



ASEAN summit declares regional fight vs dengue

By **FRANCO G. REGALA**

CLARKFREEPORT, Pampanga — With the incidence of dengue increasing dramatically worldwide in recent years, health officials and experts from the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) have called to strengthen cooperation in the fight against the epidemic-prone viral disease in a two-day regional forum that ended yesterday.

With a theme “ASEAN Unity and Harmony: A Key to Combat Dengue,” the weekend event tackled the latest information, expert opinion, challenges and issues surrounding dengue, whose yearly occurrence worldwide is estimated at 50–100 million dengue infections based

on World Health Organization (WHO) data.

“Your presence is a testament of your strong commitment in a continuous fight against dengue,” assistant secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) Gerardo Bayugo told delegates attending the forum.

He cited the importance of regional cooperation to manage and control dengue. “Together in unity, it is possible to achieve our common goal to control dengue,” he added.

DOH Undersecretary Nemesio Gako echoed a similar point, adding that this year’s theme is very appropriate as unity and cooperation is essential to fight the infectious disease.

“Our differences do not constraint our

fight against dengue. This annual gathering fortifies our efforts in combating the disease. Together, we can fight dengue,” Gako said.

Dr. Rose Nani Mudin from Malaysia, who was among the speakers, discussed topics about the regional epidemiology and virus surveillance network dubbed as UNITE Dengue, which was founded by the Ministry of Health Malaysia and the Singapore National Environment Agency’s Environmental Health Institute in 2012.

The UNITE Dengue, which is the acronym for United In Tackling Epidemic Dengue, is a network for cross border sharing of dengue surveillance information and knowledge on dengue control, she added.