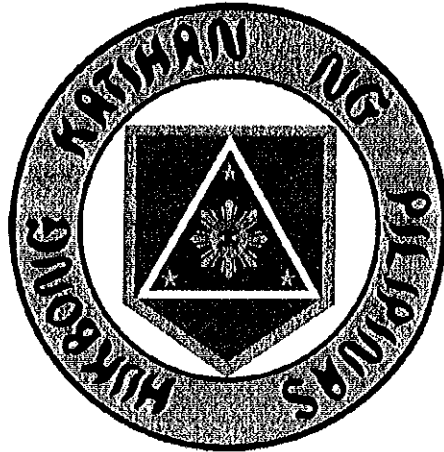


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NEWS CLIPPINGS

14 March 2019

Thursday



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

14 MARCH 2019

Weather Forecast- http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast		
Page Nr.	Title	Source
NATIONAL NEWS		
1-3	Congress to probe water shortage	P Star-1
4-5	Gov't lowers growth goal amid budget row	PDI-A1
AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS		
6	Taiwan diplomat: PH, Taiwan must 'soldier on' in the face of China pressure	Malaya-B1
7	CHED: Slay of Iloilo student not ROTC-related	P Star-13
8	PMA cadets rule ROTC challenge	PDI-A4
9	CHR condemns school violence	PDI-A4
10	Cops, military to guard 'will of electorate'	M Bulletin-6
11	US 7 th fleet makes port visit	D Tribune-7
12-13	Show evidence on EU funding of Reds, gov't asked	P Star-8
14-15	Fronts lose EU donors	D Tribune-1
16	Nakatanggap ng mensahe mula sa NPA? Isumbong mol-EPD	Balita-2
17	12 BIFF men killed in AFP Maguindanao offensive	P Star-13
18	BIFF camp captured by troops	Malaya-B1
19	Fatwa issued to push vaccines in BARMM	PDI-A5
20-21	Bangsamoro leader Jaafar, 75	P Star-1
22-23	Jaafar, 75: Bangsamoro cause loses 'Martyr, consensus builder'	PDI-A8
24-25	Palace, senators mourn Jaafar's passing	M Bulletin-1
26-27	MILF Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar, 75	M Times-A1
28-29	MILF vice chair Jaafar dies of kidney failure	Malaya-B1
30	Palace mourns Jaafar passing	D Tribune-3
31	Bangsamoro TC chief passes away	M Standard-A1
32-33	MILF vice chair Ghazali Jaafar dies at 75	Tempo-2
34	MILF vice chairman Jaafar, pumanaw na	Balita-2
35	MILF vice chairman Jaafar patay na	PM-2
36	MILF vice chairman Jaafar pumanaw na	Ngayon-2
37	BARMM issues 'fatwa' on immunization for 45,598 kids	M Bulletin-8
38	Sandigan affirms trial of Misuari for graft	P Star-3
39	Sandiganbayan affirms graft, malversation raps vs Misuari	M Bulletin-2
40	Misuari must face raps-Sandigan	M Standard-A2
41	Sandigan green-lights Nur's graft case	D Tribune-3
42	2 terrorists, 2 soldiers killed in Lanao Sur clash	M Bulletin-8
43	Marawi City vice mayor arrested on rebellion charges	M Times-A3
44	Marawi vice mayor arrested for attack on Marawi City	Malaya-B1
45	Marawi City vice mayor inaresto sa rebelyon	Ngayon-9
46	Terrorist, pro-IS bandits killed in massive assault	M Times-A7
47	Sabah on full alert over Abu Sayyaf threats	M Times-A7

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48	Rebellion raps vs. Marawi dad	M Standard-A1
49	Gov't presses attack versus terrorists	D Tribune-7
EDITORIAL/ COMMENTARY		
50	MDT can't be used to recover Panatag	P Star-10
51	State power over terrorism	M Bulletin-9
ONLINE NEWS		
52	Davao Occidental town declares NPA 'persona non grata'	www.pna.gov.ph
53	Troops seize Abu Sayyaf guns, motorboat in Sulu	www.pna.gov.ph
54	Army assures safety of Davao City residents amid NPA atrocities	www.pna.gov.ph
55	More politicians receive extortion letters from rebels	www.pna.gov.ph

Congress to probe water shortage

Manila Water: Low supply, not mismanagement

By PAOLO ROMERO

Lawmakers yesterday called for a thorough investigation of the water crisis currently affecting residents in Metro Manila and Rizal.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said there is a need to conduct an inquiry into the water shortage that he believes could have been minimized or even prevented had the proper agencies and private concessionaires acted promptly.

"We will have to find out, investigate why this happened," Sotto told reporters.

He said he would instruct the appropriate Senate committee to conduct the investigation.

The House of Representatives is conducting its own inquiry into the water supply problem in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Quezon City Rep. Winston Castelo, who chairs the committee on Metro Manila development, last night said his panel and the committee on housing headed by Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Benitez would hold a joint hearing on Monday.

"We need to get a clear picture of the situation and how we're going to deal with it because a lot of people are already getting adversely affected by the problem," Castelo said.

The two panels have sent invitations to Manila Water and Maynilad as well as the National Water Regulatory Board (NWRB).

Turn to Page 6

Congress From Page 1

"Where are the 100,000 barangay rainwater catch basins?" asked Sen. Nancy Binay as she cited the government's rainwater collector systems (RWCS) that were supposed to be put up in all barangays threatened by the El Niño dry spell.

Binay said Republic Act 6716, which was passed in 1989, provides for the construction of 100,000 water wells, rainwater collectors and rehabilitation of existing wells in all barangays.

Binay, who is running for re-election in the May elections, said the government failed to construct 100,000 water wells, cisterns and other types of rainwater harvesting facilities and catchment systems which should have been installed within the premises of public markets, public schools, farms and barangays with no existing water supply or where the source of water is scarce or limited.

Re-electionist Sen. Sonny Angara said Congress should also look into the water shortage problem to find long-term solutions to ensure adequate water supply amid the country's rising population and continued economic development.

Angara expressed concern over the ongoing water service interruptions across the concession area of Manila Water, causing inconvenience to many businesses and residents.

Manila Water, which covers the east zone of Metro Manila

and Rizal province, has advised its customers to expect more water interruptions in the coming days due to limited water supply as El Niño begins to set in and could last until August.

Angara noted that while Manila Water has been suffering supply woes, its west zone counterpart Maynilad has not.

Rep. Jericho Nograles of the Puwersa ng Bayaning Atleta partylist said Manila Water should stop blaming El Niño for the company's failure to supply water in several cities in Metro Manila, calling it simply a case of mismanagement.

He cited Manila Water's "lack of foresight and mismanagement" that resulted in the total loss of water in key areas for almost a week now.

Rep. Carlos Zarate group of Bayan Muna yesterday asked the House of Representatives to look into the sudden water service interruptions in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

In a resolution, Zarate said that an investigation is needed, considering that the NWRB and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) have declared that there is no problem with water supply.

Manila Water not liable

Manila Water president Ferdinand dela Cruz said Ayala-led Manila Water Co. Inc. cannot be held liable as it maintains the problem is

primarily due to supply deficit and not on any internal problem or mismanagement.

Dela Cruz has debunked possible internal issues that is causing limited or no water supply in parts of Metro Manila and Rizal province for several days now.

"There is no internal problem that caused the shortage, or any filtration and machine issue that we cannot draw water from Angat. Nor is this a prelude to a request for higher prices. This is really a supply deficit issue," Dela Cruz said during the Asia Water Council briefing on Wednesday.

Even the MWSS said Manila Water cannot be held legally liable as stated in the concession agreement.

MWSS chief regulator Patrick Ty added that there will also be no penalty on Manila Water as this is not covered in the concession agreement.

"The Kaliwa Dam was supposed to be delivered last year but it was delayed, you can't blame Manila Water for that. I can probably blame them a little because they should have done some mitigating factors but what is happening is not entirely their fault," Ty said.

"If this is staged then why does Maynilad have water? Second, where will the water go? They have been mentioning this since last year. It's just that they reached the tipping point," he added.

Manila Water has long projected that demand would continuously increase and it can only count on La Mesa Dam to bridge that gap.

"Right now, they have La

Mesa but because of El Niño, it also decreased. And this will just happen again until we resolve the problem on a new water source," Ty said.

Dela Cruz maintained that Manila Water has not been remiss in advocating for new water sources for a long time.

The water at La Mesa Dam reached critical level of 68.76 meters as of Wednesday.

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

"Our focus right now is make sure to get better predictability but it will take a little while to put things in motion," dela Cruz said.

"Manila Water is not sleeping and we are making sure to pinpoint which areas are affected and continue to work on additional supply," he added.

While cross-border flow or water sharing has been agreed with west zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Dela Cruz said the company does not want to give false hopes as to when supply will be back to normal.

"This will continue to persist for a while because it is a high consumption period. We may have more aggressive rotational interruptions," he said.

Malacañang has started to consolidate efforts from concerned departments, particularly from the economic development cluster, to address the issue of water supply crisis in Metro Manila, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said yesterday.

According to Nograles, an executive order will be pre-

sented to President Duterte to allow government to properly address water issues in the country. The proposed EO aims to address the fragmentation in the water sector by providing the framework for an integrated and coordinated effort in planning and implementing the programs and projects to address all issues in the water sector, he added.

The economic cluster led by Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III has vetted the EO now up for review of the Cabinet Assistance System (CAS) to help the government better resolve the many issues involving the supply and distribution of water.

Even before water interruptions in some areas in Metro Manila, Nograles said the Palace has been looking at inter-agency efforts to address the matter after the government saw some issues while in the process of finalizing the 2017-2022 Philippine Development Plan (PDP).

Buhay party-list Rep. Lito Atienza said he would file a bill making it mandatory for all building owners, both private and government, as well as households around the country to provide their own rainwater catchment facilities. "We need to take seriously the threat of a water-less Philippines or face the dire consequences. We warned about this four years ago and it is now happening. We urgently need a law requiring all building owners as well as households to put up their own rainwater catchment facilities," he said.

Magdalo party-list Rep.

Gary Alejano, a senatorial candidate of the opposition Otso Diretso, sought yesterday a congressional inquiry on the water shortage in Metro Manila and Rizal.

Alejano filed a resolution directing the appropriate committee in the House to immediately conduct an investigation to look into reported water shortage.

"The water service interruptions evidently experienced by numerous residents and consumers in Metro Manila and the province of Rizal is a matter of utmost public interest and deserves the immediate attention of Congress," Alejano said.

To save water, Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano III said the government could regulate supply to carwash shops and golf courses.

He said Malacañang could order state agencies to reduce their use of water.

Marawi civic leader Samira Gutoc is also calling for an investigation on the water shortage being experienced in many parts of Metro Manila.

Gutoc, a senatorial candidate of Otso Diretso, said the water crisis is fast becoming a catastrophe and a probe should be conducted to identify the cause.

She said there is a great disconnect between the government and private water companies on the cause of the water shortage.

- With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Jess Diaz, Delon Porcalla, Helen Flores, Louise Maureen Simeon, Christina Mendez

GOV'T LOWERS GROWTH GOAL AMID BUDGET ROW

STORY BY BEN O. DE VERA

The government's economic managers revise their projection for this year to 6-7 percent from 7-8 percent due to the near certainty of a reenacted budget and the effects of El Niño on agriculture.

A2

FROM A1

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

President Duterte's economic advisers on Wednesday cut their growth target this year to 6-7 percent from 7-8 percent in expectation of the government operating on a reenacted 2018 budget as a result of a congressional deadlock over pork in the P3.8-trillion national spending bill for 2019.

After a meeting of the Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordination Committee, acting Budget Secretary Janet Abuel told a news conference that the gross domestic product (GDP) growth target ranges for 2019 and 2020 were adjusted while keeping the earlier medium-term goal of 7-8 percent growth for 2021-2022.

For 2020, the GDP growth range was downgraded to 6.5-7.5 percent.

Impact of reenacted budget

"The impact on economic growth of budget reenactment is estimated at minus 0.7-0.9

percentage points if the budget is reenacted until April 2019, minus 1.4-1.9 percentage points if until August 2019, and minus 2.1-2.8 percentage points under a full-year reenacted budget," Abuel said.

Leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives failed to break a stalemate over postratification realignments in the final version of the 2019 budget bill at a meeting in Malacañang called by President Duterte on Tuesday night.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson earlier said Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo funneled P95 billion in Department of Public Works and Highways and Department of Education funds to projects arbitrarily identified by her allies in the House.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III has refused to sign the final version of the budget with the realignments, saying they were unconstitutional, while President Duterte has threatened to veto the budget if it is illegal.

House leaders maintained that the congressmen just itemized the changes they had introduced in the budget, and the meeting broke up without

prospects of a resolution.

Malacañang said on Wednesday that it could cushion the effects of a reenacted budget, but appealed to the lawmakers to break the impasse and submit the new budget for Mr. Duterte's signature.

