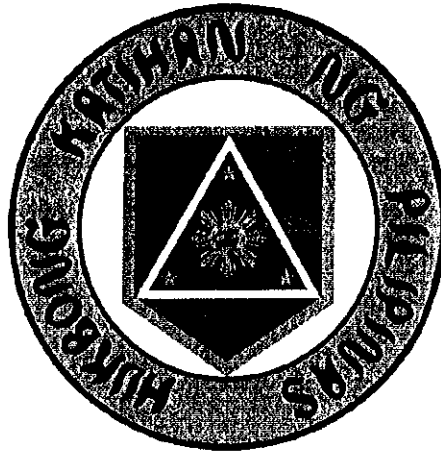


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Saturday

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Comelec: 40 of 62 bets violated poster rules

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

More senatorial aspirants have received warning from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) supposedly for using unlawful campaign materials.

In her Twitter account @com-mrguanzon, Comelec Commissioner Rowena Guanzon said six more names were added to the original list of 34 senatorial candidates with illegal posters and campaign materi-

als. There are 62 running for senator in the May elections.

"Thirty-four plus six senatorial candidates have illegal posters, as of yesterday," she said.

Ordered to remove their unlawful

campaign materials were Freddie Aguilar, Ibrahim Albani, Gary Alejandro, Richard Alfajora, Raffy Alunan, Sonny Angara, Bam Aquino, Ernesto Arellano, Marcelino Arias, Bernard Austria, Nancy Binay, Edmundo Casiño, Pia Cayetano, Glenn Chong, Neri Colmenares, Chel Diokno, JV Ejercito, Jinggoy Estrada, Larry Gaddon and Conrado Generoso.

The others were Florin Hilbay,

Leborio Jangao, Rodolfo Javellana, Lito Lapid, Romy Macalintal, Emily Mallillin, Faisal Mangondato, Zajid Mangudadatu, Sonny Matula, Luther Meniano, Allan Montaña, Willie Ong, Serge Osmeña, Koko Pimentel, Grace Poe, Danilo Roleda, Lorenzo Tañada, Francis Tolentino, Antonio Valdes and Cynthia Villar.

Macalintal earlier questioned

Turn to Page 2

Comelec From Page 1

"where Comelec got information of any violation committed in relation to posting of propaganda campaign materials."

"As early as Feb. 11, I have already advised all my supporters thru my radio interviews that if they have posted any propaganda materials for me in any area not allowed by law to please remove the same immediately on or before Feb. 11," he maintained.

At a forum, Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said candidates found violating the campaign rules would be given the chance to comply.

"We are just informing them of our guidelines and are giving them warnings to comply.

After their receipt of the notices, they need to take actions immediately," he said.

Jimenez added appropriate actions would be taken against candidates who fail to remove their illegal campaign materials. He did not elaborate.

He also called on all government agencies and public schools not to invite candidates in the May 13 polls to be their guest speakers.

"If it's private, that's OK. But for those in government, my advice is to avoid it. While there is no prohibition on that act specifically, we need to avoid appearance of impropriety," he said.

Jimenez noted that having candidates as guest speakers

could be perceived as partisan political activity.

"If you were to force your staff or members to listen to someone speak and be political at that event, then you might be imposing your political views on them," he added.

Meanwhile, some candidates included in the Comelec list of campaign poster violators denied violating any election rules.

Sen. Sonny Angara, who is seeking reelection, stressed he had been abiding by the Comelec's campaign rules.

"We've been complying on campaign posters but 'unscrupulous people' also put them up," Angara said.

Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito also said he has instructed his staff to strictly follow Comelec rules.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III said he was surprised by the inclusion of his name in the list of alleged violators.

"I have very few posters. Hence, (that's) most unlikely," Pimentel told reporters.

He asked the Comelec to reveal where those illegal posters were so they can be verified and removed.

"We have many supporters, hence, we have not memorized all locations of posters they have put up... Comelec should tell us where," Pimentel said.

'Offensive'

Sen. Nancy Binay said she was surprised and offended by the report of the Comelec.

"I find it very offensive that I'm being tagged as a violator (of) campaign materials. Why's that? When candidates whose

faces are plastered all over the country are not in the list," Binay said.

"I find the Comelec's list highly questionable. In fact, I have no tarpaulins. I only have one billboard—and I've not ordered one—but I've requested the one who put up the billboard to remove it," she said.

She explained she was among the first to appeal in social media to her fellow candidates "for them to take down posters that don't conform with the allowed sizes."

She said she plans to request Guanzon to conduct a full information drive with regard to campaign "do's and don'ts." The Comelec, she said, should come up with a list/directory of designated common poster areas in every barangay, mu-

nicipality, and city as reference and guide for political parties, candidates and their supporters.

Legal Network for Truthful Elections executive director Rona Caritos, meanwhile, lauded the Comelec for its "aggressive" action against illegal posters and campaign materials.

"We are happy over the proactive accountability mechanism of the Comelec... We are happy with this move - due process is observed and they get the side of candidates," she said.

But Comelec, she stressed, should be impartial in enforcing rules.

"They should not be biased. Don't look at partylines or color of the candidates. Otherwise, the credibility of the Comelec will be affected," she added. — With Paolo Romero

DIGONG: JINGGOY, BONG REQUEST CAME TOO LATE

STORY BY JULIE M. AURELIO

President Duterte says he did not endorse the candidacies of former Senators Estrada and Revilla because he had already finalized his list when they sought his support.

A6

FROM A1

VOTE 2019

#ELECTION 2019

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

President Duterte said he did not endorse the candidacy of former Sen. Jinggoy Estrada and two other proadministration senatorial aspirants because it was already "too late" when they sought his backing.

Estrada, former Sen. Bong Revilla and former TV journalist Jiggy Manicad were absent at the proclamation rally of the administration party Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) on Thursday in the City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan province, where the names of only 11 administration senatorial candidates were announced.

"They gave me the signal too late," Mr. Duterte told reporters after the rally. "Actually, almost a year ago I was already forming the ticket. But I just played dumb. I really didn't tell."

'Good track record'

In a statement, Estrada said he respected the decision of the administration party "regarding their preferred senatorial bets."

"With or without the en-

dorsement of the President," he said, "I will continue to be an ally of this administration. My support to this administration is not diminished in any way."

He said the endorsement of "our popular President" would have been helpful, but he trusted Filipinos to reelect him "based on my good track record as a public servant, long list of legislative accomplishments and genuine desire to uplift the lives of the masses."

Estrada and Revilla were charged with graft and plunder in connection with the P10-billion pork barrel scam masterminded by businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles.

Revilla was acquitted last year but Estrada is still facing trial and is out on bail.

The President's act of raising Estrada's hand, the standard display of endorsing a candidate, at an event in Albay last week was intended to show "courtesy"

and to avoid putting the former senator in an awkward situation, according to presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

"From what I know [of] the President's character, he does not embarrass people, especially women. As he explained, it was just courtesy to him," Panelo said at a press briefing on Friday.

Estrada, Revilla and Manicad, however, are included in the bloated Senate slate supported by Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP),

the regional party established by the President's daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte.

Mr. Duterte, national chair of PDP-Laban, said he respected HNP's choice of 13 candidates.

Own preferences

"For my part, I had my own preferences," the President said. "The problem is that Inday, she's a politician and I am also. So we cannot agree on all, especially on all of the personalities there."

PDP-Laban's senatorial candidates are its party president, reelectionist Sen. Koko Pimentel, former presidential political adviser Francis Tolentino, former Bureau of Corrections Director General Ronald dela Rosa, Magulndanao Rep. Zaid Mangudadatu and former Special Assistant to the President Bong Go.

Decision 'understandable'

The ruling party's guest candidates are reelectionist Senators Cynthia Villar, Sonny Angara and JV Ejercito, Taguig Rep. Pia Cayetano, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos and singer Freddie Aguilar.

Aguilar was included in the lineup because of Mr. Duterte's *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), according to Go.

