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NEWS CLIPPINGS

30 May 2018

Wednesday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

BELLO EXPECTS PAY HIKES WITHIN 30 DAYS

STORY BY DJ YAP, JOVIC YEE AND ROY STEPHEN C. CANIVEL

The employers' group Ecop opposes the proposed daily minimum wage of P750, saying it will endanger the viability of micro, small and medium enterprises that employ close to 5 million workers.

AB

FROM A1

By DJ Yap, Jovic Yee and Roy Stephen C. Canivel @Team_Inquirer

An increase in the minimum wage to be set by regional wage boards may be expected "within the month" but it won't push the floor pay to the P750 per day that labor groups are demanding, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said on Tuesday.

"[There will be an adjustment] within the month because the President's instruction is very clear, which is to address the issue of rising prices," Bello told reporters in the Senate.

The secretary made the statement a day after the Makabayan bloc of lawmakers filed House Bill No. 7787, which would set a uniform daily minimum wage rate of P750 that would apply to all enterprises regardless of location, size or industry classification.

The lawmakers said the measure was needed given the "exploding impact" of the administration's Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law on the price of basic goods and services. The law slaps an excise on fuel and other goods.

'Disaster'

The Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop) said the wage increase sought by labor groups "will be a disaster."

"Rural areas [will] not [be able to] get investments be-

cause of [the] high cost of logistics plus a lack of infrastructure. [Meanwhile], urban areas will not be competitive," Ecop president Donald Dee said in a text message.

Acting Ecop president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. warned that the operations of more than 900,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the country would be put at risk.

He said the viability of the MSMEs would be affected by any "dramatic increase" in wages, especially in regions where the minimum pay is lower than that in Metro Manila.

Currently, the minimum wage varies among regions, with that in Metro Manila pegged at up to P512 and that in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao at P255.

Uniform increase

Bello said wage increases would likely vary from region to region, though a uniform raise was also possible.

But the increases would not push the daily minimum pay to the P750 being sought by opposition lawmakers in the House and labor groups, he added.

"That can't be done ... If we do that, instead of getting 12 employees, a company won't hire anymore," Bello said.

Bello will meet with officials of the Department of Finance, Department of Trade and Industry, and the National Economic and Development Authority to discuss the proposed wage hike.

"We are going to meet them to find out how we can address

their demand for P750 per day. But that has to be passed by Congress," he said.

The secretary said it was Congress that could fix the national minimum wage. "What we can do to address the spiraling of prices is through the regional tripartite wage board."

Bello acknowledged that the regional wage boards could only make an adjustment once a year. "But in case of a supervening event that may require immediate action, you can activate our regional wage boards," he said.

Ortiz-Luis said the "pain of inflation triggered by a wage hike will worsen the plight of the rest of the wage and salary workers."

As of 2016, 911,768 MSMEs were registered in the country, employing more than 4.8 million workers.

Partido Manggagawa chair Rene Magtubo said a wage increase would cut employers' profits but would neither put them out of business nor make them poor.

Long-term impact

In fact, he said, the employers themselves would eventually benefit from the wage adjustment.

"A wage increase raises the capacity of workers to uplift their well-being and at the same time raise the demand for goods and services, hence sustaining economic activity and growth," Magtubo said.

In the short term, increasing wages may reduce profits "but sustains the economy that employers profit in the long

term," he said.

For the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP), employers should see the wisdom behind HB 7787.

For too long, millions of Filipinos have not felt the impact of the economic growth that the country is supposedly enjoying, the group said.

"We urge employers and business owners to listen to the poor's appeal for equality and not disrespect their struggle for better lives," ALU-TUCP spokesperson Alan Tanjusay said.

'Supervening condition'

Ortiz-Luis maintained though that until a "supervening condition" was declared by the wage boards, no new wage order may come out within a year of the last issuance.

In Metro Manila, the last wage increase was implemented in October.

Maria Criselda Sy, executive director of the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC), said the regional wage boards were determining the existence of a supervening condition to allow the issuance of a new wage order.

Among the factors the wage boards were looking to determine a supervening condition were the breaching of the inflation rate target and the "extraordinary increase" in the price of basic commodities in at least three months.

Once these conditions are determined, the NWPC will decide in 30 days if there is basis to adjust wages. **INQ**

30 May 2013 2013 1

DOJ chief won't probe deals with Calida firm

By EDU PUNAY

Justice Secretary Menarado Guevarra yesterday defended Solicitor General Jose Calida from charges involving the contract of his family's security agency with the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Guevarra said there is nothing anomalous in the contract with Calida's Vigilant Investigative and Security Agency Inc. (VISAI), which a complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman tagged as conflict of interest, in violation of Republic Act No. 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

Gov't corporate counsel denies corruption. See Page 2

"It's a private security agency, not the OSC (Office of the Solicitor General) or the SolGen, who entered into the contracts with the DOJ. Let's presume that the contracts were validly entered into, unless it could be shown that procurement laws were not observed," Guevarra told reporters.

"From the viewpoint of the DOJ, what is important is that all procurement laws, rules and regulations were observed

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when it entered into these contracts," he stressed.

Guevarra also explained that there is no need to order an internal inquiry on the matter "unless there's a challenge to the validity of the contracts."

The DOJ chief made the statement after opposition senators called for the resignation of Calida over the P150-million contracts bagged by VISAI in at least 10 government agencies, including the DOJ.

Apart from the DOJ, Calida's security agency bagged contracts with the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

Calida won't divest shares

While Calida explained that he did not violate RA 6713 after resigning from his post as president and chairman of VISAI prior to his appointment as solicitor general in 2016, he admitted that he has not divested his 60-percent shares in the family business.

"That he has not yet divested his interest in said enterprise is of no moment since the requirement of the law is either to resign from the management of the enterprise and/or divest himself of his interest in it," the embattled solicitor general argued in a statement released Monday night.

Calida insisted that he has not violated the law, which specifically prohibits a government

official from holding interest in a private firm with contracts or transactions requiring approval of his office or a private firm that is regulated or licensed by his office.

"To reiterate, the Office of the Solicitor General is not the approving authority for the subject contracts, which were all obtained through public bidding in accordance with the law. Neither is the OSG in the business of licensing, regulating or supervising security agencies such as Vigilant," he argued.

The solicitor general also clarified that his firm did not earn P150 million from the contracts — as reported in the media — saying "only a small percentage is left as agency fee" as the bulk of payments were to salaries of guards and mandatory contributions to the Social Security System and Pag-IBIG.

The Palace had earlier defended Calida, believing that the

allegations hurled against the solicitor general came from his enemies who are trying to get back at him after securing the ouster of chief justice Maria Lourdes Sereno from the Supreme Court.

The complaint against Calida was filed with the ombudsman earlier this month by private citizen Jocelyn Acosta, who accused him of violating RA 6713.

Acosta is the same private citizen who requested Calida's office to initiate a quo warranto case against Supreme Court Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo de Castro the same way he did against Sereno.

But Calida rejected the request, citing lack of evidence that De Castro also violated the law by not filing her complete statements of assets, liabilities and net worth like Sereno.

Party-list Rep. Tom Villarin of Akbayan said yesterday Calida should be investigated and charged for conflict of in-

terest in his security agency's contracts with several government agencies.

"There should be no sacred cow here just because you are close to President Duterte. Just a whiff of corruption but here, we have a heap of dung that really smells bad," he said. He said conflict of interest is manifest in the P151 million worth of contracts Calida's security agency has obtained from several government offices, including the House of Representatives.

He pointed out that though Calida has resigned as chairman and president of VISAI before taking over the OSG, the solicitor general still owns 60 percent of the company two months after being in office, while his wife and three children share the remaining 40 percent.

"Another family close to the President dipping into the government's coffers. This is becoming a common refrain in

the Duterte Cabinet after the Tulfo-Teo scandal," he added.

Former tourism secretary Wanda Tulfo-Teo resigned amid the controversial P60-million advertisement the tourism department placed on her brother's television show on the state-owned PTV4.

For his part, Rep. Antonio Tinio of Alliance of Concerned Teachers asked why presidential spokesman Harry Roque is defending the solicitor general.

"Why is the presidential spokesperson lawyering for Solgen Calida? Secretary Roque is preposterously arguing that there is no conflict of interest in Calida's security agency cornering P151 million in government contracts," he said.

He said the Palace spokesman's statement shows the "double standard in President Duterte's so-called campaign against corruption within his own Cabinet." — With Jess Diaz

DOT head gets speedy CA nod

By ROBERTZON RAMIREZ

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat breezed through her confirmation hearing with no member of the Commission on Appointments (CA) committee on tourism and economic development raising any questions or objections.

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DOT From Page 1

"It was the longest day of my life. It felt like eternity even though it was just seven minutes," Puyat told **The STAR** describing how she felt during the confirmation hearing yesterday morning as she was asked about her qualifications for her position.

While stuck in traffic along EDSA on her way to the Senate, Puyat said she had to study before facing the CA panel, as she did not want to assume a favorable result.

Puyat said she was humbled by the decision of the CA and expressed excitement to work with the Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP), which will nominate the replacement of Cesar Montano.

Montano was formerly chief of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) — an attached agency of the DOT — amid the controversial P80 million he fully paid to Linda Legaspi for a food tourism project dubbed as "Buhay Carinderia."

Tourism stakeholders expressed their delight and excitement to work with Puyat.

"The industry wholeheartedly welcomes the confirmation of Secretary Puyat," TCP president Jose Clemente told **The STAR**.

Rajah Travel president Aileen Clemente said the private sector welcomes immediate confirmation of the tourism secretary and looks forward to "stepping on the pedal for tourism growth."

"So far the direction she seems to be taking is the same as the aspiration of the rest of the industry," Clemente said.

"We all look forward to supporting her in the progressive tourism endeavor," she added.

Puyat said she will prioritize improving tourism policies and develop programs on tourism infrastructure using her experience as an economist, educator and government executive.

Puyat, a former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), was appointed tourism secretary last May 14, shortly after former tourism secretary Wanda Teo was reportedly fired by Duterte.

But Teo claimed she resigned



Puyat

amid the controversial P60 million in ads she placed in her brother's show on PTV4.

Puyat clarified that DOT Undersecretary Kat de Castro, like other assistant secretaries and undersecretaries of the DOT, has submitted her courtesy resignation to President Duterte.

But Puyat said in a memorandum that all assistant secretaries and undersecretaries would continue reporting "until any action is taken by the President on such courtesy resignations."

It is not yet clear, however, if Duterte has already accepted the resignation of De Castro, one of his known supporters who helped during the campaign trail.

"Like all the other undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, she already gave her courtesy resignation," Puyat said, referring to De Castro.

But Puyat emphasized she is reviewing the performance of all officials of the DOT, including De Castro.

Reacting to reports that she could not let go of De Castro as she is close to the official's father, Noli de Castro, Puyat just laughed but acknowledged knowing the broadcaster.

Other CA hearings

The CA said the appointment of Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra would be taken up today.

Guevarra was appointed last month after Vitaliano Aguirre III resigned as justice secretary.

During marathon hearings held

yesterday, the various committees of the CA deliberated on the appointments of Puyat, Agrarian Reform Secretary John Castriciones, Commission on Elections Commissioner Socorro Inting, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. and Ambassadors Sulpicio Confado and Akmad Atiah Sakkam.

Apart from Castriciones, who had to face those opposing his confirmation during his third hearing, the rest of the presidential appointees practically breezed through their respective hearings.

During the confirmation hearing of Castriciones, five persons gave their sworn statements against the secretary, who they said was not qualified for the job and does not have the support of the DAR employees and other stakeholders.

DAR Employees Association (DAREA) national president Antonia Pascual noted how Castriciones was the only appointee not supported by her organization.

Pascual said Castriciones was not qualified because he is not an advocate of agrarian reform and does not have the necessary experience in the field.

She said that Castriciones' style was also not suited for the DAR because he has a military mindset.

Pascual said Castriciones was not responding to the communications sent to him by the DAREA and that he was constantly harassing union members.

Much of the same complaints were raised by Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Workers national president Ferdinand Gaitte, who accused Castriciones of exhibiting acts inimical to the interest of DAR employees.

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor, who represents the Federation of Free Farmers, called Castriciones a neophyte in the agrarian reform sector.

He said the agrarian reform program is now at the end stages and as such, having an OJT or on the job trainee is an insult to farmers.

— With Marvin Sy, Jess Diaz, Catherine Talavera

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AFP honors 18 for exemplary service

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. awarded 16 soldiers and two civilian military personnel with medals and citations in recognition of their selfless service and sacrifices for the nation yesterday.

"This Monday morning's flag raising ceremony is made more special with the presence of our fellow soldiers who have brought great honor and pride through their commendable service, not only to the organization, but

to the whole nation as well," he said.

Awarded with the Gold Cross Medal were Maj. Rydel Reynaldo Cabugon, 1st Lt. Brian Palencia, PFCs Enrique Macinas and Dondon Onsar all from the Philippine Army; Maj. Michael Rabina; Staff Sgts. Ronaldo Suarez and Glenn Grafa, all from the Philippine Air Force; and 1st Lts. George Galzote and Jobert Jude both from the Philippine Marines.

The Silver Cross Medal was awarded to Lt. Col. Francis Julius Buyucan from the Philippine Marines while

the Meritorious Achievement Medal was awarded to Col. Ferdinand Torres from the Philippine Airforce, Col. Consolito Yecla, Col. Alex Rillera, Lt. Col. Edgardo Talaroc Jr., and Maj. Benjamin Cadiente Jr. all from the Philippine Army.

Col. Raul Bautista from the Philippine Army on the other hand received the Command Plaque while civilian employees from the GHQ, Emma Sicar and Kye Kristofer Salongcay were both awarded the Chief of Staff Commendation Medal.

