

Obama visits Canada



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U.S. President Barack Obama waves to the media as he and Prime Minister Stephen Harper leave a joint news conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2009.

Leaders establish Clean Energy Dialogue, discuss global security concerns

OTTAWA – February 19, 2009 President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper today agreed the United States and Canada will pursue economic recovery measures and efforts to strengthen the international financial system to counter the global economic recession.

“I value our strategic partnership with Canada and look forward to working closely with the

Prime Minister to address the global economic recession and create jobs, to protect our environment through promoting clean energy technologies, and achieve our shared goals in responding to international security challenges.” said the President.

“The President and I agree that both our countries must take immediate action to restore economic growth by lowering taxes, ensuring access to credit and unleashing spending that stimulates economic growth. We also agreed to strengthen our cooperation in the

areas of environmental protection and global security,” said the Prime Minister.

Restoring economic growth and creating jobs

The President and the Prime Minister discussed their respective economic recovery plans and their focus on saving and creating jobs. In addition, the President and the Prime Minister discussed common challenges they face, including restructuring of the North American auto sector.

They also discussed working together to develop effective global responses to the economic crisis, through the G-8 and G-20 processes. The United States and Canada will actively work together to ensure that the G-20 Summit in April contributes to restoring confidence in financial markets.

Finally, they instructed senior officials to meet at an early date to develop strategies to enhance our collective security in North America, including reviewing the management

EDITORIAL

Understanding recession and coping with it

By this time, we have realized that our economy is in a recession as we hear all the reports from radio, television and the internet. It is said to be worsening everyday as many people lose their jobs. But our Prime Minister claims that we have a sound banking system which makes us luckier than our neighbors south of the border. Isn't it surprising that not too long ago, our economy was booming?

Just like anything else in life, nothing is certain and we all have to be aware of the complexities of modern day living. The subject of economics is oftentimes relegated to policy makers, but it seems more and more apparent that understanding its principles and how it affects our daily life would make us better consumers. In economics, the term recession generally describes the reduction of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) for at least two quarters. The usual dictionary definition is "a period of reduced economic activity", a business cycle contraction. But what seems to frighten most people is the danger of a depression which is defined as a prolonged recession. It is said that if nothing is done to make the economy recover, we will have a depression which is something to be avoided at all costs.

Why do recessions occur? Can we blame it on government, or on businesses, or on consumers or on a combination of all these groups? Are consumers well informed in the use of credit? Is there a need for more regulations to protect consumers?

In the United States, there are many factors that may be responsible for the recession - the cost of the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, the housing crisis, or financial meltdown, and the burgeoning or increasing deficits. In Canada, the recession is supposed to be a reflection of what is happening in the U.S. Our economy is so tightly connected to the United States as they are not only our neighbors but also our biggest trading partner. Therefore, it is easy to see how we will suffer from the same thing as they do. Our relationship with them is so close that it is said when the United States "sneeze" we are the ones that catch the cold.

It is an eye opener to find out that the banking system in the United States is one of the reasons for the economic crisis. People put money in the bank. The banks in turn use this

money to make money by lending it out with interest. If strict rules had been followed in the process of giving loans to people who have the ability to repay, there would be no problem. However, it would appear that mortgages were given to many people who did not have the ability to pay and when they defaulted, the banks foreclosed many properties. These properties were sold at a loss, hence, the banks did not get the original amount they lent out. Over a period of time, these banks also ran out of money. This is why the government had to bail them out. Before President Bush left, several billion dollars were given to the banks. It is a big scandal when it was found out that the banks gave bonuses to their CEOs. Naturally, people were scandalized to hear about this abuse by the banks of the bailout money. Now it is the intention of the new administration of President Obama to hold the banks accountable for the next bailout to avoid the complete failure of financial institution in the United States.

The auto industry is another case of interest. What went wrong in this industry? Consumers hardly buy American-made cars anymore. They prefer either not to buy locally made cars or they keep their cars longer. It is doubtful whether the bailout money can really put car makers back into a profitable stage. If they do not get bailed out, many people would lose their jobs. However, it is not known whether it will really help solve their problems of re-structuring the industry to make them competitive. Is the government just pouring in good money to prolong the life of a dying industry?

Even though we do not have a banking problem like the United States, we are also living in a recession. We must learn how to cope with the situation until things get better. Some tips of advice from financial advisers are based on common sense like use credit wisely (not to use credit cards if you can avoid it), save money regularly for emergency use, economize by decreasing consumption of luxuries, shop wisely, and above all, we should all learn to live within our means. ■

Zenadia Ferry Kharroubi



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COOPERATIVE NEWS

Your patronage of the Cooperative store is our only way to make it work

Things have not changed much since our last report. We are still faced with the same problem of having not enough members buying from their own store. We have been trying to keep our prices as low as possible, and we also try to buy fresh vegetables every week but they are not completely sold as quickly as they should be. Perhaps, the weather has something to do with the slow sales lately. We hope that the spring thaw will make people go out more and visit our store.

Time is really going fast and our store lease will soon expire by May 2010. We need to make a decision whether to move out or stay. We wonder if there is a better location than the current space we are leasing. But we found out from the owner that as long as we occupy the same space, he is not going to give back the security deposit of \$10 000 without interest. This may motivate us to shop around for a better deal if we can find it. Your feedback is important to help us make the proper decision.

The Office de la langue française issued us an order to change our sign into French. Making a proper sign for the store will cost money which we have very little of. We are therefore appealing to all members to pitch in. We estimate a sign will cost about \$2000. Our deadline to conform to the sign law is April 2009.

If members are wondering when the general assembly will be, we are in the process of finalizing the financial report for 2007 which we need to submit to the government within 30 days. We hope to call for a general assembly meeting by April 2009 in the next issue of this paper, we will give the announcement.

We have received one new member this month of February. Ms. Svetlana Suarez, president of the Kapampangan Association of Quebec is our newest member. We thank Ms. Suarez for her support and hope that all the other officers of her organization will follow. We will also start to call on other associations to become members. The president of FAMAS, Claro Bermudez, and the president of the Bicol Association, Merly Nunez, are

already members of the Cooperative but there are many more associations who are not. If we succeed in recruiting the numerous associations and really make them aware of our goals, we will be able to improve the capital structure of the Cooperative.

We are again making a partial list of members who have not yet fully paid for their shares. We would like to appeal to them to contact us and let us know if they are interested to become active and complete their payment as soon as possible. Their cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

- 0538-06 - Cuano, Joysia
- 0216-05 - De la Cruz, Rosario
- 0034-05 - De la Cruz, Marilou
- 0430-06 - De las Alas, Antonio
- 0561-06 - De Pena, Miguela
- 0012-05 - Desamito, Jesse
- 0012-05 - Desamito, Olive
- 0192-05 - Diaz, Saijanamie
- 0539-06 - Diesta, Pacita
- 0526-06 - Dimanalata, Norma
- 0534-06 - Dizon, Olivia
- 0295-06 - Dizon, Zenaida
- 0264-05 - Dolfo, Roberto
- 0547-06 Domingo, Isabelito, Jr.
- 0322-06 - Domingo, Matthew
- 0402-06 - Domingo, Mel
- 0564-06 - Domingo, Michaelangelo
- 0321-06 - Domingo, Rachel
- 0545-06 - Domingo, Reagan
- 0504-06 - Domingo, Remedios
- 0566-06 - Domingo, Santino
- 0453-06 - Domingo, Saturnina
- 0535-06 - Dote, Victoria
- 0209-06 - Dumagat, Teresa
- 0098-05 - Dumdum, Imelda
- 0224-05 - Duran, Teresita
- 0379-06 - Dy, Benjamin
- 0413-06 - Elacion, Ma. Legario
- 0159-05 - Eltanal, Lourdescita
- 0440-06 - Emboscado, Ramero
- 0251-05 - Eribal, Jose Melvin
- 0493-06 - Erivera, Casiana
- 0492-06 - Erivera, Estela
- 0084-05 - Escalante, Mary Ann
- 0240-05 - Espanola, Rita
- 0388-06 - Espiritu, Emilia
- 0389-06 - Espiritu, Leonora
- 0536-06 - Esteves, Marivic
- 0076-05 - Eusebio, Ma. Julina
- 0236-05 - Exaltacio, Kriselda
- 0030-05 - Factor, Mary Ann
- 0449-06 - Fadera, Emmanuel
- 0556-06 - Favila, Rachelle
- 0300-05 - Fernandez, June

- 0348-06 - Ferrer, Excelsa Thelma
- 0326-06 - Flores, Aurea
- 0103-05 - Flores, Editha
- 0387-06 - Flores, Lanie
- 0227-06 - Forcadilla, Clarita
- 0033-05 - Francia, Rosalie
- 0494-06 - Francisco, Greta
- 0337-06 - Galaura, Jeanette
- 0340-06 - Galaura, Jocelyn
- 0029-05 - Galera, Yolanda
- 0329-06 - Galutira, Vilma
- 0292-05 - Garcia, Juanita
- 0488-06 - Garcia, Ma. Visitacion
- 0555-06 - Gerance, Aurea
- 0563-06 - Gevero, Edgar
- 0096-05 - Gevero, Epifania
- 0404-06 - Gloria, Delia
- 0049-05 - Gonzalo, Caridad
- 0309-06 - Gose, Marilou
- 0325-06 - Granflor, Lowella
- 0278-06 - Guelos, Estrella
- 0077-05 - Gutierrez, Lolita
- 0258-05 - Hernandez, Luz
- 0448-06 - Hinayo, Wila
- 0352-06 - Idio, Raquel
- 0531-06 - Ilayat, Alicia
- 0486-06 - Imperial, Laraine
- 0485-06 - Imperial, Paul
- 0043-05 - Indiano, Raul
- 0533-06 - Jareno, Sameul
- 0468-06 - Jimenez, Cesar
- 0469-06 - Jimenez, Lourdes
- 0267-05 - Julian, Christine Frances
- 0233-05 - Justo, Ferdinand
- 0524-06 - Kernan, Ma. Josephine
- 0269-06 - Kido, Elisa
- 0231-05 - Lacaden, Maricel
- 0324-06 - Lagrio, Josefina
- 0158-05 - Lahaylahay, Cristina
- 0092-05 - Langoey, Arlene
- 0092-05 - Langoey, Arlene
- 0446-06 - Legaspi, Elizabeth
- 0167-05 - Legaspi, Jocelyn
- 0574-06 - Libunao, Sharon
- 0351-06 - Lictaoa, Zenaida
- 0307-06 - Lida, Lanie
- 0589-06 - Lim, Flora
- 0129-05 - Limjuco, Nimfa
- 0304-06 - Lo, Jasmin
- 0211-05 - Lompot, Filomena
- 0259-05 - Lopez, Gilbert
- 0490-06 - Lopez, Helly Hedeliza
- 0390-06 - Lopez, Rodel
- 0108-05 - Lozada, Priscilla
- 0572-06 - Madayag, Helen
- 0542-06 - Maderazo, Joy
- 0172-05 - Madriaga, Fresnido
- 0184-05 - Madriaga, Portia
- 0405-06 - Maglana, Lorna
- 0288-05 - Malaluan, Dominga
- 0072-05 - Mallaria, Edna
- 0048-05 - Mamuad, Estrella
- 0465-06 - Maneja, Dominador
- 0015-05 - Mangino, Ruben
- 0431-06 - Maputol, Jennifer
- 0543-06 - Maquilang, Zenaida
- 0447-06 - Marmeto, Marielo
- 0248-05 - Mejia, Cecilia
- 0470-06 - Mendoza, Angelina
- 0118-05 - Millares, Arlie
- 0532-06 - Miranda, Teresita
- 0528-06 - Mojado, Ana
- 0290-05 - Molina, Arcelita
- 0344-06 - Molina, Cristina
- 0457-06 - Montilla, Fred
- 0423-06 - Moran, Grace Padua
- 0422-06 - Moran, Ramon
- 0201-05 - Motil, Rosalie
- 0335-06 - Munoz, Connie
- 0425-06 - Nazareno, Rosario
- 0420-06 - Nepomuceno, Susana
- 0306-06 - Neri, Jean
- 0522-06 - Nicavera, Joy
- 0114-05 - Nicolas, Jesusa
- 0477-06 - Nipa, Evelyn
- 0148-05 - Nogadas, Dolores
- 0518-06 - Obzunar, Karen
- 0032-5 - Ocampo, Exaltacion
- 0056-05 - Odon, Florehbie
- 0237-05 - Oliver, Cecilia
- 0120-05 - Opendo, Judy Mae
- 0210-05 - Ordillo, Rosemarie
- 0270-05 - Orpida, Marites
- 0359-06 - Osano, Irma
- 0472-06 - Osera, Sonia
- 0562-06 - Otacan, Pauly
- 0442-06 - Pacana, Juliet
- 0165-05 - Pacheco, Christian
- 0298-05 - Padadac, Blessy
- 0163-05 - Padida, Lily
- 0435-06 - Paloma, Leila Jovita
- 0014-05 - Papa, Rosalinda
- 0117-05 - Paquinol, Norberta
- 0006-05 - Pascua, Rolando
- 0093-05 - Pastoril, Emma
- 0434-06 - Pelington, Martin
- 0411-06 - Penaredondo, Hazel
- 0271-05 - Penchon, Natividad
- 0198-05 - Penton, Natividad
- 0375-06 - Penuela, Mary kjane
- 0037-05 - Peralta, Aurora
- 0036-05 - Peralta, Fe
- 0141-05 - Peralta, Rolando
- 0078-05 - Perez, Anabella
- 0466-06 - Perreras, Juvy
- 0514-06 - Pescador, Nerissa
- 0428-05 - Petilla, Dionisia
- 0253-05 - Poonin, Conchita
- 0097-05 - Proulx, Andre
- 0391-06 - Punzalan, Romina
- 0243-05 - Quijote, Estela
- 0527-06 - Quintana, Desiree
- 0099-05 - Quizon, Annabelle
- 0357-06 - Raboy, Epiphany
- 0358-06 - Raboy, Teodora
- 0318-06 - Ramos, Ernesto
- 0151-05 - Raquero, Carmela
- 0327-06 - Raquero, Mar
- 0368-06 - Realin, Jocelyn
- 0429-06 - Reano, Pamela
- 0013-95 - Regacho, Monica
- 0044-05 - Relato, Ressa
- 0275-05 - Respicio, Rowena
- 0252-05 - Reyes, Denise Jane
- 0503-06 - Reyes, Edilmira
- 0245-05 - Reyes, Olive
- 0075-05 - Reyes, Pepito
- 0281-05 - Reyes, Romeo
- 0509-06 - Reynoso, Cristita

(To be continued next issue)



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Minister Kenney announces appointments to the Immigration and Refugee Board Of Canada



Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Ottawa, February 17, 2009 — The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, today announced 12 full-time appointments to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB).