Speaking to reporters at an HNP rally in Baguio City on Friday, Duterte said her father's decision on Estrada was "understandable."

"My father is close to many people and he has other candidates in mind," she said.

Estrada joined his half-brother Ejercito, Manicad, Angara, Dela Rosa and Mangudadatu in HNP's Baguio rally.

The President's daughter said HNP was backing Estrada and the others "because these are the candidates who will help this administration. There's no doubt about it."

—WITH REPORTS
FROM VALERIE DAMIAN AND
TONETTE ORBJAS INQ

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Marine officer kills self

A Marine corporal committed suicide after his partner allegedly refused to have sex with him at their house in Sta. Cruz, Manila, before dawn yesterday.

Police identified the fatality as Michael Arceo, a member of the Philippine Navy assigned at the Marine Battalion Landing Team 8 in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Inspector Glenzor Vallejo, homicide investigation chief of the Manila Police District, said Arceo's partner refused to sleep with him because "she does not want to get pregnant."

Failing to convince the woman after repeated attempts, Arceo took his service firearm and shot himself.

Responding barangay watchmen rushed him to the hospital but he was declared dead on arrival.

Vallejo said they requested the National Bureau of Investigation to subject Arceo's partner to a paraffin test.

- Rey Galupo

Marine dies while cleaning firearm

A member of the Philippine Marine died after he allegedly shot himself while cleaning his gun in Sta. Cruz, Manila, early Friday morning.

The police identified the victim as Cpl. Michael Arceo, 26, a resident of Malabon Street, Barangay 338, Sta. Cruz, Manila. He was rushed to University of Santo Tomas Hospital, but he later succumbed to a gunshot wound in the chin.

According to Sushimita Tayo, the victim's live-in partner, she saw the victim cleaning his gun on the second floor of their house.

Tayo said that she went down-

stairs to check and attend to the customers of their bar.

After a few minutes, she heard a gunshot, prompting her to check his partner at around 3:20 a.m. on Feb. 15. She saw the victim already sprawled with blood on the floor.

Tayo sought assistance from their employees and brought the victim to the hospital.

SPO3 Marlon San Pedro, case investigator, said that they have to determine yet whether the victim intentionally shot himself or a foul play was involved in the incident.

(Erma Edera)

Island villagers fear getting caught up in mining dispute

By MARIE TONETTE MARTICHO

GUIUAN, Eastern Samar — The residents of Homonhon are alarmed by the growing presence of policemen, army and armed civilians on the island as a dispute between two mining companies began to escalate.

Tension began to build up on the island after a liquidation order was issued by Judge Paz Cortes of Regional Trial Court Branch 271 in Taguig City against Techiron Resources Inc. (TRI), a corporation engaged in mining chromite and other minerals on Homonhon.

The liquidation order was issued after the court upheld the petition of former mining operator and mineral production sharing agreement holder, Cambaya Mining Corporation (CMC), alleging that Techiron was not complying with the profit-sharing agreement. Techiron argued that it has gained no profits despite the multi-million investments and short span of operation.

Techiron started operations in December 2016 on a 1,600-hectare site.

CMC insisted on implementing the order without a sheriff. A contingent from CMC went to the mining site accompanied by over 50 policemen from the Regional Mobile Force Battalion, 8th Regional Public Safety Battalion and Guiuan Police.

"We are here to protect our property, we will take over the place," CMC

President Yan Ming said during a meeting at the Canawayun barangay hall with the police and Techiron President Abiloy Gil.

Jonalyn Anos, a Casuguran barangay councilman, said the villagers are afraid they would get caught in the middle of dispute.

"Most residents are afraid to leave their house, some even said that we are like in Marawi. We don't understand what is happening, but we don't want to be in the middle of it," Anos said.

Urbano Garado Jr., the barangay chairman said the issue will not be resolved at their level.

"Hindi namin kaya ito dito. Hindi kami, sapay na may mga armadong lalaki na dumadating pati mga police at sundalo. Mas maganda sa korte na lang sila mag-usap dahil natrauma na ang mga tao dito," he said.

Gil insisted the court sheriff must serve the order.

He alleged his group has been experiencing harassment since January when their employees were arrested, and a person who claimed to be appointed by the court as a liquidation officer attempted to enforce the same order with some policemen and soldiers in civilian clothes.

The police officials assured they only went to Homonhon to maintain the peace.

Cops caught drinking in public face outright dismissal – Duterte

By ARNALYN D. KASILING

Policemen caught drinking in public would face outright dismissal from the service, President Duterte warned Thursday.

The President said he could easily recruit new policemen to replace dismissed cops who defy his order against drinking in public places.

"No drinking for police in public. That's an order. You violate it, I will dismiss you. Hindi lang suspend. I'll dismiss you," he said during the proclamation rally of the administration

party's senatorial ticket in Bulacan.

In prohibiting cops from drinking liquor in public, Duterte explained that he wanted to avoid incidents where uniformed personnel get into a drunken fight and put lives in danger.

If the cops wanted to enjoy a drinking session, they better go home instead, according to the President.

"Minsan Army, pulis, mag-abot diyan sa sing-along, karaokehan. Kapag maabutan nila ang Army nagkakanta ayaw nang bitawan, 'My way...' Tapos ito namang mga buang na pulis suplado. 'Hoy, t*** i** mo kayabang mo diyan.' Maya-maya barilan na (When

soldiers and cops meet at a sing-along or karaoke bar, if the Army keeps on singing 'My Way' and the snooty cops heckle them for being arrogant, a shoot-out ensues)," he added.

"Kaya kayo mag-inuman doon, uwi kayo sa bahay ninyo (So if you want to drink, go home)," he said.

Duterte insisted that he would not tolerate erring cops and instead offer their jobs to other Filipinos looking for employment.

"Sobra-sobra ang Pilipino. Marami diyan naghihintay lang ng opportunity. Huwag mo akong patiisin sa iyo. L****. Bakit ako magtulis? Eh 'di maghahanap

ako (There are many Filipinos waiting for the opportunity. I won't bear with you. Why would I suffer? I'd look for someone else)," he said.

Last January, the President announced that policemen and soldiers were no longer allowed to drink in public to curb drunken and violent behavior.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año later cautioned that cops seen drinking in bars and other public places could face administrative raps such as dereliction of duty, insubordination and gross neglect of duty. 3

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Manila
**Standard
TODAY**

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Hugpong bets stump in Pampanga

**By Maricel V. Cruz,
Nat Mariano and Macon
Ramos-Araneta**

SPEAKER Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on Friday brought Hugpong Ng Pagbabago (HNP) senatorial candidates in her district in Pampanga where they received a spirited welcome.

Former presidential assistant for political affairs Francis Tolentino and former senator Bong Revilla kicked off the day-long sortie in Porac, Pampanga at 8 a.m., and were joined by Pampanga Gov. Lilia Pineda and former congressman Mikey Arroyo, Vice Gov. Dennis Pineda and other local officials.

Next page

Hugpong...

From AP

They then proceeded to Floridablanca and where they were joined by Senator Cynthia Villar and former Presidential special assistant Christopher Go and welcomed by some 10,000 supporters.

They also attended jam-packed sorties in Arroyo's hometown in Lubao.

HNP candidates were scheduled to go next to Sasmuan, Guagua and Sta. Rita.

Arroyo has vowed to give the HNP senatorial candidates her all-out support.

HNP led by its founder and chairman Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, kicked off its senatorial campaign on Tuesday in Pampanga because it is where President Duterte received the most number of votes outside of his own bailiwick, Davao.

Meanwhile, six of the candidates wooed voters in the north, making a stop in Baguio City.

Duterte led the caravan along with the party's senatorial bets—re-electionist Senators Edgardo Angara and JV Ejercito, former senator Jinggoy Estrada, former Philippine National Police chief Ronald dela Rosa, Maguindanao Rep. Zaid Mangudadatu and former reporter Jiggy Manicad.

The mayor said they do not intend to join the alumni homecoming of the Philippine Military Academy as they had a rally Saturday in La Union.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has barred PMA alumni, including honorary class members, from "engaging in political campaigning" during their annual homecoming this weekend at Fort del Pilar.

