

Belmonte tightens watch on hotels

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QUEZON City Mayor Josefina Belmonte wants the local police to augment security in hotels serving as quarantine facilities to make sure that those under quarantine will not sneak out and pose danger to communities.

She stressed the need to tighten enforcement of health protocols after the Department of Health (DoH) confirmed that the new coronavirus variant first seen in the United Kingdom had been seen in Bontoc, Mountain Province and other areas.

“With the lawmen assigned outside these establishments, we can prevent returning Filipinos from leaving without finishing the government-mandated quarantine period,” she said.

“Now that the DoH confirmed the presence of the new strain in several places of the country, the more we need to double our efforts in preventing the spread of the virus,” Belmonte added.

Quezon City has intensified the inspection of hotels and other establishments to make sure these are following health and safety protocols.

“We are leaving no stone unturned to guarantee that every hotel operating in the city is implementing the health and safety guidelines to the letter,” Tetta Tirona, action officer of the Quezon City Tourism Department, said.

Based on national and local health and safety guidelines, only four- and five-star hotels accredited by the Department of Tourism may accept “staycation” guests.

The rest of the hotels and other similar establishments are only allowed to accept long-term bookings and health care workers for accommodation near their workplace.

During their monitoring on January 18, Tirona said three of the five establishments they visited have stringent quarantine protocols.

The City Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit (CESU), meanwhile, required hotels to submit a list of returning foreign workers (RFWs) and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) staying with them on a daily basis.

All RFWs and OFWs staying in hotels were required to finish the 14-day quarantine before they will be allowed to go home, regardless if they test positive or negative for the coronavirus, CESU head Dr. Rolando Cruz said.

“We will not allow them to go home or continue their quarantine at home. It is part of our protocol to ensure the safety of everyone,” he added.

Meanwhile, Belmonte announced that the city’s first patient with the B117 variant had recovered. The male resident was allowed to go home after he tested negative for the virus.

His mother and girlfriend have also tested negative for the UK variant.