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NEWS CLIPPINGS

08 January 2019

Tuesday



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PNP CONFIRMS SPYING ON ACT TEACHERS

STORY BY JAYMEE T. GAMIL, JHESSET O. ENANO AND MART SAMBALUD

Director General Albayalde bewails the 'scary' method of profiling members of the teachers' group. Amid a public outcry, the education department has recalled a letter to school heads endorsing the police operation.

A2

FROM A1

By Jaymee T. Gamil,
Jhesset O. Enano
and Mart Sambalud
@Team_Inquirer

The Philippine National Police has confirmed reports that it is profiling members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), a group critical of the Duterte administration, drawing an outcry from rights and lawyers organizations.

PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde on Monday sacked three police intelligence officers, not for the profiling of ACT members but for their "scary" method of intelligence gathering.

"Maybe they don't know what the job of an intelligence officer is. No. 1, if you're an intelligence officer, there shouldn't be a leak [of your operations]... especially so if you would be creating unnecessary panic," Albayalde said.

"You have to do a good job discreetly," he added.

The relief of intelligence officials from the Santa Cruz, Manila, police station; Batasan, Quezon City, police station; and another in Zambales province came following complaints by ACT over the weekend that the PNP was openly profiling its members.

Policemen's visits

In Manila, at least six public elementary and high schools had been visited by police officers, some reportedly in civilian clothes.

The police officers reportedly carried a memorandum signed by Chief Insp. Rexson Layug, intelligence chief of the Santa Cruz police station in Manila.

Information gathering has been reported, too, in other provinces, including Bulacan, Sorsogon, Camarines Sur and Agusan del Sur.

"They want to justify and normalize surveillance," ACT secretary general Raymond Basilio told the Inquirer. "We have the right to live freely and what they are doing does not fall under 'normal.'"

Human rights and lawyers' groups denounced the PNP's insistence on the legality of its collection of information on members of ACT, which they said was sowing more fear given the political climate under the Duterte administration.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said the PNP had violated the ACT members' constitutional rights to privacy and association.

CHR spokesperson Jacqueline Ann de Guia said in a statement on Sunday that reports that the PNP was profiling public and private school teachers were "alarming."

Harassment

The National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) said coming up with the "inventory"—though deemed harmless by police officials—should be seen in the larger context of the crackdown on



Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION
PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE
ZAMBALES POLICE PROVINCIAL OFFICE
PROVINCIAL INTELLIGENCE BRANCH
Camp Captain Conrado D. Yap, Iba, Zambales
Email add: zppn_pib@yahoo.com.ph CP No. 09507138155



MEMORANDUM

ZAB-ALL-1812-27-02

TO: All COPs
(Attn: Intel Section)

FROM: Officer-in-Charge
Provincial Intel Branch

SUBJECT: Inventory of All Public and Private School Teachers Who are Members of or Aligned with Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT)

DATE: December 27, 2018

1. References

- Mid-Term Elections 2019; and
- Memo from TDI dated December 10, 2018 with same subject as above
- Memo from C. Rio PROS dated December 27, 2018 with same subject as above

2. Based on the above references, conduct an inventory of all public and private school teachers who are members of or aligned with the ACT in Excel format using the matrix below:

- Submit said compliance to this Office NLT Monday, January 7, 2019
- For strict compliance

PANCHO DASCA DOBLE
Police Chief Inspector

INTEL ORDER A memorandum issued by Chief Insp. Pancho Dasca Doble, acting head of the Zambales police intelligence unit, on Dec. 27, 2018, orders his subordinates to conduct an inventory of all public and private school teachers "who are members of or aligned" with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers. —PHOTO COURTESY OF ACT

activists and opposition leaders.

"It's invasive, discriminatory and amounts to harassment and persecution," said NUPL national president Edre Olalia.

Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay expressed fear that the profiling would lead to prosecution, arrests and even killings, given the trend of "Red-tagging" under the Duterte administration.

"The recent Red-tagging [of] ACT Rep. France Castro and this recent incident come to more than mere coincidence," Palabay said in a statement.

In November last year Castro was arrested, along with former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and 16 others, at a checkpoint in Talaingod, Davao del Norte province, for alleged "lumad" (indigenous) child trafficking.

Teachers' union

ACT Davao City president Elenito R. Escalante said his group was a legitimate union of teachers recognized by the Department of Education (DepEd) and other government agencies.

"Our championing of the rights and welfare of teachers is no crime," Escalante said.

In a rally at the Camp Crame gates on Monday, ACT national chair Benjie Valbuena said the group first learned about the operations after police officers went to Cecilio Apostol Elementary School in Manila on Thursday.

The police officers asked school officials to fill out a "survey form" seeking an "inventory" of ACT members on the faculty and informing the school about the police operation.

A teacher took a photo of the "form" and reproduced it for ACT.

The form was a memorandum from the intelligence chief of the Santa Cruz police station ordering the policemen to "conduct an inventory of all public and private school teachers who are members aligned with the ACT."

The memo showed an example of the database format to be used and cited other memorandums purportedly coming from the Metro Manila regional intelligence division and the "midterm elections of 2019."

A new party-list group called ACT-CIS is accredited for the May elections. Its top nominee is Erwin Tulfo, a supporter of President Duterte.

Amid the uproar, the DepEd has ordered the recall of a letter addressed to school heads by the Schools Division Office in Manila that endorsed the PNP memo.

Other groups, too

At the press conference, Albayalde said the gathering of information was not limited to ACT members.

The PNP chief said the intelligence officers focused on ACT to determine whether it was doing something wrong like supporting armed rebellion.

Escalante likened the PNP move to the government's anti-illegal drug campaign "tokhang," a combination of two Visayan words—"toktok" (knock) and "hangyo" (ask)—in which drug suspects are subject to profiling.

The PNP has been criticized since the beginning of the administration's crackdown on illegal drugs after it came up with "drug watch lists" considered a target list for extrajudicial killings. —WITH A REPORT FROM VINCE F. NONATO INQ

'Baldo also planned to kill former mayor'

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

Aside from allegedly ordering the murder of Ako Bicol party-list representative Rodel Batocabe last month in Daraga, Albay, Carlwyn Baldo when he was vice mayor also wanted to kill mayor Gerry Jaucian in May last year so he could assume the top post in the town, an intelligence officer claimed yesterday.

Chief Supt. Amador Corpus, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) director, said the plot to kill Jaucian did not materialize because the mayor died of lung cancer on May 4 as Baldo was planning the hit.

Corpus said Baldo employed at the time the very same persons he contracted for Batocabe's murder, promising to pay them P350,000.

"If you remember, (Baldo) was the vice mayor prior to June 2018... the information came from our primary witness," Corpus said.

Turn to Page 2

Baldo From Page 1

He said Emmanuel Judavar, the former henchman of Baldo who backed out due to their falling out in October last year, detailed the information about Baldo's plots.

Director General Oscar Albayalde, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, said that because the revelations opened a can of worms, they would recommend that the P50-million reward for the solution to Batocabe's murder be given to Judavar.

He pointed out that the resolution of the Batocabe murder started from Judavar's revelations, although the PNP is "not closing its doors to other angles" that include an alleged internal rift within the Ako Bicol party.

Albayalde also declared at yesterday's press briefing that the recovered spent shells at the place where Batocabe and his bodyguard, Senior Police Officer 1 Orlando Diaz, were

gunned down matched that of the licensed firearm of self-confessed gunman Henry Yuson.

Quoting a report from the police crime laboratory, he said the 11 shells and five slugs recovered from the crime scene matched Yuson's .40 caliber pistol.

The result of the examination in the Integrated Ballistics Identification System, he added, would further boost the case against those accused of involvement in Batocabe's murder.

"Even without the presence of the real firearm, our evidence is strong because it cross-matched... We are now confident that what he (Yuson) was saying is true," Albayalde said in the briefing.

Yuson earlier confessed to killing the lawmaker on Baldo's order. Batocabe and Diaz were killed as they were boarding a vehicle after a gift-giving activity for senior citizens in Barangay Burgos

last Dec 22.

Meanwhile, a source from the intelligence community said the murder is also rooted in the never-ending feud resulting from the operation of Small Town Lottery (STL) in Albay.

"Batocabe earned the ire of very powerful people in the province because of his incessant criticism and investigation of the STL, particularly the loss of billions of pesos in revenues on the part of the national government," the source told **The STAR**.

It appeared that a day before Batocabe was killed, the congressman visited an official of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and discussed "very sensitive matters."

"Eliminating Batocabe is like killing two birds with one stone — you get rid of somebody who doesn't stop prying into the shenanigans in the STL operations and kill a potential mayor who doesn't dance to your music," the source added.

He claimed that a provincial government official might

have something to do with the murder and that Baldo was a willing accomplice in the crime.

Batocabe started his inquiry into the alleged failure of the STL operations in 2017 after receiving reports that it was being used as fronts for *neteng* and other illegal games in the country.

In May that year, Lucky V Prime Enterprises Corp. started operations in Albay after securing a license to operate STL. The firm was then headed by its president, Alex Herman Alemania, and corporate secretary Alexander Javier, both of Quezon province.

But in November 2017, barely six months after they started operating, Alemania was shot by motorcycle-riding gunmen in front of a shopping mall. He survived the murder attempt. Police killed one of his attackers and wounded another in an alleged shootout.

Last August, the PCSO issued Board Resolution 248 canceling Lucky V's franchise to

operate in Albay for failing to remit a total of P259.4 million in monthly sales. It was also discovered that the firm failed to use official tickets or receipts.

The PCSO board subsequently forfeited Lucky V's cash bond as penalty and payment for its obligations.

"I'm sure the authorities are also looking into these things but won't come out with an official statement unless they have concrete evidence to pin down the bigger fish," the source said.

The National Bureau of Investigation expressed willingness to look into all possible angles in the Batocabe slay, including the alleged STL anomalies, when ordered.

Right to question

Daraga Mayor Baldo could still contest the decision of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) party to withdraw its nomination for his re-election bid in the coming May 13 midterm polls, the Commission on Elections

(Comelec) said yesterday.

Spokesman James Jimenez noted the poll body's rules allow Baldo to question the cancellation of his Lakas-CMD Certificate of Nomination and Acceptance (CONA).

"Withdrawal of CONA must be with the consent of the individual. So, we have to get his take on this. If (he agrees), he will become an independent if he decides to continue to run," he explained.

Jimenez maintained that Lakas-CMD could no longer appoint a substitute for Baldo because the period for this is already over. Baldo is being accused of masterminding the slaying of Batocabe, his rival for the mayoralty post in Daraga.

Yesterday, Comelec law department director Maria Norina Tangaro-Casingal received the letter of Lakas-CMD executive director Bautista Ongpin Jr. revoking the CONA issued to Baldo as the party's official candidate for mayor of Daraga.

— With Sheila Crisostomo
Rey Galupo

DFA urged to coordinate with Vietnam over disputed South China Sea

AN opposition salon urged the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to work with Vietnam in negotiating a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano agreed with the proposal of former Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario for the Philippines to discuss the issue with the Vietnamese government.

"Vietnam has taken a strong stance against pro-China provisions in the proposed COC. The Philippines must support

Vietnam on this to block the attempts of China to gain complete control of entire South China Sea," Alejano said.

Del Rosario has recently called on the DFA to block the pro-China provisions in the proposed COC in the South China Sea.

Specifically, Del Rosario urged the DFA to take the same position of Vietnam on banning any new air defense identification zone, clarifying maritime entitlements in accordance with international law, blocking of a proposal by China to ban

military drills in the South China Sea with countries outside the region unless all signatories agree, and blocking China's proposal to exclude foreign oil firms by limiting joint development deals to China and Southeast Asia.

Alejano has previously expressed admiration on the position and actions of Vietnam regarding China's expansionist policy.

"Vietnam has been vocal in condemning China's militarization of the South China Sea. And while it has maintained

good economic relations with China, it has not foregone its territorial claims in the South China Sea and compromised its sovereignty – a few things the Duterte administration should take note off," Alejano stressed.

The former Marine officer enjoined the Philippines and the rest of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ensure that the COC serve its main purpose of ensuring peace and stability in the region according to international law.

Jester Manalastas

Election gun ban to start Jan. 13

The gun ban to be imposed for the midterm elections will start on Jan. 13 and end on June 12, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said yesterday.

While the ban is in place, licensed gun owners are not allowed to carry or transport their firearms outside their residence, but they may seek exemption from the Commission on Elections (Comelec), which will review the applications.

Albayalde said law enforcers on duty and in uniform are exempted from the gun ban. Also excluded are personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Coast Guard, National Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement agencies.

Private security agencies may also be exempted from the gun ban.

