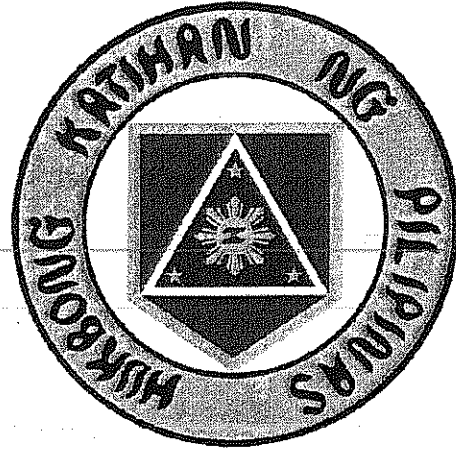


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NEWS CLIPPINGS

14 November 2018

Wednesday



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Lapeña still enjoys Rody trust – Palace

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Former Customs chief Isidro Lapeña still enjoys President Duterte's trust and confidence until he is found guilty of the charges against him, Malacañang said yesterday.

Lapeña, who was replaced as Customs chief as he was facing controversy over the entry of a multibillion-peso shabu shipment, is facing graft charges over 105 missing containers believed to have contained undervalued goods.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) said Lapeña had violated the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act when he failed to stop the release of the undervalued items from the Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI).

Lapeña previously filed smuggling cases against ATI and six other companies for supposedly releasing shipping containers without being examined. ATI said it could only process containers for release from the port after Customs issues a release instruction.

Lapeña, who has been named Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) director-general, is also facing administrative complaints of gross

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Lapeña

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neglect of duty and grave misconduct over the release of the P69.68-million shipment.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the filing of cases against Lapeña proved that no one is exempt from the administration's drive against corruption.

"No one, friends or political foes alike, is spared in our fight against corruption. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has a mandate to fulfill and its action is proof that the President shall not shield those upon whom a shadow of doubt has been cast," Panelo said in a statement.

"Good governance is the hallmark of the Duterte administration. This latest development is a reaffirmation of the President's commitment against all forms of corruption and illegality," he added.

But Panelo maintained

Lapeña is presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

"Nonetheless, we point out that TESDA director-general Lapeña has the constitutional right to be presumed innocent. Until and unless proven otherwise, he still enjoys the trust and confidence of the appointing authority who happens to be the President," Panelo said.

Duterte replaced Lapeña as customs chief as the bureau is drawing flak over the entry of about P11 billion worth of shabu in the country. Despite the controversy, Duterte believes Lapeña is an honest man and was only outplayed by a "corrupt system."

Last week, the President described the Bureau of Customs (BOC) as "anarchy" and admitted that corruption would persist in the agency regardless of who is heading it.

The others

Lapeña, for his part, hit the NBI for failing to unmask those behind the smuggling of 105 container vans of ceramic tiles when they filed graft charges against him.

Lapeña lamented the NBI should have instead identify the others behind the smuggling.

"It is unfortunate that the NBI concluded its investigations on the case of the 105 illegally released containers from the Port of Manila without getting any statements from me," Lapeña said.

"What is more unfortunate is that the NBI did not unmask the real people behind the illegal scheme," he added.

Lapeña stressed the unlawful release of the 105 container vans would not have been discovered were it not for his issuance of alert orders of the shipment involving 119 container vans.

"I know that this illegal

scheme is possibly happening even long before I was placed in the Bureau of Customs. Under my watch, this modus was uncovered. It was under my watch that we discovered 105 containers illegally released from the terminal, through the use of fake documents," Lapeña said.

Lapeña also denied protecting the personalities behind the illegal release of the container vans.

He said he had ordered the filing of criminal cases against them.

"It is unclear to me why would NBI find negligence on my part when I was the one who alerted (them about) the containers. Based on existing procedures in the BOC, the release of containers from a certain port is the responsibility of the concerned officers of that port," Lapeña said.

"I was hoping that their investigation would lead to finding out the truth and the

people who connived to release the 105 containers from the terminal. I leave the development of this case to the DOJ (Department of Justice)," he said.

"I maintain that I did the right thing that was supposed to be done at that time."

The DOJ is set to forward to the Office of the Ombudsman the graft charges filed by the NBI against Lapeña.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said that while the DOJ has concurrent jurisdiction to conduct preliminary investigation on graft cases, the ombudsman has exclusive jurisdiction on high-ranking officials.

"This rule on cases against officials with salary grade of at least 27 under the Memorandum of Agreement of DOJ and the ombudsman has not been amended, and therefore still in effect," Guevarra said.

Sen. Richard Gordon said there are lessons that can be learned from the legal woes

of Lapeña.

"He's OK but things have been happening behind his back. It's a jungle out there," said Gordon, chairman of the Senate Blue Ribbon committee, referring to the BOC.

For the past months, the committee has been investigating corruption at the BOC, including the smuggling of tons of shabu worth billions of pesos that found their way to the streets.

Gordon said new BOC chief Rey Leonardo Guerrero should make sure that his subordinates are not coopted by smugglers.

"From what I see (Lapeña) lacked follow-through on his orders," he said.

Gordon, however, declined to comment on the case pushed by the NBI.

The committee is expected to conduct its final hearing on the smuggling of illegal drugs at the BOC next week.

- With Evelyn Macairan, Paolo Romero, Edu Punay

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CHINA: TALKS ON SEA CODE FINISHED IN 3 YRS

STORY BY REUTERS, AFP AND JULIE M. AURELIO

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang says a code of conduct with Asean will contribute to stability in the South China Sea and bolster free trade. Washington, however, has urged Beijing to stop its militarization of the strategic waterway.

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SINGAPORE—China's Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday that Beijing hoped a consultation with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea would be completed in three years, and that such a deal would bolster free trade.

China also hopes to come to an agreement on its ongoing trade dispute with the United States based on mutual respect and trust, Li said at a function in Singapore, adding "there are no winners in any trade war."

Working text

China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) agreed in August on a working text to continue protracted negotiations over the code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Four Asean members—Brunei, Malaysia, the

Philippines and Vietnam—and China have overlapping claims to islands in the sea, one of the world's busiest waterways.

For years, they have been discussing a pact to prevent an escalation of disputes.

"It is China's hope that the [code of conduct] consultation will be finished in three years time so that it will contribute to enduring peace and stability in the South China Sea," Li said in a lecture.

Li's comments appeared to be the first clear time frame for finishing the code of conduct.

Talks have dragged on for years, with China accused of delaying progress as it prefers to deal with less powerful countries on a one-on-one basis.

Militarization

One such claimant is the Philippines, which has set aside an international arbitral court ruling in 2016 invalidating China's claim to nearly all of the South China Sea in exchange for Chinese aid, loans



'NO HEGEMONY' After Beijing stepped up its militarization of the South China Sea, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang assures Asean leaders that his country "is not out to dominate the strategic waterway." —AFP

and foreign investments.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is attending the 33rd Asean Summit in Singapore and is expected to "reiterate" the country's "principled positions on matters concerning the South China Sea," according to a

government statement released late Monday.

China, which has rejected the ruling of the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, has built military bases on seven Philippine-claimed reefs in the Spratly

archipelago and intimidates fishermen and naval vessels from rival countries.

China also has deployed anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles on the biggest Philippine reefs—Kagitingan (international name: Fiery Cross), Zamora (Subi) and Panganiban (Mischief)—from which it can hit targets within 500 kilometers.

Last month, China opened weather observation stations on the three reefs that can be used for military purposes, drawing protests from Philippine lawmakers.

Li is in Singapore to attend the Asean Summit and meetings between the bloc and its partner nations.

Not seeking hegemony

"China and Asean countries will benefit in that process, it will also be conducive to free trade and go on to serve the interests of other parties," Li said, referring to the code of conduct.

Li said China was not out to dominate the South China Sea.

"We are not and we will not seek hegemony or expansion. That is something that we will never do," he said.

"What we hope is to have a harmonious relationship with our neighbors. There have been small signs of progress in recent months," he added.

Last week, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis urged their Chinese counterparts to halt the militarization of the South China Sea, drawing a rebuke from the Chinese for sending US warships close to islands claimed by Beijing.

On Tuesday, US National Security Adviser John Bolton reiterated that the United States objected to China's unilateral military steps in the South China Sea, and said US freedom of navigation operations in the disputed waterway had increased. —REPORTS FROM REUTERS, AFP AND JULIE M. AURELIO INQ

Rody seeks tighter Asean action vs terrorism, drugs

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

SINGAPORE – Together with other Association of Southeast Asian Nations leaders, President Duterte will engage leaders of ASEAN Dialogue Partner countries to further enrich partnership in key areas of cooperation, including the problem on illegal drugs.

Malacañang said the President will reiterate the Philippines' principled positions on matters concerning the South China Sea and transnational and trans-boundary issues such as terrorism, violent extremism, trafficking in persons, illicit drugs and disaster risk reduction and management.

The Philippines looks forward to exchanging views on ASEAN community-building as well as discussions on regional and global developments that impact regional peace, security and stability, it added.

It also said that the Philippines looks forward to candid talks on the direction of cooperation in East Asia during the 13th East Asian Summit.

Duterte, who is facing criticisms related to his war against illegal drugs, left for the ASEAN summit last Monday on back-to-back visits to Singapore and Papua New Guinea.

He will participate in the 33rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits from Nov. 12-15 and the 26th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting this Nov. 16 to 18.

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong formally opened the 33rd ASEAN Summit yesterday afternoon at the Suntec Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Center. The Prime Minister also hosted a working dinner for the ASEAN leaders last night.

The Palace sees the event as an opportunity for Duterte and other ASEAN leaders to move ASEAN community-building forward and bring ASEAN closer to a rules-based, people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN Community.

At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting in Port Moresby, the President will work with other economic leaders to affirm the multilateral trading system and uphold the role of APEC as the forum for addressing issues, leveraging on the region's economic growth and pursuing open markets.

At the APEC, Duterte will show that the Philippines fully supports Papua New Guinea's hosting of the meeting. The Philippines will work with APEC partners to strive to attain the Bogor Goals and explore ways to make APEC work even better for people.

Malacañang said the President would emphasize the need to sustain MSME support and development and facilitate their access to the global marketplace.

In Port Moresby, the President will meet members of the Filipino community in Papua New

Guinea.

In the Philippines' engagements with ASEAN and APEC, Duterte will continue to strive to pursue goals and aspirations shared with stakeholders in the region and beyond to secure a better quality of life for peoples and a more productive partnership among nations.

Meanwhile, economic ministers have pushed to next year the possible "substantial conclusion" of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said the economic ministers are ready to present today the results of the discussions during the RCEP ministerial meeting, where parties continued the negotiations and finalization of several chapters of the agreement.

"We are determined to finish everything by next year. There is a big likelihood, and we even would like to have conclusion and signing by next year as well," he said at a press briefing here yesterday.

He added: "The Philippines, together with other RCEP parties, will greatly benefit from this partnership, especially in harnessing the economic benefits from promoting trade, investment, employment and economic growth."

Lopez said there are close to 92 tariff lines now included in the tariff trade liberations. For the benefit of farmers in the Philippines, the tariff rates would be retained to protect them. 13

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'Talks on sea code should end in 3 years'

SINGAPORE – China's Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday that Beijing hoped a consultation with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea would be completed in three years, and that such a

deal would bolster free trade. China also hopes to come to an agreement on its ongoing

trade dispute with the United States based on mutual respect and trust, Li said at a function in Singapore, adding "there are no winners in any trade

war." China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed in August on a working text to continue long-drawn-out negotiations over the code of conduct in the South China Sea.

No Davao visit for China's Xi. Story on Page 13.

Some ASEAN members
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Talks From Page 1

and China have overlapping claims to islands in the sea, one of the world's busiest waterways. For years, they have been discussing a pact to prevent an escalation of disputes.

"It is China's hope that the COC (code of conduct) consultation will be finished in three years time so that it will contribute to enduring peace and stability in the South China Sea," Li said in a lecture on the sidelines of the summit. He is in Singapore to attend annual meetings between ASEAN and its partner nations.

"China and ASEAN countries will benefit in that process, it will also be conducive to free trade and go on to serve the interests of other parties."

Last week, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis urged their Chinese counterparts to halt militarization of the South China Sea, drawing a rebuke from the Chinese for sending US warships close to islands claimed by Beijing.

