

Indian President arrives for 5-day state visit in PH

MANILA -- Indian President Ram Nath Kovind arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) on Thursday afternoon for his five-day state visit upon the invitation of President Rodrigo Duterte.

He was onboard a chartered Air India flight that touched down in Manila at 4:24 p.m.

Kovind was welcomed by Chief of Presidential Protocol and Presidential Assistant on Foreign Affairs Robert Borje, Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Francisco Duque III, DOH Undersecretary Lilibeth David, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Undersecretary Enrique Manalo, Philippine Ambassador to India Ramon Bagatsing Jr., Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano, Manila International Airport Authority General Manager Ed Monreal, Indian Ambassador to the Philippines Jaideep Mazumdar and Mrs. Parvati Mazumdar, and Defense Attache Sandeep Marathe.

He is the third Indian leader to make a state visit here since the establishment of the Philippines-India bilateral relations in 1949.

The DFA earlier said Kovind and Duterte will hold a bilateral meeting on Oct. 18 in Malacañang to discuss areas of mutual interest, including political, economic, cultural, and people-to-people engagement.

During his state visit from Oct. 17 to 21, Kovind is also set to meet with members of the Indian community in the Philippines and the Filipino beneficiaries of the Mahaveer Philippine Foundation Inc.

He will also attend events organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (Phil) Inc. (FICCI). (PNA)

Solon wants to legalize motorcycles-for-hire

MANILA -- Senator Edgardo "Sonny" Angara has filed a measure seeking to legalize the operation of motorcycles-for-hire.

Angara filed Senate Bill 1025, which seeks to amend the Land Transportation and Traffic Code, to allow motorcycles to be registered with the Land Transportation Office as "for hire" and may be used as a commercial vehicle to transport passengers and goods.

In a statement on Thursday, he said the worsening traffic problem in Metro Manila and the frequently bogged-down mass transit systems highlight the need to provide commuters with an alternative mode of transportation, such as motorcycles-for-hire or "habal-habal".

He, however, noted that the "increasingly-popular mode of transport" is still considered illegal under the Land Transportation and Traffic Code, which covers the registration and operation of all motor vehicles in the country.

He cited the case of motorcycle ride-hailing service Angkas, which was allowed to operate for six months starting last June 8 as part of a pilot-run of "motorcycle taxis".

"Commuting in Metro Manila has become very challenging. A typical commuter has to allocate at least two hours to get to work or school and that is if their regular modes of transport are available. What if the MRT breaks down? Kulang pa ang dalawang oras mo sa byahe (Two hours would not be enough for the commute)," Angara said.

"Tulad nitong nangyari sa LRT-2 na nasunog. Libo-libong Pilipino ang naperwisyo nito at karamihan sa kanila ay habal na ang sinasakyan para mas mabilis makarating sa

destinasyon nila at mas mura din ito kumpara sa Grab (Just like the fire incident in LRT-2, thousands of Filipinos were inconvenienced and most of them resorted to the use of the habal-habal as a mode of transportation to reach their destination because it's cheaper compared to Grab)," he added.

Republic Act 4136, or the Land Transportation and Traffic Code, only allows the registration of motorcycles for either private or government use and prohibit its listing as a vehicle for hire.

"However, individuals and even unaccredited transport groups, continue to utilize motorcycles for public transport despite (the) explicit prohibition of such operation under

the same law," Angara said.

Under the bill, a motorcycle must have a minimum engine displacement of 125 cubic cm. and a backbone-type built to be registered for transporting passengers.

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) will be tasked to ensure the roadworthiness of motorcycles-for-hire before they are registered.

To further ensure their safety, no modifications on the motorcycles would be allowed, except for the installation, based on safe engineering design specifications, of motorcycle luggage carriers, saddlebags, step boards or footpegs, and appropriate speed limiter and monitoring device. (PNA)

BI stops 4 Dubai-bound household workers at NAIA

MANILA -- Four undocumented overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) were stopped at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) while attempting to leave for Bangkok in the guise of being tourists, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) said Thursday.

