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19 September 2018

Wednesday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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10 mayors under probe over Ompong absence

By CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

At the height of a powerful typhoon, were the local executives missing in action?

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is validating reports that at least 10 municipal mayors in Cagayan Valley and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) were absent during the onslaught of Typhoon Ompong.

DILG Undersecretary for peace and order Bernardo Florece Jr. said local chief executives or LCEs found liable for absenteeism and negligence of duty may be sanctioned with administrative cases.

Earlier yesterday, Florece said LCEs could be suspended in connection with

Philvolcs chief: Phil unprepared for large-scale disasters. See Page 6.

cases filed before the DILG. But for cases filed with the ombudsman, "erring mayors could face dismissal," Florece told a press conference at the DILG central office in Quezon City.

"We were surprised with the reports

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10 mayors From Page 1

received at the central office of absentee mayors whose local government units are part of the critical areas in the Typhoon Ompong track," Florece said.

Based on the DILG's Operation Listo protocols, LCEs whose local government units (LGUs) fall under the alpha (low-risk), bravo (medium-risk) and charlie (high-risk) areas during typhoons are mandated to undertake necessary critical preparedness actions as part of disaster preparations.

DILG spokesman Jonathan Malaya said the actual names of the municipal/city mayors could not be divulged at the moment as the department is still reviewing their performances vis-à-vis the Operation Listo protocols.

"The department doesn't want trial by publicity so the actual names of erring mayors will be released after the investigation is complete," he said.

Mayors who will be proven negligent or remiss of doing their duty, especially as chairpersons of their respective local disaster risk reduction and management council, need to explain or justify in writing within the prescribed period why no disciplinary action shall be taken against them, according to Malaya.

"As mandated by the Local Government Code, the presence and support of mayors in their respective areas of jurisdictions are imperative for them to carry out measures to protect their constituents from the harmful effects of disasters and calamities," he said.

Malaya added that being the agency mandated to exercise general supervision over the LGUs, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año enjoined the LCEs days ahead to be physically present in their respective LGUs before, during and after the onslaught of Ompong.

He explained that according to the doctrine of qualified political agency, the DILG as the alter ego of President Duterte has the power to sanction erring LCEs.

"Emphasize that we do not necessarily aim to look for bad performance but we also hope to find best practices," he said.

DILG Central Office Disaster Information Coordinating Center (CODIX) chief Edgar Alian Tabell said that in the absence of a national law on forced evacuation, it is up to the LGUs to undertake forced evacuations in their LGUs.

"There is enough authority for mayors to conduct forced evacuation under the general welfare clause of the Local Government Code. So, even in the absence of a specific law, there is legal authority for the mayor to implement forced evacuation if the conditions so warrant," he said.

In the case of Barangay Ucab in Itogon, Benguet, where missing miners and their families were reported buried underneath a collapsed bunt-house, the agency did not receive any report that the LGU conducted the forced evacuation.

"We received a report that the LGU conducted preemptive evacuation prior to the onslaught of Ompong. Unfortunately the miners evacuated to another area which happened to be landslide-prone," Tabell said.

He added that the DILG, as lead agency of the Management of the Dead and Missing cluster, has activated the MDM-Benguet to extract these missing persons in coordination with other national government agencies in the cluster.

Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesman Senior Superintendent Benigno Durana said the DILG would investigate the liability of those who failed

to implement the forced evacuation of people in danger zones.

"For now, the DILG is investigating if concerned authorities have liability on why it happened. What I know is that according to the DILG, it is a hazard area and if we have situations like this, preemptive evacuation is necessary, if it was done," he said in mixed Filipino and English.

"The DILG is looking into local officials, if they have ample reaction in preparing for Typhoon Ompong," he added.

Durana noted that the PNP is ready to help in the investigation in the event that the DILG needs its support.

"As of now, we have not yet received any order regarding that but if the DILG wants us to be involved, definitely (we will) because the PNP is also under the DILG," he added.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) has reported that there were about 74 casualties — 60 in the CAR, 10 in Cagayan, two in Central Luzon and one each in the National Capital Region and Ilocos region.

Timely action

While the mayors are now under investigation, the DILG lauded some LCEs and the PNP for their timely action which saved 591,762 persons or 147,540 families in seven regions across the country.

Florece said the preemptive evacuation, prepositioning of supplies and equipment, and establishment of critical preparedness actions by LGUs based on Operation Listo protocols significantly contributed to successful Ompong operations.

"I commend our governors, mayors and barangay captains for being on top of Typhoon Ompong activities in their respective areas of jurisdictions, which saved the lives of thousands of Filipinos, especially those who are living in vulnerable areas," he said.

Florece was designated as OIC while Año is on official travel abroad.

The NDRRMC reported that Ompong affected 2,738 barangays, 433 cities and municipalities, and 31 provinces across the NCR: Regions I, II and III, CAR; Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas,

Rizal and Quezon) and Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan).

Of the figures, a total of 219,508 people or 57,196 families were served inside and outside evacuation centers.

Florece said the department activated its 24/7 Disaster Monitoring and Reporting Systems led by its CODIX as early as Sept. 11 or five days before Ompong was expected to hit the country.

He likewise commended the PNP for its round-the-clock monitoring to ensure continuous operations of communication system, repacking of family food packs at the Department of Social Welfare and Development field offices and the deployment of search and rescue (SAR) personnel across Ompong-affected areas.

"Our police officers set aside their personal safety and braved strong winds and rains just to fulfill their avowed duties and save the lives of our people," he said.

With Ompong now out of the Philippine area of responsibility, Malaya said LGUs should continue with the post-disaster activities such as relief pack distributions and mass feeding.

SENATORS TO OPPOSE P55-B PORK IN BUDGET

Drilon says he will block the passage of the P3.7-trillion spending bill and filibuster if the questionable allocations/insertions remain. Malacañang and the House of Representatives have denied the existence of the graft-ridden fund.

By Leila E. Salaverria and Marion Ramos @Team_Inquirer

Senators on Tuesday vowed to fight for the removal of billions in pork from the P3.757-trillion proposed national budget for 2019 once they get their hands on the House of Representatives' version of the spending bill.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who has long been saying that the 2019 budget is riddled with funds for pet projects of lawmakers, said the squabble among House members over P55 billion in pork would make it easier for the Senate to identify and delete the funds.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon also said he

would block the approval of a budget larded with pork, a source of kickbacks for lawmakers.

"I will oppose the passage of the budget and filibuster, if needed, if these pork barrel allocations/insertions remain," Drilon said in a text message to reporters.

The massive appropriations

for the representatives' pet projects, came to light after House leaders bickered over the proposed allocations.

Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles, the House appropriations committee chair, reportedly had a shouting match with Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. after the House majority leader asked Nograles to sign a

committee report on the proposed budget that deleted P55 billion in funding for various pet projects, including airports.

The controversy ended on Tuesday, with Andaya leading the realignment of the suspect funds.

In a radio interview, Lacson said he was thankful for this development, in a way, because it

would be easier to find where the pork had been lodged.

"My staff was happy because their job got a bit easier," he said.

The pork funds have been lodged with the Department of Education and the Department of Transportation, he said.

Lacson also insisted that the funds for the con-



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gressmen's projects constituted pork, amid the contention of other parties that pork referred only to funding for projects identified postlegislation, and that it was part of lawmakers' power to propose amendments to the budget.

The senator said the Supreme Court ruling that invalidated the graft-ridden pork-barrel system mentioned that all informal practices that produced the same effect could also be considered pork barrel.

"So if [a project] is identified by a member of Congress and he says it is his project, we can

call that pork," he said.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea on Tuesday denied there were insertions worth P55 billion in the proposed budget for next year.

"That is not true," Medialdea told *Inquirer.net*.

Funds realigned

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque also denied there were insertions in the proposed 2019 budget.

"If it is true that there are items which were not in the [National Expenditure Program], then we do not know where that came from," Roque said.

The House stood firm in exercising its power of the purse by realigning almost P52 billion

in proposed allocations of Malacañang for the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) next year to various state agencies.

Andaya moved to convene the House into a committee of the whole to modify the report prepared by Nograles.

The P52-billion fund was taken from the proposed budget of the DPWH for the country's 15 regions and was contained in the original budget proposal for 2019, an election year.

"We did not reduce anything. We just moved [the funds] to other departments," Andaya said during the deliberations.

"We will actually be strengthening [government] programs. But there is an

amount, equivalent to less than 2 percent of the budget, just a drop in the bucket, which we will move to other presidential programs," he said.

Andaya said the transfer of state funds would be "done in a manner that is transparent, open and compliant with the laws of the land, including recent Supreme Court decisions on public expenditures."

Budget cuts

The biggest amount was deducted from the Mimaropa region, which suffered a staggering P10.4 billion in budget cut.

The Bicol region, the home region of Vice President Leni Robredo, lost P9.2 billion in proposed funds for various infrastructure projects.

Andaya's action ended the two-day impasse on the plenary deliberations on the national budget.

After just 30 minutes, a majority of the 198 lawmakers present agreed to adopt Andaya's resolution for the budget realignment by viva voce, or voice vote.

Earlier, a source in the House said the P55 billion was not pork but funds "parked" in the budget of several agencies.

A congressman from Luzon, who agreed to talk on condition of anonymity, said the funds hidden in the appropriations for certain agencies had been there long before Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took over the helm at the House in July.

The lawmaker said the

funds were coursed through several congressmen, some of whom were supposedly unaware that billions of pesos from the state coffers had been earmarked for projects in their legislative districts.

"Those funds had been placed in the proposed budget during the previous leadership in the House. You can say that the money was just being parked there," the lawmaker said.

Asked who made the arrangement, the lawmaker said: "[Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno] will be able to explain that. The previous House leadership should also be asked about that." —WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND NESTOR CORRALES INQ

VP key guest at Sept. 21 Mass for democracy

By Lella B. Salaverria
@LellasINQ

Vice President Leni Robredo would be the highest ranking government official at an event to mark the 46th anniversary of the declaration of martial law by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos on Sept. 21 that is expected to draw critics of President Duterte.

Tindig Pilipinas, an umbrella organization of 150 groups criticizing alleged human rights abuses under Mr. Duterte, will sponsor a Mass on that day at De La Salle University.

According to Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, one of Mr. Duterte's most vocal critics and member of Tindig, the Sept. 21 Mass was meant to call for the protection of democracy.

Trillanes, who is holed up at the Senate, met with Tindig members at his office on Tuesday.

Ideal government

"Tindig Pilipinas will not stop its activities until we attain again a government that is good

and not corrupt," Trillanes said.

He said what the group wanted was a government "that truly cares for the welfare of each Filipino."

Tindig, he added, wanted a "robust economy that will bring jobs, provide adequate wages and affordable goods."

The group also wanted to bring together "a united people who help, love and are kind to each other," according to Trillanes.

"We can achieve these if we are united," he added.

Trillanes said more people were joining the ranks of the opposition after their eyes had been opened to realities under the Duterte administration.

Individual decision

He said, though, that there had been no recruitment of forces to join this mass movement—no communists or uniformed personnel.

As to whether there will be calls to oust Mr. Duterte, Trillanes said that would be an individual decision.

"As for me, I have long been saying that he needs to resign," Trillanes said of Mr. Duterte.

