



More vaccines eyed for VisMin areas

BY GERARD NAVAL

WITH the National Capital Region now classified as a "low-risk" COVID-19 area, the Department of Health yesterday said it is considering redeploying vaccines originally allocated to Metro Manila, to Visayas and Mindanao areas which are reporting surges in infection.

"It's good that NCR is now at low risk classification based on the daily attack rate and number of new cases per day," Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said in a press briefing at the Lakeshore Mega Vaccination Hub in Taguig City.

"They have started to go down, which means the case transmission is slowing down... it will give us more comfort to redeploy the vaccines, some of which have been originally allocated for NCR," he

added.

The DOH recently reported surges in COVID-19 cases in almost all regions in the Visayas and Mindanao.

"We have to be agile. We have to be able to adjust given the situation. We have to be sensitive to areas experiencing a spike or a surge," Duque said adding government has increased allocations to the Western Visayas (Region 6), Eastern Visayas (8), Zamboanga Peninsula (9), Northern Mindanao (10), Davao (11), Soccsksargen (12), Caraga (13), and BARMM.

On Wednesday, the DOH said the NCR can already be considered as "low risk" as there was a 23 percent decline in new cases in the last two weeks, while Metro Manila's average daily attack rate (ADAR) is now at 5.7.

On the other hand, Caraga,

Western Visayas, Davao, and Soccsksargen regions are considered "high risk" areas because of high ADARs and growth rates.

The country yesterday received two million more doses of vaccine from Sinovac Biotech, the fourth batch from the Chinese firm delivered this month, presidential spokesman Harry Roque said.

Roque said the shipment includes the 1.6 million doses procured by the national government. The Manila city government received the remaining 400,000 doses.

The supply was received by Duque, National Task Force against COVID-19 chief implementer and vaccine czar Carlito Galvez Jr., Manila Mayor Isko Moreno, and Vice Mayor Honey

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Lacuna at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Moreno said the procurement was made possible through a tripartite agreement with the national government and assistance from the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines.

Sinovac has delivered 5.5 million doses of CoronaVac vaccine this month and 11 million since February.

The country is expecting the delivery of 250,000 doses of the Moderna vaccines on June 27, and 2.2 million doses of vaccines from AstraZeneca, under the COVAX Facility.

The Philippines has received 16.2 million doses of vaccine since February.

The country targets to buy 148 million vaccines this year and to vaccinate 50 million to 70 million before the year ends.

Guido David, of the independent OCTA Research Group, said the country can still reach its target of population protection before the end of the year if it's able to sustain an average of 195,000 jabs a day.

Fellow OCTA group member Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, in a virtual briefing in Malacañang, said community protection can be achieved faster or by October and herd immunity before Christmas is

possible if the country sustains a 250,000 doses jabs a day.

A total of 8.9 million jabs have been administered in the country. The country was able to administer a high of 336,843 jabs in a day last week.

OCTA called for the inclusion of Iloilo, Bacolod, Cagayan de Oro, and Baguio cities and other areas with high cases of COVID-19 in the vaccination priority list.

Roque said the government added 10 cities that are experiencing surges -- Bacolod, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Baguio, Zamboanga, Dumaguete, Tuguegarao, General Santos, Naga, and Legazpi. -- *With Jocelyn Montemayor and Ashzel Hachero*