

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
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LAGING HANDA PRESS BRIEFING
WITH SECRETARY MARTIN ANDANAR;
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR TROPICAL MEDICINE DR. CELIA CARLOS;
BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION SPOKESPERSON DANA SANDOVAL;
DFA UNDERSECRETARY ERNESTO ABELLA;
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE DR. RABINDRA ABEYASINGHE
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SEC. ANDANAR: Salamat, Rocky. Magandang umaga po sa lahat ng nanunuod sa atin ngayon at nakikinig ng live; mula dito sa press briefing room and good morning to our friends sa Malacañang Press Corps. Let me start with my opening statement.

With the confirmation of two cases of the Novel coronavirus in the Philippines, the administration assures everyone that the government is taking necessary actions to quell the spread of this contagion.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has ordered temporarily banning the entry of any person regardless of nationality except Filipino citizens and holders of permanent resident visa issued by the Philippine government directly coming from China and its special administrative regions Hong Kong and Macau.

The President will be presiding later today the next meeting of the Task Force; that's going to be in the afternoon and there will also be a presscon after that. So, it's open to the media.

The Department of Health has released protocols in cooperation with other agencies of the government and has been providing up to date advisories to address the misconception in the virus and how to protect oneself from incurring such. Caution is vital, and we ask the public to consider only vetted reports and updates from the Department of Health and other lead government agencies.

Meanwhile, the Department of Foreign Affairs or DFA has earlier said that it can repatriate Filipinos in the Wuhan City back to the country for free provided that existing rules and laws with regard to the virus are strictly observed - mandatory quarantine among others.

In times like this, it is easy to mislead our fellow Filipinos. So we urged the public to stop spreading rumors and goading fears as well as ending the stigma against specific nationality or race. There is no room for discrimination and there should be none at all.

Let us set aside our individual differences as we ask for a moratorium to people who want to hijack this situation and reduce it to mere for politicking because lives are at stake.

United in one common purpose we will overcome this health scare.

And now I turn over the microphone to Dr. Carlos of the RITM; good morning, Ma'am.

DR. CARLOS: Good morning everybody. I'll would just like to give a few presentation slides on what is currently known about the virus and what our agency, the Research Institute for Tropical Medicines, has been doing to address this with the Department of Health. So we now are well aware that this is a coronavirus and its name has been derived because of its appearance of spikes on the surface.

It causes about 10 to 30% of upper respiratory tract infections in adults and we may have been infected unknowingly with this virus in the previous months of our lives.

The emergence of the virus actually is expected to have arisen from some animal species; and currently being suspected are the bats population.

The spectrum of illness can be wide range from a symptomatic infection to simple cough and colds, fever and diarrhea to pneumonia's, to severe respiratory failure and in fact to death.

There are currently seven now, known coronaviruses. Four were previously known as human coronaviruses, then came the SARS, MERsCOV and now the Novel Coronavirus.

We know that it originated from Hubei in China.

And just to emphasize, the age group mostly affected are on the average 55 years - based on the latest publications - mostly males at 68% and more than half have chronic diseases notably cardio-vascular and Cerebro-vascular disease.

And main manifestations are fever 83% and in cough in 82%. And infection is mainly acquired via respiratory droplets, when na infected person coughs or sneezes, that is why it is advised that people with respiratory infections cover their mouth.

And the reproduction number, which basically defines the number of people that one sick person can infect is about 2.24. So, an infected person can infect around more than 2 other people in a non-immune population.

And no specific anti-viral treatment is currently recommended, although there are many studies looking into this and treatment therefore is mainly supportive. If we compare the case fatality rates - these are the death rates of people who get infected in comparison with other infectious diseases – it's about 2% compared to 99% of cases of rabies where we all know almost all people die of rabies once infected; compared to MERS of 34%; and the Ebola of 39.8 or close to 40%.

And we have heard recently that WHO has declared a public health emergency of international concern for this infection and Dr. Rabi can perhaps be the one to elaborate on that.

The more important steps to avoid getting sick are to prevent getting infected and there are different ways of how to protect oneself, this has been emphasized many times by Secretary Duque: cleaning of hands; avoid touching our eyes; nose or mouth with unclean hands or unwashed hands; avoid close contact with anyone with flu-like symptoms or colds; and avoid unprotected contact with live, wild or farm animals. And of course to protect others, we need to wear mask if we are infected.

There are ways of disinfecting objects in surfaces and there have been proven agents mainly hypochlorite solution and there are already recommendations on how this can be prepared - we just projected in this slide. So, diluted household bleach disinfects within 10 to 60 minutes from contact time.

And this is just the figure to illustrate how we prepare the solution from the original 5% bleach available in our department stores and groceries and use of this maybe therefore easy since the chemical anyway is available in most groceries and supermarkets.

And the questions of: 'Should we wear mask?' This has been addressed in many occasions and this is a poster from the WHO. Yes, we wear mask if we have respiratory symptoms such as cough and difficulty of breathing; if we are providing care to individuals with respiratory symptoms; and if you are a health worker and attending to individuals with respiratory symptoms.

Currently, since there is no community transmission of the Novel Coronavirus in the Philippines, we are not recommending its use for the general public who do not have respiratory symptoms.

So, this is the usual surgical mask and you have the colored portion outward and white portion inward and the proper way of using that is for the colored portion to be the exposed part and the white portion towards the person. The white portion is responsible for trapping the droplets from the individual wearing the mask; whereas the outer portion which is colored is some anti-resistance to water, so it protects the wearer from droplets coming from the outside.

If we plan to travel abroad, there are certain things that it may be best to observe: We need to get enough rest; we need to update our shots, especially the flu and other vaccinations.

We need to observe good hand hygiene; and we need to eat and drink from safe, clean and reliable sources.

Now, there are already advisories on the need for persons under investigation to be admitted. And there are four criteria currently employed by the DOH in order to make an assessment of

whether an individual is a PUI. And these considerations are: the presence or absence of fever; presence or absence of respiratory infection; travel history for the past 14 days – this time already expanded from Hubei only, initially, to the whole of China and its administrative regions; and history of exposure to an infected person or working in a facility caring for infected people.

And we have this guide tool distributed in all of the DOH facilities to help health workers make an assessment.

And we have certain criteria to discharge, mainly two negative specific Novel coronavirus test results done 48 hours apart, if the patient is asymptomatic; if the lab tests are improving, including the x-ray findings.

Now, I will show some of interventions that the RITM has been doing to help address the problem. The RITM is the infectious disease specialty center of the Department of Health. It has a two-pronged role in responding to this outbreak, both in the management of persons under investigation and, you know, suspected patients who are infected; and for laboratory testing. We are providing the Novel coronavirus PCR test to identify whether the virus is present from an individual's secretion.

So we have participated in the drafting of the guidelines on preparedness in response to this organism, and continue to contribute to that. We are a member of DOH Task Force for Coronaviruses.

We participate in many conferences to share information to the public. And in the hospital, we coordinate with referring hospitals and the Bureau of Quarantine for patient suspected to have novel coronavirus infection. We receive patients arriving from overseas who are suspected to be PUIs, and we manage them. We do post-discharge care. We ensure that infection prevention and control measures are in place and, of course, the lectures.

In the laboratory, we coordinate with all facilities with admitted PUIs, and process and release results of tests that we do for Novel coronavirus. We have coordinated with the WHO reference laboratory for confirmatory test initially.

