

# HAWAII FILIPINO CHRONICLE

HAWAII'S #1 FILIPINO NEWSPAPER

◆ MARCH 26, 2011 ◆

## The Plight of Nurses in the Philippines

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## EDITORIAL

## Righting the Wrongs Suffered by Philippine RNs

**O**ne of the issues currently being tackled by the Philippines' House of Representatives is the long-standing plight of young Filipino registered nurses who are being forced to pay training fees to hospitals instead of being afforded proper stipends and allowances that are due professionals. This system is an upshot of the present state of the nursing profession in the country. Today, more than 200,000 nurses are competing to find jobs in a very tight industry and thus have become easy prey for abusive hospitals that take advantage of their desperation. To justify the system, hospitals have labelled these nurses as "nurse trainees" or "on-the-job trainees" who essentially pay for the services they render.

Because of the previous administration's policy to make nurses a primary labor export of the country, schools that churn out nurses like pancakes for the international market have greatly increased in number—from just 170 in year 2000 to almost 500 in 2011. In June 2001, only 4,430 nursing graduates took the Philippine Nursing Licensure Exam, a fraction compared to the 84,287 graduates who took the board exam in December 2010.

The Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) suspension of the opening of new nursing programs at all colleges and universities and its order to monitor and close down perennially low-performing schools could not have come sooner. CHED should have moved even earlier to cap the number of nursing schools according to the number of nurses that the Philippines' labor market can realistically absorb.

But as there's no point crying over spilled milk, what CHED should do next is to work closely with the Department of Labor and Employment to prevent the further proliferation of graduates in certain disciplines. Furthermore, these agencies should educate incoming college students to choose courses that will give them better chances of employment after they graduate. The idea is to encourage Filipino students to find work in the Philippines after graduation. While there is nothing wrong with wanting to learn and grow professionally by working abroad, the government should still enforce policies that will ensure the sustainability and advancement of the local job market, especially for those people who want to serve their country.

We hope CHED officials will remain true to their word and uphold the new policies and standards stated in their Memorandum Order No. 14 which seeks to reinvigorate nursing education in the Philippines. Requiring nursing schools to abide by stricter standards in terms of training and facilities is necessary to ensure that Filipino nursing students will become capable professionals in the future—professionals who can competently shoulder the health of a nation on the cusp of modernity.

Certainly, the way this issue is resolved will have a great bearing on the Filipino people's impression of President Benigno Aquino III and how serious his administration is regarding the social and political reforms he has espoused for the Philippines.

## Wanted: Champion to Tackle Oahu's Homeless Problem

**H**omelessness continues to be a hot button issue for both state and city officials. Just recently, the State moved some 75-100 homeless out of the Kakaako waterfront area, while City crews cleared similar encampments from Keanu Beach Park on the Waianae Coast.

These efforts are band-aid solutions at best. Without viable alternative housing solutions, the homeless will simply migrate to neighboring communities. In Kakaako, the homeless have already moved mauka of Ala Moana Boulevard and set up shop at nearby Mother Waldron Community Park.

In Downtown-Palama where homelessness is rampant, HPD quietly launched a partnership with Kooka Kalihii Valley (KKV) to address numerous complaints. Each week, social workers from the non-profit agency have reached out to the homeless camped in front

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

**W**e are now a few weeks removed from the devastating March 11th earthquake that rocked Japan and the ensuing radioactive contamination from a damaged nuclear power plant that alarmed the international community. Yet news and images of the Japanese people's suffering continue to weigh heavily on the minds of many Hawaii residents.

A number of local businesses and community groups have organized fundraisers for the victims. Filipinos have done their part, most notably the leaders of the Fil-Com Center, who sponsored a donation drive last March 19 in Waipahu. Not to be outdone, a group of caring students in Leeward Community College's Philippine Studies Program also organized their own fundraiser, which netted a little over \$3,000 (please see story on page 7). Filipinos are no strangers when it comes to natural disasters and have been known to quickly band together to help their own. It is heartwarming to know that we have mobilized just as quickly to help our suffering brothers and sisters in Japan.

This issue's cover story was written by our Philippine correspondent Gregory Bren Garcia, who enlightens readers on the plight facing nurses in the Philippines. Because nursing jobs are scarce there, many hospitals have taken advantage of these nurses' predicament by essentially forcing them to pay so-called "fees" which they pass off as "specialized training" instead of paying them accordingly. The nurses are caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place—they need experience in order to be considered for long-term employment at these hospitals, so they have little choice but to pay these fees. Fortunately, as our correspondent notes, the Philippine government is working to rectify this problem. We hope you will take time to read this very interesting story beginning on page 4.

Speaking of nurses, some 3,500 Filipino nurses have chosen to remain in the war-torn nation of Libya in North Africa, despite the dangers to their personal safety. These nurses' decision to continue tending to scores of injured Libyans in the nation's hospitals has earned the admiration of many in the Arab world. Read more about these heroic nurses and other OFWs on page 15.

We have other news, updates and regular columns in this issue that we hope you will enjoy reading. As always, it is our pleasure to continue providing our readers with the very latest news affecting Filipinos not just in Hawaii, but globally. Thank you once again for faithfully supporting the Hawaii Filipino Chronicle—the leading Filipino newspaper in the 50th State!

Until next time...*aloha and mahalo!*

*Chona A. Montesines-Sonido*

of the historic OR&L Building, offering assistance and alternate living arrangements. Student nurses from the University of Hawaii-Manoa have joined the efforts and provided basic medical assistance and referrals. Initially met with suspicion by the homeless, the persistent volunteers have earned their trust. A few have even taken up offers for housing assistance and began moving off the streets.

But to truly make a bigger dent in the homeless population, there has to be a strong, concerted, community-wide effort. What's really needed is a champion to lead the charge—someone like Marc Alexander, the state's homeless coordinator. Alexander has impressive credentials as the former Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Diocese in Honolulu, but does he have the leadership and charisma needed to bring the State, City and private sector together and move forward on a number of plausible solutions that have already been offered by the community and homeless advocates?

It's a tall order, but it can be done. Take for instance, fixed rail—an equally difficult subject for Oahu residents. As contentious as rail was and continues to be, it has moved forward, thanks in part to former mayor Mufi Hannemann whose leadership was instrumental in championing the project and shepherding it through its many twists and turns. In much the same way, strong leadership will be needed to tackle Oahu's homeless problem, particularly since there are no easy answers.

Will Alexander, the state's pointman on homelessness, be up to the challenge? We can only hope so.



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## OPINION

# Returned to Sender

COMMONSENSE By Marichu A. Villanueva

**W**hile we were waiting for the expected developing story early evening Monday on the impeachment vote in Congress against Ombudsman Mercedes Gutierrez, we were literally treated to an earthshaking breaking news. I was busy talking with our senior House reporter Jess Diaz when I was rudely interrupted by frantic questions by my officemates if we were having an earthquake. It was only then that I felt the ground under my feet was shaking us up and down. I could only think, My God, there was really an earthquake!

Later on we learned from official word from the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) that a magnitude 5.7 earthquake shook most parts in Southern Luzon around 6:37 p.m. Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum placed the epicenter at 12 kilometers northeast of Lubang island in Occidental Mindoro. The tremor was felt at Intensity 4 in Manila while it registered as Intensity 3 in Quezon City.

So this lesser degree of earthshaking perhaps was the reason why it was hardly noticed by those at the Batasan Pambansa, which is located in Quezon City, while Congress members were hotly debating at the floor the impeachment case against Gutierrez. Not even Jess who was at the other end of the line felt the tremor while we were busy discussing the possible headline on the impeachment vote at the House.

After putting down the telephone handset, my first instinct was to get as far away from the wall beside my desk. Call it paranoia but after that magnitude 9 earthquake in Japan, it is better to be aware of your surroundings for your own protection in case something like that happens while at work.

I am really concerned about the condemned building located very near us for fear it might collapse and hit us at The STAR editorial office in Port Area in Manila. This is the clear and present danger posed by the

government-owned 14-storey building adjacent to our office. It formerly housed the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) Region IV office but has been abandoned for a long time now. It is actually owned by the Philippine Ports Authority.

This building, with its countless cracked walls inside, is visibly in a state of disrepair as seen from the outside. Worse, we found out, the basement of the building is inundated apparently by the nearby Manila Bay seeping through the cracked floors. Since it is just across our office, we often see water being pumped out of the basement into the street sewer system.

And to think this condemned building is located just two blocks away from the head office of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) along Bonifacio Drive. The DPWH is supposed to be the government agency exercising oversight functions on the safety of public and private buildings all over the country.

Except for frayed nerves for almost everyone who felt Monday night's earthquake, there was no report of any major damage to properties or persons being hurt. It was not of any catastrophic magnitude but back to work for those of us still in the office.

Anyway, that earthquake incident did not also move a bit the very determined allies of President Benigno 'Noy' Aquino III to carry out the impeachment proceedings against the Ombudsman to be elevated to the Senate that very night.

