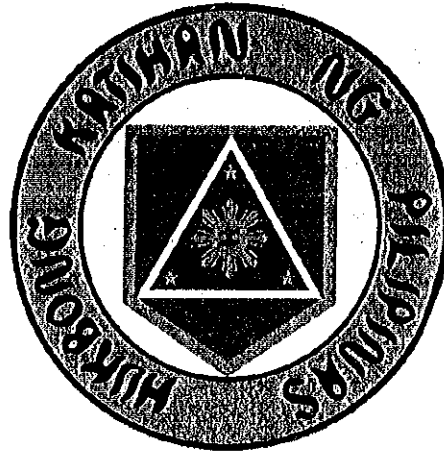


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## NEWS CLIPPINGS

11 February 2019

Monday

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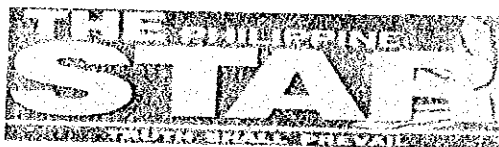
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 11 FEBRUARY 2019

Weather Forecast- <a href="http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast">http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast</a>		
Page Nr.	Title	Source
<b>NATIONAL NEWS</b>		
1-2	Rody to campaign for immunization	P Star-1
3-4	Andaya: 2 execs set to restore P75-B pork	PDI-A1
<b>AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS</b>		
5-6	Health sector gets P21.5-B budget boost	P Star-4
7	Duterte to attend Inaul Festival	M Bulletin-16
8	New Vizcaya cop chief assumes post	P Star-14
9	Cops fishing for info vs Reds, not trying to solve murder of NDFP peace consultant	PDI-A11
10	Reds burn Quezon construction equipment	P Star-14
11	Manhaunt on versus heavy equipment-burning rebels	D Tribune-7
12	NPA rebels burn heavy equipment for road project	Tempo-4
13	Duterte warns rebels to keep off May 2019 polls	M Bulletin-2
14	Duterte sa NPA: 'Wag manggulo sa eleksiyon	Balita-3
15	Palace to communist rebels: Accept defeat	M Times-A2
16	Palace dares Joma: Let's talk peace	M Standard-A7
17	Palace tweets 'defeated' Joma	D Tribune-7
18	No final list of BTA appointees-OPAPP	P Star-14
19-20	'Govt, MILF conspired to ensure BOL victory'	M Times-A1
21	Moves synchronized during Sabah crisis	D Tribune-1
22	Army chief visits troops in Sulu	M Bulletin-11
23	BTA appointees list still up for approval	M Bulletin-5
24	Unexploded bombs still litter Marawi	M Times-A7
25	Marawi rehab: 49 bombs yet to be found	Malaya-B1
26	Support security measures, Armed Forces asks public	Malaya-B1
27	Mindanao support solid-Kono	D Tribune-2
28	'DAR order on agri land conversion to benefit cronies'	P Star-6
29	Employees bid goodbye to ARMM in flag rites	PDI-A11
30-31	Japan vows continued support for Mindanao	P Star-1
32-33	Japan will be 'steady partner' of PH-Kono	M Bulletin-1
34	Japan reaffirms commitment to development of Mindanao	Malaya-B2
35	Japan minister pledges support for Mindanao infra	M Standard-A1
36	Mindanao solons urged to push Islamic banking framework	M Bulletin-16
<b>EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY</b>		
37	Mandatory ROTC? Think hard first	PDI-A13
38-39	Rebuilding new roads to peace, security, and human development	M Bulletin-12
40	False claims by the CPP-NPA	M Times-A4
41-42	Did Du30 get a new kidney?	M Times-A1

*By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.*

43-44	Fallout from Jolo bombing	M Standard-A4
<b>ONLINE NEWS</b>		
45-46	Centcom lauds resident's tip-off in foiled NPA attack	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>



# Rody to campaign for immunization

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Amid a measles outbreak, President Duterte is taking a direct hand in the information campaign that seeks to restore the public's confidence in the government's immunization program, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential Communications Operations Secretary Martin Andanar said the President would deliver a message about the importance of immunization in one of his speeches.

"I heard the President will help (Health Secretary Francisco Duque III) bring back the people's trust in the Department of Health's immunization program and the President himself will help in the communications," Andanar told state-run *Radyo Pilipinas* last Saturday.

"I think he will say something in one of the coming events," he added.

Andanar said his agency

would "actively support" the health department's information campaign.

"We will assist them in their vaccination program, which was affected by the issue on Dengvaxia... other immunization programs were also affected. Several illnesses like measles and pneumonia could have been avoided (if children were given immunization)," Andanar said.

Last year, the country's immunization rate plunged to 40 percent from an average of 70 percent in recent years. Officials have blamed the drop on the Dengvaxia controversy, which erupted after it was

Turn to Page 8

## Rody From Page 1

disclosed that the vaccine may have placed recipients who never had dengue fever at risk of contracting more severe diseases.

Duque has attributed the measles outbreak in various parts of the country to the panic caused by the Dengvaxia fiasco.

Last week, Duterte ordered agencies to launch a "vigorous" information campaign to promote the government's immunization program.

### **Compulsory vaccination**

Members of the House of Representatives yesterday called on officials to

stop blaming each other for the measles outbreak in the country, but work instead to restore the trust of Filipinos in the government's vaccination programs.

"Right now, the most important message – the only message – that we need to be hearing from everyone is to assure the mothers. Convince the mothers to have their children vaccinated," House Deputy Speaker Rep. Pia Cayetano said in a mix of English and Filipino.

"As we are talking, while we are pointing fingers, debating, babies are dying," the representative from Taguig, who will be seeking re-election in

the Senate in the May 13 polls, told reporters in an interview in La Trinidad, Benguet over the weekend.

Cayetano, principal author and sponsor of the Mandatory Infants and Children Immunization law or Republic Act 10152, stressed that there is an urgent need to end the "general feeling of distrust" among parents toward the government's mandatory immunization program.

"Since I heard the news about the measles outbreak I stress its need when I talk to mothers, hoping to give them that sense of confidence to have their children vaccinated," Cayetano said.

Reps. Mikee Romero of party-list 1Pacman, Berna-

dette Dy of Bagong Henerasyon, Neil Abayon of Aangat Tayo party-list, Salvador Belaro Jr. of 1-Ang Edukasyon party-list and Ron Salo of Kabayan party-list also made a similar call.

"Time is of the essence. This (blame game) is the last thing we need at this point. Let's help one another in fighting this outbreak. We need all the help we can get. Now is the time to put up a united front so that our children will be safe," Romero said.

Dy, aware of Australia's report that a child from Manila carried the virus to them, called for civil aviation protocols to screen airline passengers to keep the virus from spreading.

"The objective now is to

keep the measles from spreading to the rest of the country, world," Dy said.

Abayon, a registered nurse by profession, asked the health department to make public the names of areas where there are confirmed cases of measles so that local government officials will be able to make the appropriate measures against its spread.

Belaro urged the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education to direct all school officials to take precautions against measles for the health and safety of their students and faculty.

"Schools can be hotspots of the spread of measles and other contagious diseases because of population density

and vulnerability of children and teenagers because of their health status, so precautions are necessary," Belaro said.

Salo, for his part, said poor families with members infected with measles can avail themselves of the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. coverage for indigents. He urged families to immediately go to hospitals when they see the symptoms of measles among their household.

"PhilHealth will be there for the indigent families. Measles is covered by PhilHealth. It is important for doctors to examine and cure the patients. Life and health are precious," Salo said in English and Filipino.

– With Delon Porcalla

# ANDAYA: 2 EXECS SET TO RESTORE P75-B PORK

STORY BY DJ YAP

**The House appropriations committee chair vows action in the Supreme Court if Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles succeed in their 'evil scheme.'**

AB

**FROM A1**

**By DJ Yap**  
@deejayapINQ

Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. on Sunday accused two Cabinet officials of orchestrating the restoration of P75 billion in pork allegedly inserted by budget officials into the proposed 2019 appropriations law but was realigned by lawmakers to their own projects.

Andaya, chair of the House of Representatives appropriations committee, said Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles were maneuvering for the restoration through the President's expected veto message on the P3.8-trillion national budget.

"Now that Congress has fulfilled its job in correcting the P75-billion gaffe, Secretaries Diokno and Nograles are back [on] the drawing board to restore it in

the 2019 GAA (General Appropriations Act) via a veto message," Andaya said in a statement.

"This is clear mockery of the power of Congress to scrutinize the budget," said the former House majority leader.

The Inquirer tried to reach Diokno and Nograles for comment on Sunday, but they didn't return calls.

## Going to Supreme Court

Andaya vowed to join Senators Panfilo Lacson and Franklin Drilon in questioning the veto message in the Supreme Court should it reflect the restoration of the P75 billion earlier earmarked for projects under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

"In case the two Cabinet members succeed in this evil scheme of vetoing the (general appropriations bill) to restore the P75-billion insertion, I will join Senators Lacson and Drilon in questioning the veto message [in] the Supreme Court," Andaya said.



**MONEY BUSINESS** Sen. Loren Legarda, the Senate finance committee chair, and Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., House appropriations committee chief, show copies of the conference committee report on the P3.8-trillion spending bill. —JOAN BONDOC

Earlier, Andaya accused Diokno of inserting the P75 billion into the DPWH funding under the National Expenditure Program (NEP) to finance projects that would benefit the budget chief's in-laws.

Diokno has denied the allegations.

The House and the Senate ratified the 2019 spending bill on Friday, the last session day of

the 17th Congress, after a contentious conference that lasted several days.

The two chambers agreed to divert the P75 billion in public works funds to other projects to be identified by the legislators themselves.

#### **Presidential veto**

The President, who must sign the spending bill within 30

days of receipt or else it lapses into law, can veto the entire measure or portions of it.

Lacson, supported by Andaya, had urged the President to veto items that "look and smell like pork"—funding for lawmakers' projects intended to benefit them politically as well as financially through kickbacks.

In his statement, Andaya said Lacson's observation that the P75-billion insertion in the NEP was "a conspiracy between the DBM (Department of Budget and Management) and the previous House leadership" was correct.

"I find it interesting how the DBM can maneuver to restore its P75-billion insertion in the final print of the 2019 general appropriations bill," he said.

He issued an unsolicited advice to his predecessor Nograles, who chaired the House appropriations panel under the leadership of former Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez.

"Be careful with the crafting of the veto message for it will

just lead back to where it all started. The public never forgets that you were part of the previous House leadership as chair of the appropriations committee," Andaya said.

"Both the Senate and the House have realigned the P75-billion DBM insertion," he said.

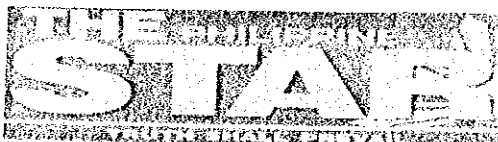
#### **Clearly pork**

"We knew that the funding source for the insertion was clearly pork. The infrastructure projects inserted by the DBM at 4 a.m. of July 22, 2018, were not vetted by the DPWH," Andaya said.

The House leader, however, was quick to deflect spray from Mr. Duterte.

"The President is not part of the conspiracy between the DBM and the previous House leadership," he said.

"It will be a great disservice and disloyalty for few Cabinet members to drag the President into this mess," Andaya said. INQ



# Health sector gets P21.5-B budget boost

By PAOLO ROMERO

The health sector got a major boost in the P3.7-trillion General Appropriations Bill (GAB), getting over a fifth of the P100-billion increase in the budgets of several

departments and constitutional offices this year.

Reporting to the plenary the highlights of the 2019 GAB just before its ratification on Friday, Sen. Loren Legarda, chairperson of the finance committee, said the Department

of Health's budget this year got a boost of P21.5 billion.

