

HAWAII-PHILIPPINE NEWS EDITION

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HAWAII FILIPINO CHRONICLE

HAWAII'S ONLY WEEKLY FILIPINO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

REMEMBERING JOSE RIZAL

By HFC Staff

The Knights of Rizal-Hawaii Chapter will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the Philippines' foremost national hero, on Sunday, June 19, 2011.

Rizal was marched from his cell at Fort Santiago and shot by a firing squad on December 30, 1896. He was sentenced to death after the Spaniards found him guilty of rebellion, sedition and of forming an illegal association.

Members of the Knights of Rizal will gather on June 19 in Downtown for the unveiling of a special sign acknowledging the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Square. Last year, the Honolulu City Council passed a resolution renaming

part of College Walk as the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Square.

In the evening, the organization will gather at the Hale Koa Hotel's Waikiki Ballroom for the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Awards Gala. The highlight of the evening will be awarding of the Inaugural Dr. Jose P. Rizal Awards for Peace and Social Justice, sponsored by the Knights of Rizal and the Filipino Community Center. The award recognizes individuals whose lives and works embody the precepts and ideals of Rizal.

"The award is one way of recognizing Dr. Rizal's accomplishments and keeping his legacy alive," says Jun Colmenares of the Knights of Rizal. "We plan to institutionalize the award by keeping it an annual event. We felt that it is high time to honor individuals, Filipino or non-Filipino, who best represent the ideals of our national hero, and we believe that we have such individuals here in Hawaii."

Colmenares encourages the

(continued on page 4)



The iconic statue of Dr. Jose Rizal graces the eva end of College Walk in Downtown Honolulu

'Chedeng' Gathers Speed, Changes Direction

By Paolo ROMERO

MANILA, Philippines - Typhoon "Chedeng" (international name Songda) gathered speed as it changed direction Wednesday afternoon, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

PAGASA said in its 5 p.m. bulletin that the typhoon changed direction from west northwest to northwest. The typhoon gathered speed from 9 kilometers per hour to 15 kph, the weather bureau added.

The typhoon, located 310 kilometers east of Catarman, Northern Samar, remained strong with maximum sustained winds of 130 kilometers per hour and gusts of up to 160 kph.



Public storm signal number 2 remains hoisted over Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte and the three Samar provinces.

The weather bureau has included Quezon and Aurora provinces in the list of areas under public storm signal num-

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UH Filipino Undergraduates Earn Fulbright-Hays Scholarships

By Ruth MABANGLO

Three Filipino Language & Literature minors from the University of Hawaii-Manoa were accepted in the Advanced Filipino Abroad Program (AFAP) this year in a national search for participants. These students are Katherine Jumalon, Philip Cezar Sarmiento and Ritchilda Yasana.

The three UH students will join nine others from various colleges in the U.S. in



Katherine Jumalon, Philip Cezar Sarmiento and Ritchilda Yasana

receiving full scholarships and privileges from the U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant and Fulbright Hayes. The scholarships

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EDITORIAL

Victory for Taxpayers at 2010 Legislature

The top priority for Hawaii's state legislature was no different than any other in the country—to balance the budget with reasonable loss to government operations. The class of 2010 Hawaii lawmakers should be commended for accomplishing this, and most notably, having done so without increasing the income tax or State General Excise Tax (GET).

Legislators came into the session perhaps without the same enthusiasm as in the past knowing that their work this year would require making hard decisions, even letdowns via cuts to programs and holds on funding projects. Everyone knew what was to be expected but that didn't stop some interest groups from lobbying only to leave with fiscal uncertainties.

The State House in particular, under Speaker Calvin Say, provided the kind of leadership needed for Hawaii's working people during these trying times. From the very start, House leadership rejected the idea of raising the GET, while the State Senate left it as an option. Gov. Neil Abercrombie also sided with the people expressing his anti-GET hike stance. Due to massive public outcry from the community and businesses, the Senate finally folded, siding with the House and governor to forego raising the GET and passing instead another measure that will generate some \$600 million in revenues for the state. Even though Senate President Shan Tsutsui waived on the GET and suspension of exemptions, as a freshman at the helm, he deserves credit for standing against powerful interest groups that lobbied hard against the bill. We are encouraged that he will continue this type of "we-the-people" leadership over the interests of a powerful few.

Lawmakers' decision to suspend temporarily some businesses' general excise tax exemptions actually follows a nationwide trend federally and nationally, second guessing the soundness of extending corporate



exemptions while government operations face shutdown. The other alternative would be to raise taxes on citizens—a much more damaging and unpopular position.

The fact is these businesses are not unfairly targeted, but now are required to finally pay their fair share in GET as other businesses have been doing. No doubt that the lift on these exemptions will come at a cost to consumers by added expenses being passed onto them, but the impact should be less in scope and far less, relative to what consumers would pay for an across-the-board GET hike for the entire state, or worst yet, a boost on income taxes.

Kudos also should go to the many concerned individuals, media, community and business groups who were vigilant against the GET hike proposal. It was a concerted effort that bridged the gap among people of numerous political persuasions that we hope will continue. If the message wasn't clear enough, it must be reiterated that Hawaii residents at this moment are already being stretched too thin by work furloughs, frozen wages, unemployment, fore-

closures, rising costs of gasoline, health insurance, and most basic goods and services. A GET hike hurts businesses and should only be considered when the economy is back on solid footing.

Aside from this one major victory, the 2010 legislature was short in vision with no one singular bill that stands out (aside from the civil unions bill) of the 250 passed this year. In cooperation with the public, perhaps lawmakers must reexamine the fundamental role of state government. This would better enable them to focus their energy on areas that could be worked on with greater results. Otherwise, streamlining government operations, maintaining what's deemed "essential" at the time and searching for piecemeal revenue streams, as what occurred this 2010 session, will be the sole matters of business in the near future as we all wait for better economic days. We deserve better from our elected representatives. ■

Waiting for Approval

New Congress, new commitment to stamp out corruption? That's what the Anti-Money Laundering Council must be hoping for as it presses the 15th Congress to expand the coverage of Republic Act 9160 or the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001. The AMLC wants the law to include in its coverage more individuals, institutions and predicate

crimes particularly corruption.

Why was this crime—one of the biggest reasons for laundering dirty money—excluded from the coverage of RA 9160 in the first place? The inevitable suspicion is that some of the people who crafted the law had their own dirty money to protect from scrutiny by the anti-laundering police.

RA 9160 was passed mainly because the Paris-based Financial Action

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OPINION

President Obama's New Mideast Policy is Flawed!

SHOOTING STRAIGHT
by Bobit S. AVILA

tanyahu to do... embrace the new Obama Doctrine? That Israel expanded its original territories after the Six-Day War was due to the fact that it was attacked by the Arab nations surrounding it. Hence, that old adage "To the victors belong the spoils" no doubt has been applied in this case.

For the Israelis, it is a matter of survival that they have this buffer zone. Good thing for Syria and the rest, Israel stopped fighting after six days. They could very well have crossed into Syria and occupied it. But that's another story. Since then, the countries surrounding Israel have vowed never to recognize its right to exist. This is where the Obama Mideast Doctrine is seriously flawed. I fully concur that there should be a Palestinian State, but not at the expense of Israel because we will never see the end of this conflict.

I would like to believe that someday, there could be a Palestinian State side-by-side with Israel for as long as the Palestinians abandon its old and unacceptable policy of not recognizing Israel. A study of the Six-Day War that you can easily Google will give you an idea of how Israel had to fight all the Arab Armies surrounding it. So far, only Egypt and Jordan has signed a peace accord with Israel and that resulted in the return of the Sinai Peninsula that Israel also captured during the Six-Day War.

Let me say it here that when the Arab countries begin to recog-

nize Israel's right to exist then peace can finally come to the Middle East, then perhaps someday they would even return the Golan Heights. This is why US Pres. Barack Obama is wrong in putting a precondition the return to the borders prior to the Six-Day War as a starting point in peace talks. This shows Pres. Obama's naïveté and lack of knowledge of history.

I just couldn't believe that the Philippine government won't be filing any protest against the buzzing by Chinese Mig 29s of our rickety old OV-10 Broncos in Spratly Is-

lands. Sure, Malacañang says that this was in deference to the visit of Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie who is in town for an official visit. They are also saying that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are still working to get complete details of that incident. Come now, the reports from the OV-10 pilots say that they were buzzed by Mig 29s, what more details does Malacañang want?

Mind you, a formal diplomatic protest against foreign nations is our basic right as a nation to protect our sovereignty. If Malacañang refuses to make that protest in the

earliest possible time, it would be tantamount to telling the Chinese Air Force pilots to continue flying into Philippine skies. I'm just wondering if this was what the Aquino administration meant by its Open Skies Policy. Incidentally, if you didn't know, the OV-10 "Bronco" is a Counter Insurgency (coin) aircraft, which tells you that it had no business flying into the Spratlys where there is no insurgency there as it is mostly over water. This only shows that the Philippine Air Force (PAF) for lack of air assets is using the wrong aircraft for their reconnaissance missions. (www.philstar.com) ■

But let's not forget that the ancient past also included Israel. If you go further back into world history, you will note that almost half of Europe was under the Ottoman Empire (1289-1928), which was a Muslim dominated world. While it was one of the longest reigning empires, the Ottoman Empire, just like all the empires before it, also collapsed. The problem is, too many of us forget our history, which is why we are doomed to repeat them.

