

Duterte extends Philippines's coronavirus lockdown to April 30



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has extended until April 30 a partial lockdown of the country, affecting an estimated 57 million people in the northern island of Luzon, his cabinet secretary announced on Tuesday.

The "enhanced community quarantine", which Duterte declared in mid-March to help contain the spread of the deadly coronavirus, was to end on Sunday, April 12.

In a televised address late on Monday night,

Duterte hinted at the decision when he said he was "inclined" to extend the lockdown until the end of April.

However, Duterte said, the country does not have enough funds to sustain an extended lockdown and pleaded for financial support from private businesses.

But on Tuesday, Cabinet Secretary Carlo Nograles said the decision to extend the lockdown had been made, on the recommendation of an inter-

agency committee formed to address the health emergency.

The lockdown of Luzon, the country's largest island, has been in place since March 17. It was seen as an expansion of an earlier order covering only Metro Manila, the sprawling capital with a population of more than 12 million people.

Since then, provincial and town executives in the rest of the country have also implemented their own ver-

See Page 2...

Budget shortfall seen to widen this year

MANILA, Philippines — Japanese investment house Nomura said the Philippines is likely to post a wider budget deficit this year as the national government tries to soften the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Euben Paracuelles, senior economist for Southeast Asia at Nomura, said the country is set to book a wider budget shortfall of 4.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) instead of 3.7 percent of GDP this year.

President Duterte signed Republic Act 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act wherein the government has earmarked a sizeable P200 billion or 1.1 per-



cent of GDP to fund cash handouts to eligible households.

About 18 million poor families are expected to receive between P5,000 and P8,000 for the months of April and May amid the month-long enhanced community quarantine imposed in Luzon to prevent further

spread of COVID-19.

"The Philippine government, in our view, has rightly prioritized providing the needed help to the poor and has acted relatively swiftly," Paracuelles said.

The economist said the key risk is the possible extension of the lockdown

See Page 7...

Chinese medical experts arrive in PHL to help Filipinos fight COVID-19 pandemic



The 12 medical experts from China, who are expected to provide valuable advice to the government in its efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, have arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA)

The medical experts including two Chinese offi-

cials were welcomed by DFA Secretary Teodoro Locsin and PCOO secretary Martin Andanar.

In a Twitter post, the DFA said the experts will share technical advice on the prevention and control of COVID-19 in the country.

The experts also brought non-invasive mate-

rials, personal protection equipment (PPE) suits, and masks donated by China, which was received by Sec. Locsin.

The Chinese medical experts and officials are expected to stay in the Philippines for two weeks to observe and share with their Filipino counterparts best practices and experiences in battling the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan and Hubei.

They will also visit several government hospitals, among them the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and the Lung Center of the Philippines.

BSP chief sees room to further cut rates

THE central bank has ample space to further cut interest rates, as it seeks to shield the economy from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) fallout.

Amid a "real risk" of a technical recession, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Benjamin E. Diokno said that there is a "a lot of room for cutting interest rates and also a lot of room in cutting the reserve requirement."

"Our decision will be dependent on what the actual inflation is, the inflation outlook for the next three quarters and what's happening in the world economy," he told ABS-CBN News Channel on Sunday.

A BusinessWorld poll of 11 economists held last week yielded a 2.3% median estimate for March headline inflation, closer to the lower end of the BSP's 2-2.8% estimate.

The Philippine Statistics Authority will report March inflation data on

Tuesday (April 7).

"There's a downward trend [in inflation]. So how much can we cut? We have a lot of policy space. As you know, the interest rate was increased by 175 basis points (bps) in 2018 and we have only cut it so far 1.5%... So we can still have room for cutting," Mr. Diokno said.

Last year, the central bank cut rates by a total of 75 bps. This was followed by another 75 bps worth of easing this year through the 25 bps cut in February and

another 50 bps cut done in March.

This has brought down the overnight reverse repurchase, lending, and deposit rates to 3.25%, 3.75%, and 2.75%, respectively.

Meanwhile, the reserve requirement ratio (RRR) of universal lenders has been effectively reduced by 200 bps on Friday to 12% to give the financial market a liquidity boost amid the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) currently imposed in Luzon.

See Page 7...



