



Leyte-Samar

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In the wake of Leyte's 1st COVID-19 case

Romualdez imposes stricter border control

JOEY A. GABIETA, RONALD O. REYES

TACLOBAN CITY- The mayor of this city, Alfred Romualdez, said that he would impose a stricter border control after Leyte province reported its first confirmed coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) case.

Romualdez made this announcement via online hours after the regional office of the Department of Health (DOH-8) on Friday (April 17) morning confirmed that a 58-year old woman from the town of Burauen, Leyte was infected with the coronavirus.

Burauen is about 45 kms away from Tacloban City, considered the regional center of Eastern Visayas.

The woman is now at the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC) based here in Tacloban for confinement and management of her illness.

"Today, we will be more strict here in the borders of the city... (there will be) random checkpoints. Please stay home," Romualdez said Friday afternoon.

According to the city mayor, the quarantine checkpoints in the city will

also be manned by police, aside from the personnel of the city government. He would also ask assistance from the Philippine Army to help guard the city's checkpoints.

By imposing a stricter board control, the city government hope that its record of having no COVID-19 patient could be sustain until its restrictive community quarantine period would see Romualdez /page 5...

BFAR rolls out its market-on-wheels with fish and other sea products



MARKET-ON-WHEELS. With the movements of the people restricted due to quarantine imposed by various local government units, a market-on-wheel was launched by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources selling fresh fish and other marine products. (BFAR)

TACLOBAN CITY- The regional office of Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has started to roll out its market-on-wheels with fish and other marine products are being sold.

The program, dubbed as 'Fish for Every Juan ni Ani at Kita, also called Love Us, Lab-as,' is BFAR's intervention during this time of pandemic cause by the coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) among

the region's fishermen by selling their items to the consumers.

"This is one of our endeavors to support our registered fisherfolks and associations in the region on see BFAR /page 5...



OPPOSITION. Residents of Homonhon Island, off Guiuan town in Eastern Samar, still managed to express their opposition on the loading activity, despite of the prevailing general community quarantine. A foreign vessel docked off the shore of the island to collect 7,000 metric tons of chromite. The villagers fear the activity could result to infection of COVID-19 on the island. Story on page 2. (EFREN HIPE)

DOH confirms 1st COVID-19 in Leyte

TACLOBAN CITY-A 58-year old woman is the first confirmed coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) case of Leyte province, making her the fifth of the entire Eastern Visayas region.

The woman, who has a travelled history of Guam and Manila, is from the town of Burauen, is now confined at the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC), based this city, Dr. Minerva Molon, regional director of the Department of Health in a press conference Friday (April 17).

Molon said that the pa-

tient arrived in Burauen on March 13 but ten days later or on March 23, she suffered sore throat, fever, headache and vomiting which prompted her to seek medical care at the rural health center but was referred to the EVRMC.

And upon examination on her, she was advised by the doctor to undergo home quarantine for 14 days as she was now classified as patient under investigation (PUI).

But on the last day of her quarantine period or on April 6, her symptoms continued reason why she underwent a rapid test

conducted by the municipal government which turned to be positive of COVID-19.

see DOH /page 5...



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Fear of possible COVID-19 infection Homonhon residents show 'silent' protest on the loading activity by a foreign vessel

TACLOBAN CITY- The people of Homonhon Island are making their 'silent' protest on the loading of chromite ore by a foreign vessel.

This was disclosed by Danny Lagos, president of the Save Isla Homonhon which opposes any mining activities on the historic island.

Lagos said that while the residents of the island could not go out of their homes due to the prevailing general community quarantine imposed by the provincial government as part of the measure against possible spread of the coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19), they still do it by displaying placards signifying their opposition.

"Due to the prevailing quarantine, the people of the island could not go out of their homes. But there is a silent protest by the residents. Some tried to get near the wharf to register their opposition," Lagos, in a phone interview, said.

He said that while it could be true that protocols would be followed during the operation like the wearing of the personal protective gear and observance of social distancing of those involved, these are not enough.