Sherif Atallah, Roxane Cyr, Mariam Sarwar Pal, Pharès Pierre, Sonia Rodrigue and Jocelyne Senécal were appointed for three-year terms in the Montréal office. Douglas John Cryer, Jacques Fortin, John Gerald Kivlichan and Marie-Claude Andrée Yaacov were appointed for three-year terms in the Toronto office. Larry James Campbell and Douglas Bruce Fortney were appointed for three-year terms in the Vancouver office. These appointments were made in accordance with the IRB's merit-based appointment process.

The Minister is committed to delivering on his promise to fill vacancies on the Board with qualified individuals as quickly as possible. With today's announcement of 12 appointments, and the Minister's announcement of 13 appointments and three reappointments on January 23, 2009, the Board now stands at close to 90 percent of its full complement. With a lower vacancy rate on the IRB, genuine refugee claims will be processed and finalized faster, while frivolous asylum applications will be dismissed more quickly.

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Mr. Atallah was a Corporate Communications

Consultant with David & Goliath Communications Marketing. He also held positions with Diners Club International (Canada), the most recent being Assistant Vice-President, Branding & Marketing Communications. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Film and Communications from McGill University.

Prior to her appointment to the Board, Ms. Cyr was a Tribunal Officer at the IRB. She also held the positions of Hearings Officer with Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Parole Officer with the Correctional Service of Canada. Ms. Cyr has a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology from the University of Ottawa.

Prior to her appointment to the Board, Ms. Pal worked as a consultant specializing in economic analysis and legal research. She was also a lawyer in private practice, providing assistance to employees of international organizations involved in grievance processes. She has held the positions of Economist with the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines and Senior Social Policy Expert with the African Development Bank. Ms. Pal received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Victoria, her Bachelor of Arts in Economics and her Master of Arts in Economics from McGill University, as well as her Bachelor of Laws from McGill University.

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Mr. Pierre was Director of International Development for Miro Média. Mr. Pierre holds an Honours Bachelor of Mathematics, with a specialization in Secondary Education and a minor in Administration and Political Science, from the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Prior to her appointment to the Board, Ms. Rodrigue was a lawyer in private practice, specializing in immigration and refugee law in Montréal. She was also a lawyer with the law firm William, Aguilar and Associates in Montréal. She holds a

Bachelor of Laws from Université Laval. Ms. Rodrigue was called to the Barreau du Québec in 1991.

Prior to her appointment to the Board, Ms. Senécal was a Tribunal Officer at the IRB. She also worked in a number of other positions within the IRB, including those of Research Officer in the documentation centre and Case Officer in the registry. Ms. Senécal did her studies in nursing and social sciences at the Cégep du Vieux Montréal. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Nursing from the University of Regina with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. She has extensive experience as a Legislative Assistant and has pastored Christian churches in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Mr. Cryer received his Bachelor of Religious Education from the Alberta Bible College. Prior to his appointment to the Board, Mr. Fortin was a notary in private practice in Gatineau. He was also a lawyer in private practice in Montréal and in Hull. Mr. Fortin has a Bachelor of Arts, a Licentiate in Laws and a Diploma in Notarial Law from the University of Ottawa. Mr. Fortin was called to the Barreau du Québec in 1969 and to the Chambre des notaires du Québec in 1987.

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Mr. Kivlichan was a Tribunal Officer with the IRB. He also held the positions of Intermediate Accountant with Orenstein and Partners as well as Staff Accountant with Peat Marwick. He received his Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Toronto and his Bachelor of Laws from the University of British Columbia. Mr. Kivlichan was called to the Bar of British Columbia in 1982.

Prior to her appointment to the Board, Ms. Yaacov was Legal Counsel for the Durham Children's Aid Society. She has also held the position of Legal Counsel for the Children's Aid Societies of Brant and Toronto. She has been a Program Consultant and Settlement Project Officer with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Ms. Yaacov received her Bachelor of Fine Arts

from York University, her Master of Arts from the University of Toronto and her Bachelor of Laws from the Osgoode Hall Law School.

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Mr. Campbell was Vice Chair and previously Senior Vice Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal in British Columbia. He has also held the positions of Vice Chair and Member of the Workers' Compensation Review Board, and Client Services Manager and Case Manager with the Worker's Compensation Board of British Columbia. Mr. Campbell received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Calgary and his Master of Business Administration in International Business from the Cass Business School of the City University in London, England.

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Mr. Fortney was an independent Management Consultant specializing in the fields of international business development, finance and treasury. He was the Vice-President, Project Financing, of SNC-Lavalin Capital in Montréal. He also held several positions with Export Development Canada, the most recent being Chief Representative for Mexico. Mr. Fortney received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba and his Bachelor in Public Administration as well as his Master of Business Administration from the University of Ottawa.

Created in 1989, the IRB is an independent administrative tribunal that reports to Parliament through the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. The Board has three divisions—the Refugee Protection Division, the Immigration Appeal Division and the Immigration Division. The IRB determines refugee protection claims made in Canada, hears immigration appeals, and conducts admissibility hearings and detention reviews. ■

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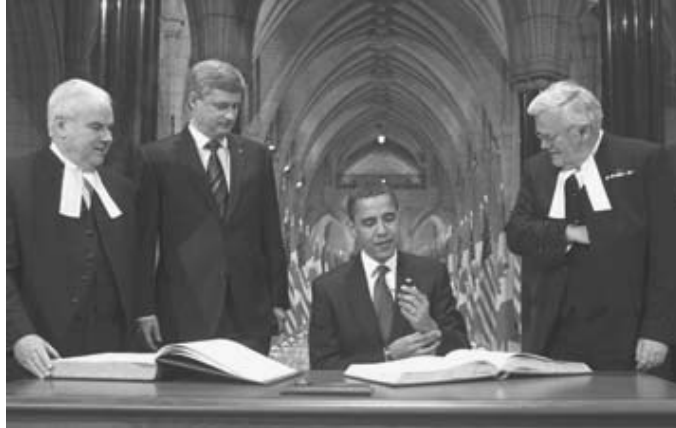
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FROM PAGE 1 OBAMA

of the Canada-U.S. border.

Tackling climate change and energy security

Noting the long and productive history of bilateral co-operation on continental environmental protection and energy trade and technology, the President and the Prime Minister agreed that environmental protection and the development of clean energy are inextricably linked and announced plans



to work together to build a new energy economy as a key element of broader economic recovery and reinvestment efforts.

The Leaders discussed practical ways the United States and Canada could encourage the development of clean energy technologies to reduce greenhouse gases and combat climate change. The Leaders established a senior-level U.S.-Canada Clean Energy Dialogue that will cooperate on several critical energy science and technology issues, including:

- Expand clean energy research and

Ottawa shop workers stunned by Obama stop



An Ottawa ByWard Market shop girl says she nearly passed out with excitement when U.S. President Barack Obama made a quick stop into her store on Thursday after finishing up business on Parliament Hill.

The president's surprise stop at the historic ByWard Market created what has become the usual pandemonium Obama now encounters wherever he goes, with crowds of eager shoppers - some screaming with excitement -- rushing to meet the U.S. president and to grab a

development
 - Develop and deploy clean energy technology
 - Build a more efficient electricity grid based on clean and renewable generation
 United States and Canadian officials will meet in the coming weeks to launch the Clean Energy Dialogue.

Responding to international security challenges

The President and the Prime Minister agreed on the importance of Canada and the United States cooperating closely on a number of key international priorities for

both countries, with a particular focus on Afghanistan, which is a top priority for both countries and which will be a major subject of attention at the upcoming NATO Summit. The Leaders also agreed to work together closely in the Americas, including promoting effective discussion and meaningful results at the Summit of the Americas in April.

Our Foreign Ministers will meet in Washington next week, and Ministers of Defence the following week, to pursue a strengthened dialogue on these and other key international challenges. ■

picture.

Obama's stopped at a French bakery for cookies, a souvenir shop where he picked up a key chain with a moose on it for his daughter and a scarf for his wife, and then the Beaver Tails Hut where 17-year-old Jessica Milien works.

"It was overwhelming, I almost fainted. I couldn't believe I was standing in front of President Obama," Milien told Canada AM Friday.

A U.S. Secret Service agent appeared at the window of the Beaver

Tail hut and said the president had asked for one of the hot pastries her store sells. Milien, who has been a huge fan of Obama's, was selected as the employee who would hand it to him.

"He asked me my name and we had a little conversation and then we took pictures," she recounted, calling it the most exciting day of her life.

"Meeting him meant that there is possibility to succeed at anything in life. He's inspired me to work hard and achieve every day," she added.

BeaverTails Canada Inc. founder and co-owner Grant Hooker had invented a custom-made Beaver Tail, called the Obama Tail, which was served at the Canadian Embassy during the Obama inauguration back in January.

So that's what was served to the man himself: an Obama Tail, a tail-shaped deep-fried pastry, coated with cinnamon and sugar and topped with



maple-flavoured eyes and drizzled with a Nutella "O" for "Obama."

Hooker says he had sent out an invitation to the president to come in and try it but he never dreamed Obama could do it.

"I had said there was a snowball's chance in Florida he would actually accept," Hooker told Canada AM.

But accept he did, though no one at BeaverTails knew he was coming ahead of time.

"We didn't have the faintest hint," Hooker says.

Obama and his massive security team also shuffled their way through the crowds to stop in Le Moulin de Provence, a local French bakery. There, the president picked up maple-

leaf-shaped cookies for his daughters - which he got on the house, says employee Isabelle Corriveau.

"He wanted to buy shortbread cookies, but we gave them to him, for his girls," she told Canada AM. "He said thank-you and then he left."

After Obama shook hands with all the employees in the shop and posed for pictures, Corriveau says she was struck by how friendly the president was.

"I think he's down-to-earth and really nice. He's a really nice person actually, I think," she said.

Obama and his 50-car motorcade also made an unexpected visit at the indoor market across the street from the bakery, where he drew screams and cheers from shoppers as he wandered through the aisles and chatted with vendors.

Earlier in the day, about 1,000 onlookers gathered on the snowy lawn of Parliament Hill to catch a glimpse of

the famed American president. They received only a brief wave from Obama, who was joined by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. But many said it was the moment they had been waiting for.

"We're so tired, we haven't slept," Stephanie Scott, a Toronto resident who arrived on the Hill at 4:30 a.m. told CTV Ottawa.

Some Americans even made the trip to Canada just to see the U.S. president.

"Why do you think I'm here? It's because I couldn't go (to the inauguration in Washington)," said Rita Bruney of Brooklyn. "I missed him one place, so I'm catching him on the other side." ■

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Marine Paradise Of Central Visayas



The whole island of Siquijor was declared a marine reserve and tourist zone in 1978 by virtue of Proclamation No. 1810. As such, the island-province will be developed into a major tourist destination under the supervision of the Philippine Tourism Authority.

It was originally known as 'Katugasan' coming from tugas, molave trees that covered the hills. The Spanish called it 'Isla de Fuego' due to the bushel of fireflies they found there.

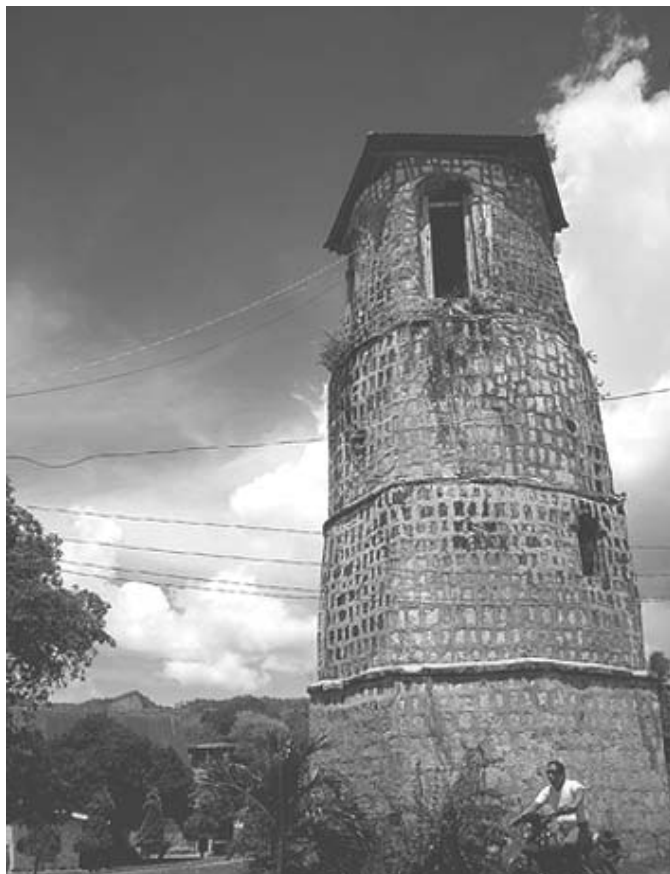
Known for its scenic beauty and archaic churches, Siquijor is also blessed with natural and historical attractions. Its unspoiled environment and the warm hospitality of its people never fail to beckon visitors from all over. The serenity of the whole province makes it ideal for a perfect getaway.

