



National Policy Against Covid-19 chief implementer and vaccine czar Sec. Carlito Galvez Jr.

MANILA – The government targets to inoculate about 50 to 70 million individuals this year, National Policy Against

"The massive nationwide vaccination program is anchored on the Philippine national vaccine roadmap. Its goal is to achieve the full recovery of our economy and the lives of our Filipino people," Galvez said during a Laging Handa public briefing.

Galvez said the government will carry out a strategic framework of the national vaccine roadmap.

He said safety and efficacy are some of the key considerations of the government in buying Covid-19 vaccines.

Galvez said the World Health Organization (WHO) solidarity vaccine trial is set to begin in the country this month.

"This month, the Philippines and Colombia would take part in WHO solidarity vaccine trial," Galvez said, noting that about 15,000 volunteers will be participating in the trial.

Meanwhile, Galvez said the government is strictly conducting a full evaluation of the vaccine candidates to ensure the procurement of safe and efficient Covid-19 vaccines.

"Ang gobyerno po ay may mga portfolio ng mga vaccines, ibig sabihin po nito marami tayong pagkukunan ng bakuna sa iba-ibang manufacturer. Ito po ay para matiyak na magkakaroon tayo ng sapat na bakuna para sa lahat (The

government has the portfolios of the [candidate] vaccines, which means we have many sources from various manufacturers to make sure that we can acquire enough vaccines for all), particularly this year 2021," he said.

Vaccination program

He said the government will strategically prioritize the inoculation of healthcare workers as well as members of vulnerable sectors such as senior citizens.

It will also initially vaccinate essential workers that are vulnerable and those belong to the co-morbid groups, the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), and the remaining workforce in the country.

Galvez noted that the implementation of the nationwide vaccination program "is not the sole responsibility of the government.

"Batid ng pamahalaan na hindi niya ito makakayang mag-isa. (Knowing that the government cannot do it alone). This is the reason why the whole-of-government and the whole-of-nation approach shall be adopted," he said.

There is a need to

maximize manpower, expertise, and processes to ensure coordinated and integrated implementation of the vaccination campaign, he added.

LGUs, private sector's role

On the other hand, Galvez cited the significant role of local government units (LGUs) and the private sector in the Covid-19 vaccination program.

He re-echoed President Rodrigo Duterte's remarks that LGUs will be in charge of identifying and profiling the priority sectors who will initially get Covid-19 jabs.

Galvez said LGUs are tasked to support the national government in the mass rollout of the nation-

wide vaccination program.

Meanwhile, the private sector, he added, will provide invaluable, technical, and financial support in the procurement of the vaccines as well as the deployment of possible Covid-19 vaccines, particularly in setting up of cold chain logistics.

"In recognition of this, the President recently approved the tripartite agreement between the national government, the LGUs, and the vaccine companies," Galvez said.

Galvez reiterated that the government is serious about providing a safe and efficient Covid-19 vaccine which will be given free to all Filipinos. (PNA)

Duterte to receive Covid-19 shots in private

MANILA – President Rodrigo Duterte is still willing to receive the first dose of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) vaccine from China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd., but he'll do it in private, Malacañang said Tuesday.

In a Palace press briefing, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the President said he had "no problem" being the first to receive the vaccine shot but will be "taking the route" of United Kingdom's Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip, who were inoculated with vaccine doses in private.

"His answer was 'No problem, I will take the vaccine as soon as it is available'. Dahil siya nga daw po ay talagang kailangan niyang magkaroon ng bakuna. Pero ang sabi niya, hindi na kinakailangan ipakita 'to sa publiko (Because he said he really needed to receive the vaccine. But he said, there won't be a need to make it public). He's taking the route of the British sovereign dahil naging decision po nila Queen Elizabeth at ang kaniyang asawa na pribadong pagtuturok sa kanila (because the decision of Queen Elizabeth and her husband is to do it privately)," he said.

While vaccine doses will be administered in private, Roque said the Palace will announce when Duterte has finally received his vaccine shots.

"Inaanunsyo po natin kung siya ay nagpabakuna na (We will announce when

he gets vaccinated)," he said.

Duterte, in previous speeches, has expressed willingness to be the first person to be inoculated to boost confidence of the public on the Covid-19 vaccines.

Vaccine czar, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., said the government has been preparing for the rollout of the large-scale immunization program by next month.

However, Galvez said the rollout can be moved to March if the manufacturers would not be able to deliver the shots on schedule.

