

# GMA orders closure of stores selling China milk

By PAOLO ROMERO

China has been struggling to contain the scandal, with countries around the world rushing to ban or restrict its dairy products.

The Philippine government barred the entry of China-made milk products after baby formula tainted with melamine triggered a global food safety crisis.

The Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFD) has so far tested 30 dairy products and found two with traces of melamine.

Duque said BFAD would be announcing today the results of the latest batch of 200 products that they have screened.

Mrs. Arroyo wanted to make sure that Filipino consumers are protected from contaminated dairy products coming from China.

Other importing countries have also banned Chinese milk products even as the Chinese government conducted a crackdown on all milk manufacturers using the toxic chemical melamine.

Over 50,000 Chinese babies have been reported sick due to infant formula contaminated with melamine, a chemical used in making plastics, which can make milk and other food products appear to have a higher protein count than they actually do.

President Arroyo ordered the closure of establishments and food outlets importing and selling melamine-tainted milk and dairy products.

In a Cabinet meeting, Mrs. Arroyo ordered officials to strictly monitor the sale and importation of melamine-tainted dairy products and close down the establishments selling them.

The President issued the order after Health Secretary Francisco Duque III presided over a briefing at Malacañang on the latest developments in the melamine scare.

Duque and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in a briefing at the Palace said

from any harmful chemical," Palawan Rep. Abraham Mitra said.

"You should take a proactive stand, instead of checking the product only after the scare has been made, like in this case," said Nueva Ecija Rep. Rodolfo Antonino.

Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group (PASG) head Undersecretary Antonio Villar Jr., also made the same proposal for his agency to monitor the entry of other possible contaminated imported products.

Villar hailed the creation of the task force led by the Department of Health (DOH) and BFAD but pro-

posed that all other products that would have adverse effects on public health should be included.

"It's better if the task force also included other imported products that did not pass strict scrutiny or regulation by the countries of origin. For example pyrotechnic products, drugs, foods, electrical gadgets or toys to name a few," he said.

The DOH and BFAD earlier sought the assistance of the PASG and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to help prevent the entry of melamine-tainted milk.

— With Delon Porcalla, Sheila Crisostomo, Evelyn Macairan