It lures nature lovers and adventurers to explore its numerous caves, springs and rivers, and to climb up Mount Bandilaan, the highest peak at the center of the island. Being a coral island, it also invites diving enthusiasts to explore the reefs

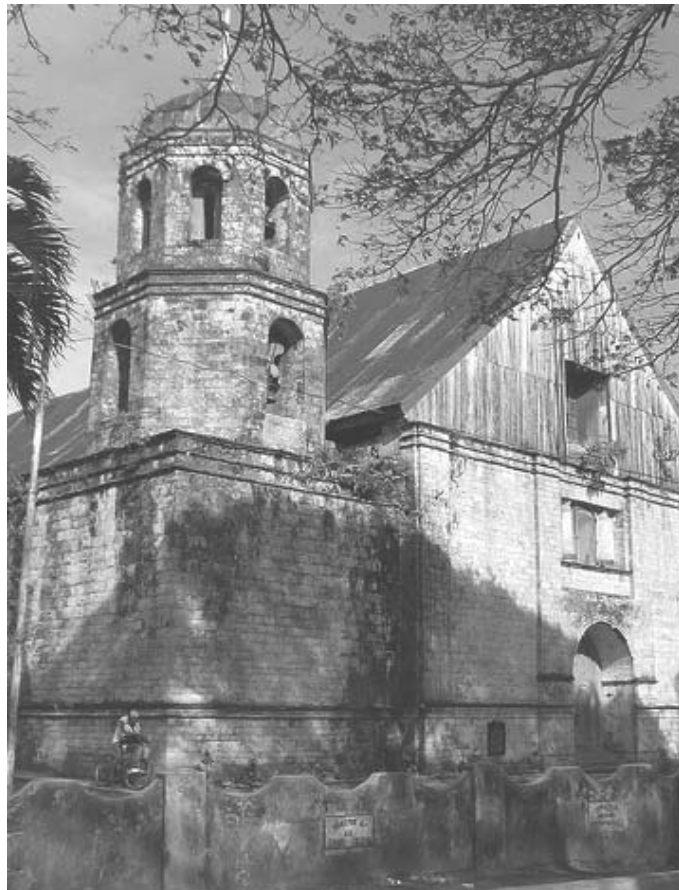
surrounding the island, teeming with marine life which have been remarkably left untouched. For tourists who just want to lay back and relax, the island offers a never-ending stretch of white sand beaches, all 102 kilometers of shorelines surrounding the island. It also provides a trip to the past with the old Cang-Isok house, and **St Isidore Labrador Parish Convent** in Lazi which was constructed by the Spaniards in 1884 and it is reputed to be the biggest and one of the oldest convents in the Philippines. It is believed to have been the vacation house for the Diocese's priests at that time.

Salagdoong Beach Resort which is one of the island's most frequented beaches which boasts of crystal-clear waters, powdery white sand, high rock formations and favorite diving spots.

Capilay Spring is a natural spring converted into a public swimming pool at the heart of **San Juan** town. Its cold water with the nearby shades of trees offers a refreshing delight to picnickers especially during summer.



Old stone bellfry, part of St. Francis of Assisi Church, located in the capital, Siquijor



San Isidro Labrador Church and Convent (Lazi, Siquijor) - Reputed to be the biggest and among the oldest in the country, it has been declared a historical landmark by the Philippine Historical Commission.



The sunlit halls of San Isidro are filled with a rich history

Cambugahay Falls, located near Lazi, is composed of several levels of waterfalls and is considered enchanted by the locals, as it is secluded and relatively unexplored.

With such varied tourist attractions, Siquijor looms as the playground of the Central Visayas region. ■



Cambugahay Falls, Siquijor consists of 3 or 4 successive falls like this one where you can swim and dive



Solili Festival - Taking after the traditions in Lazi, Siquijor, the Solili Binalaye is a marriage ritual where both parents of the bride and groom prepare a fest and take turns in advising the couple on the realities of married life. The rituals are depicted in a street-dancing competition that serves as the highlights of the week-long Solili Festival and Araw ng Siquijor Charter Day Celebration.



Capilay Spring Park (San Juan, Siquijor) - A natural, spring-fed swimming pool situated at the heart of the town plaza where local people converge during weekends for a swim in the cool waters of the lake or simply sit under the shade in the spring park and people-watch



San Juan Beach, Siquijor



The sky and the sea meet at this beautiful golden sand beach, just a 5 min walk from vacation homes in Lazi, Siquijor.



Siquijor Island, view from the mountains - known for its vast shores, its laid-back & serene lifestyle, the island is a mystical place, a true haven for the weary soul.

Liberal Party stalwart denounces graft raps

Let us join hands vs global crisis - Arroyo



Congressman Nereus Acosta

Former Bukidnon congressman Nereus Acosta, a stalwart of the Liberal Party (LP), yesterday denounced the graft case filed against him by the Office of the Ombudsman for allegedly misusing P10.5 million in public funds during his term seven years ago.

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"I stand by my record of environmental legislation (as principal author of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts), non-government organizations (NGO) and community-based work in Mindanao, and the legitimate use of public funds for my district during my first two terms," Acosta said in a statement sent to The STAR.

Sen. Mar Roxas, LP president, also denounced the Ombudsman's move, saying Acosta "has unfortunately become an unwitting collateral damage in these renewed attacks by the Arroyo administration against me and the Liberals for standing up for accountability and good governance."

"We expect that they will use the 'rule by law and coercion' at the expense of the rule of law," Roxas said in a statement.

The Ombudsman announced the other day its decision to file charges against Acosta before the Sandiganbayan based on a complaint lodged against him in 2001.

Acosta, together with his mother Socorro, former mayor of Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, and his maternal aunt Ma. Nemia Borridor, is being accused of violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

Acosta is accused of illegally transferring a P2.5-million solar tunnel dryer from one town to another for the use of the Bukidnon Integrated Network of Home Industries Inc. (Binhi), a private entity.

He is also accused of releasing P2.5 million in public funds to Binhi where his aunt is a board member,

and another P5.5 million to the Bukidnon Vegetables Producers Cooperative, another private entity.

"I am fully prepared to present any evidence attesting to this, as we have answered all charges leveled against me and my mother previously," he said.

"I will face the bar of public opinion and any court of law, as any public servant ought to when called to account for his actions while in office," he said.

Acosta bewailed how the case "used by my political opponents as an election issue against me during my campaign for a third term in 2004" has resurfaced.

He recalled that the Ombudsman revived the case at the height of the "Hello, Garci" controversy and just a few days after he endorsed the impeachment complaint against President Arroyo in 2005.

"I was stripped of my chairmanship of the (House) committee on ecology and did not receive any pork barrel funds for the rest of my final term in Congress," he said.

In 2006, Acosta said he was one of four congressmen who again endorsed a second impeachment complaint against Mrs. Arroyo a year before former Commission on Elections commissioner Virgilio Garcillano ran for congressman in the first district of Bukidnon.

"I find it utterly malicious that this case is being sent to the Sandiganbayan at a time when Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez is under intense fire from various sectors for failing to act on large-scale, multimillion-peso graft cases," he said.

Acosta said he now belongs to a large group of private citizens and groups led by Bantay Katarungan, Kilosbayan and former Senator Jovito Salonga that is preparing an impeachment complaint against Gutierrez.

The Office of the Ombudsman, however, dismissed Acosta's claim that the graft case against him has political color.

"It's only the facts of the case, the evidence and the law that were considered," Assistant Ombudsman Jose de Jesus Jr. told The STAR.

On the issue of an impeachment complaint against Gutierrez, he said the Office of the Ombudsman would deal with it at the proper time if such a complaint would indeed be filed.

"We still believe that our honorable congressmen will not be swayed by the few detractors of the Ombudsman. We will cross the bridge when we get there," De Jesus said. ■

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on Monday underscored the need for the government, business and labor sectors to work together in order to weather the adverse impact of the global economic crisis.

In her speech during the Multi-Sectoral Jobs Summit at the Heroes Hall in Malacanang, President Arroyo said this is a time for the three sectors to join hands by not neglecting those who feel the hardships of the global downturn, especially firms under strain and workers facing layoffs.

In response to the concerns raised during the tripartite meeting two weeks ago, the President laid out some specific measures and actions to help and assist displaced/retrained workers as well as companies affected by the global economic meltdown.

Likewise, the President emphasized on what government, business and labor are doing to save and generate jobs.

She said even before the tripartite consultation started, the government has already been put together the Economic Resiliency Plan.

"Under this Economic Resiliency Plan which is our stimulus program, we will continue our unprecedented investments. I direct key agencies to show solid progress in bidding out and/or implementing major infra and social projects under the P300 billion stimulus plan. We consider this the most important government initiative this year," she said.

The Chief Executive also said part of the resiliency plan is the putting of all budget-funded energy-independence and environment jobs in one box called "Green Collar Jobs."



Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo delivers her message during a 'Joining Hands Against Global Crisis' meeting at the presidential palace in Manila February 9, 2009. Arroyo called for a meeting of government agencies on Monday to help generate jobs for Filipinos in the face of the global crisis that has laid off about 33,000 domestic jobs and nearly 6,000 overseas work contract since October 2008.

Truly if anything, she said, "a tight economy should prompt people to yearn for greater stability and harmony and working together not working apart".

"So, let us all pull together to make sure the country puts jobs and the economy ahead of political and costly conflicts. Let us focus on "Joining Hands Against the Global Crisis," she added. ■

Arroyo meets Hillary Clinton



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (R) and Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo laugh as they speak to reporters at the State Department in Washington February 6, 2009.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo met with US State Secretary Hillary Clinton in Washington, D.C. on Friday, a day after she failed to meet with President Barack Obama, a Malacañang official said.

The President and the former first lady of the United States met for 30 minutes at the State Department and talked about the Philippines' strategy in ending the Moro insurgency in southern Philippines and addressing the effects of global meltdown, according to a Palace aide traveling with her.

Arroyo asked Clinton to include the

Philippines in her scheduled trip to Asia later this month.

"She (Clinton) said she will try her best to go to the Philippines as long as her schedule allows it," Undersecretary Lorelei Fajardo, deputy presidential spokesperson, said over government-run Radyo ng Bayan from Washington.

Arroyo made an unscheduled two-day visit to Washington to attend last Thursday's National Prayer Breakfast, an annual gathering of US Congress members, but failed to meet Obama, who was the guest speaker. ■

Philippines seen unlikely to attempt constitution change

39,000 lose jobs in Philippines in four months

Allies of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo have dropped plans to amend the constitution ahead of presidential elections next year, and the polls will go ahead as scheduled, officials and analysts said yesterday. Manila has been rife with talk in recent months that the administration would pursue the plan to help Arroyo and senior elected officials circumvent constitutionally-set term limits and remain in office.

But there has been strong opposition from Arroyo's political foes and from the powerful Church,



Interior and local government secretary Ronaldo Puno during an interview with Reuters at his office at Camp Crame in Quezon City, Metro Manila February 20, 2009.

year. Arroyo will not be eligible to contest under laws that prohibit more than a single six-year elected term for the president. Varying limits are prescribed for other elected officials.

While some opposition politicians warn that government allies may still stage a last-minute attempt to remove term limits, the space to do so seems to be rapidly shrinking.

The only resolution in the House of Representatives relating to constitutional amendments, or charter change, is a move by the legislature to amend some provisions relating to the economy, including easing limits on foreign investment in certain sectors.

But many see this as a thinly-disguised attempt to ram through provisions removing the term limits on elected officials, and so it is being dropped for now, Puno said.

"There is a certainty on the part of everyone that no, they are not really talking about economic provisions, they are talking about perpetuation in office. That's unfortunate but we have to live with it. "Most discussions I've had with leaders in Congress indicate that we have no time to do this (economic change) and that it will just have to wait for the next administration."

House Speaker Prospero Nograles, the author of the resolution, said he hoped it would come up for discussion soon, but indicated it was unlikely to get very far.

"Personally, I think the mood in Congress is to have elections," he told Reuters.

Pro-Arroyo Congressman Luis Villafuerte, who is preparing another resolution for charter change by setting up a constituent assembly, also said time was against his plan.

"I think we're running out of time because if we would settle all the controversies around my proposal, it would be too late to introduce amendments, make and implement them," he said.

Any proposal on charter change approved by the House would have to be endorsed by the 24-member Senate, where a significant number are opponents of Arroyo.

And if the two legislatures differ, the only recourse would be the Supreme Court, which would leave little time to accomplish anything before the elections due in May next year. ■

At least 39,000 Filipinos have lost their jobs since October as factories and companies lay off workers amid the deepening global financial crisis, an official said Monday.

The 39,000 included more than 5,400 overseas-based Filipinos who had lost their jobs in the Middle East and Taiwan, which accounted for the bulk of the returning expatriates, Labour Secretary Mariano Roque said.

Roque said the figure was based on official reports by industry leaders as well

sector in Dubai, but had managed to find employment elsewhere in the United Arab Emirates.

He said of the estimated 300,000 Filipinos in the Emirates, 2,000 were now out of work.

Places for Filipino nurses in the United States were also "dropping" with only 700 contracts up for grabs last year, compared with up to 8,000 available three years ago, he said.

