

DATE : 02 DEC 2018

DAY : Sunday

# **DENR**

**IN THE NEWS**

**Strategic Communication and Initiative Service**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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# The Manila Times

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EDITORIAL

CARTOON

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# Metro landfills filling up – Sotto

**S**ENATE President Vicente Sotto 3rd warned that landfills in Metro Manila were reaching their maximum capacity and proposed the use of the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) incineration method.

Due to the lack of planning and efficient waste treatment method, Sotto said landfills in Metro Manila are reaching their maximum

capacity and might no longer accommodate the tons of trash generated in the coming years.

The Senate president said one of the effective and sustainable waste treatment technologies that was being adopted by many countries was the WTE incineration method.

Europe is said to be the largest market for WTE technologies

(47.6 percent), while Japan dominates 60 percent of Asia-Pacific WTE market for incineration.

Sotto said this method could not only reduce mountains of waste in landfills but could also generate energy.

However, Republic Act 8749 bans incineration and the law has to be repealed before the country can use the system proposed by Sotto.

Sotto has filed Senate Bill (SB) 2076 which seeks to regulate the use of treatment technology for municipal and hazardous wastes, repealing for the purpose Section 20 of RA 8749, titled "The Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999."

The measure would promote the use of state-of-the-art, environmentally sound and safe

technologies for the handling treatment, thermal or non-thermal destruction, utilization and disposal of residual wastes.

It also mandates local government units (LGUs) to promote, encourage and implement a comprehensive solid waste management plan that includes waste segregation, recycling and composting.



**EDITORIAL**

## Reviving our rivers

**E**nvironment Secretary Roy Cimatu's recent directive for a national river cleanup hardly merited mention in the roiling national conversation, but, done properly, the program could have far-reaching impact across generations in innumerable communities all over the country.

Cimatu told regional directors and personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Nov. 22 that they could lose their jobs should they fail to clean up polluted river systems under their jurisdiction. At the 4th International River Summit in Cebu City, he said: "*Iyong mga personnel na napabayaang ang river, maghahanap ako ng mas magaling sa kanila na ipapalit* (Those personnel who neglected the river, I will find better replacement for them). Take note, this is really my commitment."

He likened the degradation of the country's river systems to Boracay, noting that a number (some estimates put it at 50 of the 400-plus river basins) are biologically dead, destroyed by fecal coliform. He recalled how Butuanon in Cebu was beautiful when he saw it on his first military assignment two decades ago: "*Mas malinis noon. Eh ngayon, what happened? Parang Boracay din na malinis pero nadumihan* (It used to be clean. But now, what happened? It's like Boracay that was once clean but became dirty)."

Cimatu has also dirty-tagged Malandog in Antique and the protected Subterranean River in Palawan.

The country has 412 principal river basins, with 19 considered major. Among the important ones are Cagayan—the longest at 505 kilometers—that flows through primary forests; Agno and Pampanga that cross the plains of Central Luzon; and Pasig, which flows through the center of Metro Manila and provides the main drainage outlet for most of the metropolis' waterways.

These rivers also serve as transport routes and sources of livelihood for the surrounding communities. But urbanization and rapid population growth have polluted many of them, resulting in unhealthy living conditions and the death of their ecosystems. According to the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC), created in 1999 to revitalize the dead waterway with then First Lady Ming Ramos leading it, 70 percent of the waste thrown into the Pasig River are domestic—human feces, garbage, food and compost—while the remaining 30 percent are industrial and chemical waste from factories.

The reckless dumping of waste has been seen in other rivers and waterways across the country, and lax implementation of the law has worsened the practice.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government has stepped in, threatening to sue mayors and barangay captains for violation of Republic Act No. 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000. The law mandates local executives to implement solid waste and segregation systems in every barangay or locality, with violators facing suspension or removal from office. It also punishes private citizens with fines or jail terms.

These government initiatives can produce results, if implemented with sustained and well-supported effort. The country has enough laws to undergird such projects, and there are many examples from which to draw inspiration, like the River Thames in the United Kingdom, which was declared biologically dead in the late 1950s but has since been revived; and the Singapore River, which underwent a 40-year transformation from being an open sewer in the 1970s to a clean, well-maintained waterway that is now a tourist draw.

Even the Pasig River, declared biologically inert in the '90s, has been a success story of sorts lately. Last month, the International River Foundation recognized the PRRC for its rehabilitation efforts in the first Asia River Prize Awards. It lauded the commission's almost two decades of work that saw the relocation of more than 18,000 families and the dismantling of private structures along the riverbanks, thus improving the river's water quality.

A revitalized Pasig River can provide, at the very least, a viable alternative transport route for metro residents, the way it did for old Manila and its surrounding environs in centuries past. The PRRC's 19-year work in this regard has not been without hiccups, but it shows that the revival of habitats killed by human abuse is possible. Cimatu's order, and the DILG's warning to punish LGUs' environmental neglect, should help spur the rejuvenation of the country's many other rivers, and improve the conditions of the communities around them.



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EDITORIAL

CARTOON

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## A tale of 2 cities: Manila and Venice

**V**enice, Italy—Imagine a city with no cars, no roads, and that almost floats on water. A city connected by canals and waterways and navigated only by boats. Imagine further that it is considered by many as the most beautiful city in the world. That city can only be Venice, the land of Marco Polo and Antonio Vivaldi.

As a climate scientist, I am fascinated by the fact that Venice is also the poster city for climate change and rising sea levels. Built practically in the Adriatic Sea, the city is experiencing more frequent flooding, especially during winter. St Mark's Square, the most iconic place in the islands, is among the most vulnerable during *acqua alta* (high water). In fact, a flood warning siren has been installed throughout the city to alert residents and tourists alike when waters are rising. The future is even bleaker, as studies suggest that the city could be totally submerged in water by the year 2100 if current warming trends persist.

Which reminds me of its similarities to Metro Manila. While they are worlds apart literally and figuratively, they both face the threat of a warming climate. Rising flood waters afflict both cities with recurring frequency. Like Venice, future climate scenarios threaten to submerge

### COMMENTARY

RODEL D. LASCO

large portions of metropolitan Manila. Of course, the case of flooding in Manila is multifaceted and more than just because of sea level.

