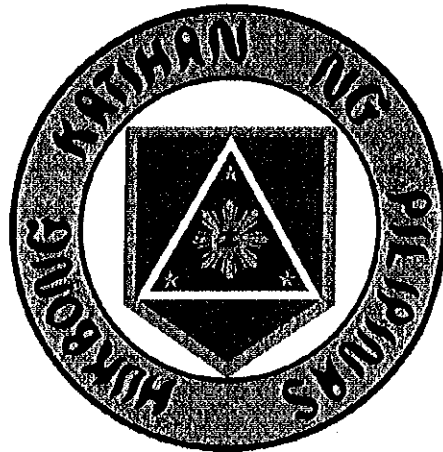


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LAWMAKERS KEEP P75-B PORK IN FINAL BUDGET BILL

STORY BY MARLON RAMOS AND LEILA B. SALAVERRIA

The senators will receive at least P3 billion each, while the congressmen will 'equitably share' P5 billion to add to the P160 million that each of them will get if President Duterte will approve the 2019 spending program.

A4

FROM A1

By Marlon Ramos
and Leila B. Salaverria
@Team_Inquirer

The lawmakers whom Sen. Panfilo Lacson has described as "incorrigibly insatiable" are having their way with the budget after all.

They are keeping P75 billion in pork in the final version of the P3.8-trillion national budget proposal for 2019 despite Lacson's strident objections, according to Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., chair of the appropriations committee of the House of Representatives.

"It's the (Senate-House) pork," Andaya told Inquirer editors and reporters on Wednesday night after his meeting with Sen. Loren Legarda, chair of the Senate finance committee.

Senators to get more

"Whatever I say now, I'm sure it will be called pork. So let's just say it's pork. It's the year of the pig [anyway]," Andaya said.

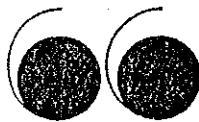
The bulk of the amount, he said, would be allotted to the 23 senators, who would each receive at least P3 billion in government projects, while the 292 members of the House would "equitably share" the remaining P5 billion.

The congressmen's share would be on top of the P160 million that Lacson earlier divulged each of them would get if President Duterte would approve the final version of the budget bill that the lawmakers prepared.

Andaya said it was he and Legarda who approved the final draft committee report prepared by the "small group" of the Senate-House conference committee that the lawmakers convened to hasten the approval of the long-stalled national spending measure.

"We will have a [national] budget on Friday," Andaya said.

But the senators and the representatives should brace themselves for public censure of their decision, he said, pointing out that both houses of Congress had to approve the final version of the spending bill before it would be transmitted.



**Whatever I say now, I'm sure
it will be called pork. So let's just say
it's pork. It's the year of the pig [anyway]**

Rolando Andaya Jr.
Camarines Sur Representative

to Malacañang for President Duterte to sign.

"It's up [to] each institution to brace [itself] for the backlash. They passed it. Why will I defend it by myself? That's what you want to pass, then defend it," he added.

Violation of SC ruling

Lacson had decried the congressmen's insistence on larding the budget with pork, which he said was in violation of a 2013 Supreme Court ruling that outlawed the pork barrel system.

On Tuesday, Lacson urged

President Duterte to use his veto power to remove the pork that the "incorrigibly insatiable" congressmen had embedded in the 2019 budget.

Legarda discussed the draft report with her colleagues on Wednesday night.

Lacson said on Thursday that he had informed his colleagues that he would cast a dissenting vote at the ratification of the report on Friday.

He said he disagreed with the retention of the pork and that he hoped more senators would share his view.

"Basically, yes, the P160 million per House member plus the billion-peso insertions made by a number of their colleagues, and the P23-billion Department of Public Works and Highways insertions by a number of senators plus other insertions in different agencies have all been retained," Lacson said.

Unconscionable realignments

"Sadly, no matter how hard I argued last night, I only have one vote, although I have good reason to believe that some like-minded colleagues are supportive of deleting all pork insertions, particularly the excessive and unconscionable realignments made not only by our [House] counterparts but by a number of our colleagues as well," he said.

But there was a positive development, Lacson said, pointing to the deletion of appropriations for flood control projects, such as dredging and desilting and the realignment of the funds to purchase dredgers.

He said the draft report also retained the additional funds

given to the Department of Health for the operation of new health centers.

Lacson said many of his institutional amendments were also retained, including funds for a 240-day-a-year feeding program for wasted and nearly wasted schoolchildren, additional allowance for teachers, allocations for veterans, additional funds requested by the judiciary, and funds for the activation of one infantry division for the Army.

Although the budget remained larded with pork, Lacson said he hoped he had contributed to the national conversation about the system that the Supreme Court had declared unconstitutional.

"More than that, hopefully, I was able to enlighten the public because of the public discourse that transpired, for or against the outlawed pork barrel. I would say we have gained some headway in this regard," he said.

He reiterated his call to the President to exercise his veto power to remove "line items that clearly look and smell like pork." INQ

Measles outbreak in 3 more regions

By MAYEN JAYMALIN

Measles From Page 1

Aside from Metro Manila and Central Luzon, three more regions are reeling from measles outbreaks and another three are being monitored for possibly being in the same situation, the Department of Health (DOH) said yesterday.

"We are expanding the outbreak from Metro Manila to other regions as cases have increased in the past weeks," Health Secretary Francisco Duque III announced at a press conference yesterday.

Aside from the National Capital Region (NCR) and Central Luzon, Duque said outbreaks of measles have been detected in the Calabarzon region and in Western and Central Visayas.

Based on validated data, Duque said 575 cases, including nine deaths, have been recorded in Calabarzon -- the region of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon. The figure was 2,538 percent higher than last year's 21 cases.

In Western Visayas, 104 cases and three deaths were recorded or 550 percent higher than last year, while 71 cases --

Turn to Page 6

with one death, were posted in Central Visayas or an increase of 3,450 percent from only two cases last year.

The DOH previously declared an outbreak of measles in NCR and Central Luzon. In the NCR, 441 cases, including five deaths, were recorded while 575 cases with nine deaths were recorded in Central Luzon.

Out of the 17 cities in the NCR, 14 recorded clustering of measles cases.

Among those admitted in the NCR, the DOH said seven were pregnant women now confined at the San Lazaro Hospital.

Duque also raised heightened alert in Mimaropa, Ilocos region, Eastern Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Northern Mindanao and Soccsksargen.

He said 70 cases were reported in Mimaropa, 64 cases including two deaths in Ilocos, 60 cases in Northern Mindanao, 54 cases with one death in Eastern Visayas and 43 cases in Soccsksargen.

"These regions should step up their responses against the highly communicable diseases as well as ensure that preventive measures play a vital role

in preventing the spread of the disease," Duque stressed.

He assured the public that there is no new strain of measles and that the outbreaks were due to the increasing number of unvaccinated children nationwide.

To control the outbreak, Duque said, the DOH is now undertaking house-to-house measles immunization program for the estimated 1.8 million unvaccinated children nationwide.

Forget Dengvaxia

Duque appealed to the public to set aside the Dengvaxia controversy and avail themselves of the benefits of measles vaccines.

"Don't think twice, have your children immunized," he said in Filipino.

The DOH said it did not immediately declare outbreak of measles because data have to be validated.

Ferchito Avelino, DOH Epidemiology Bureau director, said the main DOH office has to make the announcement due to the extent of the outbreak.

"LGUs can make the declaration of an outbreak if the

cases were confined in certain areas only," he pointed out.

Health Undersecretary Eric Domingo said the outbreak of measles was due to the increase in the number of unvaccinated children for the past years.

Domingo noted that measles immunization rates have been declining since 2015, and they have significantly dropped in the last two years following the Dengvaxia controversy.

He said when the DOH conducted supplemental measles immunization in October last year, the program yielded only 29 percent immunization rate.

Domingo said the DOH will now be providing measles immunization to children as young as six months to provide them with the necessary protection.

He said the DOH is also providing free measles immunization to adults, although a majority of measles cases involve children below five years old.

President Duterte, said his spokesman Salvador Panelo, has ordered the DOH to launch a nationwide campaign to promote immunization for measles.

Panelo said the President gave the orders to Duque at Wednesday's Cabinet meeting which lasted until past 1 a.m.

yesterday.

"The Department of Health's immunization program was likewise tackled. The President ordered a vigorous campaign to promote the complete immunization for children," he said.

"He directed Secretary Duque to do something about it and Secretary Duque said 'we are already doing something about it.' So, we're conducting a massive immunization plus information campaign that it's better to prevent than to cure," Panelo added.

Red Cross ready

With more regions hit by the measles outbreak, the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) is offering to put up emergency medical units and outdoor hospitals to accommodate the growing number of children afflicted with measles.

PRC chair Sen. Richard Gordon said the San Lazaro Hospital is now overflowing with children sick with measles.

When he visited the hospital, he said, he saw two or three children sharing one bed, while rooms that usually accommodate two or three patients are now filled with 10.

"Even hallways are being used," Gordon said.

He said the PRC is ready to

provide medical interventions, including the establishment of a 100-bed emergency medical unit and welfare desks at San Lazaro Hospital.

San Lazaro doctors said there are 250 patients with confirmed measles cases admitted at the hospital. They were mostly unvaccinated children.

Gordon said the PRC is also ready to provide blankets and hygiene kits.

"Let's stop the scare and rather educate the parents, families and communities on the importance of vaccination for our children's sake," Gordon said in his Twitter account, apparently referring to the Dengvaxia scare.

Sen. Nancy Binay, meanwhile, called for a united effort to convince parents to have their children vaccinated with anti-measles shots.

Binay said the DOH with the help of the media should intensify its information campaign regarding the importance of immunization.

"The harm will be more serious if we don't get our children vaccinated," she said.

She stressed there should be no finger-pointing over the possible cause of the outbreak and that authorities should focus on addressing the problem.

"At this point in time, let's

stop blaming each other," she said.

Binay said an alarming development in the measles outbreak is its having affected a tourist from Australia. She warned this might prompt other countries to issue advisory against traveling to the Philippines.

"We don't want this problem to be the trigger for other countries to issue travel advisories," she said.

She admitted the Dengvaxia controversy could further discourage parents from having their children vaccinated.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said even fellow Cabinet officials acknowledged the impact of the Dengvaxia controversy on the government's immunization program.

"Last night it was discussed in the Cabinet that the reason for the measles outbreak was the Dengvaxia issue. Parents became afraid of having their children vaccinated," he said in Filipino on the sidelines of the National Federalism Summit in Manila.

"We will embark on an advocacy to encourage parents to bring their children for immunization," he said.

— With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Emmanuel Tupas, Christina Mendez

Talks on cards to review US-PH defense pact

By Jerome Aning
@JeromeAningINQ

Philippine and United States officials on Thursday confirmed that talks were being planned to review and possibly revise the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) between the two countries.

But the timetable and provisions being considered for revision have yet to be agreed on, according to Foreign Undersecretary Enrique Manalo, Defense Undersecretary Cardozo Luna and US Ambassador to the

Philippines Sung Kim.

In his remarks at a think tank conference on US-Philippine relations, Luna called for a review of the treaty to make it relevant to modern geopolitical issues, including the country's dispute with China in the South China Sea.

Vague commitment

Luna did not say what provisions in the treaty should be modified.

Duterte administration officials have said that the treaty was vague on the US commitment to

defend the Philippines in case a third country attacks its territories in the South China Sea.

Kim said Washington was amenable to "taking a close look" at the treaty, but pointed out that both sides already had other cooperation mechanisms, two of them the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

"We would welcome taking a close look at the treaty to see whether we can make any adjustments to make it even better than what it is now," Kim told

reporters in an interview.

"[There are] various mechanisms and frameworks, so I think we will just continue to stay closely engaged and talk to each other. And if there are any adjustments that would be useful, certainly, we would welcome an opportunity to make adjustments," he added.

Continuing discussions

Manalo said the Philippines was "continuing discussions to strengthen [its] alliance with the US" and that even US Secretary

of State Mike Pompeo had affirmed the US commitments under the MDT.

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. met with Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton when he visited the United States in December, Manalo said.

Asked if the United States would soon be sending officials to talk about the review of the MDT, Kim said that "a series of visitors [was expected] throughout this year," but it was still to be decided whether any particular visit would focus on it.

American and Filipino officials, he said, are ready "to move forward any discussions about any aspect of the relationship, including the MDT." A3

The two-day think tank conference organized by the US Embassy, the Asia Foundation and the Ateneo School of Government, gathered experts to discuss shared issues on security priorities and defense cooperation, as well as trade, development, technology and infrastructure trends that will shape US-Philippine ties in the future. INQ

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February 2019

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DE LIMA PROPOSES JULY 12 AS PH VICTORY DAY VS CHINA SEA CLAIM

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINQ

President Duterte may have put the decision on the back burner, but Sen. Leila de Lima wants Filipinos to remember the day their country won a landmark victory in its challenge to China's claim to nearly the entire South China Sea.

National pride

De Lima has filed a bill that would declare July 12 of every year a special working holiday

to be known as the West Philippine Sea Victory Day.

The intention is to commemorate and instill national pride in the historic ruling of the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated Beijing's claim to almost 90 percent of the strategic waterway, including waters within the Philippines' 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone known as West Philippine Sea.

The remembrance of the day could also prompt the

government to pursue programs consistent with the ruling, De Lima said.

A vocal critic of President Duterte's brutal drug war and cozying up to China, De Lima has been detained since February 2017 on charges filed by the Department of Justice accusing her of involvement in the proliferation of illegal drugs at the national penitentiary during her time as justice secretary.

She has denounced the charges as baseless and political persecution.

The Hague ruling stemmed from a challenge to China's sweeping claim brought by President Benigno Aquino III in 2013 after China took control of Panatag Shoal, a traditional fishing ground for Filipinos off the coast of Zambales.

The decision was handed down on July 12, 2016, shortly after Aquino stepped down and Mr. Duterte took over.

Mr. Duterte has decided not to bring up the ruling with China for now, and has instead been cultivating friendship with

the Philippines' giant neighbor.

In her bill, De Lima said that despite the Philippines resorting to peaceful and legal means to oppose China's aggressive island-building and militarization of the South China Sea, it still continued with its activities.

This was what prompted the Philippine government during the Aquino administration to challenge China's excessive claim in the Hague court. De Lima, who was then the justice secretary, was part of the dele-

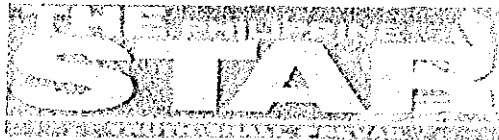
gation that argued the Philippines' case.

Invalid claim

The tribunal ruled that China's claim had no basis in international law and that it had violated the Philippines' sovereign right to fish and explore resources in the West Philippine Sea.

The tribunal also said Beijing's large-scale reclamation in the South China Sea caused severe harm to the coral environment. INQ

6



Phl mulls protest vs Chinese structure

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines is studying the steps to be taken to protest China's establishment of a maritime rescue center at Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef in the West Philippine Sea, a senior official of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

"It's under consideration. We're studying what steps might be taken," Undersecretary Enrique Manalo told reporters on the sidelines of a think tank conference on The Future of US-Philippines Bilateral Relationship in Makati City.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said on Saturday that the Phil-

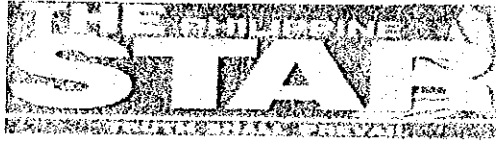
ippines would protest China's establishment of a center once this is verified.

He agreed with Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio that the Philippines should contest China's construction on the Philippine-claimed Kagitingan Reef.

Carpio said the Philippine government should file a protest to avoid the misunderstanding that it approves of China's action at the Philippine-claimed reef and thus weaken the country's claim over the disputed area.

But Carpio and Malacañang differed on how the Philippines should deal with China's establishment of a maritime rescue center at Kagitingan.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Filipinos should be "thankful" to China for building the center even as it vowed to oppose acts that intrude into Manila's sovereignty.



