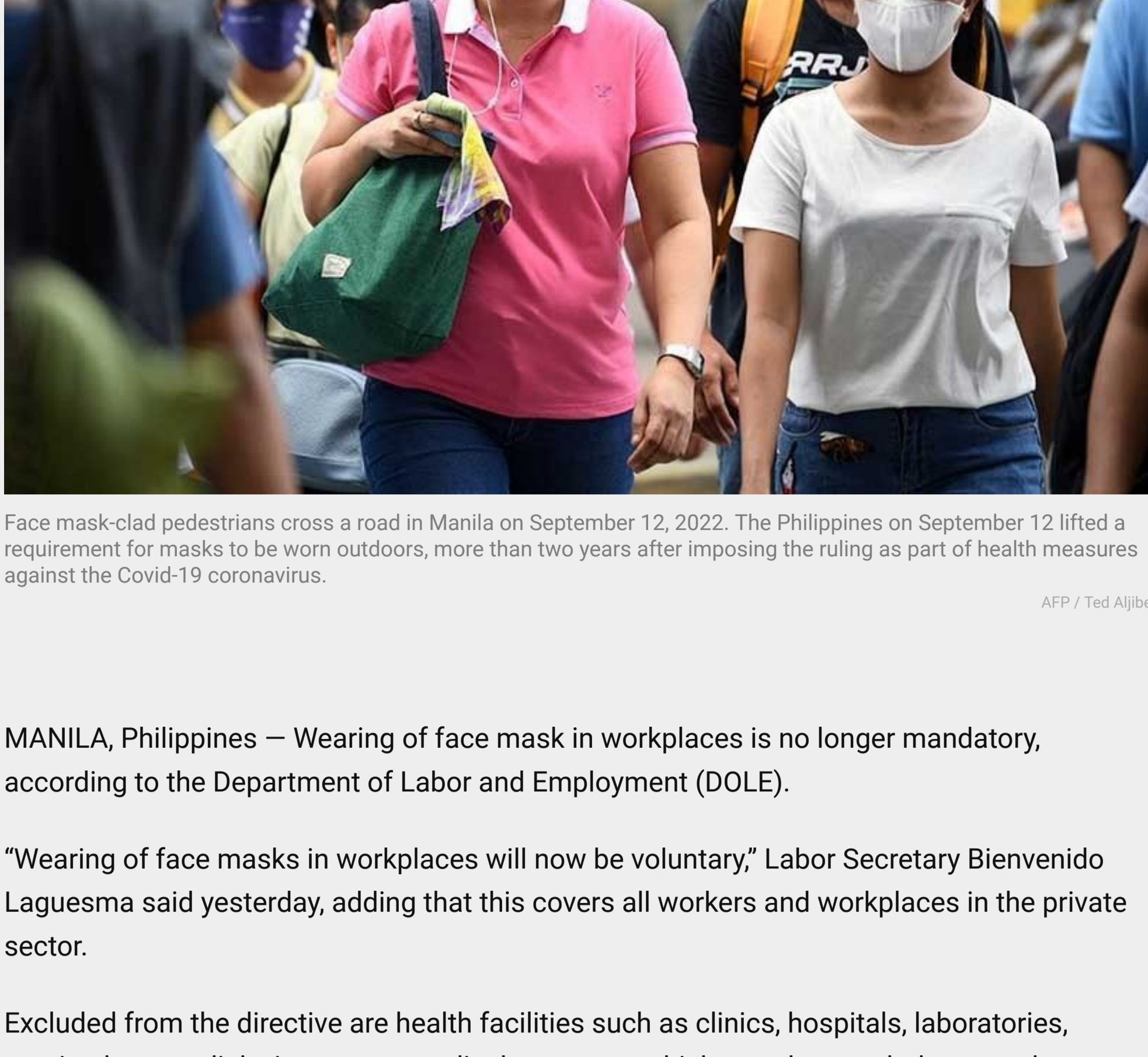


HEADLINES

Masking in workplaces no longer mandatory – DOLE

Rhodina Villanueva - The Philippine Star 📍
November 4, 2022 | 12:00am



Face mask-clad pedestrians cross a road in Manila on September 12, 2022. The Philippines on September 12 lifted a requirement for masks to be worn outdoors, more than two years after imposing the ruling as part of health measures against the Covid-19 coronavirus.

AFP / Ted Aljibe

MANILA, Philippines — Wearing of face mask in workplaces is no longer mandatory, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

“Wearing of face masks in workplaces will now be voluntary,” Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma said yesterday, adding that this covers all workers and workplaces in the private sector.

Excluded from the directive are health facilities such as clinics, hospitals, laboratories, nursing homes, dialysis centers; medical transport vehicles such as ambulance and paramedic rescue vehicles, and public transportation by land, air or sea.

Laguesma said employers and their workers may opt to implement a policy requiring the wearing of face masks after taking into account the hazards and risks such as enclosed spaces and poor ventilation; industry requirements like food safety, and incidence of other communicable diseases such as flu and tuberculosis.

The directive also states that the elderly, immunocompromised, unvaccinated, COVID symptomatic individuals, persons with comorbidities and pregnant women are encouraged to wear face masks in workplaces.

Laguesma said both the employers and workers have the responsibility to ensure safe and healthy working conditions.

He said the easing of the face mask policy in workplaces is in accordance with an executive order issued by Malacañang on Oct. 28.

Earlier, the Department of Education announced that the wearing of face masks in classrooms would be optional.

Meanwhile, Sen. Bong Go urged the public, especially the students not to be complacent as the threat of COVID remains.

Go, chairman of the Senate committee on health, said the health and safety of the Filipinos are his priority.

“Human life, unlike a movie, has no part two. A life lost is a life lost forever. Let’s take care of each other’s life and health,” Go said.

“While I welcome science-based policies and measures that will help us renormalize our lives again such as the voluntary wearing of masks indoors and outdoors, we should still not be complacent as the threat of an unseen and evolving enemy remains,” Go said.

If the wearing of masks is not an inconvenience, Go said everyone should continue doing so for protection.

He reiterated his appeal to those who have not been vaccinated to get vaccinated, especially the booster, noting this is key to overcoming the pandemic.

Go lamented that the country’s booster rate is still too low, one of the lowest in the entire Southeast Asia

He said that as of Nov. 1, the vaccinated rate was around 48 percent on children aged 5-11, while first booster dose uptake remains low nationally among all age groups at around 26 percent of the target population. — **Cecille Suerte Felipe**



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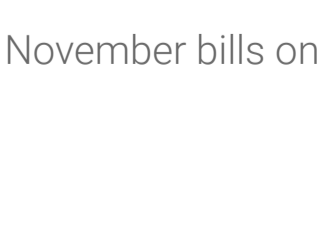
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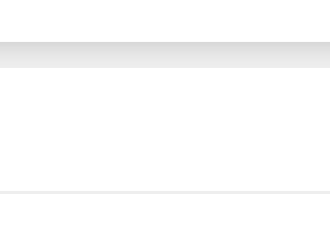
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