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CABINET REPORT – THE NEW NORMAL
HOSTED BY PCOO SECRETARY MARTIN ANDANAR
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SEC. ANDANAR: Noong Biyernes sinimulan nating pag-usapan dito sa Cabinet Report ang tungkol sa vaccine self-reliance. At sa tulong ni Department of Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato 'Boy' de la Peña, nagkaroon tayo ng overview sa planong ito ng pamahalaan. Dagdag dito sa kuwentuhan natin kay Sec. Boy, nabatid natin na nasa mga siyentipikong Pinoy nga ang kakayahang gumawa ng mga bakuna kontra COVID-19.

Bakit nga ba kailangang bigyan natin ng pansin ang programang vaccine self-reliance? Simple lang, dito nakasalalay ang kinabukasan.

Sabi nga ni Peter Singer na Special Advisor to the Director General sa World Health Organization: "Increase in distributed domestic manufacturing capacity and production often at the regional level will be required to ensure genuine security of supply for all. Many regions or countries may decide that domestic capability is about to shift from a 'nice to have' to 'must have' status."

Ngayong gabi ipagpapatuloy natin ang ating pagtalakay sa paksang ito – vaccine self-reliance pa rin ang pag-uusapan natin ngayong gabi. Ito po ang inyong Communications Secretary Martin Andanar, welcome to The Cabinet Report.

[AD]

Welcome back to The Cabinet Report, ang ating mga makakapanayam ngayong gabi ay mga opisyal ng Research Institute for Tropical Medicine o RITM ng Department of Health.

Ang RITM ay itinayo noong 1981 bilang focal point ng research sa mga infectious diseases. Kasama po natin ngayong gabi si Dr. Celia Carlos, siya po ang Director ng RITM; at si Dr. Noel Macalalad, siya naman ang Division Chief ng Biologicals Production sa RITM.

Magandang gabi, Director Carlos.

DIRECTOR CARLOS: Good evening, Secretary.

SEC. ANDANAR: Good evening, Division Chief Macalalad.

DIVISION CHIEF MACALALAD: Good evening po, Sec.

SEC. ANDANAR: Magsimula muna tayo kay Director. Director Carlos, ano po ang RITM sa konteksto ng usapin nang pagbabakuna dito sa Pilipinas?

DIRECTOR CARLOS: Ang RITM po ay may mandate na mag-produce ng biologicals for the Philippines. We have been doing this for some time prior to the establishment of the institute but this was under another agency, it was called the Biologicals Production Service na minerge [merge] po sa RITM noong year 1999.

SEC. ANDANAR: Naku, mabuti't nasimulan ninyo na ang pagbabalik-tanaw dahil ako ay interesadong malaman ang tungkol sa nakaraan partikular na sa dati na nating pagiging vaccine producer at exporter pa.

DIRECTOR CARLOS: In 1805 po was the start of vaccine production in the Philippines when there was this Balmis Expedition which arrived in Manila to produce the smallpox vaccine, 1805. And then 1887 to 1999 daw po, there were changes in the names and locations of the vaccine production facility until it eventually became called the Biologicals Production Service or BPS in Alabang already.

So iyong location po noong BPS na iyon eh ang tawag ngayon doon ay Filinvest Corporate City kasi po nabili po ng private corporation iyong location niya. But unfortunately when the property was acquired by Filinvest, the production stopped and the BPS was merged in RITM in 1999. Nabili yata ang property noong around the year before, 1998 and then 1999 na-merge na po sa RITM iyong BPS.

So during that time po noong transition na iyon, walang production which is a sad event po. Pero based on the other stories, in the 1950's po the BPS or the Biologicals Production Service— 1950's 'to ah to 60's we're producing vaccines and exporting them. And these vaccines were mga DPT, mga tetanus, iyong DPT – diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus – tapos they were also producing iyong oral rehydration salt solution, iyong mga anti-venom, iyong sa cobra anti-venom 'to, for snake bites. And ang support po noon was coming from UNICEF, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

SEC. ANDANAR: Magbalik po tayo sa kasalukuyan, siguro maganda pong ipaliwanag po natin iyong pangalan ng inyong ahensiya, ang Research Institute for Tropical Medicine. Ano po ang ibig sabihin na term na 'tropical medicine' sa pangalan ng ahensiya ninyo; at ano din po iyang mga biologicals na sabi po ninyo ay mandato ninyong gawin o i-produce?

