

HAWAII-PHILIPPINE NEWS EDITION

HAWAII FILIPINO CHRONICLE

HAWAII'S ONLY WEEKLY FILIPINO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

FILIPINO ENTREPRENEURS DISPLAY UNIQUE ITEMS IN 14TH ANNUAL MADE IN HAWAII FESTIVAL

By HFC Staff

If you enjoy locally-made products, good food and entertainment, then the 13th Annual Made in Hawaii Festival may be just for you. Scheduled for August 21-23, 2009 at the Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall, First Hawaiian Bank's Made in Hawaii Festival will feature more than 420 booths of exhibitors from all over Hawaii, each offering a diverse assortment of locally-made products such as food, books, gifts, fashions, plans, art, crafts and more of the latest and greatest finds, as well as old favorites.

"Everything we are is Hawaii and we are proud to keep aloha strong by continuing an island favorite product festival as we celebrate 50 years of statehood," says Richard Botti, president of the newly-established Made in Hawaii Association, which produces the festival.

"It's been a real pleasure to watch the show grow from the original 61 booths to more than 420 this time around. We are

proud to support all of these small businesses, our long time veterans and our new exhibitors."

Keeping the line with the 50th Anniversary of Statehood, organizers set the theme for this year's festival as "Keep Aloha Strong—Buy Hawaii For Hawaii."

Despite the sluggish economy, more than 37,000 people attended the three-day

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UST Singers Win California Choral Fest

The University of Santo Tomas Singers swept the 2009 California International Choir Festival and Competition, winning the People's Choice Award as well as two other categories at the recently concluded event.

The prestigious competition was held at the Performing Arts Center at San Luis Obispo, California.

The UST Singers is the second Filipino musical group to win big at the festival. Iamuscapella, from the island of Luzon, won the People's Choice Award and other prizes at the first-ever choral competition in 2007.

Fidel G. Calalang Jr., founded the Manila-based group in 1992. Over the past 16 years, the choir has garnered more than 45 top awards at international choral competitions. The group consists of students and alumni and tours regularly in Europe, Asia and North America.



However, the San Luis Obispo event marked the choir's first competition in the U.S., Calalang says. The group plans to perform in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles before heading home to Manila.

"It's really great that we were able to win prizes," Calalang says, adding there's a possibility the group could return to the Central Coast.

The third California International Choral Festival and Competition will be held in 2011. (Good News Pilipinas) ■

6 RP Products to Enter US Market Duty-Free

By Ma. Elisa P. OSORIO

MANILA, Philippines - SIX PHILIPPINE EXPORTS WILL BE ABLE TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES duty free after being granted the privilege under the United States Generalized System of Preferences (US GSP), the United States Trade Representative (USTR) announced yesterday.

The six products are:

- (1) Twine, cordage, rope and cables of abaca or other (leaf) fibers;
- (2) Lead-acid storage batteries of a kind used as the primary source of electrical power for electrically powered vehicles;
- (3) Nickel-iron storage batteries, of a kind



Assembling a rattan for mats

used as the primary source of electrical power for electrically powered vehicles; and

- (4) Insulated beverage bag with outer surface textiles, interior only flexible plastic

(continued on page 4)

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The Weak Republic

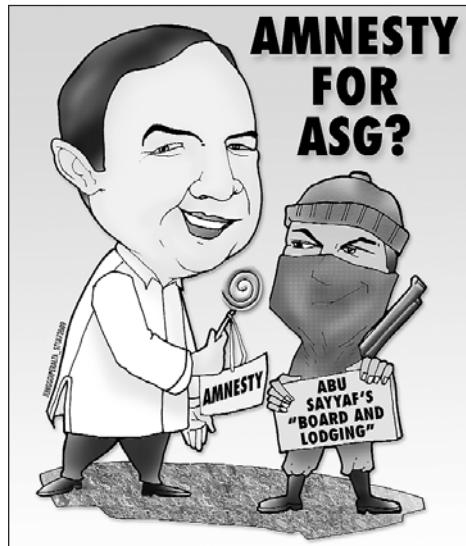
If you can't beat them, grant them amnesty. That's how a weak republic deals with a group whose principal activities since its creation have been banditry and terrorism. The Abu Sayyaf first gained notoriety when it raided the town of Ipil in Zamboanga del Sur in April 1995. Over 50 people were killed when the bandits pillaged and then burned down the town center. The group has changed little since then.

The Abu Sayyaf goes after civilians and "soft" targets, with particular preference for Christian missionaries, priests, teachers, churches and schools. The education of a generation of children in Basilan and Sulu has been disrupted by Abu Sayyaf attacks. The group has a predilection for torturing, mutilating and decapitating its victims — sometimes on videotape, which the group's accomplices try to peddle to news organizations. In one of their capers, the bandits lopped off the breasts of their hostages. They tore off the fingernails of captive priest Rhoel Gallardo, then dragged him across the jungle until he bled to death. What twisted cause can such atrocities possibly serve?

In recent years the group has focused on fund-raising through kidnapping and extortion. Those capers destroyed the tourism industry in several provinces for up to two years and scared away investors. Later, as Abu Sayyaf leaders were captured or killed, those left behind teamed up with Jemaah Islamiyah and members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, bombing the Davao International Airport and killing 21 people in 2003, then bombing the Superferry 14 a year later, leaving over a hundred dead or missing.

Now, we are told, some Abu Sayyaf members are old and tired and would want to rejoin the social mainstream, preferably with livelihood assistance courtesy of Philippine taxpayers. After having their fun, they want a peaceful retirement, and the government is seriously considering the proposal.

What do the relatives of the hundreds of victims of rape, arson, kidnapping, torture, mutilation and murder think about that? Before anyone takes pity on the arthritic militants who are growing too old for murder and mayhem, someone should first pay attention to those who are clamoring



for justice and the rule of law. Even Islamic groups have condemned the activities of the Abu Sayyaf. That amnesty proposal belongs to the garbage heap. This group represents no ideology or religion and must be eliminated. (www.philstar.com) ■

Pranksters?

In three days, three banks in northern Metro Manila have been hit by explosions. The latest victim is a UnionBank branch in Valenzuela City. Its main entrance was shattered and an automated teller machine damaged by what ordinance experts described as a pillbox-type explosive. The blast followed similar attacks last week on Allied Bank branches in Caloocan and Valenzuela.

Investigators downplayed the explosions as the handiwork of pranksters rather than more sinister elements believed to be responsible for setting off a bomb the other Sunday at the Office of the Ombudsman and planting improvised explosive devices in other spots in Metro Manila. Those IEDs, police said, used C-4 military explosives.

As the attack on the UnionBank branch showed, however, even a pillar box can cause extensive damage to property and bring harm to the public. A simple Molotov cocktail can trigger a fire that can engulf an entire

community or business establishment.

Pranksters or not, whoever sets off an explosion that puts life or property at risk must be caught and penalized. Even powerful firecrackers can destroy property or maim or kill people. Those attacks on banks could be a prelude to extortion or an attempt to sabotage economic activity. Considering the political environment, it would also be unwise for investigators to immediately rule out a political agenda in the attacks.

Law enforcers must not wait for grievous harm to befall the public or more serious damage to be inflicted on property before moving aggressively to stop the attacks. Ignoring such activities emboldens the perpetrators or copycats to stage similar acts of lawlessness. That is anarchy and it should not be allowed to spread.

The public can do its part by exercising vigilance and reporting suspicious activities or packages immediately to authorities. For law enforcers, ignoring these attacks is a dereliction of duty. Anyone planting or setting off explosives — whether for fun, mischief, terrorism, extortion or other criminal intent — must be arrested and punished. (www.philstar.com) ■

FILIPINO CHRONICLE

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Guil Franco

Photographer

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AROUND THE ISLAND

by Mayor Mufti HANNEMANN

We are always pleased to welcome traveling dignitaries to Honolulu, but the recent visit by Ilocos Norte Governor Michael Marcos Keon was extra special because of our city's close ties to the Philippines, and particularly the Ilocos region.