At the same time, Venice is a testament to the ingenuity of humankind to adapt to even the most hostile living conditions. Underneath the city is a virtual forest of timber which forms the foundation of houses and buildings that cram the city. Buried for centuries, the wooden piles do not rot because of lack of oxygen in their watery grave. This ability to innovate gives me hope that as climate changes, humans will be resilient enough to find novel ways of adapting to the "new normal."

But adaptation has its limits. While the Venetians have proven that humans can survive and even flourish in a "water world," this does not mean that we should neglect mitigating global greenhouse gas emissions, the culprit behind rising temperatures and sea level rise. For one thing, it is naïve and reckless to extrapolate the

experience of one city to the entire planet.

The Philippines observed climate consciousness week in the third week of November. Led by the Climate Change Commission, a number of activities were held, designed to enhance the level of awareness of our people on the dangers posed by climate change. As one of the most climatically vulnerable nations of the planet, we must support local and international efforts to address global warming.

While Venice has survived hundreds of years of wars and political turmoil, it may eventually succumb to two unlikely forces—one local (tourism), the other global (climate change). In the year 2100, its epitaph could very well be: Venice—a victim of its own success, and the failure of nations to act as one.

Quo vadis, Manila?

Rodel D. Lasco, PhD, is a lead author of several Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, including the fifth assessment report and the forthcoming sixth assessment report. He is the executive director of The OML Center, a foundation devoted to discovering climate change adaptation solutions (<http://www.omlopezcenter.org/>).



1st page

## STUDY WARNS OF SURGING HEALTH RISKS FROM CHANGING CLIMATE



**A WOMAN (right) suffered from heat-stroke symptoms in a New Delhi hospital on June 20. A wide-ranging scientific report lays out the growing risks of climate change for human health and predicts that cascading hazards could soon face millions more people in rich and poor countries around the world.** SAUMYA KHANDLWAL/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**C**ROP yields are declining. Tropical diseases like dengue fever are showing up in unfamiliar places, including in the United States. Tens of millions of people are exposed to extreme heat.

These are the stark findings of a wide-ranging scientific report that lays out the growing risks of climate change for human health and predicts that cascading hazards could soon face millions more people in rich and poor countries around the world.

The report, published this past week in the public health journal *The Lancet*, incorporates the work of 24 academic institutions and United Nations agencies, and follows a major climate assessment issued last week by the US government.

The two studies represent the most serious warnings to date that climate change is posing a series of interconnected health risks for the global population.

"We don't see these health impacts individually," said Kristie L. Ebi, a professor of global health at the University of Washington and one of the authors of the *Lancet* study. "We see them jointly. We see them coming at communities all at the same time."

Among the biggest threats humans face in a warming climate is heat stress, which not only kills people directly but can also lead to kidney and cardiovascular disease, the report noted.

Higher temperatures can also diminish people's ability to work, particularly in agriculture, leading to tens of billions of hours of lost labor capacity each year.

Most worrying, according to the authors, is the compounding effect of extreme weather events that are exacerbated by climate change.

Heat waves, floods and storms can batter the very public-health systems that are meant to help people, the report says.

A failure to rein in emissions, it warns, could lead to disasters that "disrupt core public-health infrastructure and overwhelm health services."

The US report, called the National Climate Assessment, says that extreme rainfall could overwhelm the nation's ailing water and sewer systems, contributing to shortages of drinkable water and increasing exposure to gastrointestinal disease.

In some parts of the country, like Florida and Texas, higher temperatures will be a boon to a type of mosquito that transmits the viruses that cause dengue, Zika, chikungunya and yellow fever.

Echoing these warnings, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres urged world leaders to swiftly curb greenhouse-gas emissions as they had promised under the Paris climate accord three years ago.

Nine out of 10 people breathe unsafe air, according to the World Health Organization, Guterres said. "Meeting the Paris Agreement commitments could save more than a million lives a year," he said.

Cutting emissions from sources like coal-fired power plants and diesel-burning trucks would also result in enormous savings to public-health systems, the *Lancet* authors said.

"Doing that now would be good for us, it would be good for our livelihoods and would be good for the planet," Ebi said.

But as the world continues to warm, the study warned of a number of potential domino effects.



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## Extreme heat

IN 2017, 157 million more people were exposed to heat-related health risks than in 2000, the report said. And that was before the scorching summer of 2018.

In England and Wales, for instance, over a 15-day period of exceptionally high temperatures this summer, there were 700 "excess deaths" compared to a comparable period in previous years, said Nick Watts, the report's lead author.

Some of the most vulnerable people are

in relatively prosperous countries in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly because these places have large populations of older people living in cities.

In both regions, more than 40 percent of people over the age of 65 were found to be at risk.

In the United States, the National Climate Assessment found that some of the largest increases in heat-related mortality in future years would occur in the Northeast.

By midcentury, there could be 50 to 100 excess deaths per 1 million people due to heat in that region, the report said.

## Lost labor

HEAT makes it hard for people to work, especially on farms.

According to the Lancet report, in 2017, 153 billion hours of labor were lost worldwide because of heat, with the largest share in vulnerable rural communities in countries like India. That's 64 billion more lost labor hours than in 2000.

By midcentury, "Prevalence of heatstroke and extreme weather will have redefined global labor and production beyond recognition," *The Lancet* warned in an accompanying editorial. "Multiple cities will be uninhabitable, and migration patterns will be far beyond those levels already creating pressure worldwide."

## Infectious diseases

THE risk of debilitating, often deadly infectious diseases is moving to new places. That's because even small changes in temperature and rainfall can have a significant effect on where diseases that are spread by bugs and water can take hold.

Habitats for dengue-spreading mosquitoes have expanded significantly, the Lancet study concluded.

The National Climate Assessment noted that warmer conditions may have helped transmit Zika in the US.

Since 1950, the Lancet study said, the cholera bacteria has expanded its reach to the Baltic coastline, and the risk of malaria has spread to higher altitudes in sub-Saharan Africa.

"I don't want people to be surprised when they see cases of what used to be tropical diseases now being found in the United States as a result of changing climate," said Gina McCarthy, a professor of public health at Harvard and a former administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency during the Obama administration.

## Droughts and floods

EXTREME droughts and floods are affecting already vulnerable communities, particularly in Southeast Asia and South America. Drought affects agricultural yields, in turn heightening the risk of early death, hunger and childhood malnutrition, according to the Lancet report.

With drought often comes more dust, which can aggravate allergies and asthma and can also accelerate the reproduction of disease-causing fungi in soil, according to the National Climate Assessment.