The amounts include P15 billion for the upgrading of hospitals under Health Facilities Enhancement Program (HFEP) and provision of P4.8 billion to complete the P7-billion re-

quirement for the hiring of medical personnel who will manage the facilities.

Legarda said allocation for medical assistance for indigent patients has been likewise increased.

"We are also providing funds for cancer medicines to help cancer patients in coping with their costly treatment," she said.

Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito, chairman of the health committee, said the funding for the HFEP would help ensure the effective implementation of the Universal Health Care (UHC) Bill.

Ejercito fought for the restoration of funding for the HFEP after the Department of Budget and Management cut the allocation for it.

He said the facilities would ensure the smooth implementation of the UHC measure, which includes all Filipinos in the National Health Insurance Program as well as bring down to an affordable level the people's expenses on health services including but not limited to checkups and selected laboratory procedures.

Congress, the judiciary as well as several constitutional offices and departments also got increases in their respective budgets in the GAB.

Congress got an increase of P1.8 billion for this year to cover the additional operating requirement of the Senate and the Commission on Appointments, including funding for the construction of a new Senate building.

The Office of the Vice President's budget this year will have a net hike of P215 million to fund various social programs of the OVP intended to improve the life of the poor and for the special duty allowance of security officers assigned to Vice President Leni Robredo.

The Department of Education was given a budgetary increase of P2.521 billion to fund various initiatives including P800 million for the allowance of teachers during the observance of World Teachers' Day, training, computerization and school-feeding program.

State universities and colleges will have an additional P2.8 billion for capital outlay, among others.

The Department of Labor and Employment will have a net increase of P2.612 billion for emergency aid for distressed overseas Filipino workers, while the Department of Information and Communications Technology was given an additional P2 billion for the national broadband and cybersecurity programs.

5



The Department of the Interior and Local Government obtained an additional funding of P1.75 billion for the construction of the Emergency 911 Command Center as well as more capital outlay for both the Philippine National Police and the Bureau of Fire Protection.

The Department of National Defense got an increase of P3.1 billion to fund various programs including those for the integration of rebel returnees, operating expenses of the Veterans Memorial Medical Center and additional allowances for members of the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Units.

The Department of Public Works and Highways obtained an increase of P32.92 billion for infrastructure projects while Department of Science and Technology got P450.25 million more to fund research grants.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development was given an additional P3.16 billion for its protective services programs as well as for the construction of more halfway homes for children in conflict with the law.

The Department of Tourism has P38 million more while the National Economic and Development Authority obtained an increase of P164.1 million for various research/studies to be undertaken by NEDA, including the preparation of various master plans of local government units.

The judiciary got a budgetary hike of P2.1 billion for the construction of the Cagayan de Oro complex and halls of justice under the Supreme Court as well as buildings for the Sandiganbayan and Court of Appeals.

### **Duterte to attend Inaul Festival**

BULUAN, Magauindanao – All is set for the second visit here of President Duterte on Monday for the 3rd Inaul Festival, civilian and security officials said today. Local authorities led by Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, head of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, and Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu said Malacañang has confirmed the visit of the President who will also distribute 1,000 certificates of land ownership award (CLOAs) to peasants in the province. Duterte first visited this provincial capital town on July 22, 2016 to inaugurate the 4.5-megawatt blo mass-based power plant. (All G. Macabalang)

## New Vizcaya cop chief assumes post

**BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya** – Senior Superintendent Richard Saavedra has assumed his post as the new police director of this province.

Saavedra, former police director of Siquijor, replaced Senior Superintendent Jeremias Aglugub, who was relieved from his post after the killing of National Democratic Front consultant Randy Felix Malayao on Jan. 30.

Chief Inspector Geovanni Cejes, Aritao police chief, who was also relieved from his post following the incident, was replaced by Inspector Jerome Simeon.

Aglugub and Cejes were accused of mishandling evidence when they turned over the cell phones, laptop and other personal belongings recovered from Malayao to his sister Perla Upano.

Malayao was shot while sleeping in a bus bound for Tuguegarao, Cagayan dur-

ing a stopover in Barangay Darapidap, Aritao.

Malayao was buried at a public cemetery in San Pablo, Isabela on Thursday.

### Tabak Division

In the military, the Army's First Infantry "Tabak" Division (ID) based in Zamboanga del Sur has a new commander.

Brig. Gen. Roberto Ancan replaced Maj. Gen. Roseller Murillo, who is retiring from military service, according to Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, Army public affairs office chief.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Macairog Alberto led the turnover ceremony on Thursday.

Ancan is former commander of the 1002nd "Bagwis" Brigade based in Sarangani and chief of staff of the 3rd ID in Capiz. – Victor Martin, Michael Punongbayan

LAWYERS' LAMENT

# COPS FISHING FOR INFO VS REDS, NOT TRYING TO SOLVE

## MURDER OF NDFP PEACE CONSULTANT

BAGUIO CITY—A police lawsuit against friends and family members of slain peace talks consultant Randy Felix Malayao was meant only to fish for information about communist rebels and not solve his murder, according to a member of the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) on Friday.

NUPL lawyer Edu Balgos was charged on Feb. 6 with grave threats, grave coercion and obstruction of justice because of his role in retrieving Malayao's laptop, phones and his other belongings from the

Nueva Vizcaya police.

Also charged were Balgos' wife, Rina, and Malayao's sister, Perla Urpano.

Police accused them of taking material evidence.

A consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in peace talks with the Duterte administration, Malayao was shot dead at dawn on Jan. 30 as he slept inside an Isabela-bound bus that made a pit stop at the Nueva Vizcaya town of Aritao.

Police released Malayao's belongings to Urpano at mid-

night of Jan. 30.

### Relieved

Senior Supt. Jeremias Aglugub, Nueva Vizcaya police chief, and Chief Insp. Giovanni Cejes, Aritao police chief, were sacked for mishandling the investigation.

Cejas filed the complaints against the Balgos couple and Urpano a day before Malayao was buried on Feb. 7 at the San Pablo Cemetery.

"Let us not forget that Randy Malayao is the victim here, his family is still grieving and the PNP

is putting unnecessary pressure on them," said Balgos, who helped Malayao's family when they reclaimed Malayao's belongings.

"The police should focus on the evidence they have," he said.

### Objective

"But they are hell-bent on laying their hands on Randy's cell-phones and laptop," Balgos said.

"This only shows that police are not really trying to solve the killing but actually want to fish for information," he added.

Balgos did not explain what

kind of data Malayao had been keeping in his devices.

### Unknown data

He, however, said police willingly released Malayao's belongings.

"His family stayed to assert their right to his personal belongings until the police gave in at around midnight," Balgos said.

Sections 1 and 2 of the Bill of Rights state that a slain victim's nearest kin was entitled to his or her belongings, the NUPL lawyer said.

Edre Olalia, NUPL president, said policemen investigating the murder of Malayao "are acting again like keystone cops of the early 1900s."

"How could an investigation be credible and competent when preconceived and biased inflexible conclusions come before the facts and premises?" Olalia said in a statement. 11

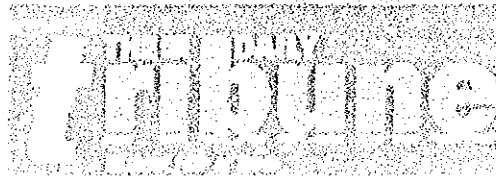
He was referring to a new account that said police are looking into a fallout between Malayao and the New People's Army as a motive for Malayao's killing. —KIMBERLIE QUITASOL INQ

### **Reds burn Quezon construction equipment**

Suspected communist rebels torched construction equipment in Infanta, Quezon on Friday.

Police said 15 New People's Army rebels burned three backhoes and a bulldozer owned by Northern Builders Corp. in Sitio Queborosa, Barangay Magsaysay.

The equipment were being used for a road widening project for the construction of Kaliwa Dam. — Romina Cabrera



## Manhunt on versus heavy equipment-burning rebels

Government forces have launched a manhunt against some 15 members of New People's Army (NPA) who torched on Friday several heavy equipment that were being used for a dam project in Infanta, Quezon.

**He added they will exhaust all means to track down and arrest the suspects.**

Describing the attackers as terrorists, Calabarzon police regional office head Chief Supt. Edward Carranza condemned the act and vowed to bring the suspects before the bar of justice.

Carranza said the terrorists torched three backhoes and a bulldozer being used for Kaliwa Dam project in Sitio Queborosa in

Barangay Magsaysay, Infanta.

"Upon knowledge of the incident, I immediately directed my men to double their efforts in solving the case and assure that the responsible persons will be put behind bars," Carranza said.

He added they are now coordinating with the Armed Forces of the Philippines for the arrest of the perpetrators of the incident.

"We will not allow these terrorists to continue committing and sowing violence in our communities," he said.

He added they will exhaust all means to track down and arrest the suspects.

Infanta police chief Lowell Atienza said the burned heavy equipment are owned by the Northern Builders Corporation.

## NPA rebels burn heavy equipment for road project

By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG

The Philippine National Police criticized the New People's Army Saturday after three backhoes and a bulldozer used in a road-widening project for the construction of a dam in Infanta, Quezon were burned by suspected communist rebels over the weekend.

Chief Supt. Edward Carranza, director of the Philippine National Police Region 4-A or the Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon area, said at least 15 NPA rebels are believed to be behind the arson incident.

According to Chief Insp. Lowell Atienza, chief of the Infanta Municipal Police Station, they received a report from a concerned citizen that the communist rebels raided a construction site in Sitio Queborosa in Barangay Magsaysay around 6:30 a.m. Friday and burned some equipment.

Atienza said investigators were immediately dispatched to verify the incident and it turned out

that indeed, three backhoes and a bulldozer owned by Northern Builders Corp. were burned by the still unidentified NPA rebels.

Carranza said the burned equipment was used in a road-widening work for the construction of the P12.2-billion Kaliwa Dam project.

The Kaliwa Dam project is expected to provide an additional 600 million liters of water a day to the province and other nearby areas, including Metro Manila, according to authorities.

Carranza said the police have coordinated with the military to identify the perpetrators of the arson incident and make them pay for what they did.

The Calabarzon top cop appealed to the public to reach out to them should they have any helpful information that could lead to the location of the rebels. The Calabarzon police could be reached through their hotlines 09457644414 and 0908777-9992.

## Duterte warns rebels to keep off May 2019 polls

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Communist rebels should "not mess up" the May midterm elections if they want to have a shot at the peace talks with the government, President Duterte declared recently.

The President asked the Communist rebels to respect the democratic process even if they don't favor some candidates in the polls.

"Kayong mga komunistang nakikinig [To the communists] if you really find it in your heart to be a participant of an exercise of the people to choose their candidate, kindly do not mess up with it," Duterte said in his visit to Albay last Friday.

"If you still want me or maybe

hoping to talk to me with the remaining three years, I'd like you to honor this tradition of our people," he added.

Duterte asserted that rebels have no business interfering in the upcoming elections as he renewed his call for them to stop extorting money from people in exchange for "permits."

"Hindi na bale sabihin nila na parang aso ang ugali niyan. That is none of your business because if it is the will of the people, kanya na... That's democracy. Wala tayong magawa [It does not matter if they behave like dogs. That is none of your business because if it is the will of the people, that's democracy.

We can't do anything]," he said.

In the same speech, the President offered to resume the peace talks with the local Communist group if its members would stop their extortion activities. He said he would not order the arrest of the rebel negotiators and even shoulder their hotel expenses during the duration of the peace negotiations.

"Ang mga NPA, kayo nakikinig kayo ngayon, kung gusto talaga ninyong tumulong, stop the extortion... You will have to stop extorting money and 'yung taxation ninyo [The NPAs, if you're listening today, if you want to help, stop the extortion. You will have to stop extorting money and taxation]," he said.