Dela Rosa belongs to PMA Class 1986.

On the other hand, re-electionists Senators Grace Poe (Independent) and Paolo Benigno Aquino IV (Liberal Party) will be at the Lipa Love Fest Free Valentine Concert to be held today at the nBIR compound (Olan's Place), Barangay Marawoy, Lipa City, Batangas.

The event was organized by Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto together with Team Bangon. Poe remained the top senatorial candidate in the 2019 midterm elections, the latest Pulse Asia revealed on Friday.

Last month, Pulse Asia interviewed 1,800 respondents nationwide on their preferences for senator.

Poe remains at the top with an overall voter preference of 74.9 percent for a statistical ranking of solo first place.

President Rodrigo Duterte-backed re-

electionist Villar came in second with 60.5 percent voter preference.

Taguig City Rep. Pia Cayetano and former senator Lito Lapid shared the third to sixth spot in the overall ranking places with 53.3 percent and 53.0 percent voter preferences, respectively.

Both re-electionist senators Ma. Lourdes Nancy Binay, with 50.1 percent voter preference, and Angara, 48.8 percent, were ranked third to seventh and third to ninth places, respectively.

The ruling party PDP-Laban senatorial bet Senator Aquilino Pimentel III ranked 5th to 11th places with 45.5 voter preference while Duterte's former top aide Christopher Go entered the 6th to 12th spot with 44.7 voter preferences.

Estrada, who faces plunder and graft cases, ranked 6th to 12th spot with 44.3 percent.

The Liberal Party's former senator Manuel Roxas II, with 41.8 percent, ranked 7th to 14th places.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos, at 41.2 percent, ranked 7th to 15th places, former senator Bong Revilla, Jr., 40.2 percent, ranked 8th to 15th places, and re-electionist Senator Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, at 38.5 percent, ranked 10th to 15th places.

Completing the top 15 list were former senator Sergio Osmeña III, 37.7 percent, at 10th to 15th places, and former Bureau of Corrections chief Ronald Dela Rosa, 36.9 percent, at 11th to 16th places.

Only 3.4 percent of the respondents were undecided about who they would vote for as senator, while 1.1 percent refused to identify their preferred candidates. Another 1.1 percent said they were not included to vote for any candidate for the post.

The survey, conducted from Jan. 26 to 31, used face-to-face interviews of 1,800 Filipino adults nationwide. It has a +2.3% error margin at the 95% confidence level.

Subnational estimates for the geographic areas covered in the survey have the following error margins at 95% confidence level: +6.5% for Metro Manila, +3.5% for the rest of Luzon, +5.3% for the Visayas and +4.7% for Mindanao.

Seven out of the 11 Duterte-endorsed senatorial candidates were able to make it in the Top 15.

Administration-backed senatorial bets who didn't make it in the list were Maguindanao Rep. Zaid Mangudadatu, former political adviser Francis Tolentino, re-electionist Senator JV Ejercito, and folk singer Freddie Aquilar.

'Lend a wife' a hyperbole, Palace defends Rody vs Tatad

By Nat Mariano

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's challenge of virility to former Senator Francisco Tatad was just hyperbole, the Palace said Friday, adding Duterte was "only making fun" of the columnist for proliferating "false news."

As usual, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo again defended Duterte's remark, saying he was only "dramatizing" things when he asked Tatad to "lend" his wife.

In his speech in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan, on Thursday night, Duterte slammed Tatad for allegedly spreading rumors about his "deteriorating" health.

The former Senator recently wrote in a newspaper column that Duterte underwent a "successful" kidney transplant at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center in San Juan. The transplant, he said, was conducted on Jan. 29.

But Duterte allegedly had attended the premiere of the biopic of former Bureau of Corrections chief Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa that day.

"Hey, Tatad, you know there's a border between press freedom and disrespecting a person. If I see you, avoid me. F*** you, I will slap you. Believe it, I will slap you in front of many people," Duterte said as he led the initial campaign rally of the ruling PDP-Laban party.

He said Tatad had violated press freedom by publishing a "disrespectful" column about his health. The 73-year-old President then dared the 79-year-old columnist to prove his manhood.

"You really want to try if we still have it or not? Do you have a wife? Lend it to me... Maybe let's do it here. It'll be fine. It's just 10 minutes," he said.

Panelo then added Duterte's remark to his long examples of "figurative speech."

"Well, that's just hyperbole. That's just to dramatize that he's still virile at his age. He's pissed off with false news," Panelo told reporters.

"People have been used to this President. Hyperbole. He uses certain situations and makes fun of it, makes fun of the, and makes fun of others. It's just for fun."

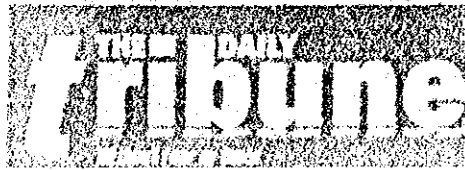
It was not the first time that Tatad targeted the President's state of health in his column.

In 2017 he said Duterte traveled to China to assess his health condition with the doctors of the Fuda Cancer Hospital in Guangzhou.

The President then said he went to China to be circumcised.

Since then, Duterte has called Tatad an "idiot" for using his column to redeem himself from the negative views about his role during Martial Law.

In 1969, the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos appointed Tatad as Minister of Public Information. He gained prominence when he went on air on Sept. 23, 1972, when he announced Proclamation 1081, in which Marcos declared martial law.



HR issues' closure sought

By Mario J. Mallari

The government sought the delisting of more than 600 cases of enforced and involuntary disappearances mostly attributed to government forces between 1975 and 2012 as the Philippines assured

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From page 1

a United Nations body of a stronger legal framework and institutional mechanisms to address the matter.

Led by Undersecretary Severo Catura of the Presidential Human Rights Committee, the Philippine mission is in Sarajevo for the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances.

On Thursday, the mission met with the five-man working group for a series of dialogues which is the initial step for the delisting process.

The mission also included officials from the Departments of Foreign Affairs (DFA), National Defense (DND), Justice (DoJ) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"The delegation, at the same time, expressed concern over false information submitted to the working group, including some cases which were not supported by facts and were reported without obtaining the required consent from the families of victims," the DFA said.

Reds purge to blame

Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade, AFP assistant deputy chief of staff for operations, presented information indicating that many of the cases took place at the height of the internal purging by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

During the initial meeting, Catura formally moved for the delisting of the 625 cases.

He also gave assurances that the government, under President Duterte, has put in place a strong legal framework and institutional mechanism to address the issue.

The local delegation stressed that the process of clarifying these cases with the UN is supported by, and runs, parallel to, domestic mechanisms being implemented by the DoJ, such as that established by the Anti-Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance Law of 2012 (Republic Act 10353) and Administrative Order 35.

compensated through RA 10368; where the whereabouts or fate of disappeared persons have been reported and where cases were erroneous duplicates, possibly fictitious, or had been closed.

Both the Philippine mission and the UN Working Group agreed that the Sarajevo dialogue was an excellent starting point in taking forward work on addressing the issue.

The delegation expressed concern over false information submitted to the working group, including some cases which were not supported by facts.

Catura emphasized before the UN Working Group that these domestic mechanisms involved close cooperation between the government and the victims and their families, NGO and civil society organizations.

Cooperation guaranteed

He underscored the government's commitment to cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms and affirmed the policy of the Duterte administration to implement a human approach to development and governance. Also emphasized was that the Philippines had always welcomed dialogue on the issue of enforced or involuntary disappearances.

During its presentation, lawyer Maria Theresa Sindico-Guillaume of the DoJ informed the Working Group that 105 of the 625 cases had already been taken up and related claims for reparation granted under the Human Rights Victims Recognition and Reparation Act of 2013 (RA 10368).

Guillaume provided the UN Working Group with information on the cases where perpetrators had been tried and convicted or acquitted; where victims had been

Reds free 6 militiamen in Agusan Sur

DAVAO CITY — Six members of the Civilian Armed Auxiliaries kidnapped by New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Agusan del Norte last year were released on Thursday.

The Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) identified the militiamen as Jurlan Gaviola, Marson Iligan, Bienvinido Lamion, Eddie Tindoy, Sanny Malobay and Hermito Iligan.

Joaquin Jacinto, National Democratic Front spokesman for Mindanao, led the turnover of the captives to third party facilitators in Barangay San Juan, Sibagat.

The captives were later turned over to local government and military officials in Barangay Poblacion.

Maj. Gen. Felimon Santos, Eastmincom commander, said the release of the captives was due to the pressure of relentless military operations.

The six militiamen were among 12 government troopers snatched while sleeping at a military detachment

in Barangay New Tubigon also in Sibagat on Dec. 19. Two other militiamen were kidnapped in San Antonio, Doña Remedios Trinidad in Agusan del Norte on Dec. 22.

2 soldiers killed

In Bukidnon, two soldiers were killed while another was wounded in an NPA attack in Barangay Dalwangan, Malaybalay on Thursday night.

The identities of the slain soldiers were withheld pending notification of their family members.

The military said two M16 rifles, two landmines, ammunition and personal belongings were recovered at the scene.

Malin Mabini, spokesman for the NPA-Northern Central Mindanao Regional Command, claimed they took seven high-powered firearms from the soldiers.

Mabini said three of their combatants were also killed in the clash. — Ben Serrano, Edith Regalado, Gerry Lee Gorit, Jaime Laude

6 CAGU-hostages released by NPA in Agusan del Sur

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD
and MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

The Armed Forces of the Philippines-Eastern Mindanao Command (AFP-EastMinCom) Friday announced the release last Thursday of six Civilian Armed Auxilliary (CAA) who were abducted almost two months ago by Communist New People's Army (NPA) in Agusan del Sur.

The release of the six militiamen brings down to nine - two soldiers and seven CAAs - the remaining captives still being held by the Com-

munist insurgents.

Lt. Gen. Felimon T. Santos, AFP EastMinCom Commander, identified the freed CAAs as Jurian B. Gaviola, Marson C. Iligan, Bienvenido A. Lamion, Eddie J. Tindoy, Sanny G. Malobay and Hermito M. Iligan.

Santos said the six abducted CAAs were released by their NPA abductors through a third party facilitator and were turned over to the Army's 401st Brigade, Fourth Infantry Division at the Headquarters of the Eighth Special Forces Company, Third Special Forces Battalion, Special Forces Regiment (Airborne), at Purok 12-A, Poblacion,

Sibagat, Agusan del Sur on Thursday, February 14.

Santos said the release was brought about by the pressure of the relentless military operations to rescue the said troops.

"As of this time, our units in the area are continuously conducting military operations to rescue the remaining troops who are still being held and used as human shields and propaganda subject by the NPAs," Santos said.

"We are assuring our communities that this, propaganda means of 'kidnap-for-presscon' to stop security operations, and allow them to continue

conducting their recruitment, carry out atrocities against communities and to project a force to reckoned with, will not affect our effort and commitment to protect our communities and their right to live peacefully," he added.

Santos said the released CAAs will be given time to talk with their immediate families, after which, they will undergo normal processing such as medical check-up and debriefing.

Two soldiers and 13 Caggu members from New Tubigon Patrol base in Sibagat, Agusan del Sur were abducted by NPA terrorists on December 19, 2018. ||

NPA frees 6 militias, kills 2 soldiers in raid

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Communist insurgents freed six out of over a dozen soldiers and militias they captured in southern Philippines, and, at the same time, raided a military post and killing two soldiers and wounding another in the restive region.

Army Lt. Col. Ezra Balagtey, spokesman for the Eastern Mindanao Command, said that in a ceremony held on Thursday in the hinterlands of Barangay San Juan Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur, New People's Army (NPA) rebels released militias Jurian Gaviola, Marson and Hermito Iligan, Bienvinido Lamion, Eddie Tindoy and Sanny Malobay, but seven other militias and two soldiers remain captive in the province.

The six militiamen were captured after their detachment was attacked and overtaken by the NPA last December 9 in Barangay New Tubigon, Sibagat town.

Balagtey said the rebels released the militias to a third party facilitator, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, and handed them over to the 401st Infantry Brigade, also in the town. "The release was brought about by the pressure of the relentless military operations to rescue the kidnapped troops," he said.

Balagtey said despite the release of the hostages, rescue operation would still continue in the province. He said Maj. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr., the regional military commander, ordered the operation. "As of this time, our units in

the area are continuously conducting military operations to rescue the remaining troops who are still being held and used as human shield and propaganda subject by the NPA," Balagtey said.

This was confirmed by Santos, who also branded the release as rebel propaganda. "We assure our communities that this will not affect our effort and commitment in protecting our people," he said.

A rebel spokesman, Ka Malem Mabini, said NPA fighters also raided late Thursday a patrol base of the 1st Special Forces-Civilian Active Auxiliary in Dalwangan Village in Bukidnon's Malaybalay City, and killed two soldiers and wounded another.

Mabini said rebel forces also seized seven assorted automatic rifles from soldiers. "In this military action, it was confirmed that two officers of the Special Forces were killed, while one soldier was also wounded. The Red armies also seized seven different high-powered rifles from the soldiers," he said.

Balagtey confirmed the fighting and said four rebels were reportedly slain in the clash. He said about 30 rebels attacked the patrol base, sparking a firefight.

He said an 11-man army team was constructing a patrol base in the village when rebels assaulted the soldiers, who fought the attackers and eventually fled, leaving behind two automatic rifles and two landmines. **AL JACINTO AND ALEXANDER LOPEZ**

'Cornered' rebels release six hostages



Bad Intent Members of New People's Army were forced to release their hostages after being relentlessly pursued by government soldiers. FILE PHOTO

Brig. Gen. Franco Nemesio M. Gacal, commander of 4th Infantry Division, clarified that the release of hostages was not an act of peace offering by the rebels.

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

Relentlessly pursued by government troops, New People's Army (NPA) rebels who were holding 15 hostages whom they abducted last December were forced to release six of the victims Thursday night in Agusan del Sur.

Brig. Gen. Franco Nemesio M. Gacal, commander of 4th Infantry Division, clarified that the release of hostages was not an act of peace offering by the rebels,

but more of a ploy to survive and escape from their dragnet operations.

This, as Gacal expressed optimism that the remaining hostages will eventually be freed by the rebels as they were already running out of food supplies and places to hide.

The kidnapped victims were released in Barangay San Juan, Bayugan City in Agusan del Sur around 6 p.m. on Thursday.

To recall, on 10 December 2018 more than 50 heavily-armed terrorists abducted two soldiers and 13 government

militiamen from their station in New Tublgon, Sibagat.

The hostages were used by the suspects as shields as they were being pursued by government troopers at the time of the abduction.

6 gov't auxiliary hostage released

By Francisco Tuyay

SIX government auxiliary men who were taken hostage by terrorist NPA's who raided a military patrol base were freed after 75 days of captivity even as four NPA rebels and two army soldiers were killed in a renewed fighting preceding a raid by local insurgents at a construction site of a military detachment in Bukidnon.

The six Civilian Active Auxiliary were part of the 15 government troops (two soldiers and 13 CAAs) manning the Tubigon Patrol Base in Sibagat, Agusan del Sur who were kidnapped by the NPA rebels during a raid on December 1 last year.

Maj. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr., commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command, said the NPA captors of the six CAAs were forced to released their captives in the midst of exhaustion and on the run from pursuing security forces in Caraga region.

Santos identified the freed CAAs as Jurian Gaviola, Marson Iligan, Bienvenido Lamion, Eddie Tindoy, Sanny Malobay and Hermito Iligan.

The civilians volunteers were reportedly released at the vicinity of Barrage San Juan, Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur at about 6:07 p.m. on Valentine's Day.

