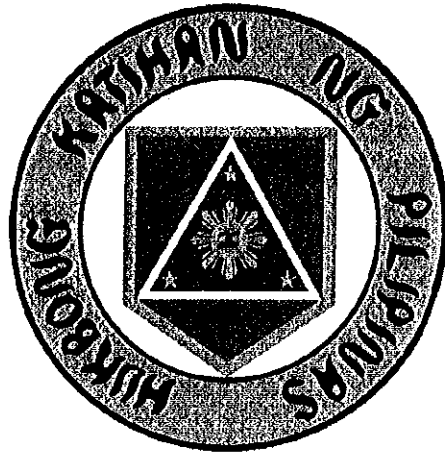


*By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.*



# ARMY

Serving the people. Securing the land.

[oacpa.army2012@gmail.com](mailto:oacpa.army2012@gmail.com)

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## NEWS CLIPPINGS

12 February 2019

Tuesday



*Honor. Patriotism. Duty.*



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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 12 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>		
1-3	And they're off...officially	P Star-1
4-5	Palace defends Du30's 11 choices for senator	PDI-A1
<b>AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS</b>		
6-7	Cop gets medal for keeping his cool	PDI-A1
8	2 US destroyers sail in disputed sea; China irked	PDI-A2
9-10	US destroyers sail in disputed South China Sea amid trade tensions	M Bulletin-1
11	2 US warships sail in disputed China Sea	Malaya-B2
12-13	2 US warship test 'freedom of navigation' on WPS	M Standard-A1
14	Military looking for drone jammers	PDI-A3
15	P11-M smuggled cigarettes seized at Zamboanga port	PDI-A9
16	300 Caraga barangays eyed as poll watchlist areas	P Star-11
17-18	Comelec eyes 100% e-transmission of results	P Star-1
19-20	Campaign period starts today	Malaya-B1
21	Campaign period simula ngayon	PM-2
22	Albayalde to cops: Remain apolitical	Tempo-3
23	AFP, PNP, PCG personnel get pre-valentine's day gift	PDI-A10
24	Soldiers, cops, PCG get bus fare discount	P Star-1
25	20% bus fare discount for cops, soldiers, PCG	M Bulletin-2
26	Soldiers, cops entitled to 20% discount in PUVs	Malaya-B1
27	Fare discount for uniformed personnel	D Tribune-3
28	Troops, cops to get 20% discount in bus fares-DOTr	M Standard-A6
29	20% discount sa bus sa pulis, sundalo	Balita-2
30	Miyembro ng AFP, PNP at PCG, May 20% discount sa bus	PM-2
31	AFP, PNP at PCG, may 20% discount sa bus	Ngayon-3
32	Drive versus smuggling intensified	D Tribune-7
33-34	Disarm, farm lands	D Tribune-1
35	SC ready for 'tele-hearing of cases	M Standard-A3
36	Sayyaf man tagged in 2001 kidnappings nabbed in Manila	P Star-10
37	Logger slain by Abus in Basilan; 6 escape	P Star-11
38	Army soldiers, local officials organize first bird watching tour at Liguasan Marsh	PDI-A8
39	Commander bravo frustrated but will toe line-MILF chair	PDI-A5
40-41	MNLF freezes Moro state petition	D Tribune-1
42	Rody wants to meet Abe anew on Phi-Japan ties	P Star-4
43-44	Japan helping fight terror scourge	D Tribune-3
45	US providing Phi P300M for intel operations	P Star-7
46	US pledges P300-M aid in PH fight vs terrorism	PDI-A5

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

47	Palace welcomes P300-M intel support from US	M Bulletin-1
48-49	US to give P300-M intel support to fight terror	M Times-A1
50	Palace welcomes US intel support	D Tribune-3
51	Anti-terror drive draws P300-M US financing	M Standard-A1
52	Palace welcomes P300-M intelligence support from US	Tempo-7
53	Gauge views on Autonomy, Cordillera leaders asked	PDI-A9
54	Prove cheating in plebiscite, Cotabato mayor asked	P Star-11
55	Caraga police force gets heroes' welcome	M Bulletin-11
56	PH, JICA to sign loan agreement for road projects	M Bulletin-11
57	Muslim, Christian youth join hands to guard places of worship in ARMM	M Bulletin-11
58-59	Cotabato mayor wants SC to nullify BOL vote	M Times-A1
60	BOL plebiscite tabulation 'incomplete'	Malaya-B2
<b>EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY</b>		
61	PH's duplicity on security matters	PDI-A7
62	What the Davao-Japan connection means	M Bulletin-9
63	Pursue one peace accord with all Muslim groups	M Times-A4
64-65	Conflicted interest	D Tribune-4
66	A prudent approach	M Standard-A4
67-68	PH-China ties up close	M Standard-A4
69	BOL and BARMM: Hope and high expectations	M Standard-A5
<b>ONLINE NEWS</b>		
70	AFP, PNP, Coast Guard personnel get bus fare discounts	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>
71	AFP denies conspiring with MILF for BOL win	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>



# And they're off... officially

## Campaign period starts for nat'l bets

By PAOLO ROMERO  
and HELEN FLORES

The 90-day national campaign for over 60 senatorial candidates and 154 party-list groups in the May elections officially kicks off today, with the Commission on Elections (Comelec) again warning them against committing electoral offenses.

The Comelec last month released the names of 62 senatorial candidates it has allowed to run as well as 154 accredited party-list groups seeking seats in the House of Representatives.

The Senate race is considered to be tight, with seven senators seeking reelection, six others wanting to return to the chamber and several prominent candidates, including those endorsed by President Duterte, fighting over only 12 slots.

The reelectionist senators, belonging to different political parties, will be launching their electoral campaign separately

Turn to Page 2

## And they're

From Page 1

but they are expected to be together in a rare sortie tomorrow in Tondo, Manila.

Sens. Cynthia Villar, Sonny Angara, Joseph Victor Ejercito and Aquilino Pimentel III are scheduled to attend a campaign kick-off in Pampanga this afternoon organized by the Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP), a regional party headed by Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte.

Also expected to join the campaign rally are other candidates supported by the HNP,

namely former special assistant to the president Christopher Go, former Bureau of Corrections chief Ronaldo dela Rosa, former political affairs adviser Francis Tolentino, Taguig City-Pateros Rep. Pia Cayetano, former senators Ramon Revilla Jr. and Jinggoy Estrada, Maguindanao Rep. Zaid Mangudadatu and former journalist Jiggy Manicad.

Ejercito and Dela Rosa, both motorbike enthusiasts, are expected to proceed to the venue in a convoy of motorcycles.

Also expected to speak during the rally are Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Pampanga Gov. Lilia Pineda.

Sen. Grace Poe will kick off her campaign this morning with a school feeding program at a multi-purpose hall in Payatas, Quezon City.

Sen. Nancy Binay will launch her campaign with a motorcade from San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. She will be joined by Angara, former Senate president Juan Ponce Enrile and senatorial candidate Dan Roleda.

Reelectionist senators Angara, Binay, Ejercito, Pimentel, Poe, Villar and Aquino—who is running under the opposition coalition Otso Diretso—are scheduled to be together in one rally in Tondo tomorrow.

The event was organized by Poe, who is running as an independent. Five of her fellow reelectionists and Senate President Vicente Sotto III have confirmed their attendance.

### House-to-house

Opposition senatorial bets, meanwhile, will begin their house-to-house campaign today. Liberal Party president Francis Pangilinan said a house-to-house campaign will enable them to directly relay to the people their platforms while listening to their concerns.

"This campaign strategy of going house-to-house is a game-changer. It has not been done on a national scale," said Pangilinan, who is also the Otso Diretso campaign manager.

The candidates of the Otso Diretso (Straight Eight) slate are Aquino, former senator Mar Roxas, human rights lawyer Chel Diokno, Marawi civic leader Samira Gutoc, former solicitor general Florin Hilbay, veteran election lawyer Romulo Macalinal, former Quezon congressman Erin Tañada and Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano.

Otso Diretso candidates except Roxas will join a "face-to-face persuasion campaign" in Caloocan City, where they are also expected to launch the slate's eight-point program.

Pangilinan said the opposition bets will focus on improving the lives of Filipino families.

"They themselves will knock on doors and talk to ordinary folk all over the country,"

he said.

"Our campaign would be uphill as most of them are relatively unknown in the national stage. But I am confident that when the people get to know them more, they will vote for them to become our public servants in the Senate," he said.

Pangilinan, who himself ran and won as an independent in 2007, said getting the people's attention would be key to victory for Otso Diretso.

He said Project Makinig, a 10-week project he started late last year, was able to mobilize 9,800 volunteers to talk to 116,000 people. Project Makinig promotes face-to-face, volunteer-driven persuasion campaign.

"Makinig 2.0 is our version of People Power, empowering ordinary citizens so that they are able to make the right choice for senators and empowering them to campaign for these choices," Pangilinan said.

"Unlike resource-rich traditional politicians who will launch their electoral campaigns through massive proclamation rallies, the Otso Diretso candidates will start their campaign going back to the people, sharing each other's stories," he said.

Vice President Leni Robredo, LP chair, will join all Otso Diretso candidates in a kick-off rally in Naga City, Camarines Sur tomorrow.

### Active campaigning

At Malacañang, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said President Duterte is expected to actively campaign for his allies – including the ones embroiled in controversies. He has yet to disclose his choices for senators.

"The President will, as he said, endorse certain candidates of his choice so presumably he will be actively campaigning since he is not prohibited by law to do so," Panelo said in a chance interview.

"An endorsement could translate into votes given the popularity of the President, but then again the ultimate judgment will be on the part of the people," he added.

While Duterte has been publicly praising some candidates, he has not released a complete list of senatorial bets of his choice.

Two political groups with senatorial slates are aligned with the administration. They are the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban),

the political party of Duterte; and the HNP coalition of presidential daughter and Mayor Carpio, which is reportedly endorsing 14 candidates.

Previous reports said Duterte would also lead the kick off for a mixed slate of senatorial candidates under a coalition called "Du it."

In his previous speeches and media interviews, the President voiced support for the senatorial bids of 10 candidates – Tolentino, Dela Rosa, Go, folk singer Freddie Aguilar, Angara, Villar, Cayetano, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos, Ejercito and Estrada.

Duterte previously admitted there were disagreements among his allies over who would comprise the administration's senatorial slate.

But Panelo said the development only proved that the administration has a "deep bench."

"If he, for instance, supports the three slates, then it only means that he has a deep bench of senatorial hopefuls. So, regardless of who among the wins, *eh OK pa rin sa kanya iyon* (that would be acceptable to him)," the spokesman said.

While Malacañang claimed Duterte has a lot of candidates to choose from, critics pointed out that some of his choices were involved in irregularities, especially Estrada and Marcos.

Estrada is out on bail for plunder in connection with the multibillion-peso pork barrel scam.

Critics said Duterte's endorsement of Estrada was incompatible with his promise not to tolerate even a whiff of corruption under his watch.

But Panelo said Estrada is presumed innocent until a court finds him guilty of the charges against him.

"The Constitution says unless you are convicted by final judgment... He (Estrada) has been granted bail and the reason for the court's grant of provisional liberty is anchored on the fact that the evidence of guilt is not strong," the spokesman said.

"So you cannot begrudge the President for endorsing a man who is presumed to be innocent under the law. Otherwise you are prejudging him," he added.

Asked what qualifications Duterte wants for candidates seeking his endorsement, Panelo replied: "Based on what I heard from him when he endorses – honesty, efficient in work."

– With Alexis Romero



February 2019

PHILIPPINE DAILY  
INQUIRER

Page: 11

# PALACE DEFENDS DU30'S 11 CHOICES FOR SENATOR

STORY BY CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO

The President says choosing his own ticket is the right thing to do. He acknowledges that he owes a debt of gratitude to some controversial candidates who helped him win in 2016.

FROM A1

VOTE 2019  
#ELECTION 2019

By Christine O. Avendaño  
@10avendanoINQ

It's more of a presidential slate than an administration ticket for the senatorial elections in May.

On the eve of the start of the campaign for national candidates, the Duterte administration still had no full slate for the 12 Senate seats up for grabs in the midterm elections.

It was a departure from the full slate of the Aquino administration's Team P-Noy in 2013 and the ticket of the Arroyo administration's Team Unity in 2007.

President Duterte told reporters on Jan. 23 that he would have his own personal ticket because it was "the right thing to do."

Mr. Duterte's 11

So far, Mr. Duterte has endorsed 11 senatorial aspirants—four of the five candidates of his Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), which makes it the administration party, and seven others.

The four PDP-Laban candidates he is endorsing are his former aide Chris Topher Go; his former national police chief Ronald dela Rosa; his former

political adviser Francis Tolentino; and Maguindanao Rep. Zaid "Dong" Mangudadatu.

The President has also publicly endorsed reelectionist Senators Cynthia Villar, JVEjercito and Sonny Angara, former Senators Jinggoy Estrada and Pia Cayetano, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos and singer Freddie Aguilar.

Quid pro quo

Mr. Duterte said he would support Villar, Cayetano, Angara and Marcos because they supported him in the 2016 presidential race.

He also said he would endorse Estrada whom he called a "friend," and one of the 15 candidates of Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP), the political party of his daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio.

On two occasions, the President said Aguilar was his candidate because he was a "nationalist" and had composed relevant songs.

Mangudadatu

On Monday night, Mr. Duterte called Mangudadatu a senator in a speech he delivered in Buluan,



**PERSONAL CHOICE** Former PNP Director General Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa is among the 11 senatorial candidates being endorsed by President Duterte. —MALACANANG PHOTO

Maguindanao province.

The President called out Mangudadatu's name while he was speaking about the possibility of Maguindanao finding oil in Liguasan Marsh.

#### Preferred

"So if you become rich, do not forget us," the President said.

Also in his speech, the President thanked Marcos for support-

ing his presidential bid in 2016.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo on Monday noted that Mr. Duterte had said he would campaign for his "preferred candidates."

Asked whether the President's endorsement of practically three slates would affect the chances of administration candidates, Panelo said: "Well, you know in the ultimate analy-

sis, it will be the electorate who will decide."

The three slates consisted of those from PDP-Laban, his supposed senatorial slate and HNP.

Panelo said the President had come up with his own senatorial slate although he was chair of PDP-Laban because it was his personal preference. "So, I don't think we can stop him."

He added that the President was presenting certain candidates that he thought would be good material for the Senate.

#### 'Deep bench'

If the President is supporting three slates it means he has a deep bench of senatorial hopefuls, according to Panelo.

He said not all candidates on the slate that previous Presidents had endorsed had won. "There is always somebody outside of the slate that gets the approbation of the people."

Panelo defended the inclusion of Marcos and Estrada among the preferred candidates of the President when asked about Mr. Duterte's strong stand against corruption.

Marcos is a daughter of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who had been accused of amassing ill-gotten wealth of up to \$5 billion during his 20-year rule.

Estrada is facing plunder charges in the Sandiganbayan,

but is out on bail.

#### 'Debt of gratitude'

Panelo said the President was helping Marcos because he was "indebted to her because she is one of only two governors who helped him in the [2016 presidential] campaign. His reason was because he owed her a debt of gratitude."

Panelo noted that Imee Marcos had not yet been charged of any crime.

In the case of Estrada, Panelo said the son of former President Joseph Estrada had not yet been convicted of plunder.

Estrada is accused of plunder and 11 counts of graft for allegedly pocketing P183.79 million from his Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) allocation from 2004 to 2010 in the scheme allegedly masterminded by businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles in collusion with lawmakers.