DIRECTOR CARLOS: 'Pag sinabing tropical medicine, ito iyong common na mga sakit doon sa zone of tropics. Sa ating earth kasi may mga zones – may temperate zone, may tropical zone. So sa mga zones na ito may mga karaniwan o common diseases, posibleng doon lang na nakikita kaya tinatawag po sila o dini-define as tropical diseases. For example, usually common dito iyong mga cholera; iyong mga diarrheal diseases; mga dengue, usually dengue po sa mga tropical areas kasi iyong mosquito na vector po noon, hindi siya nagta-thrive sa malalamig.

Malaria common din po iyan na tropical disease kasi nga iyong mosquito vector also does not thrive well in colder climates. So iniipon po iyong mga sakit na iyon sa tropical zone.

Iyon namang biologicals, parang mga chemicals po iyon na can be administered to people such as vaccines, such as mga antibodies, mga immunoglobulins to help in developing antibodies for vaccines; iyon namang antibodies and immunoglobulins to fight an ongoing infection.

Example po ng mga biologicals aside from vaccines, iyong mga convalescent plasma na tina-transfuse ngayon sa mga may severe COVID, iyon po; sa rabies 'pag nakagat ng aso, 'pag severe ang bite may immunoglobulins din na i-inject, iyong rabies immunoglobulin.

SEC. ANDANAR: Bago ako tumungo sa next question ko, Director, gusto ko munang marinig ang inyong pananaw tungkol sa vaccine self-reliance.

DIRECTOR CARLOS: Sa opinyon ko po, 'pag sinabing vaccine self-reliance, iyon ay kapasidad ng isang bansa like the Philippines na makapagdiskubre ng mga bakuna, ma-develop ito para malaman kung alin dito ang mabisa para magamit sa pambansang program for vaccination.

So magsisimula po sa vaccine discovery hanggang sa paggamit ng mga promising and effective vaccines into a national immunization program which will lead to protection of most of the population against infectious disease, iyon po ang concept po ng vaccine self-reliance.

SEC. ANDANAR: Mayroon po palang ongoing project ang RITM mula pa noong 2018 na simula na nga sa pagtungo ng Pilipinas sa daan sa pagiging vaccine self-reliant. Pakibahagi po ito sa amin, Director.

DIRECTOR CARLOS: Nag-propose po kami and iyong first stage nga po noon iyong prefeasibility study with Asian Development Bank. And then depending sa results po noon, we will pursue whatever perhaps is recommended by the findings from the prefeasibility study. The objective of course is to support the national immunization program so that there is an adequate vaccine supply and we ensure vaccine security and self-sufficiency.

And then iyong second general objective is to have local production and capacity-building for vaccine production to enable the country to reduce the vaccine costs kasi po medyo mahal ang bakuna lalo 'pag imported po siya.

So under po noong broad objectives na iyon, may mga specific objectives which will cover facility development, iyong technology acquisition, iyong actual production of the vaccines and lastly capacity-building.

We are targeting a number of vaccines which are currently in our EPI – EPI means Expanded Program of Immunization or is otherwise called as the National Immunization Program, NIP. We thought of this because these are vaccines routinely needed by our children po, mga infants, for example, iyong mga DPT, polio, hemophilus influenza – iyong mga 'yun, iyong EPI vaccines, tapos hepatitis B.

And the other which we included in our proposal is a possible COVID-19 vaccine chilling facility and the purified cobra anti-venom facility. Kasi po ngayon may existing facility po for

cobra anti-venom production ang RITM and we want a better facility and expanded facility, then perhaps if there is additional space for expansion - to produce other biologicals and facilities for research and development.

Kasi nga po as I mentioned in my initial statement on vaccine self-reliance, that in my opinion should begin from research and development until identifying the final product and its distribution and implementation in a National Immunization Program, so iyon po ang component vaccines which we are targeting.

And the project will cover a number of things po, it is a huge undertaking. There, of course is need for acquisition of facilities in [garbled] which we initially thought it's possibly in New Clark City. Kasi RITM has no more available space to accommodate these facilities.

And we have in our mind, designed a vaccine campus with a minimum requirements such as the production facility, the animal facility, the storage and distribution area and quality assurance and quality control facilities. The animal facility po is quite huge because we need the animals for vaccine production – mga horse, mga rabbits, iyon po and mice. We need facilities to house all of them. So that's the initial investment po.

Then after that construction, then we need to acquire the manufacturing capability. If the PPP proceeds then we partner with the private company who hopefully can provide the [garbled] stance and the initial equipment and vaccine production infrastructure for the production process.

