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# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**31 July 2018**

**Tuesday**



*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

31 JULY 2018

Weather Forecast- <a href="http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast">http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast</a>		
Page Nr.	Title	Source
<b>NATIONAL NEWS</b>		
1-2	Surrender, PNP tells 4 militant leaders	PDI-A1
3-4	Fariñ as out; Suarez keeps minority post	P Star-1
<b>AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS</b>		
5	Navy studying how 4 patrol boats donated by China will fit in its program	PDI-A6
6	PH gets 4 new patrol boats, 30 grenade launchers from China	M Bulletin-1
7	China donates 4 patrol boats	Tempo-2
8	Duterte okays AFP's submarine program	M Bulletin-1
9	IED blast	M Bulletin-10
10-11	Senators eye reducing universal charge in power	M Bulletin-2
12	Submarines soon	D tribune-12
13	Submarine program OK'd	Tempo-2
14	NPA rebel tagged in killings falls	P Star-13
15	Police say food meant for NPA Guerrillas seized in Bukidnon village	PDI-A2
16	NPA food cache seized	M Bulletin-10
17	Cop survives NPA ambush in Masbate	M Bulletin-6
18	PNP chief orders hunt for leftists leaders	Malaya-B1
19	Wanted na NPA member, nakorner	Balita-4
20	House, Senate, cabinet satisfaction ratings down	PDI-A6
21	Palace: Bangsamoro Law not perfect, but not rushed	P Star-1
22	39 N. Cotabato brgy's ready to join plebiscite for new Bangsamoro entity	M bulletin-10
23	Door still open for BOL changes	D tribune-1
24	Palace open to amending new Bangsamoro law: Roque	Malaya-B2
25	BOL changes loom amid MNLF concerns	M Standard-A1
26	MILF woos back renegades	D Tribune-3
27	Dayalogo sa Abu Sayyaf, paraan ng pagpapasuko	Balita-2
<b>EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY</b>		
28	We need a Philippine version of federalism	P Star-11
29	The Patriots: Lorenzana and Del Rosario	PDI-A10
30	Duterte appeals to other Moro groups	M Bulletin-8
31	Plebiscite on Bangsamoro Organic Law	M Times-A4
32-33	The demise of the Quad?	M Times-A6
34-35	Speculation	M Standard-A4
36-37	Not on the same page	D tribune-4
38-39	Too early to rejoice	D tribune-4
40-41	Realizing the Bangsamoro dream	D tribune-5

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

42-43	Washington beckons	Malaya-B4
44	Huwag makiusap sa Sayyaf!	Ngayon-4
45	Duterte appeals to other Moro groups	Tempo-6
46	Apela ni Duterte sa iba pang grupo ng mga Moro	Balita-6
<b>ONLINE NEWS</b>		
47	PH Air Force jets join interoperability exercise in Palawan	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
48	Police seize food meant for NPA guerrillas in Bukidnon village	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
49	Navy studying how 4 boats from China will fit in its program	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
50	BIFF blamed for roadside bomb blast in Maguindanao	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>
51	Army deploys newly-activated battalion to Zamboanga Peninsula	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>



# SURRENDER, PNP TELLS 4 MILITANT LEADERS

National Police chief Albayalde asks former party-list lawmakers Ocampo, Casiño, Maza and Mariano to turn themselves in. But their lawyer says her clients will face what she describes as trumped-up murder charges.

By Jaymee T. Gamil  
@JGamilINQ

Surrender instead of waiting to be arrested.

The Philippine National Police chief made the appeal to former party-list lawmakers—including National Anti-Poverty Commission chief Liza Maza—who have been issued

arrest warrants by a Nueva Ecija court in connection with a multiple murder case.

At a press conference on Monday in Camp Crame, PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde said the police were "duty-bound" and "constitutionally mandated" to implement the arrest order issued last week by the Palayan City Regional Trial

Court Branch 40.

The warrants were issued for former Bayan Muna Representatives Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño, former Gabriela Representative Maza, former Agrarian Reform Secretary and ex-Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano, Vicente Cayetano, Delfin Pimentel and Emeterio Atalan.

While the PNP had already sent out arresting teams to serve the warrants, Albayalde said, "I am also appealing to these individuals to just turn themselves in and to submit themselves to judicial processes."

The PNP chief said he hoped the subjects of the warrants would send surrender feelers

within the week.

The warrants arose from a multiple murder case the Nueva Ecija police filed in 2006 during the administration of then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The PNP, acting on complaints by widows of the victims and the testimony of an alleged "coconspirator" in the crime, accused 19 people, including the

militant leaders, of having a hand in the deaths of Carlito Bayudang, Jimmy Peralta and Danilo Felipe.

Bayudang, Peralta and Felipe were killed allegedly because they were supporters of Akbayan, a rival party-list group.

The Supreme Court ordered the Palayan court in 2017 to continue hearing the case. **A2**

## FROM A1

setting aside orders issued by the lower court in 2008 remanding the case to the Nueva Ecija prosecutor's office for preliminary investigation.

As Albayalde held the press conference, groups belonging to Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) staged a rally just outside Camp Crame, calling for the dropping of charges against the militant leaders.

Bayan said the charges were fabricated and baseless.

"Now, Regional Trial Court Judge [Evelyn Turla] found probable cause, when earlier she could not. These are definitely unusual circumstances," the group said in a statement.

### 'Unfair'

In a statement, the legal counsel of the former party-list representatives on Monday described as "unfair" Albayalde's encouragement for "the innocent to surrender."

"The warrant stems from a clearly trumped-up charge ini-

tiated 12 years ago by the PNP, the military and the Inter-Agency Legal Action Group, and was part of the legal offensive policy of the Arroyo administration

against progressive leaders of mass organizations," said Rachel Pastores of the Public Interest Law Center.

Pastores noted that the "al-

leged witnesses in the case have long been found by different tribunals to have lied about the facts in this case. They were even adjudged liable for dam-

ages... for besmirching [Ocampo's] reputation."

"Our clients are not in hiding, but considering the climate of impunity, they are taking the

necessary precautions while they weigh all options to ensure their safety and to protect their rights," she said.

Pastores gave assurance that the leaders would face the charges against them, adding that they had filed a motion for reconsideration in the Palayan court and had asked the court to dismiss the charges against them.

### Political harassment

Asked about allegations that the case was revived as part of political harassment arising from Arroyo's rise to power as Speaker, Albayalde said: "This is a court order. All we will do is follow [it], as part of our mandate to serve warrants of arrest. We have no hold over what happened before."

On Monday, the Communist Party of the Philippines said the revival of the charges against the militant leaders "is a portent of more general crackdown following successive arrests and detention of activists and human rights workers across the country." —WITH REPORTS FROM FRINSTON LIM AND JULIA ORNE-DO INQ

# Fariñas out; Suarez keeps minority post

## Andaya new majority leader; 3 groups unite as opposition

By DELON PORCALLA

The first congressman to sign the petition to install Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as Speaker is still the minority leader.

In a bizarre turn of events at the House of Representatives, lawmakers yesterday voted in plenary to keep Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez as minority leader despite his clear alliance with the chamber's leadership.

Suarez, a vocal ally of Arroyo, was chosen over at least two other contenders for the post—Deputy Speaker Romero Quimbo of the Liberal Party (LP) and former majority leader Ilo-

cos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas.

A former Arroyo Cabinet official, Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. was elected majority leader replacing Fariñas. Andaya was budget chief under the Arroyo administration.

The leadership ruckus in the House began on the day President Duterte delivered his State of the Nation Address (SONA) when more

Turn to Page 6

## Fariñas From Page 1

than 180 lawmakers signed a petition calling for the ouster of Davao del Norte Rep. Pantaleon Alvarez as speaker and installing Arroyo as his replacement.

The development saw former political foes agreeing to coalesce to form the minority group.

The seven-member Makabayan bloc and the LP of former president Benigno Aquino III decided to join forces to represent the House opposition.

The names of the left-wing lawmakers were included in the list of 22 that Quimbo wanted Arroyo to recognize as minority members. Quimbo made the request in a letter to Arroyo.

The LP faction and members of the so-called "Magnificent 7" had pushed for the removal of Suarez as minority leader.

"The duly constituted and organized minority is looking forward to working with you towards a fruitful and meaningful Third Regular Session," Marikina Rep. Quimbo wrote Arroyo in his two-page letter, referring to the end of 17th Congress, or until June 2019.

Suarez had vowed not to relinquish his post, saying there had been "no vacancy" in the

position of minority leader, as his nomination in 2016 had in fact been upheld by the Supreme Court, in effect rejecting Ifugao Rep. Teddy Baguilat's bid to take his position.

The militant lawmakers who joined Quimbo's mostly LP bloc were Reps. Isagani Zarate of Bayan Muna, Antonio Tinio and France Castro of ACT Teachers, Emmi de Jesus and Arlene Brosas of Gabriela, Ariel Casilao of Anakpawis and Sarah Jane Elago of Kabataan.

The remaining six in the so-called Magnificent 7, which is led by its titular head Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, are Reps. Baguilat, Raul Daza of northern Samar, Edgar Erice of Caloocan, Gary Alejano of party-list Magdalo and Tom Villarin of party-list Akbayan.

Meanwhile, the LP minority faction is composed of Quimbo, Francis Gerald Abaya of Cavite, Jorge Banal and Kit Belmonte both of Quezon City, Gabriel Bordado of Camarines Sur, Jocelyn Limkaichong of Negros Oriental and Josephine Ramirez-Sato of Occidental Mindoro.

The lone legislator from the Nationalist People's Coalition of billionaire Danding

Cojuangco is Pangasinan Rep. Christopher de Venecia, son of former speaker Jose de Venecia.

De Venecia had a falling out with Arroyo over the botched \$329-million national broadband network deal with Chinese firm ZTE.

### 'Respect decision'

Meanwhile, Malacañang yesterday urged Aquino to respect the leadership change at the House of Representatives after the former chief executive questioned Arroyo's ascension to the speakership as well as her ability to perform her task effectively, considering the little time left before the end of the 17th Congress.

Aquino, whose administration filed corruption charges against Arroyo, his predecessor, has expressed doubts on the Speaker's effectiveness as House members would be busy with their reelection bids.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque, a former party-list representative, said the decision of the House members to elect a new Speaker should just be respected.

"I really cannot comment on that because I have ceased to become a member of the House, and that was the decision made by the House. The former president was also a

former member of the House. We are both non-congressmen," Roque said at a press briefing.

"The sitting congressmen have spoken. Let us just respect the decision of the lawmakers," he added.

Arroyo, who is serving her last term as representative of Pampanga's second district, was elected Speaker last July 23, replacing Alvarez.

The sudden change in leadership, which some sectors have described as a "coup," happened hours before President Duterte was to deliver his SONA.

Roque insisted that Duterte had nothing to do with the leadership change at the House.

"No congressman can ever attest to that fact," the presidential spokesman said, referring to allegations that Arroyo's election as Speaker had the blessing of the President.

"I am in contact with the President, and I can assure you that he did not take any steps to influence, either way, the choice of leadership in the House."

Duterte has expressed hopes that there would be positive changes under the leadership of Arroyo, who is an economist.

- With Alexis Romero

PART OF \$14-M MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM BEIJING

# NAVY STUDYING HOW 4 PATROL BOATS DONATED BY CHINA WILL FIT IN ITS PROGRAM

By Jeannette I. Andrade  
@jiandradeINQ

The Philippine Navy is assessing how to integrate four patrol boats it received from China last week.

Besides the 12-meter patrol boats, China also gave the Philippine Navy 200 grenade launchers and ammunition.

The donation was part of a \$14-million military assistance from China.

It followed the provision last year of about 6,000 assault ri-

fles and hundreds of sniper rifles and included small arms and ammunition, said Cmdr. Jonathan Zata, spokesperson for the Navy.

