

# Interesting Times

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## US Ambassador visits INC Executive Minister

(Eagle News) – The United States Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim visited Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC) Church of Christ Executive Minister Brother Eduardo V. Manalo on Monday, February 12, 2018.

The US Ambassador arrived at the INC Central Office before 8 in the morning.

Ambassador Kim’s visit to the INC Central Office came about as the Church is preparing celebrations of its 50th anniversary in the West.

The first overseas congregation of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church of Christ) was established in Hawaii on July 27, 1968. The second overseas congregation was established in San Francisco, California. At present, the Church is in 142 countries and territories around the world, with membership comprising of at least 133 ethnic groups and nationalities.

After his visit, the US ambassador, accompanied by Brother Eduardo, was cheerfully greeted and welcomed by several ministers and volunteer workers at the INC Central Office who excitedly waved small flags of the United States of America and of the INC at the Central Office’s lobby.



US ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim, accompanied by Iglesia Ni Cristo Executive Minister Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, is cheerfully greeted and welcomed by ministers and volunteer workers at the INC Central Office. The US Ambassador visited the INC Executive Minister on Monday, February 12, 2018 at the INC Central Office in Quezon City, Philippines. (Photo released by INC-Public Information Office)

### President Duterte seeks more help for Overseas Filipinos, taps INC Executive Minister Manalo for their “extensive network”

(Eagle News) – Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said that the Philippine government would want to “tap the network” of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC) or Church of Christ which has around 6,000 congregations worldwide in addressing the concerns of Filipinos across the globe.

This he said was the reason why President Rodrigo Duterte appointed INC Executive Minister Brother Eduardo V. Manalo as special envoy for overseas Filipinos’ concerns.

“Meron po talagang network si Mr. Eduardo Manalo sa iba’t ibang Pilipino na nagtatrabaho sa iba’t ibang mga bansa (Mr. Eduardo Manalo has a network of various Filipinos working in different countries),” Roque said in a press conference in Malacanang while citing the 6,000 congregations of the INC spread across the globe.

“At matagal na po sila na gumagalaw sa hanay ng mga overseas Filipino workers (And they have long been helping and performing acts in service to overseas Filipino workers),” he said.

Roque said that it is this vast network of the INC across the globe through its members spread in 142 countries worldwide that the Philippine government



President Rodrigo R. Duterte

wanted to make use of, particularly at this time that there were many reports of abuses suffered by OFWs, especially domestic helpers, in the hands of their foreign employers.

He explained that the Church and its members had also proven their capability in helping their countrymen in various regions across the globe. The INC has been engaged in community and socio-civic projects, including the “Kabayan

### DFA’s Cayetano backs INC leader’s appointment; says INC’s “very organized system” to help PHL address overseas Filipinos’ concerns

(Eagle News) – Foreign Affairs secretary Alan Peter Cayetano welcomed the appointment of Iglesia Ni Cristo Executive Minister Brother Eduardo V. Manalo as he noted how the INC has a “very organized system” of coordination that can greatly help concerns of overseas Filipinos abroad.

He also observed how the INC leader had been conducting pastoral visitations of many of the INC’s local congregations abroad.

“One reason is they have churches in several countries around the world and Ka Eduardo is actually visiting many of them,” Cayetano noted.

“Anyone of you (who have) dealt with the INC Church in the localities, kung makikita nyo very organized,” he said.

The secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) also observed how this INC system –



where their administrators coordinate complaints received from the church’s various local congregations to the government – can actually help the government.

“Whether member or non-member, (kung may mag-complain), they have a system where the tagapamahala in each kapilya has a liaison with the government,” he said.

Cayetano said the DFA saw how the INC’s very organized system would benefit more Filipinos, which is the reason the DFA recommended the INC Executive Minister’s appointment to President Rodrigo Duterte.

“So that system will benefit Filipinos. So that’s one reason that the DFA also recommended and the President approved that,” he said. *continue to page 2*



Call for justice as Joanna Demafelis’ body returns home from Kuwait

▶ See Page 2



Trillanes declared “persona non grata” in Davao City

▶ See Page 6



17 killed in Florida school shooting by former student: sheriff

▶ See Page 8

## Call for justice as Joanna Demafelis' body returns home from Kuwait

ILOILO, Philippines (AFP) — More than a hundred relatives and supporters of a Filipina maid whose body was found stuffed in a freezer in Kuwait branded banners demanding justice as her coffin was returned home on Saturday.

The family of Joanna Demafelis openly wept as the white casket was unloaded at an airport cargo terminal in the central city of Iloilo.

"Justice for Joanna D. Demafelis," was emblazoned on banners and on T-shirts worn by the crowd which included a congressman and local officials expressing their anger over the death of the Filipina whose body was found in a freezer in Kuwait earlier this month.

The incident worsened a diplomatic flap between the Philippines and Kuwait with President Rodrigo Duterte alleging that Arab employers routinely rape their Filipina workers, force them to work 21 hours a day and feed them scraps.

He has also banned



Jessica (C), sister of Filipina overseas worker Joanna Demafelis whose body was found inside a freezer in Kuwait, cries in front of a wooden casket containing her sister's body shortly after its arrival at the international airport in Manila on February 16, 2018, while Philippine Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano (C-behind w/glasses) looks on. / AFP PHOTO / TED ALJIBE

the deployment of new workers to Kuwait and ordered airlines to fly home any of the 252,000 Filipinos working there who wish to return.

About 10 million Filipinos work abroad and the money they remit back is a lifeline of the

Philippine economy. Their treatment abroad is often a political issue at home.

Kuwait's foreign minister previously condemned Manila's "escalation," of the issue but Philippine Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said Friday the Kuwaiti

ambassador had assured him his government was "outraged" over the killing and determined to find those responsible.

A distraught Eva Demafelis could only say "I am sad," when asked by reporters about the death of her daughter.

"She does not deserve the manner in which she died. She was beaten up," said an aunt, Rosela Demafelis Taunan, referring to local news reports about the 29-year-old maid's death. "She decided to go abroad because she

wanted to help her parents repair the house that was damaged by Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)," in 2013, the aunt recalled.

The slain maid also wanted to finance the college education of her youngest sister, Joyce, the aunt said.

Residents lined the highway as the funeral convoy escorted by police cars and motorcycles made its way to Demafelis's hometown, about a two hour's drive from the city.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello said late Friday that "working groups" from both countries were discussing forging a memorandum for protecting the rights of Filipinos in Kuwait, many of whom are working as maids.

Domestic workers in that country are not covered by ordinary labour legislation, and accounts of Filipinas being subjected to abuse and exploitation in the Middle East have long circulated. (Agence France-Presse)

## Duterte: PHL to deal with China "in friendly, civilized terms" in South China Sea dispute

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte reiterated the country will deal with China only through diplomacy.

He said before Chinese-Filipino businessmen on Monday, February 19, during an anniversary celebration of the Chinese Filipino Business Club, Inc. (CFBC) at the Manila Hotel that the country will insist on its sovereign rights over its claims in the West Philippine Sea but in "friendly and civilized terms."

"We cannot go there ride in our, whatever, navy,

grey ships, the coastguard and start waving our rifles. We cannot do that today. It is unrealistic, it cannot be true. Then why would I go there, bringing my navy, my soldiers, my police and everything only to be slaughtered. I will not commit the lives of the Filipinos only to die unnecessarily. I will not go into a battle which I can never win," he said.

