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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Cimatu underscores role of brgy officials in Bacolod's COVID fight

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by [Glazyl Masculino](#)

BACOLOD CITY – Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu emphasized the significant role barangay officials would be playing in locating the virus amid the increasing number of coronavirus disease (COVID)-19 cases here.



Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu leads a meeting with barangay officials, members of the COVID-19 technical working group, and medical directors during his visit in Bacolod City Tuesday to help arrest the rising number of COVID cases here. (Photo courtesy of Bacolod City PIO / MANILA BULLETIN)

Cimatu, who was in Bacolod on Tuesday, met with the barangay officials, members of the COVID-19 technical working group, and medical directors, as part of the Office of the President's response to Mayor Evelio Leonardia's appeal for augmentation in view of the worsening COVID-19 situation here.

Cimatu, who has been credited for containing the COVID-19 outbreak in Cebu City, said that barangays with high numbers of COVID-19 cases here should be prioritized.

Based on the latest data from the City Health Office, the top 10 barangays with the highest number of cases are: Estefania with 100; Taculing with 77; Villamonte with 65; Banago with 62; Mansilingan and Mandalagan both with 61 cases; Alijis with 55 cases; Tangub with 46 cases; Bata with 39 cases; and Garanda with 38.

"This is where the role of village officials – especially barangay captains – comes in," Cimatu said.

"The key here is to locate the virus [and thus identify] where we exert all our efforts," he said, adding that this is the primary step towards effectively containing the spread of the COVID-19 disease," he said.

"This is the game of the barangay captains," he said, stressing that as elected officials, they were supposed to lead the people especially during this crisis.

For his part, Regional Inter-Agency Task Force (RIATF)-Visayas deputy chief implementer Gen. Melquiades Feliciano recommended a centralized command center where all clusters of the technical working group could meet every day to strengthen their collaboration.



Cimatu underscores role of brgy officials in Bacolod's COVID fight

“The focal person is the barangay captain,” he said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Mary Jean Leroche, chief pathologist of Department of Health (DOH)-Central Visayas, shared the best practices that helped curb the COVID-19 outbreak in Cebu City, emphasizing the collaborative efforts between and among public and private hospitals.

Leroche also highlighted the efforts to improve the testing capacity in communities and the involvement of the private sector in the information drive.

Aside from distribution of PPEs (personal protective equipment), she also mentioned the strict implementation of border control and minimum health standards.



Cimatu sa Bacolod officials: ‘Locate the virus’

By [Bombo Radyo Bacolod](#)

-September 2, 2020 | 3:35 PM

BACOLOD CITY — Iniutos ni National Inter-Agency Task Force member at Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu na unahin munang hanapin ang virus sa Bacolod bilang “primary step” sa epektibo na pagsugpo ng COVID-19 pandemic.

Sa pulong na isinagawa kasama ang mga barangay officials, miyembro ng COVID-19 technical working group at mga medical directors sa Bacolod City kahapon, inihayag ni Cimatu na dapat mag-exert ng efforts ang lahat upang ma-locate ang virus.

Ayon kay Cimatu, dapat na unahin ang mga barangay na may mataas na numero ng coronavirus cases.

Nabatid na ang meeting ni Cimatu kasama ang mga barangay officials at iba pang mga concerned sectors ay isa sa mga sagot ng Office of the President sa apela ni Mayor Evelio Leonardia para sa augmentation dahil sa patuloy na pagdami ng kaso ng COVID sa lungsod.

Base sa pinakahuling tala ng City Health Office, makikita na ang 10 mga barangay na may pinakamataas na kaso sa Bacolod ay kinabililangan ng Estefania na may 100; Taculing na may 77; Villamonte na may 65; Banago na may 62; Mansilingan at Mandalagan na may tig-61; Alijis na may 55; Tangub na may 46; Bata na may 39 at Granada na may 38 na kaso.

Inirekomenda naman ni RIATF-Visayas deputy chief implementer Gen. Melquiades Feliciano ang centralized command center kung saan ang lahat ng clusters ng technical working group ay magpupulong bawat araw upang mas mapatibay pa ang kanilang kolaborasyon.



DENR reminds public on proper disposal of hazardous wastes

By Marita Moaje September 2, 2020, 6:55 pm



DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda

MANILA – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Wednesday reminded the public as well as hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and even businesses and companies of the proper way to dispose of hazardous wastes amid the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

The DENR made this reminder after hundreds of used rapid test kits were left scattered along M. Dela Fuente Street in Sampaloc, Manila on Tuesday evening.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda in an interview over DZBB said that there is a color coding scheme in disposing of hazardous wastes.

“Let me remind everybody that we have a correct process in disposing of our hazardous wastes. We can place it in a yellow bag or if not, in any trash bag and put a visible label on it,” Antiporda said.

Antiporda said yellow is the color for “hazwastes”.

If there is none, proper labeling would do by just identifying the trash bag content as a rapid tester, PPE (personal protective equipment), or face masks.

Those picking up the trash bags may also be properly informed that the content of the bag is considered hazardous wastes.

Antiporda said the DENR is discouraging scavengers picking up unidentified trash bags as they may be hazardous.

Those who will be caught improperly disposing of their hazardous wastes may be charged with violation of Republic Act 6969 or An Act To Control Toxic Substances And Hazardous And Nuclear Wastes, and may also be fined.

Antiporda said the Solid Waste Management Commission of the DENR now identifies hazardous wastes from households as “household healthcare waste”.

He added that the DENR is now planning to distribute yellow trash bins to be distributed in every barangay where people may throw their hazardous wastes such as used face masks.

Antiporda added that the DENR will be coordinating with the Manila city government in investigating the “scattered used rapid tests kits” incident. *(PNA)*

'Dispose of face masks, other hazardous wastes properly,' DOH and DENR appeal to public

Published September 2, 2020, 2:42 PM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

The Department of Health (DOH) warned healthcare facilities that they would face sanctions if they were found not following the proper disposal of medical waste.



(Photo by AHMAD AL-RUBAYE / AFP / MANILA BULLETIN)

DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire issued the warning after reports that used rapid antibody test kits were found along M. Dela Fuente Street in Sampaloc, Manila.

"There is a sanction for all of these healthcare facilities na hindi nila tinatapon nang maayos ang kanilang waste. Let us try to understand na ito pong mga rapid test kits na ito, ito po ay healthcare waste [that these rapid test kits, these are healthcare waste]," said Vergeire.

For its part, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Thursday renewed its appeal to the public to properly discard and label hazardous healthcare wastes, following reports that used rapid test kits had been scattered along a street in Sampaloc, Manila on Tuesday evening, a development that has been noted by the DOH.

"Let me remind everybody that we already have the right process for disposing of these special wastes. What we are saying is very simple. Just put the hazardous healthcare waste in a labeled container or put it in a yellow trash bag," DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda said in a DZBB interview.

The DENR official acknowledges that the society is overwhelmed by the rising amount of household waste due to the pandemic. But he reminded the public to do their part in containing the coronavirus starting from their homes.

Household healthcare wastes, such as used face masks and gloves, are considered special wastes.

"When placed in a trash bag just have proper labeling so the one collecting the garbage will know that it is a used test kit, personal protective equipment, or face mask. Or you can personally tell the garbage collector that it contains a hazardous waste. Proper labeling is a huge help to the garbage collector who will dispose of these wastes. It is very simple to do only if we care about our fellowmen," Antiporda pointed out.



‘Dispose of face masks, other hazardous wastes properly,’ DOH and DENR appeal to public

He said the DENR will look into the incident in Sampaloc to determine where the used test kits came from, “if it is from a hospital, clinic, or company that initiated coronavirus screening among its employees.”

Those who will be found responsible for the “indiscriminate disposal of hazardous waste” will be charged for violation of the Republic Act (RA) 6969 or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990, he added.

Antiporda explained that hospital wastes are collected by registered treatment storage and disposal facility.

“We don’t have a problem with our disposal facilities. The biggest part of the problem comes from households that are treating these as ordinary household waste. What happens is we protect ourselves using this face mask but when we dispose this improperly, we end up harming the people around us,” he added.

He cited that the DENR is planning to distribute 100 yellow trash bins for the special wastes.

“We will prioritize Manila and give at least one trash bin to each barangay. It will be placed in a strategic area where people can discard their hazardous household healthcare wastes,” he said.

“Pagka healthcare waste, mas iba po ang treatment nyan kaysa sa mga ordinary waste products natin katulad sa bahay—dahil ito po ay maaring makapanghawa at maaring makapag-cause ng harm sa mga tao [When it comes to healthcare waste, the treatment is different as compared to ordinary waste—such as in our homes— because it can be contagious and can cause harm to people],” she added.