Li also said he hoped to finalize a major trade pact with 15 other countries called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019, and that they would announce "substantive progress" in negotiations at meetings this week.

Focus on trade tensions

The potential damage to global trade brought on by President Donald Trump's tariffs battle with Beijing is looming as leaders of Southeast Asian nations, China, the US and other regional economies meet in Singapore this week.

Countries across the region, many of which have relied heavily on trade to grow their economies,

are responding with strong talk about free trade.

"All countries are linked in the same industrial chain in the world today and China and the US are an important part of it. No one wants or expects to see an interruption of it," Li said in the lecture.

It's unclear if this week's summit meetings of the 10-nation ASEAN will yield progress on a new trade pact that would commit member countries and others in the Asian-Pacific region to opening markets further.

Participants say India, for one, is balking at opening its markets wider to imports from China under the RCEP.

Expectations are modest. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday in a statement that he would be joining leaders in Singapore to just "review progress" toward an agreement.

But the momentum is in the direction of more, not less, open trade.

"Against the backdrop of rising anti-globalization sentiments and trade tensions, ASEAN will need to continue to stay open and connected and leverage our collective strength to navigate disruptive trends and anchor our relevance to the global economy," Singapore's minister for trade and industry, Chan Chun Sing, told fellow economic ministers Monday.

The ministers approved statements on facilitating more open trade, cooperation on developing renewable energy and e-commerce.

He noted that as a region of 630 million people, ASEAN is destined to become the world's fourth biggest economy by 2030, after the US, China and the European Union.

The globalization of manufacturing has been a key factor driv-

ing dynamic growth in Southeast Asia, where the regional economy's size more than doubled to \$2.8 trillion as of 2017.

Speaking at a business conference on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit, Li compared "rising unilateralism and protectionism," uncertainties and other destabilizing factors to harmful contaminants in an ocean.

"No country can effectively deal with these challenges on its own," he said.

During Li's visit, Singapore and China signed an upgraded free trade agreement that gives each better access to markets in the services industries.

As discussions over the RCEP trade pact drag on, another rival accord, the dozen-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, has been making headway despite Trump withdrawing the US from the Pacific Rim free trade initiative three days after he took office.

The remaining 11 countries are preparing to inaugurate the revised trade deal, the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, following Australia's ratification earlier this month. The deal is due to take effect on Dec. 30.

Several other economies are preparing to try to join the pan-Pacific accord, including the Philippines and South Korea.

Japanese media reported that Taiwan's representative to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, former chairman of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. Morris Chang, plans to ask Japan to back the island's request to also become a member during a meeting at the grouping's annual summit in Papua New Guinea that starts on Saturday.

- Reuters, AP

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Talks on South China Sea code should end in three years – Chinese Premier Li

SINGAPORE (Reuters) – China's Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday that Beijing hopes a consultation with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea would be completed in three years,

and that such a deal would bolster free trade.

China also hopes to come to an agreement on its ongoing trade dispute with the United States based on mutual respect and trust. ►10

Talks on South China...

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Li said at a function in Singapore, adding "there are no winners in any trade war."

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The Manila Times

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Beijing: Finish sea code in 3 yrs

**Duterte to reiterate 'principled position'
on West PH Sea in Asean summit**

SINGAPORE: A rulebook to settle disputes in the hotly contested South China Sea should be finished in three years, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday, insisting his nation does not seek "hegemony or expansion."

Li's comments appeared to be the first clear timeframe for finishing the code of conduct. Talks have dragged on for years, with China accused of delaying progress as it prefers to deal with less powerful

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Beijing: Finish sea code in 3 yrs

countries on a one-to-one basis. Ownership of islands and waters in the South China Sea is disputed by several nations, including the Philippines.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will "reiterate" the country's "principled positions" on the dispute over South China Sea, which Manila calls the West Philippine Sea, during this week's summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in Singapore, Malacañang said on Tuesday.

"The President will reiterate the Philippines' principled positions on matters concerning the South China Sea and transnational and trans-boundary issues such as terrorism, violent extremism, trafficking in persons, illicit drugs and disaster risk reduction and management," the Palace said in a statement.

"The Philippines looks forward to exchanging views on Asean community-building as well as discussions on regional and global developments that impact regional peace security and stability," it added.

President Rodrigo had said he preferred to set aside in the mean-

time the Philippines' 2016 victory in an international arbitration court, which invalidated Beijing's claims on the disputed waters, in favor of boosting economic ties.

Slow progress

China, whose nine-dash-line map claims virtually all of the sea, has established military positions on disputed outcrops and intimidates fishermen and naval vessels from rival countries.

Tensions have soared with fellow claimants such as Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan, as well as the United States, which has traditionally been the dominant military power in the area.

Beijing and the 10-member Asean have for years sought to hammer out a code to govern disputes in the disputed waters, but the process has moved slowly.

Speaking in Singapore ahead of the opening of an Asean summit, Li said: "It is China's hope that the (code of conduct) consultation will be finished in three years' time so that it will contribute to enduring peace and stability in the South China Sea."

"We are not and we will not seek hegemony or expansion. That is something that we will never do," he added.

"What we hope is to have a harmonious relationship with our neighbors."

Warships and drills

There have been small signs of progress in recent months.

China and Southeast Asian nations announced in August that they had agreed on their initial bargaining positions as they work towards a code.

While both sides hailed it as a vital step, critics said that some of Beijing's proposals in the agreement were clearly aimed at expanding its influence in the region at the expense of Washington.

Navies from China and Southeast Asia also staged their first joint drills last month in the South China Sea — which is criss-crossed by busy shipping lanes and home to abundant natural resources — in an effort to ease tensions.

Opposition has weakened in many parts of Southeast Asia to China's aggressive behavior in the

waters in recent years, with countries keen to attract investment from Beijing and worried about US commitment to the region under President Donald Trump.

Nonetheless Washington and other western allies like Britain and Australia have ramped up freedom of navigation exercises in recent months.

The sailing of warships through the strategic region is a bid to enforce the idea that the sea is international waters and open to all, a stance that infuriates Beijing.

National Security Advisor John Bolton told reporters in Singapore that any code of conduct deal struck between China and Southeast Asian nations should not be allowed to restrict access to the sea.

"It also has to be acceptable to all the countries that have legitimate maritime and naval military rights to transit and other associated rights that we don't want to see infringed," he said.

He also took a swipe at China for using the years of negotiations to build up its military installations across the sea.

"Not just by creating facts on the ground but by creating ground and then putting the facts on top of them," he added.

AFP AND RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

China wants sea rulebook done in 3 years

SINGAPORE—A rulebook to settle disputes in the hotly contested South China Sea should be finished in three years. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday, insisting his nation does not seek "hegemony or expansion."

Li's comments appeared to be the first clear timeframe for finishing the code of conduct. Talks have dragged on for years,

with China accused of delaying progress as it prefers to deal with less powerful countries on a one-on-one basis.

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China...

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Opposition has weakened in many parts of Southeast Asia to China's aggressive behavior in the waters in recent years, with countries keen to attract investment from Beijing and worried about US commitment to the region under President Donald Trump. **AFP**

Chinese premier hopes talks on sea code will end in 3 years

SINGAPORE. — China's Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday that Beijing hoped a consultation with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea would be completed in three years, and that such a deal would bolster free trade.

China also hopes to come to an agreement on its ongoing trade dispute with the United States based on mutual respect and trust, Li said at a function in Singapore, adding "there are no winners in any trade war."

China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed in August on a working text to continue long drawn-out negotiations over the code of conduct in the South

China Sea.

Beijing claims most of the South China Sea while ASEAN members Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei claim parts of the area. Taiwan is also a claimant.

Some ASEAN members and China have overlapping claims to islands in the sea, one of the world's busiest waterways. For years, they have been discussing a pact to prevent an escalation of disputes.

"It is China's hope that the COC (code of conduct) consultation will be finished in three years time so that it will contribute to enduring peace and stability in the South China Sea," Li said in a lecture. He is in Singapore to attending annual meetings between ASEAN and its partner nations.

"China and ASEAN countries will benefit in that process, it will also be conducive to free trade and go on to serve the interests of other parties."

Last week, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis urged their Chinese counterparts to halt militarization of the South China Sea, drawing a rebuke from the Chinese for sending US warships close to islands claimed by Beijing.

Li also said he hoped to finalize a major trade pact with 15 other countries called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019, and that they would announce "substantive progress" in negotiations at meetings this week. — *Reuters*

Discord, synergy up in gab

By Kristina Maralit

SINGAPORE - President Rodrigo Duterte will reiterate the Philippines' stand on issues about the disputed territories in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) when he meets with his fellow Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders.

He is also expected to raise the same when he joins dialogue partners on Wednesday in the 33rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits here.

In a Palace statement released Monday night, Duterte said he "will engage leaders of ASEAN dialogue partner-countries to further enrich

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The Chief Executive, along with the nine other heads of states from the region, is slated to convene for expected discussions with China in three related meetings

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partnership in key areas of cooperation."

"The President will reiterate the Philippines' principled positions on matters concerning the South China Sea and transnational and trans-boundary issues such as

terrorism, violent extremism, trafficking in persons, illicit drugs and disaster risk reduction and management," it said.

The Chief Executive, along with the other nine heads of states from the region, is slated to convene for expected discussions with China in three related meetings - the 21st ASEAN-China Summit (ASEAN Plus One), the ASEAN Plus Three Summit (with Japan and South Korea) and the East Asia Summit where Australia, India, Japan, New

Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States are also expected to be in attendance.

In the ASEAN Plus One meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, the 10 leaders may raise concerns over the continuing land reclamations in the WPS and the reported building and operation of so-called weather stations and

other military structures in the area, particularly on the Spratly Islands.

Malacañang stated that the Philippines is looking to have a meaningful exchange of views "and discussions on regional and global developments that impact regional peace, security and stability.

China has repeatedly claimed ownership of nearly the entire South

China Sea, including parts of the WPS.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, however, voided claims made by Beijing in July 2016 and arbitrarily recognized the Philippines' sovereignty over the area.

Duterte arrived Monday night and immediately gathered

Cabinet members who are part of his official delegation to discuss talking points which may possibly crop up during the three-day summit, including the Philippines' territorial dispute with China.

Malacañang stated that the Philippines is looking to have a meaningful exchange of views "and discussions on regional and global developments that impact regional peace, security and stability."

The ASEAN and China are still in the middle of negotiations for the adoption of a new code of conduct in the WPS for maritime stability.

The President is also expected to tackle the Philippines' economic viability for micro, small and medium enterprises and the country's infrastructure development through its "Build, Build, Build" program.

"Non-traditional issues" like counterterrorism, illegal drugs and human trafficking and how these are being addressed by the government are also expected to be discussed by Duterte.

Arroyo upbeat about Xi's visit

SPEAKER Gloria Macapagal Arroyo says the scheduled visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the Philippines later this month will result in the further strengthening of the relations between the two countries.

She made the statement over the weekend even as she put to rest on Tuesday the rumors she would soon be appointed Finance secretary in the Duterte administration.

"It is so hypothetical," Arroyo told reporters.

In her Keynote Speech at the Boao Forum for the Asia Youth Summit 2018 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center, Arroyo said Philippine-China relations had a deep foundation and that she expected Xi's visit to further boost those relations given the "favorable" status under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.

"I expect President Xi's visit to further strengthen the relations between our two countries," Arroyo said.

"Our evolving relationship is part of a history that dates back to the previous leaders of our two countries, so it has a deep foundation. Now, the current status continues to be favorable because President Rodrigo Duterte is a friend of China."

She said keeping a good relationship with China was important to the Philippines because of its geographical location, trading partnership and proven capability in infrastructure development.

"The relationship between China and the Philippines is very important for my country. One major reason is geography: The Philippines and China are located within each other's backyard, so to speak, so good relations between neighbors is always a priority. Second, China is increasingly involved not only in bilateral dealings, but also collectively, such as through the ASEAN of which the Philippines is an active member."

The former president also said China was poised to become the largest economy in the world, so that it was essential that the Philippines be friends with China.

"Third, China's economy remains the most dynamic and fast growing among the major nations, and will soon become the largest economy in the world, so of course, it is good to be friends with China," Arroyo said. **Maricel V. Cruz**

Summit overshadowed by US-China tariff war

SINGAPORE. – Asian leaders gathered for a summit on Tuesday amid warnings that the post-World War 2 international order is in jeopardy and trade tensions between Washington and Beijing could trigger a “domino effect” of protectionist measures by other countries.

