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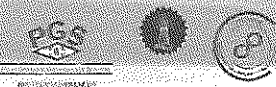
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NEWS CLIPPINGS

13 June 2018

Wednesday



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SEA ROW TAKES CENTER STAGE IN JUNE 12 RITES

STORY BY NESTOR CORRALES, CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND DJ YAP

President Duterte and Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua discuss the harassment of Filipino fishermen by China's coast guards at Panatag Shoal during the Independence Day celebration in Kawit, Cavite.

A10

FROM A1

By Nestor Corrales,
Christine O. Avendaño
and DJ Yap
@Team_Inquirer

KAWIT, CAVITE—President Duterte and Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua discussed China Coast Guard abuses at Panatag Shoal in the West Philippine Sea on Tuesday as the nation celebrated Independence Day.

Mr. Duterte and Zhao had a brief talk at Aguinaldo Shrine here, from where Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of the revolt against Spanish colonial rule, proclaimed Philippine independence on June 12, 1898.

Zhao's presence at the celebration of the 120th anniversary of Philippine independence raised eyebrows and drew disapproving comments on social media, although he was just one of the foreign diplomats invited to the event.

The meeting came amid controversy following reports that Chinese coast guards are confiscating the catch of Filipino fishermen at Panatag Shoal, a rich fishing ground located 230 kilometers from the coast of Zambales province, well within the Philippines' 370 exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the South China Sea but controlled by China.

"President Duterte shared his concern about the Filipino fishermen," Zhao told reporters after the event.

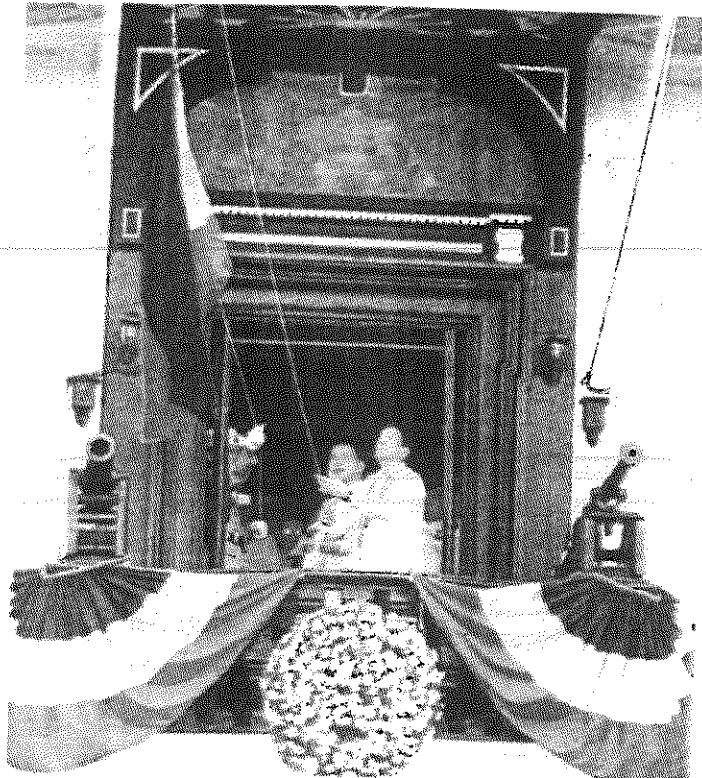
Beijing probe

Zhao said Beijing was conducting a "serious and responsible" investigation of the Filipino fishermen's complaints.

He said Beijing would "discipline" coast guards who would be proven to have taken fish from Filipinos at Panatag.

Zhao referred to Panatag by its Chinese name—Huangyan.

Panatag is internationally



INDEPENDENCE DAY RITES President Duterte raises the flag during Tuesday's ceremony to celebrate the country's 120th Independence Day at Museo ni Emilio Aguinaldo in Kawit, Cavite. With him is Rene Escalante, chair of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines. —JOAN BONDOC

known as Scarborough Shoal. Although it is in the West Philippine Sea—waters within the Philippines' EEZ in the South China Sea—it does not generate territorial waters and therefore does not belong to any party in the territorial disputes in the strategic waterway, according to the July 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

Scarborough Shoal, the court ruled, is a common fishing ground for the Philippines, China and Vietnam.

'Friendly agreement'

He said the Philippines and China had a "friendly agreement" that allowed Filipinos to fish at Panatag Shoal.

"This arrangement has not changed and will not be changed," Zhao said.

He said initial investigation

by both sides showed Chinese coast guards were not harassing Filipino fishermen and not confiscating their catch.

"It is some sort of barter trade, which has been going on for quite some time," Zhao said, adding Chinese coast guards exchanged food and water for the Filipinos' fish.

'Unacceptable'

Rommel Cejuela, one of three fishermen quoted in last week's television report about Chinese abuses at Panatag, said on Monday that the coast guards were not harassing Filipino fishermen but they were persistent about getting fish and always picking the best ones that cost up to P4,000 each.

Cejuela and his companions asked the government to help ask China to stop its coast guards from having their way

with Filipino fishermen.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque told reporters that the Philippines had brought up the matter with China and demanded Beijing to stop the "unacceptable" practice.

Asked on Tuesday about Cejuela's statement that China still controlled Panatag Shoal, Zhao said he would take note of the complaint, and insisted an investigation was going on.

On reports that China does not allow big fishing vessels at Panatag, Zhao said the two countries had an understanding on the matter.

"Both sides will only allow fishermen to go there. Up until now, we do not encourage commercial fishing of the large fishing vessels there because we also have a responsibility for protecting the species of the fish and also the environment there," he said.

Asked what he had discussed with President Duterte, Zhao replied that it was confidential.

Policy of appeasement

Opposition Sen. Francis Pangilinan said he was not surprised that Zhao was at the Kawit event.

"It isn't surprising, considering how the current administration has put in place a policy of appeasement as a response to China's illegal annexation of thousands of square kilometers of our exclusive economic zone," Pangilinan said.

Social media were abuzz with pictures of Zhao talking with Mr. Duterte and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, with the caption for one photo noting the "irony" of celebrating freedom in Chinese shackles.

"Governor of the Philippines speaking with representatives of President Xi," a commenter said on Twitter.

"We should be proud of our president. He's the 1st president to make our country the 1st official colony of Imperial China in the 21st century," another tweeted. INQ



'World to see major change'

Trump to invite NoKor leader to White House

SINGAPORE – US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met for the first time in this city-state yesterday and vowed to work together for the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean peninsula.

"Today we had a historic meeting and decided to leave the past behind," Kim said. "The world will see a major change."

Washington committed to provide security guarantees for its old enemy.

Trump said he had formed a "very special bond" with Kim and that relationship with North Korea would be very different.

"People are going to be very impressed and people are going to be very happy and we are going to take care of a very dangerous problem for the world," Trump said.

Asked whether he would invite Kim to the White House,

Trump said "Absolutely, I will."

But a joint statement signed at the end of their historic summit in Singapore gave few details on how either goal would be achieved.

"President Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK and Chairman Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," said the statement.

DPRK is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the formal name of North Korea.

Trump said he expected the denuclearization process to

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World From Page 1

start "very, very quickly." US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and North Korean officials would hold follow-up negotiations "at the earliest possible date," the statement said.

Political analysts said the summit had yielded only symbolic results and nothing tangible.

"It is unclear if further negotiations will lead to the end goal of denuclearization," said Anthony Ruggiero, senior fellow of Washington's Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank. "This looks like a restatement of where we left negotiations more than 10 years ago and not a major step forward."

The document also made no mention of the international sanctions that have crippled North Korea's economy for pursuing its nuclear weapons program.

Nor was there any reference to finally signing a peace treaty.

North Korea and the United States were on opposite sides in the 1950-53 Korean War and are technically still at war, as the conflict, in which millions of people died, was concluded only with a truce.

But the joint statement did say the two sides had agreed to recovering the remains of prisoners of war and of those missing in action and repatriating them.

China, the third party to the truce, said it hoped North Korea and the United States could reach a basic consensus on denuclearization.

"At the same time, there needs to be a peace mechanism for the peninsula to resolve North Korea's reasonable security concerns," China's top diplomat, State Councilor Wang Yi, told reporters in Beijing.

If the joint statement does lead to a lasting detente, it could fundamentally change

the security landscape of Northeast Asia, just as former US President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 led to the transformation of China.

But Li Nan, senior researcher at Fangoal, a Beijing-based Chinese public policy think tank, said the meeting had only symbolic significance.

"It is too early to call it a turning point in North Korea-US relations," Li said.

However, the dollar jumped to a 3-week top yesterday and Asian shares rose on news of the agreement.

Trump called Kim "very smart" and a "very worthy, very hard negotiator."

"I learned he's a very talented man. I also learned that he loves his country very much."

During a post-lunch stroll through the gardens of the Singapore hotel where the summit was held, Trump said the meeting had gone "better than anybody could have expected."

Kim stood silently along-

side, but the North Korean leader had earlier described their summit as a "good prelude to peace."

Both men walked to Trump's bulletproof limousine, nicknamed "The Beast," and looked in at the rear seat, with Trump apparently showing Kim something inside. They then resumed their walk.

They had appeared cautious and serious when they first arrived for the summit at the Capella hotel on Singapore's Sentosa, a resort island with luxury hotels, a casino, man-made beaches and a Universal Studios theme park.

But, with cameras of the world's press trained on them, they displayed an initial atmosphere of bonhomie as they met on the verandah of the Capella, a refurbished 19th century British regimental officers' mess.

Body language expert said both men tried to project command as they met, but also displayed signs of nerves.

'Like a movie'

After a handshake, they were soon smiling and holding each other by the arm, before Trump guided Kim to the library where they held a meeting with only their interpreters. Trump had said on Saturday he would know within a minute of meeting Kim whether he would reach a deal.

Inside, they sat alongside each other against a backdrop of North Korean and US flags, with Kim beaming broadly as the US president gave him a thumbs up.

After initial exchanges lasting around 40 minutes, Trump and Kim emerged, walking side-by-side through the colonnaded hotel before entering a meeting room, where they were joined by their most senior officials.

Kim was heard telling Trump through a translator: "I think the entire world is watching this moment. Many people in the world will think of this as a scene from a fantasy... science fiction movie."

Trump was joined by Pompeo, National Security Adviser John Bolton and John Keily, White House Chief of Staff, for the expanded talks, while Kim's team included former military intelligence chief Kim Yong Chol, foreign minister Ri Yong Ho and Ri Su Yong, vice chairman of the ruling Workers' Party.

As the two leaders met, Singapore navy vessels and air force Apache helicopters patrolled, while fighter jets and a Gulfstream 550 early warning aircraft circled.

After the meetings, the two teams and other senior officials met for a working lunch, where beef short ribs, sweet and sour pork and "Daegu Jormin," or Korean braised cod, were served for the main course, according to the menu.

That was followed by dark chocolate tarts, pastries and vanilla ice cream for dessert.

The North Korean leader's sister and close confidante Kim Yo Jong was in the lunch party.

- Reuters

Carpio: PH should sue China for damaged reefs

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

The admission of National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. that Chinese fishermen have harvested giant clams and destroyed coral reefs at Panatag Shoal is enough for the Duterte administration to seek compensation from China, acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio said on Tuesday.

Carpio said the government should file another case against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which has recognized the Philippines' sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea, waters within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the heavily disputed South China Sea.

Report confirmed

Esperon, who also heads the Task Force West Philippine Sea, has confirmed a GMA 7 report last week that Chinese fishermen have damaged the line of coral reefs at Panatag, a rich

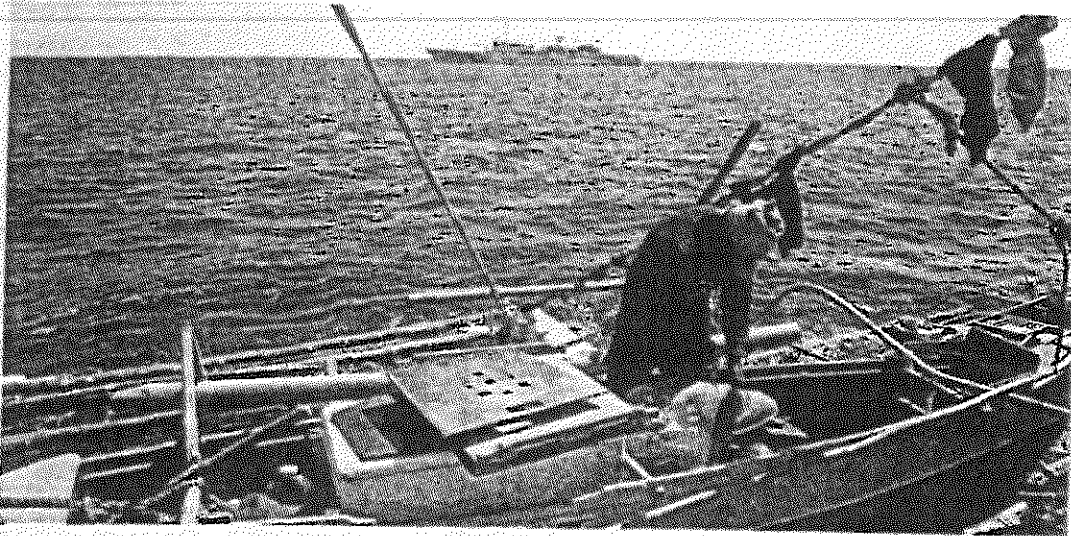
fishing ground off the coast of Masinloc, Zambales province, that is internationally known as Scarborough Shoal.

"The arbitral tribunal already ruled... that China violated its obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment when China did not prevent Chinese fishermen from harvesting giant clams and destroying the coral reefs in the process," Carpio said in a text message to the Inquirer.

"The Philippines was not awarded damages because it did not ask for damages. This time, the Philippines should demand damages for the economic losses of Filipino fishermen," he said.

