

No LGUs 'fully compliant' with road clearing ops yet: DILG

MANILA -- There is no local government unit (LGU) yet which has been declared as fully compliant with the campaign to clear roads of obstructions and illegal structures, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said Friday.

"We have not made any determination on which LGUs are fully compliant because the assessment of all LGUs will come after the 60-day deadline which will be on September 29, 2019," DILG spokesperson and Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said in a statement.

Malaya made the clarification in response to the Makati City government's claim that it has joined the cities of Marikina, Mala-

bon, Navotas, Pasay, San Juan, Valenzuela and municipality of Pateros, which earlier reports said are 100-percent compliant with the campaign to clear roads of obstructions, ahead of the 60-day deadline imposed by the DILG.

Citing the department's Memorandum Circular No. 121-2019, Malaya said full compliance with the order is not based on road clearing operations alone.

"For an LGU to be declared as fully compliant, they should also enact or revisit ordinances related to road clearing and banning of illegal construction; prepare an inventory of roads within their jurisdiction; develop and implement displacement strategies, and cause the rehabilitation

of recovered public roads," the DILG official said.

Malaya also said compliance reports on the matter submitted by LGUs to the DILG regional offices and its Bureau of Local Government Supervision (BLGS) are still subject to validation.

"Secretary (Eduardo) Año has, in fact, ordered the creation of validation teams to check on the compliance of the accomplishments of LGUs in the implementation of the MC on road clearing. These teams shall be composed of the DILG, Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and civil society," Malaya stressed.

"Similar to what he

did in Metro Manila, Secretary Año has also assigned DILG Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries to the regions to closely work and coordinate with the DILG regional directors and LGUs, monitor actions taken, and emphasize that the road clearing is national in scope," he added.

The DILG official, however, said the agency is pleased with the smooth implementation of road clearing operations nationwide.

"As Secretary Año has said, the real test of the performance of the Local Chief Executives lies in their consistency of maintaining the cleared roads beyond the September 29 deadline with the support of the police and the barangays," Malaya said. (PNA)

Priest urges faithful to observe 'plant-based' diet

MANILA—Amid the reported cases of African swine fever (ASF) in the country, an official of the social action arm of the Archdiocese of Manila on Friday encouraged the faithful to start following a plant-based diet.

"We promote plant-based diet. We don't eat pork. We don't serve pork. Protein can come from fish, tofu, nuts. We promote the healthiest food is plant-based," Caritas Manila executive director, Fr. Anton Pascual said in an interview.

Pascual noted for the past two years, it was reported that the illnesses of the less fortunate are no longer traditional problems such as ulcer but long-term diseases.

"Since two years ago, the ailments of the

urban poor are not anymore traditional poor problems like tuberculosis, ulcer but now chronic lifestyle diseases like heart, diabetes, stroke," the Caritas Manila official said.

"We have to promote urban gardening, vertical farming, etc.," he added.

A plant-based diet centers on foods from plant sources such as fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and meat substitutes such as soy products.

On the other hand, a Catholic prelate supported the precautionary measures against the ASF.

"Precautionary measures are prudent measures, however, I am not sure now if to stop serving for feeding programs would be one of them because

there might be sources of pork which are not contaminated," said Bishop Oscar Jaime Florencio, member of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Episcopal Commission on Health Care (CBCP-ECHC) in a statement.

"This means that we have to make some verifications," he added.

On Monday, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said 14 of the 20 blood samples from pigs sent to the United Kingdom for laboratory examination tested positive for the highly contagious African swine fever.

The tests were done after reports of the unusual number of pig deaths in backyard farms in the province of Rizal. (PNA)

No lack of plans on use of emergency powers: DOTr chief

MANILA — Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Arthur Tugade on Friday denied Senator Grace Poe's accusation of lack of a master plan on the use of emergency powers to solve traffic woes in Metro Manila.

In a television interview, Tugade enumerated the agency's plans on how to use the granting of emergency powers to President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

The plans include a transportation infrastructure plan made by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a plan submitted to and reviewed by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), and a 30-year roadmap filed as legislation.

"Kung sa plano

lang ho, meron ho. Eh hindi 'ho kami binibigyan ng pagkakataon (If it's just planning, we have those. But we were not given a chance)," Tugade said.

The transport chief said they were unable to present these plans during the hearing with the Senate committee on public services chaired by Poe on Tuesday as the discussions stalled on railway issues.

"Nung nag-hearing kami, hindi naman kami binigyan ng pagkakataon na ilahad at i-amplify 'yung aming mga plano. Naudlot 'ho kami dun sa riles (When we had that hearing, we were not given the chance to lay out and amplify our plans. We got stuck on railway issues)," Tugade said.

Due to the delay in

the granting of emergency powers which the DOTr has been asking for since the beginning of Duterte's term, Tugade said they would no longer ask for it as they have "more important other things to do than talk and talk and talk."

"Trabaho na lang po kami (We'll just work)," he added.

When Poe's call for his replacement was brought up, Tugade said the senator should not feel entitled to question his appointment as chief of the DOTr as she is not part of the executive branch of the government.

"Sobra naman ang bilib ni ma'am sa sarili niya. Pati 'ho ba ehikutibo, saklaw na ng kanyang feeling of power? (She thinks too much of herself. Are executive powers part of

her sense of power?) 'Sus Maria. We serve and I serve at the pleasure of the President," Tugade said.

On Wednesday, the DOTr said emergency powers would allow for the immediate adoption of policies that normally required time-consuming amendment of existing laws and ordinances.

"It would provide for a platform to fast-track procurement, right-of-way acquisition, and relocation process," the DOTr Communications and Commuter Affairs Office said in a message.

It added emergency powers would also allow for the immediate implementation of high-impact priority projects "on a shorter gestation period and/or enabling partial operability." (PNA)

Over 200 illegal foreign workers nabbed in Pasig raid

MANILA -- A total of 277 foreign workers were arrested in a raid at a corporate office in Ortigas Center in Pasig City, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) reported on Friday.

According to Immigration Commissioner Jaime Morente, immigration agents are initially looking for only four Chinese fugitives who are wanted by authorities for their involvement in economic crimes in China.

However, the raid conducted on Wednesday resulted in the apprehension of 273 other foreigners, who were caught in the act of conducting illegal online operations.

"We received an official communication from Police Attaché Chen Chao of the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines indicating that these Chinese fugitives engaged in an investment scam that vic-

timized more than a thousand individuals, and has an estimated cost of damages amounting to more than 100 million RMB," Morente said in a statement.

On the other hand, FSU Head Bobby Raquepo noted that the foreigners were found to be undocumented.

He said that after verification with Chinese authorities, it was discovered that those arrested are also fugitives from justice, and wanted for a large scale fraud and investment scam in their country.

"Upon verification with the Chinese government, we found out that the passports of these fugitives have already been canceled, making them undocumented aliens," Raquepo added.

With this, Morente assured the public that they are serious in the drive against foreign criminals who try to evade punish-

ment and prosecution.

"Their presence in the country is a risk to public security," he said.

"These fugitives will be hunted, deported, and will be blacklisted, effectively banning them from re-entering the country," the BI chief furthered.

The case has been forwarded to the Bureau's Legal Division for filing of appropriate charges.

The Chinese national are temporarily being detained at the BI's Warden Facility in Taguig City pending deportation proceedings.

The operation was conducted by the Bureau's Fugitive Search Unit (FSU), in coordination with the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC), Philippine National Police (PNP)'s Integrity Monitoring and Enforcement Group (IMEG), and the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS). (PNA)