

NAMFREL NEWS



Participants of the 2nd Leg of the MBnB Training of Trainers Program with the NAMFREL HQ Team

NAMFREL launches the Maging Bantay ng Bayan Training Program for BARMM

On September 3, 2024, the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) launched the Maging Bantay ng Bayan (MBnB) Training Program for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Fifty (50) representatives from various civil society organizations gathered in Cotabato City for the first leg of the Training of Trainers on Election and Good Governance Monitoring component of the MBnB Training Program held from September 3 to 5, 2024. Participants included representatives from civil society organizations across the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Cotabato City, and the eight newly created municipalities. A second leg of the training was conducted in Zamboanga City from September 9 to 11, 2024 with participants from civil society organizations in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The three-day training covered topics such as the Bangsamoro Electoral Code, the BARMM Parliamentary Elections, election observation, and good governance monitoring.



The NAMFREL MBnB Training Series is a training platform developed by NAMFREL aimed at providing knowledge and skills to citizens on election and good governance monitoring. The phrase "Bantay ng Bayan" reflects NAMFREL's mission to engage citizens in safeguarding election integrity, protecting the votes of the people through election observation and electoral reforms, and empowering citizens to monitor, participate in, and promote good governance in their communities.

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The NAMFREL MBnB BARMM has been comprehensively redesigned to address BARMM-specific issues and tailored to be culturally and contextually appropriate for BARMM communities. This localized approach ensures that the training resonates deeply with participants, enhancing its impact. NAMFREL aims for the Training of Trainers model to enable participants to share the knowledge and skills gained with their communities, empowering trainers to replicate the program at the grassroots level and expand its reach and influence.



Participants of the 1st Leg of the MBnB Training of Trainers Program with the NAMFREL HQ Team

NAMFREL believes that BARMM's success depends on fostering an informed and engaged public alongside strong democratic institutions. Through its Maging Bantay ng Bayan BARMM program and other initiatives, NAMFREL hopes to contribute meaningfully to the region's progress.

NAMFREL pays courtesy call to Notre Dame University President



NAMFREL National Chairperson Mr. Lito Averia and Secretary-General Mr. Eric Jude Alvia together with the Notre Dame University President, Fr. Francis C. Zabala, OMI, DMin

On September 5, 2024, the NAMFREL HQ Team paid a courtesy call to the Notre Dame University President, Fr. Francis C. Zabala, OMI, DMin. The support of Notre Dame University throughout the years has been significant for NAMFREL's operations in Cotabato City. Fr. Zabala reaffirmed his commitment to NAMFREL's mission and expressed strong support for its newly launched Maging Bantay ng Bayan BARMM training program. He emphasized the importance of voter information and civic education programs in fostering an informed electorate in the region, especially with the upcoming BARMM Parliamentary Elections.

NAMFREL releases its Position Paper on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Elections and Election-Related Activities



On July 16, 2024, NAMFREL released its position paper on the use of Artificial Intelligence in elections. The organization recommended that the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) draft a Code of Conduct outlining principles for election stakeholders to follow. These principles were initially discussed during a roundtable discussion attended by election stakeholders, the media, and technology experts held on June 26, 2024, at the University of Asia and the Pacific.

On September 17, 2024, COMELEC released its guidelines under COMELEC Resolution No. 11064, establishing regulations for the use of social media, AI, and internet technology in the 2025 National, Local, and BARMM Parliamentary Elections. In this resolution, COMELEC specified the permissible use of AI for digital election campaigns. NAMFREL welcomed this approach by COMELEC, particularly the guidelines addressing misinformation, as essential steps to mitigate the spread of false information and ensure a fair electoral environment.

However, NAMFREL reiterates its stance that ethical principles should guide stakeholders in AI use in elections over punitive measures. NAMFREL advocates for the development of a Code of Conduct to encourage stakeholders to adopt self-regulation practices based on shared ethical standards.

Read NAMFREL's Position Paper here:
<https://bit.ly/3Wr2wD1>.