Carpio, a member of the legal team that argued and won the Philippines' challenge to China's claim to nearly all of the South China Sea, said Manila must also demand payment from Beijing for its refusal to let Filipinos fish in the lagoon of Panatag.

He said Beijing clearly flouted the July 12, 2016, arbitral rul-



CHINA PATROL Filipino fishermen prepare to fish at Panatag Shoal while a Chinese Coast Guard ship patrols a kilometer away in this photo taken in 2016. —RICHARD A. REYES

ing, which invalidated China's sweeping claim to the South China Sea.

Common fishing ground

The ruling, Carpio added, declared that Panatag is the "only common fishing ground" of Filipino, Chinese and Viet-

namese fishermen in the West Philippine Sea.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea explicitly states that China has the obligation to "protect and preserve the marine environment," he said.

"The coral reefs are the

breeding ground of fish and without them there will be no fish in [Panatag], which the arbitral tribunal ruled is the traditional fishing ground of Filipino, Chinese and Vietnamese fishermen," he added.

International law, Carpio said, guarantees the freedom of

navigation of fishing vessels from all countries within the Philippine EEZ.

Carpio said the same principle should apply to the territorial waters of China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei in the South China Sea.

"However, only fishermen of the adjacent coastal state can fish in their country's EEZ. Thus, only Filipino fishermen can fish in the EEZ of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea," he said.

Seized by China

Panatag, located 230 km west of Zamboanga and well within the Philippine EEZ, has always been known as a traditional fishing ground of Filipinos.

But the shoal was seized by China after a two-month maritime standoff with the Philippines in 2012.

The incident triggered a diplomatic row between Manila and Beijing, and prompted the Aquino administration to seek arbitration in the UN court in The Hague. INQ

China invading PH? Nonsense, says envoy

By **Christine O. Avendaño**
@10avendañoINQ

KAWIT, CAVITE—Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua dismissed on Tuesday as “nonsense” talk spreading about China invading the Philippines that spread when a Chinese military plane landed in Davao City.

“I’m really puzzled and even surprised that some of the people here [are] taking the landing of Chinese military jets as a kind of military threat to the Philippines,” Zhao told reporters.

He also said some people said the landing of the Chinese plane in Davao City indicated that this might be the “beginning of our invasion.”

“Please allow me to be blunt, it’s nonsense. We have never thought of going to war with our good neighbor, our good friend that is the Philippines,” he said.

The Chinese ambassador said the Chinese government followed protocol set by Manila on foreign military planes landing in the Philippines.

He said the plane went to Davao City to refuel. //

“The plane was on its way to New Zealand for a bilateral military exercise,” he said.

“You have your protocols, which allow foreign airplanes over your territory or water or fly over your airspace,” said Zhao. INQ

Filipinos can freely fish in 'Panatag' — Chinese envoy

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Filipinos are still allowed to freely fish in Panatag Shoal based on a friendly arrangement between the Philippines and China, a Chinese diplomat said Tuesday.

Chinese Ambassador to the Philip-

pires Zhao Jianhua made the assurance after President Duterte raised concerns about the welfare of Filipino fishermen during their brief conversation at the Philippine Independence Day celebration in Cavite.

"President Duterte shared his concern about the Filipino fishermen,"

Zhao said during an interview with reporters at the sidelines of the freedom rites in Kawit.

"The friendly arrangement to allow Filipino fishermen to fish in the waters around Huangyan or Scarborough is going to be there. It will not be changed. That means they ▶2

Filipinos can freely...

◀ 1

can go back and fish there freely," he added.

Even China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China's policy of allowing Filipino fishermen to fish in the Scarborough Shoal "out of goodwill" remains unchanged.

Zhao noted that the fishing arrangement in Scarborough Shoal (Panatag Shoal) was reached during the previous meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Duterte.

"They reached into a friendly arrangement which allows the Filipino fishermen to go back to the waters near Scarborough so fishermen are fishing there. This arrangement has not changed and will not be changed," he said.

Filipino fishermen had earlier asked for the government's help amid complaints that Chinese coast guards have been forcefully taking their best catch in Panatag Shoal off Zambales.

Malacañang has described the incident as "fish thievery" and urged Beijing to prevent the unacceptable situation from happening again. Not a single kilo of fish should be taken by the Chinese from the Filipino fishermen, according to Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque.

Beijing, in turn, has committed to investigate the alleged misconduct of its coast guards and impose sanctions if allegations are proven. It also assured it has no policy of harassing Filipino fishermen in the South China Sea.

China seized control of Panatag Shoal, an area within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, following a standoff between the Philippines and Chinese vessels in 2012. Beijing prevented Filipino fishermen from entering the shoal, prompting the Aquino government to seek United Nations arbitration.

The Hague-based arbitration court nullified China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea, saying it violated the Philippines' sovereign rights by building artificial islands and interfering with fishing activities.

Acting Chief Justice Antonio T. Carpio further clarified that the Philippines cannot invoke sovereign rights over the Panatag Shoal since the 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) did not settle the dispute with China for lack of jurisdiction.

Thus, Carpio said the government should push for protocols with China on the Filipinos' fishing activities in the contested area in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Carpio, a member of the Philippines' arbitration team in the PCA, said the arbitral ruling clearly stated that Filipinos have the right to fish in the Panatag Shoal together with Chinese fishermen.

The court ruled that Panatag Shoal was a traditional fishing

ground for many countries and that no nation can prevent anyone from fishing in the area.

China refused to recognize the ruling further straining ties with Manila.

The tension later eased when President Duterte decided the government would conduct a bilateral dialogue with China to address the maritime dispute. Instead of antagonizing China, he also pursued other areas of cooperation such as increased trade and investments between the two countries.

Disciplinary action

China has vowed to impose disciplinary actions against its coast guard personnel if allegations of misconduct towards Filipino fishermen in the Panatag Shoal will be proven.

Zhao assured that China does not tolerate any action of its coast guards that is "harmful" to Filipino fishermen.

"If there is any misconduct conducted by the Chinese Coast Guards, those individuals will be punished and the rules will be there. As a rule, we do not allow Chinese Coast Guards to do whatever, to do anything that is harmful to the Filipino fishermen," he said.

"They will be disciplined in accordance with our own regulation," said Zhao, who briefly spoke to the President during the freedom rites.

Zhao's statement was echoed by Geng.

Zhao admitted that if he had bad apples,

he would get rid of them and throw them into the sea.

He said China has started a "very serious and responsible" investigation into the alleged seizure of fish catch by some coast guard members.

Initial probe, however, indicated that the fish-taking incident forms part of the "barter trade," not harassment, according to the ambassador.

"The initial investigation of both sides reflects that this is not harassment, this is not confiscation. It is some sort of barter trade, which has been going on for quite some time," Zhao said.

"When your fishermen need food, particularly when they need food and water, the Chinese fishermen, Chinese Coast Guard will exchange these with their catch," he added.

Nonetheless, Zhao said if the alleged seizure of fish from the Filipino fishermen was proven true, this should be viewed as an "isolated incident."

Filipino fishermen have complained that Chinese Coast Guard personnel have been regularly boarding their ships and forcibly taking a portion of their best catch at Panatag Shoal.

Romel Cejuela, a fisherman from Masinloc, Zambales, however, made it clear that there was no harassment, saying the Chinese offered noodles, cigarettes, and water in exchange for the fishes. (With reports from Roy C. Mabasa and Rey G. Panaligan)

China to throw CG 'bad apples' into sea — envoy

By Sara Susanne D. Fabunan, Vito Barcelo and Rey E. Requejo

CHINA'S Ambassador Zhao Jianhua admitted Thursday there were "bad apples" in the Chinese Coast Guard and said he would throw them into

the South China Sea to feed the fish, but a foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing said Filipinos could fish in Scarborough Shoal—which is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone—only "out of goodwill."

Both statements were issued after Filipino fishermen complained

that members of the Chinese Coast Guard were in the habit of boarding their boats and taking their catch.

"Even in the best regulated families, accidents happen. So we always have had apples, but if we have bad apples, you know what I'm going

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China...

From A1

to do, I'm going to throw them into the South China Sea and feed the fish," the Chinese envoy said in an interview.

Zhao, who had a brief talk with President Rodrigo Duterte, discussed the country's concern over the action of the Chinese coast guards.

"President Duterte shared his concern about the Filipino fishermen," Zhao said.

The Chinese ambassador also assured the Philippine government that they will conduct a serious investigation into the incidents, but said initial indications seemed to show there was no harassment of the fishermen but "some sort of barter trade" in which the Filipinos received cigarettes, noodles and water.

A statement by Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang was less conciliatory, however.

"China has made appropriate arrangements for the Philippine fishermen to fish in relevant waters out of goodwill," Geng said. "This policy remains unchanged."

Geng's statement contradicted Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano's claim on Sunday that the Philippines and China have forged a provisional fisheries agreement as equal parties in the Scarborough Shoal, which the Philippines calls Panatag.

Geng said the Chinese Coast Guard was merely "safeguarding" peace, order and tranquility in the area and had offered "humanitarian aid" to Filipino fishermen "many times."

He also said China was acting in "accordance with the law."

Earlier several fishermen alleged that the Chinese Coast Guard made it a habit of taking their catch in a report on GMA News.

"They don't ask for permission. They just go through our catch and take what

they want," one fishermen said in Filipino on camera.

Another remarked that the Philippines may have won the arbitration against China, but said the victory was useless because nothing has changed in Scarborough Shoal.

Asked if the media reports were true, Geng said the Chinese government is conducting an investigation "seriously."

"If the Philippine side claimed is true, I believe relevant Chinese departments will handle that in a serious manner," he added.

Geng noted that relations between China and the Philippines have taken on a positive turn.

"China has a clear and firm determination to commit itself to consolidating and strengthening China-Philippines relations," Geng said.

In a Malacañang press conference on Monday, Panatag Shoal fisherman Rommel Sihuela confirmed that China has control over Panatag Shoal, as China "allows" them to fish there.

He also added that there is no Philippine Coast Guard patrolling the area.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque presented Sihuela and two other fishermen on Monday to describe to reporters the real state of Panatag Shoal.

Cayetano, in his 120th Independence Day message, he reiterated the country's "independent foreign policy" that it is a "friend to all and enemy to none."

Amidst China's continuous militarization in the West Philippine Sea, Cayetano said the Philippines must push on and fight for its national interest.

Over the past years, China has claimed some of the features of the South China Sea, particularly the Philippine-owned reefs-turned-islands in the Kalayaan Group of Islands (Spratlys) where Beijing has installed weapons systems. **With Macon Ramos-Araneta and PNA**

Chinese envoy: Erring Coast Guard men will be punished

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday talked with Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua about his concerns involving Filipino fishermen at the Scarborough Shoal, who are allegedly being harassed by Chinese Coast Guard personnel.

Duterte and Zhao were in Kawi, Cavite for the 120th Independence Day celebrations which Duterte led.

Zhao, in an interview after the celebrations, said the President just shared with him his renewed concerns about the Filipino fishermen. He said Duterte, at the start of his term as president,

also raised his concerns about the Filipino fishermen, and this led to a "friendly arrangement" between the Philippines and China, which allows Filipino fishermen to fish in the waters near the Scarborough area. He said this arrangement has not changed and Filipinos can still fish in the area.

"Let's continue the friendly arrangement. If anything happened, if the media report is somewhat true, let's view it as an isolated incident. It should not reflect the whole picture of the bilateral relationship and should not reflect the whole arrangement with regard to

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CHINESE

the fishing in the waters around Huangyan or Scarborough," he said.

A media network recently released a video showing some Chinese Coast Guard members taking some of the Filipino fishermen's catch. On Monday, a Filipino fisherman presented to media in Malacañang said China appears to be in control of the Scarborough Shoal because it has vessels patrolling the area. The Chinese vessels also decide which fishing boats could enter the area, according to fisherman Rommel Cejuela from Masinloc in Zambales.

Zhao said Chinese agencies are investigating the harassment incidents and those found to have committed any wrongdoing would be "punished."

He said he could not specify what sanctions would be imposed but later joked, "If we have bad apples, you know what I'm going to do, I'm going to throw them into the South China Sea and feed the fish."

"First and foremost, the friendly arrangement to allow Filipino fishermen to fish in the waters around Huangyan or Scarborough is going to be there. It will not be changed. That means they can go back and fish there freely. So we will check and if there is any misconduct conducted by the Chinese Coast Guard. Those individuals will be punished and the rules will be there. As a rule, we do not allow Chinese Coast Guards to do whatever, to do anything that is harmful to the Filipino fishermen," he said.

On China's reported refusal to allow bigger fishing vessels to fish at the Scarborough Shoal, Zhao said there is a mutual understanding between the Philippines and China to discourage commercial fishing firms or "giant fishing vessels" to fish in the area as a form of protection for the marine life and fishing sanctuary in the area.

Zhao was among members of the diplomatic corps who attended the Cavite rites. He was seen talking also with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana. Zhao said his conversation with Lorenzana was "confidential."

'GOODWILL'

Zhao, in a statement issued by the Chinese Embassy, said the alleged harassment incidents are being investigated and erring personnel would be punished.

The statement also said Filipino fishermen were allowed to fish in the shoal "out of goodwill."

"China has made appropriate arrangement for the Philippine fishermen to fish in relevant waters out of goodwill," the statement said.

This contradicts a statement made Sunday by Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano that Manila and Beijing have forged a fisheries agreement as equal parties in the shoal.

In April 2012, China obtained control of the shoal after a stand-off with the Philippine Navy. The following year, the Aquino administration filed a case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration challenging China's massive claims in disputed areas in the South China Sea in 2013. In July 2016 under the Duterte administration, the arbitral tribunal ruled in favor of Manila although it said Scarborough Shoal is a traditional fishing ground not only of Filipino fishermen but also of Chinese and Vietnamese fishermen.

