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ECONOMIC GROWTH SLOWS DOWN TO 6%

STORY BY BEN C. DE VERA

The expansion of the local economy in the second quarter fell below the government target due to the closure of Boracay, higher prices and tighter mining regulations, according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Pernia.

FROM AT

By Ben C. de Vera
@pendeveraINC

The closure of Boracay, high prices and tighter mining regulations weighed down the country's economic expansion in the second quarter to 6 percent year-on-year, or below expectations, the government's top economist said on Thursday.

The growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) in April-June was the weakest in three years, ending a run of 10 consecutive quarters in which the economy grew at least 6.5 percent.

GDP is the value of goods produced and services rendered in a given period.

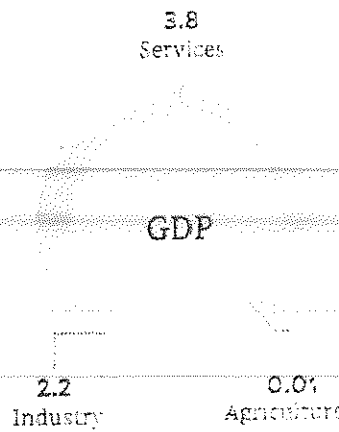
Manila-based, however, is not about to panic over the slightly lower growth.

"I don't think it is alarming because 6 percent is still high," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said at a press briefing.

Despite the lower-than-ex-

SHARE OF SECTORS

(in percentage point)



SOURCE: PSA

pected figures, the Philippines remains one of the best-performing economies in Asia, behind Vietnam's 6.8 percent and China's 6.7 percent for the quarter.

Boracay shutdown

"The slowdown is partly due

to policy decisions undertaken that are expected to promote sustainable and resilient development," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said. He was referring to the temporary closure of Boracay.

The shutdown, Pernia said, "partly made a dent on the economy with growth in exports of services slowing to 6.1 percent in the second quarter from 11.2 percent in the first."

The government has said that the resort island draws 2 million tourists each year and pumps roughly \$1 billion into the economy.

Pernia earlier said the closure of Boracay would cut GDP growth this year by 0.5 percent.

The island was shut down in April for a six-month cleanup on the orders of President Duterte, who describes the resort as a "cesspool" clogged by town-to-town dumpsites flushing sewage into the sea.

When Boracay reopened in October, Pernia said, there would possibly be "even more tourists."

Roque said Mr. Duterte would not hesitate to protect the environment even if this would affect the growth of the economy.

Inflation

Pernia said that had it not been for the elevated inflation rate, GDP growth "would have been well within our target of 7-8 percent."

In the second quarter inflation averaged 2.8 percent, beyond the government's target range of 1-2 percent for the entire year.

The country's economic managers have blamed higher global oil prices and tight supply of agricultural products like rice for high consumer prices.

Others put the blame on the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Incentive (TRAIN) Act, which inflation rose to a new five-year high of 5.3 percent in July.

The TRAIN law, which took effect on Jan. 1, increased or imposed new excise on goods like oil, cigarettes, sugary drinks, vehicles and metallic and non-metallic minerals to compensate for tax exempt personal

annual income that was raised to P250,000.

Closure of mines

Pernia attributed the "lackluster" performance of the mining and quarrying sector to the closure of some mining jobs and to the imposition of excise on minerals.

Also, "The stricter enforcement of regulations on aquaculture producers at Laguna de Bay resulted in the drop in freshwater fish catch," he said.

Agriculture's anemic growth of 0.2 percent did not help.

Industrial growth also eased because of strict regulations of controlled chemicals and higher shipping rates.

"We are also gravely concerned about the almost stagnant output of the agriculture sector," Pernia said.

Lifting rice quotas

He noted that a "gross deficiency in the domestic production of food" helped fuel inflation.

The government is preparing a raft of "temporary" mea-

sures to increase food supplies, Pernia said, including reducing import duties of certain products and possible lifting of quotas on rice imports.

The National Economic and Development Authority chief reiterated that the TRAIN law must not be blamed for the slower growth. He said the tax reform law even boosted consumer spending in the second quarter.

"In the case of household consumption, higher disposable income resulting from the recently passed tax reform package and improved labor market conditions are seen to help sustain growth," he said.

Household final consumption expenditure growth slowed to 5.6 percent in April-June from 6.2 percent a year ago, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) show.

Disincent, however, head of the PSA noted that consumers had cut their spending on cigarettes and gambling. —WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE C. AVENDAÑO AND AP/IS

Economy slows down to 8%

By CHRISTINA ALEJO

As inflationary pressures subsided, rising prices of raw materials and services from the second quarter to the third quarter, the government reported that the economy slowed down to 8 percent in the third quarter.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reported that the economy grew at an annual rate of 8 percent in the third quarter, down from 9 percent in the second quarter.

The BEA also reported that the economy grew at an annual rate of 7.5 percent in the third quarter, down from 8 percent in the second quarter.

The BEA also reported that the economy grew at an annual rate of 7 percent in the third quarter, down from 7.5 percent in the second quarter.

The BEA also reported that the economy grew at an annual rate of 6.5 percent in the third quarter, down from 7 percent in the second quarter.

The BEA also reported that the economy grew at an annual rate of 6 percent in the third quarter, down from 6.5 percent in the second quarter.

Economy From Page 1

judicious," he added.

Aside from the temporary closure of Boracay from April to October, the closure of several mining pits and the imposition of export tax on non-metallic and metallic minerals had contributed to the economic deceleration.

The Boracay closure, alone, caused the slowdown in the growth of service exports to 4.4 percent in the second quarter from 1.2 percent in the first quarter.

The stricter enforcement of aquaculture regulations in

Capiz and Bay also resulted in the drop in freshwater fish catch.

The latest figures also put the average gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the first six months of the year at 6.8 percent, implying that the economy would lose to a rate of at least 7.5 percent in the second semester if each quarter saw one of the slower growth patterns in a year.

The BEA said that the rate of investment in non-durable, productive and expansion capital equipment, however, was

at a pricing

The principal growth drivers of the economy in the second quarter of the year were in manufacturing, trade and construction sub-sectors. Among major sectors, services recorded the fastest growth at 6.6 percent, followed by industry with 6.5 percent, while agriculture continued to lag behind with a growth of 0.2 percent.

