- Chemicals

QC activates special task force vs mercury

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THE Quezon City Health Department (QCHD) recently convened a special task force to protect the public against harmful cosmetics believed to be tainted with excess mercury.

Mercury is a toxic metal that poses serious health risks to humans and the environment.

The QC Task Force vs Banned Mercury Cosmetics was convened last week by Dr. Ramona Abarquez, officer- in- charge of the QC Health Department and concurrent chairperson of the task force, a few weeks after its creation.

The task force is mandated to implement a city- wide ban on mercury- containing cosmetics in response to reports of persistent sale of these supposedly banned products in physical and online markets.

A toxics watchdog group, Ecowaste Coalition, affirmed its support to the city's renewed drive to combat the illegal trade of skin whiteners with mercury content.

Dr. Laarni Malapit, head of QCHD Special Services Division and vice chairperson of the task force, welcomed the participants representing various city government departments and offices and the Ecowaste Coalition.

Pharmacist Jeanette Dacanay, chief of Food- Drug Regulation Section and Secretariat of the task force, then reviewed the powers and functions of the task force and the specific roles of member departments and offices.

Dur ing the meet ing, the Ecowaste Coalition acknowledged and thanked the QCHD, particularly the seven fooddrug regulation of f icers, for their focused efforts to form the task force. This will surely promote collaboration and synergy among the departments and offices to prevent contraband cosmetics with mercury from being traded in Quezon City.

Created through Executive Order 2025-2 signed by Mayor Joy Belmonte last February 12, the task force has been assigned

to enforce and ensure the effective implementation of City Ordinance No. 2767, banning the manufacture, distribution, and sale of mercury- containing skinwhitening cosmetics.

The group is also tasked to ident i fy and apprehend the importers, distr ibutors, and retailers of prohibited mercury- containing cosmetics within the city's jurisdiction; address related reports, notices, and complaints; conduct information drives about the hazards of such cosmetics; and monitor and coordinate with other stakeholders towards the effective implementation of the said ordinance.

Enacted in 2018 in response to the illicit trade in Quezon City of cosmetics with mercury content as documented and exposed by the Ecowaste Coalition, City Ordinance 2767 mandates compliance with the ban on mercury-containing cosmetics to protect human health and the environment against mercury, which is considered by the World Health Organization as one of the top 10 chemicals of major public health concern.