



Death toll rises to 11; DOH braces for upsurge

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HEALTH officials reported 29 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and three new deaths on Sunday, bringing the total to 140 confirmed cases and 11 deaths.

"It will still increase. So we are doing what were approved by President Rodrigo

Duterte-- the proposal by the Inter-Agency Task Force (LATF) for containment because we are bracing for a further surge," said Health Secretary Francisco Duque III in an interview over radio dzMM.

"While we do not like it, that's what happening not only in the Philippines, but in the whole world," he added.

Duque attributed the increase to the contact tracing being done by the Health

Department on a COVID-19 patients' close contacts. He said the mode of transmission is respiratory droplets which are not carried in the air.

The new deaths were an American male, 86, from Marikina City with travel history from the US and Korea; a Filipino male, 40, from Pasig City with no history of travel abroad, a Filipino male, 64, from Negros Oriental.

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The fatality from Negros Oriental was identified as a councilor of Tayasan, while the Pasig City fatality was said to be an employee at the House of Representatives.

Duque said two patients have recovered. He said the number was low because of the long recovery period—two to three weeks for mild to moderate cases, and three to six weeks for critical COVID-19 cases.

The patients who recovered from COVID-19 are the two Chinese nationals who have returned to China.

With 11 dead out of 140 confirmed cases, the mortality rate was a high 7.8 percent, but Duque said this was the result of the limited number of tests being conducted.

If more tests were conducted and more people were found to be positive, then the fatality rate would decline, Duque said.

Duque branded "fake news" reports that patients admitted at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Hospital in Manila have tested positive for COVID-19, and that trainees and staff who were exposed to the patients were sent home to undergo self-quarantine.

The report, which was initially released by The Varsitarian, UST's official student publication, quoted UST Hospital Medical Director Dr. Marcellus Francis Ramirez.

But Duque admitted there were doctors, nurses and other health workers who were also being monitored for the virus.

In a TV interview, PBA party-list Rep. Jericho Nograles confirmed that one of the deaths reported on Sunday was an employee of the House of Representatives.

"The entire House of Representatives is saddened. At the same time, we are worried and nervous, too, as to who he had talked with," he said.

The number of cases in Quezon City doubled to 14 on Sunday, Mayor Joy Belmonte said. The city's cases were from barangays San Antonio, Palig-sahan, Matandang Balara, Greater Lagro, Bagong Lipunan Crame, San Isidro, San Labrador, Bagbag and Doña Imelda.

On Friday, Belmonte declared a state of calamity in the city due to increasing number of COVID-19 cases.

Laguna province on Sunday reported its first confirmed COVID-19 patient from Sta. Rosa City.