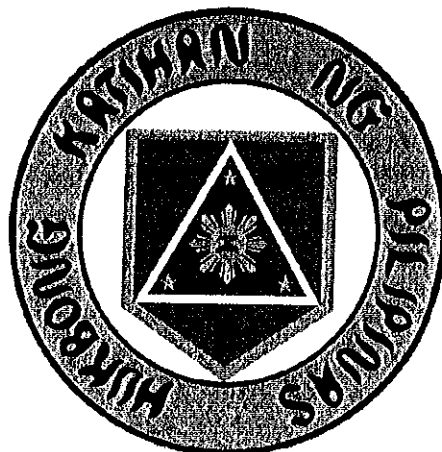


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10 February 2019

Sunday

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'Follow poster rules or face sanctions'

*Campaign period
begins Tuesday*

**BILANG
PILIPINO
2019**

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

The 90-day campaign period for senatorial candidates and party-list groups starts on Feb. 12 with a stern warning from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to take down unlawful campaign materials.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said the Comelec's education and information division's Operation Baklas is coordinating with the Department of Public Works and Highways and Metro Manila Development Authority to remove unlawful campaign materials.

Jimenez warned that the Comelec will hold candidates and parties accountable for illegal campaign materials even if they claim that these were put up by others or without

their knowledge.

"If the materials are still up after the start of the campaign period, then it can be presumed they are up because candidates allow them to remain up. It is clear that they are benefitting from the presence of these materials and that might be a way to hold them liable," he said.

Jimenez explained that all existing campaign materials are "automatically in violation of campaign rules" so they

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Follow From Page 1

have to be removed before Feb. 12.

"We are sending out letters to the political parties and candidates, advising them of the need to take down their materials. We don't expect them to reply to us (in writing) but we do expect to see compliance by Feb. 12," Jimenez said in a press briefing.

"Many of the materials are so big while our limit size for campaign materials is 2x3 feet or 3x2 feet depending on the orientation that you like," Jimenez said.

The campaign materials are also situated in places that are outside the common poster areas that will be determined by the Comelec's election officers in each locality, Jimenez added.

Posters may be put up in private property but this must have the permission of the owner and the required size of the materials will also have to be observed.

Comelec Resolution No. 10429, promulgated on Oct. 1, 2018 sets the campaign period for national candidates from

Feb. 12 to May 11.

During this time, they are prohibited from "giving donations, or gift in cash or in kind," among others; otherwise they shall be held liable for election offense.

There are 62 candidates vying for the 12 slots in the Senate while 134 party-list group are gunning for seats in the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, Comelec Resolution No. 10429 sets the 45-day campaign period for local bets from March 29 to May 11.

Source code

As this developed, the Comelec yesterday deposited at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) the source code that will be used for the elections.

Jimenez said the transfer was in compliance with Republic Act 9369, which requires the poll body to put the source code in escrow with the BSP.

"We are doing this for safekeeping and to make sure that there is a copy that we can refer to in the future if ever the integrity of the machines are

called into question," Jimenez told reporters at the BSP.

Before the transfer of the source code, Comelec officials Jose Tolentino Jr., executive director of the office of the executive director and law department, and Bartolome Sinocruz Jr., deputy executive director for operations, signed an escrow agreement with the BSP's Josephine Olivete, director of cash deposit; Elmore Capule, senior assistant governor and general counsel, legal services; and Dahlia Luna, senior assistant governor, currency management sector.

Tolentino noted that the integrity, reliability and credibility of the source code had never been questioned since they started depositing it at the BSP in 2010.

After the signing of the agreement, the BSP and Comelec officials opened before reporters the two boxes: a yellow ballot box and a black box containing the three major components of the source code - election management system, vote counting machine (VCM) and the counting and consolidation system.

The source code was put in

the protected vault of the BSP with the officials and media as witnesses.

The Comelec needs a court order and authority from the electoral tribunals to open the vault and retrieve the source code.

Printing of ballots

The printing machines of the National Printing Office started running yesterday for more than 63 million official ballots that will be used on May 13.

According to Ma. Victoria Dulcero, vice chair of the Comelec's printing committee, they would be printing a total of 63,622,481 ballots.

Of the ballots, 61,803,771 are for voting in the Philippines while 1,818,710 are for overseas absentee voters (OAVs).

The Comelec is also printing 1,142,063 ballots that will be used for the final testing and sealing prior to election day to test the VCMs.

The Comelec has prioritized the printing of ballots for OAVs, whose month-long voting starts on April 13.

Dulcero noted that the printing of ballots will be done based on priority areas, starting with

the provinces in Mindanao, followed by the Visayas, Luzon and Metro Manila.

She added that they expect the printing to be completed by April 25 but the ballots will still undergo various processes, particularly verification with the use of 250 VCMs being operated by 500 personnel taking turns in two shifts.

Verified ballots will then be prepared by the packing and shipping committee for delivery to the Comelec's regional hubs across the country until their shipment to their intended destination on May 13.

The start of the printing was witnessed by Alexander Ramos, representative of PDP-Laban and Hubert Guevarra, representative of Nationalist People's Coalition and Ang Kabuhayan party-list group.

Ramos told *The STAR* that they would be closely monitoring the printing, packing and delivery processes.

"We will have 24/7 observers here to ensure that public interest is protected. We are not saying that there will be issues but we want to know what is happening on a day-to-day basis and let the public

decide if there is an issue or not," Ramos maintained.

Security

The security template used during the recently-concluded Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) plebiscites in Mindanao will be reviewed for readjustment in the May elections, the military said yesterday.

Col. Noel Detoyato, Armed Forces of the Philippines public affairs office chief, said the military and its police counterparts have been deputized by the Comelec to enforce security measures nationwide.

"Our BOL plebiscite security template will be reviewed and will be readjusted to cover all other critical areas or the so-called election hotspots across the country prior, during and after the mid-term elections," Detoyato said.

Areas of election concerns due to political rivalry include several towns in Regions 1, 2, 4A, 5 as well as the Visayas and Mindanao, specifically in the towns and villages comprising the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. - With Robertzon Ramirez, Jaime Laude

NEXT FIGHT VS PORK A TEST FOR DU30, SC

STORY BY LEILA B. SALAVERRIA

There remain two ways to remove alleged pork insertions in the 2019 budget. The first is for the President to veto each 'pork-laden' item, as Sen. Panfilo Lacson has urged. If Mr. Duterte doesn't show 'political will' to do this, Sen. Franklin Drilon suggests asking the Supreme Court to rule on excising the lard.

PHOTO
A4

FROM A1

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINO

Sen. Panfilo Lacson on Saturday said the P3.8-trillion 2019 budget would test President Duterte's political will in removing the large amount of pork that he claimed it contained, and if that did not work, Sen. Franklin Drilon suggested asking the Supreme Court to excise the lard.

Congress ratified the spending bill on Friday, and the next step is for the President to sign it into law.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles has said each item in the measure would be thoroughly scrutinized to make sure there was nothing illegal that could be challenged in the high court.

Lacson, who voted against the measure, said Mr. Duterte in the past showed he could take decisive action when public funds were involved.

He recalled that Mr. Duterte made tycoon Lucio Tan's Philippine Airlines pay P6 billion in overdue navigational fees and other charges, and also pushed cigarette manufacturer

Mighty Corp. to make a P40-billion tax settlement.

"Now, this is another test or affirmation, if I may call it that, of his political will. I am hoping that since he has a reputation of having political will, he will excise what are clearly pork funds [from the budget]," Lacson said in a radio interview.

Drilon, the minority leader, also said the President could exercise his veto power, though he was not optimistic that Mr. Duterte would do that.

"The first line of defense is the President because he has line-item veto power," Drilon said, also in a radio interview.

'Abuse of discretion'

He also voted against the proposed budget, saying senators were not given enough time to study the bicameral report on the measure.

Drilon said groups or individuals who believed the 2019 budget violated the Supreme Court's earlier ruling invalidating the pork barrel system could take their case to the tribunal.

