

HAWAII FILIPINO CHRONICLE

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OFW REMITTANCES BOOST YULETIDE CHEER FOR FILIPINOS

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EDITORIAL

Helping the Philippines' Unsung Heroes

During much of the 1960s to as recent as the 1980s, Manila lured the best and the brightest minds from across the Philippines for well-paying jobs that were largely unavailable in the provinces. "Brain drain" was the term used to describe this migration to the capital city. Today, however, Manila is not good enough for Filipinos seeking high-paying jobs. They would much rather go to the U.S., UK, Europe or the Middle East.

Fast-forward to the modern day Philippines. Economic and personal hardships continue to drive tens of thousands of Filipinos to leave the country in search of better opportunities overseas. In fact, some 8.5 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) toil anonymously in distant lands and send a good portion of their salaries back home to relatives to help with food, clothing, education and other expenses. The amount remitted is staggering—an estimated \$23 billion for 2011 alone. While other world economies floundered during the end of 2009 and much of 2010, the Philippine economy held steady, due largely to the steady inflow of OFW remittances.

Despite the economic benefits that OFWs have provided, experts have noted a number of negative consequences on Philippine society. First and foremost is the stress and strain placed on families that struggle to cope with one or even both parents being away on extended periods. The toll is also great on OFWs who must endure loneliness in foreign countries where they are often treated as second-class citizens. There is also the resulting "brain drain" that compromises the Philippines' human capital requirements which are needed for long-term economic development.

In recognition of OFWs' contributions, the Philippine government and private sector have teamed up on promotions and various awards aimed at boosting morale. While such gestures are commendable, what would be more meaningful is for the government to take greater measures on behalf of OFWs to prevent human trafficking, abuse and extortion, cases of which are unfortunately on the rise.

The government should also continue to focus on policy reforms that will enable the economy to stay on a rapid and sustainable growth path. The plight of many OFWs should give the Philippines' leaders more impetus to strive for economic progress. In the long run, a robust Philippine economy will make working abroad an option, not a necessity, for Filipinos.

The Importance of Saying Merry Christmas

Each year, the traditional "Merry Christmas" greeting is being phased out by the more generic "Seasons Greetings" or "Happy Holidays." More churches and faith-based organizations are realizing this and encouraging the use of "Merry Christmas."

The importance of saying Merry Christmas may seem trivial but remember that stripping away religious rights happens incrementally. It starts when school children aren't allowed to draw a picture of Jesus and when class valedictorians have their microphones shut off for mentioning Jesus. One day, we may very well wake up and find no more Bibles being sold and churches driven underground. Thinking back, it may dawn on us that it all began when saying Merry Christmas was forbidden and people thought it was too trivial to pay attention to. Still not convinced? Just last year, a Nevada high school banned its teachers and staff from saying "Merry Christmas" due to the threat of a lawsuit by the ACLU.

While many religions do not observe Christmas, it should not be considered an affront if someone wishes you a "Merry Christmas." December 25th celebrates the birth of Christ, and Christians

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Before anything, we at the Chronicle would like to wish all of our readers a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We trust that your Christmas season has gotten off to a good start. For most Filipinos, the Yuletide Season—however hectic and commercialized it may be—is still the happiest time of the year. Perhaps nowhere is this endearing love for Christmas more evident than in joyous celebrations as in the annual Pasko! celebration at the FilCom Center. Organizers have once again planned an entire day and evening full of activities that are designed to immerse attendees on the many aspects and traditions of a typical Filipino Christmas—just as they would celebrate Christmas in the Philippines. Mahalo to the many community groups for their hard work in putting together such a wonderful event. If you have yet to experience a Filipino Christmas, we encourage you to attend. Please read more on this Pasko! celebration beginning on page 8.

At press time, a small group of volunteers with the Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii (PMAH) Ohana Medical Mission will be flying to the Philippines to treat poor and needy residents in Davao, Mindanao and Payatas, Quezon City. Scheduled for December 12-15, the mission will be the first for Davao and Payatas, and will culminate in a homecoming mission in Ilocos Sur. The Mindanao Islands, in particular, are extremely poor with almost half the population being classified as being below the poverty line. No less fortunate is Payatas, where the main dumpsite for Quezon City's solid waste is collected. Please keep these volunteers in your prayers.

Our cover story for this issue, entitled "OFW Remittances Boost Yuletide Cheer for Filipinos," was submitted by Gregory Garcia, who writes about the tremendous financial impacts of remittances by our OFWs—Overseas Filipino Workers. Their remittances, estimated in the tens of billions of dollars, have helped to boost the Philippines' economy. These unsung heroes have sacrificed much in order to provide for their families. Many Filipinos in Hawaii, while not OFWs *per se*, regularly send money to loved ones back home. We hope you will enjoy reading Gregory's article beginning on page 4. There are also other columns and articles in this issue that you will enjoy reading, including Legislative Connection (page 6), Legal Matters (page 7), Travel & Tourism (page 9), Legal Notes (page 13) and Philippine Language (page 14).

That's it for now. As always, we encourage our readers to provide feedback, story ideas, tips or concerns regarding Hawaii's dynamic and vibrant Filipino community. Please drop us an email at: filipinochronicle@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you!

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

Chona A. Montesines-Sonido

have every right to happily observe the day. Similarly, it would be awkward to require people of other faiths to say 'Happy Holidays' instead of 'Happy Hanukkah,' 'Happy Winter Solstice' or 'Happy Kwanzaa.'

Christians and non-Christians alike purchase and decorate a Christmas tree, not a holiday tree. We hang lights, put up a nativity scene and count down the days until the birth of Christ. Why should we have to generalize anything? Why should anyone? Different holidays are celebrated throughout the year. They are each unique and deserve to be recognized for what they are instead of a generalized blanket holiday version just to be politically-correct.

As for Filipinos, we are devoted to our faith. In the coming weeks, let's remember to proclaim Christ as the center of the Christmas Season by saying "Merry Christmas" loud and clear. If we don't take a stand, the next generation may end up not knowing that Christmas used to be celebrated very publicly by a vast majority of Americans.



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OP-ED

Should the Arroyo 8 Justices Be Allowed to Continue to Abuse the Nation?

By Atty. Ted Laguatan

From the beginning, the Obama administration embraced the importance of the Asia Pacific region. It's home to nearly half the world's population, boasts several of the largest and fastest-growing economies and some of the world's busiest ports and shipping lanes and presents consequential challenges such as military buildups, concerns about the proliferation of nuclear weapons, natural disasters, and the world's worst levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Concerned about former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA) and her husband former Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo escaping prosecution for serious crimes - Secretary of Justice Leila de Lima issued a watch list order (WLO) or hold order - to prevent them from going abroad.

Perhaps sensing that charges were about to be filed against them, the Arroyos petitioned the Philippine Supreme Court to issue a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to invalidate the WLO - reasoning that GMA needed to get medical attention abroad which she claimed was not available in the Philippines.

"Hogwash!" quipped one Filipino specialist doctor trained in one of the best medical establishments in the U.S. "We have so many qualified competent doctors here who can attend to her claimed condition of hypoparathyroidism." Secretary of Health Dr. Ike Ona echoed the same sentiments. Dr. Leo Olarte, head of the Philippine Medical Association feels insulted by GMA's claim of unavailability of qualified Filipino doctors. He will seek sanctions against GMA's doctors if they connived with her in giving that impression.

Oral arguments on the TRO petition were scheduled on November 22, 2011. Written comments were to be submitted before that date. These are nor-

mal procedures which would give all parties the opportunity to present their positions - consistent with due process principles.

But instead, what happened? Eight GMA appointed Justices, led by midnight appointee Chief Justice Renato Corona rushed the unilateral approval of the TRO petition - not affording the government the opportunity to present counter arguments and not waiting for the scheduled oral arguments to take place.

As if on signal, the Arroyos immediately rushed to the airport within a few hours on the same day seeking to board a flight to Singapore. They reserved five different flights to Singapore using different airlines. From there, their itinerary included a flight to Spain, a country with which the Philippines has no extradition treaty - and which really does not exactly have international renown for exceptional medical expertise. These events suggest that de Lima's concerns are not based on wild imaginings.

Showing uncommon common sense, the Secretary stayed the WLO.

The concerns of Secretary de Lima who officially represent the people of the Philippines are legitimate concerns.

If the eight Justices of the Supreme Court were acting in good faith, they would have given the government the opportunity to present counter arguments against the Arroyos' TRO petitions and waited for the submission of briefs and the oral arguments before making a decision.

In emergency situations, a proper court may unilaterally issue a TRO to instantly prevent some harm from occurring where the facts clearly suggest this might happen.

This is not the situation here. Even GMA's doctors affirm that she is in no immediate danger of dying or suffering irreparable injury. They even state that she should recover in a few months.

As in every case, credibility is always an issue. It is only

proper for the Justices to scrutinize which party is telling the truth and which party has the weightier more rational arguments - before making their decisions. At all times, the Justices are supposed to remain neutral and fair and base their decisions on proper procedure and objective evidence.