Zhao, in Cavite, said China has no plan to invade, or even go to war, with the Philippines which it considers as its "good neighbor" and "good friend."

He said he was talking about reactions to a stopover of a Chinese plane in Davao City on June 8.

"I'm really puzzled and even surprised that some of the people here (are) taking the landing of Chinese military jets as a kind of military threat to the Philippines, and even indicated that this might be the beginning of our invasion. Please allow me to be blunt, it's nonsense. We have never thought of going to war with our good neighbor, our good friend that is the Philippines," he said.

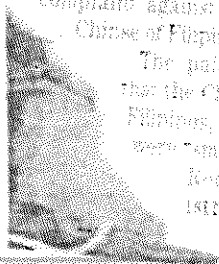
Zhao said the Chinese aircraft was on its way to New Zealand for a military exercise and made a stop in Davao City just to refuel. — *With Ashzel Hachero and Evan Orias*

China to discipline errant coast guard men – envoy

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Gao Qiang on Tuesday refused to categorize as "harassment" the reported seizure by Chinese Coast Guard personnel of the catch of Philippine fishermen on Scarborough Shoal.

"What's harassment was what happened during the time of then President (Nerney) Aquino when (Filipinos) were subjected to water cannon (bombardment) and ramming," said Roque in a Malacañang press briefing.

Roque was reacting to the threat made by former solicitor general Florio Hilbay that they are filing a complaint against the alleged harassment by the Chinese of Philippine fishermen in disputed waters. The palace official said that granting that the Chinese had been taking fish from Filipinos, the reports said what were taken were "small compared to the total catch." Roque said the Duterte administration expects China to look



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China to discipline errant coast guard men – envoy

From page 1

into the complaint against its coast guard personnel.

On Tuesday, Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua made the assurance that their government is investigating the alleged taking of fish from Filipinos by the Chinese coast guard.

"There will be discipline in accordance with our own regulations," Zhao Jianhua told reporters.

Zhao said that if the reports

are true, his government will make sure to regulate the "bad actions" of their coast guard.

"If we have bad evidence, you know what I'm going to do. I'm going to throw (them) into the South China Sea and feed the fish," Zhao said.

On Monday, the three fishermen — Romeo Sibong, Delfin Izana and June Iru — joined Roque in a press briefing at Malacañang where they narrated how the Chinese Coast Guards took their fish.

Still, Zhao reiterated that

"friendly arrangements" between the Philippines and China currently allow Filipino fishermen to fish, noting that "it will not be changed."

"They can go back and fish from (now) so we will check and if there is any misconduct committed by the Chinese Coast Guards, those individuals will be punished and the rules will be there," Zhao said.

He further said that as a rule, their government will not allow Chinese Coast Guards to do anything that is harmful to the Filipino fishermen.

Push for protocols on fishing in Panatag, gov't urged

By EDU PUNAY

Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio called on the Duterte administration to push for protocols with China on fishing activities in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

Carpio also said the Philippine government may file a protest and seek damages against China for preventing Filipinos from fishing in Panatag Shoal, but it cannot invoke sovereign rights over the contested area in the West Philippine Sea just yet.

Carpio, an expert on South China Sea issues who was part of the Philippine team that won the arbitration case against China, explained the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in July 2016 did not settle the territorial dispute between the two nations over the shoal due to lack of jurisdiction on the matter.

This means the Philippine government cannot invoke territorial rights over the shoal because it has not been declared part of the nation's territory, he said.

But Carpio stressed the ruling clearly stated that Filipinos have the right to fish in these waters alongside Chinese fishermen.

"The ruling says that Scarborough Shoal is a traditional fishing ground of Filipino and Chinese fishermen. So both can fish there," the senior magistrate explained in an interview.

Carpio suggested that to be able to comply with the PCA ruling, the government should talk to China and establish protocols "so we can fish in peace."

"We have to talk to them because we have a traditional fishing right there together with Chinese fishermen," he pointed out.

And if China refuses to cooperate and share Panatag Shoal with Filipino fishermen, Carpio said there are other options available for the government to pursue. He said the Philippine government could go back to the PCA and block China's application for permit to explore the seabed before the international seabed authority. "The international seabed authority can suspend that license of China. There are so many ways of doing it; that is just only one of the ways to put pressure on China if it refuses. We are not totally helpless," Carpio said.

But whatever strategy the government would take, Carpio said it is important to "support our coast guards and our fishermen going there."

A militant lawmaker, meanwhile, described the confiscation made by the Chinese Coast Guard of the catch by the Filipino fishermen at Panatag Shoal as "kotong (mulcting)."

Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao said the Duterte administration should take concrete action to protect Filipinos "from harassment and illegal confiscation of their catch by the Chinese Coast Guard."

"The video that caught Chinese

Coast Guard personnel boarding a fishing boat and taking the catch of Filipino fishers not only stirs anger but is also heart-breaking due to the failure of the Duterte government to protect our fisherfolk from constant harassment and extortion by the Chinese," he said.

He accused the Chinese Coast Guard of "acting like pirates."

"The Duterte government should not take this one lightly. While the government allowed a People's Liberation Army aircraft to refuel in Davao City, China repeatedly violates the rights of our fisherfolk's freedom of movement, depriving them of their sources of livelihood. These acts should be condemned. No self-respecting government would allow such demeaning and insulting acts against its citizens," Casilao said.

He also criticized presidential spokes-

man Harry Roque for "downplaying the incident."

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV said the minority in the Senate will file a resolution calling for an investigation into the incident.

"I can remember that when I was chairman of the (Senate) committee for national defense, we investigated the situation in Panatag. The Aquino administration ended with our territorial integrity intact and uncompromised, but the Duterte administration is changing that," Trillanes said.

Trillanes said a number of resolutions have been previously filed in the Senate seeking an investigation of incidents involving China.

He stressed though that the Panatag Shoal incident is an important and relevant issue.

"We are ready to investigate because these issues are very relevant. We cannot just let our sovereignty be compromised," Trillanes added.

Panatag Shoal is 120 miles off Pangasinan and Zambales. China seized it in 2012 when then president Benigno Aquino III withdrew Philippine Coast Guard ships to ease a standoff with the Chinese Coast Guard.

Since then, the Chinese have been guarding the area, though the Duterte administration claims that Beijing is allowing Filipinos to fish there.

Last week, Carpio called on the Duterte administration to file another case against China before the PCA over reported harassment by Chinese coast guards on Filipino fishermen in Panatag Shoal, in violation of the PCA ruling.

- With Jess Diaz, Janvic Mateo

Beijing probing sea abuses – envoy

CHINA is investigating its coast guards who last month took the catch of Filipino fishermen at the disputed Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, the Chinese ambassador to the Philippines said on Tuesday.

Zhao Jianhua called the catch takers "bad apples" and if it was proven that they forcibly took the Filipinos' catch, he would "throw [them] into the South China Sea and feed the fish."

Last week, GMA News released a video footage that was supposedly taken on May 20.

Cameras on a fishing boat captured the Chinese asking for fish from the fishermen and then sailing away when they found out that the Filipinos had not caught any.

On Monday, Romel Cejuela, a fisherman from Bajo de Masinloc in Zambales, bared that the Chinese usually took their haul from the shoal

► Abuses A8

ABUSES FROM A1

Beijing probing sea abuses

worth about P4,000 in exchange for cigarettes, noodles and water.

"[If proven,] there will be discipline in accordance with our own regulations. I'm not sure about the details because it will be the investigation is being conducted by competent agencies and they have their own corresponding regulations." Ambassador Zhao Jianhua told reporters after President Rodrigo Duterte's speech during the 120th celebration of Philippine Independence at the Museo ni Aguinaldo in Kawit, Cavite.

"Whether [this is] forceful taking or harassment, it's really up to the investigation. I'm sure you have noted the Filipino side's remarks about their investigation conducted with your fishermen involved. From the remarks, I can see that it's primarily barter trade [between the fishermen and the coast guards] if you may call it," Zhao said.

He added that the "friendly arrangement" between the Philippines and China to allow Filipino fishermen to fish in the rich fishing grounds will stand.

"First and foremost, the friendly arrangement to allow Filipino fishermen to fish in the waters around Huangyan or Scarborough is going to be there. It will not be changed. That means they can go back and fish there freely so we will check and if there is any misconduct conducted by the Chinese coast guards, those individuals will be punished and the rules will be there," Zhao said.

"As a rule, we do not allow Chinese coast guards to do whatever to do anything that is harmful to the Filipino fishermen," he added.

Zhao said there's a "mutual understanding" not to allow large boats of Filipino fishermen to sail to Panatag Shoal, adding that both countries agreed that only fishermen will be allowed to enter the shoal.

Cejuela said on Monday that their big ships, or their "mother" ships, are allowed only up to the entrance of the shoal as their

smaller boats are the only ones allowed by the Chinese to enter the shoal.

Once they fill their smaller boats, they return to their mother ships and deposit all their catch.

Then, they go back to the shoal and fish again, Cejuela said.

"Up until now, we do not encourage commercial fishing, the large giant fishing vessels are there because we also have a responsibility for protecting the species of the fish and also the environment there," Zhao said.

He said the friendly arrangement should be continued since the supposed catch-taking is an "isolated incident."

"If anything happens, if the media report is somewhat true, let's view it as an isolated incident. It should not reflect the whole picture of the bilateral relationship and should not reflect the whole arrangement with regard to the fishing in the waters around Huangyan or Scarborough," Zhao said.

The United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration thrashed China's "nine-dash claim" to the entire South China Sea in a ruling at The Hague on July 12, 2016.

The ruling declared that Filipino fishermen should enjoy fishing rights at the Panatag Shoal and that the Spratly Islands, as well as the Panganiban (Mischief) Reef, Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal and Recto Bank are all within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

But Duterte set aside the ruling.

Zhao also downplayed fears and concerns over the landing and refueling of a Chinese military aircraft last week in Davao City.

He said China's aircraft followed Philippine protocols when it made a stop in Davao City.

"The landing is very simple, it's for refueling," Zhao added.

According to the ambassador, the plane was on its way to New Zealand for bilateral military exercises.

Malacañang on Sunday confirmed the landing of the Chinese military aircraft, saying the request for landing was "received, processed and cleared by relevant Philippine government agencies."

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA AND
CATHERINE S. VALENTE

Robredo: PH freedom in danger

BY LLANESCA T. PANTI

PHILIPPINE independence is in danger, Vice President Maria Leonor "Leni" Robredo warned during the commemoration of the 120th anniversary of the declaration of Philippine independence from Spain.

While Filipinos have surmounted American colonization, the Japanese invasion during World War 2 and Martial Law, the fight to preserve freedom is not yet over, Robredo said.

"These days, our freedom is facing a lot of danger, from the rising prices of commodities, denial of justice, disregard of human rights and invasion of our territories by

foreign powers," Robredo said in her Independence Day message.

The vice president, however, was confident Filipinos would rise to the challenge.

"I am hopeful that we Filipinos have the courage to lift each other from poverty, courage to defend our rights and freedom from all threats," Robredo said.

Robredo earlier warned that the

China's militarization of the West Philippine Sea was the most serious external threats to the Philippines since World War 2.

A television report had revealed that members of the Chinese coast guard have been forcibly taking the catch of Filipino fishermen in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, a traditional fishing ground for the Philippines and China as well as Taiwan and Vietnam.

Panatag Shoal lies within the Philippines' 200-nautical-miles exclusive economic zone.

"Seeing the pain that our fisherfolk go through as they work hard for something that they might not even be able to bring home at the end of a hard day's work breaks our hearts, especially as we celebrate Independence Day tomorrow. Nobody deserves that, least of all our

fishermen. Our country doesn't deserve that," Robredo said during a forum on West Philippine Sea issues in UP Diliman on Monday.

In her second engagement on Independence Day as guest of honor for the oath-taking of newly elected *barangay* (village) officials in Rosario, Cavite, the vice president said she would defend the rights of fishermen earning their livelihood in the West Philippine Sea.

"We want assure our fishermen that we want to be of help to them, we are on the same side, that we will stand to defend their right to fish there," Robredo, who used to serve as legal counsel for fisherfolk before joining politics, said in a chance interview.

ACT-Teacher's partylist Rep. Antonio Tinio said the Duterte

administration was disrespecting Philippine Independence due to its failure to protect its people and its sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea.

"The Duterte administration has failed to protect its people," Tinio said in a separate statement.

Former solicitor general Floren Hilbay, one of the counsels in the Philippines' arbitration case vs China in The Hague, earlier described China's push for a joint exploration of the West Philippine Sea with the Philippines as "thievery."

"China is taking resources that it does not even own in the first place, as shown by its militarization of the West Philippine Sea. If they really believe that they own the West Philippine Sea, why would they share its ownership with us?" Hilbay said in

the same forum.

"China's proposal of a joint exploration is just a false benevolence of a thief," Hilbay added.

Hilbay also called on the Department of Foreign Affairs to come clean on the 50 to 100 protests it had supposedly lodged against China due to Beijing's continued militarization in West Philippine Sea, including the deployment of anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles to the Subi, Mischief and Fiery Cross reefs, which are all within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

"What is really in those protests, if those were indeed filed? It should invoke our victory in the UN Tribunal in The Hague. Otherwise, we are giving away our rights in the West Philippine Sea to China," Hilbay said.

Leni: Pinoys will fight for freedom

BY JP LOPEZ

VICE President Leni Robredo yesterday warned of modern-day threats to the country's hard-fought independence but expressed belief Filipinos would fight for their freedom.

Robredo, who led flag-raising and wreath-laying ceremonies for the 120th Independence Day celebrations at the Rizal Park in

Manila, said widespread poverty, soaring prices of commodities, injustice, human rights abuses and the incursion into the country's territories are threatening independence.

