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Filipino cooperative faces big challenges

By Zenaïda Ferry Kharroubi

The story about the first Filipino cooperative in Montreal has to be told to clear the air and let the public understand what actually happened. Hearsay reports do not help anyone but just make things worse so this report is made after a lengthy review of the financial transactions of the Coop.

The Filipino Solidarity Cooperative was founded in August 2004, and opened its first store on July 15, 2005 at 4711 Van Horne Avenue in Montreal. An article about it appeared in this newspaper in August 2005. Memberships gradually increased and after several months, Mr. Jose Gaviola, its former president, claimed that there were over 500 members who signed up. Unknown to most people, only around 140 people are fully paid members and the majority numbering around 400 are not legally members yet for they only paid between \$10 to \$20 which allowed 90 of them to join the members' savings plan. It was alleged that Mr. Gaviola introduced the so-called "Paluagan" to attract membership in the Coop. Some of them said later that Mr. Gaviola never told them to pay \$100 and no one followed them up to collect the balance. Nevertheless, the Coop was able to buy more merchandise by using some of the money from the savings plan. The sales particularly



Some members of the new board of directors and supporters who have invested in the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative are ready to launch a membership drive to promote the idea of cooperation and unity. See pages 4 and 5 for the names of some volunteers and financial supporters of the Coop.

See Page 4

Filipino Coop



Davao Del Sur

TOURISM | PAGE 10

Contents

Earth Talk	p. 9
Classified Ads	p. 9
Philippine Cuisine	p. 9
Tourism	p. 11
Photo Gallery	p. 12-13
Entertainment	p. 14-15
Health & Science	p. 18
Community News	p. 20
Global Perspectives	p. 21

Philippines most wanted confirmed dead

January 20, 2007

The leader of the Philippines' fiercest Muslim militant group and the country's most wanted man is dead, military chief General Hermogenes Esperon said on Saturday.

He said US forensic tests on a decomposing body found last month on the island of Jolo have confirmed it was Khaddafy Janjalani, chief of the Abu Sayyaf, who had a \$US5 million US bounty on his head.

Tissue from the body which could not be identified was taken to the United States for comparison with samples from Janjalani's brother.

"We hit the jackpot, there was a match in the DNA," Esperon told Reuters. "We are sure it is Janjalani".

He later told a news conference: "The armed forces of the Philippines is proud to announce we have neutralised the centre of gravity of terrorism in the Philippines."

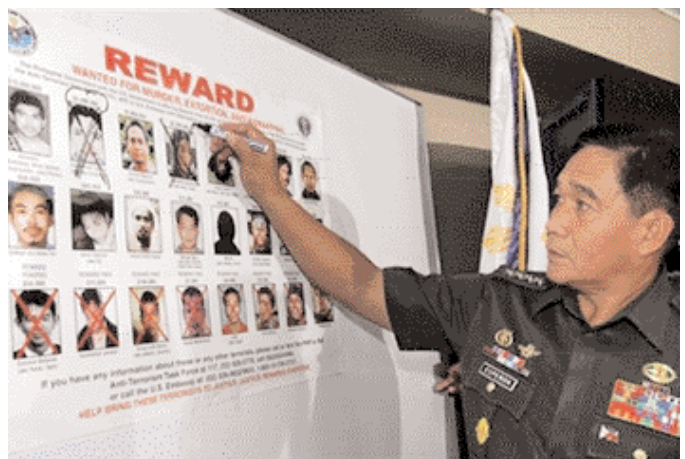
Janjalani, 31, was on the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's list of most wanted terrorists after being indicted by a US court for the kidnap

and killing of American missionary Martin Burnham in 2002.

Captured militants who led troops

See Page 3

Most Wanted



Philippine Armed Forces Chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., crosses out a photo of Abu Sayyaf leader Khaddafy Janjalani on a wanted poster, during a news conference announcing the death of the Muslim militant, at the Armed Forces' headquarters in Quezon city north of Manila, Philippines, Saturday Jan. 20, 2007. Esperon said DNA test results have confirmed the killing of Janjalani, the head of al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group, during a clash with Philippine troops in September.

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EDITORIAL

Will the community support its own cooperative?

After all is said and done, what is the next step in the process of making the Cooperative survive the financial crisis? It is probably more a matter of self-pride that we are trying to make it work as to give up easily will be a shame, particularly, if we consider the fact that there are so many Filipinos living in this area. If people let this enterprise fail, we only have ourselves to blame. What is \$100 per person to risk in this venture? It is not a big amount, and it is affordable even by a low-wage earner, yet, this amount becomes significant if more people invest in the Coop. Its cash flow will be more secure and will allow it to buy more merchandise, and eventually, hire personnel that can give more services to the members. For example, if people say that the reason they are going to Kim Hour and Kim Phat is because they cannot buy fresh meat, that is not going to be a reason anymore once we have the needed capital to get the equipment and the manpower to offer it. Besides, they can still buy many other things as the only item missing is fresh meat.

There is no doubt that some people will feel afraid to invest even a single cent if the Cooperative is not run in a transparent way. However, the members have a big say in who should run the Coop. Elections of directors are held during the general assembly. Rules must be followed with regards to the terms of office of the directors unlike in other community associations where someone can literally hold the office of president perpetually. Any qualified member can be a candidate, but it seems that there is not enough interest yet in directorship because most members are too busy doing double jobs, or they feel not ready to participate actively in the management of the Coop. Perhaps, when the Coop is more established, there will be more people interested. When it becomes profitable, more people will surely want to get involved. Ironically, it is now that the Coop needs guidance in terms of promotion, marketing, and retailing. Can we not be generous enough to consider giving part of our time? It is not the monetary reward that counts

but the idea is to promote our community's economic welfare. Our increasing population should be put to our own advantage. It is a common knowledge that the reason the other communities are successful is because they protect their own people and they will buy first from the businesses owned by them. On the other hand, Filipinos are known to be apathetic and do not think about patronizing their "kababayan." Perhaps, the Cooperative will make them realize that it is about time we change our attitude. We can do better by patronizing our own people's business.

The membership drive that is being organized needs everyone's support. The prizes offered are not the only reason to work hard and recruit more members. The most important reason is our feeling of unity as a community. If we help this drive succeed, it is to our credit that the Cooperative is going to survive and become a successful business.

There may still be some people who have not heard about the Coop which is more popularly known as "Divisoria Cubao." Perhaps, this is because not everyone receives a copy of the newspaper, or they do not really like to read. Nevertheless, we keep trying to publicize the Cooperative to make everyone aware of its existence.

It is greatly hoped that our appeal to the community will be heard. May there be enough people who will participate in this method of membership campaign. Apparently, this method was not yet used by any cooperative. We are actually going to be the first one to use it. It is in the hands of the community to see that the campaign becomes a wonderful opportunity to prove to all, specially to ourselves, that we can be united for a common goal. By being united, we can accomplish anything.

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi

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From Page 1

MOST WANTED

to the buried body said Janjalani was mortally wounded in a gun battle in September.

The test results capped a week of resounding success for the military against the Abu Sayyaf.

On Wednesday, troops claimed they had killed Jainal Antel Sali, alias Abu Sulaiman, one of the top five leaders of the group, in a gun battle at a jungle camp on Jolo.

Ten militants were killed in another battle on Thursday, while several others have been killed in recent weeks.

Not the end-game

The Abu Sayyaf, now largely confined to Jolo, emerged as a kidnap gang in the late 1990s, taking Western tourists captive and holding them for huge ransoms.

Janjalani was said to be trying to take the group back to its Islamic fundamentalist roots. In recent years, Abu Sayyaf has developed links with the regional Jemaah Islamiyah, which wants to set up an Islamic state across Southeast Asia.

At least 30 Indonesian members of Jemaah Islamiyah, including two men suspected to be involved in the 2002 Bali bombings, are believed to be on Jolo along with about 400 Abu Sayyaf militants.

The Philippine military has about 7,000 men on Jolo and they are

receiving training and intelligence from about 100 US special forces officers.

A Western security analyst said the recent successes against Abu Sayyaf appeared to have come about because troops had completed a "figure of 8" pincer movement on Jolo and had divided the militants into two groups and encircled them.

"They are now tightening the squeeze and the enemy is running out of places to go," he said, adding that strict patrolling by navy boats around the island had cut off possible escape routes.

