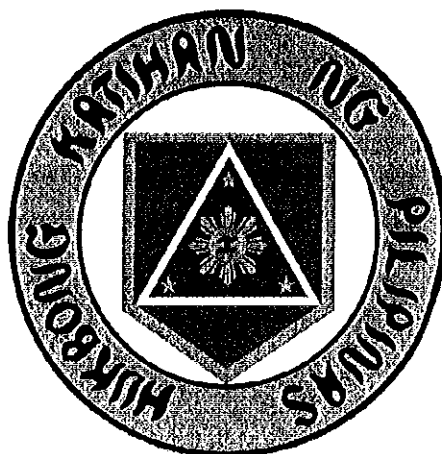


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DUTERTE NAMES 46 POLs ON NARCOLIST

The President says charges have been filed with the Ombudsman against the local officials and congressmen involved in drug trafficking. The information against the others, he says, is still being verified.

By Christine O. Avendaño
@ioavendanoINQ

President Duterte on Thursday night identified 43 local officials and three congressmen, most of them running in midterm elections in May, on

his so-called narcolist.

Speaking in Davao City, Mr. Duterte said cases had been filed against the politicians allegedly involved in the illegal drug trade with the Office of the Ombudsman.

"So this is already a validat-

ed report," Mr. Duterte said during a joint police-military command conference.

The local officials named are from the Ilocos region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Eastern

Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Soccsargen, Caraga region and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

On the list of officials named by the President are 35 mayors, seven vice mayors, one

provincial board member, and three members of the House of Representatives.

The President named the politicians as he lamented the loss of policemen and soldiers in his bloody war on drugs.

From July 2018 to March this

year, he said, 527 policemen were wounded, 553 soldiers killed, and 3,038 wounded in the campaign against narcotics.

The three congressmen he named were Leyte Rep. Vicente Sofronio Veloso, who is running for reelection; **AB**

FROM A1

Pangasinan Rep. Jesus Celeste, who is not running; and Zambales Rep. Jeffrey Khonghun, who is also running for another term.

Among the local officials on the list identified by Mr. Duterte was dismissed Iloilo City Mayor Jed Patrick Mabilog, who has fled the country.

The President said he had given a list of Philippine officials, including Mabilog, to the US Embassy in Manila.

But he said he did not know if Mabilog was in the United States or in Canada.

Alcala clan

Mr. Duterte also mentioned Mayor Roderick Alcala of Lucena City in Quezon province.

"These Alcalas," the President said, referring to former Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala and saying the clan had been wiped out because of involvement in illegal drugs.

"You never learned," Mr. Duterte said.

The President said he had met Alcala in Lucena and

POLITICIANS ON PRESIDENT DUTERTE'S DRUG LIST

Congressmen

- Jesus Celeste of Pangasinan
- Jeffrey D. Khonghun of Zambales
- Vicente Sofronio Veloso of Leyte

Mayors

- Ferdinand Dancel Aguinaldo of Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte
- Marjorie Apil Salazar of Lasam, Cagayan
- Cipriano Dungao Violago Jr. of San Rafael, Bulacan
- Erlon Clemente Agustin of Camiling, Tarlac
- Jefferson Fernandez Khonghun of Subic, Zambales
- Bruno Tolentino Ramos of Bay, Laguna
- Caesar Pabalete Perez of Los Baños, Laguna
- Cecilio C. Hernandez of Rodriguez, Rizal
- Eulalio Mendoza Alilio of

Lemery, Batangas

- Juan Valencia Toreja of Ibaan, Batangas
- Loreto Sahagun Amante of San Pablo City, Laguna
- Raul S. Palino of Teresa, Rizal
- Roderick Alcantara Alcala of Lucena City, Quezon
- Nieves Cabuñalda Rosente of El Nido, Palawan
- Former Mayor Jed Patrick Escalante Mabilog of Iloilo City
- Julius Ronald Leyritana Pacificador of Hamtic, Antique
- Mariano Malficio Malones Sr. of Maasin, Iloilo
- Sigfredo Alfuentes Betita of Carles, Iloilo
- Vicente Areño Loot of Daanbantayan, Cebu
- Gamar Ahay Janihim of Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte
- Leonida Albor Angcap of Mid-

thanked him for greeting him.

"But you know you are here, you have been always there [on] the list for many years," he said he told Alcala.

Mr. Duterte also named Mayor Vicente Loot of Daanbantayan, Cebu province, who is a former police chief superintendent.

Loot is not running for re-election.

"There are some people in the world you cannot dupe," Mr. Duterte said, adding he would resign if he could not "neutralize" the drug problem because that would mean he was useless.

"I am not interested in re-

salip, Zamboanga del Sur

- Crisinciano Enot Mahilac of Sinacaban, Misamis Occidental
- David Mabal Navarro of Clarin, Misamis Occidental
- Ezel Tabuelog Villanueva of Calamba, Misamis Occidental
- Jason Paredes Almonte of Oroquieta City
- Abubakar Pendatun Maulana of Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat
- Albert Palencia of Banga, South Cotabato
- Pablo Mondejar Matinong Jr. of Sto. Niño, South Cotabato
- Roberto Malijao Luna Jr. of Lingig, Surigao del Sur
- Mamaulan Abinal Mulok of Maguing, Lanao del Sur
- Former Mayor Montasser Meling Sabal of Talitay, Maguindanao
- Rasul Mabang Sangki of Ampatuan, Maguindanao

- Vicman Kambang Montawal of Datu Montawal, Maguindanao
- Jamar Abdulla Mansul of Hadji Muhtamad, Basilan

Vice Mayors

- Ariel Tabugo Alagos Jr. of Culasí, Antique
- Dennis Linco Hernandez of Rodriguez, Rizal
- Fralz Cabilao Sabalones of San Fernando, Cebu
- Abdulwahad M. Sabal of Talitay, Maguindanao
- Anida A. Dimaukom of Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao
- Arafat Alim Salic of Marawi City
- Jamal Abinal Pangandamun of Maguing, Lanao del Sur
- Ohto Caumbo Montawal of Datu Montawal

Provincial Board Member

- Rommel Cruz Ayuson of Rizal

leasing it before or after the elections because I don't have any intention of hurting anybody," Mr. Duterte said.

