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MORO LEADERS CRITIQUE GOV'T PEACE PROCESS



(L-R) Dr. Macapado Muslim, Dumagay "Farouk" Pandi Bilao, Mehol Sadain, Nene Pimentel, Senen Bacani and Omar "Solitario" Ali.

Three leaders from the major tribal groups of the Muslims of Mindanao critically scrutinized the peace process that the government is pushing for acceptance by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) at a forum at the University of Makati last February 4.

Organized by the Pimentel Center for Local Governance and the College of Governance and Public Policy of the University in collaboration with the Mindanao State University and the East West Center Alumni Association, the forum was the first that sought out the public and candid views of Moro leaders on the peace process.

The three Moro leaders, namely, former Commissioner of the Commission on Elections, Mehol Sadain, a Tausug; former Marawi City Mayor Omar Ali, a Maranaw, and a former Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Dumagay Farouk Pandi Bilao, a Maguindanao criticized the peace effort of the Government as effete and lacking in substance.

Cultural diversity

Sadain said that, among other things, the "cultural diversity" of our population must be recognized. The status quo is unacceptable. And any plan to advance the cause of peace in Mindanao must

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National Decentralization Symposium on February 27-29

By Clarisse Aquino

A three-day national symposium to assess the state of implementation of decentralization in the Philippines is slated to be held at the University of Makati on February 27 to 29, 2012.

The symposium gathers major stakeholders

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Word from the Center

National transformation is achievable. But many things have to be done before that can happen.

One, individuals seeking it must, themselves, undergo their own transformation from being self-serving persons to selfless individuals who will advance not their personal interests but the national weal.

Indeed, many other things are needed to facilitate the attainment of that goal.

But at this point, let us focus on just one other thing: the need for justice in this country to be fairly and speedily delivered. For as the trite saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied.

The Center has knowledge of some cases that had been sleeping the sleep of the dead or, may be, of the dying in the bowels of government agencies but have now come to life again. Meaning that the government agencies con-

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ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY A PRIORITY --- SEC. PAJE



SEC. PAJE



The Philippines needs to prioritize, develop and strengthen environmental security to enable the nation to cope with serious environmental challenges that threaten the survival of our people and the generations to come.

This was the statement of Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Jesus Paje when he keynoted the first roundtable discussion initiated by the Pimentel Institute on Leadership and Governance last January 31 at the University of Makati.

"Environment Security is the highest form of security that our country needs to develop," Secretary Paje stressed. We need to secure the present and future generations against the threats posed by environmental degradation brought about by man-made and natural calamities, the DENR secretary said.

He cited the recent tsunami that destroyed parts of Japan in 2011 as a grim reminder that environmental security is of utmost importance to ensure the survival of our people against the unpredictable wrath of nature.

Environment security means making our people secure against the destructive effects of a changing environment, Paje explained.

Climate change

In the roundtable discussion, Sec. Paje explained that "climate change" is simply the experience of a changing climate.

Change means what was two-feet of snow in New York before, is now more than one meter high, he explained.

There is rapid melting of glaciers in the north pole, he noted.

In some places storm then packed 70 kilometers per hour on the average, while now more than 240 kilometers per hour storm is the new normal phenomenon, he said.

Philippines: A hazard zone?

Paje said that the Philippines ranks sixth as the most vulnerable country in the world in terms of climate change threats and third as the most hazardous country to live in the world.

Contributing to this grim status is the fact that the

Philippines is squeezed by two plates ---the Eurasian and Pacific plates--- which makes the country prone to earth deadly shakings.

As a matter of fact, the Philippines experiences earthquakes and landslides on a daily basis, much of which is not felt, Paje said.

"It's a breathing Earth," he added.

Government challenges

The secretary also asserted that the main challenge of government is to break the cycle of poverty, overpopulation, degradation of natural resources, and low productivity. When a country is poor, it is overpopulated. If a country is overpopulated, the tendency is to over exploit its natural resources, through massive mining, illegal logging, among other things.

This will lead to low productivity

and more poverty. It becomes a cycle, Paje said.

Government has to break the unsustainable use of resources. That is why government must have the will and determination to enforce drastic measures like the total log ban.

