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NEWS CLIPPINGS

27 November 2018

Tuesday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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Rody to fire another exec

*Palace: Fired
HUDCC
exec asked
for commission*

By EDITH REGALADO
and ALEXIS ROMERO

DAVAO CITY - President Duterte is set to fire this week for graft another government official with the rank of undersecretary.

"When I return to Manila I am going to fire another undersecretary for corruption," the President said during kick-off ceremonies for the construction of the Davao City Bulk Water Project along the Davao-Bukidnon road yesterday afternoon.

He did not identify the official nor name any agency.

"Again there is corruption in government because people are not doing (anything) about it," the President said, citing in particular how he has opened

Turn to Page 2

Rody From Page 1

avenues for people to report to him or to his office about government officials involved in graft and corruption.

The latest official that the President fired over corruption allegations was Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) secretary-general Falconi Millar.

The President's order on Millar's dismissal took effect immediately even as the latter was in charge of the Bangon Marawi rehabilitation project.

The Chief Executive has been firing high-ranking officials and heads of offices accused of corruption, excessive travels and abuse of power.

Among those he had fired were former interior and local government secretary Mike Sueno, former tourism chief Wanda Teo and former justice secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II.

This year alone Duterte ordered the dismissal of military officials over supposed anomalous transactions at the Armed Forces of the Philip-

ines' V. Luna Medical Center.

The President also fired the board members and management of Nayong Filipino Foundation for entering into a supposedly disadvantageous lease deal with a Hong Kong-based developer for an integrated casino resort project.

Duterte likewise fired former National Irrigation Administration chief Peter Lavina in March last year and former government corporate counsel Rudolf Philip Jurado last May.

Not fired

Meanwhile, Millar claimed that he resigned and was not dismissed from his post.

He alleged that some people had hatched a "demolition job" against him for protecting the government's interests.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, however, said a complaint was filed against Millar by a company who had accused him of extortion.

"There was a complaint, there was a sworn statement

and then the President ordered an investigation and there was a credible basis, the complaint was validated," Panelo said.

He said the complaint came from a person representing a company with receivables from HUDCC.

"It appears that the company has yet to collect the money and then according to that sworn statement (the complainant) was asked to give money for the release. It was relayed to him twice," Panelo said.

He said the company representative refused to pay and executed an affidavit against Millar.

A source said the company, which had "millions" in receivables from the HUDCC, filed the complaint last Oct. 26.

Panelo said the government would support the filing of charges against the former housing official.

"I'm sure there will be a case filed, but you need witnesses. So, before the DOJ (Department of Justice) can file a case, you need these witnesses," he said.

TOURISTS FROM CHINA ARE 'ILLEGAL WORKERS'

STORY BY DJ YAP

The Chinese nationals skirted labor laws to be part of online gambling operations, a Senate panel has found. Sen. Joel Villanueva accuses the foreigners of stealing jobs from Filipinos and calls for stringent government regulations. **A4**

By DJ Yap
@deejayapINQ

Tens of thousands of Chinese from mainland China have been entering the Philippines as tourists before obtaining short-term special permits to work in online gambling operations, a Senate panel learned on Monday.

At a hearing of the Senate labor committee, Sen. Joel Villanueva expressed alarm and indignation after immigration and labor authorities admitted that more than 119,000 "tourists," most of them from mainland China, were able to skirt labor regulations to gain temporary employment in the country.

These tourist visa holders technically remain tourists even during the three-to-six-month duration of their work assignment in the country.

Thus, their employers need not prove that the jobs cannot otherwise be performed by locals, which is the usual policy for alien workers.

'Stealing' jobs

"It's very clear. Chinese nationals have been stealing our jobs, taking away our homes and pilfering opportunities from Filipinos," Villanueva said.

He called for stringent regulation of foreign workers in the country.

The Senate panel is looking into the proliferation of presumed illegal workers from China, whose numbers have risen around Metro Manila to a degree that do not match official employment numbers from the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole).

Dole figures show that since 2015, close to 116,000 foreigners have been issued an alien employment permit (AEP), which allows them to work legally in

the Philippines.

An AEP will be issued by Dole only if there is no Filipino willing or competent enough to do the job being offered to a foreigner.

Requirement for visa

The permit is one of the major requirements for the issuance of a work visa for aliens, but officials acknowledge that virtually all AEP holders have been able to get work visas.

Chinese nationals account for the bulk of foreign workers holding AEPs, numbering almost 52,000, or about 45 percent of the total, mostly working in manufacturing, information and communications, and administrative and support services.

But Labor Undersecretary Ciriaco Lagunzad III told the Senate committee that there was another way the Chinese had been able to gain employment even without an AEP by obtaining special work permits from the Bureau of Immigration.

"This is beyond AEP ... because it is intended for short-term assignments for six months ... or three months ex-

tensible by another three months," he said.

Lagunzad explained that the status of these permit holders remained tourists. "Is this covered by an AEP? The answer is no," he said.

He said there were more than 119,000 of such permits issued by the immigration bureau from 2017 to 2018. But the actual number could be bigger, considering some 1.6 million tourist visas were issued to Chinese citizens in 2018 alone by the Department of Foreign Affairs, and only 18 preemployment visas.

Massive presence in Metro

Villanueva also described anecdotal evidence of massive Chinese presence in major real estate developments in Metro Manila, especially in the south.

Demand for offices and housing by the Chinese workers has buoyed the real estate market in Metro Manila, pushing rents up in many condominium buildings.

Reports of unruly behavior of these workers in residential buildings also have been increasing.

"There's definitely more

than the official numbers," Villanueva said.

Homer Arellano, head of the immigration bureau's Prosecution and Legal Assistance Section, said the special work permits were typically granted to foreign basketball players to play in the local league and to international entertainers holding a concert.

Offshore gaming operators

But when Villanueva noted that there couldn't be 119,000 of such type of workers, Arellano said: "Most of them are Chinese and they work in firms run by Pogos (Philippine offshore gaming operators)."

To which Sen. Grace Poe reacted: "Shouldn't that be a red flag to us? They shouldn't enter here under false pretenses."

Poe also wondered if immigration authorities had kept track of these permit holders' background and whether they had any criminal record in their home countries.

Mandarin

Arellano said one factor that put Filipinos at a disadvantage with the Chinese for this type of job was lack of fluency in speaking Mandarin.

This prompted Poe to retort that Filipinos could be hired as understudies to learn from the Chinese in Pogo jobs.

Villanueva followed up by suggesting that language skills training of Tesda (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) focus on teaching Mandarin to Filipinos.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Villanueva said it was not his intention to spread anti-Chinese sentiment but only to make sure that Filipino jobs were protected.

"It is unfortunate but we're not trying to single out any nationality, but we're talking of illegal workers stealing jobs from Filipinos," he said. INQ

He said the envoy told him the matter was for the Chinese foreign ministry to handle.

File a complaint

"That is we have to make a formal communication also after we receive the complaint [of GMA News]," he said, adding that he had advised the network

to file a complaint.

Panalo said the government was also looking into a report that Chinese nationals had been seen at a shopping mall in Pasay City wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the words "We want to have a memory in the South China Sea."

He said he could not tell whether it was a political statement, but the government would take appropriate action after the investigation.

Panatang Shoal is a traditional fishing ground for Filipinos.

China, which claims nearly the entire South China Sea,

seized the shoal in 2012, prompting the Philippines to challenge its sweeping claim in the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration the next year.

In July 2016, the court ruled that China's claim had no basis in international law and that it had violated the Philippines'

sovereign right to fish and explore resources in the West Philippine Sea.

China ignored the ruling but allowed Filipinos to fish at Panatang after relations with the Philippines improved under the Duterte administration, although keeping the shoal under tight watch.

No Philippine patrol

In an interview with reporters, Jun Veneracion, the GMA reporter involved in the Panatang incident, said Filipino fishermen complained about the absence of the Philippine Coast Guard from the area.

"The problem is, we don't have a presence there. That's what dismays the [fishermen]. China has never left that place, but our [fishermen] have never had anyone to rely on. No one is patrolling there," Veneracion said.

In an interview on Saturday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana declined to comment on the harassment of the GMA news crew at Panatang, but he denied Veneracion's report.

"We do go there, or at least our Coast Guard. The Chinese don't send their Navy there," Lorenzana said.

Asked if the incident was a cause for concern, Lorenzana replied: "It was just the media that was barred. Our [fishermen] can go there."

Veneracion said China had at least three Coast Guard vessels in the area.

He said Filipino fishermen had also complained about the Chinese coast guards documenting their presence by video as they fished at the shoal. *no*

"For what purpose or reason they are being documented, they don't know. But they can't fight back. They can't muster the courage. That's just the way it is," Veneracion said. —WITH A

REPORT FROM JAYMEE T. GAMIL INQ

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JOINT SEA EXPLORATION
VILLAR: 60-40 PROFIT
SHARING FAVORS PH

By Deffin T. Mallari Jr.
(@dmallarijr)

LUCENA CITY—A 60-40 profit sharing between the Philippines and China in a joint exploration of energy sources in the South China Sea will favor the country, according to Sen. Cynthia Villar.

"Sixty percent [for the Philippines] is the majority share. Anyway, they [Chinese] are the ones who will shoulder the cost," Villar told journalists here on Saturday.

China and the Philippines signed a memorandum of understanding last

FROM A1

week to negotiate an agreement for joint development of oil and gas sources in the South China Sea.

Vice President Leni Robredo on Sunday said she was worried about the constitutional implications of the agreement.

On Saturday, former Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales spoke about internal forces working against the Philippines' interests.

Malacañang on Monday slammed Robredo and Morales for making "not only premature but [also] baseless and unfair" statements.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said Robredo and Morales anchored their comments on mere news reports, not on the signed document itself.

For starters only

He said the signed memorandum of understanding was "only an agreement to agree to certain things," a "framework for a future agreement based on mutual respect [for] each oth-



LEGAL Sen. Cynthia Villar says she believes the deal is legal. —JOAN BONDOC

er's sovereignty and interest."

Villar was guest in the annual assembly of senior citizens from Quezon's first and second districts held at the convention center in Lucena City.

She played down the controversy surrounding the document signed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Manila on Tuesday.

"We have yet to see the details [of the agreement] except the publicity. It seems that it's

only in principles, to start the negotiation," Villar said.

She added: "There [are] no specifics yet on how to do it."

Villar said she believed the agreement entered into by the Duterte administration was legal.

Nothing there

Speaking to Palace reporters, Panelo also rebutted allegations by exiled Communist Party of the Philippines founder

Jose Maria Sison that the memorandum was treasonous.

"Maybe he has not read the agreement signed. It's just an agreement to agree on certain things. There's nothing there that would be a basis there for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there's nothing there," Panelo said.

Sison last week charged that the agreement was "a blatant betrayal of the sovereign rights and national patrimony of the

Philippines and the Filipino people."

He said signing the deal was a "clear act of treason" by President Duterte.

To show that there was nothing treasonous in the agreement, the Palace released the text of the document on Monday.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development, the Philippines and China agreed to negotiate arrangements to facilitate oil and gas exploration and exploitation in maritime areas with applicable rules of international law.

The document does not state the location of a joint exploration, but it is understood to be in the West Philippine Sea—waters within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone.

Joint steering committee

The two countries agreed to set up an intergovernmental joint steering committee that will negotiate the cooperation agreement within 12 months.

The two sides will set up "interentrepreneurial working groups" that will negotiate and

agree on technical and commercial arrangements that will apply in the relevant working area.

According to the document, the foreign ministers of the two countries will serve as chairs of the joint steering committee, with their energy ministers serving as vice chairs and with equal numbers of relevant agencies participating.

The committee will negotiate and agree on the cooperation agreements and the maritime areas to which these will apply, and decide the number of working groups to be established and for which part of the cooperation area each group will be established.

Beijing will authorize China National Offshore Oil Corp. as the Chinese enterprise for each working group.

Manila will authorize the enterprise that has a service contract with the Philippine government.

If there is no such enterprise, Philippine National Oil Co.-Exploration Corp. will be assigned as the Philippine enterprise in the relevant working group.

—WITH REPORTS FROM
CHRISTINE D. AVENDAÑO AND JULIE
M. AURELIO INQ

Xi's Philippine visit a 'milestone' event



As cooperation and political trust improve, China and the Philippines agreed on Nov. 20 to lift ties to a comprehensive strategic cooperation relations while stressing the need to manage disputes in the South China Sea through "friendly negotiations."

The decision was announced after visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping's meeting with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday in Manila, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

Chinese experts stressed that the visit is a milestone event in the development of bilateral relations and the two countries will pursue greater cooperation under the framework of the China-proposed Belt and Road initiative (BRI) in the coming years.

As friendly neighbors across the sea, China and the Philippines enjoy geographic proximity and a strong bond that links the two peoples and cultures, Xi said, Xinhua reported on Tuesday.

Since Duterte took office, China and the Philippines have reopened the door of friendship and cooperation to each other, bringing real benefits to the two peoples and making important contributions to regional peace, stability and prosperity, Xi noted.

Xi's visit will largely promote bilateral relations as the visit shows that China values friendly relations with the Philippines, Cu Xiaosong, a research fellow on Southeast Asian studies at the Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences, told the *Global Times* on Nov. 20.

"It is a milestone event in the development of bilateral relations," Cu remarked.

Glenn Fajarenda, commercial counselor of the Philippine Embassy in China, told the *Global Times* on Nov. 20 that "Xi's visit is vital in highlighting the significant relationship between our two countries, particularly in trade and investments. The visit will encourage more and deeper engagements."

Improved China-Philippines relations will also play an important role in maintaining the stability of the South China Sea, experts noted.

"If China and the Philippines can reach an agreement on the exploration and development of oil and gas resources in the South China Sea, it will be a breakthrough in economic cooperation in the region and will largely promote the safety of the Asia-Pacific," Cu said.

The prospects for economic and trade relations between the two countries are very bright as Philippine priorities are aligned with the key sectors such as infrastructure, construction and building materials, chemicals and manufacturing, Fajarenda said.

Cu agrees, saying that bilateral economic and trade ties will be further enhanced to a higher level, and the two countries will pursue more cooperation under the BRI.

As a developing country with more than 100 million people, the Philippines needs to improve its infrastructure and enhance the growth of its industrial enterprises, Cu noted.

GROWTH PROSPECTS

The hospitality toward Chinese people is easily felt among the Philippine public.

The Chinese and Philippine flags were placed along Roxas Boulevard in Manila a week ago. Many Chinese who live and study in Manila waited along the boulevard on Tuesday to welcome Xi.

"We're so excited that President Xi has come to Manila. We hope the two countries could strengthen cultural exchanges in the future," said Ku Jiansong, a PhD candidate from China who studies at Adamson University in Manila, told the *Global Times* on Nov. 20.

"I have met many locals who like to discuss Chinese culture with me as they want to know more about China," he said.

Experts said cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries also see a huge potential.

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As of the end of September, China's investment in the Philippines was \$1.25 billion and the Philippines' investment in the Chinese market reached \$3.33 billion, according to the MOCOM.

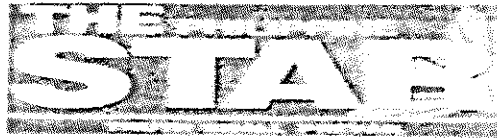
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China pledges to enhance maritime cooperation with the Philippines

BEIJING, Nov. 21 (Xinhua) — China is ready to move forward with maritime cooperation with the Philippines in various fields to benefit the two countries, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Wednesday.

Governments of the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development on Tuesday.

"The two countries have taken a new step on

exploration and development of oil and gas," spokesperson Geng Shuang told a daily press briefing, adding that the two sides would continue to discuss the related details.

Geng said China also hoped to enhance communication with other countries along the South China Sea on such cooperation, to make the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation.

Historic opportunity to bolster China-Philippines ties

BEIJING, Nov. 20 (Xinhua) — Relations between China and the Philippines, as Chinese President Xi Jinping said in a signed article published Monday, "have now seen a rainbow after the rain."

With Xi arriving in Manila on Tuesday for the first state visit to the Southeast Asian country by a Chinese president in 13 years, the two nations have a historic opportunity to steer ties towards an even brighter future.

Since President Rodrigo Duterte took office in 2016, the two Asian neighbors have managed to ride out a rough patch in their relationship over the South China Sea issue by returning to dialogue and maintaining cooperation.

Most notably, thanks to the strategic guidance by their leaders, the

two countries have both embarked on a path of consultation rather than confrontation.

Together with the productive efforts of other countries involved in the South China Sea issue, there's been a calm in the crucial body of water as well as the broader region, a boon to the entire world no doubt.

Meanwhile, since communication and contact resumed, mutual understanding and political trust have been gradually restored, and practical cooperation and people-to-people exchanges have picked up steam.

Xi and Duterte have met multiple times, and various dialogue and consultation mechanisms have been revived. The two countries have set up a platform for bilateral consultation on the South China Sea and successfully convened three meetings.

Economic relations are solid. Bilateral trade topped \$50 billion in 2017, making China the Philippines' largest trading partner and source of imports. Also last year, newly added Chinese investment in the Philippines jumped

67 percent to \$53.84 million.

The tourism sector is also revving up. China has now become the Philippines' second biggest source of tourists, with more than 1.5 million Chinese expected to visit the country this year and bring about \$610 million in revenues.

Given this progress, and considering their geographical approximation, and historical and cultural bonds, relations show great potential on a variety of fronts.

For starters, with China endeavoring to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation and the Philippines striving to implement the 10-point Socioeconomic Agenda and the "Build, Build, Build" Strategy, the two countries can better synergize their development plans and help each other fulfill their aspirations.

Particularly, the Philippines is a natural partner within the framework of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, a plan to improve connectivity and boost common

development along and beyond the ancient overland and maritime Silk Road trade routes. Together, the two can join hands to renew the legacy.

Now Xi's state visit provides a great opportunity for the two sides to explore those possibilities and turn them into reality. With both sides committed to making a success of this latest round of top-level diplomacy, confidence abounds for a new chapter in bilateral relations.

The restoration of China-Philippines relations bears a significance that transcends the two countries, and not only in the tangible benefits for the broader region brought by stronger relations.

The trajectory of their relationship illustrates that China and the Philippines have the wisdom, courage and ability to properly handle their disputes and keep specific problems from jeopardizing overall relations. It is something that offers a valuable lesson for all.

Phi not falling into debt trap, Chinese envoy says

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines is in no danger of falling into a debt trap with China's funding of the Duterte administration's flagship infrastructure projects under the "Build, Build, Build" program, an official of the Chinese embassy in Manila said yesterday.

Charges d'Affaires Tan Qingsheng said he "cannot understand the logic" behind media reports that the Philippines is facing a debt trap with China-funded projects that account for about a third of the government's 75 flagship infrastructure projects under the "Build, Build, Build" program.

"Those projects (were) proposed by the Philippine side and are economically viable and positive for the Philippine economy," Tan said during the China-Philippines Business Forum.

"I can assure you that there will be no danger of the so-called debt trap," he said.

Experts warned of risks of falling into the Chinese debt trap amid hyped opportunities in the Belt and Road Initiative, which the Philippines believes it will benefit from and help the Duterte presidency's envisioned "Golden Age of Infrastructure."

Tan noted that China and the Philippines are both developing countries and promoting sustainable economic growth and social development is the priority of President Duterte.

During the two-day state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Manila last week, he and Duterte witnessed the signing of 29 cooperation documents, including the Memorandum

of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development. The MOU aims to promote oil and gas development cooperation.

The two sides agreed to set up an inter-governmental joint steering commission and inter-enterprise working group and decide relevant cooperation arrangement at an early date.

"The MOU is a big step in the right direction," Tan said.

The diplomat stressed that "contentious issues, such as the South China Sea, are not the sum total of China-Philippines bilateral relations."

The United Nations-backed arbitral tribunal based in The Hague, Netherlands ruled that China's nine-dash line claim does not have a legal basis and that Beijing violated its commitment under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for building artificial islands in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

China, however, opposed and refused to honor the tribunal ruling, Beijing not only rejected the arbitral ruling, but has steadily moved to consolidate its presence and power projection in the South China Sea.

Tan said the most important document signed during the visit is the MOU on Cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative. With the MOU, he said China will be able to inject fresh vitality to the bilateral relations and lift the economic and trade cooperation to a new level.

Duterte accepted the invitation extended by Xi to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation to be held in Beijing in April 2019, according to Tan.

The Philippines and China signed agreements on the implementation of Safe Philippines Project Phase I, New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam and the Philippine National Railway South Long Haul project.

China also committed to facilitating the construction of an Industrial Park in New Clark City, Davao River Bridge, Panay-Guimaras-Negros Island Bridge and Davao City Expressway.

Tan said China would continue to encourage China Telecom to participate in the network construction and operation as the third communication provider in the Philippines.

China, he said, is ready to provide its financial and technical support to the development of the Philippines.

"However, both countries need to provide an enabling environment for their enterprises to invest in each other's country," he said, noting that China welcomes the Philippines and other countries on board the express train of its development.

'Totally unfounded'

The Department of Finance (DOF) yesterday concurred with Tan's statements.

In a speech at the Clark leg of the Sulong Pilipinas 2018-Philippine Development Forum, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III assured stakeholders that the government is borrowing prudently from its foreign partners and denied claims that the country may become buried in debt from China and Japan.

"Some uninformed critics claim that we are falling into a 'debt trap' by tap-

ping Chinese and Japanese financing for our strategic infrastructure projects. This is totally unfounded," Dominguez said.

For one, Dominguez said the government makes sure that it acquires financing assistance from other countries at the lowest possible interest rates with the longest possible payment terms.

The finance chief also said loans from China and Japan account for only a small part of the government's total borrowings.

"If we include project financing coming this year, our estimated project debt to China will only constitute 0.65 percent of our total debt from the current 0.11 percent. Our project debt to Japan will increase from the current 3.17 percent to 8.9 percent of the total debt at the end of this year," he said.

Dominguez added that by 2022, when most of the financing for the "Build, Build, Build" program has been accessed, the share of China financing in the government's total debt would reach only 4.5 percent, while Japan's share is projected to rise to 9.5 percent.

"So, there is no danger of us being drowned by Chinese debt," Dominguez said.

The secretary added that the Duterte administration ensures that projects go through a rigorous process not in any way influenced by other parties.

"In the past administration, there was a big scandal involving Chinese financing. That administration allowed the Chinese state-owned enterprises to dictate what projects are going to be done here," Dominguez said.

- With Mary Grace Padin

INQUIRER

CJ need not be subservient to Du30, says Panelo

Subservience to the appointing power is not one of the factors being considered by President Duterte in appointing the next Chief Justice. Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said even nominees, who had opinions on issues contrary to those of the President, had a chance of being appointed. Panelo made the comment when asked if Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio's stand on territorial disputes in the South China Sea would affect his chance of being appointed.—JULIE M. AURELIO **AY**

HOUSE FORUM

GIGANTIC FRAUD, CARPIO CALLS CHINA SEA CLAIM

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

It may be a tall task, but Filipinos should start educating 1.4 billion Chinese people that their belief that China owned the entire South China Sea is a "gigantic fraud," acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio said on Monday.

"The Chinese government today would not comply with the [arbitral] ruling until the Chinese people understand that that historical narrative is totally false," Carpio told a forum sponsored by the chiefs of staff of lawmakers in the House of Representatives.

He said every Chinese citizen had been taught from a young age that China had owned and controlled the vast sea region since 2,000 years ago.

"If the Chinese government will comply with the ruling today, that will delegitimize them in the eyes of the Chinese people who really believe they own the South China Sea," he said.

Mantra

"They have this mantra: 'We will not give away a square inch of our sacred territory that was bequeathed to us by our ancestors through the ages,'" he added.

According to Carpio, the Chinese people may even topple the communist regime should Beijing recognize the 2016 landmark ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which recognized the sovereign rights of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea, waters located within its 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea. INQ

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Carpio's stance on sea dispute won't affect CJ bid – Panelo

MALACANANG on Monday said the stance of Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio on the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) would not affect his bid to become the actual top magistrate of the Supreme Court.

Carpio, who has been critical of the administration's policy on China and who has been insisting on the country's assertion of its international arbitration victory on the West Philippine Sea, is

» **Stance A2**

the most senior of the justices included in the five-person shortlist of the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC).