On Friday, the military ordered an extra 1,500 marines to be sent to the neighbouring island of Basilan, which is also considered a hideout for the Abu Sayyaf.

But diplomats say Abu Sayyaf cannot be totally eliminated, given the support it receives from the local population. "It's not the end-game but it will take the sting out of their tail," one diplomat said.

The group is believed to have been responsible for a string of kidnappings, murders, acts of piracy and bomb blasts across the Philippines in the past 10 years.

The Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility for the Philippines' worst terror attack, in February 2004, when a bomb crippled a ferry near Manila, killing more than 100 people. ■

See Also *"Is this The End of Abu Sayaf?"*
Page 23

Engineer of Death

January 20, 2007

Jainal Antel Sali Jr., known as Abu Sulaiman, had 7,000 soldiers (plus American military advisers) on his tail for years. This former overseas worker (after a stint as a Moro National Liberation Front rebel, he had gone to Saudi Arabia where police intelligence reports say he worked in construction) had been with the Abu Sayyaf since the late 1990s, where he used his skills to deadly purpose.

The US government, which had placed a US\$5-million reward for him, dead or alive, was after him because of the kidnappings and hostage executions he planned and participated in that were so notorious: the Jolo kidnapping of American Jeffrey Craig Schilling in 2000; the abduction from Palawan of 17 Filipinos and three American tourists in 2001, in which

Guillermo Sobero was beheaded and Martin Burnham killed during rescue operations. Burnham's wife, Gracia, summed up Sali in this manner: "Based



A photograph of Khaddafy Janjalani is seen in this Philippine Army handout.

See Page 17 **ENGINEER OF DEATH**

Nigeria to assure Philippines all will be done to free hostages

January 22, 2007

Nigeria plans to assure the government of the Philippines that it is doing everything in its power to obtain the release of the six Filipinos who were seized by unidentified men last the weekend, officials said.

"The foreign minister will be speaking with the representative of the Philippine government here to explain the situation in Nigeria and to say that it is not that we are not doing our best to ensure that those that have been

seized get back home safe and sound," President Olusegun Obasanjo's spokeswoman, Remi Oyo, told AFP Monday.

The six men are being held on a cargo ship in the oil-rich Niger Delta. The latest kidnapping marks the second time Filipinos have been held hostage in the region in the past six months.

It prompted Philippine President Gloria Arroyo on Monday to order
See Page 17 **HOSTAGES**

I made a different kind of New Year's resolution ... and it brought me the best year yet! "

The holidays have come and gone and what is usually left is a New Years resolution on how to make this year a healthier and better year. That all starts with making healthier choices. Albert Einstein said "You cannot do the same thing over and over and expect a different result". If for any reason you are suffering from pain in any part of your body, just maybe you have not taken care of the problem.

There are so many people who have given up on their health, not knowing that there may be a better way that what they've already tried. They need a second chance with their health, like I once had. I want to share with you a true story of a patient that is still under my regular chiropractic care.

Last year Ralf came to my office after the holidays. He had spent a week with his family in the Caribbean and for a majority of the time there, he spent on his back not able to move due to debilitating back and neck pain. As well, both of his knees were so swollen they looked like two balloons in the middle of his legs. He promised himself that as soon as he got home he would find the reason for his pain and fix it. That is when he scheduled his consultation with me. Ralf explained to me during that visit that "He had too much water in his knee and that he needed to have it removed." However, when I examined him I knew that the swelling was a protection mechanism for the subluxations that were present in his lower back. Ralf understood the underlying cause for his pain and agreed to have an adjustment. One week later he was able to move around without pain. A few weeks later his neighbor asked what he was doing that was so different because he looks so much healthier and happier! Ralf simply listened to his body. He took care of his subluxations so his body was able to heal naturally.

So you see when you have subluxation, the nerves are choked and the natural energy cannot flow properly to the rest of your body. Several times a day patients thank me for helping them with their health problems. But I

can't really take the credit. I've never healed anyone of anything. What I do is make a specific spinal adjustment to remove the subluxation, and the body responds by healing itself. Subluxation is at a pandemic because of our lifestyle. Sitting is the major cause of subluxation, an average person sits for 32 years. Sitting is as devastating on the spine as sugar is to the teeth. Subluxation also caused by stress, accidents, slips, falls and even the birthing process. But we get tremendous results it's as simple as that.

Many people of all ages come to see me with their health problems. Such as ... headaches, migraines, chronic pain, neck pain, shoulder/arm pain, insomnia, backaches, ear infections, asthma, allergies, numbness in limbs, fatigued, depression, arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, attention deficit disorder, lack of concentration. Just to name a few. You don't have to be in pain to get your spine checked either. If you're one of millions of people suffering from pain and have not yet seen the light at the end of the tunnel.... Then this offer is just for you!

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From Page 1

Filipino Coop

for the month of April 2006 reached over \$29,000 which was its best record.

For a short while, the Coop seemed to be doing well. Mr. Gaviola then decided to increase the store's space by negotiating to rent the basement for an additional rent of \$800 in April 2006 without consulting the board of directors. Expenses were incurred to renovate it for approximately \$12 000. Then in July 2005, there was not enough money in the bank when Mr. Gaviola issued a cheque that bounced. The root of the problem was not discovered until later when Mr. Gaviola and his wife, Adele Gayol, suddenly resigned in August 2006. No one really knew the reasons behind the resignation but after several problems were revealed, people started to guess what had happened. Prior to their resignations, Mr. Gaviola and Mr. Eugene Salinas accused Ms. Rhoda Tremocha as the one responsible for the shortage of cash but she said she was not the only one handling cash at the Coop especially when she went on holiday in May 2006. According to her, Mr. Gaviola was always there and although he used to give her some cash received, she did not know how much she was supposed to receive, as receipts were not always used. She also said that sometimes the envelopes that were supposed to contain cash, were empty. Although Mr. Salinas was supposed to be the bookkeeper as per agreement made during the board of directors meeting on January 22, 2006 at Gilmore College, she said Mr. Salinas did not do any accounting as he was too busy with his income tax business. Apparently he only did accounting one week before the scheduled general assembly on July 16, 2006. Mr. Salinas prepared a report for the emergency meeting on July 9 but it was full of mistakes so Mrs. Kharroubi who was invited to the meeting suggested to prepare an accurate report before making any accusations. As it would appear, Mr. Salinas did not have accurate figures - first he reported on July 9 that the missing amount was \$16,000 but on July 15, it became \$32 000 and then his final report on August 16 showed \$21,000 as the net accountability of the treasurer. At this time, Mr. Gaviola had already resigned on July 31 so the new board met with the treasurer to get her report.

Mr. Salinas submitted his resignation letter dated September 4, 2006 together with a bill amounting to \$7 365.55 covering his services as bookkeeper from January to June 2006 at \$345 monthly, purchases he made that were authorized by Mr. Gaviola and a claim for refund of \$500 allegedly for his relatives' membership shares. According to the treasurer, there was no record of this amount being received by the Coop.

After Mr. Gaviola's resignation, there was a need to replace the two positions in the Board. Lei Mark Castillo was designated as

the interim secretary, and Alex Robles, as the Vice President while Mr. Ben Bade, being the vice-president before, assumed the presidency. An election was supposed to be held during the general assembly on October 22, 2006, to replace some directors and to elect two new ones, however, there were not enough candidates so the people who were nominated were unanimously acclaimed. Four members were named as the new directors, namely, Estrella Gascon, Gerard Castillo, Domingo Loriga, and Joecel Trinidad, designated as the secretary. The board of directors is now composed of seven members instead of five. Magnolia Camat did not want to renew her term as director.

The Members' Savings Plan was discontinued on the advice of CDR as it is not allowed under the Cooperatives Act. Due to poor accounting procedures, the funds used in cash purchases of merchandise and other expenses of the Coop were not properly recorded. What aggravated the situation seemed to be the fact that there were too many unbudgeted expenses and inconsistency of procedures. In addition to

the financial crisis if measures are taken to correct the mistakes that were committed. Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi volunteered to help in following up with government agencies certain outstanding matters, for example, the balance of the first grant by CDEC, and the application to Emploi Quebec for a subsidized employee of the Coop. Although \$15 000 was received as part of the first \$25 000 initial grant, it was not enough to meet the debts of the Coop. The bill alone for the auditors and the bookkeeper totaled over \$6,000 which could have been less if the financial records from Faiz Accounting Service that first did the bookkeeping of the Coop had been transmitted to the auditors. It was not until Mrs. Kharroubi intervened that the missing information was provided to the auditors.

