial-proper-disposal-used-masks-ppe-necessary/amp/>

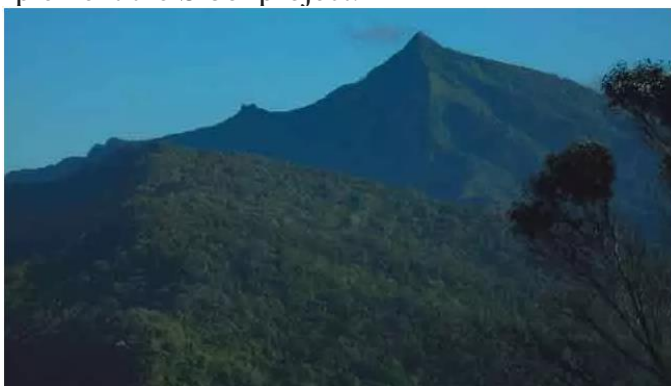
## US launches new biodiversity project to protect PH environment

By [The Manila Times](#)

August 17, 2020

The US government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAid), launched the Philippines Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans, and Landscapes (Sibol) project that will support the sustainable management of the country's natural resources and combat environmental crimes.

The five-year, P1.1 billion project will provide support to the Philippine government to achieve its goals of improving natural resource governance and stimulating public and private investments, leading to greater ecosystem stability and inclusive green growth. USAid will work closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to implement the Sibol project.



*USAid's new biodiversity project will protect Cleopatra's Needle in Puerto Princesa City as a critical habitat for wildlife*  
PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMUAL VILLANUEVA/CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY PH

"Effective conservation management and measurement of the value of natural resources contribute to the Philippines' economic development and environmental resilience," explained Lawrence Hardy 2nd, Mission Director of USAid Philippines. "Through Sibol, USAid is pleased to support the Philippines' efforts to conserve the country's rich biodiversity while improving the livelihoods of Filipinos whose incomes depend upon these natural resources."

RTI International, a US-based nonprofit organization, will lead the implementation of the Sibol project, building on its three decades of experience providing technical assistance, institutional strengthening, programmatic support, and research in a variety of sectors in the Philippines. The Center for Conservation Innovations, Forest Foundation Philippines, Internews, Zoological Society of London, and the Resources, Environment, and Economics Center for Studies (REECS), comprise the consortium partnering with RTI.

DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs Juan Miguel Cuna welcomed this important partnership with USAid and said, "Ensuring ecosystem integrity and human well-being are among the key priorities of DENR."

"We look forward to partnering with USAid in advancing our goals of environmental sustainability and strengthening DENR's capacity to combat environmental criminals, enhance the adaptive capacities of communities against natural disasters, as well as improve the economic conditions of affected local people," he added.

Since 2014, USAid has provided more than P5 billion in assistance to the Philippine government in conserving the country's biodiversity and protecting its landscapes and seascapes.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/08/17/weekly/expat-diplomats/us-launches-new-biodiversity-project-to-protect-ph-environment/756355/>

# Tampakan LGU terminates deal with mining firm

By: [Karl R. Ocampo](#) - Reporter / [@kocampoINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:22 AM August 17, 2020

The municipality of Tampakan has terminated an agreement that allowed Sagittarius Mining Inc. (SMI) to continue its mining operations in the area, citing “vague” and “disadvantageous” terms in the contract.

The local government unit in South Cotabato issued the resolution last week, wherein it stated that the local government unit (LGU) of Tampakan “is no longer interested to conduct any review/updating of the 2009 municipal principal agreement” with SMI. It is, however, open to entering a new agreement with the company. “Unfortunately, until now, [the agreement] was not updated contrary to its provision that it should be reviewed every four years to cope with the demands and call of present times,” the resolution read.

“After scrutiny, there are provisions ... that are considered vague, disadvantageous to inhabitants of Tampakan and which unduly tie the hands of the local government of Tampakan ... to protect its people and the environment,” it added.

The local directive came months after the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) approved the 12-year extension of SMI’s financial and technical assistance agreement (FTAA), which would allow it to operate until March 21, 2032.

The order was issued by MGB on June 8, 2016, but was known only recently.

Alyansa Tigil Mina described the extension as a “midnight deal,” noting that “it was done without the knowledge of the affected stakeholders, including the LGUs, farmers and indigenous peoples in Tampakan.”

The MGB, for its part, cited force majeure in agreeing to extend the company’s contract, saying that legal conflicts, the ban on open-pit mining and peace and order problems impeded SMI to pursue its operations in the municipality.

SMI’s Tampakan project is known to be Southeast Asia’s largest undeveloped copper and gold reserve. But even with an FTAA, SMI cannot proceed with commercial operations without the certification from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, given that ancestral lands would be affected by the Tampakan project’s development.

Despite the longstanding battle between SMI and the residents of Tampakan, MGB director Wilfredo Moncano said he remained positive that the mining project would happen before the Duterte administration ends.

“I am not privy to the execution and the contents of the agreement [between the two parties] but that can be settled by talking and calm dialogue,” he said. “Perhaps in the assessment of the LGU, there may be terms in the principal agreement that need to be modified because it is outdated given that the document was executed several years ago.” “I hope they will come to an agreement soon and support the development and realization of the potential of this project,” he added.

## MECQ extension urged in Metro

posted August 16, 2020 at 05:58 pm

by [Willie Casas](#)

A public health expert on Saturday called for a two-week extension of the modified enhanced community quarantine or MECQ in Metro Manila and in the nearby provinces, saying relaxing the lockdown could further increase the COVID-19 cases in the Philippines.

“What is clear right now is that the increase in COVID-19 cases is unrelenting and the viral transmission has not decreased,” Tony Leachon, a former adviser to the National Task Force on the COVID-19 response, told ABS-CBN’s Teleradyo.

“If we go down to GCG [general community quarantine], all the more that we won’t be able to control the viral transmission while our health system capacity is not yet in place.”

Reimposed on Aug. 4, the MECQ in Metro Manila, Laguna, Cavite, Rizal and Bulacan will end on Aug. 18, with the government announcing new quarantine levels on Monday.