As the Ombudsman appointee of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Gutierrez was naturally backed then by the administration in power. Thus, Gutierrez successfully nipped in the bud last year the first impeachment attempt against her from being elevated to the Senate. The impeachment move against Gutierrez was successfully blocked while it was at the level of the House justice committee during the 14th Congress.

With the change of administration last year, however,



All the senators, including Sen. Bongbong Marcos (left) and Sen. TG Guingona will act as judges in Ombudsman Gutierrez impeachment trial in the Senate.

Gutierrez became a fair game. No longer under any mantle of protection by the chief pork-barrel dispenser, the Ombudsman found herself getting impeached by the House under the control of Liberal Party-mates of President Aquino, now the ruling majority in the 15th Congress.

Not even the fact that Mrs. Arroyo is now a member of the House of Representatives from the second congressional district of Pampanga could stop the steam-rolling of the impeachment process against Gutierrez. The loyal allies of Mrs. Arroyo, backed by her two sons and brother-in-law who are all also incumbent House members, have been able to stall only for

awhile the impeach move against Gutierrez until Monday night's plenary voting. But their votes, which only reached 46, were too small to tilt the scale.

After eight hours of marathon sessions, the House voted overwhelmingly by 212 in favor of endorsing to the Senate the impeachment cases against Gutierrez. As Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. correctly pointed out, it was a vote of confidence on the leadership of President Aquino. But will that hold sway with the Senate?

Upon assuming office in June last year, President Aquino made no secret of his desire to ease out Gutierrez as Ombudsman. As far as he is concerned, the incumbent Ombudsman

would remain the gatekeeper for the Arroyos in protecting them from prosecution on graft and plunder cases filed before but never prospered.

Precisely, the same graft and plunder cases comprise the Six Articles of Impeachment against Gutierrez that were endorsed for Senate trial. These cases included the infamous fertilizer fund scam, the case of the so-called Euro-Generals, the Mega-Pacific deal, and the NBN-ZTE scandal, where no less than ex-President Arroyo and her husband, former First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo were directly implicated.

Curiously, these are the same cases in the past that were investigated by the Senate under the so-called "inquiries in aid of legislation." The voluminous files of these cases were turned over by the Senate to the Ombudsman for further investigation and prosecution.

For alleged lack of action and resolution of these cases by the Ombudsman that supposedly favored her former patrons, Gutierrez found herself the one in trouble now. These cases ironically go back again to the Senate as Articles of Impeachment against Gutierrez. They are now being returned to sender. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))



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# Volunteerism for a Fee: The Plight of Nurses in the Philippines

By Gregory Bren Garcia

**F**ranco, a registered nurse of four years, remembers how hard it was to reach his goal of becoming a nurse. He endured four years of challenging theoretical and hands-on education at a respected university and passed the tough Philippine Nursing Licensure Exam. But becoming a nurse in the Philippines is one thing; actually working as one is another.

"I took the board exam in December 2005 and got the results in February 2006. I passed the licensure exam but it was so difficult to look for a job afterwards," says Franco, who requested anonymity.

To jumpstart his career, Franco paid Php5000 (US\$1515) for a three month-long "basic skills training" at the Lung Center of the Philippines in 2006. After his stint at the center, he then paid around Php20,000 (US\$460) to obtain another working experience at the National Kidney Institute and an-

other Php5,000 to get into the Philippine Heart Center. He also applied at the Ospital ng Maynila but likewise had to pay a Php5,000 fee before he could start working. He had no choice but to pay such fees because he needed some sort of record or experience first if he were to be considered for long-term employment at another hospital.

In fairness to the hospitals mentioned, Franco says the training sessions helped him gain more practical knowledge. For instance, the National Kidney Institute's training included

instructions in dialysis procedures, while the Philippine Heart Center training included sessions in life support.

However, he believes that the practice of collecting fees from "volunteer" registered nurses is an abusive paradox wherein professionals are made to pay for the services they afford instead of being given stipends.

"We are registered nurses and already professionals. It isn't proper for hospitals to earn big amounts of money for the services we render. 'Unethical' and 'abusive' are words that properly describe the culture of volunteerism for a fee," he says.

## A Long Overdue Mess

Earlier this year, the Philippine House of Representatives began tackling the long-standing plight of Filipino nurses. Leaders of nursing associations, including the Nars ng Bayan, Ang Nars and the Philippine Nurses Association, called on the Congress to expedite the passage of legislation that would stop private and public hospitals from hiring "volunteer" nurses without affording them proper stipends or allowances.

The nurses



Philippine nurses work long shifts but unlike other professionals in the Philippines, many new nursing graduates receive no compensation. Instead, they are required by some hospitals to pay for services they render.

have the support of progressive party-list representatives, most importantly Reps. Emerenciana de Jesus and Luzviminda Ilagan of Gabriela. Other party-list leaders, namely Reps. Teodoro Casiño and Neri Colmenares of Bayan Muna, Rep. Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, Rep. Raymond Palatino of Kabataan and Rep. Antonio Tinio of ACT Teachers, have also expressed support for the nurses by authoring House Resolution 861, which they filed in cooperation with Reps. de Jesus and Ilagan.

In the resolution, they called on President Benigno Aquino III to immediately abrogate "the exploitative practice of collecting training fees from professional and registered nurses under various forms of 'volunteer training programs' by public and private hospitals pending investigation."

They point out that the system of paying fees has existed for a number of years and has grown extensively. Moreover, they say that today, nurses are being asked to pay between Php3,000 to Php8,000 (US\$69 to US\$184) by medical institutions for just three to five months' service as registered nurses performing regular duties.

In an exclusive interview with the Hawaii Filipino Chron-

icle, Dr. Teresita Barcelo, president of the Philippine Nurses Association, says that while the Philippine government has not blatantly encouraged the system, it has clearly allowed it to thrive.

"The government does not really encourage the practice of nursing volunteerism but they are allowing the hospitals to collect the fees," she says.

Barcelo adds that the situation is being worsened by the fact that many young nurses today are forced to accept the unfair terms because they are desperate to find work. Similarly, the authors of House Resolution 861 noted that "public and private hospital administrations have taken advantage of the misery and desperation of our nurses by augmenting their nursing staff without paying salaries and benefits or filling up regular positions in the hospital staffing structure."

Many young registered nurses are willing to move mountains just to get jobs in medical facilities because work experience is very important in applying for jobs abroad. Many Philippine hospitals provide "nurse volunteers" a certificate equivalent to a working experience, but such certification is not always useful because each

(continued on page 5)

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## COVER STORY

(from page 4 VOLUNTEERISM...)

country has its own professional standards.

During the congressional hearings, the nurses associations said that some hospitals even justified the fees paid by nurses by calling them "nurse trainees," or nurses undergoing on-the-job training (OJT). But paying fees for OJTs is an incongruity considering the fact that registered nurses are already skilled health care professionals who passed the Professional Regulatory Commission's (PRC) licensure exam. They simply have no need of further training if they are just being tasked to do regular hospital duties.

The hospital executives who early in the hearings were in high dudgeon, initially dared the nurses to name the hospitals involved; but they later said that they have been put in bad light and will therefore temporarily suspend all structured training given to nurses in hospitals, much to the chagrin of the nurses. According to Barcelo, the executives missed the point.

"We are not against training per se. Nurses need training when, for example, they want to go to specialization (e.g. critical care nursing, oncology nursing, etc.). But what the hospitals are doing are just taking in the nurses and orienting them to regular hospital work. They are not really training them, they're just exploiting them," Barcelo says.

### Too Many Nurses

Barcelo noted that there are now more than 200,000 unemployed and underemployed licensed nurses in the Philippines, making them easy prey to abusive hospitals. She said this mushrooming of registered nurses can be traced back to the rapid increase in the number of nursing schools in the Philippines during the last decade. Moreover, it also appears that the government's policy since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's term has been to support this trend as part of the efforts to make nurses as one of the country's top labor exports.

"It is an open secret. The government does not really openly admit that we are producing nurses for foreign consumption. However, a few years ago, when news came out that several million jobs for nurses were opening abroad, our policymakers thought that we could

take advantage of the situation. Obviously, many very entrepreneurial businessmen also jumped on the opportunity, because the number of nursing schools in the country skyrocketed from just 170 in 2000 to 491 in February 2011," Barcelo says.

Based on records released by the Board of Nursing (an agency within the PRC), the number of nursing graduates taking the Philippine Nursing Licensure Exam increased steadily over the last 10 years. Only 4,430 nursing graduates took the June 2001 board exam, while a staggering 84,287 graduates took the December 2010 exam (see table).

The representatives supporting the nurses also bemoaned the "continued drumbeating of government agencies regarding job opportunities for nurses abroad," which they say has encouraged many young Filipinos to aspire taking BS Nursing in college with the thought of seeking employment abroad instead of desiring to reinforce the much-needed human resources for the public health sector especially in the provinces.

During the congressional hearings, hospital executives claimed that the nursing field is not really as saturated as reports make it appear. In fact, according to them, some 20,000 nursing positions are still waiting to be filled up all around the country.

