

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



TEAM **ARMY**

Serving the people. Securing the land.

oacpa.army2012@gmail.com
OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

28 May 2018

Monday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

TABLE OF CONTENTS

28 MAY 2018

Weather Forecast- http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast		
PAGE NR.	TITLE	SOURCE
NATIONAL NEWS		
1-3	Labor groups pushes P800 minimum wage	PDI p.A1
4-6	DTI: Price compliance at 100%	Phil. Star p.1
AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS		
7	Palace dares 'pro-US' critics: Attack China	Phil. Star p.3
8	US warships sail near China-claimed isles	PDI p.A7
9	US warship sail near SCS island claimed by Beijing	Phil. Star p.3
10	US warship sail near SCS island claimed by Beijing	Malaya p.B1
11-12	Repairs in Pag-asa island within RP rights – Palace	Tribune p.1
13-14	PH yo join world's biggest war games	Mla. Times p.A1
15	PH joining largest maritime exercise	Malaya p.B2
16	PH-China oil hunt 'gives up' arbitral ruling	Mla. Standard p.A2
17	Army trainees deployed to dig for illegal pipes	PDI p.A10
18	Army's 6 th Infantry has new Commander	PDI p.A8
19	6 th Infantry Division changes guard in historic rites	Mla. Bulletin p.12
20	Sobejana tapped to lead Army 6 th ID	Tempo p.5
21	Medal of Valor awardee is new 6 th ID chief	Malaya p.B2
22	'Honeylet' to open Bulacan capitol today	Mla. Bulletin p.7
23	NPA killed in CamSur clash	Mla. Bulletin p.7
24-25	Charges filed vs broadcaster's killers	Mla. Times p.A7
26	What are you afraid of? Lacson ask nat'l ID critics	Malaya p.B1
27	NPA rebel dies, 3 soldiers hurt in Davao Oriental calsh	Tribune p.3
28-29	Congress to ratify nat'l ID bill today	Phil. Star p.1
30	President wary of ISIS setting up cells in PH	Mla. Bulletin p.1
31	BBL faces more hurdles in Senate	PDI p.A5
32	PNP wants control of Bangsamoro police	Mla. Bulletin p.2
33	House to go into overdrive for BBL draft	Mla. Standard p.A2
34	New Army commander tapped to crush remaining BIFF men	Tribune p.3
EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY		
35	Why can't PH do a Vietnam?	PDI p.A14
36	Time to make a stand	PDI p.A15
37	Col. Ernesto Ravina, Air Force hero	PDI p.A15
38-39	Oil prices rising unabated worldwide	Phil. Star p.13
40	The Chinese offensive	Mla. Bulletin p.8

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

41	21st century diplomacy at work	Mla. Times p.B6
42-43	Carpio, Robredo and Golez make a fool of themselves over Chinese-bomber issue	Mla. Times p.A1
44-45	An upgrade long overdue	Mla. Standard p.A5
46	What cheek!	Tribune p.6



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

LABOR GROUP PUSHES P800 MINIMUM WAGE

STORY BY TINA G. SANTOS

The moderate Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines says the daily basic pay it demands will mitigate the worsening plight of workers due to the TRAIN law's adverse effects and the rising cost of living. **A18**

FROM A1

By Tina G. Santos
@santostinaINQ

A labor group is demanding a national minimum wage of P800 daily to help workers cope with the surging prices that workers blame on the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act.

At present, each region has its own daily minimum wage, which ranges from P255 in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to P512 in Metro Manila.

The call for a uniform minimum wage nationwide came as Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III ordered the country's 17 regional tripartite wage boards to discuss and study the impact of the TRAIN law on each region.

Bello said the government must be sensitive to the plight of workers, who are planning to stage rallies to protest the TRAIN law and rising cost of living.

Uniform wages

The Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) is urging the regional wage boards to synchronize all minimum wage rates at a uniform P800 daily nationwide.

"[The] government must now mitigate the worsening plight of workers and their families by providing a safety net while employers must immediately provide a substantial wage increase and save workers from falling into deeper destitution," the group said.

Alan Tanjusa, ALU-TUCP spokesperson, said his group was alarmed by the swift erosion of the buying power of the



WAGE HIKE DEMAND Members of Kilusang Mayo Uno call for a wage increase and a freeze on oil prices during a protest action at a gas station in Quezon City last week. The militant labor group plans to hold similar rallies this week to show the Duterte administration how prices of basic commodities and services can be lowered. —NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

minimum wage amid the TRAIN law and rising prices.

The TRAIN law imposes starting on Jan. 1 an excise on oil, sugary drinks and vehicles, among other goods, to compensate for raising the cap on tax-exempt personal income to P250,000 annually.

A surge in global oil prices coupled with the excise has caused the pump prices of oil products to soar, resulting in a domino effect on a range of

goods and services.

Inflation rate

As a result, the inflation rate rose to a five-year high of 4.5 percent in April and is expected to further go up.

The current minimum wage of P512 in Metro Manila falls short of the estimated living wage of P973 for a family of five and is far below the living wage of P1,168 for a family of six, according to research group Ibon.

Tanjusay said the labor group was reiterating its appeal to President Duterte to grant its proposal for the government to provide workers a subsidy of P500 daily so they could meet the family living wage.

He said the minimum wages should now be uniform because the poverty in Luzon was the same poverty felt by workers in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao said a P750 national minimum

wage was not only to mitigate the impact of policies like the new tax law but also to recognize the Filipino workers' rights.

Social justice

"The call for a P750 national minimum wage is a social justice and democratic measure," he said in a statement.

Casilao said the problem was that the cost of living had increased but workers were left with low purchasing power as

their wages had not increased.

He said a national wage rate was needed because it was not only those in Metro Manila who were suffering.

"The assumption that the cost of living in the provinces is low is wrong. People in the provinces actually pay more because of transport [of products] and other logistical cost," Casilaog said.

'Triple Whammy' protest

Kilusang Mayo Uno said it would hold protest actions this week to show the Duterte administration how prices of basic commodities and services could be lowered.

The militant labor group said it would go to Makati City to slam the big oil companies, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Employers Confederation of the Philippines for their roles in pushing up prices and depressing wages.

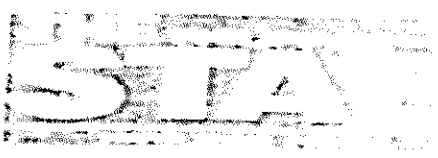
"In the 'Triple Whammy' protest this week, we will be calling on the DTI to immediately junk the TRAIN law, oil deregulation law and value-added tax, which primarily cause the rising prices of petroleum products as well as basic commodities and services," said Ed Cubelo, KMU Metro Manila chair.

Balance interest

In a radio interview, Bello said that while the wage boards should be sensitive to the situation of workers, these should balance the interests of labor and management.

The labor secretary issued the order for the wage boards to meet amid calls for wage increases and Mr. Duterte's directive for the labor department to convene the regional wage boards. —WITH A REPORT FROM AL-

LANNAWAL INQ



DTI: Price compliance at 100%

By RICHMOND MERCURIO

Price compliance among manufacturers of basic goods and commodities has remained at 100 percent amid fears that some businessmen are taking advantage of soaring global crude costs and the effects of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law.

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez yesterday said it is hard to catch someone if no one is actually violating the law.

"We have not seen changes in the suggested retail price (SRP). Price compliance is 100 percent. I double-checked this and had it rechecked by our price monitoring team," Lopez said.

He said the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is being challenged by some lawmakers to catch profiteers.

"So far we really cannot find (profiteers), that is why we cannot catch anyone. In fact, I want to catch someone but there is really none.

Everybody is complying (with SRP)," Lopez said.

Lopez said while there may have been isolated cases of one or two brands in some stores that are not complying with the SRP, manufacturers correct their pricing immediately once their attention is called by the DTI.

"You know why? Based on my experience in a company before, once there is a violation in SRP and DTI has called your attention, the manufacturer is afraid that his product would be removed from the shelves because that is a mortal sin. Imagine, you invest in advertisements for your brand

Turn to Page 10

DTI From Page 1

and then suddenly when consumers look for your products in the stores, (these are) not in the shelves," he said.

President Duterte has mobilized concerned agencies and ordered them to take immediate steps to ease consumer woes and protect them from profiteers.

Last year, the DTI scrapped the practice of pre-approval on the setting of SRP of basic necessities and prime commodities as it decided to hand over control to manufacturers.

Manufacturers, however, are still required to submit updated SRPs of basic necessities and prime commodities and notify the DTI Consumer Protection and Advocacy Bureau of any adjustments.

The DTI steps in and investigates if all brands implement similar price hikes at the same time.

Lopez said only two brands have recently raised prices due to higher cost of tin plates.

"Aside from that, there have not been any (other price increase)," he said.

VAT exemptions

For his part, Sen. Panfilo Lacson is once again pushing for a reduction in the number of value-added tax (VAT) exemptions to generate additional revenues while easing

the burden on consumers who have been reeling from the continued rise in the prices of fuel and basic goods.

Lacson said the outcry over the never-ending increase in pump prices and inflation could have been avoided had his colleagues in Congress agreed to his proposal during the deliberations on the TRAIN to reduce VAT exemptions and bring down the VAT rate from 12 to 10 percent.

During the Senate debates on TRAIN, Lacson said there was a need to reduce the 143 VAT exemptions granted to various sectors, which he said cost the government significant revenues.

He noted that the Philippines has the most number of VAT exemptions among Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries, with Thailand having only 25, Indonesia at around 20 and Malaysia with just 14.

According to Lacson, the total exemptions granted by other ASEAN countries would still be lower than the 143 provided by the Philippine government.

Under Lacson's proposal, 78 exemptions would be removed out of the 143 and the VAT rate would be brought down to 10 percent from the present 12 percent.

Even with the reduction in VAT rate, Lacson claimed that the government would still be able to generate incremental revenues amounting to P117 billion from the removal of the 78 VAT exemptions alone.

He recalled how his office consulted with the Department of Finance (DOF) during the deliberations on the TRAIN. The DOF was supportive of his proposal, Lacson claimed.

However, he said his colleagues in Congress did not support him because they had interests or stakes in the sectors that would be hit by the removal of the exemptions such as eco-zones, power, housing and cooperatives.

Lacson said he intends to revive his proposal in light of the spike in the price of fuel and basic goods.

He is currently looking for a member of the House of Representatives to file a counterpart bill because under the law, all bills related to revenues must originate from the House.

Lacson said he would consult the DOF again just to see where they stand on this now because if they would no longer support his proposal, then it would be good as dead.

Tax on fuel

Meanwhile, a ranking government official yesterday said the Department of Energy (DOE) could recommend the suspension of excise tax im-

posed on fuel products if international crude prices stay at \$80 per barrel for three months.

In an interview over *dzBB*, DOE undersecretary Donato Marcos said the agency will recommend to the DOF the suspension of excise tax on fuels under the TRAIN if benchmark crude prices persist at the \$80 per barrel level.

This was earlier announced by DOE-Oil Industry Management Bureau (OIMB) director Rino Abad, who said the agency will recommend the suspension of the excise tax on fuel scheduled in 2019 once world oil prices hit the three-month average of \$80 per barrel.

Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi also said the agency is studying several options, including the suspension of the excise tax on fuel.

"I believe there is a mechanism on the implementation of excise tax when oil price reaches certain levels," he said.

Starting last January, the TRAIN imposed higher excise tax on gasoline from P4.35 per liter to P7 per liter and new tax rates of P2.50 per liter on diesel, P3 per liter on kerosene and P2.50 per liter on auto liquefied petroleum gas.

However, there is a provision in the law that the TRAIN taxes on fuel products will be suspended when the benchmark crude oil prices hit \$80 per barrel for a period of three months.

The DOE has also met with

oil companies to give them further discounts, provided they scale up their corporate social responsibility programs to support the transport sector and even the marginalized, which will be formalized through a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the DOE.

At present, owners of public utility vehicles avail of a P1 per liter discount under an existing MOA between the DOE and only three oil firms - Petron Corp., Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp.

