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NEWS CLIPPINGS

08 August 2018

Wednesday



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FUEL, FOOD COSTS PUSH INFLATION UP TO 5.7%

Rising prices pushed the total inflation rate to 5.7 percent, breaching the central bank's target. Analysts believe the budget authority is moving with more of an interest rate to a cash point on Thursday.

FROM A1

By Ben O. de Vera
and Jovic Yee
@Team_Inquirer

Higher food, fuel and transport costs pushed inflation nationwide to 5.7 percent last month, the fastest rise in over five years, the government said on Tuesday.

Surging inflation reduced a family's purchasing power of P10,000 last year to only P9,430 last month.

In Metro Manila, prices of basic goods and services rose further to 6.5 percent up from 5.6 percent in June and 2.9 percent in July last year.

Inflation in July nationwide marked the fifth straight month the rate has breached the central bank's 3-4 percent target for this year and next, leading some analysts to believe policymakers would deliver a rate hike as much as 50 basis points on Thursday.

The inflation rate was near the top end of the central bank's 5.1-5.8 percent estimate for July.

Amid rising consumer prices, the country's economic manager assured the public that the government was moving to temper inflation. They said inflation would taper off toward the end of the year.

Food prices surge

In a report released on Tuesday, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) attributed the increase in prices of basic goods

and services to a 7.1-percent year-on-year increase in the price of food and nonalcoholic beverages.

Rice prices have further gone up amid low grain inventory and depleted buffer stock of the National Food Authority.

Declining rice inventory

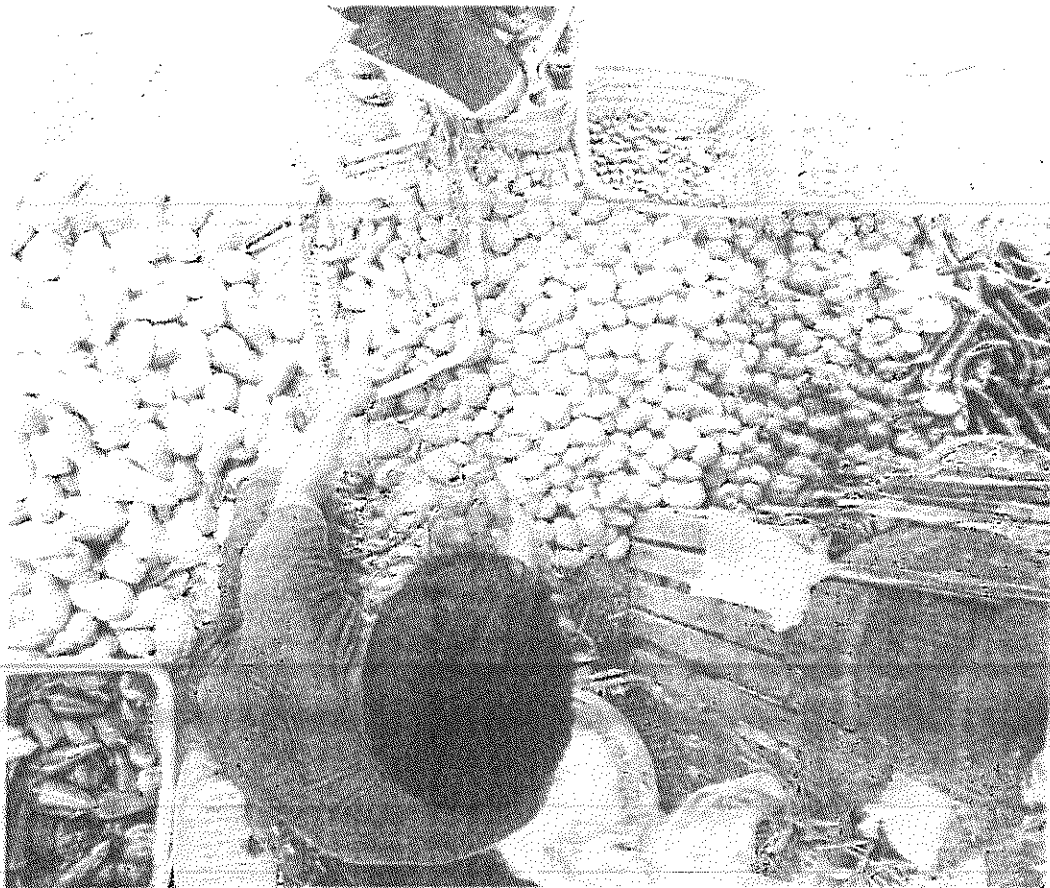
"Part of the supply problem is the country's declining rice stock inventory—caused by weather disturbances in the country and in other rice-producing countries like Thailand and Vietnam—which is taking a toll on the prices of rice," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Socio-economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said in a joint statement.

They said the 2.36 million metric tons of rice last month "declined by 8.2 percent year-on-year (from 2.57 million MT in July 2017) and dropping by 11.1 percent from the preceding month's 2.9 million MT, with the National Food Authority's rice buffer remaining almost depleted."

Jeepney fare

Another driver of inflation is higher transport costs. Since July 9, minimum jeepney fare has been increased to P5 from P4 because of rising pump prices of fuel.

At the same time, the excise on cigarette further rose to P35 per pack starting July under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act, up from P32.50 in January and



HIGH PRICES With inflation rate going up to a high of 5.7 percent in five years, vendors at Pace Market in Manila expect prices of vegetables to rise.—MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

P90 last year.

The TRAIN law, which was implemented on Jan. 1, jacked up or imposed new excise on cigarettes, sugary drinks, oil products and vehicles, among other goods, to compensate for a higher tax-exempt personal income.

At the Senate finance committee hearing on the proposed P2,757-trillion national budget

for 2009, Finance Secretary Dominguez said the TRAIN law contributed 0.7 percentage point to inflation.

Commodity groups

The Psa said the following commodity groups braved about the highest prices in Metro Manila:

- Alcohol, beverages and tobacco, up 21.4 percent year-

to-year

- Transport, up 8.6 percent
- Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, up 8.2 percent

- Food and nonalcoholic beverages, up 7.2 percent

- Health, up 4.9 percent
- Clothing and footwear, up 2.6 percent

- Recreation and culture, up 2.1 percent

- Communication, up 1.1 percent

Income loss

In the wake of the price increases, workers saw their income go down by as much as P2,700 in the first six months.

Based on estimates of Ibon Foundation, roughly 60 million Filipinos suffered an income loss of around P993 to P2,795 because of the higher-than-expected inflation.

The research group noted that the peso's continued depreciation, the rising price of oil on the global market and the implementation of the TRAIN law were among the factors that drove up inflation to 5.7 percent in July.

Wage hike

On Tuesday, labor groups lamented that Ibon's estimate showed that the recent P9 to P56 increase in the minimum wage imposed by the Department of Labor and Employment was not enough to cover at least P165 that workers lost to inflation monthly.

Nagkaisa, labor coalition spokesperson Rent Magtubo urged the government to fast-track its plan to flood the market with basic goods, such as rice, sugar, cooking oil at affordable prices to tame inflation.

The Federation of Free Workers urged the Department of Trade and Industry to be more proactive in monitoring businesses, which may take advantage of the situation. —WITH A REPORT FROM REUTERS INC.

Duterte sacks entire Nayong Pilipino board

Nayong Pilipino Foundation chair Patricia Ocampo (third from right) leads the groundbreaking for the construction of the \$1.5-billion Nayong Landing integrated resort in Parañaque yesterday. During the ceremony, Malacañang announced that President Duterte had fired the foundation's board of directors for approving the supposedly disadvantageous lease deal with Landing Resorts Philippines Development Corp. Also in photo are Landing CFO David Hoon, Landing CEO Jay Lee, Parañaque Rep. Eric Olivarez, Parañaque Mayor Edwin Olivarez, Landing Philippines chairman and executive Director Yang Zhihui, Pagcor president Alfredo Lim, and chair and CEO Andrea Domingo.

ROBERTO PINTELO

For 70-year casino lease

By ALEXIS ROMERO

With the groundbreaking came the heartbreak.