Governor Keon's June 22 visit to Honolulu Hale underscored our strong bonds of family and friendship, and our intertwined histories and cultures. We were very pleased to host the governor and his delegation here, and also at a luncheon I organized. We all enjoyed the warm friendship, good humor, and opportunity to strengthen our relationship with

Ilocos during these events and others in the community.

Many of Hawaii's earliest Filipino immigrants came from the region, of course, and others continue to join our community and make important contributions to its neighborhoods, economy and social fabric. Honolulu and Laaag, the provincial capital of Ilocos Norte, have been sister cities since 1969, and I was proud to visit Laaag in 2005 to renew that important relationship. I am deeply honored to have been adopted as an illustrious and compassionate Son of Badoc, and an Honorary Son of Bacara, both in Ilocos Norte. Honolulu also has important sister city relationships with Vigan, Baguio, Manila and Cebu.

I look forward to visiting Laaag, Cebu and Manila this November as part of a trade mission organized by the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii. One important highlight will be the renewal of our sister city agreement with Cebu, and I'm sure we will make lots of new friends everywhere we visit.



Honolulu Mayor Mufti Hannemann organized a luncheon for visiting Ilocos Norte Governor Michael Marcos Keon. From left to right are Badoc Mayor Thomas Torralba, Mayor Hannemann, Governor Keon, and Ilocos Norte Attorney Ferdinand "Chito" Dumlao.

The Chamber held a wonderful Installation Banquet on July 11 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, and I dropped by to commend this important group for working with the City to plan the Philippines trip, and to plan the third Taste of Kalikai celebration.

I'd like to also express my sincere appreciation to our good friends at the Oahu Filipino Community Council, who unanimously

approved a resolution in support of our rail transit project during the group's annual convention, which I was proud to address on June 27 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village.

In other news, please be sure to visit the new Honolulu Farmers' Market, held every Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Neal S. Blaisdell Center, corner of Kapilana Blvd. and Ward Ave. The market features fresh locally

grown fruits and vegetables, delicious food, orchids and plants, tropical cut flowers, local fruit preserves and much more.

I've long been a strong supporter of our farmers, and I believe this new Farmers' Market venture will prove to be popular with our residents and visitors alike.

The market is sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the Department of Enterprise Services, and Oahu Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.

Come on down, join the fun, eat healthy, and save money!

Please don't forget that the new ban on using hand-held cellular phones and other electronic devices while driving took effect on July 1. We believe this carefully crafted ordinance – the first such ban in Hawaii – will go a long way toward improving public safety for motorists and pedestrians, especially seniors, children and the disabled. Our intent is to ensure drivers keep their attention focused on the road, where it belongs. ■

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

State to Process ID Cards at Pearl City High

STATE ID PERSONNEL WILL PROCESS applications for State ID cards on Saturday, August 1, 2009 at Pearl City High School, from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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change in name or citizenship, no other documents are required.

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must be supported by certified government-issued documents. Altered and/or illegible documents will not be accepted.

The State ID cards will be

processed and mailed within 10 business days. Application forms are available online at: www.stateid.hawaii.gov. Please call 587-3112 for further details. ■

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HEADLINE NEWS (CONT.)

(cont. from page 1; Made in Hawaii...)

festival last year and visited the hundreds of displays.

The Festival will be open from 10 am – 9 pm on August 21-22 and from 10 am – 5 pm on August 23. Admission is \$3 and free for children ages six and under.

According to Festival organizers, shoppers will once again be able to ship their purchases directly to their friends and families on the neighbor islands and the Mainland via a U.S. Post Office booth, which will be on-site. This special service began last year and gives shoppers a head start on their shopping and gift-giving needs.

Should shoppers need a break, they can listen to live music from an award-winning lineup of local entertainers, including Genoa Keawe Ohana, Eddie Kamae, Jay Larrin, Natalie Ai Kamau, Maunalua, Frank DeLima, Jerry Santos, Makana, Hoku Zuttemeister and Cyril Pahinui. Not to be outdone, Hawaii's talented chefs and cooks will feature Hawaii-grown produce and products at the culinary demonstration stage in the arena.

FILIPINO ENTREPRENEURS TO DISPLAY THEIR WARES

Exhibitors from across the state will feature a wide variety of products, anything and everything, all made or grown in Hawaii.

Among the exhibitors are several Filipino entrepreneurs who are anxious to display their goods to the public. They include:

• Waggin' Bakery

Owner Erick Cabal and his wife Nanako specialize in unique and delicious doggy treats as well as apparel for man's four-legged friends. For dogs with dietary restrictions, Waggin' Bakery also sells treats that are free of salt, sugar, and preservatives. All treats are hand-prepared by Erick and Nanako, who met while students at Kapiolani Community College in 2000.

Nanako previously worked at an animal hospital where she noticed dogs that suffered from vomiting, diarrhea and other digestive problems. She soon discovered that many dog foods contained salt and preservatives and buying these foods was not an option. Armed with this knowledge, the couple began to prepare their own food for their dog.

Not long after, they launched a home-based business that makes doggies treats and sells them at the local swap meet. They called it Waggin' Bakery. Within months, their products were picked up by Longs Drugs stores, pet stores and veterinary clinics. By 2005, their line of doggy treats expanded to a total of 20 different

flavors including Sweet Potato, Bacon & Cheese, Chicken Parmesan, and Peanut Butter & Honey.

They have been participating in Made in Hawaii Festival for almost five years.

• Aunty Lilikoi

Aunty Lilikoi Passion Fruit Products is a family-run business from Waimea that operates out of a 1930's plantation era building renovated into a commercial kitchen and retail store. The owners are Tony and Lori Cardenas, a husband-and-wife team that has been in business for the past 19 years and has participated in the Made in Hawaii Festival for six years.

Some of Aunty Lilikoi's products include jellies, mustards, utensils, syrups, sauces, aromatherapy, skin care, hair care, candles, and soaps.

In 2004, Tony and Lori were both honored at the Napa Valley Mustard Festival World-Wide Mustard Competition held at the American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts in Napa Valley, California. They were awarded a Bronze Medal in the Dressings and Sauces category at the festival's mustard contest for their Aunty Lilikoi Passion Fruit Wasabi Dressing.

• iKandy

iKandy in 2003, shortly after graduating from high school, iKandy offered urban-style street wear for young women.

She began rather modestly by selling her branded items from the trunk of her car, before moving on to exhibiting her clothing line at shows and fairs across the island. In 2006, she opened a store at Pearlridge Center called "Exclusive." Now, things are looking up for Patino, who has successfully developed her apparel into a recognized brand for Hawaii's young women.

ALL MADE IN HAWAII

The festival is truly a showcase of goods produced by Hawaii's most talented entrepreneurs, artists, craftsmen and designers. Everything that will be displayed is made in Hawaii. The following is just a sample of the exciting products that will be featured:

- From the Big Island: Gourmet Atebara chips from Hawaii Island Gourmet; handcrafted solid titanium bands with koa wood inlays by Koa Wood Rings; pure and organic honey by Big Island Bees; cookies and cookie dough by Donna's Cookies; custom beadwork and one-of-a-kind pieces by Paula Nurse Designs; all-natural hand soaps, lip balms and soaps, handmade pendants and necklaces by Tree Hugger Products; large-scale, top quality native Hawaiian seedlings from Nursery Solutions, Inc; and embroidered hand towels by Felicia's Ts.

- From Maui: earings, necklaces, and bracelet collections by Kachi Jewelry; original printed t-shirts by 808 Clothing Co.; lavender clothing, beauty, aromatherapy, and culinary products by Ali'i Kula Lavender; unique tropical Christmas ornaments by Maui Pacifica; award-winning music from local artists and compilations by Palm Records; books and photos by Hawaii authors and artists from Liquid-S Dream Makers, LLC.