## Duterte sa NPA: 'Wag manggulo sa eleksiyon

'Wag nang isipin ng mga komunistang rebelde na guluhin ang midterm elections sa Mayo kung gusto nilang matuloy pa ang peace talks sa gobyerno, ito ang idineklara ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte kamakailan.

Hiniling ng Palasyo sa mga komunistang rebelde na irespeto ang demokratikong proseso kahit na hindi sila pabor sa ilang kandidato sa halalalan.

"Kayong mga komunistang nakikinig, if you really find it in your heart to be a participant of an exercise of the people to choose their candidate, kindly do not mess up with it," sinabi ni Duterte sa pagbisita niya sa Albay nitong

Biyernes.

Idinili ni Duterte na hindi na dapat nakikialam ang mga rebelde sa halalan at muling panawagan sa kanila na itigil ang pangangikil ng pera kapalit ng "permits."

"Hindi na balesabihin nila na parang aso ang ugali niyan. That is none of your business because if it is the will of the people, kanya na... That's democracy. Wala tayong magawa," aniya.

Sa parehong talumpati, nag-alok si Duterte na ituloy ang usapang pangkapayapaan sa local communist group kapag itinigil ng mga miyembro nito ang kanilang pangangikil. Sinabi niya na hindi niya ipaaaresto ang rebel

negotiators at sasagutin pa ang kanilang gastusin sa hotel sa panahon ng peace negotiations.

"Ang mga NPA, kayo nakikinig kayo ngayon, kung gusto talaga ninyong tumulong, stop the extortion... You will have to stop extorting money and 'yung taxation ninyo," aniya.

"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," idinugtong niya.

**Genalyn Kahiling**

# Palace to communist rebels: Accept defeat

BY RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

**M**ALACANANG on Sunday urged anew Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Maria Sison and his comrades to end their arm struggle and rejoin society.

"It is time to rejoin society. There is nothing dishonorable in accepting defeat. There is another path for change other than armed struggle. Filipinos cannot continue killing Filipinos," Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"Sison must step down from his ivory tower and extend his hands

for peace, for his own sake, for his followers, for the Filipino people, for his country he loves so well," he added.

In a speech on Friday, President Rodrigo Duterte said he was willing to reopen peace negotiations with the communist rebels if they stopped their extortion or "revolu-

tionary taxes."

Speaking on the President's offer, Panelo said of Sison: "To miss this golden opportunity will only reduce him to a historical footnote and throw him into the dustbin of history. That will be tragic and such a waste," he said.

Sison rejected Duterte's demand, saying it was an insult to the revolutionary movement as it would result in the "suicide" of their government.

"The people's government needs financial resources for administration and social programs, including public education, land reform, raising production, health and sanitation, people's self-defense, cultural work, and so on," he said.

Mocking Sison's statements, Panelo said: "Oh... they have a government? The armchair illusory rebel chieftain must be running berserk with his imagination," he said.

"No wonder his ground forces no longer follow him. He has to wake up from his daydreaming lest he gets a nightmare that will cut short his bourgeoisie lifestyle in 'The Netherland,'" he added.

Duterte terminated peace talks between the government and the communists in November 2017 amid the rebels' continued attacks on state troops. **A2**

He then declared the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army, terror organizations and ordered the arrest of rebel leaders.

# Palace dares Joma: Let's talk peace

By Nat Mariano

**C**OMMUNIST Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison should step down from his ivory tower and accept the government's offer of reviving the peace talks instead, the Palace said on Sunday.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo slammed Sison for immediately rejecting the "softened stance" of President Rodrigo Duterte on resuming peace negotiations.

"Instead of welcoming the President's softening of his hardline stance on no peace talks with the local communists unless it puts a stop to the extortion, he (Sison) considers it as an insult to

them," Panelo said.

In a speech on Friday, Duterte said he would resume the peace talks with communist rebels if the NPA stopped its collection of revolutionary taxes, which he said was a form of extortion.

Sison, however, rebuffed the condition set by the President, saying the "people's government... (needs) financial resources for administration and social programs."

"Oh, they have a government? The armchair illusory rebel chieftain must be running berserk with his imagina-

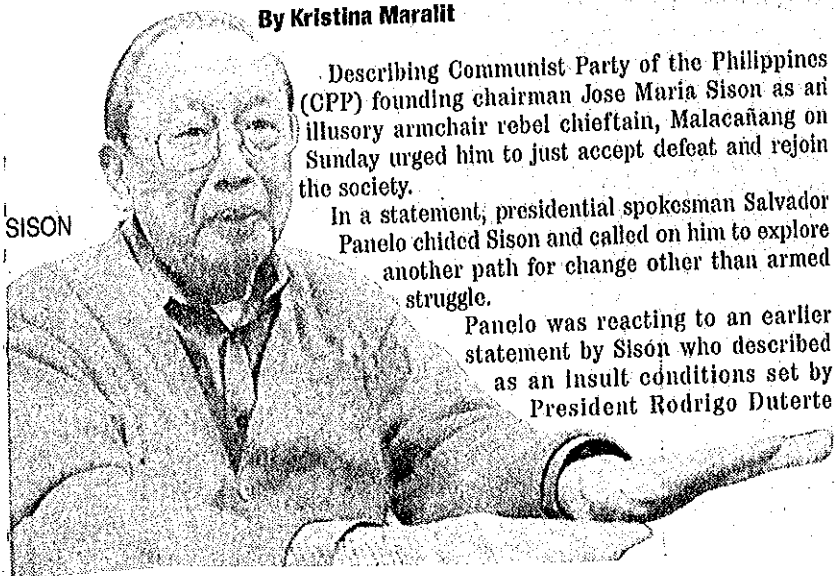
tion. No wonder his ground forces no longer follow him. He has to wake up from his daydreaming lest he gets a nightmare that will cut short his bourgeois lifestyle in The Netherlands," Panelo said.

"Sison must step down from his ivory tower and extend his hands for peace; for his own sake, for his followers, for the Filipino people, for his country he loves so well. To miss this golden opportunity will only reduce him to a historical footnote and throw him into the dustbin of history," he added. *KT*

# Palace twits 'defeated' Joma

By Kristina Maralit

SISON



Describing Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Maria Sison as an illusory armchair rebel chieftain, Malacañang on Sunday urged him to just accept defeat and rejoin the society.

In a statement, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo chided Sison and called on him to explore another path for change other than armed struggle.

Panelo was reacting to an earlier statement by Sison who described as an insult conditions set by President Rodrigo Duterte

before restarting peace negotiations between the government and the communist rebels.

"Instead of welcoming the President's softening of his hardline stance on no peace talks with the local communists unless it puts a stop to their collection of revolutionary taxes which is a euphemism for extortion, he considers it as an insult to them," Panelo said.

"The armchair illusory rebel chieftain must be running berserk with his imagination. No wonder his ground forces no longer follow him," he added.

In a gathering of barangay officials in Legazpi, Albay last week, the President talked about the possibility of reopening the suspended peace talks with communist groups.

He, however, cited several conditions.

**The armchair illusory rebel chieftain must be running berserk with his imagination.**

One of them is for the New People's Army, the CPP's armed unit, to stop its collection of revolutionary taxes which Mr. Duterte said is a form of extortion.

Sison responded by calling the President's remarks more of an "insult to the revolutionary movement than to express willingness to resume negotiations."

Panelo, however, defended the Chief Executive by saying the "noble cause" started by Sison more than five decades ago has deprived the country of young, idealistic leaders.

"A handful of them managed to stay alive, and now, like Sison, are in the twilight of their lives, still hoping to overthrow the existing political order they failed to do for fifty-two years," he said.

The official also stressed that the self-exiled communist leader must step down from his ivory tower and extend the olive branch "for peace, for his own sake, for the Filipino people, for his country he loves so well."

"Filipinos cannot continue killing Filipinos," Panelo expressed.

"To miss this golden opportunity will only reduce him to a historical footnote and thrown him into the dustbin of history. That will be tragic and such a waste," he added.

17

# No final list of BTA appointees — OPAPP

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Contrary to reports on social media, there is still no final list of appointees to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) clarified yesterday.

"The list being circulated on various social media platforms is fake," OPAPP said in a statement. "The final and official names of appointees will only come from the President."

Included in the supposed list are Moro Islamic Liberation Front chairman Al Haj Murad,

MILF vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar, MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal and Abdullah Macapaar, alias Commander Bravo.

The OPAPP said it has submitted names of the nominees to the Office of the President for review.

The OPAPP advised the public to be "prudent and judicious about what they see and share on social media."

President Duterte is expected to announce the members of the 80-member body that will oversee the interim government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) during a three-year transition period.

The creation of the BTA is provided under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro signed between

the government and the MILF on March 27, 2014.

Malacañang had earlier said the BARMM would be in place as soon as the President constitutes the BTA, unless the Supreme Court nullifies the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

The entire province of Lanao del Norte voted against the inclusion of its six towns in the BARMM during the plebiscite on Jan. 21.

In North Cotabato, 61 barangays in its seven towns voted for inclusion in the BARMM.



## COTABATO MAYOR QUESTIONS PLEBISCITE

# 'Govt, MILF conspired to ensure BOL victory'

BY WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

**G**OVERNMENT officials, the military and even election officials allegedly conspired with the **EXCLUSIVE** Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ahead of a January 21 referendum to ensure Cotabato City would fall under the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Cotabato City Mayor Frances Cynthia Guiani Sayadi claimed on Sunday.

Sayadi told *The Manila Times* the

► Conspired A2

CONSPIRED FROM A1

## Govt, MILF

MILF, which secured wider autonomy under a 2014 peace deal and is expected to lead the Barmm, sent 20,000 men to polling places across the city and encountered no resistance from the military.

Sayadi said the MILF was bent on taking control of Cotabato City through the BARMM because it was the only progressive city within the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) but was not part of it.

Thus, Cotabato City needed to vote during the January 21 plebiscite to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) if it wanted to join the BARMM. The "Yes" vote won, with 36,682 votes, versus 24,994 "No" votes.

"They have plans of making it as the capital of BARMM," Sayadi said. "They want Cotabato City because compared to other cities we have the biggest malls, the biggest internal revenue allotment (share of national government tax collections), and the city is multi-awarded," she alleged.

Sayadi said the presence of MILF men, some in uniform and with firearms, resulted in the massive disenfranchisement of registered voters.

"There was really a conspiracy [among the members of the plebiscite committee or board of election inspectors, the military and the police]. Registered voters were not able to vote [because they were being harassed and intimidated by members of the MILF]," Sayadi claimed.

"We're talking here of approximately 20,000 MILF members inside Cotabato City. They were already in Cotabato three days before the January 21 plebiscite," she added.

### Village chiefs detained

The mayor also alleged that on the eve of the plebiscite, she was in constant communication with military officials, who, she said, assured her that the military had a standing order to disperse the MILF members.

"They (military) told me that they will remove the MILF around polling centers, and they will no

longer be there in the morning. So there's nothing to worry. I have a lot of text [messages] to Gen. [Cirilito] Sobejana (military commander) and his answers were always 'noted, noted, copy,' but no corresponding action," she further said.

On the day of the plebiscite, 24 of the 37 village chiefs were instructed to go to the headquarters of the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division to attend a seminar on what is prohibited on election day.

But they were practically detained and were only released, Sayadi said, when she called the commanding officers to release them.

The series of events, the mayor stressed, only proved that events that transpired in Cotabato City were all "preplanned."

"Even before that, Presidential Peace Adviser retired general Carlito Galvez told me that Cotabato City would be placed under Comelec control. It seems that General Galvez has already made a plan," she added.

### Teachers replaced

She also pointed out that poll workers who replaced teachers who had failed to report for poll duties because of threats, were not registered voters of Cotabato City and not government teachers. They were confirmed sympathizers and supporters of the BOL, Sayadi said.

Even the Commission on Elections, she pointed out, refused to furnish her the copies of certified certificates of canvass from Cotabato City.

