BI blacklists 8 more foreign nationals

MANILA, Philippines - The Bureau of Immigration (BI) has banned from re-entering the Philippines eight more Chinese nationals who overstayed in the country after they were allowed to come here under the government’s visa-upon-arrival (VUA) for Chinese tourists.

BI Commissioner Jaime Morente issued the orders placing the eight Chinese nationals in the immigration blacklist after they were ordered to leave the country and meted fines and penalties for overstaying.

“They did not leave before the lapse of their authorized stay without any valid reason or justification. And it took them several months after they arrived before they manifested their intent to depart and return to their country,” Morente said.

It was learned that the eight Chinese nationals arrived in the country on separate dates between November 2019 and January 2020 and each were admitted for a non-extendable period of 30 days under the VUA program.

Last month, the BI chief also ordered the blacklisting of 21 Chinese VUA recipients who were also directed to leave for overstaying.

VUA’s implementing guidelines formulated by the Department of Justice (DOJ) expressly prohibits grantees of the VUA privilege to apply for extension of their stay, thus they have to leave the country before the lapse of their 30-day visa.

The VUA is a scheme that the government launched three years ago to draw more Chinese visitors into the country and boost the tourism industry.

The scheme allows a VUA grantee the privilege to enter and stay in the country for 30 days without the need of a visa from a Philippine consulate in China.

Instead, VUA recipients file their applications with the BI through tour operators accredited by the Department of Tourism (DOT).

The BI, however, suspended the processing VUA applications since late January at the height of the coronavirus outbreak in China.