- From Oahu: Hawaiian sea salt and seasonings by Grandfather's Salt, Inc.; contemporary photography services by Island Style Images; surf apparel by Alikane Kai Surf; Leah York's photography on greeting cards and matted prints by Off the Clock, Ink; snacks from Ono Tittle Corn; sauces, marinades, and dressings by Broke Da Face Sauces; craft supplies, kits, and other essentials by Crafting is Fun; South Indian curries and breads from India Café; natural ocean tumbled sea-glass jewelry and crafts by Besos Creations; and personalized baby blankets and burp cloths by It's Mine. ■

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Local designer Christina Patino had no business background when she first launched [redacted] *(cont. from page 1; G & RP Products...)*

container storing dispensing beverage thru flexible tubing;

(5) Woven or partly assembled materials of rattan for mats, matting and screens; and

(6) Exposure meters.

Other Philippine products that were eligible for US GSP include measuring instruments, cane or beet sugar, pneumatic tires, tubes or pipe fittings, optical fibers, liquid crystal devices, lasers, optical appliances, lamps and lighting fittings, and parts of tractors, television and radio parts, and basketwork.

Each of these products has registered imports below the minimum or de minimis level of \$19 million in 2008. The export value of these six products to the US was \$24 million.

Because of the waiver, the products will enjoy duty-free access to the US market even if they have exceeded the so-called statutory import ceilings set by the US for 2008, in pursuit of the program's goal to advance economic development of eligible countries.

The Philippines said that the removal of the GSP status and the subsequent payment of the regular import duty would adversely affect competitiveness through an

increase in landed cost. The Philippines also wants to avoid job losses in these export-oriented sectors should the US not extend GSP status on these products.

The removal of the GSP benefits would have affected the operations of two major exporters — Manila Cordage Company and the Pacific Cordage, Inc. which have a combined labor force of 579 employees.

It would also have set back East-Cam Tech Corp. operations with a potential labor displacement of 1,101 personnel directly involved in the production, while about 110 personnel at the Pilipinas Batteries, Inc (PBI) manufacturing plant would have been terminated.

The 2008 GSP Annual Review analyzed petitions to withdraw or limit a country's GSP benefits for not meeting GSP eligibility criteria that include, among others, the extent of a country's intellectual property rights (IPR) protection, extent of compliance with internationally-recognized worker rights, the country's level of economic development, ability to provide equitable and reasonable access to US goods and reduce trade distorting investment practices and policies, and efforts to combat terrorism. (www.philstar.com) ■



Abaca fiber

San Vicente: The 'Next Big Thing' in Philippine Tourism?

KRIPOTKIN By Alfred A. YUSON

How big is big? That's the first question. Second: Do you know the way to San Vicente?

Well, now I do. It's a 3.5-hour drive north from Puerto Princesa. The first two hours are on a good concrete road built by a South Korean contractor, a good part of it still within the city's boundaries, albeit as a national highway — until one reaches Roxas town, still on the eastern coastline. The rest of the way it turns rough, veering off northwest to cross the breadth of the island, up and down a mountain to the west coast, where El Nido is also located farther north.

The first-class municipality of San Vicente is 194 kilometers from the humongous capital. The last 50-something kilometers wind through verdant forest, where one slows down on a mostly dirt road with patches of mirage-like concrete here and there. In the rainy season it turns muddy, with rivulets running down from hill sides. Parts are being upgraded by work crews. The plan is to have it all cemented to cut down travel time to 2.5 hours.

For some years now, we've heard of San Vicente as yet another relatively unknown destination touted as "the next Boracay." In fact those who have a stake in the area contend that it'll surpass Boracay when it does get developed. The prime boast is the fabbed 14-kilometer Long Beach of white sand — the gently undulating coastline between barangays

New Agutaya and Alimanguan. If you Google "San Vicente, Palawan" you'll find most of the entries leading to websites making various pitches for real estate. One objective commentary has it: "And what does sleepy San Vicente have? Well, it has a long stretch of beach... No hotels. No resorts. No restaurants. Nothing. Only raw land, pure and simple... (It's) all so far just a real estate play."

A 2.5-hectare beachfront property is being peddled online for a discounted P17.5 million, while a whopping P37.5 million is the tag price for a 1.5-hectare lot with a 60-meter beachfront directly facing Imuruan Bay, said to be only 10 minutes from the new airport.

Indeed, ground has been broken for an international airport, with backhoes and bulldozers already leveling hectares of former rice fields close to the town proper. The powers-that-be reportedly managed to convince most of the rice farmers to sell and move out, while a few have remained adamantly in place despite continuing pressure.

Presently, everything seems to point to a grand conundrum for the future of San Vicente. While it's touted as "the next big thing" for Philippine tourism, environmental issues appear to be hindering its planned development.

At least a couple of artist-friends have established idyllic havens in the area. One is the

painter Diokno Pasilan, who with his Scottish-born wife purchased a 150-meter-long beachfront at Kabantagan 10 years ago, and built a large wooden house cum terrace that rests two meters above ground on large poles.

Red squirrels frolicking on coconut trees at sunrise and spectacular sunsets are daily fare. Now that the couple is based in Australia with their seven-year-old son, the solar-powered ref, and beds and linen for six.

In 1988, Ma. Mercedes "Ditchay" Roxas leased 11 hectares of shore and forest in Daploc Cove in Boayan Island, the largest of the outlying islands off San Vicente. For 21 years now, she and her family have lived in harmony with the fisher folk, pioneering efforts to conserve and protect the ecosystem of a prized habitat of endangered species: the Tabon Bird, while Philippine cockatoos, green sea turtles, and fragile species such as Palawan hornbills, eagles, falcons, kingfishers, parrots and giant pigeons, monitor lizards, the bearded wild boar, and rarely seen sea otters.

Her house of no walls, fences or barriers has been featured in various magazines. It has hosted Palawan officials as well as a Tourism undersecretary, who lauded her fine example of land

stewardship. For her pains as an assiduous caretaker, now her family has been declared illegal occupants of timberland, with criminal charges filed against them. Why? Because Daploc Cove is being eyed as a satellite resort development to complement the big plans for San Vicente.

But a robust brava! For Ditchay, who's fighting back the best way she knows, appearing in environmental forums, writing in provincial publications and leading a crusade by way of the Internet. She argues eloquently that the campaign against her is simply "to pave the way for a huge real estate and resort development project of a well-known Manila-Boracay resort group... Once again money and greed are buying up huge tracts of land, displacing people and destroying the inestimable natural capital of the public for the sake of private interest."

What price development? The question has been asked countless times in our islands, no less so in Palawan, which is a lovely last frontier faces serial tug-of-war on such issues as logging, mining, quarrying, and unabated commercial development.

Last month, on the occasion of the week-long Baragatan festival, the opportunity presented itself for the long drive to San Vicente to check out fabled Long Beach. Little did we know that our small party would be in for quite a shock.

We saw the airport site clearing operation, and surmised that the "visionaries" behind it must have rendered quite a sales pitch to have successfully included San Vicente as part of the President's Super Region Growth Corridor in Western Visayas. Puerto Princesa already has an international airport, and completing the highway for a 2.5-hour ride to San Vicente seems more feasible, let alone cheaper. Presently, the town only enjoys four hours of electricity, so that concerns are raised over the viability of a future power plant.

And yet the airport-a-building is scheduled to open by next year, or 2012 at the latest, with rosy pre-

dictions of direct flights from Bali, Kota Kinabalu and Bangkok, so that San Vicente can compete with Phuket, Pataya and Bali, "and will make Boracay a small congested dot in the local tourism arena."

That boast is part of the ongoing sales pitch for real estate, similar to what follows: "Price of properties, particularly beach front properties, has steeply risen in the past two years due to the construction of the new airport that can handle an Airbus 300-320 and Boeing 737-400... Property prices now range from P2,000 to P3,500 per square meter for beachfront property in Long Beach. As soon as the first airplane lands on or lifts off the runway, property price will also skyrocket up to P10,000+ per square meter. The minimum price of Boracay's beachfront property now is P20,000 per square meter. Act now before it is too late. Invest in San Vicente and watch your investment grow in a matter of 4 years."

