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Duterte to DOH: Review Cebu protocols for OFWs

Christina Mendez

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[Christina Mendez](#) (The Philippine Star )

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MANILA, Philippines — President Duterte wants the Department of Health (DOH) to assess the quarantine protocols being implemented by the Cebu provincial government for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and returning Filipinos.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the President discussed the matter with Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia during a meeting on Monday night after Malacañang ordered the diversion of Cebu-bound international flights to Manila from May 29 to June 5.

Presidential Assistant for the Visayas Michael Dino, Department of Health-Central Visayas spokesperson and chief pathologist Mary Jean Loreche and Task Force Against COVID-19 chief implementer for the Visayas Mel Feliciano also attended the

meeting, which lasted for more than two hours.

Roque said the President wanted the DOH to provide a “critique” of Garcia’s decision to allow travelers to forgo quarantine if they tested negative for COVID-19 upon their arrival.

Citing the shortage of rooms in hotels and quarantine facilities, the Cebu provincial government said returning Filipinos need not be quarantined, but they need to undergo a second swab test on the seventh day of their arrival.

“Governor Gwen explained their unique protocol... They conduct tests on the first day and allow (travelers) to undergo strict home quarantine, which is monitored by barangay health workers,” Roque said.

He said the President acknowledged that the quarantine protocols being implemented in Cebu was for humanitarian reasons as many OFWs wanted to be immediately reunited with their families.

However, Roque stressed the need to follow the protocols issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

He said the national government also wants to determine if it can learn from the policies implemented by the Cebu provincial government, which has been under a more relaxed modified general community quarantine in the past 10 months.

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