Enter US President Barack Obama last week ago mapped out his new Middle East Policy, stating amongst many other things that the starting point for talks between the Palestinians and Israel should follow the borders before the Six-Day War. Say what? What did you expect Israel Prime Minister Ne-

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

PICTORIAL NEWS

Former PNP General Visits Hawaii



Retired Philippine National Police (PNP) Gen. Francisco "Kiko" Altarejos (top row, third from left) recently visited Hawaii and met with several Filipino physicians. He formerly served as PNP's Director of Health Services at Camp Crame and is now in private practice as an orthopedic surgeon at UST and St. Luke's Hospital. The other doctors are (l to r-top) Richard Kua, Gavino Vinzon, Danilo Ablan and Cesar Palana. (bottom): Charlie Sonido, Edward Alquero and Ray Romero.

EDITORIAL

(cont. from page 2; WAITING ...)

Task Force had included the Philippines in an international blacklist of money laundering havens. The blacklist might have been ignored, but it made financial transactions and other business operations difficult in the Philippines. The government complied, but left so many offenses beyond the reach of the Anti-Money Laundering Council, including corruption, bribery and malversation of public funds.

The law excluded many other offenses such as hijacking, carjacking, human trafficking, violations of the Dangerous Drugs Act, forgery and counterfeiting, environmental violations and tax evasion. Also excluded was one of the concerns that inspired international cooperation against money laundering: terrorism and related offenses.

The AMLC found its hands tied further following a court ruling requiring subjects of an investigation by the council to be notified first before their bank accounts could be opened for scrutiny.

Recently the council again reminded Congress that amendments to RA 9160 are still waiting for legislative approval. Congress should not wait for international sanctions to be slapped on the country and affect business before acting on the proposals. (www.philstar.com) ■

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HEADLINES (CONT.)

(cont. from page 1; REMEMBERING ...)

Filipino community to submit its nominations for the award before May 15, 2011. The award is open to all Hawaii residents. Nominees may be a Filipino or non-Filipino, male or female but must have contributed to the promotion of peace and social justice in Hawaii or the world. Nominees must also show exceptional leadership, service and advocacy in the promotion of change through peaceful means, intercultural understanding, social justice and democratic principles.

Tickets for the event can be purchased by calling 864-5222.

FUTURE PLANS

In addition to the regular annual commemorations of Dr. Rizal's birthday (June 19) and death (December

30), the Knights of Rizal has undertaken several projects that promote the teachings and ideals of Rizal, including the following:

- A roving Rizal exhibit in public libraries
- Publication of materials on Rizal
- Donation of books on Rizal to public school libraries
- Participation in parades and other civic events
- Installation of the Rizal statue at the Filipino Community Center
- Installation of plaques at other Rizal monuments
- Sponsoring the Alay Kay Rizal Drama Fest at the University of Hawaii-Manoa
- Naming of the Dr. Jose Rizal Square in Downtown Honolulu

- Sponsoring the annual Rizal Youth Leadership Institute, and
- Sponsoring the annual Rizal Awards.

The Hawaii chapter includes in its ranks three of the top-ranking Knights of Rizal—Sir Ben Alibudbud, Ben Sanchez and Jun Colmenares, all of whom are holders of the Knight Grand Officer of Rizal (KGOR) rank. Sir Ben Alibudbud was a past member of the Supreme Council, while Sir Jun Colmenares was deputy area commander for the Western U.S.

In September 2011, the organization will host the 2nd Rizal Youth Leadership Institute, an annual leadership training workshop for high school and college students. About 52 young people, guests and

Knights of Rizal members attended last year's event which was held at Leeward Community College.

The Rizal Youth Leadership Institute emphasizes character building, democratic leadership, global citizenship and service to humanity. Last year's conference format included games, workshops, a simulation, youth participant presentations and short talks from guest speakers like Dr. Aquino, professor emeritus of political science and former Director of the Center for Philippine Studies at the UH-Manoa.

"If he (Rizal) were alive today, he would counsel the youth not to rest on their laurels but to continue their struggle against present injustices and inequalities which modern societies have created or imposed on subject populations," Aquino

says. She encouraged participants to carry on Rizal's noble mission and to keep it alive in their hearts, so that his supreme sacrifice and martyrdom would live forever.

"It is through initiatives like this Rizal Youth Leadership Institute, which will perpetuate the priceless legacies of Jose Rizal, whose mind and spirit are unequalled in the history of our nation, the Philippines, or in the history of any nation for that matter," Aquino says.

In December 2011, the Knights of Rizal will commemorate the 115th anniversary of the death of Rizal. And for 2012, Hawaii will host the 4th U.S.A. Regional Assembly and Conference, an event which is usually attended by Knights of Rizal delegates from around the world. ■

(cont. from page 1; UH FILIPINO ...)

include free airfare, tuition fee, board and lodging, books and other teaching materials, and the opportunity to visit Bulacan, a province north of Manila, and other historical sites in Metro Manila.

Jumalon is a senior student majoring in family resources. She has lived in Hawaii for more than 17 years, yet she feels that she did not have enough exposure to the Filipino language and culture.

"The opportunity to be a part of this program will benefit me in so many ways, but I think the most important is to learn about myself, my culture, and the place I came from,"

she says.

Sarmiento is a junior majoring in communications. He has taken numerous Filipino language and literature courses since his freshman year. As an AFAP scholar, he expects to hone his speaking skills in Filipino and to learn deep cultural knowledge about the country.

"I'm confident that my experiences as an AFAP scholar will tremendously help me in becoming more fluent in my native tongue and most importantly, I will be able to see my growth as person," he says. "It will definitely enable me to have a glimpse of what it is like to live again in the country that I left more than a decade ago."

Yasana is graduating this May with a Bachelor's of Arts in mathematics. She applied to AFAP because she is eager to learn more about the Filipino language, culture and history. Yasana expects the program to take participants' learning beyond the classroom and allow them to be in an environment where they can practice and experience what they have learned.

"I expect this experience to be challenging as well as rewarding. I look forward to the intense studying because I know that I will gain confidence in speaking Filipino. I will learn to show how to respect for the Filipino culture more and to appreciate amazing life experiences," she

says.

Now on its 20th year, the AFAP program will start on June 11, 2011 and end on August 6, 2011. The program's primary goal is to provide advanced instruction in Filipino language, literature, and culture to U.S. students. A combined formal and informal structure with total immersion experience defines the curriculum of the Advanced Filipino Abroad Program. It approaches learning the language from a thematic viewpoint that includes staying with local families to having "buddy-buddy" colleagues who will help them get by in the culture, to listening to educated native speakers of Filipino

talking of various topics. The whole Program is like an *ohana* directing all members to learning advanced Filipino in fun and enlightening ways.

With all the existing federal budget cuts, program directors Dr. Teresita Ramos, (UH Emeritus Professor) and Dr. Ruth Mabanglo (coordinator of Filipino and Philippine Literature Program) are apprehensive that next year's cycle might not be funded. Already, various national resource centers in the U.S. have withdrawn their support.

"We will still try," says Dr. Ramos. "We will apply to support students who like to learn Filipino in an immersion environment." ■

(cont. from page 1; CHEDENG ...)

ber 1. The other areas under signal number 1 were Marinduque, Masbate, Burias and Ticao Islands, Polilio Island, Biliran Island and northern Leyte.

Weather forecasters, meanwhile, clarified that the heavy rains felt in Metro Manila this afternoon was not directly caused by the typhoon.

Metro Manila may feel the effects of the typhoon by Saturday after it makes landfall in Aurora province, the weather bureau said.

Nearly 80 families have been evacuated from their homes in flood-hit areas in two villages in Taguig City while flooding has also been reported in areas in Pasig, Paranaque and Muntinlupa cities.

Local government units in Bicol and Eastern Visayas have been alerted earlier by the national

government against the weather disturbance.

Provincial authorities in Albay have already ordered the evacuation of at least 43,000 families, who are at risk from floods and landslides.

Landslides have also been reported in parts of Mindanao, but there were no reports of casualties.

ALERT UP

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), meanwhile, alerted all its units against the typhoon.

It has advised local risk reduction and management councils to advise local government officials to order pre-emptive evacuations of families living in low-lying and mountainous areas due to possible occurrence of landslides and flash-floods.

In his directive, NDRRMC



chief Benito Ramos reminded all units nationwide of the governments' zero casualties' target during calamities.

The Department of Public Works and Highway (DPWH) has also deployed quick reaction teams in provinces identified by PAGASA as critical areas including Western Visayas, Bicol, Cagayan Valley and Northern Luzon.

"PAGASA has already warned that there is a possibility that typhoon Chedeng may bring heavier rains compared to typhoon Milenyu, that's why we must double our efforts to assure the public safety and to assure immediate rescue and relief operation during calamity" Public Works Secretary Rogelio Singson said.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has also ordered its units in Eastern Visayas and Bicol to prepare for the typhoon.

PNP chief Director General Raul Bacalzo has also ordered the activation of the regions' Disaster Incident Management Task Groups (DIMG) in close coordination with civil defense authorities and local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (DRRMC).

Bacalzo also reminded police units to help in the evacuation of affected residents as well as in the deployment of personnel in evacuation areas to assist local governments and civil defense authorities.