### Brand-new equipment

"They are brand-new equipment," Zata told reporters on Monday, adding the Navy was assessing how to integrate the material and provide long-term logistical support.

The Chinese rifles went to the Philippine National Police, helping to fill a shortfall after

US lawmakers blocked the sale of about 26,000 M4 rifles to the police in 2016.

The freeze on the sale came amid concerns about the United States arming a police force accused of widespread human rights abuses in President Duterte's bloody war on drugs, in which thousands of suspects had been killed.

Zata said 25 sailors went through weeklong training in operating the patrol boats.

The boats are equipped with machine guns that fire the

heavy 7.62-mm ammunition.

Arsenio Andolong, spokesperson for the Department of National Defense, said the equipment turned over to the Navy were the third and last batch of the military assistance from China.

### Fight vs drugs, terrorism

Andolong said the grant was initially awarded to the Philippines by China in December 2016 in support of the government's war on narcotics and terrorism.

He said most of the items covered by the grant were identified by the major services.

China's donation is part of a new wave of diplomacy to engage a country with which Beijing has a bitter history of territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

China's donations so far remain small compared with arms transfers from the United States, a defense treaty ally of the Philippines, since the 1950s.

Washington has in the past

five years provided Manila \$282 million of military aid, including drones, ships, surveillance planes and assault rifles.

The United States and the Philippines have for decades held joint military exercises and the programs remain intact despite repeated threats last year by Mr. Duterte to cancel them and abrogate bilateral defense pacts because of US expressions of concern over the killings in his war on drugs.

WITH A REPORT FROM REUTERS INQ

5



## PH gets 4 new patrol boats, 30 grenade launchers from China

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The Philippine Navy (PN) said that China has recently donated four patrol boats to help the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in its modernization efforts.

In a statement, Navy spokesman

Commodore Jonathan Zata said that the four units of patrol boats came with 30 units of Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) Launcher (40MM) with corresponding ammunition.

The equipment was sent during the third week of this month.

Zata said the equipments ▶6

## PH gets 4 new...

◀1

provided by China are brand new and are currently being assessed as to how these can be integrated within the organization and supported in the long term in terms of logistics.

"Likewise we have assigned personnel to train on its operation and maintenance," Zata said.

Department of National Defense (DND) Spokesman Arsenio Andolong said the assets are part of China's US\$-14 million grant to the Philippines.

"It is (also) a manifestation of the warming relations between our two countries," he said.

Andolong said the acquisition of the military equipment from China is in keeping with President Duterte's independent foreign policy.

"We are acquiring equipment from various sources which can provide us with the hardware we need to achieve the credible defense posture that we are pursuing," Andolong said.

President Duterte earlier said that he was inclined to seek military assistance from China rather than the United States if a full-blown war against terrorists erupts in Mindanao.

The President said he could rely

on China's help since it is closer to the Philippines.

Duterte recalled that the government recently tried to purchase weapons from the US but the sale was halted due to opposition by some lawmakers. "The President and Congress seem to be in parity, not co-equal. They are really in parity of powers," he said.

China, on the other hand, provides weapons to the Philippines for free amid improving ties between the two nations.

China previously offered more than P500 million worth of military equipment to also augment the Philippine arsenal in battling Islamic State-linked militants.

The donation follows the provision last year by China of about 6,000 assault rifles and hundreds of sniper rifles.

The Chinese rifles went to the Philippine National Police (PNP), helping to fill a shortfall after US legislators blocked the sale of about 26,000 M4 rifles to the police in 2016.

China's donation is part of a new wave of diplomacy to engage a country with which Beijing has a bitter history of territorial disputes in the South China Sea. (With Reuters)



## China donates 4 patrol boats

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2

## Duterte okays AFP's submarine program

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

President Duterte has given the go signal for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to have its own submarine program, the Department of National Defense (DND) said yesterday.

DND spokesman Director Arsenio Andolong said in an interview that the

submarine acquisition program is part of the wishlist of the AFP and now the Chief Executive has given his approval for the AFP to push through with it.

"Well, the proposed submarine program at least was given a go by the President. The Philippine Navy has begun studying its doctrines and planning its procurement," Andolong said. ▶6

## Duterte okays AFP's...

◀1

"This has never been done before and I think that is significant because it shows the political will of our President. He wants to push our Armed Forces to the forefront, as equal with our neighbors," he added.

Some of our neighbors in the ASEAN region who have their own submarines are Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, Andolong said.

Andolong said that barring any unforeseen circumstances, the Philippine Navy will be able to finish the contract within President Duterte's term. But if the submarine program is not realized during Duterte's term, the important thing is that it has set a direction for the future, he said.

"The President likes the idea of us procuring our own submarines. Sa kanya, kapag inaprubahan niya kami na hahanap ng paraan kung paano ito

gagawin (if he approves it, we will be the ones who will find a way to do it)," Andolong said.

"Ngayon hindi sure, malamang hindi pa sya ma (perfect) sa termino ni President Duterte. But at least the Navy has begun studies of it kasi inaprubahan niya ang wish list. Pero pag-uusapan pa kung papaano pong pondohan, saan kukuha, at anong klase (It's not sure, and likely it won't be perfected during the President's term. But we shall discuss how to finance it, where to procure it, and what type of submarine)," he said.

Andolong said the Philippine Navy could acquire an attack submarine, fast attack submarine, ballistic missile submarine or Boomers, and guided missile submarine. He said there is also submarine which has surveillance equipment on it.

• **IED blast**

DAVAO CITY - Two soldiers from the Charlie Company of the Third Infantry Battalion (3rd IB) were wounded after an improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated as the military truck they were riding in was travelling along a road in Barangay Tambobong here, Saturday. Wounded were the vehicle's driver, Pfc. Jejomar Judan and Sgt. Enrique Genon. The New People's Army has claimed responsibility for the incident, and insisted that the explosives were command detonated. (Yas D. Ocampo)

31

MARINA JULIETA

2

# Senators eye reducing universal charge in power

## Taxpayers, consumers saddled with PSALM's multi-billion debts

By MARIO E. CASAYURAN

The Senate Committee on Energy is studying the possibility of using the P204-billion Malampaya fund to reduce the universal charge (UC) paid by end-consumers on their monthly electricity bills which could result in household savings as high as P2,033.76 annually.

The committee chaired by Sen. Sherwin T. Gatchalian took up in its public hearing yesterday Senate Bill 924 authored by Senate President Pro-Tempore Ralph G. Recto which proposes to allocate the net national government share from the Malampaya Natural Gas Project for the payment of the stranded contract costs (SCCs) and stranded debts (SDs) of the National Power Corporation (Napocor).

SCCs and SDs are components used to compute the UC imposed on consumers under the Energy EPIRA Law (RA 9136).

A universal charge is what is collected from consumers to pay for SCCs and SDs.

According to data presented by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM), applying the remaining P204 billion of the Malampaya Fund would avoid an increase of P0.8474 per kilowatt hour (kWh) in retail power rates. This would result in annual savings of P2,033.76 for an average household consuming 200 kWh per month.

"These savings are enough for an underprivileged household to buy two additional sacks of rice every year," Gatchalian said.

### PSALM debt on taxpayers

Gatchalian explained that after the corporate life of PSALM expires in 2016, its debt would be absorbed by taxpayers. PSALM's current debt is P455 billion.

Gas from the Malampaya west of Palawan province will begin to dwindle in 2024.

He expressed support for the measure in principle, subject to further study on precisely how much of the remaining Malampaya funds should be applied for the purpose.

Gatchalian also took to task once more the embattled Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) for several delays in the approval of SCC and SD rate applications.

### P34 B passed to consumers

According to PSALM, the various delays have resulted in an additional P34.78 billion of costs to be shouldered by consumers, equivalent to a power rate increase of P0.1973 per kWh.

Gatchalian then told ERC representatives at the hearing: "After all of your controversies, dadagdagan niyo pa si Juan Dela Cruz ng 34 billion pesos in costs dahil sa delay. This is absolutely unacceptable. Anong solusyon ang gagawin ninyo?" (You still add P34 billion to the shoulders of the consumers all because of your delays? What are your solutions?).

Lawyer Krishna Buela of the ERC responded that the regulatory agency is currently conducting a review of its procedures and process flows to improve their work.

Gatchalian replied: "I'm telling you that there's a problem in your procedures. It's a 34-billion peso problem to

be shouldered by the Filipino people.”

**Need for transparency**

After the hearing, the senator reiterated the need to pass the ERC Governance Act (Senate Bill No. 1490) to foster transparency and accountability in the deliberations and decisions of the country's independent power sector regulator.

The Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power project is one of the largest and most significant industrial endeavors in Philippine history as it paved the

way for the discovery of an alternative and indigenous source of energy as it reduced the country's dependence on imported fuel for the bulk of its domestic and industrial power requirement.

The Bureau of Treasury reported that the Malampaya fund posted a total revenue collection of ₱224.34 billion since 2002 and an outstanding balance of ₱182.29 billion as of June 22, 2016.

Presidential Decree 910 has mandated that the government share from

service contracts and agreements such as Malampaya Fund shall be used to finance energy resource development and exploration programs and projects as may be directed by the President.

“However, over the years, the annual revenue inflow from Malampaya was used to fund non-energy related programs such as rice sufficiency programs, relief operations and AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) Modernization Fund,” Recto explained. ]

# Submarines soon

It is now possible for the country to own submarines, according to the Department of Defense Spokesman Arsenio Andolong.

A budget for the acquisition of submarines is included in Horizon Two of the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program.

"The Navy is now studying the doctrines and planning its procurement. This has never been done before and I think that is significant," Andolong said in the interview on Monday.

Earlier, the purchase of diesel-electric submarines was scheduled for Horizon Three, which will start from

2023 to 2028.

According to Andolong, however, Navy flag-officer-in-command Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad was the one who pushed to include it in Horizon Two, which will start from 2018 to 2022.

Empedrad also mentioned that the Philippine Navy already created a Submarine Group, which is now sending personnel for the study and proper training on submarine operations. This will span seven to 10 years.

Horizon One, which covered 2013 to 2017, resulted in the purchase of three Del Pilar class frigates, 12 FA-50PH light-lift interim fighters and two strategic sealifts. **KMB**



## Submarine program OK'd

The Department of National Defense (DND) Monday said that President Duterte has given the go signal for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to have its own submarine program.

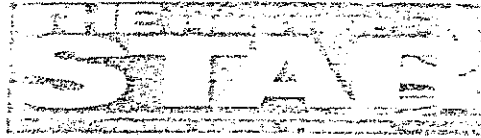
In an interview, DND spokesman Director Arsenio Andolong said the submarine acquisition is part of the wishlist of the AFP and no less than the Chief Executive has given

his blessing for the AFP to push through with it.

Andolong said the Philippine Navy is currently undergoing the study for doctrine and research.

"Well, the proposed submarine program at least was given a go by the president. The Philippine Navy has begun studying its doctrines and planning its procurement," Andolong said. **(Francis Wakefield)**





### **NPA rebel tagged in killings falls**

A New People's Army (NPA) rebel with a P500,000 bounty on his head was arrested in Barangay Pinugay, Baras, Rizal, on Sunday.

Raul Razo, alias Jade, was arrested based on a warrant issued by a local court in 2003, Senior Superintendent Kirby John Kraft, Laguna police director, said.

Razo was also tagged in the killing of Laguna board member Danny Yang in 2009 and kidnap-slay of Private First Class Eriberto Eclaveo in 2007.

Police said Razo was ranked second on the list of most wanted persons in Southern Tagalog.

In Baguio City, two members of the Kilusang Larangang Gerilya of the Ilocos-Cordillera Regional Committee were arrested also on Saturday.

In Masbate City, Police Officer 3 Rey Ragasa survived an ambush staged by NPA rebels in Barangay Batuan.