Kim says US open to MDT review

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The United States' top diplomat in Manila said yesterday Washington is open to a review of the provisions of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with the Philippines to see whether the two countries can make "any adjustments to make it even better."

Ambassador Sung Kim agreed with the Department of National Defense (DND) that an agreement as important and complicated as the MDT always "needs to be looked at very closely, as the circumstances surrounding the agree-

ment or the alliance" evolve.

Kim told reporters on the sidelines of a forum in Makati City that dialogue between the US and the Philippines is ongoing at various levels and "if there are any adjustments that would be useful, certainly we would welcome an opportunity to make adjustments."

DND Undersecretary Cardozo Luna reiterated Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's call for a review of the MDT.

"While our alliance is considered ironclad, as pronounced by our US counterparts in various fora, our two sides remain flexible in finding ways to address

contemporary security challenges," Luna said.

Lorenzana earlier stressed the need to review the treaty, given the ambivalent stand of the US on the country's maritime domain and territorial issues in the West Philippine Sea.

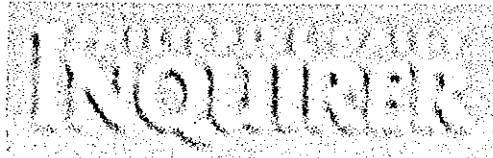
The defense chief said it is about time both countries look into the provisions of the MDT, given the mounting security concerns in the West Philippine Sea and South China Sea.

US, Filipino and regional policy experts gathered yesterday at the think tank conference on the future of the US-Philippine relationship to

share their experiences and insights to help develop a roadmap for future bilateral relations.

"Our alliance with the Philippines is our oldest in Asia," Kim said. "Throughout our shared history, we have together confronted and overcome numerous challenges. Our nations are strongest when we work together as friends, partners and allies."

Kim stressed that he has complete confidence in the strength, resiliency and importance of the relationship between the US and the Philippines. 4



PH Spratlys work sparks China vessel buildup

By Frances Mangosing
@FMangosingINQ

China deployed a large paramilitary force in the South China Sea late last year in an apparent response to the ongoing construction by the Philippines on Pagasa (Thitu) Island, new satellite images showed.

The Washington-based think tank Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AmTI) on Thursday said a handful of Chinese vessels had operated in the area between Zamora (Subi) Reef and Pagasa since July 2018, two months after the Philippines announced that it would repair the Pagasa runway.

"But their numbers increased to at least 24 on Dec. 3, just before the current construction operations began. Their numbers [reached] a high of 95 on Dec. 20 before dropping to 42 by Jan. 26," AmTI said.

The report said the fishing boats generally anchored between 3.7 and 10 kilometers

west of Pagasa, while Chinese naval and coast guard ships operated slightly farther away.

China's 'cabbage strategy'

"This deployment is consistent with prior examples of China's 'cabbage strategy,' which employs concentric layers of fishing, law enforcement and

naval vessels around contested areas," the report said.

AmTI has said that these vessels, which intimidate other claimants in the South China Sea and do not actually fish, were part of China's maritime militia.

"The fishing vessels display all the hallmarks of belonging to China's maritime militia, includ-

ing having no gear in the water that would indicate fishing activity and disabling their [identification] transceivers to hide their activities," the report said.

Biggest PH-occupied island

Pagasa is the biggest of the nine Philippine-occupied islands in the Spratlys, inhabited by

about a hundred civilians and a small detachment of troops.

In a satellite image taken on Dec. 20, a People's Liberation Army Navy Jianghu-class frigate and a Chinese Coast Guard Zhaoduan-class cutter were seen near Pagasa Island.

The Philippine Navy frigate BRP Ramon Alcaraz was also seen

southeast of Pagasa.

"The ... reduction of the militia presence, suggests Chinese forces have settled into a pattern of monitoring and intimidation after their initial large deployment failed to convince Manila to halt construction," AmTI said.

The report also said that the Philippines was working on a facility upgrade on Pagasa that was "more ambitious" than the construction of a beaching ramp.

It said images revealed "excavators depositing sand over an area of ... more than 3.2 hectares or 32,000 square meters."

"Once completed, the Philippines will have created 3.2 ha of reclaimed land in the Spratlys, compared to about 48 by Vietnam and 130 by China," the report said.

But Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana maintained that the reclamation work on Pagasa was not as extensive as AmTI claimed. —WITH A REPORT FROM JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE INQ

PH doing reclamation projects on Pag-asa

THE Philippines has been working on a reclamation far more ambitious than a simple beaching ramp on Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the South China Sea, according to a Washington-based think tank.

In a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI), satellite images from Jan. 11 and 26, 2019 showed that the reclamation work by the Philippines was "more ambitious."

"Both images are partially obscured by clouds, but they reveal

► **Reclamation A8**



■ Satellite image from the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative shows the 'ambitious' reclamation work by the military on Philippine-occupied Pag-asa Island.

PH doing

excavators depositing sand over an area of approximately eight acres, or more than 32,000 square meters, to the north of the existing causeway," the AMTI said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, meanwhile, said Manila is only after a beaching ramp, disputing AMTI's report.

"Next is the concreting of the runway. [Third] phase is the lengthening of the runway which will entail the reclamation of about 300 meters," Lorenzana told reporters in a text message.

The AMTI recalled that the Defense chief previously announced that the government plans to construct a fish port, desalination plant, solar power array, improved housing and marine research facilities in Pag-asa.

The construction, it added, was "much less destructive to the environment surrounding the Pag-asa island, compared to the actions being done by China in some of its claimed isles in the Spratly archipelago or the Kalayaan Island Group."

"Once completed, the Philippines will have created eight acres of reclaimed land in the Spratlys in recent years, compared to about 120 acres by Vietnam and 3,200 by China," the AMTI said.

Satellite images dated Dec. 13 and 14, 2018 were also shown, indicating that a barge was anchored off the west coast of the island with excavators and bulldozer "in the process of depositing and grading sand to extend the small existing causeway to the edge of the reef."

"This would allow ships with deeper drafts to deliver supplies directly onto the island, rather than the current process of offloading onto smaller boats in order to ferry supplies over the reef," the AMTI report said.

"The new construction started sometime in early to mid-December, as no apparent work is visible in imagery dated December 3," it added.

Beijing, apparently bothered by the construction of the beaching

ramp at Pag-asa, has deployed a "large fleet" of its ships coming from Subi (Zamora) reef.

Subi reef is just over 12 nautical miles southwest of Pag-asa.

The reef is also claimed by China, which is building several military facilities and other constructions there.

The AMTI said Chinese ships include those coming from the People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) and the China Coast Guard (CCG), along with dozens of fishing vessels ranging in sizes from 30 to 70 meters.

Such deployment made by China to Pag-asa is only part of its "cabbage strategy," employing concentric layers of fishing, law enforcement and naval vessels around the contested areas, mostly in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

Last month, Lorenzana said the fishing vessels were obviously carrying militiamen of the Chinese Navy.

Since July 2018, in response to Manila's kicking off the runway repairs, a "handful" of Chinese vessels have been operating between Subi reef and Pag-asa island.

The AMTI noted that compared to July, an increase of Chinese vessels to at least 24 was noticed on December 3, "just before the current construction operations began."

But in five satellite images released by AMTI captured from the middle of December to late January, the number of Chinese vessels fluctuate, "reaching a high of 95 on December 20 and dropping to 42 on January 26."

Two Chinese vessels were also visible from the satellite images taken on December 20.

These ships are PLA-N's Type 053H1G (Jianghu Y-class) frigate and a CCG Type 818 (Zhaodian-class) cutter.

Also, the Philippine Navy's *BRP Ramon Alcaraz* was also seen southwest of Pag-asa just over 7 nautical miles from the Chinese Navy's ships.

On the January 11 imagery, two ships from the Chinese Navy and coast guard were seen near Pag-asa and on January 26, it showed only the presence of the CCG's Type 718B.

DEMPSEY REYES

PH doing reclamation at WPS, says think tank

BY VICTOR REYES

WASHINGTON-BASED think tank Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) yesterday said the Philippines is not just building a beaching ramp but is also reclaiming land at the Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea.

In its website, AMTI said the land reclamation at the Pag-asa Island - the largest among the nine areas occupied by Filipino troops

in the Spratly Islands - involved around eight acres.

The Spratly Islands, also known as the Kalayaan Island Group, is a chain of islands and islets which are believed to be rich in oil and minerals deposits. It is being claimed by Philippines, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana disputed the report, insisting the work at the island only involves the beach ramp. The

construction started last year and is due to be completed during the third quarter of the year.

Lorenzana earlier said beaching ramp is needed to allow the transport of supplies for the improvement of the dilapidated runway and facilities at the Pag-asa Island, about 12 nautical miles from the Chinese-occupied Subi Reef.

The AMTI said satellite imagery

See PH DOING ► Page B3

PH DOING

taken on Dec. 13 and 14 showed a large barge anchored off the west coast of the island, with excavators and bulldozers "in the process of depositing and grading sand to extend the small existing causeway to the edge of the reef —presumably creating the beaching ramp referred to by Lorenzana."

It said more recent imagery from Jan. 11 and 26 showed "that the reclamation work is more ambitious than a simple beaching ramp."

"Both images are partially obscured by clouds, but they reveal excavators depositing sand over an area of approximately eight acres, or more than 32,000 square meters, to the north of the existing causeway," the AMTI said.

"It seems unlikely that this area of new landfill, the equivalent of about three city blocks, is meant only as a staging area for materials and equipment brought in to repair the runway," it added.

The AMTI said the construction equipment are depositing sand at the Pag-asa Island that were "shipped from elsewhere."

It said the Philippine method in the reclamation is "much less environmentally destructive" than China's recent land reclamation "which employed suction-cutter

dredgers to grind up the reef surface and build outposts with the resulting sediment."

"Once completed, the Philippines will have created eight acres of reclaimed land in the Spratlys in recent years, compared to about 120 acres by Vietnam and 3,200 by China," the AMTI said of the Philippines' land reclamation at Pag-asa island.

It said China has responded to the Philippine constructions by deploying "large fleet of ships" from Subi Reef. It said the fleet includes ships from the Chinese Navy, Coast Guard and fishing vessels serving as China's maritime militia.

"In five subsequent satellite images captured from mid-December to late January, their numbers fluctuate, reaching a high of 95 on December 20 before dropping to 42 by January 26," the AMTI said.

It said the fishing boats are anchored about two to five nautical miles of Pag-asa Island while the naval and coast guard ships are "slightly farther away to the south and the west."

"This deployment is consistent with prior examples of China's 'cabbage strategy', which employs concentric layers of fishing, law enforcement, and naval vessels around contested areas," the AMTI said.

Sought for comment about

the purported land reclamation, Lorenzana said: "As of now, only the beaching ramp is being undertaken. Next is the concreting of the runway. Third phase is the lengthening of the runway which will entail the reclamation of about 300 meters."

Lorenzana said the width of the upcoming runway-related reclamation will be airstrip-size but could not immediately give figures.

"Reclamation means there is land before and you are reclaiming the land back. Since there is no land, but water, we call it filling up the space with stones, gravel and soil," the defense chief said.

PROTEST

The Department of Foreign Affairs said the government is looking for ways to file a protest against China's establishment of a maritime rescue facility in Kagitingan Reef (Tertiary Cross Reef), which is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

"We are just studying what steps might be taken," DFA Undersecretary Enrique Manalo said at the sidelines of the US-Philippines Bilateral Relationship forum.

Earlier, DFA Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. said there is a need to protest Beijing's latest move, a point echoed by Defense Secretary

Delfin Lorenzana.

Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio also said the government should protest China's move, adding that failure to do so would mean giving implied consent to Beijing's occupation and use of the reef.

Carpio said allowing China to put up its rescue center without registering a protest contradicts the governments' claim that it has sovereignty over the area.

China's state-run media said the facility would be used to better protect navigation and transport safety in the area.

Carpio assisted the country's legal team when the Aquino government filed a case in 2013 before the Permanent Court of Arbitration challenging China's excessive claims in the disputed South China Sea.

The arbitral tribunal issued its decision in July 12, 2016 invalidating Beijing's nine-dash line claim in the disputed waters though the latter did not participate in the arbitral proceedings and rejects its ruling as it prefers bilateral talks to resolve the maritime territorial dispute.

But President Duterte has set aside the ruling and moved to mend ties with Beijing that was strained under his predecessor. --
With Ashzel Hachero

No PH land reclamation on Pag-asa Island: DND

The Philippines is not conducting any land reclamation activity on Pag-asa Island, the largest feature occupied by the country in the Kalayaan Island Group.

This was stated by Department of National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday when sought for a comment on reports made by Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative claiming that the country is conducting reclamation work covering 32,000 square meters.

"As of now, only the beaching ramp is being undertaken. Next

is the concreting of the runway (Rancudo Airfield) and the third phase involves the lengthening of the airfield," he added.

Rancudo Airfield measures 1.4 kilometers and is capable of handling medium-sized aircraft like the Air Force's Lockheed C-130 "Hercules" cargo planes.

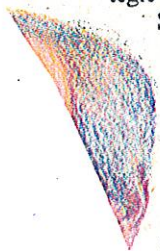
"Reclamation means there is land before and you are reclaiming the land back. Since there is no land but water, we call it filling up the space with stones, gravel, and soil," Lorenzana said. (PNA and Francis Wakefield)

95 China ships all over WPS —think tank

CHINA has deployed a large fleet of ships near the Spratly Islands in response to the Philippines' construction of a new beaching ramp on Pag-asa (Thitu) Island, an American think tank said Wednesday.

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative of the US Center for Strategic and International Studies said these included navy and coast guard ships and dozens of fishing vessels from 30 to 70 meters in length.

Satellite images from mid-December 2018 and late



Next page

95 China ships...

From A1

January 2019 showed the number of ships rising to 95 on Dec. 5 before dropping to 42 by Jan. 26, AMTI said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, meanwhile, denied an AMTI claim that the Philippines was undertaking land reclamation of its own on Pag-asa Island.

"As of now, only the beaching ramp is being undertaken. Next is the concreting of the runway [Rancudo Airfield] and the third phase involves the lengthening of the airfield," he added.

Rancudo Airfield measures 1.4 km. and is capable of handling medium-sized aircraft like the Air Force's Lockheed C-130 "Hercules" cargo planes.

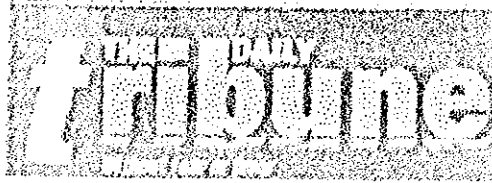
Also on Thursday, the Department of Foreign Affairs said it is still studying

further steps to take, in view of the reported construction of a Chinese maritime rescue center in the West Philippine Sea, a ranking agency official said Thursday.

"We're studying what steps might be taken or not," DFA Undersecretary for Policy Enrique Manalo told reporters in an interview in Makati City. As recently stated by DFA chief Teodoro Locsin Jr., he noted that filing a protest is an "active consideration."

Both the DFA and Malacañang have yet to issue an update regarding the reported construction in the area.

On Monday, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo, however, said the Armed Forces of the Philippines continues to monitor the disputed waters, where China and other countries—including the Philippines—share contesting territorial claims. PNA



US open to treaty review

United States Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim on Thursday revealed that the US is open to reviewing its 68-year-old defense treaty with the Philippines and to possibly explore ways on making it "even better."

In a statement, Kim said that they will review the treaty so that they can make adjustments to make it even better than its current contents and provisions.

"We would welcome taking a close look at the treaty to see whether we can make any adjustments to make it even better than what it is now," Kim said at the sidelines of a forum in Makati City.

The 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty is a pact that binds America to defend its long-term ally, the Philippines, from aggression and Philippine officials have long wanted to clarify if the US — its longtime treaty ally — will help defend the Philippines in case its forces come under attack in the disputed South China Sea.