In a news briefing, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo cited cases in which individuals not considered supporters of President Rodrigo Duterte were given posts in government, such as former Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. who supported former vice president Jejomar Binay during the 2016 elections.

"I do not think you can derive a conclusion that just because someone is a critic of the administration, [he or she] cannot be appointed," Panelo said.

Carpio has been vocal against the administration's inaction on the supposed militarization of the West Philippine Sea by China.

He has been calling on the Duterte administration to assert the ruling of the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration that junked China's claims on the disputed waters.

The 2016 ruling declared that Filipino fishermen enjoy fishing rights at the Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal and that the Spratly or Kalayaan Islands, as well as the Pangasinan (Mischief) Reef, Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal and Recto (Reed) Bank are all within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

China has refused to recognize the ruling, while Duterte

had said he did not want to insist on it as he wanted to repair and widen ties between Manila and Beijing.

Associate Justices Lucas Bersamin, Diosdado Peralta, Estela Perlas-Bernabe and Andres Reyes, Jr. round up the JBC's short list for the next chief justice.

The post of chief justice has been vacated for a month and a half now after Teresita de Castro retired last month.

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

Carpio's CJ bid unimpaired by WPS issue

By Nat Mariano

ASSOCIATE Justice Antonio Carpio's stand on the West Philippine Sea issue will not affect his chances of being appointed as the next Supreme Court Chief Justice, Malacañang said on Monday.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said that Carpio's position on the longstanding territorial dispute would not be a negative factor in the latter's bid to become the next top magistrate.

Panelo said, President Rodrigo Duterte even has been known to appoint a number of critics to his administration.

"If you will look at the history of the President, when he appointed Harry Roque, his spokesperson, I remember, during the campaign, he was against the President," Panelo said in a Palace briefing.

"He (Roque) was supporting another candidate and yet the President appointed him, and he became a member of the Cabinet," he added.

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Panelo also cited the appointment of leftist personalities in Duterte's Cabinet, including former Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael Mariano, former Social Welfare Secretary Judy Taguiwalo, and National Anti-Poverty Commission head Liza Maza.

"Those members of the Cabinet coming from the left, they were attacking the President and yet they were appointed," Panelo said.

"So, I don't think you can derive a conclusion that just because someone is a critic of the administration, he cannot be appointed," Panelo added.

Panelo admitted, however, that Carpio's appointment as the next Chief Justice is still uncertain as the President will still have to decide on whether to follow the seniority rule or not.

Carpio, 69, is the most senior among the four other nominees—Associate Justices Lucas Bersamin, Diosdado Peralta, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, and Andres Reyes Jr.

In August, Duterte appointed Teresita de Castro as the chief justice based on seniority.

'Joint exploration, exploitation in WPS unconstitutional'

By EDU PUNAY

Joint exploration and exploitation of resources in the West Philippine Sea with China is unconstitutional, acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio said yesterday.

"Joint exploration and exploitation is prohibited in our Constitution, which requires that the Philippines shall have 'full control and supervision' in the exploration and exploitation of natural resources," he explained in a text message.

"Joint exploration and exploitation" as defined by law "will diminish our 'full

control' and thus violate the Constitution," he said.

But at a forum over the weekend, Carpio said allowing Chinese participation in oil and gas exploration through Philippine service contracts might be acceptable.

The signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on oil and gas exploration during the recent visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping had sparked concerns the country's sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea would be compromised.

Carpio said a portion of the MOU appeared to suggest China's willingness to recog-

nize service contracting by the Philippines — or ultimately the country's sovereign rights over areas covered by service contracts.

"I don't have any objection with that kind of arrangement because if China comes in through our service contractors, those service contracts expressly recognize that the area falls within Philippine sovereignty or sovereign rights," he said.

"I think we're pretty safe. The government has included service contractors, so if we cooperate, if the cooperation with China on oil and gas activities will be through service

contractors, we're very safe," he explained in an interview.

The magistrate even suggested that the service contractor in the Philippines' Recto Bank (Reed Bank), Forum Energy, could tap a Chinese firm as a subcontractor.

Businessman Manuel V. Pangilinan's PXP Energy Corp., through its London-listed unit Forum Energy Plc, holds an exploration permit covering Recto Bank.

Carpio said China "can come in as a subcontractor of Forum Energy or it can buy into equity of Forum Energy, or it could do both."

— With Helen Flores

PH, China to respect sovereignty

MOU on oil and gas exploration made public

By **GENALYN D. KABILING**

The Philippines and China have agreed to respect national laws as well as territorial integrity and sovereignty under

a recent four-year cooperation deal on Beijing's vast trade and infrastructure program.

The "cooperation principles" were listed in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) on ►11

PH, China to respect...

◀1

cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative between the two countries released by the Malacañang Monday.

The MOU on the Belt and Road cooperation plan was among the 29 deals forged by the Philippines and China during the historic visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Manila last week.

"The Participants shall work together within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, with the strictest respect for national laws, rules, regulations and policies so as to realize sustainable growth and development through the Belt and Road Initiative and translate economic complementarities and people-to-people exchanges into advantages for practical cooperation and the sound sustainable development of all countries involved," it read.

The two parties would also be guided by the principles of "mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, and complete transparency inter common endeavors to expand mutually beneficially cooperation so as to realize sustainable development and common prosperity through extensive consultation, joint contribution, and the sharing of benefits."

Under the MOU on the Belt and Road cooperation plan, the two countries:

- Would cooperate on infrastructure development and connectivity in areas of mutual interest, such as transportation, telecommunication, and energy sectors.

- Would enhance communication and exchanges to improve trade flows, investment environments, and adhere to customs rules, regulations and control to facilitate lawful trade.

- Recognized China's "remarkable economic progress and development even further by offering to assist in the development of other countries to help build stronger economies and, therefore, more and richer markets for commercial and culture exchanges along the ancient Silk Route.

- Acknowledged that "the most sustainable growth of a country should not be at the expense of another, and that national progress is not zero-sum game." "Sustainable progress requires an understanding that only in a common prosperity lies the sustainable growth and property of great nations," the MOU read.

- Agree to expand the use of local currencies in bilateral trade and investment and provide financial

support for such purpose. "The Participants will establish a cooperation mechanism to deal with financial risk and crisis; and increase exchange and cooperation between credit investigation regulates and interbank institutional investors."

- Would also promote people-to-people exchanges, cultural cooperation, education, travel, and encourage stronger communication between their people.

The modes of cooperation include high-level visits, exchanges and dialogues among stakeholders; pilot programs, research and development, capacity building, and training in key areas; and investment and financial support for programs and programs.

Amicable settlement

The MOU also called for an amicable settlement through diplomatic consultations in case of any difference arising from the implementation of the pact.

The memorandum, however, "does not create legally binding obligations for the two parties. "It is an expression of their common aspiration to cooperate on the Belt and Road Initiative for their mutual benefit," the MOU read.

The MOU will remain in effect for the next four years unless a participant notifies to terminate such agreement three months before the expiration date. It may be renewed for a subsequent four-year period.

Oil, gas exploration

In another deal, Malacañang finally made public the "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development between the Philippines and China" amid calls for transparency.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo assured that the government committed no treason when it forged the pact with China to negotiate possible oil and gas exploration, dismissing the allegation made by communist leader Jose Maria Sison.

Under the deal signed last week, the two governments agreed "to negotiate on an accelerated basis arrangements to facilitate oil and gas exploration and exploitation in relevant maritime areas consistent with applicable rules of international law."

An inter-governmental joint steering committee, represented by both countries, will be established to negotiate the cooperation agreement and maritime areas for oil and gas exploration. The three-page document stated that the two sides aim

to complete the energy deal within 12 months.

"It's just an agreement to agree on certain things. There is nothing there that will be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there is nothing there," Panelo said during a Palace press briefing.

Panelo argued that the MOU would be the "framework" for the negotiations on possible oil development cooperation between the Philippines and China. He assured the public that the government would ensure any oil exploration deal would be constitutional and beneficial to the nation.

"It will be the basis of negotiations, talking points, and then after that there will be an agreement between the two countries," he said.

"It will start from those who assigned to initially make some talks then it will reach another level until it reaches (Foreign Affairs) Secretary (Teodoro) Locsin. That's the time to say anything whether for or against any agreement," he added.

Sison, founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines, had earlier alleged that the latest oil and gas exploration deal signed by the two countries was a "clear act of treason" on the part of President Duterte.

Sison, in a statement last weekend, said the MOU was also "a blatant betrayal of the sovereign rights and national patrimony of the Philippines and the Filipino people."

As other groups expressed concern about the country's oil agreement with China, Panelo insisted that the government would not allow the country to be on the losing end in any joint oil exploration deal.

60-40 sharing

He also assured that joint exploration of natural resources in the country was allowed as long as the constitutional limits such as the 60-40 sharing agreement in favor of Filipinos, are followed.

"Ang palaging position natin ay 'Is this beneficial to us?' 'Is this constitutionally allowable?' 'Yan ang palaging tanong. We cannot go beyond that,'" he said.

In negotiating an oil exploration deal, the two countries recognized that through dialogue and cooperation, they have made "substantial progress and meaningful gains in exploring opportunities and means to cooperate with each other in maritime activities" that contribute to peace and stability in the region.

The memorandum also mentioned the Charter of the United Nations, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the 2002 Declaration

on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

Under the MOU, the new committee will be co-chaired by the Foreign Ministries and co-vice chaired by the energy ministries with participation of relevant agencies. It will comprise an equal number of members nominated by the two governments.

"The committee will be responsible for negotiating and agreeing the cooperation agreements and the maritime areas to which they will apply (hereinafter referred to as the 'cooperation area'), and deciding the number of Working Groups to be established and for which part of the cooperation area each Working Group is established," it read.

The two sides would also create "Inter-Entrepreneurial Working Group" that will negotiate and agree on technical and commercial arrangements that will apply in the relevant working area.

China has also authorized the China National Offshore Corporation as the Chinese enterprise for each working group.

The Philippines, on the other hand, will authorize the enterprise

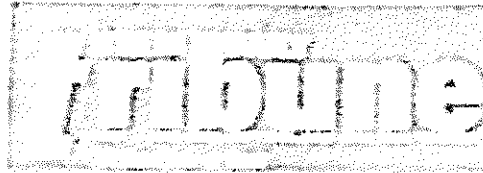
that has entered into a service contract with the Philippines with respect to the applicable working area. If there is no such entity for such area, the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) will be assigned as the Philippine enterprise for the relevant working group.

"The two governments will endeavor to agree on the cooperation agreements within twelve (12) months of this Memorandum of Understanding. The Committee and each Working Group will meet regularly to discharge their respective functions," the MOU read.

It also stated that the MOU and all other discussions, negotiations, and activities of the two governments or their authorized enterprises would be "without prejudice to the respective legal positions of both governments."

"This Memorandum of Understanding does not create rights or obligations under international or domestic law," it added.

The MOU also invoked confidentiality in the information shared by the two governments on the matter.



MoU not for WPS

By Nananeel Bordey, Mario J. Mallari and Elmer N. Manuel

The highly-touted memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the Philippines and China over possible cooperation on oil and gas exploration is not intended for the West.

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MoU not for WPS

Where they (PH-China working groups) intend to explore, where those areas are, again nobody knows

From page 1

Philippine Sea (WPS), Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said.

Locsin maintained that the deal does not cover any specific area.

He explained that when he crafted the MoU, he never thought of any particular place for a possible joint exploration.

"Where they (PH-China working groups) intend to explore, where those areas are, again nobody knows. When this was drafted, no area was in contemplation," Locsin said during a broadcast interview.

He added that the MoU put primacy to mutual respect and benefit to both parties in compliance with international law.

Framework for talks

The MoU, signed by the Philippines and China during the two-day state visit of China President Xi Jinping, was aimed at creating the framework for future talks on joint oil and gas exploration.

It stipulates adherence to international law and that it will be without prejudice to both governments' legal positions.

The deal should be in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, fairness and mutual benefit, flexibility and pragmatism and consensus, through equal and friendly consultation.

The two governments have decided to negotiate on an accelerated basis arrangement to facilitate oil and gas exploration and exploitation in relevant maritime areas consistent with applicable rules of international law.

"When I draw an agreement like this, I do it under the rules of laws. You put a veil of ignorance, you don't know who the parties are to make it fair," Locsin said.

"So what particular contracts will be affected by this? I don't know and I don't want to know," he pointed out.

At the same time, the Foreign Affairs chief reiterated that the "Chinese draft" presented to the public by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV does not deserve any response from him.

Non-sense exposé

"How can I respond to non-sense?"

It's not even a draft. It may have been written by Trillanes' staff... I am dealing with a foreign power. He's dealing with his staff member," he said.

Earlier, Locsin dismissed Trillanes' document while confirming there was indeed an initial draft from the Chinese side, but it was not the copy presented by the opposition senator.

Critics of the Duterte administration scored the signing of the MoU even before the contents were made public, insinuating the government is falling into a China trap. Some lawmakers even called for an inquiry into the agreements.

It said Chinese

"It was waived to me... I've never seen anything like that. It's like 16-point large, this big, three spaces between and there were pointers... and said, 'Chinese...' I just put it aside because I was trained at the Angara Law Office to look at memoranda of agreements in a certain way," Locsin said, adding that he has no idea where Trillanes obtained the document.

Trillanes released the supposed draft of an alleged framework agreement on joint maritime oil and gas exploration between China and the Philippines, noting that it came from an informant.

MoU safe

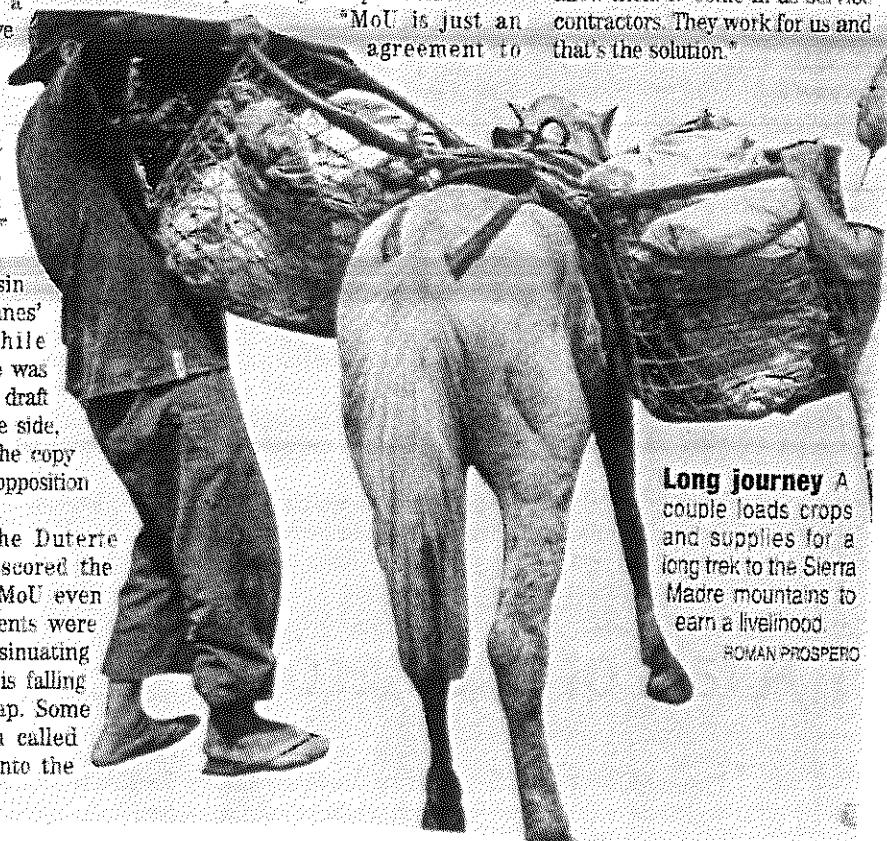
Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio, who has been a tough critic of Chinese actions in the WPS, said the MoU was safe as long as the government will be vigilant in supervising the operations.

"MoU is just an agreement to

strike a cooperation deal with China on oil and gas activities in areas that we agreed upon," Carpio clarified.

He explained that in the MoU, there was a clause that provides China can cooperate in the exploration. They could only act as subcontractors who will help in the operations, but the Philippine government will be the one supervising it.

"The practical solution is for China to get the income by working... and get the gas for us, use their machinery, the people, and spend for it. And if China will now agree, then we found the formula in settling the maritime issue in the entire South China Sea. We can even give 60 percent of the income, as long as we have the sovereign rights," Carpio said. "So, I said it's safe as long as we follow that trajectory. We will allow them to come in as service contractors. They work for us and that's the solution."



Long journey A couple loads crops and supplies for a long trek to the Sierra Madre mountains to earn a livelihood.

ROMAN PROSPERO

27 November 2018

Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Palace: MOUs with China not legally binding

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

SOME of the controversial memoranda of understanding that were signed by the Philippines and China last week does not legally bind the countries to anything.

Malacañang released yesterday copies of the two MOUs.

The MOUs on the cooperation on oil and gas development, and on the Belt and Road infrastructure initiative only provide the establishment of mechanisms to formally start discussions for possible joint ventures in the future.

Presidential spokesman and Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo stressed that the Duterte administration did not commit any treason when

it signed and exchanged 29 MOUs and notes with China.

Communist leader Jose Maria Sison earlier alleged that government committed treason when it signed the MOUs with China, particularly on the oil and gas exploration.

Sison said the MOU was also “a blatant betrayal of the sovereign rights and national patrimony of the Philippines and the Filipino people.”

“Maybe he has not read the agreement signed. It’s just an agreement to agree on certain things. There is nothing there that will be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there is nothing there,” Panelo said.

He said the MOUs just provide the

framework and talking points or basis of negotiations for a possible agreement between the two countries.

Panelo said government would not allow the country to be at a disadvantage, and assured that any deal would be done within the constitutional limits, like the 60-40 sharing agreement in favor of Filipinos.

Under both MOUs, certain committees and technical working groups would be formed to undertake the negotiations.

Both agreements also included a provision stating that the two countries are not legally obligated to anything when they agreed to the MOU.

“It is an expression of their common aspirations to cooperate on the belt and

road initiatives for their mutual benefit,” the MOU on the Belt and Road Initiatives stated, while the MOU on gas and oil development said “this MOU does not create rights or obligations under international law or domestic law.”

There have been calls for the administration to be transparent about the deals with China amid concerns that the Philippines’ interest and sovereignty might have been compromised.

Under the oil and gas MOU, the two countries agreed to negotiate arrangements that would facilitate “oil and gas exploration and exploitation in relevant maritime areas consistent with applicable

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PALACE

rules of international law.”

The negotiations would be done in 12 months.

The MOU said an inter-governmental joint steering committee, represented by both countries, will be formed to lead the negotiations on the establishment of an agreement that would identify maritime areas for oil and gas exploration.

The committee will be co-chaired by the Foreign Ministries and co-vice chaired by the energy ministries with participation of relevant agencies. It will also have an equal number of members nominated by the two governments.

An “Inter-Entrepreneurial Working Group” would be formed to negotiate and agree on technical and commercial arrangements that will apply in the relevant working area.

The memorandum added that China has also authorized the China National Offshore Oil Corporation as the Chinese enterprise for each working group while the Philippines would be authorizing an enterprise that has entered into a service contract with the Philippines with respect to the applicable working area.

“If there is no such entity for such area, the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) will be assigned as the Philippine enterprise for the relevant working group.”

The MOU on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), meanwhile, formalizes the Philippines’ intention to participate in China’s revival of the ancient Silk Road trade route.

It stated that the two governments agreed to pursue projects under the BRI “with the strictest respect for national laws, rules, regulations, and policies,” and would be “guided” by the principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. It also said any agreement would be done in complete transparency.

It also provides that the two countries shall expand the use of local currencies in two-way trade and investment; provide investment and financial support for some projects and programs; and establish a cooperation involving the two nations’ credit investigation regulators and interbank institutional investors as well as establish a “cooperation mechanism” that would deal with financial risk and crisis.

China initially established the BRI to boost infrastructure and facilities that would link Asia and Europe markets and eventually boost trade and investments among the countries.

‘CHINA CAN WALK AWAY’

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. told ANC’s Headstart that China can walk away from negotiations on oil and gas cooperation with the country if it would insist on an equal sharing, which is not allowed by Philippine law.

The 1987 Constitution explicitly states that the exploration, development and utilization of natural resources including in the exclusive economic zone should be reserved exclusively to Filipinos and that the country has full control and supervision over its natural resources.

Locsin said the historic 2016 ruling by the Netherlands-based Permanent Court of Arbitration which demolished China’s claims in the South China Sea is now part of international law, though it is not recognized by China.

“No, China won’t respect it. They said we did not take part in that agreement and who are we to impose that upon them? The point is it is now a part of international law,” he said, adding he saw no point in bringing the arbitral ruling in the MOU.

Locsin said the arbitral ruling was not so much a victory against China but rather a victory for international law, as the ruling

clarified the maritime features involved.

Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio said joint development of areas that fall within the country’s exclusive economic zone would violate the 1987 Constitution because it would diminish the country’s full control of the resources.

Carpio said if cooperation with Beijing in the exploration is done through service contractors, then the country’s sovereignty is “safe.”

“I don’t have any objection with that kind of arrangement because if China comes in through our service contractors, those service contractors expressly recognize that the area falls within our sovereignty or sovereign rights,” Carpio said.

He said Beijing could even come in as a sub-contractor of Forum Energy that holds an exploration permit of the Recto or Reed Bank in Palawan.

Forum Energy is the London-listed unit of businessman Manny Pangilinan’s PXP Energy Corporation.

Carpio said the Philippine government should be able to convince the Chinese that their government’s historical claim in the South China Sea is just a big lie.

Carpio told a forum at the House of Representatives that the Chinese government will not abide by the arbitral ruling because “that will delegitimize them in the eyes of the Chinese people who really believe they own the South China Sea.”

He said every Chinese is subjected to indoctrination, making them believe from a young age that Chinese activities in the South China Sea started 2,000 years ago and that China was the first country to discover and name the islands and other reefs in the area and therefore, own all of it.

Carpio said if the Chinese government will comply with the ruling, the Chinese people may even overthrow it “for giving away the sovereignty.”

“They have this mantra, ‘We will not give up a square inch of our sacred territory that was bequeathed to us by our ancestors through the ages,’” he said.

Carpio said the Philippine government should fight Chinese aggression by hitting the other side with hard facts.

He said when the Chinese government presented its nine-dash line claim before the United Nations Tribunal, “that came as an opportunity to expose this as a historical lie, as a fraud, a gigantic fraud on the human race – it’s totally false, there’s no basis for it.”

Carpio warned that the nine-dash line is still growing and that China could add more dashes, which may even put in danger Benham Rise, now called Philippine Rise, which is within Philippine territory.

Also on Headstart, Locsin questioned the authenticity of a supposed draft MOU on oil and gas development disclosed by opposition senator Antonio Trillanes IV last week, saying it could have been drafted by one of Trillanes’ staff.

Locsin said there was only one deal that was agreed upon, and he drafted it.

“How can I respond to a nonsense? It could have been drafted by a staff of Sen. Trillanes. I’m dealing with a foreign power. I’m not dealing with a staff member,” he said.

Trillanes claimed the draft that he bared came from an informant inside the administration.

The title of the document presented by Trillanes was “Framework Agreement on Joint Maritime Oil and Gas Exploration between China and the Philippines” while the MOU that was signed was titled “Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the People’s Republic of China.” — *With Ashzel Hachero and Wendell Vigil*

Sabi ni Acting Chief Justice Carpio Phi-China MOU walang paglabag

Wala umanong paglabag sa nilagdaang Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sa pagitan ng Pilipinas at ng bansang China kaugnay sa oil and gas development sa West Philippine Sea.

Sa ginanap ng forum ng Association of Congressional Chief of Staff, nilinaw ni acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio na hindi joint exploration ang nilagdaan ng Pilipinas.

Paliwanag ni Carpio ang joint exploration at exploration ay paglabag sa Saikang batas at kung pagpayagan ito ay mawawalan na ng full control ang gobyerno nito.

Nitinaw naman niya na sa ilalim ng nilagdaang MOU ay protektado ang bansa dito at kung naisin din ng China na maging service contractors ay pinapayagan naman ito sa ilalim ng batas.

