

Russia wants to partner with PH on railroad construction

MANILA-- The Russian government is interested to share its expertise in railroad construction with the Philippines to further increase Moscow and Manila's ties in the field of infrastructure and transportation, a ranking Russian government official said Wednesday.

"Russia is one of the leading in the sector, we have Russian railway corporations that are like the EPC

(engineering, procurement, and construction) contractors in the country," Russian Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade Aleksey Gruzdev said in a press conference on the sidelines of his two-day official visit to Manila.

"When we're talking about projects abroad, it's not only railways but also underground constructions, underground railways construction," he said.

Gruzdev said Russia has about 85,000

kilometers of railways stretched in the state.

"With this, you can understand our experience in the sector and we can share it with our friends in the Philippines," he said.

Aside from rail transport, Gruzdev said Moscow wants to explore cooperation possibilities with the Philippines in the field of aviation and pharmaceuticals.

"We do hope that this visit would result to contracts, agreements,

and joint cooperation," he told reporters.

The official is in Manila from September 24 to 25 to attend bilateral meetings with high-ranking officials of the Department of Health, Department of Transportation, Department of Trade and Industry as well as the private sector.

The Russian delegation, led by Gruzdev, consists of a number of businessmen representing the leading Russian companies in the field of the pharmaceutical industry, transport and aviation, infrastructure, and energy. (PNA)

Manila resto blast suspect nabbed in QC for checkpoint violation

MANILA -- Authorities "accidentally" arrested the suspect in the explosion at a restaurant in Manila earlier this month shortly after he sped through a checkpoint in Quezon City on Tuesday.

In a press briefing held at the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) headquarters on Wednesday, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief, Maj. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar presented the suspect Luis Cariño, 38, construction worker, and resident of Tondo, Manila.

cense as well as an official receipt and certificate of registration (OR/CR) of the motorcycle.

Police also found a sachet of shabu in his pocket and a hand grenade.

He later admitted to the police that he was responsible for the explosion in front of C-Foods Resto at the corner of 5th and Concepcion Aguila Streets in

San Miguel, Manila on September 14.

Acting QCPD director, Col. Ronnie Montejos said that they will coordinate with the Manila Police District (MPD) which has jurisdiction over said case.

The confiscated drug was turned over to the QCPD Crime Laboratory Office for examination while the hand grenade was turned

BI-NAIA on alert vs. human trafficking ahead of holiday season

MANILA -- Bureau of Immigration (BI) Commissioner Jaime Morente on Thursday reminded all Immigration personnel at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) not to let their guard down in detecting and rescuing victims of human trafficking and illegal recruitment.

Morente made the reminder as trafficking syndicates continue with their nefarious activities due to the anticipated influx of passengers at the NAIA in the coming weeks due to the upcoming holiday season.

"We will not allow this to divert our attention from the task of protecting our country-

men from the hazards of working abroad without proper documents," he said in a statement.

"There will be no letup in our campaign so long as these human traffickers continue to prey on our poor citizens," the BI chief added.

At the same time, Morente commended officers of BI-NAIA for stopping 12 suspected human trafficking victims who attempted to leave the country as tourists last week.

He noted that it is part of the agency's continuous efforts in combating human trafficking at the country's premiere port.

On the other hand, BI port operations divi-

sion chief Grifon Medina reported that the 12 passengers were intercepted from Sept. 18 to 21 and all were subsequently turned over to the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) for investigation.

He added 10 of the victims were stopped at the NAIA 3 while the two others tried to depart from NAIA 2.

"They all carried spurious travel documents which were given to them by their handlers," Medina said.

BI travel control and enforcement unit (TCEU) chief Timotea Barizo said two of the 12 are underage OFWs who carried complete documents but misrepresented their age.

Agri chief assures funds for ASF-affected hog raisers

MANILA -- Agriculture Secretary William Dar on Tuesday assured the availability of funds to help small backyard hog raisers affected by the African swine fever (ASF).

Dar was reacting to a report published in a national newspaper that there is not enough fund to assist backyard hog raisers affected by the dreaded disease.

"The headline of one major newspaper was malicious and misleading. It is far from the truth," Dar said in a statement.

"It's clear in the story that we have money, but we have to understand that paying each raiser the actual cost of culled pigs would mean benefiting only a few hundred raisers, and leaving out others," he noted.

With an initial reported culled pigs of 7,416, Dar said the Department of Agriculture (DA) would spend an initial PHP22.25 million, at an average assistance of PHP3,000 per head, regardless of weight and age.

He said the DA, through the Agricultural Credit and Policy Council (ACPC), is also giving a zero-interest, no-collateral loan worth PHP30,000 per ASF-affected hog raiser, which was also mentioned in the story, thus clearly contradicting the headline.

The DA-ACPC has allotted an initial PHP60 million to benefit some 2,000 small backyard raisers in 11 ASF-affected barangays in Rizal, Bulacan, and Quezon City.

"With this capital to tide them over, affected swine raisers can engage in any appropriate livelihood venture like broiler, layer and goat raising, and vegetable production," Dar said.

"We wish to seek the support of the

media to be more discerning and responsible in their reportage of this unfortunate episode, besetting our swine industry, where about two-thirds come from small backyard raisers," he said.

Dar also appealed to the local chief executives, farmers and fisherfolk, and members of the public and private sectors to cooperate with the DA in tackling urgent agricultural concerns in the country, such as the low price of palay and the threat of ASF.

"Nakikiusap po kami dito sa Department of Agriculture na tayong lahat ay magtulungan para maresolba ang mga kasalukuyang problema ng sektor ng agrikultura dito sa ating bansa (The DA is appealing to all stakeholders to cooperate in tackling issues concerning agriculture in our country)," Dar said.

"Hindi tayo dapat tumitigil na gumawa ng measures para mapaunlad ang mga magsasaka sa kabukiran (We should not stop in coming up with measures that would uplift the lives of farmers in the countryside)," he added.

Dar underscored the role of the local government units, which are on the front line in serving the agriculture and fisheries sector.

With everyone's help, the agriculture chief said he is optimistic that by the end of his three-year term, the agriculture sector would grow by at least 3 percent to 5 percent.

"Kaya natin ito kung tayo ay tulong-tulong (We can achieve this if we cooperate with one another). We have to do this responsibility together," he said. (PNA)

DOE assures PH sovereignty 'intact' in oil, gas deal with China

MANILA-- Manila's resolve in achieving a joint exploration deal with China without compromising Philippine sovereignty is "unshakeable", a ranking Energy official said Thursday as the two nations continue to move forward from a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in 2018.

"The first words that the Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary [Alfonso Cusi] uttered was that the President ordered him to make sure that the sovereignty of the Philippines is respected. We work under that framework. We work under that directive," DOE Assistant Secretary Leonido Pulido

do III said during the Reporting on Maritime Issues seminar hosted by the United States embassy in Manila.

Pulido assured that the DOE's input into the discussion of energy security in the West Philippine Sea always has the country's sovereignty in mind.

As each side will try to get as much as possible from the oil and gas agreement, he assured that the Philippines will approach the talks from both legal and practical perspective.

"The interest is this: We need energy exploration and that area is within the Philippine sovereignty so we are approaching this from both practical and legal

perspective," he said.

"Legal is we cannot agree on anything that would surrender Philippine sovereignty; the Secretary has repeated this several times. For us at the DOE, that is unshakeable, that is something we cannot sacrifice, that is something we cannot compromise," he added.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. earlier said China and the Philippines have already set up an inter-governmental steering committee.

Among the committee's priorities is to discuss the lifting of the 2013 ban on exploration and drilling activities in the West Philippine Sea. (PNA)