

CAVITE NEWS

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER THAT'S NATIONAL IN SCOPE

VOL. XX NO. 52

APRIL 16-22, 2020

P10.00

ISSN: 2651-7450

Entered as Second Class Mail at the Imus Post Office under Permit No. 2003-11 dated August 29, 2003

PhilHealth assures ample funds for Covid-19 patients

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) on Thursday assured it has enough funds to cover the health packages of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) patients.

During a virtual meeting of the House of Representatives' Defeat COVID-19 Committee, PhilHealth president and chief executive officer Ricardo Morales said the state-owned firm has PHP30 billion prepositioned to accredited hospitals to help them respond to the Covid-19 outbreak in the country.

Morales, however, admitted that PhilHealth is facing a shortfall in the insurance collection from its members.

"We anticipated this because everybody

(Turn to p. 2)

PH to start using new terms for COVID -19 cases

MANILA – The Philippines will now start using the new classification of persons who are confirmed or suspected to have been infected with coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said on Thursday.

Nograles said the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) on Wednesday approved Resolution 24, authorizing the use of new terms for Covid-19 cases.

The updated nomenclature in classifying individuals for the surveillance and management of the Covid-19 health event is adopted," Nograles, spokesperson of IATF-EID, said in a virtual press briefing aired on state-run PTV-4.

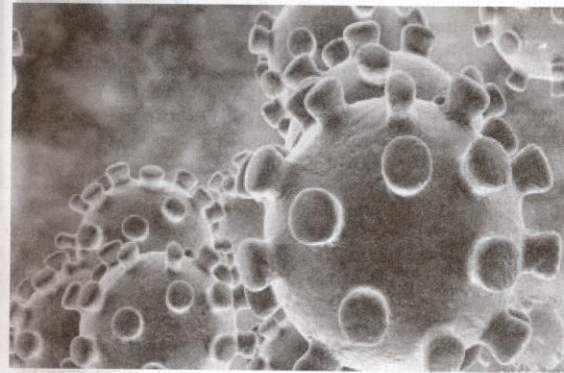
Following the issuance of IATF Resolution 24, patients under investigation (PUIs) with mild, severe, or critical symptoms whose results have not yet been released will now be categorized as "suspect" cases, Nograles said.

Nograles said PUIs with inconclusive test results are now classified as "probable" cases.

He noted that the persons under monitoring (PUMs), or those who are not exhibiting symptoms despite exposure to a Covid-19 patient, would still be referred to as PUMs.

He added that PUMs would still be reported and managed.

"Gagamitin na po natin ang mga bagong terminolohiya sa



pagklasipika ng mga indibidwal na pinagsususpetyahang may Covid-19 o kumpirmadong may Covid-19 (The new terminologies in classifying individuals suspected or confirmed to have acquired Covid-19 will now be used)," Nograles said.

The Philippines initially classified

(Turn to p. 2)

'Cremate now, pay later' scheme proposed for Covid-19 deaths

MANILA – Development Authority (MMDA) spokesperson Celine Pialago said the proposal would include funeral assistance worth PHP25,000 from the Department of Social and Welfare Development (DSWD).

The proposal, she said, was made during an online meeting Thursday led by the MMDA on the management of Covid-19 fatalities attended by representatives from the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Trade and Industry, the Philippine National Police, the University of the Philippines, as

well as representatives and owners of various crematoriums and funeral service companies.

During the meeting, she said some crematorium facilities have agreed to accept the PHP25,000 for crematory services, while funeral companies with no crematoriums would have the option to partner with a crematory facility.

"It was proposed that if a funeral service company has no crematorium, it will be given the discretion to partner with a crematory facility and they will decide on how to divide the PHP25,000," Pialago said.

If the religion of the person who died of Covid-19 does not permit cremation, she said cadavers may also be buried.

To ensure that the cremation of Covid-19 deaths would be completed in the shortest time possible, she said it was also proposed that all crematoriums, whether public or private, would be required to accept bodies of Covid-19 related deaths irrespective of residence.

The MMDA, as one of the lead agencies

(Turn to p. 2)

CAVITE NEWS

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER THAT'S NATIONAL IN SCOPE

VOL. XX NO. 52

APRIL 16-22, 2020

P 10.00

FDA approves 16 Covid-19 rapid antibody test kits

MANILA – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved 16 coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) rapid antibody test kits for commercial use as of April 16, 2020.

