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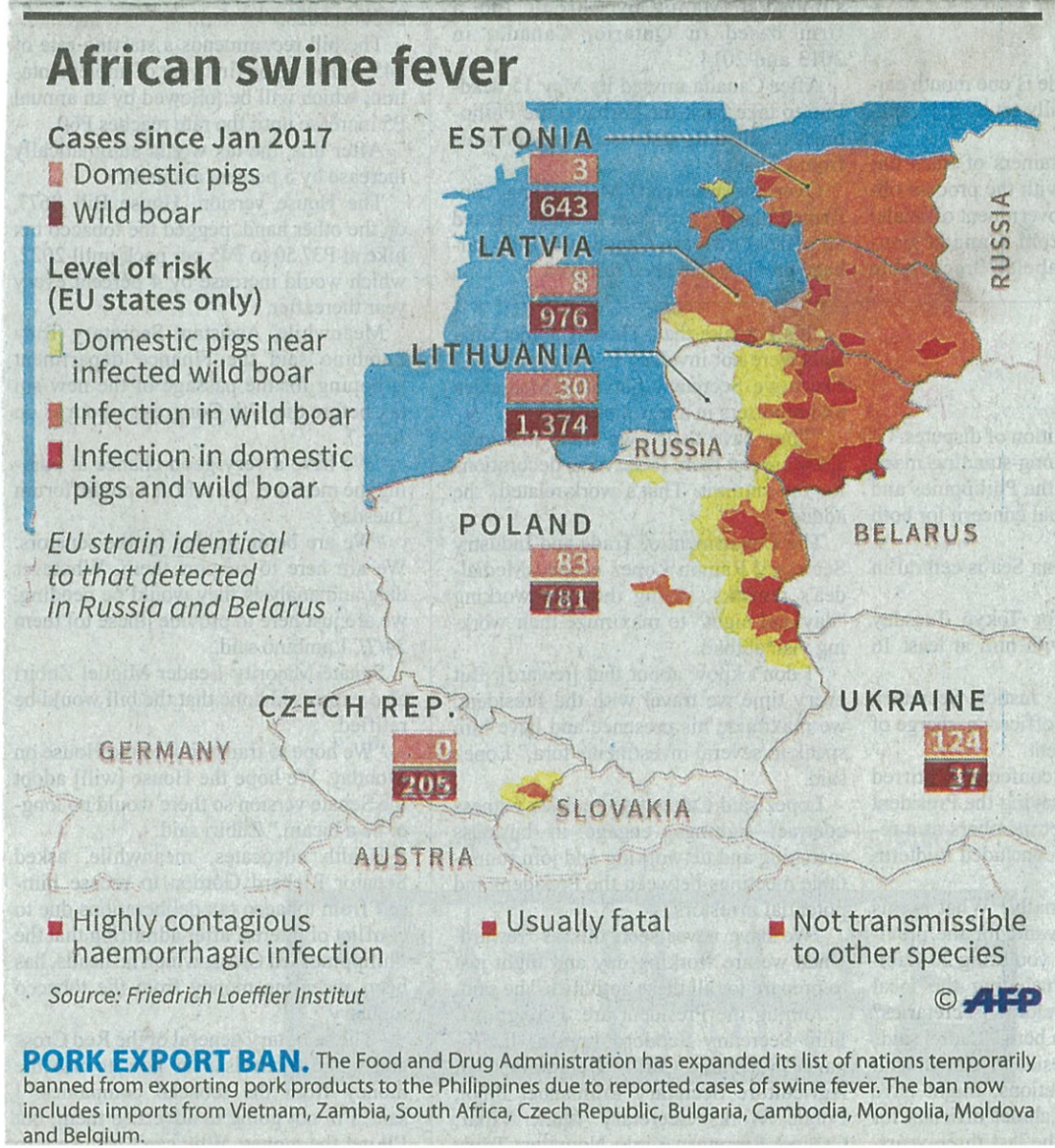
Pork meat recall ordered



PORK EXPORT BAN. The Food and Drug Administration has expanded its list of nations temporarily banned from exporting pork products to the Philippines due to reported cases of swine fever. The ban now includes imports from Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova and Belgium.

Amid deadly pig virus spread in 16 countries

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

THE Food and Drug Administration has ordered a recall of all pork-based products manufactured in countries affected by the African Swine Fever virus.

The recall includes canned goods like luncheon meat and processed pork—such as Ma Ling from China—with a manufacturing date from August 2018 or later.

The FDA has also expanded its list of countries temporarily banned from exporting pork products to the Philippines due ASF among their livestock.

A new FDA advisory now bans the importation of pork from Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova, and Belgium.

The move expands the Department of Agriculture memorandum order in September that banned imported pork products from China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, and the Ukraine.

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Pork meat...

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The World Organization for Animal Health said African swine fever is "a severe viral disease affecting domestic and wild pigs."

While humans cannot get ASF, it can have serious economic effects if it spreads among livestock. The Philippines is currently free of African swine flu.

The Agricuture Department and local hog raisers have also asked the FDA to stop the issuance of import clearances and order the immediate pullout from the market of processed pork products from these countries.

An incident involving a returning Filipino worker who was intercepted while bringing in cans of "Ma Ling" pork luncheon meat brought to the attention of the DA that while a ban and cut off date for the entry of processed pork products from China was issued last year, the FDA continued issuing permits to allow importers to bring in the banned products.

In an emergency meeting attended by officials of the Bureau of Customs at the Agriculture secretary's office Tuesday, the hog raisers also asked for the immediate creation of an Inter-Agency Task Force to handle the ASF threat to the country's P200-billion hog industry.

Earlier, the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries recommended the declaration of a state of emergency to protect the country's hog industry.

The ASF is a deadly disease that affects hogs. There is no vaccine or cure for it, and it can wipe out the hog population of a country.

China and Vietnam, two of the countries worst hit by ASF, have already eliminated millions of hogs infected by the disease with China losing about 30 percent of its swine population.

Concerned groups during the meeting requested an emergency meeting with the new director general of the FDA to address the seeming lack of coordination and synchronization of government efforts to address the ASF problem.

They also asked FDA to request the Trade department to implement an immediate recall from the market of all processed and canned pork since these are among the items included in the ban issued by the Agriculture Department in August 2018.

The group also enjoined the Bureau of Animal Industry to monitor and inspect animal feed stores to check the presence of dog and cat food using hog-based meat and bone meal processed from ASF-affected countries.

The Manila Times

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Processed pork from ASF-hit nations recalled

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Tuesday ordered all importers, distributors and retail outlets to immediately recall all pork products imported from countries affected by African Swine Fever (ASF) virus which has largely spread to Philippines' neighboring countries, particularly China.

All processed pork products from ASF-hit countries will be immediately seized from Philippine markets to prevent the entry of the highly contagious hemorrhagic disease in the country, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol earlier said.

"Food business operators importing, distributing, offering for sale and/or donating the banned products, shall be prosecuted for violation of the FDA Act of 2000, the Food Safety Act of 2013, and other relevant laws, rules and regulation on food safety," FDA said in its advisory dated May 27.

In a separate advisory, FDA also reiterated the temporary ban on the importation, distribution and sale of all processed pork meat products from ASF-affected countries namely China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine.

With the fast spread of the dreaded ASF, the FDA also expanded the said ban to countries including Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova and Belgium.