Paje said he has canceled more than 1,600 mining permits.

The country must focus on environmental security for the sake of our people and our future generations," the secretary concluded.



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RP HAS ADDITIONAL 13 MILLION HECTARES OF LAND

By Jay Dejaresco

In April this year, the Philippines will become bigger by 13 million hectares, equivalent to the combined size of the entire Luzon plus Samar and Leyte, thereby reconfiguring the country's national territory.

This was announced by Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Ramon Paje Jr. when he keynoted the first of a series of roundtable discussions of the Pimentel Institute for Leadership and Governance (PILG) at the University of Makati last January 31.

In April, the United Nations will finally award to the Philippines its eight-year long claim of the so-called "Benham rise" or the "Benham plateau" a vast tract of land located

on the northeastern portion of the Philippines, Paje announced.

Paje said he will personally go to the United Nations to formally claim the country's entitlement and ownership of the "Benham rise."

The land, however is still submerged underwater.

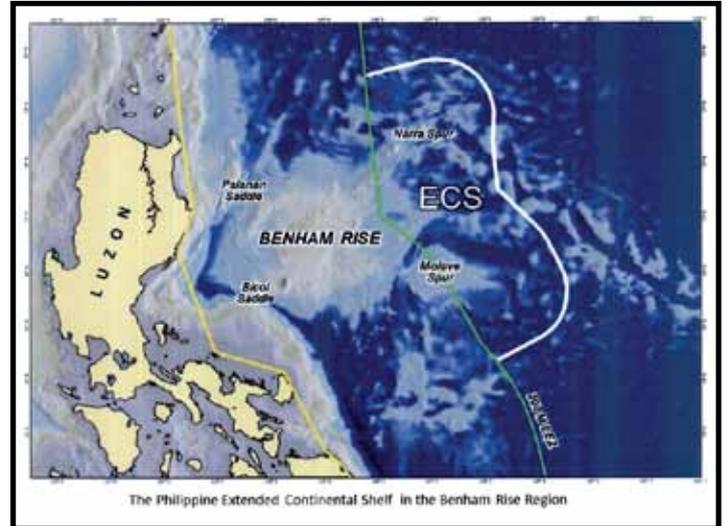
The shallowest portion of the Benham rise is 50 meters, which can potentially be subject of reclamation.-

RP claims bigger land

We may call "the Benham rise as our extended continental shelf," he noted.

There is land on the north side of the Philippines which is bigger than Luzon, Paje informed.

However, Paje ex-



plained that land underwater always rises above water over time.

Also, it is not impossible to reclaim the Benham rise.

The shallowest point of the Benham rise is 50 meters, Paje said.

In the Mall of Asia in Pasay City, 40 meters of land under water was reclaimed, he added.

It is good that the Philippines has earned the right to claim land below the sea, because this will be beneficial to future generations.

Nobody else is claiming the Benham rise, Paje said.

The United Nations will definitely recognize the Benham rise as territory belonging to the Philippines, he said.

The Philippines was able to prove owner-

ship after eight years of surveying the area, Paje added.

Paje announced he will go to the United Nations in April to formally receive the entitlement of the Benham rise.

New era: Waterworld

Why should the Philippines be interested in land located below the sea? The era of the "waterworld" --- once merely a fiction of movie-makers' imagination--- will come true sooner than what people think," he said.

By 2025, the Philippines will have a population of 200 million, Paje noted.

The Philippines will not have enough space for people to live in, Paje warned.

Only 15% of RP's land is livable

The only livable place



University of Makati EVP Edith Chan (seated center) shares a laugh with DENR Sec. Ramon Paje (extreme right) at a joke of Professor Nene Pimentel at the First Round Table Conference sponsored by the Center on January 31, 2012.

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Moro...

realistically address considerations of the politics of identity and the politics of distribution of power.

His thesis was backed up by Bilao, who complained that the root cause of the continuing struggle by the Moros in Mindanao is the failure of the government to ensure the development of their region so that poverty is eliminated. He said that the government can promise so many things but unless the pestering problem of poverty is addressed in a systematic and sustained manner, there will be no peace in Muslim Mindanao.