For politicians receiving
Turn to Page 8

Election From Page 1

threats, Albayalde said they may apply for security escorts from the PNP Police Security and Protection Group.

Albayalde said there are more than one million loose firearms nationwide.

Permit to carry suspended

Albayalde has also suspended the permit to carry firearms outside of residence (PTCFOR) in Manila as part of security measures for the annual Black Nazarene procession.

The suspension will start from 8 a.m. today until Jan. 10.

During the period, only members of the PNP, AFP and other law enforcement agencies are allowed to bear firearms provided they are performing official duties and wearing proper uniforms.

Albayalde said the 27,000-strong National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) is on full alert and will field a contingent of 7,200 officers during the traslacion for the annual feast.

Authorities are taking all possible threats seriously, according to Albayalde, including the revelation of Mayor Joseph Estrada about an intelligence report that members of an Islamic terrorist group might create trouble during the religious event.

"We are taking all these reports seriously. The members of the intelligence community are constantly monitoring any possible threat," Albayalde said.

He advised people to avoid the 6.1-kilometer procession route from Rizal Park to Quiapo Church that will be inaccessible to traffic.

"We strongly advise those with no urgent business in these areas to postpone their trips for another day for their own convenience," Albayalde said.

To achieve the goal of zero casualty, Albayalde urged everyone, including the devotees, to cooperate with authorities.

Biopics

Meanwhile, opposition senatorial candidate Romulo Macalintal sees nothing illegal about the showing of movies about the lives of fellow senatorial bets as long as these are done before the campaign period, which starts on Feb. 12.

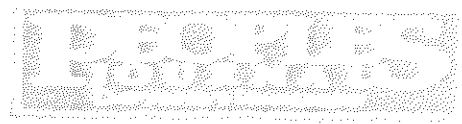
"If the movie will be shown during or within the campaign period, that will be an election offense," Macalintal, a veteran election lawyer, said, apparently referring to the upcoming movie about the life of former PNP chief Ronald dela Rosa, who is a pro-administration senatorial candidate.

The Comelec also warned against the showing of the film during the campaign period.

- With Emmanuel Tupas,
Helen Flores

8

January 2019



7

Gun ban starts Jan. 12

By Alfred Dalizon

PHILIPPINE National Police chief Director General Oscar D. Albayalde yesterday said they will strictly enforce the Commission on Elections' ban on the carrying of unauthorized weapons and employment of bodyguards starting Sunday until June 12 to ensure the holding of a safe, orderly and fair May 13 national and local elections.

The PNP chief said only members of the uniformed service who are in their official prescribed uniforms and in the actual performance of duty will be allowed to carry their firearms in public

Police will arrest anybody in civilian clothes who will be found carrying firearms during the period.

Starting this Sunday, all Permits-to-Carry-Firearms-Outside-of-Residence issued by the Office of the Chief PNP will automatically deemed as invalid until midnight of June 12.

A motor vehicle, water or air craft is also not considered a residence or place of business or extension hereof. Licensing of firearms will also cease during the period.

The PNP will also be enforcing the ban on the employment, availment or engagement of the services of security personnel or bodyguards during the election period,

although Albayalde said politicians with validated threats on their lives can still be provided security details in uniform.

The Omnibus Election Code says that during the election period, "no candidate for public office, including incumbent public officers seeking election to any public offices, shall employ, avail himself of or engage the services of security personnel or bodyguards, whether or not such bodyguards are regular members of the Philippine National Police, the Armed Forces of the Philippines or other law enforcement agency."

However, the following officials are allowed to retain their security

personnel or bodyguards: the President, Vice President, Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Secretary of National Defense, Secretary of the Interior and Local Government, Chairman and Commissioners of the Commission on Elections, Chief of Staff of the AFP and AFP Major Service Commanders, and Director Generals and Senior Officers of the PNP.

Senators, members of the House of Representatives and Provincial Governors, and Justices, Judges and Cabinet Secretaries, whose regular security complement have been provided by the PNP, AFP, NBI or other Gov-

ernment Law Enforcement Agencies for at least one (1) year at the time of the promulgation of this Resolution, may be allowed to retain the services of a maximum of two (2) of the currently detailed officers or members of said law enforcement government agencies.

When circumstances warrant, including but not limited to threats to their life and security, incumbent public officials whether elected or appointed, candidates for the May 13, 2019 national and local elections or his/her immediate family within the second degree of consanguinity and private individuals may also apply for police security during the period.

7

More than 7,200 policemen would be stationed along the 6.1-kilometer route of the procession. On top of this, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said it would also field some 2,000 soldiers to help ensure the safety of devotees.

Temporary gun ban

Eleazar said the Philippine National Police had temporarily suspended permits to carry firearms outside of residence in Manila from Jan. 8 to 10.

During this period, only members of the PNP, AFP and other law enforcement agencies on official duty and in uniform would be allowed to carry firearms.

The NCRPO would also be implementing no-fly and no-sail zones in Manila. Telecommunication signals along and around the traslacion route would be jammed as well. *17*

Last year, around 6.3 million devotees joined the almost 23-hour-long procession from Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park to Quiapo Church. —WITH REPORTS

FROM MATTHEW REYSIO-CRUZ AND
JEANNETTE ANDRADE INQ

No confirmed threat during Nazarene feast - PNP, AFP

By NON ALQUITRAN

Police and military officials clarified yesterday that there is no confirmed threat to the *traslacion* of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila tomorrow.

Philippine National Police (PNP) National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief Direc-

tor Guillermo Eleazar yesterday said the police have not confirmed any threat on the *traslacion*.

"Rumors of threats have circulated. These either have no basis or are unreliable," Eleazar said.

He issued the clarification following the revelation of Manila city officials that they received intelligence reports of an Islamic

group planning to create trouble during the *traslacion*.

Manila officials admitted that the reports are not validated but they are not taking these for granted.

At least five million devotees are expected to participate in the *traslacion* of the image of the Black

Turn to Page 8

No confirmed From Page 1

Nazarene from Rizal Park to the Quiapo Church.

According to Eleazar, they are continuously coordinating with various government agencies and the intelligence community regarding any threat to the procession of the centuries-old image.

Armed Forces Public Affairs Office chief Col. Noel Detoyato said the Joint Task Force-National Capital Region will support the PNP in the security of the *traslacion*. He said that so far there is no report of any threat.

The military will deploy 2,000 soldiers to secure the Feast of the Black Nazarene.

The 27,000-strong NCRPO has also been placed on full alert status during the *traslacion* of the Black Nazarene tomorrow, a police official said yesterday.

Eleazar cancelled all leaves and rest and recreation of all police personnel as they focused their attention on security of the *traslacion* tomorrow.

The NCRPO will deploy some 7,200 personnel during the *traslacion*, to be augmented

by soldiers.

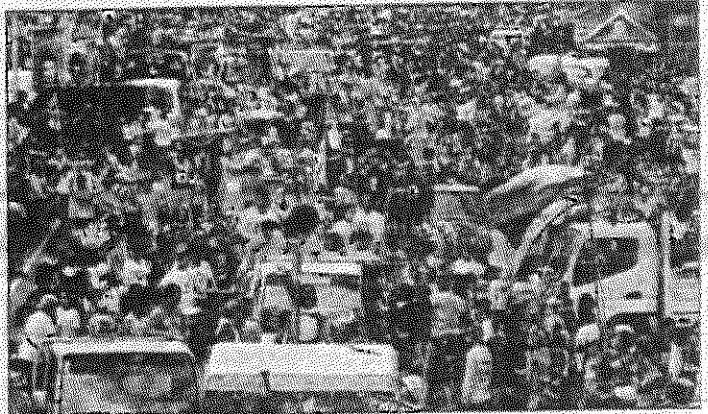
"Our uniformed personnel would be securing the Quirino and Quiapo areas and the 6.1-kilometer route, which is divided into 10 segments," Eleazar said, noting that each segment would be manned by a police commander accompanied by a medical team and several agencies equipped for emergency assistance.

The NCRPO deployed augmentation forces of 1,500 policemen starting 8 p.m. yesterday, with an additional 3,500 at 8 p.m. today.

The NCRPO will employ the containment ring system of security, with first layer being the venue security at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, Quiapo Church and the procession route of the image of the Black Nazarene.

The PNP has suspended the permit to carry firearms outside residence (PTCFOR) in Manila during the *traslacion*, from 8 a.m. of Jan. 8 up to 8 a.m. of Jan. 10.

"Only members of the PNP,



Devotees parade their replicas of the Black Nazarene in Manila yesterday. KJ ROSALES

Armed Forces of the Philippines and other law enforcement agencies who are performing official duties and wearing agency related uniforms will be allowed to carry firearms," said Eleazar.

According to Eleazar, PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde approved his recommendation to suspend PTCFOR in Manila for the peaceful and orderly *traslacion*.

A rosary vendor in front of the Quiapo Church was nabbed for possession of a homemade shotgun two days before the celebration of Black Nazarene's feast.

Manila Police District (MPD) director Senior Supt. Vicente Danao Jr. said charges of illegal possession of firearm and ammunitions were filed against Peter Codernas, of Old Balara, Quezon City.

Elements of the MPD Station 3 K-9 Unit and Quiapo Church security guards were conducting clearing operations when they discovered the homemade shotgun near the church. The gun's owner was later identified as Codernas, who admitted owning the weapon. —With Michael Punongbayan, Sheila Crisostomo, Rhodina Villanueva, Evelyn Macairan, Rey Galupo

'No security threat in Traslacion'

BY VICTOR REYES and GERARD NAVAL

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde yesterday said the police have not monitored any security threat in connection with tomorrow's Traslacion of the Black Nazarene in Manila.

"We have not monitored any significant security issue that may possibly affect the otherwise peaceful and orderly celebration of the Feast of the Black Nazarene in Manila this year," Albayalde said.

On Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada's claim that terrorists may sow violence during the event, Albayalde said: "We are taking all these reports seriously... These are all unconfirmed reports but we are not taking these reports for granted, all these we are taking them seriously."

"As of now, we have not received any information that confirms that report but as I've said, we are taking all these reports seriously. We cannot take these reports for granted... Members of the intelligence community are constantly monitoring any possible threats," said Albayalde.

Albayalde said the National Capital Region Police Office, which is now on full alert, is deploying 7,200 policemen to secure the event. This is on top of an undetermined number of Armed Forces personnel who will be supporting the security measure.

"The mission is to assist devotees in ushering the holy image of the Black Nazarene from the Quirino Grandstand back to the Minor Basilica in Quiapo. The ultimate goal is to prevent if not minimize deaths or injuries that has been

See NO SECURITY ► Page B2

NO SECURITY

perennially associated with this annual event," said Albayalde.

Albayalde urged the cooperation of everyone, particularly the devotees joining the Traslacion, "to observe proper decorum and behavior befitting the sanctity of this religious rite" to achieve zero casualty.

NCRPO chief Director Guillermo Eleazar said the PNP chief has ordered the suspension of all permit to carry firearms outside residence in Manila from 8 a.m. today up to 8 a.m. of Thursday.

"Only members of the PNP, AFP and other LEAs (law enforcement agencies) who are performing official duties and wearing agency related uniforms will be allowed to carry firearms," said Eleazar.

The NCRPO will also implement a Manila-wide liquor ban

until the culmination of the Traslacion.

Albayalde said the PNP is fine-tuning all preparations and final coordination with government agencies and the Archdiocese of Manila.

"As expected, the movement of a mammoth crowd of this magnitude will render all roads and peripheries along the 6.1-kilometer procession route around the Luneta and Quiapo areas virtually inaccessible," said Albayalde.

"Therefore, we strongly advise those with no urgent business in these areas to postpone their trips for another day for their own convenience," he added.

DEFINING FAITH

Quiapo Church Parochial Vicar Fr. Douglas Badong advised devotees, especially new ones, must keep in mind that being able to touch and get near the image on

January 9 will not define their faith.

"It's difficult when come January 9, everybody is racing to touch the image even to the point of bumping and stepping into one another," said Badong.

"We are discouraging them from doing that," he added.

The priest said if touching the image is their only purpose, they can do so anytime of the year, sans any need to hurry in doing so.

"The Black Nazarene is here all year long. They can touch, kiss, hug Him all they want," he said.

"Once it reaches the church, anytime, any hour, He is just there at the altar. There is no limit in kissing His feet, hands, clothing," added Badong.

During the Traslacion, the priest said it is already enough for a devotee to join the procession and pray.

"We should put a deeper meaning in our faith," stressed Badong.

During the Traslacion, it is a

common sight to see some individuals get on top of the sea of barefoot, yellow and maroon clad devotees in a bid to touch the image of the black Christ.

