

## HOARDERS, PROFITEERS WARNED: CRIMINAL CHARGES AWAIT YOU

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Prosecution awaits individuals found to be hoarding and profiteering off medicine in high demand amid possible “scarcity” at several drugstores in Quezon City, according to Mayor Joy Belmonte.

A group of pharmaceutical and health-care companies disclosed on Tuesday that certain brands of paracetamol had run out of stock in certain drugstores.

However, both the Department of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry assured the public that there was no shortage of paracetamol and other drugs for flu-like symptoms, but only delays in delivery.

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said that while two popular brands made by local pharmaceutical company Unilab—Biogesic and Decolgen—had temporarily run out of stock in some areas due to delivery issues, new deliveries were expected to start coming this week.

“There are other brands of paracetamol in the market, so there is no shortage,” he added.

Even so, Belmonte on Thursday called on city residents to report individuals and business establishments caught hoarding the medicines, particularly those commonly used to treat flu.

“We will not hesitate to prosecute anybody found hoarding and profiteering [off] these medicines,” the mayor said in a statement.

2 laws

The city’s legal officer, Niño Casimiro, cited two laws that impose penalties and criminal liabilities when it comes to hoarding and profiteering off products.

These are Republic Act No. 7581, or the Price Act, and Republic Act No. 7394, or the Consumer Act of the Philippines, both of which prescribe criminal penalties “without prejudice to administrative sanctions as warranted under the circumstances.”

In particular, Casimiro raised Section 15 of the Price Act, which imposes criminal penalties on hoarding and profiteering.

Apart from national laws, hoarders and especially profiteers can also be penalized under the Quezon City Ordinance

No. SP-2914 of 2020, as amended by Ordinance No. SP-2948, which limits the selling of basic necessities during calamities and emergency situations.

Belmonte also said that hoarders and profiteers are “preventing citizens who only want to purchase medicines for their families. We won’t let them get away with this.”

Meanwhile, the Quezon City health department said city residents may avail of the free medicines in its health centers, with the help of their new pharmacy management system.