Ragasa was driving his motorcycle on his way to the Milagros police office when he was waylaid at about 9:24 a.m., according to a report received by Senior Inspector Malou Calubaquib, Bicol police spokesperson.

- Non Alquitran, Ed Amoroso, Michael Punongbayan, Celso Amo, Artemio Dumlao

CIVILIAN TIP

## POLICE SAY FOOD MEANT FOR NPA GUERRILLAS SEIZED IN BUKIDNON VILLAGE

ILIGAN CITY—Police said they intercepted a stock of food meant for communist rebels in a village in Talakag town, Bukidnon province, early on Sunday.

Officials said members of the Philippine National Police

Regional Mobile Force saw rebels burying a stock of rice, sugar, salt and mung beans, while they were on patrol in the area.

At least 40 containers were seized and believed to be in-

tended for a New People's Army (NPA) camp, said Senior Insp. Paul Cubil, head of the 1004th Mobile Company of the PNP's mobile force.

Cubil said police were tipped off about the rebel food

stock "which we believe came from NPA extortion activities."


"This only shows the growing distrust of the community" against rebels, Cubil said.

Chief Supt. Timoteo Pacleb,

regional PNP director, said the case showed the key role that civilians play in the counterinsurgency campaign. *AP*

"The support of the community is indispensable," Pacleb said. —DIVINA M. SUSON INQ

**NPA food cache seized**

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY - A food cache believed to be intended for a New People's Army (NPA) camp was seized by elements of the Northern Mindanao Regional Mobile Force patrolling the hinterland of Bukidnon, early Sunday morning, according to Police Regional Office 10 (PRO10) spokesperson Supt. Surki Sereñas. Sereñas said about 40 containers filled with rice, sugar, salt and mongo beans were recovered buried on the ground in Sitio Larapan, Barangay Dominorog, Talakag, Bukidnon, by elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) mobile force led by Sr. Insp. Zean Paul Cubil, company commander of 1004th Mobile Company based in Barangay Dominorog, Talakag, Bukidnon. "We truly appreciate the help and cooperation of concerned individuals who tipped us off about this NPA food cache which we believe have come from NPA extortion activities," Cubil said. (Camcer Ordoñez Imam) 

# Cop survives NPA ambush in Masbate

By NIÑO N. LUCES

CAMP OLA, Albay - A police officer assigned to the Milagros Municipal Police Station (MPS) narrowly escaped an ambush by suspected communist guerrillas in Barangay Batuan, Masbate City yesterday morning.

Chief Inspector Malu Calubaquib, spokesperson of Police Regional Office 5 (PRO5), identified the victim as Police Officer 3 Rey A. Ragasa, a resident of Barangay B. Titong, Masbate City.

Initial investigation revealed that while the victim was riding his motorcycle on his way to work, an undetermined number of suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels fired at him.

Calubaquib said the victim did suffer any injury but his motorcycle was hit by bullets.

## Wanted NPA falls

Meanwhile in Rizal province, joint police operatives arrested a suspected NPA rebel facing a murder case in Barangay Pinugay in Baras.

Chief Supt. Edward Carranza, Police Regional Office 4-A director, identified the arrested as Raul Razo, alias "Ka Jade," who carries a P.5-million reward for his arrest.

## 4 Reds surrender

Meanwhile, two more members of the NPA have surrendered to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) over the weekend in Tarlac City.

Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, AFP-Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) spokesman, identified the surrenderers as alias "Bravo," who operated in Isabela; and alias "Victor," who belonged to the NPA operating in Zambales.

Last Thursday, two more NPA rebels from Mountain Province surrendered to authorities after a series of negotiations.

The surrenderers, whose true names were undisclosed for safety reasons, were both members of the Kilusang Larangang Gerilya (KLG) "AMPIS" of Ilocos-Cordillera Regional Committee (ICRC).

One of them was the Squad Leader (SL) of the said NPA unit, while the other was a member of the same squad. (With a report from Danny J. Estacio, Franco G. Regala, Francis T. Wakefield)

## PNP chief orders hunt for leftist leaders

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

PNP CHIEF Oscar Albayalde yesterday ordered his men to hunt down four former leftist party-list representatives and three others who have been issued warrants of arrest by a local court for the killing of farmers in 2006.

Subject of the arrest warrants issued on July 11 by Judge Evelyn Turla, of Palayan City Regional Trial Court Branch 40, were communist leaders Liza Maza, Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño, Rafael Mariano.

Also with arrest warrants, Albayalde said, were Vicente Cayetano, Delfin Pimentel, and Emetetio Antalan.

Maza, of the party-list group Gabriela, is chair of the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

Ocampo and Casiño belong to the Leftist Bayan group.

Mariano, of the Anakpawis party-list group, was named by President Duterte as agrarian reform secretary but was rejected by the Commission on Appointments.

The seven are accused in the killing of three supporters of the

See PNP > Page B6

## PNP

Akbayan party-list group -- Carlito Bayudang, Jimmy Peralta, and Danny Belipe -- in Nueva Ecija in 2001 and 2004.

Their lawyer has said the murder charges, which were filed in 2006, were dismissed by the Guimba, Nueva Ecija court in 2008.

Albayalde, in ordering the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group to form tracker teams, said none of the accused sent surrender feelers.

"However, I am also appealing to these individuals to just turn themselves in and to submit

themselves to judicial processes," he said.

President Duterte, meanwhile likened communist rebels to mindless "robots" following a leader with a "bankrupt mind."

The President, during the destruction of some P297.5 million worth of smuggled luxury cars and motorcycles in Cagayan province, urged members of the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, to surrender. He also asked the public not to support the communists who, he said, are scaring away investors.

Duterte said communist rebels

who want to surrender need only to talk with anyone in government, even police or military. He again promised to provide housing and financial assistance to those who would opt to surrender.

Duterte says the NPA rebels are "fighting for a bankrupt mind," like robots who do not question whatever orders are given to them.

"What do you really want? You cannot even occupy a barangay or a sitio for 24 hours. Then you're able to shoot somebody, kill civilians, kill soldiers for nothing, for nothing, not even an ideology... You are fighting for a bankrupt mind... Para kayong robot. Kung

among inuutos," he said.

The President last June ordered the suspension of formal talks between government and the CPP-NPA-National Democratic Front of the Philippines, pending a review of all agreements forged by the two sides.

Government is also asking NPA leaders to hold talks with government.

A number of communist leaders are based abroad, including CPP founder and NDFP chief political consultant Jose Maria Sison who has been on self-exile in the Netherlands since the late 80s. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor*

## Wanted na NPA member, nakorner

Isang lalaki na umano'y kaanib ng Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) ang nadakip ng mga pulis sa Oplan Saliksik sa Baras, Rizal, nitong Linggo ng gabi.

Batay sa ulat ng Rizal Police Provincial Office, dakong 7:30 ng gabi nang maaresto si Raul Razo, alyas "Ka Jade", 47, ikalawang most wanted sa Police Regional Office (PRO)-4, at umano'y miyembro ng CPP-NPA-NDF.

Nabatid na nagsasagawa

umano ng Oplan Saliksik, o paghahanap ng mga most wanted persons; ang mga awtoridad nang madakip ang suspek sa bahay nito sa South Ville 9, Barangay Pinugay sa Baras, sa bisa ng warrant of arrest na inisyu ni Judge Florencio S. Arellano, ng Sta. Cruz, Laguna Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 28.

Si Razo ay akusado sa murder at may P500,000 patong sa ulo.

Kasalukuyan siyang nakadetina sa Regional Mobile Force Battalion-4A headquarters.

**Mary Ann Santiago**

# House, Senate, Cabinet satisfaction ratings down

The push for a no-election (No-el) scenario in 2019 likely contributed to the decline in public satisfaction with the House of Representatives, at least two lawmakers said on Monday.

The House approval of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act, which has been blamed for the surge in prices of basic goods, and high cost of living and unemployment rate, also contributed to the drop in the ratings of the chamber, according to a party-list lawmaker.

For Senate President Vicente Sotto III, uncertainty about the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), a landmark law creating a new autonomous region for Muslims in Mindanao, may have contributed to the slight decline in the Senate's public satisfaction rating.

Public satisfaction with the House, Senate and President Duterte's Cabinet fell in June, according to results of a nationwide survey that Social Weather Stations (SWS) conducted in June.

### Biggest decline

The House saw the biggest decline in public satisfaction.

Its net satisfaction fell 10 points to a "moderate" +25 (45 percent satisfied and 20 percent dissatisfied) from a "good" +35 in March.

The Senate's net satisfaction rating stayed "good" despite a decline of 4 points to +41

## NET SATISFACTION RATINGS

March and June 2018

	June '18	March '18
Senate	+41	+45
House of Representatives	+25	+35
Supreme Court	+19	+20
Cabinet	+25	+28

SOURCE: Social Weather Stations

(57 percent satisfied and 17 percent dissatisfied) from +45 in March.

Mr. Duterte's Cabinet's net satisfaction rating in June stayed "moderate" +25 (43 percent satisfied, 18 percent dissatisfied) from +28 in March.

The noncommissioned survey used face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults nationwide.

### Opposition to No-el

Capiz Rep. Fredenil Castro, the interim majority leader, said the No-el scenario could have led to the 10-point drop in public satisfaction with the chamber.

"No matter where you look, there was opposition to it," Castro said in a phone interview.

Then Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez had floated the scenario of postponing the midterm elections purportedly to give lawmakers more time to study the proposed changes to the Constitution to shift to a federal government.

Akbayan Rep. Tom Villarín

also blamed the No-el scenario for the House's declining ratings, along with the push for federalism and the approval of the TRAIN law.

"The vast majority of the poor, both urban and rural, is rejecting the House for such antipoor policies. While it did not move in (Metro Manila) due to the massive unconditional cash transfers to temper inflation, the rating is still comparably low across all regions," Villarín said in a statement.

The chamber's role in political issues, such as the postponement of the 2019 elections and the campaign for federalism, did not help either, he said.

"The push for No-el and federalism also contributed to the decline which might translate into a rejection by the electorate of incumbents [in 2019]," Villarín said.

### Uncertainty about BOL

Given the margin of error of plus-minus 3 percentage points, the decline in public

satisfaction with the Senate is not statistically significant.

Even so, Sotto said on Monday that the survey results could be attributed to uncertainty about the BOL, which was signed by Mr. Duterte last week.

"A lot of people were waiting that. So it took us some time, and then there were pending issues in the Senate that we were not able to immediately address," Sotto told reporters.

But the SWS survey was conducted from June 27 to 30, almost a month after the Senate terminated plenary debates on BOL (then known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law).

The chamber passed the measure on third reading on May 30. The bicameral conference committee began reconciling the conflicting provisions in the Senate and the House versions on July 9—after the survey period.

Sotto became the Senate President on May 21, replacing Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III.

Malacañang told the media the Cabinet would strive to do better following a drop in the Cabinet's net satisfaction rating in June.

"We will strive to improve the delivery of services," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said at a press briefing on Monday.

—REPORTS FROM LEILA B. SALAVERRIA, DJ YAP, JULIE M. AURELIO AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ

## Palace: Bangsamoro Law not perfect, but not rushed

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) is not perfect but its passage was not rushed, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque could not say which provisions of the BOL

would be reviewed, but expressed readiness to reach out to groups that have concerns over the measure.

Roque noted that people in Sulu were not in favor of including their province in the new Bangsamoro region.

"You know, nothing is per-

fect and of course the BOL as signed into law is a result of compromise. So all that the President was saying was, if you have specific complaints, we are open to discuss these complaints with the view of possibly amending further

Turn to Page 4

## Palace From Page 1

the law," Roque said in a press briefing. "It wasn't really rushed. It's been there. It has been pending. It took us almost a year to discuss the BOL; there's been

substantial consultations... the President even called members of the Congress and Senate - if I'm not mistaken - at least three times to the Palace," he added.

