

MRT to run 24/7 next month



THE EDSA-bound Metro Rail Transit (MRT) will operate 24 hours, seven days a week starting June 1, newly-installed MRT general manager Reynaldo Berroya said last May 28.

Berroya said they are pursuing the move primarily to provide a cheap, safe and fast mode of transport specifically for call center employees who go to work at odd hours of the night.

Berroya said President Arroyo herself had ordered him to work for the round-the-clock operation of the MRT when she appointed him to his new post last week.

"We're now working on it. Right now, it is still in continuing evaluation. We have one week to implement it," Berroya said. "Actually, we see it to be physically possible. If it's financially viable, we're not sure."

Berroya said that they doubt if the ridership during the extended hours of 10pm to 5am, of the targeted call center employee segment could provide enough revenue to fund the added maintenance costs of running the rail line for 24 hours.

"We're not sure of the financial viability, of the ridership vis-a-vis cost of maintaining the trains during those hours. On top of that, there are safety considerations," Berroya said. ■

Pampanga Aetas get ancestral domain title

by DING CERVANTES
Inquirer.net

FLORIDABLANCA, Pampanga—President Arroyo went mountain-hopping here the other day to distribute to Aetas their first-ever "clean title" to 7,440 hectares of their ancestral land on the mountain ranges of Mt. Pinatubo.

The President visited Aeta settlements in Barangays Apalit, San Ramon, Palmayo and Nabuklod to hand out to the tribal folk the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).

This town is within Pampanga's second district, which covers Lubao where Mrs. Arroyo is a registered voter. Her visit here was her 14th in four months.

The President later met with Aeta leaders in Sitio Moncayao in Mabalacat town, near the Clark Freeport.

"It is the first clean title to be issued by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) covering ancestral lands," said NCIP-Central Luzon director

Salung Sunggod.

He said CADT No. R03-FLO-1206-057 came 12 years after the establishment of the NCIP, adding that it will benefit 1,423 Aetas in Pampanga.

"All encumbrances on the title have been eliminated and all other claims to the ancestral domain have been segregated and settled," he said.

Sunggod said the approved and declared net land area of 7,440.10 hectares covers the barangays of Mawakat and Nabuklod in Floridablanca, plus portions of San Marcelino town and Barangay Batiawan in Subic town, all in Zambales.

Aurea Miclat-Teves, executive director of the Project Development Institute (PDI), said that aside from the Aetas' oral tradition, "their actual labor on the land is the enduring proof of (their) claim over their ancestral domain."

"After acquiring their full rights to their land, the challenge fac-



An Aeta leader holds a copy of the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title covering 7,440 hectares handed out by President Arroyo in Floridablanca, Pampanga the other day.

Philstar Photo by Willy Perez

ing the Aetas now is to develop and fully utilize it," she said.

The PDI is a non-government organization that has been helping landless farmers and Aeta communities displaced by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991.

Teves said the Aetas "appreciate the conventional concept of legitimate ownership, which a land title represents. They believe that the most important function of land titles is in providing them security and protection." ■

Lim lets oil depot stay

by TINA SANTOS
Inquirer.net

MANILA Mayor Alfredo Lim last May 28 approved controversial Ordinance 7177, which would allow the Pandacan oil depot to continue operating in the city.

Lim claimed that it was one of the most difficult and painful decisions he has faced since he assumed office, considering the Supreme

Court ruling ordering with finality the depot's closing down.

He stressed his decision did not contradict the high tribunal's ruling.

Ordinance 7177 in effect amends Ordinance 8027 under which parts of Sta. Ana and Pandacan were reclassified from industrial to commercial zones, therefore banning the operations of the oil depot.

"In effect, the SC decision did not close an alternative remedy for the city. In fact, it even impliedly gave some specific remedies such as repealing or amending the ordinance," Lim explained. "Taking cue from the wordings of the SC, our Sanggunian passed Ordinance 7177."

"No matter how the public perceives my decision, I stand firmly by it. After all, the mark of a true leader is to make the right decision, however unpopular it may be," he added.

Lim made the announcement around noon before city hall employees and officials that include Vice Mayor Francisco "Isko" Moreno and majority councilors who were proponents of the measure.

Jubilant cheers erupted from supporters the oil depot as soon as Lim announced his decision.

They included residents who claimed that the facility has been beneficial to them, particularly in providing livelihood for their families.

Pressing reasons

Lim cited several "pressing reasons" that led him to approve Ordinance 7177.

He said he took into consideration the adverse effect to the city's economy and social programs if they would ask multinational companies to move out of the city.

"To forego this revenue would mean foregoing basic services that are badly needed," he said. "The city government uses their taxes in providing free education and health care benefits, among others, to residents."

"These are undisputed facts that we should consider and fear more as they are sure to happen than the uncertain fear of speculative terrorist attacks and environmental concerns," the mayor stressed.

Lim said that while special focus was being given on the so-called Big 3 oil players, there were actually a total of 145 huge industries operating in Pandacan and that vetoing Ordinance 7177 would displace at least 10,000 workers presently employed in these companies.

He also took note of pronouncements by the oil companies that once they were forced to relocate, the expenses to be entailed would compel them to raise the prices of their products.

Lim also said he considered the safety and security of the people in the area.

When sought for comment, Councilor Ma. Lourdes Isip-Garcia, an advocate of the depots' relocation, said they would question the validity of the ordinance before the Supreme Court. ■

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