Malaysian Prime Mahathir Mohamad told a business forum ahead of the summit in Singapore that other developed countries would take a cue from the United States and China if their tit-for-tat tariff war is allowed to spiral.

“The trade tension between the two world powers is bound to create a domino effect that will affect trade reactions and will be a reason for other developed countries to adopt protective measures against

developing countries, including the ASEAN countries,” Mahathir said, referring to the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang – for the second day – struck a conciliatory note on the trade spat, saying he was hopeful that the two sides will find a way to prevent it escalating further.

“I still hope we can hold talks based on mutual respect, balance and mutual benefits to resolve the issue. There are no winners in a trade war,” Li said before his meeting with the ASEAN leaders.

US Vice President Mike Pence will attend the Singapore meet-

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SUMMIT

ings instead of President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly painted existing multilateral trade pacts as unfair and has railed against China over intellectual property theft, entry barriers to American businesses and a yawning US trade gap.

It was not clear if Li and Pence would meet separately on the sidelines in Singapore, which would be a prelude to a summit scheduled between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the end of the month in Buenos Aires.

Before he arrived in Singapore on Monday, Li said China would further open its economy in the face of rising protectionism, though he did not refer directly to China's bruising trade war with the United States.

'RIVAL BLOCS'

Mahathir, a veteran strongman of the region who in May returned to the prime minister's office he had occupied for 22 years, told reporters that the United States is

“a colonial power” that uses “economic pressure to cow people”.

In his speech, he said “the rise of trade protectionism, resurgent nationalistic movements and inward-looking policies” seemed to be emerging even among ASEAN nations.

That was echoed by summit host Singaporean Prime Lee Hsien Loong, who told a welcome ceremony for his ASEAN counterparts that “the international order is at a turning point.”

“The existing free, open and rules-based multilateral system which has underpinned ASEAN's growth and stability has come under stress,” he said, adding that it was unclear if the international order would break up into rival blocs.

Returning to the theme as the leaders sat down to dinner, he said: “Countries are becoming insular, retreating from multilateralism and globalization, which has been the cornerstone of ASEAN peace and stability.”

China's Li is expected to rally support at the Singapore meetings for the Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade pact that will encompass more than a third of the world's GDP.

“Free trade has, in some aspects, prevented war effectively,” he said in a speech on Tuesday. “We are willing to negotiate with all sides to push ahead with free trade internationally, and we're also willing to discuss a fairer system.”

The RCEP agreement includes 16 countries, including ASEAN nations, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, but not the United States.

The draft of a statement to be issued by RCEP nations later in the week, which was reviewed by Reuters, said the group would instruct “ministers and negotiators to work toward the full conclusion of the RCEP negotiations in 2019.”

SOUTH CHINA SEA DEAL

Li said that Beijing hoped a consultation with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea would be completed in three

years, and that such a deal would bolster free trade.

China and ASEAN agreed in August on a working-text to continue long drawn-out negotiations over the code of conduct.

Some ASEAN members and China have overlapping claims to islands in the sea, one of the world's busiest waterways. For years, they have been discussing a pact to prevent an escalation of disputes.

“It is China's hope that the COC (code of conduct) consultation will be finished in three years time so that it will contribute to enduring peace and stability in the South China Sea,” Li said. “China and ASEAN countries will benefit in that process, it will also be conducive to free trade and go on to serve the interests of other parties.”

Last week, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis urged their Chinese counterparts to halt militarization of the South China Sea, drawing a rebuke from the Chinese for sending US warships close to islands claimed by Beijing. – Reuters

Sandigan forfeits Imelda's bail

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

The Sandiganbayan has forfeited the bail bond of former first lady and Ilocos Norte Rep. Imelda Marcos for her and her lawyer's "unjustified absence" during the promulgation of judgment last Friday.

In a one-page order dated Nov. 9, released to the media yesterday, the

anti-graft court's Fifth Division ruled that the absence of the accused and her counsel appeared to be unjustified.

The Fifth Division granted the prosecution's motion and ordered the cancellation of the bail bond that Marcos posted in 1991 when the cases were filed.

But as of the closing of the Fifth

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Sandigan From Page 1

Division Office of the Clerk of Court on Friday afternoon, no arrest warrant has been issued, thus law enforcement authorities could not yet enforce Marcos' arrest.

Marcos is given 30 days from Friday to expound on why no judgment on the bonds should be issued.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said there is no need to put handcuffs on Marcos in the event police arrest her following her conviction by the Sandiganbayan for graft.

"Anyone who is of advanced age, especially a woman, we don't need to handcuff," Albayalde, spoke to *dzMM* radio in Filipino.

Marcos has no history of violence, Albayalde said, adding that this was another reason why he thinks it is unnecessary to handcuff the lawmaker.

Marcos, 89, was convicted for funneling public funds to Swiss bank accounts during the 21-year rule of her husband, former dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Meanwhile, Albayalde defended the PNP from critics who accused the government of double standard in their treatment of Marcos compared to opposition Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV.

Albayalde insisted that their approach for the two politicians are almost the same, noting that he has directed the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group to prepare, after word of Marcos' conviction went public.

"Trillanes has previous history of rebellion," he said.

Albayalde insisted that no special treatment will be given

to Marcos. She will be treated like any other detainee in the event the anti-graft court orders for her to be jailed at the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame.

"We do not intent to give anybody special treatment," he said.

Not exempt from imprisonment

Marcos should not invoke her age to evade imprisonment for her conviction of graft by the Sandiganbayan, a former human rights lawyer during the martial law era insisted yesterday.

"The advanced age of (Marcos) is a non-issue consequent to her conviction for seven counts of corruption by the Sandiganbayan. No law or jurisprudence exempts a felon from arrest or incarceration due to old age," Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman argued.

Imelda, widow of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos, is now 89 years old.

Under the law, the veteran lawmaker explained that an offender aged 70 and above is "only entitled to a mitigating circumstance" under the Revised Penal Code, and that death convicts with such age cannot be subjected to such harsh punishment.

Lagman pointed out that "neither can a member of the House be privileged from arrest when the Congress is in session in offenses punishable for more than six years," which means Marcos is not excluded or exempt from arrest, much less detention.

But House Minority Leader Danilo Suarez, who is in his mid-70s, called on the general public, including the most

virulent critics of the Marcoses, to try to be fair and recognize as well the good accomplishments of the former president.

"Some of these Marcos critics devote so much their time to find issues against the late President. How about the good things that they have done? Nobody gives them credit for what they have done," the Quezon congressman said.

"Remember at the onset of the EDSA revolution, the premise was that anything that is Marcos is bad, which is wrong," Suarez lamented. "I hope we have a closure on this. Let us pay attention to the increasing number of unemployment. This is unusually big."

House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya Jr., for his part, vowed to comply with any order of the court.

"While there are remedies available to all persons under our criminal justice system including but not limited to provisional remedies and appeal, the House will respect and abide by the decision of the Sandiganbayan," the Camarines Sur lawmaker said.

Behind bars

As this developed, martial law victims trooped to Sandiganbayan yesterday morning to demand an arrest warrant for Marcos.

"While we welcome the guilty verdict against Imelda, justice should come in full circle. Imelda should be arrested and be put behind bars," said Trinidad Herrera-Repuno, chairperson of Samahan ng Ex-Detahees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto.

The group also criticized the statements of Philippine National Police chief Gen. Oscar Albayalde that Marcos's health and age should be considered on her arrest.

"Albayalde's statement should have been no surprise for us, but seriously? You have the gall to say that while the nation saw that Imelda was partying at Sara Duterte's birthday on the day of this case's promulgation! You say she's frail and old?" said Herrera-Repuno.

The martial law victims

claimed they hounded the Marcoses as far as Hawaii to make them accountable for their crimes.

"Many of those who fought the dictatorship have not reach Imelda's age because they were murdered, disappeared and put to jail under Marcos' martial law. Meanwhile, those of us who survived continue to

suffer at this age, our country's younger people continue to pay for what they have robbed from the people," Herrera-Repuno said.

SELDA maintained that the Sandiganbayan should stand by its decision and not be cowed by the Marcoses alliance with the present administration.

"The Sandiganbayan should prove that justice should be served to the robbers and plunderers in power," SELDA said.

Although hailing the conviction of Marcos, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) said the ruling came "too late.

"At 89, Imelda has only a few years left to serve her 42- to 77-year jail term," the CPP noted.

The CPP however went on to lambaste Marcos who, it said, "evaded justice by more than 30 years." - With Emmanuel Tupas, Michael Punongbayan, Delon Porcalla, Rhodina Villanueva, Artemio Dumlao



Martial law victims rally in front of the Sandiganbayan in Quezon City yesterday to demand the arrest of Ilocos Norte Rep. and former first lady Imelda Marcos following her conviction for graft.

BOY SANTOS

2 more bodies recovered from Natonin landslide

By VICTOR MARTIN

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya – Two more bodies were pulled out of the mountain rubble in Natonin, Mountain Province yesterday, bringing the total number of fatalities to 20.

Authorities said a left leg, a left arm and human intestines were also recovered from ground zero in Barangay Banawel.

Natonin Mayor Mateo Chiwayan said he coordinated

with the local government of Alfonso Lista, Ifugao for the burial of two unidentified bodies that were recovered last week.

Chiwayan said search and retrieval operations continue

despite lack of equipment. Concerned local government units took over the operations last week after police and military personnel were asked to report to their mother units.

Ivy Mariano of the Natonin command post said only two backhoes are available, one of them owned by a volunteer.

Mariano said eight persons, including five members of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit, have yet to be

accounted for.

Maj. Jefferson Somera of the 5th Infantry Division said the militiamen were part-time workers in a construction project at the building of the Department of Public Works and Highways, which was buried in the landslide at the height of Typhoon Rosita last Oct. 30.

Most of those who remain missing are residents of Barangay Aguinaldo in Alfonso Lista. 15

DOJ chief keeps hands off corruption complaint vs Lapeña

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra on Tuesday distanced himself from a graft complaint brought by the National Bureau of Investigation against former Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña, saying the disposition of the case was up to state prosecutors.

"I will not preempt the state prosecutors who will look at the complaint," Guevarra said in a message to reporters.

He said the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Office of the Ombudsman had an agreement that graft and corruption cases involving highly paid government officials would be endorsed to the Ombudsman.

Loss of P69-M tile shipment

The NBI brought a graft complaint against Lapeña in the DOJ on Monday over the loss in March of a shipment of ceramic tiles worth P69 million.

The NBI also asked the DOJ to bring administrative charges against Lapeña for gross neglect of duty and grave misconduct over the disappearance of the shipment from the Port of Manila.

The shipment arrived in 105 containers, which the NBI said the port operator, Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI), released in two batches after Lapeña failed to put them under electronic alert.

Charges have been filed against the ATI employees, importers and customs brokers

involved in the shipment.

In a statement on Tuesday, Lapeña decried the NBI investigation, which he said was concluded without hearing his side.

"What is more unfortunate is that the NBI did not unmask the real people behind the scheme," he said.

Lapeña defended the "manual alert orders" he issued for the shipment, claiming the 105 containers would not have been discovered without these.

Old racket

He said the illegal scheme probably had been going on even before he came to the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and that it was discovered on his watch.

"It is unclear to me why [the NBI would] find negligence on my part when I was the one who [placed the containers under alert]," Lapeña said.

He said he would defer to the DOJ in the disposition of the case, but maintained that he "did the right thing."

Lapeña is now director general of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda), where President Duterte assigned him last month amid a scandal involving the smuggling of 1.6 tons of "shabu" (crystal meth) into the country through the Port of Manila.

The illegal drug was worth P11 billion and it got out of the port allegedly with the connivance of BOC employees, po-

licemen and agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

To stamp out corruption in the BOC, President Duterte put it under temporary military control and appointed Rey Leonardo Guerrero, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to replace Lapeña at the agency.

But his appointment of Lapeña to Tesda has drawn criticism from lawmakers, who want him to punish the former police official instead.

Rescind Tesda appointment

On Tuesday, Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman said the graft case brought against Lapeña should prompt Mr. Duterte to rescind the appointment of the former customs chief to Tesda.