Piñol said erring tourists will be penalized with a fine of not less than P200,000. He also called the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) for help. "We are appealing to you (OFWs) to help spread the information on the the strict prohibition of sending canned goods, especially those which are coming from ASF-affected countries like China, Hong Kong, Cambodia and parts of Europe," Piñol added.

The agriculture chief also noted that the DA was already drafting the list of ASF high-risk countries, or those near countries struck by the ASF.

On Monday, the DA, along with local hog raisers, announced its plan to appeal to the Office of the President a two-month suspension on the importation of meat and meat products from ASF high-risk countries.

The Manila Times

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TO JAPAN President Rodrigo Duterte, accompanied by senator-elect Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, chats with some officials at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City before flying to Japan on Tuesday. The President will be a keynote speaker during the 25th Nikkei Conference on the Future of Asia.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Japan to support PH security needs

JAPAN is expected to continue extending support to the Philippines, particularly for regional security, given strong bilateral ties said to have further improved under the Duterte administration.

The relationship between Manila and Tokyo, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel said at the start of a three-day visit by President Rodrigo Duterte,

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Japan to support PH security needs

is currently in a "golden era."

Duterte, who will be the keynote speaker at the 25th Nikkei Conference on the Future of Asia, will also be meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to discuss the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) dispute, among others.

Laurel told reporters that Japan was particularly interested in hosting Duterte.

"The Japanese are always fascinated with leadership that is recognized, affirmed by [his] own people at the same time a tremendous political will insofar as his programs are concerned," he said.

"So he (Duterte) is not controversial but interesting, unique for the Japanese," Laurel added.

The envoy said the Japanese government would continue to provide assistance to the Philippines, noting previous assistance involving the provision of ships, jets and helicopters.

"Japan is very important not only to the Philippines ... other countries also depend on them. So it's very simple. You don't have to think too much ... Japan will support the Philippines in its needs, particularly in security," he said.

With most of the Duterte Cabinet accompanying the President, Laurel also said the trip could be a "reward" for the government's overwhelming win in the May 13 midterm elections.

"Why do you bring 20 Cabinet members here, including [those handling] local government or land reform? There is no land reform here, it is already there with us," he said.

"I think the President is so elated with the result of midterm elections ... That is the truth. It is like a reward, like, 'Thank you, you have done your jobs,'" Laurel added even as he denied that the trip was a junket.

According to Malacañang, the official delegation includes Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, Public Works Secretary Mark Villar, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato dela Peña, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi, Information and Communications Technology Secretary Eliseo Rio Jr. and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia.

Also part of the delegation are Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, Communications Secretary Martin Andanar, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr.

Lopez and Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, however, denied Laurel's "reward" statement, with the latter declaring that delegation members are never just "decoration."

"All the Cabinet members included in the trip have their own trade missions. They are not decorations in the summit. It is work," Medialdea added.

Lopez said Cabinet officials who travel with Duterte "maximize their time and speak to several investments fora ... we conduct deal signing, business matching and networking, round table meetings ... as an opportunity to dialogue with the foreign business community."

"We have never seen this as 'reward,' when we are working day and night just to prepare for all these activities," he added.

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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FDA recalls pork products due to swine fever

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has ordered the recall and seizure of all processed pork meat products from countries suspected to be affected by the African Swine Fever (ASF) virus.

Under FDA Order 2019-046, the agency ordered all importers, distributors, retail outlets and other dealers to immediately recall all pork meat products imported from countries suspected to be affected by the ASF virus.

"Food business operators, importing, distributing, offering for sale and/or donating these banned products shall be prosecuted for violation of the FDA Act of 2009, the food safety act of 2013 and other rules and regulations on food safety," the order read.

The FDA also directed its food-drug regulation officers under its field regulatory operations office and regulatory enforcement unit officers to seize all imported pork meat products for distribution, sale, transfer and/or donation, which are found during monitoring.

In a separate advisory to the general public, the FDA reiterated the temporary ban on the importation, distribution and sale of these products from countries suspected affected by the ASF virus.

Among these countries are Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Czech Republic, China, Hungary, Latvia, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sambia, South Africa, Ukraine and Vietnam.

"The public is advised to exercise extreme caution in purchasing and consuming processed pork meat products and is advised to only consume those that are sourced from countries not listed above," the FDA said.

It said that it currently does not allow the registration of processed pork meat products from the listed countries.

"A heightened post-marketing surveillance and audit is being conducted on all concerned and covered establishments to ensure full compliance with the FDA order and to hold violators liable," the FDA said.

On Monday, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol asked the FDA to recall processed meat products with cutoff date of August 2018.

"Any other products shipped in after August 2018 when we issued the ban should be recalled from the market," Piñol told reporters.

He directed the Bureau of Animal Industry to monitor and check pet stores that sell dog and cat food products using animal meat byproducts from ASF-affected countries.

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Govt to seize goods from ASF-hit nations

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By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

THE Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Tuesday ordered the total recall and seizure of all processed pork meat products, including canned goods, sold in the market that were imported from countries struck by the dreaded African swine fever (ASF).

The FDA, an agency under the Department of Health, issued the order after it met with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to discuss strategies to prevent the entry of the fatal hog disease into the country.

Meat importers and traders warned, however, that measures such as the two-month import ban recommended by hog raisers, could jack up the prices of local meat and processed meat products.

The order dated May 27 issued by FDA OIC-Director General Rolando Enrique D. Domingo will cover all importers, distributors, retail outlets and other dealers who were asked to immediately recall all pork products from ASF-affected countries.

FDA Order 2019-046 also authorized FDA's food-drug regulation officers to seize all imported meat products that have been sourced from countries which confirmed outbreaks of ASF.

"Notwithstanding and in the interest of protecting public health and safety, the Food-Drug Regulation Officers of the [Field Regulatory Operations Office] and [Regulatory Enforcement Unit] are hereby ordered to seize all imported pork meat products for distribution, offered for sale, transfer and/or for donation, which are found during the conduct of their continuous monitoring," the order read. The FDA could tap the Philippine National Police, local government units and other concerned government agencies for help in seizing the meat products, according to the order.

In September, the FDA banned the importation, distribution and sale of all processed pork meat products from China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine due to ASF.

The FDA expanded the ban to Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova and Belgium after these countries reported outbreaks of ASF.

Expensive meat

CONSUMERS should brace for higher prices of meat and processed meat products if the proposed two-month moratorium on meat imports

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from ASF high-risk countries pushes through, according to Meat Importers and Traders Association (Mita) President Jesus C. Cham.

Cham said they informed Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol of this consequence during their meeting with him on Tuesday.

He argued that suspending importation from high-risk countries, which the DA considers to be near ASF-struck states, would limit the country's meat supply, particularly for raw materials used in meat processing. The Philippines sources the majority of its raw materials for meat processing abroad, with Europe supplying bulk of the requirements of local processors.

Cham said Piñol asked them to avoid buying meat products from countries that share common borders with ASF-infected countries as a preventive measure against the fatal hog disease.

These countries, Cham noted, could include Germany, Netherlands and France, which are close to Belgium, which has confirmed ASF outbreaks in its wild boars but not in its domestic hog supplies.

To note, these three European countries are the country's top pork suppliers with Germany being the top source for the meat product.

"We told him that there could be a big impact if the supplies from these are curtailed," he said in an interview after their meeting.

"The most severely impacted would be the lower economic class which have least purchasing power because the imported pork by-products are what they can afford," he added.