Hmm. So is Long Beach all that great to attract investments and impel concerted growth?

We stepped on the beach and marveled at the shimmering stretch north and south, as far as the eye can see. The sea was calm and rolling in gently. The usual aroma bushes and a few coconut trees dotted the foreshore. The sand was soft and powdery, but it certainly wasn't dazzlingly sugar-white, rather creamish-pink, conceivably golden at magic hour. Nor was the beachfront as wide and of the gentlest slope as in Boracay.

The feeling was not unlike being in Paugpud in Ilocos Norte, except that there it was an extended crescent beach marking a large bay. Long Beach is definitely enticing, as one can look up and down the coast and feel so minute as an intruder.

There are actually over 50 kilometers of non-contiguous white beaches in the area, inclusive of bays and coves and outlying islands. The next big thing in Philippine tourism? No one can close the door to the idea, but what a grand vision and strategic

(continued on page 7)

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IMMIGRATION GUIDE



by Atty. Emmanuel Samonte TIPON

Thousands of immigration petitioners believe that simply because you are a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident (LPR), you can petition an eligible relative.

As I have been repeatedly telling clients and saying on radio, that is not enough. You have to be domiciled in the United States. That is a matter of common sense. The philosophy behind the Immigration and Nationality Act is to reunify families. How can you be reunited with someone who is not domiciled in the United States? With whom are you coming to be reunited if your petitioner is not here?

Yesterday, the San Francisco-based Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in a case origi-

Must Immigration Petitioner Be Domiciled in U.S.?

nating from Hawaii sustained immigration authorities in denying the visa petition of an alien whose petitioner was not domiciled in the U.S. Could this case have been won? Certainly -- with the right strategy.

Do-it-yourself petitioners have asked what to do after their beneficiary was denied a visa because the petitioner was not domiciled in the U.S. We told them that had they consulted us first before going back to live permanently abroad or at least before the beneficiary was interviewed, their beneficiary would have obtained a visa. Their uniform answer: "We wanted to save money." My reply: "I don't believe in saving money. I believe in working hard to earn money and spending it. We must enjoy life because there might not be a tomorrow."

FACTS

Park, a South Korean, came to the U.S. on a student visa but failed to maintain status and was placed in removal proceedings.

The Immigration Judge (IJ) granted her two weeks to voluntarily depart. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) affirmed.

Park married Higa, a U.S. citizen. Park asked the BIA to reopen her case and applied for adjustment of status to LPR. Higa filed a Petition for Alien Relative (Form I-130) with an Affidavit of Support (Form I-864). The BIA denied Park's motion to reopen because she failed to voluntarily depart. The Court of Appeals on review remanded the case to BIA which granted the motion to reopen and allowed Park to apply for adjustment of status before the IJ. The IJ denied adjustment, holding that Park's husband and sponsor was not domiciled in the U.S. The BIA upheld the IJ.

DOMICILE REQUIREMENT

To be eligible for an immigrant visa, an alien must file a visa petition pursuant to 8 USC § 1154. The alien must demonstrate admissibility under 8 USC § 1182 which requires that an alien must

have a sponsor who executes an affidavit of support. 8 USC § 1183(f) requires that the sponsor (1) be a United States citizen, (2) be at least 18 years old, (3) be domiciled in the United States, and (4) have an annual income equal to at least 125 percent of the Federal Poverty guideline.

The statute does not define "domicile" but the Attorney General has issued a regulation 8 CFR § 213a.1 defining it as: "The place where a sponsor has his or her principal residence, as defined in section 101(a)(33) of the Act, with the intention to maintain that residence for the foreseeable future."

INA § 101(a)(33) defines "residence" as "the place of general abode; the place of general abode of a person means his principal, actual dwelling place in fact, without regard to intent."

A USC may qualify as a sponsor if only temporarily residing abroad. The sponsor must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the sponsor's domicile remains in the U.S. and will establish a domicile in the U.S. on or before the date of the alien's admission or adjustment of status.

FACTORS TO ESTABLISH INTENT TO MAINTAIN RESIDENCE

The intention to maintain a residence for the foreseeable future may be established by certain factors, such as: (1) current residence; (2) voting registration and practices; (3) location of personal and real property; (4) location of brokerage and bank accounts; (5) location of spouse and family; (6) membership in unions and other organizations; (7) place of employment or business; (8) driver's

with Mactan, where he's set up his version of "Hollywood East," the Bigfoot studio and post-production facility training young Pinoy filmmakers besides churning out B-type action movies. A naturalized Filipino since 2006 by act of Congress, Gleisser has reportedly plunked down a billion pesos for the grand plan for San Vicente. But did he know that a mountain would be illegally lopped off as part of the development vision? We doubt it.

Local officials involved apparently ignore environmental laws because they couldn't care less, save for future profit. Besides, a padrino is a peso billionaire whose name everyone in Palawan knows to have been associated with logging before the ban on the profitable enterprise. Jose "Pepito" Alvarez is a nephew of Mayor Antonio Gonzales of San Vicente. But it's the uncle, also a Palawan migrant, who is the nephew's henchman. Pepito Alvarez plans to run for Governor of Palawan next year.

Before we can even talk of so-called ecological viability requirements as the main feature of the Strategic Environment Plan (SEP) for Palawan, per RA 7611, or the Forestry Code or any Environmentally Critical Areas Network (ECAN) zoning plans for the province, maybe we should just put it all down into one re-formed question:

Do we know the way for San Vicente? (www.philstar.com) ■

TRAVEL (CONT.)

(cont. from page 1; San Vicente ...)

plan it'll take. Maybe in 20 years it will be set in place, albeit we hope that not too many transgressions against both habitat and habitus would have been committed.

That hope is instantly dashed when on another road back to the poblacion, we're confronted with the sight of a mountain that's been chopped off. The site, called Logpond in Sitio Panindigan is in full view of the town proper. We drive right to the location, and indeed, despite the signs we've seen posted around town warning against any quarrying, this mountainside has been dug up, trees and all, and all the soil apparently relocated to what looks like a vast flatland across the road.

It turns out that the dumping site used to be a six-hectare fishpond maintained by San Vicente Mayor Antonio Gonzales. Now it's been filled up with all the ground that's been scoured off the mountain. The purpose? To convert those six hectares into a marina that will extend from the nearby coastline, to complement a planned "first-class resort."

Back in Puerto Princesa, we learn that a case has been filed against the mayor for "illegal extraction of quarry and illegal hauling of filling materials," since the operation that started last April has been conducted without any permit from the provincial government. Last May, the mayor was served a cease-and-desist order from the Provincial Mining and Regulatory Board (PMRB), but he



reportedly dismissed the procedure, claiming that the company that owns the 14-hectare mountain site already had an MOA with the DENR with regards tree-cutting, and that even the registration of chainsaws with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) was unnecessary.

Thus, the extraction and disposition of quarry materials continues. After all, it's in the Mayor's very own turf. Even more curious, the resort development company is said to involve other Palawan small-town officials as well as a private investor, Michael Gleisser. Now that name rang a bell.

Gleisser made his I.T. fortune in Germany and fell in love

with Mactan, where he's set up his version of "Hollywood East," the Bigfoot studio and post-production facility training young Pinoy filmmakers besides churning out B-type action movies. A naturalized Filipino since 2006 by act of Congress, Gleisser has reportedly plunked down a billion pesos for the grand plan for San Vicente. But did he know that a mountain would be illegally lopped off as part of the development vision? We doubt it.

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Do we know the way for San Vicente? (www.philstar.com) ■

license and automobile registration; and (9) payment of taxes.

PETITIONERS EVIDENCE INSUFFICIENT TO SHOW U.S. DOMICILE

Higa was not domiciled in the U.S. He (1) has been working in Japan for more than three years, (2) has briefly visited the U.S. during that time period, (3) has indefinite employment in Japan, (4) pays taxes in Japan, (5) has a bank account in Japan, and (6) does not own any property in the U.S. These "objective facts" show lack of a present intent to live in Hawaii.

