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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

Rody: Nat'l ID to cut red tape, fight crime

No privacy breach, gov't assures public

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Every Filipino must now secure a unique, permanent national identification number.

President Duterte rolled out yesterday the Philippine Identification System Act, allaying concerns that it would violate privacy and suppress civil liberties.

Duterte said the national ID would cut red tape and reduce corruption, improve the delivery of basic services, and serve as a tool for keeping the public safe.

He noted that several administrations have tried but failed to implement the law because of the apprehensions by some groups about privacy and data security.

"Let me be very clear about this: the information that will be included

in the Phil-ID (Philippine identification system) will not be any different from the information already in the possession of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) or the former NSO (National Statistics Office), GSIS (Government Service Insurance System), Phil-Health, Pag-IBIG Fund, Comelec (Commission on Elections) and other agencies that gather personal data," Duterte said as he signed the Philippine

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Rody From Page 1

Identification System Act at Malacañang.

"There is therefore no basis at all for the apprehensions about the Phil-ID, unless of course that fear is based on anything that borders on illegal," he added.

Duterte said the PSA would work closely with the National Privacy Commission, Department of Information and Communications Technology and the multi-agency PhilSystem Policy and Coordination Council to address all privacy and security concerns.

"If at all, the Phil-ID will even aid in our drive against the social menaces of poverty, corruption and criminal issues, as well as terrorism and violent extremism," the President said.

The law would also promote good governance, enhance governmental transactions and create a more conducive environment for trade and commerce, he added.

The Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) Act will estab-

lish a single and streamlined identification system in the country. Once implemented, users will have just one ID for all government transactions.

"As we all know, the President is averse to bureaucratic red tape. Through PhilSys, we hope to improve efficiency and transparency of public services and promote ease of doing business," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement.

"For the ordinary Juan de la Cruz, the signing of this Act means that he will no longer have to present multiple identification cards simply to prove his identity. This streamlining of information makes it likewise harder to commit identity theft or fraud," he added.

Better service

Laguna Rep. Sol Aragonés said the law would promote seamless delivery of services, improve the efficiency, transparency and target delivery of public and social services, enhance administrative gover-

nance, reduce corruption and curtail bureaucratic red tape.

"This is a historical milestone, a landmark legislation and a life-changing measure all rolled into one. We will never ever be asked again to present multiple government-issued IDs for any transaction," Aragonés said.

"We will no longer need to present multiple IDs to transact with government and private establishments that require individuals to present two or more government-issued IDs," she added.

"Promote greater convenience to the public, avert fraudulent transactions and misrepresentations, strengthen financial inclusions, promote ease of doing business," Aragonés, chair of the House committee on population and family relations, said.

The Phil-ID could be used for transactions with GSIS, SSS, PhilHealth, HDMF and other government agencies, passports and driver's license, tax-related transactions, registration and voting identification purposes.

"Admission to any govern-

ment hospital, health center or similar institution, application for admission in schools, colleges, learning institutions and universities, whether public or private, application and transaction for employment purposes," Aragonés enumerated.

Proponents of the national ID in the Senate assured the people that the law will protect citizens' right to privacy while making transactions with the government and private entities easier.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Republic Act 11055, which harmonizes and integrates the redundant government ID cards into a single system, would also help deter criminality.

"At long last, we now have a law that breaks the formidable barriers between government and the downtrodden and the poor due to the lack of identification," he said.

Lacson is the principal sponsor of the measure, aside from being a perennial author since his first term as senator in 2001.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, also an author of the law, thanked Duterte for signing it.

Drilon reiterated the law would not affect data privacy as the pertinent provisions of the Data Privacy Act will still apply.

Sen. Sonny Angara, another author of the law, said the ID system will not only cut down bureaucratic red tape but also empower many Filipinos formerly without appropriate identification cards to access the formal financial system and open bank accounts.

Under the bill, a foundational ID system dubbed PhilSys will be in place. It will have three components: the PhilSys Number (PSN), Phil-ID and PhilSys Registry.

Phil-ID is a non-transferable card with the PSN and basic information.

The PSA is mandated to act as the PhilSys Registry. It protects the individual's right to privacy, and may release information only under the following conditions: * when the registered person has given his or her consent, specific to the purpose prior to the processing; * when the compelling interest of public health or safety so requires, provided the risk of

significant harm to the public is established and the owner of the information is notified within 72 hours of the fact of such disclosure; * upon order of any competent court, and

* when a registered person requests from the PSA access to his or her registered information and record history, subject to the guidelines and regulations to be issued by the PSA.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Albayalde welcomed the enactment of the national ID system that assures access by citizens to a wide-range of government services and privileges. "This much-awaited measure has become a necessity for any developing country to keep pace with global trends of technology in governance. An efficient national ID system offers benefits to practical applications in census, taxation, election registration, banking, travel documentation, social security, social welfare and other transactions with government agencies," Albayalde said in a statement. — With Delon Porcalla, Paolo Romero, Cecille Suerte Felipe

'I-PEPE-DEDE-RALISMO' VIDEO SPARKS OUTRAGE

Assistant Secretary Mocha Uson's attempt to help promote federalism scandalizes lawmakers, who describe her sales pitch as 'filthy,' 'vulgar' and 'downgraded the discourse to the lowest of forms.'

By DJ Yap, Faye Orellana,
Vince F. Nonato and
Christine O. Avendaño
@Team_Inquirer

Days after describing Mocha Uson's inclusion in the federalism campaign as a "beautiful

decision" and a "brilliant idea," Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III on Monday found himself eating crow as a "filthy" video made by the sexy-dancer-turned-Duterte-administration-official supposedly promoting the proposed change in the form of

government burned like wild-fire on the internet.

"I was wrong. I thought Mocha would help in explaining the concept of federalism," Pimentel said, walking back his own impression of the controversial assistant secretary at the

Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO).

"Little did I know that they would only befool the cause of federalism," said Pimentel, president of the ruling Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), one of the

original proponents of a shift to federalism.

The former Senate President said Uson should stay away from the federalism campaign and take a leave of absence to "study first."

Pimentel's father, Aquilino

Pimentel Jr., also a former Senate President and now a member of Malacañang's consultative committee that drafted a proposed federal Constitution, said he did not care whom the government wanted to put on the promotional team. **A4**

FROM A1

but insisted that the promoters should know the subject.

"This is a democracy, so it's all right. But I repeat: For me, it's important that she disseminates correct information and that she knows what she is talking about," said the elder Pimentel.

Uson drew a firestorm of condemnation on social media with a clip from her "Good News Game Show" showing cohost Drew Olivar doing a raunchy dance, rubbing his crotch and touching his chest while singing, "I-pepe, i-pepe, I-dede, i-dede, I-pede, pede, pede, pederalismo."

"Pepe" and "dede" are vernacular terms for "vagina" and "breasts."

Uson is seen in the video laughing and encouraging Olivar.

In utter bad taste

The video was done in utter bad taste, according to scandalized social media users who first saw the video and began circulating it on Twitter and Facebook on Sunday.

Before the clip went viral, Senator Pimentel was one of the few officials who defended Uson's participation in the information campaign on which the government planned to spend P90 million.

On Friday, he said: "Who am I to question such beautiful decision? Team will be led by members of the consultative committee. [It's a] brilliant decision."

By Monday, he had changed his tune.

"Keep Mocha away from federalism," Pimentel said.

He was not angry, he said, just disappointed that the "best

and the brightest appointed to this government can come up with only that kind of bullshit."

'Downright vulgar'

Other senators were not amused by the clip.

"It is a desperate attempt to attract attention by intentionally offending our sense of propriety," Sen. Francis Escudero said.

Escudero added: "It is downright vulgar and has no place in the public discourse on such an important issue as the proposed shift to federalism and Charter change."

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the video was clearly "just a joke," but "theatrical techniques will not work to explain a very serious and high-falutin issue such as federalism."

"It's better for the PCOO to restrict their speakers on federalism to those who can explain it academically," Sotto said.

Opposition Sen. Francis Pangilinan expressed disgust, saying such "filth" and "lewdness" had no place in government.

"Secretary [Martin] Andanan should explain the lewdness and filth that is happening in his office using the funding, time and effort of the government," Pangilinan said.

Message and messenger

Sen. Ralph Recto had a sarcastic take on the controversy.

"She's the perfect endorser for federalism. She symbolizes those in favor of federalism," Recto said, referring to Uson.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson suggested that Uson might have sealed the fate of the effort to revise the 1987 Constitution for a shift to federalism.

"Without Mocha Uson, federalism is already dead and

awaiting cremation at the Senate. With Mocha Uson, the ashes should be thrown far, far away from the Philippines' 7,107 beautiful islands," Lacson said on Twitter.

Sen. Nancy Binay, who earlier suggested that Uson should "educate" senators about the merits of federalism, said she was saddened by what she had seen in the video.

"I can't emphasize enough how important the messenger relays the message. With what we all saw in the video, I think we can all agree that the message and the messenger matter," Binay said in a statement.

"It's saddening that the seriousness of the discourse has been downgraded to the lowest of forms," she added.

Not aroused

Opposition lawmakers in the House of Representatives were not aroused by Uson's video.

Caloocan City Rep. Edgar Erice said the controversy was "good for our country [because] it exposes the weakness of the proposal and I would say [Charter change] is dead."

"It shows that even the officials of Malacañang [do not] know anything about federalism that they resort to cheap gimmickry," Erice said. "Thanks to [Assistant Secretary] Mocha."

Ifugao Rep. Teddy Baguilat Jr. said: "They did not stop to think that this is a very important discussion and they are dirtying the explanation."

Baguilat wanted to know if Uson used government funds for the production of the video.

"The more important question is if the people's money have been spent on this... They allocated funds for a defective campaign. This is corruption if

that's the case," he said.

P10M for PCOO

Of the P90 million that Malacañang plans to spend on the federalism campaign, P10 million will go to the PCOO, the Palace said last week.

Administration allies in the House were not aroused by Uson's video either.

Ako Bicol Rep. Rodel Bato-cabe said: "It is a campaign that, instead of achieving its purpose, produced a different interpretation and highlighted nothing but private body parts."

Surigao del Sur Rep. Johnny Pimentel said the PCOO should look for other ways to disseminate information about federalism.

"It's not the right way to inform the people about federalism. They must find another way to disseminate information about federalism that is more appropriate so that the Filipino people will take the plan to amend the Constitution seriously," Pimentel said.

Malacañang plans to proceed with a "federalism road show" despite the scandal and Lacson's declaration that the push for the amendment of the Constitution was ready for cremation in the Senate.

"Never say die," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said at a press briefing in Davao Occidental on Monday.

"We are confident that once we are able to explain to the senators the merits of Charter change and federalism, we will get the required support. But as I have mentioned earlier, we will do this by appealing to reason and highlighting the merits of federalism," Roque said.

He said the campaign would start this month. (NC)

Cayetano, Noy 'war' over SCS issue far from over

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano yesterday hit back at former president Benigno Aquino III's suggestion to Google-search the answers to his questions on the previous administration's policies and actions

on the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) dispute, saying that he got more questions than answers.

"Your suggestion to Google answers to my questions led to more questions than answers. It revealed far more serious problems that emanated from an unclear chain of command,

serious miscalculations and the absence of an end game for the country," Cayetano said.

"The media reports that we found in Google now compel me to reiterate many of the questions I raised, and even elaborate," he added.