In fact, Cham said they are now feeling the effects of higher global meat prices and scarcity of pork supplies in the world due to higher demand by China to plug its supply losses due to ASF outbreaks. *For background, please see May 23, 2019 BM Broader Look report, "African Swine Fever spreads to China: Is it time for PHL pork industry to whine?"*

The Mita official said they are still awaiting the list of countries that the DA wants them to avoid sourcing their imports from.

Nonetheless, Cham said he would relay Piñol's request to their members, but would leave to them the decision of whether to abide by it. He noted this is a business or company decision.

Cham appealed to the DA anew to adopt science-based measures, such as those guided by international standards, when it comes to suspending importation. He explained that a high-risk country under international guidelines is the 7-kilometer radius area from the ground zero of an ASF outbreak

Unfazed

PIÑOL is cognizant of the possible price increase brought about by the local hog raisers' appeal for a two-month importation moratorium.

However, he is unfazed by the consequences, saying such would be small compared to the possible losses of the local hog industry if the ASF virus enters the country.

"Of course, we are looking at the effect of the move on prices, but the question there is: What should we prioritize, the one to peso-increase in pork prices or the destruction of the whole P200-billion hog industry?" he said in interview with reporters on Tuesday morning.

"We really have to make a decision," he added.

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Cabinet officials' Japan trip 'reward' for poll results

By Arjay L. Balinbin *Reporter*

PRESIDENT Rodrigo R. Duterte left for Japan on Tuesday afternoon to attend the Nikkei 25th International Conference on The Future of Asia in Tokyo, Malacañang said.

The President, according to a list released by the Palace on Tuesday morning, would be accompanied by at least 16 Cabinet officials.

In an interview with reporters in Japan, hours before the President's expected arrival, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose C. Laurel said the trip to Tokyo could be Mr. Duterte's "reward" to his men as he was "elated" by the results of the 2019 midterm elections.

Malacañang emailed to reporters the transcript of the interview on Tuesday afternoon.

"You know, you ask me personally what is [the] purpose? *Ito'y pabuya sa nakaraang* election (This is a reward for the previous elections). Why do you bring [16] Cabinet members here *pati ang* [including] local government [officials] or land reform [officials]? *Wala naman* land reform *dito. Tapos na, nandoon sa atin* (There is no land reform here. It is over. The land reform is there in our country)," he said.

He added: "But I think the President is so elated with the results-of the midterm elections, that this is an affirmation of his administration in the last three years. *Iyan ang katotohanan* (that is the truth)."

The ambassador continued, "*Parang pabuya na, 'Salamat ha* (It is like a reward to say 'thank you'), you've done your jobs.'"

The Palace said the President would be accompanied by the following officials: Secretaries Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr. of the Department of Foreign Affairs; Carlos G. Dominguez III of the Department of Finance; Emmanuel F. Piñol of the Department of Agriculture; Mark A. Villar of the Department of Public Works and Highways; Karlo Alexei B. Nograles of the Office of the Cabinet Secretary; Ramon M. Lopez of the Department of Trade and Industry; Bernadette Romulo-Puyat of the Department of Tourism; Arthur P. Tugade of the Department of Transportation; Fortunato T. Dela Peña of the Department of Science and Technology; Alfonso G. Cusi of the Department of Energy; Eliseo M. Rio, Jr., of the Department of Information and Communications Technology; Ernesto M. Pernia of the National Economic and Development Authority; Jose Ruperto Martin M. Andanar of the Presidential Communications Operations Office; Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr., of the National Security Council; Salvador S. Panelo of the Office of the President; and Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity Carlito G. Galvez, Jr.

According to Mr. Laurel, a delegation of 200 ("*Aba'y ang balita ko'y dalawang daan eh.*") will accompany Mr. Duterte.

FULL STORY

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link < https://bit.ly/2EzgvOv >

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Envoy: Japan trip could be reward for Cabinet men

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte left yesterday for a working visit to Japan, with at least 200 persons, including 16 Cabinet men, in the official delegation.

Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel V said the trip may be a "reward" for the officials for the administration's victory in the midterm elections earlier this month.

He said the trip is not a junket.

In March this year, the President issued Executive Order No. 77 which prohibits government officials and personnel from going on "junkets," and "strategic planning workshops or team building activities" abroad.

Laurel, in an interview in Japan, said the President was elated by the results of the recent elections, which he said was an affirmation of his administration and what it has accomplished in the last three years.

"You ask me personally what is this purpose? Ito'y pabuya sa nakaraang election. Why do you bring 21, ah 20 Cabinet members here, even local government or land reform? There is no land reform here)," he said.

"I think the President is so elated with the results that it, of the midterm election, that this is an affirmation of his administration in the last three years. Iyan ang katotohanan. Parang pabuya na, 'Salamat ha, you've done your jobs' (I think the President is so elated with the results that it, of the midterm election, that this is an affirmation of his administration in the last three years. That's the truth. It's like a reward, 'Thank you, you've done your jobs')," he added.

Laurel said the embassy's list showed about 200 people joined the delegation, including officials and their assistants.

He, however, said the trip is

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not a junket. He said some of the Cabinet men have reasons to join the trip, and some of the officials were invited to the Nikkei forum.

"My impression is, it's important that you know the Cabinet is here for reasons that they may ask the Japanese," Laurel said.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, asked about Laurel's reward statement, said the Cabinet men have "trade missions" in Japan.

"Hindi naman. Puro halos wala sa kampanya ang mga kasamang opisyal. May mga kanya-kanyang trade missions ang mga kasamang cabinete. Hindi po sila dekorasyon sa summit.Trabaho lang yan. Not really. Most of them were not involved in the election campaign. They each have trade missions. They are not decorations in the summit," he said.

The President left at 4:53 p.m. yesterday for his May 28 to June 1 official visit to Japan where he is set to attend the 25th International Nikkei Conference on "The Future of Asia," meet with Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, Japanese businessmen, and the Filipino community, among others.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra has been designated as officer-in-charge of the day-to-day operations and general administration of the Executive Branch.

In Duterte's delegation are Secretaries Teodoro Locsin (Foreign Affairs), Carlos Dominguez III (Finance), Ramon Lopez (Trade), Mark Villar (Public Works), Bernadette Romulo-Puyat (Tourism), Arthur Tugade (Transportation), Alfonso Cusi (Energy), Ernesto Pernia (National Economic and Development Authority), Fortunato dela Peña (Science), and Eliseo Rio Jr. (Information and Communications Technology), Emmanuel Piñol (Agriculture),

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, and Presidential Adviser on Peace Carlito Galvez Jr., and Communications Secretary Martin Andanar.

Laurel said some of the Cabinet officials are expected to join business forums and attend the signing of agreements and exchange of letters of intent.

Laurel also said that since some of the members of the Philippine delegation are invited by Nikkei Forum organizers, the government did not spend for their trip.

He said the government is also not spending for the trip of any local government official, if any.

"Wala akong nalalamang mayor na, o gobernador na darating na gastos ng gobyerno. Pero iyung sa Presidente, aba eh sila (organizers) ang sasagot ng suite (I do not know any mayor, or governor whose expenses would be shouldered by government. But for the President, they will shoulder the suite)," he said.

Lopez said: "I don't know about that. But every time we travel with the President, we maximize his presence and have him speak in several investments fora, and we conduct deal signing, business matching and networking, round table meetings with PRRD and investors and secretaries do join as an opportunity to dialogue with the foreign business community. We have never seen this as 'pabuya' ?? when we are working day and night just to prepare for all these activities."

Piñol said: "DA is shouldering my trip with only one staff member. I am part of the delegation because there will be issues related to agriculture which PRRD would bring up during the visit, especially tariff on bananas. All that I know is this is a working trip and not a pabuya as the good ambassador of the Philippines to Japan Jose Laurel V."