Others not yet verified

He said he won't identify the others on the list pending verification of their involvement in the narcotics trade.

Mr. Duterte said the Anti-Money Laundering Council and the Presidential Anticorruption Commission were also investigating.

"The results . . . will aid us in filing airtight cases against them," Mr. Duterte said. —WITH REPORTS FROM GERMELINA LACORTE AND JULIE M. AURELIO INQ

Gov't to public: Save water, don't panic

Palace: Water shortage looks artificial

By JAIME LAUDE and RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Hospitals have cut down on some vital services, carwash establishments have suspended operations, and entire cities have been warned of little or no water supply. But despite the worsening water woes, the government yesterday assured the public that there will be adequate water in Metro Manila.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), however, said the water level in La Mesa Dam continues to inch below critical level.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) gave as-

urance that measures are in place to ensure adequate water supply for all.

NDRRMC executive director Ricardo Jalad said representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-National Water Resource Board (DENR-NWRB) and from Angat Dam had a

meeting yesterday, during which it was revealed that the dam in Bulacan is still within its normal operating level of 199.94 meters compared to its minimum operating level at 180 meters.

Angat Dam is the main source of water in Metro Manila.

"This (shows) that Angat Dam can sufficiently address Metro Manila's water requirements," Jalad said.

So why are large areas of Metro Manila suffering from an acute water lack?

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) explained that the decline in La Mesa Dam's water level is caused by the increase in water treatment production of Manila Water.

Jalad said that the water allocation of Manila Water from MWSS sourced from Angat Dam is 18.5 cubic meters per second, or 1,600 million liters per day.

The water demand from Manila Water consumers, however, has increased to 20.25 cms

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Gov't

From Page 1

(1,750 million liters per day), forcing the concessionaire to source the deficit from La Mesa Dam.

PAGASA hydrologist Sonia Serrano said there was a reduction of 0.05 meters of water from the 68.79 meters recorded on Wednesday.

PAGASA said that as of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level in the dam was at 68.74 meters below the critical level of 69 meters.

That level is 11.41 meters below the normal level of 80.15 meters, based on the Dam Water Level Update table of PAGASA.

Serrano added that level is also the lowest mark PAGASA recorded in 21 years.

She said it was in 1998, the hottest year on record, when

PAGASA recorded water level in La Mesa Dam to be at 68.75 meters.

Remedies

Jalad said a technical working group composed of the NWRB, MWSS, National Irrigation Authority (NIA), Manila Water and Maynilad has committed to continue their close coordination to ensure that water supply releases from Angat Dam are optimized.

Jalad said the cross border gate opening shall be done in which 50 million liters of water daily (MLD) from Maynilad will be delivered to Manila Water.

MWSS also presented a contingency plan which includes, among others, the rotation water supply and pressure

management, energizing the Cardona Water Treatment plant by the end of this month. The Cardona Water Treatment plant is expected to provide an additional 50 MLD.

Manila Water, which services the east zone of Metro Manila, has cut supply in several areas supposedly because the water level in La Mesa Dam dropped due to lack of rain and high demand.

All areas under the east concession zone would experience six to 18 waterless hours.

But the MWSS did not buy such excuse, saying Manila Water sources its water from Angat Dam, which has not reached its critical level of 195 meters.

The Ayala-led water concessionaire claimed that it had already maximized its water allocation from Angat Dam,

which is 1,600 MLD as the demand had reached 1,700 MLD.

Manila Water claimed it now gets its reserve supply of 80 to 100 MLD from La Mesa, now below critical level.

West zone concessionaire Maynilad has vowed to provide additional supply to Manila Water to ease the water shortage in Metro Manila and nearby areas by April.

Maynilad will be sharing 50 MLD with Manila Water, which will benefit up to 50,000 households in Quezon City, Parañaque City and Taguig City.

Explain shortage

Malacañang yesterday urged concerned agencies to explain the cause of the insufficient water supply in Metro Manila.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said he also

f

wanted to know whether the reported water crisis was real.

"We are precisely investigating to know exactly what is happening or what's the cause of the lack of water supply," he said.

Panelo echoed the statement of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana that the problem could be due to the distribution of the water allocation since there is still enough supply at Angat Dam.

"If Angat Dam is full and the water from it supplies Metro Manila, so something is wrong with the efficiency in distributing as well as the quotas or the shares," Panelo said.

"The water comes from Angat Dam and there is no shortage there and as far as that particular dam is concerned, it is full - so why the insufficient distribution?"

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said he will be meeting his team today to assess the water problem in the country. He added there was already a draft executive order being prepared for signing of President Duterte to address the water concerns.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), for its part, issued a memorandum circular to all local government units (LGUs) calling for the enactment of ordinances to address illegal water connections and encouraging prudent use of water.