The AFP said most of the

awardees made significant contributions in the successful liberation of Marawi from the Maute-ISIS terrorists last year, whether in combat or non-combat operations. Other recipients performed outstandingly in policy development to contribute in the systems advancement of the organization. B14

"The sacrifices of the Filipino soldiers and civilian human resource are aplenty, and a simple recognition could mean so much to them. True to what they say, no one can defeat an inspired heart and soul," Galvez said.

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Puyat, Castriciones hurdle CA panels

By MARIO B. CASAYURAN and HANNAH L. TORREGOZA

Various committees of the powerful 25-member Commission on Appointments (CA) gave President Duterte its full confidence on the integrity and competence of his nominees to various key government posts.

In less than 10 minutes, the CA Tourism and Economic Development Committee chaired by Rep. Jerry P. Trenas decided to recommend the confirmation of Bernadette Fatima Romulo

Puyat as Department of Tourism (DOT) secretary.

Likewise, the CA Committee on Agrarian Reform, chaired by Sen. Grace Poe, finally confirmed the ad interim appointment of Agrarian Reform Secretary John Rualo Castriciones. The panel will transmit to the CA plenary today the panel's decision on Castriciones for concurrence.

The CA also decided in quick fashion to recommend the confirmation of five

ranking Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) officers, led by General Carlito G. Galvez Jr., AFP chief of staff, and Socorro Balinghasay Inting, a former Court of Appeals Associate Justice, as commissioner of the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

Also recommended for confirmation as ambassadors were Sulpicio Miguel Confiado, as Ambassador to Egypt with concurrent jurisdiction over Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan, and Akmad Atlah Sakkam, ambassador to ►12

Puyat Castriciones, hurdle... ◀1

Jordan with concurrent jurisdiction over Palestine.

The four other AFP officers recommended for confirmation today are Neison P. Collantes, Rolando R. Rodil, and Josehito E. Maclan as AFP brigadier generals, and Emmanuel A. Mahipus as AFP colonel reserve.

Puyat said she will prioritize on improving tourism policies and infrastructures.

"We will prioritize improving policies on access, connectivity, and security as well as enhance programs on tourism infrastructure," said Puyat in her introductory statement before the CA panel.

Puyat also said her department will continue to hold regular consultations with various industry groups such as the Tourism Congress of the Philippines as well as the Legislative and Executive branches.

"We will renew our leadership position in global tourism organizations and communities and restart our global advertising and promotions efforts," she added.

The quick manner by which the panel recommended the confirmation of Puyat's appointment left her father, former Senate Majority Leader Alberto Romulo, also a former Foreign Affairs secretary and executive secretary, envious at how fast members of the Trenas

committee in decided on his daughter's fate. The recommendation will be submitted today to the CA plenary for confirmation.

Like the Senate and the House of Representatives, the CA goes into a sine die adjournment tomorrow.

Since he had to go through the drill of answering batteries of questions when he faced the CA members years ago for his confirmation as Foreign Affairs secretary and as executive secretary, the elder Romulo said they made up for it by fully supporting his daughter and by deciding so quickly to recommend her confirmation.

"I was shocked but pleasantly surprised," Puyat told Manila Bulletin when asked how she felt after the CA committee abbreviated its public hearing and decided to recommend her confirmation in this afternoon's plenary session.

Asked whether he coached his daughter before appearing before the Trenas committee, the elder Romulo replied, "She is her own person. She does not need me. She is doing very well. It is best not to interfere."

Asked further whether his presence at the CA was actually needed as a boost for her, the elder Romulo said, "she is her own. I am just a flower."

Puyat told Senate reporters that

she is reviewing the performance of her undersecretaries and assistant secretaries in a bid to determine their competence and fitness to their current posts.

She admitted that she came prepared to face the CA members only to be surprised by their decision to recommend the confirmation of her appointment minutes after she sat on her assigned chair.

She also said she would try her best to do her duty and responsibility as DOT chief, particularly the President's admonition that there should be no corruption at the DOT.

She said she would ask the Commission on Audit (COA) to investigate any irregularity she would uncover at the DOT.

Puyat also said she will push for farm and heritage tourism, being the program of Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. She added that she would try her best so that tourist destinations would not face the same problems besetting the famed Boracay island.

She, likewise, stressed that she has no plan to come up with a tourism slogan, adding that the current, "It's More Fun in the Philippines," is already adequate and pleasing.

Meanwhile, Poe said 13 members of her panel voted to approve Castriciones' nomination, with only two voting against it during an executive session.

The senator expressed hope Castriciones would be able to address the issues hurled against him by his oppositors, who are mostly farmers and DAR employees, during the hearing.

Earlier, at least five individuals have cast their opposition to Castriciones' appointment to the DAR.

One of the oppositors, DAR-EA Union president Antonia Pascual, appealed to the CA to reject his nomination because of his "military mindset."

"This military mindset has divided the bureaucracy and created an atmosphere of fear in the DAR," Pascual said.

On the other hand, Sen. Gregorio B. Honasan, chairman of the Senate National Defense and Security Committee, said he has known Galvez for most of his

professional life and that he "represents the best and the brightest."

Honasan, a former Army colonel, said he is convinced that Galvez is competent, has integrity and has a vision.

"He represents our new breed of soldiers," he said, adding that Galvez would be able to fight and win the hearts of the Filipino people.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri said, "How I wish you are younger to serve as Chief of Staff longer."

Zubiri said that Galvez is respected by all communities in Mindanao and even the armed groups.

"He is considered as a friend. He may be trained for war but he is a man of peace," he added. (With a report from Analou de Vera)

PSG chief among 30 new appointees

By Nathaniel A. Mariano

MALACANANG on Tuesday announced President Rodrigo Duterte's 30 new appointees including a new Presidential Security Group commander and three undersecretaries of different government departments.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque confirmed through a text message that Col. Jose Eriel Niembra, deputy commander of the PSG, will replace Brig. Gen. Lope Dagoy who assumed command of the Army's 802nd Infantry Brigade in Leyte.

Niembra was a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class 1991 and once served under Task Force Davao when Duterte was mayor there.

He will assume the PSG's top post in ceremony to be attended by Duterte on Wednesday.

Malacañang has also appointed three undersecretaries:

Epimaco Verano Densing III, Undersecretary, Department of the Interior and Local Government.

Renato Lariogo Ebarle, Undersecretary, Department of Labor and Employment.

Alexander Soria Lopez, Undersecretary, Department of Energy.

Malacañang also released the appointment papers of the following newly appointed officials:

Cesar Gaba Dela Fuente III, Director IV, Department of Energy.

Cherrie Melanie Ancheta Diego, Director IV, Commission on Higher Education.

Tarhata Sumayan Mapandi, Director IV, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

Samuel Cervantes Danganan, Director III, Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Paul McCudal Villaluz, Director II, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Department of Labor and Employment.

Jude Constantine Solier Jaugan, Provincial Trade and Industry Officer, Department of Trade and Industry.

Estrelita Sindo Hizon, Member, Representing the Private Sector, Governing Board, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Department of Labor and Employment, for a term of two years.

Melinda Lopez Garcia, Member, Professional Regulatory Board of Dentistry, Professional Regulation Commission, for a term of three years.

Albert P. Dela Cruz, Member, Board of Directors, North Luzon Railways Corporation, to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Andrew Chio Kong, Member, Board of Directors, DBP Leasing Corporation, to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Edgar Crisanto Ranario Violan, Member, Board of Directors, Philippine Mining Development Corporation, to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Carmen M. Solinap, Member, Representing the Labor Sector, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Board, for a long term of three years.

Rogelio Javen Chavez Jr., Member, Representing the Labor Sector, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Board, for a term of three years.

Rene Luis M. Tadle, Member, Representing the Labor Sector, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Board, for a term of three years.

Ramon R. De Leon, Member, Representing the Labor Sector, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Board, for a term of three years.

Marivic Hernandez del Pilar, Member, Board of Trustees, Cultural Center of the Philippines, to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Charisse Marie Vergara-Uyengco, Member, Board of Directors, Food Terminal Inc., to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Porferio Ebac Mah, Member, Board of Directors, Food Terminal Inc., to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Marites Correa Tamayo, Register of Deeds II, Land Registration Authority, Department of Justice.

Yasmin Mapua-Iang, Member, Representing the Child-focused non-government organizations, National Council for Children's Television, Department of Education, for a term of three years.

Edwin Galindo Espejo, Member, Board of Directors, IRC Group of Companies (Independent Realty Corp. and Mid-Pasig Land Development Corp.).

Ralph Lauren Ancheta Du, Member, Representing the Commercial Milk Processors' Group, Dairy Industry Board, National Dairy Authority, to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Julius N. Raboca, Member, Board of Directors, Clark International Airport Corp., to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

William De Jesus Lima, Special Envoy of the President to the People's Republic of China, from July 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2018.

Michael Braganza Peloton, Member, Board of Directors, Philippine Reclamation Authority, to serve the unexpired Term of Office that began on July 1, 2017 and will end on June 30, 2018.

Fernando Selim Borja, Special Envoy to the People's Republic of China, July 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2018.

Dante Arevalo Ang, Special Envoy of the President for International Public Relations, from May 1, 2018 to Oct. 31, 2018.

MILITANTS PROTEST AT DTI, ECOP, OIL COMPANY OFFICES

By Dexter Cabalza
@dexcabalzaINQ

Amid the latest round of oil price increases on Tuesday, members of the militant labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) stormed government and private offices in Makati City, blaming them for rising prices, low wages and contractualization.

Calling their action "Triple Whammy," the protesters trooped first to the offices of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop), both on Gil Puyat Avenue, and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. on Valero Street.

"We feel the suffering felt by our countrymen due to rising prices," said Ed Cubelo, KMU chair for Metro Manila.

Cubelo said the Duterte administration was inutile for keeping its silence on the weekly oil price increases, while oil giants Shell, Chevron and Petron were raking in billions in profit.

Tuesday's fuel price adjustments—the third this month—have brought the cumulative increase in gasoline prices to P10.32 per liter so far this year. For diesel, it was P10.36 and for kerosene, P10.66.

TRAIN law

The protesters slammed President Duterte and the DTI for allowing the collection of additional taxes, including the excise on fuel and other goods set by the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law.

They said the DTI "has no teeth" in controlling the weekly oil price hikes and the consequent increase in prices of basic goods and commodities.

Cubelo also condemned Ecop "for being at the forefront against any increase in wages and abolishing the practice of contractualization."

Ecop is the employer representative on the tripartite wage

board, while the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines represents the labor sector. The government also sits on the board.

According to Ecop, the bill filed by the Makabayan bloc in the House of Representatives seeking a national daily minimum wage of P750 to be adjusted yearly was "impossible."

Right time

Now is the right time to implement a wage increase to cushion the impact of the high prices of goods, Cubelo said.

On Sunday, Sen. Panfilo Lacson warned that the soaring prices could ignite a revolution. "When the stomach protests, prepare for revolution," he said.

He urged the government to do something to arrest the price increases being blamed on the TRAIN law or face the ire of hungry masses.

His view was shared by Jose Maria Sison, Communist Party of the Philippines founder who is based in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

"There is really a high potential for huge mass protests or even people's uprisings on a nationwide scale if the Duterte regime cannot stop the rapid and relentless rise of the prices of basic consumer goods and services," Sison said in a statement on Monday night.

He said the soaring prices of basic goods and services "can ignite an unprecedented revolutionary upsurge due to a wide range of issues that motivate the mass movement and broad united front for the resignation or ouster of Duterte."

The President is "not indifferent" to the impact of the oil price increases, said his spokesperson, Harry Roque.

He said Mr. Duterte had ordered the arrest of traders who take advantage of the situation, the convening of regional wage boards and the importation of cheaper oil products. —WITH A

REPORT FROM DELFIN T. MALLARI
JR. INQ

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

NPA bomb expert slain in Misamis

A suspected bomb maker of the New People's Army (NPA) and another rebel were killed in an encounter with soldiers in Misamis Oriental on Sunday, the military reported yesterday.

An M16 and two AK47 rifles were recovered from the slain rebels, one of them identified as Odelo Compas, alias Ka Sapayan, following the clash in Sitio Kamansi, Barangay Banglay, Lagonglong, according to 1st Lt. Jere Ingente, 4th Infantry Division spokesman.

The military said Compas is the explosives-ordnance and production officer of the NPA's North Central Mindanao Regional Committee.

Ingente said a soldier was wounded in a follow-up operation in Sitio Bayhuta.

He said a grenade launcher, a shotgun, an air gun and various types of ammunition were recovered from an NPA camp that the soldiers seized.

- Jaime Laude

AFP seizes NPA camp in Misamis Oriental

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City – Soldiers reportedly seized an encampment of the New People's Army (NPA) in the mountainous area of Kamansi, Barangay Banglay in Lagonglong town, Misamis Oriental, said Lt. Tere Ingente, chief Public Affairs Office (PAO) of the Army's 4th Infantry (Diamond) Division (4th ID) told The Manila Bulletin on Tuesday.

She said the capture of the NPA camp was the result of the series of gun battles that took place in the area which started on Sunday where an alleged terrorist bomb maker was also killed.

The 4th ID PAO chief said

troops of the Army's 58th Infantry Battallion (58th IB) under the command of Lt. Col. Roy Anthony Derilo, found inside the CNT's camp 20 makeshift bunkers and listening posts that can accommodate 50 fighters.

"Our operating troops also seized one M203 grenade launcher, one 12-guage shotgun, one M635 Carbine rifle, one air gun, ammunitions, sniper scope, 3 backpacks with personal belongings and subversive documents," added Ingente, in an exclusive interview with The Manila Bulletin.

She added there was no casualty on the government side during the series of gun battles in the Kamansi area.

NPA bomb expert killed in MisOr clashes

BY DEMPSEY REYES

A BOMBER for the New People's Army (NPA) and another rebel were killed while a soldier was wounded in a running gun battle over the weekend in Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental.