The official delegation of the President sometimes includes at least 100 persons, including members of his security detail and personal staff.

During the President's visit to China last month, more Cabinet secretaries were in the official delegation.

Duterte's working visit to Japan aims to deepen the Philippines' political and economic engagement with its key strategic partner, according to a statement issued by Malacañang.

The President will address the 25th International Conference on the Future of Asia, during which he will highlight the Philippine development goals and accomplishments, foreign policy thrusts, and insights on regional and global developments.

Also expected to attend the event are the leaders of Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, and Bangladesh.

It is the President's third visit to Japan, which is the Philippines' biggest Official Development Assistance partner, second largest trading partner, and fourth highest source of tourist arrivals.

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Japan fascinated by Duterte leadership

By **ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS**

TOKYO, Japan – President Duterte is invited to Japan because the Japanese government is "fascinated" with his leadership, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel V said.

"The reason the President is brought here is that the Japanese --- it's not Abe alone --- it's the Japanese that are in themselves fascinated by his government," he said.

"The Japanese are always fascinated with leadership that is recognized, affirmed by their own people -- a tremendous political will insofar as his programs are concerned. So he is not controversial but interesting [for them]," he added.

According to Laurel, the Japanese have been im-

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Japan fascinated by...

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pressed by how Duterte was able to move the economy with "trickle-down" effects.

"If they make a growth of half a percent, they're sad. You give him 2 percent, there's joy and jumping in his office. We are here at 7 percent and we are not even contented, we are still going for the bigger goals," Laurel said.

He noted that diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan are enjoying a golden era.

During his visit in October, 2017, Duterte thanked Japan for its commitment to his government's infrastructure program and said the two countries have started to build a golden age of strategic partnership.

"Our commitment and resolve show the desire to further expand cooperative ties. I dare say that, considering what we have accomplished and achieved, the Philippines and Japan are building a golden age [for] our Strategic Partnership," Duterte said.

Duterte's third visit to Japan is upon the invitation of Nikkei to serve as one of the keynote speakers in its 25th International Conference on the Future of Asia.

Emperor Naruhito

Meanwhile, Laurel said it would be impossible for President Duterte to have an audience with new Japanese Emperor Naruhito because of Palace protocols.

"You see the Japanese are very protocolar. They are very traditional. They actually choose who visits them. For the emperor because the emperor is the symbol of Japan," he said.

"And no one will see him not even anyone of the five that were invited to speak at Nikkei because Nikkei is a private affair," he added.

Laurel explained that if Duterte would be allowed to meet the new emperor, the prime ministers of Malaysia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Laos would likewise be given the same opportunity.

"So the Japanese have their own rituals. You have to understand them. You have to understand their culture, their system. And in the end, you get along with them because they have a system that you have to wait until they are crowned," he said.

Naruhito began his reign early this month after his father, the former Emperor Akihito, abdicated.

Duterte was able to meet Akihito when he went to in 2017. He personally extended his appreciation and gratitude for the kindness and compassion of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko when Their Majesties visited the Philippines last year for the 60th anniversary of the normalization of Philippine-Japan diplomatic relations.

Malacañang has expressed confidence that the Philippines and Japan will continue to build their "golden age" of strategic partnership even now that the Land of the Rising Sun is under the Reiwa Era.

"We remain confident that the assumption of Crown Prince Naruhito would augur well for Philippines-Japan relations," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said.

"Japan's US$9-billion investment and aid package for the Philippines, spread over five years, is the largest amount the Japanese government has committed for a single country," he added.

"We hope to build the 'golden age' for Philippines-Japan strategic partnership during the reign of the new emperor. As PRRD himself said, Japan is our friend, closer even than a brother," he said.

Reward

Laurel said the President's Japan visit may also be a reward to his Cabinet members because he was "elated" by the results of the recent midterm elections where eight of his candidates won Senate seats.

Laurel said the President's visit is not so much a balancing act on the Philippines' relationship with China and Japan.

"It has nothing to do with China here in this visit... Ito'y pabuya sa nakaraang eleksyon (It is a reward for the elections). Why do you bring 20 cabinet members here, pati (even) local government and for land reform? Wala namang land reform dito? Tapos na (There's no land reform here, Japan's already done with that)," he said.

Elated

"But I think the President is so elated with the results of the midterm elections that this is an affirmation of what his administration has done in the last three years. Parang pabuya (It's like a reward)," he added.

According to Laurel, Duterte's trip will be shouldered by Nikkei who invited the Philippine leader to attend the international conference. However, it is not clear if the expenses of the Cabinet members and their staff who will be joining this trip were also paid by Nikkei or by the Philippine government.

"Unang-una, ito ay imbitasyon ng Nikkei. Sila ang sasagot ng gastos [ng Presidente]. Pagka-libre ay 'di sabihin sa kapitbahay (First of all, this is upon the invitation of Nikkei. They will shoulder the President's expenses. If something is free, of course you'll tell your neighbors)," he said.

16 Cabinet officials

A total of 16 Cabinet officials are joining Duterte in his third visit to Japan. They include Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato dela Peña, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi, and Information and Communications Secretary Eliseo Rio Jr.

Duterte is also bringing with him National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) director-general Ernesto Pernia, Communications Secretary Martin Andanar, National Security Adviser Secretary Hermogenes Esperon Jr., presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, and peace, reconciliation and unity adviser Carlito Galvez Jr.

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PH envoy on why 16 Cabinet execs on Du30 trip: Reward for poll win

TOKYO—President Duterte has taken 16 Cabinet officials on his third trip to Japan as a "reward" for the victory of his allies in the May 13 midterm elections, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel said on Tuesday.

The President departed for Tokyo on Tuesday afternoon on a visit aimed at deepening the Philippines' political and economic ties with a regional ally that he had described as "closer than a brother."

He boarded a private plane that left Villamor Air Base in Pasay City at 4:52 p.m., and was expected to land in Tokyo five hours later, officials said.

He will meet with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the evening, their seventh since the Philippine leader came to office in 2016.

Future of Asia

Mr. Duterte will deliver the keynote address to the 25th International Conference on the Future of Asia on the invitation of Nikkei Inc.

His speech "will highlight Philippine development goals and accomplishments, foreign policy thrusts, and insights on regional and global developments," according to a predeparture statement.

OFF TO JAPAN President Duterte returns the salute of military officers welcoming him to Villamor Air Base in Pasay City on Tuesday prior to his departure for Japan to attend the 25th International Conference on the Future of Asia. Sixteen Cabinet officials are traveling with the President as part of the 200-strong Philippine delegation to the annual gathering. —MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Laurel said Mr. Duterte's 200-strong delegation included Cabinet secretaries, other officials and their staff.

In a talk with Filipino reporters covering the President's trip, Laurel said Mr. Duterte's visit should not be seen as a balancing act in the Philippines' ties with Japan and China.

"It has nothing to do with China here in this visit. This is a reward for the past elections. Why do you bring 20 Cabinet members here, even local government? For land reform? There's no land reform here, they're done with that," he said.

"But I think the President is so elated with the results of the midterm elections that this is an affirmation of what his administration has done in the last three years. It's like a reward," he added.

Working day and night

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez disputed Laurel's view.

"I don't know about that. But

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every time we travel with the President, we maximize his presence and have him speak to several investment [forums], and we conduct deal-signing, business matching and networking, roundtable meetings with President Duterte and investors and secretaries do join as an opportunity to dialogue with the foreign business community," Lopez said.