The DILG ordinance also allows concessionaires and water utilities to conduct emergency repair of leaks, as well as allowing free use of firetrucks from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) for water distribution operations.

The Philippine Air Force, for its part, has deployed one of its planes for cloud seeding

operations.

The problem

The MWSS said government is partly to blame even if a possible supply problem has long been forecast and delayed solutions have been formulated.

In a televised interview, MWSS chief regulator Patrick Ty said several projects - which could have addressed the shortage happening now in Metro Manila and parts of Rizal - have been delayed.

"It's our fault. It's the government because the Kaliwa and Laiban Dam have been proposed since Marcos' time and due to a lot of oppositions and accommodations for the IPs (indigenous people), from the informal settlers, from this leftist group, church group, these projects keep on getting moved," Ty said.

"It is our fault but it is also everyone else's. We've been delaying all these projects and right now, we cannot rely on Angat. It is just one source and we need an alternative," he added.

The proposed Laiban Dam would supply more than 2,000 MLD while Kaliwa Dam would provide 600 MLD, the latter awaiting its environmental compliance certificate before work can actually proceed.

"Since 2007, Laiban is being discussed but until now we have not started and that's the problem. We have all the plans since we have forecast the problems, including population growth," Ty said.

"That is why we were also rushing during the Aquino administration, unfortunately because of all these oppositions, it gets derailed. That's the problem," he added. - With Christina Mendez, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Louise Maureen Simeon, Jose Rodel Clapano, Mayen Jaymalin

Palace defiant on Hague tribunal

By Nat Mariano

THE Philippine government will not cooperate with the International Criminal Court should the Hague-based tribunal throw a full-scale investigation on President Rodrigo Duterte's "harsher" war on drugs, the Palace maintained on Thursday.

In a Palace press briefing, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said the ICC had no jurisdiction over the country and its matters, adding the country remained unrestrained by their rules.

"They don't have a jurisdiction. If they don't have jurisdiction, they cannot do anything against us," Panelo told Palace reporters.

Next page

Palace...

From A1

"There's no jurisdiction. Why would you cooperate with them if they don't have jurisdiction over us? We're not bound by their rules."

In Cauayan City in Isabela, Duterte said if the ICC would declare him guilty of crimes against humanity due to the series of drug-related killings, he said he would be "glad to go" and would even be the one to put the rope around his neck.

Speaking before Isabela officials and villagers during the campaign rally of PDP-Laban senatorial candidates at the Francisco L. Dy Memorial Coliseum on Wednesday evening in Cauayan City, Duterte said, "For all the things that I have said, ordered and done, I am willing to put [the rope around] my neck about this."

Duterte, who said last year that he would be ready to die by firing squad, had earlier ordered the withdrawal of the Philippines' membership in the ICC. The withdrawal will take effect on March 17.

Reiterating his stand that the ICC had no jurisdiction over him, Duterte claimed the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC, was not enforceable in the country because it was not published in a government publication or any newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines.

Panelo, the President's chief legal counsel, stressed the ICC would violate its own rules if it would conduct a preliminary investigation. **With PNA**

Cloud seeding starts in Isabela this weekend

BY DEMPSEY REYES

CLOUD seeding will be conducted this weekend starting in Cauayan, Isabela, to cushion the impact of drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon, the Philippine Air Force announced on Thursday.

The announcement came amid the dry spell ushered in by the weather phenomenon, resulting in water shortage in several major cities, including those in Metro Manila.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has tapped the Air Force and the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines for assistance in carrying out the cloud seeding as the dry spell was blamed for the water shortage.

Isabela is the most vulnerable to drought, according to the Agriculture department.

Maj. Aristides Galang Jr. said the aircraft to be used in the operation would be the CAFN-22 "Nomad" twin-engine turbo-prop aircraft.

The plane is being fitted with cloud-seeding equipment at the Mactan-Benito Ebuen Air Base in Cebu.

Pilots from the 220th Airlift Wing would fly the aircraft, while the cloud seeding shall be conducted by personnel from the 200th Air Force Weather Group.

The operation would be conducted from March up to May.

Meanwhile, the National Disas-

ter Risk Reduction and Management Council has convened to discuss updates and plans regarding the impacts of El Niño.

Office of Civil Defense Administrator Ricardo Jalad assured that the government was exerting efforts to ensure adequate water supply to the public.

"These agencies present in [the] meeting, especially those working with the water sector, would continue to collaborate to provide the needed services to the public," Jalad said in a statement also on Thursday.

He added that the regional offices of the DA allotted P18.3 million for the cloud-seeding being recommended for Cagayan Valley and Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos City) scheduled between March 14 and May 21 this year. A7

Jalad said the Department of the Interior and Local Government would issue a memorandum circular to all local government units to urge them to enact ordinances to curb illegal connections and encourage prudent use of water.

The Bureau of Fire Protection was also directed to allow free use of firetrucks for water distribution.

A total of 16,034 farmers have been affected by El Niño, based on a DA report, while the total volume loss was placed at 22,918 metric tons of crops, mostly rice and corn.

The farmers affected are from Mimaropa (Mindoro Occidental and Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan), Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region and Soccsksargen.

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Cloud seeding under way—PAF

THE Philippine Air Force confirmed Thursday that it will begin cloud seeding operations this weekend, as the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council has released P18.3 million to the Department of Agriculture's regional officers to address the El Niño phenomenon.

