

Report suspicious-looking individuals to authorities: AFP

MANILA -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) urged the public to report all suspicious-looking individuals to authorities.

"On the part of the AFP, the CSAFP (Chief-of-Staff, AFP) is again calling out for the support of the local populace for the timely sharing of information to the security sector whenever they notice unusual incidents or strangers in their locality. Counter-terrorism is everybody's concern," military public affairs office chief, Col. Noel Detoyato, said in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA) Friday.

This comes in the wake of the explosion that hit a restaurant in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat which injured about 18 people on Wednesday.

Earlier, Joint Task Force Central, under Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, said that security procedures will be adjusted following the explosion.

This will be done in coordination with the police and the local government unit. (PNA)

PRRD urges prosecutors to work with PNP, NBI for protection

MANILA - President Rodrigo R. Duterte on Thursday urged prosecutors to work with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) for their safety and protection.

"I also encourage the leadership of the Prosecutors' League to work with the Philippine National Police, the National Bureau of Investigation and other relevant agencies to come up with solutions on how to better protect our prosecutors and their families," Duterte said in his speech at the 31st Annual Convention of the Prosecutors' League of the Philippines in Palawan.

Duterte said he understands the risks of the prosecutors due to the nature of their jobs being a former prosecutor himself.

"As a former prosecutor, I understand the very important role that you play in the administration of justice, which unfortunately involves antagonizing lawless elements, hardened criminals and their powerful backers. The assassination of prosecutors across the country have lighted the danger that prosecutors and their respective families that

they endure," he said.

Duterte vowed to protect the prosecutors in work-related cases and threats.

"Kung kaso lang na sa trabaho ninyo (If it's a work-related case), I will do everything to protect you," he said.

The President said he is in favor of arming prosecutors for their safety.

"Baril? (Guns?) I will allow it," he said, receiving applause from the audience.

Duterte asked for

the prosecutors' continuous support for his administration's reforms in the country's justice system.

"I ask you, my fellow prosecutors, to never waver in supporting the efforts of this administration in instituting the necessary reforms within DOJ (Department of Justice) and the NPS (National Prosecution Service) so that we may regain our people's trust and confidence in our justice system," he said. (PNA)

Palace confident of inflation to continuously go down

MANILA - Malacañang on Friday expressed confidence that inflation rate will continue to go down for the rest of the year after recent March 2019 figures showed the country registering its lowest inflation rate since January 2018.

"We are confident that this slide would continue further for the rest of the year as President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's signing of Republic Act No. 11203 (Rice tariffication law) last February is expected to further ease inflation," Presidential Spokesperson Salva-

dor Panelo said in a statement.

Panelo said economic managers expect rice prices to go down and even cut inflation by 0.5 to 0.7 percentage point this year.

"The Administration's resolve to cushion the impact of inflation has resulted in the downward path of inflation for five straight months," he said.

Panelo said the government is preparing for the possible effects of El Niño or prolonged dry spell on the prices of goods.

"The government, however, would not be complacent and has been vigilant in keeping a close watch on the prices of goods and commodities with the onslaught of El Niño, which may hamper food production. The

PH monitors situation in Libya amid state of emergency

MANILA -- The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is monitoring the situation in Libya after local authorities declared a state of emergency on Wednesday night.

Chargé d'Affaires Elmer Cato said the Philippine Embassy in Tripoli is in touch with members of the Filipino Community and reported that none has so far been affected by the clashes.

This, as it issued an advisory to the estimat-

ed 1,000 Filipinos working in the capital and western parts of the country and urged them to stay calm but vigilant.

In a bulletin sent to the media, the department asked all Filipinos who may need assistance to contact the Philippine Embassy in Tripoli at +218.91.824.4208.

The Presidential Council in Libya placed security forces on alert after units loyal to the rival Libyan National Army announced they have begun advancing

towards Tripoli, triggering some limited clashes south of the capital that left one person dead.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres initially expressed "deep concern" over the military movement and the risk of confrontation it poses.

"There is no military solution. Only intra-Libyan dialogue can solve Libyan problems. I call for calm and restraint," he said Thursday. (PNA)

3 Russian naval ships to visit PH April 8-12

MANILA -- The Philippine Navy (PN) on Thursday announced that three Russian Navy vessels will be paying a five-day goodwill visit to Manila next week.

Navy spokesperson, Capt. Jonathan Zata, said the visiting Russian vessels are the Admiral Tributs, Vinogradov and Irkut.

Admiral Tributs and Vinogradov are classified by the Russian Navy as "large, anti-submarine ships" while the Irkut is called a "large sea tanker".

Zata said the ships will be docking at Pier 15, Manila South Harbor at about 9 a.m. on Monday.

"The PN will render customary welcome ceremony upon arrival of the vessels," he said in a statement.

Earlier, PN flag-officer-in-command, Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad, said Russian and Filipino naval cooperation is expected to get a much-needed boost as both nations are set to sign a naval cooperation agreement this July.

He added that the initial agreement is already finalized and that they will forward it to the Department of National Defense (DND) for approval.

Once the DND gives its approval, Empedrad said they will go to Russia to sign the agreement, which is expected to strengthen the relationship of the two countries. (PNA)

DDB to conduct census on extent of PH drug problem

MANILA -- The Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) is ready to undertake a scientific study to determine the real nature and extent of the country's problem on illegal drugs, its chairperson said Friday.

In a statement, DDB chairperson Catalino Cuy said the study will be a census, instead of a survey, to provide a real picture of the drug situation.

Reports from all law enforcement agencies and intelligence

information will also be included and integrated in the data analysis.

"What we want is an actual census to provide the real picture of the drug situation in the country," Cuy said.

"There were previous studies with similar intentions but the results of which did not include data from law enforcement agencies. This time, we will make sure that these will be included and integrated in analyzing data and coming up with statisti-

cal figures," he added.

The census, according to the DDB, will be undertaken with the help of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Cuy said talks have already begun between the DDB and PSA for the conduct of the census.

He thanked the Office of the President and the Senate for upholding the DDB's mandate to conduct studies to determine the nature and extent of the drug problem. (PNA)

PH calls on parties to cease tension-raising activities in WPS

MANILA -- The Philippine government on Thursday called on concerned parties in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) to desist from any activity that would raise tensions in the disputed area.

The statement came following reports of Chinese vessels swarming near and around Pagasa Island in the disputed waters.

"We call on concerned parties to desist from any action and activity that contravenes the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as these generate tension, mistrust and uncertainty, and threatens

regional peace and stability," the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a statement sent to reporters.

While negotiations for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea are ongoing, the government called for the full and effective implementation of the DOC.

"We cannot emphasize enough the imperative to build and promote mutual trust and confidence, to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities; and to avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and undermine peace, security and stability in the region," it added.