

“Radiating positivity, creating connectivity”

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SMORGASBORD

PRIVATE SECTOR NEEDS TO HELP BUY VACCINES: TEODORO

By: **BEBIE H. BAQUERO**

DEVELOPED countries in the world have already ordered vaccines against Covid-19 and their stockpile will last until 2023.

Former Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilbert C. Teodoro told Cebu City-based DYRC radio that rich countries heavily purchased vaccines because they have the notion that perhaps this Covid-19 will stay for several years. Secondly, Covid-19 virus may mutate which will result to new class of virus that the present vaccines may not be any more effective and need to be boosted.

“Those are what the rich countries are doing. The Philippines is not considered a rich country so we cannot afford heavy purchases-

es,” Teodoro said.

However, Teodoro said that if the private sector will help the government, we can negotiate with vaccine manufacturers to purchase vaccines.

“If the private sector will help the government finance the purchase of enough vaccines for all Filipinos, for the love of the country, we can surely procure vaccines for our immediate needs,” Teodoro said.

He said that recently, the European Union signed a contract with Pfizer for the vaccine manufacturing company to provide 1.8 billion doses. The first dose of 900 million doses is good for the period until 2023, and with the option to purchase for 900 million vaccines for sec-

ond dose.

He said that if this volume of vaccines has excess, the European Union will use it for vaccine diplomacy. This means they will share the excess vaccines to allied countries in need.

“What I see is that rich countries can easily purchase vaccines because their laws allow their government officials to do it for present and future uses. In the Philippines, the procurement law makes it harder for the authorities to do it. Even if Congress will pass an emergency power to the President or mayor, our laws are still strict and not flexible,” Teodoro said.

He also cited that last year, several countries purchased vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and Sinovac. There was no vaccine production at that time. And they were not sure if there are vaccines that can be produced. But they deal in advance.

He said the Philippines which is considered a poor country cannot compete with the rich countries. And we had zero vaccine deal last year.

“The Filipino people must also think how to help and support the government because the government resources have limit. The private sector and the people have limited resources also. But if the government and the private sector will help each

other, I think we can do it,” Teodoro said.

He also said that purchases of vaccines by the Philippines will be through foreign loans.

He said all countries now obtain loans to purchase vaccines. Although he remembered that during World War II, the United States gave war fund with low interest to the private sector because it helped their country.

He said that during the Asian financial crisis, the South Koreans helped their government and even sold broken jewelries to help the procurement needs of the government and stabilize their currency.

Teodoro believed that the Filipinos can adopt what the South Koreans did. We are fortunate that Filipino economic managers have strong macro-economic fundamentals that would allow the Filipinos to easily survive this pandemic if the private sector will help the government.

The government is really trying to vaccinate as fast as possible so the economy will be completely reopened.

He said there are heavy infrastructure and construction of roads and bridges, but the workers are quarantined to control the health and safety in several areas.

“We should give positive inputs and positive suggestions

to the government. This is not the time for political bickering. There are Filipinos here and abroad who are well knowledgeable in technology and best practices and they can help the government,” Teodoro said.

He also admitted that the problem that aggravated the pandemic is the fact that the Philippines is a consumer-based country.

“So, there’s a need to vaccinate the people as soon as possible so we can fully open the economy,” Teodoro added.

He said the Philippines must not order only one vaccine. We should order as many as we can regardless of manufacturer and country of origin.

We should also make a deal for future order of as many vaccines as we can, not only for now but for the future because we do not know if there will be a booster or other mutation.

In addition, if the people are already vaccinated and the economy is open, we need to introduce industrialization and other kinds of businesses in the country like aquaculture. The Visayas is number one exporter of blue crabs, and other sustainable businesses like mining, provided it will follow safety rules and international standards mining.

“We need to have only one voice as Philippines,” Teodoro said.



GILBERT C. TEODORO