



DOH: 8 regions to get more vax doses; 2m jobs of Sinovac arrive

By Willie Casas and Joel Zurbano

REGIONS battling spike in COVID-19 infections have been allocated more vaccines, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said Thursday.

Duque identified the areas as follows: Regions 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Caraga, and BARMM.

"We have to be sensitive to the areas experiencing a spike or a surge. So we need to redeploy. Every now and then we need to recalibrate our response," he said in a briefing with Israeli vaccination experts.

For her part, Health Undersecretary Myrna Cabotaje said the number of additional doses per priority area ranges from 5,000 to 10,000, depending on the region's population, number of COVID-19 cases, and vaccine inventory.

"We calibrate how much we are going to give them. Let us also consider that there is still limited supply," she said.

The DOH earlier flagged several areas in Visayas and Mindanao over their rising number of COVID-19 infections.

Testing czar Secretary Vince Dizon said several densely populated urban centers will get a bigger share of vaccines once more supplies come in.

"Given a situation where there is scarcity of vaccines...you really need to prioritize areas [in] which the vaccines are most effectively utilized," he said.

"These areas, based on the strategy of focus and expand, are the densest areas in the country, highly urbanized cities. Why? Because, number one, they have the highest risk of getting infection. Also, [they make] the greatest contribution to the economy," Dizon said.

Dizon said some of these "key cities" are Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod, Zamboanga, Baguio, Talisay, and Minglanilla.

The Philippines has vaccinated over 6.2 million individuals as of June 20, still far from the government's target of inoculating 50 million to 70 million people this year.

Cabotaje also denied claims that Iloilo City received fewer COVID-19 vaccines.

The city government received only 66,000 out of the 84,000 vials that DOH claimed it released, Mayor Jerry Treñas earlier said.

But the DOH said the 84,000 vials were completely delivered to Iloilo City.

"He [Treñas] just cannot account for the other supplies because these did not pass through the local government unit," Cabotaje said.