Local police forces were also tasked to coordinate closely with

the DPWH and local government units for clearing operations and assistance in medical and relief operations.

Operations at Tabaco City RORO ferry terminals were suspended as early as Tuesday, stranding some 350 passengers and 11 vehicles.

Meantime, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in Sorsogon boosted its disaster preparation especially in the ports of Pilar, Bulan and Matnog towns, while repeatedly reminding seafarers to avoid sailing in rough seas.

Sorsogon PCG chief Ronnie Ong said that as early as 10 a.m. today, he already advised port officials in the three municipalities to suspend the departure of vessels.

He also stated that in the province has maintained partnership with local shipping companies and operators to provide assistance for rescue in the event of a sea mishap.

"We usually implement preventive and precautionary measures in the conduct of our operation specially those vessels that are about to depart are strictly made to undergo mandatory pre-departure inspection to see if these vessels are sea worthy and safe for carrying or transporting passengers," he said. (www.philstar.com) ■

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

City Council Honors Farrington Girls Water Polo Team

by Dennis GALOLO

THE HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL RECENTLY HONORED a small but tenacious group of Kalihikids for a memorial inaugural sports season.

Interestingly enough, Farrington High School's girls water polo team was not lauded for winning a state championship or a division title. In fact, they didn't win a single game. Instead, they were honored for their never-say-die attitude that not only carried them through a grueling season but also won over the hearts of legions of admirers and fans.

Their season began with 14 players whom Coach Eric Polivka convinced to try out for the team. However, only a few of them were experienced swimmers. When the girls found out how difficult of a sport water polo is, half of them quit. When the season started, they had only 7 players, which is the bare minimum required to play water polo—a sport that some say is the most physically-demanding of all.

NEVER QUIT

So how difficult is it to play water polo? Well, imagine having to swim for an entire hour as if you're being chased by a great white shark. That's just the beginning of a training session for most water polo teams.

You're constantly swimming, treading water and fighting for control of a very slippery ball. Opponents are grabbing your arms,



Farrington's Girls Water Polo Team (first row, wearing leets), Principal Al Carganilla (far left) and Coach Eric Polivka (second from right) receive an honorary certificate from members of the Honolulu City Council.

torso, swimsuit and legs. You get kicked, punched and elbowed under water, but no penalties are called because it's all part of the game. And there are no rest periods in water polo, unlike rugby, football or hockey.

Also, water polo is a sport that's best suited for taller, lankier players. By local standards, this means persons at least 5 feet, 9 inches tall. But most of Farrington's team was barely over 5 feet tall. Their smallest player, who stands 4 feet, 9 inches tall, is so small that some opponents confused her for the ball.

The girls were at a tremendous disadvantage but they still played their hearts out.

During the first game, two of the girls were so exhausted they threw up in the pool. Another girl was so exhausted that she had to float on her back and rest while the match continued. Others clung to the side of the pool and rested while the opponent scored point after point.

When they were short a player, Coach Eric would ask the other team to play rather than for-

feit the game. Opposing teams would even lend them players to give the girls more practice.

After awhile, the opposing teams' players and fans couldn't help but cheer for this determined group of girls from Kalihii. And something else happened—they began to get better!

Five games into the season, they scored their first point in a 2-1 loss to Aiea. In their final game of the season, they scored 7 points in a 16-7 loss to Castle. By that time, the girls could swim the entire game. They scored the most points they had all season and had a blast doing so. Their remarkable attitude captured the hearts and minds of many people who admired these Kalihikids who never gave up trying. Donations, letters of support and well-wishes poured in from everywhere.

One of their biggest fans was Principal Al Carganilla.

"It really took persistence, resiliency, extraordinary effort and courage to go through what they went through," he says. "They stuck it out the entire season. It's a

tribute to their determination and character to finish out the year."

Carganilla says that all too often, athletic greatness is based on wins and losses. In Farrington's case, the girls learned teamwork, overcoming personal fears and having pride in themselves, their school and the community—all of which overshadowed mere winning or losing.

"These young women will take these great values that they gained from this season with them forever. These lessons learned will be building blocks for them in any endeavor that they pursue," he says.

HONORARY CERTIFICATE

Upon reading about the team in a local media report, City Councilmember Romy Cachola decided to formally recognize their efforts with an honorary certificate presentation at City Hall.

"When I first read about these remarkable girls, I was amazed at how they persevered through adversity and never gave up," he says. "Many of us can identify with these girls. We know what it's like to face

the giants in our life or to struggle financially, especially in these trying times. I wanted to honor these girls because I too faced similar difficult situations in life."

As a newly-arrived immigrant to Hawaii from the Philippines, Cachola says he experienced cultural and language barriers while looking for a job. But he never gave up and even after landing his first job as a legal messenger for a financial institution, continued to work hard to improve himself.

"I looked for opportunities to advance myself," Cachola says. "I worked on Saturdays to manage the branch when no one else wanted and volunteered to cover for co-workers when they went on vacation. In a little over a year, I had learned everyone's assignments and went from a messenger to branch manager."

The Magnificent Seven are: Riezanne Bumanglag, Ashley Cambe, Jasmine Dela Cruz-Retola, Naren Diego, Marilyn Ganeulas, Jovelyn Luab and Nyein Sanboh.

Cachola says that Farrington's girls water polo team should serve as an inspiration for others who may consider themselves the "underdog" in the game of life.

"The next time you find yourself in a bind and you're forced to tread water just to keep afloat, I want you to think of these girls," Cachola says. "Sure, these girls are under-sized and overlooked. But they have learned an important secret in life—always try your best and never give up no matter what." ■

Results of 2011 Neighborhood Board Elections

THE CITY'S NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION OFFICE (NCO) released the results of the 2011 Neighborhood Board elections, which shows several Filipino candidates winning seats to various board across Oahu, including Chronicle's very own Danny de Gracia II.

De Gracia's 728 votes were enough to earn him a seat on the Waipahu Neighborhood Board No. 22. A partial list of other notable Filipinos who won their election include BayBee Hufana-Ablan, Roger Clemente and Roger Olegario (Pearl City); Marissa Capeluto and Jacinto Legal (Makakilo/Kapolei/Honokai Hale); Constante Domingo (Aliamanu/Foster Village/Salt Lake); Jason Espero and Ariel De

Jesus (Ewa); Luella Costales (Mililani Mauka/Launani Valley); Connie Herolaga, Edmund Alfonso, Lorraine Duhayonsonod and Emerito Saniantan (Waipahu); Rodolfo Ibay and Glorice Rone (Kalihii-Palama); Felipe San Nicolas (Kaneohe) and Lynn Vasquez-Dela Cerna (Aiea).

The voting period was from May 2-21, 2011. Eligible voters in districts with contested races received a passcode in the mail, which allowed them to cast a ballot online or over the telephone. Election officials estimate that the digital method of voting saved the City close to \$100,000.

A total of 13,269 voters cast a ballot, for a participation rate of 8.5 percent. This was up from 6.5 percent in 2009.

The level of voter participation

was welcomed news for NCO officials.

"Not only are we pleased that the voter participation rate rose, we cite Koolauloa's Subdistrict two's 22.7 percent participation rate as proof that the digital election method is viable," says NCO execu-

tive secretary Tom Heinrich.

The City's Neighborhood Board system consists of 33 boards across Oahu with 439 seats. Members are unpaid volunteers who attend monthly meetings and serve as advisors on community concerns.

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FEATURE

Pinoyos Find Happiness in World's Happiest Country

by Jeremiah M. OPINIANO

She found happiness in a region clutched in a drug trade. But Maricel Piniero discovered it not in acid-laden joys but in finding Filipinos, an extreme rarity in this Latin American country.

She blurted in Tagalog "dahil sa tuwa" (out of joy) when she saw several Filipinos who traveled 19,000 miles from Manila for a global conference at the posh Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, Colombia's capital. They were the first Filipinos Piniero met after leaving Manila 10 months ago. They were also the first she traded dance steps with at the lively Andres Carne de Res bar.

Piniero's disposition may lend credence to studies on overseas migration and happiness that says people from "unhappy" countries may be motivated to migrate to a "happier" country. Vice versa, people from happy countries are said to be less motivated to move elsewhere.

A 2009 study by U.S. researchers Linea Polgreen and Nicole Simpson noticed a unique result—the happiest countries had increasing emigration rates, as net migration rates increase in the happiness of the destination country.

Optimism has something to do with people's willingness to take advantage of better opportunities

overseas, the two theorized, using 24 years worth of data from the World Values Survey.

"One explanation is that migrants from happy countries are more optimistic than people in less happy countries and people in happier countries are more optimistic about life in general and the possibilities that exist outside of their country," say Polgreen and Simpson.

Even while insurgency prevails in Colombia and policemen are found on every street corner of the capital, surveys by the WVS Association, the Happy Planet Index by the new economics foundation and the happiness index by the Gallup World Poll, consistently showed that Colombia is a happier country than the Philippines. In contrast, data by the World Bank on international migration showed that the Philippines had more migrants and migrant remittances than Colombia.

PINIERO'S PINING

Frying pans and old wine bottles hanging on the ceiling swayed as Latin music filled the Andres Carne de Res bar. It was Piniero's first time here, which is 30 kilometers north of Bogota. She partied all night.