"We have never seen this as a reward. [We have been] working day and night to prepare for all these activities," he said.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol denied his trip with the President was a reward.

"[The Department of Agriculture] is shouldering my trip with only one staff member," Piñol said. "I am part of the delegation because there will be issues related to agriculture [that the President] would bring up during the visit, especially tariff on banana. All I know is this is a working trip and not a reward."

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea also denied the Cabinet officials were being rewarded for the elections.

'It's just work'

"No, it's not. The officials traveling with the President were not involved in the campaign. They have their own trade missions. They are not decorations in the summit. It's just work," Medialdea said.

The Cabinet officials traveling with the President are Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Piñol, Public Works Secretary Mark Villar, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, Lopez, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato de la Peña, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi, Communications Technology Secretary Eliseo Rio Jr., Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia, Press Secretary Martin Andanar, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo and presidential peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr.

The annual gathering, regarded as one of Asia's top foreign policy and economic forums, will be attended by political, economic and academic leaders, who will "offer their opinions frankly and freely on regional issues and the role of Asia in the world," according to the official website of the conference.

The leaders will discuss cooperation in infrastructure development, trade and investments, agriculture, labor, defense, maritime security and maritime domain awareness, people-to-people exchanges, and the pursuit of peace and progress in Mindanao.

Business meetings

Mr. Duterte is expected to meet with Japanese businessmen and attend an economic forum on Wednesday.

He will meet with Filipinos living in Tokyo on Thursday night.

On Friday afternoon, he is expected to keynote the conference, which has the theme "In Search of a New World Order, Overcoming Chaos." —**REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO AND DJ YAP - INQ**

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MABILIS SA BALITA

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Ma Ling kinatay ni Piñol

Pinatatanggal sa merkado ng Food and Drug Administration (FDA), alinsunod na rin sa direktiba ni Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol, ang mga imported processed meat product katulad ng Ma Ling dahil sa pangambang kontaminado ang mga ito ng African Swine Fever (ASF).

Sa Memorandum 2019-048 na inilabas noong Lunes ng FDA, inatasan nito lahat ng importer, distributor, retail outlet at mga dealer na itigil ang pag-aangkat ng mga pork meat product mula sa mga bansang pinaghihinalaang apektado ng ASF virus.

Babala pa ng FDA na maaaring kasuhan ng paglabag sa FDA Act of 2009, Food Safety Act of 2013 at iba pang kaugnay na batas, ang sinumang lalabag sa kanilang kautusan.

Hiniling na rin ng FDA ang tulong ng Philippine National Police, mga pamahalaang lokal at iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno para mamonitor ang merkado hinggil sa mga karneng galing sa ibang bansa.

Nauna nang pinahayag ni Piñol na noong isang taon pa nag-isyu ng memorandum ang DA sa FDA para ipagbawal ang pagpasok sa Pilipinas ng mga processed pork product mula sa mga bansang may ASF tulad ng China kung saan nanggagaling ang Ma Ling.

Agosto 2018 pa pinagbabawal ng DA ang pag-angkat ng produktong baboy mula sa mga bansang may ASF at muli lang napansin na nakapapasok sa bansa ang mga ito nang may isang overseas Filipino worker (OFW) na nakitaang nagpapasok ng Ma Ling sa bansa.

Samantala, dinagdagan pa ng FDA ang listahan ng mga bansang may temporary ban sa pagpasok ng mga processed meat product dahil na rin sa ASF.

Bukod sa pansamantalang pagbabawal na makapasok ang mga karneng baboy galing sa China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia at Ukraine, isinama na rin sa listahan ang mga bansang Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova at Belgium.

Sa isang advisory na pirmado ni FDA Officer-in-Charge Dr. Eric Domingo, muling pinaalala ng ahensya sa publiko ang pagbili ng mga produktong gawa sa karneng baboy galing sa mga bansang apektado ng ASF.

Pinayuhan ng FDA ang publiko na kung hindi maiwasang kumain ng mga processed meat product ay tiyakin na mula ito sa mga bansang wala sa listahan ng temporary ban at dapat rehistra-do sa nasabing ahensiya.

Kabilang sa mga sintomas ng ASF ay mataas na lagnat, kawalan ng ganang kumain, pagdurugo ng balat at internal organ, na maaaring ikamatay kapag hindi naagapan. **(Eileen Mencias/Armida Rico)**

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INATASAN ng Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ang mga importer, dealer at distributor na agad na i-recall ang processed pork products mula sa mga bansang pinaghihinalaang tinamaan ng African Swine Fever. **SUNDAN SA PAHINA 9**

Inangkat sa African swine fever-hit countries

PORK MEAT PRODUCTS I-RECALL

Mula sa pahina 1

Sa abiso ng FDA, ang mga opisyal ng Food and Drug Regulation, gayundin ang Regulatory Enforcement Units, ay inatasang kumpiskahin ang lahat ng imported pork products mula sa mga bansang may kaso ng swine fever.

"All importers are ordered to immediately recall all pork meat products imported from countries suspected to be affected by the African Swine Fever virus," sabi ng FDA.

Sa isa pang abiso sa publiko, sinabi ng FDA na kasama na ang Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova at Belgium sa listahan ng mga bansa na bawal na munang pag-angkatan ng mga processed pork product.

Kabilang sa mga bansang naunang pinatawan ng 'temporary ban' ang China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia at Ukraine.

Samantala, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol na hihilingin niya sa mga negosyante na boluntaryong tumigil sa pag-aangkat ng baboy at processed pork products mula sa mga bansang tinamaan ng ASF.

Ang virus, na nakamamatay sa mga baboy at baboy-ramo, ay kumalat na sa kalahati ng mga lalawigan sa China noong nakaraang taon at natukoy nitong linggo sa isang katayan sa border nito sa Hong Kong.

"Since 5 months 'yong ating surplus ng karne sa ating mga warehouse... we could actually enforce or impose, observe a self-enforced moratorium sa pag-angkat ng karne," sabi pa ng kalihim.

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3 stranded dolphins rescued in Negros Occ.

By **GLAZYL MASCULINO**

BACOLOD CITY - Three pygmy killer whales were rescued after they were stranded in the waters of Barangay Gargato in Hinigaran, Negros Occidental, last May 24.

According to Lumba Project, a website about the critically endangered Irrawaddy dolphins found in Bago and Pulupandan areas in the province, the pygmy killer whales are very social animals and are sometimes associated with other oceanic dolphins such as melon-headed whales, killer whales, pilot whales, false killer whales, and Risso's dolphins called as blackfish. This is a first record for this species in Guimaras Strait.

They were released back to the sea, after authorities checked them.

Two of them got stranded again in the neighboring city of Kabankalan, but they were unharmed.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Bantay Dagat, and Bantay Katunggan of Kabankalan City responded and released them back to the sea.

Authorities are calling on coastal residents in southern Negros to report to authorities if the animals are stranded again.

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Bayer Crop Science partners with DA office to boost hybrid rice production

BAYER CROP Science partnered with the Department of Agriculture Regional Office XII (DA-RFO XII) to implement a pilot project aimed at boosting the hybrid rice production of farmers in North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sarangani, and Sultan Kudarat.

Under the memorandum of agreement (MoA), Bayer Crop Science and DA-RFO XII will implement the project that will use Arize Hybrid Rice seeds in over 10,000 hectares of rice farms in Mindanao.

