

# Govt urged to ban e-waste imports



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A waste and pollution watchdog group has urged the government to ban the importation of electronic waste as the production of such waste across the world soared to 53.6 million tons in 2019 due to higher consumption rates of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE), according to a newly-released United Nation’s Global E-waste Monitor 2020.

The global generation of e-waste, which is classified as hazardous waste under the Basel Convention due to the presence of brominated flame retardants, lead, mercury and other toxic substances, is projected to reach 74.7 million tons by 2030.

“The global surge in the production of e-waste is deeply concerning for developing countries like the Philippines that still allow the importation of

electronic junks. End-of-life computers, TVs, mobile phones and other unwanted EEE from overseas might end up flooding our ports if no preventive action is taken,” said Roxanne Figueroa, electronic waste campaigner of EcoWaste Coalition.

“As the demand for computers and other e-gadgets grows with their increased use in online activities amid the Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic, we need to be extra vigilant against the potential rise in shipments of pre-owned electronics nearing or at the end of their useful lives, which can only add to our toxic waste woes,” she said.

As stated in the latest Global E-Waste Monitor, “a considerable amount of e-waste is still exported illegally or under the guise of being for reuse or pretending to be scrap metal.”

“In middle- and low-income countries, the e-waste management infrastructure is not yet fully developed or, in some cases, is entirely absent. Hence, e-waste is managed mostly by the informal sector. In this case, e-waste is often handled under inferior conditions, causing severe health effects

to workers as well as to the children who often live, work and play near e-waste management activities,” the report said.

“Informal and improper e-waste recycling is a major emerging hazard silently affecting our health and that of future generations. One in four children are dying from avoidable environmental exposures. One in four children could be saved, if we take action to protect their health and ensure a safe environment,” noted Maria Neira, director of Environment, Climate Change and Health Department of the World Health Organization.

For his part, Thony Dizon, chemical safety campaigner of the EcoWaste Coalition, said: “To put a stop to the entry of e-waste and other wastes into our country and to protect public health and the environment, we need to plug loopholes in regulation and ratify the Basel Ban Amendment, an international law prohibiting all hazardous waste exports from developed to developing countries.”

Such a bold action, he pointed out, will encourage developed countries not to transfer their unwanted e-waste here, as well as drive the electronic industry to shift to clean production and take full responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products throughout the product life-cycle, including their reuse, buyback or recycling.

Last year, the group wrote to Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu proposing a comprehensive ban on the importation of wastes, including plastic and electronic wastes, which is still permitted by the agency under Department of Environment and Natural Resources Administrative Order (DENR AO) 2013-22.

DENR AO 2013-22 allows the importation of “recyclable materials” such as scrap metals, scrap plastics, electronic assemblies and scrap, used oil and fly ash subject to certain limiting conditions and compliance to the requirements set by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the department.

EMB, which is currently reviewing and revising the said administrative order to update the requirements and address emerging issues, has drafted the “Guidelines on the Environmentally Sound Management of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment,” which is yet to be issued.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/07/07/business/business-top/govt-urged-to-ban-e-waste-imports/738935/>