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Nat'l ID to take off even without enabling law

The Duterte administration is planning to roll out this year the national identification system for Filipinos with or without an enabling law, an official said yesterday.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. doused fears that the national ID system would violate the people's right to privacy and

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that it might be used by the government as a tool for harassment against perceived enemies of the state.

The government has allotted P2 billion to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) to prepare for the rollout.

A national ID card will contain personal data such as biometrics, photo and fingerprints of the holder.

"We will push through with the implementation of the ID system. It has a funding of P2 billion this year. We expect the cost to run up to P20 billion in the next few years," Esperon said. "It serves as a birth certificate. Biometrics will be there,

face recognition and finger prints."

Esperon evaded questions when asked if the government would use the national ID system against terrorism and the local insurgency during the Weekly Kapihan sa Manila Bay hosted by STAR columnist and associate editor Marichu Villanueva yesterday.

"Let us look at the national ID as a necessary tool for knowing each citizen of the Philippines. It is an economic and social tool - not a security tool," Esperon said.

"The idea is to have an ID upon birth, to be changed when one reaches 18 years old," he added.

The PSA will be in charge of the national ID system along with the Department of Information and Communications Technology and National Economic and Development Authority.

The ID card is similar to that of India, which has a population of 1.3 billion.

"We will implement the program. Even without the law, we will go ahead with the necessary steps," Esperon said.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the national ID system was among the key issues discussed during the Cabinet meeting on Monday.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, chairman of the Senate subcommittee on the national ID system, has started conducting public hearings on the scheme, which aims to enhance the delivery of public services and expedite transactions in the private sector.

The Senate is eyeing to pass the national ID bill within the year.

The House of Representatives approved a similar version of the bill on third and final reading last year, requiring all Filipinos 18 years old and above, living here or abroad, to register personal data for their national IDs.

- Christina Mendez

* ID CARD SYSTEM

* RODRIGO, DUTERTE - ADMINISTRATION