NETA noted however that domestic manufacturing activity softened on the back of strict regulations for controlled chemical and chemical products, coupled with high charges of shipping companies for transporting chemicals.

With the country's population reaching 106.5 million in the second quarter of 2008, per capita GDP grew by 4.8 percent.

Pernia also noted that inflation continues to put pressure on the economy, particularly on the supply side.

Weak agriculture

The country's chief economist also noted the persistent weak performance of the agriculture sector.

"We are also gravely concerned about the almost stagnant output of the agriculture sector and this supports our premise that the main reason behind high inflation is the gross inefficiency in the domestic production of rice, which was not augmented by imported goods—especially rice," said Pernia.

He noted "dismal" output for several agricultural commodities during the second quarter such as palay, corn, sugarcane, copra, coconut and poultry.

Pernia said he is urging the Department of Agriculture to urgently review and reformulate and programs that restrict access to land use, technology and extension services, as well as to finance and markets.

"The state of the health of assessment of the marine environment, including the possible presence of corals and incidence of mangroves," he said.

NETA remains optimistic that inflation would moderate by the end of the year in line with the target of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

"The country's economic growth prospects remain positive, with manufacturing growing at a rate of 6.5 percent, supported by household consumption and invest-

ments.

"Higher disposable incomes resulting from the recently passed tax reform package and improved market conditions are seen to help sustain growth," he said.

Government consumption, however, reported a slight deceleration in the second quarter because of lower outbursements for personnel services, maintenance and operating expenses, as well as subsidies.

Pernia noted, however, that government spending is expected to continue its growth as it works toward the development of human capital through social programs, including cash transfers, the National Health Insurance Program and utilization of the Calamity Fund in disaster areas.

Likewise, the continued implementation of the Build, Build, Build program would give the economy a boost.

Expected to energize the economy in the short term are the entry of the third telecom player and the resumption of tourism activities in Boracay by October.

NETA also urged the immediate approval of the 11th Regular Foreign Investment Negative List, to reduce foreign investment restrictions.

"Together with the proper implementation of the Ease of Doing Business Act, this will surely encourage more investments from both foreign and domestic sources," said Pernia.

Inflation seen to ease

Meanwhile, the BSP said it expects a significant reduction in inflation by the passage of the rice tariffication bill by Congress at the same account of a 0.99 percent annual increase in the core inflation rate.

BSP Deputy Governor Eraldo Guinigundo said the proposed amendment to Republic Act 7261 on Tariffication Act of 1992 is expected to take effect in the third quarter and implemented in the fourth quarter, which would reduce inflation to 0.2 percentage point this year.

However, given the dynamics of the Congress, Guinigundo said inflation could be reduced by 0.8 percentage points if the Senate approves the bill in the second half of the year and the House passes it in the early next year.

"It is one of the downside risks to inflation moving forward. So in the business-

scenario, there is no assumption that rice tariffication will come through," he said.

Inflation rose to a 2.58 percent annual rate in July from 2.5 percent in June, bringing the average inflation to 2.67 percent in the first seven months of the year and exceeding the two to four percent target set by the BSP amid higher oil prices, more expensive rice, coal, pork and the impact of the tax reform law.

Guinigundo pointed out one of the factors that could temper inflation is the imposition of tariff on rice imports.

The BSP, together with other government agencies including NEDA and the Department of Finance (DOF), has been pushing for the passage of the rice tariffication bill in Congress.

The move is seen as a significant step in reorganizing the agricultural sector by removing unnecessary government intervention in the rice market.

Once the quantitative restriction is replaced by predictable tariffs, NEDA expects the private sector to respond more effectively to market signals and government can focus on regulating to ensure food safety and fair market competition.

On the other hand, the DOF estimates the removal of the rice quantitative restriction could slash retail prices of rice by as much as 27 percent.

However, rice tariffication would help mitigate the impact of the implementation of RA 10963 or the TRALK law on September prices.

Based on its latest assessment, the BSP's Monetary Board raised its inflation forecast to 2.5 instead of 2.67 percent for this year and to 2.7 instead of 2.67 percent for next year.

The BSP yesterday delivered its biggest rate hike in a decade as it raised its overnight rate to 6.25 percent, up from 5.75 percent, to curb inflationary expectations and prevent speculative currency-side pressures from driving further second-round effects.

The central bank has so far raised its overnight rates by 100 basis points through the overnight reverse repurchase rate to four percent. It hiked interest rates on 90-day, 180-day and 360-day Treasury bills by 25 basis points last June 27.

— With Lawrence Agcaoili

China state firms poised to exploit riches of disputed sea

HONG KONG/SHANGHAI— Beijing's giant state-owned enterprises are playing an increasing role in China's buildup in the South China Sea and could seek to cement their dominant position in coming years, according to new research.

The work by academic Yue Gong and published by Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute this week sheds light on a little-examined element of rising tensions across the vital trade route, showing extensive work by Chinese state-owned businesses in developing infrastructure and tourism, as well as oil and gas, some in hotly disputed areas.

Some experts and regional diplomats believe the strong commercial presence could further complicate any future regional solution should Beijing, which research shows has encouraged businesses to operate, protect them politically and militarily.

Strategic interests

China's state-owned enterprises operate in a complex and often opaque environment, serving national strategic interests as they seek new opportunities, Gong told Reuters.

"They cannot operate independently but they are ultimately opportunistic: when the policy environment is favorable, then they will go for it. And we have seen signs of that behavior in the South China Sea," said Gong, who is based at Singapore's S. Rajarajah School of International Studies.

"If the Chinese government can maintain an upper hand and leverage while achieving stability, there might well be greater opportunities," he said.

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

While the research notes the difficulty in obtaining financial information, it suggests turning seven reefs and says the Spratly archipelago into man-made islands was a multi-billion-dollar effort for China.

The study cites state media estimates that building up Fiery Heart alone, now home to a 3-kilometer runway and military facilities, including missile and radar installations, cost around \$1 billion.

Philippine reefs

Fiery Cross is claimed by the Philippines, where it is known as Kagitingan Reef.

China seized Kagitingan and six other Philippine-claimed reefs in the Spratlys and turned them into artificial islands on which it has built military bases.

The buildup of the seven man-made islands deep in the maritime heart of Southeast Asia has alarmed the United States and other regional powers.