Political concessions

The Philippines must develop political concessions with oil-producing countries and harness indigenous sources to bring oil prices down, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said.

The lawmaker, who chairs the Senate committee on energy, said the country is a major importer for its energy needs and is therefore affected by price movements in the international market.

"(The Philippines) imports almost 90 percent of its crude oil and almost 90 percent of its coal that power our power plants. This means that any disturbances in the different oil exporting countries will unfairly and directly impact our ordinary Filipino consumer," he said.

Since oil is dictated by global prices, the Philippine

government must develop and take advantage of political concessions to get it at a cheaper price, Gatchalian said.

"The only way we can get cheap oil is through political concessions. Good relationship with these oil exporting countries might benefit us to this effect," he said.

But Gatchalian said the Philippines should move toward a sustainable solution by developing renewable energy and biofuels.

"These two sources of energy are abundant in our own soil. The government should provide a conducive environment to allow the private sector to invest in indigenous energy sources that will lead to our independence from foreign sources," Gatchalian said.

Last Saturday, President Duterte ordered the DOE to look for cheaper sources of petroleum products, particularly from non-members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

However, a majority of the Philippines' oil imports come from OPEC members. Data from DOE showed that 90 percent of the imported crude oil last year was sourced from the Middle East. Saudi Arabia was the top supplier with 36.6 percent, followed by Kuwait with 30.2 percent and United Arab Emirates 17.6 percent.

- **With Marvin Sy, Danessa Rivera**



Palace dares 'pro-US' critics: Attack China

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Malacañang has dared critics of President Duterte's South China Sea policy to pick a fight with China as it expressed doubts that Washington would help Manila in its maritime dispute with Beijing.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said he wanted to see the President's critics ride a ship, sail to China and end up being vanquished.

"*Alam mo ang gusto ko? Kunin silang lahat, isama sila sa isang barko. Lusubin nila, sigel! Maubos na kayong lahat! Napukasawa niyan, mawala na kayong lahat nang matahimik na ang bayan* (What do I want? Gather all of them in one ship. Go ahead, attack China! You will be obliterated! That would be rice. I hope all of you will be gone so the nation will become quiet)," Roque said in an interview with *Light TV* aired last Thursday.

"*Lusob kayo lahat, lahat ng gustong lumaban! Pero huwag naman iyong mga ordinaryong Pilipino kasi gutom na nga, lumahanap na nga ng parasan para makakain, minamasama pa. Pero iyong talagang ginagawang pulitika, sigel, kayo na lumusob ng tuluyang na kayong mawala* (All of you, attack! But do not involve the ordinary Filipino because they are already hungry. We are finding ways to feed them yet you still find fault in what we do. To those who are politicking, go ahead, attack so you will be gone)," he added.

Roque said critics questioning Duterte's move to seek better ties with China should realize that the US would not side with the Philippines in the sea row.

"To the pro-Americans, wake up! They have repeatedly abandoned us," the spokesman said. "How many times have they said will not get involved in territorial disputes. Now, you want us to pick a fight?"

Roque also believes that the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) signed by the Philippines and the US will not convince Washington to side with Manila.

The Philippines and US signed the MDT in 1951 "to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity and their com-

mon determination to defend themselves against external armed attack."

"That's nothing. Do you believe they will fight over rocks?" he said.

"They (US) owe China a huge debt. China is the number one exporter of goods in America and the number one destination of goods made in the USA is also China," Roque added.

The Philippines and China are embroiled in a maritime dispute over parts of the SCS, a busy sea lane where \$5 trillion worth of goods pass through every year. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan are also claiming parts of the resource-rich area.

China's claim, which covers about 90 percent of the area, was invalidated by a The Hague-based tribunal in 2016 but Beijing refused to recognize the ruling,

calling it "illegal since day one."

Duterte has expressed willingness to set aside the arbitral ruling to improve the Philippines' relationship with China. The political opposition, however, claimed the President is too soft on China because of the development and military assistance promised by the Chinese government.

Officials have repeatedly claimed that Duterte would not give up even

an inch of Philippine territory to other countries. 3

7

US warships sail near China-claimed isles

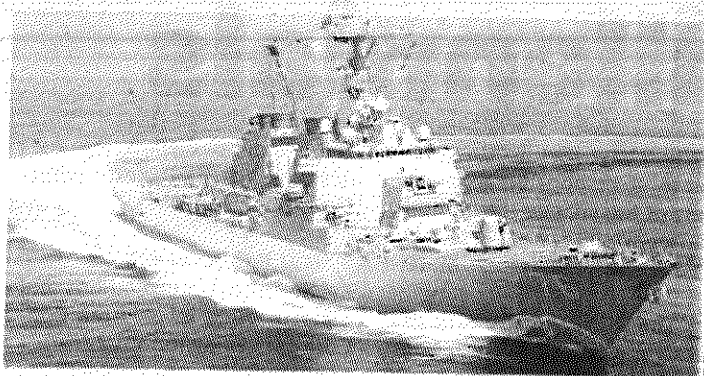
WASHINGTON—Two US Navy warships sailed near South China Sea islands claimed by China on Sunday, two US officials told Reuters, in a move likely to anger Beijing as President Donald Trump seeks its continued cooperation on North Korea.

The operation was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters.

Sensitive time

While this operation had been planned months in advance, and similar operations have become routine, it comes at a particularly sensitive time and just days after the Pentagon disinvited China from a major US-hosted naval drill.

The US officials, speaking on



REUTERS

'FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION' USS Higgins, a guided-missile destroyer, carries out on Sunday maneuvering operations near the man-made islands claimed by China in the South China Sea.

condition of anonymity, said the USS Higgins, a guided-missile destroyer and the Antietam, a guided-missile cruiser, came within 22 kilometers of the Paracel Islands, among a string

of islets, reefs and shoals over which China has territorial disputes with its neighbors.

The US military vessels carried out maneuvering operations near Tree, Lincoln, Triton

and Woody Islands in the Paracels, one of the officials said.

Largely symbolic

Critics of the US naval operations, known as "freedom of navigation," have said that they had little impact on Chinese behavior and were largely symbolic.

The US military has a long-standing position that its operations are carried out throughout the world, including in areas claimed by allies, and that they are separate from political considerations.

Satellite photographs taken on May 12 showed China appeared to have deployed truck-mounted surface-to-air missiles, or antiship cruise missiles, on Woody Island.

Earlier this month, China's Air Force landed bombers on

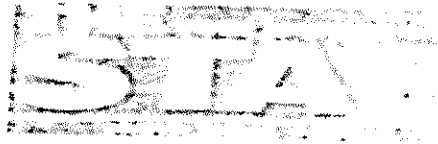
disputed islands and reefs in the South China Sea as part of a training exercise in the region, triggering concern from Vietnam and the Philippines.

Not candid enough

Pentagon officials have long complained that China has not been candid enough about its rapid military buildup and using South China Sea islands to gather intelligence in the region.

China's claims in the South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion in shipborne trade passes each year, are contested by Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

The United States has said it would like to see more international participation in freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea. —REUTERS



US warships sail near SCS islands claimed by Beijing

WASHINGTON - Two US Navy warships sailed near South China Sea islands claimed by China yesterday, two US officials told *Reuters*, in a move likely to anger Beijing as President Donald Trump seeks its continued cooperation on North Korea.

The operation was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters.

While this operation had been planned months in advance, and similar operations have become routine, it comes at a particularly sensitive time and just days after the Pentagon uninvited China from a major US-hosted naval drill.

The US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the *Higgins* guided-missile destroyer and the *Antietam*, a guided-missile cruiser, came within 12 nautical miles of the Paracel Islands, among a string of islets, reefs and shoals over which China has territorial disputes with its neighbors.

The US military vessels carried out maneuvering operations near Tree, Lincoln, Triton and Woody islands in the Paracels, one of the officials said.

Trump's cancellation of a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has put further strain on US-China ties amid a trade dispute between the world's two largest economies.

Critics of the operations, known as a "freedom of navigation," have said that they have little impact on Chinese behavior and are largely symbolic.

The US military has a long-standing position that its operations are carried out throughout the world, including in areas claimed by allies, and that they are separate from political considerations.

Satellite photographs taken on May 12 showed China appeared to have deployed truck-mounted surface-to-air missiles or anti-ship cruise missiles at Woody Island.

Earlier this month, China's air force landed bombers on disputed islands and reefs in the South China Sea as part of a training exercise in the region, triggering concern from Vietnam and the Philippines.

Pentagon officials have long complained that China has not been candid enough about its rapid military build-up and using South China Sea islands to gather intelligence in the region. 3

- Reuters

US warships sail near SCS islands claimed by Beijing

WASHINGTON — Two US Navy warships sailed near South China Sea islands claimed by China on Sunday, two US officials told Reuters, in a move likely to anger Beijing as President Donald Trump seeks its continued cooperation on North Korea.

The operation was the latest

attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters.

While this operation had been planned months in advance, and similar operations have become routine, it comes at a particularly sensitive time and just days after

the Pentagon announced China from a major US-hosted naval drill.

The US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Higgins guided-missile destroyer and the Annetam, a guided-missile cruiser, came within 12 nautical

See US WARSHIPS > Page B2

US WARSHIPS

miles of the Paracel Islands, among a string of islets, reefs and shoals over which China has territorial disputes with its neighbors.

The US military vessels carried out maneuvering operations near Tree, Lincoln, Triton and Woody islands in the Paracels, one of the officials said.

Trump's cancellation of a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has put further strain on US-China ties amid a trade dispute

between the world's two largest economies.

Critics of the operations, known as a "freedom of navigation," have said that they have little impact on Chinese behavior and are largely symbolic.

The US military has a long-standing position that its operations are carried out throughout the world, including in areas claimed by allies, and that they are separate from political considerations.

Satellite photographs taken on May 12 showed China appeared

to have deployed truck-mounted surface-to-air missiles or anti-ship cruise missiles at Woody Island.

Earlier this month, China's air force landed bombers on disputed islands and reefs in the South China Sea as part of a training exercise in the region, triggering concern from Vietnam and the Philippines.

Pentagon officials have long complained that China has not been candid enough about its rapid military build-up and using South China Sea islands to gather intel-

ligence in the region.

Chinese officials have accused Washington of viewing their country in suspicious, "Cold War" terms.

China's claims in the South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion in shipborne trade passes each year, are contested by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

The United States has said it would like to see more international participation in freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea. -- Reuters

Repairs in Pag-asa island within RP rights – Palace

By Mario J. Mallari

The Palace defended yesterday the repairs that the government conducted the runway on Pag-asa Island which is part of the contested region in South China Sea as long overdue and is within the country's prerogative.

"Repair of port facilities in Pag-asa is consistent with our national sovereignty and jurisdiction," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement.

Regional think tank Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) said in its website that the Philippines started long-delayed repairs to its crumbling runway at Pag-asa Island.

According to the AMTI, "Satellite imagery from May 17 shows two barges anchored just off the western edge of the Thitu (Pag-asa) Island runway, which collapsed into the sea years ago."

Turn to page 2

Repairs in Pag-asa island within RP rights – Palace

From page 1

"It appears that a grab dredger, consisting of a crane with a clamshell bucket, is installed on the smaller barge to the west, while the other carries a backhoe. Loose sediment from dredging can be seen in the water around the two barges and freshly-deposited sand is visible along the northern edge of the runway," it added.

The AMTI noted that this method of dredging is similar to that used by Vietnam at many of its outposts in recent years, noting that it affects surrounding reefs at a smaller scale.

According to the AMTI, Philippine defense officials in April 2017 announced that the government would be upgrading facilities at the country's occupied islands and reefs, but little work was apparent until now.

Roque earlier said that Duterte is expected to visit Pag-asa Island within his term to show the country's claim over the Kalayaan Group of Islands.

"I think, time will really come that the President will visit the Pag-asa Island," Roque said in an earlier video interview.

Roque said a visit of the President to the Pag-asa Island would serve as a statement of sovereignty.