While he testified that he intended to return to Hawaii, he could not provide any specific time to return. He said his goal was to earn money and gain experience in order to open a school in Hawaii. These goals do not reflect a present intent to live in the U.S. for the foreseeable future, but instead are indefinite in time. These statements conflict with the "objective facts" and are entitled to little weight. Park v. Holder, No. 07-74420 (9th Cir. 07/09/2009). ■

(ATTY. TIPON is from Lasang City, Philippines. He holds a Master of Laws degree from Yale Law School and a Bachelor of Law from the University of the Philippines. He is admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court, other U.S. Courts, and Philippine courts. He handles cases throughout the U.S. and the Philippines. He specializes in immigration law and criminal defense. Office: 905 Uni. St., Suite 201, Honolulu, HI 96819. Tel. (808) 847-1601. E-mail: flamila@yahoo.com; Website: [www.ImmigrationServicesUSA.com](http://ImmigrationServicesUSA.com). Listen to his very interesting, useful, and humorous program "Immigration X Files" on KNDI Hawaii radio 1270 AM on the dial every Friday 8:30-9:00 a.m. This article is for general information only. It is not legal advice. It may not be cited as an authority.)

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OFW Remittances Hit Record High in May

by Des FERRIOLS /

Thursday, July 16, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - REMITTANCES FROM OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) in May were higher than central bank expectations, with the monthly inflows reaching a new record high at \$1.48 billion as more Filipinos sought jobs abroad.

The record inflows in May brought the cumulative remittances for the first five months of the year to \$6.98 billion, representing a 2.8-percent increase from the level recorded in the same period last year.

OFW remittances are the most closely-watched economic data since these finance private spending which has become the most critical economic growth driver.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) reported yesterday that OFW remittances coursed through banks grew year-on-year by 3.7 percent in May 2009, higher than the two- to three-percent growth projected earlier.

Before May, the second highest level of remittances was \$1.47 billion, registered in March 2009.

BSP data showed that remittances from both sea-based and land-based workers posted gains of 4.6 percent and 2.4 per-



cent, respectively.

"The stream of remittances from overseas Filipinos continued to show signs of strength despite lingering global economic fragilities," said BSP Governor Armando M. Tetangco Jr. He said this provided some basis for "cautious optimism" regarding steady remittance levels for 2009.

Tetangco said remittance flows continued to be underpinned by the steady demand for Filipino workers abroad, specifically professional and skilled workers, as well as the expanded access of overseas Filipinos and their beneficiaries to a wide range of financial products and services offered by banks and other financial institutions.

According to Tetangco, the demand for Filipino workers is expected to continue as a result of hiring agreements forged between the Philippines and some host countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia and Japan.

Labor export has been a cause for embarrassment for past administrations but the Arroyo administration has made a policy of aggressive marketing of Filipino workers whose earnings boost the country's dollar reserves.

Earlier, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported that the Philippine government entered into a bilateral agreement with South Korea on the employment of Filipino workers.

Philippine Department of

Labor and Employment and its South Korean counterpart in May 2009 aimed at hiring up to 5,000 Filipino workers in the South Korean manufacturing industry and other sectors within the next 10 months. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment and its South Korean counterpart in May 2009 aimed at hiring up to 5,000 Filipino workers in the South Korean manufacturing industry and other sectors within the next 10 months.

The DOLE also said it has started talks with the Libyan health ministry for the recruitment of about 4,000 Filipino medical workers in Libya.

Moreover, the BSP said the Arroyo administration is intensifying efforts to assist retrenched overseas workers by finding new jobs for them abroad.

For the period January-May 2009, the BSP said the major sources of remittances were the U.S., Canada, Saudi Arabia, U.K., Japan, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Italy, and Germany.

With remittances showing unexpected resilience, Tetangco expressed optimism that consumer spending would recover in the coming quarters as consumers

have indicated their intention to spend despite the overall pessimism about the economy.

Tetangco said the results of the recent Consumer Expectations Survey (CES) were encouraging in that consumers indicated their intention to spend on what were considered big-ticket items such as housing, motor vehicles and appliances.

He pointed out that based on the first quarter National Income Accounts, the breakdown in the gross domestic product (GDP) reflected that consumers had already raised what he considered "precautionary savings."

Tetangco said this behavior was understandable since consumers saw the worst in terms of volatility and uncertainty in global economies and financial markets in the last quarter of 2008.

In reaction, consumers opted to put away their cash rather than spend while bracing for the full impact of the global slowdown that was expected to displace workers and lower household incomes.

"However, as more signs of a slowing of the contraction in global economies are seen, the public's confidence is expected to rise and, therefore, precautionary savings will fall," Tetangco pointed out. www.philstar.com ■

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

GMA Unveils New PNR Trains

by Paolo ROMERO /
Wednesday, July 15, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - PRESIDENT ARROYO LAUNCHED YESTERDAY the new operations of the Philippine National Railways (PNR) which would help decongest traffic and allow commuters to travel throughout Metro Manila at low fares.

Mrs. Arroyo rode a brand-new coach from the Tutuban Station in Divisoria, Manila to Gil Puyat Station in Makati City with Vice President Noli De Castro and other officials including PNR chairman Michael Defensor, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and PNR general manager Manuel Andal.

Defensor said the President wanted the PNR to fast track cleaning up and beautifying the areas along the tracks that were

cleared of squatters after seeing the debris left by the dismantling of the shanties.

The commuter coaches from South Korea will be used only in Metro Manila. Refurbished trains, on the other hand, will be used for provincial runs, particularly to Bicol. Defensor showed Mrs. Arroyo the refurbished trains, whose interiors looked like those of luxury buses complete with an LCD TV in the middle.

He said the cost of refurbishing was only P5.3 million per coach compared to buying a new one at P100 million per coach. He said a total of 30 coaches would be refurbished.

"The objective is that within the year, the trains will ply all over Metro Manila at intervals of 10 minutes," Defensor told reporters. There are 19 stations from

Cainta City to Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

He said the full Metro Manila run will be operational in the coming months though the line from Tutuban to Sucat, Parañaque City will start today at P16 per passenger. Travel time between the two points is about 30 minutes, he said.

He said the Manila-Bicol route could start before the end of the year with a travel time of six hours.

The PNR, he said, is also undertaking the upgrading of the tracks to double-rails. He said the cost of the rehabilitation of the tracks from Manila to Bicol was about \$300 million, with many bridges and tracks to repair between Manila and Bicol.

"Very soon, our trains will be of international standards like those in New York and Rome," he said.

Defensor said the coming



President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo leads unveiling of the New Philippine National Railways (PNR) trains and Logo at the PNR, Tutuban Station, Tondo Manila on July 14, 2009. (www.ppn.gov.ph)

months will also see the integration or connection of the existing train lines in Metro Manila - MRT, LRT and PNR - so it would be possible to travel all over the capital via commuter trains.

Mendoza, on the other hand, told reporters there are also plans to come up with a single ticketing system for the MRT, LRT and PNR lines.

The PNR and Metro Pacific also yesterday signed a memo-

andum of understanding for the possible construction of a highway above the rail lines that would connect the North Luzon Expressway to the South Luzon Expressway. The project will be easy to implement since there would be no right of way problems, he said.

There are also plans to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the SM group to run the stations in Metro Manila. (www.philstar.com) ■

Government to Boost E-Commerce Via Use of Digital Signatures

by Paolo ROMERO /
Wednesday, July 15, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - THE GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING AT INCREASING E-COMMERCE and online trading by beefing up security over the Internet through the use of digital signatures.

President Arroyo signed recently Executive Order 810 entitled "Institutionalizing the Certification Scheme for Digital

Signatures and Directing the Application of Digital Signatures in E-Government Services."

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said the EO will address growing concerns over the security and integrity of online transactions in the country.

Under it, all government agencies and instrumentalities are required to use digital signatures in their online services to ensure the confidentiality, authenticity, in-

tegrity and non-repudiation of e-government transactions, thus giving the transacting public the confidence and peace of mind they need in doing online transactions with government.