"And the Constitution says, unless you are convicted by final judgment, you are presumed to be innocent. So the presumption is Estrada is innocent," he said.

Panelo also said Estrada was given provisional liberty from the plunder case, showing that "the evidence of guilt is not strong." —WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ



12 February 2019

# INQUIRER

Page: 11

## AT 'TAHO' INCIDENT AT MRT Cop gets medal for keeping his cool

By Jaymee T. Gamil  
@JGamilINQ

For grace under fire from a Chinese woman  
armed with a cup of "taho," PO1 William  
Cristobal received honors on Monday

**A2**

# MRT COP AWARDED MEDAL FOR KEEPING HIS COOL

**FROM A1**

from the Philippine National Police commander.

PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde presented a commendation medal, the Medalyang Papuri, to Cristobal at PNP headquarters in Camp Crame, Quezon City, praising the officer as "worthy of emulation."

Cristobal kept his cool after being splattered with taho (sweetened bean curd drink) by 23-year-old Chinese student Jiale Zhang at the MRT Boni station in Mandaluyong City on Saturday.

Liquids have been prohibited at MRT and LRT stations since twin blasts at a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu province, killed more than 20 people and wounded nearly 100 others on Jan. 27.

## Encounter at the stiles

Cristobal stopped Zhang at the stiles when he saw that the young woman, who was studying fashion design in Manila, was carrying a cup of taho.

He told her to finish her taho first or throw it away and he would let her through.

Zhang threw the taho, not away but at Cristobal, who got it on his chest and right arm.

A commuter videoed the scene and the images went viral on the internet.

One picture showed Cristobal glowering at Zhang and gritting his teeth, but standing his ground like a good soldier.

Zhang was arrested and a raft of charges was thrown at her by the authorities, who also recommended her deportation

for good measure.

No more train rides for her, too, as the MRT banned her from its premises for defying security measures.

## 'Very commendable'

Albayalde was all praise for Cristobal on Monday.

"His actions were very commendable. What he showed our countrymen was that our police officers are truly disciplined and patient, regardless of whether they are facing a local or a foreigner," the PNP chief told reporters after the awarding ceremony for Cristobal.

"I think how he acted was worthy of emulation," Albayalde added.

In a talk with reporters after the ceremony, Cristobal said he never thought of retaliatory action after getting splattered with taho.

"I just did what our PNP chief wanted us to do, which is to have a lot of patience and do what is right for our country," said Cristobal, who has been on the force for 10 years.

## Wake-up call

Vice President Leni Robredo called the incident a "wake-up call" for the Duterte administration, which has chosen to be friendly to China despite the Chinese's grabbing Philippine territory in the South China Sea.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former PNP chief, called the incident "a slap to us" and urged Filipinos to take a stand.

"As Filipinos, we should be united in saying that, 'Hey, we may be a small country, a weak country, a poor country, but

you cannot treat us like that, [you cannot] push us around," Lacson said.

He said the PNP was right in seeking the declaration of Zhang as an undesirable alien.

Sen. Richard Gordon said China should tell its citizens to obey Philippine laws, as he called on Monday for the deportation of Zhang.

"The Chinese nationals here and all other foreign nationals staying in our country should respect our rules and laws. They should not flout our rules and they should also respect the officials who are implementing our laws," Gordon said.

But Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. advised against blowing the incident out of proportions, recommending only the prosecution of Zhang.

Locsin tweeted on Monday that he needed to think about the Filipinos living in China.

"A little outburst of reactive xenophobia" could be detrimental to them, he said.

## Waiting for developments

Malacañang also refused to see the taho-throwing incident as aggression and decided to wait for the results of the official action against Zhang.

"She's facing deportation charges. What the President hates is when an oppressive act is committed and nothing happens. But in this situation I think he will just wait for the developments," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo told reporters on Monday.

Panelo described the incident as an "isolated case." --WITH REPORTS FROM LEILA B. SALAVERRIA AND JULIEM. AURELIO INQ

# 2 US destroyers sail in disputed sea; China irked

WASHINGTON—Two US warships sailed near islands claimed by China in the South China Sea on Monday, a US official told Reuters, a move that angered Beijing at a time of tense relations between the world's two biggest economies.

Beijing and Washington are locked in a trade war and the two sides are trying to hammer out a deal ahead of a March 1 deadline when US tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports are scheduled to increase to 25 percent from 10 percent.

Escalating tensions between the United States and China have cost both countries billions of dollars and roiled global financial markets.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two guided-missile destroyers traveled within 22 kilometers of Panganiban Reef, a maritime feature internationally known as Mischief Reef and located in Philippine waters in the disputed Spratly Islands that China seized in the

mid-1990s and developed into a military outpost.

China's foreign ministry on Monday expressed anger over the US operation.

Hua Chunying, the foreign ministry spokesperson, said the US ships entered Chinese waters without permission.

## Freedom of navigation

The US operation was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters, where Chinese, Japanese and some Southeast Asian navies operate.

China claims almost all of the strategic South China Sea, including waters close to the shores of four Southeast Asian nations that have overlapping claims in the resource-rich sea—the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Beijing frequently lambastes Washington and its allies over naval operations near Chinese-occupied islands.

These include Panganiban and six other reefs that China

had seized from the Philippines and built into artificial islands to present the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague with a fait accompli in a challenge to its sweeping claim brought by the Philippine government in 2013.

The court ruled in favor of the Philippines in 2016, invalidating China's extensive claim and declaring it violated the Philippines' sovereign right to fish and explore resources in the West Philippine Sea, waters within the country's 370-km exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

## China militarization

China ignored the ruling and proceeded to develop military outposts on the Philippine reefs, topping them with naval and air defense capabilities, including antiship and surface-to-air missiles.

China and the United States have repeatedly traded barbs over what Washington calls Beijing's militarization of the South China Sea. —REUTERS



## US destroyers sail in disputed South China Sea amid trade tensions

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Two US warships sailed near islands claimed by China in the South China Sea on Monday, a US official told Reuters, a move likely to anger Beijing at a time of tense relations between the world's two biggest economies.

Beijing and Washington are locked in a trade war and the two sides are trying to hammer out a deal ahead of a March 1 deadline when US tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports are scheduled to increase to 25 percent from 10 percent.

Escalating tensions between the United States and China have cost both countries billions of dollars and roiled global financial markets.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two guided-missile destroyers traveled within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands.

The operation was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters, where Chinese, Japanese and some Southeast Asian navies operate.

China claims almost all of the strategic South China Sea and frequently lambastes the United

►4

## US destroyers sail...

◀1

States and its allies over naval operations near Chinese-occupied islands.

China and the United States have repeatedly traded barbs in the past over what Washington says is Beijing's militarization of the South China Sea by building military installations on artificial islands and reefs.

China defends its construction as necessary for self-defense and says it is the United States that is responsible for ratcheting up tensions in the region by sending warships and military planes close to islands Beijing claims.

Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei,

Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan have competing claims in the region.

Fears have grown in recent months that the US-China trade dispute is just one element in a bilateral relationship that is fast cooling across the board, with top US administration officials sharply criticizing Beijing for everything from human rights abuses to cyber espionage in the United States.

The two countries are also at odds over regional security, including Washington's overtures to the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own.

## 2 US warships sail in disputed China Sea

WASHINGTON. – Two US warships sailed near islands claimed by China in the South China Sea on Monday, a US official told Reuters, a move likely to anger Beijing at a time of tense relations between the world's two biggest economies.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two guided-missile destroyers traveled within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands.

The Philippines calls Mischief Reef as Panganiban Reef. The Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan have competing claims in the region.

Beijing and Washington are locked in a trade war and the two sides are trying to hammer out a deal ahead of a March 1 deadline when US tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese

imports are scheduled to increase to 25 percent from 10 percent.

Escalating tensions between the United States and China have cost both countries billions of dollars and roiled global financial markets.

The US warships' operation was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters, where Chinese, Japanese and some Southeast Asian navies operate.

China claims almost all of the strategic South China Sea and frequently lambastes the United States and its allies over naval operations near Chinese-occupied islands.

China and the United States have repeatedly traded barbs in the past over what Washington says is Beijing's militarization of the South

China Sea by building military installations on artificial islands and reefs.

China defends its construction as necessary for self-defense and says it is the United States that is responsible for ratcheting up tensions in the region by sending warships and military planes close to islands Beijing claims.

Fears have grown in recent months that the US-China trade dispute is just one element in a bilateral relationship that is fast cooling across the board, with top US administration officials sharply criticizing Beijing for everything from human rights abuses to cyber espionage in the United States. b2

The two countries are also at odds over regional security, including Washington's overtures to the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own. -- Reuters



12

February 2019

Manila Standard

Page:

A1

## 2 US WARSHIPS TEST 'FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION' ON WPS

THE United States sailed two warships close to the disputed islands in the South China Sea on Monday, a move expected to draw Beijing's ire.

The guided-missile destroyers USS Spruance and USS Preble sailed within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly Islands as part of what the US Navy calls a "freedom of navigation operation."

In Manila, the United States has funded the Philippine Coast Guard's Outboard Motor Center of Excellence, a new maritime training facility in Balagtas,

Bulacan, intended to enhance the coast guard's capacity to train its workforce and sustain its equipment.

US and Philippine officials inaugurated the P39-million new facility consisting of a classroom, a barracks and an outboard motor maintenance lab during the unveiling ceremony on Monday.

The US Navy's operation was carried out "to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the waterways as governed by international law,"

*Next page*

## 2 US warships...

From A1

Commander Clay Doss, a spokesman for the US Navy's 7th Fleet, told CNN.

"All operations are designed in accordance with international law and demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows," Doss said, adding "that is true in the South China Sea as in other places around the globe."

Monday's operation was the second in the South China Sea reported by the US Navy this year. In January, the destroyer USS McCampbell sailed within 12 nautical miles of the Paracel Islands.

Shortly after that operation, China accused the US of trespassing in its territorial waters—and said it had deployed missiles "capable of targeting medium and large ships."

"The US action violated the Chinese laws and international laws, infringed China's sovereignty, damaged regional peace, security and

order," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said at the time.

"China will take necessary actions to protect state sovereignty."

In late September, the USS Decatur also sailed within 12 nautical miles of Gaven and Johnson reefs in the Spratly Islands as part of a similar freedom of navigation operation.

During that operation, a Chinese destroyer came within 45 yards of the US warship, forcing it to maneuver to avoid a collision. The US labeled the Chinese warship's actions unsafe and unprofessional, while Beijing said the US was threatening the safety and sovereignty of China.

The US has accused Beijing of installing missiles and other military hardware on the disputed islands.

"There's been sort of a steady increase," Admiral John Richardson, the US Chief of Naval Operations, told reporters earlier this month when asked about China's militarization of the area.

"The weapons systems have been getting increasingly sophisticated so it's something we're watching very closely," he said.

"We've got big interests there so we're going to remain there," he added, noting that about a third of the world's trade pass through those waters.

With Rey E. Requejo

AFP MODERNIZATION PROJECT

## MILITARY LOOKING FOR DRONE JAMMERS

The Department of National Defense has reopened the bidding for the P33.75-million supply contract for ant drone equipment following a slight alteration on the specifics of the motorcycle that will be used to carry the device.

Defense Assistant Secretary Manuel Ramos, chair of the bids and awards committee, said the military needed nine sets of shoulder-fired directional jammers under the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program.

"Delivery of the goods is required not later than 120 calendar days from the receipt of contract and notice to proceed," Ramos said.

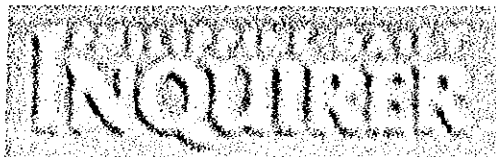
### 1 km effective distance

Directional jammers are used against unmanned aerial vehicles or drones by disrupting radio control frequencies.

The directional jammers must have an effective operational distance of at least one kilometer.

—JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE INQ 13



**REGIONS BRIEFS****P11-M smuggled cigarettes seized at Zamboanga port**

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A joint operation on illegal drugs and smuggling on Saturday intercepted 12,640 reams of smuggled cigarettes worth at least P11 million at the port here. Rear Adm. Rene Medina, commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao, said the operation seized the imported cigarettes from a commercial vessel, MV Kristel Jane, that came from Jolo town, Sulu province, on Saturday. The seized cigarettes were turned over to the Bureau of Customs office here for safekeeping, Medina said, adding that no one had come forward to claim the items. He said the foiled transport of smuggled cigarettes was a result of an intensified maritime patrol and operation of the Navy and other agencies. —JULIE ALIPALA

## 300 Caraga barangays eyed as poll watchlist areas

BUTUAN CITY -- At least 300 barangays in Caraga are being considered as election watchlist areas in the May polls, the regional office of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) said.

Most of the barangays are in Surigao del Sur and Agusan del Sur, Francisco Pobe, Comelec-Caraga director, said.

"Skirmishes between government forces and communist insurgents have occurred in these... areas, but our forces are trying to neutralize them before election day," Pobe said.

He said the Regional Joint Security Control Center (RJSCC) is validating

the list of affected barangays.

Pobe said the police and military also continue to monitor areas prone to violence, including those where there is a reported presence of private armed groups.

Security forces are set to submit their report at the RJSCC meeting in this city next week.

Caraga is composed of the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur and Dinagat Islands.

There are 1,131 barangays in the region.

Ben Serrano

## Comelec eyes 100% e-transmission of results

By MAYEN JAYMALIN

Despite the possibility of signal disruptions in far-flung areas, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) is hoping for a 100 percent electronic transmission of results of the May midterm elections.

Comelec Commissioner Marlon Casquejo said the poll body intends to surpass the electronic transmission rates in the last three elections and achieve a 100 percent rate in the coming polls.

"Transmission rate in the  
Turn to Page 4



## Comelec From Page 1

2016 elections was close to 97 percent. So we are targeting if we could exceed to 100 percent," Casquejo disclosed yesterday.

He noted that the Comelec recorded a 91 percent electronic transmission rate in 2010 and the figure dropped to 76 percent in 2013.

According to Casquejo, the Comelec has adopted contingency measures to prevent the removal of Secured Digital (SD) card from the vote counting machines (VCMs) in case electronic transmission fails due to signal disruptions.

"One of the contingency procedures is in the event that the electoral board failed to transmit election results from the voting center... they will go to the nearest voting center with a strong signal so that we could send the results directly from the VCM to the CCS

(Consolidation Canvassing System) and the transparency server," he noted.

The transfer of SD card will be accompanied by elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) or the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as well as representatives of candidates.

He said removal of the SD card would be the last resort for the electoral board to avoid doubts on the credibility of election results.

Casquejo said the Comelec is also working with the police and military to prevent attempts to sabotage the signal.

Yesterday, the Comelec conducted the last of three components of the Trusted Build program of the Automated Election System to be used in the midterm elections. — **With Sheila Crisostomo, Emmanuel Tupas, Roel Pareño**

## Campaign period starts today

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR and GERARD NAVAL

THE campaign period for the May 13 national and local elections starts today.

The opposition's senatorial slate, "Otso Diretso," is launching its campaign in Caloocan city this morning.

The slate, led by Sen. Bam Aquino, will kick off activities with a press conference at Café Poblacion from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

The PDP-Laban, under which President Duterte ran in the May 2016 elections, is set to formally launch the candidacy of its five senatorial candidates on Thursday in Bulacan.