These applications have completed necessary documentary requirements and have undergone review and evaluation by the FDA.

As part of FDA's mandate to ensure safety and quality of these products, surveillance measures are in place to monitor performance and effectiveness.

These test kits are independent from each other and each product has different specifications. These are manufactured by different companies, in various countries and settings. Each uses a technology and validation technique which may vary from others.

The rapid test kits detect the presence of antibodies in an individual's blood or serum.

Antibodies detected by these types of test kits are identified as Total Antibody, IgG antibody and IgM antibody. Total antibody signifies the collective response of the patient's immune

system. IgM antibodies represent response to a current or recent infection while IgG antibodies represent response from a past infection. Some of the kits detect only one antibody -- either IgM or IgG.

Some kits detect total antibodies -- IgM and IgG together in one result. Other kits detect both IgG and IgM at the same time but give a separate result for each.

It is important to consider the timing of the infection and the condition of the patient during the time of specimen collection.

The selection of the type of kit to be used is also dependent on the information the doctor wants to obtain, and the specifications of the kit. Interpretation must be done with caution and clinical correlation.

The FDA encourages the public to take into consideration that these kits have technical specifications unique from each other. These are rapid kits that are

packaged as easy to use but they should be administered by trained health professionals.

The agency reiterates that these kits are strictly for medical professional use only and not intended for personal use. The test should be administered by trained health professionals and the results should be interpreted by licensed physicians. Confirmatory PCR based testing is still the gold standard.

The FDA stands firm in safeguarding the public against unregistered and substandard health products amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

The agency continuously conducts post marketing surveillance and evaluation despite the stringent and expedited measures imposed on these approvals. For any reports on FDA approved Covid-19 health products, send an email to covidresponse@fda.gov.ph (FDA PR)

Organizers mulling PGA Championship without fans

Los Angeles—PGA of America chief executive Seth Waugh said Tuesday that organizers are considering multiple scenarios for the US PGA Championship now scheduled for August 6-9 in San Francisco.

Waugh, in an interview on SiriusXM radio, said the first option would be to play the tournament as currently scheduled at Harding Park.

A second option would be to hold the first major championship of the year there but without spectators and a potential third option would be to move it to another location should play in California prove impossible.

The tournament has already been postponed from May as the coronavirus pandemic up-ended the golfing calendar along with the rest of the sports world.

Under the revamped plans agreed by golf's governing bodies, the US PGA Championship in August would be followed by the US Open in September and the Masters at Augusta National in November. The British Open has been cancelled.

"The plan is to do it as normally as possible, with fans, obviously, and have a fairly normal PGA Championship at Harding Park," Waugh said.

"If the safest way, and/or the only way to do it is without fans, we're fully prepared to do that. We believe that having it as a television event is worth doing regardless of whether there's fans there or not.

"Obviously, that'll change the experience, but we think the world is starved for some entertainment, and

particularly in sports."

California Governor Gavin Newsom said this month that he does not anticipate having crowds at sporting events in the state this year.

Waugh said that if California or San Francisco City authorities decide the tournament can't be held at Harding Park, the PGA could try to find an alternate venue.

"It makes it simpler if there aren't any fans to think about things like that," he said. "We don't certainly have a plan C right now, but we'd be prepared to think about that if that became a possibility.

"We're going to do everything we can to play the PGA Championship this year."

Meanwhile, the PGA of America donated \$5 million to launch the Golf Emergency Relief fund on Monday, aiming to provide support for the golf industry during the coronavirus pandemic.

The body, whose flagship event the US PGA Championship has been postponed from May amid the shelter-in-place policies designed to slow spread of the virus, pledged to match up to an additional \$2.5 million given by other groups.

A statement said the PGA of America contribution included all members of its executive team voluntarily reducing their compensation. The board of directors pledged personal donations.

"There's pain everywhere," PGA chief executive Seth Waugh said. "It's how to get to the other side. The government is doing extraordinary

actions last week were stunning. The loan programs are very clever to keep people employed. The bad news is it may not be enough depending on how long this lasts.

"What we're saying is, 'How can we create an additional safety net?'"

The fund will be administered by E4E Relief, an independent public charity.