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, including waters claimed by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Gong's research shows how China Communications Construction Corp (CCCC) and its subsidiaries seized on policies advocated by President Xi Jinping in 2012 to expand its maritime capabilities via the South China Sea, in part by developing some of the world's largest dredgers.

CCCC planned to list its dredging operation in 2015, but its application later lapsed according to the Hong Kong stock exchange.

Paracels business

CCCC has formed new units centered on the Paracels, which

China disputes with Vietnam, that are cycling expansion in tourism, logistics, fishing as well as ongoing construction activities, according to the paper.

The construction giant has partnered with Beijing for investment across various sectors—a plan that stems from the fact that it has quietly benefited from land reclamation in the South China Sea through implementing national tasks," the research states.

CCCC also collaborated with other state-owned businesses, including China Travel Service Group (CTS), to develop a nascent cruise ship and tourism industry in the Paracels after state leaders in 2012 overcame earlier reluctance to back such

moves.

CCCC, which has units listed in Hong Kong and Shanghai did not respond to requests for comment. China National Travel Service, which oversees CTSG after a series of mergers, did not respond to requests for comment.

More than 70,000 tourists have traveled on four cruise ships that hit the South China Sea when the Paracels route was opened in April 2013, the Hainan Maritime Safety Administration, said in January.

Energy push

Some 680 commercial flights landed at the expanded runway on Woody Island where Sandao City is now the administrative hub of China's

ment in oil and gas output rose 22.45 percent—up from 23 percent last year. That was second highest in Asia, operation off north China.

CNOOC's latest annual report noted eight new discoveries in the south China Sea, out of a total of 39 struck offshore China in 2017.

Some players like CNOOC "appear more skillful and effective in mobilizing resources to influence state policy while some actors, such as enterprises in the tourism industry, respond only when the state provides incentives," Gong noted.

In a statement to Reuters, CNOOC Ltd. said it had a deep water development strategy for the South China Sea and planned to extend investment on future exploration and development.

More companies coming

"All oil and gas companies among the globe are welcome to jointly invest and operate offshore China and to achieve success together with the company," CNOOC Ltd. said.

A host of other state-owned companies are reportedly eyeing slices of the South China Sea action from nuclear, nuclear energy, programs, telecommunication, fisheries and banking.

Jay Storey, a South China Sea expert at ISIAS, said the work showed "Beijing is incentivizing companies to become major players in the South China Sea."

"This is something that China set out that the other countries cannot or, particularly on this side," Storey said.

"The dispute is absolutely not about a resolution either a legal or a political resolution and the role of China's state-owned enterprises only highlights that," he said. —REUTERS

South China Sea operations in the year ended December 2017.

The Singapore research also details how China National Offshore Oil Corp. (CNOOC) lobbied for funding and greater Chinese involvement in the South China Sea a decade ago after facing criticism from scholars concerned at activities by rival claimants.

CNOOC later earmarked \$2 billion for exploration and built a giant deep-water drilling rig that was placed off centre. That name it later sparking tensions with Hanoi.

According to its first-quarter filings of lasted that CNOOC Ltd. which is in charge of all the group's exploration and production business the south China Sea's share of the company

ASEAN-CHINA TALKS

SETTING TIME
FRAME ON CODE
OF CONDUCT
'UNREALISTIC'

BEIJING—Talks on completing a code of conduct for the disputed South China Sea will be long and complex and it would be unrealistic to set a timetable, state media on Thursday cited a senior Chinese diplomat as saying.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, and China agreed last week on a working plan to continue long drawn-out negotiations over the code of conduct, with officials lauding it as a "milestone" and "great progress."

Four members of ASEAN and China have overlapping claims to the sea and the world's busiest and most strategic waterways, where China has expanded recent into man-made islands.

For years they have been discussing a pact to prevent an escalation of tensions.

In an interview with China's Newsworld magazine, Qiao Guo, director general of the Chinese foreign ministry's Department of Maritime and Ocean Affairs, said the talks were continuing.

Many of the topics were complex and sensitive and there were many different points of view, he said.

"If these issues are to be resolved, all relevant parties need to keep looking for the greatest common denominator," Yi added. —REUTERS

Unrealistic to set timetable for sea code - Chinese official

BEIJING - Talks on completing a code of conduct for the disputed South China Sea will be long and complex, and it would be unrealistic to set a timetable, state media yesterday cited a senior Chinese diplomat as saying.

Southeast Asia and China agreed last week on a working text to continue long drawn-out negotiations over the code of conduct, with officials lauding it as a "milestone" and "great progress."

Several members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China have overlapping claims to the sea, one of the world's busiest and most strategic waterways, where China has expanded reefs into man-made islands.

In an interview with *China Newsweek* magazine, Yi Xianlong, director general of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, said the talks were continuing.

Many of the topics were complex and sensitive and there were many different points of view, he said.

"If these issues can be resolved and the code finally comes together, all sides need to keep looking for the greatest common denominator," Yi added. "There are

voices from the outside who are trying to set a timetable for the talks on the code, but that is unrealistic."

Any multilateral talks take time, especially on such a complex issue as the South China Sea, Yi added.

"It is impossible to define a timetable. Instead of setting the timetable unrealistically and binding one's hands, it's better to step forward one foot at a time," he also said.

China has repeatedly denounced what it views as interference from "countries outside the region" in the South China Sea, generally a message to the US and its allies to stay out of the dispute.

Signing China up to a legally binding and enforceable code for the waterway has long been a goal for claimant-members of ASEAN, some of whom have maritime interests over what they see as China's overreach for their sovereign rights in the sea, including of fishermen and energy exploration efforts.

"Countries outside the region have been pushing the code must be legal binding. This issue is quite complicated, involving the domestic legal procedures of all the countries concerned," he added without elaborating. - Reuters

ROQUE: PH EYES SIGNING OF EXPLORATION DEAL WITH CHINA BEFORE XI VISIT

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMCAurelioINQ

Malacañang is looking forward to signing a joint exploration agreement with China in the West Philippine Sea before Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit later this year.

West Philippine Sea is the local name of the waters within the Philippines' 370-kilometer

exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said no timetable had been set for the signing of the joint exploration agreement.

"No time frame. But of course, because of the impending visit of President Xi, I would say that it is any time between

now and the visit of President Xi. But it was not expressly stated as such," Roque said.