Cayetano and Aquino recently clashed over the Philip-

pine stance on West Philippine Sea, with the former president accusing the Duterte administration of not being transparent in its transaction in negotiating with China on the issue.

Cayetano, irked by Aquino's criticism of his hair in connection with the issue, also slammed Sen. Antonio

Trillanes IV calling him Aquino's "attack dog."

The senator on Sunday called Cayetano a "political snake."

In his second open letter to Aquino which, he said, was made "after some thought and a thorough Google search," Cayetano

complained about Aquino's "mouthpieces" who started calling him names and dared the former president to start helping enlighten the nation by sharing the events and his decisions that led to the extremely complex situation in the West Philippine Sea the country is facing today.

Palace open to China, Asean war games

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

MALACAÑANG is open to the holding of military drills between China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) as proposed by Beijing.

China was reported to have proposed the holding of military exercises with Asean countries but these exercises should not include the United States.

Speaking to reporters in Malita, Davao Occidental on Monday, Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr.

said China's objective in pursuing an all-Asian military drill was to have a "closer cooperation among six neighbors."

"We understand the invitation of China. It wants closer cooperation among six neighbors and the US is not its neighbor and

"We have made leapfrog progress in advancing Asean-China relations from quantity to quality," he added, saying the first joint maritime exercises would be held in October.

Vietnam has offered some of the stiffest resistance to China over the maritime dispute in recent times, regularly complaining about Beijing's activities on contested islands and in disputed waters.

The Philippines, under former president Benigno Aquino 3rd, had also been a leading voice against China's maritime expansion.

therefore we understand that," Roque said.

"We have also said that we are amenable to a joint exploration in the disputed areas and we are pushing for 60-40 sharing, 60 percent accruing to Filipinos of course," he added.

Beijing had reportedly suggested that China and the 10 members of Asean should carry out joint military exercises regularly.

However, these drills should not involve countries outside the region "unless the parties concerned are notified beforehand

and express no objection."

Beijing also suggested that China and Asean could carry out joint oil and gas exploration but again proposed that firms from countries outside the region be excluded from such activities.

Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam have overlapping claims in the South China Sea.

"We believe that without any disturbances from the outside, code of conduct consultations will accelerate," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.

The country filed a complaint questioning China's sea claims before the United Nations arbitral tribunal. The court ruled in favor of the Philippines, invalidating Beijing's claims on almost the entire South China Sea based on its nine-dash policy.

However, President Rodrigo Duterte set aside the ruling as he shifted the Philippines' policy towards China, adopting instead a friendly stance in pursuit of more vibrant ties with Asia's largest economy.

WITH AFP

What's next for Philippine Rise

THE Foreign Service Institute and Oceana Philippines recently gathered relevant agencies, members of the academe, and stakeholders to discuss future plans to sustain and further strengthen the protection of the Philippine Rise.

President Rodrigo Duterte on May 16, 2017 signed Executive Order No. 25, renaming Benham Rise to Philippine Rise, a 24.4-million-hectare undersea region located in the Philippine Sea, approximately 250 kilometers east of the northern coastline of Dinapigue, Isabela.

A day before the first anniversary of the renaming, Duterte signed a presidential proclamation to protect 50,000 hectares of the Philippine Rise as a "strict protection zone."

The protected area includes Benham Bank, which is around 17,000 hectares, declared as a no-take zone, and will be closed to any human activities except for scientific research.

Duterte said the presidential proclamation includes the requirement for continuous assessment of coral reef and fish species, which he said is "vital for the management of the Philippine Rise and its resources." He also committed to capacitate Filipino scientists to fulfill their mandates in conducting scientific research in the Philippine Rise.

But despite the presidential proclamation, Dr. Jay Batongbacal, director of UP Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, during the roundtable discussion dubbed "After Philippine Rise Proclamation: What's Next?" expressed his alarm about the lack of security around Philippine Rise, which should be subjected to surveillance.

"Philippines should be on guard to ensure that even if other countries have military troops, we won't back out," he said. "We should also assert our right and honor to name features in the Philippine Rise, but sad to say we failed to stop a country from doing that."

Early this year, Chinese researchers performed surveys in the Rise and named five of its features.

Another issue pointed out during the discussion was the need to boost food security measures and develop new fishing grounds for fish sufficiency.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources assistant director Sammy Malvas proposed ways to secure food sufficiency and biodiversity conservation in the country; continue fisheries development efforts in the Philippine Rise (Payao Development and Livelihood Support for fishers, among others); strengthen collaboration among government agencies, the academe, and civil service groups; and expand research and conduct more oceanographic surveys.

The formal declaration of the Philippine Rise as a fisheries management area of FMA signifies the need to sustainably fish in the area, to ensure future generations would still have fish to eat.

Oceana Philippine vice president Gloria Estenzo Ramos underlined the need for "strong collaboration for the protection and conservation of the Philippine Rise" and to restore and conserve the health, richness, and abundance of other marine areas in the country.

In his concluding remarks, FSI director general Claro Cristobal emphasized that cooperation between and among agencies and stakeholders is key in the protection and preservation of the Philippine Rise.

The cooperation in the domestic sphere, said Cristobal, serves as the basis of how the Philippine government will pursue its interests in the international community.

MANILA TIMES SCHOOLS DISPUTE CLAIMS, BILLINGS

We do not owe SBMA anything

BY PATRICK ROXAS

THE Manila Times Schools denied strongly the claim of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) that it repossessed the Times' properties for non-payment of rentals and other obligations.

"We do not owe SBMA anything," Kristjan Gargantiel of the Gargantiel Ilagan and Atanente law office, counsel for The Manila Times Schools, said.

He was reacting to the SBMA statement earlier reported by *The Manila Times*.

Two cases regarding contracts of lease were filed against the SBMA by The Manila Times School of Journalism and The Manila Times College of Subic. Both involve questions over billings.

In the case of The Manila Times School of Journalism, the lease agreement with SBMA was supposed to cover 10 buildings as stipulated, but in reality only five buildings were made available to the school.

Gargantiel explained: "Upon inspection at a much later date, however, it turned out that there are only 7. Of the 7, one is being used as a common building that houses all electrical wirings and switches that services all buildings, including another locator (not the school). Worse, the other building is currently used by the SBMA Maintenance Department. Therefore, there are only 5 and not 10 buildings."

Even the SBMA had agreed with the Times' position. The SBMA Board, in a resolution issued on December 21, 2017, said the "Number of Buildings will be at 5 and not 10 as stated to the lease contract of the company. Resolved further, that the correction be

reflected to (sic) the Contract of Manila Times."

The board, however, nullified the resolution in March without making any explanation, Gargantiel said.

Another stipulation in the contract of lease was a provision for an 8 percent yearly escalation on rental fees. But in the SBMA billings, there was a year when the escalation imposed exceeded 100 percent.

"This gross error became the basis of the SBMA billings that consequently inflated to a ridiculous level the already questionable billings," Gargantiel said.

Ryan Tulio, the school's vice president for operations, agreed with the observation of SBMA Chairman and Administrator Wilma Eisma on the "miserable condition of the former George Dewey High School (GDHS)."

"But whose fault was it? Certainly not the School of Journalism," Tulio said.

He added that the owners of the school were consistent in their plan to repair, construct and develop the facilities, but the SBMA repeatedly rejected the school's applications for the issuance of permits to develop the property.

Tulio said the deterioration of the buildings could have been prevented had Eisma not allowed the Philippine National Police to use the facilities as a training site for its anti-terrorism drive. The PNP wrote Eisma a letter on June

1, 2018 seeking permission for the use of the Times' facilities and she approved the request.

"We were reliably informed that in previous years, the PNP and the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) have used the Times' buildings and facilities for their military exercises seeking approval only from the SBMA," Tulio said.

"Another point of discussion was the issue of turnover," Tulio added. "The facilities were never turned over to us formally."

He said the SBMA passed on the obligations of the previous lessee to The Manila Times College of Subic and insisted on collecting "ghost billings" from the college.

The college was originally liable

for the previous obligation of the former lessee but that provision was waived by SBMA in the subsequent Board Resolution No. 09-04-3020, which read in part: "... but resolved TO DISREGARD (all caps by Mr. Tulio) the condition that LESSEE shall assume the payment of pending claims against Subic Bay Medical Center, Inc. (SBMCI, the former lessee), including unpaid salaries of the latter's former employees."

Despite this clear provision, the SBMA, either by ignorance or mistake, continues to bill The Manila Times College of Subic, Tulio said.

In January 2007, SBMA pre-terminated the contract of lease with its former lessee, the SBMCI.

But even if the property had been vacated, from January 2007 to 2010, SBMA persisted in billing its former lessee. "Is that legal? Is it moral?" Tulio asked.

"Even assuming, without admitting, that the College was responsible for the past obligations of the former lessee, the period between January 2007 and August 15, 2010, when the contract of lease by the college had formally started, there was no lessee to speak of," Tulio said. "Why then did SBMA bill SBMCI, when in fact it had already left the facility? And if there was no lessee, there should be no billing in the first place."

The Common Usage Service Area, or CUSA, a supposed monthly

fee imposed by SBMA, is also being charged to The Manila Times College of Subic and The Manila Times School of Journalism, Tulio said.

"But that provision was absent in both our Contracts of Lease and more importantly, SBMA lost the case against Ocean Adventure questioning the legality of CUSA," Tulio added.

He reminded SBMA officials that the cases are considered subjudice and are far from being resolved.

Since the merits of the cases are yet to be heard, "it might be prudent for the SBMA officials to await the outcome of the cases. Their celebration might turn out to be premature," Tulio said. *AR*

STOPPING DISSENT

POLITICAL 'TOKHANG' TAKING SHAPE IN MINDANAO, MILITANTS WARN

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—
 Brace for political "tokhang."

Ryan Amper, spokesperson for Barug Katungod Mindanao (Stand for Human Rights Mindanao), issued the warning on Monday as he revealed that more than 600 activists in Mindanao were slapped with alleged fabricated charges, mostly by the military, since President Duterte took office two years ago.

"This political 'tokhang' is meant to silence the dissent of activists and community leaders," Amper said in a telephone interview.

"Tokhang" was derived from the Visayan words "roktok" (knock) and "hangyo" (plead), which the government employed in the war against drugs that killed thousands of mostly poor suspected drug users and traders.

During operations, policemen usually knock on the door of drug personalities and ask them to surrender and undergo rehabilitation.

"We have verified incidents where the military knocked on the houses of suspected NPA (New People's Army) rebels or supporters and asked them to surrender," Amper said.

'Manufactured' raps

He said among the "manufactured" charges filed against militants and human rights defenders included murder, frustrated murder, serious illegal detention, alarm and scandal, public disorder, grave coercion and obstruction of justice.

In a statement on Sunday, Amper blamed the growing number of cases filed against activists to the Inter-Agency Committee on Legal Action, which was created by the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in October 2017.

This aims to strengthen intelligence gathering and cooperation, investigation, prosecution and monitoring of cases against threat groups in the country.

Evidence

Capt. Arvin Encinas, spokesperson for the Army's 6th Infantry Division, belied accusations that the military filed fabricated charges against those critical of the government and big businesses operating on "lumad" (indigenous peoples) communities.

"Our charges are backed [up by] evidence," he said.

Encinas, however, admitted there was an increase in the number of cases filed against militants and community leaders since the military intensified operations against communist rebels. —BONG SARMIENTO INQ

2 NPA rebels killed in clash; 20 surrender

Two New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in an encounter with government troopers in Agusan del Sur on Sunday.

