



NEWS EDITION

HAWAII'S ONLY WEEKLY FILIPINO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

A TRADE MISSION WITH HIGH ENERGY

By Belinda A. Aquino, Ph.D.



The 22nd Trade Mission to the Philippines under the auspices of the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (FCCH) and its affiliate, the Hawaii-Philippines Business and Economic Council (HPBEC), was held February 10-18, 2012. It covered five destinations—Manila, Cebu, Baguio, Subic-Clark and Olongapo. I decided to join since it had been a while since I attended the one in 2006, which coincided with the Filipino Centennial observance in Hawaii.

The FCCH is the oldest Filipino business organization in the U.S., having been established in 1954 long before Hawaii became the 50th state of the Union. The Chamber's founding father was the late Pastor Pablo—a pioneering entrepreneur in the then Territory of Hawaii. The legacy he left behind has endured and survived to become the leading Filipino community organization after more than half a century.

Previous missions involved the offices of the Governor of Hawaii and Mayor of Honolulu with regard to sister-city relationships with Philippine counterparts. The 2012 mission invited the City and County of Honolulu, which has five sister-city ties with the Philippines, and Mayor Peter Carlisle to join. The City made a modest donation to defray operational expenses. The other major donor was Maria Etrata, president of the Renato and Maria A.F. Etrata Foundation and owner of a number of

care home facilities in Honolulu. Including Mayor Carlisle, there were 28 delegates who represented a broad spectrum of professional, business, social and government entities. The mayor's schedule varied from the main itinerary since he visited other cities like Vigan and Laoag in the Ilocos region, in addition to Cebu, to renew existing ties between them and Honolulu. In places he visited, he showed a Powerpoint documentary entitled "Honolulu—the

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March 24, 2012

BUILDERS BETTING ON BRIGHTER US HOUSING MARKET

from www.philstar.com

WASHINGTON (AP) — US builders are betting that the housing market is finally on the path back to health.

They requested 5 percent more permits in February to build single-family homes and apartments in the coming

months. That increased the annual rate to a seasonally adjusted 717,000 permits, the Commerce Department said yesterday.

While that's still half the rate considered healthy by most economists, it's the highest since October 2008.

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POLL: 47% OF PINOYS BELIEVE CJ IS GUILTY



By Helen Flores

MANILA, Philippines — Almost half of the Filipino population believes Chief Justice Renato Corona is guilty of the charges filed against him at the Senate impeachment court, a recent survey by

Pulse Asia showed.

The survey showed 47 percent of the respondents said Corona is guilty while only five percent said they believe he is innocent of the charges. Forty-three percent said they could not say if Corona is guilty or not.

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EDITORIAL

Reality TV Actually Has Been Good for Filipinos

Reality TV is a mixed bag: there is the very good and very bad.

For the very bad -- no matter how much people criticize it, this modern genre featuring outrageous temper flares, emotional meltdowns, and vulgar conduct is here to stay, that is if high ratings have any influence on TV programming.

Reality TV in general catapulted into popularity starting in the late 1990s with wildly successful shows that for the very first time presented ordinary people, non-actors, in unique, unscripted situations. Today, many reality TV shows are far more profitable and popular than regular TV sitcoms or drama series. In fact, a new breed of reality TV "stars" has become even larger than their trained card-holding, actors guild counterparts, at least in the realm of social media and internet search engines.

A CUT ABOVE THE REST - THE VERY GOOD REALITY TV SHOWS

While some reality TV producers continue to test the borders of common decency, fomenting nothing more than sensationalism and voyeurism, there are a few quality reality TV shows worth noting, specifically those that reward extraordinary talent. Reality TV competition shows from music, dance, art, cooking, and designing have become a new standard in discovering fresh talent. Some winners of these shows have gone on to become industry giants. Their rise to fame on the fast track could not have happened without the massive exposure through TV.

OUTSTANDING FILIPINOS

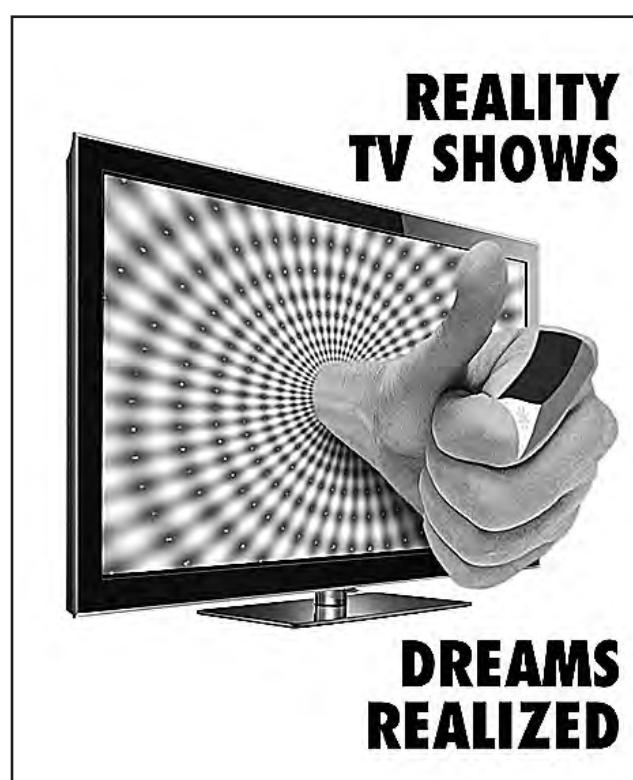
Despite comprising only a small percentage of the U.S. overall population, several talented Filipinos have made their mark on reality TV competition shows.

Top Chef

Just recently, Filipino American Paul Qui took top honors in winning Bravo TV's popular series Top Chef.

Qui, who is originally from Manila, out-cooked 29 respected chefs from around the country in Top Chef Season 9. He is the second Asian chef and first ever Pinoy to win the TV series.

"I think the number one thing that we Filipinos have is that we have a lot of heart and a lot of guts. And I definitely got that from my parents and that definitely helped me push through to 'Top Chef,'" said Qui.



On the rise to celebrity chef stardom, Qui received his training from the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Atlanta with special emphasis on Asian and European cuisine. He is currently Executive Chef at Uchiko restaurant in Texas.

Qui's win goes beyond personal achievement and may help to promote Filipino cuisine. He believes Filipino food is "pretty close to the spotlight" as restaurants in the U.S. are shifting to a "nose to tail" trend, where all parts of an animal are utilized in dishes. He mentioned dinuguan (pork blood) and crispy ulo (deep fried pork head) as two exotic dishes that may gain traction. He is also optimistic about Filipino vegetable dishes like atchara that could be better promoted and well received by wider culinary audiences.

Qui is the second Filipino to compete in Top Chef. In season 4, Filipino American Dale Talde won two competitions before being eliminated, just missing the final round of cuts. Talde has worked with several famous chefs, including

helping Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto open restaurant Morimoto in New York City.

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LETTERS

RAIL WILL DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD

I have been reading a lot of articles for and against the rail project. Those who are in favor claim that it will create jobs, solve traffic congestion, improve our quality of life and provide for a brighter future. I have also read a lot of anti-rail articles by experts such as Randall O'Toole which appeared in the Star Advertiser on March 12th.

In my humble opinion, the rail project will not solve traffic congestion and its construction will inconvenience a lot of commuters. The jobs that rail creates will mostly not be for locals since more qualified workers will be hired from outside Hawaii.

The elevated rail will be detrimental to our environment and the enormous cost of building it will burden all of us, especially our children. I sincerely believe that the money for the construction of rail can be better used to repair and maintain our roads and sewer system.

Based on recent polls and letters to the editor at the Star Advertiser, more Hawaii residents are now against the elevated rail. In fact, the chairman of the City Council is questioning why HART is pushing for the construction of the elevated rail system.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to express my views.

Wilma L. Albano
Salt Lake



NEWS EDITION

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MARCH 24, 2012

OPINION

The Prospect of Sen. Santiago as ICC Judge

by Rodel RODIS

The resolve by the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance (USP4GG) to petition the International Criminal Court (ICC) to reconsider and reject the election of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago as an ICC judge was not made on a spur or on a whim but only after careful deliberation. Although members were dismayed by the repeated contemptuous conduct of Sen. Santiago towards the House prosecutors, the decibel levels went through the roof on February 29 when Sen. Santiago screamed and twice called the prosecutors "gago" (morons) at the court hearing.

The Internet chatter rooms lit up. "How can a judge say that in a courtroom?"

The collective outrage led to calls to petition the ICC to review the conduct of Sen. Santiago to determine if "a person who is emotionally or psychologically unstable, prone to fits of uncontrollable rage, lacking in patience and empathy, ruthless with the feelings of fellow human beings, bereft of civility and uncaring about decorum" deserves to be an ICC judge.

A draft of the proposed petition was prepared by Greg Macabenta and circulated to more than 100 USP4GG members scattered across the U.S. During a March 6 national telephone conference call to discuss the petition, members offered their opinions on the draft petition.



One member from Washington DC, who participated in the teleconference, previously sent an email wherein he asked: "How can we maintain our credibility when we question someone's election only after multiple rounds of nominations and voting? Senator Miriam Santiago's selection was confirmed after 15 rounds of ICC voting. I don't think questioning the process at the back end speaks highly of our intentions and deliberations. For one, she has very impressive judiciary credentials. While she is well-known for her exaggerated bombastic pronouncements and at times eccentric actions, no one can question her intellectual capabilities."

But Macabenta noted in his draft petition that "mastery of international jurisprudence and forensic skills" was not enough, as "a sound mind, emotional and psychological stability, unsullied integrity and incorruptibility, as well as patience, civility and impeccable decorum" were also required.

Another member pointed out that although Sen. Santiago was nominated by no less than President Benigno Aquino III in 2011, it was made before she exhibited her unprofessional behavior at the Senate impeachment trial. It is comparable to the

local case of Ross Mirkarimi who was elected Sheriff of San Francisco in the November 2011 elections two months before he was charged with committing domestic violence against his wife. After Mirkarimi pled guilty to the lesser charge of misdemeanor false imprisonment, calls came for him to resign even as his supporters pointed to his impressive credentials and his 2011 election as the reasons for him to hang on.