Nagpahayag naman ng pangamba si dating Solicitor General Florin Hilbay sa nilagdaang kasunduan.

dahil tila kinikilala umanong Pilipinas na balido ang pag-claim ng China sa pinagtatalunang West Philippine Sea.

Samantala, iginhiit ka-hapon ng Malacanang na walang ginawang pagtataksil si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa paglagda ng gobyerno at China sa MOU.

Ayon kay Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo, Ang MOU ay isang framework palamang upang magkaroon ng kasunduan sa pagtanong ng dalawang bansa ukol sa oil and gas exploration. Hinimok naman ni Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines Permanent Committee

on Public Affairs Executive Secretary Fr. Jerome Secillano ang administrasyong Duterte na isapubliko ang mga kasunduan sa Chinese government dahil karapatan ng sambayanang Pilipino na malaman kung ano ang mga pakinabang ng Pilipinas sa naging pagdalaw ni Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Ayon kay Father Secillano, tungkulin ng pamahalaan na ang mga naging kasunduan ay hindi lang para sa kalyakan ng ekonomiya ng bansa kundi maging ang pangangailaga sa pambansang interes, kasamtalan at seguridad ng bansa. *(Genma Garcia, Rudy Appal at Dora Franche)*

'No treason in oil, gas dev't deal with China'

No treason was committed when the Philippines and China signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on joint oil and gas development as the document was meant to just provide talking points for negotiations, Malacañang said yesterday.

Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Maria Sison earlier

Carpio: Joint exploration in WPS unconstitutional. Story on Page 4.

said the MOU signing was a "clear act of treason" by Duterte and a "blatant betrayal of the sovereign rights and national patrimony of the Philippines and the Filipino people."

Sison said the memorandum, signed during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping on Nov. 20, disregards the Philippines' victory in its case against China before the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration.

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He also argued that the MOU puts China at par with the Philippines with regard to sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea, including its resources.

But presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo disputed Sison's claim, saying the MOU is just a framework that would pave the way for negotiations.

"Maybe he has not read the agreement signed. It's just an agreement to agree on certain things. There is nothing there that will be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there is nothing there," Panelo said.

"The agreement is just an agreement to agree. It's just a framework. As correctly stated by secretary of foreign affairs, it will be the basis of negotiations, talking points, and then after that, there will be an agreement between the two countries," he added.

"It will start from those assigned to initially make some talks, then it will reach another level until it reaches secretary (Teddy) Locsin (Jr.). That's the time to say anything whether for or against in any agreement," Panelo explained.

He said the Duterte administration would make sure that all agreements are legal and beneficial to Filipinos.

"Our position has been: is this beneficial to us; is this constitutionally allowable? That's always the question. We cannot go beyond that," the presidential spokesman said.

Panelo previously said the Philippines is free to walk out of the MOU on oil and gas development with China if the deal would turn out to be detrimental to its interests.

- Alexis Romero

PALACE: PH-China oil, gas devt pact no act of treason

THERE is nothing wrong with the Philippine government's pursuit of joint exploration of natural resources with China, Malacañang said on Monday, as it downplayed communist leader Jose

Maria "Joma" Sison's claim that it was a "clear act of treason" on the part of President Rodrigo Duterte.

In a news briefing, Palace spokesman

► **Treason A2**

Salvador Panelo said there was no legal basis to support Sison's allegation against the government.

"Maybe he has not read the agreement signed. It's just an agreement to agree on certain things," Panelo told reporters.

"There's nothing there that will be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there is nothing there," he added.

Panelo insisted that the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Philippines and China was merely a "framework" for the negotiations on a possible development of the disputed region's oil and gas resources.

"So it's just a framework, as directly stated by the secretary of Foreign Affairs (Teodoro Locsin Jr.). It will be the basis of negotiations, talking points, and then

after that, there will be an agreement between the two countries," Panelo said.

"We'll start from those assigned to initially make some talks, then it will reach another level, until it reaches Secretary Locsin. That's the time to say anything — whether for or against any agreement," he added.

Sison had said the MOU was "a blatant betrayal of the sovereign rights and national patrimony of the Philippines and the Filipino people."

But Panelo insisted that the government would not allow the country to be on the losing end in any joint oil exploration deal.

He said joint exploration of natural resources was allowed as long as the constitutional limits such as the 60-40 sharing agreement in favor of Filipinos, are followed.

Copy of agreement released

On Monday, the Palace finally released a copy of "Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development between the Philippines and China" amid calls for transparency.

Under the deal signed last week, the two governments agreed "to negotiate, on an accelerated basis, arrangements to facilitate oil and gas exploration and exploitation in relevant maritime areas consistent with applicable rules of international law."

The two countries recognized that through dialogue and cooperation, they have made "substantial progress and meaningful gains in exploring opportunities and means to cooperate with each other in maritime activities" that contribute to peace and stability in the region.

The memorandum also mentioned the Charter of the United Nations, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

An intergovernmental joint steering committee, represented by both countries, will be established to negotiate the cooperation agreement and maritime areas for oil and gas exploration.

Under the MOU, the new committee will be co-chaired by the foreign ministries of both countries, with energy ministries as vice chairs.

An equal number of members from "relevant agencies" nominated by the two governments.

"The committee will be responsible for negotiating and agreeing the cooperation agreements and the maritime areas to which they will apply (hereinafter referred

to as the 'cooperation area'), and deciding the number of Working Groups to be established and for which part of the cooperation area each Working Group is established," it read.

No rights created

The two sides will also form an "inter-Entrepreneurial Working Group" that will negotiate and agree on technical and commercial arrangements that will apply in the relevant working area.

China has authorized the China National Offshore Corp. as the Chinese enterprise for each working group.

The Philippines on the other hand, will authorize the enterprise that has entered into a service contract with the Philippines with respect to the applicable working area. If there is no entity for such area, the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corp. will be assigned as the Philippine enterprise for the relevant working group.

"The two governments will endeavour to agree on the coop-

eration agreements within twelve (12) months of this Memorandum of Understanding. The Committee and each Working Group will meet regularly to discharge their respective functions," the MOU read.

It also stated that the MOU and all other discussions, negotiations and activities of the two governments or their authorized enterprises would be "without prejudice to the respective legal positions of both governments."

"This Memorandum of Understanding does not create rights or obligations under international or domestic law," it added.

The MOU also invoked confidentiality in the information shared by the two governments on the matter.

The signing of the MOU came amid long-standing disputes between the Philippines, China and other claimant nations in the hotly contested West Philippine Sea, which is rich in oil and gas deposits.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE

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Palace: Oil deal with China is no treason

By GENALYN KABILING

The government committed no treason when it forged a pact with China to negotiate a possible oil and gas exploration in the future, Malacañang asserted on Monday.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo dismissed the allegation made by communist leader Jose Maria Sison against the government as the Palace finally released a copy of "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development between the Philippines and China" amid calls for transparency.

Under the deal signed last week, the two governments agreed "to negotiate on an accelerated basis arrangements to facilitate oil and gas exploration and exploitation in relevant maritime areas consistent with applicable rules of interna-

tional law."

An inter-governmental joint steering committee, represented by both countries, will be established to negotiate the cooperation agreement and maritime areas for oil and gas exploration. The three-page document stated that the two sides aim to complete the energy deal within 12 months.

"It's just an agreement to agree on certain things. There is nothing there that will be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there is nothing there," Panelo said during a Palace press briefing.

Panelo argued that the MOU would be the "framework" for the negotiations on a possible oil development cooperation between the Philippines and China. He assured the public that the government would ensure any oil exploration deal would be constitutional

and beneficial to the nation.

"It will be the basis of negotiations, talking points, and then after that there will be an agreement between the two countries," he said.

"It will start from those who assigned to initially make some talks then it will reach another level until it reaches (Foreign Affairs) Secretary (Teodoro) Locsin. That's the time to say anything whether for or against any agreement," he added.

Sison, founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines, earlier alleged that the latest oil and gas exploration deal signed by the two countries was a "clear act of treason" on the part of President Duterte.

Sison, in a statement last weekend, said the MOU was also "a blatant betrayal of the sovereign rights and national patrimony of the Philippines and the Filipino people."

As other groups expressed concern about the country's oil agreement with China, Panelo insisted that the government would not allow the country to be on the losing end in any joint oil exploration deal.

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He also assured that joint exploration of natural resources in the country was allowed as long as the constitutional limits such as the 60-40 sharing agreement in favor of Filipinos are followed.

'Treason' sa oil deal, pinabulaanan

NI GENALYN D. KABILING

Walang nangyaring "treason" nang makipagkasundo ang ating pamahalaan sa China kaugnay ng gagawing joint oil at gas exploration sa West Philippine Sea sa pagitan ng dalawang bansa.

Ito ang paglilinaw kahapon ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo kasabay ng pagdepensa niya sa naging puna ng communist leader na si Jose Maria Sison kaugnay ng usapin.

Ang reaksiyon ni Panelo ay kasunod ng paglalahas ng Malacañang bng kopya ng "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development between the Philippines and China" sa gitna ng panawagang magkaroon ng transparency sa nasaling kasunduan.

Sa naturang kasunduan, na pinirmahan nitong nakaraang linggo, nagkasundo ang dalawang bansa na magkaroon ng pag-uusap kaugnay ng "accelerated basis arrangements" upang mapadali ang pagsasagawa ng "oil and gas exploration and exploitation in relevant maritime areas consistent with applicable rules of international law".

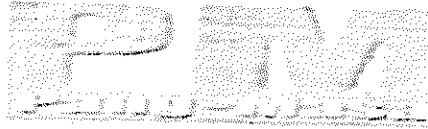
Kasabay din ito ng pagtatatag ng inter-governmental joint steering committee na kinakatawan ng dalawang bansa, upang matalakay ang "cooperation agreement at maritime areas" para sa

tuluyang pagsasagawa ng oil at gas exploration.

Nakapaioob sa kasunduan na dapat maisagawa ang energy deal sa loob lamang ng 12 buwan, o isang taon.

"It's just an agreement to agree on

certain things. There is nothing there that will be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the critics say there is nothing there," paglalahad pa ni Panelo nang humarap siya sa pulong balitaan sa Palasyo kahapon. 3



Pahayag ni Joma, sinopla...

WALANG 'TREASON' SA PH-CHINA DEAL-PALASYO

Kontra kahapon ng Malacañang ang naging pahayag ni communist leader Jose Maria Sison na ang memorandum of understanding (MOU) sa oil at gas sa pagitan ng Pilipinas at China sa West Philippine Sea (WPS) ay malinaw na pagtataksil

sa ginawa ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte at ang kanyang administrasyon. "Maybe he has not read the agreement signed. It's just an agreement to agree on certain things. There was nothing there that would be a basis for any allegation of treason. Even the cri-

Nina RUDY ANDAL at GEMMA GARCIA tics say there's nothing there," wika ni Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo. Idinagdag pa ni Panelo, ang MOU ay isang framework pa lamang upang magkaroon ng kasunduan sa pagitan ng dalawang bansa ukol sa oil and gas exploration. Sinabi tin sa forum ng Association of Congressional Chief of Staff ni

acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio na walang paglabag sa MOU dahil sa hindi joint exploration ang nilagdaan ng Pilipinas. Paliwanag ni Carpio, ang joint exploration at exploitation ay paglabag sa Saligang Batas at kung papayagan ito ay mawawalan na ng full control ang gobyerno nito. Ang binusulong umano ng China ay joint exploration, subalit mahig-

pit umano itong tinutulan ni Carpio at dapat pa rin maging mapagbantay ang publiko dahil may posibilidad pa rin na ipursigeng China na isingit sa MOU ang Joint Exploration and Development. Nilinaw naman niya na sa ilalim ng nilagdaang MOU ay protektado ang bansa rito at kung naisin din ng China na maging service contractors ay pinapayagan naman ito sa ilalim ng batas. 2

is prohibited in our Constitution, which requires that the Philippines shall have 'full control and supervision' in the exploration and exploitation of natural resources," Carpio said, in a text message.

Carpio's statement came after expressing approval earlier to the Memorandum of Understanding forged by the two governments during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping last week.

Carpio said the imminent joint development in areas in the WPS that fall within the exclusive economic zone of the country would violate the Constitution.

Carpio warned that "joint exploration and exploitation" as defined in the law "will diminish our full control and thus violate the Constitution."

With this, Carpio said that the 60-40 sharing scheme with Beijing in the proposed joint exploration and exploitation of resources in WPS could not be pursued without violating the Constitution.

Over the weekend, the most senior SC justice expressed support for the MOU, saying it had safeguards to ensure that the sovereignty of the Philippines would not be compromised.

"I think we're pretty safe. The government has included service contractors, so if we cooperate, if the cooperation with China on oil and gas activities will be through service contractors, we're very safe," he said.

Carpio pointed out that a service contract for the joint exploration of gas and oil in contested areas in the South China Sea could actually boost the country's

rights over its exclusive economic zones in the WPS.

"I don't have any objection with that kind of arrangement because if China comes in through our service contractors, those service contracts expressly recognize that the area falls within Philippine sovereignty or sovereign rights," he said.

In a forum at the House of Representatives, Carpio said the only way to get China to follow the UN arbitral decision recognizing the Philippines' rights in the WPS is to educate the Chinese people and to show them that they do not own 85.7 percent of the South China Sea as their government claims.

"The Chinese government will not comply with the ruling until the Chinese people understand that that historical narrative is totally false," Carpio said.

Carpio said the Philippines has the rightful claim over the WPS as the earliest maps dating back to the Spanish period show.

These maps were the 1734 Carta Hydrographica y Chorographica de las Yslas Filipinas printed by the Jesuit priest Murillo Velarde and the 1688 Coronelli Terrestrial Globe. Both maps submitted as evidence in the arbitral case.

Carpio said the Philippines won the arbitration case and the country must assert its territorial rights over the disputed waters. "The tribunal said China does not own the South China Sea. Now how do you convince the Chinese government to comply with the ruling when the China population believe that they own it?" he said.

PH will not tolerate harassment, Panelo says of Panatag Shoal incident

By GENALYN D. KABILING

The government will never tolerate any harassment of Filipinos here or abroad, Malacañang

said Monday amid plans to probe the incident involving the Chinese coast guards and a local television crew in Panatag Shoal.

Presidential Spokesman Salva-

dor Panelo said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) would look into the incident that the foreign coast guards allegedly barred a GMA-7 television crew from entering Panatag Shoal.

The government would also try to find out if China has an existing policy prohibiting journalists from conducting interviews in the area, according to Panelo.

"There is an investigation... We have to validate what happened there," Panelo said during a Palace press briefing.

"Hindi tayo papayag na hina-harass tayo kahit saang lugar, ke sa bansa natin o sa bansa nila [We will not allow anyone to harass us in any place, whether in our country or their country]," he said.

He assured that the government finds "objectionable" any action that violates the country's rights. "Anything that is violative of our rights as a nation, anything that violates of our citizens, we will always find it objectionable," he said.

Asked if the latest Panatag incident violated the country's rights, Panelo said: "We don't know it yet. Baka yung coast guard lang yun, baka sarili lang niya na banat yun [Maybe it was just the coast guard making such threat]."

A television crew tried to sail towards Panatag Shoal, located within the country's exclusive economic zone, but were reportedly blocked by two Chinese coast guard boats.

The Chinese coast guards reportedly told the Filipino crew to leave China's territory, saying they must get permission from China to conduct interviews. The crew left the area to ease the tension.

Panelo said he texted Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua to seek his comment about the incident. The ambassador told him about the existing diplomatic process where the DFA files a formal communication to the Chinese government.

Panelo encouraged the television network to file a formal complaint about the incident so the government could take the next appropriate course of action. Once GMA-7 sends a letter complaint, Panelo said the government would refer the matter to the DFA.

"We have to validate whether or not — because according to that Coast Guard, it was prohibited. I said, is it a policy of China to prohibit mediamen from going there or not? We don't know that yet," he said.

"The DFA will write the government of China whether or not there is such a policy," he added.

He noted that the Chinese coast guards thought "they own that place so they're showing that they own it by making prohibitions on certain acts."

Panelo, meantime, said President Duterte has called for self-restraint in the South China Sea to avoid the escalation of the territorial dispute.

The government has also pressed for the completion of a code of conduct of parties, that includes freedom of navigation, to keep peace and stability in the region, according to Panelo.

Palace slams 'harassment' on Panatag

By Nat Mariano

MALACANANG on Monday said the government will not allow any harassment of Filipinos after the Chinese Coast Guard drove away a local television crew from Panatag Shoal, stressing the Department of Foreign Affairs would look into the incident.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said the government will first find out what exactly happened during the encounter and determine if China has a policy of prohibiting journalists from conducting interviews in the area.

"First, we have to validate what hap-

pened there... I said, is it the policy of China to prohibit media men from going there or not? We don't know that yet," said Panelo in a Palace press briefing.

The spokesman urged the GMA-7 television crew that accompanied fishermen to Panatag to lodge a complaint so the government can act "appropriately" as the DFA validates the incident with China.

"We have to validate whether or not [it's the policy of China to deny journalists from covering the area] because according to that [Chinese] Coast Guard, it was prohibited. So that's why I told them, you have to give us a letter-complaint,

Next page

expressing your concern so that we can act appropriately," Panelo said.

"We will refer your complaint to the DFA, and the DFA will write the government of China whether or not there is such a policy," he added.

Asked if the incident was a violation of Philippine rights, given that Panatag Shoal is within the country's exclusive economic zone, Panelo said. "We don't know it yet. Maybe it was just the [Chinese] Coast Guard making their own threats."

The spokesman, who is also the President's chief legal adviser, stressed that the Duterte administration will not allow anyone to harass Filipinos anywhere.

"We will not allow anyone to harass us in any place, whether in our country or their country," Panelo said.

"Anything that is violative of our rights as a nation, anything that violates our citizens, we will always find it ob-

jectionable," he added.

Panelo revealed that he texted Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua to find out about the incident.

The ambassador, Panelo said, only gave him a "general" reply, telling him about the existing diplomatic process where the DFA files a formal communication to the Chinese government.

Earlier this month, GMA's "Reporter's Notebook" TV crew sailed with local fishermen toward Panatag Shoal, located within the country's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone, to film the lives of the fishermen in the area since the Chinese started occupying the reefs.

Two Chinese coast guard boats, however, stopped the crew from taking videos, conducting interviews, and navigating further, saying the Filipinos "were in China's territory."

Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of the Philippines

1. Upon the invitation of His Excellency Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines, His Excellency Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, paid a State Visit to the Philippines on 20-21 November 2018.

During the visit, the two Leaders held a bilateral meeting, wherein they recalled the history of friendly exchanges between China and the Philippines, charted the course for the future of China-Philippines bilateral relations, had in-depth exchange of views on regional and international issues of common interest, and reached important consensus.

President Xi Jinping also had a joint meeting with the Honorable House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and the Honorable Senate President Vicente Castelo Sotto III.

2. The Philippines congratulates China for its impressive achievements over the past four decades of its reform and opening up, and wishes China well in realizing its Two Centenary Goals. China congratulates the Philippines on its outstanding progress in upholding national security as well as in promoting sustainable economic growth and social development under the leadership of President Duterte, and expresses best wishes for the greater development of the Philippines.

3. Both sides agree that the sound development of China-Philippines relations serves the fundamental interests of the two peoples. Both sides recognize that the bilateral relations have achieved a positive turnaround and a sound momentum of development through the joint efforts and mutual trust of both sides. Both sides acknowledge that intensified efforts are required in order to achieve meaningful gains from cooperation agreements that were initiated.

4. The two Leaders recognize that the elevation of China-Philippines relations to higher levels is in line with the fundamental interests and shared aspiration of the two countries and peoples. Thus, on the basis of mutual respect, sincerity, equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, the Leaders decided to establish the relationship of Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation.

5. Both sides reaffirm the importance of existing China-Philippines bilateral dialogue mechanisms such as the Foreign Ministry Consultations, Consular Consultations, Joint Commission on Economic and Trade Cooperation, Annual Defense Security

Talks, Joint Committee on Agriculture, Joint Committee on Fisheries, and the Joint Commission Meeting on Science and Technology, among others, in enhancing understanding, broadening cooperation, and striving for a stronger partnership.

6. The two Leaders agree to maintain close high-level communication through bilateral visits, phone calls, exchange of letters, and side meetings in multilateral fora, so as to strengthen the planning of bilateral relations, institute timely communication on major regional and international issues, and promote the sharing of experience in state governance. The Philippines reaffirmed its observance of the One-China principle.

7. Both sides welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative. Both sides also welcome the contributions of similar connectivity initiatives in the region, including the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025.

8. The two countries recognize that defense and military cooperation is a significant component of bilateral relations and contributes to the peace and stability of the region. Both sides will jointly implement the MOU on Defense Cooperation through practical cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, disaster response and mitigation, and peacekeeping operations.

9. Both sides recognize the need to advance cooperation and collaboration in matters relating to health. The two Leaders agree to continue jointly promoting and developing cooperation in the fields of health through exchanges and cooperation in the fields of traditional medicine, human resource development for public health experts and medical scientists, public health, information and communications technology (ICT) application in health care, and health management.

10. China reiterates its firm support to the Philippine government's efforts in fighting against illicit drugs and drug-related crimes, and expresses willingness to strengthen cooperation in areas including combating the smuggling of illegal drugs and their precursor chemicals, intelligence sharing, joint investigation and operation as well as drug rehabilitation. The Philippines speaks highly of the completion of the drug rehabilitation center in Sarangani Province

and the construction of the rehabilitation center in Agusan del Sur, both financed by China through grants, and conveys its appreciation to China for its assistance in personnel training and donation of drug detection, seizure, and testing equipment.

11. Both sides strongly condemn terrorism in all forms and commit to cooperate in the areas of information exchange and capacity building, among others, to jointly prevent and address such threats. The Philippines expresses appreciation for China's support and assistance to the Philippines in counter-terrorism efforts and in the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction of Marawi City.

12. Both sides agree to strengthen law enforcement cooperation, and will enhance cooperation and communication to combat transnational crimes, including job-related crimes, telecommunications fraud, illegal on-line gambling, cybercrimes, human trafficking and illegal wildlife trade. Both sides agree to speed up the discussions with a view to signing a bilateral agreement on transfer of sentenced persons.

13. Both sides hail the progress in bilateral trade and economic cooperation, and will continue to actively implement the Six-Year Development Program for Trade and Economic Cooperation (2017-2022). The two sides agree to promote bilateral trade and investment settlements denominated in domestic currencies, and further strengthen exchanges and cooperation between the two customs, to further facilitate economic and trade activities.

14. China expressed its commitment to import more high-quality agricultural products including tropical fruits from the Philippines through expeditious completion of the accreditation process to enhance two-way trade balance.

15. The two sides will speed up the implementation of the China-Philippines Industrial Park Development Program, which was signed during this visit, and will continue to provide an enabling environment for their enterprises to invest in each other's country.

16. Both sides recognize that infrastructure cooperation has been a highlight of China-Philippines bilateral cooperation. The two sides will work for the timely completion of the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project and the Binondo

Intramuros and Estrella-Pantaleon Bridges, facilitate the implementation of projects such as the New Centennial Water Source-Kaiwa Dam Project, the Safe Philippines Project Phase I and the Philippine National Railways South Long Haul Project, and other priority projects lined up for feasibility study support and implementation, and ensure effective implementation of ongoing projects. Both sides will work towards the formulation of relevant procedures and protocols for government concessional loan (Renminbi-denominated loan), and utilize preferential buyer's credit, commercial loans for development and co-financing arrangements between China and multilateral development banks, to provide financial support to key infrastructure projects.

17. Both sides will give full play to the role of the Sino-Philippine Center for Agricultural Technology (PhilSCAT) Technical Cooperation Phase (TCP) III, and promote cooperation in the fields of high quality seeds, agriculture infrastructure and machinery. Both sides will step up cooperation in fishery. The Philippines appreciates China's donation of the first batch of 100,000 grouper seeds in 2017 and assistance in relevant capacity building, and welcomes the upcoming donation of another 100,000 grouper seeds in November 2018 and 15,000 fresh water fish seeds for broodstock development early next year. Both sides will exchange best practices and cooperate in projects on poverty alleviation.

