



Republic of the Philippines
 Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Communications Management Unit

Newspaper: Mulayya
 Date: Oct - 26, 2021
 Page/s: B1- B3

DOH slams Manila Bay execs over dolomite beach overcrowding

BY GERARD NAVAL

THE Department of Health (DOH) yesterday scored the Manila Bay Coordinating Office (MBCO) over its failure to regulate the number of people that trooped to the Manila Baywalk dolomite beach in Manila over the weekend amid the continuing threat of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

In an online press briefing,

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said it is unacceptable for government officials to simply submit to the high number of tourists while knowing the danger it entails.

“If you can’t handle it, just like the claim of some officials, because they are too many, then you can change the regulations, the process. You need to help us prevent a new spike in cases,” said Vergeire.

“We call on all national agencies, local governments that whatever were discussed in the IATF-EID, whatever safety protocols we are implementing, it is for the good of the population and public health. Therefore, we need to implement them,” she added.

Last Sunday, an estimated 5,000 people visited the controversial

.....
 See DOH > Page B3

DOH

dolomite beach, many of them bringing along children.

Vergeire also called on the public to do their part in preventing a new surge in COVID cases by adhering to minimum public health standards.

“We opened up, and we were expecting that people will comply with the standards for health, to safety protocols,” she said. “But if it will be like this, we will just go back to stricter restrictions, which we all don’t want. So let us help one another.”

In a television interview, MBCO Deputy Executive Director Jacob Meimban admitted they “do not have control” over the people trooping to the 1.2-hectare beach.

Meimban admitted their staff struggled on how to limit the number of people trooping to the area, adding the artificial beach could accommodate at most 5,000 people.

“It was the biggest number yesterday (Sunday) compared to the other days. It probably ran to the tens of thousands. Limiting the number of people coming in is the most challenging task. We did plan to limit the number of people but we didn’t expect such overwhelming numbers to come,” Meimban told CNN Philippines Monday.

“In the morning, the beach can accommodate from 3,000 to 5,000. It’s around 1.2 hectares so it can accommodate that much but our challenge is during the weekend when people flock to the area. They overwhelm our personnel and the area,” he said.

Aside from MBCO’s own staff, Meimban said they are also being assisted by personnel from the city government of Manila, the Met-

ropolitan Manila Development Authority, and the Manila Police District.

PNP chief Guillermo Eleazar has ordered the Manila Police District to deploy more policemen at the dolomite beach to ensure minimum health safety protocols are observed.

Eleazar ordered MPD Director Chief Supt. Leo Francisco to coordinate with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the beach administration and the city of Manila to possibly set limits on the number of people inside and their length of stay.

He said children are not yet allowed to go to such areas under the Alert Level 3 of quarantine in the National Capital Region.

“At the moment, everybody is coming in. We don’t have that control. The moment families come in with kids and some elderlies, we let them in. If we barred them, congestion happens and that is a big problem for us, congestion at the gate compared if we let them inside where there is some elbow room,” he explained.

For the moment, Meimban said what they can do is to strictly enforce minimum health standards such as wearing of face masks and physical distancing.

He said they would meet today to assess the situation and come up with some new approaches to the problem.

“We will be evaluating again what happened during the last week and we will come up with new approaches and a new announcement,” he said.

Last Sunday, Meimban said they will close the dolomite beach to the public every Friday for regular maintenance. The artificial beach is open to the public from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. — *With Ashzel Hachero and Victor Reyes*