These areas had reverted to a stricter lockdown from GCQ on the appeal of exhausted health workers, who had warned that the health care system was being overwhelmed by the surge in COVID-10 cases.

Leachon feared that, with 75 percent of the workforce returning to work under GCQ, the viral transmission would further increase.

“If we go back to GCQ, many people will go back to work. We will lose our gains from MECQ because it was too short. We will lose momentum,” Leachon said.

Data received from the City Government of Manila showed that the two-week MECQ helped to slightly bring down their COVID-19 numbers, he said. He said the infection, recovery and death rates went down.

“If we can sacrifice for two weeks to bring down our figures, then we’ll have a merry Christmas,” Leachon said.

He cited the “miraculous” gains made by Cebu, formerly a hot spot, where the positivity rate went down from 33 percent to 7 percent after a month-long ECQ.

Meanwhile, the positive rate in Metro Manila remains at 17 percent, which he says is high.

Malacañang on Saturday announced that, except for Metro Manila and the surrounding provinces, most parts of the Philippines would remain under relaxed community quarantine levels until the end of the month—even as the number of COVID-19 infections in the country continued to increase.



## Boracay reopening to foreign guests eyed by October

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

August 17, 2020

BORACAY Island, the crown jewel of Philippine tourism, is looking to reopen to foreign guests within a travel bubble.

Stakeholders who attended a meeting on Saturday called by the provincial government said Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores proposed to open Boracay by October “for that bubble travel.”

BusinessMirror sources said the stakeholders agreed to the reopening, “but require a [negative] RT-PCR test” from guests, at least five days from the date tested. Miraflores also “got the commitment of hotel owners to give a discount [on published room rates] up to 75 percent,” the same sources said.

The Aklan government is eyeing the travel bubble to initially be with South Korea, with Philippine Airlines flying between Incheon and the Kalibo International Airport. A working group has been tasked to discuss the details of the agreement between the Aklan LGU and Boracay stakeholders, before it is presented in the next Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force meeting.

The island has already completed its Covid-19 testing laboratory, which will help stakeholders get health checks for their employees. Per agreement between stakeholders and the LGU during the meeting on Saturday, a protocol will be established for workers to get a “daily symptomatic test.” This can help boost the confidence of tourists to travel to Boracay again, according to the provincial government.

Boracay, known the world over for its powdery white sand beach, is currently open to tourists from Western Visayas, which is currently under modified general community quarantine. The Department of Tourism (DOT) has deferred to local government leaders when they want to reopen their provinces and tourists destinations to holidaymakers and vacationists. *(See, “**LGU chiefs, worried by virus, holding up tourism reopening,**” in the BusinessMirror, July 9, 2020.)*

As of August 13, at least 164 accommodation establishments in Boracay already have certificates of authority to operate, six of which have provisional CAO. These 164 establishments have 3,377 rooms, according to data from the DOT-Western Visayas.

### Travel curbs update

Meanwhile, about 40 percent of destinations worldwide have already eased travel restrictions they had put in place to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been monitoring global responses to the pandemic from the start of the crisis.

“This latest outlook, recorded on 19 July, is up from 22 percent of destinations that had eased restrictions on travel by 15 June and the 3 percent previously observed by 15 May. It confirms the trend of a slow but continuous adaptation and responsible restart of international tourism,” said the global agency of tourism in a news statement over the weekend.

However, of the 87 destinations that have eased travel restrictions, “just four have completely lifted all restrictions,” while 83 have eased them while keeping some measures such as the partial closure of borders in place. The UNWTO noted 115 destinations, representing 53 percent of all destinations worldwide, “continue to keep their borders completely closed for tourism.”

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said, “The restart of tourism can be undertaken responsibly and in a way that safeguards public health while also supporting businesses and livelihoods. As destinations continue to ease restrictions on travel, international cooperation is of paramount importance. This way, global tourism can gain people’s trust and confidence, essential foundations as we work together to adapt to the new reality we now face.”

The Philippines continues to implement travel restrictions, which resulted in a 71.5-percent fall in visitor receipts, and a 73-percent plunge in inbound arrivals from January to July 2020. Many of the local tourism stakeholders are micro, small, and medium scale enterprises numbering 500,000, and supporting 5 million jobs.

Stakeholders have been appealing to the Bicameral Conference Committee members discussing the proposed Bayanihan 2 Act for working capital loans to be able to get back soon their feet. *(See, “**Tourism sector loses P190 billion in March-July,**” in the BusinessMirror, August 13, 2020.)*

# Bigger Bayanihan 2 funds for safety nets seen to get bicam nod

By [Butch Fernandez](#)

August 17, 2020

SENATE Minority Leader Franklin M. Drilon on Sunday stressed the need for a larger recovery fund under the proposed Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2) now being tackled by a bicameral conference committee.

The bigger outlay is meant to expand the government's social assistance package, including another round of social amelioration program (SAP), commonly referred to as *ayuda* to low-income families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Drilon said he supports the P162 billion funding for Bayanihan 2 as proposed by the House of Representatives. The Senate version is only P140 billion. The bicameral conference committee that is tasked to reconcile the disagreeing provisions is set to meet again on Monday, August 17.

“Formal and informal sectors have both been adversely hit by the pandemic. It is the responsibility of the government to help them particularly in these trying times. No sector should be left behind,” Drilon said.

Drilon said the Bayanihan 2 provides for “crucial safety nets” for all the sectors heavily hit by the pandemic, hence the need to increase the funding.

“We need to increase the scope of the various social and economic assistance programs laid out in the Bayanihan 2. Without these much-needed interventions, poverty and unemployment will continue to rise; business establishments will be forced to permanently shut down; and our economy will continue to contract,” Drilon said.

The Philippines logged the highest number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Southeast Asia recently. The country is now in recession, with second quarter GDP posting a 16.5 percent contraction, and the unemployment rate is expected to hit a record 18.5 percent this year.

Drilon said the stimulus fund can still be increased to at least the level being proposed by the House. The Department of Finance had earlier said existing resources could only provide up to P140 billion in stimulus fund.