The fatalities were identified as Juan Precioso, 59, alias Max, and Dondon Montilla, 23, alias Amag, of the NPA's North Central Mindanao Regional Command.

Reports reaching Camp Aguinaldo showed the clash occurred in Purok 4, Barangay Oro, Esperanza.

Capt. Al Anthony Pue-

las, 402nd civil-military operations officer, said a 9mm pistol with several rounds of ammunition were recovered from the fatalities.

In Ifugao, 20 communist guerrillas surrendered to the 54th Infantry Battalion in Asipulo town over the weekend.

Soldiers also overran an NPA camp in Sitio Dibulod, Dicomay 2, Jones on Saturday.

— Michael Punongbayan,
Artemio Dumlao, Ding
Cervantes

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2 NPAs killed in Agusan del Sur

By MIKE D. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY - Two New People's Army (NPA) terrorists were killed in an encounter, Sunday, with government forces in Purok 4, Barangay Oro, Esperanza town, Agusan del Sur province, Capt. Al Anthony B. Pueblas, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade told The Manila Bulletin on Monday.

The 402nd CMO officer said the slain terrorists were turned over to officials of Barangay Oro, Esperanza town for identification and proper burial.

Seized from them were a .45-caliber pistol and assorted live ammunition, Pueblas said.

No one was hurt on the government side during the gun battle, he added.

Combined peace and development forces of the 23rd Infantry Battallion and Third Platoon Sixth Agusan del Sur Civilian Active Auxiliary Company based at the Tandang Sora Patrol Base in Barangay Tandang Sora were conducting a security patrol when they chanced upon an undetermined number of NPAs at 5 a.m. on Sunday.

He said the NPAs were from the Guerrilla Front Committee 88 of the North Central Mindanao Regional Committee.

"The rebels dis-engaged from the gunfight after sensing they were outgunned and outnumbered, and fled to a nearby forested area," Pueblas said.

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2 NPA KILLED IN AGUSAN SUR CLASH

TWO members of the New People's Army (NPA) were killed in an encounter with troops in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur on Sunday, the Philippine Army reported. Captain Anthony Pueblos, spokesman for the 402nd Infantry Brigade, identified the slain rebels as Juan Precioso, alias Max, 59, and Dondon Montilla, alias Amang, 23, who are members of the Guerilla Front 88 of the North Central Mindanao Regional Command. The encounter happened at about 5 a.m. when members of the 23rd Infantry Battalion were conducting security patrolling after residents reported the presence of alleged communist rebels in the area. Troops engaged the rebels in a five-minute clash.

17 DEMPSEY REYES

2 NPAs killed in Agusan del Sur

TWO members of the New People's Army were killed in a brief firefight with government forces in Esperanza town, Agusan del Sur on Sunday, the military reported yesterday.

Capt. Anthony Pueblias, civil military operations officer of the Army's 402nd Brigade, said the firefight broke out at around 5 a.m. in Purok 4, Barangay Oro involving forces of the Army's 23rd Infantry Battalion and members of the Guerilla Front 88 of the NPA's North Central Mindanao Regional Command.

The troops were conducting security patrol in response to reports from residents on the presence of suspected communist rebels in the area, when they encountered the NPA group, he said.

The two sides traded fire for about five minutes until the rebels withdrew, leaving behind two of their comrades.

Recovered near the rebels' bodies was a 9 mm pistol with several rounds of ammunition.

Soldiers turned over the bodies to the barangay center where they were identified by residents as Juan Precioso alias "Max," 59, and Dondon Montilla alias "Amag," 23. — *Victor Reyes*

2 NPAs killed in Agusan clash

Two New People's Army rebels were killed in an encounter with the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur last Sunday.

Capt. Al Anthony B. Pueblos, civil-military officer of the Army 402nd Brigade, identified the NPA casualties as Juan Precioso, alias "Max," 59, and Dondon Montilla, alias "Amag," 23.

They are believed to be members of the Guerrilla Front 88 of the North Central Mindanao

Regional Command.

Pueblos said the Tandang base Patrol Base, 3rd Platoon, 6th Agusan and 5th CAFGU Area Auxiliary Company under the supervision of the Army 23rd Infantry Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, were conducting security patrol in Purok 4, Barangay Oro at about 5 a.m. in response to reports from residents on the presence of suspected NPA rebels when they chanced upon the insurgents.

A five-minute clash broke out in which two NPA rebels were

killed.

Pueblos said recovered near their bodies was a 9mm pistol with 2 magazines loaded with several rounds of ammunition.

Government troops brought their bodies to the village center where they were identified by residents and turned over to local officials for proper disposition.

Nobody from the government side was reported wounded in the firefight. (Francis T. Wakefield)

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2 NPA todas sa engkuwentro

Dalawang mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) ang nakasagupa ang tropa ng pamahalaan sa Purok 4, Barangay Oro, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur kahapon ng umaga.

Kinilala ang mga nasawing NPA na sina Juan Precioso alias Max, 59, at Dondon Montilla alias Amag, 23, kapwa kasapi

ng Guerrilla Front 88, ng North Central Mindanao Regional Command, CPP-NPA.

Batay sa ulat, alas-5:00 ng umaga nang magsagawa ng pagpatrolya at security operations ang mga elemento ng Tandang Sora Patrol Base, 3rd Platoon, 6th Agusan del Sur CAFGU Active Auxiliary (CAA) Company sa tialim ng

23rd Infantry Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, PA kasama ang CAFGU sa nasabing lugar nang makasagupa nila ang mga rebeide na tumagal ng limang minuto.

Narekober ng mga sundalo sa bangkay ng mga nasawing NPA ang isang pistola na may magazine at liang rounds ng bala. (Rhoderick Beñez, Joy Cantos)

Military seizes control of Isabela NPA camp

BY FREDDIE R. LAZARO

STA. CRUZ, Ilocos Sur — Government troops captured an encampment of the New People's Army (NPA) during pursuit operations in the mountainous areas in Barangay Santo Domingo in Jones, Isabela on Saturday.

Lieutenant Colonel Isagani Nato, spokesperson of the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom), on Monday said that troops from the Nolcom's Joint Task Force (JTF) "Tala" seized control of the NPA camp.

Nato said the troops recovered three improvised cooking appliances and fresh vegetables from the site.

Before the discovery of the camp, an encounter broke out between troops from the Philippine Army's 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB) under the 502nd Brigade 5th Infantry Divi-

sion (5ID) in Sitio Dibulod, Dicamay 2, Jones, Isabela province on Saturday.

Nato said all troops were accounted for, while several NPA members were reported killed.

Meanwhile, Nato said that 14 members of the Milisyang Bayan (MB) or People's Militia (PM) and six supporters surrendered in Sitio Nakatengey, Barangay Namal, Aspulo, Ilugao to the Philippine Army's 54th Infantry Battalion.

An M-16 rifle was also surrendered by the group which was later brought to the Headquarters of 54IB for safekeeping.

The surrender was made possible through the efforts and initiatives of Community Support Program (CSP) operators of the Army unit in the area, (with a report from Franco G. Regala).

Guevarra: DoJ did not vet terror list

JUSTICE Secretary Menardo Guevarra on Monday admitted that his department did not verify the list of 600 individuals that it wants the Manila Regional Trial Court to declare as terrorists because of their alleged ties to the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

Guevarra made the admission when questioned by

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LIST FROM A1

Guevarra: DoJ

Rep. Carlos Zarate of Bayan Muna party-list. The justice chief presented the proposed P21 billion budget of his department for 2019 before the House Appropriations panel.

"Our petition is based on the information provided to the DoJ by the intelligence agencies. It was solely from the Armed Forces and the PNP (Philippine National Police)," Guevarra said.

"These names were provided as due notice so the individuals can make the responsive pleading," he added.

Guevarra's response failed to assure Zarate, who said that the DoJ could have endangered the lives of the people in the list, which included UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, former Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna party-list, CPP founding chair Jose Maria Sison, alleged communist group leaders Benito and

Wilma Tamzon, National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultant Rafael Baylosis and former peace panel chief Luis Jalandoni.

"The NDFP is the umbrella group of all communist organizations in the country.

"My point here is prudence, Mr. Secretary. Why solely depend on the intelligence agencies for a petition lodged by your office? You can't just wash your hands off this. You are risking lives here," Zarate said.

"When you label somebody, they become a target. Your petition before the court involves human lives. At the very least, you should have verified it," he added.

Guevarra gave assurances that the DoJ is not after prosecuting activists and critics of the government.

A Nueva Ecija court had ordered the arrest of former Liza Maza, the chairman of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, former Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael Mariano and former lawmakers Teddy Casino and Satur Ocampo over the killing of three individuals 12 years ago.

LLANESCA T. PANTI

CREATION OF BANGSAMORO REGION

PEOPLE URGED TO VOTE IN BARMN POLL

By **Christine O. Avendaño**
@oavendanoINQ

President Duterte on Monday urged those living in the proposed new Bangsamoro autonomous region to take part in the plebiscite to enable the government to implement the law that he hoped would finally end the decades-old conflict in Muslim Mindanao.

The President made the statement after he shook hands in Malacañang with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chair Murad Ebrahim as he presented to him a copy of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which he signed into law on July 27.

A plebiscite will be held three to five months after the law is approved to legalize the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The BARMM will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which was created following a 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MILF broke away from the MNLF to continue the fight for an independent Islamic state.

Congressional leaders and members, as well as officials of the MILF, witnessed the formal presentation of the BOL at the gathering hosted by Mr. Duterte. They included Senate President Vicente Sotto III, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and MILF leader Mohagher Iqbal.

The President said he was "proud" to present the BOL, a "monumental" legislation just like the Philippine Identification System Act that he



PROUD MOMENT President Duterte presents a copy of the Bangsamoro Organic Law that he signed on July 27 to Murad Ebrahim, chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, at a gathering in Malacañang on Monday. —JOAN BONDOC

stressed "will not just impact peace and order and national security but will also chart a future where every Filipino can enjoy the freedom that this nation proudly stands for."

Thanks all around

He thanked former Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III and former Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, as well as Sotto and Arroyo, for backing his legislative agenda including the passage of the two measures.

Likewise, Mr. Duterte expressed gratitude to the MILF, the MNLF and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission "for their unwavering commitment, determination and perseverance" in pushing for the passage of the BOL.

Mr. Duterte said he hoped the law would serve as the final trajectory for the attainment of genuine peace, stability and good governance in Muslim Mindanao.

"I ask my Bangsamoro

brothers and sisters, as well as the indigenous communities and Christian settlers living within the Bangsamoro areas, to actively participate in constructive discussions about the law in your homes, in your villages and communities," he said.

"But more importantly, I encourage you to take part in the upcoming plebiscite so that you may express your sovereign will through the ballot."

Mr. Duterte asked everyone to work together in going about healing and the reconciliation process.

Akbayan Rep. Tom Villarin said the BOL "provides a glimmer of hope that at end of the rainbow, sustainable peace can be achieved in Mindanao and the whole country."

Bankrolling the operations of the new government entity with the enactment of the BOL is "a small price to pay for peace," House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya said on Monday. —WITH

A REPORT FROM MARLON RAMOS INQ

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Give Bangsamoro Law a chance, Rody urges public

President Duterte yesterday urged the public to give the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) a chance to address the issues affecting Muslim Mindanao and continue the healing

process.

