



Good News

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Updates from Government Agencies

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A new and better way

AS the Good News this week shows, the Aquino administration is taking dramatic action towards conflict resolution on many fronts. A new era of understanding, development, and growth is being ushered in.

The President's meeting with the leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Japan was warmly received throughout the political spectrum. Businessmen and industry leaders joined peace advocates in Mindanao: they finally see a way forward towards fulfilling Mindanao's promise.

EDITORIAL

In the Cordillera Administrative Region, the final peace between the government and the Cordillera People's Liberation Army is making it possible for development projects and other similar initiatives to begin in what used to be a conflict area during the martial law years.

Industrial peace is being fostered by labor sector reforms which have already made significant headway such that the Department of Labor and Employment recorded only one strike in the first seven months of this year. Government measures that seek less adversarial ways of resolving labor issues have contributed to boosting investor and creditor confidence, which redound to job generation.

Through these tangible efforts, the Aquino administration has shown the strength of its commitment to the peaceful resolution of any conflict that has denied countless Filipinos the fruits of our progress.

Peace paves way for development projects in CAR

Potable water systems, roads, and irrigation canals to be built

THE closure compact between the Philippine Government and the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) and its political wing, the Cordillera Bodong Administration, has given rise to community development projects fully supported by executives of the region.

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President Aquino with Chair Al Haj Murad Ibrahim and MILF members during an informal meeting in Tokyo, Japan. (Malacañang Photo Bureau)

PNoy-Murad meet draws positive feedback

THE recent meeting between President Benigno S. Aquino III and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chair Al Haj Murad Ibrahim in Tokyo has drawn a lot of positive feedback from various fronts.

President Aquino and Murad met last week to discuss possible approaches in moving the peace process forward. The successful meeting, which government panel chair Marvic Leonen referred to as a demonstration of the President's "very hands-on approach and personal commitment to attaining a just and lasting peace," earned the confidence of many, including government critics.

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Business leaders rally national agencies around Mindanao policy agenda

Strategic partnership of the government and the private sector to fulfill Mindanao's promise

KEY business leaders from all across Mindanao, including heads and representatives of various industry associations, have engaged national government executives in a series of policy discussions aimed at finding the common ground for addressing crucial economic issues that impact on Mindanao.

A two-day series of roundtable discussions focusing on energy, mining, and agriculture was slated in Manila recently by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (PCCII) - Mindanao, in collaboration with the USAID-Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program and the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA).

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DOLE: Only one strike in 7 months of 2011

ONLY one strike was declared in the first seven months of the year, a first for the industrial relations climate of the country, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported this week.

In a disclosure to Labor Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) said the lone strike from January to July this year was declared in January by the union of Supreme Steel Corporation in Region 3 (Central Luzon) on account of unfair labor practice, specifically, non-implementation of its collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the management.

“If the present peaceful industrial relations climate continues until the end of the year, 2011 will go down as the most peaceful year in the country’s industrial relations history, in direct contrast to the situation more than two decades ago,” Baldoz said after receiving the report.

“The good news is that there were 119 notices of strikes settled within the period involving 121,008 workers who were further spared from the adverse effects of a work stoppage, because of the prevailing peaceful industrial relations climate,” she explained.

The single strike recorded so far this year pales in comparison to the eight strikes registered in 2010, according to the NCMB. The strike incidence has also remained in the single-digit level since 2007 a far cry from the 80s when the Philippines was considered the strike capital of Asia.

Baldoz said she is pleased that reforms in the labor dispute settlement system in the country, including arbitration and adjudication, being pursued by DOLE under the administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III are already yielding positive results. Now, labor and management have the option to go for less adversarial and litigious alternative modes of dispute resolution and settlement.

“Most of all, a peaceful industrial relations climate contributes to the government’s efforts of building investor and creditor confidence in our economy, and we all know that is a boost to job generation,” she said. **GN**

Peace paves...(continued)

Two governors of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) welcomed the development projects that have been identified under the terms of peace. Governors Eustaquio Bersamin (Abra) and Leonard Mayaen (Mt. Province) expressed appreciation for the projects presented by representatives of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) during the recently held local government unit (LGU) orientations in their provinces.

The orientations sought to present to all Cordillera provinces the development plans enshrined in the GPH-CPLA closure pact. In July, LGU executives in Apayao, Kalinga, and Ifugao were also briefed with the same agenda.

