

Forest products closely watched

MINDANAO NEWSBITS

Barangay captain shot dead in Comval town

A barangay captain was shot dead by unidentified armed men while on his way to attend a political meeting in Monkayo, Compostela Valley last Wednesday...

Socialite seeks Congress post for the fifth time

DAVAO CITY - Sorja Habana Rodriguez has filed her certificate of candidacy, her fifth in as many elections, for congresswoman of Davao City's third district...

WHERE TO STAY IN MINDANAO

Table listing hotels and resorts in Davao City with contact numbers.



AGUSAN NURSERY. Students of Loreto National High School and their principal, Carmelito Anino, arrived in full force to undertake bagging operation in preparation for seedling production at the nursery...

Log smugglers active during long vacation

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY - Forest officers of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in North-eastern Mindanao have tightened their watch on forest products being transported in this city.

"Our close monitoring of the activities of timber poachers and illegal log and lumber traders will continue without letup even after the observance of the Holy Week," DENR Caraga Regional Executive Director (RED) Benjamin T. Tumaliuan said.

RED Tumaliuan issued a memorandum to his regional and provincial field forest officers, particularly to the four Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officers (PENRO) and 13 Community Environment Natural Resources Officers (CENROs)...

He specifically ordered PENRO Rosendo Asunto of Agusan del Norte and Butuan City CENR officer Achilles Ebron of Nasipit International Port in Nasipit, Agusan del Norte...

RED Tumaliuan said log smugglers and poachers are usually active during long vacation such as the Holy Week break, noting that they transport illegally sourced forest products at night.

2 couples face off in Cotabato, Kabunsan

COTABATO CITY - Residents here are expecting an exciting race between two couples for the mayorship here and for the lone congressional seat of this city and the new province of Shariff Kabunsan.

"The couple versus couple fight is drawing attention from the voters and media people," a reporter of a weekly tabloid here said.

The couples are City Mayor Muslimin Serna and his wife, Bai Sandra, and incumbent Rep. Bai Zeny Dilangalen and her husband, the former three-term congressman of Maguindanao's first district (now Shariff Kabunsan) Mayor Sema, who is seeking reelection...

will make it this time with her enlarged mass base and the support of the administration. Former congressman Dilangalen recalled that he and his wife won in the last four elections, saying they would make it for the fifth time because of their congressional projects.

In the city mayoralty race, Mayor Sema and Dilangalen are joined by Estrellita Juliano-Tamano, a businesswoman who had filed an election protest against Sema in connection with the last mayoralty election here.

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Republic of the Philippines Congress of the Philippines Metro Manila Thirteenth Congress Third Regular Session Begun and held in Metro Manila, on Monday, the twenty-fourth day of July, two thousand six.

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9417]

AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL, BY EXPANDING AND STREAMLINING ITS JURISDICTION, UPGRADING EMPLOYEE SKILLS AND AUGMENTING BENEFITS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - It is the declared policy of the State to protect the rights and promote the welfare of the Filipino worker. Pursuant to this policy and to ensure efficient and effective performance in the legal service of the Government, an expansion and streamlining shall be effected in the Office of the Solicitor General.

The legal and administrative staff of the Office of the Solicitor General shall be increased and their positions upgraded to adequately meet the Republic's burgeoning need for legal services. The litigation and other skills of lawyers of the Office of the Solicitor General shall be promoted, the benefits of employees augmented, and their welfare enhanced. Academic growth and the honing of legal communications expertise shall be encouraged.

SEC. 2. Expansion. - The staff of the Office of the Solicitor General shall be increased and their positions upgraded. From fifteen (15) legal divisions, there shall be at least thirty (30) legal divisions in the Office of the Solicitor General, with a corresponding increase in the general and administrative support personnel and provision for ample office space. Each division, permanently headed by an Assistant Solicitor General, shall consist of ten (10) lawyers and such other personnel as may be necessary for the office to effectively carry out its functions.

The present administrative structure of the Office of the Solicitor General shall be reorganized into the Financial Management Service, Docket and Case Management Services and the Human Resources Management Service. Each of these shall be composed of the necessary divisions and sections.

The legal and non-legal staff of the Office of the Solicitor General occupying the positions affected by the changes embodied in this Act at the time of its approval shall thereafter occupy the positions mandated by this Act, and discharge the duties and functions of their new positions and receive the corresponding salary and benefits without the necessity of any new appointment.

SEC. 3. Standards. - The Solicitor General shall have a cabinet rank and the same qualifications for appointment, rank, prerogatives, salaries, allowances, benefits and privileges as the Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals; an Assistant Solicitor General, those of an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals.

The qualifications for appointment, rank, prerogatives, salaries and privileges of Solicitors shall be the same as judges, specified as follows: Senior State Solicitor - Regional Trial Court Judge; State Solicitor II - Metropolitan Trial Court Judge; State Solicitor I - Municipal Trial Court in Cities Judge.

The Solicitor General shall determine the qualifications, prerogatives and responsibilities of the Associate Solicitors.

SEC. 4. Compensation. - The basic monthly compensation of the Solicitor General, Assistant Solicitors General, State Solicitors and

Associate Solicitors shall be as follows:

Table with columns: POSITION, SALARY GRADE FROM, SALARY GRADE TO. Rows include Solicitor General, Assistant Solicitor General, Senior State Solicitor, State Solicitor II, State Solicitor I, Associate Solicitor III, Associate Solicitor II, Associate Solicitor I.