The PGA, which represents club professionals, has nearly 29,000 members. But PGA president Suzy Whaley said it's hoped the fund will help members of other golf organizations, club caddies and players on developmental tours.

"We have to ensure that the heart and soul of our game—our people—are able to get back on their feet and continue to serve others down the road," Whaley said. "Eventually, golf will return, but we first need to reach out and help people in our industry during this national emergency."

The PGA said other organizations, including the US PGA Tour and the LPGA, the US Golf Association are supporting the fund, as are groups representing course superintendents, course owners and merchandisers.

"Our hope is the industry gets behind it," Whaley said.

Applications are to be accepted starting from Thursday.

The first phase will distribute \$500 grants for basic needs and \$1,500 grants for critical needs.

A second phase will make funds available up to \$3,500 depending on need

**DRAW CLOSE TO GOD
AND HE WILL DRAW
CLOSE TO YOU**

James 4:8

PH... FR. P.1

Covid-19 cases as either PUIs or PUMs.

On April 11, the Department of Health revised the classification system by adopting the terms "suspect," "probable," and "confirmed" for Covid-19 cases.

PHILHEALTH... FR. P.1

is cash-strapped. But before things get very critical, we can get over this and start to recover," Morales said. "But before the Covid-19 pandemic, we were already projecting a net loss because we were not given the funding which we asked to support the funding of the UHC [Universal Health Care]. However for the Covid pandemic, we are confident that we can support this requirement," he added.

Morales said the total assets of the insurance firm stand at PHP221 billion.

"Our current assets are about PHP70 billion, that's easily converted into cash. On top of that, we have investments and securities that can also be converted to cash of about PHP124 billion," he said.

The insurance firm started limiting the cost of Covid-19 treatment on Wednesday with the new case rate package

The IATF-EID on Monday night approved the recommendation to direct all government agencies and local government units to adopt the modified classification of Covid-19 cases.

As of Wednesday,

covering four categories: PHP43,997 for mild pneumonia, PHP143,267 for moderate pneumonia, PHP333,519 for severe pneumonia, PHP786,384 for critical pneumonia.

Prior to the new package, the PhilHealth has assured the public that it will "shoulder the full cost of treatment of Covid-19 cases until April 14, 2020."

In its Advisory No. 2020-022 addressed to all accredited hospitals and health facilities in the country, PhilHealth clarified that "after the (said) date, we shall continue to provide financial coverage to CoViD cases thru a recomputed case rate," citing that "the reason for this accommodation window is due to the novelty and the wide range of severity of the disease in the country for which no existing case rate or package based on accepted protocols has yet been established." (By Filane Mikee Cervantes/PNA)

CREMATE... FR. P.1

on the management of Covid-19 deaths, will establish a communication link between funeral service companies in Metro Manila and government agencies.

"The MMDA will establish a communication platform (Viber group) to serve as a link among crematorium facilities, funeral services, and government agencies in Metro Manila," Pialago said.

To address delays in the cremation of Covid-19 deaths, she said it was also proposed that the DOH fast-track the processing and issuance of death certificates, while a temporary certification may also be issued by an authorized representative of a hospital which would include the name, date and time of death, and the cause of death of the deceased.

Each hospital, she said, would have to appoint at least two authorized signatories for the issuance of a death certificate or temporary certification.

To ensure that personnel of funeral and mortuary services will be kept safe from a possible Covid-19 infection, she said hospitals will provide cadaver bags and personal protective equipment (PPE) for the handling of the remains infected with

the disease.

She said that the government will ensure the availability of cadaver bags and PPE sets in all public and private hospitals, with the DOH noting that 7,000 cadaver bags were currently available at the Office of Civil Defense and will be given to those who will submit a formal request.

In the case of a rapid increase in Covid-19 deaths, she said some crematoriums may be designated as the ideal facility to handle Covid-19 bodies depending on its location and capacity.

Reefers, or refrigerated containers, will also be installed in the designated facilities to store bodies awaiting cremation.

On Wednesday, the MMDA was designated as the coordinating agency for the proper disposal of the remains of Covid-19 deaths.

In a previous briefing, Pialago said that while the MMDA leads the coordination between national government agencies, local government units, health facilities, and funeral companies, the agency's personnel would not be responsible for the actual logistics or handling of Covid-19-infected cadavers. (By Raymond Carl Dela Cruz/PNA)

Galvez calls for stronger implementation of ECQ

MANILA – National Task Force on COVID-19 (NTF on COVID-19) Chief Implementer Carlito G. Galvez Jr. urged local government units and other concerned agencies to strictly enforce the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) after lamenting how some areas have disregarded the guidelines of the lockdown.