Such scenes during the popular procession often draw criticisms that it already manifests Filipino idolatry and fanaticism, instead of faith.

Today, the traditional "Pabalik" is set to begin at the Quirino Grandstand at 8 a.m., which is expected to be attended by long queues of devotees.

Also to be held starting 5 p.m. today at the Quirino Grandstand is the overnight vigil, which shall feature spiritual talks, youth dance/drama presentations, and catechesis.

The overnight vigil will then be temporary suspended to give way to the Fiesta High Mass at midnight to be led by Manila Archbishop Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle as the main celebrant.

NCRPO on full alert for Traslacion

By **ALFRED DALIZON**

THE National Capital Region Police Office yesterday went on full alert to ensure a peaceful and orderly Traslacion even as Philippine National Police chief, Director General Oscar D. Albayalde said they are seriously looking at all reports regarding plans to disrupt the event which is expected to be attended by an estimated 21 million Black Nazarene devotees.

"We are not taking for granted all reports being sent to us. Our intelligence community is monitoring all threats," the PNP chief said as he led the fine-tuning of all their preparations in coordination with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Departments of Health and Public Works and Highway, Metro Manila Development Authority, Philippine Coast Guard and the Manila city government.

"As expected, the movement of a mammoth crowd of this magnitude will render all roads and peripheries along the 6.1 kilometer procession route around the Luneta and Quiapo areas virtually inaccessible.



General Albayalde briefs the media while General Eleazar listens.

Therefore, we strongly advise those with no urgent business in these areas to postpone their trips for another day for their own convenience," he said.

The PNP chief said their National Support Units will provide operational support thru deployment of emergency medical teams, mobile patrol, bay and river patrol and intelligence monitoring.

"The mission is to assist devotees in ushering the holy image of the Black Nazarene from the Quiapo Grandstand back to the Minor Basilica in Quiapo. The ultimate goal is to prevent if not minimize deaths or injuries that has been perennially associated with this annual event," he said.

To achieve this goal of "zero casualty," the PNP chief said they need the utmost cooperation of everyone particularly the devotees who will participate in the activities. We enjoin all devotees joining the Traslacion to observe proper decorum and behavior befitting the sanctity of this religious rite," he added.

The PNP chief said he has ordered his men to evict unruly persons and those under the influence of drugs and alcohol in the area.

Gen. Albayalde yesterday also ordered the suspension of all Permit-to-Carry-Firearms-Outside-of-Residence or PTCFORs in the city of Manila from 8 a.m. today until 8 a.m. Thursday.

Only members of the

PNP, the Armed Forces and other law enforcement agencies who are performing official duties and wearing agency-prescribed uniforms will be allowed to carry firearms in Manila during the period, said Eleazar.

Elsewhere across the country where similar Feast of the Black Nazarene activities will be celebrated, Police Regional and Provincial Offices will also implement their respective security and public safety plans.

"We have not monitored any significant security issue that may possibly affect the otherwise peaceful and orderly celebration of the Feast of the Black Nazarene in Manila this year, including other major annual religious festivities celebrated in January such as the Feast of the Sto. Nino, the patron saint of the Philippines, and the Ati-Atihan in Aklan, Sinulog in Cebu and Dinagyang in Iloilo," Gen. Albayalde said.

NCRPO chief, Director Guillermo Lorenzo T. Eleazar strongly advised the devotees not to bring with them items that can potentially cause harm to others. He also appealed to the public to extend their patience during the event.

Eleazar said that the 'no fly, no sail zone' will be

strictly implemented in the procession routes. "We have also coordinated with the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and Department of Information and Communications (DICT) to jam telecommunication signals along the routes and during the procession," he added.

The NCRPO chief discouraged the devotees from bringing backpacks and valuable items including cell phones, jewelry and wristwatches and huge amount of cash; to refrain from wearing caps, from bringing colored beverages or drinks in non-transparent containers; and most importantly to strictly avoid bringing explosives or firecrackers, liquor and illegal drugs and other deadly weapons.

He said that starting at 7 o'clock last night, they had enforced the liquor ban in Manila even as he urged the Black Nazarene devotees to leave their children, elders and relatives with physical disabilities or are sick at home.

"As security preparations, a series of deliberate inter-agency coordination meeting has been done to ensure public security on this annual Catholic religious event," Eleazar said.

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Shooting spree

CAMP OLA, Albay - An Army sergeant was killed, while a barangay chairman and a tanod were wounded when unidentified suspects fired at them while they were having a drinking spree at a wake in Sitio Rakitan, Brgy. Dela Fe, Buhli town in Camarines Sur province Sunday night. Chief Insp. Malu Calubequib, spokesperson of Police Regional Office 5 (PRO-5), identified the slain soldier as Sgt. Benito Ronquillo Bien, 45, a member of the Philippine Army assigned to Bicalan, Presentation town. Wounded were Barangay Chairman Tonyben Tabalde and tanod Mario Ibanita. Initial investigation disclosed that at around 9 p.m. Sunday, the victims were having a drinking at the wake of a certain Christian Ramizares when the suspects suddenly arrived and shot at Bien several times in the head. Tabalde and Ibanita were hit by stray bullets. (Nifio N. Lucas)

Army sarge killed in CamSur shooting

CAMP OLA, Albay – An Army sergeant was killed while a barangay captain and a barangay tanod or watchman were wounded when unidentified armed men shot them while having a drinking session at the wake of a relative in Sitio Raki-tan, Barangay dela Fe, Buhi, Camarines Sur, Sunday.

Chief Insp. Malu Calubaquib, spokesperson of the Police Regional Office 5, identified the slain soldier as Sgt. Benito Bien, 45, assigned to Bicalen, Presentation, and a resident of Sitio Pito, Barangay Sagrada, Buhi.

Wounded were barangay captain Tonyben Tabalde and

tanod Mario Ibanita.

Initial investigation showed that around 9 p.m., the victims were having a drinking spree at the wake of one Christian Ramizares when the suspects appeared and shot Bien in the head several times. He died on the spot.

Tabalde and Ibanita sustained bullet wounds and were rushed to Doña Maria Josefa Foundation Hospital in Iriga City.

The suspects immediately fled after the incident.

Police have yet to establish the identities of the suspects and the motive behind the shooting. (Niño N. Luces)

Court upholds order to arrest Trillanes

BY NEIL
N. SERVALLOS

THE Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 has upheld its decision to have Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th arrested as it junked the lawmaker's plea to reverse the ruling.

Branch 150 Judge Elmo Alameda, who ordered Trillanes arrested in September last year, said the senator failed to prove the existence of an "original" application for amnesty and to explain his failure to produce it.

"Since the existence of the duly accomplished application form for amnesty has never been established nor the fact of his admission of guilt of the crime he committed... the substitutionary evidence he presented is considered hearsay evidence and cannot be admitted," Alameda said.

► TrillanesA2

in his order which was released on Monday.

"In view of all the foregoing, the Omnibus Motion is denied," he added.

Trillanes previously filed a 19-page omnibus motion for reconsideration by way of special appearance through his counsel Reynaldo Rables last October 1, where he asked the court to void its September 25 order for his arrest as it lacked "legal and factual basis."

It said that Branch 150 made a

"grave" mistake in issuing an arrest order on the basis of President Rodrigo Duterte's Proclamation 572 which voided Trillanes' amnesty *ab initio* (from the beginning).

Alameda ordered Trillanes arrested in September as it found that the senator did not apply for amnesty.

The rebellion charges filed against Trillanes in connection with the 2007 Manila Peninsula siege were dismissed in 2011 after he was granted amnesty by President Benigno Aquino 3rd.

'Hearsay' evidence

Trillanes lost his appeal a week after leaving for Europe for a series of engagements.

In his six-page order, Alameda said the senator was not able to prove through testimonies and documents that he indeed filed for amnesty and that he admitted or recanted previous statements that compromised his admission of guilt.

Alameda said Trillanes failed to produce an original copy of his amnesty application form which

bears a receiving stamp from the Department of National Defense's (DND) Amnesty Ad Hoc Committee, which he argued in the rules of court was the "highest available degree of proof."

Without it, Trillanes could not prove his compliance with the amnesty procedures, the court said.

"Sen. Trillanes cannot claim exception to this rule since no evidence has been presented that such accomplished application form exists in the files of the DND Ad Hoc Amnesty Committee," he said.

"[Trillanes] failed to satisfactorily prove the [following] predicates: the existence of the original, the loss or destruction of the original or its non-production in court, the unavailability of the original is not due to bad faith on his part," he added.

The judge said the senator's evidence and testimonies from Armed Forces and DND officials saying he filed for amnesty and admitted guilt were "hearsay."

"The rule requires that the highest available degree of proof must be produced by him to prove the contents thereof especially his claim that he made a narration of his admission of guilt of the crime subject of the application for amnesty," he added.

Makati court denies Trillanes appeal

BY EVAN ORIAS

THE Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 has upheld its decision to issue an arrest warrant against Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV in connection with President Duterte's issuance of Proclamation 572 which nullifies the amnesty granted to him in 2011.

In a three-page decision, Judge Elmo Alameda of the Makati RTC Branch 150 denied the senator's motion for reconsideration to a decision issued in September last year. Alameda's latest decision was dated December 18 but was released to media only yesterday.

"By way of reiteration, Sen. Trillanes was not able to prove through testimonial and documentary evidence that he filed his application for amnesty nor expressly admitted his guilt in the application form for the crime he committed during the Manila Peninsula incident, which are the minimum requirements set forth under Proclamation No. 75," said Alameda.

Trillanes is out of the country. He left last December 11 for speaking engagements in Europe and the US until next month.

His lawyer, Reynaldo B. Robles, said: "We have yet to see the ruling of the Court so we cannot comment on the supposed basis

of the denial of our motion. Needless to state, we will consider the possibility of appealing or questioning the ruling before the higher courts."

Alameda said Trillanes failed to show an official copy of the amnesty application form, which is the primary evidence required as proof of filing, and the official copy of the application form which he filed.

He noted Trillanes presented only documents and affidavits of several military officers and a former defense secretary

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MAKATI

to prove he complied with the minimum requirements.

Last September 25, Alameda granted the motion of the Department of Justice to issue an arrest warrant and a hold departure order against Trillanes after finding factual and legal basis for Proclama-

tion No. 572.

Trillanes posted bail of P200,000 on the same day.

In Proclamation 572 signed on Aug. 31, 2018, President Duterte voided the grant of amnesty to Trillanes, a former Navy lieutenant who was among leaders of a mutiny at least 15 years ago, for allegedly failing to comply

with requirements for the clemency, including admitting guilt. Duterte also ordered Trillanes' arrest. Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra then said that based on the Proclamation 572, Trillanes failed to comply with the requirements for amnesty grant, which are to apply for amnesty and admit one's guilt.

Proclamation No. 572 also instructed the Department of Justice and the Armed Forces "to pursue all criminal and administrative cases" filed against Trillanes in connection with the July 2003 Oakwood Mutiny, the February 2006 Marines stand-off, and the Manila Peninsula "siege" in November 2007.

Soldier killed, bgy chief, watchman injured in C. Sur

By ZAIDA DELOS REYES

A SOLDIER was killed while a village chairman and a watchman were wounded when unidentified suspects peppered them with bullets while attending a wake Sunday evening in Camarines Sur.

The fatality was identified as Sgt. Benito Bien, 45, member of Philippine Army assigned at Bicalen, Presentation,

Camarines Sur and resident of Sitio Pito, Barangay Sagrada, Buhin, in the said province.

Taken to the nearest hospital for treatment were Tonyben Tabalde, chief of Barangay Dela Fe, Buhin, Camarines Sur and watchman Mario Ibanita.

Reports reaching Camp Crame showed that the incident occurred at around 9 p.m. at Sitio Rakitan, Bgy. Dela Fe.

The victims were attending the wake of a cer-

tain Christian Ramirez when the suspects arrived and shot them repeatedly.

The report said the victims were having a drinking spree during the said wake when the incident happened.

The soldier sustained a gunshot wound in the head that caused his untimely death while the two other victims were rushed to the hospital.

Authorities are now conducting a follow up investigation.



Sundalo pinatay sa lamay ng riding in tandem

Isang sarhento ng Philippine Army ang nasawi habang sugatan ang dalawang iba pa kabilang ang isang barangay chairman nang sila ay paghabarilin ng hindi pa nakilalang suspek sa isang lamay ka makalawa ng gabi sa Brgy. Fe, Buh, Camarines Sur.

Ang biktima na namatay noon din ay nakilalang si Philippine Army Sergeant Benito Bien, 45, residente sa Brgy. Sagrada ng bayang ito.

Nasugatan naman sina Tonyben Tabaide, barangay chairman at tantod na si Mario Ibanita.