"But the messages of Tindig Pilipinas are calibrated," he said.

The President earlier said there was a plot to unseat him on Sept. 21.

Mr. Duterte's spokesperson, Harry Roque, had dismissed accusations of human rights abuses against his boss.

Propaganda?

On Tuesday, he dismissed plans by a human rights group to bring to the witness stand in the International People's Tribunal a Marawi City sultan to testify on alleged human rights violations by Mr. Duterte.

Roque said the tribunal was just leftist propaganda.

Human rights group Karapatan had said Sultan Hamidullah Atar, of Marawi City, would testify this week against the Duterte administration at the International People's Tribunal.

—WITH A REPORT FROM
JULIE M. AURELIO INQ *AT*

18 more bodies recovered from Benguet landslide

By ARTEMIO DUNLAO

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan - Eighteen bodies were dug up from tons of mud that buried a hillside mining community in Itogon in Benguet as hopes faded for finding survivors, with 57 more people still unaccounted for as of yesterday.

Benguet police director Senior Supt. Lyndon Mencio said the casualty figure from last Saturday's landslide set off by Typhoon Ompong is expected to rise as people had been arriving in droves at the site in Barangay Ucab since Sunday, checking on the whereabouts or fate of their missing loved

ones, relatives or friends.

"Rescuers are doing the retrieval manually because it is impossible to bring in heavy equipment to the site due to the washed-out road and dangerous slopes," Mencio told The STAR.

Reaching the site requires hiking for almost two hours from the highway and negotiating steep and slippery trails usually sloping by as much as 40 degrees.

He said there were about 200 to 500 rescue personnel from the army, local government units and private groups.

Mencio said retrieval efforts were becoming more difficult each day as the huge mound of soil, beneath which dozens may still be buried, was begin-

ning to dry and harden.

Police have also put up a tent in the area to process retrieved cadavers like obtaining fingerprints for identification, Mencio said.

Mencio added rescuers were still trying to locate the exact spot where the bunkhouse cum chapel once stood before it was covered by an avalanche of mud and debris at the height of Typhoon Ompong.

Grace Bando, a native of Itogon, described the area as a community of small-scale miners and their families, some of whom came from as far as the Visayas.

The buried building - formerly owned by Benguet Corp. - also doubled as a chapel for the community.

While rescuers may have given up hope of finding more survivors from the landslide, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said it could only confirm eight storm-related deaths and 21 injuries as of yesterday.

But reports from various provincial disaster offices in Northern Luzon, Bicol and Manila put the number of deaths at 100. Of these deaths, 39 were from Barangay Ucab, Itogon alone; 25 in the rest of Itogon town; nine from Baguio City; two in La Trinidad, one from Tuba, one in Kalinga; six from Mountain Province; four from Nueva Vizcaya; one from Ilocos; six from Cagayan province; two from Nueva Ecija; one from Albay and three from

National Capital Region.

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) has sent a team of social workers to Itogon to provide counseling and psychosocial services to families and relatives of the dead and missing miners.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives and the devastation caused by the effects of Ompong in the Cordillera region," said Social Welfare Secretary Virginia Orogan.

"Our Field Office CAR will continue to assess the needs of the affected families, especially the grieving relatives, for the provision of additional assistance," she added. - With Jaime Laude, Janvic Mateo

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UP dean in hot water for backing Rody's ouster

The academic freedom enjoyed by officials and employees of public universities has a limitation: you cannot call for the ouster of the president of the republic.

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) officer-in-charge J. Prospero de Vera yesterday expressed concern over a statement of a college dean at the University of the Philippines (UP) which seemingly supported the ouster of President Duterte.

"I would really encourage university officials to promote discussions, to allow students to articulate their beliefs," he said. "But calling for the ouster of the president is another thing."

Over the weekend, a pledge of support issued by UP Diliman College of Engineering dean Rizalina de Leon drew mixed reactions for calling on the college community to "join the Filipino people under the banner of Engineer

the Downfall of Tyrant and Dictator Duterte."

The statement was issued in support of scheduled activities on Sept. 21 in commemoration of the martial law declaration.

Following criticisms, De Leon issued a clarification, stressing that she does not support the ouster of Duterte.

"While I believe that the engineering community must take upon itself the challenge to defend human rights and civil liberties, and that we ought to speak out against any system of tyranny and dictatorship whether current or future, I do not and will not instigate the downfall of any person or leader, including President Duterte," she added.

De Leon noted that her brother was gunned down in the early days of martial law because he was fighting for the rights of farmers.

Despite the clarification, De Vera - who sits as co-chair of the UP Board of

Regents - said he would still ask for an explanation from the dean.

"I frown upon university officials who take a political position on issues, especially those who call for the ouster of the president. That is simply not allowed under existing law," the CHED official said.

Remembrance

As this developed, UP president Danilo Concepcion on Monday signed a proclamation declaring Sept. 21 as a Day of Remembrance of the role of the university in resisting martial law.

The designation of Sept. 21 as a Day of Remembrance was among the commitments made by Concepcion after he received backlash from the university community for attending a reunion of Marcos-era Kabataang Barangay inside the Diliman campus last month.

— Janvic Mateo

Palace slams Trillanes over surveillance 'paranoia'

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV is just paranoid in claiming that suspicious-looking men are casing his residence in Antipolo City after he refused to be placed under government custody following President Duterte's move to void his amnesty, a Palace official said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the senator, who is one of Duterte's most vocal critics, is mistaken when he claimed that intelligence personnel are conducting surveillance operations

against him and areas where he commonly moves around.

"First, it's drama; now it appears to be paranoia. I think it's very clear, the President has left the matter to the regional trial court of Makati; and so as the Supreme Court," Roque said.

The Palace issued the reaction over Trillanes' claim that purported intelligence men are casing his house even as he remains holed up at the Senate.

Last Thursday, Duterte al-

ready said that the police and the military have lost interest in going after the senator even if he has ordered his arrest when he issued Presidential Proclamation 572.

Duterte said Trillanes won't be arrested without the proper warrant coming from the courts.

Trillanes said yesterday the administration is stepping up efforts to harass him and his family as he continues to defy its orders to arrest him. — Christina Mendez, Marvin Sy. |

Trillanes paranoid — Palace

Fertile imagination

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque dismisses the claim of opposition lawmaker Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV that government agents are shadowing him, saying the senator is just paranoid.

YUMME DINGDING

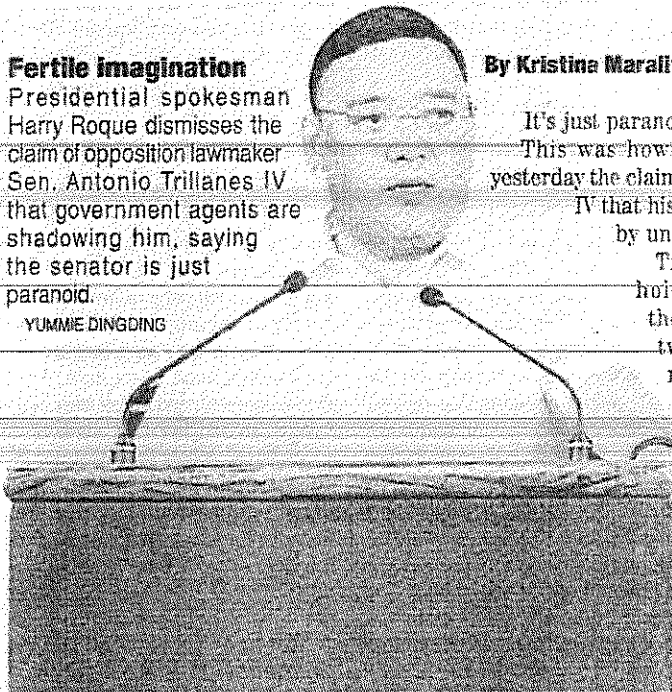
By Kristina Maralit

It's just paranoia.

This was how Malacañang described yesterday the claim of Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV that his residence is being eased by unidentified men.

Trillanes, who has been holed up in his office at the Senate for more than two weeks now after the revocation of his amnesty, sent photos and CCTV footage to reporters of a car purportedly conducting surveillance in his house in Antipolo City.

"First, it's drama. And now it appears to be paranoia. I think it's very clear that the President has already



left the matter at the hands of the Makati RTC (Regional Trial Court) and so has the Supreme Court (SC)," presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. told Palace reporters.

Roque said that Trillanes should just go home and spare the Senate of the inconvenience he is causing the institution by continuing to stay there.

Last week, the senator bared plans to go home after the SC left it to the Makati RTC the task of ruling on the validity of President Rodrigo Duterte's proclamation voiding the amnesty granted to Trillanes.

It's not right that it's the people paying for your board and lodging there at the Senate.

However, Trillanes changed his mind claiming intelligence operatives were stalking the Senate premises.

"Go home. It's not right that it's the people paying for your board and lodging there at the Senate," he added.

Duterte earlier said that unless there is a valid warrant issued by a competent court the military and the police would not arrest the senator.

Meanwhile, a Davao City prosecutor yesterday gave

Trillanes 10 days to submit a counter-affidavit in connection with the libel charges filed against him by former Davao Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte and lawyer Atty. Manases Carpio.

If Trillanes fails to submit a counter-affidavit, the prosecutor warned that such action would be deemed a waiver of his right to answer the accusation against him.

Duterte and Carpio, in their separate libel charges, accused Trillanes of defamatory publication when he claimed in a radio interview that the brothers-in-law were asking money from Uber and other companies regulated by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, the Road Board and the Department of Public Works and Highways.

"Respondent's accusations against me and Atty. Carpio are downright false, unfounded and based on hearsay information," Paolo said in his complaint.

Under the Revised Penal Code, libel is defined as a "public and malicious imputation of a crime, or of a vice or defect, real or imaginary, or any act, omission, condition, status or circumstance tending to cause the dishonor, discredit or contempt of a natural or juridical person or to blacken the memory of one who is dead." 3

Palparan still held at Fort Bonifacio

By JAIME LAUDE

The Philippine Army is still awaiting a commitment order from the Malolos Regional Trial Court (RTC) to have retired Army major general Jovito Palparan Jr. transferred to the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City.

"We are still waiting for a commitment order. Once it is furnished to us, he will be immediately shipped out here to the next place of his confinement," Army spokesman Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva said yesterday.

Palparan was still detained at the Army custodial center at Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City as of last night, more than a day after he and two co-accused soldiers - Lt. Col. Felipe Anotado and S/Sgt. Edgardo Osorio - were found guilty of the kidnapping and serious illegal

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detention of University of the Philippines student-activists Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan 12 years ago.

They were sentenced to *reclusion perpetua* or up to 40 years in prison, and were ordered to indemnify the families of Cadapan and Empeño with P100,000 in civil damages and P200,000 in moral damages.

"As much as we want him already out of our watch, we cannot do so otherwise sans a written commitment from the Bulacan RTC," Villanueva said.

'Reckoning will come'

Palparan's conviction is proof that the day of reckoning will come to human rights violators, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said yesterday, as it lauded the decision of a Malolos RTC to convict him over the disappearance of Empeño and Cadapan.

"(Palparan's conviction) brings a flicker of hope amid the dark impunity that shrouds the country today. The court's decision proves that the day of reckoning will come to those who trample upon human rights," CHR spokesperson Jacqueline de Guia said.

