



# Full-blast lockdown eyed

*Pending Du30's okay, OCTA wants more people to enforce control in MM*



File photo shows barangay officials making the rounds as the local government of Mandaluyong City imposed a seven-day granular lockdown on Block 41 Zones 4, 5, and 9 in Barangay Addition Hills last month. Granular or localized lockdown appears to be the preferred option over wide area lockdown as a means to contain the spread of COVID-19 cases.  
**Norman Cruz**

**By Macon Ramos-Araneta and Othel V. Campos**

**T**HE PROPOSED granular lockdowns in Metro Manila will need more manpower to be effective in controlling the spread of COVID-19 and its variants, the independent OCTA Research Group said Sunday.

The new quarantine method was recommended by the Inter-Agency Task Force and supported by mayors in the National Capital Region, where it would be pilot-tested starting Sept. 8, but President Rodrigo Duterte has yet to give his final approval to it, Malacanang said yesterday.

At least three of Duterte's deputies said the government is ready to roll out the area-specific lockdowns in the NCR amid surging coronavirus cases

fueled by the dangerous Delta variant.

But OCTA Research doubts the efficacy of granular lockdowns in controlling COVID-19 and its Delta variant unless additional manpower is deployed in affected areas.

In her weekly radio address, Vice President Leni Robredo also said granular lockdowns must be complemented with better testing and tracing.

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Those under the lockdown would also need to be given aid.

OCTA Research fellow Guido David said there was no evidence yet to prove the efficacy of granular lockdowns imposed by local government units during a surge.

"If you close down a street, you need barangay employees to watch over that area. They will also need to distribute food," he said.

David also said the effectiveness of granular lockdowns depends on the spread of the virus.

"If COVID-19 is spreading all over the city, for example if an LGU has 100 villages but its manpower can only handle 50, it would not be enough," he said.

Still, Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chairman Benhur Abalos all said over the weekend they are ready to implement granular lockdowns in the NCR.

On Saturday, Lopez said the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) approved the implementation of granular lockdowns starting Sept. 8.

But presidential spokesman Harry Roque said on Sunday the President has yet to approve the IATF recommendations.

Under granular or localized lockdowns — which would be imposed on specific streets or buildings rather than entire cities or provinces — only health workers could leave their homes. Authorized persons outside residence (APORs) will also be prohibited from

leaving their homes.

Currently, Metro Manila and other areas in the country are under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ), the second strictest community quarantine status, extended until Sept. 7 to address the increasing bed occupancy in local hospitals and enable the local government units to ramp up their vaccination rollout.

The nearby provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal are also under MECQ.

MECQ is also being implemented in the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Apayao, Bataan, Aklan, Iloilo, and the cities of Lucena, Lapu-Lapu, Cebu, Mandaue, and Cagayan de Oro.

General community quarantine (GCQ) status "with heightened restrictions" is retained in Ilocos Sur, Cagayan, Quezon, Batangas, Naga City, Antique, Bacolod City, and Capiz.

Cebu province, Negros Oriental, Zamboanga del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Davao City, Davao del Norte, Davao Occidental, Davao de Oro, and Butuan City is under the more restrictive GCQ.

The GCQ classification without restrictions is being implemented anew in Baguio City, Santiago City, Quirino, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Tarlac, Puerto Princesa, Guimaras, Negros Occidental, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Norte, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, North Cotabato, and South Cotabato.

Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Dinagat Islands, and Cotabato City are also under the regular GCQ.

Earlier, Interior Undersecretary Jona-

than Malaya announced the consensus among the different government agencies to resort to the implementation of granular lockdowns which could be limited to a building, street, or barangay.

DILG chief Año said Sunday that a pilot test of granular lockdowns in Metro Manila would begin Sept. 8.

GMA News Online reported that Año said recommendations on the pilot project will also be sent for approval of President Duterte.

"After the pilot project, it will be assessed and appropriate recommendations will be submitted to the President for approval," he said.

Robredo said she is in favor of opening businesses as long as they conform to strict health standards, since some workers are given health care services at work.

"Even if we implement granular lockdowns, if we do not follow basic protocols, this will be futile. Cases will still climb whether it's a widespread lockdown or granular lockdown," she said in Filipino.

In related developments:

\* The Philippine National Police (PNP) reported 63,000 violators of basic health protocols in the past 15 days as several areas were under MECQ. PNP chief Police General Guillermo Eleazar said 83 percent of the violators were only given warnings. In Metro Manila, 13,000 were accosted daily for the duration of the MECQ. Of the number, 61 percent were warned, 34 percent were fined while 5 percent were brought to the police station for other offenses.

\* Trade Secretary Lopez said the granular approach for containing COVID transmissions will help increase the number of businesses that will open.