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# Metro Manila mayors allow travel for minors

By RALPH EDWIN VILLANUEVA

**Minors are now allowed to travel provided they are in the company of one of their parents or adult guardians at all times, Metro Manila mayors said yesterday.**

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Benhur Abalos said the Metro Manila Council unanimously approved Resolution No. 21-24, which provides standard restrictions on the intrazonal and interzonal travel for minors.

The measure took effect yesterday.

"This is done to protect

our children. It would be hard if minors would go out loitering by themselves," Abalos said at a press briefing yesterday.

Additional restrictions will be determined by local government units (LGUs) in allowing travel.

Those in the vulnerable sectors will be allowed to go out to procure essential goods and services as well as work and exercise.

"We are slowly calibrating the protocols (that are being raised), because the worst could happen if we make a mistake and the cases surge once again. If that happens, our Christmas will be bad," Abalos said as he stressed the importance of following minimum health protocols.

Abalos said malls in Metro

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Department of Health  
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Manila were urged to defer sale events to weekends and holidays instead of weekdays starting in mid-November.

The appeal was meant to prevent heavy traffic, especially with the holiday season nearing.

"From November to about January, we are asking mall owners to defer their sale to the weekends and holidays," he said.

Abalos said they would ask the malls to schedule their deliveries at night to lessen daytime traffic.

The MMDA is also studying to adjust the mall hours.

"So people would not go to the malls at the same time," Abalos said.

The number coding and truck ban remain suspended.

### Face-to-face classes

Meanwhile, with less than a month to go before the resumption of limited face-to-face classes, the Department of Education (DepEd) said the number of participating schools in the pilot study has gone down to 30.

Data from DepEd showed that only 30 schools in six regions would push through with the pilot imple-

mentation, about half of the 59 schools earlier identified and approved by the Department of Health (DOH).

The schools are located in Aklan, Antique, Cebu, Lanao del Norte, Masbate, North Cotabato, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay.

DepEd Assistant Secretary Malcom Garma said these schools have confirmed to resume face-to-face classes by Nov. 15, the first day of the pilot study.

Twenty-nine other schools were earlier identified but decided not to join the pilot study due to problems in concurring with LGUs and the learners' parents as well as the spikes in COVID cases in their areas.

Garma said DepEd is working to complete the 100 public schools approved by the DOH to resume face-to-face classes before the date of the resumption next month.

Seventy more public schools are being revalidated and may make the list for the pilot study before the deadline.

At least 46 schools in participating regions are appealing to join the pilot implementation of face-to-face classes, subject to validation. Garma

said the pilot implementation would continue on Nov. 15 even if the department would not meet the 100 schools approved by the DOH.

The pilot implementation will run for two months to determine if face-to-face classes may be expanded to other geographical areas and grade levels amid the pandemic.

"We don't need to complete the 100. Whoever passes based on the listing will continue because we cannot force the 100 schools if there is no concurrence," he said.

"By Nov. 15, there is a possibility that we can reach 100 or less. But with the 100 as a pilot, we will venture to expand the program based on the study," Garma added.

Education Secretary Leonor Briones said the proposal to compress the pilot study to two months might be too short, especially when there are lots of preparations for face-to-face classes.

"Perhaps one month would be too short because one month would include the preparations. We don't start classes by just opening doors and let the kids come in. There are preparations to be made. After the prescribed period, we have to also conduct the assessment, perhaps one month would be too short," Briones said at a virtual briefing.

Briones noted that DepEd needs to see data and information to properly determine the next move to take in terms of face-to-face classes, especially since the virus is unpredictable.

Still, the DepEd said it has set aside funds to augment additional needs of schools that will participate in the pilot.

It is also developing a computation on a per capita cost for equitable distribution for participating schools.

### Not a cause of concern

The minimal number COVID infections reported among students participating in limited face-to-face classes in the tertiary level is not yet a cause of concern, Malacañang said.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said there is no need to be concerned because in-person classes would not be conducted in areas with high COVID cases.

"Our COVID-19 vaccination coverage rate is increasing not just in Metro Manila but in the entire Philippines," Roque said.

As of yesterday, the number of fully vaccinated Filipinos was at 31 million, he said.

The Commission on Higher Education has expanded limited face-to-face classes to include hotel and restaurant management, engineer-

ing, tourism and maritime courses. Students taking medical and allied health courses were allowed to conduct limited in-person classes last January.

### Ramp up vaccination

The government needs to ramp up the vaccination program as quarantine restrictions have been eased and face-to-face classes are allowed to resume in select areas, Sen. Grace Poe said yesterday.

"An expansive vaccination program will not only save lives, but also help pave the way for the reduction of lockdown measures, thereby boosting jobs and growth," Poe, chair of the committee on public services, said.

"The thrust now is to go full throttle in the campaign for our people to get the shot that is free and widely accessible," she said.

Poe said the people expect concerned agencies and LGUs to heighten efforts to help vaccinate those who are under-reached and under-served communities.

"Our people must feel the seamless care of our health system wherever they may want to seek the vaccine to protect themselves," she said. — With Romina Cabrera, Helen Flores, Paolo Romero