Soon after the cash shortage was discovered, people started claiming the money they deposited. Mr. Gaviola referred them to the treasurer who was subjected to extreme pressures. She had to scrape funds from the sales in order to give a partial payment to each claimant. Her own sons



The original board of directors and founders - from left: Jose Gaviola, Adele Gayol, Ben Bade, Magnolia Camat, and Nole Deterio. Only Bade and Camat are still active members of the Coop.

some equipment already bought, Mr. Gaviola signed leasing contracts. First he purchased equipment from Provincial Refrigeration on a leasing agreement for three years. Then he also signed another leasing contract for more equipment with Metropolitan Refrigeration. Since there was not enough space at the store to keep all the equipment, he asked Metropolitan to keep the equipment he got from Provincial. It was later discovered that Metropolitan was charging storage fees unknown to the Coop. When the leasing contracts were cancelled because the Coop could no longer continue paying the monthly payments of approximately \$2,000, Metropolitan took the shelves owned by the Coop in exchange for this account which was never invoiced.

In spite of the complicated problems, the new Board of Directors and some members believe that there is still a way out

who contributed to the plan could not withdraw anything but she ended up borrowing \$7 000 for the Coop to be used in settling some of these claims. An estimated amount of \$58 000.00 was used by the Coop from the savings plan and this has been reduced to \$23 000 payable as of December 31, 2006. Even though the new management had taken measures to cut down costs by canceling the lease of the basement and canceling the leasing contracts that Mr. Gaviola signed with two companies, there was a serious shortage of funds because of the wasted money resulting from renting the basement for a total of \$7,200, and the lease payments totalling over \$23 000. Consequently, there was no more money available to pay two workers, Myrene and Lei Mark. The Coop had to be closed for half a day and opened only when Mr. Bade or Ms. Tremocha arrive from work. Ms. Julie Parado

volunteered to be the cashier for a while and she opened the store at around 1:00 p.m. She was replaced by either Ben Bade or Rhoda Tremocha at 5:00 P.M. After a few weeks, Emploi Quebec approved to subsidize one full time employee. Leticia delos Santos, was hired on November 27, 2006 to be the cashier from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. However, Emploi Quebec demanded to have a supervisor to oversee her work.

In view of the urgent need for operating capital, Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi thought it would be a good idea to intensify the membership recruitment drive and offer incentives to members who will recruit the highest number of new members. If 1 000 people can be persuaded to invest \$100 each, it will be sufficient to meet all the obligations of the Coop and buy more merchandise to compete with the bigger stores. The Coop's Board of Directors approved Mrs. Kharroubi's proposal during a brief meeting held on January 10, 2007 to launch the membership drive. However, CDEC development agents who have never seen this way of recruiting membership before have expressed some doubts about it. They believe that "using financial incentives and personal gain to incite members to recruit new members seems to go against cooperative principles. Normally, coops rely on the quality of their products and services to attract new members." Moreover, they pointed out that it is not certain if a cooperative is able to get a permit to conduct this contest. Fortunately, after calling the Regie d'alcool, des courses et des jeux on January 18, Mrs. Kharroubi was assured by a Regie's agent, Madame Marie Josée Bédard, that a permit is not required since this type of contest is like giving a commission to members for recruiting other members as an incentive. Furthermore, she said that since it is voluntary, and there is no risk to the public, the Regie does not concern itself with requiring a permit. To make sure that this is indeed the case, Mr. Jason Prince suggested that a written confirmation be obtained from the Regie.

A bit of good news came with a letter from CDEC informing Mr. Bade on October 6, 2006 that its board of directors' had passed a resolution approving a grant of \$40 000 to the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative. A request for this grant was submitted during the time of Mr. Gaviola. However, CDEC stipulated that the Coop should first obtain a business loan. but in order to apply for a loan, a revised business plan would be required. Mr. Gaviola through the assistance of Lei Mark Castillo and a worker from RESO already prepared this business plan but was rejected by both Investissement Quebec and ACEM, two lending institutions for cooperatives. As there appeared to be no one else who could revise the business plan without a fee, Mrs. Kharroubi took it upon herself to look into the



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matter and made an appointment with the people in charge at ACEM to find out what should be done to the plan to make it acceptable. She was told that certain financial information is needed which will take sometime to produce. In view of this problem, Mrs. Kharroubi then suggested to approach the Bank of Nova Scotia where the Coop is banking but before anything can be done, two years' financial statements must be submitted. The bank manager said he would look into what he can do once he receives the two statements, and he will accept even an interim statement for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2006. This seems to offer some hope that the Coop will be able to obtain the grant of \$40 000 from CDEC if the bank approves a loan of \$25 000.

As of now, the Coop will need an immediate injection of at least \$60 000 to pay the remaining balance of \$23 000 to the members in the savings plan, to pay for some outstanding accounts and to buy at least \$20,000 worth of stock to offer enough choices to the user members. The big question is - will the Filipino community be sympathetic enough and be willing to risk a small investment of \$100 in the Cooperative? Everyone is aware that the reason other grocery stores owned by Vietnamese or Chinese merchants prosper is because many Filipinos flock to their stores at all times.

According to the 2000 statistics, there are about 12 000 Filipinos living and working in the Cote-des-Neiges/NDG district. If 5% of this number patronize the Coop by becoming a member user, it will be able to compete and offer lower prices. Eventually, the Coop will be profitable and will be able to give dividends and patronage dividends to its members. These benefits, however, do not come automatically. It requires a concerted, deliberate effort to share this vision.

Perhaps, not everyone understands how cooperatives are organized and what advantages they offer. Some important information must therefore be publicized in order that the public may appreciate the role of cooperatives in the economic development of a region. Membership in a cooperative entails rights and responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities include attending the annual assembly and patronizing the Cooperative. At present, not all members are buying often enough and some of them have not been buying at all. The ideal condition is when the Coop has a 100% business with its own members.

The management of the Cooperative is not permanent and directors are elected for a specific term of office. Every member, regardless of the number of shares, have one vote and is entitled to run as a director after one year of being a member. As the

Cooperative is organized like a business, it is imperative to elect directors who are not only committed to do the work necessary to make it profitable but they must also have some skills in communication, marketing, accounting, and administration. It is important to keep these qualifications in mind when nominating and voting for a director.

It is evident that there are many challenges facing the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative. At the top of the list is the financial crisis that can only be resolved if the community supports the membership drive. Moreover, if those who only paid \$10 or \$20 will now start paying their balances, there will be enough money to pay back the "Paluagan". A letter was written to them but some were returned because they have moved and they did not notify the Coop.

Another challenge is to have the accounting system installed so that the financial statements can be prepared more quickly. Had there been an efficient accounting system, it would have been easier to apply for a business loan.

Finally, it should be noted that there are people who have given a lot of themselves to keep the Cooperative going in spite of its troubles. Besides the first members and founders like Ben Bade, Jose Gaviola, Adele Gayol, Magnolia Camat, Nole Detorio and Rhoda Tremocha who have all invested their

own money to be used in starting the Cooperative, the following people have trusted the Coop with a loan: Aida de la Cruz, Carlito Bade, and Elias Domingo, the supplier of most of the products sold at the Coop. Recently, Zenaida Kharroubi, Lourdes Fagsao, Estrella Gascon, and Joecel Trinidad also loaned money. Other directors have also been requested to pledge some financial support in order to meet the most urgent need of the Coop. Andre Proulx accompanies Rhoda Tremocha in marketing and transporting merchandise and also replaces the cashier when she takes time off due to illness. Jojie Perez helps out in fixing things or doing errands, Lourdes Fagsao works as a volunteer bookkeeper, Paz Calope files the GST reports, and is also on duty as a supervisor of the Coop's only employee, Joecel Trinidad does the secretarial work and calls up members to attend meetings. Hermie Arguilles and Julie Parado are members of the supervisory team that has been set up by Zenaida Kharroubi to meet the requirement of Emploi Quebec. Domingo Loricca spends one hour a week to be a supervisor and also does some inventory. Ben Bade and Rhoda Tremocha along with Magnolia Camat operate the cash register evenings and weekends. Needless to say, the more members there are who volunteer to help the Coop, the better it will be for us all.

