

HAWAII FILIPINO CHRONICLE

HAWAII'S #1 FILIPINO NEWSPAPER

◆ FEBRUARY 19, 2011 ◆

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EDITORIAL

Bicol Mission Takes New Approach to Serving Needy

Oft is perhaps the medical profession in its purest sense—providing lifesaving treatment free of charge to the less fortunate without expecting compensation or a reward. While groups of medical professionals and laypersons from across the U.S. travel each year to impoverished nations the world over on missions of mercy, no one seems to do it better than volunteers from Hawaii. It could be the aloha spirit, which drives Hawaii's doctors, nurses and other volunteers to go the extra mile on these missions. Or the fact that volunteer Filipino doctors, many of whom grew up in an impoverished nation like the Philippines and can relate to the poverty that has basically crippled communities and the residents whom they treat. Whatever it may be, we like to feel that Hawaii's volunteers add an extra special touch on these missions.

One of the most recent missions involving a team from Hawaii was held in the Bicol region of the Philippines. This mission had all the trappings of previous medical missions—but with a slight twist. Organizers partnered with local churches and government officials in an arrangement that proved harmonious and beneficial for the mission. Churches spread the word via sermons and parishioners helped to register the patients, while government contributed the manpower from its health offices and medical schools. Volunteers still had to endure the heat, noise, long hours and other inconveniences, but as the old saying goes, *many hands make light work*.

In the U.S., such partnerships between church and state are all too often frowned upon. But in the Philippines and as far as medical missions are concerned, such an approach has worked and should be used by future missions to the Philippines regardless of affiliation or group.

Closing Kalihi Schools is A Mistake

The Board of Education's recommendation of closing Puuhale Elementary and Kalihi Elementary must be suspended until the new board appointed by Governor Neil Abercrombie is in place. This last minute cost-savings attempt by an outgoing BOE throws accountability out the window and is quickly becoming more unfair by the minute. The BOE's logic is to cut costs by closing and consolidating schools with low enrollment. Since the BOE's initial proposal, other schools slated to be closed suddenly have been spared due to heated community pressure. What's left for possible closing at this moment are three schools, two of which are in Kalihi. The obvious, politically tacit motivation by the BOE is that the Kalihi community is not organized or demanding enough to fight for their schools to remain open so why not let them carry the city's burden as they already do with a prison and multiple public housing? Parents and community leaders in Hawaii Kai have done an excellent job in opposing the proposal to close one of two Hawaii Kai elementary schools. Nearly 400 Hawaii Kai residents came together in opposition in one rally alone. We encourage Kalihi parents, community leaders and state representatives to show up in force to do the same if they are serious about saving Puuhale and Kalihi Elementary schools from closing.

What doesn't make sense is the BOE's past emphasis on reducing teacher-to-student ratio as a means to enhance quality education. Yet their latest move to close schools runs counter to that goal especially in an area like Kalihi where students are already underperforming academically. Numerous national studies show that smaller schools are more conducive to achieving better student performance than larger schools.

Granted that the BOE must look into ways of cost-savings given

FROM THE PUBLISHER



Welcome to the latest and greatest issue of the Hawaii Filipino Chronicle! You may have noticed that extra copies of the Chronicle have been hard to come by lately, particularly since we've been publishing our editions every two weeks ever since the start of 2011. However, we will resume our weekly issues beginning in March. We'd like to thank our readers for their patience and continued support during this period.

Our cover story was written by Teresita Bernales, Ed.D, who recently traveled to the Philippines as a member of a volunteer medical team from Hawaii to the Bicol region. Her in-depth article chronicles the intense efforts it took to conduct a medical mission to a foreign country like the Philippines. Many members of the Bicol team are veterans of missions past, who return time and again simply for the sheer personal fulfillment and satisfaction such undertakings bring. Despite the tremendously difficult work, each member returns home reinvigorated and refreshed...and with a new perspective of life. If you have ever wondered what it's like to go on a medical mission, please read Ms. Bernales' story which begins on page 4.

In news you can use, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) has submitted an informative article that offers good advice for high schoolers who may be in the process of applying for college scholarships. With the cost of tuition so high nowadays, many students depend on scholarships to help defray expenses. Unfortunately, there are unscrupulous individuals out there looking to make a quick buck. If you are a student, please read the BBB's article on page 10 on how to avoid scholarship scams. You'll be glad you did.

Speaking of being glad, the City is moving forward with a long-awaited groundbreaking ceremony for its transit project. The ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, February 22nd in Kapolei. The project is expected to boost the economy, provide jobs and when completed, offer an alternative for commuters, particularly those on the leeward side of Oahu. If you're interested in attending the groundbreaking, please read page 3 for further details.

There are other articles of interest in this issue, including Legislative Connection (page 3), Immigration Guide (page 7), Travelogue (page 8) and Legal Notes (page 13). In closing, thank you for faithfully supporting the Hawaii Filipino Chronicle. Please feel free to contact us at: filipinochronicle@gmail.com if you have story suggestions, concerns or questions regarding Hawaii's Filipino community.

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

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LEGISLATIVE CONNECTION



By Senator Will Espero

Illegal Fireworks Task Force

putting out fires causes by sparks from fireworks that landed and ignited houses, cars, and other property.

We all understand the cultural role that fireworks plays in our two annual celebrations. What we really need is goodwill and concern for neighbors, responsible use of the fireworks, and self-restraint. Unfortunately, those with access to the fireworks were using them to make bombs that jolt the hearing or worse, the property, of others and pose serious risk of fire even outside of New Year's Eve or the Fourth of July. With all of the phone calls to police and lawmakers, we finally had to take action for the sake of the safety of our residents, even if it meant that fireworks use by many law-abiding persons would be curbed.

Last year the Legislature passed a bill to address the issue of illegal fireworks, which became Act 170, and created the Illegal Fireworks Task Force. The Task Force



brought together industry representatives, law enforcement, and agency representatives from the federal, state, and county levels: Hawaii Trucking Association and Matson Navigation Company (shippers); two lobbyists for the fireworks industry; the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Federal Aviation Administration; U.S. Customs & Border Protection; Coast Guard; U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; state Departments of Agriculture, of Transportation, of Public Safety, and of Defense; the State Fire

Council; fire and police departments from each county; and the prosecuting attorney for Honolulu and Maui county. Representative Faye Hanohano, chair of the House Committee on Public Safety, and I co-chaired the Task Force.

For six months, these agency and industry representatives looked at the statistics, debated many aspects of the issue, and came up with possible methods for addressing the problem. They approved their final report just before the Legislature opened. The report summarizes the current incidence of illegal fireworks use in all four counties, commercial and law enforcement climate, and recommendations to the Legislature.

The Task Force made several recommendations:

- increase fees and fines to deter these activities;
- direct these fees and fines toward more resources for law enforcement and education;

- possible decriminalization of offenses in favor of civil fines to make enforcement easier;
- granting cargo inspection authority to other city and state agencies;
- expanding inspection authority and increasing random inspections of cargo, including using dogs that are especially trained to sniff out explosives;
- focus cargo inspections to make them more manageable and effective; and
- establishing a reward system similar to CrimeStoppers to encourage reporting of fireworks violations.

The recommendations and report of the Illegal Fireworks Task Force have been presented to the Legislature. It would be ideal if civic concern for the community and respect for the law were enough to control fireworks use. Sadly, because it is not, government has to step in for the protection of the community. Please join us in creating a safer environment by stopping the use of illegal fireworks in Hawaii.

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

City to Break Ground on Transit Project

City officials will hold a groundbreaking ceremony and blessing for the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project on February 22, 2011 in Kapolei.

The event is open to the public and will begin at 10 a.m. along Kualakai Parkway (North-South Road). Mayor Peter Carlisle says the groundbreaking will be a time for celebration.

"Many people have waited so long and worked hard to finally get to this point," he says. "This project will provide thousands of jobs for our local workforce, relieve traffic congestion and pave the way for an exciting and better future for Oahu residents."

