

HAWAII'S #1 FILIPINO NEWSPAPER

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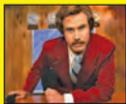
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EDITORIALS

Admiring Filipinos' Resiliency

For many Filipinos, 2013 was the year of living dangerously, especially when considering the number of natural disasters that recently hit the country. Last August, record monsoon rains fell for two straight days, turning Manila's roads into rivers and trapping tens of thousands of people. Two months later in October, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake rocked the Central Visayan region. Seismologists say that the powerful quake contained the energy equivalent of about 32 Hiroshima atomic bombs. In its aftermath, the quake left over 198 people dead, mostly in Bohol and Cebu, displaced 66,000 families and destroyed historic churches and other centuries-old national treasures. Just as the region was recovering from the damage, a super typhoon struck. Filipinos pride themselves on being able to ride out the effects of powerful storms, but they could never have adequately prepared for Haiyan—the strongest tropical cyclone ever recorded at landfall.

Last year's calamities brought out the best in many Filipinos who showed that they truly cared for their *kababayans*. One such group was PMAH's Ohana Medical Mission which traveled to Tacloban, Leyte and neighboring towns that were flattened by Haiyan's winds and storm surge. These volunteers provided free medical services to tens of thousands of victims and distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of medical supplies, equipment and relief goods.

Millions in the Central Philippines are now in the midst of rebuilding their communities and their lives—as countless of their countrymen and women have done after previous natural disasters. They remain ever optimistic, thanks to an unshakeable faith in God, a positive outlook on life and a tremendous work ethic. Filipinos are also self-reliant and know better than to wait for their government to act. It is a combination of these factors that will help them overcome these tragedies.

Interestingly enough, Filipinos' steadfastness in the face of these natural disasters gained them much admiration from the international community. A CNN report described Filipinos as "resilient, long suffering, good natured, friendly, loyal, ingenious, and a bunch of survivors." For those who believe in fate, perhaps that's why the Philippines was chosen to shoulder the strongest typhoon ever in history—to show others the indomitable human spirit at its finest.

Rewing Up Your New Year Resolution

As the old saying goes—"Out with the old and in with the new." If the past year was less-than-memorable for you, take comfort in knowing that you will never have to live through another year that ends in the number "13."

In an effort to start anew, many of us typically make New Year's resolutions like saving money, spending more time with your family, or eating more healthfully. But rather than a generic resolution to lose weight, why not set a more tangible goal by slowly reducing your consumption of animal products or including a vegetable with every meal? When it comes to self-improvement, the more detailed and specific you make it, the better.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Happy New Year to our readers and welcome to our very first issue of 2014! Let's appreciate the symbolic clean slate that presents itself for the New Year and be grateful that we get to press the "reset" button on any missteps of the past 12 months. According to the Chinese zodiac, 2014 is the Year of the Horse. If you are inclined to believe such things, those born during the Year of the Horse tend to be clever, possess good communication skills, are cheerful and stubborn. They are expected to have a good year and are advised to be quiet and patient.

As is customary here at the Chronicle, our cover story for this first issue is a look back at the Top 11 stories we reported that impacted Hawaii's Filipino community in 2013. Looking back at the events of the past 12 months also allows us to relive our successes and learn from mistakes we may have committed. As expected, it was tough deciding which stories made the cut. One story that did not make the list but nevertheless captured the interest of many Filipinos was the selection of Pope Francis from Argentina—the first non-European elected pope in over 1,200 years and the first pope from the Americas. We hope you will enjoy reliving and reading the top 11 news events of 2013 beginning on page 4.

If you're like most people, you have probably already taken down your Christmas tree and put away the decorations. City officials urge you to recycle your tree, which can be readily converted into mulch or other environmentally-friendly uses. It may take a little work, but you should do your part to prevent your tree from simply ending up in the landfill. Please turn to page 6 for more details on how to properly dispose of your tree.

In closing, thank you for your faithful support and for making Hawaii Filipino Chronicle the very best Filipino community newspaper in Hawaii! It has truly been a pleasure to serve all of our readers over the past year. Our staff will always strive to provide you with informative and timely stories in each and every issue.

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

Chona A. Montesines-Sonido

Studies show that over 40 percent of Americans make New Year's resolutions, but only 8 percent successfully achieve those goals. Experts say the key is to set small, attainable goals throughout the year, instead of a singular, overwhelming goal on January 1st. By making your resolutions realistic, there is a greater chance that you will keep them throughout the year. Also keep in mind that perfection is unattainable and that minor missteps are completely normal. Don't give up completely because you broke your diet or skipped going to the gym for a few days because you were busy. We all have our ups and downs—so resolve to recover from your mistakes and get back on track. Last but not least, don't hesitate to reward yourself when you've met your resolution or goal. Why not splurge on a massage or a new outfit? Such positive reaffirmation will help make your resolutions stick and help keep you focused.

This year is the time to make your resolutions count. Take comfort in knowing that there is an entire year of untapped potential ahead. Be optimistic and think about the possibilities. Here's to a better you in the New Year!



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CANDID PERSPECTIVES



By Emil Guillermo

Taking "Anchorman 2" to Task for Dog-Eating Joke

trifles. But silly is no excuse to serve up blatant racism.

As a former Filipino American local television anchorman in one of my previous incarnations (Washington, DC, circa 1994), I know all about hairspray, perms, and chatting up a buxom weather gal.

In other words, I know there's much to lampoon in TV news. And "Anchorman 2" does have some on-point satire. But then there's that line that's a pure throwaway.

Ron Burgundy is seen driving and says: "Only Olympic sport Filipinos are good at is eating cats and dogs."

My jaw dropped. But not for dog.

I was so irate I tried desperately to find a pen in order to scribble in the dark; I be-

lieve I've got the line verbatim.

The day I saw the movie, I had a text exchange with a relative in Tacloban in the Philippines about how people there didn't have enough to eat. The typhoon, my relative said, had uprooted local cemeteries, and attracted dogs who were chewing on the exposed remains. The dogs weren't being eaten by the starving typhoon victims.

Of course, the movie was made before the typhoon occurred. Still, the line was easy enough to edit out.

It's certainly one thing for a Filipino to joke about it. But to recycle it in a movie for a general audience is just plain racist, no matter how they update it by adding cats to the menu.

I suppose it's also intended to be funnier that the film makes dog AND cat-eating an Olympic sport. Just in time for the Winter games. So does that mean cat and dog, flash frozen, not fresh?

Still think it's no big deal?

When the only time you hear your ethnicity mentioned in pop culture is as a punch line, that's a big deal.

I know people in Hawaii generally don't feel the same level of exclusion, but on the mainland, U.S. pop culture is generally devoid of Filipino anything.

Now, I'm not offended to the point of boycotting the whole thing, though you do have choices. (Amy Adams is great in "American Hustle," for those looking to relive the disco era). Recently, on the Howard Stern show, co-star Steve Carell said if the movie

made money (and really, is there any doubt of that?), the cast and crew would all get together and have a big party concert with Seals and Croft or Hall and Oates. (The movie does use music to transport people back in time).

I'd suggest they do one more thing. Make a donation to one of the charities doing real work to help the victims of the typhoon in places like Tacloban or Samar Island.

It would be a perfect Ron Burgundy moment, live from the RP, or in the studio with a green screen and a big cardboard check. Such a small penance for a dog-eating transgression. And it fits right in with the filmmakers' penchant for shameless self-promotion.

EMIL GUILLERMO is an award winning journalist and commentator.

The holiday movie season isn't over until the box office cash register finishes a final chorus of "Jingle Bells."

At last count, after just three weeks, "Anchorman 2" is showing some staying power, ringing up more than \$100 million in sales in the U.S. and abroad.

That's a lot of dough for a movie that gets my vote for "Worst movie with a Filipino slur."

I know the movie is a silly trifle, and why bother with silly

OPINION

Time Is Up, Mr. President

AS A MATTER OF FACT By Sara Soliven De Guzman

On 2010, Filipinos decisively elected Aquino, who never planned to be President.

In the words of Budget Secretary Abad, he was an unassuming bachelor-politician, sustained only by his bloodline of democracy icons. His father, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, was gunned down on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport when he returned to the Philippines in August 1983. The tragedy resulted in the people power revolution in 1986 that toppled down the Marcos dictatorship and thrust his mother, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, into the presidency. When Cory died and the presidential race was at its peak, the reluctant Noy noy wasn't sure if he wanted to become the president. But seeing the power his parent's had on the Filipinos at a time when the country needed change, he accepted



the challenge and ran for the presidency.

Now all that is history. He has been our President for three years and the people are beginning to become restless, frustrated and impatient. Like many Pinoys, I was hopeful that he would be able to bring about changes. I was wrong and actually am very disheartened. He has good plans but has been working at a very slow pace and uncertain path. Things seem to have gotten even worse. Power rates are on the rise. Traffic is at its peak. Roads and highways are terrible. Taxes are skyrocket-

ing. Corruption (during PNoy's time) on PDAF has worsened. National security has fallen off its trail. The economic growth is confusing and the "good" reports seem partial and superficial.

