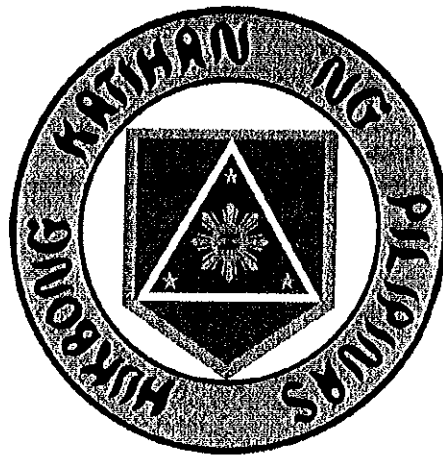


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# **TEAM ARMY**

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**OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

## **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**13 March 2019**

**Wednesday**

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# FARMERS HURTING IN EL NIÑO'S GRIP

STORY BY THE INQUIRER STAFF

**An initial P1.2 billion in crop damage has been reported in nine provinces and three cities in the Visayas and Mindanao even before the dry season is officially declared. Worst hit is Cotabato province.**

**A2**

## FROM A1

**By the Inquirer Staff**  
**@Team Inquirer**

Carabaos and goats reportedly dying. Crops wilting and residents waking up at 2 a.m. to wait for water to flow from their faucets.

These are some of the effects of El Niño gripping a growing number of provinces and cities across the country even before the dry season is officially declared.

An initial P1.2 billion in damage to crops, mostly rice and corn, was reported in nine provinces and three cities in the Visayas and Mindanao, according to dispatches reaching the Inquirer as of Tuesday.

One of the worst hit is Cotabato, which said it had so far sustained P362 million in damage to rice and P269 million in damage to corn.

In Occidental Mindoro, local governments have resorted to digging up riverbeds for water to irrigate farms reeling from the heat.

Some 3,000 hectares of farmland have been affected by the dry spell, Tony Gerundio, Department of Agriculture director in Mimaropa, said on Tuesday.

Gerundio said another 400 hectares of rice and other crops had dried up and were already

"beyond recovery."

### Lower water table

In Pangasinan province, Oftociano Manalo, a director of the Federation of Irrigators' Associations, said his 12.2-meter deep tube well could no longer pump water to his farm because the aquifer had gone deeper.

Manalo said he had to give up his corn farm because of lack of water.

Crop damage in Cotabato climbed to P670.89 million, prompting the disaster body to recommend cloud seeding to save the remaining crops.

Remedios Hernandez, acting provincial agriculturist, said rice and corn fields were devastated due to low rainfall over the past three months.

### Cattle deaths

The provincial veterinary office is verifying reports of carabao and goat deaths because of intense heat.

In Kidapawan City, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council called for the declaration of a state of calamity as crop damage had reached P53 million.

Marisa Aton, acting city agriculturist, said the villages of Patadon, Malinan and Maceboleg had already declared a state of calamity in their jurisdictions.

The dry spell has so far destroyed P185.1 million worth of rice and P6 million worth of

corn in Occidental Mindoro.

Maguindanao incurred losses of P46.8 million for rice and P54 million for corn.

The Zamboanga Peninsula region—mainly Zamboanga del Sur but also Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga City—lost P79.6 million worth of rice and P3 million worth of corn.

Also affected were Davao

ported P23.4 million in damage to high-value commercial crops and to seaweed, affecting more than 1,000 farmers.

In Cauayan town, Negros Occidental, the dry spell damaged P6.1 million worth of crops between January and February, affecting 143 hectares and 253 farmers in seven barangays, according to provincial agriculturist Japhet Masculino.

Masculino said farmers from other localities had stopped planting rice due to the dry spell.

In Iloilo City, Rene B. Pamoso, agriculture field operations division chief for Western Visayas, urged rice farmers to plant drought-resilient crops such as onion and garlic.

In Laguna, provincial agriculturist Marlon Tobias said 11.8 hectares of farmland in Calamba City had dried up.

#### Minimal impact

The Department of Agriculture said El Niño had so far affected 13,679 hectares and destroyed 22,918 tons of crops as of Tuesday.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the impact of the losses on national output was minimal as these accounted for just 1 percent of the agriculture sector.

While farms are drying up in other parts of the country, Zamboanga City is facing a

water shortage.

Of the 62,000 households in the city, more than half were getting water intermittently, said Edgar Banos, information officer of the Zamboanga City Water District.

Gertrudes Macapili, a mother of four and a schoolteacher, said water rationing was making her unproductive.

#### Waking up at 2 a.m.

"I have to wake up at 2 a.m. just to wait for our faucet to start flowing. We could hardly fill a liter of water in three minutes. I have to report to school very late, because we are only given water from 3 a.m. to 10 a.m.," Macapili said.

Macapili noted that the water shortage had been recurring every year "[b]ut every year, it is getting worse," she said.

Primacita Basillo, who has a disability, said water was available only between 3 a.m. and 11 a.m. in Tetuan.

"I am a mother who makes a living selling cooked meals. It's really miserable every day to wake up early just to store water," Basillo said. —REPORTS FROM RONNEL W. DOMINGO IN MANILA; ARMAND GALANG AND GABRIEL CARDINOZA, INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON; MARICAR CINCO, INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON; HAZEL P. VILLA, ADOR VINCENT MAYOL AND CARLA P. GOMEZ, INQUIRER VISAYAS; JULIE ALIPALA, WILLIAMOR MAGBANUA AND LEAH AGONoy, INQUIRER MINDANAO INQ

del Sur (P55 million in lost crops), Cotabato (P30 million) and Misamis Oriental (P7 million).

In Pagadian City, the Sangguniang Panlungsod declared a state of calamity on Tuesday after 40 of its 44 barangays reported P102 million in crop damage.

Other barangays also re-

# Maynilad set to share supply with Manila Water

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

With water rationing implemented in several areas, Maynilad Water Services Inc. has agreed to share its supply with Manila Water to address shortages in parts of Metro Manila and Rizal province.

The Pangilinan-led company said it would supply 50 million liters of water per day to Manila Water starting next month.

"MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System) requested us if we can share water through cross-border flow to ease the problem," Maynilad Water supply operations head Ronald Padua said yesterday.

Manila Water services over six million people in the east zone of Metro Manila. Maynilad is the west zone concessionaire.

Padua said the allotment of 50 million liters is a portion of the 100 million liters per day capacity of Maynilad's newest treatment plant in Muntinlupa.

The volume is expected to benefit up to 50,000 households daily, especially in Quezon City, Parañaque and Taguig.

MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco said they sought Maynilad's help to ease the water crisis.

Manila Water expressed hope that measures on the water sharing would be finalized within the week.

"We will have to look at

Turn to Page 4

technical solutions. We are looking for the optimal where we can have cross-border flow of water," Manila Water chief operating officer Geodino Carpio said.

During the El Niño episodes in 2010 and 2015, Manila Water shared its supply with Maynilad.

Despite the water sharing, Manila Water still warned of below normal supply during the summer.

"La Mesa Dam will not be refilled until the rain comes. And it will take a few weeks to refill even if it starts raining," Carpio said.

The water at the La Mesa Dam reached critical level of 68.85 meters yesterday.

Supply from La Mesa Dam is Manila Water's reserves since it has maximized allocation from Angat Dam at 1,600 million liters per day.

