BI reminds Pinoy tourists they can’t leave due to COVID-19

MANILA, Philippines -The Bureau of Immigration (BI) reminded Filipinos intending to travel abroad as tourist that they are still restricted from leaving the country amid the continuing global COVID-19 pandemic.

BI Commissioner Jaime Morente issued the statement after receiving a report that six Filipinos were recently barred from going to Cambodia via a special chartered flight from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

The said passengers were reportedly offloaded because they are mere tourists whose purpose in going abroad is not essential and neither do they fall under the category of travelers who are exempted from the travel ban while the country is under community quarantine.

“We want to emphasize and reiterate that Filipinos are still prohibited from leaving the country unless they are Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), holders of study visas or permanent residents in the country of their destination,” Morente said.

The BI chief appealed to the public for understanding, saying the bureau will continue to implement existing international travel restrictions until these are lifted or relaxed by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID).

According to BI port operations acting chief Grifton Medina, the six passengers were offloaded from their flight last June 29 after they informed the immigration officer that they were going to Phnom Penh merely to attend a business meeting on shrimp farming.

It was learned that there have been already several instances of departing Filipinos tourists who were barred from boarding their flights at the NAIA since the government imposed restrictions on international travel three months ago due to the pandemic.

Medina urged Filipinos who wish to embark on leisure trips or visit their relatives to be patient and wait for the IATF-EID to lift the said travel restrictions.

"These travel restrictions are only temporary and we should always bear in mind that the government implemented these measures to protect our countrymen against this deadly coronavirus," he added