Xi is expected to visit the Philippines before the year ends. Malacañang, however, has not announced any details.

Moving toward deal

Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said at a meeting with military and police officials in

Malacañang on Tuesday that China and the Philippines were moving toward a joint exploration deal.

In his press briefing on Thursday, Roque stressed that President Duterte was open to a joint venture but would not yield Philippine territory to China.

"He will not give up even an inch of Philippine territory. That is the position. There was a restatement of policy," Roque said.

Cayetano has long been talking about a joint exploration deal with China in the West Philippine Sea, but he has never mentioned whether such an agreement will be submitted to Congress for approval.

The 1987 Constitution reserves the exploitation of Philippine natural resources for

PH, China work on framework of joint oil hunt

By Nat Mariano

THE framework for the proposed joint exploration of the West Philippine Sea is expected to be ready before Chinese President Xi Jinping visits Manila in November, the Palace said Thursday.

"The President has repeatedly said that he is open to joint exploration. Number one, because the Supreme Court said it's constitutional in the case of La Buga; and number two, because it is pursuant to the national interest. But he will not give up even an inch of Philippine territory. That's our stand," said Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque.

"We are working with the realities of modern day life. We are working with the realities of geopolitics. But we are promoting the national interest first and foremost," he said.

Senator Antonio Trillanes IV, a constant critic of the administration, said the Philippines would be at a disadvantage if it pushes through with joint energy exploration with China.

Trillanes said Filipinos may be reduced to just mere observers in a joint exploration deal with China because of its technology.

"We expect China to dominate the whole engagement because Filipinos right now do not have the capability and the technology to do such undertaking," Trillanes told the ANC news channel.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano earlier said the administration is working on a framework for possible oil exploration with China where companies can work on a commercial level without damaging the country's claims.

Malacañang also maintained that the proposed joint exploration with China was constitutional and featured a 60-40 sharing scheme similar to that used in the exploration of the Malampaya gas field.

But Trillanes warned that while a 60-40 sharing policy looks fair at face value, China may crunch the numbers differently and manipulate the data to its advantage.

"Once they crunch the numbers, they can manipulate stuff and make you believe you are actually getting a 60 percent when in reality you may actually just be getting 10 percent," Trillanes said.

Navy successfully test-fires missile system

By JAIME LAUDE

The Philippine Navy (PN) successfully tested the effectiveness of its first missile gunboat yesterday.

The Navy gunboat blasted a designated target using an Israeli-made Spike-ER (Extended Range) missile in a nava-

drill held off Limay, Bataan.

Navy spokesman Cmdr. Jonathan Zata said from a distance of six kilometers, the Spike-ER missile system installed Multi-Purpose Assault Craft (MPAC) accurately neutralized its target.

Zata said testing was in line with the

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Navy

From Page 1

acceptance phase of the Department of National Defense (DND) of its missile procurement project for the Navy.

"The PN together with teams from Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd. and the DND's Technical Inspector and Acceptance Committee (TIAC) oversaw the test firing activity," Zata said.

He added, the missile exercise included the firing of mini-typhoon machine gun system that was also installed on the MPACs for final acceptance into the Navy.

Around it witness the missile firing test were Navy chief Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad and other senior naval officers and defense officials.

A Spike-ER missile was fired and accurately hit the designated target at approximately six kilometers away from the firing platform. The target was hit dead center even if the sea condition was moderately rough with waves at least one meter high but within the normal firing

conditions of the missile," Zata said.

The PN's MPAC Acquisition Project entered into a contract with Rafael through Israel's Ministry of Defense for the supply and integration of the weapons system to three locally made MPAC platforms.

On April 15, 2017, Defense Secretary Dolfin Lorenzana approved the Notice to Proceed.

The above-mentioned MPACs were constructed by the Subic Bay-based Kongsuk Corp. and activated on May 22, 2017.

"Another actual live firing demonstration of the Spike-ER missile will be conducted with the commander-in-chief, the President of the Philippines in attendance," Zata said.

The Spike-ER system, which arrived in the country last April is the Navy's first missile weapon capable of penetrating 1,000 mm or thicker homogeneous armor and having a range of eight kilometers.

Navy test fires missile system

The test firing of the country's first missile system in Corregidor Island was "successful," the Philippine Navy said on Thursday.

Commander Jonathan Zate, Navy spokesman, said the Spike-Extended Range (LR) missile launching system was on a multi-purpose attack aircraft (MPAAC) during the sea acceptance test held on Thursday in Lamon Point, Batangas.

Lamon Port is 518 kilometers away from the Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal.

Navy chief Vice Admiral Robert Limpedad,

other senior Navy officers and PMA Defense Acquisition Office representatives witnessed the live-fire testing.

"The activity is necessary to test, inspect and accept the weapons and its systems in accordance with the contract for the final acceptance of the system," Zate said in a statement.

He saw the Spike LR missile "accurately" hit the designated target six kilometers away.

The Navy has nine MPAACs which were constructed by the Subic-Basic Program Corporation.

DEMPSEY REYES

Test-firing of Navy's first missile successful

BY VICTOR REYES

THE Philippine Navy yesterday successfully test-fired its first sea-to-sea missile, which was acquired from Israeli weapons manufacturer Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.

The test-firing of the Sea-Targeted Laser-Directed (SLD) missile, which was aboard a multi-purpose attack vessel, was held at Linao, Pangasinan, Ilocos.

"In spite of the sea state and the accident by the untargeted target, a live plate with a fluorescent marker at approximately six miles raster away from the ship platform," Navy spokesman Lt. Com. Benjamin Lata said.

"The target was hit four times even if the sea state condition was moderate, from with waves of a meter one meter high but within the normal force condition of the missile," he added.

Lata said the test-firing, which was witnessed by Navy chief Vice adm. Robert Limpedrad and other senior Navy and defense officials, was "definitely a great triumph and success for the platform and system it was tested with the platform for the first accuracy of the system."

The test-firing of the SLD missile requires demand by authorities to speed up the procurement of the missile system.

The status of the test-firing was distribution of the SLD missile will be scheduled the test-firing witnesses in Linao, Ilocos.

"I believe the test-firing will be from Lata said it will determine the President's vision of "Victory over the people of state of support of a year."

The test-firing of the SLD missile by the Republic and defense officials, which is the scheduled test-firing of the SLD missile, will be held in the use of the SLD missile.