And in the long term, as part of efforts to implement universal health care, we are participating in the establishment of infectious disease specialty centers in other parts of the country so that the skill and the laboratory facilities for infectious disease cases can be shared with other areas of the country.

We are planning for surge capacity testing. And we have provided guidance for upgrade of DOH hospitals.

There are plans also to use an electronic tool to link epidemiologic and lab data for risk assessment. And assist in the procurement of reagents for our regional laboratories.

I think that's the last. And of course, to comply more closely with international health regulations, these are standards which countries must comply with in order to be able to address properly any events such as infectious disease outbreaks that we are facing nowadays. Thank you very much.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you, Dr. Carlos. Salamat po. Our next speaker is the spokesperson of the Immigration. Ma'am Dana?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Thank you, Sec. In behalf of the Bureau of Immigration Commissioner Jaime Morente, good morning to our colleagues from the government and the WHO, as well as our friends from the media.

This is to give you a rundown of the actions of the BI to help fight the 2019 Novel coronavirus. As early as the 4th week of January, all BI frontliners were required to wear protective masks to prevent the spread of the 2019 n-CoV at the airports and seaports. The Bureau of Quarantine has likewise conducted pocket trainings for frontline airport personnel on protecting themselves from the virus.

Last January 23, we have assisted the Bureau of Quarantine by providing information on PUIs. The following day, January 24, the BI has started denying applications for visa upon arrival for Chinese nationals coming from Wuhan province following the temporary cancellation of the Civil Aeronautics Board of all direct flights from Wuhan City to the Philippines. On January 28, the issuance of the visa upon arrival for Chinese nationals was suspended in an effort to slow down the arrival of Chinese tour groups. By January 30, despite not receiving any directive regarding travel bans, all frontline personnel were instructed to conduct prudent assessment of passengers, and refer passengers who came from Hubei Province to the Bureau of Quarantine for checking or double checking.

On January 31, talks about the possible repatriation of Filipinos in China started. Hence, the BI created a special team of inspectors to conduct immigration formalities for them.

On February 1, the BI implemented a ban on foreigners from Hubei Province following an order from the President to stop the entry of all visitors from Hubei. Notices were likewise sent to airlines and shipping agents requiring them to screen passengers before boarding to restrict the arrival of passengers who have visited Hubei Province in the last 14 days.

Yesterday, February 2, the President ordered an expansion of the travel ban to include the entire People's Republic of China and its Special Administrative Regions which are Hong Kong and Macau. The BI immediately implemented this, and following the President's orders, advised all stakeholders that all foreign nationals regardless of their nationality who will be coming from China and its Special Administrative Regions shall be turned back and not allowed to enter the Philippines. However, Filipino nationals and Philippine permanent resident visa holders will be allowed to enter subject to a 14-day quarantine to be

implemented by the Bureau of Quarantine. Other visa holders and transiting passengers will also be denied entry.

The ban includes passengers who have been to the areas of concern in the last 14 days. The BI has also sent a notice to airlines and shipping agents requiring them to screen passengers before boarding to restrict the arrival of aliens who have visited China, Hong Kong and Macau in the last 14 days.

Also part of the ban is the departure of Filipinos going to China and its Special Administrative Regions. The ban does not specify exceptions; hence all Filipinos regardless of visa type will be barred from travelling to China and its Special Administrative Regions temporarily.

The BI urges everyone to temporarily refrain from unnecessary travel and bear with the government as this measure is implemented. Commissioner Morente is appealing to the public, asking everyone to work hand in hand to ensure that the country is protected from this virus.

Moving forward, the BI is ready to implement further policy changes relating to foreign travel as deemed appropriate by the Department of Foreign Affairs or the Office of the President as recommended by the Department of Health. Thank you.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you, Spokesperson Dana; now to our DFA Undersecretary Ernie Abella.

USEC. ABELLA: Good morning. The Department of Foreign Affairs continues to monitor the coronavirus outbreak, and ensures protection of overseas Filipinos and the well-being and protection of the local population.

No Filipinos in China are confirmed to be infected with the 2019 n-CoV acute respiratory disease – none. There are 295,047 Filipino in mainland China. The Philippine embassy and six Philippine consulates general in China continue to issue timely advisories through the official websites and social media like WeChat.

All FSPs or foreign service posts have dedicated 24/7 hotlines that Filipino nationals can call. Public advisory providing hotline numbers for Shanghai Consulate General in Hubei Province; hotline numbers for Philippine Embassy in Beijing, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong ASR, Macau ASR, and Xiamen. Contingency plans of all China foreign service post are continually updated to reflect realities on the ground.

Second, the DFA announced Friday, 31 of January 2020, an advisory calling for the voluntary repatriation of Filipinos in Hubei in China. They are to contact the Consulate General in Shanghai by today, the 3rd of February. The aircraft may leave for China sometime this week.

A rapid response team from DFA-OUMWA (Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs) along with five to seven medical personnel from DoH maybe deployed to fetch the Filipino repatriates. DoH has drafted guidelines for the repatriation.

Third, DFA imposed on the 2nd of February 2020 temporary suspension of visa issuance to travelers in China and its special administrative region effective immediately. Temporary suspension of visa issuance is also extended to foreign nationals who within the past fourteen days immediate preceding arrival in the Philippines have been to China since and to China and its ASR. This is on top of the previous announcement temporarily suspending visa issuance for travelers coming from Hubei Province.

End of update.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you, Usec. Ernie. Our last speaker before you can ask questions is the representative of the World Health Organization here in the Philippines, Dr. Rabindra.

DR. ABEYASINGHE: Thank you, Secretary Martin. Good morning everybody! WHO has been working with the Philippine Government since the announcement of outbreak of unknown—outbreak of Pneumonia of unknown etiology that was officially communicated by the National Health Commission of China on 31st of December 2019.

We have worked closely with the authorities in China and the Chinese authorities have prioritized the response to this outbreak. Their efforts have contributed to us gaining significant knowledge on this particular outbreak. They have contributed to identifying the pathogen that caused this outbreak of Pneumonia initially in the City of Wuhan which is now known as the 2019 coronavirus.

Subsequent to that on the—by about the 10th of January, diagnostic tests for the detecting this pathogen was developed and this has also been shared through WHO with Member States. This has facilitated the ability of many countries including here in the Philippines to conduct locally diagnostic test.

WHO has been closely monitoring the evolving of this outbreak and has been concerned about the emergence of this new pathogen. Because of this concern, our Director General summoned the emergency committee of the International Health Regulations on the 22 of January whether to consider the evidence and decide whether this needs to be—this event needs to be classified as a public health emergency of international concern.

The committee could not reach a consensus on the 22nd and was reconvened on the 23rd and they decided that based on currently available evidence on the 23rd, it did not warrant to be classified as a public health emergency of international concern. However, the committee, at the request of DG, expressed their willingness to reconvene at short notice and based on further emerging evidence, the committee was reconvened on the 31st of January and at this deliberations based new evidence that's had emerged since the 23rd of January the

emergency committee of the international health regulations panel consisting of experts, international experts, independent international experts, recommended to the WHO the classification of this event as a public health emergency of international concern.