The country, along with five other governments, had been contesting ownership of the strategic waters and island chains for decades even as China asserts sovereignty over nearly the entire West Philippines Sea.

Under then-President Benigno Aquino III, the Philippines — whose ill-equipped military is no match to China's — had sought assistance from the US to bolster its defense capability and more recently, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said a team from the US will be in Manila this month for exploratory talks with Philippine officials on the possible amendments to the treaty.

Elmer N. Manuel

PDEA: No Ilocos narco-pols cleared

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) yesterday refuted reports that several politicians from the Ilocos region have been removed from President Duterte's drug watchlist.

"The President has the sole power to clear a narco-politician as recommended by four recommending bod-

ies, namely PDEA, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines," PDEA chief Aaron Aquino said.

His statement came a few days after a report came out that the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) Region 1 revalidation sub-

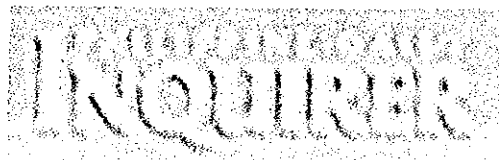
committee reportedly recommended Pangasinan Rep. Jesus Celeste, Naguilian Mayor Reynaldo Flores and Bauang Mayor Eugenio Clarence Martin de Guzman III be cleared from Duterte's narco-list. Both mayors are from La Union.

The report said the sub-committee found "no evi-

dence of the target's involvement in illegal drug activity."

Aquino said the RPOC alone has no authority to clear an alleged narco-politician, adding that the three men are still under investigation by the four agencies tasked to clear persons in the narco-list.

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- Robertzon Ramirez



RETIREMENT PLAN
DU30 CERTIFIES
PENSION BILL
FOR UNIFORMED
MEN AS URGENT

President Duterte will certify as urgent a bill seeking to reform the pension system for military and other uniformed personnel.

At a press briefing on Thursday, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo expressed optimism that the bill, which sets the pensionable and retirement age at 60, instead of the current 56, would not cost President Duterte the military's all-out support.

"No, I don't think so ... If you retire at 56, you have no more job, not unless you get appointed. If it's at 60, you can still work for four additional years," he said. A3

The Department of National Defense has recommended a pension system setting the compulsory retirement age at 60, with the retiree required to have 20 years of satisfactory active service.

Those who are in the active service but opt to retire early would still get their pension, but only when they reach 60 years old. —JULIE M. AURELIO INQ

Duterte to certify military pension bill as urgent

A BILL reforming the country's pension system for military and uniformed personnel (MUP) would likely be a law soon after President Rodrigo Duterte committed to certify it as urgent, Malacañang said on Thursday.

In a news briefing, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said Duterte made the decision during the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday evening.

Panelo said the certification of urgency might be due to calls from the troops regarding their pension fund.

"[The certification came], considering that the Armed Forces is really involved in our fight against rebellion, terrorism and since our troops are almost always in danger," he said.

Under the measure, active members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other uniformed government troops may start to receive their pension at the age of 60.

It also raises the compulsory retirement age of soldiers to 60 years old, from 56 years old.

Those who decide to retire early will receive their pensions when they reach 60 years old.

The lump sum upon retirement

or separation will only be at 18 months, from 36 months.

The pension rate for those who were wounded or killed in action will be raised to 90 percent of base pay, on top of the longevity pay.

Panelo said it was about time to move the retirement age of the troops since 56 years old is too early an age to retire.

"Apart from [the reason that] their skills are really needed, I see 56 [years old] is very early retirement... That is why it is regretful that you studied that much then you retire that early. They want to serve more, for longer time," he said.

Last year, Duterte signed Joint Resolution 1, which increased the base pay of the MUP in the government.

"There is a need to adjust the compensation package of MUP in order to make it more commensurate with their critical role in maintaining national security and peace and order, taking into consideration their exposure to high-risk environments in the performance of their duties," the resolution read.

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

Palace to certify urgent bill retiring military men at 60

By Nat Mariano

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte will certify as urgent a proposed law suggesting that pension payments for military and uniformed personnel may only start at age 60 instead of 56, the Palace said on Thursday.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said the bill, which was proposed by the Department of National Defense, might be certified as urgent by the President following complaints from the military personnel about their pension.

"I think some of them are complaining about their pension, considering that the Armed Forces are involved in our fight against terrorism, communism, and rebellion. We have lost a lot of men already," Panelo said in a Palace press briefing.

According to Panelo, the President made the decision during the Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

Under the Unified Military and Uniformed Services Personnel Separation, Retirement, and Pension Bill, there will be reforms in the retirement and pension system of the military and uniformed service personnel.

Active members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines may only start to receive their pension payments at the age of 60, it said.

The proposed legislation also sets the new compulsory retirement age from 56 years old to 60, with at least 20 years of satisfactory active service.

The lump sum upon retirement or separation would only be at 18 months, the proposed law recommends, showing an immense disparity from the current 36 months of lump sum option.

Meanwhile, for those wounded or killed in action, the pension rate will be raised to 90 percent of base pay, including the longevity pay regardless of years of active service.

The proposal also said that surviving beneficiaries shall receive 75 percent of the pension, adding that the pension for a disability benefit shall "begin immediately."

Duterte backs military pension reforms

President Duterte has vowed to certify as urgent a proposed legislation seeking reforms in the retirement and pension system of the military and uniformed service personnel.

The President endorsed the measure that includes adjusting the compulsory retirement age of uniformed personnel during a meeting with the Cabinet in Malacañang last Wednesday, according to presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

"Also discussed was the Military and Uniformed Personnel Pension Reform Bill proposed by the Department of National Defense which the President said he will certify as an urgent piece of legislation," Panelo said.

Under the measure, the Defense department has reportedly proposed raising the mandatory retirement age

for military and uniformed personnel to 60-years-old from 56-years-old. Pension payment will start only when they reach the age of 60.

The proposed legislation also reportedly seeks to increase the pension rate for those wounded or killed in action to 90 percent of base pay plus longevity pay regardless of years of active service.

In a later Palace briefing, Panelo said they believe the age of 56 was too young for military and other uniformed personnel to retire from the service.

"Apart from we need their competence, 56 is very early retirement. At this time, 80 years is still young, much more the 56-years-old," he said.

Panelo also expressed confidence that soldiers would support

the measure extending their military service, saying they "want to serve a longer time."

"If you retire at 56, you won't have work anymore. But if your retirement age is 60, you'll have additional four years," he said. "I think the measure is designed for them, for their benefit," he added.

Since he assumed office, the President has assured the military of his government's full support, from increasing their salary and allowance to upgrading their equipment and improving their benefits.

The commander-in-chief, who often visits military and police camps to boost morale, said he hopes to leave behind strong and well-equipped military and police forces. (Genalyn Kabiling)

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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71st IB turns over
school building

BUTUAN CITY - The Philippine Army's 71st Infantry (Kalbigan) Battalion (71st IB), in partnership with ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation Incorporated, has turned over a school building equipped with students' chairs, teacher's table, lights, boards, and comfort rooms in Barangay Gubatan, Maco town, Compostela Valley (ComVal) province on Wednesday. Lt. Col. Estevoyn E. Ducusin, commanding officer of the 71st IB said the brand new school building was built at a cost of P2 million. "This is a result of Community Support Program (CSP) wherein based on a Need Assessment Survey (NAS) we have found that this school needs more classroom," the 71st IB commander said, adding, "As the bridge of the community to the stakeholders, we facilitated a request to ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation Incorporated which was immediately served." Barangay Gubatan is considered a geographically isolated and disadvantaged area (GIDA). (Mike U. Crismundo) //

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PDEA belies 'clearance' of Pangasinan solons, 2 mayors from narco-list

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) refuted a newspaper report that several politicians from Ilocos region who are included in President Duterte's "narco-list" have been cleared from any involvement in illegal drugs.

According to the report, the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) Region 1 "cleared" a lawmaker from Pangasinan and two town mayors from La Union of their involvement in narco-activities.

RPOC Revalidation Sub-Committee unanimously recommended that Pangasinan Rep. Jesus Celeste, Naguilian Mayor Reynaldo Flores and Bauang Mayor Eulogio Clarence Martin De Guzman III be stricken from the President's list of narco-politicians.

The committee's resolution stated that "there is no evidence of the target's involvement in illegal drug activity."

However, PDEA said RPOC alone has no authority to clear a narco-

politician.

"The President has the sole power to clear a narco-politician as recommended by four recommending bodies, namely: PDEA, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), Philippine National Police (PNP), and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)," PDEA Director General Aaron Aquino said.

Aquino also said the three public officials were still under investigation by the four agencies.

He also clarified that there are no narco-politicians who are delisted from Duterte's list as the President has not cleared anyone. Only the President can initiate the adjudication process and clear those on the narco list.

PDEA and PNP are closely monitoring the campaign period to allay fears of circulating drug money from the politicians allegedly involved in drugs and to ensure a safe and honest elections in May.

'Pork' spoils 2019 budget: Lacson

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

BILLIONS worth of "pork" inserted by congressmen and P23 billion by some senators have been retained in the P3.757-trillion 2019 national budget that would be ratified by both chambers of Congress today, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said yesterday.

Because of this, Lacson reiterated his appeal to President Duterte to exercise his veto power against all "pork insertions" in this year's national budget.

"Basically yes, the P160 million per House member plus the billion-peso insertions made by a number of their

colleagues, and the P23-billion Department of Public Works and Highways insertions by a number of senators plus other insertions in different agencies have all been retained," Lacson said.

Lacson said during the senators' caucus late Wednesday night, Sen. Loren Legarda, chair of the Senate finance committee, "merely articulated to the best of her recollection" the agreements that would be contained in the bicam report that she would present for ratification.

"Sadly, no matter how hard I argued last night, I only have one vote, although I have good reason to believe that some like-minded colleagues are supportive of

deleting all pork insertions, particularly the excessive and unconscionable realignments made not only by our House counterpart, but by a number of our colleagues as well," he said.

On a positive note, Lacson said all appropriations for flood control, particularly dredging, desilting and the like, have been deleted and would be realigned for the purchase of dredging machines.

He said the realignment to the Department of Health's budget that the Senate introduced and most of his institutional amendments have been retained.

He said these include the 240-day-a-year school feeding program for wasted

and nearly wasted school children, additional allowance for teachers, some appropriations cover for laws passed regarding veterans, augmentation budget requested by the judiciary, as well as the activation of the 11th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army.

"More than that, hopefully, I was able to enlighten the public because of the public discourse that transpired, for or against the outlawed pork barrel. I would say, we have gained some headway in this regard," he added.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said

See PORK > Page B6

PORK.

the Senate will extend its session today at 3 p.m. to ratify the 2019 budget.

Sotto said the House contingent to the bicameral committee refused to remove the 'pork.' He said Legarda told senators after the caucus that majority of the institutional amendments proposed by the Senate were retained.

He said the caucus proceeded

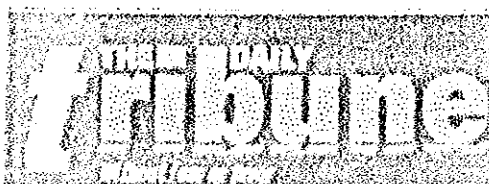
well though there was some tension.

He did not identify the senators involved, but he said, "Sen. Loren was very cordial, and Sen. Lacson was also very cordial to Loren." He said the bicameral conference committee on the national budget will meet first on Friday morning at the Manila Polo Club to sign the bicameral report.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo said it would be

best not to pre-empt the President on what he should or should not do with the 2019 budget, including vetoes of certain items.

"What we recognize is the power of Congress to amend - to review and to amend to do whatever it feels is correct, necessary and right. We'll leave it to them. Now, if the President feels that it's wrong, then he can use his veto power to correct it," he said. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor*



Snail-paced land process dismaying

By Kristina Maralit

Bureaucratic red tape and the slow process in agrarian reform, particularly the land conversion process, had so exasperated President Rodrigo Duterte during the Cabinet meeting late Wednesday that he had to pause and rest in a separate room, presidential spokesman

Salvador Panelo said.

"It was the discussion on the red tape and the problem posed by conversion on land distribution that so exasperated him. Mr. Duterte excused himself. He had to rest in a separate room," Panelo said.

The Palace official said Mr. Duterte showed his strong feeling about pushing the land

reform program, as the streamlining of the conversion process was first on the agenda.

Mr. Duterte, last month, threatened to fire Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) officials and personnel if they continue with the slow processing of land conversion papers.

The President hinted that unscrupulous DAR

Turn to page 2

It was the discussion on the red tape and the problem posed by conversion on land distribution that so exasperated him. Mr. Duterte excused himself, he had to rest in a separate room

From page 1

personnel deliberately delay the processing of papers for certain considerations.

Duterte earlier had expressed frustration on how it took some officials and personnel two years to resolve land conversion cases when it should only have taken a few months.

"If it takes you two years to process a paper, a conversion there, you are up to corruption. I told them," Duterte said in a speech during the annual assembly of the Provincial Union of Leaders Against Illegality in Lucena City on 23 January.

Streamlining needed

Panelo said an undersecretary talked about streamlining internal processes of all agencies involved in the conversion, including the imposition of definite timelines for its processing such as the provision of government permits.

"Well you know, the problem, the President was so frustrated, he spent I think half an hour saying he was so frustrated about the requirements," Panelo said.

"Remember, he was dismayed that two years had passed under his administration and land distribution had not moved," he said.

The President was disappointed by the numerous requirements, including those from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the local governments which slow down land conversion cases.

"So, they are trying to streamline that. There were suggestions on speeding up the pending cases. The President said there are so many crooks, and if one party does not have money or bribe, the case doesn't move. So, he's looking into that," Panelo said.

Military pension reform

At the same Cabinet meeting, Mr. Duterte indicated a plan to certify as urgent a bill that will reform the country's pension system for the military and other uniformed personnel as the national government yearly relies on appropriations for the regular payments to retired servicemen, Malacañang bared on Thursday.

Panelo said the matter was brought up - and consequently agreed on by the Chief Executive.

"Discussed was the Military and Uniformed Personnel Pension Reform bill proposed by the Department of National Defense (DND) which the President said he will certify as an urgent piece of legislation," Panelo said.

Alert status down in Metro Manila

The security alert status in Metro Manila have been downgraded following the arrest and filing of charges against those involved in Jolo Cathedral bombing last month.

From full alert status which mandates full attendance of police personnel, police forces in Metro Manila were placed on heightened alert status, according to Director Guillermo Eleazar, head of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO).

"The Jolo bombing incident was already declared closed case with the arrest of several suspects involved in the said terrorist and inhumane incident. In this regard, the Full Alert status of the NCRPO is downgraded to Heightened Status effective today," said Eleazar.

It was recalled that police forces in Luzon and the Visayas were placed under highest secu-

rity alert status after the January 27 Jolo town bombings to ensure that there will be no spillover of attacks.

Mindanao has been on the highest security alert status and is under Martial Law since the Marawi City siege in May 2017.

Five suspects in the bombings are now under police custody while five others were charged, including Sulu-based Abu Sayyaf Group leader Hatin Hajan Sawadjaan.

But Eleazar said there is not much difference between full and heightened alert in Metro Manila, what with the preparations for the elections.

"The difference between the two status levels is really minimal. There may be less checkpoint frequencies but the mobilization of our police personnel and resources in the Metropolis continues," said Eleazar. (Aaron Recuenco) 3

INQUIRER

POLICE BLAMED

MALAYAO SLAY: LAWMAKERS HIT 'COVER-UP, HARASSMENT'

Militant lawmakers on Thursday denounced the alleged harassment and cover-up supposedly carried out by the Philippine National Police in its investigation of the killing of National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace consultant Randy Malayao.

At a press briefing, House members belonging to the Makabayan bloc criticized the attempt of the PNP in Cagayan Valley to "deflect" public attention by painting the victim as a former New People's Army (NPA) rebel, instead of going after his killers.