Vergeire noted that medical waste must be placed in a bag and should be labeled properly before this can be disposed of in a designated area—that is approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

“Hindi po dapat ito kung saan-saan lang tinatapon [It should not be thrown anywhere],” said the Health official.

“If nakita natin na [If we see that] you are not disposing your healthcare waste properly, then there would be accorded sanctions for this,” she added.

“So una [First], we issue warnings. Kapag hindi ka pa rin sumunod [If you still do not comply], we will suspend you, and the final would be the revocation of your license,” she furthered.



Mining sector's environmental 'trade off' to help PH recover

Published September 2, 2020, 12:40 PM

by [Madelaine Miraflor](#)

The environmental 'trade off' of the highly destructive mining sector could help the Philippine economy recover during the COVID-19 pandemic, a top official from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) said.

MGB Director Wilfredo Moncano said in an interview with state-run Philippines Information Agency (PIA) that he hopes the public will gain an understanding as to how the mining sector truly operates.

During the interview, he admitted that the sector has adverse effects but he also said there are programs that help in mitigating and reducing the environmental impact brought by the sector's operations.

He then ensured the trade off of mining operations will certainly help with the recovery of the country.

Moving forward, Moncano said the mining sector is currently looking into several projects which would certify the generation of employment and revenues to the government.

But this was disputed by an environmental advocate, who said the contribution of the mining sector in the Philippines' has been dismal over the past years.

Green Thumb Coalition (GTC) Convenor and Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) National Coordinator Jaybee Garganera said he is disappointed with the "misplaced trust" of Moncano on the mining industry's contribution to economic growth.

"Historically, mining has never contributed significantly to GDP [gross domestic product], to employment, investments or tax revenues. There is no indication that trend will change in the near future," Garganera said.

At present, the mining industry contributes only 0.85 percent to the country's total GDP.

This is despite the fact the country's mineral resources has an estimated value of around \$1.4 trillion.

Garganera said it is a "twisted notion" to believe and rely on the trade offs between mining and the recovery of the country when the pandemic is "clearly linked to climate change and deforestation and mining is one of the leading causes of deforestation and climate change."

Last year, MGB embarked on a massive information campaign where it had spent millions to promote responsible mining in the country.

Such move is in stark contrast to how things were at the agency back in 2017 when it would rather spend its budget running after mining companies through multiple, overlapping audits led by late and former Environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez. (See: [Gov't now spending millions to promote responsible mining](#))



Mining sector's environmental 'trade off' to help PH recover

Lopez, a known anti-mining advocate, almost shut down half of the country's nickel operators, including the major ones, during her term.

The other day, Finance Assistant Secretary Maria Teresa Habitan said she believes that the immediate lifting of Executive Order (EO) 79, which is the moratorium on new mining projects imposed during the time of former President Benigno Aquino 3rd, can help the Philippine economy recover from the pandemic-triggered recession.

Rocky Dimaculangan, vice president for corporate communications at the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), an organization of some of the country's largest mining operations, agreed with her, but he also thinks that the government should just forego the conditions of EO 79 that no new mineral agreements shall be approved until a new tax regime in mining is passed. According to him, the mining sector is already paying too much tax, referring to the decision of the Senate to include in the package one of Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) an increase in the excise tax rate for minerals from 2 percent to 4 percent.



CA junks Bauer complaint vs Semirara Mining



By [Jordeene B. Lagare](#)
September 3, 2020

The Court of Appeals (CA) has dismissed Bauer Foundations Philippines Inc.'s petition to claim more than P7 million from Semirara Mining and Power Corp. after asserting that the latter had reneged on their agreement. In a disclosure on Wednesday, the Consunji-led company said it received the CA's June 26, 2020 decision denying the appeal of the subsidiary of Germany-based Bauer Spezialtiefbau GmbH. The mining firm added that it "does not expect the case to have any effect on its business or operations." it added. The case stemmed from Semirara Mining tapping Bauer in the last quarter of 2012 to drill 122 holes at its minesite on Semirara Island in Antique province's Caluya town and finish this on Jan. 30, 2013. But it said Bauer used only one rig when it was supposed to provide two. This prompted Semirara Mining to mobilize its own rig without prejudice to Bauer's continued work and that on Jan. 18, 2014, the latter's lone rig broke down. Two days later, Bauer pulled out its equipment and discontinued operations after completing only 87 holes. Semirara Mining shares tumbled by 4 centavos or 0.41 percent to close at P9.80 each on Wednesday.

Stop to illegal logging sought



By [Leander C. Domingo, TMT](#)
September 2, 2020

PEÑABLANCA, Cagayan: The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) has called the attention of local officials for the protection of the Peñablanca Protected Landscape and Seascape (PPLS) where the famous Callao cave is located. Gwendolyn Bambalan, DENR-Region 2 executive director, asked local authorities, particularly barangay (village) officials to be more vigilant in the forest protection efforts of the government particularly the PPLS, a declared national park. Also the chairman of the Protected Area Management Board, Bambalan explained that the PPLS was declared a national park because there are biodiversity species that are to be protected and managed.

In 2003, the PPLS was established under Proclamation 484. It has a total area of 118,781.58 hectares with 103,801 hectares terrestrial and 14,980 hectares marine. “We need [the] support [of] barangay captains in our campaign against illegal logging,” Bambalan said as she underlined the alarming incidence of apprehensions of illegally cut logs in the municipality. Ismael Manaligod, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer, said the Cagayan Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force had apprehended five conveyances and 26,123 board feet of lumber and fitches worth P1,306,174 from May 12 to Aug. 14, 2020. This municipality, home to the famous Callao Cave, works to ensure the protection of its caves and cave resources. She said caves are considered protected areas and must be preserved. Meanwhile, Bambalan expressed thanks to Gov. Manuel Mamba for the full support of the provincial government and the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies in the apprehension of illegal logging activities in Cagayan province.



Illegal loggers arrested in Bulacan

[Ramon Efren Lazaro](#) (The Philippine Star) - September 3, 2020 - 12:00am

MALOLOS, Philippines – Five suspected illegal loggers were arrested in Donya Remedios Trinidad town in Bulacan on Tuesday.

William Abayan, Jhay-ar de la Cruz, Ramon Marasigan, Alvin Padre and Ariel Rivera, all residents of Barangay Sapang Bulak, were apprehended in Sitio Tanapan in Barangay Camachin, reports reaching Col. Lawrence Cajipe, Bulacan police director, showed.

Police said three chainsaws and an undetermined number of illegally cut logs were recovered from the suspects.

The confiscated items were brought to the community environment and natural resources office in Baliwag for inventory.



9 timbog sa illegal logging

By [Victor Martin](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon)

- September 3, 2020 - 12:00am



Kinilala ang mga suspek na sina Redentor Silao, 39; Marjole Silao, 37; Jaynard Ladia, 32; Jerick James Tiburcio, 27; Francis Ladia, 27; Donato Abon, 27; Felipe Mercado, 40; Marcelo Lumosan, 27, at Regie Reyes, 42, pawang residente ng Brgy. Palacian, Aglipay.

AFP/Ted Aljibe, File

Pulis idinawit, hepe sibak

SANTIAGO CITY, Isabela, Philippines — Arestado ang isang pulis at 9 katao dahil sa illegal logging sa Aglipay, Quirino habang nadamay na masibak sa puwesto ang hepe ng una dahil sa command responsibility kamakalawa.

Kinilala ang mga suspek na sina Redentor Silao, 39; Marjole Silao, 37; Jaynard Ladia, 32; Jerick James Tiburcio, 27; Francis Ladia, 27; Donato Abon, 27; Felipe Mercado, 40; Marcelo Lumosan, 27, at Regie Reyes, 42, pawang residente ng Brgy. Palacian, Aglipay.

Agad namang sinibak sa puwesto at nahaharap sa kasong criminal at administratibo si P/Cpl. Grengo Frank Browner Eustaquio, nakatalaga sa Cabaroguis Police Station, matapos siyang isangkot sa illegal logging.

Ayon kay P/Lt. Scarlettte Enriquez, tagapagsalita ng Quirino Provincial Police Office, nagsagawa ng operasyon ang Aglipay Police at Regional Integrity Monitoring Enforcement Team na nagresulta sa pagkakadakilang ng mga suspek at pagkakabawi ng nasa 2,221 board feet na pinutol na mga kahoy lulan ng isang Isuzu forward truck (RBH 282) sa Brgy. Victoria, alas-4:00 ng hapon.