18. Both sides agree to promote cooperation in science and technology through exchange of experts and scientists, best practice sharing, joint researches, high tech park cooperation, joint organization of seminars, symposiums, and workshops, and other forms of cooperation mutually agreed upon under the framework of the Joint Commission Meeting on Science and Technology. Both sides agree to implement collaborative efforts on rice research, bamboo post-harvest and processing, renewable energy, green oil from cashew, traditional medicine, and technology transfer. The Ministry of Science and Technology of China also expresses readiness to host young Filipino scientists to China for the Talented Young Scientists Program (TYSP), so as to support the capacity building of the Philippines. Both sides welcome the adoption of the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation during the 21st ASEAN-China Leaders' Meeting.

19. Both sides will encourage cooperation in the area of information and communications technology (ICT) to improve their respective technology and service capabilities.

20. Both sides recognize that the growing Chinese tourist arrivals in the Philippines over the past years have contributed to the economic growth of the Philippines. Both sides will encourage their citizens to travel to each other's country, strengthen cooperation in tourism infrastructure development and encourage airlines to open more direct flights between cities of the two countries, in order to further facilitate people-to-people

exchanges.

21. The two sides fully recognize the importance of education exchanges including technical vocational education and training (TVET) and cooperation in enhancing the understanding and friendship between the two countries, and encourage relevant government agencies and educational institutions of various types and levels to engage in active cooperation.

China will provide an additional 50 Chinese Government Scholarships Grants for Philippine students on an annual basis from 2019-2021. Both sides will implement the Executive Program of Cultural Agreement between China and the Philippines for 2019-2023 signed during the visit and encourage their cultural institutions and groups to increase exchange of visits.

China will set up a Chinese Culture Center in the Philippines. Both sides support more twinning agreements between their cities and provinces.

22. Both sides agree to strengthen bilateral relations in the field of labor and employment and commit to implement the Memorandum of Understanding on the Employment of Filipino Teachers of English Language in China which was signed on 10 April 2018 in Boao, China, and welcome the implementation of arrangements for Filipino teachers of the English language working in China. The MOU signifies China's cognizance of the qualifications and competence of Filipino teachers to work in tertiary educational institutions as teachers of the English language. The MOU also endeavors for both countries to ensure the protection and promotion of the welfare of teachers while working onsite.

23. The Philippines welcomes the official launch of the Chinese Consulate-General in Davao City. Reciprocal arrangements for diplomatic premises in both countries will be made in the spirit of the 1975 Joint Communiqué, on the basis of international practice and reciprocity with priority given to the most immediate concerns.

24. Both sides exchanged views on issues regarding the South China Sea, and reaffirmed that contentious issues are not the sum total of China-Philippines bilateral relations and should not exclude mutually beneficial cooperation in other fields. Both sides also reaffirm the importance of maintaining and promoting regional peace and stability, freedom of navigation in and over-flight above the South China Sea. Both sides stay committed to addressing disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, and in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1982 UNCLOS.

25. Both sides note that the situation in the South China Sea has become generally more stable as a result of joint cooperative efforts between China, the Philippines, and other ASEAN Member States. Both sides, together with ASEAN Member States, will

work for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. Both sides agree to maintain the positive momentum of the negotiations on the Single Draft Code of Conduct (COC) Negotiating Text, with a view towards the early adoption of an effective COC based on consensus.

26. Both sides agree to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability. Both sides also note the importance of confidence-building measures to increase mutual trust and confidence. In this regard, both sides affirm the importance of the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea and the Joint Coast Guard Committee on Maritime Cooperation.

The two sides agree to maximize and strengthen the on-going coast guard, defense and military dialogue and liaison mechanisms, with a view to facilitating quick responses to situations on the ground and contributing to the enhancement of mutual trust and confidence between their coast guards and defense agencies.

27. Both sides welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development between the two governments, and agree to discuss maritime cooperation including maritime oil and gas exploration, sustainable use of mineral, energy and other marine resources.

They also agree to strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms in other maritime-related areas. Both sides agree to cooperate in the implementation of relevant international maritime instruments to ensure the safety of life at sea, marine environmental protection, and human resources development.

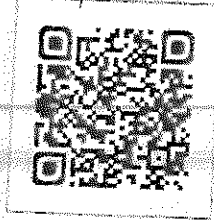
28. The two sides speak positively of the development of China-ASEAN relations, and congratulate the 15th Anniversary of the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership and the China-ASEAN Year of Innovation. Both sides welcome the adoption of the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 during the 21st China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting. China supports the Philippines as the Country Coordinator of the China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations and the coordinator for cooperation between China and BIMF-EAGA. The Philippines welcomes and supports the enhancement of cooperation between China and BIMF-EAGA, which will contribute to ASEAN Community Building and China-ASEAN cooperation.

29. Both sides agree to promote international peace and security, a rules-based multilateral free trade regime, and development cooperation, as well as enhance cooperation within relevant multilateral frameworks including the United Nations (UN) system.

30. Both sides welcome the signing of various agreements and Memoranda of Understanding during the visit, as listed in the Annex.

31. The two sides agree that the milestone visit of President Xi Jinping has contributed to

the advancement of friendship and cooperation between China and the Philippines. President Xi Jinping appreciated the warm and friendly hospitality accorded to him and his delegation by President Duterte and the Philippine government, and extended an invitation to President Duterte to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation to be held in Beijing, China, in April 2019. President Duterte accepted the invitation with pleasure.



CARPIO:

China peddling 'false' narrative on sea dispute

BY GLEE JALEA

ACTING Chief Justice Antonio Carpio on Monday urged Filipinos to assert the country's sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea), pointing out that the Chinese narrative on the disputed territory is "totally false."

During the West Philippine Sea Forum at the

...the Philippines' ... 2014 year-ago ...

False A2

be easily disproven by old maps.

Carpio, who joined the Philippine legal team that secured a victory against China from a United Nations (UN)-backed arbitration tribunal in 2016, noted that China's nine-dash-line map, encompassing an area in which it supposedly "enjoys sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the relevant waters as well as the seabed and subsoil thereof," is a recent claim that was submitted to the UN only in May 2009.

Beijing refuses to recognize the ruling of The Hague-based tribunal, which invalidated China's historical claims to the area.

China's narrative means China and the Philippines share a common border that lies just 64 kilometers (km.) off the coast of Balabac Island in Palawan, the southernmost island in Palawan; 70 km. off of Bolinao in Pangasinan, and 44 km. off Yami Island in Batanes, he said.

The Philippine team submitted over 170 ancient maps — the highest number of ancient maps ever submitted to an international tribunal — including Chinese maps from the Song to the Qing dynasties, Philippine and Southeast Asian maps, and European maps of Asia — to prove that China "never owned or controlled [South China Sea] at any time in its history."

"Even under China's Maps of National Humiliation, the Spratly Islands and Scarborough [Panatag] Shoal [in the South China Sea] were not part of Chinese territory," Carpio said.

National humiliation maps

were produced for mass education in China to "mourn the loss of national territories" since the early 20th century.

China's nine-dash-line map dating to 1947 is the first to claim the Spratlys. Scarborough Shoal appeared on the map without an exclusive name, unlike all other features drawn as part of China.

The Philippines in reality owns most of the features in the Spratlys, Carpio said. It named Scarborough Shoal "*Panacot*" as early as 1734, he said.

Carpio called on the public to "help the Philippines, among other claimant countries, to explain to the Chinese people that China has no historic claim to the South China Sea."

Carpio's statements came just days after Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit, which the Chinese leader said was meant to "deepen political mutual trust" amid differences "that needed to be handled 'properly' through consultations and dialogue."

He said the West Philippine Sea should be a "sea of friendship and cooperation" that would create a bond of friendship between China and the Philippines.

Vice President Maria Leonor "Leni" Robredo and some lawmakers have called for a protest against China after a Filipino TV news crew aired a documentary showing a Chinese Coast Guard preventing it from filming and conducting an interview in the disputed area.

GMA News' "Reporter's Notebook" team accompanied a group of Filipino fishermen to Panatag Shoal on November 8.

Navy's biggest vessel mistaken for China's sea asset

LEGAZPI CITY: The Philippine Navy's biggest vessel, which docked at the Legazpi City port a day after Malacañang declared Bicol under the state of emergency, was mistaken by Albayanos for a sea craft from China.

The *BRP Davao del Sur* (LD 602) arrived in the Legazpi City port on Saturday morning.

Ensign Estella Sasil, spokesman for Naval Forces Southern Luzon (Navforsol), told *The Manila Times* that the vessel is in Legazpi to take part in the five-day capability demonstration dubbed as "Exercise Pagsisikap 2018."

Sasil issued the statement to answer nagging questions Albayanos had raised about the presence of the Philippine Navy's first and biggest amphibious assault sea craft.

Seeing the vessel docked at the port, Albayanos passing through the Embarcadero De Legazpi had mistaken it for a Chinese vessel.

"Is that a China sea vessel? What are they are up to in Le-

gazpi? Is President Rodrigo Duterte allowing China's vessels to dock in an inter-island territory of the Philippines?" resident Edison Bombales asked the Embarcadero guard who was also clueless about its presence in Legazpi City.

"The *BRP Davao Sur* (LD 602) is our biggest sea craft. It can transport 500 troops and equipment for amphibious operation

and a maximum of two aircrafts," Sasil said.

The vessel, which is manned by Commodore Homer Gonzalez, was acquired and commissioned in 2017.

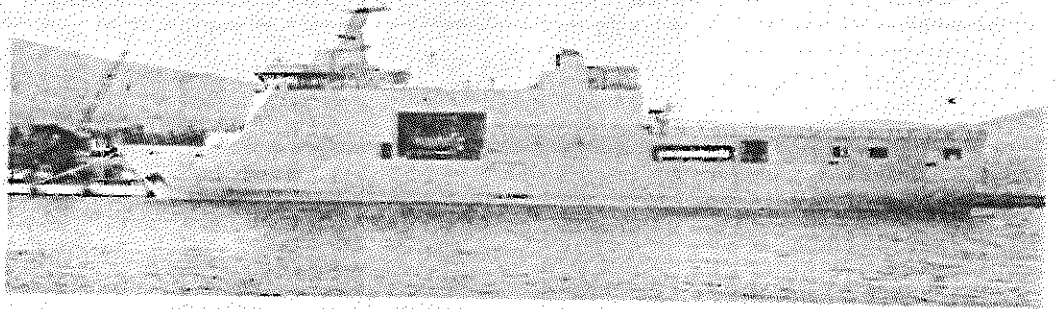
Exercise Pagsisikap 2018, is a fleet-marine amphibious exercise involving sailors, marines, naval aviators and reservists in the Bicol region that will demonstrate the

navy's anti-terror and disaster response capabilities.

As part of the exercise, a mock amphibious raid will be conducted in Barangay Lidong, Santo Domingo town on Wednesday.

Earlier, Malacañang declared the Bicol region including Samar, Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental under the state of emergency.

RHAYDZ B. BARCIA



BRP Davao del Sur



Supercharged economy via DU30

By AJ Paio

The Duterte administration has supercharged the economy through delivering on recommendations from the private sector two years ago when President Rodrigo Duterte started his term, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said.

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I ask you, if we do not have the luxury of time, give us your blessing of trust and confidence

From page 1

Dominguez, during the Philippine Development Forum Sulong Pilipinas 2018 held in Clark, Pampanga yesterday, said Mr. Duterte is committed to fulfilling the goal of inclusive growth notably on improving the ease of doing business, implementing a national identification (ID) system and instituting tax reform.

The government also responded to the call of the business sector to modernize the country's infrastructure.

Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade in the same event said the government leadership and members of the Cabinet are willing to undertake projects which need to be done.

"I ask you, if we do not have the luxury of time, give us your blessing of trust and confidence. Trust and confidence that we will do our job, not for us, not for you but for the entire nation," Tugade said.

Tugade presented the accomplishments of the Department of Transportation (DoTr) such as the Bohol-Panglao International Airport, the Cavite Gateway Terminal, the return of the Davao-Manila Passenger route, the opening of the Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) and the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program.

Dominguez added the government also responded to the call of the business sector to modernize the country's infrastructure and logistics network with its ambitious "Build, Build, Build" program that is now powering the economy and providing a strong base for sustained high growth.

The private recommendations, Dominguez recalled, were fleshed out by leaders of the business community during the first-ever "Sulong Pilipinas" consultative conference held in June 2016 in Davao City in the midst of preparations for the then new presidency of Mr. Duterte.

Such consultations with the private sector were also held in 2017 in Manila and has been expanded this year to include regional forums across the country.

Underspending no more

Dominguez said claims of a debt trap are unfounded and such suggestions were coming from "uninformed critics."

Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno, meanwhile, reported that the Duterte administration managed to reduce the government's underspending.

In less than three years, underspending declined from 12.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2015 to 3.6 percent in 2016 and down to 2.9 percent in 2017.

Tax hike move reviewed

Dominguez said the government is also reviewing the suspension of the oil excise tax hike scheduled to take effect on the first quarter of next year after global prices continuously plummeted in the last few weeks, contrary to early expectations that global oil prices would remain elevated for the rest of the year.

Underspending declined from 12.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2015 to 3.6 percent in 2016 and down to 2.9 percent in 2017.

The Finance chief was referring to the lowering of oil prices as a "totally unexpected although a pleasant development."

The suspension will be effective in the first quarter of 2019, subject to a quarterly review.

Should the original intent in the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law pushes through, the total excise

tax would be raised to P9 from P7 per liter on gasoline and to P4.50 from P2.50 per liter on diesel.

"We are currently reviewing the situation, especially now that prices are down to, I think, \$65 per barrel. That should have a big effect on the reduction of inflation rates," Dominguez said.

As to withdrawing the President's order, Dominguez

said it will still depend on the progression of the prices.

"The law is very clear. It has to be \$80 for three months. It's under review at the moment. The President has approved it already, but again, we have to look at the facts on the ground," he added.

"The projections were \$80 (per barrel), but the market was wrong. We are now recalculating. We are looking at the forward prices. Sometimes, the market can be wrong. It's not always right," he said.

Works like a dream

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) and the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) also launched the new Clark brand integrating the four districts of the Clark Freeport Zone, Clark Global City, Clark International Airport and New Clark City.

Claims of a debt trap are unfounded and such suggestions were coming from uninformed critics.

"Everyone wants to move to the big city - good money, good jobs, a place to be productive. But the paradox is that cities don't work for people, even though they're full of them. It's a pressure cooker of congestion, pollution and rent you can't afford," a CDC statement reads.

It added since Clark was built from scratch and crafted to be built for people, it is different.

"To have the vibrancy of a city without the pressure of city life. And the energy of a culture that is happy and inclusive. It's amazing what you can do when you're in the right place," it added.

Clark Freeport Zone, managed by the CDC, has continued to fuel growth not just in Pampanga but in the whole Central Luzon. Within it is the 177-hectare Clark Global City being developed by the Udenna Corporation, which is becoming the new business hub of the country.

The Clark International Airport, meanwhile, is envisioned to be next premier gateway to Asia. The airport's new terminal building expected to be operational by June 2020

will increase passenger capacity by 8 million per year.

Tan said he "cannot understand the logic" of media reports warning of a debt trap.

The 2,450-hectare New Clark City, located 100 kilometers north of Manila, will be the first smart, green, resilient and sustainable metropolis in the country. Its first phase involves the construction of the National Government Administrative Center, which includes world-class sports facilities for the SEA Games next year.

Debt trap absurd

A Chinese diplomat, meanwhile, assured the public that the Philippines is in "no danger" of falling into a debt trap with China's assistance in its "Build, Build, Build" program, solidifying the claims of Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez that the debt trap is unfounded.

People's Republic of China Embassy in Manila Charges d'Affaires Tan Qingsheng explained that on top of infrastructure aid, closer ties between the two countries also spurred tourism, with Chinese tourist arrivals expected to exceed 1.5 million this year.

Tan said he "cannot understand the logic" of media reports warning of a debt trap.

"Those projects are proposed by the Philippine side, are economically viable and are positive for the Philippine economy," Tan said. "There is no danger of a so-called debt trap."

Tan said the South China Sea "is not the sum total of China-Philippine relations."

John Gong, an Economics professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, on the other hand, said that there is no "conspiracy to bankrupt host countries and seize assets."

With Elmer N. Manuel



Duterte gives medals, gadgets, cash to wounded troopers

President Duterte conferred the Order of Lapu-Lapu to 23 soldiers wounded in a clash with Abu Sayyaf and recovering at the Don Navarro Hospital inside the Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom) in Zamboanga City. Col. Gerry Besana, public affairs officer of the Wesmincom, said the soldiers were from the 41st Infantry Battalion involved in the clash on Nov. 16. At least five soldiers were killed during that clash. Sources said Mr. Duterte also handed out gadgets and cash to the soldiers. —JULIE ALIPALA

PALACE WAITS FOR AMENDED LAW

NO EO FOR MANDATORY ROTC PROGRAM

By **Julie M. Aurelio**
@JMAurelioINQ

Contrary to President Duterte's earlier claim, Malacañang said an executive order might not be forthcoming to make the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program mandatory for Grades 11 and 12 students.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said a law passed by Congress, not an executive order, would be needed to revive the ROTC program and make it compulsory for senior high school students.

"No, the position of the President is Congress should pass a law," Panelo said when asked when the executive order would be issued. "No, because it's a law. It has to be amended."

"And I think there may already be a House (of Representatives) backer," he said.

Panelo made the remarks amid criticism of Mr. Duterte's proposal to revive ROTC and his plan to issue an executive directive if Congress failed to amend existing laws.

Last week, the President re-

peatedly pushed for a compulsory ROTC program, which, he said, would inculcate patriotism among the youth.

"I likewise encourage Congress to enact a law that will require mandatory ROTC for Grades 11 and 12 so we can instill patriotism, love of country among our youth," Mr. Duterte said before reservist soldiers in Tanza, Cavite province.

He added: "If it can be done through an executive order, I might be forced to if they do not act on it. I said this is a constitutional requirement: that you must be prepared to defend your country."

Mr. Duterte has been pushing for the revival of ROTC for senior high school students in public and private schools since last year.

To do so would mean amending Republic Act No. 7077, or the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act, as well as Republic Act No. 9163, or the National Service Training Program (NSTP) Act.

Enacted in 2002, RA 9163

made ROTC an optional and voluntary service for college students as one of the three components of the NSTP.

The two others were the Literacy Training Services and the Civil Welfare Training Service.

The mandatory ROTC program was abolished in 2001 in the wake of the public outrage over the death of University of Santo Tomas student Mark Weison Chua.

Chua was killed by cadet officers in UST after his exposé of corrupt practices in the university's ROTC program.

The Kabataan party-list group in Metro Manila said ROTC traced its roots to a military culture that led to Chua's death.

The Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns on Sunday said restoring ROTC could encourage human rights violations, claiming that the program would teach students "brutality, fascism, corruption and impunity."

Asked to comment on this criticism, Panelo said there was a lot to be learned from the program. INQ

Palace backs Du30's plan to revive ROTC program

By Nat Mariano

A PALACE official backed President Rodrigo Duterte's call to revive the Reserved Officers Training Corps, as this will instill discipline and nationalism to the youth.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said that Duterte wants to bring back the ROTC program in academic institutions to discipline students and teach them the concept of nationalism.

"The President wants ROTC revived because of the discipline, the ideals of being a nationalist," Panelo said in a Palace press briefing Monday.

"Moreover, we have to prepare ourselves. We are the only unprepared country given to many wars. We had our ROTC, I learned a lot, and I think the students will learn a lot from having a training," he added.

The Palace official made the remark after youth groups voiced its opposition to the President's wish to revive the ROTC as a mandatory subject in senior high school, citing the culture of violence and student rights violations that occurred in the past upon its implementation.

Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns said its revival would only instill brutality, fascism, corruption, and impunity, stressing the Duterte administration does not have an ounce of moral ascendancy to teach the youth about respect for human rights.

Anakbayan-Cebu and Akbayan-Cebu also echoed Salinlahi's sentiment, saying that the ROTC might only lead to abuses perpetrated by those who are in power.

Duterte, meanwhile, remained firm in his decision to call for the program's revival. A3

De Lima calls for a probe into BoC 'militarization'

DETAINED Sen. Leila de Lima on Monday called for a Senate inquiry into President Rodrigo Duterte's move ordering the military to temporarily take over the Bureau of Customs (BoC) to stamp out corruption.

In filing Senate Resolution (SR) 949, de Lima expressed concern over the adverse effect of appointing military personnel on the regular functions of the agency.

"The militarization of the BoC may impede the operations of the BoC and as a result, may gravely affect collection of revenues, the lifeblood of government," she said.

The senator noted that the functions of the BoC, under Republic Act 10863, include "assessment and collection of customs revenues from imported goods and other dues, fees, charges, fines and penalties, border control to prevent entry of smuggled goods, and prevention and suppression of smuggling and other customs fraud," among others.

In October, Duterte ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to take over the bureau, saying it was "part of his declaration of a state of lawlessness in

the country."

Duterte transferred Customs chief Isidro Lapeña to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and replaced him with the head of the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina), retired AFP chief Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

The Palace later backtracked and said the "takeover" of the military merely meant that heads of offices and sections within the bureau would be placed on floating status and the military would be on hand to assist the agency.

De Lima said Duterte should follow the Constitution, which provides that military officers in active service cannot be appointed to civilian positions in the government, especially because there is no "state of lawlessness" in the BoC.

"The operationalization of the military takeover of the BoC threatens to violate the provisions of the Constitution on the proscription against the assumption by active military officers of civilian functions and civilian offices, aside from other basic principles of a republican and democratic government as enshrined therein," she said. **A2**

JAVIER JOE ISMAEL

'Memo 32 upholds habeas'

Palace zaps 'creeping ML' yarn amid SAF deployments

By Nat Mariano, Francisco Tuyay and Maricel V. Cruz

THE deployment of troops to some parts of the Philippines is not a prelude to a suspension of the writ of habeas corpus or martial law, the Palace said Monday.

Reacting to speculation by the administration's critics, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said troops were sent to reinforce the military and police in Samar, Negros Island and the Bicol region, which have experienced ambushes and destruction of property.

"We repeatedly said if there is any intention [to declare martial law], then it will have been declared, but there is none," Panelo said.

On Thursday, the Palace released the Memorandum No. 32, which orders troop deployments to prevent "violence from spreading and escalating elsewhere in the country."

The order also authorized the enhancement of intelligence operations as well as the prompt investigation and prosecution of individuals or groups behind "acts of lawless violence."

But Bayan Muna chairman Neri Colmenares criticized the memorandum order, saying it could be a "prelude to more repressive measures such as martial law."

On Monday, Panelo said the order was a "reaction to what is happening" in those provinces.

"The memorandum precisely and expressly says that we should respect the rights of the individual. Memorandum

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32 was done pursuant to the constitutional duty of the President to protect and preserve the people," he said.

"There were series of acts committed against civilians, against soldiers and policemen in those areas and therefore there is a need to deploy troops, as well as Philippine National Police [PNP] forces in that area to secure the people," Panelo said.

Panelo also denied suggestions that the troops could be used against the opposition in the 2019 midterm elections.

He said putting the President's orders down in writing would provide guidance and transparency.

PNP chief Oscar Albayalde, meanwhile, said the deployment of two companies of the Special Action Force to the areas specified by MO 32 was not a sign of "creeping martial law."

"Remember the state has the obligation to protect its citizens from lawlessness. This is part of it. It has nothing to do with martial law," said Albayalde after the Monday flag ceremony in Camp Crame.

Albayalde said an additional SAF company will be sent to Samar and another to the Bicol region while a SAF standby force intended for deployment to Mindanao will be realigned to Negros Island.

Commission on Human Rights chairman Jose Luis Gascon, on the other hand, slammed the Duterte administration for deploying troops to three provinces in the Visayas and a province in Bicol.

Gascon said the government could already "suppress lawlessness, violence and acts of terror" with existing personnel and resources in those areas.

He also warned that the troop deployments could be a prelude to martial law.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, however, said MO 32 is in effect only in four regions—Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and the Bicol region—where the communist New People's Army rebels were still conducting atrocities against civilians.

Lorenzana also observed in a radio interview Monday that the President has publicly stated he will never order martial law nationwide.

"This Memorandum Order 32 is focused on areas where communist terrorists thrive, specifically in Bicol, Samar and Negros [Oriental and Occidental]. They continue to burn construction equipment and extort money from businessmen," he said in Filipino.

