

# THE DAILY TRIBUNE

## Smoothing of rough edges

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**A**noticeable shift from the commonplace foul-mouthed Rody to a more stately president was evident when he spoke before a pro-federalism group at the Palace.

For starters, Rody gave a more sympathetic view on drug dependents, saying that they should pay the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) a visit because he “cares for their lives.”

He said he was not into summary killings of drug suspects because he does not want to see Filipino blood spilled even in his war against drugs.

Earlier, however, he said that anybody who has tried narcotics is lost forever since the effect of drugs on the mind is permanent which seems to be a justification for extermination of drug dependents.

In the criminal case filed against him by self-styled Davao Death Squad (DDS)

member Edgar Matobato, Rody, a former prosecutor, said that he is not bothered by it but he “urged” Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales not to be selective and also investigate Sen. Leila de Lima, who has pending cases related to her alleged involvement in the drugs trade.

“You know, Matobato filed charges against me before the Ombudsman. Fine. Investigate me. If you think there’s something wrong then mete out the proper penalty. But, Ma’am (Morales), I’m hoping that you include everybody,” Rody said.

He then pointed out one the many inconsistencies in Matobato’s testimonies at the Senate inquiry on extrajudicial killings (EJKs), saying that his son, Davao City Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte, was even used by Matobato in peddling his lies.

“My son — the Vice Mayor (of Davao) — is really angry because the crazy man (Matobato) claims that he was my son’s bodyguard from kindergarten to high school at the Ateneo de Davao University. But he never graduated at the Ateneo. He finished school at the (Philippine Womens’ College),” he said. Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre earlier wondered why Morales is dragging her feet in filing charges against de Lima despite the cases filed and the testimonies in the hearings held on the drugs trade inside the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) and the Senate hearing on the killing of Albueria, Leyte, Mayor Rolando Espinosa Jr.

“After the congressional hearing, despite the many witnesses against (de Lima) including the two (National Bureau of Investigation) officers, to the Ombudsman, these are not sufficient (evidence),” Aguirre said.

“These are accusations although testimonial evidence only. But whether it is testimonial evidence, these are pieces of evidence against somebody for being charged with the violation of the Dangerous Drugs Act,” he said.

“I don’t know what’s wrong and why they’re ignoring it. Maybe, it is the Ombudsman herself who can explain her stand,” Aguirre added.

Thus, what is being noted now is that cases against officials identified with the previous administration are filed with the Department of Justice (DoJ) while charges against Rody and his men go straight to the Ombudsman.

Morales, nonetheless, also seems to have an improved view of Rody as she now subscribes to what his aides point out, which is that what Rody does is different from what he says.

When asked about Rody’s defense of Region 8 policemen led by Supt. Marvin Marcos implicated in the killing of Albueria Mayor Espinosa after de Lima said he could be impeached for it, Morales said that Duterte saying he will not let any of the policemen go to jail was “a mere statement.”

“That’s a mere statement. Whether it’s going to be carried out or not is a different story,” she said.

“According to Leila (de Lima), it’s a betrayal of public trust. We’re not bound by anyone’s opinion. We will have our own opinion,” Morales added.

“If they have a finding, good. File a case, but I will not allow the police to be left behind because they acted on my orders,” Rody said.

Of course, Rody, during his speech, can’t resist letting out some mischief in his struggle to be presidential.

He offered help for critics of his war on drugs to “adopt” drug addicts as a way to show their commitment to the demands to reform narcotics dependents.

Thus far nobody among the yellows has taken the offer.