MANILA, Philippines - February 26, 2006 - The farming village is gone, swallowed whole by a wall of mud and boulders that swept down with terrifying speed Friday from a mountainside in the eastern Philippines. Officials feared the death toll could climb past 1,500. "There are no signs of life, no

Stephen Harper, sworn in as Canada’s 22nd Prime Minister, last Monday, February 6, 2006, made some surprising choices to his Cabinet, naming David Eemrson, a former member of Paul Martin’s cabinet to the post of International Trade Minister and appointing a non-elected member to head the Public Works Department, Michael Fortier who will be responsible for a large amount of taxpayers’ money. Some political analysts considered these decisions bold moves as they are likely to stir controversies right at the beginning of his term which will be the first time in more than a decade that the Conservative Party will rule in this traditionally liberal nation.

The 46-year-old economist has vowed to cut taxes, get tough on crime and reconsider such hot-button issues as gay marriage. He takes over outgoing Liberal Party leader Paul Martin, whose 18-month government built on the country’s robust economy but was deeply marred by an ethics scandal that outraged many Canadians.

"As a government, our mission is clear," Harper said shortly after the swearing in ceremony. "We will act on the collective priorities of Canadians so that our country remains strong, independent and free."

Harper’s personal politics are said to be in line with those of many Republicans in the neighbouring US -- he’s anti-abortion and against gay marriage and big government -- and many believe rocky relations will now improve with the White House. But to govern effectively and remain in power, he’ll have to balance his own beliefs with the many Canadians who disdain US President George Bush and the war in Iraq. He also has to show

Homecoming parade for victorious Manny Paquiao

Filipino Boxing hero Manny ‘The Pacman’ Pacquiao rides a float at a big homecoming parade as he is welcomed by the city of Manila, Philippines upon his return after winning the World Featherweight (Courtesy of: Joey de Leon, Manila, Philippines photographer)

MANILA, Philippines (AP) - Thousands of Filipinos lined the streets of Manila on Friday, January 27 to cheer local boxing hero Manny "Pac Man" Pacquiao on his triumphant return after defeating Mexican rival Erik Morales. Pacquiao, (41-3-1, 32 knockouts) stopped Morales with a flurry of punches in the 10th round of their 12-round WBC super featherweight title eliminator at Las Vegas on Saturday to avenge his defeat to the same fighter 10 months ago.

On Friday Pacquiao waved to fans from a truck decked with Philippine flags and sporting two large red boxing gloves as his

Mud slides bury a village in Leyte, Philippines

MANILA, Philippines - February 17, 2006 - The farming village is gone, swallowed whole by a wall of mud and boulders that swept down with terrifying speed Friday from a mountainside in the eastern Philippines. Officials feared the death toll could climb past 1,500. "There are no signs of life, no
What’s behind those mud slides?

Mud slides have been occurring almost regularly every year in the Philippines. They have caused so much hardships, devastation and loss of lives, particularly among the poor people who are living in areas where illegal logging is rampant. Everyone is aware of the problem but there seems to be nothing done about it. Although there are government people who are mandated to oversee that the law is being followed, they are apparently being bribed into cooperating with the powerful loggers.

It is often believed that it is impossible to solve the problem of illegal logging because of rampant corruption in the government at all levels - municipal, provincial, and national. There is a culture of “survival of the fittest” and “just mind your own business” if you want to live longer. Not only do they cut trees down without replacing them, they also apparently dig up earth wherever they can to sell to contractors and developers who are building subdivisions for those who can afford to buy. With these activities going on without fear of being caught because they are being protected by those who are in power, it is no wonder that there will be landslides that will occur regularly in vulnerable places where the poor are the most numerous. These types of calamities do not happen where there are rich people because they usually live in places that are absolutely safe and always in pristine condition.

Bearing in mind the helplessness of the poor and the ruthless power of rich loggers, what is the next step? Shall we stand by and let this cycle of tragedies happen to the poor people living near the denuded mountains? Shall we just depend on governments to act? Shall we let more tragedies to strike before taking any action? What can ordinary people do?

It seems that the first reaction to tragedies of this nature is to send aid to the victims. The United States immediately responded by sending the Marines to dig up and rescue the survivors. Canada, although a little slower to react, is now responding with considerable financial aid. Filipino Canadians across the country are also actively raising funds to send to the Philippines. Although all these initiatives by both government and private citizens are admirable, they are not going to solve the problem of deadly mud slides that can bury whole towns and villages unless something is done to get to the root of the problem. The funds are certainly needed to give to the survivors who will need housing, food, and the means to earn a livelihood. But money alone is not sufficient to help them for a longer period of time. A more permanent solution will be to make people aware that they have the power to change their life if they learn to work with each other in the protection of their own environment.

The question then is: How do we begin to empower people to go beyond their own personal interests? Who will lead them out of their helplessness? From a distance, it is hard to imagine if there is anyone in the community who can be so concerned about the future that he or she will mobilize others to change things that are within their power to change. On the other hand, those of us who are away from our native land, we may need to reflect more deeply on whether or not we are also willing to go out of our way to do something in preventing mud slides from ever happening again. Although we cannot control floods and strong rains, we can always fortify the soil by planting more trees, and finding other ways to save the earth. After all, we are all living in the same planet, and we are not only helping others but we are also helping ourselves.

What else need to happen before we all wake up to do something about changing things that we have the power to change?

Filipino Solidarity Cooperative sets expansion plans

Last January 22, 2006, the Board of Directors and Committees of the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative held a meeting at Gilmore College to discuss expansion plans and to review financial results over the period of seven months. The directors of the cooperative are: Jose Gaviola, president; Ben Bade, vice-president; Rhoda Trenocha, secretary-treasurer, Magnolia Canamat and Adelia Gayel, administrators. The two committees and their members are as follows:

Education and Training Development - Lourdes Fagcao, Domingo Loricca, Jr., Josephine Villa, and Jocele Trinidad. Membership and Promotion - Lourdes Rosales, Maria Ruth Dimala-ala and Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi.

The Cooperative has now added equipment which can store meat, fish and other frozen products. There are now many more varieties of merchandise being offered for sale. It is now possible for consumers to make a “one stop shopping” for most of the things they need everyday.

A free seminar will be held on Sunday, March 19, 2006, from 2 to 4 p.m. at Gilmore College, 4950 Queen Mary Road Penthouse, to provide the public all the information they need regarding the cooperative movement, the limited liabilities of having stocks or shares in a cooperative, and the rights and responsibilities of stockholders.

Mr. Jose Gaviola, president, will discuss the management aspect, Mr. Eugene Salinas will explain the financial aspect, and Mr. Lei Mark will present the cooperative system and moderate the seminar.

If you are interested in listening to the speakers and understand how the cooperative works before signing up for membership, please call 514-485-7861 to reserve your space.
Movement is Life and Chiropractic Delivers

This may sound a bit strange at first but if you think about it for a moment the truth of this statement will become more and more apparent. Without movement you could not sustain life: blood cells that don’t move cannot transport oxygen, lungs that don’t move can’t breathe, hearts that don’t move can’t pump blood, and spines that don’t move can’t create the motion required for proper joint nutrition, for the activities of daily living, or for the stimulation of the joint-brain pathways required for proper brain and body function.

You heard correctly, movement (especially of the spine) is required for proper brain function for the coordination of activities such as concentration and learning, emotions, motor control, and organ function (including immune organs). Roger Sperry, the recipient of the Nobel prize in 1982 for his work in brain research, stated that the importance of movement of the spine in relation to brain function could be equated to that of a windmill that generates electricity for a power plant. He also stated that the more structurally distorted we are, the less energy we have for metabolism, for healing, and for thinking.

In fact research has shown that if you cut off the supply of information going to the brain, the brain will actually reach a state of coma! That’s right, the brain does not simply control the body, it controls, and organ function (including immune organs). Not only does proper spinal movement increase overall health, decrease disease and improve the ability to create feelings of happiness and well-being, it also helps to reduce pain and discomfort and to diminish feelings of anxiety and stress. When it comes right down to it we are creatures designed for virtually constant movement living in a society that involves almost constant sitting. We are also clearly designed to have properly moving and aligned spines and many of our citizens are unknowingly walking around with subluxation in their spines because they have NEVER HAD A SPINAL HEALTH EXAM!! This is not a healthy combination and the result is that we have a population that is much less healthy and much more sick, tired, and disease ridden than is necessary.