The clashes that started on Sunday morning until Monday morning resulted in the seizure of a rebel encampment with 20 makeshift bunkers that can accommodate 50 communist terrorists. Also recovered were one M203 grenade launcher, a 12-gauge shotgun, one M635 Carbine, an air gun, ammunitions, sniper scope, three backpacks with personal belongings and subversive documents.

Soldiers from the Philippine Army's 403rd Infantry Brigade (403IB) first encountered the group of NPA rebels under the Guerilla Front 4B of the North Central Mindanao Regional

Committee (NCMRC) near Sitio Kamansi, Barangay Banglay, Lagonglong at about 9 a.m. on Sunday, according to the Army's 4th Infantry Division (4ID).

The firefight lasted for about 25 minutes resulting in the death of two communist fighters and the confiscation of two AK-47 rifles and one M16 rifle.

The military identified one of the slain communist gunmen as Odelo Compas, alias Sapayanan, a "functional staff" for the production of explosives and ordnances for the NPA while the other one has yet to be identified.

Lt. Tere Ingente, chief of the

4ID Public Affairs Office in Camp Evangelista, Cagayan De Oro City, said Compas is an expert in explosives and responsible for the NPA's ordnance production unit.

While conducting pursuit operations, another 20-minute firefight broke out at 1.45 p.m. on the same day near Sitio Bayhutaog in the same village that resulted in the seizure of an NPA encampment.

A soldier who was wounded was airlifted by a helicopter gunship from the encounter site on Monday and now in stable condition at an Army station hospital in Camp Evangelista at Cagayan de Oro City.

Meanwhile, the wounded top NPA commander, Elizalde Arcella Cañete, alias Kumader Jinggoy and Zaldy, arrested immediately following his discharge from a hospital in Bukidnon on Monday.

Insp. Jiselle Longakit said Cañete, 36, was served with ar-

rest warrant at the Don Carlos Hospital where he was treated of gunshot wounds, contrary to earlier report that he was arrested while confined at the hospital.

Longakit said that Cañete sustained gunshot wounds during an armed encounter with government troops in Kitaotao, Bukidnon on May 10 which prompted him to surrender.

The military then heavily guarded Cañete at the Don Carlos Hospital until he was discharged on Monday.

Cañete, of Barangay Casoon, Monkayo, Compostela Valley, reportedly replaced the slain the dreaded Leoncito Pitao, alias Parago, as commander of the Pulang Bagani Command, Regional Operation Command, Southern Mindanao Regional Committee.

His area of responsibility covers the boundary of Bukidnon, Davao del Norte and the mountainous districts of Davao City,

WITH A REPORT FROM CRIS DIAZ

NPA bomb-maker killed in Misamis Oriental clashes

TWO members of the New People's Army, including a bomb maker, were killed and a government soldier was wounded in skirmishes in Lagonglong town in Misamis Oriental, the military reported yesterday.

1Lt. Tere Ingente, spokesperson of the Army's 4th Infantry Division based in Cagayan de Oro City, said forces under the Army's 403rd Brigade were on security operation when they clashed with about 30 rebels belonging to the NPA's Guerrilla Front B in barangay Banglay around 9 a.m. on Sunday.

Two rebels were killed during the fighting, one of whom was identified as Odelo Compas, alias Sapayanan, said to be in charge in the production of improvised bombs for the NPA unit.

Government forces also recovered two AK-47 rifles and an M16 rifle from the encounter.

During pursuit operations on Monday, soldiers caught up with the rebels in the same barangay at around 1:45 p.m., leading to the wounding of a soldier who is now recovering at the Camp Evangelista Station Hospital in Cagayan de Oro City.

The second clash resulted in the capture of a rebel camp with 20 makeshift bunkers that can accommodate 50 people, and recovery of an M203 grenade launcher, a 12-gauge shotgun, an M653 Cabine rifle, an air gun, ammunition, a sniper scope, and three backpacks with personal belongings and documents.

Ingente said information gathered by the 403rd Brigade showed several rebels could have also been wounded in the two clashes, based on bloodstains found along the escape route of the NPA fighters. — *Victor Reyes* *BR*

NPA bomb maker killed in Misamis encounter

TWO members of the New People's Army, including a bomb maker, on Monday were killed in an encounter with government forces in Misamis Oriental.

The slain bomb maker was identified as Odelo Compas alias "Sapayan-an."

The identity of the other slain NPA member was not yet available.

Troopers of the 403rd Infantry Brigade of the Army's 4th Infantry Division were conducting patrol in Bgy. Banglay, Langonglong, when they met at least 30 members of the Guerilla Front 4B of the North Central Mindanao Regional Committee (NC-MRC) near Sitio Kamansi at 9 a.m. on Monday.

Zaida delos Reyes

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NPA bomb maker, another die in Misamis encounter

TWO members of the New People's Army (NPA), including its bomb maker, were killed in an encounter with government forces the other day in Misamis Oriental.

The slain bomb maker was identified as Odele Compas, alias Sapayanan, a functional staff for Explosives/Ordnance and Production of said terrorist group.

Identity of the other slain NPA member was not yet available as of press time.

Reports reaching Camp Aguinaldo said the encounter occurred at 9 a.m. at Bgy. Banglay Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental.

Accordingly, government troops under the Army's 403rd Infantry Brigade, 4th Infantry Division were on patrol in the area when they encountered at least 30 members of the Guerilla Front 4B of the North Central Mindanao Regional Com-

mittee (NCMRC), near Sitio Kamansi.

The encounter lasted for about 25 minutes that resulted in the death of the two rebels and the recovery of two AK-47 rifles and an M-16 rifle.

As the troops continue to conduct pursuit operations, another 20-minute fire-fight took place at 1:45 p.m. the same day near Sitio Baybutac.

The encounter led to the wounding of a soldier that was evacuated to Camp Evangelista Station Hospital in Cagayan de Oro City.

The troops also seized enemy encampment with 20 makeshift bunkers that can accommodate 50 CNTs and recovered an M203 grenade launcher, a 12-gauge shotgun, an M635 Carbine, an air gun, ammunition, sniper scope, three backpacks with personal belongings and subversive documents. Zaida delos Reyes-Palanca

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3 NPA terrorists todas sa encounter

Tatlong miyembro ng rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) kabilang ang isang bomb maker ang napatay ng mga militar sa magkakahiwalay na engkuwentro sa Brgy. Banglay, Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental kamakalawa.

Ang unang bakbakan ay naitala dakong alas-9:00 ng umaga nang masabat ng Army 403rd Infantry

Brigade (IB) troops ang nasa 30 NPA terrorists sa liblib na bahagi ng Sitio Kamansi, Brgy. Banglay ng bayang ito.

Ang palitan ng putok ay tumagal ng 25 minuto na ikinasawi ng dalawang rebelde na ang isa ay nakilalang si Odejo Compas alyas Ka Sapa-yanan na bomb maker at nakasamsam rin ang dalawang AK 47 rifle at isang

M16 rifle.

Bandang ala-1:45 ng hapon naman nang mang-yari ang ikalawang bakbakan sa Sitio Bayhutaog ng nasabi ring barangay na ikinasawi ng isa pang rebelde.

Pinaniniwalaan marami pa ang nasugatang rebelde base sa mga bakas ng dugo na natagpuan sa lugar na dinaanan ng mga ito sa pagtakas.

Joy Cantos

Army nabs NPA officer in Negros

By **TARA YAP**

ILOILO CITY – A high-ranking official of the New People's Army (NPA) was nabbed by troops of the Philippine Army's 15th Infantry Battalion (15th IB) in Ilog town, Negros Occidental province.

Lt. Col. Protacio Tomalos, 15th IB commander, identified the NPA official as Bobby Pedro, communications director and liaison officer of the NPA's Armando Sumayang Jr.

Command.

With aliases of "Reymark Labrador" and "Recoy," Pedro is also said to be the top extortionist of the NPA in Southwest Negros.

Pedro was nabbed over the weekend after going to the house of a certain Noe Castillo in Pinggot village, where he was seen carrying a firearm.

Seized from Pedro were a 9mm pistol with two magazines loaded with 37 ammunition, six rounds

of 5.56mm ammunition, a mobile phone, cash, acupuncture needles, and subversive documents.

Tomalos said the arrest of Pedro was a result of tips given by the people, who reported to authorities that the NPA has been relentless in extorting money in the area.

Meanwhile, Pedro is facing charges of illegal possession of firearms. Charges were filed before the Negros Occidental Provincial Prosecutor's Office in Bacolod City.

Court frees 98 MNLF men in Zambo siege

Mayor saddened by Pasig RTC decision, vows to give victims justice

By Julie Alipala
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Tears streamed down Lourdes Omar's face when she saw her daughter, Nuraisa, 24, standing behind the fence of the Philippine Air Force base here.

Nuraisa, who was flown home from Taguig City in Metro Manila, where she spent the last four years and eight months in detention, was among the 98 suspects in the 2013 siege in the city who were ordered freed by the court recently. Twelve of them are residents of this city, 40 are from Basilan province and the rest, from Sulu province.

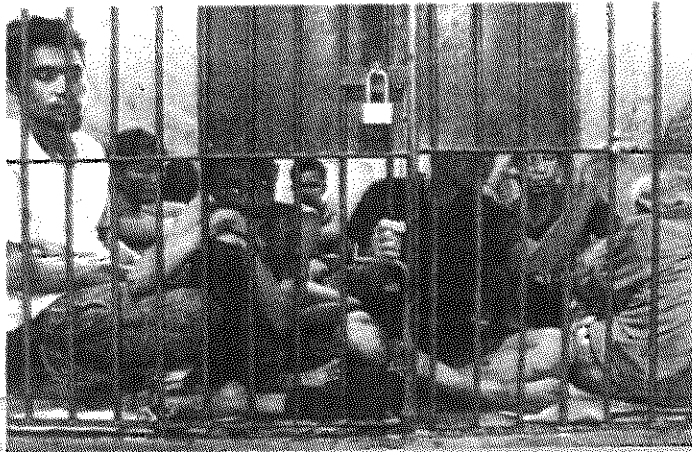
The Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 158 in Pasig City released the prisoners for serving the minimum prison sentence of two years for sedition.

Omar, 58, said her daughter was a freshman student, taking a hotel and restaurant management course, when soldiers picked her up at the height of the siege while the family was fleeing their home. "Nuraisa is not a rebel ... The government snatched all her dreams," she said.

3 kids missing

She recounted how she, her husband and their 10 children were fleeing Sta. Catalina village when Nuraisa, then 19, disappeared.

"I thought all my children were tailing me but upon reaching the safe zone, I noticed that three of them were missing," Omar said, referring to Nuraisa and her two chil-



LOCKED UP Members of the Moro National Liberation Front are detained at the Zamboanga police station for taking part in a three-week siege of the city in 2013. —EDWIN BACASMAS

dren, 6 and 16 years old.

She returned to the place where she last saw her three children, but unable to find them for days, she volunteered to be a camp leader in the hope of finding them. Her 6-year-old and 16-year-old later found their way to the camp.

'Dirty, in pain'

About two months later, policemen told her that a certain Nuraisa, who was detained in connection with the siege, was claiming to be her daughter.

She said it was the first time she saw Nuraisa after the siege. "She was dirty, in pain, and all I could do was watch from the distance. I promised to bring her home," Omar said.

Nuraisa was then moved to the Special Intensive Care Area in Taguig, along with dozens of suspected members of the Moro National Liberation Front

(MNLF) charged in connection with the siege.

A total of 278 people were arrested during the attack by followers of MNLF leader Nur Misuari, according to the Regional Human Rights Commission of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. All of them were jailed in Metro Manila, except for seven minors who were placed under the care of social workers.

Lack of evidence

On March 14, 2015, 42 suspects were ordered freed for lack of evidence to pin them down while the seven minors were released in August that year.

With the recent release, 131 suspects still remained at the Special Intensive Care Area of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology at Bicutan, Taguig City.

Omar said she learned only on Sunday that Nuraisa would be freed but her freedom had nothing to do with her being innocent. She said Nuraisa had pleaded guilty to sedition charges so she could enter a plea bargaining agreement with the court and get a lower penalty.

In her April 26 decision, RTC Judge Maria Rowena San Pedro said the 98 individuals were "guilty beyond reasonable doubt as accessories to the crime of sedition under Article 139 of the Revised Penal Code."

Fight for justice

However, she added that based on certifications issued by Chief Insp. Alberto Tapira Jr., they had "effectively served the penalty imposed upon them by their preventive detentions."

Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Isabelle Salazar said she was saddened by the release of people behind the siege.

"But we will continue to fight for justice despite the recent order of the [RTC]," she added.

At least a dozen civilians were killed while about 70 others were wounded when MNLF gunmen went on a rampage here on Sept. 9, 2013, sending more than 100,000 residents to various evacuation camps. The siege lasted for about three weeks.

"I am still positively hoping that justice will be served to the victims of the Zamboanga siege and the remaining 100 MNLF accused will be held accountable for the crimes committed," Salazar said. INQ *AB*

GOV'T PROBE ON

**MILF: 9 KILLED IN COTABATO
DRUG RAID MASSACRE VICTIMS**

MATALAM, NORTH COTABATO—A committee that monitors truce compliance by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the military is now investigating the killings of nine men tagged by police as drug suspects but who MILF leaders said belonged to their group and were massacre victims.

A ranking military officer appealed for calm, saying investigators should be given enough time to ferret out the truth about the killings of the nine men during an antidrug operation by a team of policemen and soldiers.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, head of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) based in Maguindanao province, said the military was represented in the joint ceasefire committee which monitors compliance with a truce that formed part of a peace agreement between the MILF and the government.

MILF protest

The MILF, Sobejana said, sought the investigation.

MILF leaders had said they were lodging a protest against policemen and soldiers of the 6th ID who were involved in the drug raid that led to the killings of nine MILF members on Friday and Saturday in the village of Kilada here.

Butch Malang, head of the MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCH), said the nine fatalities were disarmed then shot at close range.