"The road to justice for human rights victims may be long and difficult, but through the willpower of families, steadfastness of human rights warriors and the vigilance of the people, it can be achieved," she added.

De Guia said the case against Palparan is just one of many human rights abuse cases that have yet to be resolved.

She urged the government to hold accountable the perpetrators and pursue justice for the victims.

- With Janvic Mateo, Paolo Romero, Jose Rodel Clapano, Rhodina Villanueva

DISAPPEARANCE OF 2 UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES STUDENTS

JUDGE WHO CONVICTED PALPARAN PRAISED FOR 'STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE'

By Marlon Ramos @MRamosINQ

The decision of a Bulacan Regional Trial Court (RTC) judge sentencing retired Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. to life imprisonment showed that the rule of law remains alive in the Philippines, former Solicitor General Florin Hilbay said on Tuesday.

Hilbay, one of the fierce critics of President Duterte's brutal war on drugs, praised Judge Alexander Tamayo of the Bulacan RTC Branch 15 for his "enormous amount of courage" in handing down the guilty verdict on Monday.

"Amid the threats and challenges besetting our judiciary, we're happy that there's somebody like Judge Tamayo who [is] still standing up for justice and the rule of law," he said.

Same fate for other 'butchers'

"The moral arc of the universe [may be] long, but it bends toward justice," he added.

Hilbay said he hoped the fate that had befallen Palparan, dubbed "The Butcher" by leftist groups for his brutal tactics in fighting communist insurgents

under former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, would "soon [happen] for the butchers of this administration."

Palparan, former commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, and two other former military officers were convicted of kidnapping and illegal detention over the disappearance of University of the Philippines students Karen Empeño and Sherilyn Cadapan in 2006.

The two women were suspected of sympathizing with the communist New People's Army.

They remain missing.

Former Army Lt. Col. Felipe Anotado Jr. and former Army S/Sgt. Edgardo Osorio were also sentenced to life in prison for the abduction of the two women.

He keeps his opinions private

A fourth defendant, Army M/Sgt. Rizal Hilario, remains at large. Tamayo has issued a warrant for his arrest.

Palparan yelled at Tamayo after hearing the decision, calling the judge a "coward."

Tamayo on Tuesday declined interviews to answer Palparan.

His staff said the judge preferred to keep his opinions private.



RIGHTS ABUSE VICTIMS Families of victims of human rights violations and advocates hold a protest in front of the Bulacan Regional Trial Court in the City of Malolos on Monday, shortly before Judge Alexander Tamayo found former Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. guilty of kidnapping two student activists in 2006. —NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Lawyers in Bulacan called Tamayo a "just man."

Provincial Prosecutor Renato Samonte Jr. compared Tamayo to his father, former

Makati RTC Judge Roque Tamayo, who had a reputation as a tough magistrate.

Lawyer José de la Rama Jr., law dean of Tarlac State Univer-

sity, described Tamayo as a "man of honor" who treated all litigants with respect and equity.

"He relies on evidence presented in court, no matter what

the perception of other people about the case," De la Rama said.

Tamayo ruled that witness testimonies that Empeño and Cadapan were seen in a military camp being tortured were "credible."

Conspiratorial liability

"Crucial in determining the culpability and conspiratorial liability of General Palparan is the unassailable fact that he knew all too well of the forcible abduction and detention of Karen and Sheryn by those under his command, as he had seen these two women at Camp Tecson, but he not only acquiesced to their unlawful captivity but also gave his imprimatur to their inhumane treatment at the hands of his men, and, in effect, fomented the same by not lifting a finger to halt the abuses against them," the judge said in his decision.

Palparan also served as commander of the 204th Brigade on Mindoro Island.

Activists in Southern Tagalog blamed the killings of human rights defenders in the region on Palparan's command.

—WITH REPORTS FROM CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE AND AFP INQ

'VICTORY IN STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE'

CONVICTION WARNING TO OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS,

SAYS LEYTE GROUP

By Joey Gabieta
@joeygabietalNQ

TACLOBAN CITY—A human rights group based here on Tuesday called for celebration after the conviction of retired Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. for the abduction and disappearance of two University of the Philippines students.

Palparan, former commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, and two other ex-military officers were sentenced on Monday to life imprisonment for the kidnapping and illegal detention of Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan.

The two women were never seen again after they were taken in Hagonoy, Bulacan

province, in 2006.

'Significant victory'

"This fateful day marks the first step toward attainment of justice for victims of human rights violations. Let us celebrate today this significant victory in our hard and long-fought struggle for justice," Katungod-Sinirangan Bisayas

said in a statement.

The group said the conviction of Palparan should serve as a warning to other violators of human rights.

Palparan served as commander of the 8th Infantry Division in Catbalogan City, Samar province, from February to September 2005.

The rights group reported 36

extrajudicial killings and 712 rights abuses, including torture and harassment, during Palparan's assignment in Catbalogan.

Abuses continue

Alexander Philip Abinguna, regional coordinator of Katungod-Sinirangan Bisayas, said the group would press its campaign for the protection and

preservation of human rights.

"We will make sure that the government and its [armed] agents [will] be held accountable every time they commit human rights abuses," Abinguna said.

He said seven farmers in Eastern Visayas had been summarily executed since the Duterte administration came to power in 2016. INQ 14

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Prosecutor unfazed before Palparan

A state prosecutor who led the prosecution of retired Army Major General Jovito Palparan Jr. remains unfazed from the invectives hurled by the convicted former military official. "As prosecutors, we realize that we can't be popular with convicts. It is part of our job to handle verbal abuse from the accused," said Senior Assistant State Prosecutor Juan Pedro Navera yesterday. After hearing the verdict, the angry Palparan started hurling invectives at Navera and Judge Alexander Tamayo of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 15 of the Malolos City who convicted him of the crime of kidnapping and serious illegal detention. He faces 40 years in prison. (Jeffrey C. Domingo)

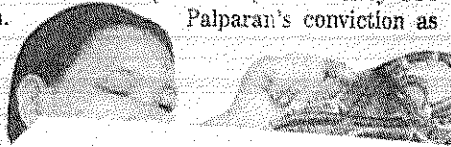
'Surface' Karen, Sherlyn

By Eimer N. Manuel and Alvin Murcia

There is no closure yet despite the conviction of retired Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. for the mothers of the two missing University of the Philippines (UP) students who are clinging on hopes in seeing their daughters, 12 years after they were last seen in the hands of Palparan's men.

Concepcion Empeño and Erlinda Cadapan,

mothers of the two missing UP students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan, yesterday said they see Palparan's conviction as



only the first step to their long wait for peace of mind and acceptance.

On Monday, a Malolos City court found Palparan guilty of the abduction of Karen and Sherlyn in 2006.

But the mothers of the missing victims still

want Palparan and his cohorts to produce their daughters — dead or alive.

The lead prosecutor in Palparan's case, meanwhile, said he never felt threatened by the curses thrown against him by the convicted soldier.



Turn to page 6

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'Surface' Karen, Sherlyn

Until we see our daughters surface and until we hug them, I think there is no closure yet

From page 1

Senior Assistant State Prosecutor Juan Pedro Navera said he is aware that prosecutors like him are not popular with convicts.

"As prosecutors, we realize that we can't be popular with convicts. It is part of our job to handle verbal abuse from the accused," Navera said.

He added it is part of their job to handle verbal abuses from the accused receiving convictions.

The prosecutor was present at the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 15 of the Malolos City, Bulacan when it handed down a guilty decision on Palparan for kidnapping and serious illegal detention of the two missing students.

After the decision was read, an angry Palparan hurled invectives at Navera and Judge Alexander Tamayo.

"As professionals, we just choose to present the evidence needed to convict," Navera stated. "As long as we act professional at all times in all cases we can also choose to ignore these curses and verbal abuse."

Also found guilty with Palparan are Lt. Col. Felipe Anotado Jr. and S/Sgt. Edgardo Osorio.

The three were sentenced to suffer *reclusion perpetua* or maximum of 40 years imprisonment.

Aside from the jail term the three accused were also ordered by the court to pay P100,000 as civil indemnity and P200,000 to each of the families of Empeno and Cadapan.

Accused M/Sgt. Rizal Hilario, remains at-large. The court issued an alias warrant for his arrest and the case was archived.

Malacañang also said it respects the verdict handed down by the court

against Palparan.

"The prosecution in this case represents the state and that is the Department of Justice (DoJ), meaning the administration supports the prosecution," presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said. "We respect the decision of the court and we would want justice to be done to the victims."

The elder Cadapan appealed to President Rodrigo Duterte to keep Palparan in jail to serve his sentence.

As prosecutors, we realize that we can't be popular with convicts. It is part of our job to handle verbal abuse from the accused.

Empeno's mother, Concepcion, meanwhile, said they fear a possible pardon for Palparan, claiming he could get help from incumbent House Speaker Gloria Arroyo, who, she said, "idolized" her general.

"Until we see our daughters surface and until we hug them,

I think there is no closure yet," Erlinda said.

"For me this is only the first step to prove that Palparan is guilty. But we need to see them, our daughters. Like Nanay Linda wants, dead or alive," Concepcion said.

Karen and Sherlyn were kidnapped in Hagonoy, Bulacan in June 2006.

At that time, Karen was taking up sociology at UP and was in Hagonoy for her thesis.

Sherlyn, a UP sports science student, was volunteering for peasant group Alyansang Magbubukid.

"The students were branded as rebels, abducted and tortured by Palparan's men at the height of then President Arroyo's anti-communist insurgency drive Oplan Bantay Laya," the mothers' lawyer Josa Deinla said.

Deinla added that there were a lot of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances then.

"The victims were not just suspected sympathizers of the NPA,"



PALPARAN

Deinla said. "Even the unarmed, the above-ground activists like Karen and Sherlyn, became victims. No distinctions whatsoever."

Palparan then was one of the leaders of the anti-communist drive, even earning the praise of his commander in chief, then President Arroyo, during her state of the nation address in 2006.

In a 2010 interview, Palparan was asked how he felt whenever he was called a "butcher" by the activists and said that he learned to live with the label. "Sometimes it's a compliment,"

he said, especially when it refers to his drive against rebels.

Following the court ruling, Palparan will be detained at the maximum security compound of the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa.

Meanwhile, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said the conviction of Palparan was a sign that justice is still reachable to human rights victims.

CHR spokesman Jacqueline Ann C. de Guia said in a statement that the decision on the "enforced disappearance case of Karen (Empeno) and Sherlyn (Cadapan) brings a flicker of hope."

"The court's decision proves that the day of reckoning will come to those who trample upon human rights," De Guia added.

The CHR spokesman also noted that the will power and vigilance of families, human rights advocates and the public could shorten the "long and difficult" road to due process and bring justice to victims deprived of it.

The same vigor shown in pursuing the case of Palparan for the sake of Empeno and Cadapan, she stressed, must be shown for the thousands of cases "that have not seen justice."

Martial law anniversary: 4,000 cops to be deployed

By NON ALQUITRAN and REY GALUPO

The Philippine National Police will deploy at least 4,000 police officers to secure rallies that will be held to mark the 46th anniversary of the declaration of martial law by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos on Friday, officials said yesterday.