"They should have at least disinfect first the (foreign) vessel and even the barge that will collect and load the chromite," Lagos said.

He added that the Techiron Resources could have loaded the mineral after the lifting of the general community quarantine which is on April 30.

"Anyway, these chromite will not rot if these will not be loaded immediately," Lagos said.

To recall, the regional office of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) in Eastern Visayas has allowed the Panamanian-registered vessel MW VW Peace to load 7,000 metric tons of chromite ore to be ship to China.

The ship has 13 Chinese and 4 Myanmar nationals as its crew personnel.

This move of the MGB and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was met with strong opposition by the officials of Eastern Samar, to include the Borongan Diocese.

For one, Governor Ben Evardone said that they are opposing to this move saying aside from a violation of the general community quarantine that prohibits entry of ships, either local or foreign, their move is more in ensuring the health of the locals from getting infected of the coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19).

"Our province has done all possible measures to protect our people from this disease and yet this mining operation has given Estehanons anxiety and fear over the possibility that all our efforts to prevent this disease from entering our province will go down the drain," Evardone said on his letter to Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu on April 14.

(JOEY A. GABIETA)

PNP-8 put up its own quarantine isolation ward for police personnel



PALO, Leyte – A quarantine isolation facility intended for possible or probable cases of COVID-19 involving police personnel was constructed inside the regional headquarters at Camp Ruperto Kangleon, this town.

This was disclosed by B/Gen. Bernabe Balba, police regional director, who said that the facility was once the AFPSLAI building.

Balba said that the facility was constructed on April 1 and now ready to bring any possible patient suspected to have the coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19).

"Containing the spread of this pandemic is everybody's concern. To all our hero cops in the frontlines, exercise extra care and caution in dealing with the community as you perform your mandated duties and responsibilities. As indelible proof of our concern for the welfare of our police frontliners, we have prepared this facility for those who might be suspected of COVID-19 for their isolation and for them to be taken care of by RHS 8 medical personnel and ensure their speedy recovery," the police regional director said, citing the reason why he initiated for the construction of such facility inside the PNP regional headquarters.

The converted building can accommodate five individuals at any one time and has two separate rooms for male and female. Each room has its own individual comfort and shower rooms.

The facility will be managed by doctors and nurses from the Regional Health Service 8 (RHS 8) of this PRO.

While the region has yet to monitor or report any police personnel suspected to have been infected with the deadly virus, there is now 50 policemen who served at various checkpoints in some parts of the country.

Three of them have already died due to COVID-19.

(LIZBETH ANN A.ABELLA)

Samar province, Catbalogan City now under general community quarantine

TACLOBAN CITY- Samar Governor Michael Reynold Tan has placed the entire province under a general community quarantine and further enhancing the implementation of mandatory precautionary measures against coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19).

The measure is to take effect on March 19 and to end on April 15. The period, however, may be extended or shortened depending on the recommendation of the Provincial Inter-Agency Task Force.

Under Executive Order 17 issued by Gov. Tan, residents are restricted to travel during the span of the community quarantine.

Those who will be allowed to travel are the actual residents of any villages in the province, those accessing basic necessities such as groceries and similar items, those travelling for medical or humanitarian reasons provided that they have and can present proper documents, and health workers, authorized government officials and those providing basic services and public utilities, and those who are reporting from their respective workplace.

Travel to Samar province for non-residents is not allowed.

To enforce the order, the government directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Provincial Health Office (PHO), Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office in coordination with local government units and barangay officials to establish checkpoints at the boundary to Northern Samar province, Eastern Samar provinces particularly in Paranas, Marabut and in Sta Rita towns.

Coastal towns in the province are also instructed not to allow docking of any motorboats and vessels coming from other provinces.

School managements are also instructed to do disinfecting protocols in their respective schools while the entire province is under quarantine period.

The provincial government also suspend work in government offices, except for those that are essential during the quarantine period. The offices however is mandated to follow the four-day work week.

The provincial government also orders local government units in the province to declare temporary closure of non-essential establishments in the respective locality.