Sa ulat, bago nangyari ang pamamamili dakong alas-9:00 ng gabi sa Sitio Rakitan, Brgy. Dela Fe ay kasalukuyang nag-unuman ang mga biktima sa harapan ng isang babay kung saan pinaglalaman ang nasawi nilang karbigan nang sinaulpot

ang salarin at saka pinagbabaril ang target na sundalo na pinapurihan sa ulo. Habang sina Tabaide at Ibanita ay natamaan ng ligaw na bala.

Tumakas ang suspek na sinamantala ang pagkakagulo ng mga tao sa lamayan. *Jay Cantav* 2

PNP PROFILING

NO GOV'T POLICY TO PLACE TEACHERS UNDER SURVEILLANCE, SAYS PALACE

By Christine O. Avendaño
@ioavendanoINQ

The government has no policy of putting teachers under surveillance but the Philippine National Police will "monitor" those suspected of illegal activities such as having links with communist rebels, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said on Monday.

Panelo made the statement in reaction to reports that the PNP was profiling members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

"Definitely, there is no policy to surveil teachers. The President loves teachers," he said, pointing out that Mr. Duterte's late mother was a teacher.

At a news conference, Panelo reminded the public that the PNP had already denied it was profiling ACT members.

Identified with Left

But he said those being "monitored" by the PNP were



Salvador Panelo

doing illegal things.

"You must remember, ACT is a legal organization identified with the Left, and the PNP and the President have said there were legal fronts but actually they are together with the Left," Panelo said.

"If you're not doing anything, why should you be afraid," he added. "If you're not doing anything, nothing will happen."

Panelo also said that if the police were putting anyone under

surveillance, it was for a reason.

Asked to explain, he cited a possible reason that police would surely monitor if they got word that one or two teachers were involved with identified New People's Army (NPA) rebels or were suspected to be NPA members.

Asked why the police were focusing on these groups, Panelo said the PNP had a lot of jobs and it had already denied profiling ACT members.

He said that if ever the PNP was monitoring the group, it might just be focusing on one or two of its members, probably "hard-core leaders." *KV*

Panelo noted that Mr. Duterte was taking care of teachers, reminding the public that the President had promised to double their salaries.

Told there was a leak of a PNP memorandum on an inventory of all public and private teachers who are members of ACT, he said there was no proof that the document was authentic. INQ

3 PNP officers sacked over leaked memo on ACT

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde yesterday ordered the relief of three intelligence officers over the leak of a supposed memorandum ordering profiling and surveillance of the members of a left-leaning teachers group.

Sacked were the intelligence chiefs of the Manila Police District Station 3, Quezon City City Police District Station 6 and provincial intelligence branch of the Zambales police.

Albayalde said the leakage of the memo has caused fear

among members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), who feel they are being intimidated by the police.

He said the intelligence officers, by the nature of their job, should have done their work discreetly.

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"Anyone, when they realize they're being profiled by the police, there is that feeling always," the PNP chief said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Albayalde said he did not sign any document ordering intelligence officers to conduct an inventory of ACT members.

But he did not deny that the order came from a PNP unit.

"The different directorates of the PNP can always issue memorandum, especially if it falls under their jurisdiction," he said.

Albayalde assured ACT members there is no cause for alarm if they have not committed any wrongdoing.

He said the surveillance order may have stemmed from the declaration of communist leader Jose Ma. Sison that ACT is one of their front organizations.

ACT members should not be afraid of police surveil-

lance if they are not doing anything unlawful, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said it is not the policy of the government to conduct surveillance on teachers.

"It's the job of the PNP to monitor all groups. If you're not doing anything wrong, why should you be afraid?" Panelo said.

"The President loves the teachers. But if you're doing something illegal or irregular, it's natural for the police to monitor what you are doing," he added.

Panelo said President Duterte has vowed to promote the welfare of teachers and to increase their salaries.

The teachers' union accused the PNP of deploying police personnel to schools to gather information about its members.

The group claimed that the PNP had issued two memoranda ordering an inventory of teachers affiliated with ACT.

— Emmanuel Tupas, Alexis Romero, Rainier Allan Ronda, Mayen Jaymalin, Ding Cervantes

Albayalde relieves 3 intel chiefs over ACT project

By AARON E. REQUENCO and
MERLINA HERNANDO-MALIPOT

Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Albayalde yesterday relieved three local police intelligence chiefs over an alleged confidential directive purportedly ordering the profiling of all members of the Alliance Concerned Teachers (ACT).

But Albayalde denied issuing such order to the intelligence community.

"As far as I am concerned, I have not signed anything like that at nung mag-leak yan. I have already ordered for all intelligence officers involved to be relieved," Albayalde told reporters in a press briefing at Camp Crame.

Those relieved from their posts were the intel chiefs of Manila Police Station 3, Quezon City Police Station 6, and the Zambales Provincial Police Office.

Albayalde surmised the

Albayalde relieves 3...

instruction might have come from the Directorate for Intelligence (DI) since it could issue such order to local intelligence units.

"I will look into that but they are relieved pending investigation," said Albayalde.

Pressed on why he had ordered the relief if no such order came from his office, Albayalde explained that it was due to sloppy work of intelligence chiefs that led to the memo's purported leak.

"If you are an intelligence officer hindi mo dapat ganun nagle-leak yung mga ginagawa mo. Kaya nga intel officer, if really merong utos na ganun hindi ba and especially so that we are creating an unnecessary panic ng mga tao na ito kung naintimidate sila," said Albayalde.

"You have to do your job discreetly," he added.

Memo leaked

The source of irritation is a January 4 memorandum on the "Inventory of All Public and Private School Teachers who are members of, or aligned with, Alliance Of Concerned Teachers (ACT)" that purportedly came from MPD Station 3, quoting an earlier memo from the Regional Intelligence Chief of Metro Manila police as the basis.

The January 24 memo has been circulating in social media.

Albayalde, however, stressed that it was not a profiling but part of the intelligence monitoring activities of the police.

"This is not profiling. It has been part of our intelligence monitoring. It does not mean that if you are subjected to profiling, you are already a member," said Albayalde.

Leaders of ACT raised safety concerns on the supposed PNP memo. Yesterday, some of its members conducted a protest action in front of Camp Crame.

But Albayalde said that ACT members have nothing to be afraid of if they are not doing anything illegal. Instead, ACT members, he said should be proud they are members of the group.

"The question is, why are you afraid if you are a member of ACT? If you are not violating any law, why be afraid," said Albayalde.

The official later said that they are currently monitoring groups affiliated with communist rebels.

"Remember, there are pronouncements coming from the CPP-NDF (Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front) that they have front organizations. This did not come from us or me or even from the military," said Albayalde.

The PNP chief cited a video uploaded on YouTube, where CPP founder Joma Sison reportedly identified ACT as one of their front organizations.

"So this is for departmental use, to ensure that this organization is legitimate, that his group is not doing something illegal like supporting armed rebellion," said Albayalde.

Endorsements recalled

Meanwhile, the Department of Education (DepEd) yesterday ordered the recall of two endorsements by DepEd Schools Division Offices (SDO) in relation to an unnumbered memorandum from the PNP directing the inventory of teachers who are members of ACT.

In an official statement, DepEd said that it received communication from a representative of the ACT raising concern over the SDO endorsements.

"Based on available information, it is noted that the DepEd Central Office has not received any such request from the PNP," DepEd said. "It is confirmed though that a letter addressed to school heads was issued by one SDO through an Acting Division Superintendent, forwarding a purported Memorandum from a PNP unit," DepEd added.

In consultation with the concerned Regional Office, DepEd said the "recall of this forwarding letter has been directed."

"Initial feedback from the field shows that there is no other similar forwarding letter which has been issued by any other DepEd local unit," DepEd added.

The agency stressed that should any inter-agency request for personal information of individuals, "such request shall be evaluated based on existing laws and regulations, including the Data Privacy Act."

In an advisory dated January 4, 2019 issued by DepEd National Capital Region (NCR) Assistant Schools Division Superintendent and Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Sheryll Gayola, all public and private elementary and secondary school in Division of City Schools - Manila were given a copy of an unnumbered memorandum dated December 26, 2018 signed by Rexson Layug, Police Chief Inspector, Chief of Intelligence Branch regarding the "inventory of all public and private teachers who are members" of ACT.

Undersecretary and Spokesperson Annalyn Sevilla said the DepEd Central

Office is "looking into the matter" at the Secretary level. The CO, she added, is also waiting for "verification from regional offices and legal team."

Intimidating

Meanwhile, the ACT strongly condemned the move calling it a "scheme to intimidate and harass" its members.

In a statement, ACT decried the recent move of the PNP to "profile" all public and private school teachers who are members of the ACT. The group alleged that the PNP are also currently making the rounds in schools and offices of the DepEd "to press" education officials for an inventory of all ACT members under their jurisdiction.

"The operations appear to be of a

nationwide scale and points to the top PNP leadership as the foremost source of the order as we received similar reports from our members in Manila, Malabon, Las Pinas, Zambales, Bulacan, Rizal, Mindoro, Sorsogon, Agusan Del Sur, among others," the group added.

For ACT, the move is "grossly illegal and unconstitutional attack on our collective right to free expression and right to self-organization."

The PNP's "concerted national scheme to single out" ACT and extract a list of all its members from principals and other school officials is a "clear violation of the constitutional right to self-organization, freedom of expression and assembly, and right to privacy."

3 police intel officers sacked for profiling leak

BY VICTOR REYES

PNP CHIEF Oscar Albayalde yesterday ordered the relief of three intelligence officers of police stations in Manila, Quezon City, and Zambales, who leaked information on the reported profiling of teachers who associated with the militant party-list group Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

"If you are an intelligence officer,

you should have not allowed that information to leak," said Albayalde in a press conference in Camp Crame, adding intelligence officers should do their job discreetly.

"They may not know how an intelligence officer is supposed to work. They do not know how to be an intelligence officer," he also said.

Albayalde did not name the

sacked intelligence officers but said they are assigned with Station 3 of the Manila Police District, Station 6 of the Quezon City Police District, and the Zambales provincial police.

ACT on Sunday denounced the reported PNP profiling of its members, after reports said a PNP memoranda ordered schools to

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submit a list of all ACT members in every school. It said members in Manila, Malabon, Las Piñas, Zambales, Bulacan, Rizal, Mindoro, Sorsogon, Agusan del Sur, and other areas reported similar orders.

Reports also said policemen have been going to schools, asking principals for the names of teachers who are ACT members. ACT chairperson Joselyn Martinez asked the PNP for its motive in conducting such profiling.

Albayalde said he is not aware of the supposed memorandum for policemen to profile members of ACT.

Albayalde also said past pro-

nouncements of communist leader Jose Maria Sison, identifying ACT as a front organization of the communist movement, may have prompted the profiling.

"That may have been what they are looking into (ACT members). But as I said, we will check on this. I will personally check on it," he said.

Albayalde assured the public any profiling done by the PNP "is part of our security preparations; these are all part of our security protocols, this is all part of the maintenance of peace and order in this country."

The Department of Education DepEd directed school division offices in Manila and Zambales to recall the memoranda.

Photos of the memoranda allegedly issued by the Manila and Zambales police last month went viral on social media last week. The two memoranda, which bear the signature of Manila police chief Insp. Rexson Layug and Zambales police chief Insp. Pancho Doble, ordered public and private school heads to identify teachers affiliated with ACT.

"Based on available information, it is noted that the DepEd Central Office has not received any such request from the PNP. It is confirmed though that a letter addressed to school heads was issued by one school division office through an acting division superintendent, forwarding a purported memorandum from a PNP unit,"

DepEd said.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo said government has no policy of placing teachers under surveillance or profiling them.

Asked what could have prompted the police to monitor the ACT members, Panelo said ACT is a known legal front of the Communist Party of the Philippines which is waging a rebellion against the government.

He said maybe a leader or two of ACT was seen engaging with CPP leaders and police are just monitoring and ensuring that they would not commit any criminal activity or engage in anything illegal. — *With Evan Orias and Jocelyn Montemayor*

Reds profiling: 3 cops probed for info leak

By Francisco Tuyay

At least three police intelligence officers were sacked for allegedly leaking the results of their discreet profiling on members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers. Philippine National Police chief Oscar Albayalde said Monday.

Albayalde declined to identify the

three spy cops, but said they were from Manila's Station 3, Quezon City's Station 6 and a station in Zambales, with ranks of senior inspector to chief inspector.

Albayalde also ordered an investigation on the leak of confidential information.

The PNP chief said he signed no order to investigate ACT, but said if such

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an order were issued, the intelligence officers should have done their job more discreetly.