The transit project is expected to cost \$5.5 billion and will extend 20 miles from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center. The elevated rail system will include 21 stations in Waipahu, Pearl City, Aiea, Kalihi, Chinatown, Downtown Honolulu and Kakaako. There will also be stations at UH-West Oahu, Leeward Community College, Pearl Highlands, Pearlridge, Aloha Stadium, Honolulu International Airport and Honolulu Community College.

Seeing the transit project come to fruition has been long and challenging process for City Council chair Nestor Garcia and other rail supporters. Garcia's

district includes Waipahu, a community where many Filipinos call home. Waipahu in fact will host the first two transit stations after the project's starting point in Kapolei.

"My district is where the focus is and where the new mass transit system will make its start. I have always believed that commuters from the Leeward side need and deserve a transportation option that is reliable and not subject to whatever transpires on the roadways," Garcia says.

Garcia says that the rail project will provide Oahu residents with a transportation option to roadway congestion.

"When it comes to the rail project, Filipinos are no different from any other ethnicity in that they will share in the benefits equally," he says. "Also, our desire to protect and keep the north and windward sides of the island as free of urbanization as possible becomes a little easier with transit oriented development (TOD)."

"In addition to being triggers for economic growth, TOD can help encourage re-development of the core of Waipahu town. Although unsettling for some, the opportunity to transform Waipahu brings much promise. What we do now about how we plan and prepare for those changes will help define our success."

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COVER STORY

Medical Volunteers Touch Thousands of Lives During Bicol Mission

By **Teresita G. Bernales**

Dozens of medical professionals and laypersons volunteered their time and personal resources on a medical mission to the typhoon-ravaged Bicol provinces in the Philippines, from January 22-26, 2011.

Overall, the mission was an overwhelming success. It was organized by the Bicol Club of Hawaii (BCH) and Titans USA Foundation, a USA-based fraternity of medical graduates from the University of Santo Tomas (UST), in cooperation with PMAH Ohana Medical Missions, Inc. and supported by Bayanhan Clinic Without Walls.

Volunteers brought a total of 14 boxes full of medicines and supplies which were donated by generous supporters from Hawaii and the mainland, counted and repacked by the BCH members and air-freighted free by Philippine Airlines.

"Each box weighed 70 lbs. and had a combined retail value

of \$180,000," says Dr. Charlie Sonido, over-all chair of the mission.

The total cost of the mission was approximately \$16,000 which was raised from donations of BCH and Titans USA Foundation members, supporters and friends in the community. This paid for expenses directly related to the mission, gift packages of toothpaste, toothbrush, canned goods and noodles for indigents of the mission areas. Land transportation from Manila and back and within the region which was heavily discounted by the Cu family, owners of Isarog Lines was paid for by the mission volunteers.

Weeks before the team's ar-

rival, the Bicol region was deluged with continuous heavy rains that caused massive flooding and landslides. Apprehension about personal safety was foremost in volunteers' minds but the urgent desire to provide medical help and assistance to the needy population in this time of calamity prevailed.

The A-Team

The overall mission chair was Charlie Sonido, MD, while co-chairs were Marc Joven, MD and Erlinda Cachola, MD. JP Orias handled the logistics. Other volunteers were Paul Glen, MD; Russell Kelly, MD; Cynthia Kelly, MD; Marianela Jacob, NP; Juliet Picazo, RN; and Jose Jacob, RN. Community volunteers included Tess Bernales, Bernie Bernales, Romy Cachola and Vanessa Jacob.

Joining the Hawaii delegation were Manila-based physicians and nurses Charlemagne Aguinaldo, MD; Lorenzo Tan, MD; medical students Kevin Giller and Pierre Nap Niere; David Reyes, RN/EM; and Angela Losa, a student nurse from California whose dad is originally from Nabua, CamSur.

Volunteers paid for their own transportation and accommodation. Local hosts paid for some meals, which, as Fr. Poblete puts it, "was the least we could do with the



Patients in Nabua waited for almost 5 hours due to traffic delays in Atimonan, Quezon



In Taysan, Legaspi City, Dr. Erlinda Cachola saw a continuous stream of patients

benefits we get."

Initially, the team experienced several hours delay caused by road construction traffic in the mountains of Quezon province which postponed the team's arrival until 12:40 p.m. instead of the scheduled 8 a.m. But after checking in, freshening up and enjoying a delicious lunch prepared by the Orias' family, volunteers were ready to "get down to business" by 2 p.m. at the mission site.

Day 1—Holy Cross Parish, Nabua

Weeks before the mission, the parish announced the medical mission and registered the first 1,000 patients for the half day mission. The overall chairperson was Msgr. Raul Pan, of Holy Cross Parish, who was assisted for the day by Dr. Teodora H. Pomillos and Glenda Trajano, RN, of the Nabua Health Office. Local nursing student volunteers from CamSur Polytechnic College were organized by Dr. Laarni Salcedo. Due to the morning's unexpected traffic delay, the patients were forced to wait longer.

"Throng of people awaited our coming that had been there from early morning," recalls one mission volunteer. "The sea of faces spoke loudly of their anguish, pain and desire to be seen by our doctors."

The responsibility of crowd control fell to Cachola, Jacob and Bernales. Vitamins and Tylenol were dispensed, while doctors and nurses were assisted by Bicol interpreters to facilitate with communication. Prior to the team's arrival, there were 610 registered patients, but the numbers increased to over 1,000 by the end of the Nabua mission. A minor commotion ensued when word spread that the volunteers were closing up shop, despite a number of people still in line.

"In the end, we relented and treated everyone who was in line," says Hawaii internist Dr. Sonido. "How can one refuse a limp and emaciated child, or a sickly man who suffered from cough, cold and fever for weeks?"

A woman who stood in line for four hours said she did not mind waiting because she knew

(continued on page 5)

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COVER STORY

(From page 4, MEDICAL...)

she would get medicines from the U.S. that are better than the local ones. Another patient requested a pack of multi-vitamins for her children. One elderly lady who had not seen a doctor in years repeatedly thanked volunteers for their selfless service.

As a parting gift, volunteers distributed thousands of free toothbrushes and toothpaste, corned beef and noodles. Patients were thrilled to receive such items, in addition to the free medical services.

Surgery was set up in a separate building adjacent to the parish hall, which provided a bit of privacy. Of the 56 surgery patients seen, the team completed 40 minor surgeries like removal of cysts, lumps and circumcision. Adult diagnoses were for cardio-pulmonary symptoms, respiratory disorders, hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes screening, joint pains, headaches, UTI, eye infections, skin diseases, osteoarthritis, neurological symptoms, allergies, pregnancy, flu, goiter, abdominal pain, gastroenteritis, insomnia, gastritis, ear problems, myofascial syndrome, numbness, cramps, hormonal changes, Parkinson's disease, pruritus, chest wall deformity, hemorrhoids, dysmenorrhea, dysuria, viral syndrome, pyelonephritis, prostate problems and shingles.

The volunteers toiled until 7:45 pm, many of them taking a break to use the restroom. They endured the heat, noise and other inconveniences without complaining. They were later treated to a sumptuous dinner featuring the best of Bicol cuisine hosted once more by the Orias family and ended the evening with a well-earned rest.

Day 2—Naga City

This portion of the medical mission was sponsored by Monsignor Romulo Vergara and Fr. John Poblete in partnership with Mayor John Bongat, the City Council represented by KGD Seling Tuason, the City Health Office and Ateneo de Naga Class of 1959. Patients were from the barangays of Abella, Igualidad and Sabang. The venue was the Naga City Youth Center.

The local overall chairpersons for Day 2 were Melinda Cu and Ning Cu who had 15 years of experience in organizing medical missions. The 89 volunteers included 18 nursing students

from the University of Nueva Caceres, 23 members of the Peñafrancia Young Professional Organization, 15 volunteers from the City Health Office and 10 volunteers from the parishes of Abella, Sabang and Igualidad.

The numbers of pre-registered patients at the three parishes totaled 1,675—many of them coming as early as 7 a.m. This figure ballooned to more than 2,000 at day's end. When the medical volunteers arrived, a majority of the patients were already seated in the bleachers with their color-coded slips with their vital signs and medical complaints duly noted.