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Leyte Samar

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Dalmacio C. Grafil
Publisher

Joey A. Gabieta
Editor

Aileen M. Grafil
Advertising Manager

Alma M. Grafil
Business Manager

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CONTACT

Tel. Nos. (053) 321-4833/(053) 888-0037

WEBSITE

www.leytesamardailynews.com

EMAIL ADDRESS

lsdaily2@yahoo.com

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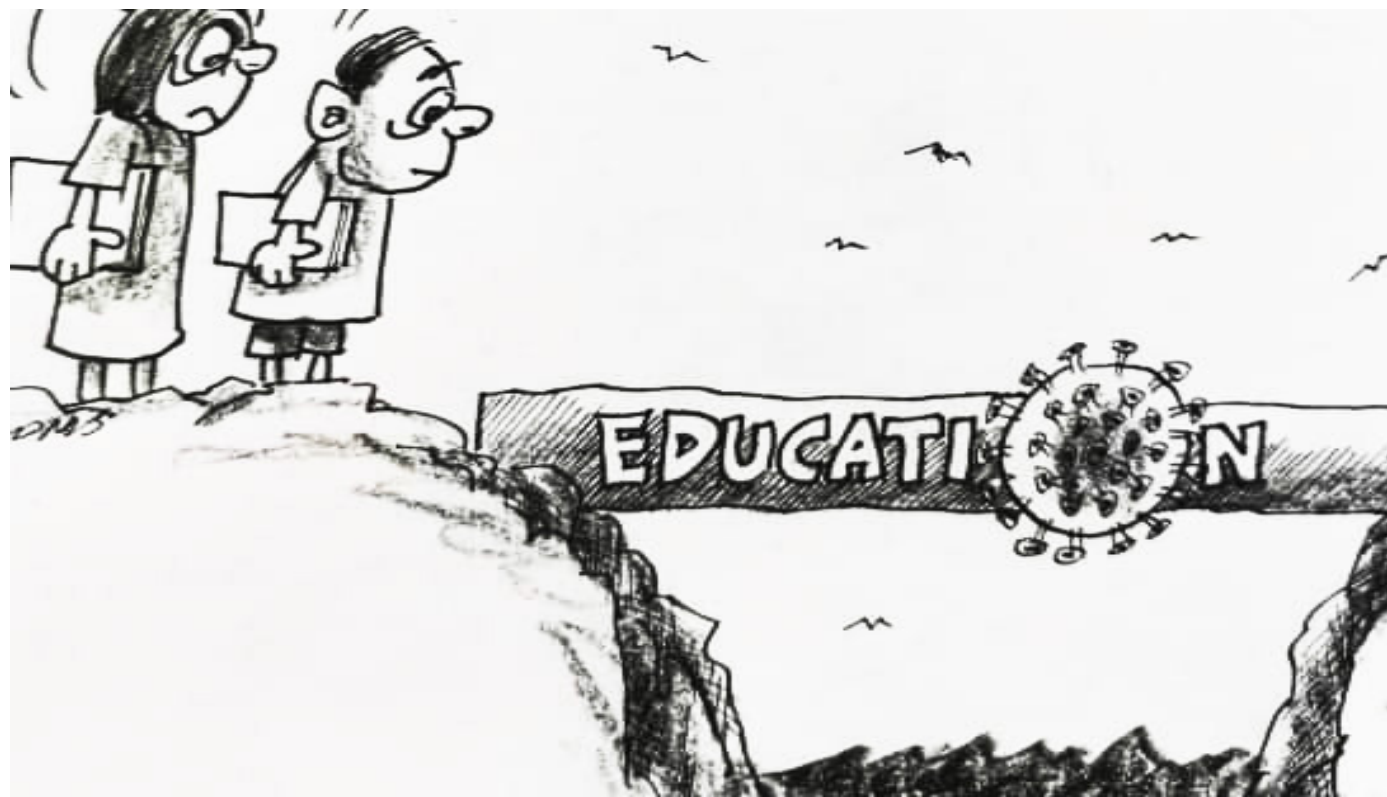
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Academic disruption

The education sector is one of the institutions that were heavily affected by the onslaught of the corona virus that is causing a worldwide chaos nowadays. The impact to it is tremendous. Everything and everyone in the academe was affected, including the various operations, plans, activities, and the like.

