

## QC bans public gatherings, festivities

The Manila Times · 17 Jan 2021 · A3 · ARLIE O. CALALO

QUEZON City Mayor Josefina “Joy” Belmonte has banned public gatherings and activities, including Chinese New Year festivities, to stop the spread of Covid-19.

The Dragon Dance or Lion Dance, one of the highlights of the Chinese New Year on February 12, would only be allowed provided that it would be held in a designated area like the stage of a mall, with the audience seated and distanced, with mask and face shield, according to the mayor.

“Amid the pandemic, I am appealing to ‘QCitizens’ to sacrifice these traditional celebrations in exchange for our health and safety because Covid-19 remains a big threat to all of us,” the city chief executive said.

Some of those prohibited are processions, parades, Santacruzán, fireworks displays, atitihan, pageants, singing or band contests, bingo, pa bit in, paluanng pal ayok (hitting the pot) and tug of war.

She also barred group contact sports such as basketball, public buffets and boodle fights, and public drinking.

“Persons may only drink at home or inside restaurants or establishments, subject to health protocols,” Belmonte said.

Also banned are group videoke or other gatherings that violate social distancing, cause noise pollution, or other noise nuisances caused by excessive merrymaking, commingling of multiple households through large parties or traditional “open door” fiesta celebrations, and any other nonessential or nonwork gatherings.

Belmonte said modest celebrations conducted within the home, among immediate family or close acquaintances are allowed, subject to social distancing and other applicable health protocols. Masses, other religious activities, religious or traditional rituals for the purpose of blessing a building or establishment may continue, subject to strict health protocols such as the wearing of face masks, face shields, and social distancing.

Celebrations conducted primarily for an online audience, with very limited physical attendance, are also allowed, she said. The city’s Law and Order Cluster, regulatory departments, barangay, and the Quezon City Police District are ordered to strictly enforce the memorandum.

Violators may be penalized under Republic Act 11332 or the “Notifiable Diseases Act,” various city ordinances, and other pertinent laws, the city’s Public Affairs and Information Service Department said.