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# Medical community now part of COVID containment panel - Manila Bulletin

by Genalyn Kabling

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## Medical community now part of COVID containment panel

Representatives from different medical societies will now be part of a government-led technical panel on efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles disclosed on Wednesday.



(JANSEN ROMERO / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

As the government recognized “a whole of nation approach” to address the public health emergency, Nograles said the medical professionals could present their recommendations, suggestions, and findings to the working group led by the Department of Health (DOH).

The panel report will then be submitted to the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Infectious Diseases and President Duterte.

“Because the President listened to the sentiment of the health workers, there will be a working group of the Department of Health and different medical societies. We have a mechanism to give the medical societies an avenue to raise their different recommendations to the DOH, IATF, and President Duterte),” he said during the online “Kapihan sa Manila Bay” forum Wednesday.

“The enhancement we are doing now is the different medical societies, their representatives are now part of this working group with the DOH so they can also voice out their concerns, and more importantly, their recommendations,” he added.

He said the DOH-led working group is expected to discuss the state of the health workforce, contact tracing and isolation protocols, transportation and workplace safety, testing efforts, and the involvement of the private sector.

The proactive behavior change campaign, active case finding, and early isolation and referrals of health facilities will also be tackled.

He said the panel is expected to submit its recommendations to the IATF on Thursday.

The inclusion of the medical professionals in the DOH panel came after President Duterte granted their plea to a timeout to

reimpose strict lockdown for two weeks to stem the surge in coronavirus infections.

The medical community earlier conceded the country was waging a losing battle against coronavirus and called for a refinement of pandemic containment measures to prevent a collapse of the health care system.

Acting on the appeal of the health frontliners, the government placed Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal under the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) from August 4 to 18. It also committed to step up efforts to test, trace, isolate, and treat patients with the coronavirus illness.

Nograles said the President listened to the appeal of the medical community, not necessarily “caved in” to their demands. He said the government cannot fight the pandemic alone and must employ a multisectoral approach to address it.

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- [Palace: Morales' tenure at PhilHealth up to the President](#)

President Duterte will only fire Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) president Ricardo Morales if there is

evidence of his involvement in corruption in the agency.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque made the statement after Morales admitted in a Senate hearing on Tuesday that corruption is still rampant in PhilHealth.

In an interview with CNN Philippines, Roque said despite Morales' statement, his fate is still up to President Duterte.

- [Police patrol, visibility beefed up in MECQ areas](#)

Police commanders in Metro Manila and four adjacent provinces were instructed to beef up their visibility and patrol activities in public markets and other places of convergence for the enforcement of stricter quarantine rules under the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ), the Joint Task Force COVID Shield said Wednesday.

Police Lt. Gen. Guillermo Lorenzo Eleazar, commander of the JTF COVID Shield, said police commanders were instructed to mobilize the barangay tanod and the city and municipal Public Order and Safety personnel to augment the police force in the conduct of regular patrol from the city and town proper down to the barangay level.

- [2,855 more health workers to be hired; contact tracing to be intensified — Nograles](#)

More health workers and contact tracers will be recruited to enhance the country's efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles announced Wednesday.

Nograles said the government intends to hire 2,855 more health workers to boost the workforce to be deployed in various health facilities.

So far, he said around 6,510 health workers have been hired out

of the 9,365 positions targeted for deployment in 339 hospitals and other healthcare facilities. The figure represents 69.51 percent of the emergency hiring of health personnel.

- [Angara wants COA, GCG present in next Senate hearing on PhilHealth anomalies](#)

The Senate should call for the presence of the Commission on Audit (COA), the Governance Commission on GOCCs (GCG), and the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement Service (PHILGEPS) in the next hearing to shed light on the various reports of losses and anomalies within the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth), Senator Juan Edgardo “Sonny” Angara said on Wednesday.

Angara said it is imperative that the Senate, acting as a Committee of the Whole, invite state auditors and representatives from the two other agencies so they can confirm that they will conduct a special audit on PhilHealth, particularly on its controversial information technology (IT) project, which reportedly is overpriced.