In his inaugural speech, P-Noy proclaimed, "I will not be able to face my parents and you who have brought me here if I do not fulfill the promises I made. My parents sought nothing less, died for nothing less, than democracy and peace. I am blessed by this legacy. I shall carry the torch forward." The Filipino people were hopeful that finally a knight in shining armor has come to save us from all our troubles and misery. But after three years, he has not been able to even resolve the Hacienda Luisita problem – something very close to his heart. It was all propaganda and lip service.

Another year has come to pass and still our country is at the bottomless pit. This is a cause for us to be alarmed and worried about the future.

In his New Year's message, P-Noy likened the remainder of his term to the crucial "last two minutes" of a basketball game. He said that we have no time to waste. He promised to redouble efforts to stamp out corruption, institute more growth and reforms and win the peace in Mindanao in 2014. He rallied Filipinos to stay on the "straight path"

(tuwid na daan) to overcome challenges and continue the country's growth.

Generally, P-Noy is seen by many as a man with good intentions, trying to do what is right and good for the country and the Filipino people. But are good intentions enough? I remember my father telling me that inefficiency is as close

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COVER STORY

2013 in Review: The Unlucky Year?

By Chona Montesines-Sonido

On some cultures, the number 13 is considered unlucky. Many buildings in U.S. cities don't have a 13th floor, some airports don't have a Gate 13 and we all know about unlucky Friday the 13th.

The fear of Friday the 13th, scientifically known as *paraskevidekatriaphobia*, results in financial losses exceeding \$800 million annually, as people avoid working, traveling and even marrying. Wedding industry experts say that a small but meaningful number of brides have postponed tying the knot in 2013 for fear of the unlucky number.

For many people, 2013 proved to be a trying, if not unlucky year. There were hardships that tested one's inner resolve, particularly a two-week long federal government shutdown that cost by some estimates about \$13 billion, a horrific Boston Marathon bombing and several natural calamities.

The year began rather optimistically for U.S. President Barack Obama as he delivered an upbeat State-of-the-Union address. However, the following months proved tumultuous for the two-term president who grappled with the govern-

ment's debt crisis, the Edward Snowden spy scandal and the glitch-plagued rollout of his health care law. Not surprisingly, polls taken at year's end showed Obama's approval rating had dropped to 41 percent—the lowest ever during his presidency.

Locally, 2013 was not all bad. For fixed rail supporters, construction resumed on Honolulu's multi-billion dollar project after a year-long hiatus. This year also marked the 50th anniversary of the Merrie Monarch Festival which is considered to be the world's most prestigious hula competition. Unfortunately, 2013 ended on a somber note for Hawaii with the death of State Department of Health director Loretta Fuddy who was killed in a small plane crash off Molokai.

Throughout the past year, the Chronicle constantly worked to keep its readers updated on top local, mainland and global news stories and how they affected Hawaii's Fil-

ipino community. What follows are the Top 11 Stories of 2013 as reported by the Hawaii Filipino Chronicle. Enjoy!

11. Controversial RH Act of 2012 Meets Roadblocks

Despite intense opposition from the powerful Catholic Church, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III courageously signed the highly-contentious Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (RH Act) into law at the end of 2012. It took 14 years before the bill was finally enacted, but condoms and other contraceptives were at last accessible to poor Filipino women and families.

Supporters hailed the RH Act and hoped it would be implemented by early 2013. However, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a *status quo ante* in March, which called for a 120-day period to assess petitions challenging the law's constitutionality. The Court was scheduled to hear oral arguments on the petitions in July but as of August 2013 the delay was still in force "until further orders." Stay tuned.

10. FilCom Honors Emme Tomimbang

The Filipino Community Center (FilCom) honored Emme Tomimbang, a veteran TV journalist who has made numerous contributions to the community over the past several decades, at its 11th Annual Gala Dinner held on November 9. Over 600 guests were in attendance for the sold-out event, which raised over \$150,000. The funds will be used to benefit FilCom, which serves thousands each year with programs for youth, senior citizens and families. In addition, the event provided much-needed visibil-



ity for the Center's facilities, particularly the Casamina-Flores Ballroom, as an ideal choice for a special events venue.

Tomimbang worked for KITV-4 for some 12 years and eventually became the station's anchorwoman for its 10 o'clock news—making her the first ever Filipino-American television anchorwoman in the U.S. A founding member of FilCom's Board of Governors, Tomimbang has also been a source of inspiration for many throughout the community, not just Filipinos.

9. Three Filipinos Begin City Council Terms

Former State legislators Joey Manahan, Ron Menor and Kymberly Marcos Pine were sworn in as members of the Honolulu City Council on January 2, 2013. Although the trio was relative newcomers to City issues, they brought a wealth of enthusiasm and legislative experience, having served their respective communities in Kalihi, Mililani and Ewa Beach for many years at the State Capitol.

Leaders in the Filipino community hailed the election of three new councilmembers, believing that their presence on the nine-member Council bodes well for the continued

and sustained participation of the Filipino community in the affairs of one of the largest metropolitan centers in the U.S. Interestingly enough, three Filipinos served on the previous Council—Romy Cachola, Donovan Dela Cruz and Nestor Garcia. Cachola and Dela Cruz are current members of the State Legislature, while Garcia has since retired from public office.

8. Hawaiian Airlines Bids Aloha to Manila

In April, Hawaiian Airlines announced that it would end its popular direct flights to Manila. Officials launched the route in March 2008, recognizing Hawaii's historical and cultural ties to the Philippines and Manila's large population of over 10 million people. However, it was not to be as high fuel costs and lower fares plagued the underperforming route.

About half of all passengers aboard the Manila route were from Hawaii. Not surprisingly, many local passengers bemoaned the canceled route, preferring Hawaiian's competitive prices and on-time schedules. Since then, Philippine Airlines has been the only carrier flying directly to Manila.

(continued on page 5)



Michael A. McMann, M.D.

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COVER STORY

(from page 4, 2013...)

7. Filipino Community Honors Fil-Am Veterans of World War II

Members of the Filipino-American Historical Society of Hawaii and the Filipino American WW II Veterans Celebration Committee hosted a luncheon on November 16 to honor Filipino-American veterans of World War II. The event paid tribute to the heroic sacrifices of these veterans who fought to liberate their homeland and preserve freedom. Funds raised were used to provide financial assistance to veterans who may need aid with funeral and burial needs. The following day, the veterans and members of the public toured the USS Arizona and enjoyed a special viewing of the documentary "An Untold Triumph."

For many of the Filipino-American veterans, the special event could have very well been the last hurrah, considering that they are dealing with various physical ailments and nearing the twilight of their lives. For the Filipino community, the event was perhaps the final time to witness a gathering of so many Fil-Am veterans under one roof.

6. Filipinos Join Call for Immigration Reform

Filipinos in Hawaii and nationwide were elated as the U.S. Senate in late June passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill, which contained provisions to reunify families, including children of Filipino WWII veterans, and created a pathway to citizenship that would give hope to the 11 million undocumented people who already live and work in the shadows of our society.

Unfortunately, the measure failed to gain the needed support of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. House members instead decided to break down the Senate's bill into separate pieces of legislation for individual consideration during the remainder of 2013. Speaker John Boehner remains optimistic that several bills on immigration reform/border security that were passed by the House's Judiciary Committee will move forward in 2014. Boehner also hinted that he

may even allow votes on four of the measures. Stay tuned.

5. Filipino Scientist Reaps Rewards of Accidental Discovery

World-renowned Filipino scientific researcher Dr. Alfredo Galvez visited Hawaii last September to discuss his groundbreaking research on a natural soy peptide called Lunasin which has been shown to block cancer cells and essentially turn "off" the body's bad genes and turn "on" its good genes. In other words, it makes cells less receptive to disease.

Hailing from the small town of San Fernando, La Union, in the Ilocos region, Galvez is considered THE pioneer in the field of epigenetics, a very new field of science which only recently has gained acceptance from the broader scientific community. Galvez's discovery is a game changer in the areas of disease control and nutritional health. To date, over 50 published papers from more than 25 research institutions have documented Lunasin's multiple health benefits. Its enormous potential has opened the door to a broad range of dramatic health benefits.

4. Filipino Community Mourns the Passing of Jorge G. Camara, M.D.

Hawaii lost a valued member of its ohana when Dr. Jorge Camara passed away last August. News of his death reverberated throughout the Filipino community, shocking and saddening scores of patients, colleagues and others whom he had come into contact with.

The soft-spoken Camara was a giant among his peers in the medical community. He will be remembered as top-notch ophthalmologist who continually pioneered new surgical procedures and ophthalmic plastic and reconstructive surgery that restored the gift of sight to those who came under his care—regardless of whether or not he or she was able to pay. Camara was also widely-recognized for his humanitarian work with the Aloha Medical Mission (AMM). He was the embodiment of Noblesse Oblige—for whom much is given, much more is expected.

