

PCOO bolsters campaign against disinformation to guide voters

MANILA -- The Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) launched the “Dismiss Disinformation” campaign to bolster its war against fake news and to guide voters in the upcoming May 13 elections.

“We hope we are going to help the public clearly understand that fake news hurts good candidates. There are good candidates out there deserving and should be the chosen leaders in the provinces or their cities, but because they fall victim to fake news, they don’t get elected,” PCOO media adviser Pia Rocas-Morato said in a recent interview with Net 25’s program “Pambansang Almusal.”

“At the end of the day your public servants should be the

leaders that you deserve, and you will be voting for the good ones. You should be voting for the good ones in this coming election without falling victim to fake news,” she added.

Morato expressed hope that with the newest PCOO campaign, they will be able to explain to the public how to avoid being victimized by fake news and to distinguish misinformation from disinformation.

“In misinformation, it happens to all of us, because us who are in the media industry, we write, we are exposed to everything we see on TV, on Facebook, and sometimes we create mistakes, but these mistakes can still be corrected and within our power to change it,” Morato explained.

“On the other hand, disinformation is not

accidental but is created on purpose. Those who spread disinformation do this for their gain, and it is the public who are most affected by it,” she added.

For his part, Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Senior Director for Strategic Communications Benjie Felipe said those responsible for spreading disinformation are spending a considerable amount of money.

“You can see that they are creating good content. The written content is believable because they are spending money on it,” he said.

Felipe said click bait contents have the power to grab the attention of the public easily as well as to influence and sway the public into believing false information.

He advised the pub-

lic to check the ‘About Us’ of the news to see the creator’s identity.

He also warned the public not to “like” or “share” any information in social media without reading it first to prevent being a victim and, at the same time, a purveyor of disinformation and fake news.

“With this, we can control the spread of fake news. Especially, if we know its consequences,” he said.

PCOO Secretary Martin Andanar earlier urged voters not to allow fake news to ruin the chances of the candidates who can serve the country well.

Andanar said if people will allow disinformation to prevail “we are actually allowing ourselves to be cheated” by unfair elections which basically destroys the democratic election process. (PNA)

NCCA won’t allow San Agustin, other churches to lose UNESCO status

MANILA -- Although it recognizes efforts to ease traffic in Metro Manila, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) said it will not allow the construction of a Chinese-funded bridge to be the reason why San Agustin Church and three other Baroque churches lose their status as a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage site.

NCCA Commissioner for Cultural Heritage Fr. Harold Rentoria was referring to the PHP4.243 billion Binondo-Intramuros Bridge project, which is meant to connect Binondo District to Intramuros and vice versa.

Controversy on the construction of the bridge arose following concerns raised by UNESCO that it would encroach on the “buffer

zone” required by the organization for the churches to be a World Heritage site.

Aside from the San Agustin Church, which was built by the Spanish in the late 16th century, the three other churches that are at risk of being removed from the UNESCO World Heritage list are San Agustin in Paoay in Ilocos Norte; Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion in Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur; and, Santo Tomas de Villanueva in Miagao, Iloilo.

“We appreciate the projects of the administration in easing the traffic. But the priority, the concern of the cultural agencies the San Agustin Church – will the outstanding universal value of the San Agustin Church be affected when the bridge is constructed?” Rentoria said in a press briefing in Malacañang.

“Yes for sure, we are not going to allow the delisting of the churches,” he added.

The four churches, collectively declared as a “UNESCO World Heritage Site” in 1993, were originally built by Augustinian friars and if San Agustin Church is

delisted, the three others will reportedly follow.

Rentoria said the NCCA is currently waiting for the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to submit its heritage impact assessments on the churches, since it did not give the agency “clearance” to proceed with the construction of the bridge.

“Until this time we’re waiting for the studies; then after that, we are going to decide because as of this time, we have not yet given the clearance of course,” Rentoria said.

“We are continuing the coordination with the DPWH, kasi sila iyong (because they are the) implementing agency. We are waiting for the submission of the archeological assessment and the heritage impact assessments,” he added.

Rentoria said the DPWH has suspended construction of the bridge as it awaits the results of the study.

“After we receive those studies, then that’s the time we can say made-delist nga ba o ano (whether it would be delisted or not). So that’s why DPWH, sila mismo nag-suspend ng work (They themselves suspended work),” Rentoria said.

Should the studies confirm that the construction of the bridge may indeed cost the San Agustin Church’s UNESCO World Heritage site status, the NCCA will discuss this with the DPWH.

“Anyway, we have the studies as the basis for the decision of NCCA and other cultural agencies including Intramuros Administration,” Rentoria said.

Rentoria said the studies are expected to be released by the end of the month. (PNA)

Metro Manila mayors back closure of bus terminals on Edsa

MANILA -- The local government units in Metro Manila are supporting the initiative of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to close down bus terminals on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (Edsa).

Edison “Bong” Nebrija, MMDA traffic manager for Edsa, reiterated that Metro Manila mayors approved a resolution of the Metro Manila Council (MMC), removing bus terminals on the major thoroughfare will help ease traffic congestion in the metropolis.

The MMC is the agency’s policy-making body composed of the 17 local chief executives of Metro Manila.

“We have been coordinating with the LGUs with regards to the logistics of the removal of the terminals. The MMDA has provided to them a list of terminals within their ju-

risdictions that are needed to be closed down,” Nebrija told the Philippine News Agency on Thursday.

The MMDA has started its dry run of the closure of the bus terminals along Edsa last April 22.

Bus operators are urged to use the interim terminals located in Valenzuela City and the City of Santa Rosa in Laguna as the Department of Transportation constructs the integrated bus terminals in Bulacan and Taguig City for public utility buses coming from the northern and southern provinces, respectively.

“We have observed that bus operators have been cooperative as they started to pick up and drop off passengers along these terminals. This can be attributed to our massive information campaign,” Nebrija said.

The MMDA is eyeing

to remove all 47 bus terminals along Edsa by June.

The agency is also implementing the “no loading and unloading” policy of provincial buses along Edsa and major roads in Metro Manila.

Violators face a fine of PHP500 for illegal loading and unloading. They may also face

Time to take environment seriously, Legarda to LGUs

MANILA -- Senator Loren Legarda said Thursday it is about time local government units take the environment seriously and adopt sustainable management of natural resources by implementing the country’s environmental laws.

Legarda made the statement following the Office of the Ombudsman’s decision to dismiss Malay town Mayor Ceciron Cawaling over his negligence in the management of Boracay, which resulted in the island’s environmental problems.

The senator noted

that the main problem in Boracay Island was the weak enforcement of and non-compliance with the country’s environmental laws.

“The previous problem of Boracay is also the problem of many ecotourism areas and other communities in the country, which is why the government must strictly enforce environmental laws, while residents and business establishments should also comply with our laws,” she said.

Legarda said the Ombudsman’s decision should prompt LGUs to enforce the environmental laws in

penalties of PHP1,000 for violation of the closed-door policy, PHP1,000 for road obstruction, and PHP150 for disregarding traffic signs. (PNA)

the country.

“I laud the Ombudsman for siding with the people, who are the victims of environmental degradation due to local governments’ non-compliance (with) the country’s environmental laws,” she said.

“With this action of the Ombudsman to dismiss officials for environmental violations, I am confident that more LGUs will be encouraged, if not compelled, to take up their responsibility of implementing all our environmental laws to ensure clean, resilient and sustainable communi-