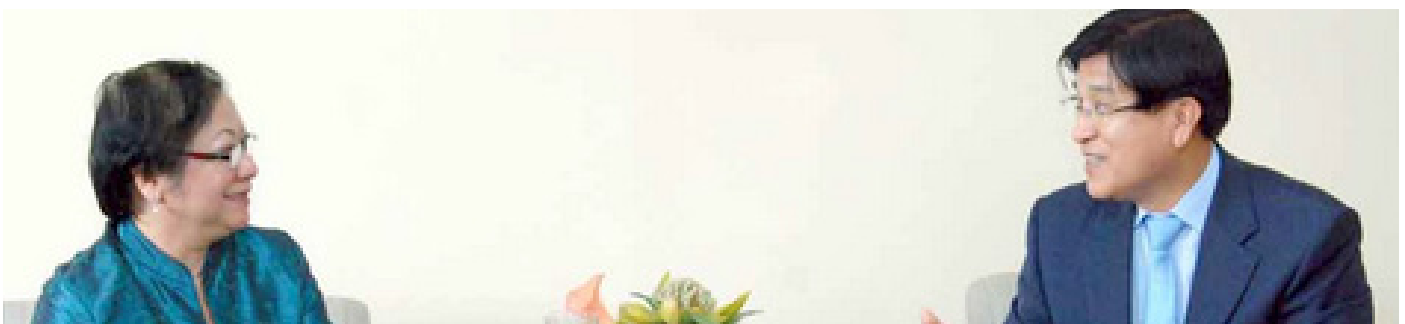
Bersamin aired his support for the implementation of the closure agreement saying, “what benefits the people is welcome here in Abra.” About P42 million has been allocated for the province’s community development, or 93% of the total funding earmarked for Abra’s CPLA members.

Proposed projects are the construction of a potable water system and the improvement of farm-to-market roads and irrigation canals.

In Mountain Province, the governor, municipal mayors, barangay officials, and other members of the provincial government also expressed support for the development projects presented, as well as the CPLA’s transformation into an organization committed to socio-economic development.

Community development projects worth P47 million and P21 million worth of inter-municipal and inter-barangay projects will go to Mountain Province. Benefiting from the closure agreement’s five-year implementation are CPLA communities in Paracelis, Bontoc, and Sadanga towns.

The projects identified are subject to community validation scheduled in August and September. **GN**



Labor and Employment Secretary Baldoz and Korean envoy Lee Hye-Min during the latter’s visit. (DOLE)



Public Works and Highways Secretary Rogelio Singson inspects the Matina Bridge and Pangi Bridge in Davao City, which were severely affected by the recent flashflood. (DPWH-11)

Flood reduction program using coconet revived

Bio-engineering solution made from discarded husks

A natural fiber extracted from coconut husks called “coir” is now being revived to reduce flooding and soil erosion in the waterways of Metro Manila.

The program of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has tapped a bio-engineering solution by using coconet coir fiber to rehabilitate the perennially clogged up esteros of the metropolis instead of using concrete structures along creeks and embankments.

In cooperation with government agencies and civic organizations, the DPWH South Manila District Engineering Office is rehabilitating the Estero de Paco using coconet as fender to soil erosion control, slope protection/stabilization, embankment and shore protection.

The Estero de Paco Rehabilitation Project, stretching from Pedro Gil to Pasig River, is in line with the government’s flood prevention activities and enhancement program for the populace living within the area.

Public Works Secretary Rogelio L. Singson said that coconet is suitable for lining the creekside because the material is known for its water absorption abilities and thus aids in the prevention of floods.

DPWH’s use of coconet technology has been lauded by President Benigno S. Aquino III, as the use of this highly indigenous Philippine geotextile made from discarded coconut husks resulted to substantial government savings in the budget for slope protection.

The technology, which is cheaper to utilize than concrete, is being used to strengthen and repair areas prone to landslides.

Using this bio engineering technology also maintains the integrity of infrastructure projects, such as roads and bridges, added Singson. **GN**

Business leaders...(continued)

The Roundtable Discussions on Mindanao Policy Agenda was organized to generate commitments on certain policy issues and recommendations that were put forward by various sectors in Mindanao, according to MinDA chair Luwalhati Antonino.

“This undertaking forms part of our concerted endeavor to come up with a realistic and validated sector-specific Mindanao Policy Agenda that is genuinely representative of the crucial and strategic business and development imperatives for Mindanao,” Antonino said.

She added that engaging the national officials of concerned agencies provide strategic opportunity to foster greater understanding of the challenges and prospects, as well as finding the common ground for policy directions that underpin business growth and economic development in Mindanao.

During the discussions, the Mindanao private sector and industry leaders took the opportunity to bring up for immediate response a number of policy issues that were directed to the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Energy, Agriculture, and the Interior and Local Government.

“We consider these issues as both crucial and strategic for the private sector and the government to address together,” Antonino stressed.

Once firmed up and validated with government inputs, the Mindanao Policy Agenda shall serve as the highlight during the 20th Mindanao Business Conference slated next month in Pagadian City.