3. Aftermath of Legalizing Gay Marriages in Hawaii

Six homosexual couples officially tied the knot shortly after midnight on December 2, 2013 in ceremonies held at the Sheraton Waikiki. And with that began a new era in Hawaii's history, as the Aloha State became the 15th state in the union to officially legalize gay marriages.

As expected, the gay marriage debate sharply divided the community and marathon hearings were held over several days, with supporters and opponents passionately speaking on Senate Bill 1. Filipinos were among those who actively testified on the controversial measure. They had differing opinions on the issue—some truly respect gays and lesbians in the community, while others feel that same sex marriages do not conform to family values. In the end, both the State House and Senate passed the bill by votes of 30-19-2 and 19-4-2, respectively. The consequences of allowing gays to wed in Hawaii, if any, will unveil itself in the coming months.

2. PMAH Extends Helping Hand to Typhoon Victims

In mid-December, a small group of about 40 doctors and other medical professionals from the Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii's (PMAH) Ohana Medical Mission traveled to the Central Visayas to provide free medical services for victims of natural disasters. Thanks to contributions from many generous donors, the Ohana Medical Mission also

distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of medications, medical supplies and relief goods. Over a five-day period, mission volunteers treated more than 6,000 typhoon survivors.

The Ohana Medical Mission was the first and largest medical/relief mission by an organization from Hawaii to the typhoon-devastated areas in Tacloban, Leyte and Northern Cebu. For many of the volunteers, it was one of their most challenging and intense missions ever—but also one of the most rewarding.

1. Natural Disasters Hit Philippines

Super Typhoon Haiyan, a Category 5 storm with winds of up to 195 mph, slammed into the Central Visayas on November 8. The timing of Haiyan (known in the Philippines as Yolanda) could not have been worse, particularly for the Visayan region, which was still recovering from the powerful 7.1 magnitude quake that rocked the area last month and caused substantial damage

to buildings and infrastructure.

Once again, members of various Filipino organizations swiftly mobilized their efforts to help their kababayans. The FilCom Center, Filipino Chamber of Commerce, Oahu Filipino Community Council, the Congress of Visayan Organizations and the Philippine Consulate General held donation drives and sponsored fundraising concerts. A tremendous outpouring of support also came from the private sector, namely businesses which offered free services to help locals get in touch with affected family members. Schools, clubs and other civic organizations also did their part to help victims thousands of miles away.

Rebuilding is continuing in hard hit areas. This past week, Leyte officials prepared a mass burial for nearly 1,000 victims—eight weeks after the disaster struck. As of January 4, 2014, the number of people who died and are missing in wake of the typhoon, has reached almost 8,000.

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

AARP Gears Up for 2014 Legislative Session

AARP Hawaii is asking members and volunteers to begin lobby state lawmakers to increase funding for programs and services for those age 50 and over in Hawaii.

A planning meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2014

at AARP's offices at 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 1920 from 10 am to 12 noon. To RSVP, please call 545-6005.

"We know that people want to get involved but may not know what to do. To help people get involved, AARP is holding a meeting that will ex-

plain the secrets of getting help from legislators. This effort kicks off with a meeting for people who want to make a difference in the Hawaii community," says Steve Tam, AARP's director of advocacy.

AARP Hawaii is a non-profit, nonpartisan member-

ship organization that works to influence positive change and improve the lives of seniors and the elderly in Hawaii. The organization estimates that by the year 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older. The organization fights for issues that include

the high cost of long-term care and access to affordable, quality health care for all generations. AARP also serves as a reliable information source on issues critical to older Americans and provides tools needed to save for retirement and protect assets.

City Urges Public to Recycle Christmas Trees

The City's Department of Environmental Services (ENV) is reminding Oahu residents to recycle their Christmas trees after the holidays.

Households with City collection should place bare trees—without flocking, ornaments and tinsel—on the curbside as part of their normal green waste pickup. The City provides curbside green waste collection to more than

160,000 homes on Oahu.

For those with green carts, the tree has to fit inside the cart with the lid closed. To fit properly, trees may have to be cut into lengths up to three feet and branches trimmed to ensure that it will fall freely from the cart during collection.

For households on manual collection, cut the tree into lengths up to three feet, bundle and place at the curb on refuse day. If cutting the tree is a

bother, residents can drop it off whole at the nearest Refuse Convenience Center.

For residents who live in condos and/or apartments, trees may be dropped off at any Refuse Convenience Center or directly to the composting facility – there is no tip fee charged for Christmas trees over the holidays, courtesy of the City.

For more information, go online to www.opala.org and click on "Holiday Trash Tips."

State Legislature Convenes January 15

The 28th State Legislature is scheduled to convene on Wednesday, January 15, 2014 at the Hawaii State Capital. The session adjourns on May 1st.

House Minority Leader Rep. Gene Ward has invited constituents for opening day refreshments and conversation in his office in Room 318 at 12 noon.

Most lawmakers say the state's economic outlook is not as bleak as in recent years, when sizable budget deficits forced cutbacks in programs and limited spending. Nevertheless, there will be challenges such as reducing future debt, the environment, minimum wage and other tough issues.

To track the status of bills and resolutions, go online to: www.capitol.hawaii.gov.

OPINION (from page 3, TIME...)

to being corrupt. If you can't get things done and have way too many reasons as to why things can't be done then there is a problem in your leadership. You are a failure.

The Palace spokesmen more often than not would always justify their actions. Recently, Abigail Valte said the palace has "no magic wand" to solve the electricity problems

of this country. Wow! The magic wand is actually the power Malacañang has to solve the problem Ms. Valte – to get professional consultants, to stop the politicking of these power groups and to get in the nitty gritty details of the problem in order to analyze, evaluate and resolve it. Now, if that were La Gloria talking, she would surely have an intelli-

gent answer and will assure the people that things will work out fine. The humility she had during her time was a gift. She also had a big heart which P-Noy and his people don't have. They are big, vindictive and heartless bullies.

Anyway, do you know that since assuming the Presidency in 2010, Aquino approved a total of P521.88 billion-worth of projects. Most of these projects are in the hands of the DPWH and DOTC. Sad to say, there are still projects that have not started while others have not been completed.

In September last year, Rene Santiago, president of the consultancy firm Bellwether Advisory Inc., noted the DOTC has not yet implemented any major PPP project, considering how Metro Manila badly needs new infrastructure to address the traffic problem. Bidding for major infrastructure projects under the DOTC such as the LRT-1 Cavite extension project, Mactan Cebu international airport expansion project, and the automated fare collection system (AFCS) for the LRT-MRT have been delayed. Funds are available but the

DOTC officials are not able to execute any of the major infrastructure projects.

The DPWH on the other hand has also fallen short of their project completion targets. As a matter of fact, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), the department has several unfinished drainage projects in Metro Manila which could have contributed to the flooding in the Metro.

Another project that needs urgent attention is the AFP Modernization Program. More than P85 billion is needed for the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the next four years. This will cover a total of 24 projects in line with the new Armed Forces Modernization Law. Let us observe. The AFP seems to be quiet on the home front these days. Are they brewing up something special?

In Agriculture, over P300 million could have been saved from spending irregularities on agricultural infrastructure projects and could have helped farmers in more than four provinces, according to the Commission on Audit after it

audited the Department of Agrarian Reform. COA said slow spending has also caused the failure of DAR to implement 27 farm-to-market roads, potable water systems, trainings, post-harvest facilities and communal irrigation projects. Our wise politicians have used the Department of Agriculture in their corrupt deals. This sleeping giant needs total revamp in personnel and systems. The dark façade of its building just gives me the creeps.

So what else can we expect from the power-hungry leaders of this ill-fated country? Tragedies are a common thing and unsolved crimes continue to be ignored. And we, as a people have not achieved full maturation in dealing with political matters. We still lack the political will to stand and act in accordance to what we believe is right and just.

P-Noy's 'tuwid na daan' is a long and arduous path. And in his last two minutes in the "court", will he still be able to make that 3-point shot to hit the mark and leave a legacy to the country? **A b a n g a n !** (www.philstar.com)

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LEGAL GUIDE

Divorce Philippine Style



By Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tipon

When it comes to divorce, who can beat the Philippines as the most hypocritical country on earth? The Philippines remains the only country on this planet which does not have a divorce law. Even Italy where the Roman Catholic pope lives allows divorce. Ay lastima Filipinas, mas papista que el mismo papa. Yet a Filipino citizen can get a divorce by going abroad or having his spouse get one abroad.

The Family Code (signed by Corazon Aquino as Executive Order No. 209 on July 6, 1987 when she ruled the country as a dictator between the time she took the oath of office and the adoption of a new Constitution) does not contain any provision on divorce. But a Filipino citizen can go to a Philippine court to have his

foreign divorce or his spouse's foreign divorce recognized.