Academic administrators in both public and private schools were caught off guard. Never did they expect that such a massive disruption of their school calendars would come, paralyzing their operations, and rendering their institutions almost dysfunctional. It was not just unexpected; it was likewise abrupt. From a smooth-sailing operation, to a sudden, chaotic situation, with all the key academic participants quickly thrown overboard.

Consider the case of mentors. Their classroom-based activities had been in full swing for months, the series of lessons in place, their close monitoring of students updated, their performance assessments on-going, their teaching strategies prepared. Suddenly, classes were suspended—for a day, then for a week, and then for months. The lessons prepared were of no more

use; the students' performances were yet lacking; the grades were not yet complete. How in the world were they to come up with fair and justifiable grades for students?

Good for public school teachers because, though classes are suspended, they are still receiving their salaries as if nothing happened. But those who belong to the private institutions whose salaries depend on tuition fees, and who are paid on a no-work-no-pay basis, found themselves in a quagmire. As the quarantines and lockdowns prolong, so do their financial agonies. Their bills are accumulating, yet their pockets are empty, drained to even buy their basic personal necessities.

And the students? Surely, they are not in the best of conditions. They learned less; their studies turned unstable; their immediate future rather dim. Many of them who are supposed to graduate this year are even deprived of a solemn, graduation ceremony wherein they can savor the sweetness of their success before their proud parents or guardians. Indeed, from the highest officials down to the lowest figures in academic communities, disruptions of activities were experienced. But this should not lead to a lasting paralysis.



Things To Mind

DOMS PAGLIAWAN

Managing mild symptoms

Be it known to all that, per Department of Health (DOH) advice, those with mild corona virus symptoms may just stay at home or in private facilities instead of seeking for hospital accommodation where the positive persons are being treated. Some reasons explain this admonition,

and it has its own wisdom.

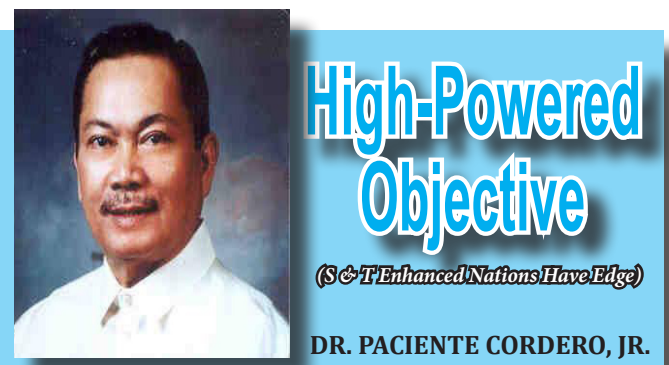
First, mild symptoms could aggravate if the sufferer is exposed to the seriously ill patients. Instead of just having a mild, treatable condition, one could contract more powerful strains of the virus and thus succumb to the disease. This, in a way, is for one's protection that one's mild illness is being prevented from further exposure to the disease. One ought not to think he is being deprived of necessary confinement in this case, for staying at home could even be more advantageous for him and his family.

Overcrowding of COVID patients in designated hospitals is another thing that is being avoided, reason why those with mild symptoms should just stay at home. If the overcrowding is due to the influx of seriously-ill patients, then so be it. But if it is merely caused by the increase of patients who are, for the most part, doing well physically, then that should be rather avoided. Resources and the frontliners' time and attention should be invested more on the serious cases, not on promising patients who can recover by themselves. *see Managing /page 5*



Corrupted victims? (Second of a series)