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Tagalog Corner

By Anna May Tappan

Pilipinas sa nakalipas na limang taon

Muli ko na namangnasilayan ang ating bansang Pilipinas noong nakaraang taon buwan ng Nobyembre. Sa aking pag-uwi ay halong kalungkutan ang aking nadama sapagkat yumao ang aking pinakamamahal na Ina. Sumagi sa aking isipan ang nakaraan, subalit dapat kung harapin ang katotohanan na ang lahat ay may pagbabago, at iyan ay nasaksihan ko sa ating bansang Pilipinas. Ako ay namangha sa mga pagbabagong aking nasilayan, katulad ng pagtaas ng pamasah, pagtaas ng mga bilingin, iyan ang ilan sa aking ikinamangha, marahil ito ay dahilan na rin sa nakalipas na limang taon kung hindi pag-uwi kung kaya't ako ay labis na namangha sa mga pagbabagong ito. Katulad na lang sa aming lugar, Ako ay tubong Bulacan, noong araw ang pamasah sa dyip ay dalawampiso lamang, ngunit ngayon ito ay pitong piso na, marahil ako ay namahalan ng sobra sapagkat ang aking isipan ay muling nag-balik tanaw sa nakalipas na limang taon. Ang mga bilingin ay napakataas na rin, noong araw ang iyong isang daang piso ay napakahalaga na at marami ka ng mabibili sa halagang iyon, subalit ngayon ikaw ay mamamangha sapagkat halos wala ka ng mailagay sapagkat ikaw ay magugulat sa mahal ng mga bilingin. Atin namang

balik-tanawin ang buhay pulitika. Sa aking pananaw ito ay walang pagbabago marahil ay alam nyo na ang aking tinutukoy, mula noon hanggang ngayon ay ganoon parin ito, mga kaguluhan ay patuloy pa rin, marahil ito ay likas na kahit saang bansa ka man pumunta. Akin ding nasaksihan ang kagandahan ng ating bansa na talaga namang maipagmamalaki nating lahat. Sa araw ng Pasko makikita mo talaga ang ating pagpapahalga sa pagsilang ng ating Mahal na Poong Maykapal. Muli ko na namang nasaksihan ang Simbang Gabi na talaga namang walang pagbabago sapagkat ito ay nakaugalian na nating mga Pilipino, at siyempre pa hindi mawawala ang Pamaskong awit na talaga namang ikaw ay lubos na masisiyahan sa mga taong tumutugtog at umaawit ng mga Pamaskong awitin, sapagkat ang kanilang mga tinig ay napakakaganda, at ito ay patuloy pa rin nilang ginagawa sa pamamagitan ng pagdalaw sa mga tahanan. Iyan ang ilan sa mga bagay na aking nasaksihan sa ating bansang Pilipinas, kaya mga kababayan kung kayo ay matagal ng hindi nakakadalaw sa ating bansang sinilangan, kayo ay huwag ng mamangha sapagkat maraming ng mga bagay, lugar na ipinagbago subalit mananatili pa rin ang mga bagay na ating mga kinaugalian na at wala ng makapagbabago noon kahit tayoy ay yumao na.



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Filipino Solidarity Cooperative sets up membership drive

The purpose of the membership drive is not only to raise the capital base of the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative but also to show our solidarity which is the fundamental principle upon which cooperatives are organized. It is an opportunity to rally the community to have a common goal - to use our economic power for our common welfare. If the Cooperative becomes profitable, it will be able to offer more services to the community and eventually, may expand to other economic activities permitted by the Cooperatives Act.

This membership drive is designed to reward those who will work hard to persuade their friends, relatives, associates, and other acquaintances to become a member by buying common and preferred shares for a total amount of \$100. Prizes will be solicited from big companies like airlines, electronic manufacturers, retail store giants, banks, insurance companies, and the like. At this time, it is not yet known which of the big companies will be willing to offer major prizes for this contest but they will soon be contacted by a committee of volunteers who will send out solicitation letters and follow them up personally. Any one who is willing to help in this effort will be greatly appreciated.

The contest is open to all qualified members subject to the following rules:

Eligibility

1. Contestant members must have paid the qualifying shares of \$100.00 effective on or before the start of the contest which is February 22, 2007.
2. Contestant members must have a legal status in Canada - a permanent resident, Canadian citizen, or holder of a temporary work permit

3. Contestant members must sign a participation form agreeing to the rules of the contest and to the decision of the judges being final.

Contest: Rules

- A. Contest date: February 22, 2007 to November 15, 2007. Eligibility date is based on the application date and payment of first installment of Common and Preferred Shares (\$50 Common, \$50 Preferred)
- B. Membership shares of person recruited to be members must be paid within 90 days after signing the membership application forms
- C. Participation in the contest is open to all members who have fully paid their \$100 as qualifying shares on or before February 22, 2007.
- D. Members who have chosen to participate in the contest must sign a consent form to participate and use their names for publicity purposes as well as their agreement to abide by the rules of the contest.
- E. Winners of the contest will be based on the highest number of members recruited who have fully paid their \$100 shares within the maximum period of 90 days from the date of their applications.
- F. There will be five major prizes awarded. The first prize will be won by the member who has recruited the highest number of fully paid members on or before the ending date of the contest. The second prize will be awarded to the member with the second highest number of fully paid members recruited, the third prize to the third highest number of members recruited, and so on. This ranking will be officially declared by a board of auditors. who will verify that all the

rules of the contest have been followed.

G. Consolation prizes will be awarded and determined by the Board of Directors. (proposal - to give \$10 per qualified member recruited)

H. Major prizes will not have any monetary value and must be accepted as donated by the sponsors.

I. The contest will be publicized in the North American Filipino Star. Details about the contest will appear every month starting January 2007 until October 2007 (exact dates depend on the publication of the North American Filipino Star which is published between the 15th and 25th of every month.). Results will appear in the December 2007 issue. Awarding of prizes will be presented on a date to be

determined by the Board of Directors but should not be delayed more than two weeks after the results have been announced.

J. Stock certificates for common and preferred shares sold during this contest shall be delivered promptly to the members who have fully paid

Please call 514-733-8915 for more information, or pick up the required membership and contest participation forms starting on February 1, 2007, at Divisoria Cubao during store hours, Monday to Friday 9:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., and Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 P.M.



Cora Eriza celebrated her birthday with friends on December 29, 2006 (Photo by John Cseh).



Vangie Gabriel preparing to blow her birthday candles, January 5, 2007



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Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk: I'm moving into a freshly painted apartment, and am curious to know whether it makes any sense to repaint the walls with non-toxic paint in hopes of "covering up" the toxic stuff already there. Or is it too late?

-- Erin East, New York, NY

Conventional indoor paints do indeed release potentially toxic chemicals during and shortly after application; though once paint is dry the majority of the offending substances, collectively known as "volatile organic compounds" or "VOCs," tend to stay sealed up. As such, most people will not be affected

shown to cause cancer in animals, and some are suspected of being carcinogenic to humans. Health effects vary greatly depending on the particular chemicals involved and the amount of exposure and individual sensitivity of those living with them. Besides paints, a wide range of other home products—including building materials, carpets, furniture, cleaning supplies and bug sprays—can emit VOCs.

If someone is suffering from respiratory problems or other symptoms upon moving into a freshly painted residence, or remaining sensitive long after a paint job, there are many paints now on the market that can help decrease the amount of VOCs emitted into the air.

There are essentially three general categories of non-toxic (or low-toxic) paints: zero-VOC, low-VOC and so-called "natural." Keep in mind, however, that the term "non-toxic" is used in its broadest sense. Even "zero-VOC" formulations, such as those made by AFM Safecoat, Yolo Colorhouse and Ecos, for example, can contain trace amounts (up to five grams per liter or less) of toxic ingredients.

Some leading low-VOC paints can be obtained from manufacturers such as Cloverdale, Vista and Miller, to name a few. Industry leaders Benjamin Moore and Sherwin-Williams also offer own low-VOC lines. "Natural" paints and finishes, from manufacturers such as Livos, Alglaia and BioShield, are made from raw ingredients such as water, plant oils, clay and milk protein, and as such usually contain minimal amounts of VOCs. Consumers can track down such healthier paints at retailers like the Environmental Home Center and Greenhome.com, and even at some of the larger home repair chains.