"If the President will not do it now, I think, before his term will be finished, he will go there, not only to show to the world our entitlement in Kalayaan but to visit our soldiers and our countrymen living there," he said.

Pag-asa Island is part of the Kalayaan Group of Islands, which is also being claimed by China.

In July 2016, the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in favor of the Philippines' arbitration case saying that China's nine-dash line map has no legal basis.

President Duterte temporarily shelved the PCA's decision to give way to friendly and peaceful dialogues with China.

He, however, vowed not give up any of the country's territorial claims amid China's alleged militarization of the disputed area.

RP joins Hawaiian drill

The Philippine Navy, also for the first time, is sending naval and air assets to this year's Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), a United States Navy-administered naval training among countries in the Pacific Region.

Capt. Lued Lincuna, spokesman of the Navy, said the Navy will be sending two warships and a helicopter during the RIMPAC 2018.

Apart from the naval ships and aircraft, Lincuna said that the Navy is sending 700 sailors and marines.

"In the past years, we were active and regularly sending participants as observers for the exercise RIMPAC but this time it will be the first time that we will be sending our ships and aircraft," said Lincuna.

Lincuna said that the Navy is sending a Tarlac-class and a Del Pilar-class ships to RIMPAC 2018, along with an AW109 helicopter.

"Because of the support of our leaders and the Filipino people, your Navy is modernizing now. We have now the capability to send ships and aircraft to participate in one of the biggest naval exercise in the world," said Lincuna.

RIMPAC, the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise. RIMPAC is held biennially on June and July of even-numbered years from Hawaii.

It is hosted and administered by the US Navy Pacific Fleet based in Pearl Harbor. RIMPAC started in 1971 with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom participating.

According to Maj. Gen. Restituto Padilla Jr., deputy chief of staff for plans and programs (J5) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine Navy first joined RIMPAC in 2012.

Padilla said that two Navy personnel were sent then as observers.

Other regular participants are Chile, Colombia, France, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Peru, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand.

China was previously invited as observer but Pentagon recently recalled its invitation -citing Beijing's aggressiveness in the disputed West Philippine Sea.

PH to join world's biggest war games

BY DEMPSEY REYES

THE Philippines will for the first time participate in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (Rimpac), the world's biggest international maritime war games, to be held off Hawaii in June.

The maneuvers will be led by the US Navy's Pacific Fleet. The biennial exercises will train thousands of personnel from more than two dozen countries on seamanship.

The Philippine Navy will deploy one landing dock ship, one frigate and an Agusta Westland helicopter for the Rimpac, Capt. Lued Lincuna, Navy spokesman, said.

"In the past years, we were active and regularly sending participants as observers for the Rimpac, but this time, it will be the first time we will be sending our ships, the Tarlac class and Del Pilar class and an aircraft (with) around 700 sailors and marines," Lincuna told reporters.

"We have now the capability to send ships and aircraft to participate in one of the biggest naval exercises in the world," he added.

Earlier, Philippine Navy flag officer-in-command Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad said the Philippines will

> War Games A2

■ WAR GAMES FROM A1

PH to join world's biggest war games

deploy 700 sailors and marines for Rimpac. They will sail for Hawaii on the first week of June.

Rimpac is held every two years in Hawaii in June and July.

This year, around 30 navies across the world are expected to participate. The naval exercises seek to enhance the interoperability among the armed forces of the Pacific Rim.

Last week, the Pentagon pulled its invitation for China to join the maritime exercises in the Pacific because of Beijing's "continued militarization" of the South China Sea.

"China's continued militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea only serves to raise tensions and destabilize the region," Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Chris Logan said.

"We have disinvited the PLA (People's Liberation Army) Navy from the 2018 Rim of the Pacific Exercise. China's behavior is inconsistent with the principles and purposes of the RIMPAC exercise," he added.

He said the Pentagon has strong evidence that China has deployed anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems and electronic jammers to "contested features" in the Spratly Islands region of the South China Sea.

"While China has maintained that the construction of the islands is to ensure safety at sea, navigation assistance, search and rescue, fisheries protection and other non-military functions, the placement of these weapon systems is only for military use," Logan said, adding that the recent landing of a Chinese bomber on Woody Island had only exacerbated strains.

China participated in the naval exercises in 2014 and in 2016.

WITH AFP

PH joining largest maritime exercise

THE Philippine Navy is sending for the first time two ships to Hawaii to take part in the upcoming Rim of Pacific or RIMPAC, the world's largest international maritime exercise hosted by the US Navy.

Navy spokesman Capt. Lued Lincuna yesterday said the two ships - a frigate and a landing dock - will be complemented by a multi-purpose attack AW-109 helicopter and 700 officers and men.

"In the past years, we were active and regularly sending participants as observers for the exercise RIMPAC but this time it will be the first that we will be sending our ships

and aircraft and around 700 sailors and marines," said Lincuna.

Lincuna said one of the Navy's Del Pilar class frigates and one of their Tariac class landing docks will be tapped to take part in the exercise but declined to give the ship's name.

The Navy has three frigates belonging to the Del Pilar class, namely the BRPs Gregorio del Pilar, Ramon Alcaraz and Andres Bonifacio - all former US Navy cutters acquired under the AFP's modernization program.

Meanwhile, there are two Tariac-class landing docks in the Navy inventory - BRP Tariac and BRP

Davao del Sur. The two were built by PTPAL of Indonesia and delivered to the Navy last year, also under the AFP's modernization program.

"Because of the support of our leaders and the Filipino people, your Navy is modernizing now. We have now the capability to send platforms, I mean ships and aircraft to participate in one of the biggest naval exercise in the world," said Lincuna.

RIMPAC is held once every two years and involves dozens of navies from around the globe. The Navy has been sending a small contingent of sailors as observers to the RIMPAC since 2012.

Recently, US said it has dis-invited China from this year's RIMPAC because of the latter's militarization and raising tensions in the disputed areas in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea.

China, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan are claiming in part or in whole the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea - a chain of islands and islets believed to be rich in oil and minerals deposits.

US has yet to announce when this year's RIMPAC will be launched. The last RIMPAC exercise in 2016 was conducted from June 30 to August 4. - *Victor Reyes*

15

PH-China oil hunt 'gives up' arbitral ruling

A JOINT oil and gas exploration by China and the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea will "somehow give up" the arbitration ruling that said Manila had sovereign rights over the disputed areas in the sea, a maritime expert said Sunday.

Jay Batongbacal, a professor of maritime affairs and the Laws of the Sea, said the government had yet to address the legal issues in the areas that would potentially be the subjects of the joint exploration deal between the Philippines and China.

"Given that we have the arbitration ruling on our side, it's really hard to think of a way to proceed with this joint development without somehow giving up the arbitration ruling," Batongbacal said.

The Philippines and China in February agreed to set up a special panel to

work out how they could jointly explore offshore oil and gas in the waters that both countries claim without needing to address the issue of sovereignty.

"It's very difficult to resolve. The conditions for engaging in joint development in the areas are not yet being addressed legally by the administration's actions or statements so far," Batongbacal said.

He agreed with former Solicitor General Florin Hilbay who said the Philippines must file a diplomatic protest against China for the supposed militarization of the disputed areas in

the South China Sea.

Batongbacal said the Philippines must be commended for exercising self-restraint over the South China Sea issues even if other claimant countries had already started developing weapons systems in the area.

The government has already begun repairing the collapsed runway on Pagasa Island, the largest of its nine features in the Spratly islands.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said this was "consistent with our national sovereignty and jurisdiction." *h2*

INQUIRY

210

BORACAY WOES

ARMY TRAINEES DEPLOYED TO DIG FOR ILLEGAL PIPES

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINC

ILOILO CITY—Military trainees have been sent to Boracay Island to help locate buried pipes suspected of illegally discharging waste water into the sea.

Armed with shovels, at least 100 trainees of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division based in Camp Macario Peralta in Jamindan town, Capiz province on Friday started digging along the main beach on the eastern side of the resort island.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, briefed the trainees before they dispersed into teams along the beach.

They were expected to be in the island for three days to help in rehabilitation efforts.

33 polluting sites

Cimatu earlier said at least 33 sites along the beach were suspected to have buried pipes that discharge drainage or waste water into the sea.

The areas were identified by a team of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources using a ground penetrating radar device that detects objects up to 70 meters beneath the surface.

Some of the pipes had been found earlier during digging by workers.

Cimatu had vowed to impose the maximum penalty on those confirmed to be responsible for installing the pipes.

But he also learned that the network of pipes had been installed by the government through the then Philippine Tourism Authority, now Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (Tieza), which is under the Department of Tourism.

Government approval

In a report on Friday, the Tieza and Boracay Island Water Co. Inc (Boracay Water), one of two water service providers in Boracay, were quoted in a statement as saying the sewage system that Cimatu was referring to

had been built long ago and with government approval.

"The major cause of manhole overflows and water pollution in Boracay is the refusal of many establishments to connect to the proper sewage system," said a joint statement issued by Tieza and Boracay Water.

Many establishments had also "illegally tapped the drainage line," the statement said.

Cimatu said illegal discharge of untreated wastewater into the sea through the pipes were responsible for results of water quality tests that showed a high coliform level despite the closure of Boracay to tourists.

Illegal structures

President Duterte, after describing the resort island as a cesspool, approved the closure of Boracay for six months starting on April 26 for a cleanup campaign.

This prompted government agencies to work double time in removing illegal structures built on the main road, beaches and forest lands.

Water service providers are also upgrading the island's sewage and drainage systems.

INQ

INQUIRY

**MEDAL OF VALOR
ARMY'S 6TH
INFANTRY HAS
NEW COMMANDER**

Medal of valor awardee and former head of joint task force Sulu has been tapped to take over the command of Armed Forces of the Philippines infantry forces in Central Mindanao.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana took over the command of the Army's Sixth Infantry Division, or the Kampilan Division, on Saturday rites at Camp Siongco in Datu Odin Sinsual in Maguindanao.

Sobejana replaced Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega who was named Western Mindanao commander.

He is among the 41 recipients of the medal of valor since 1935. --JEANNETTE LANDNADE INQ

6th Infantry Division changes guard in historic rites

By **ALI G. MACABALANG**
and **FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD**

DATU ODIN SINSUAT, Maguindanao - The Army's 6th Infantry "Kampilan" Division (6ID) changed leadership in symbolic rites witnessed for the first time by Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) officials who are working closely with the military in the campaign for lasting peace in Mindanao.

The command turnover between Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana and Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega preceded a brigade-size parade Saturday morning honoring the latter for his fruitful stewardship of the 6th ID marked by close rapport with the MILF in sustaining tranquility and combating radical rebels in Central Mindanao.

Gen. Sobejana, a well-decorated military officer and a member of the Philippine Military Academy's Class 1987, replaced Gen. Dela Vega, who assumed the leadership of the Zamboanga City-based West-

ern Mindanao Command (West-MinCom) side-by-side with his promotion to three-star rank by President Duterte.

The ceremonial changing of guard at the 6ID headquarters at Camp Siongco, Barangay Awang here was administered by Lt. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista, commanding general of the Philippine Army, representing new AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr.

Sobejana, a recipient of numerous medals for gallantry in combats in his junior days, assured that he would continue all peace-enhancing initiatives of his predecessors in the 6ID, notably now retired Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, Gen. Galvez and Gen. Dela Vega.

Civilian officials led by Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Mujiv Hataman, Maguindanao Senior Board Member Jazzer Mangudadatu and other elected leaders in Central Mindanao attended Saturday's ceremony. 12

Sobejana tapped to lead Army 6th ID

Armed Forces of the Philippines-Joint Task Force Sulu chief Brig. Gen. Cirilito E. Sobejana has been designated as the new commander of the Army 6th Infantry "Kampilan" Division.

Sobejana assumed the position during a change of command ceremony in Camp Siongo, Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao.

A well-decorated military offi-

cer, Sobejana replaced Lt. Gen. Arnel B. dela Vega who was tapped to lead the AFP Western Mindanao Command based in Zamboanga City.

