

Fil-Am students to engage youth on rebels’ abuses vs. IPs

NEW YORK CITY — In a sea of news agenda hugely dominated by the mainstream media, stories like the struggles of indigenous people’s (IP) communities in conflict-torn Mindanao get drowned in the narrative.

That’s why for Filipino-American (Fil-Am) student Roderick Perez, president of the Filipino-American student club in Fordham University, hearing the stories of sufferings endured by tribal leaders, in a conference here on Wednesday, was an eye-opener, something the Filipino diaspora here has never heard about.

“We only hear everything else coming from the mainstream media, and all these other outlets. But when it comes from first-hand sources just like them, it really provides a different perspective on all information that I didn’t know before,” he said, after listening to the stories of tribal leaders who were in New York to inform the international community about the atrocities and human rights abuses committed by communist rebels against IP communities back home.

“It’s really good as a Filipino-American student to expose myself to what they have to say because it was very informative and I learned a lot more about the indigenous Filipinos,” added Perez, a senior marketing student.

Engage Fil-Am youths

Meanwhile, Fil-Am junior economics major Carsyn Fisher, said the tribal leaders’ visit served as an “opportunity to learn about their experiences and their struggles, and the violence in their communities.”

Fisher said as a huge community in

New York, Fil-Am youth organizations should start engaging themselves on discussions about the plight of IP communities in the Philippines.

“As students, we really have an important voice, especially in New York. In the tri-state area, the collegiate Filipino community is so strong here, and this opens a lot of opportunities for us to educate each other, not only within our universities, but also in the greater young Filipino community in New York,” she said.

For his part, Perez said given the lack of media coverage on this type of issue, Fil-Am youth organizations here should take an active role in raising the discourse on the true stories in the tribal communities.

“We could help through dialogue in communities, inter-collegiate conversations between all these universities, because there’s a lot of stuff going on that’s hard to cover because of lack of media coverage on these types of issues,” he said.

Radicalization

During their visit in Fordham, the tribal leaders rallied the student community to help disseminate their stories in America — how

members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) try to control and manage their ancestral domains, killing tribal chieftains who would go against their will.

Datu Jacob Lanes, who was once a cadre of the NPA, the CPP’s armed wing, said he was assigned to organize different sectors in Southern Mindanao to rally against government.

“I have seen so much death and destructions. This is not the way of indigenous peoples just like the other indigenous people in the world. We are a peaceful people, our culture requires it,” he said.

Meanwhile, Joel Dahusay, IP teacher and community organizer, shared how the Salugpungan school served as a venue of the Reds to deceive and corrupt the IP culture, saying it has “radicalized the young children” in Mindanao.

“After I graduated in public school, I noticed that the Salugpungan school did not follow the Department of Education’s curriculum, it became a school of deception among the youth, teaching them to

become activists,” he said.

Presidential Communications Operations Office Undersecretary Lorraine Marie Badoy said the youth should be more discerning in joining school organizations, saying leftist groups have been using academic institutions as a recruitment ground for future rebels.

“They’re very vulnerable because when you’re young, you’re very idealistic. That’s fertile ground for brainwashing,” she said.

“The academe is a world of ideas, and this is where the CPP-NPA (tries to get in). The academe is a fertile ground for radicalization. If you love your country, don’t stay in the world of ideas, go beyond. Don’t join organizations that will leave you astray,” Badoy added.

The tribal leaders are making their way across the United States — from New York to Chicago, California and Washington DC — to call on the international community to hear their plight back home.

The CPP-NPA is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Philippines. (PNA)

CBCP urges probe on HK lending firm over 'passport collateral'

MANILA — The head of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines-Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People (CBCP-ECMI) on Thursday said that the lending firm in Hong Kong, which seized some 1,400 passports of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), should be probed.

CBCP-ECMI chairman Bishop Ruperto Santos noted that a probe should be conducted on the company, Overseas First Credit, for taking advantage of the needs of the Filipino workers there.

“The Overseas First Credit should be investigated, prosecuted. It is very sad story

where with their precarious and dire needs our OFWs become victims of heartless and scrupulous persons,” he said in an interview.