"[Cloud seeding] will be conducted supposedly tomorrow [Friday]. However, it was moved to Saturday or Sunday because we still have to prepare the airplanes. Initial [area to be covered] will be Cauayan [to save crops in danger of

drying up in Isabela]," PAF spokesperson Maj. Aristides Galang said.

However, cloud seeding—a process in which substances such as salt are dumped onto targeted clouds to induce rainfall—should be the last resort in addressing drought, the National Irrigation Administration said.

Pilipina Bermudez, Department Manager of the NIA Public Affairs and Information Staff, said that cloud seeding is expensive and dependent on too many factors to work. *Next page*

Cloud...

From A1

Pilipina Bermudez, Department Manager of the NIA Public Affairs and Information Staff, said that cloud seeding is expensive and dependent on too many factors to work.

"Cloud seeding should be a last resort, because it costs P1 million to fly an airplane [to do the seeding]," Bermudez told GMA's News To Go program.

Instead, the NIA official suggested the use of shallow tube wells and distribution of water supply in irrigated lands on rotational basis as a better option.

The government will do everything it can to provide clean water for everyone, NDRRMC Executive Director Ricardo Jalad said.

"We want to assure the public that the government is doing everything to ensure adequate water supply for all," Jalad said in a statement sent to reporters late Wednesday.

Previously, Ayala-led Manila Water Co. Inc. and Enrique Razon Jr. of the International Container Terminal Services Inc. were discussing the construction of a dam in Montalban, Rizal to ensure sufficient water supply in the east zone area.

According to Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System administrator Reynaldo Velasco, Manila Water is now negotiating with the Razon-Oscar Violago tandem to proceed with the new Montalban Dam or much improved Wawa Dam as a medium-term water source.

"Insofar as additional water coming from Wawa, it is a talk between Manila Water and the Razon group. That is the direction they are going and from what I gathered, Manila Water is being invited by Razon to form a JV [joint venture]," Velasco said. **PNA**

9

Cops arrest extorting NPA poseur

By Neil Alcober

The long arm of the law has finally caught up with a man who went into hiding for four years after being convicted for robbery-extortion by posing as member of Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

Senior Supt. Ariel Fulo, San Juan police chief, identified the convict as Mario Luis Gonzales, 67, of 19 J. Vicencio St., Barangay

Sta Lucia, San Juan City.

But unknown to the suspects, agents of National Bureau of Investigation set an entrapment operation against them.

Fulo, said Gonzales was collared by members of the San Juan City police warrant and subpoena unit in his house at 1:20 p.m. yesterday.

Court records showed Gonzales and two other suspects extorted P550,000 money from one Noel Franco, an engineer of a construction firm.

It was learned that Gonzales was convicted by Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 143 to suffer four to six years of imprisonment on extortion charges.

The suspects reportedly claimed to be members of the central committee of the

CPP-NPA and contacted Franco through his cellphone and demanded the said amount in aid of the revolutionary movement.

But unknown to the suspects, agents of National Bureau of Investigation set an entrapment operation against them.

When the victim handed the P200,000 to the suspects, authorities who were positioned at the area nabbed the two suspects. Gonzales, however, managed to elude arrest. 8

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Candidate from Marawi wants to beat the odds

By CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

"Samira! Samira!"
Members of the Muslim community in Port Area, Manila called out her name as Otso Diretso senatorial candidate Samira Gutoc walked toward them on Monday night.

Gutoc said she had to take every chance and work double

time to introduce herself because people in Metro Manila "do not know me."

A man volunteered to accompany her to a place where he said Gutoc could meet many potential voters. "Magbibihis lang po ako (I will just change clothes)," the volunteer told Gutoc, smiling, because he

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**BILANG
PILIPINO
2019**

was wearing a sleeveless shirt.

The volunteer said it was his way of showing support as he openly declared he would be voting for Otso Diretso bets this May.

As the people crowded around her and took selfies and groupies with her, someone suggested that she visit the barangay chairman. But since there was not much time, Gutoc asked them to relay her message to the chairman through a video. They obliged and chatted with her comfortably in their own language after recording her appeal to the village chief.

Local officials' backing important

Gutoc knows the value of securing the support of local government and barangay officials, especially in Mindanao, given their influence over their constituents.

Despite being the only senatorial candidate from Marawi City, Gutoc – a civic leader and advocate of various causes – admitted she may not be able to get the solid vote of Mindanao.

Gutoc said many local officials are apprehensive of the possible repercussions if they openly support her senatorial candidacy under the opposition coalition, Otso Diretso.

"Mindanao is under martial law, which might have implication in the electoral process because of the influence of LGUs (local government units), barangay captains. They are all afraid to be seen with the opposition," Gutoc, who was with fellow Otso Diretso candidate Erin Tañada and campaign manager Sen. Francis Pangilinan, told editors and reporters of *The STAR* during a visit where she also

got the chance to meet members of the Muslim community near the newspaper's office.

Marawi has been under martial law since it was placed under siege by terrorists in May 2017.

Gutoc said there are no government records of the total voting population among Muslims, vowing to initiate measures to account for all the Muslims in the country should she get elected to ensure that they will receive needed services.

The Otso Diretso senatorial team is set to hold campaign sorties in the coming days in Mindanao, a known bailiwick of President Duterte.

"We would be visiting them, Marawi in April. Mindanao is critical, being the land of promise. There's never been a Marawi girl (who) won in the Senate," Gutoc said.