Army commanding general Lt. Gen. Rolando Joselito D. Bautista led the turnover ceremony which was highlighted by the awarding of plaques of recognition to supportive stakeholders and the inauguration and blessing of staff officers'

quarters and pinning of ranks to newly promoted enlisted personnel.

Sobejana is one of the distinct living heroes of the country, being a recipient of Medal of Valor for demonstrating bravery and heroism in actual combat. There are only 41 recipients of the most coveted highest military award in the country since 1935: **(Francis T. Wakefield and Ali G. Macabalang)** 5

Medal of Valor awardee is new 6th ID chief

BY VICTOR REYES

AN Army general who is a recipient of the Medal of Valor, the highest military decoration, is the new commander of the 6th Infantry Division which is in charge of the campaign the terrorist Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in Central Mindanao.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana took over post on Saturday after more than a year of leading the campaign against another terrorist group, the Abu Sayyaf, in Sulu as the commander of the Joint Task Force Sulu.

Col. Divino Rey Pabayo is taking over as the officer-in-charge of the Joint Task Force Sulu, in concurrent capacity as commander of the 101st Brigade also based in Sulu.

Sobejana yesterday vowed to sustain the intensified campaign against the BIFF, a group of about 300 to 400 men who are mostly former members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The BIFF is among four terrorist groups that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria a few years ago. The others are the Abu Sayyaf, the Maute Group, and the Ansar Khilafah Philippines.

Sobejana said the defeat of the BIFF will lead to the progress of Central Mindanao.

Sobejana, of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1987, replaced Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega (PMA Class 1985) who is now commander of the AFP's Western Mindanao Command based in Zamboanga City.

Before heading the Joint Task Force Sulu in February last year, Sobejana was commander of the Army's 601st Brigade based in Sultan Kudarat.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva said Sobejana "is one of the distinct living heroes, being a recipient of Medal of Valor (MOV) for demonstrating bravery and heroism in actual combat."

"It is distinct and prestigious in the sense that there are only 41 recipients of the most coveted, highest military award in the country since 1935," he added.

Many of the 41 MOV recipients have died, including the last awardee, Capt. Rommel Sandoval who was posthumously conferred the medal in December last year for his role in the liberation of Marawi City from the Maute Group.

Sobejana is the most senior among the five MOV awardees who are still in active military service. The four others are Brig. Gen. Bartolome Bacarro, Brig. Gen. Custodio Parcon, Lt. Col. Herbert Dilag, and Capt. Robert Salvador.

Sobejana is also a recipient of other medals and awards, including a Distinguished Conduct Star, two Distinguished Service Stars, a Gold Cross medal, and two Bronze Cross medals.

'Honeylet' to open Bulacan Capitol today

By FREDDIE C. VELEZ

CITY OF MALOLOS, Bulacan — The much-awaited opening of the newly-restored Bulacan Provincial Capitol building takes place today in consonance with the celebration of National Flag Day with no less than "first lady" Cielito "Honeylet" Avanceña as the honored guest.

Avanceña is scheduled to cut the

ribbon at the blessing and reopening of the Provincial Capitol along with Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana who will lead the Flag Day rites.

Governor Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado and Vice Governor Daniel R. Fernando will be onhand to welcome Avancena and Lorenzana.

The improvement and total rehabilitation of the Bulacan provincial capitol building, which houses the offices of

the governor, vice governor, and its provincial administrative offices was finally finished after it was closed to the public since August 2017.

Last month, in an exclusive interview with this writer, Engineer Glen Reyes, head of the provincial engineering office and Engineer Roland I. Nolasco both said that the construction of the design and build scheme for the rehabilitation that was started by the ISO-certified contractor Nationstar Development

Corporation in August last year would be completed ahead of time.

The complete renovation and improvement of facilities of the building included the Bulacan Garden Park and the Children's Mini-Forest.

Reyes said that the largest mural in the Philippines, entitled "Kasaysayan ng Bulacan" which was in the lobby of the Gat. Blas F. Ople building was also transferred at the newly renovated Capitol building 7

NPA killed in CamSur clash

By NINO N. LUCES
and RUEL SALDICO

PILI, Camarines Sur -- A 20-minute gun battle between government troops and New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Garchitorena town, this province yesterday morning resulted in the killing of one guerrilla fighter, the army said.

Captain Joash Pramis, Division Public Affairs Office (DPAO) chief of the army's 9th Infantry Division (9 ID) based here, said the encounter broke out in Sitio Pagsurungan, Barangay Lidong in Garchitorena.

Pramis said combatants from Charlie Company of the army's 83rd Infantry Battalion engaged about 20 members of the NPA's Larangan 1 KP2 of the Bicol Regional Party Committee (BRPC).

One of the rebels was killed and left by

his comrades at the battle site. His identity was still being established by army authorities.

Soldiers also collected two M-16 rifles -- one of them with an M203 grenade launcher -- and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Charges filed vs broadcaster's killers

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: Murder charges have been filed against the gunmen believed to have links with the New People's Army (NPA) who attacked radio broadcaster Edmund Sestoso on April 30.

Louides Sestoso, wife of the slain broadcaster, appeared before the City Prosecutor's Office on Friday afternoon to file the complaint against John and Peter Doe, also known as "Mokong" and "Sherwin."

She appealed to "Mokong" and "Sherwin," — who in the witnesses' affidavits indicated to be from Guihulngan City — to surface so they can shed light on

the killing of her husband.

Sestoso, 50, was shot by the suspects riding a motorcycle near his boarding house at Barangay Daro in Dumaguete City, after doing his daily morning news and public affairs program "Tug-anan sa Power 91" over dyGB 91.7 FM.

He died from multiple gunshot wounds in the afternoon of May 1.

The complaint was supposed to be filed as soon as the city's

Hall of Justice opened, but was held back by a few hours because one of the three witnesses only filed his sworn statement later on Friday morning.

The witness, whose name is being withheld for security reasons, only appeared to subscribe his affidavit after being convinced by the police to do so.

According to his statement, Sestoso was shot just as he alighted the tricycle he took from his work.

A man wearing a maroon shirt then got off a black motorcycle and approached the already bullet-riddled Sestoso and fired more shots at the broadcaster.

The witness then helped Sestoso into another tricycle because one of the tires of the tricycle that the victim was riding was also fired at

by the gunmen before fleeing.

He and other concerned citizens carried Sestoso to the other tricycle and brought the wounded broadcaster to the nearby Silliman University Medical Center.

An investigation by the Negros Oriental Police Provincial Office said the suspects in the murder of Sestoso have links to the NPA.

Assistant City Prosecutor Angela Czarina Cortez-Garces said the affidavits of the three witnesses were docketed and the city prosecutor will assign a prosecutor for preliminary investigation.

The provincial police director, Senior Supt. Raul Tacaca, said results of their investigation point to a certain Rene Bustamante, alias Ka Pediong, alias Ka Jade Hervias, alias Ka Jury Mercado, and two

John Does, who are relatives of Bustamante, as the suspects who shot Sestoso.

He said the two John Does, known only as "Ka Mokong" and "Ka Sherwin," are residents of Barangay Bagoid, Guihulngan City in Negros Oriental.

Tacaca said a vital witness has personal knowledge of the suspects, who had earlier claimed to be nephews of Bustamante who was arrested in 2014 at a checkpoint in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental.

In that incident, Bustamante suspected Sestoso as the one who reported his whereabouts that resulted in his arrest, police investigation showed.

The police officer said the political angle never came out in the investigation, particularly issues discussed

by Sestoso in his radio program.

But members of the Dumaguete media doubt the details of the complaint sheet that identified an alleged member of the NPA as the suspect, because Sestoso was being monitored because of suspicion that he had connections with the Left.

They cited the manner he reported the Mabinay 6 issue and the ambush in Guihulngan.

Meanwhile, the Leonardo Panaligan Command of the NPA, through its spokesman JB Regalado, in a statement dated May 3, condemned the killing of Sestoso as a form of suppression of press freedom.

The statement called for justice and for a stop to media killings and repression. 47

What are you afraid of? Lacson asks nat'l ID critics

BY JP LOPEZ

SEN. Pantaleon Lacson yesterday told lawmakers who are opposing the proposed establishment of a national ID system that information they will put in the proposed national identification card will be the same as they have been giving in applying for a driver's license, a passport, or a voter's ID.

Besides, a national ID is optional, he said.

The proposed measure seeks to

integrate multiple government IDs by establishing a single national ID system, to be known as the Philippine ID System (PHIDS).

A bicameral conference committee passed the measure on Tuesday last week. The Senate is set to ratify today the landmark measure today.

The bill has been filed and re-filed since the Ramos administration.

Since a national ID system is one of the advocacies of Malacañang,

the measure will be an enrolled bill that President Duterte is expected to sign.

Lacson said he could not understand those opposing a national ID.

"Wala ba silang mga driver's license? Wala ba silang mga passport o wala silang voter's ID? Don't they have a driver's license, passport or voter's ID? The information that they will put in the national ID are the same informa-

See WHAT ► Page B2

• FROM PAGE B1 •

WHAT

tion, including biometrics, facial image and iris scan. Why are they complaining when they underwent the same process?," he said.

Lacson said rebels and criminals are opposing a national ID system because they will be identified as aliases would not be allowed in applying for an ID.

Leftist lawmakers have warned that the passage of the national ID system bill would pose threats to the country's security and infringe on people's privacy rights.

The communist National Democratic Front of the Philippines urged Filipinos to unite against the national ID system.

"The national ID system will practically be reviving the detested 'cedula' system which the Spanish colonial power used to control the movement of people and suppress their democratic rights," the NDFP said in a statement.

The NDFP is negotiating a peace accord with the government to end the decades-long communist insurgency. President Duterte terminated the talks in November last year but ordered government negotiators last April to resume the negotiations.

The NDFP said the ID system is bound to be a "weapon of suppression, a weapon of mass monitoring and surveillance" especially against Duterte's political critics.

"Duterte's proposed system aims to collect an inclusive list of personal information in violation of civil rights. Duterte's National ID system will be a deathblow to privacy rights. In the hands of a repressive and oppressive state, the collection of such information will surely be weaponized and used as a tool for mass surveillance, social, political and criminal profiling," it said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate has said the ID system could make Filipinos vulnerable to data breach.

Defending the proposal, Lacson said the information already stored in several government-issued IDs, which will be included in the national ID, will be secured from

data breach.

"There are many safeguards," Lacson said, stressing that the Philippine Statistics Authority which is the repository of information is not allowed to divulge the information without the consent of the owner of the ID.

He said 105 million of 109 million Filipinos stand to benefit from the national ID system as they would find it easier to transact business either with private or public offices.

Minors, including newborn babies, will be given temporary IDs. When they reach the age majority, they will be issued permanent IDs which they would carry until death.

- With Victor Reyes

NPA rebel dies, 3 soldiers hurt in Davao Oriental clash

DAVAO CITY — A New People's Army (NPA) rebel was killed while three soldiers were wounded in an encounter in the Davao Oriental town of Lupon last May 26.

Chief Insp. Milgrace Driz, Police Regional Office 11 spokesman, identified the wounded troopers as Sgt. Benjie Ortizano, Pfc. Juniel Liasgo and Pfc. Warren Amora, all members of Army's 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion.

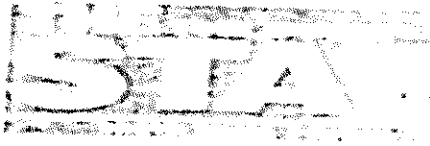
Driz said that based on the report of the Lupon Municipal Police Station, the soldiers were conducting military patrol in Purok Kinawasan

in Barangay San Isidro when they chanced upon the rebels.

Army Capt. Victor Inting, the Army's 28th Infantry Battalion civil-military operations officer, said the troops recovered the body of an NPA casualty following the encounter.

He added that the firefight may have resulted in multiple casualties on the part of the rebels.