This is not a do-it-yourself thing. Even a number of Filipino lawyers do not know how to do it as exemplified by a Filipino who hired a lawyer to do it but he turned out to be "ineffective" (the politically correct word for "incompetent"). As a result, the case that would have been a slam dunk fell outside the ring.

Here is the story. Two Filipino citizens were married in the Philippines. The wife came to the United States, became a naturalized American citizen, started dating a U.S. citizen, divorced the Filipino husband, and married the U.S. citizen.

What happens to the cuckolded husband in the Philippines? Under the Cory Family Code, he is considered still married to his wife even though they are divorced. *Pobrecito!*

Suppose the husband finds another woman and wants to marry her?

The marriage license clerk will refuse to issue one because he does not have proof of the valid termination of his marriage – like a death certifi-

cate of his spouse or decree of annulment of his marriage.

A Filipino husband hired a lawyer who filed a petition for authority to remarry invoking Article 26, Paragraph 2 of the Cory Family Code providing:

"Where a marriage between a Filipino citizen and a foreigner is validly celebrated and a divorce is thereafter validly obtained abroad by the alien spouse capacitating him or her to remarry, the Filipino spouse shall have capacity to remarry under Philippine law."

The Philippine Supreme Court observed that on its face this provision was not applicable to this case because it applies only to a situation where at the time of the first marriage the parties are a Filipino citizen and a foreigner, but in this case they were both Filipino citizens.

However, taking into consideration the legislative intent and applying the rule of reason, this provision should be interpreted to include cases involving parties who, at the time of the celebration of the marriage were Filipino citizens, but later on, one of them

becomes naturalized as a foreign citizen and obtains a divorce decree. The Filipino spouse should likewise be allowed to remarry as if the other party were a foreigner at the time of the solemnization of the marriage. To rule otherwise would be to sanction absurdity and injustice. The reckoning point is not the citizenship of the parties at the time of the celebration of the marriage, but their citizenship at the time a valid divorce is obtained abroad by the alien spouse capacitating the latter to remarry.

However, the court said that there was insufficient evidence to support the petition because the petitioner's lawyer did not present evidence that the petitioner's former wife had naturalized as an American citizen, that she had obtained a divorce decree in conformity with a foreign law, and did not submit a copy of the foreign law. *Republic v. Orbecido*, G.R. No. 154380, Oct. 5, 2005.

We had lunch with Justice Quisumbing, a fraternity

brother (Alpha Phi Beta), shortly after he wrote this opinion and commended him for his sagacity and practicality. However, we suggested that the Cory Family Code provision should be treated as self-executing in that there should be no need for a Filipino divorcee to incur expenses to file a petition for recognition of a foreign divorce.

Filipino legislators should stop this shameful hypocrisy and morbid fear of the Roman Catholic Church. Enact a divorce law. Filipino Catholics will support you. I guarantee it. Pope Francis will not excommunicate you. He will simply say, as he said of gays, "Who am I to judge?"

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

SOCIAL SECURITY UPDATE

Ring in the New Year With a COLA

By Jane Yamamoto-Burigsay

Many people ring in the new year with champagne. For others, like those people who receive Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), they will ring in 2014 with a COLA. This year, more than 60 million Americans are receiving a 1.5 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) in their monthly benefit payment.

The 1.5 percent COLA begins with increased benefits for more than 57 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2014 and payments to more than 8 million SSI recip-

ients in late December 2013.

The estimated average monthly Social Security payment to a retired worker is \$1,294 (in 2014), up from \$1,275 (in 2013). The average monthly Social Security disability payment for an individual is \$1,148 (in 2014), up from \$1,131 (in 2013). The basic monthly federal payment for SSI is \$721 (in 2014), up from \$710 (in 2013).

Other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security payroll tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$117,000, up from \$113,700. Of the estimated 165 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2014, about

10 million will pay higher taxes as a result of the increase in the taxable maximum.

The amount of earnings needed for one credit of Social Security coverage has gone up as well, but all workers can still earn up to four credits in a year. In 2014, a worker earns a credit after earning \$1,200. In 2013, one credit of coverage was \$1,160. It takes 40 credits to be fully insured for retirement benefits.

Information about Medicare changes for 2014 is available online at www.medicare.gov. Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice to learn more about the COLA and other Social Security changes in 2014.

From everyone at Social Security, have a Happy New Year!

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TRAVEL



Fiesta Islands: Come Celebrate With Us!

By JVM Francisco

MANILA, Philippines - There are 627 folk festivals in the Philippines today. That means, on the average, there is at least one festival happening somewhere in the country every single day.

To say Filipinos love to celebrate is an understatement. We celebrate to honor our patron saints, to give thanks for a good harvest, to commemorate the town's founding anniversary, and practically any other religious or secular milestone. The term Fiesta Islands describing the Philippines is therefore not just promotions hype from the Department of Tourism. Add to that the *joie de vivre* Filipinos are known for and we have fiestas like no other.

The festival season kicks off to a rousing start in January with three of the country's biggest and best attended festivals, all in honor of the Sto. Niño (Infant Jesus), the Kalibo Ati-Atihan Festival, the Sinulog Festival of Cebu and the Iloilo Dinagyang Festival.

The oldest of the three festivals is the Ati-Atihan, which dates back to the 13th century when a group of Malay *datus* (chieftains) from Borneo were granted settlement in the island of Panay by the native Ati people. It is said that in exchange for land, the *datus* by Datu Puti gave Ati chieftain Marikudo a golden *salakot* (hat), brass basins, jewelry and bales of cloth. Both peoples celebrated the land barter with merrymaking and festivities.

The commemoration of the land barter was subsequently infused with a religious flavor when the Spaniards introduced Christianity and added the tribute to the Sto. Niño to the festivities.

The Ati-Atihan festival, which will culminate this year on Jan. 19 with the a street dance parade, is without doubt the most raucous in the country. The celebration reaches fever pitch during the third week of January with unbridled merrymaking and lots of religious processions, community dancing and the street dance competition.

Kalibo is not as big as Cebu or Iloilo so there is a sense of intimacy to the festivities. My favorite is the community dance held in an open court behind the city hall where anyone can participate amidst booths selling beer and fresh oysters. Local residents and tourists link up into a snakelike chain weaving through throngs of other human chains to the beat of local bands. It doesn't matter which group you join, it's great fun as long as you're able to stand the ear-splitting music some would call it noise! and contact with thousands of sweating, dancing/moving bodies.

During the last three days of celebration, residents together with local and foreign tourists dance in the streets, accompanied by rhythmic drumbeats and shouting the now famous *Hala bira!* and *Viva Sto. Niño!* It is common practice for revelers to paint their faces with soot and wear outlandish headdresses as a tribute to the native Atis.

The festival culminates



with a religious procession followed by the street dance competition participated in by school and barangay groups clad in the most colorful costumes and headdresses. The competition is a dizzying panorama of color, movement and some of the most intricate dance steps and formations.

Simultaneous with the Kalibo Ati-Atihan is the country's biggest folk and religious festival, the Sinulog of Cebu. Although the worship of the Sto. Niño through a prayer-dance has been a centuries-old practice, the street dance parade and *mardi gras* started only in 1981 as a local government initiative.

It was named Sinulog from the Visayan word *sulog* (water current) characterizing the 2-step forward, 1-step backward worship dance. Since then, the festivities have expanded to a month-long series of events that includes exhibitions, arts and sports competitions, parties, beauty pageants and cultural shows.

The magnitude of the religious celebration makes it the biggest cultural and tourism event in the city. Over 200,000 local and foreign tourists descend upon Cebu, with airlines and hotels booked solid, and

shopping malls and restaurants filled to over-capacity during the last three days of the festivities.

Based on creative industry studies commissioned by the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the P150 million spent by the public and private sectors on all the festival events during the month-long period generate around P5.7 billion worth of economic activities and revenues for the city.

There are two highlights of the festival, the Jan. 18 fluvial and street processions attended by thousands of Sto. Niño devotees and the Jan. 19 dance parade and competition.

The grand parade the city mounts is comparable to none in the Philippines. Around 50 groups from the Visayas and Mindanao participate in the *mardi gras* around the city, culminating in a final presentation at the Cebu Sports Complex. They compete under one of two categories, the Sinulog-based category or the free interpretation category which allows them more freedom with the music and movements. The day ends with a grand production and fireworks displays in several parts of the city.

A week after the Ati-Ati-

han and Sinulog festivals, Iloilo City takes the spotlight with the Dinagyang Festival. Established in 1969 as a veneration of the Sto. Niño, the festival has now also evolved into a month-long celebration that includes street dance competitions, beauty contests, pyrolympics, sports events, exhibitions, food festivals, street parties and other merrymaking activities.

The climax of the festival is the Dinagyang Ati Contest which takes place this year on Jan. 26. Around 12 groups called *tribus* (tribes) representing various communities and schools participate in the dance showdown.