We are the DECARIE SQUARE FAMILY CHIROPRACTIC CLINIC in Decarie Square (near the Winners and Walmart on Decarie). Call us now at: 514-344-6118.

If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.

Maya Angelou
Michael Fortier is leaving a lucrative, private sector job to take this (position) … but it is only a temporary appointment. He has agreed that he will step down at the next federal election … and so this Senate seat will be available for elections, and we’ll be proceeding with Senate elections in the not-too-distant future.”

The following list completes the Cabinet:

- Gordon O’Connor - Defence
- Tony Clement - Health
- Stockwell Day - Public Safety
- Michael Fortier - Public Works
- David Emerson - International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics.
- Rona Ambrose - Environment
- Jim Prentice - Indian Affairs
- John Baird - Treasury Board
- Gary Lunn - Natural Resources
- Monte Solberg - Citizenship and Immigration - Medicine Hat, Alta.
- Michael Chong, president of the Queen’s Privy Council, minister of intergovernmental affairs and minister for sport - Wellington-Halton Hills, Ont.
- Rob Nicholson - Democratic reform (a new post) and Speaker of the House.
- Loyola Hearn, minister of fisheries and oceans - St. John’s South-Mount Pearl, N.L.
- Marjory LeBreton: Leader of the Senate/unelected
- Rob Nicholson, House leader and minister for democratic reform
- Niagara Falls, Ont.
- Carol Skelton, minister of national revenue and minister of western economic diversification
- Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar, Sask.
- Chuck Strahl, agriculture and agri-food minister and minister for the Canadian Wheat Board
- Chilliwack-Fraser Valley, B.C.
- Greg Thompson, minister of veterans affairs - New Brunswick Southwest, N.B.
- Josée Verner, minister of international co-operation and minister for Francophone and official languages.

A total of six women are now members of the new cabinet.

Stephen Harper announced after the cabinet meeting that Parliament will reconvene on April 3 and a new budget will be introduced.

Political analysts’ and opponents’ reactions

Academics and political observers alike made some comments that appear to shed light on Stephen Harper’s decision to take bold steps in his willingness to take rough hits from all sides. Political experts said that the cabinet - 27 members, including the prime minister - marks another deliberate step toward the pragmatist minister’s away from the new Conservative party’s ideological roots. Allan Tupper, a political scientist at the University of British Columbia said:”This seems to be a clear move toward quite a pragmatic, centrist style of government Faron Ellis, a career Reform-Alliance-Conservative party chronicler who teaches at Lethbridge Community College remarked: “This is the final transition away from Reform.” With just three Alberta ministers - and as many from Ontario (nine) as all four western provinces combined - Harper has rejected playing up the old West Wants In slogan. But on balance, Harper’s first cabinet seems a fiscally conservative, socially moderate model of regional balance, provincial experience and young and old. Harper said in his first news release as prime minister that the executive is “designed for work, not for show.” According to Ellis, ‘This cabinet is about the next election as much as it’s about the current minority Parliament.’ In fact, with western Liberal MPs having held the finance, health, industry and deputy prime minister jobs under the former Paul Martin government, David Taras of the University of Calgary argues that real cabinet influence has actually shifted east. Giving the economic posts to Quebec MPs underscores the significance of this province in the current minority government. More 60% of the voters did not go for the Conservatives.

New Democrat leader Jack Layton said Harper’s controversial decision to appoint a cabinet minister who was elected as a Liberal flies in the face of his election pledge to clean up government.
Aquino renews call for Arroyo to quit

Corazon Aquino, a former Philippine president and icon of a "people power" uprising that restored democracy in the Southeast Asian nation in 1986, on Tuesday renewed her call for Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to quit as leader.

Last July, Aquino turned her back on President Arroyo over allegations of vote-rigging and corruption after recordings of what the opposition said was Arroyo's conversations with an election official during 2004 national polls. Former Philippine President Aquino answers media queries during an interview in Manila's Makati financial district February 7, 2006. "We Filipinos have the right to know," said senator Benigno Aquino, was swept to power after a civilian-backed military mutiny ended the dictator's two-decade rule. She was president for six years until 1992.

She survived nearly a dozen army coup plots and attempts by two groups of soldiers -- one loyal to the ousted dictator and another that initially helped install her as president. Five years ago, Aquino reprimed her role in a second "people power" uprising that removed Joseph Estrada from office and pushed Arroyo from vice president. Aquino also helped Arroyo win the 2004 presidential elections.

On Sunday, Aquino attended a thanksgiving Mass for the recovery of Estrada who underwent eye surgery on January 27, Marine Captain Nicanor Faeldon, was surrounded by military police and intelligence agents but was able to mouth the words "Tuloy ang laban [The fight continues]" while lashing an 'L' sign with his hands.

"I am repeating the call of Navy Lieutenant Antonio Trillanes IV for the people to choose -- remain in this corrupt regime run by corruption and deception, or stand up for change and the truth," Acedillo said.

"We are reiterating our appeal. Now is the right time," Acedillo said.

"We believe that support [from the public] is there. They are just waiting for the right time," he said, when asked to comment on the military's claim that they did not have the backing of the people.

Acedillo said they supported the call of four of their comrades, who escaped last January 17, for the public to wear arm bands and join street protests to press for Arroyo's resignation.

"They have our support... We trust that they will do the right thing at the right time," Acedillo said of Army Captain Nathaniel Rabonza and First Lieutenant Francisco Ashley Acedillo.

They said efforts to unseat Arroyo had become more "timely" ahead of the 20th anniversary of the 1986 People Power uprising that toppled the Marcos dictatorship.

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mudslides triggered by heavy rains brought hundreds of houses and a school in the Philippines on Friday.

**PHILIPPINE LANDSLIDE**

**Mudslides**

The mudslides occurred as a result of heavy rains brought by the La Nina weather phenomenon. The governor reported that people for two weeks of ongoing bad weather but had returned to their homes Friday after signs that the sun was coming out.

Rescue workers held little hope Saturday of finding survivors from a devastating landslide. Lt. Col. Raul Farnacio, the highest-ranking military officer at the scene of Friday’s disaster, estimated the death toll at about 1,800 — nearly every man, woman and child who lived in Guinsaugon.

“Out of a population of 1,857, we have 57 survivors and 19 bodies,” a grim Farnacio said as search efforts resumed Saturday in a drenching rain and high winds that made the task even more miserable. “We presume that more or less that 1,800 are feared dead.”

So many died. Our village is gone, everything was buried in mud. All the people are gone,” survivor Eugene Pilo told GMA television Friday, hours after the landslide engulfed the village on Leyte island, 420 miles southeast of Manila.

Pilo, who fears he lost his wife and children, was at his brother’s house when they felt the ground shake just before 10 a.m.

“Then the landslides struck,” he recalled. “I ran out in the street, but I fell to the ground, along with my brother. There were big boulders — bigger than a house — and logs which rushed down.”

“It sounded like the mountain exploded, and the whole thing crumbled,” said survivor Dario Libatan, who lost his wife and three children. “I could not see any house standing anymore.”

Its 375 homes and elementary school were buried under mud up to 30 feet deep. Only a few small piles of debris hint at the devastation. Only a few jumbles of corrugated steel sheeting indicate Guinsaugon ever existed.

Saint Bernard village and another town also were affected, and about 3,000 evacuees huddled at a municipal hall.

Heavy rains preceded slide

Rescue workers were hampered by the thick, soft mud that remained unstable, along with flash floods spawned by two weeks of downpours that dumped 27 inches of rain on the area. The constant showers were blamed on the La Nina weather phenomenon.

The governor asked for people to dig by hand, saying the mud was too soft for heavy equipment.

“I have a glimmer of hope, based on the rule of thumb — within 24 hours you can still find survivors,” Libatan said. “After that, you move on to the recovery phase, but right now it’s still rescue mode.”

A second, minor landslide added to volunteers’ jitters, and a helicopter pilot said the ground near the top of the landslide was still moving in late afternoon.

“You could see a patch of green, then mud where it was,” Leo Dimaaal said, estimating that half the mountain had collapsed.

Education officials said 250 pupils and teachers were believed to have been at the elementary school. Only one girl and a woman were rescued alive nearby.

Aerial TV footage showed a wide swath of mud alongside stretches of green rice paddies at the foothills of the scarred mountain.

Illegal logging a factor?

Survivors and others blamed illegal logging for contributing to the disaster.

Pat Vendetti, a London-based campaigner with the Greenpeace environmental action group, agreed that illegal logging might have contributed to the mudslide.

