



A4 group inoculation seen boosting employment

By CHINO S. LEYCO

The Department of Finance (DOF) is hopeful that the inoculation drive for economic frontliners would help hasten the easing of quarantine restrictions and generate more jobs.

Finance Undersecretary Gil S. Beltran said on Thursday, June 17, that the vaccination of the A4 priority group is a welcome development as it will eventually immunize about 35.5 million workers and boost job creation.

"The vaccination of economic frontliners has finally commenced, an important step in protecting the population and the subsequent easing of restrictions," Beltran said in his report to Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III.

Beltran, who is also the DOF's chief economist, said that job risks pose by the prolonged pandemic continue, citing that the recent imposition of stricter quarantine measures in Metro Manila and nearby provinces have dented local employment.

Compared with March, the labor force survey in April revealed

that employment declined by 4.55 percent while unemployment rose by more than 20 percent. Underemployment also went up by 1.6 percent

Moreover, regional data showed that the National Capital Region (NCR) Plus Bubble — Metro Manila, Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite and Laguna — felt the brunt of the stricter quarantine measures.

In January, the number of unemployed was less than four million, but it rose by 4.7 percent to 4.14 million in April. Over the same period, NCR's unemployment increased from 506,000 to 875,000, or more than 73 percent.

CALABARZON's unemployment also jumped 8.4 percent while that of Central Luzon's, by less than one percent. Cagayan Valley and Central Visayas also have seen their unemployment increase over the period.

In April last year, more than 8.7 million Filipinos were out of employment, but it recovered in early this year to its pre-pandemic level. By February, employment reached more than 43 million, higher than the 42.5 million employed as of January last year.