But, she said, Filipinos would not be cowed by any threat.

"Sa harap ng lahat ng ito, hindi magpapazala ang Pilipinong lalaki ko. Sa harap ng Pilipinong lalaki ko ay mamundigan nang buong

giting para ipaglaban ang ating kalayaan." In the face of all these, the Filipino I know will not give up. Instead, the Filipino I know will bravely take a stand to fight for freedom," she said.

She expressed belief Filipinos have the "power to uplift the lives of their countrymen from poverty" as well as the "courage

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to stand up for their rights and capability to defend the country's freedom."

Her statements came amid alleged reported harassment incidents by Chinese Coast Guard on Filipino fishermen at the Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal which is some 124 nautical miles off Zamboales and within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

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

Opposition senators used the territorial row with China as their rallying cry for the Independence Day celebrations.

Senators Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, Francis Pangilinan, Risa Hontiveros and Leila de Lima, in statements, said it is time that Filipinos stop China's bullying tactics.

Aquino said that while the country is celebrating Independence Day, Filipino fishermen are not free to fish within the country's waters.

Pangilinan said, "We celebrate the 120th anniversary of the proclamation of Philippine independence amid stark challenges and abiding aspirations as a nation, particularly the blatant violations to our territory and our resources, and consequently to our rights as a free people."

But Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the country's independence "has never been stronger."

"Our people's pride and love for country has never waned and we take the last line of our national anthem to heart!" he said.

Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez said it is only during the term of President Duterte that the country became a "truly independent nation."

In his speech at the celebration of the country's 120th Independence Day in Tagum City in his home province of Davao del Norte, Alvarez cited the shift in

the administration's foreign policy which he said freed the country from American control.

"Our politics was controlled by Americans, our economy was controlled by the Americans. Were we truly independent? No," Alvarez said. "Previously America was our only friend. When President Duterte came into power he became friends with everyone."

He said the pivot was not only towards China since the President also "befriended Korea, he befriended other nations in the world."

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said the country's foreign policy will remain "a friend to all and enemy to none."

The DFA has been at the receiving end of criticisms due to its perceived softness in handling the territorial dispute with China.

Militant groups took the streets to denounce what they said Duterte's inability to uphold truth in Philippine history and fight for the country's sovereignty.

Manila Police District spokesman Supt. Erwin Margarejo said there were around 500 protesters.

The groups belonging to Kilusang Mayo Uno, Bayan, Anakpawis, Piston, and League of Filipino Students were blocked from going to US Embassy along Roxas Boulevard. They held a brief program at the corner of United Nations Avenue and Roxas, shouting anti-US slogans such as "US troops out now!" and "US imperialists: No 1 terrorist." They then marched towards Livisang Bonifacio and joined groups like from Gabriela, Pamalakaya, and Babae Po Ako.

Sister Mary John Mananzan, president of St. Scholastica's College, took a swipe at government's supposed inaction and apathy to the harassment and assault that women face on the street, more so in militarized zones across the country. She argued that there is no freedom where rights of women are not respected. — *With Wendell Vigilis and Ashzel Hachero*

Hontiveros seeks foreign policy 'audit'

SEN. Risa Hontiveros on Tuesday called for an "audit" of the Duterte administration's foreign policy.

The senator said a foreign policy audit would scrutinize the diplomatic actions taken by the Department of Foreign Affairs against China's militarization in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

She wants to know "what diplomatic platforms and channels were used" to address Chinese incursions, as well as the reported harassment of Filipino fishermen by the Chinese Coast Guard in Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal, which is within the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Hontiveros said a foreign policy audit would determine if the foreign policy framework is in compliance with Manila's international obligations, particularly

the arbitral tribunal ruling on the WPS.

"Amid the timidity, silence and opacity about how government carries its foreign policy work, we need a public, participatory and comprehensive assessment of its foreign policy directions and implementation," she said. "It's time to audit its foreign policy, especially the so-called 50-100 diplomatic protests and actions undertaken by the foreign affairs department vis-a-vis China."

Hontiveros was referring to the claim of Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano that his department filed 50 to 100 diplomatic protests against China but opted not to publicize them.

"In light of all these threats to and violations of our national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the public deserves to know if the

government is really standing up for us," Hontiveros said.

She said President Rodrigo Duterte and the DFA have the "responsibility to inform the people about their foreign affairs strategy to respond to China's aggressive actions in the region."

Other senators also on Tuesday expressed dismay over the government's "defeatist" mindset amid the "serious threat" posed by China.

"Not since World War 2 have we faced such a serious threat to our sovereignty, to the very definition of who we are, to our very existence and survival as a country," Sen. Francis Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan, who is also the president of the Liberal Party (LP), lamented that the country celebrated its 120th Independence Day amid reports of bla-

tant violations to the country's territory and resources.

"We are the cradle of heroes, we swore not to allow oppressors, but why it seems our leaders are acting as slaves to China? Why are they disregarding the needs of Filipino fishermen? And what happened to their sworn duty to protect the rights of the Filipino people?" he asked.

Sen. Paolo Benigno Aquino 4th said it was difficult to accept that Filipino fishermen were still not able to fish freely within Philippine waters and were being bullied by the Chinese.

"If the government continues its defeatist mentality, China will be more emboldened to commit more abuses to our territory and against the Filipino people," he added. **BERNADETTE TAMAYO AND JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA**

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Protesters call Rody 'traitor'

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Militant groups yesterday denounced President Duterte, branding him a "traitor" to the country's interests.

A group of activists heckled Duterte while he was about to deliver his speech at the celebration of the 120th anniversary of Philippine Independence in Kawit, Cavite.

Some of the protesters who held the lightning rally called Duterte a traitor and called for his ouster before they were escorted out of the venue by

the police and Presidential Security Group.

The protesters raised several posters with different messages and chanted "*Hunyo a dose, hirwad na kalayaan*" (June 12, a fake independence).

Duterte was unfazed by the protesters, who he said have the right to express their views.

Duterte said he loves his countrymen, including those who heckled him.

"We cannot agree at all times for all seasons. But at least we have this exercise once every six years. I suppose under this new Constitution you can elect the leaders that you want to run the country," the President said.

Hundreds of protesters also gathered in front of the Chinese embassy in Makati City and in Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila denouncing Duterte's supposed selling out the country to China.

"Filipino fishermen were harassed by the Chinese Coast Guard, and the Duterte regime is too cowardly to challenge this intrusion into our territory," Kilusang Mayo Uno chair Elmer Labog said.

"Duterte has traded away the dignity and livelihood of our workers to protect his own interests," Labog added.

He said Duterte has not opposed China's claims to the disputed South China Sea, and even refused to assert the Philippines' right to that territory.

Labog accused Duterte of colluding with China as proven by the President's agreement with the Chinese on trade and economic cooperation as well as infrastructure projects.

"Duterte boasts of close ties with China, but it has benefit-

ted only him, at the expense of the rest of the country," Labog said.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) assailed Duterte for reneging on its promise of an independent foreign policy.

"The Philippines cannot be truly free, not when foreign powers collude to take advantage of our people and resources. We cannot be truly free if China continues to claim most of the West Philippine Sea," Bayan secretary-general Renato Reyes said.

He said the Duterte administration has chosen the path of "subservience" as it practically gives up the West Philippine Sea in exchange for loans and investments from China.

Manila Bishop Broderick Pabillo said the incident at Panatag Shoal and reports of reef destruction in the area could indicate a "creeping subservience to China."

He said the tolerance of the Duterte administration to Chinese transgression at the West Philippine Sea and the abuses at the shoal could be perceived that the Philippines is slowly

losing its independence.

"With our situation, our independence is being chipped off. We have the creeping subservience to China," he said.

Vice President Leni Robredo called for a stronger government stance against such reported incidents inside the Philippine waters.

Robredo assured Filipino fishermen traversing the West Philippine Sea of her support amid reports of harassment committed by the Chinese coast guards against them.

"It's heartbreaking to see them (fishermen) feeling that they don't have anyone to turn to. We want to assure them that many of us are still ready to fight for them," Robredo said.

Detained Sen. Leila de Lima issued her Independence Day statement, saying there is no real democracy under the Duterte administration.

Ousted chief justice Maria Lourdes Sereno said the Philippines was plunged into "terrible times" because fear was allowed to rule the country.

On the other hand, the urban poor group Kadamay slammed "the government's policy of giving up Philippine territories while aggravating the poverty levels domestically."

"This was best summed up recently by (presidential spokesman) Harry Roque's comments justifying the taking of Filipino fishermen's catch by Chinese authorities in exchange for instant noodles," Kadamay chair Gloria Arellano said. ☐

Teddy Casiño of Bayan said Roque should resign for downplaying the harassment incident involving the Chinese coast guard on Filipino fishermen.

Casiño recalled Roque was once like them, joining them on the streets fighting for the sovereign rights of the Philippines over the disputed Panatag Shoal and even defended the fishermen.

Casiño emphasized he understands where Roque is, being the spokesman of the President, when he seemed to have downplayed the harassment of Chinese coastguard.

"The best thing that he can do now, if he wants to maintain his integrity, is to resign - just because he wants to maintain his position, he is abandoning his principles," Casiño said. - With Mayen Jaymalin, Evelyn Macairan, Marvin Sy, Helen Flores, Robertzon Ramirez, Emmanuel Tupas, Rhodina Villanueva, Janvic Mateo

DUTERTE CRITICS SLAM FAKE INDEPENDENCE

Critics of President Duterte marked the 120th anniversary of Philippine independence on Tuesday with calls to assert the country's sovereignty in the territorial dispute with China and to protect democracy against authoritarian rule.

Hundreds of activists, including women's rights advocates, rallied in the rain at Liwasang Bonifacio for an "HINDIpendence Day" celebration.

They said despite the end of Spanish colonial rule 120 years ago, the country continued to struggle for economic freedom, civil and political rights and sovereignty in face

of Chinese incursions in the West Philippine Sea and continued dependence on the United States.

Plans for Charter change, extrajudicial killings linked to the war on drugs, rising taxes, fake news and attacks on the media, martial law in Mindanao, lack of respect for women and labor contractualization are among the daily problems faced by millions of Filipinos despite the country's "independence," they said.

"The fight against (Charter change) is a fight for our future, a fight against a dictator and a fight for freedom," for-

mer Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares said.

UP gathering

In a gathering at the University of the Philippines, members of Tindig Pilipinas, a coalition opposed to the Duterte administration, Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano slammed the government's weak stance toward China in the maritime dispute.

"Even if you only have your nails and teeth, if your rights are trampled on, you have to fight! This government is very harsh on Filipinos but fearful of the Chinese," he said.

In Cebu City, dozens of

protesters burned Chinese and US flags in the heart of the city.

Speakers during the brief rally took turns criticizing the Duterte administration for failing to protect Filipino fishermen being harassed by the Chinese in the West Philippine Sea.

Members of Kilusang Mayo Uno also collected signatures to support a campaign to abolish the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act and to implement a nationwide daily minimum wage of P750.

—REPORTS FROM AIE BALAGTAS SEE, JODEE A. AGONCILLO, LEO UDTOHAN, ROSALIE ABATAYO AND JOEY A. GABIETA INQ

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PEACE GATHERING

MANOBO CHIEF LAYS DOWN ARMS, ENDS 25-YEAR FIGHT WITH GOV'T

By Frinston Lim
@flimINQ

DAVAO CITY—After fighting the government for more than 20 years, Datu Guibang Apoga, leader of the Langilan-Manobo tribe, has surfaced from the hinterlands of Davao del Norte and Bukidnon provinces to lay down his arms, the military said.

Maj. Ezra Balagtey, spokesperson for the military's Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom), said Apoga, who led a "pangayaw" (tribal war) in 1993 against government troops and security personnel of logging firm Alcantara and Sons (Alsons), finally made peace with the government on Saturday during a tribal peace gathering at Palma Gil village in Talaingod, Davao del Norte.

Balagtey said Apoga's move virtually ended one of the fiercest battles waged by indigenous peoples (IPs) to defend their ancestral lands in Southern Mindanao.

Forced surrender?

He said Apoga, said to be in his 80s, was received by fellow tribal leaders and local and military officials during a "tampura" (peace gathering) at Sitio Nasilaban.

Balagtey said Apoga surrendered his rifle to Brig. Gen. Ernesto Torres Jr., commander of the Army's 1003rd Infantry Brigade, and Lt. Col. Edwin Paredes, 56th Infantry Battalion commander, during the event witnessed by about 500 tribal elders and members.

But 18 Manobo datu, who had fought side by side with Apoga as leaders of Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanugon (Unity for the Defense of Ancestral Lands), refused the military's claim of the tribal leader's surrender.

In a statement, the group said Alamara paramilitary forces and the 56th Infantry Battalion "orchestrated" the "lumad" gathering to make it appear that



Datu Guibang Apoga

the ailing Apoga had renounced the tribes' fight to defend their ancestral domain. Earlier, the lumad group Pasaka said Apoga had gone home to his community of Nasilaban to recuperate when soldiers visited his house to force him to surrender.

Bows and arrows

"In his speech at the assembly, Datu Guibang Apoga spoke of his desire for lumad schools to continue to serve his people. Nowhere in his brief discourse did he speak of surrendering his conviction nor did he endorse the demise of his tribe and his people," said the statement signed by Datu Doloman Dausay, secretary general and spokesperson for the lumad group Salugpongan, and Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay, a council member, and 16 others.

Armed with just bows and arrows and improvised rifles, Apoga's group attacked Alsons employees and resisted government troops sent to arrest him and his followers, forcing him to flee deep into the forest.

He was slapped with several murder charges as a result of the attacks on Alsons' guards and workers.