"There was abuse of discretion on the part of many legislators in inserting their projects in the budget," he said, citing what could be a probable viola-



Franklin Drilon

tion in the budget process.

In a landmark 2013 ruling, the Supreme Court declared the "pork barrel" system unconstitutional and banned all "past and present pork barrel laws ... and the various congressional insertions, which conferred personal, lump-sum allocations to legislators from which they are able to fund specific projects which they themselves determine."

Members of the Makabayan bloc in the House of Representatives also challenged Mr. Duterte to make good on his campaign promise against corruption by vetoing the pork items in the budget.

"The shameful passage of the pork-laden 2019 budget presents a golden opportunity for President Duterte to prove he is



Panfilo Lacson

really against graft and corruption, by using his veto powers to take out the billions of insertions," said Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate.

Zarate said that "as a matter of policy and principle," the Makabayan lawmakers would not use any pork that may have been apportioned to them.

'Baseline allocation'

According House appropriations committee chair Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. the "baseline allocation" for each House member amounted to at least P160 million.

The "guidance" from Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was that no district should be "left behind" and "no one should end up empty-handed,"

he told reporters on Friday.

"Naturally, districts with bigger needs, such as areas that were hit by recent natural calamities will get a bigger share," Andaya added.

Drilon said that when he served as executive secretary in the 1990s, the countrywide development fund, an earlier version the pork barrel, amounted to around P2.5 billion.

'Warped'

But in the present budget, almost the same amount was allocated to projects in just one province, he said.

"It's up to the people to judge this," he added.

Lacson said it was understandable for some lawmakers to impress their constituents with local projects in an election year, but the budget process to do this was "warped."

Local Development Councils are supposed to propose projects for their districts, with approval from their respective Regional Development Councils.

The district representatives or their staff are expected to attend these council meetings so they could shepherd the funding for those projects when Congress discusses the spending

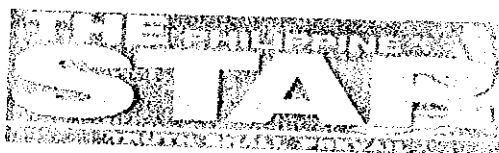
bill. But they don't attend and lawmakers "arbitrarily" make changes in the budget without the knowledge of the local governments, according to Lacson.

"That is the problem. There is a disconnect between the needs and priorities of (local government units), especially the far-flung ones, and the national budget. The national budget fails to address the needs so the distribution of national wealth is not equitable," he said.

In a speech after members of the House of Representatives ratified the committee report on Friday, Arroyo declared that passage of the budget showed Mr. Duterte had the full backing of the chamber under her leadership.

"Delivering the President's priority legislative agenda as enunciated in his 2018 State of the Nation Address was my own commitment when you elected me to be your Speaker last July, and we have delivered," she said.

"Let the critics carp, but I am hopeful that our people shall know that this 17th Congress has been hard at work for the people who dutifully and thoughtfully marked ballots in May 2016 to mandate our presence here," Arroyo said. —WITH A REPORT FROM MELVIN GASCON INQ



'Bad weather delaying gov't projects on Pag-Asa Island'

By JAIME LAUDE

The presence of numerous Chinese fishing boats in the waters near the country's Pag-Asa Island in the disputed Spratly archipelago is no longer a threat to the islanders.

They are more concerned with the completion of the construction of a beaching ramp in the island town.

What bothers them, they said, is the prevailing severe sea conditions because of stormy weather, causing delay of the key government project in the island town.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Friday that construction of the beaching ramp in Pag-Asa Island is expected to be finished first quarter of this year.

The beaching ramp, once operational, will pave the way for the repairs of other existing facilities in the island, including the unpaved Rancudo Airfield.

Lorenzana said the defense department intends to extend the 1,300-meter airfield runway by 300 meters.

The islanders welcomed Lorenzana's pronouncement, hoping that the private contractor of the beaching project -- Luzviminda Construction Corp. -- will soon return and resume construction of the port.

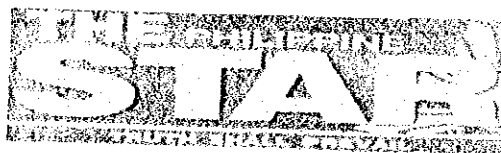
"The construction of the beaching ramp was temporarily stopped late last year after the civilian contractor moved its heavy equipment out of the island due to the series of storms that hit the area. We hope that soon they will return

and resume their construction activities," a resident said.

Unlike before when everybody in the island was jittery over the presence of Chinese boats in the waters close to the island town, today these things no longer bother them.

Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), through the Asia Maritime Transparency International (AMTI), bared the huge number of Chinese fishing boats near Pag-Asa Island are militia of the Peoples Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN).

These fishing boats were apparently deployed near Pag-Asa to intimidate the Philippine government and discourage it from pushing through with its infrastructure development of the island town.



Lorenzana lauds House support for mandatory ROTC

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday hailed the House of Representatives for passing the Mandatory Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) bill on second reading.

He said reinstating the mandatory reservist training program for Grades 11 and 12 will benefit the country and its citizens.

"As the voice of the Filipino people, our representatives'

votes truly reflect the collective sentiments of our people, especially the Filipino youth who will greatly benefit from the ROTC program which aims to instill patriotism, love of country, moral and spiritual values, respect for human rights and adherence to the Constitution," Lorenzana said.

He thanked the lawmakers for their strong support and appealed to both chambers of Congress to fast-track the approval of the bill.

"This (is a) key defense advocacy of developing the Filipino youth as our nation's future defenders, patriots and leaders," Lorenzana said.

"This legislation will also strengthen our Reserve Force which is an important component of our national defense and security," he said.

However, a group promoting children's rights said the proposal to revive and implement the ROTC among high-school students is a violation

of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Salinlahi secretary-general Eule Rico Bonganay said the UN convention, to which the Philippines is a signatory, has a protocol against the involvement of children in armed conflict.

"We are deeply concerned that children aged 14 to 17 years old will be trained by military elements who are notorious for their brutality and violations of children's rights,"

Bonganay said.

"It is also known that many of the ROTC trainees undergo hazing and experience not just physical violence but also sexual assaults from their upper-classmen, officers and also from members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines," she said.

Bonganay reminded the government of the mammoth youth mobilizations in the early 2000 over the killing of Mark Welson Chua which resulted in the abolishment of

the mandatory ROTC.

Salinlahi emphasized that no child should be obliged to join any institution like the ROTC. "Their democratic right to choose must always be protected and ensured by the state. Forcing children to undergo mandatory ROTC is a clear admission that the government fails to gain the trust of the students in the military, given its rampant human rights abuses," Bonganay added.

- With Rhodina Villanueva

P2.2-M smuggled cigarettes seized in Zamboanga

ZAMBOANGA CITY - At least 148 boxes of smuggled cigarettes worth P2.2 million were confiscated from a commercial vessel at a port here yesterday.

Personnel of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency-Zamboanga peninsula office, Joint Task Force Zamboanga, Bureau of Customs (BOC) and Armed Forces of the Philippines Intelligence Service seized the cigarettes on *M/V Kristel Jane 3* that came from Jolo.

The BOC said the smuggled cigarettes could have originated from Malaysia.

No one has claimed ownership of the shipment.

- Roel Pareño

3 siblings die, 50 families affected in huge Mati City fire

By IVY C. TEJANO

DAVAO CITY — Three siblings, aged three to 10 years old, were reported killed, while at least 50 families or 135 individuals were displaced after a huge fire razed at least 25 houses in Sampaloc, Barangay Santo Niño in Mati City on Friday evening.

Based on initial data from the Davao Oriental Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (PDRPMC), the fire started at about 11:30 p.m. on February 8, Friday, and was still

raging at 2 a.m. Saturday, February 9.

The Public Information Office of Davao Oriental initially said that Amely Pearl Halipa, 10; Alicia Cenise Halipa, 8; and Kirsh Heris, 3, were missing.

