

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## So far, no Pinoys infected

by PIA LEE-BRAGO  
Philstar.com

NO Filipinos abroad have been reported affected by the swine flu virus but the Philippines is now in a pandemic preparedness stage.

Foreign Affairs spokesperson Eduardo Malaya said last April 30 that the DFA has not received reports from Philippine embassies and consulates general on any Filipino national suffering from the swine flu

virus especially those in Mexico where there are 309 Filipinos, the United States and other affected areas.

"None. We have not received any report from posts regarding any Filipino having been affected by the swine flu virus including Filipinos who are in Mexico," Malaya said in a press conference of the DFA and the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) on the Philippines-US' hosting of the first ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR) on Disaster Relief in Metro Manila and various areas in Central Luzon.

"Our Filipinos overseas have been spared as of the moment. We have not received anything from the posts which would indicate certain Filipinos overseas are suffering from the swine flu virus," he said.

The DFA issued a travel advisory after the Department of Health (DOH) warned Filipino travelers to avoid unnecessary

travel to Mexico or other affected areas.

### Prepared for threat

Malacañang ordered authorities to step up measures to prevent the outbreak of swine flu into the country after the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that a pandemic was imminent.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman Anthony Golez said the authorities, led by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), have already readied contingency plans in case of an outbreak in the country.

His advice to the public was basic: "We must continue with our business and pay closer attention to our hygiene. That's a way to arm ourselves against the virus."

Golez also said President Arroyo is taking extra precautions against the swine flu, especially that there is still no specific vaccine against it.

### DOH command conference

Health Secretary Francisco Duque called a command conference involving the agency's regional directors and



Health Secretary Francisco Duque presents boxes of stocked anti-flu drugs to members of the media inside a government warehouse in Metro Manila April 30, 2009. The World Health Organization said on Wednesday the world is at the brink of a pandemic, raising its threat level as the swine flu virus spread and killed the first person outside of Mexico, a toddler in Texas.  
Reuters Photo by John Javellana

epidemiologists and officials of DOH-controlled hospitals to "discuss readiness plans and command and control systems for an imminent pandemic."

"I'm also calling for a meeting with the chiefs of all private hospitals to coordinate with the DOH on how they can prepare and respond to possible case of Mexican swine flu which may come to their attention," Duque said.

This as the DOH is checking on a group of Filipinos belonging to Human Life International that went to Mexico for a pilgrimage.

The agency had coordinated with the Philippine embassy in Mexico and the group's officers to ensure that the pilgrims would undergo appropriate screening and other medical attention if needed when they return home. ■

## If elected president, Binay will file plunder raps vs GMA

by DING CERVANTES  
Philstar.com

BACOLOR, Pampanga.— Opposition leader and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay disclosed here last May 1 that there is no legal impediment to President Arroyo's running for Congress in next year's elections.

He said that if Charter change (Cha-cha) does not materialize

and he is elected president in next year's polls, he will file plunder charges against Mrs. Arroyo.

Binay echoed the same sentiment voiced by Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio. Binay met Panlilio yesterday morning at the King's Royale Hotel here.

Panlilio made the same statement in a recent press conference amid proposals of some sectors for him to run for presi-

dent in next year's May elections. Panlilio had once exposed alleged bribery of local officials in a meeting in Malacañang.

Binay met Panlilio a few hours before Mrs. Arroyo arrived in Barangay San Basilio in Sta. Rita, Pampanga, and inspected a newly completed farm-to-market road.

He said that part of the proposal to amend the Constitution is to enable Mrs. Arroyo to extend her term.

"Let us be vigilant over allegations that only the economic concerns would be the concern of Charter change," he said.

Binay said the issue to be brought before the Supreme Court would tackle only the legality of the means used to change the Charter.

He said there is no question that the proposal of the President's supporters to shift to parliamen-

tary system of government was to perpetuate her in power and protect her from possible charges that could be filed against her should she leave the presidency.

"For all the charges that could be filed against her and members of her family, it's but natural (for the President to protect herself and her family)," he said.

Binay said the President is a registered voter of Lubao, Pampanga.

"Even if she has been absent for a long time in her town, there is the principle of animus rivertendi or her intent to return which can be used for election purposes," he said.

Binay said the opposition is set to hold meetings starting this July to convince opposition presidential aspirants to unite and support a common candidate by September. ■

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