"Nananawagan po ako sa ating Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), mayors, barangay captains, at ating Philippine National Police at Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na lalo pa pong pa-igtingin ang pagpapatupad ng ECQ," Galvez said during his virtual press briefing last night.

"May mga nakita po kaming mga tahasang paglabag ng lockdown. Muli po, kami ay nananawagan sa ating mga kababayan to stay at home," he added.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte declared the implementation of ECQ throughout Luzon from March 16 to April 12 as the government ramped

up its efforts to contain the spread of the disease.

The lockdown was later extended by the President until April 30 based on the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID).

Galvez reminded Filipinos to observe social distancing as this is one of the most effective ways to protect themselves from being infected and curb the spread of the disease.

He cited a number of LGUs in the country which have been able to effectively implement the ECQ and are now reaping positive results.

"Nakita natin ang lugar na may disiplina ay uni-uni ng gumaganda ang kanilang sitwasyon. Ehemplong natin ang Baguio, Valenzuela, Davao at CARAGA," he said.

"Huwag po tayong magpabaya. dahil buhay ninyo at ng inyong pamilya ang nakataya. Nakita natin ang nangyari sa mga bansang hindi sumunod sa social distancing at lockdown.

(Turn to p. 5)

CAVITE NEWS
WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

raquel.caviteneews@gmail.com
09974094932/09329770888

RAQUEL M. MAGTIBAY
Publisher

JOMAR MENES
Editor-In-Chief

JOHN JEPREE MAGTIBAY
Lay-out Artist

LAURO M. MAGTIBAY
Circulation Manager

ATTY. MARIO MONTEVIRGEN
Legal Counsel

PAPI Publishers Association
of the Philippines, Inc.

THIS NEWSPAPER IS EDITED, PUBLISHED AND CIRCULATED IN THE PROVINCE OF CAVITE AT BLK. 3 LOT 75 ISTANA MALAGASANG IF IMUS CAVITE

Commercial Advertising Rate: P200.00/col.cm
Legal Rate P160.00/col.cm.

*It is the blessing of Jehovah that makes one rich,
And He adds no pain with it.
Proverbs 10:22*

NFA... FR.P. 3

NFA resolves rice milling problems to insure continuous supply

the NFA has already made adjustments in the "guaranteed milling recovery" (GMR) to help rice millers recoup their "lost income".

"About the rice hull, we shall also recommend to the IATF to make representations with Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Año, to advise the LGUs where the ricemills are located, to find places where the rice hull could be dumped, because right now there are no rice hull buyers. As for the NFA, I am instructing all the NFA Regional Directors and the Provincial Managers to help by identifying vacant spaces in the NFA compounds where the rice hulls can be temporarily placed or stored so we could eliminate these small yet valid problems of our milling contractors," Dansal said.

"Our primordial concern now is the continuous, full-blast NFA palay stocks milling, for a safe level supply of rice for this current emergency," she stressed.

Dansal noted that since the declaration of a Luzon-wide ECQ on March 15, followed by other areas in the Visayas and Mindanao, 100% of the NFA's rice sales went to government agencies

for the Covid19 emergency. As of April 13, the total rice withdrawals of NFA rice by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and various local government units (LGUs) reached 1,939,852 bags.

The government's rice inventory currently stands at 7.69 million bags, good to last for 116 days or about 3 ½ months, based on the agency's 10% market share.

Meanwhile, NFA continues its aggressive local palay procurement as farmers continue to harvest their summer crop. Its 440 warehouses and buying stations are open daily, including Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. As of this writing we procure an average of 20,052 bags per day.

"We are ready to serve the farmers and buy their harvest, especially when farmgate prices fall below the P19 per kg support price of the government," Dansal said.