Rapping the critics who question his approach with China, Duterte asked: "What were they doing during their time? Why did they not start to build things there, structures that China is doing now?"

"Even in the claim itself and in the development of the claim, wala tayong ginawa," he said.



Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua

He said that while China was building structures and military bases in the disputed sea "they are) not intended for us."

He said they were "really intended against those (whom) the Chinese think would destroy them, and that is America."

In fact, Duterte said that Chinese President Xi Jinping himself has promised not to build anything in Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal.

"Ganun na lang ang respeto ko kay Xi Jin Ping. Sabi nila they will not build. They assured that....Si Xi Jinping mis-

mo nagsabi, and he is a man of honor," he said.

As for China's naming of features in the Philippine Rise, Duterte said that the move was understandable.

"Eh alangan namang gawing German? Ang alam nila Chinese eh. Those are just directions na tapos na sila dyan. Of course, they will do it in Chinese, it's their dialect," he said.

He said what matters was that the "Philippine Rise is ours."

"Huwag mong galawin. I will insist," he said. (Eagle News Service)

continuation from page 1 (US Ambassador visits INC Executive Minister)

"We are very happy with the visit of His Excellency US Ambassador Sung Kim to the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church of Christ) Central Office to visit the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo," said Brother Joel San Pedro, an INC minister and the INC Central Office Protocol Officer.

"The timing is perfect as the Church is celebrating its 50th anniversary in the West," he said.

He noted that the INC has around 300 congregations in the United States alone.

The Church also counts among its members people belonging to various races and cultures.

The Iglesia Ni Cristo was first registered in the Philippines on July 27, 1914, and will be celebrating its 104th anniversary this year.

His Excellency Ambassador Sung Kim was sworn in as the US Ambassador to the Philippines on November 3, 2016, and started his posting in the Philippines a month later, on December 1, 2016.

From 2011 to 2014, he was the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea. In between the two ambassadorships, Ambassador Kim served as Special Representative for North Korea Policy in Washington.

Ambassador Kim was born in Seoul, Korea, and grew up in Los Angeles. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania and completed a degree in law from Loyola University. He also holds a Master of Laws degree from the London School of Economics and an honorary doctorate from the Catholic University of Korea. (Eagle News Service with a release from INC-Public Information Office)



## Ballot recount on VP electoral protest moved to March 19; Marcos camp dismayed

The Supreme Court, sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, has set March 19 as the start of the ballot recount in the electoral protest case of former senator Ferdinand Marcos Jr., against Vice-President Leni Robredo, moving the recount date for over a month allegedly because of the need for psychological tests for the revisors of the recount.

This came about as Robredo's camp filed a motion to consider as "withdrawn" any pending motions if any that they have that may delay the ballot recount, even as their camp claimed they did not have any.

The motion was filed on Thursday, February 8, the same day that Marcos himself and his supporters held a rally before the Supreme Court, where he expressed dismay over the delay in the ballot recount that was supposed to start this month.

### Psychological evaluation for revisors

The ballot recount was moved because the revisors should first undergo psychological evaluation before they could start the recount process.

The revisors will be part of the committee that will conduct the examination of the contested ballots in Marcos' electoral protest case.

Marcos said that his supporters were there at the Supreme Court on Thursday, February 8, to hold a prayer vigil at the start of the recount.

"Kaya sila andito (The reason why they are here is) to hold a vigil. But the recount was moved to next month again. This prayer



Former senator Ferdinand Marcos Jr., answers reporters' questions as he and his supporters camped out before the Supreme Court on Thursday, February 7, 2018. (Photo by Moira Encina, Eagle News Service)

vigil turned into a protest to show displeasure," Marcos told reporters at the event.

He rued that not one ballot box has been opened since he filed his electoral protest case with the PET in October 2016.

"It is almost two years but not one ballot box has been opened. I hope the recount will really push through next month," he said.

The former senator also questioned why there was a need for a psychological test for the revisors, which was the reason the recount date was moved for a month.

"Bigla nagkaroon ng psychological test para sa revisor. Wala naman yan sa batas. Noong 2016 pwede ng gawin yan," Marcos said.

Marcos filed his poll protest on June 29, 2016, a day before Robredo was sworn in as Vice-President. Marcos questioned Robredo's victory, citing massive cheating in the May 2016 automated elections where Robredo only

had a slim lead of 263,473 votes.

Marcos sought the annulment of election results in Basilan, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur, claiming that ballots there had been pre-shaded.

He also sought the recount of the votes in 36,000 precincts in 27 other areas (22 provinces and 5 cities).

He claimed that if all the votes from the said precincts were wither annulled or recounted, he would have enough votes to overcome Robredo's lead.

The Robredo camp, however, insisted that there was no cheating in the elections.

Robredo's lawyer, Atty. Romulo Macalintal said that the motion they filed on Thursday with the

## DOLE chief expresses support for INC Executive Minister's appointment as special envoy for overseas Filipinos' concerns

(Eagle News) — Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III expressed support for the appointment of Iglesia Ni Cristo Executive Minister Brother Eduardo V. Manalo as Special Envoy for Overseas Filipinos' Concerns. Bello said this move by President Rodrigo Duterte would greatly help the cause of overseas Filipinos. "Malaking bagay, madami silang congregation. (It's a big deal. They have many congregations.) He would be a great help to our effort to provide protection to our OFWs," he said.

The labor chief said he would be more than glad to work and coordinate with work regarding overseas Filipino concerns.

"He is very much welcome, if he wants us to work with him I will just be too glad to work and coordinate with him," Bello said.

The secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment also cited the stature and reputation of the INC Executive Minister and the Church for helping people all over the world through various programs that touched the lives of not just Filipinos, but he said that this will be of great help to the government.

### Extensive network

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque earlier acknowledged this "extensive



Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III

network" of the INC or Church of Christ that the Philippine government wanted to tap in addressing the concerns of Filipinos across the globe.

He also clarified that the INC leader would not be receiving any honorarium or budget for his work and that the appointment did not violate the doctrine of separation of Church and State. "Hindi po, kasi ang separation of Church and State, dalawa po yan: Yung kalayaan na magkaroon ng pananampalata, tsaka yung kasiguraduhan ng estado mismo ay hindi mag-eendorso ng isang pananampalata," Roque explained.

### INC brethren one with the Executive Minister

The INC has already issued a statement saying that the Church members worldwide are one in expressing their readiness to extend help to the best of their abilities to their fellow Filipinos wherever they may be.

Through a statement released by the INC Public Information Office (INC-PIO) on Thursday, February 15, the INC members unitedly thanked the President for the trust that he placed on the INC leader.

"Nagpapasalamat po tayo sa Mahal na Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte sa kanilang pagtititwala po sa Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo," said Brother Edwil Zabala of the INC Public Information Office.

"Ang buong kapatiran ng Iglesia Ni Cristo po ay kaisa ng Ka Eduardo na tutulong sa mga kababayan po natin nasaan man po para sa kanilang kapakanan. Kagaya po ng inilunsad na programa po ng Ka Eduardo noon pa, ang 'Kabayan Ko, Kapatid Ko'—sa abot ng ating makakaya ay lilingap po tayo sa mga kababayan natin nasaan man po sila." (Eagle News Service with a release from INC-Public Information Office)

Marcos' spokesperson, Atty. Vic Rodriguez, added that the motion filed by Robredo was "a mere scrap of paper and may be later disowned by her as having been signed without her authority" since it was not signed by the vice president.