## Contentious tourism fund

He cited some programs that Bayanihan 2 aimed to provide for the most vulnerable sectors. These include the P10-billion assistance to the Tourism sector's badly hit small and medium enterprises, to help them with working capital so they can rev up operations that were shuttered by the lockdowns, and save employees' jobs.

However, the bicameral panels from the Senate and House are expected to have debates on this P10-billion Tourism funding, since the House version transfers the fund to the TIEZA, for use solely on tourism infrastructure—a matter objected to by all stakeholders who say infrastructure is not the need of the hour. Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat supports their view.

Bayanihan 2 also provides for: the proposed P15,000 cash assistance for health-care workers who would contract mild to moderate Covid-19, P100,000 to nurses and doctors (health-care workers) who would contract a severe case of Covid-19, and P1 million to the families of healthcare workers who die of the disease; as well as P5,000 to P8,000 cash subsidy (SAP) to low-income earners; provision of cash assistance to teachers from private schools and tertiary education institutions and part-time faculty in state universities and colleges; and cash-for-work for displaced workers.

Bigger Bayanihan 2 funds for safety nets seen to get

August 17, 2020

TITLE: bicam nod

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The Senate version provided standby funding of P10 billion for the procurement of PCR Testing and extraction kits, supplies, materials, and reagents; P15 billion for the implementation of cash-for-work program and the TUPAD; P17 billion for the unemployment or involuntary separation assistance for displaced workers or employees; P50-billion infusion of capital to government financial institutions including the P5 billion to Philippine Guarantee Corporation, P30 billion to LandBank, P15 billion to Development Bank of the Philippines; P17-billion assistance to the Agriculture sector; and P3-billion assistance to state universities and colleges.

The minority leader said the collectibles from Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGO) licensees and service providers can bridge the funding gap.

At the Senate Committee on Labor hearing in February, BIR Commissioner Sixto Dy said POGO licensees and operators are currently not paying franchise taxes to the BIR. In all, POGOs' unpaid taxes amount to around P50 billion.

“We need to collect these huge amounts of money to finance these crucial programs. It can bridge the funding gap because we have no choice but increase the spending for Covid-19,” Drilon said.

# COVID-19 infections top 161,000 with total deaths nearing 3,000

August 16, 2020 | 7:48 pm



THE Department of Health (DoH) reported 3,420 new coronavirus infections on Sunday, bringing the total to 161,253.

The death toll rose to 2,665 after 65 more patients died, while recoveries increased by a record 40,397 to 112,586, it said in a bulletin.

Of the new cases, 2,091 came from Metro Manila, 263 from Laguna, 149 from Cavite, 137 from Batangas and 106 from Rizal, DoH said.

There were 46,002 active cases, 90.7% of which were mild, 6.7% did not show symptoms, 1.1% were severe and 1.5% were critical, it added.

Forty-six of the new reported deaths came from Metro Manila, 13 from Central Visayas, three from the Calabarzon region, and one each from Central Luzon, Bicol, and the Davao regions, the agency said.

More than 1.89 million individuals have been tested for the virus, according to DoH.

DoH reported “time-based” recoveries by reconciling their data with those of local government units.

Under the protocol, patients with mild symptoms or don’t show them at all will be tagged as recoveries after 14 days from the onset of the illness or from the time of swabbing.

The patients should be cleared by physicians before being classed as recoveries.

DoH said last week time-based recoveries will be reported every Sunday.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte locked down Luzon island in mid-March, suspending work, classes and public transportation to contain the pandemic. People should stay home except to buy food and other basic goods, he said.

He extended the strict lockdown twice for the island and thrice for Metro Manila. He later put Manila and nearby cities and provinces back under a strict lockdown until Aug. 18 after a fresh surge in infections.

The Education department also moved the opening of classes to Oct. 5 from Aug. 24. Mr. Duterte has said he wouldn’t allow face-face classes in the absence of a vaccine.

COVID-19 infections top 161,000 with total deaths

August 17, 2020

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While Russia claims to be the first country to develop a coronavirus vaccine, trials were still being conducted and the vaccine shots are not expected to arrive in the Philippines until next year.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday said his country had developed the first vaccine for the coronavirus. Critics have questioned the safety of the vaccine from the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology since vaccines take years to develop.

The Philippines and Russia seek to run phase 3 clinical trials of the vaccine from October to March, and these may involve as many as 3,000 volunteer patients, Presidential Spokesman Harry L. Roque said last week.

The coronavirus has sickened about 21.6 million and killed more than 769,000 people worldwide, according to Worldometers website, citing various sources including data from the World Health Organization.

The website said about 14.3 million people have recovered from the virus, listing only 6.5 million active cases. — **Vann Marlo M. Villegas**

## Pinas may bagong 3,420 COVID-19 cases; 40,397 pa nakarekober na



August 16, 2020 @ 5:10 PM 14 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Naitala ngayong Linggo, Agosto 16 ang mataas na bilang ng mga nakarekober sa coronavirus disease 2019 o COVID-19 base na rin sa isinagawang time-based recovery tagging o Oplan recovery ng Department of Health.

Sa virtual presser, sinabi ni Health Usec Maria Rosario Vergeire na umabot sa 40,397 ang nadagdag ngayong araw na gumaling sa sakit kung saan umabot na sa kabuuang 112,586 ang COVID-19 related recoveries.

Gayundin nakapagtala ang DOH ng 3,420 bagong kaso kaya umakyat na sa 161,253 ang COVID-19 case sa bansa habang umabot naman sa 46,002 ang aktibong mga kaso.

Sa 3,420 mga bagong kaso, 2,745 ang nangyari noong August 3 hanggang 16 at ang top regions na may naitalang mga bagong kaso ay ang NCR na may 1,594; Region 4A, 619 at Region 7, 86.

Nasa 65 naman ang nadagdag sa bilang ng mga pumanaw sanhi upang umabot na sa 2,665 ang namamatay sa sakit.

Sa bilang na ito, 29 ang pumanaw ngayong Agosto, 29 noong July at 7 noong June kung saan karamihan sa mga pumanaw ay mula naman sa NCR, Region 7, Region 4A, Region 3 at Region 11.