The Dinagyang dance style is quite distinct from those of other festivals in the country. While it is patterned after the *ati* movements, the dance has evolved a unique style that mesmerizes the audience for its energy, crispness and precision. The production values are equally stunning, with impressive sets and props, colorful costumes and heart-thumping percussion music.

The success of these three festivals lies not only in the local residents' deep devotion to the Sto. Niño but in the manner by which there is a confluence of support from and participation of the local government, the private sector, the Department of Tourism, the business community and the educational institutions.

The professional planning and organization provided by the Kalibo Sto. Niño Ati-Atihan Foundation, the Sinulog Foundation and the Iloilo Dinagyang Foundation are also keys to the success of the festivals and have provided the continuity to the annual celebration beyond the politics of the times.

So if you've never experienced the Ati-Atihan, Sinulog or Dinagyang, now is the time to head over to Kalibo, Cebu and Iloilo for three unique, exciting and unforgettable fiestas that celebrate the Filipino spirit, faith and heritage.

We guarantee you'll never think of festivals the same way again after you've experienced festivals in our islands! (www.philstar.com)

HEALTH & FAMILY

Your 2014 Guide to Healthy Living

AN APPLE A DAY

By Tyrone M. Reyes, M.D.

You've been making health decisions all your life for yourself and for your family. I'm sure that for the new year, you are eager to maintain your health and enjoy life in the most vibrant, vigorous way possible. Study after study has shown that simple lifestyle choices — how active you are, what you eat, how much sleep you get — all have an enormous impact on your health.

Today's article features advice towards a longer and healthier life. It's a busy person's guide to the lifestyle choices you need to make to ensure you stay healthy and strong for years to come. You can reduce your risk for many degenerative diseases and chronic conditions by following the advice in today's column.

■ EAT MEDITERRANEAN.

Although countless observational studies have pointed to the health benefits of specific foods or nutrients, rarely have entire eating regimens undergone close scientific scrutiny. A notable exception is the Mediterranean diet, a term coined to describe the traditional eating pattern of people living in the region bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean diet consists mostly of plant foods (fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, nuts, and seeds); animal protein consumed chiefly in the forms of fish and poultry; olive oil as the principal fat; and wine taken with meals (see figure for Mediterranean diet pyramid).

Although the diet was a product of the foods easily cultivated or gathered in the region centuries ago, modern research confirms its unintentional wisdom. Multiple compounds in plant foods appear as antioxidants, slowing the aging process and hindering the development of cancer and heart disease. By slowing digestion,

the fiber in whole grain, legumes, and fruits can help keep blood sugar under control; fiber also creates a feeling of fullness, which may help satisfy appetite. The monounsaturated fats in olive oil, nuts, and fish can have anti-inflammatory effects, which may help stave off heart disease and many other conditions. Perhaps, most important to its success is that Mediterranean-style eating excludes many foods common to cause health problems: saturated fat from animal source, trans fat, and refined carbohydrates.

■ WATCH YOUR WEIGHT.

Excess body weight increases your risk for more than 50 different health problems. These conditions include the leading causes of death — heart disease, stroke, breast cancer, and diabetes — as well as less serious ailments such as arthritic knees and gallstones.

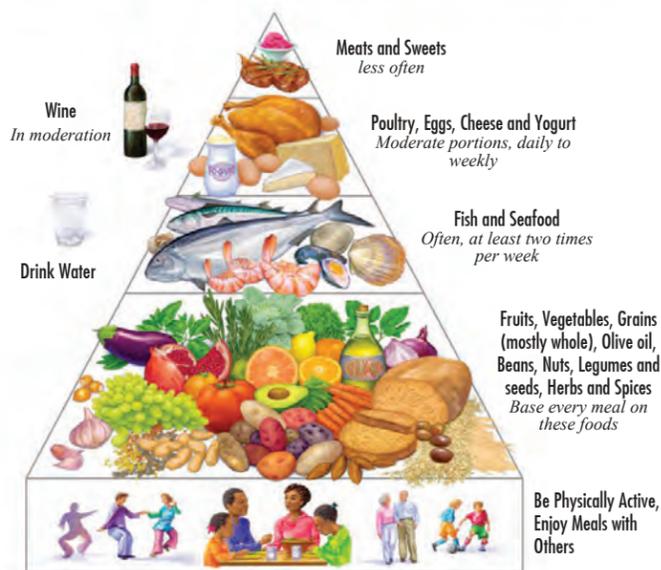
A Harvard study found that obesity increases the risk of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and gallstones. Among people who were overweight or obese, there was a direct relationship between Body Mass Index (BMI) and the risk of acquiring a disease: The higher the BMI, the higher the likelihood of disease.

Fat distribution also plays a role in health risk. Visceral fat — that is, fat in the abdominal area that serves as padding between organs — is metabolically active, producing substances that spur inflammation and increase insulin resistance. The best way to lose excess weight is to consume fewer calories and to indulge in a regular exercise program.

■ LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE.

Every new year, we toast to good health for good reason. Moderate drinking has been associated with reduced risk for heart disease and death from all causes. Alcohol of any kind increases HDL (good) cholesterol, improves insulin sensitivity, and reduces inflammation. Wine, in particular,

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



contains small amounts of plant substances called flavonoids that have demonstrated anti-inflammatory and anticancer activity in laboratory experiments.

Men are advised not to exceed two drinks a day; in women, only once a day. In women, the benefits of alcohol vanish with a second drink. (A standard drink is shown in the accompanying figure.) At more than the recommended limits, you increase your risk of cancers of the breast (in women), head and neck, and digestive system; hypertension; stroke; and car accidents. At higher levels of consumption, the risk of pancreatic and liver diseases and neurological disorders rises.

■ DON'T SMOKE. If you smoke, quit. There are few things you can do that will have such immediate and lasting benefits as giving up cigarettes. In 20 minutes, your heart rate will fall. By tomorrow, you'll have cleared the excess carbon monoxide from your blood. Within months, you'll be breathing more easily and coughing much less. Over the years, your risk for lung cancer, stroke, and heart disease will have dropped by at least half. In 15 years, you'll have erased your excess risk for heart disease.

Separate yourself from smokers. Inhaling another person's smoke is also emerging as a weaker, but still noteworthy, risk factor. If you're a non-

smoker, become a nag. Let the smokers in your circle of friends and family know that you would like them to quit, and encourage them in their efforts. Be patient. Only four percent to seven percent of smokers are able to quit on any attempt without aids like nicotine replacement products or medical help, and only one-quarter to one-third who use any quit-smoking medicine, stay smoke-free for more than six months. It usually takes many attempts before a person is successful at quitting.

■ KEEP MOVING. Lack of physical activity is an independent risk factor for nearly all of the diseases that are most likely to kill or disable you. In the long-running Framingham Heart Study, sedentary subjects died a year and a half earlier than those who were moderately active. Those who were very active enjoyed three and a half more years than their sedentary counterparts.

Regular moderate exercise can help to protect you against

the following problems: heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, arthritis, accidents, depression and anxiety, and infections.

■ GET ENOUGH SLEEP.

Medical evidence suggests that for optimum health and function, the average adult should get seven to nine hours of sleep daily. But many people regularly fall short of that goal. And as your sleep debt mounts, the health consequences increase, putting you at growing risk for weight gain, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and memory loss.

In some cases, sleep debt results from insomnia or other underlying conditions that may require medical attention. But most sleep debt comes from burning the candles at both ends — consistently failing to get to bed on time and to stay there until you've slept enough. Fortunately, sleep doesn't charge interest on the unpaid balance, or even demand a one-for-one repayment. It may take some work, but you can repay even a chronic, longstanding sleep debt.

■ USE SUPPLEMENTS SELECTIVELY.

It was once believed that it was possible to compensate for dietary deficiencies by simply popping a multivitamin pill every day. But research suggests that multivitamins may not be all they're cracked up to be.

In 2006, the US Natural Institutes of Health said there wasn't enough evidence for a recommendation about taking multivitamins. There's also

(continued on page 10)

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PHILIPPINE NEWS

**Phil's Liter of Light Campaign
 Bags Int'l Award**

by Pia Lee-Brago
 Thursday, January 3, 2014

MANILA, Philippines - A Filipino was recently awarded the Sustainia Community Award in Copenhagen, Denmark for his "Liter of Light" (Isang Litrong Liwanag) initiative in the Philippines.

The Sustainia Award is an annual international award given to a solution, technology or project with a significant potential to help build a more sustainable future.

Illac Diaz, a Humphrey Fellowship alumnus in the United States, has founded the MyShelter Foundation, which he used to launch the Liter of Light campaign.

The campaign is a grassroots solar movement that aims to empower the most under-resourced communities through the creation of livelihood programs.

The group trains people from low-income regions to assemble locally sourced, sustainable and affordable solar products.

The campaign is named after a plastic bottle filled with a liter of water and a small amount of bleach. With each bottle inserted through the roof of a house, sunlight, with an intensity of a 55-watt bulb, is refracted.

