

NAMFREL NEWS



NAMFREL intensifies its involvement in BARMM in preparation for the 2025 BARMM Parliamentary Elections

NAMFREL held a series of consultations in the BARMM starting in January 2024. The consultations aimed to ensure the involvement and representation of diverse voices in electoral and governance matters and to encourage cooperation among various stakeholders to promote transparent democratic processes within BARMM. The consultations also helped the organization to grasp the distinct challenges, build context, and further understand the socio-political dynamics of the region.

The first consultation was held at Notre Dame University in Cotabato City on January 31, 2024, while a second consultation was held at L'Meridien Hotel in Zamboanga City on March 2, 2024. Both consultations were attended by stakeholders across various sectors from different provinces in BARMM. BTA Member MP Hon Adzfar H. Usman also participated in the consultation in Zamboanga City and shared insights from the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority. Both consultations have been useful platforms for the organization to interact with various stakeholders in the region and learn about their concerns.



The consultations were conducted in line with the PARTICIPATE BARMM Program, which aims to support the Bangsamoro region by providing assistance that will help strengthen democracy and achieve long-lasting peace in the region, well beyond the transition period. As one of the member organizations of the PARTICIPATE Consortium, NAMFREL hopes to promote and facilitate citizen participation in the 2025 BARMM parliamentary elections. The PARTICIPATE BARMM Program was officially launched in Cotabato City on January 30, 2024.

Even before the program launch, NAMFREL has been involved in different regional activities in BARMM. NAMFREL Chapters attended and participated in the series of consultations for the BTA Bill No. 267 or the "Parliamentary Districts Act of 2023" held by the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority in several provinces.

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On March 22, 2024, to firm up its commitment to contribute to the success of the ongoing political transition in the BARMM, NAMFREL together with the PARTICIPATE Consortium met with the Bangsamoro Information Office at the Ateneo School of Government Office in Quezon City. In the meeting, NAMFREL shared the key findings and points raised during the consultations, as well as its plans and proposed activities in the region.



NAMFREL helps shed light on the 2025 Automated Election System through a public discussion

On February 21, 2024, South Korean firm Miru Systems conducted an End-to-End Demonstration of the Automated Election System to be used for the 2025 polls. COMELEC and Miru then formally signed the contract for the lease of the Full Automation System with Transparency Audit/Count (FASTrAC) on March 11, 2024. In response, NAMFREL held a media briefing to relay to the media and the public its recommendations to improve the transparency, integrity, and credibility of the 2025 Elections.

In its recommendations, NAMFREL emphasizes the importance of the VVPAT or the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail as the secondary physical record of the vote.

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If used as an accountable form, the VVPAT will be an indispensable tool in the audit process of the election results. On February 21, 2024, COMELEC Chairman George Erwin Garcia said that COMELEC had adopted NAMFREL's previous recommendation to have a QR Code on the VVPAT. To be encoded into the QR Code is the link to the corresponding ballot stored in the ACM however, NAMFREL recommends encoding the human-readable portion of the VVPAT and the hash code into the QR Code. Additionally, NAMFREL recommends that election results and polling precinct data be encoded into the QR Codes on the printed election returns. These recommendations aim to enhance the transparency of the vote count and increase public confidence in the credibility of the election results. To learn more about NAMFREL's recommendations, watch the media briefing at: <https://fb.watch/rFHQRVv0Xw/> and at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBx5bEIOwQ&t=3s>



Artificial Intelligence has the potential to both empower and challenge democracy - NAMFREL Chairperson Lito Averia

NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia shared his knowledge of the current trends in AI at the Multiparty Dialogue on Navigating the Digital Landscape: Artificial Intelligence, Disinformation, and Misinformation in Philippine Elections. On March 25, 2024, he explained how emerging trends in the field of Artificial Intelligence can pose potential risks and challenges to democracy at the Shangri-La the Fort, BGC. Various election stakeholders were in attendance including representatives from political parties, youth groups, and civil society organizations.