But a regional party headed by Davao City Mayor and presidential daughter Sarah Duterte-Carpio, the Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP), will launch its campaign in Pampanga this morning at the provincial capitol.

The PDP-Laban and the HNP have common candidates.

President Duterte apparently has his own set of candidates, some of whom are also PDP-Laban and HNP bets.

The PDP-Laban candidates are Duterte's former special assistant, Christopher "Bong" Go; former PNP chief Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa; Duterte's former political adviser, Francis Tolentino; Duterte's godson and PDP-Laban head Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III; and Maguindanao Rep. Zaid Mangudadatu.

The HNP has a national slate composed of eight candidates -- Go, Dela Rosa, Sen. Cynthia Villar, Sen. JV Ejercito, Taguig Rep. Pia Cayetano, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos, Mangudadatu, and former senator Jinggoy Estrada. Its regional slate is composed of Tolentino, Pimentel, Sen. Juan Edgardo Angara, former senator Bong Revilla, and former mediaman Jiggy

See CAMPAIGN> Page B3

## CAMPAIGN

Manical.

Duterte has been vocal about his preference for certain candidates. He is appearing in TV ads of Go and Tolentino. He has raised the arm of some senatorial hopefuls in several events, which presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said was the President's way of voicing his "personal choice."

Among the personalities that Duterte has vouched for are Go, Dela Rosa, Tolentino, Villar, Angara, Ejercito, Cayetano, Marcos, Estrada, and folk icon Freddie Aguilar.

## NEUTRALITY

On the eve of the start of the campaign period, Duterte reminded those in government, including those in the military and the police, not to get involved in the campaign of any candidate.

"I have ordered the military, I have ordered the police, neutral. Neutral ang Cabinet. Although, they can campaign pero sa panahon ko, sabi ko huwag. Huwag kayo makialam sa pulitika (I said don't. Don't get involved in politics), the President said during the distribution of land titles to land reform beneficiaries in Maguindanao.

Duterte also said no government funds should be used in the campaign. He said the presence of some Cabinet officials in sorties or events attended by candidates could lead to suspicions that government funds are being used.

The President said his case is different because he is a "political entity," and he can choose if he would campaign or not.

## BONG GO IN CRAME

Go was in the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame yesterday, where he promised policemen that housing and medical care for them will be his priority "when the time comes."

Speaking at the launching of the Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terrorismo, Go said he is not campaigning, noting it is not proper to campaign inside a police camp.

He urged the youth to support President Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs.

He later talked about some of government's programs, including last year's acquisition of P1.6 billion worth of equipment for the PNP.

"On my part, I want to push for the continuation of the AFP-PNP housing program where we will give affordable housing units to our police. Our priority will be the policemen in terms of housing," Go said.

Go also promised to provide medical services to policemen and to their families.

In an interview, Go said he was invited to be the guest speaker of the launching of the anti-drugs program as the honorary chairman of the Association of Chiefs of Police of the Philippines Inc.

"I went here as an invited guest, only and as a private citizen or maybe as a former secretary... I'm not campaigning," he said.

PNP chief Oscar Albayalde defended Go and said he was not campaigning. "He is here as member of the ACPI, being the honorary chairman of the ACPI," he said.

"Campaigning inside camp is prohibited. That is strictly prohibited," he added.

## OFF LIMITS

Three dioceses have declared churches under their jurisdictions as off limits to election propaganda materials.

The Archdiocese of Caceres (Bicol region) said churches are not allowed to be used as a venue to promote the candidacy of any candidate.

"It is prohibited to allow the posting of any candidate's or political party's political advertisement (tarpaulin, banners, stickers, etc) in church property, including political rallies in church premises," said Caceres Archbishop Rolando Tirona.

Balanga Bishop Ruperto Santos said he has also issued a similar order for the diocese.

"We have a pastoral directive that there will be no political tarpaulins in any church patio and fences," he said adding no candidate will be allowed to participate in offertory processions of masses.

Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes said he did not find it necessary to come out with an official order but that such a prohibition is already in

effect in the diocese.

"Our people know that it is forbidden," said Bastes.

Back in the 2013 polls, the Diocese of Bacolod placed a tarpaulin in front of San Sebastian Church in Bacolod City bearing names of candidates for senators and party-list groups.

In the tarpaulin, the Diocese of Bacolod identified senatorial candidates and party-list groups that are for and against the reproductive health law.

## CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

Resolution No. 10488 of the Commission on Elections said the campaign period for senators, party-list groups, and for local positions will run until May 11.

Local candidates will begin their campaign period on March 29.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said the official start of the campaign period means the Comelec can hold liable candidates engaged in illegal election activities.

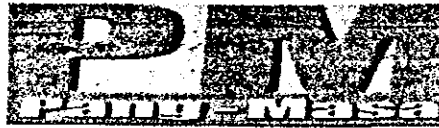
Considered as lawful campaign materials are pamphlets, leaflets, cards, stickers or other printed materials not exceeding 8 1/2 by 14 inches; posters made of cloth, paper, cardboard or any posted material not exceeding 2 by 3 feet; printed letters urging voters to vote for or against any candidate; and mobile vehicles that are with or without sound systems and/or lights.

Candidates are prohibited from distributing campaign materials that violate gender sensitivity, that are obscene or offensive, or those that violate the Magna Carta for Women.

Candidates are required to post their campaign materials only in authorized common poster areas which include public places such as roads, plazas, markets, barangay centers, parks, or any other public grounds as identified by local election officers.

For broadcast campaign materials, candidates are allowed a maximum of 120 minutes of TV ads on a per station basis, and 180 minutes of radio ads on a per station basis.

The Comelec said all candidates shall also be required to register with the agency the website names and web addresses of their official blogs or social media pages. — *With Victor Reyes*



# PNP PINAIGTING ANG SEGURIDAD. CAMPAIGN PERIOD SIMULA NGAYON

Pinaigting ng Philippine National Police (PNP) ang seguridad sa buong bansa bunga ng pag-arangkada ng kampanya ngayong araw ng mga tumatakbong senador at partylist congress-

men kaugnay ng gagang-ping midterm elections sa Mayo ng taong ito.

Ayon kay PNP Chief P/Director General Oscar Albayalde na nakahanda na ang lahat ng security measures para sa pagsi-

simula ng campaign period sa national level na tatagal ng 90 araw.

Sinabi ni Albayalde, na may mga bago silang listahan ng hotspot areas na patuloy na isinasailalim sa pagba-validate ng PNP sa pakikipagkoordinasyon sa Commission on Elections

(Comelec) at AFP.

Magugunita na noong nakalipas na buwan ay sinabi ni Albayalde na nasa 19 bayan, siyudad at munisipalidad sa Luzon at Mindanao ang isinailalim sa Election Watchlist Areas (EWAS) para sa nalalapit na May 2019 midterm polls tulad

ng bayan ng Sudipen at Balaoan sa La Union; Jones sa Isabela; Lemery sa Batangas; Rozas sa Oriental Mindoro; Balud at Dimasalang sa Masbate at Daraga sa lalawigan naman ng Albay.

Kabilang pa sa talaan ay mula sa rehiyon ng Mindanao na kinabibila-

ngan naman ng Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur; Cagayan de Oro City; Hadji Mohammad Ajul; Tipo-Tipo at Lantawan sa Basilan; Sultan Dumlundong; Mamasapano; Shariff Aguak, Shariff Saydona Mustapha at Datu Unsay sa Maguindanao; gayundin ang Marawi City

sa Lanao del Sur.

Ang nasabing mga lugar ay may mga naitalang insidente ng karamihan, presensya ng mga armadong grupo at mga bahta sa pambansang seguridad na naging basehan para ibilang ito sa listahan ng hotspot. Joy Cantos

## Albayalde to cops: Remain apolitical

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Director General Oscar Albayalde reminded the 190,000-strong police force to remain apolitical on Monday, a day before the start of the campaign period for the 2019 midterm elections.

"Sa ating mga members ng PNP, palagi natin sinasabi sa kanila to remain apolitical, hindi political, apolitical. Huwag silang pumanig kung kanino and of course we will be fast in relieving kung makita natin na commanders na kumikililing sa kahit na sinong kandidato," Albayalde said.

"Bawal na bawal 'yung kampanya sa loob ng kampo. Bawal na bawal 'yan. Hindi namin pwede pahintulutan 'yan," he added.

On Tuesday, February 12, the campaign period for the senators and party-list groups will commence. It will last until May 11, 2019, according to the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

This was echoed by senatorial candidate Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, who was the guest of honor and speaker on the launching of Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo in Camp Crame, Quezon City.

It is a project aimed at educating the youth about the ill-effects of illegal drugs and prevent them from

joining terrorist organizations.

Go said candidates should not engage in premature campaigning as it violates Comelec rules.

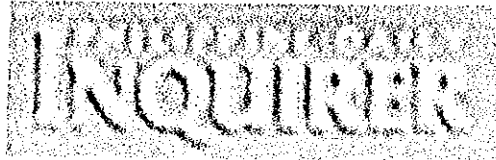
However, when asked by a lady reporter if his presence at Camp Crame could be considered premature campaigning, Go maintained he merely graced an invitation from the Association of the Chief of Police of the Philippines for the launching of the anti-illegal drugs and terrorism campaign.

For his part, Albayalde said the police force is "very ready" to implement their security preparations as the campaign period kicks-off Tuesday.

"Handang-handa naman na tayo doon sa ating mga security preparations. Meron tayong mga listahan at patuloy nating bina-validate 'yong mga listahan ng mga hotspots dito at patuloy naman 'yong coordination natin with the Comelec and with the AFP," Albayalde said.

Earlier, Albayalde announced that at least 19 towns and cities across the country are deemed election hotspots because of the history of violent elections in the past, and the presence of armed groups and other threat groups such as communist rebels. (Martin Sadongdong)





20-PERCENT CUT IN BUS FARE

## AFP, PNP, PCG PERSONNEL GET PRE-VALENTINE'S DAY GIFT

By Krixia Subingsubing  
@krixiasINQ

In recognition of their service, active members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) are now entitled to a 20-percent fare discount when they ride city and provincial buses.

The incentive took effect on Feb. 11 after officials of the Department of Transportation (DOTr), through the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, and representatives of the PNP, PCG and AFP signed a memorandum of agreement.

In a statement, the DOTr said the 20-percent fare discount was due to a "directive from President Duterte to honor the men and women in uniform for their exemplary service in preserving



**ADDED INCENTIVE** Men in uniform get a discount in bus rides out of gratitude for their service to the country.

—NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

the sovereignty, national security and peace and order of the country."

To avail themselves of the incentive, uniformed personnel have only to present a valid identification card as proof of active service. INQ

# Soldiers, cops, PCG get bus fare discount

By ROMINA CABRERA and RICHMOND MERCURIO

Personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP) and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) will now enjoy a 20-percent

yesterday signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Department of Transportation (DOTr) for the fare discount for personnel on active duty.

They need only present a valid ID as proof of active

*Student fare discount law ratified; story on Page 6*

discount on bus fares.

This comes as the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) and 13 city and provincial bus companies

service to avail themselves of the 20-percent discount.

LTFRB chairman Martin Delgra said the MOA formalizes the former benefits

**Turn to Page 6**

## Soldiers From Page 1

given by some bus companies to uniformed men and women.

"We formalized what is already happening on the ground in some places. The reception from bus operators is good,"

Delgra told reporters.

He noted, however, that the discount is not mandatory and that bus companies are only encouraged to give out the benefit "as an impression of goodwill."

Since the discount is not mandatory under a memoran-

dum circular, unlike discounts for students and persons with disabilities, bus companies would not be penalized for non-compliance.

The LTFRB said that the special discount for active personnel was a directive of President Duterte to honor the men and

women who give their lives for the country.

The DOTr said the move is "in recognition of the contribution and sacrifice of the men and women who risk their lives to safeguard our country."

"In line with the President's

directive, this is our way of giving back to our soldiers, policemen and Coast Guard servicemen who secure our nation and protect the Filipino people. We owe the peace and order and national security of our country to their inspiring service," Transportation Secre-

tary Arthur Tugade said.

The special fare discount for all uniformed personnel of the AFP, PNP and PCG shall remain effective indefinitely and will be reviewed after one year, according to the DOTr.

— With Evelyn Macairan

## 20% bus fare discount for cops, soldiers, PCG

By ALEXANDRIA DENNISE SAN JUAN

Uniformed personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) are now entitled to a 20 percent fare discount on public utility buses (PUBs) through an agreement with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB).

The LTFRB and representatives from the security sector signed the memorandum of agreement on Monday granting the discount to all uniformed personnel who are on active duty in all city and provincial buses.

To avail of the discount, uniformed personnel from these agencies are only required to present a valid identification card as proof of active service.

Present in the MOA signing held at the LTFRB office in Quezon City

were LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra III, AFP Deputy Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Gaudencio Collado Jr., PCG Deputy Commandant Vice Admiral Rolando Legaspi, PNP Deputy Director for Police Community Relations PCSupt. Joselito Daniel, and participating bus operators.

According to the LTFRB, the special privilege of PUB fare discounts to uniformed personnel was a directive of President Duterte to "honor the men and women in uniform for their exemplary service in preserving the sovereignty, national security, and peace and order of our country."

"We salute the relentless efforts of our uniformed personnel, and the LTFRB is honored to be part of this expression of gratitude," Delgra said.

The special fare discount for all uniformed personnel of the AFP, PNP, and PCG shall continue and remain effective indefinitely, which will then be reviewed one year thereafter. 2

## Soldiers, cops entitled to 20% discount in PUVs

BY EVAN ORIAS

STARTING today, all active personnel of the Armed Forces, PNP, and Coast Guard are entitled to a 20-percent discount fare in all public utility vehicles nationwide.

The Department of Transportation and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board signed a memorandum of agreement yesterday granting a discount to policemen, soldiers, and Coast Guard servicemen.

"In line with the President's

.....  
See SOLDIERS > Page B3

## SOLDIERS

directive, this is our way of giving back to our soldiers, policemen and Coast Guard servicemen who secure our nation and protect the Filipino people. We owe the peace and order and national security of our country to their inspiring

service," said DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade.

Tugade said uniformed personnel from the AFP, PNP, and Coast Guard should present a valid ID to public utility drivers to avail of the fare discount.

Last year, the DOTr announced that all active military

personnel of the AFP may avail of free rides at the Metro Rail Transit Line 3.

In 2017, a memorandum was signed between the AFP and the Light Rail Transit Authority granting all uniformed personnel of free rides until December 2018 at the LRT 2.



## Fare discount for uniformed personnel

A memorandum of agreement granting fare discount to uniformed personnel was signed yesterday between the Department of Transportation (DoTr), through the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) and bus operators in recognition of their contribution and sacrifice for the country.

Personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) who are in active duty shall be given a fare discount of 20 percent in all city and provincial public utility buses (PUB). \3

To avail of the fare discount, uniformed personnel from the aforementioned agencies are only required to present a valid ID as proof of active service.

Signing the MoA were AFP Chief of Staff General Benjamin Madrigal Jr., PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde, PCG Commandant Admiral Elson Hermogino, LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra III, and participating bus operators. **MBA**



## Troops, cops to get 20% discount in bus fares—DOTr

GOOD news for the active members of the military, the Coast Guard and the Philippine National Police.

The Department of Transportation said Monday the uniformed personnel would be given a 20-percent fare discount in all city and provincial public utility buses.

The DOTr had said the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board stressed the discount would be given to those on active duty from the military, the national police and the Coast Guard.

"The special fare discount for all uniformed personnel of the AFP, PNP, and PCG shall continue and remain effective indefinitely, which will then be reviewed one year thereafter," the DOTr said in a statement.