Lorenzana said the troop deployments would also ensure fair and honest elections.

"We received complaints that the NPA is interfering with the elections in these areas," he said, noting that candidates who do not pay the rebels will be unable to enter certain areas.

Lawmakers on Monday said they are convinced the deployment of additional soldiers and police in Bicol region and some provinces in the Visayas is not a prelude to martial law or the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in the entire country.

Reps. Raneo Abu of Batangas, Rolando Andaya, Jr. of Camarines Sur and Edgar Mary Sarmiento of Samar said the President's Memorandum Order 32 on the deployment of troops in the provinces was intended merely to stop lawless violence and acts of terror.

"I fully support the initiative of the administration in deploying additional troops to curb lawless violence in some parts of the country. During times like these, we must remain vigilant against those who threaten our peace, for violence has no place in a democratic society such as ours," Abu, a deputy speaker, said.

Andaya, the House majority leader, also backed the President's MO 32.

"I support the order of the President as I believe that it was based on verified information which came into his possession which for security reasons cannot be declassified."

At the same time, Andaya asked the leaders of the implementing agencies to respect civil and political rights and explain the breadth and limits of their powers and actions to the public, in a language easily understood.

"This is to avoid conflict, misinformation, [and] misperception," Andaya said. "Both the public and the police and the military should be mindful of the clear language of Section 4 of the order that civil or political rights are not suspended and all the constitutional rights of every individual shall be respected," he said.

Sarmiento said President Duterte's order to deploy more security forces in his province is an answered prayer for Samarinos, who are constantly terrorized by private armed groups during the election season.

"Samar is a constant hotbed of political assassinations and harassment during election season. Many of these armed goons employed by some politicians are mostly criminals involved in other illegal activities and communist rebels involved in extortion," Sarmiento said.

"This move to deploy more troops in Samar in other areas deemed as election hotspots is definitely a welcome relief for most people of Samar. It is an answered prayer for us," Sarmiento added. **With Rio N. Araja and PNA**

Another exec faces dismissal

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday said he would fire another undersecretary because of allegations of corruption.

He did not give details. Just last Thursday, Duterte dismissed a housing official for a corruption complaint.

"Corruption is not acceptable to me. I need not repeat it every day. Then when I go to Manila, I am going back, I am going to fire another undersecretary for corruption," Duterte said in Davao City during the kick-off of the construction of the city's water supply project.

He said there are unscrupulous individuals who continue to engage in corrupt practices despite measures instituted by government to stop these practices.

Among these measures, he said, is the Ease of Doing Business Act that was passed under his term to expedite issuance of permits,

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licenses and other documents in government. He said Malacañang also has an office tasked to receive complaints against erring government workers.

On Thursday last week, Duterte announced he dismissed Falconi Millar as secretary general of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council because of corruption complaints.

Millar, who also headed the secretariat of the Task Force Bangon

Marawi, has denied the allegation, claiming a demolition job was launched against him after he annoyed some personalities.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo said Millar allegedly twice asked a private company for money in exchange for the release of the HUDCC's payment to the company.

Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman, said the private company is involved in the rehabilitation of Marawi City, several barangays of which were attacked and occupied for five months by

the Maute terror group.

Panelo said he could not remember the name of the company but a sworn affidavit was presented to Malacañang, and the President had the incident verified before he decided to terminate Millar.

Duterte has fired a number of his appointees and other officials because of allegations of corruption and excessive travels.

The latest was the entire board of the Nayong Pilipino Foundation over allegations of corruption and the grant of a long-term gambling license which Duterte

opposed; several military officials for alleged ghost purchases; Noel Patrick Sales Prudente as Customs deputy commissioner for alleged excessive foreign trips; Rudolf Jurado as Government Corporate Counsel in connection with a casino permit; Mark Tolentino as Transportation assistant secretary for dealing with a sibling of Duterte over some government projects; and Terry Ridon as head of the Presidential Commission on Urban Poor and his four commissioners over alleged foreign junkets.

Jr

MEMORANDUM ORDER 32

LORENZANA: TROOP DEPLOYMENT TO ENSURE PEACEFUL POLLS

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Monday said he did not see the coverage of President Duterte's order to the police and the military to suppress and prevent lawless violence in parts of the Visayas and the Bicol region expanding to include other areas.

In a radio interview on Monday, Lorenzana said the areas covered by Memorandum Order No. 32 (MO 32) like the provinces of Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and the Bicol region were "those with dense Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) presence."

But he said Mr. Duterte had no plan to declare martial law nationwide. "Didn't they hear the President publicly say he will not declare martial law nationwide?" Lorenzana said.

He said martial law was de-

clared in Mindanao because the security situation there was "problematic" and that it may be extended for a longer period.

"MO 32 focuses on areas where the communist terrorists thrive, where they are active in burning down construction equipment and extorting from businessmen," he said.

Election impact

While the police and military saw a possible escalation of attacks by the CPP-NPA, particularly in the run-up to next year's midterm elections, it was unnecessary to expand the areas covered by the order, he said.

According to him, the NPA will heighten its offensive to project that it remains a potent, united force despite the mass surrender of its members.

He said MO 32 would help

"level the playing field" in the coming elections, claiming that the CPP-NPA demanded payment of cash before allowing candidates to enter and campaign in an area.

"This (MO 32) is our way to ensure the election period is peaceful, orderly and fair," he added.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson earlier said the deployment of more security personnel to the four areas was "unnecessary."

But Lorenzana said: "We welcome anything that will improve our [security] operations to make places and areas peaceful ... There is nothing to be concerned about over MO 32."

Respecting rights

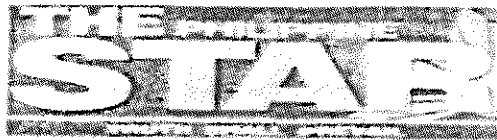
In Eastern Visayas, military and police officials allayed fears that the deployment of

troops might result in human rights abuses.

"Human rights will serve as our guide in the implementation and enforcement of our laws. We don't oppose in [respecting] human rights," said Senior Supt. Arnel Arcenas, assistant regional police director.

Maj. Gen. Raul Farnacio, commanding general of the 8th Infantry Division based in Catbalogan City, also said the Army would "strictly adhere to the rules and procedures set by higher headquarters in the conduct of internal security operations" in the region. MD

As part of the augmentation, two Army battalions of the division earlier deployed to Mindanao would return to the region. —REPORTS FROM JEANNETTE ANDRADE AND JOEY GABETA INQ



'Troops not meant to scare, but to secure people'

The sending of additional troops to parts of Southern Luzon and the Visayas was meant to secure the public, Malacañang said yesterday, after some groups expressed concern that the de-

ployment would be used to suppress political dissent.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Memorandum Order (MO) No. 32, which called for the immediate

deployment of additional soldiers and policemen in Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and the Bicol region, is not related to the upcoming elections.

"The memorandum precisely and expressly says that we should respect the rights of the individual. (MO 32) was done pursuant to the constitutional

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duty of the President to protect and preserve the people," Panelo said at a press briefing.

"There were series of acts committed against civilians, against soldiers and policemen in those areas and therefore there is a need to deploy troops, as well as Philippine National Police (PNP) forces in that area to secure the people, for their own safety and peace of the area," he added.

But Bayan Muna chairman Neri Colmenares urged President Duterte not to use the memorandum against the opposition, noting that

the document was issued just a few months before the midterm polls.

"Even if (the MO) has anything to do with that, the more Mr. Colmenares should be happy because you will be securing the area during election time," Panelo said.

Panelo said the deployment is necessary because of killings, ambushes and destruction of properties in the areas mentioned in the memorandum.

The memorandum labeled the incidents as "lawless violence" - Alexis Romero, Emmanuel Tupas, Delon Porcalla, Gilbert Bayoran

dy

No expansion in troop deployment – Lorenzana

BY DEMPSEY REYES

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's order to deploy additional police and military troops to Samar, Bicol and Negros will not be expanded to other regions, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Monday.

Lorenzana said the places under Memorandum Order 32 were areas prone to attacks by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

"No need [for expansion]. Those are only areas where the NPA are strong," he said in an interview with radio station dzRH.

The Defense chief also warned the NPA could interfere in the May 2019 elections.

"So, [the memorandum] is one of our ways to ensure that the campaign and election itself will be peaceful and fair," Lorenzana stressed.

He also allayed fears that the memorandum would be a prelude to nationwide martial law.

"The people have nothing to fear since there is no martial law [nationwide]. There is no martial law indicated in the order, this is just to heighten our efforts in maintaining the peace and order in [those] places, especially in the countryside," Lorenzana said.

Col. Noel Detoyato, Armed Forces public affairs chief, said critics of Memorandum Order 32 were siding with lawless groups.

"This memorandum is intended

to freely check all the activities of the enemies. You know, the lawless elements are scared with the presence of additional law enforcers," he said in a radio interview.

Detoyato and Lorenzana said human rights would be respected in areas covered by the memorandum.

The order was issued in response to the massacre of nine sugarcane workers in Sagay City and the ambush of the police-escorted convoy of Food and Drug Administration Chief Nela Charade Puno in Camarines Sur.

Order not against opposition – Palace

Malacañang on Monday said the order of President Duterte to deploy more soldiers and policemen to Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and the Bicol Region was not meant to weaken the op-

position months before the 2019 mid-term elections.

In a news briefing, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo denied the claim of Bayan Muna Chairman Neri Colmenares, who said that such was the plan of the administration, given the timing of the order's release.

"I think he has not read the memorandum. The memorandum precisely and expressly says that we should respect the rights of the individual. That Memorandum 32 was done pursuant to the constitutional duty of the President to protect and preserve the people," Panelo said.

"There were series of acts committed against civilians, against soldiers and policemen in those areas and therefore there is a need to deploy troops, as well as PNP forces in that area to secure the people for their own safety and peace of the area," he added.

WITH RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

Lorenzana: NPA is the target of memo order

BY VICTOR REYES

DEFENSE Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday said there is no need to expand the coverage of Memorandum Order 32 that calls for the deployment of additional troops to the Bicol region and the provinces of Samar, Negros Oriental, and Negros Occidental to suppress lawless violence.

He allayed fears the additional deployment will lead to the declaration of martial law nationwide and said the real target of MO 32 is the New People's Army, which he called a terrorist group.

He said the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, has stepped up its atrocities, including burning of construction equipment, in the Samar and Negros provinces and in the Bicol region.

"Did you see any mention of martial law in the EO? None. If (MO 32) is merely meant to enhance our efforts to maintain peace and order, especially in the countryside," he said adding President Duterte has issued statements that he is not going to declare martial law nationwide.

Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao in May last year after the Maute terror group attacked and occupied several barangays in Marawi City.

Lorenzana said the additional troop deployment will be in areas where the NPA has "strong" presence. He said the NPA, which collects "permit to campaign fees," is a threat to the residents and to the May 2019 mid-term elections.

He said there have been reports that the NPA intervened in past elections in the Samar and Negros provinces and in the Bicol region, by endorsing certain candidates and through the collection of campaign fees.

"It means that elections were not fair, there's no level playing field in the last elections. This (MO 32) is a way to ensure that the campaign period is going to be peaceful and it's going to be fair," he said.

Lorenzana also sought to downplay remarks made by Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former PNP chief, that President Duterte, the military's commander in chief, does not need a memorandum to order the deployment of troops anywhere in the country.

"It already depends on how we see this. To me, anything that will improve our operations to make the places or areas peaceful and stable, we welcome those," Lorenzana said.

Col. Noel Detoyato, chief of the AFP public affairs office, said the issuance of MO 32 was triggered by a "series of atrocities" perpetrated by the NPA. He said the order is aimed at preventing the NPA from launching more attacks.

"We have to be ahead of them," he said, noting the NPA carry out attacks in areas where military forces are thin.

Continued NPA attacks were among the main reasons President Duterte canceled for-

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LORENZANA

mal peace negotiations with the communists this year.

Detoyato implied only the communists are opposing MO 32.

"The martial law rumor-mongers are the ones going to be affected by this," he said. "They are not going to be able to freely move and we will be able to check their activities. You know, the lawless elements are the only ones who are afraid of the presence of our law enforcers."

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman, said the deployment of more troops is part of government's efforts to strengthen the campaign against communist insurgency.

He said there are more incidents of terrorism and other criminal activities in the areas under MO 32.

"There were series of acts committed against civilians, against soldiers and policemen in those areas and therefore there is a need to deploy troops, as well as PNP forces in that area to secure the people, for its own safety and peace of the area," he said.

He said Malacañang had to put the order in writing to formalize the directives and be transparent about the instructions, including the places that need to be secured.

He said the opposition should not be concerned about the deployment of more troops but should in fact be happy, "because you will be securing the area during election time."

He also said the move is not a prelude to expanding martial law coverage.

Opposition Sen. Francis Pangilinan said the deployment of additional troops to communist-infested areas will mean more police abuses.

Pangilinan said what government should do is to first cleanse the PNP of misfits amid recent reports that some of them were involved in criminal acts such as rape, murder, and robbery extortion.

"Lalo lang dadami ang pang-aabuso ng PNP at madadawit pa AFP sa ganitong paraan... Sa hanay ng PNP na nanggagaling ang lawlessness (There will be an increase in abuses by the PNP, and the AFP will somehow get dragged into the allegations of abuses. Lawlessness comes from the ranks of the PNP)," he said.

He did not give figures backing his claim.

Based on PNP records, 43 policemen accused of rape have been charged with administrative cases from 2015 to the first week of November 2018. The most recent of the alleged rape cases involved as victims an arrested illegal gambling player and a 15-year-old daughter of an arrested drug pusher.

The Commission on Human Rights, through its spokeswoman Jacqueline Ann de Guia, said effective law enforcement, and not the deployment of more troops, is the answer to lawless violence. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor, Raymond Africa and Angela Lopez de Leon*

5 NPA rebels surrender in Bukidnon

Five New People's Army rebels surrendered in Bukidnon over the weekend.

The surrenderees, who were identified only as Lucas, 49; Pigong, 18; Boy, 25, and Cobra, 24, turned over an M1 Garand rifle, three caliber .22 pistols and a machine gun, 2nd Lt. Jennifer Cuarteron of the 8th Infantry Battalion (IB) said yesterday.

Cuarteron said the rebels surrendered to Lt. Col. Ronald Illana, 8th IB commander, in Barangay Poblacion, Impasugong.

Col. Edgardo de Leon, 403rd IB commander, attributed the surrenders to localized peace talks.

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- Michael Punongbayan

Police, NPA clash in Davao beach resort

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – A joint police and military operation resulted in an encounter yesterday morning with New People's Army (NPA) rebels believed to have been holed up in a beach resort in Barangay Talomo in this city.

No casualty was reported on both government and NPA sides.

Southern Mindanao regional police office director Chief Supt. Marcelo Morales told The STAR that the police team was about to serve five warrants of arrest against a certain Ernie del Pilar, also known as Commander Jeffrey

of the NPA's Pulang Bagani Command 1 and his group at Victorio's Beach Resort.

The warrants of arrest against Del Pilar were for kidnapping and murder.

Morales said they monitored at least eight other NPA members who were with Del Pilar at the time of the

encounter.

Recovered at the crime scene were several firearms, improvised explosive device, mobile phone and ammunition.

"Our troops tried hard to make sure that they could not escape but the rebels escaped," Morales said.

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PNP: NPAs hid in Davao beach resort

By ZEA C. CAPISTRANO

DAVAO CITY - Residents in Barangay Talomo Proper were awakened by gunshots and the sound of explosives as police reportedly figured in an encounter with alleged members of the New People's Army's Special Partisan Unit (SPARU) in a beach resort Monday dawn.

Editha Roque, a resident from the barangay said they were awakened by the sound of gunshots coming from Victorio Beach Seminar Place at around 3 a.m.

"There were exchanges of fires. There were sounds of grenades blasting," she said in an interview.

In a statement, City Director Alexander Tagum said an operation was conducted jointly by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine

National Police Task Force to serve a warrant of arrest against "the group of SPARU-SOG" of the NPA.

It is still unclear whether there were casualties during the incident. Tagum said they recovered an M16 assault rifle, bandolier with magazines and ammunition, improvised explosive devices and subversive documents.

He added that one of the members of the NPA is now in custody of the police. Tagum said an estimated eight armed suspects were hiding in the resort prior to the serving of the warrant of arrest.

Village chairman Bendor Calamba told Manila Bulletin that authorities went to their house around 1 a.m. and reportedly asked for his presence to witness the operation. Calamba said the police did not provide him with details and only asked him: "Kap ubani

lang sa mi kay emergency ni (Kap, just come with us because this is an emergency)."

Calamba also said "wala may na-trap na tao (there were no people trapped inside)."

However, a chat exchange between a netizen and her boyfriend who was said to be among those trapped inside the property went viral on the Internet. In the exchange of text messages, a certain Raimond said he was trapped inside a room with women and other men. He said they can hear the sound of the gunfire as he was sending messages while he dropped to the floor to take cover.

Calamba said the resort has long been closed to the public. Its beach line is included in the city's coastal road project. (With a report from Armando B. Fenequito, Jr.)

'If they want war, let's have war'

Palace shrugs off Joma's retort

MALACANANG on Tuesday shrugged off communist leader Jose Maria "Joma" Sison's statement rejecting President Rodrigo Duterte's call for him to submit the "final draft" of peace agreement between the government and the communists.

► War A2

In a news conference, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo reiterated Duterte's statement that the government would continue with its war against the communist rebels if they were no longer interested in holding peace talks.

"It's their call. *Kung ayaw nila e di huwag. Sabi nga ni Presidente,*

e gusto niyo ng giyera, e di giyera (If they don't want it, fine. The President said, if they want war, let's have war)," Panelo said.

But the Palace official reiterated that Duterte remained committed to peace despite Sison's pronouncements.

"As we said, this government is open to peace talks. It's about time we put end to this. It's conflict within Filipinos. The President doesn't like blood being shed. For the 50 years we've been doing that," he said.

On Thursday, Duterte said he

wanted the communists to submit their version of the peace agreement, which would be subjected to review by state security officials.

But Sison said Duterte asking the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) to submit a final draft of a peace agreement meant nothing and should be ignored.

"Duterte is simply joking, stupid or crazy when he publicly proposes that the NDFP submit to him a draft peace agreement for him to approve, subject to the further ap-

proval of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and PNP (Philippine National Police)," Sison said in a statement posted on the NDFP website over the weekend.

Sison said the NDFP and government peace panels had written their respective drafts of the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms (Caser) and on political and constitutional reforms.

Considered the heart and soul of the peace process, the Caser calls for, among others, solutions to the coun-

try's social problems, free land distribution and rural industrialization.

Two weeks ago, the NDFP announced that Fidel Agcaoili, Luis Jalandoni and Coni Ledesma, Jalandoni's spouse and also a member of the NDFP peace panel, would return to the country.

But the trip was aborted due to threats of arrest and Duterte's supposed unwillingness to reopen the peace negotiations.

In his speech in Cavite on Thursday, Duterte admitted that he had

no plans to face the NDFP leaders should they make good on their trip back home.

But Duterte vowed not to have Agcaoili and Jalandoni arrested by the police.

Peace talks between the government and the NDFP broke down in November last year amid a series of rebel attacks on state troops. The resumption of talks in June did not push through upon the recommendation of state security officials.

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

400 SAF commandos ipinakalal sa Bicol, Samar

Aabot sa halds 400 Special Action Force (SAF) commandos ang ipinadala ng Philippine National Police upang tumulong sa tropa ng mga sundalo sa pagsupil sa 'state of lawlessness' at terorismo sa Bicol Region, Samar habang nakaambay na rin ang karagdagang puwersa sa Negros Islands.

Ito ang inihayag kahapon ni PNP Chief P/ Director General Oscar Albayalde bilang pagtalima sa inisyong Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) 32 ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte.

Sinabi ni Albayalde na inatasan na niya ang pinuno ng SAF para magpadala ng tig-tig-isang company ng SAF commandos sa nasabing mga lalawigan.

Ang bawat company ng SAF commandos ay aabot sa 127 hanggang 132 opisyal at mga miyembro.

Samantalang sa Negros, sinabi ni Albayalde

na may naka-standby na puwersa ng SAF troopers na isasabak sa mga kritikal na lalawigan para palakasin ang kanilang elite units sa lugar at makatuwang ng AFP forces sa pagsupil sa mga bayolemteng aktibidad partikular na ng mga rebeideng New People's Army (NPA).

Ayon kay Albayalde, ang pagpapakalat ng karagdagang puwersa ng militar at pulisya sa mga kritikal na lugar na bawarte ng NPA rebels ay hindi makakaapekto sa kasalukuyang setup ng PNP.

Aimsunod sa kautusan,

sinabi ni Albayalde na inatasan na niya ang tropa ng pulisya upang pagtingin pa ang operasyon para masupil ang karahasan at terorismo.

Kaugnay nito, tinyak naman ni Albayalde na hindi magbubunsod sa deklarasyon ng martial law sa buong bansa ang nasabing memorandum order ng punong ehekutibo.



Ilan sa mga miyembro ng Special Action Force ng Philippine National Police na nalitratuhan habang dumadalo kahapon sa flag raising ceremony sa Camp Crame. (Kuha ni Michael Varcas)

Sinabi ni Albayalde na ang nasabing memorandum ay base sa serye ng mga pag-atake ng mga rebelde sa mga himpilan ng pulisya sa Samar, massacre sa Sagay City sa Negros Occidental at pananambang sa mga pulis sa Bicol Region noong nakalipas na buwan. (Joy Cantos)

3 bata, 3 araw nawala sa gubat

LIMAY, Bataan - Nasagip ng mga awtoridad ang tatlong batang babae na naiulat na nawawala sa loob ng tatlong araw at dalawang gabi, makaraang mamuhay nang walang pagkain sa kagubatan ng Limay sa Bataan.

Ayon kay Bataan Police Provincial Office director, Senior Supt. Marcelo Dayag, dalawa sa mga bata ay siyam na taong gulang, habang 16-anyos ang isa pa.

Nasa ligtas na kalagayan ang mga bata nang matagpuan sila ng mga pulis at barangay tanod sa kagubatan sa Sitio Ariada Carbonsite, Barangay Lamao, kahapon ng hapon.

Sa pahayag ng mga kaanak ng tatlong bata, umalis umano sa kanilang lugar ang mga ito at nagkatuwang umakyat ng bundok at maligo sa ilog.

Matapos maligo nang ilang oras ay hindi na alam ng mga ito ang kanilang patutunguhan.

Hanggang sa dainan na sila ng gabi at nagpalipas ng gabi sa isang kube na pag-aari ng isang Lolo "Boy".

Naiulat ng pulisya na dati nang ginawang hideout ng mga tauhan ng New People's Army (NPA) ang lugar.

Sa panayam sa isa sa mga bata, sinabi niyang tanging suso, kamoteng-kahoy at mga bungang-kahoy ang kinain nila sa loob ng dalawang

araw.

"Nanguha po kami ng mga suso, paco at kamoteng kahoy na svang niluluto namin na pagkain. Di naman kami natakot maski madilim dahil masarap sa ilog. Natalakot na rin kaming umuwi dahil pagagalitan kami ng magulang namin," anang isa sa mga bata.

Mar T. Supnad

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ACTOBAN CITY - The Eastern Visayas police and Philippine Army 8th Infantry Division on Monday assured that all appropriate measures are being undertaken to ensure the safety and security of Eastern Visayas residents and visitors.

"There is nothing to worry about. We are doing our best together with the other security forces.

Recently we have conducted a Joint Peace and Security Coordinating Council (JPSCC) for the whole Visayas. Everything is in preparation for the elections and keeping Eastern Visayas safe," said Chief Supt. Dionardo Carlos, Eastern Visayas regional police director.

Carlos also clarified that the death of Joseph "Dawud" Amulga Jr. during a buy-bust operation was based on their monitoring of his alleged allegiance with the terrorist group.

"He has a background of supporting the ISIS, Hindi naman naging pwedeng pigihan because Ormoc is an entry point and we are in the Eastern seaboard highway (Samar and Leyte). It was the foiled transaction of selling a firearm using pinement Yung intention niya kasi ang narmonitoring CIOG 8," he explained.