What isn't clear though is why, if such a demand really exists, Philippine public hospitals are still experiencing a dearth in nursing manpower. Barcelo says one needs only look at the low nurse-to-patient ratio at many public hospitals.

"In many Philippine public hospitals, the ratio of nurse-to-patient is 1-to-20. Some even go as high as 1-to-50. If the demand for nurses is increasing but they never get to work in hospitals, then something has to give," she says.

According to Barcelo, it is quite difficult to establish more precise figures, because hospitals, especially those that are privately run, are uncooperative when it comes to revealing private data such as nurse-to-patient ratio. But differences in per-hospital figures notwithstanding, one should note that the World Health Organization recommends an ideal nurse-to-patient ratio of 1-to-4.

PHILIPPINE NURSING LICENSURE EXAM	TOTAL NUMBER OF EXAMINEES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PASSERS	PASSING RATE
June 2001	4,430	2,405	54.29%
December 2001	3,851	2,025	52.58%
June 2002	4,931	2,292	46.48%
December 2002	4,522	1,936	42.81%
June 2003	7,992	4,217	52.77%
December 2003	7,632	3,311	43.38%
June 2004	13,225	7,371	55.74%
December 2004	12,100	5,210	43.06%
June 2005	26,000	2,843	49.40%
December 2005	24,287	13,108	53.97%
June 2006	42,006	17,821	42.42%
December 2006	40,147	9,712	49.10%
June 2007	64,909	31,275	48.18%
December 2007	67,728	28,924	42.71%
June 2008	64,459	27,765	43.07%
November 2008	88,649	39,455	44.51%
June 2009	77,901	32,617	41.87%
November 2009	94,462	37,527	39.73%
July 2010	91,008	37,679	41.40%
December 2010	84,287	29,711	35.25%

Is the quality of nursing education in the Philippines on the decline? The above numbers show that while the total number of nursing students taking the Nursing Licensure Exam have skyrocketed, the passing rate plummeted from 54 percent in 2001 to 35 percent in 2010.

### A Profession in Decline?

The subject of whether the nursing profession in the Philippines is really declining in quality has been discussed extensively ever since the paranoia over the June 2006 Philippine Nursing Licensure Exam controversy.

Ninety-two examinees, led by Rachele Efre from Saint Louis University in Baguio, alleged that answers to two sections of the exam were leaked to prominent review centers in Manila, which then distributed copies to its student clients. Suddenly, the prestige of a venerable profession became threatened by allegations of political skulduggery.

After subsequent investigations, two members of the Board of Nursing were dismissed for negligence. One of them claimed that she unintentionally left copies of the answers in a shop where she had the questionnaires photocopied.

As a result of the controversy, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered nursing graduates to retake the compromised parts of the examinations.

Trailing in the shadow of the 2006 licensure exam scandal is the growing public concern that the quality of nursing education in the country itself is deteriorating.

"I don't want to be the judge on whether the quality of the nursing education in the Philip-

ines is really declining or not, but one indicator may be the passing rate of nursing graduates taking the licensure exam," says Barcelo. "The passing rate for the December 2010 licensure exam was 35 percent—the lowest in recent years. In the past, more than 40 percent of the examinees usually pass."

Over the last 10 years, there has been a steady increase in the number of examinees who take and pass the licensure exam. However, one should look more closely at the passing rates. The highest passing rate—55.74 percent—was recorded in June

2004. Since then, a steady decline in the number of passers has been observed. The lowest passing rate, as Barcelo points out, was seen in December 2010, when only 35.25 percent passed the exams (see table).

### Stemming the Tide

It is argued that the decline in nursing licensure exam passing rates may have something to do with the increase in the number of shoddy nursing schools—possible "diploma mills" that are just out there for the money.

A real breakthrough in the

(continued on page 6)

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## COVER STORY (cont.)

(from page 5, VOLUNTEERISM...)

process of weeding out perennially failing nursing programs at state universities and colleges (SUCs), local colleges and universities (LUCs) and private higher education institutes (HEIs) came in 2009 when the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) adopted new policies and standards for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. These were promulgated via CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 14., Series of 2009.

In June 2010, CHED revealed that 253 nursing schools in the Philippines had board exam passing rates that fell short of the 2009 national passing average of 40.70 percent. Around 100 of these low-performing schools garnered very low passing rates of below 30 percent.

In an interview with the Philippine Daily Inquirer in June 2010, CHED Executive Director Julio Vitriolo said that these 100 nursing schools will be closed down by 2013 if their students' average licensure exam passing rates for the next three years remained below 30 percent, which is the minimum set by CMO 14.

"If their passing rate remains below 30 percent by 2013, then their nursing programs will be phased out," Vitriolo said.

In addition to getting rid of failing nursing programs in SUCs, LUCs, and HEIs, CMO

14 also now requires all schools to have their own base hospitals. In the past, many students underwent training at hospitals located a long way from their schools or homes. At present, schools applying for licenses to introduce a nursing program are required to have a Level IV Hospital (tertiary care, teaching, and training hospital) or even just a Level III Hospital (secondary care hospital) but with requisite conditions.

CMO 14 also requires nursing school hospitals to have a minimum capacity of 100 beds, with 60 percent of the total bed capacity dedicated to the Related Learning Experience (RLE) of students. In addition, the hospital should also be accessible and located within the region where the nursing school is situated. The last requirement is important to prevent students from incurring unnecessary expenses and travel risks.

In order to alleviate the oversupply of graduates in the nursing profession and to stop the "gradual decline in the performance of nursing education graduates," CHED also issued a moratorium on the opening of new nursing programs in all SUCs, LUCs, and HEIs for school year 2011-2012. The moratorium, which also suspended applications for new programs on business administration, teacher educa-

tion, hotel and restaurant management, and information technology, was published through CHED Memorandum Order No. 32., Series of 2010. It was issued on September 30, 2010.

"The moratorium, I believe, is a decisive action on the part of CHED to mitigate potential oversupply of graduates in certain disciplines, and in the process, to encourage incoming students to opt for courses that offer the best chances of employment after graduation," Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz said in a press release published in November in the Philippine Government's website, The Official Gazette.

Late in February this year, Sen. Edgardo Angara also suggested that new nurses can be channeled into rural health units. He filed Senate Bill 2629 which seeks to establish a Local Health Unit in each municipality and a Rural Health Unit in each town in the provinces to provide basic health services to remote places in the Philippines. The bill proposes that a five-member health

team man each health unit, including two nurses.

As of press time, hearings regarding the nursing volunteer issue are still ongoing in Congress. During an inquiry last March 9, 2011, the Congress Committee on Higher and Technical Education (CHTE) affirmed the need for the regulation of various fees required of nursing students and nurses by schools and hospitals nationwide.

Representatives of the Commission on Higher Education, who were also present during the hearing, proposed to come up with a set of guidelines for nursing fees which are expected to be subjected to a public hearing before June 2011.

As for Franco, he is happy to be working as a regular staff nurse for East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City. The hospital is one of the few in Metro Manila that does not charge fees from new nurses.

"I am glad to say that at my hospital, new nurses are never obliged to pay to render service.

The hospital even gives them free meals. Most of them really enjoy their stay here because they are given specialized training, for instance in trauma nursing. Others even get to extend their stay because the hospital ends up hiring them permanently," he says.

Franco feels fortunate to have been given the chance to work there because his experiences have allowed him to advance his career.

"I was first assigned in the operating room and specialized in surgical nursing. After two years, our posts were rotated and I was assigned in the Neurology Department where I cared for stroke patients. I'm thankful to be working here because I really learn a lot," he says.

Franco and his colleagues are among the lucky few, of course. For now, most nurses in the Philippines will just have to wait for things to get better. Their hopes are pinned on how the new administration and the Congress will address their troubles.

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

## BBB Offers Tips on Keeping Kids Safe Online

Knowing where your kids are can seem like a full-time job. Knowing where they are online, which websites they visit and with whom they talk to is even harder but no less important.

According to a study by the Nielsen Norman Group, kids as young as nine years old are just as capable, if not more so, than their parents at navigating the internet. Young children may be computer whizzes but aren't necessarily as smart as their parents when it comes to identi-

fying online threats, including predators and fraud.

Hawaii's BBB encourages parents to teach their kids and teens about unsafe online situations and recommends looking out for seven warning signs.

"The best way to keep your kids safe online is to keep the lines of communication open," says Bonnie Horibata, vice-president of Hawaii's BBB. "Talk to them about possible dangers and let them know that they can always come to you if they feel confused, threatened or bullied online."