But on Saturday, Mati Fire Marshal Sr. Insp. Christian Cena confirmed in a radio interview that the three siblings were killed in the fire after they were trapped in their home.

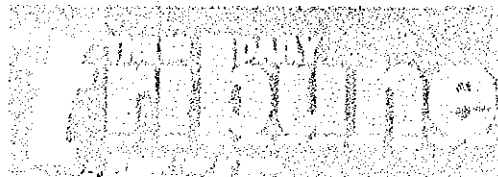
Members of the Mati City and Provincial (DRRMC) of Davao Oriental, along with the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Provincial Engineering Office, volunteers, and the police and military,

were among those which responded to the incident.

City officials, led by Mati City Mayor Carlo Rabat, and other officials from the provincial government were already coordinating at the fire scene and facilitating interventions.

Fire trucks from towns of Lupon and San Isidro have augmented fire trucks in the city to help control the fire.

Authorities have yet to determine the cause of the fire incident, while an evacuation center in Barangay Central in Mati City has been set up to house the 50 affected families in the fire incident.



Military insists on foreign terrorist claim

Amid the ongoing probe on the deadly twin bombings at a Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu several weeks ago, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) contended that the perpetrators were possibly Indonesian citizens, a claim disputed by the Indonesian Embassy which is seeking clarification.

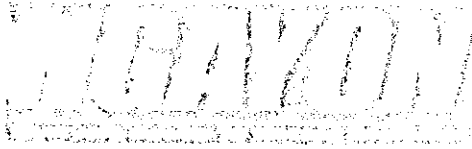
Our previous intelligence reports prove that there are indeed foreigners in some camps that we have overrun.

AFP Public Affairs chief Noel Detoyato said the military based their claim on the passports recovered from foreigners during their operations while he was still a lieutenant.

"Our previous intelligence reports prove that there are indeed foreigners in some camps that we have overrun," said Detoyato in a radio interview Saturday. "I have also seen and recovered passports for other countries. So there is really a connection with global terrorists."

The AFP public affairs chief also noted the dissemination of information about the nationality of the suspects was to forewarn the public that foreign terrorists are indeed entering the country.

"We are just concerned about the national security and the security of our countrymen," Detoyato said. "We released the information to forewarn that there are really foreigners involved."



Gov't officials, AFP at PNP bawal mangampanya

Pinagbawalan ni Pangulong Duterte ang mga opisyal ng gobyerno at mga miyembro ng kanyang Gabinete na mangampanya para sa sinusuportahan nilang mga kandidato.

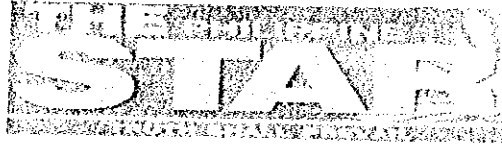
Sinabi ng Pangulo, maging ang mga pulis at militar ay dapat maging neutral sa papalapit na eleksyon sa Mayo at

huwag makikialam sa mga bagay na dapat pagpasyahan ng taumbayan o mga botante.

Aminado ang Pangulo na maaring ma-kuwestiyon al maging isyu ang paggamit ng resources at pondo ng gobyerno sa pangampanya katulad ng sasakyan at mga eroplano.

Binigyang-diin pa ni Pangulong Duterte, hindi siya makikialam sa pulitika, pero ikakampanya nilo ang mga taong may tinatanaw siyang utang na loob.

Katulad din ng ibang Filipino, inaasahan ng Pangulo na magiging malinis at tahimik ang darating na eleksiyon. (Malou Escudero) L



ACT wary of continued profiling of teachers

By JANVIC MATEO

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) yesterday expressed alarm over the reported plan of the Philippine National Police (PNP) to continue its intelligence operations against teachers affiliated with the left-ist group.

"This is precisely what we were worried about – the PNP is now taking a Court of Appeals decision as a nod to their illegal operations," ACT secretary general Raymond Basilio said, referring to the appellate court's dismissal of their petition against profiling of its members.

"It has emboldened state forces to continue and intensify their attacks against our organization," he added.

The teacher's group on Friday said they will file a motion for reconsideration on the CA decision, which junked on technical grounds their petition asking the court to stop the PNP's inventory of its members.

Following the release of the

ruling, PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Bernard Banac was quoted in a report as saying that they would continue intelligence operations against ACT members and other groups perceived to be enemies of the state.

He clarified that they did not specifically target the teacher's group, noting that it is the responsibility of the PNP to collect information from all threat groups.

Basilio said the PNP statement confirmed the actions that they previously denied.

"They used to have a hard time getting their stories straight when asked about the profiling, but now the truth's out. They consider teachers, as well as anyone else who dare fight for their rights and welfare, as enemies of the state. What they fail to realize, however, is they've also exposed themselves to be the real enemy of the people," he said.

"Democracy puts primacy on civilians and their rights, which the state has an obligation to

uphold and protect. Police forces, on the other hand, have a duty to 'serve and protect' the people, not to suspect and make enemies out of them," added the ACT official.

The outgoing director of the DepEd in Central Luzon has claimed that some ACT members in the region are active members of the communist New People's Army (NPA).

In the forum of the Pam-panga Press Club (PPC) last Wednesday, DepEd director Beatriz Torno, who is retiring this month, said that almost all provinces in Central Luzon are infiltrated by teachers who belong to ACT and are alleged NPA members.

Torno did not say where she got the information, but noted that DepEd has a current program with law enforcers on anti-terrorism.

She also could not give figures on how many ACT members in her region allegedly belong to the NPA.

– With Ding Cervantes

**2 soldiers wounded
in Cotabato clash with NPA**

Two soldiers were wounded in a clash with at least 20 communist rebels in the town of Makilala, North Cotabato province, on Friday, according to the military. Lt. Col. Rhojun Rosales, 39th Infantry Battalion commander, said soldiers were responding to reports about armed men massing up in the area when they were fired upon. The gunfight lasted about an hour, Rosales said. He added that two attack helicopters were sent to the area, prompting residents to flee.—WILLIAMORA A. MAGBANUA

Rectify, Church told

Early on, I've said we were abused by the priests. How many of us? I'm not sure

By Kristina Maralit

The Catholic Church should initiate internal reforms after Pope Francis admitted that nuns had been sexually abused by priests and bishops, President

Rodrigo Duterte said.

"He (Pope Francis) admitted that nuns were preyed on by priests. I told you, the Church has to reform," Mr. Duterte said in his speech before delegates of the Peace and Order Summit for Barangay Officials in Legazpi City, Albay last Friday.

The recent statement of the Pope was a vindication of sorts for Mr. Duterte who time and again has slammed the Catholic Church for its "hypocritical acts."

According to the President, the Pontiff publicly acknowledging the issue is proof that Church

Turn to page 2

Rectify, Church told

Though the law allows you to campaign just like the President, I would insist that you don't interfere

From page 1

leaders have no moral ascendancy to throw dirt at his governance of the country.

"I wasn't joking about it. I will not joke or crack a joke about that. I told you so. The Church has to reform," he said.

The President himself claimed he experienced sexual abuse from a priest back in his younger years.

"Early on, I've said we were abused by the priests. How many of us? I'm not sure," he shared.

The Chief Executive has repeatedly traded barbs with the clergy by questioning Catholic doctrines,

accusing bishops and priests of abuse and corruption and even suggested that

"wealthy bishops" should be killed by street idlers.

Malacañang, however, defended Mr.

Duterte's rhetoric against the clerics by stressing it was just the President's way of conveying his message not to use the pulpit in criticizing his policies, especially his controversial campaign against illegal drugs.

Despite the Chief Executive's repeated verbal attacks on the Catholic Church, the Palace stressed that recent policies and orders issued by the President are proofs of his respect for the faithful and how he "recognized the fundamental role of religion in the lives of the Filipino people."

Mr. Duterte even previously praised Pope Francis for being a "progressive" leader.

Cabinet men can't endorse

Mr. Duterte directed members of his Cabinet to stay neutral in the midterm polls in a bid to quash allegations that state funds would be used during the campaign period.

