

## 2 CHINESE NABBED FOR KIDNAPPING OVER GAMBLING DEBTS

MANILA -- Anti-kidnapping operatives of the Philippine National Police (PNP) have arrested two Chinese na Lt. Col. Villaflor Banawagan, Luzon field unit commander of Anti-Kidnapping Group (AKG), on Thursday identified the suspects as Wan Renhong and Wan Liang, who were members of a loan shark syndicate.

Citing the affidavit of

the victim named Wang Hong, Banawagan said the victim lost in a gambling spree on December 4 and got a loan worth PHP1 million with 15-percent interest.

While the victim checked in a hotel at Parañaque City on December 8, the kidnapers warned that he would be killed if he could not pay his loan.

The victim, who

was detained, man- aged to report the inci- dent to his friend who later reported to the po- lice which led to his res- cue and the arrest of the suspects on Tues- day night.

The suspects are facing kidnapping for ran- som with serious illegal detention after undergo- ing inquest proceedings before the Department of Justice (DOJ) on Wednesday. (PNA)

## Campaign to end violence against women pushed

MANILA -- Hun- dreds of government employees and law enforcement officers convened on Thursday for a three-kilometer solidarity walk culmi- nating an 18-day cam- paign to end violence against women (VAW).

The event, which started on November 25, was organized by the Philippine Com- mission on Women (PCW) and the Depart- ment of National De-

fense (DND).

"Everyone of us who walked today have a mission: to advocate respect, love, and peace. You may not be in the frontline fighting a war but there might be a woman or a child being bullied, being catcalled, an officemate being sexually har- rassed..." DND Under- secretary Cardozo Luna said in his speech during the event at the Camp Agu- inaldo in Quezon City.

"Be an advocate. If a person you know is a victim, encourage them to seek help and give moral support, most of the time violence pros- pers when people do nothing: the time to end VAW is now," he added.

Luna also cited that women law enforcers are also assigned to facilitate concerns on VAW in every police sta- tion so complainants can be comfortable in sharing their stories.

PCW chairperson Rhodora Bucoy, in a media interview, urged all Filipinos to under- stand that VAW is a se- rious human rights vi- olation.

She said if there is no respect for women's rights "we cannot have a truly sustainable de-

velopment, inclusive development which is the very essence of Philippine Develop- ment Plan".

**The campaign**

The 18-Day Cam- paign to End VAW is anchored on the Philip- pine government's goal of protecting the human rights of women and girls by upholding its commitment to ad- dress all forms of gen- der-based violence as enshrined in the 1987 Constitution.

Under the Republic Act 10398 or the act dedicating November 25 of every year as the National Conscious- ness Day for the Elim- ination of Violence Against Women and Children, government agencies are directed to raise awareness on the issue of violence and to free women and girls from its different forms.

In 2002, the Philip- pine Government through the PCW and other key stakeholders joined the global campaign.

Former President Gloria Macapagal-Ar- royo, in 2006, signed Proclamation 1172 ex- tending the national campaign to 18 days, thereby including De- cember 12, a historic

date that marked the signing in the year 2000 of the UN protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to supplement the UN convention against tran- snational organized crimes.

From 2016 to 2021, the campaign carries the theme "VAW-free community starts With Me". This year's cam- paign underscores the valuable role of individ- uals, especially the youth, in fighting vio- lence against women and girls within various institutions.

The campaign is necessary because global estimates by the World Health Organiza- tion indicate that about 1 in 3 women (35%) world- wide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence from inti- mate partner or non-part- ner in her lifetime.

In the Philippines, the National Demo- graphic Health Survey 2017 released by the Philippine Statistics Au- thority revealed that 1 in 4 Filipino women, aged 15-49 have experi- enced physical, emo- tional or sexual vio- lence from their hus- band or partner. (PNA)

## Germany to hire 30K foreign medical workers: DOLE

MANILA -- The Department of Labor and Em- ployment (DOLE) said Germany is looking to employ some 30,000 hospital workers, including nurses in 2020.

"They need 30,000 nurses, hospital workers, medical workers. That's a big number," Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III in an interview Wednesday.