But police said the slain men were drug suspects who fought it out during an antidrug operation that started on Friday and went on until the wee hours of Saturday.

Police said drugs and guns

were seized although they could not declare the volume of confiscated drugs.

Chief Insp. Sunny Leoncito, Matalam police chief, said the raiding team was serving a search warrant issued by Judge Alandrex Betoya, of the Regional Trial Court Branch 16, on Dadling Kasan and Intan Aban, a female MILF member.

Leoncito said the police-military team was on its way to the village of Kilada, where Kasan and Aban lived, but was met with heavy gunfire.

An hourlong gunfight led to the wounding and subsequent death of seven suspects on Friday.

He said the team was forced to withdraw because of the superior firepower of the suspects and returned on Saturday when two more suspects were killed.

But Malang, in a letter to Mohagher Iqbal, chair of the MILF panel overseeing the implementation of the peace agreement, said the dead men belonged to the 105th base command of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (Biaf), the armed wing of the MILF.

'Massacred'

Malang said the men had not fired but yielded their guns.

"After the Biaf troops were disarmed, they were deliberately shot by the operatives," Malang said in the letter.

Von Al-Haq, Biaf spokesperson, said: "They were shot after they were disarmed when they could no more defend themselves," said Al-Haq. "So, they were massacred."

Malang said no drugs were recovered during the raid, contrary to the claim of police.

—EDWIN FERNANDEZ INQ

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Army intel officer killed in ambush

ZAMBOANGA CITY – An intelligence officer of the Army was killed in an ambush believed staged by Abu Sayyaf bandits in Basilan on Monday.

Sgt. Moh Alama, 46, of the 18th Infantry Battalion (IB) was driving his motorcycle on his way to Barangay Baguindan, Tipo-Tipo when he was waylaid. He died at the scene.

Personnel of the 18th IB have been encouraging Abu Sayyaf bandits to surrender and avail themselves of the government's livelihood program. B

Four Abu Sayyaf bandits surrendered to the 18th IB last week.

– Roel Pareño

Security tightened in Tacurong after foiled bomb attack

ZAMBOANGA CITY. The military tightened security in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat after it foiled an attempted bombing outside a school there by bandits tied to the Islamic State.

Captain Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said members of

the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom have threatened to launch bomb attacks in the province.

He said they pre-empted the weekend bombing following the discovery of the improvised explosive device (IED) planted in front of the Griño Elementary

School along the highway.

"The Explosive Ordnance Disposal of the army and police conducted safety procedures to secure the suspected IED," he said.

The bomb was assembled from an unexploded 105mm ammunition.

It was unclear how the ammunition, that soldiers use, fell into the hands of the extremists group.

Meanwhile, in Basilan, unidentified gunmen killed Sergeant Mohammad Alam in an ambush on Monday in Barangay

Bagundan, Tipo-Tipo town.

Alam, 46, intelligence operative of the Army's 18th Infantry Battalion, was traveling on a motorcycle when gunmen attacked him. He died on the spot from multiple gunshot wounds.

ALJACINTO

Bomb attack in school in Sultan Kudarat foiled

GOVERNMENT forces preempted a planned bombing by the terrorist group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) with the recovery of an improvised bomb planted in a school in Tacurong City, the military reported yesterday.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, spokesman of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the bomb was found by forces of the Joint Task Force Talakudong around 3 p.m. Sunday in front of the Griño Elementary School.

Encinas said an unnamed informant tipped them about the bomb, which was made from a 105 mm ammunition and placed inside a black bag.

"There was going to be a Brigada Eskwela the following day. We're lucky someone tipped us the information (about the bomb), otherwise it (blast) could have inflicted casualties on soldiers and civilians," he said.

The informant allegedly claimed

the bomb was planted by BIFF member Yasser Saligan, who is under the group of BIFF commander Sukarno Sapal, alias Diok.

Encinas said Diok's group, which belongs to the faction of BIFF leader Ismael Abubukar, alias Commander Bungos, is planning other bombings in Sultan Kudarat.

"From time to time, they've been actually doing that. On our part, monitoring by our intelligence community is continuing. They are not relaxing," he said.

The BIFF has been blamed for numerous bombings and other atrocities in Central Mindanao. It is composed of around 300 to 400 men, mostly former members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The BIFF is among local terrorist groups that have pledged allegiance with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. The others were the Abu Sayyaf, the Maute Group, and the Ansar Khalifa Philippines. — *Victor Reyes*

Military thwarts bomb attack in Sultan Kudarat

By Mario J. Mallari

A few days before the class opening on Monday, authorities foiled a bomb attack near a school in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat - recovering an improvised explosive device (IED) allegedly planted by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Capt. Arvin Encinas, spokesman of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID), yesterday said that the IED was recovered in front of the Grino

Elementary School located along the national highway at around 3 p.m. Sunday.

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) of the Army and PNP conducted safety procedure to secure the suspected IED.

Encinas said that the IED was made of unexploded ordnance from 105mm ammunition.

According to Encinas, the discovery of the IED came after a civilian informant said that a certain Yasser Saligan of the BIFF faction

of commander Sukarno Sapal will conduct IED attacks targeting Sultan Kudarat province.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6th ID commander, thanked the civilian tipster, noting that the foiled attack came as the Department of Education, along with other agencies, will kick off Brigada Eskwela.

Sobejana urged the public to be vigilant at all times and to report immediately any suspicious thing or acts to the military and the police to prevent terror attacks. ✓

Military foils school bombing in Tacurong City

By Zaida delos Reyes

GOVERNMENT forces on Monday foiled what could have been a deadly bombing when they recovered a bag loaded with an improvised explosive device in front of an elementary school in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat.

Joint Task Force Sulu commander Brig. General Cielito Sobejana said troops from the Joint Task Force Talakudong recov-

ered the IED in front of the Grino Elementary School on the national highway in the city at 3 p.m. on Monday.

The bomb was placed in a bag left in front of the school.

A concerned citizen informed the authorities about the suspicious bag left unattended outside the school.

A team from the Explosive Ordnance Dispos-

al of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police immediately proceeded to the area and retrieved the bag.

The IED was fashioned from a 105mm ammunition, with mobile phone as trigger device.

Authorities suspected that the plan was to attack the school's "Brigada Eskwela," the annual activity which encourages the participation of

teachers, parents, and the community in the cleaning and repair of public schools.

Sobejana said a civilian informant told authorities that Yasser Saligan of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters under Commander Sukarno Asapal alias "Diok" placed the bomb in front of the Grino Elementary School.

The lipster added that Saligan planned IED at-

tacks targeting Sultan Kudarat.

Sobejana thanked the civilians for informing authorities about the suspicious baggage, saying it prevented possible serious damage to the public and property.

He encouraged everyone to report immediately any suspicious object or acts to the military and the police to prevent terror attacks.

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Military foils bomb try in Tacurong

GOVERNMENT forces foiled what could have been a deadly bombing activity in front of an elementary school following the recovery of a bag loaded with improvised explosive device (IED) the other day in Tacurong City.

Joint Task Force Sulu commander Brig. Gen. Celinto Sobajana said that at 8 p.m., troops from Joint Task Force Talakudong recovered the IED in front of Grino Elementary School, particularly along the national highway of the city.

The IED was placed in a bag and left in front of the school.

A concerned citizen informed the authorities regarding the suspicious bag left unattended in front of the school.

Elements of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) of the Army and Philippine National Police (PNP) retrieved the bag.

It was learned that the IED was made of unexploded ordnance from 105mm ammunition.

A civilian informant said a certain Yasser Saligan of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) under Commander Sukarno Asapal, alias Diok, was the one who placed the IED in the said area.

The report also said that the target of the bomb was Sultan Kudarat, Zaida delos Reyes-Palanca.

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Duterte certifies proposed BBL as urgent

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte yesterday certified as urgent the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) to enable Congress to pass it before session adjourns today.

The certification allows the legislature to disregard the three-day rule and pass the measure on second and third reading on the same day.

"The Office of the Executive Secretary (certified) as urgent both versions of the BBL pending in both the House of Representatives and Senate," presidential spokesman Harry Roque announced during an event at the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame.

Roque said the differences between the two versions of the BBL would be later threshed out by lawmakers in the House and Senate.

"Once both chambers have reconciled and finalized the version, the President will sign the Bangsamoro Basic Law," he added.

During the event, Roque caused confusion when he said there is no need for the President to certify BBL as urgent.

"Maybe there will no longer be a certification of urgency because the House and Senate versions are different but what is important is the two chambers have agreed to communicate and to do everything to reconcile their versions," Roque had said in a press briefing in Mountain Province.

"Now of course we would like to have BBL enacted before Congress goes into recess on June 2, but their promise really is they will do everything possible to pass BBL," he said.

Roque said Duterte met with lawmakers and members of the Bangsamoro Transition Council Monday night to discuss ways to harmonize the BBL drafts.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III and Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri said the President personally told them during the meeting that he will issue the needed certification.

As of yesterday, the senators, particularly Sotto, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto and Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, were still writing amendments to the BBL.

Sotto said after its approval, both chambers will imme-

diately form the bicameral conference committee on the BBL to reconcile the conflicting provisions of their respective versions of the measures.

Sotto said it was possible that Duterte will sign it immediately to report the same in his State of the Nation Address on July 23.

An urgent request

House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas said it was agreed during that meeting in Malacñang that the President will sign the BBL into law when he delivers his third SONA.

He said the meeting had discussed how to go about the piece of legislation.

Fariñas told reporters that the bicameral conference committee (bican) will be convened during the nearly two-month recess, to pave the way for the ironing out of the "conflicting provisions" in the BBL.

"The bicam report shall be submitted for ratification by the House and the Senate in their plenary sessions in the morning of July 23, with the President signing it into law in time for his State of the Nation Address at 4 p.m. of that same

day," he said.

While Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, Fariñas and their Senate counterparts gave Duterte the final say on what provisions should remain and be removed, the President nonetheless "did not impose anything on Congress, but granted our request to certify the BBL bill as urgent."

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza also confirmed the President would sign the BBL into law in time for his third SONA on July 23.

Dureza said the President had a meeting with leaders of the House and Senate last Monday along with a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MLF) delegation headed by Kagi Murad Ibrahim.

"It was a good meeting with all leaders of the House and the Senate, including their members who expressed strongly their views on the bill," Dureza said.

"The President met separately with the leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front headed by Kagi Murad Ibrahim. Then he convened separately the government sector," he added.

Dureza said the President

initially expressed his own views and initial assessment on the BBL.

"The meeting adjourned with a general consensus that the two chambers conclude their work at the earliest possible time and if there are varying versions, that the mandated bicameral committees of both chambers meet to come up with a joint reconciled and accepted version," Dureza said.

He said Duterte stated that he would certify the bill as urgent.

The House and the Senate are expected to pass BBL on third and final reading this week.

"We will then have a bicameral conference committee during the break, that will resolve conflicting provisions of our bills in collaboration with the executive department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission," Fariñas said.

Deputy Speaker Rolando Andaya Jr. earlier asked the three committees of the House that consolidated and approved the BBL bill to seriously look into constitutional issues on some provisions of the measure. "We should work together to make sure this bill is

as airtight as possible, as President Duterte's administration has put much work and effort into this measure. We all do not want to see it wasted just because of a fatal oversight," he said. The Camarines Sur lawmaker in particular expressed concern that Article 12 Section 1 of House Bill 6475, which discussed Fiscal Autonomy of the Bangsamoro, is unconstitutional according to existing jurisprudence. Andaya explained fiscal autonomy is granted by the Constitution and cannot be superseded by a law passed even by Congress.

"It is a constitutional grant and cannot be attained by membership. This is the ruling of the Supreme Court on the power of fiscal autonomy," he said.

For her part, Rep. Amihilda Sangoapan of party-list Anak Mindanao clarified they are not saying the BBL is the solution to the peace situation in war-ravaged Mindanao. ♪

"What we're trying to say is, do we have an alternative to the peace situation in Mindanao?" - With Paolo Romero, Delon Porcalla, Jose Rodel Clapano, Cecille Suerte Felipe

BREAKING IMPASSE

PRESIDENT CERTIFIES PROPOSED BBL URGENT

By **Vince F. Nonato**
and **DJ Yap**
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte has left it up to Congress to break the deadlock on various contentious provisions of a bill that would establish an autonomous homeland for Muslims in Mindanao.

But he has certified the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) urgent to

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FROM A1

expedite its passage.

Although congressional leaders met with Mr. Duterte on Monday evening to seek his position on the controversial provisions of the BBL, House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas said "the President did not impose anything on Congress."

Instead, Mr. Duterte "granted our request to certify the BBL bill urgent" so both the House and the Senate could approve their respective versions on second and third reading before

adjourning on Wednesday, Fariñas told reporters in a mobile chat on Monday night.

He said this would allow the two chambers to resolve the issues at the conference level sometime during the seven-week recess.

Malacañang released Mr. Duterte's certification, addressed to Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez and Senate President Vicente Sotto III, on Tuesday night.

Congress adjourns on May 30 and returns on July 23.

The Senate-House conference will be held "in collaboration with the Executive Department and the Bangsamoro

Transition Commission (BTC)," Fariñas said.

Afterward, the conference report will be submitted for ratification by the House and the Senate when they resume sessions on the morning of July 23.

"The President [will sign] it into law in time for his State of the Nation Address at 4 p.m. of that same day," Fariñas said.

Major differences

There could be striking and major differences between the two versions of the bill.

The House version approved by a joint panel follows closely the BTC proposal. But members

of the Senate, including Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto and Sen. Franklin Drilon, have indicated their intention to introduce amendments to their chamber's version.

Recto earlier said he would propose 150 amendments, while Drilon said he would propose 100.

Sotto said the Senate would accept amendments on Tuesday and approve the measure on Wednesday.

Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, the sponsor of the bill on the Senate floor, said the amendments would be tackled on Tuesday "till midnight if necessary."