NAMFREL submits position papers on proposed legislation to the Senate and the House of Representatives

On August 27, 2024, NAMFREL submitted its official positions on several bills discussed during a public hearing of the House Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms. The hearing addressed topics such as alternative voting methods, the possibility of holding elections in malls, and additional measures to address nuisance candidates. On the same day, NAMFREL also provided its official stance on bills scheduled for review by the Senate Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation in a public hearing on August 28, 2024. This Senate hearing focused on proposed legislation to extend the terms of elective Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan officials.

NAMFREL voiced support for select electoral reforms in the proposed bills and offered further recommendations to enhance the proposals, aiming to better serve the voting public. NAMFREL believes that electoral reforms are essential to ensure that elections in the country remain free, fair, and transparent.

NAMFREL CDO-MisOr releases statement on premature campaigning ahead of the 2025 NLE



NAMFREL CDO-Misor Chapter on the Proliferation of Political Banners Ahead of Elections

As we approach the upcoming local and national elections, we have observed a noticeable increase in the number of banners, posters, tarpaulins, and even billboards featuring the faces of potential candidates. These displays, whether urging voters to register, sending greetings for fiestas, or wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, are clearly intended to elevate the visibility of these individuals in the public eye, particularly among the voters.

While some may see this as acceptable and part of a strategic approach—especially in an environment where candidates must utilize resources to gain favor and attention—it raises concerns about fairness in our election process. Unfortunately, the influence of money and powerful figures often skews the playing field, undermining the very essence of a fair and democratic election.

We at NAMFREL CDO-Misor Chapter call on all stakeholders in the upcoming elections to remain true to their purpose. Real change can only come if we are consistent in advocating for fairness, transparency, and integrity in our electoral process. Let us ensure that our decisions and actions serve the best interests of the community, especially here in Cagayan de Oro City.

We wish all aspiring candidates well in their journey, whether they have already decided to run or are still contemplating their decision. We also urge the public to stay vigilant and actively engage in shaping a better city, province, region, and country. The future of our society is in our hands—as responsible, informed, and engaged citizens.

On September 17, 2024, the NAMFREL CDO-MisOr Chapter raised concerns over the growing presence of political banners and other campaign materials in public spaces well before the election period. Although these materials may not strictly violate current election laws, the premature display of campaign posters risks undermining the fairness of the election process. NAMFREL, in full support of the CDO-MisOr Chapter's stance, calls on all election stakeholders to uphold principles of fairness and integrity to ensure an equitable campaign environment.

Read NAMFREL CDO-MisOr Chapter's statement in full here:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CeZSbswyT/>

NAMFREL continues to observe the preparations for the 2025 National, Local, and BARMM Parliamentary Elections

On June 13, 2024, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) issued Memorandum No. 240588, which included excerpts from the minutes of a COMELEC En Banc meeting held on June 7, 2024. During this meeting, the En Banc approved the continued accreditation of NAMFREL as a citizens' arm "in any and all elections, plebiscites, recalls, and referenda to be conducted by the Commission on Elections." With this accreditation, NAMFREL reinforced its commitment to ensuring that elections in the country are fair, free, and transparent by actively monitoring various electoral processes leading up to the 2025 National, Local, and BARMM Parliamentary Elections. NAMFREL has already begun preparations to participate in the local source code review.

NAMFREL observes the voter registration and ERB Hearings for the 2025 NLE



NAMFREL Volunteers observing the conduct of voter registration at the RAP Site in Double Dragon Plaza

NAMFREL Chapters closely monitored the voter registration process for the 2025 National and Local Elections up until it closed on September 30, 2024. Chapters from various provinces conducted observations not only at COMELEC offices but also at Register Anywhere Program (RAP) sites and other satellite registration locations, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of the registration process.

In addition, several NAMFREL Chapters across the country observed and actively participated in Election Registration Board (ERB) hearings for voter registration applications submitted between April to June 2024. These ERB hearings are crucial in validating the identity of voters and approving their applications for the 2025 National and Local Elections. NAMFREL's involvement aimed to support the integrity and accuracy of the voters list.