Precautions should be taken during the application of any paint. Only buy exactly what you need and apply it with adequate ventilation. Remember to always keep paints out of the reach of children and pets, and safely dispose of all unused product. If ventilation is not sufficient, wear a respirator with a filter that will capture and prevent the inhalation of VOCs.

Dear EarthTalk: I've heard the term "greenbelts" pertaining to the natural coastline barriers in India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka that protected some people from the worst of the Indian Ocean Tsunami. But what are greenbelts that exist in urban areas?

-- Helen, via e-mail

The term "greenbelt" refers to any area of undeveloped natural land that has been set aside near urban or developed land to provide open space, offer light recreational opportunities or contain development. And yes, the natural greenbelts along areas of Southeast Asia's coastlines, including the region's mangrove forests, served

as buffers and helped to prevent even greater loss of life from the December 2004 tsunami.

Greenbelts in and around urban areas have probably not saved any lives, but they are important nonetheless to the ecological health of any given region. The various plants and trees in greenbelts serve as organic sponges for various forms of pollution, and as storehouses of carbon dioxide to help offset global warming. "Trees are an important part of the city infrastructure," says Gary Moll of American Forests. Because of the many benefits trees provide to cities, Moll likes to refer to them as the "ultimate urban multi-taskers."



"Greenbelts help urban dwellers feel more connected to nature, while also working to contain development and sprawl, and absorb the carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming." Getty Images

Greenbelts are also important to help urban dwellers feel more connected to nature. Dr. S.C. Sharma of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in India believes that all cities should " earmark certain areas for the development of greenbelts [to] bring life and color to the cement concrete jungle and [a] healthy environment to the urbanities."

Greenbelts are also important in efforts to limit sprawl, which is the tendency for cities to spread out and encroach on rural lands and wildlife habitat. Three U.S. states--Oregon, Washington and Tennessee--require their largest cities to establish so-called "urban growth boundaries" to limit sprawl through the establishment of planned greenbelts. Meanwhile, the cities of Minneapolis, Virginia Beach, Miami and Anchorage have created urban growth boundaries on their own. In California's Bay Area, the non-profit Greenbelt Alliance has successfully lobbied for the establishment of 21 urban growth boundaries across four counties surrounding the city of San Francisco.

The concept has also caught on in Canada, with the cities of Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver adopting similar mandates for the creation of greenbelts to combat sprawl. Urban greenbelts can also be found in and around larger cities in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The green belt concept has even spread to rural areas, such as in East Africa. Womens' rights and environmental activist Wangari Maathai launched the Green Belt Movement in Kenya in 1977 as a grassroots tree-planting program to address the challenges of deforestation, soil erosion and lack of water there. To date, her organization has overseen the planting of 40 million trees across Africa. In 2004 Maathai was the first environmentalist to be awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. Why "peace?" "There can be no peace without equitable development and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space," said Maathai in her acceptance speech.

GOT AN ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTION? Send it to: EarthTalk, c/o E/The Environmental Magazine, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881;



Conventional paints can "off-gas" a number of potentially toxic chemicals, collectively known as VOCs, that can cause serious respiratory tract irritation as well as visual impairment, headaches, dizziness and memory loss. Fortunately a number of non-toxic, low-toxic and "natural" paints are now on the market. (Getty Images)

once the telltale new paint smell has faded away.

If someone is suffering adverse health effects from exposure to fresh paint it should not be taken lightly. "Off-gassing" VOCs can cause serious respiratory tract irritation as well as visual impairment, headaches, dizziness and memory loss. Additionally, many VOCs have been

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Arroz a la cubana



1/4 k ground lean pork (note: 1 kilo = 2.2 lbs)
 1/4 k ground beef
 2 tbsp oil
 1 tbsp garlic, macerated
 a small onion, sliced thin
 1 large tomato, sliced
 1 small box of raisins (approx. 1/6 cup)
 1/4 tsp pepper
 1 tsp salt
 6 cups cooked (steamed) rice, molded (use a cup as mold)
 fried saba or plantain banana, sliced
 fried sweet potatoes
 sunny side up fried eggs, one per person

Saute in hot oil, garlic, onion, and tomato until tender. Add meat and cook until done. Add the rest of the ingredients and season. Arrange the molds of rice on a huge platter. I like to make a ring of the molds of rice. Arrange in the central part of the platter the cooked meat mixture, the fried bananas and sweet potatoes. Top molds of rice with fried eggs. This makes a dramatic presentation!
 Serves 6.

Morisqueta Tostada



3 c old rice (last night's rice will do)
 2 Chinese sausages, sliced
 1 tbsp garlic, macerated
 1 medium onion, sliced
 1 tbsp soy sauce
 1/4 c chopped ham
 2 tbsp chopped shrimps
 1 scrambled egg
 green onions, finely cut

Fry Chinese sausages until crisp; set aside. Saute garlic, onion, and rice. Add the rest of the ingredients and cook until rice is coated with soy sauce. Garnish with scrambled egg slices and green onions.

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Ask the Video Guy

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Plasma or LCD: What to buy

Shopping for LCD or Plasma TVs? Which to get? The answer lies often to your taste, budget and basic knowledge of current technology now saturating the market. You must have received hundreds of flyers, brochures or catalogues of bargain plasma, LCD, DLPs, during this holiday season. Those 50 inch plasma theater cost \$10,000 4 years ago and now you'll find them at \$3000 plus odd dollars. The problem is what model and technology should I buy? Learn the basics of LCDs and Plasma and then ask the salesman for specials not yet printed on the flyers. You'll be surprised what they can offer.

How LCD TVs Work

What Is LCD Technology?

Like popular LCD monitors you commonly see used with computers, LCD TVs have a slim design and a flat viewing surface, but have been fine tuned for video display. Recent advances in flat panel LCD technology now allow for larger screens, wider viewing angles, and higher-quality video images. LCD TVs are also competition for trendy-but-heavy, plasma display technology. They are several times lighter than comparably sized plasmas, and are far more durable.

How do LCD TV's work?

Two sheets of polarized transparent material, one with a special polymer coating that holds liquid crystals, are adhered together. Electric current is passed through individual crystals, which interpret the information from the broadcast signal to allow or disallow light through them to create

an image. The crystals themselves do not produce light, so the technology is "non-emissive" and therefore does not give off radiation like an older television does. Fluorescent tubes housed behind the transparent material illuminate the image. They require less power to operate than CRT and plasma televisions which require powering hundreds of electrodes to stimulate the phosphorous.

How Plasma Works

Plasma is flat, lightweight surface covered with millions of tiny glass bubbles. Each bubble contains a gas-like substance, the plasma, and has a phosphorous coating. Think of the bubbles as pixels.

Now, think of each pixel-bubble as having three sub pixels - one red, one green, one blue. When its time to display an image signal (RGB), a digitally controlled electronic current flows through the flat screen, causing the plasma inside designated bubbles to give off ultraviolet rays. The light in turn causes the phosphor coatings to glow the appropriate colour.

Millions of RGB bubbles glow and time to make a rich, vivid image on your plasma TV.

Don't rush to the Best Buy, Future Shop, Compusmart etc yet because on the next issue of the Filipino Star, we shall compare the advantages of Plasma & LCD. So be patient and be wise to save. Happy New Year to All!

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Sprawled along the shores of Southeastern Mindanao, Davao del Sur is a place of natural wonders and rarities. It boasts of the country's highest peak, **Mt. Apo**, the most prized Philippine orchid species like the Vanda Sanderiana, some of the most exotic fruits, and the endangered **Philippine Eagle**.

Davao del Sur is home to a host of ethnic groups whose culture and way of life have been preserved. These are the Bagobos, the Mandayas, the Mansakas, the Atas, the Kalagans, the Tagakaolos, and the Mangguangans. Their arts and crafts are on display in museums and shops.

There is a wide choice of white sand beaches and resorts. In the city, there are numerous hotels and inns. Dining is good and varied. Nightlife is fun.



Trekking around Mt. Apo

Some of the popular sports activities are golf, watersports, and mountain climbing.

Located in the southeastern corner of the country's southernmost island of Mindanao, The province is composed of sandy beaches and outlying islands; agricultural plains and valleys; rainforests; swamps; rolling hills and mountains including the Philippines' highest peak, Mt. Apo (3,144 meters).