The mission started at 9:30 a.m. and lasted until 7:30 p.m. Surgery was done at a makeshift operating room on the stage of the center, where 34 minor surgeries were performed out of 51 applicants. After treating their patients, the volunteer doctors who were assigned to adults decided to assist the pediatric physicians.

Team member Romy Cachola served as chief vitamin dispenser for Day 2. He trained two nurses/interpreters how to consult with patients and explain the proper use of Tylenol and its side effect and how to take the vitamins—all in under two minutes per patient.

"The cases were similar to Nabua, but double in numbers. There was a lot of cough and cold cases, fever in adults and children, hypertension and diabetes in adults and malnutrition," says Waipahu internist Dr. Russel Kelly.

The Ateneo de Naga class of 1959 headed the gift distribution, helped with the opening ceremony, setting-up and wherever assistance was needed. These movers and shakers of Naga were a very spirited and accomplished group of retired professionals. Upon learning that Cachola was a member of the Honolulu City Council, they wasted little time in trying to establish a Sister City relationship between Naga and Honolulu. Cachola was very diplomatic in explaining the procedure. His suggestion to help make Naga more attractive was for city officials to build a golf course.

When asked about her experience, volunteer Marianela Jacob said that she did not mind the exhausting, non-stop work.

"The patients were kind and appreciative of the medical help

they received," says Jacob, whose husband Joe and daughter joined the Bicol mission team. This was the second medical mission for Jacob, who said she would participate again should the opportunity arise.

City of Naga medical officer Dr. Mel Paz, was grateful for the assistance of his colleagues from Hawaii and the U.S. mainland.

"This mission is an opportunity for the poor to get medical treatment," he says. "Patients love getting medicines from the U.S."

After another long day, the Mayor of Naga hosted a dinner for volunteers at the Ambassador Hotel. Speeches followed and the group's host Fr. Poblete awarded certificates to all of the volunteers.

Before heading to their home base, the group visited the shrine of Our Lady of Peñafrancia. A bus took the group to the Basilica where Fr. Louie Occiano awaited them. The group filed into a tiny room where they prayed and touched her garment, as is the tradition to receive her graces. It was a joyful and spiritual encounter for devotees of the group.

Day 3—Legaspi City and Sto. Domingo

The team awoke early and left Macagang Hotel and Resort



Lay volunteers Bernie and Tess Bernales dispensed vitamins and Tylenol assisted by nursing students



Sorting out boxes of medicines and supplies at Macagang Business Resort and Hotel before loading them for Naga City

bound for Legaspi City. It was a scenic ride past the beautiful countryside, Mayon volcano and the Cagsawa ruins. At the suggestion of host Fr. Raphael Siapno, volunteers stopped at the top of a hill near the town of Taysan, which gave them a breathtaking view of the city of Legaspi, the Mayon volcano and the Pacific Ocean.

When arriving at Taysan Elementary, yet a large crowd

awaited the mission volunteers who were greeted with warm applause.

"We felt the anticipation and relief in their minds and hearts that their ills would now be cured," says one mission volunteer.

The pre-planning for Legaspi was done by Fr. Raleigh Siapno, who was assisted by Fulbert Gillego, MD of the

(continued on page 6)



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COVER STORY (cont.)

(from page 5, MEDICAL...)

Legaspi Health Office, along with Carmen Calleja, Irma Velasco, Anni Liaguino and other members of the Ladies of Charity which has been helping medical missions for 50 years. Volunteers included members of the School of Saint Agnes Class of 1984, barangay health workers, barangay tanods and nurses from Bicol University.

In all, 21 doctors treated about 1,900 registered patients. The types of cases in Legaspi City were about the same as the other previous two sites. Local doctors who participated were Arlene Calleja, Joseph Tabara, Ina Roa-Tabara, Catherine Antesallao, Honey Rney Raborar, Julie Iho Salvosa, Fulbert Gillego, Andrew Deoparte, Rey Vincent Trimforte, Jubie Garcia, and Edbert General.

An advance team proceeded to Sto. Domingo before volunteers adjourned at 3 p.m. in Taysan, Legaspi City. Sto. Domingo, a seaside town of Albay, where mission volunteer Dr. Cynthia Romano-Kelly hails. Cynthia's father, the late Dr. Rogelio Romano, operated a 15-bed clinic at Sto. Domingo until last year. After a brief lunch at the Kelly's home, volunteers resumed seeing patients at 4 p.m.

When they arrived at the clinic site, there was a crowd of less than 100 patients. However, as the mission progressed into the afternoon and early evening, the line of patients seemed endless which reached almost a thousand.

"They kept coming and literally overwhelmed the doctors and non-medical people who were in charge of crowd control," says one mission volunteer. "It was hard to refuse treatment for a patient in dire need of help. We decided to see as much as we could until 8 p.m. when we had to close shop."

After closing shop, the

group enjoyed a short dinner hosted by the Kellys. The exhausted group later boarded a chartered bus to Manila.

"We were exhausted to the bones but also exhilarated by helping so many people get better," says volunteer physician Dr. Charlie Aguinaldo.

"For the patients, it was more than experiencing a cure. It was about interacting with trained medical experts who were able to reach out, learn of their physical needs and make them healthy once again," adds Manila-based physician Dr. Lorenzo Tan.

A Sense of Satisfaction

For many volunteers, few things in life are as gratifying as helping others who will never be able to repay them. For mission co-chair Dr. Erlinda Cahola, who has lost count of the number of medical missions she has participated in, the reward for all the hard work is a "pervading feeling of joy."

"You are able to help in your own little way," she says. "It's rewarding emotionally and spiritually. Aside from these personal satisfactions, the fellowship and camaraderie among volunteers develop into lifelong friendships. It's truly a life-changing experience."

Fellow mission co-chair Dr. Mark Joven said that he treated more pediatric patients during the Bicol mission than any other mission he has participated in.

"We literally ran out of medications and had to acquire more to accommodate everyone. Overall, it was a successful mission," he says.

Dr. Joven says that the patients were extremely grateful for the free medications, which they could not afford to buy. Because of low wages, families usually allot most of their earnings for food, so health is secondary.

"I remember this mother



Dr. Marc Joven checks a patient in Naga City. Children comprised 42% of the total patients seen by the team

who needed anti-seizure medications for her son who had cerebral palsy. I gave her a six month supply of medication like the other patients and she was very thankful. Our gesture was

small, but I felt that it made a big difference in their lives," he says. Pharmaceutical representative Greg McIntosh who details asthma medicines in Honolulu served as patient educator for the proper use of inhalers. "I cannot forget one elderly patient who kissed my hands to express his gratitude for the service we rendered," he remembers.

Orias called it a "feel-good moment" for the volunteers. This Bicol mission differed from previous missions in that organizers partnered with local churches and government officials.

"The churches spread the word about the mission through sermons and helped to pre-qual-

ify mission recipients, while the local government provided manpower from its Rural Health Office and medical schools," Orias says. "It was a harmonious and efficient partnership."

"We served our fellow Bicolanos and felt their appreciation and gratitude," says Juliet Picazo, RN who is originally from Nabua and now resides in Honolulu.

According to mission volunteer Dr. Paul Glen, a volunteer surgeon from Kaiser, his team screened 157 potential surgery cases and completed 118 of them.

The Bicol Medical Mission treated a total of 7,064 patients, 42 percent of whom are children.

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

UST Alumni Distribute Food to Needy Residents

By Teresita G. Bernalles

Representatives from the UST Alumni Association of Hawaii (USTAAH), Gawad Kalinga (GK) Philippines and GK USA recently distributed rice, noodles and canned goods to needy residents of the UST/Aloha GK Village at Agudo in Mandaluyong, Metropolitan Manila.

In addition to USTAAH, the other primary sponsor or GK partner in Hawaii is the Hawaii International Relief Organization, or HIRO. Representing USTAAH was Dr. Teresita Bernalles and her husband Bernie Bernalles, who is also a GK coordinator in Hawaii. The couple was in the Philippines for a medical mission to Bicol and to attend the University of Santo Tomas' 400th anniversary celebration. Representing GK Philippines and GK USA were Inoy and Ed Figueroa.