ACT, in a statement, said police officers have been approaching officials of local schools and asking for a list of ACT members in their schools.

The Commission on Human Rights, for its part, expressed concern over the profiling, saying it violated ACT members' rights to privacy and to free association.

In a statement, Albayalde said there was no crackdown on ACT members in any school.

"What the PNP is undertaking is simply intelligence or information gathering, which is one of its major functions," he said.

"It is the responsibility of the PNP to monitor any and all groups and organizations critical of the government, especially those linked to militant organizations whose objective is to overthrow the duly-elected government."

He said Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison him-

self had identified organizations with links to the rebels.

"This did not come from us or even from the military, this was the pronouncement of Joma Sison, an. He identified these organizations, not us," he added.

The Palace said Monday members of ACT should have nothing to fear if they are not doing anything illegal.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo maintained that the PNP has already dismissed the claims that the agency has called for an inventory of all public and private school teachers who are affiliated with the ACT.

PNP defends profiling of ACT members

By Alfred Dalizon

PHILIPPINE National Police chief Director General Oscar D. Albayalde yesterday said there's nothing wrong with profiling members of the supposed left-leaning teachers' union Alliance of Concerned Teachers but at the same time ordered the administrative relief of three of his intelligence officers who supposedly leaked the report to the media and the tutors themselves.

Ordered relieved from their posts were the intelligence chiefs of the Manila Police District Station 3 and Quezon City Police District Station 6 as well as the intelligence chief of the Zambales Police Provincial Office.

The PNP chief said that he ordered the investigation of the three since internal communication should remain confidential and must not be leaked to the public to avoid alarming the people concerned.

Albayalde said he did not sign any such memorandum and added that most probably, there is "carelessness" on the part

of some of his men.

He explained that if the memorandum really came from the PNP Directorate for Intelligence, it should remain for internal consumption only. He added that different PNP directorial staffs release their own routine reports and memorandum which do not go to the Office of the Chief, PNP.

Gen. Albayalde however said that as far as he is concerned, any such memorandum cannot be used to harass ACT members, not unless they are guilty of a crime.

"As I've said, I did not specifically order gathering of information on ACT members. But I will be extremely surprised if our intelligence community has not done so on ACT and other front organizations of the Communist Party of the Philippines identified by Jose Ma. Sison," the PNP chief said.

"It is the duty of the state to protect its citizens and its interests against the enemies of the state (Communist Terrorist Groups or CPP/NPA) and its allies or front organizations enumerated by Jose Ma. Sison

such as BAYAN, KMU, KMP, LFS, GABRIELLA, ACT, KADENA, etc.

Gathering intelligence will allow the state to distinguish genuine progressives from unrepentant communist terrorists out to overthrow a duly elected government through violent means; routinely extort, burn and loot assets of businesses that gave livelihood to peace-loving citizens of this country," he added.

"Now that Sison himself has identified ACT as a front organization of the CPP/NPA/NDF, the burden is now upon members of ACT to dissociate themselves from this terrorist organization and denounce its infiltration, manipulation, and use of the ranks of Filipino educators," Gen. Albayalde said.

National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Guillermo Lorenzo T. Eleazar said that even assuming that there are indeed such moves, he believes there is nothing wrong with it since its part of their mandate to find out what is happening in the country.

Eleazar said it's good for intelligence officers to have "many open sources" instead of just getting information on ACT from the Civil Service Commission and skipping its rounds in schools. However, he gave the assurance that police will not abuse the information gathered. "Alam namin ang tama at mali at hindi kami gagawang mali at hindi kami magto-tolerate ng anumang mali," he said.

NORMAL POLICE WORK

Malacanang also said there is nothing wrong with the PNP's reported surveillance of ACT.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said authorities will only monitor members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers who have ties with communist rebels "if they have shown any acts that will be inimical to the state."

These efforts are part of the job of the police, he said.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers claimed over the weekend that police officers recently visited schools in Malabon, Cebu, Isabela and some

Mindanao provinces, asking for the names of their members.

The supposed profiling is meant to stifle "all forms of opposition," claimed ACT, which last year earned the ire of President Rodrigo Duterte's daughter, Davao Mayor Sara Duterte, for claiming that her city does not give allowances to teachers.

NO INVENTORY REQUEST

The Department of Education (DepEd) has not received any request from the PNP regarding an inventory of teachers who are members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

In a statement issued by DepEd on Monday it said the DepEd Central Office has not received any such request from the PNP.

The representative of the ACT earlier raised concern over alleged two endorsements by DepEd Schools Division Offices (SDO) of a supposed Memorandum from the PNP directing the inventory of teachers who are members of ACT.

With E Montano,
Arlene Rivera

• Aid to former NPA rebels

CAMP BANGASI, Butuan City
- Another batch of 27 former New People's Army (NPA) rebels received financial support from the government through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at the Army's 8th Infantry Battalion (8IB) headquarters in Impasug-on, Bukidnon last January 3, military officials reported Monday. Officials of the DSWD-Bukidnon provincial office released the incentive that totaled ₱135,000 - or ₱5,000 each - for the rebel returnees who formerly belonged to the NPA's North Central Mindanao Regional Command and Milita ng Bayan (MB), it said. In the turnover rites, DSWD-Bukidnon provincial officials said the agency program for the former rebels was apart from the medical assistance and other aid under the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP). (Mike U. Crismundo)

NUJP hits Red link, Joma 'supervision'

A FORMER member and organizer of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines on Monday asserted his knowledge of the "direct communication and supervision" of Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison on the newsmen's group.

The statement came about a week after the same source, who called himself "Ka Ernesto" but did not divulge his real identity, made headlines in local tabloids and regional newspapers for calling out the "deceit and lies" of the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army, ahead of the communist group's 50th anniversary last Dec. 26.

In a statement also issued Monday, the NUJP disowned their supposed member and denounced the continued efforts in linking them to the communist revolutionary movement, saying the tagging "is part of an orchestrated effort to intimidate them into silence."

NUJP officers found themselves answering requests for interviews from community news outfits around the country, soliciting reactions to charges by the so-called Ka Ernesto.

When the union asked where the story originated from, the community outfits invariably pointed to banner stories carried by a number of Manila-based tabloids—Police Files Tonite, Bagong Bomba and Saksi Mata ng Katotohanan—which carried the exact same headline "NUJP pinamumunuan ng CPP-NPA-NDF" (NUJP headed by CPP-NPA-NDF), the

latter initials referring to the National Democratic Front, which Sison heads.

"It is hilarious that they keep repeating these charges since the NUJP's membership represents a broad spectrum of creeds and political beliefs bound by a common dedication to defending and expanding the bounds of freedom of the press and of expression," the newsmen's group statement read. "But, as they say, stupid is as stupid does."

Ka Ernesto, who requested that his full name not be made public for the sake of his personal safety as well as his family's, said the link between NUJP and CPP "is part of a collective effort of people from the communist organization supervised by a certain RSV, the group's political officer."

He said the NUJP has a direct link with the Utrecht-based Sison and the communist leadership because of a "special operation" the journalists are supposedly spearheading—that is, to shield members of the NPA who are getting arrested.

Being a "longtime member" of the CPP, Ka Ernesto said he is a witness of the communications and dialogues of "RSV" and a certain "JMS" on Facebook Messenger and other social media chat apps, and claimed to have deciphered messages

of those communications.

He said he has been with the movement for a long time and he can attest to the fact that the operations and leanings of NUJP are being manipulated by the communist group.

Ka Ernesto claimed to be a pioneer of the NUJP and had been active in recruiting and influencing laborers to form union groups in different newspaper companies.

He said he started out as a youth organizer for the College Editors Guild of the Philippines and became editor-in-chief of a college paper of a known university in Metro Manila.

He added that he did finish his college degree after he was convinced by the CPP to go full time in the group's "legal point."

This is the second time in a few weeks the NUJP has been linked to the rebels since a certain Mario Ludades, claiming to be one of the founders of the CPP, accused the group of being a "legal front" of the underground movement in stories run by several outfits on Dec. 26, incidentally the 50th anniversary of the CPP.

Ka Ernesto, however, said the CPP "will get back at him" since he had been speaking of the "wrongdoings" of the communist group.

He said he spent 12 years as the movement's organizer of youth for the CPP and as a fact-finding journalist in areas where the NPA is being defeated by government troops during encounters. **BL**

There is no way the communists can oust President Rodrigo Duterte who enjoys a very high trust and approval ratings from the people, Ka Ernesto added.

Resumption of peace talks with Reds slim—Lorenzana

CHANCES of reviving the stalled peace talks with communist rebels remain slim as the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army continue to commit atrocities and threaten to oust President Rodrigo Duterte, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has said.

"With his [CPP founder Jose Maria "Joma"

Sison's] threat to oust PRRD and the continuing attacks, extortions and burning of construction equipment I personally don't see any chance of resumption of talks in the near future. I have consistently said that Sison and his people should also show some sincerity," he said in a message to reporters Sunday.

Lorenzana described Sison's call to oust

Duterte "hollow" and said the CPP-NPA was losing to the government's anti-insurgency campaign.

"His previous call of prioritizing the ouster of PRRD is a hollow one knowing fully how popular the President remains. But he has to make it ostensibly to rally his fighters," Lorenzana said. PNA

STOPPING ATTACKS

MILF OFFERS TO SECURE COTABATO

DAVAO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on Monday offered to secure Cotabato in the wake of reports that armed men were planning to attack the city that was rocked by an explosion on New Year's Eve that killed two people and wounded 30 others.

Von Al Haq, spokesperson for the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), the MILF's armed wing, made the offer as he appealed for calm amid social media reports that gunmen would sow chaos in Cotabato City.

He called the reports "fake news," saying these were spread by people hired by a group opposing the inclusion of Cotabato City in the new Bangsamoro region that would be created after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

"The MILF's BIAF is ready to provide even a battalion of fighters to help secure the peripheries of Cotabato City should the proper government agencies request for augmentation," he told the Inquirer by telephone.

Request

Al Haq was referring to either the military or the police, which, he said, could make the request through the coordinating committee on the cessation of hostilities, one of the mechanisms in the peace process between the MILF and the government.

During the Marawi siege in 2017, the MILF ordered its troops to stand guard in the peripheries against terrorists escaping from the city, he said.

For the plebiscite to ratify the BOL, the MILF wants peace and order to reign during the exercise, particularly in Cotabato City that has been serving as seat of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) for the last 28 years, Al Haq said.

The BOL, which is anchored on the final peace agreement between the government and the MILF that was signed in 2014, seeks to establish the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to replace the ARMM.

The Commission on Elections has scheduled the plebiscite on Jan. 21 and Feb. 6.

Cotabato twice rejected its inclusion in the ARMM, and its mayor, Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi, had said the city "would do the same in the upcoming plebiscite." —BONG SARMIENTO INQ

Sulu rallies behind Duterte's federalism

BY AL JACINTO

SULU: Thousands of Muslims rallied here on Monday to express their support for the proposed establishment of a federal government that the Duterte administration is espousing.

Sulu Gov. Jolo Tan and his father, Sakur Tan, both staunch allies of President Rodrigo Duterte in the south, led the rally in downtown Jolo, the provincial capital.

Members of the pro-Duterte group called *Kilusang Pagbabago* (Movement for Change) and the municipal mayors also joined

the rally where speakers discussed in detail the proposed form of government.

Villagers from different towns marched as early as 6 a.m. and trooped to the Jolo municipal grounds to listen to what advocates of federalism had to say about the importance of this form

of government to the people of Sulu, one of five provinces under the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

"We are here to enlighten our Tausug people about President Duterte's proposed federal government. The Tausug people are for federalism and their trust in the President remains very strong. We are all for federalism, we are behind the President," said the Tan patriarch, who is again running for governor in Sulu.

Wedzmar Abdurajak, executive assistant of presidential daughter and Davao Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio, also spoke during the rally


and thanked the organizers and huge crowd for their support.

Muslims in the region are to vote on January 21 and February 6 for the ratification of the controversial Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) which, if approved, would replace ARMM with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The governor of Sulu filed a petition with the Supreme Court last year, questioning the legality and constitutionality of the BOL. Constitutional framers also asked the high court to reject the BOL, saying the law violates the Charter. A7

Zambo siege, a Noy blunder

By Perseus Echaminada

 CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY — The Zamboanga City siege that lasted for 18 days in September 2013 could have been prevented had President Benigno Aquino III pursued talks for the final implementation of

Turn to page 2

Zambo siege, a Noy blunder

In March 2013, the government and MNLF peace panels were in the final stage in resolving the remaining contentious issues in the agreement when the government panel issued a notice terminating the peace talks

From page 1

the 1996 peace accord with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), an MNLF official said yesterday.