“To have (passport) as collateral is black-mailing for very excessive interest rate,” Santos added.

At the same time, the CBCP-ECMI head urged the Philippine post in the Chinese territory to assist the OFWs in securing a new travel document.

“We appeal to our Consulate Office to help and assist our OFWs, especially for the procurement of new passport,” he said.

“As to avoid this inhumane act of loan shack, it is commendable to have a bank which will cater specifically

to needs of our OFWs,” Santos added.

On Wednesday, Hong Kong police confiscated some 1,400 passports, which were supposedly used as collateral for loans of OFWs from the lending company.

The use of passport as collateral is not allowed under Foreign Service Circular No. 2014-99 of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). As a result of the illegal act, the document will also be invalidated.

To apply for a new passport, the OFWs have to submit an affidavit stating that their old passport was used as collateral for a loan.

They will also be included on the watchlist of the DFA. (PNA)

TESDA-11 to strengthen intervention in conflict-affected areas

MANILA — The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in Region 11 (TESDA-11) plans to strengthen its intervention in conflict-affected areas, an official said on Thursday.

TESDA-11 director Lorenzo Macapili said the agency’s intervention must not only end on skills training provision.

“It (intervention) has to be sustainable. We need the support and inputs of other agencies, NGOs (non-government organizations) and the LGUs (local government units), down to the barangay level, to achieve this,” Macapili told the Philippine News Agency in an interview.

According to Macapili, there were many places in the region that were declared peaceful by the military.

“But when the military left, they are back to (being inharmonious) because there was no sustainable

intervention,” he said.

TESDA-11 has identified 331 barangays it considers conflict-affected. The agency is currently doing the profiling of these barangays, according to Macapili.

He said TESDA-11 held a meeting with different agencies, NGOs and Davao City LGU and oriented them with its "Indicative Action Plan" for July to December. A joint regional poverty reduction livelihood and employment cluster and provincial task force cluster meeting on Executive Order 70, on the other hand, is scheduled Thursday in Davao Oriental.

“Under EO 70, government agencies’ programs are harmonized depending on the needs of the communities,” Macapili said.

In an earlier statement, Macapili said to TESDA will anchor all its programs on the needs of the affected commu-

nities in a holistic approach to come up with a doable action plan composed of programs and activities “that will be implemented by us with all resources being harmonized”.

He told the PNA it is important to assess first the communities, for TESDA and partners to know the proper intervention, adopting the value chain programming approach to be implemented by cluster agencies.

Meanwhile, Macapili said convergence meetings are also slated on July 9, 11, 19, 23 and 25.

“We will assess the community needs, will have community dialogues, community profiling, and identify problems from July 5-27,” he said.

Macapili added that the Department of Social Welfare and Development, teachers, and trainers will join TESDA’s provincial task force.

PH to validate damaged reef ecosystems in Spratly Islands

MANILA — Malacañang on Thursday said the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) should validate a reported destruction of reef ecosystems in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal and Spratly Islands due to China’s reclamation and illegal fishing activities.

“I think this is under Department of Agriculture, kasi iyong Fisheries (BFAR) sa kanya (because BFAR is under DA) — they should conduct a study on that, to validate that particular finding of one particular group,” Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a

Palace briefing.

The University of the Philippines’ Marine Science Institute (UP MSI) reportedly said the Philippines loses about PHP33.1 billion every year due to the damaged coral reefs in the disputed area of the West Philippine Sea.

Panelo said the Philippine government will undertake measures based on its own investigation.

“We will have to make our own study. The specific department concerned with that should conduct an inquiry on that matter and then the government will undertake measures,” he said.

Asked if government

is alarmed by the UP marine scientists’ findings, Panelo replied: “We will always be concerned if it affects the security of the state and it affects the general welfare of the people”.

Panelo said the Philippine Coast Guard should also enforce the country laws to prevent poaching activities within the country’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

“They should know what to do, because they know their duty. We will leave it to them. The Coast Guards have their own specific duty in accordance with law,” Panelo said. (PNA)