



PH seals deal for 40M doses of Pfizer vaccine

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE government has signed a supply agreement with Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE for the procurement of 40 million doses of vaccines against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the biggest so far, according to the National Task Force against COVID-19 (NTF).

Deliveries of the vaccine will begin "after eight weeks starting August," NTF chief and vaccine czar Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. said yesterday.

The deal comes as a delay in vaccine deliveries earlier this month forced some areas in Metro Manila to close vaccination sites.

"We are very happy to report that the government and the management of Pfizer have finally concluded our negotiations. Secretary Duque and I signed yesterday (Saturday) the supply agreement for the biggest and most decisive deal we had for 2021," Galvez said in a statement.

Galvez said the Pfizer supply will be delivered in bulk starting

August this year.

"The vaccine demand has begun to ease up for many big and rich countries, as most of them have already acquired more than enough vaccines for their population and have vaccinated many of their citizens. This has allowed the manufacturer to commit to us that deliveries, though still to be made in tranches, will be in bulk," he said.

The vaccine purchase will be funded through the loans from Asian Development Bank (ADB). Payment will not pass through the government as it will be directly made by the ADB to Pfizer.

Galvez said with the latest supply agreement for 40 million doses from Pfizer, the country has now secured 113 million doses, including 26 million from China's Sinovac, 10 million from Russia's Gamaleya, 20 million doses from Moderna, and 17 million doses from AstraZeneca.

He said around 16 million doses from Novavax and Johnson &

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Johnson are still under negotiation.

He said in addition to the procured vaccines, the country is expecting at least 44 million doses of vaccines from the global vaccine-sharing scheme COVAX Facility which is backed by the World Health Organization.

"The vaccines from Pfizer will significantly boost our national immunization program and will enable us to realize our goal of achieving herd immunity by year-end. This is another positive development that will give a happy and better Christmas for all Filipinos," he added.

Galvez said local government units (LGUs) should be ready with the deployment of the Pfizer vaccine which has a storage temperature requirement of -80 to -60

degree Celsius.

He said the vaccine will be distributed to all provinces and regions but "this will not be possible if the receiving LGU is not ready to handle these types of vaccines."

The NTF said the country has received some 14.2 million doses of vaccines since February, including those bought by the government and private sector and donated by foreign governments.

Data from the National Vaccination Operations Center showed that as of June 18, some 5.95 million individuals have received their first dose of the vaccine while at least 2 million have completed the two doses.

It also showed about a million healthcare workers, who belong to the A1 priority group in the national vaccination program, have been fully vaccinated, while

1.9 million senior citizens (A2) have received their first dose, and 536,476 of which have been fully vaccinated.

For persons with comorbidities (A3), at least 2 million have been given their first jab and 498,925 have received both shots.

For the economic frontliners (A4), about 452,600 were given their first dose, while 23,826 indigent residents (A5) were given their first dose.

The country targets to inoculate 50 million to 70 million by year-end.

More vaccines are expected to be delivered this month, such as 1.5 million doses of Sinovac vaccines on June 24, and 250,000 doses of Moderna vaccines on June 27.

Also expected within the month of June are shipments of more than 2 million doses of AstraZen-

eca vaccines from COVAX facility, and 150,000 doses of Sputnik V.

A team of Israeli medical experts arrived in Manila yesterday.

The experts are expected to share their expertise in the vaccination program.

Ambassador to Israel Macairog Alberto said the medical mission was made possible through the efforts of the embassy in Tel Aviv, the NTF, and Israeli's Health and Foreign Ministry.

"The Israeli medical mission will support the Philippines in its anti-COVID-19 response and vaccination program," Alberto said.

The members of the team are physicians Avraham Ben Zaken, Adam Segal and Dafna Segol.

Alberto thanked Israel which it said "is a dear friend, ready to always lend a helping hand."

Earlier, Israel provided personal

protective equipment to the Department of National Defense and the Philippine National Police for the use of their frontliners. Education equipment were also provided to the Department of Education to aid in distance learning.

Israel is leading the world in COVID-19 vaccination. With a population of 9.3 million, Israel has already vaccinated more than 80 percent of its people.

About 29,000 Filipinos living and working in Israel are also beneficiaries of the Israeli government's inoculation program.

The Israeli government has already rescinded its order for its citizens to wear masks outdoors in another step towards relative normality due to the success of its mass COVID-19 vaccination program. — **With Ashzel Hachero and Reuters**