From January to mid-April, the NFA had already bought 2.56 million bags of palay. The agency targets to buy 2.4 million bags in April and 1.6 million bags in May, and a total of 15.44 million bags for the whole of 2020. (NFA)

QUEZON CITY.-- National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Judy Carol Dansal recently met with the agency's ricemilling contractors to address operational issues and insure the continuous and unimpeded flow of government rice supply across the country, especially in Metro Manila and other areas placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

The meeting was held in NFA Cabanatuan City on April 11, Black Saturday, a day after Dansal observed the millers' withdrawal of palay for milling from NFA warehouses in Cabanatuan City, and their actual rice delivery to NFA bodegas on April 10, Good Friday. The Administrator had ordered all NFA offices to be operational 12/7 even during the Holy Week to promptly address all the rice needs of DSWD and LGUs for distribution to families affected by the ECQ.

Among the issues raised by the 51 rice milling contractors from Nueva Ecija and Bulacan were: their difficulty in the mobilization of mill operators, laborers, drivers and other employees due the Covid19 lockdown and border regulations issued by the LGUs; the procurement of their mills' fast-moving parts and other consumables; and the difficulty in marketing their ricemilling by-products such as rice bran or "darak" and rice hull or "ipa".

Dansal, who is a member of the National Task Force (NTF) on

Covid19, provided quick solutions to the millers' problems, saying, "We cannot afford to let anything hamper our palay milling activities to continuously serve the rice requirements of the National Capital Region (NCR) and of the other areas in the country during this time of crisis."

For their unhampered mobility, the NFA Administrator said all milling contractors' employees and laborers shall be issued IDs by the NFA, as "providers of essential services, to be presented to checkpoints, for their easy passage. Their trucks, which haul palay for milling from NFA and deliver back rice recoveries, shall be provided with Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) stickers, similar to the haulers of other food commodities," she said.

To insure the fast turn-around of the millers' trucks from the rice mill to the NFA warehouse and vice-versa, Dansal assured that the NFA has more than enough laborers in its warehouses, having hired tricycle drivers and other workers who, for the time being, have lost their regular livelihood due to the strict lockdown policies.

On the procurement of the mills' fast-moving parts and other consumables, Dansal said she will recommend to the IATF to allow Manila-based suppliers of the needed ricemill spare parts to operate. And to facilitate the purchase of spare parts, as well as for smooth coordination purposes,

the NFA shall issue a certification to be presented to the checkpoints, for the unimpeded transport and purchase of parts needed for the immediate repair of the ricemills. The NFA is part of the National Task Force (NTF) Covid19 under the Task Groups (TGs) on Response Operations and Resource Management and Logistics.

On the sale of rice by-products "darak" and "ipa" which serve as NFA's payment-in-kind (PIK) for milling services, Dansal said the NFA has already made adjustments in the "guaranteed milling recovery" (GMR) to help rice millers recoup their "lost income".

"About the rice hull, we shall also recommend to the IATF to make representations with Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Año, to advise the LGUs where the ricemills are located, to find places where the rice hull could be dumped, because right now there are no rice hull buyers. As for the NFA, I am instructing all the NFA Regional Directors and the Provincial Managers to help by identifying vacant spaces in the NFA compounds where the rice hulls can be temporarily placed or stored so we could eliminate these small yet valid problems of our milling contractors," Dansal said.

"Our primordial concern now is the continuous, full-blast NFA palay stocks milling, for a safe level

supply of rice for this current emergency," she stressed.

Dansal noted that since the declaration of a Luzon-wide ECQ on March 15, followed by other areas in the Visayas and Mindanao, 100% of the NFA's rice sales went to government agencies for the Covid19 emergency. As of April 13, the total rice withdrawals of NFA rice by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and various local government units (LGUs) reached 1,939,852 bags.

The government's rice inventory currently stands at 7.69 million bags, good to last for 116 days or about 3 ½ months, based on the agency's 10% market share.

Meanwhile, NFA continues its aggressive local palay procurement as farmers continue to harvest their summer crop. Its 440 warehouses and buying stations are open daily, including Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. As of this writing we procure an average of 20,052 bags per day.

"We are ready to serve the farmers and buy their harvest, especially when farmgate prices fall below the P19 per kg support price of the government," Dansal said.

From January to mid-April, the NFA had already bought 2.56 million bags of palay. The agency targets to buy 2.4 million bags in April and 1.6 million bags in May, and a total of 15.44 million bags for the whole of 2020. (NFA)

**SUPPORT YOUR
LOCAL POLICE**

DA's "Plant, Plant, Plant Program" to benefit all farmers, fishers, consumers nationwide

QUEZON CITY, -- The Department of Agriculture (DA) will implement nationwide the Duterte administration's "Plant, Plant, Plant Program" or "Ahon Lahat, Pagkaing Sapat (ALPAS) Laban sa Covid-19" program to benefit farmers, fishers and consumers.