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Lord, thank you for your greatness. Thank you that when I am weak, you are strong. Lord, the Devil is scheming and I know he desires to keep me from spending time with you. Don't let him win! Give me a measure of your strength so that I might not give into discouragement, deception and doubt! Help me honor you in all my ways. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Lord, help me let go of my fear of failure. I know Satan wants to use my fears to hold me back from living boldly for You. Forgive me for not living in faith, and help me from this moment on to live with bold confidence in You. Lord, help me not compare myself to others around me. I pray instead that I can keep my eye on You and live a life that proclaims Your excellence. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

God is going to shift things around for you today and let things work in your favor.

NEDA..... from page 8....

Institute.

Luzon is currently under a month-long enhanced community quarantine until April 12, although there are indications that an extension is possible in order to further contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

As of Sunday, the country recorded more than 3,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus. There have been 144 fatalities and 57 recoveries reported as of Saturday evening.

Chinese medical experts arrive in PHL to help Filipinos fight COVID-19 pandemic

The 12 medical experts from China, who are expected to provide valuable advice to the government in its efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, have arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA)

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Lockdown to April 30... from page 1....

sions of the lockdown, putting virtually the entire country of more than 104 million under quarantine, with commercial aviation and shipping banned and land transportation under restrictions.

Aside from the lockdown, the Philippine Congress has also approved legislation giving Duterte special powers to handle the crisis, as well as more than \$4bn in government funds to support the healthcare system and provide financial aid to those who have lost their jobs.

As of the end of Monday, there were an estimated 3,660 coronavirus infections and 163 deaths in the coun-

try. The Philippines recorded the first coronavirus death in the world outside of China in early February.

The government has announced that it will carry out mass testing for coronavirus from April 14.

However, the delay in the implementation of the programme has drawn criticism, with health experts saying that the disease could be spreading among the population without being detected.

The Duterte administration has also come under fire for the inadequate supply of protective gear for healthcare workers, after reports that at least 18 doctors and two nurses have died from

the infection.

Duterte also drew condemnation from critics and rights groups, after he said those who violated the government's lockdown order and threatened the lives of the security forces should be shot dead.

Meanwhile, Nograles said despite the extension of the lockdown, Duterte would still have the authority to decide whether to "relax" some of the restrictions depending on "public health considerations" and "food security" factors.

More than 1.3 million people across the world have been confirmed to have the coronavirus and nearly 75,000 have died. At least 277,000 have recovered from the disease.

**Ilang tips para
malunasan ang sakit
ni Doc Willie Ong**

1. Headache – Ang karamihan ng sakit ng ulo ay dahil sa stress o iyung tinatawag na tension headache. Subukan ang acupressure massage. Dahan-dahan lang ang pagmamasahe. Gawin ang mga sumusunod:

- Masahihin ang magkabilang sentido. Sa harap at taas ng tainga.
- Pisilin ang balat sa taas ng ilong at masahihin paitaas. Gawin ito nang maraming beses.
- Masahihin ang noo sa ibabaw ng kilay mula sa gitna at papalabas;
- Masahihin din ang mabilog na buto sa likod ng tainga.
- Pisilin ang malaman na parte sa pagitan ng una at pangalawang daliri.

Paalala lang: Huwag na huwag ipapamasaha ang iyong batok, sa likod ng leeg at sa harap ng leeg. Marami na ang naparalisa dahil diyan. Mag-ingat.

2. Insomnia – Uminom ng mainit na chamomile tea with honey sa gabi. Langhapin ang usok nito. Ang chamomile ay nagpapa-relax ng katawan. Kumain din ng isang saging sa gabi. Ang saging ay may tryptophan na nagtatanggal ng stress. Nabibili ang chamomile tea sa mga supermarket.

3. Diabetes – Ang solusyon sa diabetes ay ang pagmonitor ng iyong blood sugar. Matutong gumamit ng blood sugar test. Nagkakahalaga ito ng mga P3,000. Kapag nag-papa-check ng blood sugar, tusukin ang pinakamaliit na daliri, sa may tagiliran nito. Mas kaunti ang nerve fibers dito at hindi gaano masakit. Ang normal na fasting blood sugar ay 100 mg/dl o 5.5 mmol/L o mas mababa pa. Umiwas lang sa dalawang bagay: Matataba at matatamis. Iyan lang ang bawal sa may diabetes.