"Tesda does not deserve Lapeña, more so now that the NBI has filed a criminal complaint [against him]," Lagman told reporters.

"Based on his record in the Bureau of Customs, why recycle him to an agency concerned with education? It does not follow," he said.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo, however, said Lapeña had the right to be presumed innocent and until proven otherwise, he continued to enjoy the trust and confidence of President Duterte.

—REPORTS FROM JEROME ANING, DEXTER CABALZA, MARLON RAMOS AND CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO INQ

AFP chief recommends Mindanao ML extension

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Armed Forces chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. will recommend to President Duterte the extension of martial law in Mindanao due to the clamor of different

local government units (LGUs) in the South.

Galvez, who arrived here last night from Davao City, said based on their assessment in the Eastern Mindanao Command, most of the LGUs are recommending the exten-

sion of martial law following the positive impact on their areas.

"The LGUs are recommending the extension because they saw the very positive impact in terms of tourism, investments doubled up to more than 90 percent and the peace and order improved, especially in the cities," Galvez said.

He said the areas in Eastern Mindanao have been relatively peaceful in terms of violent incidents perpetrated by the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-

NPA).

"We were shown the sentiments of the different provincial governors and majority said they wanted martial law to stay in the whole of Mindanao," Galvez said.

Galvez said he is also expecting similar feedback from the LGUs in Western Mindanao areas following initial reports about the support for the extension of martial law.

He said they would also wait for reports from Regional Peace and Order Council.

Galvez said last week they met officials of the Department of the Interior and Local Government and

the Department of National Defense to assess the sentiments of the different local executives from Lanao and Maguindanao that also support the extension of martial law.

The AFP chief maintained that the reason for extending martial law was due to the persistent threat of terrorism and the NPA.

He said the implementation of martial law had also diminished the threat from the Anzar Khalifa Philippines, a local terror group allied with the Islamic State.

Galvez said they also expect that the gains next year against the NPA group will be "irreversible."

Martial law extension eyed

Recommendation based on Mindanao LGU requests – AFP

By **ARMANDO S. FENEQUITO JR.**

DAVAO CITY – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) might recommend the extension of martial law

in Mindanao.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Carlito G. Galvez Jr revealed this Tuesday, saying the extension came from the requests of the majority of the local government units (LGU) in the island.

“Maraming mga LGUs and government officials (Many LGU and government officials) that are looking for the extension,” Galvez said in an interview during his visit to the Eastern Mindanao Command (East- ▶10

Martial law extension... ◀1

mincom) headquarters on Tuesday.

Galvez said local officials in Mindanao want to ensure that the island will be cleansed of terrorist groups which are sowing fear and violence.

The military, based on its initial assessment, said an extension will have many positive impacts such as security and economic development.

The assessment report of Eastmincom disclosed that tourist arrivals in Davao City increased by 50 percent even with the prevailing martial law

Galvez said the clamor from the local governments is proof of the benefits being derived by the communities from the implementation of martial law in Mindanao.

Galvez also noted that the skeptics and critics of martial law are coming from Manila and outside Mindanao who did not experience the current implementation.

He said the recommendation to extend martial law will be decided as soon as their assessment is completed.

AFP to recommend 'ML' extension

DAVAO CITY — The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) might recommend for the extension of Martial Law in Mindanao.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Carlito G. Galvez Jr. said the extension came from the request of the majority of the local government units (LGU) in the island.

"Maraming mga LGUs and government officials (Many LGU and government officials) that are looking for the extension," Galvez said in an interview during his visit at the Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) Headquarters on Tuesday.

Galvez said the local officials in Mindanao want to ensure that the island will be cleansed by terrorist groups who are spreading violence.

Based on its initial assessment,

there are many positive impacts observed such as security and economic development.

He said the assessment report of Eastmincom bared that the tourist arrivals in Davao City has also increased up to 50 percent.

Galvez said the clamor from the local governments are the only proof the benefits of the implementation of Martial Law in Mindanao.

The AFP top official also noted that the "skeptics" and critics of Martial Law are those from Manila and outside Mindanao who did not experience the current implementation.

Galvez said the extension recommendation will be decided as soon as their assessment is completed. (Armando Fenequito Jr.)

Palace welcomes imminent return of Balangiga bells

By GENALYN KABILING and FRANCIST WAKEFIELD

Malacañang welcomes the US government's imminent return of the Balangiga bells to the country, saying

these church bells form part of the nation's patrimony. Presidential Spokesman Salva-

dor Panelo, however, said they would withhold further comment until all the church bells are delivered to the country.

"We welcome any move. ▶10

Palace welcomes imminent... ◀1

ment towards the return of the Bells of Balangiga to the Philippines. The President himself, in his second State of the Nation Address, expressed his desire for the return of these bells explaining that they form part of our country's patrimony and they were taken at the cost of bloodshed of thousands of Filipinos," Panelo said in a statement.

Panelo maintained that all three church bells, taken by the US troops in Balangiga, Eastern Samar as a war booty in 1901, must be returned to the country.

"Given that the possession of the bells have not yet been turned over to the Philippine government, we are withholding any further comment on the matter until the last bell has been properly delivered to the country," he said.

"In the words of the President himself: 'It ain't here until it's here,'" he added.

Panelo was reacting to reports quoting Rolando Borrinaga of the Committee on Historical Research of the National

Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) about the looming repatriation of the two Balangiga bells from a US base in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The third church bell, currently placed at a US Army museum in South Korea, is also reportedly expected to be brought back to the country. There was no mention however on the delivery date of the church bells.

In his second State of the Nation Address last July, the President asked anew the United States to return the bells taken by American soldiers more than a hundred years ago. He said the church bells belong to Filipinos and form part of national heritage.

Duterte previously declared that he could never have "good rapport" with the United States unless it gives back the Balangiga bells.

The US Department of Defense has reportedly notified Congress about its plan to return the Balangiga bells to the Philippines following repeated demands from President Duterte for Washington to return the bells taken during the Philippine-US war.

No comment

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana Tuesday said he would refrain from making any statements with regards to the Balangiga bells following reports on their looming return to the country from a United States base in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

In a text message, Lorenzana said until he sees the bells in the country, then that's the time he will comment on the matter.

"None, until I see those bells in the Philippines," Lorenzana said.

"On the bells, silent muna tayo (we will remain silent) until they are here," he added.

Department of National Defense (DND) Spokesman Arsenio Andolong also said that they don't have any statement regarding the bells at the moment.

Dr. Rolando Borrinaga of the Committee on Historical Research of National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), was earlier quoted as saying that a ceremony will be held on November 15 (Manila time) at the Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming for the repatriation of the Balangiga bells.

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P7-M cigarettes seized in Zamboanga port

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Authorities seized some P7 million worth of cigarettes from Sabah in Malaysia as the local government imposed a strict campaign against smuggling in this southern port city.

Philippine Coast Guard personnel, backed by soldiers and policemen, confiscated a cargo of 200 boxes of LS and Fort cigarettes from *M/V Maria Rebecca Montenegro* which arrived here on Monday.

Chief Insp. Helen Galvez, regional police spokesperson, said the cigarettes were concealed in the cargo deck of the vessel and are believed to have come from Tawau (town) in Sabah.

She added that the contraband would be turned over to the Bureau of Customs while police continue their investigation to determine who owns the cargo.

Meanwhile, security forces also seized some P3.6 million worth

of smuggled rice at a private wharf here recently near an outpost of the maritime police.

Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco, who heads the Regional Peace and Order Council, said personnel manning the post failed to detect the arrival of the smuggled rice.

She called on maritime police to help in the government's relentless war against smuggling in Zamboanga. "I have called the attention of the agency and I sent a text message to Philippine National Police Chief Oscar Albayalde regarding the incident," she said.

She added that the Philippine National Police, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Coast Guard and even the National Bureau of Investigation have been working closely to curb smuggling. "The maritime police have yet to do something in this regard," she added.

AL JACINTO

26

6 Army officers promoted

The Philippine Army conferred stars to six newly promoted generals spearheaded by commanding general Lt. Gen. Macalino S. Alberto during the flag-raising ceremony in Fort Bonifado, Taguig City last Monday.

The Philippine Army recognizes soldiers who are being promoted to inspire and instill the significance and attributes of their newly earned ranks to them as part of its noble tradition.

Promoted to major general were Brigadier Generals Roy T. Devesa and Cirilo E. Sobejano, commanders of the Training and Doctrine Command and 6th Infantry (Kampilan) Division, respectively.

Four colonels were promoted to brigadier general: Thomas R. Sedano, commander, 2nd Mechanized Infantry (Magbalantay) Brigade, Mechanized Infantry Division; William N. Gonzales, commander, First Scout Ranger Regiment, Special Operation Command; Larry B. Mojica, commander, 902nd (Fight Era) Brigade, 9th Infantry (Spear) Division; and Francisco Ariel A. Felodano, commander, 102nd Infantry (Igoon) Brigade, 1st Infantry (Tabak) Division.

In his message, Alberto said that as they start another chapter in their

military careers and savor the honor and pride that comes from their star, they should remember that from that star, exudes greater responsibility and higher level of expectations and standards of leadership.

"Apparently, it will also demand greater sacrifice from us and even from our families," Alberto said. "I want to congratulate you not only for your accomplishment, but also for your integrity, resourcefulness, enthusiasm, and wisdom. Only few become brigadier generals, and fewer become major general and perhaps fewer become successful generals. I hope you are the fewer successful generals," he added.

Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva said the PA through the years had transformed to become a more dynamic and responsive organization through the Transformation Roadmap.

"By this, it is the Army's desire and conviction to place brilliant leaders in key position to ensure that it will always be on track in support of the national government thrust in building a peaceful and stronger nation," he said. (Francis T. Wakefield)



USARPAC chief cites U.S.-PH alliance

GENERAL Robert Brown, commander of the United States Army Pacific (USARPAC), visited the Philippines from November 10 to 13, emphasizing the importance of the U.S.-Philippine alliance to the Indo-Pacific region.

While in the Philippines, Gen. Brown attended a U.S. and Philippine Veterans Day ceremony at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Taguig City, Manila, and spoke at the National Defense College of the Philippines. General Brown also met with Philippine Undersecretary of National Defense Cardozo Luna, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Gen. Carlito Galvez, and Commanding General of the Philippine Army (PA) Lt. Gen. Macairog Alberto.

"It's a privilege to visit the Philippines for Veterans Day and to recognize both our countries' militaries and their decades of service to the American and Philippine people," said Brown. "Together, Americans and Filipinos have fought valiantly in defense of their nations, loved ones, and way of life. We honor their sacrifices by continuing to support a free and open Indo-Pacific alongside our friend, partner, and ally, the Philippines."

General Brown's visit focused on reaffirming the U.S. Army's close people-to-people ties with the PA and increasing the interoperability of both the AFP and U.S. armed forces in the coming year.

Dureza hopeful on resumption of peace talks

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza expressed hope that a meeting between President Duterte and National Democratic Front of the Philippines negotiators could lead to the resumption of peace talks with communist rebels. In an interview aired over the ABS-CBN News Channel on Monday, Dureza said the President remained committed to pursuing a peaceful end to the rebellion. Mr. Duterte, according to Dureza, is aware that "we also have to address the root cause" of the rebellion. —JEANNETE LANDRADE ¹⁸

Soldiers foil NPA attack; rebel killed

A New People's Army (NPA) rebel was killed in an encounter with soldiers in Sitio Butuan, Barangay Igcabugao, Igaras, Iloilo on Monday.

Nine NPA supporters were arrested in a follow-up operation, according to First Lt. Hazel Joy Durotan, 61st Infantry Battalion (IB)

spokesperson.

"The troops were responding to reports... on the presence of... NPA rebels in the area when they were fired at, triggering a gunbattle that lasted for half an hour," Durotan said.

Three gallons of gasoline, a backpack, an improvised explosive device and a

bandolier were recovered along the rebels' escape route.

The military said the rebels were plotting to burn the facilities of Century Peak Energy Corp. (CPEC), which is constructing a hydroelectric power plant in the area.

Last August, a CPEC employee was wounded in

an ambush staged by NPA rebels.