Floods can wash away farmland and homes and spread waterborne diseases.

## Food production

THOUGH the world still produces more than enough food to feed itself, rising temperatures and extreme weather events are affecting food production. Crop yields are diminishing in 30 countries, reversing a trend of rising agricultural productivity and threatening food security around the world and in the United States.

The quality of some food itself is also expected to decline, according to the National Climate Assessment. Rising levels of carbon dioxide will reduce the presence of key nutrients—including iron, zinc and protein—in crops and seafood.

*New York Times News Service*



## FOCUS

# Polluters in the room: big energy 'undermining' UN climate talks



**PARIS:** Oil and coal giants are exploiting a lack of conflict-of-interest protection at UN climate talks to push for continued fossil fuel use despite its contribution to harmful climate change, several sources have told AFP.

As policymakers from around the world prepare to gather in Poland for the COP 24 summit to finalise the Paris climate promises, officials and campaigners said that groups representing big energy are free to lobby with little or no oversight at the negotiations.

Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), non-state actors may apply to join the process, some in the form of so-called business-interest NGOs.

They may then participate in sessions as observers, walking the same corridors as the very policymakers who must decide on the future of our planet.

Under the Paris Agreement, the world's nations agreed to limit global warming to "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). The UN's top science panel concluded last month that the rise in temperature should be capped at 1.5 C to avoid severe impacts.

Its report called for a radical drawdown in fossil fuel usage, starting as soon as 2020, and said it would need to be halved by 2030 to meet the 1.5 C target.

And yet, despite the scientific consensus that greenhouse gas emissions must be slashed in order to avoid climate disaster, the world's only international action plan still reserves a seat for major polluters.

Parallel UN processes, such as the World Health Organization's Framework Conven-

tion on Tobacco, have conflict of interest protections woven into their text.

The UNFCCC has none.

"Everyday we learn more about what big polluters continue to do to undermine climate policy, yet their trade associations are still free to stalk the halls at the UNFCCC," said Jesse Bragg, from Corporate Accountability, a group that works to expose conflicts of interest.

In January, the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) bloc submitted a formal request to add specific conflict of interest protections into the UN process.

The text warned that conflict of interest "may arise when a non-party stakeholder with a concern or aim that directly or indirectly involves limiting or influencing specific climate-related scientific understanding, actions or policies, is actively participating in the UNFCCC".

### 'Threatens legitimacy'

It said the problem of fossil fuel representation in climate talks was so serious that it "threatens the integrity and legitimacy" of the Paris accord.

Sources close to talks told AFP that the submission was shot down by developed nations during an intersessional meeting in May, and that the very existence of discussions surrounding it was scrubbed from official records.

The final text stated that nations agreed "the importance of enhancing the engagement of non-party stakeholders... and took note of the diverse views expressed".

A senior negotiator told AFP only

that there had been "some amendments" to the submission.

Ovais Sarmad, deputy executive secretary of the UNFCCC, said that all non-state observers to the climate talks are vetted according to rules agreed by countries themselves.

"No particular interest group influences the decision-making process," he told AFP.

"There might be perceptions of (conflict of interest) but we take it extremely seriously and go through a due diligence process to make sure those issues don't come up."

The European Parliament last month voted for a resolution supporting a conflict of interest policy in climate talks.

Earlier this year a group of 16 environmental groups made a separate submission to the UNFCCC calling for better conflict of interest protection.

They pointed out that the UN only requires two things from observers: that they be legally registered as not-for-profit, and that their work include issues related to climate change.

"Unfortunately, some of the organisations that are most detrimental to climate change meet these exact criteria," the groups wrote, including "those that directly or indirectly represent the interest of fossil fuel corporations such as Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell and BP."

### Lobbyists 'at heart' of talks

Of the more than one dozen business-interest NGOs AFP contacted over this story, only a handful provided comment.

A spokeswoman from the World Coal Association said it "would like to see practi-

cal solutions to reduce global emissions".

The WCA at climate talks "will continue to call for policy parity for all low emission technologies," she said, "including those relating to low emissions coal technologies."

Myron Ebell, a high-profile climate sceptic who headed up US President Donald Trump's environmental transition team, said his business-interest non-profit — the Competitive Enterprise Institute — was not attending COP24.

Ebell said he "didn't see much point" in going to the climate talks, which he described as an "organised cabal".

"It's not clear to me what the role of the big oil companies is, and if I were a supporter of the framework convention I think I would be on the side of those groups that say the oil companies should not be allowed to be there," he told AFP.

Just days before the COP was due to start on Sunday, host country Poland announced that three state-run coal giants would sponsor the event. (AFP)

They include JSW, which describes itself as "the European Union's largest coking coal producer" and PGE, which operates the world's second-largest fossil fuel power plant.

"At a time when the world's leading scientists warn that global temperatures are on course to a 'climate catastrophe', the fossil fuel industry's lobbyists are preparing to be at the very heart of UN climate negotiations in Poland," Harjeet Singh, global lead on Climate Change at ActionAid International, told AFP.

"There is a very obvious conflict between the fossil fuel industry's interests and reductions in carbon emissions." **AFP**



## Grim tidings from science on climate change ✓

**PARIS:** Scientists monitoring the Earth's climate and environment have delivered a cascade of grim news this year, adding a sense of urgency to UN talks starting next week in Poland on how best to draw down the greenhouse gases that drive global warming.

The 2015 Paris Agreement calls on humanity to block the rise in Earth's temperature at "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) compared to preindustrial levels, and 1.5 C if possible.

Here is a summary of recent findings:

### 1 degree Celsius

Earth's average surface temperature from January to October 2018 was one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the 1850-1900 baseline.

Long-term warming is caused by the accumulation of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) cast off when fossil fuels are burned to produce energy.

Seventeen of the hottest years on record have occurred since the start of the 21st century, with 2018 ranking as the 4th warmest.

### 405.5 ppm

The concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere reached 405.5 parts per million (ppm) in 2017, the highest in at least 3 million years and a 45 percent jump since the preindustrial era.

The last time CO<sub>2</sub> was at that level, oceans were 10-20 meters higher.

Concentrations of the second most important greenhouse gas, methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), have also risen sharply due to leakage from the gas industry's fracking boom and flatulence from expanding livestock.

### Emissions

After remaining stable for three years, carbon pollution increased more than one percent in 2017 to 53.5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent, a measure which includes all main greenhouse gases. Emissions are on track to climb again in 2018.