His resolve to defend his ancestral domain from alleged intrusion of businesses and the military earned him the Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan (Hero of the Environment) in 2017. INQ

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Westmincom to destroy 1,221 guns

ZAMBOANGA CITY - At least 1,221 firearms recently recovered in military operations or surrendered by their owners in Zamboanga peninsula, Basilan and Sulu will be destroyed tomorrow. **b**

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, will lead the decommissioning of the guns at Camp Arturo Enrile in this city.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, Westmincom spokesman, said the destruction of the loose firearms aims to demonstrate the resolve of the government to fight terrorism and insurgency.

Besana said personnel of the 9th Forward Service Support Unit would crush the firearms using a road roller.

The military has intensified the recovery of loose firearms as part of the implementation of martial law in Mindanao.

- Roel Pareño

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AFP honors young soldier's heroism

By JOSEPH JUBELAG

GENERAL SALIPADA K. PENDATUN, Maguindanao - The military cited the bravery and heroism of a young soldier who was killed on Monday while pursuing a band of Islamic State (IS)-inspired jihadists in the marshland area here which serves as a stronghold of the local terror group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, 33rd Infantry Battalion commander, said PFC Garry Quitar displayed his gallantry when he served as a point man of a team which figured in a face-to-face gunfight with IS-inspired jihadists belonging to BIFF local terror group.

He said Quitar, a native of Pigcawayan, North Cotabato, led the team which pursued fleeing terrorists in the marshy terrain here, following intense airstrikes and artillery bombardments launched by government forces which targeted the terrorist strongholds and gun factory the past days.

The military reported at least 15 suspected terrorists have been killed in the attacks.

Cabunoc said Quitar volunteered to be the point man of the patrol despite the high risks involved in the military operations.

"His bravery will be emulated by the rest of my troops," Cabunoc said.

Government troops had stormed the marshland areas where the fleeing terrorists had sought refuge.

Intelligence information revealed that foreign terrorist Salahuddin Hassan, together with a dozen of local terrorists were believed holed out in the marshland area here.

"Troops had to wade in chest-deep

murky and deep waters of the Liguashan marsh while tracking down the enemies," Cabunoc said.

He said soldiers had to adapt to the condition of new battlefield as they learned new tactics and innovations from such experience.

Brig Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6th Infantry Division commander, has extended his condolences to the bereaved family of Quitar, saying "the military has lost a man and warrior who will never be forgotten in the history of wars."

Statue unveiled in Laguna honors sacrifices of soldiers

BY VICTOR REYES

A STATUE of a soldier and young girl was unveiled yesterday in Cavinti town, Laguna by local government officials to honor the sacrifices of soldiers during the 120th Independence Day celebration.

The statue was erected by the Cavinti town government on a property of the National Power Corporation in Barangay West Talaongan. Its lifetime light will be shouldered by the CBK Power Company Limited, a power generation company. *RV*

"Our soldiers sacrificed a lot for us to enjoy our booming eco-tourism as well as the peace and order in our community. This is a small recognition compared to what they have been doing for the people of Cavinti," said Cavinti Mayor Milbert Oliveros.

Oliveros said the town "decided to deviate from the customary activities because we believe that the best way to honor the sacrifices of our founding fathers is to honor our present day heroes who have followed their footsteps so that present day Filipinos will continue to enjoy the freedom and democracy which they fought and died for."

Brig. Gen. Arnulfo Mancebo Burgos, commander of the Army's 202nd Brigade based in Cavinti town, graced the ceremony. He

said the statue is an affirmation of the "people's faith" to the Armed Forces.

Burgos said the statue will serve as an inspiration for soldiers. "We are both humbled and proud. Once in a while, even heroes need heroes to succeed. You are the heroes of our country's heroes," he said.

"Such degree of trust shall serve as an eternal inspiration for all of us in the noble profession of arms to keep doing what we do—serve the Filipino people and secure this part of our land," Burgos said.

"We are humbled by our people's outpouring of support because we never expected to experience such in our service. We are proud because we are soldiers who are loved, respected and whose service is appreciated by the very people whom we have sworn to serve," Burgos also said.

The soldier and the girl who served as the statue's model were Private First Class Gemson Miras, assigned with the 202nd Brigade, and Cheche Bumanglag, a soldier's daughter. They are both residents of Cavinti town.

AFP spokesman Col. Edgard Arerale said the nation and the people celebrated the independence that was "bequeathed to us by our forebears through their blood, sweat, tears, and innumerable sacrifices."

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22 NPA rebels surrender in Bicol

LEGAZPI CITY - At least 22 New People's Army (NPA) rebels have surrendered to local officials, according to the military.

Maj. Gen. Jesus Mangquil Jr., 9th Infantry Division commander, said most of the surrenderees were with NPA groups operating in Sorsogon and nearby provinces.

Mangquil said around 100 rebels in Bicol had earlier surrendered. He said local officials also received surrender feelers from more rebels.

Bicol had been earlier tagged as a bailiwick of communist rebels. Many NPA leaders, including Sofero Llamas, alias Ka Teroy and Ka Nognog, were natives of the region.

- Cot Dematera

Quezon village chief, Batangas poll exec slain

By **DANNY ESTACIO** and **LYLA MANALO**

SAN NARCISO, Quezon/BAUAN, Batangas — A barangay chairman was killed by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Barangay Busokbusokan, San Narciso, Quezon last Monday afternoon, while the election officer of Mabini, Batangas was gunned down by motorcycle-riding killers later in the day.

Police in Quezon identified the slain village official as Ruben Aureada Carabido, 53, married, chairman of Barangay Binay in San Narciso. Probers said Carabido was in Busokbusokan to visit his brother at 1:30 p.m., when about eight NPA rebels arrived and shot him to death.

Later at 6:10 p.m. in Bauan, Batangas, Noel Alvarez Meralles, 53, a resident of Batangas City and election officer of Mabini, was slain by riding-in-tandem gunmen in front of CitiMart in Barangay 4-Poblacion.

Senior Superintendent Edwin Quilates said a Special Investigation Task Group (STG) has been formed to solve the killing of Meralles, who was described by Batangas Election Supervisor Gloria Petallo as a quiet and kind person.

Police find 2 persons of interest in priest slay

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

PNP chief Oscar Albayalde yesterday said police investigators have found two persons of interest in the killing of Fr. Richmond Nilo, parish priest of Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija, on Sunday night.

Albayalde said investigators who reviewed CCTV footage around the crime scene have identified two men who may shed light on the killing. He said an artist's sketch

of the two who were seen riding a motorcycle would soon be released to the media. Witnesses said the person who shot Fr. Nilo escaped aboard a motorcycle.

Chief Supt. Amador Corpus, Central Luzon Police Regional Office chief, said among the motives being looked into by probes was Fr. Nilo's involvement in a number of land disputes and for his fight

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POLICE

against abuse of minors.
"Fr. Nilo was helping someone with the problem (land dispute)," Corpus said, adding the priest received death threats.

He said Fr. Nilo's sister issued a statement to the police which stated what she knew of the land dispute.

Fr. Nilo, 40, was preparing to celebrate Mass when he was shot through the window at the back of the altar by an unidentified man.

He was the third priest to be killed since December last year and the fourth to be attacked.

Last April 29, Fr. Mark Ventura was killed by armed men after celebrating Mass at the gymnasium of Barangay Pena West in Gattaran, Cagayan Province, while Fr. Marcelito Paer was shot dead in Jean, Nueva Ecija last December.

Last week, Fr. Rey Urmeneta, former chaplain of the PNP at Camp Crame who is now assigned with the St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Calamba, was wounded when he was shot by unidentified men.

Manila Archbishop Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle called for a review of existing laws on gun selling and ownership, saying there are just too many in the streets that may cause further violence and killings.

In his Independence Day message, Tagle urged lawmakers and

security officials to consider reviewing prevailing rules on owning firearms and ammunition.

"We are calling the attention of our lawmakers and those in charge of peace and order: Why is there too many guns and weapons on the loose?" asked Tagle.

"Maybe there is a need to review laws and regulations concerning the manufacture, selling, buying, and ownership of guns. Let us not wait anymore for the time when it is easier to purchase guns than rice," he added.

Tagle also called on the faithful to offer masses in their respective parishes for nine straight days starting today, June 13, for priests who have been killed.

In his Independence Day Message for the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan, CBCP president Socrates Villegas assailed the killings of priests.

"They are killing our flock. They are killing us the shepherds. They are killing our faith. They are cursing our Church. They are killing God again as they did in Calvary," said Villegas.

"Killing is the solution. Killing is the language. Killing is the way. Killing is the answer. Killing is encouraged. Killing is their job. Killers are rewarded. Killers boast of their murders," he added. — *With Gerard Naval*

HECKLERS

(Peace is for everyone, everyone is for peace—Bayan ST).

Segun said Couichie was allowed to exercise his freedom of expression but will be charged for violation of the Revised Penal Code for disturbance of public order.

When he resumed his speech, Duterte said: "We cannot agree at all times for all seasons. We may not understand each other but at least there is a common denominator and that is love of country. Nobody but nobody can ever question sa pagmamahal ko sa bayan (my love for the country)."

He added what the protesters did was allowed under the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

Duterte led the flag-raising ceremony at the Museo ni Emilio Aguinaldo in Kawit, Cavite but skipped the arrival honors and wreath laying ceremony due to the rains. He instead dropped by the Emilio Aguinaldo monument and paid his respects to the first President before he left Cavite.

The President said it was a great honor for him to join the celebration of Independence Day, his first since becoming president in 2016.

Duterte was supposed to lead the Independence Day celebration last

year at the Rizal Park in Manila but Malacañang claimed he had to attend to some "challenges" confronting the country at that time. Instead, he sent Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano to represent him and join Vice President Maria Leonora Robredo at the flag raising ceremony.

The annual Independence Day *vin d'honneur* was also cancelled last year in deference to the siege in Marawi City then which came under terrorist attack on May 23, 2017.

There is no announcement yet as to whether the Independence Day *vin d'honneur*, which is usually attended by members of the diplomatic corps, would be held this year. Presidential spokesman Harry Roque, when asked, said "no info (information)."

In his speech, Duterte said: "The story of how our forebears fought for our sovereignty and established a Filipino nation shall forever inspire us to cherish the freedoms that we enjoy, all of us, today."

He lamented, though: "Sadly, more than a century since our heroes liberated us from foreign subjugation, our nation still has to face enemies that attack from within. This, time, we face the modern challenges of poverty, corruption, environmental degradation, terrorism, criminality and

illegal drugs."

Duterte said he has made it his personal mission to free the nation of the social ills, but admitted he cannot do it alone and would need the support of the Filipinos to address the problems and ensure they would not cause more damage to the future.

He renewed his commitment to get rid of illegal drugs and corruption, and reiterated what he had already done or has started to do since assuming the presidency, such as firing government officials involved in corruption and intensifying the anti-drug campaign problems.

He added he is also exerting efforts to achieve peace and renewed his call for communist leader Jose Maria Sison to return to the country for the peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

He likewise appealed again to Congress to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law to avoid another "round of ruckus."

He also reaffirmed his commitment to address terrorism problems especially in Mindanao, while reiterating his gratitude for the different law enforcement groups that had been fighting local terrorist groups.

"Ako, sabi ko (I said), I have a few more years. And I will do my

best especially in the matter of graft and corruption. I have fired so many and will continue to fire everybody... I said I will stop graft and corruption and I'm doing it. Talagang ginagawa ko. Inuupakan ko lahat. Sinabi ko, nintuin ninyo ang droga (I really do it. I hit everyone. I said, stop drugs) because drugs will destroy this nation," Duterte said.

In the afternoon, the President flew to Clark in Pampanga where he administered the oath of office to some 3,100 newly elected barangay officials.

Duterte urged the barangay leaders to help him in his fight against illegal drugs.

He also reassured the officials he would back them up and not allow them to go to jail if they are charged for doing their duties, as long as they do not get involved in illegal drugs.

In Camp Crame, ranking police officials led by Deputy Director General Ramon Apolinario, the deputy PNP chief for administration, held the traditional flag-raising activity in the absence of PNP chief Oscar Albayalde who joined President Duterte in Kawit, Cavite.

In a speech he read for Albayalde, Apolinario reminded policemen to be loyal to their sworn duties to protect and serve the people. — *With Raymond Africa*

22 NPA sumuko sa Sorsogon

CAMP NAKAR, Quezon - Dalawampung dalawang miyembro ng Communist NPA Terrorists (CNTs) mula sa Sub-Regional Yunit Guerrilla, Komiteng Probinsya 3- Sorsogon, sa ilalim ni Jeffrey Benzon Q Hazel alyas Pita, ang sumuko sa 903de sa pamamagitan ng 31st Infantry Battalion ng Philippine Army sa Barangay Rangas, Iubat, Sorsogon, Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) nitong Linggo, bandang 1:30 ng hapon.

Ayon kay Lieutenant General Danilo Pamoranag, commander ng

SOLCOM, isinuko rin ng 22 rebeldy ang isang M65 rifle, isang M14 rifle, isang K99 carbine at tatlong cal. 45 pistols.

Sinabi ni Brigadier General Greg Almerol, commander ng 903rd Brigade, ang matagumpay na pagsuko ng mga rebelde ay dahil sa patuloy na negosasyon sa tulong ng ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno at lokal na pamahalaan.

Base pa sa ulat, nilipat ang mga sumuko sa Camp Ota, Legaspi City para sa custodial debriefing.

Danny J. Estacio

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FFW welcomes move to free 6 CPP cadres for peace talks

MILITANT labor group Federation of Free Workers welcomed the decision of two Metro Manila Regional Trial Courts to allow six top Communist Party of the Philippines leaders to participate in the peace talks to end the world's longest-running communist insurgency.

The court allowed Alan Jazmines, an alleged CPP Central Committee member, CPP chairman Benito Tiamzon, Adelberto Silva, Rafael Baylosis, Vicente Ladlad and Randall Echanis to take part in the talks.