"I believe the test-firing will be from Lata said it will determine the President's vision of "Victory over the people of state of support of a year."

"Whether our test-firing will be from Lata said it will determine the President's vision of "Victory over the people of state of support of a year."

"I believe the test-firing will be from Lata said it will determine the President's vision of "Victory over the people of state of support of a year."

ARMY PULLOUT IN SURIGAO, 'LUMAD' START JOURNEY HOME

SAN AGUSTIN SURIGAO DEL SUR—About 1,600 "lumad" (indigenous peoples) who fled their homes here and in neighboring Langa town after a military detachment was put up there are finally returning to their villages.

On Thursday, the lumad who have been encamped at a village gymnasium for 27 months home immediately after breakfast, carrying their belongings, with their children, the elderly and farm animals in tow. Among them were two soldiers who were born three years ago in makeshift tents at the Sports Oval in Tandag City. They sought refuge at the facility after three lumad leaders were killed in September 2015.

Search assurance

The lumad decided to go home after military leaders assured them that soldiers were no longer in the area and the military detachment had been dismantled.

They had no fear of due to the military's presence. The lumad group Mapasa said the village council of Diatagon at Langa, Surigao del Sur province, had revoked its resolution that allowed the military to set up a detachment at Kilometer 9 in Barangay Simo was that triggered the evacuation.

Checkpoints

Lt. Col. Jaime Datun, commander of the Army's 89th Infantry Battalion, had agreed to remove the detachment and said the military would no longer set up smaller detachments for regular search. Only mobile checkpoints would be installed, he said.

Datun said soldiers were prohibited from entering lumad homes. "If one of my men violates my order, they can report directly to me," he said.

In a statement, Mapasa said the lumad were eager to return home now that they were certain they could freely move around their communities.

"We will go back to what we regard as paradise [from] where we were confined to have to live our lives and livelihood," Mapasa said. —ORBIT BANGKANG
DAD INC. *AK*

Guerrilla: Case vs CPP, NPA as terror groups stands

A court order excluding four prominent leftist personalities from the Duterte administration's terror list does not set back the government's bid to legally declare the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, New People's Army (NPA), as "terrorist" organizations, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said on Thursday. The Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 14 on July 27 declared former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, United Nations rapporteur Victoria Lucia Tauli-Corpuz and National Democratic Front of the Philippines consultants Rafael Baylisis and Jose Malencio Maulinas "nonparties" to the case. The four were among the more than 600 individuals whom the Department of Justice had reported to the court as members of the CPP-NPA. "The only real respondents are the CPP and the NPA ... who are the party-respondents in the petition to declare them as terrorist organizations" —DONALD PAZZIBUGAN *MS*

DOJ downplays ruling clearing 4 CPP leaders

By EDU PUNAY

The government's bid in court to declare over 600 persons linked to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), as terrorists remains on track, an official said yesterday.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra issued the statement following a recent ruling by the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 19 declaring four key CPP leaders - former Bayan Muna representative Satur Ocampo and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace consultant Ra-

fael Barlosis, Victoria Lucia Tezli-Corpuz and Jose Melencio Molintas - as non-parties to the case.

Guevarra said the development was not a setback to the government's proscription case against the communist rebels.

"In the first place, the only

real respondents in the proscription case are the CPP and the NPA. It is these entities, not the named individuals, who are the party-respondents in the petition to declare them as terrorist organizations," he stressed.

Acting Prosecutor General Richard Anthony Fadullor said the DOJ "will just have to resort to causing the service of summons by publication" as directed in the RTC ruling.

Guevarra revealed that they only submitted to the court the list of individuals

including Ocampo, Barlosis, Corpuz and Molintas, with alleged links to the CPP-NPA solely for the purpose of service of summons to the two organizations.

In a resolution on July 27, RTC Judge Mario Madonna-Malagat ruled that Ocampo and Barlosis are non-parties since "the prayed-for declaration from this court is an organization, association or group of persons" while the non other deemed being part of the group.

Last March, the DOJ filed

before the court a motion seeking to declare communist leaders and their armed members as terrorists, submitting a list of over 600 names that included CPP founding chair Jose Maria Sison, alleged CPP leaders Benito and Wilma Triazon, former peace panel chief Luis Jalandoni, human rights lawyer and former baguio City councilor Jose Molintas and Cordillerans Joanna Canino, Wanda Baragay, Holmgat, Sherwin De Vera, Beverly Sakongat Longid and Jeannette Ribaya Cravidos.

The petition was filed following the termination of the peace talks between the government and the CPP in November last year.

In its petition, the DOJ cited Republic Act 9372, the Human Security Act of 2007, in seeking the declaration of the CPP and NPA officials and members as terrorists.

The petition signed by Senior Associate State Prosecutor Peter Ong, accused the CPP-NPA of having an "evil plan of imposing a totalitarian regime."

3:00 PM

DoJ downplays SC ruling on CPP-NPA

THE Department of Justice on Thursday downplayed the ruling by a Manila city regional trial court declaring four alleged leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, as non-parties to its petition seeking the CPP-NPA as terrorist organizations.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra explained that the government's petition before Manila City RTC Branch 15, seeking to declare the CPP-NPA as terrorist groups and linking more than 600 individuals to the communist group remains on track.

This came after the lower court declared former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace consultant Rafael Baylón as well as Victoria Lucia Tauli-Corpus and Jose Meinoric Molintas as non-parties to the case.

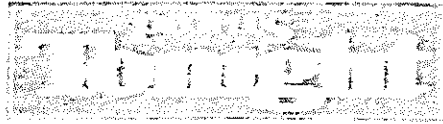
Guevarra said that the development was

not a setback to the government's fight against terrorism.

"The court's ruling on the non-party status of the respondents does not affect the CPP and the NPA. It is their status, not the named individuals, who are the party-respondents in the petition to declare them as terrorist organizations," the Justice Secretary said.

Acting Prosecutor General Edward Anthony Fuduban, head of the DoJ's prosecutorial arm, also rebutted the ruling. "The declaration by the court of some personalities as non-parties will not have any bearing on the outcome of the case," he said.