Davao City, the premiere city of Mindanao, is located in the northeastern part of the province, at the head of the gulf. In terms of land area, Davao City is the world's largest city (244,000 hectares). The mighty Davao river runs through the city.



Tudaya Falls, one of the highest in the country



A Philippine Eagle with spectacular Mt Apo in the backdrop



Scenes from the Kadayawan Festival Parade in Davao City, held in August each year . A dancer (Top left), is dressed up in traditional Bagobo.

Davao enjoys a mild, pleasant climate all year round, there is no pronounced wet or dry season. and the province sits outside of the typhoon belt.

Davao del Sur is an ethnic mix of Muslims, Visayans, Tagalogs, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish with a number of indigenous tribes scattered in the central plains and the western shores of the Davao Gulf. The city of Davao has a population of 892,000 inhabitants spread across a vast land. Cebuano is the main language although English and Pilipino are widely spoken. B'laan, Bagobo, Manobo, Tagakaolo are the local tribe dialects. The Atas (numbering

220,000) and the Bagobos (around 80,000 people) are the largest tribes. The colorful artistic heritage of Davao stems from the rich culture of its tribes. The Bagobos, for instance, are famous for their aesthetics in the meticulous carving of weapons; the elaborate decoration of inlaid metal boxes with bells; and the ornamentation of their abaca fiber dress with embroidery, shells, beads and metal discs.

A fabulous time to witness the rich cultural heritage and arts of the local people is during the **Kadayawan Festival**, held every third week of August in Davao City. Kadayawan is the festival of festivals in Davao. Showcasing are tribal inspired street

dancers and authentic *Lumads* (indigenous people).

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Endangered dwarf buffalo flourishing again in Philippines

January 24, 2007

A unique dwarf water buffalo driven to the edge of extinction by hunting and deforestation is flourishing

again in a rare success for conservationists, the Philippines government said.

Big-game hunters using

helicopters and automatic rifles, and deforestation by settlers, loggers and ranchers pushed the tamaraw, or Bubalus mindorensis, among the ranks of the world's critically endangered list by 1970.

By then its population on Mindoro island shrank to 150, from about 10,000 in the previous decade, the environment department said on its website.

The government banned hunting of the animal, the largest mammal native to the Philippines, and in 1979 introduced a captive breeding program that has produced just one offspring with 19 of the 20 captured buffaloes now dead.

A strategic shift to habitat conservation through creation of a 25,000-hectare (61,776-acre) jungle reserve, as well as increased environmental awareness by residents, boosted numbers to 187 by 2001.

By the following year the total reached 253, and the latest official count is 263, "although the figure could even exceed 300 if reported loose sightings in the northern side of the Iglit Baco National Park are taken in."

"The tamaraws have definitely survived. In fact, with the continuous efforts of the government, concerned sectors and the Mindorenses (Mindoro

residents), they may even begin to thrive," it added.

First documented in 1888, the mature tamaraw stands about three feet (0.91 meters) high at the shoulder and weighs 300 kilograms (661.39 pounds). ■

Wanted: 5,800 couples for new Lovapalooza record

January 24, 2007

More than 5,700 couples are needed on February 10 to overturn Hungary's Lovapalooza supremacy.

In 2004 the Philippines broke the Guinness World Record for the most couples kissing in one event, by gathering 5,239 couples at the Rajah Solaiman fronting Manila's famed Baywalk.

But Hungary broke the record the following year, in a kissing festival attended by 5,700 couples, according to Alma Cala of the Lovapalooza Alumni secretariat.

Organizers of this year's Lovapalooza spectacle are urging Filipinos to take back the record.

Alumni of the record-breaking kissfest are staging a "Kissing de Avance" march and rally today, to give notice of their determination to regain the record. ■

Philippines dwarf water buffalo

From a population of 150 in the 70s, the critically endangered species could now exceed 300 after conservation efforts, according to the government Wednesday

PHILIPPINES

LUZON

MANILA

VISAYAS

MINDANAO

Habitat

Iglit Baco National Park, Mindoro island

Asian water buffalo

Dwarf water buffalo or "Tamaraw" (Bubalus mindorensis)

Height: 0.91 metres (at shoulder)

Weight: up to 300 kg

Lifespan: 20-25 years

There were an estimated 10,000 on Mindoro island in the 1960s

Sources: Harbin/IUCN 240107 AFP

A graphic on the Philippines' dwarf water buffalo. A unique dwarf water buffalo driven to the edge of extinction by hunting and deforestation is flourishing again in a rare success for conservationists, the Philippines government said.

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Pearl of Manila was featured in the Montreal Gazette by Sarah Musgrave in her column "Casual Restos". It is also included in a restaurant guide "Cheap Thrills" sold in bookstores.

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Vangie Gabriel (2nd from left) celebrated her birthday at Mont Olympia Restaurant on January 5, 2007 in grand style complete with a live orchestra, the Blacksmiths.



Julie Parado (4th from the right) reading the greeting card wishing her "bon voyage" was given a despedida party by the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative, January 13, 2007, for having volunteered her time to be the cashier.



After the high mass to celebrate the feast of Sto. Nino, Father Frank Alvarez (3rd from left) poses for souvenir with Hilda Veloso, Father Réal Levesque, Zenaida Kharroubi, and Father Gerry Loiselle, January 19, 2007, at the Filipino Catholic Mission.



Ati-Atihan dancers with their colorful costumes and drums provided an impressive display of native costumes during the Sinulog celebration at the Filipino Catholic Mission, January 19, 2007



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Gilmore International College Christmas Party



Students of Tuesday French and English classes pose with their teachers, Zenaïda Kharroubi and Diana Lewis (2nd from right)



Students of Sunday French class pose with their teacher, Mr. Kadri Sherifi.



Gilmore International College annual Christmas party held on December 16, 2006 at the College premises on Queen Mary Road



Gilmore College alumni with their families and friends pose for a souvenir photo besides the Christmas tree, December 16, 2006.



A Christmas photo with the children and a grandmother invited by Juvy Perreras during Gilmore International College's annual Christmas party, December 16, 2006



Students of the Saturday French class at Gilmore International College pose with their teacher during the Christmas party, December 16, 2007. From left: Elaila Elumbra, Leticia de los Santos, Roy Javelosa, Zenaïda Kharroubi, (teacher), Gracel Dorado, and Lenny Villanueva.



Vic hints of marriage with model Pia Guanio



Lovebirds Vic Sotto and Pia Guanio are truly serious with each other. In a recent TV interview where he was asked if Pia would be the woman he's bringing to the altar (for the second time), Vic replied: "Siguro darating kami roon. And kung dumating man ang panahon na iyon, we'll be glad to announce it to the whole world. Ang dalawang taong nakikipagrelasyon sa

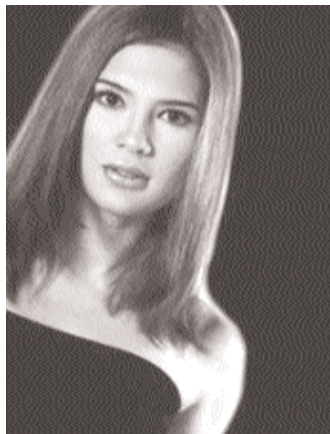
isa't isa ay 'yun lang naman ang ultimate goal. You're willing to spend the rest of your life with that person." Vic adds: "Patibay nang patibay ang relationship namin. She's a very loving person, [she] takes care of me well. She's the type of person na habang matagal mong nakikilala, mas magugustuhan mo. Kahit na hindi 'yung love angle, 'no? I mean, the more you

look at her, the more she becomes [pretty]. At mas nakikilala mo yung pagkatao niya, mas gumaganda yung pagkatao niya."

Vic says he and Pia are open to the idea of getting married, but they have decided to wait a little longer because Danica, Vic's daughter by Dina Bonnevie, is getting married this year to basketball player Marc Pingris. "Papaunahin ko na 'yung bata," says Vic. Pia, who is 25 years younger than Vic, does not believe that her boyfriend is a womanizer. "Is he a womanizer? I don't think so," she says. "I don't believe what they say about him. So women are the ones who get attracted to him and not the other way around? I do hope so. It means he's hot and, as I've said, I want my man to be hot. I can't be with a womanizer because I grew up with a father and a brother who are not."