Nakuha ng pulisya ang isang cellphone mula kay Marjole Silao at dito nakita ang mga palitan nila ng text messages ni Eustaquio na agad hinuli ng mga kabaro sa followup operation sa Cabaroguis Police Station.

Sinabi ni Enriquez na command responsibility naman ang dahilan ng pagsibak sa acting chief ng Cabaroguis Police dahil sa pagkakasangkot ni Eustaquio sa illegal logging.



On disposal of infectious wastes: Shut down awaits protocol violators

(The Freeman)

-September 3, 2020 - 12:00am



In a briefing Wednesday, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire called on local government units and medical facilities to follow protocols on the proper handling of infectious healthcare waste as it could have serious impacts on human health and the environment if not managed properly.

CEBU, Philippines — Healthcare facilities and testing laboratories that fail to properly dispose of infectious medical waste could face sanctions and lose their license, the Department of Health warned yesterday.

The DOH issued the warning after used rapid test kits were seen scattered along M. Dela Fuente St. in Sampaloc, Manila Tuesday night. CCTV footage provided by the city government of Manila showed the test kits fell from a punctured garbage bag attached to a pedicab.

In a briefing Wednesday, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire called on local government units and medical facilities to follow protocols on the proper handling of infectious healthcare waste as it could have serious impacts on human health and the environment if not managed properly.

She said failure to comply with the proper disposal of medical waste may lead to suspension and even revocation of a medical facility's license.

"May I remind all our healthcare facilities it is part of your licensing. We have requirement on proper disposal of healthcare waste. If you are found that you are not disposing your healthcare waste properly, there'll be accorded sanctions for this," Vergeire said.

Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno said the city government and the police have begun investigating who was responsible for the improper disposal of used rapid test kits.

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"We can locate maybe the clinic, maybe a private office, maybe a hospital, or maybe a laboratory. [The Manila Police District said] they are looking already at sinisiyasat na 'yung nangyari," he said in a release.



On disposal of infectious wastes: Shut down awaits protocol violators

Moreno also warned all clinics, laboratories, businesses and corporations in the city that failure to properly dispose of infectious waste would face closure orders. He added that charges for improper waste management will be filed against them.

Management of healthcare waste

As coronavirus cases continue to increase, medical facilities across the country are also seeing a surge in the volume of infectious waste they produce, which could pose a problem for treatment facilities and landfills

Data obtained by Philstar.com from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources showed that the country has so far generated 19,187.7 metric tons of infectious healthcare waste from April to July 20. The figure, which refers to the waste service providers intend to transport and treat, was based on the special permit to transport submitted by treaters.

For the whole of 2019, healthcare facilities produced 88,878.7 metric tons of infectious waste.

According to the DOH's guidelines on the management of waste during the COVID-19 crisis, all medical waste generated in the management and treatment of suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients should be considered infectious. These include among others used protective gear, gloves, swabs, test tubes and syringes.

Infectious waste is discarded in an appropriate waste receptacle. The waste bins must be properly sealed prior to their transport to the facility's temporary facility. Some facilities disinfect their waste at source.

The DOH said infectious waste generated may be stored temporarily in designated locations, away from patients and public spaces before it is picked up for treatment.

Medical waste in the country is typically disinfected through steam sterilization, also called autoclave, which subjects the waste to intense heat and pressure to kill pathogens. Treated healthcare waste is then transported to a licensed sanitary landfill for final disposal in a cell dedicated for infectious waste. — **Philstar.com (FREEMAN)**



Groups decry slow legislative grind on environment-related measures

Published September 2, 2020, 5:00 PM

by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

Environmental groups have lamented the “consistently slow” processing of environment-related measures during the 18th Congress wherein not a single measure for the protection of the environment was passed into law.

Nilad Metro Manila Environmental Network and Earth Island Institute Asia Pacific have reviewed the bills, resolutions, and speeches filed by members of the House of Representatives and Senate between July 22, 2019 to July 31, 2020.

They pointed out that there were several local measures signed into law by President Duterte in August, 2019 but all of them were sponsored and approved during the 17th Congress.

“Based on the data of 10 committees we reviewed, the majority of the measures are still waiting to be deliberated and have yet to be tackled at the plenary level. Only seven were passed at the 2nd reading and only 13 hurdled the 3rd reading,” the groups said.

In the Senate, based on the nine committees the groups reviewed, only five out of 63 environment-related bills were passed on first reading on the committee level (Consolidated/Substituted) while the majority of the measures are pending before their respective committees.

“We do not pass judgment on the efficiency of the Congress secretariat. This is a leadership call,” they said, adding that “it reflects the priorities of the ruling coalition which has expedited the passage of draconian laws such as the Terror Law but has dilly-dallied on vital measures that could save the lives of millions, especially the future generation.”

Nilad and Earth Island Institute reminded the leaders of both Houses of Congress that the current situation requires the rejection of policies and programs that exacerbate the suffering of many Filipinos.

“We have to stop projects that destroy our biodiversity and weaken our climate resilience. For many years, environment advocates have been arguing the dirty and harmful impact of development aggression projects such as large-scale corporate mining and reclamation,” they said.

“Boosting our environment protection mechanisms will not only make us better prepared in dealing with disasters, it will also give us a stronger chance to survive the next public health crisis. We have to start greening our concept of the ‘new normal’ if we want to address the well-being of our people,” they added.

The groups pointed out that legislators have less than two years before the end of their term. “The next 12 months are therefore crucial in pushing the passage of laws that will immensely contribute to climate-proofing and pandemic-proofing our communities,” they pointed out.



Groups decry slow legislative grind on environment-related measures

“The 18th Congress still has enough time to rethink and refocus its agenda towards a holistic approach in building a more progressive society. We demand the inclusion of environment protection into its overall plan of action,” they said, noting that there are several bills and resolutions which the Congress leadership can certify as a priority.

These bills include the House Bill (HB) 00253 or an Act Declaring as Closed to Mining Applications those areas declared by local government units as no mining zones; HB00254 or an Act Re-Orienting the Philippine Mining Industry Towards National Industrialization and Ensuring the Highest Industry Development Standards; HB00257 or An Act Imposing Moratorium on the Open Pit Method of Mining for Copper, Gold, Silver, and Complex Ores in the Philippines; and HB03395 or an Act to Protect Marine Mammals and Ensure their Survival for the Benefit of Future Generations.

“We ask Congress to be more proactive in reaching out to community stakeholders and environment advocates. We are ready to sit down with legislators and share our ideas about these environment-related measures. We recognize the uncertain times and we hope legislators will use the emergency situation to reverse the rapid decline of our biodiversity and together let us craft new laws and programs that will ensure a greener and brighter future for our people,” the groups said.



DOH warns of sanctions vs facilities not following waste disposal protocols

By: [Darryl John Esguerra](#) - Reporter / [@DJEsguerraINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:39 PM September 02, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Health (DOH) on Wednesday warned sanctions against medical facilities that are not following protocols on proper disposal of healthcare wastes.

The health department issued the statement after a video of used rapid test kits that fell from a dump sack in Sampaloc, Manila Tuesday night made its round in social media.

According to DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, failure to comply with the proper disposal of medical wastes may lead to suspension or even revocation of a healthcare facility's license.

“There is a sanction for all these healthcare facilities na hindi nila tinatapon ng maayos ang kanilang waste,” Vergeire said in an online media forum.

“Iba ho ang treatment niyan kumpara po sa ordinary waste products natin katulad sa bahay dahil ito po ay maaaring makapanghawa at maaaring mag-cause ng harm sa mga tao,” she added.

The Health official said healthcare wastes should be sealed inside a bag before being disposed in designated areas approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

“Hindi po ito dapat kung saan saan lang tinatapon,” Vergeire said.

She then called on healthcare facilities as well as local government units to ensure proper disposal of COVID-19 testing kits and protective personal equipment.

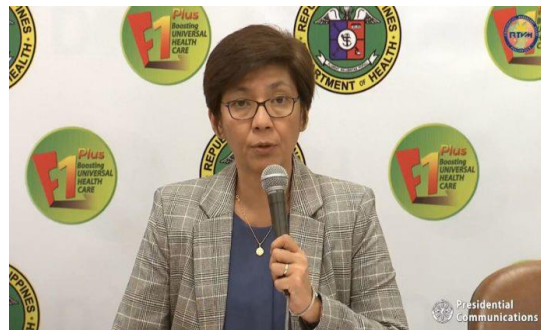
EDV



DOH threatens to revoke licenses of facilities who fail to properly dispose of infectious waste



By [BusinessMirror](#)
September 3, 2020



Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire warned health facilities that their licenses will be revoked if they fail to properly dispose of their infectious medical waste.