While there are those who are afraid, Gutoc said there are other courageous local officials brave enough to stand up for what they believe in, in addition to the people themselves who have pledged to vote for them.

"So we are so grateful to General Santos for inviting us there," the outspoken Gutoc said, referring to their campaign sortie in General Santos City recently.

As a native of Marawi, Gutoc has been calling on the government to help its residents fully recover two years after the IS-inspired Maute group attacked and displaced the entire community.

"Marawi residents are still in the evacuation (centers)," Gutoc said.

"We hope they will be brought back to ground zero... It is not about money, financial (assistance) but their self-respect and dignity – when you get your people back on their feet and they make their own decisions, they build their own houses... Resiliency is something (inter-

nal) in each and everyone, *hindi 'yan binibigay lang* (it's not just given)," she added.

Against the odds

Gutoc has been showing courage not just in running for a national position despite lack of resources and popular surname, but in pushing for what she thinks is right for Mindanao.

She was a member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission appointed by

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Candidate From Page 2

Duterte to draft the Bangsamoro Organic Law but resigned because of her opposition to the President's misogynistic remarks and declaration of martial law.

"I was the one who spoke in Congress about the human rights violations (being committed in Mindanao under martial law). The PDP-Laban (to which the President belongs) invited me to run in the local level but I did not accept it because of principle," she noted.

Gutoc said the national government should ensure members of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority would be transparent and accountable.

"If elected... I will demand that reporting be done. A web portal should reflect how monthly disbursement is done. How agencies are going to spend their

funds," she said.

Gutoc said she was thankful that the President signed the BOL that would replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao but his administration should not take full credit for it because it was a product of long negotiations.

She believes it is a big step to achieve peace and development in Mindanao even if there are groups trying to obstruct the BOL's implementation.

Maguindanao clashes displace 30,000 villagers

By Edwin O. Fernandez
@inqmindanao

SHARIFF AGUAK, MAGUINDANAO—Close to 6,000 families or 30,295 people have fled their homes in seven towns in this province because of ongoing clashes between government troops and the Islamic State-inspired local militants, the provincial social welfare office said.

Hadja Emma Ali, provincial social welfare chief, said the evacuees came from 22 villages in the towns of Datu Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Mamasapano, Datu Salibo, Shariff Aguak, Datu Saudi, Datu Unsay, Datu Piang, all in Maguindanao's second district, the site of the military's operations against the militants.

Ground, air assaults

Ali said at least two civilians were injured when they were hit by shrapnel after mortars landed near their houses.

She said her office had been extending aid to the evacuees.

Datu Piang and Datu Unsay towns also extended aid to the displaced families, including evacuees seeking refuge in relatives' homes.

The military claimed more than 20 militants had been killed in ground and air assaults against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in the marshland of Datu Shariff Saydona Mustapha since Monday.

A soldier was killed and 11 others were wounded when ground troops clashed with fleeing BIFF men following helicopter attacks.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said one of the fatalities was a man, believed to be an Arab, who had been training local militants in making bombs.

Only 1 fighter killed

Abu Misry Mama, speaking for one of the factions of the BIFF, denied reports that his group suffered heavy casualties. "Only one fighter was killed," he said.

Civilians displaced by the fighting were asking why war continued in the province when the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was already in effect.

"We thought genuine peace is here with the coming of the BARMM," said Salipada Agam,

55, an evacuee from Shariff Saydona Mustapha who sought shelter in a relative's home in Mamasapano.

He was referring to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) that replaced the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The BARMM was the product of the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Hoping for peace

"Hopes were high then that peace would finally reign and that (there would be) no more war after the BOL and BARMM," he said. "I was wrong because fighting is still here."

Two helicopter gunships pounded the militants' position on Monday after some 300 heavily armed men were seen in Libutan.

An Army intelligence officer said BIFF men had gathered since Sunday night in Datu Shariff Saydona, after 30 gunmen clashed with government troops at Barangay Tuka in Mamasapano that left two soldiers and a civilian injured.

INQ

17

Duterte optimistic Mindanao will catch up with rest of PH

By BEN R. ROSARIO

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay -- For Mindanao to catch up with the rest of the country in terms of economic progress, voter should support senators who are sincere and capable in pursuing a legislative program for peace and development in the region.

This was President Duterte's message to Bicol folk during well-attended campaign sorties for administration senatorial candidates.

Duterte singled-out Maguindanao Rep. Dong Mangudadatu as his personal choice in helping pursue additional pieces of legislation that would support the recently enacted Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

The Chief Executive described Mangudadatu as "one of the good leaders of the Moro people, who

will promote peace in Mindanao."

Duterte urged voters to help him put in place the development and peace programs in Mindanao, saying that they only need to support Mangudadatu and several other senatorial bets he had endorsed.

"So, hingin ko ay isa lang. Masabi ko lang na may isang senador na aalagaan mo, kasi he will promote peace in Mindanao," Duterte said.

Duterte was joined by Mayor Sara Duterte, the founding chairperson of the Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP), in supporting Mangudadatu's candidacy.

In various Hugpong ng Pagbabago campaign sorties, the city mayor makes it a point to introduce Mangudadatu as the "key to Mindanao's peace and progress."

Mangudadatu is optimistic that attaining peace in Mindanao

is not far-fetched, banking on the full implementation of the BOL, which he supports to give the south a respite from the wars and lift the people from the bondage of poverty.