The Armed Forces and the Police will never side with anybody, any candidate or for any issue for that matter.

Members of the Armed Forces and the police should also be strictly non-partisan and that government workers would not be

allowed "to do some campaigning for or against anybody."

"The Cabinet members, including your special assistant here who was my classmate and fraternity brother, I told them, 'though the law allows you to campaign just like the President, I would insist that you don't interfere,'" he said four days before the official campaign period starts on 12 February.

The government code of ethics does not prohibit political appointees like Cabinet members from joining campaign sorties. It's government rank-and-file personnel who are barred from engaging in partisan politics during election season.

However, Mr. Duterte wants his Cabinet members to remain nonpartisan so as to spare them from intrigues and accusations of using government resources to help their favored candidates. He, however, will still join the campaigns of his bets, especially those he said he is indebted to.

"So, just to do away with those issues and to make it really equal for all. Nobody uses government property or funds because that is not allowed. I hope we can make our lives that simple. I hope we can follow that," he expressed.

The President likewise gave assurances the military and

police to stay politically neutral in the elections.

"I can assure you that the Armed Forces and the Police will never side with anybody, any candidate or for any issue for that matter that is submitted to the people for their resolution," Mr. Duterte said.

Stop extortion, NPA told

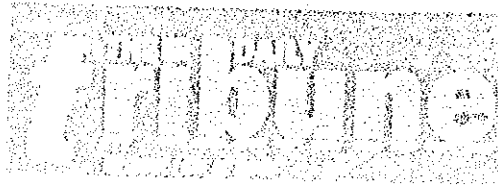
Duterte also called on members of the New People's Army to stop their extortion activities.

"You can come, courtesy of the money of the people of the Philippines. I don't have funds. You can come and be billeted in simple hotels because luxury is not for us and you can come in peace. You will not be arrested," he added.

I wasn't joking about it. The Church has to reform.

The peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines were halted in 2018.

The Peace and Order Summit for Barangay Officials was attended by thousands of local leaders who gathered to discuss issues and concerns affecting peace and order in the region such as illegal drugs, violent extremism and criminality



Army battles Negros NPA

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

Government troops in Negros Oriental stopped elements of a New People's Army which were allegedly trying to terrorize communities in the province.

Residents tipped the NPA presence in the areas.

The 15th Infantry Battalion, while conducting Community Support Programs in Sitio Baliw, Brgy Baglic, Mabinay town, had a brief encounter with the Maoist group at around 1:30 p.m. on Friday.

Residents tipped the NPA presence in the areas.

According to the 15th IB report, the group planned to disrupt government programs intended for the people.

The encounter lasted half-an-hour before the NPA retreated and were pursued.

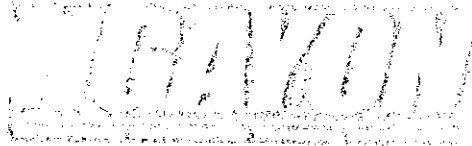
"This encounter was the result of the continuing coordinative effort of

the populace who had grown weary of the NPA menace and the unrelenting commitment of your army troops to protect the community from the NPA terrorists," Brig. Gen. Ignacio Madriaga said.

"This event was a clear manifestation that the locals are no longer afraid of the NPA," he added.

One M16 rifle with 11 magazines, one Anti-Personnel Mine, one rifle grenade, one commercial radio, personal belongings and subversive documents were recovered by the soldiers.

"This victory is a testimony of courage coupled with strong determination of our troops who are helping the Local Government Units ensure full implementation of programs that will alleviate the socio-economic problem affecting their localities," Armed Forces of the Philippines Central Command Commander Lt. Gen. Noel Clement said. 7



Duterte sa NPA: Stop extortion!

Sa gilna nang nalalapit na kampanyahan, sinabihan ni Pangulong Duterte ang mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) na tigilan ang pangongoleka ng pera mula sa mga mamamayan.

Kalimitang nanghihingi ng pera sa mga pulitiko ang mga NPA para makapangampanya sa isang probinsiya o lugar.

Sinabi ni Duterte na kung gustong tumulong ng mga NPA ay dapat itigil ang ginagawang extortion o pangingikil.

"Eh sanay tayo ng magulo na eleksyon eh. Terrorism, magnakaw ng

balota. Ang mga NPA, kayo nakikinig kayo ngayon, kung gusto talaga ninyong tumulong, stop the extortion," sabi ng Pangulo.

Ipinahiwatig din ng Pangulo na maaring magkaroong muli ng usapang pangkapyapaan kung itigilan ng mga NPA ang pangingikil.

"You will have to stop extorting money and yung taxation ninyo. I said I will guarantee na ako na mismo ang gagastos sa talks. You can come courtesy of the money of the people of the Philippines. Wala akong pera. You

can come and be billeted in simple hotels because luxury is not for us. And you can come in peace. Hindi kayo huhulihin. But one of the things on a long view, but afar, if you can't stop extortion, you have no business..." sabi ng Pangulo.

Idinagdag pa ng Pangulo na mismong ang gobyerno ay hindi nanghihingi kahit ng singko para mabigyan ng permit ang mga nangangampanya.

Hindi rin aniya dapat makipag-kumpitensiya ang mga NPA sa pangongolekta ng buwis. (Malou Escudero) 2

Armas ng NPA, nasamsam

ILOILO CITY -- Nasamsam ng militar ang mga armas ng New People's Army (NPA) matapos ang engkuwentro ng mga ito sa Mabinay, Negros Occidental, nitong Biyernes.

Sinabl ni 15th Infantry Battalion (IB) Civil Military Officer, Capt. Rainer Ubungen, kabilang sa nasamsam ng mga tauhan nito ang isang M16 ArmaLite rifle, rifle grenade, iba't ibang bala, ilang commercial radio at iba pang subersibong dokumento.

Aniya, namataan ng mga tauhan nito ang mga rebelde na nangingikil sa mga residente sa Sitio Baliw, Brgy. Bagtic, nitong Biyernes ng hapon.

Dahil dito, nagkaroon ng sagupaan ang dalawang panig ngunit matapos ang 30 minuto ay umatras din ang mga rebelde na nagresulta sa pagkakasamsam ng mga armas na iniwan ng kilusan.

5 Tara Yap

2019 SPENDING BILL HIGHLIGHTS

RATIFIED BUDGET GIVES BIGGEST BOOST TO INFRA, HEALTH PROJECTS

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINQ

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Health (DOH) bagged the biggest increases on top of their proposed budgets among government agencies in the P3.8-trillion 2019 spending bill, according to figures from Senate finance committee chair Sen. Loren Legarda.

Legarda, citing the highlights of the conference committee report on Friday, said the DPWH got a net increase of P32.923 billion and the DOH P21.52 billion.

The Senate and the House of Representatives on Friday ratified the proposed General Appropriations Act of 2019, which would continue to support the administration's "Build, Build, Build" program.

No figures for the total budget of each government agency in the spending measure were available as of Saturday.

Legarda said the DPWH's allocations for right-of-way settlements and foreign-assisted projects were cut, but its budget increased overall due to funds set aside for local infrastructure projects.

The Senate had pushed for an additional P15 billion to build

and equip health centers as part of the DOH program to enhance its health facilities. It added P4.78 billion to complete the funding for new personnel.

For indigents, cancer meds

Lawmakers also increased the funding to assist indigent patients and to purchase medicines for cancer patients.

The "special purpose funds" in the spending bill was slashed by P70.67 billion, Legarda said. The reduction included P7.227 billion in allocations to local governments and in miscellaneous personnel benefits.

The Department of Education had a net increase of P2.521 billion, which includes P800 million for teachers' allowance on World Teachers' Day.

The additional funding would also go to teacher development and computerization programs, textbooks and other instructional materials and the school-based feeding program.

Increase for SUCs, DSWD

State universities and colleges (SUCs) would get a P2.813-billion increase to fund capital outlays for several schools, including the University of the Philippines.

Also given an increase was the Department of Social Wel-



Loren Legarda

fare and Development (DSWD), which will get P3.158 billion.