“There is a sanction for all these healthcare facilities who are not properly disposing the hospital waste,” Vergeire said in an online media forum.

She said that proper handling of medical waste should be strictly implemented to prevent the infection and transmission of the deadly disease.

“Let us try to understand that these rapid tests are health waste and should be treated differently from household waste. These [used] rapid test kits can harm or infect people,” Vergeire said.

The health official urged local government units and health facilities to remember that there are guidelines and protocols on proper handling of medical waste and that it should not be ignored.

The DOH had already issued Department Memorandum 2020-0170, or the Interim Guidelines on the Management of Health Facilities, Community Quarantine Units and Temporary Treatment and Monitoring Facilities (TTMF) with Cases of Covid-19, on the proper handling of hospital waste.

It provides guidance on the proper management of all Covid-19-related health-care waste in all health facilities, community quarantine units, and TTMF to prevent the spread of the disease.

The DOH underscored that waste management must be given priority to address the increase in the generation of hazardous waste, especially infectious waste related to Covid-19, as well as to ensure the welfare of all users of health-care facilities.

She said the proper disposal for treated infectious waste is at designated sanitary landfills.



DOH umapela sa LGUs, health facilities para sa proper disposal ng 'healthcare waste'

By [Bombo Christian Yosores](#)

-September 2, 2020 | 3:07 PM



IMAGE | Manila City government ordered the disinfection of Trabajo Market's vicinity following the viral video and photos of rapid test kits seen along the M. Dela Fuente Street last Tuesday evening/Manila PIO

Umapela ang Department of Health (DOH) sa mga local governemnt units, ospital at laboratoryong humahawak ng COVID-19 tests at confirmed cases kaugnay ng tamang disposal o pagtatapon ng health care wastes.

Pahayag ito ng ahensya matapos lumabas ang ulat hinggil sa nagkalat na antibody rapid test kits sa Trabajo Market sa Lungsod ng Maynila kagabi, matapos umanong malaglag mula sa kariton ng isang mangangalakal.

"Itong mga rapid test kits na ito ay healthcare waste. Ibig sabihin mas iba ang treatment nyan kesa sa ordinary waste products natin sa bahay dahil ito ay maaaring makapang-hawa at makapag-cause ng harm sa tao," ani Health Usec. Maria Rosario Vergeire.

"Baka hinahawakan lang ng mga nagkokolekta at wala silang gloves, and they can easily get infections or be harmed dito sa mga practice na ito."

Ayon sa opisyal, dapat nakasilid sa isang bag na may label bilang health care waste, at hindi maaaring basta sino lang ang magtatapon nito.

May mga nakatalaga namang dumpsite para sa healthcare waste na aprubado ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Ang healthcare facilities ay mayroon ding kontrata sa healthcare disposal firms na nangangasiwa sa pagtatapon ng nasabing mga equipment sa health facilities.

"Nananawagan kami sa mga LGUs, healthcare facilities we have policies, protocols para sa proper disposal ng healthcare wastes. Itong mga ginagamit natin sa COVID-19 response tulad ng PPEs, kits, diagnostic kits at iba pang ginagamit for patients, ito ay healthcare wastes."

Paliwanag ni Vergeire, maaaring patawan ng suspensyon at mawalan ng lisensya ang mga pasilidad na mapapatunayang nagpabaya sa pagtatapon ng healthcare wastes.

"Kapag nakita namin na you are not disposing your wastes properly, then there would be according sanctions for this... mayroon naman tayong in-general na sinusunod na patakaran.



Asia-Pacific nations plan Covid-19 response to address hunger

September 2, 2020, 2:19 pm



JAKARTA – Asia-Pacific nations convened the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) virtual conference to plan coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) response and recovery to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and tackle the hunger crisis.

As Covid-19 continues to threaten lives and livelihoods across numerous nations of the Asia-Pacific region, it has led to setbacks in the fight to end hunger and malnutrition, the UN FAO announced, as noted in a release issued by the FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific and received here on Tuesday.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to over half of the world's undernourished, and in the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the number of hungry people in Southern Asia is projected to rise by nearly a third to reach 330 million by 2030, the Sustainable Development Goal deadline set by the global community to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in all its forms.

In response, government representatives from 46 FAO member states in Asia and the Pacific have convened a four-day virtual conference to closely assess the current situation of food security in the region, with specific emphasis on implications linked to the spread of the coronavirus disease and its impact on food systems across regions.

Over 400 delegates are partaking in a virtual meeting of FAO's 35th Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan.

The meeting involved government officials, private sector, civil society, academia, and technical experts in the food and agriculture sectors.

New-fangled ways and approaches

From Afghanistan and Iran in the west, across populous South and East Asia, and far out into the Pacific Islands, novel ways and approaches will be deemed necessary to trounce over the twin pandemics of Covid-19 outbreak and hunger.

Climate change is another aggravating factor menacing efforts to boost resilience across our food systems.



Asia-Pacific nations plan Covid-19 response to address hunger

"We must come to terms with what is before us and recognize that the world and our region has changed. We must find new ways to move forward and ensure sustainable food security in the face of these twin pandemics as well as prepare for threats that can and will evolve in future," Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific Jong-Jin Kim stated.

"This virtual conference brings together people and ideas to chart a true course of action for the benefit of all," Kim added.

The conference will highlight FAO's recently launched comprehensive Covid-19 Response and Recovery Program designed to offer a flexible and coordinated global response targeted to ensure access to nutritious food for all. The program includes the mobilization of all forms of resources and partnerships at the country, regional, and global level.

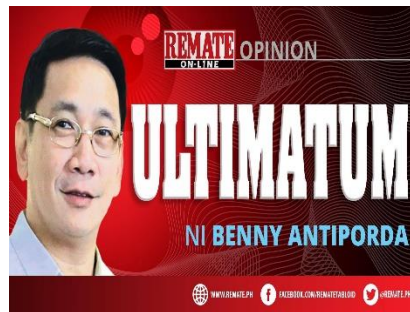
The main focus is to mitigate the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic while concurrently bolstering the longer-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods.

The conference will also take into account new marketing channels, such as e-commerce and new technologies, including better storage facilities, which will help to reduce food losses, as these are critical to ensuring the flow of nutritious foods and to boost incomes of those engaged in the food and agriculture sectors.

Equally critical is enabling smallholder and family farmers – those who produce most of the food we consume – to become more dynamic, entrepreneurial, and competitive through continual innovation. Smallholders will require much greater access to financial resources, technology, and innovation.

Bringing all players together will be critical to realizing these gains, and to this end, the FAO is in the process of implementing the Hand-in-Hand Initiative. The conference will feature a special session to gauge the progress achieved in the region through this initiative. **(ANTARA)**

COVID-19 AT KRISIS SA GADGET VS 25M ESTUDYANTE, GURO



September 2, 2020 @ 12:21 PM 17 hours ago

Isang buwan na lang, o sa Oktubre 5, magbubukas na ang eskwela sa buong bansa.

‘Yun bang === lahat ng public school mula kinder hanggang senior high school sa ilalim ng Department of Education.

Magkagayunman, hindi pa malinaw kung tiyak na magaganap ito dahil para kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, hangga’t walang bakuna, hindi pupwedeng ipagsapalaran ang buhay ng batang Filipino sa coronavirus disease-19.

Sabi nga niya, ang edukasyon, pwedeng maibalik kung mawala, pero ang buhay, hindi pwedeng ibalik kapag nawala na.

Katotohanan namang nakamamatay ang COVID-19, bukod pa sa malawakang masamang epekto nito sa mga pamilya, pamayanan at ekonomiya ng bansa kung umatake.

Kaya nga, dapat sanang magbukas ang lahat ng public school nitong nakaraang Agosto 24 subalit ipinagpaliban ito ng Pangulo sa Oktubre 5.

Ang ilang tanong ngayon: Matutuloy na kaya ang klase sa darating na buwan?

Handa na ba ang DepEd na protektahan sa COVID-19 ang buhay ng nasa 24 milyong estudyante at halos 1 milyong guro na sasabak sa eskwela?

Kaya bang mag-aral ang milyon-milyong estudyanteng hirap sa online learning?

24/7 PASOK NG MGA GURO

Kwento ng mga guro sa ULTIMATUM, hindi uso ang work from home sa kanila.

