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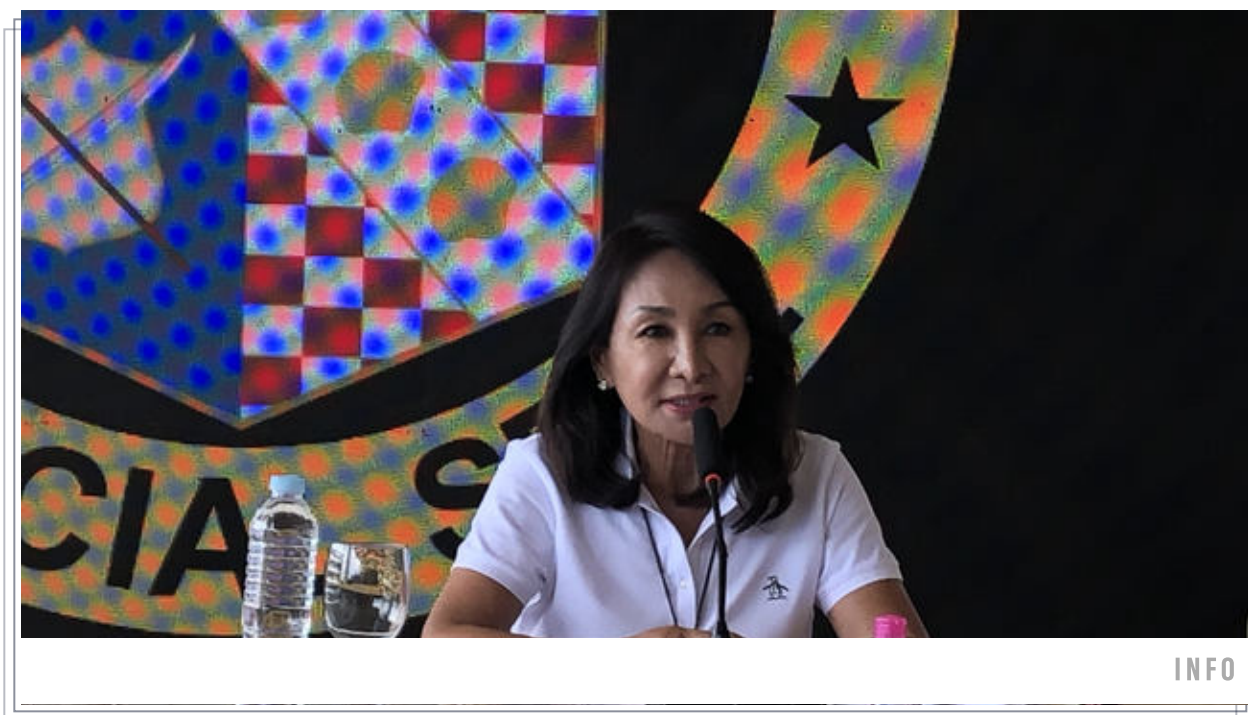
PHILIPPINES

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Cebu Province insists on its customs protocols for arriving OFWs

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INFO



CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES



Cebu province's system prescribes a significantly shorter quarantine period for OFWs and returning Filipinos than that of the national government's policy

Cebu Province will continue to implement its customs protocols for the swabbing and quarantine of incoming Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) and returning Filipinos despite alleged pressure from national advisers to heed protocols under the whole-of-nation approach.

"My executive order stays and I will have this further strengthened by an ordinance to be passed by the Cebu Provincial Board. Para ni sa atong mga kaigsuonan nga manguli nga niagi na og grabe nga kalisud sa gawas nga manguli nya mapun-an pa nato ang kalisod," Governor Gwendolyn Garcia said in a press conference on Monday, May 3.

(This is for our brothers and sisters coming home, who have undergone hardships, and who will go home to added burdens.)

Under Executive Order No. 17 Series of 2021, Cebu-bound OFWs and returning Filipinos from abroad will be swabbed upon arrival in the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

They will then be ushered to designated hotels where they will quarantine for 2-3 days while awaiting RTC-PCR test results. If they test negative, they will be allowed to head back to their home local government units (LGU), subject to custom health protocols. Meanwhile, those who test positive will be transported to isolation facilities.

This system prescribes a significantly shorter quarantine period for OFWs and returning Filipinos than that of the national government's policy. This was first implemented in March 31.

Under the guidelines set by The Task Group on the Management of Returning Overseas Filipinos, OFWs and returning Filipinos will only be swabbed on the 6th day of their hotel quarantine. They will then be made to wait for their COVID-19 test results before release.

Garcia said she had received communication from the Department of Health – Central Visayas on Saturday, May 1. There was recommendation from three doctors under the DOH technical advisory council to have all LGUs heed the whole-of-nation approach for health protocols on the arrival of OFWs and returning Filipinos.

“Instead of going back to that repressive quarantine policies for our returning Filipinos and OFWs, in line with their whole-of-nation approach, I take a position as governor of the Province of Cebu,” she said.

Garcia cited Section 105 of the Local Government Code, saying the law requires the consultation of the concerned local government unit before the Secretary of Health could assume direct supervision and control of health operations in the LGU.

Dr Mary Jean Loreche, DOH – Central Visayas Chief Pathologist, addressed concerns during the same press conference on the possibility of missing active cases if the arriving passengers are tested during the “window period” – the first few days of infection where the viral load is so low that the infection can be undetectable.

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Loreche said the province can “afford” to implement the policy because it had already adapted contact-tracing and surveillance systems from previous surges it was able to contain.

“We have to remember that because our systems and our processes are already in

place, we can afford to do the testing upon arrival and when they are negative, they are released to their LGUs subject to compliance of the quarantine and of course, the testing protocols,” Loreche said.

Referring to the whole-of-nation-approach to testing protocols, Loreche added, “I believe that is uncalled for. We can do our protocols because we have proven it to be right for us.”

As of Sunday, May 2, the Cebu Province tallied 32 new cases, bringing its total active cases to 889. Its total cases of COVID-19 stand at 14,845, with 13,310 recoveries and 646 deaths. – **Rappler.com**

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