"There was really a conspiracy," she said.

The mayor said the MILF also did it in Isabela City and Lanao del Sur, but did not succeed because there were only a few members of the MILF there, unlike in Cotabato City, which was only an hour away from Camp Darapanan, the headquarters of the MILF.

She admitted getting information prior to the MILF's action, but said she felt confident that nothing would happen because of the assurances given to her by the military.

"If I was only told by the military that they would not take action on the presence of MILF, we could have prepared," she added.

## Moves synchronized during Sabah crisis

By Perseus Echeminada

Former President Benigno Aquino and former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdul Najib Rajak had set up a hotline at the height of the Lahad Datu standoff to coordinate their actions, the late crown prince of the Sultanate of Sulu revealed in 4 March 2013 as the incident raged.

Aquino and Najib were believed to have tightly coordinated during the standoff that

led to suspicions that the Aquino administration synchronized its actions with that of Malaysia, if not Aquino was taking direct orders from Najib.

Raja Muda Agbimudidin Kiram, brother of the former Sulu Sultan Jamalul Kiram III, led more than 1,000 followers in the Lahad Datu siege in 2013. He returned to Sulu after the Sabah siege, but died in 2015.

The group of Kiram  
**Turn to page 2**

Instead of helping us, Aquino became the spokesman for Najib and he was the one who urged the Malaysians to take military and police action to annihilate our group

From page 1

landed in Lahad Datu on 15 February 2013 after there was negotiations but he said Aquino who was in direct contact with Najib did not make any effort to help the group of Kiram.

Aquino even warned the group of Kiram to give up and surrender to the Malaysian security forces.

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

"Instead of helping us, Aquino became the spokesman for Najib and he was the one who urged

the Malaysians to take military and police action to annihilate our group," he said.

The military and police operations started on 1 March 2013 and lasted seven days.

Kiram and 35 others eluded the Malaysian security forces but they were arrested when they arrived in Tawi-Tawi upon orders of Aquino.

Kiram died in Sinunlo, Tawi-Tawi in 2014 due to cardiac arrest.

### Rekindling a feud

Kiram warned that Najib wanted to resurrect a centuries-old feud between the Sultanate of Sulu and the Tausugs who are mostly members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Maguindanao tribes of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"Kiram told me its history repeating itself," Idjirani said. He said with the final peace accord between the government and the MILF, the rebel group's guerillas now form part of security forces that coordinate with Malaysia in monitoring the movement of MNLF which still has a number of strongholds in Sabah.

"Malaysia with the help of the Philippine government is now again pitting the Tausug and Maguindanao people to protect Sabah. The Malaysians are now the modern-day Spanish conquistadors," he said.

### Noynoy kowtows

Aquino, at the time, issued a statement which called, short of ordering, the followers of Kiram to surrender unconditionally, which was the same demand of Najib on what he called as Sabah

invaders.

The statement of Aquino was a total surrender while later indicating that the cause of the country in reclaiming Sabah "is hopeless."

Kiram, the Sulu Sultan, complained that the Sultanate was not consulted regarding the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, the letter which the Sulu Sultanate sent to Malacañang, Aquino said, was lost in "the bureaucratic maze."

Kiram told me it's history repeating itself.

The fighting which started in Lahad Datu later on spread to other parts of Sabah. Some rebel groups joined the expedition who were suspected members of the MNLF.



## Army chief visits troops in Sulu

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Army Chief Lt. Gen. Macario S. Alberto visited troops in Jolo, Sulu, on Friday.

Alberto was welcomed by 11th Infantry Division (11th ID) Commander, Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo Jr. and was also apprised of the security situation in the area.

Army Spokesman Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, said Alberto visited Sulu as a result of successive incidents in the area where Army troops were heavily involved.

Two bombings occurred on January 27 at Mt. Carmel Church in the town of Jolo where 22 persons were killed including five Army personnel and injured about a hundred others.

The incident prompted the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to launch massive operations following the directive of President Duterte to pursue and destroy the perpetrators.

Almost two weeks ago, the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion clashed with the Abu Sayyaf, which resulted in the death of eight soldiers and the wounding of 18 others.

Villanueva said Alberto met with a wounded Army soldier confined at Kuta General Teodolfo Bautista Station Hospital in Jolo, Sulu and another 12 soldiers at Camp General Basilio Station Hospital at the Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom) in Zamboanga City.

Fifteen soldiers are being treated for wounds suffered during the Jolo bombing and the counter-terrorism operations in Patikul.

Alberto also extended financial assistance to each personnel to boost their morale as he expressed his gratitude and appreciation for their sacrifices and dedication.

Recently, in line with the directive of President Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine Army provisionally established the 11th ID which took effect on December 1, 2018.

The creation of the new infantry division aims to strengthen the AFP's current troop deployment in Sulu as well as to have a permanent presence and dedicated force that will address the peace and order problem in the area.

"Moreover, one of the priority thrusts of the Philippine Army now is the improvement of its medical health services and support capabilities in order to address and meet the demand of our troops' survivability in combat. Medical treatment facilities and procedures are continuously being upgraded to be responsive to the operational requirements of the tactical units," Villanueva said.

"Amidst the current situation, the Philippine Army shall continue to move, innovate and strategize to generate a ground force that is decisive, resilient and agile and can provide the necessary support and capability to end all threats."

# BTA appointees list still up for approval

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

**T**he Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) Sunday clarified that there is as of yet no final and official list of appointees for the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA).

In a statement, OPAPP said the list being circulated on various social media platforms is false and people should not believe it.

The list that has been circulating on social media allegedly composed the 41 nominees to the 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.

The purported list included Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, MILF vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar, MILF Peace Implementing Panel chairperson

Mohagher Iqbal and Abdullah Macapaar alias Commander Bravo.

Just like Murad, most of those included in the list are from Maguindanao.

"To date, OPAPP has transmitted the list of nominees to the Office of the President for review. The final and official names of appointees will only come from the President," OPAPP said.

"OPAPP advises the public to be pru-

dent and judicious about what they see and share on social media," it added.

President Rodrigo Duterte is expected to name 80 appointees to the BTA, majority of whom are MILF members.

The MILF, meanwhile, has already disowned the alleged list and encourage netizens to delete it from their social media accounts to avoid sowing confusion.

Presidential Peace Adviser Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., earlier said President Duterte is counting on the soon-to-be constituted 80-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) to ensure "effective governance" in the proposed new autonomous region.

Galvez said they started to vet the

people to constitute the BTA or the interim government in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region and submit their names to the President for approval.

According to Galvez, Duterte wants the BTA members to have "no record of corruption" and be "sincere public servants."

"The President said there should be good governance, effective governance. Even if the law is good but then we cannot implement it well so the President's prerequisites were the person

must have no record of corruption and they are sincere public servants," Galvez said.

Galvez said the MILF has nominated 41 representatives to the BTA and the government 39 individuals. Of the BTA nominees, nine come from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

"It will be multi-sectoral and there will be equitable representation from the different provinces," Galvez said.

# Unexploded bombs still litter Marawi

BY DEMPSEY REYES

**A**LMOST two years after it was declared liberated from terrorists, Marawi City, capital of Lanao del Sur province in southern Mindanao, was still filled with unexploded ordnances, causing delay in its rehabilitation, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said on Sunday.

Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, military spokesman, said around 40 unexploded ordnances, mostly

air bombs dropped by military aircraft during the Marawi siege in 2017, were yet to be retrieved.

This was based on the information from Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., commander of the Philippine Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade, according to Arevalo.

"I asked him (Brawner) about that and he said there are around 40 more [unexploded] ordnances that we still need to recover," he said in an interview over dzRH radio.

Recovering the unexploded bombs would be hard, Arevalo said, because some of the bombs

came from an air assault and went directly to the ground.

"That is why there is a need for us to detect where these are and we need to be careful in retrieving these items," he added.

Arevalo said authorities were able to "clear" 80 percent of the main battle area in Marawi City.

The fighting between government troops and the Islamic State-inspired Maute Group lasted five months, from May to October in 2017.

The government is having a hard time in completely rehabilitating Marawi City, which was still in ruins when Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., the military chief, visited the former battle ground.

Arevalo clarified that the military's role in Marawi was only to support Task Force Bangon Marawi, which was primarily in charge of rehabilitating the besieged city.

"We cannot do this alone, the Armed Forces is just part of it.

What I have been explaining to the public is this is not just an ordinary digging like what we are doing in digging for yams," he explained.

"This requires a lot of processes because even if we locate all of those [ordnances] that need to be located, we still have to observe certain procedures, even with those who have expertise in ordnances, but they are the ones who could help in unearthing these items," Arevalo said. *Ar*

## Marawi rehab: 49 bombs yet to be found

BY VICTOR REYES

NEARLY 50 unexploded bombs have yet to be recovered from Marawi City which was ravaged in 2017 by a five-month armed conflict between government forces and the Maute terror group, the Armed Forces said yesterday.

The delayed recovery of the 49 bombs, all delivered by the military during the five-month conflict from May to October 2017, is delaying the rehabilitation of the city, said AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo.

The Maute Group occupied

See MARAWI ► Page B3

### MARAWI

several barangays in the city in May 2017, prompting President Duterte to declare martial in the entire Mindanao. The conflict left over 1,000 terrorists, soldiers, policemen, and civilians dead.

Arevalo said a private firm contracted by the government for the rehabilitation of Marawi City is helping in the detection and recovery of the ordnance. He said

the job is not as easy as harvesting "kamote" or sweet potatoes.

"These will have to be retrieved with the help of the winning contractor. The ordnance were specifically difficult to retrieve because they are either buried deeply or are underneath buildings and collapsed structures," said Arevalo.

Arevalo said the military, through the Army's 103rd Brigade under Col. Romeo Brawner, is exerting all efforts to recover the

unexploded ordnance. "We cannot do this alone. The Armed Forces is just part of it," he said.

"We still have more than 40 (bombs) to recover up to now... It's not like harvesting kamote which you will just dig and get. This requires a tedious process," said Arevalo.

"Even if you locate them, you just cannot unearth them. We still have to observe certain procedures. We need ordnance experts who can help because this is a very difficult

and dangerous mission," he also said.

Arevalo said some of the bombs were dropped by military planes.

"If it came from our aircraft, delivered from air, these are deeply buried. That's why we need to detect where they are area and need to carefully recover them," he said.

Arevalo said the presence of these unexploded bombs poses danger to Marawi residents and the people who are tapped to reconstruct the city.

## Support security measures, Armed Forces asks public

BY VICTOR REYES

THE Armed Forces yesterday appealed to the public to support counter-terrorism measures adopted by the security sector, including a ban on bottled liquids in train stations in Metro Manila.

"We need the understanding, cooperation of the people because it's difficult to blame one another. We need your cooperation, like in Metro Manila where (bottled) liquids are prohibited in (train stations)," said AFP spokesman Brig.

Gen. Edgardo Arevalo.

He said acknowledged that the security measures are an "inconvenience" to the public, but "what we are asking for is a little sacrifice for the good of the greater many."

"The fight against terrorism will work if there is a cooperation of every Filipino," he added.

The ban on bottled liquids in trains came weeks after the twin bombings at the Our Lady of Mt Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, which led to the death of 23 persons and the wounding of over a

hundred others.

Arevalo said many materials used to make improvise explosive devices can be acquired locally, including fertilizers. "They are there and it's just a matter of competency, how to sneak them," he said.

As to the danger posed by water, Arevalo said this can be best answered by explosive and ordnance experts.

"I am not the authority but my thought is there are some liquids that may appear like water, which

See SUPPORT > Page B6

### SUPPORT

are actually not water, that can be used as component for explosives," he said.

Arevalo also said the January 27 bombings in Jolo only prove there is no "un-impenetrable barrier" for a determined terrorist.

The bombing occurred while Mindanao is under martial law.