Well stated in the premise of the policy that because of the emergency situation, it is deemed necessary for the government to ensure that rights and welfare of affected sectors are protected and promoted. The principles of human rights and inclusivity provide a moral grounding to guarantee that all affected families shall have access to programs and services in overcoming the challenges brought by this situation. It is crystal clear that the assistance is inclusive of all affected families which encompasses the entirety of the population as the calamity and emergency is nationwide and all people are potential to get infected by the virus that has already claimed lives and affected many,



Observing Mother's Post Demise Birthday

To the Cordero Clan and friends I am dedicating this column to our beloved Nanay as we, her surviving sons, daughter-in laws and grandchildren, continue to observe her birthday – 98th years (March 15th) – with Masses offered by my youngest brother Dr. Angel and his family in California, USA, and another Mass in the Burauen Catholic Church offered by brothers Dr. Reynaldo and Dr. Paciente, Jr. families. We, three brothers have vowed to continue observing our departed Tatay's and Nanay's birthdays even if they have

both joined our Creators already! This is our sign of love and respect to them who have brought us, their 3 sons, as upright citizens, law-abiding servants of the country and assets of society. Our regrets, though, that we were unable to announce in an obituary about Nanay's joining our creator on October 9, 2019. Our sincerest apologies to our relatives and loving friends. As our tribute to our parents, we have long thought of and actually been giving annually Medals to the graduates and Academic Achievers of San Diego Elementary School, our moth-

er helped build ably helped by our father raise funds for the school building, together with the kind-hearted residents of San Diego Poblacion Barangay, Burauen, Leyte. We, sons and families call the awards as the Paciente, Sr. and Necitas Cordero Family Medals. Our nanay was the very first classroom teacher – I belong to the School's Batch No. 3 of Grade 6 Graduates. Through the simple memento, we are able to perpetuate the memory of our parents contribution to the youth and residents of the barangay.

Act (Republic Act 11469), it was specifically stipulated under Section 4 (c) that it shall provide emergency subsidy to the target 18 million households that are considered as low-income households. Such number practically excluded 4,975,630 out of the total household population of 22,975,630. The guidelines issued by the social welfare and development department provided for what it defined as Emergency Subsidy Program (ESP) which is a social amelioration program to provide cash or non-cash subsidy to eighteen (18) million household beneficiaries, in the amount of at least Five Thousand Pesos (PhP 5,000.00) to a maximum of Eight Thousand Pesos (PhP 8,000.00) per month for two (2) months, for basic food, medicine, and toiletries.

It excluded a huge number of households which were initially considered as affected by the emergency and covered by the state of calamity. The disparity widened as the figure was based on the 2015 Census of Population which is way below present count of households and families. The data should have

see Corrupted /page 5 ...

er helped build ably helped by our father raise funds for the school building, together with the kind-hearted residents of San Diego Poblacion Barangay, Burauen, Leyte. We, sons and families call the awards as the Paciente, Sr. and Necitas Cordero Family Medals. Our nanay was the very first classroom teacher – I belong to the School's Batch No. 3 of Grade 6 Graduates. Through the simple memento, we are able to perpetuate the memory of our parents contribution to the youth and residents of the barangay.

To our ever-dearest Nanay – OUR HEART-FELT HAPPY BIRTHDAY GREETINGS!

We shall forever remember and love you and Tatay! As mentioned in my column following her demise, "Nanay (and) Tatay were my avid fans.

ooo000ooo
NEXT TOPIC : "A Simple Proof of Filipino Ingenuity"

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Joyful, thankful, helpful

THAT'S what the spirit of Easter should lead us to. With Christ guaranteeing our salvation and as long as we do our part, we have every reason to be joyful and thankful that in turn should strongly encourage us to be helpful to others.

This lifestyle was reflected well among the first Christians. This is how the Acts of the Apostles (2,42-47) described this phenomenon: "They (the first Christians) devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

"All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Everyday they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their meals and exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people..."

Take note of the radical simplicity these first Christian lived as a re-

sult of their faith in the apostles that in the end channeled their faith in Christ. Such simplicity led them to be joyful, thankful and concerned with the needs of the others.