Sa kabuuang bagong naitalang recoveries, ang 914 ay batay sa kung ano ang inulat araw-araw habang ang 39,483 ay base naman sa time-based recoveries.

Nasa 85 naman ang duplicates na kailangang alisin sa total case counts kung saan limang recovered cases ay iniulat na recovered ngunit matapos ang final validation at napag-alamang 12 ang pumanaw habang tatlo ang active cases. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

Source: <https://www.remate.ph/pinas-may-bagong-3420-covid-19-cases-40397-pa-nakarekober-na/>

# Mandatory COVID-19 test sa manggagawa

By [Danilo Garcia](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon) - August 17, 2020 - 12:00am



Kabilang sa mga manggagawa na isasailalim dito ang mga nasa turismo; local manufacturing; transportasyon at logistics; food retails; edukasyon; serbisyong pinansyal; non-food retail; pampublikong palengke; konstruksyon; suplay ng tubig; sewerage; waste management; pampublikong sektor at maging ang media.

Boy Santos, file

MANILA, Philippines — Gagawin ng mandatory ng Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) ang pagpapasailalim sa mga manggagawa ng ilang sektor sa paggawa sa RT-PCR test o swab test para mas makatiyak sa pagbagal ng pagkalat ng COVID-19.

Ito ay sa pamamagitan ng inilabas na Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04 ng DOLE at Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) ukol sa Supplemental Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19.

Kabilang sa mga manggagawa na isasailalim dito ang mga nasa turismo; local manufacturing; transportasyon at logistics; food retails; edukasyon; serbisyong pinansyal; non-food retail; pampublikong palengke; konstruksyon; suplay ng tubig; sewerage; waste management; pampublikong sektor at maging ang media.

Ngunit ipinaalala ni Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III na ang RT-PCR test ay dapat sagutin ng kumpanya at hindi ipasa ang gastusin sa mga empleyado.

Nakapaloob din sa panuntunan na dapat isailalim kada apat na linggo ang mga manggagawa na nasa 'hospitality and tourism sector' sa El Nido, Boracay, Coron, Panglao, Siargao at iba pang destinasyon ng turismo na tinukoy ng Department of Tourism (DOT).

Ang mga obrero naman buhat sa manufacturing at public service providers sa mga 'economic zones' na nasa ilalim ng Special Concern Area ay kailangang sumailalim sa tests kada quarter ng taon.

Kada quarter rin ang RT-PCR test sa mga manggagawa na 'frontline at economic priority' o iyong mga nagtatrabaho sa mga sektor na mataas ang prayoridad at mataas ang interaksyon sa publiko.

Kung magpopositibo ang isang manggagawa, kailangang bigyan ang pasyente ng kaniyang kumpanya ng benepisyo sa sick leave, medical insurance coverage, at supplemental pay allowance habang naka-quarantine.

Nakapaloob din sa panuntunan ang pagsusuot ng mga empleyado ng face masks at shields, disinfection items tulad ng alkohol, physical distancing at iba pang protocols sa mga tanggapan at pook-gawaan.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2020/08/17/2035838/mandatory-covid-19-test-sa-manggagawa/amp/>





A municipal ordinance signed last week named the six sandbars and coral reefs as Pag-asa Cay 1, 2, 3 and 4 from nearest to farthest while the reefs were Pag-asa reef 1 and 2.

[Philstar.com/File](https://www.philstar.com/File)

## Kalayaan LGU names 6 sandbars, reefs in West Philippine Sea

[Romina Cabrera](#) (The Philippine Star) - August 17, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — In a move to assert sovereignty over the country's territory, the municipal government of Kalayaan islands in Palawan has officially named sandbars and reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

A municipal ordinance signed last week named the six sandbars and coral reefs as Pag-asa Cay 1, 2, 3 and 4 from nearest to farthest while the reefs were Pag-asa reef 1 and 2.

They were named after Pag-asa island, the nearest feature close to the cays and reefs and the seat of government of the municipality.

These cays and reefs have served as fishermen's shelter during bad weather in the area, noted by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) as traditional fishing grounds of local residents, according to officials.

Maurice Philip Albayda, Kalayaan municipal officer, said the naming of cays and reefs is "a proactive approach that is a giant leap for our nation's cause," amid territorial disputes with China over the waters.

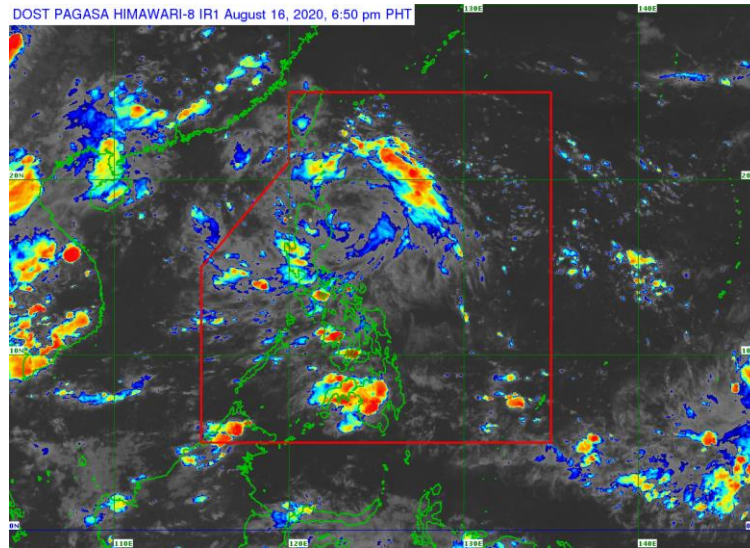
"We do not intend to stir any situation in the area. However this measure is an example of a brave move that, through we as a local government, with our limited mandates, can do a giant leap for our nation's cause, sovereignty over our territory," Albayda said in a text message.

"On a national implication, the naming means putting our ground more established in the disputed areas where we know we have already won in the 2016 PCA ruling," he said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana recently visited Pag-asa island as the government completed a ship beaching ramp, which makes it easier for more infrastructure projects to push through. President Duterte has yet to visit the island.