Inting said the troops also recovered improvised explosive device, wires, blasting caps, rifle grenades, ammunition and personal belongings of the rebels. **3 PNA**



Congress to ratify nat'l ID bill today

By MARVIN SY

After three decades of languishing in the legislative mill, the national ID system bill is expected to be ratified by Congress today, the final step before it is transmitted to President Duterte for his signature.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, principal author and sponsor of the bill, said the measure is something that he has been pushing for since he first became senator in 2001.

First proposed during the administration of former president Fidel Ramos, the national ID bill has failed to take off due to lack of support in Congress and a general fear of the system because of privacy issues.

Turn to Page 10

Congress From Page 1

But now with the backing of Duterte, the bill, which is also dubbed as the Philippine ID system, has been approved by both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The bill has also gone through the bicameral conference committee where a consolidated version has been prepared and would be presented today in both chambers of Congress for ratification.

"This is a landmark legislation because it is only under the administration of President Duterte that this was approved," Lacson said in a radio interview.

The fears raised about the present national ID, according to Lacson, have been unfounded considering that the information that would be stored in the ID are basic details of an individual such as name, birthdate, address, gender, photograph and biometrics.

The senator explained that all these information about a person are already kept by various government agencies that issue IDs or other documents.

"I don't understand the criticism and opposition (to the national ID). Don't they have driver's licenses? Don't they have passports? Don't they have voter's IDs? The information needed for the national ID are the same so why should they complain when they have already gone through the same process before?" he said.

The information contained in the national ID would be kept secure, with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) as the repository of the data, according to Lacson, adding

there are enough safeguards under the proposed law that would keep the data of the national ID holders secure against unauthorized disclosures.

The only people who should be worried about the national ID, according to the senator, are rebels, terrorists and other criminal elements who thrive on anonymity.

"Those with aliases would now have a difficult time maintaining their aliases. I suppose this is the fear of the leftists because there are NPA (New People's Army), ASG (Abu Sayyaf group), who are fighting the government, so now, with a national ID system, they would be easily identified," Lacson said.

The bill calls for the allocation of an initial P25 billion for the PSA to implement the law.

Lacson, however, said the PSA has aired its concern that P25 billion might not be enough if all of the safeguards would be included in the law; thus, the actual budget needed could run up to P40 billion.

He added that the implementation could also take some time, with the PSA saying that this could take five years to complete.

16.3 M Filipinos to benefit

More than the taxpayers, proponents said the poorest of the poor reaching about 16.3 million out of the total 104 million Filipinos today stand to benefit from the establishment of the national ID system or the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys).

"The PhilSys is particularly important for vulnerable sec-

tors of our population, like those who are marginalized and living in poverty and those living in remote areas," Camiguin Rep. Xavier Jesus Romualdo, one of the principal authors of the bill, said.

"Once they have the means to prove their identity, people will be empowered to exercise their rights and privileges and access basic services," the chairman of the House committee on government reorganization added.

A study undertaken by the Identification for Development initiative of the World Bank had shown that over 16.3 million Filipinos "do not have proof of identity and are hindered from availing themselves of government and financial services."

Romualdo said PhilSys would enable "more Filipinos to access vital services, such as education, social protection, health care, banking and finance."

Another co-author of the bill, former journalist and incumbent Laguna Rep. Sol Aragones, described as a "historical milestone" the passing of the measure after more than 20 years since it was first proposed in Congress.

"We now have an opportunity to create a significant impact and everlasting effect on the lives of our people with something that can fit in our pocket, *kasya sa bulsa*, in the form of an ID," the legislator said.

"This 'one for all, all for one' ID seeks to synchronize and harmonize all existing government-initiated identification cards, into a unified, comprehensive and efficient system," she added.

The PhilSys ID, according

to Aragones, will be issued to all citizens and resident aliens to provide them with a valid proof of identity and a means to simplify public and private transactions.

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

This landmark legislation is expected to promote seamless delivery of service; improve the efficiency, transparency and targeted delivery of public and social services; enhance administrative governance; reduce corruption and curtail bureaucratic red tape; avert fraudulent transactions and misrepresentations; strengthen financial inclusion and promote ease of doing business.

- With Delon Porcalla

President wary of ISIS setting up cells in PH

By GENALYN D. KABILING

The notorious Islamic State (ISIS) might choose the Philippines as a "logical place" to set up camp and kill the

infidels, President Duterte recently warned the public.

The President said the ISIS militants are unlikely to choose Indonesia and Malaysia as its next caliphate in

the region since these countries are dominated by Muslims.

"They are being pushed out of the Middle East. Now they're planning to establish a caliph- ▶4

President wary of...



ate here in Southeast Asia. What country would be the most ideal to set up a camp?" Duterte said during the launch of the Davao River Bridge project in Davao City last Thursday.

"Where would they set up camp? What's the logical place? Mindanao. Where would they find the infidels to kill? They are not found aplenty in Indonesia, Malaysia, or Brunei. It's right here," he added.

He acknowledged that the country could be the next "battleground" of ISIS after being driven out of the Middle East by western forces. He

noted that these militants were looking for a country "where they can mix with the crowd."

"What country would be the most ideal to set up a camp? Indonesia? Indonesia is all Muslim. It could not be Malaysia, it's all Muslim," he said.

Duterte cautioned that the ISIS militants have an ideology dedicated to kill people and destroy places.

"Itong g***** ISIS na ito, they do not know anything except to kill and destroy. And sometimes in their crazy notion that they are the disciples of God, they say that they will

kill all infidels and infidels is - are the non-Muslims," he said.

Faced with the imminent terror threat, Duterte said he has decided to keep his options open on whether to seek assistance from the United States and China if hostilities erupt in Mindanao. He added that his decision to avoid war with China over a territorial dispute was part of a strategy to seek its aid against security threat.

"Because of the threat here in Mindanao, you must have an option of where to go. Is America ready to die for us? Are they ready to send their troops here? Or can I call China for more arms because we do not have it?" he said.

BBL faces more hurdles in Senate

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

The proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) still faces a few hurdles in the Senate as some senators are pushing for more than 100 amendments to Senate

Bill No. 1717.

With three session days left, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said he was pushing for some 150 proposed amendments for a responsible and constitutional BBL.

In an interview over dwIZ on

Saturday, Recto raised concerns on the constitutionality of some provisions, such as shared powers between the national government and the Bangsamoro government over the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR).

"Can the powers of the national government be reduced? We can devolve but the national government's powers cannot be reduced. The Constitution does not recognize shared or exclusive power," he said.

Another issue was the pro-

posed parliamentary system of government in the BAR. The Philippines currently has a unitary and presidential form of government.

Recto also raised concerns over proposals that the BAR get a P150-billion annual budget

from the national government, without having to give back.

"Should we allow that? Should they contribute nothing to national development... if the taxpayers of the Philippines are paying for it?" he said. INQ *JA*

PNP wants control of Bangsamoro police

By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG and AARON B. RECUENCO

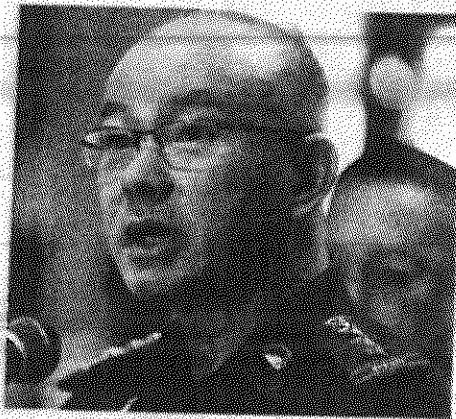
The Philippine National Police (PNP) is proposing amendments to the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) which will give them total control of the police force in the region.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said it was only logical that the police and military forces in the would-be Bangsamoro region are controlled by the

national government to avoid future conflict.

"Our concern is that, the [Armed Forces of the Philippines] and the PNP will be under the direct supervision of the chief minister in the proposal. On our part, we want it to remain as is (controlled by national government)," Albayalde said.

"Ours is to remain as is. Our stand is that we will be putting up different police regional offices there. Or even one police regional office will do," added Albayalde.



ALBAYALDE

Under House Bill 6475, which will create the BBL and abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the power to exercise operational control and

supervision and disciplinary powers over the Bangsamoro police will be given to the chief minister

The proposed bill also tasks the chief minister to select the head and deputies of the Bangsamoro police, and the employment and deployment of its troops.

"What we are trying to avoid is for the [police] to be politicized in the future and we cannot do anything about it because we cannot control our forces. There is no more command and control," he noted.

The PNP chief also expressed fears that the police force in the Bangsamoro region might become a big private armed group (PAG) when political powers exercise control over it.

Even the recruitment of the Bangsamoro police's members will have to be handled by the PNP, just like when the Negros Island Region was created. 2

House to go into overdrive for BBL draft

By Rio N. Araja

HOUSE Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez said Sunday he would work double time to pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law on third and final reading before Congress adjourns on June 2.

"We are going to approve the peace bill this week. We already requested the President [Rodrigo Duterte] to certify the matter as an urgent measure," Alvarez said.

He said Congress could still call for a session until Friday just to pass the BBL.

On May 22, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission requested Congress to give them until today [Monday] to respond to the undisclosed amendments on the measure.

Such was an offshoot of an executive meeting also held on that day attended by the members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, Alvarez, Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas, the heads of the House joint committees on local government represented by Rep. Pedro Acharon, Muslim Affairs by Rep. Mauryag Papandayan, and the special panel on peace, reconciliation and unity led by Rep. Ruby Sahali to iron out the final version of the bill.

New Army commander tapped to crush remaining BIFF men

By Mario J. Mallari

A hemedalled military official was appointed as new commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) in Maguindanao where remnants of the Islamic State-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) are still operating.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, one of the few living Medal for Valor awardees, replaced Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, who was recently promoted as commander of the Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom).

Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista led the change of command ceremony on Saturday at the 6th ID headquarters at Camp Siongeo in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao.

A member of the Philippine

Military Academy (PMA) Class of 1987, Sobejana was previously the commander of Joint Task Force Sulu which has been focused on defeating the terrorist Abu Sayyaf group.

Prior to his appointment as 6th ID chief, Sobejana has been scoring heavily against the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu with the series of releases and rescue of kidnap victims.

During his tenure as JTF-Sulu commander, Sobejana welcomed a total of 76 Abu Sayyaf bandits back to the folds of the law. Some 700 firearms were also turned over to the task force.

In his speech, Bautista urged all 6th ID troops to rally behind Sobejana "to move forward in unison and keep in step to achieve greater heights."

Why can't PH do a Vietnam?

COMMENTARY

ALITO L. MALINAO

While the Philippines is mum on what moves it has taken to counter China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, at least on the diplomatic front, Vietnam has been vocal in condemning China's militarization of the disputed area.

On May 22, Vietnam, China's ideological brother but mortal enemy, accused Beijing of violating its territory when Chinese bombers landed and took off from Woody Island in the Paracels—an activity that Beijing said was part of its training exercises.

"Vietnam demands that China stop these activities, cease militarization of the area, and strictly respect Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa Islands," Vietnam foreign ministry spokesperson Le Thi Thu Hang said in a statement, using the Vietnamese term for the Paracels. She said the presence of the bombers in the area had an adverse impact on ongoing negotiations between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

Woody Island is being claimed by China, Vietnam and Taiwan. But according to an American think tank, the bombers could affect a radius of more than 1,000 nautical miles, meaning the Philippines is within range.

Earlier this month, Vietnam also called on China to withdraw military equipment from the nearby Spratly Islands in the disputed waters, following news reports that China had installed missiles there. Vietnam said China should show responsibility "in maintaining peace and stability in the East Sea" (the Vietnamese term for the South China Sea). It also said China

should not "carry out militarization activities" and "withdraw military equipment illegally installed on features under Vietnam's sovereignty."

The statement was issued after US news network CNBC reported on May 2 that China had installed antiship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on three Philippine-claimed reefs in the Spratlys that it had seized and transformed into military outposts—Kagitingan (international name: Fiery Cross), Zamora (Subi), and Panganiban (Mischief).

Unlike the Philippines, Vietnam's claims over some parts of the Spratlys are not even validated by an international court ruling. And yet it continues to stand up to China.