Many expressed doubts that the ICC would even consider the petition. But USP4GG chair Loida Nicolas-Lewis, who served with Sen. Santiago and Sen. Franklin Drilon in the Student Council of the University of the Philippines (UP) during the 1960s, explained: "We do not have the illusion of being successful in removing Senator Miriam but we are giving her notice that her continued antics are not acceptable to global Filipinos now that she is in the global arena. Something said is something heard. She thinks that she can do and say whatever she wants with impunity. Our petition will show that Filipinos overseas will not tolerate her disrespectful, uncouth behavior."

One member suggested that the group wait for those in the Philippines to initiate this

move and then join them, as has been the practice of overseas Filipinos to follow the lead of homeland Filipinos.

But that was before. As former Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban noted recently: "Overseas Filipinos, without having to reside here physically, have the means to inform themselves of our country's needs and of the suitability of candidates for national offices. Interactive news websites, cable TV programs, social networks like Facebook and Twitter, cell phones, Skype, Magic Jack, emails, teleconferencing and other electronic wonders no longer require actual physical presence to acquire thorough knowledge of Philippine political life," he wrote in his column "Enfranchising duals and greens."

Just as Filipinos in Cagayan de Oro should not defer their initiatives to the folks in Manila, overseas Filipinos should not likewise defer to Filipinos in the Philippines. An initiative will rise or fall on its merits and not on its source.

When the Internet was googled to find out if any individual or group in the Philippines was embarking on a similar initiative, none was found. There was outrage certainly as expressed in the letter to the editor

of the Philippine Daily Inquirer from UP Prof. Gemino Abad who wrote: "Anyone, especially a senator, who has no respect for the innate dignity of every human being, loses his or her personal worth and dignity. The senator no longer entertains, she disgusts with her shrill, outrageous harangues and self-congratulatory displays of superior knowledge and experience in judicial proceedings; she dishonors the impeachment court.

"Does the impeachment court condone such insufferable behavior? What sanction has it for contemptuous disregard of basic human dignity? Why is she not herself detained to stop her from committing more dishonorable acts? If her fits of rage and displays of self-satisfaction should continue at the International Criminal Court, she would inevitably become our country's disgrace and a world-wide object of ridicule."

The answer to Prof. Abad's question is "yes." The Philippine Senate has repeatedly condoned the "insufferable behavior" of Sen. Santiago as they did when she railed on the Senate floor after her nomination as Chief Justice was rejected by the Supreme Court: "I spit in the face of Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban and his cohorts in the Supreme Court...a Supreme Court of idiots."

Sen. Santiago has never been reprimanded nor chided for her "dishonorable acts." Perhaps because her colleagues, a few of whom barely graduated from high school, are intimidated by her impressive academic accomplishments.

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EDITORIAL (CONT.)

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

American Idol

When it comes to reality TV in terms of viewer audience and influence in launching the careers of its contestants, American Idol has no parallel. The most well-known Filipino to grace Idol is Jasmine Trias of season 3 who placed third overall. Since her memorable run on the show, Trias has released one album to date and is currently performing with Hawaii's very own Society of Seven in Las Vegas. Other Idol finalists of Filipino heritage include Camile Velasco and Ramiele Malubay.

But to no surprise there is another Filipino this sea-

son, Jessica Sanchez, who critics believe may have the powerful vocal range to take the title. Since her now memorable rendition of Whitney Houston's I Will Always Love You (already receiving 6 million views on YouTube, even more hits than many established music artists), she has been the frontrunner of American Idol season 11. As of press time, Sanchez is still on top of Entertainment Weekly's poll of who should win American Idol.

Before American Idol, Sanchez competed in the first season of America's Got Talent, another reality TV show. She was only 11 at the time but still managed to advance to the top 13.

So You Think You Can Dance

So You Think You Can Dance is another reality TV competition show with millions of viewers that featured in its top tier of contestants, Filipino Americans.

Just last year, Filipinos Tadd Gadduang and Marko Germar finished in the top 5 (top two male dancers) in season 8. Gadduang, 25, is a hip-hop dancer from Daly City, California. Germar, 22, is a contemporary jazz dancer from Guam.

The highest finisher of Filipino ancestry on the show was Melody Lacayanga of Season 1. A jazz dancer from Daly City, Lacayanga amazingly placed runner-up.

Project Runway

The multiple award winning show Project Runway which features fashion designers from around the world had Filipino Jay Nicolas Sario competing in season 7. Sario, who received some of his training in Hawaii, won two competitions before being let go, placing fourth overall. Sario just missed the final cut of three who are chosen to show their collection during New York City's fashion week.

MISNOMER

Perhaps the term reality TV is no longer adequate to describe much of modern TV programming. The genre has become so diverse that it de-

serves sub categories. How could viewers really justify placing Jersey Shore in the same mix as American Idol and pass them off as reality TV.

One benefit that quality reality TV shows has done is improve visibility among minorities who had been grossly underrepresented from traditional TV programming for years. It's refreshing to see Filipinos competing and excelling on national TV. From the standpoint of raising our community's image and perception, reality TV surprisingly has been positive for Filipinos. We'd like to congratulate all of these talented individuals who've represented our community admirably. ■

(cont. from page 1; A TRADE...)

Gathering Place of the Pacific."

THEMES OF THE MISSION

The general theme of the mission was "Cultural Nuances in Doing Business in the Philippines." It encompassed a number of sub-themes and topics on Philippine society, history and culture, which provided the context for socio-economic programs and business trends in the country that the mission was primarily interested in.

The mission organized six workshop panels to address various topics identified with their lead discussants, as follows:

- Outsourcing/Workforce Training/Professional Services - Rosemarie Mendoza
- Renewable Energy Sources and Green Technology - Manuel Lanuevo
- Trade Import-Export of Goods/Products - Melody Calisay
- Investments/Finance/Real Estate/International Banking - Harry Alonso
- Retirement and Health Care Issues/Medical Tourism - Belinda A. Aquino
- Social Entrepreneurship and Investments - Soledad Manaay

Each workshop panel also had a number of individual speakers who focused on specific topics, which were treated with more depth and detail especially based on their own work experience. Among them were:

- Dante Aragon, "Freedom from Fossil Fuels—The Hawaii Strategy"
- Elsa Talavera, "Role of Hawaii's Care Home Providers: Transfer of Ex-

pertise to Help the Retirement Industry in the Philippines"

- Soledad Manaay, "Making the Philippines a Choice Retirement Destination"
- Paul Alimbuyao, "Money Makes the World Go Round: Opportunities and Challenges to Moving Funds Across the Pacific"
- Dean T. Alegado, "Challenges and Issues Inhibiting Growth of the U.S. Retiree Community in the Philippines"
- Veridigno P Atienza, "The Philippines and Subic/Clark as a Retirement Community Destination"
- Nestor Calara, "The U.S. Retiree Community in the Philippines and Its Contribution to the Philippine Economy"
- Desirea Aguinaldo Helsham, "Outsourcing Workforce Overseas—Opportunities and Challenges to Partnering with Baguio Businesses"
- Danny Urquico, "Private Sector Initiatives: 25 years of Partnering with Hawaii—the Child and Family Services Philippines, Inc. Story"

When I saw the agenda during the mission's planning stage, my first thought was, "This looks like Mission Impossible." It seemed more than the three international conferences I had put together in the past. But the seeming impossibly gradually turned into reality as the mission rolled from place to place. This is a tribute to the talent, tenacity, energy, synergy and teamwork of the leadership team which was composed of:



Dr. Belinda Aquino and Harry Alonso during the 22nd Philippine Trade Mission sponsored by the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii

- Harry Alonso, FCCH president, for his foresight, oversight and great sense of humor
- Paul Alimbuyao, mission chairperson, for his organizing ability and effective networking, especially with First Hawaiian Bank
- Rose Cruz Churma, HPBEC executive director and mission co-chair, for the substantive content and organization of panels and constant consultation with and feedback from Philippine counterparts and networks
- Rosemarie Mendoza, mission co-chair, for logistics, financial resources and administrative skills needed for organizational efficiency
- Rosemarie Aquino, mission co-chair, for arranging Aloha Night and visits with Philippine Congressman Joe Duavit and the GMA TV station, as well as networking with Bank of Hawaii

The standing joke was, with Three Roses with exceedingly high-octane caliber and energy, how could the mission not succeed? Of course, no offense to the two gentlemen at the leadership helm.

In addition, Paul Cortes, Deputy Philippine Consul General of Honolulu, provided much-needed coordination with Philippine groups and individuals regarding schedules of the mission delegates on a day-to-day basis. He was able to arrange with former Philippine Consul General in Honolulu, Leoncio Cardenas Jr., a merienda for many of the delegates before they returned to Hawaii.

The mission could not have succeeded without the input of a hardworking core of site coordinators who were responsible for planning and coordinating appropriate activities visited by the delegates. They included: George Carpenter (for Cebu); Nelda Zulueta (for all the places visited); Gina Ordonez, Mary Grace Tirona and Armand Bustamente (for Manila); Dean Alegado (for Subic); and Danny

possible that some confusion had occurred. In any case, the no-show prompted FCCH president Harry Alonso to write a letter to the ambassador expressing the disappointment of mission delegation on his failure to show up after the proper arrangements had been made. The mission is eagerly awaiting an explanation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Breakout panels on various topics covered by the mission such as outsourcing, renewable energy, social entrepreneurship, retirement, health care, medical tourism, etc., gave the public more time to participate in smaller group discussions. Due to space constraints, I cannot include every topic explored but a few major ones can be cited.

1. Retirement and health issues. As attractive as retirement options in the Philippines seem to be, there are certain issues that first need to be addressed or resolved to make these options viable. Most are related to health, security and well-being of retirees who opt to return to the Philippines.

