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NEWS CLIPPINGS

17 September 2018

Monday



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100 miners feared buried

Cagayan under state of calamity

By RAYMUND CATINDIG

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan – Nearly 100 people are feared dead in a landslide that buried a mining shelter in Itogon, Benguet during the onslaught of Typhoon Ompong on Saturday.

Itogon Mayor Victorio Palangdan said the small-scale miners were trapped in a bunkhouse buried by a landslide.

Along the path of devastation left by Ompong (international name Mangkhut), officials said at least 56 people were confirmed killed mostly in landslides in mountain areas.

Earlier, two rescue workers died in a landslide in Itogon while trying to retrieve several people buried in the mud.

Palangdan said rescue workers retrieved as many as 30 dead from the mining bunkhouse.

He said most of the dead were retrieved from the bunkhouse used by the former Benguet Corp., located outside the mining tunnel just below the mountain slopes.

"There were people trapped inside the privately owned bunkhouse that was buried by the landslide. We fear they might be dead," Palangdan said over *dzMM*.

Benguet provincial police chief Senior Supt. Lyndon Men-

cio added they have recovered four bodies from the site.

"We're on top of the building that was buried. There seems to be no sign of life. We already recovered four bodies in the area," Mencio also told *dzMM*.

Presidential political adviser Francis Tolentino, designated as a "conduit" to coordinate government rescue and relief efforts, earlier said 20 of the fatalities were in the Cordillera region and four from Nueva Vizcaya.

The Cagayan police said a 74-year-old farmer died of exposure after his hut was torn apart by strong winds in the remote town of Peñablanca. In Ilocos Sur, another person died after he was hit by a falling tree.

Tolentino said the tally reflected the situation at 9 a.m., adding that reports from other areas of northern Luzon hit by Ompong on Saturday were still coming in.

Emmanuel Salamat of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said police reported at least 20 dead in the Cordillera region alone.

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100 miners

From Page 1

Tolentino said most of the victims died from landslides, adding they are still searching for others still missing.

A family of four died Saturday after their house was buried in a landslide in a remote village in Nueva Vizcaya.

Cordillera regional police director Chief Supt. Rolando Nana said they listed 20 fatalities, mostly from landslides. He said Benguet reported seven fatalities, Baguio City and Mountain Province at six each while one fatality was reported in Kalinga. Baguio City Mayor Mauricio Domogan however said only three people died and six others were missing on Saturday after ferocious winds and rain destroyed several houses and set off landslides, which also blocked roads to the popular vacation destination.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Council (NDRRMC), meanwhile, refused to release casualty reports, saying all figures should be validated first.

However, the NDRRMC reported a total of 250,036 people in seven regions were affected by Ompong as it passed through Luzon over the weekend.

The NDRRMC said a total of 1,403 barangays in 332 cities and municipalities of 30 provinces in the National Capital Region (NCR), Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Cordillera and Region 1, 2, and 3 were adversely affected by the storm.

A total of 133,457 people or 34,169 families had to stay in 1,190 evacuation centers while the rest stayed at home, the NDRRMC said.

Although Ompong has left the country on Saturday, the typhoon left a trail of destruction in northern Luzon.

The Cordillera region, being

a mountainous area, was heavily hit by landslides. It was this region that reported most of the casualties.

Cagayan, which initially bore the brunt of Ompong, was heavily damaged in terms of infrastructure and destroyed crops.

The provincial board of Cagayan has declared a state of calamity, which Gov. Manuel Mamba said sustained P4.6 billion damage in agriculture and P46 million in infrastructure.

Mamba said the entire province has no electricity after six major power transmission lines had been toppled by strong winds brought by Ompong.

All major roads in the province are still passable but telecommunication lines are still down, he said.

The province of Kalinga has also been placed under a state of calamity. Gov. Jocel Baac said agricultural damage caused by the typhoon in the

province may reach P1 billion. The heavy rains brought by Ompong also caused massive floods from Pangasinan, Tar-

lac, Bulacan, down to Metro Manila in the south.

At least 108 barangays in 18 towns and cities in Pangasinan

were flooded. - With Helen Flores, Cesar Ramirez, Artemio Dumlaog, Victor Martin, AP, Reuters

47 DEAD, 40 MISSING IN LUZON LANDSLIDES

STORY BY INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Mudslides caused by Typhoon 'Ompong' buried people in Baguio City and the provinces of Benguet, Mountain Province, Kalinga and Nueva Vizcaya. President Duterte commiserated with families of the victims. **ATO**

FROM A1

By Inquirer Northern Luzon
@inquirer_baguio

BAGUIO CITY—Massive landslides killed 47 people while 40 others were missing in this city and in the provinces of Benguet, Mountain Province, Kalinga and Nueva Vizcaya, as Typhoon "Ompong" (international name: Mangkhut) unleashed its fury on Friday night and early Saturday.

President Duterte expressed his sympathies for the loved ones of those who died.

"I share the grief of those who have lost their loved ones," he said in Tuguegarao City in Cagayan, another typhoon-stricken province, on Sunday afternoon.

Power and communication lines were toppled, but some had been restored late Sunday in parts of the mountain city and in provinces that were in the path of Ompong as it exited the country on Saturday night.

As of 3 p.m. on Sunday, the typhoon was spotted 935 kilometers west-northwest of northern Luzon, well outside the Philippine area of responsibility. It was headed for southern China and Hong Kong, packing winds of 130 km per hour and gusts of up to 180 kph at a fast northwestward pace of 30 kph.

39 slides in Baguio

The weather cleared up on Sunday in Batanes province, allowing residents to unstrap the ropes holding down their houses. In Isabela province, farmers began drying out wet palay and corn harvests.

But rescue and retrieval teams continued to search for nine people buried in mud in Baguio, where 39 landslides were recorded.

Five bodies had been recovered, while a sixth person was struck and killed by a falling tree.

In the mining town of Ito-gon, strong rains eroded a hillside, pushing down a bunkhouse and the houses of pocket miners and their families at Barangay Ucab before 2 p.m. on Saturday.

Rescuers on Sunday recovered the bodies of 30 people and were looking for 31 more based on an initial estimate.

Family buried in Bontoc

In Bontoc, the capital town

of Mountain Province, a family of eight was buried in mudslide at Sitio Dantay, Barangay Alab-Oriente, on Saturday afternoon.

Rescuers said Glendalyn Minimo, 14, and her brother, Darren Lee, 11, survived but lost their parents, grandparents and two siblings.

Also on Saturday, a man died shortly after he was rescued from a landslide near a river in Pasil town, Kalinga province.

James Cayo Bitao was rescued by volunteers and policemen at Barangay Guina-ang and was to be taken to the Pasil rural health unit. He died while he was being transported on foot to Lubuagan town where he was to be driven to Kalinga Provincial Hospital in Tabuk City.

In Nueva Vizcaya province, a landslide on Saturday killed a family of four at Barangay

Banaw in Kayapa town.

The fatalities were a 36-year-old father and his three children—a 19-year-old son; a 2-year-old girl; and an 8-month-old child.

Roads closed

Halsema Highway, a major road network used to transport vegetables, was closed on Sunday due to a 50-meter erosion in Buguias town, Benguet

province.

Bontoc-Banaue Road, which leads to Ifugao province, was also closed due to a 150-meter erosion near Mount Polis.

Also closed due to falling rocks was Kennon Road. Landslides also affected Marcos Highway, but it remained open to all vehicles on Sunday.

In Ilocos Norte province, 10,596 residents in two cities and 19 towns who were evacu-

ated at the height of Ompong, had returned home.

Schools damaged

The Department of Education said many schools were damaged by Ompong's winds. Initial damage was placed at P12.6 million.

People availed themselves of free calls and charging stations offered at outlets of two telecommunication companies and a private mobile telephone retailer in Ilocos Norte.

A private water firm distributed free potable water to residents.

Classes in Ilocos Norte, Benguet and Abra remained canceled to allow clearing operations and repairs to continue.

The Am-among Festival in Bontoc, which coincided with its 110th founding anniversary, was supposed to open on Monday but was also canceled.

But the Philippine Youth Games (Batang Pinoy) would push through as scheduled on Monday in Baguio.

Flooding in Bulacan

In Bulacan province, flash floods caused by cascading waters from the Sierra Madre and rains brought by Ompong submerged most of the 24 towns and rendered eight major roads impassable.

Angat Dam's water elevation reached 210.33 meters above sea level (masl), breaching its 210-masl spilling level.

The two dams below Angat had been releasing water before Ompong blew through northern Luzon.

But Ipo Dam reduced its discharge when its reservoir level dropped to 101.08 masl.

Bustos Dam, which had been releasing water since Typhoon "Karding" struck Bulacan last month, also reduced its water discharge.

The towns of San Miguel, Marilao, Guiguinto and Calumpit suffered floods that were between 1 foot and 6 feet.

A total of 3,980 people in 32 villages of the towns of Bulakan, Plaridel, Santa Maria, Obando, Balagtas, Norzagaray, Paombong, and Guiguinto and Malolos City had been moved to 32 evacuation centers. —KIMBERLIE

QUITASOL, KARLSTON LAPNITEN, VILLAMOR VISAYA JR., LELANIE ADRIANO AND CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE, WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO AND JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE IN MANILA INC

Rody complains of high airfares, food prices

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte yesterday complained about high airfares in the country days after the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) approved the re-impo- sition of fuel surcharges because of

rising oil prices in the global market.

Duterte brought up the high airfares during a meeting with Cabinet members and local officials on the effects of Typhoon Ompong in Tuguegarao.

"By the way, the airfare, is it

controlled by airlines? Are we controlling it? Which is which?" the President said.

Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade replied that the airfares are determined by the CAB.

Duterte, who travels to Davao

City during weekends, complained that airfares have become very costly. Tugade explained that the Philippines does not have its own fuel and has to import from other countries.

Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi

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said about 50 percent of the Philippines' energy needs is dependent on oil while the rest are from renewable and indigenous sources.

"We import oil so we are working on projects in the Philippine Rise and the West Philippine Sea for our oil sufficiency," Cusi said.

Tugade said he has been crafting a matrix that would compare air fare charges with oil prices.

"We want it to be axiomatic. If the oil prices drop and you do not lower fares, you can be subjected to sanctions or penalty," the transportation chief said.

Last week, the CAB approved the imposition of fuel surcharges, an act that was disallowed three years ago.

In a resolution, CAB said aviation fuel prices have risen to \$85.16 per barrel as of April 2018 from \$63.66 per barrel in the same period last year.

Because of the resolution, passengers of one-way domestic flights may have to pay P34 to P769 while passengers bound for other countries may have to pay P163 to P9,860 more, depending on the destination and jet fuel costs.

The applicable fuel surcharge would be determined based on the two-month average of jet fuel MOPS prices in its peso per liter equivalent, and would be fixed for two months, CAB said. There will be no fuel surcharge if the two-month price average of jet fuel per liter falls below P21.

In the same meeting, Duterte described as a "tragic development" the absence of a vessel that travels directly from Davao to Manila. He said many people from the province who are carrying food items are experiencing inconvenience because of the overcrowding in ships.

Tugade noted that the major component of food costs is transportation.

"Two things are being done: we provide refrigerated containers for use of farmers and fishermen to preserve their products. We also talk to shipping companies, if it is possible, to impose special tariffs on perishable goods instead of tariffs dictated by the market. This can help reduce the costs

of transporting goods which in turn will help lower prices in the market," Tugade said.

Duterte then asked officials to continue searching for means to reduce the prices of food in the market.

'Suspend TRAIN'

The Freedom from Debt Coalition has called for the suspension of Republic Act 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law amid its "snowballing impact" on the prices of basic commodities and services.

FDC president Rene Ofreneo cited the "glaring effects of TRAIN on the economy," with inflation breaching a nine-year high of 6.4 percent in August and the surge in the prices of basic food items, including rice.

"Why does the Duterte administration and its economic managers still consider the TRAIN law to be an indisputable success despite three quarters of proof that only its suspension can benefit the Filipino people," Ofreneo said in a statement.

Ofreneo hit the administration's economic managers, who he said should not escape accountability for their "extreme incompetence or outright callousness."

He slammed the "band-aid measures" that the administration is looking to take, such as the Rice Tarrification law, or cut in tariffs for imported food items, instead of confronting the link of TRAIN and inflation.

He added that these counter-inflationary measures that the government is looking at will only worsen the country's vulnerability to supply shocks in the long run.

"These counter-inflationary policy directions... reveal that our economic managers and legislators continue to treat inflation as a short-term problem with emergency palliatives," he added.

The FDC said the government should instead activate the potential of the local economy, such as buying stocks of the National Food Authority from local palay farmers instead of importing.

-With Romina Cabrera

US hurricane, Asian typhoon: Water, wind

WASHINGTON—Nature expresses its fury in sundry ways. Two deadly storms—Hurricane “Florence” and Typhoon “Mangkhut” (Philippine name: Ompong)—roared ashore on the same day, half a world apart, but the way they spread devastation was as different as water and wind.

Storms in the western Pacific generally hit with much higher winds and the people who live in their way are often poorer and more vulnerable, Princeton University hurricane and climate scientist Gabriel Vecchi said on Saturday.

Type of destruction

That will likely determine the type of destruction.

Mangkhut made landfall on Friday (Saturday in the Philippines) on the northeastern tip of Luzon island in the Philippines with top winds of 220 kilometers per hour.

Florence had weakened to a Category 1 storm with 144 kph winds by the time it arrived at North Carolina’s coast.

Yet a day after landfall, the faster-moving Mangkhut was back out over open water—weakens but headed across the South China Sea toward China.

Florence, meanwhile, was still plodding across South Carolina at a pace slower than a normal person walks.

By Saturday morning, the storm had already dumped more than 76 centimeters of rain, a record for North Carolina.

Mangkhut deadlier

Experts say Mangkhut may well end up being the deadlier storm.

As of Saturday afternoon, the death count in the Philippines was a bit higher, although still far below that of other storms that have hit the disaster-prone country.

And with Mangkhut now headed toward the densely populated southeast coast of China, it is likely to cause more death and destruction.

But Florence’s watery insured damage total will eventually be higher, Ernst Rauch, head of climate research for the world’s largest reinsurer Munich Re, told German media.

That’s because of a combination of geography, climatic conditions and human factors.

The western Pacific has two and a half times more storms that reach the minimum hurricane strength of 118 kph.

The region has three and a half times more storms that reach major hurricane strength of 178 kph, and three times more accumulated energy out of those hurricanes, an index that measures not just strength and number of storms but how long they last, according to more than 65 years of storm data.

30 percent busier

So far this year, there have been 23 named storms in the western Pacific and 10 in the Atlantic, both regions more than 30 percent busier than average years.

Hurricanes and typhoons are the same type of storm;

both are tropical cyclones, but those that occur in the Pacific west of the International Date Line are called typhoons.

The water in the western Pacific is warmer, and warm water fuels storms.

There are also only a few pieces of land to get in the way and weaken them, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

"If we are ever going to have a Category 6 (a speculated-on level that's above current measurement tools), the western Pacific is where it's going to be," said meteorologist Ryan Maue of weathermodels.com.

The Philippines tends to get hit nearly every year, the Carolinas far less frequently though with lots of close calls, Maue said.

Another big difference

That shows another big difference in the storms.

Mangkhut formed further south and stayed south—over warmer water.

Florence was out of the tropics when it hit land.

Because of that, Florence was weakened by the dry air and upper level winds of the higher latitudes.

Not so the more southerly Mangkhut, which Maue said, "essentially had a perfect environment to intensify to a Category 5 and stay there."

"[Mangkhut] and Florence are certainly different animals," said Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

More rain than Mangkhut

Because Florence is moving so slowly, he said, it will dump more rain than Mangkhut.

Both storms have lasted a long time, especially Florence, which formed all the way over near Africa 15 days before landfall, McNoldy said.

Both storms cover a large area, but Mangkhut still dwarfs Florence.

Mangkhut's tropical storm force winds stretched more than 520 km from the center, while Florence's spread about 312 km, Klotzbach said.

Economics also plays a role in a storm's impact.

As a developing country, the Philippines is much poorer than the southeastern United States, which means houses tend to be less sturdy and first responders less well-equipped, among other factors.

This is one reason why, when disaster does strike, the effects can be devastating.

'Yolanda'

In 2013, one of the most powerful storms on record, Super typhoon "Haiyan" (Philippine name: Yolanda), killed 7,300 people and displaced more than 5 million when it swept across the islands of the central Philippines.

Straddling the famous Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines is also bedeviled by volcanoes and earthquakes, and while there are considerable patches of poverty in North and South Carolina, it is not the same as the rural area where Ompong hit. —AP

'5-member gov't procurement panel to curb corruption'

President Duterte will form a five-person commission that would handle all government purchases as part of his effort to cleanse the government of corruption.

Duterte said the commission, to be composed of people "adept in accounting and auditing," would prevent overpricing, ghost deliveries and collusion among bidders.

"This will not really be a super body. I will call it checks and balances, the office of checks and balances. All purchases of government (will go through it) I will know whether payment has been made, whether there were deliveries, so we can avoid ghost deliveries and invented SA-ROs (special allotment release orders)," the President said during a briefing on Typhoon Ompong in Tuguegarao yesterday.

"If I can just assemble about five simple men who are adept in accounting and then of course audit, it's very important, we can survive. I'm just awaiting the retirement of people," he added.

Duterte hinted that uniformed personnel would be part of the commission.

"Next year I'm waiting for some guys, one of them should have been Rolly who is about to retire," the President said, referring to Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista, who will take over as National Food Authority administrator in October.

Duterte said the present procurement mechanisms have disadvantages and have to be perfected to ensure the prompt delivery of supplies.

He said the lowest bid requirement of the Commission on Audit (COA) has led to "terribly inferior" projects and has encouraged collusion among prospective suppliers.

"What ails the country actually is the lowest bid, the lowest bid... is really a purgatory that somehow the government must correct. That's why I do not follow COA. Don't give me that sh*t," the President said.

Duterte said the Swiss challenge is better than none but takes time. Under a Swiss challenge, firms interested to undertake a project are asked to come up with proposals that are better than the one submitted by the original proponent.

"Swiss challenge is better than none but how fast it can be done is the problem. We have to perfect that," the President said.

Duterte said the late president Ferdinand Marcos also formed a body that would compare the prices of supplies or equipment to be acquired by government.

"I am ready to assume responsibility... in the end I will be the one who will be grilled for this. This insanity of corruption must really stop," the President said.

- Alexis Romero

Duterte eyes Army chief as next NFA administrator

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Another soldier will lead the National Food Authority (NFA) as President Duterte is set to appoint Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista as administrator of the embattled state grains agency.

During a meeting on the effects of Typhoon Ompong yesterday, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III

said the NFA was facing rice supply issues in Cagayan because of the absence of leadership in the agency.

NFA administrator Jason Aquino has "requested" Duterte to relieve him from his post because of disagreements with fellow officials.

Bello said he had tried to discuss the matter with Agriculture

Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, who replied that he has no control over the NFA. Bello asked Duterte whether he could allow Piñol to handle the NFA temporarily to address the issue.

Duterte, who was presiding over the meeting in Tuguegarao, then asked some military officials present in the meeting who among them is retiring soon. Bautista told

Duterte that he would bow out of the service in October.

"In the meantime, I cannot place you in the central bank, perhaps I can place you in the NFA to rationalize the chaotic... to come up with plans, make it structural,"

the President said.

Duterte admitted that Bautista may not like the post because he is not into rice trading.

"Si Bautista muna... di naman siya tindere (For now, it's Bautista. He is not a rice trader). In the meantime, you have to help the country to rationalize it," he added.

Duterte justified his appointment of Bautista and other military men to civilian posts, saying he wants people who will follow his orders.

"I want my orders followed because I'm here giving orders. If my

orders are not followed, I'd rather retire," he said.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Duterte expressed his desire to appoint Bautista as NFA administrator after he retires on Oct. 15.

Bautista assumed the post of Army commanding general in October last year after serving as the chief of the Presidential Security Group.

Duterte reiterated that he is in favor of imposing tariffs on rice, saying the imposition of quotas has caused corruption.

"I have decided (it has to be) tariffication. Whoever submits the highest bid, give it to them. Conduct a public bidding. Whoever has the money and whoever wants to import, go ahead. That would really stop corruption," he said.

"If the government has control, there is corruption. I tell you again," he added.

Duterte eyes Army chief as NFA head

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

President Duterte wants the Philippine Army chief, Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista, to take over the top National Food Authority (NFA) post when he retires next month.

The President made his choice known on Sunday as he presided over a disaster response briefing in Tuguegarao City in Cagayan.

"In the meantime, that I can't appoint you to the central bank, maybe you can run the NFA. Rationalize the idiotic ... Plan it, make it structural," Mr. Duterte told Bautista.

The President asked the Army chief when he would retire, to which Bautista replied Oct. 15. He will be 56 on that date.

"If you want, you can take over the NFA. Let's just talk some other day about it," Mr. Duterte told Bautista.

PSG commander

Bautista, prior to leading the Philippine Army, was commander of the Presidential Security Group (PSG). He graduated from the Philippine Military Academy "Sandiwa" Class in 1985.

He led the task force that defeated the Maute group during the 2017 Marawi City siege.

The post of NFA administrator was vacated by Jason Aquino, an ex-military official who offered to resign amid the controversial NFA rice shortage that triggered price hikes.

In a statement, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque

said Bautista's term as NFA administrator would take effect on the day of his retirement on Oct. 15.

Should he accept the position, the President told Bautista to make sure that NFA rice stocks were distributed to markets.

Mr. Duterte stressed the importance of having map-like tools to monitor the NFA's rice supply and ensure its efficient distribution, especially during disasters.

He added that he was willing to buy more trucks to help the NFA efficiently deliver rice to retailers.

