



Confusion reigns over face shields

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

Has the requirement for the use of face shields been lifted? Confusion reigned yesterday as government agencies issued conflicting statements on the issue.

President Duterte has agreed with suggestions to remove the use of face shields except in hospitals, but the Department of Health (DOH) is appealing to let the policy remain.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said yesterday the President had told him on Wednesday that the face shield requirement should be removed.

"Last night, the President agreed that face shields should only be used in hospitals. Allowed us to remove ours! Attn DOH!" Sotto tweeted, urging the health department to remove the face shield rule.

Later in the day, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) recommended to Duterte to continue the mandatory wearing of face shields in enclosed and indoor spaces, hospitals, schools, workplaces and commercial establishments.

The IATF requires the public to wear face shields and face masks both indoors and outdoors in all public areas – from various food establishments to

Turn to Page 4



Confusion From Page 1

malls, public markets, transport terminals and places of worship. It also reminds the public to observe frequent hand-washing and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Last night, Malacañang clarified that the face shield policy remains in effect, amid various pronouncements from different personalities about the wearing of face shields.

"While waiting for the President's decision on the matter, the existing

policy on the use of face shields remains in effect," presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said.

During yesterday's briefing, UST professor Nicanor Austriaco, a Filipino-American molecular biologist, said face shields provide an additional nine percent protection against COVID-19.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque said the DOH would try to appeal Duterte's decision, noting that face shields provide increased protection.

"We will appeal for reconsideration. The President said it is done in hospitals but in other settings, it is best to discuss with the IATF for consensus. The problem is that vaccine coverage is still three percent. It's good to have an extra layer of protection," Duque said in Filipino.

"You need it in enclosed areas or where one-meter physical distancing is not possible. In crowded areas, it is still needed," the health chief pointed out, but noted they will abide by the President's decision.

The DOH and other experts have been strongly recommending the continued use of face shields.

Sensitivity to reason

Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Alfredo Garbin Jr. commended Duterte's "sensitivity to reason" for stating that the wearing of face shields should only be done in hospitals and not mandatory for everybody.

"We acknowledge the sensitivity of President Duterte to reason. He listens to justified, reasonable public

clamor," Garbin said.

Manila Mayor Isko Moreno also thanked the President for scrapping the requirement, saying that it eases the poor's financial burden.

"What matters at the end of the day is, face shields cost money. A minimum wage earner could have spent that money to buy rice. In these trying times, this is one baby step to ease the hardships of the people," Moreno said in Filipino. — **With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Mayen Jaymalin, Delon Porcalla, Marc Jayson Cayabyab**