Here, the eight Arroyo appointed Justices never provided the government the opportunity to present written contra briefs nor did they bother to wait for the scheduled oral arguments which would have taken place in a few days. Instead, contrary to the protestations of the five dissenting justices, they unilaterally utilized their numbers to tyrannize the ends of justice and fundamental due process rights. Shamelessly and blatantly, they instantly granted the TRO.

The laws are made for man rather than man being made for the laws. Some laws are clearly unjust or the way some good laws as applied are clearly unjust. Conscience dictates that in these situations, civil disobedience should be resorted to.

Some men and women paid heavily, with their freedom or their lives, to be true to God's law that they found within their deepest selves - but with their sacrifices, unquestionably, they left the world a better place for others.

Here, by their actions, eight biased pro Arroyo Justices show that they are placing the interests of their patron above that of the Filipino people. They are using their official powers to dish out laws or orders that tyrannize and brutalize the rights of the citizenry. How different is this from the tyranny of a single dictator?

Defying biased eight pro Arroyo Justices is not the same as disrespecting the Supreme Court as an institution. Secretary de Lima is simply affirming the rights of the Filipino people in taking a stand against judicial tyranny?

Note: San Francisco based Atty. Ted Laguatan is a member of the California Bar. He does complex litigation and is the Legal Counsel and Spokesperson for US Pinays for Good Governance. Email laguatanlaw@gmail.com



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OFW Remittances Boost Yuletide Cheer for Filipinos

By Gregory Garcia

The World Bank estimates remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to reach \$23 billion in 2011, much higher than the more modest \$20.1 billion forecast by the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP). This year's remittances figure is expected to be the biggest on record, eclipsing the \$18.7 billion recorded for 2010.

The amount of remittances received from January to September this year has already reached \$14.7 billion, significantly higher than the \$13.7 billion that came in during the same period in 2010. However, more money is expected to be remitted at year's end, the time when OFWs usually send home cash for the Christmas holidays.

The BSP noted that remittances to the Philippines continued to grow because of the rising demand for Filipino workers abroad despite uncertainties in the global economic climate.

"Notwithstanding lingering global economic uncertainties, the cumulative steam of remittances from overseas Filipinos continued to be solid and resilient, supported by sustained demand for Filipino skills abroad," the BSP said in a statement last October.

Similarly, the World Bank expects remittance flows to the Philippines to remain resistant to the lingering economic challenges that hound other parts of the world. This means the country is likely to remain as the fourth largest recipient of foreign remittances this year after India (with an expected \$58 billion in remittances), China (\$57 billion) and Mexico (\$24 billion).

Who are the OFWs?

Latest data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency show that in 2009, an estimated 8.5 million Filipinos were either deployed or permanently domiciled in 214 coun-

tries and territories around the world.

These Filipinos abroad can be classified into three categories: the first group is composed of temporary workers who have been away from the Philippines for at least six months and who expect to come home after their work contracts expire; the second group comprises permanent migrants, former Philippine citizens who have already decided to reside permanently in other countries; and the third group is composed of irregular migrants, Philippine citizens who work illegally in other countries or who come to other countries with valid work permits but eventually overstay or lose their legitimate status.

According to a 2010 report by the National Statistics Office, almost half (47.9 percent) of the more than 2 million OFWs deployed during that year were young people between the ages of 25 to 34. A significant number of these 2 million OFWs worked as laborers and unskilled workers (32 percent), service workers (15.1 percent), trade workers (14.9 percent), and plant and machine operators and assemblers (14.3 percent). There were also a good number of professionals (9.9 percent), technicians and associate professionals (5.6 percent) and clerks (5.4 percent). The smallest group comprised government and organization officials, corporate executives, managers, proprietors and supervisors (2.5 percent).

The Philippines' Saving Grace

During the global financial crisis of the late-2000s, many countries in the Western world, including the U.S., fell into a recession. The Philippine economy, on the other hand, held up surprisingly well, and the country even posted a real GDP growth rate of 1.1 percent.

Economists pointed out many factors that contributed to the country's resilience, including the policy and regulatory improvements that the government implemented to prevent a repeat of the effects of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. However, observers also noted that one key factor that contributed greatly to this resilience is remittances from OFWs.

Indeed, the impact of Filipino migration and the remittances phenomenon have been the focus of attention for many years. Most of the time, a surge in remittances is generally welcomed as a cause for celebration. After all, remittances from OFWs do help the economy in more ways than one.

University of the Philippines (UP) professor Ernesto Pernia, for instance, pointed out in a 2006 paper he wrote for the UP School of Economics that migration and remittances "appear to benefit households, communities and the macroeconomy." At the household level, remittances serve to enhance family incomes, while at the community level, money from abroad serves to mitigate inequality and poverty by allowing the creation of jobs and trading opportunities, generating greater demand for goods and services, and encouraging more spending. At the macroeconomic level, remittances may help finance fiscal and trade deficits and debts, as money sent by OFWs account



for at least 10 percent of the country's GDP every year.

But Pernia was quick to point out that the country's reliance on foreign remittances also carries considerable consequences. Migration, he says, arguably causes brain drain that compromises the nation's human capital requirements, which it needs for long-term economic development.

Furthermore, migration and remittances could become subject to economic and political uncertainties in other parts of the world. A paper published by the Asian Development Bank in 2009, for example, noted that analysts from both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund initially projected a contraction in foreign remittances to the Philippines because of the global financial crisis. They expected figures to be just around 2008's level of \$16.4 billion. On the contrary, remittances for 2009 reached \$17.3 billion. The projected situation did not come to pass only because demand for Filipino workers continued to rise abroad, and because the decline in remittances from countries like the U.S. were offset by surging remittances from regions like the Middle East, which were not that much affected by the global recession.

Pernia advised the government to instead focus on policy reforms that will enable the

economy to stay on a rapid and sustainable growth path.

"A robust domestic economy would make working abroad an option, not a necessity, for Filipinos," he said.

From Hawaii with Love

Like their counterparts in the Middle East, Europe and other parts of the world, Filipinos in Hawaii have varying reasons for sending money back home to the Philippines. Arnold Villafuerte, for instance, says his family sends money on a monthly basis to support the education of some of their relatives.

"We support full-time students who are gifted intellectually but are financially challenged. We do not only provide for their tuition fee but also for their daily sustenance," he says. "The amount we send is based on how much their tuition fee is, the miscellaneous expenses they might incur, and how much their daily expenses will be."

Another Hawaii resident, Christallene Pagulayan, says she sends money home not necessarily because her family needs it but because it's her way of showing her love for them.

"My parents are both state teachers who can support themselves and I am not obliged to send money. However, as a daughter who is away from home, I do feel the need to send

(continued on page 5)

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COVER STORY

(From page 4, OFW...)

cash and boxes of goods whenever I can. Of course, I do make sure that my financial obligations here in the U.S. are taken care of first. I also make certain that I have enough savings and actually have extra money to send to my family. Usually, my parents refuse to receive the money, but I'm the one who tells them it's okay," she says.

Filipinos often have mixed feelings about sending money back to the Philippines. For one thing, as Pagulayan has pointed out, one has to consider one's financial standing first before one can even think of helping other people. Villafuerte is of the same mind.

"There's an adage that says 'charity begins at home.' If you think you have extra to spare, then I'm all for it. What we need to understand is that we should take care of ourselves and our family (here in the U.S.) first before helping others if and when possible," he says. "One way or another, we are indebted to many relatives and friends back home, and we should always look back and try to give back."

Joy and Sacrifice

But aside from the financial considerations of going abroad and sending money back to the

Philippines, there are also emotional issues to consider.

"Yes, pay in the U.S. is higher than in the Philippines, but you won't be with your family when they need you, and you won't be able to see your younger siblings grow. These are moments that money can't buy," says Pagulayan. "No matter how long you talk to them over the phone and no matter how much material things you put in a balikbayan box, it's just not enough to replace your physical presence. That's the sad reality of things."

Those who are left behind in the Philippines share the same kind of yearning experienced by Filipinos who have gone abroad to find work. College student Maria Garcia, for example, misses her sister all the time, especially during occasions like Christmas.

"When my sister left for New Zealand to work, I felt really sad. My sister was the one who took care of me when I was a child, so the parting really affected me. It was the first time we spent so much time away from each other. But it becomes even more difficult whenever the Christmas season comes around," she says.

Garcia says her family copes with the situation by praying for her sister's safety

and by getting in touch with her by phone and by internet. From her end, Garcia's sister tries to make up for her absence by sending them money and goods during Christmas.

"My sister sends me and my mom money and stuff during Christmas and New Year. We really appreciate it because even though she has her own family to take care of, she never fails to remember us by sharing what little she has," she says.

Although these are just material things, Garcia says it really helps in keeping the family together during the holidays.

"If she had a choice, she wouldn't have left the Philippines. She wouldn't be spending Christmas away from home. But this is our reality. This is a situation we just have to cope with. In fact, I'm grateful because the Filipino culture values family ties. At the end of the day, it's not really about the money, it's about keeping those family ties alive," she says.