These additional social welfare allotments would be used for protective services and the implementation of the enhanced program for children, families, indigenous peoples and individuals in difficult situations.

About one-third, or P1 billion, would be used for Bahay Pag-asa centers under the Juvenile Justice Welfare Council for children in conflict with the law.

Additional P3B for DND

The Department of National Defense (DND) got an additional P3.098 billion, which would fund the Task Force and Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program for the rebel/insurgent returnees, veterans' hospitalization and medical care and

the purchase of medicine and medical supplies for Veterans Memorial Medical Center.

Some of that money would be spent for allowances of government-armed militiamen under the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) and a new Maritime Command in Tawi-Tawi province.

The budget of the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole) was raised by P2.612 billion for the emergency repatriation of overseas Filipino workers, the employment facilitation program and the government internship program.

A P2.191-billion increase went to the judiciary to fund the construction of new halls of justice and new buildings for the Sandiganbayan and the Court of Appeals.

New Senate building

Congress' budget was increased by P1.775 billion to fund the construction of a new Senate building and additional operating requirements of the Senate and the Commission on Appointments.

Other executive offices got a net increase of P8.112 billion to fund, among others, additional intelligence and confidential funds for the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and

the National Security Council, and the operation of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Inter-agency Committee on Anti-illegal Drugs.

The Department of Agriculture's budget was slashed by P2.046 billion due to the reduction in allocations for farm-to-market roads and for credit facilities of the Agricultural Credit Policy Council.

But Legarda said this would be partially offset by the P10 million provided for the young farmers program and P50 million for the livestock production program, as well as the construction of fish landings, fisherman's wharf, and the purchase of fishing gears under the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

DOTr budget cut

In addition, P185 million was set aside for the establishment of Carabao Dairy Centers in various provinces.

The budget of the Department of Transportation (DOTr) also was reduced by P4.812 billion due to cuts in right-of-way funding, but selected air and sea ports, and the purchase of helicopters and lighted ocean buoys got additional allotments.

About P6.855 billion also was sliced off the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) budget

due largely to the transfer of the funds for the Southeast Asian Games from the DPA to the Philippine Sports Commission.

But Congress provided funds for the opening of consular offices within the country, as well as embassies in Melbourne, Barcelona, Nagoya, Morocco, Stockholm and Turkey, including augmentation of the operating requirements of selected embassies.

Immigration

The proposed 2019 budget also has a specific provision prohibiting the Bureau of Immigration from issuing temporary work permits to foreigners unless they present an alien employment permit or a similar certification from the Dole.

It also states that before the Dole issues this certification, it must determine that no Filipino is able and willing to do the same work at the time of application.

Another provision prohibits the use of unprogrammed funds for any project for public video surveillance and communication systems that will put the country's national security at risk.

The general provisions also clarify that the block grant to the Bangsamoro government will be automatically appropriated. INQ

World Bank lauds ratification of BOL

The World Bank lauded the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) that seeks to promote lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the Philippines' southern region. In a statement, the World Bank congratulated the Filipino people, particularly the Bangsamoros, for the ratification of the law, describing the measure as "a significant milestone" for Mindanao. But the multilateral institution noted that "much work" still needs to be done to fulfill the law's goal of autonomous, secured and prosperous regions of Bangsamoro and Mindanao. "The recent bombings in Jolo and the residual violence in some other places in conflict-affected areas following the BOL's ratification highlights the complexity of challenges facing the region and the country," the World Bank said. "The formation of the Bangsamoro is one important step that can put the country in a better position to address these drivers of conflict," the World Bank said. (CSL) **B1**

Hataman, other officials bid farewell to ARMM

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY — Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Gov. Mujiv Hataman and members of his Cabinet on Friday bade farewell to their respective offices, which are set to be replaced by a new set of offices under the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Hataman and Vice Governor Haroun Al-Rashid Lucman Jr. were joined by hundreds of rank and file regional government employees for Friday's flag retreat where they posed for photos beside a giant tarpaulin which bore the message: "Thank you and Goodbye, ARMM."

Two days earlier, former Anak Mindanao party-list Rep. Djalila Turrabin-

Hataman, wife of the ARMM governor, posted on her Facebook page a recollection of her husband's service in the soon-to-be-abolished regional government.

"(We praise God) for the opportunity given to him to serve ARMM and its people. He was not from any revolutionary front, not from an ethnic group that claim greatness and superiority but instead is a Yakan, who is looked down, even by some Muslim and Moro groups as a lower class tribe. He did not belong to the old rich or old political (or both) clans that have ruled for decades," Djalila said of her husband.

She added: "(Hataman) is a son of a quiet community leader of a town... even the Basilan people consider a lowly backward municipality. His only claim to

the seat he occupied was his consistent, principled stands when he was a young activist and as three-term Anak Mindanao representative in Congress"

"May history be kind to his seven years as public servant in ARMM. And more importantly, may Allah (swt) find him worthy of His Mercy, accept his good deeds and forgive his errors, shortcomings and excesses. It is not important for people to remember him, but may they benefit from the good that he has done, and be protected from unfavorable consequences his actions and decisions may bring, in the near or far future," the wife said. 12

Hataman has repeatedly assured that his administration would leave behind a "good legacy" to the upcoming administrators of BARMM.

Murad disowns list of BTA nominees

BY MASIDING NOOR YAHYA

MARAWI CITY: The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has disowned a list that circulated on social media of its alleged 41 nominees to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the body that will serve as interim government in the incoming Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) until its first elections in 2022.

MILF Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim told reporters in Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao that the list was "not official" and asked netizens to delete it from their social media accounts to avoid sowing confusion.

He said it did not emanate from the MILF and no one was given consent to do so, nor was such an act necessary in the first place.

The purported list included Ebrahim, Ghazali Jaafar, Mohagher Iqbal and Abdullah Macapaar aka Commander Bravo.

Majority in the list are, like Murad, Maguindanaons, including Ghazali and Mohagher, and field commanders.

Murad said all sectors would be fairly represented in the BTA.

With the ratification of the

Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) creating the BARMM, President Rodrigo Duterte is expected to name 80 appointees to the BTA, majority of whom are MILF members.

The law states that the MILF will lead the BTA, but it also allows members to come from its rival, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), as well as from the indigenous peoples of the region.

The MNLF members to be included in the BTA are to come from the breakaway faction now headed by Yusop Jikiri, not from the original MNLF under Prof. Nur Misuari.

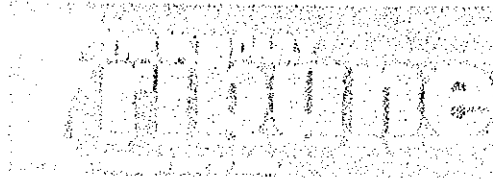
Jikiri's faction sat in the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) that drafted the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and enacted into law by Congress as BOL.

Aside from the 80 members to be appointed by the President, the incumbent elected officials of the outgoing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will also sit in the transition body until their terms expire on June 30, 2019.

The BOL was anchored on the final peace deal signed by the government and the MILF in 2014, after four decades of conflict that left more than 120,000 people dead.

Meanwhile, Murad said he accepted the plebiscite result in Lanao del Norte where the "No" vote won, disallowing the province's six towns from joining the new Bangsamoro region.

"As long as the plebiscite was conducted in fair and honest manner, we are ready to accept whatever is the result. If otherwise, we will see what can be done legally," he said. *AK*



OIC: Synchronize MNLF, MILF pacts

By Perseus Echeminada

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) wanted the government to synchronize the 1996 peace accord with Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Bangsamoro deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to assure that the current pact will endure. **Turn to page 6**

From page 1

MNLF spokesman Emmanuel Fontanilla told *Daily Tribune* that OIC is seeking the conclusion of the final implementation of 1996 peace agreement which was abandoned by former President Benigno Aquino in 2013.

The OIC in a resolution urged the government to link the two peace accords to attain lasting peace in Mindanao.

