

REPORT TO THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO SECTION 5
OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11469, OTHERWISE KNOWN
AS THE "BAYANIHAN TO HEAL AS ONE ACT"

MONDAY, 13 APRIL 2020

On the third week of the implementation of Republic Act (RA) No. 11469 or the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act," and pursuant to Section 4(a)¹ thereof, I approved the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to extend the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) over the entire Luzon to 11:59 pm of 30 April 2020. While concrete, far-reaching measures have already been undertaken to respond to, and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the extension of the ECQ is necessary to enable the government to build on its existing measures, maximize the gains we have achieved thus far, and further strengthen the capacities of our institutions as we continue to soldier on in this battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to report that in addition to on-going programs on the detection and containment of COVID-19, this Administration has taken intensified steps to prevent the further transmission of the virus and mitigate the effects of the crisis, consistent with the mandates of the different agencies in the Executive Department and pursuant to the temporary emergency measures under Section 4 of RA No. 11469. In particular, I respectfully present the updates and developments in the implementation of existing and newly-initiated measures aimed to: (1) Provide Emergency Assistance to all Affected Sectors; (2) Secure Facilities and Resources for the Health Sector and Other Frontliners; (3) Establish Sound Fiscal and Monetary Actions that are Responsive to all Stakeholders; and (4) Formulate a Responsive and Sustainable Recovery Plan.

This report is based on the submission of 85 departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Executive branch of government transmitted to this Office through the Executive Secretary, most of which were received on **10 April 2020 (Friday)**. I greatly appreciate the comments given to us by some senators (Senate Comments) including those comprising the Senate's representatives to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the implementation of RA No. 11469. Through this report, as well as through our succeeding submissions, the Senate Comments shall be addressed.

I. Provide Emergency Assistance to all Affected Sectors

As I have greatly underscored in previous instances, our government must deliver genuine, sensitive and tangible assistance to those in need during this crisis. It is my commitment to our *kababayans* that the government is here for them. Hence, I have instructed all concerned departments and agencies to mobilize available resources to provide aid to all affected sectors.

¹ Section 4(a). Following World Health Organization guidelines and best practices, adopt and implement measures to prevent or suppress further transmission and spread of COVID-19 through effective education, detection, protection, and treatment.

Social Amelioration Programs (SAP)

The Emergency Subsidy Program (ESP) pursuant to Section 4 (c)² and (cc)³ of RA No. 11469 is implemented through various national and local government SAP.

As of 08 April 2020, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has released a total amount of PhP101.5 Billion for the implementation of the SAP of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). As previously reported, PhP100 Billion has already been released to fund the SAP implemented by the DSWD.

The DSWD targets to serve 18 Million families through its SAP. This figure may include beneficiaries from other comparable assistance programs of national government agencies under the ESP. Based on the data of the DSWD, the breakdown of total families and low-income families per region is as follows:

Region	Number of Families	
	Total	Informal and Poor/ Near Poor
NCR	3,260,399	1,788,604
CAR	434,209	318,707
I	1,263,607	999,531
II	881,440	698,042
III	2,707,342	1,807,929
IV-A	3,511,076	2,249,567
IV-B	752,804	614,100
V	1,362,596	1,146,914
VI	1,835,555	1,472,683
VII	1,806,056	1,346,613
VIII	1,053,680	875,246
IX	890,346	721,841
X	1,111,803	892,577
XI	1,248,805	953,521
XII	1,139,025	953,853
BARMM	665,597	623,607
CARAGA	625,663	492,758
PH	24,550,003	17,956,093

The official list used as a starting point in the identification of beneficiaries was the DSWD's *Listahan 2015* or the National Household Targeting System for Poverty

² **Section 4(c).** Provide an emergency subsidy to around eighteen (18) million low income households: *Provided*, That the subsidy shall amount to a minimum of Five thousand pesos (₱5,000) to a maximum of Eight thousand pesos (₱8,000) a month for two (2) months: *Provided, further*, That the subsidy shall be computed based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rates: *Provided, finally*, That the subsidy received from the current conditional cash transfer program and rice subsidy shall be taken into consideration in the computation of the emergency subsidy as provided for in this Act.

³ **Section 4(cc).** Implement an expanded and enhanced Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program, responsive to the need posed by the crisis, and provision of an assistance program, whether in cash or non-cash, whichever is more practicable, where the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development, or the Secretary of Labor and Employment, when relevant, shall transfer cash, cash voucher, or goods through the LGUs or directly to households who have no incomes or savings to draw from, including households working in the informal economy and those who are not currently recipients of the current Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program, of an amount adequate to restore capacity to purchase basic food and other essential items during the duration of the quarantine. To carry out this subsection, the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment may approve the temporary emergency standards of eligibility and level of benefits.

Reduction, which identified 15 million poor families and their geographic location. Population growth was factored in based on the official data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), resulting in the addition of 3 million more families. Local government units (LGUs) which identified additional eligible family beneficiaries can submit their lists to the DSWD for validation.

To ensure that the benefits provided are given to the rightful beneficiaries, the DSWD, after consulting various stakeholders, is set to issue Omnibus Guidelines consolidating and harmonizing all issuances pertaining to its implementation of the ESP, particularly with respect to the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) and Livelihood Assistance Grants (LAG).

The emergency subsidy shall be given on a "per family basis," thereby extending cash assistance to all families falling under the category of "low-income household" despite living in a single house. The proposed subsidy amount per region is computed based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rate and taking into consideration the amount received by beneficiaries of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program and rice subsidy received by families under the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps) and those who are non-4Ps.

Currently, there are 4.4 Million 4Ps beneficiaries, while the rest are part of the informal economy workers and underprivileged sectors of the society, among others. As previously reported, about 84.58% (3,721,833) of the 4.4 million target 4Ps beneficiaries were given emergency subsidies, amounting to PhP16,347,295,950.00. The subsidies were paid out by the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) as the main distribution mechanism for the government's various Social Protection and Amelioration Programs.

A tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed by the DSWD, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), and the LBP for the provision of emergency subsidy to around 435,000 drivers of public utility vehicles (PUVs) whose operations were suspended due to the ECQ. These include public utility jeepneys, UV Express, public utility buses, point-to-point buses, taxis, transport network vehicle service (TNVS), school transport services, tourist transport services, and motorcycle taxis.

As of 09 April 2020, 40,418 non-4Ps beneficiaries comprising 4,175 from the TNVS sector and 36,243 from the other PUV sectors have been given emergency subsidies amounting to PhP323,344,000.00. This number represents 61.56% of the total 65,661 target beneficiaries from the TNVS and PUVs sector in the National Capital Region (NCR).

To ensure that the emergency cash subsidies for poor and low-income households will be extended to all qualified and deserving families in a timely and efficient manner, the DSWD and the Department of Finance (DOF) are preparing a comprehensive list of households per municipality that will group members of the formal sector (private and public sector) and informal sector, and identify which are CCT beneficiaries and non-CCT beneficiaries.

As recommended in the Senate Comments, the DSWD is studying the development of a unified online public monitoring and transparency system to

promote better monitoring of the SAP implementation and encourage public participation. For this purpose, the DSWD is considering the creation of a Technical Working Group (TWG) together with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and other stakeholders. In the meantime, the DSWD has created an Operations Center to receive grievances from the public to enable it to promptly address gaps in implementation.

The DOF has computed that adding 5.4 million family beneficiaries to cover 95% of the total families in the country, as proposed in the Senate Comments, will result in an additional budget requirement of around PhP66.4 Billion. Considering the limited resources of the government, it might be prudent to prioritize allocating resources in accordance with RA No. 11469 to immediately assist the poorest of the poor.

As of 08 April 2020, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has released an unconditional cash transfer of PhP5,000 each to a total of 300,994 farmers out of 597,404 target beneficiaries for its Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program (RFFA).⁴ Out of the RFFA's total allocated budget of PhP3 Billion, the amount of PhP1.5 Billion has so far been utilized. The DA is also continuously implementing its Financial Subsidy for Rice Farmers (FSRF) Program,⁵ and to date, 18,495 out of 591,246 target farmer beneficiaries have received an unconditional cash transfer of PhP5,000 each, with a total disbursed amount of PhP92.48 Million.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) has issued Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 4, which prescribes the guidelines on the issuance of identification cards to Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs) to ensure their access to the SAP and other emergency assistance provided by the DAR and other concerned agencies.