What else did she like about Vic? "Besides his sense of humor, what I like about him is his patience. He's patient with me. I'm quite a brat, you know. He knows how to handle me when I'm in a nasty mood." ■

Vina Settles Score With Borgy



A confrontation, an apology and a slap on the face were all that were needed to settle matters between Vina Morales and Borgy Manotoc. If you will recall, Borgy said in a radio interview recently that among the celebrity women he had gone to bed with was Vina. The two others he mentioned were German model Lana Asanin, who used to appear on "Eat Bulaga," and Victoria London, who was last seen on an ABC 5 game show. Both are no longer in the country. "Of course, I know who Borgy Manotoc is," Vina said in one interview. "Who doesn't? But I'm not close to him. Hanggang 'Hi!' and 'Hello!' lang kami. No, I've never gone to bed with him!"

Vina had been looking for Borgy since then to clarify what he said. On Dec. 10, the two crossed paths at Greenbelt in Makati. In front of Borgy's girlfriend, model Ornussa Cadness, Vina confronted Borgy. The son of Imee Marcos and Tommy Manotoc said it was all a joke which went out of proportion. As Borgy kept saying, "I'm sorry!", Vina gave him a big slap across his face, causing his mouth to bleed. But before they parted, Vina and Borgy hugged each other to put an end to the controversy. Vina explained her

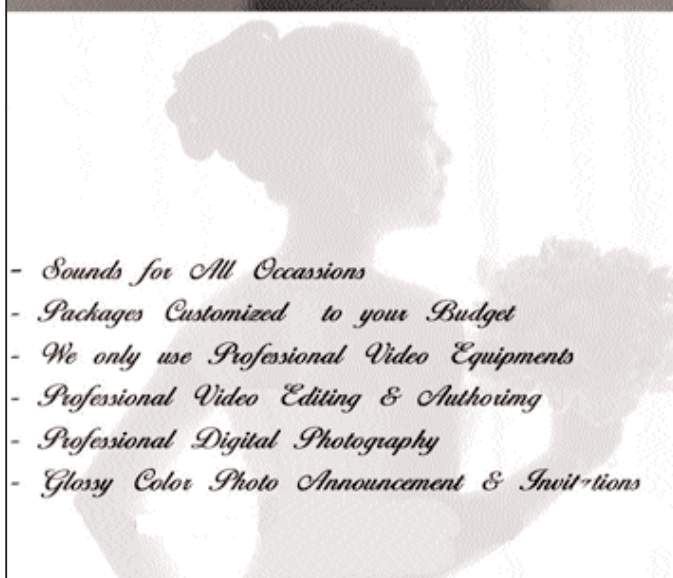
action: "It had been more than a week since the controversy broke out; I'm all over television, hurting, but Borgy never said a word. Not even a call or a text message to apologize. I was worried that people were starting to believe that I really went to bed with him." ■

Malapit Ang Intriga Kay Jennylyn at Mark



Sa tuwing may pelikula na ilalabas sina Jennylyn Mercado at Mark Herras ay malimit na may kasama itong negatibong intriga tungkol sa kanila. Katulad na lang ng chika na may kumakalat umano na nude video nina Jen at Mark. At ayon pa sa chika, si Mark pa daw ang kumukuha ng nasabing nude video. Kaagad naman na pinabulaanan ni Jen ang nasabing intriga. Sa katunayan ay hindi na raw niya pinapansin ang mga intriga na ibinabato sa kanya, sanay na raw kasi siya dito. Pero ayon sa kanya, "Shock kami (ni Mark) na meron pala kaming sex video na naman. Hindi naman totoo. God knows na hindi totoo 'yon. Ang alam ko at alam ni God na wala talaga kaming ganoong video. Hindi ko alam 'yon! Dagdag pa ng dalaga: "Anyway, wala ako'ng time sa ganoong negative issues! I am busy with my career! Hindi ako gagawa ng ganyang bagay lalo na kung ikakasama ko!" Hiling din ni Jen na ang pelikula na lang daw nila ni Mark na Super Noypi ang pag-usapan at huwag na ang mga negatibong intriga na wala namang katotohanan. Si Mark man ay nangangalati sa inis nang makaabot sa kanya ang intrigang ito. Hinahamon niya ang sinuman nagkalat ng balitang ito na maglabas ng pruwaba tungkol sa kanilang akusasyon. Ayon pa sa binata, hindi na raw maganda ang intrigang ito na binabato sa kanya. Kaya pa daw niyang tanggapin ang akusasyon na babaero o bad boy siya, pero ang pagkakaroon ng nude video dahil parang pinapalabas na manyak siya. Hanggang ngayon ay walang nakikitang nude video nina Jen at Mark, kaya tingin namin ay paninira lang ito sa dalawa. ■

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More Than Friends Sina Bea



Mukhang sooner o later ay aamin na rin itong sina Bea Alonzo at Mico Palanca sa tunay na score sa pagitan nilang dalawa. Kung noon ay deny to death pa sila na may something special na namamagitan sa kanila, ngayon ay unti-unti na nilang ibinabahagi sa publiko ang magandang pagtitinginan na namumuo sa pagitan nilang dalawa. Sa ngayon ay inamin na nina Bea at Mico na matagal na silang nagde-date. Hindi lang nila sinabi ang eksaktong buwan o taon kung kailan sila nagsimulang mag-date. Sa teleseryeng "Kay Tagal Kitang Hinintay" ng ABS-CBN na ipinalabas three years ago pa yata naging close ang dalawa. At nang matapos noon

ang nasabing teleserye ay doon nagsimula ang ugong na nagkakamabutihin na nga raw sina Bea at Mico. Pero that time ay walang inaamin ang dalawa at friends lang daw sila. Vocal si Mico na may pagtingin siya kay Bea. At mukhang nagbigay pa nga ito ng clue sa tunay na relasyon nila nang sabihin niya sa isang interview, "Yeah, we've been dating, we're happy. But there's no label. We're more than friends." Hindi naman kinontra ni Bea ang sinabi ni Mico sa interview. Sa katunayan, noon daw ini-interview si Mico tungkol sa kanilang dalawa ni Bea ay nasa nasa paligid lang daw ang dalaga at tawa nang tawa sa mga sinasabi ni Mico. ■

Star Cinema mulls "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" sequel

Star Cinema, the producer of "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" is mulling a sequel after the film bagged the most number of awards during the 32nd Metro Manila Film Festival and raked in

P150 million in the box office. The movie which starred real-life couple Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo, was named MMFF's top grossing film after it earned P139 million at the end of the festival on January 6th. The controversial "Enteng Kabisote 3: the Legend goes on and on and on" came in second, earning P128 million. The organizers of the festival were hit by other producers after they named it best picture based on its popularity. If the plan of having the sequel of "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" pushes through, it will be shown either in December 2007 or January 2008. I highly recommend seeing this movie as it hits the video racks! Be the first to rate it. ■



2006 Grand Star Dreamer owns P3.2m condominium



2006 Grand Star Dreamer Josephine "Yeng" Constantino of ABS-CBN's top-rated reality show "Pinoy Dream Academy" was in tears upon accepting her P3.2 million condominium-prize in the competition that ended last December. Yeng's new three bedroom crib is on the 27th floor of GA Condominium along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue-Boni. The fully-furnished loft was sponsored by Globe Asiatique. Aside from the 40 sq meter condo unit, Yeng is also expecting a car prize for bagging the best Song award in the 2006 Metro Manila Film Festival for her composition "Hawak Kamay", used as the theme song of the top-grossing film "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo." ■

Obvious Na In Love Si Pops



"Hindi man deretsahang aminin ni Pop Fernandez, obvious naman na in love na in love siya ngayon kay Jomari Ylanna. Matagal na silang tinatanong ng publiko, pero tanging sobrang special lang daw ang tingin nila sa isa't isa. Pero kung babasahin ang mga salitang lumalabas sa bibig ni Pops, ang sagot sa matagal nang katanungan kung sila na ba talaga ay isang malaking OO. Bukod sa malimit silang mag-date ay ka jamming na rin ni Jomari ang mga anak na binata ni Pops sa gimikan. Ayon pa nga kay Pops ay close na raw si Jomari sa kanyang mga anak. Nang kamakailan lang ay nag-guest itong si Pops sa

programang "The Buzz." Kasalan na ngayon ang tinatanong sa kanya. Natatawang nasabi ni Pops na hindi pa nga raw siya umaamin ay kasal naman ngayon ang tinatanong sa kanya. "There are no immediate plans. If that is going to happen, though, I'd like it to be in Las Vegas so that there would be no difficulty filing a divorce in case something wrong between us happens," sabi ng Concert Queen. At ngayong Pasko, ang regalo daw ni Pops kay Jomari ay, "Myself, love. That's the greatest gift." O, 'di ba obvious na in-labababo si Pops? ■

