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MANILA — *An official of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) on Friday reported that they already finished the printing of over 63 million ballots for the May 13 midterm elections.*

Teopisto Elnas, Deputy Project Director of the Project Management Office (PMO) for the upcoming polls, noted that they have started shipping the official ballots initially to far-flung areas.

“As far as the deployment of official ballots is concerned, we are in our third day of dispatch. The priority areas like Autonomous in Region Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi and of course Batanes area. We already started deployment and it will end on May 4,” he said in a press briefing. “It is expected that by May 4, the official ballots are already in place in the different municipality and city treasurers’ office.”

He said of the 63 million ballots printed, a total of 61,843,746 are local bal-

lots, the rest will be used in the final and testing sealing (FTS) of the vote counting machines (VCMs), for demonstrations, among others. The figure does not include the over 1.8 million ballots for overseas voting.

He added that they expect the distribution process to be completed by May 4.

The printing of the ballots started last February 9 at the National Printing Office.

Meanwhile, Elnas said they will be using 85,000 VCMS in the same number of clustered precincts nationwide in the May polls. The number of VCMs is lower than the 92,000 used in the 2016 presidential polls.

“We only have 85,000 clustered precincts and of course we are 1,000 maximum number of registered voters per clustered pre-

strategically located for purposes of deploying them before the FTS.

The FTS is set to be held from May 6 until May 10. The process is to test the VCMs before they are transferred to the voting centers on election day.

Elnas added that they have some 7,000 VCMs as a contingency which will be deployed to provincial election supervisors. (PNA)

cinct. In 2016, our maximum number was only 800, that's why we reached 92,000,” he said.

He reported that they already finished the deployment of all VCMs to regional and local hubs, which are

Reserve short; Angat Dam to keep May irrigation water quota

MANILA -- Angat Dam will retain its irrigation water allocation of 10 cubic meters per second (cms) in May, even if its dipping water level breaches the minimum operating level (MOL) of 180 meters before that month.

This is to ensure the availability of irrigation water for rice farms in Angat's service areas in Bulacan and Pampanga provinces that have not yet harvested their crops, National Water Resources Board (NWRB) engineer, Bea Soriano, said Friday.

“Those plants still need water before harvest time,” Soriano said.

Despite the irrigation allocation, Angat Dam's water quota for Metro Manila in May will still be 48 cms, the same as in April, she said.

Soriano made the assurance as hydrologists of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) expect Angat Dam's water level to dip below the MOL this weekend.

Angat's 6 a.m. water level on Friday already dipped to 180.73 meters, 6.2 meters lower than the desired 186.93 meters for the day, PAGASA hydrologist Jason Bausa said, noting that the dam's water level has been dipping this week by an average 0.50 meters.

“We expect Angat's water level to breach the MOL by Sunday,” he said.

Soriano said Angat Dam's irrigation water allocation this April is 35 cms.

The NWRB reduced the allocation for May as projected demand for irrigation water would be lesser, she added. (PNA)

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and He will flee from you.” – James 4:7