For retirees from the U.S., the main problem is that they cannot carry their Medicare insurance benefits to the Philippines except in emergency cases. The question of "Medicare portability" is being widely discussed in Filipino circles and no less than President Benigno Aquino III is seeking the cooperation of U.S. President Barack Obama so that retirees who go back to the Philippines can use their Medicare insurance to pay for medical services.

The major drawback to Medicare portability is the process of accrediting Philippine hospitals by U.S. health authorities. Currently, there are three accredited hospitals in Manila and one in Cebu. This is a tough call because Philippine healthcare facilities are subject to the same stringent comprehensive accreditation review that U.S. facilities undergo.

Dr. Abraham Rasul, Jr. of Washington D.C., who is a vigorous advocate for Medicare portability, believes that "Philippine tertiary care facilities can meet the current standards of [U.S.] accreditation." He says that a number of these facilities have already passed the accreditation process of Medicare-approved agencies like the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO).

Another hurdle is the U.S.

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Joseph M. Zobian, M.D.



Board-certified ophthalmologist
U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer,
Philippines
San Marcelino, Zambales
1988 to 1990
Tagalog and Ilokano spoken

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MARCH 24, 2012

HEADLINES

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

"This report is one of the more encouraging new construction reports we have seen in the last four years," said Patrick Newport, an economist with IHS Global Insight.

Builders have grown more confident over the past six months after seeing more people express interest in buying a home.

The rise in permits suggests builders see that interest translating into sales over the next 12 months. That's how long it typically takes to build a home after a permit is obtained.

Economists cautioned that construction levels remain depressed and the housing market

has a long way to go before it is back to full health.

In an indication of that challenge, the government said builders broke ground on slightly fewer homes in February. The seasonally adjusted rate of 698,000 housing starts fell from January's revised level of 706,000, which was the highest since October 2008.

"The key numbers in this report are the housing permits—not the starts," said Newport. "The permits are better measured than starts, are less influenced by weather and are forward looking."

Ian Shepherdson, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics, said he expects fur-

ther gains over the next few months.

"Housing will add to growth all year, and beyond," Shepherdson said.

A mild winter allowed builders to keep working in most parts of the country. And an improving job market has many slightly more optimistic about home sales this year.

Newport said 2012 should be a better year for construction of homes. He projects 745,000 homes will be started, up from 611,000 last year. Two-thirds are likely to be apartments and condos, reflecting pent-up demand for housing among young adults who are living with their parents.

Builders are starting to see some signs of progress. They are more confident after seeing more people express interest in buying a home. Mortgage rates are hovering near record lows below 4 percent. And home sales started to rise at the end of last year.

Though new homes represent just 20 percent of the overall home market, they have an outsize impact on the economy. Each home built creates an average of three jobs for a year and generates about \$90,000 in taxes, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

There are some hurdles to a smooth recovery: Builders are

struggling to compete with deeply discounted foreclosures and short sales—when lenders allow homes to be sold for less than what's owed on the mortgage.

After previous recessions, housing accounted for at least 15 percent of US economic growth. Since the recession officially ended in June 2009, it has contributed just 4 percent.

Another reason sales have fallen is that previously occupied homes have become a better deal than new homes. The median price of a new home is about 30 percent higher than the median price for a re-sale. That's nearly twice the markup typical in a healthy housing market. ■

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

The survey was conducted among 1,200 respondents from Feb. 26 to March 9. It was completed while the impeachment court was in recess after 26 days of trial.

At least 33 percent of the respondents said Corona is "probably guilty" while 15 percent said he is "definitely guilty."

Four percent said the Chief Justice is "probably innocent" and one percent said he is "definitely innocent."

Fifty-four percent of the respondents in Mindanao said they believe the Chief Justice is guilty, 50 percent in the National Capital Region, 48 percent in the rest of Luzon and 37 percent in

the Visayas.

Sixty six percent of those who said they believe Corona is guilty and 64 percent who said he is innocent said they formed their opinion during the trial.

About eight in ten Filipinos (84 percent) said they follow the impeachment trial of Corona, while 56 percent admitted they know little about it.

Majority said they are monitoring developments through television – 80 percent at the national level, 67 to 84 percent across geographic areas and 70 to 88 percent across socio-economic groupings.

Lack of interest was cited for those who said they are not monitoring the trial – among the

Class E (24 percent) and the Visayas (25 percent).

Sixty-seven percent said they have "little to no knowledge" of the impeachment case; 56 percent said they have "a little knowledge" and 11 percent said they have "almost none or no knowledge at all."

Only 33 percent said they have a "great deal to sufficient knowledge"; 24 percent said "not a great deal but a sufficient amount"; and eight percent said they have a "great deal of knowledge."

'Filipinos will accept or respect Senate's decision'

The survey also showed that 58 percent of Filipinos believe their countrymen would accept

and respect whatever would be the Senate's decision on the impeachment case of Corona.

It was the majority sentiment in every socio-economic class (53 to 63 percent) and almost all geographic areas (53 to 68 percent).

Respondents in the Visayas, however, said only 40 percent of Filipinos would accept the decision, while 41 percent said Filipinos would accept and respect only the decision that they favor.

The poll also showed that nearly seven in 10 Filipinos (69 percent) said they expect the senators to be fair and impartial in the performance of their duty as judges in the impeachment trial.

On the other hand, 22 percent said the senator-judges would not be fair. Nine percent of the respondents said they "don't

know."

Pulse Asia said the public is divided on whether the House of Representatives fast-tracked the impeachment process.

Thirty eight percent of the respondents said they do think the congressmen fast-tracked the process while 32 percent of Filipinos have a contrary opinion. Twenty nine percent were undecided.

A near majority of Metro Manilans (46 percent) said the impeachment process at the House was fast-tracked, while 44 percent in the rest of Luzon said otherwise.

In the Visayas, almost the same percentages either expressed ambivalence or did not believe that the impeachment of Corona was hastily done (44 versus 32 percent). (www.philstar.com) ■

(cont. from page 5; A TRADE ...)

Congress, which needs to be convinced that liberalizing the accreditation process for purposes of portability means greater savings for the U.S. Medicare and Medicaid are experiencing severe funding problems in this time of financial crisis, with the Hospital Insurance Program expected to run out of funds by 2029. Still, many groups are already lobbying Congress for Medicare portability legislation.

2. Transfer of Health Care Expertise and Facilities. The level and quality of health care for seniors and retirees was another popular topic. Elsa Talavera, president and CEO of All-Island Case Management Corporation, spoke about her experiences in assessing needs of clients, placing them at appropriate levels of care, matching them with caregivers and evaluating services and other activities designed to give them utmost quality care. Talavera's

agency can also assist with finding affordable homes for proper care of elderly if they do not qualify for Medicaid benefits.

The concept and practice of "case management" can be applied to Philippine settings for the benefit of clients needing different levels of health care. There is no shortage of human resources that can be properly trained and professionally developed as caregivers for an aging population.

3. Waste Management and Environmental Protection. These are areas in which the Philippines' record is quite dismal. This hit home for delegates especially in highland Baguio, where waste disposal is certainly detrimental to lowland areas receiving all that waste material, thereby further polluting the environment. Manny Lanuevo suggested in his presentation that towns and cities in the Philippines can actually generate an income stream from garbage collection and

waste management and that garbage can be converted to energy.

No doubt, all these possibilities in a Philippine setting will need capitalization for infrastructure development and more sophisticated technology. But the Philippine economy has actually been doing well in recent years in macro terms. President Aquino indicated this when he came to Hawaii for the APEC conference. The country's political leaders and economic planners should examine their priorities to include many of the programs discussed in the mission workshops. Developing regional partnerships are certainly feasible and doable in this rapidly globalizing world.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the 22nd Mission was sparked by high energy resulting in very productive outputs. An informal debriefing was held to review the mission's per-

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City Schedules Transit Plan Meetings

THE CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES (DTS) will hold a series of public informational meetings on the recently-completed draft of the Short Range Transit Service Operations Plan. DTS is in the process of developing and implementing the plan to improve the effectiveness of The Bus and Handi-Van.

The Short Range Transit

Plan is intended to map transit's role to support enhanced mobility for Oahu's residents and visitors, reduce traffic congestion and provide a transit-based strategy to create livable communities. To accomplish this, the plan's focus is on mitigating operational problems in the near term and setting the stage for fixed guideway service.

The Plan is available for re-

view online at <http://www1.honolulu.gov/dts/short-range-transit-plan.htm>. It identifies and recommends service improvements for existing bus and paratransit services. It also serves as a tool to prioritize capital improvements, including acquisition of replacement and expansion service buses and paratransit vans.

Five regional meetings are scheduled for the convenience of transit patrons and the public. Persons requiring special accommodation at the meetings,

such as large print materials or sign language interpreters, are asked to call DTS at 768-8362 by March 20, 2012.

The meeting schedule is as follows:

- Central Oahu/ Mililani/ Wahiawa/ Haleiwa
March 27, 2012, 7 pm at the Wahiawa Recreation Center, 1139 Kilani Avenue
- Kapolei/ Ewa/ Leeward Coast/ Waipahu/ Pearl City
March 28, 2012, 7 pm at Kapolei Hale, 1000 Uluohia Street, Conference Room A

Waikiki/ Makiki/ Kahala/ Downtown/ East Honolulu

March 29, 2012, 7 pm at Mission Memorial Auditorium, 550 South King Street

• Windward Oahu
April 2, 2012, 7 pm at Ben Parker Elementary, 45-269 Waikalua Road

• Salt Lake/ Kalihi/ Airport/ Aiea
April 3, 2012, 7 pm at the Oahu Veterans Center, 1298 Kukila Street

For more details on the meetings, please contact Eric Stoetzer from DTS at 768-8362 or via email at: estoezer@honolulu.gov. ■

State to Process ID Cards on Lanai

STATE ID PERSONNEL WILL BE AT THE LANAI SENIOR CENTER to process applications for State ID cards on April 14, 2012 from 9:30 am to 2 pm.

The fee is \$10 for senior citizens 65 years and older and \$15 for all others, payable in cash only. State ID cards will be processed and mailed to applicants within 10 business days.