We need to have the same simplicity if we really want to be joyful, thankful and helpful to others. Let's remember that we are meant to be joyful. We may not be able to avoid suffering and pain in this life, but it cannot be denied that deep in our heart we want to be happy, with a joy that never ends.

And it's possible to be joyful despite the many negative things that we have to face in life. As long as we hold fast to our faith in Christ, we can experience what St. Paul experienced:

"In all things we suffer tribulation, but we are not distressed. We are sore pressed, but we are not destitute. We endure persecution, but we are not forsaken. We are cast down, but we do not perish. We are always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame." (2 Cor 4,8-10)

To keep our faith in

Christ going, we have to be thankful to Christ for whatever. When we are always thankful to Christ, we open our heart to the workings of grace and the innate goodness that comes with our nature, at least that part that is still unaffected by sin.

We have to see to it that everyday, we are conscious that we are always thanking God and others. In fact, we need to continue lifting our heart in thanksgiving all throughout the day.

A day without saying "thank you" is a bad day. It's a clear sign we are quite self-immersed only, blind to the continuing proof of the goodness of Christ and the others. We detach ourselves from them, isolating ourselves in effect and putting ourselves in grave danger.

It's when we are joyful and thankful that we would be in the condition to be helpful to others. This concern and helpfulness for others would be manifested by desiring what is good for others from every point of view: physical, moral and spiritual, and by being always aware of the needs of others, especially their spiritual well-being.

This can only mean that we have to get out of our own shell and to actively enter into the dynamics of a life of communion. Thus, we certainly need to deepen and strengthen our sense of communion. It's definitely not an easy thing to do, but neither is it impossible. We just have to realize that we need to constantly ask for grace for it and be as unsparing as we can in exerting the necessary effort.

Prayer for the Nation and for Those who Serve in Public Office

God, our Father, you guide everything in wisdom and love. Accept the prayers we offer for our nation, by the wisdom of our leaders and integrity of our citizens, may harmony and justice be secured and may there be lasting prosperity and peace.

Almighty and eternal God, You know the longings of our hearts and You protect our rights in your goodness, watch over those in authority, so that people everywhere may enjoy freedom, security and peace.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever, Amen. (Courtesy of Daughters of St. Paul)



Pray the Holy Rosary daily
for world peace and conversion of sinners
(The family that prays together stays together)

Samar... ...from Page 2

The LGUs are also directed to implement curfew in coordination with the Philippine National Police.

The residents of the province are directed to comply with the social distancing policy at all times and prohibit all social and religious gathering including meetings.

The provincial government also order the PHO to refer all cases of COVID-19 suspected patients to Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center for proper monitoring and treatment.

Prior to the declaration of the provincial government putting the entire province under general community quarantine, Catbalogan City Mayor Dexter Uy issued an executive order placing his city in the same category.

Mayor Uy, in his order, all transport vehicles mandated to follow social distancing by only allowing half of passenger capacity of their vehicles.

Vehicles entering the city are subjected to under screening and registration. Vehicles carrying supplies and goods and products shall be allowed entry provided they present proof of delivery or vouchers showing place of delivery in Catbalogan.

Workers or employees in Catbalogan who are leaving outside the city whose work establishments remains operating shall present certificate of employment and company ID. The same also apply to residents of the city who

are working in outside Catbalogan.

Medical emergencies must provide proof of referral slip from the local health center at the checkpoint.

Residents of the city who are returning from other place are considered person under monitoring and required to report in their Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) and under 14-day quarantine.

Passengers with symptoms will be isolated and will be order to return to their community of origin.

Mayor Uy also ordered all villages to set up their checkpoints in entrance and exit of their communities to restrict movements of their residents.

The city government also imposes curfew from 6 pm for residents below 18

years old and 9pm to 5am for residents 18 years old and above.

Those who will be affected by the curfew will have to present their certification of employment with stated working hours or proof of employment or business operation to be exempted.

The city also impose liquor ban during the duration of the quarantine period.