The Philippines has secured 25 million doses of Sinovac vaccine with the first 50,000 doses expected to arrive in February, but the government is also sourcing from other vaccine suppliers to cover the entire Philippine population.

Last week, Duterte said China-made vaccines are "as good as" those produced in the United States and Europe.

He allayed fears over China-made vaccines insisting that their government would not allow their people to be inoculated with the vaccine if they were not "safe, sure, and secure".

A recent Pulse Asia survey found that nearly half

(SEE page 6)



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Cavite cancels award for China firm's \$10 billion Sangley project

The province of Cavite has cancelled its award of a \$10-billion airport deal in Sangley Point, among the biggest projects involving a Chinese firm under President Duterte, who has pursued warmer ties with Beijing since taking office in 2016.

China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC) and Philippine company MacroAsia Corp. won the auction in 2019 to partner with the Cavite provincial government to upgrade the Sangley airport.

"The notice of selection and award for the Sangley Point International Airport Project issued on 12 February 2020 was cancelled," MacroAsia told the stock exchange yesterday.

Cavite Gov. Jonvic Remulla told Reuters the consortium's documentation was "deficient in three or four items." Its shares closed up 0.36 percent having earlier fallen as much as 19 percent over the cancellation.

China's CCCC did not respond to a request for comment.

Remulla said the decision was not related to a US sanctioning of CCCC and other Chinese state firms in August.

The US has blacklisted numerous Chinese companies over their roles in building military installations on submerged reefs in disputed areas of the South China Sea, including one within missile range of the Philippines.

The Philippine foreign affairs secretary had recommend projects involving those firms be terminated. Duterte's office, however, rejected that, arguing their completion was in the national interest.

The collapse of the airport deal will be a setback for Duterte, whose opponents say he has gambled with sovereignty and bet heavily on China transforming the Philippines' outdated infrastructure with billions of dollars of investment that has largely not materialized.

Duterte, whose six-year term ends next year, has seen dozens of projects under his Build, Build, Build program delayed, cancelled or downsized.

He has been criticized for threatening to cut ties with old ally the United States while heaping praise on China's leadership and refusing to confront it over the conduct of its navy and coast guard in the South China Sea.

His spokesman, Harry Roque, declined to comment on the airport deal or the President's China policy.

The Sangley airport was one of two multibillion airport projects intended to take pressure off Manila airport.

Remulla said in a Facebook post that Cavite would start new negotiations for a private sector partner.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian



was not aware of the issue but said the government supported legal operations of Chinese firms in the Philippines.

"We hope the Philippines can provide a conducive business environment for Chinese companies," he said.

NAIA consortium to the rescue?

Meanwhile, a superteam of conglomerates – the so-called NAIA consortium that previously bid to rehabilitate Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) – could reunite to take a shot at the Sangley airport project.

"We will consult with the other members of the consortium... the original NAIA consortium," AC Infrastructure Holdings Corp. president and CEO Jose Rene Almendras told The STAR when asked if the Ayala Group would want to take a crack at the now stalled airport project.

Aside from AC Infrastructure, members of the consortium include Aboitiz InfraCapital Inc., Alliance Global Group Inc., Asia's Emerging Dragon Corp., Filinvest Development Corp., JG Summit Holdings Inc. and Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC).

For his part, MPIC chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan said the SPIA project "looks interesting." MPIC purchased bid documents for the Sangley project, but did not submit an actual bid.

"We don't know enough about the project – the little we know we've gleaned from media accounts. But it looks interesting – not least because the airport connects to our southern tollways," Pangilinan told The STAR.

Aboitiz InfraCapital president and CEO Cosette Canilao said the company is open to explore opportunities in the airport sector. "We have always believed that airports will be key to reviving the economy, and we remain open to look at opportunities in the sector," she said. Meanwhile, Megawide Construction Corp. said it has not thought about the SPIA project yet. "We can't say at this point. We'll have to assess the terms first. But right now, we'll focus on other existing projects," Megawide chief business development officer Jim Feliciano told The STAR.

In December 2019, sole bidder CCCC-MacroAsia consortium bagged the \$10-billion project to upgrade Sangley airport. The consortium was previously given three extensions by the Cavite provincial government yet failed to complete post-qualification requirements.