# Pagasa monitors 2 LPAs

By: [Darryl John Esguerra](#) - Reporter / [@DJEsguerraINQ](#)  
INQUIRER.net / 07:15 PM August 16, 2020



MANILA, Philippines — Two low-pressure areas (LPAs) inside the Philippine territory will bring rains to parts of Luzon, the weather state bureau reported Sunday.

In an advisory, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said one of the LPAs is located 160 kilometers east of Tuguegarao City, Cagayan as of 3 pm.m Sunday.

The other LPA was last seen 135 kilometers west-northwest of Dagupan City, Pangasinan.

The Ilocos Region, Cordillera Administrative Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, and the province of Quezon will experience rains and thunderstorms due to the LPA and the southwest monsoon or habagat.

The “habagat” will cause Metro Manila, Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, and the rest of Calabarzon scattered rains and thunderstorms.

Meanwhile, a localized thunderstorm will bring rain over the rest of the country but this would mostly be in the afternoon or evening.

Pagasa warned residents of possible flash floods and landslides during severe rain or thunderstorms.

## LPA, localized thunderstorm iiral sa Pilipinas



August 16, 2020 @ 8:33 AM 22 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Patuloy na makaaapekto ang low pressure area (LPA) sa Cagayan Valley, Cordillera Administrative Region, at Ilocos provinces ngayong Linggo, Agosto 16 batay sa PAGASA.

Makararanas ng mga pag-ulan at maulap na himpapawid ang mga nabanggit na lugar.

Gayundin ang nalalabing bahagi ng bansa maging ang Metro Manila na maaaring magkaroon ng mga pag-ulan sa tanghali o gabi dulot naman ng localized thunderstorms.

Samantala, nagbabala ang PAGASA sa posibilidad ng pagbaha o pagguho ng lupa sa kasagsagan ng buhos ng ulan, kulog, at kidlat.

Sa ulat, namataan ang LPA sa layong 225 km east northeast ng Casiguran, Aurora. **RNT/FGDC**

# Quake shakes Batanes

[Helen Flores](#) (The Philippine Star) - August 17, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A magnitude-5 earthquake shook parts of Batanes yesterday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

The quake, which occurred 40 kilometers southeast of Sabtang at 10:53 a.m., was expected to cause damage and aftershocks, the agency said.

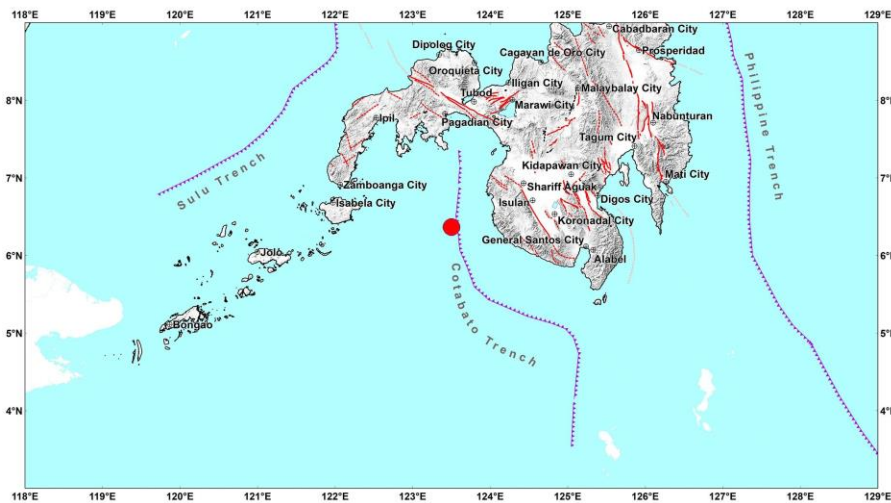
It was felt at Intensity 5 in Sabtang; Intensity 4 in Uyugan, Ivana, Mahatao and Basco, and Intensity 3 in Itbayat.

Phivolcs classifies quakes with Intensities five, four and three as strong, moderately strong and weak, respectively.

The quake was tectonic in origin.

Meanwhile, another magnitude-3.3 quake hit Danao, Bohol at 10:09 a.m. yesterday..

The temblor's epicenter was located some three kilometers northwest of the town.



# Magnitude 5.1 quake strikes southwest of Sultan Kudarat

Published August 16, 2020 4:23pm

A magnitude 5.1 earthquake struck 66 kilometers southwest of Sultan Kudarat's Kalamansig town Sunday afternoon, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) reported.

The tremor struck at 3:22 p.m., was tectonic in origin, and had a 586-kilometer depth of focus.

**PHIVOLCS-DOST** @phivolcs\_dost

#EarthquakePH #EarthquakeSultanKudarat

Earthquake Information No.1  
Date and Time: 16 Aug 2020 - 03:22 PM  
Magnitude = 5.1  
Depth = 586 kilometers  
Location = 06.36N, 123.50E - 066 km S 69° W of Kalamansig (Sultan Kudarat)

[earthquake.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/2020\\_Earthquak...](http://earthquake.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/2020_Earthquak...)

3:53 PM · Aug 16, 2020

28 See PHIVOLCS-DOST's other Tweets

No damage was expected from the quake, and aftershocks were unlikely. — **DVM, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/751561/magnitude-5-1-quake-strikes-southwest-of-sultan-kudarat/story/>

# Italy garbage dips with virus lockdowns, but plastics rise

Associated Press / 09:49 PM August 16, 2020



Garbage is seen next to the beach at Fiumicino, near Rome, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2020. Italy produced 10% less garbage during its coronavirus lockdown, but environmentalists warn that increased reliance on disposable masks and packaging is imperiling efforts to curb single-use plastics that end up in oceans and seas. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

ROME — Italy produced 10% less garbage during its coronavirus lockdown, but environmentalists warn that increased reliance on disposable masks and packaging is imperiling efforts to curb single-use plastics that end up in oceans and seas.

