

# Homelandnews

## Robredo on Duterte's dare to shop for COVID vaccines: 'Sobrang pikon'

**By: Katrina Hallare**  
 MANILA, Philippines — "Pa-rang hindi Pangulo yung nag-sasalita. Sobrang pikon (He doesn't seem to be behaving like a President. He's so quick-tempered).

This was Vice President Leni Robredo's response to President Rodrigo Duterte's latest outburst, daring her to shop overseas for COVID-19 vaccines.

"Parati naman sinasabi kapag pikon ka, talo ka di ba? Dapat sa trabaho namin di kami napipikon eh," Robredo said in an interview for the GMA News program "The Mangahas Interviews" aired Wednesday.

(People often say that if you're quick-tempered, you'll lose the argument. When you're in our profession, you shouldn't lose your temper easily.)

"Kasi sa trabaho namin, kailangan yung tao malayang mag-criticize eh. Kailangan yung tao, malayang magbigay ng sugges-



tions, kasi yun yung makabubuti sa aming panunungkulan," she later added.

(In our job, the people should have the freedom to criticize. The people should have the freedom to give suggestions on how to do our job better.)

Duterte raged in his public address Monday night, saying he would fund Robredo's pur-

chases solely to procure the Philippines' COVID-19 vaccines.

### Covid vaccines

This followed the Vice President's calls for Sinovac Biotech's vaccine to be reviewed, as 600,000 doses arrived on Sunday. This makes the Philippines the last Southeast Asian country to conduct COVID-19 testing.

Robredo said that she had warned about this from the start, saying: "Ito na nga yung sinasabi natin from the very start. talagang mahihirapan tayo pag hindi tayo maagap."

(This was what I've been warning about. If we don't act fast, we'll be having a hard time catching up.)

"Kahit bigyan mo ako ng napakaraming pera, di na tayo bwelong bumili kasi late na tayo gumalaw eh," she later lamented.

(Even if you give me a lot of money, we cannot do it, as we failed to act quickly.)

## Margielyn Didal wins inaugural Asia Skater of Year award



### By: Mark Giongco

MANILA, Philippines — Tokyo Olympics hopeful Margielyn Didal reaped several accolades, including the top award, in the Asia Skate Awards.

Didal was named the inaugural Women's Asia Skater of the Year, edging seven other finalists.

The 21-year-old Cebu native pocketed \$1,500 for the plum.

Another Filipino in Cindy Lou Serma was nominated for the prestigious award.

Didal also won the Style for

Miles and Fastest Feet in the East awards that earned her \$300 in the process.

Meanwhile, three Filipinos in Mak Feliciano, Daryl Dominguez and Daniel Ledermann missed out on the Men's Asia Skater of the Year honor won by Japan's Auto Horigome.

Didal is a shoo-in for the pandemic-hit Olympics where the top 20 skateboarders are given outright berths. The reigning Asian and Southeast Asian champion is currently ranked 14th in the world.

## Many of 118 new COVID-19 cases in Baguio traced to call centers

**By: Vincent Cabreza -**  
 BAGUIO CITY—Employees of business process outsourcing (BPO) firms, or call centers, have been isolated this week due to a possible coronavirus outbreak after workplace tests confirmed that many of the 118 infection cases recorded in Baguio on Wednesday (Mar. 3) came from



these facilities.

Other patients on the list work for a high-end food establishment.

The infections raised the number of Baguio's active cases to 345 out of the new city total of 5,387.

Mayor Benjamin Magalong, the country's contact-tracing czar, said he expected the number of cases to rise as contact tracing efforts track down people who may have been exposed to the new carriers, according to the city information office.

The City Health Services Office did not identify the location of the stricken BPOs. Large call center operations are concentrated in Camp John Hay, the Baguio City Economic Zone and a BPO hub administered by a shopping mall in downtown Baguio.

Baguio is on general community quarantine (GCQ) which had been extended to March 31. But the city had eased border restrictions, exempting leisure travellers from GCQ restrictions.

## Drilon questions validity of Parlade's being anti-insurgency task force spokesman



as the chamber tackled the committee report of the Senate defense panel on its investigation into the alleged red-tagging by military officials.

The probe, which was conducted late last year, was triggered by a Facebook post by Parlade implying that actress Liza Soberano had been recruited by communist rebels when she communicated with Gabriela Women's party-list group, which he had tagged as a communist front.

"I would like to think that the sponsor will agree that the designation as a spokesperson not only poses problems on his personality but also could be questioned on the ground that we are designating an active military officer in a purely civilian office which is prohibited under the Constitution," Drilon said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, chair of the committee, agreed with Drilon, noting that the committee report included a recommendation that Parlade "should not be holding two positions" in the NTF-Elcac as well as in the AFP.

"Simply because there might be some confusion and whatever he says as spokesperson of the NTF-Elcac necessarily reflects on his superiors in the AFP, if not the AFP itself," Lacson said.

He added that the panel report recommended that the NTF-Elcac engage a spokesperson not holding concurrent positions in the security sector to prevent a "potential conflict" in policies.

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**By: Christia Marie Ramos**  
 MANILA, Philippines — Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon questioned on Wednesday the validity of Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr.'s designation as spokesperson of the Duterte administration's anti-insurgency task force while still an active military officer, saying this could be unconstitutional.

Drilon cited Article 16, Section 5, Paragraph 4 of the Constitution which states that "no member of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in active service shall at any time be appointed or designated in any capacity to a civilian position in the government."

To rectify this apparent violation of the Constitution, Drilon said Parlade, who is also the AFP Southern Luzon command chief, should no longer serve as the spokesperson of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac).

Drilon, a former justice secretary, raised this point during Wednesday's plenary session

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