President Duterte declared martial law in the whole of Mindanao in May 2017 shortly after members of the Maute Group occupied several barangays in Marawi City.

Arevalo maintained martial law is needed in the fight against terrorist groups, which he said continue to recruit members.

Arevalo surmised that worse attacks could have occurred without

martial law. He said the Jolo bombings happened during martial law. "How much more if there is no martial law?" he said.

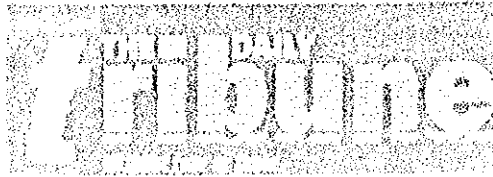
The Metro Rail Transit Line 3 started confiscating all kinds of bottled liquids, including lotions, colognes, and alcohols, from train passengers last Thursday. After the Jolo bombings, only bottled drinks were confiscated.

The ban, which was ordered by

the Department of Transportation (DOTr), has triggered complaints from some train passengers who were inconvenienced by long lines in train stations.

The DOTr has said the following liquids may be permitted upon validation and approval of security personnel and police officers: baby formula, water, breast milk in bottles (if the passenger is traveling with a baby); all prescription and over-the-counter

medications; liquids including water, juice or liquid nutrition for passengers with disability or serious illness; life-sustaining liquids such as bone marrow, blood products, and transplant organs; mastectomy products, prosthetics breasts, bras or shells containing gels, saline solution, or other liquids; and gels, frozen liquids or medical-related items used by persons with disabilities or medical conditions.



# Mindanao support solid – Kono

Locsin cited Japan as the most consistent international "partner" of the Philippines

By Mario J. Mallari

Japan will not waver in its support to the development of Mindanao, visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono said yesterday.

The Japanese official is in the country for a three-day official visit as part of the official's agenda in the inauguration ceremony of the Japanese consulate general in Davao.

He said Japan is pleased to open a new diplomatic facility in the City of Davao.

Joining the Foreign Minister were deputy director-general Fumio Shimizu of the Southeast

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez and Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel were also present during the courtesy call.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said Kono's visit is a "testament to the strengthened strategic partnership between the Philippines and Japan."

Kono is in the country upon the invitation of Locsin.

**Japan welcomes the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and would like to continue to support the development of Mindanao.**

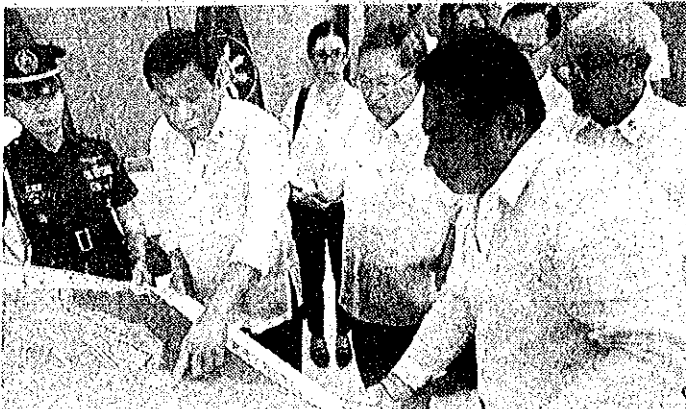
"Just as significantly, we reviewed our defense and security engagement and pledged to persist in our efforts to open new doors for cooperation in this field – in terms of equipment, education and training and other modalities. Japan will stay our steady partner in strengthening our defense capabilities as we modernize our armed forces and bolster maritime security in the region," Locsin said in a joint statement he read on behalf of Japan and the Philippines.

**Security cooperation sealed**

In the statement, both Tokyo and Manila said cooperation is taking place "under the intense pressures of the larger regional security situation," most notably the maritime disputes in the South China Sea or the West Philippine Sea and the Korean Peninsula.

With the President during Kono's call were Locsin, Medialdea and Dominguez.

During the hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings in August 2017, Kono paid his initial courtesy call on Mr. Duterte where Japan-Philippines bilateral relations were discussed.



**Double-time guys** President Rodrigo Duterte directs development programs for war-torn Marawi City during a Cabinet meeting in Davao City. MALACANANG PHOTO

Kono made the commitment upon meeting President Rodrigo Duterte in a courtesy call last Saturday at Matina Enclaves, Davao City.

"Foreign Minister Kono said Japan welcomes the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. He also mentioned that Japan would like to continue to support the development of Mindanao," a Malacañang statement read.

and Southwest Asian Affairs Department; Jun Nanazawa, executive assistant to the Minister for Foreign Affairs; Yukiko Okano, director of Country Assistance Planning Division I; Shu Kawano, senior foreign policy coordinator; Daisuke Nihei, principal deputy director, Second Southeast Asia Division, and Hirofumi Ono, deputy director, Second Southeast Asia Division.

**It has been more consistent in every area, including defense, than the United States or any other country.**

**Most reliable**

Locsin cited Japan as the most consistent international "partner" of the Philippines.

He made the pronouncement while his Japanese counterpart Minister Taro Kono was in the country for a three-day official visit.

**Strengthening our defense capabilities as we modernize our armed forces and bolster maritime security in the region will get Japanese backing.**

"Japan's cooperation with the Philippines has been of great material benefit to us," said Locsin in a social media post. "It has been more consistent in every area, including defense, than the United States or any other country."

## 'DAR order on agri land conversion to benefit cronies'

By ROMINA CABRERA

Former agrarian reform secretary Rafael Mariano has criticized an administrative order issued by his successor, saying it would benefit President Duterte's cronies.

Mariano said the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)'s Administrative Order No. 1, 2019, would fast-track the conversion of lands to non-agricultural uses without requiring the applicant to submit supporting data.

He said the order would deem all land conversion applications automatically approved, as it would be concluded within 30 days instead of the minimum 120 days as required under the rules.

Mariano said the order of Agrarian Reform Secretary John Castricones would "greatly imperil the state of farmers and our national security."

He said the administration seemed "very eager" to streamline the process and hasten land conversion.

"It is President Duterte's will to fast-track land conversion to benefit his cronies. He will also benefit from it and that, I think, is corruption," Mariano said, adding he proposed an executive order for a two-year moratorium on the acceptance and processing of land conversion applicants in 2016 when he was DAR secretary.

Mariano failed to get the nod of the Commission on Appointments in September 2017.

### Rody in Maguindanao to distribute CLOAs

Duterte will be in Buluan town today to attend the Inaul Festival and distribute land to agrarian reform beneficiaries.

The President will distribute land ownership awards to farmers in the presence of provincial and municipal officials.

The Inaul Festival, which will culminate on Feb. 14, showcases the iconic Inaul fabric that Maguindanaons have been producing using wooden looms for centuries now.

The office of Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu is promoting the traditional craft by providing weavers with technical support and brokering linkages with markets outside Mindanao and abroad.

This year's Inaul Festival, partly a thanksgiving celebration for the ratification through a plebiscite of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, was launched on Thursday.

For contemporary historians, the Inaul cloth symbolizes the resilience of closely knit ethnic Maguindanaon communities in the raya, or upper delta, and the ilod, or downstream zone of Maguindanao.

Maguindanao's indigenous non-Muslim Teduray people have also been wearing clothes made of Inaul fabric even before Shariff Mohammad Kabunsuan, an Arab-Malay cleric from Johore, now part of Malaysia, set foot in what is now Cotabato City in the 14th century to spread Islam.

"We are thankful to President Duterte for his scheduled engagement with agrarian reform beneficiaries in Maguindanao province while we are having this Inaul Festival," Mangudadatu said yesterday.

TRANSITION TO BARMM

# EMPLOYEES BID GOODBYE TO ARMM IN FLAG RITES

By Sheila Mae Dela Cruz  
@inqmindanao

COTABATO CITY—Hundreds of employees of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and their officials heaved a collective sigh of sadness as they bid goodbye to the autonomous government that they had been serving for the last 29 years.

The symbol of the ARMM, its flag, had been turned over to the Bureau of Cultural Heritage (BCH) following the last flag-raising ceremony for the autonomous government that is giving way to a new one.

Hoisted for the last time, the flag would soon be on display at the new Bangsamoro Museum in the city, a reminder of the autonomous region that the administration of President Benigno Aquino III had described as a failed experiment in Moro autonomy.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman and his vice governor, Haroun Alrashid Lucman Jr., turned over the flag to the BCH.

Thousands of employees assembled for the flag retreat, carrying a streamer reading: "Thank you and goodbye, ARMM."

## Autonomous experiment

Among employees who spoke at the flag ceremony, Elizabeth Nataño said it was her second time to experience the autonomous government.

The Lupong Tagapaganap ng Pook, the body formed in an earlier attempt at autonomy under the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, had been abolished in 1989 when then President Corazon Aquino signed Republic Act No. 9054 that created the ARMM.

Now, the ARMM is being abolished again to give way to the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) after the new law for its creation was ratified in a plebiscite on Jan. 21 and Feb. 6.

But Nataño, a senior administrative assistant, was only one of thousands of employees who had served the ARMM for decades.

## 6,000 Jobs

Except for those who work in health, education and social work, around 6,000 permanent employees in the ARMM are expected to lose their jobs as the new Bangsamoro takes over.

Hataman said he was still awaiting the official announcement of the 80 names that President Duterte would appoint to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the body that would serve as interim government before the Bangsamoro's first regular elections in 2022.

Aside from the 80 people to be named by the President, the BTA will also be composed of 25 elected officials until their terms expire at noon on June 30. INQ



## Japan vows continued support for Mindanao

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY - Japan's foreign minister met with President Duterte in this city on Saturday and relayed his country's readiness to continue supporting development efforts in conflict-stricken Mindanao.

Foreign Minister Taro Kono paid a courtesy call on Duterte at the Matina Enclaves here as part of a three-day official visit to the Philippines.

During the meeting, Duterte said he was honored by Kono's visit.

"Foreign Minister Kono, for his part, said Japan welcomes the ratification of the

Turn to Page 5

## Japan From Page 1

Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). He also mentioned that Japan would like to continue to support the development of Mindanao," the Malacañang statement said.

The BOL will create a new autonomous region with greater control of natural resources in parts of Mindanao and with a bigger share in national government resources.

Cotabato City; Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, except Isabela City; and 61 villages in seven towns of North Cotabato voted for inclusion in the soon-to-be-formed Bangsamoro region during plebiscites held on Jan. 21 and Feb. 6.

Isabela City in Basilan and the entire province of Lanao del Norte rejected the BOL during the plebiscites. Sulu also op-

posed the BOL but the province would still be included in BOL because ARMM provinces are taken as one geographical unit.

Kono also expressed Japan's sympathy to the victims of the twin blasts that rocked Jolo that left more than 20 people dead

last month.

Also in the agenda of the Japanese foreign minister's visit was the inauguration of the Japanese Consulate General in Davao. Kono said Japan is "pleased" to open a new consulate general in the city.

Kono was accompanied by Japanese Ambassador Koji Haneda and Davao Consul General Yoshiaki Miwa. Also present during the courtesy call were Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III and Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel.

Turn to Page 8

## Japan From Page 5

The Department of Foreign Affairs has described the visit as "a testament to the strengthened strategic partnership between the Philippines and Japan" and an affirmation of the two countries' longstanding bilateral friendship.

Meanwhile, Kono also had a bilateral discussion with Locsin yesterday morning at the Marco Polo Hotel.

Kono and Locsin tackled areas of mutual interest, including political, economic and people-to-people engagement between Japan and the Philippines.

Kono also met separately with Dominguez and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana at the Waterfront Insular Hotel.

Kono and Dominguez discussed how to further strength-

en relations between the two countries, especially since Japan vowed to fund several important infrastructure projects in the country.

### **P10.62-B road dev't project**

The Philippines and Japan yesterday signed the exchange of notes for the P10.62-billion road development project in conflict-stricken areas in Mindanao.