Priority will be given to applicants with completed application forms and required certified documents. Applications without these documents will not be processed. State ID officials also advise the public to keep the following in mind:

- New applicants must provide at a minimum an original social security card and a certified copy of their birth certificate (or resident alien card, if applicable).
- For renewals of current ID cards with no change in name or citizenship, no other documents are required.
- All changes in status or name due to marriage, divorce, annulment, adoption or citizenship must also be supported by certified government-issued documents. Altered and illegible documents are not acceptable. Information on application requirements is available by calling 587-3112. Application forms are also available online at: www.stateid.hawaii.gov. ■

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Foodbank Celebration to Honor Hawaii's Patriots

HAWAII'S WORLD WAR II FILIPINO-AMERICAN U.S. ARMY VETERANS will be among the heroes honored during the upcoming Hawaii Foodbank's Patriots Celebration.

Now in its 17th and final year, this annual gala fundraiser for the Hawaii Foodbank will celebrate 16 years of Hawaii's Patriots. It is scheduled for July 3, 2012 at 6 pm at the Hilton

Hawaii Village's Coral Ballroom. The event will feature a reception with live entertainment, sit-down dinner and formal program. Proceeds will benefit the Hawaii Foodbank.

The Hawaii Foodbank collects, warehouses and distributes mass quantities of both perishable and non-perishable food to help feed Hawaii's hungry. Last year, the Foodbank

distributed 11.8 million pounds of food, including 3 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to those requiring emergency food assistance in Hawaii.

Individual seats are \$250 per person; \$10,000 per Medal of Honor table; \$5,000 per Silver Star table and \$2,500 per Bronze Star table. For more information, please call 836-3600 ext. 223. ■

Philippine Consulate Announces Ambassadors Tour

THE PHILIPPINE CONSULATE GENERAL OF HONOLULU has announced the 7th Ambassadors, Consuls General and Tourism Directors Tour of the Philippines, scheduled for July 11-15, 2012.

The tour is a joint project of all Philippine foreign posts in the U.S. (Agana, Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, Saipan, San Francisco and Washington, DC) and Canada, in cooperation with the Philippine Department of Tourism and Department of Trade & Industry.

Participants will have the

opportunity to visit selected attractions in the Philippines and experience the beauty of its top destinations.

The tour includes:

- Three to four nights at the Dusit Hotel in Makati City with daily buffet breakfasts
- Dinners with cultural shows and entertainment
- Historic wreath laying ceremony at Rizal Park
- Visit to Malacanang with lunch
- Meeting and photo opportunity with President Benigno S. Aquino III

- Choice of special tours and immersion programs
- Day trip and barrio fiesta at Las Casas de Acuzar in Bataan

Consulate officials are encouraging those who are interested to book now. The cost of the tour is \$1,474 via Philippine Airlines and \$1,465 via Hawaiian Airlines.

For more details, please contact Aloha Tours and Travel at 845-2218, Diplomat Tours and Travel at 848-2404, Everlasting Services at 841-2881, Noble Travel (Maui) at 244-4609 or Panda Travel at 732-6691. ■

HEADLINES (CONT.)

(cont. from page 5; A TRADE...)

formance vis-a-vis its avowed goals, foremost of which is to promote better Hawaii-Philippine economic relations in a mutually beneficial way.

Mission chair Alimbuyao says his job was "a great challenge." His main concern was to "break new ground and significantly enhance the current state of Philippine-Hawaii relations particularly in the field of economic and business development, which, in my opinion, was achieved." He adds that there is

much room for improvement, especially in the area of giving young and upcoming leaders opportunities to get involved in the next trade mission. The mission is held every two years.

Mission co-chair Aquino says, "I see the Trade Mission as an introduction of who we are and what we can offer." She believes the Mission got its message across, but is not yet near its goal of significantly increasing business and economic activity between Hawaii and the Philippines. "Each trip

brings an opportunity to expand our networking skills," she adds, and to really achieve its goals, "the Trade Mission needs to follow through on its aims to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones."

(DR. AQUINO is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Hawaii-Manoa where she served as Professor of Political Science and Asian Studies and Director of the Center for Philippine Studies for 35 years. She was a member of the 22nd Trade Mission Committee and member of the HPBEC's Board of Directors.) ■

MARCH 24, 2012

IMMIGRATION GUIDE



by Atty. Emmanuel Samonte TIPON

You don't get to go back in time and do do-overs in life." — Steve Schmidt, Sen. John McCain's campaign adviser, on whether he would have recommended Sarah Palin as McCain's vice presidential running mate if he had to do it over again.

"You have watched that movie three times, what's so fascinating about it?" asked my beloved as she urged me to get dressed and go to church. She was referring to the new HBO film "Game Change" which portrays Sarah Palin (Julianne Moore) from the time she was being considered by Steve Schmidt (Woody Harrelson) as Sen. McCain's (Ed Harris) running mate because they needed an exciting game changer to lift them from the political doldrums until they lost the election.

"There are lessons to be learned from the story that are relevant to immigration," I replied.

Depending on your political orientation, the movie is either accurate, partly accurate and partly derogatory, totally derogatory, etc. Why would HBO, four years after Palin's defeat, make a film about her? Is it because she is a super star and there is a continuing interest in her and they want to make money out of her story without even giving her a share? Or is it because they

OPINION (CONT.)

(cont. from page 3; THE PROSPECT...)

ments or because they fear being on the receiving end of her tongue-lashing.

But what made the February 29 "gago" harangue at the House prosecutors memorable was not the outrageousness of Sen. Santiago's conduct but the quiet courage of private prosecutor Vitaliano Aguirre who covered his ears while she was berating the prosecutors. Although he was cited by the Senate for contempt, his simple act of defiance, captured on national television, inspired a global protest of her conduct the likes of which Sen. Santiago has never faced before.

It was as if people resolved that if Atty. Aguirre can stand up to her, so can

Sarah Palin, Game Change, and Immigration

are part of the liberal, elitist, pro-Democrat media who probably enjoy kicking a woman when she is down simply because she is a Republican?

SHOULD WE KICK A WOMAN WHO IS DOWN?

How would this argument play in immigration court? "Is it the American way to kick out of the country a woman who is down and is trying to get up in order to care for and support her young children by working in a health care facility to help the sick? Is it in the best interest of the United States to break up a family and leave U.S. citizen children motherless simply because their mother many years ago deposited some bad checks at the behest of her former husband, even though she has been punished and met the 5 R's of rehabilitation — took responsibility although she did not know the checks were bad, expressed regret and apologized, showed remorse, made restitution, and has not been a recidivist?

Sarah Palin has sex appeal, exhibits poise, and is a great communicator with a sense of humor in her speeches and in her debate with the humorless Senator Biden (whom she mistakenly called O'Biden probably because she was thinking of Obama). During these occasions she could talk eloquently about policy and spoke in generalities. Her handlers' mistake was arranging for her to be interviewed by reporters who are part of the liberal pro-Democrat media. Didn't they realize that these people are out there to pose "gotcha" questions? And

worse, they did not thoroughly prepare her. Even if they did, how could they have anticipated the question to name one bad Supreme Court decision — a totally irrelevant one since Palin was not applying for a judgeship. Even lawyers applying for a judgeship are not likely to be asked such question. If they cited one case, there would be endless follow up questions. How about the question to Palin to name the newspapers she read? Obama and Biden were never asked. This was a trick question. If she named one/some, the follow up question would be "why does she read this newspaper/newspapers and why not others? Another follow up question would be "how often?" If she did not say "everyday," the follow up question would be "why not every day?" On and on.

How come Obama was regarded by the media as "experienced" to become President, even though his experience basically consisted in being a "community organizer," while Sarah Palin was regarded as "inexperienced," even though she was a former mayor and an incumbent governor? Because Obama was supported by the media and knew how to charm many

Americans like Casanova charmed the women he seduced. McCain lost not because of Palin but because many people vented their anger at him for Bush II's (his fellow Republican) reckless imprudence in invading Iraq on the pretext it had weapons of mass destruction, just like Marcos and Enrile faking Enrile's ambush as a pretext for imposing martial law.

PREPARE FOR INTERVIEW

Immigrants should endeavor to avoid an interview by submitting a neat and complete application package. But in many cases, an interview is required for which immigrants should thoroughly prepare with their lawyer. Some lawyers do not prepare an immigrant but tell the immigrant that they will just meet at the immigration office. Replace your lawyer who tells you that.

Many immigrants regret ever having immigrated to the United States. They had a good life in their homeland, had a job,

owned their own home, had a car, had a maid, and were respected members of the community. Here they have none of the above or only some. It is probably too late to go back. They have no more job there, they might have sold their home, and as the comedian Rodney Dangerfield complained "don't get no respect" because they would be considered failures. Should they be lamenting their misfortune like David remembering the days of old? Psalms 143:5. Or hearken to Steve Schmidt's words: "You don't get to go back in time and do do-overs in life?" ■

(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: filam-law@yahoo.com. Websites: www.MilitaryandCriminalLaw.com, and www.ImmigrationServicesUSA.com. Listen to the most witty, interesting, and informative radio program in Hawaii on KNDI at 1270, AM dial every Thursday at 7:30 a.m., rebroadcast at www.iluko.com.)

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Sinigang: We Like It Sour

TURO-TURO Text & Photos by Claude TAYAG

If one is to take a survey on what is our national dish, chances are it will definitely be a tossup between *adobo* and *sinigang*. But which *adobo* and which *sinigang*, may I ask? Though both are found in every region of the archipelago coming in different names and variations, they nevertheless share the same popularity, crossing all economic boundaries. They are the great levelers on the Pinoy dining table.

Sinigang is basically a clear broth soup dish flavored with a sour fruit or the young, acidic leaves of a fruit-bearing tree. Any seafood or meat may be included, with a requisite set of vegetables added to it (i.e. *kangkong*, *okra*, *gabi*, *sitaw*, eggplant, banana heart, mustard leaves, radish, and the must-have green finger chilies. It doesn't vary much from these), making it a complete meal unto itself. It owes its popularity not only to its readily available ingredients, its versatility as to its contents, depending on what the purse can afford, but also mainly satisfying every Pinoy's penchant for anything sour or maasim.

