

Duterte to read water firms' letters before public

MANILA -- President Rodrigo Duterte will read before the public the letters of the water concessionaires expressing willingness to revisit the supposed onerous concession agreements, Malacañang said on Wednesday.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the President decided to read the letters of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. as signed by their owners, businessmen Manuel V. Pangilinan and Fernando Zobel de Ayala, respectively, for "transparency."

"The Chief Executive will read the letters of Maynilad and Manila Water before the public for transparency and to show that all the steps being undertaken by the government in resolving this issue with the two Metro Manila water concessionaires are aboveboard and legitimate," Panelo said in a statement.

Panelo said the President will also review the practical and legal consequences of the situation before making his next move.

He noted that President also wanted to speak with all government lawyers involved in the drafting of the existing concession agreements to determine why they allowed the onerous provisions.

"These companies not only have inefficiently delivered water to the households but exacted unconscionable amounts from the taxpayers," Panelo said.

Meanwhile, Panelo welcomed the letter of Manila Water which states that it will no longer pursue its claims in the amount of PHP7.39 billion against the government and that it will defer the implementation of their supposed water

charge increase.

He also acknowledged how Maynilad president and chief executive officer Ramoncito Fernandez bared in a legislative hearing that they will no longer pursue its arbitral award in 2017 in the amount of PHP3.4 billion against the government.

"The Filipino people have just been protected from paying a total amount of at least PHP10.8 billion, an obligation which has no legal basis, to private entities," Panelo said.

"Once again, the President exercising political will, coupled with his ability to ascertain inequities in contract law as well as his character to identify with the plight of the ordinary Filipinos, has protected their interest, in obedience to the

Wounded troops get Christmas gifts

MANILA -- In recognition of their service to the country, Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana gave Christmas gifts to 36 soldiers who were wounded in action.

The gift-giving took place at the Army General Hospital in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, said PA spokesperson Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala.

The activity is part of the DND Christmas tradition project called "K A P A G D A K A " (Kapakanan at Gabay sa Dating Kaanyuan) that promotes the welfare of persons with disabilities particularly with the soldiers who were injured during their mission.

PA chief Lt. Gen. Gilbert Gapay assisted Lorenzana in the giving of grocery items and cash incentives to the 36 wounded soldiers, who were with their dependents.

"Ito po'y nagbibigay sa amin ng tuwa at

constitutional command to serve and protect the people," he added.

In a hearing at the House of Representatives, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) deputy administrator for engineering Leonor Cleofas said it has revoked the resolution extending the concession agreement with Maynilad Water and Maynila.

Cleofas said the decision to revoke the resolution adopted in 2008 was reached during a board meeting last December 5.

The board resolution extended the concession agreements with the water companies by another 15 years from 2022 to 2037.

Duterte's quarrel with water concessionaires and government lawyers started after the government was ordered by the Singapore arbitration court to pay for the two water concessionaires damages.

The President earlier threatened to file economic sabotage cases against all involved in the crafting of the water deals and asked Department of Justice and Office of the Solicitor General to craft new water concession agreements that are "favorable to the State and the Filipino people".

He also threatened to expropriate the operation of water facilities if he is not satisfied with the explanation of water concessionaires and government lawyers on the supposed onerous water concession deals. (PNA)

moral na kami po ay nabibigyan ng pamasako. Kami po ay nagpasalamat sa mga binigay niya na aginaldo. Kami rin po ay natutuwa na kami po ay binigyan niya ng pansin at halaga (This gives us happiness and boosts our morale. We thank them for these Christmas gifts. We are happy because we feel that we are valued and given attention)," Sgt. Renato Eucogco, who is currently recovering at the hospital after he lost his legs during the Marawi Siege in 2017, said.

The DND chief said "KAPAGDAKA" also has additional programs like the distribution of wheelchairs and assistive devices; livelihood trainings for wounded-in-action (WIA) soldiers and their dependents; skills development opportunities to equip the WIA as they return or get discharged from the service; and other future

programs that will further provide assistance to the wounded troops.

"Let me express my most serious thanks to you all for your great service to the nation, even risking your lives to serve our country and the people. I hope that you find comfort with the assurance that the government is at your back to support you and your families. You may have lost or injured a part of your body, but your spirit has definitely become stronger," Lorenzana added. (PNA)

Palace orders X'mas assistance for B'gay Officials

President Rody Duterte issued a directive recently under EO 99 giving assistanceto barangay officials for their economic empowerment this Yuletide season.

PDU30 noted that under the Local

TESDA amends housekeeping training regulations

MANILA -- The amended training regulations (TRs) for Technical Education and Skills Development Authority's (TESDA) Housekeeping NC III and IV qualifications will take effect in 2020.

"This (amended TRs) will take effect for the delivery of training programs, assessment, and certification within one year after the conduct of Regional Lead Assessor (RLA)," TESDA information officer Rogelio Llovit said Wednesday.

The RLA, Llovit said, is an activity wherein assessors would be trained and oriented about the details of the amended TR.

The RLA is being organized and will be conducted as soon as possible, he added.

Llovit said it is still possible to have the RLA before yearend, and TESDA just needs to gather the assessors from around the country.

In a statement on Tuesday, TESDA Secretary Isidro Lapeña said the revised TRs aim to further promote qualifications and competencies that are in-demand and environment-friendly, and ensure their compliance with prevailing industry standards.

"The demand and skills requirements of

hotel and restaurant businesses are constantly changing, and so TESDA should also keep up with the training we provide," Lapeña said.

Training hours were expanded from 76 hours to 264 hours for Housekeeping NC III, and from 112 hours to 357 hours for Housekeeping NC IV.

Further, the training would include competencies in planning and scheduling routine maintenance, repairs of physical assets, planning and managing housekeeping services for guests, managing lost and found

procedures, managing inventory, storage and issuance of linen and uniform, and managing laundry/valet service.

Graduates of these qualifications may also be hired as public area supervisor, linen/uniform supervisor and laundry supervisor, according to TESDA.

NC IV graduates may also become housekeeping assistant manager, housekeeping manager, head housekeeper, assistant housekeeper administrator, assistant executive housekeeper, and laundry manager, it added. (PNA)

Private firms have until Dec. 24 to give 13th-month pay: DOLE

MANILA -- Private sector employers have until Christmas Eve to release the 13th-month pay of their workers, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said Wednesday.

"This is a reminder to our employers not to forget. The law is clear that you have to give your employees on or before Christmas Day their 13th-month pay. It doesn't matter if you're earning or not, you are mandated by law. Employees are entitled to 13th-month pay on or before December 25. There are other employers who released half of it middle of the year but they should give it," Bello said in an interview.

He added that the benefit cannot be given in kind. "It can't be. It should be given in cash," he said.

However, Bello said companies hit by calamities are exempted from giving the cash benefit.

Under Presidential Decree 851, private sector workers should be given a 13th-month pay that should be released not later than December 24.

However, an employer may give to his or her employees half of the 13th-month pay before the opening of the regular school year and the remaining half on or before December 24 every year. (PNA)

ayapa and other workers are covered by the program. The budget for the social-assistance program will be charged against available funds of the barangays subject to budgeting, accounting

and auditing laws and regulations.

Duterte said: The Yuletide season is an opportune time to come up with programs in recognition of the service of barangay officials. **(Daniel TenoriaFabros)**