"Some of my friends here and in the Philippines love to dance, which I do, too," says Piniero, an



Anthropologist Maricel Piniero dances the night away with Philippine government official Dennis Arroyo at the Andres Carne de Res bar in Colombia. South America.

assistant professor at the Universidad de los Andes, which is equivalent to Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines.

She had been in Colombia for seven months but was unable to meet a compatriot—even in Catholic churches here. According to recent Philippine government data, less than 100 Filipinos are in Colombia. The government estimates 24,407 Filipinos, mostly contract workers, are scattered in 48 countries throughout Latin America, which includes Central America and the Caribbean.

"The region offers a lot of things that can make a Filipino happy—food, recipes, different fruits, Latin music and dance," says

Piniero, a Philippine-trained anthropologist.

UTILITY

Another reason for the optimism from overseas migrants may have to do with a person's aim for self-improvement. Migration decisions, according to Polgreen and Simpson, may see people compare their utility—i.e. talent, skills and income possibilities—of living in the home country with the utility of living abroad. Happiness then follows.

"If the utility of living abroad exceeds the utility of staying home net of migration costs such as distance, language, or the family left home, the person will move

abroad. Happiness captures something meaningful about utility," say Polgreen and Simpson.

Not that Piniero is lonelier in the Philippines. She admits to being homesick at times. But she is accustomed to traveling. Professional advancement brought her first to the U.S. and then to Ecuador, her first Latin American country sojourn.

After acquiring a doctorate from the University of Georgia in Atlanta, research projects in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador followed. Tucked out, Piniero went home to the Philippines and rested for a year until she secured a financially- and professionally-rewarding job as dissertation adviser of hers forwarded a job as assistant professor under the Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios sobre Desarrollo—the Universidad de los Andes' research arm for interdisciplinary studies in development.

Piniero's earnings alone reveal her utility as she occasionally sends money to her parents and siblings in the Philippines. For her, Latin America is an interesting region to be in.

"As an anthropologist, it's more satisfying to work in a country or culture different from our own," Piniero says.

Still, on the day that she was with compatriots who endured an over 30-hour plane ride to Colombia, Piniero and her countrymen were more than satisfied. And they partied all night in one of the happiest countries in the world—drug-free. (OFW Journalism Consortium) ■

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

Farrington Students to Compete in National Health Conference

Joseph M. Zobian, M.D.



Board-certified ophthalmologist
U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, Philippines
San Marcelino, Zambales
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WHILE MOST FARRINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS are enjoying a summer break, members of the school's Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Chapter are gearing up for a national conference next month in Anaheim, California.

Earlier this year, Farrington's HOSA Chapter won numerous awards and recognitions at the 2011 State Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSOS) Conference held February 23-24 at the Hawaii State Convention Center. In total, the Farrington Chapter garnered 21 medals and earned the right to represent Hawaii in the national competition this summer. A total of 24 Farrington students will participate in leadership workshops at the national conference and hopefully continue their winning streak.

The awardees include:

- Maureen Gante, 1st place, Dental Spelling
- Brian Lu, 2nd place, Dental Terminology
- Natalie Subia, 3rd place, Med-



Farrington students pose with their awards at the 2011 State Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSOS) Conference held February 23-24 at the Convention Center

ical Math

- Taylor Gabatino, 1st place, Extemporaneous Writing
- Stephanie Cacal, Xyra Gonzales, Zazare Jasmin, Mary Piso and Danica Simon, 1st place, Public Service Announcement
- April Fermin, 1st place, Medical Spelling
- Krizelle Magdirila, 2nd place, Medical Terminology
- Jarin Loristo, 2nd place, Medical Math
- Cristina Felicitas, 3rd place, Biotechnology
- Rose BacI-an and Aliene Invention, 2nd place, CPR/First Aid
- Melanie Takashima, 3rd place, Extemporaneous Writing

- Diana Simon and Gladly Baloran, 3rd place, Community Awareness
- Tere Membrere and Jiro Manog, 2nd place, Community Awareness
- Anessa Jones, State Historian

HOSA is a national organization whose mission is to promote opportunities in health care and ensure the delivery of quality care to all people. Farrington's Chapter of HOSA is currently in its fifth year. Its mission is to provide service to the healthcare and Kalhi community. In addition to competing in a variety of health-related events at the State CTSO Conference, Farrington students volunteer

(continued on page 7)



by **Atty. Emmanuel Samonte TIPON**

IMMIGRATION GUIDE

Bankrupt Alien Whose Wife is Pregnant Deported

Judges: the good, the bad, and the ugly."

The alien was the child of a father who was admitted to the United States by obtaining a visa by fraud or misrepresentation — telling the consul who interviewed him in connection with his visa application that he was coming to join his father in Hawaii although the father died more than 5 years earlier. There is a relief for this kind of fraud — in Section 237(a)(1)(H) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. This is discussed in a book I am also writing on the subject of Waivers.

The child was admitted as a derivative beneficiary. He was not charged with fraud because he never signed any paper making any misrepresentation nor was he inter-

viewed by a consul. He was charged with entering the U.S. without a valid visa. The government alleged that since his father's visa was obtained fraudulently and therefore void, the child's visa was perforce invalid. There is also relief for this visa problem — in Section 212(k) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. This is also discussed in the book I am writing. In addition Section 237(a)(1)(H) may also be invoked.

The difficulty is that all of these waivers or relief are not rights but are given only in the discretion of the Attorney General or his designee, the Immigration Judge. You need an excellent — not merely a good — lawyer to establish that you are entitled to a waiver or relief. The lawyer must be able to convince

the IJ that your positive equities outweigh the negative factors.

BANKRUPTCY A NEGATIVE FACTOR

In the case of this child, he had a number of positive equities — lived in the U.S. for more than 7 years, had a pregnant wife who was a green card holder but who stubbornly refused to apply for U.S. citizenship, had a U.S. born child, had a job, had no criminal record, and paid taxes. The only negative factor in his life — he and his wife had filed for bankruptcy. He had borrowed money to buy a car and then lost his job. He was advised by the usual ignorances that he could save his car by filing for bankruptcy. His car was repossessed anyway and now is car less. His wife testified that he had also borrowed \$6,000 to pay for a birthday party for their infant child and which they sought to be excused through bankruptcy. The judge was shocked at this display of extravagance and irresponsibility. He denied relief and ordered the alien deported. Actually, the \$6,000 was

sent to a relative in the Philippines who had a medical problem. Why the wife did not tell the truth is inexplicable. It would have looked better in the eyes of the judge if she had told the truth — it was used for humanitarian aid.

So they will move for reconsideration or appeal. Who knows what the outcome will be. They will need more money to pay an attorney. And suffer more mental anguish and anxiety. All because they did not tell the truth.

FORTHCOMING ARTICLES YOU WILL ENJOY READING:

Barack's "playboy" father's immigration problem - and how we could have solved it. Barack's buddy and Fil-Am nabbed in world's oldest profession reverse sting

(ATTY. TIPON has a Master of Laws degree from Yale Law School and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines. Office: 800 Bethel St., Suite 402, Honolulu, HI 96813. Tel. (808) 225-2645. E-Mail: flam-law@yahoo.com. Websites: www.MilitaryandCriminalLaw.com, and www.ImmigrationServicesUSA.com. Listen to the most witty, interesting, and informative radio program in Hawaii on KNDD at 1270 AM dial every Thursday at 7:30 a.m., rebroadcast at www.tlko.com.) ■

Have you ever heard of an alien with no criminal record who filed for bankruptcy deported? Especially one with a pregnant wife?

I just returned from London after attending the royal wedding of William and Catherine and this is the kind of news I hear. Incredible, but true. And ordered by a Judge whom I told last month I would place in the "good" category in my forthcoming book "Immigration

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

BBB Warns Public of Acai Berry Weight Loss Scam

THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU AND THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION are warning consumers to be wary of phony "news" announcements of free trial offers for online diet pills.

According to the FTC, millions of consumers are being lured to websites that imitate reputable news organizations. The "reporters" on these sites have supposedly evaluated acai berry supplements and claim that their products cause major weight loss in a short period of time with no diet or exercise.

In reality, the websites are deceptive advertisements placed by third-party or "affiliate" marketers. The websites are aimed at enticing consumers to buy the featured acai berry weight-loss products. These fake news operations are the subject of a nationwide law enforcement initiative.

Deceptive online ads for the acai berry weight loss products can be found posing to be from popular outlets like ABC, Fox News, CBS, CNN, USA Today and Consumer Reports. According to the FTC, the defendants collectively have paid more than \$10 million to advertise their fake news sites but have likely received well in excess of that amount in ill-gotten commissions.

In 2010, the FTC filed an action against acai berry marketer Central Coast Nutraceuticals which has an F rating with BBB. The company has been accused of decep-



Fresh Acai berries

tively marketing acai berry supplements as weight-loss products and "colon cleansers" along with a variety of refund and exchange issues.

"Fighting deceptive free trial offers online continues to be a game of whack-a-mole," says Dwight Kealoha, CEO of Hawaii's BBB. "As soon as one company is put out of business, it's replaced by another with the same model of ripping consumers off under the guise of a no-risk free trial offer. Before signing up for any free trial offer, read the fine print carefully and always check the company out with BBB. You'll save time and money by avoiding the hassle and recurring charges of some unscrupulous offers."