The jobless rate among Filipinos abroad could be much higher, he



Job applicants prepare documents for an employment agency in Manila on February 3. At least 39,000 Filipinos have lost their jobs since October as factories and companies lay off workers amid the deepening global financial crisis, an official has said.

as trade groups.

He said the government had allotted seven billion pesos (149 million dollars) to create 180,000 "emergency jobs" this year as a stop-gap measure to prevent unemployment from ballooning.

"As of last Friday we have about 39,000 fall outs. These are workers who have lost their jobs mainly in the electronics and manufacturing sector," Roque told the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines.

He said the government had enough resources to create temporary employment opportunities in the next two years, but would be hard pressed if the crisis extended beyond that.

Roque noted that many Filipinos lost their jobs in the real estate and services

conceded, noting that a large portion of the eight million Filipino workers abroad were without proper documentation.

The government has already launched a retraining programme for those who lost their jobs, with the business process outsourcing sector expected to provide opportunities as it is projected to grow 20 percent this year despite the crisis, Roque said.

But the government "cannot hit a 100 percent batting average in terms of helping these overseas Filipinos," he said, noting that many were already heavily in debt even before flying out.

"They are expecting immediate relief, and it's something we can't do quickly," he said. ■

leading to worries of divisiveness and possible unrest if the government stuck to its guns.


"If you are asking me about cha-cha (charter change), I can't see that there is going to be time for it any more," said Ronaldo Puno, Arroyo's chief political strategist.

"The process of going through the legislature and then the probable challenge in the Supreme Court and then subsequently a plebiscite – that time frame does not seem likely to fit within the remaining time," he said in an interview. "Time is against any kind of change."


Economists have warned that any possibility of unrest in the country would be hugely detrimental for financial markets and for prospective foreign investment, given growing risk aversion following the global financial crisis.

Elections are due in May next

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Philippine Embassy Consular Clinic in Montreal Feb. 28

This year's first Philippine Consular Service will be held at FAMAS Community Centre on Saturday, 28 February from 9 am to 5 pm (attached letter from Philippine Ambassador to Canada, H.E. Jose Brillantes, refers).

The requirements and special instructions regarding Machine Readable Passport Applications are listed below. Kindly note that other services will be offered as well:

- Full notarial and legal services, Balikbayan stamp services, Passport amendments and Travel document services

- Accepting dual citizenship, report of birth, report of marriage, visa and mortuary certificate applications

Hard copies of the attached Machine Readable Passport Applications and their instructions are available courtesy of FAMAS Community Centre located on Van Horne Avenue.

For further inquiries, please contact the Philippine Embassy at telephone no. 613-233-1121 or at embassyofphilippines@rogers.com.

Carmelita Sideco suddenly passed away February 25, 2009



We are saddened by the news of Carmelita Sideco's sudden death after having been brought to the Royal Victoria Hospital on Tuesday evening. She succumbed to pneumonia at 1 p.m. the following day, Wednesday.

Final arrangements were not known at press time.

Lita was a very active volunteer in many organizations. She was always helping and supporting different causes. In particular, she often shopped at the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative in her desire to do her share of making the Coop become a viable enterprise. She was also a member of the Foundation for Greater Montreal, an organization raising funds to build a community center for all Filipinos.

We will surely miss such a great community leader.

We wish to express our sincere condolence to her family and friends.

Trent English Professor Wins Prestigious National Teaching Award

Dr. Sarah Keefer Awarded One of Ten 2009 3M Fellowships from Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Friday, February 6, 2009, Peterborough - Dr. Sarah Keefer, a professor of English Literature at Trent University, has been recognized as one of Canada's outstanding university teachers as a winner of a prestigious 3M Teaching Fellowship, a national award given annually to professors in Canada in recognition of their excellence in teaching and educational leadership.

"I was absolutely wowed when I received the news," Prof. Keefer said about winning the award, which is co-sponsored by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) and 3M Canada Company. "This is a valorization of what I do. I love teaching and I truly believe that it is a calling. I go the distance for my students and this award says I am doing something right. It is a great vote of confidence."

"Dr. Keefer is a most fitting recipient of this prestigious award. She models the best attributes of scholar and teacher. Her students are truly fortunate to have been provided with an enduring legacy of scholarship and pride in scholarship," said Dr. Christine McKinnon, vice president Academic and dean of Arts & Science

at Trent. "This honour also adds Dr. Keefer to a prestigious list of previous 3M Fellowship winners at Trent, further demonstrating the University's commitment to excellence in teaching."

Prof. Keefer holds a B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. She started at Trent as an instructor in 1984, becoming a full professor in 1999. She has also held the positions of senior tutor, acting associate chair and coordinator of the Emphasis in Medieval, Antique and Renaissance Studies at Trent. Her primary area of research is the liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon Church and its influence on the culture of the period. Throughout her distinguished teaching career, she has also been awarded Merit Awards for Excellence in Teaching (1997, 2003, 2008), Trent University's Symons Award for Excellence in Teaching (2000), and an OCUFA Teaching Award (2001).

OR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 12, 2009

ALLEN DEFENDS WORKERS RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

OTTAWA - A New Democrat bill to protect the pensions and severances of unemployed Canadians is one of the few private members' bills that has a chance to become law this session.

"The Conservative government refuses to make essential changes to Employment Insurance to protect families from hitting the bottom of their savings before benefits kick in, this must change, and that's what my bill will accomplish" said New Democrat Critic for Skills Training and Apprenticeships Malcolm Allen.

Allen was pleased to learn yesterday that his Private Members Bill, introduced on February 2, 2009, to protect severances and pensions of unemployed workers was bumped up on the Order of Precedence. This means that Bill C-279, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (amounts not included in earnings), will be debated this session and has good chance of becoming law. Only 30 Private Members Bills are reviewed by government in each session.

"New Democrats will also continue to push the government to open access to Employment Insurance," said Allen. "In the absence of leadership from the government in responding to the needs of families in this economic crisis, Bill C-279 will be good step forward and I urge my Conservative colleagues from the Niagara Region to break ranks from their party and join New Democrats in supporting the workers of Canada."

Allen points out that up to 60 percent of the unemployed are not eligible for EI under the current rules and nothing in this Conservative and Liberal budget is going to change that.

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<p>Bean Curd Soup 1/2 Crispy Chicken Shrimp Cake with Chinese Broccoli Sweet and Sour Pork Seafood with Bean Curd in Hot Pot Salt and Pepper Squid Fried Sea Bass Fish Steamed Rice</p> <p style="text-align: right;">\$63.95 6 Persons</p>	<p>Fish maw seafood soup 2 Baked Lobsters with Ginger Seafood with Eggplant in Hot Pot Stuffed Bean Curd with Shrimp Seafood with Chinese broccoli Fried Sea Bass Fish House Fried Rice Special Fried Noodles</p> <p style="text-align: right;">\$125.95 10 Persons</p>

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Seafood mix with Oyster Sauce



Ingredients:

- * 1 kilo of seafood (any one or a combination of crabs, prawns, squid, clams, mussels and any seafood)
- * 1 large onion, diced
- * spring onions (cut 1 inch long)
- * 1 thumb sized ginger, sliced into strips
- * 1/2 teaspoon of sugar or monosodium glutamate
- * 1/3 cup of oyster sauce
- * 2 pieces green finger pepper (sili pag sigang) chopped
- * 3 table spoons of cooking oil or olive oil
- * 1/3 cup water
- * Salt and pepper to taste

Cooking Instructions:

- * Cut crabs into 2 or 4 if very big
- * Steam crabs and prawns for 5 minutes
- * Clean squid and cut into 1 inch long sections
- * On a big wok, sauté garlic until golden brown, then add ginger and onions, sauté for a minute more
- * Add water and bring to a boil
- * Add squid, clams, mussels and other uncooked seafood.
- * Boil for 5 minutes
- * Add crabs and shrimp
- * Add the oyster sauce
- * Salt and pepper to taste
- * Sprinkle the sugar or monosodium glutamate (vetsin)
- * Add the long green chili
- * Mix well and bring to a boil
- * Simmer for 3 minutes
- * Serve hot with steamed rice

Seafood with Oyster Sauce Cooking Tips:

- * Add the long green chili earlier if you prefer your mixed seafood with oyster sauce hot.
- *The above recipe can be used for just one type of seafood like crabs only or a combination of many including fish.

Siopao (Chinese bun)



siopao buns:

- 4 cups rice flour or dim-sum flour
 - 1 tablespoon baking powder
 - 3 teaspoon dry yeast
 - 1 and half cup luke warm water
 - 4 tablespoon sugar
 - half cup shortening
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - extra flour
 - siopao bun filling: previously boiled half kilo chicken preferably breast part (boil in water together with 3 whole eggs add 1 teaspoon of salt. drain. strip into small pieces).
 - half cup water
 - 1 cup onion (finely chopped)
 - 1 clove garlic (finely chopped)
 - 3 tablespoon soy sauce
 - 3 tablespoon sesame oil
 - 2 tablespoon sugar
 - 1 to 2 tablespoon of cornstarch or corn flour
 - half teaspoon ground black pepper
 - 3 hard boiled eggs (cut into thin slices or tiny cubes); salted eggs can also be used and is a good substitute to the plain egg
 - 3 tablespoon hoi-sin sauce (optional)
 - 1 teaspoon MSG (optional)
- How to make siopao**
the dough of the siopao bun:
dissolve yeast in lukewarm water. add sugar and 3 and half cups of rice flour, baking powder and mix to make a soft sponge like dough. squeeze and beat thoroughly or mash. transfer to a floured board and knead with your hands, using a pushing motion, until the dough is smooth. keep doing this for about an 20- 40 minutes. (really depends on the quality of the flour)

Set aside on a lightly oiled large bowl (large enough, to hold the dough once it expands or rise), cover it with a clean slightly damp cloth or towel and wait for it to rise until almost double in size. (for some say 20 - 30 minutes). after reaching the expected size, add the remaining flour and 1/4 cup shortening. mix well. knead until smooth. punch down once, re-cover with the cloth or towel and leave to rise again for another 30 with your hands, pulling the sides to form a circle or balls. set aside on a clean, dry surface. the filling of the siopao bun: in a sauce pan, heat oil. saute garlic and onion. reduce heat, add chicken strips and cook till lightly brown now add water, soy sauce, , sugar, ground pepper, and corn starch or corn flour, hoi sin sauce, MSG stir continuously until sauce boils, reduce heat. if you want the filling to be thick, add in more of the rnstarch. let it simmer uncovered for 2 minutes. turn off heat. Add the chopped hard boiled eggs to the cooked filling, stir in to mix. set aside. How to fill the siopao

buns: take each ball of dough and roll out on floured surface.place one round of dough in palm of hand.flatten or deepen a bit the top of the dough and put one table spoon of filling in center of siopao dough.press edges of dough together. take the 2 ends of bun, bring them up over the pinched edge and twist together firmly.Cut 12 pieces of wax or greaseproof paper into 3 inch square. or depending on the number of ball doughs you've made. a plain coupon bond will also do just fine. brush one side of the paper lightly with oil if using only a coupon bond. Place the bun upside down, so the smooth rounded side is uppermost. or just simply place each siopao on a piece of wax paper or greaseproof paper. arrange on a steamer. keep doing this to

the rest of the stuffed dough buns. just set aside excess stuffed dough buns if steamer is full. can also be stored frozen and steamed in the future.
On steaming the siopao buns: Seam the buns in a 3 layer aluminum steamer setting but originally done in 4-5 layers of native steamer of bamboo setting. with the ground floor comprising water with vinegar--- don't forget the vinegar which would certainly help to keep your buns white and attractive. the second layer is empty. the third or upper most layer is where you place the siopao buns to steam.
steam the stuffed siopao buns for approximately 12-20 minutes or until the siopao buns are a bit soft. ■

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FilStar Photo Gallery



Princess of Hearts pageant sponsored by the Bicol Association of Quebec held on Saturday, February 14, 2009 at St. Kevin's Church Hall. The Princess of Hearts 2009, Christine Arroyo (center) is flanked by three princesses with their escorts - 1st runner-up Jackieelyn Marr, 2nd runner-up Chris April Llaguno, and 3rd runner-up Stephanie Mendoza.



The Executive Board of the Bicol Association of Quebec headed by Merle Nunez, president, pose with the Princess of Hearts 2009, Christine Arroyo



Laging Handa Scout Group 0592 members pose with the Stoney Point Commissioner, Virginia Elliot. Front row from left: Ian Gravel, Kyle Fernandez, Ian Gravel, Jamie Ezra "Babin" Cello, and Group Commissioner Zenaida Kharroubi. Back row: Manny Lagasca, FAMAS director, Scout Area Commissioner Virginia Elliot, Scout Leader Rom y Valenzuela, Flor Rillo, Vice-president of FAMAS. Other members not in the picture are: Scout Leaders Nelson Alvaro and Mary Joy Lizarondo, Scouts Ryan and Christian Masangkay, Miguel Carlo Alvaro, and Thomas Nuguid, Cubs Dawn Sarto, Natasha Nuguid and Mikhayla de las Alas.



"Mangoes for Mango" - Area Commissioner Virginia Elliot told the story of how Scout leaders get a nickname. She explained why she got her Scout nickname "Mango" because of the color of her hair. Coincidentally, Laging Handa Scouts gave her a gift of mangoes.



Ernelito Lebario shows Ian Gravel how to tie a rope while Area Commissioner Virginia Elliot of the Stoney Point Area watches. Rope tying is one of the survival skills taught in the Scout program.

Laging Handa Scout Group 0592 needs more adult volunteers

The first Filipino-Canadian Scout Group, which was founded in 2003, is calling for more adult volunteers to join the group in order to carry out the Scouting programs which help young children from ages 5 to 14 develop their survival and leadership skills.