Fariñas said on Monday afternoon that the meeting with Mr. Duterte was meant for Congress leaders "to hear directly from the President what the final position is."

BTC agrees

He said then that during a closed-door meeting on Monday morning—the second such meeting since May 22—the BTC members agreed to "most" of the amendments proposed by legislators.

Fariñas also said the BTC agreed to naming the proposed Muslim homeland Autonomous Region of Bangsamoro (ARB).

He also mentioned the national government's retention of defense and security functions over the restive area, meaning the Bangsamoro regional police would remain under the Philippine National Police.

Issues that remained unresolved, he said, were fiscal autonomy and the opt-in provision that would allow the proposed Muslim homeland's expansion to adjacent areas outside the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao where at least 10 percent of registered voters had sought a plebiscite on the BBL. —WITH A REPORT FROM JULIEM, AURELIO INQ

Duterte certifies BBL bills as urgent

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday finally certified as urgent the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) bills of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The certification will expedite the passage of the BBL, which is among the top priority measures of the Duterte administration.

President Duterte is expected to sign the BBL on or before he delivers his third state of the nation address (SONA) on July 23.

The BBL will pave the way for the creation of a Bangsamoro region that will replace the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. The creation of a Bangsamoro region is part of the

peace agreement signed by government with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in March 2014.

In a letter to Senate President Vicente Sotto III and Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, President Duterte said the passage of the BBL "is a manifestation of the government's commitment to address the diverse needs of the people in Bangsamoro and all communities and constituents of Mindanao, towards a just and lasting peace in Mindanao and in the Philippines as a whole."

With the President's certification, the Senate can approve the priority measure on third reading immediately after it is passed it on second reading. The measure is undergoing amendments in the plenary.

Congress is set to hold its last session today before going on a sine-die adjournment.

Sotto said the bicameral committee may deliberate on the provisions of the Senate and House versions of BBL during the break, so both chambers can ratify the measure before President Duterte's SONA.

Zubiri said the bicam might take place in July.

On Monday night, Sotto and majority leader Miguel Zubiri met with the President in Malacañang.

House majority leader Rodolfo Fariñas said congressmen failed to resolve the contentious BBL provisions when they met with the President also on Monday night and decided to just iron out all the

details when they meet with senators at the bicameral level during the congressional break.

"The President did not impose anything on Congress but granted our request to certify the BBL bill as urgent in order for the HOR and the Senate to pass their respective BBL bills on second and 3rd readings before we adjourn on Wednesday," he told reporters.

House leaders had to meet with the President to seek guidance on resolving the issues and ensure the constitutionality of the priority measure.

Fariñas admitted that the President himself is apprehensive of some of the BBL provisions, par-

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DUTERTE

ticularly the proposed creation of a separate police and military for the proposed autonomous region of the Bangsamoro.

House leaders, however, told the President that they will be able to resolve the issue at the bicam level and asked him to certify the bill as urgent.

Fariñas said bicameral meetings will be held during the break "in collaboration with the executive

department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission."

He said the bicam report will be submitted for ratification by the House and the Senate in their plenary sessions on the morning of July 23, with the President signing it into law in time for his SONA at 4 p.m. of the same day.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque earlier yesterday said a certification may no longer be needed as the Senate and the House submitted have different versions of

the bill, which lawmakers vowed to reconcile and pass as soon as possible.

Later yesterday, Roque said Senate Bill 1717 and House Bill 6475 were eventually certified as urgent and the certifications had been sent to the Senate and the House.

"After much deliberation, the President has decided to make the House and Senate versions of the BBL as urgent... Once both chambers have reconciled and finalized the version, the President

will sign the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL)," Roque said.

Sotto said Roque "does not understand" the need for the President's certification, "insisting that we have differing versions."

"The President told us last night that he will (certify BBL as urgent). He also knows there are two versions. We will not be able to pass BBL on third reading if we do not get a certification of urgency," Sotto said. — *With JP Lopez and Wendell Vigilia*

Finally, BBL certified as urgent bill

By Nathaniel Mariano and Maricel V. Cruz

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday certified the House and Senate bills on the Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent.

"The passage of this measure is a manifestation of the government's commitment to address the diverse needs of the people in Bangsamoro, and all communities and constituents of Mindanao, towards a just and lasting peace in Mindanao and in the Philippines as a whole," Duterte said.

In other developments:

• The House of Representatives on Tuesday opened plenary deliberations on

the proposed BBL.

House Bill 6475, principally authored by Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, was sponsored in the plenary by Representatives Pedro Acharon of South Cotabato, chairman of the committee on local governments; Mauyag Papandayan of Lanao del Sur, chairman of the committee on Muslim affairs; Ruby Sahali of Tawi-Tawi, and chairwoman of the peace, reconciliation and unity committee.

The House has yet to receive a copy of the President's certification declaring the bill an urgent measure, as of press time.

The bill was expected to have approved HE 6475 on second reading Tuesday night.

• House majority leader and Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas on Tuesday

said he saw no need to amend the 1987 Constitution to establish a Bangsamoro region in Mindanao.

Fariñas made the statement even as he reiterated that the House leadership will pass the constitutional Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Critics feel that the proposed BBL will not pass constitutional the test as the bill calls for the abolition of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao that the Constitution itself created.

"There is no need to amend the 1987 Constitution. Another option would be to wait for the Con-Ass [constituent assembly] to accommodate the BBL," Fariñas said.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman had earlier assailed the BBL proposal, saying it was unconstitutional.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza earlier said Duterte had held separate meetings with all the leaders of the House and the Senate and with the leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front led by its chairman Murad Ibrahim.

"The President initially expressed his own personal views and initial assessments which resonated well to all," said Dureza who was optimistic on the passage of the bill.

"The meeting adjourned with a general consensus that the two chambers conclude their work at the earliest possible time and if there are varying versions, that the mandated bicameral committees of both chambers meet to come up with a joint reconciled and accepted version," Dureza said.

Rody certifies BBL as urgent

BBL now in the brink of Moro law passage

By Gerry Baldo

The presidential spokesman Harry Roque said that the BBL approval by Congress may not need the President's certification for the quick passage in Congress of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, Maitubang yesterday announced that President Duterte has certified as urgent two versions of the proposed BBL pending in both Houses of Congress.

“Just three minutes ago, the Office of the Executive Secretary officially issued a certification as urgent both versions on the creation of the BBL pending on both the House of Representatives and the Senate,” Roque announced during the *RoadNothersPh’s first year anniversary at Camp Crane in Quez in City.

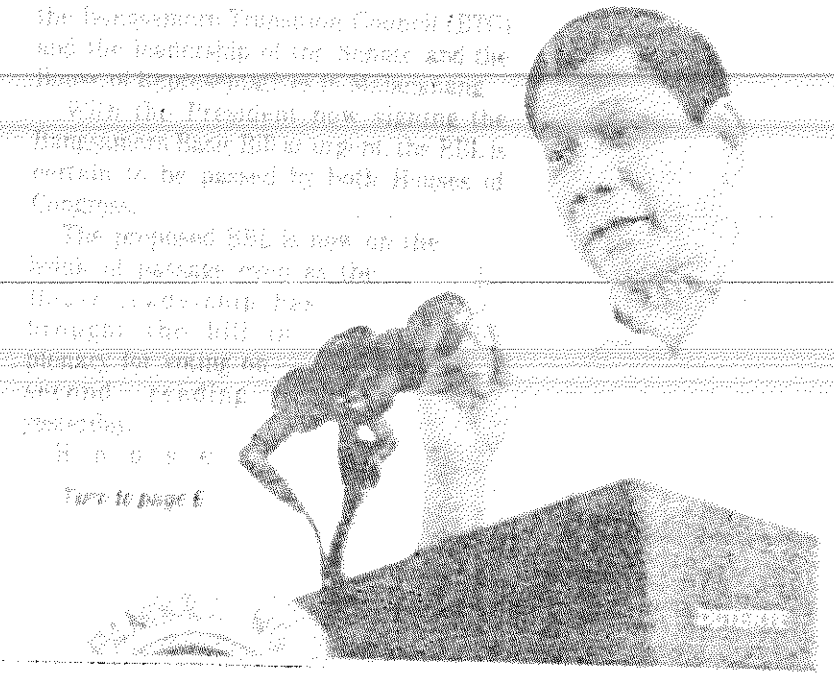
The certification was released after President Duterte conferred in Manila with

the Bangsamoro Transition Council (BTC) and the leadership of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

With the President now signing the Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent, the BBL is certain to be passed by both Houses of Congress.

The proposed BBL is now on the brink of passage even as the House leadership has moved the bill in priority for voting in second reading session.

It is expected to go to page 6



Rody certifies BBL as urgent

From page 1

Majority Floor Leader and Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas, chair of the House committee on rules, said the BBL will be approved on third and final reading before the Lower House adjourns *sine die* later this week.

"The bicameral conference committee report shall be submitted for ratification by the House of Representatives and the Senate in their plenary sessions in the morning of Monday, July 23, 2018, with the President signing it into law in time for his State of the Nation Address at four p.m. of that same day," Fariñas said shortly before Mindanao lawmakers started delivering their sponsorship speeches for the bill.

Fariñas noted that President Duterte has expressed some concerns on the BBL, including a separate police military from the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"I said, for us to be able to meet the deadline of passing it and possibly with the President signing it into law on Sona, we have to approve it on third reading before we adjourn," said Fariñas.

Fariñas added that the "President did not impose anything on Congress, but granted our request to certify the BBL bill as urgent in order for the House of Representatives and the Senate to pass their respective BBL bills on second and third readings before we adjourn on Wednesday.

"We will then have a Bicameral (BiCam) Conference Committee during the break, that will resolve conflicting provisions of our bills in collaboration with the Executive Department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC)."

"Congress will resolve them in its BiCam Conference Committee in collaboration with the Executive Department and the BTC. If we won't resolve them, we won't have a bill for the President to consider," said Fariñas.

Section 4 of House Bill (HB) No. 6475 or BBL provides that cities and provinces sharing a common border with the Bangsamoro shall be allowed to join the plebiscite through a petition signed by at least 10 percent of registered voters. This will be done every five years for

a period of 25 years after the creation of the Bangsamoro.

HB No. 6475 also grants fiscal autonomy to the Bangsamoro — which some lawmakers perceived to be "unconstitutional" as such power could only be granted by the Constitution and could not be superseded by a law.

During the BTC meeting with lawmakers, Fariñas said the BTC accepted the proposed amendments of lawmakers to take out provisions creating the Bangsamoro's own uniformed service.

Roque said the President met separately the leaders of the two houses of Congress and the BTC officials.

"The query last night was how to certify two bills pending in the House and the Senate because they were not the same but the decision was reached finally to certify both versions of the bill and there was an agreement that after both houses of Congress had passed already their respective versions that the differences would be threshed out immediately," Roque said.

With the Palace certification, both the Senate and the House of Representatives are expected to pass the BBL before Congress adjourns *sine die* on June 1, which is just two days from today.

Roque said certified copy of the bill "is on its way to both Houses of Congress."

"Once both chambers have reconciled and finalized the version, the President will sign the Bangsamoro Basic Law," Roque said.

The BBL is designed to address the decades-long conflict in Mindanao by creating a political entity to replace the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

"The passage of this measure is a manifestation of the government's commitment to address the diverse needs of the people in Bangsamoro, and all communities and constituents of Mindanao, toward a just and lasting peace in Mindanao and in the Philippines as a whole," Duterte stated in the certification submitted to Senate President Vicente Sotto III and House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez.

Duterte had earlier said he would like to see the BBL passed ahead of the proposal to amend

the Constitution that would give way for the shift of the form of government to federalism.

A Consultative Committee (concom) tasked by Duterte to review the 1987 Constitution has started introducing its proposed amendments.

Senate chief Sotto confirms Rody certified BBL as urgent

Senate President Vicente Sotto III on Tuesday said Malacañang has certified the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent.

"Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea just called. They will send now the certification," Sotto said in a message to reporters.

Roque confirmed the development.

"After much deliberation, the President has decided to make the House and Senate versions of the BBL as urgent and a copy of it is on its way to both houses of Congress," Roque said in a statement. "Once both chambers have reconciled and finalized the version, the President will sign the BBL."

Rody critics say BBL rushed for Sona purposes only

A GMA report quoted staunch critic, party lister Gary Alejano as saying that the passage of the measure providing for the BBL is being rushed in Congress so that President Duterte could have an accomplishment to report in his Sona.

Alejano made the remark on Tuesday as both houses of Congress seek to approve their respective versions of the measure before their session break.

"The President wanted to report this to the people in his Sona, otherwise will have nothing to report," Alejano told reporters in a press conference.

Alejano argued that instead of conducting deliberations on the measure, the Congress leaders chose to only negotiate it with the BTC.

Alejano earlier urged his colleagues not to fast-track the passage of the BBL proposal.

"I ask that we carefully develop a BBL that would result to such without, of course, unreasonably delaying the process. We do not want to compromise the quality of this measure for the sake of beating the deadline," he said.

With PNA

DU30 certifies BBL as urgent measure

By **EFREN MONTANO & RYAN PONCE PACPACO**

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has finally certified the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) as urgent, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said yesterday afternoon.

"After much deliberation, the President has decided to make the House and Senate versions of the BBL as urgent and copy of it is on its way to both houses of Congress," Roque said in a statement.

"Once both chambers have reconciled and finalized the version, the President will sign the BBL," he added.

Roque said in an earlier press briefing in Bontoc, Mountain Province there may be no need to certify the BBL as urgent because of the stark differences between the versions of the Senate and House of Representatives.

"Hindi na po siguro magkakaroon ng certification of urgency kasi unang una po magkaiba yung berayon ng Kamara at Senado," Roque said in a televised press briefing in Bontoc, Mountain Province.