The Value of Wisdom

Indeed, the migration phenomenon is a current reality which Filipinos cannot avoid, so many of them just try to make the best out of it. Many ride the diaspora wave successfully, creating more financial mobility for themselves and for

their families, whether they decide to finally settle abroad or start a new life back in the Philippines. Others, however, tend to exhaust their savings, making them unable to save for long-term investments like insurance or real estate. They are also rendered incapable of exploring alternative means of generating income, like setting up their own small enterprise.

A recent survey by the global marketing research firm Nielsen showed that many OFWs are still unable to save because the money they earn are used primarily for their family's basic daily needs, including food, rent, utility bills and education bills. The research revealed that 96 percent of the 1,316 households surveyed from June 2010 to July 2011 allocated money for their daily needs but only 17 percent said they were able to save or invest the money they earned abroad.

This is due in part to the fact that many OFWs, being unskilled workers, have very small disposable incomes to begin with. Nevertheless, some analysts believe many of them would be in a much better situation if only they were more prudent with their financial decisions. For his part, Villafuerte says he feels sorry for Filipinos who return home without enough security because of unwise financial decisions.

"My advice is to be prudent and to not spend beyond your means. Be honest to yourself and try not to impress anybody.

Some of our kababayans try to show off and make believe that they can afford when in fact they are hard up," he says.

On the other hand, Pagulayan says OFWs should always see saving cash as their primary goal.

"Save, save, and save money. Always be in control of your finances. It's not hard to do, especially these days when there are so many personal finance apps for smart phones, which you can use to monitor your cash inflow and outflow," she says. "In addition, make sure that you make your immediate family a priority over your other relatives in the Philippines."

Villafuerte also shares some ideas on how foreign-based Filipinos can contribute to the development of their home country so that collectively, Filipinos, as a people, can turn the diaspora tide and find a way for their countrymen to prosper in their own country.

"Investing is good but what's more important is sustainability. When you invest hard-earned money, you always look forward to be successful in whatever endeavor you get into. Once successful, then you improve people's lives and contribute to the overall well-being of the community and of the country. Filipinos are known to be hardworking, smart and skillful. With proper education, management and leadership, I strongly believe that our own people can prosper in our country," he says.

SOCIAL SECURITY UPDATE

Social Security: Helping Hawaii's Homeless

By Jane Yamamoto-Burgisay

More than half a million Americans experience homelessness on any given night. Nearly 20 percent of them are "chronically homeless," meaning they are on the streets regularly.

Social Security has several programs that pay benefits to qualified individuals, including those who are homeless. These programs include retirement, disability, and survivors benefits, as well as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which is a needs-based program for people who are blind, disabled, or age 65 or older.

If you know someone who is homeless and you want

learn more about how Social Security might help, a good place to start is to go online and visit: www.socialsecurity.gov/homelessness.

That page includes a link to the Spotlight on Homelessness — a website designed to help the homeless apply for SSI. It's available at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-homeless.htm.

The homelessness page also includes links to information on health care for the homeless, institutionalization, advocacy groups, reports on homeless outreach, and even links to other websites like the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and HUD.

Other helpful information

for the homeless is also available at: www.socialsecurity.gov. For example, there is a link to our Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool, or BEST. Based on answers to various questions, this tool helps determine the benefits someone might be eligible for and gives information about how to qualify and apply. Go directly to www.socialsecurity.gov/best.

Tell anyone you know who is homeless or threatened with homelessness to use the Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool and to see for themselves the different types of benefits and assistance they may be eligible to receive. Spread the word about available help for the homeless.

Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/homelessness to learn more.

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LEGISLATIVE CONNECTION



By Senator Will Espero

Teaching Financial Literacy In Our Public Schools

cans polled indicated they lived beyond their financial means. This reliance on credit is a significant indicator of our country's spending habits. Before this decade's recession began, in 2004, Americans paid more than \$24 billion in credit card fees, a staggering amount considering there are 300 million people living in our borders. That \$24 billion on fees is 18% higher than it was just a year earlier.

Our average savings rate is another important measure of household finances. In 2005, the personal savings rate was -0.5%. A negative rate means that Americans were not saving, but were either increasing their borrowing or dipping into past savings. The significance of the negative rate was that it was the first time since the Great Depression that the rate was negative, which was one reason economists were so dire about the country's financial condition.

Being able to manage money prudently is as essential a life skill as reading, writing, and arithmetic. That's why I believe that learning the ins and outs of personal finance should be included in Hawaii's public school curriculum.

The generations of Americans who lived through the Great Depression painfully learned the lessons of living within your means and saving up for a rainy day. Their discipline bolstered the overall financial health of the country. The following generations lived in relative prosperity and comfort, however, giving them a dramatically different sense of spending and saving.

In one survey on personal finance, 40% of those Ameri-

Defaults on borrowing is also a concern. The highest rate of bankruptcy was among adults aged 35-44 years of age, with young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 having the second highest bankruptcy filing rate.

As critical a life skill as money management is, one survey showed that only 26% of youth reported that their parents taught them how to do so. Making and living within a budget, differentiating between "wants" and "needs", spending prudently, managing debt and credit, saving and investing, saving up for goals and a rainy day, dealing with mortgages – these and many more are tasks that everyone needs to do. Even still, a 2004 study by the JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy reported that 65% of all participating high school students failed an exam on personal finance basics.

Recognizing the importance of financial skills in light

of statistics like these, eight states (Idaho, Illinois, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, New York, Texas, and Utah) either require a course in personal financial education for high school graduation or require that high schools offer the course. Hawaii includes the subject of personal finance in its public school educational standards but does not require students to be tested on it or that any courses on it to be offered at schools.

Research shows that as few as ten hours of personal financial education has a positive effect on students' spending and savings habits. Even Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke weighed in on the importance of youth learning how to manage money early in life to prepare them to decide financial matters and comprehend the complex financial market as adults.

In 2007, I introduced a bill to mandate financial literacy in our public school system. The

bill did not pass the Legislature. The state Secondary Students Conference, recently held at the State Capitol, considered a measure, Resolution 29, recommending that financial literacy education be required in Hawaii public schools to educate students about the importance of money management and personal finance.

The many measures of how Americans spend, save, borrow, pay fees and charges, and default, all point to the need for preparation in this critical life skill. I plan to continue my support for financial literacy in our schools and will work with my colleagues and the Board of Education to address this matter. Young people will be better prepared for the responsibilities of adulthood by teaching them about budgeting, checking and savings accounts, credit cards, insurance, retirement accounts, stocks and bonds, and loans and mortgages.

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

Libraries Receive DVDs of Philippine Folktales and Myths

A two-DVD collection of 11 folktales and myths from the Philippines was presented to officials from the University of Hawaii and the Hawaii State Libraries on December 9, 2011.

The presentation included live storytelling by costumed students from UH, Leeward Community College, Chaminade and the East-West Center, under the direction of award-winning playwright and writer Ruth Mabanglo.

The DVD collection, called "Lola Basyang Stories", features creation myths, pranksters, monsters and stories about mountains and animals from different parts of the Philippines. Lola Basyang was the pen name of a favorite Filipino author whose stories for children were adapted for radio, TV and movies.

The DVD collection was produced by the Filipino Association of University Women (FAUW). The stories were videotaped during live performances presented at "Anak," a children's festival sponsored by FAUW at the Children's Discovery Center last year.

"The stories are fun and entertaining,



while imparting morals, values and a cultural viewpoint of the world," says Mabanglo, who also heads the UH Filipino and Philippine Literature Program. "We trained our actors for the performances and created our own costumes with the grants we received from the Filipino Heritage Fund and donations in kind from the UH Katipunan Club and the Filipino American Historical Society of Hawaii."

Mabanglo says that the collection is a great way to share a part of the Filipino culture and also serves as a window from which Filipino folk beliefs can be seen. The DVD collection will also be available for sale through Kalamansi Books, a locally-based company which specializes in Philippine books, at www.bookbook.com. Each DVD is available at \$10.

For more information on the DVD collection, please contact Mabanglo at 956-6970.

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LEGAL MATTERS



By Atty. Emmanuel
Samonte Tapon

Pacquiao Stood Up Hawaiian Fans & Missed Chance to Sponsor Our Genuine Dual Citizenship Bill

Colorful flyers announcing my tayo's Emmanuel "Manny" Pacquiao's visit to Hawaii and an opportunity to meet and dine with him for \$250 each circulated in Hawaii even before his victory over Marquez. We asked our friends at city hall, led by Council Member Tuli Gabbard (who used to be married to a Laoagueno) and is now running for congress in rural Oahu and neighbor islands, to sponsor a resolution proclaiming Manny Pacquiao Day. She did. Even the Mayor wanted to get into the act by announcing he would give the key to the city to Pacquiao at a nationally televised pre-football game ceremony on November 19.

Pacquiao never showed up. Just like he did last year when people bought tickets to a concert in Honolulu. No valid explanation. We called up the Philippine Consulate and we were told that Pacquiao never contacted them so that they could have met him at the airport and gave him the courtesies of the port like other visiting dignitaries – he is a congressman, remember. We are confident that someday Manny will visit Hawaii, especially if we can get someone to fight him. I suggest our unpopular governor who has a lot of practice fighting teachers, golf-playing senior citizens, the state's main newspaper, etc. That would rival the "Thrilla in Manila."