Parents are also urged to register their children, both boys and girls, during this month of February until March to benefit from the reduced membership fees of \$99 and also have a chance to win prizes.



Jamie Ezra "Babin" Cello, Ian Gravel and Neil Gravel are intently figuring out a puzzle which appears in the book brought by Area Commissioner Virginia Elliot during the weekly activity of the Laging Handa Scouts, Saturday, February 21, 2009.

There are many activities that are designed for each age group. Camping is one of the most popular activities enjoyed by both adults and youth. It is required in the program to go camping every season. On March 6 to 8, Laging Handa Scouts will go camping to Tamacouta for the winter season. Parents and guests are allowed to join this camping trip.

Attendance in Scout Jamborees is another exciting activity that young people will always enjoy and remember for a lifetime. Instead of merely watching TV or playing computer games, young people will have a better way of spending their time by being part of the Scouting program.

For more information, please call 514-485-7861.

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Tips for small businesses to survive recession

I do believe that most Filipinos who successfully make it in any place of their choices didn't really put this big "R" into their head.. after all, we are all used to that. We came from a country whose recession is just a part of everyday life . Wise "pinoy" normally laughed and treated the situation like a scene in a tele-novela they just let it shrink, then move forward. So what's new! It doesn't matter if we are in a global recession??? "pinoy yata toh! sanay sa hirap."

When two employees at a family owned store recently asked to work three days each week instead of five, owner Noella Gonzaga would immediately hang a hiring sign on the front for someone to fill those shifts. But with talks of a possible recession in the news everyday, she ultimately decided to bridge the gap herself.

"Normally we'd replace those days, but because of the climate, we decided to wait and see," said Noella, who has owned the store for 17 years. "It just means that my husband, me and my children should work a little more. Noella is one of a growing number of Montreal's small-business owners who have started planning for a recession earlier.

Some small businesses - especially those connected to the real estate market - are already feeling the pain of dwindling revenue. Others such as Noella are doing fine but taking steps to protect themselves in case business starts to sour. Are we entering a broad-based recession with a capital R? Or will this remain a narrower slump linked to the mortgage crisis? It's mostly common sense that many small-business owners are too busy or distracted to apply until it's too late.

In either case, small-business group experts offer a variety of tips for entrepreneurs looking to survive in tough economic times :

Pay attention to cash flow. Your sales figures may be great, but it's cash flow that will determine whether you can keep the doors open. Calculate whether you have enough cash to pay for your expenses if revenue suddenly drops. When these times come up, it's important to put together a realistic cash forecast," said Mike Rose, chief executive officer of Rose Ryan, a finance and accounting firm. "Run some scenarios. What if you lose a big client? What if you experience a drop in sales?"

Get Tough with accounts receivable. In good times, it's easy to let things slide so that customers who are supposed to pay in 30 days don't pay until months later. In bad times, you can't afford to be so mellow. Call them up, and tell them you love their business but you have a business to run, too, and you've got to get paid," said Jeffery Stein, CEO of Peyton Investments. The squeaky wheel gets the attention. If you lose a customer because you're being aggressive about getting paid, you were probably going to lose them anyway.

Trim the fat. "What fat?" you may well ask. You probably already deep-sized the glitzy holiday party. But this is a chance to look for further cost savings and efficiencies within your business.

Ways to cut costs That might mean postponing non-essential purchases, consolidating offices or dismissing underperforming workers. Be aware and kicking. One of my client companies is looking at who are their 'A players,' " said Jerry Ervin, a management consultant and trainer.

"They're a sales organization in the real estate industry, and during the boom it was a lot of order taking. People didn't really have to sell at all. Now they're having to ramp up their sales skills. They're moving people (who can't generate sales) out."

Ask employees for help. "One mistake many businesses make is that leadership just clams up," said Denise

project to the forefront. ... It's what people want now."

Pay attention to existing customers. Your biggest asset is your existing customers," said Chuck Born of Growth Management Consultants. "Look for more business from them, and get referrals from them. It's always easier to keep customers than to find new ones, so customer service



O'Berry, a small-business adviser . When you see trouble coming, open up communication with all employees, particularly front-line employees. Ask them for ideas on how things can be improved."

Seek employee suggestions on staffing reductions. Layoffs aren't necessarily your only alternative. There are intermediate options " said Mike Van Horn, who runs support groups for small-business owners. Get your people together and say, 'we've got a downturn, we have the option of laying people off, or cutting everyone's hours by 10 percent but that's the last thing that we're gonna do in order to survive'. Often there will be a lot of support (for cost cutting) if employees see it's in everyone's interest over time."

Retool your products. How would a recession affect your customers? And can you retool your products or services to meet their new needs? Karen Bevels, who runs Karen Bevels Cafe and Catering, recently started a line of half-price catering menus. They offer the same caliber of ingredients as her regular menus, but with less-experienced servers and simpler recipes - a \$30-per-person dinner built around beef lasagna and an apple crisp, for instance, instead of a \$60 dinner featuring beef bourguignon and an apple tart. Although the lower-priced menus started just last fall, they're already generating more revenue than Bevels' traditional catering. People are looking for a low-cost alternative," said Bevels. "The recession forced this

becomes more important than ever.

Take your key customers to lunch or drop by to thank them for their business," Stein said. "They may give you clues (about their solvency), such as not answering questions about how their business is going. Meanwhile, learn everything you can about how your customers are doing financially - so you don't extend credit to a business that is teetering on the edge of failure.

On the personnel front, a recession is an opportunity to snatch up highly skilled employees who are out of work or insecure about their company's future.

Lorna Clayton, owner of a beauty salon in Laval hired 4 experienced beauticians recently from a troubled competitor. Whether their troubles are due to the recession, I'm not sure," Lorna said. but we're taking it as an opportunity to hire and grow, and try to learn from their business, basically."

Similarly, keep an eye out for weakened competitors who may be available for acquisition. Builders Control, a 12-person firm that manages construction funds for lenders, is using the downturn in the housing industry as an opportunity to buy two similar out-of-state companies. Take advantage of the low rate interest, downed prices of property that can be used in your line of work or future business plan.

Don't stop marketing. What everyone cuts first is marketing, which is crazy," said Van Horn. "Look at your marketing to see where you actually

moving photos with your own music 🎵

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to do is eliminate the thing that will bring in new business. Scrutinize your marketing budget to make sure you're not wasting money, but don't stop marketing or advertising completely. If you can afford it, you may even want to increase your sales and marketing team.

Offer deals. If you can make them pencil out, think carefully before slashing prices as a survival strategy. Know your costs before you discount your prices," said Vicki Suiter of Suiter Financial Systems. Using a strategy of lowering prices to get more business can bankrupt your company. Still, sometimes a strategic discounting gamble can pay off.

Search here and there for a wise strategy. Verus Technology Solutions, a tech consulting firm, saw a lot of its business evaporate during the dot-com recession. To land one particularly big job, Verus slashed its fees 38 percent. Winning that contract allowed Verus to avoid laying off its most valuable programmers and emerge from the recession intact. And partway through the job, as the client saw results, Verus managed to renegotiate the contract at a higher rate.

That project was the most important 18-month project we've ever had, and allowed us to keep our really top technical people on staff," said co-owner Shawn Westerhoff. "We'd been looking at staff reductions and benefit expenses reductions, and we didn't have to do any of that."

Planning for recovery
The big client that sustained Verus Solutions through the last recession was a venture capital firm that decided to upgrade its computer systems - so it would have better data for decision making when the economy picked up. "Now is the time when business owners ought to be going to workshops on how to prepare for the recovery.

Plan ahead - easier said than done. Virtually all experts say the time to plan for a recession is before it happens. Start trimming costs before you're actually losing money. Diversify your client base to include markets that are less affected by a downturn. And apply for loans or lines of credit while your business is thriving - don't

wait until you're in the middle of a cash crunch.

Of course, such advice will come too late for many businesses. "The smart businesses were taking care of financing the first day you put your money up for business," said Paul Witkay, founder of the Alliance of Chief Executives. "If you're just reacting now, you're probably in trouble." The flip side of planning for a recession is planning for the inevitable recovery. It's not easy as we think! But if you are still on a hot seat to own a company, then I would suggest online home-based business with less money involved is the way to turn these recession years into your most profitable years ever. Here are a few ideas that you can do so:

1. You can create your own product or write your own tutorial book or e-book and market it online.
2. You can become an affiliate and sell other's products online.
3. You can start an online auction business in eBay, yahoo.
4. You can start an internet travel business (travel is another surprise recession buster industry- it is predicted to increase \$7 trillion dollars over the next 10 years.)
5. You can learn a few skills and begin buying websites, improving them, and "flipping" them for profit.
6. You can start a blog and monetize that blog through google adsense and affiliate products, and advertising space.
7. You can learn to build a list of prospects in an active niche and then monetize that list by recommending affiliate products.
8. Or you can use your hobby and special skill as a starting point for your business - take a look of my own business which I joyfully operated in my home in between downtown's job. www.JASlideshow.com

These are only just a few of the top ways to survive what they call Global Recession. Make a decision now! Start doing some research, form a plan of action, stay focused, follow a proven system, and you too can be a recession born internet success story -

Jeanette A. ■

Show your loved ones that you care with One Million Acts of Green

For Valentines Day, One Million Acts of Green have introduced a Valentines e-card that Canadians can share with their friends, classmates and family to help spread some love for the environment.

Each year, in the US alone enough holiday cards are bought to fill a 10-story football stadium and kill 300,000 trees. With very similar holiday traditions, Canadians also have an impact on the environment with their paper cards.

One Million Acts of Green proposes that Canadians use a recycled paper Valentines card for the person most special in their life, but spread the love and the green message to the rest of their loved ones with an electronic card.

Using recycled paper, making your own wrapping paper and sending an e-card instead of a paper one are all acts of green that Canadians can register at www.onemillionactsofgreen.com to contribute towards the million.

The green initiative is presented by The Hour, in partnership with CBC and Cisco, with the idea that one small act can make a big difference. Cisco calls this the Human Network Effect: a network of people with the power to change the world in which we live and work. As individual green acts combine, the positive impact on our planet is much greater.

Submitted by Cisco Canada - One Million Acts of Green ■
Feeding Birds Benefits Everyone Says the Humane Society of Canada (HSC)

February 20, 2009, VANCOUVER - Cold weather and snow are making their seasonal appearances over much of Canada making it increasingly difficult for birds to find enough food. The Humane Society of Canada (HSC) says that people and birds both benefit when humans assist their feathered friends by supplying them with a continuous supply of quality bird feed.

"Millions of Canadians are bird lovers and over one third of Canadian households report that they feed and watch birds," says Al Hickey, Western Regional Director for The Humane Society of Canada (HSC).


According to Hickey it is a good idea to learn what species of birds live in your area and then find out what types of feed would be good for them: "To learn about local species of birds and the foods they like you can talk to employees who sell bird feed as well as local nature and bird watching groups and animal protection organizations."

According to HSC Executive Director Michael O'Sullivan, it may take a while for birds to discover their new food source but he says that they will find your bird feeder and gratefully return on a regular basis: "It is important to ensure that once you start supplying local birds with food that you keep food in the feeder until the birds' natural food supplies become plentiful once again in the spring."

The Humane Society of Canada has had so many enquiries about feeding birds that an attractive bird feeder with seed cakes was added to the Online Adventure Store on our website. Money generated from these items goes to protecting animals and environment. The charity also has a number of heart warming children's books about birds written by author Jackie Greene that make great Christmas and Holiday gifts.

"Bird feeding provides an excellent opportunity to learn about our beautiful feathered friends who play vital roles in nature," says O'Sullivan. The charity is the park steward for a nature reserve and provides bird food and shelter for birds who have decided not to fly south.

"Using bird identification books is a fun way to learn what birds are visiting your feeder," he says. "These books usually provide some general information about the various birds. A good set of binoculars will help you identify winged visitors and observing and learning about birds is a wonderful way for people of all ages to learn about and develop a greater respect for nature and our feathered friends," says O'Sullivan. ■



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Empowering the people

By Jerry O. Estrada

Making a difference

In 2005, I used to travel with my former boss, Atty. Mordino Rodriguez Cua (Coop Man of Asia 2004), either to attend coop board meetings or visit several cooperatives in the Philippines, specifically, Visayas, Mindanao, and other parts of Luzon. I can still recall that my brain then was completely empty with regards to coops and its purpose of existence.

I would say that my former boss had influenced me a lot. His life being a coop volunteer leader was not easy, he who spent his 50 years building coop organizations, creating leaders, empowering the poor people to become self-reliant. He preferred to teach the ordinary people how to fish instead of giving them fish forever. I heard directly from him his myriad coop experiences during our travel time - his struggles, sacrifices, failures, and achievements.

Personally speaking, since my first job exposure after studying was in the corporate world, I was then a little bit insensitive to the needs of poor people. Traveling from island to island around the Philippines for several years was not new to me because the market research firm that I used to work with required a lot of it. I spent my time traveling and serving multinational companies. But when I traveled and worked with Atty. Cua, it was totally a different experience.

One of our stops was in Cebu City to visit Cebu CFI (Court of First Instance) Coop and Cebu People's Coop, both millionaire coops in Cebu City. When we visited the latter I noticed the letters, C.O.O.P., scribbled on the front door with a coined acronym after each letter. I recall that since then I became interested in coops and realized that cooperatives are one of the best ways to fight social injustice and poverty. The acronym itself will probably make people understand how cooperatives work. C is for Capitalized (by members) - Cooperatives need capital just like any other business enterprise either single proprietorships or corporations. Most corporations require thousands or millions of capital to jumpstart their businesses, hence, shareholders most of the time are not poor people. However, cooperatives give ordinary workers a chance to own a business enterprise with a meager capital. In fact, based on record, even Caisse Populaire Desjardins started with five Canadian Dollars (CAD\$5) as its

capital per individual member. Until now Desjardins is still asking the same amount as their social capital.