Horibata says parents should encourage their children to talk with them should they find themselves in the following seven situations:

1. You visit a website that asks for personal information like your home address, first and last name, e-mail address, phone or Social Security number. Your kids may not realize that information such as their full name, address, phone number or even their e-mail address or Social Security Number can be very valuable to companies that want
2. A person you don't know sends you inappropriate pictures or inappropriate language or wants to actually meet. Talk to your kids about what would constitute as inappropriate photos and conversations online, as well as the immense dangers of meeting or talking to strangers.
3. You want to post a picture of yourself online. Posting pictures online can seem harmless but can often provide important clues to predators. Approve any photos before your kid posts them online until you feel they are old enough to make the right call.
4. You visit a website that asks for financial information like bank, credit or debit card numbers. Some websites may try to get at your wallet through your kids. Let your kids know that it is never acceptable to give out your bank, credit or debit card numbers to anyone.

(continued on page 7)

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## IMMIGRATION GUIDE



By Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tipon

# There They Go Again – Blaming God for Tsunami

Many people believe that an earthquake is an “act of God.” Last Sunday, we heard in church that earthquakes and tsunamis are “acts of God” and a sign that the end of the world is near. I left. “Brother, the service is not yet over,” a deacon admonished. For me it was. I have heard this before many times.

Why blame God for such disasters? Is God so cruel that He would visit his wrath on Thursday upon the Japanese many of whom were innocent children? If God wanted to strike at Japan, God is 70 years late. Why didn't He tsunami Japan on December 7, 1941?

An atheist blogger said that “a massive earthquake that kills thousands does not make me want to believe or worship this god. A god that would kill innocent people, including small children, is not a god that I

would want to look up to in any way. . . Why do so many people want to believe and worship a vengeful god? <http://www.opposingviews.com/i/horrible-japan-earthquake-not-an-act-of-god>.

## Act of God

The term “act of God” is legal jargon for “an event that directly and exclusively results from the occurrence of natural causes that could not have been prevented by the exercise of foresight or caution; an inevitable accident.” West's Encyclopedia of American Law, edition 2.

Parties to a contract with a legal obligation to do something try to avoid liability by blaming God for their nonperformance. For example, if a tsunami had struck Waikiki and I did not evacuate and my car was swept away, my car insurer would probably have sought to avoid liability on the ground that the loss

was caused by an “act of God” rather than by an accident. “Courts have recognized various events as acts of God—tornadoes, earthquakes, death, extraordinarily high tides, violent winds, and floods. Many insurance policies for property damage exclude from their protection damage caused by acts of God.” West's Encyclopedia of American Law, edition 2.

However, there are insurance policies that specifically cover so-called “acts of God”. Thus, we have flood insurance for our condo.

Suppose a tsunami had destroyed the Waikiki hotels, thereby preventing a newlywed couple from holding their reception, could they have held the hotel liable for damages? The hotel's likely defense: “act of God”.

## Suits versus God

God has been named defendant in a number of law suits. In

2008, a case was filed to prevent God from engaging in harmful activities. The court said that it would dismiss it because God could not be served with summons for lack of an address. The complainant countered: “Since God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit.”

(ATTY. TIPON has a Master of Laws degree from Yale Law School and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines. He practices in Hawaii, specializing in immigration law and criminal defense. Tel. (808) 225-2645. E-Mail: [filmanlov@yahoo.com](mailto:filmanlov@yahoo.com). Website: [www.ImmigrationServiceUSA.com](http://www.ImmigrationServiceUSA.com). He is from Laog City and Magsingal, Ilocos Sur. He is co-author of “Immigration Law Service, 1st ed.” an 8-volume practice guide for immigration officers and lawyers. Listen to the most funny, witty, and useful radio program in Hawaii on KNDI at 1270 AM dial every Tuesday at 7:30 a.m. and on KHBC at 1060 AM dial every Thursday at 8 p.m. This article is a general overview of the subject matter discussed and is not intended as legal advice. No warranty is made by the writer or publisher as to its completeness or correctness at the time of publication.)

Living in picturesque Waikiki Beach in Hawaii is wonderful until an earthquake strikes some distant land like Japan and Chile. Then the air becomes filled with the noise from sirens, radio broadcasts, and police loudspeakers warning of a tsunami and telling people to evacuate to higher ground. This has happened twice within the last two years. Dutifully we evacuated to our son's home in the hills of Makakilo. No tsunami. The tsunami forecasters are like the boy who cried wolf. The third time they cry tsunami, we won't evacuate. I have bought a *salva vida* and tied it to my bed.

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS



## LCC Students Raise Funds for Quake Victims

Students in the Philippine Studies Program at Leeward Community College quickly sprang and

responded to the tragedy in Japan by organizing a three-day relief drive on campus.

Dubbed JAPINO: Japan-

ese-Filipino Friendship Initiative (*In one with the Japan quake and tsunami victims*), the campaign was held March 14-16, 2011 and raised a total of \$3,185.65. All donations will be given to the American Red Cross.

“The relief drive was not only to raise funds for the earthquake and tsunami victims in Japan but to promote awareness of global events, as well as humanitarian consciousness and action among our students,” says Dr. Raymond Liongson, professor and coordinator of the program. “There was an educational value in this relief drive—our students realized that a pain to one is a pain to all.

“We are proud of what our

students have done and we thank everyone who supported their cause.”

During a short but solemn gathering held on the final day of the relief drive, Philippine Deputy Consul General Paul Cortes conveyed an optimistic message in a song entitled “*May bukas pa na naghinhintay . . . Sisikat din ang iyong araw*” (There is still tomorrow waiting

. . . Your sun will again rise).

During that gathering, a student shared a comment from a Japanese lady who dropped by the donation table and thanked the group for caring.

“She did not say thank you for your donations or thank you for collecting donations. She thanked the students and donors for caring.” the student says.

## Joseph M. Zobian, M.D.



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(from page 6, BBB...)

- You are being harassed or bullied through a social networking site, e-mails or instant messages. Online bullying isn't just a harmless prank and your kids need to know that it's important they tell you before it goes too far.
- You get a friend request on a social networking site from someone you don't

know. “Friending” someone online whom you don't know in real life is opening the door to hackers, predators and other possible threats.

- You want to sign up for a “free” service online or get “free” ringtones or daily jokes via text messages. “Free” rarely comes without a price and supposedly “free” services can result in

repeated charges to your credit card or phone bill.

Parents are encouraged to report websites that request personally identifiable information from children under age 13 at [www.CARU.org](http://www.CARU.org).

More information about kids' online safety is available at the Children's Advertising Review Unit Parent's Corner at <http://www.caru.org/program/parents-corner.aspx>.

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

## City Awards More Contracts for Fixed Rail

The City recently awarded two more major contracts for the Honolulu Rail Transit Project.

The first contract in the amount of \$574 million was awarded to Ansaldo Honolulu, a joint venture of Ansaldo STS and Ansaldo Breda, for the rail project's "core systems," which consists of the train vehicles and system control center. As the winning bidder for the \$574-million core systems contract, Ansaldo Honolulu will be responsible for manufacturing an initial order of 80 train cars, as well as providing power and communications. Ansaldo will also operate and maintain the rail system.

The second contract in the amount of \$372 million was awarded to Kiewit Infrastructure

West Co. Kiewit will design and construct the second phase of the rail elevated guideway along Kamehameha Highway from Pearl City to Aloha Stadium—a distance of 3.9 miles. Kiewit will be responsible for construction of the elevated guideway, installation of train tracks and restoration of the road surface along the route.

According to City officials, these latest contracts represent a net savings of \$165 million from current project estimates. Both were selected through the procurement process based on "best value," which is determined by evaluating all relevant criteria in addition to price. The core systems contract came in about 27 percent under the current project estimate, while the Kamehameha

Highway Guideway contract came in about 17 percent above the current project estimate.

"Not only are we creating much-needed jobs with these and other rail contracts, but we are also saving taxpayers' money by making the most of the competitive bids coming in for the project," says Mayor Peter Carlisle. "This process reinforces the City's commitment to ensure the rail project comes in on time and on budget."

To date, City officials say they have saved over \$300 million in construction costs on four construction contracts. Two earlier construction contracts include the contract to Kiewit for the first 6.5-mile phase of the rail project from East Kapolei to Pearl City and the contract for

the train maintenance and storage facility in Waipahu, which was awarded to the joint venture of Kiewit/Kobayashi.

"We are pleased that three of the four major contracts have resulted in a net savings of more than \$300 million. This contributes significantly to the confidence and stability of the financial plan," Mayor Carlisle says.

The City will award the design contract for the third section of the rail project from Aloha Stadium to Honolulu Airport later this year. The final two phases of the rail alignment from Honolulu Airport to Ala Moana Center will be built through a design-bid-build process. The train stations along the rail route will be designed and constructed

through separate future contracts.

The \$5.5 billion transit project is a 20-mile elevated rail system connecting East Kapolei with Ala Moana Center. It includes 21 stations in communities including Waipahu, Pearl City, Aiea, Kalihi, Chinatown, Downtown Honolulu and Kakaako. There will also be stations at activity centers such as UH-West Oahu, Leeward Community College, Pearl Highlands, Pearlridge, Aloha Stadium, Honolulu International Airport and Honolulu Community College.