BRIC-A-BRAC FOR LIFE CORNER

By: Arturo E. Piao



A Bric-a-Brac excerpt series for knowledge enhancement to Better, Inner-being, Social-interaction and Healthful Living

- Health Awareness - Hypertension

- A blood pressure that is persistently above normal is called Hypertension. It is usually asymptomatic and is often a contributing factor to myocardial infarction (heart attack).
- Hypertensions manifest or have no overt signs. It is known as "Silent Killer." Headaches, dizziness, and fainting have been reported, but not always symptomatic.
- Tiredness/Confusion/Vision Changes/Chest Pain/Heart Failure/Blood in the Urine/Nosebleed/Irregular Heart Beat/Ear-Nose or Buzzing
- If your headache is severe or if you experience any of the symptoms mentioned above, you must see a doctor right away. These may be a sign of dangerously high-blood pressure called Malignant Hypertension or a Complication from High Blood Pressure.

(For any questions, comments, and suggestions, just text to 0907-625-4070 or 0905-741-5008)



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ERNA M. BALAGTAS
Publisher

DIOSAN MARUAL
KCEE NACION

Marketing & Circulation Manager

DIOSDADO ARIEL F. ALTO, JR.
Editor-In-Chief

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KUTOB NG KAPALARAN

CAPRICORN: (Dis. 22-Ene. 19) Mahalin ang sarili at maaakit mo ang iyong true love. Ikaw lang ang nakakaalam kung ano ang gusto mo. Mag-focus sa gawain dahil malaki ang potensiyal na matamo ang pag-unlad na higit pa sa iyong inaasahan. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 22, 53, 35, 41, 12 at ivory white.

AQUARIUS: (Ene. 20-Peb. 18) Tanggapin ang legal transgression ng mahal mo. Bigyan siya ng abogado para maipagtanggol siya. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 15, 26, 52, 36, 41 at honey yellow.

PISCES: (Peb. 19-Mar. 20) Magpasalamat sa masalimuot na karanasan. Dahil ito ang magpapatatag sa iyo. Hanapin ang feel good sa moments. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 42, 26, 22, 53, 35 at cherry red.

ARIES: (Mar. 21-Abr. 19) Meron kang control sa iyong emotional reactions. Kaya dedma ka lang sa pagre-react ng iba. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 11, 53, 36, 27, 48 at mango orange.

TAURUS: (Abr. 20-May. 20) Walang masasayang sa mga bagay na pinag-laan ng panahon at lakas. Basta huwag samahan ng bisyo. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 55, 25, 32, 41, 11 at satin white.

GEMINI: (May. 21-Hun. 21) Ang iyong well being ay dominant sa universe. Mahalin ang sarili at ang kaligayahang inaasam ay darating sa iyo. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 12, 45, 32, 23, 52 at cinnamon brown.

CANCER: (Hun. 22-Hul. 22) Ikaw ang meron dahil pumapabor sa'yo ang tadhana. Hanapin ang good feeling na magdadala sa'yo sa iyong destiny. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 32, 37, 54, 11, 44 at vanilla brown.

LEO: (Hul. 23-Ago. 22) Ang kabuuan ng iyong pagkatao ang kukumpleto para mapadpad sa karanasang kailangan sa buhay. Magpakatatag. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 54, 47, 31, 33, 11 at cyan blue.

VIRGO: (Ago. 23-Set.23) Ang iyong negative thought ay mangingi-babaw. Paglabanan para makaiwas na ma-ging mapagpatol. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 11, 23, 33, 41, 51 at emerald green.

LIBRA: (Set. 24-Okt. 23) Matutupad ang panagi-nip. Magbabago ang trend ng buhay mo. Biglang marami ang mapalapit sa'yo. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 22, 55, 35, 41, 12, at magenta red.

SCORPIO: (Okt. 24-Nob. 22) Yakapin ang masali-muot na karanasan, ito ang tamang panahon para malaman ng lahat ang totoo. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 35, 53, 15, 42, 23 at chestnut brown.

SAGITTARIUS: (Nob. 23-Dis. 21) Magpa-aura cleansing para maalis ang sumpa ng kabiguan sa pag-ibig. Nakatakda ang masaganang bukas. Lucky numbers at color for the day ang 22, 43, 55, 11, 35 at pine green.

60 traders violating suggested retail price face charges

FAIR PRICING. In a bid to provide sufficient and affordable food especially during this pandemic, Department of Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez wants middlemen traders who sell basic goods at higher prices to be punished by law. He said during Tuesday's (Jan. 19, 2021) virtual press briefing that they want to involve the security sector in the food sufficiency campaign. (PNA file photo)

MANILA – The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DA), has filed charges against 60 traders who violated the Republic Act 7581 or the Price Act.

In a virtual press briefer, DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez on Tuesday said the two agencies have been partnering with each other to bust profiteering groups taking advantage of the many restrictions implemented during the quarantine period.