Marcos also noted that what Macalintal filed would not cover motions that the Robredo camp may file in the future. (with a report from Moira Encina, Eagle News Service)

PET "was an acceptance of Marcos' challenge that they file a motion to withdraw all pending motions that could stop the recount."

Marcos had earlier signed a joint manifestation on the withdrawal of "any and all motions and incidents that may unduly delay or hamper the revision proceedings" in election protest for Vice-President, and dared Robredo to sign this too.

"Both the protestant (Marcos) and protestee (Robredo) further commit to refrain from filing any frivolous motion that

will unwarrantedly interrupt, defer, postpone, suspend, delay, prolong and/or impede the conduct of the proceedings in this case," the manifestation also added.

Robredo, however, did not sign the document, and her camp instead filed their own motion withdrawing any pending motions that they have with the PET.

But the document was supposedly only signed by Robredo's lawyer, Macalintal, and not by the Vice-President herself.

## President Duterte seeks more help for Overseas Filipinos, taps INC Executive Minister Manalo for their "extensive network"

continuation from page 1

Ko, Kapatid Ko" or "My Countrymen, My Brethren" and various "Aid for Humanity" or Lingap sa Mamamayan" programs.

"So yun po ang ating nais ma-tap—yung network at yung napatunayan nang kakayahang nila ng kanilang organisasyon na pangalagaan ang kapakanan ng ating mga kababayan sa iba't ibang mga bansa (So that really is what we want to tap — that network and the proven capability of their organization to care for the interest of our countrymen in various countries)," Roque said while noting that these INC projects also help those who are non-members of the Church.

"Yun po ang dahilan kung bakit siya naitalaga (That is the reason why he was appointed)," he added.

The Palace spokesperson also explained there was no violation of the separation ...of the Church and State doctrine in the appointment of the INC Executive Minister as special envoy for overseas Filipinos' concerns, and that there is no honorarium or any budgetary allocation for the position of a special envoy.

"Ang alam ko po wala tayong budget for special envoy, yan po ang

katotohanan. So kaya nga po tayo ang makikinabang sa kanyang network. Hindi naman po natin siya popondohan yung kanyang trabaho (What I know is that there is no budget for special envoy, that is the truth. So that is why we are going to benefit from his network. We will not give him funds in his work)," Roque told reporters in Malacanang.

He said that the INC had long been extending help to those in need overseas, whatever faith they belong to. He said the appointment was simply the government's recognition of this fact.

"Kumbaga ginagawa na nila yun. Sa pagtatalaga sa kanya, siguro nire-recognize na rin natin yung kanilang ginagawa sa mga nakalipas na taon (In effect, they have long been doing this. So with this appointment, we most likely

recognize what they have been doing in the past years)," Roque said.

"At pinapagiting na natin na sana ay maging mas malawak pa ang kanilang tulong na ibinibigay sa ating mga OFWs (And we will strengthen this further, that hopefully this will be wider in scope — the help that they are extending to our OFWs)," he said.

He also defended the appointment amid allegations by detractors that it was merely a "political accommodation."

"Hindi po yan bayad pu-

litika (This is not a political payback)," the Presidential spokesperson said. "Siguro po itong mga pangayari ngayon — na nagiging biktima ng pang-abuso ang ating mga OFWs — ang naging udyok na matalaga itong si Mr. Manalo dahil nga sa kanyang — gaya ng sinabi ko po kanina — malawak na network at serbisyo sa ating mga kababayan (Most likely, because of what is happening now — that our OFWs are becoming victims of abuse — this prompted us to appoint Mr. Manalo because of his — like what I said earlier — wide network and service to our countrymen)," he noted.

Roque said that President Duterte also believes in the competency of Brother Eduardo Manalo which is why he appointed him as his special envoy for Overseas Filipinos' concerns.

### Addressing Overseas Filipinos' concerns

Roque said that President Duterte also believes in the competency of Brother Eduardo Manalo which is why he appointed him as his special envoy for Overseas Filipinos' concerns.

"Siempre po, di naman siya itatalaga kung wala siyang napatunayang serbisyo sa ating mga kababayan na nakatira sa iba't ibang bansa (Surely, he will not be appointed absent proof of previous service to our countrymen who are living in different countries)," he said in answer to questions on this during the press confer-

ence. He said the President has faith in Brother Eduardo and that his appointment would further the government's aim to strengthen the provision of services and help to OFWs.

"Siguro po ang naging marching order sa pagtatalaga sa kanya sa panahon na nangyari nga itong mga pag-abuso sa mga kababayan natin ay mas paingitan pa ang paninilbihan sa ating mga OFWs (Most likely, the marching order in his appointment were the recent circumstances of and incidents of abuse of our countrymen and the need to further service our OFWs)," he said.

### INC statement

Meanwhile, the Iglesia Ni Cristo through a statement released by its Public Information Office (INC-PIO) on Thursday, February 15, thanked the President for the trust that he placed on the INC leader.



"Nagpapasalamat po tayo sa Mahal na Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte sa kanilang pagtititwala po sa Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo," said Brother Edwil Zabala of the INC Public Information Office.

INC minister Zabala said that the whole of the INC membership is united with Brother Eduardo in extending assistance for the welfare of fellow Filipinos. "Ang buong kapatiran

ng Iglesia Ni Cristo po ay kaisa ng Ka Eduardo na tutulong sa mga kababayan po natin nasaan man po para sa kanilang kapakanan. Kagaya po ng inilunsad na programa po ng Ka Eduardo noon pa, ang 'Kabayan Ko, Kapatid Ko'—sa abot ng ating makakaya ay lilingap po tayo sa mga kababayan natin nasaan man po sila." (with a release from INC-PIO)

## DFA's Cayetano backs INC leader's appointment...

continuation from page 1

He said that it is also embedded in the DFA's operations how to include the concerns raised by various special envoys who seek help for the interest of overseas Filipinos and economic diplomacy abroad.

"So basically it's a support (system)," he said explaining the role of special envoys. "They are able to multiply our efforts in the countries," he explained.

Cayetano emphasized that the Duterte administration is really serious in its campaign to protect the interests of all Filipinos abroad, and not just OFWs, which is why, he said, the President appointed the INC Executive Minister.

President Duterte issued the appointment

of Ka Eduardo as his Special Envoy for Overseas Filipinos' Concerns on February 13, 2018. He said this will be in effect until January 29, 2019.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque earlier said that the Philippine government wanted to tap the extensive network of the INC or Church of Christ which has around 6,000 congregations worldwide in addressing the concerns of Filipinos across the globe.

He also clarified that the INC leader would not be receiving any honorarium or budget for his work and that the appointment did not violate the doctrine of separation of Church and State. (Eagle News Service)

## DOLE officially orders total ban on deployment of OFWs to Kuwait

(Eagle News) — The Department of Labor and Employment has officially ordered a total ban on the deployment of Overseas Filipino Workers to Kuwait.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III signed on Monday the administrative order that puts in place the ban, which came after the discovery of the gruesome death of Joanna Demafelis.

