

DepEd, SEARCA to promote agriculture in K-12 program

MANILA -- The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) have discussed building a partnership to promote the importance of agriculture among Filipino learners.

Education Secretary Leonor Briones, in a statement on Thursday, said agriculture is one of the recommended fields for students nationwide.

"We are primarily an agricultural country and we want to enhance interest in agriculture," Briones said.

On Aug. 28, SEARCA Director Glenn Gregorio presented to DepEd the center's programs that may be linked with the K to 12 curriculum, particularly in agriculture, under the Technical

Vocational track.

"The programs include faculty development -- offering graduate scholarships in agriculture and allied degrees, short courses on agribusiness and agri-entrepreneurial mindset and education, and continuing education and professional licensure exams review services," Gregorio said.

Citing that SEARCA's School + Home Gardens Program are complementary with DepEd's Gulayan sa Paaralan and the School Inside a Garden programs, Gregorio said that they will improve and localize the components in the teacher's learning support materials.

He added that SEARCA "shall also embed upgraded agri-business context and examples in the K to 12 curriculum".

In line with this, Briones said the DepEd will explore urban-based gardening for schools in urban areas like gardening on rooftops and pots.

"Make agriculture sexy like grafting. That is very interesting, kasi may (application) ng science iyan (Science has an application on that). Hindi ka lang nagtatanim at gumagawa ng (You are not just planting and making) organic fertilizers," she added.

Briones reported that there are existing schools with little farms and school sites bigger in size and even have tilapia farms.

However, she stressed the importance of urban farming and the need for its promotion to be intensified.

To celebrate the contribution of young people who

are actively engaged in agriculture, the SEARCA has launched its annual photo contest with this year's theme "Cultivating Southeast Asia's Youth Agripreneurs".

Gregorio said "agripreneurs" are agricultural entrepreneurs or "transfarmers" who combine business opportunities with agriculture.

With ages ranging from 15 to 34, Gregoria said the Southeast Asian population is young -- providing their respective countries many benefits because "they can become good leaders and the catalyst for economic, social, and cultural development".

The contest is open to all Filipinos and to citizens of other Southeast Asian nations. The first-place winner will receive USD1,000, the second and third places will get USD800 and USD500, respectively, while a People's Choice award will receive USD200.

Special prizes await the Department of Education Secretary's Choice and the SEARCA Director's Choice. (PNA)

ela that it is not our policy to red-tag, especially in our media platforms," Andanar said.

Agtay, meanwhile, reiterated that the photo and article came from a "legitimate source," like all other agencies and groups that provide the PNA with documentation of their activities and the like.

She also assured the lawmakers that the PNA is always open for any clarifications or comments on any articles that the agency publishes on its website.

"You could always call us, our phone number is on the website. I'll entertain you, I'll entertain you," she said.

"Meron kayong gustong i-clarify, at kung anuman, may sama ng loob, pwede po kayong tumawag. Open ang communication line ng PNA para dun sa mga may mga sentiments on whatever that is published," Agtay said.

No policy to red-tag anyone, any group: PCOO

MANILA -- The Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) on Friday assured lawmakers that it is not the policy of the department, nor of any of its attached agencies and offices, to red-tag any progressive organizations or party-list groups.

The assurance was made by Communications Secretary Martin Andanar and News and Information Bureau (NIB) director Virginia Arcilla-Agtay during the budget presentation of the PCOO's proposed 2020 budget before the House Committee on Appropriations.

The issue on red-tagging was brought up by ACT-Teachers party-list Rep. France Castro and Gabriela party-list Rep. Arlene Brosas, who manifested that their groups were victims of supposedly unfair and one-sided reporting from the Philippine News Agency (PNA).

The PNA is an attached agency of the NIB, which is under the PCOO.

Castro asked if it is the "official policy" of the PNA and the PCOO to vilify and "make illegal" leftists like them.

In response, Agtay said the PNA is a wire agency,

whose mandate is to produce news and information materials about the government, its programs and its impact on the people and the Presidency.

She said the PNA does not deviate from this mandate.

"Tungkol sa mga storya na sinasabi nyo na lumalabas na (Regarding the stories that you cited, which supposedly) that vilifies groups that you belong to, we are just narrating the quotes, the statements of our sources," the NIB director said.