He, however, clarified that the 30,000 job of- fers are not solely for Filipino health workers.

"They want us Filipinos. In their order of pref- erence, number one is the Philippines," the DOLE chief said.

Last month, DOLE reported that the Europe- an nation is projecting to hire at least 1,000 Filipi- no nurses next year under the Triple Win Project.

"They want to hire as many as they can, and we have many nurses that are well qualified," Bello added.

Data from the Philippine Overseas Employ- ment Administration (POEA) showed a total of 903 Pinoy nurses were hired under the Triple Win Project since 2013.

Administered by the POEA, the Triple Win Project is a government-to-government hiring pro- gram between Berlin and Manila. (PNA)

## US senators' 'intrusive' act won't affect US-PH ties: Palace

MANILA -- The Phil- ippines' relations with the United States (US) would remain "untar- nished" despite the "misguided and intru- sive act" by some Amer- ican senators consid- ered as an insult to Manila's dignity and sovereignty, Mala- cañang said Saturday.

The assurance was made by Presi- dential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo as he said the Duterte gov- ernment viewed with "grave concern" the US Senate foreign rela- tions panel's call for the immediate release of detained Senator Leila de Lima and the drop- ping of charges against Rappler chief Maria Ressa.

"While we continue

to respect the US Sen- ate as an institution, we, however, will not allow our sovereignty trampled upon by a few of their members," Panelo said in a state- ment. "We hope that probing and educated minds will ultimately prevail and that such misguided and intru- sive act shall not tarnish nor diminish the warm relations between our two countries."

The US Senate for- eign relations commit- tee approved on De- cember 11 Resolution 142, which urges the Philippine government to immediately release de Lima and withdraw charges against Res- sa.

De Lima is detained at the Philippine Cus- todial Center in Quezon City because of her supposed involvement in unlawful drug trade during her stint as jus- tice secretary under the Aquino government.

Ressa, on the oth- er hand, is accused of evading the payment of PHP150 million in tax dues on Rappler's 2015 bond sales to two foreign parties. She was ordered arrested in November 2018 but was freed after posting bail.

Panelo said de Lima and Ressa, who are facing criminal prosecution for "trans- gression of Philippine laws," are accorded procedural due pro- cess "in all stages of their criminal prosecu- tion."

"In every stage of the proceeding, both exercised their consti- tutional right to due pro- cess and to competent counsel of their choice. They continue to avail of all available legal rem- edies for their de- fense," he said. "Res- sa was given provision- al liberty by the hearing court while de Lima's continued detention re- mains on account of the nature of the crime she is charged with and the court's finding that the evidence against her is strong."

Panelo also noted that the investigating public prosecutors found probable cause to file criminal charges against them and is- sue warrants for their arrest.

Unlike Ressa who is out on bail, de Lima is still in jail because the country's law "with- holds her right to liber- ty, given the gravity of the crimes on illegal drugs charged against her," the Palace official explained.

"We reiterate that the cases against de Lima and Ressa have absolutely nothing to do with their political views on the Duterte admin- istration. The record shows that no one has been hailed to court on account of one's exer- cise of the freedom of the speech and of the press," he said. "The

text of Resolution No. 142 reveals the preju- dice upon which the good US senators based their conclusion on the situation in our country, which have ab- solutely no basis in fact nor in law."

Thus, the US Sen- ate panel's interfer- ence is a "brazen and heedless" affront to the Philippines' the dignity and sovereignty, Pane- lo said, adding that the "undisguised and out- rageous" intrusion of American lawmakers was unacceptable, considering that the Philippines "has long ceased to be a colony"

of the US.

"We call on these US senators to remove the blinders in their eyes and look at the de Lima and Ressa cas- es not with jaundiced eyes but with studied objectivity and cautious discernment. They should respect the ju- dicial processes of our country, in the same manner, we respect theirs," he said. "Among sovereign states, there must be equal and mutual respect. Intru- sion on the sovereign rights of independent countries is abhorrent in civilized societies and anathema to inter- national order." (PNA)