At that pace, Earth will pass the 1.5 C marker as early as 2030.

To cap global warming at 2 C, emissions must decline a quarter within a dozen years. To stay under 1.5 C, they will have to drop by more than half.

### Melting ice

Arctic summer sea ice shrank in 2018 to a low of 4.59 million square kilometers

(1.77 million square miles), well above the record low of 3.39 million square kilometers set in 2012.

But long-term trends are unmistakable: Arctic sea ice cover is declining at a rate of more than 13 percent per decade, relative to the 1981-2010 average.

Climate models predict the Arctic Ocean could, in some years, be ice-free as early as 2030.

### Extreme events

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) says there are clear links between climate change and increases in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather.

The number of climate-related extreme events — such as droughts, wildfires, heatwaves, floods and cyclones — has doubled since 1990, research has shown.

The intensity of typhoons battering China, Taiwan, Japan and the Korean Peninsula since 1980 has increased by 12 to 15 percent.

Natural disasters drive more than 25 million people into poverty every year, according to the World Bank, and cause annual losses in excess of half a trillion dollars (440 billion euros).

### 84.8 millimeters

Water that expands as it warms and runoff from ice sheets atop Greenland and Antarctica currently add about 3 millimeters (0.12 inches) to sea levels per year. Since 1993, the global ocean watermark has gone up by more than 85mm (3.3 inches).

That pace is likely to pick up, threatening the homes and livelihoods of tens of millions of people in low-lying areas around the world.

Melting glaciers could lift sea levels a meter (three feet) by 2100, and — with only 2 C of warming — by several meters more over the following centuries.

### 1/5 of species affected

Of the 8,688 animal and plant species listed as "threatened" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List, a fifth have been hit by climate change.

From 1970 to 2014, the global population of vertebrates — birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and fish — plummeted by about 60 percent, due mainly to killing for food or profit, and habitat loss.

The number of species is declining 100 to 1,000 times faster than only centuries ago, which means the planet has entered a "mass extinction event" — only the sixth in the last half-billion years.

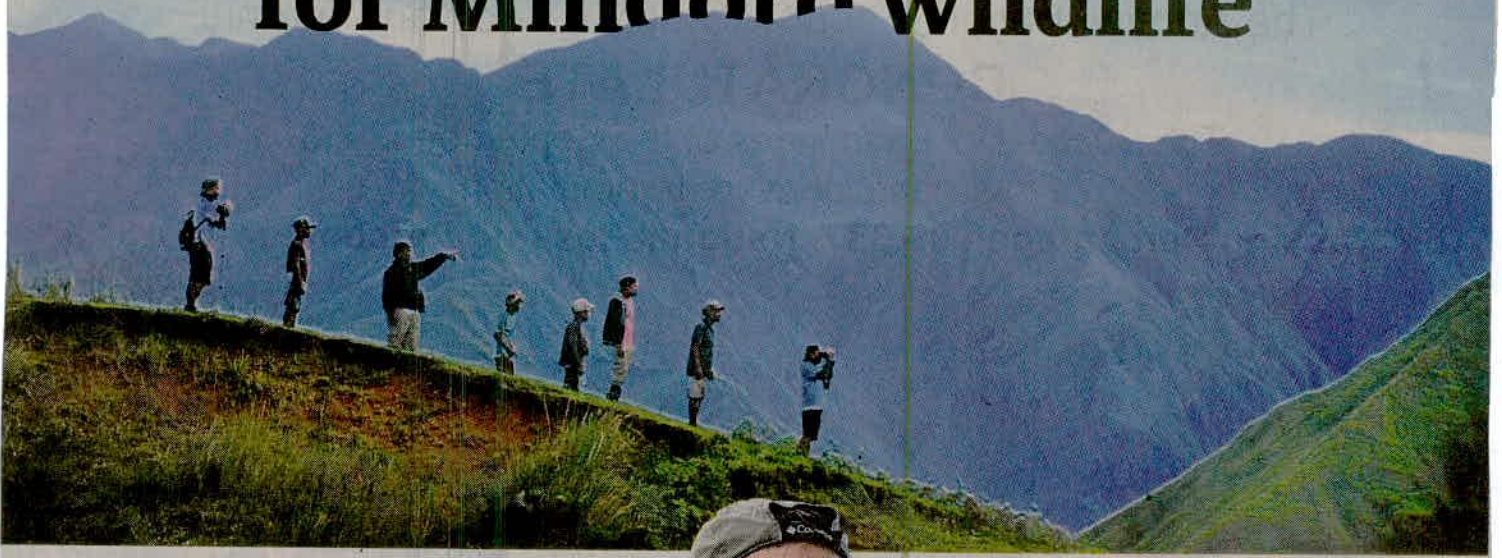




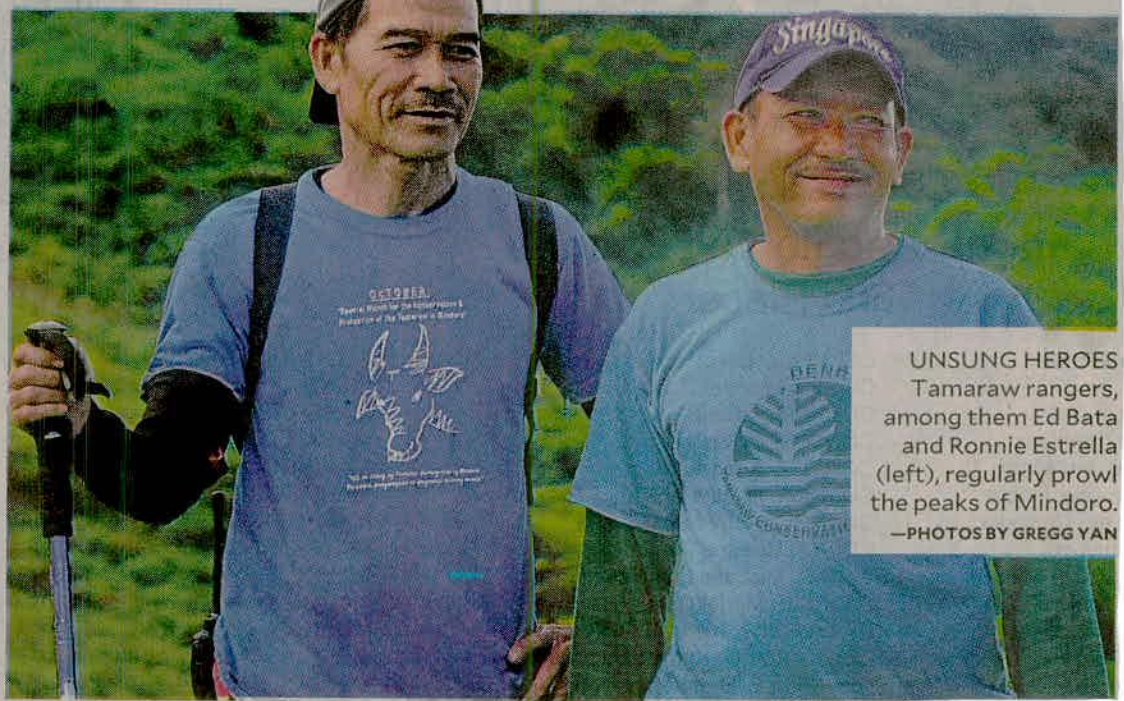
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# Dodging bullets and angry tamaraws, they brave odds for Mindoro wildlife



