

EPD director axed for assaulting lady cop

MANILA -- National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) head, Maj. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar ordered the administrative relief of Brig. Gen. Christopher Tambungan, district director of the Eastern Police District (EPD), from his post after he allegedly assaulted a female police officer last month.

According to Eleazar, Tambungan hit Corporal April Santiago in the head and intentionally opened his car door to hit the lady cop after the latter failed to help him in a task.

Tambungan also allegedly committed verbal abuse on Santiago, who is assigned at the Greenhills Police Community Precinct (PCP-1) of the San Juan City Police Station.

"Allegedly, Brig. Gen. Tambungan confronted PCpl (Police Corporal) Santiago because she couldn't help him in a task given [to] her. Thereafter, he physically assaulted PCpl Santiago, hitting her on the head and later swinging his car door to hit her, while hurling verbal abuse at her," Eleazar told reporters in message sent to reporters late Wednesday.

Eleazar showed to media a copy of the closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage of the incident, which happened in front of the Greenhills PCP around 7 p.m. on May 12 but he only received the report on the matter Tuesday.

"Unfortunately, a report of this incident reached my office only yesterday. Apparently, Cpl. Santiago hesitated to file a complaint due to her fear that she might be the one to get reprimanded," the Metro Manila top cop noted.

"In the light of Cpl Santiago's complaint, I made a partial investigation of the matter and based on this, I have come to believe the allegations of Cpl Santiago. I further believe that the physical actuations of Gen. Tambungan, including his alleged verbal abuse upon his victim are unjustified and completely unbecoming of an officer of the PNP," Eleazar stressed.

Legal aid

The PNP, meanwhile, assured legal assistance to the female police officer allegedly assaulted by Brig. Gen. Christopher Tambungan, district director of the Eastern Police District (EPD), last month.

PNP chief Gen. Oscar Albayalde said the PNP will provide lawyers for Santiago if she wants to pursue a case against Tambungan.

"We have a legal assistance program and legal service that

can provide a counsel to the policewoman or she can even get her own lawyer. It is up to her. But even if she will not push through with the criminal case, the administrative case will continue," Albayalde told reporters on the sidelines of a firearms expo held in Mandaluyong City Thursday.

Albayalde said he has yet to see the closed circuit television (CCTV) footage of the incident, stressing that the punishment to be meted against Tambungan will depend on the result of the investigation.

"So even me without seeing the video, since somebody has been hurt, whether there is a video or not and coming from the RD (Regional Director) himself, then I have to support his decision. I was briefed by RD Eleazar. In fact, he asked for guidance and clearance on whether can relieve Gen. Tambungan administratively and I

said yes," the PNP Chief said.

While noting that erring cops can be disciplined through various methods including charging them administratively, Albayalde said police officials do not have to manhandle them.

"It's very unfortunate that it is a woman whom he manhandled. We are not saying he is guilty. He was just only relieved administratively to pave the way for an impartial investigation but if we see that there is a complainant and there is enough evidence to charge him, his relief will be permanent," said Albayalde.

"I said no matter how furious you are towards a woman, considering that the PNP is gender sensitive, we never hurt women for that matter. Even if they committed errors or they are a remiss in their duties, there are several ways to deal with them. They can be summoned and charged administratively.

But we don't have hurt them," he stressed.

Albayalde also said that based on the report from NCRPO Deputy Regional Director for Operations (DRDO), Tambungan also faces two cases before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Tambungan was transferred to the office of Eleazar while Col. Florendo Quebuyen, EPD deputy district director for administration, was designated as the officer-in-charge.

Tambungan, a member of PNPA Class 1987 and former Manila Police District Deputy Director for Administration, replaced Brig. Gen. Bernabe Balba, who was relieved from the post after a member of the EPD's District Drug Enforcement Unit (DDEU) was arrested for robbery extortion in March.

Tambungan has been serving as EPD director for three months prior to his relief. (PNA)

Pag-IBIG execs say salary step increments above board

MANILA -- Pag-IBIG Fund on Wednesday clarified that the pay adjustment of its officers and employees in 2018 was merely salary step increments and not an increase in the salary rates which requires approval from Malacañang.

