

New BJMP OIC vows continuity of programs

MANILA -- The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) will continue implementing its various flagship programs and support the government's war on illegal drugs, crime, corruption and violent extremism.

This was stressed by Chief Supt. Allan S. Iral, who was named BJMP officer-in-charge, replacing BJMP chief Director Deogracias Tapayan who reached the mandatory retirement age of 56 on Wednesday.

During the turn-over ceremony at the BJMP headquarters in Quezon City, Iral stressed

the importance of continuity of the bureau's ongoing programs as enumerated in the agency's long-term development plan.

The first of these programs, Iral said, is providing voter's registration to 45,500 persons deprived of liberty (PDLs).

Iral served as the Regional Director of the BJMP's Regional Offices in Davao and Central Visayas. He promoted the safekeeping and welfare of PDLs while empowering the jail officers he managed, resulting in the selection of BJMP Davao as Region of the Year in 2015 and led to

his recognition as the Best Regional Director of the Bureau in 2016.

Iral was awarded as Junior Officer of the Year in 1996 and Staff Officer of the Year in 2009. As the warden of Manila City Jail and Davao City Jail, he had zero history of escape and jail disturbance.

Meanwhile, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo M. Año welcomed the promotion of Iral as the new OIC of the BJMP, as well as six other officials as new Jail Chief Superintendents.

"I have come to

know Chief Allan Iral as a man of competence... This is a grand responsibility not everyone can carry, but with your able hands and sharp mind, I am sure that the Bureau and those you oversee will thrive under your leadership," Año said.

"We thank Chief Tapayan's faithful service to the Bureau and we're sure that he will find ways to serve the country in his private capacity or in government," he added.

Aside from the promotion of Iral, six jail officials were promoted as the jail bureau's chief superintendents, namely:

Jail Chief Supt. Rinco Montaus, Director for Comptrollership

Jail Chief Supt. Clement Laboy, Director for Intelligence

Jail Chief Supt. Louie Muñoz, Regional Director BJMP Region 10

Jail Chief Supt. Arnel Gongona, Regional Director BJMP Region 5

Jail Chief Supt. Amelia Rayandanan, Regional Director BJMP Region 11

Jail Chief Supt. Rebecca Pawid, Regional Director Region 1

While their promotion comes with additional privileges, Año reminded them to focus instead on their duties and responsibilities.

"You will now be occupying sensitive positions that will define the future of the Bureau. Be sure to utilize and share the knowledge, skills and training you learned from your past experiences to push the Bureau to greater heights," Año added. (PNA)

Solon pushes for economic reforms to foster competition

MANILA--A senator on Thursday stressed the need for the immediate implementation of economic reforms that will foster a more competitive business environment in the country.

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian made the statement after citing recent Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) data, which showed the Philippines' poor standing in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows compared with 10 Asian countries in 2018.

"Based on our own analysis, macroeconomic risks, such as higher-than-expected inflation in 2018, the country's restrictive investment environment, and poor infrastructure quality -- particularly on transportation and logistical infrastructure -- remain to be the key stumbling block for the country to corner high-

er FDI," he said.

Gatchalian, who chairs the Senate committee on economic affairs, urged his colleagues in the Senate to prioritize the passage of key economic bills that will foster an inclusive, efficient, and competitive business environment in the Philippines - such as the Public Service Act and the Retail Trade Liberalization Act.

He also pushed for the passage of a measure amending the Foreign Investments Act of 1991, which he said is essential to put the country in a competitive position over other ASEAN countries.

The proposed FIA amendment aims to attract businesses and investments by providing clarity to foreigners, who are interested in investing in small and medium enterprises or practicing their profession in the Philippines. (PNA)

No sacred cows in internal cleansing drive: NCRPO chief

MANILA -- National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) director Maj. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar on Wednesday stressed that there will be no sacred cows in the unrelenting internal cleansing program of the police force.

Eleazar made the reminder during the oath-taking of the newly-promoted personnel of Quezon City Police District (QCPD) at the QCPD Grandstand, Camp Karingal, Quezon City.

In his message, Eleazar said internal

cleansing is not just about punishing scallaws but also restoring the pride and self-respect in the uniform of the police personnel and gaining the trust of the public.

He congratulated the personnel and told them that their promotion is because of their perseverance, dedication, and discipline.

He also thanked the loved ones of the promoted personnel for the support they always bestowed on them.

