

Authorities round up curfew, health protocol violators in Cebu City

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Unmindful of constant reminders from authorities, about a hundred individuals were rounded up from an establishment located on the 22nd floor of a building in Barangay Luz, Cebu City past midnight on Sunday, June 20.

These individuals were brought to the holding facility of the Prevention, Restoration, Order, Beautification, and Enhancement (PROBE) located in Barangay Cogon Ramos and were asked to pay fine of P500 for staying outside beyond curfew hours and for violation of health protocols particularly their failure to observe social distancing.

Those who will fail to pay the fine will be asked to render community service, says Raquel Arce, PROBE team head. But as of this writing, CDN Digital is yet to determine how many of these individuals were already released from the PROBE holding facility. The operation was part of 'Oplan Bulabog' by the Cebu City Police Office (CCPO) and PROBE, according to a Facebook post by Police Colonel Josefino Ligan, the CCPO chief.

Wrong information deters smokers from switching to better alternatives Advocates of tobacco harm reduction (THR) urged adult smokers to discern the science behind non-combustible alternatives as misleading and false information may push them away from switching to better nicotine alternatives like vapes and heated tobacco products (HTPs).

'The perception of harm from vaping is not consistent with the scientific evidence. Local public health experts should take the lead in providing Filipino smokers who cannot or do not want to quit smoking by themselves or with currently-approved methods with accurate scientific information on e-cigarettes and other better nicotine alternatives,' Clarisse Virgino, Philippine representative to the Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates (**CAPHRA**) said.

Virgino was referring to a study done by Public Health England (PHE), an executive agency of the UK Department of Health and Social Care that found 'the proportion [of smokers] who thought vaping was less harmful than cigarettes declined from 45 percent in 2014 to 34 percent in 2019.'

These misperceptions, according to the report, are particularly common among smokers who do not vape. 'Increasingly incorrect perceptions among the public about the harms of vaping could prevent some smokers using vaping products to quit smoking,' the report said. PHE has been consistent in its stance that 'e-cigarettes are around 95 percent safer than combustible cigarettes.'

In its 2020 report, PHE stated that despite reductions in smoking prevalence, smoking remains the biggest single cause of preventable death and disease and a leading cause of health inequalities. The agency posited that 'alternative nicotine delivery devices that are less harmful could play a crucial role in reducing this health burden.'

The report further stated that 'vaping regulated nicotine products has a small fraction of the risks of smoking,' and that smokers should be encouraged to try regulated nicotine vaping products along with smoking cessation medications and behavioral support to greatly increase their chances of successfully stopping smoking. In the Philippines, where more than 16 million individuals smoke with a low quit rate of 4 percent and a smoking related death rate of 88,000 per annum,

Virgino suggested that the Department of Health (DOH) 'should broaden its tobacco control strategy.' 'Combustion in cigarettes, not nicotine, is what is harmful to the health of smokers. As such, Filipino smokers who would otherwise continue smoking should be encouraged to switch to less harmful nicotine alternatives such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. Doing so would significantly reduce smoking-related sickness and deaths in the country,' she said.

Virgino said THR is a public health strategy that aims to provide better alternatives to reduce harms caused by smoking. 'Instead of sticking with the myopic 'quit or die' approach of the World Health Organization, the DOH should look at the emerging science and consider adopting THR in the country's tobacco control strategy,' she said.

HR is the key advocacy of **CAPHRA**-a regional alliance committed to educating, advocating and representing the right of adult alternative nicotine consumers to access and use of products that reduce harm from tobacco use. Its country representatives work with THR experts and advocates from around the world. **CAPHRA** is an alliance of consumer organizations that aims to educate, advocate and represent the right of adult alternative nicotine consumers to access and use of products that reduce harm from tobacco use.

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