

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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IN THE NEWS

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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Miners condemn killing of Canadian hostage

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) on Friday condemned the killing of John Ridsdel by the Abu Sayyaf and demanded that the government bring the perpetrators to swift and heavy justice.

"We are devastated by his senseless and grisly death at the hands of the Abu Sayyaf. John did not deserve such fate," the statement said.

The statement came as the Armed Forces mounted an all-out-offensive against the bandit group on orders of President Aquino, whose term ends in less than two months.

Ridsdel was beheaded by Abu Sayyaf bandits, who demanded ransom for his and three other kidnap victims' release.

The incident is considered a big blow to the government's campaign against lawless groups.

In a statement, COMP said Ridsdel was well-aware of the dangers he faced in the Philippines having been involved in a mining operation in Zamboanga del Norte for many years as a consultant for a local mining company.

"Despite knowing the danger, Ridsdel's love for the Philippines prompted him to stay and retire in the country appreciating its innate beauty and believing in its people. "It is unfortunate, for all that John had given, he only encountered the darkest of what we have," COMP added.

The group said Ridsdel's murder must serve as a wake-up call for everyone and re-awakens the commitment to help ensure peace and prosperity in Mindanao and the country as a whole.

"We condole with John's family in this time of indescribable grief. And we are one with all countries in condemning terrorism and will continue to raise our voices against acts that impede on our freedom and our divine right to life," the statement said.

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Albay named int'l model for sustainable dev't

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Ramon Paje lauded the province of Albay on being named the country's third biosphere reserve, which makes the province a model of sustainable development by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Paje said the designation gives due recognition to the province's commitment to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

"Albay's recognition as a UNESCO biosphere reserve is a tribute to the outstanding efforts of its people as well as its local leaders to live harmoniously with nature, to respect the environment, and to take responsibility for its rich natural resources," Paje said.

"If every community completely owns up to the care of its ecosystem, then a huge part of our country's resources is already secured for the future generations of Filipinos," he added.

Albay's inclusion in the list of biosphere reserves was announced on March 19 during a two-day meeting in Lima, Peru, following the recommendation of the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) program.

Albay Governor Joey Salceda personally received the award. "This award means very much to the people and government of Albay."

He assured the International Coordinating Council of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program that Albay will always be a "champion of sustainable development."

The MAB, set up in the early 1970s, aims to improve the "interaction between people and their natural environment on a global scale."

Biosphere reserves are internationally recognized as models of sustainable development, which provide "living observatories" for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

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Grace, Miriam get thumbs up from environment watchdog

By **CHITO A. CHAVEZ**

Presidential candidates Senators Grace Poe and Miriam Defensor Santiago gained praises from a waste and pollution watchdog group for their strong positions in upholding the incineration ban.

The EcoWaste Coalition lauded the two women presidential aspirants for their clear-cut stance to enforce the ban on waste incineration that is enshrined in two major environmental laws: Republic Act 8749, or the Clean

Air Act, and Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

Through a questionnaire on wastes and toxics, the Quezon City based group asked presidential bets what steps they would take to stem the continuing violation of the incineration ban and what initiatives they would embark on to strengthen both laws.

In her response, Poe, without mincing words, stated "only technologies that do not constitute incineration will be approved," adding that she will

"shut down existing incinerators that managed to circumvent the incineration ban."

For her part, Santiago said she will "immediately rescind the guideline that allows waste-to-energy facilities" to burn trash to generate electricity.

The guideline, which is being crafted by the National Solid Waste Management Commission, drew the ire of environmentalists as this will undermine the incineration ban and open the floodgates to burn technologies.

On the other hand, the group

found the response of Daang Matuwid candidate Mar Roxas disappointingly pro-incineration.

Roxas said that "as a general rule, laws must not ban technologies," citing that "the Supreme Court decision has clarified that what is banned is incineration that emits toxic fumes," which he said "must be strictly enforced."

Contrary to his views, the EcoWaste Coalition stressed there is no such thing as a pollution-free incinerator and that such facilities, including

their modern variants inevitably emit noxious and carcinogenic pollutants to the environment either via the smokestack or the ash generated by the combustion process.

The EcoWaste Coalition lamented the ironic absence of responses to the survey from Vice President Jejomar Binay and Mayor Rodrigo Duterte whose long experiences running their respective cities should have given them more informed perspectives on how to tackle the waste crisis responsibly.

The Manila Times

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MAYNILAD STATEMENT

Water discoloration traced to manganese

BY NELSON S. BADILLA
REPORTER

THE Maynilad Water Services, Inc. has admitted that the water it distributes in the southern part of Metro Manila was contaminated with high level of manganese.

Despite the problem, which might affect the health of their users, Maynilad made the assurance to the affected customers that the water supply being distributed is

still within the parameters set by the Philippine National Standards for Drinking Water.

However, Maynilad was very quick to put the blame of the con-

tamination on the Laguna Lake.

In a statement that came from the office of Madel Zaide, head of the Media Relations, Corporate Communications, Commercial, and Marketing Division of Maynilad, Maynilad stressed that "The water discoloration being observed by some of our customers in the south is due to the presence of high manganese level in the raw water supply that we are getting from Laguna Lake."