Manila Water has deployed 27 tankers to its concession areas to provide water to consumers.

The company said its customers would have to endure three more months of unstable water supply as service interruptions would continue amid El Niño.

The state weather bureau said the dry spell would last until June.

Velasco said the MWSS was looking at other sources to meet the water needs of the affected residents.

He said they have asked the National Water Resources Board to activate deep wells, which can supply 100 million liters per day to Manila Water.

"Manila Water will also activate its treatment plant in Cardona, Rizal to deliver 50 million liters of water by the end of March," Velasco said.

## Senators call for action

Senators pressed yesterday concerned government agencies for swift action to address water shortage and the effects of El Niño.

Reelectionist Sen. Sonny Angara said the government should roll out an action plan in food-growing areas in the country before the drought unleashes its brunt on farmers, who are also grappling with low prices of rice and coconut.

He also pushed for a "proactive stance" on the part of the government beginning with the designation of an "anti-El Niño czar" who will orchestrate a multiagency response to the dry spell.

"A man-made disaster over a natural disaster is a double whammy that will leave less food on the table for families and less income for farmers," Angara said.

Sen. Grace Poe sought the approval of a bill creating a single agency in charge of sustainable water management and sanitation amid threats of a prolonged dry spell.

Poe earlier filed Senate Bill 1217 or the proposed Water Regulatory Act seeking to rationalize and streamline functions of various state agencies in terms of water regulation in that

the independent body is mandated to set the policy for water supply, sewerage and septage management, issue licenses and set, review or approve rates.

She also urged the Department of Agriculture and other government agencies to activate Task Force El Niño that would identify communities severely affected by drought and water shortages.

In Zamboanga, the agriculture department regional office reported that around P80 million worth of rice and corn was damaged due to drought.

Sen. Nancy Binay hit the conflicting statements of government agencies and private companies on the water shortage in Metro Manila.

"The MWSS and PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration) said there is sufficient supply of water in the Angat Dam. Manila Water claims water is lacking that's why there's shortage. Maynilad is willing to share water with Manila Water, what's the real score?" Binay said.

Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano III urged authorities to regulate the use of water by carwash shops and golf courses in Metro Manila.

"We should control the distribution of water to carwash businesses and golf courses because washing your vehicle or playing golf is a luxury we could forgo. In fact, if the water supply problem worsens, the government could deny giving water to these establishments," he said.

Albano said car owners who need to have their vehicles cleaned and people who have to play golf could do so in nearby provinces where there is ample water.

He said some carwash businesses even have illegal water connections.

Albano called on the government to give priority to households and critical establishments such as hospitals in the distribution of water.

He also asked Malacañang to direct state agencies to control their water use.

## PNP appeals for calm

The Philippine National Police (PNP) yesterday appealed for calm from Metro Manila residents affected by the water shortage.

PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Bernard Banac urged the public to maintain order in dealing with the crisis.

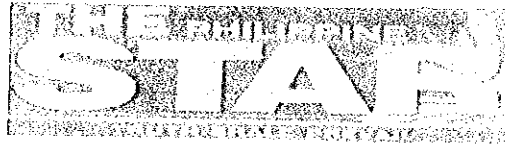
While they understood the suffering of the people who have to wait for long hours to get water supply from their respective local government units, Banac said it should not result in violence.

He said police officers are ready to provide assistance and security in the distribution points of water.

Banac urged policemen to conserve water in their respective offices, including those located at Camp Crame in Quezon City. — With Rhodina Villanueva, Paolo Romero, Jess Diaz, Emmanuel Tupas, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Roel Pareño

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## *Cadet's death revives questions vs ROTC*

The death of an Iloilo student allegedly at the hands of an officer of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) has renewed criticisms against the program, which is being pushed by the government to be mandatorily imposed on students.

Militant youth group Anakbayan yesterday condemned the death of Willy Amihoy, a student of Iloilo State College of Fisheries, who was allegedly beaten to death by a fellow student who is also a commander of the ROTC program in the school.

"ROTC has yet again proven itself to be a tool for the violation of human rights and to reinforce the powerplay and abuse as exemplified by the mercenary tradition of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)," said Anakbayan spokesperson Alex Danday.

Danday cited the case of Mark Welson Chua, who was found dead 18 years ago after exposing irregularities in the ROTC program of the University of Santo Tomas.

"In the context of Duterte's intensified attacks against the Filipino people through military harassment, intimidation, and killings alongside the nationwide de facto martial law, a program that aims to reinforce the culture of power play and impunity in schools begs its abolition," she said as she called for the abolition of the program.

— Janvic Mateo



# UNTV CUP FINALS

## AFP in historic 3-peat triumph

Armed Forces of the Philippines became the first three-time champion of the UNTV Cup by sweeping Senate in the best-of-three title series Monday night before a huge crowd at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Getting stellar performances from Jerry Lumongsod, Darwin Cordero and Boyel Bautista, the AFP Cavaliers ousted the Senate Defenders, 88-78, in Game 2 for a fitting finish to another year of dominance.

Lumongsod erupted for 26 points aside from posting three assists, three steals and a rebound to clinch the Finals MVP. He scored 14 points in the team's 76-73 win in Game 1.

Also shining for the Cavaliers were Darwin Cordero and former Letran star Boyel Bautista who contributed 19 and 18 points.

Jeffrey Quiambao added 11 points aside from making life miserable for the usually high-scoring Garri Sevilla who struggled big time on 2-of-10 shooting from the field.

AFP's title win was worth P4 million to its

beneficiary - the AFP's Education Benefit Systems Office.

The Cavaliers, who also triumphed in 2014 and 2016, did not go home empty-handed as UNTV President and CEO Dr. Daniel Razon handed them their P500,000 prize while the dethroned champions got P300,000. ||

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# The Manila Times

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## DENR, MILITARY JOIN FORCES VS ILLEGAL LOGGING IN CAGAYAN VALLEY

**TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan:** To improve environmental law enforcement from deterrence, investigation, arrest and searches to the prosecution, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has partnered with law enforcement agencies against illegal logging in Cagayan Valley (Region 2). A memorandum of agreement was signed for institutional cooperation between the DENR in Region 2

and the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to provide a quick response to verified reports of environmental violations within the region. Antonio Abawag, DENR Region 2 executive director, had asked the assistance of law enforcement agencies in the apprehension of illegal transport of mineral products during the Regional Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force meeting held at the DENR regional office here. Abawag also ordered the Provincial and Community Environment and Natural Resources Officers to closely coordinate with the battalion and unit commanders of the Army and the PNP in conducting anti-illegal logging operations.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

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# The Manila Times

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## COURT ALLOWS 'MORONG 43' ACCUSED TO FILE DEMURRER TO EVIDENCE

THE Sandiganbayan's Seventh Division has granted several former officials of the military and police to file demurrers to evidence in the cases filed against them over alleged failure to allow eight people, who were among 43 health workers arrested in Morong, Rizal in 2010, to get a lawyer of their choice. A demurrer to evidence is a motion to dismiss challenging the sufficiency of the evidence presented by the prosecution during trial. If a court denies a demurrer, which the defendant filed with its permission, he may present evidence in his defense. The defense had said that the prosecution failed to prove the existence and identities of the complainants' lawyer of choice when the alleged offense supposedly occurred in February 2010. The petitioners were retired Lt. Gen. Jorge Segovia, retired Maj. Gen. Aurelio Baladad, then-2nd Infantry Division (ID) chief of staff Josellito Reyes, then-2nd ID Intelligence officer Cristobal Zaragoza, then-police superintendents Marion Balonglong and Allan Nobleza, and then-2nd ID spokesman Jovily Cabading. The court gave them a non-extendible period of 10 days from receipt of the resolution within which to file their respective demurrers to evidence. Associate Justice Zaldy Trespases penned the resolution, concurred in by Associate Justice Ma. Theresa Dolores Gomez Estoesta, who leads the Sandiganbayan's Seventh Division, and Associate Justice Georgina Hidalgo.