Demafelis was found inside the freezer of an apartment left abandoned since 2016.

It also came amid investigations into the deaths of six other cases.

"In pursuit of national interest and with the advent of the series of reports involving abuse and death of overseas



Photo screenshot from Net25, Agila Balita

Filipino workers (OFWs) in Kuwait, a total ban on deployment of all OFWs to Kuwait pursuant to the

directive of the President of the Philippines is hereby enforced," Bello said in the order.

He said the order would take effect "immediately." "To date, some 2,229 Fil-

ipinos have been issued travel documents, and 1,754 have already been granted immigration

clearances," Bello said in a joint statement with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

He said the government would also extend assistance to the OFWs who were affected by the ban. Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said in the joint statement that the government's "efforts to protect our kababayans will not end with the imposition of deployment bans or the repatriation of our workers in countries where they are prone to maltreatment."

"We will also go after illegal recruiters, human traffickers and other modern-day slave traders who continue to victimize our people," he said. (Eagle News Service)

## President Duterte says ICC statute not yet part of PHL laws, as he "lectures" ICC prosecutor

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte said he would want to have a one-on-one talk with the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) who has opened a preliminary examination on the complaint for alleged crimes against humanity that had been filed against him and 11 other officials.

This is so he could enlighten ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda about the real situation in the country, as well as its laws where the ICC Statute is not yet a part of, he said.

In a press conference in Davao City, Duterte said ICC Prosecutor Bensouda should also understand that the treaty that created the ICC — although signed by the Philippines in 2011 — is not enforceable as a law in the Philippines and does not bind the country because it had not been published in any official gazette as is required under Philippine jurisprudence.

"May I lecture you," the President said addressing the ICC prosecutor in a televised press conference.

"There is a Philippine Constitution, it provides for remedies to seek redress of grievance," he said, referring to the constitutional right of Filipinos to petition the government for redress of grievances.

He explained how Philippine criminal laws are.

"You cannot escape liability by just pretending to be ignorant. So in order not to be ignorant we have to publish our penal laws, especially with punitive sanctions," said Duterte, a veteran Philippine lawyer who had once served as a prosecutor in Davao City for several years before he was elected in 1988 as the City's mayor.

"One of the fundamental requirements in a decent, in a humane society, in a democracy, is that you must know the law that you are violating," Duterte said. "Now, you decide a case in the international court like a common law," he said.

He said the ICC can make a crime out of an act or a deed that would constitute as a crime.



President Rodrigo Duterte speaking during a press conference in Davao City on Friday night, February 9, 2018 where he gave a televised "lecture," explaining Philippine laws, to International Criminal Court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda. (Photo grabbed from RTVM/ Courtesy Presidential Communications Office)

"But these laws must be published in the official gazette, to be really effective laws."

### "Rare privilege" to talk to ICC prosecutor

The 72-year old Philippine leader who is known for his strong words, said he would welcome ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda in the country, and would like to enlighten her on the real situation when he talks to her personally.

"I hope you come, and I hope we can be together in one room. I hope I can have that rare privilege of talking to you. Tayo lang dalawa, the two of us in a room. I welcome you," he said.

But Duterte said that if after he explains everything to the ICC prosecutor, and she still would insist on hailing him to trial, he would rather be executed in another country which would allow this.

"If you find me guilty, go ahead, find a country where they kill people with a firing squad. I am ready," he said.

"I do not want imprisonment," he said.

### Extrajudicial killing

At the same time, Duterte also pointed out that even the matter of extrajudicial killing which his administration is accused of, has not been properly defined.

"But what is extrajudicial killing? There is no... provision of extrajudicial killing, it is not defined anywhere," he said.

He then questioned why he would be accused of a crime that does not exist in the Philippines' Revised Penal Code.

While treaties form part of the laws of the land, there was no publication of the treaty that formed the ICC, specif-

ically the Rome Statute which is also known as the International Criminal Court Statute.

"Now the treaty says that we sign the treaty, we deliver the documents in Rome, ang sabi ninyo, but those laws were submitted to you, but were not published — yung definition of what are the crimes that you can take cognizant of," he said addressing the ICC prosecutor in a televised press conference.

One of the fundamentals is really is that you have to publish it in the official gazette, which this government did not (do). Not my government, I did not sign it," he said.

"Was there any publication? None," Duterte stressed.

### The Rome Statute

The Rome Statute was adopted at a diplomatic conference in Rome on 17 July 1998 and it entered into force on 1 July 2002.

Under the Rome Statute, the ICC can only investigate and prosecute the four core international crimes in situations where states are "unable" or "unwilling" to do so themselves.

The jurisdiction of the court is also complimentary to jurisdictions of domestic courts. The court has jurisdiction over crimes only if they are committed in the territory of a state party or if they are committed by a national of a state party.

ICC Prosecutor Bensouda said the "ICC would have jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes if committed on the respective territories of the Philippines" or by its respective nationals since the date when the Statute entered into force in each State, namely since 1 November 2011 in the case of Philippines."

## DOLE qualifies govt's total ban on OFW deployment in Kuwait; ban covers only first-time overseas workers

(Eagle News) — The Department of Labor and Employment has qualified the government's total ban on overseas Filipino workers to Kuwait, saying this only referred to "all types of workers being deployed for the first time for overseas employment in Kuwait."

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III clarified the "general coverage" of department issued Administrative Order No. 54 regarding the total ban on the deployment of OFWs in Kuwait.

"The deployment ban covers all types of workers being deployed for the first time for overseas employment in Kuwait, without distinction as to skill, profession or type of work," stated AO No. 54a issued on February 14, 2018.

There are three groups of workers not covered by the ban.

"The ban does not include workers who are vacationing in the Philippines and will be returning to the same employer to finish their contracts, at the end of his/her vacation," it said.

"Balik Manggawa workers who are returning to Kuwait on a new contract with the same employer" are also exempted from the ban, so are "seafarers who will be transiting through or boarding in Kuwait to join their principals."



President Rodrigo Duterte

But Bello said that "Balik Manggawa" or returning OFWs to Kuwait on a new contract with the same employer, "shall require prior clearance from the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA)."

He said the "order takes effect immediately." (Eagle News Service)

### Territorial jurisdiction applies

But the Philippine president claimed the ICC cannot claim jurisdiction over the case under the rule on territoriality.

"Our principle of territoriality is that the crime must only be prosecuted in the place where the crime was committed," he said.

The territorial principle is a principle of public international law under which a sovereign state can prosecute criminal offences that are committed within its borders.

Territorial jurisdiction also means that a criminal action should be filed in the place where the crime was committed, except as provided in the treaties and laws of preferential application, based on Article 2 of the Revised Penal Code.

Earlier, the President's Spokesperson Harry Roque reiterated that the alleged deaths attributed to the administration's campaign against illegal drugs were because of lawful police operations and therefore could not be regarded as attacks against civilians.

Roque clarified that no formal charges were filed against any official in govern-

ment, since the preliminary examination only aims to determine if there is a reasonable basis to conduct a formal investigation.

"Lilinawin ko po, preliminary examination pa lang po ito. So wala po talagang nasasakdal dito. Pag-aaralan lang ng [ICC] Prosecutor 'yung situwasyon at tingnan kung mayroong reasonable basis to begin a preliminary investigation," he said.