“There were similar landslides at the end of 2004 and the end of 2003, both directly linked to illegal logging on land above villages, and both in the Philippines,” said Vendetti.

A local official said he believed as many as 2,000 people may have been buried. Like much of the eastern Visayas island group, Leyte has experienced heavy rains for about 10 days. More than 20 people were killed in landslides earlier this week on the island.

Relief groups have called for drinking water, food, blankets and body bags to be brought to the scene. Philippine Navy and Coast Guard ships are rushing to the area.

President Gloria Arroyo says she has ordered the entire naval force in the central Philippines region to the area.

Naval ships are being used as floating hospitals and command centres for the rescue operation.

They say recent heavy rainfall is more likely to blame.

The Philippines experiences about 20 typhoons each year.

Earlier this week, 16 people were killed when heavy rains and flash floods hit the southeast-provinces.

In 2004, storms left about 1,800 people dead or missing in provinces northeast of the capital, Manila.
From Globalization to Internationalization

Last month, in this column, I presented a Creed of Peace, as enunciated by the late Ralph M. Lewis, ending with the words; “I am guilty of war when I think that the land of a man’s birth must necessarily be the place of his livelihood.” Now, as one of about 80 million trans-nationals working in the world today, I reiterate that I hold firmly to the belief and philosophy that the accident of one’s place of birth need not determine where that person must live and work forever. The fact that there are so many millions of us working internationally, gives new meaning to cross-cultural communications. This is a result of three relatively recent explosions to which we are now adjusting: the explosion of human population; the explosion of knowledge; and the explosion of expectations. After the Second World War, there was steady expansion of economic integration which far outpaced both political and cultural integration until the last decade brought about cultural interdependence, because of television and the Internet, and we are moving to one world in culture as well as economics. The earlier phase of integration of economic activities of trade, finance, and investment has generally been referred to as “Globalization”, and the broader aspects such as educational exchanges and intercultural activities are now often referred to as “Internationalization”. We are at a crossroads in the process and the interplay between globalization and internationalization must become more transparent, ethical, and better integrated to address three sets of long-term global issues: a) Maintaining peace and security, fighting terrorism, curtailing crime, and promoting human rights; (b) Fighting systemic corruption, curtailing rampant capitalism and correcting the unethical exploitation of human and natural resources; and c) Addressing the deep spiritual malaise whereby many people feel that they have no stake in a global society and believe that there is nothing they can do about it by ethical and/or legal means. The knowledge explosion has made more people productive and this has raised expectations that include access to the ballot box as well as to the market place through jobs. When educated people are denied political and economic freedom their frustrations will contribute to the spiritual malaise we are experiencing today. Old paradigms no longer serve society and ethical leadership is needed to foster change. Activists, protesters, and terrorists, represent the tip of the iceberg. It was not the tip of the iceberg that sank the Titanic and a myopic focus on terrorists will not remove the underlying danger born of cynicism and mistrust harbored by disenfranchised and dispossessed people who have no hope. We need new approaches in leadership that include Diplomacy in economic, political, cultural and military affairs to restore trust in peacekeeping and military interventions based on military ethics and international law that will allow for world peace—not just the absence of war.

There are about nine million transnational workers spread around the world from the Philippines alone, and this implies the concept of a team that is multi-disciplined and transcends national boundaries. Also, this requires a unique set of qualities that depend heavily on the internationalization of the learning process wherever the learning and skills development takes place. The real challenge is to identify rational and humane principles that we can work toward collectively. The human being is creative emotionally as well as intellectually. A feeling is a “thing” – just as a “thought” is a “thing.” A practical outcome is realized when minds are attuned to understand or to see the same thing or to alter the thoughts until there is a common vision. This bringing together of thoughts, knowledge and emotional energy results in human synergy. This meeting of the minds creates the emotional energy that empowers two or more minds to work creatively together. The synergistic approach shows that effective human action in dealing with any kind of crisis or challenge is dependent upon two key factors: (1) the Resources, both human and material, which can be brought to bear on the situation, and (2) the Process, how the resources are utilized in dealing with the situation. If either of the two factors is missing, the chance of success is nil. However, if people work together utilizing their resources rationally and humbly, they can produce results beyond the mere sum of their individual inputs. That is called synergy. It is also the premise on which participatory democratic administration is founded. The influence of a leader in a synergistic application is particularly critical in multi-disciplinary teams and working groups that transcend national boundaries. The knowledge base does not rest on just one person nor does the responsibility rest on only one pair of shoulders. Above all there must be a willingness to work for the good of all in our global society. To help us all to better understand the pitfalls of modern society, here is an item that was published in a magazine in Singapore in the 1960s. “The Seven Deadly Sins of Society: Politics without principles; Pleasure without conscience; Character without integrity; Wealth without work; Commerce without morality; Science without humanity; and Worship without sacrifice.”

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<th>RESTAURANT</th>
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<td><strong>Choice 1</strong></td>
<td>Good for 10 people for Lunch only with 2-litre Coke &amp; Sprite</td>
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<td>Soup Seafood bean curd</td>
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<td>Soup-cheese with corn</td>
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<td>Shrimp in lobster sauce</td>
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<td>Steamed rice</td>
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<td><strong>FREE DELIVERY</strong></td>
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Filipino Montrealea poised to vote for 2007 RP Election

A resounding number of 104 Philippine passport holders are ready to exercise their right to vote during the May 2007 Philippine election of the President, Vice-President, Senators and Party-List Representative. On 11 and 12 February 2006, the Philippine Honourary Consulate located on 6260 Victoria together with the staff from the Philippine Embassy in Ottawa, held an Overseas Absentee Voting Registration. During an interview with Joseph Gerard B. Angeles, Minister and Consul General of the Philippine Embassy to Canada, out of the total 104 voters registered last weekend, 89 were new registrants and 15 were transferring voting precinct primarily from Hong Kong. He and his Philippine Embassy team, together with the Honourary Consul Salvador Cabugao were very much encouraged by the turn-out and extended their gratitude to the network of community members, associations, Filipino establishments and the media that help sensitized Filipino citizens to the importance of not only exercising their democratic right to be heard but also of their potential ability to effect change in the Philippines. In an effort to build on this momentum, another Overseas Absentee Voting Registration will be held in early spring, most probably in May, at the Office of the Philippine Honourary Consul in Montreal. Watch out for further details on this subject during the coming months.

Two Local schools launch project with Filipino Parents

A first-ever project called Partenariat école-famille-communauté, a partnership among the school, community and family, has been initiated by the École des Nations and the École du Petit-Chapiteau elementary schools. Both schools are located at the heart of the Plamondon and Victoria area where the school population is a mixture of pupils from the Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi communities among others, however, Filipino pupils account for 50 per cent and more of the total population. It is for this reason, among others, that the pilot project has been launched and is slated to last until 2006. The overall goal of the pilot project is to help Filipino pupils achieve their fullest academic potential. Together with a community liaison agent and resource persons from l’École des Nations, l’École...
Sampaguita - The Philippine National Flower

Sampaguita, otherwise known as Jasmine sambac ("Maid of Orleans") variety is our national flower. It is a symbol of purity, simplicity, humility and strength. Its blossom is celebrated in Philippine legends, stories and songs. In the Philippines, the sampaguita also has a number of names: sampag, sampaguan, campoplot, lumali, kulatai, panguo, and manual.

In 1934, the American Governor-General Frank Murphy, moved by sentiment, named it a national symbol. "Sentiment has dictated the designation of national flowers either symbolical of certain national or sentiments, or reminiscent of some important historical or traditional events," Murphy explained in Proclamation Number 652. "France has her fleur-de-lis and Japan her cherry blossom," he said. "In the same way the Philippines should have her national flower."

Sampaguita, a Spanish term, comes from the Filipino words "sumpa kita," which means "I promise you." It is a pledge of mutual love. In early days, a couple exchanged sampaguita necklaces much like a bride and groom exchange wedding rings nowadays. To this day, garlands of sampaguita are offered to dignitaries and special guests. Jasmine arrived in the Philippines in pre-recorded times, most likely as an item of barter or gift on board trade boats plying the South China Sea. In the Philippines a type of Jasmine called sampag was described as early as 1698 when Ignacio Mercado, an Augustinian monk, first wrote about its medicinal use in the Declaracion de las Virtudes de los arboles y plantas que estan en este libro. In translation, Mercado said that the leaves of the sampag (which has bigger flowers than sampaguita) made a wonderful syrup to comfort the heart. The vapour was a good cure for asthma.