"Since the onset of the strong El Niño beginning the last quarter of 2015, the water level in Laguna

Lake has been steadily decreasing. The high temperature brought on by the summer season further exacerbated the quality of raw water in the lake," Maynilad further pointed out.

Maynilad explained that "The sharp decline in the water level in Laguna Lake causes more sediments, such as manganese and other mineral deposits, to enter our water treatment facility."

It indicated that the affected customers should not worry anymore as the company has started to address the situation.

"We are continuously adjusting our operations in our treatment facility to fully contain the level of dissolved manganese," Maynilad said.

"We are also conducting flushing activities in areas where there have been reports of water discoloration," the company added.

Maynilad assured the public that "Through these measures, we hope to fully address the water discoloration within the next few days."

"We will continue to provide updates as and when necessary. Meanwhile, we advise our affected customers to put a clean cloth over

your faucet to filter the water and/or to let the water stand for a few hours to let the manganese settle to the bottom of the container," Maynilad added.

Meanwhile, Maynilad asked the affected customers to contact the Maynilad Hotline 1626 so that they "can send our field personnel to obtain water samples from their homes."

"We will test the samples in our Central Laboratory to ensure that their water supply meets the water safety standards of the Department of Health," it added.

PILIPINO MAMIROR

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AMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

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2 ILLEGAL HUNTERS KULONG

TIMBOG sa pinagsanib na elemento ng Palawan Provincial Intelligence Branch (PIB) Regional Public Safety Battalion (RPSB) at Regional Intelligence Branch (RID) ang dalawang notoryus na illegal hunters makaraang magsagawa ang mga ito ng pagsalakay sa Calaut Safari Park, Brgy. New Quezon, Busuanga, Palawan.

Base sa isinumiteng ulat ni PIB Chief PSupt. Vicente Cabatingan, kay Palawan PNP Provincial Director Benjamin Acorda Jr., nakilala ang naarestong suspek na sina Luis Gabiola, at isang Virgilio Aversoza, pawang mga residente ng naturang lugar.

Nakumpiska sa pag-iingat ng mga suspek ang 2 piraso ng Home-made Shotgun, 2 Improvised Barrel, 4 piraso ng Lower Receiver/Trigger Assembly, mga bala at basyo nito, 3 bote ng dynamite, 8 metro ng time fuse, 2 blasting caps, 8 piraso ng lower jaw bones, Wild Boar, (Calamian Deer) at 7 piraso ng dried skin nito.

Sinasabi sa ulat na isinagawa ni Cabatingan ang pagsalakay dakong alas-4:30 ng umaga

bitbit ang Search Warrant na ipinalabas ni Hon. Judge Usman bundod na rin ng ilang magkakasunod na natatanggap umanong reklamo ng mga ito kaugnay ng isinasagawang mga illegal na operasyon ng mga suspek sa lugar.

Kaugnay nito, paglabag sa RA-9147- (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act) RA-8550 (Illegal Fishing) at RA-10591 (Firearms and Ammunitions Regulatory Act) ang isinampang kaso ng pulisya sa piskalya laban sa naarestong mga suspek.

Samantala, naaresto rin ni Cabatingan at kanyang mga tauhan ang itinuturong No.7 Most Wanted Person (Provincial Level) na si Joseph Casipong, 39, binata sa kanyang tirahan sa Sitio Stockpile, Brgy. Dumarao, Roxas, Palawan bandang alas 6:00 ng gabi.

Lumilitaw na nahaharap sa kasong Murder ang suspek makaraang pagsasaksakin nito hanggang sa mapatay ang biktimgang si Jessel Cortes noong nakaraang ika-12 ng buwan ng Pebrero taon 2009 sa Sitio Cororoy, Brgy. Calawag, Taytay, Palawan.

DICK GARAY

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El Niño drying up Asia as sister La Niña looms

TEMERLOH, Malaysia—Withering drought and sizzling temperatures from El Niño have caused food and water shortages and ravaged farms across Asia, and experts warn of a double-whammy of possible flooding from its sibling, La Niña.

The current El Niño, which began last year, has been one of the strongest ever, leaving the Mekong River at its lowest level in decades, causing food-related unrest in the Philippines, and smothering vast regions in a months-long heat wave often topping 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

Economic losses in Southeast Asia could top \$10 billion, IHS Global Insight told AFP.

The regional fever is expected to break by mid-year but fears are growing that an equally forceful La Niña will follow.

That could bring heavy rain to an already flood-prone region, exacerbating agricultural damage and leaving crops

vulnerable to disease and pests.

"The situation could become even worse if a La Niña event which often follows an El Niño strikes towards the end of this year," Stephen O'Brien, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and relief, said this week.

He said El Niño had already left 60 million people worldwide requiring "urgent assistance," particularly in Africa.

Wilhemina Pelegrina, a Greenpeace campaigner on agriculture, said La Niña could be "devastating" for Asia, bringing possible "flooding and landslides that could affect food production."

