



## Testing process for Vietnam-made ASF vaccine queried in Senate

A SENIOR Senator queried the Bureau of Animal Industry's (BAI) decision to allow a vaccine supplier to play a role in testing a Vietnam-sourced vaccine designed to protect hogs against African Swine Fever (ASF).

Senator Cynthia A. Villar, who chairs the chamber's agriculture panel, questioned at a joint committee hearing the role of vaccine supplier KPP Powers Commodities, Inc. in the trials.

On June 2, the BAI reported that field trials for the ASF vaccine were successful. Assistant Director Arlyn Vytiaco told the joint panel that the trials were conducted at six farms in Luzon.

BAI Director Paul C. Limson also told the hearing that "our role is to monitor the field trial being conducted. We were not the actual ones conducting (the trial)."

Ms. Villar said that BAI should have been in charge of carrying out the trials, citing the risk of "bias" if an outside party plays a role in the vaccine tests.

Reynaldo Robles, lawyer and spokesman for KPP Powers, said the company supplied the vaccines to independent farms who conducted the trials.

"The one in charge of getting samples is the farm owner (who) gives it to BAI," which was in charge of testing the impact of the vaccine on the hogs, he said.

Food and Drug Administration Director-General Samuel A. Zacate said the agency issued an authorization to import 300,000 doses of the ASF vaccine for field trials, at the BAI's request.

Ms. Villar said non-government entities should play no part in vaccine trials.

Vietnam approved the commercial use of the vaccine only in July. According to media reports, Vietnam is set to ship vaccines to the Philippines this month.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said the testing of vaccines should not be rushed.

"We should have learned from our COVID experience," he told the panel, noting that the Philippines waited for a long time to obtain COVID-19 vaccines approved by the World Health Organization.

"It's very simple. This should not have been rushed," Mr. Cainglet said. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

# Trade dep't pursuing tie-ups in EV, energy-efficient ships

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said that it will be pursuing investment in electric vehicle (EV) technology and seek partnerships in building energy-efficient ships.

"Our country also plans to enter the global EV value chain. Climate change has compelled the shift to green products such as EVs," Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said in his keynote speech at the 12<sup>th</sup> Arangkada Philippines Forum on Wednesday.

He said the Philippines will push for foreign EV technology transfer, noting the potential to leverage Philippines' large re-

serves of key minerals like nickel, copper, and cobalt.

He said access to technology will unlock activities like "the assembly of pure EVs, plug-in hybrid EVs, hybrid EVs, and fuel cell EVs."

The Philippines will also be in a position to manufacture EV parts and systems and develop the necessary support infrastructure like charging stations, Mr. Pascual said.

However, to ensure "minimal carbon footprint and more value-added economic activity" from expanded EV-related operations, the DTI will also seek

investment in the processing of rare metals.

"We (will) also invite investment in energy storage technology, including battery energy storage systems," he said.

Mr. Pascual also said the DTI welcomes financing and partnership proposals for building energy-efficient ships.

The energy-efficient ship initiative is expected to lead to related ventures like the manufacture of maritime equipment, he said.

"Of course, we also have ambitious targets for renewable energy and reducing wasted heat and other forms of waste," he added.

Mr. Pascual said the DTI will leverage free trade agreements and preferential tariffs to ensure such products will have broad market access.

"We have recently concluded the negotiations for our participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework Agreement on Supply Chain Resilience," he noted.

He said the agreement involving 14 countries will allow the mobilization of sustainable investment, showcase the Philippines as a reliable supplier of manufactured goods, and strengthen supply chains. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

## Holidays, stepped-up gov't spending expected to provide boost to growth in second half — NEDA

THE year-end holidays and stepped-up government spending will help drive growth towards the close of 2023, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon said.

"(For household consumption) there is holiday spending... Early on we recommended to the President to implement holiday economics," she said, referring the practice of manufacturing long weekends by moving holiday observances to Fridays and Mondays.

Speaking at the SGV Tax Symposium on Wednesday, she said other drivers include the improving labor market and accelerated

government spending. "For the second semester, we will be seeing more spending from the government," she said.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 4.3% in the second quarter, the slowest reading in over two years.

Government spending during the period contracted 7.1%, reversing the 6.2% growth posted in the first quarter and the year-earlier rise of 10.9%.

Government agencies have been tasked to come up with catch-up plans for spending amid low budget utilization levels in the first half.

Ms. Edillon also cited the push to maintain infrastructure spend-

ing levels of at least 5% of GDP as a driver.

This year, the government plans to spend 5.3% of GDP on infrastructure, equivalent to P1.29 trillion. It plans to spend 5-6% on infrastructure yearly.

NEDA also noted that parts of the economy continue to recover from the pandemic, such as real estate, tourism, and mining and quarrying.

Ms. Edillon noted the risk of elevated inflation, as seen particularly in high food prices.

"We are still seeing several challenges with respect to food inflation. We have a very small agriculture sector in terms of productivity. There are also many

challenges with respect to logistics and we are trying to address that," she said.

Inflation accelerated to 6.1% in September from 5.3% in August. The indicator remained above the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) full-year forecast of 5.8%.

September also marked the 18<sup>th</sup> straight month that inflation had breached the BSP's 2-4% target band for this year.

Food inflation surged to 10% from 8.2% a month earlier, as rice inflation accelerated to 17.9%, the highest such reading since March 2009.

Inflation averaged 6.6% in the first nine months, against 5.1% a year earlier. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**



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