4. Cancer – May mga pagkain na panlaban sa kanser. Para makaiwas sa prostate cancer, kumain ng 10 kutsarang spaghetti sauce bawat linggo. Para umiwas sa lung cancer, kumain nang maraming kamote. Kapag ang isang tao ay wala pang kanser, ang pinakamagandang kainin ay ang tatlong K: kamatis, carrots at kalabasa. Puwede rin ang mga ito: green tea, curry powder, bawang, sibuyas, sibuyas dahon (leeks), repolyo, cauliflower, tofu o tokwa, at talong. Damihan ang pagkain ng anti-cancer foods at bawasan ang mga karne at taba.



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VP Robredo... from page 8....

ceptable siya kasi unang-una 'yung mensahe ng pangulo noong umpisa pa, pinapasa sa local government units 'yung pagaasikaso sa kanilang jurisdiction."

She pointed out that local officials like Vico Sotto should be appreciated for their creativity and innovation in finding solution in their areas of jurisdiction.

"Ang local government units kailangan ina-appreciate natin, yung local officials na nag-i-innovate, na creative sa solusyong pinapakita, na inaasikaso ang kaniyang mga tao," Robredo said.

Earlier, a commissioner from the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) had asked the

NBI to investigate Robredo over her relief drive that allegedly undermined efforts of the national government amid the COVID-19 crisis.

PACC Commissioner Manuelito Luna wanted a probe of Robredo's "illegal solicitations, actions that compete with, or calculated to undermine national government efforts in this time of public health emergency or national calamity."

President Rodrigo Duterte last Friday fired Luna, and praised Robredo's moves to solicit aid to help frontliners battling the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"Tama yan maghingi ka ng tulong sa kapwa mo tao," Duterte said.

Budget.... from page 8....

amid the still-rising confirmed cases in the Philippines.

"We believe an extended lockdown would not only require an improvement of the distribution of relief measures but also more funding. We therefore continue to believe that, similar to what other countries have already done in the region, a sizeable supplementary budget (apart from reallocations of the existing budget) will have to be passed that is designed to provide more aide to the poor as well as measures to support the broader economy," he added.

In the absence of social safety nets and if fiscal space or implementation capacity of support measures is limited, the economist said the restrictions may not be adhered to strictly or may need to be relaxed at some point, undermining efforts to contain the very outbreak that the lockdown was meant to quickly address.

Nomura said the Philippine economy would slip into a recession with a GDP contraction of 1.9 percent this year if the COVID-19 pandemic drags into the second

half. The country's GDP would grow by 0.8 percent in the first quarter before contracting by 2.3 percent, 3.2 percent and three percent in the second, third and fourth quarters, respectively under a bad scenario.

Under this scenario, Nomura said monetary and fiscal policy responses are unable to keep businesses solvent, while the world experiences a full-blown credit crunch, banking crises and a continued market meltdown in the second half.

There is a large, permanent loss in output, featuring a persistently high unemployment, while new waves of infections and the developing world becomes the new hotbed for the virus under the bad case.

Under the bad scenario, he added the social distancing measures locally are extended over the second quarter, with the month long enhanced community quarantine lasting until May and expanded nationwide.

Under its base case scenario, Nomura further lowered its GDP growth forecast to 1.6 percent instead of 4.7 percent this year.

BSP....

For now, RRR of thrift, rural, and quasi-banks are maintained at four percent, three percent, and 14%, although the BSP said that they will also evaluate on bringing down RRR for the said financial institutions.

The Monetary Board has also authorized Mr. Diokno to bring down RRR by a total of 400 bps for the whole of 2020.

In 2019, the BSP slashed lenders' reserve requirement by 400 bps in a bid to bring down its level closer to its regional counterparts before Mr. Diokno's term ends in mid-2023.

The BSP chief acknowledged the headwinds the economy might face given the looming risk of a technical recession which is defined as two consecutive quarters of negative growth.

"There's a real risk that there will be a technical recession...I think Q2 and Q3 we might have negative growth...I think we can restart the economy in May so even Q3 may not be negative," Mr. Diokno said.

Amid the pandemic and the Luzon quarantine, the National Economic and Development Authority said that gross domestic product (GDP) growth could settle between -0.6% to 4.3% in 2020, a major downgrade from the 6.5 to 7.5% growth target set by the government before the outbreak.

