

QC dads, health office squabble over 2019 fund

By Rio N. Araja

THE 37-member Quezon City council is at odds with the city government's health officer over alleged fake news that the fund allocation for medicines and hazard pay for health personnel was removed in the 2019 budget.

In light of the May 13 elections, Majority Floor Leader and District 3 Councilor **Franz Pumaren** said the council was not disregarding the basic service of medicines for the city residents.

He blamed Dr. Verdades Linga, health department head, as "the one who started sharing the false information" that over P110 million was removed from the city health's 2019 budget to "malign the procedure of the budget deliberation and the city council."

"I wish we would say the truth. It is a sole discretion of the city council. It was mandated by the law that we have every right to dissect every department, every budget—whether we increase, decrease or realign the budget. It just pains me to hear that. All of us can testify that we did not remove a big chunk of the city health department's budget. That's a big lie," Pumaren said in a statement.

"As claimed by the health department, this was not a personal matter. The city council has consistently addressed the concerns of the city health department. The office head was asked regarding the distribution of medicines. However, she cannot clearly justify such," he added.

The councilor said Linga even failed to take part in the budget deliberation.

"I was invited [on] Jan. 28 by Councilor Pumaren to listen to his privilege speech. Tomorrow [Thursday], I will be at the Blue Ribbon committee hearing to shed light on this [issue]," Linga told the **Standard** in a text message.

District 4 Councilor **Marvin Rillo**, meanwhile, proposed that the council refer this matter to the Blue Ribbon Committee.