Under the EO establishments that are allowed to operate at those selling basic commodities, food and essential services, groceries, supermarkets, pharmacies and other establishments selling basic necessities and prime commodities provided that they observe proper distancing and limit the purchase of their clients. **(ROEL T. AMAZONA)**

Corrupted... ...from Page 4

been rectified first to include the affected population based on actual count. Unfortunately, the policy was implemented despite cries from local officials and the public in general against the exclusion of a great number. Contrary to the declaration of the president that he removed politicians from the process, the listing was thrown back to the hands of politicians who were tasked to do the listing of beneficiaries based on the small number of households that were allocated by the social and welfare and development department to every barangay.

comments to allelma@yahoo.com

Managing... ...from Page 3

selves.

Consider this wisdom: when a mild sufferer is just at home, he could have family members attend to his needs. If he needs to eat, wants to drink warm water, or desires to watch television or to listen to the radio, some loved ones could facilitate these for him. Whereas in the hospital, he would be deprived of all this. There might be nurses roaming around, but they have other things to do, and would hardly respond to personal requests. He would be there as an object of monitoring and experimentation.

There's more. Note the hospital bills that one could accumulate while inside the hospital premises.

BFAR... ...from Page 1

marketing their products to areas where these products are not easily accessed," BFAR 8 Regional Director Juan Albaladejo said.

Love Us, Lab-as started in Sta Fe town in Leyte province this week and will go to other towns like in Alangalang, Tabontabon, La Paz, Dagami, Burauen, Juita and Jaro.

During the first day in Sta Fe, Albaladejo said that one of the consumers, a senior citizen, had no money to buy a dried fish and used her 2.5 kilos of rice instead.

But Albaladejo clarified that they have to impose restriction after several res-

DOH in the region vows to do best to avoid community transmission of COVID-19

TACLOBAN CITY- The Department of Health (DOH) has vowed to do its best to prevent local transmission of the coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) anywhere in the region.

This was disclosed by Dr. Minerva Molon, DOH regional director, during a press conference during which she announced Leyte having its first case COVID-19 from Burauen town.

Molon said their office is doing its best to prevent local transmission like what happened in Tarangnan,

ises. They could amount to huge sums of money. We may have seen on facebook that, based on the testimonies of some recovered patients, their bills had bloated to millions of pesos. That would be heavy on the pocket. Good if one is moneyed enough, but if one is hard up and could hardly survive financially, he'd better stay at home. That accumulated sum could be the result of trial-and-error treatment done by the doctors, knowing that to date, the disease has not had a definitive cure. So one would have to pay much for a series of experimentation done on him—a thing that could be avoided by just recuperating at home.

Home confinement, though, could risk the family members' health. They would be at risk of contracting the disease. That's why it is very im-

Samar where the second patient tested was said to have infected two other patients.

"We are doing our best to prevent local transmission for it will transcend into community transmission, which we don't like to happen" the DOH regional director said.

Dr. Lesmes Lumen, the Leyte provincial health officer, said that the critical activity is the conduct of the contact tracing being performed by the department which they immediately conducted.

Lumen said that health

portant that the infected person religiously observes all the safety protocols at all times for the protection of other household members. The latter, too, should take the necessary precautions in dealing with their sick loved one. They must wear masks when approaching the isolated room, wash or disinfect their hands afterwards, observe physical distancing, and separate the patient's utensils.

With these insights, we might find staying at home far wiser than going to the hospital for

DOH... ...from Page 1

"Last April 13, an oropharyngeal swab was taken, (with the) sample sent to the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu and just yesterday (April 16), the result came which is RT-PCR (real time-polymerase chain reaction) positive for COVID-19," Molon said, reading a prepared press statement.

The woman was immediately brought to EVRMC 'for observation and management.'

Molon said that the with the help of the rural health unit of Burauen, contact tracing was started on Friday morning, particularly those she had in close contact like the eight members of the house where the suspect lives.

The DOH regional director dismissed any local transmission saying the woman could have get the infection in Manila where there were already confirmed COVID-19 cases.

officers of Burauen have the list of the contacts.

