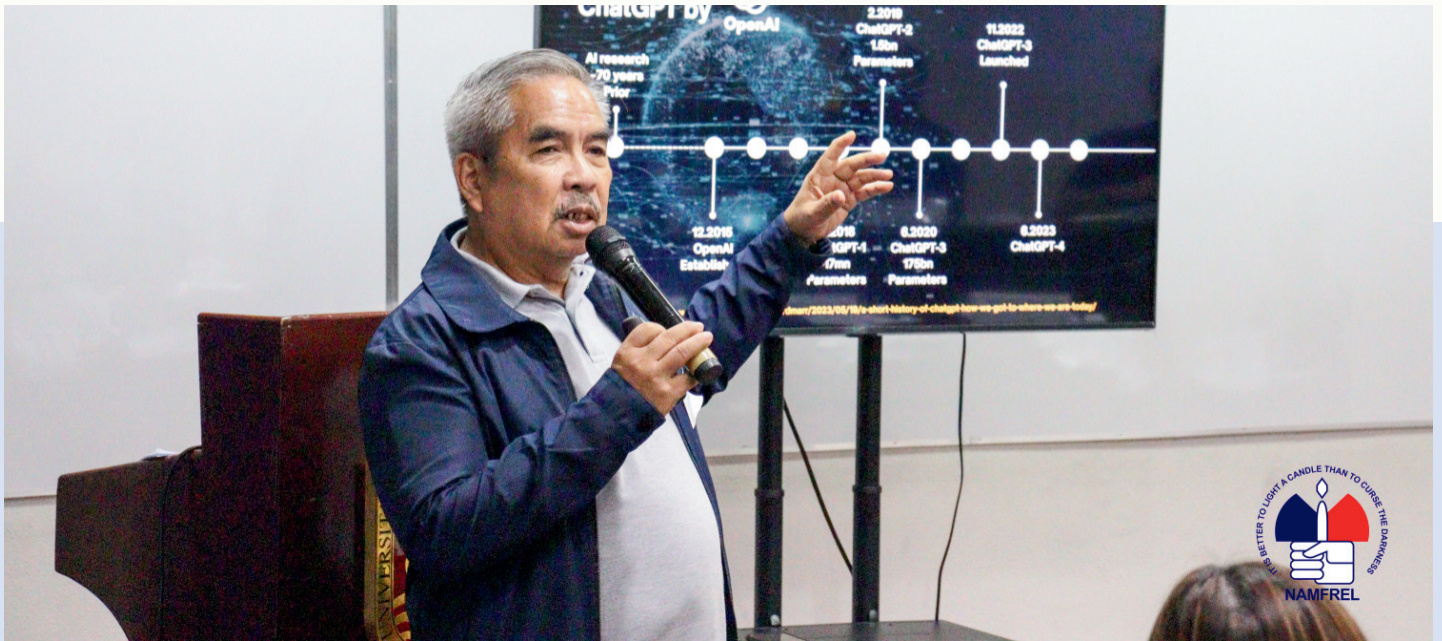


# NAMFREL NEWS



NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia explains the development of artificial intelligence

## NAMFREL spearheads call for the creation of an AI Code of Conduct for Philippine Elections

Given the increasing concerns about the possible use of generative artificial intelligence (generative AI) in the 2025 National and Local Elections, the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), in partnership with the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P), organized a roundtable discussion on the use of artificial intelligence for elections and election-related activities. The discussion took place at the UA&P on June 26, 2024, with the support of the Philippine Computer Emergency Response Team and the National Association of Data Protection Officers of the Philippines. The event aimed to bring together representatives from various sectors and gather their input on the use of artificial intelligence in elections and the creation of a Code of Conduct for election stakeholders.



In a media interview, NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia stated, "We are not pursuing active regulation but rather self-regulation by the stakeholders." According to Mr. Averia, the Code of Conduct should contain a set of ethical principles on the proper use of artificial intelligence for election stakeholders to follow. A code of conduct will allow election stakeholders to regulate and hold each other accountable on their use of artificial intelligence for the upcoming elections.

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The rise of artificial intelligence and generative AI, in particular, has raised both excitement and concerns around the globe. Generative AI can make the creative process easier for the individual, allowing them to transform their ideas into creative outputs quickly. On the other hand, generative AI can also be used to sow confusion and spread misinformation. This particular application of generative AI has found its place within elections where deepfake technology has gained notoriety with its ability to create realistic videos and audio.