- [New PH Army commander assumes post](#)

Lt. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, a bemedalled general from Mindanao, officially took command of the Philippine Army (PA) on Tuesday. Sobejana assumed the top Army post from Lt. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, who is now the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), in a turnover ceremony in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City on Tuesday afternoon.

Prior to being designated as the Army chief, Sobejana was the commander of the Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom) which has been dealing with some of the country’s most vicious insurgents and terrorist groups including the Abu Sayyaf Group,

Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and various factions of the Dawlah Islamiyah.

- [‘Grabe 2020’: Huge Beirut blast sends netizens to the edge](#)

Following a series of unfortunate events including the blast in Beirut that killed at least 40 people and wounded 4,000 others on Wednesday had netizens tweeting “Grabe 2020” out of frustration.

“Taal Volcano Eruption. Kobe Bryant and her daughter Helicopter Crash. Australia Bush Fire. Coronavirus Disease 2019. NAIA Airplane Crash. Bomb explosion in Lebanon. Grabe 2020 ah, worst year ever,” tweeted @immhary\_.

- [NPA leader, 2 others killed in Laguna clash](#)

A ranking official of the New People’s Army (NPA) and two of his men died in a fierce gunbattle with authorities in the town of Kalayaan in Laguna, Tuesday.

Gen. Archie Francisco Gamboa, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), said the encounter happened with forces from the Regional Mobile Force Battalion of CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), chancing upon the group of men in Barangay San Antonio while conducting routine security patrol in the area around 1 a.m.

- [Curb over-pricing of face masks, PPE — Hontiveros](#)

Senator Risa Hontiveros on Wednesday urged the Departments of Health (DOH), Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) to form an anti-overpricing committee to ensure that prices of face masks, personal

protective equipment (PPE) and other products needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic remain stable.

Hontiveros said this is necessary and required by law to ensure greater transparency and cut down corruption and fraud in the state health insurer's operations.

- [UST grads win 3rd place in Spain architecture tilt for sustainable coastal area design](#)

Five University of Santo Tomas (UST) Bachelor of Science in Architecture graduates won third place in the Design for Living international competition hosted by the Institute for Advanced Architecture for Catalonia (IAAC) in Barcelona, Spain.

The team consisted of Aramis Corullo, Paula Casia, Gellaine Burgos, Althea Poblete, and Angelo Landicho. The Filipinos competed against over 190 other entries from 80 countries.

- [Coronavirus infects 24,000 S.African health workers](#)

Some 24,000 health workers in South Africa have contracted the coronavirus, 181 of whom have died, since the pandemic hit the country in March, the health minister announced on Wednesday. South Africa is the hardest-hit country in Africa with at least 521,318 infections diagnosed so far, accounting for more than half the continent's cases.

Health Minister Zweli Mkize told a news conference that the numbers of health workers who tested positive for coronavirus stood at 24,104 with 181 deaths.

- [Prelate urges support for frontliners' call, presses medical solutions for pandemic](#)

A Catholic prelate believes the country's response to the



coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic will be more effective if addressed “with medical solutions.”

San Carlos Bishop Gerardo Alminaza said this in a statement noting how “the government spent billions of money on failed priorities, and allowed the virus to infect more; of in-effectivity of military responses; and of political minions, military men and business interests advising on COVID crisis.”

- [Provide immunity to PhilHealth whistleblowers, Lacson urges](#)

Senator Panfilo M. Lacson wants the Senate to extend legislative immunity to a board member of the alleged graft-ridden Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and a former Philhealth official who will continue their testimonies before the Senate Committee of the Whole on irregularities at the state-run health agency.