Duterte expressed hope that the measure, which he signed into law last July 26, would finally end the decades-old conflict rooted in the Bangsamoro's

fight for self-determination and the recognition of their unique identity.

"Let us give this law a chance to address the Bangsamoro people's aspiration for genuine

autonomy, while preserving our bond as a single nation and affirming the sovereignty of the indivisible Republic of the Philippines," the President said at the presentation of the BOL at

Malacañang.

"Let us work together as we continue the healing and reconciliation process," he added.

The BOL is a product of a

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Give From Page 1

series of peace negotiations between the government and Moro groups. It is largely based on the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, the peace deal between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The law will create a new Bangsamoro region with enhanced autonomy. The region will have a parliamentary form of government composed of 80 members representing different parties, sectors and districts elected by the people.

It also provides for a regional party system where parties must first be duly accredited by the Bangsamoro Election Office. The members of the parliament will then choose the chief minister and two deputy chief ministers, nominated by the chief minister.

The chief minister will appoint members of his Cabinet, a majority of whom will come from the members of parliament.

The parliament will also have the power to pass an annual budget for the region.

The BOL will also grant the new region the right to manage its funds, income and resources. The national government will provide an annual block grant to the Bangsamoro government - drawn from the annual national budget - to enable it to efficiently perform its powers and functions.

Taxes collected from the Bangsamoro region will be divided 75 percent 25 percent in favor of the Bangsamoro government. Proponents of the law said the setup would allow the Bangsamoro to catch up with other regions in terms of economic development.

Duterte urged the Bangsamoros, indigenous communities and Christian settlers living in Bangsamoro areas to actively participate in constructive discussions about the law.

"But more importantly, I encourage you to take part in the upcoming plebiscite so that you may express your sovereign will through the ballot," he added.

A plebiscite is needed to implement the BOL. The law should secure a majority vote from areas included in the region.

MILF peace panel chairman Mohagher Iqbal said the decommissioning of his group's combatants and weapons would take place after the BOL is ratified in the plebiscite.

"Immediately after the ratification... the second phase of decommissioning 30 percent of our combatants will take place," Iqbal told reporters at Malacananang. The plebiscite is expected to be held between November and January next year.

Duterte thanked former Senate president Aquilino Pimentel III and former House speaker Pantaleon Alvarez for supporting the BOL and other priority bills of his administration. He said the passage of the laws "speak well of their able leadership and firm resolve to rise above divisive partisan politics."

"Let me also express my gratitude to the members of the Bangsamoro

Transition Commission, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Moro National Liberation Front for their unwavering commitment, determination and perseverance in pursuing the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. May this serve as the final trajectory for the attainment of genuine peace, stability and good governance in Muslim Mindanao," he said.

"Together, let us shatter the dark clouds that once loomed over our nation for generations and welcome the dawn of a brighter future not only for the Bangsamoro people, but for all peace-loving Filipinos."

Meanwhile, House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya Jr. said yesterday the government can always find ways to fund the P110 billion President Duterte had promised to ensure a smooth implementation of the BOL next year.

"The President has assured it will not be an unfunded mandate. It is a small price to pay for peace," Andaya said. The Department of Budget and Management, Department of Finance, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), House appropriations committee and Bangsamoro leaders, he said, may work out a way to address the BOL's funding requirements.

"The determination can be tripartite or quadripartite. First things first, determine the fiscal cost based on the mandate of the law," he explained.

The new Bangsamoro for Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will be taking over ARMM.

So far, the national government initially has P72 billion for the proposed P110-billion BOL according to Andaya.

"It's all up to the inter-governmental mechanism under the BOL, and the experts can also fix that, and on how it will be reflected in the 2019 General Appropriations Act," the House official stressed.

Of the initial amount, P32 billion represents allocation for ARMM, P25 billion sourced from revenues generated by Internal Revenue Allotments and the P15 billion from national government agencies. - Alexis Komero, Delon Porcalla

'Let's work for healing in Mindanao'

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte on Monday urged the Moro people to rally behind the implementation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), asking them to work together for the "healing and reconciliation process" in Mindanao.

In his speech during the presentation of the BOL in Malacañang

Duterte called on the Moro people to take part in the upcoming plebiscite that will ratify the measure, which he hoped "will finally end the decades-old conflict that is rooted in the Bangsamoro's fight for self-determination and the recognition of their unique identity."

"I ask my Bangsamoro brothers

and sisters, as well as the indigenous communities and Christian settlers living within the Bangsamoro areas, to actively participate in constructive discussions about the law in your homes, in your villages, and communities," the President said.

"But more importantly, I encourage you to take part in the upcoming

plebiscite so that you may express your sovereign will through the ballot," he added.

The BOL, signed by the President on July 27, aims to end decades of conflict in Mindanao by creating a political entity that would enjoy greater autonomy than the

►HealingA2

HEALING FROM A Let's work

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The new law covers the existing ARMM areas (Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao), six towns in Lanao del Norte and 39 barangay (villages) in North Cotabato pending a plebiscite before the end of the year.

With the passage of the Bangsamoro law, Duterte acknowledged that the nation must continue to work together for peace and development

in Mindanao.

"Let us work together as we continue the healing and reconciliation process. Let us give this law a chance to address the Bangsamoro people's aspiration for genuine autonomy, while preserving our bond as a single nation and affirming the sovereignty of the indivisible Republic of the Philippines," he said.

The President presented to Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Chair Al-Hajj Murad Ebrahim the BOL or Republic Act 11054, which is the product of years of negotiations between the government and the Philippines' largest Muslim

separatist group.

Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino 3rd, forged the peace agreement with the MILF in 2014 but failed to get Congress to pass the law when he stepped down in 2016.

The 16th Congress halted debates because of public outrage over the death of 44 police commandos in a botched anti-terrorism raid in Mamasapano, Maguindanao in January 2015, where some MILF members were accused of involvement. Some provisions in the Bangsamoro law's earlier versions also faced questions on constitutionality.

Duterte expanded the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) that produced the proposed measure that the 17th Congress tackled and passed.

The President thanked the members of the BTC, the MILF and the Moro National Liberation Front "for their unwavering commitment, determination and perseverance in pursuing the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law."

"May this serve as the final trajectory for the attainment of genuine peace, stability, [and] good governance in Muslim Mindanao," Duterte said.

"Together, let us shatter the dark clouds that once loomed over our nation for generations, and welcome the dawn of a brighter future not only for the Bangsamoro people, but for all peace-loving Filipinos," he added.

Meanwhile, MILF chief peace negotiator Mohagher Iqbal said they were now in the process of decommissioning its armed wing—the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF).

"Immediately after the ratification of the Basic Law, the second phase is the decommissioning between the 30 percent of our BIAF

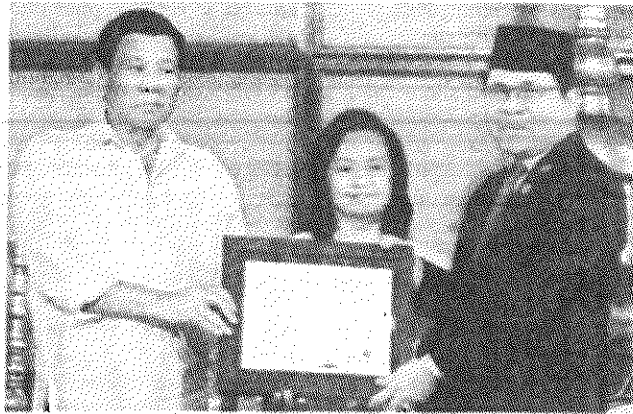
combatants will take place," Iqbal told reporters. "But the process is already ongoing. The moment the BBL is ratified, there will be an immediate decommissioning of the BIAF combatants," he added.

The MILF is estimated to have more than 10,000 armed fighters.

In exchange for the turnover of weapons to an independent decommissioning body and the decommissioning of the MILF combatants, the government is expected to offer them socioeconomic programs, consistent with the normalization process.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE

No BOL funding in 2019 national budget – Andaya



Done deal. President Duterte shakes hands with Mawi Islamic Liberation Front chairman Murad Ebrahimi and presents a copy of the signed Bangsamoro Organic Law as Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo looks on.

MAACAPAL PHOTO

**BY WENDELL VIGILIA
AND JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR**

THE operating budget for the initial implementation of the newly signed Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) is not included in the proposed P3.75 trillion national budget for 2019, House majority leader Rolando Andaya Jr. yesterday said.

Andaya said the House of Representatives will be tasked to find funding sources for the estimated P100 billion needed to implement the BOL in its maiden year. The amount was arrived at during the bicameral conference committee debates on the measure.

"If there's P32 billion for ARMM (Autonomous Region

for Muslim Mindanao) for 2019, plus P15 billion lodged with national government agencies and about P25 billion in IRA (internal revenue allotment), then we must look for an additional P38-40 billion to finance the balance," Andaya said.

"The important thing is to run the final numbers since some are saying that as much as P20 billion more is needed. The Department Budget Management (DBM) will have the final say," he added.

President Duterte yesterday led the signing ceremony in Malacañang for the BOL (Republic Act 11054), which will setup the Bangsamoro Autono-

See NO BOL ► Page 80

NO BOL

mous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to replace the ARMM.

Among those who attended the event were members of Congress led by Senate President Vicente Sotto III and Speaker Gloria Arroyo, government led by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) led by Al Hadj Murad and different stakeholders.

In his speech, Duterte urged everyone to give the BOL a chance to be implemented and address the concerns and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people for a genuine autonomy.

He likewise encouraged families and residents in the affected areas to participate in the plebiscite for the BOL before the year ends.

"I ask my Bangsamoro brothers and sisters, as well as the indigenous communities and Christian settlers living within the Bangsamoro areas, to actively participate in constructive discussions about the law in your homes, in your villages, and communities. But more importantly, I encourage you to take part in the upcoming plebiscite so that you may express your sovereign will through the ballot," Duterte said.

"Let us work together as we continue the healing and reconciliation process. Let us give this law a chance to address the Bangsamoro people's aspiration for genuine au-

tonomy, while preserving our bond as a single nation and affirming the sovereignty of the indivisible Republic of the Philippines," he added.

Peace Adviser Jesus Duraza said the plebiscite will be held not earlier than 90 days or later than 150 days after the effectivity of the law, or between late October to late December.

The plebiscite will cover the provinces included under the ARMM, six municipalities in the province of Lanao del Norte, 39 barangays in North Cotabato, the cities of Cotabato and Isabela in the province of Basilan, and those qualified for inclusion by way of petition or resolution.

"I signed into law the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Region in Muslim Mindanao, which I hope will finally end the decades-old conflict that is rooted in the Bangsamoro's fight for self-determination and the recognition of their unique identity," the President said.

Duterte thanked members of Congress for supporting his administration's legislative agenda, as well as the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, the MILF, and the Moro National Liberation Front for their unwavering commitment, determination, and perseverance in pursuing the passage of the BOL.

"Together, let us shatter the dark clouds that once loomed over

our nation for generations, and welcome the dawn of a brighter future not only for the Bangsamoro people, but for all peace-loving Filipinos," he said.

MILF peace panel head Mohagher Iqbal said they have started the decommissioning of MILF forces and weapons.

Iqbal, in an interview, said at least 30 percent of the MILF weapons and combatants are set to be decommissioned, while the next batch or 35 percent would be decommissioned once the Bangsamoro Transition Authority is in place.