The Philippines is no stranger to the spread of disinformation and fake news. The previous electoral cycles saw an abundance of fake news in social media spread by troll farms. With the introduction of artificial intelligence and generative AI, the Philippine electoral landscape will again undergo a massive transformation and what is an already volatile information environment could worsen. Deepfakes and AI-generated images can erode public trust and undermine democratic institutions. Presently, there is no local law that regulates the use of artificial intelligence. However, several bills and resolutions have been filed in Congress and the House of Representatives to push for the regulation of use and development of artificial intelligence.

NAMFREL hopes that this call for the creation of a code of conduct will compel the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), together with other concerned government agencies and election stakeholders, to craft a code of conduct that will guide election stakeholders in the proper use of artificial intelligence for election-related purposes. A position paper was written as an output of the discussion and sent to the COMELEC. You can read it here: <https://bit.ly/3Wr2wD1>.

## NAMFREL National Chairperson observes the manufacturing of ACMs at the Miru Systems Plant in South Korea



NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia (rightmost) together with representatives from the COMELEC, Miru Systems Co. Ltd., LENTE, PPCRV, and KBP

On April 19, 2024, NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia, together with representatives from the COMELEC and other election stakeholders, flew to South Korea to visit the office and plant of Miru Systems Co. Ltd. Miru Systems Co. Ltd. is an election technology provider based in South Korea that has previously provided election equipment to Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Congo. It was one of the companies that bid for a contract together with three local partners to supply automated counting machines, election management systems, consolidation and canvassing systems, and others for the Full Automation System with Transparency Audit/Count (FASTRAC) project for the 2025 National and Local Elections. On February 22, 2024, the COMELEC awarded the project to the joint venture of Miru Systems Co. Ltd., Integrated Computer Systems, St. Timothy Construction Corporation, and Centerpoint Solutions Technologies, Inc. (MIRU-ICS-STCC-CPSTI). Miru Systems was the lone bidder for the lease of the FASTRAC project worth PHP17.9 billion. On March 11, 2024, COMELEC and Miru Systems signed the contract for the FASTRAC project.

NAMFREL Chair Averia observed how the automated counting machines were being assembled, and scrutinized the different parts of the machines from the main CPU to the scanner controller shown by Miru representatives. He also tried out how the completed automated counting machine works and performed various tests on the unit. He observed that the visit to the plant effectively demonstrated transparency. Election stakeholders were provided with the opportunity to observe firsthand the assembly and operation of the new machines.



NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia with the new automated counting machine for the 2025 National, Local, and BARMM Parliamentary Elections

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Following the visit, NAMFREL submitted its observations and recommendations to the COMELEC to help ensure that the new election system will be as fair and transparent as possible. The COMELEC stated that the site visit to the office and plant facilities is an essential part of the implementation of the contract between COMELEC and the Miru Joint Venture for the FASTrAC Project. For the 2025 National, Local, and BARMM Elections, Miru Systems will provide 110,000 automated counting machines with 20,000 of the machines arriving in August as announced by COMELEC Chairman George Garcia.



## NAMFREL trains NCR youth on election monitoring

On June 14, 2024, NAMFREL conducted the Maging Bantay ng Bayan (MBnB) Youth Training on Election Observation in Mandaluyong City. The training was participated in by select youth participants from the National Capital Region, who were equipped with knowledge of electoral processes, international standards on election monitoring, and the importance of election observation in today's context. They were also trained on how to monitor the different stages of the electoral cycle.



NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia shares with the participants information about the different electoral exercises in the Philippines

Engaging young individuals in election observation not only promotes transparency and integrity in elections but also fosters a sense of civic duty and responsibility. NAMFREL believes that democracy thrives when people from all backgrounds get involved and take collective action. Young people, in particular, can offer fresh perspectives on issues and bring innovative ideas to the table. They possess untapped potential to drive social change. Involving young individuals fosters a sense of civic duty and responsibility. This early engagement helps them to become well-informed and active citizens as well as future leaders in their communities and the nation. It is precisely this potential that NAMFREL wishes to cultivate within the youth of our country. NAMFREL hopes this training will kick-start their involvement in ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections in the country.



