

Albay GCQ extended; resorts closed

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ALBAY Gov. Al Francis Bitchara yesterday placed his province under general community quarantine (GCQ) and shut down the operations of resorts to control the continued increase of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in the area.

Albay is among the provinces that Malacañang placed under modified GCQ from June 16 to 30. It was under the GCQ classification from June 1 to 15.

The Department of Health said there are 4,387 COVID-19 cases in Albay as of Wednesday – 469 active cases, 89 deaths and 3,829 recoveries.

Bichara issued an executive order last June 15 extending the GCQ in his jurisdiction until the end of the month, except for the towns of Jovelar and Rapu-Rapu, which will be under MGCQ.

In a radio interview, Bichara said some groups asked the provincial government to impose the strictest enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to stop the rise in COVID-19 infections, but the province settled for GCQ to cushion the pandemic's impact on the local economy.

Bichara said placing the province under ECQ would also lead to further suffering by the people, noting that the provincial local government unit lacks the resources to give financial assistance to households.

Besides, Bichara said COVID-19 infections in the province is not too high, citing that only 50 cases were reported on Wednesday.

Bichara said he has ordered the suspension of the operations of resorts in the province “because many are having karaoke, drinking sessions. Even in quarantine facilities, some are having drinking sessions so we will be strict this time.”

He said that while border security will be strict, there will be no individual checking of vehicles in the quarantine checkpoints to avoid traffic congestion.

Bichara attributed the spike in COVID-19 cases in the province mainly to Metro Manila travelers who visited the province's resorts. He said some have been caught presenting fake medical certificates to gain entry to the leisure establishments.

Bichara also cited local transmission for the rise of COVID-19 cases in the province.

Recently, he said 50 workers of an electric cooperative contracted the disease. "They infected each other but many of them are asymptomatic," he said.

Meanwhile, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said three more barangay chairmen are under investigation for the occurrence of super-spreader events or mass gathering in their areas amid the pandemic.

Año said the three are Ireneo Cabahug of Barangay Matabungkay, Lian town in Batangas; Bobby Daquioag of Barangay San Mariano, Sta. Marcela town in Apayao; and Franklyn Ong of Barangay Kasambangan in Cebu City.

Año said Cabahug is under investigation for failing to enforce minimum public health standards, specifically observance of physical distancing and wearing of face mask, among tourists who went to a beach resort in his barangay recently.

Daquioag is in hot water for the holding of a wedding and reception, which the barangay official attended, in his barangay when Apayao was still under modified enhanced community quarantine.

On the other hand, Ong is being probed for incidents of violations of physical distancing at F-bar and Café and Simatra Café in his barangay.

If evidence warrants, Año said the three could face charges of gross neglect of duty, negligence, serious misconduct, and violation of Republic Act 11332 or the Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act.

"We expect the help of barangay leaders in the enforcement of health protocols but in these incidents, it appeared they (Cabahug, Daquioag and Ong) did not do their responsibilities and were remiss in their jobs. We are going to investigate them all," Año said

Año said that so far, three barangay chairmen have been charged for the super spreader events in Barangay San Jose in Navotas City, Club Holic Bar & Restaurant in Barangay Kamputhaw in Cebu City, and Barangay Matictic in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

The barangay chairmen of Barangays 181 and 182, both in Manila City, are now facing trial for the holding of a boxing match amid the pandemic.

Meanwhile, a 60-day preventive suspension was already meted by the Caloocan City Council on the chairman of Barangay 171 for the mass gathering at the Gubat sa Ciudad Resort.

“Sleeping on the job is not allowed in this time of the pandemic. We should be active in monitoring our areas to ensure there will be no mass gatherings which result in the increase of (COVID-19) cases,” Año said.

Source: https://malaya.com.ph/index.php/news_news/albay-gcq-extended-resorts-closed/