Funds used to purchase food for the Aloha GK Agudo villagers were raised during the USTAAH Christmas Party last December. This year marked the third time that donations were given to Aloha GK Agudo Village residents. In 2009, former Hawaii State Rep. Jun Absinay donated goods to the Aloha GK Agudo Village, while Dory Villafuerte headed a group from that distributed school supplies for the children and rice to the families in 2010.

A total of 63 families reside in the 15 homes sponsored by GK partners from Hawaii. The



Bernie Bernalles handing out a sack of rice, noodles, milk, canned sardines and corned beef

men hold jobs such as tricycle drivers, construction workers, factory workers, shoe repairmen and scrap metals workers. Women are generally stay-at-home mothers but a few have found work as laundry women (labandera) or ironing clothes (plantsadora). There are also several sari-sari stores in the compound.

The president of the Agudo Village Association is Myrna Sabinano. She is assisted by secretary Rhoda Feliciano and treasurer Jocelyn Cosa, treasurer. Together, the three women are working hard to finish the rest of the homes allotted for the village. Another non-profit group, Cross International Foundation, has pledged to finish the remaining houses.

Sponsors are also looking to build a multi-purpose community center, which would offer programs for 3-7 year olds, 8-14 year olds and 15-21 year olds. Ateneo University is providing assistance in encouraging the village's youth to finish high school and to stay away from drugs and other vices. To keep peace and prevent crimes, villagers have launched a neighborhood watch group and

take turns patrolling the area at night.

Also planned for the community center are various activities aimed at empowering residents and providing assistance in starting up small-scale industries. Organizers received a boost from Philippine Congressman Neptali Gonzales who pledged to help clear the lot where the center is to be built.

"It was a delight to see a working, peaceful community amidst the blight of the surrounding areas," says Bernie Bernalles. "They have a positive attitude about the future and were very appreciative of the kindness and generosity of their sponsors from Hawaii. They extended their heartfelt gratitude for giving them their homes and for the gifts of food."

In a small way, the sponsors from Hawaii are doing their part to provide homes for the homeless and food for the hungry, thus helping alleviate poverty in the Philippines. Sponsors also hope that in the future, more Filipino as well as non-Filipino organizations will join them as partners in this very worthwhile undertaking.

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IMMIGRATION GUIDE



By Atty. Emmanuel
Samonte Tipon



Adulterine children' are the issue of adulterous intercourse and are regarded more unfavorably than illegitimate offspring of single persons." Matter of Young, 12 I&N Dec. 340 (BIA 1967).

Unfaithful Wife Wants Husband to Petition Adulterine Child

Her husband did not know about her infidelity, but said that her husband would not mind since he was in a nursing home and could no longer perform his marital duties and had "permitted" her to have a child with another man. The person she talked with showed skepticism that a man would willingly be a *pendejo consentido*. He remarked that he must not be an Ilocano. "He is an American," she replied.

If the Filipina had consulted with a competent lawyer before returning to the U.S., he would have told her that she could have brought the child with her. The U.S. will waive the visa requirement for a child born during a visit abroad of a mother who is a lawful permanent resident upon her first return to the U.S. after the birth of the child. 8 CFR §211.1(b)(1).

Is Adulterine Child a Stepchild?

Assuming the husband forgave his wife, can he petition her adulterine child? Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 201(b)(2)(A)(i) provides that "children" of U.S. citizens are immediate relatives who can be petitioned by such citizens.

INA §101(b)(1) defines the term "child" as an unmarried person under twenty one years of age who is:

(A) a child born in wedlock;

(B) a stepchild, whether or not born out of wedlock, provided the child had not reached the age of eighteen years at the time the marriage creating the status of stepchild occurred."

Can an adulterine child be classified as a stepchild? The statute is clear that the illegitimate child of one spouse becomes the stepchild of the other spouse when the child is conceived *prior* to the marriage. But does the illegitimate child of one spouse become the stepchild of the other spouse when the child is conceived and born *during* the existence of the marriage?

The former INS contended that the statute contemplated children born prior to the existing marriage who become the stepchildren of the new spouse upon marriage, not illegitimate children who were not yet born at the time of the marriage. However, the Board of Immigration Appeals and the Attorney General ruled that adulterine children are stepchild-

ren, saying it was the "intent of Congress" to include them. Matter of Stultz, 15 I&N Dec. 362.

COMMENT: If that was what Congress intended, why did it not say so? On the contrary, what Congress intended is expressed in the statute — it is the marriage that creates the relationship of stepchild. Thus, existing children become stepchildren by the marriage of their parent to another. How can a nonexistent child at the time of the marriage become a stepchild?

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

AMM Sends Medical Teams to Philippines

Aloha Medical Mission (AMM), a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to serving the medically-underserved, has sent a team of doctors, nurses and laypeople to the province of Negros Occidental, Philippines for a medical mission from February 21-25, 2011.

The team left Hawaii for the Philippines via Philippine Airlines on February 17. Comprised entirely of volunteers, members paid their own way and will be rendering free medical and surgical services to the indigent citizens of Bacolod-Silay. This year marks AMM's ninth mission to the province of Negros Occidental. General surgeon and board president Dr. Brad Wong is leading the team.

A second team of AMM volunteers left on February 18



via Hawaiian Airlines and will meet their colleagues upon arrival in Manila. Volunteers from both teams hail from Honolulu, Maui, the Big Island, California, Guam, Oregon, Washington and Australia.

On February 11, 2011, a third AMM team traveled to the Philippines for a mission to underserved citizens of Calamba, Laguna. That team, which included 10 volunteers from Oahu and Hilo, was headed by general surgeon Dr. Carl Lum. They were met in-country by the rest of their teammates, who hailed

from Florida, Guam, South Carolina and the Philippines.

In a similar mission last February 2010, Dr. Lum's team performed 230 surgeries and treated 480 patients in a week's time.

The AMM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer organization based in Honolulu. Since 1983, it has sent over 4,000 volunteers on 126 missions to 15 countries. Some 250,000 patients have been treated and 16,000 surgeries performed, all free charge.

AMM also operates the only completely free dental clinic in Hawaii, supports two free clinics in Bangladesh and sponsors an advanced training program for Philippine ophthalmologists.

For more information about AMM or to learn how to volunteer, please visit www.alohahealthmission.org.

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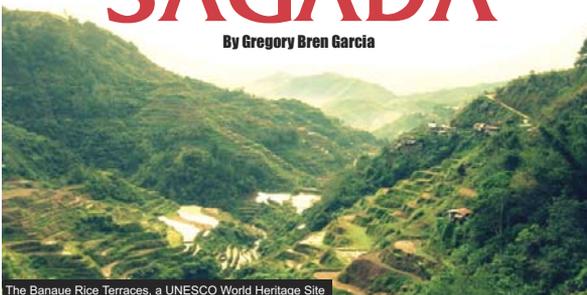
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TRAVEL OUGE

Romancing SAGADA

By Gregory Bren Garcia



The Banaue Rice Terraces, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Paceful and chaotic, provincial and global, rough and beautiful. Add “and everything in between” to that list and you have Sagada. Indeed, this remote little town nestled in the heart of Mountain Province in the Philippines is a world of its own, unlike any other place in the country. Its bucolic beauty, long known among foreign holiday-makers and well-traveled Filipinos, is still quite alien to pedestrian local tourists who prefer the more traversed roads to Baguio, Tagaytay and other commercialized destinations from the sightseeing pantry. But in my case, I chose the road less traveled; I opted to slash gallantly through unfamiliar towns, dusty trails, cliff-hanging terrains and rickety vehicles playing terrible 80s and 90s music. But in the end, it was all worth it.

Sagada Backpacking 101

My trip to Sagada was a compulsion of sorts, not one of my usual premeditated jaunts planned weeks in advance and usually on road trips aboard the

car of some willing friend who's kind (or foolish) enough to agree to drive long distances. My friend Steph, who at that time was experiencing some kind of metaphysical unease and expressed her desire for a time off from the daily grind, was actually the one who asked me to tag along. Since I had long wanted to go there and now there's a plea to boot, I thought why not?

