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Villanueva, chair of the Senate Committee on Labor, Employment, and Human Resource Development, said the DOLE must investigate whether the victim's employer complies with pertinent labor laws, standards, and regulations. "Tinatawagan natin ang DOLE para magpadala ng mga inspectors at imbestigahan ang mga labor practices ng kumpanya (We call on DOLE to dispatch labor inspectors to investigate the labor practices of the company)," Villanueva said. "Employers cannot hold their workers against their will, especially for nonpayment of debt. Baka kidnapping na po 'yan (That could be considered kidnapping). In fact, no less than our Constitution guarantees that 'no person shall be imprisoned for debt'," he added. Yang Kang, allegedly held prisoner by his employer, died after falling from the sixth-floor window of his

office building in Pamplona Dos, Las Piñas City last Friday. Villanueva cited that the victim had been allegedly held by his employer for the supposed nonpayment of the worker's debt. The senator also urged the government to prevent the trafficking of foreigners in reaction to a recent statement of the Chinese embassy, which pointed out that some of its nationals recruited to work here in the Philippines are apparent victims of human trafficking. "We call on the government to closely coordinate with the Chinese embassy so that Chinese nationals who intend to work here in the country are properly apprised of the correct procedures that should be followed to obtain proper working permits and work visas," he said. "Through this, both our governments can help minimize, if not eliminate, the rising cases of trafficking

involving our citizens all over the world," he added. Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo earlier asked the Philippine National Police to probe the incident, noting that the Philippines "will not allow nor tolerate any kind of abuse inflicted on any foreigner". The embassy welcomed Panelo's remarks as it urged relevant departments in the country "to bring the perpetrators to justice through an objective, fair, and thorough investigation and continue to take concrete and effective measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens in the Philippines." (PNA)

MANILA -- Senator Joel Villanueva on Thursday urged the Department of Labor Employment (DOLE) to inspect the employer of the Chinese national, who fell to his death while escaping from an office building in Las Piñas City.

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PRRD still trusts PAO chief amid corruption claims

MANILA -- Public Attorney's Office (PAO) chief Persida Acosta still has the trust and confidence of President Rodrigo Duterte amid corruption allegations, Malacañang said on Thursday. Earlier, some PAO lawyers asked the Office of the Ombudsman to preventively suspend Acosta and forensics chief Erwin Erfe over corrupt practices relating to disbursements and allocation of the PAO budget. Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said pending investigation, Acosta still has the trust and confidence of the President. "Palagi naman si Presidente, hanggang walang findings of probable cause, palaging nandoon iyong trust (The President has always said the same thing, until there are no findings of probable cause, the trust is still there)," Panelo said in a Palace briefing. Panelo, however, said if the Office of the Ombudsman finds probable cause, the President will not interfere in the case. "Pero, kung 'pag may probable cause na, ibang usapan iyon -- then there will be suspension galing sa Ombudsman. Eh hindi naman teritoryo ni Presidente iyon (But if there is probable cause, that's a different story--then there

will be suspension from the Ombudsman. That's no longer the territory of the President)," he added. Asked if Palace will ask Acosta to file a leave of absence pending investigation, Panelo said he will leave it to the PAO chief to decide. "Eh nasa ano 'yun eh, nakay Chief Acosta na iyon (That's for Chief Acosta to decide)," Panelo said. In a statement submitted before the Ombudsman, the PAO lawyers accused Acosta of "fraud, falsification, and malfeasance in public procurement." Among the alleged illegal purchases made by Acosta were office supplies used for the Dengvaxia cases. PAO lawyer Wilfredo Garrido Jr. earlier filed a graft complaint against Acosta. "Despite the pendency of the instant complaint filed by complainant Garrido, respondents Acosta and Erfe, through their cohorts in Financial Planning and Management Service, have a systematic scheme in covering traces of their capricious, illegal, and corrupt practices especially relating to the disbursements and allocation of the PAO budget," the lawyers said. Acosta, however, denied the lawyers' accusations. (PNA)

Duterte supports fair treatment of LGBT community

MANILA -- President Rodrigo Duterte supports the fair treatment of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, Malacañang said on Thursday after a report on a transwoman being discriminated against went viral. Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the act of barring transwoman Gretchen Diez from entering a female restroom in a mall in Cubao, Quezon City is a "violation" of the city's Gender-Fair Ordinance that protects members of the LGBT community from discrimination. Under the local measure, it is unlawful to "ridicule, to commit harassment, disallow the entry from any establishment, promote discrimination and to commit any act that demeans the dignity and self-respect of a person." "Our position is we have to respect LGBT. Tsaka (And) another thing, there is an ordinance. There is an ordinance to respect them so violation yung gingawa doon sa transgender (so what was done to the transgender is

a violation)," Panelo said in a Palace briefing. Panelo, however, acknowledged that the mall and cleaning crew has issued an apology to Diez and expressed willingness to be educated on LGBT rights. "I remember the President expressed support for the LGBT one time so I think he will support that kind, gusto nun palaging (he always wants) fair treatment to all," Panelo said. "We have to respect the rights of all people. Kung yan ang choice nila eh (If it's their choice)," he added. Asked if Duterte would certify as urgent the passage of the sexual orientation or gender identity or expression equality (SOGIE) bill, Panelo said he will ask the President but will leave it to Congress to act upon it. "Passage will depend on the wisdom of the lawmakers. We cannot encroach on that, sa kanila 'yun (that's theirs)," Panelo said.

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