### Preliminary examination is not investigation, says ICC

Prosecutor Fatou also issued a statement clarifying that a preliminary examination is not tantamount to an investigation.

"I emphasize that a preliminary examination is not an investigation but a process of examining the information available in order to reach a fully informed determination on whether there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation pursuant to the criteria established by the Rome Statute," she said in her statement issued February 8.

"Specifically, under article 53(1) of the Rome Statute, I, as Prosecutor, must consider issues of jurisdiction, admissibility and the interests of jus-

tice in making this determination," she added.

The complaint before the ICC was filed by Atty. Jude Sabio, lawyer of a self-confessed hired killer in Davao City, Edgar Matobato, who had earlier appeared in a senate hearing that probed the alleged extrajudicial killings that he claimed was connected to the Philippine president when he was still the mayor of Davao City.

The senate, however, later questioned Matobato's credibility as senators pointed out several inconsistencies in his testimony.

Matobato's lawyer, Sabio, later filed the ICC complaint and included in it senator Richard Gordon, head of the senate blue ribbon committee, which questioned Matobato's credibility, as well as then senator Allan Peter Cayetano who had delivered speeches defending Duterte against allegations of extrajudicial killings.

Nine other Philippine government officials, including the secretary of the Department of Justice and the government solicitor general, were also included in Sabio's complaint to the ICC. (Eagle News Service)

## UST expels eight civil law students over hazing victim Castillo's death

The University of Sto. Tomas has ordered the expulsion of eight civil law students for their alleged roles in the death of UST law freshman Horacio Castillo III in September last year.

In a university statement published in The Varsitarian, UST said the expulsion took place after the committee tasked to investigate his death found them guilty of violating the Code of Conduct and Discipline..

The committee formed on Sept. 19, 2017 was composed of six administrators and a representative from the Central Student Council, the statement said.

UST did not identify the eight expelled students. "The university reiterates its commitment to ferret out the truth, determine liability, and impose the appropriate sanctions," UST said.

"...UST has always been one with the Castillo family in the steadfast call for everyone to pray and work together to achieve justice for Horacio and for truth to prevail," it added.

Several individuals affiliated with the Aegis Juris fraternity have been charged in connection with Castillo's death.

Castillo was believed to have died from injuries sustained during the fraternity's hazing rites. (Eagle News Service)



File photo of UST law freshman Horacio Castillo III

## SC asks Divina, 20 other Aegis Juris frat lawyers to comment on disbarment complaint

The Supreme Court has asked University of Santo Tomas law dean Nilo Divina and several other lawyers who are members of the Aegis Juris fraternity to comment on the Senate committee report that recommended that they

be disbarred.

In a notice dated February 6, the SC gave the 21 lawyers 10 days upon notice to comment on the report, which it treated as regular disbarment complaint.

The report had made the recommenda-

tion against the lawyers, noting that their actions following the death of hazing victim Horacio Castillo III in September last year "constitute grossly immoral conduct that is shocking, against the decency expected from lawyers and a mock-

ery of the legal profession."

The lawyers are accused of trying to cover up the death of the University of Sto. Tomas law freshman, who died reportedly during Aegis Juris fraternity hazing rites. (Eagle News Service)



## Indonesian police confers Medal of Honor to PNP Chief Dela Rosa

By Mar Gabriel  
Eagle News Service



Philippine National Police Chief Ronald dela Rosa receives the Medal of Honor from the Indonesian Police. /PNP/

The Indonesian police has conferred Philippine National Police Chief Ronald dela Rosa with the nation's highest award given to security authorities.

Dela Rosa, who has spearheaded the Philippines' war against drugs, received the Bintang Bhayangkara Utama award for his contribution

to the security not only of the Philippines but also of Indonesia.

The PNP and the Indonesia National Police are pioneer members of the ASEAN Association of Police Chief or the ASEANAPOL, which fights terrorism, piracy, smuggling, transnational crime, and illegal drugs, among others.

"According to general (INP chief) Tito Karnavian, he

would like to thank General Bato for the rockstar-like inspiration to the Indonesian police and Indonesian people on how to fight the war on drugs," Dela Rosa added.

He thanked Indonesia President Joko Widodo and the chief of the Indonesian police for giving the medal of honor, which he said was "doubly significant" for him.

Apart from Dela Rosa, the

Minister for Home Affairs of Singapore, Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, Commissioner of the Royal Brunei Police Force, Inspector General of the Royal Malaysia Police, the Commissioner of the Singapore Police, and the Director of the Internal Security Department of Singapore received the award.

(Eagle News Service)

## PNP handang makipagnayan sa ICC ukol sa drug war campaign ng pamahalaan



Ang larawan ay kinuha mula sa Net 25, Agila Balit

MANILA, Philippines (Eagle News) — Bukas ang Philippine National Police (PNP) na makipagnayan sa International Criminal Court (ICC) kaugnay ng kaso laban sa giyera kontra iligal na droga.

Ayon kay PNP Spokesperson Chief Supt. John Bulatacao, handa silang magsumite ng mga datos kaugnay ng kampanya kung papayagan ng mga matataas na opisyal.

Dagdag ni Bulatacao, kokonsultahin din ng PNP ang legal experts ng bansa, gaya ni Solicitor General Jose Calida bago magbigay ng importasyon sa ICC. Nagsasagawa ng preliminary examination ang ICC sa giyera ng bansa kontra droga.

PNP, iginiti na 'bloodless' pa rin ang bagong Oplan Tokhang

Nanindigan ang Philippine National Police (PNP) na hindi madugo ang muling paglunsad ng Oplan Tokhang. Nakapagsagawa ng higit sa apat na libong operasyon ang pulisya sa ilalim nito, kung saan higit dalawang libong drug suspects ang mga sumuko.

Mula naman nang ibalik sa giyera kontra iligal na droga ang PNP, nasa 65 drug suspects ang napatay.

Ayon sa PNP, ang datos ay sa ilalim ng 4,613 operations ng pulisya na isinagawa sa buong bansa mula December 5, 2017 hanggang February 14, 2018.

Inaresto naman ang mahigit sa pitong libong mga suspek sa mga operasyon sa parehong panahon. (Eagle News Service)

## Trillanes declared “persona non grata” in Davao City

Fil-Am businesswoman accused of funding destab plots vs Duterte also declared as such by city council

Senator Antonio Trillanes IV and Fil-Am businesswoman Loida Nicolas-Lewis have been declared as “persona non gratae” in Davao City.

The declaration made by the city council came after Trillanes said Davao was the most dangerous city in the country, with the highest incidence of murder, and the second highest incidence of rape, in a press conference in Chicago, in the United States.



Nicolas-Lewis has been accused of funding destabilization plots against President Rodrigo Duterte. “Mr. Trillanes, you will not succeed in destroying

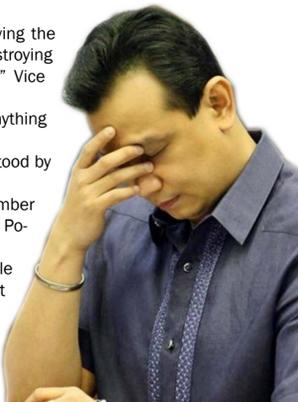
our city. You will not succeed in destroying the Dabawenyos. You will not succeed in destroying our beloved President Rodrigo Duterte,” Vice Mayor Bernard Al-ag said.