"The peace initiatives to end the more than 50 years of armed conflict is good for the country particularly so if social justice is in the main agenda. Social justice is giving more to those less in life and it can be achieved with more jobs, less poverty and less inequality," FFW president lawyer Sonny Matula said.

The labor group said Filipinos are now starting to see the hope for lasting peace with the communist guerillas and the Moro secessionists to end bloodletting.

"On the quest for peace, we commend both the government and the CPP-led NDF for the reopening of formal talks in July 2018. FFW also appreciates Norway's valuable role in the reopening of the peace process in the Philippines," Matula said.

Both the rebels and the government cannot walk away from the negotiating table because Norway has consistently been there. ^{A 2.}

Other than acting as third-party facilitator of peace talks between the government and the NDF, Norway is also a member of the International Monitoring Team overseeing the implementation of the peace process between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front, as well as the Independent Decommissioning Body responsible for the decommissioning of MILF combatants.

In the last International Labor Conference last week, various labor groups lauded and manifested their support to the resumption of peace talks with social justice in all fronts.

The labor groups has also urged Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, who heads the government negotiating panel talking with the NDF, to involve trade unions and civil society groups in the peace process. **Vito Bartelo**

THREE-DAY OFFENSIVE

SOLDIER KILLED IN CLASHES WITH EX-BIFF GUNMEN

IN MAGUINDANAO, N. COTABATO

CAMP SIONGCO, MAGUINDANAO—A soldier was killed in the military's three-day offensive against gunmen formerly allied with the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in the borders of Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces.

The military on Tuesday confirmed the death of Pfc. Garry Quito, a native of Pigcawayan, North Cotabato, and a member of the Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion (IB).

Quito and his fellow soldiers were wading in a portion of the vast Liguasan Marsh when he was hit, said Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, 33rd IB commander.

"He volunteered as the point man of the patrol despite the high risks involved in the operations. His bravery will be emulated by the rest of my troops," Cabunoc said.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the 6th Infantry Division (ID) based here, said the government "lost a gentle-

man and a warrior" with Quito's death. "He will never be forgotten," he said.

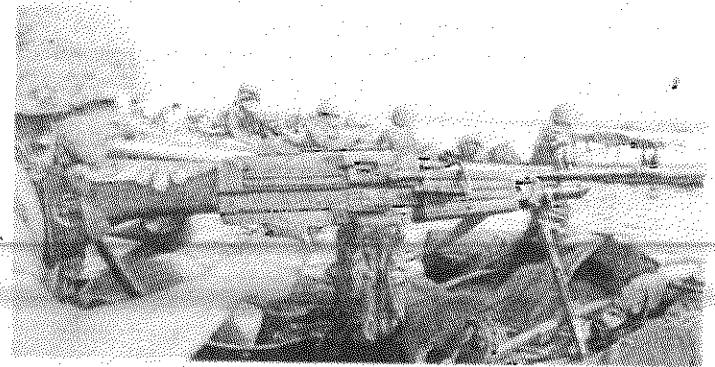
The military said the operations also resulted in the killing of 15 former BIFF gunmen under the command of Esmail Abdulmalik, also known as Abu Toraike.

Foreigners

Abdulmalik had recently bolted BIFF to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State, a military report said. He now works with former BIFF commander Esmail Abubakar, known as Commander Bungos, it said.

Sobejana said their reports indicated that among the casualties on Abdulmalik's group could be five Indonesians and a Singaporean seen in the area as air and ground operations were being conducted on Sunday.

"They are confirmed to be with the terror group and could be among the 15 fatalities," Sobejana told the Inquirer. "They were our primary targets. We are



BATTLE READY Government troops stay alert as they patrol Liguasan Marsh and its tributaries after conducting air and ground strikes in Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces where BIFF members operate. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

still validating their identities."

Cabunoc said Abdulmalik's group had moved farther into the vast Liguasan Marsh that he and his men had to wade in chest-deep, murky water to find them.

"We are adapting in this new battlefield condition through innovations in tactics and equipment. We are drawing lessons from this experi-

ence," Cabunoc said.

He said some informants had also told him that Singaporean bomb expert Salahuddin Hassan, also known as Orak, and some foreign jihadists had eluded the bomb run and were still trapped in the area.

Hassan has been the target of military operations in the past after being allegedly in-

involved in several attacks in Central Mindanao.

Separate attack

As the military continued to pursue Abdulmalik's group in Liguasan Marsh, BIFF gunmen attacked the military detachments in Datu Unsay and Datu Hoffer town on Monday night.

Capt. Arvin John Encinas, spokesperson for the 6th ID, said four BIFF gunmen were killed in the attacks, which he said were in retaliation for the military assault against Abdulmalik's group.

Encinas said the BIFF gunmen also shot and killed two residents of Barangay Limpogo in Datu Hoffer. **AP**

Displacement

Abu Misri Mama, BIFF spokesperson, admitted that their forces were behind the attacks but said only two of their members were killed.

The military operations displaced about 20,000 people from

the towns of Pagalungan, Datu Montawal, Raja Buayan and SK Pendatun in Maguindanao, and Pikit in North Cotabato.

Education officials in Maguindanao's second congressional district, including the four towns where the military operations were being conducted, suspended classes starting Monday. More than 1,400 elementary pupils and a few hundred high school students had been affected by the suspension.

Lawyer Rasol Mitnug Jr., education secretary of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said elementary teachers in the four towns had been instructed to help protect their pupils from harm.

Mitnug did not say when classes would resume, but noted that some of the public schools in Pagalungan, Datu Montawal, Raja Buayan and SK Pendatun were being used as evacuation centers. —**KARLOS MANLUPIG AND EDWIN FERNANDEZ INQ**

6 BIFF men, soldier slain in Maguindanao clashes

By JOHN UNSON

MAGUINDANAO - Six members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and a soldier were killed in encounters in this province on Monday.

The slain soldier was identified only as a certain Pfc. Quito.

Quito and other personnel of the 33rd Infantry Battalion were looking for six BIFF men wounded in air strikes on Sunday when the clash occurred, Gen. Cirilito Sobejana of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) said yesterday.

Three bandits with aliases of Bundas, Kamid and Oruk were killed in firefights in Liguasan marsh near a suspected BIFF bomb factory

destroyed in the air strikes.

Three other bandits were killed in a gunfight with soldiers when another group of BIFF men led by a certain Metin tried to surround a detachment of the 57th ID in Barangay Meta, Datu Unsay.

Local officials identified the fatalities as Turman Aber, Mansur Mohammad and Kusid Laguab, alias Mamalu.

Sobejana said three civilians caught in the crossfire were wounded.

The military said 15 militants were killed in air strikes and ground offensive that targeted BIFF bomb makers Taib Dinggo and Abu Walid.

Four of the fatalities are reportedly foreigners.

- With Jaime Laude

7 BIFF, 1 soldier killed in Maguindanao clashes

SEVEN members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) have been killed in two separate encounters with troops in Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID), the first encounter on Monday night killed five terrorists in Barangay Meia Datu Unsay, Maguindanao.

Sobejana said the bandits took the dead bodies of their three members while two others were left on the encounter site.

He said the Islamic State-inspired terrorists were attempting to harass troops stationed at a detachment based in the area.

Cpt Arvin Encinas, 6ID spokesman, said the encounter between troops and the BIFF in Maguindanao lasted for 25 minutes, saying that the attacks were "retaliation" from those in the ongoing operations in Liguasan Marsh.

At about 9 p.m., two terrorists using an M16 rifle killed a civilian, identified as Ricky Udas, in Barangay Limpongo, Datu Hoffer.

At 4 a.m. on Tuesday, military forces encountered another group of BIFF commanded by Mando Mamalupong, subleader under the Kanalan faction, in Barangay Ulandang, Midsayap, North Cotabato resulting in the deaths of two terrorists and wounding two civilians. ¹⁷

The encounters happened in

the wake of ongoing operations within the Liguasan Marsh where the troops dismantled a bomb factory and killed 15 BIFF terrorists on Sunday.

Meanwhile, a young soldier was killed in the middle of the operations in the Liguasan Marsh on Monday.

Encinas identified the fatality as Private First Class Garry Quitor, 27, of Pigcawayan, North Cotabato.

Encinas said Quitor was part of Alpha Company, 33rd Infantry (Makabayan) Battalion (33rd IB) led by Lt. Alessandro Cruzada that pursued the small band of terrorists in the marshy terrain of Maguindanao.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, the 33rd commanding officer, said that Quitor died as a hero.

"He volunteered as the point man of the patrol despite the high risks involved in the operations. His bravery will be emulated by the rest of my troops," he said.

The Army and the Philippine National Police were tracking the enemies inside the bushy area that was reported as the hiding place of the fleeing terrorists.

Informants said that Salahuddin Hassan, alias Orak, and some foreign terrorists are trapped in the area after their boats were destroyed by the air and artillery bombardments on Monday.

**DEMPSEY REYES
AND JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL**

ENCLOSURE

6 BIFF men IS-inspired aliens—AFP

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao—
The military here is verifying reports
that six of the 15 people killed in the
air strikes against the IS-linked Bang-
samoro Islamic Freedom Fighters op-
erating in this province were foreign-
ers, an Army official said.

“There were five Indonesians and
a Singaporean who are confirmed to
be with the terror group and could be
among the 15 fatalities,” Brig. Gen.
Cirilito Sobejana, the Army’s 6th In-
fantry Division commander, told the
Philippine News Agency.

“They were our primary target, and
we are still validating their identities,”
Sobejana said.

He said the air strikes were launched
on Sunday and Monday after an aerial
video confirmed the existence of a
BIFF weapon and bomb factory in the
middle of Maguindanao’s marshland.

Fifteen members of the BIFF fac-
tion under Commander Toraife were
killed, eight others were injured and
two bomb experts were arrested.

A soldier of the 33rd Infantry Bat-
talion, who was part of the ground
assault unit, was killed during the
clashes Monday with the fleeing BIFF
members, the military said.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, the head
of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, said
he and his men had to wade through
the chest-deep waters of the Liguasan
Marsh to locate concealed BIFF posi-
tions. **PNA**

'Flush out BIFF from Liguasan Marsh'

By Mario J. Mallari

Thus, ordered Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. to troops now operating against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Central Mindanao not only to achieve peace, but also to bring in government services.

Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP Public Affairs Office chief, said that the AFP chief emphasized to the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID), under Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, the need to get rid of the armed elements in order to bring government service to peace-loving people of Central Mindanao.

"General Galvez has given commanders operational goals and standards to clear areas in every operation, there should be extra push toward the positive contribution to the AFP mission which is to clear all security threats, defeat all enemies," Detoyato said.

"The instruction to the ground commanders is to increase the operational tempo so that there will be improved security environment so that government services will be delivered," he added.

Detoyato stressed that the AFP chief did not give any timeframe for the troops to accomplish the mission in Central Mindanao.

He cited the dynamics of the ongoing operations in Liguasan Marsh which is a combination of water, marsh land and patches of land.

"Liguasan is a very unique operational area...those who have mastery of the terrain clearly have the advantage," Detoyato said.

According to Detoyato, there are about 50 BIFF fighters now being pursued by troops.

Currently, elements of the 6th ID are conducting focused military operations against the BIFF in Liguasan Marsh which straddles three provinces in Central Mindanao.

So far, 16 BIFF rebels had been killed while a bomb manufacturing facility was destroyed during the continuing combat operations.

On the other hand, at least one soldier perished in the firefight.

Sobejana vowed to utilize all resources under his disposal to defeat the BIFF -- which is linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

On Monday, Sobejana said that at least three foreign militants were among the targets of the ongoing operations.

Sundalo utas sa bakbakan vs terorista

Isang batang sundalo ang napatay sa pakikipagbakbakan sa ISIS-inspired terrorist group sa Maguindanao nitong Lunes, Hunyo 11.

Kinilala ang nasawi na si Pfc. Garry Quitor, 27, ng Bigawayan, North Cotabato.

Si Quitor ay parte ng Alpha Company, 33rd Infantry Battalion na pinamamunuan ni Lt. Alessandro Cruzadana tungkol sa malikhaing grupo ng terorista (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters) sa Maguindanao.

Ayon kay Lt. Col. Harold M. Cabunoc, commanding officer ng 33rd Infantry (Makabayan) Battalion, namatay si Quitor na bayani.

"He volunteered as the point man of the patrol despite the high risks involved in the operations. His bravery will be emulated by the rest of my troops," ani Cabunoc.

Tinutugis ng Army at ng PNP ang mga kalaban sa lugar na inilala na kuta ng mga terorista.

Ayon sa military informants, patuloy na nakuilang sa lugar si

Salahuddin Hassan, alias Orak, at ang ilang foreign jihadists matapos masim ang kanilang bangka sa air strikes at bombahan kalsapor.

Patuloy na tinutugis ng mga sundalo ang mga sugatang terorista.

"We hit him dead on because his gun malfunctioned as he attempted to shoot another soldier. We spotted stains of blood on the water lilies," ayon kay 2nd Lt. Dennis Camos na namuno sa tracking patrol.

Francis T. Wakefield
at Fer Taboy

41



ISIS remnants kill young soldier

A young soldier was shot dead in a face-to-face battle with the remnants of the ISIS-inspired terrorist group in Maguindanao on Monday.

The fatality was identified as Pfc Garry Quito, 27, of Pigcawayan, North Cotabato.

Quito was part of Alpha Company, 33rd Infantry Battalion led by 1st Lt. Alessandro Cruzada that pursued the small band of terrorists (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters) in the marshy terrain of Maguindanao.

Lt Col. Harold M Cabunoc, the Commanding Officer of the 33rd Infantry (Makabayan) Battalion, said that Quito died as a hero.

"He volunteered as the point man of the patrol despite the high risks involved in the operations. His bravery will be emulated by the rest of my troops," Cabunoc said.