Santos said the release was facilitated by a third party—the erstwhile hostages subsequently turned over to the the 401st Brigade at Purok 12-A, Poblacion, Sibagat, Agusan del Sur.

Santos said military units were continuously conducting operations to rescue the remaining troops who were still being held hostage and used as human shield and propaganda by the NPAs.

Meanwhile, four New People's Army rebels and two army soldiers were killed during a clash preceding a raid by the terrorist group at a construction site of a patrol base at the outskirts of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon Thursday night.

Capt. Rhyun Delgado Layug of the 403rd Brigade said a platoon of soldiers was constructing a patrol base in Sitio Green Valley, Dalwagan, Malaybalay City when some 30 armed NPAs struck at them.

Layug reported that the team of army troopers was surprised and overwhelmed by the attacking NPA rebels resulting to the death of two soldiers.

However, the soldiers managed to retaliate against the rebels forcing them to scamper and flee, dragging with them their four dead comrades.

Layug said the NPA rebel band had admitted in a radio communication intercepted by the military that they indeed lost four men.

6 sa CAFGU, pinalaya ng NPA

Pinalaya ng New People's Army (NPA) nitong Huwebes ang anim na tauhan ng Citizen's Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU), na binihag ng mga rebelde sa Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur.

Ayon kay 4th Infantry Division (IB) Spokesman, Lt. Col. Ezra Balagtey, sina Jurian Gaviola, Marson Iligan, Bienvenido Lamion, Eddie Tindoy, Sanny Malobay, at Hermito Iligan, ay kabilang sa 15 hinostage ng mga

rebelde noong Disyembre.

Sa pahayag ng militar, ang anim ay pinakawalan sa Bgy. San Juan, at kabilang sa 13 CAFGU at dalawang sundalong binihag ng NPA sa Bgy. New Tubigon Patrol Base sa Sibagat, Agusan del Sur, noong Disyembre 19, 2018.

Sinabi ni Balagtey na isasailalim sa medical at psychological treatment ang anim na tauhan ng CAFGU.

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Fer Taboy

Duterte lashes out at Tatad

Over health speculation

SAN JOSE DEL MONTE, Bulacan: A fuming President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened to slap a former legislator who wrote a story concerning his health.

In a speech during the kick-off rally of the campaign of his political party Partido Demokratikong Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) on Thursday here, Duterte warned former senator

► **Lashes A3**

■ LASHES FROM A1

Duterte

Francisco Tatad for being disrespectful for publishing an opinion piece, which said that Duterte had a kidney transplant on Jan. 29, 2019.

He said what Tatad published was a violation of press freedom. The opinion piece was pub-

lished in *The Manila Times* this week.

"This Tatad, you Tatad. You know, there is a border between press freedom and disrespecting people. If I see you, get out of my way. You son of a b***h, I will slap you. Believe me, I will slap you in front of a lot of people," Duterte said.

"You son of a b***h, if I see you, guard yourself. That is really a violation of press freedom. But

this is not... your joke, it was disrespectful," he added.

Duterte did not stop there, even going to the extent of asking Tatad to let him "borrow" he former senator's wife as he questioned Tatad's virility.

He said that this was so because he kept disrespecting people.

"You really want to test if we really have [it]? You have a wife. You lend her to me, you son of a b***h," Duterte added.

In a news briefing on Friday, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said Duterte's lewd statement was merely a "hyperbole" and was meant to just dramatize.

The spokesman then asked Tatad to verify his stories first before publishing them in his column.

In the piece published in *The Manila Times* last February 11, Tatad quoted two sources who said a team led by Dr. Rose Marie Rosete Lique, the nation's first woman

kidney transplant doctor and executive director of the National Kidney and Transplant Institute, performed the procedure.

The two sources, however, differed in details, with one saying the operation was held at Cardinal Santos Medical Center in San Juan, while the other said the same doctor performed the same procedure in Davao.

This is not the first time that the health status of the President was

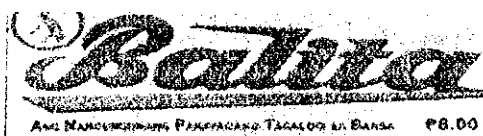
held under a microscope.

Last year, Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Ma. Sison said Duterte was in coma.

While Duterte refuted the claim, he admitted on September 21, in a speech during the 3rd Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinical Forum of the Asia-Pacific Association of Gastroenterology, that he underwent colonoscopy and endoscopy a week prior.

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

14 February 2019



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4 sa NPA, 2 sundalo todas sa sagupaan

Apat na umano'y miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) at dalawang sundalo ang nasawi habang sugatan naman ang isa pa sa militar sa isang engkwentro sa Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, alitong

Huwebes ng gabi. Ito ang kinumpirma ni Capt. Regie Go, OIC ng 4th Infantry Division-Public Information Office, na tumanggi nitunang ibunyag ang pagkakakilanlan ng mga nasawi at

nasugatan.

Sinabi ni Go na nangyari ang bakbakan bandang 9:40 ng gabi sa Sitio Green Valley, Barangay Dalwangan, Malaybalay.

Ivy C. Tejano

REHABILITATION OF LANAO DEL SUR CAPITAL

DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS AT MARAWI'S GROUND ZERO STARTS

By Divina M. Suson
@inqmindanao

MARAWI CITY—Demolition and clearing of structures heavily damaged by the five-month war in 2017 between government forces and the Islamic State-inspired Maute group here began on Thursday, signalling the start of the rebuilding of Marawi, an official of the National Housing Authority (NHA) said.

Ikmat Bantuas, NHA field engineer, assured property owners that CJI General Services, a Batangas province-

based contractor which won the contract to clear Sectors 2 to 9 of the city's ground zero, or the area where heavy fighting was centered, would only demolish structures that were allowed by their owners to be dismantled.

Mayor's property

Among the first to be demolished was a building owned by Marawi City Mayor Majul Gandamra on Osmeña Street at Barangay Sangkay. Gandamra's property, located inside Sector 5, was one of 409 structures whose owners consented to the demolition, Bantuas said.

"We want to show residents that we are doing it in a proper manner," he said. "We follow the guidelines. First, the property owner had to be there. Second, all concerned agencies should have signed the demolition permit."

But Bantuas warned that the crew would no longer return to clear structures whose owners had refused to give their consent.

"If they refused to demolish their structures now but decided to change their minds later, then we would no longer come back," he said.

The demolition and debris

clearing within Sector 1 of the city's ground zero was stopped in December last year after its contractor failed to secure a demolition permit from the local government and an environmental compliance certificate from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Negotiations

A total of 6,800 structures, classified as nonhabitable, hazardous and heavily damaged, still stand inside the 250-hectare ground zero, according to the NHA.

The Inter-Agency Committee on Debris Clearing, composed of the Department of Public Works and Highways, Bureau of Fire Protection and the Department of Health, will determine which of these remaining structures are still habitable, hazardous and need to be demolished.

Bantuas, however, said the NHA would negotiate with landowners if their structures needed to be cleared to give way to government projects, like road widening or the construction of public facilities.

"We'll find ways to get their

consent," he said.

Bantuas said some property owners were reluctant to give their consent because they thought they might lose portions of their properties once their structures were demolished.

The Task Force Bangon Marawi, however, assured this would not happen. "We will document everything. We want to show them their properties will be restored, nothing more, nothing less," he said.

Edsel Alan Manigbas, deputy project manager of CJI, said the firm was given eight months to finish the demolition. INQ

Pinoy among 6 arrested in Malaysia for terror links

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysian authorities said yesterday they have arrested six people, including four foreigners, suspected of planning attacks or being members of militant groups.

Malaysia has been on high alert since gunmen allied with the Islamic State (IS) carried out a series of attacks in Ja-

karta, the capital of neighboring Indonesia, in January 2016.

Police said the six were arrested in five separate raids between December and January, on suspicion of planning attacks or having links to militant groups.

"They include two Malaysians and four foreigners from Singapore, Bangladesh,

the Philippines and a South Asian country," Fuzi Harun, police inspector general, said in a statement posted on social media.