SAP and Other Assistance to Laborers

The DOLE has issued several labor advisories to ensure safe and humane working conditions in light of the COVID-19 situation and to provide guidelines on the implementation of flexible work arrangements and other remedial measures.

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on all affected and displaced Filipino workers from the formal and informal sectors, the DOLE has adjusted its targets for the COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program (CAMP) and the *Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers* (TUPAD) - *Barangay Ko, Bahay Ko* projects to cover the extended ECQ period. For CAMP, the number of 115,806 target workers has been increased to 321,975 workers. Meanwhile, for TUPAD, the number of 193,298 target beneficiaries has been increased to 235,949.

As of 09 April 2020, the DOLE has reported that the TUPAD program has provided assistance to 46% of its target beneficiaries or 118,086 workers from the informal sector, amounting to PhP206 Million. Meanwhile, the CAMP program has

⁴ This refers to the financial assistance to Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) -registered rice farmers tilling 0.5 to 2.0 hectares in the 33 identified most affected provinces in terms of drop in *palay* price.

⁵ This refers to the financial subsidy for RSBSA-registered rice farmers tilling 0.5 hectare and below in the 34 identified provinces not covered by the RFFA and eight (8) mostly affected provinces included in the RFFA.

provided assistance to 52% of its target beneficiaries equivalent to 167,941 workers and has utilized PhP840 Million for said program.

Assistance to Overseas Filipinos and Foreign Nationals in the Country

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has assisted in the repatriation of 2,869 sea-based Filipino workers and 1,666 land-based workers on 03 to 08 April 2020. It continues to monitor the status of 594 Filipino nationals overseas who are diagnosed with COVID-19 as of 08 April 2020, including the additional cases reported from the Asia-Pacific region, Middle East and Africa, and the Americas.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) continues to provide transportation to repatriated Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) from the airport to their designated hotel or quarantine facility. As of 09 April 2020, 504 OFWs have been assisted through this effort.

To assist the repatriated seafarers, the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) established Malasakit Help Desks (MHDs) and Salubong Teams at the airports and seaports. The MARINA also coordinates with hotels and hostels in the NCR to serve as Quarantine Facilities for the repatriated seafarers. As of 09 April 2020, 5,950 seafarers have already benefitted from this effort. The MARINA also established Mobile MHDs to locate and assist stranded seafarers in the NCR.

In order to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 at seaports and maritime vessels, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) has issued MC No. 09 (s. 2020), adopting guidelines on the arrival and repatriation of overseas Filipinos and the guidelines at seaports for all maritime vessels issued by the Department of Health (DOH). Moreover, from 15 March to 05 April 2020, the POEA Labor Assistance Center has assisted a total of 1,459 OFWs.

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) Executive Committee (ExeCom) will coordinate with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the POEA, and the DFA on the health coverage of Filipinos abroad with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, including mutual agreement on reciprocity, application of overseas insurance, and application of PhilHealth benefits.

The DFA has issued 14 flight clearances for the repatriation of foreign nationals in the Philippines and approved 15 requests for flight permits for the repatriation of Filipino nationals abroad. On 08 April 2020, a repatriation flight to London with 99 British nationals onboard was allowed to depart from Manila.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) has assisted in 323 rescue missions (boat, land, and air transfers) to facilitate safe travels of foreign nationals to gateways, in coordination with their respective foreign embassies and relevant agencies.

Benefit Packages for COVID-19 Patients⁶

The PhilHealth ExeCom has approved the direct reimbursement of patients previously confined for COVID-19, who were unable to avail the benefit for the full cost of treatment as announced, with retroactive application from 01 February 2020, subject to advisories to be issued on the matter.

Protection of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs)

The Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) has adopted policies and measures to prevent the transmission and spread of COVID-19 among its personnel and PDLs. It has suspended the visitation privileges of PDLs and restricted visits from religious organizations, non-government organizations, foreign embassies and consulates, and other humanitarian, educational, business or political missions. Doctors and lawyers visiting their PDL clients are allowed entry into prison facilities only on a case-to-case basis and subject to stringent screening.

The BuCor has implemented disinfection protocols and quarantine schemes to reduce physical movement of personnel. More importantly, temporary tents are being used for PDLs to decongest prison buildings at the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) and a COVID-19 24-hour Monitoring Center has been established in the NBP Administration Building.

As of 07 April 2020, there are no reported COVID-19 cases in BuCor facilities nationwide. However, there are 74 PDLs and 80 BuCor personnel who are considered persons under monitoring (PUMs), and two (2) PDLs and one (1) personnel are considered persons under investigation (PUIs). These PUMs and PUIs are being monitored for symptoms and have been isolated from the rest of the prison population in designated quarantine and isolation areas in various BuCor facilities. The BuCor has already coordinated with partner hospitals should there be a need to transport these PUMs and PUIs for medical treatment.

Assistance to Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups

The DOH has existing issuances and protocols to protect the country's vulnerable sectors, such as Department Circular No. 2020-167 dated 23 March 2020, reiterating the directive to continuously provide essential health service during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Department Memorandum No. 2020-0146 dated 30 March 2020, adopting protocols on maternal care and childbirth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DOH hospitals also maintain Women and Child Protection Units capable of responding to any act of violence in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the DSWD, and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The DILG has issued an advisory that all Barangay Violence Against Women Desks and Barangay Council for the Protection of the Children shall remain active and fully functional during the ECQ. Accordingly, the DILG, through the Philippine

⁶ **Section 4(e).** Direct the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) to shoulder all medical expenses of public and private health workers in case of exposure to COVID-19 or any work-related injury or disease during the duration of the emergency.

Commission on Women, has been continuously monitoring and actively responding to inquiries related to violence against women and children. Together with the Council for the Welfare of Children, the DILG has issued Joint MC (JMC) No. 2020-001, which reiterates the protocols to be followed by LGUs in reaching out to children (i.e., street children, children in need of special protection, children at risk, and children in conflict with the law) during the ECQ.

In relation to the Senate's recommendation to ensure compliance with RA No. 10152 or the "Mandatory Infants and Children Health Immunization Act of 2011," the DOH has issued Department Memorandum No. 2020-01507 dated 25 March 2020, on the Interim Guidelines for Immunization Services in the Context of COVID 19 Outbreak to address the concern on the interruption of immunization services of infants and young children, which may result in an outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases. Further, to ensure the availability of vaccines, the DOH is regularly monitoring the regional stock level and has partnered with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for the distribution of vaccines in regions due to the prevailing restrictions on travel.

To enable people to avail of health services without having to physically go to health facilities, the DOH has introduced a free dedicated telemedicine service (for both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 concerns) for residents in the NCR, particularly hotline number (02) 8424-1724 or (02) 7798-8000.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has authorized MGB Regional Directors to allow mining companies to re-align unutilized funds in their Social Development Management Program to assist their respective host communities and neighboring areas. So far, the utilization of said funds has provided hygiene kits and food packs to 39,801 households and 1,961 frontliners during the ECQ period.

On 07 April 2020, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) has donated forfeited goods (i.e., 320 containers of rice and 186 containers of frozen seafood) to the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) to aid poor Filipinos affected by the ECQ.

Assistance to Muslim Filipinos

The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) has issued an MC temporarily suspending Islamic religious activities in the Philippines, and has encouraged our Muslim brothers to pray at home.

The NCMF continues to assist stranded *tablighs* (missionaries) (e.g., those in Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Lanao del Sur) and stranded Muslim Filipino students in the NCR and conduct relief operations in several cities and municipalities.

Assistance to Students, Educators and Educational Institutions

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) continues to provide assistance for the repatriation of students deployed overseas. As of date, 13 students have already been repatriated. The CHED is also continuously providing for

⁷ Interim Guidelines for Immunization Services in the Context of COVID 19 Outbreak.

the basic necessities of the 180 students stranded in Central Mindanao University until the lifting of the ECQ.