"We call on the senators and representatives to break the stalemate and deliver to the Filipino people an appropriations law that can aid this government better their lives and help our country move forward," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said.

Public services

Panelo gave assurance that the government would continue delivering public services despite operating on a reenacted budget.

Lacson and Sotto said Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III agreed with them that President Duterte could sign a supplemental budget to deal with financial matters affected by Congress' failure to enact a new budget.

That may be the solution to the difficulties of 134 public school teachers from four re-

gions who, according to their union, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), have not been paid for two months because of the absence of a new budget.

Reports about unpaid teachers initially came from the Central Visayas and Caraga regions, but the list expanded on Wednesday to include Central Luzon and the Davao region.

No funds

The ACT said most of the unpaid teachers were regular government employees but, according to local offices of the Department of Education, the reenacted budget does not include funds to pay the salaries of teachers hired after May 31, 2018.

"This is just further testament to what we have been saying all this time—it is us ordinary citizens and workers who suffer the consequences of the insatiable greed of our legislators," said Raymond Basilio, ACT secretary general.

"The impasse cannot continue," Basilio said. "Nonpayment of salaries in two months is a grave violation of our right to be compensated accordingly for our services."

Speaking on behalf of the economic team, Abuel urged Congress to submit the 2019 budget for President Duterte to sign so that the government could proceed with its development priorities—public infrastructure and social services.

"The longer the budget impasse lasts, the larger the adverse effects to the Philippine economy and [the] people," Abuel said.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said the team rolled back its target for this year "because it seems to be a foregone conclusion that the budget will be reenacted until April, which is the least harmful of the possible reenactments."

El Niño effect

Besides a reenacted budget, Pernia said he also expected the effects on agriculture of the "mild" dry spell caused by El Niño to slow economic growth.

Dominguez, head of the team, said the US-China trade war would also slow growth prospect.

"The international trade issue between our major trading partners is a source of concern," Dominguez said. "We also know

very well that any slowdown in growth in our trading partners will affect our growth possibilities."

Asked about the impact of a reenacted budget, Dominguez replied: "The fact that we did not have the budget we presented meant we had P46 billion less to spend in the [first 90 days of 2019]. That's half a billion pesos a day that we are not spending to create jobs, to improve infrastructure, for better health care, and better education."

Dominguez lamented the failure to implement new infrastructure projects at the start of the year.

"The first quarter is the best period to do construction—we have dry weather, no typhoons. That delay in starting new projects will delay the infrastructure program," Dominguez said.

"We're concerned that this delay [in budget approval] is dragging on too long. There's an issue in the House, and we hope these issues are resolved and the certified budget is presented to the President for his action," he said. —WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO, MARLON RAMOS AND MATTHEW REYSIO-CRUZ INQ

Taiwan diplomat: PH, Taiwan must 'soldier on' in the face of China pressure

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

TAIPEI. — There's always strength in numbers.

A high-ranking Taiwanese diplomat believes that it will be mutually beneficial for the Philippines and Taiwan to further strengthen their relations in the face of threats

posed by Beijing.

"It's quite similar (the challenges faced by Manila and Taipei)," Ambassador Henry Ming-Jeng Chen, Director-General of the Department of International Information Services of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), said here on Wednesday over lunch with

South Asian journalists.

Chen was drawing a parallel between Manila, which is in a tug-of-war with Beijing over the ownership of islands in the South China Sea and Taipei, which is working to gain leverage to resist Beijing's

See TAIWAN > Page B3

TAIWAN

call for a cross-strait reunification.

To achieve its goal, the Taiwanese government led by President Tsai Ing-wen has been implementing its New Southbound Policy (NSP) in an effort build soft power in the region.

The NSP is an external economic strategy that calls for "developing comprehensive, mutually beneficial relations with countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and South Asia, Australia and New Zealand."

"I still want to sincerely hope that based on (our) mutual benefits (and) as long as we can create a win-win strategy, no one can stop us (Philippines and Taiwan) and we should just keep moving forward. We just have to soldier on," Chen said.

Being a "people-centered" policy, the NSP aims to "create a new model of economic development and help drive regional growth and prosperity by pursuing bilateral exchanges and cooperation in several areas."

These include economic collaboration, people-to-people exchanges through education exchanges with target countries, resources sharing in culture, tourism, medical care, technology, agriculture, and small and medium-sized enterprises, and regional links by building "systematic bilateral and multilateral cooperation with partner countries while strengthening negotiations and dialogue."

The soft-spoken diplomat sees a huge common ground between

Taiwan and the Philippines — the pursuit of real democracy.

"You see, Taiwan is pro-democracy, a democratic country, like the Philippines. We have our own principles, we have our own goals and as long as you're a free country, you have the right to choose where you're going and choose which friends you're going to make," Chen said.

He added: "We're an independent state so therefore, we can do anything we want but as long as it can benefit our people, it can also benefit our neighboring countries so nothing can stop us."

Chen said that despite the China conundrum, he does not see any stumbling block for as long as both countries will work for a common goal "and (push) this obstruction away."

"This is a win-win strategy — there should be no concerns about anything so as long as this can benefit the people of the two countries," he said.

In 2017, Taiwan and the Philippines signed a new bilateral investment agreement providing a legal framework for Taiwanese investors in the Philippines and Filipino investors in Taiwan, giving all parties a safety net while doing business.

The BIA, the first updated investment agreement that Taiwan signed with an NSP target country, prompted Beijing to air concerns about the nature of the agreement, saying it was not just an ordinary trade tie but an official one.

In a separate interview, a Taiwanese trade official who requested anonymity said the signing of

the agreement made them appreciate the Philippines more.

Dr. Michael Hsin-Hu Wang Hsiao, the chairman of the think-tank Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation who also serves as Tsai's senior advisor, said TAEF "has a very good and solid contact" with the Philippines especially with its young leaders through the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation and with Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program through Dr. Maria Screna I. Diokno.

"So far so good. We're never satisfied (with the warm reception from other NSP target countries) but we're happy," he said.

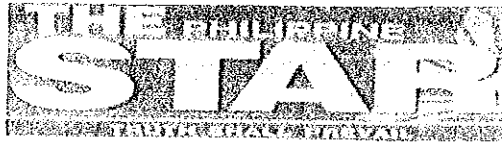
Founded in 2018, TAEF is the first policy-oriented think tank in Taiwan with a focus on Southeast Asian and South Asian affairs.

With the implementation of the NSP, TAEF's goal is to promote comprehensive ties between Taiwan and the 10 ASEAN countries, six South Asian states, as well as Australia and New Zealand through cooperation and exchanges in three major fields — including think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and young leaders — to consolidate a sense of regional community in Asia and establish long-term cooperative partnerships.

Dr. Alan Hao Yang, TAEF's executive director, said the think-tank's focus is to pay attention to the local needs of South Asian countries.

"There's no end for local needs so it's not only a rhetoric but (really finding) a way how to implement national projects in localities," he said.

14 March 2019



Page: 13

CHED: Slay of Iloilo student not ROTC-related

The killing of a student in Dumangas, Iloilo on Monday is not related to the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program, officials have clarified.

"I don't know why it is being twisted into an anti-ROTC propaganda," Prospero de Vera III, Commission on Higher Education head and chairman of the board of

regents at the Iloilo State College of Fisheries (ISCF), told **The STAR**.

Elmer Decilao, 24, a former ROTC officer, was arrested for allegedly killing Willy Amihoy, 23, at the ISCF dormitory on Monday.

De Vera said Decilao is a graduating education student while Amihoy is a first year education student majoring

in bioscience.

Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala, Army public affairs office chief, slammed criticisms of the ROTC program over the incident, noting that the ROTC program is focused on making responsible citizens.

"It is inaccurate that the assailant... is an ROTC commander. He was an ROTC officer in 2017, but is no longer

an ROTC officer at the time of the incident," Zagala said during the Kapihan sa Manila Bay weekly forum yesterday. **B**

According to a police report, Decilao accused Amihoy of stealing his wallet. The suspect allegedly hit Amihoy with a steel pipe in the head following an argument. — Janvic Mateo, Michael Punongbayan, Jennifer Rendon, Jaime Laude

16 March 2019

INQUIRER

Page: 17

PMA cadets rule ROTC challenge

Philippine Military Academy cadets dominated the recently concluded Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) challenge held in Zambales, which the military said was launched in response to President Duterte's instruction to revive the ROTC to instill love of country among the youth. Capt. Jonathan Zata, Philippine Navy spokesperson, said at least 300 ROTC cadets from different schools took part in contests for marksmanship, endurance and first aid. —JEAN-

NETTE I. ANDRADE

14 March 2019

INQUIRER

Page: A4

CHR condemns school violence

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Tuesday condemned the killing of a student inside school premises in Iloilo province allegedly by the commander of the school's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). Willy Amihoy, 23, student of Iloilo State College of Fisheries in Dumangas town, Iloilo, was found dead inside the toilet of the school's dorm. Police identified the suspect as Elmer Decilao, another student and ROTC commander.

In a statement, CHR spokesperson Jacqueline De Guia said violence had no place in schools. The killing was discovered by school security guard Rex Damian, who checked on the male dorm after receiving a report about a commotion there. Damian found droops of blood on the kitchen floor. The bloodstains led him to the toilet where Damian saw a bloodied Amihoy slumped on the floor. A4 Damian said he confronted Decilao, who admitted to the killing. Jojen Suegay, Dumangas police chief, said Decilao had accused Amihoy of stealing his wallet. —PATRICIA DENISE

M. CHIU AND JOEL FRANCO

14

March 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 6

Cops, military to guard 'will of electorate'

By FREDDIE G. LAZARO

BANGUED, Abra — Local officials in Abra have assured that the military and police will display the highest sense of professionalism in the midterm elections in May.

The assurance came after President Duterte said he is certain the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) will remain non-partisan in the polls.

Gov. Ma. Jocelyn Valera-Bernos, a reserve lieutenant colonel in the Philip-

pine Army, assured her provincemates the "will of the electorate" will be guarded with utmost care.

Earlier, the Commission on Elections (Comelec), police and military renewed their commitment in ensuring an honest, fair, and peaceful elections.

Abra had earlier activated "Abra Shield", a unique public safety force composed of 1501st Regional Mobile First Battalion, 22nd Special Action Company, PNP-Special Action Force, and Provincial Mobile Force Company to implement the gun ban and to inten-

sify operations against loose firearms and private armed groups.

Aside from setting up checkpoints, the police has stepped up foot and mobile patrols all over the province.

The Army unit stationed in the province had pledged to support the local police operations while strengthening its counter-insurgency campaign.

Bernos appealed to the policemen and soldiers not to be enticed by politicians. She reminded them to always be on the side of the law and perform their mandate "to serve the country and their fellow Filipinos." 6

14

March 2019

Page: ~~7~~

NEWS BRIEFS

US 7th Fleet makes port visit

Officials and crew of the Philippine Navy (PN) vessel *BRP Davao Del Sur* (LD602) yesterday conducted meeting procedure with their counterparts from *USS Blue Ridge* in Corregidor Island as the latter makes port call to the Philippines.

LD602 commanding officer Homer Gonzales, said it was a privilege being part of the activity.

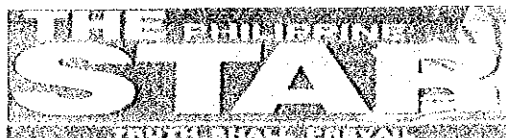
Meeting procedure is one in the long lists of traditions observed not just by the PN but all the navies of the world welcoming ships from other navies arriving for a port visit.

"It is truly an experience escorting *USS Blue Ridge* as it entered the Port of Manila once again for another fruitful engagement not only with sailors but also key leaders from our navy," Gonzales said.

Bobby Ricohermoso

14

March 2019



Page: 8

Show evidence on EU funding of Reds, gov't asked

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The European Union has asked the Duterte administration to present evidence proving that some groups that receive funds from EU states have ties to the communist rebellion, a military official said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) deputy chief of staff for civil military operations, said EU funding for some groups has been placed on hold after the regional bloc was informed about their supposed ties with the rebels.

"They are auditing the funds they have released. They have put on hold those they have not released because they have been programmed already," Parlade said, referring to EU officials, at a press briefing in Malacañang.

"The ball is now with us. We have to submit to them the documentation they are seeking," he added.

Parlade is a member of the Philippine delegation to the 117th Session of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and the High-Level Segment of the 40th Human Rights Council. During the forum, Philippine officials responded to leftist groups' claims about human rights abuses in the Philippines.

Parlade said EU's ambassador had admitted that the regional bloc was supposed to release about two million euros to the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, a group that officials have accused of being a legal front of communist rebels.

He claimed that Belgium has also provided 15 million euros to seven Philippine non-government organizations (NGOs) for five years.

"We are not saying that all these NGOs are being exploited by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). We are studying what organiza-

tions are benefiting from these funds. But (those are) only two entities, the EU and the Belgian government," he said.

Parlade said there are documents signed by CPP founder Jose Maria Sison enumerating IBON Foundation, Karapatan and Kilusang Mayo Uno as front organizations.