"Randy was a victim but the PNP keeps on vilifying his person, and he now becomes the subject of investigation as they are doing everything to retrieve his personal belongings," said Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate.

Shot dead while sleeping

A Bayan Muna regional coordinator for Cagayan Valley, Malayao was shot dead while sleeping inside a passenger bus on his way home to Isabela province on Jan. 30.

Citing an "intelligence report" from the military, a press release issued by the PNP in Cagayan Valley described Malayao as a former NPA who was supposedly executed by his former comrades.

The Army's 5th Division has denied issuing the report.

---MELVINGASCON INQ A3

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NPA rebel nabbed in Bulacan

A New People's Army rebel, who is facing murder and frustrated murder charges, was arrested in Norzagaray, Bulacan yesterday.

The military withheld the identity of the rebel, who has standing warrants of arrest issued in 2011. The suspect was collared in Barangay Bigte at around 10:30 a.m.

Personnel of the 7th and 9th Infantry Divisions (IDs), Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and Bulacan police launched the operation based on tips by villagers.

Brig. Gen. Lenard Agustin, 7th ID acting commander, said they would continue to hunt down rebels with pending warrants even as he urged them to surrender to authorities.

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- Artemio Dumlao, Michael Punongbayan

PRESIDENT BLAMING REDS, RED TAPE

DUTERTE IRKED BY SLOW PACE OF LAND CONVERSION

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

Frustrated by the sluggish land use conversion process, President Duterte had an "outburst" at a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, blaming bureaucratic red tape and communist rebels.

The outburst came two days after Malacañang announced that the Philippine Reclamation Authority had been placed under the direct control of the Office of the President because Mr. Duterte wanted to be more hands-on with the approval of reclamation projects, 43 of which are in Manila Bay.

The President's exasperation with the slow pace of land conversion prompted him to rest for a few minutes during the meeting with his Cabinet, according to presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

He said Mr. Duterte was so frustrated with the requirements for conversion that he talked about these for half an hour.

Many requirements

"It turns out that there are many requirements from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), local government units," he said.

Panelo made the remarks following the Cabinet meeting, during which the President reminded agencies to streamline the conversion process.

Panelo said the President also blamed the New People's Army (NPA) for slowing down the land use conversion program by threatening government inspectors from surveying land.

"So how will you give the permit if you cannot examine the land? That's why there are so many pending applica-

tions," he said.

On Thursday, Mr. Duterte slammed new red tape.

"In the land conversion, it took two years, that includes corruption, where the applicant keeps on coming back," he said.

Speaking at an oath-taking of government officials in Malacañang, the President said he left the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday night during a discussion of the land use conversion process.

"If that is red tape or black tape... I cut them. I would not like to be a part of this briefing," he said.

Pending for 25 years

The President said he found out that some applications had been pending in the National Economic and Development Authority for 25 years.

In Davao City, he cited the case of a company that was ap-

plying for a permit to construct a brewery but ended up buying land beside the provincial boundary because of red tape.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles earlier said the government wanted to reduce the application period for land conversion to 30 days, from the previous 26 to 36 months.

Last year, 140 conversion cases were pending in the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Between 1988 and the first half of 2016, the DAR approved 97,592.5 hectares of land earlier awarded to agrarian reform beneficiaries for conversion into nonagricultural purposes.

Food security

Farmers' groups have opposed conversion of farms into nonagricultural use such as subdivisions, shopping malls and industrial parks, saying

hese adversely affect the country's ability to feed itself.

In September 2016, then Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael Mariano proposed a two-year moratorium on the conversion of agricultural lands to ensure food security.

Calling the proposed ban "antithetical to economic growth, job generation and poverty reduction," Economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Perina, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Vice President Leni Robredo urged Mariano to instead press for the passage of a national land use plan.

Mariano's proposal went nowhere. He failed to get confirmation from the Commission on Appointments in September 2017.

The President is pushing for a speedier conversion of agri-

cultural land into other uses even as he claims that he supports land reform.

China factor

The demand for agricultural land is not only coming from real estate and industrial park developers, but also from foreigners.

Ramon Tulfo, who was appointed special envoy to Beijing in 2018, wrote last October that China was interested in contract farming—leasing idle agricultural lands and fishponds.

Tulfo said he could facilitate applications and issuance of permits to Chinese investors to generate jobs in the countryside.

China has also been reported to be looking at more than five areas in Luzon and Mindanao as potential locations for industrial parks. —WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ

Malayao burial: 'Rise above grief'

SAN PABLO, ISABELA—Perla Urpano was usually composed during the seven-day wake of National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultant Randy Malayao, greeting and thanking people who came to pay their respects to her brother.

But on Thursday, she wailed as family members bid their last goodbye to the slain peace and human rights advocate, who was buried at a public cemetery here.

More than 1,000 people, including farmers, joined the march from the Malayaos' ancestral house in Barangay Minanga to the San Pablo Cathedral here, where more sympathizers waited.

Residents said it was the first time they saw a big crowd in the cathedral, where the necrological services for Malayao were held.

During the Mass, the officiating priest encouraged the people to take comfort in the life that Malayao lived.

Meaningful life

"I know that all of us are grieving and angered, but we should rise above our grief and anger, and find comfort in the fact that Randy lived a meaningful life," the priest said.

Former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo; former Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael Mariano and Gabriela Rep. Emmi de Jesus joined the funeral march, along with residents and school children who waited in front of their school to throw flowers at Malayao's casket.

Malayao, 49, was killed by a lone gunman inside a bus in Arlitao, Nueva Vizcaya, on Jan. 30.

His relatives had remained mum on the ongoing police investigation even as his sister, Urpano, was charged with grave threats, grave coercion and obstruction of justice on Wednesday.

The Arlitao police also filed similar charges in the Nueva Vizcaya Prosecutor's Office against Karapatan-Cagayan Valley legal counsel, Edu Balgos, and his wife, Rina Balgos, a former provincial board member.

Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino, Cagayan Valley regional police director, said the Balgos couple and Urpano forcibly took the six cell phones, a laptop and documents of Malayao

FAREWELL TO PEACE

ADVOCATE Relatives and sympathizers, including farmers, join the funeral march for slain NDFP consultant Randy Malayao on Thursday.

—RAUL TING/CONTRIBUTOR

from police custody.

These items, said Espino, should have been "vital evidence that could provide leads on Malayao's killing."

Hypocrisy

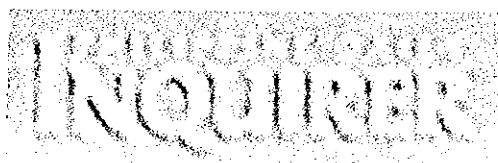
Lawyer Neri Colmenares, former Bayan Muna representative, also lambasted Malacañang for what he said was hypocrisy in its condemnation of Malayao's murder.

According to an Inquirer.net report, Colmenares said Malacañang's remarks on Malayao's murder ran contrary to what he said were rumors being peddled by the Philippine National Police about Malayao.

On Feb. 4, Inquirer.net said in its report that local police pointed to a supposed quarrel between Malayao and New People's Army (NPA) rebels as one of the motives for his killing. Local police had also branded Malayao as an NPA rebel. *113*

On Jan. 31, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the murder of Malayao should be condemned because no one should be killed because of his beliefs. —REPORTS FROM KIMBERLIE QUITASOL AND VILLAMOR VISAYA JR. INQ

8 February 2019



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NPA surrenderees included in next round of land distribution

Communist rebels who surrender to the government now have a shot at owning a piece of land as agrarian reform beneficiaries. President Duterte said he wanted to include surrenderees of the New People's Army (NPA) in the land distribution under the government's agrarian reform program. Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said this was one of several issues discussed in the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday at Malacañang. "The President directed the inclusion of NPA surrenderees in the next round of land distribution," he said. ---JULIE M. AURELIO **AB**

Slain NDFP peace consultant laid to rest in Isabela

ISABELA: As Felix Randy Malayao, National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace consultant, was laid to rest on Thursday at San Pablo town's public cemetery, his kin and supporters vowed to continue fighting for the down-trodden, especially by the people in power.

Malayao was shot dead by still unidentified gunman on January 30 while he was onboard a Victory Liner bus at CCQ terminal in Barangay Darapidap, Aritao town.

Two persons of interest were subjected to police investigation, but until today have not been identified.

A funeral march began at 8 a.m.

with national leaders from the Makabayan Bloc, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Kilusang Mayo Uno, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Karapatan, Promotion of Church People's Response, Sandugo, International Friendship Groups, College Editors Guild of the Philippines, Karapatan-Cagayan Valley (Region 2), Danggay-an-Cagayan Valley and local leaders from peasant organizations, among others.

A final tribute was held on Wednesday night at the Malayao ancestral home in Barangay Minanga Norte in San Pablo, Isabela.

Meanwhile, Danggay-an-Cagay-

an Valley, which is affiliated with the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, criticized the Philippine National Police (PNP) for immediately relieving Nueva Vizcaya police officials allegedly because of investigation lapses.

Senior Supt. Jeremias Aglugub, Nueva Vizcaya police director, and Chief Insp. Geovanni Cejes, Aritao town police chief, were ordered relieved by PNP Director Oscar Albayalde for "mishandling vital pieces of evidence on the case."

Top police officials even blamed Cejes for allowing the release of several pieces of evidence, including Malayao's cellphone, which police said could have contained

information that might facilitate the ongoing investigation.

But Danggayán said the relieved officers were "honorable PNP officials who upheld the rule of law by turning over the personal belongings of the murdered peace consultant to his family."

Danggayán also described the recent numerous media releases containing unverified information by the Police Regional Office 2 (PRO2) headed by Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino, as "the lowest of low in government tactics to justify its murder of peace activists."

PRO2 media releases claimed Malayao committed grave offenses against the revolutionary

movement and blamed the New People's Army "for the cowardly act of murder" in the early morning of January 30.

"We encourage the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and the PNP to exercise reason and professionalism in the conduct of their duty to serve and protect the people. We call on them to produce the [pieces of] evidence, the CCTV (closed-circuit television) footages inside the bus and on the bus stop to help apprehend the assailants," Danggayán stated.

Meanwhile, the Cagayan Valley police released the CCTV footage that captured Malayao's killing and pointed to still unidentified three

persons at the bus terminals in Quezon City and in Aritao town where Malayao was shot.

The CCTV footages were shown during a media conference at the Nueva Vizcaya police headquarters in Bayombong town on Wednesday, where a man was caught taking a picture of the bus Malayao boarded as it left the terminal in Quezon City on January 29.

It also showed that when the bus made a stopover in Aritao, two men were seen smoking outside the bus then one of them boarded the bus and minutes later, Malayao was dead after several gunshots were heard. *AF*

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

Visayas poll bets warned vs hiring rebels, armed men

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: The Police Regional Office 6 (PRO-6) warned politicians in Western Visayas running in the May 13 midterm elections to refrain from getting the services of rebels and private armed groups (PAGs) to ensure the peaceful conduct of polls.

Chief Supt. John Bulalacao, PRO-6 director, said he had a list of names of these local candidates but refused to reveal them as they were still validating these.

"Getting the services of rebels

and PAGs is a form of cheating. We are warning these candidates to stop their nefarious activities," he said.

Bulalacao said local candidates would likely use rebels and PAGs to intimidate voters and their op-

ponents, but warned they would use the full force of law against these candidates.

"We encourage the public to expose these candidates. They don't deserve a seat in our government," Bulalacao pointed out.

Security measures, including checkpoints and enforcement of the gun ban, have been in effect since the election period began on January 13 for the elections.

Bulalacao added that PRO-6 was also receiving intelligence reports that rebels, particularly the New People's Army (NPA), have sent letters to several politicians

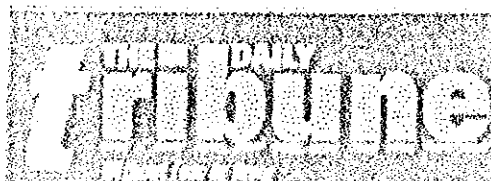
offering their services.

The rebels have set their rates from P100,000 to P500,000 for their services, Bulalacao said.

Col. Alberto Desoyo of the 301st Infantry Brigade said the letters were from the NPA's Central Front Committee.

He said it was intensifying its operations in areas across the region where rebel presence was reported.

"Our men are deployed to hinterland *barangay* (villages) for military operations to monitor movement of rebels and conduct offensive operations to neutralize them," Desoyo added.



Raps filed vs Malayao kin, colleagues

By Elmer N. Manuel and Francis Earl Cueto

The Cagayan Valley Regional Police on Thursday filed complaints against two colleagues and a relative of slain National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace consultant Randy Malayao for taking evidence related to his killing the past week.

The complaints stemmed from the seizure of Malayao's laptop and six cellphones that were vital in the investigation by his sibling Perla Upano, provincial board member Edu Balgos, and a certain Rina Balgos.

Authorities lodged complaints for obstruction of justice, grave coercion and grave threat against the trio after the personal belongings of Malayao were allegedly taken from police custody.

Malayao was shot dead inside a bus in Nueva Vizcaya last 30 January. The assailant escaped on board a motorcycle driven by a cohort.

While investigations were being conducted, Mrs. Balgos allegedly demanded to observe the inventory of the crime scene and insinuated that officers may plant evidence according to the affidavit submitted by Chief Insp. Giovanni Cejes, the former head of the Aritao police.

Cejas said Balgos continued her tirades even after he explained that authorities are following standard operating procedure in the investigation and noted that she mistakenly assumed that policemen in the area were members of the Military Intelligence Group.

Malayao was shot dead inside a bus in Nueva Vizcaya last 30 January. The assailant escaped on board a motorcycle driven by a cohort.

Upano, on the other hand, soon after came to the police station and refused to sign a consent form for police to examine her slain sibling's gadgets, said Cejes, recounting that Upano later handed her a phone, over which he talked to Mr. Balgos — a provincial board member — who allegedly yelled at him that he had no right to withhold Malayao's belongings.

"He was outrageous in telling me that I was committing a human right violation and that I am ignorant of what I was doing," Cejes said.

Mrs. Balgos also asked him if he wanted to be summoned by Congress, he said.

Cejas said he "reluctantly" released Malayao's belongings due to "undue pressure."

The items, he said, could have been "very instrumental in unfolding the truth" and that their loss left police "empty-handed" in their investigation.

Cejas and the chief of the Nueva Vizcaya province were removed from their posts for supposed negligence in handling the evidence.

Cagayan Valley police director Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino has asked the help of Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año's in retrieving Malayao's personal belongings.

Police also reviewed security measures with bus operators.

Malayao, formerly among the leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Cagayan Valley, was arrested in Cainta, Rizal in 2008.

He was accused and later acquitted of involvement in the 2001 killing of Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo, a former military officer and prominent anti-communist campaigner.

Before peace talks between the government and the NDFP collapsed in 2017, Malayao attended the negotiations in Europe.

NPA surrenderers to own lands

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Communist rebels who will surrender to the government will be given a chance to own a piece of land under a new directive of President Duterte.

"The President directed the inclusion of New People's Army surrenderers in the next round of land distribution," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a statement yesterday.

The President issued the directive about the government's land distribution program benefitting rebel returnees during a Cabinet meeting in Malacañang Wednesday.

day.

Last December, the President ordered the creation of a national task force to end the local communist armed conflict in the country. The task force, chaired by the President, is mandated to craft and implement a "National Peace Framework" that will include development and peace-building initiatives in conflict-affected places.

Duterte previously expressed hope the five-decade communist insurgency would be over by the second quarter of 2019, citing the fall of many rebel fronts in the provinces. He also repeatedly appealed to communist rebels to lay

down their arms and surrender to authorities, promising to provide housing and livelihood assistance.

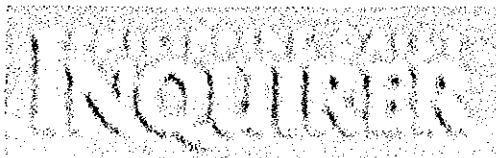
Panelo said they tackled in the Cabinet meeting government programs aimed at accelerating government assistance to farmers and fishermen to boost their productivity and income.

