

# Duterte visits soldiers wounded in Mindanao blasts

**MANILA** -- President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday visited soldiers who were wounded after a series of blasts rocked Central Mindanao on Sunday.

Photos released by Malacañang showed Duterte personally checking the condition of wounded-in-action (WIA) soldiers at the Camp Siongo Station Hospital in Maguindanao.

His visit took place after he led the distribution of the certificates of land ownership award (CLOA) to qualified agrarian reform beneficiaries coming from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The President conferred the Order of Lapu-Lapu Rank of Kampilan on the soldiers.

The Order of Lapu-Lapu is given to those "deserving of merit and recognition and to fully express the President's appreciation of the Filipino people's contributions to the success of the campaigns and the programs of the government."

He also extended assistance to their families.

Reports showed that at least 23 individuals, including nine soldiers, were wounded in the series of explosions, nine days before martial law in Mindanao expires on December 31.

**P r e s i d e n t i a l** Spokesperson Salvador Panelo earlier condemned the attacks, assuring that the government would "pursue the perpetrators" and "crush all evil forces or enemies of the state, as well as their support-

ers."

"Any attempt to sow fear, hatred, and violence is doomed to fail," Panelo said.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) suspected the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) to be behind the explosions.

The BIFF is an offshoot of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is now in power in the newly-established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The BARMM replaces the now-defunct Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao following the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law that is anchored on the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro government inked between the national gov-

ernment and the MILF in 2014.

Despite the explosions, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said it will not recommend an extension of martial law in Mindanao.

Earlier, Duterte said he was willing to allow the BARMM to have its armed forces to "kill terrorists" who threatened the region's development.

"To be honest, when you are already evolved into something regional and you have your own armed forces or police, I will agree to let you bear arms. But you know you have to kill the terrorists," he said during the distribution of CLOAs in Cotabato City.

Panelo later clarified that the BARMM used to have a security force overseen by the AFP and the PNP. (PNA)

## Duterte reiterates willingness to accept Rohingya refugees

**MANILA** -- President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday reiterated his willingness to accept Rohingya refugees fleeing war and persecution in Myanmar.

"Ako (Me), I am prepared. I have communicated my desire na 'yung mga Rohingya sa Burma kung gusto nilang mag-migrate, tatanggapin ko sila (I am prepared. I have communicated my desire that if the Rohingya refugees in Burma want to migrate, I will accept them here)," Duterte said in a speech in Cotabato City.

"Malaki ang lupa natin, kawawa naman 'yang mga tao doon, 'yung mga Muslim na... (We have big lands, the people there are pitiful, the Muslims...)," he added.

Duterte urged neighboring countries Malaysia and Indonesia to do the same.

"Maghati-hati tayo (Let's share among

us); Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines. Ako (Me) I'm ready to accept," Duterte said.

He recalled how Bataan and Palawan took in Vietnamese "boat people" fleeing the Vietnam War between 1975 to 1992.

"Nagtanggap man tayo noon ng mga Vietnamese 'di ba? Panahon ng Amerikano diy-an sa Palawan (Didn't we accept Vietnamese in the past? During the American period there in Palawan)," Duterte said.

Last year, Duterte has said he was willing to accept Rohingya refugees in the Philippines, believing that genocide was apparently taking place in Myanmar.

In February this year, the President reiterated he wanted to help the Rohingya refugees, criticizing the supposed inaction of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) to address their plight.

The Rohingya, often described as "the world's most persecuted minority", are an ethnic group, majority of whom are Muslim, who have lived for centuries in Myanmar. Currently, there are about 1.1 million Rohingyas in the Southeast Asian country.

The Philippines' open-door policy to refugees can be traced back to 1923 when the country took in the first wave of White Russians fleeing from the Socialist Revolution, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The country also admitted Jewish refugees in 1934, Spanish Republicans in 1939, Chinese refugees in 1940, White Russians in 1949, Vietnamese "boat people" in 1975, Iranian refugees in 1979, Indo-Chinese refugees in 1980, and East Timor refugees in 2000. (PNA)

# Over-speeding of trucks must be controlled: Duterte

**MANILA** -- President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday said he wanted to have over-speeding of trucks regulated by police, lamenting that it has been one of the country's leading causes of deaths in road accidents.