The author during the UNDP's second Bio-Camp in Mindoro.  
—BERNARD MAGCARANG



**UNSUNG HEROES**  
Tamaraw rangers, among them Ed Bata and Ronnie Estrella (left), regularly prowl the peaks of Mindoro.  
—PHOTOS BY GREGG YAN



A Taw'buid woman protects herself from the pelting rain with a banana leaf



A tamaraw bull



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MINDORO—Trapped on the banks of an angry swollen river, the old Taw'buid woman trembled in the pelting rain, protected by nothing but a flimsy banana leaf.

I, too, was cold, but I had an umbrella, which I gave her. Dropping my jungle pack, I considered our predicament.

A sudden downpour engorged Occidental Mindoro's mountain rivers an hour earlier. Forging the river was suicide. The only crossing was across a bamboo "monkey bridge" made of two slippery poles—a rotting base pole and a flimsy handrail. Which, of course, was broken. The bridge spanned 7 meters (25 feet) over angry, churning brown water. Just like an Indiana Jones movie.

With no alternative to get help and because a Siganon, or lowlander, like me cannot touch a female Taw'buid tribeswoman even for warmth, I ploughed forward to repair the bridge, tying myself to a branch with thick vines—a trick I learned from jungle survival school. White-knuckling the broken bamboo rail, I took a step. Another. Knew I should have dieted more. Suddenly I felt the rotting bamboo pole give way. Craaaaack!

I quickly hopped back before the bamboo pole completely collapsed. I gazed at the shivering Taw'buid woman on the riverbank and cursed myself for not being able to do more. Eventually, the rain eased up, the river became calmer and help arrived.

**Lifeline**

The first of our team's Taw'buid and Buhid porters arrived to assess the situation. Rapidly, they strung more vines around the battered bridge while a lithe scout crossed with a "fisho"—a long Taw'buid blade—emerging minutes later with two fresh bamboo poles.



A Taw'buid gatherer

As we sweated, grunted and tried to avoid falling into the river, the bridge took form.

Kamille Rosales, of the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (Biofin) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), handed the Taw'buid woman a dry shirt to keep her warm. After a half-hour, the bridge was up and we trudged once more to civilization.

As we crossed that rickety bridge, I realized how the brave, resourceful rangers of the Tamaraw Conservation Program (TCP) and the Mt. Iglit-Baco National Park surmounted these obstacles all the time, fording swollen rivers, patrolling

against heavily armed poachers and dismantling dangerous spring-loaded spike traps set illegally within the park's core zone.

Building bridges and keeping open a lifeline to the lowlands have kept the park and its endangered animals alive and thriving. This year, the park's tamaraw numbers swelled to

523, the highest recorded since conservation efforts began.

"We rangers have dodged bullets and charging tamaraws," recalled ranger team leader Ronnie Estrella.

"Once, I slipped down a mountain because we were patrolling without lights. We even chased off a dozen poachers

with fireworks because we had no guns! This has become much more than a job for us. This is where many of us have devoted our lives," he added.



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**Plucky and tough**

Making do with equipment that have seen better days, the plucky rangers are every bit as tough as the tamaraws they protect.

Said TCP coordinator June Pineda: "If the rangers disappear, the tamaraws disappear. The Taw'buid believe that if the tamaraws disappear, their people will, too. So we can say our rangers are key to sustaining the natural habitat of the tamaraws within the Iglit-Baco National Park."

The Mt. Iglit-Baco National Park in Mindoro spans 75,445 hectares and is dominated by the 2,488-meter Mt. Baco and the 2,364-m Mt. Iglit. Eight ma-

gor river systems wend through its grassy peaks. When I first visited the park at the height of the monsoon season in 2012, we crossed a total of 42 rivers and streams. I remember how my ankles became leech magnets.

The park is famed for hosting the best-protected population of tamaraws (*Bubalus mindorensis*), the most endangered buffalo species in the world. Doves of mountain climbers and birdwatchers regularly visit, in hopes of seeing flying jewels like the Mindoro hornbill (*Penelopides mindorensis*) and the Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon (*Gallicolumba platanae*).

**Real heroes**

The park is also home to the reclusive Taw'buid, the largest of the eight tribes collectively called Mangyan, the others being the Alangan, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunuo, Iraya, Ratagnon and Tadyawan. The last time I visited was when the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the TCP and National Geographic gave the tribe a shipment of solar lamps.

This year, I was invited by the UNDP to join the second Bio-Camp, an annual move to enhance public support for tamaraw conservation. Among other goals, the UNDP's Biofin works to mobilize resources to finance nature and sustainable development and help close the funding gap to implement critically important biodiversity conservation projects.

The participants summited Mt. Magawang, saw tamaraws in the wild and had lively discussions on how best to help rangers—the real heroes of Mt. Iglit-Baco National Park.

"Tamaraw patrols are sent out once or twice weekly and spend three days on each shift," explained TCP field operations officer Ed Bata. "Last August, we found a tamaraw skull and the lower left jawbone of a Philippine deer—probably shot for meat by hunters. Poachers come at night, their flashlights rigged under the barrels of illegally acquired long-firearms like M14s."

Despite the odds, the rangers make do with old equipment, computers that have broken down and dilapidated gear.