Like in past protest rallies, the anti-riot police officers will be armed only with batons and truncheons, said Director Guillermo Eleazar, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO). They will not carry their service firearms.

"We would be at least 50 meters

away from the rallyists. As long as they are not violating any law, we would allow them to conduct their protest rally as long as they want," Eleazar said in an interview.

Chief Superintendent Rolando Anduyan, director of the Manila Police District, was designated as ground commander of the anti-

riot police officers.

Eleazar met with Teddy Casifio and other leaders of militant groups at the Intramuros-Golf Course clubhouse to set ground rules for the rally.

"By dialoguing with the protest rally leaders, we were able to establish a warm relationship and a communication line that would prevent violence from igniting," Eleazar said.

Casifio and rally leaders vowed to police their ranks and prevent "outsiders" from provoking them into a violent confrontation with

anti-riot police officers.

As agreed upon, protesters will gather at the Quirino Grandstand at around 4 p.m. on Friday.

The rally leaders said they would erect a stage at the grandstand and would stay up to 7 p.m. but Eleazar said he would allow them to stay "as long as they want" so long as the assembly remains peaceful. *R*

The police officials recommended that groups supporting President Duterte assemble at Burnham Green, the large open space in front of the grandstand.

Rallyists, cops agree on guidelines for peaceful commemoration of martial law

By RIA FERNANDEZ

Groups who will be staging protests in various parts of Manila on Friday assured of a peaceful commemoration of the 46th anniversary of the declaration of martial law.

Former President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law on September 21, 1972.

Laban ng Masa National Coordinator Rasti Delizo said they already have "an agreement (with the police) to hold a peaceful demonstration in front of the Rizal Monument."

Delizo gave the statement during "Talakayan para sa Mapayapang Paggunita ng Martial Law" organized by the Manila Police District (MPD) Tuesday morning at the Intramuros Golf Club.

Leaders of militant groups Delizo and former Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casino stressed the importance of the occasion, noting that it is not only to commemorate the martial law anniversary but also to remind the young generation that this dark phase of our history must not happen again.

"We must not let another dicta-

torship emerge and happen under our watch," Casino said.

Separate rallies

Protesters will stage separate rallies in Plaza Salamanca, Bonifacio Shrine, and Morayta starting 9 a.m. Friday. But they may also use Liwasang Bonifacio and Plaza Miranda as alternative venues, according to the MPD.

Maximum tolerance

National Capital Region Police Office Chief Guillermo Eleazar said around 4,000 cops will be deployed to secure the event.

"(We will exercise) maximum tolerance. Ang maganda kasi dito nagkaroon na kami ng kasunduan. Pag meron kasing kasunduan, merong mga panuntunang dapat sundin (What's good here is that we already have an agreement. If there is an agreement, there are guidelines that must be followed)," he said.

Eleazar added that even other rallyists who failed to secure a permit beforehand will still be allowed to join protests so long as they go to "areas that we have agreed."

"Ang mga haharangin natin yung mga pupunta sa lugar na hindi pinag-usapan (We will only block those who will be going to places that are not included in the agreement)," he said.

Eleazar said that they have not monitored any threat yet they are "always prepared for any eventuality."

The groups are expected to march towards the Rizal Monument at Rizal Park for the culmination of the demonstration at 4 p.m., police said.

Closed roads

The MPD Traffic Enforcement Unit announced the closure of the following roads from 6 a.m. onwards: north and southbound lanes of Roxas Boulevard from Katigbak Drive to Quirino Avenue, east and westbound lanes of T.M. Kalaw from M.H. del Pilar to Roxas Boulevard, and U.N. Avenue corner Roxas Boulevard - service road.

Duterte supporters set rally

Meanwhile, supporters of President Duterte are also expected to hold rally at the Burnham Green section of the park. 2

Grieving parents of missing UP activists want to see daughters

THE parents of missing University of the Philippines students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan, who disappeared in 2006, now have only one wish—to see their daughters, or their daughter's bodies, dead or alive.

Karen's mom Concepcion and Sherlyn's mother Erlinda, has made known their wishes now that Major General Jovito Palparan Jr. has been convicted by a Malolos City court.

The court found Palparan guilty for the abduction of the two UP students.

"Hanggang hindi po nila nililitaw at hindi namin nayayakap ang warm body ng aming anak, I think there's no closure yet," the elder Cadapan said in a television interview a day after Palparan was sentenced to life in prison.

"Para sa akin first step pa lang itong pag-convict kay Palparan na siya ay guilty. Tulad din ni Nanay Linda kailangan din namin na si Karen ay ma-surface. Kailangan namin makita ang katawan niya, maaaring buhay o patay," the elder Empeño added.

Karen, a sociology student, and Sherlyn, who was taking up sports science, were abducted in Hagonoy, Bulacan in June 2006. Both had volunteered for peasant group Alyansang Magbubukid.

The students, who were branded as rebels, were reportedly abducted, and tortured by Palparan's men during the height of then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's anti-communist insurgency drive "Oplan Bantay Laya, the mothers' lawyer, Josa Deinla, alleged.

DH

Bulacan honors AFP Chief with 'Gawad Dangal ng Lipi'

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff, General Carlito G Galvez Jr received the Gawad Dangal ng Lipi, an award recognizing exceptional sons and daughters of Bulacan in Malolos City, Bulacan, on Monday.

Galvez, born in Bustos town, was honored for his excellence in the military service, having been appointed to key positions before leading the whole Armed Forces as its Chief of Staff.

Governor Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado of Bulacan accompanied by Vice Governor Daniel R. Fernando and Chairman Herminio S. Esguerra of Dangal ng Bulacan Foundation, Inc. presented the Plaque of Recognition to General Galvez.

Duterte vows no cheating in 2019 polls

By GENALYN D. KABILING

The government would not resort to any form of cheating in the upcoming midterm elections, national and local elections just to secure victory for its bets, President Duterte vowed last Monday.

The President has promised anew to facilitate clean and credible elections in 2019, as he rejected poll fraud as a way to enter a "democratic government" in the country.

"No way that kaming nasa gobyerno ngayon will take part in any cheating [No way will our government take part in any cheating]," Duterte said during a meeting with officials on disaster rescue and relief efforts in La Trinidad, Benguet.

"I will never allow it kasi [because] that ain't the way how to join a democratic government," he said.

The President also renewed his pledge that the military and police would enforce strict gun control and not to engage in partisan politics.

He also authorized them to "shoot" candidates who violate the gun ban during the election period.

"I commit to you that the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police, and I will promise you a clean election. Walang partido, partido [No partisanship]," he said. 4

DENR zeroes in on small-scale mining

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu has ordered the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) to "revisit and validate" all applications for small-scale mining to prevent another catastrophic event caused by landslide.

"We will be stricter in approving Minahang Bayan sites (People's Small-Scale Mining Areas), and affirm their conformity to standards that are safe especially for the miners," Cimatu said.

The DENR chief also directed the MGB to make sure the shelters provided to small-scale miners are safe and do not pose risk to them.

"Their (small-scale miners) residences should be far enough from identified geohazard areas," he said.

Cimatu issued the statement after the MGB office in the Cordillera Auto-

nous Region (CAR) confirmed that 10 associations of small-scale miners had been granted temporary mining contracts in Itogon, Benguet, pending the declaration of a Minahang Bayan.

Landslides occurred in Itogon, Benguet over the weekend following torrential rainfall brought by typhoon Ompong.

Cimatu immediately ordered the revocation of all the temporary contracts effective immediately, and called a halt to all small-scale mining activities in the region.

The contracts were issued by virtue of Executive Order (EO) 79 issued in 2012.

EO 79 aims to implement mining reforms in the country to ensure environmental protection and promote responsible utilization of mineral resources.

One of the provisions to improve

small-scale mining activities is to allow them only within declared minahang bayan, pursuant to Republic Act 7076 or the People's Small Scale Mining Act of 1991.

Cimatu said he would request the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to help the MGB impose complete stoppage of all mining activities in CAR.

He also ordered the MGB to review all geohazard maps in the country and determine which are in known mining sites.

Cimatu then urged local government units (LGUs) to consult geohazard maps prepared and issued by the DENR, which clearly indicates landslide and flood prone areas.

The LGUs, he said, should "not hesitate in evacuating residents and workers during calamities, even if you have to carry them out bodily." 7

Zero tolerance on hooligans

Maximum restraint on peaceable assembly

The militants agreed to police their ranks and keep their protest orderly

By Pat C. Santos

The Manila Police District (MPD) warned yesterday that it will implement a zero-tolerance policy on vandalism and hooliganism by militants commemorating on 21 September the imposition of martial law 46 years ago.

MPD head Chief Supt. Rolando Anduyan issued the warning at a meeting with city officials and various militant organizations expected to take to the streets of the capital in remembering the martial law years.

Anduyan said that the MPD will guard against acts of

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lawlessness and will go so far as to enforce city ordinances such as those against the defacing of public structures such as center islands.

Even spray-painting slogans usually resorted to by militants to air their grievances will not be tolerated, the police official added.

But in what may be portent of things to come — of militants becoming unruly — former Rep. Teddy Casino said the organizers of protest rallies may not be able to control everyone on their side.

Casino's statement prompted Anduyan to emphasize that in keeping the peace they may be forced to arrest those who will become unruly or those who will resort to violence.

Nonetheless, the militants agreed to police their

ranks as they pledged to keep their protest orderly and peaceful during a press conference in Intramuros, Manila.

National Capital Region Police Office head Chief Supt. Guillermo Eleazar said they will arrest and file cases against those who will break the peace "on a case-to-case basis" depending on the gravity of the offenses.

The police led by Eleazar and Anduyan and the militants inked a peace covenant after holding an open dialogue.

MPD had recommended to the militants as venue for their activities the Quirino Grandstand. The police, including augmentation forces from within the jurisdiction of NCRPO, will field 4,000 personnel.

Casino's group pledged to secure a rally permit from the Manila city government.

'OMPONG' TOLL BALLOONS

THE Philippine Army has retrieved a total of 39 bodies from a collapsed bunkhouse in Itogon, Benguet, as the death toll from super Typhoon "Ompong" ("Mangkhut") ballooned to 98 across the country.

Authorities gave conflicting figures on fatalities from a landslide that crushed the bunkhouse at a mining site in Barangay Ucab, Itogon, early Sunday.

Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, Army spokesman, said as of Tuesday's report, there were 39 bodies recovered by military responders in Ucab village, where the bunkhouse, used as a worship house, collapsed.

>TollIAS

■ TOLL FROM A1

'Ompong' toll balloons

"Rescuers are now facing difficulties in removing boulders of rocks and the hardening mud due to the warming weather. In this condition, the troops are working relentlessly for a speedy retrieval and rescue operations in the hopes of saving more lives," Villanueva said in a statement.

Mayor Victorio Palandang of Itogon said there were only 15 bodies recovered, contradicting the figures provided by the Army. In a phone interview with re-

porters, Palandang cited the local government of Itogon for exerting efforts to enforce pre-emptive evacuation in the municipality despite resistance from residents.

"We tried to enforce also the forced evacuation, but they also refused to do it. Some were being dragged already but still, they were resisting," he said.

Palandang pointed out there was a need for legislation to allow them to get handcuffs for the implementation of forced evacu-

ations in times of major disasters.