When one takes a sip of the hot, sour broth, it will make you break into a sweat, a most welcome cooling effect in this warm climate of ours. Many a time one

makes the ritual of pouring a little broth over the rice to moisten it, mashing the *gabi*, cutting the protein and veggies, and mixing everything together, and before a spoonful is placed in the mouth, it is sprinkled with a little *patis* and mashed green finger chili for the coup de grace. It is our chicken soup, comforting every Juan's tired soul, satisfying every Juan's craving.

Of all the basic tastes, it is sourness that is most dominant in Philippine cuisine. With vinegar as one of the most indispensable ingredients in the Filipino kitchen, it has been in use for centuries not just for seasoning but also as a natural preservative. In the pre-refrigeration era, it was common practice to cook with vinegar, which would prolong the dish's shelf life without refrigeration, most especially with our hot tropical climate. It is also widely used as a marinade or brine, pickling vegetables and fruits (i.e. *achara* and *burong mangga*), and is the much-favored dipping sauce throughout the length and breadth of the archipelago.

Thus, wrote the late Doreen Fernandez in *Palayok*, this formed our collective fondness for a touch of sourness in dishes like *kinilaw*, *paksiw*, *adobo* and *sinigang*. Just imagine having *chicharon*, *tapa*, *longganisa*, *tuyô*, *danggit*, without the mira-



cle water. And, have you ever noticed why we automatically add vinegar or *kalamansi* to any kind of pancit? The uninitiated may find the sourness initially a bit jarring to their taste buds, but it is indeed an acquired taste. Adding to this mouth-puckering acidic preference is the abundance of sour fruits and leaves that are eaten as is, used in dipping sauces, or added to the cooking: *kamias*, *kalamansi*, *dayap*, green sampalok fruit and its young leaves, green mango, tomato, *santol*, *batuan*, *alibangbang* and *labog* leaves, etc.

Even our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, must have been salivating (gut-wrenching, hair-pulling withdrawal) for that mouth-puckering sourness when he wrote the four chapters in *Noli Me Tangere* where food was the central theme, considering he finished the book in 1892, after four years of living Europe. In the chapter "The Fishing Excursion": "When the party reached the *baklad* or bamboo fish pen, Tía Isabel ordered the boatman's son to have the *panalok* (bamboo rod with a net basket) ready "so the live fish can pass from the water to the *sinigang* broth," she said. Meanwhile, "Andeng, Maria Clara's childhood friend, who had a reputation of being an excellent cook, prepared the rice water (washing) for stewing the fish, adding to it some tomatoes and *kamias*."

In this scene, Rizal not only revealed his knowledge of what went into the *sinigang* and how it is done, but also gave paramount importance to the freshness of the fish.

Though asim or sourness may be the predominant taste in the Pinoy palate, the degree of sour notes nevertheless varies from region to region. Most pronounced is the Tagalog (Metro

Manila and its southern provinces collectively known as Calabarzon — Calamba, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), and Mimaropa — Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan, which all use copious amounts of vinegar and sour fruits in their cooking (i.e. *kamias/kalamias*, *sampalok*, *kalamansi*, *suka*).

In Pampanga, it is the nuanced sweet/sour notes of *Bulanglang bayabas* made with ripe guava, while in Lucena City, it is the very mildly sour fish-head soup *cocido* (nothing to do with the Spanish *cocido*, a.k.a. *pucherohereabouts*) made only with a few drops of *kalamansi* and tomato.

In the Central Visayas (Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor) and the Eastern Visayas (Samar, Leyte and Biliran), a not-so-sour fish soup, *tola* is also favored, basically the same as *cocido* using just *kalamansi* and tomato. But in the Western Visayas region (Aklan, Antique, Negros Occidental, Capiz, Guimaras and Iloilo), the *batuan* fruit is more commonly used. And mind you, nobody — but nobody — calls it *sinigang* anywhere in the Visayas.

So, going back to our million-peso question, which *sinigang*, may I ask?

The word "authentic" always pops up in any food discussion, but what is "authentic" anyway? It is a very gray area, especially in this day and age of globalization. What used to be hard-to-get ingredients, as well as seasonal vegetables and fruits, are now available year-round. Did you know that French beans (*haricot vert*), cherry tomatoes, romaine lettuce, the Japanese *yakon* and *daikon*, and the Vietnamese dragon fruit are now commonplace in most supermarkets and even wet markets

Of all the *sinigang* variants, this version with miso (fermented Chinese yellow bean paste, not the Japanese miso) has fresh mustard leaves and radish as the requisite vegetables instead of the usual *kangkong*, *gabi*, and *okra*. *Kanduli* is the salmon catfish caught in the coastal waters, estuaries, and freshwater streams of Batangas and Laguna de Bay, feeding on crustaceans, snails and small fishes.

in Metro Manila, including Angeles City where I live? They've been growing them locally in the past decade or so. Salmon heads and bellies are readily available everywhere, a byproduct of the canning factories of Alaska. They are a favorite main ingredient in *sinigang sa miso*, and command a premium price compared with using *maya-maya* or other local fishes. One can find this once-rare Alaskan product being served in most food courts nowadays. But does using an imported fish in our *sinigang* makes it any less "authentic"? And where did the *miso* come from anyway? Of Chinese origin, it's been part of the Pinoy's pantry list for centuries.

What about *sinigang na corned beef*? SideBar of the Chateau 1771 Group first introduced it to the public only in 1995, and yet it has become a popular addition to our *sinigang* tradition. Again, is it any less authentic by introducing an imported component to it?

Why is *Bulanglang Kapampangan* (that's *sinigang sa bayabas* to the Tagalogs) favored by the Pampangos? Going back some four centuries or more, our native guava, commonplace as it is nowadays, originally came from the Americas during the 250 years of the galleon trade when Spain ruled us through the viceroy of Mexico. And so did *atsuete*, *tsokolate*, *mani*, avocado, camachile, chico, atis, *pinya*, *kasuy*, *kamote*, *sayote*, champorado, tamales, etc.

And what if you happen to be in a foreign land? Does using trout, bokchoy and *sinigang* powder make it less authentic? Cooking anywhere else in the world is making the most of whatever is locally available, and then adapting it to the taste/palate (panlasa) one grew up with. A cuisine is a work in progress; it is a living thing that is constantly evolving. Whatever the case, *sinigang* will definitely keep its asim even a century hence. Isn't more fun not knowing what it will be like generations from now? (www.philstar.com) ■



In Chinese culture, the fish head is always a special treat reserved for the patriarch or honored guest, and we Filipinos must have inherited this practice from our Chinese forebears. What could be a more gustatory delight than sucking on the skull's deep recesses for its rich, creamy brain, nibbling a fatty eyeball and tender, soft flavorful cheeks (wish there was more), gelatinous tendons, and silky skin? Nothing can beat the luxury of this treat, coupled with comforting flavors of its salty-sour broth, dipped in fish sauce with mashed green chili.

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MARCH 24, 2012

OPEN FORUM

Germany's Solar Failure is a Big Lesson for Hawaii

by Panos Prevedouros

Bjorn Lomborg recently exposed Germany's Sunshine Daydream. It's the same daydream that Gov. Abercrombie, Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Chair Mina Morita and the local "pseudo-greens" have put into motion for Hawaii.

Like Germany, the results will be pathetic and costs very high. Here are some highlights of Germany's failed solar initiative:

- Despite the massive investment of \$130 billion, solar power accounts for only about 0.3 percent of Germany's total energy.
- Germany is paying about \$1,000 per ton of CO₂ reduced. The current CO₂ price in Europe is \$8 per ton.
- Defenders of Germany's solar subsidies also claim that they have helped to create "green jobs"—yes but in China where the pan-

els are made.

- Germany's citizens now pay the second-highest price for electricity in the developed world.
- Denmark's citizens now pay the highest price for electricity because they are the "world wind-energy champion."

Hawaii's energy plan is focused on solar and wind, so we clearly know what the energy supply and cost future will be for Hawaii. Hawaii residents pay the same rate as Germany now and three times the U.S. average. If the current plan continues, Hawaii's price for electricity will be five times higher than that of the U.S. mainland.

However, this may be the least of Hawaii's problems. Since wind and solar are intermittent, we will need to maintain archaic, oil burning generators. In contrast, Denmark imports electricity from the hydroelectric plants of Scandinavia when wind dies down, while Germany imports electricity from France's



nuclear power plants. Hawaii has no such options so the outcome will be brown outs and explosive KWh costs. A true lose-lose plan is now in the works.

If you doubt me, just read this Pacific Business News article dated March 7, 2012: www.bizjournals.com/pacific/blog/morning_call/2012/03/keahole-solar-power-heco-sign.html and compare it with my June 27, 2011 assessment: <http://fixoahu.blogspot.com/2011/07/solar-power-plant-on-ohau-does-not-pass.html>.

If you think that Hawaii has perfect, sunny conditions for solar, you're wrong. Hawaii has good conditions but it's far from perfect due to frequent cloudiness. At best, we get 8 to 10 hours of solar power per day, so

with solar we need oil 60 percent to 70 percent of the time on a clear sunny day.

For this reason, solar energy has a capacity factor of 25 percent. This means that a 100 MW solar photovoltaic plant is equivalent to a 25 MW oil or hydroelectric plant. A similar "capacity factor" applies to wind.

Solar thermal, like the Keahole Solar Power that HEKO agreed to buy energy from and that the PUC is likely to rubber stamp, is defunct technology abandoned in Spain which once championed it.

GOOGLE CANS SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT

Even when you have all the money of Google, you should spend it wisely. The search engine giant, which invests heavily

in renewable energy initiatives, recently backed off of at least one of them.

Google said it is dropping development of solar thermal electricity because solar thermal cannot keep pace with the rapid price decline of another solar technology—photovoltaics.

On November 29, 2011, I sent the article about Google's decision to PUC chair Morita, the governor and State Legislature. Apparently, unlike Google, they do not care to spend money wisely.