Last week, Duterte said he was open to modifying the BOL to respond to the concerns of some groups who are not satisfied with the measure. The BOL, which will create a new Bangsamoro region with enhanced autonomy, was signed into law last Thursday.

Roque said Duterte made the statement to assure the people in Mindanao that he wants everyone to be involved in peace efforts.

"Many people in Sulu were against it (BOL) just because traditionally, Sulu does not want to be

part of it (Bangsamoro). But I think, things have changed," he said.

"And I think the message of the President is he really wants to reach out to the people of Sulu and he wants lasting peace to include Sulu. He is willing to sit down with Sulu and talk about possible amendments."

Duterte has also expressed readiness to talk to Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chairman Nur Misuari, who has been critical of the government's peace deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The BOL will implement the 2014 peace agreement between the government and the MILF.

Duterte has promised Misuari to provide him autonomy if the MNLF leader asks for it.

"I think he's reaching out

specifically to Nur Misuari and he is willing to listen to Nur Misuari... to accommodate some of Misuari's wishes if it can be accommodated. But as of now, I think it's just really a strong message that if you are not happy with BOL, come talk to me," Roque said.

Amending the BOL requires legislative action but Roque believes the process won't take long.

Roque could not say whether there would be formal rites for the signing of BOL, noting that Duterte is not fond of ceremonies.

"I would personally want to see a ceremony and I would like to invite all the stakeholders... I think we deserve one," he said.

The President's top aide Christopher Go said the ceremonial signing of BOL would be held on Aug. 6 in Malacañang. - With Cecille Suerte Felipe



31

10

## 39 N. Cotabato brgys ready to join plebiscite for new Bangsamoro entity

By MALU CADELINA MANAR

KIDAPAWAN CITY - Thirty-nine of the 543 barangays in North Cotabato are set to participate in the plebiscite to determine if their residents are willing to be included in the Bangsamoro in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), a political entity that would replace the 28-year old Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The Bangsamoro Organic Law or Republic Act 11054 created the BARMM.

Abdullah 'Dong' Cusain, head of the Media Affairs Committee for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) under the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), said these villages in the towns

of Pigcawayan, Midsayap, Aleosan, Pikit, Carmen, and Kabacan, all in North Cotabato voted "yes" in a 2001 plebiscite.

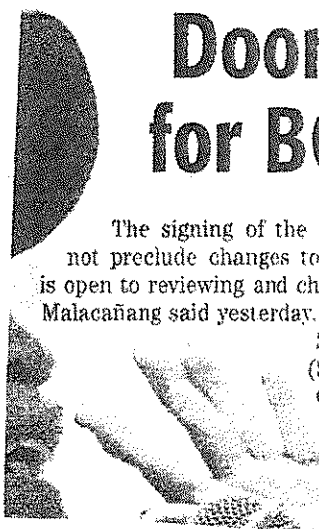
The ARMM was expanded to include areas, which initially rejected inclusion, through Republic Act 9054. In August 14, 2001, a special plebiscite was held and 39 barangays in North Cotabato wanted their areas included in the autonomous region.

However, Cusain said that a barangay that would want to join the new Bangsamoro region can still participate in the incoming plebiscite if at least 10 percent of their voting population would submit a petition to the concerned agency.

However, among the 39 villages, only few are contiguous. |o

# Door still open for BOL changes

The signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) does not preclude changes to it as President Rodrigo Duterte is open to reviewing and changing its contentious provisions, Malacañang said yesterday.



Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, meanwhile, said Mr. Duterte will hold a ceremonial signing of the BOL in Malacañang on 6 August.

Turn to page 2

# Door still open for BOL changes

From page 1

"I think the general sentiment of the President is if there are those who object, we're open to reviewing those specific provisions," Roque said.

Roque also welcomed the overwhelming favorable response of the international community to the BOL.

"Of course, we are one with the whole world in praying that the Bangsamoro Organic Law would pave the way for lasting peace in Mindanao," Roque said.

Mr. Duterte signed without further delay last 27 July the landmark legislation which is expected to bring the much desired peace in Mindanao.

Roque, for instance, noted Sulu did not previously welcome being part of the proposed Bangsamoro autonomous region. Roque, however, said "things have changed."

"During the President's visit to Sulu, there are many who are against the BOL just because

traditionally Sulu does not want to be part of it," Roque said.

### Unprecedented visits

"The President had four or five trips to Jolo, Sulu. I don't think any other President has made these trips to Sulu and I think the message of the President is that he really wanted to reach out to the people of Sulu to encourage them to work for lasting peace," Roque said.

Duterte was in Jolo, Sulu last Friday to visit fire victims as he vowed to provide the local government with financial aid and additional fire trucks.

Roque said the BOL might not be perfect but he said it was not "rushed."

"It wasn't really rushed. It's been there. It's been pending, it took us almost a year to discuss the BOL. There's been substantial consultations. I note that the President even called members of Congress and Senate at least three times to the Palace to discuss the measure," Roque said.

"Although, you know, nothing

is perfect and of course the BOL as signed in the law is a result of compromises. So all that the President was saying is that if you have specific complaints, we're open to discuss these complaints in the view of possibly amending it," he added.

Should there be revisions, it would have to require congressional action, Roque added.

"For now we have the BOL, so let's see whatever changes they may want," he added.

Mr. Duterte is also reaching out to Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chairman Nur Misuari and he is willing to accommodate some of Misuari's wishes, Roque said.

"As of now I think it's just really a strong message that if you're not happy with BOL, come talk to me," Roque said.

Roque added Duterte is also open to accepting surrenderers from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) noting that he would provide them with housing, capital, land and employment.

## Palace open to amending new Bangsamoro law: Roque

**PRESIDENTIAL** Spokesman Harry Roque yesterday said Malacañang is amenable to amending the recently-signed Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) to make it more acceptable to the Bangsamoro people and the public.

But Roque said the law should first be given a chance to be implemented and its impact assessed before amendments are proposed and considered.

"Nothing is perfect," Roque said when asked about President Duterte's statement last that he was open to the idea of introducing amendments to the BOL.

Roque said the government is open to discussing specific complaints that might arise against the new law, with the view of possibly amending it.

Critics have earlier warned

against 'rushing' the BOL in time for Duterte's third State of the Nation Address, saying this could cause more problems with the Bangsamoro people rather than address the decades-long peace and order problem in the southern region.

Roque denied the BOL was rushed.

"It (BOL) wasn't really rushed. It's been there. It has been pending. It took us almost a year to discuss the BOL, there have been substantial consultations. I note that, you know, the President even called members of the Congress and Senate, if I'm not mistaken, at least three times to the Palace... of course the BOL, as signed into law, is a result of a compromise," Roque said.

On Duterte's pronouncements about reaching out to Moro National Liberation

Front chairman Nur Misuari, Roque said the statement showed the President was ready to listen to Misuari's concerns about the Bangsamoro region and to "accommodate some of Nur Misuari's wishes if it can be accommodated."

He reiterated the President is serious about bringing peace and development in Mindanao and "he just wants to tell the public especially the Mindanaoans that 'if you are not happy with BOL, come talk to me'."

Duterte signed Republic Act No. 11054, which creates the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), into law last July 27.

A ceremonial signing of the law is set on August 6 in Malacañang.

— *Jocelyn Montemayor*

## BOL changes loom amid MNLF concerns

By Nat Mariano  
and Nash B. Maulana

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is willing to amend the recently passed Bangsamoro Organic Law to accommodate the concerns of Moro National Liberation Front founding chairman Nur Misuari, including a possible separate autonomous region, the Palace said Monday.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque

said the President is willing to sit down with leaders in Sulu to discuss possible amendments.

"The general sentiment of the President is if there are those who want to object because of specific provisions, we are open to reviewing the specific provisions," said Roque, adding that the President's several trips to Jolo, Sulu imply that he is serious in reaching out towards the people to provide them a lasting peace in Sulu. *Next page*

### BOL...

From A1

"He is willing to listen to Nur Misuari and accommodate some of his wishes if [they] can be accommodated," said Roque. "It's just really a strong message that if you are not happy with BOL, come to talk to me."

During his speech in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay, the President announced that he would like to talk with Misuari for a possible separate autonomous region for his group, noting that the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao was created through a peace pact 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," Duterte said, adding

he has three years to hack it.

On July 26, the President has signed into law the Republic Act No. 11054 or the BOL.

The BOL will abolish the ARMM and will create a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in its place. The BAR territorial jurisdiction includes the original ARMM provinces such as Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, and Sulu; six towns in Lanao del Norte; 39 barangays in North Cotabato; Cotabato City, and Isabela City in Basilan.

The Bangsamoro parliament, headed by an elected chief minister, will govern the new autonomous region.

The chief minister must be elected by 80 members or representatives. Forty of these representatives need to be party representatives, while the remaining half must be made up

of district representatives and sectoral representatives.

Non-Muslim indigenous people such as the Teduray, Lambangian, Dulangan Manobo, B'Laan, and Higaonon will also be given seats.

Under the BOL, a plebiscite must be held not earlier than 90 days and no later than 150 days after the law's effectivity. The President will then appoint 80 members of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority to help deliver a lasting peace in Mindanao.

Senator Francis Escudero said Monday the Palace is bound to submit to Congress any proposal to amend the new law.

"A copy of the proposal containing the amendments should be transmitted to the both houses of Congress—the Senate and the House," said Escudero, a member of the subcommittee on the Basic Bangsamoro Law.

25

# FOR MINDANAO PEACE

# MILF woos back renegades

By Elmer Navarro Manuel

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is keen on opening its doors to members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) if its splinter groups decide to return to its fold.

This comes after President Rodrigo Duterte signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) which was welcomed by MILF chairman Murad Ebrahim as both sides work for peace in Mindanao.

The BIFF is a breakaway group of the MILF led by the late Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato. The group, however, has since been broken into three factions: the *Karialan*, *Bungos* and *Abu Turaifie* groups.

Ebrahim earlier said that terrorists and extremist groups will be isolated with the new Bangsamoro law, a statement he made in a gathering of almost 100,000 MILF officials,

“The MILF has been trying to negotiate with the *Karialan* and *Bungos* factions to join and once again be a part of the organization.”

combatants and supporters in Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

“Anytime that they want to join, they can join,” Ebrahim said.

But the MILF leader clarified that the invitation is not extended to the group of Abu Turaifie, which was labeled by the Army’s 6th Infantry Division as an ISIS-inspired group in Central Mindanao.

“The MILF has been trying to negotiate with the *Karialan* and *Bungos* factions to join and once again be a part of the organization,” said Ebrahim. “They still want political solutions, but they do not believe in the government.”

“So, if there’s viable political solution in place, I think this can gradually win over these small groups,” he added.

The BIFF *Karialan* faction claimed it is in a “wait and see” mode watching developments following the new Bangsamoro law. It wants

to know if BOL will uphold the Shariah Law but its members vowed not to be a hindrance to the implementation of the law.

BIFF *Bungos* faction spokesperson Abu Missry Mama maintained its fight is far from over.

During the assembly, the MILF urged its members and supporters to stay united as they face new struggles when the new Bangsamoro government takes its place.

Meantime, Cotabato City can thrive even without partaking of a P80-billion annual grant under the proposed Bangsamoro region, its mayor said.

The city of nearly 300,000 people is unlikely to join the Bangsamoro. While Maguindanao province, where Cotabato is located, is should a plebiscite be held today, said Mayor Cynthia Guiani.

While Maguindanao province, where Cotabato is located, is part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the city is an independent component of the larger SOCCSKSARGEN region.

## Dayalogo sa Abu Sayyaf, paraan ng pagpapasuko

Inihayag ng Malacañang na ang pagnanais ni Pangulong Duterte na makipagdiyalogo sa Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ay isang paraan upang mahimok ang mga bandido na sumuko na lang sa gobyerno.