It is expected that many govern-

ment projects will be generated with the issuance of the EO, which means that more government services will become readily available and accessible online to the citizenry and the public. This will,

likewise, create various business opportunities for the private sector.

The government promised that it will have fully integrated services that will completely address the needs of the transacting public. DTI said e-government services that are secure, transparent, efficient and cost-effective will be available soon. This will make online transactions with government a truly pleasant and worthwhile experience.

Part of this is to stimulate the thriving and flourishing e-commerce environment in the Philippines to further promote the widespread use of e-commerce by the public and stimulate the growth of online businesses by en-

couraging businesses of all shapes and sizes to venture online.

The EOC cites the important roles of DTI and the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) in the certification scheme for digital signatures.

It designates the DTI, through its Philippine Accreditation Office (PAO), as the Accreditation and Assessment Body; the CICT's National Computer Center (NCC) as the Root Certification Authority (CA) and Government CA; and all government agencies and instrumentalities with e-government services as Registration Authorities (RAs). (www.philstar.com) ■

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■ PHILIPPINE NEWS FEATURE — Mad Scramble for Obama Trip

by Paolo ROMERO /

Thursday, July 16, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - CONGRESSMEN ARE IN A MAD SCRAMBLE to join President Arroyo's trip to Washington on July 30 to meet with US President Barack Obama.

Malacañang officials said they would try to dissuade "non-essential congressmen" from joining the President's trip to spare Mrs. Arroyo from criticism on the large number of her delegation.

Deputy presidential spokesman Gary Olivar, however, said the Palace could not totally bar lawmakers from joining Mrs. Arroyo's trips, as they are members of a co-equal and independent branch of government.

Olivar said it was not surprising that concerns about too many congressmen joining such trips at government expense have been relayed to them after criticisms of the President's foreign trips came out.

"Having said that, how much |

further can the Palace go beyond that (dissuading)? After all, the congressmen are from a separate and co-equal branch and if they comply with the requirement of the law... it's their call (to join the foreign trips)," Olivar said.

Officials said terrorism and climate change would top the agenda of the meeting.

Mrs. Arroyo will be the first leader from Southeast Asia to visit the US under the Obama administration, a White House statement said.

The White House said the two leaders will have "an opportunity to discuss ways to enhance US-Philippine cooperation on critical global issues, including counter-terrorism and climate change, as well as further the traditionally strong alliance and bond between our nations."

While in Washington, the President will also meet with key US government officials and members of Congress, private sector partners, business groups, and the Filipino community. (www.philstar.com) ■

■ PHILIPPINE NEWS



RP Ranked 8th Among Countries with Most Casualties from Disasters

by Marichu VILLANUEVA /

Wednesday, July 15, 2009

MALDIVES - THE PHILIPPINES RANKED

8TH among countries in the world with the most number of casualties due to tropical cyclones and other major disasters last year, according to the 2008 General Assessment Report (GAR) that the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) will launch in Manila next month.

The launching of the 2008 GAR was originally scheduled on Aug. 3 with Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro leading the ceremonies at the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) head office in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

However, the launch was tentatively moved to Aug. 7 or 8 when the defense chief, who is concurrent NDCC chairman, returns to Manila from Washington. Teodoro would accompany President Arroyo on a state visit this July 30.

US President Barack Obama has invited the President to a meeting at the White House to discuss counter-terrorism and climate change concerns, among other issues, between the two countries.

Teodoro is among the Cabinet members in the official delegation of Mrs. Arroyo in her meeting with Obama.

UNISDR senior regional coordinator Jerry Velasquez disclosed to The STAR that the UNISDR, which assisted the drafting of the 2008 GAR, was formally launched in Bahrain last May.

This was subsequently launched in Indonesia, Thailand, Iran, Samoa and Japan, which are among the top ten countries that recorded the highest number of casualties due to natural calamities.

China and Myanmar were the top two countries in the GAR last year due to the Sichuan earthquake and cyclone Nargis, respectively.

The GAR stated that disaster risk is not evenly distributed and that developing countries like the Philippines have a "highly disproportionate share of risk."

The GAR cited that Japan has approximately 2.5 million citizens exposed annually to tropical cyclones while the Philippines has 16 million.

However, the estimated annual death toll from cyclones in the Philippines is almost 17 times greater than that of Japan.

Velasquez explained that the launching of the GAR would trigger negotiations for bilateral and multilateral donations to assist the Philippines in improving its disaster prevention, response and mitigation measures.

Aside from the launching of the 2008 GAR, Velasquez said the international community has also been awaiting the Philippines' ratification of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

The document was signed by the foreign minister of the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Laos in 2005.

While nine of the ten ASEAN member states have already ratified this agreement, the Philippines has yet to enter formally and bind the country to the ASEAN pact.

The full ratification of the agreement by the entire ASEAN will automatically trigger the release of some \$15-million worth of funding assistance from Japan.

The instrument of ratification for this agreement is pending before the Senate committee on foreign relations chaired by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Sen. Loren Legarda, who is the UNISDR-designated "champion" for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, vowed here yesterday to prod her colleagues in Congress to work closely with the executive branch and put into a body of law the Strategic National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (SNAP), which shall provide direction and actions for reducing disaster risks in the country.

The SNAP bill, co-authored by Legarda and Sen. Rodolfo Blazón, seeks to establish a permanent government agency to replace NDCC to be known as the Disaster Risk Management. (www.philstar.com) ■



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No to Amnesty for Abu Sayyaf

by Paolo ROMERO /

Thursday, July 16, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - THE PROPOSAL TO GRANT AMNESTY to the Abu Sayyaf drew flak from various sectors yesterday as Malacanang said the move is "more unlikely than likely" to be considered.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had said Malacanang would carefully study the proposal of Sen. Richard Gordon, who claimed to have information that some Abu Sayyaf commanders wanted amnesty and livelihood assistance in exchange for laying down their arms.

Security officials led by Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and some members of the Cabinet security cluster, however, expressed opposition to the idea.

Deputy presidential spokesman Gary Olivar admitted the growing public opinion as well as the negative implications on the country's security ties with other countries could force Malacanang to reject Gordon's proposal.

Olivar said the strong objections were made even before se-

curity officials in Malacanang were to meet and study the proposal.

The Abu Sayyaf - or Bearer of the Sword - wrote its early history in blood, staging kidnappings, bombings and

beheadings to draw attention, recruits and funds from the al-Qaeda terror network of international fugitive Osama bin Laden.

The homegrown terrorist group is listed as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

Washington is helping the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in its campaign against the Abu Sayyaf.

"There appear to be interpretations that, legally as well morally, there seems to be little ground to stand on to give amnesty to a group like the Abu Sayyaf when some of its actions like the beheading of foreign citizens, the systematic use of ransom, don't seem to be consistent with any relevant political agenda," Olivar said.

He said nobody even considers the Abu Sayyaf as a political

group that could be granted amnesty, adding the proposal "seems objectionable to a lot of observers."

Indeed, Washington expressed yesterday its objections to the proposal.

US Embassy spokeswoman Rebecca Thompson said the Abu Sayyaf, like any other criminal and terrorist group, must be made accountable for their actions.

"In order to bring about the prosperous, peaceful and thriving future that we all want for Mindanao and for all Filipinos, there must be rule of law, and rule of law requires effective law enforcement and holding criminals and terrorists accountable for their actions," Thompson said.

She said the amnesty proposal would go against the Philippine government's policy against negotiating with terrorists.

Teodoro, for his part, said the Abu Sayyaf does not deserve fair treatment for their crimes.

"They have done so much damage knowingly to the country and to the people of Sulu. I feel the

advantages of any amnesty are far, far outweighed by the need to enforce the law in a consistent and firm manner," he said.

AGAINST POLICY

Teodoro said any talk of amnesty for the Abu Sayyaf would deal a serious blow to the counter-terrorism efforts of the government.

He said the proposal would only send the wrong signal to the international community observing the Philippines' government's efforts in battling the terror scourge of the Abu Sayyaf.