Italian researchers estimate that during the peak months of Italy's lockdown in March and April, urban waste production fell by 500,000 tons. That decrease is enabling dumps in Italy — where trash collection in major cities has often become a hot-button political issue — to absorb the 300,000 tons of extra waste from protective masks and gloves estimated to be used this year, according to the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research.

“Substantially, the figures will balance each other by the end of this year,” Valeria Frittelloni, the institute's head of waste management and circular economy, told The Associated Press.

But the pandemic dealt a blow to efforts to move away from single-use plastics in many places where they were just beginning to become mainstream. U.N., Greenpeace, Italy's Marevivo environmental organization and other such groups are warning that continued reliance on single-use plastics will pose longer-term risks to the environment.

That's particularly true for a country with a long coastline along the Mediterranean Sea, which is plagued by the tiny bits of broken-down plastic known as microplastics.

“We don't have an estimate yet of how much of those objects were dumped in the environment, but what is sure is that all those that have been abandoned sooner or later will reach the sea,” said Giuseppe Ungherese, head of anti-pollution campaigns at Greenpeace Italy.

After years of reducing reliance on products like plastic bags and cutlery, in line with European Union directives, Italy saw a huge spike in plastic use during the coronavirus emergency. The Italian National Consortium for the Collection and Recycling of Plastic Packages said the increase in online shopping and its related packaging led to an 8% increase in plastic waste, even within an overall decrease in garbage production.

Keiron Roberts, an environmental research fellow at the University of Portsmouth in England, said other countries saw similar demand for plastics and cardboard as a result of the so-called Amazon effect — referring to a surge in reliance on the internet retailer as people holed up to abide by stay-at-home orders. But he concurred that within Europe, Italy was in a particularly vulnerable spot.

“Because you are surrounded by coastline, you just need to have some rain events that will wash these masks into the sewage system or into the rivers and the waterways and they will eventually make their ways into the ocean,” he said.

“There’s no area of the Mediterranean now where plastic hasn’t impacted,” he added.

Italy’s National Center for Research reported in 2018 that the presence of microplastics on surface seawater off Italy’s coasts was comparable to levels found in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, the collection of ocean debris that spans part of that ocean.

Globally, the U.N. Environment Program has warned that the increased use of single-use plastics in protective equipment could lead to uncontrolled dumping and add to marine pollution, and it has urged countries to develop adequate disposal plans. The U.N. Trade body, UNCTAD, estimates that worldwide global sales of face masks alone will reach \$166 billion this year, up from \$800 million in 2019.

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, only a quarter of Italy’s waste was recycled, with an estimated 53 kilotons of plastics leaking into the Mediterranean each year, according to the environmental group WWF.

“Plastics and global warming are the main threats, and we need to act now to prevent our planet and sea from transforming into a hostile and unlivable environment,” said Greenpeace’s Ungherese.

/MUF

# EU business council touts waste reduction as potential investment draw

August 16, 2020 | 7:30 pm



PHILSTAR

EUROPEAN businesses asked the government to back measures reducing plastic waste and offer incentives for recycling to promote investment and facilitate the post-pandemic economic recovery.

A circular economy model, which minimizes waste in the design process and through reuse and recycling of manufactured products, will help reduce pollution and promote a healthier and more productive population, EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) Executive Director Chris Humphrey said in an online interview Tuesday.

The council cited a report from the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia saying that the adoption of circular economy models could bring about economic growth of \$324 billion and create 1.5 million jobs in Asia by 2025.

EU-ABC recommends domestic waste collection and reuse, adding costs to plastic waste to discourage their use, and regulations for waste collection.

Mr. Humphrey said that such moves could help the Philippines attract more investment. "Absolutely, as long as the government will place the right policies and for industries to do so, and that means encouraging things like setting up recycling, maybe some incentives for recycling. It will mean changing policies around single-use plastics as well."

He said that a circular economy model is key to post-pandemic recovery.

"What's really changed is the degree of lockdowns that we have seen right across the region and indeed globally allowing us to stop and think and do a bit of a reset of how we approach business and how we approach investments in the longer-term... we need a way that's gonna be more inclusive, is gonna protect the environment we live in, but will still allow for sound economic growth."

Waste from single-use plastics like surgical masks and plastic cups has been on the rise due to the pandemic, the World Economic Forum said last month.

Mr. Humphrey recommended environmental education for private households, corporates, and the government.

"Hopefully things will change and get better as we start dealing with COVID-19... online shopping and e-commerce will become a lot more prevalent as well, but it doesn't mean these things can't be done in a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly way. It doesn't mean we can't promote the idea of recycling." — **Jenina P. Ibañez**

Source: <https://www.bworldonline.com/eu-business-council-touts-waste-reduction-as-potential-investment-draw/>



Climate change could expose new epidemics,

TITLE: scientists say

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August 17, 2020

DATE

# Climate change could expose new epidemics, scientists say

Published August 16, 2020, 12:06 PM

by [Agence France-Presse](#)

**PARIS** — Long-dormant viruses brought back to life; the resurgence of deadly and disfiguring smallpox; a dengue or zika “season” in Europe.



As global warming melts permafrost such as the Alaskan tundra, what new threats will be unfrozen? (AFP / MANILA BULLETIN)

These could be disaster movie storylines, but they are also serious and increasingly plausible scenarios of epidemics unleashed by global warming, scientists say.

The COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the globe and claimed over 760,000 lives so far almost certainly came from a wild bat, highlighting the danger of humanity’s constant encroachment on the planet’s dwindling wild spaces.

But the expanding ecological footprint of our species could trigger epidemics in other ways too. Climate change — already wreaking havoc with one degree Celsius of warming — is also emerging as a driver of infectious disease, whether by expanding the footprint of malaria- and dengue-carrying mosquitos, or defrosting prehistoric pathogens from the Siberian permafrost.

## ‘Ignorance is our enemy’

“In my darkest moments, I see a really horrible future for Homo sapiens because we are an animal, and when we extend our borders things will happen to us,” said Birgitta Evengard, a researcher in clinical microbiology at Umea University in Sweden.