Mangudadatu said the support of the national government, Mindanaoans, and the Filipino Muslims is vital for Mindanao to catch up with the rest of the country, especially that part of the island is transitioning to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

"BARMM, if given the right implementation and full support of the people not only the Muslim Filipinos, the whole of Mindanao's growth will accelerate and push this country into unprecedented growth and progress," he said.

Thus, Mangudadatu said, Mindanao needs another voice in the Senate so that peace and development initiatives for the island can be given a stronger push.

Mangudadatu, who is seeking a Senate seat in the May election, said Mindanao is a land of opportunities but, these have remained untapped because of perceived peace and order issues.

1st BARMM POC meet tags ASG, BIFF as security risks

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY – The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) tagged the sporadic atrocities by extremist militants as main security concerns in the new geopolitical region during its first peace and order council (POC) meeting here this week.

A recent report from a BARMM ministry official also mentioned the possibility of using Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) field personnel in Sulu to reach out to Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) combatants and possibly strike a "truce" aimed at giving the new autonomous governance the chance to bring about justice, peace, and equitable growth in depressed communities like Sulu.

Military and police officials took turns on Tuesday in briefing BARMM interim Chief Minister Murad Ebrahim about the extent of threats from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

The Army's 6th Infantry Division (6ID) said Wednesday that 20 Daesh-inspired BIFF members were killed in the military's continuing "surgical" operations in the areas of Salibu-Pagatin-Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak towns in Maguindanao.

The bodies of two of the fatalities, including an Arab-looking person, were recovered in Brgy. Inaladan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha town by artillery and airstrikes-backed troops of 40th Infantry Battalion on March 12, a 6ID statement said.

The statement named 17 of the slain BIFF militants as Abdul Karim Kadil, Yusop Lakiman, an alias Paks/Pagal, Yusop Bastardo, Musa alias USA, Dungadong alias Dong, Hamer Lakiman, Alladin Bagundong, Baser Abdula, Muhalidin Akob, Ansare

Mukaliir, Datokan Masala, Mutasir Manap, Kage Manap, Duang Ali, Yusof Kadir, and Mubarak Antoling.

The BIFF was founded by the late Ameril Umra Kato, an Islamist radical leader who broke away from the MILF after staging attacks in North Cotabato in protest against the Supreme Court's voiding of the front's 2008 Memorandum Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD) with the Arroyo government.

Three factions have eventually sprung from the BIFF. One of them is led by Esmael Abdulmalik, otherwise known as Abu Toraiife, and bomb-maker Salahuddin Hassan. The military blamed Toraiife and Hassan, both Islamist radicals, for the spate of bombings in Central Mindanao and for harboring foreign bomb-makers, including the slain notorious Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan.

MILF leaders, including Chairman Murad, in statements after the passage of RA 11054 or BARMM charter in July 2018, said they would embark on local talks aimed at winning back the BIFF factions to the social mainstream. They were more hopeful of striking a truce with the two other BIFF factions.

At Tuesday's POC meeting, Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6ID chief, told Murad that while the military was relentless in its surgical operations against the BIFF, battalion and brigade commanders have been working closely with the local government units in Maguindanao in community development activities designed to persuade BIFF members to return to the folds of the law.

Maguindanao mayors led by Governor Esmael Mangudadatu and military officials led by Gen. Sobejana had already facilitated the surrender of dozens of BIFF combatants in at least four symbolic ceremonies since 2018, the 6ID said.

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ROSES & THORNS

PIA ROCES MORATO

The class act that is Vigan



Luckily, or shall we say, serendipitously, I have had the chance to visit the city of Vigan as often as I could because of my shared interest with former Mayor Eva Singson Medina on culture and heritage.

My love for history and culture is no secret as I always say which explains why I keep coming back to this beautiful city. But there is one more very important component that I purposely combine with this love for history and culture and that is the element of progress.

We all know that Vigan is a UNESCO Heritage site which is why every year thousands of tourists venture into this city to experience what it's like to have walked the streets during the Spanish era.

The one very catchy detail about this beautiful city however is the fact that it played a very significant role in the area of trade. Vigan was an important trading post in pre-colonial times long before the Spanish galleons.

Goods from China sailing from the South China Sea came to Isla de Bigan through the Mestizo River that surrounded the island.

From Asian kingdoms, seafaring merchants came to barter goods in exchange for gold and mountain products brought down by the natives in the Cordilleras resulting into a multi-cultural bloodline of Bigueños which emerged when Chinese immigrants began to settle in the area.

In 1572, Captain Juan de Salcedo saw that Vigan City was indeed a thriving trading settlement which led him to establish the Villa Fernandina de Vigan as capital of Ilocos, making it the third Spanish settlement in the Philippines during the Spanish era.

The Manila-Acapulco galleon trade in the 18th century was undertaken by Vigan Chinese mestizo traders who exported local products such as basi, tobacco and abel to Europe and other parts of Asia. This trade brought about so much wealth which enabled them to build big brick masonry and wooden houses through the help of local

carpenters and masons.

In the mid 19th century, when the Manila-Acapulco trade was abolished, the local economy became weak and the City of Vigan reversed into a municipality.

In 2001, however, by invoking the 1758 Spanish decree, and because the city was the capital, Vigan was once again elevated as a *ciudad* becoming the first integral city of the province of Ilocos Sur. Vigan City has a master plan and its leaders are very well educated about the past and how it affects the future of their city especially with regard to their local economy.