Both parties will deploy field technicians to help the rice farmers. The farmers will also undergo rice production training through the Bayer Agri-Academy.

"This is the first-of-its-kind among our projects with the Department of Agriculture. By formalizing our partnership, we convey our commitment to join hands with the government to improve the region's rice productivity," Iiinas Ivan Lao, Bayer Crop Science country commercial lead, said in a statement.

According to Bayer Crop Science, the average yield of inbred rice farmers is around four metric tons, while hybrid rice seeds can potentially increase yield by six to eight metric tons. The adoption rate for hybrid rice remains low in the region.

"More than ever, we need to collaborate with the Department of Agriculture to ensure the project's success. The support of DA-RFO XII and the local government units of the provinces involved will create a significant impact to the farming communities in the region," Recher Ondap, head of seeds at Bayer Crop Science, said.

Mr. Ondap said the project will allow farmers to increase their yield by 20%.

Planting season will start in May or June and will end by September. At the end of the season, farmers who have harvested more than five metric tons of hybrid rice will be honored as top yielders in their areas. This would allow them to qualify for the DA's annual Gawad Saka Awards.

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NFA says rice procurement funds adequate after reports of delayed payments

THE NATIONAL Food Authority (NFA) said it has sufficient funding to fulfill its domestic rice procurement mandate, despite high buying prices that have persuaded farmers to sell it 4.1 million bags of palay, or unmilled rice, as of May 20.

In a statement Tuesday, NFA Officer-in-Charge Administrator Tomas R. Escarez said he had to deliver reassurances amid reports of delayed payments to farmers in some NFA buying stations.

"NFA management assures those isolated instances are being addressed at the soonest possible time," it said in the statement.

The NFA has lost its rice importing functions under the rice tariffication law, which liberalizes the import process for private entities. It has been relegated to maintaining a buffer stock from domestically-produced rice.

The NFA currently pays P20.70 per kilogram (kg) for palay, consisting of the P17.00 per kilogram support price and an additional P3.00 as a buffer stocking incentive (BSI); a P0.20 drying incentive; a P0.20 delivery incentive; and a P0.30 cooperative development incentive fee (CDIF).

The average farmgate price for palay paid by commercial rice buyers fell 0.5% week-on-week during the second week of May to P18.35 per kilogram (kg), the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

Mr. Escarez has advised NFA field offices to request funds in advance to be able to pay for palay deliveries from farmers.

As of May 20, the NFA has bought about 4.1 million bags of palay worth P4.2 billion. The NFA's ultimate target is to procure 15 to 30 million bags to keep in inventory for emergencies. —
Vincent Mariel P. Galang

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

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DA: Stop pork imports from ASF hit-countries

The Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday announced that it will ask traders to voluntarily refrain from importing pigs and processed pork products from countries hit by African swine fever (ASF).

In a statement, the DA said that its leadership will meet with meat importers to appeal for a self-limitation on importing pork and processed pork products.

The move is to stop the spread of the virus, which is fatal to pigs and wild boars.

The department also noted the high-risk countries are those contiguous to countries with ASF like Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

The DA also said that the ban "could be challenged by trading partners" if it is imposed by the government instead of being a voluntary effort by traders.

ASF is not dangerous to humans but is fatal to pigs and wild boar, and has no vaccine or cure.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continued issuing import permits for canned and processed pork from China despite a ban from the DA last year.

The department also noted the high-risk countries are those contiguous to countries with ASF like Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

This, as the agency asked the FDA to pull out from markets all processed pork products imported from countries hit by African swine fever since August 2018.

The latest appeal came after *South China Morning Post* earlier reported that about 1,500 fake "Ma Ling brand" cans that were seized could contain meat from diseased pigs mixed with internal organs.

According to Asst. Supt. Chan Yiu-wah of the Intellectual Property Investigation Bureau, the meat could be probably made in unhygienic and illegal plants in Sichuan.

ENManuel

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SLOW FOOD NAKATUTOK SA CORDI MOUNTAIN RECIPES PARA SA INT'L PROMOTION

NAKATUTOK ngayon ang Slow Food International, isang Italy-based organization na naglalayon na ipreserba ang mga "pagkaing bundok" na prodyus sa dalawang probinsiya sa Cordillera sa pag-asang mapanatili ang mga ito sa mga hapag kainan para ma-enjoy pa rin ng mga darating na henerasyon.

"While Slow Food has already identified local food from two Benguet municipalities and four Ifugao towns, we will still finalize reports and find out how the local communities can help propagate the 'mountain food' that are distinctively Cordilleran," pahayag ni Elena Aniere, Slow Food International Asia Pacific program director, sa isang eksklusibong panayam kamakailan.

Nakipagkita si Aniere sa mga kinatawan ng mga probinsiya para sa mga karagdagang diskusyon tungkol sa pro grama.

"We want to promote differences," sabi ni Aniere. Ipinaliwanag niya na ang mga eksperto mula sa Slow Food ay naglibot sa mga komunidad ng Ifugao at Benguet para matukoy ang mga produkto na tunay na Cordilleran.

"Although some of these food are the same, there are differences when you go from one community to another," sabi pa ni Aniere.

"You can copy the ingredients, but then the food will taste differently because there are ingredients that are distinctively from a certain area that makes the taste different," sabi ni Aniere, isang Australian.

Ipinaliwanag ni Aniere na ang kanilang organisasyon ay nakikipagtrabaho sa Department of Agriculture para matukoy ang mga produkto ng pagkain na magiging paksa ng kanilang preserbasyon at mga gagawing pagtataguyod.

Ginawa pang ehemplo ng opisyal ng Slow Food ang "tap-ey" (local rice wine) kasama si Department of Tourism - Cordillera officer-in-charge Jovi Ganongan.

Sinabi naman ni Slow Food vice president Edie Mokiibi, isang Ugandan agronomist, na kailangan nilang itaguyod ang mga pagkain na prodyus na locally ng ilang henerasyon, na nagiging katutubo na sa rehiyon.

Ilan dito ay ang "etag" (smoked pork) at "pinikpikan."

Isang Kalinga si Ganongan, ang umaasa na maisali ang programa sa DOT Cordillera's vision na maitaguyod ang lutuin ng Cordillera.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang Slow Food ay may mahigit nang 100,000 miyembro sa 150 bansa, kung saan ang mga local o regional chapters ay makikita.

Ang Slow Food chapters ay siyang responsable sa mga okasyon tulad ng pinakamalaking food ang wine fair sa mundo, ang Salone del Gusto sa Turin, ang biennial cheese fair sa Bra na tinawag na Cheese, ang Genoan fish festival na tinawag na Slow-Fish, at ang Turin's Terra Madre (Mother Earth) world meeting of food communities, na lahat ay ginanap sa Italy. **PNA**

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PH rice scientist Gregorio is new SEARCA director

By Brenda Jocson

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—A rice scientist has been appointed as new director of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture.

Glenn B. Gregorio, PhD, who assumed office this month is the eleventh to hold the top SEARCA post for a three-year term since its establishment in November 1966 by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization.

SEARCA is an inter-government treaty organization hosted by the Philippine government on the campus of the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

Gregorio is also an Academician at the National Academy of Science and Technology of the Philippines and is currently a professor at the Institute of Crop Science of the UPLB College of Agriculture and Food Science.

A distinguished rice scientist, Gregorio served the International Rice Research Institute for almost 30 years, including a five-year stint as International Rice Research Institute's rice breeder in Africa, based at Africa Rice Centre station at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria from 2004 to 2009.