The mountain town is far of course – some 400km away from Manila and accessible only by a combination of bus and shuttle rides. So the cheapest way you can get there is through the old-fashioned way – backpacking. Going to Sagada with fellow backpackers is not only about security in numbers, it's also about economics. By going in groups, you pay less for lodg-

ing and organized tours when you're in town later.

Bus trips cost around Php450 (US\$10) but last only up to the town of Banaue, in Ifugao province. If you plan to go on a weekend, make sure to book in advance because tickets become easily sold out due to high demand. Florida Bus Line has two daily trips that leave at around 9pm and 11pm from Sampaloc,

Manila. Other bus lines, like Ohayami and Autobus, also have trips to Banaue but from what I heard, they offer less comfortable accommodations and we didn't really fancy forgoing any amount of comfort on such a long journey.

At the Sampaloc station of Florida Bus Line, we met up with the four other backpackers introduced to us through a friend of a friend – Jen and Tin, who were vacationing from Singapore, and Kimo and Ahmed from Manila.

Boarding our bus, it surprised me just how many foreigners there were. Half of the passengers were speaking different languages – German, French and English in American and Australian accents. A few Koreans, Japanese and Singaporeans were also onboard, such that it felt like the bus was actually chartered by the United Nations. I did wonder how come this many people from different corners of the world knew about Sagada (and was probably returning there for their second, third, and so on visit) while I, a Filipino, haven't even been there?

(continued on page 12)

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

Advice from BBB on Avoiding Scholarship Scams

Millions of young people depend on grants and scholarships to pay for college. Applying for financial aid can be confusing and some companies claim they can help. However, consumers who take the bait can end up paying for information and assistance that are already available for free.

Hawaii's Better Business Bureau (BBB) recommends doing research before paying any company to find financial aid for college.

During the 2009-2010 school year, \$94 billion in grants was made available to college students to help cover education costs, according to

The College Board. Sources of the funding included federal and state government, institutions, private entities and employers.

"Times are tight and many families are looking to tap into the well of scholarships and grants to help their kids go to college," says Dwight Kealoha, CEO of Hawaii's BBB. "While some companies are trying to take advantage of struggling families looking for funding, the good news is that all of the information you need is already available for free."

Every year, BBB receives complaints from parents who paid money upfront to a company that promised to find



scholarships and grants for their child but ultimately didn't deliver.

One such company, Edifice Financial Aid, sends prospective college students a letter explaining they have been selected for a personal interview. Students who call for their interview are scheduled for a financial aid seminar along with other students and parents. Complainants say they attended the seminar and paid over \$1,000 for help finding aid, but the services offered were mostly assistance in filling out financial aid forms.

BBB is also receiving complaints about J.E.C.C., Inc.

Complainants say they thought they were taking advantage of a free trial CD-ROM on how to get federal grants for college. Some were charged as much as \$69, even before receiving the information in the mail. Those who received the information complained that it wasn't helpful at all.

BBB advises consumers to be wary of the following red flags when receiving a sales pitch from a financial-aid finder:

- "The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back." In reality, no one can guarantee a grant or scholarship. Guarantees that are offered usually have so many conditions or strings attached that it is almost impossible for consumers to get their money back.
- "You cannot get this information anywhere else." Actually, scholarship information is widely available in books, from libraries and financial aid

offices and on the internet, if you are willing to search for it.

- "We will do all the work." Only parents and students can really determine and provide the financial information needed to complete the forms.
- "You have been selected by a national foundation to receive a scholarship." If you have not entered a competition sponsored by the foundation, this claim is highly unlikely.
- "May I have your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship?" This is never a requirement for a legitimate scholarship offer.
- "The scholarship will cost some money." Legitimate scholarship offers never require payment of any kind.

For more information on finding financial aid for school, visit www.fafsa.gov. BBB also offers advice on managing personal finances and avoiding scams at www.hawaii.bbb.org.

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Council to Vote on Rush Limbaugh Reso

The Honolulu City Council will vote next week on a resolution asking talk show host Rush Limbaugh to apologize for derogatory remarks in reference to Chinese president Hu Jintao.

Co-introduced by Councilmembers Stanley Chang and Romy Cachola, Resolution 11-34 also urges Clear Channel, the station that employs Limbaugh, and sponsors of radio talk shows to implement policies against racial discrimination.

During a radio show on January 19, 2011, Limbaugh did a mock impersonation of President Hu and the Chinese language. He later dismissed criticisms from prominent Chinese-American officials.

Cachola said he co-introduced the legislation to show support for his fellow councilmember, in light of a similar



Rush Limbaugh

resolution that occurred in 2007 with the ABC TV show "Desperate Housewives" in which one of the main characters commented that Filipino physicians seemed incompetent.

"In 2007, we received help not only from the Filipino community, but other ethnic groups as well," Cachola says. "That's why I co-introduced the resolution."

The veteran councilmember says that Filipinos should support the resolution because if minority groups won't stand up for themselves, then no one

else will.

"We should not tolerate bigotry which is unacceptable and has no place in our society. We can do our part to prevent these instances from happening by joining with other ethnic groups and civil rights organizations," Cachola says.

He feels that the media's image of Filipinos has slowly improved over the years, but there is still much to be done.

"Enhancing our image as Filipinos should be an on-going and long-term goal. Since plantation times up to now, we've made a lot of headway but we cannot stop because there's still a long way to go compared to other ethnic groups," he says.

The Council's Executive Matters Committee passed the resolution at its February 7, 2011 meeting. The full Council will vote on the measure at its next meeting on Wednesday, February 22, 2011.

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

SC Won't Stop Impeach Proceedings vs Mercei

by Edu Punay
Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - The Supreme Court (SC) rejected yesterday Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez's bid to stop Congress from hearing the impeachment cases filed against her by two militant groups for her alleged inaction on corruption and human rights cases involving former President and now Pangpanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her officials.

But SC spokesman Midas Marquez advised the House committee on justice to let the High Court rule first with finality on Gutierrez's plea before hearing the impeachment cases. Gutierrez was an Arroyo appointee.

He explained that with the ruling, the SC in effect has lifted its status quo ante order that temporarily stopped the House committee from proceeding with the impeachment cases.

"The decision is not yet final, and the rules provide for filing of a motion for reconsideration. It would be more prudent if the House will respect the procedure on appeal since this case is being prioritized by the Court anyway so that (possible appeal) would be

immediately resolved," Marquez told a press conference.

Marquez's advice to the House committee came after the Ombudsman's office voiced its plan to appeal the SC ruling.

"The decision is not yet final. We will file a motion for reconsideration," Gutierrez told The STAR.

"Our office has not yet received the official copy of the said decision. Pending such receipt, the Ombudsman is still studying her options, including the filing of a Motion of Reconsideration on the said decision," Assistant Ombudsman and spokesman Jose de Jesus Jr. said in a statement.

Malacañang called the SC decision a "welcome reiteration of normal constitutional practice."

Solicitor General Joel Cadiz said he was hopeful the SC would eventually reaffirm its ruling.

"We salute and thank the Supreme Court for upholding the separation of its powers with that of a co-equal branch of government - Congress," he told The STAR over the phone.

7-5-2 decision

The SC justices voted 7-5-2



Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez

in full court session to dismiss Gutierrez's petition to stop the House committee on justice from proceeding with the consolidated impeachment complaints filed by former Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros and the militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) last year.

The High Court said the House committee did not violate the one-year constitutional ban on successive impeachment proceedings against an official, contrary to the claim of Gutierrez.

"The majority has decided there is no violation of the one-year ban and interpreted that the prohibition is on more than one impeachment complaint," Marquez explained.

The SC justices who voted for the continuation of the impeachment hearings were Associate Justices Antonio Carpio,

Conchita Carpio-Morales, Jose Mendoza, Roberto Abad, Maria Lourdes Sereno, Antonio Eduardo Nachura, Martin Villarama. Carpio-Morales penned the ruling.

Chief Justice Renato Corona and Associate Justices Arturo Brion, Lucas Bersamin, Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, and Diosdado Peralta dissented.

Associate Justices Mariano del Castillo and Jose Perez submitted a separate "partial" concurring opinion. They said only the first impeachment complaint - filed by Hontiveros - should be admitted.