Train service for the first leg of the transit route from East Kapolei to Aloha Stadium is scheduled to begin in 2015, with full service along the entire 20-mile route from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center expected in 2019.

## Hawaiian Air Shows Filipino Documentary on Flights to Manila

Since early January, Hawaiian Airlines has been airing a 90-minute long documentary film entitled "Mabuhay with Aloha, Celebrating Filipinos' 100 years in Hawaii" aboard its flights from

Honolulu to Manila.

The documentary explains the migration of Hawaii's early Filipinos, from the adventurers and stowaways who sailed across the Pacific to the first Filipino governor in the U.S.

Through more than 50 interviews and rare photographs, the documentary highlights the struggles of the *sakada*, the workers recruited to work in the cane fields, and their eventual successes as they made Hawaii home. It also takes viewers to places like Cebu and the Ilocos region where Filipino workers embarked for Hawaii.

Blaine Miyasato, Vice President of Hawaiian Air Lines, says the film provides passengers a richer understanding of the ties between Hawaii and the Philippines.

"We're happy to further our ties with the Hawaii Filipino

community and our passengers with this historical program," Miyasato says.

"Mabuhay with Aloha" was commissioned by the Hawaii Filipino Centennial Commission and has aired on public television and the Hawaii International Film Festival. It was produced by award-winning television personality Emma Tomimbang who was awarded the Philippine government's Pamana ng Pilipino Presidential Award for Outstanding Overseas Filipinos in 2006. Pepi Nieva, a Manila native who has been living and working in Hawaii, is the co-writer and associate producer of the program.

"I dedicated 'Mabuhay with Aloha' to the *sakada*, Hawaii's Filipino plantation

workers, one of whom was my father," says Tomimbang, who traces her roots to Siquijor Island in the Visayas. "It's wonderful that Hawaiian Air is giving more people the opportunity to learn about a very important part of our history, much of which has never been taught in schools."

Hawaiian Airlines flies between Manila and Honolulu four times a week and recently began offering connecting flights to Ilocos Norte via Cebu Pacific Air. The documentary will continue playing on flights from Honolulu to Manila through June 2011.

A special commemorative edition of "Mabuhay with Aloha" is available in a two-disc DVD package. Please call 947-6677 for further details.

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HONOLULU / Date: Friday, April 1, 2011

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## PHILIPPINE NEWS

## 'Merci Exit to Boost Fight vs Corruption'

by Delon Porcallo  
Thursday, March 24, 2011

**M**ANILA, Philippines - Impeaching Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez is the "strongest signal" the Aquino administration can send to the public to prove the seriousness of its fight against corruption.

"The impeachment of the Ombudsman is the strongest signal we can send to you right now that we are trying to put in place the kind of level playing field for your businesses to survive and prosper in the long term," President Aquino told businessmen attending the Philippine Economic Briefing in Cagayan de Oro City yesterday.

He said removing Gutierrez is one way of restoring the people's faith in government and of attracting investments.

"This is why we called for the impeachment of the Ombudsman. We cannot have deals such as ZTE, MegaPacific, or NAI-A-3 hold back the country any longer. As the Senate prepares to try the Ombudsman, I urge you to support this and other efforts to fight corruption," he said.

"We are working to eliminate corruption in our institutions. I know that corruption can seem easy over the short term - bribe the right people and you can get the deal. But look what happens to those who do this. Sooner or later, the anomalies are discovered," he said.

"There is public outrage, and the deals are undone. In the end, the money invested, and the bribes spent on the project, are wasted. What a waste of private capital and taxpayers money," the President pointed out.

"Adding insult to injury is that those who were caught are not prosecuted or are allowed to plea bargain instead of being tried," Aquino said, apparently referring to former military comptroller Carlos Garcia who was able to strike a plea bargain deal with the Ombudsman's prosecutors.

"We are trying to create an environment where this does not happen, where no one questions the legitimacy of such deals, and where nothing needs to be undone later on. And part of creating such an environment is

putting in place the right people who will prosecute those who do such things," he added.

"Together, we can eliminate the dark elements that hinder us from the true and lasting change that we have long hoped for. Together, we can end the systematized corruption that has prevented our country from fulfilling its vast potential," he said.

"I may be President but I am also a citizen of this republic. As a citizen of this republic, I am really not happy with the performance of the Ombudsman and her people," he told Palace reporters in chance interview.

**No pork dangled**

Malacañang also denied that it had dangled P20 million in additional pork barrel funds to lawmakers to buy their votes for Gutierrez's impeachment.

"You should have greater faith in the ability of many of our legislators to transcend their narrow, parochial interest and aspire for the greater good," presidential spokesman Edwin Lacerda stated in a text message in response to the allegation.

"Well, these kinds of things normally defy the bounds of logic. *Alam naman po natín iyung budgetary constraints ng pamahalaan.* Again, *hindi po natín alam kung saan nanggaling ito but kung sino po man iyung nagtatabi nuon* (We know the budgetary constraints of the government. Again, we don't know where all these came from but whoever made the allegation) obviously did not do the math," deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte said for her part.

She also rebuffed Gutierrez's claim that "dark politics" was at play when House members voted overwhelmingly to impeach her.

"If you say dark, it presupposes that something was done covertly. But I think everybody can attest to the proceedings in the House, the hearings were televised publicly. I don't know the frame of mind of the Ombudsman when she made such claim," Valte said.

She also said it was understandable for Gutierrez to hold a press conference to air her side following her impeachment.

"I think that is to be expected of someone who is being accused of something - to come

out to the public and say I didn't do this and that," she said.

"But again, at the end of the day, what matters would be the trial at the Senate," she said.

**Hand-carried**

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives formally indicted Gutierrez before the Senate acting as an impeachment court yesterday by impeaching the articles of impeachment against her.

Iloilo Rep. Niel Tupas Jr., justice committee chairman, and his senior vice chairman, Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas of Ilocos Norte, hand-carried to the impeachment court House Resolution 105, which contains six articles of impeachment or charges against Gutierrez.

Tupas chaired the 11-man prosecution panel in the impeachment trial.

"We'll start with the strongest article which is the fertilizer fund scam and we will end with another strongest article, which is the low conviction record, which includes the plea bargaining agreement entered between the Ombudsman and General Garcia," Tupas said.

Also with Tupas and Fariñas were Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III, former Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros Baraquel, Akbayan Rep. Arlene Bag-ao, Bayan secretary-general Renato Reyes, Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares, and Oriental Mindoro Rep. Reynaldo Umali.

"We don't have to convict the accused on all six charges. If we can convict her on at least one charge, that is already enough to oust her," Fariñas said.

According to the committee, the six charges amount to "betrayal of public trust," one of several grounds for removing impeachable officers.

Broadly, the articles of impeachment accuse Gutierrez of inaction on the P728-million fertilizer scam in 2004, the case of a "Euro general," the P1-billion Mega Pacific deal, the botched \$329-million national broadband network (NBN) contract the Arroyo administration had awarded to Chinese firm ZTE Corp., the death of Navy Ensign Philip Pestaño, and her low conviction record.

The first article states that the Ombudsman failed to

promptly act on the recommendations of the Senate and the Commission on Audit to file the appropriate charges against then Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, his undersecretary Jocelyn "Jojoc" Bolante, and other agriculture officials and politicians involved in the fertilizer scam.

It accuses the respondent of having "inexcusably failed" to file such charges "for more than five years."

During the justice committee hearings on the complaints against Gutierrez, former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, a complainant in the fertilizer scam cases, said the Ombudsman "has mastered the difficult art of doing nothing."

He said Gutierrez has not required Lorenzo, Bolante and others implicated in the scam to submit their counter-affidavits since he filed his complaint more than six years ago.

The second article of impeachment cites the case of "Euro general" Eliseo de la Paz, who had admitted in a Senate hearing to bringing more than \$10,000 out of the country without a proper declaration with Customs and in violation of currency regulations.

It states that despite the lapse of more than two years from time De la Paz made the admission and the submission by the Philippine National Police of its report charging the officer with violating the law, Gutierrez failed to file the appropriate

charges against him.

On the P1-billion contract the Commission on Elections had awarded to Mega Pacific, the impeachment resolution calls attention to the Jan. 13, 2004 decision of the Supreme Court that "Comelec and its officials concerned must bear full responsibility for the failed bidding and award, and held accountable for the electoral mess."

It says Gutierrez "has absolved from any criminal liability the Comelec officials and private individuals involved in the Mega Pacific deal" despite the decision of the Supreme Court.

The fourth impeachment article accuses the Ombudsman of "wrongfully" excluding then President Arroyo and her husband "from criminal prosecution stemming from the scandalous NBN-ZTE broadband contract" notwithstanding the evidence presented to her office. It notes that Gutierrez is a former classmate of Mrs. Arroyo's husband.

In the Pestaño case, the House has charged the respondent with "wrongfully absolving the Philippine Navy officers and personnel implicated in the death of Navy Ensign Philip Andrew Pestaño, notwithstanding the findings and recommendations of the Senate committees on justice and human rights, and on national defense and security, and the United Nations Human Rights Committee."

