

PNP units ordered to observe water conservation measures

MANILA -- The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Thursday ordered all of its units in areas affected by water shortage to observe conservation measures.

PNP chief, Gen. Oscar Albayalde, has ordered an inspection to prevent wasteful or unnecessary water usage in police facilities.

Albayalde also directed PNP units to assist barangay authorities in maintaining order and crowd control in rationing points to allow the efficient and orderly distribution of water to affected residents.

"Local PNP units are directed to ensure safety and security of water service providers against unruly crowd and persons who may want to provoke chaos in the water distribution

points," the PNP chief said in a statement.

PNP spokesperson, Col. Bernard Banac, said police units will also be on the lookout for unauthorized tampering or pilferage of water from fire hydrants and main water lines.

Banac earlier called on residents affected by water service interruption in various areas to stay calm, noting that police officers are ready to assist local government units and communities in the distribution of water being conducted by concessionaire Manila Water and fire trucks of the Bureau of Fire Protection.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) assured sufficient water supply in jail facilities for inmates to maintain proper hy-

giene and prevent the spread of diseases.

BJMP spokesperson Chief Insp. Xavier Solda said they have coordinated with Maynilad, as well as the Bureau of Fire Protection, for water supply assistance and they also procured drums for water stocking in their jail facilities.

"Fortunately, for BJMP facilities in Metro Manila, wala kaming problema sa tubig (we don't have problems with water supply)... We assure the public, the families ng PDLs (Persons Deprived of Liberty) that our water supply is enough. The BJMP is ready for it," he said.

He also said the BJMP has enough supply of medicine to be used for treating summer diseases among inmates. (PNA)

DBM recommends issuance of EO for state workers' pay hike

MANILA -- The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has recommended to Malacañang the issuance of an executive order (EO) to implement the fourth tranche of salary hike for state workers.

This, as Congress has yet to submit to the Palace the enrolled copy of the PHP3.757-trillion 2019 national budget, amid allegations that members of the House of Representatives made some changes on the Bicameral Conference Committee-approved national budget.

Since the government is operating on a reenacted budget to date, DBM officer in charge and Undersecretary Janet Abuel said they cannot implement the fourth tranche of the wage increase scheduled for this year.

Thus, she cited the need for "some additional recommendations for funding."

"But definitely we would like to allay the fears of government employees that the reenactment would prevent the grant

but that would require an Executive Order to be issued by the President, which the DBM has already recommended," she said in a press briefing Wednesday.

Amid the budget impasse, Abuel said economic officials "are hoping for the enactment of the 2019 GAA."

DBM officials have said that the last tranche of pay hike under the Sal-

ary Standardization Law (SSL) of 2015 will require about PHP45 to PHP50 billion.

Compensation adjustments for employees of national government agencies will be sourced from the national budget while for those belonging to government-owned and controlled corporations, the budget has to come from their respective corporate funds. (PNA)

Manila court okays Ressa travel plea, resets arraignment

MANILA -- The Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) on Thursday reset the arraignment of Rappler chief executive officer Maria Ressa and writer Reynaldo Santos Jr. on cyber libel charges, from April 12 to April 16.

In an order issued Thursday, Manila RTC Branch 46 Judge Rainelda Estacio-Montesa also granted Ressa's lawyers request for per-

mission to travel abroad upon the posting of a travel bond.

The court also granted Ressa's motion to travel to Singapore and San Francisco, USA from March 15 to 29; to New York from April 2 to 14 and from April 21 to 28.

Ressa was initially ordered to post a PHP500,000 bond but the defense counsels requested to reduce the sum to PHP300,000 or

SC junks complaint vs. de Castro

MANILA -- The Supreme Court (SC) has dismissed for lack of basis an administrative complaint against retired chief justice Teresita Leonardo-de Castro.

In its resolution dated January 22, the High Court, through Associate Justice Marvic Leonen, turned down the complaint filed by litigants complaining of delay in the disposition of cases pending before the court.