Throughout his career, Gregorio has bred more than 15 rice varieties, most of which are salt-tolerant varieties that have greatly helped farmers in Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, and the Philippines.

He also led efforts to develop micronutrient-dense rice varieties to address anemia and malnutrition in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

But rice breeding is not Gregorio's only forte. Prior to his appointment as Searca Director, he also served as Crop Breeding Manager for Corn at the East-West Seed Company, Inc. from 2015 to 2018, where he was the global lead of the sweet corn and waxy corn breeding programs for South and Southeast Asia, the Latin Americas, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Gregorio has been the recipient of numerous awards, including Outstanding Young Scientist Award (OYS 2004) and Outstanding Publication Award given by NAST; The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM 2004) in the field of Agriculture-Plant Breeding and Genetics;

The Ho Chi Minh Medal Award for great contribution to the cause of agriculture and rural development in Vietnam; Ten Outstanding Youth Scientists (TOYS 1981) of the Philippines given by the Department of Science and Technology of the Philippines;

Honorary Scientist, Rural Development Administration, Korea; and other awards for his outstanding research and research management achievements.

Gregorio has authored and co-authored at least 90 articles published in various scientific journals, chapters on rice breeding in 14 books, and five scientific manuals and bulletins.

He also mentored and supervised 20 PhD and 27 MS graduate students and more than 40 BS students in plant breeding and genetics at UPLB and other universities in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America; and he continues to hone scientists and future scientists as a mentor and teacher.

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FDA orders seizure of all pork products from countries affected with African Swine Fever

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said it has ordered the recall and seizure of pork meat products imported from countries affected by African Swine Fever (ASF).

The order covers products which are for distribution, offered for sale, transfer, or donation.

"Pursuant to the FDA Order No. 2018-133 dated 24 September 2018 and FDA Order No. 2019-045 dated 27 May 2019, all importers, distributors, retail outlets, and other dealers of processed pork meat products, are hereby ordered to immediately recall all pork meat products imported from countries suspected to be affected by the African Swine Fever (ASF) virus as identified in the aforementioned Orders," FDA said through the FDA Order 2019-046 given to reporters on Tuesday.

Food-Drug Regulation Officers and Regulatory Enforcement Unit (REU) officers have been instructed to collect all pork products in circulation originating from ASF-affected countries. It authorized them to seek the assistance of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Local Government Units (LGUs) if necessary.

Section 14 of Republic Act (RA) No. 9711 authorizes the FDA Director-General "to issue orders of seizure, to seize and hold in custody any article or articles of food... that is adulterated, counterfeited, misbranded or unregistered, or drug, in-vitro diagnostic reagent, biologicals, and vaccine that is adulterated or misbranded."

The FDA also reiterated its warning against the purchase and consumption and importation of all pork meat products from ASF-affected countries like China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova, and Belgium.

ASF is non-treatable and contagious, and can kill swine in as little as two days. The Bureau of Customs first alerted NAIA in January about the possible entry of contaminated pork products after it received reports of their entry into South Korea and Japan late last year. — **Vincent Mariel P. Galang**

PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

A WORKER carrying pork at the Commonwealth Public Market.

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BANDERA
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Ma Ling iba-ban ng FDA

KABILANG ang Ma Ling sa listahan ng mga processed pork products na insyuhan ng pansamantalang ban bunsod ng pagkalat ng African swine fever virus, ayon sa Food and Drug Administration.

Sinabi ng FDA na kabilang sa mga sakop ng ban ang mga processed pork meat products mula sa Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova, at Belgium.

Nauna nang inisyuhan ng ban noong Setyembre 2018 ang pitong bansa kabilang na ang China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, at Ukraine.

Sinabi ni FDA Officer-in-charge Eric Domingo na layunin ng kautusan na maharang ang pagpasok ng virus sa bansa. — *Inquirer.net*

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

Fake vinegar

A guy who provides hair rebonding service as a sideline uses vinegar on his hair as a conditioner. He is often teased that he should add soy sauce, garlic, pepper and bay leaf for an *adobo* touch, but he has the last laugh: his hair is silky soft.

Only time will tell if he will lose his hair faster than his peers because of the vinegar. We also don't know if certain vinegar brands might cause that kind of long-term damage.

In culinary school, we were taught that not all local vinegars are created equal: one major brand has double the acidity of others so recipes must be adjusted accordingly.

Vinegars fermented from natural ingredients tend to be pricier. There's a brand of Ilocano vinegar that's a cut above the rest, and which I can't replace with any other brand when I make Vigan-type *longganiza* at home. Unfortunately, its production seems limited since it's not available in the big supermarket chains; I find it only in flea markets.

Balsamic vinegars, made from freshly crushed grape must, can fetch dizzying prices depending on the quality, with connoisseurs discussing the intensity and depth of the flavor. The Oracolo Gold Cap, produced in Modena, Italy, is aged for 25 years in century-old oak and chestnut barrels. Price: 350 euros for a 100-ml bottle.

I've never sampled this vinegar. But I think my favorite Ilocano *suka*, although modestly priced, can compete with the lower priced Balsamic vinegars ($5 to $30 for about 250 ml). Like the Oracolo, genuine *sukang Iloko* should be registered for protected denomination of origin.

In my pantry I have Philippine-made vinegars fermented from mango, strawberry and rice, apart from the more common variants from sugarcane and coconut.

But I've never heard of any vinegar brand being described as fake or synthetic… until recently.

Since the warning about "fake" vinegars was issued by the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology, I am heeding the warning to check my vinegar for synthetic acetic acid.

* * *

It's scary to be told that the synthetic acetic acid in fake vinegar is similar to what's used in petroleum products, and can cause cancer and degenerative afflictions such as Parkinson's disease.

Processing food to prolong shelf life has been around since the prehistoric age, when humans had to store food for the lean months, such as during winter or periods of drought. Meat, fish and certain plant products were salted, sun-dried or smoked. Humans have been fermenting rice, grapes and other agricultural crops for wines, flavoring and leavening for ages. Colors have been extracted from plants for food-grade dyes.

Later, scientists developed substances from non-food sources for similar purposes. The substances are more stable, but some have been linked to cancer and degenerative diseases.

Even people who are aware of the health risks posed by substances such as monosodium glutamate and curing salts, however, aren't ready to give up hotdog, *tocino* and MSG-laden cup noodles.

The attitude is that consuming such substances in moderation can't be hazardous to one's health. My cookbooks on charcuterie have extensive discussions on the health risks posed by nitrates and nitrites used for meat preservation, but they suggest amounts that can be used, which are supposed to have been vetted by global food authorities for safe consumption.

* * *

Lifestyles make people opt for processed food with long shelf life. I suspect that a fondness for hotdog, corned beef and canned meat loaf contributed to the early deaths due to cancer of some of my contemporaries who weren't heavy smokers or drinkers. A fellow reporter at Malacañang told me, before she died at 35 of colon cancer, that the only reason she could think of for her affliction was her use of an inordinate amount of MSG in her food.

There have been periodic scandals, for example, involving the use of carcinogenic preservatives for bread and similar products. The preservatives are banned, taken out of ingredient lists, but are quickly replaced with new ones with different names but similar properties.

Why? Because the typical Filipino consumer wants his bread soft with a white crumb, and will remain so on the table at room temperature for at least a week.

This is not possible without chemical dough softeners, conditioners or whatever names are given to preserve the bread especially in the warm, humid tropics. One day there will be another health-related scandal regarding these preservatives. But as long as people want their bread to sit on the table for a week or two while remaining soft without getting moldy, the bread will need preservatives.