"We have two justices concurring in part because they believe that while the second impeachment complaint might be banned, there is nothing to stop the first impeachment complaint from proceeding," said Marquez.

Associate Justice Presbitero Velasco inhibited himself from the proceedings because his son, Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Velasco, is a member of the House justice committee.

Marquez said the SC believes the impeachment cases - filed on July 22 and Aug. 3 last year - may be tackled as one because they were jointly referred to the House committee on Aug. 11.

"The complaints were referred to the House justice committee at the same time so the committee was doing only one proceeding," he explained.

In her petition, Gutierrez argued that the second complaint violated the one-year ban on the

filing of more than one impeachment complaint and that the move of the committee to consolidate the two was a "circumvention" of such ban.

But the SC stressed that the ban under Article XI Section 3(5) of the Constitution, which states that "no impeachment proceedings shall be initiated against the same official more than once within a period of one year," does not refer to the number of impeachment complaints filed against the same public official.

It also junked the claim of the Ombudsman that her right to due process was violated and that the impeachment complaints against her do not meet the standards laid down by the committee itself for the determination of sufficiency in substance.

"There is no denial of due process since the respondent can file an answer after complaint has been declared sufficient in form and substance," Marquez explained, quoting the ruling.

The groups of Hontiveros and Bayan moved to have Gutierrez impeached for her failure to act on corruption and human rights cases against the Arroyo administration.

She is accused of culpable violation of the Constitution and betrayal of public trust.

Last Sept. 1, the House justice committee found the two complaints sufficient in form. Six days after, the same panel, voting 41-16, declared the complaints sufficient in substance.

The same committee had junked the impeachment complaints against Mrs. Arroyo for violation of the one-year ban. (www.philstar.com)

Pampanga Woman Wins Cebuana Pera Padala Promo

Abeigail Faith Feliciano—a resident of Pampanga, Philippines and a MoneyGram remittance recipient—recently won a P10,000 cash prize from Cebuana Pera Padala's Sagot Ko, 2 Taong Money Remittance Mo! promo. A winner from the promo's third monthly draw, Feliciano received the cash prize from Cebuana Lhuillier. She is also the first MoneyGram Inter-

national recipient winner.

The contest, which is open to all Cebuana Pera Padala international money remittance receivers, began September 1, 2010 and will run until February 27, 2011. Recipients have a chance to be one of the four lucky grand prize winners of P480,000 each or one of the 120 winners of P10,000 each.

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TRAVELOGUE (cont.)

(from page 8, ROMANCING...)

It took quite a while before the bright indoor lights and the multilingual babble were finally killed by the start of the onboard movie about a man on a warpath against his family's murderers. After a quick prayer that our bus doesn't fall off some random precipice and a mental note that I'll buy a bonnet somewhere so I can shield my eyes from those darned night lights on my next bus ride, I found myself quickly drifting off to sleep. And our 8-hour journey from Manila to Banaue began.

Sojourn at the Rice Terraces

We arrived at Banaue at around 7am and had breakfast at the Hidden Valley Restaurant, a landmark in way for being the only one located near the Florida Bus terminal. I couldn't help but smile at the thought of the restaurant's moniker, considering it's in the Cordilleras, as remote to any hidden valley was geographically possible. But we were nonetheless thankful for a place to have a cheap but filling breakfast.

At the Hidden Valley Restaurant, you can look forward to meeting barkers who will herd you off to shuttle rides going to Sagada. And by shuttles, I mean a fleet of ragtag yet still road-worthy Ford Fierras, jeepneys and multi-seat Hyundais that were retrofitted with cargo carriers so that they can carry more bags (and people) on their roofs. The trip costs around Php350 (US\$8) per person, a small price to pay for a

scenic journey through the highlands.

The six of us hit the road with two young female American English teachers from Korea, a visiting Filipina and her American husband, and a Swiss couple. For four hours (stopovers and photo-ops included), we traversed rustic landscapes and enjoyed the cool breeze blowing through the open windows. It was an adventure in itself, and a treat that was radically different from what Manila and the lowlands could offer.

Expect a shuttle trip to Sagada to include stopovers at viewpoints where you can fully appreciate the majesty of the Banaue Rice Terraces, the world's largest rice terraces and a famous UNESCO World Heritage Site. We even got the chance to step on one of the rice terraces' top tiers, and with it came that organic thrill of being one with the 2000-year old wonder, a monument to the Filipino people's ingenuity and their harmony with the environment.

The joy of yoghurt and bonfires

It took another hour from our last stopover at Bontoc, Mountain Province before we reached Sagada. Before the journey was over, I was already feeling a little sick from the rising heat, the winding dust roads, and from my companions' sheer audacity to sing along with those dreadful Michael Learns to Rock tracks being played by our driver. When at last we arrived, I greedily took in Sagada's fresh



Dining hall of the honey Rocky Valley Inn

air and hydrated for the first time after several hours. Slowly, I felt my dizziness lift.

You'll soon find out that Sagada is a bustling town, but by any measure, it's quite small. The downtown area has just two intersecting roads which are lined up with flea markets selling everything under the sun, from faux fur coats to mouse traps.

The majority of the buildings are small hotels, stores and restaurants that offer anything from local delicacies like pinikpikan and etag to multi-course European meals. The combination of dilapidated and pastoral-looking structures only adds charm to the surroundings. One of my companions even cleverly pointed out the lack of girlic bars and other sin establishments, both a peculiarity and a testament to the town's boom-

ing tourism industry.

And Sagada's tourism industry is very efficient and centralized indeed. The first stop for any visitor is the tourism center at the municipal hall, which offers many services. For starters, you can ask the location of your hotel, or book guides for your trekking and spelunking tours.

Take note that our hotel, Rocky Valley Inn, is the farthest of all hotels in town and located about a kilometer away from the municipal hall, a good 20 minutes on wheels. Thankfully, Gao, the hotel's young, low-profile boss went to pick us up in an old Fierra.

The hotel is located in a valley out of town and is surrounded by an orange orchard, verdant forests and limestone outcrops. Made mostly out of wood, it provides a very homey atmosphere and you'll find that

the food they serve is quite good, too. The room rates are also very inviting – just Php450 (US\$10) per person per night for a room with bunk beds for six people. There are many other hotels in town which offer rooms for as little as Php250 (US\$6), but you can be sure that Rocky Valley Inn is one up on them in terms of location.

Since we were too tired by evening to do anything else, we headed downtown to eat at the Yoghurt House, that little piece of bohemian heaven that is quite famous for its delicious yoghurt and great-tasting entrées that are often big enough for two people to share. Indeed the food was good, and the desserts were heavenly. My companions hated the yoghurt's tangy, sour taste but being the yoghurt lover that I was, I enjoyed my serving.

Full and hydrated, we then booked a buffet dinner for the following night at the nearby Log Cabin, bought a couple of bottles of vodka and then returned to our hotel for a bonfire. It was a cool, lovely evening, and I had a grand time having a few drinks around a roaring fire with newfound friends. See, for us city dwellers used to tropical climate, exhaling fog is one of those little mundane experiences that we also consider as nothing short of magical.

(to be continued next issue)

PHILIPPINE NEWS

HSBC Sees Peso Hitting 37.50:\$1 This Year

by Lawrence Agcaoili
Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011

MANILA, Philippines — British banking giant HSBC sees the peso strengthening to 37.50 against the dollar this year and further to 35.50 to \$1 next year as the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is likely allow the local currency to appreciate further to cushion the impact of imported inflation brought about by rising global oil and food prices.

"We believe the peso will end the year at 37.50 per dollar. By 2012, it will be 35.50 per dollar. The growth in the Philippines is strong, and the foreign exchange should reflect that," visiting HSBC economist Frederic Neumann said at a press briefing yesterday.

The Hong Kong-based economist sees the peso appre-

ciating steadily at 40.50 to \$1 in the first quarter, 39.50 in the second, 38.50 in the third, and P37.50 in the fourth quarter of this year.

Neumann explained that strong capital inflows to emerging markets including the Philippines as well as the robust remittances from overseas Filipinos would continue to support the local currency.