The CHED is closely working with the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations in developing an economic stimulus package for private higher education institutions (HEIs), taking into consideration the financial impact of the ECQ on HEIs. It has consulted state universities and colleges (SUCs) and private HEIs on the anticipated impact of an extended ECQ, including extended class suspension and summer classes, capacity for online instructions, reviews for licensure examination, and required hours for on-the-job trainings. Inputs from SUCs and private HEIs will be incorporated in the forthcoming CHED Advisory, which is set for approval on 13 April 2020.

The Department of Education (DepEd) Provident Fund National Board of Trustees has issued Board Resolution No. 02 (s. 2020), which imposes a three-month moratorium on payment of loans by DepEd staff and extending the payment period for an additional three (3) months without accruing additional interest and penalties. The DepEd also secured an agreement with the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) for a three (3) month moratorium on loan payments for their members and pensioners.

Protection of Consumers

The National Government remains vigilant on market trends, and especially watchful on those who would exploit market demand in this extraordinary time.⁸

For the period of 02 to 09 April 2020, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) conducted 2,415 price monitoring activities, where 98% of 12,602 monitored entities were found compliant. During the same period, the DTI issued 150 Letters of Inquiry and 71 Notices of Violation, and launched a total of 888 operations in connection with its campaign on anti-hoarding/anti-profiteering (107 of which were joint operations with the PNP-Crime investigation and Detection Group [CIDG], and the National Bureau of Investigation [NBI]). From 17 March to 03 April 2020, the PNP arrested a total of 635 persons for hoarding, profiteering, and/or manipulation of prices of goods and medical supplies.

Due to the surge in demand, the DTI included personal protective equipment (PPEs) and other medical-related products in the price monitoring of basic needs and prime commodities. Around 528 firms have been monitored to ensure that they are following pertinent provisions of fair trade laws. A total of 2,987 online complaints have been acted upon, 594 of which have been endorsed to the PNP - CIDG and the NBI, 231 to the DOH - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and 2,162 to other concerned agencies. The joint actions of the DTI, the NBI and the PNP on these online complaints have resulted in the arrest of 72 suspects and confiscation of around PhP6 Million worth of paraphernalia.

⁸ Section 4(i). Continue to enforce measures to protect the people from hoarding, profiteering, injurious speculations, manipulation of prices, product deceptions, and cartels, monopolies or other combinations in restraint of trade, or other pernicious practices affecting the supply, distribution and movement of food, clothing, hygiene and sanitation products, medicine and medical supplies, fuel, fertilizers, chemicals, building materials, implements, machinery equipment and spare parts required in agriculture, industry and other essential services, and other articles of prime necessity, whether imported or locally produced or manufactured.

The DA has created a central *Bantay Presyo* Task Force to monitor prices of basic food commodities and enforce the Price Act, in partnership with the DTI and LGUs.

To ensure that the price of sugar remains within the suggested retail price (SRP), the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) continues to monitor groceries and wet markets in the NCR. The SRA has confirmed that sugar stocks are sufficient, with raw sugar stocks good for three (3) to four (4) months while refined sugar stocks are good for four (4) to five (5) months.

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) has coordinated with the DTI to enforce measures to protect the people from, among others, cartels, monopolies or other combinations in restraint of trade affecting the supply, distribution and movement of food, medicine and other essential goods and services.

Assistance to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Productive Sectors⁹

The economic team is planning to roll out a wage subsidy program for MSMEs, which will provide relief for the formal sector and middle-class workers who are not covered by the ESP.

The DOF is currently evaluating the proposal to establish a Small Business Relief Program to help some 1.5 million small businesses in the formal sector and their 3.4 million workers affected by the ECQ. The program may involve a wage subsidy of up to PhP8,000 per eligible worker for up to two (2) months, which will cost around PhP50.8 Billion over the whole period. The DOF is also studying the proposal to grant small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic a credit guarantee to provide them easy access to bank financing.

The DA, through the Agricultural Credit Policy Council, has identified 57 partner lending conduits to assist in the implementation of the Expanded SURE-Aid and Recovery Project.¹⁰ Out of these 57 entities, 36 have already signified intent to participate. To date, 16 out of the 295 target micro and small enterprises have signified intent to avail the program.

The Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) is working with the Social Security System (SSS) to implement the proposed PhP45 Billion wage subsidy assistance to employees of eligible businesses.

As an update on the implementation of the moratorium on loan payment of borrowers of the Small Business Corporation, a total of 7,317 retail borrowers and 205 wholesale borrowers have been given reprieve from their payments, which is equivalent to a deferred collection in the amount of PhP252,037,199.84 for the period. The moratorium extends to and also benefits roughly around 134,000 micro enterprises with loans from wholesale borrowers.

⁹ **Section 4(n).** Ensure the availability of credit to the productive sectors of the economy especially in the countryside through measures such as, but not limited to, lowering the effective lending rates of interest and reserve requirements of lending institutions.

¹⁰ The project aims to provide small farmers and fishers and small enterprises zero interest loans to help them through the crisis and facilitate their recovery.

Pursuant to Section 4(bb)¹¹ of RA No. 11469, the DTI has issued MC No. 20-12 dated 04 April 2020, which provides guidelines on concessions for residential rents and commercial rents of MSMEs nationwide.

Ensuring an Uninterrupted Supply Chain¹²

The DA, in coordination with the DILG and the Department of National Defense (DND), continues to ensure the unhampered movement of agri-fishery products and inputs, by validating and accrediting legitimate agri-fishery entities and personnel and issuing 80,731 food passes as of 08 April 2020. To further ensure the smooth movement of cargoes, both food and non-food, the DICT is in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for the implementation of RapidPass.Ph, which would allow qualified individuals to apply for a QR code or alphanumeric code for access through RapidPass checkpoints in the NCR. To date, approximately 14,000 access passes have been approved.

The DILG has ordered the dismantling of checkpoints installed by LGUs along national and provincial roads, and has encouraged the public to report any action that hampers movement of essential goods and cargoes. The DILG Emergency Operations Center has designated five (5) hotlines that will receive complaints against, and reports of abuse committed by, LGU officials and police personnel.

To ensure adequate supply of readily available, safe, and nutritious food within each community, the DA is implementing the Urban Agriculture Program (UAP) by providing (1) assorted vegetable seeds, seedlings, and starter kits in affected urban areas in almost all regions, and (2) trainings on urban vegetable gardening, aquaponics, hydroponics, value chain, and agripreneurship. The UAP has already served 173,957 out of 209,273 target beneficiaries as of 08 April 2020.

The DA, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, also provided fingerlings and seaweed propagules to a total of 1,005 fishpond and cage operators and seaweed farmers to augment the country's fish production and help fisher folks increase their incomes.

Availability of and accessibility to rice, fish, meat, milk, fruits, and vegetables in ECQ areas were maintained through the DA's *Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita on Wheels*, which has already served 33 barangays, and *Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita Online - Oh My Gulay* and *Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita – Fish on the Go* which have served 128,000 individuals.

The DOTr Maritime Sector ensures that all ports under its jurisdiction remain open and operational for the duration of the ECQ in order to ensure the continuous and unhampered movement of cargoes.

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) has ensured the continued operation of 126 ports nationwide. To address port congestion, the PPA adopted port emergency

¹¹ **Section 4 (bb).** Provide for a minimum of thirty (30)-day grace period on residential rents falling due within the period of the enhanced community quarantine, without incurring interests, penalties, fees, and other charges.

¹² **Section 4(p).** Ensure the availability of essential goods, in particular food and medicine, by adopting measures as may reasonably be necessary to facilitate and/or minimize disruption to the supply chain, especially for basic commodities and services to the maximum extent possible.

measures to ensure unhampered flow of import cargoes at the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT). To make way for incoming cargoes needed by the government, the PPA has temporarily authorized the Manila North Harbor to receive overstaying and cleared import cargoes from the MICT.

Joint Administrative Order (JAO) No. 20-01¹³ was issued by the PPA, the DTI, the DA, and the BOC to prevent congestion at the ports. To implement JAO No. 20-01, the BOC issued a Customs Memorandum Order providing for the general and operational guidelines on summary abandonment proceedings during the ECQ. The PPA, in turn, issued Administrative Order No. 03-2020, providing for guidelines in implementing JAO No. 20-01 in the Port of Manila. Moreover, the movement of trucks and their drivers and helpers from one port to another was further relaxed with the issuance of PPA MC No. 14-2020.