A7 REINA C. TOLENTINO

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MANILA BULLETIN  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## Efforts to prevent NPA from accessing foreign funds underway

Efforts are now underway to restrict New People's Army (NPA) rebels from accessing funds they have acquired abroad.

This was disclosed by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Public Affairs Office chief Col. Noel Detoyato when asked whether the government is doing something to stop the rebels from receiving funding abroad.

"Yes, including foreign funds they are receiving by deceiving the (foreign)

donors and diverting the money to further their terroristic activities with the ultimate aim of toppling down the government and changing our way of life," he said in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA) late Monday.

The military official had earlier said only a unified and whole-of-government approach will defeat the NPA, which is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union.

"We have identified so many factors to eradicate the communist terrorists (and these are) prevent them from accessing funds, counter their mass base recruitment and front organizations," Detoyato said.

And they can only be neutralized effectively if the government will synchronize its efforts to counter them and the threats they pose.

"We can only do this effectively if the whole government will synchronize

their efforts toward a common goal (which is aimed at containing these factors that responsible for the continued operation of the NPA movement)," the AFP official added.

Once this is done, Detoyato expressed confidence that the ideology espoused by Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison and his "blind followers" will be defeated once and for all. (PNA)

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As this developed, joint military and police forces preempted another arson attempt by the New People's Army in Sitio Salok, Barangay Magsaysay in Infanta, Quezon province.

Brig. Gen. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr., commander of the 202nd Infantry "Unifier" Brigade said government forces encountered an undetermined number of rebels at 8 a.m. Friday.

Burgos said the 30 minute firefight took place some 3 km. away from the compound of Northern Builders, the Kaliwa Dam project contractor whose equipment were torched by suspected NPA members last Feb. 7.

Kaliwa Dam is one of the 76 ongoing flagship and developmental projects in Region 4-A (Calabarzon). **PNA**

## Albayalde, 16 other PNP officers face Election Code raps

BY PETER TABINGO

CRIMINAL complaints were filed yesterday before the Commission on Elections against PNP chief Oscar Albayalde, PNP Region 8 Director Dionardo Carlos, and 15 other police officials for alleged involvement in partisan political activities.

The complaints were filed by

party-list ACT Teachers Reps. Antonio Tinio and France Castro, who sought indictments against the respondents for alleged violations of Article 22, Section 261 (i) penalizing intervention or involvement of public officers and employees in any election campaign; and (o) concerning use of public funds or equipment for a partisan political activity.

Te respondents could face jail terms and disqualification from public office under Section 264 of the same Code.

Also named in the complaint were Police Colonels Rolando V. Bade, Leyte PNP provincial director; Nelson DC. Eucogco, Southern Leyte PNP provincial

See ALBAYALDE ➤ Page B3

### ALBAYALDE

director; Dante P. Novicio, Samar PNP provincial director; Reynaldo B. Dela Cruz, Northern Samar PNP provincial director; and Jose Ceasar B. Biso, Ormoc City PNP director;

Police Majors Miguelito N. Bocade, Isabel Municipal Police Station officer-in-charge, Leyte; Allan T. Novales, Bato Municipal Police Station OIC; Joemen P. Collado Acting Chief, acting chief Palo Municipal Police Station; Romualdo Perez Doncillo, chief, Talalora Municipal Police Station (Western Samar); Arnoldo P. Gomba, Jr., OIC, Palapag Municipal Police Station; and Erwin Naelga, chief, Catarman Municipal Police Station;

Police Captains Sherwin Amando L. Machete, acting chief, Southern Leyte Municipal Police Station; Oscar Leonido Cobacha, officer-in-charge, Ormoc City Police Station Police Station 3; Bobby Bolo Montaña, chief,

Jiabong Municipal Police Station (Samar); and Elias P. Ero, OIC, Rosario Municipal Police Station.

Tinio and Castro said the PNP officials have tagged the ACT Teachers party-list as "terrorists" and described them as "legal fronts" of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army in various Facebook posts.

Also subject of negative posts are the other members of the Makabayan bloc in the Lower House, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, and Makabayan Coalition senatorial bet Neri Colmenares.

The same FB pages said the party-list groups funnel public funds in the form of pork barrel funds or Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) into the "terrorist NPAs."

"This is a blatantly malicious and baseless post. ACT Teachers and specifically, the Makabayan bloc ... have never given any fund, whether

private or public, to the NPA," the lawmakers said.

They pointed out that there have been no pork barrel releases since 2013 after the Supreme Court declared such funds unconstitutional.

"We were also among the parties who questioned the pork barrel system ... which led to the PDAF and DAP (Disbursement Acceleration Program) being declared unconstitutional in the first place," they added.

The complainants noted that the posts appeared and were shared on the official accounts of the respondents.

Attached with the 25-page complaint affidavit were screen shots of the Facebook posts.

"The posting and continuous circulation of the above malicious posts could only have been made possible, and amplified further, through the use of public funds, facilities, resources, personnel and authority," they said.



OPERATION VS IS-BACKED REBELS

## GOV'T AIRSTRIKES KILL 6 BIFF GUNMEN IN MAGUINDANAO

COTABATO CITY—After four soldiers were killed by Islamic State (IS)-inspired gunmen in separate instances in this city and in Maguindanao province recently, the military retaliated and attacked a suspected lair of terrorists in Shariff Saydona Mustapha town, leaving six rebels dead, military reports said.

Two other suspected members of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were injured while a government soldier was killed during the initial clashes on Monday morning, according to Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division.

"Expect continuing military operations in the coming days to flush out BIFF in the peripheries of communities near the marshland," Sobejana told reporters on Tuesday.

He withheld the identity of the slain soldier pending notification of his immediate family.

Six bodies, suspected to be BIFF rebels, were fished out of the marshland at Barangay Inal-

adan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, after the military operation.

### BIFF faction

Residents told local and military officials that the fatalities were followers of Abu Torayfe, leader of a faction of BIFF.

Two helicopter gunships, backed by artillery fire, took turns in striking sections of the marshland.

The operation sent several villagers fleeing to safer grounds. Residents in the nearby towns of Datu Salibo and Mamasapano also fled during the military operation.

Sobejana said there would be no letup in the offensives even as he directed all units under his command to exercise precautionary measures to prevent retaliatory attacks, especially on off-duty soldiers.

Last week four soldiers, one in Cotabato City and three in Maguindanao, were killed by gunmen who later claimed to belong to BIFF. —EDWIN O. FERNANDEZ INQ

## 3 BIFF, 2 Maute men slain in clashes

Three leaders of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were among those reported killed as the military stepped up its offensive against the bandits in Maguindanao.