He added that the suspected bombing killed two and injured two others in Barangay Bobojosan in Lagan, North-

BY MARIE TONETTE GRACE MARTICIO

PNP, Army assure public's safety in Eastern Visayas

ern Samar was linked to individuals involved in dynamite fishing.

"We looked into the background of the victims kasi hindi 'yun ang usual na gamit for possible terroristic activities," he noted.

Maj. Gen. Raul M. Farnacio, commander of the 8th Infantry Division, in close coordination with the PNP and other law enforcement agencies in strengthening their intelligence capabilities against individuals or groups suspected of, or responsible for, committing or conspiring to commit acts of lawless violence within their area of operations.

"To the general public, rest assured that your Army will strictly adhere to the rules and procedures set forth by higher headquarters in the

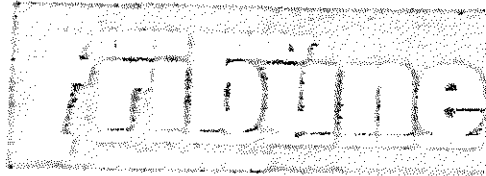
conduct of internal security operations in Eastern Visayas," Maj. Gen. Raul M. Farnacio, commander of the 8th Infantry Division said.

Farnacio urged the communities to be extra vigilant and report to authorities the presence of suspected armed groups or suspicious individuals in their communities.

On November 22, President Duterte has declared a state of national emergency on account of lawless violence in Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and the Bicol region.

The President issued Memorandum Order No. 32 due to the random occurrence of violence in said provinces and region perpetrated by lawless elements. *6*

Cej



Crooks, bets links probed

Politicians who have linked up with organized crime and the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group in their effort to raise funds for next year's midterm elections were tagged in intelligence reports and are now under close watch by the Philippine National Police (PNP).

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said the police continue to

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validate information on some politicians, particularly those based in Mindanao.

"We are continuously validating reports of the active collusion by some local politicians with organized crime groups engaged in kidnapping for ransom, presumably for fund-raising purposes," he said. Albayalde added reports were being monitored in some parts of Mindanao, particularly in known areas of operation by kidnapping gangs.

Establish collusion

"These are all based on the intelligence information that we gather. We have not established that there's collusion. That's why we need to develop and conduct case buildup," he added.

Albayalde said, "Sometimes, you

just have reason to (conclude) that there's collusion there."

The PNP chief admitted the difficulty of gathering evidence on the involvement of politicians to organized crimes.

He said that based on information they receive, there are less than 10 policemen in Mindanao who are maintaining private goons to do dirty jobs for them, particularly on the aspect of raising campaign funds.

Polls factor

"Of course, (the collusion) is quite dangerous due to the upcoming election," he explained. "We should not allow this, especially in parts of Mindanao where incidents of kidnapping are still happening."

Kidnappings usually occur in the western part of Mindanao, particularly in the Basilan and Zamboanga areas.

Albayalde earlier ordered a

crackdown on guns-for-hire and private armed groups (PAG) last July following the series of killings of local officials in the country.

Neutralize PAG

The PNP chief said his agency seeks to disarm and neutralize hired guns and PAG which are being tapped by politicians, especially during the election period.

Since last August, the PNP claimed it has neutralized 82 gun-for-hire syndicate members and confiscated 35 assorted firearms.

He disclosed that intelligence operations are now being directed against more or less 77 active PAG with 2,071 members believed armed with an estimated 1,582 firearms.

A large majority of these active PAG operate in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

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PNP monitors politicians with links to KFR groups

By AARON RECUENCO

Some politicians in Mindanao have started colluding with armed groups to raise funds for the midterm elections next year, a top police official said yesterday.

Director General Oscar Albayalde, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), disclosed that the usual fund-raising criminal activity is kidnapping-for-ransom, with the possibility of collusion with the notorious Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

"These are all based on the intelligence information that we gather. We have not established that there's collusion, that's why we need to develop and conduct of

case buildup," said Albayalde.

"But sometimes, you just have reason to that there's collusion there," he added.

Albayalde admitted that it is indeed difficult to gather physical evidence on the involvement of the politicians since the latter are also very careful.

But based on the information they have been receiving, the official said there are less than 10 policemen in Mindanao who are maintaining private goons to do the dirty jobs for them, particularly on the aspect of raising campaign funds.

He said the kidnappings usually occur in the western part of Mindanao, particu-

larly Basilan and Zamboanga areas.

"This is quite dangerous because of the upcoming elections. We should not allow this to happen especially that kidnappings are still happening in some parts of Mindanao," said Albayalde.

And in the absence of evidence to pin down the politicians, the PNP Chief said what they are left to do is to implement measures to prevent kidnap-for-ransom from happening. ||

Initial intelligence gathered by the PNP revealed that there are 77 partisan armed groups operating in Mindanao, almost all of them are in central and western part of Mindanao.

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NGAYON

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Tiwaling pulitiko at armadong grupo **Sabwatan para sa halalan**

Ilang mga tiwaling pulitiko ang umano'y nakikipagsabwatan sa mga armadong grupo kabilang ang mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa rehiyon ng Mindanao para makapangalap ng pondo para sa midterm elections sa Mayo 2019.

Ito ang ibihulga kahapon ni PNP Chief P/Director General Oscar Albayalde sa press briefing sa Camp Crame.

Sinabi ni Albayalde na kabilang sa fund raising ay ang mga kriminal na aktibidad kabilang ang kidnapping for ransom (KFR) at posibleng pakikipagsabwatan sa mga ekstremistang Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

Aminado naman ang PNP Chief na ang pawang base lamang sa intelligence report ang natatanggap nilang impormasyon hinggil sa umano'y sabwatan ng ilang mga tiwaling pulitiko at ng Abu Sayyaf na kailangan pa ng masusing case buildup at ebidensya.

Sa kasalukuyan, nasa 10 pulitiko naman partikular na sa Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) ang nagmimintina ng mga Private Armed Groups (PAGs) o mga goons para makapangalap ng pondo na magagamit ng mga ito sa halalan sa Mayo ng susunod na taon.

Ayon kay Albayalde kararawan ng pagaganap ang kidnapping for ransom sa Mindanao partikular na sa Basilan at bahagi ng Zamboanga Peninsula. Sa tala ang mga hostages ay binadala ng mga bandido sa kanilang teritoryo sa Sulu. (Joy Santos)

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ILANG POLITIKO SA MINDANAO KAKALAP NG PONDO SA KIDNAPPING

Para umano maka-	Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa	ay ang kidnapping for
pangalap ng pondo sa	rehiyon ng Mindanao.	ransom (KFR) at posib-
2019 midterm elections	Ito ang ibinulgar ka-	leng pakikipagsabwatan
ay ilang mga tiwaling	hapon ni PNP Chief P/	sa mga ekstremistang
politiko ang umano'y na-	Director General Oscar	Abu Sayyaf Group
kikipagsabwatan sa mga	Albayalde sa press brie-	(ASG).
armadong grupo kabilang	ing sa Camp Crame na	Ang Abu Sayyaf ay
ang mga bandidong Abu	kabilang sa fund raising	sangkot sa KFR, ambush-

rades laban sa tropang gobyerno at pamumugot ng ulo sa mga hostages ay namumugad sa Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi at iba pang lugar sa Western Mindanao.

Inarmin ng PNP Chief

na ang pawang base lamang sa intelligence report ang natatanggap nilang impormasyon hinggil sa umano'y sabwatan ng ilang mga tiwaling pulitiko at ng Abu Sayyaf na kailangan pa

ng masusing case build-up at ebidensya. 2

Sa kasalukuyan, nasa 10 pulitiko naman partikular na sa Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) ang nag-

mimintina ng mga Private Armed Groups (PAGs) o mga goons para makapangalap ng pondo na magagamit ng mga ito sa halalan sa Mayo ng susunod na taon. *Joy Cantos-*

KFR sa Mindanao, para sa campaign funds—PNP Chief

Ni AARON RECUENCO

Nakikipagsabwatan sa private armed groups, partikular sa mga nagsasagaw ang kidnap-for-ransom (KFR), ang ilang pulitiko sa Mindanao upang mangalap ng pondo para sa eleksiyon sa Mayo 13, 2019.

Ito ang ibinunyag kahapon ni Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Oscar Albayalde.

Aniya, kadalasan sa fund-raising criminal activity sa rehiyon ay ang kidnaping-for-ransom ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), sa tulong na rin ng ilang pulitiko.

"These are all based on the intelligence information that we gather. We have not establish that

there's collusion, that's why we need to develop and conduct of case buildup. But sometimes, you just have reason to that there's collusion there," ani Albayalde.

Aminado si Albayalde na hiram siya sa pagkalap ng physical evidence kaugnay ng pagkakasangkot ng ilang pulitiko, dahil sobra rin ang ginagawang pag-iingat ng mga ito.

Batay sa natanggap na impormasyon ng PNP, mayroong hawak na IIR na pulis ang isa sa bawat tiwaling pulitiko sa Mindanao, na humahawak din ng private goons na magtatrabaho upang makalikom ng kaukulang pondong gagamitin sa

eleksiyon.

Madalas, aniya, ang insidente ng pagdukot sa kanlurang bahagi ng Mindanao, partikular na sa Basilan at Zamboanga areas.

"This is quite dangerous because of the upcoming elections. We should not allow this to happen especially that kidnappings are still happening in some parts of Mindanao," sabi ni Albayalde.

Ayon sa PNP Chief, dahil sa kawalan ng matibay na ebidensiyang pagbabatayan ng pulisya, ipatutupad na lang muna nila sa ngayon ang mahigpit na pagbabantay upang maiwasan ang mga kidnaping sa Mindanao.

Pugot na Mama Mary, nasa exhibit sa UST

Ni Leslie Ann G. Aquino

Kabilang ang pugot na imahen ng Birheng Maria sa mga religious artifacts na idi-display sa University of Santo Tomas (UST) sa Maynila ngayong linggo.

Napugot ang ulo ng imahen ng Maria Auxiliadora de Marawi makaraan ang pag-atake ng grupo ng teroristang Maute-SIS sa Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, noong nakaraming taon.

Matatandaang isang video ang kumalat sa social media noong Mayo 2017 na nagpapakita sa ilang miyembro ng Maute na sumisigaw ng "Allahu Akbar" habang winawasak ang mga religious icon, tulad ng pagpurit sa larawan nina Pope Francis at Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at pagsusunog sa St. Mary's Cathedral.

"This is the original image of Mary

Help of Christians whose head they removed because they pulverized it," panayag ni Jonathan Luciano, Aid to the Church in Need, national director.

"This headless image we are going to exhibit. Even the clothes we didn't change it, even the stains. It will form part of the exhibition," dagdag pa nitya.

Makaraan ang exhibit, ibibigay ang imahen sa punong opisina ng ACN International sa Germany.

Samantala, dumating na rin sa bansa nitong Biyernes ang ibang mga religious artifacts na magiging bahagi rin ng exhibit.

Magsisimula sa Nobyembre 26 hanggang Disyembre 1 sa UST main lobby, ang exhibit ay kasabay ng paggunita sa Red Wednesday. 2

Duterte's China dilemma

Behind every fascism, there is a failed revolution," the early-20th century German philosopher Walter Benjamin warned, highlighting the inherent danger in how unfulfilled utopian promises can create a vacuum of terror.

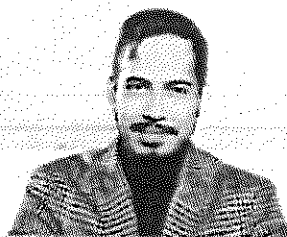
His key insight was that reactionary darkness is immanent to the fragile, audacious hope for creating a better world, the attempt to break from the shackles of a discredited status quo.

A few decades later, Singapore's philosopher-king, Lee Kuan Yew, warned that the rise of China will be so momentous that it won't only require adjustment by its neighbors and rivals, but will also irrevocably transform the nature of the international system.

Today, we are living with the consequences of both Benjamin's dialectical warning as well as Lee's geometric forecast about the future of the Asian order. The revenge of geopolitics, and emergence of what Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad calls "new imperialism," is the result of the failure of regional actors to create a truly stable, inclusive and rules-based regional order.

When the Cold War rivalry ended, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) took it upon itself to, in the words of constructivist scholars, "socialize" great powers such as China into not only accepting, but also internalizing the norms of nonaggression and dialogue-based resolution of disputes.

The upshot was the dangerous illusion of a truly horizontal and stable regional order undergirded by the Asean principles. Today, however, the Asean is grappling with an overpowering China, which is effectively dictating the agenda on virtually every area of shared concern. This includes the ongoing negotiations over a Code of Conduct that is increasingly reflecting Beijing's



HORIZONS

RICHARD HEYDARIAN

preferences than regional pacifist norms.

The revengeful return of "great power politics" has presented smaller neighbors such as the Philippines with an existential dilemma. During our inaugural forum for the newly established Akademiayang Filipino, Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio went so far as to describe China's rising maritime assertiveness in Philippine waters as the "gravest external threat [to the country] since World War II."

The question, however, remains: How to best deal with a risen China, which now has the world's second largest economy and military? In the perspective of mayor-turned-president Rodrigo Duterte, the best way to deal with China is proactive engagement, which often, at least rhetorically, borders on graceful accommodation, if not strategic resignation.

The fact of the matter is that when the Philippines' arbitration award came out on July 12, 2016, no single power was in a position to foist it upon an intransigent China. Not the United States, which was then under a lame-duck president, nor the Asean, which has yet to even acknowledge the existence of the award. The European Union took several

days before it could even draft a statement.

Ironically, we seemed loneliest at our moment of greatest moral victory. It's precisely within this context of strategic solitude that some welcomed Mr. Duterte's call for a "soft-landing" in the West Philippine Sea. If we were "meek" and "humble," the President proudly advised, we would receive Beijing's "mercy."

Two years on, however, what we see is largely the unfulfilled promise of Chinese mercy. Over the past year, China's militarization of the South China Sea disputes entered a new and dangerous phase with the deployment of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), anticruise ballistic missiles, electronic jamming equipment and a whole package of advanced military assets to artificially created islands.

As the US Indo-Pacific Command Adm. Philip Davidson put it, we are now confronting a "great wall of SAMs" in the South China Sea. As for China's \$9-billion pledge of infrastructure investments and development assistance in the Philippines, the backlog is striking.

Among the 10 big-ticket projects in the pipeline, only one so far, the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project, has cleared the preliminary stages of implementation. And among the 29 deals signed during President Xi Jinping's much-vaunted visit, only two, namely the implementation agreements on feasibility studies for the Panay-Guimaras-Negros Island Bridges Project and the Davao City Expressway, evinced some modicum of advancement.

The rest were mostly memorandums of understanding, frameworks and letters on already identified projects. Let's just hope that we haven't been taken for a ride, and that time will sort out everything.

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'TAKE A STAND, DON'T BE BULLIED'

SALVADOR Panelo once again exhibits with legal flourish that sleight of hand which does not succeed in hiding a moral vacuum.

"Arbitration is useless unless claimant countries unite against China" presumes an equation of might with right, and a right which is subservient

to expediency. We know, though, that when might prevails without right, it achieves a hollow victory.

Moreover, it is possible to take a stand without depending on a chorus of approval (although the Philippines received just that from The Hague tribunal). A principled

stand comes from deliberate choice. Let us not allow ourselves to be bullied into a helpless state of mind. We are, after all, born with backbone. Singapore demonstrated this, and gained global respect.

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'Telco-serye' finally over

It's a great week for our countrymen due to three positive developments.

First is the big-time oil price rollbacks. Second, the "telco-serye" has come to an end with the selection of Mislattel consortium as the country's third telco player.

The last is the Philippine Navy's new missile system to help us realize our dream of "minimum credible defense."

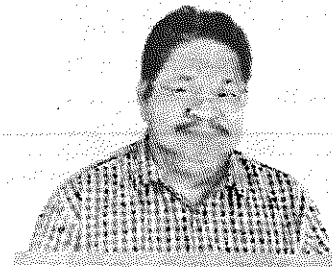
The latest oil price rollbacks are P2.30 per liter for diesel, P1.10 per liter for gasoline and P2.10 per liter for kerosene. The price cuts for diesel and gasoline are the 18th and 17th this year, respectively.

Phoenix Petroleum brought down its prices around noon on Nov. 24. Seoil followed suit at 6 a.m. the following day, while Jetli

lowered its prices at 6 a.m. on Nov. 26. The Big Three, namely Shell, Petron and Caltex, together with Petrogazz and PTT, reduced their prices only at 6 a.m. today, Nov. 27.

As far as we know, the weekly average gas and diesel prices are based on Mean of Platts Singapore with the results already known on Friday evening. Why then do most oil companies wait until several days later to cut their prices? If Phoenix Petroleum can do it on Saturday, why do others delay? Is it because of "operational adjustments" or just "plain insatiable corporate greed?"

Another question: Why is gasoline cheaper by P11 per liter in nearby Malolos and other areas in Bulacan compared to Metro Manila? The same is also



SHARP EDGES

JAKE J. MADERAZO

true for diesel which is lower by P8 per liter in some parts of the province.

It is the responsibility of the joint task force of the energy and justice departments to give the public the right answers to these questions. Their officials should

wake up from their self-imposed hibernation. Unless, of course, they are now "allies" of the oil companies instead of the people.

Finally, a third telco player is coming—Mislattel, in partnership with China Telecom. The selection of the consortium was officially announced by the National Telecommunications Commission in a resolution.

As they say, the telco-serye of press releases from both losers and winners has ended. Now, we must focus on the real issues. The duopoly of PLDT-Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom will now have a "serious competitor" in the form of a company that has "foreign backing" and "international backbone."

But can Mislattel-China Telecom deliver on the promised 27

megabits per second internet speed in its first year of operation and 55 Mbps through the second and fifth years?

OpenSignal, a mobile analytics company, says the downloading speed of PLDT-Smart nationwide for May and June this year is only at 13.09 Mbps compared to Globe's 7.34 Mbps.

Perhaps, the fulfillment of Mislattel's promise is another telco-serye.

Congratulations to the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Palace for continually pursuing our dream of "minimum credible defense" against foreign invaders and internal enemies.

We successfully tested our Israeli-made "surface-to-surface missiles" fired from an attack he-

licopter and a moving seacraft.

Now, we can stop bigger enemy ships or aircraft that might try to challenge our territorial waters.

Early this year, foreign policy think tank Lowy Institute says the Philippines has the weakest military capability in Asia-Pacific (19th out of 25).

This is sad but hopefully, there will be an improvement as I hope the AFP will get its first submarine in addition to multi-role fighter aircraft, long-range patrol aircraft plus frigates, cruisers and destroyers within the next three years.

I salute our soldiers and the AFP! INQ

E-mail jakejm2005@yahoo.com for comments and suggestions.

The rot at the core is Duterteismo

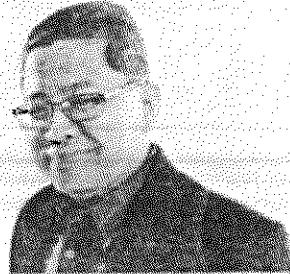
The last few episodes in the current season of that heartbreaking series called Philippine democracy have been harrowing. The following "Highlights" were particularly dispiriting; they gave us a close-up look at the rot eating away at the core of the democratic project.

One, the leak of large chunks of a group chat among members of the influential University of the Philippines fraternity Upsilon Sigma Phi ("lonsi" being a cloying diminutive for Upsilon, the scandal has been hashtagged #lonsileaks). This profoundly offensive scandal revealed a deep-seated antipathy among the members against women, LGBTQs, Muslims, Marcos critics, martial law victims, people of color, activists—in short, against almost everything that progressive UP is known for.

Two, the degrading state visit of the new emperor, Xi Jinping of China. Long-standing Philippine protocols were not followed; President Duterte conducted himself as his visitor's inferior; a raft of documents were signed, some with potential constitutional issues, but were not released to the public. The insult to national dignity was deepened when a timely GMA documentary by Jun Veneracion showed Chinese coast guard harassment in the waters off Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

Three, the brutal murder of three members of the Ado family—the spouses Romeo and Christine and their 11-year-old child Romeo Jr.—by Caloocan policeman Jerry Antonio (as identified by the Quezon City Police District). They were killed in their sleep, allegedly because the spouses had filed a criminal complaint against Antonio. A pouch containing two sachets of shabu was allegedly found on Christine's person, but what are the odds that this "evidence" was planted? This mass murder came on the heels of the Philippine National Police's melodrama over its supposedly unfair portrayal in the hit TV series, "FPJ's Ang Probinsyano."

Four, the deployment of troops to Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and Camarines Sur, under what Sen. Panfilo Lacson called a "baffling" memorandum



NEWSSTAND

JOHN NERY

order from the President. This is ostensibly to quell "lawless violence," but necessarily raises questions about the potential expansion of the scope of martial law.

These episodes are instances of one or more of the seven No's of Duterteismo.

Randy David was the first to use the term "Duterteismo" as shorthand for presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte's approach to governance. He meant that the mayor's basic appeal to the electorate was based on projecting "the will and leadership to do what needs to be done." The lack of policy specifics, or indeed of a program, was characteristic of that approach.

(Rereading his column two and a half years after he wrote it, I am impressed by his refusal to call Mr. Duterte a populist, and by his description of the candidate's appeal as the "Philippine incarnation of fascism" and of Mr. Duterte himself as a fascist. I believe that critical analysis of the President's politics today is moving away from the easy-to-use but in my view badly cracked lens of populism to fascism-as-filter.)

Last year, for a talk at a forum on civil liberties and democracy in De La Salle University, I borrowed the concept, and blogged about it. I have only lately realized that I had not yet published what I called "the 7 No's of Duterteismo" in this space. If you will allow me:

In its fully evolved state, Duterteismo, as an ideology of power, is defined by its No's. Appropriately enough, they number seven in all—a proper Marcosian touch.

1. No Cure: Its signature program, the campaign against drugs, was based on the notion that there was no remedy for drug addiction. Addicts cannot be rehabilitated.

2. No Innocents: This same signature program has claimed thousands of lives—including those of mere toddlers, children who were 4 or 5 years old. Each of these deaths will be justified, as necessary "collateral damage."

3. No Rights: Constitutional safeguards, even those expressly included to make the imposition of martial law more difficult than before, will be treated as suggestions—all subsumed under the "war on drugs."

4. No West: In Duterteismo's ideal world, Mr. Duterte will complete the repudiation of the Americans and other Western sources of influence, in the name of an irritable nationalism.

5. No Criticism: This irritable nationalism is triggered by criticism, especially of alleged human rights violations. It will find expression in a new foreign policy dictated by the need to form alliances with those countries which will not criticize us.

6. No Truth: Duterteismo welcomes the use of "creative imagination" and "alternative facts," because a post-truth regime makes accountability more difficult, sometimes even impossible.

7. No Limits: The be-all and end-all of Duterteismo in its mature stage is the accumulation of all power, for power's sake. As early as August 2015, Mr. Duterte was already entertaining plans for "constitutional dictatorship."

Reviewing these seven elements of Duterteismo, it seems clear to me that the rot at the core—the source of that stench, the corruption not only of the Philippine government but of the Filipino soul—is Duterteismo.

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CHAFF FROM THE GRAIN

China's global PR offensive



By HECTOR R. R. VILLANUEVA

"Power is the greatest aphrodisiac." — Henry Kissinger

THE rise of China to world power in the 21st century is inevitable.

This is the Age of Pax China, which aims to be Numero Ono, and benefactor to developing economies.

Thus, President Xi Jinping's two-day state visit last week was a momentous gesture by the Chinese leader, who, with his busy calendar, had gone out of his way to visit his new friend President Rodrigo Roa Duterte of the Philippines.

China seems willing and prepared to flood the country with investments, loans, technical assistance, disaster aid, cooperation, and ODAs.

Mind you, China remains a ruthless and ambitious behemoth and this Big Brother-Little Brother relation-

ship carries intrinsic risks, costs, and long-term effects on their national interests.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Liechi once commented on complaints on SCS, "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that is just a fact."

Prof. Graham Allison of Harvard asserted, "China sees itself as a fixture of the universe; it always was; it will always be."

He also added that "Chinese strategy is driven by realpolitik and unencumbered by any serious need to justify Chinese behavior in terms of international law or ethical norms."

In the meantime, China is out to make friends with countries big and small, with an aggressive economic and public relations offensive, especially in developing economies, in contrast to US President Donald Trump's isolationist, mercantilist economic policy, and belligerent foreign policy.