In 2019, growth settled at a below-target growth of 5.9%.

from page 1....

"We're confident that the economy can take the adjustments," Mr. Diokno said, noting that the country had 84 quarters of continuous growth in the past despite the Asian financial crisis and the global financial crisis.

"We have gross international reserves (GIR) equivalent to almost eight months of import, our peso is fairly steady so we don't have any foreign exchange problems as our neighbors," he said.

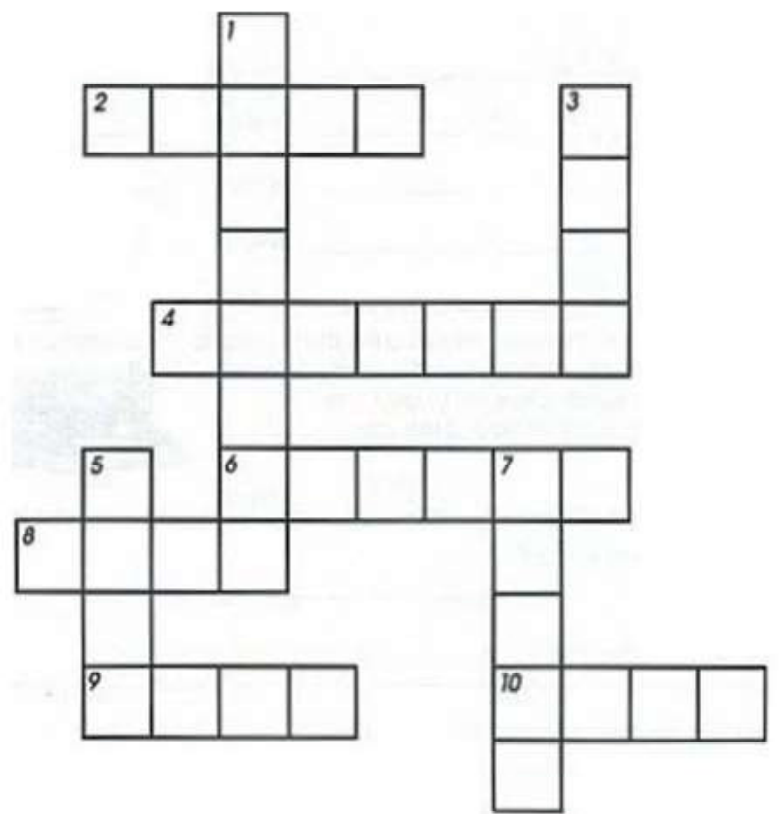
As of end-February, GIR stood at \$87.606 billion, going beyond both the January level of \$86.868 billion and the \$82.78 billion traced in February 2019, according to BSP data.

Meanwhile, the peso has relatively recovered compared to its level at the onset of the Luzon ECQ. On Friday, it closed at P50.72 against the greenback, stronger from its P50.85 dollar close on Thursday as well as its flat P51 finish level a week ago.

"Really our concern is the public health issue and then we'll take care, Secretary of Finance [Carlos G.] Dominguez [III] and myself will take care of the economy and also [Socioeconomic Planning] Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia," Mr. Diokno said.

COVID-19 cases in the country rose by 76 on Saturday, its lowest pace of daily growth rate in a week, bringing the total to 3,094 cases, according to health officials. Meanwhile, COVID-19 has already claimed 144 lives while 57 recoveries have been recorded. — Luz Wendy T. Noble

CROSSWORDS!!



Across

- 2. Not to follow the rule
- 4. To let something go
- 6. The front of a television
- 8. To take part in an election
- 9. To lend someone something
- 10. To beg

Down

- 1. To make something smaller
- 3. Symbols
- 5. Something you want to reach
- 7. To select someone for a certain position

VP Robredo slams 'over centralized' response to COVID-19 emergency



Vice President Leni Robredo on Sunday took a dig on the government's "too centralized" response for the COVID-19 threat, depriving local government units enough chance to decide on their own, especially on matters cropping up in their localities.

In an interview on ANC, Robredo said, "Hindi lang support, pero sapat na elbow room para sa local officials para gawin 'yung tingin nila nararapat sa

kanilang jurisdiction. 'Yung strong LGUs ang makapagbibigay ng progress sa bansa."