"Walang opinion po na mga nasasaad dun sa mga articles (There were no opinions proffered in the articles). These are all quotes from the sources of the government," Agtay said.

Andanar also affirmed that red-tagging is not a policy of the PCOO.

"It is not our policy to red-tag any organization. As mentioned by the director of the NIB, we do our best -- and I point out to all the media agencies of the government -- to be as objective as possible, to report both sides," he told the lawmakers.

"Whether you are with the government or you are

with the opposition, or you have a story that is of public interest, kailangan po talaga patas (there should be balance). Pero hindi po policy ng PCOO ang mag red-tag (But it is not the policy of the PCOO to red-tag)," Andanar said.

Castro noted that she was not being interviewed by government reporters on the issues involving her.

"The representative of ACT-Teachers party-list is more than welcome to have her own program on PTV (People's Television Network), Radyo Pilipinas or any of our platforms, as the President did mention during the opening of PTV-Cordillera," Andanar said.

Meanwhile, Brosas cited a story published in the PNA website about a supposed "failed fact-finding mission" that she and her group undertook in Isabela.

Brosas contended that the story's content, and the accompanying photo, was contrary to what really transpired and that Gabriela was unfairly vilified and red-tagged in the said article.

"Again, we assure the congresswoman of Gabri-

American woman, parents of baby hidden in luggage face raps

MANILA -- The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Thursday formally announced the filing of charges against the parents of a six-day-old baby, which was hidden in a piece of luggage by an American woman at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

The suspect, Jennifer Talbot, as well as the mother of the baby, Maricris Cempron Dulap and the unidentified biological father who remain at large, were charged for violation of Republic Act 7610 - otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act.

Talbot was also charged by the NBI's International Airport Investigation Department with human trafficking, kidnapping and, serious illegal detention.

On Wednesday, Talbot was only able to present a notarized but unsigned affidavit of consent and support allegedly executed by the mother of the baby to travel to the United States.

No travel clearance was likewise issued to the baby by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Talbot had booked a flight to the United States via Delta Air Lines when she was asked to step to the side at the boarding gate at the NAIA Terminal 3 by airport personnel for carrying an infant inside a sling bag without travel documents.

The expatriate was able to slip past the immigration counter without declaring the baby. (PNA)

MARINA promotes sea passengers' rights in Cebu info campaign

MANILA -- The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) on Thursday advocated seaborne passengers' rights in another awareness campaign at the Cebu Ports Authority in Cebu City.

During the event, Nannette Villamor-Dinopol, deputy administrator for operations of MARINA, said their "nationwide approach" to information dissemination will lead to better awareness of these rights.

"We replicated the campaign in Luzon, here in Visayas, and next month in Mindanao -- for we believe that a nationwide approach to information dissemination yields better and more meaningful impact to our stakeholders," Villamor-Dinopol said.

During the information campaign, the official said such rights include the right to information to cancelled or delayed voyages, the right to refund or revalidate tickets in such scenarios, and the right to amenities such as meals and free accommodation following revalidation of tickets, if necessary.

These rights also apply to sea passengers of an incomplete voyage, including the right to be transported to their destination.

The maritime transport office also clarified the right to compensation of sea passengers for a cancelled or delayed voyage only applies if free accommodation is not practicable for the shipping operator.

These rights are also only applicable if their voyages were cancelled, delayed, or uncompleted due to causes attributable to the shipping operator.

Joy Dianne Gumatay, MARINA communications officer, said non-compliant shipping operators or ship personnel can be sanctioned based on MARINA's Circular 2018-7.

"May sanctions po depende kung pang ilang offense (there are sanctions depending on how many times they have repeated the offense)," Gumatay said in a message sent to reporters.

The MARINA also encouraged sea passengers to read said circular for more information on their rights in their website <https://marina.gov.ph/> and call +63 995 400 7336 or +632 521 804 to report non-compliance of shipping operators or for complaints.

On April 11, 2019, MARINA's information campaign was formally launched at the Port of Batangas in Batangas City to inform sea passengers of their rights and obligations of shipping operators in incidents at sea that cause inconvenience to the riding public. (PNA)