El Niño is triggered by periodic oceanic warming in the eastern Pacific Ocean that can trigger drought in some regions, heavy rain in others.

Much of Asia has been punished by a bone-dry heat wave marked by record-high temperatures, threatening the livelihoods of countless millions.

Vietnam, one of the world's top rice exporters, has been particularly hard-hit by

its worst drought in a century.

In the economically vital Mekong Delta bread basket, the mighty river's vastly reduced flow has left up to 50 percent of arable land affected by salt-water intrusion that harms crops and can damage farmland, said Le Anh Tuan, a professor of climate change at Can Tho University.

More than 500,000 people are short of drinking water, while hotels, schools and hospitals are struggling to maintain clean-water supplies.

Neighboring Thailand and Cambodia also are suffering, with vast areas short of water and Thai rice output curbed.

In Malaysia, the extreme weather has shrunk reservoirs, dried up agricultural lands, forced water rationing in some areas, and caused repeated school closures as a health precaution.

Fisherman Abdul Rafar Matarrh said his daily catch in central Malaysia's Pahang River has been decimated as the normally broad river has shrunk to a third its size, leaving dead fish to rot in the dry bed. **AFP**

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El Niño dries up farms in Asia as its stormy sister La Niña looms

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The regional fever is expected to break by midyear but fears



A FARMER looks at the dry corn field due to hot weather intensified by the El Niño phenomenon in Tuguegarao, Cagayan Province. RICHARD A. REYES

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EL NIÑO DRIES UP FARMS IN ASIA ...

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"Last year I could catch about 20 kilos of fish a day. Now, to get 1 kilo is very hard," said Abdul Rafar, 80, after netting just one small fish in an entire morning under an unforgiving sun.

In India, about 330 million people are at risk from water shortages and crop damage, the government said recently, and blazing temperatures have been blamed for scores of heatstroke deaths and dead livestock. **AFP**

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El Niño dries up Asia

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Residents wait for their ration of drinking water in Yangon, Myanmar yesterday.

EPA

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

El Niño dries up PH, rest of Asia as its stormy sister La Niña looms

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That could bring heavy rain ►7

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Millions left out to dry

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In India, about 330 million people are at risk from water shortages and crop damage, the government said recently, and blazing temperatures have been blamed for scores of heat-stroke deaths and dead livestock.

Authorities in Palau warned recently the tiny Pacific island nation could completely dry up soon in a "total water outage".

'Things will get worse'

As a result, rice prices have risen this year but the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and other experts say a major food crisis is not yet imminent as stocks remain ample.

But warning signs have already emerged – two people were killed in early April in the drought-ravaged Kidapawan City in North Cotabato when police reportedly clashed with thousands of farmers protesting over food shortages.

With La Niña looming, the situation has laid bare the region's lack of preparedness for the extreme weather swings expected to result from climate change, said Rajiv Biswas, Asia-Pacific Chief Economist at IHS Global Insight.

"What tends to happen is that they (governments) talk about it in the immediate time there is a crisis and then one year later they forget about it and move on," he said, adding that "things will get worse."

More investment is needed in agricultural infrastructure, irrigation and water storage systems, desalination technologies and insurance coverage for farmers, he said.

Calling the global situation "truly alarming," the UN's O'Brien said Tuesday this year's El Niño spotlights the need for global cooperation to brace against the extreme weather.

"We must respond quickly to immediate, life-threatening needs, but we must also help people to become more self-reliant, and build individual and community capacity to respond to future shocks," he said.



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Gov't workers to get mid-year bonus next month

Government personnel will get their mid-year bonus totaling P31 billion next month, Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said yesterday.

He said the one-month mid-year bonus for most state officials and employees would

be tax-free.

"Eight in every 10 civilian personnel will receive their bonus in full, or tax-free under Republic Act No. 10653, which provides that gross annual benefits not exceeding P82,000

By JESS DIAZ

shall be tax-exempt," he said.

Abad pointed out that those who would get their mid-year incentive in full include 970,943 personnel holding Salary Grades 1 to 16. He added the bonus should be paid not