Ito ang sinabi kahapon ni Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque makaraang sabihin ni Duterte noong nakaraang linggo na handa siyang magtungo sa kampo ng Abu Sayyaf sa Sulu upang makipag-usapsa mga bandido.

Sa kanyang press briefing kahapon, sinabi ni Roque na gusto lang puntuhin ng Pangulo na handa itong tanggapin ang sinumang kasapi ng Abu Sayyaf

na nais sumuko sa pamahalaan, gaya ng ginawa ng ilang miyembro ng Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), at New People's Army (NPA).

"I think what he's saying is, in the same way he has been accepting surrenderees from the MILF, MNLF, and the NPA, he's willing to accept surrenderees from the ASG," ani Roque.

"So what he means is surrender and you would be given a new lease on life. That's as far how I understood that totality of what the President said on the basis of the transcripts," dagdag niya.

Aniya, ang nasabing apela ni Duterte ay hindi mairutlad sa porma na pakikipag-usap ng gobyerno sa Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

"Well, I think he's talking about the fact that we have, in fact, recognized ASG surrenderees lately. So it's really an enticement for the ASG to surrender," paglilinaw ni Roque.

Sa taya ni Joint Task Force Sulu (JTFS) Commander, Brig. Gen. Divine Pabayo, nasa 300 na lang ang miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf sa Sulu.

**Argyll Cyrus Geducos  
at Fer Taboy**

2

## SHOOTING STRAIGHT

BOBIT S. AVILA

### We need a Philippine version of federalism

Last Saturday, the Consultative Commission led by former Chief Justice Reynato Puno had a conference on federalism at the Mandau Sports Center. Former Cordova Mayor Adelino Sitoy called to ask me to be a reactor for that event, however I had to decline simply because I haven't yet read the draft constitution for a federal republic. Yes, I will make myself available when I have read the draft constitution. Meanwhile, a foreigner married to a Filipina wrote me in response to our column on the State of California last week.



"Dear Sir. The State of California is watched a lot in Asia because of the media. The reality is that California is no longer well thought of here in Texas and other US western states. California has become an overtaxed, high priced (with everything), and over regulated. It is a liberal haven with unemployment issues. Other US western states deal with California "immigrants" so to speak who move into the urban areas here in Texas. They bring unwanted tastes for government control of most activities and other California cultural matters. They are not particularly welcomed here.

The Philippines is similar in some ways to Texas in that both of us respect independence. However the changes are obvious. We both have a Spanish heritage, however we have moved to a different form of government. The Philippines retains some of the old ideas in government from Spain. This is apparent at all levels of government in the Philippines. From my perspective, you have a hybrid government structure with some Spanish and some US concepts in government. I concur with your view on dynasties in government. We had that to some extent here with the Bush and Clinton families.

There is a case for federalism in the Philippines but it must be a Filipino version that fits your culture. There remain issues in government that I observed when I was in Pagadian City:

1. Excessive bureaucracy in government. Too much redundancy.
2. Corruption in some areas.
3. Lethargic PNP - Most security seems to be done by private security nationwide.

4. Poorly equipped, questionably led, and ineffective ground combat operations by the Army. The individual Filipino Scout seems competent but it ends there. Officers and NCOs seem to be missing. Checkpoints in areas with insurgency are unmanned or not seriously controlled in Mindanao.

5. The Philippine Navy and Coast Guard are much too small for an island nation with a rich maritime tradition.

6. Philippine air assets in the military are tiny. This was obvious in Marawi. The lack of helicopters do not allow the Army or Marines to be mobile in dealing with insurgents. As a combat army officer we knew better through bitter experience in Vietnam.

7. Areas overlooked in the infrastructure are rapid maintenance and/or construction of highways. The Philippines needs limited access highways like the US Interstate System or the German Autobahn. Often in Mindanao, traffic moves at the speed of the slowest carabao or tricycle. As a result inter province commerce moves slowly and quite inefficiently. This impedes the Filipino economy significantly. My wife is a Filipina. I love the country but it is functioning well below its potential."

I don't know newly appointed Ombudsman Samuel Martires except that he was Pres. Rodrigo Duterte's first appointee as associate justice of the Supreme Court. So I totally agree with Rep. Lito Atienza that critics should give him some slack, after all he has a huge mission ahead of him. My impression of the new Ombudsman is that he is a fair-minded person who will uphold the law without bias or prejudice. And that's enough for me to support him. I just hope that he would concentrate on the cases that the former Ombudsman conveniently set aside.

I'm in Manila right now as guest of Cebu Pacific Air (CPA) for they are planning to show the media something, but they cannot yet tell me what it is. But they billeted me at the spanking new Savoy Hotel which is not far from the Belmont Hotel just across the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3. This P5-billion hotel development is within the 25-hectare Newport City in Pasay City, which is like a twin hotel of the already famous Belmont Hotel.

You can say that the Savoy Hotel is an airport hotel, but it is only due to its proximity to the NAIA terminal, more so that passengers can simply cross the street in a very convenient overpass. But its amenities are far superior to standard airport hotels. The Savoy offers themed spaces called "The Squares," where business ventures can be done in a great place.

Email: [rsbobita@gmail.com](mailto:rsbobita@gmail.com)

★

## The Patriots: Lorenzana and Del Rosario

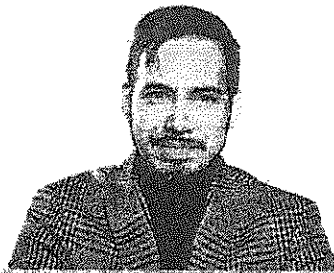
**O**urs is an age of unbridled power grabs, feisty populism and shameless publicity. Or, at least, that is the grim, dreary and gloomy picture some pundits like to paint vis-à-vis our political classes and broader state institutions. And it's hard to blame them for such excessive lamentations, given the "Game of Thrones"-like politicking we have seen in recent times.

A growing number of citizens have lost trust in our leaders. But, like all generalizations, this cynical prism overlooks the patriotism and competence also present in the mandarins and bureaucrats of the world. They are our unsung heroes, collectively acting as enduring glues that bind our ever-restless nations together, though often away from the glare of media frenzy. It's they, more than the media-savvy politicians and their coterie of opportunistic attendants, who are the epitome of patriotism.

In the Philippines, I have had the privilege of getting to know a great number of such figures, a cadre of highly competent and dedicated women and men who have brought excellence and honor to our state institutions. They serve as the antidote to the unruly politics that has come to define much of our elected officialdom.

From my personal experience, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and former foreign secretary Albert del Rosario are two of them. Each has been known more in the context of their respective principals—Benigno Aquino III (Del Rosario) and Rodrigo Duterte (Lorenzana). Yet, even a cursory look at their careers attest to their pedigree as exemplars of true public service.

Lorenzana, a fellow Ilocano born in Mindanao, was a former commander of



**HORIZONS**  
RICHARD HEYDARIAN

the Light Armored Brigade and member of the Presidential Security Group, where he directly protected the lives of three presidents throughout the decades. Aside from being a highly decorated soldier, Lorenzana was also a defense attaché at the Philippine Embassy in Washington (2002-2004) and later led the Office of Veterans Affairs at the same institution.

Thanks to his tireless efforts, Lorenzana successfully lobbied the American government to allocate \$265 million for Filipino veterans of World War II, who fought valiantly alongside their American counterparts against Imperial Japan. It was during those early years of diplomatic service that he forged a strong professional and personal bond with Del Rosario, who served as an ambassador to the United States in the earlier years of the Arroyo administration.

Del Rosario's career highlights were his principled resignation from a highly prized diplomatic post in response to deteriorating democratic conditions in the Philippines in

the mid-2000s and, later, his key role in shepherding the Philippines' legal warfare (lawfare) against China to secure our rights in the West Philippine Sea.

As foreign secretary, he also oversaw, with utmost professionalism and bereft of self-serving publicity, the safe and sound repatriation of thousands of overseas Filipino workers at the height of the Arab uprisings.

The media has been recently abuzz with supposed differences between the two gentlemen over the West Philippine Sea issue, particularly on the usefulness of the Philippines' landmark arbitration award at The Hague against China. Yet, what this false narrative of supposed disagreement between the two conceals is that they represent the two sides of the same coin: patriotic defense of the Philippines' national interest.

Each has brought his own victory for the Philippines. Del Rosario oversaw a successful legal campaign that won the Philippines a crucial bargaining chip vis-à-vis China. Absent the arbitration award, which has riled Beijing and questioned its legitimacy as a regional leader, the Philippines would have been almost completely at the mercy of China's "goodwill." It was under Lorenzana, meanwhile, that the Philippines, after decades of delay, fortified its presence on the ground, particularly in Pag-asa and other land features under the country's control.

So long as we have public servants like Lorenzana and Del Rosario in our midst, we have every reason to hope and fight for our country.

✍️

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# Duterte appeals to other Moro groups

**T**HE United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) have long been critical of the Philippines in its aggressive efforts to stop the drug menace in the country, but came out last week to hail the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and its immediate signing by President Duterte.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres congratulated the peace negotiators of the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who had labored for years, back to the previous administration of President Benigno Aquino III, the many civil society organizations that had supported their efforts, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, and the members of Congress, particularly the Bicameral Conference Committee, that came up, finally, with the BOL last week.

"The United Nations will continue to support the Philippines in the implementation of the law and help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority as an effective conduit for peace, democratic governance, and human rights," the UN said.

The European Union, in a statement issued by spokesman Maja Kocijancic, said the enactment of the law is a "an opportunity for the Filipino people to embrace peace and stability after decades of strife."

There has never been complete peace in Mindanao all these many years. There were always Moro fighters challenging government authority. It is said that the American colonizers had invented the .45 caliber pistol to stop the Moros who, it seemed, could not be stopped by the usual .38 caliber revolvers of their troops.

A major effort for peace was made when, during the Corazon Aquino administration, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) of Nur Misuari

assumed leadership in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), but a major faction broke off – the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) – dissatisfied with the ARMM. The MILF continued the movement for greater autonomy during the Aquino administration which, however, could not get Congress to approve a Bangsamoro Organic Law. It took the Duterte administration to achieve this.

President Duterte has now turned to other Moro groups who have long been fighting national government authority in Mindanao. In a speech in Jolo, Sulu, Friday night, he turned his attention to one Moro group that has become known for kidnapping and holding foreigners for ransom. He appealed to the Abu Sayyaf and other groups to give the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region a chance to prove itself.

There are other Moro groups active in various remote parts of Mindanao, like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. The Maute Group sought to establish itself in Marawi City last year with the aid of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); it was defeated after five months of fighting but its followers are still around.

Now that the Philippine government has set up the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, it is hoped that the Moro people will see it as a great opportunity for peace, development, and autonomy in Mindanao. The UN and the EU have immediately voiced their welcome and their hopes for peace following enactment of the Bangsamoro law, for they know peace in Mindanao is related to peace in the rest of the world. §

The hopes and support of the nation are with President Duterte as he now moves to win over other outlaw groups in the search for peace in Mindanao.

# Editorial

## Plebiscite on Bangsamoro Organic Law

**B**EFORE the nation can realize the vision of peace and development in Muslim Mindanao, the government must conduct a successful plebiscite, not only in the existing autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), but also in the new areas that have been targeted for inclusion in the envisioned Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR). The affected people and communities must first ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Congratulations and expectations because of the law's passage have been profuse within the country and in the international community.

It is right that the Congress and Malacañang should take pride in this unprecedented national decision to venture into new territory in local governance and autonomy. Plenty of political will and popular consensus were vital to the law's passage.

Realistically, however, as is plain from its text, BOL will not implement itself. All the necessary preparations, steps and requirements for implementation of the new law must be met.