A total of 38 people consisting of 20 soldiers, five policemen and 13 civilians were killed during the siege.

The battle between state forces and MNLF rebels also displaced 100,000 city residents.

Emmanuel Fontanilla, MNLF spokesman, in an interview with *Daily Tribune*, said in March 2013 the government and MNLF peace panels were in the final stage of resolving the remaining contentious issues in the agreement when the government panel issued a notice terminating the peace talks.

"After the government panel walked out from the negotiating table, the MNLF had no option but to pursue its original political objective, which is declaring the independence of the Bangsa Moro Republik (BMR)," he said.

The MNLF has declared Davao the capital of BMR in its petition with the United Nations (UN), which recognizes the granting of independence to all colonized countries, Fontanilla added.

During the proclamation of independence in July 2013, MNLF founding chairman Nur Misuari declared Mindanao, Palawan, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan,

including the Malaysian island of Sabah and Sarawak, as part of the BMR territory.

Noynoy plays general

After hoisting its flag in Davao City, the next stop would have been Zamboanga City, but government forces thwarted the MNLF mission after it intercepted a pump boat loaded with 30 MNLF guerillas. The battle ensued afterwards.

"After terminating the peace talks, Aquino then ordered an all-out war against the MNLF in Zamboanga city using military air, land and sea assets," he said.

At the height of the fighting, Aquino was sighted in full combat gear as if leading the troops in the operation.

According to an MNLF source, Aquino also set up a "war room" where he personally directed troop movements using a computer.

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

Nur gives way

The OIC has granted the MNLF a permanent observer status during plenary sessions and also recognized Misuari as the sole representative of

Muslim Mindanao.

Misuari, however, ordered the shelving of MNLF's independence petition to pave the move by President Duterte for the shift of the form of government from a unitary to a federal set up, which the secessionist group fully supports.

After the government panel walked out from the negotiating table, the MNLF has no option but to declare the independence of the Bangsa Moro Republik.

"No more political activities related to the independence and the petition to the UN happened," Fontanilla said.

He added the MNLF peace panel is again ready for the resumption of the stalled peace talk for the full implementation of the 1996 peace agreement abandoned by Aquino.

Fontanilla said they are waiting to be notified by the Office of the Presidential Peace Adviser for the resumption of the discussions.

Earlier, President Duterte announced his willingness for a new round of talks with Misuari to prevent the "dismemberment" of the country.

Hopes high

"With the appointment of retired general Carlito Galvez as the new peace adviser, we are optimistic that the MNLF and government panels will soon return to the negotiating table," he said.

Plebiscite preparations ongoing despite SC petitions vs BOL

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

Unperturbed by the two petitions filed in the Supreme Court (SC) against the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the Commission on Elections (Comelec) is not about to slow down in its preparations for the plebiscite on Jan. 21 and Feb. 6.

In an interview, Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said they cannot allow themselves to be sidetracked.

"We are not bothered by these petitions. If the SC issues a temporary restraining order (TRO), only then will we stop what we are doing," Jimenez added.

The Comelec official said they do not want to be "caught flat-footed" if they stopped the preparations and no TRO is issued by the SC.

"Remember, the challenges are not directed versus Comelec but the law itself. If ever the Comelec is going to be a party, it's just incidental because we are the one that enforces it," he maintained.

Muslim accountants back BOL

Meanwhile, a national organization of Muslim accountants yesterday asked the SC to uphold the legality of the BOL.

In a 51-page answer-in-intervention, the Philippine Association of Islamic Accountants (PAIA) supported the solicitor general in defending the constitutionality of the BOL and asked the SC to dismiss the petitions filed by the Sulu provincial government led by Gov. Abdusakur Tan II and the Philippine Constitutional Association.

Joined by Commissioner Manuelito Luna of the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission, PAIA led by its president Amanoding Esmail argued that the BOL or Republic Act 11054 does not violate Article 10, Section 18 of the 1987 Constitution, which authorized only one organic law to establish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The group stressed that the Constitution allows Congress to repeal and amend the ARMM.

"It is our submission that autonomy in the Constitution is a juridical entity and it may undergo metamorphosis into its better form by congressional legislation in

the name of general welfare or the welfare of the Bangsamoro," read the pleading.

"No doubt, the autonomy provisions in the Constitution constitute the legal formulation of the resolution of the Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination, which is an issue of social justice that is rooted in their marginalization by the majority population of the country for centuries. Against this social backdrop, there cannot be any one masterstroke to span the social gap and mend the relationship," it pointed out.

Fight vs insurgency, terrorism

For its part, the military will work with Filipino Muslim communities in the effort to end the country's insurgency problem and the threat posed by terror groups.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Lt. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., speaking at his first flag-raising ceremony in Camp Agumaldo yesterday, called on his fellow officials and soldiers to strive for excellence.

Madrigal added that the AFP will "fully support the conduct of the plebiscite" for the BOL and gave assurance the Bangsamoro people's exercise of their right to vote would be safeguarded.

"We also need to eradicate the existence of terrorist cells through our initiative on preventing and countering violent extremism with the support of concerned agencies and the Muslim community," Madrigal said.

The new AFP chief, who assumed the post last month, laid out his intentions for the year, stressing the need to enhance professionalism and character development alongside achieving operational goals.

"To reach higher levels of success, it is imperative that we possess a deeper sense of dedication, teamwork, professional competence and commitment to excellence," he said.

Madrigal reminded his fellow officials, officers and soldiers of the AFP's goal of putting an end to the armed conflict and the terror threat in the country.

"We will carry on and push our strong will to score a complete victory and finally put an end to local communist armed conflict. We will focus on capacitating

ourselves in peace constituency-building, stakeholder leadership, community dialogue and nation-building," he said.

Madrigal emphasized that the AFP must always be reminded of the trust of the people that solidifies the military's legitimacy and

credibility as their protector.

- With Edu Punay, Michael Punongbayan,
Ramil Bajo, Roel Pareño, Jose Rodel Clapano

Dureza confident BOL will become a reality

By ANTONIO L. COLINA IV

DAVAO CITY – Former Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process (PAPP) secretary Jesus Dureza expressed confidence that the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARM) will become a reality, saying that the fruits of the 50-year Moro struggle, that was marked by loss of lives, human sufferings, and agony, will soon “ripen for everyone to harvest.”

“I am not a Moro but I am a Bangsamoro. I grew up from childhood and lived in the Moro homeland of Mindanao. I know the BOL (Bangsamoro Organic Law) will be a reality. No doubt about it,” he said in a statement on Monday.

Dureza, who resigned as PAPP secretary in November 2018 following the corruption controversies involving some of his executives, said the ratification of the BOL would not deliver “magical instant results” but nevertheless called on the people to help nurture, tend, and nourish it one step at a time until it becomes sustainable.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has scheduled two separate dates for the plebiscite of OLBARM. The January 21 will be for the voters in

the six provinces and two cities in the ARMM as well as Cotabato City and Isabela City in Basilan while and February 6 for the province of Lanao del Norte, except Iligan City, the municipalities of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit, and Pigkawayan in the province of North Cotabato; and all other areas that asked for inclusion in the future BARM.

Dureza said he was also optimistic that Cotabato City and Isabela City of Basilan, situated at the heart of the ARMM but which are still not part of core territory, will decide to join the future Bangsamoro government that will replace the present ARMM when it gets ratified.

He urged the people to give the OLBARM the last chance to work as the best step to take despite the trauma suffered and the lingering doubts of the people.

He also said that the social healing and acceptance are starting points for cohesion.

“It may take time but now is the best time to start. There are still untold benefits to the area that need to be shown. A rejection may worsen the situation with a disabling environment. No one can survive as an island apart from the rest,” he said.

Despite the perceived objection of the province of Sulu to OLBARM for the moment, Dureza said it should not be a cause for concern, as he believed the people of the province will see the light and give the law a chance to prevent engendering animosity, enmity and inevitably distance and dissatisfaction stemming from a “no vote.”

“We understand why there are discordant voices and they are not without reason. But since there is no way to ‘opt out’ of the original ARMM in spite of the ‘No’ in Sulu province, the result will be of no moment. Sulu will be part of the new BARM, notwithstanding,” he said.

“If things do not happen as expected, it’s not the end of the world. We still have President Duterte whose remaining years in office will enable him to surely align matters, in his own bold — at times, unconventional ways. Truth to tell, were it not for him, this rare chance would not have come to pass,” he added.

He said the people should trust Duterte as the OLBARM is “his baby” and that he will not allow this to be a wasted legacy.

If all else fails, Dureza said the OLBARM can still be amended or changed to suit the prevailing situations and crimes.

Muslim accountants ask SC to dismiss case against BOL

By REY G. PANALIGAN

A group of Muslim accountants and several individuals have joined the government in asking the Supreme Court (SC) to dismiss the petition against the constitutionality of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) or Republic Act No. 11054.

In their pleading, the Philippine Association of Islamic Accountants (PAIA) told the SC that the Constitution allows Congress to amend, revise, or strengthen the law that created the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The group, in effect, joined the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), the government's law firm, which sought the dismissal of the petition filed by the Sulu provincial government through Gov. Abdusakin Tan II.

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

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

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has set the plebiscite for the BOL on January 21.

The PAIA said the BOL did not violate the constitutional principle of separation of powers in the government.

"In the traditional structure of power in political democracy, separation of power is apportioned between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary, with the Executive executing the law and seeing to it that the law is faithfully enforced or complied with, the Legislature making the law and defining state policies, and the Judiciary interpreting the law. This political rule underwrites the principle of check and balance. And the BOL provides for this political arrangement," it said.

Earlier, the OSG - in its comment to Tan's petition - told the SC that RA 11054 does not violate Sections 18 and 19, Article X of the Constitution that mandates only one organic act to establish the ARMM.

It said that RA 11054 which created the BAR was not exactly a creation of a new autonomous region as described in the Constitution, but rather an amendment of the organic act and an expansion of the territorial jurisdiction of ARMM.

Dismiss petition vs. BOL—'Minda' group

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Supreme Court has been asked to dismiss the petition filed by Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan II seeking to declare as unconstitutional Republic Act No. 11054, also known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

In a 51-page answer-in-intervention, the Philippine Association of Islamic Accountants, Inc. led by Amanoding Esmail argued that the BOL is far better than the present Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Refuting the arguments of the petitioner, the PAIA said that Section 18 and 19, Article X of the Constitution do not prevent Congress from passing legislations establishing or strengthening or even abolishing the ARMM and creating a new one.

The petitioner earlier claimed that the BOL violates the 1987 Constitution, particularly Sections 18 and 19, which created the ARMM.

PAIA insisted that there was no legal basis to abolish the ARMM and that if the government wants to do it, it can only be done through amending the Constitution.

The group emphasized that Section 19 can be construed as a mere directive for the first Congress elected under the 1987 Constitution to pass the organic acts for the autonomous regions in Mindanao and the Cordilleras within 18 months from the time of its organization while Section 18 relates to the process of such organic acts.

"Petitioner overreached in opining that the constitutional provisions delimit the legislative power of Congress; it is reading something into the provisions," the group said.

The PAIA also accused Tan of "over-reading" the law in saying that the BOL violates the constitutional principle of separation of power and check and balance.

"In the traditional structure of power in political democracy, separation of power is apportioned between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary, with the Executive executing the law and seeing to it that the law is faithfully enforced or complied with, the Legislature making the law and defining state policies, and the Judiciary interpreting the law. This political rule underwrites the principle of check and balance. And the BOL provides for this political arrangement," the group argued.

LORENZANA ASSURES Peaceful BOL plebiscite

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the Executive Branch will respect the sovereign voice



By Mario J. Mallari and Kristina Maralit

The New Year's Eve bombing in Cotabato City was a "peace spoiler" but the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday committed to a peaceful ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and vowed to honor whatever is the result of the polls.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana relayed the MILF commitment as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) reaches its height of preparations to ensure the orderly and smooth holding of the 21 January plebiscite in areas under the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the cities of Isabela and Cotabato City, where a recent blast had killed two and injured

a score of others.

"The MILF leadership pledged to have a peaceful plebiscite and will honor the result," Lorenzana said.

The MILF is pushing for the ratification of BOL — a result of its decades-long peace negotiations with government which was signed into law by President Duterte last year. Once ratified, it will allow Bangsamoro more autonomy.

Lorenzana stressed that only members of the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) will carry firearms upon approval of the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

The MILF leadership pledged to have a peaceful plebiscite and will honor the result.

Government security forces are on alert against the so-called "peace spoilers" who want to disrupt peace in Mindanao.

Cotabato City Mayor Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi claimed that an MILF commander had issued a threat prior

to the explosion in a Cotabato City shopping mall. Cotabato City is said to be against the BOL.