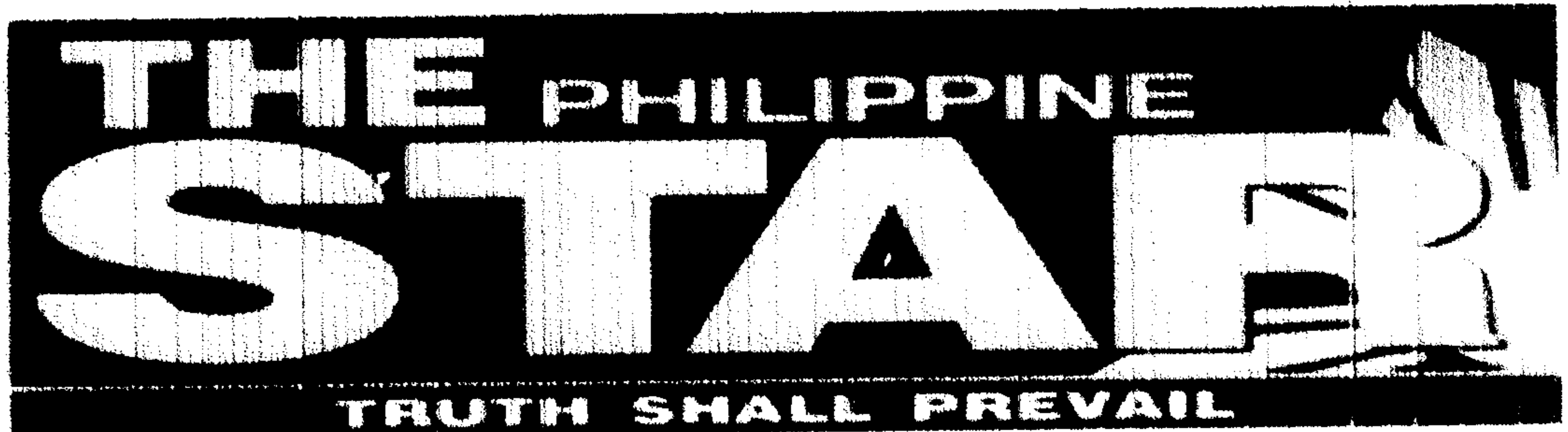
later than May 15.

The grant of the incentive is mandated under Executive Order No. 201, which President Aquino issued last Feb. 19 to fulfill a promise to upgrade salary rates in the bureaucracy.

Aquino had submitted to Congress a draft of the proposed Salary Standardization Law 4 as the enabling authority for the adjustment, but lawmakers failed to approve it.

The fate of the proposed law

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Gov't From Page 1

now rests with Aquino's successor and the next Congress.

Abad said funds for the mid-year bonus would be taken from agency allocations for salaries.

"The funding requirement for casuals and contractual personnel shall be charged against the agency lump sum appropriation from which the salaries of these employees are drawn," he said.

To be entitled to the bonus, an employee must have rendered at least a total or an aggregate of four months of service from July 1, 2015 to May 15, 2016, obtained at least a satisfactory performance rating in the immediately preceding period and should still be in the service as of May 15.

Those with less than four months of service, or those who are no longer in the service as of May 15, shall not be entitled to the bonus.

For state corporations, the governing board shall determine the grant of the bonus, chargeable against approved corporate operating budgets. If funds are insufficient, they may grant lower rates but at uniform percentage of the basic monthly salary as of May 15.

For local government units, the Sanggunian shall determine the grant of the bonus, to be charged against their budgets. They may grant lower rates but at uniform percentage of the basic monthly salary as of May 15, if funds are insufficient.

Under Aquino's EO 201, the lowest-paid public school teachers and government nurses, who hold Salary Grade 11, now receive a monthly basic pay of P19,077 to P20,585, depending on the length of service.

The previous rates ranged from P18,549 to P19,887. This means that teachers and nurses get an increase of P528 to P698 a month.

Under the Philippine Nursing Law of 2002, state nurses are supposed to hold Salary Grade 15, which provide for a basic pay of P26,192 to P30,752 under the new salary schedule contained in EO 201.

Party-list group Ang Nars, which represents nurses in Congress, has filed a case against Abad with the Supreme Court to compel him to follow the 2002 law.

The salaries of Cabinet members, justices of the Supreme Court (SC) and senators and congressmen went up from P90,000-P111,198 a month to P117,086-P128,278.

SC justices are among the highest-paid officials of the land.

According to a Commission on Audit report on gross compensation for 2014, justices received between P4 million and P5.7 million. Of that amount, only about P1 million represented basic pay. The rest was in the form of allowances and incentives.

The lowest-paid government worker, who holds Salary Grade 1, gets P9,478 to P10,132 in monthly pay under the new schedule, from the old salary range of P9,000 to P9,649. - With Prinz Magtulis

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Rescued lions to be flown to S. Africa

LIMA—A planeload of 33 lions rescued from abuse in Peruvian and Colombian circuses will fly to South Africa Friday in what campaigners call the largest ever airlift of big cats.

The lions, with names such as Zeus and Shakira, were freed after the use of wild animals in circuses was outlawed in Peru in 2011 and Colombia in 2013.

They have been rounded up with the help of authorities by Animal Defenders International, an animal rights charity.

"It's truly wonderful that these lions, after a lifetime of suffering and abuse in circuses, are going home to Africa," said the president of ADI, Jan Creamer.

"All of the lions when they arrive from the circuses have health problems, parasites, disease," she added.

"All of their lives they haven't had enough food, so they have long-term malnutrition problems."

In recent months spent in straw-lined cages in a refuge north of Lima, however, they have been well fed and are in generally good health, she said.

Twenty-four lions rescued in Peru will be driven from their temporary rescue center to Lima airport to be picked up by a cargo plane that is bringing another nine over from Colombia.

That contingent includes Shakira, named after the Colombian pop singer.

From one of 10 Peruvian circuses also comes "Ricardo, the one-eyed lion" and from another "Joseph, the almost-blind lion."

Together, the 33 will take a 15-hour flight to South Africa in travel cages inside the plane chartered by ADI.