The last article of impeachment cites the "low conviction record" of Gutierrez. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

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**PHILIPPINE NEWS**



"Radiation scare" results in massive evacuation in Tokyo, Japan

**1,000 Japanese Nationals  
 Arriving Daily at NAIA**

by Rudy Santos  
 Monday, March 21, 2011

**M**ANILA, Philippines - Over a thousand Japanese nationals have been coming to the country every day through the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) terminals in various flights from Japan.

The increase in arrivals came after the powerful earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan last March 11 and after it raised its radioactivity alert to level 5 at its nuclear plant in Fukushima which has been badly damaged due to the disaster.

Immigration Airport Operations Division (AOD) chief Ynn Pelia said they have noticed that the arrivals of Japanese increased after the incident, as compared to the number of arrivals in previous months.

Medical doctors at the NAIA said they don't have the necessary instrument or machine that can detect at the point of entry incoming passengers affected by nuclear radiation.

Human quarantine doctor Vicenta Vasquez said, "The only thing we can do at the moment is to refer them to the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) or the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI) which have the facility."

Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) assistant general manager Antonio Bautista, meantime, said the DOST has its own monitoring system and as far as their observation is concerned, there is no risk of the Philippines being affected by the radioactive plume. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

**Japan Donates Lying-in  
 Facilities in Sorsogon**

by Jun Pasaylo  
 Tuesday, March 22, 2011

**M**ANILA, Philippines - The Japanese government continues to pour humanitarian assistance to some of the poorest communities in the Philippines.

Japanese Ambassador Makoto Katsuma turned over a P3.7 million project for the municipality of Bulan in Sorsogon province today for the construction of a lying-in health facility.

The project was funded through Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP).

The grant came after the municipal government requested assistance from the Embassy of Japan for the construction of a lying-in center in Barangay Zone 2 and the renovation of the existing health station in Barangay Otavi.

The project is expected to improve the maternal and child health care situation in the area, as the Japanese government will also install necessary equipment in the facilities.

The municipal government has difficulty in delivering adequate social service to its growing population. In particular, quality health service is not available in many parts of the town. Many pregnant women in the area cannot seek proper diagnosis and tend to choose home-based delivery that has potential threat to their health.

Japan, as the top donor of the official development assistance for the Philippines, launched GGP here in 1989 for the purpose of reducing poverty and helping various communities.

As of March 2011, more or less 442 grassroots projects funded by GGP have been implemented by NGOs, local government units and other non-profit organizations.

The total grant for these projects amounts to US\$19,929,409. Japan believed that the undertakings will not only strengthen friendship between the peoples of Japan and the Philippines, but also contribute to fostering a strategic partnership between the two countries. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

PHILIPPINE NEWS

# Thomas Opens AFP-US Fusion Cell

by Roel Pareño  
Tuesday, March 22, 2011

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines – A more coordinated intelligence planning is expected between the Philippine and US military forces in “breaking the end of violence” as US Ambassador Harry Thomas formally opened the joint fusion cell inside the military camp here yesterday.

Thomas, in his address during the inauguration, said the facility will bring together the intelligence leaders and personnel of both military forces in making and creating instant security in southern Philippines.

Thomas, who was assisted by Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief Lt.

Gen. Raymundo Ferrer, said aside from the sharing of information, the center will develop understanding of the concerns of the local populace.

The fusion cell was established in the compound of the military intelligence group inside the Westmincom.

“We hope we will continue to find many ways to work with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine government to help the people here reject violence,” Thomas said.

The US military, through its Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P), has maintained its presence in



Amb. Harry Thomas, Jr.

southern Philippines almost a decade now working to assist in intelligence and training local Filipino forces.

“The goal is to reduce violence, bring peace and security to southern Philippines,” Thomas said. Thomas dismissed perception that the establishment of the fusion cell is a sign of a longer stay of the American forces in the country.

He said the presence of the US Military in this region is at the request of the AFP and the Philippine government and maintained it to be on a temporary basis. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

# 'Phi to Have Full Access to Potable Water by 2013'

by Delon Porcalla  
Wednesday, March 23, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - Interior Secretary Jesse Robredo yesterday assured the public that by 2013, the whole country will have access to potable water.

During the celebration of World Water Day at the Asia Music Hall of SM Mall of Asia, Robredo said 238 towns with less than 50 percent water service coverage will be covered by the water project.

He said 100 municipalities will be provided potable water every year.

At present, only 80 percent of the country has access to safe drinking water.

Robredo also encouraged local government units to in-

vest in water supply systems.

President Aquino, who was the keynote speaker at the event, said the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is also developing an adjusted tariff setting methodology for small water service providers.

He said “we have inched closer” to fulfilling the Millennium Development Goal of addressing water supply shortfall.

“We look forward to a future where every Filipino’s necessity – not only water, but healthcare, education, jobs and livelihood opportunities – is provided for,” Aquino said. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

# Arum: Pacman Ready vs Mosley

by Olmin Leyba  
Tuesday, March 22, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - Top Rank boss Bob Arum is so pleased with how Manny Pacquiao looks and moves in training camp that a good six weeks before fight night, he already declared the Filipino icon ready to mix it up with Shane Mosley.

“He looks terrific. He looks very, very good,” said Arum, who flew in to Baguio to check on the high-altitude training of the pound-for-pound superstar under Freddie Roach at the Cooyans Hotel’s Shape Up Gym.

“This is so early, and look how great he is. He can fight next week, probably,” exclaimed the 79-year-old promoter.

The fighting congressman from Sarangani is set to defend his World Boxing Organization welterweight title against Mosley on May 7 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Arum said he’s quite impressed with how the 32-year-old Pacquiao, a feared southpaw with tremendous KO



Top Rank’s top honcho Bob Arum and P4P king Cong. Manny Pacquiao

power, is fast developing a new weapon – his right hand.

“I like the way he’s been using that right hand, because I really believe that the right hand is gonna tell the story of the fight,” said Arum.

“Everybody knows that the left hand is his power hand, so Mosley’s gonna be looking for that left hand. But I think he’s using his right hand tremendously and that’s gonna be his big weapon,” he added.

Arum arrived in the Philippines early Monday accompanied by step daughter Denia Duboef, and two of Pacquiao’s sparmates, Shawn Porter and

David Rodela.

From Manila, they were flown to the City of Pines on board the private plane of former Ilocos Sur Gov. Chavit Singson, just in time for the public workout of Pacquiao yesterday.

Arum said Pacquiao’s Baguio training camp, now on its second week, is running smoothly, unlike the previous build-up for the Antonio Margarito fight in which the Pacman looked sluggish.

“He’s just incredible. He’s really looking very, very good,” said Arum, leaving for the US on Wednesday night

with no concern whatsoever on the way Pacquiao gears himself up for the showdown with Mosley.

Meanwhile, Shawn Porter and David Rodela, Pacquiao’s sparmates, arrived yesterday although Roach said the sparring sessions will only start next Tuesday.

While expressing satisfaction with the progress of Pacquiao’s training early in the camp, Roach said the Filipino icon remains far from reaching

peak form to let him go sparring with Porter and Rodela, who have been with Team Pacquiao in past campaigns.

“He’s been off for a while, he still has some bad timing,” said Roach. “We’re not ready to fight yet.”

Sparring is scheduled every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday with two more sparring partners, who fight like Mosley, on standby in Los Angeles and ready to join the camp any moment. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))



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# Women's Month Honors Successful, Influential Pinays

By Christina Mendez



ANILA, Philippines - Feisty Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago has been listed as among the 10 most successful and the 20 most influential Filipinas recently named on the Internet.

Santiago, the only nationally elected public official in the two lists, joins world-class singer Lea Salonga and young teen sensation Charice Pengpeng, who are also on both lists.

Santiago, Salonga and Pengpeng were listed by the powerful website, Female Network, as among its 10 awardees for its first-ever Womanity Awards, which recognized the power of women in society in celebration of International Women's Day last March 8.

The website Female Network records some 4 million to 5 million page views per day.

The awardees are: Santiago for outstanding public service; Salonga, arts; Pengpeng, entertainment; Jessica Soho, media; Ana Julaton, sports; stylist Liz Uy, fashion; Dr. Raquel Fortum, science; Bing Sibal-Limjoco, business; TV host Daphne Oseña-Paez, advocacy; model and TV personality Tweetie de Leon-Gonzales, special award.

Meantime, the globally famous search engine Google released the list of the Top 20 Most Influential Filipinas of 2010.

The local unit of Google.com said that the choice of the Top 20 was based on the volume of search queries that the Internet search engine company received last year.