Consumers who believe they have been misled by a free trial offer can file a complaint online at: www.bbb.org. ■

(cont. from page 6; FARRINGTON...)

at the Blood Bank of Hawaii, for the Kalhi Business Association (KBA) Christmas Parade, at feeder schools and at Bishop Museum's Treat Street during Halloween.

A portion of the students' travel expenses are paid through state funds but unfortunately, about half of our state funding was recalled at the last minute, leaving students to make up the difference.

"We appreciate donations received from our alumni association, FAF and a few private donors, but are hoping for a few more generous contributions to alleviate our students' costs," says Judy Sadoyama, HOSA advisor.

If you are interested in sponsoring the students, please send your donations to Farrington High School, 1564 North King Street, Honolulu, HI, 96817. ■

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Quickie in Marseille

by Manny GONZALES, Plantation Bay Resort & Spa

MANILA, Philippines - When I mentioned to a European friend that I was going to Marseille, he rolled his eyes expressively. "Why?"

This is about the reaction you can expect from a lot of people, but if everything you know about Marseille is what you learned from The French Connection (in which it was depicted as a crime-infested Drug Dealers' Central), have I got news for you.

Thinking I was just going to rest a couple of days between a trip to Spain and a jaunt around Provence, I had booked my hotel blind, and was pleasantly surprised to find out that it was right on the edge of Marseille's Vieux Port (vyeuh-pohrr). This turned out to be the largest sailboat marina I had ever seen, the equivalent of maybe 10 soccer fields, a veritable forest of masts surrounded by a U-shaped boulevard that took almost an hour to walk around.

Within the Vieux Port, it is easy to forget that you are in France's second largest city, and easy to imagine that you are in a quaint seaside village which just happens to have about 2000 boats in its harbor (see picture).

On my first day, it was sunshiny but cold, so I just walked around the marina, enjoying the spectacle of sailboats gliding by with women on them who probably would have looked great topless, but regrettably were wrapped up in thick coats. The U-shaped boulevard, which annoyingly keeps changing name (Quai de this, Quai de that), was lined with bars, cafés, and hotels. It soon became clear that absolutely the thing to do in Marseille on a chilly spring day is to sit at a sidewalk café, order a beer (a coffee would ice up in minutes), and face the sun with as much of your body as possible.

So I did.
 For people with more sophisticated literary leanings than The French Connection, Marseille is also associated with Alexander Dumas's novel The Count of Monte Cristo, the story of a man who is unjustly imprisoned, escapes, recovers the fortune a fellow-prisoner had told him about, and slowly gets even with everyone who was mean to him. (At least, this is what I gathered from the Classics Illustrated comic book; the actual novel comprises two thick volumes, and I had better things to do in my adolescent years.) Most French people claim that they



The Vieux Port of Marseille is about the size of 10 football fields.

read it. You may wish to take such claims with a grain of salt.)

Anyway, in the book the protagonist was supposedly imprisoned in the Chateau d'I, which despite being called a chateau is actually Marseille's answer to Alcatraz — a prison on a small island several miles from shore. Provence, of which Marseille is a part, used to be an independent kingdom but then got gullied into joining France, so the people of Provence always had an uneasy relationship with the central government. Hence, the Chateau d'I and several other fortifications in the area were built by French kings not to defend Marseille, but to control it. This policy ended when Louis XVI got guillotined.

The Chateau d'I is accessed

by ferry, and it is totally worth the journey. The island is surrounded by the clearest water you ever saw, and the prison itself, though there is not much to it, is full of helpful signs — "the cell where General Kleber's body was kept for two years, slowly decomposing" and has TVs scattered around, apparently playing every single movie version of The Count of Monte Cristo ever made, including one (I think) in Bulgarian. The only trouble with d'I is that it is not dark and depressing enough, this being the South of France after all.

Another cruise you can take from the Vieux Port is the Calanques (kuh-LANK) tour. Being both enterprising and gullible, I took it.

The Calanques are coves — indentations in the coastline. Now,

guidebooks and cruise advertising posters will try to give you the impression that a calanque is just like a Norwegian fjord, except for being in France. (A fjord is a deep and long inlet that was carved by glaciers, and most fjords are pretty substantial geographical features — just look at a map of Norway.) Well, I can now tell you that if a calanque is a fjord, it is a junior fjord. A very junior fjord. A fjord dropout, if you will. Some of these calanques were barely wide enough to beach a rowboat. A few were a little more extensive, but honestly, several orders of magnitude removed from Norwegian proportions.

However, the Calanques tour takes you all through Marseille's harbor, which has forts, an old palace, and heaps of interesting sights, and then takes you to rugged coastlines that sort of look like the Isle of Capri, at a much cheaper price. Therefore, I also recommend this boat ride — just don't expect fjords.

Instead of jostling for seats in the front, as I foolishly did, find a nice quiet seat in the back. Not only will you be able to move around without climbing over fat ladies sitting on the deck, you will also be closer to the toilets. Bring a sandwich and a Coke, as the cruise takes three hours and they don't serve anything on board. Guidebooks should tell you useful stuff like this; you're welcome.

(continued on page 10)

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

China Builds More Spratly Outposts

by DJ STA. ANA, News5/
Tuesday, May 24, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - CHINA HAS SET UP MILITARY GARISONS and outposts within Philippine-claimed territory in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Documents and photographs obtained by News5 show that the military garrisons and outposts are located on six reefs that are part of the Kalayaan Island Group. Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam are claiming the Spratlys either entirely or in part. The Spratly Islands are located within an area of 150,000 square miles and are made up of some 200 islands, reefs and shoals.

The Aquino administration is expected to push for diplomatic solutions to the dispute as well as joint economic development of the area. But a political analyst said Manila should not surrender its sovereignty and should turn to the international community for help.

The Philippines is claiming only a portion of the Spratlys, known as the Kalayaan Island Group, located in a 64,000-square-mile area and made up of 54 islands, reefs, and shoals.

Included in the Kalayaan Group is Pagasa, also known as Thi Tu Is-

land, the second biggest island in the Spratlys. The Philippines has an airstrip and maintains a small community on Pagasa Island as well as garrisons in eight other islets.

Vietnam occupies 23 islets while China and Malaysia occupy seven each.

The Kalayaan Island Group is part of the province of Palawan and is within the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

Documents show that of the seven Chinese-occupied islands, six are located well within the Kalayaan Island Group. The military garrisons and outposts were located at Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef, Calderon (Cuarteron) Reef, Gaven Reef, Zamora (Subi) Reef, Chigua (Dong Men Jiao) Reef and Panganiban reef, better known as Misicof Reef.

At Kagitingan Reef, China built a permanent communications and maritime observatory garrison that can house 200 troops. China built a helicopter landing pad, a 300-meter long wharf allowing supply ships and patrol boats to dock, a two-story barracks and a 500-square meter plantation area. Beijing designated the Kagitingan Reef as its main command headquarters as it is equipped

with satellite data transmission,



Chinamen in Kalyaan

surface and air search radars. This garrison is armed with at least four high-powered naval guns and several gun emplacements.

China built permanent reef fortresses and supply platforms at the Calderon, Gaven and Chigua reefs. These supply platforms can resist winds up to 71 knots and are equipped with VHF / UHF communications equipment, search radars as well as naval guns and anti-aircraft guns. These three supply platforms can also serve as docks for Chinese navy patrol boats.

At Zamora Reef, China has built a permanent reef fortress and supply platform that can house 160 troops. This garrison has a helipad and is armed with four twin barrel 37-millimeter naval guns.

Documents also show that China has built up its facilities at Panganiban Reef. In 1995, Manila and Beijing had a diplomatic dispute

when China started building structures on the reef. At that time, China said the structures were shelters for its fishermen but questions were raised as the "shelters" were equipped with satellite communications and radars.

Panganiban Reef now has four building complexes with 13 multi-story buildings. Fifty Chinese Marines are permanently stationed there and are equipped with satellite communications equipment. China has undertaken several lagoon construction activities at Panganiban Reef. The construction of additional facilities at Panganiban Reef is apparently aimed at establishing pre-positioned bases in the South China Sea, enabling Beijing to project its influence and power in the disputed islands.

Documents also show that apart from the military garrisons and outposts, China is aggressively pursuing large-scale maritime projects aimed at cementing its claim on the Spratlys. These projects include construction of port facilities, airports, navigation buoys, light-houses, ocean observatories and maritime meteorology networks.

President Aquino had recently voiced the idea of claimant countries jointly developing Spratlys' resources - and sharing in the benefits. Defense Secretary Voltaire

Gazmin says this a "good idea," adding that a good neighbor policy may be the best way to resolving the dispute.

"The proposal of the President is why don't we come up with some sort of consortium where all the claimant countries are putting up their resources for a particular project in these areas?" Gazmin explained. "For whatever proceeds we get - we divide, we share equally, which is a very good idea."

But Gazmin said this was just one idea of the President. "It's just one of his (President Aquino) ideas."

"If that is one way of resolving the issue peacefully and at the same time earning from it, not fighting but earning and sharing resources - I guess that is a friendly neighborhood," he said.

Gazmin said any "intrusions" into the Philippine territory would be dealt with diplomatically.

Last March 2, 2011, Manila filed a protest over China's alleged intrusion into Philippine waters where Chinese Navy patrol boats "harassed" the MV Veritas Voyager, a Philippine oil exploration ship.