The latest toll included 25 more from Itogon apart from the bunkhouse tragedy; nine from Baguio City; two from La Trinidad; one from Tuba; one from Kalinga; six from Mountain Province; four from Nueva Vizcaya; six from Cagayan; one from Albay; one from Ilocos Sur; two from Nueva Ecija; and one from Caloocan City.

Villanueva, meanwhile, said the Army has deployed the 525th Engineer Combat Battalion and K-9 military working dogs to assist in rescue and retrieval operations in Ucab, Itogon, Benguet, where authorities are struggling to find 65 more persons.

The engineering battalion is composed of six search and rescue retrieval teams with heavy equipment and specialized tools while the K-9 unit can also be utilized for complex emergencies to save human lives," he added.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) also on Tuesday said a total of 216,492 families or 893,844 persons were still affected by effects of the typhoon, which exited Philippine territory over the weekend.

Of the number, NDRRMC spokesman Edgar Posadas said a total of 61,709 families or 236,060 people were still in

evacuation centers established in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Cordillera Administrative Region and Metro Manila.

Posadas told a news conference that there were only eight confirmed fatalities from the typhoon as confirmed by the Management of the Dead and Missing managed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

He said 146 international and 135 domestic flights had been canceled due to Opong.

Four international and 56 domestic flights have resumed.

DEMPSEY REYES

AFP chief of staff receives award

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. received the Gawad Dangal ng Lipi award, given by the Province of Bulacan to its exceptional sons and daughters on Monday in Malolos City.

Gov. Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado, accompanied by Vice Gov. Daniel Fernando and Chairman Herminio Esguerra of Dangal ng Bulacan Foundation, Inc., presented the

Plaque of Recognition to Galvez.

The general, who was born in Bustos town, was honored for his excellence in the military service, having been appointed to key positions before leading the AFP as its chief of staff.

He was also awarded for his loyalty, courage and dedication in the military profession manifesting the qualities of an outstanding public servant. **Kathleen Mae Bulquerin**

NEWS BRIEFS

Lumad, accused of being a rebel, gunned down K9
A 23-year-old lumad, suspected of being a communist rebel, was gunned down allegedly by soldiers in a remote area of Buenavista town, Agusan del Norte province on Sept. 15, according to the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) in Northern Mindanao. The lumad, Rex Hagadon, was with his father when he was killed, allegedly by soldiers belonging to Army's 23rd Infantry Battalion, RMP said. The group added that Hagadon's father remained missing. On Sept. 16, the village council of Lower Olave in Buenavista claimed Hagadon's body upon instructions from the Army. RMP sisters said Hagadon's family was traumatized by his killing. "The entire family fears that if they go near his body, they would be automatically labeled as NPA supporters," said RMP. —MART SAMBALUD

Ex-rebels seek aid to start a new life

QUINAPONDAN, Eastern Samar

Four former rebels who recently surrendered here want the government to help them return to a normal life.

The surrenderers, all from Basey, Samar, served in the Jorge Bolito Command of the New People's Army (NPA) operating in Sta. Rita, Basey, Marabut in Samar and parts of Eastern Samar.

After surrendering to the 2nd Eastern Samar Provincial Mobile Force Company, they said they wanted to join the government's Enhanced Comprehensive Localized Integration Program (E-CLIP).

The E-CLIP is a flagship program of the Duterte administration under the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) that is part of the government's peace and development agenda.

One of the former rebels said he was only 18 and in 4th year high school when the NPA recruited him.

"Sirubukan ko lang kasi inosente ako kung ano talaga yung nangyayari doon sa kanila. Nasubukan ko lang iyon pero hindi ko gaanong nagustuhan iyong pamalakad doon, ngayong naexperience ko na ayaw ko na. Minsan gutom, mahirap ang kalagayan doon," the surrenderer, who is now 20, said.

He was captured during an encounter with Army troops on March 26, 2017. Charged with frustrated murder he was detained for three months where he met PCI Frederick Señal who was then the company commander of Samar Provincial Police Security Company (PPSC).

"Dahil maganda angtrato nila sa akin noong nahuli ako, sabi ni Sir Señal hanapin ko daw siya kapag nakalabas ako kung gusto ko magsurrender," he said.

After learning that his comrade had surrendered, another rebel, a team leader and the group's intelligence officer for 12 years, decided to go home to his family and surrender.

"Lalong tumatagal lalo akong nahihirapan sa loob ko na gusto ko ng umuwi at makasama ang pamilya ko. Naramdaman ko din na walang magandang mangyayari sa mga buhay namin doon at unti-unti ko ng naisip na umuwi at magbalik-loob kaya pumunta rin ako dito," the 30-year-old rebel said.

Ram also turned in his caliber .38 revolver.

The third surrenderer, who is 29, fought with the NPA for almost 15 years. He said only reached Grade 2, and was left with no choice but to help his parents till a parcel of land in the mountain.

"Nirecruit kami doon sa arming tani-man kasi daw bata pa ako at mabagsik. Tinanong ako kung boluntaryong sasapi sa rebolusyon. Dahil bata pa ako, naniwala naman ako sa ibang pinaglalaman ng grupo," he said.

He came across one of the flyers being distributed by the police, which convinced him to surrender. He said he did it because his wife had just given birth to their first child.

He said she does not know he is a member of the NPA. (Marie Tonette Grace Marticio)

NPA's Bagani Commander killed

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY - An alleged commander of Pulang Bagani Command 3 (PBC 3) of the CPP-NPA Terrorists (CNTs) was killed in a fierce gun battle Sunday with combat maneuvering troops of the 3rd Infantry Battalion (3rd IB) under the 10th Infantry (Agila) Division (10th ID).

Capt. Jerry S. Lamosao, chief Public Affairs Office (PAO) of the 10th ID said the PBC commander was killed after 30 minutes of heavy gunfight.

Based on the initial report of 3rd IB commander Lt. Col. Oca Partuza, the gun battle

took place after concerned villagers reported the presence of CNTs who are allegedly conducting extortion and recruitment activities in the vicinity of Baracatan, Toril District, Davao City.

The gunfight started at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday (Sept. 16), Capt. Lamosao further claimed.

The slain PBC 13 commander, a certain "Ka Ivy" was reportedly a resident of Ilang-Ilang area, San Mariano, Agusan del Sur.

During clearing and mopping up operations, operating troops seized in the encounter site one M16 Armalite Rifle, one AK47 rifle, 4 units of detonator switch, 5 magazines of AK47

rifle, 2 magazines of M16 Armalite rifle full loaded with live ammunitions, 1 magazine of M16 also full loaded with live bullets, 1 stethoscope, 1 blood pressure monitor, 1 bandoleer, 1 box of assorted medicines, 6 bottles of Efficascant oil, 1 vial of valium, 1 vial of tramadol, 1 vial of anespin, 2 vials of anticholinergic, 2 wallets, 2 sedula assorted, ID's, assorted notebooks, subversive documents and Palawan receipt, Capt. Lamosao said.

There was no casualty on the government side, he said.

Maj. Gen. Noel S. Clement, commanding general of the 10th "Agila" Division lauded the accomplishment of the 3rd IB.

Duterte sees defeat of NPA by next year

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday expressed belief that a victory against the New People's Army (NPA) is possible by the second quarter of next year because of the continued surrender of many of the communist rebels.

"I think we're winning the war finally," the President said in Camp

Melchor Dela Cruz in Isabela province, after the presentation of NPA members who have surrendered.

Duterte said many rebel fronts in Central and Eastern Mindanao are falling one by one.

He said in Isabela, the number of NPA members has also dimin-

See DUTERTE > Page B5

DUTERTE

ished because of the surrender of almost 100 rebels and the recovery of about 45 high firearms.

"I think kung maawa ang Panginoon Diyos (by God's mercy), this will be over by the second

quarter of next year. Ang damina kasing nag-su-surrender at maganda iyung armas (Many are surrendering and they have good firearms)," the President said.

Last March, Duterte predicted a the defeat of the NPA, the armed

wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, by next year.

Duterte said intelligence reports as well as information from the former NPA members have been helpful in finding and convincing other rebels to surrender.

The Duterte government had

shifted to localize peace negotiations following the collapse of the peace talks between the national government and the CPP and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NDFP).

Duterte has repeatedly said the CPP has no real ideology.

Military in relief mission attacked

THE military's relief and humanitarian mission in "Ompong"-stricken areas in Nueva Ecija and Nueva Viscaya was disrupted after New People's Army rebels fired at troops manning a patrol base at the outskirts of Bongabon town in Nueva Ecija the other day.

Maj. Ericon Bulosan, head of the Public Information Office of the Army's Northern Luzon Command said at least 10 NPAs attacked the patrol base of the 70th Infantry Battalion of the 7th Infantry division in Brgy Labi Tuesday morning.

He said the rebel group from the Kilusang Sierra Madre positioned 500 meters away from the patrol base fired at on-duty personnel forcing an ensued fighting. The troops who were on their way to villages affected by Typhoon Ompong was forced to reinforce, derailing the ongoing humanitarian mission.

Francisco Tuyay 43

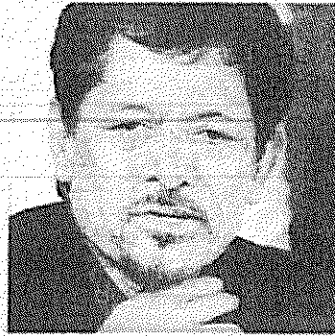
Kagawad nilikida ng NPA

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay - Dead-on-the-spot ang 40-anyos na kagawad ng barangay matapos pagbabarilin ng liquidation squad ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) sa harap mismo ng kanyang anak sa gitna ng kanilang palayan sa Sitio Pahak, Brgy. San Pedro, San Pascual, Masbate kamakalawa ng umaga. Anim na punglo ang tumama sa iba't-ibang bahagi ng katawan ng biktima si Ruben Rivera habang hindi naman sinaktan ang kanyang anak na si Marvin Rivera, 14. Sa ulat, dakong alas-7 ng umaga, nagtungo ang biktima at anak sa kanilang bukid para tingnan ang tanim na palay. Gayunman, ilang sandali lang ay dumating ang tinatayang 15-rebelde na armado ng mahahabang uri ng baril at pinadapa sa palayan ang kagawad. Matapos dumapa sa gitna ng palayan, anim na beses binaril ng mga rebelde ang biktima na agad nasawi habang hindi naman nakakilos sa sobrang takot ang binatilyong anak. Nang masigurong patay na ang biktima, tumakas ang mga rebelde patungo sa bulubunduking bahagi ng barangay.

(Jorge Hallare)

Nur asks Sandiganbayan to dismiss graft case

Moro leader Nur Misuari had asked the antigraft court Sandiganbayan to dismiss the graft and malversation charges against him over an alleged P77.2-million "ghost textbook" scam when he was governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). In a 15-page motion filed on Sept. 14, Misuari argued that he was not liable for purchases made by the ARMM government in 2000 and 2001 because payments were released in 2003 and 2004 during the term of his successor, Parouk Hussin. Misuari said he had been detained in Malaysia from 2001 to 2002 and in Sta. Rosa, Laguna and Quezon City from 2002 to 2008. "It would not have been possible" for him to "goad" his co-accused, the late ARMM education chief Mahid Mutilan, into committing graft. —VINCE F. NONATO



Nur Misuari

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Misuari seeks dismissal of graft, malversation charges

By CZARINA NICOLE O. ONG

Former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Nur Misuari is asking the Sandiganbayan Third Division to junk his two graft and two malversation through falsification charges since the irregular transactions he was being accused of took place during the term of his successor.