According to Guevarra, they only submitted to the court the list of individuals, including Ocampo, Baylón, Corpus, and Molintas, with alleged links to the CPP-NPA solely for the purpose of service of summons to the two organizations. **Rey E. Requejo**



NPA weapons seized

MARINE trooper on Wednesday noon seized a cache of high-powered weapons and ammunition belonging to the New People's Army in Quezon, Palawan shortly after a clash with the rebels, a Police Regional Office 4-E report said yesterday.

PHILCOM Director Gen. Saenzosmen Domingo said a group of Marines and army soldiers led by the Lt. Aspern and Staff Sgt. Noyan Lantada were on patrol near San Lorenzo, Barangay Quinque in Quezon, Palawan when they encountered the guerrillas at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

Heavy fighting ensued between the security troops and an estimated 20 heavily-armed rebels led by one Jose Te Albar and Ra Borwan until the guerrillas retreated to their jungle hideout. Alfred Dalizon

ed

Normalization for MILF fighters, communities under way

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

The implementing panels of the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) met on Wednesday with members of the different peace mechanisms as part of preparations for

the normalization track, a key process in the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the two parties.

Nabil Tan, deputy presidential peace adviser and chairman of the Government Implementing Panel for the Bangsamoro

accords, said the meeting focused on any remaining ceasefire mechanisms and the normalization process.

"The preparations for the normalization are complete; security concerns are serious matters. We all have the bigger audience to address and should face that in this partnership, we can maintain our peaceful co-existence on the ground," Tan said.

Mohagher Iqbal, chair of the MILF Implementing Panel, emphasized the need for all parties to be steadfast, saying the implementation process is more difficult than the negotiations.

"Implementation is more difficult than the theoretical side of it. We need to be very creative. There are situations on the ground that we actually resolve

"The journey is not yet over. We have to travel some distance. The road is full of twists and turns, bumps and bumps," he added.

The meeting in Cotabato City was held following the ceremonial presentation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) at the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) main office on Wednesday.

Iqbal said the BOL signifies the closure of armed conflict between the government and the MILF.

"Now that we have the BOL, more than anything else, this is for the youth, for the future generations of the Bangsamoro. They will be the ones who will reap all these benefits," he said.

Daro Kamaruddin bin Mustafa, the Malaysian facilitator, lauded the government and the MILF for their role in the peace process in Mindanao.

"I'm pleased to be here today to listen to the many groups that are involved in the peace process," Mustafa said.

The ceasefire mechanisms - International Monitoring Team, Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities, and Ad Hoc Joint Action Group - were created during the early stages of peace negotiations by both sides as their commitment to the ceasefire agreement, and to create an environment of peace while the parties are negotiating.

The joint bodies under the Annex on Normalization were established following the parties' pledge to transform the lives of the MILF combatants into productive members of the community and to pursue sustainable livelihood free from fear of violence and crime, while their camps will also transform into peaceful communities.

The bodies under the normalizer include an Joint Normalization Committee, Joint Peace and Security Committee, Independent Decommissioning Body, Joint Test Forces on Camps Transformation, and Joint Force on Decommissioning Operations, and their communities.

2 - With Edil Regalado

Military braces for attacks from 'peace spoilers'

BY DEMPSEY REYES

WITH the recent signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) by President Rodrigo Duterte, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is bracing for attacks that may be mounted by "peace spoilers," particularly terrorist groups in Mindanao, a military official said.

Brig. Gen. Ciriano Sobejana, commander of the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) in Mindanao, said his unit is preparing for the possible attacks of individuals or

groups who are opposed to the Bangsamoro law.

Sobejana gave assurances that the military has come up with contingency plans to foil terrorist attacks.

"We have anticipated scenarios and we have corresponding contingency plans for each scenario," he told reporters in an interview.

Sobejana said the Army is closely monitoring the activities of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a breakaway group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The BIFF has been split into two factions — the Karafan and

Bungos groups.


The BIFF, which is linked to the Islamic State, expressed opposition to the BOL and vowed to intensify attacks against the government.

Sobejana said the military would not let its guard down even if Abu Mishry Ibrahim, BIFF spokesman, congratulated the MILF over the passage of the BOL.

"We do not know the feelings of other members [of the BIFF]," Sobejana said.

"We see all terror groups as security threats that is why we are guarding their movements," he stressed. *IN*

CIVIL GROUPS UNITE FOR BOL

COTABATO CITY: Various civil society organizations (CSOs) expressed unity in pushing for the implementation of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), or Republic Act 11054 on Thursday. Hashim Manticayan, speaking on behalf of 64 CSOs under the League of Bangsamoro Organizations, traces the so-called "Moro problem" from post-colonization era. Since those years, he said, the Moro has been marginalized in the aspects of political, socio-economic, and cultural issues. "The Bangsamoro Organic Law is the blood of tens of thousands of martyrs and soldiers who lost their lives for the present and future generations to live a peaceful life," said Manticayan referring to the decades-long struggle of the Moro people. Froilyn Mendoza, a non-Muslim who advocates indigenous peoples' and women's rights, said there is still much work to do as she called for the people to vote in affirmation in the coming plebiscite. The event was organized by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process represented by Undersecretary Nabil Tan and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front represented by Mohagher Iqbal, with ARMM Gov. Mujib Hataman, Susana Abayatin of Bangsamoro Transition Commission and Dato' Kamarudin bin Mustafa, Malaysian facilitator for the Bangsamoro peace talks.  JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

PNoy is wrong



FORMER President Benigno Aquino III has been quoted as saying that he frowns on the idea of our entering into a possible joint exploration with China, in any manner or form, in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea (SCS/WPS), disputed or otherwise.

He then proceeded to lambast President Duterte for even entertaining the idea of a 60-40 sharing arrangement even in undisputed areas controlled by the Philippines.

Said BSA III: "We are not obliged to enter into a sharing scheme for exploration with China...the country has the exclusive rights over the West Philippine Sea...and even if the administration sees this as a 'practical solution' to the ongoing dispute over the area, we should be wary of the Chinese..."

It is a pity that BSA III should be saying these things after his administration waylaid earlier efforts for the country to seriously engage in, one, knowing and eventually developing whatever resources are found in the SCS/WPS and, two, finally inking a Code of Conduct in the disputed area involving China and the 10-member Asean regional grouping. Like a hacendero who has outlived his usefulness but continues to believe otherwise, he is now trying to inject himself all over again into this very critical matter on the basis of false, misleading and ultimately wrong assumptions.