Lagi sila sa kani-kanilang eskwela o kung hindi naman, sa mga lugar na nagse-xerox ng mga kopya ng mga leksyon o module para sa blended learning.

Tapos ipamamahagi ang mga ito sa mga bahay ng mga estudyante dahil self-learning o matututo na umano ang mga ito sa mga module.

COVID-19 AT KRISIS SA GADGET VS 25M ESTUDYANTE, GURO

Sabi nila, araw-gabi, mula Lunes hanggang Linggo, walang puknat ang kontak sa kanila ng mga taga-DepEd para alamin ang kahandaan ng mga ito para sa pagbubukas ng klase sa Oktubre 5.

Wala ring puknat ang kanilang Brigada Eskwela kahit may posibilidad na maging isolation facility sa COVID-19 ang kanilang iskul.

Bukod sa sabi nilang sobrang pagod sa paghahanda para magturo sa new normal style, may malalaking problema pa ang mga guro at kabilang na rito ang kalagayan ng kanilang mga estudyante at panganib sa sakit.

Ilan na nga ba ang nagkakasakit na taga-DepEd na karamihan ay mga guro?

MAHIGIT 800 SA DEPED TINAMAAN

Batay sa mga ulat mismo ng DepEd, simula noong Enero, may mahigit 800 na tinamaan ng COVID-19.

Tinilad-tilad ang mga kaso sa 297 estudyante, 340 titser at 186 na hindi titser.

Kakaunti lang naman umano ang natamaan sa trabaho sa hanay ng mga titser at nahawa lang sa ibang mga tao.

Pero kung maging aktibo na ang lahat sa DepEd na kinasasangkutan ng 24 milyong estudyante at 1 milyong guro, nakasisiguro ba ang DepEd na hindi kakalat ang COVID-19 sa mga ito?

Paiiralin man ang blended learning, may mga araw pa ring obligado ang mga estudyante at guro na magkikita-kita kaya posibleng magkasakit.

Isa pa, sino ang sasagot sa mga tatamaan ng COVID-19 sa mga guro at estudyante?

Sa bahagi ng mga guro, hindi sila tulad ng mga health frontliner na may malalaking insentibo kung matamaan sila gaya ng P100,000 para sa magkakaroon ng mild at P1 milyon kung mamatay.

COVID-19 AT 24M ESTUDYANTE

Sa ibang bansa, gaya sa Europe, magbubukas na ang mga klase sa linggong ito.

Katwiran ng mga pamahalaan, hindi lang online learning ang paiiralin nila kundi in-person o face-to-face dahil wala umanong kapalit ang sistemang ito sa pagkakaroon ng mga estudyante ng kaalaman.

Duda sila sa epekto ng online learning sa edukasyon.

‘Yun bang === magiging hilaw ang edukasyon ng mga kabataan.

Pero handang mabilis na rumesponde ang mga pamahalaan kung sakaling umatake ang COVID-19 sa mga mag-aaral.



COVID-19 AT KRISIS SA GADGET VS 25M ESTUDYANTE, GURO

Ganito ngayon ang ginagawa ng mga departamentong pang-edukasyon sa Amerika, gayundin sa Asya, gaya ng South Korea at China na napakabilis magsuspende o magsara ng mga eskwela kung may tinamaan nang mga mag-aaral o guro.

Gaano naman kabilis ang DepEd na umaksyon kung may kakalat na pandemya sa hanay ng mga mag-aaral?

Nasaan ang mga pondo ng DepEd na pansalo sa mga magkakasakit, ang mga tao sa iskul na mabilis na kumilos, ang ugnayan nila sa ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan at ospital na pagdadalhan ng mga magkakasakit?

Heto ang isang sitwasyon: Napakahirap maghanap ngayon ng mga ospital na roon itakbo ang mga nako-COVID-19 dahil punuan ang mga ospital ng mga maysakit at maraming ospital ang walang kakayahang mag-asikaso sa mga nako-COVID-19.

WALANG GADGET, WIFI ATBP.

Paano naman ang paglabas ng katotohanang milyon-milyong estudyante mula sa 24 milyong nag-enroll na hindi handa sa online learning dahil sa kawalan ng gadget at kawalan ng konek sa internet at hindi rin basta makakonek sa iba pang linya ng edukasyon gaya ng paggamit ng mga radio at telebisyon?

May suplay man ang mga guro ng kumpletong gadget, paano ang koneksyon nila sa milyon-milyong estudyante na walang gadget at koneksyon sa internet, telebisyon at radio?

Imadyinin na lang na may tatlo o apat na anak na sabay-sabay na gagamit ng gadget, radio, telebisyon at iba pa.

Kaya bang bilhan ng mga magulang na mahihirap ang mga bata ng mga nasabing gamit na kailangan para sa iba't magkakasabay na pag-aaral ng mga bata?

Sa ibang salita, mga Bro, problema ang koneksyon na maaaring ikapapalpak ng online learning sakaling ito ang mamayani sa pagbubukas ng klase sa Oktubre 5.

IPAUBAYA SA MGA AWTORIDAD

Marami pang mangyayari sa loob ng mahigit isang buwan na paghahanda.

Una, ano ang magiging pasya ng Pangulo sa pagbubukas ng klase lalo't may kapangyarihan siya sa batas na magtakda ng mga araw ng pasukan?

Ikalawa, maaari bang iayon ang paggana ng mga eskwela sa pinaiiral na uri ng quarantine na magkakaiba sa bansa?

Halimbawa, ano ang pupwedeng sistema ng pag-aaral sa mga lugar na deklaradong sakop ng General Community Quarantine at Modified General Community Quarantine?

Depende sa sitwasyon, mga Bro, maghintay na lang tayo sa desisyon ng mga kinauukulan at nakasalalay ito sa kalagayan natin sa pandemya at malungkot na kalagayan ng higit na nakararaming estudyante.



COVID-19 cases in PH could hit over half a million by end of 2020, UP forecast says

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Sep 2, 2020 9:40:32 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, September 2) —The coronavirus tally in the Philippines could average at around 585,000 before the year ends, based on a forecast by researchers from the University of the Philippines (UP).

The UP COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team on Wednesday updated its [coronavirus dashboard](#) to extend projections to cover up to Dec. 31 this year.

The team indicated that the year-end COVID-19 figures could still go down to around 402,000 detected cases. But it could also reach as high as 767,000, depending on different factors that may affect viral transmission, detection of cases, and data reporting in the next four months.

Meanwhile, the team approximates that the country's cases — including those undetected — may breach two million by the end of the year. This accounts for 1.85 percent of the country's estimated population of 108 million.

For active COVID-19 cases or currently ill patients, figures could average at 68,000, according to the forecast. Depending again on various factors, this could hit as low as around 21,000 and as high as 116,000.

The researchers also calculate the country's COVID-19 death toll to be anywhere between 5,000 to 10,000, with the projected average at 7,500 fatalities.

As of Sept. 2, the Department of Health reported that [226,440 in the country have fallen ill with the coronavirus](#). Of this number, 3,623 have lost their lives to the disease, while 158,610 have already recovered.

[Only Iligan City](#) in Northern Mindanao is currently under a stricter modified enhanced community quarantine until Sept. 30 due to a spike in infections.

The country's capital region Metro Manila — which accounts for more than half of the national tally of infections — remains under general community quarantine, along with Bulacan, Batangas, Tacloban City, and Bacolod City. The rest of the country has been placed under a more relaxed modified GCQ.



Gatchalian itinutulak ang 5Rs sagot sa krisis sa basura sa Pinas



September 2, 2020 @ 1:06 PM 17 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Itinutulak ni Senator Win Gatchalian ang pag-adopt sa waste-to-energy (WTE) facilities sa treatment at disposal ng solid wastes sa bansa dahil sa panganib at hindi na mababawi pang pinsaa nito sa kapaligiran sa mga tao.



“The most immediate action we can take is to urgently and strictly implement the 5Rs of the waste hierarchy:

- Refuse generating waste,
- Reduce the amount of waste produced,
- Reuse materials,
- Recycle waste materials and Recover other uses for residual garbage,” ani Gatchalian sa kanyang privilege speech nitong Martes, September 1, 2020. **RNT**



Mayor Isko orders investigation over improper disposal of used rapid test kits

Published September 2, 2020, 4:27 PM

by [Minka Klaudia Tiangco](#)

Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso ordered an investigation on the used coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) rapid test kits that were scattered along M. Dela Fuente Street in Sampaloc, Manila Tuesday night.