Salahudin Hassan, a certain Commander Bastardo and a certain Mauwiyah, a supposed bomb expert, were said to be among 20 BIFF men killed in air and ground strikes in Shariff Saydona town on Monday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6th Infantry Division commander, said the number of fatalities is still being validated.

Sobejana said a soldier was also killed while seven others were wounded in gunfights with the bandits.

"Operations are ongoing. The last encounter was at around midnight. We have inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, with body parts splattered all over the place," Sobejana said.

He said around 100 BIFF men split in smaller groups while their leader, Abu Toraife, remained holed out in the area.

In Pagayawan, Lanao del Sur, two members of the Maute group were killed in an encounter on Monday.

The fatalities were identified only by their aliases of Sahid and Jihad.

Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., 103rd Army Brigade and Joint Task Force Ranao commander, said two soldiers were also killed while another was wounded in the clash.

Brawner said three companies of soldiers have been pursuing the militants led by Owaida Marohomsar, alias Abu Dar, since last week.

Brawner said they are coordinating with local government officials to ensure that no civilians would be caught in the crossfire.

— Jaime Laude, Roel Pareño



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# 6 BIFFs, soldier killed in Maguindanao clash

**C**OTABATO CITY (PNA) – Six members of the Islamic State (IS)-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were killed while two other militants were wounded during a day-long military operation in Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao on Monday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Army's Sixth Infantry Division (6ID) commander, said a soldier was also killed while another was wounded during the clashes.

He declined to identify them pending proper notification of their respective families.

"Expect a continuing military operation in the coming days to flush out the BIFF in the peripheries of communities near the Liguasan marshland," the military official told newsmen here Tuesday.

Sobejana confirmed the casualties on the BIFF side based on body counts at the main site of the battle in Barangay

Inaladan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha.

"We are in the process of confirming their identities," he said, adding that the two wounded radicals were also monitored being carried away by their fleeing comrades.

Military helicopter gunships, backed by artillery fire, pounded on the BIFF pinpointed lairs in the Liguasan Marsh area, which prompted the evacuation of villagers from Inaladan.

Military ground troops also noted

evacuations in the neighboring areas of Barangay Pagatin, Datu Salibo and Barangay Tuka in Mamasapano town.

Sobejana identified the targets of the operation as the BIFF factions of Karialan, Bongos, and Abu Toraiife.

"We are doing this operation (against the BIFF) fast because of the psychological impact it might have on civilians in the area," he said.

Sobejana said he was looking

forward to neutralizing for good the BIFF the soonest time, possibly before the conduct of the May 13 elections this year.

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## 20 terrorists killed in airstrikes in Maguindanao

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

A military official said Tuesday that at least 20 terrorists, including high-value targets, were killed in the airstrikes and artillery missions against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Daulah Islamiyah in Maguindanao.

Major General Cirilito Sobejana, the commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, disclosed that the Maguindanao operations lasted up to 12 midnight Monday.

He said there are still unverified reports that commanders and subcommanders of the BIFF and Daulah Islamiyah were killed.

Sobejana said they are still verifying the total number of casualties on the side of the enemy because most of those killed were unrecognizable.

"Our last encounter was around midnight. There are more casualties inflicted on the side of the enemy. Their bodies were broken into pieces that's why we don't have an exact number of body count," Sobejana said in Tagalog.

"But we have some reports that some of those who got killed in yesterday's encounter up to midnight last night has reached 20. We are still validating the figure and some of them are high value targets, meaning commanders and subcommanders, including Salahudin Hassan, Mauwiyah and Commander Bastardo."

Sobejana stressed that despite not knowing the exact number of fatalities and casualties, the most important thing is that they are partially in control of the stronghold of the enemy, and there are less number of fatalities and casualties on the side of the military. *lf*

He said as of latest count, one soldier was killed while seven others were wounded.

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## 20 terrorists killed in military assault on BIFF lair

BY VICTOR REYES

AROUND 20 terrorists, including two sub-leaders of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and a Singaporean bomber, have reportedly been killed in bombardment and ground assault operations being conducted by the military on a BIFF camp in Maguindanao since Monday.

Soldiers have recovered "body parts" from the BIFF lair in Shariff Saydona Mustapha where fighting is ongoing as of yesterday, said Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division.

On the reported 20 fatalities, Sobejana said the military "is still validating the figure but some of them are high-value targets, or high-value individuals."

Military aircraft and howitzers on Monday bombed the lair where about 120 BIFF men were reported to be consolidating and planning attacks. The bombardment was followed by ground assaults, leading to series of skirmishes.

Among those reported killed in the continuing operations were BIFF sub-leaders Salahudin Hassan and a "Commander Bastardo,"

and Singaporean bomber Muhammad Ali Abdul Rahiman, alias Mauwiyah.

As to the fate of BIFF leader Abu Toraype, Sobejana said, "We could not confirm or deny if he was killed or not. We have mobilized contacts on the ground to confirm if he was among those killed."

Sobejana said the military has also received reports that many other BIFF members were wounded in the fighting. "We were able to monitor that they are extricating their wounded, along with some of their fatalities," he said.

On the government side, Sobejana said the military's casualty figures remained at one dead but the number of injured rose to seven.

"There are still pockets of resistance. They have splintered into smaller groups in the vast area. We have beefed up our forces so we can follow every direction of the enemy," he said.

He said the military conducted bombing runs and shelling of enemy positions yesterday. 02

Sobejana said soldiers have controlled parts of the enemy stronghold but the military is expecting the BIFF men to counter-attack.

## 20 BIFF todas sa air strike!

Umaabot na sa 20 milyembro ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Force (BIFF) ang napaslang sa isinagawang air strike operation ng tropa ng pamahalaan sa pinagkukutaan ng Daesh-ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) inspired group sa Maguindanao.

Ito ang kinumpirma kahapon ni Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander ng 6th Infantry Division (ID) ng Philippine Army at Joint Task Force (JTF) Central.

"We have inflicted heavy casualties on the enemies, until midnight

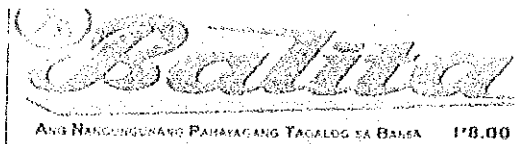
last night (March 11), medyo lasug-lasog yung mga katawan, we have some reports na umabot na sa almost 20 yung mga namatay sa kalaban," ani Sobejana.

Sa nasabing operasyon, nakasagupa ng ground troops ng Philippine Army (NPA) ang mga tumatakas na BIFF kung saan isa ang nasawi sa mga sundalo habang pito naman ang nasugatan sa tropa ng pamahalaan.

Nagsimula umano ang bombrun ng MG520 bomber plane ng Philippine Air Force dakong

alas-5:50 ng umaga nitong Lunes sa Brgy. Inaladan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha na umabot hanggang hatlinggabi ang operasyon.