The exchange of notes between Locsin and Kono took place at the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao City.

Through the Japan-assisted project titled "Road Network Development Project in Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (RNDP)," access roads linking the region's main cities will be constructed or refurbished, specifically in the areas of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat.

It will cover the Matanog-Barira-Alamiada-Libungan Road, Parang-Balabagan Road, Tapan-Lobok Coastal Road, Marawi City Ring Road, Parang East Diversion Road and Manungan-Parang Road.

The signing means that the details of the project and financing arrangement have been ironed out. It comes before the actual signing of agreements.

"Japan is at the forefront of the road to the realization of Mindanao's great promise. The RNDP, on which we exchanged notes, is an important step toward that goal by allowing communities long ravaged by conflict to heal, to live, and work in safety, and enjoy the dividends of peace," Locsin said in his speech. — With Alexis Romero, Helen Flores

## Japan will be 'steady partner' of PH — Kono

By **ROY C. MABAGA**  
and **GENALYN D. KABILING**

Japan will remain as the Philippines' "steady partner" in strengthening the country's defense capabilities as the two sides continue to explore new areas of cooperation in regional security and military modernization.

This was contained in a joint statement issued by Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Loocin Jr. and visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono on Sunday shortly after their bilateral meeting in Davao City where they discussed areas of mutual interest including political, economic, and people-to-people exchange.

Kono is on a three-day visit to the Philippines where he led the ceremonial opening of the Japanese Consulate General office in Davao. He met with President Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday and is flying back to Japan at noon on Monday.

"Just as significantly, we reviewed our defense and security engagement and pledged to persist in our efforts to open new doors for cooperation in this field - in terms of equipment, education and training, and other modalities. Japan will stay as our steady partner in strengthening our defense capabilities as we modernize our armed forces and bolster maritime security in the region," Loocin said in a joint statement he read in behalf of ▶8

## Japan will be...

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Japan and the Philippines.

In the statement, both Tokyo and Manila said this particular cooperation is taking place "under the intense pressures of the larger regional security situation," most notably the maritime disputes in the South China Sea or the West Philippine Sea and the Korean Peninsula.

"We both recognize that the regional security environment is fraught with challenges, including in the West Philippine Sea and the Korean Peninsula. As maritime countries with unique similarities; as neighbors whose sea lanes of communication may be similarly affected by recent developments; we recognized the imperative of further bilateral cooperation. At the same time, we acknowledged that keeping and promoting the region's peace and stability is a collective responsibility; one that must be underpinned by mutual trust, sincere dialogue, and functional cooperation," Locsin said.

The two sides also touched on the development in Mindanao where Japan has invested more than P13 billion in the form of assistance to various projects to help the region attain "the dividends of a long-promised and much-delayed peace."

"We emerge from this morning's meeting freshly confident about prospects for realizing Mindanao's promise in the wake of positive, indeed striking developments, in bringing Bangsamoro to reality," they said in the statement, in reference to the just-concluded plebiscites on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) held last January 21 and Febru-

ary 6, respectively

Japan also reiterated its commitment to the P24 billion program called "The Road Development Project in Conflicted-Areas in Mindanao," a goal that would allow communities long ravaged by conflict "to heal, to live and work in safety, and enjoy the dividends of peace."

### Support for Mindanao

Japan has pledged to continue to support the peace and development initiatives in Mindanao following the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

"During their meeting at Matina Enclaves here, President Duterte said he was honored that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in his city," the Palace said.

"Foreign Minister Kono, for his part, said Japan welcomes the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. He also mentioned that Japan would like to continue to support the development of Mindanao," it added.

During the same meeting, Kono relayed Japan's sympathy to the victims of the two explosions that hit the Jolo Cathedral last month.

Foreign Minister Kono was accompanied by Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koji Haneda and Davao Consul General Yoshiaki Miwa during the meeting with the President.

Also present were Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, and Philippine Ambassador to Japan Jose Laurel.

## Japan reaffirms commitment to development of Mindanao

JAPAN reaffirmed its commitment to continue supporting the development of Mindanao as it welcomed the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) during the two-day plebiscite in parts of Mindanao.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, during his courtesy call on President Duterte on Saturday night at the Matina Encalves in Davao City, relayed Japan's support for the BOL and the peace and development

efforts in Mindanao along with its sympathies over the twin blasts at a cathedral in Jolo in Sulu recently.

Malacanang said Kono was accompanied by Japanese Ambassador Koji Haneda and Davao Consul General Yoshiaki Miwa during his call on Duterte.

Kono, who arrived Saturday, is in the country for a three day-visit. Most of his activities are to be held in Davao, including a bilateral meeting with Foreign Affairs Sec-

retary Teodoro Locsin Jr., signing of a memorandum of agreement on a P24-billion road network development project in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, and the inauguration of the Japan Consul General office in Davao. B2

The DFA said the visit of Kono is a "testament to the strengthened strategic partnership between the Philippines and Japan, and an affirmation of our long-standing bilateral friendship." — *Jocelyn Montemayor*

## Japan minister pledges support for Mindanao infra

By Nat Mariano

JAPANESE Foreign Minister Taro Kono on Sunday met with President Rodrigo Duterte to extend Japan's willingness to improve the infrastructure in Mindanao.

Malacañang said Kono, who is here for a three-day official visit, paid a courtesy call on Duterte at the Matina Enclaves Residences in Davao City.

"Foreign Minister Kono said Japan welcomes the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. He also mentioned that Japan would like to continue to support the development of Mindanao," the Palace said in a statement.

With the BOL, the government hopes to address the people's aspiration for genuine autonomy and end the decades-old conflict in the region through the establishment of a more powerful and self-governing Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Kono also said Japan will support capacity-building during the transition period of the BOL, vowing to give job and livelihood creation for former Moro Islamic Liberation Front combatants.

"Japan will support the Philippines' efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region," he said. "Japan is ready to expand our support as the peace process

progress."

Kono, along with Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koji Haneda and Davao Consul General Yoshiaki Miwa, has expressed Japan's sympathy to the victims of the two fatal blasts that rocked Jolo last month.

His official visit is the first for Japan's top minister. Kono's visit also comes months after Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councilor Wang Yi paid Duterte a visit in October last year.

A day after his courtesy call on Duterte, Kono held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. and

*Next page*

### Japan...

From A1

held an exchange of notes in relation to the "Road Network Development Project in Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao."

Japan pledged to lend almost \$200 million for the road network that "supports the foundation of people's lives in Mindanao by improving access to schools and hospitals and by revitalizing economic activities in the region."

In a joint press conference held Sunday, Locsin viewed the meeting as "an opportunity for stocktaking and for advancing

our cooperation to more mutually-beneficial outcomes."

He said Japan had been helping Duterte achieve his transformative agenda for the Philippines in terms of infrastructure, social inclusion and securing peace and progress in the southernmost part of the country.

"We emerge from this morning's meeting freshly confident about prospects for realizing Mindanao's promise in the wake of positive, indeed striking developments, in bringing Bangsamoro to reality. The inauguration of the Japanese Consulate-General later this evening demonstrates Japan's enduring commitment to Mind-

anao, especially with the ratification of the BOL," Locsin said.

"The two of us come from a productive meeting this morning with a single mind — that our two countries must sustain the effort to keep and to grow the gains of our Strategic Partnership. Building on past achievements, and seizing opportunities offered by the future, this partnership will flourish and endure."

Foreign Affairs has already said that Kono's visit is a "testament to the strengthened strategic partnership between the Philippines and Japan, and an affirmation of our long-standing bilateral friendship."

## Mindanao solons urged to push Islamic banking framework

By ANTONIO L. COLINA IV

DAVAO CITY – Mindanao lawmakers must pursue the proposed framework on Islamic banking in the Philippines for the development of the Bangsamoro territory, a top executive of the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) said.

"We have not heard much about the initiatives and probably since we are now doing the plebiscite on the BOL we will eventually have the BARMM, this will be a good time to push those initiatives forward, and create that law," DBP chief executive officer and president Cecilia Borromeo said.

She said the proposed legislation will provide the legal framework for Islamic banking in the country.

She said the DBP-owned Al Amanah Islamic Bank, the only Islamic bank in the Philippines, can help by establishing branches in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to make Islamic financing more accessible.

"If the BARMM will need an Islamic bank, then with the clearance the Department of Finance, the entire Board of DBP is willing to give Al Amanah Bank as its contribution to the Bangsamoro," she said, noting that the framework for Islamic banking must be approved to optimize the opportunities that can be offered by the Al Amanah Islamic Bank.

She said there are global Islamic financial institutions interested in Al Amanah Bank but they are waiting for a general framework.

He said there are current initiatives in Congress to create the measure in coordination with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

Borromeo said an Islamic banking framework is necessary because Islamic banks offer no interest rate and the arrangement between lender and borrower will be under the Shariah law.

"There are unique features of Islamic banking, very different from the regular banking that we know like charging interest rate - one basic difference - it's not allowed under the Islamic banking, so the regulations that will govern the transactions under the purely Islamic banking would be very different from the regular banking that we know," she said.

DBP Director Maria Lourdes Arcenas said they want to provide a mechanism for Islamic financing to bring development that reduces vulnerabilities of the people in the Bangsamoro areas, among them financial, health, and education.

"Any project of development must reduce vulnerabilities especially in conflict areas. For us now, especially in these kinds of situation, we would like to see development reducing vulnerabilities in these areas, financial vulnerability, health, education," she said.

She said the DBP granted P5 million in regular loan to Mothers for Peace, but the group lends it to the Meranaw women from Marawi who are holed up in Iligan City and Cagayan de Oro the "Shariah way" with no interest.

# Mandatory ROTC? Think hard first

**T**he House of Representatives is poised to pass a bill reviving the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) after the May elections. The Senate is still deliberating on its version of the measure at committee level.

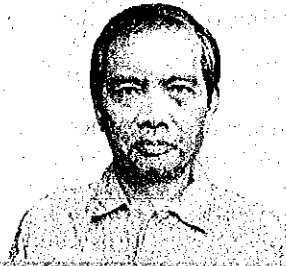
This bill could give new meaning to the May 2019 elections for the youth. It is a bill that directly impinges on the interest of the youth, especially those aged 16 and 17 who have yet to take Grades 11 and 12.

If the Duterte-endorsed senatorial candidates win in the elections, this bill will certainly pass. If the opposition senatorial candidates win, the proposed revival of ROTC will fail. The reason is simple—it is Mr. Duterte who has urged Congress to pass the measure, threatening to issue an executive order to the same effect if they fail to do so.

If the bill passes this year, and it takes another year to formulate the new ROTC Program of Instruction and set up the training system (facilities, instructors, resource materials), the first batch of Grade 11 students who will take the course will be those in September 2020 or September 2022.

How can the proposed mandatory ROTC be hardwired to deliver on its purpose to "instill patriotism, love of country, moral and spiritual values, and respect for human rights and adherence to the Constitution," and avoid past evils, such as corruption and murder (Cadet Officer Mark Chua case, 2001)? Passing another law is not enough. Learning from the lessons from ROTC and similar civic training and development programs is the best way. Consider these lessons:

**Lesson 1.** Generate acceptance, owner-



## ON THE MOVE

SEGUNDO ECLAR ROMERO

ship and support by key stakeholders. In a democracy, it makes sense to consult the people who will be most directly and heavily affected by a new proposal. Hold consultations with the youth, the military and the civic orientation and engagement institutions. Consult the relevant literature, experience of other countries and experts.

**Lesson 2.** Resuscitate corroded civic institutions and strengthen recently created ones. People have forgotten about these powerful civic orientation and engagement institutions that have been hijacked, neglected and weaponized for private purposes, among them the Boy Scouts of the Philippines, the Girl Scouts of the Philippines, the Sangguniang Kabataan, the Red Cross. We must strengthen and nurture these institutions that provide the resources, opportunities and capabilities for the youth to engage in community problem-solving, not only family or personal problem-solving.