According to Panelo, they discussed the Landbank's Accessible and Sustainable Lending Program for Small Farmers that provides "greater access to loan facilities."

"Landbank also made mention that 361,000 farmers with existing Individual Certificates of Land Ownership Awards will be qualified

for a bank loan," he said.

To improve the lives of farmers and fishermen, he said Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol also reported the "bucket list" for implementation. "These are farm-to-market roads, irrigation, which includes solar powered irrigation system to be financed by an Israeli company, storage facilities, activation of regional food terminals, and strengthening of the Ro-Ro (roll on, roll off) programs, easy access credit for farmers, institutionalization of a farmer and fisherfolk credit union, and the creation of a Cabinet cluster headed by the President," he added.



JOLO CHURCH BLAST SUSPECT KAMMAR INNOCENT, TORTURED TO ADMIT CRIME—LAWYER

By Julie S. Alipala
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Mukammar Pae turned himself in to clear his name, not to surrender to authorities for a crime he did not commit, his lawyer said on Thursday.

Lawyer Meltoni Sibulan said police tortured his client and forced him to admit to the twin bombings of the Our Lady of

Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu province, on Jan. 27.

The Philippine National Police presented "innocent civilians," Sibulan said, referring to Pae and three other men, to make the public believe that the Jolo bombing was a closed case.

Lumberyard workers

"The government is presenting innocent civilians who are working hard for a living as tree

cutters and lumberyard workers. The [police] committed illegal arrest," he said.

On Jan. 31, Pae, 45, who is known in Barangay Anuling as Kammar, sought the help of his son's friend, an Army soldier assigned at Camp Bud Datu in Indanan town, to clear his name, according to Sibulan.

Pae was taken into custody by the military, but was turned over the next day to Senior Supt.

Pablo Labra II, the provincial police director of Sulu, he said.

'Just turned over'

A document, Sibulan said, certified that the military had "turned over the living body of Mukammar to PD Labra. He was not arrested, just turned over."

"Upon turnover to the police, Pae was immediately arrested, tortured and detained. The military didn't touch him,

but the police tortured him and forced him to admit to a crime he never committed," he added.

"Pae was beaten, his head was submerged in water and he was subjected to waterboarding," Sibulan said of the torture that involves placing a towel over a detainee's face and pouring water on the towel until it dripped into his mouth and nostrils, evoking the feeling of drowning.

The lawyer said his three oth-

er clients were "arrested, without any warrant" on the night of Feb. 1, when members of the PNP's 52nd Special Action Force barged into the houses of Albaji Gadjali, who was sleeping with his son Kaiser, and Rajan Gadjali.

Col. Gerry Besana, the public affairs officer of the military's Western Mindanao Command, had earlier described the main suspect behind the Jolo blasts to be in his early 20s. INQ AS

FROM FULL TO HEIGHTENED

NCRPO LOWERS METRO ALERT LEVEL STATUS AS PNP DECLARES JOLO BOMBING SOLVED

By Dexter Cabalza
@dexcabalzaINQ

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) downgraded the alert level in Metro Manila on Thursday after the Philippine National Police declared solved the recent bombing in Jolo, Sulu with the arrest of several suspects.

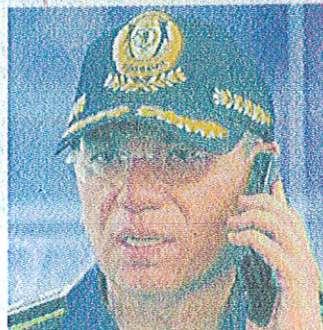
Director Guillermo Eleazar, NCRPO chief, however, clarified that going from full alert to heightened alert would have "minimal effect" on the security measures being implemented in the metropolis.

"There may be less check-point frequencies but the mobilization of our police personnel and resources, our intelligence plans, strategies and efforts to detect terrorist personalities will continue," Eleazar said.

3 alert levels

The PNP has three alert status: normal, heightened and full as outlined under Command Memorandum Circular No. 18-2013 issued by then PNP Director General Alan Purisima.

Under heightened alert status, all leaves of police officers are canceled and their work hours are extended by 25 per-



APPEAL NCRPO chief Guillermo Eleazar asks the public to remain vigilant.

—NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

cent. Full alert status, on the other hand, means that their leaves are also canceled while their duty time is extended by 50 percent.

"Metro Manila is still the center of commerce and trade, the home of practically all government institutions, departments and agencies, and is always a possible target of terrorists. That is why your police force has to be alert and vigilant 24-7," Eleazar said.

He urged the public to also remain alert and vigilant, and to report to authorities any suspicious-looking people or suspicious activities in their

community.

"While the Jolo bombing case has been solved, we cannot relax our guard. From this sad experience, we have learned that the terrorist threat is lurking over the country and can be triggered anytime, anywhere," Eleazar said.

On Jan. 28, the NCRPO raised to full its status alert level in Metro Manila following two explosions during a Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu province. At least 20 people were killed while over 100 others were injured as a result of the bombing.

Solved but not closed

On Tuesday, the PNP said the case was already "solved but not closed yet" following the surrender of five suspects.

They were identified as Kammah Pae alias Kammah of the Abu Sayyaf Group-affiliated Ajang-Ajang Group, Albaji Kisae alias Awag, and his sons Rajan Bakil alias Radjan and Kaisar Bakil alias Isal, and Salit Alih alias Papong. ^{MO}

Along with 14 others who remain at large, they were charged with 23 counts of murder, 95 counts of frustrated murder and damage to property. ^{INQ}

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Blasting caps, bomb materials found in Butuan City

BUTUAN CITY—Blasting caps, leg wires, ammunitions and other bomb materials were found by police and the military in Purok 14, Sitio Kauswagan, Barangay Bit-os, Butuan City on Tuesday, police officials reported Thursday.

The elements of Butuan City Police Intelligence Branch, City Police Mobile Force Company (BCPMFC), in coordination with the Army's 23rd Infantry Battalion (23rd IB) and their respective bomb disposal experts swooped down on the area and found the bomb materials which police described as enough to "create a series of terroristic activities."

Among the recovered bomb ma-

terials were 356 pieces of electric blasting caps with 5 meter-long leg wire and 184 rounds of caliber 5.56 ammunition.

The said recovered bomb items were placed inside two ice buckets and two plastic containers concealed inside two sacks in a thick foliage area at Purok 14, Sitio Kauswagan, Barangay Bit-os, this city on Tuesday.

The EOD personnel of BCPMFC are handling the recovered items for proper disposition.

The discovery of the bomb materials was made following a tip received from a former rebel. (Mike U. Crismundo) 11

NCRPO downgrades Metro alert level

THE National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) on Thursday downgraded its security status level in Metro Manila from "full" to "heightened" because the twin blasts that hit Jolo, Sulu is considered closed.

Metro police chief Guillermo Eleazar explained that the downgrading of the alert status level means there would be fewer checkpoints.

However, the mobilization of police personnel would continue and intelligence strategies would be intensified to foil any possible terror plans and detect terrorist personalities.

"While the Jolo bombing has been solved, we cannot relax our guard. From this sad experience, we have learned that [the] terrorist threat is lurking and can be trig-

gered anytime, anywhere," he said.

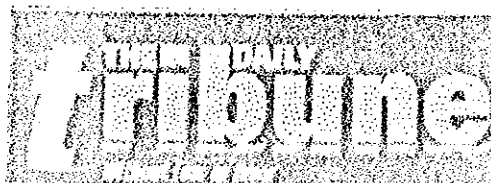
"Metro Manila is still the center of commerce and trade, the home of practically all government institutions, departments and agencies, and is always a possible target of terrorists. That is why your police force has to be alert and vigilant twenty-four-seven," Eleazar added.

He ordered the downgrading

of the alert status after Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Oscar Albayalde declared the blasts that hit the Jolo cathedral solved with the surrender of five members of the Ajang-Ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf Group. A3

The PNP filed multiple counts of murder and frustrated murder against the suspects.

ROY D.R. NARRA



Nation prays together for peace

From the President to the common folks, the Filipino nation bowed their heads in prayer at 12 noon Thursday to intercede for peace, unity and prosperity in a synchronized nationwide interfaith "Moment of Prayer."

They interceded by saying The Prayer for Peace in the Philippines or praying in their own words for the leaders of the land, families, children and a myriad of concerns.

President Duterte prayed privately while Vice President Leni Robredo who was attending a fund raiser, managed to pray with her staff. Senate President Vicente Sotto III interceded with a group at the Philippine Senate, while Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo led a moment of prayer for the House of Representatives.

At the Supreme Court, Associate Justice Antonio Carpio presided over the prayer, and Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin prayed privately while attending a lunch engagement.

In their own venues, members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police gave voice to their heart's desire for peace.

Elsewhere, big businesses also had recourse to prayer.

In many parishes, church bells rang and noontime Masses were preceded by the Prayer for Peace in the Philippines, in various dialects. Muslim leaders and their groups also intoned the same prayer as part of their noontime prayer.

Bomb materials, nasamsam sa raid

BUTUAN CITY - Nasamsam ng militar at pulisya ang mga materyales ng pampasabog sa isang pagsalakay sa Purok 14, Sitio Kauswagan, Barangay Bit-os, Butuan City, nitong Martes.

Ayon kay Chief Supt. Gilberto Cruz, regional director ng Northeastern Mindanao Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13), kabilang sa nasamsam ng mga tauhan ng Butuan City Police Intelligence Branch,

City Police Mobile Force Company (BCPMFC), at 23rd Infantry Battalion (23rd IB) ng Philippine Army (PA) ang 356 piraso ng electric blasting caps na may limang metrang wire at 184 rolyong bala ng caliber 5.56.

Ang mga ito aniya ay nadiskubreng nakalagay sa dalawang ice buckets at dalawang plastic container na nakasakong itinago sa mga halaman sa

Purok 14, Sitio Kauswagan, Barangay Bit-os.

Sapat na aniya ang mga ito na makapagsagawa ng sunud-sunod na pambobomba sa rehiyon.

Ang naturang pampasabog ay itinuro ng isang dating rebelde na sumuko sa pamahalaan upang makapagbagong-buhay, ayon pa kay Cruz.

5 **Mike U. Crismundo**

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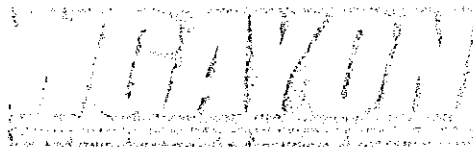
IBAYON

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Jolo cathedral bombing lutas na

Nalutas na ang kaso ng malagim na pagpapasabog sa Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church sa Jolo, Sulu noong Enero 27 ng taong ito na kumilit ng buhay ng 23 katao habang mahigit pa sa 100 ang nasugatan. Ito ang inihayag kahapon ni Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año matapos na sumuko na sa mga awtoridad ang limang suspect. Sinabi ni Año na natukoy ring mag-asawang Indonesian terrorist ang suicide bombers kung saan kailangan pa ng konting panahon upang matukoy ang pagkakakilanlan sa mga ito. Inihayag pa nito na ang mga suspek ay nasampahan na ng 23 counts ng murder at multiple frustrated murder at damage to property sa Sulu Provincial Prosecutors Office. (Joy Cantos)

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Sawadjaan posibleng Emir ng ISIS sa 'Pinas

Hindi malayo at malaki ang posibilidad na naging Emir ng Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) si Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan na natukoy na utak sa Jolo Cathedral bombing na ikinasawi ng 23 katao habang mahigit pa sa 100 ang nasugatan noong Enero 27 ng taong ito.

Ito ang inihayag kahapon ni Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command Spokesman Col. Gerry Besana.

Sinabi ni Besana na sa mga nagpapaligsahang maging Emir ng ISIS Philippines ay pinaka-notoryus si Sawadjaan at kilala ito sa pagiging radikal na tulad rin ng napatay ng Emir ng ISIS sa Southeast Asia na si Abu Sayyaf Commander Isnilon Hapilon na posibleng siyang nagustuhan ng ISIS international terrorist upang ito ang mapili. (Jov Cantos)

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Maguindanao opens 3rd Inaul Festival

By ALI G. MACABALANG

BULUAN, Maguindanao – The provincial government on Thursday, February 7, opened the 3rd Inaul Festival aimed at promoting the centuries-old hand-woven fabric common to Maguindanao and Maranao tribes.

The annual festivity formally opened with a morning grand parade around the capital town by thousands of residents and officials from the 36 towns of the province mostly wearing colorful dresses made of inaul fabric.

Eye-catching traditional flags, flyers, banners, and streamers resurfaced in strategic sections of this town and around the provincial capitol building here where many of the festivities are scheduled to be held until February 14, Valentine's Day.

Gov. Esmail Mangudadatu said national fashion designers were invited to infuse modern features that could help inaul clothes penetrate the global markets.

Among them is Renee Salud, who took interest in the fabric and designed inaul gowns that were worn and displayed by candidates of the 2017 Miss Universe pageant during their tour segment in Davao City.

"This time, fashion designers including Salud would personally observe the rudiments of inaul weaving by dozens of Moro hand weavers in a segment of the festival called 'inaulative' venture," Mangudadatu said.

From the colorfully refurbished gym, officials, residents and visiting dignitaries proceeded to the public market for the opening of the inaul expo, which features different native products topped by varieties of inaul by-products.

Other events lined up are the drum and lyre exhibition by participating students from different schools across Maguindanao; a sagayan (Moro war dance) competition; and a concert featuring celebrities like Bamboo Mañalac.

Event organizers said Bamboo Mañalac, Francisco Gaudencio in real person, readily accepted the invitation as part of his contribution to the enhancement of colorful cultures and traditions of the Moro people, to which the popular Filipino musician traces his parental lineage, especially among the Maranao tribe.

Lanao del Norte rejects BOL; N. Cotabato villages vote yes

By JOHN UNSON

NORTH COTABATO—The entire province of Lanao del Norte voted against the inclusion of its six municipalities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

However, 61 barangays in the seven towns in North Cotabato voted yes to be included in the BARMM following last Wednesday's plebiscite.

These were the unofficial results obtained yesterday from the provincial Commission on Elections (Comelec).

The barangays in seven towns of North Cotabato — Midsayap, Aleosan, Pikit, Kaba-can, Carmen, Tulunan and Pigcawayan — are enclaves of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Plebiscite results also revealed voters in the towns of Aleosan and Tulunan voted against being included in the BARMM.

Maugan Mosaid, municipal administrator of Pikit, said the plebiscite was held in 23 of the 42 barangays in their municipality, resulting in the inclusion of 22 barangays into BARMM's territory.

But residents in Barangay Balatican on the outskirts of Pikit voted against, leaving their village still under control of the municipal government of Pikit.

On the other hand, residents of the six towns in Lanao del Norte — Balo-i, Pantar, Tagoloan, Munai, Tangkal and Nurungan — voted against their inclusion in the BARMM.

The Comelec said the canvassing was based on results with a voter turnout of 63 percent, with the municipality of Lina-mon yet to submit its tabulation.

The municipalities of Pantao Ragat, Poona Piagapo and Salvador voted yes.

However, the total partial unofficial province-wide result showed an overwhelming no vote for its inclusion.

Lanao del Norte has 22 municipalities and the law provides that the entire province, as mother local government unit, should vote as one in the plebiscite.

Meanwhile, the Comelec in Manila yesterday decided to defer the official canvassing of votes for the second round of plebiscite of additional areas under the new BARMM.

Sitting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBoC), the seven-member poll body ordered the resetting of the official canvassing on Monday.

Comelec Chairman Sheriff Abas adjourned the session shortly after reconvening since there are still no certificates of canvass (COCs) to be canvassed.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said COCs from the areas covered by the second round of plebiscite are expected to arrive in Manila over the weekend.

Jimenez said a reception committee at the Comelec main office in Intramuros will receive and safeguard the certificates of canvass.

