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MANILA -- Close to 200 wanted persons were arrested while more than PHP23 million worth of various illegal drugs were confiscated during the simultaneous "one-time, big-time" operations in Metro Manila. From December 24-26, a total of 240 police operations resulted to the arrest of 445 drug personalities and recovery of 3,493.03 kilos of shabu worth PHP23.752 million while 7,210.63 grams of marijuana valued at PHP864,835, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) acting chief, Brig. Gen. Debold Sinas said Friday. "Total seizure is PHP23 million pesos for the last two days," Sinas during a press briefing at the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) station 10.

The Northern Police District has the highest amount of drug seizure with PHP10,994,104 worth of drugs; Southern Police District with PHP8,323,336; QCPD- PHP1,980,364; Eastern Police District with PHP1,260,584; and Manila Police District with PHP1,194,243. In the two-day operation, Sinas said the least confiscation of drugs was from 5 to 10 grams. Through the Simultaneous Enhanced Managing Police Operations program, police synchronized operations against illegal drugs, loose firearms and felons. On the other hand, in the operations, 34 were arrested for loose firearms with the confiscation of 49 small

arms, three light arms, and an explosive. Sinas said in the 181 police operations, there were eight top most wanted persons arrested and 172 others caught. He said the latest accomplishment was a result of revised strategy to fight crimes, illegal drugs, and loose firearms. Under the guidance of Philippine National Police (PNP) officer-in-charge, Lt. Gen. Archie Francisco Gamboa, operations were now focused on the specific wanted suspects. "Kung sino ang target ng operation, siya lang ang huhulihin natin [Whoever is the target of the operation, they are the people to get arrested]," Gamboa said. (PNA)

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House panel vows to pass key tax bills to fund infra priorities

MANILA – The House Ways and Means Committee will sustain its commitment to fund President Rodrigo Duterte's key infrastructure and human development priorities, its chairman said Monday. Albay Rep. Joey Salceda said he will push for the passage in plenary of key tax measures that hurdled committee level, particularly the following: the tax regime for Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs), with an estimated PHP20 billion to 45 billion tax take; Motor Vehicle Road Users' Tax with PHP16 billion in revenues; mining fiscal regime worth PHP2 billion of taxes; and tax on single-use plastics for PHP4 billion expected revenue. Salceda said the panel would also improve tax administration by studying structural reforms in the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs. "We will likewise try to raise taxpayer morale by studying digital transformation of the revenue collection agencies. We want to make taxpayer experience seamless. The aim, ultimately, is to encourage tax compliance and deter tax avoidance," Salceda said. "With a few tweaks in taxpayer experience, even if we improve compliance by just 1 percent of total BIR collections, that is already a revenue increase of about PHP22 billion. We can, of course, do much more," he added. Salceda noted that the most important priority next year will be to pass the Corporate Income Tax and Incentive Rationalization Act (CITIRA) which he described as the "single most important economic reform after EDSA." "I expect the Senate to pass CITIRA within the first two months of the new year. As the first proponent of a governing body for incentives, for me, one of the most crucial aspects of the reform will be the Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB)," he said. "No FIRB makes CITIRA meaningless. It's the people's seat at the table. Without reform, we will likely hit PHP500 billion in tax incentives next year, while still making domestic corporations pay the highest tax rates in ASEAN," he added. The committee chairman said he is also expecting the Passive Income and Financial Intermediaries Tax (PIFITA) and the Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act (RPVRA) to pass in 2020. "PIFITA will unlock the potential of our capital markets and encourage ordinary Filipinos to invest for their future. RPVRA will help complete Build, Build, Build by expediting right of way acquisition. Both are definitely crucial for growth," he said. (PNA)

No Filipinos hurt in Zawiyah airstrike

MANILA -- No Filipinos were hurt in the deadly airstrikes that rained on Zawiyah district in Libya, the Philippine Embassy in Tripoli said Friday. At least two fatalities and about 10 injured were reported after the deadly airstrikes as fighting continued to rage in the outskirts of Tripoli and its surrounding area. Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Elmer Cato said at least seven Filipinos are residing in Zawiyah district, most of the nurses, but none were wounded in the attack. "We have not received reports of Filipinos being among the casualties in the recent incidents. But the Embassy is closely monitoring the situation on the ground," Cato said in a text message. The embassy is also monitoring news on the ground, particularly in Salahuddin district, where fighting has been reportedly taking place for the past

several months. "There are about 20 Filipinos in the area who we have been advising to relocate. Some already have moved to relatives and friends elsewhere," he said. On Thursday, the embassy repatriated seven Filipinos, including two minors, bringing to 149 the total number of Filipinos from Tripoli and surrounding areas who were assisted by the departments of foreign affairs and labor in returning to the Philippines. Cato said more than 1,000 Filipinos, mostly nurses and hospital workers and their dependents, are staying in Tripoli and surrounding areas that have been placed under Alert Level IV seven months ago. Only about 10 percent have so far availed themselves of the government's repatriation offer while several displaced by the fighting have been provided temporary shelter by the embassy. (PNA)

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