They will arrive on Saturday in Johannesburg where they will be housed before being sent in October to the Emoya Big Cat Sanctuary in the north of the country.

"The lions will be in their natural habitat for the first time in their lives," Creamer said. "They should fit right into that habitat. It's the best environment for them." **AFP**

China warned on sea dispute ruling

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – China risks "terrible" damage to its reputation if it ignores an impending international court ruling on the South China Sea, the United States said on Thursday, while urging Southeast Asian countries to rally behind the court decision.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague is expected to rule in coming weeks on a case the Philippines has brought against China's claim to virtually all of the South China Sea, a strategic route for a quarter of the world's trade and oil.

The ruling is widely expected to

favor the Philippines and risks significantly raising regional tensions because China, although a signatory of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea under which the case is being heard, rejects the court's authority to hear it.

US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a House of Representatives hearing China "can't have it both ways," by being a party to the convention but rejecting its provisions, including "the binding nature of any arbitration decision."

"China has a decision to make," he said. ("If) it ignores the de-

cision ... it risks doing terrible damage to its reputation, further alienating countries in the region and pushing them even closer to the United States."

Washington has been lobbying hard to convince countries to state that the court's ruling, expected in late May or early June, must be binding. The court has no enforcement powers and its decisions have been ignored in the past.

Blinken said the United States had worked hard to build up the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as an organization that "might feel some greater strength in numbers" to take on difficult issues like the South China Sea.

He referred to a February summit at which US President Barack Obama and ASEAN leaders – four of whose countries have rival claims in the South China Sea – agreed that territorial disputes should be resolved peacefully and via legal means.

"We are looking to ASEAN, as it did most recently at that summit, to express its support for these basic principles and we would like to see that happen when the arbitration decision is issued as well," Blinken said.

China has been lobbying hard too and said on Sunday that it had agreed with three ASEAN members – Brunei, Cambodia and Laos – that South China Sea territorial disputes should not affect relations between the bloc and Beijing.

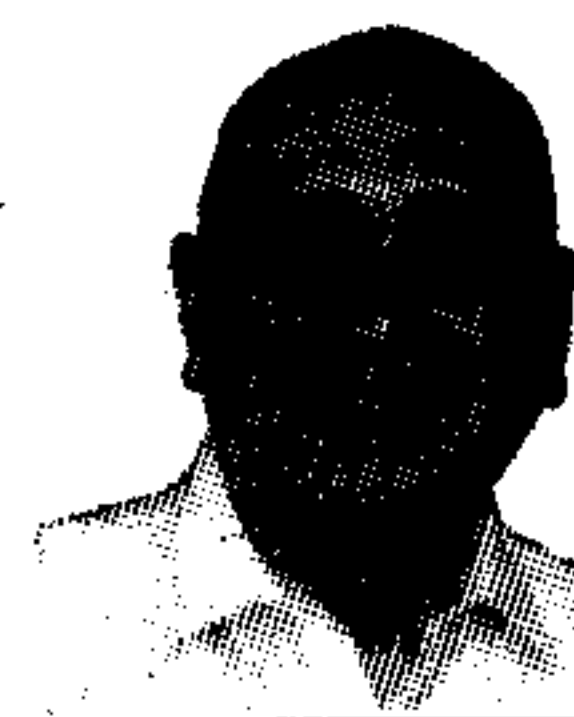
The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Seeking fresh water in times of climate change crisis

"Water is a far more pressing problem than climate change. Even if climate wouldn't change, we have a water problem and this water problem is much more urgent....."

Peter Brabeck



AMBASSADORS' CORNER

AMADO S. TOLENTINO, JR.

At the dawn of the 21st century, it was touted that 2001 marks the first year of the century of water. The idea, however, was overtaken by dramatic changes in climate throughout the world that many thought climate is the biggest problem and nothing else matters. Thus, in the meantime, the looming global water shortage got far less attention than global warming.

According to the United Nations, one reason water receives less attention is that unlike global warming, there is no such thing as a global water crisis. Instead, there are a series of regional predicaments in a world where the distribution of water is so lopsided that 60 percent of it is found in just nine countries including Brazil, the US and Canada.

As a chemical compound, nothing could be simpler than water. Two atoms of hydrogen joined to one of oxygen equals water. And, there is no shortage of water on planet Earth, which is covered by water but more than 97 percent is salty. The shortage is of fresh water to grow crops, drinking and sanitation water for households and to cool power plants.

In the past, military conflict over water rights was a grave national security issue between some countries: Ethiopia and Egypt over the Nile; Botswana and Namibia over the Okavango; Israel, Palestine and Jordan over the Jordan River, to mention a few.

Water from rivers in those countries cross political boundaries with the concomitant boundary issue. Be that as it may, the situation created a natural interdependence between countries in sharing the water resource, drawing people to work together on the water availability aspect even when countries were officially at war.

Perhaps, "water wars" were averted at that time due to the changing perception of the concept of permanent sovereignty over natural resources in favor of functional sovereignty or equitable utilization of transboundary shared resources. But in the light of the recent changed political and security environment, could peaceful negotiation over water issues still hold on for a much longer time?

