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By Associated Press

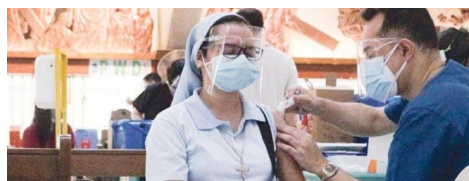
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A missionary sister of the Saint Anthony Mary Claret gets her first dose of the Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Quezon City on Aug. 14, 2021. PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE

PATTAYA: The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday (Tuesday in Manila) called for a two-month moratorium on administering booster shots of Covid-19 vaccines as a means of reducing global vaccine inequality and preventing the emergence of new coronavirus variants.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Hungary's capital Budapest, that he was "really disappointed" with the scope

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many countries struggle to provide first and second doses to more than small fractions of their populations while wealthier nations maintain growing vaccine stockpiles.

Tedros called on countries offering third vaccine doses "to share what can be used for boosters with other countries so [they] can increase their first and second vaccination coverage."

Several countries including United States, Israel and Hungary as well as others in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, are already offering or planning to offer to their populations Covid-19 booster

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the first country in the 27-member European Union to allow residents to sign up for a third dose, and more than 187,000 people have received a booster so far, according to government statistics.

Last week, US health officials announced plans to dispense Covid-19 booster shots to all Americans in an effort to shore up protection against a surge in cases attributed to the Delta variant and signs that vaccines' effectiveness is slipping.

Yet the UN health agency has repeatedly called for rich nations to stop booster jabs.

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On Monday, Tedros said that of the 4.8 billion vaccine doses delivered to date globally, 75 percent have gone to only 10 countries while vaccine coverage in Africa is at less than 2 percent.

"Vaccine injustice and vaccine nationalism" increase the risk of more contagious variants emerging, Tedros said.

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"The virus will get the chance to

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vaccination coverage, and the Delta variant could evolve to become more virulent, and at the same time more potent variants could also emerge," he said.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told the news conference that Hungary has 8 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine in storage and that the Central European country has donated more than 1.5 million doses to other countries.

Tedros thanked Hungary for making those donations, adding "we hope that you will do more because no one is safe until

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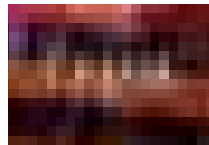
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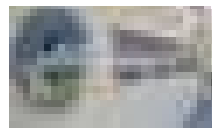
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