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Taiwan travel ban lifted

DOT welcomes move; restrictions in other areas evaluated

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The Philippine government has decided to lift the travel ban imposed on visitors from Taiwan and vice versa following appeals made by concerned members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases held meeting in Malacañang on Friday. The move was agreed with the lifting of the travel restrictions on Taiwan earlier implemented as a precaution against the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Accordingly, travel may now be made by any national to Taiwan from the Philippines and vice versa.

“The lifting of travel restrictions for Taiwan has been agreed upon by the members of the IATF by reason of the strict measures they are undertaking, as well as the protocols they are implementing to address the COVID-19,” Panelo said Friday evening.

The task force will also study the proposed lifting of the travel ban on other areas, depending on the health protocols instituted in these places.

“The Palace confirms that the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF) has resolved to lift the travel restrictions imposed upon Taiwan, effective immediately. Accordingly, travel may now be made by any national to Taiwan from the Philippines and vice versa,” Presidential spokesman Sal- **► 8**





Taiwan travel ban...



vador Panelo said.

A resolution by the task force, led by Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, is expected to be issued later.

The meeting of the task force was attended by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, several Cabinet members, and other health officials. Concerns were reportedly raised on the impact of the Taiwan travel ban on the country's tourism industry as well as the welfare of Filipino workers in the Asian neighbor.

The Philippine government had earlier announced that foreign nationals from Taiwan are prohibited from entering the country over the coronavirus threat. The decision was reportedly based on the World Health Organization's policy recognizing Taiwan as part of China.

Earlier, Manila imposed a temporary ban on China and its special administrative regions to prevent

the spread of the disease. Filipinos have also been prevented from visiting these places for their safety and protection.

The travel ban was later expanded to cover Taiwan. This prompted the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Manila to call on the Philippine government to correct its decision and remove Taiwan from the travel ban. The office insisted that the Taiwan is a sovereign state and is not part of China.

Likewise, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested the travel ban the Philippine government imposed on travelers coming to the country from Taiwan on February 10. It asked the Philippines to correct its "unilateral decision" to include their country in the travel ban because of the "One-China Policy."

However, Malacañang denied

that the said policy was the reason behind Taiwan's inclusion in the travel ban.

The Palace later clarified that the President has asked for more time to review the appeal, insisting that the safety and protection of Filipinos remain the government's paramount concern.

Panelo said the task force will also evaluate other jurisdictions, including Macau, for the possible lifting of the imposed travel ban.

Meanwhile, the Department of Tourism (DOT) welcomed the lifting of the travel ban.

"The lifting of the travel ban on Taiwan is highly assuring and we hope that the COVID-19 crisis would soon be resolved, worldwide. Ultimately, the recovery of all affected countries is a universal prayer, especially that tourism is an inclusive and sustainable business for and of the people," Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said.