Ports authorities have already conducted an inventory of all abandoned and/or forfeited cargoes, and distinguished perishable from non-perishable goods in order to properly identify which cargoes may be eventually disposed of pursuant to RA No. 10863 or the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA) and JAO No. 20-01. As regards the 24-hour period for the BOC to issue a Final Assessment pursuant to JAO No. 20-01, the BOC was able to assess 21,795 containers within the period of 01 April to 07 April 2020 or an increase of 229% from the previous week.

To prevent additional economic costs and in an effort to keep the price of goods stable during the ECQ period, the PPA prohibited the imposition of additional port charges and fees, including hazard fee, in the provision and delivery of port services. Anent the point raised in the Senate Comments, the PPA shall undertake immediate review of its existing tariff structure in consultation with stakeholders.

To provide unhampered movement of essential flights, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines facilitated 391 cargo flights, seven general aviation flights, 128 utility/maintenance flights, 67 government flights, and 834 military flights. Meanwhile, the Mactan Cebu International Airport and the Clark International Airport Corporation continue to facilitate cargo flights.

To respond to the increasing demand for packaged food products, the FDA approved 7,360 applications for a License to Operate (LO) and Certificate of Product Registration (CPR) of basic food commodities such as canned goods and instant noodles.

In order to help boost the country's food supply, the DAR has established a Task Force Food ARBoost intended to assist ARBs in marketing their products by linking them to institutional and local markets. As of 10 April 2020, the Task Force has assisted at least 139 ARB organizations. The DAR has also prescribed guidelines on the issuance of quarantine accreditation passes to ARB Organizations.

¹³ Entitled "Adoption of Processes for the Expeditious Release of Refrigerated Containers and Dry Vans During the Period of Enhanced Community Quarantine."

The prototype of the tool to address supply chain concerns is now ready for presentation to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Regional Development Group.

Ensuring Water and Energy Supply¹⁴

To curb the spread of COVID-19 with frequent hand-washing and bath-taking, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has increased the water allocation of Metropolitan Water Works and Sewerage System (MWSS) from 42 cubic meters per second (CMS) to 46 CMS until 30 April 2020.

As of 09 April 2020, the water level in the Angat reservoir is 193.92 meters which is 13.92 meters above the minimum operating water level of 180 meters and 5.14 meters higher compared to the water level on the same date last year. The water level in the Ipo dam and the La Mesa dam are 100.71 meters and 77.09 meters, respectively. The PAGASA's rainfall forecasts project sustainable water supply in the Angat reservoir in the coming months.

The country's energy supply continues to be sufficient with high level of reserve capacity for power generation (at 37%) and inventory of crude oil and refined petroleum products (at 56.4 days), as of 08 April 2020.

The 24/7 Bayanihan Energy Service Hotline of the Department of Energy (DOE) continues to assist and respond to the issues and questions submitted by energy industry players and consumers.

Assistance to and Partnership with LGUs

The DBM issued Local Budget Circular No. 125 dated 07 April 2020, providing guidelines on the release and utilization of the *Bayanihan* Grant to Cities and Municipalities.

The DA has distributed agricultural products to LGUs in the NCR worth PhP3 Million as additional relief goods. The DOE is allocating PhP3.4 Billion from the Electrification Fund (EF) of ER 1-94 for the use of host LGU-beneficiaries in their COVID-19 response programs.

The DICT has provided technical assistance to 19 national government agencies, LGUs, and regional IATFs in the form of installation of video conferencing platform/ applications and creation of smart community quarantine management mobile application. The DICT has provided free wi-fi access to five (5) testing centers, two (2) hospitals, and three (3) COVID-19 Centers and Emergency Operations Centers enabling swift exchange of information and giving frontliners the opportunity to communicate with their loved ones.

Further, the DICT is in the process of adopting a telemedicine technology solution which will enable LGUs to provide remote consultation, electronic medical records system, and telemedicine kits.

¹⁴ Section 4(u). Conserve and regulate the distribution and use of power, fuel, energy, and water, and ensure adequate supply of the same.

The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), in partnership with a private entity, is developing a web application that can provide real-time information to LGUs on current health situations within a given area to track down all COVID-19 cases and disaggregate the data into barangays and health facilities; and to monitor the daily changes during the entire duration of the community quarantine.

Pursuant to Section 4(g)¹⁵ of RA No. 11469, the DILG continues to monitor the compliance of LGUs in implementing the SAP. As of 09 April 2020, there are 664 cities and municipalities that have submitted a MOA to the DSWD indicating their intention to avail of the SAP. On the other hand, the remaining 195 cities and municipalities are still in the process of crafting their respective MOAs with the DSWD.

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Concerns Department is closely coordinating with the Secretariat of the MNLF from the GPH-MNLF Coordinating Committees to monitor the status of the situation in their areas and to determine possible support to the MNLF members. Coordination with LGUs and other local partners through the OPAPP Area Management Offices are being made to facilitate issues related to community quarantine and lockdown in areas where MNLF members are present.

Pursuant to Section 4(s) of RA No. 11469,¹⁶ the PNP has deployed Joint Task Force Red to supervise the implementation of ECQ protocols within the NCR. To complement the responsibilities of the Joint Task Force, the PNP has designated Directorates for Integrated Police Operations which will serve as supervisors for inter-regional concerns. As of 03 April 2020, a total of 81,908 individuals have been either warned, arrested, or fined for violating quarantine protocols and a total of 7,561 public utility vehicles have been apprehended for violating the guidelines of the ECQ.

Emergency Procurement of Goods and Supplies

Consistent with the objective of undertaking an expedited procurement of goods and services for social amelioration measures,¹⁷ the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB), chaired by the Secretary of the DBM, issued Resolution No. 06-2020 dated 06 April 2020, which provides Guidelines for Emergency Procurement under RA No. 11469. Under this issuance, the GPPB has increased the allowable amount of advance payment from 15% to 30% on specific COVID-19-related procurement activities. The GPPB has identified that advance

¹⁵ **Section 4(g).** Ensure that all Local Government Units (LGUs) are acting within the letter and spirit of all the rules, regulations and directives issued by the National Government pursuant to this Act; are implementing standards of Community Quarantine consistent with what the National Government has laid down for the subject area, while allowing LGUs to continue exercising their autonomy in matters undefined by the National Government or are within the parameters it has set; and are fully cooperating towards a unified, cohesive and orderly implementation of the national policy to address COVID-19: *Provided*, That all LGUs shall be authorized to utilize more than five percent (5%) of the amount allocated for their calamity fund subject to additional funding and support from the National Government.

¹⁶ **Section 4(s).** Regulate traffic on all roads, streets, and bridges, and access thereto; prohibit putting up of encroachments or obstacles; authorize the removal of encroachments and illegal constructions in public places; and perform all other related acts.

¹⁷ **Section 4(k).** Undertake the procurement of the following as the need arises, in the most expeditious manner, as exemptions from the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 or the "Government Procurement Reform Act" and other relevant laws: x x x

payment is one of the most pressing concerns in the procurement of medical supplies and PPEs during the ECQ as suppliers tend to prioritize buyers who are willing to make partial or full payment upon placing their orders.

Measures on Disposal of Related Wastes

The DOH has an existing protocol for infection control of healthcare facilities and on how to handle health care waste. All health care waste is pre-treated with chemical disinfectant such as hypochlorite solution. Further, private hospitals in the NCR and in urban centers are being served by private waste treaters and disposal systems service providers. DOH field personnel are likewise informed of the need to pre-treat medical wastes like used PPEs for those PUIs or COVID-19 patients at home quarantine.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) - Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) continues to ensure the proper transport and disposal of healthcare wastes for further treatment. It has issued 274 Special Permits for the transport of healthcare wastes. As of date, 46.40 metric tons of healthcare wastes have undergone treatment in EMB-accredited Treatment, Sanitation, and Disposal (TSD) facilities.

The DENR has been directed to address in its subsequent reports the concerns raised in the Senate Comments, including the necessity of issuing new or special guidelines to guide the public in the proper and sanitary disposal of used medical masks, tissues, and other similar personal hygiene products and to elaborate how TSD facilities ensure the safe and sanitary disposal of infectious healthcare wastes.

Continuing Efforts on Information Dissemination

Relevant agencies of the government have ongoing efforts to ensure the widest dissemination of information relative to the crisis.