He said Trillanes has never done anything good for the city.

In a statement, Trillanes, however, stood by his pronouncements.

He said these were based on December 2015 statistics of the Philippine National Police.

“The truth definitely hurts...The people of Davao either know it or tolerate it out of fear or they’ve actually believed the lie that was fed to them that Davao City is the safest city in the world,” he said. (With a report from Jerold Tagbo, Eagle News Service)



## Ombudsman suspends Aurora governor for nine months



Aurora Governor Gerardo Noveras (Photo courtesy: <http://bagongaurora.com>)

The Ombudsman has ordered the suspension of Aurora Governor Gerardo Noveras after he allegedly allowed his own dump trucks to be used in the construction of a barangay project.

In meeting out the nine-month suspension without pay, the Ombudsman said in a decision approved on January 15 that Noveras was “liable for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service” for allowing Remnant Builders—which won the P232,441.50

contract for the project in Barangay Nipoo, Dinalungan—to use the dump trucks even if they were not in Remnant’s initial list of equipment to be used.

According to the Ombudsman, the fact that the vehicles were used meant he could have been given compensation.

“It is impossible for respondent to not have known that his dump trucks were used for the project considering their massive size

and the project’s exposure to the public,” the Ombudsman said, belying Noveras’ defense.

It noted Julio Liss, Remnant’s proprietor, conspired with Noveras to label his dump trucks “Edfrobon” to make it appear they belonged to Edfrobon Construction Services Inc.

The anti-graft body added that “even if respondent did not intervene in the bidding process and did not coerce or intimidate anyone, the fact

that he allowed the use of his dump trucks in a government project within his jurisdiction tarnishes the image and integrity of his public office.”

“Wherefore, judgment is hereby rendered finding Gerardo Noveras liable for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service...,” the Ombudsman said.

It junked the charges of grave misconduct and grave abuse of authority against the Aurora governor. (Eagle News Service)

## Boracay resorts given two months to comply with environmental regulations

Scores of holiday resorts on the Philippines’ famous white-sand island Boracay have been given two months to clean up or face closure, officials said Wednesday, February 14 after President Rodrigo Duterte warned tourists were swimming in polluted waters.



Boracay (Photo courtesy: Agence France Presse)

The outspoken leader last week blasted the tiny island’s hotels, restaurants and other businesses, accusing them of dumping sewage directly into the sea and turning it into a “cesspool.”

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said a total of 300 businesses faced “evaluation” for sanitary or other offenses on the 1,000-hectare (2,470-acre) island, of which 51 have already been handed official warnings for violating environmental regulations.

Many of these busi-

nesses are accused of using the island’s drainage system to send untreated sewage into the sea, officials said.

“(The DENR) is giving them two months to comply with the law. Otherwise, we will close them,” Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said in a statement posted on his agency’s website.

Officials will also investigate businesses that put up

buildings in protected parts of the island.

Boracay is one of the country’s top tourist destinations, attracting some two million visitors each year.

It has some 500 tourism-related businesses, although most of the island’s supplies have to be shipped in from nearby ports.

Tourism Secretary Wanda Teo said the island needs a

“massive clean-up,” adding that the work was “a bitter pill that we have to swallow if we (are) to collectively save and sustain Boracay.”

Local businesses said Duterte’s remarks had yet to have a serious effect on visitor numbers.

But Nnette Graf, head of industry association the Boracay Foundation, said there had been “one or two cancellations” since the issue came to light.

Local government official Rowen Aguirre conceded that inspectors had often found cases of resort violations concerning waste water discharge and expanding into “no-build” zones, but expressed optimism that the problems could be resolved.

“The term ‘cesspool’ is too strong. You just have to come here and see the situation for yourself,” he told AFP. (Agence France Presse)

## Military discovers food packs, medical supplies buried by suspected NPA rebels in forested area in Bukidnon



Soldiers from the Infantry Battalion of the Army’s 4th ID unearthed on Wednesday, Feb. 14, supplies allegedly buried by suspected members of the New People’s Army in a forested area in Bukidnon. /88th IB/

The military on Wednesday discovered food and medical supplies buried by suspected members of the New People’s Army in a forested area in Bukidnon for future use. In a statement, Lieutenant Colonel Randy Remonte, commanding officer of the 88th Infantry Battalion of the Army’s 4th ID, said residents of Barangay Concepcion, Valencia, tipped his men about the presence of the food packs, medical supplies, and sacks of rice the rebels reportedly extorted from them.

The items in plastic containers were unearthed around 8 a.m. on Wednesday, February 14, 2018.

“We appreciate the support of the residents...most especially Punong Barangay Luzviminda Santillan. We would not be able to locate these items without their vigilance and cooperation,” Remonte said. (Eagle News Service)

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## NUPL: Palparan “self-destructed” in hearing on kidnapping, serious illegal detention raps



File photo of Jovito Palparan (right)

The National Union of People’s Lawyers said retired Major General Jovito Palparan Jr. “self-destructed” in his last court hearing on the kidnapping and serious illegal detention charges filed against him.

In a text message to reporters on Thursday, NUPL president Edre Olalia said Palparan, who reportedly maintained his innocence in the disappearance of two University of the Philippines students in 2006, “self-destructed with his contrived and sloppy defense.”

“It’s all bare denial and blames imagined conspiracy against him,” Olalia said.

“He sees red everywhere and recklessly, maliciously and baselessly blames his present woes to what he stubbornly refers to as ‘enemies of the State,’ including human rights lawyers, human rights organizations, farmers’ groups, and the Left. His incessant red scare perceptions as a political dinosaur should have been fossilized,” Olalia added.

UP students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan were seized allegedly by members of the military in Hagonoy.

The orders were allegedly given by Palparan. (Eagle News Service)

## 17 killed in Florida school shooting by former student: sheriff

by Lella Macor  
Agence France Presse

A former student armed with an AR-15 rifle opened fire at a Florida high school on Wednesday, February 14 killing at least 17 people, officials said, in a harrowing shooting spree that saw terrified students hiding in closets and under desks as they texted for help.

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel identified the gunman as Nikolaus Cruz, 19, a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland who had been expelled for “disciplinary reasons.”

Cruz was arrested without incident in the nearby town of Coral Springs after the Feb. 14 rampage and taken to hospital with minor injuries, the sheriff said.

“We have already begun to dissect his websites and things on social media that he was on and some of the things... are very, very disturbing,” Israel said.

“He had countless magazines, multiple magazines, and at this point, we believe he had one AR-15 rifle,” the sheriff added.

Israel said he was uncertain about the exact number of people injured, but at least 14 were taken to hospital and two had died there of their wounds.

The shooting, one of nearly 20 since the start of the year, will once again throw the spotlight on the epidemic of gun violence in the United States and the ready accessibility of weapons in a country with 33,000 gun-related deaths annually.

“This is a terrible day for Parkland,” Israel said, speaking of the city of about 30,000 people, located 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Miami.

“My very own triplets went to that school.”

A teacher at the school told the Miami Herald that Cruz had been identified previously as a potential threat to his classmates.