"There's the problem, because there's a dearth of a substantial knowledge of where the rice is. That's why I need somebody I can trust and tell to fix it," the President said. INQ

Duterte visits Cagayan, names Army chief as next NFA head

By GENALYN D. KABILING and ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

President Duterte visited yesterday Cagayan province, where typhoon "Ompong" made landfall last Saturday, and announced his plan to designate Army chief, Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista, as the next administrator of the National Food Authority (NFA).

The President said he wanted

Bautista to rationalize the "idiotic" structure in the NFA and ensure a stable supply of rice in the country.

Bautista, former Presidential Security Group (PSG) commander, is scheduled to retire from service next month.

A graduate of the Philippine Mil-

itary Academy (PMA) in 1985, Bautista will take the place of NFA administrator Jason Aquino who recently offered to be relieved from his post last week. Aquino has drawn criticisms for the recent shortage of NFA rice that triggered price hikes in the market.

"NFA ka na. Mabait yan si Rolly (You'll be assigned in NFA. Rolly is good)," the President ▶6

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Duterte visits Cagayan... ◀1

to id Bautista during the government's disaster response meeting in typhoon-hit Cagayan.

"In the meantime, hindi kita malagay sa Central Bank, pwede ka muna sa NFA siguro to rationalize the idiotic itong, para maplano make it structural (In the meantime that I cannot put you in Central Bank, perhaps you can serve at the NFA to rationalize the idiotic structure, to plan, to make it structural)," he said.

Even as the country has adequate supply of rice, Duterte directed Bautista to make sure the government rice stocks are distributed from the warehouses to the market.

He said the incoming NFA chief should have a map to monitor the agency's rice supply and ensure its efficient distribution especially during calamities. He added that he was mulling the purchase of trucks for the NFA that would efficiently deliver the rice stocks to the retail stores.

"There is a dearth of substantial knowledge of where the rice is (during calamity). I need somebody I can trust at masabihan ko na fix that. So wala na ako ibang malagay so si Bautista muna," he said.

"In the meantime, you have to help the country and rationalize everything there. Keep a level of inventory," he told Bautista.

Duterte also directed Bautista to enforce the law amid plans of the government to lift the import quota system and impose tariffs on rice.

He said he was supportive of the rice tariffication proposal to help stabilize rice prices and prevent shortage of the commodity. He said liberalizing the rice imports would also help stop corruption.

President Duterte visited on Sunday Cagayan de Oro and Ilocos Norte, two provinces hit by Typhoon Ompong.

The President attended situation briefings on the effects of the typhoon in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan at around 12 p.m., and at in Ilocos Norte two hours later.

Duterte will also visit Isabela, another province hit by the typhoon, on Tuesday.

Duterte saddened

President Duterte assured the people that the government is ready to address the effects of the typhoon as he shared the grief of those who lost

their loved ones due to the storm.

Duterte made the statement as he presided over the situation briefing on the effects of "Ompong" in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Sunday afternoon.

In his opening remarks, Duterte said that while the damages caused by the typhoon is not as severe as the government expected it to be, services will be restored to affected areas as soon as possible.

"I want to assure people that government is present. It's important to fix bridges, electricity, services to the public," he said.

"We thank God na ito lang ang inabot natin (that this is all we experienced)... not so severe as we expect it to be because earlier it was touted na malakas din ito (that would also be strong) so it got everybody worried," he added.

According to Duterte, rehabilitation of affected areas should proceed immediately after the onslaught of Typhoon Ompong. He added that he will discuss calamity fund with Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno soon.

Prior the briefing, Duterte conducted an aerial inspection over the affected areas in Cagayan.

According to Duterte, he may not be able to go to all areas affected by the typhoon in one day so he assured to visit some other time.

"I may not be able to make the rounds of all the areas today. I may continue tomorrow," he said.

Alter egos

The President also said that he made the right decision to send Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade and Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III to their home provinces to oversee the government's preparation and response.

"And I think I made the right decision when I called for a tête-à-tête, very informal, it was a time that I said the Cabinet members should be here," Duterte said.

"So I started to joke with Secretary Tugade who was from here and Bebot (Bello) because the typhoon was plotted to pass by Isabela, and the others," he added.

"For one moment I did not doubt your presence here, Secretary Bello and Art (Tugade). Taga dito umuwi kayo doon harapin natin problema (You are from here and you went here immediately to face the problem). I am very pleased with the report," he continued.

Government response

President Duterte is satisfied with how the government is addressing the effects of Typhoon Ompong.

During the press briefing in Tuguegarao Sunday, Roque lauded how there were no fatalities recorded in the Cagayan Valley. However, he said the government is sad to hear about the casualties in other areas.

"So far, zero casualty in Region II. Sana po sa briefing mamaya ay hindi po magbabago 'yan (We hope that that will not change during the briefing later)," he said.

Presidential Political Adviser Francis Tolentino said the government's preparation for the typhoon has been "very good."

Panic-buying

There is no reason to go panic buying as the government has assured the public of adequate supply of food and other goods following the onslaught of typhoon Ompong.

After the powerful typhoon battered some provinces in Luzon, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said it was "business as usual" as the inventory of basic goods remains sufficient and prices are within the suggested retail price (SRP).

"Ang importante hindi kailangan mag-panic buying dahil ang supply is good for two to three weeks inventory (The important thing is there is no need for panic buying because the supply is good for two to three weeks of inventory)," Lopez said in a press conference by Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque in Tuguegarao City.

Lopez noted that they have not monitored any sudden price increases in basic goods in the typhoon-hit areas.

He said businesses have reopened with plenty of stocks for public consumption. To sustain the supply of goods, he said it was important to keep the roads open or tap alternative routes to bring the goods to the market.

Lopez also said the country has 4.6 million sacks of government rice and will make them available not only in public markets but also in the supermarkets.

Lopez said grains retailers would be required to sell basic regular and well-milled rice ranging from ₱38 to ₱41 per kilo.

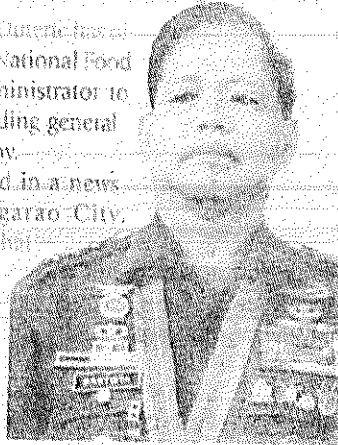
Apart from food products, Lopez said they would also monitor the supply and cost of construction materials amid the anticipated rehabilitation in the typhoon-affected areas.

Army chief tapped to head grains agency

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has offered the position of National Food Authority (NFA) administrator to the retiring commanding general of the Philippine Army.

Duterte announced in a news briefing in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan on Sunday that he had offered the post to Lt. Gen. Roldando Bautista.

"Rolly (Bautista) is a good guy. In the meantime, while I



Army chief tapped to head grains agency

CHIEF FROM A1

Army chief tapped to head grains

cannot place you in the central bank, you may work in the NFA, to rationalize the idiotic... so you can plan, make it structural," Duterte said.

"There's the problem, because there's a dearth of a substantial knowledge of where the rice is, that's why I need somebody I

can trust and who I can tell to fix that," Duterte added. "We have to help the country to rationalize everything."

Bautista is set to step down as army chief on October 15, when he hits the mandatory retirement age of 56.

Duterte's pronouncement came

just days after he announced that Jason Aquino wanted to vacate his position as NFA administrator.

In last week's tete-a-tete with Presidential Chief Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo in Malacanang, Duterte said Aquino, a retired military officer, wanted to step down from his post because he was "tired."

"He cannot cope with the play there inside, which is always ordinary, happening in the government because we cannot be in agreement all the time," Duterte said.

Aquino is on leave until October 12, NFA spokesman Rex Estoperez said.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan earlier said that it was not enough for Aquino to resign from his post; charges should be filed against him.

Aquino's resignation came amid a rice supply problem in the country. Due to a delay in rice shipments, the NFA's inventory wore thin, resulting in a spike in prices.

Complaints of weevil-infested rice and rice hoarding also hounded the NFA and the Department of Agriculture.

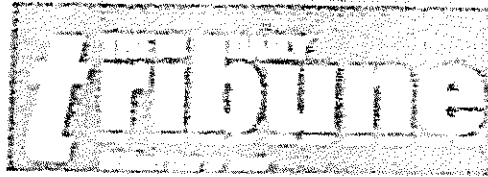
Duterte earlier said that he would not sack Aquino and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol amid the rice crisis. Instead, laws should be strengthened, the

President said.

"Maybe the laws are weak or unenforceable. All we have to do is to improve on those laws, not necessarily fire people," Duterte told the media before going to Israel and Jordan two weeks ago.

"I do not see any serious offense there. We have not really lost anything except that there is an aberration in the market," Duterte added.

RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA



Bautista tapped for NFA

By Kristina Maralit

Recognizing the crucial role of the National Food Authority (NFA) in assuring reliable rice supply following super typhoon "Ompong," President Rodrigo Duterte offered yesterday to Philippine Army (PA) chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista to head the grains agency.

The Chief Executive extended the offer during his inter-agency

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Bautista tapped for NFA

Under Aquino's watch, the NFA was harshly criticized for the sky-high prices of commercial rice

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meeting with Cabinet secretaries and other officials held at the Cagayan Provincial Capitol in Tuguegarao City for damage assessments and tackle government relief and rehabilitation efforts after typhoon "Ompong" left massive damage in Northern Luzon.

"You can head the NFA. Make it structural. I need not repeat it. There's a problem, there's a dearth of a substantial knowledge of where the rice is. That's why I need somebody I can trust to fix that," Duterte said.

"I can't think of any other person to place there, Bautista can take the post come October. We have to help the country rationalize everything," he added.

Bautista is set to retire from the Armed Forces on 15 October. It was not clear, however, how the former Presidential Security Group

commander responded to the Chief Executive's offer.

Aquino out soon

Early last week, the President bared that Jason Aquino, now on terminal leave, "has requested to be relieved" as NFA chief, citing he is "tired and cannot cope" with the situation in the agency.

Under Aquino's watch, the NFA was harshly criticized for the sky-high prices of commercial rice that reached up to P70 per kilo and the dwindling supply of the more affordable NFA rice pegged at P27 per kilo in the market.

Duterte said he is actively looking for Aquino's replacement and is just "waiting for him to retire."

More evac centers

Mr. Duterte also ordered the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) to lead efforts in building more evacuation centers to lessen the use of public school buildings in times of natural disasters.

Mr. Duterte echoed the concern of Department of Education

(DepEd) Secretary Leonor Briones who said the use of classrooms as temporary shelters during calamities disrupts the flow of classes during the school year.

"The education of children is affected. The longer evacuees stay in the schools, the longer the disturbance of the education of the children," Duterte said.

The President then instructed NDRRMC Executive Director Ricardo Jalad to lay the groundwork for the proposal.

"General Jalad think of this. Then give me a position paper and I will work on it for the budget," he said.

Duterte suggested that the planned evacuation centers be the size of gymnasiums made of concrete and iron and with enough comfort rooms for men and women.

The DepEd reported that over seven million students have been affected in regions where classes were declared suspended, placed under storm signal warnings or areas where schools were used as temporary shelters for displaced residents.

Another ex-military man eyed to head NFA

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday offered the position of National Food Authority (NFA) administrator to outgoing Army Commander Lt. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista.

The President, during the Typhoon Ompong situational briefing held at the Cagayan Provincial Capitol in Tuguegarao City, said he knew Bautista does not want to deal with the procurement and selling of rice but he needs someone to institute reforms in the agency.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Bautista would assume the post of NFA Administrator "effective on his retirement as Chief of Army on 15 October."

He will replace Jason Aquino whom, the President initially said, asked to be relieved as NFA chief because he could not "cope" with some of the practices in the agency.

Aquino-like Bautista was a member of the Philippine Army prior to his retirement. A member of the Philippine Military Academy class of 1991, he served as Operations chief of the Scout Rangers.

Duterte said he initially wanted to appoint Bautista to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

"NFA. Mabait iyan, si Rolly (Bautista). In the meantime na hindi kita mailagay sa Central Bank, pwede ka muna sa NFA siguro, to rationalize the idiotic, para maplano, make it structural. Mag-retire na iyan, oh," he said.

He reiterated that there is a

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problem in the NFA and he wants Bautista to look into the rice supply situation and ensure proper distribution, starting with the older stocks to ensure it would not be

infested with wood bugs (bukbok). "I need somebody I can trust at masabihan ko na fix that... Wala naman ako bang malagay, si Bautista muna come October. Alam ko ayaw naman niya magbenta ng bigas, hindi

naman siya tindero, so sabi ko pag-usapan natin balang-araw. In the meantime, we have to help the country to rationalize everything," Duterte said.

Bautista, a member of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA)

"Sandiwa" Class of 1985, was former commander of Duterte's Presidential Security Group (PSG) before he was named commander of the Army's 1st Infantry Division. He was also a former commander of the Army's 104th Brigade.



Army general to head NFA — Rody

**By Nat Mariano
and Macon Ramos-Araneta**

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte on Sunday chose Philippine Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista to head the National Food Authority, after his appointee Jason Aquino asked to be relieved.

The President, who presided over a briefing with several Cabinet secretaries and government officials in the Cagayan Provincial Capitol over the effects of Typhoon "Ompong," said he wanted to appoint Bautista when he retires on Oct. 15.

"There's the problem because there's a dearth of a substantial knowledge of

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Army...

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where the rice is. That's why I need somebody who I can trust and who will fix the problem," Duterte said, referring to a shortage of rice that has driven prices up.

Asked about Duterte's choice, Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said it was clear that the President wanted someone obedient.

"What he said was clear. He wants to appoint someone from the military because he wants them to follow his orders," Roque said.

"The President believes he needs an absolutely honest person who will follow his orders in NFA because it's important to provide ample supply of rice," Roque said.

Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez said Sunday the government will require all grain retailers to sell cheaper

regular and well-milled commercial rice or face cancellation of their licenses.

Lopez said the DTL, together with the NFA, will make it a requirement for retailers to sell not only premium rice brands, but also basic, regular, and well-milled rice.

Lopez also said 4.6-million sacks of NFA rice, usually priced at P27 to P32 per kilo, will be made available nationwide and will be sold in supermarkets.

Senator Loren Legarda said that she was assured by the administration's economic team that prices of goods and services will soon stabilize following measures being undertaken by the government.

Legarda, chairman of the Senate committee on finance, was briefed by Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Socio-economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia, and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Francisco Dakila, Jr. on the causes of the spike in inflation rate and the measures the government is taking to

stabilize inflation expectations.

Figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that inflation rose to a nine-year high of 6.4 percent in August.

"We tried to analyze the causes of food and transport inflation and even the depreciation of peso. We also factored in the effects of monsoon rains and drought, as well as issues in the world market and prices of oil," Legarda said.

She said there are interventions being made in terms of policy and executive action.

These include the immediate release of 4.6-million sacks of rice available in NFA warehouses to markets across the country. The economic managers also urged the Senate to immediately pass the Rice Tariffication Bill within the month.

The DTL, NFA, Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigation, and farmer groups will form a monitoring team for surveillance of rice from ports to NFA warehouses and retail outlets.

To reduce the gap between the farm gate and retail prices of chicken, the Department of Agriculture and DTL will convene poultry producers and setup public markets where producers can sell directly to the end customer.

To address the shortage, the NFA Council has approved the importation of two-million sacks of rice for delivery by the end of September, and authorized the importation of five-million sacks more that are expected to arrive in one-and-a-half months, and another five-million sacks for early next year.

But the Senator stressed that the government must address rice wastage to lessen the need to import rice, noting that 800,000 metric tons of milled rice is wasted due to improper handling, transport and storage.

"There should be a designated authority or task force to address this wastage. If we can reduce even half of rice wastage, it would mean less importation as well," Legarda said.

Retiring Army chief to head NFA – Duterte

President Duterte yesterday announced plans to designate Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista as the next National Food Authority administrator when he retires next month.

The President said he wanted Bautista to rationalize the "idiotic" structure in the NFA and ensure a stable supply of rice in the country.

Bautista, a former Presidential Security Group commander, is scheduled to retire from the military next month.

A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class 1985, Bautista will take the place of NFA Administrator Jason Aquino who recently offered to be relieved from his post. Aquino has drawn criticisms for the recent shortage of NFA rice that triggered price hikes in the market.

"NFA ka na. Mabait yan si Rolly," the President told Bautista during the government's disaster response meeting in typhoon-hit Cagayan.

"In the meantime hindi kita malagay sa Central Bank, pwede

ka muna sa NFA siguro to rationalize the idiotic itong, para maplano make it structural," he said.

Even as the country has adequate supply of rice, Duterte directed Bautista to make sure the government rice stocks are distributed from the warehouses to the market.

He said the incoming NFA chief should have a map to monitor the agency's rice supply and ensure its efficient distribution especially during calamities. He added that he was mulling the purchase of trucks for the NFA that would efficiently deliver the rice stocks to the retail stores.

"There is a dearth of substantial knowledge of where the rice is during calamity. I need somebody I can trust at masabihan ko na fix that. So wala na ako ibang malagay so si Bautista muna," he said.

"In the meantime you have to help the country and rationalize everything there. Keep a level of inventory," he told Bautista.

Duterte also directed Bautista "to enforce the law" amid plans of

the government to lift the import quota system and impose tariffs on rice.

He said he was supportive of the rice tariffication proposal to help stabilize rice prices and prevent shortage of the commodity. He said liberalizing the rice imports would also help stop corruption.

"I am decided on tariffication. Walang limit well of course you have to auction," he said.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said Bautista's appointment would take effect after his retirement from the military.

"PRRD expressed his desire to appoint Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista as NFA Admin effective on his retirement as Chief of Army on 15 Oct.," Roque said in a message to reporters.

Prior to his appointment as commanding general of the Army, Bautista served as commander of the task force that defeated the Islamic State-linked terrorists that attacked Marawi City last year. **(Genalyn D. Kabiling)**

Army general bagong NFA chief

<p>Nakatakdang ita- laga ni Pangulong Du- terte ang kasalukuyang commanding general ng Philippine Army bi- lang susunod na ad- ministrator ng National Food Authority.</p> <p>Ginawa ng Pangu- lo ang pahayag ka- hapon sa Cabinet meeting nito sa pag- bisita niya sa Tugue- garao City, Caga-</p>	<p>yan na hinagupit ng bagyong Ompong. Ayon kay Pangu- long Duterte, itatalaga niya si Lt. Gen. Ro- lando Bautista bilang kapalit ng magbibitiw na si NFA Administrator Jason Aquino.</p> <p>Magugunita na noong tete-a-tete ni Pangulong Duterte kay Secretary Salvador Panelo kamakailan sa</p>	<p>Malacañang ay isini- walat nitong nais nang magbitiw ni Aquino sa NFA.</p> <p>Nagsiilbing unang Presidential Security Group (PSG) com- mander si Gen. Bau- tista kay Pangulong Duterte bago ito naita- laga sa ibang unit ng Philippine Army hang- gang sa maging Army chief. (Rudy Andal)</p>
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2

Baguio briefly isolated; Vigan houses damaged

TYPHOON "Ompong" left a trail of damage in two major tourist destinations in Northern Luzon - Baguio City and Vigan, Ilocos Sur.

Four roads leading to Baguio City were closed, due to heavy rains and landslides in the area, according to the Public Information Agency of Cordil-

lera: Kennon Road, Marcos Highway, Halsema Highway, and Benguet-Nueva Vizcaya Road.

Lt. Col. Chamberlagne Esmino, spokesman of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) based in Baguio City, said only Naguilian Road had been opened after it experienced a minor

landslide incident causing rocks to block the road.

Esmino also said there was a landslide near Loakan Airport. A house was also hit by falling rocks within the Loakan area, leaving one family trapped.

Based on the situational report of...

■ DAMAGED FROM A1

Baguio briefly isolated; Vigan houses damaged

Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR), Baguio City was still on red alert status, along with Abra, Apayao, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province.

Ruben Carandang, OCD-CAR director, said there were a total of six dead, two injured and eight missing.

But according to the Philippine National Police in Baguio, the death toll in the city had risen to eight.

The OCD-CAR suspended tourism activities.

On Sunday, Baguio City Mayor Mauricio Domogan declared that classes in all levels in the city on Monday were canceled.

"While Administrative Order 128 was issued by our office suspending classes from pre-school to senior high school from September 17-21, 2018 to pave the way for the conduct of the 2018 Batang Pinoy National Finals, we are issuing today Administrative

Order 133 suspending classes in the tertiary level including technical vocational and graduate school to pave the way for the conduct of cleanup activities after the onslaught of typhoon Ompong," Domogan said in a Facebook post on Sunday.

In Vigan, Ilocos Sur, which was given the distinction of a Heritage City by Unesco, Spanish colonial houses were badly hit by the storm, destroying windows and roofs.

The Philippine Red Cross said in a Facebook post on Saturday the storm had also damaged lampposts and establishments in the city.

No fatalities were reported in Vigan.

On Sunday, Ilocos Sur governor Ryan Luis Singson declared that there would be no classes in all levels (public and private) in the province, due to recovery efforts.

**ARIC JOHN SY CUA AND
DEMPSEY REYES**

1- The Manila Times AR

Palace condemns General Santos blast

MALACANANG denounced the explosion in a *barangay* (village) in General Santos City on Sunday, which left seven people injured.

An improvised explosive exploded on Sunday near a row of establishments along the national highway *Barangay Apopong*.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms today's explosion that hit General Santos City which left scores of people injured. This comes at an unfortunate time when the nation is reeling from the effects of *Ompong*," Palace spokesman Harry Roque, Jr. said in a statement.

Roque said the government would do everything to bring justice to the victims.

"Authorities are now conducting an investigation. We vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," he said.

The explosion came roughly a week after President Rodrigo Duterte said the implementation of martial law and suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao "lessened

criminality by and large."

