

Terrorist Joma can never be political refugee

MANILA -- Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo M. Año on Thursday said exiled Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) leader Joma Sison must be hallucinating when he claimed that he is absolutely protected in his self-imposed exile in the Netherlands.

"Ang isang kriminal ay hindi kailanman puwedeng ituring na political refugee. Ang isang mass murderer ay hindi puwedeng maging refugee. Buking ka na, Joma, kaya panagutan mo ang mga kasalanan mong pagpatay sa mga kapwa mo Pilipino (A criminal can never be considered a political refugee. A mass murderer can never be a refugee. Joma, you are exposed so you better answer for your crime of killing your fellow Filipinos)," Año said.

The Manila Regional Trial Court has recently issued a warrant of arrest against Joma and 36 of his alleged co-conspirators in the Inopacan massacre, a deadly purge of CPP/NPA members accused by the party of various offenses. The remains of the victims were discovered in a mass grave in Inopacan, Leyte in 2006.

The DILG chief also called Sison a coward for hiding from the charges against him in a foreign country and living there like a king.

"Duwag ka (You are a coward), Joma. Now that you are in the last few years of your life, do something right for a change, own up to your sins against the Filipino people and face the charges against you and give justice to the victims of the Inopacan massacre, among many others," he says.

The Philippine Na-

tional Police (PNP), he said, is also closely coordinating with the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) for the issuance of a red notice for Sison's arrest, which serves as a valid request for provisional arrest.

"We have referred the warrant issued by the Manila Regional Trial Court to Interpol for publication of a red notice which is defined as a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action," he says.

"Once the Interpol publishes a red notice, Joma Sison becomes a wanted man all over the world," he adds.

Año said that while there is no bilateral extradition treaty between the Philippines and the Netherlands, it is possible to explore the possibility of transmitting this as a request to the Dutch government for mutual legal assistance (MLA) on criminal matters.

According to the DILG chief, although Sison has been granted refugee status in The Netherlands due to alleged political persecution in the Philippines, "the grounds for the grant of such refugee status to Joma Sison no longer exist and should therefore be revoked."

He said the government will seek a special arrangement with the Dutch government for the extradition of Joma Sison on the grounds that his "refugee status" is no longer tenable because he participated in the commission of crimes and other criminal acts, as determined by the Regional Trial Court that renders him effectively ineligible.

The DILG Secretary also stressed that the communist leader con-

tinues to direct his terrorist forces in the country from his self-imposed exile in the Netherlands through public statements and issuances, such as directing the New People's Army to kill and plunder in the countryside.

"This fact has been established when the United States, the European Union, and the Duterte administration declared the CPP/NPA as a terrorist organization," he said.

In 1992, The Netherlands recognized Joma as a "political refugee" on the basis of his alleged persecution by the Marcos regime.

He says that the government is now actively working with the European Union to have Sison's so-called refugee status in The Netherlands revoked as soon as possible. The Netherlands is part of the European Union.

"Wala nang rason pa para kanlungin pa ng Netherlands si Joma dahil ang Pilipinas at ang EU mismo kung saan kasapi ang Netherlands ay nag-sasabing isang terrorist organization ang CPP na pinamumunuan ni Sison. Ang ibig sabihin si Sison ay isang terorista na hindi kailangan binibigyang proteksyon ng kahit sino mang gobyerno (There is no longer a reason why the Netherlands should provide protection to Joma because the Philippines and the EU, to which the Netherlands is a member, say that the CPP led by Joma is a terrorist organization which does not need protection from any government)," he stressed.

Año said initial talks with the EU deputy ambassador were positive, with the latter committing to help the Philippine government

in this matter.

At the same time, the DILG and the PNP have teamed up with the Department of Justice, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of Foreign Affairs to arrest all the others who were found to be responsible for the Inopacan massacre.

Aside from Sison, among those included in the warrant of arrest issued by the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 32 are National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) senior adviser Luis Jalandoni, communist leaders Rodolfo Salas and Leo Velasco, and Sison's wife, Juliet.

"Sumisikip na ang mundo mo, Joma. Malapit na ang araw ng pagtutuos para sa mga kasalanang ginawa mo sa ating bansa at sa mga biktima ng Inopacan massacre (Your world is getting smaller, Joma. The day of reckoning for you to pay for your sins to the country and to the victims of the Inopacan massacre is nearing)," Año said. (PR)

Palace condemns ambush of ex-guv Espino

MANILA -- Malacañang condemned the ambush of former Pangasinan Governor Amada Espino Jr. and vowed to prosecute perpetrators responsible for the "dastardly" act.

"We condemn this felonious act as we believe that any unjustified killing has no place in a civilized society like ours," Panelo said in a statement on Thursday.

Panelo assured that the Philippine National Police (PNP) is thoroughly investigating the attempt to take Espino's life.

"We guarantee that police authorities are

PH, Canada armies eye stronger disaster response cooperation

MANILA -- Philippine Army (PA) chief Lt. Gen. Macairog S. Alberto and his Canadian counterpart have recognized the need for cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

This came about as Alberto met with Canadian Army chief Lt. Gen. Wayne Eyre at the 11th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference in Bangkok, Thailand on Tuesday, said PA spokesperson Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala in a statement Wednesday.

Also discussed during the two officials' meeting were current

internal challenges and the issue on West Philippine Sea.

They also recalled Philippine-Canada roles during the Korean War and other foreign relations participation, such as in United Nations deployments.

The bilateral meeting aims to channel concerns on peace and security as well as to establish bond between commanders that will mutually benefit both armies, Zagala added.

"It is important for the Philippine Army to participate in bilateral

meetings for it is an avenue to understand other countries' interests and at the same time, for us to express our security concerns. These activities will lead us to strengthen our military cooperation and to mutually benefit with our ally nations," he said.

Alberto also thanked Eyre for accommodating Filipino military students and reciprocated the gesture by offering PA training schools if ever the Canadian Army intends to send its students to the Philippines. (PNA)

House sets record-high average attendance

MANILA -- A record-high average of 247 representatives have attended the 18 session days of the House of Representatives since the 18th Congress opened on July 22 this year.

House Deputy Speaker Neptali Gonzales II commended his colleagues for their dedication to perform their legislative duties

under the guidance of House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano.

"I have been a member of several Congresses, and I am truly elated by the record attendance of House members of the 18th Congress led by Speaker Cayetano," said Gonzales, majority leader during the 16th Congress.

"The high attendance of our colleagues reflects their discipline, hard work, deep passion, and great interest to serve the people and enact priority laws that will give them a safe and comfortable life," he added.

Despite many holidays last month, Gonzales said the House recorded high attendees of 266 on Aug. 13, a day after the observance of Eid al-

tacked their convoy in an intersection at Barangay Magtaking in San Carlos City, Pangasinan on Wednesday (Sept. 11) afternoon.

Espino, also a former representative of Pangasinan, is now in stable condition while his other four aides are also recovering. (PNA)

Adha Day and 259 attendees on Aug. 27, a day after the National Heroes Day.

With the consistent presence of an overwhelming majority of its members, the House effectively held the committee budget hearings on the proposed General Appropriations Bill (GAB) for 2020 and other priority measures.

Gonzales said the House is on the right track to beat its self-imposed deadline for the approval of the proposed national budget before the October 4 break.

He credited Cayetano's strong and competent leadership for keeping the House of Representatives on track in achieving its legislative agenda and priorities.

"Speaker Cayetano is a working Speaker, administratively and legislatively. He is very hands-on. He makes sure that all committees, especially the important and big ones, are handled by qualified House Members. He can't be influenced by a recommendation simply because of party entitlement," Gonzales said. (PR)