

Batangas Times

In Search of Truth Amidst Change

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SONA 2016: What are Duterte's priorities?

President Rodrigo Duterte's first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday echoed his election campaign promises and his inaugural address — law and order, economic development, and improved government service.

At the outset, Duterte pointed out that all three leaders facing Congress and the nation — Senate President Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel, House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez and the President himself — are all from Mindanao. That is a sign of fresh efforts to address the decades-long neglect of the southern Philippine region while it tries to deal with festering armed conflicts and underdevelopment.

Unilateral ceasefire with Reds

To loud applause, the President declared a unilateral

ceasefire with the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, which has been waging a 47-year-old insurgency.

The NDF, the political arm of the CPP, represents the rebels in peace negotiations to end Asia's longest-running insurgency.

NDF representatives have indicated they were open to a ceasefire while holding negotiations with the Duterte government, a departure from their previous firm stand of not agreeing to a truce until a final

peace deal has been signed.

'Relentless' fight vs. corruption, crime

Recalling his promises during the election campaign, Duterte said his administration's fight against crime, illegal drugs, and corruption “will be relentless and sustained.”

“We will not stop until the last drug lord, the last financier, and the last [drug] pusher have surrendered or [have been] put behind bars — or below the ground if they so wish,” he said.

Duterte ordered the National

Police Commission to speed up the investigation of cases of officers linked to crime. He also directed the Napolcom to suggest policies for making lifestyle checks on the police.

Inter-agency fight vs. drugs

Duterte said his administration will create an inter-agency committee to deal with illegal drugs and integrate efforts and strengthen partnerships of all “stakeholders.” He said the armed forces will prepare military camps to be used for drug rehabilitation.

Duterte declares unilateral cease-fire with Left

Saying attaining permanent peace before his term ends is his cherished goal, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte declared, effective immediately, a unilateral ceasefire with the Left, and urged the National Democratic Front to respond accordingly.

Duterte underscored his commitment to lasting peace midway during his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) Monday (July 25) as he addressed the joint session of the 17th Congress, which opened earlier in the day.

“To the CPP-NPA-NDF, let's end these decades of ambushes....we are getting nowhere and it's getting bloodier by the day,” Duterte said.

To immediately “stop the violence on the ground, restore peace in communities, and provide the right atmosphere for resuming peace talks,” Duterte said: “I am now announcing a unilateral

cease-fire” with the Communist Party of the Philippines, the National Democratic Front and its military arm, the New People's Army. He then called on the “NDF to respond accordingly.

Earlier, he issued a blanket appeal for peace to other insurgent groups as well, especially Muslims who have fought government for four decades. “All of us want peace, not the peace of the dead, but the peace of the living,” he said.

“We express our willingness and readiness to go to the negotiating table; and yet we have our guns fixed at our sides, ready to pull the trigger.”

He found it sad and ironic “that while we extol the bravery and heroism of our soldiers -- you rebels do the same for your fighters -- what I see are the widows and orphans and I feel their pain and grief.”

Duterte's SONA earns support from business sector



LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

The first State of the Nation Address of President Rodrigo Duterte generated strong support from the business community, calling the President's directives and policy pronouncements music to every businessman's ears.

Francis Chua, chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ICCP) and chairman emeritus of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), cited the President's candidness in his address to the nation.

Notably, he said, the President has ordered to reduce business registration to only three days. He also ordered the

reduction of income tax rates for both individual and corporations. Likewise, the President has called for the relaxation of the economic restrictions in the Constitution to allow more foreign investments into the country.

“The President has again reiterated that ease of doing business as mandatory, reduction of personal and corporate income tax, clean government. All of these are music to the business sector's ears,” said Chua.

The Makati Business Club, which was critical to Duterte during the presidential campaign, lauded the President's very comprehensive SONA.

SONA (LENS) REVIEW

Brillante Mendoza draws flak, praise for Duterte's SONA

Some called it artsy and brilliant while others found Brillante Mendoza's State of the Nation Address (SONA) directing style annoying.

The award-winning Mendoza, who was tasked to direct President Rodrigo Duterte's first SONA, used many unconventional angles during the speech.

Unlike previous ones, which was again broadcast live on all major television networks in the country, Duterte's first SONA showed a lot of close-ups,

worm's eye view, and some double exposures.

Slow transitions, slow camera panning, and dim lighting were also evident throughout Duterte's speech.

In some shots, Duterte's hand movements were in focus. A new shot used was that of the president seen from behind the podium.