Two blasts rocked Sultan Kudarat on August 28 and September 2, killing a total of five people. The provincial police chief was relieved of duty.

Clinic, other establishments damaged

Chief Supt. Eliseo Rasco, director of Police Regional Office 12 (Soccsksargen), said the blast occurred at 11:50 a.m. in front of the *Mic Bonito Lying-in Clinic*, located in a crowded section of the *Makar junction*.

Rasco said the blast ripped

through the facade of the clinic and nearby establishments, which included an eatery, pharmacy and a pawnshop.

He said seven persons sustained minor injuries and were brought to the *St. Elizabeth Hospital* for treatment.

They were identified as Marlon Orabia, 30; Jerry Guyos, 19; Joana Bless Alipio, 3; Filipa Regidor, 64; Lally Jean Alipio, 34; John Lennon Calang, 22; and Claire Uozola, 24.

Witnesses said an unidentified person left a bag in front of the clinic minutes before the blast.

A worker at the clinic, who asked not to be named, said she

saw a man in front of the establishment "who was looking for something."

She said she asked him if he needed something and was told that he was looking where to buy pork.

The witness, who was then with her father, said they waved the man off and proceeded to close the clinic for lunch.

Moments after settling down, she said they suddenly heard an explosion in front of the clinic.

Rasco, who rushed to the scene, said initial investigation showed the blast was caused by an improvised explosive.

"This is [an act of] terrorism.

The purpose of the perpetrators is to clearly terrorize the people," he said.

He said probes were looking at possible links to the August 28 and September 2 bomb attacks in *Isulan town* in Sultan Kudarat, which killed five people and injured more than 40 others.

Both incidents were blamed by authorities on alleged terror cells of the *Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters*.

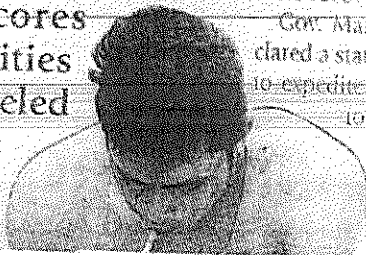
"But we can't make any conclusion yet as we don't have the evidences and our investigation is still ongoing," he said.

RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA AND PNA

'Ompong' death toll rises to 65

BY DEMPSEY REYES

THE death toll in the aftermath of Typhoon "Ompong" rose to 65 on Sunday while scores remained missing, authorities said, as northern Luzon reeled from flooding, landslides and power outages.



In Hogon, Benguet, more than 30 people trapped in a collapsed mining bunkhouse that also served as a chapel were feared dead, after seven bodies were recovered by rescuers.

Gov. Manuel Mamba of Cagayan declared a state of calamity in his province to expedite the release of funds needed to give aid to those who evacuated and repair infrastructure damaged by the typhoon.

A2

'Ompong' death toll rises

It will also automatically freeze the prices of goods in the market, said Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez, who assured the public that no price hikes would happen after the typhoon.

Mayor Victoria Palangdan of Itogon said there were 36 dead in his area. Of the number, 27 have been identified by authorities.

Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat, commander of the military's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom), said 43 miners were initially trapped in the Itogon bunkhouse.

"We still don't have the official number of retrieved cadavers and the operations are still ongoing," Salamat told *The Manila Times* in a phone interview.

Presidential adviser Francis Tolentino said most of those declared dead were from the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

"There were a lot of casualties in Cordillera, in the areas of Itogon, Benguet and Mountain Province and parts of Baguio... [this was] because of landslides, soil saturation, rainfall," Tolentino was quoted as saying.

"We're now ending the search-and-rescue operations. By tomorrow the rehabilitation should commence. Power lines, water must be restored. We condole with the families of those who lost their lives," Tolentino told President Rodrigo Duterte during a briefing in Tuguegarao, Cagayan.

Zero casualties in Cagayan

Ompong made landfall in Baguio, Cagayan early Saturday as the strongest typhoon to hit the country so far this year.

Mamba said Cagayan had yet to record fatalities due to Ompong.

Tolentino said a family of six was among those killed after their house in Baguio city was buried by a landslide.

A resident in Kalinga also died after a rock fell on him as a result of soil erosion. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital.

In Nueva Vizcaya, another family of four died Saturday afternoon after their house in a remote barangay was buried in a landslide.

Killed were a 36-year-old father and his three children, one of them aged two years old and the other one, eight months old. Three of the family members went to the evacuation center and were spared from the tragic accident.

In Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur, a man was cleaning up debris when a mango tree fell on him. He was pronounced dead on arrival.

138,000 in evac centers

About 138,000 individuals sought shelter in evacuation areas in northern and central

Luzon after the onslaught of typhoon Ompong.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said 137,994 individuals or 35,720 families were inside 1,250 evacuation centers in the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, CAR and the National Capital Region on Sunday.

DSWD chief Virginia Orogo said field offices were collaborating with local government units for the profiling of the displaced families.

"Our field offices are now doing initial assessment and profiling of individuals affected by the typhoon to determine additional assistance and services," she said.

"The department is also monitoring child and women-friendly spaces in all evacuations centers in Luzon to immediately cater to their needs of assistance," Orogo added.

About 200 family food packs were delivered in Palayan City and in Dingalan Central School in Aurora Province, while authorities from the Ilocos region provided sleeping kits, family kits, and hygiene kits for affected residents in Mindoro Elementary School.

Emergency communication lines were also established in Tabuk City, Kalinga and Luna Apayao as part of DSWD's res-

cue operations.

The national government provided P8 million worth of assistance, local governments provided P1 million and non-government organizations gave P77,000 worth of aid to the victims in the typhoon-stricken areas, the DSWD said.

Palace satisfied

President Duterte found the government's response to Typhoon Ompong "very satisfactory," Malacañang said on Sunday.

In a news briefing in Tuguegarao, Cagayan, Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said Duterte lauded the "zero casualty" recorded in Region 2.

"Hopefully, in the next briefing, that will not be changed," Roque said.

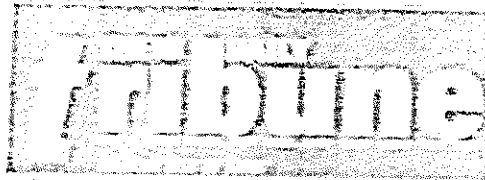
"[However], we're sorry there are casualties reported in some parts of the Philippines," he added.

This was seconded by Tolentino, who was appointed by Duterte last Thursday as his "conduit" for disaster response.

"Preparation [was] very good [nationwide]," Tolentino said in a message.

Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go distributed photos of himself and the President conducting an aerial survey of Cagayan.

WITH FRANCIS EARL A. CUETO, RALPH U. VILLANUEVA AND MARY GLEEFER JALEA



49 dead, 40 trapped

DU30 heads to landslide area

Rains brought by the southwest monsoon softened the earth even before typhoon 'Ompong' hit

By Kristina Maralit and Mario J. Mallari

At least 40 people, mostly gold miners, were feared trapped in a landslide triggered by rains

in Itogon, Benguet as fatalities from typhoon "Ompong" jumped to 49.

Police Regional Office-Cordillera (PRO-COR) information officer Police Senior Insp. Pelita Tacio

said seven bodies were dug up by rescuers at press time.

Town Mayor Victorio Palangdan expressed fears all of those buried were already dead.

"There is a bunkhouse of one company which has from 40 to 50 people trapped. They were buried by landslide, our worry is that all of them are dead," the mayor said.

President Duterte said he will visit the landslide site today.

The number of people killed by the typhoon jumped to 49 as more landslide victims were

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49 dead, 40 trapped

Mining should stop in this municipality

From page 1

discovered, Philippine National Police spokesman Benigno Durana said.

Kennedy Waclin, chairman of Barangay Ucab where the landslide happened, said the rains brought by the southwest monsoon softened the earth even before typhoon "Ompong" hit.

He said most of the residents of Barangay Ucab are miners.

The buried structure is an old bunkhouse owned by Benguet Corp that was being used by small-scale miners.

"We know for a fact that this area is dangerous because there is a big tunnel mined by Benguet Corp. a hundred years ago," the mayor said.

Palangdan blamed mining for the landslides in the town. He said he will stop mining operations that have caused sinkholes not only in Itogon but also in other cities and towns in Benguet.

"Mining should stop in this municipality," he said.

Tacio, who was at the scene of the landslide earlier yesterday, said rescuers found another man but could not immediately pluck his body which was pinned by rocks and mud.

Aid to pour

Offers of humanitarian assistance from various countries have started to pour in after the havoc wreaked by the typhoon.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said offers for humanitarian assistance actually started on Saturday.

Department of Agriculture in Mindanao also readied food supplies to be sent to Northern Luzon.

Among the first countries to offer assistance were Japan, Australia and the United States. Member-states of the Association of Southeast Nations also expressed willingness to help.

Coordinating the offers of assistance to stranded overseas Filipino workers (OFW) prompted the Philippines and China to postpone the visit to Manila of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi scheduled 16 to 18 September.

"At this time, the DFA is focused on coordinating offers of international humanitarian assistance through the Philippine Humanitarian Assistance Registry and in extending assistance to OFW stranded in ports around the country," the DFA said in a statement.

However, there were still no details what assistance has been offered by the said countries.

Also, local authorities are still conducting assessment on the severity of the effects of "Ompong" to determine whether there is a need for international assistance.

When super typhoon "Yolanda" struck central Philippines in November 2013, the government received millions of dollars worth of humanitarian assistances from various countries.

The United States and South Korea even sent troops to help in the clearing and rehabilitation efforts.

Mindanao to send food

The Department of Agriculture (DA) in Mindanao also readied food supplies to be sent to Northern Luzon provinces devastated by the typhoon.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, four Mindanao regions is set to airlift food items such as vegetables, fish and fruits.

Offers for humanitarian assistance actually started on Saturday.

Piñol issued instructions to directors of Regions IX, X, XI and XII to consolidate basic food items which may be needed in Northern Luzon.

"Zamboanga Peninsula (Region IX) has been tasked to supply fish and sardines, Northern Mindanao (Region X) vegetables while Davao (Region XI) and Central Mindanao (Region XII) fruits, especially bananas," Piñol said.

Piñol added he will request President Rodrigo Duterte to direct the Department of National Defense and Armed Forces of the Philippines to dispatch Air Force C-130 aircraft to the four regions to pick up the food supplies.

Piñol said DA Regional Offices in Cagayan Valley, Cordillera and Ilocos will be tasked to ensure the efficient distribution of the food supplies to the public

markets so it would be available to consumers.

Moreover, DA will also coordinate with poultry producers in Luzon areas not affected by the typhoon to supply dressed chicken and hog raisers will also be placed on alert to supply meat to the typhoon-affected areas should there be a need for it.

DoTr in rehab mode

Department of Transportation (DoTr) Secretary Arthur Tugade reported to Mr. Duterte that the restoration and rehabilitation efforts of the DoTr in all affected airports, seaports and terminals are now under way.

During the presidential briefing held at the Cagayan Provincial Capitol, Tugade estimated around P35 million to P40 million worth of damage was incurred in infrastructure alone, primarily in Tuguegarao Airport.

Immediately after "Ompong's" landfall, the transportation chief inspected Tuguegarao Airport and found out that the baggage carousel area and other offices of the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines were badly damaged.

Meanwhile, the runway ramp and other navigational equipment

are all functional. Tugade said it will take until Tuesday for the Baggage X-ray scanner to be repaired or replaced.

Dioceses appeal for help

Various dioceses affected by floods and landslides are also sounding off for aid.

Among dioceses appealing for assistance were the Diocese of Baguio, Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan, Diocese of Tarlac and Diocese of Laoag.

According to Father Manny Flores Jr., Social Action Director of the Diocese of Baguio, there is difficulty in delivering reliefs and supplies in isolated areas in Baguio due to blockage on main routes.

However, Father Flores assured residents the local government has been working with the volunteers to immediately clear obstructing logs and soils out of the road.

"As an initial assessment, Baguio is now isolated as almost all routes going to Baguio are closed, so right now, it is difficult to go in and out of Baguio... There's a lot of landslides but the government and volunteers are already working on it to fix our road network," Fr. Flores said.

With Kuhlín Ceslie Gacula, Raymart T. Lolo, AP

54 dead from Ompong

Most fatalities from collapsed mining site in Benguet

BY VICTOR REYES
AND RAYMOND AFRICA

At least 54 persons have died, including 30 miners buried in a mining site yesterday in Irogon town in Benguet, while dozens were injured mostly in landslides triggered by typhoon "Ompong" (international name Mangkhut) which wrought havoc over the weekend in northern Luzon.

Ompong left the Philippine area of responsibility at 9 p.m. on Saturday and made landfall yesterday in Guangdong, China's most populous province.

The fatality count in the buried mining site came from the Tarlac-based Northern Luzon Command

whose soldiers were involved in rescue operations.

The PNP has a higher fatality count. PNP's National Operations Center (NOC) based in Camp Crame which collates initial reports from police regional offices nationwide, said it has recorded at least 59 fatalities as of 6 p.m. Sunday — one each from Ilocos Region, Central Luzon, and National Capital Region; seven in Cagayan Valley; and 49 in the Cordillera Administrative Region including 33 in Benguet. The PNP has no specific data on the casualties in the mining site.

Aside from the 59 fatalities, the NOC said there were 47 reported injured and 16 missing.

President Duterte conducted

an aerial inspection of the areas affected by Ompong in Cagayan and Ilocos Norte provinces. In Tuguegarao and Ilocos Norte, he reiterated his commitment to address concerns about mining operations by next year.

Duterte said he was hoping to visit Baguio and other parts of Ilocos and the Cordillera region today.

Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat, commander of the Northern Luzon Command, said 43 miners were trapped in the mining site in Barangay Ucab and 30 bodies have been recovered as of yesterday morning.

"Retrieval operations are ongoing. So far, we have retrieved 30 bodies... It's possible all the 45 are already dead," he said.

He said the mining site was buried in a landslide that was triggered by rains in the past several days.

Salamat also said other reports showed only 19 bodies have been recovered.

Irogon Mayor Victorio Palangdan said 32 died in the incident. He said about 40 to 50 persons were trapped in the bunker of the small-scale miners, which was buried by the landslide.

He called for a stop to mining in Irogon.

"More than half of (Irogon) is a mining area... itong nanina pa noon, 100 plus years ago. Ito na ang resulta. Ito na'yung gumuguhô

Sec MOST ► Page B2

MOST

na babuyundakin dahil sa namin na ang loob nito (this area has been mined 100 plus years ago. The mining operations have led to the collapse of the mountains)," said Palangdan.

Palangdan appealed to authorities for additional relief goods and to the Department of Public Works and Highways to speed up road repairs because Ilogon is "isolated."

Earlier yesterday, political adviser Francis Tolentino reported to President Duterte there were 29 fatalities but said the figure may increase because of a landslide near a mining operation in Barangay Ucab Ilogon. He said reports said 43 people were reported trapped inside a church that was buried in a landslide. He later said in a radio interview that it is likely to be the same landslide in Ilogon that had been reported but involved a miner's bunker.

Tolentino was tapped by the President to be his point person on the Ompong preparations and response operations.

The 30 fatalities from Ilogon are on top of 24 others earlier reported by the Army's 5th Infantry Division, based in Isabela.

5th ID spokesman Capt. Jefferson Somera said seven of the 24 fatalities are from Benguet, six each from Mountain Province and Baguio City, four in Nueva Vizcaya and one in Kalinga.

Somera said most of the deaths were caused by landslides, "especially in Cordillera which is prone to landslides."

He also said there were eight missing in Baguio City and five in Benguet. There were 23 injured in Benguet, Baguio City, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province and

Nueva Vizcaya.

The Office of Civil Defense-Cordillera Administrative Region reported 20 deaths — seven in Benguet, one each in Baguio City and in Mountain Province, and one in Kalinga. It said 12 are missing and 20 were injured.

In the National Capital Region, Office of Civil Defense-NCR director Romulo Cabantac said his office received initial reports of "many" people who became casualties of Ompong but declined to say the number and the specifics.

"We cannot yet give the exact figures, we have to wait for the confirmation from the DOH (Department of Health) and DILG (Department of Interior and Local Government)," Cabantac said.

VALIDATING REPORTS

Edgar Posadas, spokesman of the Camp Aguinaldo-based National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, said the council has yet to officially record any casualty count.

He said the DOH and the DILG, which are leading the council's Management of the Dead and Missing (MDM) cluster, are still validating and corroborating reports of casualties.

"We are not disputing the data," said Posadas, referring to reports of casualties released by other agencies. "For all you know, they are accurate but we're coming from the MDM," he said.

The NDRRMC said 38,515 families or 151,872 persons have been evacuated in Ilocos region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Camarines, Bicol, CAR and NCR.

Asked to assess the effects of Ompong based on information at hand, Posadas said, "It's not as severe as Yolanda."

Some quarters earlier compared

Ompong to "Yolanda" which left about 6,000 people dead, affected millions of people, and destroyed billions of pesos worth of property when it battered Eastern Visayas in 2013.

Duterte said despite the developments, the damage Ompong left was not that severe. He acknowledged the preparations made in anticipation of the typhoon and thanked those responsible for the preparations.

He expressed satisfaction with the government response, adding that nothing beats being "hands-on."

He ordered the immediate restoration of power and communications in areas affected areas as well as the immediate rehabilitation of roads and bridges.

The President also directed the Department of Public Works and Highways to oversee the construction of permanent gym-like facilities that would be used as evacuation centers, instead of schools, to avoid disrupting classes.

Tolentino reported some 5.7 million Filipinos have been affected by the typhoon and some of them people are still in evacuation centers.

He said the national government is waiting for the declaration of various local government units of states of calamity in their areas which will trigger a price freeze.

In Ilocos Norte, Gov. Imee Marcos asked for fund assistance from the Office of the President and the National Housing Authority to assist in the rehabilitation efforts in her province.

The President said the NHA would be communicating with Ilocos Norte about the housing issue.

DAMAGED SCHOOLS

Education Secretary Leonor

Binay said 115 public schools were damaged by Ompong.

She said the cost of damage amounts to at least P100 million and the figure does not include damaged computers and laboratory tools in public schools.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) said it will set aside P100 million for financial assistance to families of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by Ompong.

"We will have a complete list of the worst hit areas. We will provide calamity assistance to OFW families," said OWWA Administrator Hans Leo Cadac.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said OFWs who were affected by flight cancellations due to Ompong will receive P5,000 in cash assistance from the department.

"For our kababayan OFWs whose flights going to or from the Philippines were cancelled because of typhoon Ompong, please proceed to the DFA

assistance desks at Terminals 1, 2 and 3 of NAIA and at the departure terminal of the Clark International Airport so you could avail yourself of the P5,000 cash assistance that we have been disbursing since yesterday (Saturday)," said Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy Elmer Caro said.

Affected OFWs are required to personally appear at the DFA

assistance desks at the airport terminals and submit their airline ticket showing their original date of departure, reissued ticket showing new date of departure, employment contract, and employment certificate.

Caro said OFWs may also claim their cash assistance at the DFA's Migrant

Worker-Affairs Office in Pasay City.

The OFWs may claim the cash advances until September 21.

Vice President Ma Leonor Robredo said her office has formed disaster teams to distribute relief goods in typhoon-hit areas.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority will deploy 15 personnel on Wednesday to Capayan to clear road obstructions. The group will stay for two to three days.

The agency said it will also bring two rubber boats, a military truck, and water purifiers to provide potable water to affected residents.

Weather forecaster Ariel Romas said Ompong continues to enhance the southwest monsoon.

pressure area was spotted in 150-km east-southeast of Southern Mindanao (outside PAR). It is expected to enter the PAR today but it will dissipate in eastern Mindanao.

The eye of Mang-khat, the Thai name for Southeast Asia's mango-steen fruit, skirted 100 km south of Hong Kong but the former British colony was still caught in the typhoon's swirling bands of rain and gale-force winds. — *With Jocelyn Mantemayor, Ewan Orta, Gerard Naval and Ashzel Piachero*

QC disaster workers lauded

By Rio N. Araja

QUEZON City Mayor Herbert Bautista on Sunday commended the city's disaster risk reduction and management council for its proactive approach in preparing for typhoon "Ompong."

"I congratulate you for all your efforts in helping make our city resilient. Our early warning, preemptive evacuation and pre-positioning of assets did us well. We did our best, but we still can do better in the future," Bautista told the council.

He thanked the personnel of the emergency services and disaster response and relief clusters for being on full alert since Friday until early Sunday evening.

Over 500 personnel from different departments of the city government and reinforced by volunteers from the mili-

tary's joint task force in the National Capital Region, Quezon City Police District, Bureau of Fire Protection and 150 2nd Army Ready Reserve Brigade were on standby and mission-ready during the full alert period.

According to Bautista, there were no reported typhoon-related casualties, except for a 10-year-old reported missing in Barangay Silangan.

At least 1,413 families or 6,266 individuals from nine flood-prone barangays sought shelter in evacuation centers and were provided hot meals by the QC Social Services Development De-

partment, he said.

All of the city's health centers were open 24 hours during the alert period, he added.

Meanwhile, to celebrate 100 years of Philippine cinema, the QCinema is touring Quezon City to show local independent films in public schools and barangays in an effort to inspire young people to become the next generation of filmmakers and artists.

"We are doing this roadshow to promote good cinema from local independent film makers, and to expose young people to quality film-making that delivers a good message about life," Vice Mayor Jay Belmonte said.

Speaking to high school students at Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo High School she said, "we're doing this all over the city for young people like you because, in the future, you may submit your creative works of art through film, so we could help you." BY



Clan war ends in Maguindanao

They can talk peace, after all. The bloody clan war between two families in Maguindanao finally ended on Saturday after a settlement aided by Army soldiers between their members.

The Iranun Inter-Agency Task Force, led by the local government of Barira, successfully aided the settlement between the Daraba Sasao and Kumiling-Nati families.