Countering allegations of groups aligned with communists remains a challenge, according to presidential human rights committee undersecretary Severo Catura.

"The modern human rights narrative is really a result of the influence of many front organizations masquerading as NGOs and human rights defenders," Catura said.

"We need to fix the human rights narrative... We hope to address the negative information coming from other groups that are very critical of this administration," he added.

Parlade said only the Duterte administration was serious in addressing com-

munist insurgency.

"During the time of PNoy (former president Benigno Aquino III), if you remember, you will be relieved if you are not toeing the line. So let's be frank – it's only in this administration that we saw a serious effort to end insurgency," he said.

Parlade said the previous administration had freed some arrested communists, affecting the drive of the military.

"Every time there is peace talks, someone is released. So really, it's only now that the AFP felt this issue on insurgency is being seriously addressed," he added.

More evidence

The AFP is expected to grant EU's request.

Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief, said that on top of already existing pieces of evidence, the military is continuously gathering more to prove that EU funds for left-wing or-

ganizations are being diverted to the NPA.

Detoyato bared that the military has documents showing the paper trail of these EU fund donations to several left-wing NGOs that have been diverted to advance the rebel cause.

"Yes, they are receiving funds by deceiving (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.

The EU, according to Detoyato, gave 621,000 euros for the first tranche to the groups and another 1.3 million euros more are expected to come.

PNP welcomes EU request

The Philippine National Police (PNP) yesterday welcomed the EU's request for the government to provide more evidence linking some NGOs to communist rebels.

"This development pro-

vides energy to spur the final push against the 50-year-old communist insurgency over the cliff by denying the underground movement of foreign support to sustain its terrorist activities in the countryside," PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Bernard Banac said in a statement.

Banac said the positive development provides a window to address the decades-old communist insurgency.

Meanwhile, at the same press briefing, members of the delegation insisted that their trip to Europe was not a junket but could not say how much was spent for it.

"Let us just look at it this way: you spent, say P1 million or P2 million in the process, but you are able to prevent the funding worth P2 billion or P1 billion to organizations radicalizing children. I hope critics consider that," Parlade said.

— With Jaime Laude, Emmanuel Tupas

Fronts lose EU donors

By Kristina Maralit

In a bid to cut the lifeblood of communist rebels, the government has called on Belgium and the European Union (EU) to stop giving financial aid to groups acting as "legal fronts" for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed unit, New People's Army (NPA).

This was one of the main orders of business conducted last month when a contingent made up of officials from the military and the Presidential Communications Operations Office traveled to Bosnia, Switzerland and Belgium and appeared before the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances summit.

It was in the said trip where the representatives appealed to the EU and Belgian Foreign Ministry to cease funding local groups who allegedly use money to finance the nefarious acts of the CPP-NPA.

Diverted to guerillas
With the amount of money



Life-saving skills Firefighters from different regions show off their wares during the Fire Olympics Competition 2019 at the Quirino Grandstand in time for Fire Prevention Month.

BOB DUNGO JR.

the so-called "fronts" of the communist movement receive, insurgency in the Philippines will be "prolonged."

At least seven non-government

organizations were cited as beneficiaries of the EU and the Belgian government but which divert their funds to help the NPA

Turn to page 2

Fronts lose EU donors

From page 1

bulk up their artillery and manpower.

Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr., a member of the contingent to EU, tagged the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) as one such organization with communist affiliation.

The RMP, for one, was accused of being a group of nuns who "radicalize" children.

Rich picking

"What we saw, and it was very clear, is the release of some 622,000 euros for the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines. They are proudly displaying the logo of the European Union without the EU knowing that it is among the front organizations," Parlade bared at a press briefing in Malacañang yesterday.

The Rural Missionaries of the Philippines is one such organization with communist affiliation.

"When we did our research, we engaged the Ambassador of EU in Manila and we found out that the EU is also planning to release another 1.3 million euros for their succeeding projects also to be undertaken by RMP. We expressed our concern because with the amount of money they're receiving, the insurgency problem we've been wanting to end will drag on," he said.

Red units identified

The Belgian Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, reportedly has been funding seven Belgian groups that

work with local organizations the Armed Forces tagged as legal fronts for the CPP-NPA.

These groups, according to Parlade, are the RMP, IBON Foundation, Karapatan and Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development.

The groups have been receiving three million euros for the past five years.

Parlade shared that the EU and Belgian officials were "surprised" over the revelation that they were funding communist "sympathizers."

They supposedly expressed commitment to halt the sending of financial aids to said groups if they can provide more evidence to further solidify their ground against them.

Next steps

"They wanted us to provide more evidence and to file a formal complaint. As soon as they have that they promise to stop this funding," Parlade stated.

"We have to show them proof that legal organizations are actually committing or contributing to these, all these revolutionary (movement)," he added.

As for the filing of the formal complaint, Parlade said the National Task Force to End Local Communist Insurgency is already in the process of putting it together.

Once completed, the transmittal of the document may be done in the next few days or "maybe next month."

"The earlier the better because the next tranche of funds could be released anytime soon," Parlade said.

Nakatanggap ng mensahe mula sa NPA? Isumbong mo! –EPD

Binalaan kahapon ng pamunuan ng Eastern Police District (EPD) ang publiko hinggil sa umano'y mga extortion at threat messages, na ipinakakalat sa pamamagitan ng text messages at social media, mula sa mga umano'y miyembro ng Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP/NPA).

Tiniyak ni EPD chief, Police Chief Supt. Christopher Tambungan na hindi nila pahihintulutan sa EPD ang mga ganitong extortion schemes sa kanilang nasasakupan.

Hinikayat rin niya ang publiko na kung sakaling makatanggap ng mga ganitong mensahe ay huwag na itong ipasa at sa halip ay iparating sa kanilang tanggapan para sa kautulang aksiyon.

"If you received such information through your mobile phones, please do not hesitate to report to the nearest police station for verification and possible operation. Help us stop this

scheme of spreading fear to the public. Do not share or pass the text message to anyone, just report it immediately so as not to create panic or harm," panawagan ni Tambungan.

"Likewise, continuous counter intelligence efforts and target hardening measures will be implemented to the government, private/ non-private offices and vital installations as well as

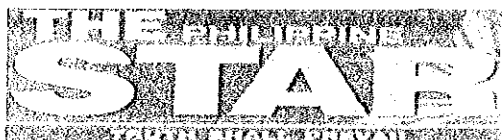
further strengthening the conduct of beat and boarder patrolling to the places of convergence to prevent such threats from occurring," ayon sa EPD.

Maaari umano'y magsumbong sa kanilang tanggapan ang mga taong makatanggap ng mga ganitong mensahe sa numerong (02) 641-0877 o 0998-5987874.

Mary Ann Santiago

14

March 2019



Page: 13

12 BIFF men killed in AFP Maguindanao offensive

By JOHN UNSON

MAGUINDANAO – At least 12 members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were confirmed killed in air and ground assaults launched by the military in this province since Sunday.

Municipal and barangay officials said Karim Binua, Munir Masdal, Ganih Lantih, Bukhari Samad, Acob Sanday, Monir Salama, Musib Tantung and Hamodi Gensa were killed in the air strikes.

Usman Gadoh, Ibra Awil, Badrudin Saman and Odin

Salih were reportedly slain in clashes with soldiers near Liguasan delta and in Datu Saudi town.

Among the fatalities were said to be followers of bomb maker Esmael Abdulmalik, also known as Abu Toraife.

Eleven personnel of the Army's 6th Infantry Division

were wounded in the encounters.

The military said more than a dozen improvised explosive devices were recovered at the scene.

The military launched the offensive after receiving reports on the presence of members of the three factions

of the BIFF in Shariff Saidona Mustapha and Mamasapano.

Firefights also erupted at the border of Shariff Saidona and Datu Salibo.

Hundreds of villagers evacuated their homes to avoid being caught in the crossfire. The provincial government and Humanitar-

ian Emergency Assistance and Response Team of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are providing assistance to the evacuees.

Maj. Gen. Cirillo Sobejana, 6th ID commander, said military operations against the BIFF would continue.

12

BIFF camp captured by troops

BY VICTOR REYES

AFTER two days of bombardment and ground assault operations, government forces yesterday captured the camp of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in Shariff Saydona Mustapha town in Maguindanao.

Troops also recovered the body of a foreign-looking man from the BIFF lair.

"We are still validating his identity but he is a foreign national. He is Arab-looking," said Maj. Gen.

Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division.

Sobejana said the foreign-looking man is among the 20 terrorists he earlier said were reported to have been killed in the air strikes, artillery bombardment, and assault by ground forces since Monday morning.

The others reported killed in the operations were BIFF sub-leaders Salahudin Hassan and Bastardo, and Singaporean bomber Muhamad Ali Abdul Rahiman alias Mauwiyah.

So far, only two enemy bodies

have been recovered at the scene, said Sobejana. The fatality count is based on intelligence information gathered from various sources, he said.

The operations targeted about 120 BIFF members, led by Abu Toraype, who were consolidating and planning attacks.

Maj. Arvin Encinas, 6th ID spokesman, named 17 of the reported BIFF fatalities as Abdul Karim Kadil, Yusop Lakiman alias

See BIFF > Page B3

BIFF

Paks and Pagal, one Musa alias USA, one Dungadong alias Dong, Hamer Lakiman, Alladin Bagundong, Baser Abdulā, Muhalidin Akob, Ansare Mukalir, Datokan Masala, Mutasir Manap, Kage Manap, Duang Ali At, Mubarak

Antoling, and Yusop Kadir.

Sobejana said troops recovered 20 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from the occupied camp. But two other IEDs exploded on Tuesday night and yesterday morning, injuring three soldiers.

"We already seized their camp, and we are still negotiating (to

capture) another camp nearby.. We already occupied their camp where they had concentration," he said.

"We are on hot pursuit now. We have deployed forces to enclose them... There are still areas to where they escaped and that is the subject of our ongoing operations," he added.

14

March 2019

INQUIRER

Page:

A5

Fatwa issued to push vaccines in BARMM

By Edwin O. Fernandez
and Sheila Mae dela Cruz
@Team_Inquirer

COTABATO CITY—The health minister of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) issued a fatwa, or Islamic ruling, to prompt parents to have their children vaccinated against measles.

The fatwa came after reports reaching the BARMM Ministry of Health showed reluctance among parents to have their children immunized because of uncertainty over whether it conforms with their religion.

The fatwa sought to promote vaccination among Muslims as a safe and efficient way to prevent common diseases, according to Dr. Safrullah Dipatuan, BARMM health minister.

The issuance of the fatwa was approved by 13 leaders of the Regional Darul Ifta. A cere-

monial signing was held prior to the fatwa launch.

Holy act

"Immunization prevents deaths and suffering from vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, tetanus, polio, pneumonia, hepatitis, diphtheria, rubella and mumps," said Dipatuan, adding that saving lives is a holy act that "we must do as an act of faith."

Data from the BARMM Ministry of Health showed that as of March 10, at least 45,598 infants and children had already received measles vaccination across the region.

Effective campaign

The ministry said measles cases in the region decreased to 361 this year compared to 1,260 cases during the same period last year.

With support from the United Nations Children's Fund

(Unicef), Dr. Zul Qarney Abas, deputy health minister, said the ministry had asked the Regional Darul Ifta to issue the fatwa after discovering that many parents in the region "tend to refuse immunization because they were unsure if vaccination was consistent with their faith."

No violation

In September last year, the ministry and Unicef held two conferences and issued a fatwa saying vaccination was legitimate and did not violate the Quran.

Abas said Islam permitted vaccination, noting that "vaccines are halal."

"The best gift we can give to our child is full immunization," said Farid Dastgeer, child protection specialist of Unicef.

With the fatwa on immunization, the ministry said it hoped to increase immunization rates across the Bangsamoro region. INQ *BS*

16



Bangsamoro leader Jaafar, 75

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – Ghazali Jaafar, 75, held in high regard as a Bangsamoro leader, succumbed to lingering illness in a hospital here at around 1 a.m. yesterday.

Describing him as a "warrior of peace," Malacañang paid tribute to Jaafar yesterday.

"He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah or Paradise," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

Jaafar was last seen in public last Feb. 22, when he attended oath-taking ceremonies at Malacañang.

"Jaafar selflessly dedicated and devoted his life for others. Truly, he

Turn to Page 7

Bangsamoro

From Page 1

is a man of peace," said presidential peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr.

Jaafar led the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

"We will never forget that despite his health condition, Jaafar went the extra mile to join several campaign rallies to push for the realization of the Moro people's aspiration for genuine and meaningful autonomy," Galvez added.

The Department of National Defense (DND) also condoled with the family and friends of Jaafar.

"May Allah grant him rest in Jannah or Heaven," said Arsenio Andolong, DND Public Affairs Service director.

MILF chairman Murad Ebrahim cited Jaafar as one of the pillars of the MILF in the Bangsamoro struggle. Jaafar was the first vice chairman of the MILF.