(MANILA PIO/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Domagoso said the Manila Police District (MPD) is now tracing where the improperly discarded waste came from, warning that any establishment found to be disposing hazardous waste erroneously will face closure orders as well as charges for improper waste management.

“Mayroong responsable sa sitwasyon na ito and we are now looking kung saan nanggaling yung improper disposal of hazardous materials (There is someone responsible for this situation and we are now looking where the improperly disposed hazardous materials came from),” he told reporters.

“We can locate maybe the clinic, maybe a private office, maybe a hospital, or maybe a laboratory. [The MPD said] they are looking already at sinisiyasat na ‘yung nangyari (and investigating what happened),” he added.

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage from the Manila city government showed that the used rapid test kits were scattered on the street after the garbage bag carrying it was accidentally ripped open. The test kits then fell from the pedicab carrying the trash.

Domagoso ordered the proper disposal of the test kits and the disinfection of the area after receiving the report.



(MANILA PIO/ MANILA BULLETIN)



Mayor Isko orders investigation over improper disposal of used rapid test kits

Mayor Isko stressed that the Manila Health Department (MHD) and the city government's six district hospitals strictly adhere with Republic Act No. 6969 or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1999 and RA 9003 or the Philippine Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

"Hazardous waste disposal is done through DENR-accredited hazardous waste service contractors, which is in charge in the treatment, storage and disposal of all hazardous and infectious waste generated in all health centers and district hospitals in the City of Manila," he said in a statement issued Wednesday.

The local chief executive said biohazard waste and infectious waste materials, such as syringes and test kits, are placed in puncture-proof plastic containers with 10-percent Clorox.

Meanwhile, test tubes, gloves, cotton balls, pipette tips, and used PPEs (personal protective equipment) are placed in a yellow plastic bag.

Domagoso also said that the city government stopped using rapid test kits on July 15 after they were able to purchase COVID-19 serology testing machines.

Isko Moreno insists Manila complied with environmental laws on proper disposal of medical waste

By [Catalina Ricci S. Madarang](#)

- September 2, 2020 - 5:45 PM



Manila Mayor-elect Isko Moreno (Facebook/Isko Moreno)

The Manila City government launched a probe over an incident wherein rapid test kits were not disposed of properly.

In an ambush interview with reporters on September 2, Manila Mayor **Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso** warned of possible closure of health facilities and businesses in Manila that they find disposing of hazardous materials such as test kits for the virus that causes COVID-19.

Domagoso [cited](#) a surveillance video that captured a bicycle with a sidecar that seemed to accidentally drop used rapid test kits along M. Dela Fuente Street in Sampaloc, Manila last Tuesday night, September 1.

“Mayroong responsable sa sitwasyon na ito and we are now looking kung saang nanggaling yung improper disposal of hazardous materials,” Domagoso said.

“We can locate maybe the clinic, maybe a private office, maybe a hospital, or maybe a laboratory. [The MPD said] they are looking already at sinisiyasat na ‘yung nangyari,” he added.

Domagoso stressed that the Manila city government strictly complied with environmental laws such as the Republic Act 6969 (**Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1999**) and the Republic Act No. 9003 (**Philippine Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000**).

In line with this, he noted that the **Manila Department of Public Services** had already disposed of the scattered test kits. He also confirmed that what happened was an accident.

“Hazardous waste disposal is done through DENR-accredited hazardous waste service contractors, which is in charge of the treatment, storage and disposal of all hazardous and infectious waste generated in all health centers and district hospitals in the City of Manila. All wastes generated are properly handled and treated prior to its final disposal,” Domagoso said.



Isko Moreno insists Manila complied with environmental laws on proper disposal of medical waste

He explained that biohazard waste materials such as syringes and test kits are placed in puncture-proof plastic containers with 10% Clorox.

Other materials such as test tubes, gloves and used personal protective equipment are placed in a yellow plastic bag.

No more rapid tests

Domagoso clarified that the city government had stopped using rapid test kits to detect infections since last July 15 wherein they started the free **drive-thru COVID-19 testing**.

“The City Government of Manila, which includes the Manila Health Department (MHD) and its six district hospitals, has halted the use of rapid test kits since July 15, 2020, which is when the city has already started its free drive-thru serology testing,” he said.

This COVID-19 drive-thru procedure can be [availed](#) at the testing facility in front of the **Andres Bonifacio Monument** in Ermita.

Guidelines on medical waste

In the disposal procedures for COVID-19 related medical waste, the World Health Organization advised that all health care waste produced during the treatment of suspected or infected patients, including PPEs, should be collected and placed safely “designated containers and bags, treated, and then safely disposed of and/or treated, preferably onsite.”

“Put medical waste into a double-layer medical waste bag, seal the bag with cable ties in a gooseneck fashion, and spray the bag with 1,000 mg/L chlorine-containing disinfectant,” the WHO [said](#).

“Put sharp objects into a special sharps box, seal the box, and spray the box with 1,000 mg/L chlorine-containing disinfectant. 4. Put the bagged waste into a medical waste transfer box, attach a special infection label, and fully close the box,” the organization added.

The [guidelines](#) issued by the **Department of Health** are also similar wherein all medical supplies, including PPEs and test kits “shall adhere to existing guidelines on the management of healthcare wastes.”

Meanwhile, environmental advocacy group **Environment Coalition** found 33 brands of single-use protective face masks with no **Certificate of Medical Device Notification (CMDN)**, which may not be effective against the deadly pathogen, and not listed in the **Food and Drug Administration’s Notified Face Masks**.

In a statement last August 30, the group urged the FDA to regulate the distribution of these face masks given that wearing them is part of the minimum health protocols of the government.

“We request the FDA to exercise regulatory flexibility and consider these products as de facto medical face masks for source control that should be regulated for consumer protection,” [said](#) Thony Dizon, Chemical Safety Campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition.

Upgrade Asia's ageing hydropower fleet to secure reliable clean energy supply, experts urge

As the need for steady clean electricity generation grows, refurbishing Asia's decades-old hydropower plants could help them regain past strength, enhancing their contribution to the region's energy transition, shows a new study.



Hòa Bình Dam in Vietnam. With 650 gigawatts installed, Asia is home to half of the world's hydropower capacity.
Image: [Znipер](#), [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#) via Flickr

By [Tim Ha](#)
Sept. 2, 2020

Dozens of hydropower stations across Asia that were built decades ago are in need of multi-billion dollar investments to sustain their contribution to the region's renewable energy goals, new research has found.

The [analysis](#), conducted by the International Hydropower Association for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), identifies 21 hydroelectric plants boasting a capacity of more than 6 gigawatts (GW) that urgently require an upgrade due to poor performance, equipment deficiencies and major failings in their civil infrastructure, with \$2.7 billion in investment needed.

In addition, a further 45 stations with a capacity of nearly 20 GW are deemed to be ripe for rehabilitation in the coming years, representing up to \$11 billion in financing needs. With 11 stations identified, India has the most hydropower plants assessed as being in high need of refurbishment, but several ageing structures are also sited in Russia, Turkey, Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos, and the Philippines, among others.

Discovery of threatened species pushes bid to protect Vietnam forest

An extensive biodiversity survey in Kon Plong, a district in Vietnam's central highlands, has revealed the presence of endangered endemic species such as the gray-shanked douc langur in forests that are not currently protected.



More than 120 species of mammals and birds were recorded in Kon Plong, including the critically endangered gray-shanked douc langur, a monkey endemic to Vietnam. Image: Vietnam Wildlife Destinations Facebook Page

By Michael Tatarski, Mongabay.com

Recently disclosed results from an extensive survey have revealed the presence of several highly endangered species in a forest that is not currently under any legal protection in Vietnam's central highlands.

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and GreenViet, a biodiversity conservation NGO based in Da Nang, undertook months of fieldwork involving human observation and 130 remote camera traps in Kon Plong. This rural district is located northwest of Kon Tum, a growing city of 200,000 that is the capital of the province of the same name.

According to a press release on the biodiversity survey, more than 120 species of mammals and birds were recorded in Kon Plong, including the critically endangered gray-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix cinerea*), a monkey endemic to Vietnam, as well as the northern yellow-cheeked gibbon (*Nomascus gabriellae*), Owston's palm civet (*Chrotogale owstoni*), pygmy slow loris (*Nycticebus pygmaeus*) — all endangered species — Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), otters and forest cats.

A separate biodiversity summary notes that Kon Plong is likely home to the largest gray-shanked douc langur population in Vietnam, while the Owston's palm civet population is also significant, as the species has been decimated by snares and hunting in national parks elsewhere in the country.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Kon Plong's forests, which span 84,000 hectares (207,600 acres), is that they are currently managed for forestry and watershed services, meaning no specific biodiversity protection is in place.