The Memorandum of Agreement for the discount was signed by officials of the LTFRB, the AFP, the PNP, the PCG, and participating bus operators on Monday.

Uniformed personnel have to show their ID to enjoy the privilege.

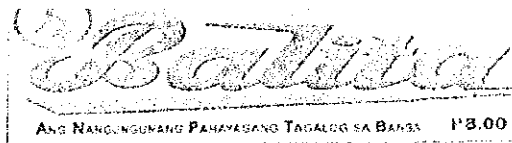
"In line with the President's directive, this is our way of giving back to our soldiers, policemen and Coast Guard servicemen who secure our nation and protect the Filipino people. We owe the peace and order and national security of our country to their inspiring service," Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade said.

"We salute the relentless efforts of our uniformed personnel, and the LTFRB is honored to be part of this expression of gratitude," added LTFRB chairman Martin Delgra III.

For his part, PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde vowed to increase the number of police presence at transport terminals and other related areas.

"We in the PNP [will] return the favor by assuring the transport operators and the rest of our countrymen our best as we continue to serve and protect," Albayalde said in a statement read by a representative.

12 February 2019



Page: 2

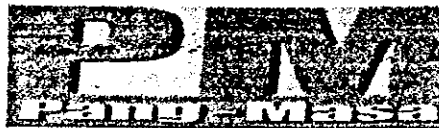
## 20% discount sa bus sa pulis, sundalo

Bibigyan na ng 20 porsiyentong diskuwento ang mga tauhan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), at Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa mga pampasaherong bus.

Ito ang kinumpirma ng Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) kasunod ng pinirmahan nitong kasunduan, na sasaklaw sa mga bus na bumibiyahen sa Metro Manila at sa mga probinsiya.

Upang makakuha ng diskuwento, ipinayo ng LTFRB sa mga operatibang PNP, AFP at PCG na kailangan ng mga itong magprisinta ng kani-kanilang identification card (ID) bilang patunay na aktibo pa sila sa serbisyo.

**Alexandria Dennise San Juan**



## **MIYEMBRO NG AFP, PNP at PCG, MAY 20% DISCOUNT SA BUS**

Inianunsyo ng Department of Transportation (DOTr) na makakatanggap na ng 20% diskwento ang mga aktibong miyembro ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), at Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa mga city at provincial public utility buses (PUBs).

Ito ay kasunod nang paglagda kahapon ng isang Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), kasama ang Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) at 13 bus companies sa bansa.

Simula kahapon ay epektibo na ang pagbibigay ng diskwento na maaaring mai-avail ng mga ito sa pamamagitan lamang nang pagpapakita ng balidong identification cards (ID).

Ayon kay Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, mismong si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte naman nagmula ang direktiba para bigyan ng diskwento sa mga PUBs ang mga unipormadong personnel ng AFP, PNP at PCG, bilang pagkilala at pasasalamat sa kanilang serbisyo sa bansa. -Mer Layson-

# AFP, PNP at PCG, may 20% discount sa bus

Makakatanggap na ng diskwento ang mga aktibong miyembro ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), at Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa mga city at provincial public utility buses (PUBs).

Ang magandang balita ay inanunsyo ng Department of Transportation (DOTr) kasunod nang paglagda nila kahapon

ng isang Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), kasama ang Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) at 13 bus companies sa bansa.

Ayon sa DOTr, aabot sa 20 porsiyento ang matatanggap na discount ng mga aktibong sundalo, pulis at coast guard, kung sasakay ng mga pampasa herong bus.

Epektibo na simula ka-

## NI MER LAYSON

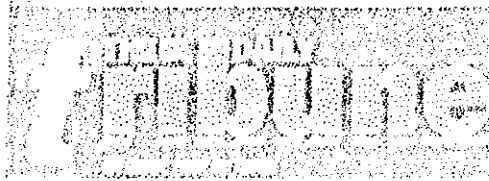
hapon ang pagbibigay ng diskwento na maaaring mai-avail ng mga ito sa pamamagitan lamang nang pagpapakita ng balidong identification cards (ID).

Ayon kay Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, mismong kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte naman nagmula ang direktiba para bigyan ng diskwento sa mga PUBs ang mga uni-

pormadong personnel ng AFP, PNP at PCG, bilang pagkilala at pasasalamat sa kanilang serbisyo sa bansa.

"In line with the President's directive, this is our way of giving back to our soldiers, policemen and Coast Guard servicemen who secure our nation

and protect the Filipino people. We owe the peace and order and national security of our country to their inspiring service," ani Tugade.



## Drive versus smuggling intensified

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

Government authorities in Mindanao region have doubled down on their campaign against all forms of illegal activities particularly smuggling of illegal drugs and other contraband.

**The smuggled cigarettes were recovered aboard a commercial ferry that came from Jolo.**

This, after at least P11 million worth of smuggled cigarettes were intercepted on Saturday by authorities in Zamboanga City.

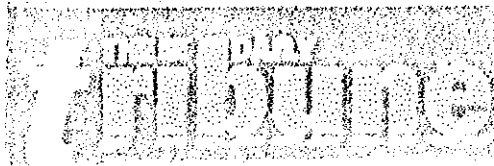
Rear Admiral Rene Medina, Naval Forces Western Mindanao Command chief, said the smuggled cigarettes were recovered aboard a commercial ferry that came from Jolo, Sulu and docked at the local port.

The shipment consisted of 12,640 reams of assorted imported cigarettes.

Medina said this was the result of an intensified and focused maritime patrol and operation of the Philippine Navy (PN) in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies.

He vowed that PN and his command will remain vigilant in the conduct of their mandated task to deter any unlawful activities in their area of operation.





# Disarm, farm lands

## *Reds get peace offer anew*

**You cannot solve this through killing each other. We will be wiped out over foolish reasons**

**By Kristina Maralit**

Lay down your arms and cultivate your lands.

This was President Rodrigo Duterte's offer to the New People's Army (NPA) as he urged communist rebels to put an end to their decades-long armed struggle with the government as

he will distribute all state-owned lands.

"I have always told everybody - the military, police, everyone, even the Cabinet - that we will not have peace until we do not arrive at a resolution with our rebel brothers and give them land," the President said in his speech during the ceremonial distribution of Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) to more than 800 agrarian reform beneficiaries in Maguindanao last night.

"You cannot solve this through

killing each other. We will be wiped out over foolish reasons," he continued.

Joined by Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol and Agrarian Reform Secretary John Castriciones, along with Maguindanao Gov. Esmel "Toto" Mangudadatu and other local officials, Mr. Duterte stressed there is no more need for the NPA's revolutionary movement for the poor to have land to till because his administration is already implementing land reform.

**Turn to page 2**

# Disarm, farm lands

We will not have peace until we do not arrive at a resolution with our rebel brothers and give them land

*From page 1*

"What for? Their campaign of giving land to the people, I'm already doing that," he said.

"Drop your weapons. That will do no one any good. It is useless, very useless to fight. Let's talk. Bury your arms. You don't need it," Mr. Duterte said.

"Join the government. This is not mine alone. This is ours," he added.

## Hands tied

Noting that his hands are tied when it comes to the rising prices of oil and its by-products even if the people threaten to "hang" him, the President encouraged new land owners to cultivate their lands as he said there will come a day when even the countries who are the richest in oil resources will be knocking on their doors.

The Philippines may not have been blessed with oil, but it was blessed with lands so rich that they can produce food not just for Filipinos but even other nations, he said.

"My Moro brothers, I just distributed those documents you are holding right now. That's about on the average two, three hectares. I distributed something like 1,740 hectares. Many of you are beneficiaries.

Take what is yours, cultivate it," Mr. Duterte urged. "Just wait. The time will come that when food becomes scarce because of climate change, nothing will grow anymore in other lands. It will be us, those with lands, who can dictate the prices."

## Fertile lands are blessings

The President also mentioned that, although the country may not be much of a rice producer anymore, more agricultural products may be produced because of the vast farmlands.

He also vowed to spend a big portion of his remaining years in office to working toward achieving lasting peace in Mindanao and that he will start with restarting peace talks with Nur Misuari and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Mr. Duterte expressed optimism that with Misuari's help and leadership, the government will finally quash the security threat that is the Islamic State.

"I'm telling you now. Whatever else we need (for peace), I will give you as long as it is within the bounds of the Constitution," he expressed.

Until that is realized, however, the Chief Executive made one last appeal to communist rebels to peacefully surrender and pledge allegiance to the government.

# SC ready for 'tele-hearing' of cases

By Rey E. Requejo

**T**HE Supreme Court will soon implement the new rule allowing high-risk detainees, including arrested terrorists, to stand trial in courts from their detention facilities without the need to go to the courtrooms.

Court Administrator Midas Marquez said on Monday that the SC has already adopted the resolution allowing the "tele-hearing" system or the use of videoconferencing technology to allow the remote testimonies and appearances of those facing charges and detained in jail.

Marquez, also the Court's spokesman, said the new system will be pilot-tested in Davao City Jail, where arrested members of terrorist groups Maute,

Abu Sayaff and New People's Army are currently detained.

Marquez said the necessary equipment, including laptops and monitors, had already been installed in the hearing room built inside the Davao City Jail which he personally inspected last Friday, Feb. 8.

Marquez said the new "tele-hearing" system is part of a four-point judicial reform agenda of Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin.

Associate Justice Diosdado Peralta, who was tapped as working chair of the new SC revision of rules committee, has been tasked to draft the guidelines that would govern the remote testimony and appearances of the accused from their jail cells.

"This is trailblazing because it can pave the way for long-distance court appearances of OFWs working abroad who have pending civil cases in the country," Peralta said, in a statement.

The SC approved the latest measure upon the recommendation by the Office of the Court Administrator.

Through video conference, the arrested members of Maute, Abu Sayyaf and NPA will no longer be required to physically appear before the courts and may face trial while inside the jails.

A 100-foot monopole tower with necessary equipment was built within the Davao Hall of Justice and will be connected to the three jail facilities in the city.

The SC assured the public that the constitutional rights of the accused will be protected through procedural safeguards in the implementing rules.

"In order to ensure that the accused's constitutional rights are adequately protected, the counsel of the accused shall be present with the accused in the same designated room in the jail facility throughout the duration of the tele-hearing," Marquez said. 13

The pilot testing of the latest measure adopted by the Court will also apply to detainees who are diagnosed with grave and serious medical conditions in Davao.

25

### **Sayyaf man tagged in 2001 kidnappings nabbed in Manila**

An alleged member of the Abu Sayyaf, wanted for the kidnapping of workers from the Golden Harvest plantation in Basilan in 2001, was arrested at a safehouse in Ermita, Manila on Sunday.

Biznar Salabudin, alias Abu Talha and Abdulrahman Daiyung, is reportedly a member of the terror group's faction under the late Isnilon Hapilon, said Director Guillermo Eleazar, National Capital Region Police Office chief.

Salabudin was the subject of an arrest warrant for kidnapping issued by the Basilan regional trial court.

Salabudin and other members of Hapilon's faction allegedly kidnapped workers from the plantation in Lantawan

town and beheaded some of them.

The suspect was identified by the survivors, who are now under the government's witness protection program.

Eleazar is expected to present Salabudin in a press conference at Camp Bagong Diwa today.

Last month, alleged Abu Sayyaf members Harub Jaljalis and Pinky Ani Hadjinulla were arrested in Zamboanga City in connection with the kidnappings. — Non Alquitran

## Logger slain by Abus in Basilan; 6 escape

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits shot dead a lumberjack while his companions managed to escape in Maluso, Basilan on Friday, police learned yesterday.

The fatality was identified as Eutiquio Auxtero, 39, a resident of Barangay Tubigan.

The Maluso police said the victim and his companions were on their way to a mountain when they were stopped by a group of Abu Sayyaf bandits

led by Pasil Bayali and Guraba Gulam in Sitio Alleng, Barangay Tubigan at about 10 a.m.

Bayali reportedly shot Auxtero in the head using an M16 rifle, prompting the other loggers to scamper toward Barangay Tubigan.

Responding police officers said Bayali was positively identified by one of Auxtero's companions.

Police and military personnel launched pursuit operations, but they failed to catch up with

the suspects.

The body of the victim was turned over to his family.

Last month, suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits reportedly shot and beheaded a villager they suspected of giving information that led to the arrest of one of their cohorts in Indanan, Sulu.

Police said the bandits dumped the decapitated body of the victim a few meters away from the house of their arrested cohort. ||

– Roel Pareño



220,000-HECTARE AREA HAS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR ECO-TOURISM

## ARMY SOLDIERS, LOCAL OFFICIALS ORGANIZE FIRST BIRD WATCHING

### TOUR AT LIGUASAN MARSH

By Edwin O. Fernandez  
@inqmindanao

GEN. SK PENDATUN, MAGUINDANAO—Soldiers, former Moro rebels and bird enthusiasts went to a former lair of terrorists in Maguindanao province not to attack bandits but to watch birds.

The camera-wielding bird watchers, headed by Emily Jamorabon of the Tacurong City tourism office, were backed by soldiers and policemen as they stalked their targets on motorized boats operated by former members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

The ex-BIFF rebels surrendered to the government early this year.

The group was part of the first bird watching tour at

Liguasan Marsh, which was jointly organized by the 33rd Infantry Battalion (IB) and the municipal government of General Salipada K. Pendatun, Maguindanao.

"When the area is peaceful, beauty comes out," said Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, 33rd IB commander.

#### Eco-tourism potential

The 220,000-hectare Liguasan Marsh has great potential for eco-tourism because of the presence of rare species of water birds.

"Some of the birds like the comb-crested Jacana can only be found here," Jamorabon said. "Foreign tourists would be very interested to see them here."

Jamorabon was among 15

civilians, accompanied by soldiers and policemen, who dared to see the birds at their feeding grounds in the newly "liberated" southern area of Liguasan Marsh.

#### Peace program

Seeing the potential of the area where the BIFF used to operate, Cabunoc hatched a peace program that lured Moro rebels to embrace peace. That program led to the surrender of about 40 BIFF members.

Cabunoc said he wanted to support the government in providing sustainable livelihood for rebels who surrendered in the past two years.

"Let us support the peace by boosting the tourism industry in Maguindanao," he said in a statement. INQ

LANAO DEL NORTE PLEBISCITE

# COMMANDER BRAVO FRUSTRATED BUT WILL TOE LINE-MILF CHAIR

By Gerinelina Lacorte  
and Richel Umel  
@Team\_Inquirer

DAVAO CITY—The commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in northwestern Mindanao, popularly known as Commander Bravo, is frustrated by the results of the recent plebiscite in Lanao del Norte but will support the rebel group's efforts to achieve autonomy.

MILF chair Murad Ebrahim said this on Sunday as he expressed confidence that Bravo, whose real name is Abdullah Macapaar and who enjoys a strong following in the province, would "toe the line."

"We are confident that Commander Bravo will toe the line," Ebrahim said in an interview, days after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in a plebiscite.

"We know he was very frustrated because people in the area were very supportive [of the BOL]. [H]e assured us that he would submit to the command of the

[MILF] central committee," he added.

Ebrahim, who is expected to head the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) as interim chief minister, said the MILF had already submitted to President Duterte a list of 41 BTA nominees and was only waiting for him to appoint the rest of the 80-member body.

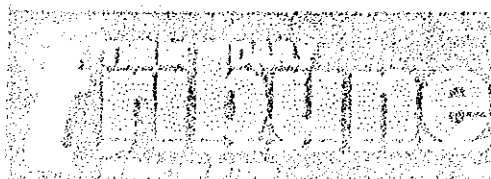
## Interim government

The BTA would serve as the interim government in the Bangsamoro region until its first elections in 2022.

