

Gov't to seek damages from Dengvaxia maker

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The Philippine government will seek damages—not just a full P3.5-billion refund—from the maker of the controversial Dengvaxia antidengue vaccine, Malacañang said on Sunday.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque welcomed the decision of Sanofi Pasteur to reimburse the Department of Health's (DOH) P1.16 billion for stocks of unused dengue vaccine but said that the government would still sue the company to recover damages.

"We will not complain that more than P1 billion in public funds were returned," Roque said in a radio interview.

'Not just full refund'

"But after the investigation and if it is established that Sanofi suppressed information that caused trouble to our children, then we will seek not just a full refund, but damages as well," he said.

Roque said that the government would seek damages after the completion of the investigation of the Senate, the Department of Justice and the National Bureau of Investigation.

The DOH has put on hold its immunization program after Sanofi Pasteur announced the results of its new analysis that showed that the vaccine could make symptoms worse in vaccinated people who had not been previously exposed to the dengue virus.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the DOH would demand the refund of the P3.5 billion paid to Sanofi, as well as the setting up of an indemnification fund to cover hospitalization and treatment for children with severe dengue.

On Friday, Duque said Sanofi reimbursed the govern-

ment P1.16 billion for the unused Dengvaxia vaccine stocks.

The DOH is also heeding the advice of a National Expert Panel to suspend the mass immunization program's pending unresolved safety issues.

The DOH is expecting the expert panel from the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) to release this week the preliminary result of its review on the cause of death of the 14 recipients of Dengvaxia.

"Maybe this week, the report on the 14 cases by the PGH panel [will be released]," said Health Undersecretary Enrique Domingo in a text message. INQ

* DOH
* VACCINATION
- DENG VAXIA