



Duterte orders swift deployment of COVID-19 vaccines to provinces

By GENALYN KABILING

As the country receives more coronavirus vaccines from suppliers, President Duterte has ordered authorities to "move faster" with the distribution of life-saving jabs to the people, especially in Mindanao.

The President pushed for a swift-

er vaccine rollout during a televised address Monday, June 21, after expressing concern about the surge of infections in Mindanao.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III had earlier reported to the President that Mindanao has become the highest contributor to the country's total daily cases ►**8**

COVID-19 UPDATE IN PH

1,367,894 CONFIRMED CASES

3,666 NEW CASES

23,809 DEATHS

1,291,389 RECOVERED

As of June 22, 2021



Duterte orders swift... 1◀

of coronavirus. The country reported 5,249 cases of infections Monday, which pushed the total cases to 1,364,239. The coronavirus data included 55,847 active cases and 23,749 deaths.

"I hope that you'd move faster kasi as - ang ano kasi dito is... Well, as long as we have the supply in steady manner, there is no reason why we should also dilly-dally in the distribution of the vaccines in the provinces," the President told the government's task force in charge of addressing the pandemic in Davao City Monday.

Prior to the President's comments aired live on state television, Duque presented a report that the country's cases have plateaued, except for Mindanao that recently accounted for the bulk of daily infections. He called for intensified COVID preventive measures, including increase in critical health care resources, to stem the case surge in Visayas and Mindanao.

The President then asked Duque for a list of the allocation of coronavirus vaccines in every province in the country. The health chief informed the President about the vaccine allocation plan, including raising the vaccine supply in areas experiencing COVID case spike.

"Kasi I'm just wondering there are - in Mindanao, sabi mo, it has surpassed the number of cases doon sa Luzon. Sa dito sa Mindanao, ilan na ang napadapa - nabigyan ng bakuna? (In Mindanao, how many have been given the vaccines?)," Duterte asked Duque. Duque deferred to vaccine czar Carlito Galvez Jr. in providing details about the vaccine distribution in the provinces.

More than 2 million people have so far been fully vaccinated since the government embarked on the free inoculation drive last March. The list of vaccinated persons consisted mostly of health workers, senior citizens, and people with comorbidity.

The country has already received around 14.2 million doses of coronavirus vaccines and is expected to get another 4 million before the end of the month.

No favoritism in vaccine distribution

As this developed, the National Task Force (NTF) Against COVID-19 refuted allegations that Davao City, President Duterte's hometown, was allocated with the biggest portion of Pfizer vaccine doses.

NTF spokesman Restituto Padilla Jr. said the government is ensuring the equitable distribution of vaccines in the country but areas experiencing a surge are being prioritized.

"There is an equitable distribution so the allocation depends on the number of persons getting sick, and some areas have the capability to support the logistics chain requirements," Padilla said in a radio interview over dzBB.

Around 2.4 million doses of Pfizer jabs have been received by the government through donations from the global initiative COVAX Facility. These were composed of 193,050 doses delivered on May 10; and 2,276,820 doses which arrived on June 10.

In the delivery made on June 10, the NTF had said that 210,000 doses of Pfizer jabs were transported each to Metro Cebu and Metro Davao while the remaining were allocated to "NCR Plus" areas - Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal.

But Padilla clarified that the allocation in Davao was meant to support the entire Davao Region (Region 11), and not just Davao City. Davao Region is comprised of five provinces and six cities, including Davao City.

The Department of Health (DOH) said Davao City is one of the "areas of concern" as a surge of infections was observed in the area. In the first week of June, Davao City had a growth rate of 54 percent while its attack rate was at 11.34 percent.

This translated to high-to-critical risk health care and ICU [intensive care unit] utilization rates, which means more people are getting hospitalized.

"We are particularly monitoring the situation in Davao because it has the highest attack rate now, according to DOH," Padilla said. (With a report from Martin A. Sadongdong)