When one goes to Vigan, you will witness the dignity and discipline of the people who are all a part of city building. People in Vigan, or Ilocos Sur for that matter, fully understand what needs to be done to keep their city intact. Their past has enabled them to determine what needs to be pursued as well as rejected.

Vigan leadership is firm. There is no room for setbacks for a city that seeks to pass on its heritage to the succeeding generations.

At the end of the day, we all love to talk about the beauty of Vigan, but beautiful as it may be, the most important part I've learned when it comes to my trips to this glorious city is the fact that its current leadership together with its people are determined to keep it strong.

The masterplan involves the participation of Vigan's constituents and this is evident especially from every public servant you see under their local government. A clear inclusion of the past with the progressive needs of the present is the combination that motivates this city.

The masterplan links culture and heritage with economic and development projects through long term and sustainable programs.

And like they always say, you can't move forward if you don't know where you came from.

Heritage plus innovation is what makes Vigan City a class act through and through.

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COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Army Day

On March 22 the Philippine Army observes its 122nd founding anniversary at their headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. The highlight of their anniversary would be having no less than their Commander-in-chief, President Rodrigo Duterte, to join them for the traditional trooping of the lines and directly address the uniformed men and women of the Philippine Army.



As one of the three major service commands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine Army comprises more than half of the 140,000-strong uniformed personnel. Currently, Lt.Gen. Macairog Alberto is its Commanding General. Alberto belongs to the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class 1986.

On this occasion, we deemed it timely to highlight the Filipino Army men and women – celebrating their anniversary theme “122 Years of Heroism, Securing the Land” – as our featured subject of discussions during this week’s *Kapihan sa Manila Bay* news forum.

We invited key officers in charge of the Philippine Army’s civil-military operations (CMO) to our *Kapihan sa Manila Bay* at Cafe Adriatico in Remedios, Circle last Wednesday. Joining us in the conversations were Lt.Col. Demy Zagala, public affairs chief of the Philippine Army, along with Col. Patricio Ruben P. Amata, General Staff College (GSC, Infantry), and assistant chief of staff for CMO G7PA and Col. Facundo O. Palafox IV CAV (GSC) PA Regiment Commander CMO Regiment.

Amata belongs to PMA Class 1993 while Palafox comes from PMA Class 1990. Zagala is a proud product of military training from the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). Regardless of where they got their military training, the three Army officers attested to the “meritocracy” principle as the basic guide followed in the matter of promotions at the AFP.

On a personal note, I first came to know Zagala who once served in the Presidential Security Group (PSG) where he was one of the junior officers among the close-in security to former president Joseph Estrada. When he graduated associate bachelor in political science in 1990 from Dela Salle University, Zagala was the ROTC Corp Commander. He was commissioned in the reserve force of the Army in 1991 until he was subsequently called to active duty a few months later.

Zagala is actually an Army brat. He followed his father’s entry into the Army who was also a product of ROTC when he was called to active service during World War II in our country. In fact, his late father, Maj.Gen. Rafael Zagala served as Army Commanding General from 1971 to 1976 until he retired from the military service.

During our *Kapihan sa Manila Bay* news forum, Zagala echoed the call for the restoration of ROTC requirement in colleges and universities. Zagala believes the ROTC

is the best training ground for young Filipinos to develop the sense of nationalism, patriotism, discipline, leadership, and most especially, the love for country and people. “That’s why, we here, we feel that ROTC can contribute more to selfless service, more towards nation building rather than the individual,” Zagala cited.

Thus, he felt sad that the name of the ROTC has been unjustly dragged in the killing of a freshman college student – an incident that had nothing to do at all with the ROTC, except that the suspect was once an officer of ROTC in the past. This was the reported killing of freshman Willy Amihoy at the campus dormitory last Monday by alleged assailant Elmer Decilao who was identified as ROTC Corps Commander at the Iloilo State College of Fisheries (ISCOF) in 2017.

No less than the Commission on Human Rights declared the incident had nothing to do with ROTC based on their own investigation of the case.

The military denounced obvious propaganda attempt by left-leaning groups to misinform the public by linking the incident to the ROTC and put it in bad light.

The ROTC program, they pointed out, remains focused on making responsible citizens and patriotic citizens out of the country’s young men and women who are interested to become future officers of the AFP.

In fact, no less than President Duterte has been urging the 18th Congress to pass a law to make ROTC mandatory anew in all colleges and universities. The President’s strong push for mandatory ROTC came in the wake of continuing threats of communist insurgency in the country that has reached school campuses as recruitment grounds for young cadres of the New People’s Army (NPA).

At one point in time last year, President Duterte even announced he might issue an Executive Order that would implement this mandatory ROTC. This would amend an existing law that made the ROTC program optional since 2002. A bill reinstituting the mandatory ROTC for Grades 11 and 12 students in all public and private schools nationwide, authored by House deputy speaker Batangas Rep. Ranco Abu, has been approved on second reading last Feb. 6. Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian authored its counterpart bill in the Senate.

It was former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who signed Republic Act (RA) 9163, or the National Service Training Program (NSTP) Act that made ROTC no longer prerequisite in the collegiate curriculum. RA 9163, signed on Jan. 23, 2002, allowed college students to choose between ROTC, Literacy Training Service and Civil Welfare Training Service as part of their required National Service Training Program. The law made the NSTP mandatory for all college students while the mandatory ROTC program it replaced covered male students only.

