



PH to buy 50m Moderna shots

THE government has reserved 50 million doses of Moderna booster shots for 2022, Philippine Ambassador to Washington D.C. Jose Manuel Romualdez said Tuesday.

"Moderna already informed us about the booster shots that are being developed now. We've reserved 50 million doses for next year," he said in a Malacañang briefing.

Romualdez said the vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer are "still very effective" against the emerging variants of concerns, including the highly contagious Delta variant first detected in India.

"Pfizer specifically is very effective against the Delta variant, they are 88 percent effective and we expect the

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same thing from Moderna because the technology they used is the same," he said.

The Philippines recently signed a supply deal for 40 million doses of

Pfizer vaccine, which has been approved for use on individuals aged 12 and above.

About 7.5 million doses will arrive in the third quarter of the year while the remaining 32.5 million jabs will be delivered in the last quarter.

Moderna's shot uses mRNA technology to teach the cells how to make a protein that would trigger an immune response inside the body.

The US-based company was among the leading vaccine manufacturers to start

developing booster shots as an added protection against virus mutations and to bolster immunity from the first two jabs.

Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel previously told Axios that booster shots may be necessary as early as September 2021 especially for those at high risk (senior citizens and health care workers) who received their first round of jabs in December 2020 and January 2021.

Romualdez confirmed that the initial shipment of 249,600 from the 20 million Moderna vaccine doses the country earlier ordered will arrive on June 27.

He said the rest of the doses would be spread across several delivery dates to the Philippines until the latter part of 2021.

"Next month that will probably be close to a million, then down the road up to around November, we will be getting the entire 20 million from Moderna," he said.

He also said the Philippines is getting

"close to 800,000 to 1 million" from the 80 million-dose global vaccine commitment of the United States.

"We're going to get something like close to 800,000 to 1 million doses of either Moderna or AstraZeneca from their stockpile, which is expected to be given to us by next month," he said.

The Philippines is among the countries that will receive a portion of the 500 million vaccine doses Washington will procure for donations, he added.

Health Undersecretary Myrna Cabotaje, meanwhile, said the Philippines will receive an additional 2.2 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine from the COVAX facility Wednesday, June 23.

The vaccines will be allocated to health workers, senior citizens, persons with comorbidities, and the indigent population, she said.

Cabotaje said thousands of Moderna doses will also arrive this month.

Vaccine czar Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. earlier said some 6.4 million doses will be delivered to the country within June.

On the other hand, Cabotaje said the inoculation of minors against COVID-19 will still depend on the country's vaccine supply.

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Cabotaje said 7.5 million doses will arrive in the third quarter of the year while the remaining 32.5 million jabs will be delivered in the last quarter.

Galvez previously said the vaccination of minors could possibly begin by the fourth quarter of 2021.

"While we have a plan to eventually include our children as part of B and C

classification... it depends on the vaccine supply over the next few months whether we will include the child population," Cabotaje said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Cabotaje also said 97 percent of health workers in priority areas have already been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Cabotaje said 2 million senior citizens, 2.1 million people with comorbidities, over 573,000 essential workers, and 76,412 indigents have also been vaccinated against COVID-19.

A total of 8.5 million doses have been administered nationwide, 6.4 million of which were first doses while 2.1 million were second doses.

Galvez Jr. had said earlier that the government is expecting Metro Manila and neighboring provinces to achieve herd immunity by November this year.

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