He was charged in connection with the reportedly anomalous purchase of different educational packages and materials from

2000 to 2001.

Misuari stated in his omnibus motion to dismiss and defer arraignment that based on records obtained from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the payments for the irregular transactions were made during the term of Governor Parouk Hussein from September 30, 2002 to September 30, 2005.

"Accused Nur Misuari is not liable for anomalous payment of 'ghost textbooks' committed during the succeeding administration," his motion read. "It is likewise

clear as day that accused Nur Misuari did not receive any money or funds subject matter of the complaint as the demand for payment was made when he was no longer performing the functions of the Office of the Regional Governor of ARMM."

He added that there was no conspiracy between him and his co-accused, since he was in detention for more than six years since January 7, 2002 until his release in 2008 when he was finally granted bail.

Prior to his detention, Misuari was illegally held in detention in Malaysia from

December 2001 to January 2002.

"There is nothing in the record of these cases to show accused Nur Misuari had any dealing with any of the co-accused during his more than six years of continuous detention in Malaysia and the Philippines from 2001 to 2008 regarding the alleged anomalous transactions," the motion read. "Moreover, he had no influence or any moral ascendancy over them at all not only because he was facing charges and detained but also because he was no longer the Regional Governor of ARMM."

Even when he was still governor, Misuari said his co-accused were not under his direct control. In fact, they worked directly under the Regional Cabinet Secretary of the ARMM Department of Education and

Sports.

At the same time, the departmental documents pertaining to the subject transactions were not brought to Misuari for review. Instead, they were reviewed, signed and approved by the Regional Cabinet Secretary of the Regional Department.

"For this reason, accused was absolutely oblivious to the irregular transactions subject of this case until publications have described his alleged involvement, the information filed, and the warrant for his arrest was issued," the motion stated.

Misuari harped on the delay in the conduct of the preliminary investigation and the filing of the criminal charges against him before the Sandiganbayan. He said the cases were brought to the Ombudsman for investigation on November 6, 2013.

Misuari asks court: Dismiss graft cases

By Maricel V. Cruz

FORMER governor Nur Misuari of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has asked the Sandiganbayan to dismiss the cases filed against him by the Ombudsman in connection with the alleged anomalous purchase of educational materials during his watch as the chief executive of the area.

Misuari told the anti-graft court's Third Division said there was an absence of evidence that would pin him down to the allegedly irregular transaction.

He also raised the issue of inordinate delay against the Ombudsman.

Misuari, the former ARMM governor, is facing two counts each of graft and malversation by falsification owing to the alleged anomalous procurement of educational materials worth P115.2 million during his term.

Misuari said he could not be held liable for the transaction that was done when he was no longer the ARMM governor.

Misuari and his co-accused allegedly conspired to give "unwarranted benefits, advantage and privilege" to MBI Learning Tools, CPR Publishing, and White Orchids Printing. He said the payments to MBI Learning in December were released in 2003, CPR Publishing in July 2004, and to White Orchids Printing in July 2004 and September 2005. DW

Misuari seeks dismissal of graft, malversation raps

BY PETER TABINGO

Dec. 5, 2003.

FORMER Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Gov. Nur Misuari has asked the Sandiganbayan to junk four criminal charges filed against him last year by the Office of the Ombudsman.

In his 15-page omnibus motion filed through counsel Manolo T. Flores, Misuari said the cases should be dismissed outright due to inordinate delay in the preliminary investigation and the filing of the cases and for lack of basis to link him to the questioned transactions.

Misuari was accused of unlawful involvement in fraudulent procurement of information and technology package worth P31 million from MBI Learning Tools on December 21, 2000 and multimedia information technology package worth P46.26 million from CPR Publishing on July 24, 2001.

However, he claimed the payment for the identified transactions took place when he was no longer the regional governor of the ARMM as he only served from March 31, 1996 to Sept. 30, 2001.

He said payment to CPR Publishing was only made on July 1, 2004 while for MBI Learning Tools payment was released on

He added that it is likewise impossible that he received any money or profit from the said transactions as the demands for payment were made when he had already left the office.

By the same grounds, he noted that the prosecution's allegation of conspiracy between him and the other accused including officials of the ARMM-Department of Education and the private defendants must likewise fail.

He recalled that for the supposed date of payment to CPR Publishing, he was already in detention at the PNP-Special Action Force Training Camp in Sta. Cruz, Laguna from January 2002 until he was released on bail in 2008. Before this, he was also detained in Malaysia from December 2001 to January 2002.

Invoking his constitutional right to speedy disposition of cases, Misuari claimed there was inordinate delay in the investigation of the Ombudsman saying the case was first brought to it on Nov. 6, 2015 while the information was only filed on May 5, 2017.

Still, it took investigators 118 days to conclude their evaluation of evidence to render a resolution of indictment against him on March 26, 2018.

Misuari seeks graft raps dismissal

Moro National Liberation Front founding chairman Nur Misuari asked the Sandiganbayan to dismiss graft and malversation charges filed against him, saying he was no longer the governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao when the alleged questionable transactions took place.

Misuari was charged for allegedly giving undue advantage to suppliers who bagged the P77.26 million contract for procurement of textbooks and for using fake documents to justify the deal in 2000 and 2001.

However, Misuari said the questioned payment to the winning contractors were made during the term of his successor Gov. Parouk Hussein, or from 30 September 2002 to 30 September 2005.

"It is likewise clear as day that accused Nur Misuari did not receive any money or funds subject matter of the complaint as the demand for payment was made when he was no longer performing the functions of the Office of the Regional Governor of ARMM," Misuari said in his motion.

He said there can be no conspiracy between him and his co-accused, since he was in detention for more than six years from 7 January 2002 until his release in 2008 when he was finally granted bail.

Before his detention in the Philippines, he was jailed in Malaysia from December 2001 to January 2002.

"There is nothing in the record of these cases to show accused Nur Misuari had any dealing with any of the co-accused during his more than six years of continuous detention in Malaysia and the Philippines from 2001 to 2008 regarding the alleged anomalous transactions," the motion read.

"Moreover, he had no influence or any moral ascendancy over them at all not only because he was facing charges and detained but also because he was no longer the regional governor of ARMM."

Even when he was still governor, Misuari said he has no control over his co-accused who were working directly under the Regional Cabinet Secretary of the ARMM Department of Education and Sports.

Misuari said the documents on the questioned transactions were not brought to him for review. He said they were reviewed, signed and approved by the Regional Cabinet Secretary of the Regional Department.

EWB

Sultan's ICC bid 'propaganda'

THE plan of an alleged a sultan from Marawi City to testify against President Rodrigo Duterte in a global court is a "propaganda proceeding" initiated by the Left, Malacañang said Tuesday.

"That's not an official proceeding. That's a propaganda proceeding by the Left," Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said in a Palace press briefing Tuesday afternoon.

Roque made the remark when asked to comment about the report of human rights group Karapatan saying Sultan Hamidullah Atar of Marawi City will attest before the International Peoples' Tribunal in opposition to the President.

According to Karapatan, Atar will testify on Sept. 18-19 at the IPT2018 in Brussels, Belgium. He will talk about the human rights violations allegedly committed under the Duterte administration during the Marawi City siege, and the declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

Roque, meanwhile, remains confident that the Sultan's testimony would not be a cause of concern on the part of the President. **Nat Mariano**

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GOVERNOR TURNS EMOTIONAL

Hataman: ARMM ready for transition

By Mario J. Mallari
and Elmer N. Manuel

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Gov. Mujiv Hataman yesterday declared they are now ready for the transition to a new Bangsamoro political entity following the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

At the Senate budget hearing, Hataman, stressed that the ARMM government will be leaving the region without any liability to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) which would succeed ARMM.

"We have zero liability, Mister Chairman," Hataman told Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who headed the budget deliberations along with Sen. Gregorio Honasan.

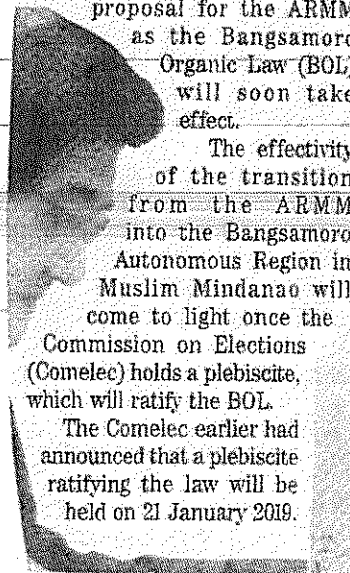
"We are now ready for the

transition," declared Hataman, who enumerated 24 milestones achieved during his seven-year tenure as ARMM governor.

Turning emotional, the governor noted that what he may be presenting is the last budget proposal for the ARMM as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) will soon take effect.

The effectivity of the transition from the ARMM into the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will come to light once the Commission on Elections (Comelec) holds a plebiscite, which will ratify the BOL.

The Comelec earlier had announced that a plebiscite ratifying the law will be held on 21 January 2019.



Proper goodbyes

Hataman, in his opening remarks, said that he wanted to be present at the budget hearing because he wished to at least say his goodbyes properly.

"Actually Mr. Chair, officially I am on leave. But I really want to come back. It seems hard that in six years we were together here and I won't even be able to say goodbye properly to you," said Hataman.

Asked by Lacson, vice chairman of the committee, on the legacy that will be left by the ARMM leadership, Hataman said they had learned a lot from the Senate during budget hearings.

"Especially to Sen. Ping, to the budget committee and the whole leadership of the Senate... I think in all of our budget hearings, we learned a lot from the Senate," said Hataman, noting that the ARMM only had an annual budget of P1 billion since he became governor, but it climbed to P10 billion in 2016 with the help of Congress.

"It happened not without reason, but because we regained the trust of the national government and the allocation of the funds was made clear," he added while his voice cracked, taking a slight pause.

We are now ready for the transition, declared Hataman, who enumerated 24 milestones achieved during his seven-year tenure as ARMM governor.

The governor said he even asked his staff if they really need to attend the hearing since they are just waiting for the ratification of the BOL. He said, however, that their proposed budget could be a guide for the new Bangsamoro region.

The BOL, which will replace the existing ARMM, was signed into law by President Rodrigo Duterte in July 2018.

It was the result of long years of negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Funds for transition

Lacson vowed to submit ARMM's proposed funding for 2019 before the plenary.

Complementing the ARMM's phase-out plans are the efforts of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace

Process (OPAPP) to oversee the transition to BTA, to be headed by the MILF.

But Secretary Jesus Dureza and deputy peace adviser Nabil Tan lamented the P6 billion cut in the OPAPP's proposed 2019 budget may affect the normalization phase of the peace agreement with the MILF.

The two stressed the urgency of restoring the cuts during the deliberations of the OPAPP's proposed P688.7-million budget for 2019.

"We need funding to cover the normalization process, but this was not approved by the DBM," said Tan, who also chairs the government implementing panel for the Bangsamoro accords, during the hearing.

