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Bello sorry over confusion on 'No Vax, No Ride' exemptions

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The government should apologize for public confusion created by the implementation of the “no vaccination, no ride”, especially on the issue pertaining to who should be exempted from the policy, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Silvestre Bello III said on Wednesday, Jan. 19.



(NOEL B. PABALATE / MANILA BULLETIN)

“I think there is a reason for us to apologize to the public for that because, as I was saying to [Cabinet Secretary] Karlo Nograles, kailangan pa natin ng (we need) a massive information drive about this policy,” Bello said in an interview with CNN Philippines on Wednesday, Jan. 19.

Bello issued the statement following an uproar on the enforcement of the “No Vax, No Ride” policy, which took effect on Monday, Jan. 17, as some workers were prohibited to use public utility vehicles (PUVs) for being unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

Bello earlier clarified that employees working on-site had always been exempted from this rule and just need to present documents proving their employment such as a company identification card.

“Very clear po na ang (It is very clear that the) ‘No vax, no ride’ policy does not apply to workers. Kapag ikaw ay (If you are a) worker, you cannot be prevented from riding public transport,” the labor chief emphasized.

“Yung mga implementers natin, siguro, because of their enthusiasm to protect the public, nakalimutan nila na exempted ang ating mga workers (Maybe because of the enthusiasm of our implementers to protect the public, they forgot that workers are exempted),” he added.

To avoid confusion among the public and the enforcers, Bello also urged the implementing agencies to further expand the information drive on the policy.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr), which issued the order to implement the scheme, has been reiterating that the policy does not cover all unvaccinated individuals.

Under the order, exempted from the policy are persons with medical conditions that prohibit them to get their jab, and those who will avail essential goods or services.

“Kung ikaw ay may (If you have a) medical condition that prohibits you from being vaccinated, all you need to do is present a medical certificate,” DOTr explained.

“Kung nakaka-first dose ka pa lamang, o kaya naman ay unvaccinated, ngunit essential ang iyong lakad—halimbawa, may medical check up, medical examination, o kaya naman ikaw ay magta-trabaho, bibili ng essential goods, mag-a-apply ng lisensya, passport, etc., you need to present proof na ikaw eh talagang doon papunta (If you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated but your travel is essential — for medical check up, medical examination, work, passport or license application, you just need to present a proof),” it added.

According to the DOTr, exempted passengers can just show proof such as medical appointment, certificate or appointment from the company, or health pass from the barangay that they will obtain essential goods, among others.

The DOTr has defended the enforcement of the policy, adding that it is in line with President Duterte’s order to restrict the movement of unvaccinated individuals in Metro Manila amid a renewed surge in the number COVID-19 cases there.

The restriction will remain in effect while the National Capital Region is under Alert Level 3 or a higher quarantine classification.

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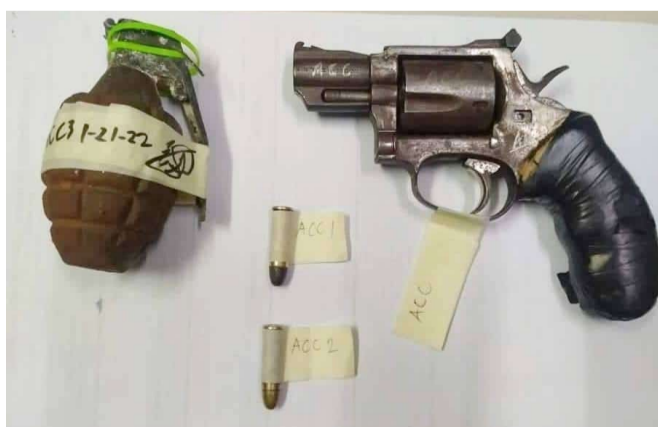
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