As officials of the Nayong Pilipino Foundation (NPF) were leading groundbreaking rites yesterday for a casino project in the Entertainment City in Parañaque, word from Malacañang got around that they were being dismissed for corruption.

NPF chair Patricia Yvette Ocampo hurriedly left as news of President Duterte's order broke out. In a statement later in the day, Ocampo denied any wrongdoing. Dismissed were all board members and management of the state-run firm.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the President — at Malacañang's cabinet meeting — voiced his "extreme concern" that the NPF had

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Duterte

From Page 1

entered into a lease deal with Landing Resorts Philippines Development Corp. that was "grossly disadvantageous" to the government.

"In addition to the firing of the entire board of the Nayong Pilipino Foundation Inc., the President has instructed a review of the contract of lease entered by (Nayong Pilipino) with Landing Resorts Philippines Development Corp., which the Chief Executive described, in his own words, as flawed," Roque said in a statement.

Recalling what transpired during Monday's meeting, Roque said the President was incensed that NPF leased a government property "for a ridiculous long period or time of 70 years, beyond the lifetime of anyone."

"The papers that will formally terminate the entire management and the entire board or directors of Nayong Pilipino will be issued in due course by the Executive Secretary," Roque added.

Comprising the NPF board are Grace Enagsagan, Danny Carmona, Ivor Benares, Milla Ledredo and Ray Salvosa, according to the foundation's website.

Roque could not provide details about the lease contract but he claimed it was originally supposed to be for 70 years, later reduced to 50 years and eventually to 25 years.

"The rental payment was still unconscionable, but he was exasperated. He started the meeting with a general expression of exasperation," the presidential spokesman said.

Asked if the government would pursue charges against NPF officials, Roque replied, "I do not know yet whether or not charges will be pursued. I'm only announcing that he has sacked all of them."

NPF officials at the ground-

breaking ceremony were caught off guard by the announcement. Online videos showed Ocampo rushing to leave and refusing to answer questions from the media.

Landing Resorts Philippines Development Corp. (LRPDC), a subsidiary of Hong Kong's Landing International Development Ltd., has a provisional license to operate a casino issued by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

The casino is a component of Landing Philippines' tourism project with the NPF. The project will be developed on land owned by NPF and has an investment commitment of \$1.5 billion, according to a Pagcor press statement.

In a statement, Ocampo said she would abide by President Duterte's order but denied accusations of irregularities in the lease contract with Landing Philippines.

"I strongly deny accusations that there was graft and corruption. On the contrary, the lease contract with Landing International Development Ltd. is aboveboard and is highly advantageous to the government and to the Filipino people," she said.

Monthly rentals were pegged at P360 per square meter, and the advance rental amount was placed at P827.05 million.

In addition, NPF will receive an additional monthly rental equivalent to 10 percent of net profits from the operations of attractions and theme parks, exclusive of the value added tax.

"We negotiated what we believed then, and believe now, are most advantageous terms and conditions for the government and the people," Ocampo explained.

"We will continue to serve the President in our personal

capacities as we firmly believe in the President's fight to rid the country of graft and corruption," she added.

"In behalf of the board of trustees of the NPF, I would like to thank the President for having been given the opportunity to serve the Filipino people. It is regrettable that it has come to this, but we understand that we serve at the pleasure of the President," she said.

No effect

Landing International, meanwhile, said in a statement its NayonLanding project is still pushing through and its lease contract with NPF still valid despite the sacking of NPF officials.

The firm said that from its point of view, Malacañang's decision "did not affect the validity of the subject contract or lease."

It clarified that the term of lease with NPF is for a period of 25 years only "commencing from the date of execution of the contract of lease."

"Unless the lease contract is cancelled or nullified on solid legal grounds by the courts, Landing has reason to believe that it is a valid leaseholder and can legally proceed with its project," it said.

But it stressed that "subject to and upon approval of LRPDC's application with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), the term of the lease shall be for a period of 50 years, as allowed by Republic Act 9595 or Tourism Act of 2009, as an incentive to encourage foreign investments in the Philippines."

Earlier at the groundbreaking ceremony, Ocampo said the NPF supported Landing Group because the project was in line with the board's aim of preserving and promoting Filipino culture and heritage.



President Duterte warns police officers facing various cases in an expletive-laden speech that the days of scalwags are numbered as he faces them at Malacañang yesterday. **FRANCIS ROALES**

She said NPP board members had made it their commitment to put up a new Noyon Pilipino to remind the Filipinos of the country's culture and diverse heritage.

"We rallied to several people and presented our project but it was only the Landing Group that embraced our entire concept. I have never met in my whole life an investor to our country that is the entire of the whole project and investment, decided to promote our country and that is why our whole board is 100 percent supportive," she said.

In a press briefing yesterday prior to the actual groundbreaking, Landing International chief operating officer Jay Lee said the group through Landing Resort Philippines Development Corp. is on track to open its planned Filipino-inspired integrated resorts and entertainment resort in Manila.

Landing Philippines will build Noyon Landing, an integrated resort with estimated development cost of up to \$1.5 billion, located at a

Filipino-inspired architecture and interior design that will be the country's new gateway to tourism and leisure tourism by 2025.

Lee said the group is organized by the company's young manager in the Philippines. "Based on some criteria of already selected."

"I don't think we're saturated market. It has depended on the kind of projects and operators. It's an investment. This will be a halfway landmark for Manila's new developments."

He said Landing International has a lot of other projects and is looking for the ideal market for its new projects. "Integrated resorts, however, that are not yet come to Manila," he said.

"By having this new development, and other similar countries, we are creating a destination to regional resorts," he added.

The development will have as its flagship attraction the Filipino Cultural Town. It will also have an indoor theme park.

"Noyon Landing will be an iconic landmark that will highlight Manila as a modern global city with a rich culture and heritage. We are redefining integrated resort as we blend in the local cultures, leisure and entertainment into the development, making it a must-see and a must-experience tourist destination," said Landing International chairman Jay Lee in his speech at the ceremony.

Furthermore, he said the project is expected to significantly contribute to the economy and the country's tourism industry, as it is projected to create over 10,000 jobs by 2025, including direct and indirect employment.

Lee also expects to draw an additional 2.5 million foreign tourists to the Philippines.

Landing International, a subsidiary of Noyon Development, will provide extensive catering for local and international tourists. Landing also operates Jeti, Salsabea World or Jeti, Isiano, South Tower - With Louella Desiderio, Catherine Talavera, Ed Gonzales.

PH-CHINA GAS SEARCH GETS DUTERTE NUDGE

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has approved in principle the creation of a high-level working group tasked to formulate a framework for a planned oil and gas exploration and development with China in the contested

meeting on Monday night and, if everything goes well, there is a big possibility that the Philippines and China could come up with a framework agreement by September.

'China is also ready (with its)

areas of the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea or WPS), Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said on Tuesday.

According to Cayetano, the President gave his approval during their

working group and as soon as both sides have working groups, we could start talking,' he told reporters in a news briefing in Taguig City.

The Foreign Affairs secretary earlier

► SearchA2

said China has expressed its openness to a 60-40 split on the joint exploration in the disputed areas of the South China Sea.

Cayetano, however, declined to give more details about the planned agreement but he noted that the working group would be composed of officials from the Cabinet level, including the Departments of Energy, Environment and Natural Resources, Defense, Interior and Local Gov-

ernment and Justice, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and National Security Agency.

These agencies, he said, could provide expert inputs on environmental, energy, security and legal issues.

'The working group will also advise us and help us in negotiations,' Cayetano added.

He said he wants the joint exploration to begin as soon as possible because of some factors

that could have serious impact, if the project is delayed.

If the agreement would be made on the fifth year (2021) of the Duterte administration, Cayetano said, there is a big chance that one side or both sides of the commercial venture would wait for the next administration rather than proceed with the project.

Another reason is that the Malampaya gas field is expected to run out by 2024 and because

it provides 45 percent of Luzon's power requirements, the country would need to find new sources before that happens.

'For us, it is an urgent need and could benefit all Filipinos. I want to work double time on it and I am hoping that our side of the working group can do a lot this August and then try to hit September or October,' Cayetano said.

JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA

Duterte cues PH-China talks

Everything the arbitration award says we're pursuing - we're talking with China

By Marie J. Mallari

Discussions on oil and gas and other positive matters convinced President Rodrigo Duterte to give the green light to the creation of a high-level working group for the

planned joint exploration with China in the disputed part of the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

This was revealed yesterday by Foreign Affairs Secretary Alastair Peter Cayetano following the approval by the Chief Executive

of the formation of a Cabinet-level group to craft and finalize a framework for a possible sea pact with China.

Among the agencies that will be involved are the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Energy,

Justice, Environment and Natural Resources, Interior and Local Governments, the National Security Council, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and the Office of the Solicitor General.

"Our discussions on oil and gas are progressing quite well. Last night I asked the President if I can form the working group and he approved it," Cayetano said.

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The high-level working group, Cayetano said, is tasked to come up with a framework on how to go about the planned joint exploration project with China.

The foreign affairs chief stressed that the planned joint exploration would only cover areas in the disputed portion of the WPS.

On the other hand, Cayetano said Beijing will also form its own working group to meet with its Philippine counterpart to formally discuss their respective frameworks.

Cayetano, at the same time, stressed

Cayetano dared Aquino to a one-on-one debate on the issue.

that while the Duterte administration is not announcing publicly its efforts in dealing with China on the WPS dispute, it has been observing the arbitral award issued by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas.

"Are we implementing it? They (Aquino administration) only filed it, us we are going to implement it," Cayetano said.

"Everything the arbitration award says we're pursuing - we're talking with China," he added.

Cayetano also challenged Aquino to offer an alternative if he does not like the Duterte approach in addressing the problems it inherited from the former President.

"I am not saying that ours is perfect but I am asking President Aquino and the others: 'What's your alternative?' So, in oil and gas, if you don't like that as good as Malampaya and you don't want to deal with China, what's

your alternative?" he asked.

In Malampaya, the government is taking a 60-40 share deal with the private contractors of the gas exploration.

Cayetano also dared Aquino to a one-on-one debate on the issue.

"I am ready anytime, at any place, if he likes a one-on-one debate. Or if he'd like to bring Secretary (Albert) Del Rosario or Sen. Antonio Trillanes, it should not even be a debate, it should be a healthy discussion about the correct policy and on building relationship with our neighbors and how to handle the South China Sea issue professionally in accordance with our interest and with our territorial and sovereign rights," Cayetano said.

PH opposes unilateral exploitation of SCS

FOREIGN Secretary Alar Peter Cayetano said Tuesday the Philippines would not allow oil and gas deposits in the disputed South China Sea to be deposited unilaterally by one nation alone.

The Duterte administration, which took over in 2016 from the Aquino administration, had sought closer relations with China, against what the Philippines won an arbitral ruling from the International Tribunal regarding the dispute in the area.

Former President Benigno Aquino III who initiated the arbitration case against China, had said Manila had "no obligation" to share resources with Beijing as Duterte worked on a possible cooperation agreement or exploration with China.

The South China Sea is a marginal sea that is part of the Pacific Ocean, encompassing an area from the Karimata and Malacca Straits to the Strait of Taiwan of around 3.5 million square kilometers.

Officials say the sea carries tremendous strategic importance: one-third of the world's shipping passes through it carrying over \$2 trillion in trade each year; it contains lucrative fisheries that are crucial for the food security of millions in Southeast Asia; and huge oil and gas reserves are believed to lie beneath its seabed.

Cayetano said the nation "is busy exploring and producing resources in the U.S. West Philippine Sea, our sovereign zone, to take care of our people's needs and ensure our growth."

The board for the area is not yet in place. It must ensure that the environment is not destroyed and the oil and gas is not harvested unilaterally in the excess of the other claimants.

"If any country, including China, is willing to give us a distressed area, the same (shore) that we get in Indonesia, how can anyone argue that we lost our sovereign rights?"

Chinese president to visit Manila by year-end

BY ASHTEEL KACHERO

Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to visit Manila by the end of the year, according to a senior government official. The official said the visit is being planned for the end of the year.

Caviteño said President Duterte "formed a close relationship with the Chinese president."

Xi is expected to visit Manila by the end of the year, according to a senior government official.

"The visit is being planned for the end of the year," Caviteño said. "We are planning to visit him at the latter part of the year."

Xi is expected to visit Manila by the end of the year, according to a senior government official.

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CHINESE

CHINESE

that involved Beijing's massive claim in the South China Sea in favor of more investment and loans from China.

At the same time, Caviteño assured the public the government will not allow oil and gas deposits in the West Philippine Sea to be harvested "unilaterally by China."

"If there are living and non-living resources in the WPS and we can come up with a win-win framework, why not? If not, it is our job to preserve it, make sure that the environment is not destroyed and that oil and gas resources is not harvested unilaterally at the expense of the other claimants," Caviteño said.

Caviteño said President Duterte has approved the creation of a working group to study the feasibility and impact of a joint exploration agreement with China in the WPS based on their commitments to uphold the rule of law and international law.

Caviteño reiterated the country will not give up its sovereign rights over the area and insisted any agreement for joint exploitation should present viable and direct with the local community.

"I will confirm that any agreement will be in accordance with the Constitution. We cannot come by with an agreement that is unconstitutional. It cannot be done since we are representing the government and the government is restricted to the framework of the Constitution," he said.

Caviteño said China can give to the country the same or even better share than what the government is getting from the Malampaya gas reserves off Palawan. "Just there is no reason for critics of the administration to accuse it of selling or losing the country's sovereign rights in the area."

"Our starting proposition is Malampaya. If any country is willing to give in the dispute areas the same share that we get from Malampaya, now let us agree that we lose sovereign rights! We want an agreement that is the same or better than Malampaya," he said, noting the Malampaya deal is a 60-40 share agreement in favor of the Philippines.

The South China Sea resources, protected by joint understanding between South Philippines Exploration Ltd. under the Korea-Dutch-Saudi-Chinese-Malampaya deal and the Philippine National Oil Corporation.



ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Fake bombs planted in N. Cotabato town

NORTH COTABATO - Authorities have launched a manhunt for pranksters who left replicas of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along the roads in Miang, North Cotabato.

Bomb experts said at least two IED prototypes found on Sunday and Monday had no blasting powder and had electrical wires connected to metal cans containing several rounds of rifle ammunition, nails and metal fragments.

Brig. Gen. Cirilo Sobojana of the Army's 6th Infantry

Division said the fake bombs were placed in shopping bags and left along busy sections of the roads.

The South Cotabato police received reports that two men on a motorcycle left the shopping bags. **IN** - John Unson

IED BOMB COMPONENTS FOUND IN NORTH COTABATO

CAMP SIONGCO, Awrang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao: A suspected improvised explosive device (IED) was found inside a blue paper bag in Barangay Bagongtapa, M'lang, North Cotabato on Monday allegedly left by two unidentified persons riding a motorcycle. Capt. Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the 6th Infantry Division, said a squad from the 7th Infantry Battalion responded to reports of an unattended baggage in front of a mini store.

Personnel of the Explosive Ordnance Department (EOD) found the baggage containing three rounds of 7.62mm ammunition without detonator and power source and no explosive filler. Earlier on Sunday a suspected IED wrapped in a paper bag was also found in front of a mini store on Magaysay Street, Poblacion also in M'lang municipality at about 1:30 p.m. Encinas said EOD operatives also found the device only as dummy, composed of a cellphone with wirings, a red can wrapped with red electrical tape containing construction nails and broken glass. Witnesses said two unidentified men wearing black hooded jackets left the bag in the area.

JULMUNIR L. JANNARAL

Phil ID weapon vs terror—military

By Francisco Tuyay, Macon Ramos-Araneta and Maricel V. Cruz

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines on Tuesday welcomed the passage into law of the Act mandating the implementation of one identification system which it claimed would eventually restrict criminals and terrorists from pulling off evil-minded acts.

Col. Eogardo Arevalo, spokesman of the AFP, said terrorists and criminals would

have difficulty pursuing their wicked-minded plans and evil designs with the execution of the one identification system.

"We believe it will promote a peaceful and secure environment where terrorists, criminals, and other unscrupulous individuals will have a difficulty coping to pursue their evil designs and notorious activities," Arevalo stressed.

