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WHO warns of new COVID surge in 2 months, urges PH to prepare

By: **Kurt Dela Peña** - Content Researcher Writer / @inquirerdotnet INQUIRER.net / 04:35 PM April 07, 2022



FILE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines—As COVID-19 cases will likely rise, especially after the elections on May 9, the World Health Organization (WHO) said the Philippines should be prepared.

Dr. Rajendra Yadav, acting WHO representative to the Philippines, stressed that to prepare for and possibly prevent a rise in COVID-19 cases, everyone should wear a mask and get booster shots.

Last April 1, Dr. Rontgene Solante, a specialist on infectious diseases, said highly crowded election-related activities and the “waning immunity” of people who have yet to get booster shots could be the reasons for a new surge in cases.

READ: Health expert warns of COVID-19 ‘surge’ after May 9 polls

Yadav said on Wednesday (April 6) that the continuous “recalibration” of COVID-19 response is essential. He recommended house-to-house vaccination, especially for Filipinos not yet vaccinated.

It was last year when Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the government was expecting to completely vaccinate 77 million Filipinos by

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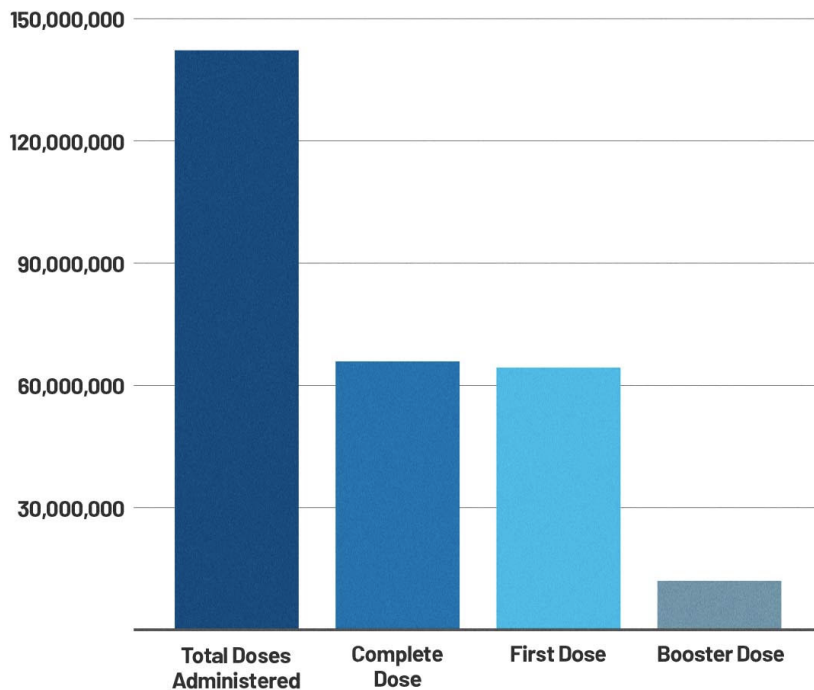
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Likewise, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., head of the National Task Force Against COVID-19, said 71.16 million Filipinos are expected to have received booster doses by quarter three 2022.

VACCINATION IN THE PHILIPPINES



INQ | SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan

However, as of March 30, there were only 65,885,048 fully vaccinated and 64,332,540 initially vaccinated. Out of the fully vaccinated, there were only 12,018,418 individuals who received booster shots.

Last March 29, when the total number of fully vaccinated was still 65,804,988, Bantay Bakuna, which advocates for a comprehensive and transparent rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, said the seven-day average rate was 182,709 per day.

Bantay Bakuna stressed that if the government continued with this rate, it would take two months to fully vaccinate 77 million and 10 months to fully vaccinate 90 million.

READ: [Duque: Gov't eyes 77 million fully vaxxed vs COVID-19 by Q1 2022](#)

Excess, expiring

Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion said on April 2 that 27 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine are set to expire in July. He said

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**READ: 27 million COVID-19 vaccine doses
Concepcion**

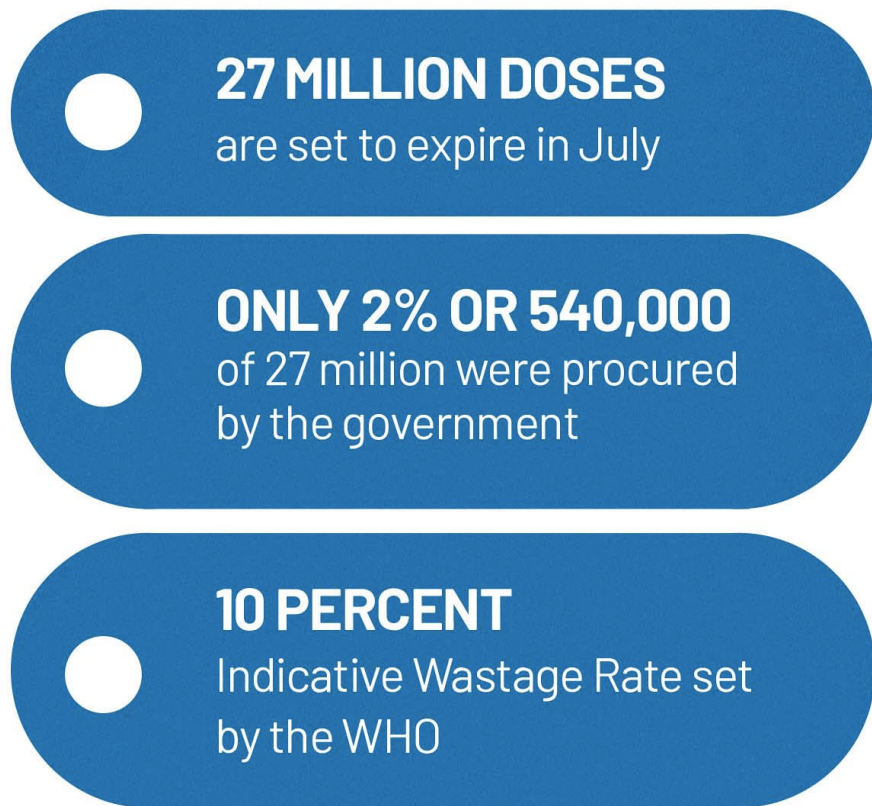
Concepcion stressed that “if we don’t use these vaccines, we will have wasted Filipino taxpayers’ money. Let’s not waste 27 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine”.

