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LTO TO REVOKE LICENSE OF MAN DRIVING FROM PASSENGER SEAT

MANILA -- The Land Transportation Office (LTO) is set to revoke the license of a driver who was seen in a viral video driving his car while seated in the passenger seat

The driver, who is identified as Miko Lopez, will likewise face charges for reckless driving, illegal modification (removing the steering wheel), not wearing a seatbelt and "improper person to operate a motor vehicle." The driver was summoned to the LTO central office in Quezon City for a hearing on the incident that was scheduled on the afternoon of the same day but did not show up.

"Mr. Lopez failed to appear despite service of summons. The LTO Law Enforcement Service will now prepare for the resolution," Libiran said.

The video showed Lopez on the passenger seat, his left hand on the steering wheel and his left leg slung over the center console into the driver's side to manipulate the pedals.

Tokyo, MNL to boost exchange on defense, infra, Bangsamoro dev't

MANILA -- The Philippine and Japanese governments have vowed to increase their cooperation on defense and security, as well as the development of infrastructure in the country, and the Bangsamoro region.

This commitment was made during the second bilateral meeting between Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. and his Japanese counterpart, Foreign Minister Taro Kono, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo on Wednesday.

According to a Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) statement issued Friday, the two top diplomats continued their discussions on further elevating the cooperation between the two states under a "strengthened strategic partnership."

"The two foreign ministers vowed to further advance cooperation, particularly in defense and security, economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and the development of the Bangsamoro region," it said.

"They also exchanged views on regional issues of mutual concern, including the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea," it added.

During the meeting, Locsin highlighted the country's "profound and abiding friendship" with Japan, attested to by Tokyo's support through the years.

For his part, Kono noted the "deep relationship" between the two countries, describing it in President Rodrigo Duterte's words that Japan is the Philippines' "friend closer than a brother."

Locsin and Kono's meeting came three months after they met in Davao City last February 10.

Locsin was in Tokyo to accompany the Chief Executive who participated in the 25th Nikkei Conference on the Future of Asia and met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The DFA said this was Locsin's first official trip to Japan since assuming office. (PNA)

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Nothing illegal with mandatory ROTC for senior high

MANILA -- The proposed reinstatement of the mandatory Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) for Grades 11 and 12 students does not violate any international law, the spokesperson of the Department of National Defense (DND) said Friday.

"It is the DND's position that those opposed to the proposed bill are using a myopic interpretation of the law, which misleads the public into forming false perceptions and ill-informed opinions. The proposed bill was vetted by the DOJ, DND, DepED, and DFA (departments of justice, national defense, education, and foreign affairs) to ensure that it does not contravene the Philippine constitution and international conventions," Arsenio Andolong told the Philippine News Agency (PNA).

Andolong was reacting to claims made by some sectors that making ROTC mandatory for senior high students violates international law.

He was referring to House of Representatives Bill 8961, which seeks to amend Republic Act (RA) 7077 or the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act. The bill was passed by the House on third and final reading, with a vote of 167-4-0.

Andolong said that under the "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict", to which the Philippines is a signatory, the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is 18 years old.

He also pointed out that ROTC cadets are not conscripted into the military and expected to fight wars during their two-year training.

"While some cadets may opt to join the regular force after they finish their voluntary advanced ROTC in college, mandatory ROTC will not automatically make our Grades 11 and 12 students part of the AFP. Furthermore, critics of the bill also forget that (the) mobilization of reservists in times of war will require an Act of Congress," Andolong explained.

He added that reinstating mandatory ROTC among Grades 11 and 12 students is logical as only a small percentage of high school students are able to attend college.

This will automatically exclude them from the program should mandatory ROTC be reinstated for college students only.

"As to the question of age, we must point out that mandatory ROTC in the past was part of the curriculum of first and second year college students, most of whom were 16 to 18 years old. Reinstating mandatory ROTC in Grades 11 and 12 would not be any different in terms of age because these students fall within the same age bracket of the first and second year college students of the old curriculum. This seems to be a fact that proponents of college-level ROTC conveniently forget when they cite age as a problem in the current proposal," Andolong he said.

Under House Bill 8961, ROTC training would apply to "all students in Grades 11 and 12 in all senior high schools in public and private educational institutions" and shall be a requirement for graduation.

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