PRESS RELEASE

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BI to decongest alien detention center during COVID-19 outbreak

Bicutan, TAGUIG—The Bureau of Immigration (BI) said it would soon move to decongest its detention center in Bicutan, Taguig City to reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreak among the foreigners confined in the facility.

BI Commissioner Jaime Morente has ordered the bureau’s legal division and other concerned offices to speed up the resolution of deportation cases against foreigners presently detained at the BI Warden Facility (BIWF) in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan.

Morente observed that overcrowding in the facility exposes both the inmates and their guards to the risk of getting infected with the virus.

“We don’t want COVID-19 transmissions to happen in our facility,” Morente said. “We will work double time to deport aliens, especially for wards that are considered health risks,” he added.

Morente stated that the BI might consider granting bail and release via recognizance for aliens who cannot be deported yet due to pending court cases.

The BI chief issued a memorandum directing the bureau’s legal officers to conduct an inventory of all deportation cases and submit the appropriate recommended resolutions to the board of commissioners.

Morente also instructed the bureau’s deportation unit to expedite the implementation of all deportation orders issued by the board and secure the necessary clearances needed to facilitate their departure from the country.

To date, high-risk detainees were already identified as three pregnant women. Two were already released on bail, while one has already been deported.

Morente, nonetheless, assured that they have already instituted safeguards and measures to lessen the risk of virus transmission inside the BIWF.

Morente previously ordered the creation of a BI-Covid Task Force that would ensure all employees, as well as wards, receive appropriate medical response and Covid-related concerns are properly addressed.

A 24/7 internal health hotline has been set-up, and a medical task group has also been activated.
to spearhead the bureau’s fight against the disease. Protocols on what to do in case a positive case has been detected has also been established, and a medical officer is always on duty at the BIWF to monitor the health of wards and employees.

The BIWF was placed on lockdown, and temporarily, no visitors are allowed to enter. The Philippine National Police has been tapped to assist in securing the facility’s premises.

Frequent dialogue with PDLs and Embassy representatives are also being conducted to provide updates regarding Covid-19.

To ensure sanitized premises, all wards were advised to always take a bath, and are not allowed to enter common facilities without properly sanitizing themselves. They were likewise informed of DOH protocols in proper handwashing and sanitizing.

According to BIWF Chief Remiecar Caguiron, the facility underwent rigorous cleaning and disinfection. "Vehicles are disinfected upon entering the compound, with sanitation tents and foot baths in place to sanitize entering personnel," she reported.

Caguiron shared that they are likewise coordinating with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and foreign embassies regarding possible donations for face masks.

It can be recalled that the ICRC previously commended the efforts of jail facilities, including the BIWF, in mitigating the spread of COVID-19.