Let me clarify what that would mean. The classification of the event as a public health international emergency of international concern provides the WHO the opportunity to better coordinate an international response mobilizing resources of all Member States to address this challenge. The committee and WHO continues to believe that this outbreak can be controlled and the spread of the virus can be stopped.

WHO is working together with Member States to strengthen their preparedness, capacities to improve their ability to deal with possible or likely importations of cases and to better manage those cases.

WHO commends their actions taken by the Philippine Government to strengthen its preparedness, to build capacity to detect cases and WHO continues to work together with the Department of Health–Philippines and the Philippine Government to increase its preparedness and response capacities to deal with this outbreak. We remain confident that the outbreak can be controlled and we can prevent expanded spread of this disease.

To date, there have been more than seventeen thousand cases reported. The vast majority of the cases continue to be reported from the People’s Republic of China. The outbreak has also unfortunately resulted in the death of three hundred and sixty two people, all of them in the People’s Republic of China; excluding the one death which happened on Saturday here in the Philippines.

The disease has now been reported from twenty three countries, several of those countries also reporting local transmission although most of the cases that those countries have reported had a travel history to affected areas in Hubei Province particularly to Wuhan.

WHO reiterates that WHO has made available and is mobilizing all resources in its capacity at country of its (*unclear*) in the region and globally to address this emergency of international concern and we will continue to work with the Department of Health–Philippines and the government of the Philippines to increase your preparedness and response capacities.

WHO is confident that at this point of time, there is no community spread of the disease as per evidence that is currently available within the Philippines. We want to reiterate that the two cases that have been reported here in the Philippines were both from travelers who originated from Wuhan who actually traveled with early signs of the disease.

So, we commend the government of the Philippines for measures it’s implementing and we work in partnership with them to strengthen their response capacities.

Thank you.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you, Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe. Thank you, Dr. Celia Carlos, Usec. Ernie Abella and Bureau of Immigration Spokesperson Dana Sandoval. I turnover to Undersecretary Rocky Ignacio for the press conference.

USEC. ROCKY: Okay. Question! Reymund Tinaza, then Mela.

REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO: Good noon, ladies and gentlemen. Kay Secretary Andanar siguro. Now, ‘yung papatuparin o pagpapatupad ng temporary travel ban, kasama ba dito ang—may concern kasi ‘yung mga doctors from US who are planning to travel for a medical mission sa Guimaras. Nagtanong sila kung kasama ba sila kasi mayroon silang layover or stopover sa Hong Kong and mainland China then to Manila. Kung kasama ba sila sa banned sa entry sa Pilipinas?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: If they are part of the delegation po—Hello, there. If they are part of the delegation of the WHO and government efforts in combating the virus then they will be allowed to enter the Philippines.

REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO: No, I mean not necessarily part of the delegation of the WHO but only doctors, regular doctors from US who are traveling to the Philippines but they have a layover or stopover in Hong Kong and China. So, they are part of the affected to be banned/barred entry.

SPOX SANDOVAL: Doon po sa directive na na natanggap natin from the Office of the President: All Filipino nationals po. So lahat po ng darating na Pilipino are subjected to the assessment of the Bureau of Quarantine. They will also not be allowed to depart the country.

REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO: Iyong not necessarily Filipino nationals, let say US nationals or European nationals who are coming to the Philippines, but they have a scheduled layover or stop over for four to five hours in the airport, then flight to Manila?

SPOX SANDOVAL: Even transiting passengers po, basta bumaba po ng Hong Kong, mag-layover po sa Hong Kong, mag-transit, they will still not be allowed to enter the Philippines.

REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO: Kay Undersecretary Abella. Sir, now that umiiral na iyong temporary travel ban and our local aircraft or airplanes, PAL and Cebu Pacific, already cancelled or suspended flights to and from... any from China to their SARs. Ano iyong magiging arrangement for iyong aircraft nila for example from Wuhan or from Hong Kong or from ano... kung wala naman ng bibiyaheng aircraft?

USEC. ABELLA: Katulad nung na-report kanina, inaareglo nung gobyerno na may mapadala tayong aircraft na patungo doon sa affected areas na iyon. So, ang expected po ay sometime this week, iyon ang target date makarating doon para i-ferry back iyong mga nag-volunteer na magpapa-repatriate.

Q: I know it was already mentioned earlier, but just to reiterate since there are so many criticisms. It was January 31 when WHO declared the 2019 N-COV ARD as a public health emergency of international concern. Prior to this declaration, do you think the Bureau of Immigration make necessary or enough actions to quell the spread of the contagion?

SPOX SANDOVAL: Yes po, we believe so po. Kasi we worked with the recommendations of the Department of Health and we cannot policy changes with regards to travel ban unless directed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the President. So lahat po iyan, we take into consideration the recommendations of the Department of Health which is based on the recommendations of the World Health Organization.

Q: China declared human to human transmission of the N-COV on January 20, then Singapore with 13 confirmed cases of N-COV banned travellers with recent visit to China on January 31. The Philippines with two confirmed cases made a similar ban on February 2. For BI, do you think government response is just right or is it late as alleged by some critics?

SPOX SANDOVAL: We believe po that it's just right, kasi like I said earlier po, naka-angkla po tayo on the recommendations of the world Health Organization and ang ating Department of Health is equipped in assessing the situation and the needs of our country kung kailangan po natin ng travel ban. So, iyong naging response po natin is appropriate naman with the recommendations of the World Health Organization.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Usec. Abella or Secretary Andanar. Good morning. Sir, what will happen to those OFWs who are just here in the Philippines for a vacation, will they be allowed to go back?

SPOX SANDOVAL: Temporarily po due to the travel ban hindi po muna, because wala pong distinction between visa types doon sa lumabas po ng direktiba doon sa travel ban. So lahat po ng Pilipino nationals who are in the country will not be allowed to depart for Hong Kong, China and Macau.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: But given that situation, since iyon po kasi iyong source of income nila, of course. So I understand, some of them are concerned what will happen to their jobs in China or in Hong Kong or in Macau. What's the plan of the government for these OFWs?

SPOX SANDOVAL: We fully understand po, because eh kung iyon ang talagang ikinabubuhay nila, but I believe po, the POEA and the OWWA will be doing their part po in ensuring na itong mga trabaho po nitong ating kababayan abroad ay mananatili despite this travel ban.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Ma'am, just a clarification on the quarantine of Filipinos who are coming back here. Paano po iyong magiging procedure noon, doon sa mandatory quarantine, talagang self-quarantine lang iyong gagawin sa kanila?

SPOX SANDOVAL: It might be best po for the Bureau of Quarantine to answer this question. Because they the ones who are implementing the quarantine. In Immigration po, we process the documents of the person and the person itself; but when it comes to health matters upon arrival, it's really the Bureau of Quarantine.

SALEEMA REFRAN/GMA7: Sir, can we just get the reaction of the WHO to news coming from Thailand that a certain cocktail of anti-virals used to treat flu and HIV is used to treat N-COV patients and apparently there is one who had a dramatic improvement. What do you know about this?

DR. ABEYASINGHE: Thank you for the question. We have seen media reports of this. As you know the declaration of a public health emergency of the international concern also encourages research into better managing patients and looking for treatments and preventive interventions such as vaccines. So, we encourage evidence driven efforts in that direction. We have seen reports coming from Thailand; of course, the improvement of one patient does not constitute evidence.