The Senate Committee of the Whole conducted yesterday a 10-hour hearing on alleged widespread corruption at PhilHealth. The hearing resumes Tuesday morning. The two are Alejandro Cabading and lawyer Thorrson Montes Keith, former PhilHealth anti-fraud official. Lacson said the grant of a legislative immunity means that the person is guaranteed from future suits arising from his testimony during a public hearing by a Senate committee. He said witnesses given legislative immunity are usually emboldened to give testimonies on alleged irregularities in cases being investigated by the Senate. Cabading sought the grant of legislative immunity to him in yesterday's start of the public hearing by the Senate on PhilHealth irregularities that surprised senators on their magnitude. It was Cabading who named the officials in the PhilHealth Executive Committee who compose the “in-house Mafia” or are involved in graft



practices. Aside from legislative immunity, Lacson said the Senate could give security to witnesses should they request for it. Senators were disappointed at the refusal of retired Brig. Gen, Ricardo Morales, PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), to acknowledge irregularities on his agency's proposed ICT budget bloated by at least P734 million. Another PhilHealth official maintained that some P15 billion had been lost at PhilHealth due to corruption.

- [TikTok app use goes on in PH, says Nograles](#)

It will be "status quo" for the operations of TikTok, a popular short-form video application on social media, in the country for now, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said Wednesday. Even as TikTok come under intense scrutiny in some countries over security issues, Nograles said the government has so far not seen any evidence to warrant any ban of the social media app in the country.

- [P9 B downloaded for reproduction of self-learning modules](#)

The Department of Education (DepEd) has downloaded P9 billion to its local offices nationwide to help ensure the availability of self-learning modules when classes start on Aug. 24.

"DepEd has funds to reproduce learning modules," said Education Undersecretary and Spokesperson Annalyn Sevilla. "We have downloaded funds down to division offices, totaling about P9 billion already," she added.

- ['PhilHealth officials must resign due to anomalies', farmers demand](#)

A farmers' group on Wednesday called for the resignation of Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) officials over corruption allegations within the agency.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) emphasized the need for PhilHealth President Ricardo Morales and other officials to resign from their posts after being implicated to anomalies that resulted to the loss of P15 billion in the state insurer's funds.

- [3.5 M Pinoys stranded due to quarantine](#)

About 3.5 million adult Filipinos were left stranded due to the community quarantine imposed by the government in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showed.

In the survey conducted from July 3 to 6 among 1,555 respondents, the SWS found out that 5.1 percent or an estimated 3.5 million of Filipinos were stranded by community quarantines based on the 2020 projected population of 69.5 million adults.

- [American fugitive arrested in Batangas](#)

An American wanted for crimes in the United States was arrested by authorities in Batangas Wednesday, the Department of Justice (DoJ) said.

DoJ Undersecretary Markk Perete, who has supervision over the Bureau of Immigration (BI), identified the arrested American fugitive as Peter Alex Drier.

"Said individual is an undocumented alien and a fugitive from justice with an outstanding warrant issued by the San Diego Police Department in California for charges of assault with a deadly weapon, and simple assault," the DoJ spokesman said.

- [Additional wards, ICU at East Avenue Medical Center set for completion](#)

Construction of additional wards and an intensive care unit at the East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City to improve the hospital's bed capacity for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases are expected to be completed by mid -August and September.

Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar said Wednesday that the additional wards, once completed, will be able to accommodate 250 more patients.

- [DSWD vows to cover 5-M unserved SAP 2 beneficiaries](#)

The Department of Social Welfare and Development vowed Wednesday (August 5) to cover the remaining 5 million beneficiaries who have yet to receive their second tranche of emergency cash subsidies.

DSWD spokesperson Irene Dumlao said this noting over 9.7 million families or 69. 2 percent of the targeted beneficiaries for the second tranche already received their SAP 2 aid.

“Nasa mahigit na 5 million pa ang mabibigyan ng ayuda (There are still over 5 million beneficiaries expected to receive cash aid),” she told DZBB in an interview. “Atin pong napag-usapan by the middle of August, nakikita po natin na tapos na tayo sa pamamahagi ng ayuda (we are eyeing to finish the distribution of cash aid middle of August).”

- [TESDA issues new guidelines for training providers](#)

Due to disruptions brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Technical Education and Skills

Development Authority (TESDA) has released a new set of regulations for technical-vocational education and training (TVET) providers offering enterprise-based training (EBT). TESDA Secretary Isidro Lapeña just signed TESDA Circular No. 80 series of 2020, or the “Enterprise-Based Training (EBT) Guidelines Under the New Normal Environment” which imposes the observation of necessary measures and protocols to keep the safety of learners and trainers.