The national ID bill that was proposed in 2001, finally gained headway following its ratification by both Congress and signed into law by President Rodrigo Duterte last Monday.

The national ID will contain the full name, sex, blood type, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, address and front

facing photo.

In related developments:

• With a price tag of P25 billion, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said the National ID project should be able to solve the problem of 7.5-million Filipinos without birth certificates.

"That should be one of the outcomes of the project," Recto said.

"If there will be a mass list-up and registration, then perhaps we can use this activity to end the plight of those without birth certificates."

He said this could be looked into as one of the bonuses of the project.

"What I'm saying is that we should use the national ID platform as an opportunity

to solve the quandary of those who do not have birth documents," he also said.

He said an individual without or who could not present a birth certificate could still register for a national ID by presenting "alternative or additional documents to prove his or her identity."

While the law states that the birth certificate is the basic documentary requirement for registration, he said this clause was inserted in cognizance of the reality that millions of Filipinos have no birth certificates.

• Lawmakers from the House of Representatives hailed President Duterte's signing of the bill creating the national identification system. **With PHN A-1**



14 rescued by Wescom as boat sinks in El Nido

By ZAIDA DELOS REYES

GOVERNMENT forces rescued 14 persons from a sinking boat the other day in El Nido, Palawan.

Capt. Cherry Tando, spokesperson of Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Western Command (Wescom), said 14 of the 14 rescued individuals were passengers while the four others were the boat captain, a tour guide and two crew of tourist boat M/T Cleopatra.

Tando said Joint Task Force Malampaya of the Western Command received report at around 12 p.m. that a tourist boat was sinking in the vicinity of Haincaran Island in El Nido.

In response, Wescom dispatched Naval Ship BR1 Nestor Reinos (PC 380) to the area.

According to the boat captain, Hayron I Sulaymar, 45, of Puerto Francisco City, M/T Cleopatra departed from El Nido for a private island tour with 10 Filipino guests and ship personnel, a tour guide and a crew personnel.

Sulaymar said that on their way to small island in Manila Island, M/T Cleopatra encountered big waves causing the bow to crack, causing water to spill in.

Sulaymar wanted his guests to the front of the boat hoping for the bow to remain afloat but big waves pounded the boat again, causing it to sink.

Other tourist boats nearby provided their assistants and transferred their guests to another tourist boat.

The crew, however, remained in the sinking boat as they drifted away due to strong wind and big waves.

PC 380 towed the tourist boat to El Nido at 2 p.m.



PAF sarge dies in MC mishap

MAGALLANES, Cavite - An Airforce staff sergeant was killed when the motorcycle he was riding fell into a 30-foot bridge last Monday afternoon.

Police identified the victim as Robert Digma, 42, of the 53rd Combat Squadron, 736 Combat Group and detailed at Magallanes, Cavite. The driver of the motorcycle, Roberto Berangue, 35, of Sgt. Narciso General Landa Aguinaldo Cavite was injured.

Police said the victims were negotiating a sharp curve towards the Bahay Bridge at 6:15 p.m. when the motorcycle went out of control when its brakes failed, causing the vehicle to fall into the 30-foot bridge down to the river.

Digma was thrown away and landed on the river unconscious while his rescue went down with the motorcycle and swam to the river bank.

Digma died later at a hospital. Celso C. Lidol

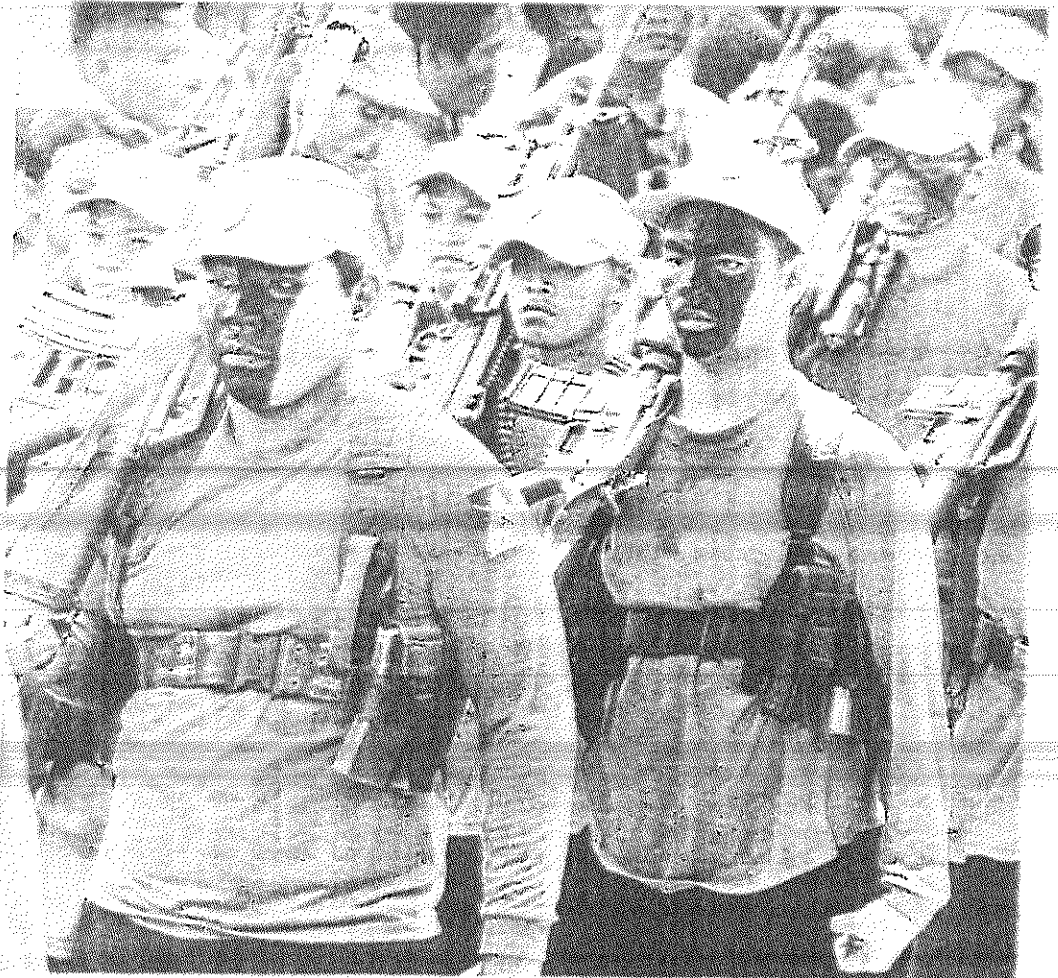
DOJ chief: List declaring Reds terrorists not vetted

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

The Department of Justice (DOJ) did not conduct an independent verification of the supposed connection of some 600 people with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) who had been tagged as terrorists. Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra admitted on Monday.

Among those that the DOJ named terrorists were United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, former Bayan Muna Rep Satur Ocampo and four former Catholic priests.

Defending his department's proposed P210-billion budget for 2019, Guevarra told the House appropriations committee that DOJ prosecutors did not do their own vetting of the individuals named in a petition that the government filed seeking to declare as terrorist organizations the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).



SHOW OF FORCE New People's Army guerrillas have their faces painted to hide their identities during the celebration of the 42nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines last December on Mt. Diwata. The guerrillas, who have been fighting a rebellion rooted in agrarian unrest for decades, have been declared terrorists by President Duterte. —AP

Procedure

Under questioning by Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate, the justice secretary said the inclusion of the individuals, most of them identified with militant groups on the terror list, was intended to satisfy the procedural requirement of filing the petition.

"The DOJ itself did not have personal verification regarding the connection of these individuals with the CPP and NPA," Guevarra said in the budget hearing.

"The petition was based on the information supplied solely to the department by the intelligence agencies of the government," he added.

Zarate urged Guevarra to be more careful and exercise prudence in linking private individuals to underground groups since such accusations may put

their lives at risk.

Prudent

"You cannot just wait your hands off because the petition is filed in the court endangered the lives of these people," the lawmaker told the justice secretary.

"You should be prudent and more circumspect. We know that in the Philippines, if you are tagged, you can be an operational target not just for prosecution, but also for physical attacks," he added.