Family cohesion

In his talk, Bilao also said that he believed as a former rebel commander that the cohesion of the families of the Moro peoples must be promoted so that it would be easier for them pacify the hot-heads among the youth and direct them to more peaceful pursuits.

Addressing himself to the armed factions belonging to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) of which he was a former commander and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Bilao asserted that it was counterproductive for the two factions to be at odds with one another. There will be no peace if the armed elements in the ARMM are unable even to agree among themselves to seek peace with one voice and to define the manner of doing it.



Commissioner Mehol Sadain

Not all ducks

For his part, Mayor Omar Ali emphasized that it is time the government realized that while we are all citizens of the Republic "we are not all ducks, some are chicken." By that he meant that the solution to the violent problem in Muslim Mindanao must take into account the traditions and cultures of the Moro peoples which are different from the rest of the population.

He also said that one of the obstacles that lie on the way to peace in Muslim Mindanao is the fact that the Constitution is considered "sacred", as if it is untouchable so that there is much hesitation to amend it.

Amend Constitution

The former Marawi mayor further said that the Constitution may and should be amended sooner than later. Since the centuries-old conflict has taken away so many innocent lives and destroyed billions of pesos worth of properties, it is now time to introduce federalism in the country, Ali, said Federalism would lead to peace, prog-



ARMM DAR Sec. Farouk Pandi Bilao

ress and development in the region and benefit the entire country as well, he added.

"If there is no peace in Mindanao, he said, it may be traced to "lack of power" in the hands of the people and of those they elect to run the affairs of Muslim Mindanao, he added.

The Moro speakers and the audience who joined in the discussion were unanimous in denouncing the tendency of some people in the country to tag the violent struggle of the Moros in Mindanao as "a Moro problem." It is "not," they said, "a Moro problem. It is a national problem, a problem of all Filipinos."

Adopt federalism

Bilao and Omar Ali categorically suggested the adoption of the federal system as the single most feasible solution to "the centuries-old armed struggle by the Moro peoples against the highly centralized government based in Manila.

By adopting the federal system of government, the Moro leaders hoped that it would remedy the problem of lack



Mayor Omar "Solitario" Ali

"of self-determination" and "grant genuine autonomy" to the Muslim peoples that they had been demanding for so long.

They found the existing autonomy to be a superficial attempt by the central government in Manila to continue its imperial rule over the ARMM.

Among other things, the matter of covering land in Muslim Mindanao with Torrens Titles was also pointed out as a source of irritation among the Moro peoples especially as it relates to their so-called ancestral domains. They opined that their lands had been taken over by non-Muslims over the years through the Torrens system that was alien to their tradition and culture.

Fallacy of 'one size fits all'

Dr. Macapado Muslim, president of the Mindanao State University in Marawi City, who moderated the Forum said that the government approach that seems to say that "one size fits all" will not work. Respect for diversity, he said, is indispensable for the peace process to succeed.

Dr. Muslim also said that peace can hardly be attained in Mindanao because political power and financial resources are concentrated in Manila. There must, in effect, be decentralization of powers and resources to the regions as federal states so that the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, for instance, could function fully as an effective government of the peoples in the region.



Dr. Macapado Muslim



Dr. Ramon Clarete



Sec. Senen Bacani



Dr. Alex Brillantes

There is hope

However, he added "there is hope." And "we should build on what we have." He referred specifically to the ARMM structure and government which he described as "imperfect" but something that "we can refine."

In his remarks, Senen Bacani, a member of the government peace panel, said that President Benigno S. Aquino III is determined to offer a just solution to the festering violent struggle of the Moro peoples in Mindanao "within the framework of the Constitution."

During the open forum, former Undersecretary of the Department of Transportation and Communication, Gene Mamondiong, angrily declared that one of the most serious underlying manifestations of the socio-cultural divide that worsens the conflict in Mindanao is the fact that "you, Christians, do not consider us, Muslims, your brothers, and we reciprocate that hostile attitude."

Unless the Christian majority recognizes the Moro peoples of Mindanao as "brothers" and "vice versa", he said, the violent conflict will continue without let-up.