With October celebrated as Tamaraw Month, it may be time to help reequip Mindoro's tamaraw rangers with GPS units, spotting scopes, binoculars, laptops and field uniforms. As I found out while repairing that rickety bridge, a little help goes a long way. —CONTRIBUTED/INQ



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## 2 baboy, bastos na turista arestado sa Boracay

**ARESTADO** ang dalawang Latvian national makaraang mahuling umihi at naninigarilyo sa dalampasigan ng isla Boracay.

Kinilala ang mga inarestong sina Klavs Skevis, 26 at Marats Prietas, 26.

Sa ulat ng Malay Police Station, nagpapatrolya ang mga pulis nang mapansin ang dalawang lasing na naninigarilyo at umihi sa ipinagbabawal.

Sinita ang mga dayuhan pero naging arogante pa sa pagsagot sa mga pulis ang mga ito kaya agad silang

kinuwelyuhan at dinala sa presinto.

Nahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa anti-smoking ordinance at resistance and disobedience upon agent of authority ang dalawang Latvian.

Matatandaan na sa muling pagbubukas ng isla noong Oktubre 26 ay nagpatupad ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ng mahigpit na pagbabawal sa paninigarilyo, pagkakatatag at pag-inom ng alak sa beach front, maging sa mga pampublikong lugar.

Ang pagbubukas at paglilinis ng mga kalat sa Boracay ay pinangunahan ni DENR Solid Waste and Local Government Units Concerns Usec. Benny Antiporda.

**MARY SAPICO**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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# The arduous journey to competitiveness

**T**he government has been flexing its muscle to make doing business in the country easier, faster and cheaper. There are several implications with the improvement of a country's ease of doing business.

Foremost, it tells of a government's efficiency, transparency and determination to welcome investors and help enterprises grow.

Subliminally, it means less corruption that would encourage investors to pour in capital because less government red tape means good business and good business means better margins for businessmen, ultimately.

That is why an improved ranking in the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Report of the World Bank is important because it brings positive perception of the country's business environment. Among the various competitiveness reports, this study is where the Philippines should focus its efforts.

Unfortunately, these efforts are not enough to sway the rising tide of other countries in accelerating their efforts at competitiveness.

The Philippines' rank plummeted in the 2019 EODB Report to 124 from 113 among the 190 countries surveyed in the report.

Convinced that an injustice was committed and the WB erred in its survey, particularly on credit access, the Philippines protested the WB report and demanded the multilateral bank to immediately correct the ranking, which the Department of Finance and the Department of Trade and Industry believed should have improved to 108 instead of 124 out of 190 countries surveyed. The WB, though, has stood pat on its decision that the Philippines' rank is where it should be.

Already, Trade and Industry Undersecretary for competitiveness Rowel S. Barba has called for a leapfrog in the implementation of measures for the country to make it to a respectable ranking or in the top 20 percentile bracket of the EODB survey results by 2023.

One crucial measure is to fast track the implementation of the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Act by creating the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) so it can be included in next year's survey.

Under this law, a simple application should be approved within three days, the complex in seven days and the highly technical in 20 days. There are extensions of 20-45 days depending on the nature of the application. Applications not acted upon within the prescribed period are deemed approved.

The law aims to increase transparency and promote honesty and responsibility in government service delivery. It also included simplifying measures to reduce red tape in service transactions, and it established a formal corruption prevention tool for service provision.

The ARTA also implements initiatives to improve the EODB ranking of the country, monitors and evaluates the compliance of covered government offices and agencies and issues notice of warning to erring/noncomplying government officials/employees.

But the operationalization of the law can come only after the President's appointment of the Director-General of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), which is responsible for the implementation and overseeing of a national policy on anti-red tape and Ease of Doing Business.

Barba stressed that the ARTA can start running by the second quarter already, but this is "assuming the DG is appointed as soon as possible." Meeting this timeline is crucial to ensure the ARTA can be included in the next cycle review of the Ease of Doing Business. To hit this target, he said, reforms must be in place starting May of each year.

But the government has yet to appoint the ARTA Director-General, who has the sole authority to issue the law's implementing rules and regulations.

There are still organizational issues bounding ARTA like staffing and



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A full-blown ARTA organization would require 1,200 manpower complement and a working budget of P300 million, but Barba said they are also having difficult time hiring lawyers and attracting people to join government because of the lower salary rates.

With many officers leaving the government to run for public office, the President may have also a hard time looking for the ARTA DG. They are working on initial staffing of 400 people during their discussions with the DBM.

In fact, full implementation of the

law will require the completion of the citizen charter program, a flagship initiative to implement ARTA. The citizen charter is a document that "communicates, in simple terms, information on the services provided by

the government to its citizens. It describes the step-by-step procedure for availing a particular service, and the guaranteed performance level that they may expect for that service."

While the crucial ARTA imple-

mentation awaits, other countries or those of even lower competitiveness ranking than the Philippines are accelerating implementation of their reform measures to further improve the ease of doing business.



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## Duterte reiterates implementation of 'Ease of Doing Business' law

President Rodrigo Duterte reiterated his commitment to fully implement the law on "Ease of Doing Business" to prevent corruption in government.

"Corruption in government is not acceptable to me," President Duterte stressed in his speech during the kickoff event for the construction of the PHP12-billion Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project in Barangay Gumalang, Baguio District in Davao City.

Duterte called on all government agencies to ensure compliance so that projects such as the water bulk project will not be delayed or caught up in the processing of permits and clearances.

He also asked the public to be assertive for corruption to stop, noting that irregularities often exist because there is no complaint. The President said the public can now take advantage of the mechanisms in place to report corruption.

Last month, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) submitted the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 (EODB) to the President.

The EODB aims to fast-track transactions with the government through streamlining of processes and reducing processing time in all government agencies, local government units, and government-owned and controlled corporations.