Molon said that they will send their own team to assist the local health personnel of Burauen in the conduct of contact tracing.

She said that those who had in contact with the woman two days prior the appearance of her symptoms until she was brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional medical Center (EVRMC) will be investigated as they are considered close in contact with patient. **(LIZBETH ANN A. ABELLA)**

confinement. But, of course, should the illness aggravate, one must proceed there without delay, before it's too late.



Dr. Lesmes Lumen, the provincial health officer of Leyte, said that he was instructed by Governor Leopoldo Dominico Petilla to do necessary measures like contact tracing and imposed restriction on the movements of the people in coordination with the local government unit of Burauen and even the nearby municipalities to ensure that the virus would not spread.

Just like Dr. Molon, Lumen also allayed the fear of the people of Leyte not to panic despite recording its first COVID-19 case insisting that there is no local transmission of the disease in the province.

Of Eastern Visayas five COVID-19 patients, two have been discharged after they recovered from the ailment.

Aside from this latest case, the two other remaining patients of the region are from Tarangan town in Samar.

(JOEY A. GABIETA, ROEL T. AMAZONA)

Romualdez... ...from Page 1

end on April 28.

Residents coming from outside the city, particularly those with confirmed COVID-19 cases, would not be allowed to enter Tacloban City unless they are considered as among the frontliners or in need of medical assistance and in food and other essential business or delivery.

Even City Hall employees who are residing outside Tacloban are also prohibited to enter the city.

Meantime, Burauen Mayor Juanito Renomeron, in his own online address Friday night, said that they are doing everything to ensure that the virus would not spread in their municipality.

Experts check Region 8's proposed Covid-19 testing lab

TACLOBAN CITY – Health experts from Manila on Thursday (April 16) conducted an onsite assessment of the proposed coronavirus testing laboratory here.

“Based on the findings, we still have to comply with some documentary requirements and small correction on the physical set up of the laboratory,” said Exuperia Sabalberino, Department of Health (DOH) Eastern Visayas assistant director.

The review panel was composed of experts from the DOH central office, the World Health Organization, and the Research Institute of Tropical Medicine (RITM).

“Laboratory assessment of gaps, documentary review, technical assistance, and safety recommendations were also provided, and we’re given time to comply,” Exuperia said.

Although there were minor deficiencies in terms of policies and equipment, the regional office was given a go

signal to proceed with the third stage of the accreditation process, she added.

“We will be sending a letter of request for the Molecular Analyst Proficiency Training at the RITM of the personnel who will be operating the testing center,” she said.

The laboratory is directly under the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center, but with the supervision of the DOH field office here.

The health official said it would take one to two weeks before the laboratory becomes fully operational due to the quality assurance procedures.

This includes the proficiency testing wherein the laboratory would start accepting samples and run tests, but the first five positive results would be sent to the RITM for validation.

“If the initial tests conducted here tally perfectly with the RITM, the laboratory will now be granted a full-scale implementation, running tests, and releasing results independently,” Sabalberino said.



EQUIPMENT FOR TEST LAB. Health experts from Manila on Thursday (April 17, 2020) arrive at the Tacloban airport with the RT-Polymerase Chain Reaction Machine needed for the coronavirus disease 2019 testing laboratory in the city. The team was in the city for the onsite assessment of the proposed laboratory. (Photo courtesy of DOH)

tion machine, Exuperia said.

At present, specimens are sent to Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu City, one of the country’s subnational testing laboratory.

Since January, some 253 specimens from Eastern Visayas have been tested for COVID-19, of which 1.9 percent or five of the total samples tested positive.

Meanwhile, the DOH thanked all the organizations which offered technical assistance for the establishment of the regional testing center.

They are the EVRMC, the Philippine Association of Medical Technologists in Eastern Visayas, the Philippine Science High School, St. Scholastica’s College, the An Waray and Tingog party lists.

(GERICO SABALZA/PNA)

The proposed laboratory located at the old building of the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center here can run at least 90 tests per running time using the Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction

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