Volunteers and local entrepreneurs using simple tools and basic carpentry skills can light up their communities for just \$2 per solar bottle, according to the Sustainia Guide to 100 Sustainable Solutions.



Low-income communities benefit from the solar bottle lights that provide an innovative minimal cost and carbon-free solution

The nighttime upgrade with a solar panel retails in foreign markets at \$10. Built by grassroots entrepreneurs and women's groups in the Philippines, the cost of finished goods are reduced by 40 percent.

The bulbs are useful to hundreds of millions of families that live in informal housing settlements and have only small windows that limit the amount of sunlight entering their homes.

Liter of Light has grown from one home in Laguna to 350,000 lights in 10 countries in just 20 months. Three hundred and seventy grassroots solar entrepreneurs have been trained at that time, with each entrepreneur servicing an average of 1,100 homes per year. The campaign hopes to reach one million homes by 2015.

The campaign went along the theme of the 2013 Humphrey Fellowship Global Leadership Forum, "Confronting Global Challenges: A Focus on Climate Change." (www.philstar.com)

HEALTH & FAMILY (from page 9, YOUR 2014...)

been little or no evidence of protection against cardiovascular disease or cancers from a number of individual vitamin supplements, including vitamin E, vitamin C, beta carotene, and the B vitamin trio — B6, B12, and folic acid.

Recent research suggests that potential harm has been added to the mix. In 2008, a Cochrane Collaboration review found that low-risk people in trials for a host of diseases who were given supplements of vitamin A, vitamin E, and beta-carotene had a slightly higher death rate. And there's some evidence that excess folic acid (the synthetic version of folate, a vitamin found abundantly in vegetables, fruits, and grains) may be contributing to an uptick in colon polyps. Both observations, though, warrant further study.

Experts agree that the best way to get the nutrients we need is through food. It is likely that what counts is the synergistic interaction of these nutrients — which might also help explain why trials of single nutrients don't pan out.

However, it may be too soon to draw the line on all supplements. Adequate calcium and vitamin D are essential in preserving bone density. Although you can get the recommended 1,200 mg calcium requirement in your diet, studies suggest that most women do not. It is possible to get the recommended vitamin D intakes (400 IU for women ages 51 to 70; 600 IU for women ages 71 and older) through diet or sun exposure. But many health experts now recommend getting 1,000 IU, which is harder to do without taking supplements. Consult your doctor about the appropriate supplementation for you.

Start the year right by following the seven steps discussed in today's article to a longer and healthier life. Discover how you can feel better, look better, and live longer in these seven easy steps.

Have a healthy new year!
 (www.philstar.com)

PHILIPPINE NEWS

Probers Looking at SARO Big Fish

by Edu Punay
Tuesday, January 7, 2014

MANILA, Philippines - The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is looking into the possible involvement of higher officials in a syndicate behind the falsification of special allotment release orders (SAROs).

"The investigators are not ruling out the involvement of higher officials in the SARO scam. So far though, the same has not been established yet," Justice Secretary Leila de Lima said in a text message.

De Lima earlier confirmed that Budget Undersecretary

Mario Relampagos is among those being investigated by the NBI since some of his staff, including his secretary, driver and janitor, were tagged as members of the syndicate.

De Lima said Relampagos has submitted a statement to the NBI, which is under her office's administrative supervision.

She refused to reveal details of the statement, but a source in the bureau said Relampagos denied any involvement in the scam.

De Lima said Relampagos would "most probably" be invited for questioning.

The NBI earlier verified



Justice Secretary Leila de Lima

that the SAROs for two projects in Cagayan and Aklan provinces worth P161 million and P77 million, respectively, were falsified.

De Lima said initial investigation showed that a DBM personnel led by a certain

"supremo," and staff of several congressmen were involved in the racket.

She said evidence also pointed to a consultant of Aklan Rep. Teodoro Haresco as the source of the two fake SAROs. Haresco was a former party-list representative.

But she said there has been no indication at this point that the congressmen, whose staff had been tagged in the scam, were involved.

"The NBI only established so far involvement of congressional staff," she said.

De Lima has given the NBI until end of this month to complete the probe and submit a report.

She said some of those being investigated are being

eyed as state witnesses.

Except for differences in font styles, the fake SAROs have the same SARO numbers, codes, amount of money, dates and name of signatories compared with the authentic ones.

The fake SAROs were discovered last November at the height of the investigation into the congressional pork barrel fund scam in which businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles was tagged as the mastermind.

Napoles allegedly used nonexistent foundations to divert Priority Development Assistance Fund and Malampaya funds with the help of several lawmakers and implementing government agencies.

(www.philstar.com)

Singson: Reconstruction Won't Be Completed Within Noy's Term

by Louis Bacani
Monday, January 6, 2014

MANILA, Philippines - The reconstruction efforts including the shelter programs in the areas devastated by Super Typhoon "Yolanda" won't be finished by 2016, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said Monday.

"We are telling you it cannot be done in two years with this scale of the devastation there," DPWH Sec. Rogelio Singson said at a televised press briefing in Malacañang.

Singson said the government is doing its best in constructing the shelters for the typhoon victims, reporting



President Benigno S. Aquino III with Rep. Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (L), Tacloban City Mayor Alfred Romualdez and Governor Dominic Petilla (R) inspect bunkhouse units Sunday (December 22). Marcelino Pascua/Presidential Communications Operations Office

that 126 of 222 bunkhouses to be built in the affected municipalities have been completed.

Around 6,000 families were also eyed to be transferred by the end of this month.

However, Singson said the construction has been sus-

pended and the number of families to be accommodated by the completed bunkhouses will be reduced after the shelters were reconfigured.

Originally, one bunkhouse costs P83,017 and has 24 rooms or units that will each

accommodate a single family of three to four. But according to Singson, international experts and agencies had commented that one room unit is too tight.

"Instead of 24 families in a bunkhouse, we're reducing them to 12 families. So now, one family will occupy a bigger unit," Singson said, adding that one bunkhouse will now cost P78,587.

"One family can now occupy not just 8.64 square meters but 17.28 square meters. And that is already acceptable to international standards," Singson said.

Singson added that the adjustments in the designs would also address the concerns pointed out by the international experts on space, ventilation, drainage and security.

"All experts are onground. I have met at least 10 from different UN organizations giving their suggestions and so we're adapting. We've been constructing bunkhouses long before they arrived," Singson said.

The public works chief said one to two more months will be needed to meet the adjustments and redesigning for all 222 bunkhouses.

(www.philstar.com)

DOH official: 'Yolanda' Victims Burials Completed in Leyte

by Camille Diola
Monday, January 6, 2014

MANILA, Philippines -A health official said that the mass burial for thousands of victims of Super typhoon Yolanda in Leyte has been completed.

In an interview with Bombo Radyo, Health Undersecretary Janet Garin said the

Department of Health, the National Bureau of Investigation and local government units have met President Benigno Aquino III's Monday deadline to complete the burial activities in the province.

According to the state report, the number of individuals still missing stood at 1,785 as of posting time.

Government earned criti-

cisms for supposed ineptness in gathering and burying the 1,400 remains left scattered in disaster zones.

Survivors and relief volunteers have had to endure the stench from the decaying bodies many of which were trapped under rubble.

The death toll from the calamity climbed to 6,166 as of Friday. (www.philstar.com)



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MAINLAND NEWS

A Look at What 2014 May Hold for Small Businesses

by Joyce M. Rosenberg (AP)
Thursday, January 3, 2014

NEW YORK - What stresses small business owners the most? Our conversations with them and the research we come across suggest it's a lack of clarity. Well, there's no small business crystal ball — at least one we are aware of — but if one existed, here's a look at what it might reveal for 2014:

Help From Washington?

Look for a more conciliatory attitude in Congress. Lawmakers' collaboration on a budget deal in December is a sign that they'll cooperate on issues affecting small business, including tax reform, says Barbara Kasoff, president of Women Impacting Public Policy, a group that advocates for women and minorities in business. The deadlock over the budget and government shutdown in 2013 hurt small businesses including federal contractors.

The safest bet? An increase in a tax code provision that allows businesses to deduct up-front rather than depreciate the cost of equipment like vehicles, computers and machinery. Without action by Congress, the 2014 deduction is \$25,000, down from \$500,000 in 2013. With many companies still struggling and congressional elections in November, lawmakers may boost it.

Revenue Strains

A tepid economic recovery will continue to frustrate small-company owners, says Susan Woodward, an economist with Sand Hill Econometrics in Menlo Park, Calif. Small retailers are struggling

even as consumers spend more. Growth in online shopping and a tendency for people to patronize stores owned by big companies (choosing Starbucks rather than the local coffee shop, for example) will continue to be a challenge.

Small businesses shouldn't expect goldmines from government contracting. Agencies will spend carefully. Some small federal contractors reported even before the \$85 billion in spending cuts in 2013 that agencies had been cutting back. Contractors will prospect for business with companies to make up for budget cuts in 2013 and to diversify their revenue streams.