More importantly, Manny missed a golden opportunity to sponsor a genuine dual citizenship that I drafted. My bill removes the requirement of the pseudo-dual citizenship law, Republic Act No. 9225, of taking a pledge of allegiance to the Philippines to reacquire Philippine citizenship and eliminates various conditions that make Filipinos taking the

pledge second class citizens. Among them is the requirement that he/she must specifically renounce in writing his U.S. or other foreign citizenship before running for public office. Another is that professionals who have already been licensed to practice their profession must apply for a new license. So if you are a lawyer, you would have to take the bar exams again?

Why would I want Manny to sponsor my bill? Because he is very popular and he has not filed any bill of consequence. This would make him immortal long after Parkinson's disease or other ailments have claimed him like other great boxers. And the anti-balikbayan members of Congress whom I will expose if they fight this bill again, might be reluctant to fight Pacquiao on this bill. *Pagbigyan.*

My new bill is a little bit longer than the original bill I drafted in 1993 titled "Once a Filipino, Always a Filipino." I gave it to Speaker Jose de Venecia who introduced it in the House "as is". See our picture at U.S. Visa and Immigration News, August-September 1993. My bill was mangled by anti-balikbayan members of Congress transforming it into a "re-acquisition" not "retention" of Philippine citizenship law and treating "re-acquirers" as second class citizens. See Republic Act No. 9225, reproduced in my best-selling book "Winning by Knowing Your Election Laws" published by Rex Book Store in Manila.

(ATTY. TAPON 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: filamlaw@yahoo.com. Websites: www.Militaryand-CriminalLaw.com, and www.ImmigrationServiceUSA.com. Listen to the most witty, interesting, and informative radio program in Hawaii on KNDI at 1270, AM, that every Thursday at 7:30 a.m., rebroadcast at www.sitlako.com.)

PICTORIAL NEWS



Pres. Benigno S. Aquino III with Deputy Consul General Paul Raymond Cortes and his family during the Dinner Reception with the President in Walkiki

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUEZON CITY

HOUSE BILL No. _____

Introduced by Representative Emmanuel Pacquiao

AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT "ONCE A FILIPINO ALWAYS A FILIPINO"

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the "Once a Filipino Always a Filipino Law".

SEC. 2. Retention of Philippine citizenship. - A natural-born Philippine citizen shall retain such Philippine citizenship even though he or she has acquired the citizenship of another country. All natural-born Philippine citizens who have acquired the citizenship of another country before the approval of this Act shall be deemed to have retained Philippine citizenship without the necessity of taking an oath or doing any act.

SEC. 3. Rights and Obligations. - Persons who retain Philippine citizenship shall enjoy full civil and political rights and be subject to all obligations and responsibilities in accordance with Philippine laws without any conditions.

SEC. 4. Repealing Clause. - Republic Act No. 9225 and all laws, decrees, orders, and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed.

SEC. 5. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall be effective upon its approval.

APPROVED.

(Drafted by Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tapon, 800 Bethel St., Suite 402, Honolulu, HI 96813. Tel. (808) 225 2645. E-mail: filamlaw@yahoo.com)

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

FilCom Center to Host Christmas Celebration

By HFC Staff

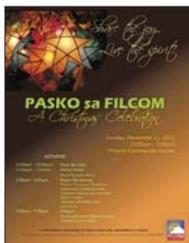
The sights, sounds and smells of Christmas will once again fill the air at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu on Sunday, December 11, 2011 from 11 am to 7 pm, as the Filipino community celebrates Christmas or *Pasko*—the most cherished and longest-observed festivity in the Philippines.

Themed “Pasko sa FilCom,” this year’s event will highlight traditional and contemporary Philippine Christmas celebrations, featuring eight-hours of merriment, food, games, caroling and cultural en-

counters. Free and open to the public, *Pasko* will also feature a string of festive activities for the young and young at heart, immigrant and local folks, *kababayan* and even non-Filipinos.

The event starts off with a mass or *Misa de Gallo* at 11 am at the FilCom’s ballroom arranged by the Bicol Club. From noon to 1 pm, the Royal Hawaiian Band will entertain the audience with a delightful Christmas musical concert.

Various activities will take place between 1 pm to 4 pm, including a *parol* contest by the United Filipino Council of Hawaii; a table-top Christmas tree contest by the Oahu Fil-



ipino Community Council; a Christmas decor contest, *parol*-making and children’s games sponsored by the Filipino Association of University Women and the Filipino American His-

torical Society of Hawaii; a *pabtin* game from the University of the Philippines Alumni Association, Christmas bingo by the Leeward Community College Philippine Studies Program; and a *sorbetero* cart provided by the Filipino Jaycees.

Filipino food cooking demonstrations will be provided by the UH Timpuoyg and Katipunan student groups, while Filipino Christmas specialties will be sold by a food vendor during the entire event.

From 4 pm to 7 pm, various entertainers coordinated by the Congress of Visayan Organizations will perform Christmas

carols, dances and other numbers. Entertainers include the FilCom’s Paula Kawayan, Himig at Indak, Band Cortes, Rolando Sanchez, Fani and Marie; and others.

“Pasko sa FilCom will showcase how Christmas is celebrated in the Philippines,” says event organizer Jun Colmenares. “It is one way by which Filipinos in Hawaii share their culture with the community at large. *Pasko* promises to be a colorful, lively and fun-filled celebration of the Christmas spirit.”

The event is sponsored by the FilCom Center in collaboration with various Filipino community organizations.

UH Ilokano Program Launches New Book

The University of Hawaii-Manoa’s Ilokano Language and Literature Program held a special book launching for “Panagtaripato: Parenting Our Stories, Our Stories As Parents” on December 5, 2011 at Spalding Theatre.

The event was held in conjunction with Kookua Kalihii Valley (KKV) Comprehensive Health Services, the UH Timpuoyg Student Organization, Nakem Conferences and Nakem Youth.

Published by TMI Global and translated into English by Dr. Aurelio Solver Agcaoili, coordinator of the UH Ilokano Program, the book retells the stories of 19 Filipino parents who raised their children in Hawaii.

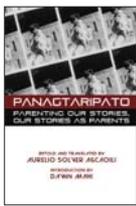
In his opening remarks, KKV executive director Dr. David Derauf admitted that he realized only recently the connection between healing and reconciliation—concepts that he found difficult to grasp even as a practicing physician. The theme of healing and reconciliation was the very inspiration for the founding of KKV in 1972 by a handful of visionaries who wanted to advance the cause of healing in its integrated, holistic sense.

Based on a number of focus group discussions with parents from Kalihii and Waipahu and a panel discussion on a public television production “Talkback with Dr Agcaoili,” the book highlights the stories of Marie

Aguilar, Eppie Baclog, Remy Baclog, Luz Bagaosin, Cleo Bala Casino, Bring Dapozza, Rose Dapozza, Rochelle Domingo, Roselynn Gapay, Lucia Geronimo, Letty Manuel, Loreto Manuel, Perilita Tapez Sadorra, Benjamin Somera, Ernesto Somera, Evangeline Somera, Nellie Somera, Alfredo Tapez and Corazon Tapez.

Written in both Ilokano and English, “Panagtaripato: Parenting Our Stories, Our Stories As Parents” is a product of the partnership between Dawn Mahi, project director of Lei Hiji’u o Kalihii Valley Project and Agcaoili of the UH Ilokano Program and Nakem Conferences. The partnership was made possible via a grant awarded by Mahi to Nakem Youth.

The book celebrates the tender loving care given by Ilokano parents to their chil-



dren, who instilled in them timeless values of heritage, community and culture.

In 2010, Nakem Youth published a collection of stories of young people entitled “Kabambannuagan: Our Voices, Our Lives.” Edited by Agcaoili and Jeffrey Acido, and translated into Ilokano, “Kabambannuagan: Our Voices, Our Lives” articulated for the first time the difficulties and challenges of children of immigrants in their search for a home in Hawaii.

Speakers at the recent book launching included Perilita Tapez Sadorra, secretary general of TMI Global; Lynne Gutierrez, president of the United Filipino Council of Hawaii; Dr. Gordon Lee, faculty of the University of Hawaii Honors Program; Dr. Pia Arboleda, faculty of the UH Tagalog Program; Darleen Rodriguez, a peace and justice activist; Jeffrey Acido, program director of Nakem Youth; Dean Domingo, president of the UH Timpuoyg Student Organization; Nadine Ortega, a graduating masters student in political science at UH; and

Cindy Spencer, vice president of the Domestic Violence Action Center.

Another book, “Alic(n)ation: Nation and Nationalism in Ilokano Exilic Literatures,” will be launched next year by TMI Global. The book revisits the conceptualizations of nation and national-

ism in the day-to-day life of Ilokano immigrants and exiles in Hawaii and other places. It will also be edited and translated into English by Agcaoili.

To order a copy of “Panagtaripato: Parenting Our Stories, Our Stories As Parents,” please call 956-8405 or send an email to: tmi@global@gmail.com.