"Hopefully this month, we will have an oath-taking. Forty-one [of the members will have] to come from the MILF, to ensure [that the group will have a] sitting majority," Ebrahim said.

Ebrahim said that among the MILF nominees was Macapaar, who had strongly denied the allegations of the Dimaporo clan in Lanao del Norte that he was behind the bombings in three towns of the province on the eve of the Feb. 6 plebiscite. INQ

12 February 2019



Page: 1

## MNLF freezes Moro state petition

**By Perseus Echaminada**

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) had suspended efforts before the United Nations (UN) to acquire recognition for the Bangsa Moro Republik (BMR), which comprises Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan and Malaysia's Sabah and Sarawak, due to the earnest effort of President Rodrigo Duterte to

***Turn to page 6***

# MNLF freezes Moro state petition

*From page 1*

seek a dialogue with MNLF chairman Nur Misuari.

The decision of Duterte's predecessor, former President Benigno Aquino, to abandon peace talks with the MNLF prompted the secessionist group to declare independence and sought recognition from the UN.

The petition has been submitted to the UN Special Committee on Decolonization.

A *Daily Tribune* source said the MNLF central committee has declared Davao City as the capital of BMR in its petition submitted to the UN General Assembly based on Resolution 1514 issued in 1960 that recognized the pursuit of independence among colonized countries.

**President Benigno Aquino, to abandon peace talks with the MNLF, prompted the secessionist group to declare independence and sought recognition from the UN.**

The forming of BMR was an offshoot of the peace accord forged by the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation front (MILF), which was considered Aquino's "betrayal" of the 1996 peace agreement forged by the government and the MNLF.

Emmanuel Fontanilla, MNLF spokesman, declined to comment on the UN petition as MNLF founding chairman Nur Misuari had ordered all political moves related to the declaration of independence suspended to pay respect to the President's effort to reach out to the MNLF.

## **Expanded Bangsamoro version**

Misuari proclaimed the BMR independent in July 2013. The BMR flag was raised in Davao City prior to the Zamboanga siege that started in September 2013.

**All political moves on the declaration of independence suspended to pay respect to the President's effort to reach out to the MNLF.**

Fontanilla said Misuari ordered the shelving of MNLF's petition to allow President Duterte's efforts, including

the shift from unitary to a federal government to gain ground.

"No more political activities related to independence in the petition to the UN should be taken," Misuari was quoted as saying.

**OIC granted MNLF a permanent observer status and recognized Misuari as the sole Bangsamoro representative.**

Misuari made the pronouncement hours after the bicameral conference committee passed the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in July 2017, which replaced the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with a new entity called the Bangsamoro autonomous region.

The BBL was approved as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in a plebiscite last 21 January.

Misuari included Sabah and Sarawak in the BMR because these territories were part of the Sultanate of Sulu long before Malaysia became a sovereign country.

## **OIC watch ongoing**

The MNLF declaration of independence had gained the attention of the international community, particularly the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is observing the political developments in Mindanao.

The OIC granted the MNLF a permanent observer status and recognized Misuari as the sole Bangsamoro representative of the Philippines.

The MNLF opted to adopt the so called "Kosovo model" as a peaceful means to attain independence for BMR.

The source said the MNLF had renounced war and is now pursuing a peaceful strategy similar to Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said the Kosovo declaration of independence did not violate international law.

"The MNLF is just reasserting the rights of the people of Sulu over their ancestral and historic rights," he said.

# Rody wants to meet Abe anew on Phl-Japan ties

By MARY GRACE PADIN

President Duterte wants to meet with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe again to discuss further deepening of ties between the Philippines and Japan, Malacañang said yesterday.

At his hour-long meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono in Davao City over the weekend, Duterte stressed the

need for strengthening the two countries' strategic partnership, especially in addressing transnational crimes and other threats.

"The President further expressed his desire to meet PM (Prime Minister) Abe again to discuss developments in bilateral ties and assess ways of moving forward together on shared concerns," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

Kono told Duterte Japan is committed to further deepen and expand cooperation with the Philippines. He also condemned the bombings in Jolo and reiterated Japan's readiness to cooperate in the fight against terrorism.

"Foreign Minister Kono likewise conveyed Prime Minister Abe's grave concern over the twin explosions in Jolo, Sulu and expressed Japan's condemna-

tion of the terrorism and violent extremism and their commitment to assist the Philippines in combating the scourge of terrorism," Panelo said.

Kono relayed his country's readiness to continue supporting development efforts in conflict areas in Mindanao. He also welcomed the successful holding of the Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite and expressed Japan's commitment

to develop the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and to rehabilitate war-torn Marawi.

Japan's top diplomat also recognized the Philippines' contribution to the socio-economic development of Japan and conveyed his country's plan to open up its labor market to qualified Filipinos.

Duterte thanked Kono for visiting the Philippines and lauded the inauguration of

Japan's consulate general in Davao. He said the consulate has "significantly" expanded Japan's presence in Mindanao.

The President also called Japan a "true friend and proven partner" and praised the East Asian country for its involvement in the Philippines' ambitious 'Build, Build, Build' infrastructure program.

— With Alexis Romero, Edith Regalado

# Japan helping fight terror scourge

Kono reiterated Japan's sustained support for the Philippines' quest for just and lasting peace and development in Mindanao

By Elmer N. Manuel and Maya Padillo

Expressing grave concern over the deadly explosions that rocked Mindanao recently, the Japanese government has renewed its commitment to extend a helping hand in fighting terrorism in the country.

In a meeting with President Rodrigo Duterte during his visit to Davao City recently, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono assured Japan's cooperation in combatting the deadly scourge.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Kono "personally conveyed the warm wishes and message of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the President, as well as Japan's commitment to further deepen and expand cooperation with the Philippines."

"FM Kono likewise conveyed PM Abe's grave concern over the twin explosions in Jolo, Sulu, and expressed Japan's condemnation of the terrorism and violent extremism and their commitment to assist the Philippines in combatting the scourge of terrorism," he added.

Panelo recounted the Japan foreign minister's meeting with the President, saying that Kono reiterated "Japan's sustained support for the Philippines' quest for just and lasting peace and development in Mindanao."

We appreciate for the island being the driving force of the bilateral relationship becoming closer and stronger.

He likewise extended felicitations for the success of the Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite and expressed Japan's commitment to rehabilitate and reconstruct Marawi and develop ARMM, including the funding of the Road Network Development Plan for ARMM."

The Japanese foreign minister "recognized the Philippines' contribution to the socio-economic development of Japan and conveyed Japan's plan to open up its labor market for qualified Filipinos," according to Panelo.

He said Duterte thanked Kono for the visit to Davao City and hailed the inauguration of Japan's Consulate General in the city, which he described as "significantly expanding Japan's presence and ties in southern Philippines."

"The President likewise lauded Japan -- which he described as a true friend and proven partner -- for its involvement in the Philippines' 'Build, Build, Build' program and highlighted the quality of the infrastructure projects, as well as the transfer of technology and training embedded in the projects that would benefit

Filipino practitioners and experts," Pabelo said.

With the recent opening of the Embassy of Japan's Consular Office in Davao, the governments of Japan and the Philippines are now expecting improved bilateral ties between the two countries.

Kono expressed hope that the opening of the consular office "will be a springboard to enhance the bilateral relationship."

"We appreciate for the island (Mindanao) being the driving force of the bilateral relationship becoming closer and stronger," said Kono in his opening statement during the bilateral meeting with Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez on Sunday at the Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao.

Dominguez thanked Japan for its generous and continuous support to the Philippines especially in providing positive impact to the country's major infrastructure projects and sectoral cooperation.

According to him, over the years, Japan remained to be the Philippines' top official development assistance or ODA partner.

"The Philippine government recognizes the steadfast commitment of the Government of Japan in supporting the country's development agenda especially in helping jump-start the aggressive 'Build, Build, Build' infrastructure modernization program so crucial to the nation's sustained economic development," Dominguez said.

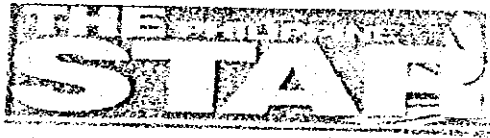
He mentioned that since the start of President Duterte's administration in June 2016, nine loan agreements have been signed between the Philippines and Japan.

Since 2017, Dominguez said six high-level meetings were already convened by the two countries in view of strengthening the Philippines-Japan joint statement on bilateral cooperation.

"With frequent coordination meetings, our accomplishments in the last two years are unprecedented," he bared.

Following the "Fast and Sure" approach the Duterte administration has adopted with Prime Minister Abo's administration, Dominguez said they have processed loan approvals for majority of the infrastructure projects being undertaken with Japan in just an average of three to four months.

"This demonstrates our shared commitment to work closely to ensure that the Filipino people get to benefit from these projects at reasonable costs and at the soonest possible time. We look forward to a more productive discussions in the forthcoming seventh high level meeting to be convened in Osaka, Japan later this month," he said. **With Joshua Lao**



# US providing Phl P300 M for intel operations

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The United States has vowed to provide the Philippines about P300 million in funds to help boost its intelligence operations as it grapples with threats posed by extremist groups, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the commitment reflected the "very strong" alliance between the Philippines and its defense treaty partner US.

"Terrorism knows no boundaries, politics, religion and creed. It is the new evil in the world that strikes at every country and every continent and all member-nations of the United Nations really should help and cooperate with each other to combat and crush terrorism," the spokesman said in a press briefing.

He made the announcement weeks after a twin bombing rocked Jolo, Sulu – a known bailiwick of local terrorist group Abu Sayyaf, which has pledged allegiance to the extremist Islamic State (IS). More than 20 people died and dozens others were injured in the blast.

Indonesian suicide bombers aided by Abu Sayyaf bandits were behind the explosions, according to security officials.

President Duterte has vowed to take no prisoners of IS, which he described as "insane" and "made in hell."

"In Mindanao, as we all know, terrorists apparently have gained a foothold in that region and they have unleashed in fact bombs that killed our soldiers, as well as our civilians," Panelo said. "We would like to assure the public that our armed forces are relentlessly pursuing these mass murderers, even as some of them by now have been criminally charged and are presently detained."

As the government intensifies its campaign against terrorism, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) is also beefing up its capability using at least P1.320 billion to purchase

50 fast boats.

PCG commandant Admiral Elson Hermogino yesterday said four of these boats – the 38-meter response boats – were bought last year for P120 million from the US and are expected to arrive in the middle of this year.

The boats could travel at 40-knots, enough to run after the motorized

boats used by terrorists and pirates in the waters of Mindanao.

The remaining P1.2 billion would be used to purchase 40 units of 33-footer boats from local shipbuilders. Deliveries are expected to start this year and will be completed by 2020.

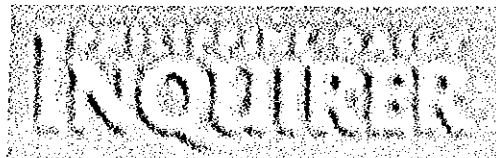
"These boats would be used for anti-piracy and law enforcement

operations in the southern part of the Philippines. So, expect a more enhanced (Coast Guard) operations in this area," Hermogino said.

He added that the purchase of the small boats is part of security measures the PCG is undertaking as it increases its vigilance along coastal waters. – With Evelyn Macairan, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Helen Flores

48





**US pledges P300-M aid in PH fight vs terrorism**

Malacañang on Monday welcomed the United States' P300-million aid pledge to boost the Philippines' intelligence gathering capabilities in fighting terrorism. Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a statement that the offer was proof of the country's continued good relations with the United States, its longtime ally. The US defense department recently said it was helping the Armed Forces of the Philippines in gathering intelligence information on terrorist groups in the country. Panelo said the government needed all the help it could get in fighting terrorism. "Terrorism knows no boundaries, politics, religion and creed. It is the new evil in the world that strikes at every country and every continent," he said. —JULIE M. AURELIO

46

# Palace welcomes P300-M intel support from US

By ARGYLL B. GEDUCOS

Malacañang welcomed the commitment of the United States government to provide the Philippines P300 million

to improve the country's intelligence gathering capabilities.

In a statement, Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the commitment is proof of the good ties between

to two allied countries.

"We welcome the United States' commitment in fighting terrorism. This shows that our military alliance with the United States remains ▶4

## Palace welcomes P300-M... ◀1

strong," he said.

In its latest quarterly report on the Philippines, the US Defense Department said it is helping the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) gather intelligence on terror groups in the country.

Panelo said the government is accepting all the help and funding it can get to fight terrorists, saying terrorism knows no boundaries, politics, religion, and creed.

"It is the new evil in the world that strikes at every country and every continent. We need all the help as every member-country in the United Nations needs the assistance and cooperation of each other to combat and crush terrorism."

In Mindanao, Panelo said terrorists have gained a foothold and have unleashed bombs that killed soldiers

and civilians. However, he said the people will not allow terrorism to rule over them.

"While the terroristic acts have created fear and anxiety in the inhabitants of the region, they however refused to be intimidated and cowed as they exercised their right of suffrage in the just concluded plebiscite," he said.

"Our armed forces are relentlessly pursuing the mass murderers even as some of them have been criminally charged and presently detained," he added.

"We assure the nation that security for our people have been enhanced. We call our people to be vigilant and report to the authorities any suspicious act by any person or group of persons in their communities that may tend to endanger their lives, limbs and properties," Panelo said.

47

## US to give P300-M intel support to fight terror

THE UNITED States (US) government had pledged to provide more than P300 million in financial support for intelligence-gathering in the Philippines' counter-terrorism effort, Malacañang announced

on Monday.

In a statement, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Philippine government welcomed US support following the explosions that rocked

»SupportA8

■ SUPPORT FROM A1

## US to give P300-M intel support to fight terror

Mindanao in January.

"We welcome the United States' commitment in fighting terrorism. This shows that our military alliance with the United States remains strong," Panelo said.

Panelo noted that terrorists in Mindanao "have gained a foothold and have unleashed bombs that killed our soldiers and civilians," but added it did not stop the people from participating in the second plebiscite on the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

"While the terroristic acts have created fear and anxiety in the inhabitants of the region, they however refused to be intimidated and cowed as they exercised their right of suffrage in the just-concluded plebiscite," he said.

The Palace official reiterated that government forces would "relentlessly" hunt down the "mass murderers."

"Our armed forces are relentlessly pursuing the mass murderers even as some of them have been criminally charged and presently detained," Panelo said.

A day before the plebiscite on the ratification of the proposed BOL on February 6, explosions occurred in Sultan Naga Dimaporo, Lala and Kauswagan in Lanao del Norte province.

On January 21, majority of voters from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao voted in favor of the proposed BOL. However, this was followed by two separate bombings in Zamboanga City and in Jolo, Sulu, claiming the lives of at least 23 people.

### Japan to help vs terror

The Palace also said Japan was committed to help the Philippines quell terrorism.

In a separate statement, Panelo said this was promised by Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono on Saturday, during his cour-

tesy call on President Rodrigo Duterte in Davao City.

Panelo said Kono conveyed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "grave concern" over the twin explosions in Jolo, Sulu.

"During that hour-long meeting, Kono reiterated Japan's sustained support for the Philippines' quest for just and lasting peace and development in Mindanao [and] extended felicitations for the success of the holding of the Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite," Panelo said.

In a press briefing, Panelo said Japan did not specify the help.