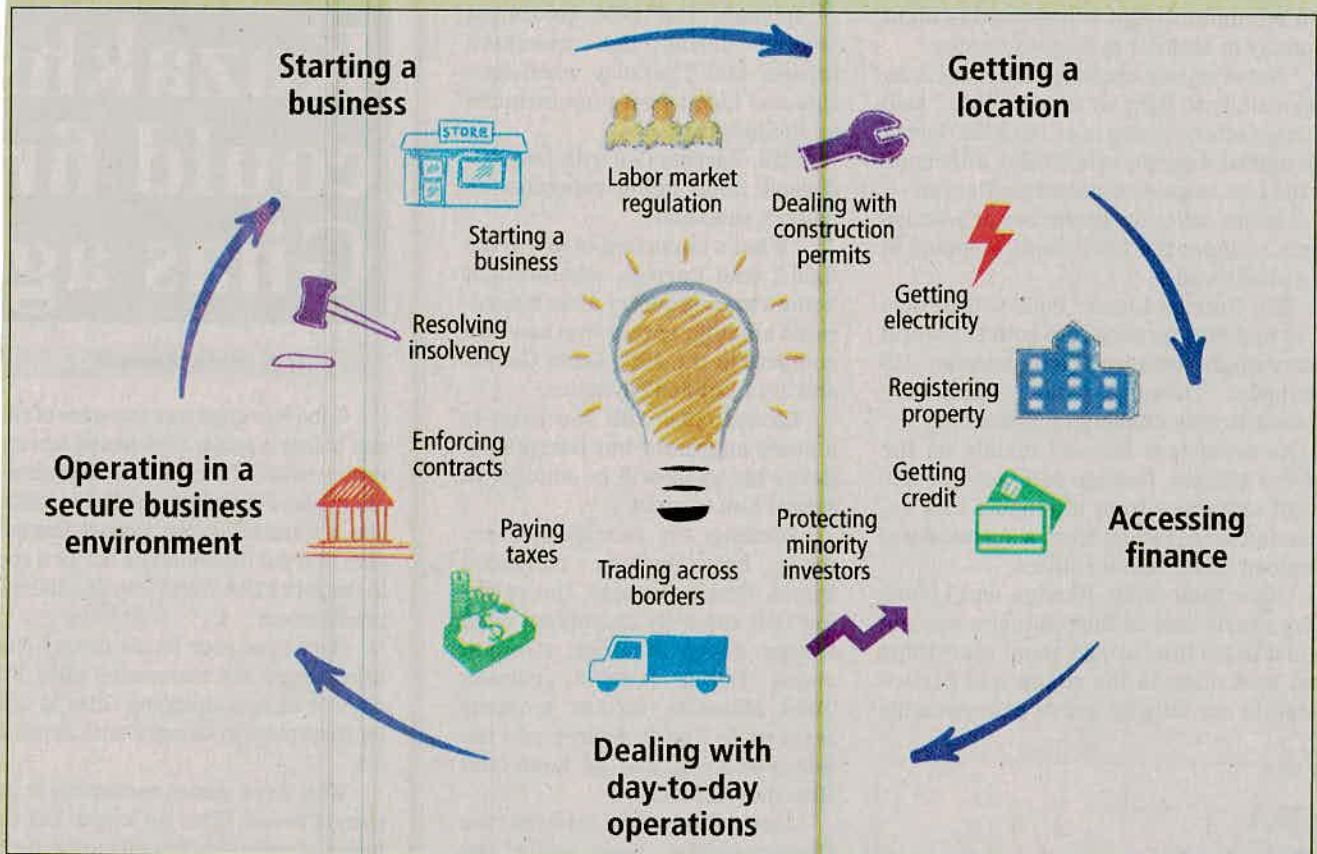
Under the law's "3-7-20 rule", all government agencies must complete the simple transaction within three working days, seven working days for complex transactions, and 20 working days for highly technical transactions.

Employees who fail to comply with the "3-7-20 rule" would be suspended for six months, and dismissal from service for second offense. (Lilian C Mellejor/PNA)



## What is measured in ease of doing business?

Source: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/TheWorld Bank. Doing Business Database. Doing Business 2019: Training for Reform: Comparing Business Regulation for Domestic Firms in 190 Economies. 2019.



An economy cannot thrive without a healthy private sector. When local businesses flourish, they create jobs and generate income that can be spent and invested domestically. Any rational government that cares about the economic well-being and advancement of its constituency pays special attention to laws and regulations affecting local small and medium size enterprises. Effective business regulation affords micro and small firms the opportunity to grow, innovate and, when applicable, move from the informal to the formal sector of an economy.

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## Ease of Doing Business ranking

Source: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/TheWorld Bank. Doing Business Database. Doing Business 2019. Training for Reform: Comparing Business Regulation for Domestic Firms in 190 Economies. 2019.