Discovery of threatened species pushes bid to protect Vietnam forest

It's probably the largest and most important forest that's not under special forest status, and because it's not limestone karst like in far northern Vietnam, it's probably the most threatened.

Josh Kempinski, country director, FFI Vietnam

Ha Thang Long, the chairman of GreenViet, started working in Kon Plong in 2001, and has seen firsthand how much the area has changed since then.

"When I first went, there was just one road and it was really bad," he said in a Skype call. "It took me a whole day to get to the village I stayed in, and now it only takes four hours. Roads have been built everywhere, and hydropower stations have also appeared. A lot of people from elsewhere in the country have also come and tried to start businesses."

"Kon Plong has gone from being almost entirely forested to being more fragmented, so the change is pretty drastic," Josh Kempinski, country director of FFI Vietnam, said in a call. "There's huge potential for sustainable development here. There's so much you could do in these degraded areas, all kinds of agriculture, and it has a climate suitable for flowers and fruit."

Both Kempinski and Long are adamant, however, that the remaining forests need to be preserved immediately.

"I don't want to overblow it, but it's probably the largest and most important forest that's not under special forest status, and because it's not limestone karst like in far northern Vietnam, it's probably the most threatened. It could relatively easily be completely cleared," Kempinski said.

"If there is no effort to preserve the wildlife and the forest there, the wildlife will disappear soon," Long said.

Kempinski cited the area immediately surrounding Kon Tum as an example of what could happen to Kon Plong. The city's environs appear heavily forested, but the region is largely made up of acacia, rubber and coffee plantations grown on cleared land.

"There's really nothing to stop Kon Plong from ending up like that, unless there are high-level decisions made around biodiversity protection, ecotourism and ecosystem services," he said. "That's the message we're trying to take to the government."

Both conservationists also stressed the importance of balancing wildlife protection and livelihood improvement. Kon Plong's population is mostly made up of ethnic minority groups, and their villages are impoverished.

"It's a heartbreaking scenario," Kempinski said. "They're very poor, and they're clearing forest to grow an unbelievably low-value crop like cassava, and they grow it in a haphazard way because they're not supported. They're destroying the forest they already need to grow a crop that they can barely live on, so we need a holistic view."



Discovery of threatened species pushes bid to protect Vietnam forest

The immediate priority of FFI and GreenViet, meanwhile, is to convince district- and provincial-level government officials to establish a nature reserve in Kon Plong, at the very least.

“Some areas are still difficult to access and in good condition,” Long said. “It should become a reserve or a national park so that there is more effort on conservation and protection. We’re working with the forest protection department and provincial authorities to set that up.”

Kempinski said he is encouraged by his interactions with local officials thus far, particularly at a workshop in which FFI and GreenViet shared their findings and stressed the rarity of Kon Plong’s forests.

“There was almost complete consensus on the need to protect the area,” he said. “What’s left of the forest should be protected, but to do that requires investment, more attention and better development plans, so there’s a huge amount of work to do.”

The images of rare wildlife also helped convince some officials, he said: “One stood up and said, ‘We didn’t know that Kon Plong was so important, that it had endemic primates, bears and more. Now we have to rethink how we can protect the forest.’”

When asked whether making the survey results public could further endanger Kon Plong’s wildlife, Kempinski said that hunters have already done serious damage to animal populations.

“We’ve never seen snare density like it anywhere in Vietnam,” he said. “Whatever networks hunters and poachers have, they’re already there. We were pulling out massive long lines dozens or even hundreds of meters long, it’s practically like longline fishing.”

Additionally, the NGOs came to realise that without the high biodiversity values, it would be difficult to convince government officials to take action. “You can’t say, ‘This area is really important, but we’re not going to tell you why,’” Kempinski said.

Now, it remains to be seen what sort of action will be taken, but Long cautioned that officials need to act fast. “To me, this is the last chance, the last block of forest in the country that still has wildlife you can’t find anywhere else that isn’t protected,” he said. “It’s just the beginning of major development around Kon Tum, so if we have a good policy right now, it will set the right path for another 20 or 50 years. If not, then there is no chance for these animals.”



Under cover of Covid-19, loggers ravage Cambodian wildlife sanctuary

Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary in Cambodia has lost almost a fifth of its forest cover since 2010, largely to agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and land grabbing.



Green peafowl usually found at the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary in Mondulkiri and Kratié provinces, Cambodia. The sanctuary hosts some of the last known populations of threatened species. Image: Cambodia Bird Guide Association Facebook page

By Chris Humphrey, Mongabay.com

Sept. 2, 2020

Nestled in the far reaches of eastern Cambodia lies [Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary](#), one of the nation's most vital areas of protected forest and a haven for rare wildlife. Yet right now, it's also seeing frequent visits from well-documented human predators. Exploitative agricultural companies and illegal loggers, operating with renewed vigor under the cover of the global pandemic, have ravaged large areas of the park, free from fear of investigation by international NGOs.

First established as Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area in 2002, the protected area was later named Seima Protection Forest in 2009, before finally becoming Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary in 2016. In terms of biodiversity, the entire site is of global significance. Nearly a thousand plant, fungi and animal species have been recorded within the area, and many Bunong, a minority ethnic group indigenous to Cambodia, claim the sanctuary as their ancestral homeland.

The jungle within the 3,000-square-kilometer (1,160-square-mile) sanctuary supports the world's largest known populations of several threatened species, most notably the black-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nigripes*) and southern yellow-cheeked crested gibbon (*Nomascus gabriellae*). Keo Seima's southern border, which rubs shoulders with Vietnam, remains a haven for elephants that make a home among tropical evergreen, mixed deciduous, semi-evergreen and deciduous dipterocarp forest.



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Yet even such a crucial and recognised shelter for wildlife and Indigenous peoples has slipped into Cambodia's predictable tale of loss. Between 2001 and 2019, Keo Seima lost 21 per cent of its forest, much of it old growth, according to [satellite data](#) from the Global Land Analysis and Discovery lab at the University of Maryland (UMD).

While annual tree cover loss had been decreasing since its peak in 2014 (4 per cent loss that year), 2019 showed double the amount of loss (1.4 per cent) compared to 2018 (0.72 per cent). In 2020, this rise shows no sign of slowing, with the UMD data recording more than 29,000 tree cover loss alerts so far this year.

Researchers say the consequences of deforestation in the region are severe, affecting not only native animal and tree species, but also the Bunong. Residing primarily in the province of Mondulhiri, the Bunong comprise the nation's largest highland Indigenous group. Its members have grown vulnerable not only due to deforestation but also thanks to what they and advocates say is an increasingly unsympathetic government.

In May, more than 200 Bunong protested after being denied access to farmland in Keo Seima, a move Cambodia's environment ministry said was a consequence of conservation laws. Kroeung Tola, a representative of the Bunong, [told local media](#) they should be entitled to land rights under a law that promises state land for traditional or communal farming in protected area. Acquiring these protections, however, can be highly challenging due to a lengthy and costly application process.

Keo Seima was twice included on Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) "Last of the Wild" list (in the early '90s and in 2004), a compilation of areas least affected by human activity. Yet while the Bunong have at times been prohibited from subsistence farming to survive, others have invaded the sanctuary to farm and log for profit. By 2018, the situation had deteriorated so much that a forest protection ranger, a military police officer and a staff member from WCS [were shot dead confronting illegal loggers](#).

A WCS staff member working on their Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ Project, which advocates for protection of rangers, forest and the provision of legal land titles to Indigenous communities, said most of the forest loss is due to agricultural expansion.

"In large part, it is land-grabbing and small-scale agricultural expansion — the agriculture being small-scale, not the expansion, which is significant," the WCS worker, who asked to remain anonymous for safety concerns, told Mongabay via email. "Most valuable trees in this area were removed long ago. Cassava and cashew farm expansion ... and land-grabbing for speculation, especially in the new border road, are major drivers here."



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The phenomenon the WCS staff member describes certainly isn't new. Even recent deforestation in Keo Seima, along with other protected areas like [Beng Per Wildlife Sanctuary](#) and [Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary](#), can be traced back to the introduction of Cambodia's highly controversial economic land concessions (ELCs). These ELCs are areas of land, often in protected areas, allocated by the government to corporations aiming to invest in agriculture for short-term financial gain. They were first introduced in 1996, and although the practice officially ended in 2012, glaring loopholes have essentially allowed the practice to continue.