"But we welcome all kinds of help. As I said, all nations of the world must unite to combat terrorism," he said.

Kono, the Palace said, informed the Philippine government that Japan was willing to open up its labor market for qualified Filipinos, in recognition of the Philippines' contribution to the socioeconomic development of Japan.

Duterte thanked Kono for the visit and lauded Japan for being a "true friend" for its involvement in the country's "Build, Build, Build" program, the Palace said.

"[The President] highlighted the quality of the infrastructure projects, as well as the transfer of technology and training embedded in the projects that would benefit Filipino practitioners and experts," he said.

Duterte also expressed willingness to meet Abe anew, to discuss developments in bilateral ties.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd mentioned that loan agreements formalized between the Philippines and Japan since 2016 had reached 398.82 billion yen (about \$3.63 billion or P189.92 billion).

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE,  
RALPH U. VILLANUEVA AND  
MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO**



# Palace welcomes US intel support

By Kristina Maralit

Malacañang on Monday welcomed the United States' pledge to provide P300 million in aid to boost the country's intelligence gathering capabilities.

Describing terrorism as the "new evil of the world," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Americans' aid, coming on the heels of the string of bombings that rocked Mindanao, would be a big push to the government's efforts to thwart security threats and is proof of the strong ties between the two nations.

"We welcome the United States' commitment in fighting terrorism. This shows that our military alliance with the United States remains strong," the official said during a Palace briefing.

Panelo likewise stressed the need for all countries belonging to the United

Nations (UN) to band together and provide assistance and cooperation to "combat and crush terrorism."

## **We welcome the United States' commitment in fighting terrorism.**

"Terrorism knows no boundaries, politics, religion and creed. It is the new evil in the world that strikes at every country and every continent. We need all the help as every member-country in the United Nations needs the assistance and cooperation of each other to combat and crush terrorism," he stated.

The spokesman particularly noted the current situation in Mindanao where ISIS-influenced terror groups continue to sow fear and carry out violent acts despite Martial Law still

being in full effect.

However, despite the seeming unrest down south and the "fear and anxiety" the terrorists have caused, Panelo reassured the public that government forces are working nonstop to ensure the safety and security of everyone and to bring the evildoers to justice.

"Our armed forces are relentlessly pursuing the mass murderers even as some of them have been criminally charged and presently detained," reiterated Panelo.

"We assure the nation that security for our people have been enhanced. We call our people to be vigilant and report to the authorities any suspicious act by any person or group of persons in their communities that may tend to endanger their lives, limbs and properties," he continued.



## Anti-terror drive draws ₱300-m US financing

By Nat Mariano

MALACAÑANG disclosed on Monday the United States government would provide P300-million intelligence support to the Philippines to boost the latter's capabilities in fending off terrorism.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Palace welcomed the US' multi-million-peso intel support, adding such commitment showed Manila was in good terms with Washington.

"We welcome the United States' commitment in fighting terrorism. This shows that our military alliance with the United States remains strong," Panelo said in a Palace press briefing.

According to the Palace official, the country needed all the help it could get to combat terrorists, stressing that "terrorism knows no boundaries, politics, religion, and creed."

"It is the new evil in the world that strikes at every country and every continent. We need all the help as every member-country in the United Nations needs the assistance and cooperation of

Next page

## Anti-terror drive...

From A1  
each other to combat and crush terrorism," he said.

In its latest quarterly report on the country, the US Department of Defense said it was supporting the Armed Forces of the Philippines in acquiring intelligence reports on terrorist groups in the country.

It also considered Abu Sayyaf Group sub-unit commander Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan as the new leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in the Philippines.

The US' vow to assist the country in its anti-terrorism campaign came even after the Philippine government had declared martial rule in Mindanao.

Despite its imposition, several explosions still rocked some parts of the war-torn region in the past weeks.

Panelo admitted that "terrorists have gained a foothold" in the southernmost part of the country, unleashing bombs that took the lives of soldiers and civilians.

However, even with the terroristic acts, the public refused to be intimidated by fear and anxiety, he said.

## Palace welcomes P300-M intelligence support from US

Malacañang welcomed the commitment of the United States government to provide the Philippines P300 million to improve the country's intelligence gathering capabilities.

In a statement, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the commitment is proof of the good ties between the two allied countries.

"We welcome the United States' commitment in fighting terrorism. This shows that our military alliance with the United States remains strong," he said.

In its latest quarterly report on the Philippines, the US Defense Department said it is helping the Armed Forces of the Philippines gather intelligence on terror groups in the country.

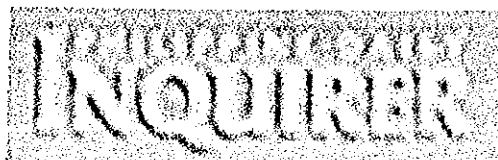
Panelo said the government is accepting all the help and funding it can get to fight terrorists, saying terrorism knows no boundaries, politics, religion, and creed.

"It is the new evil in the world that strikes at every country and every continent. We need all the help as every member-country in the United Nations needs the assistance and cooperation of each other to combat and crush terrorism."

In Mindanao, Panelo said terrorists have gained a foothold and have unleashed bombs that killed soldiers and civilians. However, he said the people will not allow terrorism to rule over them.

"While the terroristic acts have created fear and anxiety in the inhabitants of the region, they, however, refused to be intimidated and cowed as they exercised their right of suffrage in the just concluded plebiscite," he said.

"Our Armed Forces are relentlessly pursuing the mass murderers even as some of them have been criminally charged and presently detained," he added. (Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos)



THIRD ATTEMPT AT SELF-GOVERNANCE

# GAUGE VIEWS ON AUTONOMY, CORDILLERA LEADERS ASKED

BAGUIO CITY—The constitutional mandate to form a Cordillera autonomous region has again drawn the attention of the government, following the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

But to get the support of President Duterte, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia suggested holding a "pre-plebiscite" to gauge how Cordillera residents really felt about a third bid for autonomy.

Since 1987, Cordillera has been operating as an adminis-

trative region through Executive Order No. 220, which then President Corazon Aquino issued after a "sipat" (ceasefire) with former rebel priest Conrado Balweg.

## Constitutional mandate

The Cordillera Administrative Region—composed of the provinces of Benguet, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Apayao, Abra and Kalinga, and Baguio City—was organized to prepare its residents for autonomy.

Like Muslim Mindanao, the Cordillera is described in Section 15, Article X of the 1987 Con-

stitution as home to people with distinct historical and cultural heritage and is entitled to an autonomous region.

But two organic laws to form the Cordillera autonomous region were rejected in plebiscites in 1990 and 1998.

The Cordillera Regional Development Council and the region's lawmakers had pushed for a third autonomy law, but the latest measure did not pass the 17th Congress and would need to be revived in the 18th Congress.

Pernia said the majority votes against the two au-

tonomous laws appeared to have discouraged national support for the third autonomy campaign.

## 'Tipping point'

It was a sentiment voiced by the administration of former President Benigno Aquino III.

Instead of backing the autonomy bill, Aquino pursued in 2011 a closure agreement with Balweg's militia, the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, to resolve the peace talks began by his mother.

"If the results [of a preliminary referendum on the auton-

omy campaign] are a resounding 'Yes,' that would be the tipping point as far as getting the autonomy bill passed," Pernia said during a press briefing after a forum on autonomy at Camp John Hay here last week.

"It would be the impetus for President [Duterte] to make [an autonomy] bill urgent," he said.

"It just occurred to me I should have mentioned the pre-plebiscite [at the forum] ... The push of the Cordillerans for autonomy could get a boost if there's going to be a pre-plebiscite for which people are well-informed about the ramifi-

cations of an autonomous region," he said.

He cited the problems faced by the United Kingdom regarding its exit from the European Union, which, he said, "remains an uncertainty."

"There are proposals to have another referendum [to see] if people really want it," he said. "It seems that in the first [Brexit] referendum, people were not adequately informed." 19

Pernia said: "I think a good information campaign of what a Cordillera autonomous region really means would be important." --VINCENT CADREZA INQ



# Prove cheating in plebiscite, Cotabato mayor asked

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Malacañang yesterday challenged Cotabato City Mayor Cynthia Sayadi to prove her allegation that there was a conspiracy to ensure the victory of the yes vote during the plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Sayadi could go to court if she has evidence to support her claim.

"File the appropriate charges against who... she felt violated

election laws," Panelo said.

Asked if the mayor's claims would be investigated, Panelo said she has to file a case in appropriate administrative bodies.

Sayadi claimed that the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) conspired to ensure that Cotabato City would be included in the planned Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

At least 36,682 voters favored the inclusion of the city in the BARMM while 24,994 voted against it.

Sayadi, a staunch critic of the BOL, claimed many voters were intimidated and harassed by MILF men to vote in favor of the BOL.

She said most village chiefs were also asked to attend a "seminar" at an Army headquarters.

Sayadi likewise alleged that some poll workers were MILF sympathizers and not registered voters in the city.

President Duterte campaigned for a yes vote in Cotabato, saying it would address the injustices committed against the Bangsamoro people. //

# Caraga police force gets heroes' welcome

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

**CAMP COL. RAFAEL C. RODRIGUEZ, Butuan City** - The 384-strong contingent from the Northeastern Mindanao Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) was commended for its vital contributions in ensuring the peaceful and secured plebiscite in Lanao del Norte.

The 384 Caraga cops, who were deployed for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) plebiscite, were accorded with a heroes' welcome upon their arrival at the regional headquarters of PRO 13 here Sunday evening.

After they got off the bus, the PRO13 contingent walked from the bridge in Barangay Libertad, Butuan City to the PRO 13 Caraga Regional Headquarters at Camp Col. Rafael C. Rodriguez here.

They were met with flaglets and rounds of applause from police personnel, their families and friends, and the local populace.

PRO 13 Regional Director Chief Supt. Gilberto DC Cruz, spearheaded the welcome ceremony and lauded the troops as heroes.

The 372 police non-commissioned officers and 12 commissioned-officers were awarded with "Medalya Ng Kagalingan" (PNP Merit Medal) during



**PROUD TO BE BACK** - The 384-strong contingent of the Northeastern Mindanao Police Regional Office (PRO 13) proudly march through the street of Butuan City Sunday after returning from deployment in the Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite. (Photo courtesy of PRO 13)

the welcome ceremony.

They were given a one-week break each for their contributions in ensuring the peaceful and secured plebiscite.

Supt. Ian John Rosales, commander of the 2nd Company of Agusan del Norte Provincial Mobile Force, led the seven-day deployment of PRO13 contingents in Lanao del Norte.

"We are honored and proud that in

the historic BOL plebiscite, there were PRO13 personnel who secured the line and contributed in the conduct of successful election," said Cruz in his message.

The region's top police chief also highlighted that the Filipinos will never forget their sacrifices just to protect others and uphold the people's right to suffrage.

## PH, JICA to sign loan agreement for road projects

DAVAO CITY - The Philippine government is set to sign a loan agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for \$202.04 million, or equivalent to P10.544 billion, for road networks in Mindanao after the exchange of notes between Foreign Affairs secretary Teodoro "Teddy Boy" Locsin Jr. and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono here on Sunday.

In an interview, Natsuko Sakata, Japanese assistant press secretary, said the signing of the loan agreements was supposed to happen alongside the signing of the exchange of letters between Locsin and Kono here but it did not materialize due to some procedures.

She said no schedule has been set yet for the signing of the loan agreement for the "Road Network Development Project in Conflict Affected Areas in Mindanao" but added it will happen soon.

The Japanese official added they hope the Japanese loan for the development of road networks particularly in conflict-affected areas here can revitalize the economy of Mindanao by

rehabilitating the road system.

"We have to revitalize the economy in those conflict affected areas. Now is the time for everybody to enjoy the dividend of peace, we have to come back to normal life and to economic activities, you need roads and transportation services," she said, adding that the road projects can provide the people of Mindanao better access to social services such as schools and hospitals.

She said road projects are expected to contribute to developing a road network that supports the foundation of people's lives in Mindanao; improving access to public services such as schools and hospitals; and revitalizing the economic activities in the region.

Aside from the road projects, she said the Japanese government will also support the region in the establishment of a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) by 2022.

The projects are expected to be finished in 2026.

The loan has a repayment period of 25 years inclusive of seven-year grace period.

In a briefer published on the website of the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines, the funds will be utilized to finance projects that will "improve logistics, stimulate economic activity, and strengthen access to the region with the construction and refurbishment of roads and bridges" in the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat.

"The project will construct and improve access roads to arterial roads linking the main cities of Mindanao, thereby contributing to the revitalization of the regional economy, the reduction of poverty and the consolidation of peace in conflict affected areas in Mindanao," it said.

The projects that will be funded using the Japanese loan include the construction and improvement of 101.9 kilometer access roads, including the 19.8-km Marawi Ring Road and 23-km Marawi Trans-Central Road.

The infrastructure projects are intended to "foster economic activity, ensure smooth commodity flow, and improve the region's accessibility." (Antonio L. Colina IV)



# Muslim, Christian youth join hands to guard places of worship in ARMM

By ALI G. MACABALANG

**C**OTABATO CITY – Muslim, Christian and lumad youths promoting interfaith unity have started providing voluntary services to help secure places of worships across the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), drawing praises from peace and order councils (POCs) that had earlier batted for such coordinated action.

Young residents here, in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan and elsewhere in the would-be-defunct ARMM, extended monitoring and protective services in the last Friday congregational prayers and Sunday masses at varying natures, sources told the Manila Bulletin yesterday.

In Basilan, ethnic Muslim and Christian young residents openly showed their security services by forming a human chain outside the Sta. Isabel Cathedral in Isabel City for Sunday to protect mass goers, elating police and military troops earlier deployed in the area as security contingents.

Government officials said similar youth services happened in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Jolo in Sulu and Maguindanao where there are several masjids (mosques) and a few community churches.

"This is impressive," Maguindanao Governor and Peace and Order Council (POC) Chairman Esmael Mangudadatu told reporters, referring to the youth sector's voluntary act.

In the regular meeting of Maguindanao's POC last January 30, Mangudadatu and Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, chief of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, appealed to the civilian sector to help secure all places of worships in Central and Western Mindanao regions.

In Central Mindanao, Sobejana said military contingents had been ordered to provide security to mosques, churches and other places of worships especially during days of mass or congregational prayers on Fridays and Sundays.

"But the police and military alone cannot do it. The civilian sectors can help a lot," Sobejana told the POC meeting.

"There must be higher level of vigilance among all sectors," he pointed out.

The POC in Maguindanao and coun-

terparts in ARMM have condemned the twin bombings of Jolo's Mount Carmel Cathedral that left 23 people killed and 95 wounded on Jan. 27, and the grenade attack on a suburb mosque in Zamboanga City on Jan. 30 that killed two Muslim worshippers and wounded four others.

The POCs heightened alert status in their respective areas of jurisdictions, and called for civilian sector's support following the renewed attacks on the places of worship.



# Cotabato mayor wants SC to nullify BOL vote

BY WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

**T**HE legal team of Cotabato City Mayor Cynthia Guiani Sayadi is studying all options in preparation for the filing of a petition before the Supreme Court (SC) to declare the just concluded plebiscites in Mindanao null and void.

**EXCLUSIVE** Sayadi said her camp had documented all the violence, threats and intimidation that transpired within and outside of polling places during the casting of votes in Cotabato City  
➤BOLA2

**BOL FROM A1**

## Cotabato

for its inclusion in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) on January 21.