After the facilities are installed, the actual process development and validation of promising vaccines will happen and if successful, they will be registered and if successful again, there will be commissioning of good manufacturing facility that we hope will be established through partnership with the private companies. So iyon po ang plans natin.

SEC. ANDANAR: Iyon po ang ongoing projects sa vaccine self-reliance ng RITM na nagsimula pa noong 2018. Sa pagdating nga pandemya lalo na ngayong nahihirapan tayong makakuha ng supply ng bakuna kontra COVID, hindi ba nagbago ang plano para sa vaccine self-reliance project ng RITM?

DIRECTOR CARLOS: When COVID broke out, we asked ADB if it is possible to include the COVID vaccines and they agreed.

SEC. ANDANAR: May idadagdag pa po ba kayo, Division Chief Macalalad?

DIVISION CHIEF MACALALAD: Iyon po 'yung aming proposal at saka iyon po 'yung tinitingnan ng ADB din. So ang maganda nga lang po sa ngayon dahil kasi nagmamadali po tayo kaya marami na pong tumutulong na mangyari na magkaroon agad tayo ng planta for COVID-19 vaccine. For the long term so ang tinitingnan po nga natin in terms of self-reliance ay iyong ating bakuna for the National Immunization Program na dapat mayroon po ang bansang Pilipinas.

So iyon po 'yung long term dahil ang—hopefully, ang pandemic hindi magtagal at sana matapos ito at kung ito naman ay magtutuluy-tuloy, so iyong ating annual vaccination program kung

sasama siya at magiging parte na po siya ng National Immunization Program. So iyon po 'yung tinitingnan natin in the future with the development of this vaccine facility.

So we are looking forward na magtulung-tulong po lahat sa ngayon. We really need all government agencies to go together also with the private entities or partners to help us in the endeavor towards a vaccine self-reliance. So iyon lang po, magandang gabi po, Secretary.

DIRECTOR CARLOS: Masaya po kami na may goal po ang bansa natin ngayon for vaccine self-reliance kasi po [garbled] dapat naman po na may sarili tayong kapasidad na mag-produce ng ating mga bakuna. Kasi vaccination is an important health program po in every country and it will help prevent many of the diseases which are affecting the population. And prevention of diseases is better than treatment of diseases already. Prevention in other words is better than cure 'no, treatment to achieve a cure kasi mas magastos po kung nagkasakit nga at saka pa lang gagamutin. Mas mura po mag-invest on vaccination rather than on treatment of existing diseases.

So we're happy that the government is pursuing these programs and many offices are now helping one another for us to achieve this dream of becoming a vaccine self-reliant country. Iyon lang po, thank you.

SEC. ANDANAR: Maraming salamat, Dr. Celia Carlos, Director ng Research Institute for Tropical Medicine o RITM ng DOH; at Dr. Noel Macalalad, Division Chief ng Biologicals Production sa RITM.

Sa ating pagbalik, ang ating panayam sa isang foreign company na balak ding gawin ang kanilang mga bakuna kontra COVID dito sa bansa natin kasama ang kanilang Philippine partner. Keep it here, this is The Cabinet Report.

[AD]

SEC. ANDANAR: Welcome back to the Cabinet Report.

Nababanggit na upang agarang masimulan na ang paggawa dito ng mga bakuna kontra COVID. Mainam daw na makipag-partner ang mga pribadong kumpanyang lokal sa mga foreign companies na may technical expertise na sa paggawa ng mga bakuna. Kasama na siyempre ang panlaban sa COVID. Apat po sa mga kasalukuyang napangalanan sa mga pahayagan bilang potential local COVID vaccine producer at inanyayahan nating makapanayam, subalit isa lang po ang nagpaunlak.

Kausap natin noong Biyernes ang Filipino Vaccine Firm na Glovax. Ngayon naman ang mai-interview natin ay ang kanilang partner, ang South Korean Biotechnology Company na EU Biologics. From Seoul, we are joined this evening by. Mr. Seo Kyu Kim. Mr. Kim is the head of the Business Development Team at EU Biologics. EU Biologics has partnered with Filipino Vaccine Company Glovax to produce their own COVID vaccine, EU CorVac-19 here in the country. Mr. Kim, tell us a bit of your company.