So, even before Duterte finished his over-an-hour speech, Mendoza became a Philippine trending topic on Twitter.

'First live indie film!'

"Costume design discouraged. Cinematography is in!"

Thus said one Twitter user about the telecast of President Rodrigo Duterte's first State of the Nation Address at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City on Mon, Jul 25.

The comment was a reference to two changes in this year's address: the downplay in the fashion aspect of the event (no red carpet this year) and Brillante Mendoza directing the SONA.

In earlier interviews, Mendoza — whose film *Ma'Rosa* competed at the 2016 Cannes film festival — said he wanted Duterte's SONA to be very sincere and very real.

"The essence is to communicate with the people," he said.

We're not sure if Mendoza indeed managed to to present a real and sincere SONA. However, we're pretty sure it's very different from the SONAs before it.

Early into the President's more than an hour address, it was clear we wouldn't be getting the usual SONA, at least visually.

Mendoza utilized high-angle

and low-angle shots, and used close-up shots of Duterte during the more emotional moments of the speech.

He also focused on the VIPs inside the Plenary Hall of the Batasang Pambansa — including Batangas Rep. Vilma Santos laughing at a joke and Vice President Leni Robredo and Philippine National Police head Chief Supt. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa listening intently, among others.

But the acclaimed director also had some... interesting shots. No less than two times, the viewers were treated with a close-up on Duterte's during the speech.

A number of netizens were also not pleased with a number of "under the table" shots.

"If what Brillante Mendoza meant by 'we will see the real Duterte' is seeing the President's brain through his nostrils, well," a netizen commented.

Directors and members of the media and the entertainment industry also took part in the conversation, making Mendoza an instant trending topic online.

Do you want to know the meaning of President Duterte's tiny hand tattoo?



Book author and investigative journalist Raissa Robles just kind of blew our minds, you guys.

Have you noticed the small tattoo on President Rodrigo Duterte's right hand? Just below his thumb. Yes, our Commander-in-chief is inked and there's a deep meaning behind it.

According to Robles' interview with Jesus Dureza for Asia's oldest English language newspaper, the South China Morning Post, Duterte's presidential adviser on the peace process, the tattoo is the mark the "Magic Group" (yes, Dureza actually said that) of the Guardians Brotherhood.

Dureza jokingly referred to it as "a secret cult," but explained that the Guardians is "a fraternal group of people."

Initially, it was a "military fraternal group," but eventually they started recruiting civilians as members. That's how Dureza, a former city prosecutor and Duterte's former classmate, and the President himself got involved in the group. However, Dureza is not aware when Duterte officially joined the Guardians Brotherhood.

"According to its website, the Guardians Brotherhood started out in 1976 during Marcos' Martial Law as an informal soldiers' group known as the 'Diablo (Devil) Squad,'" Robles wrote.

A group with such an ominous sounding name was "disbanded," but the members formally registered the group with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as a "self-help group to improve soldiers' welfare."

But these guys did more stuff other than improving the welfare of military men.

According to the findings of the Davide Commission, a fact-finding group led by former chief justice Hilario Davide Jr, the "Guardians have been in nearly each coup attempt since July 1986."

This includes all the failed coup attempts between 1986 to 1988, when the late president Corazon Aquino was still in power. During this time, Duterte was serving as Davao City's "officer-in-charge vice mayor." In 1988, he ran for mayor and won.

When secret meetings are held, the members verified each other's affiliation by showing the discretely small hand tattoo. Yes, just like the one on Duterte's hand.

So, what does this all mean? Yes, our president is a member of a group of people who tried to oust Corazon Aquino to put Marcos back in power.

Could this be why Duterte is a dear friend of the Marcoses despite his numerous declarations about hating corrupt officials who steal from the government and from the people?

Or why Duterte dismissed all criticisms and approved the burial of the late dictator at the Libingan ng mga Bayani?

Main Editorial

President Duterte's first SONA today

President Duterte delivers his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) today, the 25th day of his administration, before a joint session of Congress at the Batasan. Like his Inaugural Address in Malacañang last June 30, the SONA will be simple, direct, and forceful, like the man himself. It will not be a long one, partly because he is just beginning and he still does not have much to report. But it should be loaded with the new President's plans for the nation in the next six months before this year ends – and then in the next six years before he steps down from office.

