



LGUs placed on alert for Delta variant

BY GERARD NAVAL

THE Department of Health (DOH) has placed all local government units on heightened alert as the Philippine Genome Center (PGC) detected 40 more COVID-19 variant cases in the country, including four Delta (India) variant cases.

With the growing threat of the Delta variant, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said it is important that LGUs become stricter in the enforcement of minimum health protocols to control its spread.

"We want to prevent further the entry of this Delta variant. All are on heightened alert. All LGUs were informed to be on guard against the Delta variant across all borders. All LGUs were given adequate information regarding the Delta variant," Vergeire said in a virtual briefing.

The World Health Organization (WHO) last week said the Delta variant of COVID-19 is quickly becoming the globally dominant variant of the disease, as it noted that the variant has already spread to more than 80 countries world-

wide since it was first detected in India.

On Monday, the DOH reported that the PGC has detected 4 additional Delta variant cases in the country.

The additional cases are three Returning Overseas Filipinos (ROFs) from the MV Eastern Hope, a ship currently docked in South Korea, who were repatriated back to the country on June 3, and an ROF who arrived from Saudi Arabia on May 24.

On the three seafarers, Vergeire said: "We can say that they don't have travel history to India. They are seafarers that

went to Japan and then South Korea, where they tested positive and immediately repatriated."

She said two cases have already completed the 10-day isolation after their arrival in the country and have been discharged upon certification of recovery, while the other one is still admitted at a hospital in Metro Manila.

On the other hand, the fourth case from Saudi Arabia has already completed the mandated isolation, tagged as recov-

.....
See LGUS > Page B4

• FROM PAGE B1 •

LGUS

ered on June 10, discharged from the isolation facility, and is now under strict home quarantine.

There are now 17 Delta variant cases recorded in the Philippines, with 15 recoveries, 1 death, and 1 active case.

Aside from the Delta variant, other COVID-19 variants continue to be detected in the Philippines.

The DOH said there were 14 additional Alpha (United Kingdom) variant cases, 21 Beta (South Africa) variant cases, and 1 additional Theta (Philippine) variant case based on the latest whole-genome sequencing report of the PGC.

Of the additional Alpha variant cases detected, 12 are local cases, while two are being verified as to whether they are local or ROF cases. Based on the case line list, two cases have died and 12 cases have been tagged as recovered. The Alpha variant now has a total of 1,085 cases.

Among the additional Beta variant cases detected, 20 are local cases while one case is being verified as to whether it is a local or ROF case. Based on the case line list, 20 cases have been tagged as recovered and one case is currently active. The total Beta variant cases in

the country is now at 1,267.

Lastly, the additional Theta variant case is currently being verified as to whether it is a local or ROF case.

The lone case has already been tagged as recovered. There are already 163 total Theta variant cases in the country.

PGC executive director Cynthia Saloma said they have not yet detected a community transmission of the Delta variant in the country.

Saloma said the 17 cases of the Delta variant, which was first detected in India, are all international travelers.

Warning that the Delta variant is more transmissible than the other variants, Saloma highlighted the need to maintain strong border controls to prevent the entry of more cases.

She said that if the COVID-19 Alpha variant, which was first detected in the United Kingdom, could infect four to five persons, the Delta variant is 60 percent more transmissible and can infect up to eight persons.

National Task Force against COVID-19 spokesman Resituto Padilla, in an interview with CNN Philippines, said experts have already warned that the Delta variant can infect a person faster and can be more lethal as it could

lead to hospitalization and has a higher fatality rate compared to other variants.

Padilla and Presidential spokesman Harry Roque reiterated the importance of following the health protocols such as the wearing of face masks and face shields, washing of hands and observing social distancing including those who have already received their first dose or completed their two doses of vaccination.

Roque said complacency in following health protocols, and not the lack or insufficient supply of vaccine, was the main contributor in the spike of COVID-19 cases in some parts of the country.

He said the presence of new variants also contributed to the spike in cases in some areas such as in Iloilo City.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the government should adjust its health protocols to prevent the further spread of the Delta variant in the country.

"There should be adjustments and improvement," he said, even as he suggested that the government ease up restrictions on the movements of vaccinated people as long as they still observe proper health protocols in public. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor, Raymond Africa and Noel Talacay*