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Council must demand swift action by executive: Rama

The Cebu City Council in a special session yesterday asked Mayor Edgar Labella to immediately release the P1 billion allocated to fight Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19).

“Just as we have swiftly approved the budget, we in the Sangunian must demand swift action by the executive with greater transparency and accountability,” said Vice Mayor Michael L. Rama who presides the Cebu City Council with 19 elected local lawmakers. He is also the chairman of the Committee on Health, with City Councilor Niña Mabatid as vice chairperson.

Rama, who delivered a privilege speech, said he wanted to bring the City Council’s attention the sentiments of their constituents brought about by the confusion on the different policies and executive orders in addressing the pressing concern of COVID-19.

The concerns related to quarantine passes, border



MAYOR EDGAR LABELLA

passes, and many more did not escape Rama and his office staff.

Rama said there were complaints regarding unfair distribution of rice in the barangays coupled with lack of clear-cut guidelines and system of distribution reached his office.

“People trooped to their respective barangays in order to avail of the rice subsidies and the quarantine passes amidst the implementation by the City Government of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) pursuant to the executive order of the

mayor,” said Rama in his privilege speech.

He even recalled delivering a privilege speech last January bringing to the attention of the mayor, city health department, disaster response team and other offices of the Cebu City Government preparations to tackle in the event COVID-19 will infiltrate the city.

He added that being the chairman of the Committee on Health, Hospital Services and Sanitation, he was able to visit all 80 barangays in a bid to disseminate information about this dreaded virus under information, education and communication (IEC).

“Now, this government in a bid to react on the rise of COVID-19 cases in Cebu City, has been forced to shut down almost practically everything by implementing ECQ! Or what I simply call as a localized version of martial law,” Rama said.

“The ECQ had been in force last March 28, 2020 at around 12:00 noon. The Cebuanos became confused.



VICE MAYOR MICHAEL RAMA

Many are asking me and my office about the quarantine passes and the guidelines of this policy. I have shared with the mayor and former councilor Joey Daluz about the border passes but not this quarantine passes because this will only sow confusion among the populace,” Rama said.

While the City Council swiftly approved the P1 billion budget, Rama cited the highly politicized distribution of rice in the barangays brought about by the political differences of elected barangay officials

and the Mayor’s Information Liaison Officers (MILO).

“Complaints about the unfair distribution and lack of system was the primordial concern. I am deeply disturbed to see the political bickering over solidarity in these trying times,” Rama said.

The barangays were not even instructed to deliver the rice assistance house to house. Instead, residents trooped to barangay halls resulting in mammoth crowds without social distancing.

He reminded the executive department that President Rodrigo Duterte approved the imposition of Stringent Social Distancing Measures upon the recommendation of health officials, as well as members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) in a bid to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“Now, why are we doing the opposite?” Rama asked.

ELIAS O. BAQUERO