“Our biggest enemy is our own ignorance,” she added. “Nature is full of microorganisms.” Think of permafrost, a climate change time bomb spread across Russia, Canada and Alaska that contains three times the carbon that has been emitted since the start of industrialisation.

Even if humanity manages to cap global warming at under two degrees Celsius, the cornerstone goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the permafrost area will decrease by a quarter by 2100, according to the UN’s climate science panel, the IPCC.

And then there are the permafrost’s hidden treasures.

“Microorganisms can survive in frozen space for a long, long time,” said Vladimir Romanovsky, a professor of geophysics at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

## An Anthrax comeback?

As ground thaws, once-frozen soil particles, organic material and microorganisms that had been locked away for millennia are carried toward the surface by water flows, he explained.

Climate change could expose new epidemics,

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TITLE: scientists say

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“That’s how thawing can spread these microorganisms into present day environments.” There are already examples of ancient, long-frozen bugs coming to life.

“When you put a seed into soil that is then frozen for thousands of years, nothing happens,” said Jean-Michel Claverie, an emeritus professor of genomics at the School of Medicine of Aix-Marseille University in France.

“But when you warm the earth, the seed will be able to germinate,” he added. “That is similar to what happens with a virus.”

Claverie’s lab has successfully revived Siberian viruses that are at least 30,000 years old.

These reanimated bugs only attack amoebas, but tens of thousands of years ago there were certainly others that aimed higher up the food chain.

“Neanderthals, mammoths, woolly rhinos all got sick, and many died,” said Claverie. “Some of the viruses that caused their sicknesses are probably still in the soil.”

The number of bacteria and viruses lurking in the permafrost is incalculable, but the more important question is how dangerous they are.

And here, scientists disagree.

“Anthrax shows that bacteria can be resting in permafrost for hundreds of years and be revived,” said Evengard.

In 2016, a child in Siberia died from the disease, which had disappeared from the region at least 75 years earlier.

Other pathogens — such as smallpox or the influenza strain that killed tens of millions in 1917 and 1918 — may also be present in the sub-Arctic region.

For Claverie, however, the return of smallpox – officially declared eradicated 50 years ago – cannot be excluded. 18th-and 19th-century victims of the disease “buried in cemeteries in Siberia are totally preserved by the cold,” he noted.

Native to southeast Asia, the tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*) – which carries dengue and chikungunya – arrived in southern Europe in the first decade of this century and has been moving rapidly north ever since, to Paris and beyond.

“An increase in mean temperature could result in seasonal dengue transmission in southern Europe if *A. aegypti* infected with virus were to be established,” according to the Europe Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.



The COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the globe and claimed over 760,000 lives so far almost certainly came from a wild bat, highlighting the danger of humanity's constant encroachment on the planet's dwindling wild spaces.

Joven Cagande, file

## How climate change could expose new epidemics

(Agence France-Presse) - August 17, 2020 - 12:00am

PARIS – Long-dormant viruses brought back to life; the resurgence of deadly and disfiguring smallpox; a dengue or zika “season” in Europe.

These could be disaster movie storylines, but they are also serious and increasingly plausible scenarios of epidemics unleashed by global warming, scientists say.

The COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the globe and claimed over 760,000 lives so far almost certainly came from a wild bat, highlighting the danger of humanity's constant encroachment on the planet's dwindling wild spaces.

But the expanding ecological footprint of our species could trigger epidemics in other ways too.

Climate change – already wreaking havoc with one degree Celsius of warming – is also emerging as a driver of infectious disease, whether by expanding the footprint of malaria- and dengue-carrying mosquitos, or defrosting prehistoric pathogens from the Siberian permafrost.

### ‘Ignorance is our enemy’

“In my darkest moments, I see a really horrible future for Homo sapiens because we are an animal, and when we extend our borders things will happen to us,” said Birgitta Evengard, a researcher in clinical microbiology at Umea University in Sweden.

“Our biggest enemy is our own ignorance,” she added. “Nature is full of microorganisms.”

Think of permafrost, a climate change time bomb spread across Russia, Canada and Alaska that contains three times the carbon that has been emitted since the start of industrialization.

Even if humanity manages to cap global warming at under two degrees Celsius, the cornerstone goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the permafrost area will decrease by a quarter by 2100, according to the UN's climate science panel, the IPCC.

And then there are the permafrost's hidden treasures.

“Microorganisms can survive in frozen space for a long, long time,” said Vladimir Romanovsky, a professor of geophysics at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

### An anthrax comeback?

As ground thaws, once-frozen soil particles, organic material and microorganisms that had been locked away for millennia are carried toward the surface by water flows, he explained.

“That’s how thawing can spread these microorganisms into present day environments.”

There are already examples of ancient, long-frozen bugs coming to life.

“When you put a seed into soil that is then frozen for thousands of years, nothing happens,” said Jean-Michel Claverie, an emeritus professor of genomics at the School of Medicine of Aix-Marseille University in France.

“But when you warm the earth, the seed will be able to germinate,” he added. “That is similar to what happens with a virus.”

Claverie’s lab has successfully revived Siberian viruses that are at least 30,000 years old.

These reanimated bugs only attack amoebas, but tens of thousands of years ago there were certainly others that aimed higher up the food chain.

“Neanderthals, mammoths, woolly rhinos all got sick, and many died,” said Claverie. “Some of the viruses that caused their sicknesses are probably still in the soil.”

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## **2-million-year-old pathogens**

This case has been attributed to the thawing of a long-buried carcass, but some experts counter that the animal remains in question may have been in shallow dirt and thus subject to periodic thawing.

Other pathogens – such as smallpox or the influenza strain that killed tens of millions in 1917 and 1918 – may also be present in the sub-Arctic region.

But they “have probably been inactivated,” Romanovsky concluded in a study published earlier this year.

For Claverie, however, the return of smallpox – officially declared eradicated 50 years ago – cannot be excluded. 18th- and 19th-century victims of the disease “buried in cemeteries in Siberia are totally preserved by the cold,” he noted.

In the unlikely event of a local epidemic, a vaccine is available.