O is for Owned (by members) - While millionaires or billionaire businessmen own majority of huge corporations, ordinary people never had a chance to have a good slice of the wealth of this world. The cooperative gives a chance to ordinary workers to become a member and at the same time to be an owner of the business enterprise. When cooperatives become successful, a member as one of the owners receives a dividend, hence giving him/her a chance to receive a profit from his/her own business, while majority of the huge corporations only enrich its major stockholders.

O is for Operated (by members) - Normally, rich stockholders are managing big corporations. This means that he who owns the gold rules the world. In corporations, the member who owns the biggest capital or number of stocks automatically becomes the President. In cooperatives, it is different because election of officers is not based on number of stocks or money. All coop member-owners have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) regardless of the amount of capital (money) he/she gave to the coop. During the election of the Board of Directors, any member can run as officer if he/she wants it provided the member has fulfilled all the necessary requirements stated on its by-laws. This makes the coop unique compared to other private companies.

P for Patronized (by members) - In cooperatives, there is a sure captured market (customers) - its members. Usually, the cooperatives are hardly hit by recession or any economic downturn because the members are always there to patronize the coop as co-owners of the business. The Notre Dame of Jolo Multi-Purpose Cooperative, a church-run cooperative store, which also owned some ferryboats, located in a war-stricken area of Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, Philippines, is still standing strong to serve its members even after the 2006 incident when the Abu Sayyaf blasted a homemade bomb detonated by a cell phone hooked to a timer and hidden in the baggage counter of the busy cooperative building which left nine people dead; 20 more were injured. Most of the members of this coop are Muslims because cooperatives are usually established in

the same area where most of its members live.

To summarize, the coop is designed for ordinary people and where the leaders make sacrifices to improve the lives of other people - its members. A coop is like an arena where the biggest struggle is made to alleviate poverty. Without the co-operatives, ordinary people cannot be freed from the yoke of some greedy capitalists. In Montreal, our cooperative is not yet fully patronized by its members. This is the reason why it is not yet reaching its profitable stage and still operating on a deficit. But if the members completely understand the reason for having a cooperative and they all start buying from their own store, things will change quickly. In a short time, the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative should be breaking even and eventually become profitable. Moreover, if more Filipinos become members, there will be more capital available to buy merchandise in greater volume at a lower price. The savings can then be passed on to its members.

Be a coop member now. Please call the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative at (514) 733-8915. ■

Cooperatives to combat recession

February 24th, 2009 by solbcics
Start: Feb 24 2009 - 16:38

Rajesh Deol in Chandigarh
Published on: Deccan Herald

In Chandigarh recently, Ivano Berberini, president of the International Cooperative Alliance, spoke to Deccan Herald on the sidelines of a national conference on 'Revival of Rural Cooperative Credit Structure.'

Calling the present economic crisis as the "moral crisis of capitalism", Ivano Berberini, president of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), a representative global body that unites, represents and serves cooperatives worldwide; feels cooperatives could be the answer in times of the global meltdown. In Chandigarh recently, Berberini spoke to Deccan Herald on the sidelines of a national conference on 'Revival of Rural Cooperative Credit Structure.' The ICA has 221 member organisations from 85 countries spread across various sectors of economy representing nearly 800 million individuals worldwide.

How is the cooperative movement faring in times of global recession?

There has not been any major downfall reported in cooperative societies from any country after the meltdown. It is a good sign of hope. Except for construction cooperatives facing some hardships in some countries, there has not been any decline in the cooperative sector. In fact, cooperative banks have registered a growth in the recession-hit capitalist economy.

What, in your view, could be the reasons for the cooperative sector

remaining largely unaffected, as you say, by the global economic meltdown?

Cooperatives around the world are cushioned from the effects of global recession because cooperatives were not involved in any speculative activity. It is interesting to note that growth of cooperative banks has shown an upward trend after the meltdown because people have expressed faith in them. It is because of their good business practices.

So, would you say that cooperatives offer a good economic model?

Cooperatives are an idealistic form of corporate structure. The concept of cooperatives guided by principles of cooperation was evolved on account of economy of scale for weaker sections of society to provide them deserved opportunities to meet their needs and earn their livelihood. The current economic crisis is also a moral crisis of capitalism which solely believed in realising maximum profits. The successes of cooperatives in different parts of the world prove the feasibility and effectiveness of value based economic enterprises. India is no exception to that. The Green Revolution and White Revolution became possible only due to a vast network and the classic federal character of cooperatives in India.

What are the challenges faced by the cooperative movement?

Global recession is real. The challenge before us is how to defend cooperatives and their members, workers, consumers and users from the repercussions of this crisis destined to become long term and is fraught with unpredictable consequences. The most difficult challenge that a cooperative enterprise faces is that it must survive, not only as an "enterprise" but also as a "cooperative". Cooperatives to get as competitive as the best companies.

The cooperative movement is largely identified with agriculture. Which other areas do you foresee where the cooperatives can play a dominant role, particularly in the rural economy?

It is true that the cooperative movement accounts for over 50 percent of agricultural production in the world. However, there is scope for social cooperatives which focuses on health, child care or gender-related issues. In India, for example, there is ample scope for growth of cooperatives in the farm and dairy sectors.

India has the largest number of cooperatives and members in the world and has become an active ICA member. The scope for cooperatives is phenomenal provided quality services, quality product and an attitude that believes in quality. ■

Sharon Cuneta, People Asia's Megastar



She is too young to be labeled an icon, but what else can you call someone who has reached the heights she has scaled in singing and acting? So much so that the press coined a new word just to describe the stature of Sharon Cuneta: Megastar.

And the public agreed and gave her the franchise to the word. Sharon Cuneta responded by making herself worthy of the title.

Now on her 30th year in showbusiness, Sharon's star still boasts of mega wattage.

What are you proudest of, I asked her recently.

"My family," she replied without a second thought. Then she added, "And my 30 years in showbusiness."

I asked her that question after she and her husband Sen. Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan made their first public appearance together at Sharon's concert at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel after persistent rumors of a breakup. "Kiko and I had a spat that was blown out of proportion. But you know, in the 13 years we have been married, we have never fought over a third party or over another person. Which married couple doesn't have fights?"

"Our latest spat and the publicity it created came at a point when I was burnt out emotionally, physically. I was just so tired I had to get away. But the spin others gave to it!"

Sharon could only conclude, "It must be political."

What she was born with she brought to the fore, and what eluded her, she worked hard to have. And hold.

That is perhaps why Sharon Cuneta touches a chord in most Filipinos' hearts. They see in her not just her sparkling eyes and porcelain skin — they see a woman who has had

to struggle despite her wealth, good looks and melodious voice. And they see in her a woman, who, not having had a perfect life to start with, worked hard to have it all.

You see, Filipinos, good-natured as they are, don't idolize the lucky ones. In fact, they envy the lucky ones for the perfect lives they probably don't deserve.

But in Sharon Cuneta, who makes every product she endorses fly off the shelves, the Filipino public sees a woman who mirrors their hopes and dreams, their yearnings and aspirations. This poor little rich girl belonged to the second family of the father she adored. Her first marriage foundered, and so did subsequent romantic relationships that she thought would last.

So in Sharon, people see their broken hopes, and also their fulfilled dreams. They rejoiced when she married (now senator) Kiko, they applauded the arrival of her eagerly awaited babies Frankie, (now eight), and Miel, (now four), and gave her a pat on the back for the way her eldest daughter KC, 23, had turned out.

People have been rooting for Sharon Cuneta from the moment she sang "Mr. DJ" and stole their hearts. They're still rooting for her now.

"There was a time," Sharon told People Asia, "when I was resigned to living alone for the rest of my life. And I was okay with that. If KC was destined to be my only daughter, then I thought I would just adopt. I had a Plan A, B, C. Things have a way of balancing out, don't they? God had given me so much already and I was humble enough to accept I could not have everything."

Sharon has much to show for the hard work she's put into her career. She has over a dozen best actress awards from prestigious award-giving bodies, including five for one movie alone, *Madrasta*. Her records and CDs have received awards from Platinum to "Sextuple" Platinum. In 2004 she was named one of the Philippines' 15 best actresses of all time by the Directors' Guild of the Philippines. In the same year, she was named one of the Ten Most Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines (TOYM).

After Miel's birth, Sharon allowed herself to enjoy the gift of just staying at home, where she is a wiz in the kitchen. If her showbiz career did not

take off, she says she would have taken up Hotel and Restaurant Management in college. She had set her sights on becoming a professional chef. (She also took up ballet, Yamaha organ, flute, and piano classes in her growing-up years.) But things don't always turn out the way we want them to be. Sharon had to put domesticity and cooking (to her heart's content) on the back burner till she was in her thirties and when she did so, she made up for lost time.

Sharon has been compiling recipes since she was a teenager and her recipe books are neatly stored in her attic, which is almost as huge as the entire first floor of her house. It is a "glamorized bodega," giggles Sharon, "because it has four air-conditioners." Neatly stacked on shelves with appropriate headings and labels are albums, magazines, recipe books and mementoes, which Sharon "filed" during her home leave.

"A slim figure and a great career are not the be-all and the end-all of my existence!" she proclaims. So what is the be-all and the end-all of her existence?

"God, my kids! It's really my family. When I was a child my dream was really to just get married and have a happy home. My singing career was just an accident. I didn't really expect to become famous after 'Mr. DJ'."

She says she wants to spend more time with her family, and relates, "When I wake up in the morning, it is as if my daughters have won the lotto."

Miel, for one, shouts, "Mama's awake, Mama's awake!"

The years that followed her early marriage and its subsequent breakup were "workaholic years," she recalls. "I became a workaholic shortly after my marriage broke up... because, I don't know if it's typical of the way we are, but I thought, this area of my life is destroyed na, so don't let it naman spill over to the other areas, like my career. Take care of what you can take care of because you are not in control of everything. And the little control that God has given you, use it. Let's say He gave you a job. So what do you do? You do your best. I was just grateful for a job and I knew how to save. Even when I was little, I had always been a smart saver. I was never waldas. But now I spoil myself... I wanna enjoy my money. I'm not one of those... you know, scrimp and scrimp. And I like to

spoil the people I love."

Sharon, upon daughter Frankie's prodding, tells us the story of "The Necklace."

"We recently went on a Caribbean cruise and when we stopped in the Cayman Islands, we went to a store that sells gems. Frankie wanted a heart-shaped emerald necklace that I thought was too grown-up for her. So I said she couldn't have it. But I saw her looking so longingly at the necklace, I bought it secretly. When we got back to the ship, I saw her crying and then I told her I had a surprise for her. The heart-shaped emerald necklace! I told her that it was a symbol of my love, and that wherever she is, she carries Mama's heart with her."

On her 30th year in showbiz, she says there is nothing that she hasn't done that she still dreams of doing.

"The first 20 years out of my 30 years in show business helped me build relationships in the business. It helped me build a name and establish a reputation. It helped me save because I really worked when I could. Now, I can afford to just relax and do the things that I feel that I want to do. And then spend more time with the kids. And that's why in a way, KC was short-changed in that area."

"Nowadays, I will work but it wouldn't be like before... unlike with KC before, it was really hard. I really had to build our security. I had to build a nest egg. I had to make sure we had food on the table. I didn't want to depend on my parents."

Running for office herself — she was once rumored as a mayoralty bet for Pasay — is not part of Sharon's immediate plans. She has concerts slated abroad in 2009. After her critically acclaimed *Caregiver*, another movie with Star Cinema is already in the offing.

She is also thinking of retiring, but we are willing to bet it will remain just that — a thought. It isn't just because she is Pablo Cuneta's daughter and Helen Gamboa's niece, and now, Sen. Kiko Pangilinan's wife that Sharon is the Megastar that she is.

She is what she is now because she put her good genes, her talents and the opportunities that came her way to good use. And the public responded by making her a Megastar. ■



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FILIPINO STAR SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

Joey Albert: a success story who keeps coming home



Joey Albert is something special indeed, as she showed during her concert here in Montreal, Dec 2007

Now based in Canada with her family, Joey Albert keeps coming back to share her music with her kababayan. While all the performers making up the Legends of OPM are still based in the country actively pursuing their individual careers, it is only Joey Albert who has made her home abroad in Vancouver, Canada and has semi-retired from the music field. At the same time, it is also only Joey who has not worked before with Boss Vic del Rosario, head honcho of the Viva group of companies.

When Boss Vic thought of bringing together a group of hit makers of Original Pilipino Music (OPM), his lineup consisted of perennial favorite Rico J. Puno, Nonoy Zuñiga, Rey Valera, Claire de la Fuente, Eva Eugenio, and Joey Albert. This was to be held Dec. 30, 2008 at the PICC, when the whole country would be in a mood for everything Filipino, from San Fernando parols, to the Metro Manila Film Festival of Pinoy films, to balikbayan enjoying the holiday break with their families. All the artists welcomed the concept and the lineup of performers with confidence and rejoicing. All except Joey Albert.

"I was really nervous in the beginning. I didn't know how I was gonna fit in. These are heavy weight, let's face it," the ever humble Joey confesses.

"I was included because of my hit songs. I am not that legendary, but my songs are. I've been away for 12 years, yet they keep using them for teleseryes. Tell Me was used again recently," she continues, with what we have started to call her ode to her songs.

