

QC declares state of calamity

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Mayor Joy Belmonte placed Quezon City under a state of calamity on Friday to hasten the use of its Quick Response Fund in the fight against COVID-19, following confirmation that six people in the city have tested positive for the coronavirus. The declaration will allow the city's 142 villages to procure materials for the protection of its 2.9-million population, the biggest among the 17 local governments in Metro Manila.

The Quezon City government declared on Friday a state of calamity, a status that would allow local officials to "utilize a portion of its Quick Response Fund" to address the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) after six cases were confirmed in the city. Mayor Joy Belmonte said the declaration would allow the city's 142 barangays to engage in emergency procurement and distribution of goods and services to fight COVID-19.

Approved by city council

The declaration was approved by the city council in a special session upon the recommendation of the city's **disaster risk reduction and management council**.

"This is the first time in many years, for as long as I can remember, that QC has declared a state of calamity," said Belmonte. "But this is something important because the President has himself declared a state of public health emergency in the country. This is our basis to declare a state of calamity here in our city."

While the entire Metro Manila was placed under "community quarantine," Belmonte said, Quezon City is in special situation, being the biggest city in the metropolis in terms of land area, covering about 25 percent of the National Capital Region (NCR). It also has the biggest population—more than 2.9 million people—among the 17 local governments making up NCR.

'Circumstances unique'

"The circumstances of Quezon City are unique [compared] to our neighboring cities in Metro Manila. That's why I think it would be easier for them to address the needs of their respective cities. Here in Quezon City, I have to mobilize the full support of our 142 barangays," Belmonte said. The mayor said she had ordered the immediate closure of public spaces, such as parks, covered courts, buildings and other facilities, for disinfection. She also called on parents to keep their children "safe at home" as barangay officials and police officers will be strictly monitoring public spaces, including malls, computer shops and community spaces. The mayor said she would also issue an order that will strengthen the implementation of local measures for containing the spread of the virus, including a ban on mass gatherings and events.

Belmonte clarified that movement within the city would not be restricted pending the issuance of guidelines for the Metro Manila-wide quarantine, but checkpoints would be set up at the city boundaries with neighboring provinces, such as Bulacan and Rizal.