The real danger, he added, lies in deeper strata where unknown pathogens that have not seen daylight for two million years or more may be exposed by global warming.

If there were no hosts for the bugs to infect there would not be a problem, but climate change – indirectly – has intervened here as well.

“With the industrial exploitation of the Arctic, all the risk factors are there – pathogens and the people to carry them,” Claverie said.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/08/17/2035848/how-climate-change-could-expose-new-epidemics>



A file photo taken on March 3, 2014, shows a high tide energized by storm surging washes across Ejit Island in Majuro Atoll, Marshall Islands. Giff Johnson/AFP

## How climate change could expose new epidemics

Published August 16, 2020 6:38pm

By AMELIE BOTTOLLIER-DEPOIS, Agence France-Presse

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If there were no hosts for the bugs to infect there would not be a problem, but climate change—indirectly—has intervened here as well.

"With the industrial exploitation of the Arctic, all the risk factors are there—pathogens and the people to carry them," Claverie said.

The revival of ancient bacteria or viruses remains speculative, but climate change has already boosted the spread of diseases that kill about half a million people every year: malaria, dengue, chikungunya, zika.

"Mosquitoes moving their range north are now able to overwinter in some temperate regions," said Jeanne Fair, deputy group leader for biosecurity and public health at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

"They also have longer breeding periods."

### 'Climate change aperitif'

Native to southeast Asia, the tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*)—which carries dengue and chikungunya—arrived in southern Europe in the first decade of this century and has been moving rapidly north ever since, to Paris and beyond.

Meanwhile, another dengue-bearing mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, has also appeared in Europe. Whichever species may be the culprit, the Europe Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has registered 40 cases of local transmission of dengue between 2010 and 2019.

"An increase in mean temperature could result in seasonal dengue transmission in southern Europe if *A. aegypti* infected with virus were to be established," according to the Europe Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

As for malaria—a disease that once blighted southern Europe and the southern United States and for which an effective treatment exists—the risk of exposure depends in large part on social-economic conditions.

More than five billion people could be living in malaria-affected regions by 2050 if climate change continues unabated, but strong economic growth and social development could reduce that number to less than two billion, according to a study cited by the IPCC.

"Recent experience in southern Europe demonstrates how rapidly the disease may reappear if health services falter," the IPCC said in 2013, alluding to a resurgence of cases in Greece in 2008.

In Africa—which saw 228 million cases of malaria in 2018, 94 percent of the world's total—the disease vector is moving into new regions, notably the high-altitude plains of Ethiopia and Kenya.

For the moment, the signals for communicable tropical diseases "are worrying in terms of expanding vectors, not necessarily transmission," said Cyril Caminade, an epidemiologist working on climate change at the Institute of Infection and Global Health at the University of Liverpool.

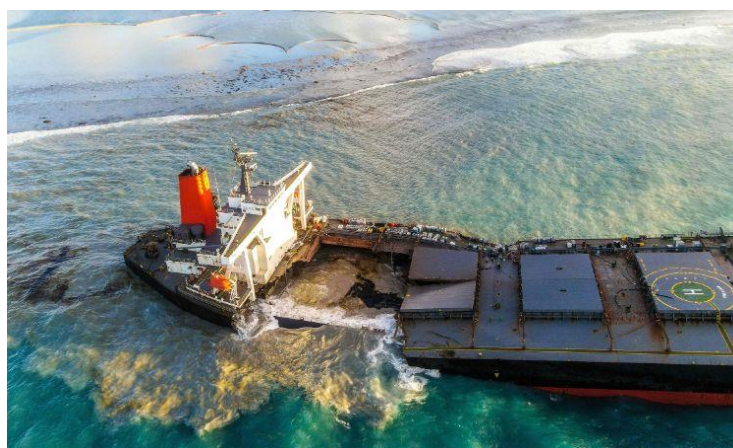
"That said, we're only tasting the aperitif of climate change so far," he added. — **AFP**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/science/751576/how-climate-change-could-expose-new-epidemics/story/>

# A cargo ship leaking tons of oil off the Mauritius coast has split in two

By Sophie Jeong, Susanna Capelouto and Nicole Chavez, CNN

Published Aug 16, 2020 9:08:11 PM



**(CNN)** — A ship that has [leaked tons of oil](#) off the coast of Mauritius has split apart, authorities said on Saturday.

"At around 4.30 pm, a major detachment of the vessel's forward section was observed," the National Crisis Committee of Mauritius said in statement.

The Japanese-owned ship, MV Wakashio, ran aground at Pointe d'Esny in late July and began leaking tons of oil into a pristine Indian Ocean lagoon last week.

A massive clean-up operation involving thousands of local volunteers had been underway. But a crack inside the hull of the ship expanded earlier this week, according to the ship's operator Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, a Japanese company.

Tal Harris, a communications coordinators for Greenpeace Africa International, told CNN that authorities have "decreed the area a forbidden zone" and volunteers have been asked to ceased activities.

Earlier this week, Sunil Dowarkasing, a former strategist for Greenpeace International and former member of parliament in Mauritius, told CNN that one of the ship's three oil tanks had already leaked into the ocean and crews were attempting to remove the oil from the other tanks before the ship broke up.

It's unclear how much oil was removed before Saturday. Earlier this week, the operator, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, said about 1,180 metric tons of oil had leaked from the vessel's fuel tank -- with about 460 tons manually recovered from the sea and coast. The ship was carrying about 3,800 tons of Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil and 200 tons of diesel oil, according to the operator.

Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth had declared a state of environmental emergency.

"We are in a situation of environmental crisis," Kavy Ramano, the country's environment minister, had said.

The spill is close to two environmentally protected marine ecosystems and the Blue Bay Marine Park reserve. Nearby are a number of popular tourist beaches and mangrove plantations.

The MV Wakashio was on its way from China to Brazil when it ran aground on the reef on July 25.

*This story was first published on CNN.com, ["A cargo ship leaking tons of oil off the Mauritius coast has split in two"](#)*

Source: <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/world/2020/8/16/mauritius-oil-spill-ship-splits.html?fbclid#.Xzky5jZk9ZY.twitter>