Political analyst Dindo Manhit of Stratbase stressed Manila should not surrender its sovereignty. While admitting the Philippines is militarily weak, Manhit said Manila can turn to the international community to exert pressure on China or any other claimant country. (www.philstar.com) ■

Jobless Pinoys Now 11.3 M

by Helen FLORES/
Tuesday, May 24, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED FILIPINOS ROSE by 1.4 million to 11.3 million in March from 9.9 million in November last year, according to the latest survey by polling firm Social Weather Stations (SWS).

This is a 3.7 percentage point increase to the unemployment rate of 27.2 percent in March from 23.5 percent in the previous quarter. On a year-on-year comparison, the unemployment rate rose a tenth of a percentage point in March from 27.1 percent in March 2010. SWS conducted face-to-face interviews on 1,200 representative adults aged 18 years old and above from March 4 to 7.

The latest National Statistics Office's Labor Force Survey showed that the country's unemployment rate rose to 7.4 percent (2.9 million) in January from 7.3 percent (2.8 million) in the same period last year.

SWS said unemployment has been high since May 2005. It fell below 20 percent only three times—the last time was in September 2010 when the rate was 18.9 percent.



Jobless Filipinos trying their luck in a jobfair

The two surveys conducted by SWS showed that adult unemployment was primarily composed of those who quit their jobs or were re-trenched.

Nine percent of the present unemployment rate were composed of people who had lost their jobs while 10 percent had voluntarily left work. Seven percent were first-time jobseekers.

Of the nine percent who lost their jobs, seven percent did not get their contracts renewed, one percent belonged to companies that stopped operating, and one percent were laid off.

SWS defines unemployed persons as those who are "not working and at the same time looking for

work."

Since 2005, the official definition of unemployment has been persons who are disposed to work and are actively looking for employment.

Not included in the definition are persons available for work but are not actively seeking jobs for reasons such as tiredness/belief no job is available, awaiting results of an application, temporary illness/disability, bad weather and waiting for rehire/recall.

The SWS survey, published in the newspaper BusinessWorld yesterday, has sampling error margins of plus or minus three percentage points for national and plus or minus six percentage points for area percentages. (www.philstar.com) ■

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

DepEd: Achievement Rates of Students Declining

by Rainier Allan RONDA/
Thursday, May 26, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - **THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DEPED) BARED YESTERDAY** the declining achievement rates in the past years of elementary and high school students nationwide.

Education Secretary Armin Luistro presented graphs showing a downward trend representing achievement levels and survival rates of elementary and high school students. The graphs were part of his report on the state of basic education at the National Education Summit held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati.

DepEd records showed a declining achievement level of elemen-

tary and high school students based on National Achievement Tests (NAT) results from 2005 to 2010.

DepEd, with the support of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), held the education summit to give education stakeholders the state of basic education, higher education and technical-vocational education in the country as it presents solutions and reforms it seeks to implement in the next few years.

NAT results of high school students from 2005 to 2010 showed that the mean percentage score (MPS) of students dropped from school year 2007-08, which posted an MPS of 49.26 percent, to 47.40



percent in 2008-09, and down to 46.30 percent in 2009 to 2010.

For the elementary achievement test results, negligible gains were made with low MPS results of 64.81 percent in 2007-08, 66.33 percent in 2008 to 2009, and 69.21 percent in 2009 to 2010.

The cohort survival rate or the percentage of students that made it

to the next higher level in both elementary and high school levels also declined from 2007 to 2010.

For the elementary school level, the cohort survival rate went from 75.26 percent in 2007-08 to 75.39 percent in 2008-09, and back down to 74.38 percent in 2009 to 2010.

For the high school level, the cohort survival rate went from 79.91 percent in 2007-08, 79.73 in 2008-09, and down to 78.44 percent in 2009 to 2010.

Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio said that the DepEd and CHED should take a closer look at the statistics from which it should present the true sad state of neglect of education in the country.

"In previous years, we have always heard rosy statistics from DepEd about the supposed improving achievement levels. Now, we see the true picture of the ugly state of affairs," Tinio said.

"These are bleak statistics that should be highlighted to force the government to take more drastic action to arrest the deterioration of the state of education by allotting more resources to education in the next few years," Tinio said.

Luistro also presented their Ambitious K (Kindergarten)+12 Basic Education Curriculum program as one of their main solutions to improve the learning competencies of Filipino graduates and raise their chances of getting employed. (www.philstar.com) ■

No More Question on God and Religion in RH Debates - Lagman

by Paolo ROMERO
Thursday, May 26, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - **PLENARY DEBATES OVER THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (RH) BILL AT THE HOUSE** of Representatives went out of control as these touched on other issues that included God and religion. House Minority Leader and Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman lamented yesterday.

Lagman said he would no longer entertain those questions, which is the reason why he gave up on the arguments of his colleagues questioning the RH bill.

"I have tolerated this line of questioning for some time but there has to be an end to questions which are not relevant to the issue at hand," Lagman told a press conference.

Lagman, principal author of the RH bill, made the statement after being grilled for more than an hour

on Tuesday night by Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia who contends the bill runs counter to beliefs of the predominantly Catholic Filipinos.

Lagman said Garcia's "perorations" not only talked about God but also touched on "imperialism."

Lagman, who still has to debate with more than 30 anti-RH bill lawmakers, said he was expecting questions on the constitutionality of the measure, on the issue of public funds, and the issue of abortion.

"These are the questions we should answer to educate the public as well as convince those who have reservations on the bill," he said.

The debates on the measure continued last night with Lagman refusing to debate any further with Garcia.

An exasperated Lagman simply sat down and asked Alagad party-list Rep. Rodante Marcoleta to take his place.



Rep. Edcel Lagman

Garcia, however, did not interpellate. He said he would still wait for Lagman to take the podium.

The debates on Wednesday became heated when Lagman decided he could no longer answer more questions.

"Is your honor saying you are allergic to God?" Garcia further grilled Lagman.

"I am not allergic to God. I am allergic to your uncalled for homily," the Albay lawmaker retorted.

Garcia pressed Lagman whether the opening prayer in the House was a mere lip service or if God was absent in the chamber.

"I believe Mr. Speaker that the honorable congressman from Cebu would want me to say something against the Church that would force my excommunication," Lagman said.

"If, by defending this bill, I

would be excommunicated, then so be it. I am a Catholic, but I believe the state has the right to legislate laws that would benefit the people. This country is under God," he said.

An official of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) said the Catholic Church does not need to excommunicate Lagman.

According to Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes, the Albay lawmaker has already separated himself from the Church.

"We do not have to excommunicate him. Christ will excommunicate him. He is excommunicating himself by doing that. That is automatic by himself. We don't give him the honor to make him excommunicated. By doing that, he is already separating (himself) from the Church and of the teachings of Christ," Bastes said.

Bastes said Lagman should not take it against the Catholic clergy if they use the pulpit to speak against the RH bill.

"All the priests, all the bishops in the Philippines are using the pulpit to preach the truth. It is our duty, whether he (Lagman) likes it or not. He is feeling sick already because he is allergic to the homilies of the priests," Bastes said.

Lagman earlier told the press

conference that the increasing unemployment in the country "clearly exposes the detrimental effects of a lack of a comprehensive policy on reproductive health and family planning on our people."

"This development should spur Congress to finally enact into law the reproductive health bill because there are empirical data which document the links between high fertility and resulting population growth to persistent poverty and wage stagnation in developing countries like the Philippines," he said.

Lagman explained that based on research conducted by respected economists Ernesto Pemia and Aniceto Orbeta, rapid population growth expands the labor supply and this will translate into either a decline in wages or an increase in unemployment if there is no commensurate increase in employment opportunities.

He also cited a World Bank study that showed rapid population growth is likely to depress wages at the bottom end of the pay scale in developing countries where there are disproportionately high levels of fertility among the lowest income groups.

"This means workers in the lowest economic quintile who are precisely the ones who are already the most impoverished would also be the ones most affected by falling wages," Lagman said. (www.philstar.com) ■

Human Trafficking Case Prevented in Manila

by Aurea CALICA
Wednesday, May 25, 2011

MANILA (Xinhua) -- **THE PHILIPPINE AUTHORITIES RESCUED 54 WOMEN** illegally recruited for housekeeping jobs in Qatar and Syria on Wednesday, foiling a human trafficking plot.

These women, who were kept at a house in Singalong, Manila, claimed a Syrian national was behind the illegal recruitment operation, Vice President Jejomar Binay said.

The women were recruited by different agents based in Philippines' Visayas and Mindanao regions.

"I am glad that we were able to prevent our countrymen from leaving our country and falling victim to illegal recruitment," said Binay, also Presidential Adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) affairs.

He said that some of the women were supposed to be deployed to Syria where there is a prevailing deployment ban due to political conflict.

"Under these conditions, we

cannot allow them to leave the country. It is our duty to ensure and protect their well-being," Binay said.

"Once again, I call on all Filipinos to be vigilant and not to let themselves be victimized," Binay added.

It is reported that a significant number of Filipino men and women migrant workers are subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude worldwide in factories, construction sites, and as domestic workers in Asia and increasingly throughout the Middle East. (www.philstar.com) ■

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LEGAL NOTES

Switching Jobs Amidst the Visa Retrogression



by Reuben S. SEGURITAN

more and the new job is in the "same or similar occupational classification" as the job for which the employment-based immigrant visa petition (EB1, EB2 or EB3) was filed.