According to Guevarra, the names of Corrao, Ocampo and others were mentioned in the

petition to "give due notice" to the CPP and NPA as actual respondents in the petition which the DOJ filed in the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 19 on Feb. 21.

"They were included in the hope that they will file the necessary pleadings on behalf of the entities named in the petition," he said.

Court's move

Guevarra said it was up to the Nueva Ecija court to order the arrest of Ocampo, former Anapawan Rep. Rafael Mariano, former Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casino and ex-Gabriel

Rep. Liza Maza, also the chair of the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

President Duterte declared the CPP-NPA terrorist organizations following the collapse of peace talks between the government and National Democratic Front of the Philippines, which represents all underground rebel groups.

To heed Mr. Duterte's declaration, the DOJ filed a petition for the court to make formal the declaration of CPP, NPA and other underground groups with ties with communist rebels as terrorist organizations. (NQ)

Duterte greenlights local peace talks with Reds

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

The Cabinet has approved President Duterte's call for localized peace talks with the communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels, presidential spokesman Harry Roque said yesterday.

"It was approved in the

Cabinet meeting, so it is forthcoming," Roque announced a day after the Cabinet meeting.

Duterte is also to preside over a joint command conference with top security officials to discuss the national threat board, including the recent militant attacks in Mindanao and developments in the cam-

paign against terrorism.

The approval of the localized peace talks came after backchannel efforts for peace with the National Democratic Front (NDF) stalled last June.

The NDF is representing the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA in peace talks with the government.

Last month, Marikina City released its guidelines that the talks be nationally coordinated, centrally directed and locally supervised and implemented. Constitutional integrity and sovereignty will not be compromised; there will be complete and genuine resolution of the local armed

conflict covering the NPA.

If there is a ceasefire, the constitutional mandate of the state to protect public safety, civilian welfare, critical infrastructure and private properties and the guarantee of rule of law and order will not be compromised at all times. Provision of a full amnesty

package based on disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration to mainstream society.

Roque added localized peace talks should include no coalition government or power sharing, no revolution, no taxation, extortion and other violent activities.

Executive order on localized peace talks OK'd

THE executive order on the localized peace talks with communist rebels was approved during Monday's Cabinet meeting, Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said on Tuesday.

"It was approved in the cabinet meeting so it is forthcoming," Roque said in a press briefing.

Last month, President Rodrigo Duterte approved the guidelines on the localized peace talks days after National Democratic Front (NDF) founder Jose Ma. Sison said his group would no longer talk peace with the government.

Roque said under the guidelines, the localized peace negotiations

should be "nationally orchestrated, centrally directed and locally supervised and implemented."

Duterte terminated the peace talks with the communist rebels in November last year.

Two weeks after the President signed Proclamation 374, which declared the New People's Army and Communist Party of the Philippines as terrorist groups, triggering a word war with Sison.

In April, Duterte said he would give the communist rebels one last chance to talk peace but Sison said his group would pull out from the negotiations.

RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA

5,000 Basilan residents displaced

By NANCY E. LACSON

ZAMBOANGA CITY — An estimated 5,000 residents coming from five villages of Hadji Mohammed Ajal town in Basilan province now feel their homes since Tuesday as the military stepped up operations against the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

The intensified operations came

after a deadly car bomb hit a military detachment in Lantawan City last July 31 that killed 11 and wounded five persons.

Hadji Mohammed Ajal Mayor Tahir G. Faruqi reported yesterday that residents — most of them belonging to the Yakan tribe — of Faruqiyah Tuburan village, Lantawan (andlin, Longgoung, and Bunan) fled their homes since Tuesday to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

The five villages have been virtually transformed into "ghost villages", according to Faruqi.

Faruqi said the military stepped up operations against elements of the ASG

which may be hiding in the forested areas in the town. These were the same suspects tagged in the Lantawan car bomb attack.

Lantawan City Vice Mayor Frederick Faruqi yesterday said some of those who fled their homes in Hadji Mohammed Ajal are now in Lantawan and are staying with their respective relatives.

He said most of those who are residents of Hadji Mohammed Ajal had relatives in Lantawan, which is just adjacent to the town.

"If we can simply say that we are just not in our part," Faruqi said.

But what was important, according to him, was that those who seek refuge in

Lantawan "are peace-loving people.

"All that is the case is when we have nothing to worry if they come to stay with their relatives here," he added.

Faruqi said the military operations against the ASG were necessary in order for the community to experience peace and tranquility away from attacks of the terror group.

Faruqi called on his constituents to be calm and alert at all times, and to report to the police and military authorities any suspicious activities in their community to prevent any attacks from happening in the community.

Army denies dropping bombs in Cotabato village

By MALU CADELINA MANAB

III-APAWAN CITY - The military, based in Malibian, North Cotabato, is denying reports that bombs were dropped in a rebel-influenced barangay, on Tuesday.

Lt. Col. Rogelio Rosales, commanding officer of the 38th Infantry Battalion, said the attack helicopter that residents say it: Barangay Bataasan, in Matigba, did not drop a single bomb when it hovered in the area around 4:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Rosales said the AH-64 attack helicopter only monitored the movement of an armed group led by a certain Gregorio Magbana, also known as Commander Greg, of the New Peoples' Army (NPA) Front Guerrilla 51.

He accused Magbana's group of extorting money from farmers and residents in the area.

Rosales said that as early as 3 a.m. Tuesday, he sent troops at Puron-C, Barangay Bataasan, to run after the rebels but were attacked before they could reach the area.

"Pinantalan ng ating tropa ang oryentadong saan-na-monitor ang grupo ni Commander Greg. E kaso, pinapitakutan nila kung Magbana, at the time, kawa nag-reports kawa ng helicopter," said Rosales in an interview over Catholic radio (DZNT).

The Army base says it has not yet seen the helicopter. It says the rebels were away and keep an eye on their movements while converging in the hinterlands, according to the officers.

Lito Panginan, a tribal leader in Barangay Belasan, said they have had expulsions and burnings but he is not sure that dropped the bombs.

"No drop was witnessed by these five blasts. We thought there were heavy encounters in the ground, but there were none. What we heard were explosive and gun fires," said Panginan and added, "We appeal to the army and government not to bomb our barangay. Only our children."

• Lumad killed

CAMP COL. RAFAEL C. RODRIGUEZ, Baguio City - The regional command of Northwestern Mindanao Police Regional Office 10 (PRO 10) on Tuesday ordered operations with munition against the killers of a lumad leader in highland communities in Las Nieves town, Agusan del Norte province. PRO 10 also ordered Agusan del Norte Police Provincial Office (PPO) and Las Nieves Municipal Police Station (MPS) to render thorough investigation and establish motive of the killing of Rigorosa tribal leader Roberto Acado Mandomanda, 60 years old, and also known as "Dati Biog". Reports said that Mandomanda had just stepped out of his residence at Purok 2, Barangay Kasiklan, Las Nieves town, Agusan del Norte province, at 6:30 a.m. Saturday when three men shot him from close range (MinsU, Cismunda).

Army pushes Cafgu listup against NPAs

By Ben Moses Ebreo

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—The Philippine Army has offered the recruitment of Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit or Cafgus to complement the presence of government forces in remote areas.

Lt. Colonel Thomas Dominic Baluga, commanding officer of the Army's 70 Infantry Battalion based in Nueva Ecija, said Cafgus has been left unsupported but are still serving as guardians of peace and order in areas frequented by the New People's Army rebels.

"We have Cafgus in Nueva Vizcaya who are being supported with P4,500 monthly subsistence allowance. We are also asking other assistance so that they can continue as frontline armed forces in remote areas especially in remote areas," he said.

Baluga said over the years, Cafgus have transformed from merely armed force to a multi-disciplinary force that supports the army in its various peacekeeping initiatives in areas being visited by NPA rebels.

He said Cafgus at present are also given proper training, livelihood opportunities and involved in civic military activities such as rescue operations during disasters and calamities and medical services for the poor, among others.