"We consider (his death) as a big loss to the leadership of the MILF and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)," Ebrahim said.

Jaafar was chairman of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) before it became the Bangsamoro Transition Authority following the ratification of the BOL last month.

"A sad day for us all with the passing of brother Ghazali Jaafar, MILF vice chairman and chairman of the (BTC) which successfully brought the (BOL) into reality," former presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza posted on Facebook.

Catholic priest Eliseo Mercado also paid tribute to Jaafar.

"Celebrating and remembering friendship and our common struggle for a just and peaceful Mindanao on the passing of MILF vice chairman (Jaafar). Prayers and condolences to his family and to the MILF," Mercado said.

Jaafar died weeks after his admission to a hospital, according to his son Johari Abo.

Jaafar earlier told **The STAR** that he had an angioplasty, a procedure that improved blood flow to his heart.

But he suffered complications after the surgery, leading to his frequent confinement.

Earlier this week Jaafar complained of abdominal pain. He was in intensive care and was diagnosed with a kidney problem.

Jaafar's remains were brought to his family's farm in Barangay Pigkalagan, Sultan Kudarat in Maguindanao.

Peace process

Jaafar was the first chairman of the MILF negotiating panel when peace talks started in 1997 and was responsible for a ceasefire agreement with the government.

The MILF in 2014 signed a landmark pact with the Aquino administration to end separatist insurgency that had killed 150,000 persons since the 1970s.

Ebrahim, Jaafar and the MILF's former chief negotiator and now BARMM education minister Mohagher Iqbal were still adolescents when they joined the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the 1970s.

They bolted the MNLF along with senior rebel leader Hashim Salamat in the 1980s and founded the MILF.

Salamat, who studied Islamic theology at Al-Azhar University in Egypt and political science professor Nur Misuari organized the MNLF in the early 1970s but became estranged over ideology and religious practice.

Condolences

The Philippine National Police (PNP) expressed its condolences to Jaafar's family.

"From a worthy adversary to a partner in peace, chairman Jaafar shared the PNP's aspirations for genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao," PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Bernard Banac said in a statement.

"By reaching out the magnanimous hand of friendship and peace, chairman Jaafar sought to make the peace process work through the newly ratified (BOL)," Banac added.

Senators were likewise saddened with the death of Jaafar.

"(But) I am happy that Mr. Jaafar was able to see the fruition of their peace talks with the government. My condolences to the Jaafar family and the entire MILF organization," Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III said.

Sen. Sonny Angara described Jaafar as a voice of reason and a voice for peace.

"In exchange of arms (the MILF) surrendered, (the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) gave equipment such as welding machines and ovens, among others, to jumpstart the livelihood of their fighters who returned to the fold of the government," Sen. Joel Villanueva said.

"Today is a sad day for the Bangsamoro and the country as (MILF) first vice chairman and BTC chairman Jaafar joined Allah early yesterday morning," said Otso Diretso senatorial candidate Samira Gutoc.

"I call on my fellow Bangsamoro people and Filipino people to continue his deeds by making sure that we embody the value of peace in everything that we do. Let us honor (Jaafar) by honoring his creed of peace for the Bangsamoro and the Philippines," she added.

Gutoc said the Bangsamoro people will remember Jaafar as a fighter for peace and security.

She added that Jaafar fought hard so the Bangsamoro people could have independence.

"As a measure of how great an influence he is to me and other people, I made the decision to run for senator upon his advice. I consulted him on my decision," she said.

- With Christina Mendez, Jaime Laude, Jose Rodel Clapano, John Unson, Emmanuel Tupas, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Helen Flores

14

March 2019

INQUIRER

Page:

A8

JAAFAR, 75: BANGSAMORO CAUSE LOSES

'MARTYR, CONSENSUS BUILDER'

By **Dong Sarmento,**
Julie Alpala
and **Sheila Mae dela Cruz**
@InqNational

KORONADAL CITY—Ghazali Jaafar, one of the founders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who fought for Moro self-determination since the early 1970s, died early Wednesday just weeks after seeing the creation of a new autonomous region in his Muslim homeland. He was 75.

"Bangsamoro lost a *shahid* (martyr) today," said Murad Ebrahim, the MILF chair and interim chief minister of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), which will temporarily govern the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

"He is one of the pillars of the MILF leadership and has been with the Bangsamoro struggle for around 50 years or more," Murad said in a text message to the Inquirer. "We sincerely pray to Allah to reward his good deeds and accept his soul to His paradise."

Malacañang expressed "heartfelt condolences" to the family and friends of the "warrior of peace."

"He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (Paradise),"

presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

Politically savvy

Mohagher Iqbal, who served as the MILF's peace panel chair, said Jaafar was more of a politically savvy leader than a military tactician and was one who "(made) things possible through compromises" without abandoning his principles.

Iqbal said Jaafar's expertise was in laying down approaches and methodologies to achieve the "desired objective."

According to Benedicto Bacani, executive director of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance, a Cotabato-based antiterror think tank, Jaafar had established a "broad political network of support for the cause of the Bangsamoro" and was skilled at unifying diverse interests.

"He is a consensus builder, and that's the vacuum he left behind," Bacani said.

The MILF website, Luwaran, said Jaafar organized the Moro youth group Mandharul Islam in the late 1960s to defend Muslim villages against attacks of the military-backed Ilaga paramilitary Christian group that was burning Moro homes and mosques then.

According to Iqbal, Jaafar

was one of the "seniors" in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari and was among those who formed the "New MNLF" in August 1977 before they formally broke away from Misuari and renamed their group MILF in 1982.

Not trained to fight

Jaafar was not trained abroad as a fighter like some other MILF leaders, but he always had a clear vision of the Bangsamoro people's right to self-determination and independence, and he "never wavered in this vision till

tend the historic ceremony to mark the accord along with other MILF leaders and fighters, Jaafar said: "I never imagined then that we would be in the corridors of the seat of power of the Philippine state."

Jaafar had called Malacañang the "seat of Moro oppression."

In February 2017, President Duterte named him chair of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, which was tasked with crafting an enabling law to create the future BARMM to implement the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro between the government and the MILF.

Heart ailment

He underwent angioplasty in July 2018 while in Metro Manila following the approval of the final version of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) by the congressional bicameral conference committee.

Despite being weak and ailing, he helped campaign for BOL ratification last January and was appointed one of the 41 representatives of the MILF in the 80-member BTA and named parliament speaker.

During the oath-taking for BTA members in Malacañang on Feb. 22, he fell back on his

wheelchair after standing during the ceremony.

Jaafar died of kidney complications around 1 a.m. on Wednesday at a hospital in Davao City.

"He is a big loss to the Bangsamoro people. His passing comes at a time when we are about to start a new chapter in the Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination," said former ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman.

Presidential peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. said that despite his failing health, Jaafar "went the extra mile to join several campaign rallies to push for the realization of the Moro people's aspiration for a genuine and meaningful autonomy."

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri said the country "owes much of the peace embracing Mindanao and the Muslim communities nationwide to Jaafar."

Peace advocate Baiha Samayatin, executive director of the Moro Women Development Cultural Center, said Jaafar was "a great leader" in the struggle for self-determination of the Bangsamoro who would never be forgotten.

—WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO, JAYMEET. GAMIL, PATRICIA DENISE M. CHIU, JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE AND MARLON RAMOS IN MANILA INQ

his last breath," Iqbal said.

As the first peace panel chair of the MILF under the late Salamat Hashim, Jaafar signed the ceasefire agreement with the government in 1997.

In October 2012, the government, under then President Benigno Aquino III, and the MILF signed a framework agreement to end the rebellion and build an expanded and more powerful replacement to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Recalling entering Malacañang for the first time to at-

Palace, senators mourn Jaafar's passing

By ARGYLL B. GEDUCOS
and MARIO B. CASAYURAN

Malacañang has condoled with the family and friends of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar who died early Wednesday.

"Our deep thoughts and sincere prayers to Mr. Ghazali Jaafar who died early morning today, March 13, 2019,"

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said, describing the late leader as a "warrior of peace."

"The Palace takes this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family members and friends of Mr. Jaafar. He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (Paradise)," he added.

Jaafar served as the chairperson of the MILF Peace ►10

Palace, senators mourn... 41

Negotiating Panel from 1996 to 1997. He likewise became the First Vice chairperson of the MILF Central Committee and MILF for Political Affairs.

President Duterte appointed Jaafar as chairperson of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission in January, 2017 and as a member of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in February, 2019.

Jaafar underwent angioplasty procedure last year. He suffered complications in the abdomen after, leading to frequent returns to the hospital for check-ups and confinement.

MILF Chairman Murad Ebrahim said that Jaafar used to complain of abdominal pain and was confined in the intensive care unit.

Murad said Jaafar was diagnosed with a kidney problem and toxins had spread to his body early Wednesday.

Jaafar's passing came less than two months after Mindanaoans voted to ratify the creation of the BARMM which is the product of a decades-long negotiation between the government and the MILF.

Huge loss to PH

Senators branded Jaafar's death as a huge loss not only to the Bangsamoro but to the nation.

Former Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III said he is saddened by the passing of Jaafar "but at the same time thankful that I have been able to meet and work with him concerning the Bangsamoro Organic

Law (BOL)."

"I was also able to shake his hand during the appointment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority members in Malacañang. I am happy that Mr. Jaafar was able to see the fruition of their peace talks with the government. My condolences to the Jaafar family and the entire MILF organization," he added.

Senator Richard J. Gordon said Jaafar is a "hard act to follow."

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of my Muslim brother Ghadzali Jaafar, who is the speaker of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and first vice chairman of the MILF. He would be a hard act to follow," said Gordon.

"Jaafar's passing is a deep loss to our country. His sincerity, wisdom, and experience are attributes needed to drive his and our dreams of a successful Mindanao. His leadership will be sorely missed. We all have to work as one now and continue what he has started," he added.

For his part, re-electionist Sen. Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito said her is sure that Jaafar died with a sense of fulfillment as he witnessed the signing and ratification of the Organic Law.

Another re-electionist, Senator Juan Edgardo M. Angara, recognized Jaafar as one of the chief architects of the new BARMM and the BOL.

"He was highly determined to get the best deal for his constituents but was also willing to be flexible

on some points in order to come up with a new organic law for Muslim Mindanao. He was a voice of reason and a voice for peace and will surely be missed," Angara said.

Re-electionist Senator Nancy Binay also expressed her condolences to the family of Jaafar on his passing.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel F. Zubiri said the Senate joins the family of Jaafar in hailing his life of courage, honor, and nobility.

He dedicated his strength, intelligence, and soul to freeing the Bangsamoro people from the strife that history has bestowed on Mindanao, he said.

Zubiri has worked closely with Jaafar during the crafting of the BOL.

"The country owes much of the peace embracing Mindanao and the Muslim communities nationwide to Chairman Jaafar. He consistently extended his hand of conciliation and brotherhood to fellow Muslims - more so, to fellow Filipinos during the course of the Bangsamoro struggle. His efforts contributed greatly to achieving unity among factions of fellow Muslim brothers. He has earned the admiration and respect of allies and adversaries because he has always stood for his dream of bringing forth a Bangsamoro where godliness, liberty, progress, and peace will reign forever," he added.

"We shall always remember him for giving us the privilege of working with him to craft the historical Bangsamoro Organic Law as one of the important pillars of a truly autonomous Bangsamoro," he stressed.

14

March 2019

The Manila Times

Page: A1

MILF Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar, 75

MORO Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar passed away on Wednesday at the age of 75.

Jaafar's passing was confirmed by his son Cotabato City Councilor Johari "Butch" Abo, former Tawi-Tawi governor Al Tillah said in a text message sent to *The Manila Times*.

"Brother Jaafar is a great loss to the Muslims and the Muslim Ummah's rights to

► Jaafar A8



MILF

self-determination," said Tillah, president of Parhimpunan sin Islam Ha Pilipinas (Islamic Society of the Philippines). "Bro. Jaafar has been in the forefront of the quest for peace in Mindanao and a major player in the peace process from day one until his untimely demise," he added.

MILF Chairman Al Hajj Murad Ibrahim confirmed that Jaafar died past 1 a.m. after weeks of being admitted to a hospital in Davao City.

"We are officially announcing the passing away of our brother Ghazali Jaafar, the first vice chairman of the MILF, at the same time the recommended speaker-to-be of the parliament of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao," Murad said in a statement.

"*Kanina pong 1 a.m., dinala siya sa isang [At 1 a.m., he was brought to a] hospital sa Davao City...he has been suffering from some internal illness for a few months already,"* he added.

Ibrahim said Jaafar's death was a big loss and the replacement for his position in the commission would be decided upon soon.

Ibrahim said earlier this week, Jaafar complained of abdominal pain and was confined at the intensive care unit.

He was diagnosed with a kidney problem, he added.

Jaafar, acknowledged as a pillar of the MILF, was the chairman of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) that drafted what is now known as Republic Act 11054, the charter of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

A member of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the body that oversees BARMM, he was also the first vice chairman of the MILF Central Committee and vice chairman for political affairs of the rebel group that once waged a bloody separatist insurgency in Mindanao.