The group included a 48-year-old Singaporean accused of planning to attack a building used by Freemasons in the state of Johor. He is believed to have links with Akel

Zainal, a Malaysian identified as an IS fighter in Syria, police said.

Police also detained a suspected member of the Abu Sayyaf group in a separate raid in the eastern state of Sabah, where he worked as a laborer. The 21-year-old suspect is believed have ties with Abu Sayyaf leader Furuji Indama,

Fuzi said.

A 28-year-old man from an unidentified South Asian country was arrested during a raid in Selangor state. Interpol had issued a warrant, known as a red notice, for his suspected involvement in criminal and militant activities, Fuzi said.

Malaysia has arrested hun-

dreds of people over the past few years for suspected links to militant groups.

A grenade attack on a bar on the outskirts of the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, in June 2016 wounded eight people. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, the first such strike on Malaysian soil.

-- Reuters

4 Abus slain, 5 hurt in Sulu clash

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY — Four Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed and five others were wounded as government troopers launched pursuit operations yesterday for the group they encountered in Patikul, Sulu, on Thursday.

Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, 11th Army Division and Joint Task Force Sulu commander, said personnel of the 6th Special Forces Battalion clashed with the group of Monde Sawadjaan, a nephew of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan.

Hatib is the alleged mastermind in the twin bombings in Jolo last Jan. 27 that left 23 people dead and more than a hundred wounded.

Meanwhile, the remains of Cpl. Nemesis Salviejo, who was killed in the clash in Barangay Igasan on Thursday, were flown to Villamor Air Base yesterday after a sendoff ceremony held at the Edwin Andrews Air Base here.

Three other soldiers were wounded in the clash.

Pabayo vowed relentless military operations to neutralize the Abu Sayyaf. *K*

Sayyaf terrorist captured in Sabah

ZAMBOANGA CITY: An Abu Sayyaf terrorist, who fled the Philippines in March last year, was arrested in Sabah where he was working in a construction site, Malaysian media reported on Friday.

The *Malay Mail* quoted Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Mohamad Fuzi Harun saying: "The suspect, aged 21, had illegally entered Malaysia in March 2018 and has been working at a construction site. He is highly skilled in handling firearms and has direct connections with Furuji Indama, the current leader of ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group)."

According to Harun, five other suspected terrorists were also captured separately in anti-terror raids in Malaysia. One of them is a 48-year-old Singaporean man, who had planned to attack the Freemason building in Johor.

He said they were also holding a 31-year-old Bangladeshi supporter of the Islamic State Group (IS), who was arrested in Selangor, and was

involved in recruiting local militants for the extremist group, as well as two Malaysian suspects, both aged 38, who were deported to Malaysia after they were found to have channelled funds to an IS terrorist while working at a farm abroad.

Harun said police also arrested another terror suspect from a south Asian country in Selangor after police received information that the 26-year-old terrorist had been giving protection to another terror suspect whose name was listed under Interpol's red notice for his involvement in serious terror activities.

Police gave no other details on the Filipino, except that all of those arrested have been detained under the Security Offences Act of 2012. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, including the Philippine National Police, have not release any report about the Filipino terrorist arrest.

AL JACINTO



Misuari seeks court nod for UAE, Morocco trips

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founder Nur Misuari has asked the Sandiganbayan to allow him to travel to the United Arab Emirates and Morocco.

In a motion filed before the anti-graft court's third division on Feb. 11, Misuari through his lawyer Manolo Flores said he was invited by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

to attend the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Abu Dhabi on March 1 and 2 and the 14th session of member-states of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC in Rabat, Morocco on March 13 and 14.

"The participation of the MNLF in the meetings will greatly benefit the Philippines in terms of ending the armed conflict in Mindanao to im-

prove the Philippine economy as a whole," Misuari's motion read.

Misuari said he intends to leave the country on Feb. 27. He said he would stay in the UAE until his departure for Morocco.

He said he would return to the country not later than March 20.

Misuari assured the court that his intended travel would

not impede his arraignment on March 27.

Misuari is facing two counts each of graft and malversation of public funds through falsification of public documents over the alleged anomalous purchase of educational materials when he was governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in 2000 and 2001. **IJ**

— Elizabeth Marcelo

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Misuari seeks Sandigan nod to attend Islamic summits

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chair Nur Misuari has sought the permission of the Sandiganbayan third division to travel to Abu Dhabi and Rabat, to attend pan-Islamic council summits. In his urgent motion to travel, Misuari said he intended to travel to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from March 1 to 2 for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) composed of 52 Islamic states, and to Rabat, Morocco, on March 13 and 14 for the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States. Misuari said the MNLF was the "sole representative" of the Bangsamoro people in both summits, and that his attendance would be beneficial to the peace process in Mindanao. However, the prosecution opposed the motion to travel. Misuari faces two counts each of graft and malversation for allegedly defrauding the government in connection to a P77.26-million "ghost textbooks" contract.—PATRICIA DENISE M. CHIU

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Misuari seeks permission to travel to UAE, Morocco

By CZARINA NICOLE C. ONG

Former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Nur Misuari is asking permission from the Sandiganbayan Third Division to be allowed to travel to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates and Morocco this March.

Misuari bared in his motion that he wished to attend the 48th Session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Council (OIC) of Foreign Ministers and the 14th Session of the Parliamentary Union of Islamic Cooperation (PUIC) Member States.

The first event will take place on March 1 and 2 at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The second one will be held on March 13 and 14 in Rabat, Morocco.

He plans to leave the country on February 27 and fly to Abu Dhabi. He will stay there before flying to Morocco on March 11. After which, he will fly back to the Philippines either on March

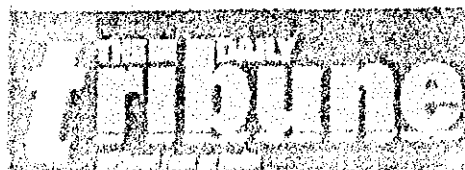
16 or 17 and return no later than the 20th.

Misuari said this will give him plenty of time before his scheduled arraignment on March 27.

He explained that the OIC is an active participant in the conduct of the peace process to resolve the armed conflict in Southern Philippines.

It was the peace process that led to the signing of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the Philippine government, Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the OIC on September 2, 1996.

"The accused Chairman Nur Misuari is a signatory to the 1996 Final Peace Agreement and as such he is expected to deliver his message during the plenary session of the proceedings of the OIC Ministerial meeting regarding the developments of the implementation of the peace agreement in Southern Philippines, Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago," the motion read.



Misuari seeks travel permit

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chairman Nur Misuari on Friday sought the approval of the Sandiganbayan to attend pan-Islamic council summits where he said the MNLF enjoys an observer status on behalf of the Bangsamoro people.

Misuari, in his urgent motion to travel filed at the Sandiganbayan Third Division, said he intends to travel to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates from 1 to 2 March and to Rabat, Morocco on 13 to 14 March.

Misuari stressed that the MNLF is the sole representative of the Bangsamoro people in both summits, noting his trip would benefit the peace process in Mindanao.

The MNLF chairman explained the trip to Abu Dhabi is for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) composed of 52 Islamic states while his travel to Rabat is for the Parliamentary Union of the OIC-Member States (PUIC) and attached the respective invitation letters in his travel motion.

Misuari stressed that the MNLF is the sole representative of the Bangsamoro people in both summits, noting his trip would benefit the peace process in Mindanao.

"The participation of the MNLF in the forthcoming meetings of the OIC and PUIC as above stated will greatly benefit the Philippines in terms of ending the armed conflict in Mindanao and to improve the Philippine economy as a whole," Misuari said.

The prosecution opposed the intended trip of Misuari, saying he should file separate motions for each of the summits and has likewise failed to prove the necessity of his attendance and questioned the duration of Misuari's trip since the summits only last two days but his itinerary states he will be abroad for almost one month.