She cited Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto's brush with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), over a complaint on his decision to allow tricycles to operate despite tight enforcement of social distancing measures.

Unacceptable Robredo found the NBI's move against Mayor Sotto unacceptable. NBI Deputy Director

and spokesman Ferdinand Lavin confirmed that the anti-graft division sent Mayor Sotto a letter inviting him to appear at the NBI's main office in Manila on April 7.

Lavin said when asked what Sotto's violation, "For LGU officials for disobeying national government policies or directives in imposing quarantines under the Bayanihan to Heal As One Act."

Sotto, who allowed tricycles in Pasig City to ply their routes to transport health workers and emergency patients to hospitals, asked the national government to exempt tricycles from the ban.

But, Sotto eventually complied with the directive of the national government as regards the quarantine.

Robredo said, "Unac

See Page 7...

NEDA preparing post-coronavirus pandemic policies

THE National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) is preparing economic policies to help the country navigate the "new normal" once the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic ends.

"The Inter-Agency Task Force Technical Working Group for Anticipatory and Forward Planning (IATF-TWG-AFP), chaired by NEDA, is currently preparing to provide recommendations to rebuild confidence and adjust to the new normal," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia was quoted as saying in a statement.

The TWG is tasked to come up with "programs and strategies to promote confidence in the country's health systems through data analytics, recommend programs and strategies to rebuild consumer and business confidence, and recommend policies and programs to adapt to a 'new normal,'" NEDA said.

In order to come up with recommendations, the NEDA is conducting an online public consultation (<http://bit.ly/NewNormalConsultation>) on the "new normal" until April 7, 12 noon.

Filipinos are also asked to fill out online surveys — one for business owners and another for consumers (www.dof.gov.ph/iatf-afp-msme-survey/ and www.neda.gov.ph/consumer-rapid-assessment/).

"We in government need to understand this new normal for different sectors. This way, we can come up with policies and programs to help society adjust to the new nor-



mal," the agency said.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez said the surveys will aid the economic team in crafting a recovery plan "with a focus on helping micro, small, and medium enterprises get back on their feet once the quarantine is lifted.

"The survey will also help the government devise fiscal and monetary strategies tailored to the needs of the business community, so government actions will keep the overall economy

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83% of over 19,000 people tested were negative for COVID-19 -DOH

Of the over 19,000 people who were tested for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), 83 percent were negative for the illness, the Department of Health (DOH) reported on Sunday.

"Tayo po ay nakapag-test na ng 19,585 individuals. Kasama po sa bilang na ito ang mga test na ginagawa sa ating mga pasyenteng COVID-19-positive... upang ma-monitor po ang progreso ng kanilang kalusugan," Health Undersecretary Rosette Vergeire said at a virtual press briefing.

"Sa lahat po ng tinentest natin for COVID-19, 83 percent ang nagreresulta ng negatibo."

The DOH said that a total of 23,678 tests, including retests, had been processed as of Saturday.

There were currently eight laboratories nationwide that had received certi-

fication to conduct independent COVID-19 testing.

All the accredited laboratories were capable of testing 1,200 individuals each day, according to Vergeire.

Meanwhile, some 78 other facilities were currently seeking certification to conduct COVID-19 testing.

"Ang target po natin ay 8,000 hanggang 10,000 tests kada araw... pagdating

83% OF OVER 19,000 PEOPLE TESTED WERE NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19 -DOH

ICYMI: Of the over 19,000 people who were tested for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), 83 percent were negative for the illness, the Department of Health reported on Sunday.

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ng April 14," the health official said.

The chief of the government's COVID-19 response earlier announced that mass testing of suspected cases would begin on the same date.

COVID-19 has infected 3,246 people nationwide as of Sunday afternoon.

Of this number, 152 have died while 64 have already recovered.

ing issues and build from there with forward planning as our lens," Mr. Pernia said.

The IATF-TWG-AFP is scheduled to submit a progress report to the IATF for Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases on April 7 and the final report by April 13.

The group was created through Resolution No. 16 of the IATF-Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases dated March 27. It in-

cludes the Departments of Science and Technology, Trade and Industry, Education, Health, Budget and Management, Finance, Agriculture, Tourism, and Information and Communications Technology; National Intelligence Coordinating Agency; Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas; and University of the Philippines Resilience

See Page 2...