In Bukidnon, three NPA guerrillas identified only by their aliases of Dave, Darwin and Aidel surrendered to the 8th IB last Friday. They turned over an M79 grenade launcher, an Uzi and a caliber .22. - Jaime Laude, Ben Serrano 15

NPA KILLED IN ILOILO CLASH

A MEMBER of the New Peoples Army (NPA) was killed in an encounter while nine others were arrested by military forces in Igbaras, Iloilo on Monday afternoon, following an attempt to burn down several facilities of an energy firm. The Philippine Army's 61st Infantry Battalion (61IB) said the rebel was killed by the troops who responded to reports by

civilians about the presence of "fully armed" communist rebels in Sitio Butuan, Barangay Igcabugao of Igbaras. The firefight lasted for about 30 minutes. No Army personnel hurt during the encounter. Lt. Col. Sisenando Magbalot Jr., 61IB commanding officer, said troops also found an abandoned cadaver of the slain rebel along with a backpack, improvised explosive device and a handker for a 5.56mm. Nine individuals were held after the encounter. The military also recovered three gallons of gasoline suspected brought by the rebels to burn down the facilities of Century Peak Energy Corp. (CPEC). Magbalot recalled that in August, a pick-up ferry with employees on board escorted by 61IB personnel were ambushed by the communist rebels. One employee was wounded. In 2015, he added, the rebels also torched several heavy equipment of CPEC that was constructing mini-hydro project in the village.

A7

DEMPSEY REYES

NPA killed in Iloilo

A MEMBER of the New People's Army was killed in a clash with government forces in Igaras town in Iloilo Monday, the military said yesterday.

The firefight also foiled an NPA plan to burn facilities of the Century Peak Energy Corp. in the town, said Lt. Col. Sisenando Magbalot Jr., commander of the Army's 61st Infantry Battalion.

Magbalot said his battalion conducted combat operations after receiving information about the planned attack on the firm which he said has refused to give in to the NPA's extortion demands.

The 30-minute clash occurred at around 11:20 a.m. between troops and about 10 NPA members in Sitio Butuan in Barangay Igcahugao.

During clearing operation, soldiers recovered the body, a backpack, improvised bomb, a bandolier, and three gallons of gasoline.

Magbalot said six members of the NPA's Militia ng Bayan group and three other civilians were held after they were found in the encounter site.

"We did not recover any fire-arm or ammunition from them so eventually they were released last night," he said. — *Victor Reyes*

NPA terrorist killed, 9 held in Iloilo encounter

By ZAIDA
DELOS REYES

A SUSPECTED member of the New People's Army (NPA) was killed while nine others were arrested in an encounter with government forces the other day in Igaras, Iloilo.

1Lt. Hazel Joy M. Durotan, Civil Military Officer (CMO) of the Army's 61st Infantry Battalion, said the slain terrorist was not yet identified as of press time.

Those arrested were either identified for security reasons.

Reports reaching Camp Aguinaldo said the encounter occurred at around

11:20 a.m. in Sitio Putuan, Bgy. Igcabugao, Igaras, Iloilo.

Accordingly, elements of 61st IB went to the area to respond on the reported sightings of NPA terrorists allegedly harassing the community.

Upon reaching the place, the soldiers were welcomed with bullets from the enemy so they promptly returned fire, triggering a 30-minute firefight, killing one rebel whose body was abandoned by his comrades.

Recovered from the slain terrorist were a backpack, IED and bandolier for 5.56mm.

The report said nine

other individuals were also held following the encounter.

Also recovered in the area were three gallons of gasoline believed to be used by the CPP-NPA terrorists on their plan to burn the facilities of Century Peak Energy Corporation (CPEC).

It can be recalled that last August, a pickup ferrying CPEC employees and 61st IB personnel was ambushed by the CPP-NPA terrorists, wounding one of the company employees.

In 2015, the terrorist group torched several heavy equipment of the said company used to construct mini-hydro project in the same barangay.

Rebel commander slain in clash with soldiers

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City — A New People's Army (NPA) commander was killed in a gunbattle with troops of the 65th Infantry (Stalwart) Battalion (65th IB) in a forested area near Sitio Narvasa, Barangay Pinilayan, Tagoloan II, Lanao del Sur last Sunday.

This was disclosed by Capt. Norman M. Tagros, Civil Military Operation Officer (CMO) of the Army's 403rd Infantry (Peacemaker) Brigade, who added that an undetermined number of other rebels was also believed wounded

during the 20-minute encounter that started at 9:40 a.m.

"The gunbattle took place along the boundary of Bukidnon and Lanao de Sur provinces after government troops, who were conducting Focused Military Operations (FMOs) in the area, were fired upon by more or less 70 heavily armed CNTs under Guerilla Front Committee 68 of the CPP-NPA North-Central Mindanao Regional Committee," Capt. Tagros said.

"The firefight, which ensued for about 20 minutes, resulted to the death of the commander of Platoon

2 from the abovementioned Guerilla Front Committee," claimed the 403rd CMO officer.

However, he has yet to release the identity of the slain commander.

He said operating troops of the 65th IB seized one M16 Armalite rifle, one AK-47 rifle, six AK-47 magazines with live ammunitions, 14 backpacks, 27 sacks of rice, medical supplies and assorted medicines and subversive documents with high intelligence value.

One soldier of the 65th IB was slightly hurt when he was shot in the hand during the firefight.

NPA fronts in Davao region down to 4 – Army

DAVAO CITY (PNA) – The strength of the New People's Army (NPA) operating in the Davao Region is down to four guerrilla fronts from 11, according to the commander of the Army's 10th Infantry Division based in Tuburan, Compostela Valley province.

Maj. Gen. Noel Clement, 10ID commander, said the NPA's strength in the region has decreased due to the mass surrender of its members and mass-based organizations in different areas.

The 10ID covers Region 11, part of North and South Cotabato, and Trento of Agusan del Sur. It has 13 battalions.

"The NPA strength in the region reduced drastically not only regulars but also their mass base and legal fronts," Clement said.

From January to November 8, 10ID records said the number of surrenders was as follows: 495 NPA members, 668 Militia ng Bayan (MB), 238 Sangay

ng Partido sa Lokalidad, 6,202 NPA supporters, and 84 members of the left-leaning groups.

Forty-two NPA members were also arrested during the same period, including 10 MBs, three NPA supporters, and seven members of communist front organizations.

During the same period, 187 fire-

arms were recovered, 248 Improvised explosive devices (IED) were seized, and 107 NPA camps discovered.

Capt. Jerry Lamosao, 10ID spokesperson, said the Army's Community Support Program (CSP) in the far-flung areas has resulted in the reduction of the NPA strength.

Rebel fronts fizzle in Davao

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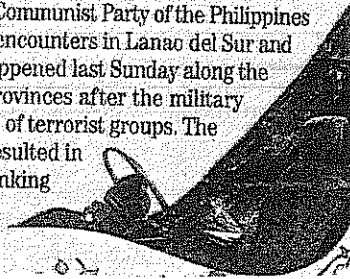
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CPP-NPA members fall

One high-ranking officer and a member of Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army died in two separate encounters in Lanao del Sur and Iloilo. According to reports, the encounter happened last Sunday along the boundary of Bukidnon and Lanao del Sur provinces after the military troops were fired by more or less 70 members of terrorist groups. The firefight lasted for about 20 minutes which resulted in killing an alias Alan, believed to be a high-ranking officer of the communist group.

Kathleen Mae Bulquerin



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Extortion eyed in rebel attack

GENERAL SANTOS CITY (PWA) — Police are eyeing extortion by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels as behind last Friday's burning of a backhoe in a remote village in Lake Sebu town, South Cotabato. Insp. Ricky Frias, deputy chief of the Lake Sebu municipal police station, said Monday they received reports that the owner of the burned backhoe, Gemmie Construction Supply Inc., had received extortion demands from the rebels. Frias said the backhoe was parked near the road project site in Silig Lantenek, Barangay Lamitigon when it was burned by at least 10 suspected NPA rebels at around 10 p.m. The suspects reportedly razed the equipment, cement bags and fired several shots before leaving the scene, he said. Frias said the suspects did not harm the backhoe operator identified as Mervin Papa. "It was similar to what happened before involving several heavy equipment owned by the company," he said, referring to the burning by NPA rebels of four heavy equipment assigned to the same project by the Koronadal City-based construction firm in 2015. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) had contracted the company for the concreting of road project connecting the municipality of Nartun in Sarangani and Lake Sebu in South Cotabato.

NPA chief killed in battle

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City—A New People's Army (NPA) commander was killed in a gunbattle with troops of the 65th Infantry (Stalwart) Battalion (65th IB) in a forested area near Sitio Narvasa, Barangay Pinilayan, Tagoloan II, Lanao del Sur last Sunday.

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Committee 68 of the CPP-NPA North-Central Mindanao Regional Committee," Capt. Tagros said.

The firefight, which ensued for about 20 minutes, resulted to the death of the commander of Platoon 2 from the abovementioned Guerilla Front Committee, claimed the 403rd CMO officer.

However, he has yet to release the identity of the slain commander.

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One soldier of the 65th IB was slightly hurt when he was shot in the hand during the firefight. **(Mike U. Crismundo)**

Army chief questions Reds' intention in pushing for peace talks resumption

By **STEVE A. GOSUICO**

FORT Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija -- Army chief Lt. Gen. Macario S. Alberto yesterday questioned the sincerity and intentions of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), if they are really serious in pushing this long-stalled peace talks with the government.

"Sa pangipon ng gobyerno, nandoon po ang sinceridad, nandoon po ang magandang intensyon niya. Ngayon, ganoon din ba ang intensyon ng kabilang pangipon? So kung walang magandang intensyon yung kabilang pangipon (CPP-NDF-NPA) na gagamitin lamang ang peace talks para sila ay magpalakas, mag-organize at mag-recruit pa, hindi na magkakaroon ng magandang resulta ang peace talks, kasi ang intensyon ng kabila ay hindi maganda," explained Alberto during a brief interview with newsmen yesterday.

The former top military

spook-turned-Army chief flew to this camp yesterday morning, his first visit to an Army camp since assuming the top Army post last October.

During his visit, Alberto, who took over from erstwhile Army chief Lt. Gen. Joselito Bautista last Oct. 15, was given a battalion-size arrival honors by the 7th Infantry "Kaugmay" Division headed by commanding-general Major Gen. Filemon T. Santos Jr.

Alberto also went to the Fort Magsaysay Army Station Hospital where he visited two recuperating Army soldiers who were wounded in action during a recent encounter with NPA rebels in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija, earlier this month.

At the FMASH, the Army chief personally pinned the medal of wounded soldier to Pfc. Dennis D. Tara, of the 91st Infantry Battalion, and Sgt. Alexis S. Baltazar from the 84th IB. Both wounded soldiers were also given cash aids by Alberto, enclosed in small brown envelopes.

After which, Alberto met "Joseph," an NPA surrenderer also recuperating at

the FMASH. "Joseph," who was wounded in a clash with government troops recently, was the latest addition to the growing number of disgruntled ex-rebels who abandoned the armed struggle due to false hopes and promises of their rebel comrades to return to the folds of the law to be able to live a normal life anew.

Alberto presented "Joseph" and a former NPA amason named Ka Rose (Rachel Galario), who was arrested earlier along with three other NPA amasons and who also availed of the government's Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP), where the former rebels are given financial aid and livelihood training in preparation to their re-integration into mainstream society.

Rachel was presented to the media by the Army chief while carrying her two-month old baby girl. Rachel's daughter was born in Rizal, Nueva Ecija and her father is named Allan, an active NPA squad leader. Rachel herself, revealed during an interview with mediamen.

In presenting the two ex-rebels, who turned their backs against the rebel movement, Alberto stressed that this proves the government's show of respect for human rights and its sincerity in helping out those ex-rebels who were misguided and enticed in joining the armed struggle and now would want to reform and live a normal life.

Militar vs NPA: 9 hostage nasagip, 1 rebelde utas

Matagumpay na nasagip ng tropa ng militar ang siyam na katao na hinostage at ginawang "human shield" ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) habang isa naman sa komunistang grupo ang napatay sa naganap na bakbakan sa Brgy. Igcabugao, Igbaras, Iloilo kamakalawa ng tanghali.

Ayon sa ulat, dakong alas-11:20 ng tanghali nang makasagupa ng tropa ng Army's 61st Infantry Battalion (IB) ang grupo ng mga rebelde sa nasabing lugar.