Teodoro said the proposal should be studied more carefully because of its implications on national security.

While being firm against granting amnesty to the Abu Sayyaf, Teodoro said it is not questioning the motive of Gordon who brought up the idea.

"I won't question the motives. It may be sincere. Let's give the benefit of the doubt that they are sincere and let's analyze the proposal objectively," he said.

Gordon, however, emphasized that now is the right time for the government to press forward and apply

a comprehensive solution aimed at ending armed conflict and kidnapping incidents in Mindanao.

Gordon said his proposal to grant amnesty to the Abu Sayyaf must be complimented with good governance and development projects as well as respect, understanding, and acceptance of Filipino Muslims.

"Amnesty should not be equated with being soft. Our bigger goal is to end decades of conflict and poverty in Muslim Mindanao. Amnesty is but part of the solution," Gordon stressed.

Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Avelino Razon Jr. also expressed his opposition to the proposal. Razon has been tasked by Malacanang to lead the review of the proposal made by Gordon.

"We have a policy in government that we are not supposed to negotiate with any terrorist group. The Abu Sayyaf group... is not fighting for any ideology. They are not really qualified because of the terrorist acts they have committed," he said.

Razon though stressed the final decision still rests on the Cabinet. (www.philstar.com)

PHILIPPINE NEWS

I Love the Filipino People - Vagni

by Mayen JAYMALIN /

Wednesday, July 15, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - DESPITE THE NIGHTMARE HE HAD GONE THROUGH, freed Italian Red Cross worker Eugenio Vagni yesterday said he is still willing to return to the country.

"If they ask me, why not? I love the Filipino people," Vagni said.

The 62-year-old engineer said he has already forgiven his abductors and called on them to go back to society and lead normal lives.

"You have kept me for six months and now I am free and alive. Now it's time to think of normal life," Vagni said.

He admitted though that there were times that he felt his life was in danger, but remembering that his wife and children are waiting for him kept him going.

"I meditate, think of the good times and my family. Hope to be free one day," he said when asked what were the things he did as a captive in Sulu jungle.

While in captivity, Vagni said he lived like his abductors, slept

without a bed and ate only fish and vegetables. He lost 20 kilos since his abduction last January.

He said his captors spoke to him only a few times because many of them do not speak English.

When told by his abductors that he would be released anytime, Vagni said he initially doubted it.

"They have told me that I am free for the past months so when they informed me I said sorry but I don't believe you," he said.

Vagni said he has not yet decided what to do next.

"After six months in captivity, I have lost something about myself that I have to get back. I have to find myself before deciding what to do," he said.

COURTESY CALL

Looking gaunt but renewed, he was escorted to the Palace for a meeting with President Arroyo by Italian Ambassador to the Philippines Reubens Fedele, Sen. Richard Gordon, Western Mindanao Command chief Maj. Gen. Nelson Allaga and Task Force Comet head Maj. Gen. Juancho Saban.

Vagni met and thanked the President for the government's efforts to secure his release.

The President welcomed him with a warm smile. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro joined Mrs. Arroyo in welcoming Vagni at Malacanang's Music Room.

"Good to have you back. Wel-

FEATURE



President Arroyo chats with freed hostage Eugenio Vagni at Malacanang

survived on scant meals of fish and rice, and longed for home near Florence with his Thai wife and daughter.

He appeared calm and composed, until the talk turned to football.

A journalist remarked that Florence's team, Fiorentina, has emerged champion. It was a joke — Fiorentina actually finished fourth in Italy's Serie A and so failed to win an important place in the European Champions League, a coveted event among legions of Italian sports fans.

For the first time, Vagni seemed to be riveted. "Yeah?" he asked. "Now please tell me because I don't know. I missed it for six months."

Fedele, who sat beside him, cut in. "Please don't say these things to a Florentino," Fedele said, smiling.

"If he finds out it is not true, he can have a very bad reaction afterward," the ambassador said in jest, then gave Vagni the real news and drawing the aid worker's anguished response. (www.philstar.com)

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LEGAL NOTES



by Reuben S.
SEGURITAN

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) have taken the first major step in the permanent retention of the immigration files of millions of aliens.

The immigration files, known as the A-files, document the history of the interactions between an alien and the U.S. government. They contain demographic information, photographs, birth certificates, marriage licenses, interview transcripts, and other re-

lated documents.

There are approximately 53 million A-files currently maintained by the USCIS. About 21 million of these files have been retired to the Federal Records Center.

The A-files were previously considered temporary records and could be disposed of 75 years from the date the files were retired to the Federal Records Center or 75 years from the date of the last action.

Under the agreement between the USCIS and the NARA, these A-files will be transferred to the National Archives' custody and become permanent records 100 years from the alien's birth date.

The first set of archival processing of approximately 135,000 files is projected to be completed by next summer and be available for public access.

The preservation of these

records is important because these are major resources to various researchers and scholars who would like to study the records and delve into the wealth of information on the rich heritage and contributions of immigrants to the U.S. They provide additional perspectives in studies on immigration history, government policy and diaspora.

These records are also of significant value to those wanting to trace their family genealogy and learn about their ancestors' personal experiences to immigrate to the U.S.

Access to these records is an invaluable tool in studying and charting out U.S. immigration policy and protocols.

For instance, an interesting footnote in history was discovered through the A-files concerning Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the pre-eminent founding father of the Republic of China. Inquiry into his records revealed that he once tried to gain access and seek refuge in the

U.S. by claiming that he was a "native-born Hawaiian." The discovery of his true identity had led to important debates and deliberations in view of the restrictions imposed under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

This is just a glimpse of what other important footnotes in history can be discovered through the A-files. The permanent preservation and access to these files will allow us the luxury of time and opportunity to look further into these.

From these historical archives, we are able to glean an array of images and voices of our predecessors who treaded their challenging paths in order to weave the colorful fabric of what is America today.

At present, access to the A-files is made though the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIA). A written request to the USCIS is needed as well as written authorization or proof of death of the immigrant.

The transfer to the National Archives will make the records available to the public either in the research rooms where they will be archived in Kansas City or San Francisco. Copies will also be available through mail. An index will be available to support research use. ■

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

Alien Files to Become Permanent Records

PHILIPPINE NEWS

Signal No. 1 Hoisted Over 3 Areas as 'Isang' Intensifies

by Dino MARAGAY /
Thursday, July 16, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - SIGNAL NO. 1 WAS HOISTED OVER THREE AREAS as tropical cyclone "Isang" intensified into a storm, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said today.

A TV report said Cagayan, Is-

abela and Northern Aurora were placed under Signal No. 1.

"Cagayan, Isabela and Northern Aurora will experience rains and occasional gusty winds and the coastal waters along these areas will be moderate to rough. The rest of the country will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming cloudy with scattered to widespread rains

over the western sections of Southern Luzon and Western Visayas," Pagasa said in its 5 a.m. update.

The weather bureau said "Isang" was last spotted 225km north northeast of Virac, Catanduanes. The storm currently travels at a speed of 17 kph and wind strength of 65 kph.

Pagasa also issued a warning to the public that landslides may occur in low areas due to heavy rains. (www.philstar.com) ■

World Bank Hikes RP Loan Package by 31%

by Ted P. TORRES /
Thursday, July 16, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - The World Bank (WB) has increased its loan package to the Philippines by 31 percent to over \$320 million in fiscal year 2009 "to help the country weather the effects of the global financial crisis."

In a statement, World Bank Philippines country director Bert Hofman said the new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) loan package will finance development programs and projects, including a quick-disbursing \$200-million fund for the Global Food Crisis Response Program Development Policy Operation.

The loan window supported the country's programs to address high food prices and strengthened social protection and safety nets for the poor, he said.

The World Bank's fiscal year



Director Bert Hofman

starts July 1 and ends June 30.

"Fiscal year 2009 was particularly challenging as the Philippines and the rest of the world were hit by shocks coming from the global food crisis and the global financial meltdown. With the new CAS, the bank is in a better position to help address the country's development needs as it battles the impact of the evolving global recession," Hofman said.