Figure out the following: (i) China's damming the source of water of the Mekong River has sparked serious concern among countries downstream namely Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; (ii) India, China and Pakistan see rising tensions over shared water resources to boost production to keep up with their huge and expanding populations; (iii) A growing sense of alarm in Central Asia over the prospect that poor but glacier-heavy nations (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan) may one day restrict the flow of water to their parched but oil-rich neighbors (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan); (iv) Ultimate peace between Pakistan and India may hinge as much on water as on nuclear weapons for the two countries must share the glacier-dependent Indus.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Seeking fresh water in times of climate change crisis

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The limited supply of freshwater must meet the needs of a human population that has tripled in the last century and continues to grow at almost 80 million every year. Right now, there is a torrent of water-related news concerning the dry spell brought about by the drought effect of El Niño, the declaration of state of calamity in specified areas due to lack of adequate water supply and a decline in agricultural production on account of scarcity of water for agriculture.

Based on numerous studies, including those done by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and confirmed by a UNICEF-WHO report, 8.4 mil-

lion Filipinos have no access to clean drinking water. The major reason for freshwater scarcity in the Philippines is pollution from industries, households, tourism sites and agricultural areas. Industries use a wide range of chemicals, many of which are highly toxic and find their way to natural water systems. Wastewater from households follow the same route to natural water channels like run-offs of agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides.

A UNDP report further mentioned that the Metro Manila main underground aquifer is so over pumped that groundwater levels have considerably dropped to critical levels. This has induced saline

“The solution to water scarcity is largely in the hands of governments because it requires policies such as better and effective regulation of groundwater, irrigation and more intelligent use of wastewater”

water to encroach into coastal zones and threaten Marikina Valley and places along the Laguna Lake region. Once again, water rationing plans are on board in Metro Manila.

Even the Rainwater Collection Facilities and Spring Water Protection Law (1989), which mandates construction of water wells, rainwater collectors, development of springs, rehabilitation of existing water wells in all barangays in the Philippines, remains in the books, largely unimplemented.

The solution to water scarcity is largely in the hands of governments because it requires policies such as better and effective regulation of groundwater, irrigation and more intelligent use of wastewater. Among Asean countries, Thailand adopted a policy to minimize use of water by not growing off-season rice as a response to the gravity of the drought situation. Water has to be conserved for household consumption. Farmers switched to drought-resistant crops such as beans or raising livestock. Others resorted to raising poultry or farming shallow-water fish in baskets. Many rice farmers have also joined government-sponsored employment schemes such as working on irrigation canal dredging projects, which generate more than 40,000 jobs nationwide.

With the recent formal signing at the UN Headquarters in New York by 171 countries of the Paris Agreement on reduction of greenhouse gas emission, water scarcity has “come of age” as a forefront issue. As countries actively pursue major actions like a shift to renewable energy sources (solar, wind, biomass, hydropower, etc.) to stop the devastating impacts of climate change, it is now the time for action to set the pathway that will lead to a far-reaching effort to meet the challenges posed by the most precious but finite resource on Earth – fresh water.

Ambassador Amado Tolentino, Jr. continues with his engagement as a member of the Asociacion Internacional de Derecho de Aguas (Rome).

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INIT

Guest Column

Riding the winds of change in energy



GUEST COLUMN
CHARLIE
CLEMENT

Coming up with the right energy mix for the Philippines' increasing energy needs is an ongoing quest, and one of the primary considerations we have to keep in mind is our geophysical condition being an archipelago and a tropical country.

In the searing hot days of summer, the dry spell takes its toll on hydro-power as bodies of water dry up and the valuable resource becomes scarce. Gas plants, meanwhile, are periodically prone to failure due to lack of fuel. All of these lead to the power outages that many areas of the country need to contend with.

With the Philippines' growing dependence on imported fossil fuels, the government has started to take significant steps to increase the penetration of renewables in the energy mix. While we take pride in being the world's second-largest geothermal power producer next to the U.S., much of our renewable energy resources remain untapped and the opportunities for cleaner and sustainable energy can help further diversify our energy mix in the wake of global fuel price volatility.

The current share of renewables in ASEAN countries, at 24 percent, is already twice the global average of 12 percent. Aside from hydro, the more practical sources would be geothermal, solar and wind. In a way, renewables present themselves as a perfect match to many sociological givens in the region. For instance, in large parts of the population where low-income household cannot access modern fuels like the Philippines, traditional biomass is heavily utilized for cooking in rural areas. Efforts should now be focused on boosting the deployment of modern forms of renewable energy in these types of communities.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that onshore wind would be one of the cheapest and quickest alternative sources of energy to deploy compared to supercritical coal, geothermal, and nuclear power plants. Efforts are underway to address significant market barriers to encourage the development of wind energy, and wind production costs have declined significantly over the last few years. Wind is produced by the uneven heating of the earth's surface by the sun. As long as the sun shines, there will always be wind, and therefore, such energy source will be generously available to harness.