At that point, Mrs. Lourdes Pimentel suggested that at the close of the forum, all the participants Muslims and non-Muslims alike should hold hands and ask the Almighty to crown with success the peace negotiations between the Moro rebels and

the government.

In his remarks at the opening of the forum, Prof. Nene Pimentel underscored the importance of discussing the peace process by responsible Moro leaders. He added that the government and our people must not lose sight of "the historical basis" of the present violent struggle in Muslim Mindanao.

Centuries old conflict

Pimentel traced the violent struggle waged by the Moro peoples as having spanned almost six centuries starting from the time when Spain colonized the country in 1521 and which continued up to the turn of the 20th century when the Americans took over as our colonial masters in 1898.

The problem persisted, he said, for the entire duration of the American occupation up until July 4, 1946. And even after "we had regained our independence as a nation on that day, the violent struggle of the Moro peoples for self-determination did not cease," Pimentel opined.

Casualties innumerable

Pimentel said that recent estimates of the casualties of the MNLF-Government war for seven years (1969-1976) alone placed the body count at 120,000. The victims do not include those who perished in the conflict from the Spanish and American colonial eras and the billions of pesos worth of properties that were



Pastor King Flores leads prayer; holding the hand of Gene Mamondiong

destroyed.

Further, he said that it is imperative that all our people should help in the search for peace in the areas of Mindanao that are now riven by bloody conflict. The Forum, he emphasized, was a feeble effort to bring out the perspectives of the Moro peoples on why peace has eluded those parts of Mindanao despite the passage of centuries.

Pimentel ended his opening statement with an expression of bewilderment. "Why," he asked "should a religion of peace like Islam wage war on a religion of love like Christianity and vice versa?"

Poignant scene

The forum ended with a prayer for peace led by Pastor King Flores that featured a poignant scene of the Moro and Christian participants

holding hands and begging forgiveness for their personal and their ancestors' lapses in treating one another as brothers and sister and for the bloodshed that characterized the search for peace in Muslim Mindanao.

The Pimentel Center and the Mindanao State University have agreed to do a similar forum in Marawi City sometime in the second quarter of this year.

Transformational success

Over a hundred individuals that included officials of the ARMM, public administration graduate students from of the University of the Philippines, alumni of the East-West Center/University of Hawaii, political science students from the University of Makati and NGO representatives attended the forum. Unanimously, the participants hailed the forum as "a success" not only substantially because many vital and on-the-ground issues were raised (though not necessarily resolved) but also because symbolically it underscored the need for transformation among all the parties concerned - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - if peace is to prevail in Mindanao and the entire country as well.

[Compiled from reports by Dean Alex Brillantes, Ms. Paula Angela S. Bautista, and the staff of Paglaum]



East West Center Alumni with Prof. Nene Pimentel

RP...

in the Philippines is 15 percent of its total land mass. Paje disclosed the following figures: Of the 30 million hectares of land, 15 million is forest land which is inalienable.

That is around 53 percent that cannot be owned or alienated.

Half of the remaining land is agricultural which should be retained as such otherwise the country would lose one of its main food sources.

Remove the geo-hazard areas, the industrial areas, what will be left is only 15 percent for people to live in.

With an explosive population, there will be a scramble for land within which to live, Paje said.

The livable land is getting smaller while the population growth is exponential, he said.

But in the future, though, Paje believes technology will advance that will allow people to live anywhere, even underwater.

In fact, he said it is about to happen.

In the next five years the country will witness the first underwater hotel in Coron, Palawan, Paje announced.

Paje also noted that the Philippines is a signatory of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea.

The Philippine territory extends 200 miles to the right, left, north and south of the country.

Thus, the Philippines is 240 million hectares of water and 30 million hectares of land.

Paje described the Philippines as a country of water with a few lands above it.

National...

in decentralization led by the Philippine Councilors League of the Philippines (PCL) as well as the academe like the College of Governance and Public Policy of the University of Makati, the Pimentel Center for Local governance and the Pimentel Institute for Leadership and Governance.

The symposium aims to evaluate the progress of decentralization efforts in the country as envisioned by the constitution and laws passed by congress.