Malacañang condoled with the family and friends of Jaafar, who it described as a "warrior of peace."

"Mr. Jaafar was a warrior of peace. He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in *Jannah* (paradise)," Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

Malacañang peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr., in a separate statement, said the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process mourns Jaafar's passing, calling him a "great Moro leader."

"As a Moro leader, Jaafar, the first vice chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, showed us his determination in leading the Moro people through the passage and eventual ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law," Galvez added.

"We will never forget that despite his health condition, Jaafar went the extra mile to join several campaign rallies to push for the realization of the Moro people's aspiration for a genuine and meaningful autonomy."

"Jaafar selflessly dedicated and devoted his life for others. Truly, he is a man of peace," he said.

Susana Salvador Anayatin, a member of the BTA, expressed her "heartfelt appreciation and gratitude" to Jaafar.

"From your BTC, *nakikiramay po kami* (we mourn your loss). Rest in God's peace now, rest assured we will continue the struggle for RSD (right to self-determination) of the Bangsamoro," she said in a Facebook post.

The BTC shared a photo of Jaafar from November 2018, showing him sitting under a banner bearing the commission's logo.

"May Allah reward him for his good deeds and grant him a place in *Jannah*," the caption said.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also mourned the death of Jaafar.

Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., AFP chief of staff, said Jaafar has been "instrumental [in] the quest for peace in Mindanao," becoming a partner of the Philippine military.

"His insights and dedication as a person and as a peace advocate will be his enduring legacy — not only to the Bangsamoro people but to the entire nation as well. For those whom he left behind,

the pursuit of peace continues until its fruition," Madrigal noted in a statement.

Lt. Gen. Arnel de la Vega, commander of the Zamboanga-based Western Mindanao Command, also extended his condolences to those left behind by Jaafar, "whose legacy as a peace stalwart and devoted leader shall live on."

"His contribution to the peace efforts of the government and the security forces shall forever be remembered," de la Vega said.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the whole Joint Task Force Central expressed sympathies to the passing of Jaafar, citing him as a "big loss" to the MILF.

"The people of Bangsamoro will never forget him because of his peace efforts. He left a legacy everybody remembers," Sobejana added.

Sen. Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito also sent his condolences on Jaafar's passing.

"This is sad news. With my deepest sympathies to Vice Chair Ghazali Jaafar whom I have talked to a lot during BOL deliberations. He, together with Chairman Murad, welcomed me in Camp Darapanan which I will never forget. Again my deepest sympathies on his passing," Ejercito said.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE
AND DEMPSEY REYES AND
MASIDING NOOR YAHYA**

MILF vice chair Jaafar dies of kidney failure

BY VICTOR REYES

GHAZALI Jaafar, the first vice chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, died of kidney failure yesterday at a Davao City hospital after 50 years of involvement in the Bangsamoro struggle. He was 75.

Jaafar's chief of staff, Raby Angkal, said the senior MILF official succumbed at around 1 a.m. at the Metro Davao Medical and Research Center where he was rushed on Monday after experiencing weakness.

The government condoled with the family and friends of Jaafar.

"Our deep thoughts and sincere prayers to Mr. Ghazali Jaafar who died early morning today, March 13, 2019. The Palace takes this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family members and friends of Mr. Jaafar. He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (Paradise)," Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and

concurrent presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

Angkal said Jaafar showed signs of weakening last year after the Senate and House bicameral committee approved the Bangsamoro Organic Law that established the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"Right after the bicameral committee meeting and the BOI was approved (in July), we noticed that he became weaker. We convinced him to have a checkup at the St. Lukes with the help of his good friend, Gen. Galvez," said Angkal, referring to former AFP chief Gen. Carlito Galvez, now the presidential adviser on the peace process.

"He was advised by experts to be admitted after they observed a weakening of his heart. He was confined at the Philippine Heart Center where had a bypass," said Angkal.

Angkal said doctors advised

See MILF ► Page B2

MILF

Jaafar to rest after his operation.

"But since the BOK has yet to be ratified, the vice chairman still attended gathering, campaign to convince people, explain to the people what the BOL is so it will be ratified," he said.

"After the ratification of the BOL (through a plebiscite in January and February), he grew weak again. He was rushed to the hospital where he was confined for the last three days. He was taken last night to the ICU (intensive care unit) where he died," said Angkal.

"His heart problem was already treated. His death, based on the findings, is due to kidney malfunction, he also has asthma," said Angkal of Jaafar.

Angkal said Jaafar's illness may have been the result of "pressure because of the BOL."

He added: "The schedule was really hectic and he was probably stressed during the passage of the BOL, coupled with old age, that's

why he died."

He said Jaafar was laid to rest in his hometown of Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao before noon yesterday, in keeping with the Muslim tradition that the dead should be buried not more than 24 hours after his death.

Angkal said thousands attended the burial, including MILF chairman Ebrahim Murad. Also present were government officials, including Galvez.

In a television interview, Murad said he and Jaafar joined the Moro struggle in the late 1960s with the Moro National Liberation Front that signed a peace accord with the government in 1996.

The MILF later settled for autonomy and signed a peace agreement with the government in 2014.

"We have been in this struggle for about 50 years," Murad said of Jaafar, who served as the MILF's first chief negotiator when the group started peace negotiations with the government in 1997.

"He was the one who forged

the ceasefire agreement between the GRP and the MILF during his term as chairman of the panel," said Murad.

He said Jaafar was being eyed as the first speaker of the Bangsamoro parliament.

"He was supposed to be recommended to become the speaker of the parliament, the first speaker of the parliament but then we had this natural, although unexpected, death," said Murad.

He said Jaafar is a "big loss" to the parliament and to the MILF but they could not do anything because "it's the will of Allah."

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division based in Maguindanao, said the 6th ID condolees with the loved ones of Jaafar.

"He is a big loss to the MILF. The people of the Bangsamoro will never forget him because of his peace efforts. He left a legacy everybody remembers," said Sobejana.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen.

Edgard Arevalo said the military is offering "its prayers and condolences with the relatives and friends of Jaafar for his untimely demise."

Arevalo said Jaafar had been "instrumental to the quest for peace in Mindanao as the AFP's dependable partner in that elusive aspiration."

"His insights and dedication as a person and as a peace advocate will be his enduring legacy—not only to the Bangsamoro people but to the entire nation as well. For those whom he left behind, the pursuit for peace continues until its fruition," he said.

AFP Western Mindanao Command spokesman Col. Gerry Besana said Jaafar's "legacy as a peace stalwart and devoted leader shall live on."

"His contribution to the peace efforts of the government and the security forces shall forever be remembered. We beseech the eternal repose of his soul. May Allah bless and grant him eternal place in Jannah," said Besana.

14

March 2019



Page: 3

WARRIOR OF PEACE

Palace mourns Jaafar passing

Prior to his death, Jaafar took his oath before President Rodrigo Duterte as a member of the 80-man Bangsamoro Transition Authority

By Kristina Maralit and Mario Mallari

Malacañang yesterday extended its condolences to the family and friends of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar whom it called a "warrior of peace."

Jaafar, whose real name is Salih Abo, passed away early Wednesday morning after a long battle with a cardiovascular disease. He was 75.

"The Palace takes this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family members and friends of Mr. Jaafar," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

"He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (paradise)," he added.

To recall, Jaafar was appointed as head of the now-defunct Bangsamoro Transition Commission in January 2017, and was one of the proponents of Republic Act 11054, otherwise known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

The said charter paved the way for the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Prior to his death, Jaafar took his oath before President Rodrigo Duterte as a member of the 80-man Bangsamoro

Transition Authority, the interim governing body overseeing the BARMM.

He was at the helm of the MILF peace negotiating panel from 1996 to 1997 and later on became the first vice chairman and concurrent chief of the group's political affairs.

He underwent a heart bypass early this year and was supposed to act as interim speaker of the BARMM regional parliament.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) also relayed its condolences on Jaafar's demise.

"We will never forget that despite his health condition, Jaafar selflessly dedicated and devoted his life for others. Truly, he is a man of peace," OPAPP chief Carlito Galvez said.

With Elmer N. Manuel

Bangsamoro TC chief passes away

By Nash B. Maulana

COTABATO CITY—He was preparing to lead the newly minted Bangsamoro government, but Ghazali Jaafar spent most of his life as a revolutionary.

That life came to an end early Wednesday at a hospital in Davao City, weeks after he underwent a heart bypass operation. His body was buried after the noon Muslim prayer at his farm in Pig-calagan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

Observers had noticed that Jaafar, vice chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, seemed pale and weak during the recent plebiscites to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law on Jan. 22 and Feb. 6, which paved the way for the creation of a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Veteran broadcast journalist Melo Acuna and wife Jonah Acuna fondly remember Jaafar as being thoughtful to friends, occasionally sending them the spicy palapa, pulverized chilly fried in grated coconut meat.

Next page



Bangsamoro...

From A1

In early February 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte named Jaafar as the chairman of the Expanded Bangsamoro Transition Commission, which then included members and officials of the MILF, as well as other sector-representatives, to help Congress draft a Bangsamoro law.

On Feb. 22, 2019, Jaafar was one of the presidential appointees to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, as speaker of the BTA Interim Parliament.

Jaafar was Datukan Abo or Toks to his media peers and friends. His radio listeners in the late 1960's fondly recall Toks by his broadcast signature, "Sinumagad a Lanun a Minukit a

Langkuno" (Literally: Bygones and Glorious Past).

Shortly after the Jabidah Massacre on March 18, 1968, Abo went underground, trained abroad and later worked for Suara Malaysia (Voice of Malaysia), a British Broadcasting Corp. affiliate regional station, which granted a bloc airtime slot for Mindanao Muslim expatriates in Sabah, Malaysia.

Abo's talent was further honed in 1973 when, along with fellow Mindanaoan, Nahdin Jubaira from Sulu, Mus Sema, Ustadz Abuhuraira, Mina Mohamunad and Akmad Bayam, he was trained by the BBC-Voice of Malaysia as its pool of regional talents and anchor persons. They were then members of the Moro National Liberation Front, prior to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. With Nat Mariano, Macon Ramos-Araneta and PNA

MILF vice chair Ghazali Jaafar dies at 75

COTABATO CITY -- Ghazali Jaafar, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front first vice chairperson for political affairs and chairman of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, succumbed to a lingering illness at the Metro Davao Medical and Research Center in Davao City yesterday. He was 75.

Speaking over a local radio station, Prof. Raby Angkal, the family spokesperson, said the remains of the Moro revolutionary leader will be brought home to Sitio Tapuken, Barangay Pigcalagan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, where he will be buried in Muslim rites. According to the Davao City police, Jaafar's body was claimed by his family around 3:45 a.m.

"We, the family, feel sad but in a way happy that the vice chairman Jaafar has fulfilled his legacy of helping set up the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao prior to his death," Angkal said.

He said Jaafar has not been feeling well lately, following his recent heart bypass operation in a hospital in Metro Manila. "Since then, he has been in and out of the hospital,"

Angkal said.

Jaafar last year said he had angioplasty, a procedure that improves blood flow to the heart. He suffered complications in the abdomen after, leading to frequent returns to the hospital for check-ups and confinement.

In an interview with ANC earlier this week, MILF chairman and BARMM chief minister Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim said that Jaafar complained of abdominal pain and was confined to an Intensive Care Unit. Murad said Jaafar was diagnosed with a kidney problem and toxins had spread in his body yesterday.

According to Dr. Angela Tan, attending physician, Jaafar was admitted at the hospital last Monday until he died from shock multifactorial (colon cancer) at around 1:40 a.m.

The entire MILF organization led by Murad is expected to attend the burial ceremony for Jaafar in his farm in Barangay Pigcalagan.

Malacañang yesterday expressed its condolences to the family and friends of Jaafar.

"Our deep thoughts and sincere

prayers to Mr. Ghazali Jaafar who died early morning today, March 13, 2019," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said, describing the late MILF leader as a "warrior of peace."

"The Palace takes this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family members and friends of Mr. Jaafar. He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (Paradise)," he added.

The Philippine National Police also condoled with the family of Jaafar.

"The Philippine National Police joins the Filipino nation in mourning over the passing of Chairman Ghazali Jaafar of the Bangsamoro Transition Committee," said Senior Supt. Bernard Banac, PNP spokesperson.

From being a "worthy adversary" as a militant to finally becoming a "peace partner," Banac underscored that Jaafar "shared the PNP's aspirations for a genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao."

"By reaching out the magnanimous hand of friendship and peace, Chairman Jaafar sought to make

the peace process work thru the newly-ratified Bangsamoro Organic Law," Banac stated. "On behalf of the PNP high command, we express our deepest condolences to the bereaved family of Chairman Jaafar and his colleagues in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority," he concluded.

Presidential peace adviser Carlito G. Galvez Jr. said the men and women of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process mourn the passing of Jaafar.