To learn more about our national flower, visit: www.turoturo.com or www.topropicals.com or visit the Intercultural Library at 6767 Côte-des-Neiges and browse through their collection of Philippine books.
Batanes: The Nature’s Playground

The province is home to the famous Ivatans who are nationally acclaimed as the “True Insulares”. The Ivatans are of Malay stock, tracing their roots to early immigrants from Formosa, Taiwan as well as Spaniards who came to the island in the 16th century. Being an insular people, the Ivatans have kept the purity of their gene pool through time.

The island-province of Batanes was created by a series of volcanic activities and other geologic forces millions of years ago. Batanes lies at the northernmost tip of the Philippines, where the Pacific Ocean merges with the South China Sea. It is composed of three major islands, namely: Batan which contains the capital town of Basco, Sabtang, and Itbayat. Close by are seven islets including Amianan, which is the closest to Formosa. Thus, Batanes has been identified as the country’s potential gateway to East China.

Geography

The island-province is strewn on a 4,500 square kilometer expanse of territorial waters, the Luzon Strait and Balintang Channel, where the Pacific Ocean merges with the South China Sea, a sealane between the Philippines and the southern parts of Japan, China, Hongkong, and Taiwan. It is bounded on the north by the Bashi Channel, on the east by the Pacific Ocean, on the west by the South China Sea, and on the south by the Balintang Channel. It is characterized by gently rolling hills, cliffs, and black and white sand beaches.

Batanes is about 860 kilometers (approx. 525 miles) from Manila. Basco, the capital town, is about 280 kilometers north of Aparri and about 190 kilometers south of Taiwan.

Political Subdivision

Batanes has six municipalities, 29 barangays, and one congressional district. The six municipalities are Ivan, Uyugan, Mahatao, Basco (the capital), and the island municipalities of Sabtang and Itbayat.

Climate

The Batanes weather is rather pleasant. Compared to the rest of the country, Batanes is blessed with a cooler, balmier climate. It enjoys practically four seasons, the best one being summer which is from March to June. Average monthly rainfall is 450 mm.

Population

The 2002 census of population for Batanes registered a population total of 16,467 distributed over a land area of 230 square kilometers.

Language / Dialect

The mother tongue of Batanes is Ivatan, spoken by 93.94 percent of all households. The Ilocano dialect is also spoken while Filipino and English are generally spoken and understood.

Major Industries

The province has a total agricultural land area of 5,438 hectares and has a wide area open for agricultural expansion.
MEDICAL TOURISM

RP ready for medical tourism: DoT chief

HEALTHCARE with leisure. This is how the Department of Tourism (DoT) describes its new program, aimed at positioning the country as a competitive health vacation destination in Asia, targeting both the wellness/spa and medical tourist markets.

Newly appointed Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan has announced that under the Philippine Health Tour Program (PHTP), DoT and its partner agencies such as the Department of Health (DoH), Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (DoH-PITAHC) and the Department of Energy (DoE) will jointly offer cost-effective medical treatments combined with special timetabled events that will showcase some of the best tourist attractions the country has to offer, according to a press statement.

Pagdanganan explained that the new program will be offered to tourists whose main purpose for visiting the Philippines is to undergo ‘minimally invasive medical procedures and treatments.’ Specially-designed tours integrated to the medical programs by accredited hospitals and healthcare establishments will then be offered to the suit the needs of this identified market segment. The tourism chief said that the Philippines is one of the few countries in Southeast Asia and in Asia to offer such specialized tour offerings, with only Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and India as competitors.

Pagdanganan revealed that the DoT, DoH-PITAHC and DoE have already come up with rules and regulations for the accreditation of health establishments, wellness centers and hospitals in the country, using DoT standards for hotels as the benchmark. Currently, only St. Luke’s Medical Center has met these standards.

‘But the horizon for health tourism in the country looks very good as well when applications for accreditation of other hospitals such as the Asian Hospital in Alabang, Capitol Medical Center in Quezon City and Medical City in Mandaluyong City are already underway,’ the tourism chief said in the press statement.

Likewise, through the efforts of the DoT, the government’s firm support in developing the potentials of medical tourism is manifested in the 2004 Investment Priorities Plan, qualifying its development for certain investment incentives such as reduced tariffs on the importation of hospital equipment.

The tourism chief said that currently, health holidays are significantly growing outside Europe and in other parts of the world. ‘If the growth of health resorts in Asia, including the Philippines, is anything to go by, there would seem to be a huge potential to develop health tourism as a great come-on since health and wellness using traditional healing methods, such as massage, healing and herbs is very much part of the Asian culture,’ the tourism chief stressed.

The country’s bid was also reinforced during the state visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Bahrain last December when she signed a memorandum of understanding for tourism cooperation wherein the Bahraini government expressed interest in sending medical tourists to the Philippines.

This will also be facilitated with the air services agreement forged between the Philippines and Bahrain. Both documents were signed during the Bahrain visit last December where Tourism Undersecretary for Planning and Product Development Evelyn Pantig was a member of the Philippine delegation.

Pagdanganan said that the tour programs are already being finalized for integration with the medical packages while local and international sales missions and promotions are already being lined up to draw attention to the program. A medical tourism forum and modules for the implementation of a ‘Mabuhay Host Training Program’ for healthcare frontliners of accredited hospitals are already underway to strengthen the country’s readiness as a health vacation destination.

Nature Adventure for Summer in the Philippines

March
11 - 12 WHALE WATCHING - Donsol, Sorsogon n. & Best of Bicol swim with giant whale sharks found in Donsol, Sorsogon, witness the most magical sights of firesflies dancing and flickering while your boatman silently paddles down a wide river, p 4,300 all included pati souvenir & wholesome fun

SCUBA DIVING LESSONS Every 7-9pm per class min. of 2 M.T.W.Th in Makati City. Check out dive Sat & Sunday. Course fee P 12500 inclusive of dive instructor, pool, wetsuit, BCD, Regulators, Tanks, weights, aircon classroom, PADI Open Water Wall Certificate & PADI Open Water Certification Card and wholesome fun. Check Out dive fee P 3,500 inclusive of buffet meals, tanks, dive boats, dive master, non aircon accommodation. NOT INCLUDED mask, snorkle, fins, wetsuit, bootie, fare to and from Batangas

APRIL
1-2 Coron Beachy Escapades Palawan (8 beds left)
Birthday trip 6-9 Basco & Sabtang, BATANES P 17,000 all included (3 seats/beds left)
April HOLY WEEK (SUPER Limited Seats, First Come, First Serve) 13 Laguna Visita Iglesia P888/pax (30seats left) 13-16 Sagada, Fedelisan & Bontoc (15seats/beds left) 13-16 Vigan, Laaoag, Pagudpud Visita Iglesia (20beds left) 13-16 Batanes Visita Iglesia FULLY BOOKED
21 - 23 EARTH DAY CELEBRATION Fri-Sun National Ecology Center of the Philippines Everybody is Welcome to Save the Environment

MAY Pahiyas
ASIAN BACK PACKING June 21 to 25 Mt. Kita Kinabalu & Brunei OPEN June 25 to 29 Bangkok & Cambodia (open for group of 4 ONLY) June 29 to July 3 Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia Open PLEASE CALL FOR INQUIRY on the Asia tours, emails inquiry will not be entertained.

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Entry of migratory birds feared in Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY: The Department of Agriculture has warned residents in Central Mindanao on the entry of Indonesian migratory birds suspected as carriers of bird-flu disease.

“We urge the public to immediately report any presence of chickens, ducks and other migratory birds suspected to have been infected with the disease,” Regional Executive Director Abusama M. Alid said.
The Filipino Solidarity Cooperative (Divisoria Cubao) Board of Directors and Committees held a meeting last January 22, 2006 at Gilmore College. (See brief article on page 2)

Claro Bermudez, Head Scout Leader & Registrar, Laging Handa Scout Group congratulates new member Peter Kevin Araneta after his investiture while assistant Scout leader Nida V. Buataran looks on. (February 11, 2006)

Writing Workshop

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Spring session
April 21-23, 2006
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Please call 514-485-7861

This seminar will be followed by a Public Speaking Workshop to be announced at the end of the course.

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New rule change opens the door to Filipinos with relatives in Canada under the Skilled Workers Program.