WHO will work more closely with the authorities in Thailand, but also we are continuing to work with the authorities in China and with other research institutions to build evidence of what practices should be adopted by affected countries to improve case management, to prevent of the transmission and no sooner there is clear evidence of what works, WHO will share that. In the meantime, WHO has shared interim guidance with Member States on how to prevent and control infection, how to manage cases and how to do diagnosis of suspected patients through lab testing.

So we need to recognize that this is an evolving situation, it's a new disease and WHO remains committed to working together with the global research community to generate that evidence and share it with Member States when available.

SALEEMA REFRAN/GMA7: Sir, right now, what we know is the transmission is through droplets... respiratory. But in the US I understand, there was a patient where they found the virus in the stool sample. What do you know about this and is this alarming?

DR. ABEYASINGHE: So, we know that the virus will be content in body fluids and usually it being a respiratory disease, the commonest mechanism of transmission from symptomatic individuals is through sneezing and coughing when droplets containing the virus, either absorbed by somebody in close proximity or rest on some surface which then becomes a fomite, an infected surface, the catching of which could help transmit the disease to somebody else, because you touched the place where the virus is and then touch your eyes or nose or mouth and the virus came enter you. So, that's the common mode of transmission.

But if not unknown, that coronaviruses can cause intestinal side effects and so reports that viruses are contained in the feces are entirely unexpected; but we do believe that that's not the primary mode of transmission of this outbreak. The reports of the presence and possible

implications by its transmission through fecal routes are being investigated, but not as yet confirmed by WHO.

SALEEMA REFRAN/GMA7: To Dr. Carlos and maybe Secretary Andanar. Given na wala pa naman po talaga na kumakalat sa mga Pilipino, wala pa pong community spread ito pong N-COV. Pero iyon nga po, that is possible pa rin naman na through fecal matter kumalat iyong mga ganito pong klaseng viruses. How are you reacting to this? Kasi nga given na maraming Pilipino na wala pong mga sarili po nilang mga toilets.

DR. CARLOS: Firstly, there are other coronaviruses previously identified like MERsCOV in which there was proven virus excretion through the feces. So it may not be surprising that the same thing will be later evident from the Novel Coronavirus.

So what do we do? We need to strengthen advice to the public to practice oral and proper food hygiene; to wash their hands well before and after eating; before and after using the toilet, which is not really common because we see many Filipinos using the toilets without washing their hands before and after. So we need to strengthen that information. And we need to be careful about disposal of feces - they should be properly contained and put in the proper waste disposal bins, especially for areas where there are no established sewage systems.

So I think for now, those are the recommendations especially in areas where there are no established sewage systems.

SALEEMA REFRAN/GMA7: Secretary Andanar, would you know po if mayroon tayong quarantine facility na ... sabi nila in Magsaysay or in Caballo Island. Ano po ba iyong balak pong gawin doon, lalo na po rito sa mga babalik po na mga Pilipino from those countries po?

SEC. ANDANAR: Ang sinabi po ni Secretary Duque is they're considering Fort Magsaysay kasi nga sa laki ng facility at puwedeng i-quarantine doon kahit na ilang daan o libong pasyente. Ten thousand iyong actually capacity ng Fort Magsaysay.

Pero iyong sa Visayas and sa Mindanao, bukod doon sa mga ospital ng ating Department of Health, wala pang nababanggit sa akin si Secretary Duque kung saan ika-quarantine iyong mga possible carriers nitong n-CoV. But later on, we have an emergency meeting with the President and after that, we will have a press conference o baka puwede mong itanong mo ulit doon sa—mayroong dagdag po si Dra. Carlos.

DR. CARLOS: In the interagency meeting last Friday, the plan was for a team from the DOH, from Quarantine, from Immigration, DFA to visit the prospective facilities that include Fort Magsaysay. So depending on the findings, the decision will be made on where to quarantine the returning Filipinos.

SALEEMA REFRAN/GMA7: Pero po, nagsimula na po silang bumalik. Kahapon po tayo nag-start ng atin pong isyu ng temporary ban. So siyempre po iyong mga nakabalik pong mga Pilipino, although alam nilang may self-quarantine, hindi po nila alam kung saan sila pupunta, kung ano po ang gagawin. Hindi po kasi malinaw iyon sa public na—kunwari, ako po, dumating ako, babalik po ako sa pamilya ko at sasakay ako ng bus, sasakay ako ng taxi. So iyong ganoon pong pag-aalala, paano po ba natin iyon maku-control?

USEC. ABELLA: So far, ulitin ko lang po iyong sinabi natin kanina na iyong proposal po, iyong—wala pa pong nakabalik mula sa Wuhan at sa Hubei Province.

SALEEMA REFRAN/GMA7: Pero po, sir, iyong mga galing China, Hong Kong, Macau, siyempre po kabado po sila ngayon. Bumalik po sila kahapon. So ano po iyong instructions natin sa kanila? Paano po tayo magse-self quarantine? Paano po iyong proseso?

DR. CARLOS: I projected the decision tool earlier in my presentation. And there's a part there where if personnel returning from China have no symptoms, no fever, no respiratory symptoms, just a history of travel, they need to do self-monitoring at home. So they stay at home, preferably separated from the rest of the household. If they can stay in a separate room, that's much better. They are advised to wear masks for around 14 days, from the date of arrival until they complete the two weeks. If they have no symptoms, then that's it. But if they develop symptoms, they're advised to go to a facility which can evaluate them. So that's the general instruction.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Saleema. Can we have—

DR. CARLOS: I'm sorry, to monitor their temperature twice a day.

Q: My question is for the Bureau of Immigration. I would like to confirm some reports I have read this morning about hundreds of foreigners including 300 Chinese nationals are stranded in the airports, I don't know if all of them are in NAIA. Apparently, right now, they weren't allowed to get into the Philippines but now they can't leave because there are no flights available. Can we confirm that figures and to know what will happen to them?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yes, that's true. There are around 300 Chinese nationals who are stranded in NAIA because most of the airlines have cancelled their flights already to and from the different parts of China. But our office is coordinating with the Chinese embassy, and they have pledged to send an aircraft to fetch their citizens who are stranded in the country. And maybe today or in the next few days, we will find out the details of these flights that the Chinese embassy will be arranging.

Q: Where are they now?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Currently, they're still at the NAIA.

Q: There's a specific area in the airport?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yes.

Q: They are only Chinese or there are also foreigners from other—

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: There are also other foreign nationals. But most of the ones that were stranded since yesterday have already departed.

Q: I have another question for Undersecretary Abella. When can we expect the arrival of the Filipinos repatriated from China? And I don't know if you have an idea how many of them will be ... have already requested to be repatriated to the Philippines?

USEC. ABELLA: As of an hour ago or 45 minutes ago, we found out that about 40 Filipinos have already requested to be repatriated. The expected goal is to be able to fetch them within the week. That is the intended goal.

Q: Sir, 40?

USEC. ABELLA: Forty, 4-0, yes.