According to WCS, private companies now running ELCs in Keo Seima include Wuzhishan L.S Group Company, Vietnam Rubber Group (VRG), Binh Phuoc Kratie Rubber 1 Company, and Binh Phuoc Kratie Rubber 2 Company. If the names of the last two companies appear essentially identical, you're getting close to the root of the problem. According to Cambodian law, ELC companies are limited to 100 km² (39 mi²) each, but regularly get around this restriction by registering as [multiple entities under slightly different names](#).

In December 2017, a former chairman of VRG was investigated for [channeling \\$114.4 million into investments in other businesses](#). The Vietnamese state-run company, which currently operates in seven Cambodian provinces via 19 subsidiaries and turned over an estimated \$1.28 billion in 2019, [plans to acquire an additional nearly 200 km² \(77 mi²\) in 2020](#).

Neither Keo Seima's director, the Cambodian Ministry of Environment, Wuzhishan L.S Group nor VRG responded to requests for comment about the recent tree cover loss in Keo Seima. Contact information for Binh Phuoc Kratie Rubber 1 Company and Binh Phuoc Kratie Rubber 2 Company was not available at the time this story was produced.

Other significant barriers to conserving protected forest include recent [government bans on the use of satellite imagery](#) to track illegal logging. This has made monitoring areas like [Peam Krasaop Wildlife Sanctuary](#), which has seen hundreds of hectares cut down by industrial-scale machines, even more difficult. Crystal Davis, director of [Global Forest Watch \(GFW\)](#), an online platform that visualises satellite data on land cover change, [told Reuters](#) that Cambodia was not the first country that had attempted to censor or discredit their data.

Having a significant portion of the sanctuary's boundary running against the border of Vietnam doesn't help, either. In 2018, two areas of protected forest, including Snoul Wildlife Sanctuary, were [dissolved by royal decree](#) after being almost entirely stripped of forest, with much of the timber flowing into neighboring Vietnam.

The [Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade \(FLEGT\)](#) agreement between Vietnam and the European Union, which came into effect in June 2019, supposedly ensures that all timber exported to the EU from Vietnam has legal, verifiable origins. In reality, the accord also [feeds a thriving illegal cross-border trade between Cambodia and Vietnam](#), as rare timber, such as



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Siamese rosewood (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis*), is laundered through a quota system in Vietnam, ultimately giving it lawful status.

Marcus Hardtke, an expert who's worked on forest issues in Cambodia since 1996 with a number of NGOs and who spent five years with international watchdog organisation Global Witness in the early 2000s, said the cross-border trade of logs between Vietnam and Cambodia is thriving.

"There is still a steady stream of timber from Seima protected area across the border into Vietnam," he said. "It is more diverse now, often at night, but it continues. And it almost always involves people in uniform at several levels. It's a balanced system of bribes and influence. If this balance is disturbed, violence can occur."

With the Covid-19 pandemic raging across the world, international organizations are unable to access protected areas. The UK-based Environment Investigation Agency (EIA) said it hasn't been able to get anyone to Cambodia for months.

"Assessing Cambodian cross-border transportation is rather challenging, especially since travel is not allowed at the moment," said EIA forest campaigner Thomas Chung. "As part of our country monitoring, we do record publicly available media reports on relevant seizures and activities."

Chung said the organization's reports actually showed a decline in cross-border trade. But he said sales of high-risk timber have still been identified in records and, crucially, their figures do not include numbers from illegal trading.

With international NGOs essentially locked out of the county, the responsibility of deforestation monitoring falls on Cambodian law enforcement efforts, which, on paper, appear to support conservation efforts in Keo Seima to reduce forest loss and safeguard the livelihoods of the Bunong population. Since 2001, several acts of legislation have been introduced, designed to award land titles to Indigenous communities inside the boundaries of the wildlife sanctuary.

However, conservationists say the government's intentions are not playing out in practice.

"The apparent aims of these legislative acts are noble, and something on paper we support – ensuring legal recognition of traditionally owned lands, especially for indigenous [Bunong] people," the WCS staff member said. "But the reality of its implementation is that land has, and likely will, be given to anyone who can establish a veneer of legitimacy to a claim of historical use. We strongly support legal titles for indigenous communities, and this has and continues to be a major part of our work in Keo Seima."

WCS is among very few conservation NGOs working in Keo Seima. In the current circumstances, it's almost impossible to speak to anybody with any real knowledge of the issues in the region, which is largely due to the opaqueness brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, but also a lack of responsiveness on behalf of environmental NGOs. Of at least seven Cambodia-based



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organisations Mongabay contacted over the past year for two separate stories, only one was prepared to speak on record about the issue being investigated. Most didn't respond at all.

“The big corporate western NGOs see themselves as service providers to ‘assist the government’,” Hardtke said. “They don't address organised forest crime. In the case of Keo Seima, they changed the maps and called the Vietnamese robbery ‘planned/authorised deforestation’ on their maps, which is not their concern under [REDD](#) [the UN's forest protection programme], as they see it. That's only ‘unplanned deforestation’ done by the little guys. So these NGOs are quite in harmony with the local rangers they ‘assist’.”

Hardtke said the value of environment NGOs in Cambodia is in carrying out ecological surveys and providing support in the form of equipment and logistics, yet added they engage at mid-management level with a “mediocre ministry” and therefore have very limited influence. “They shy away from the necessary confrontation as it would risk their business model,” he said. “It's not the fault of certain individuals in the scene, it's a systemic problem.”

The tale of Keo Seima isn't just that of one sanctuary, but rather the [narrative of an entire nation](#). A quick look at [Global Forest Watch](#) shows large portions of Cambodia covered in the bright pink that denotes extensive tree cover loss, much of it supplanting the dark green that signifies primary forest. And Cambodia's government appears to be doing little to address the issue on a local or national level.

“Local authorities are complicit,” Hardtke said. “Large parts of Keo Seima got destroyed in 2013/14 when the government handed over the best, most carbon-rich evergreen forest areas to notorious Vietnamese rubber companies, despite Keo Seima being a protected area and a REDD project site. The Vietnamese cleared over 30,000 hectares [300 km², or 116 mi²] and trucked the logs across the border to Vietnam. They also logged surrounding areas with impunity.”

When it comes to alleged government corruption, Hardtke does not mince his words.

“In cases like Seima, [authorities] go after the small guy who built a hut along a forest trail. That is, if the guy is not part of a land-grabbing scheme organised by more powerful locals and outside investors,” he said. “In that case, authorities, like rangers, are bribed or coerced into cooperating. Deals like the multimillion dollar Vietnamese timber grab are just beyond the radar of park management. Such deals are done by the Phnom Penh mafia and untouchable. Lower levels are paid off.

“Cambodian authorities prey on the poor and serve the rich.”

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Toxic liquid leaks into Paris river from cement plant

posted September 02, 2020 at 08:00 am

by [AFP](#)

Hundreds of litres of toxic wastewater have leaked into Paris' Seine River from a plant belonging to Franco-Swiss cement giant Lafarge-Holcim, local reports said, sparking outrage from French officials.

Lafarge acknowledged the spillage but insisted it had been the result of sabotage, rather than an intentional act by the company.

The contaminated liquid is composed of a mixture of cement, wastewater treatment liquid and plastic microfibres and comes from a Lafarge site in the east of the city, Europe 1 radio said.

"It's a complete environmental scandal, as we have been working with our partners for a long time to improve the quality of the River Seine," Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said on Twitter.

The city government "will ask prosecutors to open a case for these grave acts that harm our environment," she added.

Paris prosecutors told AFP they had opened an investigation into pollution of the river with harmful products on August 27.

In a statement, Lafarge said it was the "victim" and said the spillage was provoked by a "malicious act". The cement giant said the leakage has now been stopped and controls reinforced.

Deputy mayor Emmanuel Gregoire said the town hall was "very angry" with the firm, which should have informed the city government of the problem.

This incident "will not be without consequences on our overall attitude on these kinds of sites," Gregoire added.

Since Tuesday, city-dwellers have been informing Paris authorities of harmful practices of a range of cement-making companies, such as toxic waste outpourings into the river, the official said.

Sanctions are not heavy or dissuasive enough, he added.

Environmental activists have previously accused Lafarge of contaminating the Seine and in February staged demonstrations against the Paris site.

Environment Minister Barbara Pompili said on Twitter that a team from her ministry would be going to the scene and those responsible would face justice.

In April 2019, France's Vinci firm was accused of discharging cement wastewater in the River Seine. The company was subsequently fined 50,000 euros (\$60,000).