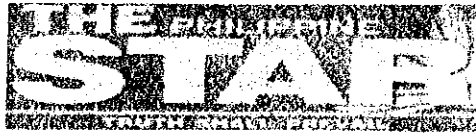
Based on his itinerary, Misuari will depart Manila for Abu Dhabi on 27 February and will proceed to Morocco on 11 March. His return to the Philippines is expected between 17 and 20 March.

The motion of Misuari has been submitted for resolution of the Sandiganbayan on Friday, according to the division clerk of court.

Misuari faces two counts each of graft and malversation for giving undue advantage to CPR Publishing House, MBJ Learning Tools and White Orchids for the procurement of "ghost textbooks" from 2000 to 2001 during his term as ARMM governor.

He and his co-accused also allegedly falsified procurement documents to justify the legality of the P77.26-million contract.

Elmer N. Manuel



ACROSS THE COUNTRY

BIFF gunsmith nabbed; arms cache recovered

MAGUINDANAO - Police and military personnel seized several firearms in a raid on the house of an alleged gunsmith of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Maguindanao yesterday.

Police said Abusana Abpun did not resist arrest when cornered in Barangay Poblacion, Buluan.

Three M4 Carbine rifles, an M1 Carbine, six 9mm pistols, a 12 gauge shotgun, a tripod for a caliber .50 machine-gun and gun parts were recovered at the scene.

"Our informant showed us videos of the suspect while repairing a gun owned by a BIFF member," Senior Superintendent James Culmatico, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao director, said.

Culmatico said Abpun supplied firearms not only to

the BIFF, but other criminal gangs.

- John Unson, Michael Punongbayan

Gov't forces raid BIFF gun factory in Maguindanao

By FRANCIS WAREFIELD

Government forces seized illegal firearms in a dawn raid at a gun factory of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Brgy. Poblacion, Buluan, Maguindanao.

Backed by heavily armed Army soldiers, the combined elements of the Special Action Force (SAF) and the CIDG-ARMM served the search warrant at about 6 a.m., February 15, against Abusama Abpun, 60, alleged illegal firearms manufacturer.

Among the seized firearms were three M4 Carbine Rifles, one M1 Carbine, six 9mm Tomgram, a 12 gauge shotgun, a tripod for Cal. 50 heavy machinegun, and several unassembled firearms.

Senior Supt. James Gulmalico, regional head of the CIDG, said that the suspect was the source of firearms for criminal elements including the BIFF.

"Our informant showed us videos of the suspect while repairing a gun owned by a BIFF member who personally brought the defective weapon," he said.

Gun shop supplying pro-IS groups assaulted

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL AND AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Government forces raided at dawn on Friday an illegal gun shop supplying weapons to pro-Islamic State (IS) groups and criminal gangs in Barangay Poblacion, Buluan in Maguindanao, officials said.

Maj. Arvin Encinas, spokesman of the 6th Infantry Division (6th ID) said army soldiers backed by heavily armed elements of the Special Action Force and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (CIDG-

ARMM) raided the shop and served a search warrant against Abusama Abpun, 60, an illegal firearms gunsmith.

Encinas said the gun factory was being maintained by the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Security forces seized illegal fire-

arms including three M4 carbine rifles, one M1 carbine, six 9mm Tomgram, a 12 gauge shotgun, a tripod for .50 heavy machine gun, and several unassembled firearms.

Senior Supt. James Gulmatico, the regional head of the CIDG-ARMM, said that the suspect was the source of firearms for criminal elements, including the BIFF.

"Our informant showed us videos of the suspect while repairing a gun owned by a BIFF member, who personally brought the defective weapon to his shop. We followed the legal procedures in serving the warrant," he added.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, commander of the 33rd In-

fantry Battalion, who led soldiers in the operation, said the campaign against lawlessness was gaining ground following Abpun's arrest.

"We have removed another logistics support source of the BIFF and other lawless elements. We will defeat them by cutting-off the sources of their weapons," he said.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sohejana, the 6th ID commander, commended the troops for their latest feat.

There was no immediate statement from Maguindanao Gov. Esmel Mangudadatu on the presence of the illegal gun shop in his hometown. *A7*

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Another US sail-by, another China protest

TWO United States guided-missile destroyers - the USS Spruance and the USS Preble - sailed into the South China Sea last Monday, close to the Spratly island group near Palawan. The sail-bys were, as expected, immediately protested by China as a "provocative action."

Earlier, last January 7, another US warship, the USS McCampbell, sailed near the Paracels, another group of islands also in the South China Sea but farther north, between Vietnam and Luzon. These are only the latest incidents involving US ships and planes in the South China Sea. And they are not likely to be the last.

At the root of the dispute is China's claim to nearly all of the South China Sea, defined by a nine-dash loop, as its territorial waters and the many islands within the loop as its territory. The US, whose warships sail all over the globe, rejects this claim, saying the South China Sea - like other international waters - is open to all shipping under the principle of "freedom of navigation."

China's claim is similarly disputed by several nations in Southeast Asia, notably the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. The Philippines is specially concerned as Scarborough Shoal, which is known to us as Panatag or Bajo de Masinloc, is well within our 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

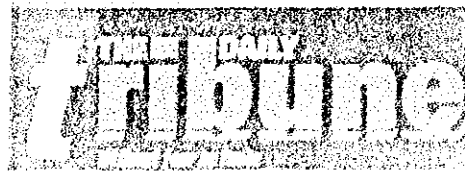
But it is also within China's nine-dash loop.

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have an understanding on their respective claims. We will stand by our claims, especially since we are backed by the UN Arbitral Court in The Hague. But we all agreed to have a Code of Conduct to guide our moves and decisions without giving up our legal claims.

This has helped keep the peace between China and the Southeast Asian nations, but the US, the world's remaining superpower, is not yielding on the principle of "freedom of navigation." It has vowed to keep sending its warships and its planes into the South China Sea, close to the shoals China has built up with runways and garrisons.

The danger is that one of these days, a close encounter may lead to a shooting incident, and escalate into a wider war which we all fear. This is why the Philippines and its fellow ASEAN members hope that some kind of agreement, perhaps under the United Nations, can be reached to settle this matter.

We will continue to have those repeated sail-bys by American warships, followed automatically by protests by China. Surely in this modern age, nations should be able to sit down and come to some agreement, knowing that a war like those in the earlier days of our world is no longer possible in today's nuclear age. 8



Peace still elusive

"The new Muslim government has been painted by the government as the solution to end the cycle of poverty and violent extremism."

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), whose leaders are expected to become the kingpins in the newly formed but highly questionable Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and to operate yet under a parliamentary system, despite the existence of the constitutional presidential system, may not succeed in bringing peace in Mindanao as promised — just to get President Duterte to push for an MILF government with a lot of powers granted and taxpayers' money that may all come to waste.

But peace can hardly be won in Mindanao, especially as a key rebel stronghold, namely, Lanao del Norte, refused to join the MILF and its BARMM. What this may mean is that fighting in Mindanao will continue, despite the creation of the BARMM and with the MILF taking full control of its government, while still refusing to give up its arms.

There were some parts of the Muslim Mindanao area, such as Sulu, which is known as the bailiwick of aging warhorse Nur Misuari, where they were forcibly made to join the BARMM, despite their having registered their "No" vote soundly and all because the Bangsamoro Organic



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cacho-Olivares

respected?

The way it looks, government has bent over backwards to give the MILF whatever it wanted, including Cotabato City, the area which has consistently rejected being part of the ARMM and the BARMM too!

Just check this: An area already rejected becoming part of the BARMM, but to ensure that even some areas would still be under the control of the MILF that will be the BARMM leaders, there was even another plebiscite, this time, focused on barangays that would want to join the BARMM.

This is yet to ensure that if an area is against joining the new Muslim government, getting barangays to join would then provide the MILF leaders control over these villages and, ultimately, create more problems with the area

proper, especially since barangays are located near each other.

Law or some plebiscite rule fashioned by the House and the Senate made it compulsory for the former members of the ARMM to be automatically retained as BARMM members.

This leads one to ask then: Why were the Sulu voters asked to vote when their vote to reject being part of the BARMM is not being

Already, the plebiscite results showed that voters in the Christian majority region of Lanao del Norte has refused to allow six local towns to become part of the BARMM.