Speaking to *The Manila Times*, Sayadi showed documents that included pictures, names of personalities and her text exchanges with military officers in the provinces, among others, that will prove her claims that government and military officials, who were supposed to protect the integrity of the plebiscite, allegedly conspired with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to ensure the victory of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). "They are all fully documented and we will present them at the proper forum at the proper time," Sayadi said in an interview.

Speaking to reporters, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said Sayadi should first file a complaint.

"Precisely, you have to file a case

in the appropriate administrative bodies," Panelo said when asked if the Palace would investigate Sayadi's claims.

"If she has evidence to back up her claim, then file the appropriate charges against whosoever she felt has violated elections laws," he added.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines on Monday denied Sayadi's allegations.

"This is grossly unfair to the men and women of the [Armed Forces] who dutifully performed their election duties," said Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, military spokesman, in a statement.

Arevalo said Sayadi should bring her charges to a proper forum and challenged her to "substantiate her allegations than besmear the good reputation of the [military] through media."

"The [Armed Forces] is and will remain professional, non-partisan and true to its mandate of protecting the people in the exercise of their political rights and in electing their leaders who will manage the affairs of the state," Arevalo said.

## 'Massive disenfranchisement'

Sayadi claimed that polling places in Cotabato City Central Pilot Elementary School, Datu Siang Elementary School, Muamad Elementary School, Cotabato City Institute, Datu Usman Elementary School, Sero Elementary School and Roxas Elementary School were subjected to threats and intimidation.

She said massive disenfranchisement of registered voters in Cotabato City could have been prevented if the military and the Department of Education (DepEd) were only honest enough and matched their words with actions.

"I kept my word and they didn't," she said. "I believed them because they formed part of the government and I'm also a government official."

Sayadi reiterated that she was assured by the military leadership of the 6th Infantry Division (ID) on the eve of the plebiscite that the thousands of non-voting MILF members inside Cotabato City would be asked to leave but

nothing happened.

"Even the DepEd assured us that there is no problem, the teachers will serve. I am so confident. Who would not believe if government says so, I don't listen to the MILF because I believe that a government official should only listen to her fellow government officials," she added.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of 6th ID, denied the allegations, saying the military would never take sides in any forms of political exercise.

He said he personally conducted rounds during the first plebiscite in Cotabato City to drive out MILF members and even regular voters who had no business in polling precincts.

## Chaos in Cotabato?

Mayor Sayadi said that if Cotabato City became part of the BARMM, there would be "chaos" because the MILF "cannot control even their own people."

"Cotabato City will be at their mercy. There will be more abuses

if it becomes part of the BARMM," she said.

Under her watch, Sayadi pointed out, Cotabato City became the most progressive city in that part of the region and ranked 14th most competitive city in the country, first in Region 12 and fourth in the entire Mindanao next to Davao City, Cagayan de Oro City and Tagum City.

It was also the second safest city in the entire country next to Ormoc City during the first and second quarter of 2018, No. 1 during the third quarter but went down in ranking during the 4th quarter because of a bombing incident that Sayadi believes was perpetrated by the MILF.

"But despite the bombing incident our crime rate is still low," Sayadi added.

On Sunday, Sayadi told *The Times* that the MILF, which is expected to lead the BARMM, sent 20,000 men to polling places across the city and encountered no resistance from the military.

The BOL, which is part of the 2014 peace agreement between

government and the MILF, creates the BARMM, replacing the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This new region will have wider control over its resources and political power.

Despite the strong opposition of Sayadi to the inclusion of the city in the new Bangsamoro entity, the "Yes" votes still prevailed in the January 21 plebiscite conducted to ratify BOL. In the second referendum on February 6, voters in Lanao del Norte rejected the inclusion of six towns in the BARMM, while most of the 67 villages in North Cotabato that filed petitions to join the new region voted in favor of it.

Cotabato City will be part of the new Bangsamoro core territories and will leave Region 12 (Socsksargen). The city twice rejected joining the ARMM in plebiscites for the Organic Act of the ARMM (Republic Act 6734) in 1989, and expanded ARMM Law (Republic Act 9054) in 2001.

**WITH CATHERINE S. VALENTE  
AND DEMPSEY REYES**

## BOL plebiscite tabulation 'incomplete'

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) yesterday completed the canvassing of votes for the February 6 Bangsamoro plebiscite but was not able to announce the results.

This, after the Comelec, sitting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBOC), was unable to complete the

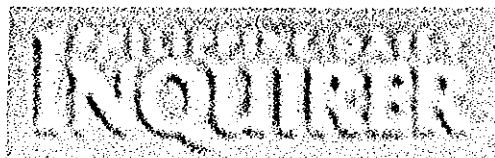
tabulation and auditing of the canvassed votes from Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato.

"Only 20 percent has been done (by the Tabulation Group and Audit Group)," said Comelec chairman Sheriff Abas.

The NPBOC declared a recess and will go on recess until 4 p.m. today.

The NPBOC already canvassed the votes from Lanao del Norte as well as those from the towns of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pigkawayan, Pikit, and Tulunan in North Cotabato. B2

The certificates of canvass from the said areas arrived at the Comelec main office in Manila during the weekend. — *Gerard Naval*



## PH'S DUPLICITY ON SECURITY MATTERS

THE duplicity of the Duterte administration never ceases to astonish us. After welcoming with open arms China's invasion of our territories in the West Philippine Sea, it now wants the Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States reviewed for its "vagueness" about the "US commitment to defend the Philippines in case a third country attacks its territories in the South China Sea" ("Review of US-PH defense pact urged," 2/8/19).

Do our foreign affairs and defense officials really believe their US counterparts are as stupid as they are? Filipinos themselves think such droll pronouncements are nothing but arrant nonsense. In fact, we have become the laughing-stock of other Asian countries that continue to protest China's brazen "might is right" occupa-

tion of islands they claim as theirs.

Such protest may be futile, but "*qui tacet, consentire videtur*" (silence implies consent)! That is exactly what Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio has been urging this administration to do, but all in vain.

Where will Mr. Duterte and his minions hide in shame when this nightmare of a government is over? With China already dug in so deep, can future administrations undo what they have foolishly done with finality? 17

Matching might with super-might, the United States can enforce "freedom of navigation," but not our feeble claim to any territory there. Indeed, snoozers, losers!

ARNULFO M. EDRALIN,  
armed\_2d\_teeth@yahoo.com



#MINDANAO

# What the Davao-Japan connection means

By JOHN TRIA



**T**HE visit of Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono to Davao City last Sunday highlights the long historical connection between Davao and Japan, and points to a strong future putting the southern Philippine island at the apex of new cooperation.

Highlights of the visit included one to one meetings with Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez apart from other meetings with Cabinet members such as Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

These discussions are punctuated by the 202 million dollars for Mindanao road rehabilitation, apart from other Build Build Build projects it has committed to fund.

This road network in particular will help support the rehabilitation of Marawi and provide stronger links between farms and markets to help unlock the promise of many areas, particularly in the Bangsamoro.

It can be recalled that Japan has consistently supported the peace process in Mindanao, what with its hosting of talks between the MILF's Murad and then President Aquino.

A notable contribution is the Mindanao container terminal at the Phividec industrial area near Cagayan de Oro, which has boosted its attractiveness as an investment destination. Of late several large industrial companies will begin constructing facilities there.

Recently, the 5.6 billion contributed by Japan from January to Sept 2018

accounts for 41.2% of total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA).

This makes it the biggest ODA contributor, consistently putting Japan as our biggest ODA partner over the last 20 years.

Japan has also become our largest export partner overtaking the US in 2010. Our average exports are at about 12 billion dollars and rising. Between it and China we have the bulk of our external trade.

The industrial area near Cagayan de Oro, has boosted its attractiveness as an investment destination. Several large industrial companies will soon begin constructing facilities there.

At present Japanese fruit companies export bananas to Japan and elsewhere, and future ventures point to the possibility of larger industrial investments.

Apart from the large industrial investments recorded by agencies such as the PEZA and BOI is a large number of small and medium scale investments coming in the form of ramen restaurants and clothing retailers.

Japan's role as a partner focused on infrastructure positions it as an enabler of trade and economic activity vital to sustaining peace. Undeniably, the infrastructure it has funded since the 1990s is part of the Philippine growth story.

## Japan in Mindanao history

Japan's involvement in Mindanao dates back to the early 1900s when Japanese worked the abaca fields in Davao. By the 1920s their population breached 20,000 in a city that barely had a hundred thousand residents.

This has created a local Japanese heritage with descendants and relatives settling even after World War 2.

Today, the Japanese school and college Nikkei Jin Kai hosts hundreds of them with exchange programs enabling them to partner with Japanese colleges.

A Little Tokyo has been established in Mintal in Davao to serve as a memorial for the once thriving Japanese settlement there.

A Japanese consular office, operating since the 1920s, is now a consulate general offering full consular services to the rising number of Japanese residents and visitors from Mindanao.

These Japanese ties to Mindanao show a unique shared history that ought to overshadow any experience in war.

The Japanese were and are known to be industrious neighbors and able to eke out a successful living from the land. They partook of Mindanao's promise at the same time other settlers came.

In the near future, direct Japan to Mindanao flights are expected, what with a high number of residents taking vacations in and fostering trade with Japan.

Japanese anime and movies are a growing part of the youtube and netflix generation. These elements put Japanese brands and culture to compete with Western influences, and contribute to a further "Asianization" of Asians.

Thus, this visit means so much to push trade and cultural relations with Japan and the rest of Asia.

It underscores these ties and cements a centuries-old relationship rooted in culture and ethnicity, to help navigate the stirred waters of today's geopolitical complexities and demographic shifts to make for a dynamic region.

Having let go of our colonial past with the West, Asian countries have deepened their ties with each other Asia is the future, and

all relations in this dynamic part of the world will be premised on mutual benefit and shared values.

With a strong, successful past and present, partnerships are as fruitful and point to a fruitful future.

For reactions: [facebook.com/john-triapa](https://facebook.com/john-triapa)



## Editorial

### Pursue one peace accord with all Muslim groups

THE Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) made good sense in its suggestion that the Philippine government synchronize its peace agreements with the two Muslim rebel groups in Mindanao under a single, coherent plan for enduring peace in the South.

A policy of following separate tracks in forging peace with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is a gross mistake, as amply demonstrated when turmoil and confusion surrounded the holding of a plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). Pursuing separate deals with the two groups is likely to harvest only false hopes for peace.

The question now is how the nation can move forward with Mindanao stuck in fresh tension and uncertainty. The situation cannot be resolved with fanciful pronouncements by the Commission on Elections and politicians about success in the BOL plebiscite.

An important constitutional question about the BOL still has to be resolved by the Supreme Court.

The OIC has valid ground to voice its opinion because it played a mediating role in the forging of the 1996 GRP-MNLF peace agreement that led to the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) during the time of President Fidel V. Ramos.

Along with MNLF leaders, the OIC maintains that the 1996 agreement has not been fully implemented in accordance with its letter and spirit.

The government and the MNLF were working on the conclusion of the final implementation of the 1996 agreement when the administration of former president Benigno S. Aquino 3rd acceded to office. Mr. Aquino decided to abandon the agreement in 2013 and opted to pursue a separate peace agreement with the MILF, with Malaysia brokering the talks.

Although the Aquino initiative wound up with its own peace agreement in Mindanao, it resulted in more questions than answers. And it produced such tragedies as the Mamasapano Massacre, among others.

We share the view of experts and seasoned negotiators that the Philippine government should forge one peace agreement with Muslim groups as one community for peace and stability to hold, and in order to conform with the strict guidelines of the Philippine Constitution.

Clearly, the pact with the MILF cannot stand alone as a fig leaf for peace in Mindanao.

It is indubitably correct now to seek the synchronization or unification of the 1996 peace accord with the MNLF and the Bangsamoro deal with the MILF under a common pact that can endure.

By linking the two peace accords, the two Muslim groups and the government can work toward establishing real and lasting peace in Mindanao.

By indicating his desire to talk with the MNLF, President Rodrigo Duterte will open the door for fruitful negotiations and synchronization.

And by focusing future talks on the resolution of the remaining issues in the two peace agreements, the level of statecraft in Mindanao peacemaking can be advanced to a higher level.

This may be viewed as highly challenging. But there is an opportunity here that should not be missed.



# Conflicted interest

**“The statement of Noynoy was a total surrender to Malaysia with a feeble reference about the Philippine claim to Sabah... which he referred to as a “hopeless” effort.**

Malaysia always had a substantial role in the Mindanao peace process involving particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) during the term of President Noynoy Aquino that has been ascribed to neighbors helping out each other.

Many, however, are starting to question its overlapping role in supposedly facilitating peace while exercising its sovereign function of keeping the Philippines at bay in its Sabah claim.

The crisis in 2013 when 235 supporters of the late Sulu Sultan Jamalul Kiram invaded Lahad Datu to Sabah from Malaysia indicated the true nature of Malaysian and Noynoy's capitulation.

Noynoy and his sidekick Mar Roxas, for instance, appeared to have suffered an identity problem during the standoff that lasted for about a month and were talking like Malaysians seeing the Filipinos as security threats.

Both Filipino officials said nothing about the safety of the Sultan's followers and the estimated 800,000 Filipinos residing in Sabah who suffered the backlash of Malaysian wrath after the Sultan's ill-equipped army was defeated.

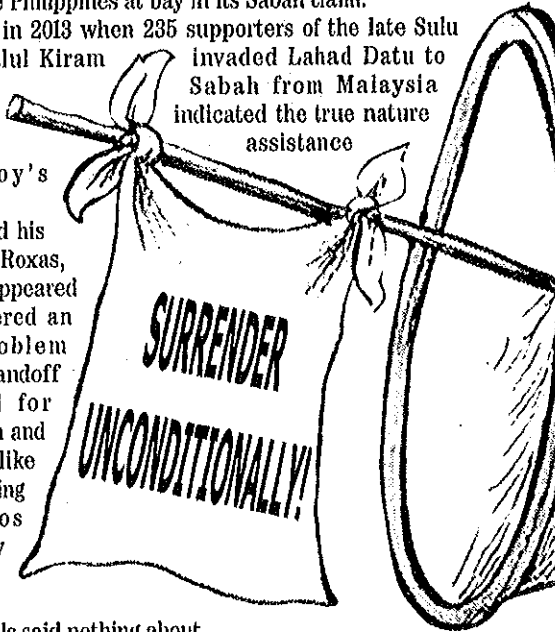
Noynoy then issued a statement which called, short of ordering, the followers of Kiram to surrender unconditionally, which was the same demand of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak on the “Sabah invaders.”

The statement of Noynoy was a total surrender to Malaysia with a feeble reference about the Philippine claim to Sabah being still on the table but which he referred to as a “hopeless” effort.

The Sultanate of Sulu, in a suicidal attempt, enforced its claim based on reports that the lease agreement with Malaysia, which inherited the contract from its former colonial ruler Great Britain, would have lapsed in February 2015.

Malaysia stopped its rent payments and more significantly its recognition of the Sultanate's claim. The Sultanate sought assistance from the government, but Noynoy referred to the territorial issue as “dormant.”

Kiram, similar to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), questioned the exclusivity of the Mindanao peace deal with the MILF which Malaysia favors.



From the start, the MILF and the Malaysian government seem to have an extraordinary relationship. During the time that the MILF was nearly decimated in an all-out war launched by former President Joseph Estrada, its commanders and chieftains all sought refuge in Malaysia.

Malaysia is also the facilitator of the peace negotiations between the Philippines and the MILF and it is among nations that has the biggest military contingent in the country, next to the United States, which acts as peace monitors.

The Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) was also signed in the presence of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak who appears to have an equal footing with Noynoy in the FAB-signing ceremony.

During the invasion of Sabah, the MILF was never heard to have made a stand on the issue while it was entirely former MNLF chairman Nur Misuari who took the limelight on the side of the Sultan's forces.

“  
*Noynoy  
made clear  
that he  
wanted to  
disassociate  
with the  
Sultan or  
the claim  
associated  
with it out  
of fear of  
offending  
Malaysia.*

Noynoy also parroted Najib for the government's response in the Sabah conflict.

In several US embassy cables coming out from the US post in Malaysia, intercepted by watchdog website WikiLeaks, the US government perceived that Malaysia had deep interests, mostly economic, in the conclusion of the peace negotiations and the forming of the Bangsamoro homeland.

The leaked cables quoted former US Ambassador to Malaysia Christopher LaFleur as saying that he sensed from Malaysian officials a “degree of wariness with increasing US activities and presence in a neighboring Muslim area of Southeast Asia.”

“It also whiffs of Malaysian interests on Mindanao, an area in which Malaysia desires influence and economic gain,” LaFleur said.

The Sulu Sultan said the Sabah expedition would have not been launched had the Sultanate been consulted regarding the FAB, which was the basic document for the Bangsamoro Organic Law then known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Kiram said he wrote Noynoy about the consultation process regarding the peace deal, but Noynoy claimed he never read it. The Palace then said the letter was lost in “the bureaucratic maze” or in a more direct way of speaking, was tossed into a trash can.

Noynoy made clear that he wanted to disassociate with the Sultan or the claim associated with it out of fear of offending Malaysia.

There were a lot of talks about a *modus vivendi* with Malaysia for all Philippine presidents after Marcos regarding the Sabah claim, which appears to have been the case between Noynoy and Najib.

Najib is now under probe in Malaysia for some financial misdeals that consequently poses questions of integrity on his close affinity with Noynoy regarding the Mindanao peace deal.

Cef

## EDITORIAL

# A prudent approach

**D**EFENSE Secretary Delfin Lorenzana says he remains unfazed by reports that China has deployed a large fleet of ships near the Spratly Islands in response to the Philippines' construction of a new beaching ramp on Pag-asa (Thitu) Island.

"The presence of militia... is no surprise to us as they have been there since 2012. We expect other countries to respect Philippine sovereignty, and to conduct themselves in a civilized manner befitting members of the global community," Lorenzana said in a statement released Friday.

On Wednesday, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) of the US Center for Strategic and International Studies said the Chinese fleet included navy and coast guard ships and dozens of fishing vessels from 30 to 70 meters in length.

Satellite images from mid-December 2018 and late January 2019 showed the number of ships rising to 95 on Dec. 5 before dropping to 42 by Jan. 26, AMTI said.

But Lorenzana denied an AMTI claim that the Philippines was un-

dertaking land reclamation of its own on Pag-asa Island.

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

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

In December, the Defense chief said Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jiahua had tried to discourage the Philippines' repairs on the Pag-asa runway, and even Lorenzana's visit to island.

"We pointed out to them that it's just proper for us to improve the runway and every facility in the Pag-asa because they have already

developed Subi Reef," Lorenzana said at the time.

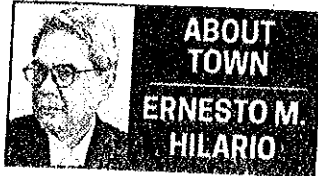
Facilities being constructed and restored included a beaching ramp, the air strip or the Rancudo Airfield, barracks for soldiers, desalination facilities, a sewage disposal system, conventional and renewable power generators, and lighthouses, shelters and storage facilities for fishers, Lorenzana said.

"These planned modest improvements are basic but nonetheless highly essential in delivering social services," he said in his statement.

The secretary's approach—firm but non-confrontational—is a welcome change from the obsequiousness we often see from other Palace officials. KY

Indeed, we do not need to be apologetic about building improvements on our own territory—and certainly, it is no business of any other state to tell us not to do it. Given the expansionist bent of our northern neighbor in the South China Sea, building up the territories that we already occupy is the only prudent thing to do.

# PH-China ties up close



**ABOUT TOWN**  
**ERNESTO M. HILARIO**

HOW are we dealing with our next-door neighbor China at present?

This question can best be answered by no less than our current ambassador to Beijing, Jose Santiago "Chito" Sta. Romana, who spent more than four decades in China after he and several members of a delegation of student activists on a visit to the mainland had no choice but to stay on as they risked arrest

*"Sta. Romana spent more than four decades in China."*

by the Marcos regime if they returned to the Philippines.

Last week, we managed to make our way through moderate midday traffic to reach the Cosmopolitan Church along Taft Avenue in Manila to listen to Sta. Romana discuss Philippines-China relations in a forum orga-

nized by the United Council of Churches of the Philippines.

At the outset, Sta. Romana laid down what he described as the strategic framework of our bilateral relations.

The starting point of current ties with our next-door neighbor, he pointed out, is the independent foreign policy laid down in the 1987 Constitution. Is it possible to have an independent foreign policy in an interdependent world? Yes, he said. This means being friends to all, enemies to none; seeking unity with all countries, including the big powers; giving priority to national interest; and upholding ASEAN unity and neutrality.

Turn to A5

# PH-China...

From A4

The Philippine government has actually made a big shift in its foreign policy. From the traditional close ties with the U.S., we now seek stronger ties with China focusing on economic cooperation, but not forging a military alliance.

Basically our ties with China run along two tracks. There are contentious issues, and non-contentious issues. The contentious issues involve the sovereignty issue, or ownership of disputed territory or land in the West Philippine Sea, such as Scarborough Shoal, which we consider part of our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The envoy emphasized that it is not only the Philippines that claims ownership of Scarborough Shoal but also Vietnam and Taiwan. The overlapping claims are what complicate matters in the South China Sea.

We have chosen to shift from an adversarial approach to a non-adversarial one, and to focus on diplomacy to settle non-contentious issues, such as economic cooperation, cultural and educational exchanges, people-to-people contacts, as well as joint efforts at countering terrorism and criminality.

Contentious issues, Sta. Romana explained, should not be an obstacle to stronger bilateral relations.

On the part of the Philippines, we have made a shift in perspective: from viewing China as a national security threat, we now view it as a development partner.

There's also a change in the Chinese perspective. Before, Beijing considered the country a geopolitical pawn of the US. Now, the Chinese consider the Philippines as a friendly neighbor whose national interests are separate

from those of its military allies.

"We use diplomacy as a first line of defense, to create a good political atmosphere through high-level meetings and bilateral talks to resolve disputes," he said. "When you're on friendly terms, it's easier to talk."

Here, the envoy cited lessons from history. China had border disputes with Vietnam and Russia, but these were ultimately settled through negotiations and bilateral talks even after armed skirmishes along their borders.

The Philippines has already won gains from bilateral talks, Sta. Romana stressed. We now have access to fishing areas in Scarborough Shoal, thus reducing the level of tension in the SCS/WPS.

China is now our leading trade partner. Our fruit exports, mainly banana and pineapple, can now be found in market stalls in Beijing and elsewhere, even as we still maintain sizable trade with the US and Japan. The Chinese government has also extended grants to build two bridges across the Pasig River, and feasibility studies for infrastructure projects.

The Official Development Assistance (ODA) from China actually comes in two packages. The first package includes the Chico River Irrigation Project which will benefit farmers in Cagayan and Kalinga; the Kaliwa Dam in Quezon province will be an alternative source of water for Metro Manila and benefit residents of Metro Manila, and the South Railway from Tutuban in Manila to Matnog-Sorsogon covering more than 600 kilometers that will facilitate travel to southern Luzon and the Bicol Region.

Then there's the big increase in the number of Chinese visitors to the country. They are now the second biggest tourist arrivals after the South Koreans. The Department of Tourism projects a 40 percent growth in the number of Chinese tourists next year.

Foreign direct investments (FDI) from Chi-

na is already 7th largest as of 2017, according to our Board of Investments (BOI).

If we now see more Chinese nationals in Metro Manila, Sta. Romana pointed out, they are working for Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs) that are doing business here since gambling is prohibited in the mainland. A number of Chinese nationals have been given special working permits and now work in POGOs, but not in ordinary construction projects, unless they are in supervisory or management positions.

The envoy clarified that China charges only two percent interest rates for ODA loans, not 6 percent or even 12 percent as claimed by some quarters. In fact, he said, interest on Chinese loans are lower than those extended by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. We have actually fallen into a debt trap with World Bank and IMF loans in the past, he said.

For the ambassador, fears that we would fall into a debt trap with Chinese loans are unfounded since approved infrastructure projects would have to be economically viable, meaning, they would have to pay for themselves. NEDA has rigorous standards in approving projects with 10 percent rate of return to offset the cost of borrowings. Besides, we can pay our loans as the domestic economy has already reached investment grade according to international credit rating agencies.

The Philippine economy is growing. Part of this growth would be fueled by the demographic sweet spot where our young labor force can sustain our economic gains. But our Achilles heel is poor infrastructure, and this is where we have to diversify our sources of loans to finance our accelerated infrastructure development program, Sta. Romana concluded, adding that "what is important is that we retain our sovereignty and sovereign rights."

ernhil@yahoo.com



# BOL and BARMM: Hope and high expectations



**BUSINESS  
CLASS**  
**RUDY  
ROMERO**

**“Will the MILF’s leaders use BARMM’s abundant resources effectively?”**

I BELIEVE that the great majority of Filipinos will agree with the statement that one of the greatest failures among the institutions brought into being by the 1987 Constitution has been the autonomous region for Muslim Mindanao. After nearly 24 years of the existence of ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), the territories covered by ARMM—five provinces, one city and a number of municipalities and barangays—have remained among the poorest parts of the Republic. Indeed, for political theorists and development experts alike, ARMM has been close to being a big joke.

Last week, the population of ARMM, in a plebiscite, ratified BOL (Bangsamoro Organic Law), which provided for the establishment of BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) to replace ARMM. The administration of President Rodrigo Duterte and the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) pushed very hard for BOL’s ratification, combining their formidable resources to ensure approval by the ARMM population of a document that in many respects is truly landmark in character.

The core message of the pro-BOL campaign was that ARMM was a colossal failure and that BARMM would be a replacement that was far superior and that would usher in, finally, a life of prosperity, well-being and contentment for the people of Muslim Mindanao.

That campaign pitch has been followed, in the post-plebiscite, by all sorts of hype-type statements emanating from the officials of the Duterte administration and other BOL advocates. In chorus fashion, all of them have said that peace and order will

reign now that Mindanao’s Muslims have a document establishing their political identity. Governance will be much better, with regional resources more judiciously used. The Duterte administration’s economic managers see a sharp rise in investments—foreign and domestic—with improved peace conditions and the advent of better governance. And the tourism-sector officials have completed the hype by foreseeing a surge in tourism once the BARMM government has taken office.

The change in the economic fortunes of BARMM/ARMM envisioned by BOL’s advocates is breathtaking in its character and scope. From being an impoverished, badly governed part of this country’s second-largest island, BARMM/ARMM is expected, with the strokes of the voters’ pens, to be transformed into a well-governed, smoothly running and high-growth piece of God’s earth.

Is this a realistic prospect? Will the BARMM created by BOL really be the realization of every Muslim

Mindanaoan’s most cherished dream (not to mention the long-held hope of Mindanao-sympathetic development planners)?

The hyperbolic statements regarding BARMM’s prospects rest mainly on the fact that BOL has given to BARMM far more resources—a huge start-up fund, a retainable share in all national-tax collections plus a share in revenues derived from the exploitation of national resources—which will make BARMM far more capable than ARMM of undertaking economic and social projects. An attempt has been made, and continues to be made, to link good governance and abundant financial resources. Is there a close link between the two?

I have no intent to denigrate or belittle MILF’s leaders, and I desire only the best for BARMM and its population; but I have to express my doubts as to whether Muslim Mindanao’s new governing institutions will be able to live up to the high expectations of BOL’s advocates.

Essentially, development is not about physical and financial resources. It is essentially about people. Messrs Al-Murad and Salamat and their MILF colleagues have shown themselves to be good at running groups of soldiers, but they have no experience in providing good governance to civilian followers. When BARMM begins to function, they definitely will not be able to hit the ground running.

This country’s experience with ARMM is a clear demonstration that resources alone do not a progressive region make. ARMM has never lacked financial resources; it has always been well-funded. Its leaders—these included the Ampatuan clan—wasted the region’s finances, thereby failing to put in place the physical and social infrastructure needed by its population. And so ARMM failed.

Will the MILF’s leaders use BARMM’s abundant resources effectively? Will they give BARMM governance better than ARMM’s? MILF’s leaders have given assurances that they will govern BARMM well, but the value of those assurances is uncertain because MILF’s leaders have no civil-governance track record to speak of.

I hope that all the hype about BOL and BARMM’s future will be borne out in the coming days, for the sake of Muslim Mindanao’s population.

What no right-thinking Filipino wants to see is BARMM going the way of ARMM.

69

## **ONLINE NEWS**

### **12 FEBRUARY 2019**

[www.pna.gov.ph](http://www.pna.gov.ph)

#### **AFP, PNP, Coast Guard personnel get bus fare discounts**

By Aerol John Pateña February 11, 2019, 6:47 pm

**MANILA** -- Personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) may now avail of a 20 percent fare discount in all city and provincial public utility buses (PUBs).

This after the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) signed on Monday a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the AFP, PNP, and PCG granting fare discounts to the uniformed personnel.

Among those who signed the MOA are AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., PNP chief, Director General Oscar Albayalde, PCG Commandant, Admiral Elson Hermogino, LTFRB chairman Martin Delgra III, and participating bus operators.

"To avail of the fare discount, uniformed personnel from the aforementioned agencies are only required to present a valid ID as proof of active service," the LTFRB said in a statement.

Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Arthur Tugade said the granting of fare discounts in PUBs to uniformed personnel was in line with the directive of President Rodrigo Duterte to honor the men and women in uniform.

"In line with the President's directive, this is our way of giving back to our soldiers, policemen and Coast Guard servicemen who secure our nation and protect the Filipino people. We owe the peace and order and national security of our country to their inspiring service," Tugade said.

The special fare discount for all uniformed personnel shall continue and remain effective indefinitely, which will then be reviewed after one year. **(PNA)**

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

[www.pna.gov.ph](http://www.pna.gov.ph)

## **AFP denies conspiring with MILF for BOL win**

By Priam Nepomuceno February 11, 2019, 4:57 pm

**MANILA** -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Monday denied reports claiming that government officials have conspired with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to ensure the win of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in the recent plebiscites.

"This is an unfortunate occasion where the AFP, despite diligently performing its mandate 24/7, is being accused of a malpractice. This is grossly unfair to the men and women of the AFP who dutifully performed their election duties," AFP spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said in a message to reporters Monday.

Arevalo was reacting to Cotabato City Mayor Frances Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi's claims that government, military, and Commission on Elections and the MILF conspired to ensure that Cotabato City would fall under the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"We hope that the good Mayor of Cotabato City will bring her charges to the proper forum and substantiate her allegations than besmirch the good reputation of the AFP through media," Arevalo said.

He added that the AFP remains "professional, non-partisan, and true to its mandate of protecting the people in the exercise of their political rights and in electing their leaders who will manage the affairs of the state".

During the Jan. 21 plebiscite to ratify the BOL, the "Yes" vote won in Cotabato City. **(PNA)**