Q: [OFF MIC]

USEC. ABELLA: From Hubei Province.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Kay Ma'am Dana po. Hi, ma'am. Nababanggit po kanina mayroon nang 23 countries na affected ng coronavirus, pero naka-concentrate lang po tayo ng travel ban sa China, Macau at saka Hong Kong. Iyong iba bang bansa na affected na rin nito like Taiwan, for example, Malaysia mayroon na rin recorded, Singapore, wala ba tayong i-impose din na travel ban diyan sa mga—safe ba tayo sa mga dumarating na citizens nila or other nationality coming from that countries papunta rito sa Pilipinas or tayo naman ay pupunta din sa kanila?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Siguro po kung may changes in policy dito sa ating travel ban, if there's a need to expand it, it will be recommended po by the Department of Health and the World Health Organization.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Ang concern lang, ma'am, is baka masyado tayong naka-concentrate sa China, Macau at Hong Kong. Baka malusutan naman tayo dito sa iba pang other countries na affected na rin pala nitong coronavirus?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: We believe naman po that the capacities of our Department of Health, also the World Health Organization, is enough naman po to guide the President and our other government agencies in crafting changes in the policies po dito sa travel ban.

FRANCIS WAKEFIELD/TRIBUNE: Good morning po, sirs/ma'ams. Sec. Andanar, tanong ko lang: Nagkaroon po ng komento si Vice President Leni Robredo about sa hindi raw maayos na pagbibigay ng impormasyon ni Secretary Panelo about the coronavirus. Ngayon, in-encourage niya si Presidente Duterte na as the head of the government na siya po ang lumabas sa publiko, magbigay ng update para at least ang mga tao po ay mas mapanatag sa nangyayari ngayon sa atin with regard sa virus po. Ano po ang komento ng Palasyo doon, sir?

SEC. ANDANAR: We respect the suggestion of the Vice President. Mamaya mayroon tayong emergency meeting with the President, at exactly pag-uusapan itong 2019 N-Coronavirus. Then after which, there is a presscon so you may ask the President later on. Thank you.

ROSALIE COZ/UNTV: Good morning po. Kay Ms. Dana po. Ma'am, may exceptions po doon sa travel ban? For example, mayroon pong naka-schedule na operations sa China or kaya sa Macau and Hong Kong and pati po ba iyong mga diplomatic personnel ay exempted doon sa travel ban to China?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: 'Yung mga Filipinos po that would be departing the country, wala pong exemptions na nakalagay doon; but of course, for such reason po of there is really a health emergency, maaari po siguro through the recommendations of the Department of Health din.

Kasama din po 'yung isa pong question na nag-e-emerge 'yung mga dual citizens, kung maaari po ba silang umalis ng bansa given that they are both Filipino and foreign nationals. Sa atin po, we allow the departure po upon presentation of the foreign passport.

ROSALIE COZ/UNTV: Puwede rin po bang makuha 'yung bilang kung ilan na po 'yung hindi po pinayagan na makapasok ng bansa? Mga Chinese and foreign nationals na nanggaling sa China and other special administrative regions.

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Sa ngayon po, we are still collating the figure kasi the directive just happened yesterday morning. So, kinokolekta pa po natin 'yung figures but perhaps in the next few days po we will be able to give you a more concrete number.

ROSALIE COZ/UNTV: Last na lang po. I-clarify ko lang po 'yung naging statement n'yo kanina doon sa mga OFW na hindi makakabalik dahil sa travel ban. So, ang OWWA ang magbibigay ng assistance. What particular assistance po?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Siguro po coordination with their agencies para po maprotektahan 'yung kanilang trabaho bago pa po sila makabalik sa bansa. Given the situation, I'm sure everyone understands that each country has been conducting their own restrictions when it comes to travel because dito nga sa kumakalat na sakit na ito. So, I'm sure that people will understand that we are doing this, the government is doing this for the protection of everybody.

ROSALIE COZ/UNTV: [OFF MIC] Thank you.

CCTV: Morning! Yellow from China Central Television. I have a question to Secretary Andanar. Because yesterday, I saw a post by Ambassador Chito Sta. Romana in his Facebook and he post a song written by Filipino leaving Wuhan and in this song that he post - I hope I pronounce it right - “Bangon Tayong Magkakasama, Bangon Tayong Magkakaisa.” So, this kind of song encourage people in Wuhan and our own in China very much. So, I would like to know from Philippine Government, do we have any encourage message to Chinese people and especially to this Filipino who choose to leave Wuhan? Thank you.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you for that question. In fact, I have seen several videos online of Chinese people chanting that specific song that you were saying. Yesterday, we did release a statement against discrimination - that we should not discriminate people especially Chinese who are affected by this n-coronavirus. This is not the trait of the Filipino, it should never be the trait of a Filipino. And we did mention also that there were several times or numerous times that we were in need and countries around us like Singapore, Malaysia, China, even the Americas and Europe were there for us so we should be also there for the Chinese people who are suffering this n-coronavirus in prayer and also in support. There should be no room for discrimination. I will be as—Do you have an answer to that? Kung mayroon ka?

Okay. So, later on I have a meeting with the President and we will ask the President what his message is to the Chinese people.

Thank you.

CCTV: Thank you. I have another question to Dr. Rabindra from WHO. You just mentioned that all the states need to work together to prevent this kind of transmission of the virus. So, I would like to know some comments from you about how do you see Chinese government's actions like they locked down quite a lot of cities to prevent the spread of the virus and like Chinese government build a hospital in eight days to contain a lot of people there. So, I'd like to know from WHO side. Thank you.

DR. ABEYASINGHE: Thank you for the question. WHO acknowledges the proactive role that China has played right from the beginning of this outbreak, transparently sharing information as it become available. Sharing knowledge, the identification of the pathogen per se, defining its whole genome sequence, sharing that and sharing diagnostics; also sharing information about the clinical presentations, the manifestations, and how the patients are managed. All of that has been valuable in helping WHO better understand this disease.

So, as our Director General mentioned when he met President Xi Jinhua, we are very appreciative of those efforts of the Chinese government. And we also are encouraged by the measures China is implementing to contain this outbreak both in Wuhan and Hubei and within China, but also from spreading to other countries.

WHO acknowledges and is monitoring closely China's efforts to lockdown approximately fifty million people now to contain this outbreak. As WHO mentioned, this is unprecedented in global public health and we are closely looking at its effectiveness and what its relevant with the future global efforts in containing these kind of epidemics.

We also appreciate the early efforts implemented by the Government of China in implementing travel ban for tour groups to travel abroad and in early implementation of exit screening to screen patients leaving China. These are important experiences that WHO is trying to understand and see what is replicable and good so that we can learn from these experiences and their potential usefulness. And we continue to work both on the ground in China with your specialists to better understand what is necessary to control this disease and to help control the disease in China.

CCTV: Thank you so much, sir. Last question to anyone who can answer it. Because it was mentioned in a press conference that there's no local transmission here in the Philippines yet, but what the government is prepared to do in case this outbreak will happen in the Philippines because maybe we will face some shortage of the equipment like face masks and especially like the doctors and the nurses in hospital, their equipment maybe face a shortage. So, I'd like to know how the government will do...?

DR. CARLOS: Based on our recent meeting in the Department of Health, as early as now, there are efforts to procure huge amounts of personal protective equipment not only from local sources but even from international sources in anticipation of a possible wider spread of this coronavirus.

And of course, we are still at the containment phase which means there is no community transmission that's why huge amount of effort is currently being implemented to identify possible people who may transmit the disease. As you know, there is contact tracing of the persons who were found to be positive and that's not a small amount of effort. You identify all the possible contacts of that patient, you assess their health condition, you treat them or you quarantine them if necessary.

