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## Dengvaxia issue won't weigh down opposition Senate bets — solon

By Ellson Quismorio

Opposition Senate bets won't be carrying the “stain” of the Dengvaxia mess in the upcoming May 13 polls.

Thus, reckoned Surigao del Sur 2nd district, Rep. Johnny Pimentel, even as he noted that the Dengvaxia issue cannot be connected to the opposition candidates in the Senate.



Surigao del Sur 2nd district Rep. Johnny Pimentel  
(Facebook / MANILA BULLETIN)

“I don’t think it will be an issue considering that candidates of the Liberal Party (LP) were not involved in the Dengvaxia transaction so therefore it would be useless to link them to the Dengvaxia case,” said Pimentel, a member of ruling party Partido Demokratiko Pilipino–Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban).

“Besides, the administration senatorial bets are not raising the issue during their rallies,” noted Pimentel, a former chairman of House Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability.



It can be recalled that in April 2016 or just a month before the presidential elections, the previous Aquino administration tapped the relatively new vaccine, Dengvaxia, as a response to the spike in dengue fever cases. Dengue fever has been a perennial child killer in the Philippines.

Manufactured by French pharmaceutical firm Sanofi Pasteur, the drug was administered to an estimated 900,000 school children before the mass vaccination effort was suspended by the current Duterte administration.

The suspension resulted from Sanofi's own admission in November 2017 that Dengvaxia could be harmful for "seronegative" children, or those who have never contracted dengue but were given Dengvaxia shots anyway.

Over 100 vaccinees have reportedly died, and the figure is expected to rise within the identified critical period for the vaccinees, which is the next three to five years.

The timing of the vaccine's ill effects mean that the kin of the vaccine victims have yet to express their anger and outrage on the Dengvaxia mess in an election setting.

Meanwhile, Antipolo City 2nd district Rep. Romeo Acop still believes that the Dengvaxia controversy deserves to be made an election issue if only to give a sense of justice to the victims' families.

"It's unfortunate that it's not being taken up as an election issue. I commiserate with the victims since they have no avenue to express their anger," said the House Committee on Public Order and Safety chairman.

Acop further lamented that, as far as Philippine elections go, it's the superficial or non-important issues and statements from politicians that usually dominate the topics of discussion.

"They all give us general statements. They say they want to solve poverty but they can't say how. Anything goes, whether it's fake news or real news, it's all out there [during the elections]. But for me, Dengvaxia is a legitimate issue that should be discussed," he said.