The violent dispute started with a personal grudge that led to the killing of two persons last July.

The settlement also led to the handover of a pistol, two rifles and a rocket-propelled grenade as a sign of their sincere desire to end their conflict.

Brigadier Gen. Jesus Sarsagat of the 603rd Brigade and Mayor Abdul Radjak Tomawis helped to settle the dispute.

They said they wanted to end the culture of violence and uphold peace and security within the community.

Both parties expressed their gratitude to the military and civilian authorities. 7 KB

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Senate stay 'none of your business'

By Mario J. Mallari

His prolonged stay inside the Senate building to evade arrest may be getting into the nerves of Sen. Antonio Trillanes as he said yesterday that his campout is nobody else's business.

Still fearful of arrest, Trillanes said he

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Senate stay 'none of your business'

From page 1

is determined to stay at the Senate until the courts resolved the issues surrounding the revocation of the amnesty granted to him by former President Benigno Aquino.

Trillanes taunted his critics, saying his stay at the Senate, where he was declared free from arrest without proper court order by Senate President Vicente Sotto III, is none of their business.

He maintained that the Senate is not incurring any additional expenses for his stay at his office despite pronouncements, even by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, that there will be no warrantless arrest.

"We got information directly from the arresting unit that I will be arrested... that's why they are saying that I can go out... what if I don't want to go out and I want to sleep here? What do you care?" Trillanes said on radio.

He maintained his continued stay at the Senate is upon the advice of

his lawyers.

"We, my companions and lawyers, agreed that I will stay here at the Senate so that my court cases will not be affected and to avoid any untoward incident if they attempt to arrest me," Trillanes said.

Sotto noted there are limitations for Trillanes' continued stay in the Senate building.

He stressed he would wait for the resolution of his cases pending at the Makati Regional Trial Court Branches 148 and 150 before leaving the Senate. Trillanes said he expects a court decision in the next two weeks.

Non-stop criticisms

Trillanes also continued his bravado and tirades against the President, vowing he will not stop criticizing Mr. Duterte.

Last Thursday, Trillanes claimed that "motorcycle-riding personnel" tailed his vehicle when it went out of the Senate compound to gas up. He

added similar incidents happened on Friday — prompting him to abandon his previous plans to leave the Senate.

Since the issuance of Proclamation 572 last 4 September, Trillanes has kept himself inside his office at the Senate.

There were reports of distraction inside the Senate compound due to Trillanes' continued stay there.

Patience has limit

No less than Sotto noted there are limitations for Trillanes' continued stay in the Senate building.

Trillanes said the normal maintenance schedules at the Senate are not hampered by his stay.

Proclamation 572 revoked the amnesty granted to Trillanes by Aquino who delegated the authority to former Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin.

In issuing the proclamation, President Rodrigo Duterte subsequently ordered the arrest of Trillanes and have him undergo general court martial proceedings.

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House starts budget plenary debates today

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

THE House of Representatives will begin this afternoon the plenary deliberations on the P3.757-trillion proposed national budget for 2019 with the aim of approving it before Congress goes on a month-long break on October 13. Congressmen will begin tackling House Bill 8169 or the Gen-

eral Appropriations Bill for 2019 at 2 p.m. with the sponsorship speech of Rep. Karlo Nograles (PDP-Laban, Davao City), chair of the House committee on appropriations.

"The House is always conscious of its mandate to approve next year's budget in order not to hamper the delivery of basic services to the Filipino people," said Nograles.

Nograles' speech will be followed by plenary debates on the bill's general principles and provisions.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) earlier acceded to lawmakers' request to move the filing of COCs for the May 13, 2019 elections from October 1 to 5,

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HOUSE

2018 to October 11 to 17 so they can focus on pending legislative measures, especially the 2019 national budget.

The budgets of the following agencies have been lined up: Department of National Defense (DND), Department of Education (DepEd) and their attached agencies; Department of Finance (DOF), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and Department of Tourism (DOT) and their attached agencies and corporations; Commission on Audit (COA), Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

The budgets of other executive offices will also be tackled, namely: Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC); Governance Commission for GOCCs; Commission on the Filipino Language; and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts with the following offices: NCCA (Proper), National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), National Library of the Philippines (NLP), and National Archives of the Philippines (NAP).

The budget deliberations were delayed in the committee level after congressmen objected to the cash-based budgeting system under the

2019 budget.

As a compromise, the House and the Executive decided to adopt a "hybrid" budgeting system which is a mix of the cash-based scheme and the current obligation-based system, which congressmen favor.

The Executive department agreed to defer for at least two to three years the full implementation of the cash-based budgeting system.

Under the cash-based scheme, only projects and programs which are implementable for completion and payment within the fiscal year and during the three-month extension period after the yearend are included for funding in the GAA.

The current "obligation-based" budgeting includes projects and programs in the GAA and the implementation, completion and payment of which could be made beyond the yearend provided they are obligated within the fiscal year by contract or other modes of incurring obligation.

Lawmakers and the Executive have agreed to extend the implementation of projects to 18 months from 15 months that the DBM initially proposed.

The budget department has also agreed to restore some of the budget cuts in social services, particularly in health and education and even public works.

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NPA helps in typhoon rescue, relief

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) over the weekend ordered all units of the New People's Army (NPA) as well its unarmed forces in Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon to carry out rescue, relief and rehabilitation work for millions of

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NPA helps

From Page 1

people whose homes and livelihood were ravaged by strong winds and rains brought by Typhoon Ompong.

In a statement posted on the website of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the CPP said that over the next

days, local commands of the NPA can concentrate primarily on civic action amid the disaster even as they remain vigilant over the relentless offensive operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"The Party urges the Filipino people and international humanitarian agencies to unite and extend all possible help to address the welfare of the people. It urges all democratic sectors to establish Serve the People brigades to help collect and distribute relief assistance," the CPP said.

The CPP said the broad masses of workers, peasants, minority people, fisherfolk and other basic sectors suffer the most from the damage wrought by Typhoon Ompong.

"There is urgent need to mobilize them to carry out collective effort from the devastation and facilitate

the entry and equitable distribution of all financial and material assistance," the CPP said.

The CPP said that like in the past, the people will be burdened by rampant corruption and inefficiencies in the Philippine reactionary government whose agencies always fail to squarely ad-

dress their conditions.

"Their clamor for wage increases, land distribution, cancellation of debt, agricultural subsidies, free irrigation and livelihood assistance and economic relief demand immediate attention and resolution," the CPP said.

- With Artemio Dumlaog

Group of NPA leaders yields in Compostela

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Six New People's Army (NPA) terrorists, four of which are high ranking, surrendered to the Army's 46th Infantry Battalion in Compostela Valley.

A military report disclosed that the NPAs surrendered to 46th ID under Lt. Col. Benjamin A Dao-on, at Mabini, Compostela Valley on Friday (September 14, 2018).

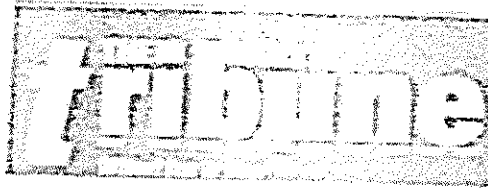
The high ranking NPA surrenderers were identified as alias Joffrey,

identified as a political instructor of the Sentro De Grabidad (SDG) Platoon; alias Sander, identified as Vice Commander, SDG Pltn; alias Anthony, Squad Leader of Squad 2, SDG Pltn; and alias Arnel, Team Leader, ABE Squad 1, SDG Pltn.

The other surrenderer was identified as alias Renz, a member of Squad 2, SDG and alias Tenie, also a member of Squad 2.

They turned in four caliber .45 pistols. Later they revealed the whereabouts of their other firearms, which resulted to the recovery of four AK47 rifles.

Meanwhile, Col. Gilbert Saret, the Commander of 1001st Infantry Brigade, welcomed the surrender and assured the former rebels of assistance as they return to the mainstream society. 15



Soldiers save Indonesians, wounded NPA

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

Philippine military rescued three Indonesians who were long held hostage by the Abu Sayyaf Group in Sulu.

The three Indonesians have been Abu Sayyaf captives since January 2017 in Tawi-Tawi and were subjects of rescue missions by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) since the day of their abduction by the ISIS-inspired group.

The Indonesian hostages were identified as Hamdam Salim, 34; Subandi Sattuh, 27 and Sudarian Samarsung, 41. They were rescued in Barangay Buanza, Idanan.

All three are fishermen. They will be repatriated after they have been turned over to the Indonesian embassy.

The freed Abu Sayyaf victims were turned over to JTF Sulu Commander, Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo Jr., former governor Abdusakur Tan and Provincial Director of the Sulu Provincial Police Office Supt. Pablo Labra II.

The rebel was abandoned by his comrades after he was heavily wounded as a result of the exchange of gunfire between the government and rebel forces.

According to reports, the three hostages were forcibly taken last in January 2017 while they were onboard a speedboat off the waters of Taganak Island, Tawi-Tawi.

The rescue was made possible through the collective efforts of the Joint Task Force Sulu, Miss Tarhata Misuari, Abdul Kiram Misuari and former governor Abdusakur Tan.

They were immediately brought to the Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital for medical check-up and custodial debriefing.

Last Friday, government troops also rescued a wounded member of the New People's Army following an encounter in Davao Oriental.

The rebel was abandoned by his comrades after he was heavily wounded as a result of the exchange of gunfire between the government and rebel forces.

The wounded rebel was identified as Jason Languban.

He was rescued in Barangay Maragatas, Lupon at 9 a.m. on tip: provided by the residents to the troops belonging to the 28th Infantry Battalion.

Upon interrogation, Languban said he was from Sta. Cruz, Davao de Sur.

The military rushed Languban to the Camp Panacan Station Hospital before he was transferred to the Southern Philippines Medical Center, also in Davao City. 7

8 hurt in GenSan blast

BY RAYMOND AFRICA
AND VICTOR REYES

EIGHT persons, including a six-year-old girl, were injured after still unidentified suspects detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) near two pharmacies in General Santos City before noon yesterday.

Supt. Aldrin Gonzales, Central Mindanao Police Regional Office spokesman, said the explosion happened along the national highway near Hadano Park in Crossing Mahar, barangay Apopong at noon.

Col. Ezra Balagtey, spokesman of the Armed Forces' Eastern Mindanao Command, said the military and the police are still conducting an investigation to identify the perpetrators and their possible motive.

Balogtey said the IED exploded near the Generics Pharmacy and the Brigada Pharmacy.

"Eight civilians were slightly wounded, non-critical, all at lower extremities," said Balagtey, citing diagnosis conducted at the St. Elizabeth Hospital where the victims were taken for treatment.

Gonzales said initial reports identified the wounded as Jesily Yvonne Guyos, 19, of Polomolok, South Cotabato; Anthon Fallor, 24, of Polomolok, South Cotabato; Claire Uozola, 24, Koronadal City; Joana Bless Alipio, 6, Polomolok, South Cotabato; Ianie Alipio, 34, Polomolok, South Cotabato; John Lenon Callary, 22, Sultan Kudarat; Felipa Regios, 63, Apopong, General Santos City; and Marlon Yadao Orabia, 30, General Santos City.

Gonzales said the victims sus-

tained shrapnel wounds in different parts of their bodies.

Asked about the suspects who could have planted the IED, Balagtey said: "None yet. The Task Force Gensan is still conducting investigation in coordination with the police."

"It was an IED but as to the component, we still don't know. There is still no information as to the signature. There is an ongoing post-blast investigation to determine the signature and identify the group," he added.

Balogtey said two major armed groups are known to operate in General Santos city, including the terrorist Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), which have been blamed for the bombings in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat on August 28 and September 3 that left several

people dead and dozens injured.

The New People's Army (NPA) also has presence in General Santos city. Formal peace negotiations between the government and the communists were ordered suspended by President Duterte in June.

"It could be the NPA, it could be the terrorists," Balagtey said, adding the military and police have intensified security measures in the city with the hope of arresting the suspects.

"We don't want to have a secondary explosion. That is what the Task Force Gensan did - intensify the security operations to prevent a repeat (of the explosion)," Balagtey said.

The explosion was the third to hit Central Mindanao region in 19 days. It happened even as PNP chief Oscar Albayalde has placed police units in the whole of Mindanao region under full alert status.

6 na NPA, sumuko 5

Matapos ang mahabang panahong pakikipaglaban sa pamahalaan, sumuko sa pamahalaan ang anim na miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA). Kabilang ang apat na mataas na opisyal nito sa Compostela Valley, kamakailan.

Hindi na ibinigay ng militar ang pagkakakilanlan ng mga ito para na rin sa kanilang seguridad.

Sumuko ang mga ito sa 46th Infantry Battalion (IB) ng Philippine Army (PA) sa Mabini, Compostela Valley, mung nakaraang Bivermes.

Isinuko rin ng mga ito ang iba't ibang uri ng kanilang armas.

Nagpahayag naman ng pasasalamat si 1001st Infantry Battalion (IB) commander, Col. Gilbert Saret sa pagsuko ng mga ito.

"We would like to welcome our brothers who were victims of NPA exploitation. We want to assure them that we will assist them as they return to the fold of the law, particularly in their enrollment with the Enhance Comprehensive Localized Integration Program or the E-CLIP, ayon na sa kanya.

Francis T. Wakefield

NPA commander utas sa engkuwentro

Napatay ang isang mataas na opisyal ng New People's Army o NPA makaraang makasagupa ang tropa ng pamahalaan sa

NI RHODERICK BEÑEZ

Sitio Flortam, Barangay Batasan, Makilala, North Cotabato nitong Sabado.

Kinilala ang nasawi na si Jacob Rodinas alias Jaco o Velum ng Ergy Balite, Magpet, North Cotabato at tinaguriang secretary ng Guerilla Front 51 ng NPA.

Sa phone interview ng Pilipino STAR Ngayon kay Lt. Col. Rhojun Rosales, ang commando officer ng 39th IB ng PNA Army, bitbit ng mga surralo at pulis ang war-

rant of arrest ay tinungo ang lugar alas-5:00 ng hapon pero sinalubong na sila ng mga putok ng mga rebeldeng grupo.

Dito na nagkaroon ng bakbakan, hanggang sa kinaumagahan ay nakita na lamang ang patay na katawan ni Rodinas sa masukal na bahagi ng Sitio Flortam.

Si Rodinas ay responsible umano sa pangngikil o extortion sa mga negosyante sa North Cotabato at Davao del Sur. Nahaharap din siya sa kasong arson, extortion, homicide at murder.

7 Tausug men killed; group cries massacre

Army says slain men were members of

Abu Sayyaf involved in clash with soldiers in Sulu

By **Mart Sambalud**
and **Julie Alipala**
@Team_Inquirer

DAVAO CITY—A militant Moro group is calling on the Commission on Human Rights to probe the deaths of seven Tausug men, who allegedly sought soldiers' permission to harvest lanzones and durian at a village in Patikul, Sulu but ended up dead in the hands of soldiers belonging to another unit.

"We call upon the Commission on Human Rights to investigate the reported massacre of civilians in Patikul," said Jerome Succor Aba, national chair of the group Suara Bangsamoro.

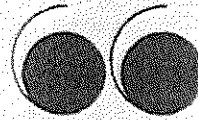
Jerome said the killing of the seven men was not the first case of massacre in Moro communities.

A relative of the men said the victims sought permission from the 55th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army to harvest fruits from their trees at the village of Kabunakar in Patikul on Friday.

Bullet-riddled

On Saturday, their bullet-riddled bodies were laid out inside an Army headquarters in Jolo, the relative said.

Mahmur Arula, relative of the victims, said his cousins Makrub Diray, 25; Alpadal Di-



They were just trying to earn a living by harvesting their own trees

Mahmur Arula
Relative of victims

ray, 16; Mijar Hairan and Basiluddin Hairani, 30; Issah Hamsan, 21; Benajal Tula and Maknun Sakirin, 22 just wanted to harvest lanzones and durian.

Around 9 a.m. of Sept. 14, the men were given a permit to enter their farm and harvest fruits but while there, Scout Rangers arrested them.

Arula said three witnesses saw the men still alive after they were arrested around 11 a.m. on the same day.

But around 11 a.m. on Sept. 15, the men's bodies were visited by relatives at the Army-led joint Task Force Sulu headquarters in Jolo.

Military report

The military insisted that the seven were members of the

homegrown terror group Abu Sayyaf, which now has ties with Islamic State.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, public affairs officer of the Western Mindanao Command, said there was a "legitimate" encounter between the Scout Rangers and more than 100 Abu Sayyaf men under Radullan Sahiron on Sept. 14 around 1:30 p.m.

Besana said 17 soldiers were wounded in the clash.

The military reported that seven Abu Sayyaf fighters were killed and another six were wounded, including Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan.

Earning a living

But Arula said his slain relatives were not terrorists.

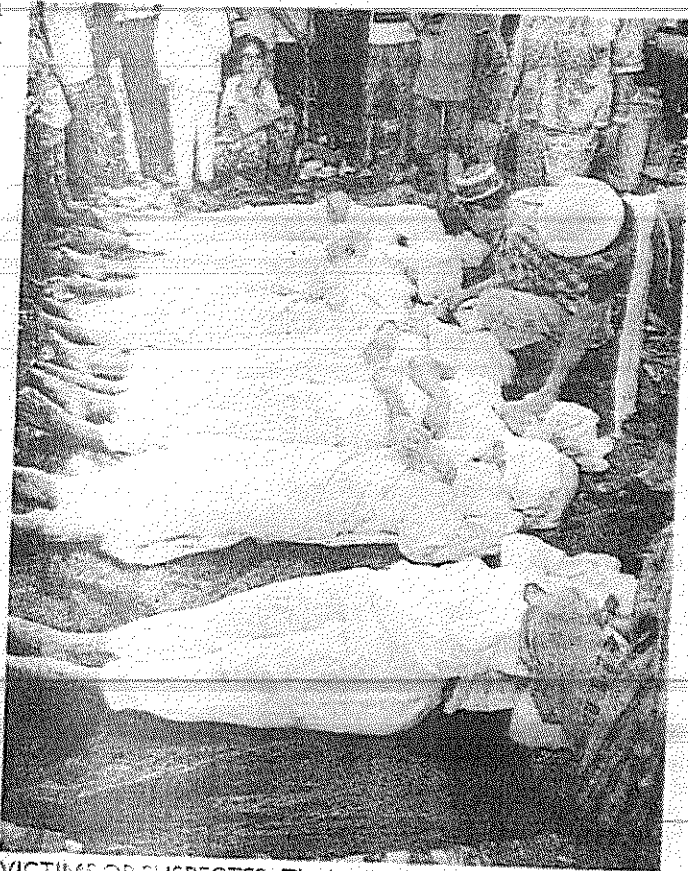
"They were just trying to earn a living by harvesting their own trees," Arula said.

Alih Ayub, professor at the Western Mindanao University and consultant of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, had attested to the identity of the seven men.

Still alive

Fatima Salihi, who worked for the Pantawid Pamilya Program (4Ps) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, said the wife of one of the slain men was a 4Ps beneficiary.

Suara Bangsamoro condemned the killings.



VICTIMS OR SUSPECTS? The bodies of the slain Tausug men in an Army camp in Jolo. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Aba of Suara said "Scout Rangers mistook the seven" for Abu Sayyaf members "and captured them."

He said relatives of the victims saw them still alive after sol-

diers took them into custody.

Aba said the youngest victim was a high school student who recently evacuated to the village of Igasan, also in Patikul. INQ *AK*

3 Indonesians freed

Abu Sayyaf bandits have freed three Indonesian men they kidnapped at sea off Malaysia early last year, officials said on Sunday.

The Indonesians were freed on Friday with the help of the Moro National Liberation Front, a rebel group that signed a peace deal with the Philippine government, at Indanan town in Sulu province, police said.

The released hostages, Hamdam Salim, Subandi Satuh and Sudarlan Samansung, were to be handed to the Indonesian ambassador in Zam-

boanga City later on Sunday, the military said.

While cruising on board a speedboat, the three were taken at gunpoint by suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits off Sabah on Borneo island in January last year.

In exchange for ransom

The hostages were brought aboard motorboats to the gunmen's jungle hideout in Sulu, a poor, predominantly Muslim province where the Abu Sayyaf has had a presence since the late 1980s, officials said.

An Abu Sayyaf commander,

Marjan Sahidjuan, who uses nom de guerre Apo Mike, led the abductors who freed the captives in exchange for a ransom, a security official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But the regional military spokesperson, Lt. Col. Gerry Bessana, said the military was unaware of any ransom payment and added that relentless offensives pressured the kidnapers to let go of their hostages.

The Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia have beefed up security along their massive sea border. —AP **Al**

3 Indonesians kidnapped in 2017 rescued in Sulu

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Three Indonesians kidnapped in waters off Tawi-Tawi, Sulu in January, 2017 were released by their **▶ 6**

3 Indonesians kidnapped... ◀ 1

captors to the military in Barangay Buanza, Indanan, Sulu last Saturday.

A report sent by the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) yesterday identified the hostages as Hamdan Salim, 34; Subandi Sattub, 27; and Sudarian Samansung, 41.

The three have already been turned over to Brigadier General Divine Rey Pabayo Jr., commander of the Joint Task Force Sulu; former Governor Abdusakar Tan; and Senior Superintendent Labra, director of the Sulu Police Provincial Office (PPO).

The three Indonesians were forcibly taken by armed men while onboard a

speedboat in waters off Taganak Island, Tawi-Tawi on Jan. 18, 2017.

The release was made possible through the joint efforts of the Joint Task Force Sulu, Miss Tarhiata Misuari, Abdul Kiram Misuari, and former Governor Abdusakar Tan.

The three were immediately brought to the Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital for medical check-up and custodial debriefing prior turn-over to the higher headquarters.

The Indonesians are expected to be turned-over to Indonesian Ambassador to the Philippines Dr. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang at the Western Mindanao Command later yesterday.

