

QC GOVERNMENT: NO NEED TO LOCK DOWN KAMUNING

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The Quezon City government will not place Kamuning on lockdown as a returning resident who has been found positive for the more contagious variant of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) did not go home in the barangay.



“This person did not set foot in the community, he did not go home nor did he interact with residents from Kamuning. He went straight [from the hotel where he underwent quarantine then to] the city’s isolation facility,” Mayor Joy Belmonte said at a press conference on Thursday.

She said it was unlikely that the virus variant had been transmitted to neighbors.

Belmonte explained that the city government would only resort to a “granular” lockdown based on its monitoring of clustering of cases or community transmission. Kamuning is among the villages with the lowest number of cases in the city, she noted.

The country’s first case of the more contagious UK variant of COVID-19 was traced to a returning resident from Quezon City, the Department of Health confirmed on Wednesday night.

The male patient, along with a female companion, arrived from Dubai on Jan. 7. He tested negative for the virus before he left the Philippines on Dec. 27, and negative again when he reached Dubai.

Isolation center

He underwent another swab test on Jan. 7 upon arrival in Manila, and checked into a hotel while waiting for the results.

When the patient was found to be positive for COVID-19, the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team brought him to one of the city-owned isolation centers, according to the chief of the City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit, Rolly Cruz.

The patient’s female companion tested negative for the virus.

Other residents of Quezon City who were on the same flight they took will also be screened by the local government.

The UK variant was detected after the sample was randomly selected to undergo screening at the Philippine Genome Center (PGC).

Belmonte said she had learned that samples of travelers coming from countries where the presence of the COVID-19 variant have been reported were automatically screened by the PGC, but samples of those coming from other countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, were selected randomly.

Contact tracing

The city government has ramped up its contact tracing efforts to prevent virus transmission. Health workers who transported the patient were also isolated and tested. As a precaution, household members of the patient were brought to an isolation unit for testing. Cruz said the close contacts of those who had come in contact with the patient were now being identified.

The village chair of Kamuning has reported to the city government that some of its residents have experienced discrimination after it was confirmed that the patient also lives in the community.

Some were even asked not to report to work, Belmonte said.

“I am saddened by this, but this is the effect of the lack of awareness, education and clarification brought by the premature announcement without describing the circumstances surrounding his case,” the mayor said.

She stressed that there was no basis for discrimination of Kamuning residents as proper quarantine protocols had been followed.

Belmonte warned that the city was ready to pursue its antidiscrimination ordinance should Kamuning residents continue to be discriminated against despite public knowledge about the nature of the case.