“We have 1,070 letters on inquiry -- these are letters sent out to shops under question for issues of overpricing and other concerns raised to our office. For now, we have recorded 31 with show cause order, there are 274 that violated trade laws, and 60 were filed with formal charges,” he said.

Lopez said that during their monitoring activities, shop owners are confronted right away if caught violating the law. However, if they adjust their prices, it will serve as

their first warning and they will be allowed to continue doing business.

“However, if they continue with their violation, that is the time we execute the due process. They will receive show cause orders,” he said.

Any act of illegal price manipulation of any basic necessity or prime commodity under the Price Act has an appropriate penalty of imprisonment of not less than five years nor more than 15 years. It also comes with a fine of not less than PHP5,000 nor more than PHP2 million.

On the other hand, violation of price ceiling or pricing beyond the suggested retail price especially in the event of a calamity will be penalized with imprisonment for a period of not less than one year nor more than 10 years, and a fine of not less than PHP5,000 nor more than PHP1 million, or both, at the discretion of the court.

Meanwhile, Lopez also shared that the consuming public can use their developed "E-presyo" app to check the prices of products in a particular supermarket or shop and compare it with other outlets.

“Using this app, you can easily compare the prices, makikita mo kung saan ka makakasulit lalo na kapag bibili ka ng maramihan (you will see where you can get more with your budget especially if you are buying by bulk). This is updated regularly and it is also on our website but for convenience, the app is useful,” he said.

Medical scholarship law to solve doctor shortage in rural areas

MANILA – A lawmaker said Wednesday the law mandating a medical scholarship and return service program would result in having doctors in remote towns in the country.

House of Representatives Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez, one of the authors of the law, said the program is the answer to the problem of students from poor families who want to take a doctor of medicine course but cannot afford its high cost.

“We are hoping that Republic Act No. 11509, which President (Rodrigo) Duterte signed last December 23, will entice poor students in the provinces to pursue medical education through the program and eventually serve their community,” Rodriguez said. “It is also the answer to our lack of doctors in remote areas in the provinces, where many of the sick die without being attended to by a physician.”

Under the law, each town in the country should have at least one qualified applicant in the medical scholarship and return service program.

In case there is no qualified student from a particular town, its slot may be given to an applicant from a nearby municipality.

After completing his medical course and passing the licensure examination, the new doctor-program beneficiary is required to render service in his town for one year for every year of his doctor of medicine degree.

He said all towns, however remote, would have at least one doctor through the new law.

The doctors will serve in government hospitals

or health facilities and hold positions and receive compensation commensurate to their education, Rodriguez said, adding that program beneficiaries who do not want to comply with the return service requirement would have to reimburse the government twice the amount that it spent for their medical education.

The program offers full financial assistance to qualified students.

Aside from tuition and other school fees, it covers expenses for allowance for prescribed books, supplies and equipment, clothing or uniform, dormitory or boarding house accommodation, transportation, internship fees, medical review fees, licensure fees, other related miscellaneous living or subsistence expenses, and annual medical insurance.

Qualified applicants are to take their course in a state university or college or an accredited private learning institution. (PNA)



Go calls for prudence, transparency in vaccine procurement

MANILA – Senator Christopher "Bong" Go on Monday called on the government to be transparent and prudent in its procurement of Covid-19 vaccines to ensure the best price in the negotiation process.

In a short manifestation during the plenary session, Go said the government is also mandated to ensure proper and full accounting of public funds used, noting that these should be disclosed to the public at the proper time without compromising the ongoing negotiations.

"I urge Vaccine Czar Secretary (Carlito) Galvez to explain the process further without compromising ongoing efforts to procure and administer as many vaccines as needed for our people," he said.

Go said that in the spirit of transparency, Galvez could disclose the prices of all vaccines at the appropriate time to allay any doubts of the public.

"Magtiwala po tayo sa ating gobyerno. I am personally aware na bago pa man nagsimula sa social media ang mga kuro-kuro at haka-haka, masusi na po ang pagtrabaho ng mga opisyal ng ating pamahalaan to get the best for our country and for every Filipino (Let us trust in the government. I am per-

sonally aware that before all the speculations started on social media, government officials have been diligently working to get the best for our country and for every Filipino)," he said.

Go reiterated President Rodrigo Duterte's commitment that his administration will do everything to ensure that the national vaccination program is safe, sure and secure from approval to rollout and implementation.