The rest of the MILF weapons and combatants or the remaining 35 percent will be decommissioned after the election and assumption of the BARMM officials.

Andaya said aside from the BOL, finance managers likewise did not provide any funding for the implementation of the Supreme Court's recent order increasing the IRA of local government units (LGUs).

Andaya said Congress will have to increase by P120 billion next year's IRA, which represents the 40 percent share of LGUs from national taxes collected, to comply with the SC ruling that shares of LGUs should be sourced from "all national taxes and not only national internal revenue taxes."

Malacañang has included IRA in the amount of P575.5 billion in the 2019 national budget.

'ID law, BOL for peace'

2 landmark measures inked

By Kathreen Mae Bulquerin

President Rodrigo Duterte signed yesterday the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and the Phil Identification or national ID Act which he called public order measures that will guarantee peace and a good future for

Filipinos.

Both measures "not only impact peace and order, but also chart a future where every Filipino, regardless of ethnicity, culture, or religious affiliation, can enjoy the freedom this nation proudly stands for," Duterte said.

The Palace held a ceremonial reenactment of the signing of the BOL along with the actual signing of the national ID law in Malacañang.

On the BOL, Duterte appealed for Filipinos to give the new Bangsamoro region a chance.

"Let us give this law a chance

to address the Bangsamoro people's aspiration for genuine autonomy while preserving our bond as a single nation," the President said.

He added that the single national identification system law will enhance governmental transactions and encourage

the environment for trade and commerce to thrive.

"Together, let us shatter the clouds that once loomed over our nation, and welcome our brighter future not only for the Bangsamoro people, but also for peace-loving Filipinos," he said.

The President added that

there should be no apprehensions about the ID Act since it will provide data privacy and security.

The ID law "will not only enhance governance, but will also reduce corruption and avoid fraudulent transactions," Duterte assured.

Discussions set

"I ask my Bangsamoro brothers and sisters, as well as the indigenous communities and Christian settlers living within the Bangsamoro areas, to actively participate in constructive discussions about the law in your homes, in your villages, and communities," Duterte said.

"More importantly, I encourage you to take part in the upcoming plebiscite so that you may express your sovereign will through the ballot," he added.

Presidential Peace Adviser

Turn to page 2

'ID law, BOL for peace'



Landmark shake President Rodrigo Duterte, center, and leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, right, shake hands during a ceremonial presentation of the signed Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao at Malacañang Palace. At left is Senate President Vicente Sotto III and second from right is former President and now Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

From page 1

Secretary Jesus Dureza said the plebiscite on the BOL could take place by late November or early December.

Duterte thanked lawmakers responsible for supporting his administration's legislative agenda, including Senator Aquilino Pimentel III, former House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, Senate President Vicente Sotto III and Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Partisan politics hurdled

"Indeed, the passage of these laws speak well of their able leadership and firm resolve to rise above divisive partisan politics," Duterte said.

The Chief Executive also expressed gratitude to the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) for their unwavering commitment in pursuing the passage of the BOL.

Last 26 July, Duterte signed the BOL, or Republic Act 11054, a law that will establish a new Bangsamoro political entity to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), but did not hold any ceremony.

Peace dividends

The Philippine National Police (PNP), meanwhile, said the Duterte administration is already

reaping peace dividends from the President's strong resolve against crime and drugs.

"The index crime rate went

The passage of these laws speak well of their able leadership and firm resolve to rise above divisive partisan politics.

down in the country by 46.98 percent for the past two years since Duterte became the President," PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde told media.

"The crimes against person went down by 30.42 percent, while the crimes against properties went down by 56.16 percent. So this is all covered by statistics

and record," Albayalde said.

He added majority of the criminal cases percentage went down, except the murder cases which went up by 1.5 percent.

"Murder cases went up slightly by 1.5 percent. It covered the July 2014 to June 2018, all the rest went down including homicide, it went down by 10.8 percent. The physical injuries cases went down by 39.73 percent, even the rape cases went down by 19.88 percent," Albayalde also added.

"I am pleased to announce that of the 9,866 High Value Targets (HVT) in the list of drug personalities subject to interdiction operations only 918 or 9.3 percent remain unaccounted as of 30 June 2018.

TODAY

Bangsamoro urged to take part in plebiscite

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has urged all stakeholders of the future Bangsamoro Autonomous Region to participate in the plebiscite to approve the law and signify their intention to join the new political entity.

"I ask my Bangsamoro brothers and sisters, as well as the indigenous communities and Christian settlers living within the Bangsamoro areas, to actively participate in constructive discussions about the law in your homes, in your villages, and communities," the President said during yesterday's ceremonial signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

"More importantly, I encourage you to take part in the upcoming plebiscite so that you may express your sovereign will through the ballot," Duterte added.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will form part of BAR's core territory.

The BOL is a result of the final peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal said the plebiscite can be held as early as November this year.

But Presidential Peace Process Adviser Jesus Dureza said it might be scheduled in November or January, which is still within the 150 day limit set from the time the law was approved.

Earlier, Duterte said he would like to talk to Moro National Liberation Front founding chairman Nur Misuari for a possible separate autonomous region for his group. The ARMM was created as a result of the final peace agreement between the government and the MNLF.

"I can create also an autonomy for him if that's what he wants, and pending the federal system implementation, he can just wait for it if he trusts me," the President said.

The BAR will receive a yearly "block grant" of about P60 billion, which is equivalent to 5 percent of the net national internal revenue tax collection of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs from the third fiscal year immediately preceding the current fiscal year.

The Bangsamoro Parliament, to be headed by a Chief Minister, will govern the BAR.

The Chief Minister must be elected by 80 members or representatives, of which at least 40 are party representatives.

The other half must be divided into district representatives and sectoral representatives.

Seats will be reserved for members of the non-Muslim indigenous peoples, such as the Teduray, Lambangian, Dulangan Manobo, B'Laan and Higaonon.

Nat Mariano

The myth of war with China

In Tolstoy's "War and Peace," one of the characters memorably laments Russia's humiliating defeat at the hands of Napoleon's Grande Armée by despairingly stating, "We lost because very early on we told ourselves we had lost."

Tolstoy's message is clear: War is, above all, a test of wills fought in the minds of men rather than in the actual battlefield.

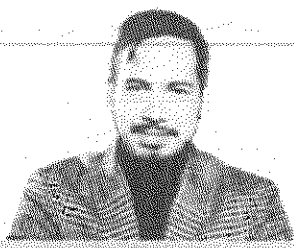
Two centuries since the Napoleonic wars, we are once again confronting the specter of conflict, this time in Asia's seascape, particularly in the South China Sea, where China has been challenging America's decades-long naval hegemony in Asia.

As I wrote in a previous book, "Asia's New Battlefield" (Zed Books, London), if there were to be a third World War, it will most likely take place in our maritime backyard. After all, as veteran Singaporean diplomat Bilahari Kausikan has pointed out, it's in the South China Sea where the parameters of US-China competition are most pronounced.

It's in these strategic waters where, according to Harvard's Graham Allison, we face a dangerous "Thucydides Trap," as the modern Athens (China) challenges the hegemony of modern Sparta (America). Without a question, there are legitimate reasons for concern.

But should we really fear war in the near future? President Duterte thinks so. He has repeatedly claimed that if smaller claimant states such as the Philippines were to assert their rights, China would resort to armed conflict.

A more careful analysis of China's foreign policy, however, reveals that the Asian powerhouse is the last country to wish for war. First of all, any armed confrontation



HORIZONS

RICHARD HEYDARIAN

would severely disrupt China's export-oriented economy, since the country depends on the South China Sea for a vast majority of its trade as well as energy imports.

Yes, we may sleepwalk into conflict, as in World War I, but no one is interested in disrupting decades of continued economic growth. This is especially the case for developing China, where continued prosperity is the sole source of legitimacy for an unelected regime.

Second, any war in the South China Sea, especially against a weaker and helpless adversary like the Philippines, would irrevocably damage China's regional standing, sowing panic among other smaller states and forcing them to start hedging their bets by fully aligning with America. This would not only represent a soft-power disaster for China, but would also immediately tilt the regional balance of power in America's favor.

Third, any war in the South China Sea would be used as a pretext by America, Japan, India, Australia and major European

powers to step up their military presence in the area. This would immediately end China's current position of dominance and test the mettle of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), which hasn't fought a single war since the end of the Cold War.

As Sun Tzu, China's legendary strategic thinker, counseled in "The Art of War": "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." This is precisely why Beijing's strategy is to intimidate smaller claimant states such as the Philippines through psychological warfare.

The beauty of Marites Vitug's newly released book "Rock Solid" is that it's a timely reminder that the Philippines' arbitration award victory at The Hague is our best bargaining chip in the ongoing battle of wills in the South China Sea. Meticulously researched and written in accessible journalistic lexicon, her work eloquently punctures the false binary narrative that the only options for our country are graceful accommodation or war.

China knows that defying international law carries its own strategic costs, and that's why it has used a combination of intimidation and economic incentives to lure the Philippines. The aim of China's statecraft is to compel its smaller neighbors to internalize defeat and embrace strategic acquiescence as the only way forward.

We shouldn't fall for this trick. Rule of law is the best and only way to manage and resolve the disputes, short of accepting Chinese maritime hegemony. There can't be peace without justice.

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PH AS US PAWN IN PROXY WAR?

WHY does the Inquirer continue to raise fear among the populace, the latest being the headline, "PH airs concern over China radio warnings" (8/1/18)?

The picture caption indicates China has built a man-made island on Zamora (Subi) Reef in the Spratlys, without pointing out that Vietnam has actually occupied 48 features in the area, which doubled under the previous administration.

It was Vietnam and the Philippines that first built a military outpost in the South China Sea, way back in 1975, while China only started construction in 2016 after the United States was allowed to build facilities inside the Philippines through the Edca, or Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. The late nationalist senator Miriam Santiago criticized the agreement because it prohibited the Philippine government from conducting an inspection; in addition, the construction and utility had to be paid for by Filipino taxpayers.

Shouldn't we ask the previous

administration to be transparent about the deal that made the Philippines a frontline of US military adventurism? Have we forgotten how Japan and the United States made Manila the most destroyed city in World War II because of their geopolitics?

A 2015 US defense report to Congress showed that the United States had 10 times more aircraft carriers, nuclear warheads and military aircraft in the South China Sea than China, yet these hardly received the same reportage as the continued "demonization" of China.

China is not stupid to let the US military roam the South China Sea. Did we forget that the United States stored nuclear weapons in the Philippines in direct violation of our Constitution? The United States even refuses to give the Philippines custody of convicted American murderers of Filipinos.

Don't put the Philippines in the frontline of US proxy wars!

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China claims a victory on Korean nuclear issue

At a time when much of the world is concerned about how to implement the denuclearization agreement reached between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on June 12 in Singapore, China is quietly patting itself on the back even though it wasn't party to the talks. Beijing considers the outcome a Chinese victory.

At a key but little noticed conference on foreign affairs held in Beijing 10 days after the Singapore meeting, Chinese leader Xi Jinping reported that "China has won some tough battles on the diplomatic front" since he became the Communist Party's general secretary in 2012. According to one conference participant, Xi said the battles won included "moves to peacefully resolve the South China



FRANK CHING

Sea issue, the Doklam standoff with India and the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue."

Xi's words were reported by Fu Xiaoqiang, a research fellow at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, who was approached by the *China Daily* for his views for an article published June 28.