The 180-day period refers to calendar days and begins from the date the I-485 application was received by the USCIS according to the receipt notice.

The "same or similar occupational classification" condition is a little less black and white. A recent guidance from the USCIS dated April 7, 2011, clarified that in determining whether this requirement is met, the USCIS will look at the totality of the circumstances and compare several factors. These factors include but are not limited to the job duties of both positions, the SOC codes for the position in the I-

140 petition and for the new position, and the wages associated with each position.

The SOC code pertains to the Standard Occupational Classification system used by the Department of Labor in grouping and classifying jobs and occupations. Occupations are generally categorized on the basis of type of work performed, as well as the skills, education and training required to perform the job. There are currently 840 detailed occupations under which all workers fall. These are categorized into 461 broad occupations, 97 minor groups and 23 major groups.

As an example, a physical therapist position is assigned the SOC code of 29-1123. The first two digits [29] represent the major group of healthcare practitioners

and technical occupations (which group includes health technologists and technicians); the third digit [1] represents the minor group health diagnosing and treating practitioners (which includes physicians, pharmacists and dentists); the fourth and fifth digits [12] refer to the broad occupation of therapists (which includes occupational therapists and speech pathologists); and the last digit [3] represents the detailed occupation of physical therapists.

The USCIS has said that it will analyze the SOC codes of the two jobs without necessarily matching any particular order of digits in the two codes.

According to a 2005 USCIS Memorandum on AC21, a "substantial discrepancy" in the wages of the two jobs may be a contributing factor in a denial when the evidence is considered in its totality, but officers are advised not to deny a case

solely on the difference in wages. Where the employee did not change employers but accepted a different position or received a promotion or demotion, the guidance states that the job duties must be sufficiently similar. The USCIS said that it will evaluate these situations on a case-by-case basis and with consideration to the totality of the circumstances.

Sometimes, both the I-140 petition and I-485 application remain pending for 180 days or more after they are concurrently filed. In such a case, the worker is not automatically entitled to portability. The USCIS must first review the I-140 petition and see if it is, or would have been, approvable, before adjudicating the I-485 application to determine if the new position is the same or similar occupational classification. ■

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

Immigrant workers facing significant backlogs in their adjustment of status applications (I-485) because of the visa retrogression may change jobs when certain eligibility requirements are met.

These requirements are spelled out under the American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act (AC21) which was passed in 2000. The I-485 application must have been pending for 180 days or

MAINLAND NEWS

Bantay Bata Caravans Through California

AJ PRESS
Wednesday, May 25, 2011

REDWOOD CITY—THE ABS-CBN FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL'S FLAGSHIP PROGRAM, Bantay Bata (Child Watch), caravanned through California with stops at Redwood City, Vallejo, Los Angeles and two Southern California hospitals. The caravan was led by its executive director - journalist and philanthropist, Tina Monzon-Palma, who met with Filipino American organiza-

tions around the state and lead donors to the nonprofit.

ABS-CBN Foundation International President, Robbie Fabian, hosted the kick off at the TFC Studios in Redwood City. "Bantay Bata has attracted all sorts of donors from all over the country, like one of our lead donors, 12-year old Hannah, of Virginia," shares Fabian. "The plight of children is one that speaks to every family because as Hannah so poignantly stated, "no Filipino child should die of hunger."

The Filipino-American commu-

nities in Vallejo, Los Angeles and Southern California hospital also hosted the nonprofit, bringing celebrity supporters Becca Godinez, Bernardo Bernardo and Martin Nievera.

"Pacific Health Corporation supports Bantay Bata because 60% of our employees in all four hospitals and two psychiatric campuses are Filipino American," says Erol Santos, Director for Community Outreach of Pacific Health Corporation. "Our President and CEO, Mr. George Hopf and our CRO and CFO, Mr.

Michael White take what's in the hearts of our employees, as part of the vision of the business. Bantay Bata will be their first community building involvement and we hope the greater corporate community and their employers will follow our platform of community partnership."

Bantay Bata continues to be the biggest advocate for poor children and their families in the Philippines. In 2010, national hotline, Bantay Bata 163, received an average of 43 rescue calls a day. Approximately 6,000 children needed emergency medical attention, rescue or immediate home visit. The program also provided scholarships, family counseling and therapy, including legal intervention to about 328 families in crisis.

Over the years, child abuse prevention campaigns, seminars and trainings have proven to reduce the incidence of child physical abuse. These workshops on child and family welfare and laws have increased community advocacy for poor children and their families and have been brought to many cities, including Cebu, Mandaue, Pangasinan, Manila, Camarines Norte and Leyte.

"Filipino-Americans are great examples of our best quality as a people: our generosity and compassion for our neighbor. Bantay Bata is proud to see, first hand, what this kind of love looks like all over the world," says Fabian.

To learn more about Bantay Bata and other programs of the ABS-CBN Foundation International, visit www.abs-cbnfoundation.org, (www.asianjournal.com) ■

Ambassador Cuisia Congratulates Filipino Teachers on their Sound Advocacy and Unity

PHILIPPINE EMBASSY
Wednesday, May 18, 2011

WASHINGTON, DC - AMBASSADOR JOSE L. CUISIA, JR. MET THE FILIPINO TEACHERS in Prince George's (PG) county and congratulated them on the unity they demonstrated and strategic action they have taken in addressing the policy of Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) on the status of international teachers.

The Ambassador welcomed the recent decision of PGCPS to rescind its policy of making a determination on the renewal of visas of international teachers based on their certification in a critical or non critical subject area. This policy issued in March would have led to the loss of jobs of many Filipino teachers in PG County and consequently, their work visas.

"I am very pleased to hear about this good news. From the be-



Ambassador Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. (fourth from left) congratulates the President of the Filipino Educators Network (PEN), Carlo Parapara PhD (rightmost), and PEN officer Millet Fanga (second from right). (Photo courtesy of PEN)

ginning, the Embassy monitored this issue and explored ways on how to help the teachers. We commend our Filipino teachers for the unity they have shown and for the swift and deliberate action by which they have approached this case," the Ambassador remarked.

PEN led the Filipino teachers in consolidating their position and resources to assert their rights and mitigate the impact that the county decision would have brought to the teachers and their families. They sought the assistance of Delegate Kris Valderama who arranged a di-

alogue between the teachers and PGCPS. The successful campaign of the teachers was a true community undertaking as they were also assisted by the PG County Educators' Association, the lawyers in the Filipino-American community and the Embassy of the Philippines, among others.

In his letter to PEN, PGCPS Superintendent Dr. William Hite further committed, "...we will continue to sponsor teachers as long as they meet the other necessary requirements without regard to assignment or certification." (www.asianjournal.com)

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FOOD & LEISURE

Name that Tuna at IFEX

by Evelyn MACAIRAN

MANILA, Philippines - The health benefits of tuna have been highlighted the world over and it's been included in diet regimens in the past years. Tuna contains Omega-3 fatty acids like DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) and EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid) that are found to lessen the risk of cardiovascular diseases by decreasing triglyceride levels, slowing the growth rate of atherosclerotic plaque, and lowering blood pressure. An excellent source of protein, tuna is likewise packed with selenium, magnesium, potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, niacin, and folic acid.

The Philippines is ranked as the 5th largest producer and a premier source of tuna in the world.

KM Food Products, a family-run enterprise based in General Santos City, manufactures innovative value-added tuna products without monosodium glutamate (MSG) and artificial coloring. With the health of consumers as their topmost consideration, KM Food Products avoids using these substances so their tuna products will provide maximum health benefits without sacrificing flavor.

"Our products retain their natural fish color without any artificial coloring or "smoking" process," says KM Food Products' marketing manager Khrisna Gabaldon. "Tuna or any processed fish undergoes a normal discoloration process — from fresh red to a pale color. Discoloration can be hidden through a "smoking" process, seasonings or



Tuna bola bola is among the delicious offerings of KM Food Products featured at the 8th IFEX Philippines

any artificial coloring like achuete that are available on the market. But through our new technology and natural ingredients, we offer value-added tuna products that keep their natural color without discoloration."

Since its introduction into the

market, the company has won numerous awards for its value-added tuna products. Baggging the "Product Innovator of the Year" for the second time during the 5th Annual Yaman Awards of the Yaman Gensan in 2009, the company also won the Top Seller Award for Processed Food Category at the Philippine National Trade Fair in the same year.

Its products are handcarried by OFWs or their families to countries such as Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Hawaii, the US mainland, and the Middle East. A few balikbayan boxes sent to Vallejo, California opened doors for negotiations to export the company's products to California, USA.

After joining the National

Trade Fair in 2008, the company evolved into being a top producer of value-added tuna products and innovative tuna processing. A regular exhibitor at the International Food Exhibition (IFEX), KM Food Products will join 19 other companies in the Partner Region Program (PRP) Pavilion. PRP is a project of IFEX that further promotes innovation and marketing of quality food products of small and medium enterprises. For the 8th IFEX Philippines, the Partner Region is Region 12 (SOCCSKSARGEN). The PRP Pavilion is a gastronomic showcase where IFEX visitors can sample delectable dishes from General Santos City, along with the provinces of South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani.