A training participant from Pasig asks a question about election observation



NAMFREL NCR Convener and NAMFREL San Juan Chapter Chair George Escarraga explains the qualifications to be an election observer

## NAMFREL volunteers observe Las Piñas plebiscite

On June 29, 2024, the NAMFREL Las Piñas Chapter observed the conduct of the plebiscite aiming to ratify the delineation of 20 barangays in the city following City Ordinance No. 1941-23. Registered voters of the 20 barangays were asked if they were in favor of redrawing the boundaries of the barangays based on a survey approved in 2015 by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. NAMFREL volunteers observed the conduct of the plebiscite from the opening of the voting period up to the canvassing of votes. The city ordinance has been officially ratified and approved with 41,493 constituents voting "YES" in favor during the plebiscite.

## NAMFREL Secretary-General Eric Alvia highlights the importance of civic participation to the youth



NAMFREL Secretary-General Eric Alvia (front, right) together with the students of the Political Institutions and Dynamics class of UA&P

To further instill in the youth the importance of civic participation, NAMFREL Secretary-General Eric Jude Alvia shared the importance of civil society in democracy with the students of the Political Institutions and Dynamics class under Dr. Nicomedes Alviar on April 30, 2024, at the University of Asia and the Pacific in Pasig. He discussed the vital role of civic engagement and democratic and free elections in cultivating a healthier and more representative democracy in the Philippines.

## **NAMFREL Volunteers strengthen engagement with election stakeholders for the 2025 National, Local and BARMM Elections**

On June 3, 2024, NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia met and spoke with representatives from various regional political parties, members of parliament, and other stakeholders from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) at the Multiparty Democracy Summit - BARMM at the COMELEC Main Office in Intramuros, Manila. The summit was co-organized by the Commission on Elections and Participate PH.



NAMFREL National Chairperson Lito Averia together with the Participate PH Consortium, COMELEC, and representatives from the different political parties in BARMM at the Multiparty Democracy Summit - BARMM

## Dialogue for HOPE in Basilan



NAMFREL Basilan Chairperson Perre Ian Dela Cruz together with other participants at the CSO Dialogue for Hope at Tumaga, Zamboanga City

On June 14, 2024, NAMFREL Basilan Chairperson Perre Ian Dela Cruz served as a panelist at the CSO Dialogue for HOPE (Honest, Orderly, and Peaceful Election) for 2025 ZamPen and BaSuLTa at Tumaga, Zamboanga City. He provided his perspectives on the suggestions put forward by various civil society organizations, drawing from his extensive experience as a long-time election observer and advocate for peaceful elections in BARMM. NAMFREL remains dedicated to ensuring the participation and representation of diverse voices in electoral and governance issues within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.



## Complementary duties and responsibilities of election stakeholders

On May 15, 2024, NAMFREL Ilocos Norte took part in the reorganization and recruitment of NAMFREL, PPCRV, and I Vote Good volunteers under the Diocese of Laoag in Ilocos Norte. NAMFREL believes that various election stakeholders have complementary duties and responsibilities. Given the multifaceted nature of elections, monitoring electoral processes and ensuring the public receives correct electoral information may be too burdensome for a singular organization to bear. Collaboration among various election stakeholders would be crucial in promoting transparency in electoral processes and encouraging political participation among the citizenry. NAMFREL underscores the vital role of civil society organizations in ensuring the conduct of the 2025 National and Local Elections.

## Engaging with COMELEC in voter registration and ERB hearings



NAMFREL Maguindanao Chairperson Rodjipay Mangulamas and other volunteers observing the conduct of the satellite registration and Special Register Anywhere Program at Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao del Norte

NAMFREL is actively engaging with COMELEC as it prepares for the upcoming elections. NAMFREL Chapters are observing the voter registration process for the 2025 National and Local Elections. Specifically, NAMFREL Maguindanao monitored the satellite registration and Special Register Anywhere Program at Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao del Norte from April 15-16, 2024.



NAMFREL Camarines Norte observing the ERB Hearing at the COMELEC Office in Daet, Camarines Norte

Various NAMFREL Chapters in different provinces also observed and participated in the election registration board hearings for voter registration applications submitted from January to March 2024. These hearings are important for validating and approving voter registration applications for the 2025 National and Local Elections. Voter registration will be open until September 30, 2024.



NAMFREL Catanduanes observing the ERB Hearing at the COMELEC Office in Virac, Catanduanes



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