So, those are really very huge measures being undertaken to avoid the transition of the country from simple containment to mitigation. So, hopefully we will not reach that particular stage.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Kay Dr. Carlos po. As a follow-up to the question of Ms. Yellow. You mentioned a while ago that the RITM is preparing for the possible surge of people that you need you need to check whether they have the coronavirus, could you tell us more about your preparations, ma'am?

DR. CARLOS: We have a surge capacity plan for training subnational laboratories to be able to do the test. But since we just acquired the technology fairly recently and started testing

Thursday last week, we may need to, you know, first, make an assessment of five subnational laboratories previously identified.

In fact, we have been training them for influenza surveillance since almost five years ago and the test for coronavirus uses the same test format. So it will not be difficult, we just have different reagents and different primers.

So, we are—we have that plan and in the last command conference of the DoH, there were already measures laid out on how they can be provided capacity to do the test.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: So, in the future ma'am we may be able to activate five more laboratories for the testing?

DR. CARLOS: Yes.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Ma'am, follow-up lang din po doon sa—or just to clarify 'yung nabanggit n'yo po kanina. Returning Filipinos from China if they do not manifest any symptoms, ang mayroon lang sila is travel history to China, they can self-quarantine. But what about those coming from Hubei Province or Wuhan po?

DR. CARLOS: I think the same recommendations hold. The decision tree is clear, if you have no symptoms, you just have an exposure to you know, by travel, then you can do just self-quarantine.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN2: Ma'am ito po, that's being explained in depth doon sa mga bumabalik po na Filipinos from China?

SPOX SANDOVAL: Yes po. We are in close coordination with the Bureau of Quarantine who does the explanation po when it comes to the pagka-quarantine po nitong mga dumarating natin na OFWs. So, they are advised po kung ano iyong mga kailangan nilang gawin and then sila din po iyong nagsasabi kung ano iyong step by step na dapat gawin at kung saan pong magre-report kung sakali pong makaramdam ng any symptoms of the coronavirus.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN2: Ma'am, ano pong ginagawang basis ng Bureau of Immigration to verify kung totoo iyong sinasabi na travel history ng isang tao?

SPOX SANDOVAL: Passports po makikita po iyan sa passports, kasi kasama po dito sa travel ban is not just iyong pinanggalingan niya, but the travel history within the last 14 days. So, makikita po sa passport kung saang bansa po nanggaling. So, if within the last 14 days the foreign national came from Hong Kong, China or Macau automatic po we can deny the entry of this person. At the same time po nagpadala na rin po tayo ng advice sa airlines, pati po sa mga shipping agents to pre-screen the foreign nationals that are boarding their vessels to make sure na hind na po makasakay itong mga foreign nationals na ito para po maiwasan na kailangan pa natin silang ibalik. And pre-screening po really is to advantage of the company,

dahil hindi na po nila kailangan ng added cost para ibalik pa po iyong taong ito, since automatic disqualified naman na po iyan kapag pumasok sila sa bansa.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN2: Sir, what do you say to criticisms na iyong emergency meeting later ay masyado nang late considering na last week pa po na-report iyong first death from coronavirus in the Philippines?

SEC. ANDANAR: No it's not late. In fact, very timely ang decision ng gobyerno. Again, we follow also the directives and also the recommendation from the World Health Organization, the Department of Health. Again, I would like to reiterate na itong namatay na infected by the n-coronavirus is a person from China. At iyong infected din iyong kanyang kasama. Wala pang Filipino, thank God na infected nito. Iyong desisyon naman ng gobyerno ay very methodical at iyong meeting mamaya ay nataonan lang din na timely because nung weekend namatay iyong pasyente na galing pang China and unfortunately, the first death outside China.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN2: Sir, sinu-sino iyong mga kasama doon sa meeting and what can the public expect doon sa outcome ng meeting na iyon?

SEC. ANDANAR: Hindi ko masagot kung sinu-sino, because I was also just informed, pero ang nakalagay doon Pia is select number of Cabinet members, so meaning hindi lahat.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR: To our officials. I'm just curious because the first death in Philippines is the second confirmed case of N-COV, tama po? Okay. But when the DOH, when the government announced the first case of the N-COV, there was no mention of the 44 year old Chinese man who is already suffering from the disease. May we know why there was no announcement regarding the second case of the n-CoV?

DR. CARLOS: I was in the presscon when Secretary Duque announced the death of the first case and he did mention that the first case had companion, male companion who was also sick. But at that time, the male companion was not as ill as what happened in the subsequent days. So the illness progressed subsequently which eventually lead to his demise.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR: Okay. So when he was ill, it was not yet n-CoV, it was just a confirmed case that time.

DR. CARLOS: It wasn't confirmed, his confirmation came later.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR: Ah later, so it's just deteriorated fast?

DR. CARLOS: Opo. His condition deteriorated in the last 24 hours.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR: Okay. Do you have any information as to how many people have interacted or had interacted with the fatality?

DR. CARLOS: This of course will be the health personnel attending to him and the people perhaps who were exposed during their travels, because they traveled to different places in the Philippines. And that is now being investigated by the Epidemiology Bureau.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am, just to clarify on the timeline of the two confirmed cases because DOH announced the first confirmed case on January 31 and then the first mortality was announced yesterday. Why was there a two-day gap between the confirmation of the cases? When did you actually confirm that the second confirmed case is n-CoV, because it turns out that the two are a couple from Wuhan. Were they not tested at the same time?

DR. CARLOS: The sample from the first confirmed case was sent to Australia and the sample from the second case was... although sent just last Friday, we had the testing done already at RITM by that time. So, the official results from the second case was sent out last Saturday morning only; so, the results of the first confirmed case came earlier, because that was sent to Australia.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am, just to clarify. The second confirmed case was confirmed already by RITM, because we have the capability already.

DR. CARLOS: Yes.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am, why did the government not send both samples to Australia? Why did you just decide to send the sample of the first case?

DR. CARLOS: We sent actually the sample to Australia of the second case, last Friday and we are waiting for the results which may probably come anytime soon. So, since we had the capability already for testing Thursday last week, we decided of course to process the sample of the other PUIs sent to us and we had that result. And just to make sure that perhaps we were doing the right thing, we also processed in parallel the sample from the first confirmed case, which was positive; and we had the same results. So the staff was confident that our procedure was correct.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am, can you give us an update of the—I think we have around 34, 36 PUIs and 4 are undergoing testing. Can you give us an update if the four remaining cases have turned out to be positive or negative and do we have additional PUIs as of today?

DR. CARLOS: I don't know about the additional PUIs, because that's within the data base of the Epi Bureau. The question should probably be answered by the Epi Bureau people. But as to the rest, so far with the results sent to me for approval, there has been no positive result to date, after the second positive.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am, just to clarify. You already knew on Saturday, that there is a second confirmed case. Ma'am, why did you decide not to announce that on Saturday and why did you announce it just yesterday?

DR. CARLOS: Well, we sent the results to our superiors and it was the decision above which... you know, it was them who decided when to call for the announcement. But that was late Saturday already. So, perhaps there was not enough time to gather people to make the announcement on the same day.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am, around what time was the patient pronounced dead and was the confirmation before the patient died or after the patient expired?

DR. CARLOS: The confirmation came before.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: Ma'am around what time namatay iyong pasyente?