The DOH continues to provide timely updates and information on COVID-19 to the public through various media, such as the DOH Social Media Engagements which include daily virtual pressers through the DOH Official Facebook page, its other social media accounts, daily posting of infographics, and the DOH PH COVID-19 Viber Community.

The Presidential Communications Operations Office, together with its attached agencies, has continued to maximize all government media platforms and information materials in contributing to public awareness and understanding of government measures to address the COVID-19 situation.

The DOT continues to prepare and disseminate updated travel advisories and address queries on matters pertaining to the pandemic through its Foreign Office Assistance and other communication channels. The Translated Philippine Travel Advisory has also been made available by the DOT through online portals.

The Industrial Technology Development Institute (ITDI) under the DOST has made available online various e-learning materials and instructional videos on

technologies that can provide livelihood opportunities to those affected by the pandemic.

II. Secure Facilities and Resources for the Health Sector and Other Frontliners

An equally significant pillar of this whole-of-government approach in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic is capacitating our health facilities and protecting our health personnel. Towards this end, we want to make available all necessary resources to the health sector.

Human Resource for Health, Referral Hospitals and Equipment by the Numbers

The National Government has bolstered the number of frontliners who are our health warriors in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. On 03 April 2020, the DBM approved the DOH's request for the engagement of additional 857 contract of service (COS) workers who will be deployed to the following COVID-19 referral hospitals: (i) Lung Center of the Philippines; (ii) Philippine General Hospital; and (iii) Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center. The 857 additional COS workers will have the following positions, with the total monthly cost of PhP35.823 Million, chargeable against available released allotment of the DOH under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 General Appropriations Act (GAA):

Position Title	Salary Grade	No. of Workers
Medical Officer III	SG-21	82
Nurse II	SG-15	267
Radiologic Technologist I	SG-11	35
Respiratory Therapist I	SG-10	85
Ward Assistant I	SG-7	118
Medical Equipment Technician I	SG-6	30
Nursing Attendant II	SG-6	204
Administrative Aide IV (Ambulance Driver)	SG-4	36
Total		857

Complementing the above measure is the temporary restriction/regulation of the deployment of Filipino healthcare workers abroad to ensure that the country shall have sufficient healthcare personnel to meet the demands of the threat of COVID-19 in the country. In this regard, the POEA has issued Governing Board Resolution No. 9 (s. 2020), which temporarily suspends the deployment of Filipino health care professionals falling under the Mission Critical Skill (MCS) Framework. The occupations included in the MCS Framework are: (i) Medical Doctor/Physician; (ii) Nurse; (iii) Microbiologist; (iv) Molecular Biologist; (v) Medical Technologist; (vi) Clinical Analyst; (vii) Respiratory Therapist; (viii) Pharmacist; (ix) Laboratory Technician; (x) X-ray/Radiologic Technician; (xi) Nursing Assistant/Nursing Aid; (xii) Operator of medical equipment; (xiii) Supervisor of health services and personal care; and (xiv) Repairman of medical-hospital equipment.

On 05 April 2020, a special flight from Fuzhou, China carrying a Chinese medical expert team and equipment for COVID-19 arrived in Manila.

COVID-19 Bed Capacity and Quarantine Facilities

The total number of hospital beds dedicated to COVID-19 in DOH hospitals and private hospitals, including recently converted quarantine centers pursuant to Section 4(k) of RA No. 11469¹⁸ are as follows:

NCR	2,031 beds
Luzon	544 beds
Visayas	370 beds
Mindanao	249 beds
TOTAL	3,194 beds

A total of 1,760 COVID-19 isolation rooms are currently occupied. There are 1,051 available ventilators, 209 of which are currently being used. There are likewise 855 decontamination facilities established in quarantine control points in the NCR.

The DOH has activated the Rizal Coliseum and Quezon Institute as community quarantine facilities that can respectively accommodate a total of 112 and 100 PUIs and PUMs. The coliseum is being managed by the PNP Medical Corps.

As of 09 April 2020, the Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ) has assigned 20 teams to different hotel-quarantine facilities and has deployed 87 employees for purposes of overseeing the mandatory 14-day quarantine of Overseas Filipinos. For the period 06-09 April 2020, the BOQ monitored the arrival of 167 Overseas Filipinos who are required to be quarantined.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) continues to facilitate the conversion of evacuation centers and selected sites as health/quarantine facilities, emergency operation centers, food hubs, and quarters for health workers. So far, 68 evacuation centers have been made available and ready for use while 46 are already being utilized. These evacuation centers are distributed to different regions and are being utilized as follows:

Region	No. of Evacuation Centers Converted					Total
	Available and Ready for Use	Being used as Health/Quarantine Facilities	Being used as Emergency Operation Centers	Being used as Food Hub/Other Facilities	Being used as Quarters for Health Workers	
NCR			1			1
CAR	7					7
I	10	1	1	1		13
II	6			1		7
III	4	2				6
IV-A	6	2	1			9
IV-B	4	2	1	1		8
V	3				1	4

¹⁸ Section 4(k). Undertake the procurement of the following as the need arises, in the most expeditious manner, as exemptions from the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 or the "Government Procurement Reform Act" and other relevant laws: x x x

(3) Lease of real property or venue for use to house health workers or serve as quarantine centers, medical relief and aid distribution locations, or temporary medical facilities.

VI	6	5				11
VII	2	6		1		9
VIII	2	2	2	2		8
IX	2	3				5
X	5	1	1	1		8
XI	4	1		2		7
XII	2	2				4
XIII	5	2				7
Total	68	29	7	9	1	114

Evacuation centers that were converted to health/quarantine facilities have an estimated capacity of 1,180 for PUIs and PUMs. They have served a total of 494 PUIs and PUMs so far, from 341 that was reported on 03 April 2020. The DPWH has also finished the construction work necessary to convert the Ninoy Aquino Stadium to a health/quarantine facility, and continues to undertake the conversion of the Philippine International Convention Center-Forum and the World Trade Center.

The DENR authorized the use of at least seven (7) of its facilities as temporary isolation areas for PUIs, quarters for frontliners, and staging areas for food distribution. The two (2) vessels of 2GO Shipping converted into floating quarantine hospitals for PUMs are expected to be operational this week.

The CHED has approved the use of five (5) SUCs as quarantine facilities and discussions for the possible use of two (2) other SUC facilities for similar purposes are set this week. The CHED has also created a Public Health Experts Group, consisting of experts in the field of medicine and public health, to provide technical assistance and guidance to SUCs and LGUs in ensuring the safety of using SUC facilities as quarantine centers/community isolation units.

The DepEd has issued two (2) policy instructions to guide its field offices with respect to requests of LGUs to use DepEd premises, namely: i) Guidance to Regional Directors for Action on Requests by Local Government Units to use DepEd Schools as Quarantine or Isolation Areas for COVID-19; and ii) Guidance to Regional Directors for Action on Requests by Local Government Units to use DepEd Schools and Engage DepEd Personnel in Activities Related to COVID-19.

To date, 95 of 209 such requests from LGUs have already been approved. This concerns 1,198 DepEd facilities mostly to be used as quarantine/isolation facilities. In terms of number of schools, the DepEd has approved the use of 473 schools in 95 LGUs while the other requests are either undergoing evaluation or awaiting additional documents for compliance.

Assistance to Health Workers and Frontliners

Agencies continue to take action and contribute resources from their own budgetary capacities, their existing assets, and donations. The DOTr, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC), and MARINA have provided PPEs, free meals, thermal scanners or vitamins to healthcare workers, drivers, and other frontline personnel.

The DENR donated a total of 52,362.73 board feet of lumber to the DPWH, hospitals, and LGUs for the construction of quarantine and other medical facilities. In coordination with the Office of the President and the Office of the Vice President, the

PCG continues to provide air assets in the transport of PPEs and medical supplies for areas in Northern Mindanao, Busuanga, Palawan, Davao, and Cotabato.

The DOT is monitoring around 320 operational accommodation establishments that have provided service to long staying guests, Business Process Outsourcing companies, health workers, and employees of nearby basic establishments.