Secretary Eduardo D. del Rosario, chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council and of Pag-IBIG Fund's Board of Trustees, made this response to the observation issued by the Commission on Audit (COA) on last year's pay hike.

He said while step increments among employees of other agencies are granted automatically every three years on the basis of longevity of service, the step increments granted to Pag-IBIG employees were intended to address the effects of inflation over the years.

Del Rosario said the grant of such step increments is within the powers of its Board based on Pag-IBIG's Compensation Plan and since there was no increase in salary rates nor new benefits granted, presidential approval is not required.

"I want to assure the public that the grant of step increments in 2018 was proper, done according to the right process and, most importantly, was not excessive," Del Rosario said in a statement on Wednesday.

"We have only adjusted the salaries of Pag-IBIG Fund officers and employees to be, more or less, on the same level of SSL4 (Salary Standardization Law 4), which is currently being received by employees of other government institutions. We would like to assure all, our members in particular, that we continue to adhere to the directive of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte in safeguarding the workers' fund," he added.

Del Rosario said the Fund also adjusted the salary rates of all covered contractors and job order personnel to be comparable with positions in government and granted them a premium rate of 20 percent in compliance with the Joint Circular No. 1 issued in November 2018 by COA, the Civil Service Commission, and the Department of Budget and Management.

In complying with the circular, the Pag-IBIG Fund Board agreed with the rationale of the three agencies calling for equal pay among permanent employees and job order personnel in government, pegged at the prevailing rates of the fourth tranche of the SSL4.

Del Rosario said the Pag-IBIG Fund Board had the same intention in granting the step increments to employees and officers of Pag-IBIG Fund last year, even while the step increments applied to the salaries of a majority of its employees still resulted to a lower rate than the prevailing rates of the third tranche of the SSL4.

Pag-IBIG Fund CEO Acmad Rizaldy Moti also clarified that the agency's Board went through all the requisite processes and ensured that all conditions were met prior to the granting of the step increments.

"The Board considered all bases when the step increments were granted in 2018. The intention behind the grant of step increments under the Compensation Plan of Pag-IBIG Fund was not to raise the salaries of officers and employees -- but rather to maintain the purchasing power and value that they had in 2009 or 10 years ago when the Fund's Compensation Plan was first adopted," Moti said.

Comelec to deliberate on consolidation of petitions vs. Cardema

MANILA — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) First Division will deliberate on the testimonies of both parties to consolidate the petitions questioning the substitution by former National Youth Commission (NYC) chairman Ronald Cardema as the first nominee of Duterte Youth Party-list.

"The First Division will be deliberating on your pending manifestations for consolidation," said poll body First Division Presiding Commissioner Al Parreno during the hearing at the Comelec Session Hall in Manila Wednesday.

So far, two petitions have been filed before the poll body against the substitution of the youth party-list's first nominee. The first was filed by petitioners Raoul Danniel Manuel of the National Union of Students of the Philippines, Paula Sabrine Janer of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines, and Raainah Punzalan of the Youth Act Now Against Tyranny.

The second petition was filed by petitioners Aunell Ross Angcos, Cyra Aurelio, and Hannah Navarroza.

In both petitions, they claim that the 34-year-old Cardema is no longer eligible to represent the group since he is already overage.

Under the Party-list Law, a nominee of the Youth Sector must be at least 25 years old but not more than 30 years old on Election Day.

On the other hand, Commissioner Rowena Guanzon said the Commission en banc will not yet issue the Certificate of Proclamation (COP) to the Duterte Youth Party-list group which is one of 51 winning party-list organizations in the May 13 polls.

"The Commission en banc has decided that it will not yet issue a Certificate of Proclamation to the Duterte Youth party-list," she said in an interview on the sidelines of the launch of her book, "The Government Auditing Code of the Philippines".

The poll official said this is due to the pending petitions against Cardema's substitution.

The Duterte Youth was awarded one seat at the House of Representatives after getting a total of 354,629 votes in the May elections.

The COP is the requirement by the House of Representatives in allowing winning congressmen to assume their posts.

Last month, voting 5-1-1, the Commission en banc has accepted the application of Duterte Youth to substitute all its five nominees, headed by Cardema. (PNA)