Review the performance of similar

institutions that have yet to mature in the performance of their functions due to lack of support for institutional development—the National Service Training Program, the National Service Reserve Corps, the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency. Review these institutions together as a system. If necessary, scrap and build structures, but do not layer redundant systems one on top of the other.

**Lesson 3.** Look forward, not just back. Conjure the envisioned outcome and impact of the proposed ROTC law, 10 years or 20 years down the road. What is the best scenario? What is the worst scenario? What is the preferred scenario? How do these compare with a "do nothing" (no mandatory ROTC) scenario? **M3**

Let us have more informed discussion and debates about the kind of citizen civic-military orientation and engagement the country requires. To insist on imposing half-baked mandatory ROTC proposals is to play god with the time, energy, trust, resources and lives of our youth, with no cogent arguments to convince them of the wisdom of our decisions. Contrary to the intention of the proposed law, poorly designed mandatory ROTC will tend to turn the youth against the government, and kill in them whatever urge for selfless service to community and country they may be capable of.

It is a pity that the youth affected by the mandatory ROTC are too young to vote on the issue in the May 2019 elections.

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## PEACE-MAKER

# Rebuilding new roads to peace, security, and human development



By **JOSE C. DE VENECIA, JR.**  
Former Speaker of the House of representatives

### (Conclusion)

**I**N 2006, as my small, humble contribution in helping encourage direct talks between Seoul and Pyongyang, I transferred from Manila to Seoul the secretariat of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), which I founded and established in Manila in September, 2000, and of which I am chairman of its standing committee up to now. The ICAPP Secretariat is now most active in Seoul and headed by Secretary General Park Rob-yug, an experienced South Korean diplomat, and by my co-chairman, now South Korean National Security Adviser Chung Eui-yong.

Since we formed ICAPP in Manila in 2000, ICAPP now counts some 350 ruling, opposition, and independent parties from 52 countries in Asia, and the Korean Workers Party of North Korea is a respected member of ICAPP.

The late Reverend Moon and Madame Moon over the years have built genuine goodwill in Pyongyang and among the Koreans in the North and donated their much-appreciated hotel and erstwhile automobile factory that they established there to the North Korean government and people, among many other philanthropies in various parts of the world.

### Two Koreas should adapt to global changes

We must point out that despite the occasional harsh rhetoric on both sides of the 38th Parallel, we believe governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society organizations, and religious groups must encourage and support direct talks

between Seoul and Pyongyang.

Indeed, direct talks between North and South will complement these high-level explorations. Perhaps they could even catalyze the long-suspended Six-Party Talks to prevent nuclear proliferation in the Korean Peninsula. Perhaps direct bilateral or multilateral talks could even lead to agreement on a road map to eventual unification. But these talks have not been reopened for a long time now.

We in Asia and the global community most acknowledge and applaud the forthright efforts of US President Donald Trump and North Korean Leader Kim Jong-Un, consistently supported by South Korean President Moon Jae-In, which have the potential for a breakthrough, hopefully sooner than later, towards a final peace in the Korean Peninsula.

Today the basic fact is that the distribution of power in the world is fast-changing—particularly in East Asia and the Korean Peninsula must adapt to these epochal transformations.

Vietnam itself emerged from three difficult successive wars, winning against great powers, and its socialist government adopting a market economy, lifted its people from poverty to become today a rising peaceful economic power. North Korea can be like Vietnam, which is already emerging as a significant state in Southeast Asia.

The great example of course is how the two Germanys finally emerged from Cold War confrontation and totally united under then Chancellor Helmut Kohl, to become today the predominant economic power in Europe.

And China, under the unforgettable leader Deng Xiaoping, opened China to the world, lifted more than 500 million people from poverty and introduced appreciable elements of free enterprise capitalism to

China's socialist economy, which has propelled China to the second largest in the global economy with the potential to become No. 1 within 10-15 years.

The immediate task of the parliaments and mainstream political parties of the Republic of Korea and the Communist Korean Workers' Party (KWP) of the North, aided by the parliaments, political parties, civil society, and business leaders of the global community, is to draw up a clear, distinct and workable road map toward unification.

Our task is to ask ourselves why this is happening and how we can keep peace within our region despite the stiff economic competition our countries face.

We must be aware of all the pitfalls and failings of democracy and free market competition. What ethical standards can we bring in so that we can bring all our entrepreneurial skills but operate fairly and with civility?

Perhaps, the answer is in our distant past when the maritime highways linked our nations to one another and participated in a trade where one country supplied what was needed in another, for which they bartered for what they needed.

My own country the Philippines, located as it is on the margins of islands in Southeast Asia, developed virtually on its own, though it did take part in a long-distance trading system, that encompassed both the Indian Ocean and the China Sea and reached past Madagascar

in East Africa to Nagasaki, Japan.

#### **Most practical solution in South China Sea crises**

As we pointed out much earlier, the raging conflict in the South China Sea, with conflicting sovereignty claims, may be settled by temporarily shelving the issue of sovereignty, as earlier proposed by Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of China's peaceful rise: revive the Seismic Survey Agreement signed by China, the Philippines, and Vietnam, which we had the privilege to initiate in 2004; undertake joint oil/gas exploration and joint development with an equitable sharing of production and profits; designate "fishing corridors"; demilitarize the disputed islets through the phased withdrawal of armed garrisons; and convert the zone of conflict into a Zone of Peace, Friendship, Cooperation and Development.

This is perhaps the most realistic, most common-sensical solution to the problem of the Spratlys and Paracels, and which could subsequently be joined by Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan, and could also be the solution to the problem between China and Japan in the Senkaku Straits or Diaoyu in the East China Sea.

Easier said than done but this is now the time to consider the practical, prin-

cipled, common-sensical win-win compromises necessary for the geo-political settlements in the China Sea.

We must make our own road to the future. And in this task we should take hope from the writer Lu Hsun, a hero of China's revolutionary period.

"Hope [says Lu Hsun] cannot be said to exist. Nor can it be said not to exist. It is just like roads across the earth. For actually the earth had no roads to begin with; but when many people pass one way a road is made."

Here in our meeting in Seoul, we know the journey will be difficult. The journey will be long. But the rewards at the journey's end will be more than justify every tear, every hurt, every fall.

It is in this spirit that we in the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), and the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) join hands with all of you, distinguished delegates from around the world, all advocates of reconciliation and peace – peace in our time, hopefully sooner than later in this century – peace in the Korean Peninsula, peace throughout in our planet Earth. *h*

For we share rebuilding new roads to the future for mankind, for all our peoples.

## False claims by the CPP-NPA

**T**HE battle for Central Negros rages on, on the ground and in cyberspace.

The New People's Army recently claimed that its military offensives in Central Negros in January resulted to the death of not less than 23 soldiers belonging to the Philippine Army's 94th Infantry Battalion in Guihulngan City alone.

However, aside from one member of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) who was liquidated by the NPA on January 6, not a single soldier was killed or seriously wounded or injured.

Before 5 in the morning of January 19, the NPA attacked a group of soldiers near the barangay hall of Brgy. Tacpao in Guihulngan City. "Ni-reyd ng mga kasama ang [Peace and Development Team of 94th Infantry Battalion] sa barangay hall at Day Care Center ng Tacpao gamit ang mga command-detonated na explosibo (CDX). ... Namatay sa naturang reyd ang 12 sundalo", Ang Bayan, the official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines, reported in its January 21, 2019 issue. Such a slaughter would obviously have been difficult to hide from the local residents.

What actually happened was that the attackers fled after a brief firefight, leaving behind several rounds of assorted ammunition, a pistol, three caps, and bloodstains. Three NPA members were wounded according to 19-year old Efren Canumay



### RESURGENCE

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who participated in the attack but later surrendered to the troops. The Leonardo Panaligan Command (NPA Central Negros) not surprisingly denied having Efren in their roster and also denied recruiting minors. Efren joined the NPA when he was 17.

That the NPA recruits minors is old news. No amount of denial by JB Regalado, the spokesperson of the NPA in Central Negros, can take away the fact that the NPA recruits minors, sometimes as young as 15. Didn't the NPA take great pride in having more than 100 youth, including students, parade in a remote corner of Guihulngan City in connection with the recent 50th founding anniversary of the CPP?

The CPP-NPA is increasingly experiencing problems getting its propaganda and narrative out to the public as its social media accounts and websites have been under attack lately. The National Union of Journalists in the Philippines on December 26 complained that "alternative media outfits Bulatlat and Kodao ... were taken down almost simultaneously. That these assaults on freedom of the press and of free expression took place on the 50th founding an-

niversary of the CPP is clearly no coincidence." Obviously, as the CPP-NPA-NDPP's website [www.philippinerevolution.info](http://www.philippinerevolution.info) became inaccessible too.

Facebook accounts of the NPA in Negros have less if any activity with other accounts taking over the posting of updates. Fake accounts, some using the names and photos of the NPA accounts, have emerged posting anti-NPA comments, photos and memes on Facebook walls of the CPP-NPA, allied organizations and individuals.

Kodao Productions that featured CPP's 50th anniversary in Bicol, in 2016 covered the anniversary with the NPA in Central Negros. On that occasion, Juanito Magbanua of the NPA's Apolinario Catmaitan (Negros) Command told Kodao that the gathering was the "largest event" the NPA in Negros had "ever hosted." Magbanua bragged that more guerrilla fronts were being developed. And true enough, the Mt. Canseron Command was activated sometime late 2017, becoming the fifth NPA command in Negros.

In December 2016 President Rodrigo Duterte's ceasefire was still in force. Troops were being pulled out of Negros. But the situation is different today with soldiers again being deployed in Negros - 220 additional a few days ago - and the Duterte Administration no longer having intentions of giving political or military concessions to the CPP. The plan last year for a stand-down agreement (to have taken

effect June 21 2018) seems to have been the last hoorah of those who, despite all the evidence of the CPP-NPA-NDPP's real intentions and lack of sincerity, still believed in formal peace talks.

The government is luring both regular NPA members and its mass base to abandon the communist cause and avail of the programs offered to rebel returnees. In Bohol, 77 CPP-NPA supporters "surrendered" last year to avail of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) jointly offered by the provincial and national governments. The number of surrenderees - mass base and combatants - in Negros Island in 2018 was a modest 19 (The Daily Guardian, February 8, 2019). However, as the government intensifies its anti-insurgency campaign in Negros - militarily, propaganda-wise and through civil-military initiatives - more NPA mass base and fighters are likely to see the wisdom of surrendering. **Ay**

A government that fails to address the needs and concerns of the people is usually the biggest recruiter for insurgent movements. However, while the communists often raise valid points against the government, armed attacks on soldiers only make life more miserable for the local population. Furthermore, untrue claims of losses inflicted on government troops have the CPP-NPA look like just another purveyor of fake news.

## Did DU30 get a new kidney?

TWO complementary sources, neither of which wants to be named, have claimed

that on Wednesday morning, Jan. 29, 2019, President Rodrigo Duterte underwent a successful kidney transplant surgery amid rumors that he had fallen seriously ill.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

FRANCISCO S. TATAD

►TatadA5

The first source said a team led by Dr. Rose Marie Rosete-Liquete, the nation's first woman kidney transplant doctor and executive director of the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTI), performed the procedure at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center in San Juan, Metro Manila. The second source said the same doctor performed the same procedure on the same patient on the same day, but in Davao.

### Cardinal Santos or Davao?

According to the first source, DU30 checked in at Cardinal Santos on Tuesday evening, after attending the premier presentation of former PNP chief and senatorial candidate Bato de la Rosa's biopic at SM Mega Mall, Ortigas Center. The next day he underwent his surgical procedure. He reportedly spent the next couple of days recuperating in a medically furnished luxury suite at Ortigas Center before he flew to Davao.