Sinabi ni Sobejana na kabilang sa mga punliya sa operasyon ay ang mga high value target ang mga BIFF commanders at sub-commanders na sina Salahudin Hassan, Mauwiyah at Kumander Bas-tardo. Beneberipika pa ng militar kung kabilang sina Mauwiyah at Hassan sa mga napaslang sa air strike. (Joy Can-tos, Rhoderick Beñez)



## 20 utas sa operasyon vs BIFF, Daulah Islamiyah

Nasa 20 Daesh-inspired terrorists, kabilang ang ilang high-value targets, ang napatay sa surgical airstrikes at artillery missions ng militar laban sa Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) at Daulah Islamiyah sa Maguindanao, kinumpirma kahapon isang opisyal ng militar.

Inabot ng hatinggabi nitong Lunes ang operasyon sa bahagi ng Inaladan, Shariff Saydona, Raja Buayan, Mamasapano Complex, sa Maguindanao, ayon kay Major General Cirilito Sobejana, commander ng 6th Infantry Division ng Army.

Sa mga hindi pa beripikadong ulat, kabilang sa mga napatay ang mga

commander at subcommanders ng BIFF at Daulah Islamiyah na sina Salahudin Hassan, Singaporean Mauwiyah na natitirang bahagi ng Malaysian terrorist na si Zulkifli Abdulhir alyas Marwan, at Commander Bastardo.

Malaking bilang din sa hanay ng mga terorista ang nasugatan habang isa ang nasawi at pito ang sugatan sa hanay ng militar.

Patuloy ang beripikasyon sa kabuuang bilang ng nasawi sa mga terorista.

Samantala, inaalam pa kung kabilang sa mga napatay sa operasyon si Abu Toraype, na namumuno sa isa pang grupo ng BIFF.

**Francis T. Wakefield**

**12 DEAD, THOUSANDS DISPLACED**

# Maguindanao clashes rage

The said number, however, does not include displaced residents who evacuated from the towns of Datu Saudi Ampatuan and Datu Piang

**By Kristina Maralit**

Violence reared its ugly head once again in restive Mindanao region as clashes between government soldiers and ISIS-inspired terror groups erupted beginning last Monday in Maguindanao.

At press time, authorities said at least 12 people were already killed and thousands of civilians were forced to flee their homes to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

Bangsamoro region minister of social services Raisa Jajurie said 3,295 families or around 16,000 individuals were staying in various evacuation camps in the towns of Shariff Saidona, Shariff Aguak and Datu Salibo.

The said number, however, does not include displaced residents who evacuated from the towns of Datu Saudi Ampatuan and Datu Piang.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Central Mindanao, said the firefight between government troops and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) started in Barangay Inaladan in the municipality

of Shariff Saydona Mustapha and moved toward other areas where the ISIS group has a presence.

Of the fatalities, three were government soldiers, eight were members of the BIFF and one was from the Maute group.

Sobejana said one soldier from the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division was killed and another was wounded during the gun battle.

**We assure the public that we are targeting only the encampments of ISIS-inspired groups of BIFF.**

Those killed from the BIFF side were identified as Kumander Pegka, Karim Binua, Munir Madsal, Gani Lanti, Bukari Samad and Sanday Musib.

He added they are still trying to identify two more slain bandits who were hit by the government's attack helicopters.

Air and ground assault continued on Tuesday in several barangays in Maguindanao following a whole day of intense firefight on Monday as Sobejana urged residents to stay inside evacuation centers.

"We assure the public that we are

targeting only the encampments of ISIS-inspired groups of BIFF," Sobejana said.

Abu Amir, spokesman for the BIFF under the Karialan faction, said they were just forced to fight back after seeing military troops intruding in their communities in Barangay Libutan.

This, as Malacañang yesterday assured the government will exert all efforts to flush out ISIS and its sympathizers out of the country.



**Locked and loaded**  
Government soldiers prepare to storm enemies' lairs in Mindanao.

The Palace was reacting to an article on the *New York Times* tagging the Philippines, particularly Mindanao, as the jihadists' new breeding ground.

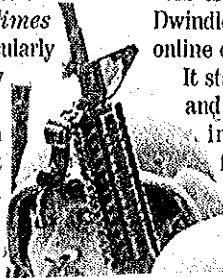
Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo admitted that the government was disturbed by the report.

The article, titled "How

ISIS is Rising in the Philippines as It Dwindles in the Middle East" and posted online on 9 March.

It stated the ISIS is far from defeated and that the movement has sprouted in the Mindanao, long a haven for insurgents because of dense wilderness and weak policing.

**With Gladys Mao Ablon**



## 6 militants, soldier die

COTABATO CITY (PNA) – Six members of the Islamic State (IS)-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were killed while two other militants were wounded during a day-long military operation in Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao on Monday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Army's Sixth Infantry Division (6ID) commander, said a soldier was also killed while another was wounded during the clashes. He declined to identify them pending proper notification of their respective families.

Sobejana confirmed the casualties on the BIFF side based on body counts at the main site of the battle in Barangay Inaladan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha.



## PALACE SAYS GOV'T READY TO THWART IS RISE IN PH

By Julie M. Aurelio  
@JMAurelioINQ

The government will thwart terrorist activities of Islamic State (IS), which a New York Times (NYT) report said was rising in the Philippines.

The report said IS has "attracted a range of militant jihadists" in Mindanao.

Malacañang gave the assurance in reaction to the Times report, which said IS was mov-

ing to the Philippines after losing ground in the Middle East.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the Department of National Defense (DND) was monitoring the movements of IS-affiliated groups and individuals in Mindanao, where martial law was declared following the siege of Marawi City by IS followers.

"Definitely, we should undertake measures to prevent that from happening," Panelo

said at a press briefing on Tuesday.

### DND role

Pressed for details, Panelo said he had to "ask the DND because they are the ones monitoring the movements of these people."

In a report entitled "How ISIS is Rising in the Philippines as It Dwindles in the Middle East," the Times warned that IS has "sprouted elsewhere," in-

cluding Mindanao.

While its territory in the Middle East has dwindled, IS has spread to Mindanao where it has "attracted a range of militant jihadists."

In May 2017, the IS-backed Maute terrorist group entered Marawi and engaged government soldiers in a war that lasted for five months.

Martial law in Mindanao has been extended to Dec. 31, 2019.  
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# INQUIRER

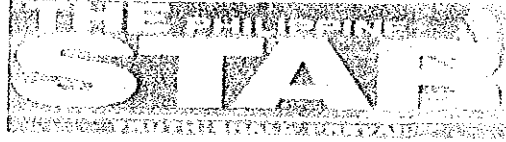
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## 2 soldiers dead in clash with IS gunmen

Fighting erupted on Monday between the military and Islamic State (IS)-inspired gunmen in Lanao del Sur, leaving two soldiers dead and two others wounded. The clashes occurred around 3 pm in the town of Pagayawan. The site of the clashes was near Marawi City, which had been freed of IS followers who tried to set up an IS base there.

Col. Romeo Brawner said soldiers were in pursuit of the group of Abu Dar. Dar, aka Humam Abdul Najib, was a senior terror leader who helped plan and carry out the siege of Marawi City. He was able to escape during the clashes on Monday. —JEFFREY MAITEM



# Gov't vows to step up measures vs IS

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Malacañang yesterday vowed to prevent Islamic State (IS) militants from spreading influence in the country.

A recent *New York Times* report detailed how IS is strengthening its presence in the Philippines as it is facing setbacks in the Middle East.