Today, China being the second largest economy and industrial powerhouse, all roads lead to Beijing.

China will help the Philippines with investments and infrastructure and it is up to the Philippines to avoid the debt trap, and foreclosure by China, by keeping the investments corrupt-free, and putting them to maximum efficient use.

In sum, with sound governance, the Philippines need not lose its sovereignty nor fall into the debt trap.

Being strategically located, the Philippines can find a niche in the geopolitical scheme of things. -- (1) a Modus Vivendi, or (2) quid pro quo, or (3) become a vassal client state.

China is set on its mission with 5,000 years of civilization behind it.

As a world economic and military power, China can be ruthless as well as benign, depending on the circumstances.

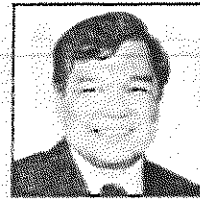
Small nations should not bet into harm's way

You be the judge. 9

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FINDING ANSWERS

ROTC has immense benefits for the youth



By **ATTY. JOEY D. LINA**
Former Senator

PRESIDENT Duterte is right: Patriotism can be instilled in senior high school students who undergo some military training. And so are discipline, teamwork, and leadership skills, among many others. I should know. I was corps commander in Preparatory Military Training during my high school days.

The President's call last week for Congress to pass a measure making the Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program mandatory for all senior high school students certainly has the support of those yearning for a more disciplined and patriotic citizenry.

"I encourage Congress to enact a law that will require mandatory ROTC for Grades 11 and 12 so we can instill patriotism, love of country among our youth," Mr. Duterte said in a speech at the 35th founding anniversary of the Army Reserve Command on Nov. 22 in Tanza, Cavite.

Discipline and obedience to authority developed through the ROTC program can go a long way in addressing the problems our country is faced with - from the nightmarish drug menace to the hellish traffic jams worsened by undisciplined motorists and pedestrians.

The move to revive mandatory ROTC comes at a time when an overwhelming majority of Filipinos are wary of Chinese intrusions in the West Philippine Sea. The latest SWS survey revealed that "87 percent of Filipinos said it was important that the Philippines regained control of the West Philippine Sea islands occupied by China" and that "84 percent of Filipinos said it was not right Manila simply lets Beijing build and fortify its military outposts in the disputed territories."

Indeed, along with the sense of

discipline and patriotism that one gets from active involvement in ROTC is the readiness to fulfill the ultimate responsibility of defending the Philippines from foreign aggression, considering that defense of the state is the duty of everyone.

It was Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew who prominently pushed the idea that an army comprised of the nation's citizenry can serve as a deterrent to foreign invaders because of the "knowledge that even if they could subdue our Armed Forces, they would have to keep down a whole people well-trained in the use of arms and explosives."

With all the proper values that help shape a young person's character - aside from toughening of the physique through pushups and jumping jacks - derived from ROTC, it is indeed essential to bring back the old glory of military training for students.

All the marching drills and the various formations that cadets execute under the hot sun have their purpose. Leadership skills, teamwork and unity are developed and the grueling exercises instill the value of discipline and sacrifice to achieve common objectives.

During our school days at Osmeña High School in Tondo, military training was viewed as a sort of a rite of passage from adolescence towards adulthood. Sporting long hair was the fad then, and like others in the bloom of youth, I didn't want to go against the trend by having the short haircut required for the training. But it didn't take long for us to learn and appreciate the value of humility and obedience to authority.

Mandatory ROTC program was stopped after the 2001 killing of Cadet Mark Chua who exposed corruption that plagued ROTC at the University of Santo Tomas. After his death, ROTC became optional starting in 2002 through RA 9163, the National

Service Training Program Act.

Critics of ROTC cannot be blamed if abuses and violence in the past have created the impression that the program is no good and students are not learning anything other than marching on the field under the sweltering heat of the sun. A militant youth group even claimed ROTC promotes "blind obedience" and that it is "nothing more than a fascist tool of repression used by the state to instill a militaristic mindset" among students.

To gain widespread acceptance and make the public realize the necessity of ROTC in our country's development and security, there is need to enhance the program and put in place the necessary safeguards to avoid past mistakes.

Our leaders could be guided by what Lee said when he started building Singapore's defense system to the exemplar that it is today: "We had to re-orientate people's minds to accept the need for a people's army and overcome their traditional dislike for soldiering. Only if we changed people's thinking and attitudes could we raise a large citizen army like Switzerland or Israel."

With public acceptance of an improved ROTC program, it would then be easier to implement, if the need should arise, the provision (Article 2, Section 4) in the 1987 Constitution which states that "Government may call upon the people to defend the State and, in fulfillment thereof, all citizens may be required, under conditions provided by law, to render personal military or civil service."

The knowledge that millions of Filipinos with ROTC training would be willing and capable of defending the motherland could indeed be a strong deterrent against enemy invaders.

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Trillanes should walk the talk

FAILED coup plotter Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th ought to practice what he preaches.

Just as Chinese President Xi Jinping was to arrive in Manila for a state visit, the Yellows' political hitman against President Rodrigo Duterte and his homie, Kiko Pangilinan, filed a Senate resolution demanding to see the draft of the oil and gas exploration agreement that was to be signed with China. "We are demanding transparency... We're calling them out, *walang* consultation *na nangyari* with the legislature," Trillanes said.

Well, look who's talking? This is the same Trillanes who, six years ago, held secret talks in Beijing as PNoy's backchannel negotiator during the naval stand-off over Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal until he was outed by then Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario. Obviously sore over Trillanes' meddling, del Rosario accused the military mutineer of torpedoing his efforts at resolving the lingering impasse with China.

I find it hypocritical of Trillanes to call out the Duterte administration for some perceived illicit arrangement on the West Philippine Sea when he himself hasn't been transparent about his backchannel negotiations with China that ended (badly) with the Chinese military taking jurisdictional control over the shoal ever since.

The admitted putschist is not exactly an icon of transparency. Up to now, Trillanes has not fully disclosed to the public the details of his numerous trips to Beijing or what transpired during his clandestine talks with Chinese officials.

Except for media statements on his exaggerated accomplishments as PNoy's backchannel negotiator — and fellow *Times* columnist Bobi Tiglao's exposé of his secret aide memoire (which the confessed rebel has not admitted until the present) — Trillanes never bothered to submit any formal or official report



FLIPSIDE
ATTY. DODO DULAY

to the Senate or to the Palace on his activities as PNoy's special envoy to China to negotiate an end to the impasse on Panatag Shoal.

In fact, I recall that when Trillanes was being grilled by then Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile about his trips to China and why he was talking with officials there, Trillanes walked out of the session hall rather than face the interpellation of the veteran senator.

"You went to China, you asked the ambassador of the Philippines there for a meeting, and you said do not take notes during our conversation, and you called the Secretary of Foreign Affairs a traitor and you told me he committed treason," Enrile said.

"Wasn't it your duty to notify the Office of the Senate President when you leave this country? I don't know how many times you have been to China but I recall six times? I am now hearing reports you were there 15 times. Who paid for those trips to Beijing?" Enrile added.

Trillanes also tried to stop Enrile from disclosing the details of his conversations with then Philippine Ambassador to China Sonia Brady, claiming these were "state secrets."

I guess the Filipino people will never know the truth about Trillanes' bungling of the Panatag Shoal stand-off since he has repeatedly insisted that he was not under obligation to report about his trips to China. So much for transparency.

Perhaps this is as good a time as any for del Rosario to likewise speak up about what really happened during the Panatag Shoal stand-off. Del Rosario, another PNoy underling, re-

cently called on Filipinos to seek "full transparency" after the Philippines and China signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on oil and gas development in the West Philippine Sea. "Our people should be seeking full transparency throughout the whole process," said del Rosario.

In the same spirit of full transparency, del Rosario should also reveal what he knows about Trillanes' backchanneling activities in China, and give his rejoinder to the latter's accusation that he committed treasonous acts. More importantly, del Rosario ought to disclose to the public what transpired during his talks with the United States, whom he called the "honest broker" who advised the Philippines to agree to the withdrawal of ships from the shoal to avoid further escalating tensions in the area.

Did he and PNoy really ask the US to intervene in the stand-off and send its warships to the area by invoking the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty that requires the US to come to the aid of the Philippines if it comes under attack? How did we leave Scarborough Shoal? Who gave the order for our ships to leave?

Did the Philippines file the case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague at the behest of the United States, after then US secretary of state Hillary Clinton rejected any such intervention and publicly announced that the "US does not take a position in territorial disputes between two countries?"

Unlike the PNoy administration's still obscure moves during the Panatag shoal stand-off with China, the Duterte administration's dealings with China have been recorded — and more importantly, transparent. Proof of this is the Philippines-China MOU on oil and gas development, which Foreign Secretary Teodoro L. Locsin Jr. described as a mere "agreement to agree," with the crafting of the specifics handed over to an inter-governmental joint steering committee to be set up by both countries.

Quoting several parts of the MOU which he personally drafted, Locsin said "all discussions, negotiations

and activities of the two governments, or the authorized enterprises under or pursuant to this memorandum of understanding, will be without prejudice to the respective legal positions of both governments" and that the agreement will "not create rights or obligations under international or domestic law."

Being the Harvard lawyer that he is, Locsin's inclusion of these provisions will ensure that any deal reached with China (if we even reach one at all) won't affect the PCA judgment in our favor or our claim over Scarborough Shoal.

So, there it is, out in the open. What can be more transparent than that?

Unfortunately, I can't say the same of Trillanes, Del Rosario and their Yellow cohorts. *AS*

The fragility of a China pivot

IF there is one advice I can give President Duterte, if I may be so bold, it is for him to rethink his China pivot. Unlike most of his loyal supporters, I believe that the result of the SWS survey, where 84 percent disapproved of his stance towards China, is a serious handwriting on the wall that should be taken to heart, and should not be simply dismissed as either the outcome of a flawed process, or the opinion of an ignorant multitude. After all, SWS is the same survey outfit that showed that the President's trust rating for the third quarter enjoyed a rebound after suffering a setback when he cursed God. One cannot be selective in heralding favorable survey results and dismissing unfavorable ones.

Whether by chance, or by deliberate intent, the optics related to China in the wake of the visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping has been marred by detrimental images. These include the breach in the protocol for displaying our flag, the unfortunate incident in Panatag where the Chinese Coast Guard prevented a news team from doing its job, the arrest of illegal Chinese workers, and the murder of a Chinese expatriate by a fellow Chinese national. In light of the release of the survey results, which also show that Filipinos don't trust China, these images have provided a counter-narrative to what the government would like to paint as a successful visit by President Xi.

It is even worse, ironically, that the icing projected as a coup de grace, the signing of 29 memoranda of understanding (MOU), agreements and exchanges of letters, most notable of which is the signing of the MOU for a joint oil and gas exploration, was marred by what appeared as an absence of transparency. This is further worsened by a seeming lack of coordination between and among top officials, with divergent state-



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ments from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Energy and the Palace.

As if the China-related troubles are not enough, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana made it worse when he publicly declared that President Duterte has stopped government officials from celebrating openly our victory with the ruling of the arbitral tribunal at the The Hague for fear of offending China. This, after the President openly declared to other countries during the Asean summit in Singapore that China is already in possession of the contested West Philippine Sea.

And it doesn't help that instead of apologizing for the breach in flag protocol, administration officials appear only too eager to give justifications even before they call for an inquiry into the matter.

Meanwhile, prominent social media enablers of the President, and their coterie of followers, lose no time in propagating what appears to be an apologist stance favoring China. SWS was accused of peddling fake news. The GMA news team of Jun Veneracion was pilloried, as if he was the aggressor, and many even agreed that Jun should have asked China for permission. Anyone who appeared to question China's conduct and motives was trolled and shamed.

It was actually surreal to see the spectacle of Filipinos insulting other Filipinos just to defend China. It is like American neo-colonialism all over again, albeit with a new, Chinese face.

The dominant theme of the pro-China line of defense is always rooted to the argument that we,

as a weak country, have no choice, because the alternative is war if we take a more confrontational stance. Top government officials diminish the ruling of the arbitral tribunal as useless and unenforceable. Many argue that instead of criticizing the President, we should even thank him for his boldness to appease China and save us from the mess which his predecessors had created.

But to argue that capitulation and obsequiousness, which many would recast as pragmatic diplomacy, is the only way to proceed to avoid war betrays a gross misunderstanding of international relations, and an inability to understand not only the political psychology of China but also of other state players.

It is a fallacy to argue that the option is either war or capitulation because the arbitral tribunal ruling is an empty victory for us.

First of all, China may be a bully, but it is not in its best interest to be a warmonger. If it is, then it should have already invaded Taiwan, where its territorial claim is more historically rooted, or declared war on Vietnam which has always treated it as an adversary. China would not invest in resources for waging a war when it could achieve the same through debt-trap diplomacy.

Many defenders of China would like us to believe that the developmentalist packages that it brings are a worthy reward for taking the alternative path to confrontation. The psychology of state actors was lost on us. This is perhaps borne from a kind of thinking framed by a drug war where drug criminals are the adversaries, and the options are always the polar opposites of having violence and dying or capitulating and living.

States naturally gravitate towards the underdog and they do not want to be identified with aggressors. Even without formal enforcing powers relative to the

arbitral tribunal ruling, the Philippines would have earned the support of allies in its legal fight in the West Philippine Sea.

The optics was all ours. We are a small country but whose legitimate claim was just affirmed by an international body through a fair process. We are being bullied by a country that obviously was flaunting its power by flexing both its military and economic superiority. But instead of taking this route, we abandoned the arbitral tribunal ruling and banked on China's debt diplomacy masked by a developmentalist facade which has the risk of unraveling anyway sooner or later, as it has in fact unraveled in Sri Lanka.

Now, we are reduced to becoming an apologist, that boy in the school yard who was so afraid of the bully that he turned himself into an ally just to survive. Vietnam and Malaysia, even Indonesia, are now emerging as the templates for how to deal a soft blow to China, even as we have to contend with being relegated to being that country which told the world that China already is in possession of the WPS so we have no choice but to live with it.

As Vietnam is telling China to leave the Paracels alone, Mahathir is gradually extricating Malaysia from onerous Chinese loans, and Indonesia doesn't hesitate to fire their guns at Chinese encroachment, we are becoming a people who are busy defending Chinese interests and would rather troll and demean our own who dare call out their motives. And we are so confident that we are the ones doing it the right way.

Now, you tell me which countries are earning the respect of the world community. We simply squandered our leverage. Now, we have to hope and pray that we will not be caught in a debt trap. Because if that happens, we may have to face the fact that we did it to ourselves. AS

Do we really want to remain as America's shield?

WHEN some of my Filipino friends here in the Netherlands invited me to stage a protest outside the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in 2013 when the time the arbitral case against China

was filed, I emphatically refused and told them that the whole thing was a mistake. It would cost our country a great deal of resources and diplomatic capital.

When President Rodrigo Duterte spoke during the June 2015 Asia CEO Forum, I was surprised at his stance on the South China Sea (SCS) crisis. He understood the dangerous geopolitical position of the Philippines.

During the campaign, Duterte kept on mentioning his proposed conciliatory approach towards China. I was thrilled because, for me, he would seriously turn the tide of history.

Historians of international history have all been predicting that a new world war is looming and the SCS is one of the potential flash points.

When great powers are at war, they usually don't fight first in their own soil. For example, during the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union fought their wars in other countries.

Looking at the SCS geopolitical theater, the Philippines is the best candidate for a proxy war between China and the US. North Korea has nukes and the resolve to use them. Meanwhile, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are very industrialized and well-developed. No rational war strategist would seek to destroy such countries.

Remember: whoever is the victor in every war bears the brunt of rebuilding — that's the price one pays for being the center of the new order that emerges after a devastating contest for global dominance. No matter how crazy it seems to us, war involves rational calculation. So,



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the rational thing to do is for proxy wars to be conducted in countries where the price of rebuilding after would be less costly. In the SCS geopolitical theater, that is the Philippines.

Part of US defense strategy is its defensive perimeter in the Pacific, the island chain from the Aleutians to Japan, to the Ryukyus down to our country.

Duterte saw that danger. Thus, he's trying to nudge our country away from it. He predicts that the first casualty if an armed conflict breaks out in the SCS would be Palawan: "It would be a massacre," he said. Hence, he won't allow weapons to be stockpiled there "to avoid the country being caught in a crossfire in case a war breaks out" (*Manila Bulletin*, "Duterte won't allow stockpile of weapons in Palawan," Nov. 11, 2018).

We will not fully realize the significance of what he's doing until we get the benefit of hindsight. Since he became president,

Duterte has been pursuing neutralism, elegantly formulated as "friend to all, enemy of none."

This echoes what Claro M. Recto advocated in the 1950s. Recto was against the Mutual De-

fense Treaty with the US and a fierce opponent of US bases in the Philippines. Of course, the US hated him for it. In his memoir, *Portrait of A Cold War Warrior*, Joseph B. Smith, a former US spy assigned in Manila, revealed that the Central Intelligence Agency station in the Philippines had an "election operation... to make sure

Recto was soundly defeated in the 1957 presidential election.

In his "Our Mendicant Foreign Policy" speech, Recto called our alliance with the US a "dangerous and provocative entanglement," saying the Americans would "expose our people to the fearful consequences of another war, a war which will be fought on Asian soil with only expendable and bewildered Asians for sacrificial victims on the altar of power politics and international intrigue."

We should seriously reflect on the questions Recto posed over 50 years ago: "What have we done with our independence to make sure that our country will not again become the battleground of foreign wars?"

Duterte asked an analogous question in October 2016 during the 115th anniversary of the Philippine Coast Guard: "I ask you frankly. Give me your answer. We will maintain all military alliances because they say we need it for our defense. Should World War 3 [happen], do you think we still have time to discuss a third world war? When all the ICBMs (guided ballistic missiles), when all the Poseidons (nuclear-armed submarine ballistic missiles) underneath the sea are [fired], where will we be? See you in heaven."

Duterte is pointing the way to a safer future. He's already laying the ground for a neutral foreign policy akin to what Finland has — no military alliances, only close ties with Moscow and partnership with Washington. That shielded the Finnish from the devastating effects of the Cold War. *ff*

Duterte might not be fully supported by our military and foreign policy elites. Most of them are too indebted to the US. A lot of them are still stuck in their fantasy that our alliance with the US will keep us alive. We would be alive, for sure, but after thousands of our people are dead after we serve as Uncle Sam's shield against his enemies.

But do we really want to remain as America's shield? No! Then end our provocative and dangerous entanglement with the US. Be the Finland of Asia. If yes, just like what Duterte said: See you in heaven, but after going through hell to keep America safe.

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Red scare, snake pit and character

O SAKA: The Duterte administration took office on a so-called unity cabinet, with PRRD reaching out to both the left and the right in the political spectrum but with overemphasis on the Davao connection: either one is from Davao or has served in Davao. It issued Executive Order (EO) 1 in 2016 in an effort to curve corruption in 12 agencies and re-align supervision and control to that of the Office of the Cabinet Secretary or OCS, headed by a close confidante of PRRD and erstwhile 2016 campaign manager, Leoncio "Jun" Evasco.

Evasco was said to be the heart and soul of the inner sanctum of the very closed group. Characterized as the ideologue, Evasco was a quiet, unassuming, out-of-sight gatekeeper. Never got used to the trappings of the Office of the President (OP), Evasco went his way working silently putting together a team that had structured the OP proper into functioning governance nets of the cabinet cluster system (CCS) and the cabinet assistance system (CAS). Further, E.O. 9 was issued to strengthen the OCS by constituting the following offices under it: Office of Participatory Governance, Strategic Action and Response (where the Quick Response Center and the Citizen's Complaint Center or 8888 were lodged) and the Performance and Projects Management Office. Some of the functions of the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) got distributed, with control and supervision of PMS placed under the Special Assistant to the President.

The CAS and CCS are not new organizations since they originated from the PCCA and were further enhanced by PPVR. The structure worked well at the beginning of PRRD's term until unwieldy power players came into the picture. As the midterm approached, the rainbow colors in the cabinet started getting replaced with faugue colors and with the replacement came the issues of red scare, hijacking of cabinet agenda, and more and more presidential assistants and advisers getting to sit and engage anyone and everyone at cabinet meetings.

OCS control started to weaken, result-



ZILCH
LOURDES
TIQUIA

ing in undisciplined and uncoordinated actions where complete staff work were set aside and PRRD started taking unvetted positions. The snake pit started the whispers and daggers were sharpened to create a wag-the-dog scenario that PRRD was being controlled by the Left. When threats to the presidency were made, PRRD started giving more power to the military to ensure political survival. With no signed agreement with the CPP-NPA-NDF, the witch hunt began as more military men joined the ranks of the official family.

E.O. 67, issued Oct. 31, 2018, laid the predicate for what some would refer to as the cleaning up of the stables in the administration. With almost 60 military officers harnessed by PRRD in cabinet and sub-cabinet levels, one can see the clear effort to rid government of people associated with the legal left and those who spent time underground. There was also the effort to rid the OP proper of people said to have done some questionable acts while in office. So, it was no wonder that in one fell swoop, the Duterte administration was able to implement a surgical cut in the OP proper courtesy of E.O. 67.

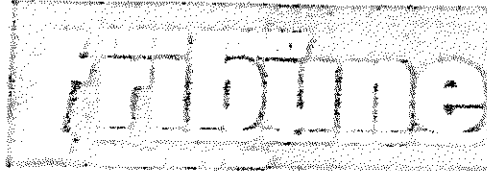
Unfortunately, there were more than 150 officers, employees or rank and file who were given the pink slip to end their services effective October 2018. In an effort to "justify strengthening the democratic and institutional framework of the Executive Branch" and the filing of the certificate of candidacy, the Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) has become the strongest and most powerful center today after rationalizing OP and consolidating core mandates. Almost all of the officials and staff of the OES were with the previous administration and others continue to wonder why leaks are unabated. *SV*

Thus, when Rep. Karol Nograles took

over as Cabinet Secretary, he was assuming a position without an office and no staff to transition to because before he was sworn in, E.O. 67 "took effect immediately." No report was made about the terminations and the impact of such in the midterm. Suddenly, some were out of office exactly two months before Christmas. Observers are wondering if PRRD knew about and actually sanctioned it. Was a power play launched under the cover of the midterm elections? Which group won in the snake pit? Would PRRD be served well?

Time and again, it has been said "nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." The people Evasco invited and the team he molded left quietly with nary a sign of protest. Professionals, as they are, they chose to bid public service goodbye ahead of the end of Duterte's term. They worked hard because they were the machine that got things going and consistently pushed the nets to work together. To these men and women, the nation is thankful. You held on to the flag, took the bullets for PRRD and went on your way with, yes, a sad heart and bruised ego, but knowing fully well you gave it your best shot. After all, working in government is a thankless job. Working 24/7 in a highly charged atmosphere is not easy but you go back to work to hold the fort again and again to serve country. That's character and it will always tap out the snake pit. Always.

Part of character-building is friendship nurtured through the years. Not easy when growing apart means growing roots, building niches, making personal choices, crossing rubicons, standing up from every stumble — personal or professional. To these strong and amazing women — Cynthia Jose-Colei, Ymay Jeturian, Vedy Yuzon-Magno, Nikki Cruz-Ibanez, Cynthia Sumulong-Caparas, Tonette Gaynilo, Pat Roque-San Agustin, Rossan Suanes-Cabiling and Issa Abad Santos-Baron — gratitude is not enough for the shared experience of a lifetime. Indeed, the best of times. May we see each other again in better times, fair winds and smooth seas. *AP*



Who's afraid of martial law?

“It's time to change tactics if these critics want to be credible and acceptable to the people.”

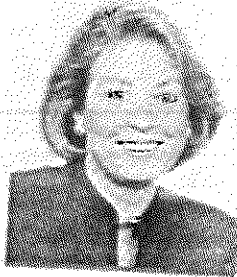
What's with these constant critics of President Duterte to equate virtually all his legitimate moves as acts to declare and to impose nationwide martial rule in the country?

It's really a wonder why they even use this issue to demonize the President, given that the majority in all probability hardly fear the martial law imposed by Duterte, as they have been witnessing all year long its lenient imposition in Mindanao, which honored the constitutional guarantees of all freedoms. Even the terrorists and their kin were not denied their rights, as after their capture, they were quickly charged in court and not detained for months on end or even tortured. There were no abuses committed, only made-up claims of abuse by the military from the usual aboveground commies.