"The 'Plant, Plant, Plant Program' will be implemented not only in Luzon, where the enhanced community quarantine is being enforced, but also in Visayas and Mindanao," Agriculture Secretary William Dar said.

Dar said this program embraces the 'Whole of Nation' approach as advocated by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, to increase the country's food adequacy level during the emergency situation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"In the next two weeks, we will conduct via teleconference regional consultations and planning nationwide with our partners — local government units, and regional and provincial agriculture and fishery councils (RAFCs and PAFCs) — to update them on developments due to the Covid-19 national emergency situation and enhance the implementation of refocused DA programs, including the Plant, Plant, Plant Program," the DA chief said.

Dar also thanked the Inter-Agency Task



"The 'Plant, Plant, Plant Program' seeks to increase national agri-fishery output through intensified use of quality seeds, appropriate inputs, modern technologies to increase levels of productivity across all commodities. (File Photo from DA)

Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) for approving the recommended P31-billion supplemental budget to fund the 'Plant, Plant, Plant Program' that seeks to increase national agri-fishery output through intensified use of quality seeds, appropriate inputs, modern technologies to increase levels of productivity across all commodities, and thus ensure food productivity, availability, accessibility and affordability amidst the threat of Covid-19 pandemic.

"Of the P31-billion additional budget, we will vigorously pursue a P8.5-billion 'Rice Resiliency Project' aimed at producing more rice to increase our sufficiency level from the present 87 percent to 93 percent,"

said secretary Dar.

He added that DA will boost palay production to reach 22.12 million metric tons by end of December 2020, equivalent to 13.51 MMT of rice or 93% of the country's total demand at 14.46 MMT.

"Right after the current dry season, we will urge farmers to plant more areas by providing them quality seeds, fertilizers, and appropriate technical assistance," said secretary Dar.

The other projects that will be funded under the 'Plant, Plant, Plant Program' are: Additional palay procurement fund of the National Food Authority; Expanded SURE Aid and recovery project; Expanded agriculture insurance project; Social amelioration for farmers and farm workers; Upscaling of KADIWA ni Ani at

NFA resolves rice milling problems to insure continuous supply

QUEZON CITY, -- National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Judy Carol Dansal recently met with the agency's ricemilling contractors to address operational issues and insure the continuous and unimpeded flow of government rice supply across the country, especially in Metro Manila and other areas placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

The meeting was held in NFA Cabanatuan City on April 11, Black Saturday, a day after Dansal observed the millers' withdrawal of palay for milling from NFA warehouses in Cabanatuan City, and their actual rice delivery to NFA bodegas on April 10, Good Friday. The Administrator had ordered all NFA offices to be operational 12/7 even during the Holy Week to promptly address all the rice needs of DSWD and LGUs for distribution to families affected by the

ECQ.

Among the issues raised by the 51 rice milling contractors from Nueva Ecija and Bulacan were: their difficulty in the mobilization of mill operators, laborers, drivers and other employees due the Covid19 lockdown and border regulations issued by the LGUs; the procurement of their mills' fast-moving parts and other consumables; and the difficulty in marketing their ricemilling by-products such as rice bran or "darak" and rice hull or "ipa".

Dansal, who is a member of the National Task Force (NTF) on Covid19, provided quick solutions to the millers' problems, saying, "We cannot afford to let anything hamper our palay milling activities to continuously serve the rice requirements of the National Capital Region (NCR) and of the other areas in the country during this time of crisis."

For their unhampered mobility, the NFA Administrator said all milling contractors' employees and laborers shall be issued IDs by the NFA, as "providers of essential services, to be presented to checkpoints, for their easy passage. Their trucks, which haul palay for milling from NFA and deliver back rice recoveries, shall be provided with Inter Agency Task Force

(IATF) stickers, similar to the haulers of other food commodities," she said.

To insure the fast turn-around of the millers' trucks from the rice mill to the NFA warehouse and vice-versa, Dansal assured that the NFA has more than enough laborers in its warehouses, having hired tricycle drivers and other workers who, for the time being, have lost their regular livelihood due to the strict lockdown policies.