Meanwhile, the House leadership assured yesterday that the constitution-

ally-compliant Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) will be signed into law by President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte before he delivers his third State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 23, 2018 despite some reservations by the Chief Executive.

House Majority Floor Leader and Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo "Rudy" Fariñas, who chairs the House committee on rules, said Congress will approve the peace bill on third and final reading before its sine die adjournment this week.

"The bicameral conference committee report shall be submitted for ratification by the House of Representatives and the Senate in their plenary sessions in the morning of Monday, July 23, 2018, with the President signing it into law in time for his State of the Nation Address at 4 p.m. of that same day," Fariñas told reporters after attending a meeting with President Duterte and House leaders Monday night at Malacañang where the Chief Executive agreed to certify the BBL as urgent measure.

Yesterday, the House of Representatives began hearing the sponsorship speeches of BBL authors at the plenary and will approve the measure on second and third readings this Wednesday.



House Bill (HB) No. 6475 was sponsored in the plenary yesterday by Reps. Pedro Acharon (NPC, South Cotabato), chair of the committee on local government; Maanyag Papandayan (PDP-Laban, Lanao del Sur), chair of the committee on Muslim affairs; Ruby Sahali (PDP-Laban, Tawi-Tawi), chair and peace, reconciliation and unity; and Anak Mindanao party-list Rep. Amihilda Sangcopan.

The House received the copy of the President's certification declaring the measure as an urgent measure at past six yesterday.

Fariñas admitted that President Duterte has expressed some concerns on BBL, including a separate police military from the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

He clarified to President Duterte that the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) was amenable that

the police and military forces in the Bangsamoro region will still be under the control of the national government.

"Sabi ko, for us to be able to meet the deadline of passing it and possibly with the President signing it into law on SONA, we have to approve it on third reading before we adjourn," said Fariñas.

Fariñas said the "President did not impose anything on Congress, but granted our request to certify the BBL bill as urgent in order for the HoR and the Senate to pass their respective BBL bills on second and third readings before we adjourn on Wednesday. We will then have a Bicameral (BiCam) Conference Committee during the break, that will resolve conflicting provisions of our bills in collaboration with the Executive Department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC)." 7

DUTERTE TO SIGN BBL IN JULY

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte will mark his third State of the Nation Address in July by signing the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), according to House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas.

Fariñas made the disclosure to journalists before midnight on

Monday after lawmakers met with the President regarding the measure.

The proposal abolishes the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and replaces it with a Bangsamoro Region that will enjoy fiscal autonomy and be governed by the Bangsamoro Par-

liament elected by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region's inhabitants.

"The President granted our request to certify the bill on the BBL [Bangsamoro Basic Law] as urgent in order for the House and the Senate to pass their respective BBL

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■ BBL FROM A1

Duterte

bills on second and third readings before we adjourn on Wednesday. We will then have a Bicameral Conference Committee [meeting] during the break that will resolve conflicting provisions of our bills in collaboration with the executive department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission [BTC]," Fariñas said.

"The Bicameral Conference Committee Report will then be submitted for ratification by the House and the Senate in their respective plenary sessions on the morning of Monday, July 23, with the President signing it into law in time for his State of the Nation Address at 4 p.m. of that same day," he added.

The President certified the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent on Tuesday.

The certifications of urgency

were given to Senate President Tito Sotto and Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez late Tuesday afternoon.

The certifications cover House Bill 6475 and Senate bill 1717.

"The passage of this measure is a manifestation of the government's commitment to address the diverse needs of the people in Bangsamoro and all communities and constituents of Mindanao, towards a just and lasting peace in Mindanao and in the Philippines as a whole."

Duterte's letter read.

A certification of urgency means that the House of Representatives can pass the bill on second and third reading on the same day.

The BBL measure seeks to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and replace it with a Bangsamoro Region.

RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA AND LLANESCA T. PANTI

BBL signed into law on SONA day — solon

By Jester P. Manalastas

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte will sign into law the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) on the day of his 3rd State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas disclosed this after he and other leaders of the House of Representatives and Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) met the President to get his opinion on the BBL, particularly on the disagreeing provisions.

According to Fariñas, the President seems to be satisfied with the measure and did not ask anything from the lawmakers.

In fact, Fariñas said, the President is granting their request to certify it as an urgent bill so that it will be approved on third and final reading before the adjournment today.

"The President did not impose anything on Congress, but granted our request to certify the BBL bill as urgent in order for the HJR and the Senate to pass their respective BBL bills on 2nd and 3rd Readings before we adjourn," Fariñas said.

"We will then have a Bicameral (BiCam) Conference Committee during the break, that will resolve conflicting provisions of

our bills in collaboration with the Executive Department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC)," he added.

The BiCam Conference Committee Report shall be submitted for ratification by the House and the Senate in their Plenary sessions in the morning of Monday, July 23, 2018, with the President signing it into law in time for his State of the Nation Address at 4 pm of that same day.

The House's version, filed by Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez himself, was based on the report submitted by the BTC.

The bill aims to establish a political entity, provide for a basic structure of government to recognize the justness and legitimacy of the cause of the Bangsamoro people and their desire to chart their own political future through a democratic process securing their identity and allowing self governance.

House, Senate versions

Certifying the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent to ensure its passage this week in Congress may no longer be necessary, Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque Jr. said yesterday.

The Senate and House of Representatives have asked President Duterte to certify the bill as urgent

as this would allow them to pass the measure on second and third and final reading on the same day.

But Roque pointed to varying versions of the bill in the Senate and the House of Representatives that would still have to be threshed out in the bicameral conference committee. "Yung certification nga po may not be necessary because in the first place they have different versions," the Palace official said at a news conference in Bontoc, Mountain Province.

"Pero ang commitment is for both houses to pass it and to reconcile whatever versions they may have so that it can be enacted into law at the soonest time possible," he added.

Roque's statement came a day after Duterte met with congressional leaders, some Cabinet officials, and members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission in Malacanan to address contentious issues of the bill.

During the meeting, Duterte expressed his views and "initial assessments which resonated well to all," according to Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Duraza.

The BBL aims to end decades of conflict in Mindanao by creating a political entity that would replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. **With E Montano**

A DAY MORE OF MARTIAL LAW IS 'TOO MUCH'

A year after the declaration of martial law in Mindanao, the League of Filipino Students-Northern Mindanao Region calls on all the youth to stand for genuine democracy and national freedom. Martial law in Mindanao has only consolidated President Duterte's power. A year has passed and the blood of Mindanaoans has overflowed from his iron fists. We will stand with the people of Marawi and Mindanao in calling to end martial law and resonate the call for justice for all victims of human rights violations.

Tens of thousands of Maranaos are being barred from returning to their homes. Instead of providing concrete rehabilitation plans, the evacuees were made to live in makeshift tents, evacuation centers or temporary shelters. Martial law was used continually to persecute the people of Marawi even after the siege.

Mr. Duterte imposed and extended martial law in Mindanao to gain further control of resources. Militant peasants and the *lumad* who fight for genuine land reform and defense of their ancestral land were meted

with militarization and countless human rights violations. Martial law has become a curtain to cover the economic interests of foreign corporations and a blanket to silence the people who dare to defy it.

One day of martial law is too much—what more now that it has lasted a year?

We will vow to amplify the calls of the people to end martial law and to fight for genuine democracy and freedom!

MY
KRISTINE B. CABARDO,
chair, League of Filipino
Students-Northern Mindanao

The long-term economic plan of the BBL — where is it?

Before Congress goes sine-die this May, the Bangsa Moro Basic Law (BBL) would have been passed by the lower house on third and last reading, without a hitch it is likely to get the nod of the Senate as well. Now, a cursory look at how different the political structure under the BBL and what it was with the ARMM one seems lost in the verbose ramifications of where the funds would be coming from to fund the BBL behemoth, from its transition from the ARMM up to the time they are able to get themselves organized and start legislating their budgetary requirements.

From all indications the 4 or 5 million citizens comprising the BBL will continue to get central government subsidy for at least 2019, or longer, to the tune of P30 billion a year from everyone's pocket. ARMM had a little less annual budget than that. But just the same this observer sees little change from the ARMM, due the absence of a visionary economic development plan, except

the imperative of government to buck the political pressure from the MILF group who now wants to get this autonomy concession from government via the BBL, or else.

My take: why can't the government quit sailing asea on the hope that a political structure like BBL, never mind the illusory financial bonanza that could come to the region under an autonomous structure, without going through the same traumatic experience with ARMM, which the P-Now administration and the present one, labeled a "failed experiment." The BBL could likely result as another regional structure propped by everyone's taxes, not much different from the ARMM, without a clear economic plan.

I have not seen or heard a hint on any government long-term economic development plan paralleled with the reconfiguration of the political structure - that is the BBL. Without this economic blueprint from the central government, is it now left to the leadership in the region to craft and

chart their future, and we all hope for the best? Autonomy sounds beautiful on paper and music to the ears of the incorrigible parliamentary dreamers among us. But I think it can be a very costly experiment the way the BBL is envisioned without an overall economic rudder from the central government think tank, like the NEDA, to provide long-term vision to where it should grow and how to develop optimally the vast resources of the region, after all, the whole country are also stakeholders and owners of the nation's immense natural resources in Mindanao.

It would be a pity to miss another chance for Mindanao with all its vast natural resources. It is as big as Singapore in population, except that 70-80% of Singapore's resources are just the ingenuity and financial talent of its people to enjoy one of the highest per capita incomes in the world and be the financial capital of most of Asia and Europe. —MARVEL K. TAN, a Tausog, Quezon City

SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

Kinder, gentler?

At dawn last Saturday in North Cotabato, nine suspected members of a drug trafficking ring were killed in what lawmen described as a shootout with a combined police and military team.

The nine turned out to be members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, so Malacañang has ordered an investigation. But at this point I'm going by the initial report that it was a drug operation that turned violent.

In Tondo, Manila at around the same time on Saturday, four men on motorcycles gunned down a policeman who was recently reinstated despite being tagged as a drug suspect.

Over the weekend, four drug suspects were shot dead by police in separate incidents in Cavite. Two others were shot dead in Bulacan on Saturday.

That's 16 drug suspects killed in just two days. We can put things in perspective: 32 drug suspects were arrested over the weekend in Cavite. Still, 16 is a lot of dead bodies. Are drug killings again on the rise? And is there less public tolerance for the killings?

The answer to the second question, as far as I can surmise, is no. As to the first question, mine is a high death toll for a single drug bust, but if it doesn't become a regular thing, the public tends to ignore a death or two in a single incident. Such killings have been going on for decades.

When Oscar Albayalde was picked as the new head of the Philippine National Police, I wrote that we would probably be seeing a kinder, gentler PNP and drug war.

Albayalde, after all, sacked nearly the entire Calocan police force following the brutal executions of teenage drug suspects in the city.

He grinned when I asked him if I was just imagining that the drug war had become less bloody. He was our guest on the premiere episode of "The Chiefs," broadcast the other night at 8:30 when Signal TV launched One News (Channel 8, 25) on HD.

The rules of engagement, he told us, are "paramount and respect for human rights is one of them."

Maybe an off-the-record interview with Albayalde would give deeper insights regarding this brutal war, although he was forthright enough in his recorded answers. And he deftly parried questions that would have had him criticize the performance of his military academy *mistak*, Ronald dela Rosa, who recommended him as the next PNP chief.

Albayalde would only concede that there had been "lapses" in the conduct of the war, for which he has slapped penalties on several abusive cops.

Police have been killing drug suspects decades before *toking* became a household word. Why else do you think "salvaging" or retrieval has denoted execution in this country since the Marcos regime? The anti-drug campaign under President Duterte stands out only because of the sheer number of suspects slain in such a short period.



Even the brutality is not new. Suspects used to be garoted with a vehicle fan belt twisted around a police rightsick. The "mummy" treatment, using a plastic bag over the head, has also been around for some time. Burning bodies to ashes gets rid of the corpus delicti, although the burning takes a long time and the stench could attract attention. So killers place the corpse in a drum, pour in concrete and toss the package into the sea. Relatives of *desaparecidos* should try looking for such drums lying in the bottom of Manila Bay.

But Albayalde seems aware of the limits of short cuts to law enforcement. He reassures the public that respect for human rights is being inculcated among PNP personnel. He announced that he would comply with a Supreme Court order for the submission of case files on 3,806 drug killings under Duterte.

At the end of 18 months when Albayalde retires from the police service, he hopes to leave behind a more disciplined PNP.

Will the discipline mean curbing the excesses of the war on drugs? When President Duterte appointed Albayalde, he described the new PNP chief as "strict" and "the right guy" for the job. Duterte's marching order was simple, Albayalde said: "do what is right."

During our interview, Albayalde touched on the reforms being initiated, from recruitment and training to improvements in facilities for scientific criminal investigation. Duterte has given him a free hand to reorganize the PNP, and so far, Albayalde says he has received no request from politicians for the assignment or promotion of any police official.

Albayalde is grateful that even if he is from Pampanga, not Davao, and has never been assigned to Mindanao, he was picked for the top PNP post. Dela Rosa's endorsement was a key factor, but Duterte stressed that Albayalde owed his promotion to no one, and that he got the job on sheer credentials.

He seems to consider Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former PNP chief, as a role model. Albayalde agrees with Lacson's belief that you can't impose national discipline without a disciplined police force.

Ping Lacson, however, was feared not just for going after "kotong" or extorting cops and ordering PNP personnel to lose their beer bellies. Like Davao's Dirty Rody, Lacson built a reputation for "neutralizing" troublemakers. Among the most controversial, before he became PNP chief, was the neutralization of 11 members of the Kuratong Baleleng crime gang in Quezon City.

The Kuratong's first leader, incidentally, was Octavio Parojinog Sr., father of Ozamiz City mayor Reynaldo Parojinog Sr., who was killed together with 15 relatives and security aides in a police drug raid in July last year.

The Parojinogs were the second alleged narco family to suffer a bloody police raid, after the Espinosas of Albuera, Leyte.