The IS has attracted militant jihadists in southern Philippines, which the group considers as its East Asia province, the report said.

The article mentioned last

month's bombing of a Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, which has been attributed to foreign suicide bombers and the Marawi siege in 2017.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said security forces would step up measures to prevent the IS from turning Mindanao into its stronghold.

"We should undertake measures to prevent that from happening," Panelo said, adding that the government is concerned about IS presence in Mindanao.

Last year, Duterte warned that IS poses a threat to Mindanao despite

losing strongholds in the Middle East.

"We are in a troubled world. It's dangerous. Crisis comes one after another. Maybe we just defused the most critical one. But on the other side of the world, there remains to be a problem of terrorism and political instability throughout the nations," Duterte said in a speech last June.

The President said the IS is now looking for new bases in Southeast Asia because of the losses they suffered in the Middle East.

"The problem is they are losing the landmass fast in the Middle East.

And the ISIS are being finished off, really literally they are being killed... They just want to kill and the worst of it is the hardliners or the insane leaders would always say that they want to kill all the infidels of this planet," the President said.

"We are not ready for that. We can never be ready for it. America and Russia, China, you can never really be ready in a war against terrorism. They struck, they disappear, they mix the shadow of humanity and forever commit impunity the way they want it to be," he added. ✓

## Palace disturbed by report Mindanao is new IS base

MALACAÑANG on Tuesday expressed concern over a report that the Philippines is turning into a base of Islamic State (IS) fighters.

"Definitely, then we should undertake measures to prevent that from happening," Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a news conference.

"I will have to ask the Department of National Defense because they are the ones monitoring the movements of these people," he added.

*The New York Times* reported that after losing their territories they controlled in Iraq and Syria, IS fighters were eyeing Mindanao as their new base, calling the region its "East Asia province."

"But far from defeated, the movement has sprouted elsewhere. And here in the Mindanao island group of southern Philippines, long a haven for insurgents because of dense wilderness and weak policing, the Islamic State

➤BaseA2

has attracted a range of militant jihadists," the report said.

"An illustration circulated days later on Islamic State chat groups, showing President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines kneeling on a pile of skulls and a militant standing over him with a dagger. The caption on the picture sounded a warning:

"The fighting has just begun," it added.

Mindanao has been under martial rule since May last year in response to IS-inspired Maute rebels that laid siege to Marawi City and allegedly attempted to establish a caliphate for the terror group.

Duterte, in his speech in February, warned of more terrorist at-

tacks by the IS, which he described as "insane" and "made in hell."

"We have this insane IS that they would kill. And I expect that they would do some bombings here and bombings there 'cause that's what they get in the Middle East," the President had said.

Duterte earlier ordered government troops to annihilate ter-

rorists and enemies of the state after the twin explosions at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, that killed at least 20 people and injured almost 100.

The IS had claimed credit for the attack, saying two suicide bombers detonated a belt of explosives.

The Philippine military was not

discounting this claim but said the Ajang-Ajang, a sub-group of the bandit Abu Sayyaf Group, might be behind the blasts.

The Philippine National Police had declared the Jolo cathedral bombing "case closed" after the alleged bombers surrendered separately to authorities in Sulu.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE

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The Manila Times

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# More troops deployed vs pro-IS group

BY AL JACINTO

**Z**AMBOANGA CITY: The Philippine Army said it deployed more troops to run after a group of pro-Islamic State (IS) terrorists who killed two soldiers and wounded another in fierce fighting in restive Lanao del Sur on Monday.

It said two bandits were also killed, but soldiers only recovered one body in the remote village of Calaludan in Pagayawan town. Monday's clashes were the result of a tipoff from villagers on the

presence of Dawlah Islamiya (DI) members, according to Capt. Clint Antipala, spokesman for the 1st Infantry Division.

Quoting a report from Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the

103rd Infantry Brigade, Antipala said, "Additional troops were sent [to the province] in order to pursue the fleeing terrorists as well as to ensure the safety and security of the local populace in the area."

He said soldiers from the 55th Infantry Battalion were pursuing the terrorists, whose leaders pledged allegiance to IS and vowed to fight for the establishment of a caliphate in the troubled south.

"We are sustaining our focused military operation in order to destroy the remnants of this group DI-Lanao and make free the province from terrorists," Brawner said in his report.

Brig. Gen. Roberto Ancan, divi-

sion commander, condoled with the families of the slain soldiers "who paid the ultimate sacrifice in protecting our people against the terrorist group."

Security was also tightened in the province and more checkpoints were established to ensure the safety of the residents.

## Singaporean terrorists

The military believed that two most wanted Singaporean terrorists were among the fatalities in a series of air artillery and ground operations in several towns of Maguindanao since Monday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division, claimed there were about 20 reported dead after they launched operations in the towns of Datu Salibo, Pagatin, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak, or known as the so-called "SPMS box."

Among the 20 fatalities, Sobejana said, were Singaporean terrorists Salahudin Hassan, Mauwiyah and one known as "Commander *Bastardo*."

But, they were only reported killed as Sobejana noted that such information was subject for validation by their units on the ground.

"We strongly suspect [that Mau-

wiyah was among killed] because he was in the target when the bomb was dropped. We could not find a complete body as the fatalities' bodies are dismembered," he said.

Initially, two terrorists were killed in the air and ground operations, while a soldier was shot in the head.

"We are validating the figure and trying to identify them," Sobejana added.

The terrorist group being traced by the military was under the supervision of Abu Toraype, who was believed present in one area of the encounter.

**WITH A REPORT FROM  
DEMPSEY REYES**

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Sharifland  
TODAY

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## 22 IS-linked rebels killed in 2-day raids

**By Francisco Tuyay  
and Nat Mariano**

ISLAMIC State-inspired terror groups suffered a major blow as the military launched massive air strikes and ground attacks that killed 22 terrorists in two separate battles in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur.

In Maguindanao, two days of air raids, artillery shelling and a ground assault on a terrorist stronghold in the hinterlands of Shariff Saydona Mustapha killed 20 fighters, including some high-value targets, said Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana.

Sobejana could not yet ascertain whether Singaporean Jihadist Muhammad Ali Abdul Rahiman, alias Mauwiyah and Salahudin Hassan, both leaders of the Daulah Islamiya, were among those killed.

During the campaign, Sobejana said assaulting ground troops met stiff resistance but the terrorists were overwhelmed by a bomb run that forced them to retreat.

One soldier died from enemy fire.

In Lanao del Sur fighting, two members of the IS-linked Maute group and two soldiers were killed in a battle that lasted

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## 22 IS-linked...

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hours in Barangay Padas in Pagayawan town Monday afternoon.

Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade, said the two dead terrorists were Abu Jihad and Abu Tahir who were part of the 24-man contingent under Maute chieftain Abu Dar.

The Palace on Tuesday said it would take measures to prevent ISIS from turning the Philippines into a base for its operations.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Palace remains "definitely concerned" about the terrorist group's activities in the country, especially those involving establishing a foothold in Mindanao.

Panelo's remark came after the New York Times reported that the Islamic State group is "rising" in the Philippines as its fortunes dwindle in the Middle East.

"Across the islands of the southern Philippines, the black flag of the Islamic State is flying over what the group considers as its East Asia province," the New York Times' article released on Saturday said.