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MERCAN CAPITAL LTD., Founded in 1989
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Lumpia, Pampango Style (Vegetable Spring Rolls)

Serves: 30-36

Ingredients:
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 pound pork, sliced small and thin
- 2 cups sweet potatoes, cubed 1/2 inch
- 2 cups red potatoes, cubed 1/2 inch
- 2 cups green beans, cubed 1/2 inch
- 2 cups carrots, cubed 1/2 inch
- 2 cups cabbage, cubed, shredded
- 1/2 to 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 heated stove & refrigerator, covered with a damp cloth
- 2 tablespoons bagoong (salted fish, preferred over powder)
- 1 small hot pepper (red or green), chopped (or powdered ginger)
- 1/4 cup minced garlic clove (fresh is better)

Preparation:

1. Heat oil in a wok or large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic, onion, and pork. Cook until the pork is browned and the onion is translucent.

2. Add green beans, carrots, and red potatoes to the wok. Cook until the vegetables are tender.

3. Season with salt and pepper. Add sweet potato and red pepper, cooking until slightly tender.

4. Add cabbage, cooking until it is tender. Add green beans, carrots, and cabbage. Mix well. If needed, add broth.

5. Cover and cook until meat is tender.

6. Add gabi stems and leaves; bagoong; all of the powdered or 1 teaspoon powdered black, chopped into pieces, or crushed or garlic in oil. Add onions and sliced pork. Cover and cook until meat is tender.

7. Season with salt and pepper. Add sweet and red potatoes, cooking until slightly tender. Add green beans, carrots and cabbage. Mix well. If needed, add broth.

8. Continue cooking with occasional stirring until vegetables are tender. Remove from heat. Drain in a colander and cool.

9. Separate wrappers from each other. Keep covered with a damp cloth. Place 2 to 3 heaping tablespoons of cooked mixture on a wrapper. Fold once horizontally. Next, fold in both ends and roll. Wet edges with water to seal. Deep-fat fry. Serve with a dipping sauce of vinegar, salt, pepper, and crushed garlic. May be served cold.

10. Serve hot or keep warm by placing on a hot tray, uncovered. Makes 30 to 36 egg rolls.

Serve with a dipping sauce of vinegar, salt, pepper, and crushed garlic. May be frozen before frying. Lay egg rolls in a single layer on a cookie sheet, allowing space between each. Freeze. When frozen, pack together in a plastic bag.

Using a 6 to 8 quart saucepan, saute garlic in oil. Add onions and sliced pork. Cover and cook until meat is tender. Season with salt and pepper. Add sweet and red potatoes, cooking until slightly tender. Add green beans, carrots and cabbage. Mix well. If needed, add broth. Continue cooking with occasional stirring until vegetables are tender. Remove from heat. Drain in a colander and cool.

Separate wrappers from each other. Keep covered with a damp cloth. Place 2 to 3 heaping tablespoons of cooked mixture on a wrapper. Fold once horizontally. Next, fold in both ends and roll. Wet edges with water to seal. Deep-fat fry. Serve hot or keep warm by placing on a hot tray, uncovered. Makes 30 to 36 egg rolls.

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Spread gabi leaves on a platter. Put about 2 tablespoons of the mixture into each leaf. Pour 1 teaspoon of the coconut milk in an open pan for 2 minutes. Add your choice of diced pork, shrimp or salmon pieces; gabi stems and leaves; bagong; all of the spices, and tinapa into the mixture. Cook over low heat for about 8 minutes, stirring constantly until thickened. Set aside.

To serve, take 1 leaf and spread about 2 tablespoons of the mixture into the center. Fold the leaf on 4 sides and tie with its own stem if available and reinforce with a small string or thick thread around 4 sides ending with a bow on top for easier handling or individual serving. (This also prevents accidental opening of the wrap while cooking) Cook the wraps in the remaining coconut milk in a covered saucepan for about 8-10 minutes over low heat, until most of the liquid evaporates, leaving just enough moisture on the wraps. Serve hot with rice.
From Page 1 Pacquiao

motorcade left the Malacanang presidential palace, where he was received by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Confetti rained down as it inched its way through Manila’s old financial center, while admirers waving small Philippine flags by the roadside chanted his name. A banner on another truck read, “The victory of Pacquiao is the victory of the Filipino.”

Pacquiao, who flew back to Manila from Los Angeles with his wife Friday, was met at the airport by his two sons and mother. He was mobbed at the airport by fans who sought his autograph and posed for pictures with him.

“Now, my happiness is complete,” he said, referring to the family reunion after months of separation while he trained in the United States.

At the presidential palace, Arroyo - beaming with pride - called in the palace kitchen staff and posed for a photograph with the Filipino boxing sensation, who has been called the “people’s champ” by the local media.

The presidential cooks offered special pastries shaped like boxing gloves stuffed with chicken and wild mushrooms for the champion.

His victory over the more fancied Morales came as a much needed morale booster for his nation following months of political conflict that saw mounting calls for Arroyo to resign over allegations that she cheated to win the 2004 election.

Feuding political factions briefly put aside their differences as Filipinos rejoiced over Pacquiao’s triumph.

Speaking on the Malacanang palace grounds Friday, Pacquiao called on his countrymen to unite “with or without a (boxing) fight.”

Pacquiao, 27, is extremely popular in the Philippines. Before his fight, he released a music CD that included the song, “This fight is for you,” which is being played by radio stations nationwide.

He has also starred in two Filipino action movies and has endorsed a number of local products, from socks to a herbal food supplement.

At the victory celebration organized by officials at Manila’s seaside boulevard, Pacquiao and Arroyo sang his hit song on a stage with Filipino gold medalists from the recent Southeast Asian Games held in the Philippines.

Pacquiao told reporters earlier he was ready to take on Morales again or the Mexican’s countryman, Marco Antonio Barrera, who he stopped in the 11th round in their encounter in November 2003.

“I am the thorn in the throat of the Mexican boxers,” Pacquiao said. “Right now I can fight anyone ... in the same weight level.”

From Page 11 Birds

smugglers have been using Sarangani (formerly Balut Island) as the dropping point for birds from Indonesia. He said the smugglers, using powerful motorboats, would segregate the birds upon arrival in Sarangani Island before they are sent to Gen. Santos City and other neighboring cities and provinces in Central Mindanao.

Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban, during his visit to Sarangani last week, said officials are taking concerted efforts to keep the country free from the virus.

Join Gilmore students’ annual “Cabane à sucre” Sugaring Off Party Sunday, April 2 Call 485-7861 for ticket reservations
Nominations for 2006 Presidential Awards now open

The Philippine Centre Foundation of Greater Montreal is pleased to acknowledge the following contributors to the Philippine Center Building Project. Total contributions received for the period July to December 2004 is $7,310.00.

Mary Damianakis, Ugo & Mrs. Deangelas, Marie-Luise Ernstsohn, Peter Ernstsohn, Deogracias & Mrs. Esquie, Filipino-Canadian Association of the West Island, John & Liz Martinez, Romeo Rodriguez and Manuela De Guzman, Francis Scarpalegga, Normand & Catherine Talbot, Paterno Zacarias and anonymous contributor.

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For information call Tel No. 626-7635 or 630-3961 or 961-3951. Nominations are now open for the Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas for 2006.

Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose S. Brillantes said the Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas are bestowed on distinguished Filipino individuals and organizations overseas by the President of the Philippines in a ceremony during the observance of the "Month of Overseas Filipinos" at the Malacanan Palace in Manila. A biennial event, the ceremonies will take place in December of odd years.

This distinguished honor is awarded to Filipino individuals and organizations abroad who have demonstrated examples of Filipino excellence, integrity, and love of their nation and overseas, "Ambassador Brillantes said.

"The year 2006 awardes will include exemplars of Filipino excellence, individuals who have dedicated their work in the service of the Filipino people, leaders of community initiatives that promote the common good and the protection of the rights of others. Civil society organizations based overseas whose programs have helped improve the lives of others, particularly in the marginalized sectors, will also be honored," he added.

According to the ambassador, the 2006 Presidential Awards will be more than an occasion for the country to extend recognition and gratitude to Filipino individuals and organizations overseas for their work and achievements. "It is also a way of showing the rest of the world that the Filipinos is proud of the virtues and qualities of its own citizenry," Ambassador Brillantes added.

Since its establishment in December 1991, the Presidential Award has been bestowed upon Filipinos in private organizations in thirty-six (36) countries. The awards are open to Filipino individuals, associations (both formal and informal) and organizations overseas, as well as foreign private individuals and organizations abroad.