DR. CARLOS: I am not aware of the exact time of death, but it was Saturday.

MIKHAIL FLORES/AFP NEWS AGENCY: To Miss Dana, can you clarify on the Chinese who are currently in NAIA. Where did they come from and where exactly in NAIA are they currently held?

SPOX SANDOVAL: This is collectively, so they are not bunched up together in one terminal. So, I would have to get the details kung saan-saan sila galing. But most probably, within China and the Special Administrative Region, that is why they were caught in limbo and at the airports. But, like I said earlier, the Chinese Embassy has already coordinated this with our office and is planning to send special flights to fetch their nationals.

Q: Regarding the passengers stranded in the airports. I think it's not just Chinese.

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yes.

Q: What would happen with the others? I think there are some Americans—

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Most of them were able to depart already.

Q: So right now, are mainly Chinese?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yes. Most of the ones who were stranded yesterday were able to depart already.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Dra. Carlos, good morning po. Doktora, how can we assure the safety of the patients pati iyong mga health workers na naka-assign sa San Lazaro Hospital, pati na doon sa mga ospital na kung saan mayroong mga patients under observation?

DR. CARLOS: For San Lazaro and RITM, we have set standard procedures on infection prevention and control and that covers a lot of things, from wearing of the personal protective equipment, to handling of patients, to cleaning of rooms occupied by infected patients, and so on.

So both of the hospitals have a long history of handling emerging infectious diseases. And so far, we have been good. The health workers have been... none of them so far have been infected.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Doktora, dapat lang ba na magbigay tayo ng additional, or recommend na magbigay ng additional hazard pay doon sa mga health workers na naka-assign sa mga patients?

DR. CARLOS: In addition to the previous answer, we also request our health workers to monitor their temperature twice a day. And then we quarantine them in case they develop any symptoms, and we manage the symptoms.

Your question is about the hazard pay—

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Additional, ma'am.

DR. CARLOS: That would be good. But it's not within my power to determine whether that should be given. But if that is recommended, I'm sure all of us will welcome that especially from RITM and San Lazaro.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Will you recommend, ma'am?

DR. CARLOS: Of course. Although we have a standard hazard pay in government. But there are people who are exposed to more hazards than others but they receive the same remuneration.

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Just a point of clarification regarding the earlier question about the 300 Chinese. The number does not just include those who are at the airports right now. It also includes the ones ... the Chinese nationals who are in the country who want to go back to their homelands already. So it's not just the ones at the airports, but includes all those who are in the country who want to go home now.

Q: [OFF MIC]

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Not only in Manila.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Ma'am, any update on efforts of the government to track down iyong people who got contact doon sa Wuhan couple?

DR. CARLOS: The Epidemiology Bureau staffs have the updated information. I'm sorry, I don't have the updated information.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: And, ma'am, doon sa RITM, may mga test sample pa ba tayo na hinihintay from Melbourne, Australia?

DR. CARLOS: We sent three samples from three patients, so we are awaiting them.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: And those samples are from people who came from China also, Wuhan?

DR. CARLOS: Yes, from China.

JHOANNA BALLARAN/JIJI PRESS: Ma'am, Dr. Carlos, my question is: How do you ensure that passengers will follow self-quarantine procedures? Does the government have like a means to monitor these passengers? Kasi unlike in other countries, they're stuck in one place for 14 days. So how do you ensure that they will follow self-quarantine procedures?

DR. CARLOS: We have personnel under the Epidemiology Bureau who follow up these personnel who are requested to do home quarantine. So they monitor these personnel.

AZER PARROCHA/PNA: Dr. Carlos, just to clarify. We have our own capacity to detect if cases confirmed of n-CoV here. But do we still have to send the sample to Australia before announcing that a patient is confirmed even if we have our own ability to confirm the test sample?

DR. CARLOS: I think I need to correct your statement. We announced in fact that there was a second positive even before we received the confirmatory test results because the sample from the second positive is still being ran in Australia right now. The Secretary decided that this should be announced because maybe he was confident about our findings.

AZER PARROCHA/PNA: So just to clarify: We don't need to wait for the test to come back from Australia?

DR. CARLOS: No more.

YAN/PHOENIX TV HONG KONG: For Ms. Dana. Does the travel ban also include Chinese citizens who may not be coming from China, Hong Kong and Macau?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: The ban specifically states that all foreign nationals who are coming from China, Hong Kong and Macau. So we implement the directive to the letter. So for example, they are permanent residents of the United States, then they are not included.

YAN/PHOENIX TV HONG KONG: What if they're—sorry, Chinese citizens but not coming from China, Hong Kong and Macau in the last 14 days?

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yeah, but they are not included if they did not come from those three countries. Because what we are looking at is not the nationality but where they came from. So since these are the areas that the Department of Health recommended that we implement the travel ban, the President said this directive, gave this directive to us, hence, we implement it. So any foreign national, not just the Chinese but all other nationals, if they come from these areas of concern, then they will not be allowed to enter the country.

USEC. IGNACIO: May question si Henry Uri, I think for Dr. Carlos. Ma'am, puwede po daw patanong: Saan hotel nag-check in sa Manila iyong Wuhan couple after they get back from Dumaguete? And kumusta iyong mga staff ng hotel na nakasalamuha especially nung namatay na Chinese?

DR. CARLOS: I'm sorry, I do not have such information. The Epidemiology Bureau staff would have the information.

REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO: To Dr. Rabi. Hi, sir. Sir, just your assessment on how the Philippine government, specifically the Department of Health, reacted when there was this announcement of outbreak of n-CoV and how is DOH now acting to prevent the spread of the virus?

DR. ABEYASINGHE: I believe that the Philippine government has been responding to an evolving situation. As I mentioned, this is a new situation; it's an evolving situation. And with the emergence of disease and the emergence of more information, the government response has been proactively strengthened.

We have been working very closely in guiding that response. As new evidence emerges, as I explained earlier and as WHO classified the event as a public health emergency, the Philippine government implemented more stringent measures, this is in relation to the relative risk and the pattern of movement of people. And so, we are satisfied so far with the measures being implemented by the government of the Philippines. And we are continuing to work with them to increase their preparedness in case there are further importations of... there is evidence of local transmission. As I mentioned earlier, at this point of time, there are no reports of any confirmed of local transmission.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: To Dr. Carlos. You said earlier that if patients are—PUIs or those practicing self-quarantine should exhibit any symptoms, they should seek medical advice. When they go the hospitals, what kind of protocol should they expect or should they ask for?

For example, should they go directly to the clinics or to the ER? Paano po ang mangyayari doon? Kasi siyempre kapag pumila ka sa clinic ng doctor, mas marami ka pang puwedeng mahawa 'di ba. Kapag sa ER, ganoon din naman. So anong mga protocols po ang ipapatupad ng mga hospitals natin particularly the private hospitals which are not under the government?

DR. CARLOS: We have seen private hospitals initiating their own measures to address this. In fact, there are private hospitals who established separate triage areas to evaluate patients consulting for possible Novel coronavirus infection.

I have seen tents erected in some private hospitals, separate from their regular emergency rooms, were these patients who qualify under the decision table can directly proceed. And they have dedicated personnel to attend to these patients.

