

Officials push for tourism amid crisis

by VERNADETTA JOVEN
Philstar.com

THE current economic crisis is an opportunity to position the country at par with other tourist destinations in Asia, tourism officials said last May 29.

"It [the global crisis] should not be a deterrent but [it is] an opportunity for us to do more. We should come up with creative marketing strategy that would adapt to this kind of environment," said Frankfurt attaché Venus Tan of the Department of Tourism (DOT).

Tan said competition among the region is a great vehicle for the Philippines to extend its reach and tap visitors who often go to countries like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

"It is important for us to reach out to the front liners like tour operators and travel agents," she said.

Verna Covar-Buensuceso, DOT chief tourism operations officer and head of Team Europe, added that to raise awareness, they are investing on educational and familiarization tours to further promote the country.

"Europeans don't know much about the Philippines so they [the tour operators] tend to push destinations that they are familiar with," Covar-Buensuceso said.

Ranking fifth in the European market, Switzerland has 18,000 tourists who visit the Philippines annually. Focusing on this strength and the unique European lifestyle of being partial to warm climate, the DOT has invited 100 delegates from the top four tour operators in Switzerland to check out Cebu, Bohol, Boracay and Palawan until the end of May.

"The timing right now is very good because more than 100,000 visitors go to Thailand and I hope that number extends here as well. Although we only have a population of 7.5 million, around 12 million of our citizens travel annually so I really encourage the Philippines to put a clear focus on tourism," said Swiss Ambassador Peter Sutter.

Sutter, who has been living in the country for three years now, said the infrastructure and tourism efforts have greatly improved in the past years.

"It [the Philippines] is a great country and very attractive. I've been receiving positive feedback and this should be turned as a way to promote the destinations here," he said. ■

A(H1N1) cases in RP rise to 14

THE Philippines has a total of 14 confirmed influenza A(H1N1) cases in the country following the confirmation of four more cases last May 28, the Department of Health (DOH) reported.

Two of the newly-confirmed patients, a 19-year-old woman and a seven-year-old girl, returned from a trip to the US. The other two cases were had contact who had contact with Taiwanese nationals at a wedding in Zambales province on May 17.

DOH Secretary Francisco Duque III said all the four newly-confirmed patients are Filipinos, and that they have

only mild respiratory symptoms after being treated.

Although the DOH anticipates more A(H1N1) cases to be found out, the health chief said there should not be any cause for panic.

"Right now, what we are seeing from the behavior of the virus is that most of the cases are mild and are self-limiting."

"The case fatality rate of A(H1N1) virus in fact is less than

1 percent," said Duque, adding that another disease—dengue fever—is even more fatal in the Southeast Asian country, where 57 people have died of the virus as of April this year.

He said the 14 confirmed cases have shown relatively mild symptoms. They are being closely monitored in health facilities and all are "responding positively to the treatment."

"The most important thing is that we still do not have any severe case or any death," Duque said, adding that there is no indication of sustained community transmission in the Philippines.

He assured the public that

the health department will continue to closely watch the situation and strengthen the country's preparedness and response plan.

Duque, however, said his department may be shifting its control strategy from hospitalization of all infection cases to outpatient and home management of mild cases and cases under observation.

Since May 1, the department has monitored 211 cases, including the 14 confirmed ones. Currently, 25 cases are still pending laboratory results and the other 172 ones have been dismissed since their results are negative for the virus. (Philstar.com)

US envoy praises RP for intensive advocacy vs A/H1N1 virus

MARAWI CITY—The Philippine government is doing well and they promoted the campaign against the A/H1N1 virus very vigorously, said US Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie A. Kenney in an interview during her recent visit to Marawi.

"The issues on A/H1N1 are being addressed by the Philippine government and its public awareness campaign is helping a lot. What we do is we share information, Ambassador Kenney said.

The US Ambassador also urged the people to promote basic hygiene practices to prevent virus infection.

"I think the best thing that we can do is to wash our hands and observe proper hygiene. Vaccines and medications will work when you're already sick but our main goal is to keep people from getting sick," she stressed. (PIA)

150,000 jobs available at Luneta job fair

by MARLON RAMOS
Inquirer.net

MORE than 150,000 jobs in private companies and government agencies will be offered to job hunters when the Department of Labor and Employment holds a job fair at the Luneta Grandstand in Manila on June 12.

Dubbed *Kalayaan 2009 Mega Job and Livelihood Fair*, the three-day job fair is part of the national government's celebration of the country's 111th Independence Day.

Labor Undersecretary Lourdes Trasmonte on Friday, May 28 said the event would be the first time that government owned and controlled companies and government financial institutions would participate in a job fest.

Trasmonte said some 950 companies are set participate in the job fair, which will also provide livelihood training and free legal services from state lawyers.

"Even non-degree holders could apply for various positions in both local and foreign companies," Trasmonte said in a press briefing.

Hans Leo Cacdac, deputy administrator of the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, said job seekers could also apply for 75,000 employment opportunities abroad on June 14.

Trasmonte advised interested individuals to send their applications for the pre-registration process by visiting the website <http://philjob.net>. ■

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