This can spell trouble, if the armed MILF tries controlling these barangays.

The bigger problem really is the MILF's refusal to submit to decommissioning its arms and, unlike the peace pact forged between

the government and Nur Misuari with his Moro National Liberation, where the armed MNLF troops were integrated in the Philippine Army, the MILF leaders refuse to budge and give up their arms. This may mean that the MILF leaders, despite having won what it wanted by way of legal status — albeit constitutionally questionable

since the Constitution cannot be amended by a mere law from Congress — will use its firearms independent of the Philippine police and the military which hardly bodes well for peace in Mindanao, especially as the MILF leaders aren't wont to accept responsibility for trouble descending on Muslim Mindanao.

The landmark referendum has been billed as the culmination of a decades-long process seeking to halt Muslim separatist violence that has claimed some 150,000 lives since the 1970s.

“Peace can hardly be won in Mindanao, especially as a key rebel stronghold, namely, Lanao del Norte, refused to join the MILF and its BARMM. Yet how can the creation of the BARMM with the MILF in power and position even guarantee when other Muslim rebel groups, such as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and, yes, the MNLF remnants and even a rumored new Christian militia group, are forming, ready to fight the MILF if it as much as tries to take control of its Christian areas which could have been added to the BARMM through the MILF-favored plebiscite on barangay acceptance.

The new Muslim government has been painted by the government as the solution to end the cycle of poverty and violent extremism. Locals will have more control over their territory and see an influx of government cash for development projects aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty and violent extremism.

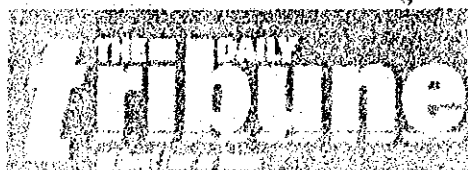
This is seriously doubted. The ARMM was precisely billed the same way. Money was poured into the ARMM and yet corruption set in and whatever money was poured for government projects ended up in private pockets.

Just what makes government think that it will be different with a Malacañang-installed MILF leadership in the BARMM?

Theirs would be an interim government and it is as sure as day that these MILF leaders will do everything to retain power — including the usual cheating which would lead to more killings.

And it all could be for naught — once the battle before the Supreme Court on the BARMM's constitutionality is questioned and determined.

Besides, there is also that probability of secession by the MILF — once it gets what it wants — by way of helicopter gunships and the like, which they can have, courtesy of the Muslim world.



Joma violating conditions of his asylum

The communist insurgency terrorizing the country is embodied by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). It is affiliated with the so-called National Democratic Front (NDF), which is its face in the news media, and the New People's Army (NPA), its armed wing. The avowed objective of the CPP-NDF-NPA troika is the violent overthrow of the duly-constituted government of the Republic of the Philippines and its replacement with a Maoist-type communist government.

“By itself, Sison's involvement in terrorism is incompatible to his claim that he is being politically persecuted by Manila.

Communism does not tolerate free speech, free elections, free trade and freedom of religion. Power and privilege are vested exclusively in its political leaders, or politburo, and shared by the military establishment.

The communist ideology thrives in societies where poor citizens are gullible enough to believe that communism is their salvation.

Ironically, communists spread their godless ideology by exploiting the freedoms guaranteed by the very government they want to overthrow. They infiltrate the bureaucracy, educational system, representative government and news media.

Russian communism enslaved the people of the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1989. Ordinary citizens lived in virtual poverty under the communist yoke.

Red Chinese communism caused the death of 30 million Chinese through the command economy imposed on the nation. Millions more died during the so-called Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

The CPP-NDF-NPA troika has been engaged in subversive activities against the government of the Philippines since 1968. Its so-called “protracted people's war” is the longest communist insurgency in the world.

Interestingly, the CPP avoids using the word “communist” in public on account of the dislike the free world has for the term. Thus, the CPP deals with the news media through the NDF.

Although the NDF claims to be a democratic front, it is anything except democratic. Its superficial name is akin to the so-called

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, also known as North Korea.

The NPA's goal is to destroy government infrastructure in the countryside. NPA cadres harass industries and demand the payment of “revolutionary taxes” which are remitted to higher communist authorities for them to spend as they see fit.

Naturally, the United States and the European Union consider the NPA a terrorist organization.

Jose Mar Sison is the head of the CPP-NDF-NPA troika. Prior to the proclamation of martial law in the Philippines in 1972, Sison organized destabilization activities against the government, including the

infamous 1971 Plaza Miranda bombing incident which killed and injured people attending a political rally in the heart of downtown Manila.

The detention of Sison during the martial law regime crippled the operations of the troika.

After seizing power in 1986, President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino released Sison. Accompanied by a couple of loyal allies, Sison fled to The Netherlands and obtained political asylum from the Dutch government.

Sison has been living in Utrecht in The Netherlands for the past three decades, supported by NPA revolutionary money. Non-government organizations in Europe misled by Sison's unflattering portrayal of the situation in the

Philippines also provide him funds.

From his base in The Netherlands, Sison directs the terrorist operations of the troika in

the Philippines.

Under international humanitarian law, political asylum is granted by a host country to a foreign national who flees his own country to avoid political persecution. Asylum means a safe haven in the host country for an indefinite period, on the understanding that the grantee will not violate the conditions of the asylum which includes compliance with the laws of the host country.

Sison's involvement in the terrorist acts of the NPA is a violation of the conditions of his political asylum because the European Union, to which The Netherlands belongs, officially considers the NPA a terrorist organization. The Dutch government does not and should not sponsor international terrorism.

By itself, Sison's involvement in terrorism is incompatible to his claim that he is being politically persecuted by Manila. Requiring Sison to answer for his involvement in terrorist acts in the Philippines is just and proper and cannot in any way be considered as political persecution.

Last 6 February, members of the Liga Filipinas Independencia, a coalition of 38 anti-communist organizations and sectoral groups, held a big rally outside the Embassy of The Netherlands in Makati.

They handed a letter to the Dutch government demanding the return of Sison to the Philippines to face justice.

Although the embassy received the letter, the Dutch government has not acted on it.

Peace-loving nations like The Netherlands should not coddle terrorists like Sison. If the Dutch decide to keep Sison in their country, then it's time for President Rodrigo Duterte to restudy the diplomatic ties between Manila and Amsterdam.

“Sison has been living in Utrecht in The Netherlands for the past three decades, supported by NPA revolutionary money.”

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

ONLINE NEWS

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NPA arsonist killed, rebels injured in Laguna encounter

By Saul Pa-a

CAMP GEN. MATEO CAPINPIN, Tanay, Rizal -- A member of the New People's Army (NPA) communist terrorist group responsible for burning heavy equipment for a dam project was killed in a military encounter Thursday in Sitio Pinamintian, Barangay San Buenaventura, Luisiana, Laguna.

Brig. Gen. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr., Commander of the 202nd Brigade, who directly supervises ongoing Focused Military Operation (FMO) to run after rebel arsonists, said government troops engaged the NPAs to a gun battle, killing one of them and injuring several others as evidenced by heavy traces of bloodstains at the encounter site.

No one was hurt on the government side, as military offensives forced terrorist insurgents who dragged along wounded and suspected dead comrades, as they fled towards different directions.

Military and police officials said their series of encounters are considered punitive actions against the NPA arsonists whose attacks to civilians and their properties are expected to cause delay in the ongoing construction of Kaliwa Dam and component road projects.

The Kaliwa Dam, one of the government's "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure flagship projects is expected to bring development and provide livelihood for the people in the far-flung areas of Quezon and Laguna.

"Thursday's encounter was the result of the 80th Infantry Battalion and the 2nd Jungle Fighter Company's (2JFC) pursuit operations in Infanta, Quezon," Burgos said.

As of press time, government troops are continuing their ongoing pursuit operations against the terrorists, while checkpoints are heightened to collar the rebels lurking in the area. **(PNA)**