"We would like to convey our deepest sympathies and condolences to the bereaved family and relatives of Jaafar," Galvez said. "A great Moro leader, Jaafar, the first vice chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, showed us his determination in leading the Moro people through the passage and eventual ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law."

"We will never forget that despite his health condition, Jaafar went the extra mile to join several campaign rallies to push for the realization of the Moro people's aspiration for a genuine and meaningful autonomy,"



JAAFAR

Galvez added.

The BARMM is the result of the decades-old comprehensive peace processes between the government and the MILF, with its establishment only realized under the administration of President Duterte.

It is a new and more empowered regional government that replaced the old Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao setup. (PNA, Argyll Geducos, Martin Sadongdong, Ali Macabalang, and Francis Wakefield)

2

MILF vice chairman Jaafar, pumanaw na

Nagluluksa ang Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) sa pagkamatay ni Bangsamoro Transition Authority member Ghazali Jaafar Jaafar, sinabi kahapon ni Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito G. Galvez, Jr.

Si Jaafar, dating chairman ng Bangsamoro Transition Commission at miyembro ng Bangsamoro Transition Authority, ay sumakabilang buhay sa isang ospital sa Davao City, dakong 1:00 ng madaling araw kahapon.

Ayon kay Galvez, nagluluksa ang OPAPP sa pagpanaw ni Jaafar.

"We would like to convey our deepest sympathies and condolences to the bereaved family and relatives of Jaafar," pahayag ni Galvez.

"As a great Moro leader, Jaafar, the First Vice Chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, showed us his determination in leading the Moro people through the passage and eventual ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law."

"We will never forget that despite his health condition, Jaafar went the extra mile to join several campaign rallies to push for the realization of the Moro people's aspiration for a genuine and meaningful autonomy," dagdag ni Galvez.

Nagpahayag naman ng pakikiramay ang Malacañang sa pamilya at mga kaibigan ni Jaafar.

Ipinarating ito ni Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo nang makumpirma ang balita.

"Our deep thoughts and sincere prayers to Mr. Ghazali Jaafar who died early morning today, March 13, 2019," aniya, inilarawan si Jaafar na "warrior of peace".

"The Palace takes this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family members and friends of Mr. Jaafar. He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (Paradise)," dagdag niya.

Francis T. Wakefield,
Fer Tahoy,
at Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos



MILF Vice Chairman Jaafar patay na

Patay na si Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar (Salih Abo) matapos na maratay sa isang hospital sa lungsod ng Davao kahapon ng madaling araw.

Sinabi ni PNP Spokesman Police Colonel Bernard Banac si Jaafar ay binawian ng buhay sa edad na 73-anyos dakong ala-1:39 ng madaling araw sa Metro Davao Medical and Research Center.

Nabatid na nagkaroon ng maraming komplikasyon sa kaniyang sakit si Jaafar partikular na sa bato, puso at kaniyang tiyan.

Ayon kay MILF Chairman Murad Ebrahim na bago binawian ng buhay si Jaafar ay pabalikbalik na sa hospital si Jaafar na madalas magpa-checkup dahil sa seryosong kondisyon ng kalusugan nito.

Si Jaafar ay sumai-

lalin din sa angioplasty nitong nakaraang taon upang umayos ang daloy ng dugo sa kaniyang puso.

Naitalaga si Jaafar bilang Chief ng Bangsamoro Transition Commission na humawak sa Bangsamoro Organic Law na siyang nagbigay daan sa paglikha ng bagong Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)-Joy Cantos, Rhoderick Beliez-

MILF Vice Chairman Jaafar pumanaw na

Nagpaabot ng pakikiramay ang Malacañang sa pagpanaw ni Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) vice chairman at speaker-to-be of the parliament ng Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Ghazali Jaafar kahapon dahil sa kidney failure.

Sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo, maituturing na "warrior of peace" si Jaafar na nagsilbing chairman ng MILF peace panel mula 1996 hanggang 1997 at vice chairman ng MILF Political Affairs.

"The Palace takes this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family members and friends of Mr. Jaafar. He has fought many battles for peace and may Allah grant him a place in Jannah (Paradise)," pahayag ni Panelo.

Matagal ng may iniindang sakit si Jaafar at hindi na nito nakayanan kaya binawián ng buhay sa edad na 75.

Kinilala ng gobyerno ang naging kontribusyon ni Jaafar sa pagsusulong ng Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Si Jaafar ay nagsilbi ring Bangsamoro Transition Commission chairman bago ang naganap na referendum sa Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) kamakailan na siya namang pumalit na sa ARMM.
(Rudy AndalJoy Cantos)

BARMM issues 'fatwa' on immunization for 45,598 kids

By **ALIG. MACABALANG, NONOYE. LACSON,**
 and **BONIYA L. ERMAC**

COTABATO CITY - The Ministry of Health of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MOH-BARMM) launched this week a fatwa (Islamic ruling) on immunization, underscoring the importance of vaccination in the campaign against preventable diseases.

Dr. Safrullah Dipatuan, MOH secretary, said the fatwa was approved and signed by 13 religious leaders of the Regional Darul Ifta Tuesday morning.

"Immunization prevents deaths and suffering from vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, tetanus, polio, pneumonia, hepatitis, diphtheria, rubella and mumps," Dipatuan said.

Saving lives is a holy act "we must do in pursuit of our faith," he added.

Official data of the MOH showed that as of March 10, about 45,598 target infants and children in BARMM have already been administered with anti-measles vaccines.

BARMM covers Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi provinces, the cities of Marawi, Cotabato and Lamitan, and 63 barangays in six North Cotabato towns.

The MOH data showed that measles cases in BARMM declined to 361 confirmed cases in the first quarter of this year from 1,260 cases during the same period in 2018.

"refused immunization because they were unsure if vaccination was consistent with their faith."

The MOH and the UNICEF had conducted two conferences - one for the island provinces and another for the mainland provinces - in preparation for the issuance of the fatwa on the legitimacy of vaccination per evidence found in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Dr. Abas assured that immunization is permissible from the Islamic perspective noting that "the vaccines are halal."

"The best gift we can give to our child is a full immunization certificate," said Farid Dastgeer, a child protection specialist of UNICEF.

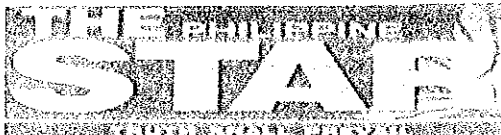
With the fatwa on immunization, the Health Ministry is hoping to increase the immunization rates across the Bangsamoro region. (Ali G. Macabalang)

Across the country, however, measles deaths have hit a new high, with 286 fatalities recorded from Jan. 1 to March 2 of this year, representing a seven-fold increase over 39 measles deaths recorded in the same period last year, the Department of Health disclosed last Tuesday.

Together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Dr. Zul Qarney Abas, MOH deputy minister, said they tapped the Regional Darul Ifta to issue the fatwa after discovering that many parents in BARMM

H

March 2019



Page: 3

Sandigan affirms trial of Misuari for graft

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

The Sandiganbayan has affirmed its earlier ruling to make Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founder Nur Misuari face trial over the alleged anomalous purchase of educational materials during his term as governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

In a resolution promulgated on March 8 and obtained yesterday, the court's Third Division said Misuari failed to raise any new argument in his motion for reconsideration.

This would warrant the reversal of its Nov. 29, 2018 ruling denying his motion to dismiss the two counts of graft and another two counts of the complex crime of malversation of public funds through falsification of public documents.

"It bears stressing that accused-movant Misuari merely rehashed the same arguments regarding his alleged non-liability and lack of participation in the offenses charged, which were raised in his omnibus motion to dismiss and defer arraignment. The Court already rejected the said arguments in its assailed resolution," the Third Division's new resolution read.

The Office of the Ombudsman on May 2017 filed the cases stemming from the payment of P31 million to MBJ Learning Tools on Dec. 21, 2000 and P46.261 million to CPR Publishing on July 24, 2001, both for the supply of information technology packages.

The ombudsman said none of the supposed purchased materials was ever delivered. Instead, Misuari and his co-accused former regional officials of the Department of Education allegedly falsified disbursement vouchers, purchase orders, canvass reports, sales invoices, delivery receipts and other supporting documents to make it appear that the transactions were aboveboard.

In his motion for reconsideration, Misuari argued he was no longer the governor of ARMM when the questioned transactions were made.

Misuari said his term as governor only lasted from March 31, 1996 to Sept. 30, 2001 with Parouk Hussein as his successor.

Contrary to the prosecution's allegation, Misuari said the payments to MBJ Learning and CPR Publishing were made in December 2003 and July 2004, respectively, when he was in detention.

"In any case, granting that the Court may take judicial notice of the accused-movant's years of incumbency as ARMM governor, the same does not necessarily result in his automatic exculpation, given the existence of documents relating to the subject transactions which were allegedly signed by him during his incumbency," the Third Division said.

Besides, the veracity of Misuari's claims shall be vetted against the prosecution's evidence in a full blown trial, the anti-graft court said.

"Suffice it to say that the Court has long determined the existence of probable cause and has already resolved to proceed with trial to afford all the parties the full opportunity to present their case," it added.

Sandiganbayan affirms graft, malversation raps vs Misuari

By CZARINA NICOLE O. ONG

The Sandiganbayan Third Division has affirmed its decision denying the motion filed by former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Nur Misuari seeking to junk his two graft and two malversation through falsification charges.

Misuari was charged in connection with the reportedly anomalous purchase of different educational packages and materials from 2000 to 2001.

In his motion for reconsideration, Misuari stressed that the irregular transactions he was being accused of took place during the term of his successor. Because of this, he cannot be held liable for receiving any money or funds from the transaction.

He added that the arguments are not evidentiary in nature that requires ventilation in a full-blown trial.

Despite his arguments, the anti-graft court still affirmed its earlier decision.

"It bears stressing that accused-movant Misuari merely rehashed the same arguments regarding his alleged non-liability and lack of participation in the offenses charged," the resolution read.

Even if Misuari was no longer the ARMM governor at the time the transactions took place, the Sandiganbayan said that it does not necessarily result in his "automatic exculpation" given the existence of documents relating to the subject transactions which were allegedly signed by him during his incumbency.

Misuari must face raps—Sandigan

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE Sandiganbayan has rejected the motion to dismiss the graft charges against Moro National Liberation Front founding chairman Nur Misuari over the alleged irregularities in the purchase of P77.26 million worth of “ghost textbooks” when he was governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

In a resolution dated March 8, the anti-graft court’s Third Division found probable cause against Misuari and ruled to proceed with the trial of Misuari on two counts each of graft and misuse of public funds.

“The court must stress that a comprehensive consideration of the merits

of the prosecution’s evidence and the defense’s arguments, as to the alleged weakness thereof, is premature at this point and better left to trial on the merits,” the Sandiganbayan said.

Misuari is accused of graft and misuse of funds for allegedly conspiring with his co-accused to give “unwar-

ranted benefits, advantage and privilege” to three private companies.

The Ombudsman found that “no such materials were delivered” by MBL Learning Tools, CPR Publishing, and White Orchids Printing and Publishing House.

But Misuari claims he could not be held liable for a transaction that pushed through when he was no longer ARMM governor.

Misuari said the payments to CPR Publishing took place in July 2004, MBL Learning in December 2003, and to White Orchids in July 2004 and September 2005, all of which were covered by the incumbency of former ARMM

governor Parouk Hussin.

Misuari said his term ended on Sept. 30, 2001, and that the issue of conspiracy was “non-existent.”

He said he was detained in Malaysia from December 2001 to January 2002 and for six years in the Philippines from 2002 to 2008.

He said he was detained at the Philippine National Police-Special Action Force Training Center in Santa Rosa, Laguna, when the three private companies were paid.

Late last month, the Sandiganbayan’s Third Division entered a not-guilty plea on behalf of Misuari after he refused to enter a plea during his arraignment. *A2*

Sandigan green-lights Nur's graft case

By Elmer N. Manuel

The Sandiganbayan 3rd Division has denied the motion for reconsideration filed by Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chairman Nur Misuari to dismiss graft charges against him over the alleged purchase of non-existent educational materials, when he was still governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

In its resolution dated 8 March, the anti-graft court said it already found probable cause against Misuari and ruled to proceed with the trial to allow both parties to present their case.

"The court must stress that a comprehensive consideration of the merits of the prosecution's evidence and the defense's arguments, as to the alleged weakness thereof, is premature at this point and better left to trial on the merits," the Sandiganbayan said.

In its resolution dated 8 March, the anti-graft court said it already found probable cause against Misuari and ruled to proceed with the trial.

To recall, the prosecution had accused Misuari of giving undue advantage to CPR Publishing House, MBI Learning Tools

and White Orchids for the procurement of "ghost textbooks" for ARMM from 2000 to 2001.

However, Nur argued he cannot be held liable for a transaction that pushed through when he is no longer ARMM governor.

He added that the payments to CPR Publishing took place in July 2004, MBI Learning in December 2003 and for White Orchids in July 2004 and September 2005.

