Antidengue drive pushed in Western Visayas

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III on Thursday directed intensified action to stem the increase in dengue cases in Western Visayas, the region widely reported to be the most affected by the spread of the mosquito-borne disease.

Duque held a dialogue with local officials in Iloilo province and inspected hospitals and other facilities to assess the situation and extend the needed assistance.

A total of 18,834 dengue cases have been recorded by the Department of Health (DOH) Center for Health Development in Western Visayas from Jan. 1 to July 13, 2019, indicating a 259 percent increase compared with the same period last year (5,251 cases).

In a statement, the DOH said Aklan province had the highest attack rate of 406 percent (2,460 cases vs 678 in 2018) while Guimaras had the highest percentage increase at 1,258 percent (384 cases vs 52 in 2018).

There were also 94 deaths in the region, with Negros Occidental province recording the highest number at 24.

Ages of dengue patients ranged from 27 days to 98 years, with the median at 12. Most cases belonged to the 1 to 10-year-old age group, the DOH said.

Five provinces (Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras and Iloilo) and one highly urbanized city, Iloilo City, have declared dengue outbreaks.

“We commend the leadership in Western Visayas for acting swiftly to address this outbreak,” Duque said.

“We also reiterate our call to the public to go to the nearest health facility when experiencing the signs and symptoms of dengue and not wait for it to get worse,” he added.