



OCTA lowers surge estimate at 30,000 a day from DOH's 43,000

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

THE Philippines hit over 20,000 new cases of COVID-19 for the third straight day on Sunday, as an independent research group warned that confirmed cases across the country might hit 30,000 daily by next week.

Still, the OCTA Research Group's estimate yes-

terday was much lower than a Department of Health figure that said as many as 43,000 daily cases might be reported in Metro Manila alone by the end of the month.

On Sunday, the Philippines confirmed 20,019 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the country's total to 2,080,984

as the more transmissible Delta variant continued to spread, according to the DOH.

The department also reported 20,089 new recoveries, pushing the total number of Filipinos who recovered from the disease to 1,889,312, which means the

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country had 157,438 active cases as of 4 p.m. Sunday.

A total of 173 more deaths were reported from COVID-19 on Sunday, bringing the disease's death toll in the country to 34,234.

The country has struggled to ramp up its vaccine rollout as the government has said it wants to inoculate 70 million Filipinos by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, around 75 percent of the Philippines' 4,200 intensive care unit beds for COVID-19 patients are occupied, a situation classified as high risk, the DOH said.

Latest data from the DOH also shows that the National Capital Region's COVID-19 ICU occupancy is at high risk with 75 percent of the 1,500 beds in use.

Occupancy rate is considered "high risk" if utilization surpasses 70 percent but less than 85 percent.

Meanwhile, ward beds for COVID-19 patients nationwide and in NCR are also at high risk.

Treatment czar and Health Under-

secretary Leopoldo Vega said Sunday the One Hospital Command, a referral system for healthcare services, had been receiving 500 calls a day due to the community transmission of the COVID-19 Delta variant.

"That's Delta, Delta variant. It's the dominant variant. We know that it is highly infectious and there are breakthrough infections for the vaccinated, he said, adding calls, including other emergency cases aside from COVID-19, had also risen outside of Metro Manila.

The reproduction number of the coronavirus in Metro Manila increased from 1.39 to 1.41 but the overall trend of COVID-19 cases is decreasing, said OCTA Research group fellow Guido David.

However, David said they hoped the reproduction number would become lower during the third week of September to further slow the transmission of COVID-19.

For the whole Philippines, he said the reproductive number is 1.32.

For the entire National Capital Region (NCR), he said the reproduction number is 1.41. "Overall, the trend is decreasing," noted David who said reproduction number refers to the aver-

age number of secondary infections by each infected individual.

The independent research firm does not see 43,000 daily new infections in Metro Manila alone, as projected by the health department, said David.

"We can reach 30,000 fresh cases in the whole country by the end of September in our trajectory, but we don't see 43,000 daily new cases in Metro Manila alone," he said.

The decline of the country's reproduction number, or the number of people infected by a single virus patient, is slowing down, according to David.

The Philippines' positivity rate, or the number of those who take a COVID-19 test and turn positive, is at 27 percent to 28 percent, while it is 25 percent in Metro Manila, he said.

Among areas with the most cases are the capital region, Laguna, Cavite, Rizal, Bulacan, Cebu (including Cebu City), Iloilo (including Iloilo City), Davao del Sur (including Davao City), Cagayan, Bukidnon, Tarlac, Quezon, and Pangasinan, according to David.

The number of cases in Metro Manila is expected to decline in the second or third week this month, he said.