There are four categories of awards to be bestowed upon Filipinos and private organizations overseas, namely, the Lingkod sa Kapwin Filipino Award, the Banaag Award, the Kaunib ng Bayan Award and the Pamana ng Filipino Award.

Nominations may be submitted to the Philippine Embassy, 130 Albert St. Suite 606, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5G4, and must be received by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas on or before March 15, 2006. For information or a nomination form, please contact the Philippine Embassy at tel. no. (613) 233-1121; fax no. (613) 233-4165; e-mail: embassyofphilippines@rogers.com.

Ambassador Brillantes assumes chairmanship of UN committee

Ambassador Jose S. Brillantes has assumed as Chairman of the ASEAN- Ottawa Committee (AOC), following turnover ceremonies on 18 March during the 195th AOC Meeting. The AOC is composed of the Head of Missions of ASEAN Embassies and High Commissions accredited to Ottawa.

By reason of Ambassador Brillantes’ chairmanship, Minister and Consul General Joseph Gerard B. Angeles also assumed officially the chairmanship of the AOC Working Group, composed of deputies and officers of the three ASEAN missions.

Minister Angeles is assisted in the Working Group by Third Secretary and Vice Consul Rhenita B. Rodriguez.

The AOC Chairman Magdalene Chee Siong Teo, High Commissioner for Brunei Darussalam, turned over the AOC gavel and sound block to Ambassador Brillantes, in the presence of other AOC Heads of Mission and members of the AOC Working Group.

The first major AOC activity under the Philippine chairmanship will be the Working Visit of ASEAN Heads of Mission to the Canadian West Coast, particularly in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, slated in March 2006. The visit will include calls on the Premiers and Lieutenant Governors of British Columbia and Alberta, the provincial ministers of investment and trade, and the local chambers of commerce. AOC is being invited to the ASEAN joint cooperation work plan.

Another major project during the Philippine chairmanship is the forging of the Pacific Rim-ASEAN Joint Cooperation Work Plan.

The Philippine chairmanship will also focus on promoting ASEAN awareness. In line with this objective, the AOC is planning to host an ASEAN Food Fair sometime during spring or summer, an ASEAN Forum sometime in summer or fall, an ASEAN Day Roundtable sometime towards end of September, accompanied by a newspaper supplement, and ASEAN sports throughout the year to promote camaraderie among mission members and their families.

I will distribute LITA’s information to all Filipinos who have responded to our Call for financial help for Filipina

SOLICITATION FOR FINANCIAL HELP: Filipinos are expected to send $10,000 donation from Indonesian Filipinos to Philippine Community. At this stage of LAILA, she needs FINANCIAL HELP more than anything else. Respondent to our call for help are directed issue cheque is issued for this TURNOVER.

Laila’s situation by Lita Sideco sideco@sympatico.ca

I know about Laila’s situation. I had a long visit with her on Sunday afternoon. Her progress is remarkable and she has a very determined positive desire to continue helping her health team in her progressive rehabilitation. She is very well looked after and very active in her care. She informed me that her TV and Internet are being paid for by the nurses on Monday. She will need more active and dynamic physical therapy in the future. She will need more active and dynamic physiotherapy; she should really go to a Reahab. Center for that, not a Foster Home. I told her to call me for a Reahab. Center (or 23282437 and staunch ally) to write a summary and referral to Eddie when the timing is right and Ed will assess her rehab. needs. She will be taught a home programme and can be seen periodically at our clinic ( Clinique de Physiatrie Cote des Neiges)

Thank you for sending this note. I was told about Laila by the Phil. Embassy via a Fax of the Ambassador’s letter to Immigration Canada requesting an extension of her visa due to her unfortunate illness. The Embassy also sent a copy of a letter sent to another member of parliament seeking his intervention in the matter. I sent a copy of both to the office if the Mt. Royal MP, Mr. Irwin Cotler and she is now in therapeutic exercises. Diane di Sablon on Jan. 27th. Laila had a contract till Feb. 1st or 2nd and she is in fact not covered by Medicaid and the daily rate is $2,000.00. She was affected by a neurological condition which caused her to be paralyzed head to toe. She is undergoing the treatment during the acute stage. She is receiving adequate care at the JGH but will require intensive rehabilitation which is costly. The MP, Michel De Jonge and Lucienne Robilliard has been furnished copies of the same letters, Laila’s recent employer being from Westminster.

In the meantime, Annie Miral has been briefing the office of the MP Raymonde Folco who was our support and guiding light during the 80s when the Domestic Core programme was changed and became the much improved version, the Live-In Caregiver Programme. She will be of great help in this matter. Annie is keeping her posted.

It seems that Filipinos are really helpful and supportive based on Felix’ case. We can do one thing at a time...(see case). The worst case scenario: she is accorded an extension of her 21 mos. to 24 mos., at which time she can allow her to extend her contract giving her time to apply as an immigrant. She has a good prognosis with adequate REHAB. and determination.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS “A FILIPINA NEEDS YOUR FINANCIAL HELP MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE” LET US HELP HER.

Felix Salazar

JGH Mini-Med

School unlocks health mysteries

JGH and Pfizer Canada host public education series

Montreal, February 6, 2006 - What are the dangers of gorging on junk food? How do we protect ourselves against disease? Where do we come from? What can we do to protect ourselves from these health mysteries?

Dr. Salazar, screening the Number One way to prevent colorectal cancer? What is a colonoscopy? Is prostate cancer an inevitable part of aging, or can men do something to prevent it?
Impress your friends and family with your knowledge about these hot medical topics and more, by taking part in the innovative, educational and entertaining JGH Mini-Med School! The popular public education series returns to the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) this spring, and the JGH and Pfizer Canada are inviting Montrealers to help them refuel their lab coats to hear straight talk in non-technical language from some of the JGH’s most dynamic physicians and researchers.

Registration is still underway for the spring series, which will take place at the JGH every Tuesday evening from April 4 to 25 (French sessions) and May 2 to June 6 (English sessions). Space is limited, and seats are filling up fast, so register today at www.jgh.ca or by calling 514-340-8222, local 3337. The fee is $80 for adults and $50 for students (under 25 with student ID) and seniors (60 and over), $35 for students (under age 25 with student ID) and seniors (60 and over). Register online to take advantage of a $5 discount! A special rate of $25 is available for 2006 JGH Mini-Med School registrants. For more information, visit www.jgh.ca and click on JGH Mini-Med School. About the JGH:

Since 1934, the Sir Mortimer B. Davis - Jewish General Hospital, a McGill University teaching hospital, has provided “Care for All,” serving patients from diverse religions, linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Montreal, throughout Quebec and beyond. As one of the province’s largest acute-care hospitals, the JGH has achieved a reputation for excellence in key medical specialties by continually expanding and upgrading its facilities for clinical treatment and teaching, as well as research at the Lady Davis Institute for Medical Research. For more, please visit www.jgh.ca.

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Beware of Text Scam
Philippine Embassy Warns Filipinos in Canada

The Philippine Embassy is warning to be wary of text messages that promise large cash winnings from purported raffle drawings in the Philippines, a scheme that has victimized some Filipinos in Canada.

Ambassador Jose S. Brillantes advised Filipinos in Canada to be careful in providing personal information to senders of text messages promising large amounts of money to avoid being victimized by these fraudsters.

The text messages usually contain details such as “Congratulations! The last four digits of your Subscriber Identify Module (SIM) card has won P500,000 from new PAGCOR/CB Philippine Foundation.” It then asks the recipient to call a “Director Jeg V. Chua: for instruction on how to claim the prize. Upon calling this “Director Chua,” the recipient of the text message would be asked to send personal information before the supposed prize could be claimed.

Ambassador Brillantes is urging the public to contact the Embassy in case they receive such text messages so that these fraudulent schemes could be immediately reported to authorities in Manila.

The Filipino Nurses Association of Quebec, Inc. is holding an election on Friday, March 31, 2006, 0830-1830 hrs., Philippine Community Center, 4708 Van Horne Ave., Montreal, QC
Lea Faces a Whole New World

Five months pregnant, Lea Salonga can’t wait to embrace a whole new world -- motherhood. When the stork visits in May, she says “everything takes a back seat.” Motherhood, she believes, is the greatest role that a woman can face. “I’m prepared to take a nice, long break to spend time with my baby,” Lea says. “It could be six months, one year, two years... If I never have to sing again, or do another concert again, it will be all worth it for me.” Lea plans to deliver her baby in the Philippines “because all the tita and other relatives are there. But we’ll travel back and forth because the other set of grandparents are in the United States.”