On the procurement of the mills' fast-moving parts and other consumables, Dansal said she will recommend to the IATF to allow Manila-based suppliers of the needed ricemill spare parts to operate. And to facilitate the purchase of spare parts, as well as for smooth coordination purposes, the NFA shall issue a certification to be presented to the checkpoints, for the unimpeded transport and purchase of parts needed for the immediate repair of ricemills. The NFA is part of the National Task Force (NTF) Covid19 under the Task Groups (TGs) on Response Operations and Resource Management and Logistics.

On the sale of rice by-products "darak" and "ipa" which serve as NFA's payment-in-kind (PIK) for milling services, Dansal said

(Turn to p. 4)

NFA resolves rice milling problems to insure continuous supply

QUEZON CITY, -- National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Judy Carol Dansal recently met with the agency's ricemilling contractors to address operational issues and insure the continuous and unimpeded flow of government rice supply across the country, especially in Metro Manila and other areas placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

The meeting was held in NFA Cabanatuan City on April 11, Black Saturday, a day after Dansal observed the millers' withdrawal of palay for milling from NFA warehouses in Cabanatuan City, and their actual rice delivery to NFA bodegas on April 10, Good Friday. The Administrator had ordered all NFA offices to be operational 12/7 even during the Holy Week to promptly address all the rice needs of DSWD and LGUs for distribution to families affected by the ECQ.

Among the issues raised by the 51 rice milling contractors from Nueva Ecija and Bulacan were: their difficulty in the mobilization of mill operators, laborers, drivers and other employees due the Covid19 lockdown and border regulations issued by the LGUs; the procurement of their mills' fast-moving parts and other consumables; and the difficulty in marketing their ricemilling by-products such as rice bran or "darak" and rice hull or "ipa".

Dansal, who is a member of the National Task Force (NTF) on Covid19, provided quick solutions to the millers' problems, saying, "We cannot afford to let anything hamper our palay milling activities to continuously serve the rice requirements of the National Capital Region (NCR) and of the other areas in the country during this time of crisis."

For their unhampered

mobility, the NFA Administrator said all milling contractors' employees and laborers shall be issued IDs by the NFA, as "providers of essential services, to be presented to checkpoints, for their easy passage. Their trucks, which haul palay for milling from NFA and deliver back rice recoveries, shall be provided with Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) stickers, similar to the haulers of other food commodities," she said.

To insure the fast turn-around of the millers' trucks from the rice mill to the NFA warehouse and vice-versa, Dansal assured that the NFA has more than enough laborers in its warehouses, having hired tricycle drivers and other workers who, for the time being, have lost their regular livelihood due to the strict lockdown policies.

On the procurement of the mills' fast-moving parts and other consumables, Dansal said she will recommend to the IATF to allow Manila-based suppliers of the needed ricemill spare parts to operate. And to facilitate the purchase of spare parts, as well as for smooth coordination purposes, the NFA shall issue a certification to be presented to the checkpoints, for the unimpeded transport and purchase of parts needed for the immediate repair of ricemills. The NFA is part of the National Task Force (NTF) Covid19 under the Task Groups (TGs) on Response Operations and Resource Management and Logistics.

On the sale of rice by-products "darak" and "ipa" which serve as NFA's payment-in-kind (PIK) for milling services, Dansal said the NFA has already made adjustments in the "guaranteed milling recovery" (GMR) to help rice millers recoup their "lost income".

"About the rice hull, we shall also recommend to the IATF to make

representations with Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Año, to advise the LGUs where the ricemills are located, to find places where the rice hull could be dumped, because right now there are no rice hull buyers. As for the NFA, I am instructing all the NFA Regional Directors and the Provincial Managers to help by identifying vacant spaces in the NFA compounds where the rice hulls can be temporarily placed or stored so we could eliminate these small yet valid problems of our milling contractors," Dansal said.

"Our primordial concern now is the continuous, full-blast NFA palay stocks milling, for a safe level supply of rice for this current emergency," she stressed.

Dansal noted that since the declaration of a Luzon-wide ECQ on March 15, followed by other areas in the Visayas and Mindanao, 100% of the NFA's rice sales went to government agencies for the Covid19 emergency. As of April 13, the total rice withdrawals of NFA rice by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and various local government units (LGUs) reached 1,939,852 bags.