Bago ito ay nagresponde ang mga sundalo sa lugar matapos na makatanggap ng report na nanghaharass at nangongotong sa mga residente dito ang tinatayang mahigit sa sampung mga armadong rebelde.

Samantalang sa kasagsagan ng bakbakan ay pinasok ng mga rebelde ang kubo ng mga residente nito at hinostage

ang siyam katao.

Ang palitan ng putok ay tumagal ng may 30 minuto na ikinasawi ng isang rebelde na inabandona ng mga papatakas nitong kasamahan.

Hindi naman nagawang paputukan ng tropa ang isang kubo kung saan binihag at ginawang pananggalang ng mga rebelde ang siyam na residente ng lugar na makaraan ang ilang sandali nang makatiyempo ay agad namang nagaitakas patungo sa direksyon ng kagubatan.

Nasagip naman ng mga sundalo ang siyam na residenteng hostage na nangirinig pa sa mainding sindak bunga ng insidente.

Narekober naman sa encounter site ang isang backpack, Improvised Explosive Device, bandolier ng 5.56 MM, 3 galon ng gasolina na gagamitin sana sa planong sunugin ang isang pasilidad sa lugar. (Joy Cantos)

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SC TELLS GOVT, MILF Answer petition vs Bangsamoro law

BY JOMAR CANLAS

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to explain the legality and constitutionality of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Following *en banc* deliberations, the high court ordered the Executive Department to file its comment to the petition filed by the Province of Sulu, represented by Gov. Abdusakur Tan 2nd.

The province is assailing the legality of Republic Act 11054 or the BOL that will replace the existing Autonomous Region

► **PetitionA2**

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■ PETITION FROM A1

Answer petition vs Bangsamoro law

in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) possessing more powers.

The court did not issue any order against BOL and the Comelec stopping the implementation of Comelec en banc Resolution No. 18-072 and proceeding with the scheduled plebiscite on Jan. 21, 2019 for the ratification of RA 11054, despite the petitioners' claim that the law contravenes the Constitution.

The former government chief negotiator of the peace process with the MILF, Associate Justice Mario Victor Leonen, is the *ponente* in the case and is tasked to conduct a study and make recommendations.

Named respondents to the case are Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

'Abuse of discretion'

The petitioner argued that Congress committed grave abuse of discretion, amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction, in passing the Bangsamoro Law.

In particular, it pointed out that the law violates Section 18 and 19 of Article X of the 1987 Constitution, which authorized the enactment of only one organic act to establish the ARMM.

"Since ARMM is created by Constitutional fiat, Congress, by itself, has absolutely no authority to abolish ARMM. Only through an amendment of the Constitution may ARMM be abolished. This is so, because only the Constitution may create or abolish an auto-

nous region," the petition stated.

"Accordingly, when Congress, by enacting RA 11054, effectively abolished ARMM, and established BAR (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region) in its stead, Congress committed an Unconstitutional act, an unwarranted infringement of Article X of the Constitution," it argued.

The petitioner stressed that by establishing a parliamentary form of government in the BAR, it violated the doctrine of separation of powers enshrined in the Constitution.

"The same provision of Bangsamoro Organic Law, also violates Section 18, Article X of the Constitution requiring that the Organic Act of an Autonomous Region shall, among others, define the basic structure of government for the region consisting of the executive department and legislative assembly, both of which shall be elective and representative of the constituent political units," it pointed out.

It stressed that the "automatic inclusion of the present geographical area known as the ARMM in the newly created BAR and the provision that the provinces and cities of the ARMM shall vote as one geographical area are likewise unconstitutional."

"The provisions under Section 2(a), Article III on Territorial Jurisdiction and Article XV of RA 11054 on the conduct of the plebiscite do not afford the constituents of the Province of Sulu, to the prejudice of their right to suffrage and their right to local autonomy, the option to vote to join or not to join the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region."

Sulu province sought a temporary restraining order or a writ of preliminary injunction to stop the Bangsamoro law's implementation.

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Army officer cleared of plunder promoted to major general

BY VICTOR REYES

A SENIOR Army official implicated but later exonerated in the plunder of military resources several years ago has been promoted to the rank of major general, the military reported yesterday.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Macairog Alberto conferred the new rank of Maj. Gen. to Roy Devesa in last Monday's flag raising ceremony at the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

Devesa, a member of the Philippine Military Academy class of 1985, is currently the commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command based in Camp O'Donnel in Capas, Tarlac.

Devesa was among the various

military officers who were charged in 2012 by former military comptroller Col. George Rabusa with plunder in connection with the controversial "conversion" scheme in the military.

Among the other ranking officers charged by Rabusa were former AFP chiefs Efren Abu, Diomedio Villanueva and Roy Cimatu, and former military comptrollers Maj. Gens. Carlos Garcia and Jacinto Ligot.

Devesa was the executive assistant of Gen. Angelo Reyes who committed suicide in 2011 amid allegations that he also benefitted from the illegal conversion scheme while he was the AFP chief from 1999 to 2001.

The Office of the Ombudsman

dismissed the charges against Devesa and the other officers for lack of evidence, except Garcia.

Garcia, his wife and his three children were tried for the plunder of about P303 million. The charges were dismissed after Garcia entered into a plea bargain deal with the Ombudsman and approved by the Sandiganbayan which lowered the charges to direct bribery and facilitating money laundering.

As part of the deal, Garcia agreed to return of P135 million of the P303 million he and his family supposedly plundered.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division based in Maguindanao, was also promoted to the

rank of major general. Sobejana is a member of the PMA class 1987.

Sobejana is a recipient of the Medal of Valor, the highest military decoration in combat. He was awarded the coveted medal for his feat against the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group in Basilan in 1995.

Promoted from colonel to brigadier general were Thomas Sedano, commander of the Mechanized Infantry Division; William Gonzales, commander of the First Scout Ranger Regiment; Larry Mojica, commander of the 902nd Brigade; and Francisco Ariel Feliciano, commander of the 102nd Brigade.

Alberto congratulated the newly-promoted officers for their promotion which he said comes with greater sacrifice. B3

Armistice

Armistice is a word that means a cessation of the hostilities of war. It's different from a ceasefire, which would have a fixed time period, like the Christmas holiday ceasefires between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the New People's Army. An armistice is also different from a peace treaty, which formally ends a war with specific agreements.

The leaders of Western nations came together in France on Sunday to celebrate the centenary of a particular Armistice, capitalized. In the name of nationalism, and claims of "a war to end all wars" (a term coined by the British writer H.G. Wells, who believed that once Germany could be defeated, there would be no more war), Europe went berserk for four years, mobilizing some 70 million soldiers not just from Europe but also from the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Japan participated nominally, guarding vital sea lanes in Asia from the Germans.

At least 7 million soldiers and 8 million civilians were killed, excluding many more who would die in the flu epidemic of 1918 when the war and movement of people helped the virus to spread rapidly.

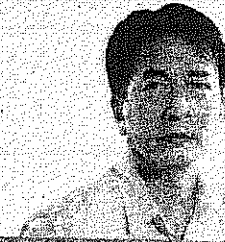
Amid the carnage and destruction, the nations' leaders turned to symbols, setting the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, in 1918, to sign the armistice papers. The Armistice, now celebrated in British Commonwealth countries as Remembrance Day and among Americans as Veterans Day, brought the soldiers home, but the tensions remained.

Unlike in World War II, the Philippines was not directly affected by this war, except for a number of Filipinos who were sent out as part of the US expeditions, recruited from among the early largely working-class migrants in America. One casualty, Tomas Claudio, originally from Morong, Rizal, had migrated to the United States as a contract worker. He was killed in Chateau-Thierry, France, in 1918. In Morong, there are two schools named after him.

Is World War I and the Armistice of any relevance, then, to the Philippines?

The First World War, and the Armistice, should be part of peace education curricula. The war epitomized Joel 3:10: "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears: Let the weak say, 'I am strong.'"

The factories of peacetime were converted into producers of machines of mass destruction. Sometimes described as the "chemists' war," World War I saw the deployment of toxic chemicals like chlorine. The wonders of aviation were converted into angry raptors of war. Automobiles were retrofitted into military ambulances.



PINOY KASI

MICHAEL L. TAN

The Armistice signed in 1918 paved the way for several peace treaties, World War I finally coming to an end only in 1920 with the Treaty of Versailles. A League of Nations was established that same year, specifically to find ways to keep the peace.

Alas, the restless nations went back to the battlefields within two decades. The wagon in which the Armistice was signed was ordered destroyed by Hitler. The pretensions of nationalism in the First World War now gave way to a full-blown war of empires that made World War I look tame.

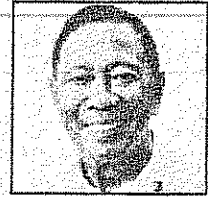
The Philippines was trapped this second time around in a global conflagration that saw some 15 million soldiers and 45 million civilians killed, although these are underestimates; the Chinese claim that as many as 50 million civilians were killed in their country alone. Next year, we will commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the Battle of Manila, which almost totally devastated the Pearl of the Orient and killed some 100,000 civilians.

The United Nations replaced the League of Nations, with more hopes for peace, but there would be more international conflicts, and Filipino involvement, notably in Korea and Vietnam. Another example of an armistice was that signed involving the United States, North Korea and South Korea in 1953, putting the Korean conflict on hold. It was a war that never really ended in a declaration of peace.

Which is why we must take note of the Armistice of 1918, and its context and aftermath. Armistices remind us of how murderous humans can be, and how much more difficult it is to wage peace than war. It is too easy to whip up national rage and rush to take up arms than to heed Isaiah 2:4. Reversing the call of Joel 3:10, the passage in Isaiah notes: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Is privatization or outsourcing the solution to the woes facing the Bureau of Customs?



By JEJOMAR C. BINAY Former Vice President

HERE have been renewed calls to privatize the Bureau of Customs (BOC) in the wake of a major organizational revamp ordered by Malacañang...

The top to mid-level shake-up was triggered by the belated admission, in the face of incontrovertible testimonies and evidence, that billions of pesos worth of shabu entered the country...

In many countries, specific revenue functions are being managed by or have been outsourced to the private sector primarily to narrow the so-called tax gap...

The private sector approach, proponents argue, is more flexible and objectives-based. There are standards for performance and incentives. More importantly, it allows for greater efficiency, accountability and transparency.

Common examples of privatized or outsourced revenue functions include data processing, debt collection, information technology, and tax payments through banks.

Again, it need not be full privatization. Concerns have in fact been raised about turning full control over our revenue collections to the private sector, especially access to confidential information like intelligence reports and revenue records.

functions that can be outsourced, and provide strict guidelines for monitoring and evaluating performance.

During the time of former President Cory Aquino, the inspection, classification, and valuation of shipments to the Philippines were handled by a private firm, the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) of Switzerland.

All these were done at the ports of origin, before they are shipped to the Philippines. The work of customs personnel was purely ministerial, thereby removing discretion in the inspection and valuation of cargo.

Observers noted that during this period, revenue collection increased and smuggling incidents declined. However, the privatization program became a casualty, say some reports, of alleged irregularities involving an agency with oversight functions. The contract with SGS was not renewed.

Over the course of several administrations, there have been proposals to engage the services of private companies for pre-shipment inspections and disposal of seized goods. The proposals were made by incumbent and former finance and customs officials. However, these proposals were rejected by Malacañang.

During the previous administration, it was estimated that government was losing P230 billion a year from smuggled agricultural products, P30 billion from oil smuggling, and P12 billion from tobacco smuggling. The infamous "tara" system was being used not only to line the pockets of corrupt customs officials but allegedly to raise funds for some political personalities.

But now, smuggling is not just about revenue losses. It takes on social and political dimensions because of the entry of illegal drugs through our ports. This hits at the core of the administration's

war on drugs. The relentless anti-drug drive being waged in the streets is now perceived as pointless when billions of pesos in shabu continue to flood the market because of the connivance of customs personnel.

Thus, the major shakeup at the customs management and the pronouncement of a "military takeover" of the BOC. Malacañang had to walk back the latter after questions were raised on its constitutionality.

I think it is about time that the government seriously consider the option of privatizing some function of the customs bureau.

Senate President Tito Sotto recently revived the proposal. With the Senate president backing privatization, I see no reason for the administration to delay the matter any longer.