3 Indonesians freed by Abu Sayyaf in Sulu

THREE Indonesians were freed by the Abu Sayyaf group in Sulu on Saturday, almost 20 months after they were kidnapped in Tawi-Tawi.

Hamdam Salim, 34, Suband Natuh, 27, and Sudarlan Saranggug, 41, were released around 4 a.m. and subsequently recovered by the military in Barangay Bagan in Indanan town, Lt. Col. Wern Besana, spokesman of the AFP's Western Mindanao Command, said yesterday.

The release brings to 11 the number of individuals still in the hands of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu.

The three were seized by the Abu Sayyaf off Taganak Island in

Tawi-Tawi on January 18 last year, and later brought to Sulu, a known bailiwick of the group.

Besana said there is no information on whether ransom was paid. "What we know is they are pressured (by the military operations)," he said.

He said the release was made possible through the joint efforts of the military's Joint Task Force Sulu under Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabaya, former Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan, and other stakeholders.

A report from the police in the Autonomous Region in Muslim

See 3 INDONESIA'S > Page B2

3 INDONESIA'S

Mindanao said the three were released to the Moro National Liberation Front which sponsored for their release.

They were then turned over to former Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan before they were brought to the Joint Task Force Sulu and Senior

Supt. Pablo Larra II, chief of the Sulu police.

Besana said operations continue to secure the freedom of the remaining kidnap victims — nine Filipinos, a Dutch, and a Vietnamese. — *Victor Reyes and Raymond Africa*

3 Indonesians freed from Sayyaf in Sulu

By Francisco Tuyay

THE military said the government's anti-terror campaign has led to the rescue of three Indonesian nationals held captive by the Abu Sayyaf Group for 20 months since Jan. 18 last year.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the Western Mindanao Command identified the rescued Indonesian hostages as Hamdam Salim, 34; Subandi Sattuh, 27 and Sudarlan Samansung, 41.

Besana said the hostages were rescued from the ASG at 4 pm Saturday in Brgy. Buanza, Indanan, Sulu.

Besana said that the three Indonesians were turned over to Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo Jr., former Sulu governor Abdusakur Tan and Sulu provincial police officer Sr. Supt. Labra.

The three Indonesians will be eventually turned over to the Indonesia Ambassador at the Western Mindanao Command.

The 3 hostages were taken Jan. 18, 2017 while on board a speedboat off the waters of Taganak Island, Tawi-Tawi.

Meanwhile, Marine Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesman of the Armed Forces of the Philippines said on Sunday that operating units from the Joint Task Force Sulu under Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo conducted focused operations against the terrorist in Brgy. Bakong, Patikul, killing seven terrorists in an ensued firefight.

Arevalo said the fighting erupted hours as Typhoon "Ompong" threatened to hit land in Cagayan and Isabela provinces at 1:30 am Friday.

Arevalo disclosed that six other ter-

rorists were injured, including ASG sub-leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan who was hit in the stomach and lower extremities.

The renewed fighting with the ASG injured 17 soldiers who sustained shrapnel wounds.

"We praise the combat skills of our soldiers in seizing the element of surprise and firepower. They were unfazed by volleys of retaliatory fire from more or less 100 Abu Sayyaf terrorists under senior leader Radullan Sahiron and sub-leaders Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan and Idang Susukan," Arevalo said.

He said that the site of the intense skirmishes is a notorious ASG territory on the basis of military and human intelligence. **CB**

"The folks of Patikul knows it very well such that no civilians dared to go or pass by the place," Arevalo added.

"We stand firm in our report that this was a legitimate encounter contrary to enemy propaganda that it was a "massacre," Arevalo pointed out.

3 Indonesian hostages pinalaya

Tatlong Indonesian nationals na dinukot ng bandi-dong grupo na Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ang ligtas na sa kapahamakan makaraang palayain ng mga terorista kamakalawa ng hapon sa Sulu.

Kinilala ang mga dayuhang pinalaya na sina Hamdam Salim, 34-anyos, Subandi Sattuh, 27 at Sudarlan Samansung, 41 anyos.

Base sa ulat ng Western Mindanao Command, dating kong alas-4 ng hapon, ng palayain ang mga hostages sa Brgy Buanza, Indanan, Sulu.

Kaagad silang ibinangalawang kay Brigadier General Divino Rey Paay Jr., Commander ng Joint Task Force Sulu, dating governor Aboussakur Tan at Provincial Director ng Sulu Provincial Police Senior

Supt. Labra.

Mabilis na dinala ang mga hostages sa Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital para sa medical check-up at sasailalim sa stress debriefing.

Nakikipag-ugnayan na ang gobyerno ng Pilipinas sa mga opisyal ng Indonesia

kaugnay sa pagtu-turnover ng pamahalaan sa tatlong dayuhan.

Ang tatlong Indonesian ay dinukot ng ASG sa Sabah, Malaysia noong Enero 18, 2017 habang sakay ng speedboat sa karagatan ng Taganak Island sa Tawi-tawi. *(Gemma Garcia)*

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3 Indon hostages rescued

Three Indonesian hostages were rescued in Barangay Buanza, Indanan, Sulu on Saturday, the military disclosed yesterday.

A report sent by the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), identified the rescued victims as Hamdam Salim, 34; Subandi Sattuh, 27 and Sudarian Samansung, 41.

The three were turned over to Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo Jr., commander of the Joint Task Force Sulu, former Gov. Abdusakur Tan, and provincial director of the Sulu Provincial Police Office Sen. Supt. Pablo Labra.

The three, it was recalled, were forcibly taken on January 18, 2017 while on board a speedboat off the waters of Taganan Island, Tawi-Tawi.

The release was made possible through the joint efforts of the Joint Task Force Sulu, Tarhata Misuari, Abdul Kiram Misuari, and Tan.

The rescued hostages were immediately brought to the Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital for medical checkup and custodial debriefing prior

to their turnover to the higher headquarters.

The three are expected to be turned-over to Indonesian Ambassador to the Philippines Dr. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang at the Western Mindanao Command on Sunday.

Meantime, six New People's Army (NPA) rebels, four of whom are high ranking leaders, voluntarily surrendered to the Army's 46th Infantry Battalion in Compostela Valley, a military report said.

The report disclosed that the NPAs surrendered to the 46th ID under Lt. Col. Benjamin A Dao-on at Mabini, Compostela Valley on Friday.

The high ranking NPA surrenderees were one alias Joffrey, identified as a political instructor of the Sentro De Grabilidad (SDG) platoon; an alias Sander, identified as the vice commander, an alias Anthony, squad leader of Squad 2, SDG Pltn; and alias Arnel, team leader, ABE Squad 1. The other surrenderees were identified as alias Renz, a member of squad 2 and alias Tenie, also a member of squad 2. (Francis T. Wakefield)

TERRORISM

ALERT RAISED AS 3RD BOMB IN SOCGSKSARGEN HITS GENSAN

By Bong S. Sarmiento
@inmindanao

KORONADAL CITY—Seven people were wounded in an explosion in nearby General Santos City on Sunday, the third explosion in the Soccsksargen region in less than a month, authorities said.

Supt. Aldrin Gonzales, spokesperson for the regional police office, said the explosion occurred around 11:40 a.m. outside TGP Generic Pharmacy at Crossing Makar in the village of Labangal in that city.

Gonzalez said the still unknown suspect placed the improvised explosive device beside the pharmacy.

He investigators were on the case.

South Cotabato Rep. Pedro Acharon Jr., urged the public to be vigilant in the wake of the explosion.

Acharon said the bombing appeared to be meant to "scare than to hurt people."

3rd bombing

Lawyer Arnel Zapatos, city administrator, said the victims were being treated at a local hospital for injuries.

Sunday's bombing here was the third in the region in barely 20 days.

Powerful explosions rocked Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat on Sept. 2 and Aug. 28, killing five persons and wounding nearly 50 others.

The police and the military blamed the Isulan explosions on an Islamic State (IS)-inspired faction of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters.

The region was placed on full red alert following the deadly Isulan blasts.

The region is composed of the provinces of South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani and the cities of General Santos, Koronadal, Tacurong, Kidapawan and Cotabato.

Defying martial law

The explosions took place even as martial law continued to be in force in Mindanao following its declaration to end a bid by IS to take control of Marawi City.

Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., deputy commander of Joint Task Force Ranao, told the Inquirer that, despite intensified operations, the military had failed to catch and arrest remaining leaders of the Maute Group in Lanao del Sur.

Maute was one of several homegrown terror groups allied with IS that launched the campaign to take over Marawi.

One of its surviving leaders, Owayda Benito Marohombsar, also known as Abu Dar, was earlier reported to have escaped with dozens of Maute gunmen.

INQ 114

12

Bomb explosion rocks GenSan; 8 wounded

By JOSEPH JURELAG and MARTIN A. SADONEDONG

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — At least eight people, including a six-year-old girl, were wounded when a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) went off in front of a pharmacy in Crossing Makar, Barangay Apopong,

this city yesterday morning.

Supt. Aldrin Gonzales, regional police spokesman, said the IED exploded in front of a branch of a popular pharmacy chain near Hadano Park in Crossing Makar at

▶14

Bomb explosion rocks...

◀1

11:40 a.m.

Gonzales identified the wounded as Joana Bless Alipio, 6; Yvonne Guyos, 19; Claire Uozia, 24; Lanie Alipio, 34; John Lennon Calary, 22; Felipe Regios, 63; Marion Yadao, 30; and Anton Fallo, 24.

According to a doctor from St. Elizabeth Hospital, the victims sustained wounds on their lower extremities but were declared out of danger.

Citing an initial report from the Soccsksargen Police Regional Office (PRO-12), Senior Superintendent Benigno Durana Jr., PNP spokesman, said the explosion also damaged a tent and a sports utility vehicle (SUV) parked on the road.

Explosive ordnance disposal teams of the General Santos City Police Office and AFP Joint Task Force General Santos immediately conducted panning/assessment in the area.

Media reports indicated that before the explosion, some witnesses saw two men onboard a single motorcycle leave a bag beside the establishment.

The explosion occurred barely a month after the twin bombings in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat — also in the Soccsksargen region, which claimed five lives and wounded 46 others. Police forces in Mindanao are currently in full alert status after the recent bombings.

On August 28, an IED went off in the middle of a town festival in Barangay Kalawag 3, Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. Three persons were killed in the said blast while 36 were injured.

Another IED exploded in Barangay Kalawag 2, Isulan, Sultan Kudarat on September 2, killing three persons and wounding 12 more.

Police have identified and charged 25 members of an alleged breakaway faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter (BIFF) as the ones behind the first Isulan town bombing.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said that he had also tasked police forces in the region to intensify conduct of checkpoints, police visibility patrols, and focused intelligence and law enforcement operations.

"I have directed the mobilization of all available police security forces in pursuit operations against persons responsible for the latest act of terrorism in General Santos City," said Albayalde.

"We assure the public of our keen resolve and commitment to bring before the bar of justice those responsible for this dastardly and vicious act," he added.

Meanwhile, Malacañang has denounced the latest bombing in General Santos City and promised to hunt down the culprits.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said authorities have started an investigation into the incident which he claimed was a "brazen attack to justice."

"We condemn in the strongest pos-

sible terms today's explosion that hit General Santos City which left scores of people injured. This comes at an unfortunate time when the nation is reeling from the effects of Ompong," Roque said.

"Authorities are now conducting an investigation. We vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," he added. (With reports from Aaron B. Recuenco, Francis T. Wakefield, and Genalyn D. Kabiling)

SEVEN HURT

New blast rocks GenSan

The region has been under constant attacks from anti-government forces of late, including a bomb explosion in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat last 2 September

could not yet give further details of the most recent blast to rock Mindanao, weeks after Bangsamoro Organic Law, which aims to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), was signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on 26 July.

years old; Lally Jean Alipyo, 34; Jessly Yrome Guyos, 18; John Lennon Calong, 22 and Filippa Regidor, 63.

The region has been under constant attacks from anti-government forces of late, including a bomb explosion in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat last 2 September.

Seven persons were hurt when a bomb exploded shortly before noon Sunday at Crossing Makar along the National Highway in General Santos City.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the blast came at an unfortunate time as some parts of the country continue to reel from the effects of typhoon "Ompong" (Mangkhut).

The PNP said the bombings bore the fingerprints of a faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter.

The IED blast killed two people and injured 15, mostly clients of the internet shop where the bomb was reportedly placed by two motorcycle-riding men.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) said an improvised explosive device (IED) was set off in front of the Generics Pharmacy and the Bonita Lying-in Clinic at around 11:45 am.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms (yesterday's) explosion that hit General Santos City, which left scores of people injured," Roque said.

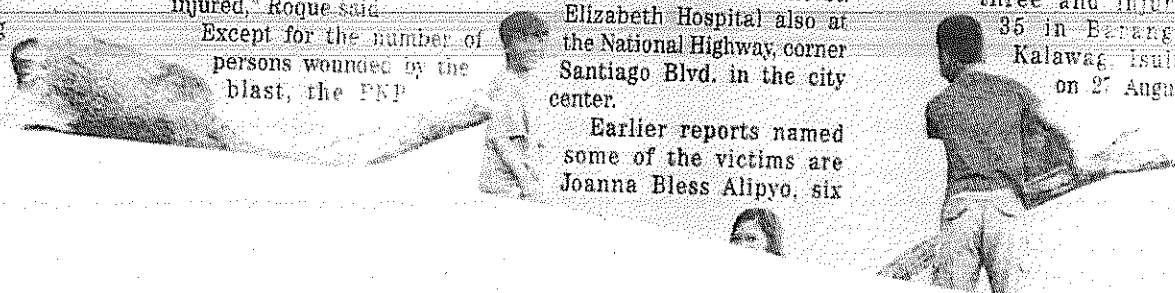
Police spokesman Senior Supt. Benigno Durana said the victims were rushed to the St. Elizabeth Hospital also at the National Highway, corner Santiago Blvd. in the city center.

It was the second attack in Isulan after another blast killed three and injured 35 in Barangay Kalawag, Isulan on 27 August.

Malacañang quickly condemned the attack.

Except for the number of persons wounded by the blast, the PNP

Earlier reports named some of the victims are Joanna Bless Alipyo, six



Authorities offered P1 million for the arrest of the culprit.

The PNP said the bombings bore the fingerprints of a faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter (BIFF).

Last July, a Moroccan set himself off as he passed through a CAFGU detachment in Lamitan, Basilan in the ARMM on 81 July, killing 10 – including women and a child – and wounding seven.

The ISIS quickly claimed responsibility for the attack, which Mohaqher Iqbal, chief peace negotiator of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, said would have been likely.

Iqbal raised the likelihood of the BIFF and the Dawlah Isamiyah-Abu Turalfie Group as behind the attack.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of 8th Infantry Division, agreed with Iqbal's observation. 7

INDONESIA TODAY

GenSan blast hurts 7 people, BIFF blamed

By Francisco Tuyay and Nat Mariano

TERRORISTS set off a bomb in a commercial alley in General Santos City Sunday, wounding seven people, including a six-year-old girl.

Initial reports said the improvised explosive device went off along the national highway in Brgy. Apopong near two pharmacies at 11:40 am. *Next page*

GenSan...

From A1

Lt. Col. Ezra Balatgey, spokesman of the Eastern Mindanao Command, said the seven wounded civilians were brought to St. Elizabeth Hospital where they were treated for minor injuries.

The bomb damaged one of the pharmacies and a sports utility vehicle parked nearby.

The attack comes weeks after the twin explosions in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, that left four people, including two minors, dead and wounded 35 others.

Authorities blamed the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters for the Sultan Kudarat attacks, although they did not say who was behind the latest blast in General Santos city.

Military and police explosives experts were investigating the site of the blast.

Police and military personnel have reinforced General Santos City to protect the public against similar attacks.

Malacañang on Sunday condemned the latest bombing.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms today's explosion that hit General Santos City which left scores of people injured," said Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque. "This comes at an unfortunate time when the nation is reeling from the effects of [Typhoon] Ompong."

"Authorities are now conducting an investigation. We vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," Roque added.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said an improvised explosive device injured the victims including a six-year-old girl.

"I have directed the mobilization of all available police security forces in pursuit operations against persons responsible for the latest act of terrorism in General Santos City," he said.

7 slain Sulu boys were Abu Sayyaf — military

By ALI G. MACABALANE

COTABATO CITY — The Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) stands pat on its initial reports that the seven young men slain over the weekend in military operations in Patikul, Sulu were combatants of the terror group Abu Sayyaf.

Interviewed by phone Sunday morning by The Manila Bulletin, Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, Westmincom spokesman, said the military would even welcome an independent probe on the incident to establish the truth as demanded by local human rights groups led by the Suara (voice of) Bangsamoro.

Lt. Col. Besana described Saturday's incident as a "legitimate military operation" where the seven rebels were slain, and six comrades including Abu Sayyaf local leader Hatib Hajar Sawadjan were wounded along with 17 soldiers.

He said troops of the Task Group Panther under Lt. Col. Samuel Yunque and Capt. Michael Asistores of the Scout Rangers engaged more than 100 Abu Sayyaf men under Radulan Saniron around 1:30 pm. Friday in a village in Patikul town.

In battles that ensued Saturday morning, both camps suffered casualties, according to initial military reports.

The Suara Bangsamoro disputed the military report, saying the incident was

a "massacre" with seven young Tausogs as victims.

In its report published partly in another national daily the Suara Bangsamoro mentioned a certain Mahmud Arul as a witness who said he saw the seven boys arrested by soldiers Friday. Their bodies were found riddled with bullets the following day at the headquarters of the Task Force Sulu.

Arula reportedly identified the victims as Makrub Diray, 25; Alpadal Diray, 16; Mijar Hairan and Basiluddin Hairani, 30; Issah Hamsan, 21; Benajal Tula and Maknun Sakirin, 22.

The seven fatalities were permitted Friday morning by the Army's 55th Infantry Battalion stationed in Barangay Issan in Patikul town to harvest lanzones and durian in a nearby orchard farm, the Suara Bangsamoro said, citing Arula's allegation. 15

SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

Red or yellow October?

Did the President and commander-in-chief issue an order but was ignored or disobeyed by the troops?

This is the 64-dollar question as the administration pursues its obsession to put Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV back in detention.

Professional soldiers who are true to their oath will not follow an unlawful order. This is according to former military chief and former senator Rodolfo Biazon, who as a Marine commander protected Corazon Aquino during the days leading up to the 1986 people power revolt. When she became president, Biazon helped crush coup attempts in 1987 and 1989, which were staged by soldiers led by Gregorio Honasan.

Biazon faced us on "The Chiefs" last Friday on Signal TV's *One News* channel; Honasan begged off. Trillanes/Magdalo was represented by the group's former party-list congressman, combat helicopter pilot Francisco Acedillo, who might also lose his amnesty and face arrest for participation in the Oakwood mutiny.

The articulate Acedillo, who is studying law at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, believes today's Armed Forces of the Philippines has been cleared of the coup virus. Like Trillanes, who also talked to us last week from the Senate, Acedillo says he is flabbergasted by the accusation that Magdalo is plotting with the Reds and "yellows" to oust Duterte by next month.

Both Trillanes and Acedillo stressed that there was no way they could sleep with the AFP's enemy the communists.

"There is no such collusion and there will never be," Acedillo told us. "It is antithetical for us to be bombed with these enemies of the state," he said, because the rebels continue to kill the soldiers that Magdalo is representing in Congress.

If they lie in bed with the communists, he stressed, they would lose their military support "and we lose our very reason for being."

Maintaining that support is probably giving the Magdalo second thoughts about filing a criminal case against AFP personnel who claim to have lost Trillanes' application for amnesty.

Now talking like a lawyer, Acedillo cited Republic Act 9470, the National Archives Law of 2007, which he said requires government agencies to keep custody of official documents. Losing such documents may warrant punishment of five to 15 years in prison plus a fine of P500,000 to P1 million.

Acedillo commends the AFP's handling of Trillanes' case and for behaving "as if they are the adult in the room."

He notes that the literal translation of coup d'etat is an attack on the state. Since the aggrieved party is the state, the grant of amnesty ultimately "is an act of grace by the state... the act comes from the sovereign will of the people" and not just from a particular individual.

Malacañang will likely dispute this. What is harder to dispute is the argument that under the Constitution, the grant of amnesty is a shared power between the president and the legislature.



Not even Ferdinand Marcos during his dictatorship ever voided or revoked any of the 12 amnesties he granted to communist rebels, Acedillo pointed out.

The police in fact proceeded to the Senate after Duterte ordered Trillanes' arrest, while the military prepared to receive the senator as a returning inmate. But senators, questioning the validity of the order, allowed Trillanes to seek refuge in the chamber.

I'm sure that even the Philippine National Police leadership knew arresting a senator at the Senate wasn't going to be a walk in the park. Especially a senator who at the time was conducting a probe into possible corruption involving the solicitor general who, as Duterte later disclosed, was the one who cooked up the idea of declaring the amnesty for a single individual void from the start.

Since the cops showed up at the Senate, no one can say that the PMayers in the PNP did not try to carry out the order of Duterte. Surely even the President did not expect PNP members to barge into the Senate and drag Trillanes to detention at Camp Aguinaldo.

Someone must have whispered to Duterte that the order was causing unease in the ranks, both in the PNP where many units are still under alumni of the Philippine Military Academy, and in the AFP, whose chief of staff Carlito Galvez Jr. and several key commanders were themselves former rebel soldiers who were granted amnesty.

What generated that 64-dollar question were the subsequent actions and pronouncements of Duterte. First he inexplicably cut short his trip to Jordan and returned to the Philippines. Then he challenged Trillanes and Magdalo to initiate a mutiny or coup, and see if anyone would follow them. Duterte then accused the Magdalo of colluding with the Liberal Party and communist rebels led by Jose Maria Sison to oust him by October.