The government's rice inventory currently stands at 7.69 million bags, good to last for 116 days or about 3 1/2 months, based on the agency's 10% market share.

Meanwhile, NFA continues its aggressive local palay procurement as farmers continue to harvest their summer crop. Its 440 warehouses and buying stations are open daily, including Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. As of this writing we procure an average of 20,052 bags per day.

"We are ready to serve the farmers and buy their harvest, especially when farmgate prices fall below the P19 per kg support price of the

DA extends 'Food Pass' to ensure continuous food supply

QUEZON CITY, -- With the extension of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Luzon up to April 30, 2020, as declared by President Rodrigo Duterte, the Department of Agriculture (DA) likewise extended the validity of all issued 'Food Pass' stickers and related documents nationwide.

"We immediately issued DA Memorandum Circular No. 11, on April 14, 2020, extending the legitimacy of the 'Food Passes' we issued through our Agribusiness Marketing and Assistance Service (AMAS) to suppliers and truckers of food, rice, vegetables, fruits, meat and processed products, as well as farm, fishery and livestock inputs, raw materials and

equipment," Agriculture Secretary William Dar said.

"The extension aims to ensure the seamless and smooth transport of food, cargoes, and agri-fishery inputs essential to food production and processing, including the movement of our frontliners — farmers, fishers, and workers in food processing facilities — across the country," he added.

Thus, all DA food passes issued on March 18 and succeeding days thereafter remain valid until April 30, 2020, allowing trucks and cargo vehicles to pass through quarantine checkpoints as long as proper identification and other required documents are presented.

"We are calling on all

DA regional field offices (RFOs) to coordinate with their respective local government units, including the Philippine National Police to ensure that the extension will be honored at all checkpoints nationwide," Secretary Dar said.

To date, the DA has issued a total of 73,189 food passes; 4,109 at the central office in Quezon City; and 69,080 at the DA RFOs nationwide.

This is on top of the food passes issued by the DA's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) for fish products, the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) for meat products, and the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) for live hogs, poultry, and other farm animals. (AR, DA-AFID)

GAVEZ... FR. P2

Libu-libo ang namamatay sa kanila araw-araw," Galvez added.

Creation of TWG for Mass Testing

With the extension of the ECQ, the NTF on COVID-19 recommended to the Inter-Agency Task Force on COVID-19 the creation of a special task group that will spearhead the massive testing of suspected COVID-19-positive individuals.

The task group will focus on testing and contact tracing, specifically the consolidation of all suspected COVID-19 patients to designated testing and quarantine areas; prioritization of cities where the testing will be held; and the segregation and transport of COVID-19 positive

patients to newly-constructed quarantine areas for treatment and medication.

"Ang malawakang testing at contact-tracing ay napakalahagang milestone sa ating kampanya laban sa COVID-19," Galvez said.

"Pag nagawa na po natin ang malawakang testing, makikita na natin ang common and true picture sa lahat ng mga affected areas," he added.

The task group will be composed of the Department of Health, MMDA, Department of Interior and Local Government, LGUs, National Capital Region Police Office, AFP Joint Task Force-NCR, accredited testing laboratories, private medical teams, and civil society organizations.

Several government-designated quarantine facilities will start operating. These include the Rizal Memorial Complex, Philippine International Convention Center, World Trade Center, Philippine Sports Complex, Philippine Arena, and Ninoy Aquino Stadium started its operations and started accepting patients last Monday, April 13.

"Noong Lunes (April

13) ay binisita naman natin ang Ninoy Aquino Stadium at pormal na po nating naiturn-over sa Lungsod ng Maynila at sa AFP ang pasilidad," Galvez announced during the briefing.

PPEs for frontliners

Around 12,000 sets of personal protective equipment (PPEs) arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport yesterday which is part of the 1 million sets of PPEs worth PHP 1.8 billion procured by the Philippine government from China.

The PPEs were transported to the Philippines at no cost to the government, as they were flown in by Xiamen Air of the People's Republic of China.

"Nagpapasalamat po tayo sa Embahada ng China para sa libreng pagdala ng labindalawang libong (12,000) PPEs para sa ating mga healthcare workers," Galvez said.

The turnover of PPEs were led by Galvez and Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian and witnessed by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Civil Defense, procurement service of the Department of Budget and Management, and the Chinese Embassy.