Rank	Economy	EODB score	EODB score change	Rank	Economy	EODB score	EODB score change	Rank	Economy	EODB score	EODB score change
1	New Zealand	86.59	0.00	65	Colombia	69.24	+0.20	129	Barbados	56.78	0.00
2	Singapore	85.24	+0.27	66	Luxembourg	69.01	0.00	130	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	56.35	+0.01
3	Denmark	84.64	+0.59	67	Costa Rica	68.89	-0.47	131	Cabo Verde	55.95	+0.02
4	Hong Kong SAR, China	84.22	+0.04	68	Peru	68.83	+0.56	132	Nicaragua	55.64	+0.37
5	Korea, Rep.	84.14	-0.01	69	Vietnam	68.36	+1.59	133	Palau	55.59	+0.01
6	Georgia	83.28	+0.48	70	Kyrgyz Republic	68.33	+2.57	134	Guyana	55.57	-1.21
7	Norway	82.95	+0.25	71	Ukraine	68.25	+0.94	135	Mozambique	55.53	+1.78
8	United States	82.75	-0.01	72	Greece	68.08	-0.12	136	Pakistan	55.31	+2.53
9	United Kingdom	82.65	+0.33	73	Indonesia	67.96	+1.42	137	Togo	55.20	+6.32
10	Macedonia, FYR	81.55	+0.32	74	Mongolia	67.74	+0.27	138	Cambodia	54.80	+0.41
11	United Arab Emirates	81.28	+2.37	75	Jamaica	67.47	+0.55	139	Maldives	54.43	+0.10
12	Sweden	81.27	0.00	76	Uzbekistan	67.40	+1.08	140	St. Kitts and Nevis	54.36	+0.01
13	Taiwan, China	80.90	+0.24	77	India	67.23	+6.63	141	Senegal	54.15	+0.37
14	Lithuania	80.83	+0.29	78	Oman	67.19	-0.02	142	Lebanon	54.04	+0.07
15	Malaysia	80.60	+2.57	79	Panama	66.12	+0.41	143	Niger	53.72	+1.24
16	Estonia	80.50	+0.01	80	Tunisia	66.11	+1.51	144	Tanzania	53.63	+0.34
17	Finland	80.35	+0.05	81	Bhutan	66.08	+0.20	145	Mali	53.50	+0.23
18	Australia	80.13	-0.01	82	South Africa	66.03	+1.37	146	Nigeria	52.89	+1.37
19	Latvia	79.59	+0.33	83	Qatar	65.89	+0.64	147	Grenada	52.71	+0.07
20	Mauritius	79.58	+1.29	84	Malta	65.43	+0.28	148	Mauritania	51.99	+0.92
21	Iceland	79.35	+0.05	85	El Salvador	65.41	+0.21	149	Gambia, The	51.72	+0.23
22	Canada	79.26	+0.38	86	Botswana	65.40	+0.46	150	Marshall Islands	51.62	+0.01
23	Ireland	78.91	-0.51	87	Zambia	65.08	+1.48	151	Burkina Faso	51.57	+0.12
24	Germany	78.90	0.00	88	San Marino	64.74	+2.27	152	Guinea	51.51	+2.02
25	Azerbaijan	78.64	+7.10	89	Bosnia and Herzegovina	63.82	+0.27	153	Benin	51.42	+0.13
26	Austria	78.57	+0.03	90	Samoa	63.77	+0.01	154	Lao PDR	51.26	+0.11
27	Thailand	78.45	+1.06	91	Tonga	63.59	+0.03	155	Zimbabwe	50.44	+1.92
28	Kazakhstan	77.89	+0.73	92	Saudi Arabia	63.50	+1.62	156	Bolivia	50.32	+0.15
29	Rwanda	77.88	+4.15	93	St. Lucia	63.02	+0.06	157	Algeria	49.65	+2.06
30	Spain	77.68	+0.07	94	Vanuatu	62.87	-0.21	158	Kiribati	49.07	+0.33
31	Russian Federation	77.37	+0.61	95	Uruguay	62.60	+0.34	159	Ethiopia	49.06	+0.91
32	France	77.29	+0.99	96	Seychelles	62.41	-0.01	160	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	48.99	0.00
33	Poland	76.95	-0.36	97	Kuwait	62.20	+0.75	161	Madagascar	48.89	+0.71
34	Portugal	76.55	-0.07	98	Guatemala	62.17	+1.01	162	Sudan	48.84	+3.75
35	Czech Republic	76.10	+0.05	99	Djibouti	62.02	+8.87	163	Sierra Leone	48.74	+0.15
36	Netherlands	76.04	+0.01	100	Sri Lanka	61.22	+1.80	164	Comoros	48.66	+0.14
37	Belarus	75.77	+0.72	101	Fiji	61.15	+0.04	165	Suriname	48.05	-0.05
38	Switzerland	75.69	+0.01	102	Dominican Republic	61.12	+0.55	166	Cameroon	47.78	+0.83
39	Japan	75.65	+0.05	103	Dominica	61.07	+0.04	167	Afghanistan	47.77	+10.64
40	Slovenia	75.61	+0.02	104	Jordan	60.98	+1.42	168	Burundi	47.41	+0.73
41	Armenia	75.37	+2.06	105	Trinidad and Tobago	60.81	-0.12	169	Gabon	45.58	-0.23
42	Slovak Republic	75.17	+0.29	106	Lesotho	60.60	+0.19	170	São Tomé and Príncipe	45.14	+0.30
43	Turkey	74.33	+4.34	107	Namibia	60.53	+0.24	171	Iraq	44.72	+0.04
44	Kosovo	74.15	+0.44	108	Papua New Guinea	60.12	+1.19	171	Myanmar	44.72	+0.51
45	Belgium	73.95	+2.24	109	Brazil	60.01	+2.96	173	Angola	43.86	+2.16
46	China	73.64	+8.64	110	Nepal	59.63	-0.32	174	Liberia	43.51	-0.04
47	Moldova	73.54	+0.38	111	Malawi	59.59	+0.84	175	Guinea-Bissau	42.85	+0.27
48	Serbia	73.49	+0.17	112	Antigua and Barbuda	59.48	+0.06	176	Bangladesh	41.97	+0.91
49	Israel	73.23	+0.64	113	Paraguay	59.40	+0.41	177	Equatorial Guinea	41.94	+0.28
50	Montenegro	72.73	+0.20	114	Ghana	59.22	+2.06	178	Timor-Leste	41.60	+1.71
51	Italy	72.56	-0.15	115	Solomon Islands	59.17	+0.33	179	Syrian Arab Republic	41.57	+0.02
52	Romania	72.30	-0.53	116	West Bank and Gaza	59.11	+0.39	180	Congo, Rep.	39.83	+0.36
53	Hungary	72.28	+0.34	117	Eswatini	58.95	+0.13	181	Chad	39.36	+1.15
54	Mexico	72.09	-0.18	118	Bahamas, The	58.90	+0.77	182	Haiti	38.52	+0.11
55	Brunei Darussalam	72.03	+1.85	119	Argentina	58.80	+0.87	183	Central African Republic	36.90	+2.67
56	Chile	71.81	+0.37	120	Egypt, Arab Rep.	58.56	+2.74	184	Congo, Dem. Rep.	36.85	+0.67
57	Cyprus	71.71	+0.44	121	Honduras	58.22	+0.09	185	South Sudan	35.34	+2.04
58	Croatia	71.40	+0.34	122	Côte d'Ivoire	58.00	+4.94	186	Libya	33.44	+0.23
59	Bulgaria	71.24	+0.11	123	Ecuador	57.94	+0.12	187	Yemen, Rep.	32.41	-0.59
60	Morocco	71.02	+2.46	124	Philippines	57.68	+1.36	188	Venezuela, RB	30.61	-0.24
61	Kenya	70.31	+5.25	125	Belize	57.13	+0.02	189	Eritrea	23.07	+0.13
62	Bahrain	69.85	+1.82	126	Tajikistan	57.11	+0.08	190	Somalia	20.04	+0.06
63	Albania	69.51	+0.50	127	Uganda	57.06	+0.65				
64	Puerto Rico (U.S.)	69.46	+0.20	128	Iran, Islamic Rep.	56.98	+2.34				

Economies are ranked on their ease of doing business, from 1 to 190. A high ease of doing business ranking means the regulatory environment is more conducive to the starting and operation of a local firm. The rankings are determined by sorting the aggregate scores on 10 topics, each consisting of several indicators, giving equal weight to each topic. The rankings for all economies are benchmarked to May 2018.