Tan said the OPAPP is requesting P1.274 billion to cover the administrative transition from the ARMM to BTA.

On the other hand, Tan said the normalization process would require some P5.8 billion to fund the livelihood and other socio-

economic programs for the estimated 10,000 fighters of the MILF, who are going to put their weapons aside as agreed in various pacts with the government.



Higit 6K empleyado sa ARMM mawawalan ng trabaho sa BOL

Mahigit 6,000 empleyado ng Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) ang mawawalan ng trabaho sa sandaling ipatupad na ang Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Sa pagdirig kahapon ng Senate committee on Finance tungkol sa budget ng ARMM inungkal ni Sen. Panfilo Lacson ang magiging kapalaran ng mga empleyado sa sandaling malusaw na ito at mapalitan ng Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR).

Ayon kay ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman, hindi pa malinaw kung ano ang mangyayari sa mahigit nilang 6,000 empleyado.

"Well sir, may mga empleyado kaming matatanggal. Based doon sa batas 6,000 plus wala pa ring klaro ngayon," sabi ni Hataman.

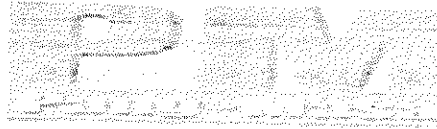
Nang tanungin ni Lacson kung saan pupunta ang nasabing mga empleyado, sinabi ni Hataman na kung tatanggapin nila ang bayad o separation pay, hindi sila maaring mag-aplay sa loob ng limang taon. Pero kung

hindi naman umano sila tatanggap ng bayad ay maaring mag-aplay sa ilalim ng BAR.

Nilinaw din ni Hataman na hindi nakapaloob sa kanilang pondo ngayong taon ang pambayad sa mga matalanggal na mga empleyado at hindi rin malinaw kung isinama ito sa 2019 panukalang budget.

Lumabas din sa pagdirig na walang utang na maiwan ang ARMM sa sandaling mapalitan na ito ng BAR at mayroon pa silang assets na maiwan na mahigit sa P1 bilyon. (Maio Escudero)

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6,000 ARMM EMPLOYEES MAWAWALAN NG TRABAHO

Nakatakda umanong mawalan ng trabaho ang mahigit 6,000 kawani ng Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) sa sandaling ipatupad na ang Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Ito ang ibinunyag ni ARMM Governor Mujiv Hataman sa pagdinig kahapon ng Senate Committee on Finance tungkol sa budget ng ARMM nang tanungin ni Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson ang magiging kapalaran ng mga empleyado ng ARMM sa sandaling malusaw na ito at mapalitan ng Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR).

Sinabi ni Hataman na hindi pa malinaw kung ano

ang posibleng mangyari sa mahigit nilang 6,000 na empleyado dahil wala pang malinaw base sa batas.

Nang tanungin ni Lacson kung saan pupunta ang nasabing mga empleyado ay sinabi ni Hataman na kung tatanggapin ang separation pay ng mga ito ay hindi sila maaring magaplay sa loob ng imang taon. Pero kung hindi naman umano sila tatanggap ng bayad ay maaaring magaplay sa ilalim ng BAR.

Nilinaw din ni Hataman na hindi nakapaloob sa kanilang pondo ngayong taon ang pambayad sa mga matatanggal na mga empleyado at hindi rin malinaw kung isinama ito sa 2019 panukalang budget.

Lumabas din sa pagdinig na walang utang na maiiwan ang ARMM sa sandaling mapalitan na ito ng BAR at mayroon pa silang assets na maiiwan na mahigit sa P1 bilyon.

Iniulat din ni Hataman na umabot sa \$2,525 na benepisyaryo ng 4Ps o Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program ang nahimila sa listahan sa buong ARMM kaya nakatipid ang gobyerno na aabot sa P600 milyon.

Bukod sa ginawang pag-iilimis sa mga benepisyaryo ng 4Ps, nawala na rin umano sa ARMM ang mga ghost students at ghost teachers na dati ay ginagastusan ng malaki ng gobyerno. *Malou Escudero*

COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA



Shift to natural gas

BARCELONA – While attending the 30th edition of the Gastech exhibition and conference being held here, the CNN kept us abreast about the onslaught back home in the Philippines of super typhoon “Ompong.” Called by its international name Mangkhut, Ompong was the strongest typhoon to hit our country this year. We had a smooth flight though when we left Manila for Spain last Friday night while Ompong has yet to make landfall in the Philippines.

As earlier feared, it left a swathe of destruction in Central and Northern Luzon’s food basket provinces of Cagayan and Benguet, before it exited the Ilocos region and moved out toward the South China Sea. Aside from the agriculture sector – not to mention loss of lives and properties – the strength of winds and rains unleashed by “Ompong” cut power supply in the affected areas, including Metro Manila.

As of this writing, the Department of Energy (DOE) reported all circuit outages are completely restored in the serviced areas of the Manila Electric Company (Meralco). Quoting the Meralco report to them, the DOE noted there are still 15,000 to 20,000 customers, or 0.23 percent to

0.30 percent of its total customers undergoing restoration.

Latest reports from the Task Force on Energy Resiliency (TFER) led by the DOE indicated that power supply has been restored in seven provinces hit by typhoon Ompong. These are Pangasinan, Batanes, Batangas, Laguna, Nueva Ecija, Quirino and Zambales.

Except for Batanes, the same provinces are the hosts of many big power plants that supply electricity in Luzon. Thus, it was not surprising that the electricity services were immediately restored because some of the big power plants, especially the base-load plants run by First Gen are easy start-up in case of disruption caused by a strong typhoon like Ompong.

Around 2,017 megawatt (MW) of power are supplied from four plants operated by First Gen Clean Energy Complex in Batangas City, namely, the 1,000 MW Sta. Rita and the 500 MW San Lorenzo combined cycle natural gas-fired power plants; the 420 MW San Gabriel and 97 MW Avion open cycle natural gas-fired power plants.

The Lopez-owned natural gas portfolio delivers 12.2 percent of the country’s gross generation last year alone.

The First Gen cites “the flexibility of these gas plants makes them crucial and complementary to the growing intermittent sources of energy as the world transforms to a full renewable energy (RE) future.” The company prides itself in the promotion of the use of natural gas as a clean, reliable and competitively priced fuel source.

In the case of First Gen, they source their natural gas directly from the Malampaya gas field in the West Philip-

But that led me to thinking where would China source its natural gas deposits? I dread to speculate.

pine Sea. The gas is transmitted through a subsea pipeline to Batangas where First Gen plants use it to generate the electricity reaching all the way to homes and establishments in Metro Manila and the rest of serviced areas in Luzon.

Aside from being a clean source of energy, natural gas adapts better to the fluctuating energy and typhoon or other events that disrupt power supply leading to blackouts. The DOE's Natural Gas Roadmap (2017-2040), in fact, has plans of making natural gas "the preferred fuel by all end-use sectors" by 2040.

Natural gas emits approximately 60 percent less carbon dioxide than coal. The electricity it generates has no by-products like ash, sludge and particulate matters suspended on

air that can cause harmful effects to people's health.

However, the natural gas supply situation in our country faces a dire future with the projected depletion of the Malampaya gas field by 2024. Definitely, there is a long waiting time for a new natural gas discovery in the West Philippine Sea, especially around the disputed overlapping maritime territories with other claimant countries in South China Sea. Unless a joint seismic exploration agreement is reached, it would be a long shot to have a new source of natural gas on stream any time sooner than desired.

If no new source of natural gas in the Philippines is developed and come on stream sooner than 2024 of the DOE's Roadmap, the next viable option is to import liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Attending the three-day Gastech conference being held here in the cosmopolitan capital city of Spain's Catalonia region, we found out the growing number of sellers and buyers in the gas industry is dramatically changing the energy landscape on a global scale. The opening ceremony of Gastech 2018 launching last Monday here was led no less by His Royal Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain.

The strong personal show of sup-

port by the Spanish King to the holding of this event – still having its political turmoil of carving its own independent Republic out of Spain – turned a little comic. Without giving any speech or opening remarks, King Felipe was ceremonially made to affix his signature digitally over a notepad. While the King's signing was being flashed over a panoramic-wide screen at the stage, the digital pen was not cooperating. The 50-year-old King took in stride the foul-up and simply went on with his ceremonial endorsement of the Gastech.

The conference here brought global players in the gas industry in the search for transitioning to this much cleaner and cheaper fuel but more reliable source of power than RE power from solar and wind energy. With the climate change phenomenon, our being a typhoon-prone country makes us always vulnerable to interrupted electricity supply as we have experienced anew for the nth time with super typhoons like Ompong. Thus, natural gas is the fuel of choice for energy security not just in the Philippines but in the world.

At the Gastech exhibits, we saw the latest state-of-the-art natural gas and LNG plants from the United States, Spain, Germany, other European nations, and even from Middle East countries like Qatar which is now one of the world's biggest producers and sellers of LNG. At the opening day of the conference here, top executives from the biggest producers of natural gas and LNG – each given only two minutes to speak – gave us a glimpse of the growth drivers for the global gas industry.

But the more interesting insights were those made by Zou Caineng, vice president of PetroChina research institute of petroleum exploration and development. An academician, Zou was explicit to underscore China's every intention to fully tap the huge natural gas deposits to decarbonize from years of use of coal and oil that seriously polluted their country's environment. Zou said the government of China wants to reduce its consumption from the present 61 percent carbon as primary energy source.

From what I understood from the translator, Zou believes the shift to the use of natural gas and LNG "will occupy 35 percent" of China's total consumption. But that led me to thinking, where would China source its shift to natural gas deposits? I dread to speculate. 9

★

THE harassment that journalist Julie Alipala of the Philippine Daily Inquirer is being subjected to because her story of the killing of seven persons in Patikul, Sulu contradicts the military version underscores once again the higher risks that reporters in the provinces face compared to those in Metro Manila.

A post in the Facebook wall of Phil Leaks dubs Julie as a certified paid hack who defends the terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf. The comments are irresponsible and vicious. Examples: Bong Media said, "Dapat ito ang na-ambush." Ricardo Macapagal said, "Tokhang 'yan."

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines issued a statement condemning "the dubious Facebook group Phil Leaks" and demanded that "Facebook take down the page Phil Leaks for endangering Alipala and other known critics of this Rodrigo Duterte government."

As of 6 p.m. yesterday, the post was still up but Facebook Philippines said it has already been referred to the appropriate group that is working on it.

Julie's story belies reports attributed to the military that last

Saturday, Sept. 15, seven members of the ASG who were Tausug were killed in a two-hour encounter in Barangay Bakoung, Patikul in Sulu.

Julie's report said the seven were not ASG. They were on their way to harvest lanzones and durian Friday. In fact, they were able to secure permit from the military to go their farmland in Sitio Tubig Baro in Barangay Kabuntakas in Patikul.

Julie said there were three witnesses who saw the seven arrested

*'Shooting the messenger
won't kill the truth.'*

HONESTLY SPEAKING

ELLEN TORDESILLAS

by Scout Rangers from the 32nd Infantry Battalion. The next day, they were all dead, their body riddled with bullets.

Julie quoted Mahmud Arula, a relative of the seven victims, declaring, "They were not terrorists. They were just trying to earn a living by harvesting their own trees inside that area."