Joey's catalogue of unforgettable

hit songs include Tell Me, I Remember the Boy, Ikaw Lang ang Mamahalain, Points of View, Kumukutikutitap, Sa Iyo Lamang, Iisa Pa Lamang, Million Miles Away,

"These songs are phenomenal. I am amazed. Usually kasi diba, out of sight, out of mind. Someone sent me a YouTube recording of a kid singing Tell Me. Wow! I don't even have to do anything, sila ang na po-promote ng songs ko. I think all these songs were just destined for me. But I am more in awe of the songs than I am of me. A lot of people don't know me. They know my songs. Yun ang sign na talagang phenomenal ang songs. Mga second generation Filipinos in Canada, classmates of my children say, Ah, mommy mo pala ang kumanta ng Tell Me. They know the songs, even before they know the singer. Ang sarap ng feeling!"

Before she decided to migrate to Canada with her husband in 1995, Joey recalls Richard Gomez asking her permission to use Sa Iyo Lamang as movie theme to be entered in the 13th Metro Manila Film Festival. The festival awards night happened while Joey was on board the plane bound for Canada. "The minute I landed, I received a fax that said, Sa Iyo Lamang won 13 awards and one of them was Best Song. This was an affirmation from God na, 'Don't worry. Yung iniwan mo, aalagaan ko.'"

To young aspiring singers, Joey is consistent with her advice, "Work hard. Sing from your heart and with your heart, sing for fun, not for fame. Fame never lasts but songs do. Sing so you have something lasting to leave behind."

ABS-CBN wins 4 medals at 2009 New York Festivals



Whong Navarro, who portrayed Agent X44 on film (left), is now TV's Lastikman

ABS-CBN's winning streak continues with a triumphant campaign in the prestigious 2009 New York Festivals, taking home four medals, the most by a single TV station in the country this year.

Leading the winners are Bantay Bata 163's 10th Anniversary Special, which won the Gold World Medal for Best Variety Special, and Korina Sanchez's investigative report on substandard glutathione food supplements, which took a Silver World Medal.

category.

Kapamilya programs "Kung Fu Kids," "Wowowee," and "Rated K," meanwhile, were awarded with finalist certificates for Children's Program, Family Program, and Magazine Format, respectively.

Korina, ABS-CBN's chief correspondent and "Bandila" news anchor, also received a finalist certificate in the Best News Reporter category at the New York Festivals.

The New York Festivals International Television Programming



Korina Sanchez



Luis Manzano is 'Flash Bomba'

Bantay Bata 163's 10th Anniversary Special was produced by the ABS-CBN Special Projects Group (SPG), headed by event-maven Chit Guerrero. The SPG is behind the company's grandest and biggest special events like "Miss Earth" and "Dolphy at 80." The Bantay Bata Special, which also won in the 17th Golden Dove Awards, is just one of the group's many world-class productions.

Meanwhile, also making an impression among the judges at the New York Festivals are Silver World Medalists "Boy & Kris" for the Talk/Interview category and "Lastikman" for the Action/Adventure

and Promotion Awards is on its 49th year of recognizing "The World's Best Work" in news, documentary, information, entertainment programming, music videos, infomercials, promotion spots, opening, and IDs.

Judging is done by several hundred US producers, directors, writers, and other media professionals.

With this victory, the network is even more upbeat to outperform itself in next year's competition to bring more glory to the country, while "in the service of Filipino worldwide."

Geneva Cruz is back, faces broken marriage and suicide rumors



Geneva Cruz

Actress Geneva Cruz has finally broken her silence on persistent nasty rumors about her alleged separation from her husband and her purported suicide attempt. Showing her wedding ring, Cruz said that she and former VJ KC Montero are still together.

The Monteros, who has been married for five years now, are based in the United States. Cruz, however, did not completely abandon her singing career in the Philippines. This would require Cruz to occasionally fly back to Manila. The singer is now in the Philippines to finish recording her album.

She confessed that, like in any relationship, there were also trials in their marriage. Her decision to revive her singing career in Manila was one

of them. She admitted that she tried to give up her career in the Philippines when they got married. After a year of being a housewife, however, she realized that she "could not live without my music."

"Music is in my blood and I'm very, very passionate with my job... I thought I could just be a housewife, which is mas mahirap actually, pero it didn't make me happy. Mas sanay akong mag-multitask na mother ako, asawa ako, artist ako," she said.

She said that, as long as their respect for each other is there, their marriage would work. She added that Montero is very supportive of her career.

"Napakabit ng asawa ko. Actually, talagang kung anong ikakasaya ko, sinusupportahan niya," she said.

She also rebuffed reports that she abandoned Heaven, her son with drummer Paco Arespacochaga, in the US.

"Hindi ko ipinamimigay ang anak ko. Ang anak ko ang pinakaimportanteng tao sa buhay ko. Hirap na hirap ako na wala siya [kapag umuwi ako sa Pilipinas] but he needs to finish 6th grade," she said.

As for her alleged suicide attempt, Cruz dismissed the rumors as "so ridiculous" and "rubbish."

"I've been in the business for almost 20 years and I still get hurt," she lamented.

She said she could not do such a thing, pointing out that she faces her problems head-on. She added that she is a strong woman and a fighter. ■

Sarah Geronimo: Ai-Ai is still the 'box-office queen'



Sarag Geronimo

Sarah Geronimo believed that actress-comedienne Ai-Ai delas Alas is still the box-office queen because of the success of her movie "Ang

Tanging Ina Niyong Lahat."

"Para sa akin po mas karapat-dapat si Ms. Ai na tawaging box office queen," Geronimo said during the press conference for her second film with John Lloyd Cruz titled "You Changed My Life." Under the direction of Cathy Garcia-Molina, "You Changed My Life" will be shown on February 25.

Geronimo was reacting to reports saying that delas Alas would feel bad if she would not get the box office queen tag. For the year 2008, Geronimo has bagged the SM Cinema Box Office Queen award for her hit film "A Very Special Love." The singer also admitted that the issue has affected her.

"Siempre medyo nabother ako kasi ka-trabaho ko si Ms. A., Ai-Ai delas Alas 'yon," she said. "Basta ako nire-respeto ko na lang ang bawat isa. Si Ms. Ai nire-respeto ko." ■

Charice shines at post-Oscars party



Charice

Filipino singing sensation Charice added another milestone in her career after she performed at an Oscars after-party dubbed "A Night to Make a Difference: Oscar Night at Mr. Chow" on Hollywood.

Charice, who is now in the US to record her first international album, sang the Dreamgirls movie hit song, "Listen."

But before her performance, Charice was introduced by her handler, international musician-composer David

Foster. He guaranteed that Charice would be a global superstar in just one year.

"She is one of the most amazing talents you will ever see, and you're gonna see history tonight, because one year from now, this girl will be one of the biggest stars on the planet, guaranteed 100%," Foster said.

After her song "Listen," the young diva received a standing ovation from the audience.

During the party, Foster also revealed that Charice started recording her album last February 21.

Charice even tried to sing one of the songs in her upcoming album, "Fingerprint." But due to technical difficulties, Charice wasn't able to sing the full song since the CD skipped.

Charice also performed an all-time hit, "I Will Survive," for the fundraising event.

Proceeds of the Oscar's after-party will go to Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation, Olivia Newton-Johns Cancer and Wellness Centre Appeal. ■

Ate Vi not keen on seeking national post in 2010



Vilma Santos

Batangas Governor Vilma Santos had reiterated that running for national position in the 2010 elections is not her priority at this time.

Santos, wife of National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) head

Ralph Recto, made her statement during the Maria Makiling Festival in Los Baños, Laguna.

The actress-turned-politician said her priorities at the moment is her province and issues on environmental awareness.

Santos along with Senators Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Jose "Jinggoy" Estrada are being considered vice presidentiables in 2010 presidential elections, the report said.

"Pasalamat ako. Ibig sabihin pinagkakatiwalian ka at naniniwala sa sa 'yo. Kung 'yun lang I'm very, very flattered. Pero para mag-isip ng national position, hindi po talaga," Santos said. ["I'm very thankful. This means people trust me and they believe in me. I'm very flattered, but I'm still not thinking of a national position."] ■

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Showbiz Gossip *Continued from p.19*

Christian Bautista, Karylle not yet ready to be in a relationship



Christian Bautista

Singers Christian Bautista and Karylle have played down rumors romantically linking them to each other.

Karylle, who just broke up with actor Dingdong Dantes, said she is not yet ready to enter into a new relationship.

"Ngayon, hindi ko naisip 'ong gan'ong bagay kasi hindi pa ako ready. So, ayokong isipin masyado," Karylle told ABS-CBN News.

In the same interview, Bautista said he and Karylle would not want to rush things between them. He said both of them are taking things slow as he pointed out that both of them are now busy with work.

"Meron talagang times na you just

have to be really good friends para makita ang tunay na pagkatao ng isa't isa... I'd rather na wait and wait for the girl or for myself to be really ready before [going into a relationship]," he said.

He, however, is not closing his doors, saying that "anything is possible." Right now, though, the crooner said he and Karylle are "both single and they are friends."

Onscreen team-up

For the first time, Bautista and Karylle are teaming up for ABS-CBN's "Your Song" on February 15. The two actors have worked together on the musical play "West Side Story" but this is the first time that both of them would be paired onscreen.

"Funny ito. Medyo may pagkapsycho ako d'on... nakakatawa lang kasi my character comes from a break-up. Sobrang siyang naging weirdo. May pagka-stalker ng konti," Karylle said.

Bautista, on the other hand, shared: "Ako ang character ko d'on dati pa akong in-love sa kanya pero hindi ko malabas dahil marami siyangguys. Lagi ko siyang iniinis. Meron kaming plan na balikan ang kanyang ex para paghiwalayin sila." ■

Lara Quigaman enjoys acting; denies going back to 'Wowowee'



Lara Quigaman

Actress and former beauty queen Lara Quigaman said that she is now enjoying the world of acting. Quigaman is part of ABS-CBN's upcoming inspirational television series "May Bukas Pa." She said that she will now focus on acting jobs.

"Isa naman po ito sa talagang gusto kong gawin after hosting. Hindi ba I should try other fields naman?" Quigaman said.

She added, "I hope talaga na maipakita ko in a way yung talent ko and I will promise na talagang gagalingan ko po."

The 2005 Miss International winner and the former host of ABS-CBN's popular noontime show "Wowowee" said that she never thought that she would enjoy playing roles.

Quigaman is not new to acting, since she was also part of the defunct weekly show "That's My Doc". She revealed that she will be doing another series after "May Bukas Pa." Though she is now focusing on acting, Quigaman admitted that it is easier for her to do hosting since she can express what she wants to say spontaneously.

'Love and Wowowee'

Quigaman is now happily in love with her non-showbiz boyfriend of almost three years. She said that she is not in a hurry to get married. The beauty queen said that her dream age to settle down is four years from now or before she reaches the age of 30.

Quigaman also cleared the issue that she will return to co-hosting "Wowowee." "As much as I want to go back and as much as I miss all the people there I cannot go back because I have all these commitments ahead of me. So hindi ako pwedeng mag-Mondays to Saturdays sa 'Wowowee' tapos mag te-taping ako for two other teleseryes," she ended. ■

It's Angel Locsin for Luis Manzano



Angel Locsin, Luis Manzano

If he were to marry now, Luis Manzano said he wants Angel Locsin to be his bride. He thinks she would make a good wife. But he doesn't think he and Angel are ready to marry now. They still want to make the most of their careers. Besides, they are still young. He is 27, while Angel is 23.

"I feel it's only now that I can prove my worth as an actor," Luis stated. "Heto at finally I'm playing the title role

in a fantaserye."

Luis plays Flash Bomba in the series "Komiks Presents Mars Ravelo's Flash Bomba" which is soon to air on ABS-CBN. This series comes on the heels of the recently-concluded fantaserye "Dyosa" where as Kulas, Luis earned positive feedback.

Luis is also looking forward to starring in the movie "A Mother's Story" with his mom, Star for all Seasons and Batangas Governor Vilma Santos. Here he plays a gay role. His lover is played by John Lloyd Cruz. To be filmed partly in New York City, "A Mother's Story" is produced by Star Cinema and will have Olive Lamasan at the helm.

"Doing 'A Mother's Story' is a double challenge for me. Hindi lang si Mommy ang magaling na artista na makakasagupa ko, wika nya. Nandiyan din si John Lloyd, who is considered the best actor of his generation," Luis said. ■

Rachelle Ann shares happiness for Charice's success



Rachelle Ann Go

like Charice is doing well in the international music scene. Go once judged the performance of Charice during the singing competition "Little Big Star".

"As a Pinoy artist, as a Pinoy singer nakaka-proud kasi sa murang edad nakarating na siya sa ibang bansa. Marami na siyang nadalang karangalan, nadalang tagumpay para sa Pilipinas... nakakaproud na 'o pinoy yan' at nakakasama niya ang mga sikat na singers. So ang sarap ng feeling. I'm happy for her at nakaka-proud talaga," Go said.

Go admitted that she also dreams of a chance to meet and perform with famous international performers like Celine Dion, who did a duet with Charice in New York last year. ■

Anne Curtis: Sam is still the hottest guy for me



Anne Curtis

rumors that she and Milby were back in each other's arms amid reports that they were seen kissing in public.

"Slow dance 'yon at hindi kami naghalikan. Marami ngang nagvi-video noon pero hindi kami naghalikan, nagsayaw lang. Kung nag-kiss man, hindi ko naman ide-deny," she stressed.

Asked about the status of their relationship, Curtis said: "I think now that I am where I am right now, whatever happens will happen. We will cross the bridge when we get there."

Meanwhile, Curtis, who just finished taping "Dyosa," said that, for her, Milby is still the hottest actor in local show business today.