"Men in the jungle, two oceans away from the arid birthplace of the Islamic State, are taking the terrorist brand name into new battles," it added.

The report also pointed out the recent terrorist attacks that rocked several parts of Mindanao in early 2019.



# El Niño destroys ₱464-m rice, corn

*Amid tight supply, water containers get costlier*

By Othel V. Campos, Rio N. Araja  
and Macon Ramos-Araneta

**T**HE early onset of El Niño has damaged 22,298 metric tons of rice and corn crops, with losses amounting to ₱464.27 million, as of March 8, 2019.

Retailers, according to a dzMM radio report, have already jacked up prices of water drums and pails by as much as ₱20, now ranging from ₱90 to ₱100 each. Purified water, which previously cost ₱95 per seven liters, is sold at ₱100 to ₱105.

A report from the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center shows the weather phenomenon, marked by high temperatures and low rainfall, has damaged 13,679 hectares of farm land, affecting 16,034 farmers.

Affected regions include MIMAROPA, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Soccksargen and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Rice farms sustained the biggest loss at ₱377.85 million from 9,860 hectares of destroyed rice lands.

This affected 7,851 farmers from the provinces of Occidental Mindoro, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Misamis Oriental, Davao del Sur, Cotabato and Maguindanao.

Damage to corn crops due to the early dry spell amounted to ₱86.42 million, with 5,686 MT of standing corn destroyed on 3,819 hectares of farm land.

About 8,183 corn farmers from the provinces of Occidental Mindoro, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Sur, Cotabato and Maguindanao were affected.

The Agriculture department said it has coordinated with local government units to carry out mitigating measures to help farmers.

It has also suggested repositioning pumps and engine sets for water distribution, and alerted the Bureau of Soils and Water Management and the Air Force on the need for cloud seeding from March 14 to May 21.

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## El Niño...

From A1

The department has released an initial P18.3 million to regional field offices and the Air Force for the cloud seeding.

Also on Tuesday, the Manila Water Co. said it has no choice but to "severely reduce" water distribution to its over 6 million customers, in view of the low water level at La Mesa Dam as a result of a dry spell.

Geodino Carpio, chief operating officer for MWC's operations, said because of a shortage of raw water supply at La Mesa Dam, the water company has no choice but to implement service interruptions in several parts of its service areas in the east zone of Metro Manila and Rizal as well.

"We have to find ways to severely reducing pressure at a single time," he said.

The water level at Manila Water's La Mesa Dam plunged to below critical level over the weekend.

But the online news site Rappler said hydrologists from the weather bureau are puzzled by Manila Water's claim,

because La Mesa Dam is only a reserve source of water, as the water concessionaires are supposed to draw water from the Angat Dam, which has not reached its critical level.

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Administrator Reynaldo Velasco told CNN Philippines, meanwhile, that he believes Manila Water has always been drawing some water from La Mesa Dam.

"I told them that's supposed to be reserve, but they have been drawing water. That's why it's now on its low," Velasco told CNN.

Manila Water's West Zone counterpart, Maynilad, has not reported a supply problem and has even agreed to help Manila Water.

Senator Nancy Binay pointed out that the conflicting statements about a water shortage in Metro Manila have only increased public confusion.

Meanwhile, Senator Juan Edgardo Angara said the government should roll out its action plan in food-growing areas before the drought is in full swing.

"A man-made disaster over a natural disaster is a double whammy that will leave

less food on the table for families and less income for farmers," Angara said.

"There are threats to agriculture in multiple fronts. Government should help farmers battle the many crises they are facing," he added.

Angara, chairman of the Senate committee on ways and means and vice chairman of the Senate committee on finance, identified four sources of government funds which can be merged to fund El Niño mitigation measures.

These are the Calamity Fund, or what is officially called as the National Disaster Risk Management and Mitigation Fund; the budget of agriculture agencies like the National Irrigation Administration; the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund under the recently passed Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law; and the Department of Social Welfare and Development's funds to aid distressed families.

The P20-billion NDRMM fund can finance preparatory activities in anticipation of an imminent disaster while the P36-billion NIA fund can be used for water-saving measures in government-managed irrigation systems, he said. **With PNA**

## CAN MILF HELP RESTORE PEACE AND ORDER?

IN reference to the news "Abu Sayyaf atrocities spook foreign investors—Duterte" (3/5/19), allow me to ask this question: What is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) doing about it now that President Duterte has put its leaders in charge of large swathes of Mindanao?

There is hardly any doubt in anyone's mind that the MILF knows who the Abu Sayyaf bandits are. Most of them are their own relatives and friends, for crying out loud! It knows how they operate in all of Mindanao and where their hideouts are. It has the force and firepower to

convince them to give up their banditry or crush them anytime it wants. Yet, none of that is happening—or will ever come to pass.

Has President Duterte been made a fool of for actually believing the MILF can help him restore peace and order? Has he forgotten that the MILF's ultimate goal is far from irenic—the setting up of an Islamic state in Mindanao and its "liberation" and secession from so-called "Imperial Manila"?

MA. MARGARITA AYTONA,  
marimar\_ay@yahoo.com

OF TREES AND FOREST

## Arm in arm with BARMM

By MANNY VILLAR

**T**HE people have spoken. By an overwhelming "YES" vote of 1,540,017 as opposed to only 198,750 "NO" votes, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified in plebiscites held last January 21 and February 6.

Based on the plebiscites, the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) will be composed of five provinces (Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and, Tawi-Tawi), three cities (Marawi, Lamitan, and Cotabato City), 116 towns, and 63 barangays (in 6 North Cotabato towns).

The road to the new BARMM was not easy. The conflict in Mindanao has for decades stunted growth in the region. It has claimed many lives and property. Efforts to achieve peace have faced many difficulties — wars, spoilers, legal obstacles, and more recently an unfortunate law enforcement operation gone awry.

The peace process got a shot in the arm with the election of Rodrigo Duterte, the

country's first president from Mindanao. One of President Duterte's campaign promises was to push for peace in Mindanao.

Within two years of his presidency, Congress approved the final version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which was called the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARMM). The President would later sign it into law paving the way for the historic plebiscite.

The former ARMM has now given way to BARMM. And we should give BARMM all the support that it needs. The Organic Law is not a perfect law. My experience in the legislature has taught me that no law — especially human law — is perfect. But peace and prosperity in Mindanao is our goal and this Organic Law is part of our continuing process to achieve what our sisters and brothers in Mindanao deserve.

The BARMM may not be the perfect solution but it is what we have right now and we have to do our part to make it succeed. Peace and prosperity in Mindanao means peace and prosperity in the Philippines.



This herculean task will fall initially on the shoulders of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the 80-member body that will govern the BARMM until June 30, 2022. The BTA members were appointed by the President and most of them have already taken their oath of office.

Under the leadership of Interim Chief Minister Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, the BTA needs to steer the BARMM in the right direction. Their brand of governance will set the tone for the future of peace and prosperity in the region.

After the euphoria of the enactment of the law and the plebiscite dissipate, the hard work begins. I agree with what most analysts are saying that the new BARMM needs to demonstrate good governance, ensure inclusive government, and strengthen democracy in communities.

But I would like to add another important task — economic development. I have always maintained that the

goal is not just peace. The goal is peace and prosperity. The latter ensures that peace will endure.