Why does China consider the Trump-Kim accord a Chinese victory? The answer lies in the roadmap that China, along with Russia, has championed for the Korean peninsula. This "dual-

track approach" calls for both the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the provision of security guarantees to North Korea, which feels threatened by the United States.

This was the approach adopted in Singapore. In the Trump-Kim accord, the US and North Korea pledged to "join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula" before North Korea committed itself "to work towards complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

This is a far cry from the approach of some in the US, notably that of the hawkish diplomat John Bolton before he became national security adviser in April. All Pyongyang has to do, he said then, was to inform the US "how

to pack up their nuclear weapons program and take it to Oak Ridge, Tennessee."

The first step in this phased Chinese approach is a "freeze for freeze," with North Korea suspending missile and nuclear testing in return for a suspension in US-South Korea joint military exercises.

North Korea has not held any test in 2018 and, in Singapore, Trump agreed to suspend joint US-South Korean military exercises.

So, the Chinese feel vindicated that their phased approach has been adopted. It is significant that when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang last month to fill in the details of the agreement reached by the two

A4 > Ching A5

CHING FROM A4

China claims a victory

leaders, he was rebuffed when he sought details of North Korea's nuclear weapons program and a timetable for denuclearization.

After his departure, North Korea's foreign ministry issued a statement denouncing what it called America's "gangster-like mindset." Instead, North Korea called for "phased, simultaneous actions" to realize

Ri, the North Korean official, affirmed an "important consensus" between leaders of the two countries. He supported improved bilateral relations but was silent on joint efforts with China.

This month, Chinese state councillor and foreign minister Wang Yi also met with Ri while both men were in Singapore for a regional foreign ministers' meeting.

Wang commended North Korea's efforts to advance denuclearization. He promised to coop-

erate with all parties, including North Korea, to "jointly advance the Korean Peninsula denuclearization and strive to realize enduring peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula at an early date."

Ri responded that his country was ready to improve bilateral relations. North Korea, he said, will "maintain strategic communication with the Chinese comrades to ensure stability and development of the Korean Peninsula and the region."

There are signs that the US doesn't appreciate the actions China has been taking behind the scenes, seeking to influence Pyongyang's decisions. In early August, Trump, speaking at a Florida rally, said enigmatically that "China maybe is getting in our way" where North Korea was concerned.

There are indications that North Korea doesn't want to be smothered by China's embrace. Last month, Chinese vice foreign minister Kong Xuanyou visited Pyongyang to meet North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho. Kong made clear that "the Chinese side is willing to make joint efforts with all parties to push forward the process of denuclearization and the building of peace mechanism of the Korean Peninsula."

But again, he said nothing about working jointly with China. This absence of a response to repeated Chinese offers of "joint efforts" may be a straw in the wind that North Korea is resisting Chinese efforts to work more closely together which, given their disparity in size, could well mean accepting Chinese dominance.

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Is the MILF ready to take the BOL?

THE recent car bombing in Basilan does not augur well for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The terror attack in the city of Lamitan in Basilan, a known stronghold of the country's largest Muslim separatist group, has invited growing skepticism in certain quarters about the ability of the MILF to effectively govern the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) — if and when the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) is approved in a referendum.

Unless the MILF can get a grip on the radical Islam militants and criminal gangs operating within the BAR, its credibility is likely to suffer. This early, the rebel group is getting pushback from some local governments being considered for inclusion in the new autonomous region. "How credible are the proponents of the BOL in bringing about peace, progress and development to Cotabato City?" asked Mayor Cynthia Guiani. Fair question.

Under the "Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao" (Republic Act 11054), the MILF will lead the interim government called the Bangsamoro Transition Authority for three years until 2022. This new Bangsamoro law signed by President Rodrigo Duterte a week or so ago implements the 2014 peace agreement hammered out by the MILF with the previous Aquino administration.

As envisioned by Congress, the BAR will replace the 28-year-old Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which PNoy described as a "failed experiment." The former president apparently forgot that the ARMM's creation was a brainchild of his mother,



FLIPSIDE

ATTY. DODO DULAY

former President Cory Aquino, whose peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Chairman Nur Misuari, brought about the 1996 final peace agreement, also called the Jakarta Accord, with the rebel group during the administration of President Fidel Ramos.

The MILF — a splinter group of the MNLF — is more optimistic that the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region will be more successful than its predecessor. Bangsamoro Transition Committee (BTC) chairman and MILF first vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar said the new Bangsamoro law is the "best antidote" to violent extremism in the Philippines.

That, of course, is easier said than done, as shown by the recent van bombing in Basilan. The carnage caused by bandits or a terrorist group (depending on who you ask) in the southern island is a confirmation that the MILF has practically no control over rogue elements operating within its territory.

Moreover, while the MILF has been quick to dissociate itself from attacks launched by insurgent groups and radical Islam militants against the Philippine military, claiming that these were breakaway factions or criminal gangs, the rebel group has not taken any steps to crack down on these insurgent groups.

But with the MILF transitioning from a revolutionary organization to a political entity, it will have to show to a doubting public that it can truly govern the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region by reining in the various insurgent groups in the territory. The integration of the MILF into the country's political

system also means that the rebel group will not only have to ensure the economic and social development of the Bangsamoro region but will also have to assume the burden of its security from the Philippine National Police (PNP).

For decades, the MILF has been accused or suspected of maintaining clandestine connections to radical insurgents and terrorist groups as "insurance" and leverage in its negotiations with the Philippine government. With the passage of the BOL, it will also now have to prove to voters that it does not play both sides of the fence.

Every attack by radical militants or Muslim bandits hereafter perpetrated against the Philippine military or innocent civilians will only bolster the narrative that the Bangsamoro is the "same dog with a different collar." Or worse, that Mindanao has merely exchanged one Muslim separatist group for another smaller splinter or insurgent groups aiming to replace the MILF.

The need for the MILF to take effective control over Bangsamoro areas is more imperative, given the admission of MILF Chairman Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim that "foreign terrorists are still trying to penetrate MILF areas."

The first order of the day for the rebel group is to get its operatives to investigate the Basilan van bombing that killed 11 people (including women and children), which Islamic State East Asia claimed was a "martyrdom operation" carried out by a Moroccan named Abu Khatir Al-Maghribi.

Although the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) quickly dismissed the IS claim as mere "terrorist propaganda," the incident is nonetheless very alarming because this is the first case of a "suicide bomber" in the country. What is also disturbing is that the suicide bomber used a vehicle filled with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which was allegedly triggered remotely via a cell phone. If accurate, this points to the increasing sophistication of terrorist bomb makers.

Expectedly, the Basilan incident caused jitters in the country's urban centers, aggravated by text and online messages warning of bigger bombings to come. While the AFP and the PNP has assured the public that there is no terror threat in Metro Manila and that the region is "safe and secure," it nevertheless placed its forces in heightened alert.

More than assurances, however, it would be better if the AFP and PNP fast-tracked its investigation into the incident and disclose the results to the public soonest in order to prevent further rumor and speculation.

The MILF can do its part by gathering and sharing intelligence information with the military and the police, and going after the perpetrators of this heinous crime almost surely taking refuge in the Bangsamoro region. This will give flesh to the rebel group's promise to become the Duterte government's "partner" for peace after the passage of the BOL. AT

Digong's greatest legacy

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Roa Duterte aka Digong says he is "ready for retirement and anything in life" after his six-year term ends in 2022.

But until then, he further says, he remains committed to fulfill his campaign promises to wage his war against illegal drugs, crime, and corruption in the country.

What about his solemn vow to rid the country of foreign troops? Is he committed to do that, too?

His determined fight against illegal drugs, crime and corruption will succeed significantly, although not totally. On the other hand, ending the presence of foreign troops in the country is something he can do conclusively without having to wage a bloody campaign, so to speak.

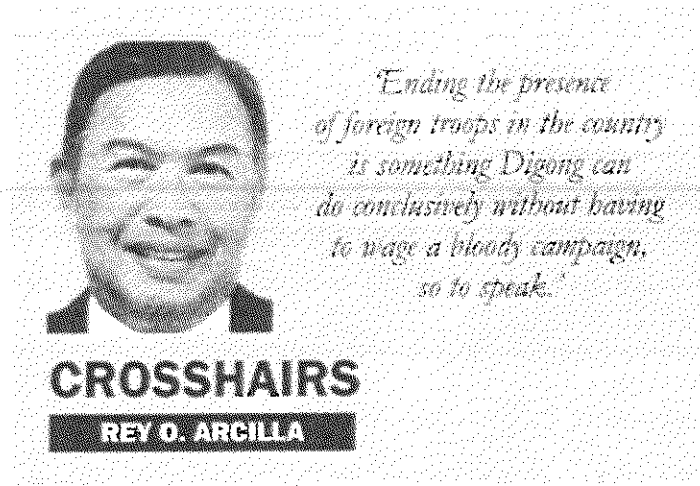
He only has to abrogate the two constitutionally infirm agreements forged with the US, namely, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Enhanced Defense Co-operation Agreement (EDCA).

Section 25, Article XVIII of the Constitution, states:

"After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, troops, or facilities, shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State."

Neither the VFA nor the EDCA is a treaty.

Both are mere executive agreements. That they were concurred in by our Senate did not make



CROSSHAIRS

REY O. ARGILLA

them treaties. That's one reason they should be abrogated.

But the more telling argument for abrogation of the agreements is that neither one is "recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State." The US Senate did not ratify them simply because it does not consider the two agreements treaties.

So, there. Digong can, without much ado, abrogate both agreements merely by citing the above constitutional provision. Of course, the provision on the notice of termination of both agreements will have to be honored, i.e., 180 days written notice in the case of the VFA and one year written notice for the EDCA.

Needless to say, such a move will be consistent with Digong's pursuit of an independent foreign policy and will certainly be beneficial to the country's interests. It will be his greatest legacy to the future of this nation.

The big question, of course, is will Digong take the momentous

step before he steps down in 2022?

DREADED TELCO HOTLINES

If you want to avoid losing more hair (think Cayetano and Aquino), adding more wrinkles on your forehead, raising your blood pressure and inviting a heart attack that could shorten your life, do not call the hotline of telco companies like PLDT, Globe and Sky-cable to complain about faulty or loss of phone, internet, cable TV connection, etc.

Invariably, this is what happens — that is, if your phone is still working or unless you don't mind exhausting your cellphone's pre-paid load or exceeding the limit of your post-paid plan:

You dial their hotline which, depending on your luck, is almost always busy. So you dial again and again and again... It helps if you have a redial key on your phone.

Finally, you get connected and

are greeted by a talking machine that tells you which key to press for your query or the service that you need. You do that, and then you are told to choose from another set of keys to press for your particular problem. If none of the keys mentioned pertains to your problem, you are told to either dial 0 or wait on the line to speak to a live person.

So you press 0 and wait. Then, a machine tells you "sorry, all our agents are busy now. Please stay on the line, blah, blah, blah."

So, you wait some more while a lousy tune keeps repeating in your ear, interspersed with messages of some kind.

I once waited for almost half an hour before an agent came on the line. By that time, the aggravation caused by the defective service and the time you had to wait to be attended to while your ear starts feeling hot (no wonder, they call it hotline because of the phone pressed against your ear for a long time), has become worse that you are ready to explode.

And so, when an agent finally attends to you, s/he gets the brunt of your ire.