The specific objectives of the symposium are:

1. Assess the state of decentralization and devolution in the Philippines after 20 years;
2. Identify gains and advances, and challenges and concerns and issues in the implementation of decentralization;
3. Recommend areas of ac-

tion by responsible parties.

Decentralization is a major vision of the constitution through the granting of more powers to the local government units, specially in delivering services to the people.

The symposium will be joined by local and national officials, and the academic community.

Vice President Jejomar Binay, former mayor of Makati City will deliver the keynote address. Other speakers include, DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo, former mayor of City of Naga, Senator Ferdinand Marcos Jr., former governor of Ilocos Norte, Chairman of the Committee on Local Government, Senator Koko Pimentel, Chairman of the Committee on Electoral Reforms and Prof. Nene Pimentel, who was the principal author of the Local Government Code.



Symposium Planning Session. (From left, clockwise) Dr. Jaime Ocampo, Dean Ed Tapia, Liza Ting, Roy Carandang, Hugh Nguyen and Nene Pimentel.

CGPP-UMak and PCL-Legislative Academy Partnership on Educational Governance

By Dr. Jaime G. Ocampo

The University of Makati is the first educational institution that customized a degree program that is offered to the Legislative Academy of the Philippine Councilors League (PCL): Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science for Councilors and other officials who have not obtained a college degree.

The BA Political Science is a 6-22 months program with mostly seminar-type classes, unlike the regular college offering where students attend daily classes for 4 years to finish a college degree.

Previous college scholastic records and public service experiences based on a standardized formula may shorten the period to finish the college degree under this customized program.

At the graduate program level, a Masters in Development Management and Governance (MDMG), may be earned in a similar manner. The program is patterned after the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) masters degree program on Development Management and the University of the Philippines (UP) and University of Makati (UMak) graduate programs on Masters in Public Administration and Governance.

This customized Masters degree may be earned in one year, with a 3-day

monthly face to face seminar-type intervention.

University of Makati professors headed by Dean Ederson Tapia, Dr. Jaime G. Ocampo, Chair of MPA Graduate Program, Prof. Raymond John Rosuelo, Prof. Renato Tan, Prof. Andrew Lou Mungcal, Prof. Jay Angustia and Prof. Lucia dela Cruz are conducting the seminar-type classes in provinces where the bulk of the students resides. This is to economize resources on the part of the students and the staff of

the PCL.

The different cluster classes are located in the following areas:

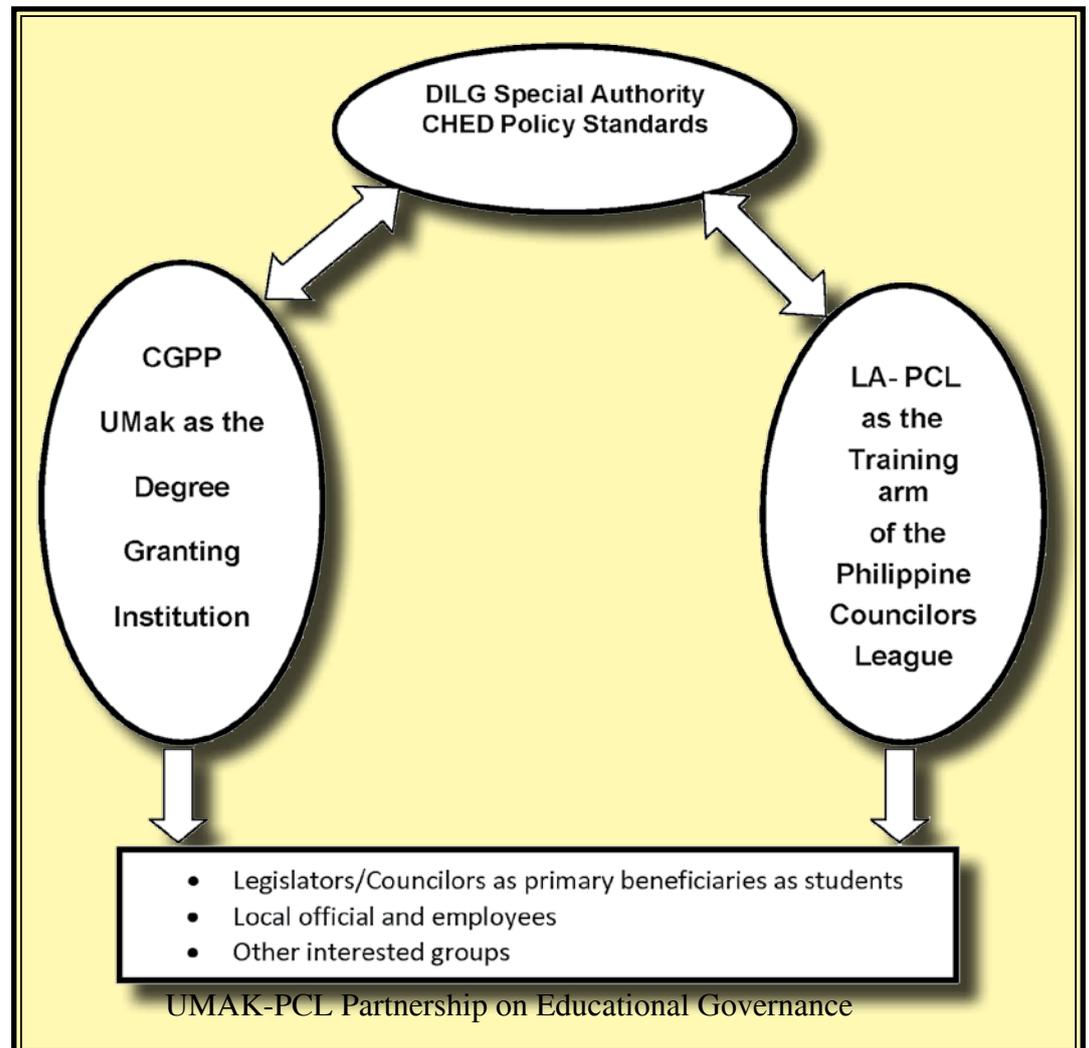
- UMak (NCR and Neighboring Provinces cluster)
- Davao Mindanao Cluster
- Gen Santos Mindanao Cluster
- Cebu Visayas Cluster
- Albay, Bicol Cluster
- Puerto Princessa, Palawan Cluster

This institutional arrangement is based on the

collaborative efforts of the different sectors, the University of Makati's College of Governance and Public Policy, Legislative Academy of the Philippine Councilor's League and the PCLG, with the support of the DILG and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

The CGPP-UMak is the degree - granting institution

The LA-PCL is the training arm of the Philippine Councilors League.



Word...

cerned have now terminated the long drawn preliminary investigations of those cases and have filed or have ordered the filing of the corresponding criminal proceedings with the courts.

Some examples follow:

1. The killing 15 years ago of naval Ensign Philip Pestano in 1995. The present Ombudsman recently reversed the dismissal of the case by the previous Ombudsman and ordered the filing of murder charges against several naval officers.

2. The bombing of fraternities and sororities cheering their barristers along Taft Avenue in Manila in September 2010. Raissa Laurel lost both legs in that incident and other innocent bystanders were also wounded in that incident.

The Department of Justice ordered the filing of criminal charges against the principal suspect in the last few days.

3. The dumping of 2010 election ma-

terials in the garbage site of Cagayan de Oro. The Commission on Elections ordered the filing of criminal charges against City Election Officer Gina Zayas-Sabio last month, after 21 months of preliminary investigation.

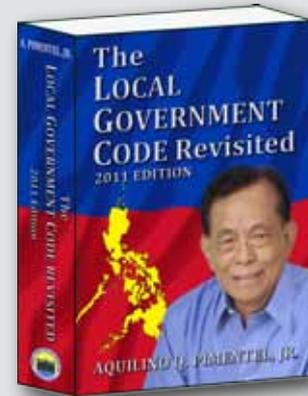
While these positive developments are welcome, a nagging question rises to the fore. Why does it take so long to get those cases to the courts?

There are many answers.

The basic concern, however, remains: Justice is certainly delayed. And the delay causes further injustice to the offended parties and destabilizes the law and order situation in the communities concerned.

For national transformation to become a reality, the country's justice system must also be reformed so that justice is delivered swiftly and fairly as demanded by the Constitution and existing legislation.

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