The Army and the PNP were tracking the enemies inside the bushy area that was reported as the hiding

place of the fleeing terrorists.

Soldiers had to wade in chest deep murky water to locate the concealed positions of the terrorists.

"We are adapting in this new battlefield condition through innovations in tactics and equipment. We are drawing lessons from this experience," said Cabunoc.

Military informants said that Salahuddin Hassan aka Orak and some foreign jihadists are still trapped in the area after their boats were destroyed by the air strikes and artillery bombardments yesterday.

The troops retrieved the enemy's Cal 30 Garand Rifle in the vicinity of the encounter site.

The soldiers are still looking for the wounded terrorist.

"We hit him dead on because his gun malfunctioned as he attempted to shoot another soldier. We spotted stains of blood on the water lilies," said 2nd Lt. Dennis Gamos who led the tracking patrol. (Francis T. Wakefield)

Duterte warns of 'revolution' in Mindanao if BBL fails to pass

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Another ruckus or "near revolution environment" might erupt in Mindanao if the bill creating the Bangsamoro region is not passed into law, President Duterte warned Tuesday.

Addressing the nation on the 120th anniversary of Philippine Independence in Kawit, Cavite, the President said he hopes that the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) would be approved in Congress to avoid trouble in the south.

►8

Duterte warns of...

◀1

"We are talking with the MI (Moro Islamic Liberation Front). Yung Bangsamoro is in Congress. I hope it will pass," Duterte said in his speech.

"If it does not, then there's going to be another round of ruckus there. I hope it would not again result to a near revolution environment," he added.

Apart from the MILF, Duterte said he was engaged in dialogue with Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chair Nur Misuari on the peace initiatives.

"Sabi niya, hintay lang ako kung ano ang mabuting pag-usapan natin [He said, I'll wait for whatever we will

discuss] so I'm talking," he said.

The President recently certified the proposed BBL as urgent, allowing the two houses of Congress to pass their versions of the bill. Duterte said the approval of the BBL was a manifestation of the government's commitment to address the diverse needs of the Bangsamoro people and other communities towards a just and lasting peace in Mindanao.

A bicameral conference committee is expected to reconcile the Senate and House versions and submit the measure in time for President Duterte's State-of-the-Nation Address next month.



Duterte warns of ruckus if BBL is not passed into law

By GENALYN KABILING

Another ruckus or "near revolution environment" might erupt in Mindanao if the bill creating the Bangsamoro region is not passed into law, President Duterte warned Tuesday.

Addressing the nation on the 120th anniversary of Philippine Independence in Kawit, Cavite, the President said he hopes that the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) would be approved in Congress to avoid trouble in the south.

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(Moro Islamic Liberation Front). Yung Bangsamoro is in Congress. I hope it will pass," Duterte said in his speech.

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EDITORIAL

A snappy salute

A patriot to the last, veteran lawmaker and former Philippine Navy captain Rullo Golez spent the early hours of Monday, June 11, defending the country he had served for so long and so well.

He was, yet again, on radio, offering his sage advice and his undimmed passion, urging the Duterte administration to be transparent with the Filipino people in its transactions with China.

But he had to decline another scheduled radio interview because he felt unwell; some time later, he died, according to House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas, "due to heart attack." He was 71.

"We lost a true patriot. He was an indefatigable defender of the West Philippine Sea," Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio said. It was a tribute that would have been personally significant to Golez, since Carpio is one of the leading defenders of the country's sovereign rights to the West Philippine Sea. The spokesperson for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Col. Edgard Arevalo, praised Golez as "a sailor, a patriot, and a public servant whose contributions to the Filipino nation and its people extended throughout his lifetime."

It was a full and remarkable life. Perhaps more people knew of him as the long-time representative from Parañaque City; he won six three-year terms, serving from 1992 to 2001 and then from 2004 to 2013. From 2001 to 2004, he served as national security adviser to President Gloria Arroyo.

But he didn't serve only in high office; he served in the trenches, too—or, rather, on deck and at sea, as an officer of the Philippine Navy. In addition to his 21 years as elected official and Cabinet appointee, he also served for 14 years in the Armed Forces, retiring as a naval captain (the equivalent of a colonel in the Army). He had graduated, with multiple distinctions, from the US Naval Academy in Annapolis.

What many Filipinos don't probably know is that Golez was one of the key Marcos government officials who "defected" and joined the People Power movement.

He was the renowned postmaster general then, who had in a very brief time transformed the national postal service from a moribund agency to an example of government efficiency. His withdrawal of support had a real impact precisely because of his reputation as a sailor-turned-professional-manager.

He served in many organizations, including the Philippine Red Cross (where he was a member of the Board of Governors for 20 years), the St. Luke's Medical Center, the Philippine Tuberculosis Society, the Philippine Cancer Society, and the Management Association of the Philippines, among others.

In his later years, however, he created a new kind of fame by taking to Twitter with gusto and discipline. (He was active in many advocacies.) In this social media space, he reached out to younger generations, impressing upon them both a love for country (he ran an occasional series called "PHILIPPINES, MY PHILIPPINES, BEAUTIFUL PHILIPPINES") and the need to defend it—lest we lose the very rights we take for granted.

He was proud of his public school background. He sometimes fondly recalled the little things he used to do in school. Once, responding to a journalist's memories, he replied: "Yes we did too in Quirino High School, a public school in Project 3, QC. We even had to bring our own cleaning materials like floor wax, *bunot, basahan* and *walis*."

And on May 28 this year, he responded to a tweet about Pag-asa island in the Spratlys with a little story. "I went snorkeling there 1970-1971 when I was part of several secret Navy missions to transport troops, equipment and supplies to our islands there (then called Freedomland). I could approach the groupers close enough to touch them a little."

That was the secret to the power of his sustained defense of the West Philippine Sea. He had been there, had staked his life to supply Freedomland. He could not, would not, imagine all that sacrifice going for naught.



WE LOST A TRUE PATRIOT. HE WAS AN INDEFATIGABLE DEFENDER OF THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA

45

SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

Bartered

Someone must be mad as hell but can't vent publicly in his trademark damn-the-torpedoes style.

Or maybe the administration is on damage control and treating the public to a *mano-mano* to fend off criticism that its policy when it comes to China is one of capitulation.

These are just some of the speculations swirling around that unusual press briefing held on a stormy Monday morning at Malacañang by President Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque Jr.

Appearing together with Roque, who in another life was regarded as a human rights advocate, were three Filipinos who say the Chinese coast guard has been confiscating their catch and taking the best ones when they fish in Panatag or Scarborough Shoal. In exchange, the fishermen are given noodles, cigarettes and water.

Administration officials describe it as "barter," but the fishermen's stories belie this. Barter is a two-way transaction between willing parties, and who engages in barter in the age of bitcoins? Don't coast guards of the world's second largest economy have cash? It's harassment and bullying, pure and simple. It's like women's position on rape, including those committed by dates, partners or spouses: if it's against our will, it's rape.

Since Panatag Shoal has appeared in Spanish-era maps of our islands, named Bajo de Masinloc after the first class municipality in Zambales, we can say that Panatag has been the traditional fishing ground of people in the province and in neighboring Pangasinan for centuries. The shoal probably teems with my favorite saltwater fish from Pangasinan, the *malaga*, a delectable variety of *samaral* or *siganid*.

Two years ago the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague declared the shoal a common fishing ground even if it lies well within the Philippines' 200-mile maritime exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

This was the only aspect of the arbitral ruling that was not completely favorable to the Philippines, which sought a definition of its maritime entitlements under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea after China occupied Panatag in April 2012. Our country was unequivocally awarded sovereign rights over Panganiban (Mischief) Reef, Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal and Recto (Reed) Bank.

The ruling clearly stated that no country has control over Panatag, and that China violated Philippine sovereign rights when it prevented Filipinos from fishing in the shoal.

Since attaining prosperity and building up its military power, Beijing's behavior in the South China Sea, which it claims nearly in its entirety, has been underpinned by the ideas that might makes right and possession is nine-tenths of the law. If there is nothing to possess, Beijing builds an artificial one.

Sadly, the only country awarded by an international tribunal with the right to dispute this stance is on its way to becoming a Chinese satellite.

I can understand why Beijing is rejecting that sweeping invalidation of its entire nine-dash-line territorial claim in the South China Sea. The area covered by the ruling includes China's territorial waters and EEZ that clearly overlap at some points with those of Vietnam, which has no love lost for the Chinese, and Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province. But these are different cases.

Any map will show that there is no way China's territorial waters and EEZ can include Ayungin, Panganiban, Recto Bank and even Panatag, which are located in an area we call the West Philippine Sea.

Speaking of cardinal points, the Philippine or Benham Rise is on the country's eastern seaboard, facing the Pacific Ocean. But we all know this already, so it's good that the architect of our foreign policy abandoned his earlier flaky threat to jet-ski in Benham.

With critics unmoved by the Benham stunt, perhaps someone experienced an epiphany and decided that the time has come to assert the Philippines' maritime sovereign rights more aggressively. And so those three fishermen got to tell their story, with the presidential spokesman describing the confiscation of their catch as "unacceptable."

Didn't President Duterte declare that in time, he would raise the issue of the arbitral court ruling with China? In fact he already did last year, in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. According to published accounts that were never disputed by Beijing, Xi's reply was that his country would go to war if Duterte pushed ahead with oil or gas exploration in the West Philippine Sea.

Since then Duterte has been saying the Philippines can't afford to go to war with China. But the Vietnamese and Afghans, among others, have shown that firepower alone is not enough to win a war. The Philippine commander-in-chief may be underestimating the patriotism, courage and competence of his troops.

In fact no one is advocating war, since the Philippines already has a powerful weapon to assert its sovereign rights: the ruling by the arbitration court.

China became prosperous and a military power by doing business with the world. It cannot ignore forever the ruling of the arbitral court, which enjoys United Nations observer status and counts 119 UN states as members plus Palestine and Kosovo.

The Chinese put weight on face, so Duterte is right in not rubbing in the Philippines' victory in the arbitration case. It is also a sound policy to maintain healthy economic ties and preserve traditionally strong cultural links with China.

So far, however, the friendly tack has failed to protect Philippine sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea. Instead of leaving Panganiban Reef off Palawan, the Chinese have even fortified what is now an artificial island, according to various reports.

After nearly two years under Duterte, the Chinese by now should at least comply with the declaration of Panatag as a common fishing ground, with no country in control of the shoal.

The stories of the fishermen show that the opposite has been happening. The administration needs resolute action if it doesn't want to be accused of bartering national sovereignty for noodles and cigarettes.



CTALK

CITO BELTRAN

Build, Build, Build: Hospitals!

Several weeks ago, my sister in law "Jo" who has suffered from elevated blood pressure felt quite ill and asked to be brought to the hospital. Having our "family home" in UP Village, Diliman, the Beltrons have always felt blessed and at ease knowing that less than a kilometer away as the crow flies, we can always find a specialized government hospital. All within walking distance of each other, you can find the Philippine Heart Center, the National Kidney Transplant Institute, the Lung Center as well as the Philippine Children's Medical Center, formerly known as the Lungsod Ng Kabataan.



It was at the NKTI that my mother was given emergency treatment for her first heart attack, and years after it was in the very same hospital that last year we spent the last 15 days of her life. It was at the Heart Center where I chose to have a life saving angiogram that revealed I had two serious arterial blocks that led to a double-angioplasty that I could actually afford. It was at the original Lung Center where I first learned about the serious damage that cigarette smoking does to my lungs. I am now an Anti-Tobacco advocate! Let's not forget the Philippine Children's Medical Center or PCMC where one of my many "apo-apohan," the granddaughter of our caretaker in Lipa, was given the best medical care when she fell ill and was paralyzed due to an adverse effect related to dengue.

Times have changed unfortunately and going to our "neighborhood hospitals" is no longer a breeze as it used to be. In spite of her medical condition, "Jo" had the presence of mind to tell her husband Ricky that it was a Friday and going to the nearby hospitals, especially the NKTI, would be a bad idea because the hospital would surely be full of patients, particularly indigents and charity cases referred to the hospital by politicians and other government agencies (this we learned when we brought our mom to NKTI last year). The couple eventually had to go to a private hospital that was several kilometers away and cost three to four times more. Thank God, Jo soon recovered and was back home.

I have long been writing about the need to build more specialized government hospitals in order to meet the serious shortage, but policy makers and politicians seem to be far more interested in infrastructure projects that are static instead of hospitals that have real physical and emotional value. I don't think of past presidents who helped build, improve or expand EDSA, but from time to time I make mention of the value and contribution of the hospitals built through

the efforts of Imelda Marcos. It has nothing to do with political color or loyalties but everything to do about healing, fixing and saving lives and loved ones. I have nothing good to say about the Martial Law years but I will not deny or discount the life giving or life saving significance of these hospitals.

The Duterte administration is currently promoting their "Build, Build, Build" agenda. It is disturbing that the much needed "emotion generators" such as specialized hospitals and universities don't seem to be in the program. The president has pushed for dedicated hospitals for the AFP and PNT, but no one has made mention of expanding and maybe duplicating the Philippine Heart Center, NKTI, Lung Center and the PCMC. The previous administrations have thought of simply privatizing said hospitals and being done with the "expense." But as I pointed out, there is too much history and emotion tied to those hospitals and every attempt to privatize them has met with serious opposition.

After years of observing this conflict of ideas, it became obvious that the reason it could never be resolved is because the groups trying to find a solution were driven by absolutes or the "my way or no way" mentality. Perhaps they were also paranoid about rules and laws and lost sight of the possibility of "sharing" or what the private sector calls "real joint ventures," not corporate takeovers or "management and maintenance" contracts where government simply steps back while an investor rakes in the profits. The government must be able to meet its social obligation, the public must be assured of affordable access to medical facilities, while the private sector is given a business model that turns a respectable profit for shareholders or owners.