The first of these steps is the approval by Congress of a supplemental budget to fund the implementation of the BOL.

As Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno has pointed out, the P160 billion needed to fund the BOL was not included in the proposed P3.7-trillion 2019 national budget because Congress had not yet passed the law when the 2019 General Appropriations Bill was crafted.

The legislature and concerned government officials should work double-time to meet the challenge.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, who shepherded the draft legislation through the Senate, is correct to point out that Bangsamoro stakeholders, including legislators, should see to it that preparations for the new region would be adequate. They should collectively press for approval of provisions and funding for the plebiscite, as well as Comelec's conduct of the balloting.

The office of the President can help by instructing all government agencies to provide all needed assistance for the peaceful and orderly conduct of this political exercise.

The entire nation should also be fully informed about the exact provisions and implications of the BOL. All our

people should welcome this new day that is dawning for our Muslim brothers and sisters and their communities. We all should see that this is all for the greater good.

It would be a mistake to oversell the BOL as the answer for all the aspirations and grievances of our Muslim communities. The law is not a magic panacea for society's ills. Like all institutional designs for self-governance, it will require hard work and competence to realize its lofty objectives.

As we look at the situation following the President's signing of the BOL, we should also take note of the sectors that remain in doubt about the wisdom of the new law. It is not salutary that some senators and politicians are still second-guessing the new law on the eve of the necessary plebiscitary process. They want to talk amendments when the train has already left the station.

We submit that the second-guessing and publicity-seeking has gone far enough. Nothing will be gained by delay and more press releases.

Congress has already written the policy. It is time to implement the law, and time for our Muslim compatriots to have the opportunity to govern themselves and forge their future according to their best interests. *AS*

# The demise of the Quad?

WHILE having lunch with an Asian diplomat a couple of weeks ago, I happened to mention the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which comprises the United States, Japan, India and Australia and is commonly known as the Quad. That on-and-off security dialogue focused on China when it started 2007 and was seen as the democratic countries' response to China's increasingly assertive rise. The dialogue ended when Australia pulled out but, after a 10-year hiatus, it was revived in 2017 when the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy was launched.

The term Indo-Pacific was introduced into the vocabulary of President Donald Trump and



FRANK CHING

other Pacific leaders to replace "Asia-Pacific" to make it clear that India, and the Indian Ocean, are part and parcel of the security interest of these countries. In June, the United States announced that the US Pacific Command had been renamed the US Indo-Pacific Command.

Given this background, it was a little surprising to hear my lunch companion chuckle and respond: "Only the United States and Aus-

tralia are left in the Quad. India and Japan are gone."

It was generally assumed that the Quad's raison d'être was China, though this was not openly said. China knew it and protested to all four members back in 2007, when the dialogue also saw parallel joint military exercises on a large scale.

So, it is not surprising that, after its revival in 2017, one of China's goals may have been to nip it in the bud quickly and quietly. And this it seems to have achieved quite successfully, through diplomacy, without use of force.

It turns out that China's president, Xi Jinping, spent two days quietly talking with Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi last April in Wuhan, in central China, mostly at shirtsleeves meetings. They discussed a range of issues, including trade, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the intractable border issue. At the end of the two-day meeting, while the problems hadn't been resolved, they had agreed at least on how they should be approached. Modi called that meeting a "milestone." Since then, India has been noticeably quiet about China. *NY*

Japan, too, was the beneficiary of the resumption of China's "smile" diplomacy. In mid-April, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a rare visit to Japan

► Ching A5

## The demise

and accepted Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's proposal for an exchange of summit visits. The following month, Premier Li Keqiang visited Japan as part of a trilateral summit involving China, Japan and South Korea, but Li stayed on after the meeting to pay an official visit to Japan.

With that, the ice was broken. Li invited Abe to visit China. If Abe

wins the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's leadership race in September, as is likely, he may visit China in October. Xi has agreed to visit Japan next year. Actually, it is high time for an exchange of visits between the leaders of the world's second and third largest economies. Both Xi and Abe assumed office in 2012 but neither has made an official visit

to the other's country.

Meanwhile, Japan has also agreed to join China's Belt and Road Initiative. Some Japanese companies are interested in exploring cooperation with China in a third country since both Japan and China have much experience with infrastructure construction and financing. Japan had been one of the few countries reluctant to take part in the Chinese initiative and that was a factor in delaying the thaw between the two countries.

So, China has greatly improved relations with India and Japan. But underlying realities remain, such as both countries' opposition to Chinese actions in the South China Sea as well as Beijing's construction and militarization of islands in the Spratly archipelago. What China has achieved isn't a change in the fundamental position of these countries so much as a willingness to cooperate and to manage differences.

China's diplomacy was the focus of attention last month when

the Communist Party held a rare meeting called Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs. That meeting established Xi Jinping Thought as the guiding thought of China's diplomacy.

After the conference, one scholar, Zhang Zhirong, a professor at the School of International Studies, Peking University, recounted with relish Xi's report of his successful diplomacy, saying, "China has defused the tensions with some neighboring countries,

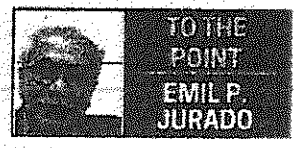
including India and Japan, thanks to its correct foreign policy." There was no mention of the Quad.

China's improvement of relations with India and Japan is to be applauded. However, it doesn't mean that those two countries will remain quiet if China should overstep its bounds say, in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, or the Indian Ocean.

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Starburst TODAY

# Speculation



THERE are reports that three women—Davao City Mayor and presidential daughter Sara Duterte Carpio, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos and House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo—have changed the political landscape. Now there is speculation: What will happen next?

First, that national political parties like Lakas, PDP-Laban and Danding Cojuangco's Nationalist People's Coalition will gravitate and even join with Sara's *Hugpong ng Pagbabago*, a regional political party, to make their alliance national in character.

Second, with Gloria now as Speaker, there will be a move to change the federal-presidential form of government to a federal-parliamentary form to make the post of prime minister possible.

Third, since it's the last year of Gloria as a member of Congress, granting that former senator Bongbong Marcos wins his protest against Vice President Leni Robredo before the 2019 elections, Bongbong then becomes the president of the new federal-parliamentary form of government, with Gloria as prime minister.

I do not know if these events will come about, but developments on the ground indicate they could be possible. Isn't politics the art of the possible?

As of now, while the political landscape remains as fluid as ever, the no-election push of Alvarez and his cohorts in Congress has been rendered useless. And since it will be up to Congress to go or not for a presidential-federal form of government, speculation is the order of the day.

Former President Arroyo's test of leadership as Speaker comes with the battle for minority—no less than four groups are claiming that they should be the minority. The minority is supposed to be the fiscalizer of the majority group led by the Speaker.

One group is led by House Deputy Speaker Romero Quimbo. He led 12

legislators to abstain from the voting for the new Speaker. They are mostly of the Liberal Party.

Another group is led by Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez who is loyal to GMA. The third group is that of former Speaker Alvarez and former majority leader, Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas.

The fourth is the Makabayan bloc led by party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio.

Coming right down to it, whoever becomes the minority group is actually the call of the Speaker. The problem is that of Gloria chooses one over the others, the others might complain.

There is speculation that the new Speaker may just let things be with four groups acting as the minority.

Whatever Gloria decides, she must know she cannot please everybody.

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Another political issue coming up is the emergence of some members of the

ruling PDP-Laban political party that ousted Senator Koko Pimentel as president and Pantaleon Alvarez as secretary-general.

In the wake of accusations from Pimentel that those who ousted him as president

were usurpers out to destroy the party, President Duterte was reported by his special assistant Bong Go as ready to set up a caucus to unify the ruling party.

I am not sure if Mr. Duterte can still prevent the ruling party from disintegrating, when some of its members are gravitating toward the regional party of Sara Duterte.

In any case, the President can always try.

The problem, however, is that Pimentel is no longer Senate president and Alvarez is no longer Speaker. So how can they lead the ruling party when they are no longer in power?

The splinter group now claiming to be the real PDP-Laban, and which still maintains Duterte as chairman, may be headed by some unknown personalities. The reality is that PDP-Laban, despite the chairmanship of Duterte, is headed for extinction unless it joins with Sara.

“People can't help wondering what will come next.”

34

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## Speculation

From AA

In fact, there is speculation that PDP-Laban may just be absorbed by Sara's regional party.

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Former President BS Aquino posed this question: What can Gloria do as Speaker because she only has a few more months? The 17th Congress is now in its last session.

Aquino obviously does not think much of Gloria. After all he had her arrested and detained for almost four years.

Gloria has already dropped the move of Alvarez and his cohorts to have a no-election scenario next year. She may even move for charter change under a federal-parliamentary system. This will validate what some people say—that she may just become prime minister under a new Constitution.

*My gular*, BS Aquino should not belittle what a Speaker can do.

With Gloria heading Congress, we expect economic reforms. She is, after all, an economist.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law has been signed into law by the President. It has been praised here and abroad. A question remains, though—will it please all the stakeholders?

Even the President himself is wary that the law will not please everybody. Even now, the residents of Cotabato City are expressing their concerns. Nur Misuari of the Moro National Liberation Front has not come out in favor if it. This has led the President to say that the BOL can always be modified in favor of all those who are concerned.

It cannot be denied that the Duterte administration has moved closer to lasting peace. By all means, this is a step toward the right direction. Who can argue

with that?

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In another attempt by the President to make peace with the Muslims, he has also expressed a desire to talk peace with the Abu Sayyaf Group in Basilan and Sulu.

I am wary about this move. The Abu Sayyaf is a terror group that wants to establish a caliphate in Mindanao.

Santa Banana, you do not negotiate with terrorists. Their agenda is to create panic to achieve their ends.

Security groups and even the Department of National Defense have established that fact that the Abu Sayyaf is already allied with IS. So what is left to talk about?

And besides, the ASG has already made kidnapping for ransom their industry. Why stop doing something when they are already profiting from it?

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# Not on the same page

“ President Rodrigo Duterte is banking on Arroyo after her hostile maneuver that ousted former Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez to deliver priority measures of the House.

Last Sunday, 29 July, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chair Al Hadj Murad Ebrahim waved to an assembly of supporters a copy of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which turned out to be defective since it did not bear the signature of Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

While former Sen. Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel said an administrative remedy can be applied that would not diminish the effectivity of the law, the missing Arroyo signature does not bode well for the autonomy measure.

It was during the term of Arroyo when the unconstitutional Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD) was signed.

The Supreme Court (SC), in October 2008, declared the Arroyo pact with the MILF as having violated the Constitution.

The SC, voting 8-7, declared the MoA-AD unconstitutional and illegal and its crafting “whimsical, capricious, oppressive, arbitrary and despotic.”

The aborted signing of the agreement led to discontent among certain factions of the MILF, which launched terror acts in apparent frustration.

Rogue elements of the rebel group went on a rampage that led to the death of 400 individuals and the displacement of 750,000 residents in areas that should have been covered by the aborted deal.

President Rodrigo Duterte is banking on Arroyo after her hostile maneuver that ousted former Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez to deliver priority measures of the House faster particularly crucial economic measures citing her credential as an economist.



"Most of the money being spent on all the huge projects such as trains, highways is government's money, that's of the people of the Republic of the Philippines. That includes us, but the problem is the amount is not sufficient," the President said in looking forward to Arroyo's help.

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*The BOL  
is now being  
hailed as a  
landmark law,  
a fact that  
seems to have  
been lost on  
Arroyo.*

Arroyo has promised to push for Rody's legislative agenda at the House of Representatives, which did not reflect in her apparent lack of interest in the BOL as deduced from her failure to affix her signature on the legacy law of the President.

A new copy of the law needs to be issued before Rody signs it to comply with Congress rules on the legislative process that requires bills transmitted to the President for approval must be "signed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives and certified by both the secretary of the Senate and the secretary general of the House."

