Dengue cases may top 240,000, Duque warns

MANILA, Philippines — Dengue cases could rise to 240,000 across the country this year if preventive measures are not put in place to stop the spread of the mosquito-borne disease, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III warned on Monday.

Duque said that based on the number of dengue cases reported before the onset of the rainy season, a spike in the disease’s incidence was to be expected.

“This is a year that you expect another spike in dengue [cases]. We are expecting about 240,000 cases based on the data that we have on hand,” he told reporters.

Latest figures from the Epidemiology Bureau of the Department of Health (DOH) showed that from Jan. 1 to May 11, 74,273 dengue cases were reported, with 312 deaths.

Twice last year’s figures

The number is nearly twice the 39,449 dengue cases, with 214 deaths, reported in the same period last year.

The bulk of these cases were reported in Calabarzon (8,150), Central Visayas (7,718) and Western Visayas (6,671). Children 5 to 9 years old were the most affected, comprising a quarter of the total, or 18,535 cases.

Cases rise every 3 years

Duque said dengue cases increased every three years as part of the disease’s natural cycle.

He urged the public to help prevent its spread by destroying the breeding grounds of the dengue-carrying Aedes aegypti mosquito, seeking early consultation if one has fever for more than two days, and observing self-protection measures like the use of repellants.

Selective fogging may also be resorted to if there is already an outbreak of the disease in the community, the DOH said.

“Dengue is part of the lives of Filipinos, just like [our neighbors] in the [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] region. Hopefully, we don’t see 240,000 cases because that means many will be hospitalized, and that will increase PhilHealth’s (Philippine Health Insurance Corp.) costs for the disease,” Duque said.

Last year, PhilHealth spent P2.4 billion for dengue treatment, up from the P1.8 billion it spent for the disease in 2017.