Don't these critics realize that their constant criticisms and their attempts to spread fears of a return to Marcos martial law days are neither credible nor feared, because Duterte's measure is nothing like the one experienced by older Filipinos?

But they keep on and on and on and this has become a boring issue for Filipinos.

Still, as the critics don't dance to



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cacho-Olivares

the tune of the majority of Filipinos, there went Vice President Leni Robredo, trying so hard to become relevant by again bringing up the martial law issue on the basis of the latest presidential memorandum related to lawlessness. She said that even as she welcomes the order, “distrust” nevertheless remains since the “people are afraid that this would be a platform to declare martial law.”

Duterte last week issued Memorandum Order 32, authorizing the deployment of more soldiers and policemen to three provinces in the Visayas and a province in the Bicol region to “suppress lawless violence and acts of terror” in those parts of the country, as well as including in the order the authority to intensify intelligence operations and the investigation and prosecution of people behind acts of violence.

It is from this order that Robredo said many people were spooked by the term “lawless violence,” as it is one of the grounds that may be invoked to declare martial law.

Really, Leni? Many Filipinos are spooked by the term “lawless violence” that has existed in the Philippine Constitution since 1987? Incidentally, the phrase was drafted by the then overwhelming yellow delegates, handpicked by the first yellow president, Cory Aquino.

“Doesn't Leni have anything to say by way of criticisms to make herself both relevant and credible before the Filipino nation?”

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order the deployment without the need of a formal memorandum.

Besides, Leni, Duterte does not need to even come up with a memorandum order to have martial law declared and imposed. The Constitution does state that all he has to do is to seek another extension of his declared martial law from Congress that is likely to grant him that extension. It cannot be denied that, not only are there Islamic insurgents, but also terrorists, among them the New People's Army.

Leni should know all this, being a lawyer, a one-term legislator and now a vice president. She certainly knows, or ought to know, the Constitution and the powers of the president under this Constitution. Why then come up with such silly criticisms that make her look like a legal and constitutional ignoramus?

But these usual critics, including the self-exiled commie founder Joma Sison and his Reds, as well as the yellows, whose long ambition is to have the President ousted through their constant demonization to regain power, position and pelf, really want Duterte to impose martial law as they appear to believe that it will be its imposition that would spell the end of his rule and regime.

But why even think that Filipinos are easily scared off by the opposition forces' constant talk of martial law imposition when these claims, coming from them, are not seen as credible by the people, but as yet another try by them to oust President Duterte.

Haven't these Reds, yellows and whites who get a kick out of ousting presidents still not realize that Filipinos no longer want a repeat of ousters that screw up the Constitution and the Supreme Court (SC) into inventing non-existent reasons for ruling the unconstitutional as constitutional. An example is the infamous SC ruling stating that then President Estrada had "constructively resigned" just to make his ouster - with the then chief justice and several other associate justices who joined the coup against Estrada - constitutional, as illegally decreed by the sole interpreter of the Charter.

It's time to change tactics if these critics want to be credible and acceptable to the people.

This goes for Leni, too, who apparently wants to be the next president, whether through the ballot or through unconstitutional means.

Doesn't Leni have anything to say by way of criticisms to make herself both relevant and credible before the Filipino nation?

Duterte does not need to even come up with the memorandum that orders the deployment of more troops in Samar and other provinces. As Commander-in-Chief of all the Armed Forces of the Philippines, he can merely

SM

WIDUING

Asinine assertion

“The CHR should not venture outside the bounds of its expertise and mandate.”

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has made another asinine assertion.

In a statement on Sunday, CHR spokesman Jacqueline de Guia issued a press statement saying recent incidents of lawless violence in Samar, Negros Occidental, and in the Bicol region need thorough investigation, not the deployment of more troops in the area.

“Incidents of violence demand thorough investigation and expedient justice for the victims. This is the more immediate clamor that needs to be addressed to truly stop the cycle of violence,” De Guia said.

are the root causes of violence in poor communities in the provinces. Following such a premise, the commission urged the government to use development solutions rather than a military approach in solving the problems of violence.

The CHR’s cautionary commentary is both correct and appropriate. But where it is correct, it is inappropriate, and where it was appropriate, it was incorrect. In other words, the agency got it all wrong.

It was correct for the CHR to say that incidents of violence that occurred in the areas covered by MO 32 need thorough investigation. But it is inappropriate and presumptuous for the

The CHR statement was a reaction to Memorandum Order (MO) 32 Malacañang had earlier issued, directing the deployment of more troops to the said areas, citing incidents of “lawless violence and acts of terror.”

Deployment of more troops, according to the CHR, might just worsen violence instead of solving it, adding that “increasing the presence of security forces might escalate tension and fuel fear in the community.”

The CHR posited that land disputes and the plight of the farmers

CHR to insinuate that President Duterte’s decision to send more troops to these areas was a wrong move.

No less than the Supreme Court has recognized, time and again, the “unassailable fact that as Commander-in-Chief, the President



has access to confidential information” unlike any ordinary citizen or group.

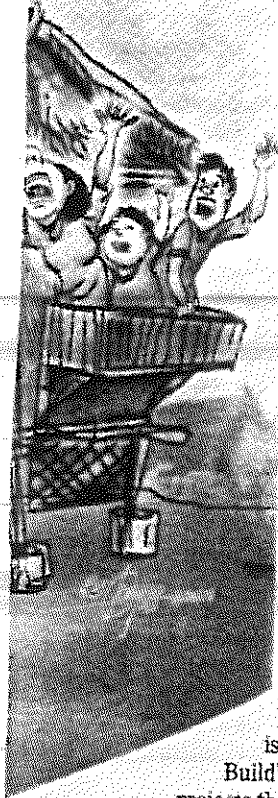
With more data available to him, the President may make a decision otherwise puzzling to anybody who is clueless, like the CHR in this case, about the factual basis of such Executive action.

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Besides, the CHR is free to conduct its investigation despite the increased presence of the military - or even because of it - because their probers can benefit from the increased security the soldiers and policemen could provide.

It becomes even more untenable if the CHR would go to the extent of asking Malacañang to withdraw the deployment of the soldiers and policemen in the areas covered by the directive. Who would protect then the unarmed civilians from the aggression or harassment of communist rebels and other lawless armed groups?

Meanwhile, the CHR espouses development solutions rather than a military one to solve the problem. Indeed, it is an appropriate solution. But it was an incorrect approach at this time.



“
It is inappropriate and presumptuous for the CHR to insinuate that President Duterte's decision to send more troops to these areas was a wrong move.

Maybe the CHR should be reminded that developmental solutions can only prosper if one crucial ingredient is present: peace. When violence reigns, development efforts perish.

As to land disputes that the commission tags as the cause of violence, the courts remain the proper venue to settle them if

the parties cannot agree between themselves. CHR has no business meddling in land disputes.

Unless the CHR had become a hermit and had gone into seclusion in the past few years, it would have known that the Duterte administration is aggressively pushing the “Build, Build, Build” program for crucial infrastructure projects that would create jobs, employment and business opportunities for our people.

For the growth of farming communities, President Duterte has signed in February this year the law that would waive irrigation fees of small farmers, something that the yellow administration posturing as a champion of human rights failed to do.

However, all these programs take time, not only to implement, but to bear fruit.

The CHR should not venture outside the bounds of its expertise and mandate. Otherwise, it displays its shameful stupidity.

Distrusting China



TO THE
POINT
EMIL P.
JURADO

THERE have been a lot of controversial reactions to the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping last week and to the signing of 29 deals especially that on the joint exploration for oil, gas and minerals.

Most of the Western press call the deals part of the Chinese debt colonialism or China's debt expansionism as they cite countries that are highly indebted to China—Sri Lanka, Pakistan, some countries in Africa and even far off Fiji Islands in the South Pacific.

Here in the Philippines, we are assured that the controversial memorandum of understanding was drafted by no less than Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin and yet to be implemented after a year. This is to the advantage of the Philippines, conforming with the 60-40 ownership provision of the Constitution.

This assurance is further bolstered by the Senate, which still has to review not only the MOU on the joint exploration but the other 28 deals as well.

Thus, things are still up in the air!

The contents, the amount of indebtedness, the firms and agencies implementing the deal and the benefits we are supposed to derive from the deal are still subject to speculation.

The Duterte administration should also make the other deals public to assure us that our President did not sacrifice sovereignty in exchange for loans, grants, investments and other accommodations.

Filipinos are suspicious of China's real motives because President Duterte does not protest China's militarization and occupation of the islands and shoals within the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone.

Eight in 10 Filipinos do not trust China, according to a recent survey. Do you?

“ Four in five
Filipinos distrust
China. Do you? ”

by the militant and Left-leaning party-list representatives, I am all for it!

I refer to the move of President Duterte to deploy more members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to Bicol, Samar and Negros in the wake of increasing violence perpetrated by the New People's Army.

The communists are expected to protest such moves. They say it's a prelude to martial law. I don't agree.

I am all for military and police presence in areas where there appears to be lawless violence, especially with the upcoming midterm elections. Their presence is needed to curb guns-for-hire, private armies and loose firearms.

We all know that in the local level, candidates for governor, mayor, and vice mayors take elections so seriously that it's a matter of life and death.

That's why we see local officials fielding family members and other relatives—to prevent their rivals from sharing the power. That's how it is here.

I can't forget that time in my hometown in Magsingal, Ilocos Sur, where

competing politicians control opposite sides of the national highway, so much so that companies of soldiers were sent to guard the town.

In Abra, where I was born, politicians take elec-

tions seriously so that somebody gets killed every now and then.

In line with the President's desire to suppress lawless violence, I would even recommend that the President should send more soldiers and cops in so-called election hotspots. In these places, local police can no longer be trusted because they may have become the private army of some politicians.

Despite the fact that Makati Mayor Abby Binay is doing an excellent job for the citizens of the richest city in the Philippines, there are still some efforts to derail her projects.

My *gula*, I am referring to the fact that benefits for senior citizens like me and my wife are being held hostage by majority of the policy-making body of the city council.

Distrusting...

From A4

Mayor Abby had plans on granting centenarians like me (I am now 91) P10,000 annually on top of the P5,000 we receive every year.

Those who are holding the plan hostage want Abby's brother to replace her. The real reason is that on cleaning up the mess left by her predecessor, she has had to include some of the councilors who have abused city funds by hiring ghost employees. They are now the same people egging Junjun to run against his sister.

A proof of Abby's good performance is the endorsement of their father, former Vice

President Jejomar Binay.

I have been following Abby's performance as mayor and I say she is really doing a good job. She takes care of us senior citizens. She also plans to build a 10-kilometer subway around the city.

I think the choice is clear.

Despite the fact that Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio is not on the same page as President Duterte on the issue of the West Philippine Sea, he still deserves to be chief justice.

Carpio has been bypassed at least twice as chief justice. He has probity, integrity, and independence. In fact he praises the President when the latter deserves it.

I cannot end this column without commiserating with the family of Metrobank founder and chairman emeritus George SK Ty, a good friend. He was a banker of note. He was also a cut above the rest in his vision and philanthropy.

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EDITORIAL

Working with critics

THE three branches of government are equal and similarly independent. This is how the Constitution guarantees checks and balances in the system. This is how a government of one is prevented, and how a healthy exchange of varying, if not diverse, opinions are encouraged. Excesses are capped, the best arguments win, and criticism is given and taken constructively to help each department do its job well.

All these sentence, however, are in the realm of the ideal.

In real-life politics, government officials are keen on appointing like minds and allies to work with them. This is not altogether illogical: We normally work best with people we trust and have a history with. Because we share the same vision and agree on methods, we get rid of resistance and opposition, and thus get things done faster.

But that is also where the danger lies.

To be fair, the predisposition for appointing only officials who hold back opposite views and outright criticism is not unique to this President. Predecessors have done the same, and have exhibited low tolerance for those who do not think as they do. Remember how former President Benigno Aquino III cas-

tigated the media who do not report favorably on him, or sidelined other elected officials who did not sport the same affiliations as he did.

In this administration, we have seen how loyalty is rewarded and how articulating opinion arrived at independently can cause people their jobs, even their good name.

This comes to mind as President Duterte prepares to choose from the Supreme Court justices short-listed by the Judicial and Bar Council. The next Chief Justice is expected to be named in the next few weeks.

The leading candidate is acting Supreme Court Chief Justice Antonio Carpio, the most senior among the magistrates, who has been bypassed more than once.

The last time he was considered

for the post, Carpio declined his nomination. He had just voted against the quo warranto petition that eventually ousted then-Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, and he said he did not want to benefit from a decision to which he disagreed.

To say that he and the President are not on the same page in a fundamental national issue would be an understatement.

Carpio is known for his judicial activism in asserting our claim in the South China Sea, while the President has bent over backwards to avoid offending Beijing.

There are assurances, of course, from the presidential spokesman that this will not prevent the President from acknowledging the fact that Carpio deserves the post. Unfortunately, we have trouble taking the spokesman's words seriously.

If at all, there must be distinction between criticism for politics' sake, and substantive criticism. One creates noise and discord; the other elevates discourse. We hope the President will be able to tell the difference. *MA*

SA

Strategic partners

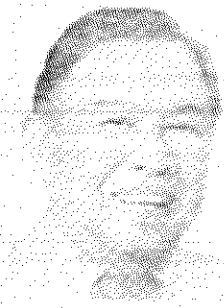
WE are now strategic partners," thus did President Rodrigo Roa Duterte aka Digong and Chinese President Xi Jinping declare. "I am pleased with the current positive momentum of the Philippines-China relations. There is a deepening trust and confidence [between] our Governments, and we have greatly increased dialogue and interaction on many levels," Digong said.

On the South China Sea issue, Xi said:

"We will continue to manage contentious issues and promote maritime cooperation through friendly consultation and we will work alongside other Asean countries towards the conclusion of the COC [code of conduct] consultations based on consensus within three years and contribute our share to peace, stability, and the welfare in this region."

On the whole, I believe Xi's state visit was quite successful and is a significant milestone in the ever-growing friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

I, and many others I'm sure, would want to applaud President Xi's civility for writing Digong a "thank you" letter for his two-day state visit and wishing Digong "good health and success, prosperity for the country, happiness for the people and stronger



CROSSHAIRS

REY O. ARGILLA

Chinese President Xi's state visit is a significant milestone in the ever-growing friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

friendship between Manila and Beijing."

That is a mark of good statesmanship.

Xi also said in his letter he was "once again deeply touched" by Duterte's "sincerity and determination to grow our bilateral relations and by the friendly sentiment of the Philippine people toward the Chinese people."

TWEETER LOCSIN

Due to his fondness for using Twitter to express his thoughts and feelings on national issues, I shall henceforth give Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. the additional moniker

"Tweeter."

The dictionary on my MacMini defines "tweeter" as "a person who posts on Twitter, especially on a regular basis." A "tweet" is "a message, image, etc., posted on Twitter."

True to form and like a gun-fighter fast on the draw, Tweeter Locsin lambasted presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, in a tweet of course, for allegedly saying that the Palace doesn't care if China made the draft on the proposed PH-China oil exploration deal in the West Philippine Sea over which we have sovereign rights.

He said: "Palace Com doesn't care if it is a Chinese draft? I

fu*ck*g* care! A framework or architecture for gas and oil in our part of the sea demands the draft be MINE... MIO ... FILLIPINO..."

As it turned out, Panelo was misquoted by the media that Locsin had to apologize to him pronto, saying he fell for "media lie" - in a tweet, naturally!

Earlier, Tweeter Locsin also resorted to Twitter in giving instructions to a DFA assistant secretary concerning OFW's in Libya.

I do not think official government communications should be done on Twitter for obvious reasons. There are other means of communications available to the DFA.

In another tweet, Locsin dismissed as "trivia" the breach of protocol for the national flag during Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent state visit spotted by a couple of netizens.

Surely, he must know that proper display and respect for the national emblem is the least bit trivial.

US ON KASHOGGI MURDER

The US government and its officials have just given us a new reason to thumb our nose at them every time they criticize us for al-

cy See STRATEGIC > Page B5

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STRATEGIC

legedly committing human rights violations.

We only have to cite US President Donald Trump's vow to stand by Saudi Arabia despite the fact that the Central Intelligence Agency has definitively concluded that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi de facto leader, was involved in the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi.

Kashoggi was a US resident and was critical of Salman in some of his articles published by the Washington Post.

SOUTH KOREAN WASTE

The South Korean government vowed to return to South Korea

the 5,100 metric tons of garbage dumped on our shores by a Korean exporter.

"The Government stated that it would take measures to have the wastes in question be brought back to Korea as soon as possible," the South Korean embassy said.

That's the way a true friend behaves... unlike the weed-crazy Canadians who up to now have not taken any step to return the rotting wastes they illegally dumped on us about five years ago.

Their prime minister, Justin "Trashy" Trudeau, even promised two years ago when he bad-mouthed Digong during the APEC Summit Meeting here, to implement what he called the "Trudeau solution" to the problem.

Maybe it's time Tweeter Loc-

sin tweeted him or his Canadian counterpart using his usual brash language?

REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administration of some of its yet unfulfilled promises and matters that need attention and/or follow-up action. More importantly, the people are entitled to know what's being done about them.

1. Digong's promise to rid the country of foreign troops. This, of course, necessitates abrogating the lopsided and constitutionally infirm VFA and the EDCA.

2. Reciprocal visa arrangements with the US and other countries. (What is the DFA doing about this? Our embassy in Washington?)

(NOTE: Here, I would like to reiterate my previous proposal for the creation of a committee to reassess the whole gamut of PH-US relations in the context of present day realities with a view to making recommendations that would be consistent with Digong's vision of what those relations ought to be.)

3. The retrieval of the Balangiga bells. This item will be removed as soon as the bells arrive.

4. The return of the Canadian waste. Sources say the DOJ has filed a motion before the proper court for the importer to return the waste to Canada. Apparently, there is no decision yet. In the meantime, I think it is incumbent upon the DFA to issue a statement on the status of this matter.

Also, if Environment Secretary

Roy Cimatu could order the return of the South Korean waste to that country, why couldn't he do the same with respect to the Canadian garbage?

Today is the 213th day of the twelfth year of the enforced disappearance of Jonas Burgos, son of the late press icon and founder of this newspaper, Joe Burgos.

After the acquittal of Major Harry Baliaga, Jr., the only person formally charged with Jonas' kidnapping, I guess what happens next is now up to Divine Providence.

From an internet friend:

MY NEW FRIENDS! I am seeing five gentlemen (give or take) every day! As soon as I wake up, Will Power helps me get out of

bed. Then I go to see John. Then Arthur Ritis shows up and stays the rest of the day. He doesn't like to stay in one place very long so he takes me from joint to joint. After such a busy day, I'm really tired and very glad to go to bed with Earl Grey. What a life!

Oh, yes, I'm also flirting with Al Zymer, or whatever his name is. I forget! And I'm thinking of calling Jack Daniels, Jim Beam or Johnny Walker to come over and keep me company.

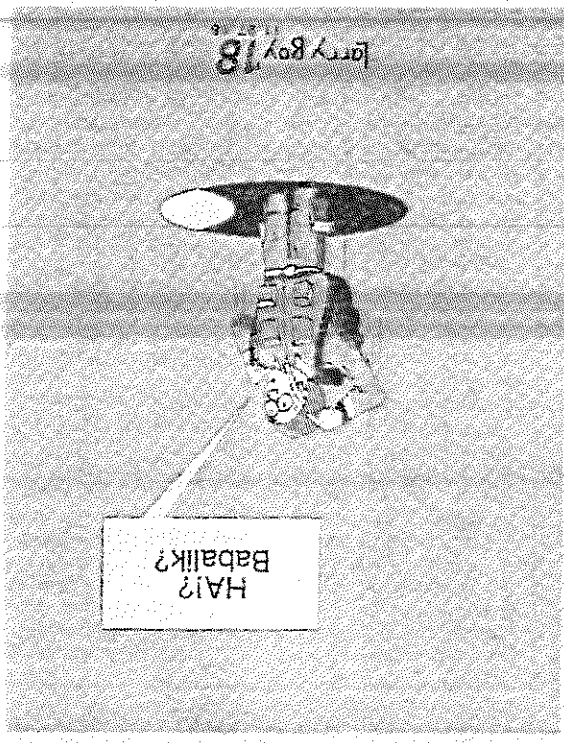
Now remember: Life is like a roll of toilet paper - the closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes. So have fun, think 'good thoughts' only, learn to laugh at yourself, and count your blessings!

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ipines (AFP) ang pagbabalik sa mandatory ROTC pero nangangamba rin sila na ang pagbabalik nito ay maging dahilan ng paglabag sa karapatang pantao. May pangamba rin na ang pagbabalik ng ROTC sa campus ay maging dahilan muli ng pang-abuso at iba pang uri ng hazing sa kadete. Pinangangambahan din ang muling pamamayangpag ng corruption. Biuwag ang ROTC noong 2001 kasunod ng karumal-dumal na pagpatay sa ROTC cadet ng UST na si Mark Welton Chua. Pinatay si Chua ng mga kapwa kadete makaraang istwalat nito ang korapsyon sa UST-ROTC unit na nilathala sa student paper. Pagkaraang patayin, ibinalot sa carpet ang katawan ni Chua at itinaon sa Pasig River. Nadakip ang mga pumatay at hinatulan ng habambuhay na pagkabihanggo.

Huwag nang ibalik ang mandatory ROTC. Hayaan na lamang ang mga estudyante na mamili kung nais nilang kumula nito hindi Hindi lang naman sa pagkuha ng ROTC makikita ang pagiging makabayan. Hindi lang ito ang paraan para madisiplina ang mga kabataan. Huwag nang dagagan pa ang pasamin ng mga estudyante sa pagkuha nito. Para maiwasan din nla ang pang-abuso at paglabag sa karapatang pantao. Please, huwag nang ipatupad ang mandatory ROTC.



GUSTO ni President Duterte na muling ibalik ang mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) sa Grade 11 and 12. Mag-iisya umano siya ng Executive Order para ma-revive ang ROTC sakali't hindi kumilos ang Kongreso na maibalik ito. Noong nakaraang taon pa ipinagpipilitan ng Presidente na maibalik ang ROTC sa mga pribado at pampublikong eskwelahan.

Pangmahing layunin ng Presidente sa pagbabalik ng ROTC ay upang madisiplina ang kabataan na tungin niya ngayon ay nawalan na ng pagmamahal sa bansa. Isa pang dahilan ay upang malhanda ang mga ito sa pagtuon na maipagsebangalang ang panbansang seguridad. Kung maisasailalim umano sa ROTC ang mga kabataan, mangingibabaw sa mga ito ang pagiging makabayan.

Huwag nang ibalik ang ROTC

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AFP, PNP exempted from hiring, transfer ban for BOL plebiscite

By Ferdinand Patinio

MANILA -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) are allowed to hire or transfer its officers and personnel during the period of the plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the Commission on Elections (Comelec) said Monday.

In Resolution No. 10451, the poll body has exempted both the police and military from the ban during the plebiscite period in connection with the Jan. 21, 2019 activity.

"The Commission resolves to grant authority to the PNP and the AFP to appoint or hire new employees from December 22 until January 20; and to transfer or detail their officers or employees from December 7 until February 5," the decision said.

The Commission en-banc said the exemption was accorded to the military and the police since they will be deputized for the forthcoming referendum.

"To impose the prohibition against the PNP and the AFP will unnecessarily limit their movements and capabilities to carry out their mandates as Comelec deputies," it added.

However, it noted that the exemption will be applicable if such actions are deemed essential to the proper functioning of the office and will not influence the conduct of the plebiscite.

Likewise, the resolution said that such actions should not involve promotion or salary increase or giving of privilege from December 22 until January 20.

It added that the exemption shall be prospective in application and is without prejudice to applicable rules and regulations among civil servants.

The Comelec noted that its Law Department must be notified in writing regarding the hiring, appointment, or transfer of officers or personnel.

The PNP and the AFP are also allowed to use armored land, water, and aircraft during the campaign period.

"This authority shall be without prejudice to the application of the prohibition to the use of public equipment and facilities owned and controlled by the government for the plebiscite campaign," it added.