Additionally, he said another \$250 million to \$350 million can be put up by the International Finance Corp. (IFC), the private sector financing arm of the World Bank, as investments in development projects.

For the current fiscal year, IFC has committed investments worth \$183.5 million for two energy projects - the Ambuklao-Binga hydroelectric power facilities and Energy Development Corp. (EDC) - in support of the privatization of the Philippine power sector.

Under the CAS for fiscal years 2010 - 2012, the World Bank has committed \$700 million to \$1 billion per year to the Philippines on top of grants and a large program of analytical and advisory activities.

As of May 2009, the World Bank's total net commitments in approved and ongoing projects reached \$1.39 billion covering 24 active projects. (www.philstar.com) ■

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**ILOKO**

by Amado I. YORO

MAANGAY ita a Hulio 25, 26, 2009 ti tinawen a panagkombension ti UFCH iti Isla ti Molokai, kas panangipakaammo da UFCH president Eddie Agas, Sr., ken ni Benny Piros a Chairman ken Coordinator ti kombension. Ni met la Piros ti agadama a presidente ti Molokai Filipino Community Council, has host council ita a tawen.

Ita a surusurenenny daytoy, Hulio 15, manamnanga nga adu dagiti delegado nga aggapu iti nadumudama nga Island Councils: Oahu, Maui, Kauai, Big Island, Lanai, a mangibagi kadagit

nadumudama a gunglo iti sidong ti UFCH. Hulio 20 ti maudi a rehistrasian ti delegado.

Friendly Isle, weno man-

nakigayeyem nga ita isya mayna agaw iti Molokai. Dat a lonely isle.

Sukog palloko wenno Indian moccasin ti tabas ti Molokai. Ad-

daan iti 260 square miles a kalewana. 38 a milia a kaatidlog, 10 a milia iti kaakaba. Ti Mt. Ka-

makou ti katayagan a bantay iti kagontagon a 4961 a kapadap-

manipud iti sea level. White Kukui Blossom ti national flower, ti Kau-

nakakai ti sentro ken masao ita ngi ill. Adu a kadaaran ti agnaed itoy a puro.

"Umaykayo," ur-urayen-

dakayo," kinuna dagiti agawasa-

Benny ken Fely Piros. "Is-

agaanandakayo. Adda kuros, addan tagtugsa nga inyeq ni

kasisin," inyisem ni Benny.

(Daytoy ti sundot ti naudi nga ipapammi iti Molokai. UFCH con-

vention met la idi Hulio 25, 26, 27,

1997)

ITOY A KOMBENSION 2009,

dumar-ayto met li baro a Miss

Hawaii Filipina 2009 ken baro a Royal Court a mapili itoy Hulio 18

ti state pageant a maayang iti Hawaii Theater. Agasalip dagit

sunmagamad:

- Miss Oahu Filipina Rachel Pacarro
- Miss Big Island Filipina Shawny Richardson-Acoba
- Miss Maui Filipina Celina Macadangdang Hayashi
- Miss Kauai Filipina Tashana

Valmoja

Miss Molokai Filipina Ashley

Ringer Ponce

Ni Miss Maui Filipina Rhoda

Castillo ti agadama a Miss Hawaii

Filipina.

=====

1959.

Iddi dawaten ni UFCH president Eddie Agas, Sr., nga isaganami ti tallap ti gunglo, nupay adda panagkitakit, aglalo ket saankami nga autorizado, ngem gapu iti pagdayot ti maika-50 nga anibersario ti UFCH ita a 2009, manen, ibasarni dagiti agapademni ditoy kadagiti nabasa ken padas.

Circa 1921, addan dagiti immun-una a gimgom ngem saanda sa naugpat.

Ngem idi simmangpet ni Ambassador Juan C. Dionisio, Sr., idi Setembre 1959, babaen ti importasiomni, nadlawana a kasupulan ti komunidad ti maysa a grupo dagiti Filipino iti Hawaii.

MAINLAND NEWS**Judge Rejects Filipino Nurses' Claims in New York**

GARDEN CITY (AP) — A FEDERAL JUDGE HAS REJECTED discrimination claims filed by 26 Filipino nurses in New York.

The nurses said they were forced to quit their jobs at nursing

homes in New York City and suburban Long Island. They said agreements made about working conditions before they left their homeland were not honored by their US employers.

An administrative law judge

ruled June 30 that the resignations were not protected by federal immigration employment law.

The nurses' immigration attorney said he was disappointed the ruling was made without a hearing. He is considering an appeal.

Ten of the nurses had faced misdemeanor charges for endangering sick patients by quitting their

jobs at a nursing home in Suffolk County on Long Island, east of New York City. A state appellate court ruled in January that the prosecution was unconstitutional.

The nurses were recruited from the Philippines to help ease a staffing shortage in the US.

The case sparked outrage and protests in the Philippines over the way the nurses were treated by the company that hired them. ■

**Filipina-American Crowned Miss U.S. International 2009**

AILEEN JAN YAP, A FILIPINO-AMERICAN from Texas, was recently crowned Miss United States International 2009 and will represent the U.S. at the 49th Miss International pageant in Macau, China on November 7.

Yap is currently a junior at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas and is majoring in biology. Her parents are from Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines. Her dad is a psychiatrist, while her mom is a nurse.

Yap says her parents were influential in her decision to pursue a career in pediatrics.

"I've always wanted to be a doctor, after seeing how rewarding it is to be able to help someone in need," she says. "I want to specialize in pediatrics because I love kids. Being the second youngest cousin, I have a lot of nieces and nephews and being around them help me decide how much I really enjoy being around children."

Miss International is the fourth



largest beauty pageant in the world. About 70 contestants from all over the world are expected for the 49th edition of the pageant at the Venetian Macau Resort in Macau. The ultimate goal of the Miss International beauty pageant is to promote world peace, goodwill, and understanding. (American Chronicle.com) ■

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JUNE TO AUGUST—Overseas Absentee Voting Registration for Filipino citizens who wish to vote in the presidential elections in May 2010. Registrants may come to the Consulate in person with their Philippine passports to accomplish the application form.

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July 18, 2009 • 6 pm. • Tapa Ballroom, Hilton Hawaiian Village

CABUGAO, GLOBAL REUNION, FAMILY PICNIC / SUNDAY
July 19, 2009 • 9 am. • Kaneohe Beach • For details, call Al Sabanagan at 677-94-87 or 783-4678

FACEBOOK 101 FOR BUSINESS / WEDNESDAY
July 22, 2009 • Noon -1 pm • Maui County Business Resource Ctr • RSVP: 808-873-8247

OUTSOURCING AND CREATIVE FUNDING OPTIONS / THURSDAY
July 23, 2009 • Noon -1:30 pm • Maui County Business Resource Ctr • RSVP: 808-873-8247

SBA RESOURCE DAY / THURSDAY
July 23, 2009 • 9 am-3 pm • American Savings Bank, Hawaii Kai • RSVP: Kim Hite, 541-2980, X212

SBA RESOURCE DAY / TUESDAY
July 28, 2009 • 9 am-3 pm • Honolulu Federal Credit Union • RSVP: Jerry Hirata, 541-2980, ext 210

"STARTING A BUSINESS IN MAUI COUNTY" / WEDNESDAY
July 29, 2009 • Noon -1 pm • Maui County Business Resource Ctr • RSVP: 808-873-8247

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July 19, 2009 • 6 pm. • Hale Ko Hotel, Waikiki

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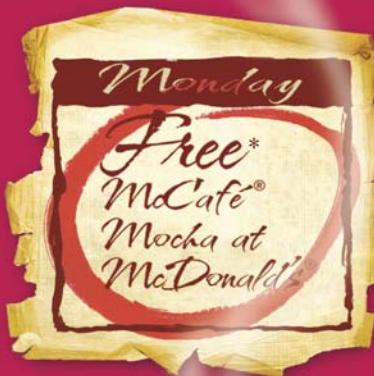
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