PHILIPPINE NEWS

DepEd: 10,000 Classrooms Up for PPP Bidding

by Rainier Allan Ronda
Wednesday, Dec. 7 2011

MANILA, Philippines - An initial batch of 10,000 classrooms will be constructed under the administration’s public-private partnership (PPP) scheme by the second quarter of next year.

Education Secretary Armin Luistro told The STAR the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has made “substantial approval” of the initial guidelines set by the DepEd technical working group (TWG) in charge of coming out with the parameters and bid documents that will be issued to groups participating in the bidding for the classroom construction.

“We believe we can have the public bidding early next year,” he said.

“It will be an initial batch of 10,000 classrooms in the first year, and another 10,000 in the next year and then another 10,000 in the next.”

DepEd had set aside a budget of P1.5 billion to P2 billion for servicing the financing requirements of classroom con-

struction, Luistro said.

The construction of 30,000 classrooms, if successfully implemented, will enable DepEd to slash by almost half the classroom shortage in public schools within a period of three years under the PPP scheme.

As of school year 2011-2012, the classroom shortage has been placed at 68,000.

The bidding for the construction of classrooms was expected to present new technologies to allow the completion of classrooms in a period of two months to as short as one month, Luistro said.

The DepEd TWG on the PPP-funded classroom construction program is working with the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Department of Finance, the Department of Budget and Management and the PPP Center on the bidding.

DepEd earlier decided to conduct a public bidding after several groups had submitted proposals to help it plug the classroom shortage in public schools under the PPP scheme. (www.philstar.com)

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TRAVEL & TOURISM

My El Nido

MANILA, Philippines - It's neither the distance nor the excitement of a destination that makes travel an exquisite experience. A short flight less than an hour from Manila can do wonders to a weary soul.

Something different from the usual was evident in the small hangar that housed the ITI plane that would take us to El Nido, the famed resort in Palawan. No two-hour-long wait. No body inspection. None of the experience of being herded around like cows.

Mae Mangaogang of El Nido greeted me when I arrived. She was to be a constant, pleasant presence wherever I went during the next two and a half days. After a light snack and a safety briefing from an airline ground stewardess, we were off to the wild blue yonder.

I had been to El Nido before. There was the resort in Pangalusian island I visited in 1996 before it burned down, and some eight years ago, the family made a trip to Lagen. Both experiences were magical, to say the least.



The staff at El Nido is amazing. They are trained to go out of their way to guarantee that a guest's needs and whims are attended to and one has a truly pleasant stay.



The sunset view in El Nido resort in Palawan

I had been angling for a writing assignment that involved travel and so I was pleased to be invited on a two-night, three-day trip to Lagen and the new acquisition of El Nido Resorts in Apulit, formerly known as Club Noah.

We flew out of Manila at 3 p.m. on a Sunday and were in Lagen in less than three hours, counting the plane ride and two transfers aboard sea crafts. The same warm greetings, complete with singing, dancing and abundant smiles that greeted us eight years ago, were still there when we arrived at the resort dock. The eagerness of the staff that welcomed us touched this jaded traveler's tired soul.

Lagen and Miniloc, the two El Nido resorts situated on Bacuit Bay, have a lot going for them. The ancient limestone walls and corridors, so ruggedly natural, strewn on islands dotting the bay are just awesome — beautiful beyond description. There are secret beaches, underwater delights, hidden islands, caves, flora, fauna and endless rock formations available to view or visit. Add to all these, the thrill of swimming in an un-

spoiled, unpoluted sea, a safe haven for marine life and host to one of the largest repositories of biodiversity on this side of the planet.

Before I got there, I wondered whether El Nido could still take my heart away considering that it would be my third time to visit the place. The answer came back to me in no time. As I looked around, the crisp wind caressing my face, I realized how foolish I was to doubt the enduring impact and awesome power of nature's rock creations chiseled through millions of years by time, tide and rain. How could I, a mere mortal with a double-digit lifespan, even imagine being unimpressed by such majesty?

During a boat ride, I sat at the front of the vessel to take it all in while getting a tan. I was multi-tasking and doing my meditations amidst the breathlessly beautiful surroundings. Navigating between massive towering limestone wonders, I was totally present to God's creation, absorbing everything with gratitude. While my skin darkened under the sun, my spirit soared in the searing beauty overload.

My favorite spot in El Nido is a quiet setting called the Small Lagoon. One must pass through a hole in the rocks during low tide to get into it. Its appeal is raw and prehistoric. Its beauty, with its lush flora and occasional birds, stingrays and other creatures that find their way inside the lagoon, is unparalleled. This has to be the "adoration chapel" of nature in this part of the world.

Another favorite is Culasa, a private, quiet, out-of-the-way beach with a tiny frontage and interesting rock formations.

In truth, it is difficult to choose so-called favorite places in a place as rich and varied as El Nido. There are just too many picturesque sites everywhere. I find myself falling in love with practically every location I visit.



Islands in the sea: A trio of islands

The experience of a destination, whether near or far, is especially heightened when you meet and interact with the right people. I have taken many trips all over the world and nothing beats the warm, true Filipino hospitality in making one feel comfortable and very much at home. It is a major factor in having a truly memorable time.

The staff at El Nido is amazing. They are trained to go out of their way to guarantee that a guest's needs and whims are attended to and one has a truly pleasant stay. I was asked about possible food allergies and dietary preferences. My room had small touches that spelled "caring," decorated with small knick-knacks here and there. In and out of boats, helping hands are ready with towels and plastic bags to protect camera equipment from sea spray and other little things that ensure nothing spoils one's holiday.

Guests were given an environmental briefing that explained how the island resorts handle their water resources and waste, and cautioned us against needless, harmful environmental impacts we may unwittingly cause. This was not a PR stunt but an earnest concern communicated to all visitors in the area.

We had a full day of sight-seeing, and the next morning, we took a five-hour trip out of Lagen to Apulit Resort in Taytay Bay. It is a much smaller venue and, this being off-season, the pace here was relaxed, laid-back. Apulit is laid out in such a way that there is a lot of walking between rooms and to eating venues and activity places. After lunch, I went Hobie Cat sailing with the club manager, Franck Merot, who gamely and ably took me on his rig.

The major event of our visit

to this resort was a trip to the caves at the back of the island. St. Joseph's Cave is humongous and really impressive with its stalagmites and stalactites largely un-touched. Our guide was a young man named Hiro who, between jokes, shared some fascinating facts about rock formations while we were spelunking in the cavernous cave rooms.

At the end of the day, I set up of my photo gear to capture the breathtaking El Nido sunset. I took dozens of pictures as the beauty of the scenery intensified every few seconds, mystifying me and my companions. As the colors turned from blue to gray, from yellow to deep orange, from gray to black, it seemed to me that God Himself was showing off, playing with my senses, and reminding not to take His greatness for granted. More than a fading light, I saw the dramatic exit of a glorious presence that gracefully gave way to nightfall.

Mae Mangaogang told me that the company will soon be introducing attractive packages to entice more locals to enjoy what will soon be a string of four resorts, after Pangalusian is fully reconstructed. But even without the tour packages, I believe that some things are just worth the money it costs to be there. In this age of climate change and other earth-altering events that have transformed the landscape in many parts of the world, it is has become an increasingly rare treat to find places when one can find nature still in truly pristine condition.

Any way I look at it, these El Nido resorts, with their level of luxury set in what is probably one of the world's last primeval destinations, are a wonderful deal. I will keep returning to El Nido to feed my senses and nurture my soul. (www.philstar.com).

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

One Killed, Firearms Seized As Gov't Troops, Bandits Clash in Sultan Kudarat

from www.philstar.com
Tuesday, December 6, 2011

DAVA O CITY, Philippines (Xinhua) - Government troops clashed with an undetermined number of armed men believed to be bandits in the southern Philippines today, leaving one dead, the military said.

Two rifles, an M-14 and a Carbine, were also recovered following the encounter in Datal Blao village, Columbio town, in Mindanao's Sultan Kudarat province, according to Colonel Leopoldo Galon, spokesperson of Eastern Mindanao Command.

Troops from the army's 27th Infantry Battalion were patrolling the vicinity of sub-village Lumunso when they chanced upon several gunmen said to be led by a certain



Daguil, a notorious bandit suspected behind cattle-rustling in the area, around 2:30 p.m., setting off a clash that killed one of the armed bandits, Colonel Galon said.

"The engaged troops found the firearms near the body of the slain gunman, whose companions fled to different directions after the incident," the military official said.

ADB Cuts Philippine Growth Forecast for 2011 to 3.7 pct

from www.philstar.com
Tuesday, December 6, 2011

MANILA (Xinhua) -- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) downgraded its growth forecast for the Philippines this year to 3.7 percent on back of a global slowdown.

According to the latest Asia Economic Monitor (AEM) issued Tuesday, the debt crisis in Europe and the U.S. fiscal problems will hurt the Philippines and other East Asian economies.