"The AFP and the PNP commanders are closely coordinating. It will be determined by them if there is need for additional troops. We are all upbeat that the plebiscite will be conducted peacefully and that the people will be able to vote according their choice," Lorenzana said.

Meanwhile, AFP Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal assured the people that the military and police will do their best in ensuring a peaceful and orderly plebiscite.

"We just want to check on the apprehension of the constituents. The Armed Forces and the PNP want to assure our people that we are doing everything to ensure that we are able to conduct the plebiscite peacefully and orderly," Madrigal said.

Malacañang, meanwhile, maintained it is leaving the BOL's fate at the hands of the people.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Executive Branch will "respect the sovereign voice."

"Of course, the Palace is pushing for the ratification. However, as always, the people will have to decide on that.

In those areas affected, the decision is up to them. We will have to respect the sovereign voice," he said.

Lorenzana stressed that only members of the APP and the PNP will carry firearms upon approval of the Comelec.

Panelo also stated they would let the Supreme Court (SC) decide on the constitutionality BOL following a petition by Philippine Constitution Association (Philconsa) slamming the creation of two autonomous regions in Mindanao.

"We'd rather not say anything about it because it's *sub judice*. We'll let the Supreme Court decide," the spokesman reiterated.

In its petition before the SC, Philconsa argued that the BOL violates Sections 18 and 19 of Article 10 of the 1987 Constitution which allows the enactment of only one organic act for Muslim Mindanao.

Under the BOL, the same ARMM provinces will still comprise the new region while Cotabato City, Isabela City, six Lanao del Norte towns and 39 North Cotabato provinces may opt to be included.

Solicitor General Jose Calida has already filed a counter move asking the SC to junk Philconsa's petition.

SC asked to uphold Bangsamoro law

THE Supreme Court has been asked by a national organization of Muslims to uphold the legality of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

In a 51-page answer-in-intervention, the Philippine Association of Islamic Accountants (PAIA) supported the Office of the Solicitor General in defending the constitutionality of the BOL and asked the SC to dismiss the petitions filed by the Sulu provincial government

led by Gov. Abdusakur Tan II.

Joined by Commissioner Manuelito Luna of the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC), PAIA led by its president Amanoding I-smail argued that the BOL or Republic Act 11054 does not violate section 18, Article X of the 1987 Constitution, which authorized only one Organic Act to establish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The group stressed that the Constitution allows Congress to repeal and amend the ARMM.

"It is our submission that autonomy in the Constitution is a juridical entity and it may undergo metamorphosis into its better form by congressional legislation in the name of general welfare or the welfare of the Bangsamoro," read the pleading.

"No doubt, the autonomy provisions in the Con-

stitution constitute the legal formulation of the resolution of the Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination, which is an issue of social justice that is rooted in their marginalisation by the majority population of the country for centuries. Against this social backdrop, there cannot be any one masterstroke to span the social gap and mend the relationship," it pointed out.

PAIA also rebutted the

argument of petitioners that the BOL violated the constitutional principle of separation of power and check and balance by creating a parliamentary form of government in the form of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

"There is no definitive provision in the Constitution that says that the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao should not be parliamentary," the group explained.

Hector Lawas

Editorial

Batocabe murder closure demands political culture reform

EVEN though there is more to do and resolve in the investigation of the murder of AKO BICOL Party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe, there is already plenty to commend in the police investigative work done on the case. Also commendable is the firm leadership of the Philippine National Police (PNP) by Gen. Oscar Albayalde and his team of officers.

It is thrilling for us to say this, given the roller-coaster story and the sometimes tragic, sometimes heroic, and always dangerous image projected by the force during the past two-and-a-half years.

With respect to the Batocabe murder, the following must certainly be said:

First, the PNP was able to quickly find, neutralize and arrest the six suspects in the killing.

Second, responsibility for the murder has been established because the arrested suspects have all implicated Daraga Mayor Carlwyn Baldo as the mastermind or the brains behind the killing.

Third, the PNP has filed double murder charges against Baldo and the six suspects. The PNP chief and other police officials believe they have an airtight case against Baldo and the other suspects. They are fully convinced that they can convict the accused, if the case goes to trial.

The major blemish of the case at this stage is that Mayor Baldo remains at large, and has so far successfully eluded arrest. All efforts should turn now toward arresting him.

The PNP should be ever aware that the country has a sorry history in catching accused individuals who run from the law, become fugitives and who even subsequently get elected to office. Lapses in law enforcement in the past, for whatever reason, should never be used as an excuse for failure. On the contrary, they should impel resolve to not let Baldo get away.

We believe extra effort must likewise be taken to reconstruct the full story behind this appalling case. The nation needs credible answers to a host of questions.

1) Why was Congressman Batocabe really murdered? It's too simple and superficial to say that the killing was politically motivated. "Politically motivated" is not an acceptable explanation; it sounds more like a cover for something.

2) Far more useful is to find the back story behind this killing. Were Batocabe and Baldo political allies or rivals? Did they support each other in past elections? Was there a break of an alliance of friendship? Was there enmity between these two politicians?

3) Since Batocabe is a native son of Daraga and a congressman, it is not possible that the two had no official or personal dealings or relationship with each other.

The extreme recourse to murder for hire by a sitting public official suggests a serious psychological reason behind the killing.

4) It has been reported that Baldo had some NPA fighters in his employ. How were these people employed, and for what purposes? Is the NPA involved in the Batocabe killing or in any of Baldo's activities?

5) Is Baldo the ally of other Albay politicians and public officials? Who are these officials? Did Baldo and the Daraga local government partake of the pork barrel or pork projects of Albay congressmen and Bicol senators, Batocabe included?

We raise these questions because they are all material for comprehending and resolving this case.

We raise them to help the PNP and its investigators resolve the case to public satisfaction, and certainly not to instruct our one and only national police.

There are also lessons here for our political leaders and political parties.

Reform of our politics is clearly just as important as police work in bringing closure to the Batocabe murder.

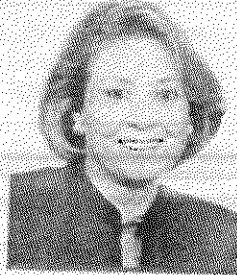
A constitutional question

“What then is the use of a barangay in Cotabato voting against joining the BAR if the municipality vote approves of being part of the BAR?”

The way the ballots for the approval or rejection of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) have been worded, which clearly favors the approval of the law, is clearly intended to ensure the inclusion of Cotabato that traditionally has rejected its addition in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and, especially now, for it to be a part of the new Bangsamoro government.

Cotabato and its environs may have no choice but be forced into becoming part of the Bangsamoro government.

The plebiscite that is slated in a few weeks' time and later followed by yet another plebiscite the following month, apparently has made certain that the vote for Cotabato and supposedly Basilan to become part of the Bangsamoro



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cacho-Olivares

ARMM would be in the majority, obviously its vote will be useless.

In an earlier move for the inclusion of Cotabato joining the ARMM, the questions focused on each city or municipality on a 12 percent vote. Cotabato has always been out of the ARMM precisely because its residents, most of whom are Christians, didn't want to be under

a Muslim government, especially one run by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels, who eventually will demand independence.

What is really weird about the way the second plebiscite is worded is that, according to Jimenez, barangay residents will be voting on the issue of being part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) but, at the same time, the vote that will count would be on the municipal level.

What then is the use of a barangay

Cotabato
voting against joining
the BAR if the municipality vote
approves of being part of the BAR,
especially as the winning vote is based
on a majority vote?

A municipality can



encompass a lot of barangays.
How can a municipality be a part
of the BAR that would exclude some
barangays, which had thumb'd down
being part of the BAR? Barangays can
be located near the next village and
the next.

Then, too, why should there even be
another vote for the second plebiscite if
and when the first plebiscite that seeks
a vote on whether the voters approve
or reject the BOL would probably be
getting the majority vote, considering
the fact that there are enough "Yes"
votes. Why then have another plebiscite
whose answers may complicate the
issue?

But a very important point in
all these plebiscites seems to be
a total lack of information on just
what the BOL encompasses by way
of its form of government. Will a

Bangsamoro government have a
parliamentary system even under a
presidential system of government?
Just what powers can this Bangsamoro
autonomous region have?

Even more important perhaps is a
bigger problem facing the formation
of the BAR through mere legislation
and approval of the BOL when no law
is empowered to amend any proviso
of the Constitution, except through a
constitutional amendment.

At this
time, the
Constitution
has provided
for only two
autonomous
regions - that of
the ARMM and
the Cordillera
Autonomous
Region. This
constitutional
proviso was
approved by
the Filipino
electorate when
they voted to

**“ If the
entire Filipino
electorate
voted for the
creation of the
ARMM... why
should merely
a group of
voters from
the region
suddenly be the
only eligible
voters? ”**

ratify the 1987 Charter.

Obviously, the existing
constitutional ARMM cannot be
replaced by a BAR through a mere
law, even if the majority vote in the
coming plebiscite in some parts of
the Mindanao area is a "Yes" vote.

A "Yes" vote will also mean
a challenge before the Supreme
Court on the constitutionality of the
BAR's creation, as this may become
a precedent, which may mean that
Congress will now have the dangerous
power to amend through a mere law
any proviso of the Constitution without
the need of constitutional amendment.

In the same vein, it should be
questioned before the High Court
why the issue of the BAR vote is
being limited to ARMM voters, as
well as voters of Cotabato and other
areas of Mindanao,

when the 1987
Constitution that sought the creation
of the ARMM and the autonomous
region of the Cordilleras was voted
upon and ratified by the entire Filipino
electorate, yet the ARMM's abolition
and its replacement by the BAR is
to be voted on solely by a group of
voters from the said region, including
Cotabato.

If the entire Filipino electorate voted
for the creation of the ARMM under the
1987 Charter, why should merely a group
of voters from the region suddenly be
the only eligible voters when the issue
concerns the entire Filipino nation and
its electorate? 4

The BAR is not just the concern of
the MILF. It is also the nation's concern
and it should be the entire electorate
who is voting for or against the creation
of the Bangsamoro region and through
the constitutional mode of amending
Charter provisions.

The PH-US Mutual Defense Treaty

IN my last column (Dec.18), I said I believe it is time for the people to stage once again the so-called Million People March of 26 August 2013 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Million_People_March) which resulted in the Supreme Court declaration that pork barrel is illegal.

With the passage of the national budget still hanging fire due to alleged pork barrel insertions, I would like to reiterate that suggestion in the hope that the Supreme Court would endeavor this time to plug the loopholes that our lawmakers (lawbreakers?) are now using to circumvent its ruling.

I also suggested that the best person to make the call for such a rally would be President Rodrigo Roa Duterte aka Digong, himself, given his anti-corruption campaign.

Will he do it? I hope so.

PH-US 1951 MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY

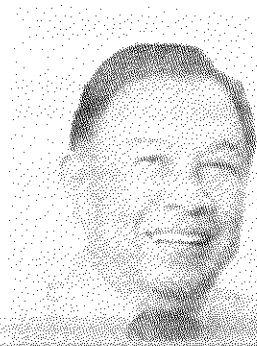
Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana recently said it is time to review the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) between the Philippines and the US.

He stressed that the ultimate goal of the review is to either "maintain, strengthen or scrap it."

That's great news.

I assume Lorenzana had the go signal of President Digong to have the treaty reviewed. I have long been voicing in this space support for Digong's promise to get rid of foreign troops on our soil. Such a review could conceivably result in the fulfillment of his promise.

If I may be so bold as to suggest, however, a review of the Visiting



CROSSHAIRS

REY O. ARCILLA

'A review of the treaty could conceivably result in the fulfillment of President Digong's promise to rid the country of foreign troops which will definitely be his greatest legacy.'

Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) should also be undertaken simultaneously because they are inextricably linked to the treaty.

In this regard, I also wish to reiterate my previous proposal for the creation of a committee to review and reassess the whole gamut of PH-US relations in the context of present day realities with a view to making recommendations that would be consistent with Digong's vision of what those relations ought to be.

Interestingly, an opposition stalwart, Cong. Gary Alejano, supported the call for a review of the MDT.

Curiously, however, Foreign Secretary Teodoro "Tweeter" Locsin, Jr., has not tweeted or issued a statement on the review. Is he for or against such a review? I suspect it is the latter.

Just before Christmas, he was

reported to have met with US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in Washington.

A press statement issued by the US Department of State said "the two Secretaries discussed ongoing efforts to address regional issues such as the South China Sea, North Korea, and counterterrorism."

Did they now? Certainly, it couldn't possibly have been an in-depth discussion of the issues mentioned. Just like all his predecessors, I think Locsin merely paid obeisance to his counterpart, period.