A sustained surge in construction of single-family homes could be a game changer, Woodward says. Growth in housing spills over to manufacturers, retailers and other businesses.

Labor Market Challenges

Expect small businesses to struggle to find skilled workers for jobs like high-tech manufacturing. It's not a new problem. Surveys throughout 2013, including monthly reports from the National Federation of Independent Business, showed that owners had positions they couldn't fill.

The situation may change if employers of all sizes keep adding jobs at the stronger pace of the second half of 2013, says Peter Cappelli, a professor of human resources management at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. A shrinking pool of workers would force small businesses to train new hires, something many have been reluctant to do.

Health care may become a recruiting issue. Owners who



In this Saturday, Nov. 24, 2012, file photo, Ping's Tibet shop owner Ping Wu Longval, left, in Cotton Exchange shopping center, helps local customer Sherry Rhodes with her shopping in Wilmington, N.C., as Rhodes is looking for ideas for wedding anniversary gifts for her husband. The Associated Press takes a look at what 2014 may hold for small businesses. (AP Photo/Wilmington Star-News, Jeff Janowski, File)

say they can't afford to buy insurance under the health care law could find it harder to attract top talent.

Finding Capital

Companies hoping to borrow from a bank or raise money on the Internet may get their wish.

Rules governing how companies solicit money from individual investors online may be completed after a long wait. The Securities and Exchange Commission published them in October, 10 months later than expected. Websites are already preparing for the day when the rules go into effect.

Banks are expected to continue gradually increasing their lending to small businesses. At the end of the third quarter, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. tallied \$284

billion in small business loans, up 2 percent from a year earlier. Banks are more likely to lend, particularly to the smallest businesses, if Congress doesn't get bogged down in budget battles and the stock market remains healthy, says Jeffrey Stibel, CEO of the credit rating company Dun & Bradstreet Credibility Corp.

Technology Trends

The number of small businesses that use cloud computing is likely to keep soaring, but owners may feel some pain as cloud providers start charging more. In 2013, 43 percent of small businesses used the cloud, storing data and software offsite and accessing them via the Internet. That's up from 5 percent in just three years, according to a survey by the advocacy group National Small Busi-

ness Association.

Cloud providers are starting to price their services like cable TV companies, says David Rosenbaum, president of Real-Time Computer Services, a technology services company in New York. Businesses get attractive introductory offers, but they're likely to pay much more in the future, especially if they decide to move their data elsewhere.

There's room for small businesses to expand into social media in 2014. More than a quarter don't use it at all, according to the NSBA. Companies will get more sophisticated in how they use it. They're starting to use social media tools that allow them to reach out to customers locally — even to customers walking past their stores, says Ramon Ray, a journalist who runs a website called smallbiztechnology.com.

Health Care

2014 will give business owners a chance to understand the complexities of the health care law. Insurance brokers and benefits consultants have said it would take a year of the law being in effect for owners to get a sense of its impact on their profits.

Many businesses avoided the law's requirements by renewing their 2013 policies before the year ended. They'll need to get up to speed before renewing in 2014. (www.philstar.com)

MoneyGram Names Winners of 2013 StarQuest, StarGazer Contest

Southern California residents Vanessa Bryan, Leon Guico, Ernie Marasigan and Virginia Puzon were selected as grand champions in the StarQuest Karaoke and StarGazer Ballroom Dancing competition held December 7, 2013.

Bryan received the Judges Favorite Award, while Guico was given the StarQuest Karaoke Grand Champion Award. Marasigan and Puzon were named the StarGazer Ballroom Dancing Grand Champions. All of the winners were awarded \$500 cash prizes.

The competition was sponsored by MoneyGram, a leading global money transfer and payment services company, and Filipino-American Media & Entertainment (FAME).



From left: MG Multi-Cultural Marketing Team Lead, Ivy Wisco, StarGazer Ballroom Dancing Grand Champion Virginia Puzon and Ernie Marasigan, MG Director of the Pacific Region, Mark Gorney

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LEGAL NOTES



By Reuben S. Seguritan

Supreme Court to Rule on CSPA Priority Date Retention

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case of *Mayorkas v. De Osorio* last December 10. The Court's decision is expected by June 2014 and will have far-reaching implications to derivative beneficiaries of family-based preference petitions.

Under immigration law, parents who are the principal beneficiaries of a family based preference petition can include their unmarried children under 21 as derivative beneficiaries. Family based preference petitions fall under four categories, namely, F1 (unmarried sons and daughters of U.S. citizens), F2A (spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents (LPRs), F2B (unmarried

sons and daughters of LPRs), F3 (married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens) and F4 (brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens).

There is a waiting period for a visa to become available because of the problem on visa backlog. The waiting period differs depending on the category and the country of chargeability; it can be decades for some countries such as Mexico and the Philippines. For example, the F4 category for the Philippines has a current priority date of July 1, 1990. Once a visa becomes available, the child who turns 21 years old "age-out" and can no longer join the parents as derivative beneficiaries. The Child Status Protection Act (CSPA) was enacted in 2002 to address this problem.

Under the CSPA, when a visa number becomes available, the amount of time the petition was pending before the

USCIS is deducted from the child's actual age. If the adjusted age of the child is under 21, the child may join the parents as derivative beneficiary. If not, the petition shall "automatically be converted to the appropriate category and the alien shall retain the original priority date issued upon receipt of the original petition."

This way the aged-out children won't have to go to the back of the line for a new family-based preference category. They will be credited for the lengthy period they already waited with their parents.

The case of *Mayorkas v. De Osorio* involves Cuellar de Osorio who was the primary beneficiary of an F3 petition of her U.S. citizen mother. Her son was thirteen years old when the petition was filed in May 1998. When a visa became available in November 2005, her son aged out and became ineligible for an immi-

grant visa. She filed for an F2B petition for her son in 2006 and requested that her son's 1998 priority be retained. The USCIS denied her request.

She appealed to the Ninth District Court which decided the case in her favor. The court ruled that the CSPA provides for the automatic conversion of the petition and priority date retention of all derivative beneficiaries of family based preference petitions. The Government appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Government contends that the language of the CSPA law is ambiguous and the decision of the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) in *Matter of Wang* 2009 should be given deference by the court. In that case, the BIA ruled that the automatic conversion of the petition to F2B and the retention of the priority date only applies to F2A petitions.

A bipartisan coalition of current and former U.S. Sena-

tors filed a legal brief with the Supreme Court last November 4 and explained that the language of the CSPA is clear; it benefits all derivative beneficiaries of family based preference petitions. It further stated that "Only through the broad coverage of all derivative beneficiaries could the CSPA effectively protect family unity and award credit for the years that families had waited." It went on to conclude that "Congress has enacted a law that is clear on its face; the agency must act to faithfully carry it out."

Once the Supreme Court resolves this case, it will finally put an end to the long-standing legal saga involving the CSPA provision allowing age-out children to retain their original priority dates.

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

Labor Secretary Stresses Importance of Long-Term Unemployment Benefits

At the end of 2013, Unemployment Insurance benefits expired for more than 1.3 million Americans. These included people who struggled economically after losing their jobs through no fault of their own, and now they will lose a critical lifeline. New Year's is usually a time of excitement and new beginnings, but for these people, it will be a time of desperation.

In a December 24 interview with the *Baltimore Sun*, and on a conference call three days later with two-dozen reporters from across the country, U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez said it would be "literally unprecedented" if Congress fails to renew the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program that provides benefits to long-term jobless Americans.

Perez said that Congress approved the program with broad bipartisan support in 2008, when the U.S. unemployment rate was 5.6 percent. The current unemployment rate is 7 percent.

"The hole that this Administration inherited in the Great Recession was a deep one. And when you're in a hole, you stop digging," Perez said. "We must maintain these emergency benefits in order to continue climbing our way back to a fully healthy economy."

Perez rejected arguments that unemployment benefits somehow act as a disincentive to the long-term unemployed when it comes to looking for work.

"The fact is, the opposite is true. Unemployment Insurance serves as a powerful incentive for people to keep searching for jobs, rather than

drop out of the labor force altogether."

Perez also noted that when Congress reconvened on January 6, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid introduced legislation to extend unemployment insurance and move it toward a vote.

"Congress can do the right thing by renewing this pro-



U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez

gram," says Perez. "It will help people who want to be employed. It will help families

keep going. It will help create economic growth for the nation."

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PHILIPPINE LANGUAGE



DAYASADAS
By Pacita Saludes

Baro A Tawen A Baro Pakinakem Baro A Plano Ken AR-ARAPAAP

Di maliklikan a t a l i a w e n t i nalikudan ken dagiti napalabas. Ket dagita ti pamuidan a mangirusat ti nawadwada a tan-awan no saan man a naaramid dagiti kinalkalikaguman iti napalabas.