"The turmoil emanating from Europe poses a growing danger to trade and finance within emerging East Asia; so the region's policymakers must be prepared to act promptly, decisively, and collectively to counter what could be an extended global economic slowdown," ADB Office of Regional Economic Integration Head Iwan J. Azis said.

The ADB earlier forecast Philippine economy to grow 4.7 percent this year.

The AEM also noted that if the Eurozone and the U.S. were to fall into a deep recession next year, the Philippine GDP growth would be 0.6 percentage points slower at 4.2 percent. It can be noted that ADB's initial forecast for Philippine eco-

nomigrowth were at 4.7 percent this year and 5.1 percent in 2012.

The ADB downgraded its forecast for the region's growth in 2012 to 7.2 percent from the 7.5 percent forecast in the September Asian Development Outlook 2011 Update. The region's Gross Domestic Product growth was still forecast to hit 7.5 percent for this year.

The ADB said that if the European and U.S. economies contracted as much as they did in 2009 - emerging East Asia would grow by 5.4 percent next year. That would only be 1.8 percentage points below the current forecast but not as severe as the impact of the 2008-2009 global crisis. This, the ADB said, is due to the diversification of the region's export markets and increased domestic demand as a source of growth.

However, the Manila-based multilateral development bank noted that the region's financial systems remain as vulnerable as they were in 2008. The report noted that the heightened risk aversion would see investors slash holdings of Asian financial assets while highly leveraged European banks would cut lending, leading to tighter credit conditions.

Philippine Inflation Slows to 4.8% in November

MANILA (Xinhua) -- Philippine inflation rate slowed to 4.8 percent on year in November on lower prices of food and utilities, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said Tuesday.

The latest inflation figure is still within the central bank's 3-5 percent inflation target for this year.

Data showed that the food and non-alcoholic beverages index at the national

level was slower at 4.8 percent in November from 5.7 percent in October. Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, likewise, eased 5.7 percent.

The NSO said the food index alone eased to 4.9 percent in November from 5.8 percent in October. This was largely due to the slower annual increase in the prices of rice, meat, fish and vegetables.

(www.philstar.com)

PHILIPPINE NEWS

P-Noy Rallies Support Behind Gov't Reforms

by Aurea Calica
Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - At the Christmas party of the Liberal Party (LP) Monday night, President Aquino urged his partymates to seize the opportunity to institute reforms in the country as they continue to enjoy the support of the people.

Aquino said he is effecting changes not for himself but for future generations.

He said they must fulfill the promises they made to the people during the election campaign.

"I really have to be able to say that what we will leave is definitely better than what we found," the President said.

He asked his colleagues to face the challenges in performing their duties.

"When you are given this responsibility, of course the task ahead is not going to be easy. The battle that is looming will not be easy," he said.

On Monday, when he spoke during the 1st National Criminal Justice Summit held at the Manila Hotel, Aquino took a job at Chief Justice Renato Corona, questioning the legitimacy of his appointment and noting that the credibility of the Supreme Court (SC).

Corona was appointed by detained former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo days before she was to step down from power, despite warnings from critics and constitutional experts against the "midnight appointment."

The SC, made up mostly of Arroyo's appointees, upheld Corona's appointment.

In his speech, Aquino recited a list of what he consid-

ered were questionable decisions of the SC, including its issuance of a temporary restraining order on the travel ban against Arroyo and its declaring as unconstitutional the creation of a truth commission to investigate the alleged irregularities in the Arroyo administration.

Aquino has drawn flak for openly criticizing Corona, who was sitting near him at the event. Several judges and justices describe Aquino's speech as "quite disturbing."

The President said that when he accepted the challenge of leading the country, he was already aware of the possible trials and tribulations that would come along with the responsibilities.

"The idea is simple. I accepted this willingly. I know the risks involved. I know the trials and tribulations, at least what to expect, and knowing fully well that the trials and tribulations that will come our way, I committed fully," he said.

"I want to be able to step down in 2016 and have people tell me that they were satisfied or they were happy with the performance, or that nobody can tell me that the commitment that I willingly undertook I didn't do," he added.

During the Christmas party, Aquino also swore into office new members of the LP.

Among those present during the event were Senators Franklin Drilon, Ralph Recto and Francis Pangilinan, Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr., Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, LP secretary-general and Cavite Rep. Joseph Emilio Abaya and LP president and Transportation Secretary Manuel Roxas II.

Christmas wishes

Aquino's Christmas wish for Arroyo is for her to have the opportunity to "rectify herself."

"Perhaps she can rectify what has been done by helping really achieve the reforms and transformation of society by telling us what exactly was done, how it was done," he said yesterday at the Bulong Pulungan Christmas party and recognition day for outstanding public servants and private individuals.

Arroyo has been placed under hospital arrest on charges of electoral sabotage.

Aquino also said the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office filed a case against her before the Office of the Ombudsman for misuse of funds that was also investigated by the Senate.

During her nine-year term, Arroyo issued Executive Order 464 to stop her officials from attending congressional inquiries on alleged anomalies of her administration. She was also able to thwart impeachment raps against her by mustering the support of her allies at the House of Representatives, thereby preventing the Senate from holding an impeachment trial.

She and her allies were accused of rigging the results of the 2004 and 2007 elections and committing acts of corruption.

There were attempts to unseat her through mutiny and rebellion by the military and other individuals, but she enjoyed the support of Catholic bishops who discouraged her ouster even after 10 of her Cabinet members — known as the Hyatt 10 — resigned to pressure her to step down from power.

"She was given an opportu-

nity to lead our country for nine and a half years. I was in the opposition; I don't think she led us properly," Aquino said.

For himself, the President said he wants to continue to receive the goodwill and support of the people.

"That is really such a tremendous gift and I hope to be deserving of the same... I think our people are really driving this whole administration towards that goal of an improved society," he said.

Articulation of public frustration

Political Adviser for Presidential Affairs Ronald Llamas said Aquino's harsh sentiments towards the judiciary are a reflection of how a majority of Filipinos feel.

He said Aquino's remarks were only a way of "articulating overwhelming public frustration."

"The President's remarks should be viewed as an honest and sincere effort to remind the Chief Justice and the other members of the judicial system that his administration is duty-bound to uphold the rule of law and due process," he said.

He said that a majority of the population feel that the SC is accountable only to Arroyo.

Llamas said the prosecution of Arroyo is meant to "send a strong message to our people and the international community that we are unwaveringly on the side of justice and the

rule of law."

Sen. Francis Escudero, meanwhile, called on Aquino and Corona to settle their differences before the year ends to remove distractions to public service.

Escudero suggested that the President and Chief Justice sit down with leaders of Congress in the Judicial-Executive and Legislative Advisory Council (JELAC) to sort out their differences in private.

"The President was merely voicing out the sentiments of many people. He was not starting a fight or (being) disrespectful but was just reminding the Supreme Court about the complaints of the people (on the institution)," Escudero said in Filipino.

He said the rift between the two branches of government is not healthy and should be settled right away.

"I hope that this ends soon. It would be sad to have this continue during the term of President Aquino because public service will be affected," Escudero said.

He commended Corona for keeping his composure after hearing the President's speech. He also said allegations that Corona was an avid supporter of Arroyo were overblown.

He said Corona cannot dictate on the entire Supreme Court on his own because the justices decide on cases separately.

"I do not believe that he can dictate on the entire Court. Let's give them some credit," he said.

(www.philstar.com)

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

Gov't Hopes to Sign Peace Accord with MILF Next Year

from www.philstar.com
Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

MANILA (Xinhua) — The government of President Benigno S. Aquino III has expressed the hope that it could sign a peace agreement early next year with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the main Muslim rebel group in the country, to finally put an end to the four-decade old armed rebellion in the southern Philippines.

In his opening statement at the resumption of the formal negotiations between the government and the MILF in Kuala Lumpur Monday, Marvic Leonen, chief government negotiator, challenged the MILF to do its part in completing their task of forging a peace accord "within the first quarter of next year."

Leonen said that the government-envisioned peace pact would reflect "a genuine acknowledgment of history and a true understanding of our peoples," adding that it will also be "a framework for all parties to work with each other under a regime of mutual respect."

"Our view of a peace agreement is that it is one that can sincerely be implemented by the administration that promises it. Certainly, the grandest of our hopes can only be achieved if we start with the practical issues that can be accomplished today while dreaming of what our worlds will be in the future,"

Leonen said.

The three-day formal exploratory talks, the 23rd for both sides, will end in Kuala Lumpur Wednesday.

Leonen and his counterpart, MILF chief negotiator Mollahagher Iqbal, are ironing out kinks in the peace process through the intercession of Malaysian facilitator Tengku Dato Ab Ghafar Tengku Mollahager.

Ghafar has been to the Philippines at least twice upon the request of both parties, most recently to bring the two sides together in informal talks on Nov. 3 following an impasse over the deaths of 19 Marines in Al Baraka, Basilan on Oct. 18.

Leonen urged the MILF to join the government in bringing "political empowerment, economic development, ecological viability, cultural respect and democratic toleration" among the Moro people.

Since the government and the MILF forged a ceasefire agreement in 2003, there had been sporadic clashes between the military and the MILF armed guerrillas, the most recent of which was the Basilan massacre.