"Sam lang for me. In our industry, physically, Sam is still the hottest person," she said.

The actress is now preparing for another fantasy series and is currently taping her newest television show "The Wedding" with actor Zanjoe Marudo.

This Valentine's Day, Curtis said she is taking thertime off work to spend time with friends. ■

Star Cinema mulls producing Claudine-Christine Reyes cares Judai film



Juday Ann Santos

Young superstar Judy Ann Santos has disclosed that she might do a film with "drama princess" Claudine Barretto.

In an interview with "SNN: Showbiz

News Ngayon," Santos said she and ABS-CBN's movie outfit Star Cinema are now talking about the possibility of her shooting a movie with Barretto.

"Walang isyu, walang problema. I would love to do a movie with her. I think it's about time," she said.

The actress has shot down reports about the alleged "silent rivalry" between them. She maintained that contrary to reports the two of them are good friends.

"Hindi naman talaga kami magkaaway. Nagkakataon lang na nagiging magkaka-kumpetensiya sa mga bagay-bagay pero we are okay, we are friends," Santos said.

In previous interviews, Barretto also said that she wanted to work with Santos. ■



Christine Reyes

When most people turn another year older, they usually mark the occasion by partying with their family and friends. But that's not how Christine Reyes chose to celebrate her birthday this year.

The "Eva Fonda" star - who turned 20 last February 5 - chose to visit the residents of Golden Acres a nursing home located behind SM City North EDSA. She gave them gifts of food and other supplies like biscuits, canned goods and sacks of rice.

But perhaps the best thing Christine did for the residents was to sit down and spend some time with them. When she arrived at the front office of Golden Acres, she talked to the press for a little while before heading to the cottages where the residents lived.

Most of the residents recognized her right away and rushed as fast they could to meet her. Some of them sang for her, while others sold her bracelets, necklaces and other handmade goods that they made themselves. Christine clapped loudly after a female resident sang the

Jessa Zaragosa hit "Bakit Pa?" and bought several necklaces from another. (She even got some of the members of her entourage to buy necklaces, too!)

Cristine also took the time to listen as the residents poured their hearts out. She was visibly touched by some of their life stories. When asked why she decided to celebrate her birthday in such a manner, she replied, "Mas marami kasing tao ang mapapaligaya ko kesa kung magpaparty lang ako tapos konting kaibigan ko lang ang masaya."

Her selfless nature is why she has been enjoying much success lately. She is thankful to ABS-CBN for giving her projects like "Kahit Isang Saglit," "Banana Split" and "Eva Fonda," and to the Viva Artists Agency (VAA) for taking care of her career and image.

"Sa kanila ako nakahanap ng second family," she says. Oh, and let's not forget the fans who support all her shows and her sponsors - MINT, Belo Medical Group, Posh Nails and Fiona - who are always there to back her up.

At the moment, Cristine is considered one of the hottest female starts of both ABS CBN and VAA. "If there's one actress whose sex appeal crosses all boundaries, siya na 'yun," says her manager Veronique del Rosario-Corpus. Which is true - every man wants Cristine and every woman wants to be her.

But in spite of the many men falling at her feet, Cristine chooses to remain single in order to focus on her career. And what a good decision that is, since she's still busy with "Eva Fonda," "Banana Split" and is in talks to do another show for ABS-CBN. A movie under Viva Films is also in the works. ■

KC thrilled over new project with Piolo



KC Concepcion

Actress-singer KC Concepcion said it is an honor to be working with one of the country's most-sought after leading man, Piolo Pascual.

"It's an honor to be paired with Piolo this time around. I'm very excited about that," Concepcion said. ■

Concepcion and Pascual are set to star in the Filipino version of Korean television series "Lovers in Paris." This is their first project together.

"Sobra siyang maalaga... he is a really, really good guy and playful din. Para siyang bata kaya nakakatuwa siyang makasama. Kahit mga workshop pa lang ang ginagawa namin ay nakikita ko na ang magiging samahan namin kaya nakakatuwa," Concepcion said.

Concepcion said the cast and crew will start taping "anytime soon."

The daughter of Megastar Sharon Cuneta also said that, if there is a guy closer to her right now, he would be Pascual especially now that they spend more time together for "Lovers in Paris." ■

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Pawnshops doing brisk business in Philippines

Limousines roll up to the plate glass storefront in the Philippines financial district, unloading heirloom jewelry, paintings and recently even a chamber for divers with the Bends.

Turnover was up 50 percent in January and business has never been

usually dealing with their customers through barred shop windows in down-and-out neighbourhoods.

The central bank says there are more than 14,000 pawnshops across the Philippines islands, with the industry, which began in the mid-19th century,



Pawnshop manager J. Michael Dizon, lender of last resort to the well-heeled sits in his office, Agencia de Empeños de Makati, Manila's financial district, on February 6, with paintings of Filipino masters pawned by clients.

better for J. Michael Dizon, lender of last resort to the well-heeled.

"I've had some weird things brought to me," said the amiable 41-year-old manager, sitting on the low sofa of a spare, air-conditioned reception room that looks more like an art gallery than a pawnshop.

Pin lights highlight a German cuckoo clock and a wall of unredeemed 1970s Filipino paintings.

"Yesterday a doctor brought me a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. I had to turn him away because he would lose his ability to earn money," said Dizon, referring to the therapy for divers stricken with the decompression illness.

Earlier, he said, he had lent money to

dominated by the Tambunting and Lhuillier families.

The industry lends about 10 billion pesos (212.8 million dollars) a year, principally accepting jewelry -- but in recent years also television sets, mobile phones, digital cameras and motorcycles.

Pawnshops lend at credit-card rates for small loans of up to three months.

Borrowed money "is used for consumption needs such as for payment of tuition fees, medical emergencies and to defray costs of celebrations like town festivals, birthdays and others," said Fernando Caballa, head of a central bank division that monitors the industry.

Cheer Mae Ecarma, publicist for the



A gold and diamond necklace and expensive watches are displayed at Agencia de Empeños de Makati. Dizon's business should become more prominent as the global credit crunch deepens.

a businessman who put up as collateral fog-making equipment for stage sets.

In Europe, pawnshops have financed wars and voyages of discovery, but in the Philippines they are mostly associated with the poor, with lenders

Lhuillier group, said pawnshops are now just one segment of the group's business which now also includes delivering money remitted by millions of Filipinos working abroad.

Caballa said it was "premature to say

if the global financial crisis has affected the lending operations of pawnshops," which he said account for less than 0.25 percent of the Philippine economy.

Dizon by contrast said his Agencia de Empeños de Makati should become more prominent as the global credit crunch deepens.

"The reason our business is flourishing is because the banks are not lending," he said, adding that banks would as a rule honour only land as collateral, and would not lend for less than the property's appraised value.

His high-end clientele includes businessmen and women who hock assets to meet monthly payrolls for their staff as economic activity slowed.

"It's not because they are bankrupt. The main reason is cash flow and liquidity," he said.

Many prefer to stay inside their cars and the uniformed staff serve them brewed coffee, pastries or whatever else

takes their fancy.

Dizon recalls turning away a client who was trying to pawn a painting by 19th century master Juan Luna, the country's most famous artist.

He said it would be difficult to dispose of such a costly investment, and the customer was politely referred to the Singapore office of Christie's auction house.

Dizon said he has a remarkably low default rate of three percent, compared to the industry average of 49.3 percent, though he expects this to rise this year. Any unredeemed items are auctioned off.

"I told my staff that this year will be difficult for everyone," he said.

Filipino pawnshops by law can accept anything of value that fits in their vaults, except guns.

Dizon said he also rejects Hermes or Louis Vuitton handbags because "the (local) market is very thin". ■

PCSO on P330M lotto pot: The more winners, the better

The more winners, the better.

This was statement of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) regarding the P330 million jackpot prize of the 6/49 Super Lotto, the biggest in Philippine lotto history, which is at stake Sunday night.

"Sana mas marami ang manalo dahil sa halaga na involved sa ating papremyo. Mas magiging kapaki-pakinabang sa marami kung sila ay maghahati-hati [I hope many would win. It would be better if the prize will be shared by many winners]," said PCSO spokesman Larry Cedro.

The PCSO is in charge of the lotto draw.

Cedro said in an interview over Radyo ng Bayan that the sales would exceed the estimate of P330 million. "We were conservative in our estimates (because) this is already a big amount," he said.

"This is a game of chance. There are no statistics on what numbers would come up," he said with an assurance that the draw would be "clean and transparent."

He said all lotto draws are conducted in the presence of the public and observers from the Commission on Audit (CA). He said many viewers now flock to the PCSO to watch the draws.

A 51-year-old construction worker won the jackpot prize of P249 million in March 30, 2008. Last December, seven winners shared the P180 million pot.

The PCSO Central Office will get details on the results of the draw, including whether there is a winner, at around 9:40 p.m. Sunday. ■



Lottery hopefuls fill out lotto tickets in a lottery stall in Manila February 17, 2009. Filipinos crowd betting centres across the Philippines as they try their luck at this year's largest online lottery draw worth 230 million pesos (\$4.8 million)

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One Kapamilya and two Kapuso artists among the 24 candidates of

One Kapamilya and two Kapuso artists are among the 24 lovely candidates for the Binibining Pilipinas 2009 pageant. They will compete to earn the right as the country's representative in the Miss Universe, Miss World and Miss International pageants.

Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Edition Plus's Priscilla Navidad is candidate No. 10, while StarStruck: The Next Level First Princess Rich Asuncion is candidate No. 3, using her real name Richelle Angalot. Both are Binibini first timers.

Rich's fellow Kapuso Abegail Lesley Cruz or Abby Cruz enters the pageant for the second time for a shot once again to win any of the three Binibini crowns at stake. She was second runner-up in the Bb. Pilipinas 2007 pageant. She is now candidate No. 24. Abby is also the current girlfriend of Paolo Bediones, who, incidentally, is hosting this year's pageant.

The press presentation of the Bb. Pilipinas 2009 candidates took place at the Sunset Pavilion of the Sofitel Philippine Plaza in Manila, yesterday, February 24. Paolo Bediones hosted the affair which was attended by representatives from print, broadcast and web

media. The other girls vying for the crowns are candidates: 1—Vanessa Johnson, 2—Carisheila May Kuijpers, 4—Gizelle Jasmin



Candidates for this year's Binibining Pilipinas (Miss Philippines) beauty pageant pose by the poolside of a posh hotel in Manila, Philippines, during its media presentation Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2009

Rivamonte, 5—Diana Arevalo, 6—Ma. Paula Bianca Paz, 7—Jane dela Cruz, 8—Cheryl Oliveros, 9—April Love Jordan, 11—Regina Hahn, 12—Jayssel Arrozal, 13—Sandra Inez

Seifert, 14—Keann Mallari, 15—Pamela Bianca Manalo, 16—Mary Tiffany Jones, 17—Marie-Ann Umali, 18—Marie Loraine de Guzman, 19—Stephanie Señires, 20—Melody

Gersbach, 21—Hazel Sutch, 22—Priscilla Mae Honorio, and 23—Barbara Salvador.

Also present at the event were last year's winners, Patricia

Fernandez (Bb. Pilipinas-International), Jennifer Barrientos (Bb. Pilipinas-Universe) and 1st runnerup Danielle Castaño who replaced Janina San Miguel as Bb. Pilipinas-World winner.

Before the coronation night, which will be held at the Araneta Coliseum on Saturday, March 7, 9:30 pm, the candidates will make TV guestings and will showcase their runway skills in a special fashion show at the Gateway Mall Activity Center on Saturday, February 28, 6 pm.

The next day, Sunday, March 1, Araneta Center shoppers and visitors will catch a glimpse of the candidates in a colorful Parade of Beauties scheduled to kick-off at 4 pm.

Meanwhile, ongoing until February 27, is the photo exhibit that chronicles the glorious years of Bb. Pilipinas at the Gateway Mall Activity Center.

The coronation night will be broadcast live by GMA-7. Paolo Bediones and Iza Calzado will be the hosts. ■



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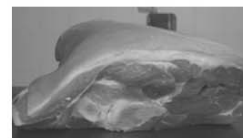
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Pork Picnic \$2.49 / kg



Pork & Skin \$3.49 / kg



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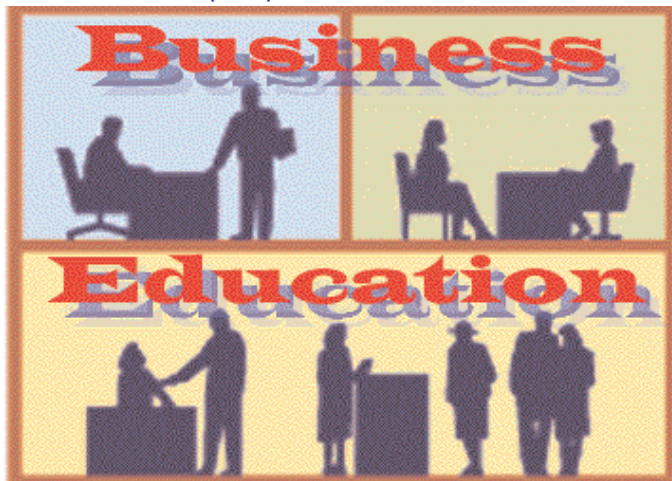
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P.A.B. students (standing behind) from left: Adelia Lascano, Melanie Bangit, Salvacion Battad, Leilani Galsim, Concepcion Dupali, Joyce Liwaliw and Milet Daquioag with their teachers (from left) Clarice Mackay, and Nina Schiff, and Director-General, Zenaida Kharroubi. Another teacher, not in photo is Amy Manon-og. The students have just completed their theory courses and are ready to do their practicum at St. Margaret CHSLD Residence starting on November 30.

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