Fortunately, I have never come across one who gets cross and impolite after being bombarded with all kinds of nasty comments from an irate customer. That must be a most difficult thing to do. I take my hat off to them. Without a doubt, they are the heroes in the world they move in. Hooray to them!

What follows after you have made your complaint is another story.

Either you survive and are sat-

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DIGONG'S

isfied... or you go through the same horrendous experience again - without any guarantee that you will survive this time.

Makes you wonder if a third tel-co will make a difference. I have a feeling it will.

Let's hope Digong will make it happen soon!

ASEAN-CHINA NAVAL DRILL

For the first time ever, a joint naval exercise off the coast of Guangdong province in China will be held this October with only Asean members and China participating.

I have not heard nor read of any reaction from the US or Australia. I wonder how they must feel.

No, I don't think the Asean-China drill has anything to do with Beijing being "dis-invited" to the ongoing Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercises in the waters between Hawaii and California. The Asean-China drill has been in the works since February

this year.

ALVAREZ AND ARROYO ON PORK

If for nothing else, Pantaleon Alvarez ought to have been ousted Speaker for giving congressmen pork barrel which has been declared unconstitutional and, therefore, illegal by the Supreme Court.

And now his successor, Gloria Arroyo, has promised to give pork barrel to those congressmen who were not given any by Alvarez. Ano ba 'yan?!

THE MISSING ANDRES BAUTISTA

Last week, I asked what government is doing, if any, about the "missing"

Andres Bautista, former Comelec chairman, who left the country after his wife accused him of irregularities while in the poll body and as head of the PCGG before that.

My question became even more relevant on account of the explo-

sive revelations made by Atty. Glen Chong about cheating in the last elections which, incidentally, have not found their way into the mainstream media and reportedly taken down by Facebook. What gives?

REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administration of some of its yet unfulfilled promises and matters that need attention and/or follow-up action. More importantly, the people are entitled to know what's being done about them.

1) Digong's promise to rid the country of foreign troops. This, of course, necessitates abrogating the lopsided VFA and the EDCA with the US.

2) Reciprocal visa arrangements with the US and other countries. (What is the DFA doing about this? Our embassy in Washington?)

3) The retrieval of the Balangiga bells. (Sources say the return of the bells is now awaiting a certification of some kind from the US Defense Department to be sub-

mitted to the US Congress. Is our embassy in Washington on top of this?)

4) The return of the Canadian waste. (Sources say the DOJ has filed a motion before the proper court for the importer to return the waste to Canada. No decision yet. No word about what Canada is doing. The DFA should be following this up.)

Today is the 101st day of the twelfth year of the enforced disappearance of Jonas Burgos, son of the late press icon and founder of this newspaper, Joe Burgos.

After the acquittal of Major Harry Baliaga, Jr., the only person formally charged with Jonas' kidnapping, I guess what happens next is now up to Divine Providence.

From an internet friend:

If con is the opposite of pro, who's surprised that Congress is the opposite of progress?

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/reynaldo.arcilla.9847>

It's about sovereignty, stupid

“The 60:40 ratio refers to costs expended to carry out the enterprise on one end and on the other, the sharing of net yields following the same ratio in cost sharing.”

With apologies to American campaign strategist James Carville who coined the phrase “It’s the economy, stupid” during the 1992 US presidential derby, allow us a variation - albeit his original likewise applies - as an apt rejoinder to those blindly criticizing the joint Philippine-China exploration proposal over resources in the West Philippine Sea.

It was recently announced that the Philippines, in the exercise of its economic sovereignty rights, was open to a joint exploration on the basis of a 60:40 share over the fruits of such endeavor. The announcement came amid controversies over both territorial and economic zone issues with China with whom we’ve aggressively renewed diplomatic relations. Those relations are focused on economic development and less focused on political alliances. Even lesser on differences and disputes.

Unfortunately, even before the last word had left the lips of those tasked to officially announce the proposal, quick to pounce on virtually everything related to the Duterte administration, the political opposition started railing and ranting.

It would have helped if reason, rationality and brains were first engaged prior to freaking out. Note the knee-jerk criticism by the tag team of Sen. Risa Hontiveros and former President Benigno Aquino III.

“It is preposterous and treacherous,



BYSTANDER
Dean de la Paz

sovereign rights to access offshore oil and gas fields, including the Reed Bank, within our 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. We don’t share ownership of the West Philippine Sea with China.”

You can almost see the hair-pulling,

the gritted teeth, the veins popping and the venom spat out if only to paint our multi-dimensional strategy to gain from our economic zones as nothing more than a surrender to perceived Chinese expansionism.

To debunk their criticism, indulge us as we go through critical points that reveal the sheer ludicrousness of their counter-arguments

and, exposing the amount of intellect or its hollowness or sheer absence that they substantiate their criticism with.

The most basic is the difference between economic rights and ownership. Rights can be shared. Not ownership.

A joint exploration for natural resources either covered by territorial sovereignty statutes or rights granted by

international courts is not a question of ownership. Their line, “We don’t share ownership of the West Philippine Sea with China,” while accurate is misplaced. The proposal for a joint undertaking does not mean ownership sharing.

The 60:40 ratio refers to costs expended to carry out the enterprise on one end and on the other, the sharing of net yields following the same ratio in cost sharing. In no sense are these reflective of ownership or equity.

Note similar arrangements in other extractive endeavors undertaken by entities, both local and foreign, in the sectors of mining and submarine exploration where a 60:40 sharing of productivity is involved.

In the extractive sectors where the natural resources remain the property of the state, such agreements are not new. Do the research and analyze similar synergistic enterprises in the exploration of the offshore Malampaya gas fields where an international conglomerate is recompensed through a yield sharing agreement involving the asset securitization of receivables. 1

Because the offer is initiated by us as we recognize our limitations in funding such capital intensive explorations thus compelling a joint sharing of yields as payments and the fact that the 60:40 ratio is in our favor collectively makes the arrangement financially viable. 4

Moreover, rather than weaken our victory won at The Hague court, it reinforces it. The proposal in fact strengthens our sovereignty rights as it recognizes our right to offer a share of Philippine resources in exchange for technical and capital expenditures.

CoC is Asia for Asians

“ Rody when he assumed the presidency proposed close engagement with China through dialogues instead of antagonizing it.

A singular achievement attributed to President Rody Duterte that should drown the shrilling voices of the bungling duo of former President Noynoy Aquino and Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV was the draft code of conduct (CoC) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China on the conflicting claims in the West Philippine Sea.

The draft document was unveiled at the conclusion of the recent ASEAN Foreign Ministers Summit in Singapore.

It was Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi who announced the CoC draft.

The CoC will contain the binding rules in the maritime conflict that becomes relevant since it has China's agreement to it.

Noynoy and his yellow cohorts have been warring on Rody the use as a policy guide the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling that favored the Philippines but is unenforceable since China does not recognize it.

Rody had introduced an independent foreign policy that engages all countries to dialogue regarding conflicts which is a tack that is now winning praises from all corners of the world except the Western powers who wanted to maintain developing nations as servile followers.

The CoC embodies Rody's policy since it places premium on direct dialogue in which China and the entire ASEAN are involved in.

There are views which stated that Western powers are trying to put a wedge between China and the ASEAN because of the fear that such a partnership would create an economic center of gravity that would have a dominant global clout.

The ASEAN has been an economic community since 2015 but its potentials as a bloc remain mostly dormant as it harmonizes the trade policies of its 10 members.

Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan who hosted the ASEAN meeting described the draft as a milestone in the CoC process since the document provides the first definite basis for maritime conflict negotiations.

Rody when he assumed the presidency proposed close engagement with China through dialogues instead of antagonizing it.

He sought joint exploration in the disputed area despite Noynoy's bankrupt opposition.

Rody is always clear about defending the country's sovereignty while talking with China as he stressed that going to war is not a solution.

Rody was accurate in his assessment that the Philippines is merely caught in the middle of the battle of giants China and the United States for dominance in the region.

Unlike before, the Philippines is now getting better deals in terms of financial aid from both the US and China.

“*Unlike before, the Philippines is now getting better terms in terms of financial aid from both the US and China.*”

The planned joint exploration in the disputed areas shows that China wanted a constructive relationship with its neighbors where everybody gains so long as there is no interference from non-Asians.

Recognition in the region of the huge role Rody played in crafting the binding document was symbolized in the handing to the Philippines of the role of country coordinator for the China-ASEAN dialogue after the CoC draft was announced.

The CoC will be signed to make it formally in effect by November when ASEAN leaders and their dialogue partners meet for the ASEAN Summit.

Noynoy whose confrontational policy induced China's massive buildup in the disputed seas and Trillanes, who practically sold the nation to China in his backchanneling work, had assailed Rody for taking a soft position in the maritime conflict.

Now, the foreign ministers of ASEAN agreed on a document embodying Rody's non-confrontational policy which is soon expected to bring back a harmonious atmosphere in the region.

The muddled up situation that existed in the previous administration was mostly the result of Noynoy kowtowing to then President Barack Obama who had then launched a campaign for a US military pivot to China.

The CoC marks the Asia for Asians philosophy that most leaders in the region now espouse after the trailblazing role of Rody's independent foreign policy to promote it.

TODAY

Justice for Bangsamoro and Pacific Plaza strike



THE most significant legislative development in recent months is of course the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, whose ceremonial signing was done yesterday. As I told a colleague who is familiar with Mindanao issue, the success in enacting this controversial but necessary law is a sign of hope that we can rise above our bickering and petty politics.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law, formerly known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law (contrary to what some think, there is no difference between "organic" and "basic") is a product of four administrations (Ramos, Arroyo, Aquino, and Duterte), of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Bangsamoro Transition Committee, and the indigenous peoples inside and outside the Bangsamoro that sought to have their voices heard. It is a product of a bipartisan group of senators and representatives from the administration and opposition—Zubiri, Drilon, Angara, Farillas, Sema, Dimaporo, and Llobregat, etc. who worked together to forge a consensus even as they represented diverse, conflicting interests. The President himself got involved at the right time and resolve an important legal issue, in my view in the right way.

I have no reservations praising the President, the leaders of the House of the Representatives, and the Senate, the administration coalition, and the opposition in pulling this whole of country project. We pulled it off. This is not to say that the law has no problems. There are still a few legal and political issues

left, including non compliance by the government of some of its commitments in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. But from the seriously flawed versions that came out of the House and the Senate, with potentially dozens of big gaps and problems, we have a law with less than five major issues. That's an achievement and the country should celebrate that.

I hope the government will also be able to do the same for big issues facing the country like land use, disaster management, climate change, and labor-only contracting. These issues are beyond partisan politics and it is time to find solutions for them.

On the issue of labor-only contracting, lines are being drawn as the labor movement flexes its muscles to compel the Duterte administration to comply with its promise to end this terrible and

it does not take rocket science to solve the endo problem.

unjust practice that denies workers their basic rights.

Unfortunately, companies have responded aggressively to the just demands of labor.

Last week, we saw the striking workers of NutriAsia and their supporters attacked by police and goons. Right now, there is a protest camp of workers from Leyte in the main office of the Department of Labor and Employment; they too are protesting their illegal dismissal. Just last week, the Court of Appeals came out with a controversial decision on this issue in the dispute between workers and PLDT.

Nearer to home for me, because I teach in the Bonifacio Global City campuses of the De La Salle University College of Law and the University of the Philippines College of Law, workers of Pacific Plaza Towers in BGC went on strike yesterday because the company

Turn to A5

Justice...