If BSA III does not realize that his statements have become an integral part of the crucial effort to agree, waylay what could eventually be a lasting solution to the decades old impasse over conflicting claims in the area, then he does not deserve any kind of attention at all. Especially since it was issued in the midst of another round of China-bashing by the usual suspects over the SCS/WPS dispute and in the run-up to the meeting between the Chinese Foreign Minister and his counterparts in Asean. It is good that despite his vain attempt to put a cloud over the meeting, the participants were able to agree on a draft Code of Conduct which has been long in coming and eagerly awaited by the parties.

In any event, if BSA III really wants to inject himself in the SCS/WPS debate, it may be wise for him to consider the

statements of a fellow traveler on the SCS/WPS dispute, Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio, who has transformed himself into the go-to guy within the dwindling ranks of the anti-China, anti-Duterte groups involved in this issue. For somebody who is presumably more knowledgeable, definitely wiser and more passionate about this issue, the Acting Chief Justice has been more circumspect and clear-minded than BSA III and his closest confidants.

Noted the Acting Chief Justice on the matter of joint exploration in the contested areas, "Government should make sure that in the proposed joint exploration, the country's sovereignty will not be compromised and the proposed 60-40 sharing arrangement complies with and is well within the Constitutional limits..." Carpio advised that he is ready

“Like a hacendero who has outlived his usefulness but continues to believe otherwise, he is now trying to inject himself all over again into this very critical matter on the basis of false, misleading and ultimately wrong assumptions.”

to support the project "if the government would ensure that no sovereignty would be surrendered and the Chinese respect the constitutional limits."

On that note we should now proceed with all deliberate speed to clear the air, set to speak, and come to terms with the concerns of China and our brothers in Asean.

On our part, the prompt, responsible and sustainable development of the resources in the contested areas should animate our processes. After all, the benefits from this positive development cannot be sneezed at. No less than the United States Geological Survey has crowed over the potential oil and gas reserves not to mention the aquatic and related resources in the area.

Based on the latest USGS research,

the South China Sea region holds reserves of some 11 billion barrels of oil and 198 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. China's National Offshore Oil Company—the state-owned energy company responsible for offshore energy exploration—provides an even much rosier estimate, predicting the region holds some 125 billion barrels of oil and 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

These are not insignificant figures in a region which is considered "woefully dependent on imported oil and gas." Recent studies show that China is the second-largest consumer of oil after the United States and continues to be critically dependent on imports to feed its energy demands. On the other hand, Japan, South Korea, India and six of the 10-member Asean are likewise net oil and gas importers.

Any serious effort to develop such huge reserves in areas close to home, as it were, should be welcome news indeed. The other benefits of a stable and peaceful SCS/WPS environment, governed by a rule-based Code of Conduct are equally considerable and should be earnestly pursued with all deliberate speed.

We are talking here of the marine and aquatic resources known to be abundant in these waters. Even the minerals, metallic and non-metallic, which some geologists and marine scientists claim would also be considerable would be a boon to the economic and social well-being of the peoples in the countries ringing the area. And we are not yet talking here of the boost to international trade which a calm and collected SCS/WPS area brings.

Noted a recent independent study by a Singapore-based think tank: "The territorial disputes over the South China Sea are about much more than energy, marine and other resources buried in the seabed."

More than \$5 trillion in global trade passes through the strategic waterway annually, including the vast majority of the imported oil on which Japan, China and South Korea rely. These countries, together with the United States and, of course, the Asean see control of the waterway as a key security concern—not just in terms of national defense but also in terms of energy and economic security."

Need we say more about the damage which BSA III's wrong view of things can result in if we simply allow it to be unquestioned? *Howay naman!*

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PARTNER IN DEVELOPMENT | 6ID supports government Peace and Development efforts

Posted by Alvin Santiago

CAMP GEN EMILIO AGUINALDO, Quezon City (DWDD) – The 6th Infantry “Kampilan” Division fully supports the government’s Peace and Development efforts, like the anti-drug campaign of the administration.



This was the statement made by Brigadier General Cirilito E Sobejana AFP, in an interview by DWDD.

According to BGen Sobejana, jointly with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), they have launched numerous operations against illegal drug groups like the recent recovery of numerous volumes of the illegal substance in the town of Datu Sinsuat.

BGen Sobejana added that if the joint operations would meet any resistance, the AFP is ready to support and respond.

TERRORISM TO TOURISM

Sobejana is optimistic that the region would benefit from the gained peace and development in the region. The 6ID is now pushing for an increase in tourism with their “terrorism to tourism” and “battlefield to oil field” slogans. He has assured the security of these developments in coordination with the Local Government Units (LGUs) and religious leaders in the region.



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

MARTIAL LAW

The continued implementation of Martial Law in Mindanao has made Mindanaoans more secure with the daily lives. The ordinary citizens have now felt the presence of their government through the delivery of basic services. He added that they respect the sentiments of some sector on their resistance to the implementation of martial law but the Mindanaoan themselves have felt the positive change with its continued imposition.

The AFP is in the forefront of the transformation ng Mindanao with the campaign of Peace and Development through the implementation of various livelihood programs in cooperation with the LGUs who will provide the much-needed resources. The AFP is also in the thick of mediating and encouraging civilian partners to assist in different projects that would make a positive impact on our countrymen.

LOCALIZED PEACE TALKS

BGen Sobejana fully-supports the conduct of localized peace talks in the pursuit of a lasting peace and development in the region. He believes that the talks would be more credible if you could we face the problem on the grounds. Direct talks with local rebel leaders can better resolve any issues of concerns since they know the problem very well. Compared to dealing with Communist leaders based in a foreign country that does not have a clear control of their members on the ground.

