

# COVID-19 spike due to complacency - Roque

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Malacañang stressed that not following health protocols was the main cause of the spike in coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in some parts of the country.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque made the statement after Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas appealed for more COVID-19 vaccines to stop the surge in cases in the city.

Iloilo City, which is under Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) until the end of the month, has so far vaccinated only about 40,000 individuals.

Another group of doctors is appealing to the national government for help as beds for COVID-19 patients in Iloilo are running out.

"We are respectfully hoping for quick action. This is for the good of the Filipino people, especially the people of the city and province of Iloilo," said the Iloilo Medical Society (IMS).

"Iloilo is the center of medical care in the island of Panay," the IMS said in a letter addressed to President Duterte, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III and Sec. Carlito Galvez Jr. of the Task Force on COVID-19.

As of June 20, the DOH has recorded 2,561 active COVID-19 cases in Iloilo City and 2,480 in Iloilo province.

Iloilo City, the regional capital of Western Visayas, is badly hit as public and private hospitals are beyond capacity in treating COVID-19 patients.

Severe COVID-19 cases from Iloilo as well as Aklan, Antique, Capiz, and Guimaras are taken to hospitals in Iloilo City.

"As cases and severity increase, medical resources inversely decrease," the IMS said.

The IMS, led by Dr. Jimmy Bullo, is also appealing for augmentation of health care personnel including doctors, nurses, and nursing assistants, medical equipment and medical supplies, including high-flow oxygen cannulas, ventilators, and medicines such as Remdesivir.

The IMS also urged the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) to fulfill its obligations to hospitals. Otherwise, the non-payment "will have a

great impact on the already burdened health facilities that may even threaten their continued existence."

## 'Mask, Hugas, Iwas'

In his press briefing on Monday, June 22, Roque said the real cause of the COVID-19 surge is not the distribution of vaccines but because some Filipinos have become complacent and not following the government slogan "Mask, Hugas, Iwas."

The slogan refers to three steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19: the wearing of face masks, handwashing, and physical distancing.

"I can assure Mayor Treñas that, unfortunately, pagdating po sa pagtaas ng kaso, ang solusyon po talaga ay 'Mask, Hugas, Iwas' at kabahagi po ng solusyon ay bakuna (when it comes to the spike in cases, the real solution is 'Mask, Hugas, Iwas' and part of it is the vaccine)," Roque said.

"Pero ang dahilan po talaga ng paglobo, yung kakulangan sa 'Mask, Hugas, at Iwas.' Yan na po ay established fact. At tsaka yung mga new variants po (But the real cause of it (surge) is the lack of 'Mask, Hugas, Iwas' and that is an established fact. The new variants are factors, as well)," Roque added.

He, however, assured Treñas that the government is ramping up vaccine distribution in areas with a high number of coronavirus cases.

"Nag-order nga po ang Presidente ng equitable distribution-- damihan ang mga bakuna doon sa mga lugar na lumulobo ang mga kaso (President Duterte has ordered an equitable distribution -- add more vaccines to places with rising COVID-19 cases)," Roque said.

"Yun naman ay pinapatupad natin ngayon (We are implementing that now)," he added.

As of June 20, a total of 12,705,870 COVID-19 vaccine doses arrived in the Philippines -- 7,500,000 doses of Sinovac; 2,556,000 doses of AstraZeneca; 2,469,870 doses of Pfizer; and 180,000 doses of Gamaleya vaccines.

As of June 19, a total of 8,222,759 vaccines have been administered and 2,120,134 individuals have been fully vaccinated.