Latest data show that the country's gross international reserves (GIR) surged 36.8 percent to a record level \$62.371 billion last year from \$45.03 billion in 2009 while the balance of payments (BOP) surplus more than doubled to hit a new record level of \$14.4 billion from \$6.42 billion in 2009.

OFW remittances likewise grew by 8.2 percent to hit a record high of \$18.76 billion last year from \$17.35 billion in 2009, exceeding the revised

growth forecast of eight percent set by the BSP.

"I would think that as growth becomes more entrenched, BSP should allow the peso to be determined by the market. Given our forecast for growth and inflation, BSP is likely to let the exchange rate do the lifting," Neumann said.

The bank recently raised its gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for the Philippines to five percent instead of 4.7 percent this year and to 5.8 percent next year. The country's GDP growth surged to its fastest in more than three decades after expanding by 7.3 percent last year from 1.1 percent in 2009.

HSBC economist Sherman Chan said in a study that another bright spot is the country's external position that remained on a firm footing buoyed by rising reserves and steady growth in equity flows. (www.philstar.com)



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LEGAL NOTES

Immigration Reform Back On Track



By Reuben S. Seguritan

News came out recently that Senator Cork Ruck Schumer (D-New York) has teamed up with Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) on the matter of immigration reform. According to an article from The Politico, efforts at forming alliances with unlikely allies, including Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), are supposedly underway.

Given the changed landscape in the present Congress, these developments augur well for a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) bill. Other events of note include Rep. Steve King's (R-Iowa) failed bid for Chairmanship of the Immigration subcommittee in the House. Representative King was a known immigra-

tion hardliner but he lost out to the less controversial Rep. Elton Gallegly of California.

Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) also allegedly made a comment that could mean that he's ready to revisit immigration reform.

Immigration reform continues to be a priority for President Obama. In his 2011 State of the Union address, he expressed his readiness to proceed with immigration reform and called on Congress to do the same. He also remarked that this country should stop deporting young talented people who could enrich the nation.

Immigration reform, he said, is needed for our economic recovery. Indeed, twelve million newly-documented immigrants could do this country a great deal economically.

Many studies have discussed immigration's economic implications. The Center for American Progress, for example, found that a mass deportation strategy would cost \$2.6 trillion in gross do-



Sen. Harry Reid

domestic product over the next ten years, while CIR would lead to a \$1.5 trillion economic growth. A temporary worker program could raise the GDP by \$792 billion, according to the study. The research group believes that CIR will raise the wage floor for all workers, produce more income and spending by newly-legalized immigrants, and result in more tax revenue for the government.

Two weeks ago, Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nevada) introduced a bill called Reform America's Broken Immigration System Act. The bill calls on Congress to pass legislation which supports national and economic security, such as the DREAM Act and AgJobs, and aims to implement a "rational

legal immigration system to ensure that the best and brightest minds of the world can come to the U.S. and create jobs for Americans while, at the same time, safeguarding the rights and wages of American workers".

Senator Reid's bill would require all U.S. workers to obtain identification and impose tougher penalties on employers found violating labor and immigration laws. It also proposes that those who are here illegally be held accountable by requiring them to earn legal status through a series of penalties, sanctions and requirements, or else they will face immediate deportation.

The senator said in an interview that the prospects of his proposal in the 112th Congress are good. His optimism may be buttressed by support from organized labor and business groups, both of which understand that something needs to be done with the country's broken immigration system.

Even former House Speaker and rumored presiden-

tial candidate Newt Gingrich has joined in on the call for immigration overhaul. In an attempt to reach out to the Hispanic community, he said at a forum late last year that although he is not for amnesty, he is for applying "common sense to the immigration debacle".

Politicians are aware that Hispanics are the fastest growing group of American voters. Republicans and Democrats alike will continue to woo them by promising immigration reform.

However, CIR is an issue that touches upon all immigrants' lives and cuts across racial lines. The President has made clear in his address that his administration is committed to passing immigration reform on his watch. We should likewise remain hopeful and do what we can to support immigration reform.

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

House to Probe P179-Billion AFP Slush Fund During GMA Term

by Lawrence Agcaolil
Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - The House committee on national defense will inquire into the alleged "conversion" into slush funds of a total of P179.4 billion in salaries appropriated for the Department of National Defense-Armed Forces of the Philippines (DND-AFP) during the Arroyo administration.

The inquiry was prompted by Resolution 967 filed by Muntinlupa Rep. Rodolfo Biazon, defense committee chairman and former AFP chief of staff.

Biazon cited an article in The STAR on Tuesday about the revelations made by Rep. Neri Colmenares of the militant party-list group Bayan Muna on the huge amount of alleged AFP conversions from 2002 to 2010, or during the nine-year watch of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"There is a need to look into the new report to deter-

mine whether part of the budgetary allocations for the cited period for 'personal services' (the budget language for salaries) were indeed converted into slush funds for use of senior officers of the AFP and the chief of staff," Biazon said.

He said if Colmenares' claims are found to have basis, "appropriate actions (should) be taken thereon, to include the crafting of legislation to preclude its occurrence."

In his expose, Colmenares tried to link Arroyo, now a congresswoman representing Panganga's second district, to the supposed P179.4-billion conversions.

"Where did all this money go, and in all those years, did GMA know nothing about it?" Colmenares asked.

Citing figures taken from the annual budgets between 2002 and 2010, he said the P179.4 billion represents excess appropriations for salaries given by Congress to the DND-AFP.

He said the legislature ap-

propriated a total of P343.4 billion for "personal services" or PS, while total compensation requests by the DND-AFP amounted to slightly over P164 billion.

He said he was shocked by the huge amount of the discrepancy or the excess appropriations for salaries when he compared the amounts actually budgeted and the fund requests submitted by the military-defense establishment, together with their staffing positions.

He pointed out that based

on the testimonies in the Senate of retired Lt. Col. George Rabusa, former AFP budget officer, PS appropriations were the favorite allocations that were converted into slush funds, which Rabusa said were shared by senior officers led by the chief of staff.

Based on Colmenares' research, in 2010, Congress appropriated P41.3 billion in PS for AFP-DND, which asked for only P19.4 billion for 137,453 positions.

In 2009, P41.2 billion was

budgeted against a P19.2-billion request for 135,580 positions.

In 2008, the budget for PS was P36 billion, but the actual AFP-DND request was only P17.3 billion for positions numbering 135,669.

Some P35.8 billion was budgeted for salaries in 2007 versus a request for P17.4 billion for 143,993 positions. The same amount was budgeted in 2006, against a request for P18.1 billion for 142,203 positions. (www.philstar.com)

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

Job Prospects Abroad Remain Bright - DOLE

by **Mayen Jaymalin**
Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported yesterday that employment prospects abroad remained bright for construction workers and other highly skilled Filipino workers in the coming year.

Labor Undersecretary Danny Cruz said at least 10,000 jobs await Filipino construction and other skilled workers in Guam in the next five years with the planned construction of new US military facilities there.

"The construction of huge US military facilities is expected to open job opportunities for Filipinos in the third quarter of this year, but the hiring of workers may start earlier because there are other buildings to be constructed aside from the military facilities," Cruz disclosed.

Cruz noted that the construction of military facilities suffered a minor setback due to financial difficulties, but he said the project would definitely start this year.

Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) chief Jennifer Manalili also reported that Saudi Arabia and other Middle East countries

are also expected to hire more Filipino construction and other workers this year.

"There are a lot of job opportunities for Filipino workers in the Middle East because of the construction boom which is expected to continue until 2020," Manalili pointed out.

Manalili said new hospitals are also set to open in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and thus expected to generate more employment for Filipino health workers in 2011.

Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz also reported that employers from Malta have expressed their desire to hire more Filipino caregivers.

Citing reports from the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), Baldoz said many overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) now working in Malta are getting high salaries.

"Malta's minimum wage is 620 euro (\$820) and Filipino workers there receive not less than this minimum wage amount. Besides, Filipino workers in Malta are allowed to do part-time jobs after eight hours of regular work," Baldoz said.

Baldoz, however, warned jobseekers desiring to work abroad to check their prospective employers, as well as their recruitment agencies, with the POEA to ensure that there are

valid job orders and that they would undergo legal application and deployment processes.