Respect the will

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Carlito Galvez Jr. yesterday called on everyone to respect the results of the second round of plebiscite.

"Whatever the results will be, I call on everyone to respect the sovereign will of the people. Let us wholeheartedly accept it and move on. The recent political exercise may have strained some relationships but we believe this is something we can mend peacefully," Galvez said.

With the culmination of the plebiscite, Galvez urged the pooling of all needed support to ensure the smooth transition from the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to the BARMM.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman earlier gave assurance they are ready and working for the smooth transition of government.

"The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) has been ratified. The area of coverage of the new autonomous region has been expanded," Galvez said.

As this developed, the provincial government of Maguindanao has asked the

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Supreme Court (SC) to uphold the constitutionality of Republic Act No. 11054 or the BOL, citing the overwhelming vote for its ratification in the plebiscite.

In a comment-in-intervention filed last Wednesday, Maguindanao Gov. Esmarel Mangudadatu asked the high court to dismiss the petitions filed by the Sulu provincial government led by Gov. Abdusakur Tan II and the Philippine Constitutional Association (Philconsa) seeking to nullify the law expanding the ARMM to become a Bangsamoro autonomous region.

Mangudadatu said the results of the plebiscite in the ARMM conducted last Jan. 21 showed 1,595,731 residents voting to ratify the BOL as against 246,185 who voted against it—a margin of over 1.25 million votes.

"The sovereign voice of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (has) clearly spoken. Under the principle of vox populi suprema

est lex (the voice of the people should be the supreme law), we implore the Honorable Court to abide by the solemn duty to uphold the clear and unmistakable mandate of the people," read the 78-page pleading.

Mangudadatu supported the argument of the solicitor general that the BOL does not violate Article X, Section 18 of the 1987 Constitution, which authorized only one Organic Act to establish the ARMM.

He argued the Organic Act is a "statute" that may be amended or repealed by Congress upon approval by the people in a plebiscite.

Mangudadatu also rebutted the contention of petitioners that the BOL violates the doctrine of separation of powers under the Constitution as it adopts a parliamentary system of government.

"A parliamentary form of government should be viewed as consistent with the policy

of local autonomy which, although encourages a closer relationship and more avenues for blending of powers between the executive and the legislative branches, does not actually sanction a complete fusion that would be tantamount to a violation of the constitutional parameters," he pointed out.

Mangudadatu also said the SC has no jurisdiction to review it through the petition for certiorari and prohibition filed by petitioners "because there is no actual case or controversy but also because there is no grave abuse of discretion on the part of the executive and legislative departments as would justify the assumption of jurisdiction by the Honorable Supreme Court."³

With these arguments, Mangudadatu asked the SC to declare the BOL as constitutional.

-- With Lino dela Cruz, Edu Punay, Roel Pareño

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Abu bandit tagged in kidnapping slain

ZAMBOANGA CITY – An Abu Sayyaf bandit was killed in an alleged shootout with government troopers in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi on Tuesday.

Rear Admiral Rene Medina, Naval Forces Western Mindanao, identified the fatality as Shaifful Julaili.

Medina said Julaili refused to pull over at a checkpoint in Barangay Lapid-Lapid and shot it out with police and military personnel.

Julaili was tagged in kidnappings in the waters off Tawi-Tawi and Sabah.

Meanwhile, authorities are checking reports that Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Idang Susukan, who was among those wounded in a military offensive in Barangay Kabbon Takas, Patikul last week, has died.

— Roel Pareño

2 Abus in 2001 beheadings fall

Two alleged Abu Sayyaf members suspected of involvement in the kidnapping and beheading of workers from a Basilan plantation in 2001 have been arrested, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) said yesterday.

Harub Jaljali, alias Indal, and Pinky Anu Hadjinulla were caught in a canteen near the city hall in Barangay Sta. Catalina, Zamboanga City last Sunday, NBI deputy director Ferdinand Lavin said.

An informant and a survivor identified the two men as among those who kidnapped and beheaded workers from the Golden Harvest plantation in Lantawan, Basilan.

Lavin said they are validating reports that the suspects, who allegedly belong to Abu Sayyaf leader Radullan Sahiron's faction, were in Zamboanga City for a bombing mission following the military's attack on the bandit group's lair in Jolo, Sulu.

Indal is allegedly a bomb maker who received training from Indonesian and Middle Eastern jihadists, according to Lavin.

Indal reportedly serves as a liaison for foreign terrorists who slip into the country and was seen escorting Abdul Patta Escalon, who was recently arrested, to Tuburan, Basilan while delivering uniforms and equipment to Abu Sayyaf members, Lavin said. 13

Lavin said intelligence officers have been following Hadjinulla, who was seen "monitoring children who were playing inside a mall."

-- Rey Galupo

2 Abu Sayyaf nabbed in Zamboanga

By JEFFREY G. DAMICO

Two suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf Group charged for involvement in the 2001 Golden Harvest kidnapping have been arrested by authorities in Zamboanga City.

National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) spokesperson Deputy Director Ferdinand Lavin identified the two as Harub Jalalis, who is also known as Indal, and Pinky Ani Hadjinulla.

Lavin said the two were arrested separately last Sunday in Zamboanga City by a team from the NBI's Counter Terrorism Division (CTD) and Western Mindanao Regional Office (WEMRO), the Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-ASG), and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

They were served arrest warrants issued by the Basilan Regional Trial Court (RTC) where they are facing charges for multiple counts of kidnapping and serious illegal detention.

"In this particular incident, the informant came out with the positive information on the whereabouts of the two," said Lavin.

"Fortunately for us and unfortunately for the two agents of the counter-terrorism division immediately dispatched a team acting on the information and nakuha itong dalawa (the two were

caught)," he added.

Lavin said one of the survivors of the Golden Harvest kidnapping incident also positively identified two suspects as among the Abu Sayyaf members who abducted them.

Fifteen plantation workers were abducted by the group on June 11, 2001 at the Golden Harvest Plantation in Barangay Tairan, Lantawan, Basilan. The Abu Sayyaf beheaded five of them, while the rest either managed to escape or were rescued by pursuing military forces.

Lavin said the suspects are believed engaged in planning out a kidnapping since Hadjinulla was frequently seen at the playground area of the mall where they are suspected conducting surveillance for a possible target.

The NBI official believes this could be a diversionary tactic meant to put in disarray the ongoing investigations of the bombing incidents in Mindanao.

"We were able to prevent what could have been another diversionary tactic by them kung nagkaroon ng kidnapping incident (if the a kidnapping incident took place)," Lavin said.

NBI-CTD Chief Raoul Manguierra said Indal is a bomb-maker for the Abu Sayyaf's Radullan Sahiron faction and was trained by Indonesian and Middle Eastern jihadists.

ASG terrorist killed in Tawi-Tawi

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Police and military authorities have neutralized a notorious member of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) who was involved in the series of kidnapping activities in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi province during the conduct of checkpoint operations.

Naval Forces Western Mindanao (NavForWesMin) Commander Rear Admiral Rene V. Medina

identified the ASG terrorist as Shaiful Julaili.

Medina said Julaili ran away from the checkpoint and fired at government troops manning it in Barangay Lapid-Lapid which prompted soldiers and policemen to retaliate.

Medina tagged Julaili as the one involved in the series of kidnapping activities in Sulu, particularly in the boundaries of Tawi-Tawi and Sabah in Malaysia.

He added that Julaili was also involved in the recent planned kidnapping in Sabah with other Sulu-based ASG bandits.

Medina emphasized that the military, in tandem with the police, will not stop in performing its duty of protecting the people and the Western Mindanao region against these terrorist groups.

"This should serve as a warning to other terrorist groups that Tawi-Tawi is not, and will never be a safe place for them to conduct their illegal activities," Medina said. (Nonoy E. Lacson) ||

ASG in kidnappings killed in Tawi-Tawi

ZAMBOANGA CITY: An Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandit linked to the spate of ransom kidnappings in Sabah, Malaysia and the Philippines was killed in a shootout with security forces at a checkpoint in Tawi-Tawi on Thursday.

Officials said Shaifful Jalaili engaged troops in a firefight while trying to flee the checkpoint in Barangay Lapid-Lapid in the capital town of Bongao. There was no report of casualties on the side of security forces.

"The Abu Sayyaf, Shaifful Jalaili, violently escaped the checkpoint and fired at government troops, which prompted them to retaliate and killed him," Rear Admiral Rene Medina, chief of the Naval Forces in Western Mindanao, said.

Jalaili was reportedly involved in the series of kidnapping activities in Sulu Sea, particularly in the boundaries of Tawi-Tawi and Sabah.

Medina said the slain bandit was also implicated in the recent kidnappings of Indonesian fishermen off Sabah, but it was not immediately known whether Jalaili and his pro-Islamic State (IS) group were planning to launch new kidnappings in the area.

Security forces have put up roadblocks and checkpoints in many areas in Tawi-Tawi as part

of an intensified campaign against lawlessness.

Troops are battling ASG fighters in the neighboring province of Sulu where a pair of suicide bombers attacked a cathedral in Jolo on January 27, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 100. The IS claimed responsibility for the deadly bombings and President Rodrigo Duterte, quoting intelligence reports, said an Indonesian couple was behind the attacks.

Five local men linked by authorities to the twin attacks have surrendered recently to deny the accusations against them, but criminal charges were filed against them after government prosecutors said they have "more than enough" evidence to indict the suspects.

But ASG leader Hajan Sawadjaan, who is also the emir of IS in the Philippines, and several other bandits also tied to the attacks, are still at-large and being hunted down by soldiers and police commandos. *A7*

Duterte, who inspected the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral a day after the bombings, ordered security forces to destroy the ASG, whose leaders pledged allegiance to the IS, and vowed to fight for the establishment of a caliphate in the restive region. **AL JACINTO**

Abu Sayyaf subleader new ISIS emir, Año says

By Francisco Tuyay
and Nat Mariano

A RADICAL bandit blamed for the deadly bomb attack on a Jolo church has taken over as the leader of the Islamic State (ISIS)-affiliated

Abu Sayyaf Group, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said Thursday, quoting US intelligence sources.

Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan has replaced the ISIS handpicked "emir

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Abu Sayyaf...

From A1

of Southeast Asia," Isnilon Hapilon, following his death by a sniper fire during five-month Marawi City siege in 2017.

Año could not confirm that ISIS had picked Sawadjaan, however, but said he is now "the most recognized."

Año said the ASG had four factions: Hatib Sawadjaan for Sulu; Furuji Indama for Basilan, Abu Dar for Lanao province and Abu Toraype for Central Mindanao.

Sawadjaan was blamed for the series of kidnappings of high-profile targets among them foreigners. He was behind the killing of Canadian nationals Robert Hall, who was executed, and John Ridsdel, who was beheaded, after they were seized from a

yacht in September 2016.

He is also the main suspect in the bomb attack in Jolo. Five suspects have already surrendered to police but 14 others, including Sawadjaan, are still at large.

The US Indo-Pacific Command reported that ISIS Philippines remained active with 300 to 550 fighters in Mindanao, whose activities are limited to Sulu.

Police reported another Abu Sayyaf fighter was killed in a shootout with soldiers and police in Tawi-Tawi Tuesday.

In a belated report, the Western Mindanao Command identified the slain bandit as Shaifful Julaili who fired on troops manning a government checkpoint.

Julaili had been involved in kidnapping sorties in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Sabah, Malaysia, police said.

In the wake of the declaration that the Jolo attack has been solved, the Philippine National Police has lowered its status in Metro Manila from full alert to heightened alert.

"The difference between the two status levels is really minimal. There may be less checkpoint frequencies but the mobilization of our police personnel and resources in the Metropolis continues. Our intelligence plans, strategies and efforts to detect terrorist personalities continue," said Metro Manila police chief Guillermo Eleazar.

He said the police would not relax their guard.

"From this sad experience, we have learned that terrorist threat is lurking over the country and can be triggered anytime, anywhere," he said of the Jan. 27 Jolo bomb attack. With Joel E. Zurbano and Maricel V. Cruz



Abu Sayyaf sub-leader linked to Sulu blasts reported dead

BY VICTOR REYES

A SUB-LEADER of the Abu Sayyaf linked to the January 27 twin bombings at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu has reportedly died from injuries

sustained in last Saturday's firefight with soldiers in Patikul town, the military said yesterday.

The information on the death of Idang Susukan, which came from various sources, is being validated, said Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo,

commander of the military's Joint Task Force Sulu

Susukan was among 15 Abu Sayyaf men reported injured in the Saturday firefight between Army

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ABU SAYYAF

soldiers and the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan in Patikul, Sulu. Five soldiers and three Abu Sayyaf members died in the clash.

Sawadjaan is being tagged the mastermind of the Sulu blasts which killed 23 persons and injured about 100 others. He is reportedly the leader of the Islamic State in the Philippines.

The blasts came less than a month after the military deployed 11 battalions to Sulu to go after Sawadjaan and other Abu Sayyaf leaders.

Pabayo said Susukan, a "high-profile sub-leader" of the Abu Sayyaf, was involved in the cathedral bombings.

"He is connected, though his name is not mentioned as directly involved," he said.

He also said the military has conflicting information on when Susukan died.

"We still have no confirmation.

We are still trying to find where he was buried... that is the information going around in Sulu, that he is already dead," he said.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said "progress reports from various sources on the ground indicate that he eventually died due to the severe injuries he sustained in that firefight."

If confirmed, Arevalo said Susukan's death "deals a serious blow on the leadership of this terrorist group."

"He is one of the ASG's notorious sub-leaders who perpetrated many kidnapping, beheading, and other terrorist attacks to include the twin blasts at the Jolo cathedral," he said.

On Sawadjaan's reported rise as ISIS-Philippines leader, Arevalo said, "That terrorist group follows their own process of selection and confirmation. The AFP is not privy to it and will not issue any confirmation."

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año on Wednesday said Sawadjaan has

taken over the "ISIS-Mindanao" leader.

The US Department of Defense, in its latest quarterly report to the US Congress, said Sawadjaan is believed to be the acting leader of "ISIS-Philippines."

The former reported ISIS leader for Southeast Asia, Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, was killed in Marawi City in 2017 during a five-month armed conflict between government forces and the Maute group.

Arevalo said whoever the ISIS names as its leader in the Philippines, "we assure our people that the AFP's desire to neutralize him and his terrorist cohorts is consistent and undiminished."

The NBI said two alleged members of the Abu Sayyaf were arrested last Sunday in separate operations in Zamboanga City.

The NBI identified the two as Harub Jalalis alias Indal and Pinky Ani Hadjinulla who are suspected of involvement in the kidnapping of workers of the

Golden Harvest plantation in Basilan in 2001.

Jalalis was arrested in a canteen on Lustre Street in Barangay Sta. Catalina and Hadjinulla at the Southway Mall, both in Zamboanga City.

The operation was carried out by the NBI assisted by the police and the Special Action Force.

NBI Deputy Director Ferdinand Lavin said the agency is determining whether two are planning to carry out bombings and other terrorist activities in Zamboanga and other parts of Mindanao.

He said Jalalis is a bomb-maker of the faction headed by Radullan Sajiron and that he also received training in explosives from Indonesian jihadists.

Lavin said Jalalis also acted as a liaison for terrorists coming from other countries in Southeast Asia.

Lavin said Hadjinulla was doing surveillance work in the Zamboanga peninsula when he was arrested. — *With Ashzel Hachero*

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ASG members nabbed

Two members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) allegedly involved in a kidnapping in Basilan in 2001 were arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation. Suspects Harub Jaljalis alias Indal, 44, and Pinky Amin Hadjinula, 37, both male, were nabbed after 18 years of evading arrest. They were identified by the victims and survivors as the ASG members who were responsible for the Golden Harvest kidnapping in Basilan in 2001. Armed with an arrest warrant issued by the Basilan Regional Trial Court in connection with the multiple counts of kidnapping and serious illegal detention, the NBI agents pounced on the suspects' lair. According to NBI spokesman and Deputy Director Ferdinand Lavin, the two were members of the ASG Urban Terrorist based in Zamboanga City. Investigation conducted by the NBI showed that Indal was the one who made bombs for Radulan Sahiron faction of the ASG and one of the few ASG operatives who allegedly received bomb-making training from visiting Indonesian and Middle Eastern Jihadists.

