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# PH now at 'low risk'

## But DOH says country not yet out of the woods

**BY GERARD NAVAL**

THE Department of Health yesterday said the country is now at "low risk" classification as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the country continues to improve.

But Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire was quick to warn the public against being complacent because the Philippines is still not yet "out of the woods."

"Decline in cases is seen at the national level and in most regions. Nationally, we are at low risk classification," said Vergeire.

Vergeire reported that all regions have been registering negative two-week case growth rates, with the latest national average at negative 48 percent.

Similarly, she said that the national average daily attack rate (ADAR) is now at 5.89 per 100,000 population, with most regions showing "moderate" ratios.

The DOH official also said the health-

care utilization rate (HCUR) nationwide is at low risk with a 41.15 percent bed occupancy rate.

Vergeire also said the intensive care unit (ICU) utilization rate for the whole country has dropped to moderate risk at 53.15 percent.

However, Vergeire said there is no cause for the public to become complacent against COVID-19 because the virus continues to post a threat in the country.

"We are not saying that we are out of the woods. What we are saying is a matter of fact and based on the monitoring of data we have right now. But we are not saying that we have no more problems," said Vergeire.

She said the country should sustain the current downward trend, as she expressed concern that the cases could against rise especially with the holiday season approaching and public mobility freer.

She said the public must strictly adhere to wearing face masks and maintaining

physical distance, as well as avoid enclosed spaces, crowded areas, and close contact activities.

Vergeire also said that there is a need to ramp up vaccination rollout and cover more citizens, especially the vulnerable population, including senior citizens and people with comorbidities.

Meanwhile, despite seeing over 1,000 new COVID-19 cases over the past three days, the independent OCTA Research group yesterday said infections in the National Capital Region (NCR) are still not on an upward trend.

In a social media post, OCTA fellow Guido David said the cases remain on a decline in Metro Manila, the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines.

"Are cases rising in the NCR? While new cases over the past few days were higher than 1,000, the trends are still in line with weekly patterns," said David, adding: "In other words, there is no indication yet of an upward trend."

NCR saw less than 1,000 cases per day for the period of October 19 to 21. On the other hand, the average daily cases in Metro Manila for the period of October 22 to 24 was reported at above 1,000.

Despite this, David said the seven-day average continued to decrease and is now at 945 cases.

Also, the reproduction number in the NCR remains below 1, and is currently at 0.48.

But while cases remain steady in Metro Manila, the OCTA said they have detected a surge in cases in Lubang, Occidental Mindoro, with cases going up by 580 percent, and its reproduction rate ballooning to 3.61.

"(There is) a COVID-19 outbreak in Lubang, a small municipality of 20,000 people in Occidental Mindoro. It is now considered a critical risk area," said OCTA.

Aside from Lubang, the group also said

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that Dumaguete City is currently at "critical risk" level, with its health-care utilization rate hitting a critical 87 percent, and ICU utilization rate at 89 percent.

On the other hand, OCTA said Bayombong in Nueva Vizcaya is at "high risk" level, with cases sustaining an upward trend of 118 percent. The town recorded an average daily attack rate of 36.14 per 100,000 population.