As even pro-administration senators and political allies wondered aloud what people were smoking at Malacañang, Duterte identified Jose Calida as the "quite bright" solicitor general whose ideas, such as the voiding of Trillanes amnesty, the President couldn't refuse.

With Galvez telling the military to stay out of politics, Duterte told the troops not to arrest Trillanes without a court order. This fueled the nagging question: did the AFP leave the commander-in-chief with no choice?

As the week dragged on and Trillanes remained jailed out at the Senate, Teresita de Castro's Supreme Court dropped the hot potato into the lap of the Makati Regional Trial Court, which in turn refused to be rushed into issuing an arrest warrant. Duterte then said petulantly that he was no longer interested in whether Trillanes would be arrested or not.

Galvez was an Army lieutenant when he, together with his *mistah* in the PMA Class 1985, now Army chief of staff Gen. Rolando Bautista, and members of the First Scout Ranger Regiment notably Danilo Lim followed Honasan in staging the bloodiest coup attempt against Cory Aquino in December 1989. Ninety-nine people were killed and 570 wounded.

Fidel Ramos, a former AFP and defense chief, granted amnesty to all rebel soldiers when he became president.

Honasan became a senator; Galvez is AFP chief; Danny Lim now heads the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority; Bautista is set to head the National Food Authority when he retires next month. Why single out Trillanes for voiding amnesty? Duterte cited presidential prerogative. But his pursuit of Trillanes is starting to border on the pathological.

In hindsight, Acedillo told us, "staging a coup was never good for any democracy. It is better that we uphold the rule of law."

Such assurances may not be enough to dispel insecurity. Only the passage of October will quell Duterte's suspicion of disloyalty (to him) in the ranks.

CTALK CITO BELTRAN

Pre-positioning good and bad

When President Duterte sent out his cabinet members from the north to dig in and show the locals that the national government had representatives on the ground, it drew mixed reactions from the crowd. On one side some people praised the high visibility of government leadership and saw the deployment as action and commitment from the Duterte administration and that was good. There were of course some more practical people who remember what happened to officials of the PNoy administration particularly Mar Roxas who ended up becoming a "victim" when they deployed for Typhoon Yolanda.



I personally did not think it wise to deploy aged cabinet members like Labor Secretary Bello and Transport Secretary Tugade to "Ground Zero." That's the sort of assignment you give to the Marines, Army or Armed Forces in general. I support showing the people that Malacañang is on the ground but let us not send our "Lolos" and place them at great risk physically and health wise. The positive result that came out of deploying our Lolos in the cabinet was the fact that they were media magnets that almost guaranteed coverage and deployment of media teams. That in turn helped highlight the threat posed by Typhoon Ompong resulting in greater public awareness.

The President's subsequent trip to Juguogarao yesterday certainly showed government in action and Duterte trying his best to address problems related to typhoon damage as well as national concerns. This act of transparency gave viewers an insight to the management style and skills level of our national executives and managers. Transparency is good but only to a point until it begins to portray some people as amateurs or below par in terms of executive skills. The televised cabinet meeting also revealed their status with the President, either they were "in a relationship" with PRRD or their status was "complicated" meaning "Bad shot" or unpopular with Digong. All you had to do was compare how PRRD would engage and react with each cabinet member and you immediately had an idea whose status was complicated.

It also revealed that certain issues or complications remain unresolved or not acted upon, such as the transfer of the NFA back to the Department of Agriculture. At the end of the day, the President would have been better advised to simply ask his cabinet members on the ground to give reports and updates with the President making a closing statement reiterating his commitment of support. His physical presence was statement enough.

On the other hand, the deployment and pre-positioning of certain personalities also gives the impression that potential senatorial candidates of the administration were sent out to place them under the spotlight. Whether they deny it or not, Harry Roque, Silvestre Bello, Francis Tolentino are strongly rumored to be on the administration's senatorial line-up for 2019. Why did Roque have to emcee the supposed "Press Conference" at the NDRRMC? He practically had a dedicated TV show talking to other cabinet members and officials thereby giving him such unusual media mileage. What made the whole thing odd was that Francis Tolentino was supposed to be the "center," the coordinator or go to person. Tolentino should have manned that coverage not Roque especially because he is the Presidential Spokesman and not the "Coordinator" for government response to Typhoon Ompong.

Incidentally, when President Duterte did his TV interview with Atty. Sal Panelo, some viewers were wondering if the show was a warm up for Panelo's return as Presidential Spokesman when Harry Roque files his Certificate of Candidacy (COC) middle of October or in a month's time. Let's not forget that Panelo was once the spokesperson and his only failing was being too much of a lawyer with a bit of flair and not the diplomat that people expected. On the other hand, the President might want to consider Francis Tolentino as his next Spokesperson because the guy has had enough exposure and contact with media.

I believe Tolentino is relatively more mature and has developed enough self-control and diplomacy after his many run-ins with the media as MMDA Chairman. The field of candidates for 2019 is far and wide and Tolentino has not been highly visible in the last year in terms of causes and advocacy, not even in expressing his opinion on national issues. Becoming spokesman would certainly give him all the mileage and coverage he could ever dream of and then run in 2022.

Speaking of pre-positioning, Cabinet Secretary Extraordinaire Bong Go has long been pre-positioned by Malacañang insiders by inserting his image on tarpaulins as well as including him in official events all this intended to push his popularity and ranking in surveys to come. I recently saw his image on a banner as I came out from the Cauayan, Isabela Airport and this scene has become more regular at airports as the elections fast approaches. I have warned at least one cabinet member that Bong Go might end up like an athlete who "peaked" too early and could end up losing the fight or the "championship." At the moment Bong Go is overexposed and is creating a level of expectation that he might fall short of in delivery. There is also the possibility that all this premature campaigning and pre-positioning could backfire on Bong Go if his opponents use it against him.

While we are all familiar with the "Selfie King" and life long loyal assistant of the President (traits that connect him to many) propagandists or rah-rah boys have seriously failed to show the accomplishments and potentials of Bong Go relative to aspiring for the job of a Senator. Remember too much of a good thing could be bad and right now there is too much of his pictures and publicity coverage but hardly any material that would show why we should vote for him as a Senator.

COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Politics-driven inflation panic

The economic managers of President Rodrigo Duterte have apparently been shaken out of their denial stage now that the entire August showed 6.4% inflation rate. Thus, no less than President Duterte himself announced last week he is ready even to adopt a "free-for-all" importation policy, if need be, to dampen the politics-driven inflation panic.

According to Finance undersecretary Karl Kendrick Chua, President Duterte is set to issue an executive order (EO) that would implement reduction of tariff and removal of non-tariff barriers on certain goods and products we import from abroad. Chua explained the EO specifically targets to address the distortions on the supply of rice, fish, meat, poultry, and other food products through importation.

The Committee on Tariff and Other Related Matters (CTRM), under the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), is set to conduct a new round of public hearings on the possible reduction of tariff and by how much as well as the removal, if not easing, of administrative restraints, or the so-called non-tariff barriers to importation of these food products.

Under the country's 1987 Constitution, the President is empowered to legislate an amendment of the Tariff Code only if the Congress is not in session. Thus, these remedial measures could be immediately implemented through the executive fiat that President Duterte can invoke when the 17th Congress adjourns for one month starting Oct. 11.

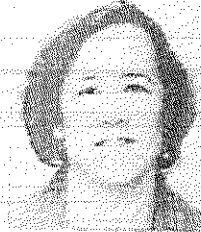
In particular, the rice prices steadily shot up in the aftermath over the turf feud between the National Food Authority (NFA) and the NFA Council late last year over how the government would import rice. While the tug-of-war whether the rice importation will be done through government-to-government transaction or through private importers dragged on, the average rice stock pile at the NFA warehouses dwindled to less than comfortable level.

The NFA is required to keep a buffer stock good for 15 days at any given time and a 30-day buffer stock during the traditional lean months of July to September.

The NFA Council-NFA feud resulted to shortage of supply in the markets of government-subsidized rice that people get from the NFA and affected the supply of commercial rice and began pushing up the prices.

Every rice importation by the NFA needs clearance from the NFA Council headed by Leoncio Evasco and the NFA, on the other hand, is headed by administrator Jason Aquino. As the price of rice steadily rose along with the public outcry over disappearance of lower priced NFA rice in the market, President Duterte stepped in the initial brush of the NFA Council-NFA feud. The Chief Executive ordered the relief last April of Evasco whom he asked to return to his being full-time Cabinet Assistance Secretary.

But apparently, this was not the only problem behind the rice supply problem. It turned out the NFA itself caused



the rice shortage when the agency did not use its more than P5 billion budget last year intended for rice procurement. The Commission on Audit (COA) found out the specific budget provision was used to pay off the NFA debts to two government-owned banks.

Taking cognizance of the COA report, the economic advisers of President Duterte led by Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez called for an investigation into this obvious case of technical malversation by the leadership of the NFA. President Duterte, in a make-believe "tete-a-tete" with his chief legal adviser Salvador Panelo on Tuesday at Malacanang Palace, casually announced his NFA administrator had "requested" that he be relieved from his post because of disagreements with fellow officials. But the President stopped short whether the offered relief of Aquino takes him off-the-hook.

The President disclosed he would like to appoint a new NFA administrator whom he strongly hinted as someone who he is waiting to finish a term of office before he could accept the offered post.

Most likely that someone is yet another retired military or police official like Aquino is.

The former Davao City Mayor has shown his preference for ex-military and police officials whom he generally described as "mission-oriented" and many of them are personally known to him for having once served stint in his home city. We have no quarrel with that for as long as these appointees are competent and capable to do the job right.

At the same "tete-a-tete," the President vowed to recommend to Congress the abolition of the NFA Council, saying "it has no purpose." The NFA Council is merely an inter-agency body but holds a lot of sway in deciding over our country's main staple. Abolishing it does not need a lot of debate in Congress if no less than the President seeks for its closure out of the rice business.

Making its last hurrah though, the NFA Council reported to the President the rice supply situation will normalize with approximately 2 million sacks of rice previously contracted to be delivered before the end of September. And that they also authorized the importation of 5 million sacks that will be arriving over the next one and half months, and another 5 million sacks to be imported early next year.

The economic managers have agreed to recommend to the President the issuance of a directive to further simplify and streamline the licensing procedures for rice imports of the NFA. This is also preparatory for the approval into law of the Rice Tariffication bill that was certified by the President as urgent administration measure. It was already approved on third and final reading at the House of Representatives and is now pending approval at the Senate.

As envisioned by this Rice Tariffication bill, there would be no more quota restrictions that private importers can procure but would be subject to pay tariff. The government, in turn, will use the proceeds from rice tariffs to finance projects and programs to enhance rice and agricultural productivity.

Even as the government is now strongly addressing the supply disruption in our country's staple food through importation, another yet looming economic problem is rearing its ugly head. The latest report of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed our country's "current account posted a deficit of \$3.1 billion due mainly to the widening deficit in trade in goods account and lower net receipts in the primary net income account," from January to June this year.

This simply means we import and pay more dollars than we export and earn dollars. In fact, the Philippine peso vis a vis the US dollar now ranges to more than P54 to \$1. At least, it makes our overseas Filipino workers happy with their remittances to their families here in the Philippines and exporters getting higher value for their dollar earnings. But that's a global phenomenon that strong macro-economic fundamentals of the country should be able to weather.

More troublesome is the politics-driven inflation panic that does the damage most. B

Can blockchain help Trillanes?

Sen. Antonio Trillanes' amnesty hinges on a simple choice between two documents. This is a learning moment to visualize how wonderful blockchain records would be.

Proclamation No. 75 and Congress' Concurrent Resolution No. 4 (2010) granted amnesty for the 2003 Oakwood mutiny and 2007 Peninsula Manila siege. The recipients were screened by then Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin.

Trillanes showed a certificate of amnesty signed by Gazmin in 2011.

Proclamation No. 572 (2018) cited an Armed Forces personnel office certification that it had no record of Trillanes' application for amnesty. It asserted that Trillanes never qualified.

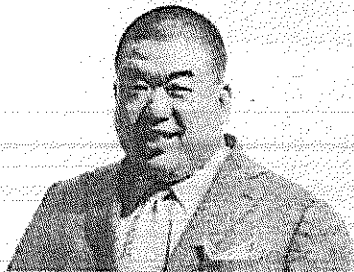
Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra's response was fair: Do not comment unless you reviewed the actual documents, and Trillanes cannot be arrested without a court order.

The Supreme Court likewise framed the issue as factual. Since it is not a trier of facts, the arena is the Makati trial courts, where prosecutors filed petitions to resume trial.

The military has no jurisdiction. Although it does have over past offenses by discharged soldiers, Republic Act No. 7055 (1991) removed court martial jurisdiction over ordinary crimes, such as rebellion and coup d'état.

The 2006 Navales case records how potential Oakwood court martial offenses were absorbed by criminal prosecution. The military did charge Trillanes with conduct unbecoming of an officer, but the only penalty is dismissal.

The courts previously tried Trillanes for rebellion and coup d'état, but dismissed both cases after receiving



SISYPHUS' LAMENT

OSCAR FRANKLIN TAN

Gazmin's certificate.

Criminal charges may be refiled after dismissal with the accused's consent. But a court must first declare his amnesty void, or there would be no crime to try.

An executive proclamation may assert facts but cannot reverse a judicial order. And as the Supreme Court stressed, there must be due process if asserted facts revoke vested rights, such as amnesty rights.

Can one somehow argue warrantless arrest under the "continuing crime" doctrine for rebellion? Jurisprudence does not support this, where the suspect joined government and is thus no longer rebelling.

Does the president need to personally sign the final certificate? The "Qualified Political Agency" doctrine (a Cabinet secretary's act is the president's) is irrelevant. The point is, the Constitution requires the president to personally grant only the amnesty itself, not implement it.

After the Marcos dictatorship, President Corason Aquino granted a broad amnesty for political crimes. She created an amnesty committee in each province. This did not require a Cabinet secretary in each province.

If the screening of thousands for a broad amnesty had to be reapproved by a president and Congress (imagine an intervening election), who would apply?

Was there a "bill of attainder" or legislative finding of guilt against a person? There was no law, just a factual assertion by the executive.

This thought exercise thus leaves only one issue: for a judge to review the Gazmin and Armed Forces certificates and pick one.

One might naturally lament this as needless drama, and that we should be able to confirm government records instantly.

Blockchain technology is precisely designed to foster trust with two features: decentralization and immutability.

A stock exchange is a trusted middleman that tells us who owns what at the end of the day. Blockchain removes the middleman and distributes the transaction records to thousands of nodes, each independently recording the transfers. Fake entries are impossible, unless one somehow takes over a majority of nodes.

And since no one person controls the nodes, there can be no bias, tampering or selective memory.

Trillanes should champion laws that make specific blockchain records authoritative evidence: notarizations, land titles, incorporations, medical records for health insurance contexts, credentials from universities, and even votes in elections.

Surely, technology can make life simpler than lawyers do!

React: oscarfranklin.tan@yahoo.com.ph,
Twitter [@oscarfbtan](https://twitter.com/oscarfbtan), facebook.com/OscarFranklinTan. This column does not represent the opinion of organizations with which the author is affiliated.

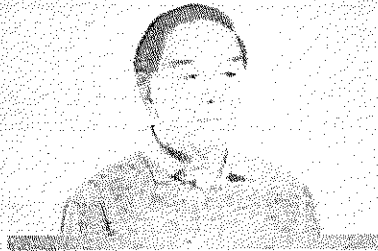
Gen. Salvador Mison next AFP chief?

Almost a month ago on Aug. 27, during the commemoration of National Heroes Day at Libingan ng mga Bayani, President Duterte declared that seniority, not politics, was the decisive factor in the appointment of Teresita Leonardo de Castro as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He said: "Everyone in the civil service, the military, everybody—seniority serves as the conveyor—it will be the same for all justices... all of them are trained. Everyone in the military observes that, no bypassing, no political colors allowed. So merit system."

By this standard, Lt. Gen. Salvador Bueno Mison, the current AFP vice chief of staff, should be the next AFP chief. Of course, I realize that such an appointment is the prerogative of the President. And I respect that prerogative enjoyed by the Commander in Chief. I also believe that we must all endeavor to provide the President with the necessary information so that, in the exercise of his responsibilities, he would be guided by the principles of justice and fairness.

Lieutenant General Mison is the most senior three-star officer in the AFP. He has been holding the position of AFP vice chief of staff for the last two years, serving under three AFP chiefs, namely Gen. Eduardo Año, now DILG officer in charge; Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero, now Marina administrator; and Gen. Carillo Galvez, who is due to retire in a few months. Seniority aside, in terms of service reputation, Mison is one of the finest officers of the AFP. Ask around—he is a no-nonsense disciplinarian with a sense of duty and responsibility that few in the organization can match. He certainly would not have been given three stars if he were a run-of-the-mill type of military officer.

Mison's only disadvantage—if one could call it a disadvantage—is that he is an Air Force man in an Army-dominated defense establishment with many marching to the same beat. For so many years, even decades, Army leaders have been a decisive factor in our national security efforts. Today, the NPA problem remains the world's longest-running insurgency. The Abu Sayyaf is still around, although, every now and then, AFP chiefs come out with pronouncements about its impending demise. The Islamic State (IS) is now in the Philippines, and the occupation of Marawi City by IS and Abu Sayyaf fighters was a tragedy brought about mainly by the failure of military intelligence. These are the painful facts, and we must face them squarely.



REVELLE

RAMON FAROLAN

On another issue: We have too many generals, not only in the Army, but also in the Air Force and the Navy. I am pleased to report that Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana shares this sentiment. In a recent dinner with the defense chief and the national security adviser hosted by a small circle of retired senior AFP officers, he expressed this same view and said he has moved to correct the situation. Each new general has a cluster of military aides and enlisted men who attend primarily to his needs. These are resources that can be better utilized elsewhere. Too many generals also add to the burden of a pension system that the nation cannot sustain much longer. Finally, the large number of generals has not contributed substantially to a more effective national defense organization.

We have good men in the Air Force and the Navy. The AFP could use their experience and expertise in crafting different courses of action that would benefit the organization. And, lest I forget, we must also give them time to carry out their plans and programs. Otherwise, the revolving door of the AFP will bring us nowhere.

One last word: In the yearbook of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1984, first class cadet Salvador Mison had this to say: "Have the courage to face the truth and be willing to risk failure in order to succeed, for success is achieved and maintained by those who keep trying." Whatever lies ahead, one can count on General Mison to continue doing his best for the Armed Forces.

Letter from a senior citizen.

"I live in San Fernando, La Union, where you only have a limited choice of quality bakeshops. Since I am a bread-eater, it's either Red Ribbon or Goldilocks. While Red Ribbon gives discounts to senior citizens, Goldilocks at the CSI Mall does not. I have cautioned the cashier and the manager a few times about this but they just shrugged their shoulders.

"I hope Goldilocks owners in Manila will advise their people here in La Union, particularly at the CSI Mall, to abide by the law. There are a few other Goldilocks outlets here in the city."

—Art Lomibao, Class 1972. *MTT*

There are two things that can be done immediately at your end in La Union. First is to report the establishment, Goldilocks, to the Office for Senior Citizens Affairs (Osca). There should be an Osca representative in San Fernando, La Union. And second, get a good lawyer to file charges against Goldilocks for violation of the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010. The first violation would result in a fine of not less than P50,000 and imprisonment of not less than two years. The Osca can help in pursuing this course of action.

rjfarolan56@gmail.com

BELOW THE LINE

Matagtag na Republika, atbp.



By JOSÉ ABETO ZAIDE

At a round-table forum with Manila Bulletin editors, Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar made his fearless forecast: Four years from today, the "Build, Build, Build" (BBB) program of the Duterte administration will dramatically cut travel time in the Philippines.

"Half of the projects completed by 2022... halos lahat natapos na... you won't even remember what it was like!" Each expressway, bridge, and road widening is aimed at solving traffic congestion, primarily in the metropolis. On his Boy Scout's honor, this is not fake news: "This is our plan and... and you can hold me [to] that timetable."

The scion of the Villar clan ticked off his record performance:

- Road construction: 1,606 kms. widened, 328 kms. diversion roads, 1,316 kms. access roads upgraded, and 393 kms. connections between national roads.
- Luzon Spine Expressway: Manila to La Union and Ilocos to Bicol. Doubling of expressways in the country, from 382.26 kms. to 834.72 kms. Halving of travel time (Metro Manila to San Fernando, La Union from 6'55" to 3'10", and Ilocos to Bicol from 19'40" to 8'15").

- Expressways ongoing or under study: Tarlac-Pangasinan Expressway, Central Luzon Link Expressway, Arterial Plaridel Bypass Road, Southeast Metro Manila Expressway, NLEX Harbor Link, Metro Manila Skyway-Stage 3, NLEX-SLEX Connector, NALAX, Cavite-Laguna Expressway, SLEX-TR4, Quezon-Bicol Expressway, and Laguna Lake Highway.

• Metro Manila Logistics Network: 12 new bridges (including Binondo-Intramuros and Estrella-Pantaleon bridges) for alternative linkages between major thoroughfares to relieve overly congested EDSA and other major roads.

• Boracay rehab: 12-meter-wide circumferential road to re-open; 161 structures demolished and 40 structures partially demolished. Sidewalks for pedestrians.

• Suspensions and blacklisting of violators: Directed against erring DPWH officers and contractors.

SPOILSPORTS - In Singapore and other countries, you cannot register a motorcar unless you have proof of garage or parking space. But we don't bother with such ordinance here. Slowpoke metropolitan traffic is compounded by potholes in major arteries. (Only expressway and major enclaves are free of potholes.) Expect more after our series of storms.

Gary Lising suggests a national bill requiring DPWH and all city mayors to asphalt all potholes and bring us up to speed.

