

COVID-19 deaths in PH rise to 17 Number of virus cases now 202; QC locks down 4 barangays

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The Department of Health (DOH) reported Wednesday the death of three more patients diagnosed with coronavirus disease (COVID-19), bringing the total number of fatalities to 17.

It also reported 15 more new COVID-19 cases, raising the total to 202.

As this developed, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte placed four barangays “under extreme lockdown” following the surge of COVID-19 cases in the said areas.

Under extreme lockdowns are Barangays Tandang Sora, Kalusugan, Matandang Balara, and Payatas.

In the areas covered by the extreme lockdown, Belmonte said “not a shadow” will be allowed to leave their residence, stressing that the “contamination is getting out of hand”.

She noted that St. Luke’s Medical Center on E. Rodriguez Avenue is located in Barangay Kalusugan.

With around 29 COVID-19 cases in the city, Belmonte said more police and soldiers will be deployed, particularly in the four barangays.

Meanwhile, Mike Marasigan, head of Quezon City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council explained that the “hot zone” where a confirmed case lives will be under extreme lock down and extreme enhanced quarantine.

He added that the “warm zone” or the area within a 500-meter radius from the house of the confirmed case will be under strict monitoring and surveillance.

Yellow cards extended

In Makati, Mayor Abigail “Abby”

Binay on Wednesday ordered the extension of the validity of the Makati Health Plus Program cards or the Yellow Cards for another 30 days.

“Makati has automatically granted a 30-day extension on all Yellow Cards. So if your card is expiring between March 15 and April 12, or the quarantine period, you don’t have to worry about not being able to use them. You will still be able to get free medicine and continue to enjoy all the health and social services that come with it,” Binay said in a statement.

DOH hotlines

The DOH, meanwhile, has set up hotlines that will help in answering health-related queries about COVID-19.

The DOH said that callers can ask questions if they “suspect [that] they are infected with COVID-19, or request assistance if they have symptoms and/ or known exposure to confirm cases or patients under investigation.”

“The information collected from emergency calls is transmitted to the COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center and other relevant agencies for immediate facilitation and response,” the DOH said in a statement.

The hotline numbers are 02-89426843 (COVID) and 1555 for Smart and PLDT subscribers.

At the University of Sto. Tomas Hospital, the first COVID-19 patient admitted in the facility was already discharged.

In a statement, the UST Hospital management said the patient was initially diagnosed as critically ill, but is now clinically well.

The hospital still has one more patient receiving treatment for COVID-19.

China assistance Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on Wednesday said Beijing will send testing kits with primers (100,000), N-95 masks (10,000), personal protective equipment (10,000), and surgical masks to help the Philippines fight the spread of COVID-19.

Locsin made this disclosure in a Twitter post shortly after receiving a text message from Chinese Ambassador to Manila Huang Xilian informing him of the incoming shipment. This latest donation from China was an offshoot of the assurance made by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Locsin on Sunday to provide the Philippines with “urgently-needed” medical supplies amid the outbreak of COVID-19.

No penalty

As this developed, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said workers in businesses that continue to operate amid the enhanced community quarantine cannot be penalized if they fail to report for work due to the suspension of public transportation.

Bello made the statement following reports of workers being stranded in checkpoints or being forced to find other means of transportation due to travel restrictions to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, Bello said workers are allowed not to report for work because of the situation.

“Kung ayaw payagan ng employers, pwedeng hindi pumasok ang manggagawa (If employers won't allow them to be absent, the workers can still not report to work),” he said.

“Since they are under enhanced community quarantine, they are excused,” he added.

On Monday, President Duterte announced that work in the public and private sectors is limited to a skeletal workforce and a work-from-home scheme. (With reports from Minka S. Tiangco, Jel Santos, and Argyll B. Geducos)