The positions and salaries of non-legal personnel in the Office of the Solicitor General shall be raised to the level of their counterparts in the Court of Appeals.

Subject to the availability of funds, the salaries and privileges of personnel of the Office of the Solicitor General granted under this Act may be further increased to match any corresponding increase in salaries and privileges later granted to their respective counterparts in the Court of Appeals.

SEC. 5. Benefits and Privileges. - Subject to the availability of funds, the Office of the Solicitor General may provide its employees with the following benefits:

- (1) Health care services through a health maintenance organization (HMO). Expenses for the mandatory annual executive check-up of the Solicitor General, the Assistant Solicitor General, and the Service Heads, shall be for the account of the office;
(2) All employees shall be covered by accident insurance policies procured by the office at its own expense during travels while in the performance of their official duties and functions;
(3) Without prejudice to efficiency in the service, scholarships to deserving employees on official time and at the expense of the Office of the Solicitor General to enhance their academic growth and upgrade their knowledge and skills. Scholars under this provision shall be selected on the basis of competitive examination; and
(4) A provident fund which shall consist of contributions made both by the Office of the Solicitor General and by its lawyers and employees to a common fund for the payment of benefits to such lawyers or employees or their heirs.

SEC. 6. Seminar and Other Professional Fees. - Subject to the availability of funds, fees for relevant seminars, as well as professional membership fees for lawyers, registration fees, and related miscellaneous expenses incurred in completing the mandatory continuing legal education (MCLE) course shall be borne by the office. Professional membership, registration fees, including those for mandatory continuing professional education (CPE), and related miscellaneous expenses of other employees holding positions for which a professional license is required by the office shall also borne by the Office of the Solicitor General.

SEC. 7. Transportation Benefits. - Subject to the availability of funds, employees shall be provided with contracted transportation services until such time that the office can procure additional motor vehicles for this purpose.

SEC. 8. Other benefits. - Consistent with the provisions of Executive Order No. 292, otherwise known as the Revised Administrative Code of 1987, the legal staff of the Office of the Solicitor General are allowed to receive honoraria and allowances from client departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government.

SEC. 9. Franking Privilege. - All official mail matters and telegrams of the Office of the Solicitor General addressed for delivery within the Philippines shall be received, transmitted, and delivered free of charge. Provided, That such mail matters when addressed to private persons or nongovernment offices shall not exceed one hundred and twenty (120) grams.

SEC. 10. Grant of Special Allowances. - The Solicitor General, Assistant Solicitor General, Senior State Solicitors, State Solicitors I and II, and Associate Solicitors I to III shall be granted special allowances in amounts to be determined by the Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management and the Solicitor General.

The grant of special allowances shall be implemented uniformly in such sums and amounts and up to the extent only that can be supported by the funding source specified in Section 11 hereof. Provided, That the said special allowance shall not exceed One Hundred percent (100%) of the basic salary of solicitors as provided in Republic Act No. 6758, otherwise known as the Salary Standardization Law.

SEC. 11. Funding. - The funds required for the implementation of this Act, including those for health care services, insurance premiums, professional, educational, and registration fees, contracted transportation benefits, and other benefits above, shall be taken from:

- (i) five percent (5%) of monetary awards given by the Courts to client departments, agencies and instrumentalities of the Government, including those under court-approved compromise agreements;
(ii) fifty percent (50%) of fees collected by the Special Committee on Naturalization; and
(iii) all other income, fees and revenues earned and collected by the Office of the Solicitor General.

For this purpose, the Office of the Solicitor General is hereby authorized to charge deputation, certification and other similar fees in the cases that it handles.

The amounts collected pursuant to this section shall constitute a trust fund in the name of the Office of the Solicitor General to be managed and used by the Solicitor General to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 12. Effects of Subsequent Salary Increases. - Upon implementation of any subsequent increases in the salary rates provided under Republic Act No. 6758, as amended, all special allowances granted under Section 10 hereof shall be considered as an implementation of the said salary increases as may be provided by law. The special allowances equivalent to the increase in the basic salary as may be provided by law shall be converted as part of the basic salary. Provided, That the amounts converted as basic salary be funded from the regular appropriations of the Office of the Solicitor General. Any excess in the allowances granted under this Act not converted as basic salary shall continue to be granted as such and shall continue to be funded under Section 11 of this Act.

SEC. 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act, the Solicitor General, in coordination with the Secretary of Budget and Management, shall promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provision of this Act.

SEC. 14. Appropriations. - The amount needed to implement office streamlining and physical expansion shall be taken from the funds and budget of the Office of the Solicitor General under the annual General Appropriations Acts.

SEC. 15. Repealing Clause. - Pertinent provisions of Executive Order No. 292, the Revised Administrative Code of 1987, as amended, Republic Act No. 9139, Executive Order No. 460 dated December 3, 1997, Executive Order No. 482 dated May 7, 1998, Administrative Order No. 117 dated February 17, 1994, and all laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 16. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 17. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days from its publication in two national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved: JOSE DE VENEZIA, JR. Speaker of the House of Representatives; MANNY MILLAR, President of the Senate

This Act which is a consolidation of Senate Bill No. 2249 and House Bill No. 5958 was finally passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on February 5, 2007 and February 6, 2007, respectively.

ROBERTO P. NAZARENO, OSCAR G. YABES, House of Representatives, Secretary of the Senate

Approved: GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, President of the Philippines