CONSUELO DE BOBO - Justice Secretary Menardo Guevara says if the DOJ or the Office of the President deny Australian missionary Patricia Fox's appeal, she can have her missionary visa downgraded to a tourist visa "for a limited period, subject to outcome of

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any further proceedings on the deportation issue.”

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said floods expressed our need for gyms, rescue boats, and no cuts in MMDA budget. Climate change and frequent and fierce storms call for a major slice of the budget to respond to the havoc that these weather swings wreak on farm harvest and even on children's education because schools are used as evacuation centers. The senator bats for all-weather boats to rescue stranded people. He concluded that the one agency whose relief and rescue capabilities should be strengthened is the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

On a related matter, Senator Recto said that we should honor the mandate and the trust millions of our countrymen had reposed in Senator Trillanes. “If he had committed offenses after Peninsula, if he had broken any law since, then the right course is to charge him, but not to nullify an amnesty that he applied for, recommended by the military, granted to him by the President, and concurred in by Congress.”

Translation: Senator Trillanes is a moving target. But sport lang tayo.

DIPLOMATIC NOTES. A hard act to follow is last Friday's national day reception at the Diamond Hotel on the 208th anniversary of Mexico's independence. Last year Mexico Ambassador Gerardo Lozano Arredondo flew in a Mariachi band; this time he raised the ante. Guests first entered a hall which had been converted into a cornucopia of Mexico - Corona beer, tacos, tequilas, tacos, etc., kiosks of Mexican produce including CEMEX and other manufacture, and photo shoot with sombrero and Mexican poncho.

Guests tarried on the showcased exhibits before entering the main ballroom where the reception line of the ambassador and his lady and his officers received everyone. The main hall was festooned from floor to ceiling (entire ceiling filled with technicolored Mexican papel picado).

After the formal felicitations and the exchanges of toasts between DFA Assistant Secretary Lumen Isleta (who represented Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alan Peter Cayetano) and the ambassador, there was the reenactment of the ringing of the bells to declare independence and *Viva Mexico!*

Diamond Hotel served a menu of Mexican staple. Mariachi music filled the air and guests tripped the light fantastic to line-dance on the parquet-dance floor. The Mexican-version of Achy-Breaky Heart (Mexican, “No Rompas Mi Corazon”), next top-spinned at accelerated into faster rpm tempo, “Payaso de Rodeo.”

Several prizes were raffled. Guests stayed on for the major prize - Aero Mexico flight to Mexico plus 7-day stay at a 5-star hotel.

You can still catch Mexico tamales, tortillas, etc., at the Diamond Hotel for the next two weeks. 14

FEEDBACK: joseabetozaide@gmail.com

What are the odds of World War 3?

THIS question came to mind after scanning this past week's geopolitical and international economic developments.

And if current trends in international relations continue unaltered, the probability of war is great. To cite a few, but very significant ones:

China and Russia (with Mongolia) staged the largest war drill in Eastern Siberia which Moscow hosted and called Vostok 2018. It involved 300,000 military troops, 36,000 war vehicles, 1,000 air force planes and 80 warships.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) said it was "exercising large-scale conflict."

Noted Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer reportedly said it is a "preparation for a future world war...the army's General Staff believes this will take place after 2020 in the form of either a global war or a series of conflicts with magnitude...the enemy is the United States and its allies."

This Vostok 2018 was preceded by the war drills of the US with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand and Asean allies after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and, before that, the Chinese military build-up in the South China Sea region that Beijing claims but the United Nations consider as international waters.

South Korea launched its first missile submarine on the same day it opened a communication center in the North Korean side of the 38th parallel where Seoul's President Moon Jae-in and Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong-un are scheduled to meet this week for



THE ASEAN PERSPECTIVE

GIL H. SANTOS

the third time. They will continue their summit talks toward denuclearization of their ideologically divided Korean peninsula and eventually, reunification.

Moon said it was "a leap forward in the country's defense industry...Peace through power is the unwavering security strategy of this government...We have set off a grand journey (with North Korea) toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula...but peace is not given gratuitously."

At the same time, in its efforts to win more friends and military alliances, Beijing has moved to strengthen its ties with Africa with a pledge of \$60 billion financial aid, including, reportedly, grants, interest-free and concessional loans, credit lines, and development funds.

The US, however, is still the biggest donor to Africa with \$12 billion released to the Sahara region and \$250 million more in 2017 to North Africa.

The North Koreans celebrated the 70th founding anniversary of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (by Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-un's grandfather) with the usual mammoth military parade but without the usual nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles as the main display.

This was obviously to show—

at least to their domestic audiences—that they are "complying" with their agreement with the US following the Singapore summit meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

Kim did not actually mention "denuclearization" in the Singapore summit last June, but Trump said he did and immediately cancelled a scheduled US-South Korean military exercise to the dismay and frustration of his American military field commanders.

Coincidentally, China has stepped up its propaganda drive with mass media supplements drumming up its calls for "reforms" in the current global trade system and the World Trade Organization attacking—without directly mentioning—Trump's "America First" policy as "protectionism."

Effectively, to the underdeveloped sovereign nations of South America, Africa, Central Asia and some South and Southeast Asia, this may sound and appear generous and liberal.

Beijing said "we do not believe that the current system is perfect and without flaws...China supports necessary reforms and perfection of the current system, including the WTO, to make it fairer, more effective and more rational.

"...the aim of reform should be to allow countries to enjoy the development fruits of globalization more fairly, not to further widen the differences between South and North...rather than just allowing one person to have a say..."

The Beijing-owned and controlled *China Daily* said in an

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editorial "the Trump administration should not be mistaken that China will surrender to the US demands. It has enough facts to drive its economy even if a trade war is prolonged."

China's leadership under President Xi Jinping believes its huge domestic market and hybrid economy can be self-sufficient to win the trade war with the US.

Beijing actually has combed its manufacturing-export economy engaging in the Western free trade market with a dictatorial government that owns and subsidizes all principal and strategic industries to cut down production costs and sell the cheapest (but inferior quality) products in the world markets.

Under the circumstances and trends, considering history as we read and actually have personally seen, who can we trust to actively reduce the chances of a shooting disastrous—and maybe, the last—war? Who enjoys the confidence of most sovereign nations to sincerely walk the extra step and ensure global peace and friendship?

Of course, the answer depends on which side of fence the respondent sits. And how dependent is the respondent on the competing superpower's "magnanimity."

For now, China's President Xi has admitted that there are still nations which do not truly trust Beijing. And that is their perception.

But that is because China had claimed the whole of, and totally ignores world opinion against its military fortifications and installations of ICBMs in, the South China Sea. Less economically developed and militarily weaker Asean na-

tions—which have claimed exclusive economic zones in the area under the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS)—have experienced military bullying by Beijing.

These widely reported instances (since 1979 by Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines until this year) reminds me of the last days in office of Indonesia's President-for-Life Sukarno. The Indonesian leader, ailing and known for his dependence on the communist powers (Russia, China, Cuba and North Korea and the non-aligned nations led by Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito and India's Jawaharlal Nehru) took in Chinese doctors in his Merdeka Palace.

Indonesia had a strong Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI or Indonesian Communist Party) led by Aidit. The Russians had an embassy in Jakarta and donated an old cruiser to Sukarno named "Irian" while the Chinese had theirs in the Godok area.

One night Sukarno was rumored to be dying. Aidit and the PKI, fearing that the military might take over, immediately staged their own coup. They rounded up seven Army officers led by General Yani, killed them and dumped their bodies in a well in Kampong Buwaya.

The late General Suharto (who eventually rose to be President), who was the chief of the Chakrabirawa Battalion in charge of the security for Greater Jakarta, reacted swiftly and captured Aidit and his forces, took over the radio and TV stations to prevent any communist broadcasts and stormed the Chinese embassy to disarm the machinegun turrets at the gate.

Singapore's first President Lee Kwan Yew (LKW) also distrusted the Chinese because their communist insurgents who worked against the British colonial government undermined the economy in their effort to take over. LKW outlawed them.

Malaysia's leadership, initially under Tunku Abdul Rahman also experienced the Chinese communists' sabotaging techniques in their efforts to take over the British rubber plantations as they already controlled the retail industry of the old Malaya.

I personally experienced covering these events as a correspondent of the wire services International News Service and the Associated Press.

Thailand's strongman Prime Minister/General Sarit Thanarat had to himself shoot Chinese arsonists in Bangkok's Lumpini Park to show his countrymen that the military junta was strong enough to quell the Chinese communists attempts to take over.

And President Xi had said last year China will be completely enjoying the status of a nuclear superpower in the year 2049, the centennial of Mao's founding of the Chinese Communist Party.

Who then should the Asean trust? The Russians, the Chinese, the Americans and its allies? My suggestion is: Consider your national interest and internalize/fortify your sense of nationalism first before plunging into any choice. Your decision may show you the odds of a war soon or later.

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Comments and reactions to
gilsmanilatimes@yahoo.com

More on the NPA in Panay and Negros

ABELATED congratulations to the Philippine Army's 301st Infantry Brigade, Antique Provincial Mobile Force Company and San Jose Police Station for neutralizing seven key officials of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) Panay in a firefight in San Jose, Antique, last August 15. Congratulations not for the killing of the seven because it would have been better to have taken them alive, but for neutralizing them. Felix Salditos, Eldie Labinghisa, Peter Mecinas, Karen Ceralvo and Liezl Bandiola were education and propaganda staff of the CPP while Jason Talibo and Jason Sanchez were there to "provide technical services," according to National Democratic Front-Panay.

The army and the police claimed that some of the fatalities were involved in extortion or collection of so-called revolutionary tax, something that NDF-Panay denies. Jason Talibo was wanted for frustrated murder, while Ioven Ceralvo—who was one of those who managed to escape—allegedly participated in the June 18, 2017 raid on the police station in Maasin, Iloilo.

Whether involved in extortion or education, the slain CPP members were not ordinary foot soldiers. Without their extensive education and propaganda work, the NPA and its front organizations could neither recruit members nor gain and maintain support locally

and abroad. Most of the casualties might indeed have been unarmed as claimed by the NDF—they were non-combatants—but knowing who they were and what they were doing, it is impossible to believe that they would just be sleeping innocently on the floor without having armed comrades standing guard, ready to open fire.

To show that the communist armed struggle in Panay hasn't lost steam despite the loss of key officers, the NPA has staged several attacks since then. On August 24, they ambushed the police in Leon, Iloilo. On September 6, there were encounters in Maayon, Capiz, and Leon. Most recently, on September 8, an encounter in Janiway, Iloilo, cost the life of a member of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (Cafgu). The local police force and the Army's 61st Infantry Battalion claim that the encounter had preempted bomb attacks by the NPA on the towns of Lambunao and Cabatuan during their town fiestas (*The Daily Guardian*, September 12). However, it would be uncharacteristic of the NPA to deliberately risk a large number of civilian casualties.

While authorities in Panay scored big against the NPA with the August 15 operation in Antique, the NPA continues to play hide and seek with security forces in Negros. On August 30, the NPA's Mt. Cansermon Command liquidated barangay chairman



RESURGENCE

MARIT STINUS- CABUGON

Mario Gonzales of Panciao, Manjuyod in Negros Oriental. A few days later, an encounter followed in the same barangay between the NPA and the 15th Infantry Battalion. Twelve families had to be evacuated. Manjuyod, which has been a peaceful town for so long, is adjacent to Mabinay where UP Cebu graduate Myles Albasin, Caloy Ybanez of Mandaue City, and four locals, were arrested in March. Ms Albasin was reportedly doing education and propaganda work, while her armed male companions were securing her.

Next to landlocked Mabinay is Kabankalan where the Mt. Canserron Command last May burned a bunkhouse and a backhoe belonging to the National Irrigation Administration, and later engaged the 62nd Infantry Battalion in a firefight that claimed the lives of two soldiers and one NPA, with eight soldiers wounded.

Further north, in Guihulngan City, the killings continue. When businesswoman Heidi Malalay Flores was killed by motorcycle-riding assassins last August 21, it is said that she was on the kill list of a local vigilante group called *Kawsa sa Guihulnganon Batok Druga ug Komunista*. On September 7, Jail Officer 2 Val Daniel Rivera Guzman was shot dead by motorcycle-riding gunmen in Brgy. McKinley. The victim had been assigned at Canlaon City jail since April but had previously worked at the Guihulngan District Jail. The NPA's Leonardo Panaligan Command claims that a certain "*Vigilante sa Guihulngan ug tibuok isla sa Negros*" group was behind the killing of the jail guard. Central Visayas Police Regional Director Debold Sinas' pep talk to the Guihulngan City policemen last month neither stopped the killings nor resulted in the solving of previous ones.

The charges against three suspects in the murder of radio broadcaster Edmund Sestoso—who was killed in Dumaguete City on April 30—have been dismissed by the Dumaguete City prosecutor for insufficiency of evidence. The testimony of the "star witness" was full of holes and hearsay statements and was contradicted by other eyewitnesses. The police wanted to pin Sestoso's murder on alleged NPA leader Rene Bustamante after having failed to have him convicted for the murder of a former NPA supporter and illegal possession of explosives in 2014. The second suspect in the Sestoso case was gunned down in La Libertad two months ago while the third was wounded in the same attack. Justice for Sestoso seems more elusive than ever. *AS*

Can DU30 collect now on Xi's 'promised' help?

TO President Rodrigo Duterte's claim that various forces have combined to destabilize his presidency, former congressman/senator/ACT Chief of Staff Gen. Rodolfo "Dong" Biazon is not the first, nor will probably



FIRST THINGS FIRST
FRANCISCO S. TATAD
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be the last, to say the destabilization has all been "self-inflicted." Biazon lengthily discussed this issue with me and Catholic broadcaster Ariel Ayala Sunday evening on my GNN cable TV program "Una sa Lahat" (First things first). But we barely scratched the surface.

The drug killings

The list of such self-inflicted destabilization efforts must begin with the drug killings. They continue to destabilize. Nobody is against a proper war on illegal drugs, but nobody wants a single drug suspect being killed without due process. In two years, thousands of drug suspects have perished without documentation or due process. Foreign dignitaries and international human rights organizations have been abused for showing some concern about the killings.

Even priests have been killed for simply quoting one of the Ten Commandments.

Beyond the killings, the killing machine has succeeded in silencing political dissent even on non-drug-related issues for fear that dissent on any issue could get the dissenter killed as an alleged drug suspect. The opposition is dying up from fear, but this is interpreted by the propaganda fraudsters as the result of the alleged popularity of the President.

Federalism as destabilization

A second open source of self-destabilization is DU30's "federalism." It is self-destabilizing because the President has no legal basis in pushing for it. Article XVII of the Constitution provides that any amendment to, or revision of, the Constitution may be proposed by the Congress upon a vote of three-fourths of all its members, or by a constitutional convention called by Congress or directly convened by the electorate, or by the people themselves through direct initiative.

The President is completely and absolutely excluded from the process. And yet DU30 and his consultative committee of "learned constitutionalists" are the ones at the front and center of this absurd project. Absurd, because it seeks to subdivide the unitary Philippine republic into 18 separate states, and put them back together again into one "federal" whole. The apparent model is perhaps Yugoslavia, which disappeared from the map after it was balkanized.

I used to be in favor of federalism, when I thought the Spratly islands, which China has now fortified and militarized, and the state of Sabah, which is now part of Malaysia, could be "federalized" into the Philippine republic. But that hope is gone, and what we have now is a unitary state that cannot by legal definition or by any sleight of hand be federalized. DU30's insistence on it, just because he has set his mind on it,

See

is a source of a completely unnecessary instability.

Revgov as destabil

DU30's recurring talk of shifting to a "revolutionary government," and establishing a coalition government with the communists provides the most persistent self-destabilization of his own government. A revolutionary government presumes a successful revolution, which dismantles the existing Constitution and the government under it. DU30 talks about it all the time, as though it were something he could just impose on the existing constitutional structure, without any resistance from those who want to defend the existing order.

A coalition government with the communists, on the other hand, means a working partnership with the communist forces whose attempt to overthrow the civil government in the late 1960s and early 1970s prompted Ferdinand Marcos to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and proclaim martial law all over the Philippines in 1971. Despite the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet communism after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the CPP/NPA/NDF continues to wage armed struggle and collect "revolutionary taxes" from farmers and businessmen in the countryside.

DU30 has appointed central committee members of the Communist Party to the Cabinet, beginning with an ex-priest Leoncio Evasco Jr. who is NDF vice chairman, whom he has named Cabinet secretary, directly in charge of the Office of the President and 12 to 18 agencies. His self-proclaimed mandate is to turn the Philippines into a Chinese-type socialist state. Under former Senate president Pimentel, PDP-Laban, DU30's party, has entered into a working alliance with China's Communist Party.

Impact on military and police

The mere mention of "revolutionary government" or coalition government with the communists is unbearably destabilizing to those who remember DU30 taking an oath to "preserve and defend the Constitution, execute its laws, do justice to every man, and consecrate himself to the service of the Nation."

It is equally destabilizing to members of the Armed Forces who swore the following oath when they entered the service: "I am a Filipino soldier. I will support and defend the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. I will obey all laws, legal orders, and decrees of my lawful superior at all times." And to members of the Philippine National Police who swore an oath to "love God, my country and people, uphold the Constitution and obey legal orders of the duly constituted authorities."

The Constitution mandates three coequal and coordinate branches

of government—the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. The operative words are coequal and coordinate. Yet in total disregard of the principle of check and balance and the separation of powers, the President has assumed virtual control of the legislature and the judiciary and put an end to the normal operations of the tripartite system of government.

Controlling Congress, destroying the SC

First, he presided over the mass migration of elected congressmen from various political parties into his borrowed PDP-Laban, which did not have more than three visible members before the elections, in order to create a so-called "supermajority." He handpicked Sen. Roko Pimentel, a Mindanaoan, to become Senate President, and Rep. Pantaleon Alvarez, another Mindanaoan, to become Speaker of the House and gave them free run of the Congress for the first two years. They have since been replaced by Senate President Tito Sotto and Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the former president.

Then DU30 moved against Supreme Court Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno, denouncing her as his "personal enemy" and demanding her immediate removal, not through impeachment, which is the only constitutional way of removing an impeachable chief justice, but through a *quo warranto* proceeding filed by the Solicitor General, in which eight justices voted, without a single word from the Constitution, to nullify her 2012 appointment *ab initio*.

No single act of the President and of the Supreme Court has permanently destabilized the constitutional order as much. By exercising a power they did not have, namely, to remove a Chief Justice who should have been removed by impeachment, the justices, at the President's behest, put themselves above the Constitution and the law.

This compels the ordinary layman to ask, do we still have a valid Constitution, and a legitimate Supreme Court? My own sense as a layman is that we are now ruled by sheer executive fiat. We have become a conquered people, a colonized race.

A friendly foreign spy

On DU30's so-called "tête-à-tête" with his presidential counsel Salvador Panelo, DU30 said a "friendly foreign government" had informed him that the communists under Jose Maria Sison and the Magdalo group under Sen Antonio Trillanes 4th and Rep. Gary Alejano "have combined" to plan his overthrow. Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has confirmed the communist part of the story but dismissed the rest of it as pure "isismis" (gossip).

Sison has been talking of DU30's various health issues, and has publicly predicted his ouster before the

end of 2019. But he has not said the push would come from the CPP/NPA/NDF or mere poor health. As for Trillanes, I interviewed him in his Senate office last Wednesday, and I saw a man more concerned about DU30's efforts to void the 2011 amnesty granted to him by President B.S. Aquino 3rd and have him re-arrested for the crimes of rebellion and coup d'etat, which had been dismissed in court and extinguished by that executive grant. He showed no signs of preparing to oust a sitting president.

The trouble though is that we do not know whether the President is bluffing or not. At the beginning of his term, his spokesman Ernesto Abella said DU30 loved to spin jokes, and that only two out of every five statements he makes should be taken seriously. But we cannot afford to speculate when the President is serious and when he is not, especially on matters related to national security.

An act of war?

Since he says a "friendly foreign government" had informed him about the alleged plot against him, he should be able to tell us how that source was able to access its alleged information. If it was the result of a wiretap or an electronic surveillance, who else did they wiretap? The Secretary of National Defense? The Secretary of Foreign Affairs? The Secretary of the Interior and Local Government? The National Security Adviser? The AFP Chief of Staff? The PNP Director General? The various heads of the intelligence services? The President and Commander in Chief?

Does it not constitute an act of war for the intelligence network of a foreign government to spy on the officials and citizens of its host country? Shouldn't this concern DU30 much more than any possible threat he wants to attribute to Trillanes? Seeing himself as the principal source of his own destabilization, it isn't easy to see why he is complaining now of being destabilized by others. Between 1986 and 2001, two Filipino presidents fell from power because of mutinous military forces. Marcos fell when the civilian-supported military forces withdrew their allegiance to their Commander in Chief. Estrada fell when the military top brass and the Cabinet similarly withdrew their support and the Supreme Court turned out in full force to support the coup.

But we never heard Marcos or Estrada at any time complain that their enemies were planning to boot them out. Has DU30 never learned from Lee Kuan Yew that "to name the enemy is to make him"? Can he not collect on China's President Xi Jinping's supposed 'promise' now—as revealed by the Davao strongman—that he will never allow his valued ally to be overthrown by hostiles?

fstatad@gmail.com

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Trillanes chapter has made the Yellows' blood run cold

PRESIDENT Duterte's offensive against Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th, nearly two weeks after it started, has made the Yellows so afraid.



RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO

To call a spade a spade, the Trillanes episode is Duterte's political blitz against the Yellows, three-and-half years before elections.

► Tiglao A4

It is a major move for Duterte to decimate the opposition this early, and to ensure that the next president would be his anointed.

Soon, Trillanes will be as much a footnote as alleged drug-lord coddler Leila de Lima and the former president's abomination at the chief justice post, Ma. Lourdes Sereno. The opposition is left with no deadly political hitman. Nor even in Trillanes' mind, a "winnable" presidential candidate in the 2022 elections: based on my interview with him in 2015, he believed that the presidency was his next post after his senatorial stint.

