



Rody 'sorry' for confusing public on face shield use

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte on Monday night apologized to the public for the confusion over the government's policy on the use of face shields.

"I will apologize to the Filipino people. This thing was being discussed openly, and many thought that we were ready to do away with the face mask. But with this kind of aggressive infection that poses a very grave danger, it's a

small inconvenience," the President said.

Duterte, in his weekly Talk to the People, said that he was just "shooting the breeze" with some lawmakers when he talked of limiting the use of face shields in hospitals. It was Senate President Vicente Sotto III who announced the President's statement to the media after their meeting last week.

His statement was not final, the President

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added.

The President last night said the wearing of face shields would still be required whether indoors or outdoors, especially amid the rising number of the Delta variant of the coronavirus in the country.

Stressing that the country cannot afford a second wave of COVID-19 cases, Duterte said the wearing of face shields is a "very small price to pay, rather than gamble with doing away with it and courting disaster."

"I will agree with you considering that this (Delta) variant is very aggressive and it can proliferate in such a short period of time. We may experience a second wave much more serious than the first," he said as he approved the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on

the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to retain the face shield policy.

Department of Health (DOH) Epidemiology Bureau Director Alethea De Guzman, in a briefing yesterday, said local studies done by the bureau showed that the combined use of face mask and face shield, and the observance of physical distancing offer a 99 percent protection against getting or transmitting COVID-19.

De Guzman said the combined use of face mask and face shield offer 93 percent protection, while the separate use of face mask or face shield offered 78 percent to 85 percent protection.

She reiterated the need to follow health protocols as well as the importance of being vaccinated especially amid the presence of several variants of COVID-19.

Sotto slammed the President's decision

on the face shield policy.

"Health experts? They have not submitted evidence(s). It's all talk!" Sotto said in a message to reporters, referring to the failure of the Department of Health to furnish the Senate with scientific studies proving the effectivity of using face shields.

Sotto, during the Senate Committee of the Whole hearing last week, asked health officials if they have considered discontinuing the use of face shields, saying that the Philippines is the only country in the world requiring its citizens to do so.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III told the Senate COW that using face shields on top of face masks, plus physical distancing would provide more than 95 percent protection against the virus, citing various scientific studies.

Sotto then asked Duque to present to the Senate COW a list of countries and

studies made to support that wearing face shields serve as an added protection against COVID-19. The DOH has yet to comply as of Monday afternoon.

Sotto said there must be something wrong with the government's pandemic response.

"Now I want to believe the LGU reports saying the handling of the pandemic is not good at all," he said.

PNP chief gen. Guillermo Eleazar called on the public to abide by the President's directive on the wearing of face shields in public places.

"According to experts, the Delta variant is highly transmissible that's why we need to be extra careful," Eleazar said.

Eleazar also reminded his men to exercise maximum tolerance and refrain from imposing sanctions on those who fail to wear face shields. — *With Raymond Africa and Noel Talacay*