Besides, privatizing some agency functions would be consistent with the leadership's policy pronouncements. As early as 2015, the President was quoted by Sun Star as saying that should he be elected, "he would like to see a radical overhaul of government, including the privatization of the graft-ridden Bureau of Customs (BOC)."

"The Bureau of Customs should be privatized. That is the only way we could dismantle and end the systemic corruption in that agency," the Sun Star quoted the President as saying in a speech delivered in Cebu City.

With these policy positions made as early as 2015 - policy changes which I also advocate - tapping the private sector to ensure professionalism, transparency, and accountability in the customs bureau should be the logical step.

Frustration with the BOC need not translate into sending armed soldiers to our ports to make sure customs employees behave.

jcbinay11@gmail.com

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AN INSIDER'S ACCOUNT II

'Del Rosario, Bensusanto, Inquirer worsened row with China'

THIS is the second of two parts of Sen. Antonio Trillanes



RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO

4th's secret aide memoire which he wrote in 2012 on his activities as President

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Aquino's special envoy to China to negotiate for an end to the stand-off between our vessels and that country's in Scarborough Shoal, which we call Bajo de Masinloc or Panatag Shoal.

It is important for us as a nation to know the truth on how we lost Panatag Shoal, as this has been the reason for the diplomatic conflict between us and, whether we like or not, the nation that is emerging as the biggest military and economic superpower in the region. I am convinced that those allied with another superpower that is bent on preventing the rise of China as the superpower in Asia have and will exploit the Panatag Shoal issue to portray it — as even Associate Justice Antonio Carpio has been doing — as exemplifying China's expansionist policy in Asia.

As Trillanes' account describes the Panatag Shoal crisis, it is not as simplistic as that.

The following is the second part of Trillanes' narrative, which he titled "Summary of Backchannel Talks (12 May to 16 August 2012)":

"On 19 June, just a few days after the media reposted the pull-out of our ships, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* published a banner photo of Chinese uniformed personnel holding a Chinese flag on top of the shoal. PNoy called me about this and said that we were betrayed by China.

I advised him to refrain from issuing statements while we are validating the info. For the meantime, I told him that the photo couldn't possibly have been current since, in the background, the skies are clear and the seas are calm. At that time, a typhoon was passing through the area and we, in fact used this

pretext to withdraw our ships.

True enough, when I confronted the Beijing negotiators, they denied this and gave me a link to a website showing this to be an old photo back in the early 1980s. I reported this to PNoy and advised him to direct the Navy to conduct an aerial reconnaissance flight to further validate the information. I then asked around in the *Inquirer* as to who fed the photo. My sources then revealed that the story came from Sec. Del Rosario.

On 25 June, the *Inquirer* published a story about a Chinese vessel ramming a Filipino fishing boat.* Again, PNoy called me and he was furious about this incident. I told him that I would ask Beijing about it. When I confronted the negotiators, they told me that their ships are in place and that the incident happened in an area that was at least 150nmi away. So, I investigated further by sending somebody to talk to one of the survivors who was then confined in Ilocos Sur.

The survivor said that they were already sinking while tied to a fish marker and that they were not rammed at all. I then asked around again in the *Inquirer* as to who fed the story. My sources then revealed that the story came from Sec. Del Rosario.

Around 02 July, I was able to negotiate for the reduction of the remaining CMS vessels to only 3. At that time, PNoy told me that he would need to decide during the 5 July cabinet meeting whether to proceed with the bilateral/backchannel talks or to internationalize it during the Asean Regional Forum on 9 July.

During the executive cabinet meeting on 5 July, I was invited to

present the bilateral/backchannel option while Sec. Del Rosario and USec Henry Bensurto** presented the multilateral/internationalize option. I clearly remember USec Bensurto with a powerpoint presentation telling everybody in the meeting that the annexation of Scarborough Shoal by

China would be used as a springboard to claim Western Luzon.

Sec. Del Rosario proceeded to present that China had almost 100 vessels in and around the shoal; that they placed a rope at the entrance of the shoal and that the Chinese were duplicitous.

On the other hand, I presented that, contrary to Sec. Del Rosario's experience, our backchannel negotiations held and proof of it

was the drastic reduction of the Chinese vessels from almost a hundred to only three with the commitment that they would pull out the remaining 3 CMS vessels if we won't raise the dispute during the ARF. Plus, Beijing gave the assurance that they will not put up any structure in or around the shoal.

With this, I recommended to PNoy to not internationalize it during ARF and see if they would live up to their commitment of pulling out completely.

In the end, when the vote came, it was lopsided in favor of Sec. Del Rosario's option. Notwithstanding the rejection of the bilateral option, I assured PNoy that he is my president and

I would stand by his decision.

On 14 July, Sec. Butch Abad asked me if the backchannel is still open. Apparently, we were snubbed by the Asean and we're now stuck with the 3 CMS ships still at the vicinity of the shoal. I asked him if Sec. Del Rosario has a plan B, he said none. I then told him that the precondition for the withdrawal of the 3 ships was that the dispute won't be raised at the ARF.

I then politely declined from continuing with my role as backchannel negotiator since Pnoy had already decided his policy action.

Finally, around mid-August, I briefed then newly assigned Ambassador to China Sonia Brady about the whole backchannel negotiations to formally terminate my role. In all, I had around 14 backchannel meetings, 7 of which were held in China while 7 were held in Manila. Mission accomplished."

** Henry Bensurto was del Rosario's Assistant Secretary heading the DFA's West Philippine Sea Center during the Panatag Shoal crisis. The online news outfit Rappler which has been del Rosario's mouthpiece described Bensurto as "the silent hero behind the blueprint of the Philippines' case against China at The Hague." After the case was filed in 2013, del Rosario rewarded Bensurto with one of the most sought-after posts in the DFA, Consul-General of San Francisco. Aquino in December 2013 awarded Bensurto the "Order of Lakandula with a rank of Grand Officer," the only government official of his rank given such award.

Email: tiglaomanilatimes@gmail.com

Facebook: [Rigoberto Tigla0](https://www.facebook.com/RigobertoTigla0)

Twitter: [@bobitigla0](https://twitter.com/bobitigla0)

Archives at: www.rigobertotigla0.com

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Creeping militarization - better than RevGov

IN a statement that contradicted the newly appointed Customs Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero, a former general, and the pronouncements of his talking head, Salvador Panelo, the President unequivocally declared: "I will not sit as President and let you render me inutile as you continue with your corruption there in Customs right in front of me. You sons of bitches. Now you have a problem. They say its militarization of the government, correct," he added. On Sunday (Oct. 28, 2018), he ordered the military to "take over the BoC." (*The Manila Times*, Nov 3, 2018)

The cat is now out of the bag! While the President's sycophants have been trying to muddle the issue with their double-speak, we have the Deegong on record on his actions and motivations — feeding his detractors with arguments to lay before the Supreme Court. The question of the constitutionality of his acts has been snatched from public discourse and now elevated to the 12 men and women of the highest court, four-fifths of whom are ingratiated and friendly to him. But the conversation on the ground is more interesting.

What are the implications of the presidential declarations?

For one, the President has clearly shown that his civilian bureaucracy is not up to the job of running government efficiently. It's quite clear now what the motives are behind his appointment of former military personnel to positions in his cabinet and sensitive bureaus and departments. This creeping militarization is nothing more than an acceptance that the President may have given up on the nuances of the republican principle of the pre-eminence of the civilian over the military. This could be presumably why martial law in Mindanao is being revisited and may be extended — perhaps indefinitely.

It is easy to speculate at this point that the Deegong is tired and has given up on the democratic ways of governance and is leaning towards a despotic pat, but this time in a slow *dance macabre* towards one-man rule. This could be a substitute for a declaration of a revolutionary government (revgov). Whereas the latter will involve "shock and awe," which could be violent, the former is simply a soft "coup d'état by substi-



LITO MONICO C. LORENZANA

tion"; in some way accomplishing what he has been signaling from the very start of his regime.

And since this takeover by the military is not accompanied by blood, perhaps most Filipinos will go for it.

So, why not also a "takeover" of the BIR? What the hell! It's one of the corrupt agencies. And while we're at it, why not lieutenants, captains and colonels for bureau chiefs, Asecs and Usecs of DoTC and DPWH. These are still headed by civilians and perceived to be graft-ridden and inept too.

And this could be the real "pagbabago" promised by DU30 and awaited by the long-suffering Filipinos. In the first two years of his term, DU30 never did have a chance to push his agenda successfully, except for some political crumbs allowed by the movers and shakers of this country that suit also their own interests. And these people have been at this long before the Deegong even thought of running for president. DU30 set out to eliminate the drug menace but after the death of thousands of minor souls and damage to our human rights record internationally, not one big fish was caught in his net.

He proposed a drastic change in the system of governance through political restructuring and development of a liberal economy by doing away with restrictive measures curtailing foreign direct investments. All these by revising the 1987 elitist-driven Constitution. He is failing here due to the recalcitrance and even direct opposition by the elected class, particularly the Senate; and the midterm election circus has come into play and distracts us all from the systemic restructuring. This election could result in the Deegong becoming a "lame-duck" president.

The discombobulated electoral process, the ultimate system that protects and sustains the perversion of democracy has always been the bastion of those who will not allow real change — *pagbabago*. The Deegong under the current democratic process must play this game. But will he? Not by the rules of those that have been calling the shots in this country for

so long — the traditional politicians, the political dynasties in cahoots with the oligarchic class. This could be the reason why the President declared that he too is building his own political dynasty in Davao because as he said, "he is forced to" do it. We can only speculate what is in the mind of the Deegong.

He has always been a maverick and allowing cosmetic changes in the political environment may be his way of lulling the real enemies of the state — the oligarchy and their elected minions. Proceed with the elections as a referendum of his government and his persona; perhaps the reason why he is hell bent in projecting only one man as his avatar — Bong Go in the Senate.

He has his allies too, like the Marcoses, but this family is burdened by its own issues and an agenda of its own. In future, to regain the power behind their name, they may clash with the emerging progeny of the Deegong. Truly in politics there are only permanent interests.

These mid-term elections therefore are crucial to the country and the program of the President. If the Senate wins enough seats for those against Charter change and federalism, then all bets are off.

Despite this scenario, changes can still be achieved but at what cost now? The Deegong may not allow the sidelining of his election promises; the elimination of illegal drugs which has already produced thousands of collateral damage; the eradication of corruption in the bureaucracy which has forced him to reach out to the military; and the structural changes through Charter revisions. These are what propelled him to power and I'm afraid to pursue this to its rightful conclusion; he may have to start a war with the oligarchy and vested interest. He is counting on the 70 percent of the people behind him. *AL*

Looking from this perspective, it could explain why the president has been working along the lines he has pursued so far: putting in place former military personnel in key cabinet posts and sensitive bureaucracies, and now the takeover of the Bureau of Customs. The Deegong has always been unorthodox in his methods.

No uncouth application of a revgov, instead a more genteel use of a creeping militarization.

Code of conduct

AMONG the many important issues that are being discussed at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit in Singapore this week is the South China Sea and the claims of several Asean members to waters and shoals that overlap with similar claims by China.

It is good that the Asean summit is also participated in by the bloc's dialogue partners, including China, the United States, Russia and Japan. This gives the regional conversation a modicum of importance, if not full international relevance.

'The SCS issue, especially concerning the Philippines, has been muddled by various advocacy groups which are mainly funded by the military-industrial complex of the US, and thus are movers and pushers of their interests.'

The presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Singapore summit is also an indication that things are moving fast in the common desire of Asean and China to diffuse any tension in the South China Sea. The importance that these leaders give to their role as Asean dialogue partners will also hasten the process of coming up with a comprehensive and binding Code of Conduct on the South China Sea (SCS).

The SCS issue, especially concerning the Philippines, has been muddled by various advocacy groups which are mainly funded by the military-industrial complex of the US, and thus are movers and pushers of their interests.

Even before the Asean summit started, these US-backed groups had been harping about alleged "militarization" by China in the disputed waters, quoting unnamed and unnamable sources among Asean leaders as having written a draft statement or resolution to be passed in the same assembly. They talked about "long-seething territorial disputes" and the supposed efforts by the regional economic bloc to balance its relations with China and the US, with the spin that a deepening rivalry between Washington and Beijing has long been a challenge to the region's unity.