Meanwhile, in order to set the mechanism for sustained partnership for monitoring of the government response to the Mindanao Policy Agenda, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed by MinDA’s Antonino and PCCI President Sergio Ortiz-Luis, thereby firming up a private and public partnership on joint advocacy on Mindanao economic policies. **GN**



Cadastral survey, reforestation take priority in DENR's 2012 budget

Support for land distribution and National Greening Program increased

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) presented this week its proposed P16.99 billion budget for 2012, an increase of almost P6 billion (or 52.7%) from this year's P11.12 billion budget.

DENR Secretary Ramon J. Paje said the proposed DENR 2012 budget increase will go to two key poverty alleviation thrusts of the Aquino Administration: reforestation and land distribution.

"Our 2012 budget will help us fulfill the marching orders of President Aquino to deliver quality social services, enhance infrastructure, and projects," said Paje. He further stressed that the increase of P3.2 billion for the land sector "mirrors the government's seriousness to pursue programs that bring immediate and substantial benefits to the poor." The current budget for the activity is only about P360 million.

Paje said some P3.56 billion will be allocated for the cadastral survey program and some P2.68 billion will be earmarked for the Aquino Administration's landmark reforestation

program called National Greening Program (NGP) which aims to reforest some 200,000 hectares. This is more than double the P1.33 billion allotment for this year.

Paje explained the P3.2 billion increase in the land sector is in keeping with the DENR's push to fulfill President Aquino's social contract with the Filipino people to institute reforms as a result of good governance, stressing that reforms in the country's land services is a must as it will redound to the overall productivity of idle lands in the country and will therefore ultimately boost economic prosperity.

For 2012, the DENR aims to issue 226,794 land patents or 51.7% more than its 2011 target of 117,237 patents and complete the cadastral survey of some 205 cities and municipalities covering some 3.1 million hectares of alienable and disposable public lands.

Also included in the DENR's 2012 priority targets in the land sector is to digitize 70 percent of surveyed lands covering 245 million hectares of such lands. **GN**

PNoy-Murad...(continued)

"The meeting would greatly boost chances of an understanding with the MILF and help make peace in Mindanao, especially in conflict areas," said Maguindanao Rep. Simeon Datumanong, a member of the minority in the House of Representatives.

For his part, former peace adviser Jesus Dureza congratulated the government and the MILF in "taking the unconventional route just so an early settlement can be mutually forged."

Bayan Muna Party-list Rep. Teddy Casiño also welcomed the meeting while Cotabato City Vice Mayor Muslimin Sema, chair of a Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) faction, also welcomed the Aquino-Murad meeting positively. "The MNLF pray that whatever understanding or agreement they may reach would be implemented."

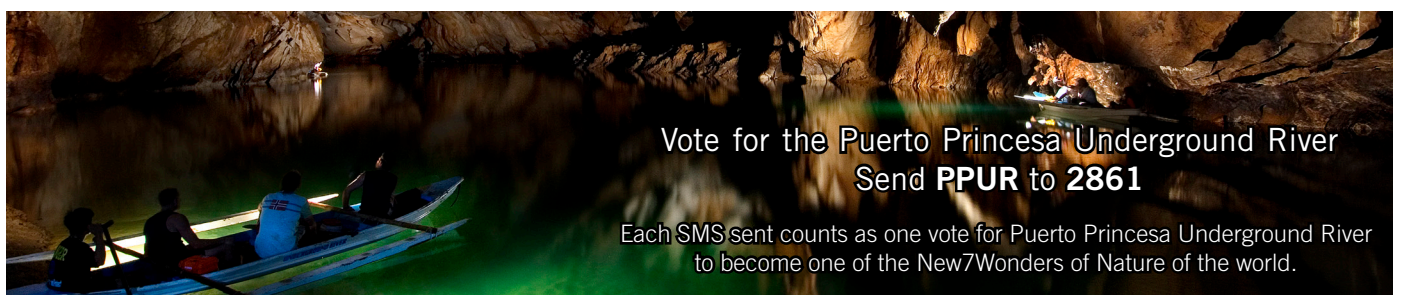
Senator Francis Pangilinan, on the other hand, called it "an out-of-the-box solution" to the decades-old armed conflict

in the south, while Sen. Loren Legarda referred to it as a "major milestone" in the peace process.

Many others expressed hope that the political masterstroke of the President would eventually lead to a peace deal with the Moro rebels.

President Aquino had the full support of his cabinet secretaries during the Tokyo meeting. Joining him were Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Quintos-Deles, Defense Sec. Voltaire Gazmin, National Security Adviser Cesar Garcia, Budget and Management Sec. Florencio Abad, Finance Sec. Cesar Purisima, Presidential Spokesperson Edwin Lacierda, and Government of the Philippines peace panel chair Marvic Leonen.

The government and the MILF peace panels are scheduled to meet for formal exploratory talks from August 22 to 24 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. **GN**



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