One of the most popular breads in Paris, shaped like a round loaf, crusty with holes in the crumb produced by long, natural fermentation, becomes hard by late afternoon. If you plan to consume it hours after purchase (the consumer lines are long), you can pop it in the freezer, in its original packaging and then in a freezer bag, and then reheat it in an oven or toaster.

But most Pinoys are not used to this way of storing bread, which does not need preservatives.

There is a natural way of prolonging bread shelf life at room temperature. But even with this method, the longest possible shelf life for bread without preservatives in our climate without affecting the quality, as far as I know, is four days.

Long, natural fermentation, which brings out the quality and flavor of the wheat, is most pronounced in sourdough bread. This crusty bread has yet to gain popularity in our country. As the name indicates, it has a pleasantly mild acidity that reminds me of good quality natural vinegar.

The scandal over "fake" vinegars won't change our food consumption habits overnight. But it's something to chew on if we want to stay healthy.

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BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
MAY 29, 2019 / PAGE: A6

editorial

'Saving' PHL's agri sector

FARMERS and fishermen feed the entire country, yet they perennially remain poor. According to a report released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2017, the poorest sectors in the Philippines are farmers, fishermen and children. Data collected by the PSA since 2006 showed that farmers and fishermen were consistently ranked the poorest among the country's basic sectors. Poverty incidence among those who produce food for the country is even higher than the national rate of 21 percent.

These figures indicate that there is little reason to celebrate Farmers' and Fisherfolks' Month, which we observe yearly in the month of May. While the incomes of farmers and fishermen have improved in recent years, the increase is not enough to lift them out of poverty. Until now, the government can't seem to find the right formula that will improve productivity and hike income exponentially. The production growth rates of the agriculture sector attest to this.

Proponents of Republic Act 11321, or the Sagip Saka (Save Agriculture) Act, hope that the new law will help government finally achieve its goal of improving the incomes of two of the Philippines's poorest sectors. Signed by the President on April 17, the law was released to the public on May 27. The release of RA 11321 may have been timed to coincide with the country's observance of the Farmers' and Fisherfolks' Month.

The law seeks to help the agricultural and fishing communities "reach their full potential" and increase the incomes of farmers and fishermen by institutionalizing the farmers and fisherfolk enterprise development program. RA 11321 stresses the use of science-based technologies in identifying and prioritizing agricultural and fishery products that will be covered by the program. It prescribes the forms of assistance, as well as the fiscal incentives—such as exempting donors from paying donors taxes when making donations to accredited farmers' organizations—to improve agricultural productivity.

The Sagip Saka Act's most salient provision is the exemption of both national government agencies and local governments from the Procurement Law when they buy farm goods directly from accredited farmers' co-ops and organizations. This provision encourages the formation of more co-ops and guarantees a ready market for farmers and fishermen. This will also be good for the national and local governments, as they will no longer have to deal with unscrupulous traders and middlemen who wantonly jack up prices.

We hope the Sagip Saka Act will not suffer the fate of other laws, such as the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997 and the Agri-Agra law, which hardly made a dent in government's goal of making farmers and fishermen competitive, at least in Southeast Asia. Some provisions of the AFMA, such as the setup of SAFDZs, are yet to be implemented. While RA 8435 prescribed the annual budget that should be set aside by the government to modernize the agriculture sector, this was not followed. The Agri-Agra should have expanded farmers' access to affordable credit from formal institutions, but millions of planters still continue to rely on loan sharks.

Citing PSA data, Sen. Francis Pangilinan, the principal author of the measure, said agricultural workers earn only P280.37 a day. The amount is not even enough to allow them to eat three square meals a day, buy their basic needs, and send their children to school. One law will not lift them out of poverty overnight but if the Sagip Saka Act is implemented properly, it will boost government's efforts to uplift local farmers and fishermen. We hope this law will truly make them benefit from the bounty of the land and the sea.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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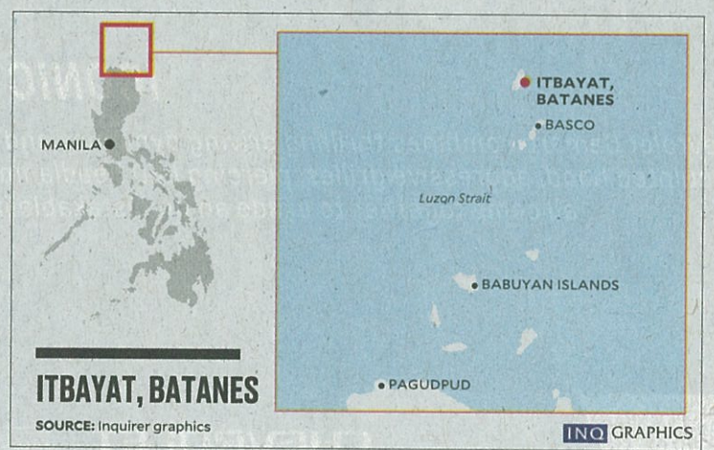
AFP TRAINS VILLAGERS AS MILITIAMEN

BATANES SHELTER FOR PH FISHERS ALSO MEANT TO DETER FOREIGN POACHERS

By Nathan Alcantara
@InqNational



ITBAYAT, BATANES—A concrete shelter built by the military for civilian use on the country's northernmost Mavulis Island will provide a safe refuge for fishermen and soldiers as they combat poaching in the country's northern fishing grounds, according to officials.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines handed over the shelter, along with fish dryers, to officials of Batanes province on Monday, about a year after construction began.

"We know that the area is being frequented by poachers from Taiwan and neighboring areas so this [shelter] will be a deterrent [to intrusions]," Maj. Ericson Bulosan, Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) public information officer, told the Inquirer.

Bulosan said 20 villagers had been trained as militiamen to help the Navy and the Coast Guard monitor the shores and the waters in the area.

> **We know that the area is being frequented by poachers from Taiwan and neighboring areas so this [shelter] will be a deterrent [to intrusions]**
>
> **Ericson Bulosan**
> Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) public information officer

Rocky outcrop

Poaching and illegal fishing are destroying the rich fishing grounds and threaten the area's marine resources, said Victor Gonzales, the head of the group based in Itbayat town.

The uninhabited island, a rocky volcanic outcrop about two kilometers long and one kilometer wide, is closer to the southern tip of Taiwan, about 150 kilometers northwest of Mavulis, than to the northern part of mainland Luzon, about 280 kilometers to the south.

Fishermen and soldiers who guard the island against foreign intruders now have a safe refuge, especially during bad weather, Bulosan said.

The solar-powered one-story shelter built above a white sand beach can accommodate 16 people. It has a dining area, a kitchen and a living room. The concrete fish drying areas could serve as helipads.

Handover rites

In June 2017, the Coast Guard installed a solar-powered lighthouse on the island.

Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat, Nolcom commander, and Defense Undersecretary Ricardo David Jr. represented the military during the formal handover rites, according to an AFP statement.

The shelter aims primarily to "optimize our maritime entitlements within our country's sovereign territory" in its northernmost region, Salamat said.

It "would greatly benefit our fishermen as well as provide maritime protection for our internal waters," he said, adding that its construction was "another significant milestone for our country and the Filipino people."

David said the "Mavulis Project" manifested "our commitment in protecting our sovereignty and asserting our ownership in this territory."

—WITH REPORTS FROM JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE AND VILLAMOR VISAYA JR. INQ