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## Duterte sacks FDA chief for corruption

MANILA, Philippines — It's the turn of the chief of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to get the ax supposedly for corruption as President Duterte continues to purge the bureaucracy of misfits and grafters, Malacañang said yesterday.

The dismissal of FDA director general Nela Charade Puno was announced yesterday by presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo.

“Please be advised that upon the instructions of the President, your appointment as Director General of the Food and Drug Authority, Department of Health, is hereby terminated,” Panelo said, quoting the one-page dismissal order signed by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea dated May 15.

Health Undersecretary Eric Domingo has been directed to take over as officer-in-charge “to ensure continuous and uninterrupted operations of the FDA.”

Asked about his reaction to Puno's dismissal, Domingo said the DOH “supports President Duterte's commitment to eradicate graft and corruption in all government agencies.”

According to Palace officials, Duterte had lost trust and confidence in Puno because of corruption issues, details of which Panelo did not share.

“This is in line with the President's continuing mandate to eradicate graft and corruption and to ensure that public officials and employees conduct themselves in a manner worthy of public trust,” the dismissal order declared.

Malacañang directed Puno to turn over relevant official documents to the DOH Office of the Undersecretary for Health Regulation immediately.

“To assure the uninterrupted delivery of public service, you are hereby directed to immediately turn over all the official documents, papers and properties in your possession to the Office of the Undersecretary for Health Regulation, DOH,” the letter read.

Duterte threatened last month to fire more officials, citing unabated incidents of corruption despite his warning of severe punishment for irregularities.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III was furnished a copy of the dismissal order.

Duterte appointed Puno to the post in August 2016 shortly after he assumed the presidency.

Puno had survived an attack by armed men in Lupi, Camarines Norte in October last year after the provincial capital passed an ordinance requiring establishments to secure FDA clearance prior to acquiring a business license.

Three of her police escorts were killed and three others injured in the attack. — with Sheila Crisostomo