The new government must create a policy environment that is conducive to entrepreneurs in order to increase economic activities in their communities. Muslims are inherently entrepreneurial. During my time in politics and even now in business, I have met a lot of Muslim traders who, given the opportunity, can be successful partners in creating jobs and generating growth.

In consonance with the tenets of their faith, the BARMM needs to establish financial policies that would encourage small and medium enterprises to create and grow businesses. In my view, this is the key to success for the BARMM.

In order to achieve this, I urge everyone — the central government, the private sector and the Filipino people — to stand arm in arm with BARMM.



## Worry about the US

**C**HINA Ambassador Zhao Jianhua displayed his diplomatic savvy when he spoke to reporters and aired his retort to comments made by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo when he visited Manila last week.

In so many words, Zhao said China will not launch any attack in the disputed South China Sea and that the region should worry about "the other side" possibly doing so.

With his statement, Ambassador Zhao showed he knows how to push his nation's policies on foreign relations while at the same time making assurances of peace to a friendly neighbor -- the Philippines -- and taking a jibe at their American rival.

**'It is to the interest of China, the Philippines and Asean to maintain freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.'**

Zhao did not name "the other side" but was apparently referring to the United States which had been calling out China for its alleged continued dominance in the disputed seas.

The envoy's statement, "We don't worry about China attacking anybody because it is not our policy," is borne out by the Philippines' historical experience with China.

Even when the Philippines under President Ferdinand Marcos occupied ten islands and features in the Spratly's in the '70s, which is also part of China's claims under the 9-Dash Line, China did not take an aggressive stance. In fact, it was Vietnam under sly circumstances that grabbed Pugad Island already occupied by the Philippines.

China has never waged any attack against the Philippines in the over one thousand years history of the Philippines and its people. This is evidenced in the goodwill that China enjoyed with the various Philippines kingdoms and sultanates from way back 1,000 A.D. starting with Rajah Kiling of Butuan which sent several trade missions to China.

This was followed by more missions by Sultan Paduka Batara starting 1417, including his own visit to Emperor Yongle.

There is a monument in Jolo, one of other major island of the Sulu group, consisting of a stone tablet paying homage to Poon Tao Kong, whose real name and story is inscribed, "Pei-Pei Hien who arrived in Jolo as an officer of the greatest Chinese navigator Chengho, the Sampao-kong who held the record on 'Navigating the South Seas....'"

It is to the interest of China, the Philippines and Asean to maintain freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. To this end, we note with satisfaction that leaders of the region are one in upholding peace.



**Of Trees and Forest**  
**Senator Manny Villar**

## Arm in arm with BARMM

**T**HE people have spoken. By an overwhelming "YES" vote of 1,540,017 as opposed to only 198,750 "NO" votes, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified in plebiscites held last January 21 and February 6.

Based on the plebiscites, the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) will be composed of five provinces (Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and, Tawi-Tawi), three cities (Marawi, Lantawan, and Cotabato City), 116 towns, and 63 barangays (in 6 North Cotabato towns).

The road to the new BARMM was not easy. The conflict in Mindanao has for decades stunted growth in the region. It has claimed many lives and property. Efforts to achieve peace have faced many difficulties—wars, spoilers, legal obstacles, and more recently an unfortunate law enforcement operation gone awry.

The peace process got a shot in the arm with the election of Rodrigo Duterte, the country's first president from Mindanao. One of President Duterte's campaign promises was to push for peace in Mindanao.

Within two years of his presidency, Congress approved the final version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which was called the Organic Law for

the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARMM). The President would later sign it into law paving the way for the historic plebiscite.

The former ARMM has now given way to BARMM. And we should give BARMM all the support that it needs. The Organic Law is not a perfect law. My experience in the legislature has taught me that no law—especially human law—is perfect. But peace and prosperity in Mindanao is our goal and this Organic Law is part of our continuing process to achieve what our sisters and brothers in Mindanao deserve.

The BARMM may not be the perfect solution but it is what we have right now and we have to do our part to make it succeed. Peace and prosperity in Mindanao means peace and prosperity in the Philippines.

This herculean task will fall initially on the shoulders of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the 80-member body that will govern the BARMM until June 30, 2022. They BTA members were appointed by the President and most of them have already taken their oath of office.

Under the leadership of Interim Chief Minister Al Haj Murad Ibrahim, the BTA needs to steer the BARMM in the right direction. Their brand of governance will

set the tone for the future of peace and prosperity in the region.

After the euphoria of the enactment of the law and the plebiscite dissipate, the hard work begins. I agree with what most analysts are saying that the new BARMM needs to demonstrate good governance, ensure inclusive government, and strengthen democracy in communities.

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## ONLINE NEWS

### 13 MARCH 2019

# Fallen heroes of Bataan deserve honor, recognition: AFP

By Priam Nepomuceno March 12, 2019, 8:14 pm

**MANILA** -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said it is only proper and fitting that Filipino and American troops who died in the name of freedom be honored.

AFP public affairs office chief, Col. Noel Detoyato made the remark ahead of the country's commemoration of the 77th anniversary of the fall of Bataan on April 9, commonly known as the "Araw ng Kagitingan" (Day of Valor).

"We have to remember the heroism and sacrifices of those who died fighting for the freedom we are now enjoying," Detoyato said when asked when asked why it is important to honor the soldiers who died defending the country against the Japanese invaders during the World War II.

Also, Detoyato said the sacrifices made by Filipino and American troops should be an inspiration for the present-day generation to preserve the freedom they have fought and died for.

"We value their memories and take it as our inspiration to do our part in preserving what they died for.

Underequipped and meagerly supplied American and Filipino forces, fighting in the Bataan frontlines, were forced to surrender in April 9, 1942 after 93 days of gallant resistance against the superior Japanese force equipped with the latest war equipment," Detoyato said.

Some 60,000 Filipino and American troops were made prisoners of war by Japanese forces.

They were made to walk some 112 kilometers from Mariveles, Bataan to Capas, Tarlac under the scorching sun with no food and water for days in what is known the world over as the "Death March". **(PNA)**

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/>

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## Efforts to prevent NPA from accessing foreign funds underway

By Priam Nepomuceno March 12, 2019, 12:14 pm

**MANILA** -- Efforts are now underway to restrict New People's Army (NPA) rebels from accessing funds they have acquired abroad.

This was disclosed by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato when asked on whether the government is doing something to stop the rebels from receiving funding abroad.

"Yes, including foreign funds they are receiving by deceiving the (foreign) donors and diverting the money to further their terroristic activities with the ultimate aim of toppling down the government and changing our way of life," he said in a message to the Philippine News Agency late Monday.

The military official earlier said only a unified and whole-of-government approach will defeat the NPA, which is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union.

"We have identified so many factors to eradicate the communist terrorists (and these are) prevent them from accessing funds, counter their mass base recruitment and front organizations," Detoyato said.

And they can only be neutralized effectively if the government will synchronize its efforts to counter them and the threats they pose.

"We can only do this effectively if the whole government will synchronize their efforts towards a common goal (which is aimed at containing these factors that responsible for the continued operation of the NPA movement)," the AFP official added.

Once this is done, Detoyato expressed confidence that the ideology espoused by Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison and his "blind followers" will be defeated once and for all. **(PNA)**

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/>