Jaya boldly announced on national television that she’s two months pregnant. “That way, I preempted any ugly rumor about my pregnancy,” says the Soul Diva. “My boyfriend and I really planned to get married and have the baby afterwards,” explains Jaya. “Well, it happened, so...” The guy is Gary Gotidoc, a divorcee like Jaya, with a 10-year-old son who, according to Jaya’s mom, comedienne Elizabeth Ramsey “looks like Jaya.” Jaya and her ex-husband, Andrew Buffington, whom she married in the US in 1999, didn’t have a child. She met Gary through a mutual friend around two years ago when she did a concert with Freestyle in Los Angeles, where Gary is based. “Gary and I were already discussing marriage when I got pregnant. No, it didn’t happen by accident,” Jaya assures. “We will push through with our plan to get married not long after I deliver.”

Echo of the Heart

So it wasn’t a publicity gimmick after all? We’re referring to gossip that Jericho Rosales and his Panday leading lady, Heart Evangelista, were making beautiful music together. Heart has openly admitted to the media that she and Echo are “exclusively dating,” meaning each of them is not seeing anyone else. Of late, there have been rumors that Heart is pregnant. The chinita star vehemently denies the report. Still, some showbiz insiders insist that there’s nothing to the rumored romance. Heart, they say, is still attached to her non-showbiz boyfriend. Whatever it is, the Heart-Echo affair came a bit too late for the recently concluded Panday teleserye.

And So Does the Soul Diva

Unlike some of our celebrities who could not face up to their romantic entanglements, Jaya boldly announced on national television that she’s two months pregnant. “That way, I preempted any ugly rumor about my pregnancy,” says the Soul Diva. “My boyfriend and I really planned to get married and have the baby afterwards,” explains Jaya. “Well, it happened, so...” The guy is Gary Gotidoc, a divorcee like Jaya, with a 10-year-old son who, according to Jaya’s mom, comedienne Elizabeth Ramsey “looks like Jaya.” Jaya and her ex-husband, Andrew Buffington, whom she married in the US in 1999, didn’t have a child. She met Gary through a mutual friend around two years ago when she did a concert with Freestyle in Los Angeles, where Gary is based. “Gary and I were already discussing marriage when I got pregnant. No, it didn’t happen by accident,” Jaya assures. “We will push through with our plan to get married not long after I deliver.”

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His Excellency, Willie

Days before the Ultra Stampede tragedy, TV host Willie Revillame has been designated Celebrity Envoy for Tourism, in connection with the “Grand Pinoy Homecoming Program” of the Department of Tourism. This is the first time that a Filipino celebrity was appointed Celebrity Envoy by the DoT. Willie’s honorary appointment surely raised a lot of eyebrows considering his “notoriety” and controversial TV career (terminated twice by ABS-CBN, suspended thrice) for foul language and obscene gestures. Tourism Secretary Ace Durano explained that Willie was chosen because he has been helping promote the country through his daily game show “Wowowee” on AB-CBN. Durano said Willie has been doing a big share in prodding Filipinos abroad, especially the young ones, to come home and experience the beauty of the country. Willie promised to do justice to his new job. “My role now is not only to help but to convince children of Fil-Am parents to come home to visit their mother country.”

Paalam na, Bayan

THOSE could have been Vice President Noli “Kabayan” de Castro’s last words after his long-running show...
on ABS-CBN was axed by the Lopez-owned network. ’Magandang Gabi, Bayan’ (MGB) had its last show last December 31, ending a run of close to 18 years that made “Kabayan” a household name and catapulted him to the Senate and later to the No. 2 post of the land. The weekly show had been co-anchored by the De Castro’s daughter, Katherine, with Erwin Tulfo and Henry Omaga Diaz, since De Castro left the program at the start of the 2004 election campaign. The Philippine Daily Inquirer reported that the Lopez family “wanted to use” De Castro’s program “to attack the administration,” but that the Vice President refused. Inquirer, quoting an unnamed source, said the Lopezes had declared “war” on President Arroyo, whom they supposedly viewed to be hostile to their business interests. Maria Ressa, head of ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.’s news and current affairs, said the report was inaccurate and insulting. She said negotiations went on for months before the show was pulled off the air. She also said that the network decided to retire the show because it was identified with De Castro and that it would be just “a shadow of its former self” without the Vice President. According to De Castro, he had been ceased to be connected with MGB since 2004, when he assumed office as Vice President. But he still hosts a program when he decided to retire the show because it made “Kabayan” a more money

MONEY sent home by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) last year rose much higher than official forecast, as more people left the Philippines to seek higher-paying jobs abroad.

OFW remittances coursed through commercial banks last year reached $10.7 billion, 25 percent higher than in 2004, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said on Wednesday.

The central bank had projected 2005 remittances to hit $10.3 billion, a growth of 20 percent from $8.5 billion the year before.

In December alone remittances grew 10.7 percent to hit $962 million. Bulk of the remittances came from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates and Singapore.

“The sustained rise in the level of remittances for 2005 was largely due to the increase in the number of Filipinos working abroad,” BSP Deputy Governor Armando Suratos said.

Preliminary data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration showed that the number of newly hired and rehired OFWs grew 5.2 percent in 2005 to 981,677.

By type, the number of land-based Filipino workers rose 4.2 percent to 733,970, while that of sea-based workers grew 8.2 percent to 247,707.

Continuing demand for OFWs is due in part to government and private sector efforts to promote and identify employment opportunities for Filipino workers and to pursue capability-enhancing programs such as predeparture training, computer literacy and seafarer training in strict compliance with international maritime standards.

Also pushing Filipinos to seek jobs abroad is the local economy’s failure to generate enough high-paying jobs, as the Philippines still has the highest jobless rate among Asian peers.

“The deployment of highly skilled, thus, higher paid Filipino workers such as engineers, teachers, nurses and medical workers also contributed to the high level of remittances in 2005,” Suratos said.

Deployment of OFWs is expected to continue for many years due to increasing demand for Filipino health care workers in developed countries with aging populations as well as sustained economic growth in the host countries.

Suratos also pointed out that financial institutions are trying to reach out to a wider range of Filipinos working overseas by aggressively pursuing marketing activities, opening more remittance centers, establishing tie-ups abroad, and introducing enhanced means of remittance transfer.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos earlier warned that bulk of OFW remittances sit idle in bank deposits because of a lack of investment opportunities elsewhere.

While he acknowledged that bigger bank savings could mean increased investments and consumption in the future, Santos doubts whether investment opportunities for OFWs would be available in the long term.

“So the challenge now is how to create productive activities for these OFW remittances,” he added. “Spending more on basic services should provide that.”

Marcos’ daughter wants compromise deal on ill-gotten wealth

LATE President Ferdinand Marcos’ eldest daughter said Wednesday a compromise deal may be the best way to resolve more than 400 cases involving her family’s alleged ill-gotten wealth.

Those cases are still pending in court as Filipinos prepare to mark the 20th anniversary of the “People Power” revolt that drove Marcos and his family into exile in Hawaii on February 25, 1986.

‘Given the long time that we spent and the huge amounts of money that have been expended, perhaps a more pragmatic solution is in order even if neither my family nor the government, nor many sectors of society will be happy about the outcome,’ House Representative Imee Marcos told The Associated Press.

‘In the end, the resolution will not be legal perhaps, but since the cases are political, the resolution will have to involve a level of political will that remains absent,’ she said.

Marcos said her mother’s American lawyer, James Lynn, was in Manila earlier this month to try to put together a global settlement of Marcos cases in the Philippines, the US, Switzerland and Singapore.

‘He’s always trying but it never seems to work out,’ she said. ‘All of us are quite tired now, and I don’t think it’s good for the family nor for the country to carry on with these court proceedings that seem to go nowhere.’

But she said she sees no hope of a deal with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s government, given that she and her brother – Governor Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of northern Ilocos Norte province -- are members of the opposition, and Arroyo’s father, former President Diosdado Macapagal, lost his re-election bid to Marcos in 1965.

During his 20-year rule, Ferdinand Marcos allegedly amassed ill-gotten wealth estimated at 5 billion dollars to 10 billion dollars in 1986, when he was whisked to exile in Hawaii. He died there three years later.
Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship. On each February 14, St. Valentine's Day, messages of affection, love and devotion are exchanged around the world.

I just received a beautiful Valentine's card from my Apo (grandson). With the printed Valentine greetings from the card was his handwritten note: “Dear Lola, isn’t it wonderful to fall in love, to feel love, to be in love, and to be loved? Lola, I am very happy, I met the woman of my dreams, we shall be getting married very soon.”