While the MILF has claimed that the soldiers were inside their "area of temporary stay" or ATS, the military insisted that they were on a legitimate mission to capture Al Asnawi, who the MILF admitted is its top commander in Basilan. Asnawi has earlier

been tagged as the mastermind in the beheading of some 10 Marines in the same area.

Despite the Basilan carnage, Leonen said that the Aquino administration is maintaining the policy of pursuing peace and justice in Mindanao.

"No less than the President [has] announced that the current policy of government today is all-out justice, not all-out war," Leonen said in his opening statement.

But at the same time, Leonen called on the MILF "to show more of its commitment by more actively identifying and assisting in the arrest of many lawless elements."

"Let us prove that our ceasefire mechanisms are not havens for kidnappers, murderers and terrorists," Leonen said.

In Malacanang, the presidential palace, Presidential Spokesperson Edwin Lacierda

said that the government remains hopeful and supportive of the pursuit of a negotiated settlement.

"We remain hopeful," Mr. Lacierda told reporters in a Palace briefing.

Lacierda said that in spite of the recent MILF attacks that killed a total of 26 soldiers in Basilan and Zamboanga Sibugay provinces, the government would continue the search for peace in Mindanao.

He said negotiations between the two sides have entered the "substantive portion of the peace talks."

But Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile is not very optimistic about the prospects of the forging of a peace pact with the Moro rebels. On the contrary he cautioned the Aquino government against "unrealistic expectations" for a peace deal, adding that MILF would likely use the

peace talks as a delaying tactic in order to further build up its guerrilla force.

"I'm not very optimistic about these peace talks. These are all delaying tactics," Enrile said in a recent radio interview.

Enrile, a former defense minister and the third highest ranking official in the Philippine government, said that it would be nearly impossible to get the MILF rebels fighting in Mindanao to lay down their weapons and start talking peace.

Enrile has also warned President Aquino not to agree to the MILF demand of a sub-state with sovereign powers because this is unconstitutional and is tantamount to a dismemberment of the country. He added that if Aquino agrees to the creation of a sub-state, he could be removed from office by impeachment.

No Significant Opposition in New Subic Coal Plant

by **Anthony Bayarong**
Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2011

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT, Philippines — The company who will build a 300-megawatt power plant here brushed off opposition to the project, saying "there are no significant opposition" to the undertaking.

Ray Cunningham, a member of the steering committee of RPE, said "If we were convince that the overwhelming people in this area did not want this project we would go away, but we have done survey and talked to a lot of people. We do not believe that there is no significant opposition to this project."

He added that the plant will

push with the construction and will eventually expand to 600MW.

"One opposition here is extremely vocal and well finance and know how to get into the media but there is a lot of hard evidence to us that indicates it is not major opposition to this project," Cunningham explained.

Asked if Olongapo City, Subic town, the Zambales provincial government, and the SBMA is not significant opposition, Cunningham said "We would prefer and continue to seek their support and endorsement in the long term."

He added that the way the process works in the Philippines

is that under the Environmental Certificate Compliance (ECC), which he cited that they have complied with all necessary requirements.

He also said endorsement from LGU or residents for a private project are not part of the law.

"Our reason for wanting their approval and support was because we want to be a blessing in the community," he added.

"Bakit naman magkakaroon ng significant opposition if we promise to build something and to operate it in a very environmentally friendly manner, so if we are building something that will kill people off course we will not build what we are building," said Lito Latin of RPE. (www.philstar.com)

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LEGAL NOTES



By Reuben S. Seguritan

New Policy of Easing Deportation Unevenly Applied

security or public safety. It called on them to regularly exercise their discretion at any time during the immigration process in order to prioritize the use of the agency's limited resources.

The memo listed at least 19 factors to be considered by ICE personnel when making enforcement decisions. These include lengthy residence in the U.S., pursuit of U.S. education, community ties, and having a U.S. citizen (USC) or lawful permanent resident (LPR) relative.

However, ICE offices apparently have not been following the memo in the past five months since it came into effect.

A survey of immigration practitioners by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and the American Immigration Council (AIC) shows that implementation of

the new policy has been sporadic at best.

For instance, in New York, removal proceedings were terminated for an alien who had been present since childhood and educated in the U.S. and had strong family and community ties.

On the other hand, relief was denied to a long-time LPR who had two misdemeanors from a long time ago but whose case involved many positive factors, including being a victim of domestic violence or serious crime, having a spouse with a severe illness, and being a primary caretaker of a sick or disabled minor relative.

In California, surveyed attorneys reported little to no change in practice since June. In one case involving an LPR with an abandonment charge, termination of removal proceedings

was denied in spite of the equities of the case. The LPR had no criminal history or only minor offenses and had a USC/LPR relative; no negative factors were present.

Many ICE officers and attorneys were reported as having said that there is no change in policy or that things were "business as usual" until they get further guidance. For example, in the Honolulu ICE office, it was said that prosecutorial discretion is denied unless there are life threatening circumstances.

The findings also reveal that the standards are sometimes applied inconsistently or interpreted narrowly. In Florida, for example, an ICE attorney said that a prosecutorial discretion request would be considered at the beginning of the case and not at any other stage of the proceedings. An ICE agent in Seattle reportedly said that discretion to

release an alien would be exercised only when a detention center is full.

Despite the clarity of the guidelines in the memo, there is evidently a gap between the leadership that issued the policy and the rank and file tasked to carry out the policy in practice. The AILA and AIC pressed the DHS and ICE in particular to issue additional guidance and hands-on training to its personnel.

In order to give effect to a policy not only approved at the executive level but in fact supported by President Obama, ICE agents and attorneys need to understand that it is their obligation to exercise discretion in accordance with the memo.

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

MAINLAND NEWS

What Will Happen to the Simbang Gabi sa Konsulado?

by Momar Visaya
Friday, December 2, 2011

NEW YORK - For the past several weeks, various Filipino-American organizations in New York and New Jersey have been meeting to prepare for the staging of the annual tradition known as Simbang Gabi sa Konsulado.

The preparations came to a grinding halt when the community leaders were advised that the Archdiocese of New York led by the Archbishop Timothy Dolan "does not approve of having masses for the Filipino community being celebrated outside a sacred worship place".

The community has been celebrating the traditional nine-day Simbang Gabi masses at the Kalayaan Hall of the Philippine Center on Fifth Avenue for the past 25 years. Community organizations take turns in hosting the daily mass.

The local tradition began in New York 1986 when Francisco Rodrigo was Consul General. "It started as a coming together of people with different opinions and positions after the Marcos era," Ludette Avelino, one of the organizers said.

"It was like a new beginning where people who were pro and against the (Philippine government then) came together to try and keep the Filipino traditions, heritage practices that we had in the Philippines

and bring it to the Philippine Center (in New York), she said.

"The Simbang Gabi became a project and it was a good beginning and from that time, 26 years ago, it has not stopped. The Philippine Center is where it was nurtured and where everybody bonded to work together," she also said.

For this year's Simbang Gabi event, sponsoring organizations met on November 22 and agreed to write a letter to Archbishop Dolan which was collectively signed by the participating organizations. The letter was then personally delivered to the Office of the Archbishop by a delegation composed of representatives of the participating Filipino community organizations and the Philippine Consulate General.

The response of the Archdiocese is eagerly awaited by the community.

The letter conveys to Archbishop Dolan the evolution of the Simbang Gabi at the Philippine Center and its importance both as a religious and a cultural tradition for the migrant Filipino community in the Northeast USA.

"I am hoping that the Archdiocese sees how important this is to our community. It is crucial that we keep this tradition alive. It just pains me to see this happen after 25 years," said Vivian Talambiras-Cruz, one of the community leaders who have been supporting the Simbang Gabi every year.

In the meantime, the organizers of the Simbang Gabi continue to undertake preparations for the observance of the tradition as it has been celebrated in the last 25 years, or in the alternative, with some modifications in deference to the position of the Archdiocese of New York on the matter.

"Perhaps it is the nostalgic patriotism for those who are quite homesick but miss certain aspects of life back home which makes this one special night at the Philippine Center something to look forward to," Vivian Talambiras Cruz, one of the organizers, said.

"When we have this celebration at the Philippine Center, we feel that we are back home. The Simbang Gabi keep us going as a community perhaps because we are able to have continuity of memories and traditions even away from home," she added.

But Fr. Joseph Marabe, in an interview with The Filipino Channel's Balitang America program, explained why the Archdiocese does not allow the local New York Filipino tradition.

"The Archdiocese does not allow masses in the Freedom Hall or in the Consulate. The universal law says, bawal talagang magmis sa unconsanated place, it is condemned by the Vatican," the priest from San Lorenzo Chapel, the only Filipino chapel in New York, said.

Marabe also believes that the community should just follow the order of the Archdiocese. "If this particular order of his would get a very negative feedback from the Filipino community, it would not reflect very well for us Filipinos," he said.

In his own letter to Consul General Mario de Leon, Jr., Marabe suggested that the sponsoring groups avail of the neighboring churches within the Philippine Cen-

ter in midtown Manhattan, including the Lady Chapel at the St. Patrick's Cathedral which was reportedly offered by the Rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Msgr. Robert Ritchie.