Baluga said they manage and support Cafgus in their areas of responsibilities through partnerships with concerned local government units and other sectors of the society. ☐

Rebel brothers surrender

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City - An alleged Communist New Peoples Army (NPA) platoon commander and his younger brother voluntarily surrendered to Army authorities and pledged to help the government's peace and development program. For security and safety reasons, identity of the NPA platoon commander and his 18-year-old younger brother are temporarily withheld. However, Capt. Al Anthony B. Puelbas, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Singers) said the commander was under the SDG Platoon 16 of Guerrilla Front Committee 16 while his younger brother was formerly under the SPP 16-A, both of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC). They brought along with them one M14 rifle with five magazines of live ammunitions and two hand grenades. They voluntarily surrendered to the Army's 29th Infantry (Matasag) Battalion (29th IB) operationally controlled by the 402nd Brigade. They are still under bonding while preparing to be enrolled to E-CLIP program that extends livelihood and cash support from the government to rebel returnees, Puelbas said. (Mike Crismundo)



15 NPA rebels, supporters in Ifugao yield

FIFTEEN members and supporters of the New People's Army (NPA) on Monday returned to the fold of the law in Poblacion, Tinoc, Ifugao.

Army's 5th Infantry Division (ID) spokesman Capt. Jefferson Somera said the rebels surrendered to Philippine Army's 54th Infantry Battalion (IB) commanding officer Lt. Col. Narciso Nabuñeg Jr. and the local government unit of Tinoc.

The group was received in a simple ceremony held at the Tinoc Municipal Hall.

"This new batch of communist terrorist and their supporters voluntarily surrendered to our teams facilitating the Community Support Program (CSP) after a dialogue with the community about the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP)," Nabuñeg said.

Major General Romeo Kimando, commander of the Army's 5th Infantry Division, commended the 5th ID for the successful surrender of the former rebels.

"As we expressed our support for the localized peace talks, we will unrelentingly pursue the enemies of the Filipino people until they voluntarily surrender and justice be served to them," Kimando said.

Those who surrendered will receive financial assistance from the E-CLIP.

Zaida delos Reyes

'No state of calamity in Basilan over bombing'

By JAIME LAUDE

Cocolisap infestation and rice shortage and not the bombing that killed 10 people in Lamitan prompted the declaration of a state of calamity in Basilan, the military clarified yesterday.

Cdr. Edgar Arevalo, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman, belied reports that the Sanggailang Pambalawigan declared a state of calamity upon the recommendation of the Provincial Peace and Order Council because of ongoing military operations.

"The AFP contacted Basilan Gov. Jim Hataman-Salman and he said that the declaration was due to cocolisap infestation and the ensuing rice shortage," Arevalo said.

"The suicide car bombing at a military checkpoint left five soldiers, four civilians and the bomber dead and

eight others, mostly soldiers, wounded.

Police and military operations are underway in Han Mohammad Apo, which is 30 kilometers away from Lamitan, as well as in Albar and Tukuran towns.

At a peace and order council meeting on Monday, Senior Superintendent Rufino Inot, Basilan police director, expressed confidence on the early resolution of the case, saying they have gathered several pieces of evidence to pin down the perpetrators.

"I assure you we will resolve this case as soon

as possible. In fact we are more than half of the accomplishment," Inot said.

He said they traced the previous owners of the van used in the bombing, but refused to give details so as not to jeopardize ongoing police operations.

Inot said arrested preacher Ustadz Indalit Malianing Jainui has been charged with multiple murder, multiple frustrated murder and illegal possession of explosives.

Prior to the incident, Jainui was reportedly seen alighting from the van used in the bombing. — With Roei Pareño

'Place Basilan under state of calamity'

THE peace and order council of Basilan province recommended the declaration of a state of calamity in the area following manmade and natural disasters.

According to a Facebook post of the provincial government of Basilan, Gov. Jim Hataman-Salliman, convened the Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC) that he heads to discuss updates on the province's security measures following the deadly bombing in

Lamitan City that left 10 people dead.

"[The] PPOC recommended the declaration of a state of calamity in Basilan, which was endorsed to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (provincial council) for further discussion and approval," said the social media post.

Other issues to include in the declaration moreover are the ongoing manhunt operations in Moh Aiul LCU [local government

unit] and the continuing *cocolisap* infestation and rice shortage that are being experienced in the province," it added.

The declaration is to be made within the week.

But the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) rebutted a report that said the declaration was recommended because of the ongoing military operations despite the announcement made by Basilan officials.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesman, said on Tuesday that the military contacted Hataman-Salliman who told him that the state of calamity declaration stemmed from the ensuing rice shortage and *cocolisap* (insect infestation) in the area.

He (Salliman) denies though that it is due to the military operations that followed the Lamitan City blast," Arevalo said in a separate statement. **DEMPSEY REYES**

ZUBIRI URGES PRESIDENT TO TALK TO POSSIBLE SPOILERS OF BANGSAMORO DEAL

By Leifa B. Salaverria
@LeifasINC

President Duterte could play a key role in helping ensure the success of the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) by reaching out to potential spoilers of the peace deal between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri said on Tuesday.

The BARMM would be established by the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which was passed by Congress and signed by the President last month to hand to the MILF what Zubiri called the government's "last promise" under the 2014 peace agreement.

Mr. Duterte handed a symbolic copy of the law to MILF chief Murad Ebrahim during a ceremony in Malacañang on Monday, in the culmination of a peace process that stretched over more than two decades to end the conflict in Mindanao, which had claimed about 150,000 lives since the 1970s.

MNLF Misuari faction

Speaking at the Meet Inquirer Multimedia Forum on Tuesday, Zubiri said he was optimistic that many armed rebels in Mindanao would embrace the new autonomous region, which would receive a raft of resources and expanded powers.

The senator expressed hope

that President Duterte could bring Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founder Nur Misuari, whom the senator described as "a class of his own," on board to support the establishment of the BARMM.

The BARMM will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which was formed following the conclusion of a peace agreement between the government and the MNLF in 1996.

Misuari served as the first governor of the ARMM, which was described in 2011 by then President Benigno Aquino III as a "failed experiment."

The MNLF faction led by Misuari did not take part in the deliberations on the BOL.

"All things perfect, we're hoping they join in. We're weighing on the fact that the President is close to Chairman Nur. We're hoping that he can reach out to Chairman Nur," Zubiri said.

Tausug members

Followers of Misuari could be included in the 60-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) that would oversee the shift to the BARMM, he said.

Mr. Duterte will name the majority of members of the BTA, he added.

"We're hoping he also involves the MNLF from the Tausug areas," Zubiri said.

The elected officials of the ARMM would automatically be

come members of the BTA and they would serve until June 30, 2019.

Members of non-Moro indigenous communities, youth, women, settler communities, traditional leaders and other sectors would have representatives in the BTA as well.

The BTA would have executive and legislative powers and would be headed by an interim chief minister who would be appointed by the President.

It would serve until 2023, when regular elections would be held for the BARMM parliament.

The MNLF faction, affiliated with Muslimin Sama, supports the establishment of the new Bangsamoro region, but it has

in Misamis to support the new region, which is described as "BARMM plus."

"If they actually read and study the provisions of this Bangsamoro Organic Law, this is a 10-time improvement of the ARMM in terms of self-governance, self-determination, in terms of giving them local, provincial autonomy," he said.

Aside from the potential spoilers, another possible problem for the new region is the discontent that could emerge among MILF members should six towns in Lanao del Norte and 39 barangays in North Cotabato fail to join the BARMM.

Little chance

Under the BOL, the six towns and 39 barangays would be allowed to join the BARMM if their "mother units"—cities or provinces—also agree to it in a plebiscite.

According to critics, however, the provision means there is little chance for those towns and barangays to join the BARMM because the mother units are unlikely to give up their territory.

Under the Bangsamoro Framework, under "land sovereignty in the concept," it put those towns and barangays into the BARMM.

The MILF is also trying to convince the government of the area. It was said.

"However, the peace can be maintained," he added.

of any possible extension

for the BOL is a challenge to the constitutionality of the parliamentary government of the BARMM in the Supreme Court.

Zubiri, however, said he was optimistic that the BOL could hurdle the challenge.

He said he had consulted with legal experts, and cited the words of former Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, who had written that what is not explicitly banned in the Constitution is allowed.

High hopes

Despite concerns, Zubiri said hopes were high for the establishment of a new Bangsamoro region.