Upon the President's signing of the bill, "the same is assigned an RA number and transmitted to the House where it originated," after which it is reproduced and copies sent to the Official Gazette "for publication and distribution to the implementing agencies."

The BOL is now being hailed as a landmark law, a fact that seems to have been lost on Arroyo.

It would be up to Rody again to dispel suspicions that may arise from the Bangsamoro people regarding Arroyo's missing signature.

It was also Rody who broke the impasse at the bicameral conference committee that threatened the approval of the then Bangsamoro Basic Law.

It was also Arroyo who frustrated what could have been a historic event in the signing of the BOL during the State of the Nation Address (SoNA).

The House power grab happened during the opening of the third session resulting in the adjourning of the assembly before the approval of the BOL.

The President, flabbergasted at Arroyo for upstaging the SoNA and delaying the BOL signing, ended up promising that he would sign it "within 48 hours" from the time his office receives a copy.

Rody delivered on his promise but not Arroyo, who literally was not on the same page as the President on the crucial Bangsamoro law.



# Too early to rejoice

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*There is that big constitutional issue which is the parliamentary system of government that the MILF has been pressing all these years under different administrations.*

The Bangsamoro people may be rejoicing too early with the congressional passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which already has the signature of President Duterte. There still are a lot of constitutional issues that have to be ironed out—and before the Supreme Court (SC).

Even as President Duterte last week signed the BOL, which is being described as “a key step to ending a Muslim rebellion” in Mindanao that had claimed more than 150,000 lives since the



**FRONTLINE**  
 Ninez Cacho-Olivares

laws has always been the problem with the Senate and the House of Representatives as, more often than not, bills enacted into law, especially the BOL, face a lot of constitutional problems.

First off, a big question would be whether or not the Legislature can, through the enactment of the

BOL, amend the 1987 Constitution, disregard the constitutional provision creating the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, since the terms and conditions in the BOL

create a new and different government structure, completely different from the ARMM.

A mere law cannot amend the

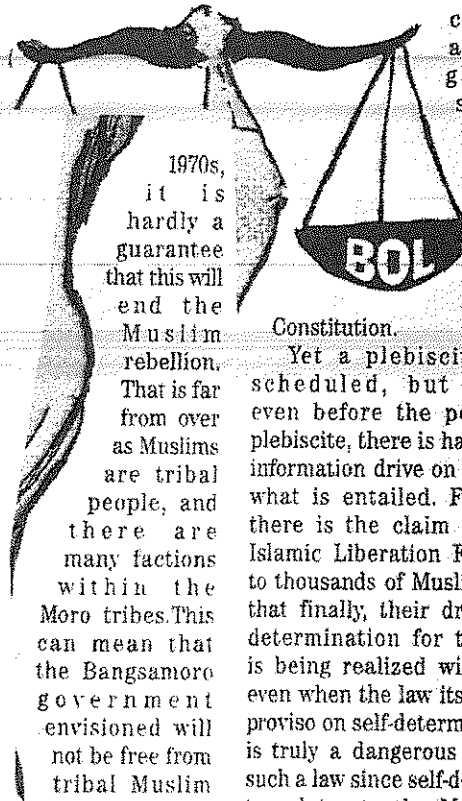
Constitution.

Yet a plebiscite is being scheduled, but obviously, even before the polls for this plebiscite, there is hardly any true information drive on this BOL and what is entailed. For example, there is the claim of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to thousands of Muslims gathered that finally, their dream of self-determination for the Muslims is being realized with the BOL, even when the law itself junks the proviso on self-determination. This is truly a dangerous inclusion in such a law since self-determination translates to the Moros' dream of having their own independent state, totally separate from the Republic of the Philippines.

Then, too, it looks like the MILF will have its own military and police, apart from the Philippine military, as the law has not mentioned this.

Give it a longer time, these same Moros and their leaders, with all the billions the central government, using taxpayers' money and not just the taxes from Mindanao taxpayers, will start getting from friendly Islamic countries attack helicopters and other war material that will eventually be used against the government of the Philippines to fulfil their “dream of self-determination,” which is the Moros' term for independence through secession.

One wonders: If the taxpayers from Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, as well as Mindanao, are footing the gargantuan bill for the unelected MILF



Rushing

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leaders to run the Bangsamoro government and pour—take a deep breath—5 percent yearly of the total national budget, which now hitting close to P3 trillion, why are only select Mindanaoans allowed to vote on the creation of a virtual independent state? Why not the general electorate?

But there are more constitutional problems to be hurdled, should this law be questioned before the High Court. Already the Philippine Constitution Association and the group of former Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan will be questioning the constitutionality of the law in the SC.

There is that big constitutional issue which is the parliamentary system of government that the MILF has been pressing all these years under different administrations. The MILF leaders finally got it written down in black and white by these senators and congressmen, who should have known better, as such a parliamentary system of government for the Bangsamoros cannot exist under the 1987 Constitution that has created a presidential government for all of the Philippines.

“*But there are more constitutional problems to be hurdled*”  
Imagine this: The new Bangsamoro government, even under transitory conditions, is to have a

parliamentary government that, in effect, is a parallel government to the national government, which makes it a state within a state—and certainly this is not allowed by the Constitution.

The Bangsamoro Transition Commission chairman Ghadzali Jaafar, in a radio interview, assured that the Bangsamoro government will be upright, giving their assurance that this government is different from the ARMM.

How can they give such assurances, considering the fact that the MILF leaders, who will be ruling their “state within a state” propped up by a budget in the tens of billions with even bigger budgets yearly, have zero experience in government? The MILF rebels are all fighters and don’t know how to govern and, worse, the MILF leadership fails to control its fighters as proven during the Mamasapano massacre that murdered 44 Special Action Forces and this when peace was being brokered. 4

One big question is this: Will the MILF accept the ruling of the SC should the High Court say the BOL is unconstitutional or will the MILF take up arms again?

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# Realizing the Bangsamoro dream

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*The  
Bangsamoro  
people are  
assured  
that their  
clamor did  
not fall on  
deaf ears.*

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) last week is a milestone aimed at - using the Chief Executive's words - the historical injustices committed against the Moro people in Mindanao.

The law aims to “establish a political entity, provide its basic structure of government in recognition of the justness and legitimacy of the cause of the Bangsamoro people and the aspirations of Muslim Filipinos and all indigenous cultural communities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to secure their identity and posterity, allowing for meaningful self-governance within the framework of the Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.”

The social, economic and political conditions of Mindanao at present are all highly conducive for this passage. For one, majority of the Bangsamoro people have all been clamoring for genuine autonomy.

With the signing of the BOL, the Bangsamoro people are assured that their clamor did not fall on deaf ears. This, in fact, is landmark legislation by the Duterte administration to give peace a chance in Mindanao.



## BRIEFING ROOM

Hary Roque

The BOL was crafted by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and approved by the bicameral conference committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate after days of intense debates and discussions to reconcile the differences and hammer out the issues between the House's and Senate's versions

of the bill.

The BOL will abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and replace it instead with the BARMM, which would have greater autonomy.

Before the BOL can be implemented, it must be subjected to a plebiscite in the ARMM and other affected areas and majority of the votes cast in the plebiscite must approve of the BOL. The Commission on Elections will handle the plebiscite.

But while security and order will still remain at the hands of the national government, the signing of this law grants the Bangsamoro to have its own regional government, parliament and justice system, which is the Shari'a law.

Moreover, the law will also guarantee the BARMM an annual 5 percent share of the national revenue apart from the 75 percent of the taxes collected in the region.

Following the signing, the international community expressed support for this historic event.

For one, the United Nations (UN) has hailed the signing of the BOL as a landmark achievement "on the road to lasting peace in southern Philippines."

"The United Nations will continue to support the Philippines in the implementation of the law, and to help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority as an effective conduit for peace, democratic governance and human rights," said a spokesman for UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

The European Union (EU) echoed this same sentiment, saying the passage of the Bangsamoro law "represents an opportunity for the Filipino people to embrace peace and stability after decades of strife." The EU said the BOL "comes after 21 years of formal talks after the first ceasefire agreement

between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front" and "underlines both parties' commitment to peace and their ability to tackle a variety of complex matters through a comprehensive and inclusive law."

Meanwhile, Japan commended the efforts of the Duterte administration, the MILF and all those who helped make the BOL a reality. Japan also said it would enhance its support for the development of Mindanao in a wide range of fields, in accordance with progress in the peace process.

The outpouring of support from the international community will be vital to achieving peace and prosperity in Mindanao. As Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said, "A collective international voice of support for the country's work to attain sustainable peace embodies the international community's recognition of President Duterte's unwavering commitment for a better Philippines."

Without a doubt, the President is firm in his pledge, which he articulated in his most recent State of the Nation Address, not to deny our Muslim brothers and sisters the basic legal tools to chart their own destiny within the constitutional framework of our country.

The BOL is a fitting symbol for this commitment. *Kapayapaan para sa bayan* (Peace for the nation). J

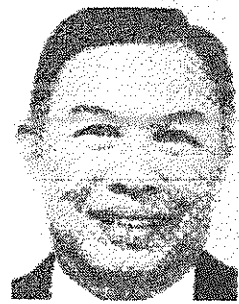
“  
The  
international  
community  
expressed  
support for  
this historic  
event.”

# Washington beckons

**P**RESIDENT Rodrigo Roa Duterte aka Digong once again highlighted his drive against corruption in his State of the Nation Address last week.

He specifically addressed himself to the officials and functionaries in the executive branch of the government.

Everyone knows that corruption is prevalent as well in the government's two other branches, namely, the legislature and the judiciary. I feel he could have and should have exhorted the heads of the two branches to intensify their own campaign against corruption.



**CROSSHAIRS**  
**REY O. ARCILLA**

*If Digong goes to Washington, it will make him no different from his predecessors whose priority after being elected president was to pay obeisance to his/her counterpart.*

## SPEAKER ARROYO

Like many others, I am dismayed by the election of Congresswoman Gloria Arroyo as Speaker.

She is not exactly a paragon of virtue, to put it kindly.

Her nine-year stay in Malacañang, six of which were believed to be courtesy of former Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano of "Hello Garc" fame, was pockmarked by various scandals and allegations of corruption.

In an item published last week, the Philippine Daily Inquirer said "except for the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, no one had to deal with as many allegations of wrongdoing or impropriety as former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo."

The daily went on to enumerate some of the anomalies during her watch that included the Jose Pidal case involving her husband Mike; the \$505-million North Rail project that Senator Franklin Drilon called "the greatest train robbery in history"; the P7.05-billion fertilizer fund scam; the

\$329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) contract with China's ZTE Corp. which was allegedly overpriced by \$130 million to cover kickbacks; the cash hand-outs to over 100 congressmen and around 200 local officials who left Malacañang carrying paper bags containing between P200,000 and P500,000 allegedly as bribe to stop an impeachment case against her; the \$932-million South Rail project which was allegedly overpriced by 22 percent; the family owned helicopter sold to the Philippine National Police as brand new; etc., etc., ad nauseam!

And now she is Speaker of the House, after almost nine years as congresswoman and after her nine-year stint in Malacañang. She has been likened to a cat with nine lives. Somebody up there, or down there, must like her a lot!

## 'A MATTER OF SCHEDULING'

Another bit of news that damp-

ened my spirit was Digong's statement that his visit to Washington was just "a matter of scheduling."

If he goes, that will make him no different from his predecessors whose priority after being elected president was to pay obeisance to his/her counterpart in Washington.

Donald Trump may be his "friend" but that doesn't really matter much in terms of shaping the eventual state of relations between our two countries. Unless Digong continues to pursue his independent foreign policy stance, my fear is that nothing will change in Washington's treatment of the Philippines as a second class or a "taken for granted" ally compared to the way she treats other allies like Israel, Egypt or even Pakistan.