The AFP is not only involved in dealing with security threats but leads the way in resolving development concerns of the community. Sobejana added that the bottom line is that the problem is economic, like the lack of job opportunities and poverty. So the government is implementing a hard and soft approach on the matter to gain a sustainable effect and thus preventing them in being duped to joint any armed uprising. **AES / MCAG**

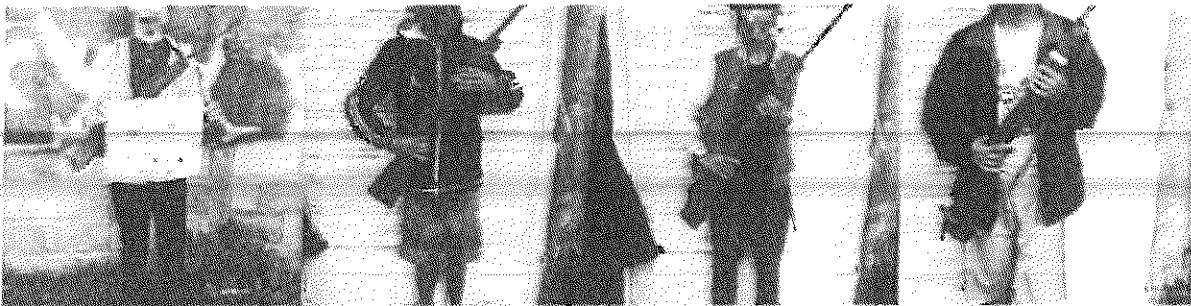
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WANTING PEACE | 4 more CPP-NPA terrorist surrender in Bukidnon

Posted by Alvin Santiago

IMPASUGONG, Bukidnon (DWDD) – Four more Communist Party of the Philippines – New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) members from Guerilla Front 4B (GF4B) surrendered to troops of the 8th Infantry “Dependable” Battalion (8IB) at Sitio Mahagwa, Brgy Hagpa, Impasugong, Bukidnon on Tuesday, August 7, 2018.

One (1) was a regular NPA terrorist, he was identified as Alias Dalasigon, 43 yrs old, who brought along his carbine rifle. The three (3) were members of Millisyang Bayan, namely: Alias Lawin, 41 yrs old; Alias Bag-as, 27 yrs old; and Alias Jampee, 25 yrs old, that also brought their 3 homemade shotguns. The surrenderees were all from Brgy Hagpa, Impasugong, Bukidnon.



“Our surrenderees from the start of our campaign, were results of our Community Support Program team deployments. People in our priority areas are now aware of the CPP-NPA’s true intentions and that they do not want to take part of their failed armed struggle anymore.” Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Illana, Commanding Officer of 8IB said

It can be recalled last July 16, two former NPA terrorists of GF4B also surrendered with firearms to 8IB Headquarters at Impasugong, Bukidnon.

On the other hand, Brigadier General Eric Vinoya, Commander of 403rd Infantry Brigade, assured the surrenderees that the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP) Committee of Bukidnon Province will ensure their proper reintegration to the community.

“Once again, we appreciate the decision of our brothers to go down and embrace peace. Together with the other members of the ECLIP Committee of Bukidnon, we will ensure your security and that all the assistance from the program will be given to you. You have made a good and very timely decision.” said Vinoya.

Surrenderees revealed that NPA terrorists promised financial support of ₱5,000 and one sack of rice every month, yet none of these came true. Terrorists also extort money of ₱10.00 per person every month and harvest crops leaving people in the community with almost nothing.

"From January up to date, 4th Infantry Division have been very serious in our campaign of putting to end the terrorism brought by the CPP-NPA. We have information that many of the NPA terrorists are now waiting for the right time to surrender because of hardship. Most of them are dismayed of the NPA terrorists' failed promises and extortion. I encourage those who want to surrender, now is the right time to do it. Your Philippine Army with the local government are very willing to assist you in your reintegration to our society." Major General Ronald Villanueva, Commander of the Army's 4th Infantry Division said. **4DPAO / MCAG**

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NPA THREAT REDUCED | Bukidnon now Conflict—Manageable and Ready for Further Development

Posted by Alvin Santiago

MALAYBALAY CITY, Bukidnon (DWDD) – 403rd Infantry Brigade (403Bde) and the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Bukidnon declared the province as Conflict-Manageable and Ready for Further Development (CMRFD) last Tuesday, August 7, 2018, around 4:25 PM.

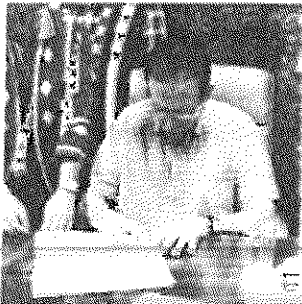


The declaration was formally conducted through a joint signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the LGU of Bukidnon headed by Governor Jose Maria R. Zubiri Jr. and Brigadier General Eric Vinoya, Commander of 403Bde.

It was agreed upon by both parties and the members of the Peace and Order Council of Bukidnon as indicated by the significant reduction of CPP-NPA terrorist attacks against civilians and civilian properties that include vital economic installations and government infrastructure projects.

Also present during the MOA Signing were Brigadier General Cristobal Zaragoza, Assistant Division Commander for Operations of 4th Infantry "Diamond" Division (4ID), Brigadier General Antonio Rosario Jr., Deputy Commander of Eastern Mindanao Command, AFP and Police Senior Superintendent Benedicto Pintor, Provincial Director of Bukidnon Police Provincial Office. Further, the Sangguniang Panlalawigan members of Bukidnon graced the event to witness the signing of the MOA.

In his message, Governor Zubiri mentioned that the CPP-NPA in Bukidnon has weakened as evidenced by the rising number of NPA surrenderees and the significant reduction of NPA-initiated atrocities.



"Daghan na nagsurrender sa ilaha. Ug sa pipila na ka bulan karon, duna ba moy nadungog nga naay giambush ang NPA? Wala." [Many have surrendered already from their (NPA) ranks. And for many months now, we have not heard of any NPA ambushes] said Governor Zubiri.

For his part, Brigadier General Vinoya considered the activity as a momentous event, as he expressed his gratitude to the Local Government of Bukidnon for its unwavering support to the peace and development initiatives of the 403rd Infantry Brigade in the province.

"The declaration of Bukidnon as Conflict-Manageable and Ready for Further Development is a very important milestone in our journey towards peace, progress and prosperity for the province and its people. I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Local Government Unit of Bukidnon headed by Honorable Governor Jose Maria R Zubiri Jr., and the members of the Bukidnon Provincial Peace and Order Council, for their unwavering support to our peace and development initiatives," said General Vinoya.

The signing of the MOA by the LGU and the Philippine Army unit in the area symbolizes that LGU recognizes the effort of the 403Bde that led to the significant decrease of NPA terroristic activities from 2017 to 1st Semester of 2018.