Against this backdrop, the assurances made by Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his Davao City visit should have more relevance to Philippine-China relations than the bellicose tone of American jingoism, which the US wanted to impose on Filipinos and Australians.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi told our Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. that "countries concerned (on the SCS issue) have returned to the track of dialogue and negotiations and consultations to properly handle the differences. The Asean countries, China and others are jointly upholding peace and stability in the South China Sea."

Wang added that a peaceful and stable South China Sea meets the common interests of China and the Philippines, and that it is the shared aspiration of the regional countries and shared responsibility for all concerned.

President Xi Jinping's forthcoming visits in Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines later this month, after his Asean summit participation in Singapore and the APEC meeting in Port Moresby, should further flesh out China's policy of upholding peace and development and shared economic progress for the region, especially the Philippines. 15

EDITORIAL

Certainty of being caught

WE CAN understand how frustrated President Duterte must be about the corruption that seems endemic in the Bureau of Customs. Three years in office, and he is already on his third Customs commissioner. The previous two appointees—described by the President as honest men—left their posts in disgrace, their reputations tarnished by scandals involving the smuggling of illegal drugs.

Over the weekend, the President aired his frustrations and said corruption may not be eradicated at all.

“Whoever you place there, there’s always corruption,” he said, as he defended his controversial decision to have the military “take over” the bureau, an order he later dialed down, saying soldiers would only “keep the peace” because the agency was “in anarchy.”

The President’s latest Customs chief, Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero, replaced Isidro Lapeña, a former police official who, ironically, ran the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency not too long ago. His predecessor, Nicanor Faeldon, a former military man who once took up arms against the government, was also replaced following a drug smuggling scandal.

In his remarks, the President blames crooked personnel at the bureau for the entrenched corruption, but doesn’t seem to realize that he

could be part of the problem.

After their failures, the previous “good men” who headed the bureau for Mr. Duterte were not punished, but rewarded with new government positions. Faeldon is poised to be appointed as the new chief of the Bureau of Corrections, while Lapeña has been “promoted” to head the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

Even granting that the two men were completely innocent of the allegations of corruption, they still held command responsibility for the smuggling that occurred during their watch. Given their spectacular failures, neither deserved to be promoted or even given a new job in the government.

But in doing just that, the President seemed to guarantee a golden parachute to whoever he appoints as Customs chief. There’s no need to worry if they mess up—the President’s got their back.

This soft approach is aggravated by the government’s failure to successfully prosecute any corruption case against Customs officials and personnel.

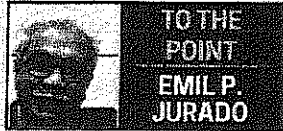
The US National Institute of Justice, a research, development and evaluation agency of the US Justice Department, summarizes a large body of research related to deterrence in “Five Things About Deterrence.”

Foremost among its findings is that the certainty of being caught is a vastly more powerful deterrent than the punishment. The institute’s research also shows that police deter crime when they do things to strengthen a criminal’s perception of the certainty of being caught.

Finally, laws and policies designed to deter crime by focusing mainly on increasing the severity of punishment are ineffective partly because criminals know little about the sanctions for specific crimes.

When the President says it is really difficult to stop corruption in the Bureau of Customs, he is really saying there is no certainty that the criminals there will be caught. And that is a recipe for failure.

Duterte's referendum



THE Baguio City Council's ban on the use of cuss words, profanities and other expletives raises interesting questions.

For one thing, the ban violates freedom of expression and speech.

I often go to Baguio to recharge my batteries and I can imagine people who get stuck in the traffic gridlock uttering expletives. So should they be arrested?

To me, profanities are part of the language. My *gulay*, those Hollywood movies and shows are filled with cuss words. My late father used to utter "puta" and "puñeta." The Spaniards, including friars, were often heard exclaiming "hijo de puta" in an effort to demean somebody. "Bullshit" is another word

often used in exasperation and disgust.

To me, these words mean nothing. When President Duterte curses, I am not surprised. Actually he is not the first chief executive

fond of cuss words. The late Manuel L. Quezon was also fond of using profanities.

They are just words—nothing more.

The 2019 elections will be a referendum on President Duterte with almost 10-million Filipinos (and rising) unemployed. There are also high inflation and low wages.

While the administration may attempt to foist federalism as an issue, or drugs and corruption, the gut topics will determine the results of the election. The poor can easily understand this. Santa Banana, even now, there are findings that people only eat once or twice a day because that is all they can afford.

I have been a journalist for almost 70 years and I know that it is the gut issues that stay with the public. The question is, can President Duterte address these issues and make life better for Filipinos?

He must listen to what the people are saying. The backlash could be in the form of rejection of his favored candidate, Christopher Lawrence Go who is running for the Senate.

Until now, people don't know who Bong Go is aside from always being the person behind President Duterte, always taking selfies. But what are his qualifications? Why should we vote for him? The President says Go is a multi-billionaire, but how did he get there? Does it have anything to do with the report of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism that says Go's family cornered contracts from the Department of Public Works and Highways worth P2.4 billion?

“He should focus on gut issues more than anything else.”

The campaign period is coming up. The Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines should make addressing these

two things a priority: Prevalence of private armies and the proliferation of loose firearms.

These problems have long existed in the Philippines and I know they come to play during the election period. They result in killings especially at the local level.

The police and military say there are some 57 private armies nationwide and about a million loose firearms, mostly in Mindanao.

It is with this thought that President Duterte should make these the focus of his campaign during this sensitive time.

Will former First Lady Imelda Marcos be arrested? This is the topic in board

Duterte's...

From A4

rooms and coffeeshops around town.

There are those who say that her conviction of graft and corruption should merit her arrest, but there are also those who point out that she is 89 years old and weak. Even Philippine National Police Chief Oscar Albayalde is not too sure if she should be arrested.

There are some things that could prevent the arrest of Imelda. Her lawyers are exhausting every legal remedy so she would not be arrested. Considering the pace of justice here in the Philippines, she might be 90 before a final judgment is handed down.

I believe she should be given consideration for her age.

The Duterte administration may be accused of giving Imelda special treatment. But we all know she can

always be released after filing a bond. Until she is convicted by the Supreme Court, she is considered innocent.

Whether Malacañang likes it or not, the third telecommunications player being Mislattel, a consortium composed of President Duterte's biggest campaign contributor, and China Telecoms will always be subject to speculation.

This may be unfair on the part of the President, but this is the talk of the town nonetheless.

There is no doubt about the qualifications of Mislattel. But Malacañang should explain the participation of China Telecoms in the bidding. It's an issue of national security. Remember the ongoing dispute between the Philippines and China on the West Philippine Sea.

I cannot help but be suspicious when another country becomes a player in things affecting national security.

ONLINE NEWS

14 NOVEMBER 2018

www.gmanews.com

Suspected NPA rebel killed, 9 others arrested after clash with military

An alleged member of the New People's Army died when suspected members of the rebel group exchanged fire with government troops in Igbaras, Iloilo on Monday morning.

The fatality remained unidentified as of posting time.

Nine others were captured after the encounter, according to a press release of the Philippine Army's 61st Infantry (Hunter) Battalion.

The encounter between the suspected NPAs and the military occurred at about 11:20 a.m. in Sitio Butuan, Barangay Igcabugao.

The military received a report from residents that more or less 10 full-armed men were in the area.

A firefight ensued and lasted for 30 minutes.

No fatality was reported on the government side.

Lieutenant Colonel Sisenando Magbalot Jr., commanding officer of the 61st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, said the troops found the dead body as they pursued the fleeing rebels.

Also recovered on the body was a backpack, an improvised explosive device, and a bandolier of 5.56 mm bullets.

The troops also recovered three gallons of gasoline in the area and they believe the rebels were about to use it to burn the facilities of the Century Peak Energy Corporation.

In 2015, the rebel group torched the company's heavy equipment used in the construction of a mini hydro project in the barangay.

The rebel group also allegedly staged an ambush in August 2017 on a pickup ferrying the company's employees and personnel from the 61st Infantry Battalion. One of the CPEC employees was wounded.

Magbalot commended the residents for informing them of the presence of rebels in their area.

"We are commending the vigilance of the local populace in reporting the presence of the CPP-NPA Terrorist which resulted to the successful deterrence of their terroristic activities like sabotaging and burning of developmental projects in the area. This is a clear indication that the people in Panay are fed up with the terrorist group," he said.

www.inquirer.net

15-year-old Maute fighter surrenders to military

By: Frances Mangosing - Reporter / @FMangosingINQ

INQUIRER.net / 08:17 PM November 13, 2018

A teenage boy believed to be a Maute or pro-Islamic State fighter surrendered Tuesday to authorities in Lanao del Sur, the military said.

The 15-year-old boy named "AJ" turned himself in to the Army's 49th Infantry Battalion in Butig town, according to Cpt. Clint Antipala, spokesperson for the 1st Infantry Division.

AJ is believed to have been recruited by his cousins –Maute brothers Omarkhayam and Abdullah – in 2014 and trained with 12 other young fighters.

The Maute brothers led the ISIS-linked fighters in a gun battle against state forces in Marawi City last year, which claimed over 1,000 lives and displaced thousands of residents.

The Islamic city was also left into ruins after five months of battle. It was the Philippines' biggest security crisis in recent years.

Last month, one suspected young Maute fighter also surrendered to government forces in Lanao del Sur.

"Nine years old was their youngest recruit and most of them were involved in armed engagement with government forces in the month of February and November of 2016," Lt. Col Edgar Allan Villanueva, commanding officer of 49th Infantry Battalion was quoted as saying.

www.inquirer.net

Medal of Valor awardee, 5 Army generals promoted

By: Frances Mangosing - Reporter / @FMangosingINQ
INQUIRER.net / 07:23 PM November 13, 2018

A recipient of the Medal for Valor, the highest military award, and five other Army officers were recently promoted to the next higher rank.

Promoted to Major General were Brigadier General Roy Devesa and Brigadier General Cirilito Sobejana, commanders of Training and Doctrine Command and 6th Infantry (Kampilan) Division, said Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva.

Sobejana, one of the five living recipients of the most coveted military award for combat, was awarded the Medal of Valor in 1995.

Promoted to Brigadier General were Colonel Thomas Sedano, Commander of the 2nd Mechanized Infantry (Magbalantay) Brigade, Mechanized Infantry Division; Colonel William Gonzales, Commander of the First Scout Ranger Regiment, Special Operation Command; Colonel Larry Mojica, Commander of the 902nd (Fight 'Em) Brigade, 9th Infantry (Spear) Division; and Colonel Francisco Ariel Felicidadario, Commander of the 102nd Infantry (Igsoon) Brigade, 1st Infantry (Tabak) Division.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Macairog Alberto donned the new ranks to the officers during the flag-raising ceremony on Monday.

"As you start another chapter in your military careers and savor the honor and pride that comes from your star, you should remember that from that star, exudes greater responsibility and higher level of expectations and standards of leadership," Alberto was quoted as saying.

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www.inquirer.net

Lorenzana to support resumption of peace talks if ...

By: Frances Mangosing - Reporter / @FMangosingINQ

INQUIRER.net / 04:43 PM November 13, 2018

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has expressed support on the possible resumption of peace talks with communist rebels amid reports of a likely meeting between President Rodrigo Duterte and leaders of the National Democratic Front (NDF) later this month.

But the defense chief said he will only support the revival of peace negotiations if the communists would be sincere and won't use it to advance their own interests.

"I am not against peace talks provided the CPP-NPA-NDF (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-NDF) are sincere in working for peace. Peace that jibes with our definition of peace. But to them peace talks is just one of the activities to advance their armed revolution. If this is the objective of their wanting to talk then I am against it," he told reporters Tuesday.

The military has previously accused the communist rebels of continued attacks against government forces despite the ongoing peace negotiations.

Last Saturday, Duterte mentioned of a possible meeting with NDFP leaders Fidel Agcaoili and Luis Jalandoni. The President said he will announce his decision if the meeting will push through or not after he attends the regional summit in Singapore this week.

Lorenzana refused to comment on the possible meeting between Mr. Duterte and the communist leaders.

"On the proposed meeting between NDFP officials and the President – we'll see how this plays out as this is still in the planning stage. As I said previously, we defer to the decision of the President to meet or not to meet Agcaoili and Jalandoni," he said.

The resumption of peace talks did not materialize earlier this year after the government decided to make more public consultations before returning to the negotiating table. /kga