MR. KIM: EU Biologics is a Korean Bio Pharmaceutical Company and then we were just established in 2010 and then now we are just listed in stock market, so like stock in non-stock the US, taking up the UN agency or Bill and Melinda-Gates Foundation and then we are quite popular because we already have WHO pre-qualified vaccines and then we have been supplying our vaccine to the UN market like UNICEF and Paju and in several individual countries as well. But we have several vaccines in the pipeline already, such as typhoid conjugate vaccines, so it's now on phase 3 clinical trial and also the PCV (pneumococcal vaccine) country vaccine, now on its phase 1 of clinical trial and also many pneumococcal conjugate vaccines. So, same level with the PCV, the phase one clinical trial.

And also the COVID-19 vaccine is now hot spot and now we are doing the phase 1 and 2 clinical trial in Korea. I just want to tell you that we have a plan to do another phase 2 clinical trial in the Philippines, so that's for the Filipino people and then this time we are going to compare with other vaccine, currently the EUA-approved in the Philippines. So we are going to compare the platform to platform. So, maybe right after the phase 2 clinical trial in the Philippines and then we just plan to apply for the EUA in the Philippines.

SEC. ANDANAR: Talk to us now about your COVID vaccine EU CorVac-19?

MR. KIM: In three words, I can just described our vaccines: One is a nano particle-based approach unit. And then we have our adjuvants and third one is we have a very versatile antigen display platform. So as I mentioned and then parts of it should have a novel adjuvants, so we used MPLA which is called the Monopoles for Lipid A. So we use that kind of adjuvants for the higher immunization. So, well many of people are not familiar with the MPLA because it is used by the premium vaccine, most like used by GSK. So GSK has a very strong IP on it, so we have to fill up our own MPLA, so we used ours.

And the other one is, a versatile antigen display using a [unclear]. So together with our [unclear] technology and then we have developed our own COVID vaccines. The EU CorVac-19 vaccine is similar with Novavax. So, Vovavax is also nano particle that pertains of unit. But a little difference is that the Novavax one is targeting the whole spike of protein. But ours, EU CorVac-19 is targeting just the RBD (reset binding domain), which is very critical to make neutralizing antibody. RBD is actually the far-off the S 1 protein, the spike protein. Our vaccines are really safe, but very highly immunogenic.

So currently, as I mentioned, it's in a phase 1 and 2 clinical trial and phase two clinical trial in the Philippines. So it's going to be initiated in a short time.

SEC. ANDANAR: And why is your company interested in the Philippine market?

MR. KIM: Well, Philippines has a good friendship with Korea and also I use to work for the Philippines before I just join to EU Biologics as well. You know the Philippines has a big potential, speaking of your population. So, now it's over 100 million people. So, that is why.

SEC. ANDANAR: Mr. Kim, Glovax calls EU Biologics, its technology transfer partner. What are your plans for technology transfer?

MR. KIM: For once, the Glovax is putting up the vaccine factory in the Philippines and then we are just willing to give our technology to the Philippines. It's going to be a three-step of technology transfer. So well, basically and then we are going to give you the entire documentation. So we just call it the document transfer. So right after that, and then maybe the recipients, in case the Philippines should review what is our technology and then what is our production method and then what is our analysis or something like that.

So, once everything is ready and then we are going to start with Fill and Finish. But the Fill and Finish is just part of the entire tech-transfer. So, Fill and Finish is to just give you a ready to fill bag to the factory and then you just locally produced and then you just QC, the quality control, and then packing and the labeling and just supply to wherever the market. So, in the Fill and Finish, the process and of course we are going to give you many advice and then also analysis methods on it.

So, if the Fill and Finish is completed and then we are able to do some further steps, which is called the antigen producing. So well, if we just give you an antigen and then you make your antigen, depending on your demands and then you just do [unclear] and then classification and everything. And at the same time, we are going to give you adjuvants and some other raw material of course. And once the antigen ready and then when we just supply the adjuvant and then you do a formulation in your local company. And after the production and then to Fill and Finish as well.

SEC. ANDANAR: I've got to ask one of the concerns about just doing Fill and Finish here in the Philippines, is that the bulk supply of the vaccines will still come from abroad, in this case, from EU Biologics. Which is really the problem for us now. We have limited access to supply. How can we be assured that that won't be the case with EU Biologics?

MR. KIM: The EU CorVac is around 100 million to 200 million doses among our capacity and then we just secure the 40 million doses at least for the Philippines. So as I mentioned, we are just discussing with some other countries as well. But as long as the Philippines is willing to receive our technology and then we are going to secure for the 40 million doses.

SEC. ANDANAR: Got it! The Philippines though is also looking beyond just filling and finishing COVID vaccines and it's also setting its sights on vaccine self-reliance in the long run as well. What are your thoughts?