So that probably is the first that the person who wishes to consult should know. They should ask where, if there is a specific place in the hospital or area where they will be evaluated. And that is the same practice in the Department of Health hospitals – we have special areas for evaluating these cases.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: At least for private hospitals, that's a very basic that they should do. They should have a specific area to diagnose or to—

DR. CARLOS: To evaluate.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: To evaluate these patients. And then, like what kind of protocol should they expect? Halimbawa, kasi baka mamaya mabigla iyong pasyente, bigla siyang i-sanitize nang bonggang-bongga, ganoon, or protective gear, whatever.

DR. CARLOS: The DOH has released guidelines on preparedness and response for this particular organism, and that includes infection and prevention control guidelines. So hopefully, that will be followed by everybody because that is supposed to be implemented by all hospital facilities. And the instructions are quite clear on what to do and how to address the infection control issues.

BUENA BERNAL/CHANNEL NEWS ASIA: For RITM, ma'am. Since the contact tracing is crucial for the containment effort, and there was a 9-day window from the date of arrival of the second confirmed case to the date that the contact tracing was done. Can we know how long is the waiting period of the test results?

DR. CARLOS: It's 48 hours.

BUENA BERNAL/CHANNEL NEWS ASIA: And for the surge capacity plan, ma'am, can we know the timeline and how many sub-national centers there are?

DR. CARLOS: There are currently five sub-national laboratories to be upgraded. And—well, we cannot just tell them to test tomorrow. They have to be equipped in terms of facilities, reagents and to be trained on the protocol, and to be given proficiency test to assess whether they can perform the test properly. That's the only time that they will be allowed to do the actual sample testing.

Q: Is there an estimated timeline, ma'am, for when can they do these?

DR. CARLOS: Well, we hope it can be done very soon but we have already drawn the plans and as I have mentioned earlier this were sub national labs established to do influenza surveillance about 5 years ago. So the basic steps for PCR which is the test - polymerase chain reaction - have been taught to them but there will some adjustments for a specific protocol on n-CoV.

Q: Would you say that it's safe to say it's within this month, within the next few weeks?

DR. CARLOS: No. Very hard to say.

Q: And these five centers where are they located?

DR. CARLOS: One is in the Baguio General Hospital; second is San Lazaro Hospital; third is Lung Center; fourth is Vicente Sotto Hospital in Cebu; and last is Southern Philippines Medical Center in Davao.

Q: Last question. Can we know the cost of the testing?

DR. CARLOS: Honestly, we have not costed it because we are doing it for free; but when we tried to estimate for our own information how much it will really cost, my staff estimate it to be between around fifteen thousand to twenty thousand.

Q: What happened with the passengers coming—are you thinking for example, like a lot of flights coming from Europe to the Philippines, did you short scaling Hong Kong maybe 1 hr the passengers they just stayed at the airport, that passenger also banned from entering in the Philippines?

USEC ABELLA: Regarding your question early how many were requested for repatriation, formerly it was 40 it's now 42.

SEC. ANDANAR: This is with regard from the question of Joanne, you asked about who will track down those patients who are into self quarantine. I believe that yesterday there was a discussion among the Cabinet members and the Cabinet thread and Secretary Ed Año messaged this – if you would allow me to read it: *'For newly arrived Filipino citizens that do not manifest symptoms a 14-day quarantine shall be imposed inside their homes. The barangay health emergency response teams shall account and monitor concerned individual daily, taking*

temperature etc. until the end of quarantine period. If anyone would show any symptom of n-CoV, the barangay official would coordinate the DOF/IATF for the immediate transfer of the patient to the hospital for treatment and isolation.'

DR. ABEYASINGHE: I just wanted to reiterate as I mentioned earlier that WHO remains confident at this coronavirus outbreak can be controlled. We need the public to act rationally.

WHO has provide the guidelines, it is important that we don't panic unnecessarily; it's important that we maintain hand hygiene by regularly washing hands with soap and water; not touching our mouth, nose and ears; if you have signs of respiratory infection to wear a mask to protect other people; practice cough etiquettes, maintain at least 1 meter distance from your nearest neighbors if you have respiratory infections; and practice cough etiquettes so that droplets are not spread; insure all meat properly cooked. By doing this we are confident that based on current available evidence this outbreak of 2019 Novel coronavirus can be controlled successfully as we have done previously with SARS and MERS. So our message is: Not to panic but to act rationally and carefully.

DR. CARLOS: My message is at the moment there is no community transmission yet of the Novel coronavirus in the Philippines, we are at the containment stage which means we are trying to prevent the virus from the spreading to the community by identifying cases who can possibly have been infected.

And since this are mostly from China and special administrative regions we encourage travelers who have been exposed or had travelled to those area to please if requested to be home quarantined to follow exactly the instruction: isolate themselves in a room, wear a face mask, take your temperature twice a day, if you start experiencing symptoms report to the hospital authorities for the evaluation.

We do not want the family members of the returning travelers to be infected, because one family member who becomes infected can - as I showed in my slides - infect 2 or more. So 2.4 is the reproduction rate, so it can double the number of patients.

If we all follow that and we practice respiratory toilet; cough etiquette; proper disposal of waste, do not just dispose waste anywhere, I think that we are confident that we can remain at the stage of containment instead of progressing to mitigation.

Second, let us reserve our mask to the those who need them, I have seen many people wearing mask; and please think of whether use of this mask are indicated, because now there is a current shortage of this valuable commodity and let us give them to those who need the most specially the health workers and then from DOH at least.

For RITM we are trying to do our share in identifying these cases and confirming through testing who are really infected and who are not so that people who are test negative can be discharged from the hospital as soon as possible.

We have released hotlines to the different hospital so that they can follow the results of the test as soon as possible. And in the near future we hope to establish more infectious disease specialty centers so that the expertise in infectious disease will be present not only in Metro Manila but in other regions of the country. Thank you.

USEC ABELLA: The DFA continues to ensure the protection of nationals abroad and also to ensure the well being of domestic public. Also regarding questions about the repatriation timeline, we need to remind ourselves that repatriation is subject to Chinese government's laws, including immigration and quarantines clearances. So it's not just a unilateral move. Thank you.

SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: The Bureau of Immigration urges everyone to refrain from unnecessary travel, kung hindi po importante ang biyahe ninyo at hindi po kailangang kailangan mas maigi po that we delayed it, we postpone it, until everything is sorted out.

Please bear with us as we are implementing measures as advised by the Department of Health who knows what is best for us to fight this virus. Let us also follow, sundin po natin ng maigi, the recommendations of the Department of Health on sanitation, on hygiene, on how to protect ourselves because this is for everyone safety. Thank you very much.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you for our guest today Usec Ernie Abella, Spokesperson Dana Sandoval, Dr. Celia Carlos, and from the W.H.O representative here in the Philippines Dr. Rabi Abeyasinghe. Thank you so much for taking time to provide vital information to the public.

I advise the public also to continue to monitor the news from the private network companies that we have here; also Presidential Communication Operation Office we have a *Laging Handa* page where you can continuously monitor the situation on this N-COV and for those who are watching in the regions, in Region 10 Northern Mindanao I will be there to also convene a special or emergency briefing about the N-COV so that we can ensure our kababayans in Region 10 that the government is on top situation. Reminding the public also that we have an emergency meeting later with the President at around 5:00 or 5:30 in the afternoon and this will be open to the media afterwards. Thank you so much.

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