"Para kay Pangulong Duterte, ang kalusugan at kaligtasan ng bawat Pilipino ay nasa sentro ng programa natin. Ito ang responsibilidad na ginagampanan natin palagi (For President Duterte, the health and safety of every Filipino is the center of our



Senator Christopher "Bong" Go (File photo)

program. This is the responsibility that we perform). Our officials will be measured by their adherence to the President's guidance," he said.

Go, meanwhile, appealed to concerned authorities to expedite the process of acquiring vaccines and collaborate with the private sector and local government units for the proper implementation of the National Covid-19 Vaccine Roadmap.

"Huwag na nating pahirapan pa dahil lahat naman tayo nagmamadali dito. 'Yun po ang inaantay natin para unti-unti na tayo makabalik sa normal na pamumuhay (Let's not make things hard since everyone of us is in a rush. We are waiting for this (vaccine) so that we could return to our normal lives). Let us work together to ensure that no Filipino is left behind in the road towards recovery," he said.

Gordon pushes law vs. motorcycle-related crimes

MANILA – Senator Richard Gordon reiterated on Monday that the Motorcycle Crime Prevention Law will protect the public from crimes committed using motorcycles and will help secure the motorcycle owners and riders from being victimized and used by criminals for illegal and brutal acts.

Gordon, author of Republic Act No. 11235, pointed out that the number of people being killed by riding-intandem assassins in the Philippines continues to rise, hence, there is an urgent need for the implementation of the measure.

Based on the monitoring of his office, he said, there have been 147 victims of motorcycle-riding gunmen reported in the news from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2020, while there have been eight victims from Jan. 1 to 16 this year.

"These assassins continue to terrorize the country and people are being murdered just like that even at this time of a pandemic. The continuous and unabated killings are increasingly alarming. Masyado nang talamak ang mga patayan (Killings are rampant)," Gordon said in a news release on Tuesday.

R.A. 11235 mandates the use of bigger, readable, and color-coded plates so that motorcycles used in crimes

can be easily identified and the use of stolen number plates can be prevented, as well.

The old plate measures 200mm x 225mm, while the new plate measures 235mm in width and 135mm in height.

The law also requires the Land Transportation Office (LTO) to maintain a registry of motorcycles to facilitate information retrieval for official investigation and law enforcement purposes. "Pakikiusapan natin ang LTO para lumabas na 'yung kanilang mga computer at ma-implement kaagad 'yung bagong plaka. Hindi naman malaki 'yung plaka; pinagkumpara ko 'yung dati sa bago para makita ang sukat (We will appeal to LTO so that their computers will be released and implement the new plates. It is not too big. I compared it to the old plate to know the size)," Gordon said.

On No. 20, 2020, LTO chief Assistant Secretary Edgar Galvante said in a letter addressed to Senate President Vicente Sotto III that their target for the full delivery of the 13-million backlog in motorcycle plates is May 2022, while the LTO Central Command Center (C3) is targeted to be operational by April this year.

However, during the budget hearing last November, Gordon told the LTO to commit for the completion of the operations center by February 2021.

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DA implements strict evaluation of imported frozen meat

MANILA – Agriculture Secretary William Dar said on Monday that strict protocols on incoming pork and pork products are being followed to mitigate the spread of African swine fever (ASF).

"Palagi kaming may nasasabat na illegal pork and pork products, maiging ang ginagawang pagkumpiska ng ahensya para doon. Kahit may mga pork clearances, binubusisi po natin (We have intercepted illegal entry of pork and pork products. The DA implements strict procedure in our confiscation there. We still monitor even those with pork clearances)," Dar said in an interview with the Philippine TV (PTV) News on Monday.

Dar has indicated that smuggled pork could be the cause of the latest outbreak.

Currently, DA officials are conducting the evaluation in Manila International Container Port (MICP). The DA mentioned that they will put up their first border inspection (FBI) facilities this year. The first one will be in the MICP.

The agriculture chief shared that these evaluation areas are plans for the longer term.

"While waiting for the facility, the Department adopts a stringent two-stage inspection process upon entry of imported agricultural commodities into the country. This is a science-based regulatory pro-

cedure that we strictly follow both for local and international shipment of agricultural products," Dar said.

The DA's Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) has started laying the groundwork for the facilities in the country's major ports.

These will be conducted on all animals, plants, fishery and related agricultural products arriving from other countries.

It will further strengthen on-site border control inspections for imported animals, plants, meat, and other farm and fishery products arriving in major international seaports in the country.

The FBI facilities will also be put up at Manila South Harbor, Subic Freeport Zone, Port of Batangas, Cebu International Port, and Port of Davao.

Park ADVISORY

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