MR. KIM: So antigen is one of the key factor to make a COVID-19 vaccine. So once you have your technology for the antigen production and then we have very much of the adjuvant capacity. So, when we just send you the adjuvant and then mixing it together in the Philippine sites and then you can just manage your capacity in their plant. But as far as I know, the design of the factory is up to 100 million doses a year. So it is okay.

SEC. ANDANAR: And what role does your local partner Glovax play here?

MR. KIM: Glovax is the vaccine focused company and also Glovax already have many experience to deal with the big hospital or even the government and so I can just say the Glovax

has very good network with the hospitals, I mean the private market and also the government as well. So that is why we are partnering with Glovax. It is about time for the Philippines to prepare your own vaccine plants.

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you for your time, Mr. Seo Kyu Kim. Head of the Business Development Team at EU Biologics, the foreign partner of Glovax.

Sa ating pagbabalik, alam natin nag kuwento ng Cuba, isang maliit na bansa na vaccine self-reliant. Sa katunayan mayroon na silang dalawang bakunang kontra COVID na sa kasalukuyan ay dumadaan na sa clinical trial. At may tatlo pa silang vaccine candidates na nakaabang. Tutok lang dito sa Cabinet report.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

SEC. ANDANAR: Iyon po ang bahagi ng report ng Hong Kong based South China Morning Post tungkol sa clinical trials para sa mga bakuna na dinevelop ng bansang Cuba.

At ito naman ang parte ng balita ng ABC news ng Estados Unidos tungkol pa rin sa paggawa ng Cuba ng sarili nilang bakuna kontra COVID.

[NEWS REPORT]

SEC. ANDANAR: At kahit na mahirap ang kalagayan sa Cuba ngayon dala na rin ng epekto ng pandemya, kapansin-pansin ang kanilang determinasyon na sila ay magiging self-reliant sa bakuna. Ito ang isa pang excerpt mula naman ngayon sa ulat ng France24 News

[NEWS REPORT]

SEC. ANDANAR: Pilipinas, inspiring talaga ang kuwento ng Cuba, ano? Napakaliit na bansa, mahirap at dahil na rin diyan pinagsikapan nilang maging vaccine self-reliant. Binalikan ko si Director Carlos ng RITM at tinanong ko siya. Kaya ba ng abilidad ng Pinoy, itong pinapangarap nating vaccine self-reliance. Ito ang kaniyang pananaw.

DIR. CARLOS: Kung sa kaya po, kaya po. We have talent here. The sad part is we really have not perhaps supported enough the talents that we have. Kasi po it's not easy to develop a vaccine product. It takes multiple specialties and mga chemist po, microbiologists, mga molecular biologist and so on. So those talents are needed for discovering new vaccines. But sad to say, we perhaps not provided incentives for our local talents to flourish. [We] probably need more programs to develop those talents, so that you know they can mature and eventually return to serve the country.

The other factor is we need to provide a good working environment for these talents after their training, which should give them good salaries maybe, good working conditions, good facilities where they can work on their research and development. And siguro there needs to be more investments on providing all of those necessary factors for the talents to flourish and it should be sustained. Maybe it should start from the younger ages you know, include providing more

emphasis on science and technology in the younger ages, so that children get interested to po to Science and Technology. And proceed with the providing new degrees relevant to vaccine research. Kasi wala po tayong ganoon dito eh, iyong degrees which will lead to special training in vaccine development.

SEC. ANDANAR: Pareho sila ng sagot ni DOST Secretary Boy Dela Peña. Tiwala sila sa galing ng Pinoy, we have the talents here. Kaya nating gumawa ng bakuna, kaya nating maging vaccine self-reliant. Pero huwag nating kalimutan ang paalala ni Director Carlos, we have to support the talents that we have. Magtiwala po tayo sa ating sarili, magtiwala po tayo sa kapwa Pinoy. Tangkilikin po natin ang produktong atin. Tangkilikin po natin ang likhang atin, nang ang mga siyentipikong Pinoy, mga doktor na Pinoy, mga researcher na Pinoy at lahat ng makakasama sa paglikha, pagbuo ng gawang Pinoy ay magkaroon ng kinakailangang suporta galing sa sarili nilang mga kababayan. Galing sa sarili nilang bayan.

Pilipinas para sa Cabinet Report, ito po si Communication Secretary Martin Andanar. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas, mabuhay ang Pilipino.

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