He said the signing of the BOL would trigger the decommissioning of MILF fighters. Many of them, he said, were excited to join the government.

Imams in Lanao del Sur are also happy because they could now offer their fellow Muslims an alternative to extremism, Zubiri said.

"The heads of the imams in Lanao del Sur are saying, 'Shrimp or here because this would be our ammunition to convince our brethren not to see the option that we have a better alternative with the BOL,'" he said.

He said Gen. Carino Garcia Jr., chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, was also happy about the signing of the BOL because it meant that "power groups would die in the end."

in differences with the group of Misuari.

Autonomy for Misuari?

In a speech in Zamboanga Sibugay on July 26, Mr. Duterte announced that he had signed the Bangsamoro law and said he would like to talk to Misuari "to figure out things so that we can have peace by the end of the year."

The President also said he could create an autonomous area for Misuari beyond the shift to federalism.

"That is what he wants. I have almost three years to work it out," he said.

He said he would like to see additional powers and autonomy given to the local level, which would strengthen the autonomy of the

BARMM can make Muslim Mindanao 'land of fulfillment'

BY ALIC MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY - Key officials in Muslim Mindanao took turns Tuesday in welcoming the enactment of RA 10593 as a "springboard" for the transformation of their promise-filled community into a "land of fulfillment," even as they urged higher authorities to ensure full implementation of the organic act for it "to make a difference."

Provincial and regional officials, alongside members of the House of Representatives from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), aired common belief that Southern Philippines will finally end its decades-old tag as "Land of Promise" once the new edict is implemented efficaciously in letter and spirit.

In separate interviews, they hailed President Rodrigo Roa Duterte for exercising his "strong political will" in the passage of the law, saying his immediate predecessor "tried but failed" to do so.

Duterte formally signed RA 10593 into law, creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in Marikina, Monday.

"This is a historic law worthy of profuse celebration. It brightens prospects for lasting peace and sustainable growth in the south, especially in the proposed Bangsamoro region," Maguindanao Gov. Estacio Manguadatu told The Manila Bulletin.

ARMM Gov. Nugh Hassan expressed similar optimism, saying that while the new law meant the eventual abolition of his post, it will yield "optimum benefits for the greater majority people" in southern Philippines.

"We supported all processes involved in its (RA 10593) enactment beyond personal interests. In fact, we have been ready for a smooth transition of ARMM to the new autonomous entity as early as last year," Hassan said.

As of July, he said, ARMM has completed "100 percent" of its inventory of resources and projects for turnover to the BARMM government.

Through their respective staffs, Governor Saraya Alonto-Adiong of Lanao del Sur, Jim Salimay of Basilan, Sakar Tan E. of Sulu and Rashudin Matro of Tawi-Tawi assured overwhelming ratification of the new law in a plebiscite to be held within 150 days from now.

BOL plebiscite likely in January 2019: Comelec

BY GERARD NAVAL

THE Commission on Elections yesterday said the earliest it can hold the plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) will be in January next year.

Comelec spokesman James Limener said the mandated BOL plebiscite will require personnel to handle preparations, and time and resources for the formulation of questions and the printing of ballot.

"Our timetable for the plebiscite is we are tentatively expecting it by January," Limener said, pointing out the Comelec has already started preparing for the May 2019 election.

"Timing to prepare for the exercises will naturally be more complex, especially with the poll body having limited resources. In a sense, it's harder to execute since we need to divert some people to oversee this activity instead of all of us focused solely on one election," he added.

Under the BOL, the Comelec will have to conduct a plebiscite in areas eyed to be included in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region to determine if they will be included or not.

The Bangsamoro region will be composed of the provinces of Lanao, Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga, and Lanao del Sur which currently comprise the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The plebiscite will seek to include all municipalities of Comandante Neri and Marikina in North Cotabato. The municipalities of Comandante and Isabela will also have a plebiscite for inclusion in the proposed region.

Limener said the Comelec will conduct its Bangsamoro Law matters through the 10th division office of the Commission in Zamboanga to coordinate the plebiscite.

House ensures P854-m BOL plebiscite budget

By Maricel V. Cruz and Macon Ramos-Araneta

THE House of Representatives' committee on appropriations has said the Commission on Elections will get the P854-million budget for the Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite in January 2019.

At a congressional hearing, the committee, presided by the committee vice chairman, Doy Leachon of Oriental Mindoro, said the House would make funds available for the implementation of the BOL—a priority mandate of the Duterte administration.

House Majority Leader and Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. earlier said the 2019 national budget did not include any funding for the implementation of the newly signed BOL.

Andaya said the House of Representatives had to find funding sources for the BOL, adding that "budget space must be created in the 2019 budget for these mandates which were not factored in when the proposed P3.757-trillion outlay was being finalized by Malacañang."

In a related development,

Senate President Pro Tempore Raoul Roco said that like every law, the BOL had a cost.

"Scratch the surface of every provision, and a price tag lies underneath," he said. Unfortunately, he noted that "we still do not know the full cost of this measure because we only have estimates and approximations."

"What we were told were the programs and the projects, but not their price. This bill is a ledger of intentions, without tallying the cost of each," he said.

But the BOL Roco said, is "a promissory note to a people. He said it was now up to us to redeem every single item promised therein."

He said "We must not default. Whatever the amount, we must fund it."

"A costly peace is better than a cheap war."

During the debates in the BOL, Roco said he ran numbers on what the BOL would cost.

He admitted though that his estimates up to the last minute of floor discussions, remained unrefined.

Using the alien, the zero-based budgeting approach, this bill would cost P369 billion in the first three years, P109 billion in the first year, and P1.901 trillion in 10 years.

President Rodrigo Duterte is scheduled to sign into law this week the BOL which replaces the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with into the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The BOL shall be the enabling law for the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro signed between the Aquino administration and the secessionist group Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

This development in the House appropriations committee also called for the P1.069-billion (one-way) deficit in its 2019 National and Local Elections budget which is intended for payment of teachers' honorarium and other benefits as mandated by the Education Service Reform Act.

MILF 'decommissioning' under way

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is preparing for the second phase of the decommissioning of its arms and forces following the historic passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF peace panel chair, said at least 30 percent of the

MILF forces would be immediately decommissioned after the ratification of the law creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

"Immediately after the ratification of the basic law, the second phase of decommissioning which will be 30 percent of our weapons and combatants will

take place...but the process is already ongoing," Iqbal said at the sidelines of the presentation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in Maracañang.

"The moment the BOL is ratified then there will be an immediate decommissioning," he added.

Another 35 percent of the

MILF 'decommissioning' ... <1

MILF combatants would be decommissioned after the "operationalization" of the Bangsamoro law.

President Duterte recently signed the long-awaited measure creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in a bid to bring lasting peace in Mindanao after years of conflict. A plebiscite must be held in the proposed territories of the Bangsamoro region within 90 to 150 days from the effectivity of the law.

The MILF earlier hailed the measure as compliant with the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro peace accord signed with the government last in 2012.

The MILF initiated the ceremonial decommissioning of some combatants and weapons in 2015 following the signing of the peace pact.

Under the peace agreement, 30 percent of the MILF combatants and weapons would be decommissioned after the passage of the Bangsamoro law. Another 25 percent of the troops and arms would take place after the plebiscite and the appointment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority. The decommissioning of the last 35 percent will happen after the Bangsamoro government is established. — Gordon J. Rabingo

MILF notes 'missing parts' in BOL

Iqbal admitted that "over and above," the BOL is laudable for giving powers and access to resources to the Bangsamoro government.

By Gladys Mae Abion

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace panel chairman Mohagher Iqbal on Tuesday said that while they praise the Duterte administration for passing the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), he stressed that a significant chunk of their proposal has been left out of the newly created measure.

In a televised interview, Iqbal said that almost 15 percent of their proposal was not captured in the BOL — which was recently signed into law by President Rodrigo Duterte — compared to the proposal of the Bangsamoro Transitional Commission (BTC).

The BOL, Iqbal said, bears "a significant difference" from the original proposal. "It is not a question of disappointment; it is a question of containing assurance that if there is anything missing or the bill, the government should fill in the missing provisions," he said.