John Leonard Monterona, Migrant-Middle East regional coordinator, said new employment policies in the UAE and other countries in the Middle East could slow down hiring of OFWs in 2011.

Monterona said that the UAE government is implementing 20 percent job reservation for its nationals as part of its labor market reforms.

"This week, the UAE labor ministry has been cited in various local news reports that it will require all companies to have at least one-fifth of their staff as Emirati citizens," Monterona disclosed.

He added that the UAE labor ministry is also expected to implement a quota system in hiring expatriate workers in line with its aim boosting employment of its citizens over foreign workers.

Monterona said UAE has been hard hit by the global crisis, thus it is opting to enforce labor market reforms that would lessen the impact on its citizens.

He said that Saudi Arabia is also implementing a "Saudization" program requiring private companies to hire its citizens up to about five percent of total staff.

"If Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been in the 1st and 2nd place, respectively, of the top ten destinations of OFWs from 2003 to 2009, since these countries are now introducing labor market reforms geared towards more restrictions, then we are seeing a dim prospect of OFW deployment by 2011," Monterona said.

OFW legal fund

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Esteban Conejos Jr. said the department's legal assistance fund could now be used to prosecute erring and abusive employers of OFWs.

Conejos said the utilization of the legal assistance fund was specified for payment of certain fees but it can now be used to go after employers of OFWs.

"We can now use it to prosecute erring and abusive employers not only as defense, bail bonds or litigation funds," Conejos said.

He said that the balance of the funds in the previous year will not revert to the National Treasury but will be added to the budget for the present year.

"According to DBM (Department of Budget and Management) we will implement that so it will have the minimum of P30 million appropriation from Congress plus balances from the previous year so we should be

okay," he added.

Conejos admitted a reduced budget after the DFA agreed to the slashing of the legal assistance fund despite increasing cases of distressed OFWs.

"But the important thing is we gave them the assurance that even with a reduced budget we can continue to provide sufficient, adequate service to our OFWs," he said

The United Filipinos in Hong Kong said cutting the legal assistance fund for OFWs from P50 million to P27 million shunned the Aquino government is willing to leave OFWs rotting in prison.

The Migrant Workers' Act requires a P100-million revolving legal assistance fund for distressed workers under the DFA.

The Blas F. Ople Center said Republic Act No. 10022 that amended the Migrant Workers' Act of 1995 mandates the DFA to use its legal assistance fund to file charges against foreign employers and agencies abroad in behalf of aggrieved Filipino workers.

Meanwhile, the labor department is coming out with a new "anti-contractualization" policy this year in an apparent effort to stop massive job losses.

Nicon Fameronag, Labor Commission Officer director, said the department plans to issue a new regulation replacing DOLE Order No. 18-02. (www.philstar.com)

Record High Remittances Bolster Phil Stocks Today

by **Paolo Romero**
Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2011

MANILA (Xinhua) -- The Philippine market posted marginal gains Wednesday on back of record-high remittances in December 2010.

The bellwether Philippine Stock Exchange index gained 0.56 percent or 21.26 points to 3,812.04, while the broader all-share index rose by 2.20 percent or 65.29 points to 3,025.92.

Trading volume remains thin with only 771 million shares valued at 5.02 billion pesos (115.13 million U.S. dollars) changed hands.

Buying was prevalent among financials, services and

mining and oil stocks. Property issues were the favorite.

"Despite drops by U.S. markets, the local stock market found a way to trade positively (on Wednesday).

Adding some positive sentiments was the news about remittances for 2010," analyst Prince Anthony Yeung of AB

Capital Securities, Inc. said in his daily stock market comment.

Remittances, which corner almost a tenth of the country's economy grew by 8.2 percent to reach a new record of 18.76 billion U.S. dollars last year.

The news has inspired investors to pick on property shares, such as Filinvest Land,

(continued on page 15)

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MAINLAND NEWS

Manny Meets Obama, Stops Traffic in DC

By AP / Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011

WASHINGTON — Manny Pacquiao stopped traffic outside the White House on Tuesday, during a whirlwind tour of the nation's capital that included meetings with President Barack Obama and Sen. Harry Reid.

The Filipino boxing sensation was crossing the street near the White House when several drivers, trying to snap photos of Pacquiao with cell phones, caused a multilane pipeline, Pacquiao publicist Fred Sternburg told The Associated Press. Nobody was hurt in the accident.

Pacquiao and his wife Jinkee spent time talking boxing and basketball with the President, along with a bit of business. Pacquiao was elected representative of Sarangani province nine months ago in national elections in the Philippines and has taken the new job as seriously as he does boxing. He's already explored building the area's first provincial hospital.

"This is an unforgettable moment in my life," Pacquiao said earlier in the day.

The eight-division world champion posed with Obama for several photos, including a boxing pose, in the Oval Office, Sternburg said. The President gave him three grocery bags full of light blue M&M's with the presidential seal, along with a watch adorned with the seal, and said he hopes to someday visit the Philippines.

Pacquiao invited the President to his fight against Shane Mosley on May 7 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Sternburg said. Obama said he would be busy but promised to watch on television.

"Manny said it was very impressive being in the Oval Office, seeing it first hand. He said it was a great honor to meet the President of the United States," Sternburg said,



U.S. Sen. Harry Reid and Phil Cong. Manny Pacquiao in Capitol Hill

pausing to laugh. "He also said the President is a very tall man."

Earlier, Pacquiao roamed the halls of the Capital as the guest of Reid, a Democrat and long-ago boxer whose recent re-election was no doubt helped by Pacquiao's campaign appearances.

After Reid and Pacquiao exchanged national flags, Reid was asked how long he would last in his prime if he two exchanged punches.

"About five seconds," Reid said.

Pacquiao arrived in town by train on Tuesday, wrapping up a press tour promoting his next fight that began in Los Angeles and included stops in Las Vegas and New York. The fact that he's arrived on the scene has been good for boxing, making plenty of high-profile fans and bringing some mainstream attention to a sport that has been seemingly dying for decades.

"You can become a great athlete and still be a great person," Reid said. (www.philstar.com)

PHILIPPINE NEWS

(from page 14, RECORD...)

Inc. and Ayala Land, Inc. Analysts said that this is because most remittances from overseas Filipino workers go into buying property in the Philippines.

Wednesday's movement was encouraging considering that the Philippine equities opened the session negatively following the 41.55 point-drop of the Dow Jones industrial average index.

Yeung said the start of the first quarter has proved to be difficult for the local market and will likely to continue until the end of the season.

While investors have been quick to pounce on battered issues, Yeung said the lack of catalysts to make the market sustain its run up is making it hard to convince investors to stay in the equities.

"Market outlook is flat to lower for the rest of the week," he said.

Stocks in the 30-company index closed mixed. Investors picked up SM Investments Corp., Alliance Global Group, Inc. and property unit Mega-world Corp. Heavyweight Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., budget airline Cebu Air Inc., and Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. ended lower. (www.philstar.com)

GLOBAL NEWS

Philippines Lifts Travel Ban to Egypt

MANILA, Philippines (Xinhua) - The Philippine government has lifted its travel ban to Egypt and said it will no longer repatriate Filipinos there to Manila after the situation in Egypt began to normalize.

Foreign Affairs spokesman Eduardo Malaya said on Tuesday the Philippine Embassy in Cairo has lowered its crisis status from level 2, which calls for voluntary repatriation, to level 1, which warns of heightened alertness, in view of the return to normalcy of the situation in Cairo and most of the Egyptian countryside.

"The voluntary repatriation program of the embassy has been concluded after bringing home a total of 94 Filipinos from the said country," Malaya said. "We're also no longer discouraging Filipinos from visiting or proceeding to Egypt."

After 18 days of massive street protests demanding for his resignation, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepped down Friday and handed over power to the military after ruling the country for nearly three decades.

There are more than 6,000 Filipino in Egypt, concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria. Close to 3,000 are domestic helpers, at least a thousand are married to Egyptian nationals, 1, 674 are Filipino-Muslim scholars, and the rest are professionals. (www.philstar.com)

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