

## Voter registration suspended in Batangas town for plebiscite

**MANILA** — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has suspended for a week the voter registration in Sto. Tomas, Batangas to give way to the events prior to a plebiscite for its cityhood on September 7.

Comelec Resolution No. 10559 released on Wednesday, stated that the listing activities in connection with the May 2020 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) will be put on hold from September 4 to 11.

The registration is set to resume on September 12.

The nationwide registration of voters for

village and youth polls started on August 1 and will end on September 30.

On the other hand, pursuant to Republic Act No. 11086, the poll body is mandated to set the date and supervise the conduct of the plebiscite converting the present municipality of Santo Tomas into a component city of Batangas.

On the said date, voters will write the word "Yes" or "Oo" on the official ballot if they vote for the approval of the ratification of R.A. No. 11086, which converts the municipality into a city.

Those who will vote

for its rejection will write the word "No" or "Hindi".

All qualified and duly registered voters of the town may cast their votes from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

An express lane will be provided for pregnant voters, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and senior citizens.

Illiterates and members of the marginalized sector, who cannot, by themselves, accomplish the ballots may be assisted by qualified persons subject to guidelines set forth in the plebiscite. (PNA)

## Palace accepts Chinese shipowner's apology for Recto Bank mishap

**MANILA** -- Malacañang on Wednesday confirmed that it has accepted the apology issued by the owner of the Chinese vessel which rammed into a Philippine fishing boat near the Reed Bank (Recto Bank) last June 9.

"We accept the recent apology extended by the owner of the Chinese vessel to our fishermen affected by the incident," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"We likewise welcome the owner's humility to take responsibility and acknowledgment that compensation must be provided to cover the actual loss," he added.

In a memorandum penned to Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. which was posted by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), a letter from an unnamed association relayed the Chinese shipowner's apologies.

Reports showed that the letter sender came from Chen Shiquin, president of the Guangdong Fishery

Mutual Insurance Association.

"It is fortunate that there were no casualties. I feel deep regret that this accident had to happen and I would like to express my deep sympathy to the Filipino fishermen. The shipowner of the Chinese fishing boat involved, through our Association, would like to express his sincere apology to the Filipino fishermen," the memorandum read.

He, however, insisted that despite the accident being "unintentional", he noted that the Chinese vessel should take the major responsibility in the accident.

He also asked the Philippine government to file a specific appeal for civil compensation based on the actual loss of the Filipinos affected.

In his fifth trip to China from Aug. 28 to Sept. 1, Duterte is expected to discuss the Recto Bank incident among other areas of concern

with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Panelo said the highlight of the President's visit will be a bilateral meeting with Xi to discuss the comprehensive strategic cooperation between the Philippines and China.

He pointed out that the President also intends to discuss with Xi the crafting of a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea and how they can expedite its conclusion.

"The President believes that the absence of the COC that is to be observed by affected countries has caused numerous conflicts in the subject waters that could have been prevented by a document that will regulate their actions. A good example of such conflict would be the maritime incident which transpired a few months ago in Recto Bank," Panelo said.

Panelo said Duterte is also expected to raise the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) which nullified China's claims

## Santa Rosa in Laguna gets own legislative district

**MANILA** -- The city of Santa Rosa in the province of Laguna now has its own legislative district under a new law signed by President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

Under Republic Act No. 11395, Santa Rosa, which is currently in the first legislative district of Laguna, will now constitute its own legislative district.

"The City of Santa Rosa is hereby separated from the First Legislative District of the Province of Laguna to constitute the Lone Legislative District of the City of Santa Rosa,

which shall commence in the next national and local elections after the effectivity of this Act," the law read.

Currently, San Pedro City is the only city, which remains part of Laguna's first district.

Santa Rosa City is Laguna's third legislative district since 2016 after the cities of Biñan and Calamba.

Rep. Danilo Ramon Fernandez, the in-

cumbent representative of the first legislative district of Laguna, will continue to represent the said district until the first representative for Santa Rosa is elected.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) will be tasked to issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this act within 60 days from the effectivity of the act.

Duterte signed the act constituting the lone legislative district of Santa Rosa on Aug. 22 but a copy of the document was released to the media only on Wednesday (Aug. 28).

Santa Rosa City currently has a population of over 300,000.

A total of 213,913 registered voters in Santa Rosa City participated in the 2019 midterm elections. (PNA)

## Suspect in killing of Ozamis City broadcaster arrested

**MANILA** — A suspect in the killing of DXOC-Ozamiz City anchorman Cosme Maestrado was arrested in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan, the Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS) announced on Wednesday.

In a statement, the PTFoMS said joint operatives of San Juan Del Monte Police Station, Bulacan Provincial Police Office, Regional Intelligence Unit-National Capital Region, and Police Regional

ketball World Cup.

Aside from Panelo, joining the President's official delegation are Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr., Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez, Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato Dela Pena, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Prospero De Vera III, and Customs Commissioner Rey Guerrero. (PNA)

Office Region 10 have arrested Gregie Azcona on Aug. 15, 2019 in Barangay Sta. Cruz, San Jose del Monte.

Azcona's arrest was based on two warrants of arrest issued by Judge Salome F. Dungog of Regional Trial Court (RTC) Ozamiz City Branch 35 for the crime of murder and by Judge Edmundo P. Pintac of RTC Ozamiz City Branch 15 for the crime of robbery.

Maestrado was reportedly killed by unidentified assailants in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental on Aug. 27, 2015.

The PTFoMS considered the arrest of Azcona as another accomplishment in its efforts to solve media killings.

The arrest of Azcona, it added, happened on the same day that the mastermind behind the murder of Kidapawan broadcaster Eduardo Dizon was named and charged through the efforts of PTFoMS.

"The arrest of Gregie Azcona and the other achievements of the PTFoMS concretize what I promised when I first took over as chair of the Task Force," Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said.

"We will bring our enemies to justice or

we will bring justice to our enemies; either way, justice will be served," he added.

For his part, PT-FoMS co-chair, Communication Secretary Martin Andanar said the Task Force's mandate is to closely monitor all the media killing cases even those that happened during the previous administrations.

"This murder of Maestrado in 2015 occurred even before the Task Force was created in 2016, but the PT-FoMS Staff, through the leadership of Usec (Joel) Egco, never wavered in its commitment to follow up and update the law enforcers assigned to the case," Andanar said.

Andanar commended the police operatives who are "up to now are steadily tracking down and pursuing the suspects who are still at large in cases of media killings."

"We cannot stop and we will not stop until all the cases that we are monitoring have been resolved", PTFoMS Executive Director Undersecretary Joel Sy Egco said.

"We are seriously carrying out the marching orders from our Chair and Co-Chair to end the perceived 'culture of impunity' for journalists in our country," he added.