The MILF peace panel chair also pointed out how the preamble in the BOL, seemed to have been formulated from the perspective of the entire Filipino people, and from that of the Bangsamoro people.

"It's common for a preamble that the one speaking is the one who asserts that right, the right to self-government. It should be the Bangsamoro people who would be speaking in behalf of themselves, as well as the other inhabitants of the proposed Bangsamoro government," said Iqbal.

"Even in this one, it is not the usual way of

formulating a preamble that the Filipino people are the ones speaking," he added.

"Seemingly absent from the BOL were basic principles, asymmetric relationship, parity of esteem principle of subsidiarity," Iqbal said.

The MILF peace panel chair also aired reservations on the absence of the delineation of powers, on the removal of the list of basic rights, on the observance of autonomy in police hubs and on territory and plebiscite.

Iqbal clarified that they were not pushing for an autonomous Bangsamoro police entity. "It's just a matter of observing that somehow it's Bangsamoro area, Bangsamoro government, it's an autonomous entity, so municipal mayors and governors should have a say on the employment and deployment of police forces in their respective areas," said Iqbal.

But despite his issues with the law, Iqbal admitted that "over and above," the BOL is laudable for giving powers and access to resources to the Bangsamoro government that are currently not being enjoyed by the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Finally, a code of conduct on SCS/WPS



FINALLY, after years of on-and-off negotiations, even acrimonious exchanges at times, a way forward is now being drawn up on the contentious South China Sea West Philippine Sea issue.

Coming out of the recently concluded meeting of Asean Foreign Ministers meeting in Singapore, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced that he and his counterparts in the 10-member regional grouping have agreed on a draft Code of Conduct on the disputed area.

It appears that this draft was finally accepted by all the parties after it was clearly indicated that "...resolving tensions in the South China Sea is an issue only for China and its Southeast Asian neighbors to negotiate."

The parties agreed and made clear that "outside interference will only complicate sensitive and complex issues" engendered in a decade by years of mangled exchanges exacerbated by unending interjections by outside forces. Thus, after 16 long years of draw-out negotiations, there is clearly light at the end of the tunnel. And the good thing is it is not from a speeding wrecker train.

Noted a keen observer of the scene after the parties hailed this critical development as no less than a milestone in China-Asean relations. "The like-mindedness attending the agreement of the parties was truly encouraging, with all countries setting aside differing approaches to the problem in favor of working together for a common, single solution. That is the only

way to ensure that the contested waters will one day be awash with cooperation, peace and stability."

Foreign Minister Wang Yi put it even more colorfully when he likened the way forward as a process where "China and the Asean are building a house together, with each country having its own idea of what the building should look like and now the groundwork has been set for a single design."

Although no details of the draft code were released after the Singapore meeting, it is clear that the goal posts have moved. Where before each country was

"The draft was accepted by all the parties."

engaged in moving its own post without regard for those of the others, now there is a singularity of purpose and direction. The disputes among the claimant countries, China and the Asean 4 (Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei) will now be negotiated under the aegis of a Code of Conduct which promotes consensus building and making of concessions by parties.

The adopted draft code simply titled "Single Draft South China Sea Code of Conduct Negotiating Text" takes off from the previously adopted "Framework Agreement on the Code of Conduct" which was initiated by the countries years back. As agreed, the SDN

noted that "it is not an instrument to settle territorial disputes or maritime delimitation issues" with a cleverly inserted caveat inserted by Malaysia which read: "the parties further acknowledge that the Code of Conduct does not address nor affect the Parties' position on legal questions relating to the settlement of disputes, maritime boundaries, or the permissible maritime entitlements of the parties under international law as enshrined in the 1982 UNCLOS."

It is clear from the discussions and the final output that the agreement reached in Singapore is just the first step in clearing the air as it effectively calms the waters and directs the parties to settle issues peacefully.

Instead of the parties haranguing and shouting at each other, the text provides a platform for the parties to engage in discussions without the need of advice or assistance from countries outside of the grouping. And only in accord with international law and the age old tradition of civility and non-confrontation.

So, even as Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano tangles with the likes of former President Aquino and Senator Trillanes, both of whom have now called him a traitor to their earlier cause/alliance, the issue over which they have exchanged such acrimonious language is now on its way to being peacefully settled. And all for the better—for the Philippines and our neighbors.

In the event, their heated revelations against each other only reinforce the view that in the six years that Mr. Aquino and company were in charge they have only succeeded in deepening the wounds inflicted on our relations with China and, yes, even with the other countries in Asean. So, ang... A

ONLINE NEWS 08 AUGUST 2018

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AFP spokesperson on the article published by Rappler

Posted by Alvin Santiago



The news report that "Basilan under the state of calamity after military operations" that came out of Rappler news online by Richard Falcatan published 12:50PM of August 6, 2018 and updated 1:02PM August 6, 2018 (sic) is untrue.

The news report went on by saying that, "The provincial board of Basilan declared a state of calamity in the province Monday, August 6, upon the recommendation of the peace and order council.

This was after the Armed Forces of the Philippines launched massive operations in the municipality of Mohammad Ajul Municipality."

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has contacted Basilan Governor Jim Hataman-Salliman and he said that the declaration was due to the "cocolisap" infestation and the ensuing rice shortage. He denies though that it is due to the military operations that followed post the Lamitan City Blast.

We demand that Rappler rectify their misleading news report and validate their story with Basilan Governor Jim Hataman-Salliman.

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GENUINE TRANSFORMATION | 2ID awards the AGP Initiated and Compliant Status to the different Offices

Posted by Alvin Santiago

CAMP MATEO CAPINPIN, Tanay, Rizal (DWDD) – The 2nd Infantry “Jungle Fighter” Division awarded the Army Governance Pathway (Initiated Status 3rd Level-Horizontal) to the four (4) offices and Compliant Status to the two (2) offices of this Command at Camp Gen. Mateo Capinpin, Brgy. Sampaloc, Tanay, Rizal on August 6, 2018.



Major General Rhoderick M Parayno AFP, Commander, 2ID, together with Colonel Faisal A Nawang MNSA (INF) PA Assistant Division Commander, RRA, awarded the Initiated Status to the Gender and Development Office (GADO), Division Public Affairs Office (DPAO), 1st Jungle Fighter Company (1JFC) and 3rd Jungle Fighter Company (3JFC). Likewise, the Compliant Status 3rd Level-Horizontal was awarded to the two offices namely, the AC of S for Education and Training, G8 and 2nd Governance and Strategy Management Office (2GSMO).

The award was given to each office for demonstrating commitment to pursue genuine transformation and reform as manifested by its exemplary progress in governance and strategy management and for successfully complying with the elements under the Army Governance Pathway. **2DPAO / MCAG**



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HUMANITARIAN MISSION | AFP hauls relief goods for Sulu fire victims

Avir Santos

JOLO, Sulu (DWDD) – Sorties of C130 and C295 aircrafts were flown to deliver relief goods for the Sulu fire victims in Jolo, Sulu since after the day the fire was declared "out".



Different organizations from all over the country coordinated with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to transport goods and help distribute such to the Joloanon victims.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanac through its ARMM HEART immediately sent by C295 plane from Cotabato City 200 sacks of 50 kilos rice, 600 boxes of sardines, 1,020 local sleeping mats (banig), and other personal items a day after the fire broke out in Sulu that left families homeless.

"The AFP in coordination with DSWD and other concerned agencies is currently doing its best to be able to help in all ways possible" said General Carlito G Galvez, Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines. "Currently, we are in close coordination with other stakeholders who have already expressed their intention to help and donate."

The AFPs Joint Task Force Sulu is also directly involved in the different disaster responses organized by the Regional Government of ARMM and the Provincial Government of Sulu by facilitating and supporting distribution of relief, conduct of feeding programs and medical assistance activities, clearing of affected area and rescue operations.

Initial investigation of the Bureau of Fire indicates that the conflagration that started at 2:45 in the afternoon last July 24, was caused by overloaded electrical wirings.

The fire claimed hundreds of houses from two baranggays in Jolo, Brgy Wallied City and Brgy Busbus, and left 20,278 persons homeless with 27 million of total estimated damages. It was declared "fire out" at 11:30 in the evening on the same day. 1DPAO / MCAG



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