Nur added all payments were conducted during the incumbency of former ARMM governor Parouk Hussin since his term expired on 30 September 2001.

Misuari also pointed out the issue of conspiracy is also non-existent as he was detained in several prisons due to various charges shortly after he stepped down from his post.

However, the Sandiganbayan said Misuari "merely rehashed the same arguments regarding his alleged non-liability and lack of participation" in the case when it denied his motion to dismiss last year.

The Sandiganbayan said it can only take note that Misuari was no longer ARMM governor when the payments were made, but stressed this cannot be the sole basis to dismiss the case at this stage.

2 terrorists, 2 soldiers killed in Lanao Sur clash

Two Daesh-Inspired Lanao Group members were killed following an encounter with government troops in Lanao del Sur on Monday, March 11.

A military report identified the killed militants as alias Abu Tahir and Abu Jihad.

Two government soldiers were killed while another was wounded as a result of the encounter between the Army's 55th Infantry Battalion, 1st Infantry (TABAK) Division and more or less 22 members of DI-Lanao group

under Abu Dar in Brgy. Calaludan, Pagayawan, Lanao del Sur at 4:20 p.m.

"We received information from the local populace on the presence of DI-Lanao group in the area and we responded to their call," said Col. Romeo Brawner, 103rd Infantry Brigade Commander, which has operational jurisdiction over Lanao del Sur.

Troops also recovered one carbine rifle and lower receiver (part) of M-16 rifle.

"We are sustaining our focused

military operation in order to destroy the remnants of this group (DI-Lanao) and make the province free from terrorists," Brawner said

Brigadier General Roberto Ancan, 1st Infantry Division and Joint Task Force Zampelan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao Provinces) commander said additional troops were sent in order to pursue the fleeing terrorists as well as to ensure the safety and security of the local populace in the area. (Francis T. Wakefield) 8

14

March 2019

The Manila Times

Page:

A3

MARAWI CITY VICE MAYOR ARRESTED ON REBELLION CHARGES

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Security forces arrested on Wednesday the vice mayor of Marawi City who is facing charges of rebellion, an army spokesman said.

Capt. Clint Antipala of the 1st Infantry Division (1D) said Arafat Salic was arrested by soldiers

and police officers before noon-time at Marawi City Hall.

"Salic is included in the Office of the Martial Law Administrator Arrest Order dated Sept. 4, 2017 for rebellion case," Antipala said, quoting a report by Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the 103rd

Infantry Brigade.

He said Salic, who underwent a routine medical check-up, would be handed over to the police. Over 300 people, mostly alleged members or supporters of pro-Islamic State (IS) and terrorist groups, were included in the arrest order.

Brig. Gen. Roberto Ancan, commander of the 1st ID, lauded Salic's capture.

"The 1st Infantry Division supports the commander in chief's (Rodrigo Duterte) declaration of Martial Law. We will perform our duties in accor-

dance with the law, respecting the rights of every individual and their properties. We take pride of the overwhelming support of the constituents and stakeholders in our area of responsibility as we perform our mandate to serve the people and

secure the land," Ancan said.

In May 2017, Duterte placed Mindanao under a state of martial law following the deadly siege of Marawi by pro-IS militants. Congress extended martial rule in Mindanao until the end of this year.

A3

AL JACINTO

Marawi vice mayor arrested for attack on Marawi City

BY VICTOR REYES

THE vice mayor of Marawi City, Arafat Salic, was arrested yesterday for the crime of rebellion in connection with the attack on and occupation of several barangays in the city by the Maute terror group almost two years ago.

The May 2017 attack led to a five-month armed conflict that left over a thousand terrorists, soldiers, policemen, and civilians dead and hundreds others injured. The fight-

ing also devastated the city which is being rebuilt by the government until now.

Salic was arrested at the town hall at around 10 a.m. by combined forces of the Army's 18th Infantry Battalion and the PNP, said 1st Infantry Division spokesman Capt. Clint Antipala.

Antipala said Salic was undergoing debriefing and medical check-up by the military as of yesterday afternoon. He added Salic will be turned over to the PNP once the

process is completed.

Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the Army's 103rd Brigade, said Salic is among persons in the arrest order list issued on Sept. 4, 2017 by the martial law administrator, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

President Duterte declared martial law in the entire Mindanao hours after the Maute Group occupied several barangays in Marawi

See MARAWI ► Page B3

MARAWI

on May 23, 2017, including the city's business district.

Lorenzana issued arrest warrants for hundreds of persons who are either members, support-

ers, or financiers of the Maute Group.

Salic's brother, former Marawi City mayor Pajad Salic, was arrested by authorities in Marawi also for rebellion in June 2017. Police tagged the former mayor as a supporter of

the Maute Group.

Antipala could not immediately say the vice mayor was arrested only now.

He also could not immediately say the specific role of the vice mayor in the Marawi City conflict.



Marawi City vice mayor inaresto sa rebelyon

Inaresto ng pinagsanib na elemento ng pulisya at militar ang bise alkalde ng Marawi City, Lanao del Sur sa isinagawang operasyon nitong Miyerkules sa city hall ng lungsod kahapon ng umaga.

Kinilala ni Captain Clint Antipala, spokesman ng 1st Infantry Division (ID) ng Phil Army ang nasakoteng suspect na si Marawi City Vice Mayor Arafat Salic.

Bandang alas-10 ng umaga nang arestuhin ng pinagsanib na mga operatiba ng Army's 82nd Infantry Battalion at ng lokal na pulisya si Vice Mayor Salic.

"Salic is included in the Office of the Martial Law Administrator arrest order dated September 4, 2017 for rebellion case," pahayag ni Col. Romeo Brawner, commander ng 103rd Infantry Brigade.

Si Salic ay kabilang sa isinasangkot sa rebelyon kaugnay ng naganap na Marawi City siege noong Mayo 23, 2017 kung saan ang krisis ay tumagal ng limang buwan.

Kaugnay nito, pinapurihan naman ni Brig. Gen. Roberto Ancan, Commander ng 1st ID ang pagka-kaaresto sa bise alkalde na kabilang sa mahigit 200 personalidad na nagsabwatan sa Marawi City siege.
(Joy Cantos)

Terrorist, pro-IS bandits killed in massive assault

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: The military on Wednesday claimed to have killed nearly 20 pro-Islamic State (IS) bandits, including a Singaporean terrorist, in massive air and ground assaults on a remote hideout in Maguindanao.

The 6th Infantry Division said the campaign, which began on Monday, was aimed at destroying a big group of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

It said about 20 bandits under Abu Turaife were slain in the assaults in Shariff Saydona town. Among those killed was Muhammad Ali Bin Abd Al Rahman or Muawiya, a notorious jihadist

belonging to the Indonesian Jemaah Islamiyah group, who had been a bomb trainer for the Abu Sayyaf.

The reports were based on intelligence information, but army commanders claimed to have seen or recovered body parts of those killed in an area targeted by heavy military bombardment.

Security forces were pursuing

over 100 terrorists in the province, which is also a stronghold of the rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

One soldier was killed and at least seven others were wounded in the clashes.

The military's Joint Task Force Central (JTFC) said air, artillery and ground operations were unrelenting, not only in Shariff Saydona, but also in the towns of Datu Salibo, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak where the group of pro-IS bandits, led by commander Salahudin Hassan, was scattered.

"JTFC launched a surgical air and artillery mission to clearly identify and confirmed targets that complemented a focused ground operations against the IS-inspired terrorist group at dawn of March

11. The operation was initiated after a concerned citizen relayed information regarding the consolidation of the fully armed terrorist group in the specific area," it said on Wednesday.

"Former BIFF rebels who surrendered to JTFC also supported the information being relayed to locate the specific locations of the terror group. Follow-on operations ensured that the terrorists were confined in the area and prevented the spill over as our troops were deployed in strategic areas," JTFC said, adding that the military also coordinated with the MILF to prevent any accidental clashes while troops were pursuing the BIFF.

Authorities have blamed the BIFF for the series of terror attacks in the restive southern region. A7

14

March 2019

The Manila Times

Page: A7

Sabah on full alert over Abu Sayyaf threats

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Sabah extended anew its curfew hours from dawn until dusk as it went on heightened alert over threats posed by the Abu Sayyaf terror group.

Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Omar Mammah said the curfew was necessary due to the "continuing threat of kidnapping-for-ransom groups and other criminals from neighboring Philippines."

The curfew has been extended until March 27 in Sabah's eastern coast which is now on full alert following Philippine intelligence reports that at least 17 Abu Sayyaf bandits led by subleaders Salip Mura, Majan Sahidjuan, alias Mike Apo, and Abu Radin were planning to strike or are on the hunt anew for targets of ransom kidnappings.

This was also reported by Malaysia's *The Star* newspaper, saying that "intelligence reports in the Philippines stated that the group was going to team up with Tawi-Tawi-based criminal elements who acted as spotters or lookouts for hostages in the eastern Sabah sea border."

It said Datuk Huzani Ghazali, commander of Eastern Sabah Security Command, admitted they were aware of the information about the movement of the Abu Sayyaf gunmen along the sea border. "We remain on full alert and have deployed all available forces to the area," he said.

Ghazali added that the focus of operation was across the east coast sea border with southern Philippines that includes Semporna, Lahad Datu and Sandakan.

The Star, quoting intelligence sources, said Mura, who was responsible for at least two kidnappings in Sabah's east coast late last year, was among the group using two speedboats with 75 horsepower-engines when they left Sulu recently.

"With him this time around was subleader Mike Apo, who was actively behind the kidnappings in Sabah between 2014 and 2016," the newspaper sources claimed. It added that the Abu Sayyaf gunmen were looking for "higher value" targets as they failed to gain much attention after they

abducted two Indonesians and a Malaysian fisher from Pegasus Reef in the Kinabatangan area on December 5.

The curfew was first implemented on July 19, 2014, following a series of kidnapping incidents which saw the beheading of Bernard Then Ted Fed, a Sarawakian, and the killing of several others, including a policeman and tourists. In September last year, the Eastern Sabah Security Zone extended a dusk-to-dawn sea curfew covering three nautical miles off the border of Tawi-Tawi's chain of islands over Abu Sayyaf threats.

Abu Sayyaf bandits, whose group had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, have threatened to execute the Indonesian and Malaysian hostages if their demand for ransom was not met.

The sources said the bandits, who spoke in Bahasa Malaysia, released a video clip showing the Indonesian hostages — believed to be Heri Ardiansyah, 19, and Hariadin, 45 — being guarded by the gunmen. The Malaysian hostage, Jari Abdulla, 24, was not

with the two.

The captives, their eyes covered with black cloth and hands tied behind their backs, made an emotional appeal to their government to save them. One militant even held a *bolo* to the neck of Hariadin as he spoke to the camera in a forested area.

The video, reports said, surfaced several days last month after Abu Sayyaf gunmen called up Jari's wife, Nadin Junianti, saying that no Malaysian authorities or negotiators have contacted them to secure her husband's release.

The gunmen said her husband would face difficulties if there was no contact from Malaysia. They also asked her for telephone contacts of Malaysian journalists. Nadin appealed to Malaysian authorities to help secure her husband's release.

Malaysian media did not say how much ransom the Abu Sayyaf was demanding for the safe release of the hostages. The terrorists are believed to still be holding nearly a dozen captives, mostly foreigners.

AL JACINTO

17

Rebellion raps vs. Marawi dad

MARAWI City Vice Mayor Arafat Salic was arrested yesterday on rebellion charges in connection with the 2017 siege.

"Salic is included in the Office of the Martial Law Administrator Arrest Order dated Sept. 4, 2017 for rebellion case," said Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the 103rd Infantry Brigade.

His brother, former Marawi Mayor Fajad Salic, was also nabbed in 2017 for rebellion in line with the arrest order issued by Defense Secretary and martial law administrator Delfin Lorenzana.

The vice mayor was arrested at the Marawi City Hall.

11

He underwent custodial debriefing and medical check-up before he was turned over to the Philippine National Police.



Vice Mayor Arafat Salic

Gov't presses attack versus terrorists

By Kathleen Mao Bulquerin

Determined to eliminate the threat of Daesh-inspired groups in Mindanao, government soldiers yesterday continued with their offensive against terrorists operating and terrorizing residents in Maguindanao.

This, as soldiers from Joint Task Force Central Mindanao yesterday shifted their operations in the towns of Salibu-Pagatin-Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak, after concerned citizens reported the enemies' presence in the said areas.

The residents claimed the terrorists conducted robbery extortion activities shortly reaching their areas last February, and in some cases, they forcibly occupied the houses of the residents.

They were living in fear for almost a month until they got the chance to report the incident to the military troops recently.

To recall, clashes between government soldiers and ISIS-inspired terror groups erupted beginning last Monday in Maguindanao.

At least 12 people were already killed and thousands of civilians were forced to flee their homes to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

They were living in fear for almost a month until they got the chance to report the incident to the military troops recently.

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.