(www.philstar.com) ■

MAINLAND NEWS

PH Envoy Gets Warm Welcome in NY

by Momar VISAYA
Friday, May 20, 2011

NEW YORK—THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY OF NORTH-EAST USA ROLLED OUT the proverbial welcome mat Wednesday evening to Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia.

The event at the Kalayaan Hall

of the Philippine Center drew community leaders from various states to meet and greet the new envoy, who assumed his post last April 2, 2011.

Ambassador Cuisia is barnstorming the United States to meet with various Filipino communities across the nation. Last week, he met with Filipino community leaders in Northern California and Las

Vegas, Nevada where he addressed a conference of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA).

During the meet and greet with the community leaders, the ambassador expressed his thanks on behalf of the Philippine government for the continued support of Filipinos to Philippines by way of scholarship programs, medical mis-

sions, humanitarian endeavors, or even just by sending in dollar remittances.

He also called on the members of the community to unite as one.

"I might be too idealistic or too optimistic to hope that the community unite as one. Let us stop the fights," Cuisia said, adding, "at saka masyado na tayong maraming community organizations na may kanya-kanyang faction."

Cuisia also reiterated his call to the community, specially to those who are already American citizens, to register and vote. He said that this is the only way to leverage the strength that the community has in numbers.

"From my various meetings with the community, I found out that a lot of Filipinos here are not engaged as they should be in politics. We have the numbers. We must show it to them that we can make a difference," the ambassador said.

He challenged the community the reverse the usual low turnout when it comes to voter participation during elections.

"Clearly, we have a very big economic footprint in the US. What I look forward to however, is seeing that the very valuable contributions we are making to the fabric of American society, by way of the recognition of the Filipino Americans as a vibrant and potent political force," he said.

This can be demonstrated in many ways, among them getting Filipino Americans in elective office across the United States.



Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose Cuisia with Consul General Mario L. De Leon Jr. of the Philippine Consulate General in New York.

(AFP press photo by Momar G. Visaya)

"For now, we want to see US policy makers and elected officials hear the voice and recognize the power of a united Filipino American community," he added.

Another cause that the envoy pushed was H.R. 3039 or the SAVE Our Industries Act, which was introduced on June 25, 2009 by Congressman Jim McDermott and Brian Bilbray, to help revitalize the United States textile and Philippine apparel industries.

He explained that there is a lot riding on this bill, which was not given enough attention during the 111th Congress. The ambassador is hopeful that it will be refiled, and that with the help of the community, we can alert the legislators to pay attention to the bill.

"SAVE has the potential to create demand in the Philippines for hundreds of millions of additional US fabric exports, which could in turn sustain thousands of US jobs over the length of the program. A reasonable forecast suggests that during the duration of SAVE, demand in the Philippines for US fabrics could grow to some \$500 million supporting about 2,000 additional direct jobs in the US textile mill sector (which currently provides below 60,000 jobs)," Cuisia said. (www.asianjournal.com) ■

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

UFCH'S MRS. HAWAII FILIPINA / SUNDAY
May 29, 2011, 6pm • Ala Moana Hotel •
Contact: Lynne Gutierrez-728-1700

OFCC'S MS. OAHU FILIPINA / SATURDAY
June 4, 2011, 6pm • Hawaii Prince Hotel
• Contact: Maria Etrata-392-2962

DINNER BALL, 113TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF FILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE / SATURDAY
June 11, 2011, 6pm • Hilton Hawaiian Village, Tapa Ballroom • For details, call Maggie Domingo @783-0068 or Edna Alkapa @ 282-3669 or the Philippine Consulate @ 505-6316 ext. 241

OFCC CONVENTION / SUNDAY
June 12, 2011, 7:30am – 4pm • Philippine Consulate • For more info, Contact: Mario Palma @ 397-8626, Maria Etrata @ 392-2962 or Amado Yoro @ 699-9814

KNIGHTS OF RIZAL-HAWAII DR. JOSE P. RIZAL 150TH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND DR. JOSE P. RIZAL AWARD GALA NIGHT / SUNDAY
June 19, 2011, 6pm • Waikiki Ballroom, Hale Koa Hotel • For more information, please call 864-5222 or email riongson@gmail.com

UFCH CONVENTION IN LAS VEGAS / FRIDAY
July 15, 2011, 7:30am – 4pm • Contact: Lynne Gutierrez-728-1700

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ILOCOS SURIAN ASSOCIATION OF HAWAII, DINNER AWARDS AND FUNDRAISING / SATURDAY

August 27, 2011, 6pm • Coral Ballroom, Hilton Hawaiian Village • Contact: Danny Villaruz @ 778-0233 or Maria Etrata @ 392-2962

GLOBAL NEWS

Pinoy Sets Repatriation

by Jun PASAYLO

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

MANILA, Philippines – THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA) ANNOUNCED TODAY that it is ready to repatriate Filipinos in Yemen in the wake of the ongoing civil unrest in the area.

In an advisory, the DFA said it raised the alert status in the area to level 3, implying that the travel expenses of outgoing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) will be shouldered by the government.

"We are ready to move our people

out of harm's way and the teams from the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh and the Philippine Consulate General in Jeddah are ready to implement the voluntary repatriation program," said DFA chief Albert del Rosario.

The DFA has also recommended a deployment ban in the area while advising Filipinos "not to travel to Yemen at this time."

The Embassy teams instructed the Filipino community in Yemen to actively monitor ongoing developments and keep communication lines open with the Em-

bassy teams in Sanaa and Aden.

The DFA said that there are 1,422 Filipinos in Yemen registered with the embassy. Many of them are working in companies whose employees assured the Embassy that they have an evacuation plan for their employees should there be a need to move them out from the restive region.

Charge d'Affaires Ezzedin Tago and a five-man team from the Embassy are in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa to implement the contingency plan.

The Embassy hotline numbers for Yemen are +966-536-881-787. (DFA) (www.phlistar.com)

Phl Re-elected to UN Human Rights Council

by Pia LEE-BRAGO

Sunday, May 22, 2011

Manila, Philippines - THE PHILIPPINES WAS RE-ELECTED FOR A THREE-YEAR TERM to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

The Philippine Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York reported to the DFA that the Philippines obtained the second highest number of votes in elections held at the 65th session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York on Friday.

The country obtained 182 votes, two votes behind Indonesia.

Geneva-based UN Watch, however, had questioned the membership of the Philippines in the UNHRC – along with Burkina Faso, India, and Indonesia – because of information provided by non-government organizations including Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House.

In its annual review of human rights practices worldwide, non-government group Human Rights Watch said the Philippine government engaged more in verbal assurance than action on human rights violations in the country.

In the World Report 2011, the group said the country's law enforcement agencies and the justice system remain weak, while the military and police commit human rights violations with impunity.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario said, however, that the country's

election into the council is a "clear indication of the appreciation and confidence of the international community in the significant gains in our human rights record."

The elections held at the UN General Assembly hall was presided over by General Assembly President Joseph Deiss. The council meets in Geneva but elections are held in New York every May.

This is the third time that the Philippines has been elected to a seat in the HRC. It was first elected during the council's inaugural session in 2006 and again for the 2007 to 2010 term.

"The Philippines is a vibrant democracy working very hard to further consolidate and strengthen the gains we have achieved in human rights, together with the rights which we fought for that led to the restoration of democracy at EDSA in 1986," said Ambassador Libran Cabactulan, Philippine Permanent Representative

to the United Nations in New York.

The UNHRC, which is made up of 47 UN member states, promotes the protection of human rights worldwide.

The council was established by the UN General Assembly on March 15, 2006 to recommend solutions to human rights violations.

Six countries that have never previously served on the United Nations Human Rights Council are among the 15 new members of the council.

Austria, Benin, Botswana, the Republic of Congo, Costa Rica and Kuwait will make their debut in the council next month, starting with three-year terms.

The other newly elected members are Burkina Faso, Chile, Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, Italy, Peru, Philippines and Romania. These countries have completed stints since the creation of the council. (www.phlistar.com)

OFWs to Lose Jobs in Saudi, Recruiters Warn

by Mayen JAYMAJIN

Monday, May 23, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - RECRUITMENT INDUSTRY LEADERS WARNED THE GOVERNMENT yesterday that many Filipino workers in Saudi Arabia might lose their jobs as a consequence of the continuing disagreement over the rules on hiring of Filipino domestic helpers, also called household service workers (HSWs).

Local recruiters said the country faces "serious repercussions" if the Philippine government refuses to accept the Saudi

officials' appeal to lower the minimum wage of HSWs from the current \$400 being demanded by the Philippines to \$200.

"The uncompromising stand of the Philippine panel in recent negotiations with a Saudi representative would result to massive job losses not only in the HSW sector but also the deployment of skilled and professional workers to the kingdom," recruitment leaders said.

They said that Saudi Arabia is the largest employer of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and the Filipinos could even-

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"The problem is not like that simple as the Philippine government would not like to think," recruiters pointed out.

"Saudi employers who have long standing relationships with Filipino recruitment agencies could be pressured by their government to stop hiring Filipinos or not renew existing contracts of OFWs even though our workers may be considered as among the highest paid non-Caucasian workers in that country," they added.

Last March, Saudi employers announced that they suspended the processing of new contracts to protest the stringent measures, including the \$400 minimum monthly salary, demanded by the Philippine government on deployment of domestic helpers.

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