Fontanilla told the *Daily Tribune* President Rodrigo Duterte's desire to resume peace talks with the MNLF is a good indicator on the resolution of the remaining issues in the two agreements the government had entered into with secessionist groups.

The resumption of peace talk may be focused on how to tie up the 1996 accord with the recently concluded MILF peace agreement, Fontanilla said.

OIC as negotiator

The MNLF peace accord was brokered by the OIC while the agreement signed by the government and MILF had Malaysia as mediator.

The resumption of the peace talks will be confined to three unresolved issues. The government and MNLF panels were already in the final stage of striking a deal when Aquino abandoned talks with the MNLF while starting negotiations with the MILF.

Among the unresolved issues pertained to governance, wealth sharing and territory.

The 32-page 1996 peace agreement covers the Basic Rights, Rights on Sharing of Revenues for Metallic Minerals, Security, Governance, Women and the Indigenous Peoples.

The MNLF said provisions of the agreement "should not be diminished." The group's spokesman said the position was shared by the OIC.

Nur tapped

Mr. Duterte earlier had said he would seek MNLF founding chairman Nur Misuari's help in resolving the conflict in Mindanao.

"He (Duterte) considers Nur Misuari as someone, with his group, who can help in ending the conflict in Mindanao," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

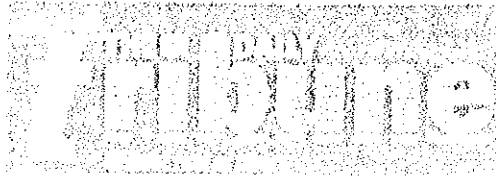
Provisions of the 1996 agreement should not be diminished.

Panelo added Misuari also offered to talk with the President to share many ideas that he can contribute for the peace, prosperity and progress in Mindanao.

"I relayed that to the President. And so, the President is open to talk to him with respect to whatever suggestions he has in mind," Panelo said.

In September 2013, senior leaders of the MNLF issued a resolution asking Manila to recall a note verbale it submitted to the OIC that sought the closure of the MNLF peace agreement.

The Palace then denied that it had issued such a communication to the OIC.



Sail from better ports

Among the most frenetic activities in the maritime sector is happening under the two and a half years of the Duterte administration with no less than 160 projects having been started.

"The details of that is these are implemented all over the Philippines and it involves putting up of ports, terminals,

Turn to page 6

The rehabilitation of the Tubigon port forms part of the government's infrastructure plan to further develop Bohol's economy

From page 1

improving belting and different other undertakings.

Among these projects is the strategic reopening of the biggest passenger terminal with a capacity of 3,000 passengers in Tubigon, Bohol after the damage it sustained during a magnitude 7.2 earthquake five years ago had been repaired.

The repair and renovation of the port was fast-tracked after an inspection conducted by Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade in March 2018.

The repair was completed in less than nine months and the port can now accommodate 28 ships, including larger sea vessels, which is almost three times more than its previous capacity of 10 ships. It also has three roll-on, roll-off (RoRo) wharfs for docking landing craft tanks and barges.

Its air-conditioned passenger terminal building can serve about 4,000 passengers daily from the previous 1,500 and provides a child care station facility. It also has enhanced security facilities, including a baggage x-ray machine and a walk-through metal detector.

Enhanced services

The rehabilitation of the Tubigon port included the establishment of a one-stop shop for a more convenient clearing and payment of charges; the repair of the pedestrian covered walkway, lighting system, security fence and gate and improvements on the port access road.

"The rehabilitation of the Tubigon port forms part of the government's infrastructure plan to further develop Bohol's economy, which was severely affected by the devastating quake that left hundreds dead and billions of pesos worth in damage," the PPA said.

The Tubigon port will serve as a primary dock for sea vessels traversing the Tubigon-Cebu City route and an alternative mode of transportation for travelers from Bohol going to Cebu and vice versa due to its shorter travel time, numerous transport schedules, affordable fares and availability of public vehicles that ply the routes to any point in Bohol.

So we are putting those up. Total, 160 projects in two and a half years, I will presume that those constitute good performance.

The port serves as a primary dock for sea vessels traversing the Tubigon-Cebu City route and an alternative mode of transportation for travelers from Bohol going to Cebu.

Connectivity a must

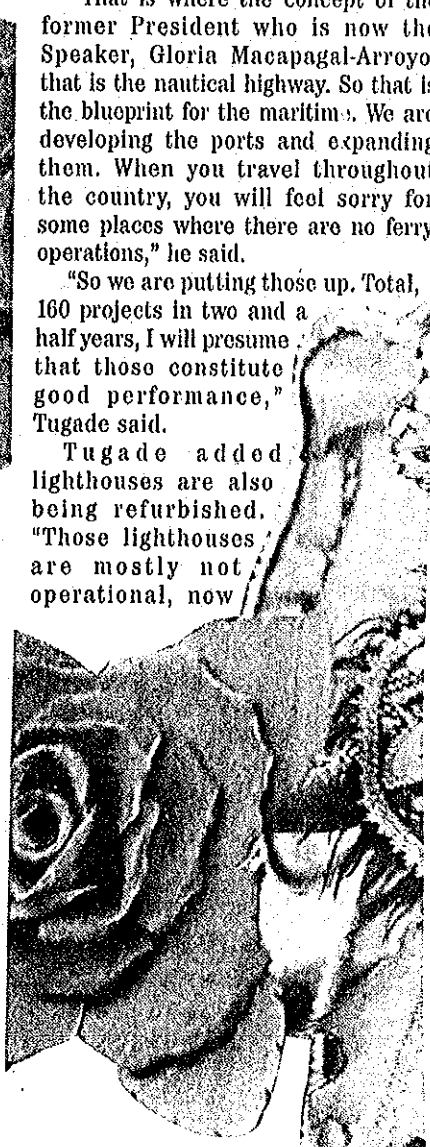
"That is completed to shorten the 19 hours needed to sail between Bohol and Cebu. Why are the projects all over the Philippines? No brainer. The Philippines is an archipelago. Because it is an archipelago, it has multiple islands which needed connectivity," he said.

"That is where the concept of the former President who is now the Speaker, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, that is the nautical highway. So that is the blueprint for the maritime. We are developing the ports and expanding them. When you travel throughout the country, you will feel sorry for some places where there are no ferry operations," he said.

"So we are putting those up. Total, 160 projects in two and a half years, I will presume that those constitute good performance," Tugade said.

Tugade added lighthouses are also being refurbished.

"Those lighthouses are mostly not operational, now



we are rehabilitating them since it was lost to us that lighthouses are also navigational tools. "The objective is that all lighthouses become operational," he added.

On maritime security, Tugade said the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), which is under his agency, had acquired fast boats.

"In the past, the terrorists like the Abu Sayyaf use faster vessels than the PCG. Now we have fast crafts. We have 90 meters, 24 meters and we have increased the personnel to operate these boats," he said.

Also the K9 operations of the PCG have improved through 400 dogs to help in securing ports.

Road RoRo

Marina also recently opened new RoRo missionary routes which means direct points connecting ports that have no existing shipping services due to their location, Tugade said.

These routes are: Basco, Batanes to Currimao, Ilocos Norte; Batangas City to San Jose, Occidental Mindoro; San Juan, Batangas to Abra de Ilog, Occidental Mindoro; Real, Quezon to Polillo Island, Quezon; Lucena, Quezon to Odiongan, Romblon; Lucena, Quezon to Buyabod, Marinduque; Lucena, Quezon to Romblon, Romblon; Lucena, Quezon to Masbate City; Maasin, Southern Leyte to Ubay, Bohol; San Narciso, Quezon to San Pascual, Masbate; Pantao, Albay to San Pascual, Masbate; Calbayog City, Samar to Cataingan, Masbate; Taytay, Palawan to Cuyo, Palawan to San Jose de Buenavista, Antique; Oslob, Cebu to Dumaguete, Negros Oriental; Punta Engano, Mactan Island, Cebu to Jetafe, Bohol; Poro, Camotes, Cebu to Isabel, Leyte; Lipata, Surigao del Norte to Dapa, Surigao del Norte and Siaton, Negros Oriental to Dipolog City.