These first three weeks of the Duterte administration have been dominated by his war on drugs – the center of his campaign which revolved around the basic idea of change. The Philippine National Police last Friday reported that as of 6 a.m. of July 22, 240 people were dead, 3,228 had been arrested, and 120,200 had surrendered in 63,973 raids and other police operations. The figures do not include those who may have been executed by vigilante groups.

The anti-drug campaign has had the biggest impact so far among all the many changes now taking place in the country. We had all been complacent about the state of our nation, not knowing that in communities all over the country, the lives of thousands of people were being destroyed by drugs. There are charges that abuses may have been committed in the anti-drugs campaign. These should be acted upon, but on the whole the nation has welcomed the

campaign which stands out as the first big change being carried out by the new administration.

The President's SONA is expected to outline what changes are coming next. Some Cabinet members have already given us an inkling of what we may expect in the coming months, such as in the workings of government and of the justice system, in an infrastructure program to massively step up national economic development, in solving traffic and other transportation problems that are holding back progress, in a major push for increased agricultural production, in expanding employment opportunities as the core of a total effort to solve the problem of mass poverty among our people. These and other plans and programs will be the core of today's SONA.

We also expect changes in the way the members of Congress and their guests gather to hear the President and how the SONA will be received by the people. The President has asked that the affair at the Batasan be kept short and simple, without the red-carpet displays of women's fashion that marked previous SONAs. We also do not expect protest demonstrations as in the past when the President's effigy was burned by angry and disgruntled elements.

But the nation's attention – and that of the world – will focus on the address itself. In the coming months and years, we will be referring to today's address with all its plans and its promises. And the President will be judged by how well he has achieved the goals he is setting forth in this, his first SONA.

To see a nation transformed

Crisostomo Ybarra

CHASING AN ELUSIVE DREAM

The world is in search of a veritable leader who shares the dream of seeing a nation transformed.

The recently concluded Philippine election was the most divisive, complex and rude. This early, the nation is seeing a new leadership – uncouth, hands-on, and decisive, versus the old leadership – decent, hands-off and discerning. It is safe to say that both have love of country. I find the uncouth very open to the point of proclaiming boldly his readiness to die for country and people. The decent appears distant from the needs of a people crying for attention. Both are stubborn.

For the first time in Philippine politics, we have seen a candidate unabashedly, not apologetic at all in attacking, even cursing a traditionally revered institution, the Catholic Church. He even

cursed, and then apologized, a globally revered person in Pope Francis for causing heavy traffic in Manila. His indecent but applauded campaign lines catered to an angry, confused electorate, desperate and impatient for TRUE CHANGE.

Surprisingly, quite a large number of voters, poor and non-poor, decent and indecent, enjoyed his antics. What appeared to be decent then has become indecent and is now becoming an acceptable norm. Heavy traffic, uncontrolled criminality and proliferation of illegal drugs were artefacts of the administration's indecisiveness and ineptness. They pictured an oligarchic government whose control and influence had become an indecent class of democracy by a privileged, elitist cadre.

Strike Anywhere

Marcelo Del Pilar

Mr. Duterte is in a hurry to end nagging discords

The lingering, pestering, nagging national issues that need urgent resolutions – were we to exclude intractable poverty – are easy to identify. One is the communist insurgency. Second is the Muslim insurrection. Third is the Marcos family's clamor for a hero's burial for the former President. There are no issues – again aside from mass poverty – as urgent as these three.

These are issues with nine lives and improbable longevity. They have been there even before the term 'millennials,' the age group also known as Generation Y, came into being. Only Mrs. Aquino tried to end the first two but failed. The President most identified with Mr. Marcos, Erap Estrada, personally wanted to give in to the demand of the

family on the third issue but was too cautious and afraid of the consequences to even try and work out a resolution.

Mr. Ramos is related to the Marcoses on his Valdez side. But there is no proof that he actively pursued a solution to his cousin's burial issue.

The passage of the BBL could have been Mr. Aquino's real legacy in the area of securing the peace and confidence-building. But he failed to use the persuasive and vast powers of the presidency to pass the genuine autonomy law. On the Marcos burial, Mr. Binay tried to forge a compromise formula, which got no go signal from Mr. Aquino's administration.

Editorial Box

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2014 Palarong Pambansa kicks off

The 2014 "Palarong Pambansa" or National Games formally kicked off today, May 5 with Department of Education (DepEd) officials leading the biggest annual sporting event for youth from various parts of the county.