“Congratulations and Happy Valentines to both of you. Yes dear, love is a many splendored thing.” Your Lola. Associated with love and courtship is the old Filipino custom, the “harana” which has remained until the present time. Throughout the different changes of the century, Filipino, rich or poor, always remember with nostalgia – the serenade or “harana.” To the romantic Filipino, there is no better way of expressing his love than to serenade on a moonlight night, wafted with the fragrance of the sampaguita or dama de noche (lady of the night) flowers.

The young Filipino suitor of yesteryears does not resort to writing letters on linen paper, or sending a Valentine’s card; he simply gets his serenade his ladylove. In the “kundiman” as a song, set to words, a music, then he steps forward, and sings to express his love. In his songs he would pour out all his sentiments and longings of his heart and hastily dedicates a torrent of love songs called “kundiman” to her. Here is a short sample of a “kundiman” - “O ilaw, sa gising malamig, wagis mo’y bituin sa langit... Bukanang ang bintana, at ako’y dangingin ng mapag-tamong mo ang tunay kong pag-daan.”

The “kundiman” has its origin among the Tagalogs of Luzon, and it is truly an expression of their extremely sentimental nature. It reached its peak during the second and third decade of the American period.

The “kundiman” has been accepted as one of the chief representatives of Philippine music, not only because of the intense feeling that it conveys, but also because of the high degree of musical artistry to which the country’s composers elevated it. Its success can be gleaned from the very talented Filipino music composers, namely, Dr. Francisco Santiago, Nicanor Abelardo, Francisco Guinto, Geofrey Villarsa (hidden), Romeo Pelareja, Freddie Espinosa, the guitarist - love for one’s children, love for God, love for someone special. It is customary to send a Valentine card or gift, often anonymously, as a mark of love and affection.

What does Valentine’s Day mean to you? Most people remember their Valentine as their first date, the first time they fell in love, or their love at first sight, the first whisper perhaps.

Let me share with you a Valentine’s card that I received from a classmate during my college days. We are still students today. We are still together. We are still the same people. We are still the same, even though we have aged a bit. We still have the same love for each other. We still have the same love for each other.

Seeing that he was a man of learning, the jailer asked whether his daughter, Julia, could be brought to Valentinus for lessons, Julia, who had been blind by birth. She was a pretty young girl with a quick mind. Valentinus read stories of Rome’s history to her. He described the world of nature to her. He taught her arithmetic and told her about God. She saw the world through his eyes, trusted his wisdom, and found comfort in his quiet strength. “Valentinus, does God really hear our prayers?” Julia said one day. “Yes, my child, He hears each one.” he replied. “Do you know what I pray for every morning and every night? I pray that I might see. I want so much to see everything you’ve told me about!”

“God does what is best for us if we will only believe in him.” Valentinus said. “Oh Valentinus, I do believe.” Julia said intensely “I do,” She knelt and grabbed his hand.

They sat quietly together, each praying. Suddenly there was a brilliant light in the cell. Radiant, Julia screamed. “Valentinus, I can see!” She can see! “Praise be to God!” Valentinus exclaimed, and he knelt in prayer.

On the eve of his death Valentinus wrote a last note to Julia, urging her to stay close to God, and signed it. “From your Valentine.”

His sentence was carried out the next day, February 14, 270 A.D., near a gate that was later named Porta Valentinii in his memory. He was buried at what is now the Church of Praxed in Rome. It is said that Julia herself planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave.
enchanting and simple melody, but the verses were somewhat monotonous due to the constant repetition of the three words "kung hindi man." The verses are as follows:

"Kung hindi man dapat sa iyong karitikan; Ang akin pag-ibig na sa iyo'y ini-balitad; Kung hindi man ako dapat kaawahan; Isinasamo kong manungaw ka lamang."

In English, this would sound like this:

"Although I may not be worthy of your compassion; I beseech thee to look out of thy window."

A priest nearby was awakened by the young men's voices and hearing the words "kung hindi man" over and over again, he asked his servants to make them stop singing their "kundiman, kundiman." Because of his inability to say the three Tagalog words clearly, the priest thus gave the song its popular name. Unfortunately, however, the good father was never been identified.

Another theory regarding the origin of the "kundiman" - the word itself was first applied to the verses and, later on to the music itself. The author, Epifanio los Santos Cristobal, has it that the word kundiman came from short verses recited by Caveteños which ran this way: "Hele-hele nang kundangan, Hele-hele nang kundiman." This was in reference to the shy Filipina who pretends not to betray her emotions when a suitor expresses his love for her, although she cares for him, for fear that her love affair would only provoke her parents into scolding her.

The other theory says that "kundiman" is a contraction of three Tagalog words, kung hindi man, (though you may not) something of an expression of humility on the part of the suitor.

The traditional Filipino courting songs are still the favorites of most modern Filipinos and are sung by them even now.

Today, the kundimans of the country’s music composers will always remain as classic love songs. As one Filipino historian wrote: "Indeed, the kundiman has grown from its very simple beginning... a highly emotional erotic love song that originated among the grassroots... into a highly developed piece of art... of high artistic import and universal appeal, and living, vibrant proof of the country's musical artistry and craftsmanship."
A Letter from a Daughter to her Parents:

Stephanie just left Montreal to go back to CFB Petawawa where she was posted in the Artillery Unit as an administration specialist. She usually comes over to Montreal not only to visit us but she misses the hectic lifestyle and night life which does not exist in the northern hills of Ontario. She was to resume her normal duties when an order came.

It is an order to work with the DART unit as part of Canada’s contribution to Pakistan’s earthquake disaster. Two days later Stephanie was on board on a military flight to Zagreb, then Saudi Arabia and a final flight to Pakistan.

Two weeks later we received a letter from Stephanie. It said,

Dear Mom, Dad & Jay,

I hope things are going well! Don’t worry, I’m doing fine here in the mountains of Pakistan. Everything here is so different from home. First, it’s a Muslim country so they have to pray 5 times a day. The first prayer starts around 5AM in the morning. We hear it everyday and it wakes me up everyday! Also October was the month of Ramadan in which they fast for a month...no food or water from 5AM-5PM...I like to see Jay try to do that!!!

Also there is one prayer in which they have to wash their hands, feet and face while chanting. It is definitely interesting in that aspect. The weather is 23-25 C during the day and 4-5 C at nighttime.

Their ways of life in with the locals are quite different. Garbage are thrown off the side of the mountain and everywhere you step on is either dirt or dusty large rock. Oh here’s a gross story...I went to our burn pit (a large hole in the ground in which we burn our garbage or the locals would dig through it) and we found a cow’s guts all over the side of the pits. It was nasty. Anyways, apparently the locals who live next to us said that their cow was sick due to the burn pit so they killed the cow and threw the guts over to our side of the fence! It’s wild!

At the field hospital we receive 125 patients per day. There are constant injuries from the locals. Just the other day, a medic had to cut a piece of bone that was protruding out of his finger so they had to use a tooth extractor. A lot of sad injuries! I miss you all and I love you all very much.

Love
Steppy

Stephanie is now back in CFB Petawawa to resume her normal duties. After that tour, her perspective in life towards the locals in Pakistan changed. She wish she could do more to help them and just hope Canada will continue to be active in humanitarian aids.

Al Abdon

PLDT, Microsoft tandem will deliver hosted software services

SOFTWARE giant Microsoft and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country’s largest phone company, struck a deal this week that will soon change the way Microsoft distributes its software to Philippine customers.

Antonio Javier Jr., Microsoft Philippines managing director, told INQ7.net that this partnership signals Microsoft’s push for a pay-per-use model for distributing its software to enterprise clients.

“This will be a hosted service,” added Javier, hinting at more collaboration between the two giants this year. ‘PLDT is going to go big in 2006 and Microsoft will play a big role in this,” the Microsoft Philippines executive said.

Continuing problems of software piracy in the corporate sector remain a headache for the software company, which has to compete with alternative software like those hawked by open source advocates. Microsoft is looking for alternative distribution models for its software products, Javier said in a statement.

“We’ve realized that in order to reach a broader set of the market, we have to look into a more innovative business model, a model where both business users and consumers can get to enjoy the benefits of our products on a pay-per-use basis. It’s a model that is pretty new to our company but it has already been mastered by telecommunication companies, particularly PLDT, which is undoubtedly the leading provider in this part of the world.”
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