Crime gangs aren't called "organized" for nothing; they know enough not to get caught in the act of selling or possessing illegal drugs -- a requirement for criminal charges to stick. Albayalde is aware of the limitations set by law in conducting drug busts.

What's a PNP chief to do, when presented with a narco list of notorious drug dealers who are also notoriously adept at avoiding criminal indictments?

The PNP has filed 608 human rights cases against its members so far -- "a good indication," Albayalde said, "that we are not tolerating any wrongdoing."

But he also added, "What happens on the ground if there is danger on the part of the operatives is something that we cannot control."

We haven't seen the last of the bloody police encounters with crime rings. But so far Albayalde has been making the right noises. Under his watch, we might yet see a touch of humanity in this ugly war.

UNRAVELING

Wannabe Americans want us to declare war vs China



By GETBY TUGLAC

ATENTION, warmongers: Parcel Islands is not Philippine territory and we have never claimed it. This group of islands and reefs is nearer to China and Vietnam, and they are the two countries that have claims to the Paracels, while we are literally on the other side of the sea.

We are so far away from Woody Island, the place where China reportedly landed an H-6K bomber aircraft, that it is outrageous how war-hungry local politicians have been portraying the area as if it was just in our neighborhood.

It's over 1,000 kilometers from the Spratly Islands (where we do have a claim). In sharp contrast, China and Vietnam are just 350 and 400 kilometers away from the Paracel Islands, including Woody, which is the largest island in the Paracels.

If any country should be mad, it is Vietnam, but I don't hear Vietnamese officials shrieking like our geographically-challenged politicians about the need to confront China and file protests around the world.

This is because Vietnam is smart: it knows it can't and shouldn't confront China militarily, not after their disastrous loss four decades ago. They also saw how their purported ally, the United States, failed to assist them in their past military clash with China.

On January 19, 1974, South Vietnamese forces engaged Chinese troops in Duncan island in the Paracels in a bid to

force them out. At that time, there were already compelling and historic claims for the Paracels, which is called Xisha in Chinese and Hoàng Sa in Vietnamese. (In Pilipino what's it called? Nothing, because we have never claimed this far-away island group.)

During the 1970s, Vietnam was still divided between US-backed South and the communist North Vietnam. The two sides were united only in 1975 after the US withdrew its troops from the South amid its losses in the "Resistance War Against the Americans" (otherwise known as the Vietnam War.)

The battle in Duncan island in 1974 lasted several days with both ground, naval, and air forces in play. But the South Vietnamese were outgunned, outmanned, and outmaneuvered by the Chinese. South Vietnam asked the US Navy Seventh Fleet for help but the Americans refused to help its ally.

As a result of Vietnam's aggression, China gained control over the entire Paracel Island group. Despite South Vietnam's protest, the United Nations didn't say anything and practically affirmed China's victory in the Paracels.

Will the US will help the Philippines in any military dispute in the South China Sea? They will not, that's for sure (and they have already declared they will not interfere in the South China Sea disputes). It's not in their best interests to help us, especially since we're not hosting their bases anymore. Besides, China and Vietnam are more important to the US economically than the Philippines.

As a result of its loss in the Paracels, Vietnam has quietly but determinedly

been building up its own military, especially its navy. It doesn't talk as much about its differences with China, unlike the Filipino politicians here who are embarrassing themselves by acting and talking like agents of the United States.

I don't know why the anti-China politicians refuse to see that US hegemony or dominance in Asia is over. China is the new superpower in Asia and the emerging multipolarity in the world (with the rise of Russia as well, along with the European Union) is best for everyone.

But leave it to the US to feel "threatened" by China. And not surprisingly, their mouthpieces here, still playing the little brown Americans, are ever-ready to serve their former colonial master by trying to stoke anti-Chinese sentiment among Filipinos. Who needs CIA agents here when you have such faux Filipinos?

Behind their anti-China statements is their anti-Duterte position. President Rodrigo Duterte has indeed become a threat to the US because of his independent foreign policy. He declared that the country will be a friend to all peace-loving nations but it will not be a servant of the Americans anymore.

Politicians promoting the anti-Duterte, anti-China, pro-US line should be ashamed of themselves. They are not serving the country's interest by their belligerency. What the Philippines needs right now is to develop economically and lift millions of its people out of poverty. We don't need war and we don't want one.

If you read Chinese history, they have

never attacked any foreign country. Instead, they are the ones that have been invaded, and brutally occupied (notably by Japan, with its military aggression in the decade leading up to World War II that led to violent events such as the Nanking Massacre).

The US lackeys screaming murder against China should just stop with their attempts at destabilizing the government and ruining our international reputation. China is not out to bomb us. If it wanted to send nukes to Manila it can do so now. It doesn't need to land a bomber aircraft in Woody island to do so.

If they want to continue to promote the US position while criticizing the Philippines' new independent foreign policy, they should just move to the US and become Americans. Or stay here and revive the Statehood Movement. Or as Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said, let the critics go to the disputed islands and start a war. "Go and attack," he said, dripping with sarcasm.

Note to the warmongers: The US Navy's Higgins and Antietam warships, a destroyer and cruiser, respectively, entered China's territorial waters without permission. Isn't this a clear sign of US aggression? Why aren't you protesting this as well the recent unilateral bombing of Syria?

The US has no territorial claims in the South China Sea. So what is it doing here if not lamely trying to assert its weakened dominance in the region? The country's anti-China politicians failed to get the memo: there is a different superpower in the South China Sea and it's not the United States. *R*

Carpio continues to mislead us on South China Sea issue

BY RIGOBERTO TIGLAO
Columnist

I HAD expected acting Chief Justice Antonio Caprio to respond to my conclusion in my column Monday that he, together with Vice President Maria Leonor Robredo, and former national security adviser Rollo Golez made a fool of themselves by demanding that our

government file a diplomatic protest against China for the take-off and landing of its H-6K bomber on its island in the South China Sea.

The three obviously blabbed their mouths thinking that either the Chinese bombers landed on a reclaimed land in atolls or reefs within our exclusive economic zone, or even in our Kalayaan Island

► TiglaoA6

group. The truth is that the Chinese used their airport in what in their maps is Yongxing island (Woody Island) in the Paracel group – far, far away from us, nearer to China than Manila is to Cebu, and which we aren't at all claiming.

But Carpio, Robredo and Golez appear to lack the intellectual integrity to admit to their quite obvious mistake.

The vice president's website even continues to post Robredo's statement which reads, translated from

Filipino: "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 West Philippine Sea using their long-range bombers is alarming." (Emphasis mine.) And to think that even the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* had called her attention to her mistake, with her spokesman Ibarra Gutierrez responding and thanking that paper for the "clarification."

How can the Republic's vice president continue to ignore the incontrovertible facts and lie? Doesn't she have any shame at all?

The Chinese bombers landed not on "our islands" but in their Yongxing island, which is not ours, nor do we claim it is ours. Yongxing is far from the West



RIGOBERTO
TIGLAO

Philippine Sea, which is, according to President Aquino's Administrative Order No. 29 of 2012, the "waters around, within and adjacent to the Kalayaan Island Group and Bajo de Masinloc."

Carpio won't admit

What I was surprised (or maybe not) is that Carpio – a member of the third branch of government that is most dedicated to the truth – hasn't admitted his mistake, and continues to mislead the country.

In his interview with GMA TV, reported in its online edition yesterday, Carpio says: "When China seized Scarborough Shoal in 2012, we did not send the Marines to retake it, we sent lawyers to The Hague to question the 9-dash line and we won that. So, we should follow international law and take advantage of the international law."

Carpio again misleads us, to rouse hatred against China, and worse to distract attention away from what we really need to do

in the Spratlys territorial dispute.

First, it makes it appear that the Chinese leader just woke up one one morning on the wrong side of his bed and ordered his troops to seize Scarborough. This is so totally false.

It was President Aquino who lit the fuse on this dispute, and bungled it so terribly that we lost what we call Panatag Shoal or Bajo de Masinloc.

For decades, the waters around Panatag had been fishing grounds for whatever nationality. Yet Aquino in early April 2012 ordered a Coast Guard surveillance ship to board eight Chinese fishing vessels it found there and tried to arrest the fishermen, on grounds that they were catching endangered species of fish. Whether this was true or not, two Chinese maritime surveillance ships – civilian and not military vessels – naturally came to the Chinese fishermen's rescue and blocked our Coast Guard vessels.

Aquino sent a warship

Apparently itching to deploy his new warship, President Aquino ordered the frigate BRP Gregorio del Pilar – which the US coast guard had refurbished and turned over to our Navy in May 2011 – to

confront the Chinese at Panatag.

That was a big-boo. It in effect militarized the area, giving the Chinese the excuse to undertake an ocean-based people-power of sorts. A flotilla of 31 Chinese fishing boats, 50 dinghies, and 10 maritime surveillance ships blocked the BRP Gregorio del Pilar from entering the shoal.

Apparently told of his big mistake by the US, Aquino ordered the navy ship to leave the area.

What made the situation confusing is that during the two-week-long stand-off, Aquino sent Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th as his personal envoy to negotiate with the Chinese. Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario, known to be very close to US authorities since his stint as Philippine Ambassador to the US for nearly eight years, did his own thing, which is to ask the Americans for help.

On June 7, 2012, Aquino ordered the Coast Guard and BFAR vessels to leave the lagoon. The Chinese didn't, and Chinese government, but not military, vessels to this day physically block any other vessel from entering, or even approaching the shoal.

Aquino told Trillanes that he ordered the ships out of Scarborough Shoal as del Rosario was told by the US that the Chinese had agreed

to withdraw their vessels simultaneously with our ships. Trillanes was incredulous, telling Aquino that he was just in the midst of negotiations with the Chinese. He even went on record to call del Rosario a traitor to the country for telling Aquino that the Chinese would also leave the shoal.

The Chinese of course, who claim the shoal as part of their territory, would pursue their own national interest, and know very well that the unwritten rule in territorial disputes is "occupation is ownership," although that occupation cannot be by force.

Aquino bungled it

China didn't really seize Scarborough Shoal. Aquino bungled the crisis that we lost it.

The filing of the UNCLOS case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which Carpio helped and is proud of, was essentially Aquino's admittedly brilliant move to keep from the public mind his colossal mistake that resulted in the Republic's loss of Panatag Shoal.

What did we get from the arbitral court's decision, which Carpio is boasting all over that we won?

Nothing.

China, as many world powers have done, simply ignored the deci-

sion of the arbitral court, especially since it doesn't recognize UNCLOS, nor do the United States, the superpower wanting to be the policeman in the South China Sea. No superpower, nor the United Nations, has dared to ask China to recognize the arbitral "award."

To spite the decision, China has even accelerated the fortification of the lands reclaimed on atolls and reefs it controls.

Of course in the world of Carpio - who had built up what had been the most influential law firm in the country during two administrations - lawyers are powerful, and would rule the world. Maybe they do within the confines of one country. But certainly not in the arena of world geopolitics.

If President Duterte did not exert efforts to befriend China, for which US lackeys have bashed him, the Asian superpower would have strived to isolate us economically. Do we really want that?

On Friday, I'll discuss the rational approach for our territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which is to do what China, Vietnam, and even Taiwan have been doing.

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The birth of the resistance

IN a real war, organized resistance after a defeat takes a little while. During World War 2, when Hitler overrun Poland, France and the low countries in Europe, only Britain was left standing. The British isles, protected by the English Channel, became the lone European country to withstand continuous pummeling by Hitler. With the sea route from America, the Atlantic, eventually controlled by the Allied forces, Britain became the springboard from whence Europe was eventually liberated.

But what was really heroic was the home-grown resistance by the people in German-occupied Europe, particularly in France. *La Resistance* was in the early years of the occupation a motley group of Frenchmen who fought not only the German forces but also their own collaborationist Vichy regime in the "unoccupied" part of Southern France. The French resistance played a significant role in the eventual liberation not only of France but the whole European continent and eventually the defeat of the Nazi forces.

The analogy of a heroic World War 2 resistance in this article ends here. In the Philippines, we have today the formation of a so-called *Resistance Coalition* to the Duterte regime. This is ostensibly one that grew out of the traditional power alliance of the old political and economic elite, the oligarchy and the church. This group, mutant of the Yellow Army, is a permutation of the "same old, same old" led by remnants of the Liberal Party of the President PNoy faction.

This group has formed itself "... into an alliance of Liberal Party (LP), party-list groups, Akbayan and Magdalo, and Tindig Filipinas... Sen Francis Pangilinan said (they) would highlight a number of issues against the

administration" (D) Yap, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 22, 2018).

Resistance to DU30 started when he precipitated a political blitzkrieg that trounced the Liberal Party, majority of whom shamelessly gravitated to the PDP Laban, and who were likewise brazenly accepted. This is nobody's fault really as our dysfunctional political system allows "turncoats and butterflies" to float toward the winning brand every time there is a change in administration. This sordid feature of a unitary presidential system is one reason we want a parliamentary federal system.

From the very start, the elite and the political cognoscenti did accept this brash *promdi* mayor from the south. However, the masses love his foul-mouthed lingo, his demeanor and his populism. One third of the voters, mostly the *masa*, was enough to propel him to power. The rest is history.

No, we were not attacked by any outside force though in effect Duterte did the attacking. But what is the Resistance Coalition (ResCoal) resisting? To be fair, we have two opposing points of view. Naturally, the allies of the Deegong, the DDS and the fist pumpers would generalize proclaiming that ResCoal is simply resisting change (*pagbabago*), the rallying cry of candidate DU30 that propelled him to power. But it is not that simple.