Ruling in favor of de Castro, who retired on October 10 last year, the High Court pointed out that charges against magistrates of the court cannot be made lightly.

"To hold a magistrate administratively liable for gross ignorance of the law, it is not enough that his or action was erroneous; it must also be proven that it was driv-

en by bad faith, dishonesty, or ill motive," the SC said, adding that "there is no showing of prima facie case against her."

The Court en banc added that de Castro's mandatory retirement on Oct. 10, 2018 also rendered the complainants' administrative complaint moot.

The case was filed by Elvira N. Enalbes, Rebecca H. Angeles, and Estelita B. Ocampo, who accused de Castro of gross ignorance of the law, gross inefficiency, gross misconduct, gross dishonesty, and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service for the latter's alleged failure to decide despite the lapse of more than five years two separate petitions filed by Eligio P. Mallari and his wife Marcelina in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

The Court ruled that the complainants' arguments, which relied on Article VIII, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution requiring the Supreme Court to decide on cases within 24 months from their submission, lack merit.

It noted that as stated in the 1987 Constitution and the Internal Rules of Court, the reckoning of the 24-month period begins only when the last pleading, brief, or memorandum has been submitted before it.

The Court held that "(w)hile the 24-month period provided under the 1987 Constitution is persuasive, it does not summarily bind this Court to the disposition of cases brought before it. It is a mere directive to ensure this Court's prompt resolution of cases, and should not be interpret-

ed as an inflexible rule."

The Court ruled that it, being the court of last resort, "should be given an ample amount of time to deliberate on cases pending before it.

Ineluctably, leeway must be given to magistrates for them to thoroughly review and reflect on the cases assigned to them. This Court note(s) that all matters brought before it involves rights, which are legally demandable and enforceable. It would be at the height of injustice if cases were hastily decided on at the risk of erroneously dispensing justice."

"Ultimately, courts must strike an objective and reasonable balance in disposing cases promptly, while maintaining judicious tenacity in interpreting and applying the law," it added. (PNA)

CPP-NPA-NDF derail PH progress: PCOO exec

MANILA -- Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Undersecretary Lorraine Marie Badoy on Wednesday said the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, and National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) derail progress in the Philippines.

"For over 50 years, we were held hostage and we had no idea that we were in such dire straits. For every one step we took forward, we were held back three steps; and how ever hard we tried, we couldn't seem to make any progress," Badoy said in a press briefing.

Badoy commended President Rodrigo R. Duterte for issuing Executive Order No. 70 creating the National Task Force to End the Communist Insurgency.

"The only Philippine President who has taken on the country's real problems has taken on this huge problem at a level no other president has -- whole of nation and by going to the very roots of the problem and hacking those roots off," she said.

She said one of the roots is the funding the CPP-NPA-NDF has been getting through their legal fronts like the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Ka-

paratan and the IBON Foundation.

"To be able to get such funds, it was necessary that they paint such a dire picture of the country and to pull numbers and statistics out of thin air to for instance make the war on drugs seem like a bloodbath with their latest made up number, 30,000 killed; and to make a wildly popular, highly trusted President seem like a butcher, a dictator, a misogynist," Badoy said.

"In order to perpetrate this scam, the Joma Sison-led terrorist group, the CPP-NPA-NDF had to keep the poor so poor and to create havoc and obstruct progress," she added.

Badoy said the Philippine government delegation who went to the European Union (EU) explained this scheme by the communist rebels.

"The money that

they thought was going to the poorest of the poor was in fact being funneled into the pockets of Joma Sison and his cohorts; and that in effect, they were funding terrorism and poverty in our country. Money they had given out of the generosity of their hearts had been used to sow and perpetuate grief and hardship," she said.

"We therefore went there to ask that they stop funding terrorism in our country," she added.

Badoy said the military have seen the abuses committed by the CPP-NPA-NDF such as extortion and arson for failure to pay revolutionary taxes, rape, pillage, violation of indigenous people's rights, mass murders, and torture and "then to put the blame on government, to paint faithful public servants as traitors".