Consistent with Administrative Order (AO) No. 28 (s. 2020),¹⁹ the DBM issued Budget Circular No. 2020-02 dated 07 April 2020, providing guidelines on the grant of Special Risk Allowance to frontline Public Health Workers during the entirety of the ECQ.

In order to streamline the logistical operations of the DOH and its ambulances, the DICT signed a MOA with the DOH for the provision of LTE Push-To-Talk Over Cellular (POC) Radios and a centralized POC Emergency Radio Dispatch system.

The DOTr, through the Road Sector, is leading the operations of the DOTr Free Bus Ride Program for Health Workers in partnership with the MMDA and other government agencies and private sectors to ferry medical frontliners to and from their respective hospitals. As of 09 April 2020, 123,575 health workers have been assisted by the program nationwide. The program is being replicated in different regions through the LTFRB and the Land Transportation Office (LTO). For easier monitoring and reference of passengers, the DOTr Free Bus Ride routes in the NCR and different LGUs were integrated in the online mobile application Sakay.ph and Google Maps. To complement this initiative, fuel subsidies are provided to participating bus units, and MHDs have been established in different hospitals. In order to further assist health workers and frontliners with their transportation, the MMDA lends bicycles through its Bike Lending Program.

The DOTr has also established the DOTr Emergency Operations Center to respond to transportation-related queries from the public.

The DOTr, through the LTFRB, has been issuing Special Permits (SPs) to PUV operators who provide transport services for health workers, medical facilities, and other exempted establishments. 529 SPs have been issued by the LTFRB Central and Regional Offices collectively, while 1,136 SPs have been issued to PUV units.

The Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), together with the toll operators, has waived the payment of toll fees for frontliners, including the health workers, members of the PNP and the AFP, and buses operating under the DOTr Free Bus Ride Program. As of 09 April 2020, a total of 3,830 RFIDs have been issued to frontliners to ensure free passage through the tollways.

The DOTr, through the TRB, has communicated to the toll operators the recommendation in the Senate Comments for operators of all expressways in Luzon

¹⁹ **Section 4(d).** Ensure that all public health workers are protected by providing them with a "COVID-19 special risk allowance", in addition to the hazard pay granted under the Magna Carta of Public Health Workers or Republic Act No. 7305.

to provide toll-free access to all motorists and not just to health workers, for the duration of the ECQ. However, the toll operators-concessionaires raised concerns on the applicability of the terms and conditions of their respective Concession Agreements and the fixed costs that they incur relative to the day-to-day operations of their facilities. As such, the proposal will be subject to further evaluation and discussion.

The DTI-Board of Investments (BOI) has assisted various private companies in facilitating donations to frontline workers, including the delivery of 2 Million pieces of surgical masks last 07 April 2020 to the DOH. Eleven (11) proposals submitted by SUCs for the production of goods for frontline service providers are currently being reviewed for possible grants from the CHED's 180 Million Higher Education Development Fund for April 2020. The DOST - Metals Industry Research and Development Center operationalized a 5,000 per day production of face shields using injection molding technology, in partnership with industry partners and with the help of donors for materials.

The 106 RxBoxes deployed at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) are undergoing testing. The required training of health workers on their use is also ongoing. The RxBox is a computer-based monitor of vital signs attached to each patient that minimizes the contact of health workers with COVID-19 patients and enables a higher patient per health worker ratio. The DOST - Philippine Council for Health Research and Development is also conducting studies on the clinical safety and efficacy of GinHAWA, a Philippine-made ICU ventilator, with a budget allocation of PhP 16.917 Million.

Update on Test Kits and Testing Centers

Pursuant to Section 4(b)²⁰ of RA No. 11469, the DOH has significantly increased its capacity to conduct massive testing for PUIs and PUMs. As of 06 April 2020, a total of 24,755 individuals have been tested, of which 3,991 or 17.21% tested positive and 19,162 or 82.62% yielded negative results.²¹

As of 07 April 2020, the DOH has activated a total of 11 laboratories and hospitals for COVID-19 testing, from the previous eight (8) facilities. The DOH targets a capacity of 8,000 tests per day. As such, a total of 900,000 tests across all activated COVID-19 PCR laboratories is projected into the next three (3) months.

The DOH is expediting the accreditation of 63 health facilities to serve as testing areas, most of which are already compliant with the Stage 1 (self-assessment) and Stage 2 (validation) requirements.²² Two (2) more health institutions are expected to complete their accreditation process, the *Victoria Luna Hospital* in Quezon City and the *Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory* in Mandaluyong. The University of the Philippines - PGH Medical Research Laboratories and the

²⁰ **Section 4(b).** Expedite and streamline the accreditation of testing kits and facilitate prompt testing by public and designated private institutions of PUIs and PUMs, and the compulsory and immediate isolation and treatment of patients: *Provided*, That the cost of treatment for COVID-19 patients shall be covered under the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation.

²¹ Turn-around time is pegged at two (2) days or 48 hours.

²² The accreditation process for a COVID-19 testing facility involves five (5) stages of assessment. The other stages are: Stage 3: Personnel training, Stage 4: Proficiency Testing, and Stage 5: Full-scale Implementation.

Philippine Red Cross are bound for proficiency testing at Stage 4, pending submission of other requirements.

As of 08 April 2020, the FDA has approved 33 COVID-19 test kits for commercial use, composed of 23 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) based kits and ten Rapid Antibody Test kits. Out of 394 COVID-19 test kit applications received, 99 have been approved, 226 disapproved, and 69 are pending approval due to incomplete requirements.

Following its FDA approval on 03 April 2020, the delivery of the locally-developed GenAmplify COVID-19 rRT-PCR Detection Kit for 26,000 tests is ongoing. The Manila HealthTek is coordinating with recipient hospitals for the training of their personnel on the use of the said kit.

In response to the query in the Senate Comments on the use of rapid testing, the DOH reiterates that RT-PCR testing remains the gold standard for diagnosing COVID-19 and that point-of-care rapid antibody-based test kits should not be used as standalone tests to definitively diagnose or rule out COVID-19. Since rapid tests kits must be used in conjunction with RT-PCR, care must be exercised to not unduly consume RT-PCR test kits for the sake of confirmation. The DOH further states that testing asymptomatic contacts using RT-PCR is not recommended until there is surplus testing capacity. In this regard, the DOH is continuously studying and exploring innovations that can potentially improve the testing capacity for COVID-19.

Strengthening Contact Tracing Measures

As of 08 April 2020, the DOH has traced a total of 8,973 contacts. It seeks to further develop and strengthen its COVID-19 Information System and linkage with the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine Laboratory Information System for timely sharing of laboratory and case data, update its policies on surveillance system and guidelines on contact tracing, and improve its capacity to undertake contact tracing through regional and local epidemiology and surveillance units, including exploring computer applications (such as the Singapore app and *Tanod Kovid*) that may be able to assist in contact tracing activities.

The DICT is finalizing its options regarding the adoption of a digital contact tracing solution to augment the data gathering and disease surveillance and response of the DOH-Epidemiology Bureau.

The BOQ has an ongoing procurement for the development of an Electronic Health Declaration Checklist.

Clinical Trials

On 08 April 2020, the DOH filed with the FDA an application for an LO as Sponsor of the World Health Organization Solidarity Trial, a large-scale international clinical trial to investigate and identify drugs effective for COVID-19 treatment.

As new evidence regarding the safety profile and use of Favipiravir (Avigan) as treatment for COVID-19 is generated through on-going clinical trials, the DOH is exploring the possibility of including said drug in its trials and is identifying sources

from Japan and China. The FDA requires manufacturers of all medicines that claim to treat COVID-19 to apply for and comply with registration requirements. Until such products are proven safe and effective, they cannot be dispensed to the public and even therapeutic claims cannot be permitted.

Healthcare Supplies and Equipment

The DOH has partnered with the DTI, the PGH, and private entities for the local mass production of PPEs for our health care workers, which will commence on 13 April 2020. It also continues to deliver PPEs to hospitals in coordination with the OCD. There is an ongoing delivery of approximately 1 million PPEs sets procured by the DOH, the Procurement Service of the DBM, and the Philippine International Trading Corporation.