"Pati 'yang mga truck, i-control ninyo ang speed. Alam mo ang disgrasya ngayon, pag ano ang patay, 10, 20 (The speed of trucks has to be controlled. You know accidents now, kill 10 to 20 people). I have to think about that. That has to stop," Duterte said in a speech in Cotabato City.

Duterte said the number of deaths due to road accidents was "no longer acceptable" to him.

"Itong over-speeding, it has to be controlled kasi marami

nang patay (This over-speeding has to be controlled because there are so many deaths)," he added.

Duterte compared deaths caused by over-speeding to a "massacre" that took place almost every day.

"Ang numbers ng patay (of deaths) ... No longer, hindi na nakakatuwa, hindi na maganda basahin. Parang massacre na almost every day (The number of deaths is no longer a laughing matter. It's not a good thing to read about. It is like a massacre almost every day)," he added.

Earlier this month, nine persons died while five others were injured when a truck hit a dump truck and a jeepney in Cardona, Rizal.

In 2013, when he was Davao City Mayor, Duterte issued Execu-

tive Order No. 39, which "orders setting the speed limit for all kinds of motor vehicles within the territorial jurisdiction of Davao City".

Section 4 of the said order states that "violators shall, if warranted, be subjected to arrest and their vehicle impounded without prejudice to the imposition of penalties and fines under the provisions of R.A. No.4136 and Davao City Ordinance No. 778, if applicable".

Duterte's two children, Davao City Mayor Sara and former Davao City Vice Mayor Paolo have previously been apprehended for over-speeding in 2014 and 2016, respectively.

The Global status report on road safety 2018, launched by World Health Organization (WHO) in Decem-

ber 2018, showed that the number of annual road traffic deaths has reached 1.35 million.

Road traffic injuries are now the leading killers of people aged 5-29 years, the report said.

The burden is disproportionately borne by pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, in particular those living in developing countries, it added.

It also noted that drastic action is needed to put these measures in place to meet any future global target that might be set and save lives.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that 10,012 people died due to road crashes in 2015, a 45.76 percent increase from 6,869 deaths recorded in 2006. (PNA)

## PH laws can address Chinese kidnappings: Palace

**MANILA** -- The government is strictly implementing laws on Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGOs), Malacañang assured on Monday, following concerns on the rise of kidnappings involving Chinese nationals.

The Palace made this comment after Senator Joel Villanueva said kidnapping incidents of Chinese POGO workers show that the industry's negative effects to the country outweigh the benefits.

**P r e s i d e n t i a l** Spokesperson Salvador Panelo, however, said there are laws that could prevent such crimes from happening.

"We have laws that will cover all imaginable situations or events oc-

curing in relation to POGOs. So, all we have to do is enforce them; and they're being enforced in fact," Panelo said in a Palace briefing.

"If there is violation like for instance, if there are overstaying here, they have to be removed in accordance with law," he added.

Records from the PNP-Anti-Kidnapping Group (PNP-AKG) show that there were six "POGO-related kidnappings" from January to November 2019.

Earlier, Panelo said Malacañang would leave it to Congress to decide whether or not POGOs should be banned in the Philippines.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang called on the Philippines to ban

online gambling, describing it as the "most dangerous tumor in modern society."

President Rodrigo Duterte, however, rejected the proposed ban, saying it would result in people losing livelihood, but warned operators to pay the right taxes.

Last month, Duterte imposed a three-day deadline for delinquent Philippine offshore gaming operators (POGOs) to settle their tax liabilities.

He warned that those who failed to comply with his order would face sanctions.

POGO workers' "compensation, salaries or wages for the services they render here are considered "taxable income" under Section 23 (A) & (D) of the National Internal Revenue Code. (PNA)