

## Duque: COVID-19 cases gradually increasing in 14 areas under Alert Level 1

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**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 19)**— COVID-19 cases are gradually increasing in 14 areas under Alert Level 1, Health Secretary Francisco Duque said on Monday.

During a taped Cabinet meeting, Duque did not name the 14 areas but he noted in his presentation that the Cavite province, Manila, and Quezon City had the highest number of new infections from April 12 to 18. At least 101 cases were recorded in Cavite, 92 in Manila and 82 in Quezon City.

In terms of region, Metro Manila recorded the highest number of new cases with 606 infections, followed by Calabarzon with 226 and Central Luzon with 181.

Vaccine czar Carlito Galvez said cases in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are also increasing amid the observance of Ramadan.

'Not significant'

In a separate briefing on Tuesday, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire clarified that the increase in infections in these areas cannot be considered significant yet.

"Dahil 'yung iba, from zero case, nagkaroon ng dalawa. From zero case, nagkaroon ng tatlo. Kaya nagpo-positive ang kanilang growth rate," Vergeire explained.

[Translation: In some areas, zero cases become two. From zero case, there are now there. That's why the growth rates become positive.]

She added hospital utilization rates remain stable in these areas.

The National Capital Region, along with 887 cities and municipalities across the country, are under the more relaxed Alert Level 1 until April 30.

From April 11 to 17, the DOH reported 1,674 new COVID-19 infections. This meant a daily average of 239, which was 12% lower than the previous week.

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