Trillanes has been the Yellow's mad dog who has been barking incessantly so loudly and wildly against Duterte that media's microphones could not but pick up his baying. Trillanes has been the Yellows' political rabid-mad cur, an *askal*, from the street; Senators Risa Hontiveros, Ramon Aquino, Kiko Pangilinan are the pusillanimous chihuahuas of the Philippine elite. At 73, don't expect the obese Sen. Franklin Drilon to fit into the armor of a dashing Yellow knight who would duel with Duterte.

Former President Aquino is fast becoming totally bald probably because of his fear of being jailed himself for graft or even just criminal negligence. He is so much discredited, and with the blood of the SAF 44 and Dengvaxia victims on his hands, he doesn't even dare appear at a mall. His would-be ex-successor, Mar Roxas posted a video on his Facebook wall saying he was off to a long soul-searching kind of journey throughout the archipelago.

The Yellows didn't see it coming. They were busy convincing themselves, and panicking to get some proof ("he went to Israel for treatment") that Duterte was dying from some illness. They even thought that the move against Trillanes was such a big blunder that one of their columnists Melito Salazar and Aquino's disgraced tourism undersecretary Vicente Romano were in a duet singing "The End is Near."

Metamorphosed

A day after Duterte launched his offensive through Proclamation 572, a *Philippine Star* columnist—

who had early this year called the outrage against Dengraxia as mass hysteria—even likened Duterte to Forest Gump and called his move a “half-wit legal maneuver.” Even the *Philippine Daily Inquirer’s* well-known columnist, a supporter of Duterte, headlined his piece “Digong is making a martyr out of Trillanes.” A non-lawyer, he claimed that Duterte “got-flawed counsel from his legal advisers” who should be fired.

Trillanes himself claimed that for Duterte to revoke his amnesty is so alarmingly stupid, that the President wasn’t really a lawyer, but just got his father, a onetime governor, to put him in the roster of attorneys. Duterte of course pointed out that his father died 20 years before he became a lawyer.

Nearly two weeks after Duterte’s move against him though, nobody’s calling the President stupid anymore.

Trillanes has quickly metamorphosed from a would-be martyr of the opposition to a coward hiding under the Senate’s skirts, as it were, trembling at the thought of spending time in some yucky police jail, to a clown, everyday expecting hordes of Filipinos to rally to his banner.

Einstein reportedly defined insanity as “doing the same thing and expecting different results.” Going by that definition, Trillanes is mad. By occupying with his gang Oakwood in 2005 and then the Peninsula hotels in 2007, he thought that he was like Ponce Enrile or a Fidel Ramos, whom Filipinos rallied around against Marcos in 1986, to trigger a People Power uprising to topple then President Arroyo. They didn’t, with Trillanes later lamely blaming then Makati Mayor Jojo Binay, whom he claimed had promised to bring the first warm bodies to the hotels to support the putschists. (Binay could mobilize People Power?)

He has done the same thing and expected a different result. He thought he would trigger People Power by holding up in the Senate. But he could gather at most 50 people, half of whom were obviously poor housewives just wanting to make a buck. To take the role of Cardinal Sin in EDSA I, he could only get that lunatic, publicity-seeking priest Roberto

Reyes. Worse, the cleric Noel Gatchalian roused Catholics’ ire when he said in his sermon at a mass for Trillanes that he prayed to God to make Duterte ill, and then later thanked Trillanes in his Facebook post for gifting him a P100,000 Apple laptop.

Even Yellow diehards praying every day for a Power Power against Duterte and who are so fond of joining protest rallies—the likes of Dinky Soliman, Teresita Deles, Jim Paredes and Mae Paner—didn’t rally to Trillanes’ banners.

Brilliantly played

Let’s be realistic. Nobody, not even his anti-Duterte comrades, likes Trillanes. He was solely Aquino’s personal minion, and I was told he was flatly rejected when he sent feelers that he wanted to be a Liberal Party vice president. Trillanes is a person that should have stayed in the military, where one doesn’t need to be liked by anybody, but only required to be obeyed because of rank.

People see Trillanes not just as arrogant but a megalomaniac. Winning twice as senator made his head swell. He mistakenly believes that the masses adore him, ignoring the fact that it was the anti-Arroyo hysteria—and I suspect massive cheating—that gave him those election victories. In his six years as senator, he has never been identified with any cause to uplift the masses out of their misery. People remember him only as somebody going against and bullying somebody—even the respected octogenarian Juan Ponce Enrile—under the pretext of conducting a Senate investigation in aid of legislation.

The Yellows had no alternative but to make him the de facto Yellow leader because of his wild, loud barking. Now *that* leader may be thrown in jail, probably to share the same jail block as De Lima.

Whether he planned it or not, Duterte brilliantly played Trillanes, making him squirm for days in his Senate office, blabbering nonsense at press conferences, his insignificant number of supporters dwindling by the day. He has demonstrated that he is not at all a martyr of democracy but a

troublemaker quaking in his boots after someone he had been cursing at constantly hit back at him.

Whether he planned it or not, or it was simply coincidental, Duterte’s timing was perfect in putting away Trillanes, as he did De Lima and Sereno.

Duterte will be endeared to the public for his administration’s expert handling of preparations for and rescue efforts in connection with the devastation wrought by Typhoon Ompong. In the next few weeks, expect the front pages of newspapers and top stories of TV news to bury the Trillanes caper and to instead report how Duterte and his top officials are commiserating with the typhoon’s victims. A month or so later, this will show up in his popularity ratings—which politicians use to determine their support for a president—going up. Watch stories on Trillanes in the newspapers move from page 1 to the inside pages, as editors—and especially we Filipinos—get tired of this self-important Aquino lackey.

Inflation in the next month or two—as it has always been in our recent history, after a period when the opposition claims it is a sign of impending doom or an incumbent—will be going down, removing doubts over Duterte’s capability to lead the nation. And lastly, what Filipinos call the “ber” months are upon us, after the terrible monsoon rains and typhoons, and people look forward to continuous merrymaking in Christmas parties. People just don’t like to be bothered on these months.

The Yellows are just starting to realize what’s happened this month, and their blood have run cold.

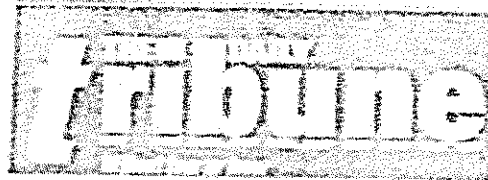
Watch Senator Grace Poe, though. She knows the Yellows are defeated, and she’s starting to position herself to be not necessarily an anti-Duterte presidential candidate, but a viable alternative to whomever Duterte chooses as his anointed in the next presidential elections. The equivalent of Binay in 2022.

Email: tiglaomanilaumes@gmail.com

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

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

Archives at www.gobenotigla.com



Too weak a Trillanes' defense

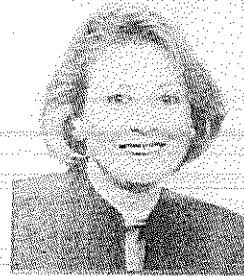
“It really must be asked why Trillanes cannot produce his claimed application.”

Not surprisingly, the lawyers of Sen. Antonio Trillanes failed to produce their client's application for amnesty which was asked by Judge Elmo Alameda of the Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 150. Action was then deferred by Alameda, despite being aware of the fact that Trillanes will still fail to produce that all-important document to ensure his victory over President Duterte's proclamation voiding the senator's amnesty grant.

What Trillanes' lawyers asked instead was for the court to allow them to present secondary evidence, which to the camp of Trillanes, consists of a video footage of Trillanes in a media interview claiming that he had applied for amnesty while holding a piece of paper supposedly representing his application.

It should then be asked: If that was his copy, why then has he failed to produce it now?

As Judge Alameda himself asked for the Trillanes application for amnesty with the Department of National Defense, his lawyer Reynaldo



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cacho-Olivares

Robles, could not produce it and instead asked the court's permission to present secondary evidence such as a video recording of the filing of amnesty, news clippings as well as certificates and affidavits attesting to the validity of Trillanes' amnesty.

If such a video footage and news clippings are to be accepted by the court as evidence, then Judge Alameda would be going against an earlier Supreme Court ruling that clearly finds as unacceptable evidence news clippings, and presumably, video footage, which is what to print media is a news clipping.

Such was a ruling by the High Court after it realized the blunder it committed when it took as evidence an unauthenticated diary in news clipping form, of the alleged final hours of then sitting President Joseph Estrada who at that time, was facing a revolt from the elite, the yellows and the communists and, of course, the meddling political Catholic bishops.

It was this news clipping of the unauthenticated diary that the Davide High Court used to claim that given the

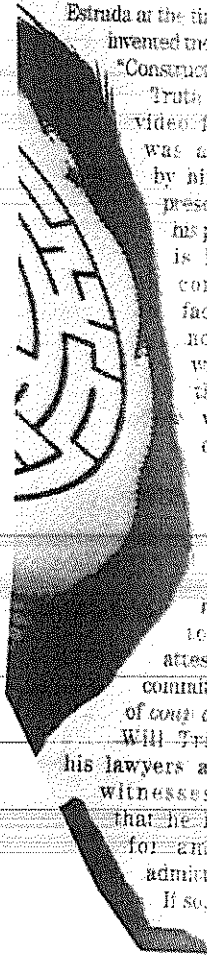
alleged mental and emotional state of Estrada at the time, that the court invented the unconstitutional "Consumptive Resignation."

Truth is, the Trillanes' video footage, which was already shown by him in a Senate presentation during his privilege speech, is hardly proof, considering the fact that he was not under oath when he spoke to the media while waving a piece of paper that he claimed was his application.

There was no affidavit from him shown to the media attesting to having committed the crime of *coup d'etat* twice.

Will Trillanes and his lawyers also present witnesses to prove that he had applied for amnesty and admitted his guilt?

If so, chances are high that



his camp would tap as witness. Rep. Gary Alejano, who is as much a prevaricator as Trillanes, both of whom resist propaganda and drama to puff up themselves.

It really must be asked why Trillanes cannot produce his claimed filed and certified application together with his affidavit admitting his guilt referring to his crimes committed if his papers were truly in order and that his amnesty is not flawed. There would then be no reason for Duterte to void Trillanes' amnesty.

“
The Trillanes' video footage, which was already shown by him in a Senate presentation during his privilege speech, is hardly proof required the applicant to submit a notarized affidavit which contradicts Trillanes' claim that all that is needed is for one to check the box for the admission of guilt.

There are more than enough amnesty grantees who can confirm, under oath and in court, that notarized affidavits were required before one could avail himself of the amnesty.

Former rebel chief Nicanor Faeldon, who availed himself of the amnesty during the yellow President's time, appears ready to testify that the amnesty grant required the applicant to submit a notarized affidavit which contradicts Trillanes' claim that all that is needed is for one to check the box for the admission of guilt.

Is an amnesty grant so trivial that the Aquino government merely seeks a checked box for the rebels' amnesty?

As the judge stated, the application which the Trillanes camp fails to produce, is essential to the case.

"The court needs the application from the amnesty commission," Alameda was quoted as saying.

Robles proposed instead that members of the commission be summoned as witnesses to Trillanes' application.

Robles also presented the certificate of amnesty signed by former Defense Chief Voltaire Gazmin. But, precisely, this is also in question, as the power to grant amnesties belongs to the President of the Republic, not to the defense chief since that power cannot be delegated.

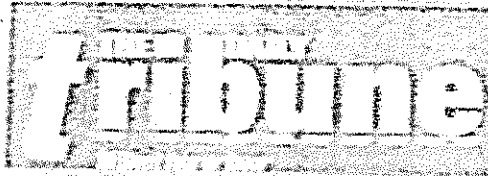
The Trillanes camp wants the Duterte government to be held accountable for "infidelity in the custody of public documents" for failing to secure the senator's application for amnesty.

It really should be Noynoy Aquino and his defense people who should be held accountable for "infidelity in the custody of documents."

They may well have come up with the flawed document which could have been filched by them after the proclamation voiding Trillanes' amnesty was announced.

Trillanes shouldn't complain too much. He can always be a companion to the jailed Leila de Lima. They deserve each other.

A



Clear vision

“Rody is also seen in a positive light after proactively seeking a negotiation mechanism to discuss the WPS issue.”

Long-term agreements appear to be China's new goal with the Philippines as ties strengthen under President Rody Duterte.

Rody had said that at one point under his administration, he will raise the claim on the West Philippine Sea (WPS) based on the Permanent Court of Arbitration award which China believes will come soon as his term reaches its final half.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi was scheduled for a visit last Sunday but was rescheduled due to typhoon “Ompong.”

Wang's agenda for the visit was billed as his role in discussions on the joint exploration agreement on WPS between the Philippines and China.

The DFA said the visit seeks to continue both countries' aim to work closely together to ensure the success of all future high-level engagements and the sustained advancement of bilateral cooperation.

Chinese and Philippine officials, however, are expected to dwell on the drafting of the Code of Conduct (CoC) which is being crafted under the aegis of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations during Wang's visit.

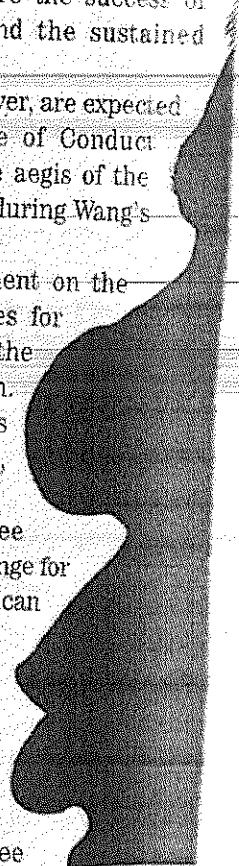
The CoC will be the binding agreement on the maritime dispute that China recognizes for the main reason that it involves only the claimants without third party intervention.

It will also comprise the ground rules in the crafting of all other agreements, including the joint exploration deal.

China apparently wanted a guarantee beyond Rody who has been a refreshing change for the Asian giant from the staunchly pro-American Noyonoy Aquino.

Rody has adopted an independent foreign policy that resulted in more solid relations with China while veering away from the previous administration's utter dependence to the United States.

Analysts quoted by the Chinese media see



the diplomacy shift as revolutionary primarily the low-key approach to the maritime dispute in which Rody raises the issues, in private, to top Beijing officials including Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Rody is also seen in a positive light after proactively seeking a negotiation mechanism to discuss the WPS issue.

Yet China has lingering doubts about Rody's approach to the Americans as the Philippine military continues to receive bulk of assistance and training from the US military.

The compatibility of equipment and training background indicate that the Philippine military is serious about security cooperation with its US counterpart, one Chinese analyst said.

Beijing also worries about the likelihood that the joint exploration of maritime resources deal between China and the Philippines will face judicial challenges.

State media cited the tough words of Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio who said under the Constitution, the government should not sign any joint exploration and development agreement with a foreign entity which refuses to acknowledge the Philippines' sovereign rights.

China's doubts on Rody debunk allegations of his yellow critics that he had sold out the nation's sovereignty to its giant neighbor.

The apparent goal, however, is for the independent foreign policy to achieve maximum benefit not for any other interests but for Filipinos.

Rody's approach is for the relations between China and the Philippines to be strong enough to weather any challenges, including those expected to arise from the disputed claims.

China understandably is working towards the protection of its interest while providing the best help it can give to a friendly neighbor.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano simply put Rody's policy: "It's important that we get something out of there. But you know it was clear to both sides that we will stick to our guns, we'll stick to our claims and let's see how we can get anything from there."

It would be difficult to decipher Rody using a foreign perspective but seen through the eyes of an ordinary Filipino, the message is crystal clear which is that the sovereign interest precedes all others.

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Three more years of Duterte

AFTER the much-disparaged Sept. 11 tête-à-tête of President Duterte with presidential legal counsel Sai Paralelo, many are asking with much concern what the remaining three years and three months of the Duterte administration would be like.

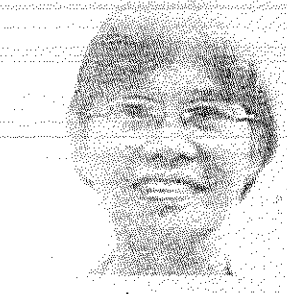
The concern stems from what many saw during the interview: Duterte cannot govern.

What the public saw during the interview was a chief executive who has lost control of the presidency and is obsessed with eliminating his number one critic: Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV.

In his obsession to put away Trillanes, Duterte has become a sucker for anything, even scams that he believes would damage Trillanes. Last year, he fell for a fake list of Trillanes' overseas bank accounts which he even presented on TV.

When Trillanes, accompanied by reporters to Singapore, proved that the account was non-existent, Duterte said he invented the fake account.

This time, his hatred for the senator found support from his Solicitor General Jose Calida, who is being investigated by the Sen-



The concern stems from what many saw during the interview: Duterte cannot govern.

HONESTLY SPEAKING

ELLEN TORDESILLAS

ate initiated by Trillanes for the multi-million contracts his family's security agencies entered with government.

Calida did the sloppy research and made Duterte sign Proclamation 572 declaring void ab initio the amnesty granted to Trillanes in 2009 because "there is no available copy of his application for amnesty in the records" and that the former Navy Officer allegedly did not admit to the charge of coup d'etat for what they did on July 27, 2003 in Oakwood Hotel

and in Manila Peninsula on Nov. 29, 2007 when Trillanes and some 300 young officers and soldiers took a stand against the corruption in the government and election cheating of Gloria Arroyo.

He also ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police to employ all lawful means to apprehend Trillanes so he can be recommitted to the detention facility where he had been incarcerated for him to stand trial for the crimes he is charged with.

Proclamation 572 was shocking for its stupidity.

Not only executed the order. Not the military. The Senate leadership did not allow members of the PNP to enter the building and arrest a member of the Senate without a warrant of arrest. The Court did not issue a warrant of arrest.

During the conversation with Panozo Duterte cited a different reason for his nullification of the amnesty to Trillanes. He said it was signed only by former Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin.

It was inaccurate because the amnesty granted to Trillanes and other military officers were by President Benigno Aquino III.

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines reminded Duterte that an amnesty is an exercise of sovereign power and the recipient of the amnesty stands before the law although he had committed no offense.

IBP President Abdiel Dan El-nal Palarao said, "Arresting and incarcerating Trillanes for offenses dismissed by amnesty runs counter to the constitutional guarantee against double jeopardy that no person shall be held to an-

THREE

swer twice for the same criminal offense."

He warned of the "chaos that may result" in the implementation of an illegal proclamation.

More respected legal minds have assailed Proclamation 572.

Yesterday, Bishop Emeritus Deogracias Yniguez added his voice, putting in a bigger context the revocation of Trillanes' amnesty: "In times of great crisis, we are called to go beyond ourselves and exhibit a spirit of courage and charity.

"The Duterte administration has blanketed the country in a moral crisis: bending the rule of law to fit one person's whim, attempt-

ing to silence the opposition, and displaying callousness towards the plight of the poor. Let there be no doubt: the revocation of amnesty of Senator Antonio Trillanes IV, one of this government's staunchest critics, without basis and with clear malice, is the President's attempt to strike a final death blow to dissent, democracy, and to our nation's moral fiber.

In times of discord and state-sponsored confusion, when fact is forced to be indistinguishable from fiction, our light is our conscience which prompts us to speak and act according to the basic rules of what is right and what is wrong. We cannot wash our hands off from witnessing the powerful's corrupt and cruel ways. We no

longer should pray in silence but pray in action. My fellow Christians, we must now gather to condemn this sorrowful state of our politics that uses State powers to perpetuate itself. Neutrality is wickedness. And to be Christian is to stand for and speak the truth. It is time for moral courage.

"And to those who use the powers of the State to oppress its people, let me remind you that only the Kingdom of God remains eternal. Dictators can rule for now but will eventually crumble under the judgment of an awakened people they long fed with deceit. Those who give license to the malevolent ways of those who distort the truth and what is just will have their time of reckoning.

"In the Old Testament, there is a story of courage among a people. The Hebrews, enslaved and abused by the Egyptian pharaoh, were gripped by fear from following the prophet Moses to cross the Red Sea. Eventually inspired with faith, courage won in their hearts.

"Before us today is our Red Sea, made by the blood of the innocent and Lady Liberty. My dear countrymen and women, if we are made in the image and likeness of God, then we must inspire courage among each other, and with faith hold out our staff, and part this sea of wickedness."

Blog: www.ellentordesillas.com
Email: ellentordesillas@gmail.com

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PRRD eyes Army chief as next NFA administrator

By Jelly Musico September 16, 2018, 7:26 pm

MANILA – President Rodrigo Duterte has expressed his desire to appoint Philippine Army (PA) Chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista as next administrator of the National Food Authority (NFA).

During the situation briefing on the effects of Typhoon Ompong in Tuguegarao on Sunday, Duterte asked Bautista to take over the NFA after the latter's retirement from the military on October 15.

"*Mabait yan si Rolly (Rolly is kind). In the meantime na hindi kita mailagay sa (that I cannot put you in the) central bank, pwede ka muna sa NFA siguro (perhaps you can go to NFA). Rationalize the idiotic,*" he said.

The President's first marching order to the outgoing PA chief is to make NFA structural to address the country's rice supply.

He said he needs someone whom he could trust to handle NFA.

"There's the problem because there's a dearth of a substantial knowledge of where the rice is. That's (why) I need somebody I can trust *at masasabihan ko na (to whom I could say), 'Fix that,'*" Duterte said.

"*Wala naman ako mailagay, si Bautista muna come October (I can't find someone to put there. Bautista first, come October),*" he added.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque confirmed that Bautista's appointment as NFA administrator will take effect on October 15.

Duterte earlier announced that incumbent NFA Administrator Jason Aquino has requested to be replaced. **(PNA)**

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