Alvin Murcia

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Kumander ng Sayyaf napatay sa air strike?

Isang mataas na lider ng teroristang Abu Sayyaf Group ang nasawi umano dahil sa pagkaubos ng dugo matapos na malubhang masugatan makaraang isagawa ang air strike operation ng militar sa Patikul, Sulu noong Sabado, ayon sa ulat kahapon.

Sinabi ni Army's 11th Infantry Division at Joint Task Force Sulu Commander Major Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, patuloy pa rin nilang beneberipika ang impormasyon hinggil sa umano'y pagkasawi ni Abu Sayyaf sub-commander indang Susukan.

Una nang napaulat na agaw-buhay si Susukan matapos itong

tamaan sa air strike at ground assault operations na inilunsad ng tropang militar noong Pebrero 2 sa Brgy. Latih at Brgy. Kaboon Takas, pawang sa bayan ng Patikul.

Bunga ng malala nitong kondisyon at pagkaubos ng dugo ay tuluyan na umanong binawian ng buhay si Susukan na inililbing na ng mga tauhan nito sa isang lugar sa kagubatan ng Sulu.

"It is still subject for validation to be safe, yung report kahapon, nung isang araw, iba-iba", ayon kay Pabayo.

Samantala, isang miyembro ng grupo ang agaw-buhay ngayon matapos na makipagpalitan ng putok sa

mga otoridad sa isang checkpoint sa Brgy. Lapid-Lapid, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, kamakalawa.

Kinilala ang sugatan at naarestong bandido na si Shaiful Julaili.

Ayon sa ulat kasalukuyang nagsasagawa ng checkpoint ang militar sa nasabing lugar nang dumating si Julaili. Gayunman, naging marahas ang nasabing bandido nang tangkain nitong takasan ang checkpoint na pinaputukan ang tropa ng militar at pulisya na nagbabantay sa naturang checkpoint.

Dahil dito, gumanti ng putok ang mga otoridad na malubhang ikinasugat ng nasabing bandido. (Joy Cantos)

Bomb maker ng ASG, 1 pa huli ng NBI

Ipinisinta kahapon ng National Bureau of Investigation ang dalawang miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf Group-Urban Terrorist Group cell (ASG-UTG) na nakabase sa Zamboanga City, kabilang ang bomb maker ng Radullan Sahiron Faction at liaison officer ng South Asian foreign terrorist fighters na nadakip kamakailan.

Sa pulong-balitaan, kinilala ni NBI Director for Intelligence Service Eric B. Distor ang mga inarestong sina Harub Jallalis, alyas Indal, 44 at Pinky Ani Hadjinulla, (lalaki) 37, sa bisa ng warrant of arrest sa mga kasong multiple counts of kidnapping at serious illegal detention na inisyu ng Basilan Regional Trial Court (RTC) kaugnay sa Golden Harvest Kidnapping Incident noong 2001.

Si Indal ay nadakip sa isang canteen sa panulukan ng Lustre at Evangelista Sts., Brgy. Sta. Catalina, Zamboanga City habang si Hadjinulla ay sa isang mall sa Zamboanga din.

Si Indal umano ay taga-gawa ng pampasabog para sa Radullan Sahiron faction ng ASG na nakapagsanay sa paggawa ng bomba sa Indonesian at Middle Eastern Jihadists trainor na bumisita sa bansa. Nagsisilbing liaison officer din umano siya sa South Asian foreign

terrorist fighters na ipinadadala sa Pilipinas para sa ASG. Ang grupo rin umano ni Indal ang nagsisilbing augmentation force sa mga oras na kinakailangan ng iba pang faction ng ASG.

Ang grupo rin ni Indal ang bihasa at gamay sa pag-o-operate sa Sulu, Basilan at Tawi-Tawi corridor.

Si Indal din umano ang nag-eskort kay Abdul Patta Escalon, ang UN designated terrorist sa Tuburan, Basilan na nagdeliber ng uniforms at equipments sa ASG fighters. Siya din ang tinukoy na liaison sa mga nakabaseng militante sa Central Mindanao.

Naniniwala si NBI director Dante Gierran na ang pagkadakip sa dalawa ay isang tagumpay ng gobyerno laban sa terorismo. (Ludy Bermudo)

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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We are for peace — MILF

By BONITA L. ERMAC

BALO-I, Lanao del Norte — Members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have assured that their presence during the second plebiscite for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) held on Wednesday was not to intimidate or cause harm to anyone but to ensure the peaceful and orderly conduct of the plebiscite.

"Walang mataas at walang mababa, pantay-pantay tayong naghahangad ng kapayapaan (No one is above or below in our common quest for peace)," said Ismael Disumalong alias Kumander Ultimax of the MILF's 102nd Base Command North-Western Mindanao Front.

He emphasized that it was also the call of the MILF to have a peaceful and orderly Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) plebiscite in the entire Lanao del Norte.

"Our presence in some polling precincts did not mean that we were there to cause harm to anyone. The MILF's central committee has ordered us not to violate the peace and ceasefire agreement," Disumalong added.

Disumalong also said that whatever the outcome of the plebiscite will be,

the MILF will respect it. He said that even if Balo-I reportedly voted "No," "there's no problem about that and we understand the voters' decision."

He further explained that if the six municipalities in Lanao del Norte would be included in the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), "rest assured the tri-people will be given equal access to all opportunities for the Bangsamoro."

"Lumads, Christians, and Muslims will be protected by the Bangsamoro government," Disumalong assured. "This [BOL] is not only for the MILF, but this is also for everyone," he pointed out.

The conduct of the plebiscite in Balo-i town with 21,411 registered voters was generally peaceful.

Sonia Canoy, teacher, and a member of the Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) was optimistic that the peaceful

election would continue until the end of the canvassing period.

"So far, we are having smooth and orderly balloting here in Balo-i," Canoy said.

She revealed that they are not worried about the presence of the MILF members in the polling precincts saying, "they are not doing anything against us, and we are confident that this plebiscite would end up peacefully." ||

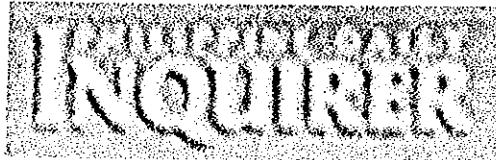
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Nation in briefs

MILF SENIOR COMMANDER WANTED FOR ARSON, MULTIPLE MURDERS NABBED

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: The Philippine National Police arrested a senior commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) wanted for arson and multiple murder cases. Chief Insp. Erwin Tabora, Montawal town police chief, confirmed on Thursday the arrest of Hamsa Abdullah Pandita, more known in Maguindanao as Commander Transceiver. Tabora said Pandita, an ethnic Maguindanaon, had lately been moving around the towns at the border of North Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces in the company of politicians. Senior Supt. Ronald Briones of the Maguindanao provincial police said security has been tight since Tuesday around the Montawal municipal police office where Pandita is detained. The families of the victims of the murder cases involving Pandita have appeared at the Montawal police station to confirm that they have not agreed to off court settlements with corresponding "blood money" based on Shari'ah jurisprudence. Senior officials of the Police Regional Office-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are anticipating possible intercession by the MILF's ceasefire committee on the plight of Pandita.

A7 JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL



SECOND ROUND OF BOL PLEBISCITE

SIX LANA DEL NORTE TOWNS EXCLUDED FROM BARMM

By Divina Suson
and Bong Sarmiento
@inqmindanao

TUBOD, LANA DEL NORTE
—A majority of the 22 towns in the province voted against letting go of six municipalities that had been proposed for inclusion in the new Muslim autonomous region, according to official results of the plebiscite released by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) here on Thursday.

The Joint Task Force Plebisito had reported that 157,629 votes went against while 81,542 were for inclusion of the towns of Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan,

Baloi and Tangkal in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The towns of Pantao Ragat, Poona Piagapo and Salvador voted yes with the six for inclusion.

The no votes won in 13 towns: Kauswagan, Linamon, Matungao, Bacolod, Baroy, Kapatagan, Kolambogan, Lala, Maigo, Magsaysay, Sultan Naga Dimaporo, Sapad and Tubod.

"The no votes is overwhelming. Although the yes votes won in the six towns, it lost in the whole province, which means the six towns cannot join the BARMM," said Comelec provincial director Joseph Hamilton Cuevas.

He said the province, which has 334,356 registered voters, registered an election turnout of 69 percent.

"This is the most peaceful plebiscite in the whole country," he said.

Wednesday's plebiscite was the second on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) intended to determine how many additional areas were to be included in the BARMM. The proposal was to include the six Lanao del Norte towns and 67 villages in seven towns in Cotabato province.

The first plebiscite on Jan. 21 ratified the BOL, which establishes the BARMM and is the fi-

nal step in the 2014 peace deal between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

21 villages vote yes

In Midsayap, Cotabato, election officials announced that 21 of the 67 villages from the towns of Pigcawayan, Aleosan, Carmen and Tulunan voted to join BARMM based on the completed canvass of plebiscite returns.

The four towns are among the seven where the 67 villages are located. The others are Pikit, Kabacan and Midsayap.

Lanao del Norte Gov. Imelda

Dimaporo said they were concerned about the alleged threats made by MILF commander Bravo against the province.

"In the next 24 hours, we have to be vigilant because he was threatening us during his last video," she said.

She asked Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayalde to extend the deployment of police in her province.

Commander Bravo had denied making any threats.

"The MILF is for the peace and order of the entire Lanao del Norte," he told the Inquirer on Wednesday. "Even if the no vote would win, there still

would be no trouble because we follow the chain of command. We leave everything to (MILF chair) Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, who would be the Chief of Parliament as the Bangsamoro Organic Law has already been ratified in the (Jan. 21) plebiscite."

In Manila, the Comelec en banc, acting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBOC), on Thursday suspended the canvassing of the certificates of canvass (COCs).

Comelec Chair Sheriff Abas said the poll body was still waiting for the COCs from Lanao del Norte and Cotabato. —WITH A REPORT FROM
TINA G. SANTOS AND RICHEL UMEI INQ

Mangudadatus ask SC to dismiss petitions vs BOL

By **ALI G. MACABALANG**
and **REY G. PANALIGAN**

COTABATO CITY — The Mangudadatus of Maguindanao have officially asked the Supreme Court (SC) to dismiss

the pending petition of Sulu Governor Sakur Tan II questioning the constitutionality of R.A. 11054 or the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Governor Esmail "Toto" Mangudadatu and his younger brother, Maguindanao Mayors' League president Fred-

die Mangudadatu, filed their "Motion for Leave of Court to Intervene, and to Admit Comment-in-Intervention by way of Opposition to the Petition" before the SC past noon Wednesday.

"The sovereign voice of the ARMM has clearly spoken. Under the principle of vox populi suprema est lex (the voice of the people should be the supreme law), we implore the Honorable Court to abide by the solemn duty to uphold the clear and unmistakable mandate of the people," Mangudadatu said in his motion.

"The majority overwhelmingly and unequivocally voted for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and in the final analysis, the indomitable people of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region most certainly deserve every liberal interpretation of its Organic Law, RA 11054," he also said.

Sought to be dismissed are the petitions filed by the Sulu provincial government led by Gov. Sakur Tan II and the Philippine Constitution Association (Philleonsa).

Respondents in Tan's petition are Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, DILG Secretary Eduardo Año, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Commission Elections,

the Presidential Peace Adviser, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Gov. Mangudadatu was authorized last week via a unanimous resolution by the Provincial Peace and Order Council of Maguindanao, the province in Muslim Mindanao that yielded the largest ratifying votes (599,581 against 9,907 rejection) during the BOL plebiscite last Jan. 21.

The intervenors as citizens "are interested in the realization of the Constitutional mandate to establish an autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao," the intervention-seeking motion read.

As taxpayers, the intervenors have legal interest in favor of the disbursement of funds to implement the Bangsamoro Organic Law which should not be foiled by the impending constitutional challenge," the motion added.

"Finally, the dream for a better and greater autonomy in the Bangsamoro Region is not just the hope and aspiration of the herein intervenors, but also of their beloved constituents who demonstrated their resounding affirmation and support for the BOL," it further said.

Lanao del Norte votes 'No' to Bangsamoro

MARAWI CITY: The province of Lanao del Norte has rejected the inclusion of six municipalities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), unofficial results of the February 6 referendum showed.

A partial and unofficial report from the media

» 'No' A8

affairs office of Lanao del Norte on the province-wide plebiscite on Wednesday showed that 157,138 voted "No" while 72,543 voted "Yes."

On Wednesday, the six towns of Balo-i, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan and Tangkal in Lanao del Norte voted on whether or not they would join the new Bangsamoro region.

Voters in other Lanao del Norte towns, except Iligan City, voted on whether to allow the six towns to join the Bangsamoro or not.

The breakdown of votes was as follows:

Bacolod: Yes - 1,447, No - 8,074;
Balo-i: Yes - 8,663, No - 3,023;
Baroy: Yes - 264, No - 11,758;
Kapatagan: Yes - 791, No - 20,893;
Kauswagan: Yes - 2,348, No - 6,791;
Kolambogan: Yes - 1,210, No - 9,623;
Lala: Yes - 1,173, No - 28,507;
Linamon: Yes - 1,550, No - 12,000;
Magsaysay: Yes - 2,286, No - 3,183;
Maigo: Yes - 3,724, No - 4,455;
Matungao: Yes - 1,420, No - 1,667;
Munai: Yes - 10,614, No - 4;
Nunungan: Yes - 1,802, No - 1,039;
Pantao-Ragat: Yes - 9,166, No - 0;
Pantar: Yes - 7,751, No - 291;
Poona-Piagapo: Yes - 5,246, No - 317;
Salvador: Yes - 11,366, No - 280;
Sapad: Yes - 987, No - 5,520;
Sultan Naga Dimaporo: Yes - 550, No - 24,452;
Tagoloan: Yes - 2,760, No - 1,975;
Tangkal: Yes - 5,927, No - 0;
Tubod: Yes - 803, No - 19,171.

In North Cotabato, voters in 67 villages were asked if they wish to join the expanded autonomous region, while voters in the mother towns where these 67 villages belong to were asked if they would allow these villages to join the new Bangsamoro autonomous entity.

The "Yes" votes won in 21 of 67 villages, according to partial and unofficial counts.

The towns and villages had petitioned to be part of the BARMM under the Bangsamoro Organic Law passed last year.

Even if the "Yes" vote won in these localities, a "double majority" of "Yes" votes is needed for a place to be officially declared part of the BARMM, Commission on Elections (Comelec) spokesman James Jimenez explained.

For instance, voters in the town of Midsayap had to answer a total of 13 questions, corresponding to the inclusion or non-inclusion to the BARMM of 13 villages or *barangay*.

For *barangay* to be included, the "Yes" votes must win at the municipal level and in the *barangay* concerned.

The same rule applies to Lanao del Norte, where "Yes" votes must win in both the municipal and provincial levels.

National canvassing on Monday

On January 21, the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao voted in favor of the Bangsamoro region. Cotabato City residents agreed to join the new region, while Isabela City in Basilan voted "No" even as the rest of the province voted "Yes."

The Comelec, sitting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBC), convened on Thursday for the canvassing of votes in the just-concluded second plebiscite in Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato.

Comelec Chairman Sheriff Abbas, however, adjourned the session because of the unavailability of certificates of canvass (COCs) from the plebiscite areas.

Jimenez said the NPBC would reconvene on Monday, adding that COCs were expected to start arriving during the weekend.

"We expect arrival during the weekend. The reception committee will safeguard the security of COCs that will arrive," he added.

Canvassing would be finished in four days, he said.

