



MMC wants 5,000 contact tracers

THE Metro Manila Council asked for 5,000 more contact tracers in case the more transmissible Delta variant of COVID-19 enters the capital region.

The MMC, which presides over the National Capital Region, is prioritizing aggressive contact tracing and testing to prevent the further spread of the virus.

"We must be able to take action against COVID-19 cases in our localities. We see a slight increase, we immediately take action," Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chairman Benhur Abalos said in a "24 Oras"

report on Sunday.

"We can immediately go into a lockdown, or immediately report the matter. And of course, swabbing, testing, and isolation are continuous. We have to be prepared for this, and not get surprised," he added.

The MMC also asked the national government to maintain strict border controls to dampen threats of the Delta variant.

The government has enforced a travel ban on passengers coming from India and six other countries, which was extended until June 30, 2021.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said Filipinos who are included in the government's repatriation programs are not covered by the travel restrictions imposed for inbound travelers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, United Arab Emirates, and Oman.

Filipinos in these countries may enter the Philippines despite a travel ban covering their host countries, Malacañang said Sunday.

"Let it be clear, however, that Fili-

pinos covered by the repatriation programs of the government and repatriation activities of manning/recruitment agencies cleared by the Bureau of Quarantine are not prohibited from entering the Philippines," Roque said in a statement.

"They can enter the country, subject to testing and quarantine protocols."

The World Health Organization has classified the Delta variant, first identified in India, as a variant of global concern.

India's death toll more than doubled to more than 330,000, according to official figures. Many experts suspect the true toll is over a million. **Willie Casas**