

MESSAGE OF SECRETARY NASSER C. PANGANDAMAN

110th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence

Maguindanao Provincial Capitol; Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao

12 June 2008

GOOD MORNING.

I AM DELIGHTED TO JOIN YOU THIS MORNING IN THE FORMAL RAISING OF THE PHILIPPINE FLAG HERE AT THE HEART OF HISTORIC MAGUINDANAO.

MAGUINDANAO USED TO BE A HUGE BATTLEFIELD DURING THE SPANISH CONQUEST. IT WAS HERE THAT THE SPANISH COLONIAL GOVERNMENT INSTALLED A MAJOR PART OF ITS ARMORY TO DEFEAT FILIPINO MUSLIMS.

THE LIST OF THE PROVINCE' FREEDOM FIGHTERS IS LONG AND SPECTACULAR SINCE MAGUINDANAO'S ULTIMATE WARRIORS INCLUDE THOSE WHO HAVE JOINED THE MOST FEROCIOUS AND BLOODIEST BATTLES AGAINST OUR COLONIZERS.

WE HAVE DATU DIMASANGKAY, SIRONGAN, SALIKULA, BUISAN, SULTAN KUDARAT, DATU PIANG, TO NAME A FEW. TO MENTION THEM ALL WOULD TAKE ME ALL DAY. INSTEAD, WITH UTMOST REVERENCE, LET US ALL BOW OUR HEADS IN HONOR OF THEIR MEMORIES.

AS WE RAISE THE SYMBOL OF OUR SOVEREIGNTY, WE ALSO COMMEMORATE THE 110TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE

PROCLAMATION OF THE COUNTRY'S LIBERATION FROM THE DESPONDENCY OF THE COLONIAL RULE. INDEED, WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT FOR SO LONG A TIME, WE CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE FREEDOM OUR FOREFATHERS WHO BRAVELY FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY HAD PASSED ON TO US.

BUT THIS OCCASION ALSO MARKS MINDANAO'S HISTORIC PAST. DECADES AGO, JOLO BECAME THE SANCTUARY OF THE CONVICTED FILIPINO SOLDIERS IN THE SPANISH ARMY CALLED DISCIPLINARIOS, WHEN THEY WERE DEPORTED HERE AND TO OTHER PARTS OF MINDANAO ON SUSPICION THAT THEY WERE SYMPATHETIC TO THE CAUSE OF THE KATIPUNAN.

IT WAS ALSO IN JOLO THAT NATIVE SOLDIERS PLANNED A MUTINY AGAINST THE SPANIARDS DURING THE REVOLUTION. AS HISTORY TELLS US, THE MUTINY WAS ABORTED AND INSTIGATORS WERE SUMMARILY EXECUTED.

YET THE SOLDIERS' REVOLT DID NOT JUST END THERE. THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE JOLO UPRISING WERE AGAIN DEPORTED TO GUAM, WHERE THEY WERE POSTED TO AN OVERCROWDED PRISON CELL.

ARMED WITH PATRIOTISM AND INNATE FILIPINO GALLANTRY, THE SOLDIERS' HOPE DID NOT WITHER. AGAIN,

THEY PLANNED ANOTHER REVOLT. BUT FATE WASN'T ON THEIR SIDE, ON DECEMBER 19, 1896, WHEN THE REVOLT BROKE OUT, THE GUAM ARMY FIRED INTO THE PRISON KILLING MORE THAN 80 OF THE PRISONERS AND WOUNDED 140. THE REST WERE EXECUTED THE FOLLOWING MORNING AFTER A SWIFT TRIAL. ALL THE BODIES WERE IN A COMMON GRAVE AT THE PIGO CEMETERY.

THESE REMIND US OF JUST A CHAPTER OF THE LONG AND ARDOUS JOURNEY OF OUR SOLDIERS TO ACHIEVE THE FREEDOM THAT WE HAVE NOW. THESE ARE SNIPPETS OF THE FILIPINOS' CONSISTENCY AND PATRIOTISM.

AND THESE ALL THE MORE INSPIRE US TO CONTINUE FIGHTING TO FREE US FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE SOIL AND HUNGER THROUGH THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM.

AS THE COUNTRY DEPARTS FROM THE TRADITIONAL FESTIVITIES RESERVED FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY, THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM JOINS THE OTHER AGENCIES IN GIVING THE FILIPINO NATION A UNIQUE AND PUBLIC SERVICE-LADEN CELEBRATION

THIS YEAR'S THEME, "REPUBLIC SERVICE, TUNGO SA GANAP NA KALAYAAN AT KAUNLARAN", DEMONSTRATES THE

GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE TO MAKE THIS EVENT TRULY MEMORABLE AS GOVERNMENT BRINGS MORE SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE.

TODAY, THE DAR WILL BE DISTRIBUTING CERTIFICATES OF LANDOWNERSHIP AWARD TO FARMER-BENEFICIARIES IN MAGUINDANAO AND SHARIFF KABUNSUAN.

CERTIFICATES FOR THE PRESIDENT DIOSDADO MACAPAGAL AGRARIAN SCHOLARSHIP WILL BE LIKEWISE DISTRIBUTED TO DESERVING STUDENTS WHO ARE PRIMARILY SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF OUR AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES.

RICE, THE MOST BASIC FOOD ATTRIBUTED TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE WILL BE GIVEN AWAY TO OUR LESS PRIVILEGED SECTOR.

IN MANILA, THE PRODUCTS OF OUR AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES WILL BE IN DISPLAY AND TRADE FAIRS WILL BE CONDUCTED TO HIGHLIGHT THE FARMERS' PROGRESS.

TALAKAYAN AND CONSULTATIVE GROUPS WILL BE READY FOR THOSE WHO WILL NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE ON AGRARIAN REFORM.

NOW IS THE OPPORTUNE TIME TO GIVE BACK TO THE PEOPLE THE SERVICES THEY DESERVE UNDER THE DEMOCRATIC AND FREE NATION.

HENCE, AS MINDANAO JOINS THE ENTIRE NATION IN CELEBRATING OUR INDEPENDENCE, LET US NOT FORGET THE HEROISM OF OUR SOLDIERS -- THOSE WHO HAVE FOUGHT FOR OUR NATION, AND THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO OFFER THEIR LIVES FOR THE SAKE OF OUR COUNTRYMEN.

COME JOIN US IN OUR QUEST TO CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY TO FARMERS' PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY.

THANK YOU AND GOOD DAY.