In 2014 alone, over 50 GW of annual installations were achieved in Asia, and investments in wind energy reached \$99.5 billion—an 11 percent increase over the previous year. The Global Wind Energy Council also points to Asia's continued dominance in the wind energy industry. It fore-

casts that the region will continue to lead with 40 to 45 percent of the annual global total share in the future.

In Vietnam, for instance, the second phase of the Bac Lieu wind farm project sees the installation of 52 units of GE wind turbines, adding 83.2 MW to the existing 16 MW output of the earlier 10 units of turbines in the project's first phase.

In Thailand as well, GE is currently building its pioneering wind facility in the country—at the Khao Kor wind farm in Petchaboon. The 60 MW project is expected to supply power to the northern part of the country, generating enough equivalent energy to power approximately 36,000 Thai households for a year. GE has also commenced construction of the Watabak wind farm, a further 60MW.

In the Philippines, this vision is becoming a reality sooner than we think. We are actually the first country in ASEAN to set up a wind farm—the landmark Bangui project in Ilocos Norte. Today, the 150 MW Burgos wind project also in Ilocos Norte is the largest so far in the region.

The potential to generate a limitless energy supply is appealing to countries such as ours that are looking into energy independence and sustainability. For an archipelago like the Philippines, whose wind regime is characterized by good wind speeds throughout the year in certain locations, this type of renewable energy offers a lot of potential. It could supply up to 76.6 GW of energy to our grids, according to the Renewable Energy Management Bureau. This puts the country on the radar screen of global investors like GE to invest in the renewable energy sector.

While there is still much work to be done, technological innovations that pair efficient wind turbines with digital technology and smarter grids point toward a bright energy future that is dependable and economical to run. And that's where we're looking.

Charlie Clement is the market development director of GE Philippines, Inc.

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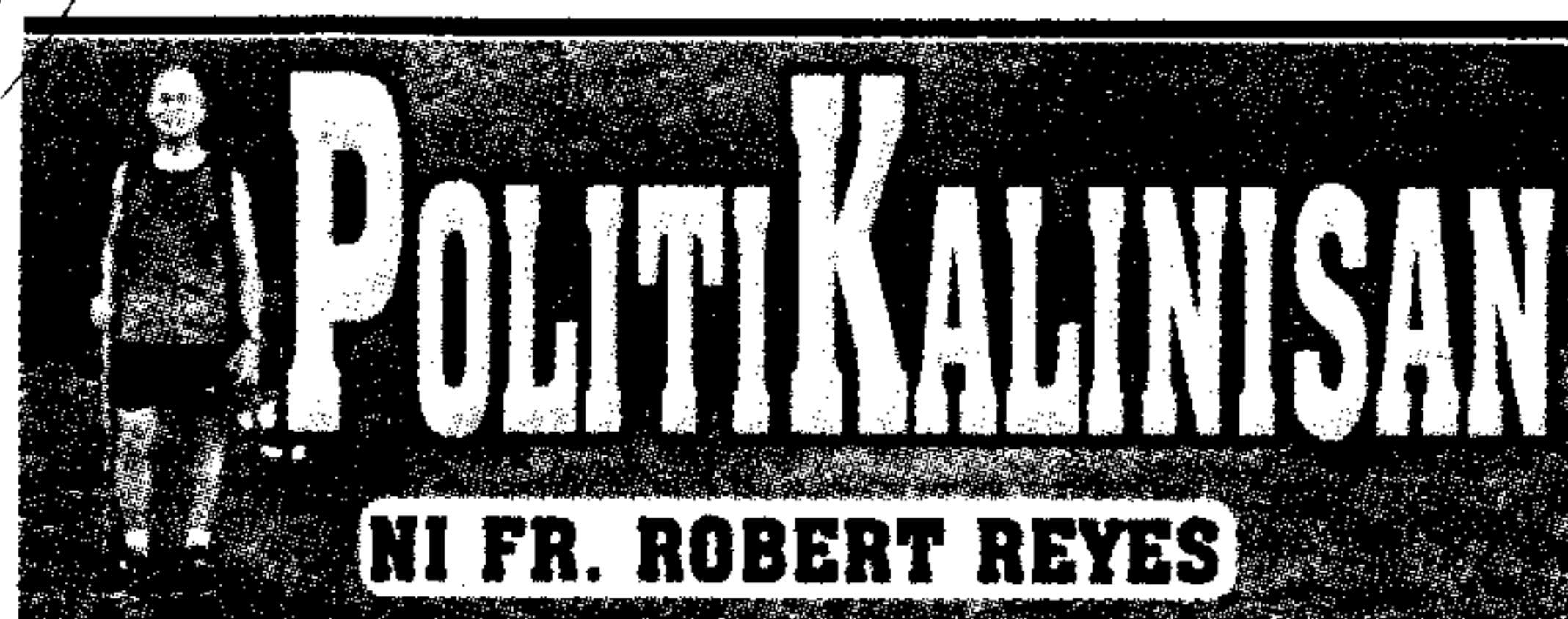
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Bishop Julio Labayen, Martial Law at Jonas Burgos