LOCSIN AND THE CANADIAN WASTE

The South Korean government has agreed to take back 6,500 tons of garbage and hazardous waste imported into the Philippines in keeping with its contractual obligation under the Basel Convention that govern the movement of hazardous wastes between nations.

In contrast, the Canadian wastes that were brought into the country some five years ago continue to rot at the Bureau of Customs.

What is our government doing to return the wastes to Canada? And the freaking Canadian government? Two years ago, its Prime Minister, Justin "Trashy" Trudeau, promised to implement what he pompously called the "Trudeau Solution." (This Trudeau appears to be prone to reneging on his commitments. Remember how he also reneged on selling 16 helicopters to us?)

Sources say that a working group has been established to consider a number of legal and technical issues before a decision could be taken on the matter.

Say what?! What's the difference between the South Korean and Canadian wastes?

I think this is one instance where the DFA head, "Tweeter" Locsin, could start making appropriate noises by tweeting the Canadians to take back their wastes instead of dipping his middle finger in issues that do not concern his department.

For instance, he tweeted on the bullying incident involving an Ateneo high school student. He said the bully should be beaten senseless. He further said that the parents of the bullied should take the law in their own hands.

Some reactions culled from a local daily to his tweet:

reydomingo:
payong pagago ni locsin...
runuruan mo maging kriminal
mga magulang... hays... edukado

See THE > Page B5

THE

ba itong si locsin?

mang_empoy:

These are the words of an "educated" man? A (foreign) diplomat at that?

Habiyas Corpuz:

What is happening to Teddy-boy...he tells Ateneo what to do... he tells the taekwondo group on what to do... This man used to have brains.

Elijah Blue:

Had always figured this guy for a brat in search of a mother figure to revere. Beware, Mr Locsin. Just because you can get away with your worst instincts now, it does not make you right. It's time for you to finally learn to put checks on yourself.

disqus_big_weiner:

Seriously Locsin??? And you are an international representative of the Philippines! The bully obviously deserves punishment. The parents of the bully are as

equally guilty or maybe even more. The victim will be traumatized and deserves the outpouring of support and professional help. But never ever be an instigator of violence especially against a minor! You are obviously losing whatever decency you have as you age Teddy Boy! Let Ateneo's investigation run its course.

DIGONG'S TAKE ON SMARTMATIC

The mid-term elections are barely four months away. But aside from exhorting politicians to "let people vote freely" and calling on the Armed Forces and police not to meddle in the elections, Digong has not pronounced himself on the clamor of the people to get rid of Smartmatic.

What is his position on it?

REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administration of some of its yet unfulfilled promises and matters that need attention and/or follow-up action.

More importantly, the people are entitled to know what's being done about them.

1. Digong's promise to rid the country of foreign troops. This, of course, necessitates abrogating the lopsided and constitutionally infirm VFA and the EDCA.

2. Reciprocal visa arrangements with the US and other countries. (What is the DFA doing about this? Our embassy in Washington?)

3. The return of the Canadian waste. I think it is incumbent upon the DFA to issue a statement on the status of this matter.

Today is the 255th day of the twelfth year of the enforced disappearance of Jonas Burgos, son of the late press icon and founder of this newspaper, Joe Burgos.

After the acquittal of Major Harry Baliaga, Jr., the only person formally charged with Jonas' kidnapping, I guess what happens next is now up to Divine Providence.

From an internet friend:

A Nazi walks into a bar, looks

around, and notices an older orthodox Jewish man seated at a nearby table. "Barman," he says, "a round on me, for all your patrons, but not for the old Jewish geezer right there."

As everyone in the bar receives their drinks, he looks directly at the Jew with a nasty little smile.

Surprisingly, the Jew nods his head and sends a warm smile back.

The Nazi is somewhat miffed, as this was not the reaction he expected. So he goes back to the bar.

"Barman, a second round for everyone but him, and this time take it all from the top shelf."

The Nazi looks again at the Jew and notices that he is STILL smiling back, and even warmer than before.

"Is that Jew a complete fool or what?" he asks the barman.

The bartender responds: "Oh no, my generous friend, that gentleman is my boss and the owner of the bar."

<https://www.facebook.com/reynaldo.arcilla.9847>

ISIS fanatics and Joma's followers



POINT OF
IMPACT
ERWIN
TULFO

THE plot thickens.

Islamic State movement-inspired terrorists prey on "soft targets" like the bombing of a shopping mall in the advent of the New Year in Cotabato City.

On the other hand, the communist New People's Army is set to "intensify" its attacks against the Armed Forces of the Philippines with the ultimate goal of overthrowing the government.

Ousting President Duterte is the overarching priority of the communists this year, based on the assertions of self-exiled Jose Ma. Sison.

So, while the ISIS followers, particularly the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and Maute Group, target defenseless innocent civilians, the CPP-NPA have a bigger ambition—to "eliminate" the President.

The Sison-inspired plot against Manong Digong is based on the prem-

ise that the President, who continues to be as popular as ever and serves as the "nation's unifying force," needs to be exterminated if the moribund communist movement hopes to survive at all.

The communist umbrella organization, National Democratic Front, is tasked to oust President Duterte this year, Sison announced Thursday.

Isn't it terrifying just imagining whom Sison wants to replace Manong Digong with?

Whichever way the terrorists desperately wish to achieve their goal of wresting power from the government, the people stand to suffer in the process.

There is not a tinge of difference between the rabid ISIS fanatics and Sison's communist followers.

Their tactics may vary a little bit but both have little respect for the innocent human life and Filipinos' aspirations for better life.

I'm not going to lose any sleep over any plot to exterminate the President, though.

It's simply unfathomable. Such thought is a product of hallucination. The people are certainly not going to allow that to happen!

Send in the clowns



FORMATION
GARY
OLIVAR

THE big news last week was the local stock market roaring into the new year with an unprecedented upsurge that beat out almost all other markets globally.

The PSEI gained by about four points over three straight days of upticks to Friday, making it the world's second-best performing index according to Bloomberg. BDO's chief market strategist Jonathan Ravelas expects the market to test the 8,000 level sometime the first half of the year, and "sooner rather than later."

Various reasons prompted this market optimism: better-than-expected GDP growth last quarter, double-digit improvement in corporate earnings last year, even spillover effects from the start of campaign-related spending.

But the biggest story of course was

"Some show of humility would be nice—but don't hold your breath"

cooling inflation, with December inflation of 5.1 percent the weakest since May. This in turn relieves pressure on the central bank to continue raising interest rates and putting the brakes on economic growth.

The boys at the Department of Finance had been saying all along that the inflation spike last year would only be temporary—the product of one-off effects from excise tax hikes that would eventually be offset by higher disposable incomes after income tax rate cuts start to kick in.

What also happened—also as predicted—was the successful management

of rice prices and supply—with the implementation of further rice import liberalization and tariffication—as well as the moderation of global oil prices, which will now allow government to again raise oil excise taxes as scheduled this year.

All of this prompts me to ask: Where are all those inflation hawks now? What happened to all those doomsayers who were roundly blaming last year's inflation spike on the Duterte administration and its aggressive pursuit of tax reform and infrastructure spending?

Some show of humility would be nice—but don't hold your breath waiting for it.

Going into the first full week of the new year, it's sadly apparent that the same clowns will continue to ride high and hog the local headlines.

For starters, I nearly fell off my seat after coming across an online statement from the teachers group, Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), comparing recent police visits to campuses as

HC

Turn to A5

Send...

From A4

"tokhang in schools".

The group called these visits "grossly illegal" and "an unconstitutional attack" on their rights to free expression, organization, and privacy. They contend that "the PNP has no business meddling in the affairs of teachers organizations" and shouldn't be allowed to just "step in and out of our schools."

Well. It's my first time to hear that our schools—all of them—are automatically exempt from the purview of law enforcement. I had always thought that this conceit was limited to the ivory-tower types in UP who like to style themselves the "Diliman republic." Unfortunately, it

looks like conceit is also infectious.

This kind of loony thinking would simply be laughable, were it not for the fact that ACT is a well-known affiliate of the National Democratic Front, whose job it is to give political and media cover to the violent NPA and the communist CPP. And so it's evident that this statement from ACT is simply intended to allow them to continue to provide such cover, hiding under the glossy garb of "academic freedom."

We can only expect the Left to spew out more of these rhetorical affronts to common sense, as government continues to cast its net wide to dredge up the armed and unarmed rebels who like to claim that they're fish swimming in the waters of people's revolution.

Unfortunately, clowns can be found anywhere in the political spectrum, not just to the Left.

Over on the Right, we're faced with the loony proposal from Presidential Adviser on Economic Affairs and ICT, the redoubtable Ramon Jacinto, to allow only two companies to construct the additional cell-site towers needed by our grossly underserved telecoms industry and consumers.

A whopping 113 million cellular subscribers are serviced by only 16,300 towers from the telco duopoly, Globe and PLDT. Our tower density score of only 0.14 is the lowest in Asia, well behind the 1.43 of market leader China. We need to build at least another 50,000 towers just to match the norms for the region.

So shouldn't we open the field to anyone and everyone who can bring in the money

and technology to fill that gap? The more the merrier, right? But this straightforward logic totally escapes Mr. RJ, who can only mumble that the two dominant telcos can still build a needed tower if the tower company fails to respond positively within 30 days.

What in God's name does that have to do with anything?

Luckily for us, the acting DICT Secretary Eliseo Rio—a former general whom I was lucky to recruit into the board of Bayantel during my stint there—is standing his ground on plain common sense. And I have no reason to doubt that his reported successor, outgoing Senator Greg Honasan, will behave any less reasonably.

Mexico City—We're on a quick break here from the still-chilly LA weather

to check off another bucket-list item of ours—venerating Our Lady of Guadalupe at the minor basilica built in her honor.

She's one of only three Marian apparitions fully approved by the Church, together with Lourdes and Fatima. Because of her intercession into history, some 10 Million pagans in the Americas were brought into the faith, earning her a rightful place as patroness of the Americas (including the US) as well as our own country.

After this weekend, we look forward to being back home in the blissfully warm climes of the motherland. What could be a better way to start off the new year than that?

Readers can write me at gbohivar1952@yahoo.com.

EDITORIAL**Environmental laws**

WITHOUT doubt, there are positive developments that make the Filipino people look forward to 2019 with more optimism in protecting and preserving the environment.

In fact, the government is sending a strong message to the public that it is serious in implementing and enforcing environmental laws, rules and regulations across the country.

What's needed is for the government to sustain the momentum created by the successful rehabilitation of the once "cesspool" Boracay Island, said DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu.

He said the government is looking forward to duplicating the feat in other top tourist destinations, including El Nido and Puerto Galera in Palawan and Panglao Island in Bohol.

Cimatu, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), described the rehabilitation of Boracay Island as the "centerpiece" of our 2018 accomplishments.

"With the eyes of the world upon us, we set forth to do what cynics thought was impossible: to transform a cesspool back to being one of the world's best beaches and swimming destinations," he said.

Cimatu said the government, through various offices and agencies, did the trick in just six months.

In some parts of this poverty-stricken nation, the inability of certain local government officials to strictly enforce environmental laws, rules and regulations demoralizes people.

Certainly, this is saddening, disgusting and lamentable because there's that urgent need to maintain the beauty and splendor of the country's principal tourist destinations.

Let's remember that our dollar-oriented tourist industry remains as a major pillar of the country's economy.

ONLINE NEWS

08 JANUARY 2019

www.pna.gov.ph

AFP chief to troops: Strive for 'commitment to excellence'

By Priam Nepomuceno

MANILA --- To achieve more success this year, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff, Lt. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal on Monday urged all military and civilian personnel to have "commitment to excellence".

"To reach higher levels of success, it is imperative that we possess a deeper sense of dedication, teamwork, professional competence, and commitment to excellence," he said.

He also reminded the AFP personnel of operational requirements, particularly in putting an end to the armed conflict and the terror threat in the country.

"We will carry on and push our strong will to score a complete victory and finally put an end to local communist armed conflict. We will focus on capacitating ourselves in peace constituency-building, stakeholder leadership, community dialogues, and nation-building," Madrigal said.

He added that the AFP will work with the Muslim community and "fully support the conduct of the plebiscite" and assure the Bangsamoro people's exercise of their right to vote.

"We also need to eradicate the existence of terrorist cells through our initiative on preventing and countering violent extremism with the support of concerned agencies and the Muslim community," the AFP chief said.

"Let us always be reminded of the trust of the Filipino people that solidifies our legitimacy and credibility as the protector of the people and the state. It is our responsibility and our obligation to repay their trust and confidence with genuine, selfless, and professional commitment and dedication to service," he said. (PNA)

