

## QC bans big events as COVID cases climb

The Philippine Star · 11 Mar 2020 · 12 · By JANVIC MATEO – With Marc Jayson Cayabyab, Neil Jayson Servillos, Robertzon Ramirez

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte yesterday prohibited local officials and the private sector from holding events that draw large crowds as the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues to rise.

Belmonte confirmed that three of the 24 cases of coronavirus in the country are Quezon City residents. She said local government agencies and barangays are barred from organizing assemblies.

“We also discourage the private sector from holding gatherings to prevent the spread of the virus,” Belmonte said.

In addition to the 57-year-old man from District 1 whose case was announced over the weekend, the mayor said two others were confirmed to have contracted the flu virus.

The second patient is a 34-year-old man now confined in a private hospital outside the city. The third is a 52-year-old man from Project 6.

Belmonte said the second patient was among the 10 new cases announced by the Department of Health on Monday. The third patient is among the four new cases announced by President Duterte.

The city health department has conducted disinfection of the building where the second case of COVID-19 resides. Contact tracing began yesterday, Belmonte said.

The mayor said city officials are still trying to locate the exact address of the third patient, who has a history of travel to Switzerland.

Belmonte said all mayors in Metro Manila are under strict instructions from President Duterte to ensure that students are kept away from malls and other crowded places while classes are suspended.

PUI in UP

A member of the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman community is undergoing monitoring after being screened with high fever at the University Health Service (UHS) on Monday.

UP Diliman chancellor Fidel Nemenzo said the person under investigation (PUI) was brought to a hospital for testing.

“We assure you that in handling the PUI, all protocols were strictly followed. The patient was isolated from the rest of the UHS patients, and the holding area was immediately disinfected,” he said.

It was not indicated if the patient was a student, faculty member or university employee.

“We will not let our guard down. UP Diliman has created its COVID-19 task force that is in charge of implementing the necessary safety measures to combat this threat to our community,” Nemenzo said.

#### Social distancing

Metro Manila mayors agreed on creating a technical working group (TWG) to craft standard policies in enforcing “social distancing” measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

During a meeting yesterday, the Metro Manila Council, which is the policy-making body of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), formed a TWG to address concerns about social distancing or the need for people to keep away from each other to stop the spread of the virus.

“The policies would set standard parameters in suspending mass gatherings in the National Capital Region,” MMDA Chairman Danilo Lim, who presided over the meeting, said.

Lim said the council would come up with the resolution on social distancing this week.

Social distancing entails a distance of at least one meter or three feet from the person next to you, according to the World Health Organization.

MMDA general manager Jojo Garcia advised passengers of the jampacked Metro and Light Rail Transits to wear face mask and observe proper hygiene since it is impossible to practice social distancing in public transport.

Garcia urged private companies to allow their employees to work from home.

#### No bus overcrowding

Amid a state of public health emergency, bus drivers would no longer be allowed to board an excess number of passengers to avoid overcrowding and prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said.

While the agency has existing rules allowing passengers to stand along the aisles of buses, LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra III said they would not allow overcrowding.

“We will not allow overcrowding, especially in this time of national emergency,” Delgra said at a press briefing.

During rush hours, commuters can be seen cramped in buses.

The LTFRB said it would coordinate with the MMDA in enforcing the policy.

The LTFRB also required operators of public utility vehicles to sanitize buses and jeepneys before and after trips.

A few weeks before the Holy Week, the Parish Pastoral Council of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral of Cubao cancelled activities for the Lenten season.

Rev. Fr. Dennis Soriano cancelled the stations of the cross,

“senakulo” and Lenten recollection.