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Duque favors 'standardized curfew, focused lockdowns' in Metro Manila

Vivienne Gulla, ABS-CBN News

3-4 minutes



People queue to claim financial assistance for residents of Zone 19 in Pasay City as they remain under the community quarantine on March 10, 2021. *Jonathan Cellona, ABS-CBN News*

MANILA — Health Secretary Francisco Duque III on Thursday said he favors uniform curfew hours in Metro Manila in a bid to contain the spike in new COVID-19 cases.

But he is against reverting the capital region to a stricter community quarantine status for now, suggesting instead the imposition of "focused lockdowns" to save the economy that has been battered by the pandemic.

"NCR is one contiguous geographic area. Baka a standardized curfew might be the order of the day," Duque said during his visit at the University of Santo Tomas Hospital for its vaccination drive.

"The correct response to the rising cases is a more effective localized, more focused lockdowns. Hindi na pwede 'yung widespread lockdowns. If you do that, sasadsad pang lalo ang ekonomiya natin. We cannot afford that. Maraming unemployed. Maraming nahihirapan, baka hindi na makabangon," he said.

(We can no longer allow widespread lockdowns because our economy will be severely affected. So many are unemployed and are having difficulties right now. They can no longer endure this.)

Some cities in Metro Manila have already imposed new curfew hours this week to control the virus spread, and even brought back check points nearly a year since the government imposed the enhanced community quarantine.

- [LIST: Metro Manila cities reintroduce curfew hours amid rising COVID-19 cases](#)

Interior Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya earlier urged Metro Manila mayors to adopt a uniform curfew hours, to "make it easier for the public to comply."

- [READ: 'Uniform curfew' sa Metro Manila iminungkahi ng DILG](#)

The Department of Health (DOH) has coordinated with the local governments in Metro Manila, Calabarzon, Central Luzon, Central

Visayas and the Cordillera Administrative Region, Duque said, to discuss efforts in containing COVID-19 infections.

Duque reiterated the need for stricter enforcement of minimum health protocols.

He pointed out that the increase in new cases was largely due to the public's non-compliance with health protocols, even as he acknowledged that the presence of COVID variants in the country may also be a factor.

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“Mas malaking dahilan sa pagtaas (ng mga kaso ng COVID-19) ang pagluluwag ng ating mga mamayan sa pagsunod sa minimum public health standards,” he said.

(The bigger reason for the spike in new COVID-19 cases is because the public is already becoming more lax in following minimum health standards.)

The OCTA Research group earlier said the majority or over 90 percent of Filipinos complied with wearing face masks and washing of hands when they go out of their houses, based on a survey they conducted in late January.

Many Filipinos, however, failed to abide by physical distancing measures.

- [READ: Many Filipinos fail to abide by physical distancing protocols: OCTA survey](#)
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The Philippines currently has over 607,000 cumulative COVID-19

cases, of which 47,769 are considered active infections. The health department has also logged some 12,608 fatalities because of the disease.