The opening ceremony, held at the Laguna Sports Complex in Sta. Cruz, welcomed at least 11,200 student-athletes and 1,200 technical officials from 80 provinces in the country's 17 regions. Laguna Governor Jorge "ER" Ejercito Estregan along with Education Secretary Armin Luistro and other DepEd officials led the opening ceremonies. Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) Director General Joel Villanueva and Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada served as keynote speakers for the formal kick off of this year's Paloro.

Scheduled from May 4 to 10, the 2014 Paloro is the 57th staging of the National Games and will feature athletes from 17 regions competing in 20 different events. Swimmer Enchong Dee,

by Ina Hernando Malipot
Olympian figure skater Michael Martinez, and basketball players Jeron at Jeric Teng joined the opening ceremonies and relays. Sarangani Congressman Manny Pacquiao, who is expected to lead the torch relay, was not able to attend the opening ceremony.

This is the first time that the province of Laguna hosted the Paloro. Among the highlights of the opening rites is the unveiling of a 26-foot-tall monument of National Hero Dr. Jose Rizal depicted as an eskrima swordsman or "esgrimador" at the sports complex. Estregan said that this "statue will be the tallest Rizal monument and the first depicting Rizal as a sportsman."

The event was made special by the participation of those who were affected by super typhoon Yolanda.

"We have survived. Thank you for your help," said the banners carried by student-athletes, along with their respective coaches and other school officials during the



Palarong-Pambansa-Opening-Ceremonies_04pionilla_050514

opening parade of the 2014 Palarong Pambansa.

Despite the devastation caused by the "Yolanda" last November, Region 8 was able to send a full delegation for this year's Paloro.

Earlier, Luistro reminded 2014 delegates and officials to adhere to "clean, green, and eco-friendly" tradition of the Paloro. He directed all Paloro officials,

athletes and school administrators to promote environmentally-sound practices which optimize the utilization of resources while protecting the environment during the week-long Paloro. "Every staging of the Paloro should be an occasion to bring out the spirit of cooperation, discipline and a deep sense of responsibility to oneself and to the environment," he said.

La Salle zaps Ateneo



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Abi Maraño put on another brilliant show as defending champion De La Salle reasserted its mastery of Ateneo, 25-14, 25-14, 25-19, and extended its perfect run to eight games in UAAP women's volleyball on January 19 at The Arena in San Juan.

One of the Miss Volleyball awardees by the Philippine Sportswriters Association, Maraño led the Lady Spikers' onslaught, scoring all but one of her 10 points in spikes. She also collected seven digs.

Earlier, Adamson University moved into a tie with Far Eastern University at fourth place after cruising to a 25-15, 25-9, 25-19

triumph over University of the Philippines.

Bouncing back from their five-set loss to the Lady Tamaraws last week, the Lady Falcons entered the game with a lot of energy, dominating the Lady Maroons in the first two sets before coasting to their fourth win in eight matches. Showing their might on all fronts, the Lady Spikers outthit the Lady Eagles, 36-20, and had more blocks, 5-2.

Alyssa Valdez, also a Miss Volleyball awardee, topscored for the Lady Eagles with 10 points. Ateneo suffered its third loss in eight starts to remain in fourth place.

Add Muhammad Ali to those who want Mayweather-Pacquiao

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali is happy that Floyd Mayweather remains unbeaten, but the sporting icon wants to see him face Filipino superstar Manny Pacquiao.

LAS VEGAS - Boxing legend Muhammad Ali is happy that Floyd Mayweather remains unbeaten, but the sporting icon wants to see him face Filipino superstar Manny Pacquiao.

The former world heavyweight champion posted a message on Twitter hailing Mayweather's majority-decision triumph Saturday over Argentina's Marcos Maidana but slipped in a jab of his own about Mayweather having yet to face Pacquiao.

"Congratulations FloydMayweather. Maybe after you rest up we can see you rumble with MannyPacquiao!" Ali tweeted.

Mayweather, 37, and Pacquiao, 35, talked about a showdown years ago as fans pushed for the superstars to meet in the ring but money and blood testing issues scuttled the talks.

Since then, Mayweather (46-0, 26 knockouts) has said he will never work with Pacquiao's long-time promoter, Bob Arum, and Pacquiao (56-5-2, 38 KOs) is reportedly in talks for a new deal with Arum that would likely take him to the end of his career.

Pacquiao beat Timothy Bradley by unanimous decision last month, avenging a controversial 2012 defeat, and could face Juan Manuel Marquez for the fifth time if the Mexican wins a fight later this month to become his mandatory next title challenger. Marquez stopped Pacquiao in 2012.