There is also the perception that with the exception of Trump, virtually nobody else of consequence in the power structure in Washington, including the media, may be considered his (Digong's

friend, unless he succumbs to being a US lackey like his predecessors. He might wish to ponder over that, too.

Fortunately, with Digong at the helm, this state of relations could change. He had, in fact, already started the process by adopting a foreign policy that is not dependent on the US.

The logical next step is to rid the country of US troops as he had promised, a step that would necessitate the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

If perchance he decides to go, he should insist on having this as the first item in the agenda.

Digong said what could stop him from going to Washington is the long haul flight. He said the 13- to 14-hour flight would kill him. Actually, flying time from Manila to Washington is between 18 and a half to 20 hours, with one refueling stop.

I have no idea how long it would take if he opts to charter a plane to go there. I don't think it would make the flight much shorter.

## ENVOY ROMUALDEZ

According to presidential spokesman Harry Roque, Jr., our ambassador to the US José Romualdez is the one trying very hard to convince Digong to accept Trump's invitation.

I must say I am not at all surprised.

I am told that Romualdez has very close ties with the rich denizens of Makati, particularly the members of the Makati Business Club, the elite

42

## WASHINGTON

and the oligarchs, most of whom are hardcore supporters of the Aquinos and are generally known to be pro-Americans.

For instance, I remember he used to defend ex-foreign secretary Albert "Super Amboy" del Rosario a lot in his column.

Draw your own conclusion, dear readers.

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### MISCELLANY

Digong's Man Friday, Bong Go, announced last week that his boss will be visiting Israel in September.

Isn't that the job of Foreign Secretary Alan Cayetano or the DFA spokesman? Or the presidential spokesman?

Speaking of Cayetano, he ceased to be a senator when he took his oath as foreign secretary. So how come he was seated, as in the last SONA, with the senators? He considers it beneath him to be seated with his Cabinet colleagues

led by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea? Just asking.

How come Ms. Leni Robredo, whose election to the vice presidency is under protest due to alleged cheating, and acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio were not singing, not even lip-synching, the national anthem during the SONA? They don't know the lyrics? Both were grim-faced. Was that their way of showing their opposition to the Duterte administration? How petty! Unpatriotic, too!

What step, if any, is the government taking against former Comelec chairman Andres Bautista who has been accused by no less than his wife of irregularities when he was head of the PCGG and the poll body? He left the country ostensibly to seek medical treatment abroad. That was a long time ago? Flight is a sign of guilt, ain't it?

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### REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administra-

tion 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 submitted 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.)

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Today is the 94th 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.

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From an internet friend:

A man is watching a game of golf on TV.

But he keeps switching channels to an X-rated movie featuring a lusty couple making love.

"I don't know whether to watch them or the game", he says to his wife.

"For Heaven's sake, watch them," his wife says. "You already know how to play golf!"

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## Editorial

# Huwag makiusap sa Sayyaf!

**H**INDI nagbibiro si Pres. Rodrigo Duterte nang makiusap siya sa mga mamamatay-taong Abu Sayyaf noong Biyernes nang dalawin ang mga biklima ng sunog sa Bgy. Busbos, Jolo, Sulu. Pakiusap niya sa Sayyaf, "Huwag n'yo akong kidnapin at huwag ninyong papatayin!" Wala raw mapapala ang Abu Sayyaf kapag siya ay pinatay. Iba na lang daw ang kidnapin ng mga ito pero huwag ang Presidente. Kahit sino raw ang kidnapin basta huwag lang siya. Sabi niya sa mga residente na ipaabot daw ang kanyang mensahe sa Abu Sayyaf.

Seryoso ang Presidente sa pakiusap at maaring naamoy niya na nasa paligid lamang ang mga terorista at maaring gumawa ang mga ito ng hakbang laban sa kanya. Kaya marahil siya ay nakikiusap sa mga ito na huwag siyang kidnapin o patayin.

Pero pakikinggan kaya siya ng mga mamamatay-tao? Wala nang kinikilala ang Abu Sayyaf. Pera ang sinasamba ng mga ito kaya naman sunud-sunod ang ginagawang pangigingidnap. Hanggang ngayon, sila pa rin ang nasa likod ng mga pangigingidnap kapalit ng ransom. Walang awa ang grupo sa mga kinikidnap na hindi makapagbigay ng ransom. Pinugutan nila ng ulo ang mga dayuhang kinidnap at bini-video pa. Noong 2016, dalawang dayuhan ang kanilang pinugutan kasabay pa sa pagkaluklok ni Duterte sa puwesto. May isang pagkakataon na pinugutan nila ang isang dayuhan sa araw pa ng pagdiriwang ng kalayaan.

Marami nang nakuhang ransom ang mga terorista. Kumita sila nang malaki nang kidnapin ang mga dayuhan sa Dos Palmas resort sa Palawan. Sila rin ang nasa likod ng pagkidnap sa mag-asawang Burnham sa Palawan din.

Kamakaitan, sinabi ni Duterte na pagkakalooban niya ng bahay at lupa ang mga susukong Sayyaf. Marami ang napatling sa balak na ito. Mga terorista, bibigyan ng bahay at lupa. Hindi tama ito. Kung sino ang maraming pinatay sila pa ang pagkakalooban ng bahay.

Sa halip na makiusap sa mga terorista, mas maganda kung pulbusin ang mga ito. Pagbayarin sa mga ginawang kasalanan. Hindi sila dapat kaawaan.

**EDITORIAL****Duterte appeals  
to other Moro groups**

**T**HE United Nations and the European Union have long been critical of the Philippines in its aggressive efforts to stop the drug menace in the country, but came out last week to hail the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and its immediate signing by President Duterte.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres congratulated the peace negotiators of the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who had labored for years, back to the previous administration of President Benigno Aquino III, the many civil society organizations that had supported their efforts, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, and the members of Congress, particularly the Bicameral Conference Committee, that came up, finally, with the BOL last week.

"The United Nations will continue to support the Philippines in the implementation of the law and help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority as an effective conduit for peace, democratic governance, and human rights," the UN said.

The European Union, in a statement issued by spokesman Maja Kocijancic, said the enactment of the law is a "an opportunity for the Filipino people to embrace peace and stability after decades of strife."

There has never been complete peace in Mindanao all these many years. There were always Moro fighters challenging government authority. It is said that the American colonizers had invented the .45 caliber pistol to stop the Moros who, it seemed, could not be stopped by the usual .38 caliber revolvers of their troops.

A major effort for peace was made when, during the Corazon Aquino administration, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) of Nur Misuari assumed leadership in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), but a major faction broke off — the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) — dissatisfied with the ARMM. The MILF continued the movement for greater autonomy during the Aquino administration which, however, could not get Congress to approve a Bangsamoro Organic Law. It took the Duterte administration to achieve this.

President Duterte has now turned to other Moro groups who have long been fighting national government authority in Mindanao. In a speech in Jolo, Sulu, Friday night, he turned his attention to one Moro group that has become known for kidnapping and holding foreigners for ransom. He appealed to the Abu Sayyaf and other groups to give the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region a chance to prove itself.

There are other Moro groups active in various remote parts of Mindanao, like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. The Maute Group sought to establish itself in Marawi City last year with the aid of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); it was defeated after five months of fighting but its followers are still around.

Now that the Philippine government has set up the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, it is hoped that the Moro people will see it as a great opportunity for peace, development, and autonomy in Mindanao. The UN and the EU have immediately voiced their welcome and their hopes for peace following enactment of the Bangsamoro law, for they know peace in Mindanao is related to peace in the rest of the world.

The hopes and support of the nation are with President Duterte as he now moves to win over other outlaw groups in the search for peace in Mindanao.



**EDITORIAL**

**Apela ni Duterte sa iba pang grupo ng mga Moro**

ANG United Nations at ang European Union ay matagal nang kritiko ng Pilipinas sa agresibo nitong pagsisikap na matuldukan ang paglaganap ng ilegal na droga sa bansa, ngunit lumabas nitong nakaraang linggo upang purihin ang pagsasabatas ng Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) at ang mabilis na paglagda ni Pangulong Duterte.

Binati ni UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres ang mga peace negotiator ng pamahalaan ng Pilipinas at ang Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) na ilang taong nagtrabaho, sa nakaraang administrasyon ni Pangulong Benigno Aquino III, ang maraming sibil na samahang sumuporta sa pagsisikap, ang Bangsamoro Transition Commission, at ang mga miyembro ng Kongreso, partikular ang Bicameral Conference Committee, na naglabas, sa wakas, ng BOL nitong nakaraang linggo.

"The United Nations will continue to support the Philippines in the implementation of the law and help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority as an effective conduit for peace, democratic governance, and human rights," pahayag ng UN.

Sinabi naman ng European Union, sa pamamagitan ng inilabas na pahayag ni Maja Kocijancic, na ang pagpapatibay ng batas ay "an opportunity for the Filipino people to embrace peace and stability after decades of strife."

Hindi kaibangman nararanasan ang isang lubos na kapayapaan sa Mindanao sa mga nakalipas na taon. Palaging narayan ang mga mandirigma ng Moro na kumakalahar sa puwersa ng pamahalaan. Sinasabing na imimbento ng mga Amerikanong mananakop ang 45 calibre pistol upang pigilan ang mga Moro, na ita hindi mapigil ng karaniwang .38 calibre revolver ng kanilang mga tropa.

Isang malaking pagsisikap para sa kapayapaan ang tururo, sa panahon ng administrasyon ni Corason Aquino, nang panunuran ni Nur Misuari ang Moro National Liberation Front ang Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), ngunit malaking pangkat ang humuwalay — ang Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) — na hindi kumerto sa ARMM. Ipinagpatuloy ng MILF ang hakbang para sa mas makapangyarihang awtonomiya sa panahon ng administrasyon ni Aquino, gayunman, hindi nito nagawang makuha ang loob ng Kongreso para aprubahan ang Bangsamoro Organic Law. At inabot pa ng administrasyon ng Duterte para lamang makamit ito.

Bumaling naman ngayon si Pangulong Duterte sa iba pang mga grupong Moro na matagal nang nakikipaglaban sa puwersa ng pamahalaan sa Mindanao. Sa kanyang talumpati sa Jolo, Sulu nitong Biyernes ng gabi, itinaling niya ang kanyang atensyon sa isang grupo ng mga Moro na kilala sa pandunukot at pagtatak ng mga dayuhan kapalit ng salapi. Nanawagan siya sa Abu Sayyaf at iba pang mga grupo na bigyan ng pagkakataon ang Bangsamoro Autonomous Region na patunayan ang sarili.

Mayroon pang ibang mga aktibong grupo ng mga Moro sa ilang lilib na bahagi ng Mindanao, tulad ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. Ang grupo ng Maute na naghangad na makapagtatag ng sarili sa lungsod ng Marawi nitong nakaraang taon sa tulong ng Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), nagapi ang grupo makalipas ang limang buwan pakikipaglaban ngunit nananatili sa paligid ang mga tagasuporta nito.

Ngayon na nagsabatas na ng pamahalaan ng Pilipinas ang Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, umaasa ito na makikita ng mga Moro ang malaking oportunidad para sa kapayapaan, pag-unlad at pagsasarili sa Mindanao. Agad na inihayag ng UN at EU ang kanilang pagtanggap at ang kanilang pag-asa para sa kapayapaan kasunod ng pagpapatibay ng batas ng Bangsamoro, dahil naniniwala sila na ang kapayapaan sa Mindanao ay kadikit ng kapayapaan sa buong mundo.

Ang pag-asa at suporta ng sambayanan ay kasama ni Pangulong Duterte sa hakbang niyang managlaban sa mga bandidong grupo para sa paghahanap ng kapayapaan sa Mindanao.

46