RA 9163 gained impetus at the height of emotional outburst over the murder of Mark Chua, a University of Santo Tomas (UST) student and cadet who exposed alleged illegal exactions practiced by certain ROTC officers in their campus. His body was later found floating in the Pasig River on March 18, 2001. In 2004, a Manila court found ROTC cadet Arnulfo Aparri Jr. guilty of killing Chua. He was sentenced to death although this was downgraded to life imprisonment without parole when the death penalty was subsequently abolished in 2006.

Though it was just one incident, it unfortunately sent to oblivion an entire program of ROTC that produces our future Army men and women.

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Teching-up the Bangsamoro Youth



Jove Tapiador, Fintech Co-Founder and President; Cong Bai Sandra Sema, Mother of BOL; and Roy Mielat, 1 Cooperativo Insurance Systems of the Philippines

With the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) established, Bangsamoro champion and acknowledged mother of the BOL Rep. Bai Sandra Sema has begun engaging and mobilizing the youth of Mindanao through the "Coop Kicks" technology and entrepreneurship program.

Done in partnership with the One Cooperative Insurance System of the Philippines (ICISP), the largest cooperative insurance organization in the Philippines, Coop Kicks features entrepreneurship and technology bootcamps, pitching competitions, mentorship, incubation and marketplace support, and access to financing for innovative business ideas and models.

"Now that the Bangsamoro Organic Law has been ratified by the people and the BARMM established and in place, it is time to work for the youth by empowering them and creating more opportunities for them to take part in charting the new course towards peace, unity, and prosperity," Rep. Sema said. "The Coop Kicks program aims to tech-up the youth and encourage them to take an active role in shaping the future of Mindanao."

Coop Kicks is an ongoing project by ICISP launched in October of 2018. The Bangsamoro Coop

Kicks, which is the program's second leg, was launched on March 6, 2019, at in Cotabato City.

Keynote speakers during the Cotabato City launch included Rep. Sema; Roy Mielat, president of ICISP; and Jove Tapiador, co-founder and Chairman of Fintech Philippines Association—a non-profit association representing and promoting the Philippines as a premier financial and technological innovator in Asia.

Cooperatives, teams, or individuals who are residents of Mindanao and who have breakthrough business solutions, products and/or services awaiting a kickstart can join the Coop Kicks pitch fest. Duly registered cooperatives in Mindanao may also become part of the program as business proponents or finance providers.

Short-listed proponents can avail of free registration in entrepreneurship and technology bootcamps, and a chance to become one of the finalists in the Coop Kicks final round.

Winners in the final round will be awarded P100,000 seed funding support; free use of a fully supported co-working space for up to one year in Cagayan de Oro City; a highly qualified mentor during the incubation period; support for business registration, processing and development; and access to Series A funding during the full development phase.

ONLINE NEWS

15 MARCH 2019

AFP backs call for provinces to form anti-insurgency bodies

By Priam Nepomuceno March 14, 2019, 12:45 pm

MANILA -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Thursday expressed support for calls of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to provinces to create their own anti-insurgency bodies.

"Yes, this will hasten the local peace process and encourage more communist terrorists to give up the armed struggle and opt for peaceful means of ending the 50-year-old insurgency," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato told the Philippine News Agency (PNA) when asked on whether the move will be helpful to the military's ongoing campaign against the New People's Army (NPA) communist rebels.

Through this measure, the military official said cascading the benefits and other forms of support for surrendering NPA members and supporters will be made much easier.

"Also, benefits for the returning rebels will also be responsive because it will be awarded to them with simpler and faster procedures since they are local constituents of the respective provinces," the AFP official added.

Another advantage of all 81 provinces having their own anti-insurgency bodies is that their respective provincial governments can address problems of local rebels.

Earlier, DILG Secretary Eduardo Año urged the country's provinces to create their respective task forces to combat insurgency issues in their respective areas.

"With no less than President Rodrigo R. Duterte himself taking the role as National Task Force chairperson, provincial governments should follow his lead by taking more active and decisive actions to counter communist terrorist groups through the creation of a provincial task forces," he added.

In December last year, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order 70, which institutionalized a whole-of-nation approach in dealing with the insurgency, through the creation of National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict. **(PNA)**

www.pna.gov.ph

AFP needs civilian force multipliers for 'Big One'

By Priam Nepomuceno March 14, 2019, 12:05 pm

MANILA -- While it has expressed readiness to respond in case of a strong earthquake in Metro Manila, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced that it is constantly participating in joint and combined exercises related to disasters in a bid to identify civilian groups who can act as the military's force multipliers.

This was bared Wednesday by Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP public affairs office chief, when asked what units the military can immediately deploy should a strong tremor hits the metropolis.

"All units inside the Metro will also be affected in case of the 'Big One,' however, (the) AFP has a contingency plan to commit as first responders troops who are inside camps to include the engineering battalion that is stationed in Libis (Quezon City) who has collapsed structures rescue capability," he said in a message to the Philippine News Agency.

The military unit Detoyato is referring to is the 525th Engineering Combat Battalion which is equipped with a variety of bulldozers, backhoes and other heavy construction equipment.

The AFP official, however, admitted that this battalion is not enough and this is the reason why the military is keen on identifying civilian groups that can augment their numbers in case of massive calamities.

"Even then, this will not be enough that is why we are regularly participating in joint and combined exercises to identify civilian groups who can be our force multipliers when widespread calamity occurs," Detoyato stressed. **(PNA)**

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