“We were told last year that he wasn’t allowed on campus with a backpack on him,” math teacher Jim Gard



Vehicles are parked outside the Broward Health Emergency facility where victims were taken following a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, a city about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Miami on February 14, 2018. Seventeen people were killed when a 19-year-old former student opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle at the Florida high school, the local sheriff said, calling the scene “horrific.” Broward County Sheriff Steve Israel said the victims were a mix of students and adults, though he could not confirm if the adults were teachers. / AFP / Michele Eve Sandberg

said. “There were problems with him last year threatening students, and I guess he was asked to leave campus.”

A law enforcement source told CBS News that the gunman pulled a fire alarm before opening fire, but Israel said he could not confirm that report.

### ‘Very scared’

Parkland Mayor Christine Hunschofsky told CNN she had spoken to a number of students after the shooting erupted shortly after 2:00 pm (1900 GMT).

“They were very scared,” she said. “And almost in shock when they came out.”

Asked about security, the Parkland mayor said a police officer is always stationed at the school and there was a “single point of entry.”

Television images showed students, some with their hands in the air, being led out of the school by heavily armed police officers and an armored vehicle filled with a SWAT team on the scene.

One injured victim was seen being placed into an ambulance on a stretcher.

Police officers in helmets, bulletproof vests and armed

with automatic weapons could be seen stationed at several points around the sprawling school complex, which serves nearly 3,000 students.

“Just a horrible day for us,” said the superintendent of the county’s school district, Robert Runcie.

The FBI said it was assisting local law enforcement with the investigation.

### ‘Everyone started running’

Student Jeliella Dadoo told CBS News that she and her schoolmates had evacuated their classroom calmly after hearing what they thought had been a routine fire alarm.

“The alarm went off so we had to evacuate from our classes,” she said. “Then we heard gunshots.”

“I heard about six gunshots,” she said, “and then some people started running and then everyone started running because we were like ‘If it’s real, then just run.’”

Teacher Melissa Falkowski told US networks that she had helped 19 students squeeze into a closet with her.

“We were in there for probably 40 minutes. We were locked in the closet until SWAT came and got us,” she told CNN.

### No child should ‘feel unsafe’

President Donald Trump offered his “prayers and condolences to the families of the victims.”

“No child, teacher or anyone else should ever feel unsafe in an American school,” he said on Twitter.

Since January 2013, there have been at least 291 school shootings across the country — an average of about one school shooting a week, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, a non-profit group that advocates for gun control.

Since the 2012 massacre at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where 20 children and six adults were shot dead, warning procedures and emergency drills have multiplied at US schools.

The goal is to teach school children how to react to a shooter who opens fire at random.

“It is pretty clear that we’re failing our kids here,” said Falkowski, the teacher who helped shield her students from harm in a closet.

“I’m not saying the solution is one thing or another, but this does not happen in other countries the way it happens here.”

## Trump visits Florida hospital to pay respects after shooting

US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump visited a Florida hospital Friday to offer their respects to the victims of a mass shooting that claimed 17 lives at a nearby high school.

The first couple visited Broward Health North Hospital, where a White House official said they would thank medical staff “for their life-saving assistance.”

The pair are also expected to visit the Broward County sheriff’s office “to meet with the law enforcement officials whose bravery helped save lives.”

Trump’s visit to the hospital had not been announced in advance.

The US leader is spending the long President’s Day holiday weekend at his Mar-a-Lago resort, which is only about a 45-minute drive from Parkland, where the Valentine’s Day shooting rampage took place.

A troubled former student, 19-year-old Nikolaus Cruz, has confessed to killing down 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School north on Wednesday, in the country’s worst school massacre since the horror at Sandy Hook six years ago.

In the wake of the attack, Trump has vowed to tackle mental health and school

safety, but has yet to make any mention of gun control.

While the latest atrocity has reignited questions about US gun laws, Trump — the first president to have addressed the powerful National Rifle Association gun lobby — staunchly opposes any additional controls.

In a televised address to the nation on Thursday, Trump suggested the root cause of the mass shootings that regularly stun the United States was a crisis of mental health — an argument regularly made by opponents of gun curbs.

Since January 2013, there have been at least 291 school shootings across the country — an average of one a week, according to the non-profit group Everytown for Gun Safety

Since the shooting, Trump has faced teary pleas from some relatives of the dead including Lori Alhadeff, whose 14-year-old daughter Alyssa was killed.

“We need action! Action! Action!” Alhadeff urged in an interview with CNN, addressing Trump as the father of an 11-year-old son of his own.

“Let’s protect Barron, and let’s also protect all these other kids here in Parkland, in Florida, and everyone everywhere else,” she said. (Agence France-Presse)



US President Donald Trump speaks with doctor Igor Nikiphorenko (L) and First Lady Melania Trump while visiting first responders at Broward Health North hospital Pompano Beach, Florida, on February 16, 2018. / AFP / Jim Watson/

## Chinese media: China building test site for unmanned ships in disputed South China Sea

BEIJING, China (AFP) — China has started building the world’s largest test site for unmanned ships — a technology with both civilian and military applications — off a port in the disputed South China Sea, state media said Tuesday, February 13.

The test area is being constructed off the southern port city of Zhuhai bordering Macau, the state Xinhua news agency said.

China asserts sovereignty over almost all the South China Sea despite competing partial claims from the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, and has reclaimed several islands which it controls to bolster its claims.

Unmanned or “au-



This photo taken on April 21, 2017 shows an aerial shot of part of a reef in the disputed South China Sea on April 21, 2017. / AFP / Ted Aljibe/

tonomous” ship technology, still in its infancy, would allow both civilian and military craft to be remotely controlled.

It could revolutionize the shipping industry by creating more cargo space on unmanned ships, which would also save huge sums in labor

costs. As the first of its kind to be built in Asia, Zhuhai’s “unmanned boat test site” is expected to become the world’s largest with an area of about 770 square kilometers.

Islands in the test zone will be equipped with GPS, sonar, com-

munication instruments or photoelectric components to guide ships and boats, according to the China’s Science and Technology Daily.

No commissioning date has been announced. “Beijing will use this test site to develop a se-

Studies. “It symbolizes its rise as a world maritime power and is meant to position it in the future market for unmanned ships, whether for civilian or military applications.”

Various unmanned ship projects already exist in the European Union and the United States. Norway is expected this year to launch the world’s first wholly electrically-powered and autonomous freighter.

China is trying to catch up in this field. It plans to launch at the end of the year its own autonomous vessel, the Jindouyun, for river transport and ferrying goods to islands. (Agence France-Presse)

# 71 dead, no survivors in Russian passenger plane crash

by Anna Malpas with  
Thibault Marchand in Moscow  
Agence France Presse

MOSCOW, Russia (AFP) — A Russian passenger plane carrying 71 people crashed near Moscow on Sunday minutes after taking off, killing everyone on board in one of the country's worst ever aviation disasters.

Investigators said the Antonov An-148 plane went down in the Ramensky district on the outskirts of Moscow at 2:48 pm (11:28 GMT) after taking off from Domodedovo airport in the capital.

"Sixty-five passengers and six crew members were on board, and all of them died," Russia's office of transport investigations said in a statement.

Three children were among the fatalities on a list published by Russian authorities.

The flight was operated by the domestic Saratov Airlines and was headed for Orsk, a city in the Ural mountains.

