



## Deaths from virus highest in Davao City, says OCTA

BY GERARD NAVAL

ASIDE from being the top source of new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases, President Duterte's hometown of Davao City also has the highest case fatality rate (CFR) in the country, the independent OCTA Research Team said yesterday.

In a statement, OCTA said Davao City has a higher CFR as compared to other local government units, including Metro Manila which is the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Davao City has steadily registered the highest number of fatalities from COVID-19 at 3.43 percent case fatality rate," said OCTA. Davao City has a total of 21,991 COVID-19 cases with 674 deaths.

Davao City beat Cebu City which has a 3.40 percent CFR, as well as Pasig (1.97%), Manila (1.85%), and Quezon (1.47%) in Metro Manila.

Davao City has overtaken Quezon City as the LGU with the highest number of average new COVID-19 cases per day. On Sunday, the OCTA noted that cases continue to climb in Davao City as it registered an average of 252 new COVID-19 cases per day during the period of June 13 to 19, which is 42 percent higher as compared to the average of 177 new cases during the period of June 6 to 12.

The increase in cases in Davao City signifies the continued surge of COVID-19 in the Visayas and Mindanao.

In a virtual press briefing, Health Undersecretary Abdullah Dumama said they continue to see growth in cases in all three regions in the Visayas and five regions in Mindanao.

"They have been showing positive two-week growth rates. Thus, we need to intensify our responses," said Dumama, as he urged public and private hospitals in the Visayas and Mindanao to increase their number of COVID-19 dedicated beds.

Currently, public hospitals have an average dedicated COVID-19 bed of 41 percent, while private hospitals have an average of COVID-19 bed of 24 percent.

"We continue to call on these hospitals to increase the dedicated beds, especially given the high utilization rate of our hospitals," said the health official.

Dumama said they are also improving the COVID-19 referral system, through the One Hospital Command, in the Visayas and Mindanao regions in order to improve the handling



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of COVID-19 patients.

Meanwhile, Tuguegarao City Mayor Jefferson Soriano yesterday said the rise of COVID-19 infections and deaths in the city have been "phenomenal" over the past months.

In a radio interview, Soriano said more than 50 percent of the total COVID-19 cases in the city were recorded in March and April this year.

"Last March, our death was only 24. Now, we have 118 (deaths)," said Soriano, adding: "The transmission here in Tuguegarao City is phenomenal. The rise of our deaths has been also phenomenal."

Soriano blamed the surge of COVID-19 cases in the city to the UK variant, pointing out that 60 residents were reported to have contracted the variant as of two weeks ago.

As of Sunday, the city recorded 7,035 cases - 6,396 recovered, 521 active cases and 118 deaths.

On the bright side, Soriano said

there were only 459 COVID-19 infections recorded on Sunday. The highest number of cases reported in the city in a day was 1,153 on April 13, he said.

Tuguegarao City is under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ), the second highest quarantine classification, since April 14. It was under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) from March 30 to April 13.

In Iloilo City, Mayor Geronimo "Jerry" Treñas yesterday turned emotional as he reiterated his appeal to the national government to provide the city with more COVID-19 vaccines amid the surge of infections in the city.

"The only way we can really stop the surge is for the national government to add more vaccines in the same way you lowered the cases in the NCR Plus 8," Treñas said during the Laging Handa press briefing.

NCR Plus 8 is composed of the National Capital Region, Metro Cebu, Metro Davao, Bulacan, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Pampanga, and Rizal.

Treñas said the national government

"flooded" NCR Plus 8 with vaccines, deciding to allocate in these areas 90 percent of vaccines that have so far arrived the country. "I think you should do the same thing (in Iloilo). Sometimes I would like to say that we are from Region 6 (Western Visayas), we are from Iloilo, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Negros but we are Filipinos and we are also as affected, the people, like the people in NCR Plus 8," said Treñas.

Treñas said the reason there was a reduction in COVID-19 cases in the NCR Plus 8 was because the government focused the rollout of the vaccines in the local government units in these areas.

"Maybe we can really stop the surge or flatten the curve if we flood also LGUs outside Metro Manila or NCR Plus 8 with vaccines. That's the only way. You did it in NCR Plus 8, perhaps you should also do it here. We are not from NCR Plus 8 but we are also Filipinos. I hope you will listen to our appeal, we hope you can also help us because we are also Filipinos," Treñas added. —

**With Victor Reyes**