The government has so much land available. Private sector has so much cash at their disposal. Government has a wealth of physicians and specialists; private sector has the marketing and management skills. Government can run hospital equipment; private sector can buy the equipment. Government has a never-ending stream of patients that contribute to maximization of resources while providing a wealth of cases worthy of research and scientific studies. Private sector has the network and skill set as well as technology to develop, market and promote these hospitals as centers of excellence, training and learning as well as profit centers. Why not build a two-in-one facility where one side is for government patients and a separate one for private patients with both sides having shared equipment and personnel and where no one is labeled as "Poor," "Indigent" or a "Charity" case. This joint venture would maximize utilization and benefits and provide both sides a means to address their respective concerns and interests.

Privatization is not the answer because public health institutions are "owned" by the public and generations of patients that passed through their doors. It is one of the few things tied to their hearts and minds and they will not give that away. If the major corporations and visionaries of Philippine business simply re-invented the approach, not only would we harvest a lot of benefits locally, we could easily elevate Philippine medical facilities as a regional player just like when the PHC was once referred to as the "Asian Heart Center."

UNRAVELING

A kiss and Chinese airplanes: The sheer silliness of it all



BY GETSY TIGLAD

Is it silly season yet again? I am constantly amazed at the opposition's intellectual bankruptcy, at how it would use ridiculously trivial or outright non-events in order to disparage President Duterte. Too bad for them; their efforts are quite useless and misses the mark with the "masa."

There's the false outrage over the mutual consent, showbizzy, closed-mouth dry kiss between Duterte and a female supporter in South Korea. Some oppositionists were even planning a protest rally over this one, because the lady who dared take a one-second presidential peck was married (what have I been saying here for so long. The Philippines is stuck in the medieval age).

I'm guessing the ones who will attend this anti-Duterte rally will be (again) the overly religious conservatives who want nothing more than to earn saintly points here on earth so they can get a gate pass to heaven. They'll need more warm bodies, though, to be provided by the not-yet legal age Catholic school children in their fancy uniforms.

But hey, whatever floats your boat, but make sure you guys clean up the streets after you fill them with your litter. Just remember that imposing your religious fundamentalism on other people will never work.

In our country, bourgeois morality never got the votes. Authenticity is what Filipinos voters value more.

Earlier, the opposition was trying to stoke anti-China sentiments by reporting that China landed a bomber aircraft in the Paracel Islands. By issuing alarmist statements, they made it appear that China was aiming a nuclear weapon at the Philippines. Such witlessness has become a trademark of the anti-Duterte bloc, who also happens to be members of the so-called Yellow Cult.

Why wouldn't China land aircraft in the Paracels when they have controlled the entire island chain since 1974? South Vietnam tried to take it over from them during the Vietnam War era but lost after the US Navy declined to help them. This historical fact should serve as a reminder to the rabid pro-US oppositionists that the Americans will not come here with guns blazing if ever we get into a war with China over the South China Sea disputes.

Vietnam has claims to the Paracels Islands but the Philippines doesn't. It's too far away from us. I had hoped this would be the end of the anti-Chinese crusade by the opposition, but no, here they come again shaking the nation with reports that China landed a military airplane in Davao City. (It's the end of the world! The Chinese are coming! Too late - they've been in this

country since before the Spaniards came, as evidenced by historical records and archaeological finds.)

It turns out that the aircraft was only in the President's hometown to refuel, with prior authorization from local aviation authorities. China's IL-76 military transport plane cannot go on long distances beyond 3,000 kilometers without refueling, thus the need for a stop in the Davao airport before continuing back home, after having come all the way from Australia.

I'm starting to pity the country's opposition. They are running out of ideas to bring down the current administration that they have to scrape the barrel with worthless stories such as dry kisses and non-existent Chinese invasions.

They could be a force for constructive criticism if only they would be willing to set aside the idea that they could do another people power-type of takeover of this popular president. EDSA will never happen again.

With the explosion of knowledge and information in social media, Filipinos have become astute political observers. They'll see a lie a mile away even if it comes in the form of a screaming headline from a highly partisan newspaper.

The problem with the anti-Duterte types is not just their self-righteous-

ness and sense of entitlement. It's their inability to understand why the "masa" or the majority of Filipinos support and dare I say it, love, Duterte. He's one of them, or at least he understands them. His simple folksy manner is endearing. He's an entertaining speaker. He's the type you would want to hang around in your house to have drinks with and shoot the breeze, a fun "huntahan."

Yes, he curses a lot, but so what, as long as he does his job and he does it really well. He meets his Cabinet every week unlike the previous Palace occupant. The economy is booming. Bigger and better infrastructure are being built. Criminality is down with even Forbes magazine saying Filipinos feel safer walking in the streets.

Duterte's critics are mainly based in Metro Manila, which traditionally has a disdain for people from the provinces, calling them country hicks. It's a class thing that won't disappear until the economic growth has reached all the poor areas, creating progressive urban centers in the southern parts of the Philippines.

Listening to Duterte speak in his homegrounds of Visayas and Mindanao, whether it's before ba-

rangay officials or soldiers or any provincial group, one realizes right away why he is popular among the masses. He's as authentic as they come: there are no pretensions, formalities, or corniness or any sort. He speaks their language and makes them laugh with his often off-color jokes. Sometimes, he gives history lessons and makes the crowd think about what it is to be a real Filipino.

Duterte's provincial sorties, whether intended or not, has also consolidated his support base. If he keeps his approval ratings (and there's little doubt he will) whomever he endorses in the 2022 presidential elections will be a sure winner.

Duterte appears to be more comfortable talking in Bisaya rather than in Tagalog/Filipino, and a lot is lost in the translation. I think if he is in Metro Manila or when he talks with media it will be better if he spoke in English, which is a wider and more accurate language than the vernacular. But of course, Duterte being Duterte he will scoff at this idea. He doesn't care if you don't like the way he speaks. He's doing his job and he loves his country. That should be enough for all of us.

Our waters, our fish



THE most recent incident involving the Chinese navy stealing the catch of Filipino fishermen in Bajo Masinloc near Scarborough Shoal (Panatag) is more than alarming. It is a brazen violation of our territorial waters and deprivation of our fisherfolk from their livelihood.

Have we become a province of China because of the government's weak stand in protecting our sovereignty? As usual, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana blamed the previous Aquino administration that made the Chinese navy rule the sea.

But former Solicitor General Florin Hilbay pointed out it was the Aquino government, with him as part of the Philippine panel, that filed and won our case against Beijing in The Hague arbitration tribunal. The

Hague court ruled that the Chinese had no legal right to claim nearly the entire South China Sea. Hilbay said it was during the two years of the Duterte administration that China began and completed its militarization of the area. This the Chinese did by building artificial islands from the shoals, reefs and protruding rocks. Through ingenious engineering, China built military bases now used by their warships and planes.

What a reversal of fortune. The whole dispute started on April 8, 2012 when Philippine navy patrol vessels apprehended several Chinese fishing boats poaching in waters near Bajo Masinloc off the Zambales coast. But the Philippine Coast

Guard were prevented from boarding the poachers' boats when armed and bigger Chinese ships came to rescue their countrymen.

Known later as the Scarborough stand-off, the incident prompted the Aquino administration in filing the case against China in The Hague tribunal. China, however, still rules the South China Sea despite the favorable ruling for Manila.

No matter how the Duterte administration plays down the Chinese bullying, plain folk like Filipino fishermen know better. The Philippines is being taken on a piecemeal basis. **A4**

The latest breach of national security was the landing of a Chinese military aircraft in Davao, Duterte's hometown. Defense Secretary Lorenzana said he did not have prior knowledge of the Russian-made Ilushin military plane of the

Chinese People's Liberation Army. Former National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, just before he passed away Monday, raised questions on the Chinese landing allegedly to refuel.

The plane could have refueled on one of the military bases the Chinese built in the Spratly Group of Islands. But it did not fuel speculation that China was testing our defense capability. First our territorial waters, now our air space.

'The kiss' lingers

Having written about it once already, I wanted to leave behind the Seoul smooching incident involving President Rodrigo Duterte and an overseas Filipino worker.

It was just a split-second kiss but the incident is lingering longer than it should.

Why? Because the president's apologists keep defending President Duterte's

Turn to A5

“The Philippines is being taken on a piecemeal basis.”

Our waters...

From A4

act as no more than part of political play. Kissing the married woman on the lips, albeit only for a split second, does not justify the impropriety. What if she were your wife, daughter or sister? Even if they were willing and see no malice in it, would you still say "It's okay, there was no malice."

We doubt that you would still be as detached or nonchalant about it. But this is not about one's personal feelings. The issue here is clearly the impropriety of the Philippine president asking for a kiss from a married woman and demeaning the dignity of his office. She may have been thrilled about it but Bea Kim's Korean husband for sure had a different

Presidential communications official Mocha Uson, taking a cue from the President saying "*Inggit lang kayo,*"

posted photos of former Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino being kissed on the cheek minutes before he went down the plane and later assassinated by a lone gunman at the Manila international airport tarmac.

May we point out to Ms. Uson that there is a stark difference between the farewell peck on Ninoy's cheek and the lips-to-lips kiss between Digong and Mrs. Bea Kim.

In its editorial the other day, the **Manila Standard** wrote that Mocha Uson is proving to be more a liability than an asset to President Duterte. Yet, the President insists she will stay in office as long as she has his confidence. The President is already his own worst enemy but now he has a Mocha Uson doing him further harm.

This President has gained a reputation for being a foulmouth for his remarks against women. Recall he said that he should have been first in line in the gang rape of an Australian missionary in Davao. He also told Filipino soldiers to shoot between the legs captured female members of the communist New People's Army. The list is long and the militant women's group Gabriela can provide us with more details.

The President and his minions, including some misguided members of media, should stop talking about this kissing incident. They are the ones fanning the flames that make that kiss linger longer than it should.

Having said that, I now seal my lips on that note and just let the President's devoted defenders out-nonsense each other.

ONLINE NEWS

13 JUNE 2018

Filipinos must unite to combat fear, want: AFP

By Priam Nepomuceno June 12, 2018, 2:57 pm

MANILA -- While it expressed preparedness to fight enemies of peace and prosperity, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has urged Filipinos to do their part in ongoing battles against fear and want.

"While your soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines are the ones at the forefront of the nation's fight against contemporary enemies of peace, security, and prosperity, every one of us must give his or her share to win our battles to gain freedom from fear and freedom from want," AFP spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo said in message as the country celebrated its 120th Independence Day on Tuesday.

Arevalo said that Tuesday's celebration is a "legacy bequeathed by our forebears" through their blood, sweat, tears, and innumerable sacrifices.

"What we do with that hard-earned freedom is our gift to our heroes and to the future generation of Filipinos," he added. (PNA)

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1038006>

AFP activates Joint Task Force 'Bicolandia'

By Priam Nepomuceno June 12, 2018, 10:30 am

MANILA -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) formally activated its Joint Task Force "Bicolandia" Monday in line with the ongoing efforts to secure the entire Bicol Region.

Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP public affairs office chief, said the move aims to integrate air, sea, and land units in the area to fully secure the entire Bicol Region, including the offshore island provinces of Masbate and Catanduanes.

"The formal activation of the Joint Task Force 'Bicolandia' is a clear indication of our persistence to usher in the best improvements for the AFP and is a concrete step that we have taken to further fortify the quest of the AFP, particularly the Southern Luzon Command, to bring and sustain peace and security in the Bicol Region," AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Carlito Galvez, Jr. said during Monday's activation ceremonies.

Joint Task Force "Bicolandia" will be headed by 9th Infantry Division commander Major Gen. Jesus Manangquil, Jr. It will take under its helm the division and supported by the Tactical Operations Group 5 and the Naval Forces Southern Luzon.

The unit will be under the direct command and supervision of Southern Luzon Command chief Lt. Gen. Danilo Pamonag, Detoyato added.

"'Bicolandia' will perform the vital task of protecting from security threats the region's budding economic landscape, vast agricultural sector, and popular tourist hubs, as well as in orchestrating joint operations in response to emergency situations," he stressed. (PNA)

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1037968>

Troops not demoralized by WPS issue: Lorenzana

By Priam Nepomuceno June 12, 2018, 10 02 am

MANILA -- Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Monday dismissed rumors that military personnel are demoralized with the government's handling of the West Philippine Sea issue.

"No, *hindi* (they are not) demoralized, *pumunta lang kayo sa* (just go to the) field. *Mataas ang morale ng mga sundalo* (Our soldiers' morale are high). *Nire-report sa akin na talagang* (It was reported to me) they are doing their best to protect our country," he added.

He said West Philippine Sea is another problem but troops are doing their best to perform their mandate.

"*Ngayon yung* (Now, the) West Philippine Sea is another problem *yan eh*, another issue *yan* but *dito sa loob* (that is another issue but internally), our soldiers' morale is high and they are doing their best to protect our people," he added.

Lorenzana earlier dismissed reports made by Magdalo Partylist Rep. Gary Alejano claiming that President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the military to stop its patrols in the West Philippine Sea.

"Wala (None), there was no (such) order whatsoever, nung, kahit nung (even in) 2016," Lorenzana stressed.

The DND chief added that the President never even made a hint on the matter.

"*Hindi, at saka hindi niya ginawa 'yan* (No, he did not do it), he did not even hint or he did not do it, he did not even hint that they stop patrolling, *kaya regular tayo dyan eh*, regular, *yung eroplano kung masama ang panahon hindi kami* (*nagpa-patrol*), *pero pagka maganda* (*ang panahon*) *ikot nang ikot yung ating eroplano dyan* (We conduct regular patrols there. Our planes do not patrol when the weather is bad. But if the weather is fine, our planes are regularly conducting patrols there)," he stressed.

Lorenzana said it is the AFP's mandate to protect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. (PNA)

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1037971>