NAMFREL observes the Automated Counting Machine Simulation Time and Motion Study



NAMFREL National Chairperson Mr. Lito Averia together with the COMELEC Staff in charge of the activity

On August 3, 2024, NAMFREL, represented by the National Chairperson Mr. Lito Averia, observed the ACM Simulation Time and Motion Study conducted by the Commission on Elections at Manuel G. Araullo High School. 200 registered voters from 4 barangays (Barangay 660-A, Barangay 661, Barangay 663, and Barangay 664) were selected to participate in the activity.

There were 4 ACMs with different ballot configurations:

- For Barangay 660-A: 20 seconds to review the ballot on the screen
- For Barangay 661: 15 seconds to review the ballot on the screen
- For Barangay 663: No ballot review
- For Barangay 664: Unlimited time to review the ballot on screen

The ACM Simulation and Time and Motion Study results will be used to guide the COMELEC En Banc in drafting the General Instructions for the Electoral Boards and the procedures for voting for the 2025 National, Local, and BARRM Parliamentary Elections.



NAMFREL observes the partial delivery of the new Automated Counting Machines

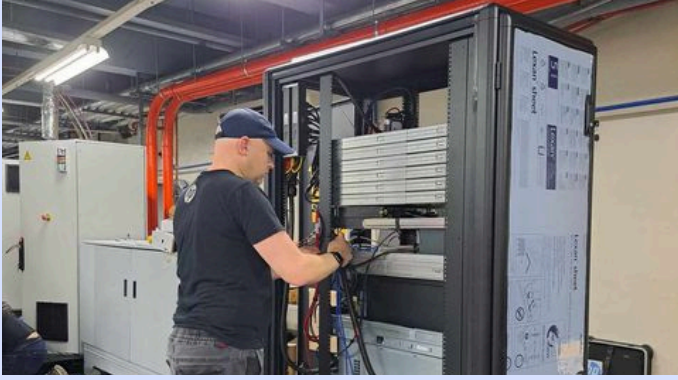


On August 31, 2024, NAMFREL, represented by Mr. Luis Jamili, observed the partial delivery of 8,640 Automated Counting Machines (ACMs) at the COMELEC Warehouse in Biñan, Laguna. In a later interview on September 13, COMELEC Chairman George Garcia said that the delivery of 110,000 automated counting machines for the 2025 National, Local, and BARRM Parliamentary Elections will be completed by November.

NAMFREL inspects the possible Data Centers for the 2025 NLE

On September 23, 2024, NAMFREL conducted a site inspection of one of the possible COMELEC Data Centers for the 2025 National and Local Elections. NAMFREL National Council Member Mr. Vic Gruet inspected and walked through the premises of PLDT Vitro Makati to see its viability as a data center. The data centers will house the servers COMELEC will use to store election data for the elections next year.

NAMFREL inspects the printing equipment for the 2025 NLE at the National Printing Office



On September 24, 2024, NAMFREL, represented by Mr. Mike Mundo, inspected the printing equipment to be used for the 2025 National and Local Elections at the National Printing Office. Two machines were delivered to the National Printing Office which will be used to print the ballots and other accountable forms for the 2025 National and Local Elections. In an earlier interview, COMELEC said they are targeting to start printing the official ballots by December 2024.

NAMFREL observes Caloocan Plebiscite



NAMFREL Volunteers on plebiscite day

On August 31, 2024, the NAMFREL Volunteers observed the conduct of a plebiscite in Brgy. Bagong Silang, Caloocan City – the country's most populous barangay. In this plebiscite, registered voters of Brgy. Bagong Silang decided if they agreed to divide the barangay into six (6) independent barangays pursuant to Republic Act No. 11993. NAMFREL Volunteers observed 10 voting centers on the plebiscite day, covering the opening process until the canvassing of results. 25,345 voters actually voted from a total number of 86,153 voters. 22,854 constituents voted in favor of the ratification to divide Barangay Bagong Silang into six (6) separate and independent barangays.



NAMFREL Volunteers monitored the situation in different voting centers on plebiscite day



A NAMFREL Volunteer assisting a voter on plebiscite day



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