As of 09 April 2020, donated PPEs have been delivered to 13 government hospitals and one (1) private hospital. In total, from 04 April 2020 to 09 April 2020, the OCD was able to deliver 43,945 sets of PPEs, 514 bottles of alcohol (500 ml.), 30 ventilators, and thousands of other medical supplies to various hospitals in NCR, CAR, Regions I, III, IV-A, and V.

In order to project the needs for PPEs per hospital and promptly allocate and distribute them to public and private hospitals, the DOH has prepared projections of PPEs based on the Feasibility Analysis of Syndromic Surveillance Using Spatio-Temporal Epidemiological Modeler (FASSSTER) for COVID-19 Modeling good for one (1) month, three (3) months, and six (6) months operation. With this model, the DOH can project and compute needed supplies, commodities, drugs, and medicines.

To prevent shortage, the FDA has expedited and approved 12 LO applications to manufacture 70% alcohol and issued 418 LOs and CPR/Certificate of Product Notification for hand sanitizers, rubbing alcohol, and disinfecting products. The FDA has issued advisories, which allow manufacturers, distributors, and importers of PPEs, ventilators, respirators or certain health products intended for local market entry and commercial use to engage in business with only an approved LO. For COVID-19 foreign donated products, an FDA clearance is no longer required prior to customs release.

In accordance with DOH-Anti Red Tape Authority-BOC JMC No. 01-2020, applications for licensing was streamlined through the "Bayanihan One Stop Shop (BOSS)," a single window concierge for all government agencies involved in the importation of COVID-19 critical commodities (e.g., PPEs, ventilators, and respirators).

In line with liberalizing the grant of incentives for the manufacture or importation of critical or needed equipment or supplies, including healthcare equipment and supplies,²³ the DOF and the DTI issued JMC No. 1-2020, which allows manufacturers and producers of medicines, medical equipment, and supplies needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic to import their materials without payment of duties, taxes, and fees.

²³ Section 4(o) of RA No. 11469.

The AFP military personnel have also pledged a portion of their salaries for one (1) month, with the total amount of PhP17.435 Million to support the country's frontliners in the fight against COVID-19.

Further, the AFP and the OCD have jointly undertaken the following: (i) ceremonial hand-over of the PhP250 Million donation from the Asian Development Bank on 04 April 2020; (ii) acquisition, transportation, and distribution of critical medical supplies, equipment, food and automotive supplies to various locations and government agencies across the country; and (iii) activation of the Civil Military Coordinating Center, which processed donations from local donors intended for the troops, medical frontliners, and the populace.

From the period of 03 to 08 April 2020, pursuant to Section 4(j)²⁴ of RA No. 11469, the DFA has facilitated donations and assistance from foreign governments namely, the Brunei Darussalam, People's Republic of China, and the European Union, as well as from five (5) other entities of foreign governments and five (5) private companies, group, and individuals.

The DOF issued Revenue Regulations No. 9-2020 dated 07 April 2020 on the tax benefits of donations made for battling COVID-19. In addition, it issued a Memorandum to the BOC Commissioner authorizing him to act on donations authorized under the CMTA, provided that the goods are donated to identified government agencies.

The DTI-BOI has assisted private companies on their plans to invest in the production of hospital-grade face masks including N95 and spare parts of much-needed ventilators. Likewise, the DTI has assisted private entities in sourcing raw materials (e.g., acetate films and clear PVC sheets) needed for the production of face shields.

Through the initiative of the DTI-BOI Confederation of Wearable Exporters of the Philippines, production of an initial 10,000 pieces of hospital-grade PPE coats and coveralls for the PGH will be delivered by the third week of April. The DTI has assisted the Distilleria Limtuaco in redirecting its alcohol production (up to 70% of its capacity) to ethyl alcohol.

III. Establish Sound Fiscal and Monetary Actions that are Responsive to All Stakeholders

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused market disruption and negative financial impact on firms and financial markets. The current Administration has built a resilient economy at the onset of its term through conservative policies that have garnered the Philippines a BBB+ credit rating by the S&P Global in 2019. Guided by the same fervor to maintain our economy afloat amidst this global financial distress, we have implemented measures that will cushion the impact of this pandemic on various sectors.

²⁴ Section 4(j). Ensure that donation, acceptance and distribution of health products intended to address the COVID-19 public health emergency are not unnecessarily delayed and that health products for donation duly certified by the regulatory agency or their accredited third party from countries with established regulation shall automatically be cleared: *Provided*, That this shall not apply to health products which do not require a certification or clearance from Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Moratoriums and other Relief Measures

The DOF has issued: (1) Revenue Memorandum Circular (RMC) 36-2020 dated 06 April 2020, which provides further clarification on the exemption from Documentary Stamp Tax; and (2) RMC 37-2020 dated 06 April 2020, providing relief for qualified loans, and the guidelines on filing of tax returns and payment of taxes before the extended deadline.

The DOF has also issued further extensions on the: a) deadline of availment for tax amnesty on delinquencies from 23 May 2020 to 08 June 2020;²⁵ b) due dates for the submission and/or filing of certain documents and/or returns as well as payment of certain taxes;²⁶ and c) application time for New Authority to Print Receipts or Invoices of taxpayers with expiring principal and supplementary receipts or invoices and extending the use of expired ones.²⁷

Several government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions have complied with the directive to implement a minimum of 30-day grace period for payment of loans within the period of the ECQ pursuant to Section 4(aa)²⁸ of RA No. 11469:

- a. The Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) granted relief to corporate and closed banks' clients from payment of loans, real property purchases, and lease falling due during the ECQ period. It also suspended the 60-day period to file claims against the assets of two recently closed banks from 15 March to 13 April 2020 or until the ECQ is lifted or extended;
- b. The Philippine Guarantee Corporation (PhilGuarantee), the SHFC, and the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation implemented a moratorium on monthly amortization payments and other relief measures;
- c. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), through its Corporate Governance and Finance Department, directed financing and lending companies to adopt debt relief measures for the extension of payment deadlines;
- d. The GSIS has granted a one month extension for premium remittances and loan payments due for the period of March and April 2020. It has likewise granted a one-month grace period on all housing loan amortization and rental payments for GSIS investment properties due for the period of March 2020 amounting to PhP28.03 Million and extended its Financial Assistance Loan Program from July 2020 to 30 September 2020;

²⁵ RMC 38-2020 dated 08 April 2020.

²⁶ RMC 39-2020 dated 08 April 2020.

²⁷ RMC 41-2020 dated 08 April 2020.

²⁸ **Section 4 (aa).** Direct all banks, quasi-banks, financing companies, lending companies, and other financial institutions, public and private, including the Government Service Insurance System, Social Security System and Pag-ibig Fund, to implement a minimum of a thirty (30)-day grace period for the payment of all loans, including but not limited to salary, personal, housing, and motor vehicle loans, as well as credit card payments, falling due within the period of the enhanced Community Quarantine without incurring interests, penalties, fees or other charges, persons with multiple loans shall likewise be given the minimum thirty (30)-day grace period for every loan.

- e. The SSS implemented several relief measures including extension of deadline of remittance of contributions and moratorium on short-term loan payments of SSS members affected by the COVID-19 situation for applicable months of February to April 2020. It will also implement a Calamity Loan Assistance Program for its members, which stands to benefit around 1.74 Million borrowers;
- f. The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM) continues to grant relief measures such as extension of the deadline for submission by Universal Charge (UC) Collecting Entities (CEs) of reportorial requirements to PSALM, moving the payment for billings falling due on 15 March to 14 April 2020 of distribution utilities (DUs), Independent Power Producer Administrators (IPPA), and remittances of UC CEs; and
- g. The LBP's moratorium on the payment of loans has so far benefited, (i) 272 credit cardholders with waived penalties amounting to PhP361,529, (ii) 210,988 salary loan borrowers with amortizations due amounting to PhP1.348 Billion, and (iii) 712 loan accounts nationwide with principal and interest due amounting to a total of PhP36.516 Billion.

Extension of Submission of Documents, Deadlines, and Renewal of Permits²⁹

The Insurance Commission (IC) has issued fifteen (15) Circular Letters intended to ease the burden of entities it regulates and of persons within the industry. Some of these issuances provide for the deferment of submission of reportorial requirements, extension of coverage, and extension of grace period. The IC also allowed more persons to be covered by insurance, pre-need, or health maintenance organization products, through the temporary relaxation of certain customer due diligence requirements.