Reports from the Comelec regional command center said that in Lanao del Norte, 13 out of 22 COCs have been forwarded to the provincial plebiscite board of canvassers for canvassing.

In North Cotabato, provincial canvassing was 90 percent completed, with votes from the towns of Pigcayan, Aleosan, Carmen and Tulunan.

Still to be submitted were ballots from the towns of Midsayap, Pikit and Kabacan. Comelec placed the voter turnout at 54 percent.

MASIDING NOOR YAHYA AND
WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

Comelec to start printing ballots Feb 9

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) is confident the ballots that will be used for the elections in May this year will be printed on time.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez on Thursday said the printing of some 61 million ballots would start on February 9 after several postponements because of the delay in the release of official names of national candidates that would appear on the ballot.

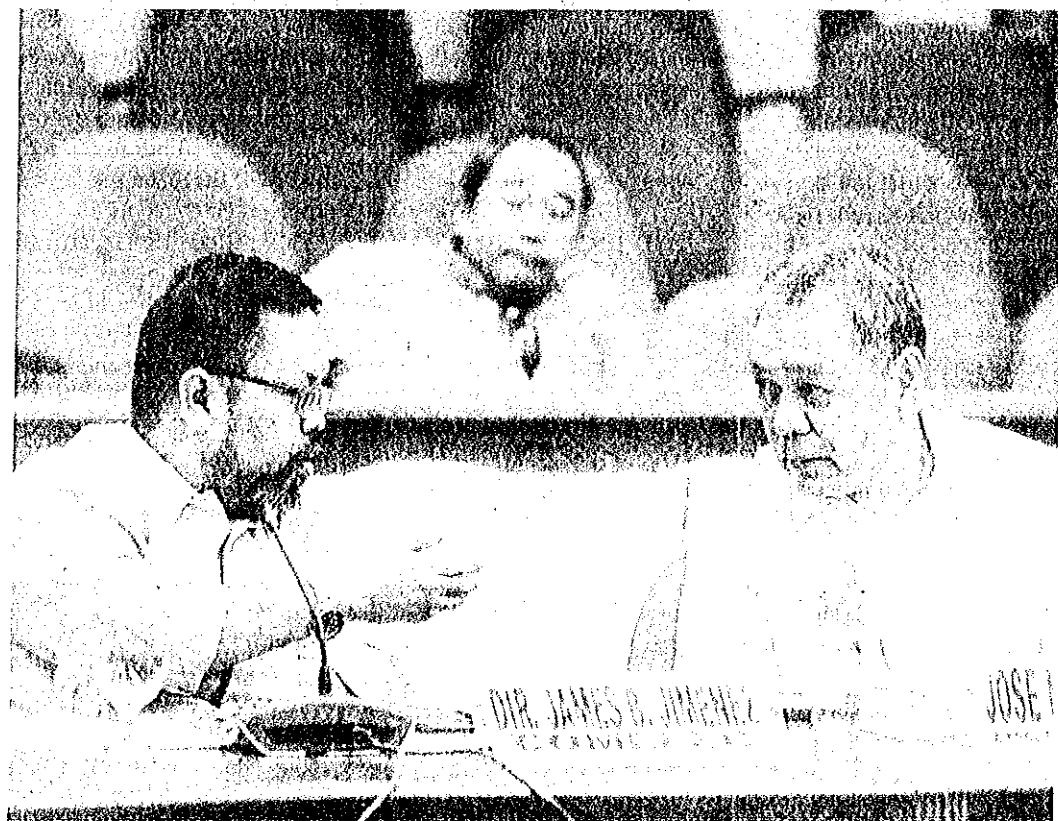
"Earlier today, we sat before a joint congressional committee for an update on the progress of the preparations for automation. One of those mentioned was the printing of ballots," said Jimenez in a press briefing.

He admitted that the printing schedule was tight but the poll official said the same thing happened in the 2016 presidential elections when printing started also late.

"In 2016 we started printing on February 12, but we still delivered the ballots on time," Jimenez pointed out.

He added that last minute changes were being done on the final list of candidates, including the removal of the name of former presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr., who withdrew his candidacy for senator due to health reasons.

The name of candidates with



POLL HEARING Commission on Elections spokesman James Jimenez talks to Executive Director Jose Tolentino during the Senate hearing on the poll body's preparations for the May elections. PHOTO BY DJ DIOSINA

pending cases but were not disqualified would be included in the ballot, Jimenez said.

There are at least 68 petitions for disqualification pending in the Comelec, including that of Sen. Loren Legarda who is running for representative of the lone district of Antique, among others.

"It is not yet final. There can be an appeal taken, which means no practical impact on the candidacy because it is not yet final," he said.

As a result of the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and the eventual dissolution of the Autonomous Region in Muslim

Mindanao (ARMM), Jimenez said the candidates for ARMM governor, vice governor and members of the regional assembly would also be removed. **A3**

"Even in the ARMM they will still vote for senator, they will vote for party-list and so on," he said.

WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

Bangsamoro people have spoken—govt

SIX Lanao del Norte towns will remain part of the province after failing to get majority votes to join the new Bangsamoro autonomous region in Wednesday's plebiscite, the provincial office of the Commission on Elections told CNN Philippines.

The Regional Plebiscite Board of Canvassers said the towns of Tagoloan, Balo-i, Pantar, Munai, Tangcal and Nunungan were unable to

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get the double majority votes needed for them to break away from Lanao del Norte and be included in the soon-to-be-established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Meanwhile, an official has asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the petitions seeking to nullify the law expanding the Autonomous

Region in Muslim Mindanao to become a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

In a comment-in-intervention, Maguindanao Gov. Esmail Mangudadatu urged the high court to uphold the constitutionality of Republic Act No. 11054, or the Bangsamoro Organic Law, citing the overwhelming vote for its ratification in the plebiscite.

Mangudadatu said the high court should dismiss the petitions of the Sulu provincial government led by Gov. Abdusakur Tan II and the Philippine Constitutional Association seeking to nullify RA 11054, which expands the ARMM to become BAR, saying the Mindanao people had already spoken in favor of the new autonomous region in Mindanao.

While all six municipalities voted to be part of the new region that will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the rest of Lanao del Norte said "no" to the proposal.

With Rey E. Requejo



BOL nat'l canvass reset to Feb. 11

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec), sitting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBOC), yesterday pushed back to Feb. 11 the canvassing of votes in the plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said the NPBOC will just convene on Monday because canvassing is still ongoing at the local levels.

Jimenez said Comelec expects the certificates of canvass (COCs) to arrive over the weekend. As of press time, only Kabacan in North Cotabato completed the canvassing of votes.

"The municipality is voting for its inclusion in the BARMM," Jimenez said.

The NPBOC is set to canvass eight COCs.

As this developed, the provincial government of Maguindanao asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the petitions challenging the constitutionality of Republic Act 11054 or the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Maguindanao Gov. Esmail "Toto" Mangudadatu, in a comment-in-intervention, said there is no more reason to question the legality of the BOL as there was overwhelming public support

BOL

for it.

He cited the results of the plebiscite in the ARMM, conducted last Jan. 21, which showed 1,595,731 residents voting to ratify the BOL as against the 246,185 who voted against it.

Mangudadatu said his province

has voted by a wide margin in support of the BOL and the creation of a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BARMM) to replace the current ARMM with 599,581 in support and 9,096 against.

He said the other ARMM provinces and cities also voted in favor of the BOL's ratification: Basilan (147,598 against 6,485); Lanao del Sur

(503,420 against 9,735); Tawi-Tawi (151,788 against 9,907); and Cotabato City (36,682 against 24,994).

The BOL replaces the ARMM with a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which would have greater fiscal autonomy, a regional government, parliament, and justice system. —
Gerard Naval and Ashzel Hachero

SC asked to junk BOL cases

Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadato has asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the petitions challenging the constitutionality of the Bangsamoro Organic Law that would set up the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region to expand the territorial jurisdiction of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

In his comment in Intervention, Mangudadato cited the overwhelming vote for the ratification of the BOL in a plebiscite conducted by the Commission on Elections.

He told the SC that in Maguindanao alone, 599,581 resident-voters ratified the BOL as against 9,096 voters with "No" votes. Also, he said, the result of the Jan. 21 plebiscite in the ARMM showed that 1,595,731 voters said "Yes"

to BOL compared to 246,185 who voted "No."

"The sovereign voice of the ARMM has clearly spoken. Under the principle of vox populi suprema est lex (the voice of the people should be the supreme law), we implore the Honorable Court to abide by the solemn duty to uphold the clear and unmistakable mandate of the people," Mangudadato said in his motion.

"The majority overwhelmingly and unequivocally voted for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and in the final analysis, the indomitable people of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region most certainly deserve every liberal interpretation of its Organic Law, RA 11054," he also said.

Sought to be dismissed are the petitions filed by the Sulu provincial government led by Gov. Abdusakur Tan II and the Philippine Constitution Association.

RA 11054 was signed into law by President Duterte in July last year. It expanded the ARMM under the new BAR with greater fiscal autonomy, regional government, parliament, and justice system.

BAR will be composed of the current ARMM members – Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur. To be added to the region are six municipalities in Lanao del Norte, 39 barangays in Cotabato, and the cities of Isabela and Cotabato subject to approval of the voters in the areas. (Rey Panaligan)

Aquinos's accountability



IT HAS been four years since the Masapano massacre of the PNP Special Action Forces. Jan. 25 came and went with only a somber ceremony to mark the occasion at the Philippine National Police headquarters at Camp Crame. Many of the widows and relatives of the 44 members of the PNP/SAF commandos could not make it to Crame as they come from different places in the country. Some of the victims' relatives who were interviewed by media lamented their loved ones have not been given justice. As next of kin, too, they have not been given compensation promised by the government.

Only one man—former Senator Juan Ponce Enrile—dared speak up as he called for former President Benigno Aquino III's accountability for the death of the PNP-SAF commandos. Enrile said Noynoy Aquino should be held liable for the botched police operation because he put in charge suspended PNP Police Director General Alan Purisma in charge of the perilous mission to get terrorist and bomb maker Marwan in MILF territory.

Enrile is right. At that time, Purisma no longer had any authority to perform any official function, much less a dangerous mission that put law enforcers' lives at risk.

I think Aquino's most grievous crime here is dereliction of duty. Under the Constitution and as commander in chief of the AFP and the PNP, he has a sworn duty to protect his men from harm. This, he did not do. In nearby Zamboanga where he

was ferried to receive Marwan dead or alive, Aquino told the AFP top brass with him to stand down and not send reinforcement to the beleaguered SAF commandos.

The result was that they were butchered by a combined force of MILF, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and Abu Sayyaf group.

Sadly, the MILF is the beneficiary of an autonomous region in Mindanao under the recent plebiscite for the approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

This is why the people need a Ponce Enrile in the Senate. The man will speak up when others would not dare.

“His most grievous crime is dereliction of duty.”

Aquino is facing a slew of other charges. Together with former Budget Secretary Butch Abad and Health Secretary Janet Garin, he is facing liability for the Dengvaxia dengue vaccine that has taken more than 50 lives. Initial findings showed that the Aquino administration paid the French manufacturer of Dengvaxia millions of pesos even before delivery. This is a highly suspicious transaction considering that 2016 was an election year. The law prohibits any such undertaking. Critics claim Aquino's Liberal Party needed the money to keep power under the presidential run of Mar Roxas.

To the victors belong the spoils; the losers take the raps.

Kailangan ng Pilipinas ng higit na cyber defense

MALAKI ang pangangailangan ng bansa sa pagpapaunlad ng cyber security, **IV** sinabi ni Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana nitong Lunes.

"Another concern is the increasing attacks in cyber space. Previous years have seen the rise of cyber threats, which can be expected to persist as the vital economic and security mechanism become more connected; thus propagating the opportunity for adversarial states and even non-state actors to create disruption on a global scale," paliwanag ng kalihim sa kanyang talumpati, sa pagdaraos ng National Defense College of the Philippines Alumni Forum, na tinawag na "The National Security Outlook for the Philippines in 2019" at ginanap sa loob ng National Defense College of the Philippines National Defense sa Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Binigyang-diin ni Sec. Lorenzana na dahil malaki ang sakop na kinapapalooban ng simpleng pag-atake sa cyber o cyber-attack, higit na kinakailangan na mabigyan ng atensiyon at tugon na makatutulong o mga bagay na maaaring maging daan sa upang mabawasan ang mga ganitong insidente.

"Extraordinary attention is required on this matter. It is important to note that the Bangladesh Central Bank heist to which a local bank was implicated must serve as reminder to strengthen both civilian and military networks," paliwanag ng DND chief.

Ayon pa kay Lorenzana, isinusulong niya ang pagpapasa ng batas na nag-uutos ng mandatariong pagpaparehistro ng mga SIM cards lalo pa't maraming improvised explosive devices o mga pampapasabog sa katinugang bahagi ng bansa ang pinapasabog gamit ang mga cellular phones.

"I did not ask Congress, only (Senator Richard) Gordon. I asked him if he could sponsor a bill that requires the mandatory registration of SIM cards. How will it help us? It makes tracking criminals easier," pahayag pa ni Lorenzana.

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Duterte to certify military pension reform bill as urgent

By Azer Parrocha February 7, 2019, 9:23 pm

MANILA -- President Rodrigo R. Duterte will certify as urgent a bill reforming the pension system of military and other uniformed personnel, Malacañang said Thursday.

"It was also discussed in the Cabinet meeting the military and uniformed personnel pension reform bill – this was proposed by the Department of National Defense, which the President said he will certify as an urgent piece of legislation," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a Palace briefing.

Panelo said Duterte's decision might have come after some members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have "complained" about their pensions.

"*Siguro nga may nagrereklamo sa pension nila, considering na involved na involved ngayon ang Armed Forces (Perhaps they have been complaining about their pension, considering the Armed Forces is very much involved) in our fight against communism, rebellion, terrorism,*" he said.

Under the proposed law, pension payments for retirees will only start once the retiree reaches the age of 60.

Panelo said that it would not cost Duterte the support of the military because it is designed for their benefit.

"*Iyong sinasabi mong baka may kung ano 56 to 60, eh gusto nga nila iyon na hindi pa sila magre-retire eh. Kasi 'pag 56 retire ka na, 'di wala ka nang trabaho (What you're saying about raising the compulsory retirement age from 56 to 60, they'll like that because they won't have to retire yet. Because when you retire at 56, then you won't have a job),*" he said

"*Kung 60, pwede ka pang magtrabaho (If at 60, you can still work) – you have additional four years. In fact, I think that measure is designed for them, for their benefit,*" he added.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana earlier said that the bill is a product of a series of consultations with members of the Inter-Agency Technical Working Group on Military and Uniformed Services Personnel led by the Department of Finance and the Bureau of the Treasury. (PNA)

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2 ASG men linked to 2001 Basilan plantation raid nabbed

By Benjamin Pulta February 7, 2019, 4:19 pm

MANILA -- Authorities presented to the media on Thursday the two members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), who were arrested earlier in Zamboanga City.

Harub Jaljalism alias Indal, 45, and Pinky Ani Hadjinulla, 37, were nabbed on Sunday by virtue of an arrest warrant for multiple counts of kidnapping and serious illegal detention issued by the Basilan Regional Trial Court (RTC), in connection with the Golden Harvest Plantation kidnapping incident in June 2001.

The NBI said that Indal, who was arrested in a canteen in Sta. Catalina, Zamboanga City, has received bomb-making training for the Radullan Sahiron faction of the ASG and has reportedly operated in Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

He is the brother of ASG leader Isjanir Saccam Aminudin alias Abu Fatima. He also escorted international terrorist Abdul Patta Escalon to Tuburan, Basilan, where the latter distributed uniforms and war fighting equipment to extremists.

Hadjinulla, who was arrested in a shopping mall in Zamboanga City, was positively identified as one of the abductors in the Golden Harvest incident.

Out of the 15 workers of the plantation who were abducted, five were beheaded while 10 others either escaped or were rescued by government forces. **(PNA)**