Tugade said shipping companies should operate in any of the newly opened missionary routes in support of the enhancement of the country's Road RoRo terminal system to improve inter-island transportation, enhance tourism and expand regional markets. **Chito Lozada**

Dayuhang suicide bomber, kinakanlong ng ASG?

NI FER TABOY

Kinakanlong ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ang isang umano'y dayuhan na

suicide bomber na namataan sa kanilang kuta sa Jolo, Sulu, kamakailan.

Ito ang kinumpirma ni Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año at sinabing ang nasabing Arab-looking na suicide bomber ay kasama ni ASG sub-commander Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan.

Si Sawadjaan ay nagsisilbing emir ng terror group na Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) sa bansa.

Paliwang ni Año, ang nabanggit na grupo ay responsable sa papagpapasabog sa Mount Carmel Cathedral sa Jolo, Sulu, kamakailan na ikinasawi ng 22 katao at

ikinasugat ng mahigit sa 100 iba pa.

Sinabi rin nito na may na-monitor din silang ilang Moroccan at Indonesian national na nasa kuta ng Abu Sayyaf upang magsilbing trainer ng mga bandido.

Kaugnay nito, inihayag ni Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde na dinoble na nila ang pangangalap ng mga impormasyon upang hindi makalusot sa bansa ang mga teroristang grupo.

Todo-banta din aniya ang mga tauhan nito sa mga entry at exit point ng bansa sa posibilidad na maharang ang mga teroristang nais manggulo sa bansa. 5

BABE'S EYE VIEW

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ambassador B. ROMUALDEZ

The terrorism-drugs nexus

Just very recently as head of the Philippine delegation, I attended the "Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS" ministers' meeting held at the US State Department. The summit was hosted by US State Secretary Mike Pompeo with US President Donald Trump as the main speaker. The US President thanked the coalition's collective commitment in defeating ISIS around the world.



At the meeting – said to be the biggest gathering ever and attended by representatives from 74 countries and five international organizations that include the Interpol and NATO – I shared our experience in Marawi City and the government's successful effort in combatting the forces of the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)-affiliated Maute and Abu Sayyaf terrorist groups working with our trusted allies, most especially the United States.

During my intervention, I told the delegates that the Philippines is doing its part in the global efforts to completely annihilate ISIS, and expressed the government's continued commitment to address the prevailing threat of terrorism, as seen in the recent bombing of a Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu that left more than 20 people dead and more than a hundred injured, with ISIS claiming responsibility for the attack.

On the sidelines of the meeting, I spoke to Lt. General Michael Nagata (who is the Director for Strategic Operational Planning of the National Counterterrorism Center under the office of the Director of National Intelligence) and explained that while it is a law and order problem, there is absolutely a connection between drugs and terrorism as evidenced by our experience during the siege of Marawi where an estimated P250 million worth of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) was discovered during clearing operations conducted by government troops. The discovery of drugs confirmed President Duterte's suspicions that terrorist groups generate funding through the illegal drugs business. President Duterte underscored this during the recent oath taking in Malacañang of newly appointed officials from various government agencies, saying that "...the rebellion in Marawi was fueled by drugs."

The delegate from Cameroon, Minister Felix Mbayu, told me that the Boko Haram – a militant Islamic terrorist group working out of Nigeria and active in Chad, Niger and parts of Cameroon – use illegal drugs to finance their activities and operations. Worse, these terrorists use the drugs themselves, making them even more vicious, kidnapping thousands of women and schoolgirls as young as eight years old to serve as sex slaves in their "rape camps." They become inhuman, making them technically ineligible to have human rights. Both of us agreed on that point.

During the lunch hosted by Secretary Pompeo, I had a discussion with the State Department's Counterterrorism Bureau head and Ambassador-at-Large Nathan Sales – who was also one of the discussants in the US panel – and I was emphatic that we really have to work together about the terrorism-drugs nexus.

In an article titled "Drugs & Thugs: Funding Terrorism Through Narcotics Trafficking" written by Associate Political Scientist of the RAND Corporation, Professor Colin P. Clarke, he pointed out that "Narcotics trafficking remains one of the most common and most lucrative forms of criminality on which terrorists rely in order to finance their organizations and activities."

Clarke outlines historical examples and contemporary cases of insurgent and terrorist groups relying on criminal activities, particularly drug trafficking, to fund their organizations, such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka in the early '80s, as well as the Hezbollah and Hamas in the Middle East that have ties with Mexican and Latin American drug cartels and various drug trafficking organizations. Terrorist groups serve as the security arm of drug cartels, and these two work well together because they are both hunted by law enforcement agencies and are the subject of intelligence network surveillance.

In many instances, terrorist groups take over the activities of the drug cartels, such as the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) that took over territory previously controlled by the Medellin and Cali cartels in the 1990s. Several sources also acknowledged that the drug money enabled FARC to spread its presence all over Colombia, with 65 percent of its funds coming from the illegal drugs trade.

A more contemporary example is the Taliban that had an estimated 500 drug laboratories in Afghanistan – a country that is now reputed to be the largest producer of opium. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), opium production in Afghanistan was at a record high of 9,000 metric tons in 2017 or an estimated \$1.4 billion in farm gate value.

In November 2017, US forces launched "Operation Jagged Edge" targeting Taliban drug laboratories to curb opium production in Afghanistan whose annual export value is estimated to be as much as \$4 billion – making Afghanistan the biggest supplier of illicit heroin all over the world (90 percent). While the bombings significantly reduced the number of drug labs, opium production is still high in Afghanistan estimated at 6,400 metric tons last year.

During the recent briefing of the UNODC last month, executive director Yuri Fedotov said, "The linkages between terrorism, illicit drugs and other forms of crime have been widely acknowledged, including by this council." His remarks were echoed by several delegates who confirmed that trafficking in illicit drugs and drug precursors threaten the social fabric, public health and political stability of their respective countries.

As President Trump said in his remarks during the coalition meeting, "the struggle against terrorism is a shared fight," and that "everyone must do their part and contribute their fair share."

One thing is clear: No ifs or buts – we must destroy the unholy alliance between terrorist groups and drug cartels.

Email: babeseyevic@ gmail.com

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Curious partners

**“
Noy
and Najib
appeared
to have
formed
a strong
partnership
during
those
period.**

Some six years ago to the date, 235 Filipinos who were loyal to the Sultan of Sulu and many of whom carrying ancient swords, arrived by boats in Lahad Datu District, Sabah, Malaysia from Tawi-Tawi in a quixotic mission — to reclaim Sabah.

It started a more than a month's battle between the “Royal Security Forces of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo” of Sultan Jamalul Kiram III and the Malaysian state forces.

The outcome was predictable, with the Malaysians overwhelming the ill-equipped warriors of the Sultan, but the response to the crisis of then President Noynoy Aquino raised several questions.

The Malaysian authorities initially tried to negotiate the surrender of the Sultan's followers which was accompanied by surprising threats from Noynoy.

A consideration for a peaceful end in the standoff, according to retired Lt. Gen. Datuk Seri Zaini Mohd Said, former field commander of the Malaysian army, was the effort of his country “in its role as the facilitator towards getting the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Manila peace accord finalized and the establishment of the Bangsamoro state in southern Philippines.”

“If force were to result in many casualties on the Sulu side, then Malaysia's plans and prospects of helping and participating in the development in the land of the Moros will diminish. It cannot be easy when there are to be vengeful and angry people from within the population there,” he added.

When the crisis escalated resulting in the assault of Malaysian authorities on Kiram's supporters, Noynoy was obviously getting guidance from Malaysia, as he parroted then Prime Minister Najib Razak's version of how the firefight erupted up to the casualty figures that resulted from the clash.

The Palace, through then Interior Secretary Mar Roxas, initially denied reports of a skirmish and the deaths resulting from it but he obviously mouthed a Malaysian line since reports from news agencies were already recounting casualties.

