Tighter controls eyed
Delta case in Misamis Oriental infects 2

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

THE Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases will meet today to decide on the appeal of Metro Manila mayors to reconsider its decision allowing children five years and older to get out of their houses amid the threat of the more transmissible Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said that with local cases of the Delta variant already reported, stricter mobility restrictions are likely to be imposed.

"Kaya sabi ni Presidente ay baka, at ngayon po ay mukhang sigurado na, na magbabalik po tayo ng ilang paghihigaon (That's why the President said 'maybe,' and it looks like this is already certain, that we are going to reimpose some restrictions)," Roque said in an interview with GMA 7's Unang Hirit.

President Duterte has said that the Delta variant, which was first detected in India, was a "cause of serious alarm and concern" following reports that it spreads faster and is more injurious than the original virus.

Roque said the IATF is taking seriously the appeal of the Metro mayors. "I have long been saying that we cannot just ignore the suggestions of our mayors who are the ones implementing the IATF policies. As far as I know, experts have already met and they will come up with their recommendation. But the IATF will have a meeting in the matter on Thursday."

Metro Manila Development Authority chairman Benhur Abalos has said that all 17 mayors in the NCR want the government to suspend the new policy allowing outdoors children five years old and above, which they said could become a super-spreader event especially now that local cases of the...
DELTA CASE

Delta variant has been detected in Misamis Oriental. Governor-Yevgeny Vicente Emcano yesterday said two persons sharing the same residence as the province's first Delta variant patient have tested positive for COVID-19 and are now being closely watched.

The governor however told the public briefing "Laging Handa" that until the samples of the two household members have been sequenced, the official count of the Delta variant in the province remains at one, while the number of active cases is at 340.

"There were five of them in the same house. The patient, and four companions. Two showed negative results but the other two were positive. We have sent samples taken from the two to Manila," Emcano said.

Emcano assured his constituents that health officials are doing diligent contact tracing to determine the potential close contacts of the index patient. "Starting from the index case, contact tracing is now almost complete at 80 percent," he said.

While waiting for the results on the two positive close contacts of the Delta variant case, the governor said the province's realigning resources and manpower for a quick response.

Emcano said the implementation of restrictions within Misamis Oriental's borders remains strict even as public health officials are hoping for the enforcement of more stringent policies to make containment efforts easier.

"If we detect a surge, hopefully we can get the nod of the IATF. We will request for an ECQ (enhanced community quarantine) for the province of Misamis Oriental so that we will be able to impose stricter measures," he said, adding that the main challenge in implementing restrictions is the varying quarantine levels in neighboring local government units.

He noted that for a time, the provinces of Dagupan and Cagayan de Oro were under GCG (general community quarantine) while the province was under modified GCQ.

"It's a good thing that we have been placed under GCQ, not because we want to make life difficult for everybody, but it does give us a better chance at controlling and monitoring the Delta variant," the governor said.

Despite the upgrade in restrictions, Emcano said local businesses and the transportation sector continue to cope by complying with health protocols.

At the same time, Emcano lamented the slow arrival of vaccines in his province.

He said he was unable to air his concerns to the IATF since he was not notified of their arrival recently.

"I am puzzled. The IATF people showed up, but I was not invited. I was hoping to call their attention to our case here in Misamis Oriental because we have Cagayan de Oro City right in the center," he said, noting that the city is getting more vaccine shipment than the province.

The governor said he is regularly communicating with the Department of Health for updates regarding the arrival of more vaccine supplies.

Manila Mayor Isko Moreno said he will not put his city under lockdown even amid the DOH report that two cases of the Delta variant have been detected in Manila.

"No lockdown this July. We must all learn to live with COVID-19," Moreno said, adding that imposing a lockdown, or even a granular lockdown three weeks after the death of the Delta variant carrier does not make sense.

Moreno said the city government only learned that the city had a Delta variant carrier exactly a month after the 58 year old patient from Pandanac died on June 28.

Moreno said the city health department has been able to trace the close contacts of the patient and that none of them tested positive for the deadly virus.

Moreno also said the city government is now looking at the possible purchase of genome sequencing machines as part of the overall effort to boost the local genome sequencing efforts to detect COVID-19 variants.

"I have already instructed our personnel to look for the machines," he said.

In Cagayan de Oro City, where five Delta variant cases have been reported, Mayor Oscar Moreno appealed to his constituents to bear with the ECQ status of the city, which he said was imposed to prevent the spread of the highly transmissible variant.

Cagayan de Oro City has been under ECQ status since Friday last week.

"What's important here is that the ECQ is a mode to ensure that the Delta variant will no longer spread. We need to take a rest when we get sick. So, let's take a rest and avoid super spreader events," Moreno said.

Moreno said he has talked to the regional social and welfare development director who said that cash assistance will be given to low-income families in the city.

Moreno appealed to the IATF not to be too strict in allowing people in and out of the city as he pointed out that Cagayan de Oro City is a center of convergence.

"Cagayan de Oro is a hub city, a convergence city and we have many people from neighboring municipalities who come to Cagayan de Oro to work or do essential things. So, authorities must be considerate. People in neighboring municipalities are already virtually part of Cagayan de Oro City," he added. - With Peter Tabingco and Asgeir Mathero