"The social aspect of the tradition can very well continue in a social hall, like the Consulate's. It would take a little sacrifice of walking and experiencing cold air," Marabe said in his letter. (www.asianjournal.com)



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PHILIPPINE LANGUAGE



DAYASADAS
By Pacita Saludes

Ti Kapintasan Pay Laeng A Balikas Nga Agaon Iti Bibig Ti Panagdaliasat Ti Pammati

sem, "AGYAMANAK APO!" ket ti masagrap ti napudno a rikna nga agkiddaw ti kasapulan bareng no nakapudnotayo iti THANKSGIVING DAY. Apo sapay koma, Ibalikastayo.

Ti panagdaliasat ti pammati

Manipud kadagiti simbaan ken bibig a napudno dagiti ibalikalasna ti denggen ti Apo. Saan laeng a dagiti balikalas no di pay ket dagiti napudno a samiweng a sumngaw iti bibig a dumanon kadagiti lapayag. Kas iti nangnegaman manipud iti Choir President a ni Mrs. Angie Duque Foshay - impakaammona kadakami ti dakkel a kaipapanan ti Nasantuan a Samiweng nga agaon kadagiti barukong nga iyeckas dagiti dila a kakuoyog ti naumbi kan nalayan a samiweng a Nadiosan.

Kumankanta ni Angie

kadagiti akto, kadagiti drama ken simbaan. Dagiti Nasantuan a Samiweng, sumnek iti kaungkan ti barukong dagiti kammang ti simbaan ken amin a nakangngegen kadagiti nasantuan nga aweng, a gumaw-gawawa ti nadiosan a kaasi. Ni Angie Fosay ti Presidente ti CHOIR (para kanta) ti PHILIPPINE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST a kaduana dagiti nasurok a tallopu ket lima a kantura iti simbaan nga imatonan ni PASTOR NOEL MARIO M. DOMINGO.

Pakaammo

Addanto CHRISTMAS CONCERT nga idasar ti FILIPPINO CHURCH OF CHRIST into no Diciembre 24, 2011, 6:00 p.m. (rabii ti Sabado) LIGHT LOOK DOWN and the word become FLESH. Message of HOPE a Proclamation of PEACE and an amazing incredible LOVE and a revelation of GODS GLORY. Conductor/Director: Rev. Noel Mario M. Domingo. For more information please contact Angelyn Foshay iti 808-351-8510, 808-428-9222, or 808-674-2115. Free Admission.

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Anonymous

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Imbag a pagaranudun
Agbalin a biddut mangpasanaang

Ti namnama a naindaklan
Makapargasak kaarbanan
Agbalin a sakit makaidagel
Biag a makapulok panagsagaba? Dawel
Kalpasan nabuslan a parabur
Namsek ap-apunan nga agamang
Nakaparnuay ragsak kaaduan
Namaruyom nga is-isem naimatangang
Ngem anian a nagkas-ang
Kalpasan bannog, panagserbi a narunaw
Gasat a nalpay, eppes a namnama
Iwalindaka, awanen kaipapanan

Maalak ti agsimronAgarubos dagiti luak kayatko a lipaten
Inkarik a panagserbik makatulogang laeng
Ngem ania't kaibatugan ita a sagrapen
Nupay no kasta, ti langit agtalekak
Ta saan nga agkikidem!

No sumngaw iti bibig ti balikas a panagayaman "DIOS TI AGNINA" maabubukay ti rikna nga umisem ken mangsungbat "AWAN TI ANIAMANNA" ti Dios ti nangipaay.

Pudno unay no ania dagiti kalikaguman a mapaadda rum-beng ti agyaman manipud iti pada a tao wenna pagam-am-muan lattan ta maaramid dagiti kalkalikagumam. Uray awan ima a mangiyawat kenka natungpal ti kalikagumam a mapaadda. Asino ti pagyamanam? Awan. Ngem balik-

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MAINLAND NEWS

Lady Gaga Discusses Anti-Bullying at White House

from www.philstar.com
Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lady Gaga visited the White House on Tuesday to discuss bullying prevention. The pop singer met with Obama administration staffers on the issue and afterward, Obama senior adviser Valerie Jarrett praised the star as "a source of strength for many young people who feel isolated and scared at their schools."

"Lady Gaga has described this cause as a personal one — she has said that as a child, she was often picked on for being different," Jarrett wrote in a blog post on the White House website. "I am deeply moved by the way she has used her story, and her success, to inspire young people, and shine the spotlight on important issues."

Gaga didn't have a chance to meet with President Barack Obama, who was traveling in Kansas for a speech on the economy.

But the two have met before, when the singer attended a fundraiser for Obama's re-election campaign in California earlier this year.

Gaga was spotted by news crews as she exited the White House grounds Tuesday afternoon dressed all in white, including sky-high white heels, with her long blond hair down.

The White House held an anti-bullying conference earlier this year, and the administration estimates that bullying affects 13 million students, or about a third of those attending school. Jarrett said the administration looked forward to supporting Gaga's Born This Way Foundation, to explore how to change the culture and policies around children in school.



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December 18-22, 2011 • For details, contact Danny Villaruz @ 778-0233

GLOBAL NEWS

Japan to Ease Visa Rules for Pinoy Tourists

by Mayen Jaymalin
Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - Local travel agencies received yesterday that Japan would soon relax rules on the issuance of visas to Filipino tourists.

Aileen Clemente, president of the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA), said that the Japanese government is expected to ease rules on the issuance of visa to encourage more Filipino tourists to visit Japan.

Clemente said they have held dialogues with the Japanese embassy on the possible relaxation of visa application for Filipinos going to Japan.

"The Japanese embassy had promised the PTAA that it would study their current visa application procedures and will consider increasing the number of accredited travel agencies in the future," Clemente said.

Clemente said only six travel agencies, all members of the PTAA, are currently accredited to conduct business with the Japanese embassy.



Other local travel agencies that receive visa applications for Japan have to course their applications through the six accredited travel agencies.

She expressed confidence that Filipinos will be encouraged to visit Japan once the visa requirements are relaxed.

Clemente said the PTAA is also exerting efforts to increase the number of Japanese tourists coming to the country.

She said the PTAA would prioritize the Japanese market starting next year.

"Because of its proximity, the

historical and economic ties between the two countries, and the tropical amenities the Philippines can offer, it is not a stretch to project half a million Japanese tourists coming to the country annually," Clemente said.

In the first eight months of the year, Japan ranked third in tourist arrivals with close to 10 percent of the 2.60 million total arrivals.

Under the draft National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP), Clemente said the government and private tourism agencies would work together to attract an estimated 1.77 million Japanese tourists to the country over the next five years.

The PTAA has more than 350 member travel agencies doing business nationwide with close to half of them capable of servicing both inbound and outbound travel.

"Japan is an important market and we can help further increase the number of Japanese tourists coming into the country while at the same time helping cut down on Filipinos that are illegally entering Japan," Clemente said. (www.philstar.com)

15 Pinoy Seamen Freed by Somali Pirates

by Pia Leo-Brago
Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

MANILA, Philippines - Fifteen Filipino seafarers were among the crew of the Italian-flagged bulk carrier MV Rosalia D'Amato released by Somali pirates from captivity on Nov. 25, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

Foreign Affairs spokesman Raul Hernandez said the department was informed on Sunday by the local manning agency of Rosalia D'Amato of the release.

Somali pirates hijacked the vessel 350 nautical miles east of Salalah, Oman on April 21.

The families of the Filipino seafarers were already informed of their release.

After the release of the ship from captivity, Rosalia D'Amato sailed towards the port of Salalah where the crewmembers were to undergo medical checkup and debriefing.

Hernandez said the repatriation of the Filipino crewmembers is yet to be



scheduled by the principal and manning agency.

To date, a total of 26 Filipino seafarers in three vessels are held captive by Somali pirates.

5 Pinays rescued from white slavery

In a related development, the Philippine Consulate General in Xiamen, China rescued five Filipino women victimized by white slavery in China.

The Quanzhou Municipal Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) and Quanzhou Public Security Bureau (PSB) of Fujian, China assisted in the rescue operation on Nov. 25, 2011.

The DFA received information from

the ordeal of the victims on Nov. 25.

A request was also received by the consulate from DFA Mindanao and DFA spokesman Hernandez who provided the consulate with the address and cellphone numbers of the victims.

Xiamen Consul General Aded Cruz called one of the victims at around 3:30 p.m. and instructed her to leave the apartment immediately with four companions. They were instructed to meet with FAO and PSB officials in a restaurant adjacent to the apartment.

At 4:20 p.m., Chinese officials confirmed that the five Filipino officers were already with them.

An hour later, Chinese police

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raided the apartment of the victims. Apprehended were five Chinese and a Filipina, the wife of one of the Chinese. At around 11 p.m., police officers started questioning the Filipinos, after which they were brought to the Xiamen consulate premises. (www.philstar.com)

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From
The Hawaii Filipino Chronicle
Management and Staff