A spokesman for the Sulu Sultanate then accused Roxas of talking in behalf of the Malaysian government. Aquino then launched his habit of blaming opponents for the crisis as he suggested political undertones on the Sabah incursion in identifying certain groups in funding the Sabah expedition.

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All of the Palace briefings contained the Malaysian line, including Aquino asking Kiram's followers to retreat from Sabah while imposing a deadline.

There was nothing said about asking Malaysia to assure the safety of, if not the Sultan's followers, then the estimated 800,000 Filipinos who reside in Sabah who were then in danger of Malaysian backlash.

Aquino issued a statement which called, short of ordering, the followers of Kiram to surrender unconditionally which was the same demand of Razak on what he called then as Sabah invaders.

The Sulu Sultan through his spokesman said the Sabah adventure would have not been launched had Noynoy consulted them on the process of forming the Bangsamoro region.

Kiram said he even sent Noynoy a letter explaining the need for the Sultanate's part in the Bangsamoro process which was exclusively between the Aquino administration and the MILF. Aquino said the letter was lost in "the bureaucratic maze."

Aquino apparently disassociated with the Sultan or his claim on Sabah to prevent offending Malaysia. 14

“ The fighting which started in Lahad Datu where the Sultan's men have camped out to be surrounded by the Malaysian police later on spread to other parts of Sabah.

Aquino was obviously getting guidance from Malaysia. One of the grudges of the Sultan was the token rent being paid by Malaysia for the oil-rich territory which is something like P75,000 a year, which was what the British government paid the Sultanate two centuries before.

Aquino remained unmoved even as Filipinos fled Sabah en masse as a result of the reported brutal treatment from Malaysian state security forces.

There were supposedly instances when Filipinos were shot while already in custody while those confined in prison were reportedly starved.

Noynoy, instead, blamed the Sultan for resurrecting a dormant issue.

Concerns over the possible violation of human rights of Filipinos in the Malaysian sweep were never entertained.

Noynoy and Najib appeared to have formed a strong partnership during those period in some mysterious circumstances, including allegations of Malaysian considerations to keep the Philippines out of the conflict.

The irony is that Najib is set to go to court for his first of many corruption trials related to a financial scandal while Noynoy has yet to get his comeuppance.

Reading through the plebiscite result

“Tribalism is a major factor that could explain the outcome.”

For reasons hitherto unexplained, there were two rounds of plebiscite conducted for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) that creates the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Was it designed to protect or promote the interest of certain powerful lawmakers-politicians?

There were tragic incidents that threatened to derail the polls like the bloody carnage at the cathedral in Jolo, the bombing in Cotabato City and the harassment bombings in Lanao del Norte, but the plebiscite went through as scheduled. The toll was heavy, in terms of lives lost and injuries inflicted. These happened proximate to the day of the polls (Are authorities pretty sure these have nothing to do with the referendum?).

The result of the plebiscite is a top topic among armchair Monday morning quarterbacks. The uninited are asking why did Sulu and Isabela City vote to reject BOL while the city mayor of Cotabato is questioning the integrity of the result in her city (ironically, Cotabato City has always been the de facto capital of the Autonomous government since its inception and its inclusion is welcome development). How did the few villages in North Cotabato succeed to be part of the territory of BARMM while the six towns in Lanao del Norte failed in their bid despite their “Yes” vote?

These questions betray ignorance of the socio-cultural and political dynamics in Morolandia and the “lopsided” provisions of the autonomy law which required a “double majority” or majority of



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Macabangkit B. Lanto

votes in both the mother geographical unit and component local units subject of the plebiscite (This is one of the contentious issues raised by the Tan petition before the Supreme Court still pending resolution).

To those who followed the saga of Moros for autonomy

and the peculiar socio-cultural variances in the area the result was expected. Tribalism and politics are very much alive among Moros.

As this column has predicted, the “Yes” vote was overwhelming in mainland Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur-Marawi City while it barely won in the island provinces of what we often refer as BASULTA or Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

The “No” votes in Sulu were buried in the landslide votes of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao where there were precincts which registered zero votes for “No.” The rejection of the BOL in Sulu didn’t count because of the peculiar provision in the BOL that the component provinces and cities of the present Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) should vote as one geographical unit. The “No” vote in Isabela was also expected, being dominated by non-Moros and, in fact, not part of the ARMM. In Lanao del Norte, about nine towns voted for inclusion but it was not enough to offset the “No” vote majority province-wide. But it was an ominous sign of a chink in the political armor of the decades-long ruling dynastic Dimaporo family.

If not for their wholehearted and intense campaign they would have lost the six towns that wished to be included in the BARMM territory.

Tribalism is a major factor that could explain the outcome. The major Moro tribes all claim *maharlika* ancestry and royal blood. One tribe can never be a vassal of another. The Sultan of Sulu, proud of his lineage and heritage is independent and autonomous from the Sultan of Maguindanao and Raja Buaya-an, just as the 4 Panoroganans or Royal Houses of Lanao are sovereign within its territories.

The polarization of the Moros is endemic and has reared its ugly head at the onset of the struggle for *merdeka* or independence. The Tausug Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) started the campaign, but the Maguindanaon members broke away organizing the Moro Islamic Liberation Front followed by the Maranaws also organizing their own MNLF-Reformist Group.

On hindsight, during the formative years of autonomy, then President Marcos, ever sensitive to the history, socio-cultural variances and nobility claims among Moros split the short-lived Southern Philippines Autonomous Region into two Autonomous Regions, one for Central Mindanao and another for the Western side. It was a solomonic solution to resolve the rivalry among tribes in mainland Mindanao and BASULTA.

The campaign for the BOL may have triggered friction among stakeholders which needs healing. The BARMM is new untested government and its path strewn with hurdles. It needs shepherding by central government and support from all sectors, irrespective of tribal identity and bias.

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ONLINE NEWS

10 FEBRUARY 2019

Senator, 5 others get Army reserve ranks

By Priam Nepomuceno February 9, 2019, 12:57 pm

MANILA – Six newly-commissioned Philippine Army (PA) reserve officers, including a lawmaker, were donned with new ranks in a ceremony that took place at the PA headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City on Friday.

In a statement Saturday, Army public affairs office chief, Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, named the new reserve officers as Lt. Col. Sherwin Gatchalian, chair of the Senate committee on economic affairs and energy; Lt. Col. Anthony Bravo, Coop-Natcco Party-list representative; Lt. Col. Roel A. Sacho, Policy Development and Planning Division Chief of the Department of Science and Technology; Lt. Col. Dindo Jose P. de Viterbo, Project Officer IV of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office; Lt. Col. Joseph Ross S. Jocson, president of Allen Packaging System Corp.; Lt. Col. Ricardo J. Gamboa, vice president of the Development Academy of the Philippines; and Major Joseph B. Encaco, Assistant Secretary of the Presidential Management Staff.

Army chief, Lt. Gen. Macairog Alberto, welcomed the newly-commissioned reserve officers who represented a cross-section of the society.

"As we sustain our momentum under the Army Transformation Roadmap, we enjoin our newly commissioned reserved officers to live up to the oath they have taken and the responsibility of the rank they now carry. I expect you to embolden our core values of honor, patriotism and duty," Alberto said.

On behalf of the newly-commissioned officers, Gatchalian said being a part of the PA reserve force is one way of showing love of country.

"We can demonstrate our love for country by working abroad and sending money back home, do business to lift up our economy, and by working in the government to serve our people. In my case, it is by wearing the Army uniform itself, which is truly an honor and opportunity. This is worthy because it represents sacrifices and willingness to offer our life beyond the call of duty, for my family, country and people," the senator said.

The donning of ranks in the military symbolizes the conferment of authority and responsibility of the commissioned officers.

This is in line with the priority thrust of the PA, which is to develop a capable reserve force as part of the Total Force Concept.

The Total Force Concept highlights the importance of developing, integrating and sustaining the country's reserve force to complement the Army's operational requirement in times of war and emergencies. **(PNA)**

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