Russia's Investigative Committee said numerous possible causes of the crash would be considered, including

weather conditions as the country has experienced record snowfall in recent weeks. It will also consider human error and technical failure, but it did not mention the possibility of terrorism.

More than 400 people and 70 vehicles had been deployed to the crash site, the country's emergency ministry said.

The site was enveloped in heavy snow, making it difficult to access, with emergency workers forced to park their vehicles and reach the wreckage by foot. Others used snowmobiles and drones to survey the scene.

Russian transport minister Maksim Sokolov said "genetic expertise" would be needed to help identify the victims, adding that it could "take two or three months".

## 'Shock wave'

"I felt a shock wave," Maria, a resident of a village near the crash site, told AFP.

"The windows shook," she said

The transport investigations office said the plane disappeared from radar screens around



A man looks at debris at the site of plane crash in Ramensky district, on the outskirts of Moscow, on February 11, 2018. A Russian passenger plane carrying 71 people crashed near Moscow on February 11, 2018, minutes after taking off, killing everyone on board in one of the country's worst ever aviation disasters. / AFP PHOTO

four minutes after take-off.

A regional official said the aircraft's black box had been retrieved.

The Russian-made plane was reportedly seven years old and bought by Saratov Airlines from another Russian airline a year ago.

Saratov was founded in the 1930s and flies to 35 Russian cities. Its hub is Saratov Central Airport in southern Russia.

The governor of the Orenburg region, where the plane was heading, told Russian media that

"more than 60 people" on board the plane were from the region.

Russian President Vladimir Putin offered "his profound condolences to those who lost their relatives in the crash," his spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Putin also cancelled plans to travel to Sochi to meet with Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas. Instead, the meeting will take place in Moscow.

## Grieving relatives

Local media website

Ural56.ru in the Orenburg region showed footage of distressed relatives at Orsk airport, where the plane had been due to land.

Andrei Odintsov, the mayor of Orsk, told Russian state television that six psychologists and four ambulances with medics were working with the families in the small airport.

Orsk is the second biggest city in the Orenburg region, near Russia's border with Kazakhstan.

A crisis centre was

also set up at Domodedovo, Moscow's second-largest airport in terms of passenger numbers.

Russia has suffered numerous plane crashes, with airlines often operating ageing aircraft in dangerous flying conditions.

A light aircraft crashed in November in Russia's far east, killing six people on board.

In December 2016 a military plane carrying Russia's famed Red Army Choir crashed after taking off from the Black Sea resort of Sochi, killing all 92 people on board.

The choir had been due to give a concert to Russian troops operating in Syria.

Pilot error was blamed for that crash.

In March 2016, all 62 passengers died when a FlyDubai jet crashed in bad weather during an aborted landing at Rostov-on-Don airport.

The Antonov An-148 plane, released in 2004, has a range of 3,600 kilometres (2,200 miles) and can carry 80 passengers. (Agence France-Presse)

## 13 killed in minister's quake zone helicopter crash

by Joshua Howat Berger  
Agence France Presse



Relatives of thirteen people killed when a military helicopter fell on a van in Santiago Jamiltepec, Oaxaca state, Mexico, carry the coffins of the victims past the site of the accident during the funeral, on February 17, 2018. A 7.2-magnitude earthquake rattled Mexico on Friday, causing little damage but triggering a tragedy when a minister's helicopter crash-landed on the way to the epicenter, Oaxaca, killing thirteen people, including three children, on the ground. / AFP PHOTO / ALFREDO ESTRELLA

MEXICO CITY, Mexico (AFP) — A 7.2-magnitude earthquake that rattled Mexico on Friday, February 16 triggered a tragedy when a minister's helicopter killed 13 people during a crash-landing on the way to the epicenter.

The UH-60 Black Hawk military helicopter landed on its side, crushing a van.

There were no reported casualties from the quake itself, which damaged buildings.

The chopper was carrying Interior Minister Alfonso Navarrete and Oaxaca state Governor Alejandro Murat, who were unharmed, President Enrique Pena Nieto said.

"Unfortunately, multiple people on the ground lost their lives and others were injured," he wrote on Twitter

late Friday.

On Saturday the Oaxaca prosecutor's office said five women, four men, and three children were killed by the helicopter, while another victim died en route to hospital.

Fifteen other people were injured, the office said in a statement.

Rescuers quickly swarmed the accident site searching for survivors.

Navarrete told the Televisa TV network that the helicopter pilot lost control of the aircraft about 40 meters (130 feet) above the ground as it was coming in to land.

He added that some passengers were hurt.

The helicopter went down in the southwestern town of Pinotepa de Don Luis — 37 kilometers (22 miles) from the

quake epicenter, according to the US Geological Survey.

About 50 homes in the nearby town of Santiago Jamiltepec were damaged, as well as the town hall and church, but no one was killed in the quake, the interior ministry said.

Oaxaca state authorities opened shelters for those affected, and nearly 6,000 soldiers and federal police were deployed to help with the emergency response.

Both Mexico's National Seismological Service and the US Geological Survey put the quake's magnitude at 7.2.

It struck at 5:39 pm (23:39 GMT) at a relatively deep 24.7 kilometers, said the USGS. (Agence France Presse)

## Search for Taiwan quake victims ends as toll rises to 17

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AFP) — Rescuers Sunday ended their search of a Taiwan building partially toppled by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake as the last trapped pair were presumed dead, bringing the final death toll to 17.

Thousands of emergency workers had combed through rubble at the foot of the 12-storey Yun Tsui apartment block since the quake struck the eastern city of Hualien late Tuesday.

It was left leaning at around a 50-degree angle by the quake, complicating rescue efforts due to fears of an imminent collapse.

Hualien mayor Fu Kun-chi said the last two victims were pinned under heavy pillars that could not be removed without risking a total collapse of the building, and the rescue was called off with the consent of their relatives.

Excavators began digging through the building from the top later Sunday to try to recover the bodies, he added.

"Seventeen people were unfortunately killed in the earthquake ... I believe their relatives will receive proper assistance," Premier William Lai said while paying his respects to victims in Hualien Sunday.

The last pair are believed to be members of a family from Beijing who arrived in Taiwan on Monday, authorities said. The bodies of three other members of the family including a boy aged 12 were recovered Saturday.

They were staying in a second-floor room at a hotel in the Yun Tsui building when the quake struck.

Fourteen of the 17 people who were killed perished in the building.

Three partially collapsed buildings in Hualien are being demolished, including the local landmark Marshal Hotel where one employee was killed.

Hualien, on Taiwan's picturesque east coast, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the quake-prone island.

Taiwan's worst tremor in recent decades was a 7.6-magnitude quake in September 1999 that killed around 2,400 people.

That quake ushered in stricter building codes but many of Taiwan's older buildings remain perilously vulnerable to even moderate tremors. (Agence France-Presse)



The second of two bodies is removed from the Yun Tsui building, which is leaning at a precarious angle, in the Taiwanese city of Hualien on February 9, 2018, after the city was hit by a 6.4-magnitude quake late on February 6. Taiwan began demolishing three dangerously damaged buildings on February 9 as rescue workers combed the rubble of a hotel in a last-ditch effort to find seven people still missing after a deadly earthquake. / AFP PHOTO