He emphasized that artificial intelligence has the potential to both empower and challenge democracy in various ways. AI technologies can enhance democratic processes by improving governance, increasing civic engagement, and fostering transparency and accountability.

However, AI-driven threats like disinformation, surveillance, and manipulation can undermine democratic values and institutions. Deep fakes and AI-generated images can erode public trust in democratic institutions. Despite the threats, Artificial intelligence can also empower citizens to participate more actively in the democratic process by providing access to information, facilitating public deliberation, and enabling grassroots activism. Social media platforms and online forums powered by AI algorithms can amplify voices, mobilize communities, and facilitate dialogue between citizens and policymakers.

NAMFREL Volunteers start observing the voter registration process

NAMFREL Chapters have started to mobilize across the country to observe the conduct of voter registration for the 2025 National and Local Elections. Voter Registration for the 2025 National and Local Elections resumed on February 12, 2024, and will continue until September 30, 2024.

The Commission on Elections has expanded the Register Anywhere Project to the Register Anywhere Program for this voter registration. To improve the voter registration experience and to make the voter registration process more inclusive, participatory, and accessible, the Commission has set up more RAP Sites in different areas of the country. Qualified voters who are present in a given locality other than his or her residence city/municipality/district may proceed to designated RAP Sites and file their applications if he/she desires to be registered in the city/municipality/district of his/her permanent residence. This will also cover individuals who temporarily reside in areas outside the city/municipality/district of his/her permanent residence because of occupation, profession, employment in the private or public sector, and educational activities.

In line with NAMFREL's vision and mission of helping strengthen Philippine democracy by empowering citizens through voter education and providing reliable information, NAMFREL has started to release information materials about the voter registration process on different social media platforms. The public can also access information about the voter registration process through voteforum.org.ph, the organization's open election data website.

To see the information and education campaign materials, click <https://www.facebook.com/Namfrel>, <https://www.instagram.com/namfrelph/>, and <https://twitter.com/Namfrel>.

NAMFREL bids farewell to its Founding National Chairperson



The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) mourns the passing of its founding National Chairperson, Jose S. Concepcion, Jr.



Former NAMFREL National Chairpersons from the last 40 years at this afternoon's NAMFREL Light-A-Candle Ceremony in Heritage Memorial Park in Taguig in honor of NAMFREL Founding Chairperson Jose S. Concepcion, Jr. From left: current chair Mr. Lito Averia; Mr. Augusto Lagman; Mrs. Corazon de la Paz-Bernardo; Amb. Henrietta de Villa; Atty. Christian Monsod; and Amb. Jose Cuisia, Jr. Other NAMFREL National Chairpersons who have since passed on were former Senator Edgardo Angara, Mr. Edward Go, and Mr. David Balangue.



NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia presented a Certificate of Recognition for JoeCon to his widow and fellow NAMFREL pioneer Mrs. Maria Victoria Concepcion.

Mr. Concepcion, or JoeCon or JCJ to many of us, or simply Joe to his friends, inspired hundreds of thousands of ordinary Filipinos to take up the cause of free and fair elections and to volunteer to join NAMFREL, the first citizen-led national election monitoring organization in the world. Mr. Concepcion was a visionary leader who truly loved his country, and believed in the power of ordinary citizens to effect lasting change in their own communities. Mr. Concepcion's favorite quote was "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Filipinos heeded his call, and his legacy lives on in the hearts of every NAMFREL Bantay ng Bayan volunteer who strives to continue what he and his fellow NAMFREL pioneers started. It also lives on across the world in every citizen-led organization inspired by NAMFREL and its volunteers, especially during his leadership.



A NAMFREL Light-A-Candle Ceremony was held in honor of NAMFREL Founding National Chairperson Jose S. Concepcion, Jr., on March 9, 2024 at Heritage Memorial Park in Taguig City.



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