Security for SONA in place; QC sets liquor ban, suspends classes

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SECURITY preparations for today's State of the Nation Address (SONA) are all in place, with the Quezon City local government suspending classes at all levels in public schools and implementing a liquor ban between 12:01 a.m. and 6 p.m. "to mitigate any public disturbance caused by intoxication."

Philippine National Police chief Gen. Nicolas Torre III on Sunday said the mobilization of 12,000 policemen to secure President Ferdinand Marcos' fourth SONA is not an overkill but a security preparation for any worst-case scenario.

"We always respect the opinion of other people. We are just making sure – we always hope for the best but we are prepared for the worst," he said.

PNP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Jean Fajardo said the police will be mobilized to secure the areas around and all the roads leading to and from the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City.

"More or less that would be the deployment unless of course we will deem it necessary to add the deployment of our personnel over the prevailing security situation," she said.

"There will also be skeletal deployment for anti- criminality efforts including police checkpoints," said Fajardo.

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte said some 2,300 personnel from the city's Law and Order Cluster and from other government agencies will likewise provide support and assistance.

"Our Law and Order Cluster is closely coordinating with the Philippine National Police to ensure the safety of our residents and visitors during this day," Belmonte said.

Fajardo on Saturday said permits were issued to militant group Bayan, which will hold a rally near St. Peter's Church on Commonwealth Avenue; Tindig Pilipinas, which requested space in White Plains; and a pro-administration group that was allowed to gather near the Sandiganbayan building, also on Commonwealth Avenue.

"We are coordinating with them to ensure they police their own ranks and avoid any unnecessary friction," Fajardo said.

She said the IBP Road would be offlimits to all rallies, regardless of affiliation as part of the agreed security plan.

The MMDA's Mobile Command Center, equipped with CCTV monitors, will be stationed at the Batasan- Commonwealth junction, while its Communications and Command Center in Pasig will monitor rallies.

The MMDA is sending a total of 1,329 personnel from various units to manage traffic, respond to emergencies, clear roads, and assist in crowd control.

Ambulances, tow trucks, fire trucks, mobile patrol units, motorcycle units, flood mitigation equipment, and other resources will also be deployed at designated routes and staging areas.

The agency will also implement a zipper lane or counterflow along Commonwealth Avenue to give way to vehicles of government officials and guests going to the Batasang Pambansa.

Motorists are advised to take alternate routes to avoid the anticipated heavy traffic along Commonwealth Avenue and IBP Road.