Last March 8, Health Undersecretary Myrna Cabotaje, head of the National Vaccine Operations Center, said the government is considering donating doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Myanmar and Africa.

READ: PH to donate COVID jabs to vaccine-short nations

“We have enough and some of their shelf life are nearing its expiry,” Cabotaje, who stressed that the government will have to ask if the shelf life could be extended, said.

EXPIRING VACCINES



INQ | SOURCES: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND NTF

GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan

According to Bantay Bakuna, the Philippines has 240,708,150 doses of COVID vaccine. As the Department of Health (DOH) said, out of this, 142,236,006 were already administered.

The DOH, however, stressed that only two percent or 540,000 of the 27

The government said on Tuesday (April 5) that it will proceed with its plan of giving out doses of COVID-19 vaccine: "We saw that we have excess vaccines right now so we are going to donate."

While arrangements are still being "finalized," Duque said Sputnik V, which was developed by the Gamaleya Institute in Russia, will be donated to Myanmar and Papua New Guinea.

**READ: PH donating 'excess' COVID-19 vaccines to Myanmar, PNG
No complacency**

Yadav said that from April to May this year, Ramadan and Holy Week will be observed as Filipinos will likewise engage in election-related activities which, since Feb. 8, have already seen immense crowds.

Solante stressed that people could be infected and that those who have already been completely vaccinated but have yet to receive booster shots could fall ill again.

"Some people don't even wear a face mask," Solante, who is the head of San Lazaro Hospital's Adult Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine Unit, said on April 1.

PROTECTED FROM COVID	
	COMPLETE DOSE
Health care workers	2,930,057
Elderly	6,603,948
Persons with existing illnesses	9,250,901
Essential workers	19,311,178
Indigent	9,048,328
Rest of the population	18,740,636

INQ | SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan

For Yadav, wearing of mask and high vaccination coverage are the "bare minimum" defense against COVID-19, saying that the government should be immediate in vaccinating Filipinos, especially the elderly and indigents.

- Health care workers

Complete Dose: 2,930,057

First Dose: 2,889,095

Booster: 1,282,678

- Elderly

Complete Dose: 6,603,948

First Dose: 5,197,798

Booster: 1,994,349

- Persons with comorbidities

Complete Dose: 9,250,901

First Dose: 7,937,271

Booster: 2,228,138

- Workers in essential services

Complete Dose: 19,311,178

First Dose: 19,305,554

Booster: 4,190,337

- Indigent

Complete Dose: 9,048,328

First Dose: 8,980,735

Booster: 1,004,033

- Rest of the population

Complete Dose: 18,740,636

First Dose: 20,022,087

Booster: 1,318,883

Yadav said there are three reasons one should get a “booster.” stressing that

He likewise stressed that there could be reduced protection against highly contagious variants of concern and that some may not develop enough protection from the primary series received.

Last March, as the government conducted the 4th national vaccination days, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire asked 44 million Filipinos eligible to receive booster shots to get the dose.

READ: 44 million Filipinos still unboosted after gov't missed vaccination target

Best thing to do

Yadav reminded local chief executives, who have less than 70 percent vaccination coverage, to implement an all-out effort to reach and exceed the 70 percent target for the primary series and booster doses.

He said that the present window of opportunity might be closing before the next potential wave strikes the Philippines. "LGUs (local government units) need to implement a more targeted approach of closer-to-home and mobile vaccinations to reach these vulnerable individuals."

"We cannot continue waiting for them to come to the health facilities. Instead, we need to reach these unreached populations by deploying outreach vaccinators immediately. In addition, we need to prioritize geographical areas with the largest number of unvaccinated senior citizens," he said.

READ: 4th national vaccine day may be the last

In March, as the government extended the "Bayanihan Bakunahan," Cabotaje said that instead of conducting a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive, the government may just concentrate on areas with a low jab rate or those that have yet to fully vaccinate 70 percent of their target population and senior citizens.

"Bringing health services closer to the communities is essential to reach unvaccinated individuals. Based on observations of the teams of WHO and Unicef (United Nations Children's Fund), centralized and fixed vaccination sites were helpful at the early stages of the vaccination campaign in many LGUs," Yadav said.

WHO said some LGUs that implemented decentralized facility-based and community-based vaccination campaigns have protected more than 80 percent and even 90 percent of their high-priority constituents.

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By taking this approach, such LGUs have shielded their populations from the next potential COVID-19 wave, it said.

As of March 30, Metro Manila has the highest vaccination rollout, with 23,613,578 doses administered. The region was followed by Calabarzon and Central Luzon, with 17,333,665 and 14,413,591 doses.

The Philippines, as of April 6, has 32,463 active COVID-19 cases. The total number of confirmed cases nationwide reached 3,680,244, including 3,588,359 recoveries and 59,422 deaths.

READ: DOH's COVID-19 tracker shows 265 new cases

TSB

For more news about the novel coronavirus click [here](#).

What you need to know about Coronavirus.

For more information on COVID-19, call the DOH Hotline: (02) 86517800 local 1149/1150.

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