HECO is in a position of technological and cost-effectiveness indifference caused by mandates. It agreed to a power purchase at 33.5 cents per KWh from hyper-expensive and under-performing Sopogy technology.

Note that's 33.5 cents per KWh at the production site. It will reach residences at over 50 cents per KWh, or five times the U.S. mainland average. So the exorbitant pricing future I was talking about before is already here! ■

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New Bulacan, NLEX Interchange Opened

by Dino BALABO

Tuesday, March 20, 2012

BULACAN, Philippines — TRAVEL TIME TO AND FROM EASTERN BULACAN AND CENTRAL LUZON through the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) will dramatically reduce.

This as the Balagtas Interchange was opened to vehicular traffic today leading to the 6.87-kilometers Plaridel by-pass road that branch out of the northbound lane of the NLEX.

The opening of the by-pass road is part of the 24.61 kilometers arterial road project that will link NLEX and the old Maharlika Highway.

Public Works Secretary Rogelio Singson said the completion of the arterial road project will greatly boost economic activity in eastern Bulacan and Central Luzon.

He stressed that travel time will be greatly reduced, especially when the en-

tire 24.61-kilometers arterial road project is completed.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said the 6.87 kilometer Plaridel by-pass road is under the contract package 1 of the Phase 1 of the project funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency JICA.

For his part, Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ramoncito Fernandez said the Plaridel Bypass road and the Balagtas Interchange is a good manifestation of public-private partnership (PPP).

"In this PPP, the government provided the road infrastructure while the Manila North Tollways Corporation (MNTC) will operate and maintain it as the country's newest tollway," he said.

The MNTC installed the fixed and non-fixed equipment necessary for an efficient tollway system. (www.philstar.com) ■



Sen. Chiz Escudero

the other hand, says the shortage of supply and the electric cooperatives' decision not to contract and purchase the necessary capacities within their respective areas were the primary causes of the power interruptions.

Escudero says the DOE can consider opening up the market for competitive players to construct more power plants on the island, with the government still maintaining, if not controlling, at least influence over the market.

"There is a dormant asset lying in the electric cooperatives nationwide which has an asset base of 130 billion pesos at any given time. The Agus-Pulangi hydro power plants, which supply half of Mindanao's power demand, need to be rehabilitated for at least 3 billion pesos so it can generate additional capacity," Escudero says.

"The government can tap the electric cooperatives to rehabilitate the said plants. In return, the government can sell them power at a low cost competitive for the cooperatives to earn and get their return of investment."

Escudero also says the government, through an executive order, can make an inventory of all privately-owned generator sets through mandatory registration. The combined power generated from all the private generator sets can supply an entire city.

"As an example, in Philippine Export Zone Authorities (PEZA) sites all over the country, power pooled from all their generation sets can provide 278 megawatts in capacity. If we can convince them to use it in times of need, it's like creating a 278-megawatt plant. Compensation and incentives should be given to them of course," the senator says. ■

Residents have experienced rotating brownouts lasting 1-2 hours daily. Many fear prolonged power outages that may last up to eight hours with the onset of the summer season.

A member of the Joint Congressional Power Commission (JCPC), Escudero says the present power problem in Mindanao is "a matter of significant concern because its impact may impair the economic soundness and competitiveness of Mindanao as an investment hub."

"Immediate intervention must be given to this persisting problem given the already volatile peace problem in Mindanao," he says. "The only way to avert and finally solve the peace problem is by improving the state of development of the people and their livelihoods. This cannot happen if future investors and current businesses pull out from Mindanao because of unstable power supply."

Officials with the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP), which has been blamed for the daily outages, say power supply in Mindanao was acutely short due to "lack of power supply generated by plants."

Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) chairman Luwalhati Antonino has accused the NGCP of creating an artificial shortage in its bid to have the Angus-Pulangi Power Plant privatized.

The Department of Energy (DOE), on

MARCH 24, 2012

PHILIPPINE NEWS

'Noynoying' Enters Wikipedia

by Rhodina VILLANUEVA
 Thursday, March 22, 2012

MANILA, Philippines - THE TERM "NOYNOYING" - COINED BY MILITANTS to refer to President Aquino's alleged inaction on the country's pressing social issues - has caught worldwide attention.

"Noynoying" is now in online encyclopedia Wikipedia, which describes the word as an Internet meme or concept that defines an effortless pose or activity consisting of sitting or standing around, in an unconcerned manner.

"It is also recognized as doing nothing when in fact you have something to do. The word is derived from President Aquino's nickname, Noynoy, and the suffix -ing, to describe the act of being Noynoy. It is a parody of his work ethic as President of the Philippines," according to Wikipedia.

Noynoying was introduced on March 15, 2012 by youth protesters in support of the transport caravan, led by the transport group Piston. "Noynoying was described as an effortless pose, an obvious jab at President Aquino, which borrowed his nickname, Noynoy, who is being criticized for having done nothing to cushion the impact of, or prevent the spike in, crude oil prices and tuition fees," the online site said.

Wikipedia said, "Noynoying is synonymous to being lazy, indecisiveness or just neglecting



the things to be done by concentrating on other matters. It was created as a reaction to what the public perceive as the President's inaction with regard to major issues affecting the country."

But Wikipedia said the entry had been nominated for deletion and to be checked for its neutrality.

The umbrella group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) has been accusing the government of "Noynoying" on the issue of oil price hike.

As transport fares and oil prices go up, President Aquino still has no substantial response to the people's demand for relief. He still thinks the economy is doing good and that his presidency has performed above par. The insensitivity and inaction is appalling. Noynoying at its worst," said Bayan secretary-general Renato Reyes.

The group questioned if government is waiting for a "national emergency" before addressing the issue of high oil prices.

"The government continues to ignore calls for the lowering of oil prices, even despite warnings

of political unrest. The intransigence of Malacañang is beyond belief. It's like Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo all over again," said Reyes.

"First Aquino opposes any move to lower or suspend the VAT and repeal the oil deregulation law. Now he flatly opposes the P125 wage hike in Congress. The callousness of this government will be its own undoing," he added.

Not contented, militant workers yesterday coined a new term to spite the President for Malacañang's rejection of the legislated wage increase, saying there is a disconnect between his "words and deeds."

"Just last Friday night, P-Noy declared in front of employers that workers' welfare is paramount but now his administration has thumbed down the wage hike proposal with the usual capitalist blackmail. P-Noy is a Noy-ngaling," noted Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) chair Renato Magtubo.

Noy-ngaling apparently comes from word "sinungaling" or liar.

According to Magtubo, Malacañang's claim that the P125 across-the-board wage hike would only lead to layoffs of workers was unfounded.

"Such horror stories are just black propaganda and blackmail. Why should we be afraid of additional money circulating in the economy due to a wage hike when billions of dollars in remit-

tances entering the country is always applauded? If the stronger purchasing power of OFW families is a positive factor in the economy then should not the same thing hold for more money in the hands of workers which we will use to buy the necessities of life?" he added.

He said that a "wage hike will be good for the workers and will also be beneficial to the economy because it will spur the production of more goods and provision of more services."

However, Vice President Jejomar Binay took up the cudgels for the President, saying even the least of officials like the barangay chairman is also working.

"Put an end to this," Binay said, referring to the derogatory term.

"Spare the President. Can you imagine if the President is not doing anything? The President is working more than anyone else in the country."

PALACE: P-Noy

UNAFFECTED

Meanwhile, Malacañang said yesterday President Aquino would just continue his work despite all the criticism.

Presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said the most important thing was that the government could carry out reforms that would benefit the country's economy and the poor. "Other countries would see our economic indicators and that's the reason why you see a lot of foreign investors coming in," he said.

According to Lacierda, the President was not affected by criticisms and did not take those comments personally, knowing that being in public office could entail harsh criticisms from detractors.

"The best evidence is that the President is answering you straight and that's his style. He doesn't take things personally," he said, adding that "free speech is enshrined in the Constitution and that is something we will honor." (www.philstar.com) ■



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Aquino to Go to UK for 'Substantial Investment' in Energy Sector

from www.philstar.com
 Tuesday, March 20, 2012

MANILA, Philippines (Xinhua) - PRESIDENT BENIGNO AQUINO III WILL VISIT the United Kingdom in either May or June to negotiate for a "substantial investment" in the energy sector.

Aquino bared his foreign trips for the year which include a state visit to the US and a swing of European countries in October. If his schedule allows him, Aquino will attend the canonization ceremonies of Filipino saint Pedro Calungsod in Rome. ■



The President's first foreign trip this year is to Cambodia, where he will attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting in April. He will return to that country in November for the ASEAN Summit and Related Summits in November. ■

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Witnesses in GMA Case Down from 42 to 12

by Perseus ECHIMINADA

Thursday, March 22, 2012

MANILA, Philippines - COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) PROSECUTORS HAVE AGREED in principle to limit presentation of evidence and witnesses in the electoral sabotage case against former President now Pampanga Rep. Gloria Arroyo and former Maguindanao election officer Lintang Bedol.

Prosecutor Juana Maria Valesa said that they would trim down their witnesses from 42 to 12 or less to speed up bail hearings before Judge Jesus Mupas of Pasay Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 112.

Valesa said they have already submitted more than 100 documents that include the Cer-

tificate of Canvass (COC), election-related directives, and reports in connection with the May 2007 midterm elections in Maguindanao.

She said that they would pursue the theory of conspiracy among the accused Arroyo, Bedol and former Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr.

"We will present witnesses to collaborate documentary evidence," she said.

Defense lawyer Benjamin Santos welcomed the trimming down of witnesses and presentation of documents in the bail hearings to prove that there is a strong case against Arroyo.

"The bail hearings would only determine if there is strong evidence against the former president," he said.

The bail hearings would resume today and the Comelec is expected to submit more documents to be marked and also present witnesses to verify the documents.

"We will be presenting surprise witnesses to prove our case," Valesa said.

Valesa said the Comelec has clarified that only the COC from Maguindanao and not the election returns was submitted to the court.

She said the municipal election returns of Maguindanao were missing and were not submitted to the Comelec by Bedol.

The COC that was canvassed by Bedol showed that Luis Singson was the leading senatorial candidate in Maguindanao in the 2007 elections.