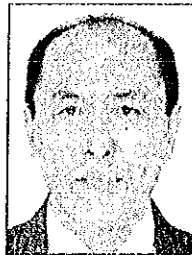
The said number, however, does not include displaced residents who evacuated from the towns of Datu Sandi Ampatuan and Datu Piang.

POSTSCRIPT

FEDERICO D. PASCUAL Jr.

MDT can't be used to recover Panatag

THERE was no need for Filipinos to cheer the assurance made by US State Secretary Mike Pompeo during his March 1 visit that the United States would defend the Philippines if any aggressor, China not excluded, attacked it. He was just repeating an old promise.



Since a Chinese armed attack is not likely to occur under the watch of President Duterte, what Manila needs is US back-channeling or its pressuring Beijing to stop grabbing, building up and militarizing features in Philippine maritime areas.

Pompeo's assurance of retaliation under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty has been unduly over-interpreted by some sectors in Manila dreaming of US military action putting an end to Chinese control of Panatag (Scarborough) shoal 120 nautical miles off the Zambales coast.

There is no provision in the MDT for taking warlike steps against China's ongoing low-intensity activities in the West Philippine Sea or invoking the treaty to recover strategically located Panatag from Chinese forces holding it for some ulterior military use.

Under the 635-word MDT, the US is committed to spring into retaliatory action only in the event of an external "armed attack" on Philippine (and/or American) territory, military personnel, naval vessel or aircraft.

Short of that, it is not clear what the Philippines can expect from its treaty partner. But Foreign Secretary Teddy Locsin Jr. was quick to tweet that the "vagueness was the best deterrent for a would-be aggressor.

Diplomatic sources familiar with the MDT talks conducted in the Cold War ambience of the early 1950s have told us that the negotiators had in mind Communist China as the potential aggressor in these parts.

Present-day Chinese coast guard firing water cannons on Filipino fishermen or seizing their choice catch are not engaged, literally, in an "armed attack." And Filipino fishermen are not members of the armed forces, nor are their fishing boats naval vessels. So the MDT may not be invoked?

Assuming the US is itching to engage China in Philippine waters – although we see that as far-fetched – it would have to bait the Chinese into firing a shot, or contrive an "armed attack" scenario in full view of a watching world.

As we have been saying here since 2016, Panatag (Bajo de Masinloc in Spanish times, Huángyán Dao to the Chinese, and Scarborough to most other seafarers) is not sovereign Philippine territory that must be defended or wrested back from invaders.

The July 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague classified Panatag as "high-tide features" (rocks), which generate only a 12-nm territorial sea, not a 200-nm exclusive economic zone or a more extensive continental shelf.

Article 121 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which the Philippines invoked in its submissions and upon which the PCA award was based, says that "rocks... cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own."

It turned out that neither China nor the Philippines owns those rocks. The tribunal did not resolve the sovereign question of ownership or possession, leaving Panatag – lying closest to the Philippines – as the communal fishing ground of neighbors, including Chinese, Filipinos and Vietnamese.

Why did not the Philippines ask in its 15 submissions that Panatag be declared part of its territory since it is just 120 nm off Zambales and 530 nm from Hainan, the nearest Chinese land mass? (That may be because the PCA was not the proper court to decide that issue.)

As a "rock" is not part of the sea, it could be acquired. Interestingly, one mode of acquisition is by conquest and occupation, but the MDT would not be the proper tool for a forceful takeover as imagined by quarters emboldened by Pompeo's reassurance.

What we kibitzers can only speculate about is if Pompeo had told Duterte of a contingency for the possible use of force – under the Mutual Defense Treaty – if China does not behave. But even if the US gave such a hint, we doubt if Duterte would play along.

• Money, time wasted on bridge replacement

REACTING to our last *Postscript* on the tearing down of the Estrella-Pantaleon bridge connecting Rockwell in Makati to Barangka in Mandaluyong by Chinese workers to replace it with their own span, Rick Ramos of Citizens Infrastructure Integrity Watchdog said:

There is no reason to replace the Estrella-Pantaleon bridge other than to make money, lots of it. The bridge is only eight years old and costs P300 million. The new four-lane bridge to be built by the Chinese will cost P1.22 billion or four times more.

Corruption at the DPWH has continued in spite of claims of President Duterte that he has a crusade against corruption. What is the point of building a four-lane bridge when the road on the Mandaluyong side is only two lanes?

This reminds me of Dugong Bridge which was demolished in 2012 and widened to four lanes. Yet the El 98 National Road was only two lanes. We at InfraWatch filed a case against the DPWH, but nothing happened because Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales protected the corrupt people of then President Noynoy Aquino.

There are three old Bailey bridges along the 4-6-lane Governor's Drive in Cavite from Carmona to General Trias. When these bridges were widened, the Bailey bridges were not touched or removed. The DPWH just added one lane on both sides of the highway to make four lanes! The existing two-lane concrete bridges were widened by simply adding a lane on both sides.

The same was done with the bridges along SLEX from Bifian to Sta. Rosa in Laguna. The existing bridges were not removed or destroyed as in the Dugong bridge in Iloilo.

METRO CORNER

State power over terrorism



By **ERIK ESPINA**

FORMER President Joseph "Erap" Estrada understood the problem of insurgency and terrorism. Handicapped by a legal-leg to comprehensively address both armed threats to the republic, presidential fiat was the alternative, with "total war." The policy direct and terse: "There is only one flag. One republic. One armed force. And the AFP is not prohibited from entering any part of Philippine territory." In his view, The MILF, the CPP-NPA, with their associates were threats to law, order, and progress. The MILF was a vanquished problem after the fall of Camp Abubakar with 40 satellite camps. Their leaders scurried back to their paymaster in Putra Jaya. Had Erap not been maneuvered out of office, the Communist peril would have been resolved under his watch. Indeed, the movie star knows how to be president in a crisis situation. He would and could have provisioned a nation waking up the

next morning, without the gestating evils against peace.

Under Ramon Magsaysay, Sr., "all-out war and all-out friendship" was wisdom behind his success over insurgents. He, however, had by his side the legal arsenal to cut the philosophical sophistry between Communism of the mind and of rebellion gripping Philippine society. State power was exercised via RA 1700, the Anti-Subversion Law, "An act to out-law the CPP & similar associations, penalizing membership therein." Passed on June 20, 1957, one clause states the CPP is "an organized conspiracy to overthrow the government not only by force and violence, but also by deceit, subversion, and other illegal means for the purpose of establishing a totalitarian regime.... The continued existence and activities of the CPP constitutes a clear, present, and grave danger to the security of the Philippines... whoever willfully and by overt acts affiliates himself and becomes or remains member of the CPP or any subversive association

shall be penalized -- by 1) arresto mayor, 2) a ban from holding any public office, and 3) denial of the right to vote.

Heightened terrorism today requires a hybrid RA 1700 and our version of the US Foreign Intelligence Service Act.

ONLINE NEWS

14 MARCH 2019

www.pna.gov.ph

Davao Occidental town declares NPA 'persona non grata'

By Rhoda Grace Saron

DAVAO CITY -- The Davao Occidental town of Jose Abad Santos has declared the New People's Army (NPA) as "persona non grata" or unacceptable, condemning the rebel group for its various atrocities.

A municipal council resolution signed by Mayor Jason John Joyce cited the "continued acts of violence, terrorism, violent extremism and other forms of lawlessness, oppression, and harassment of the communist insurgents to the people".

The resolution accused the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), of "constantly violating" the International Humanitarian Law in attacking non-conflict associated civilians, non-military equipment, and non-government facilities and establishments.

"The presence of the CPP-NPA-NDF threatens the economic, social and political stability and the well-being of the province and its populace," the resolution reads, referring to the National Democratic Front--the rebels' political wing.

Capt. Jerry Lamosao, spokesperson of the Army's 10th Infantry Division, said local government units are increasingly aware of the atrocities of the NPA.

"We would like to remind everybody that the CPP-NPA-NDF with their upcoming anniversary, is on the move to create more atrocities in the areas where they are still present. Rest assured that the 10th ID is ready to prevent them from harassing people," Lamosao said during Wednesday's AFP-PNP press briefing here.

"The manifestation that the municipality of Jose Abad Santos declaring the CPP-NPA-NDF as persona non grata is a good start so that the group will be denied on the recruitment opportunity and at the same time perform atrocious plan," he added.

Lamosao asked the residents to immediately report the presence of NPA members in their area. **(PNA)**

www.pna.gov.ph

Troops seize Abu Sayyaf guns, motorboat in Sulu

By Teofilo Garcia, Jr

ZAMBOANGA CITY -- Government troops have seized firearms and a watercraft belonging to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in a raid on an island town in the province of Sulu, officials said Wednesday.

Recovered were an M-16 "Baby Armalite" rifle, a caliber .45 pistol and a motorboat when joint military and police forces raided the hideout of an alleged ASG coddler around 11:30 a.m. Sunday in Barangay Tainga Bakkao, Banguingui town.

The raid was launched in response to a report from a civilian that an ASG coddler was hiding in Barangay Tainga Bakkao. The suspected ASG coddler, however, was gone when the troops raided the hideout.

Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, Joint Task Force Sulu commander, said the ASG bandits used the motorboat to transport militants who evaded government forces in several armed engagements in mainland Sulu.

Pabayo said the involvement of the populace in the campaign against the ASG is a clear indication that the bandit group is losing the support of the public.

"With the active support of the Tausug communities, I am confident that the problem with the Abu Sayyaf will soon be over," Pabayo added.

Military troops continue to launch combat operations against ASG bandits hiding in the hinterlands of Sulu.

"Our joint task force in Sulu is stepping up its campaign to hound terrorists by building up its intelligence and combat operations," said Lt. Gen Arnel Dela Vega, commander of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom).

"While sustaining that, military troops work with the police and the Suluanons to pursue militants and their coddlers in the area," Dela Vega added. **(PNA)**

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Army assures safety of Davao City residents amid NPA atrocities

By Lilian Mellejor

DAVAO CITY -- The Philippine Army's 3rd Infantry Battalion (3IB) has assured to keep residents of this city safe from atrocities of the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Lt. Col Oscare Partuza, 3IB commanding officer, made the assurance following Monday's encounter between the NPA and government troops in So Sangiapo, Barangay Sinuda, Kitaotao, Bukidnon.

"We and the other security forces in Davao and the local government of Davao City condemned the evil deeds of the CNTs (Communist Party of the Philippines-New Peoples' Army Terrorist)," Partuza said, referring to the military's standard designation of the NPA and its mother organization -- the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Partuza called on Dabawenyos to support the military's effort to stop NPA atrocities, adding that "with our collective actions and continuous vigilance, we can totally rid Davao City against criminals and terrorists."

After Monday's 10-minute firefight, Partuza said government troops are still pursuing the insurgents who scampered towards the northern boundary of Davao City and Bukidnon.

Partoza said the encounter ensued after government troops encountered about 30 insurgents believed to be members of the NPA's Guerilla Front 56 under a certain Egor.

Government troops recovered from the encounter site an AK47 rifle with magazine, an improvised explosive device, communication devices, ammunition, and subversive documents.

Earlier, Brig. Gen. Ernesto Torres, commander of the 1003rd Infantry Brigade, assured the military has kept the city's boundaries secured especially along the areas of Baguio and Marilog districts. The two districts are being eyed as peace and development zones under the local government's Peace 911 initiative. **(PNA)**

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More politicians receive extortion letters from rebels

By Gail Momblan

ILOILO CITY -- More politicians in Western Visayas received extortion letters from rebel groups as the campaign period for local candidates draws near, the Philippine Army's 61st Infantry Battalion (61IB) has said.

Lt. Col. Sisenado Magbalot Jr., commanding officer of the 61IB, said that politicians started to report that they received extortion letters from the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) last month.

"We anticipate more reports as we approach the campaign period for local bets," Magbalot said in a phone interview on Wednesday.

The Police Regional Office (PRO) 6 (Western Visayas) also said the same.

In a press conference on Monday, Police Brigadier General John Bulalacao, regional police director, said three politicians received extortion letters from the rebel group.

"We have received three and we expect this, especially this campaign season, but I am requesting those who have received to tell us and we will do necessary actions with coordination of the Armed Forces of the Philippines," Bulalacao said.

He refused to divulge the names and location of the three politicians for security reasons.

"We are still verifying if this is authentic letter coming from them (CPP-NPA)," he said, adding that the letters even carry serial numbers.

He said that no amount of money was requested by the rebel group "but they are requesting that a representative for their target would talk to NPA" to probably discuss the amount.

Bulalacao suggested to politicians who will receive extortion letters to report to the PRO-6 and discuss the concept in addressing the matter in their favor.

Meanwhile, Magbalot said they "had been receiving more" reports than the PRO-6.

"We still have to clear if we are talking of the same incident but all of these (extortion letters) also have to be validated. The reports we gathered are from the area of the 61st IB- within Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, and Guimaras," he said.

Magbalot also encouraged the politicians not to give in to the demands of the rebels because "it will just enhance its logical support."

He assured that government troops are active in protecting election candidates. **(PNA)**