But what have Philippine officials done except to say that the problem has been discussed in bilateral meetings with Beijing? Has Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano actually filed diplomatic protests against China's incursions into Philippine territory, as he has claimed? Or is the government so enamored of the millions of dollars in loans and grants from China that it now allows Beijing to trample upon its dignity and honor?

All that we hear is presidential spokesperson Harry Roque saying that the government is taking diplomatic initiatives but is "not making a big deal out of it."

At least President Duterte has been candid in saying that the Philippines will not wage a war with China that it cannot win.

Of course, we all know that to go to war with China would be the height of stupidity. But there must be a way, short of going to war, to stand up to, or remind, China that the reefs that it has occupied and developed into military bases belong to us, and that our sovereign rights over these areas are clearly spelled out in the arbitral ruling from The Hague in July 2016.

I was among those who applauded the President when he initiated new foreign policy moves that weaned the Philippines from dependence on the United States. But it is sad that while we have now ceased to be subservient to the United States, we are now unabashedly subservient to China.

No foreign government will respect us if we, as a nation, lose our own self-respect. As Aristotle once said, "It's impossible to win respect from others until you learn to respect yourself."

Alito L. Malinao is a former diplomatic reporter and news editor of the Manila Standard. He now teaches journalism at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila and is the author of the book "Journalism for Filipinos." *AM*

THERE'S THE RUB

CONRADO DE QUIROS IS ON MEDICAL LEAVE. —Ed.



Time to make a stand

COMMENTARY

DINDO MANHIT

The Duterte administration's policy of appeasement did not deter China's military buildup in the South China Sea, including parts of the West Philippine Sea. The administration's failure to take up the Philippines' victory in the arbitral court against China's nine-dash-line claims has allowed China to continue its belligerence and militarization.

In a report, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AmTI) said China has begun or completed over 70 acres of new construction and facility improvement in its bases in the South China Sea since the start of 2017.

Last week, China's People's Daily announced the conduct of takeoff and landing exercises of its bombers on Woody Island in the Paracels.

The AmTI said nearly the entire Philippines falls within the radius of the bombers, including Manila and all five Philippine military bases earmarked for development under the US-PH Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

Vietnam demanded that China cease militarization activities and strictly respect its sovereignty over the Hoang Sa Islands or Paracels.

Mahathir Mohamad, the new Malaysian prime minister, raised concerns over China's military activities, and sought to "ensure our voice is heard because Malaysia does have islands in the area, and this must be upheld." In an interview with the Financial Times, he described China's new leadership as "more ambitious" in its willingness to "flex their muscles a bit, and that is very worrisome."

The Philippines, on the other hand, expressed concern about the missiles installed in South China Sea islands, but said it did not see any immediate threat to

its maritime security from China's deployment of long-range bombers.

It is unthinkable that our government seems to have given up the fight so easily and agrees with all the concessions promised by the expansionist power. The administration's response to Chinese militarization gives the impression that we are at a losing end. A mere strict enforcement of the arbitral ruling from The Hague is a more than sufficient weapon for our government to take a firm stand against China's actions in the South China Sea. Our government's appreciation of the Philippines' victory against China's unfounded nine-dash claim can be a good starting point.

We cannot afford to be silent on "clear and present threats" to the islands that are clearly within our exclusive economic zone, as affirmed by the arbitral court. We have the responsibility to defend what is legally ours. All the resources in the West Philippine Sea belong exclusively to the Philippines. There is no legal dispute as to the ownership of the oil, fish and gas resources.

We cannot be so engrossed with the short-term gains that we surrender our national interest and sovereignty along the way.

There are alternative options to explore. We need to exhaust all available multilateral mechanisms, like the Asean and traditional allies. We should negotiate from a position of strength, not weakness.

We should actively engage the world powers—like the United States, Japan, India and Australia—to oppose the island-

building in and militarization of the South China Sea, and pursue continued peace and prosperity. Such cooperation could be extended to like-minded democracies that uphold the same idea of a rules-based order and interest in maintaining the status quo.

Former Philippine ambassador Albert del Rosario is right in saying that we lost opportunities to advance our position when the government decided to shelve the arbitral ruling. Instead of maximizing our gains, he said, "we also found ourselves being thrown into reverse gear, thus allowing ourselves to be fully disadvantaged."

But it is not too late. When he urged Filipinos to speak with one voice in promoting our national security, he meant everyone regardless of economic class or political affiliation.

Our traditional partners and friends in the international community are waiting to hear the Filipinos' united voice. We need to take a stand to call on the President to revisit our foreign policy to enable us to defend our sovereignty in the face of China's militarization.

With a united stand as a nation, we can rally the international community to take more responsibility in preserving peace and the freedoms of navigation and flight. The Philippines should not shelve its claim of sovereignty and must continue to promote a rules-based regime. It might want to take advantage of the Shangri-La Dialogue to be held on June 1-3 in Singapore. With leaders of over 50 countries expected to attend, the Philippines can take the opportunity to rally other countries against China's actions in the South China Sea.

Dindo Manhit is founder and managing director of Stratbase Group.

Col. Ernesto Ravina, Air Force hero

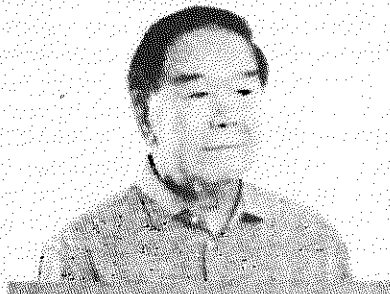
Ernesto Ravina was a member of the Philippine Military Academy's Class of 1955. He finished high school at the Cagayan Valley Institute in Aparri, before taking the PMA entrance examination and made it on his second attempt. He was a year ahead of me.

Shortly after graduation, Ernie married his high school sweetheart, Ma. Clara Ravina, an English professor at the UP College of Arts and Letters. They had three boys and two girls. All the boys would enter the PMA, following in the footsteps of their father. After a short stay at Fort del Pilar, the eldest boy Roberto was sent to the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, one of the first Filipinos to graduate from this institution. Upon his return he would serve with the Philippine Air Force. The middle boy, Ernesto Jr., finished with PMA Class of 1984, and joined the Philippine Marines. The youngest, Victor, Class of 1987, would join the Philippine Constabulary. It seemed that Ernie had allotted one son each for the major services of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. A fourth son would most likely have ended up in the Army.

As I mentioned in earlier columns, after graduation in 1956 I found myself with the Battalion Combat Teams of the Army. But after a while, the Air Force retrieved me from the Army and sent me to Fernando Air Base for flying training. At Fernando, we caught up with some members of Class of 1955 who were just about to complete their training. Five of them would earn their wings as pilots and Ernie Ravina was one of them.

For many years I lost track of Ernie, until 1974 when the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) launched its greatest offensive against the government. Muslim rebels engaged AFP units in one of the fiercest counterinsurgency actions in our history. Perhaps, not many people were aware that such a serious threat existed against the nation in 1974.

The MNLF—as distinguished from the MILF or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front—was at the height of its power and the offensive was part of a grand plan to establish control over large areas of Mindanao and thus lay the groundwork for an independent Bangsamoro state. The government threw much of its resources into the battle including F-86 Sabre jets, T-28 attack planes ("Tora Tora"), C-47 gunships, and helicopters.



REVEILLE
RAMON J. FAROLAN

One particular C-47 gunship was piloted by Lt. Col. Ernesto Ravina, along with Majors Luis Amorsolo and Ricardo Achas. In the face of heavy enemy fire, Ravina flew his plane at a dangerously low altitude to destroy rebel mortar emplacements and supply depots. Although hit in the left wing and fuselage, the aircraft continued the attack against remaining targets. For this feat of bravery, Ravina and his crew were awarded the Distinguished Aviation Cross.

The following month, the AFP launched a counteroffensive code-named "Centurion." But the rebels, in a bold move, staged an attack on the town of Jolo which was lightly defended with most of the troops participating in "Centurion." The Sulu Air Task Group (Satag) was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Ravina with a small force of airmen consisting of 10 officers and 110 enlisted men, mostly green recruits. Satag was in charge of the Jolo Airport complex.

Rebel intelligence was impeccable. They knew that the Air Force sector manned by raw trainees was the weakest link in the defense perimeter formed by government forces. If they could break through against Satag, it would be difficult for other units to hold the line.

A fierce fight took place with the airmen doing the job of foot soldiers. Ravina's heroism and leadership kept the enemy at bay and when the smoke of battle cleared, the rebels failed to breach the defenses and Jolo remained under government control. For his outstanding display of courage in the face of the enemy, Ravina was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Star, the second-highest decoration for AFP personnel. In the short span of less than a month, Ravina won two of the highest combat awards available for military personnel.

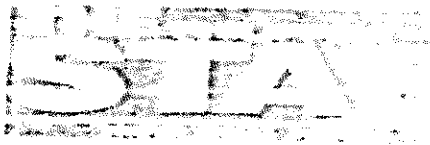
Reviewing the reports on Ravina's role in the Jolo action, not a few officers wondered why he was not given the Medal for Valor, the nation's highest military honor. He had gone head-to-head against the enemy, facing almost certain death in close combat and he stood his ground. If the Satag defense line had been breached, Jolo could have fallen to the enemy resulting in a great psychological victory for the MNLF with repercussions far beyond our shores sending the message that our government was weak and unable to defend a provincial capital.

No regrets were expressed about missing out on a Medal for Valor. Ernie Ravina had done his duty and that was all that mattered.

On Sept. 11, 1988, 2nd Lt. Victor Ravina was killed in combat against NPA rebels. The AFP honored the young officer with a Gold Cross for "bravery in action against the enemy." A PC camp in Baler, Aurora province, is named after him. Ten years later, Roberto died in Massachusetts, the victim of a hit-and-run driver. Ernesto Jr. recently retired from the military service with the rank of brigadier general. A daughter, Anna Marie, is a teacher at the International School in Luxembourg.

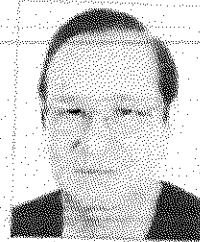
As we approach another milestone in the history of our Air Force, its family led by Lt. Gen. Gerard Galileo Kintanar Jr., remembers Colonel Ravina with great pride and honor for his display of courage and excellence as a leader of men. Ravina passed away in May 1999.

Today, his memory is kept alive with the naming of the headquarters of the 710th Special Operations Wing of the PAF in Capas, Tarlac, as Col. Ernesto Ravina Air Base. The administration of the Crow Valley gunnery range for PAF pilots is one responsibility of this unit.



INTROSPECTIVE

TONY F. KATIGBAK



Oil prices rising unabated worldwide

We have all certainly taken a hit this summer. Not only have temperatures risen to staggering and sweltering new heights, but also the prices of just about everything have continued to go up around us. The heat is making it impossible not to use air conditioning or electric fans (just to stay alive) and our electricity bills have skyrocketed – thanks in no part to Meralco raising the cost of electricity twice in the last two months – making bills go up by as much as 30 percent.

Also due to the heat, we are dehydrating faster and consuming more water increasing our water bills too. Basic goods and groceries have increased in costs and it just seems that all around us the prices of the necessities we need in life have gone up – without any compensation to what we are earning. In other words, we are all making the same amount (if we are lucky) and spending so much more.

And of course, I can't forget to include the rising cost of oil. This affects everyone and it's happening on a global scale. Oil everywhere in the world is increasing in costs and I don't see any reprieve in sight. Here in the Philippines we feel it sting the most when it comes to gas and power – especially in Metro Manila where you are almost guaranteed a one to two hour drive just to get anywhere. A full tank of gas costs almost double what it used to, but it now takes us twice as long to get to where we are going.

I'm not surprised that public transportation workers have been desperately appealing to the government for help. They have to pay so much more for gas now and the fares they have been charging just don't

cover it. However, the commuters also don't want to pay more because they are already paying more for everything else in life. The increase in oil prices is a serious problem that is affecting everyone in a wide variety of alarming ways.