The second source tried to add a personal testimonial by saying that he himself had a kidney transplant late last year, and that he and the President now shared the same transplant doctor. His operation was virtually painless, he said, and he was back on his feet less than a day after the operation. He said the latest protocol on kidney

transplants allows the doctor to attach a third kidney, which takes the place of the old pair, without touching them, unless they cause problems such as high blood pressure or infection.

This was what the doctor did to him, he said, and this was likely what the doctor did to the President as well. But he insisted it happened at a medical facility in Davao, not in San Juan. Upon hearing this, I went back to my first source to ask them if there wasn't any chance they could have confused Cardinal Santos for Davao. They stood firm on their original claim, pointing out the great inconvenience of doing it in Davao. Indeed, if DU30 was in Manila on Tuesday and was going to undergo a major surgery the next day, it made no sense to fly to Davao the evening before, when he could have rested in Manila on Tuesday evening to prepare for the surgery the next morning.

### A difficult story

It is not easy for me to report this story. The President is particularly sensitive about his state of health, and he tends to take personal offense at any discussion of it in the press. I write regularly as a critic, but I want to keep whatever goodwill exists between me and the

President. Still, we each have our respective duties. At the beginning of his presidency, DU30 disappeared from public view during the New Year holidays. His spokesman then, Ernesto Abella, could not say where he was—no one had seen him in Davao or in Manila, and yet Abella insisted he never left Davao. When the media pressed him on this point, Abella finally said, "Maybe he left Davao, after all."

As a former presidential spokesman for at least 10 years, I found this unacceptable. So I asked: "Where then did he go? Did he, by any chance, go to the Fuda cancer hospital in Guangzhou, as someone had suggested online?" I was more interested in getting a competent and responsible statement from the Palace spokesman than in tracking down the President's actual whereabouts. But my query drew not only a negative reaction from the Palace, and also a confirmatory report from one foreign diplomatic observer who reported seeing a photo (a "selfie") of a Filipino health worker with the President in Fuda.

### The Fuda case

I was not interested in staying with the story, so I told the National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon during a

Manila Hotel social function that I had dropped it altogether, but that he should tell the President about the alleged photograph from Fuda which could surface anytime in the mainstream or social media without my intervention. I was doing this against my interest as a newspaperman, but I thought the President could use a little help at the time.

The gesture was, however, completely misunderstood, for a few days later, in a speech before the troops in Mindanao, DU30 mocked me for allegedly spreading the news about his visit to the cancer hospital. He then confirmed having gone to Fuda, but only to find out, he said, where "Tatad had himself circumcised" so that he could have his own faulty circumcision fixed too.

It was coarse humor, but it's DU30's kind of humor and I did not take it against him. I continued to write about the President, but tried to avoid writing about his health, unless completely unavoidable, for obvious reasons. But the matter cannot be avoided now, in the face of this claim by two complementary sources that he had undergone a major surgical operation. The President and his spokesman may want to dismiss it mechanically as "fake news," but it is bound to

occupy some political space for some time.

The better course would be for the President's official physician rather than his spokesman to issue a medical bulletin on his state of health and general well-being. This will not stop all the speculations, but it would show the President's respect for the right of the public to be informed about his physical and mental well-being.

### Marcos' kidneys

This is not the first time I got caught up in a story of this type. In 1983 and 1984, after I left the Cabinet, where I had been press secretary, presidential spokesman and secretary of public information from 1969 to 1980, and returned to journalism, I helped expose then-President Marcos' two secret kidney transplants. Dr. G. Baird Helfrich, director of renal transplants for Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and Dr. Edgar Milford at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, performed Marcos' first transplant in August 1983. Dr. Barry Kahan, director of transplantation at Houston's Hermann Hospital, performed a second transplant in 1984, after Marcos suffered a rejection of his 1983 donated organ.

The Palace tried to hide these procedures from the public, but with the help of civic-minded individuals, these were ultimately uncovered. Dr. Enrique Ona, one of the country's leading kidney specialists, who eventually became president of the Philippine National Kidney Foundation (PNKF) and later Secretary of Health, confirmed these transplants years after Marcos fell from power in 1986 and died in 1989. On Nov. 2, 1984, Dr. Potenciano Baccay, PNKF vice president and one of Marcos's personal physicians, was found stabbed to death, "supposedly by the communists," after reportedly talking to the foreign press about the transplants.

### Effects on the Constitution

Toward the end of his days, Marcos was rumored to be suffering from *lupus*. But his authoritarian control of government put the state of his health beyond the reach of the press and the public. This created such an enormous political grievance that when Cory Aquino's appointive constitutional commission wrote the 1987 Constitution, they included, among other things, Section 11 of Article VII, which provides as follows:

"Whenever the President transmits to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he

is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

"Whenever a majority of all the Members of the Cabinet transmit to the President of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President."

Section 12 of the same Article provides: "In case of serious illness of the President, the public shall be informed of the state of his health. The members of the Cabinet in charge of national security and foreign relations and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines shall not be denied access to the President during such illness."

### Urgent questions

Given the private claims about the President's reported kidney transplant, a number of questions arise.

—Is the President suffering from an actual "serious illness"? Neither the Constitution nor

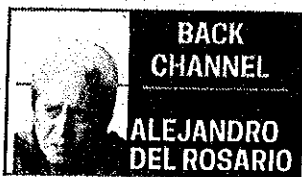
any existing law defines this term, so who will define it? A kidney transplant is normally regarded as a major surgical procedure. According to Wikipedia, the following risks could occur: allergic reaction to general anesthesia; bleeding; blood clots; leakage from the ureter (the tube that connects the kidney to the bladder); blockage from the ureter; an infection; rejection of the donated kidney; failure of the donated kidney; heart attack; a stroke.

—Assuming the information coming from private informants is correct, does the situation activate the provision of Sec 12, Article VII, of the Constitution? But this provision is poorly written. It merely provides that the Cabinet members in charge of national security and foreign relations and the AFP Chief of Staff (which means Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenza, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Gen. Benjamin Madrigal) shall not be denied access to the President during his illness, but nothing compels the President to summon these officials and reveal his precise health condition on his own. And nothing compels these officials to inquire into the President's state of health should he decide to keep them guessing.

The President must oblige us with a full statement.

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## Fallout from Jolo bombing



THE bombing of a Catholic cathedral in Jolo has spawned fears of a religious strife in Mindanao.

This was given credence after what seemed to be a retaliatory blast on a mosque that claimed as many lives in the Catholic church. Now, the fear of bombings has reached Metro Manila where the Philippine National Police has tightened security at shopping malls. Collateral damage in shopping malls could be bigger if terrorist suicide bombers are able to slip through the security check.

*“The fear has reached Metro Manila.”*

The PNP claimed that a male bomber and a female bomber from Indonesia were responsible for the Jolo cathedral attack. Suicide bombers are something new in the country's history of blasts perpetrated by lawless elements. The Abu Sayyaf group of extortionists who passed themselves off as political rebels has not been known to commit suicide bombings. This is a method of mass murder that is new and difficult to stop. How do you prevent a suicide bomber from detonating himself in a line of mall goers passing through security check?

In light of this new development, there is now a public clamor to restore the death penalty. And why not, considering that a bombing that results in mass murder is a heinous crime? The same

extreme measure should be accorded to those involved in the trafficking of illegal drugs. These evil criminals destroy young lives who in the full bloom of their lives could turn out to be useful and productive citizens. Killing them in the suspicious police scenario that they resisted arrest and fired at law enforcers has only earned condemnation and derision from local and international human rights groups.

So capture these drug traffickers and execute them after a fair and speedy trial. The public execution of Chinese drug pusher Lim Seng in the first days of Marcos martial law put the fear of God among other drug traffickers.

There is a global war being waged by terrorists. Governments world-wide should step up to the challenge of fighting these cold-blooded butchers. In other major capitals, the other weapon used by terrorists is running down pedestrians on a busy street with a stolen vehicle. London, Paris and other US cities have experienced these terrorist killing using vehicles as weapons of death.

Last week, there was the rumored death of President Rodrigo Duterte. The President laughed off the fake news while Palace officials dismissed the false report as wishful thinking by his detractors. But the President drew criticism when he told his Cabinet officials not to campaign for administration in the midterm elections on May 13. Cabinet members must have raised their eyebrows considering that President Duterte is openly campaigning for and endorsing Senate candidates Bong Go and Francis Tolentino. The President must lead by example on this issue. These two senatorial bets have enough money to mount their campaign and win senate Seats without the President campaigning for them.

The women senatorial bets—Cynthia Villar, Grace Poe and Pia Cayetano—are leading the pack in the senatorial race, according to two polling companies. But how reliable are these pollsters when their survey is limited to a small area that does not reflect the nationwide preference? And who are paying for these surveys? Obviously, it's

Turn to A5

A4

## Fallout...

From A4

the candidate who has money to spend with the questions rigged to suit the desired effect of the candidate.

Expect a few surprises in the final outcome of the May 13 elections. Those who are not in the win column of 12 senatorial candidates might yet prove the pollsters wrong. Name recall, a good work track record plus a nationwide network of supporters could prove the survey polls inadequate. This scenario is possible in the national elections for senators. At the local level, congressmen, governors and mayors

would most probably prevail given their family dynasty control of constituents in their area.

This then is the reason why those expensive TV commercial ads are done by the senatorial candidates who have to campaign on a nationwide basis while local candidates like congressmen, governors and mayors confine their campaign to their district, province or city.

But given their perks and pork barrel, the local bets have just as much stake to win. So don't wonder why the pork-laden P3.757-trillion national budget was approved by Congress despite the verbal skirmishes between Rep. Rolando Andaya and Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

It's only a joke, no?

## ONLINE NEWS

### 11 FEBRUARY 2019

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# Centcom lauds resident's tip-off in foiled NPA attack

By John Rey Saavedra

**CEBU CITY** — The Central Command (Centcom) on Sunday praised the act of a concerned citizen in the town of Mabinay in Negros Oriental for reporting to soldiers the plan of New People's Army rebels to disrupt a community program supported by the military and the local government unit.

Centcom commander, Lt. Gen. Noel Clement said the timely report by the resident led to the encounter between troops under the 15th Infantry Battalion and the "anti-development communist terrorist group" in Sitio Baliw, Barangay Bagtic of said town last Friday, February 8.

Clement said the soldiers were conducting community support programs in said place when they received a report from one of the townsfolk about the plan of the NPA rebels to attack government troops attending the activity.

Lt. Col. Patricio Tomales, commander of the 15th Infantry Battalion, "immediately ordered his troops to launch a deliberate action to preempt the evil plan," Clement said in statement sent to the Philippine News Agency.

"We were able to hit the enemy for about 30 minutes and later pushed them out of the encounter site, recovering several items such as one M16 rifle with 11 magazines, one Anti-Personnel Mine, one rifle grenade, one commercial radio, personal belongings, and subversive documents," the statement quoted Tomales as saying.

There were no reports of casualties on both sides. Clement, however, said the blood stains along the enemy withdrawal route suggest that the enemy suffered gunshot wounds during the firefight.

He also emphasized the motivation of the soldiers who managed to quell the plans of the NPA rebels.

"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," Clement said.

He reminded the people in the Visayas on the rebels' stance on development.



*By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.*

"The evil plan however, is a solid proof of NPA's anti-development stance to keep people drenched in poverty. Their pathetic move didn't work this time. The people, to whom we dedicate our service, are now actively reporting the enemy's presence and activities in their barangays. We are happy that they fully understand and support the government's peace and development initiatives," he also said.

Brig. Gen. Ignacio Madriaga, commander of the Army's 302nd Infantry (Achiever) Brigade, said in the same statement that "This encounter is 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."

According to him, the incident which sprang from a concerned resident's report "is a clear manifestation that the locals are no longer afraid of the NPA terrorist group." (PNA)