TILA nagsabay-sabay ang mga alaala at pangyayari noong nakaraang Huwebes, ika-28 ng Abril 2016. Natanggap natin ang malungkot na balita na pumanaw na si Bishop Julio Labayen. Naanyayahan din tayo sa "ground breaking ceremony" ng naturang "Martial Law Museum" sa Parks and

Wildlife sa Quezon Avenue. At mismong araw na 'yun, ika-28 ng Abril ang ika-9 na anibersaryo ng pagkawala (desaparacido) ni Jonas Burgos. Nagmistulang sabay-sabay ang tatlong pangyayari: Ang buhay ni Bishop Labayen; Martial Law at ang pagkawala ni Jonas Burgos. At lalong nagmu-

mukhang sabay-sabay at napakabilis ng mga pangyayari dahil palapit nang palapit na ang mismong araw ng eleksiyon.

Nakababahala ang maraming bagay. Una na ang popularidad ng mga kandidatong merong dalang mabibigat na bagahe na maaaring magdulot ng problema sa ating bansa. Pangalawa, sa gitna ng pagkaabala ng marami sa pangangampanya ng mga kandidato sa darating na ika-9 ng Mayo 2016, muling naging biktima ang ilang Canadian tourist sa kamay ng mga Abu Sayyaf. Tuluy-tuloy pa rin ang seryosong mga banta sa ating soberanya at kapayapaan. Pangatlo,

damang-dama ang tagtuyot sa maraming bahagi ng kapuluan. Pang-apat, tuloy pa rin ang "Senate hearing" hinggil sa \$ 81 million, ang halagang nailabas mula sa Bank of Bangladesh at naipasok sa RCBC. At panglima, ang seryosong gawain ng maingat, madasalin at malayang pagpili ng ating mga kandidato para sa halalang Mayo 2016.

Noong nakaraang apat na dekada, panahon ng diktaduryang Marcos, naroon na si Bishop Julio Labayen. Bago pa nagsimula ang termino ni Marcos ay punong-puno ng pangako, kilala si Bishop Labayen sa mga progresibong elemento

ng Simbahan at lipunan. Madalas makita at marinig si Bishop Labayen sa sari-saring isyung hindi lang sa Simbahan kundi sa buong lipunan. Isa si Bishop Labayen sa kilalang grupo ng mga progresibong Obispo na nakilalang 'Magnificent 7.' Isang propeta si Bishop Labayen at dahil dito, maaaring tawaging tunay na alagad ni Kristo lalung-lalo na sa pakikiisa sa paghihirap, gutom at tuluyang pagsisikap ng mga ito na malabanan at ang lahat ng uri ng pang-aabuso sa maliliit. Wala na si Bishop Labayen. Nabawasan na muli ang matatapang na mamamahayag.

Kakaibang Obispo si Bishop Labayen. Noong Nobyembre 29, 2007, nagkasama kami ni Bishop Labayen sa isang pagkilos sa Manila Pen. Nagtungo tayo mula sa istatwa ni Ninoy Aquino sa Paseo de Rojas sa Manila Peninsula Hotel kung saan nagpupulong si

Bishop Labayen. Napakabilis ng mga pangyayari. Sa loob ng ilang oras lamang nagsidating ang mga tangke at daan-daang mga armadong sundalo. Pasya ng grupo na pagsalitin si Bishop Labayen sa media dahil siya ang pinakamatanda at pinakarespetado sa aming lahat. Mananawagan si Bishop Labayen na huwag nang ituloy ang pag-teargas. Hindi nangyari ito dahil hindi nakapagsalita nang malinaw si Bishop Labayen sa gitna ng kaguluhan sa loob at labas ng Manila Pen. Natuloy ang teargas. Hindi natin iniwanan si Bishop Labayen. Tinalukbungan natin siya ng basang tuwalya para hindi masinghot ang mahapding usok ng teargas. 'Di kalaunan, bumaba na kaming lahat at kusang sumuko sa mga pulis na nasa lobby ng Manila Pen. Pinatuloy kaming lahat ng mga pulis sa isang malaking van. Magkatabi kaming umupo ni Bishop Labayen. Ngumiti sa akin

sa Bishop Labayen na nagsabi ng ganito, "*It's good that you are here, Robert,*" sabay ngiti ng Obispo. Nagparinig sa amin si General Geary Barrias, ang NCRPO chief noong panahong iyon.

Sandaling nakulong si Bishop Labayen na kasama ko. Nailabas siya agad ng kanyang kapwa Obispo at Karmelitanong si Bishop Rolly Tirona ng Dioses ng Bulacan.

Hindi Martial Law noon, subalit, anong ginagawa ng isang Obispo at isang pari sa loob ng piitan? Wala na si Bishop Labayen. Nawawala pa rin si Jonas. Nangyari ang lahat ng ito sa panahong hindi Martial Law. Sa pagpanaw ng isang bayani laban sa diktadurya, matutulungan na niya tayong unawain bakit at paano nagkaganito ang ating bansa. Kailangan nang tulungan ng butihing Obispo si Alice Murphy na hanapin ang kanyang nawawalang anak na si Jonas.

Teka-teka, talaga bang wala nang Martial Law?