Despite the fact that we have at least begun to explore alternative energy sources like geothermal, solar, and wind; we haven't invested enough in these alternatives to make much of a difference on the impact of the price of oil. The little that we have put into alternative energy is no match for our rising population and the sheer number of Filipinos living and working and consuming gas and energy in the country. Again, we have arrived late to the party and have put off looking for sustainable options until it was too late.

I'm sure I am not the only one who is saddened and alarmed by the rising cost of living in Metro Manila. I'm curious where this so-called "economic progress" the government keeps talking about is? The middle class and the masses certainly do not feel it. All I can see is that the working class are suffering from the costs of goods and utilities with no end in sight.

Is there any viable solution to these problems? Right now it might still be "bearable" for some but the eventual state of our economy is bound to affect the president's "Build, Build, Build" agenda unless he can find a way to protect the industries and the employees. How can we find a solution to the astronomical increase in prices of everything around us?

We are all grateful for the amazing job our troops did taking down the terrorists in Marawi, but of course despite a victory and a decisive step forward it's not always as simple as winning battle to

13 Turn to page 15

78

KATIGBAK From page 13

end the terrorist threat. Even if you are able to strike a devastating blow on the Islamic capital, it's only a matter of time before the terrorists begin popping up in other regions of Mindanao. They are like mushrooms - exceptionally difficult to contain.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. confirmed that the terrorist groups, particularly ISIS, have been trying to recruit in Mindanao looking for easily molded and groomed supporters to join their cells. While this is certainly a cause for alarm, the general also shared that despite their recruitment efforts, he feels confident that support for these groups and their ideals are waning as evidenced by a spike in the number of those who have surrendered.

In fact, Galvez, who was in Mindanao for the first year anniversary of the Marawi rebellion, said that members of the various terrorist groups in the region have continued to yield despite the reports of recruitment. The surrenderee count is currently at over 40. He believes that this number will continue to rise

due to the counter terrorist narrative that has begun to spread in the region. Hopefully he is right. It might be too much to wish for peace in our lifetime, but I suppose nothing is impossible.

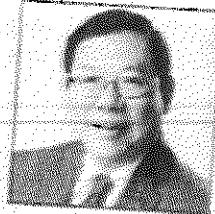
I hope that the government is successful in implementing the National ID system. This is something that will be good for all voting age Filipinos, many of whom don't have proper identification, and will become the only ID that we need. While I understand the concerns that some people have voiced about data security and potential backlash on personal privacy, the policymakers who have been vocal about supporting the system share that it is no different from all the other ID systems in the country - the only difference is that this time this is the only ID we will need.

I hope that if the bill is passed and signed into law we are able to find an exceptionally trustworthy company to run the National ID system and ensure that no data hacks or privacy leaks occur. If we can do this, and do it right, we'll be making government IDs much more convenient and easy for everyone.

★

BUSINESS BEAT

The Chinese offensive



By MELITO SALAZAR JR.

THE People's Republic of China has fortified Philippine-claimed islands in the West Philippine Sea and landed an H-6K bomber on Woody Island that can carry nuclear armed cruise missiles. On Mischief Reef, Subi Reef, and Fiery Cross Reef in the Kalayaan Island Group of the Philippines, the Chinese have built three-kilometer military-grade runways. Despite urgings from some quarters (Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio urged the government to formally protest this increasing militarization and Vice President Leni Robredo expressed serious concern), Malacañang through presidential spokesman Harry Roque said that while the government has not given up its ownership of the West Philippine Sea, it has chosen to set aside "contentious issues" with China and focus on other areas of cooperation for now.

Despite these continuing Chinese provocations and a recent statement by Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang in a regular briefing that, "The South China Sea

islands are Chinese territories," the Philippine government seems content with the belief that China is not a threat to national security. While developments were proceeding in this area it would seem that the Philippine government created a diversion by having a big show in renaming Benham Rise to Philippine Rise when it hardly did anything when China gave Chinese names to certain features of this resource-rich territory I suppose the Duterte administration has complete trust in China after Chinese President Xi Jinping allegedly promised President Duterte that China will protect him and prevent his ouster. So, the Chinese offensive continues and it is not just in the West Philippine Sea.

Makati netizens are beginning to notice increasing numbers of young Chinese men and women filling up the condominium units, at times over 70% are rented by them. Where do they head off for work - BPOs, on line gaming, financial research? I remember those days when my wife and I would hie off to the closing sale of beautiful Chinese jars and vases, buying up the lot at heavily discounted prices from smiling

Chinese mainlanders. I believe they now have permanent displays in some malls carrying a variety of Chinese furnitures, vases, ornaments, etc. One can still go to 168 Shopping mall with its close competitors, 11/88 Mall, the 999 Mall, and the Lucky Chinatown Mall with its 500 tenants selling mostly Chinese-made products at very low prices. If I am right, this was the mall where public school teachers rushed to buy cheap plastic globes, not realizing that the Spratly Islands were shown as Chinese territories. This Chinese offensive seems progressing, from petty peddlers to shop owners and now to financial and IT analysts in the Philippines financial capital?

The Chinese Embassy has also been busy undertaking projects in high-profile locations. There is the Calawa Water Pumping Project for 3,000 household in the Buhangin District of Davao City. There is the second Grant-Aid Dangerous Drugs Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center located in Agusan del Sur province after the first in Sarangani Province. Chinese equipment assistance to the Philippine Broadcasting System and China-aided two bridges across the Pasig River in Manila

are included in the Chinese gifts for the Filipinos. Recently, President Duterte presided over the Alegria Oil Field oil and gas production ceremonial commencement, a project of the China International Mining Petroleum Co. Ltd., which is 51% owned by Hong Kong-listed Polyard Petroleum International Group, Ltd. Hong Kong is a Chinese special administrative region. The company intends to drill at least 3 million barrels of oil up in the mountains of Alegria in the next 19 years. Other Chinese companies are expected to be involved in land reclamation and development (Shanghai GeoHarbour Group), development of large tourism projects and electronics industry parts (Zhongfa Group), infrastructure and construction project and thermal power supply (Haocheng Group), based on the agreements signed last April when President Duterte attended the Boao Forum in China.

The Chinese offensive is in full swing. If we are to follow President Duterte's urging, let us welcome them with open hands. Yes, as partners not masters. Yes, as a free and sovereign country not as a vassal. Yes, if they respect our territorial sovereignty.

21st century diplomacy at work

FOLLOWING last week's chronology of diplomatic developments in Northeast Asia featuring the scheduled US-North Korea summit meeting in Singapore on June 12 is a reality case study of 21st century diplomacy in action.

It also shows how the play involves the hidden role of the China-US trade war and how the Beijing and Washington leaderships use any and all ammunition available in their respective bags to attain their objectives—national interest being the top priority.

Obvious to outside observers and analysts, on the surface, are the true national interest of the major players.

North Korea wants the US to lead in lifting the United Nations' economic sanctions on Pyongyang. The UN, including North Korean allies Russia and China, had unanimously voted for the sanctions because of the North Korean nuclear armament buildup and nuclear war head delivery test launches, violations of the international agreement on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

North Korea, while announcing that it wanted the Singapore summit meeting for world peace, is suspected of being insincere and truly wants to keep its nuclear capabilities at the current levels.

Some think-tanks had said North Korea will NOT give up its nuclear armaments development program lest it suffer the fate of Libya and its dictator Moammar Gadhafi who stopped their nuclear missiles program. But Libya collapsed in the Arab Spring movement and Gadhafi was murdered by rebels.

However it appears that the economic sanctions are working—particularly the ban on food exports to Pyongyang because North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un had accepted the public invitation, through the social media, of US President Donald Trump for a summit meeting for world peace and stability.

This was preceded by North Korea sending a delegation to participate in the last Winter Olympics in South Korea, a combined North-South Korean team in the competition and followed by the dra-



THE ASEAN PERSPECTIVE

GIL H. SANTOS

matic meeting in the demilitarized truce zone in Panmunjom of Kim and President Moon Jae-in. This to the whole world was a picture of reunification of the two Koreas after the Korean War ended in 1954 in a ceasefire only.

Kim's acceptance was announced by the state-controlled North Korean state media after its underground nuclear missile test site near the border with China reportedly collapsed late last year after five missile—with increased mass destruction blasts—launches. Of course, Pyongyang did not deny nor confirm the report.

But earlier this year, Kim was summoned by China and met with President Xi Jinping secretly. China is North Korea's biggest trading partner and supporter in its nuclearization program. (This dates back to the Korean War when China sent troops and war materiel to Pyongyang to fight the Allies led by the US after the communist North invaded South Korea to "unify" the divided Korea.)

To independent observers this was an indication that Xi gave instructions to Kim so Beijing's interests in the Asia-Pacific region is *not* sidelined in the Kim-Trump summit meeting.

China is suspected to be using the North Korean nuclear development program to increase current US involvement in its current ideological disputes with Russia in the current Syrian situation and in the Iranian-Israeli war.

Asean business leaders who prefer not to be named now also believe China allows the smuggling of its food imports into North Korea to make Pyongyang almost totally dependent on Beijing for staple products, thus making China the largest importer of almost every raw material or finished products. And China has done this successfully because of its

reputed 1.3 billion population as the world's largest consumers.

More intensified US involvements in the Asia-Pacific region, means more drain in its economy. And China reportedly is using these to boost its economic competition with the US, hopefully replacing it as the world's strongest economic and military-political power in this century—the hegemon.

The US wants the complete, irreversible and verifiable (by the UN nuclear inspection agency) denuclearization of North Korea signed and followed by Pyongyang before all sanctions (particularly ban on food imports) are lifted. And to attain that, Trump even hinted he may even "help" Pyongyang's economy and reunification which will allow the political-ideological division of the North and South, but an integrated ("united") economy.

The US also wants a lesser alliance between Beijing and Pyongyang as a counter-move against China's cut-throat international trade practices. Chinese and North Korean labor are paid slave wages compared to the international labor and energy costs because they are not unionized. Their products' quality is proven to be unquestionably inferior. And the communist dictatorship controlled now by Xi allow zero dissent and public protests.

Trump also wants to curb the Chinese efforts of "robbing" the US of intellectual property rights by copying American technological inventions. The Chinese call this "innovation" which was declared as a national policy at last year's Chinese Communist Party national general assembly in Beijing.

At the same time, the US wants to maintain its total presence in the Asia-Pacific region for its own national security. On the other hand, the Chinese says this is a threat to their territorial integrity.

This is the reason for the close encounters of military jet fighter planes and warships in the South China Sea between China and the US and its allies—after China militarized with missile launching pads, air fields and naval ports since 2000—even reefs and atolls in UN-recognized exclusive economic zones of Vietnam, Malaysia,

Brunei and the Philippines.

While it practices "freedom of navigation" in the international waters of the South China Sea, Beijing claims military planes and naval ships are not allowed in any part of what it unilaterally claims its territory.

And although North Korea had released three Americans it detained as "spies" and blew up its missile test site in Punggye-ri area last week, as a "goodwill" gesture, Trump believed these were not enough.

Trump and Moon met in Washington early last week to iron out the (unmentioned) details of the Trump-Kim Singapore meeting. This was preceded by a joint US-South Korean "routine" naval exercise off the Korean peninsula and a Washington statement against the Chinese militarization of the South China Sea.

Pyongyang attacked these developments and threatened to abort the Trump-Kim Singapore meeting.

Trump's immediate response was a formal letter to Kim aborting the June 12 meeting because of "tremendous anger and open hostility" by North Korea. But in less than 48 hours later, after his domestic critics pointed out he could lose diplomatic points versus Kim in cancelling the summit meeting, Trump said there is still a good chance the Singapore meeting will go on as scheduled.

Of course this has led to a good amount of confusion, particularly for the 10 Asean members, who are waiting for peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific area. Such development will turn into reality the international financial institutions' prediction that the Asean region will be the fastest growing/progressing quarter of the world in the next 25 years.

