BI to implement expansion of travel ban

MANILA, Philippines—Bureau of Immigration (BI) Commissioner Jaime Morente announced that he has ordered the implementation of the expanded travel ban for foreigners coming from China and its Special Administrative Regions.

“We have immediately implemented the expanded travel ban, hence all foreign nationals, regardless of their nationality, who will be coming from China and its Special Administrative Regions shall be turned back and not allowed to enter the Philippines,” he announced.

Morente, however, clarified that Filipino nationals and Philippine permanent resident visa holders will be allowed to enter “subject to a 14 day quarantine, to be implemented by the Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ).” Other visa holders and transiting passengers, according to the BI, will also be denied entry.

He added that the ban includes passengers who have been to said areas in the last 14 days. “We have sent a notice to airlines and shipping agents requiring them to screen passengers before boarding to restrict the arrival of aliens who have visited the areas of concern in the past 14 days,” said Morente.

The announcement came after President Rodrigo Duterte issued a temporary travel ban Sunday morning, on travels from China, Hong Kong, Macau.

Also part of the ban is the departure of Filipinos going to China and its Special Administrative Regions. The BI clarified that the ban is in place, following the President’s orders, for all visa types.

The move comes after the World Health Organization declared the 2019-nCov as a global health emergency. The Department of Health likewise announced two confirmed cases of the virus, with one fatality in the Philippines.

It can be recalled that last Tuesday, the BI has suspended the issuance of the Visa Upon Arrival for Chinese nationals, in an effort to slow down the arrival of Chinese tour groups.

On Friday, Morente also ordered the prudent assessment of passengers, and immigration officers were instructed to refer foreign nationals who came from Hubei province to the Bureau of Quarantine for rechecking or double-checking.
Travelers from Hubei province were later banned to enter, and said restriction was expanded earlier today by the President to include the entire People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Macau.

“We urge everyone to temporarily refrain from unnecessary travel, and to bear with the government as we implement this measure,” said Morente. “Let us work hand in hand to ensure that the country is protected from this virus,” he added. #