The NCRPO chief also challenged the

newly-promoted personnel to render quality service to the community by making it safe and more secure place to live.

"If you accept this challenge, there is no reason why NCRPO will not emerge victorious against all forms of criminality," he added.

Brig. Gen. Joselito T. Esquivel Jr., QCPD director, said a total of 2,411 Police Non-Commissioned Officers (PNCOs) of QCPD were promoted. Among them, 1,966 were promoted to Corporal; 349

to Staff Sergeant; 60 to Senior Master Sergeant; 27 to Chief Master Sergeant and nine to Executive Master Sergeant.

Esquivel also congratulated the newly-promoted personnel and further challenged them to maintain their best and even surpass it.

"Promotions are intended to recognize and reward dedication and good performance, and also provide advancement in the police service; while maintaining the high morale of those promoted and inspiring others. They also provide avenues for the fulfillment of individual potential to rise in a police career," Esquivel said. (PNA)

TESDA to train soldiers to be skills trainers

MANILA -- The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in Region 11 (Davao Region) is planning to train more soldiers to become skills trainers in various construction courses, an official said on Thursday.

"We had a meeting earlier this month with the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and we agreed to strengthen partnership to enhance the implementa-

tion of skills training programs. Among the initiatives is to train soldiers to become trainers," said TESDA Region 11 director Lorenzo Macapili.

After providing skills training to the soldiers, Macapili said they will be taught to become trainers so they could impart the knowledge and skills to those who are in remote areas.

The TESDA has trained a total of 19 soldiers from the 52nd En-

gineer Brigade of the Philippine Army earlier this month. They received their certificates in Carpentry NC (National Certificate) II, Masonry NC II and Tile Setting NC II last March 11.

"We plan to conduct the Trainers' Training starting May. We need to increase the number of skilled soldiers first," Macapili said.

He said the soldiers' training would be an ongoing activity of TESDA-11.

Prelates wish PRRD good health, strength on 74th birthday

MANILA — Two Catholic Church officials have offered prayers for President Rodrigo Duterte who is celebrating his 74th birthday on Thursday.

Bishop Ruperto Santos, head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People (CBCP-ECMI), said they asked God to give the President strength and bless him with good health as he continues to lead the country.

"We, at CBCP-ECMI, offer our holy masses and prayers that God (gives) him

strength, sound health in mind and body to direct our country to a stable, secure and safe future," Santos said in a text message.

"As he celebrates his birthday, may he always see that life is God's gift and a grace that we are all alive. May he promote life, protect life of every Filipino," the Balanga prelate added.

Santos noted that they always pray for the Chief Executive, though the mass and prayers they offered today is special.

"And we are always praying for him that he may govern us accordingly to

God's will and His ways," the CBCP-ECMI head added.

Fr. Jerome Secillano, executive secretary CBCP-Permanent Committee on Public Affairs (PCPA), is also praying for Duterte's health and wisdom, among others.

"I'm praying for his health, wisdom and resolve that he may withstand the rigors of leading our country," he said.

"I pray too that he may be imbued with a genuine love for all Filipinos," the Catholic priest added.

Duterte celebrated his 74th birthday with his family in Davao City. (PNA)

DOJ orders raps vs. NDF consultant, release of ex-priest

MANILA -- State prosecutors have ordered criminal charges for illegal possession of firearms against National Democratic Front (NDF) consultant Renante Gamara.

In a resolution issued Thursday, the Department of Justice Task Force on Special Cases recommended that charges be filed against Gamara for violation of Sec-

tion 28 (Unlawful Possession of Firearms) of Republic Act 10591, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act.

Gamara, along with former priest Arturo Balagat, were arrested in Imus, Cavite for illegal possession of firearms last March 20 by elements of the PNP Regional Special Operations Unit (PNP-

RSOU) during a raid, which yielded two grenades, a pistol (Parabellum 9mm serial number R66954), ammunition, documents, and PHP90,000 cash.

The two suspects have a standing arrest warrant issued by Judge Cynthia R. Marino-Ricablanca of the Sta Cruz, Laguna Regional Trial Court.

Meanwhile, Macapili said among the target beneficiaries of TESDA in training the soldiers are indigenous people in far-flung areas.

The TESDA has been prioritizing the training in construction-related skills to help the government's "Build, Build, Build" program. (PNA)