No saan man a naaramid dagiti kalkalikaguman a naaramid ti napalabas siguraduen nga ikeddeng a

maitungpal iti masanguanan a dap-awan a dana iti tawen a masanguanan 2014. Nalidemman ti silaw iti nalikudan serken ti nawadwada a dalan . No ania ti namaginad iti napalabas, iwalin ken lipaten idaka-bayatan iti itatapog iti baro a dana a suroten iti Baro a tawen a mangitonda kenka kadagiti ar-arapaapem a di naaramid iti napalabas.

Baro a namnama ti awiten nga iserrek iti tawen 2014. Dagiti di naaramid iti napalabas kargaen a sitatalged iti baro a tawen a serken ket sigurado nga agballaigi dagiti kalikagum. Saan a pukawwen

ti namnama, umaddaang a sitatalged tapno agballaigika.

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maikadua a Bise ni – Froebel Garcia, Secretaria – ni Leta Bayudan, Corr/Secretary – Marlene Espiritu, Andrea Mendoza, Treas – Lilia Del Rosario, Auditor – Adrian Galvez, Pro-Emmie O. Anderson, Fely Cristobal Business Managers: Lerina S. Galvez, Dr. Aida Martin, Albina Gamponia, Sgt At Arms: Florencio Dagopion, John Espiritu, Gilbert Dayag, Advicers: Pacita C. Saludes, Roland & Edith Pascua, Espiritual Advicer – Rev. Jerry Saludez. Legal advicer – Melodie Aduja. Ni Atty Aduja ti mamagsapata kadakuada.

Adda ababa a Drama a

sagana ti AKA, Ag-Monologue- ni Angie Duque Phosay, Ag-daniw n– Leta Bayudan ken sal-sala iti Filipino ti mabuya. Kasta met dagiti tuktukar Filipino ti mangngegan ken kumpa-san dagiti sumasala.

Mabalangatanto dagiti mapili a rereyna iti daytoy a rabii. Ti Miss ken Mrs Gumil Hawaii ken Miss ken Mrs Annak ti Kailokuan iti America. Maawis amin dagiti naayat nga agbuybuya a kailokuan ken saan. Naragsak a Baro a Tawenyo Amin!

HAPPY NEW YEAR to Everyone!

PHILIPPINE NEWS

Military Starts Deployment of Troops in Spratlys

by Jaime Laude
Sunday, January 5, 2014

MANILA, Philippines - The military yesterday started its rotation of Air Force and naval contingents for deployments in Pag-Asa Island in the Spratlys. Originally scheduled be-

fore Christmas, the airmen were not immediately relieved by their counterparts at Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Command (AFP-Wescom) headquarters in Palawan due to the prevailing weather system hovering over the region for the entire month of December.

Kalayaan Mayor Eugenio Bito-onon Jr. confirmed the deployment of fresh troops in the island municipality.

Since the sea around the island is very rough, Wescom has started shuttling new Air Force troops to the island town using a Navy plane, giving the

islanders a chance to visit Palawan aboard the returning Navy aircraft.

Pag-Asa Island is located within the hotly contested Spratlys archipelago area but is closer by several miles to mainland Palawan than from the coastline of Vietnam, which is laying maritime claim over the region along with China, Brunei and Taiwan.

All claimant countries except Brunei have troops deployed in the region, with China becoming more aggressive in pressing its maritime claim to almost 80 percent of the entire South China Sea by deploying its warships and surveillance vessels to conduct regular maritime patrol over the area.

The other day, Beijing announced the completion of the training exercises of its aircraft carrier Liaoning in the region.

The training exercises almost resulted in a naval confrontation between a Chinese frigate and the US warship USS Cowpens in December.

Aside from the airmen who are deployed on rotation basis in Pag-Asa Island, the seat of Kalayaan Island town with a current population of almost 200 civilian inhabitants including children, contingents from the Philippine Navy are also



stationed in the area to bolster the country's territorial hold over the seven islets and two shoals in the region.

"We don't monitor any naval activities of China out there because of the prevailing weather. The sea is very rough and it is very dangerous for any ship to venture out in the open sea for now," Bito-onon said.

He added that he has yet to receive reports from local fishermen if the two Chinese maritime vessels have returned to Ayungin Shoal. The vessels left the area last month after taking up position near the shoal for several months.

Ayungin Shoal is located between Pag-Asa Island and mainland Palawan.

China, insisting that the shoal is an integral part of its maritime domain, has tried to dislodge a contingent of Marine troops stationed in the shoal aboard the grounded Navy logistic ship BRP Sierra Madre. (www.philstar.com)

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GLOBAL NEWS

Study: Babies Understand Language Differences

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (Xinhua) -- Infants who can't yet speak themselves are able to recognize that people who speak different languages use words differently, according to New Zealand research.



A study at the University of Auckland found that infants as young as 13 months understood that people from different linguistic communities used different words to refer to the same object.

"This is the first evidence that infants do not indiscriminately generalize words across people," study co-author Dr Annette Henderson said in a statement.

"This early appreciation might help infants by encouraging them to

focus on learning the words that will most likely be shared by members of their own linguistic group."

The researchers tested whether infants understood that word meanings (object labels) were not shared by individuals who speak different languages by showing infants from English-speaking families video clips that introduced two actors: one speaking French and the other English.

They then monitored how long each infant looked at objects after the objects had been labeled by each actor, as infants looked longer at things they find novel or unexpected.

They found the infants applied the rules they had learned of their own language and expected speakers of foreign languages to label objects consistently.

"This finding shows that infants appreciate that words are not shared by speakers of different languages, suggesting that infants have a fairly nuanced understanding of the conventional nature of language," said Henderson.

"People often think that babies absorb language and you don't have to teach them, and they do absorb it and they learn very passively, but

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they're not just learning willy-nilly," she said. "They're being smart and making distinctions about the words they hear and use." (www.philstar.com)

Pinay Caregiver in 'X-Factor Israel' Captures Viewers' Hearts

JERUSALEM. A 47-year-old Filipino caregiver has emerged as the newest star of Israeli reality television, putting a human face on the thousands of foreign workers who toil away in menial, back-breaking jobs in this country.

Israeli viewers of the country's myriad of reality shows have grown accustomed to successful candidates from various backgrounds, including black-clad ultra-Orthodox Jews, Ethiopian immigrants and a German convert to Judaism who became a celebrity chef. But they've never seen someone like Rose Fostanes before.

The diminutive woman with a booming voice has taken "X-Factor Israel" by storm and emerged as a national phenomenon. Known simply as "Rose," she is mobbed by fans wherever she goes.

"It's a big change in my life because before nobody recognized me, nobody knew me. But now everybody, I think everybody in Israel knows my name. And it is very funny," she said.

Fostanes arrived six years

ago to work as a caregiver so, like millions of other Filipino workers around the world, she could send money back home to her family and her girlfriend.

She spends her days caring and cleaning for an ailing woman in her 50s. To save money, Fostanes lives in a crowded apartment in south Tel Aviv, a downtrodden area inhabited by foreign laborers, with seven others.

Until recently, Fostanes was among the thousands of Filipinos who work in similar positions in Israel. The site of Filipino workers wheeling elderly Israelis in public places is so common that the word "Filipini" has become synonymous with "caregiver."

Several months ago, a friend encouraged her to enter the "X-Factor" competition, a popular show hosted by Israeli supermodel Bar Refaeli. Standing just 1.50 meters-tall (4-foot-11), Fostanes has captured her audiences' hearts with a surprisingly strong and soulful voice, belting out such hits as Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" and Lady Gaga's "You and I." She is among the final

five contestants and widely seen as a favorite.

Israeli singer Shiri Maimon, a judge on the show and former reality TV contestant herself, has served as Fostanes' "mentor" throughout the season. After a recent rendition of Christina Aguilera's "Beautiful," Maimon could barely contain her excitement.

"It was so moving. I am so proud of you. We will have an amazing journey together," she said. "I'm speechless. It was more than perfect."

Fostanes said she has dreamed of singing since she was a child, but suffered discrimination because of her ap-

pearance. She said she still can't believe how far she has come.

"Sometimes I am telling myself, 'Is it true that it happened to me?'" she said. "At least I can express and show the people that I have also talents and it's not too late for me to shine."

Fostanes said she has been a caregiver since the age of 23, working in Egypt and Lebanon before coming to Israel. She is among the roughly 10 million Filipinos, or 10 percent of the overall population, who work abroad.

Israel's estimated 40,000 Filipinos enjoy relative freedom, as long as they have work

permits. Most remain for an agreed-upon period of time before returning home.

Fostanes said Filipinos around the world have heard about her and frequently send her text messages of support. But her success has been tempered by the distance from her loved ones. She last visited the Philippines two years ago.

"Really I miss them, my family especially, and of course my girlfriend because this is the time I really need them beside me," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I need their support not only because they are in the Philippines, I want them to be by my side." (www.philstar.com)

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