From A4

refused to regularize employees despite performing core functions in the operations of the condominium. The workers who were employed as electricians, plumbers, masons, carpenters, and airconditioning technicians have been retrenched by the Polystar Manpower Agency and were asking to be reinstated by PPT who is the real employer.

The workers, who were prevented by the BGC security force to express their legitimate demands by picketing the premises of PPT, is appealing to the unit owners who the Pacific Plaza workers have served faithfully for patience while the labor dispute remains unresolved. They also seek their sympathy by pressuring the building management into granting the employees' demands so that the condominium's operations return to normal.

In a press statement, "Enough is

enough," Judy Pastorpede, leader of the retrenched employees, said: "Our employer has pushed us against the wall. They have not only violated our rights as employees but have done everything in their power to discredit us." She explained that, "we have patiently observed all legal procedures and requirements to bring our case to an immediate resolution but they continued in denying our constitutionally guaranteed rights. This is the last straw. The homeowners association must understand that this strike was never our intention but was forced upon us by management."

According to the press statement of the union, the PPT management is also accused of union-busting after two of its officers were included among those retrenched. Among the other violations committed include the non-remittance of SSS, Pag-IBIG, and PhilHealth contributions despite being deducted from workers' semi-monthly pay; delayed salaries and undisclosed deductions by Polystar; failure to meet Occupational Health and Safety Standards; failure to

fully apply the P21/day wage increase issued by the Regional Wage Board on October 2017; and many others.

Luke Espiritu of Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (disclosure: A close relative is a volunteer at BMP) to which the union was affiliated has pointed out that the strike at Pacific Plaza is a testament to the worthlessness of President Rodrigo Duterte's Executive Order 51 which supposedly addressed *endo*. According to Espiritu, Duterte's tough talk against employers on *endo* is "hogwash." "The employers are simply ignoring it and continue in their shameless and dastardly practice of contractualization. Labor disputes will inevitably arise left and right in the pursuit of regularization," Espiritu said.

It does not take rocket science to solve the *endo* problem. A new law is not even necessary. If the country can move forward on the Mindanao conflict, we should be able to find just solutions to this problem.

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ONLINE NEWS

07 AUGUST 2018

M'lang PNP intensifies visibility, intelligence networking after IED recovery

From MindaNews (Aug 6): M'lang PNP intensifies visibility, intelligence networking after IED recovery

Police in M'lang, North Cotabato has intensified their visibility, intelligence, monitoring, and other security measures after authorities recovered an improvised explosive device (IED) left by still unidentified suspects along the national highway as the town culminated its weeklong 67th founding day celebrations on Sunday.

Supt. Giovanni Ladeo, officer-in-charge of the M'lang municipal police station, said that right after the recovery, they conducted checkpoints during dawn and the time when people converge in public places.

"I don't want to speculate on the motive but our assessment was, the suspects did the planting of the IED after the celebration. Our investigations would continue," said Ladeo.

Ladeo said troops from the Army's 7th Infantry Battalion of the 6th Infantry Division are helping them secure the town from threat groups operating in the area.

Around 2:30 p.m. Sunday, bystanders saw two people leave a paper bag while walking along the highway in Magsaysay Street, Poblacion and upon checking the package they saw a mobile phone and electrical wires inside, police reports said.

Ladeo said he immediately sought the help of the operatives of the Explosives and Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team of the Army, who had the bomb defused a few hours later.

M'lang Mayor Russel Abonado said the town's security and order had been disturbed by bombing and other bomb-related incidents in the past.

"Our people in M'lang are already aware. We know our town's history. There were several bombing incidents in the past," said Abonado, adding that residents are always on alert, checking their environment.

<http://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2018/08/mlang-pnp-intensifies-visibility-intelligence-networking-after-ied-recovery/>

REBELS CRUMBLING | 86IB seized NPA encampment, People's Militia and supporters mass surrendered in Northern Luzon

Report by Alvin Santiago | August 4, 2018

CAMP GEN SERVILLANO AQUINO, Tarlac City (DWDD) – A New People's Army (NPA) encampment was taken hold of by the operating Army units under Joint Task Force (JTF) "Tala" of Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) after its discovery. while members of the "Milisyang Bayan" and supporters surrender in separate incidents on August 4, 2018 (Saturday).

The encounter that transpired in Sitio Dibulod, Dicamay 2, Jones, Isabela resulted to the discovery of a Communist NPA Terrorist (CNT) temporary harbor area or camp. in the mountainous area of Brgy Sto Domingo during the conduct of pursuit operation of 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB), 502nd Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (5ID).

The said can accommodate about ten (10) CNTs wherein the operating troops also found three (3) improvised cooking fire place and fresh vegetables.

Moreover, no casualty was incurred by the 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB) while undetermined on the terrorist side.

In the province of Ifugao, fourteen (14) members of the Milisyang Bayan (MB) or People's Militia (PM) and six (6) CNT supporters yielded in Sitio Nakatengey, Brgy Namal, Municipality of Asipulo to the 54th Infantry Battalion (54IB), 503rd Brigade also of the 5ID.

An M16 rifle was also surrendered by the group which was later brought to the Headquarters of 54IB for safekeeping.

The surrender was made possible through the efforts and initiatives of Community Support Program (CSP) operators of said Army unit deployed in the area.

NOLCOM units will sustain its Focus Military Operations (FMO) to address the armed threat groups, as well as the efforts in engaging the Local Government Units (LGUs) and other stakeholders as partners in attaining peace and development in the region. **NOLCOM / MCAG**

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ALL IN ONE | NOLCOM tenders Social Services in Ilocos Sur

by Alvin Santiago, August 21, 2018

GALIMUYOD, Ilocos Sur (DWDD) – The Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) has initiated once again its Civic Action Program, dubbed as “All in One Bayanihan”, on August 4, 2018 (Saturday), to render social services to the people of Galimuyod in Ilocos Sur.

The event formally started with a program in Brgy. Patac Covered Court that was participated by the residents and Local Government Officials of the Municipality of Galimuyod headed by Mayor Juanito B. Balingsat, the team of NOLCOM spearheaded by Lt Gen Emmanuel L Salamat, the 702nd Brigade of Joint Task Force (JTF) “KAUGNAY” led by BGen Henry A Robinson Jr, the 81st Infantry Battalion (81IB), the GO SHARE Foundation headed by Mr. Noel Gonzales, the local police and other stakeholders.

All other social services immediately followed as part of the main event. Medical Services, that includes giving of free medicines and check-up, as well as Optical Services, like Eye Check-up and Giving of Free Eye Glasses, were then provided.

A classroom and two (2) Dental Buses, from NOLCOM and the Provincial Government of Ilocos Sur which can cater two (2) patients at a time per bus, were used for the dental services.

Trainings were also provided for the members of “barangay tanod” and other municipal volunteers like Humanitarian and Disaster Response (HADR) Training, Self-Defense Training and the First Responders Training.

Aside from the free haircut and free pictorials in a photo booth that were available for all, the gift-giving, distribution of school supplies and books for the three (3) libraries, face painting and food cart services were also carried-out for the children.

Simultaneous with the other activities, a Peace and Order Consultative Meeting was conducted to discuss related matters on safety and security of the communities against local threats. This was attended by the municipal and barangay officials, together with the representatives from the security sector.

At this point, Lt Gen Salamat emphasized on the effects of these threats to the Political, Economic and Social aspects of society. Moreover, the Deception, Exploitation and Recruitment efforts of the Communist Terrorist Groups on the youth and Indigenous People (IP) were given premium in the discussion.

An information dissemination on free livelihood programs on livestock, poultry and aquaculture, as these were now subsidized by the government, was also delivered by a representative from the Department of Agriculture to enlighten the participants.

By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

About three thousand (3,000) individuals became recipients of the social services and trainings provided by thirty (40) doctors, nurses and other health practitioners from the LGU, NOLCOM and its partners.

The "All in One Bayanihan" was materialized as request was made from the grassroots, which was further followed-up by the LGU, to NOLCOM officials. This now gives the people the chance to avail of the needed basic services as a result of collaboration and cooperation among the stakeholders.

NOLCOM will remain as a partner for nation-building. Together with the Local Government Units (LGUs), Local Government Agencies (LGAs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), NOLCOM will be an advocate and prime-mover for peace and development. **NOLCOM / MCAG**

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NPA PARALYZED | 20 CNT Supporters Mass Surrenders during Peace Caravan

By Alvin Santiago | August 14, 2018 | 11:00 AM

CAMP MELCHOR F DELA CRUZ, Gamu, Isabela –20 members of the Communist-New People's Army –Terrorist (CNT) supporters surrendered to the Team of Community Support Program (CSP) of the 54th Infantry Battalion during the Peace Caravan in Sitio Nagkatengey, Brgy Namai, Asipulo, Ifugao on August 4, 2018.



According to Lt Col Narciso B Nabulneg Jr, Commander, 54IB, the 20 were composed of 16 full time "Militia ng Bayan" (MB) and six CNT contacts in their village. The group also surrendered an M16 Rifle.

"These 20 personalities were long-time supporters of the enemy that played a vital role in the survival of the CNT group. and by having them in our side, we can now paralyze the enemy activities in their traditional abode. We will soon reach the desired peace and development in this part of the country." LTC Nabulneg Jr, said.

Meanwhile, Maj Gen Perfecto M Rimando Jr, Commander, 5th Infantry Division, commended the CSP teams under 54IB for their sincerity to help the community and by assisting the CNT supporters into the right path. "Truly, if we put premium on the rights and welfare of our Kababayans in our activities, our jobs become easy. These former CNT supporters have seen the sincerity of our soldiers that is why they surrendered. If we continue to become professional in our dealing with the locals, we will achieve the desired peace the soonest possible time" MGen Rimando Jr, said.

Each MB will be entitled to receive an Immediate Assistance, Reintegration Assistance and Remuneration for the Firearm surrendered under the Enhanced

Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP). "We will assist and support those who wish to surrender, and to those who still wish to fight the government, we will use all our resources to bring them into justice," MGen Rimando Jr, added.

The MBs and CNT supporters also held their oath of allegiance to the government and denounce their former groups in front of their families, friends and local elected officials during the short program.

In line with the 5ID program of reaching the people in the countryside, 54IB launched the Peace Caravan supported by the Local Government Unit of Asipulo, Seventh Day Adventist Hospital Inc., Philippine Red Cross, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources – Ifugao, Bureau of Fire Protection, Ifugao Police Provincial Office, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office – Ifugao and Department of Public Works and Highways. The group conducted medical and dental outreach program, information drive, distribution of school supplies and gift giving (school supplies) to the students in the area.

In another activity, a peace rally was conducted in Brgy Aguid, Sagada, Mt Province on the same day facilitated by the Charlie Coy of the 54IB. The local folks held their activities in support to the program of the government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in their locality.

The said peace rally was attended by the local residents, tribal elders, youths, local officials, police and soldiers from the 54th Infantry Battalion. The attendees were holding placards declaring that the people of Sagada are peace loving people.

An oath of allegiance to the republic was also done by the two CNT supporters in front of their tribal leaders and elders.

Prior to the peace rally, the 54IB with the assistance of the 1st AFP (Talon) General Hospital, conducted free medical and dental consultation to the locals, distribution of school supplies, free haircut and poster making contest to the youth. **SDPAO / MCAG**

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