

Duterte not worried about losing Kapa members' support

MANILA -- President Rodrigo Duterte is not worried about the risk of losing the support of members of the religious group Kapa Community Ministry International Inc. after he ordered its shutdown for alleged involvement in pyramiding schemes, Malacañang said on Thursday.

Thousands of Kapa members on Thursday afternoon joined a prayer rally in General Santos City to appeal Duterte's shutdown on the group's investment operations.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo, however, downplayed Kapa members' call for Duterte to reconsider the shutdown.

"Ang naririnig lang natin sa TV, iyong mga nagsasalita, pailan-ilan eh (What we hear on TV, those who have

been talking, there are only a few). There are millions 'di ba, ang miyembro diyan sabi nila (of members)," Panelo said in a Palace briefing.

"Eh kung makita mo iyong milyon nasa kalsada, iyon ang (If there are millions on the streets then) we can say na they are outraged and they are all against it. Pero kung one, two, three, four lang, hindi naman natin alam iyon (But if it's one, two, three four only, we don't know that)," he added.

When asked if there is a chance that Duterte may change his mind and listen to Kapa members, Panelo insisted that the religious group may face charges for large-scale estafa.

"As far as the President is concerned, there's a continuing

crime of swindling or estafa," Panelo said.

"Na kay Presidente iyan. Pero basta iyan ang line ni (It's up to the President. But that's the line of the) President. Kasi you have to look at his position. Ang posisyon niya (His position), as far as he is concerned, there is a continuing crime. Kaya nga pinasarado niya eh (That's why he ordered its shutdown)," he added.

The Securities and Exchange Commission earlier flagged Kapa for allegedly soliciting investments in the form of donations and at a monthly interest rate of 30 percent.

Kapa founder Pastor Joel Apolinario denied the allegations, insisting that Kapa is a legitimate religious organization. (PNA)

Palace advises secret balloting for PDP-Laban's bet for Speaker

MANILA — Malacañang on Thursday advised the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) to conduct secret balloting among its members to determine their pulse for the House speakership race.

"What they should do, I think, the PDP should — what they should do is to have a secret balloting and get the sentiments of the members. And who gets the highest, di iyon ang ano ang magiging manok nila (should be their bet)," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a briefing.

Panelo, also Chief Presidential legal counsel, reiterated President Rodrigo R. Duterte's plan to not interfere in the race for the lower House's top post.

"The President will not interfere. He never endorsed, di ba? (right?)," he said.

Duterte is the chairman of the PDP-Laban.

Political analyst and University of the Philippines political science professor Ranjit Rye earlier said the race for the House speakership is crucial in pushing for the legislative agenda of the Duterte administration.

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Some of the names floated to replace outgoing House Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo are former foreign affairs secretary and incoming Taguig City-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano, Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Velasco, former House Speaker and current Davao del Norte 1st District Rep. Pantaleon Alvarez, and Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez. (PNA)

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NBI urges public to heed PRRD warning vs. Kapa

MANILA -- The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) cautioned the public to heed President Rodrigo Duterte's concern about the financial viability of the Kapa Community Ministry International Inc.

"We should be thankful we have a very smart President. Pre-emptive move ito (This is a pre-emptive move)," National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Deputy Director Ferdinand Lavin said in a press briefing Thursday.

"Kadalasan dito, we

would come into the picture as a reactionary move (Most of the time in the past the NBI would come into the picture as a reactionary move)," Lavin explained.

NBI National Capital Region (NBI-NCR) Director Cesar Bacani said they will file charges shortly against officials of the group in the next few days.

"With regards to the search warrants which were served last Monday, we will definitely file cas-

TESDA mulls conducting onsite assessment in Qatar

MANILA -- The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) will consider bringing its Onsite Assessment Program (OAP) in Qatar, an executive told the Philippine News Agency (PNA) on Thursday.

"There was a request from the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) from Qatar. We will be considering, subject to availability of funds," said TESDA Certification Office Executive Director Maria Susan Dela Rama.

The OAP aims to

enable overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to retain and improve their livelihood, whether as employees or as entrepreneurs, through its certifications. TESDA conducts this in Dubai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, and Riyadh.

Dela Rama earlier explained that assessments are vital as this would be an edge for an OFW applicant since it would let the employers know that he or she is capable of doing the job.

She also said that TESDA has been planning to have the OAP in

other countries, depending on POLO's request.

Meanwhile, TESDA conducted an onsite assessment in Jeddah last June 4-9.

A total of 236 OFWs in Jeddah were assessed during this period, according to TESDA. Most of them or 90 percent were also given certification in Caregiving, Massage Therapy and Filipino Computer and Literacy Program.

From OAP's launch in 2014 until 2018, there were 2,681 OFWs who benefited from the program. (PNA)

No Filipino hurt in missile attack in Saudi airport: DFA

MANILA-- The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Thursday reported no Filipino was injured in the June 12 missile attack in Saudi Arabia.

In its advisory, the agency asked members of the Filipino community "to keep a vigilant watch on potential threats to their security and to continue to abide by the security measures and protocols established by the Saudi government, as well as the country's laws, rules, and regulations".

The agency said a total of 26 people were

injured after a missile hit the arrivals hall of the Abha International Airport southwest of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. A total of 18 people sustained minor injuries while another eight were taken to the hospital.

Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Adnan Alonto assured that no Filipino was injured during the attack and that the embassy together with the Philippine Consulate General in Jeddah will "continue to monitor the situation".

He said further security-related incidents, information on develop-

ing security situations on the ground, and requests for assistance may be brought to the attention of the embassy.

Filipinos who may require assistance are encouraged to immediately contact the Embassy's Assistance to Nationals (ATN) section at +96611-480-1918 (landline), +96656 989 3301 (hotline) or assistance@riyadhpe.com (email), or the Consulate General's ATN section at +96655 219 613 or +966055 219 614 (hotline) or ans@pcgjeddah.org. (PNA)

PHP100 million in "blessings" to its members which represent 30 percent of whatever the member "donates".

NBI operatives were able to seize during the raids various documents, records, books, and equipment which will be used in the filing of the cases.

Bacani said the respondents in the complaints will include those named in its registration, the incorporators, the board of directors, officers, and other persons who were not named therein but actively participated in the said operation.

DFA raises alert level in Sudan over continued civil unrest

MANILA-- The Philippine government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), on Thursday, hoisted Alert Level 2 in Sudan following the ongoing civil unrest in the capital of Khartoum and other areas of the country.

"Alert Level 2 or Restriction Phase is issued if there are real threats to the lives, security, and properties of Filipinos due to instability in a particular country," DFA Assistant Secretary Emmanuel Fernandez said in a statement.

"Filipinos who remain in the country where Alert Level 2 is in effect are advised to restrict non-essential movements, avoid public places, and prepare for evacuation," it added.

According to the agency, the Department of Labor and Employment will only allow the return of overseas Filipino workers who have existing employment contracts and in consideration of "other special circumstances".

Filipinos in Sudan in need of assistance are urged to contact the Philippine embassy in Cairo, Egypt, through telephone numbers (+202) 252-13062 or through its Facebook Page. They may also contact the Philippine Honorary Consul in Khartoum at (+249) 183-468717 or (+249) 183-468716.

Data from the DFA as of December 2017 showed there are at least 3,000 Filipinos residing in Sudan. (PNA)