The Top 20 was released

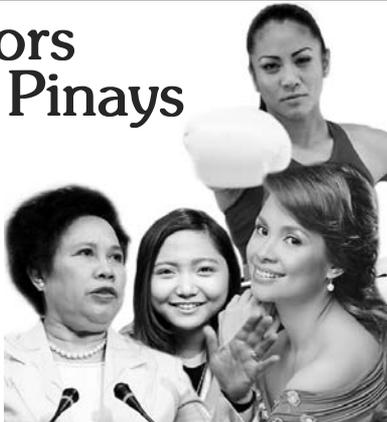
also to mark the centennial celebration of International Women's Day and as part of Google's yearend Zeitgeist, meaning "spirit of the times."

Santiago's office quoted a statement of the search giant which said that the Top 20 individuals "grabbed the greatest online mindshare in 2010."

Google's Zeitgeist measures a person's "influence" on the web by exploring millions of search queries that it receives everyday.

The search reveals the trends and the top key words which define the Filipinos' "top-of-mind" in terms of searches.

According to Google, the Top 20 "most influential Filipinas" are entertainers except for a few, such as Santiago, journalist Doris Dumlaog, designer Monique Lhuillier, and TV personality Korina Sanchez.



Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Teen singing-sensation Charice Pengpeng, award-winner Lea Salonga and lady champ Ana Julaton

This year's batch included Salonga; Pengpeng; former presidential girlfriend and now TV show host Shalani Soledad; presidential sister and popular TV personality Kris Aquino; actress-host Ruffa Gutierrez; beauty queen Venus Raj; actress Angel Locsin; singer-ac-

tress Sarah Geronimo; Asia's songbird Regine Velasquez; actress Heart Evangelista; actress Kristine Hermosa; TV show host Toni Gonzaga; megastar Sharon Cuneta; TV host Mariel Rodriguez; actress Bea Alonzo and veteran singer-actress Nora Aunor. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

## PHILIPPINE NEWS

### Expect a Short Summer

by Helen Flores  
Wednesday, March 23, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - Filipinos can expect a short and cooler summer this year due to the prevailing La Niña phenom-

enon, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said yesterday.

PAGASA acting administrator Nathaniel Servando also said they expect the late onset

of the summer season this year. "We are already entering the last week of March next week and it's quite unusual because we should already be experiencing the dry season this time of the year," Servando said in a press conference.

"We might experience warm weather associated with the so-called summer, but this may be short-lived, sometime in April because of La Niña," he said.

Meanwhile, Graciano Yumul, Science undersecretary for research and development, said the La Niña event is expected to last until May.

"By May, La Niña will be terminated but we always have a lag time of three months so we expect it to last up to August," he said.

Yumul said areas in the eastern section of the country had experienced a wetter rainy season last year due to La Niña, which refers to the abnormal cooling of the sea surface temperature in the equatorial Pacific and is characterized by too much rainfall.



Yumul also warned the public against stronger tropical cyclones this year.

"We can expect more tropical cyclones this year and these will be stronger than last year," he said.

Yumul said aside from La Niña, the very high moisture content of the atmosphere due to global warming also brings more rains in many parts of the world, including the Philippines and Australia.

Servando, meanwhile, said a low-pressure area is expected to affect the Visayas and Mindanao this weekend that will bring heavy rains in these areas.

In a related development, PAGASA launched yesterday its layman version of weather forecast and warning for the broadcast media.

PAGASA weather branch chief Robert Sawi said they replaced technical terminologies

in the regular weather forecast.

"Instead of saying it in Filipino, hilagang kanluran, we say northwest, so it's a Tagalog-English version of the forecast because many are familiar with the English terms," he said.

Sawi said they would also try to include all necessary details in the bulletin, like forecast rainfall amount, as well as the maximum and minimum temperatures in all parts of the country.

The revised PAGASA bulletin also includes the possible effects of weather systems in a more visual manner. For example, a cyclone, packing 120 kilometers per hour wind, could topple billboards.

PAGASA Public Information Office chief Venus Valdemoro said they will soon come up with the layman PAGASA forecast and warning for the print media. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

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LEGAL NOTES

# Domestic Employees of Diplomats to Get Protection



By Reuben S. Seguritan

**T**he USCIS has recently announced that A-3 and G-5 visa holders who are victims of human trafficking and other violations would become eligible for deferred action.

With this relief, the victims may be allowed to work legally and remain in the United States to resolve their pending complaints regarding the violation of the terms and conditions of their employment contract, or conditions related to human

trafficking and similar violations.

A-3 and G-5 visas are non-immigrant visas issued to attendants, servants or personal employees of ambassadors, diplomats, consular officers, foreign government officials or officers of international organizations.

Human trafficking, sometimes referred to as "trafficking in persons" and considered a form of modern-day slavery, includes acts of forced labor, holding a worker against his/her will to pay off a debt, and sex trafficking.

Trafficking may occur even in labor situations, as in the case of A-3 and G-5 visa hold-

ers. These individuals are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by their employers because the latter can claim diplomatic immunity from civil and criminal prosecution.

In the request for deferred action, the victim must submit a letter requesting deferred action and outlining the violation of the employment contract or conditions and the ongoing civil action, as well as a copy of the civil complaint filed in court. The victim must give proof of legal entry into the U.S. through an A-3 or G-5 visa.

If the application for deferred action is approved, the USCIS will adjudicate the I-765 or application for employment

authorization. The EAD to be issued will be valid for one year but may be renewed upon proof that the civil case is still pending. Fee waiver is available.

There have been many documented cases of trafficking especially of domestic workers who were subjected to abuse and maltreatment by their diplomat employers. For instance, from 2000 to 2008, there were some 42 domestic workers who had accused foreign diplomats of wrongdoing.

These cases involved promises of fair wages being made to the workers while still in their home countries. After arriving in the United States, the employees usually found their passports being taken away by the employer. They were threatened not to leave the

premises, forced to work long hours and seven-day weeks, and paid very low wages, if at all. The workers were also subjected to physical, psychological and even sexual abuse. However, because of diplomatic immunity, many of them were simply scared into silence.

By allowing for deferred action, the USCIS has taken a small but vital step towards alleviating the plight of trafficking victims by giving the workers immigration status, albeit temporary, and taking out one of the factors adding to these workers' vulnerability.

REUBEN S. SEGURITAN has been practicing law for over 30 years. For further information, you may call him at (212) 695 5281 or log on to his website at [www.seguritan.com](http://www.seguritan.com)

PHILIPPINE NEWS

## Palace Names 3 CA Justices

by Edu Punay  
Wednesday, March 23, 2011

**M**ANILA, Philippines - President Aquino has appointed three new justices to the Court of Appeals (CA), the Supreme Court (SC) announced yesterday.

In a one-page transmittal signed by Executive Secretary Paquito Ochoa Jr. received by the SC last Monday, Mala-

cañang appointed Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Carmelita Salandanan-Manahan, Makati RTC Judge Zenaida Galapate Laguilles and Cavite City RTC Judge Melchor Quirino Sadang to the CA. Manahan and Laguilles have already taken their oaths of office before Chief Justice Renato Corona.

Manahan was recipient of the Judicial Excellence Awardee

of the Justice Ramon Avancena Award, the highest honor given by the SC to career judges.

A graduate of Manuel L. Quezon University, Manahan served the Bar in 1990 and passed at the Public Attorney's Office lawyer and at the Department of Justice (DOJ) before she became a judge.

Laguilles, on the other hand, is an expert in Remedial Law and Court procedures. She

is teaching law subjects in various law schools including Philippine Christian University and Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

Laguilles handled the case of the journalists who filed a P12.5-million class suit against the husband of the former president, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Laguilles junked Arroyo's motion to dismiss the case.

On the other hand, Sadang was a long time judge of Cavite City. He followed his late fa-

ther, Judge Quirino Sadang.

Earlier this month, the Palace had appointed Regional trial court judges Victoria Isabel Paredes of Calocan City, Abraham Borreta of

Pasig City, Pamela Ann Maxino of Guagua in Pampanga and Gabriel Ingles of Cebu City as new associate justices of the appellate court.

With the appointment of the three new justices, the CA has a full bench of justices. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

## Aquino Urged to Give Marcos Hero's Burial

by Paolo Romero  
Wednesday, March 23, 2011

**M**ANILA, Philippines - Some 204 congressmen crossed party lines in signing a resolution urging President Aquino to allow the burial of the remains of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos at the Libingan ng Mga Bayani.

Sorsogon Rep. Salvador Escudero led the lawmakers in signing the resolution, saying he would gather at least 220 signatures from the 284-strong House of Representatives before formally filing it for approval in plenary.

"I and all of those who signed the resolution, as well as millions of Filipinos, want us to move on," Escudero said.

He said President Aquino was in favor of the resolution and even asked members of the majority bloc in the House for support.

Escudero served as agriculture minister during the Marcos regime.

Among those who signed the resolution were Marcos widow Ilocos Norte Rep. Imelda Marcos, Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Sorsogon Rep. Deogracias Ramos, Cagayan Rep. Rufus Rodriguez, Pampanga Rep. Anna York Bondoc, Laguna Rep. Justin Chipeco, Valenzuela Rep. Rex Gatchalian, Lanao del Norte Rep. Fatima Dimaporo, Cavite Rep. Lani Mercado-Revilla, Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez, DIWA party-list Rep. Emmeline Aglipay, Manila Rep. Zenaida Angping, Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Benitez, Bacolod

Rep. Anthony Golez, San Juan Rep. Joseph Victor Ejercito, and Ang Kasangang party-list Rep. Teodorico Haresco.