Nobody can accurately predict the immediate and short-term future in this dynamic world of this century of information and technological advances. But a lot can be learned—and one can choose the best options for, after a thorough analysis of the trend, the future—if he keeps himself accurately, factually and most speedily informed in this age.

By

gilsmanilatimes@yahoo.com

Carpio, Robredo and Golez make a fool of themselves over Chinese-bomber issue

BY RIGOBERTO TIGLAO
Columnist

A MUCH overused cliché certainly, but I can't resist quoting it: "Only in the Philippines." You'd agree with me after reading this piece.

Where else in the world would a nation's Vice President, Acting Chief Justice, a former national security adviser and even a former senator be jumping up and down shrieking against an emerging superpower, demanding that their gov-

ernment do the same — all because of their gross ignorance and bias against that nation?

After the state-owned *China Daily* reported that the People's Liberation Army landed its H-6K bomber aircraft on "an airport in the South China Sea" for landing and take-off drills, these officials retiled away.

Vice President-elect Leonor Robredo: "The news about the landing of the Chinese bombers on our islands is extremely worrisome. Aside from this, the landing and take-off exercises of China in the

► TiglaoA4

West Philippine Sea using their long-range bombers is alarming."

Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio: "Failure to formally protest against this means the Philippines is acquiescing or consenting to the militarization, and worse, to the claim of China that all the islands, waters and resources within the nine-dash line form part of Chinese territory. Any self-respecting sovereign state will immediately formally protest such encroachment on its sovereignty and sovereign rights. The Philippines must do no less."

Former national security adviser Rollo Golez: "This is a clear and present danger to the Philippines and our friends in the area. I strongly recommend for the Philippines finally to lodge a very strong diplomatic protest *dahil masyadong matindi* ang development *na ito*."

Former senator Rene Saguisag: "So, what do we call China's open militarization in our very own territory? The National Security Council should have been convened yesterday."

These officials made a fool of themselves. They blabbed their mouths off to reveal either their gross ignorance of the geography of this part of the world, their sheer intellectual laziness to do a bit of research, or their US-molded bias against China.

Paracels, not Spratlys

The bombers landed on Woody Island (Yongxing to the Chinese), the largest of the Paracel islands, 350 kilometers from Hainan



RIGOBERTO TIGLAO

province – or about half the distance from Manila to Cebu. Only China and Vietnam claim these islands. China had occupied these islands and fortified Yongxing since 1974, after a battle with the Vietnamese.

Carpio, whose hobby is collecting expensive old maps, in his book on the South China Sea issue presented over 100 medieval maps, which he claims prove our territorial claims. Yet he obviously can't distinguish between the Paracels and the Spratlys.

We have as much business in the Paracels as we do, say on Senkaku islands 330 kms from China, claimed by that country, Taiwan, and Japan, or in the Kuril islands, disputed over by Russia and Japan.

Robredo, Carpio, Golez, and Saguisag obviously thought the Chinese bombers landed on some island in our Kalayaan Group of islands in the Spratlys. They should learn to do a bit of fact-checking before they open their mouths. Yongxing is nearly a thousand kilometers from our Pag-Asa island. (We don't even have our own nomenclature for the island.)

Did any other country file a diplomatic protest against China that these ignoramuses are demanding the Duterte government to do?

No. Not even Vietnam, the only other claimant to the Paracels, which lost 60 soldiers and sailors when it fought China in 1974 over the area. A Vietnamese foreign ministry spokesman—not even its foreign minister—of course, claimed that China's moves "increase tensions, cause regional instabilities and are not good for maintaining a peaceful, stable and cooperative environment in the East Sea."

Only the Pentagon

Did the US, a superpower, which has vowed to defend the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea file a diplomatic protest against China on the issue?

Nope. Not the White House, not even its State Department bothered to comment on this development that pushed our acting chief justice and the vice president into paroxysms of protest against China. It was only a spokesman for the Pentagon, one Lt. Col. Christopher Logan, who commented on the episode, branding the exercise an act of "China's continued militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea." And even that spokesman didn't ask the US State Department to lodge a diplomatic protest against China, as the three stooges asked Duterte to do.

The US, of course, has done much worse things to independent nations' sovereignty, the most recent of which are its 100 missile strikes against Syria, an independent nation

we have diplomatic ties with. The US claimed it was in retaliation for the Syrian government's chemical attack against its own citizens. This, however, was conclusively proven to have been faked by that nation's rebels.

Did Carpio, Robredo, and Golez demand that our government file a diplomatic protest against the US? Of course not. These Filipinos are American lackeys. Did you ever hear them say a single word against the US?

No nation, not the World Bank or the European Parliament, protested the landing of Chinese bombers in their own territory.

If Duterte had followed their demand for the Philippines to issue a diplomatic protest against China for its landing of bombers in its own territory— "a very strong one," Golez urged—we would have been the only nation to do so, and we would have become the laughing-stock of the world.

This brouhaha only reveals the fact that Robredo, Carpio and Golez are essentially the mouthpieces of the US on the South China Sea territorial dispute, its proxies. They play a crucial role for the Americans as they really have totally no business in the area, even as they can't bear the thought that an Asian superpower is emerging there, which would dismantle their decades-old total hegemony in the region.

Email: tiglao.manilatimes@gmail.com

Facebook: [Rigoberto Tiglao](https://www.facebook.com/RigobertoTiglao)

Twitter: [@bobitiglao](https://twitter.com/bobitiglao)

An upgrade long overdue



CROSSROADS

JONATHAN DE LA CRUZ

THE news that a Washington think-tank has monitored repairs being done on the runway in Pag-asa, the biggest island in the Kalayaan Group of Islands which is under our control within the disputed Spratlys island group, does not come as a surprise. In fact, the runway should not only be repaired. It should be expanded. If possible, the entire KGI itself should be upgraded to accommodate increased civilian and military presence like what the other claimants in the area are doing within their own occupied islands.

As that same think-tank has been broadcasting all along, the People's Republic of China has been busy reclaiming, expanding and, yes, militarizing its own occupied areas in the Spratlys. This think-tank has been haranguing all other claimants and even non-claimants such as the US and the European Union with this information.

This does not come as a surprise.

After all, Vietnam has been doing the same in its part of that vast maritime area. Taiwan has done the same with Abu Ata, the biggest island in the area. All of them have gone ahead with their own operations ensuring that the islands or islets they already occupy will remain in their hands for as long as necessary. No questions asked.

There is nothing about freedom of navigation and commerce. Not even fishing rights, as all the fisher-

men of the claimant countries for as long as one can remember were free to fish in the lagoons and byways which formed part of that resource rich area. Not even militarization, until China accelerated its build-up and the US and its Western allies started invoking all kinds of international rules like Unclos which the five permanent members of the UN Security Council routinely violate when doing so suits their purposes.

Indeed, long before China started

defense ministry and the Armed Forces at that time to start occupying the areas which can be inhabited and put breakers or mojons within our sea boundaries, including those in the disputed areas, to fortify our claims. The Pag-asa runway was one of the major projects at that time.

There were plans to reclaim and expand the island and the other islets within the group as well as fortify our presence in the Malam-paya Sound when it was clear that

we were on the verge of a huge oil and gas discovery toward the end of the 70s. We were already on the way—but things did not turn out the way they should have after 1986. So now, we are on a crash catch-up situation. But no matter. We should proceed with all deliberate speed before things get even more problematic than they already are. As one analyst noted, if the US is really bent on helping us defend our part of this disputed area, then we should ask them to help us reclaim, expand and upgrade our holdings in return for possible use of these territories for the annual Balikatan exercises and other joint military exercises with Asean and other friendly countries.

In fact, if the US so desires and if it would really assist us in fortifying our claims, there is no way we can deny the use of the KIG, for example, in implementing the Visiting Forces Agreement which states in part that the US can actually deploy and warehouse equipment in any recognized base within the Philippines.

An expanded and upgraded KIG can very well fit that bill. What are they waiting for?

“If possible, the entire Kalayaan Group of Islands should be upgraded to accommodate increased civilian and military presence.”

working on islands or rocks (as some pundits called the islets) in what is known as the Spratlys in the South China Sea in the 1970s, we already had a runway in one of the bigger isles, Pag-asa. In fact, we were already populating the other islets in the group we later called Kalayaan Group of Islands, which was even incorporated and recognized as a municipality of Palawan in the 70s.

I remember then-Senate President Enrile telling me during a congressional break that the late President Ferdinand Marcos instructed the De-

What cheek!

Outgoing Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales last week was quoted by the media as saying that great countries don't need strongmen but strong institutions, as she highlighted the independence of the office of the Ombudsman.

What she said was part of a speech she had given before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP).

As she put it, "Great men eventually perish but great institutions outlast them all. By protecting great institutions like the Office of the Ombudsman, you are protecting the people," Morales said.

Morales also said that the Office of the Ombudsman was established to be the "first line of defense" against erring government officials in order to avoid abuse of power.

That's a fine speech—as speeches go—but also a speech where Ombudsman Morales appears to try too hard to impress upon the people that her office, under her, is a "great institution" that is the "first line of defense" against erring government officials in avoiding abuse of power.

While she speaks of "great" countries having strong institutions rather than strongmen while highlighting the office she heads as Ombudsman as a prime example of her office's independence, it has been evident for years that Morales, as head of the Office of the Ombudsman, was hardly non-partisan, or fair, for that matter.

While she, as Ombudsman, filed plunder and graft cases against government officials, Morales practiced her selective justice and clear partisanship, as she filed non-bailable charges of plunder and only against the political foes of her yellow patron, former president Benigno Aquino. While Morales went down hard on the Aquino foes, she, however, protected the allies of close aides of Aquino.

This can be proved, just by checking on how she treated the allies of Aquino and even



Aquino himself

Morales only charged three then opposition senators, Juan Ponce-Enrile, Jinggoy Estrada and Ramon Revilla with plunder. But in the case of the allies of Aquino, only a handful was charged with graft, a crime that allows instant bail. The other senators who were allies of Aquino, were not even charged, despite the fact that these senator allies of Aquino were not even indicted by Morales, despite the fact that their names also appeared in the same Commission on Audit (CoA) report which was the basis of then Justice Secretary now detained Leila de Lima and then CoA chair, Grace Pulido-Tan and of course, Ombudsman Morales, the trio known for their partisan roots and selective justice, to charge the three opposition senators with plunder.

Even more telling is the fact that even as the High Court ruling against the infamous Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) funds from where the yellow president and his yellow budget secretary took the billions in funds to bribe the members of Congress to impeach then convict then sitting chief Justice Renato Corona, just what did Ombudsman Morales do, to ensure what she says of her "great" and "independent" office of Ombudsman Morales do?

Why, she absolved Aquino completely, even

saying that Aquino can never engage in corruption.

As for Aquino's yellow budget secretary, Butch Abad, all he got was a very weak slap in the wrist plus a penalty of forfeiting his one month salary. No graft charges even for her yellow patron and his budget chief.

She didn't even bother to charge her yellow patron in the case of the Maguindanao massacre of the 44 Special Action Force commandos who were slaughtered by the Muslim rebels and even the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighters who were in peace negotiations then. Aquino was then the president and commander in chief and even as he saw what was going on in real time.

And Morales calls herself independent?

What is even worse that springs out of her record as Ombudsman is the fact that she had been caught out twice for deliberately providing, during the Senate impeachment trial of Corona, false information during her testimony against Corona, claiming that he had some US\$12 million in hundreds of bank accounts, which was a inflated lie. Moreover, Morales also provided the impeachment court with illegally obtained the dollar account transactions of Corona, from the then manipulated Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC).

And her partisan and vengeful ways continued even after the end of the yellow regime, as she did it again in the case of the manufactured evidence of President Duterte and his family members' fabricated bank transactions in the billions, in her bid to destroy him.

What the Ombudsman and her deputy did in their bid to destroy Duterte was to use the fabricated bank statements of Sen. Antonio Trillanes, who used it to destroy the presidential bid of Duterte then.

And Morales has the gall to make herself appear as the independent Ombudsman who strengthens the institution? What cheek!