ResCoal's pique and disgust have always been directed toward the personality of PRRD, an uncouth politician and an outsider. But both sides want a solution to the proliferation of illegal drugs that has threatened to make the Philippines a narco-state. But the past administrations, particularly the PNoy regime, was never serious



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**LITO MONICO
C. LORENZANA**

about eliminating it. Duterte never did mince words on his intent: "You destroy my country, I will kill you. You destroy our children, I will kill you!" The Deegong reduced the problem and solution to their simplest form. The Yellows, now out of power, want a different route: one that inputs into the equation, the safeguarding of human rights implemented through the government's justice system.

This is where DU30 differs. For him, the past governments were corrupt and inept; and they spilt over to his regime. He must use every tool available at his fingertips. "But like any reforming politician, he faces a great tautology. The tool at hand to reform a corrupt state is a corrupt state." (*The Weekly Standard*, Christopher Caldwell, May 22, 2018)

Foremost of these weak institutions is the corrupt police. Many are perceived to be partners of the drug lords and protectors of the dealers. But the Filipino masses, with their native wisdom perhaps understand this better than the elite, perforce handing PRRD 80 percent support. And the purging continues.

On another issue, ResCoal is crying out against "weaponizing" the Solicitor General, using the quo warranto case to smite CJ Sereno and quite possibly other DU30 enemies, instead of ousting her through impeachment. Here, the President understands the process only too well and will not go this course. It will be

bloody expensive. The word in the street is that convicting the ousted chief justice would have cost billions of pesos, as PNoy showed in the Corona impeachment. The DAP funds paid to the jurist-senators bear witness to this.

Lastly, the ResCoal is condemning DU30 for kowtowing to China in the West Philippine Sea. This issue strikes close to the presidential psyche. His appreciation of China's bullying act is seen through the prism of the Deegong as a bully too. He sees the encroachment of China on Philippine sovereignty as a "zero-sum-game" and blames, illogically, America: "... the moment to contest China's occupation had been when it happened and that this was something only the Obama administration could have done. 'At the time, who could have stopped it?' (Duterte) asked. 'Tell me. Philippine Navy? Marines? There would have been a massacre.' (Caldwell)

Right or wrong, the Deegong opted for a "build, build, build" strategy. "His country needs train networks, roads, new factories, and mines for extracting its rich mineral resources. These are projects the United States has long been disinclined to pursue. Under the circumstances, it would be natural if the Philippines looked increasingly towards China, which has made 'build, build, build' the cornerstone of what it offers its allies, and less towards the United States, which in recent years has contented itself with 'nag, nag, nag'" (Caldwell)

The strategy by the Yellow Forces of re-inventing itself as the Resistance Coalition could yet become a legitimate tool to magnify the weaknesses of the regime, turn the masses around and arouse their passion against this interloper. Or they could all end up as a parody.

Vive la Resistance!

KL

EDITORIAL

War is not an option

IN DEFENDING his policy of appeasing China, President Duterte likes to say that we could go to war with our giant neighbor to the north over our territorial disputes in the South China Sea, but many Filipinos would surely die and we would most likely lose the war against a far superior force.

Mr. Duterte's protestations usually follow criticism of his administration's failure to raise the alarm over Chinese actions, including the reported installation of missile defense systems on a reef claimed by the Philippines, and its refusal to demand immediate Chinese compliance with a 2016 arbitration ruling that has invalidated Beijing's expansive claims in the South China Sea and upheld Manila's sovereign rights to exploit resources in vast stretches of water off its western coast—an area we refer to as the West Philippine Sea.

"I cannot afford at this time to go to war," the President said during a speech earlier this month on

the 120th anniversary of the Philippine Navy.

"I cannot go into a battle which I cannot win and would only result in destruction for our armed forces. I really want to do something to assert [our sovereignty]... [But] in my own estimation, it would be a great loss to the nation, and probably we will end up losing a war. All of these things I want to be made known to you. Whether you accept it or not, that's the reality on the ground."

We completely agree with the President. War is certainly not an option, given the high price it would extract—and a constitutional provision that renounces war as an instrument of national policy.

Where we differ from the President is his implication that we must go to war to stand up for our sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea.

Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio, who was part of the Philippine delegation that successfully argued the country's case before the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, says there are many avenues open to the country that do not include war. These include filing a strong, diplomatic protest

just to remind the world that we have not forsaken our claim to the West Philippine Sea or that we accept China's outrageous territorial overreach. We can also reach out to and cooperate with other South China Sea claimants, and pursue a diplomatic solution in the United Nations General Assembly.

Then, of course, there is the UN tribunal ruling in our favor.

Up until now, President Duterte has spoken very little of the tribunal's ruling that invalidates China's claims and upholds the Philippines' sovereign rights. He has not used it openly in talks with Beijing, and barely mentioned it when the ruling was first handed down.

Has the President put the document in his back pocket, ready for use at some opportune time?

Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano bristles when critics accuse his department of doing nothing about Chinese expansionism, saying many diplomatic initiatives are done in secret, behind closed doors. *ACJ*

We certainly hope that these "secret" initiatives pay off—before we lose all our territory in the West Philippine Sea in the name of friendly relations with Beijing.

Same BBL problems

Is there really no need for an amendment to the 1987 Constitution involving the creation of a Bangsamoro region?

House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas says so and all too suddenly, Malacañang also says there is no need to certify the Bangsamoro Basic Bill (BBB) for Congress to quickly act on it, only for the President to state that he will sign the BBL in July, during his state of the nation address (Sona).

Fariñas issued his comment on the BBL while responding to the critics who insist that the measure providing for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is unconstitutional, as it seeks to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) that the Constitution itself created.

"Another option would be to wait for the con-ass (constituent assembly) but right now, we are here with the BBL proposal," Fariñas stressed.

Albay Representative Edcel Lagman, who opposes the BBL without first amending the Constitution, said that to legislate the BBL to replace the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao is "putting the cart before the horse" due to a prejudicial question on whether the measure is constitutional or not.

Lagman added: "To my mind, it is unconstitutional because the Constitution created the ARMM and recognized the ARMM and we cannot abolish the ARMM by mere legislation," he said.

"There has to be a constitutional amendment first to replace the ARMM with another entity like BBL," he said, adding that "It will be a problem if the House leadership will fast-track the approval of the BBL because there will be inadequate and insufficient deliberations for a very important issue."

Going by past experience with the BBL during at least two regimes, the BBL proposals and bills submitted to Congress by the peace negotiators of the Arroyo and Aquino regimes, failed to pass constitutional muster in the Supreme Court, mainly because the proposal had clear constitutional defects.

The truth is that President Duterte who

FRONTLINE



Ninez Cacho-Olivares

has been pushing for the Bangsamoro law probably realizes that the bill even if enacted into law, and even if signed by Duterte himself will not pass muster in the High Court unless certain unconstitutional provisions in the bill or law—should the BBL come to that, are not included in the law.

Certifying the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent to ensure its passage this week in Congress may no longer be necessary. Even Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said that the BBL no longer necessitates certification marked as urgent.

Roque was said to have pointed to varying versions of the bill in the Senate and the House of Representatives that would still have to be threshed out in the bicameral conference committee.

"The certification may not be necessary because in the first place they (Senate and House) have different versions," Roque said.

"But the commitment is for both houses to pass it and to reconcile whatever versions they may have so that it can be enacted into law at the soonest time possible," he added.

Roque's statement came a day after Duterte met with congressional leaders, some Cabinet officials, and members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission in Malacañang to address contentious issues of the bill.

Fariñas also admitted that the President has many apprehensions on the BBL proposal, including the proposed creation of a police and military force for the Bangsamoro

separate from the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

This particular item is always pushed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) despite knowing that the Charter does not allow this, as the Constitution clearly states that there can only be one armed force in the country.

With the MILF insistent on having its own army and police force, separate and distinct from the AFP and PNP, including this MILF provision in its proposal in the BBL will definitely be turned down by the Supreme Court, given its country's rejection of the BBL rulings in the past.

But it was also said that the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) has already agreed that the police and military forces in the Bangsamoro should still be placed under the supervision of the national government. Has there been an agreement on the Bangsamoro government having a parliamentary system under a presidential system of government, because the MILF has been pressing for this, as well as having the land sea and air over the Bangsamoro belonging to the Bangsamoro government.

Fariñas said that for Congress (Senate and House) to be able to meet the deadline of passing the BBL and possibly with the President signing it into law on SONA, we have to approve it on third reading before we adjourn," Fariñas said.

But there are more problems as some congressmen expressed apprehension as to the option provision of the proposed BBL, which states that all other contiguous areas where there is resolution of the local government unit or a petition of at least 10 percent of the registered voters in the area asking for their inclusion at least two months prior to the conduct of the ratification of the law and the process of delimitation of the Bangsamoro.

These are the same problems that occur every time the BBL raises these issues, and together with it, always threaten the country with war.

ONLINE NEWS

30 May 2018

Army now equipped with new communication platforms

By Priam Nepomuceno May 29, 2018, 2:52 pm



Photo courtesy: Philippine Army Public Affairs Office

MANILA -- The Philippine Army (PA) is now equipped with platforms that can provide situational capability and secure communication to its units in the field.

The equipment being referred to is the "Blue Force Tracking System" that was developed by the Army Signal Regiment under its situational awareness capability program.

The latter is equipped with a global positioning system, allowing it to provide critical information to ground units, PA spokesperson Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva said in a statement Tuesday.

Aside from its "Blue Force Tracking System", the Army is also equipped with Mobile Command Centers (MCC) 1 and 2, tasked to provide communication support to all field units.

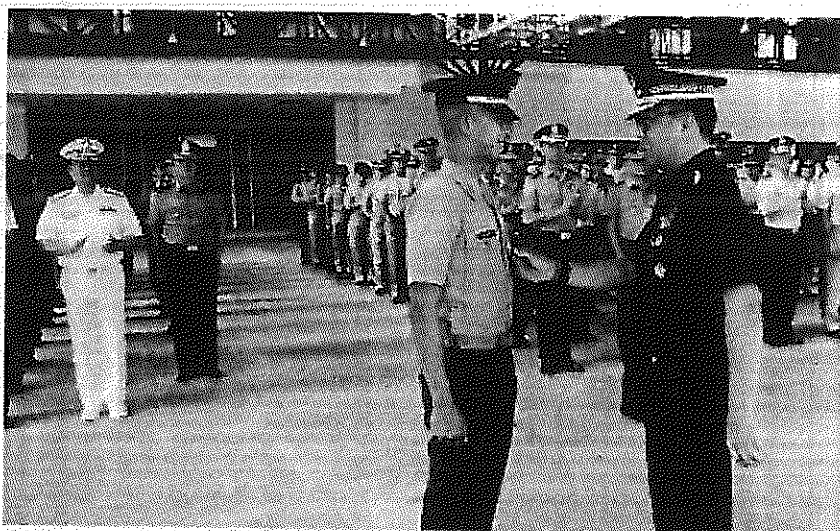
Villanueva said communication capability upgrades, such as MCC 1 and MCC 2, enable the commanders and planners to see the battlefield with real-time picture to come up with comprehensive and accurate plans and timely decisions, particularly during the conduct of focused military operations, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations.

Both platforms are capable of communicating through voice and data since they are equipped with dipole and aerial antennas, telephone extender, and satellite dish antenna, with uninterruptible power supply. **(PNA)**

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1036784>

16 troops, 2 civilians honored for contributions to Marawi battle

By Priam Nepomuceno May 29, 2018, 12:29 pm



AWARDS FOR MARAWI HEROES. Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Carlito Galvez Jr. pins the Gold Cross Medal to 1Lt George N Galzote, one of the 18 awardees during the flag-raising ceremony at the AFP General Headquarters Canopy Area in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City on Monday (May 28, 2018). *(Photo courtesy: AFP Public Affairs Office)*

MANILA -- A total of 16 military and two civilian personnel were recognized Monday for their efforts in the five-month battle to free Marawi City from the Islamic State-inspired Maute Group terrorists last year.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) public affairs office chief, Col. Noel Detoyato, said the awards were presented during the flag-raising ceremony at the AFP Canopy Area in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, which was spearheaded by AFP Chief-of-Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr.

"This Monday morning's flag-raising ceremony is made more special with the presence of our fellow soldiers, who have brought great honor and pride through their commendable service, not only to the organization, but to the whole nation as well," Galvez said.

Awarded with the Gold Cross Medal were Major Ryedel Reynaldo C. Cabugon, 1st Lt. Brian B. Palencia, Pfc. Enrique B. Macinas and Pfc. Dondon M. Onsar, all from the Philippine Army (PA); Major Michael G. Rabina, Staff Sgt. Ronaldo A. Suarez, and Staff Sgt. Glenn B.

Grafa all from the Philippine Air Force (PAF); and 1st Lt. George N. Galzote and 1st Lt. Jobert D. Jude, both from the Philippine Marine Corps (PMC).

Decorated with the Silver Cross Medal was Lt. Col. Francis Julius B. Buyucan of the Philippine Marines.

The Meritorious Achievement Medal was presented to Col. Ferdinand L. Torres of the PAF, Col. Consolito P. Yecla, Col. Alex S. Rillera, Lt. Col. Edgardo V. Talaroc Jr., and Major Benjamin D. Cadiente Jr., all from the PA.

Meanwhile, Col. Raul V. Bautista of the PA received the Command Plaque while civilian employees at the AFP general headquarters, Emma B. Sicar, and Kyle Kristoffer S. Salongcay, were awarded the Chief of Staff Commendation Medal.

"Nothing gives me more fulfillment than to join our soldiers in celebrating their moments of triumphs, such as today. It brings me so much pride and joy to witness our men and women humbly accept the products of their selflessness, commitment, dedication and perseverance," Galvez said.

Detoyato said majority of the awardees made significant contributions to the successful liberation of Marawi from the Maute terrorists last year, whether in combat or non-combat operations.

Other recipients performed outstandingly in policy development, contributing to the systems advancement of the organization.

"The sacrifices of the Filipino soldiers and civilian human resource are aplenty, and a simple recognition could mean so much to them. True to what they say, no one can defeat an inspired heart and soul," Galvez added. *(PNA)*

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