The SEC extended the deadline for submission of certain reportorial requirements, particularly annual reports, audited financial statements for 2019, and Mandatory Disclosure Forms. The SEC also extended the filing deadlines in its quasi-judicial proceedings.

The NWRB ordered the extension of the validity of all conditional water permits due to expire from 15 March 2020 to 30 June 2020 for a period of six (6) months after their expiration. Holders of certificates of public convenience (CPCs) may also apply for renewal within an extended period of six (6) months from the last date of the validity of said CPCs. The NWRB likewise directed the extension of the period of time for the payment of fees and charges to the NWRB for six (6) months from its due date without imposition of penalties.

The LTO and the LTFRB extended the application for renewal of PUV franchises, licenses, and vehicle registration until the end of April 2020. The LTO regional heads were directed not to collect fines or penalties for late registration of motor vehicles and for renewal of driver's licenses expiring during the period of ECQ.

²⁹ Section 4(z). Move statutory deadlines and timelines for the filing and submission of any document, the payment of taxes, fees, and other charges required by law, and the grant of any benefit, in order to ease the burden on individuals under Community Quarantine.

The PPA issued MC No. 15-2020³⁰, which provides, among others, for emergency approval and extensions and approvals of PPA permits. Through Circular 2020-006-A, the FDA granted an automatic four-month validity for certifications due to expire from 01 March to 30 June 2020.

Meanwhile, AO No. 29 (s. 2020) prescribed guidelines on the interruption of periods for the filing of cases, appeals, petitions for review, and other pleadings with the Office of the President during the ECQ.

Fiscal Measures of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)

The BSP released a set of frequently asked questions³¹ to answer common queries regarding the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Section 4(aa) of RA No. 11469 to ensure effective implementation by BSP-supervised financial institutions.

In addition, it issued: (i) Memorandum No. 2020-020 dated 07 April 2020 on the reduction in the Minimum Liquidity Ratio for stand-alone thrift banks, rural banks, and cooperative banks from 20% to 16%, to enhance system liquidity by allowing banks to release a portion of their liquid assets for re-lending to the public; (ii) Memorandum No. 2020-022 dated 08 April 2020 on allowing a BSP-supervised financial institution to reclassify certain debt securities that are booked at fair value to the amortized cost category in its prudential reports; and (iii) Memorandum No. 2020-023 dated 08 April 2020 on the treatment of Net Unrealized Losses in the Foreign Currency Deposit Unit (FCDU)/Expanded FCDU (EFCDU) Book for purposes of determining compliance with the EFCDU/FCDU Asset Cover Requirement, to maintain confidence and liquidity in financial markets considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

Budgetary Measures to Fund COVID-19 Effort

The National Government is continuously augmenting its fiscal resources for the country's COVID-19 response measures. Out of the pooled savings from discontinued Programs/Activities/Projects (P/A/Ps)³² and abandoned Special Purpose Funds³³ reported last week amounting to PhP189.823 Billion, the following allotments and cash allocations were released as of 09 April 2020:

³⁰ Entitled "Guidelines in the Processing of PPA Permits During the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) Due to COVID-19 Pandemic" on 08 April 2020.

³¹ Memorandum No. 2020-018 dated 06 April 2020.

³² **Section 4(v).** Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, direct the discontinuance of appropriated programs, projects or activities (P/A/P) of any agency of the Executive Department, including government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), in the FYs 2019 and 2020 General Appropriations Act (GAA), whether released or unreleased, the allotments for which remain unobligated, and utilize the savings generated therefrom to augment the allocation for any item directly related to support operations and response measures, which are necessary or beneficial in order to address the COVID-19 emergency, consistent with the herein declared national policy..

³³ **Section 4(w).** Any unutilized or unreleased balance in a special purpose fund, as of the date of declaration of a State of Emergency shall be considered to have their purpose abandoned for the duration of the State of Emergency. All such unspent, unutilized or unreleased money or funds sourced from collections or receipts, including future collections and receipts, shall be utilized and are hereby appropriated for such measures to address the COVID-19 situation and accomplish the declared national policy herein.

Department/Agency	Allotments	Cash Allocations
DSWD	100,000,000,000.00	100,000,000,000.00
DOLE	1,500,000,000.00	1,500,000,000.00
ALGU-Bayanihan Grant to Cities and Municipalities	30,823,759,246.00	30,823,759,246.00
Total	132,323,759,246.00	132,323,759,246.00

As of 09 April 2020, the following additional allotments and cash allocations were released to the following departments/agencies to cover their COVID19 response activities, which can be attributed to their existing P/A/Ps within the FY 2020 GAA:

Department/Agency	Allotment	Cash Allocation*
DOH	600,000,000.00	600,000,000.00
DSWD	3,930,605,846.00	3,908,259,846.00
DILG	548,029,000.00	520,627,550.00
DOST		53,230,732.00
DOLE		100,000,000.00
DSWD**	468,960,000.00	
Total	5,547,594,846.00	5,182,118,128.00

*Net of withholding taxes

**Modification of allotment released for the Social Pension for Senior Citizens

From the period 01 April to 08 April 2020, the LBP remitted to the BTr cash balances from various government agencies amounting to a total of PhP63.60 Billion. Various agencies, GOCCs, and instrumentalities have either identified, earmarked, reallocated or remitted various amounts from their respective budgets for COVID-19 response measures.

The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) has donated PhP290 Million to COVID-19 referral hospitals and approved the release of PhP447 Million worth of financial assistance to 81 government hospitals, chargeable against the Charity Fund of the PCSO.

The PhilGuarantee submitted to the DOF a list of real properties it owns, which may be utilized for COVID-19 projects, programs, and activities.

With regard to the proposal in the Senate Comments to increase the budget deficit by 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the DOF, while noting that it is not aware of any such recommendation from the International Monetary Fund, states that it is confident that the Philippines has the financial capacity to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The DOF noted that the country has a BBB+ credit rating; its GDP growth since 2016 averages 6.4%; its revenue collection is the highest in 22 years; and our debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest it has been at 41.5%.

IV. Responsive and Sustainable Recovery Plan

In order to aid the IATF in formulating initiatives to rebuild consumer and business confidence, the TWG on Anticipatory and Forward Planning of the IATF, chaired by the NEDA, is now processing the results of several surveys (i.e., the Consumer survey, Business survey [Industry and Services], Agriculture and Fishery

Survey, and Definition of the ‘New Normal’ survey), which shall form the foundation of the TWG’s ten (10)-day work plan to recommend programs and strategies to: (a) promote confidence in the country’s health systems through data analytics; (b) rebuild consumer and business confidence; and (c) adapt to a “new normal” state of economic activities. The TWG is set to submit its final report to the IATF on 20 April 2020.

The SEC similarly conducted a survey on the impact of the ECQ on the mutual fund industry, lending companies, financing companies, microfinance non-governmental organizations, and their clients to form part of the inputs and evaluation of the proposal for an Economic Recovery Package Bill.

The DOST Regional Offices have developed information and communications technology systems and online tools to ensure public service continuity and gather COVID-19 related data/information for decision-making. Scientists, academicians, researchers, and DOST personnel continue to render expert advice and information on COVID-19 related actions and projects.

The Commission on Population and Development (POPCOM) completed the database of barangay-level key demographic vulnerabilities variables in the NCR to make COVID-19 responses more effective and efficient at the barangay level. These indicators shall serve as baselines in planning pandemic responses such as quarantine and other support strategies to effectively and efficiently contain the spread of COVID-19. The POPCOM is now working to complete the database of these key indicators for other regions.

I would like to highlight that while the ECQ over the entire Luzon has been extended, the National Government has started on substantive forward planning to sustain the gains derived from the imposition of the ECQ and to provide our people with a safe and economically stable society after COVID-19.

Finally, in the third week of the implementation of RA No. 11469, I continue to direct the Executive department to optimize temporary emergency measures permitted therein, at all times within the limits of the Constitution. I maintain the policy of forging collaborative and mutually beneficial arrangements between government agencies and the private sector in taking necessary and effective steps to move forward and overcome this public health emergency. On the funds which Congress has authorized me to program for COVID-19 responses, this Administration has been more than diligent in looking for ways and means to source the same, and more than judicious in the utilization thereof.