Julie's colleagues rallied behind her. NUJP members in Zamboanga, Basilan and Sulu, having known Julie, said they take offense in allegations of corruption

against Julie.

NUJP Cagayan de Oro said, "While the military has insisted that the young men were killed in a 'legitimate encounter,' journalists worth their salt are duty-bound to present all sides of an incident."

They said they are not required to mouth the government's propaganda machine.

They called on authorities to check the background of the group behind the Phil Leaks Facebook Page as it "endangers the life of Ms. Alipala."

NUJP said: "Our colleague's life is endangered by the irresponsible claim and criminal act of the creators and administrators of this social media group. We demand that government authorities, including the Presidential Task Force on Media Security, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police investigate this attack and prosecute the perpetrators."

Whoever is harassing Julie should remember this: Shooting the messenger won't kill the truth.

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Email: ellentordesillas@gmail.com

BA

The local clergy war vs President Duterte

Luis Cardinal Tagle and several priests and nuns of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines are at war with President Rodrigo Duterte. The reason given by the clergy is its supposed perception that Duterte is out to become a dictator.

That is its official line but the real reason for the hostility is more personal and self-serving.

The Catholic clergy in the country enjoyed a great deal of power and influence under the administrations of mother and son presidents, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino and Benigno Aquino III.

Mrs. Aquino considered herself indebted to Manila's archbishop, Jaime Cardinal Sin. Sin instigated the "people power" revolt on EDSA in February 1986 which supported the military rebellion that compelled President Ferdinand Marcos to relinquish power to avoid needless bloodshed. As a consequence, Mrs. Aquino often consulted Sin and his priests and nuns for guidance, even in matters that were secular rather than religious.

Sin himself became a frequent presence at Malacañang and no appointment to a public office of considerable consequence was possible without his endorsement.

Members of the clergy were appointed to quiet but powerful positions. A nun was made a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission that drafted the sloppy 1987 Constitution in force today. One priest got a seat in the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board. He has the final say on whether a sex scene in a film was obscene or not.

Undoubtedly, the constitutionally mandated separation of Church and State was non-existent under Mrs. Aquino.

The clergy lost much of its power and influence in government when Mrs. Aquino left office in 1992, but it never got over its desire for its lost privileges. Despite its tax-exempt status allowed by the Constitution and the constitutionally mandated separation of Church and State notwithstanding, many priests and nuns still meddled in the affairs of the government.

Church propaganda disseminated during Masses through so-called "pastoral letters" undermined state projects the Church did not like. Catholic faithful who criticized Church meddling in government affairs



were branded as "false Catholics" or "heretics," in the same way the Old Spanish Inquisition terrorized the Catholic world in centuries past.

There was even a so-called "running priest" named Robert Reyes who supposedly ran publicized marathons to protest certain state policies.

After decades of being marginalized in the halls of power, the Church saw a chance to regain even part of its power and influence in Aquino III. He was, after all, his mother's son, and ought to be just as religious as his mother was — well, almost.

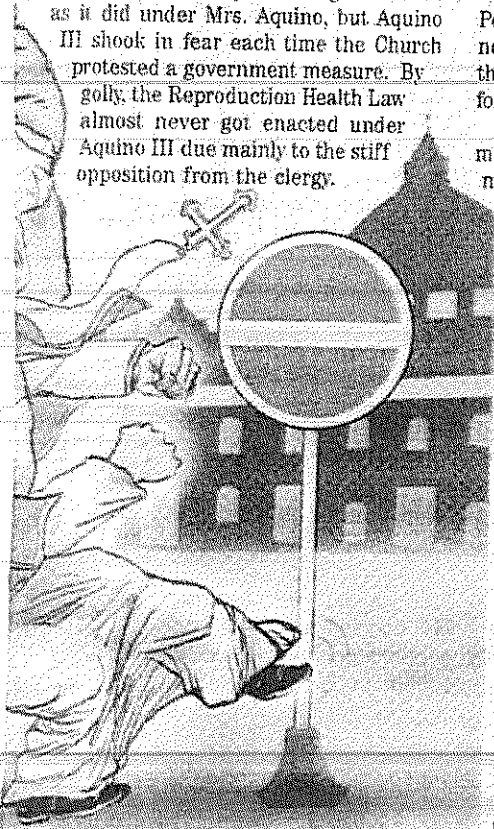
The Liberal Party (LP) also saw a political opportunity in Aquino III. This party enjoyed basking in the names of ex-President Diosdado Macapagal and the late Ninoy

Aquino. Famous names they were, but opportunistic politicians nonetheless.

Macapagal rigged the 1971 Constitutional Convention and connived with the Marcos martial law administration in exchange for a seat in the later aborted interim National Assembly. Ninoy began his political career in Tarlac as a local official elected under the Nacionalista Party. Because of Ninoy's opposition, Marcos was unable to recover Sabah from Malaysia when the latter was still too weak to resist the might of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

For mutual gain, the LP and the clergy joined forces to help Aquino III win the presidency in 2010. Under the dispensation of Aquino III, the LP dominated the political scene, with the clergy enjoying

a lifeline to the LP. The Church did not have the same say in the government as it did under Mrs. Aquino, but Aquino III shook in fear each time the Church protested a government measure. By golly, the Reproduction Health Law almost never got enacted under Aquino III due mainly to the stiff opposition from the clergy.



Hard times fell anew on the Church when President Duterte assumed office. This is a President who calls a spade a spade, and true to form, he called the clergy a meddling, troublesome lot composed of hypocrites, most of whom sired children in violation of their supposed vow of chastity.

Duterte has also called the clergy worshipers of an idiotic god of earthly power and wealth, instead of the one, true God he prays to. The priests quickly twisted the President's not so easy to fathom statement and declared to the anti-Duterte media that the President called God an idiot.

All the foregoing explains why the Catholic clergy has launched an all-out war against President Duterte. That war was manifested in many recent

newsworthy incidents.

Cardinal Tagle, who longs to become Pope someday, publicly urged law enforcers not to "play God," suggesting in the process that the Duterte government has no regard for human life.

There is Sister Patricia Fox, the meddlesome, opinionated Australian missionary nun who was ordered deported by the Bureau of Immigration for her involvement in political activities in the Philippines. Fox is an open supporter of ousted *de facto* Supreme Court Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, a known enemy of President Duterte. Despite Fox's insistence that she is not involved in Philippine politics, there is a photograph published by the news media showing Sereno cuddling up to a visibly pleased Sister Fox.

Another example concerns Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, the haughty ex-mutineer who is holed up in the Senate to avoid getting arrested after his amnesty, given to him earlier by then President Aquino III, was considered void by President Duterte. Trillanes is another known enemy of the President.

Despite their claim to being apolitical, priests and nuns rushed to

the Senate last week to console Trillanes. They called him a hero and hurled critical remarks at Duterte.

Three priests said Mass in Trillanes' office with no less than the "running priest" present to publicly heap praises upon Trillanes. A certain Father Manuel Gatchalian even prayed for ill health to befall on Duterte. *Ang kapal mo, Father!*

It clearly appears that clergymen the likes of Padre Damaso, the licentious, villainous priest in Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, are alive and kicking in Philippine society today.

“There was even a so-called “running priest” named Robert Reyes who supposedly ran publicized marathons to protest certain state policies.”

EDITORIAL

A good choice

A HIGHLY-decorated military general's sterling qualities and outstanding performance may yet take him to a very vital civilian post after his mandatory retirement on October 15.

President Duterte has already offered to Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista, a former chief of the Presidential Security Group, the post of National Food Authority (NFA) administrator.

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

NFA Administrator Jason Aquino has asked Duterte to relieve him from his post because he can no longer cope with the workload amid the shortage of cheap state-subsidized rice in the country.

With the existence of hoarders and profiteers in various parts of the country, appointing a military general to the top NFA post is a welcome development at this time of economic hardship.

This, we think, is ample proof that President Duterte is fed up with the nefarious activities of unscrupulous traders, who want to enrich themselves at the expense of the country's consumers.

As a military officer, General Bautista is in a position to go after those behind the artificial rice shortage and the skyrocketing prices of the main staple of the suffering Filipino people.

Justifying his appointment of retired military and police officers to civilian positions, the hard-hitting Chief Executive from Davao City said he wants people who will follow his orders.

"If my orders are not followed, I'd rather retire," said Duterte whose priorities include, aside from fighting illegal drugs, graft and corruption and criminality, food security.

With Bautista at the helm of the NFA, there should be reasons to expect the best in the days ahead.

ONLINE NEWS
19 SEPTEMBER 2018

Army brings relief goods to Ompong-affected provinces

By Priam Nepomuceno September 18, 2018, 1:44 pm

MANILA -- As the government mobilizes its resources to help communities ravaged by Typhoon Ompong in Northern Luzon, the Philippine Army (PA) on Monday said six of its Russian-made cargo trucks have transported 822 sacks of rice donated by Davao City to Cagayan.

This was disclosed by Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, noting that the vehicles also carried relief goods, which were repacked at the Isabela-headquarters of the 5th Infantry Division.

"The PA had exerted all effort for interventions in coordination with concerned government agencies to save precious lives and properties," he added.

Villanueva added that during post-disaster response operation, the PA also played a key role in disaster relief by transporting relief goods and basic subsistence badly needed by affected communities.

He added that the Army has the mandate to support the government as part of its humanitarian assistance and disaster relief initiatives to mitigate the impact of disasters. *(PNA)*

Galvez feted with prestigious Bulacan award

By Priam Nepomuceno September 18, 2018, 1:45 pm



Photo courtesy of AFP Public Affairs Office.

MANILA --- For his outstanding service to the military profession, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Carlito G. Galvez, Jr. was awarded Bulacan's "Gawad Dangal ng Lipi" in ceremonies in Malolos City Monday.

AFP public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato said the award was given to recognize Bulacan's exceptional sons and daughters.

Galvez is a native of Bustos town and was honored for loyalty, courage, and dedication in the military profession, manifesting the qualities of an outstanding public servant.

Bulacan Governor Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado and Vice Governor Daniel R. Fernando and Chairman Herminio S. Esguerra of Dangal ng Bulacan Foundation, Inc. presented the plaque of recognition to the AFP chief.

The citation reads "buong tapang niyang sinuong ang mga hamon na nagtangkang sirain ang kapayapaan at integridad ng ating bansa at matagumpay niya itong nahadlangan (he bravely faced and triumphed over those who tried to undermine the country's peace and integrity)."

The 50th AFP chief was also recognized for leading the First Scout Ranger Battalion against the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Sulu and Basilan when he was still the commander of Western Mindanao Command.

Among his feats was the successful liberation of Marawi; neutralization of ASG Leader Isnilon Hapilon and Maute brothers; and as Commander of 6th Infantry Division that pursued peace initiatives with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

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

Galvez was among 14 awardees recognized in their own fields of expertise, which include Public Service, Professional, Community Service, Entrepreneur, Education, Science and Technology, Arts and Culture, Trade and Industry, Health, Agriculture, and Sports.

“This is an important award as it recognizes and validates the hard work we, as public servants, dedicate to our nation. With this, I pledge to continue to serve our country with professionalism, honesty, and integrity with the goal of achieving the AFP’s mission towards a peaceful and secure Philippines,” he added. **(PNA)**