(www.philstar.com) ■

Unregulated Use of Cyanide in Balabag Mines Revealed

by Jun PASAYLO

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR, Philippines - THE SMALL-SCALE MINING OPERATIONS IN BALABAG VILLAGE in the hinterlands of Bayog town here revealed a disturbing reality – the local miners employed unregulated use of cyanide in extracting minerals from the gold-rich mountain.

This after the Inter-Agency Task Force, created to haunt those miners who work without



The tailings dam of small-scale miners in the gold-rich area of Balabag village in Zamboanga del Sur

the necessary permits from the environment department, apprehended hundreds of kilos of cyanide from the workers of

small-scale mining operations.

Since its creation in December 2011, the task force has filed 14 cases against various small-scale mining operations in Balabag including those that were allegedly owned by several town officials of Bayog.

MINERAL THIEF

Paul Vincent Arias, security manager of the Balabag Copper-Gold Exploration Project of TVI Resource Development (Philippines), said that among the cases filed against the suspects included thief of minerals and transport of illegal mining equipments and chemicals.

"We already file several cases against those individuals that attempt to transport illegal chemicals and minerals," he said in an interview at the interagency checkpoint in Balabag.

"We also intercept cyanide that the small-scale miners want to sneak to the mine site," he added.

The task force was a composed of representatives from the Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, local government units, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), among others.

It also intercepted hundreds of kilos of carbon granules rich with gold and silver that the ille-

BIR quotes Bible to Pacman: Give to Caesar...

from www.philstar.com

Thursday, March 22, 2012

MANILA, Philippines - "GIVE TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S, and to God what is God's."

This verse from the Bible – the book of Mathew in the New Testament – was read by Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) director for Region 8 Rozil Lozares to boxing champion Manny Pacquiao after filing charges against him for failure to submit his tax records.

A report by ABS-CBNnews.com said the BIR has noted that the boxer's huge tax payments dropped from over P100 million in 2008 to only P7 million in 2009.

But Pacquiao, recently appointed by the Catholic Church as Bible ambassador to promote the "Words of God," insisted that he had already fulfilled his tax obligations.

"The Pharisee asked Jesus if he should pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus took a coin and asked the Pharisee whose face was on it. He replied, 'Caesar's'. Then Jesus said 'Give to Cae-

sar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's,'" Lozares said in Filipino.

BIR chief Kim Henares earlier confirmed over dzMM radio that Pacquiao's tax payments indeed fell sharply.

However, the eight-division champion explained that he had already paid his taxes in the US with regard to his fight in that country.

"If my income has been taxed in the US, it is not necessary that I pay taxes here," he told ABS-CBNnews.com in Filipino.

"Only the money that I earn in the Philippines, that's what they can tax," he said.

"I told them, if they tax me in America and they tax me here, that's double taxation. We have a law on double taxation," he added.

But Lozares told the pound-for-pound champion to submit his tax records, and the BIR would give him tax credits.

"What will happen is tax credit – we will deduct whatever he has paid. But he has not yet submitted proof that he had really paid his taxes," Lozares countered. ■

gal miners attempted to sneak out from Balabag mine site; the "pregnant carbon" worth over P7 million.

The latest addition to the recovered items from illegal miners were the 75 sacks of illegally extracted limestone and 28 bags of illegally extracted coal – all were seized at the task force checkpoint last Sunday.

The driver, identified as Romulo Elona Jate, admitted that the cargoes were owned by Jerry Mundung and Roberto Lopez, local official and prominent individual from Bayog town.

Cyanide contamination

On top of the lack of proper protective gears for their mine workers, the unregulated mining activities of small-scale operations have taken its toll in the environment.

With the improper tailings dam for water treatment, small-scale miners simply dispose their cyanide-contaminated wastewater to the arterial rivers near the mine site.

Former village chief Bienvenido Zamora of Barangay

Guinoman, an area below the Balabag mine site, said there were already countless incidents where their farm animals die while drinking waters in the river.

"We believe that the contaminated waters of the river kill them. We know that something is wrong since no fish could ever be found in our rivers today," he added.

The 47-year-old village official also condemned the small-scale mining operations that were owned by Bayog local officials, saying, "It's not their concern whether the people and the environment would be destroyed as long as they will have money."

Zamora, who erstwhile owned a small-scale plant in the area, expressed fear on the effect of the improper waste disposal to the environment and its people as well.

"I stop my own plant because how can I be a good leader in the community when I own an illegal business that destroys not only the environment but the life of the people as well," he added. (www.philstar.com) ■

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by Reuben S.
SEGURITAN

Because of the visa backlog, it is common for a lawful permanent resident (LPR) parent, usually after living in the U.S. for five years, to become a naturalized citizen while a child waits for a visa on the basis of an approved second preference petition.

Being placed under removal proceedings is probably one of the hardest things that any immigrant might have to experience in the United States. However, even at this stage several types of relief are available to prevent an individual's deportation.

Some remedies, for example, adjustment of status, cancellation of removal, or asylum and withholding of removal, either

Long Delays and High Denial Rates Belie Immigration Report

grant or offer a path to permanent residence. If the respondent alien is not eligible for these forms of relief, he should certainly consider other options before he loses all hope and gives up.

Deferred action is one of the remedies available to an alien under deportation which is granted for humanitarian reasons. It is a form of relief granted not by the judge but in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion by the district director with the approval of the regional commissioner.

The alien must demonstrate that his removal is not a priority of the government. Some of the factors to be considered include the likelihood of ultimately removing the alien; the presence of sympathetic factors; likelihood of a large amount of adverse publicity because of those sympathetic factors; the alien's continued presence is desired by law enforcement for an ongoing investigation or review; and whether the alien is a member of

a class that is a high enforcement priority.

A grant of deferred action means that the government would not take steps to remove the alien from the United States. He becomes eligible for employment authorization in the meantime. However, deferred action is only a temporary stay of removal and does not confer any positive immigration status.

Another type of relief that may be available is voluntary departure. This allows an alien who would otherwise be deported to leave the U.S. at his own expense but within the time period ordered by the judge, which can be as long as 120 days if requested at the beginning of the proceedings.

An alien who is ordered removed may be barred from reentering the U.S. for at least several years, but one who voluntarily departs is not subject to the penalties of removal. Voluntary departure may be re-

quested before or at the master calendar hearing, after the individual hearing, or at the conclusion of the proceedings.

If the alien has a matter pending with the USCIS, typically an I-130, I-140 or I-360 petition, the judge may order an administrative closure of the removal proceedings. This is to allow the USCIS to adjudicate the petition since the judge does not have jurisdiction over it. If the petition is approved by USCIS, the alien may apply for permanent resident status before the immigration judge.

A little-known type of relief, perhaps because it is rarely resorted to, is the private bill. It involves convincing a U.S. Senator or Representative to sponsor a bill providing one with permanent residence, and thereafter to have that bill passed in both houses of Congress and then signed by the President. As one can imagine, getting a private bill passed is

nothing short of a miracle, but miracles do happen: in the 108th Congress, three private bills were passed.

The rules of both houses require the alien to establish particularly compelling circumstances and hardship. Even the mere sponsorship of a bill by a member of Congress already gives the alien relief. This is what happened to one of our clients years ago. The pendency of the private bill enabled him to remain in the U.S. until he obtained his employment-based green card.

Deferred enforced departure (DED) is a relief given to nationals of certain countries as determined by the President in his power to conduct foreign relations. If an alien is covered and is eligible for a DED, his removal is temporarily stayed and he may get employment authorization and advance parole. ■

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

PHILIPPINE NEWS

Visa Reforms Seen to Boost Tourism

from www.philstar.com
Wednesday, March 21, 2012

MANILA, Philippines - THE GOVERNMENT IS SET TO IMPLEMENT a number of visa reforms intended to boost the competitiveness of the Philippines as a tourism destination.

The new visa policies include additional visa-free privilege for

166 countries/territories from 21 to 30 days, granting of a 30-day visa-free stay to Chinese nationals traveling to the Philippines as part of a tour group handled by a Department of Tourism-accredited Philippine tour operator and a 14-day visa-free stay for Indian nationals who have a valid American, Japan, Australia, Canadian,

Shengen, Singapore, or United Kingdom visa.

The new policies were agreed upon in a recent meeting between Tourism Secretary Ramon Jimenez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario, Justice Secretary Leila M. De Lima, and BI Commissioner Ricardo A. David Jr.

The new policies are set to simplify entry requirement procedures and processes and allowing tourists more time in the Philippines.

"We need to address the perception abroad that it is difficult to enter the Philippines. With these visa reforms, we will be at par with the entry policies of our neighbors in the region and, for some markets, more liberal. This

will definitely help in achieving our target of 10 million foreign visitors by 2016," said Jimenez.

Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia allow entry of nationals of most countries without a visa for stays of up to 30 days. Tourists entering Cambodia are issued visas upon arrival valid for one month, except for nationals of ASEAN countries who are allowed to enter visa-free. ■

Visitor Arrivals Hit Record High in January

by Jovan CERDA
Thursday, March 22, 2012

MANILA, Philippines - VISITOR ARRIVALS HIT A RECORD-BREAKING 411,064 in January this year, a 17.5 percent gain from the same month last year, the Department of Tourism (DOT) said Thursday.

Koreans remained the Philippines' top visitors at 102,166, which accounted for 24.9 percent of the total visitor volume.

Visitors from the United States came second with 63,160 arrivals or 15.4 percent of the total figures.

The Chinese accounted for the third biggest volume with 42,868 arrivals, jumping by

173.8 percent from 15,656 arrivals last year. The increase in Chinese tourists is owing to the heavy influx of visitors for the Chinese New Year, which fell on the third week of January, the DOT said.

Meanwhile, the Japanese and the Taiwanese were the fourth and fifth top visitors, with 32,089 and 21,995 arrivals, respectively.

DOT said Filipinos permanently residing abroad contributed 15,531 arrivals, representing a 3.8 percent share to the total volume.