According to BI port operations division chief Grifon Medina, the women, who were supposed to be recruited to work in Dubai, were intercepted by the Bureau's travel control and enforcement unit (TCEU) as they are about to board a flight to Bangkok last October 9.

"They pretended that they all knew each other as they were co-workers and friends. But our immigration officers found numerous inconsistencies in their statements," he said in a statement.

"They all eventually admitted having United Arab Emirates (UAE) visas in their possession and that their final destination is Dubai where they were recruit-

ed to work as household service workers," Medina added.

Aside from the four women, he said that another woman, who allegedly recruited them and was supposed to accompany them on their trip, was also barred from leaving.

Medina added that they were all turned over to the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) for investigation and filing of appropriate charges.

On the other hand, BI TCEU chief Timotea Barizo said the women initially claimed to be employed at the travel agency owned by their recruiter, who also arranged their trip to Bangkok.

"During the immigration inspection, the recruiter would act as the spokesperson for the entire group. She kept on answering for everyone and has everyone's documentation. This caused our officers to further doubt

PRRD frustration over 'ninja cops' a challenge to overcome: PNP

MANILA -- The acting chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) on Thursday said President Rodrigo Duterte's disappointment towards the institution over the issue on 'ninja cops' is a challenge for them to overcome.

"It's a challenge on my leadership dahil OIC (officer-in-charge) ako that I should do something about the impression of the President. It should take upon me, dapat may initiative kung ano ang dapat kong gawin at pine-prepare ko yan. (It's a challenge on my leadership because I am the OIC. I should do something about the impression of the President. It should take it

upon me to have the initiative on what will I do, and I am preparing for that)," PNP officer-in-charge, Lt. Gen. Archie Francisco Gamboa said, in a radio interview.

In a news report, Duterte had a closed-door command conference with top PNP officials on Tuesday night where he expressed his disappointment over the involvement of police officers in illegal drugs despite the doubling of their salaries and grant of additional benefits.

Gamboa said they will meet this week to determine the performance of his commanders aside from a command conference next week.

"As a matter of fact, I will be holding an evaluative conference this week and then another command conference with all PNP commanders on Wednesday," he added.

Gamboa earlier said he will present before the media the PNP accomplishments in connection with the campaign against rogue officers.

PNP spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Bernard Banac, said they fully understand the sentiments of the President.

"Tinatanaw naming ito na isang hamon para sa buong hanay para sa pagbabago at makaka-asa ang ating mga kababayan na ang PNP ay magpapatuloy sa paglilingkod," (We look at this as a big challenge to us for us to further improve. Our countrymen can expect that the PNP will continue to perform its mandate," Banac told reporters when sought for a comment on Thursday.

"Naroon yung pina-

hayag niya (President Duterte) ang kanyang saloobin at ang kanyang kalungkutan kaya bilang ama, bilang Commander in Chief, tinatanggap naming ito bilang hamon para sa pagbabago. (We understand the President for expressing disappointment to the PNP. As our Commander-in-Chief, we see his statement as a challenge for a change to the entire ranks)," Banac noted.

Meanwhile, the PNP spokesperson confirmed that resigned PNP chief, Gen. Oscar Albayalde, already vacated the 'White House', the official residence of the PNP chief inside Camp Crame, Quezon City.

The move is in preparation for the turnover to the next PNP chief on October 29, which has yet to be named by President Rodrigo Duterte.

On Monday, Albayalde stepped down as the country's top cop and went on a non-duty status ahead of his mandatory retirement on November 8.

His resignation came amid the controversies hounding him in connection with activities of 13 policemen from Pampanga when he was still the provincial director in 2013.

The assumption of command ceremony for the next PNP chief is set on October 29.

Aside from Gamboa, concurrent Deputy Chief for Administration, other contenders to the post are Lt. Gen. Camilo Pancratius Cascolan, Deputy Chief for Operations; and Maj. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar, Chief of the PNP Directorial Staff.

Gamboa and Cascolan belong to PMA Class of 1986, while Eleazar is from PMA Class of 1987. (PNA)