"Without denigrating the achievement of the leaders and officials that emerged after (1986) EDSA People Power Revolution, it can never be



◀ Congresswoman Imelda Romualdez Marcos watch the still unburied remains of husband former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos

gainsaid that Ferdinand Marcos gave invaluable service to his country as soldier, writer, states-

man and commander-in-chief," the resolution read. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

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## PHILIPPINE NEWS

# Phivolcs: Several Metro Manila Areas Prone to Liquefaction

by Helen Flores  
Thursday, March 24, 2011

**M**ANILA, Philippines - The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) yesterday urged Filipinos, especially those living in liquefaction-prone areas as well as those in Metro Manila, to build strong houses and buildings.

Phivolcs director Renato Solidum Jr. said liquefaction could happen after a massive earthquake and several communities along coastal areas in Metro Manila and nearby provinces could be affected.

Liquefaction is the process by which wet sediment starts to behave like liquid. It occurs because of the increased pore pressure and reduced effective stress between solid particles generated by the presence of liquid. It is often caused by severe shaking, especially that associated with earthquakes.

Solidum said coastal areas in the cities of Marikina, Pasig, Taguig, Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Pasay, Las Piñas and the municipality of Pateros are prone to liquefaction.

Aside from Metro Manila, Solidum said several areas in

the provinces of Pampanga and Nueva Ecija are also susceptible to liquefaction.

These findings, he said, were part of the 2004 study conducted by Phivolcs along with the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

In an interview, Solidum said the threatened communities include tens of thousands of people living along Laguna de Bay, Barangay Putatan in Muntinlupa City, and communities along Manila Bay such as the Basco compound in Tondo.

He said the areas prone to liquefaction also include reclaimed lands such as portions of Roxas Boulevard.

However, Solidum said well-designed and properly built buildings are protected from liquefaction if a strong quake hits.

He also underscored the need to establish community-based early warning system in these areas to reduce damage and casualties.

## DepEd monitors school buildings

In a related story, engineer Oliver Hernandez, officer-in-charge of the Department of Education (DepEd) Administrative Service and chief of the Physi-

cal Facilities and Schools Engineering Division (PFSED), said that 107 out of 778 defective school buildings nationwide discovered by a Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) task force from March to April 2010 are located in Metro Manila.

The previous Metro Manila-wide building inspection, according to Hernandez, covered about 86 public schools and 418 school buildings.

He said the DepEd-PFSED was conducting a re-evaluation of all school buildings in Metro Manila identified to have questions on their structural integrity.

"We're now conducting a re-evaluation. We hope to finish it by this Friday," Hernandez said in a press conference to present the DepEd's disaster preparedness program presided over by Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and spokesman Alberto Muyot.

"We have engineers assigned in all our regions all over the country and they will inspect all school buildings in their respective areas," he said.

Hernandez said that the findings of structural defects in the 107 school buildings in Metro Manila were immedi-

ately acted upon, with a number of schools condemned and new buildings planned to replace them, while some with minor problems were given remedial work.

The minor defects the building inspectors uncovered ranged from hairline cracks on the columns and posts to exposed steel bars.

Hernandez also confirmed

that DepEd was now coordinating with Phivolcs to verify a report that a Quezon City public school, the Bagong Silangan Elementary School in Fairview, stood right on the West Valley Fault.

The Quezon City government, he said, was already looking for a relocation site for the school. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

# Troops Capture Rebels Behind Police Station Raid in Davao del Norte

by Helen Flores  
Thursday, March 24, 2011

**C**OTABATO CITY, Philippines (Xinhua) -- Government troops today captured four New People's Army (NPA) rebels behind the raid on a police station in a southern Philippine city that left one policeman dead and four others wounded, a police official said.

Superintendent Querubin Manalang, spokesperson of the southern Mindanao regional police, said three of the four rebels captured in a raid at their hide-

out are residents in a village located one kilometer away from the police station they stormed on March 19 in Panabo City, Davao del Norte province.

The leftist rebel group had targeted police installations before, but those earlier attacks were against isolated outposts in areas where the rebels are known to wield a strong sway over the local population. Panabo City, located some 32 kilometers south of regional center Davao City, is urbanized, and the police station is located at the heart of the city proper. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

## MAINLAND NEWS

# Undocumented Pinoy Workers in US Face More Hurdles

by Jose Katigbah  
Thursday, March 24, 2011

**W**ASHINGTON - Filipinos planning to come to the United States as tourists and overstay to seek employment may have to rethink their plans if a proposal to strengthen worker identity checks here comes into effect.

The federal government is exploring the possibility of using a major credit rating agency to verify the identity of US workers, a move that could make it far more difficult for undocumented immigrants to get jobs using stolen Social Security numbers.

The plan by the Department of Homeland Security is still preliminary and would probably require congressional approval,

The Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

The government already allows employers to check the legal status of employees using a system known as E-verify, but hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants beat the system by using bogus or stolen Social Security numbers.

E-Verify is an Internet-based system that compares information from an employee's Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to data from US Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration records to confirm employment eligibility.

US law requires companies to employ only individuals who may legally work in the United States - either US citizens, or foreign citizens who have the necessary authorization. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

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**LOCOS NORTH COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TRADE 12TH ANNIVERSARY AND 4TH MS. INCAY SCHOLARSHIP PAGEANT / SATURDAY**

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 ♦ For more information, call the FilCom Center at 680-0451

**BAYANIHAN CLINIC WITHOUT WALLS' 2011 COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR / SATURDAY**  
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## GLOBAL NEWS

# OFWs in Libya Ignore Last Call

**M**ANILA, Philippines - Filipinos remaining in Libya have ignored the government's last call for them to leave their jobs and return home.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said only a few of the estimated 3,500 Filipino still in Libya have responded to the government's last call for repatriation.

Labor Undersecretary Danilo Cruz said less than a hundred have signified their intention to return home.

Cruz said the government has transported 23 Filipinos from Tripoli to Djerba, Tunisia, and about 50 others were expected to leave Tripoli last night.

Jaime Jimenez, DOLE's Middle East Task Force official, said the embassy and labor officials are using backroads to transport Filipinos from Libya to avoid checkpoints.

Philippine embassy officials and staff in Tripoli will not leave their posts despite the air strikes against Libya, Malacañang said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters, deputy

presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte also said the government is focused on taking care of and ensuring the safety of the remaining Filipinos in Libya.

Some Filipinos, specifically those working in government hospitals, were offered double pay, as well as hazard pay to remain in Libya, she added.

Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario proceeded on Monday to Djerba, Tunisia from Yemen to coordinate government efforts to evacuate the remaining Filipinos working in Libya.

The government has also conducted a survey of Filipinos in Yemen who wish to be repatriated.

The government has asked Libya to let four Filipinos working as maids for a relative of leader Moammar Gadhafi to leave the country.

Enrico Fos, special aide for migrant workers at the Department of Foreign Affairs, said the four called up their relatives to get the government to negotiate their release from

work contracts. "We are also engaged in diplomatic channels and have conveyed our countrymen's request to the Gadhafi government," he said.

The maids work for a nephew of Ghadafi, Fos said.

The European Union (EU) has facilitated the repatriation of 393 Filipinos from Libya.

Ambassador Guy Ledoux, EU head of delegation, said since March 6 the EU has provided 3 million euros to the International Organization for Migration to assist nationals of three countries fleeing Libya.

Assistance was provided for the repatriation of 393 Filipinos from Libya, he added.

Ledoux said after escaping from Libya, the Filipinos passed through the evacuation points in Cairo, Egypt, Malta and Tunisia.

"This assistance is part of the European Union's commitment to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of armed conflict outside the European Union," he said. (www.philstar.com)

# Ex-Prof in Minor's Rape Now in Riyadh Jail

**A**NGELES CITY, Philippines - A former university professor charged by the Department of Justice with 32 counts of rape of a minor here was transferred last week from a jail in Jeddah to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia as part of his deportation process.

The National Bureau of Investigation-Interpol (NBI-Interpol) informed the victim's parents that

suspect Arnel Atienza Ocampo, 51, is now in the Riyadh jail and could be deported soon to face the charges before the trial court here.

Ocampo, 51, was arrested and jailed in Jeddah last Dec. 6 by Saudi authorities upon the request of Justice Secretary Leila de Lima.

The NBI-Interpol, according to the victim's parents, told them that Jeddah authorities had formally communicated with the NBI about Ocampo's transfer from Jeddah to

Riyadh as part of plans to finally deport him.

"Justice is finally within our reach. Ocampo must face the consequences of his crime. He is in jail for four months now and he must be jailed for life," the victim's father told The STAR. (www.philstar.com)

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