"We are excited to meet our year-end target of 4.6-million arrivals with the full roll-out of the 'It's More Fun in the Philippines' campaign. Our in-

stitutional programs will be complemented by those from the private sector and the local government units. Meanwhile, policy reforms and conver-

gence projects with other government agencies will seek to address impediments to tourism growth particularly on accessibility, connectivity and

entry procedures. More importantly, everybody's support is critical in creating the fun and competitive image that we are selling to the world," said Tourism Secretary Ramon Jimenez. (www.philstar.com) ■

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Fil-Am Wins America's 'Top Chef' Competition

FILIPINO-AMERICAN CHEF PAUL QUI EMERGED as the champion of "Top Chef: Texas," season 9 of the reality show.

Qui, the executive chef of Uchiko Restaurant in Austin, Texas, defeated Sarah Gruenberg of Chicago following a kitchen square-off at Black & Blue restaurant in Vancouver, British Columbia.

"I am top chef. I am extremely happy to see my mom and dad being there and every-

body I met throughout this journey," says Qui. "Seeing my dad cry makes me say that he is really proud of me. It has been a while since I saw him be proud of me like that."

However, his workload will remain the same for the new celebrity chef.

"I'd still be cooking and doing what I do best," says Qui, 31, and the winner of the \$125,000 grand prize.

During the finale, Qui



Chef Paul Qui

"rocked a clam dashi broth and coconut ice cream with Thai chili foam," according to OK! News.

Other Fil-Ams have tried to win the title exhibiting grace

under pressure over several seasons of the Bravo and Food Network reality show aired over Solar cable channels in Manila. Sally Camacho of Los Angeles placed runner-up to Chris Hammer of Las Vegas in 2011's second season of "Top Chef: Just Desserts."

U.S.-based Filipinos previously featured in the TV franchise include Dale Talde from "Top Chef All-Stars" season 8 and "Top Chef" season 4; Leah

Cohen and Eugene Villatora from "Top Chef" season 5 (New York); and Josie Smith-Malave from "Top Chef" season 2 (Los Angeles).

Qui is scheduled to return for a reunion episode in the biggest season yet for "Top Chef." A total of 29 hopefuls made it at the start of the competition. In the U.S., the show clocks in an average of more than one to two million viewers per season. (Good News Pilipinas) ■

Court Weighs US Power Over States in Health Case

WASHINGTON (AP) — CONGRESS WILL HELP PAY FOR YOUR ROADS, but your state can't lower its drinking age below 21. There's federal money for colleges, but they can't discriminate against women in the classroom or on the athletic field.

Federal cash comes with strings. Now 26 states are telling the Supreme Court that President Barack Obama's health care law has stretched an old rule too far. The new law's requirements for expanding Medicaid amount, in their view, to coercion that violates the US Constitution's division of power between the national government and the states.

No lower court has sided with the state plaintiffs. But the justices have reserved time next yesterday to hear the Medicaid issue as part of their broad review of challenges to the health care overhaul. And their decision could have implications far beyond health — for federal aid for housing, law enforcement, education and transportation.

"It was such a surprise that the court decided to hear this," said Ron Pollack, executive director of Families USA, a liberal advocacy group backing the law. If the plaintiffs prevail "it would not only invalidate the Medicaid expansion but place in jeopardy almost any federal

program that creates conditions for the receipt of funds."

Medicaid, the federal-state insurance program for low-income people, is a case study on the growing federal role in health care. Created in 1965 mainly to serve families in the old cash welfare program, it now covers more people than Medicare as a result of expansions usually initiated from Washington.

The more than 60 million Medicaid beneficiaries include one in four children, severely disabled people, many nursing home residents and low-income pregnant women. Trauma hospitals rely on Medicaid for critical funding, as do children's

hospitals. GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney's expansion of health insurance when he was governor of Massachusetts depended heavily on getting the federal government's blessing to tap Medicaid funds.

Overall, the federal government pays about 60 percent of Medicaid costs, and states cover the rest. But the program's scope and reach have turned it into one of the top state budget items, and the fact that Medicaid rolls swell when the economy tanks makes it especially tricky to handle for states required by their own constitutions to balance the books.

As if Medicaid weren't complicated already, along came Obama's health care overhaul. About half of the more than 30 million people expected to gain health coverage as a result of the overhaul will do so through Medicaid, most of them childless adults. Starting in 2014, the law effectively opens the program to anyone making up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, or about \$15,400 for an individual.

About half the states are saying: Enough is enough.

"Medicaid is no longer a partnership," said Wisconsin health secretary Dennis G. Smith, who ran the program nationwide for former President George W. Bush. "When Washington says 'You shall do this' or your entire Medicaid program is at risk ... that is flat-out coercion."

The new health care law uses "blunt force," said Smith, who was appointed by GOP Gov. Scott Walker. States are forced to carry out the expansion if they want to continue to participate in Medicaid. Refusal

would jeopardize billions in federal funds.

The federal government did enact provisions to make the expansion less costly. Under the overhaul law, Washington will pick up the entire tab for newly eligible enrollees the first three years. Eventually the federal share will drop to 90 percent, still far more than Washington contributes for the rest of Medicaid.

That's no comfort, said Smith, because the law has many hidden costs, including a so-called "woodwork effect" that Washington was aware of but did not address.

It works like this: Many people already eligible for Medicaid under previous laws don't apply, partly because of the stigma associated with a low-income program. But Obama's law requires most Americans to carry health insurance, so states are expecting many of those already eligible to sign up for the first time. And there will be no enhanced federal matching funds to help with those.

"There is a line somewhere — undefined by the courts — but there is a line somewhere," said Smith. "If this isn't coercion, what in the world is?"

Yet Smith's counterpart in Massachusetts, health secretary JudyAnn Bigby, doesn't call it coercion but "a relief in many ways."

"I don't see it as a burden at all," said Bigby, a primary care doctor before going into government service. "I see it as a tremendous opportunity. We know we have poor people who are currently unable to afford private health insurance."

Bigby, appointed by Democratic Gov. Deval Patrick, says

(continued on page 15)

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MAINLAND NEWS

US Congress to Probe Denials of Filipino WWII Vets' Claims

by Dymphna CALICA-LA PUTT
Thursday, March 15, 2012

A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS will start an investigation to verify why compensation claims of Filipino World War II veterans have been denied by the United States government.

In particular, the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs subcommittee will "look into methods used by the VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) to verify claims submitted by Filipino veterans under FVEC (Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund)," Jeff Miller, House Veterans Affairs committee chair said in a Feb. 17th letter to US Rep. Joe Heck.

The probe was ordered in response to Heck's Feb. 8th request for the House Veterans Affairs committee to urgently look into the denial of as many as 24,000 claims of Filipino veterans as well as the administration of the FVEC.

The FVEC is a \$198-million fund authorized by President Obama in 2008 for distribution as one-time lump sum payments of \$15,000 each to Filipino World War II veterans who are US citizens and US residents. Veterans living in the Philippines were allotted \$9,000 each.

The VA had turned down 24,000 claims because soldiers' names were not on the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis,

MO. This roster is what is used by the US government to determine military service, including service given in World War II.

The Filipino veterans claiming compensation, however, had proof of US military service from the Philippine government.

"That's what I want to get to the bottom of. If there is an individual who already has papers showing proof of service to the military, why are they denied compensation," Heck told Asian Journal in a telephone interview.

In his letter to Miller, who is representative of Florida's first district, Heck expressed concern over veterans' "legitimate claims that may have been unjustly denied" due to inaccurate military service records.

"The incomplete nature of NPRC's service records is well-documented," Heck said in his letter.

He mentioned a 1973 fire that destroyed official military files, including a large amount of the US Department of the Army's records of veterans discharged from 1912 to 1960. This historical data can be found in the NPRC's own website.

"With such a well-documented data deficiency, it's reasonable to assume that deserving Filipino veterans were denied their benefits," Heck said in his letter.

In the Asian Journal interview,



US Rep. Joe Heck

Heck said, "We need to move expeditiously because certainly these gentlemen cannot wait any longer," noting that an average of ten Filipino World War II veterans die everyday.

Heck also cited the recent passing of 88-year old Filipino veteran Augusto Oppus whose military service to the US was left uncompensated and unrecognized.

Oppus was one of five Filipino World War II veterans who are residents of Nevada, the third congressional district of which is represented by Heck. Compensation claims of these six former soldiers have been denied by the VA.

Also living in Nevada is the oldest living Filipino veteran in the US, Silverio Cuaresma who will celebrate his 100th birthday in June.

Coincidentally, Heck is expecting results of the congressional probe that month. "We are hoping for a preliminary report by June," he said in the interview.

In the meantime, the Nevada congressman said he is throwing his support to House Resolution 210. The bill known as the Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2011, by US Rep. Jackie Spier, directs the VA "to take into account any relevant service documentation, including documentation other than the Missouri List or the list of all discharged and deceased veterans from the 20th century." (AJPress Las Vegas) ■

(cont. from page 14; COURT ...)

part of the expansion costs will be offset with savings from accounts used to reimburse hospitals caring for the uninsured. Even with Romney's health insurance overhaul, some Massachusetts residents lack coverage.

As for the feds telling the states what to do, Bigby says it's nothing new. "States have always been obligated to follow federal rules and regulations in order to participate in Medicaid," she said. "I don't see this as any different, quite frankly."

Reflecting divisions nationally, most of the state officials suing to overturn the law are Republicans. The defenders are Democrats.

The lower court judge who went the furthest on the broad overhaul, ruling that the whole law should be struck down, nonetheless said he found the challenge to the Medicaid expansion legally unpersuasive.

"There is simply no support for the state plaintiffs' coercion argument in existing case law," wrote US District Judge Roger Vinson of Pensacola,

Fla., in the first decision on the main case now before the Supreme Court.

Nonetheless, Vinson said he appreciated the predicament of the plaintiffs. "At the time the Constitution was drafted and ratified, the founders did not expect that the federal government would be able to provide sizable funding to the states and ... exert power over the states to the extent that it currently does," Vinson wrote.

He suggested the Supreme Court may want to revisit the issue. (www.philstar.com) ■

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