Kumander Nene, Ikinasal Na

Noong September pa pala nagpakasal si Nene Tamayo, ang first winner ng "Pinoy Big Brother." Nagulat ang publiko, maging ang lahat ng kanyang co-housemate sa PBB na naging close friend niya, sa biglaan niyang pagpapakasal. Nagulat din ang

bahay ni Kuya ang mapalad na groom. Akala kasi ng publiko, nagkakamabutihan sina Nene at Bob. Ang nagging husband pala ni Kumander Nene ay si Anthony Plamio, isang dance instructor na nakapareha ni Nene sa celebrity dance show na "U Can Dance" ng ABS-CBN. Nakagaanan at nagkamabutihan sina Nene at Anthony habang nakikipagpaligsahan sa iba pang mga celebrity at dance instructor. Nakaabot pa nga sila sa grand finals kung saan nakuha nila ang "Texter's Choice Award". May sitsit na kaya raw nagpakasal kaagad si Nene ay dahil buntis na siya. Pinabulaanan naman ito ni Kumander, masaya daw siya sa kanyang ginawang desisyon na lumagay na sa tahimik, ngunit hindi daw siya buntis kaya siya nagpakasal. Sa civil ceremony lang kinasal si Kumander Nene, pero early next year daw ay magpapakasal din sila sa simbahan. Magkahalong gulat at lungkot ang reaksiyon ni Bob nang dumating sa kanya ang balita. Maging sa kanya ay inililhim ni Nene ang kanyang wedding plans. Ang ine-expect kasi ni Bob ay siya ang unang makakaalam tungkol dito kasi isa siya sa pinaka close kay Nene sa showbiz ■



lahat nang malaman na hindi si Bob de la Cruz, ang co-housemate niya sa

Atong pleads guilty, draws 6 years in jail

January 24, 2007

A former crony of deposed President Joseph Estrada pleaded guilty to corruption yesterday, in a plea-bargain that state prosecutors said would strengthen the government's hand in other graft cases.

Under the terms of the plea-bargain, Charlie Ang will serve six years in jail and return P25 million that "he personally took" from the P130 million that he conspired with Estrada to take, prosecutors said.



In exchange for a lighter sentence, Charlie "Atong" Ang has pleaded guilty to a lesser offense.

Ang, who was extradited from the United States last November, and is one of four co-defendants in the Estrada case, will be absolved of plunder, which carries life imprisonment.

Prosecutors said the P130 million came from tobacco excise taxes that Estrada illegally appropriated for himself.

The former president is accused of plundering a personal fortune of up to P4.2 billion during his 30 months in office. He was ousted by a popular revolt in January 2001.

Estrada is under house arrest at his farm in Tanay, Rizal, just outside Manila.

Ang fled to the United States after Estrada's downfall but was handed over by Washington last year at Manila's request.

Prosecutors said Ang in the plea bargain "undertakes to assist in the prosecution, and testify, whenever proper, in cases being prosecuted by the government in which he has personal knowledge."

"He is a credible witness," State Prosecutor Dennis Villa Ignacio said, noting that Ang used to be a member of Estrada's inner circle.

But Villa Ignacio said Ang's plea bargain would not be used in the plunder case against Estrada, which has already been submitted for resolution.

Jay Flaminiano, one of Estrada's lawyers, asked the anti-graft court to order the government prosecutors to provide them with a copy of the agreement.

Flaminiano said Estrada should be given the chance to respond to the contents of the agreement, especially if they put him at a disadvantage.

But Villa Ignacio objected, saying the agreement was only between the state and Ang, and would not affect Estrada's plunder trial.

Estrada has maintained he was illegally ousted in a conspiracy by a powerful elite led by the Roman Catholic Church, businessmen and the woman who replaced him, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was his vice president.

As part of the plea-bargain, Ang has waived all rights over the house and lot at 18 Manansala St. in Corinthian Gardens, Quezon City, which are covered by a writ of attachment as part of the plunder case.

The properties will be transferred to the government. ■

Manila orders private armies disarmed before polls

January 24, 2007

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ordered the police on Wednesday to disarm private armies kept by local politicians ahead of mid-term elections in May.

Nearly 40 million Filipinos will elect half of the 24-member upper house of Congress, all 230 members of the House of Representatives and more than 17,000 local officials in polls seen as a referendum on Arroyo's leadership.

"I am instructing the Philippine National Police to map out in detail all potential election hot spots, disarm any private armies and help the Commission on Elections enforce clean, honest and peaceful polls," Arroyo said in a statement on Wednesday.

After Arroyo issued the instruction, senior national police generals met the elections commission to review the situation in the country's 80 provinces,

identifying areas where violence could erupt during elections.

Oscar Calderon, the national police chief, said they were also reviewing the list of local political warlords believed to keep private armies.

Three years ago, the national police said there were about 100 armed groups across the archipelago with a few thousand weapons.

"We believed that more than half of these groups have been dismantled," Calderon told reporters, adding soldiers and police officers who were serving as bodyguards of politicians had been recalled to reduce potential violence during the election period.

Police said there were still no figures on recent election-related violence, but dozens of politicians and potential candidates had been gunned down in many parts of the country.

Elections will be held on May 14. ■

Estrada's wife won't seek reelection

January 23, 2007

Sen. Luisa Estrada on Tuesday confirmed her decision not to seek reelection in the May 2007 mid-term polls, ABS-CBN News reported.

She said San Juan Mayor Jose Victor Ejercito, a son of former president Joseph Estrada by businesswoman Guia Gomez, will instead carry the Estrada banner for the United Opposition's senatorial lineup.

The senator said the decision was also based on the former president's approval of her plans for the coming elections.

When asked about the issue that the Senate could end up with members with the same family name, the senator said it would be up to the voters to decide.

The senator's statement came after the San Juan mayor said two weeks

ago that the Estrada family was undecided on who among its members will run for the Senate.



Sen. Luisa Estrada

Ejercito, however, said that the family has decided to choose between him and the former president's wife to give others the opportunity to join the opposition's senatorial slate. ■

More than 8 million Filipinos work overseas

January 23, 2007

More than one million workers ranging from domestic helpers to doctors, engineers and pilots joined the army of Filipinos employed overseas last year.

Data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration Monday also showed more than eight million Filipinos - or one 10th of the country's 86 million people - were working overseas in 2006.

The Philippines has become one of the world's biggest exporters of workers, whose income now plays a central role in the country's economy.

In the 11 months to November last year remittances sent home by overseas workers totalled US\$11.4 billion (HK\$88.92 billion), about 10 percent of gross domestic product, according to the central bank.

But a recent Asian Development Bank report put the real figure - money not declared along with remittances through formal channels - in the US\$14 billion to US\$21 billion range.

That compares with US\$2 billion the Philippines received last year in foreign direct investment.

Attracted by higher wages, the exodus is fast draining the Philippines of its skilled professional workforce such as teachers and nurses.

According to the World Health Organization, nurses and other medical workers are leaving the Philippines at the rate of at least 15,000 a year for better-paying jobs abroad, threatening the country's health infrastructure.

WHO country representative Jean Marc Olive warned that the exodus was expected to persist until at least 2015, with annual demand for medical workers in the United States and Europe estimated to be about 800,000.

In sectors such as aviation, pilots and engineers are being poached to meet the demand of the world's rapidly expanding airline industry.

Some 250,447 Filipinos make up one of the biggest sectors of the world's merchant marine, while in places like Hong Kong and Singapore they constitute the bulk of domestic workers. The United States is the world's biggest employer with

See Page 22 OVERSEAS WORKERS

Philippines to review military pact with US after rape uproar

January 4, 2007

The Philippines has said it is prepared to amend certain provisions of a 1998 military pact with the United States following public uproar involving a US marine convicted of rape.

Manila and Washington have both "learned good lessons" from the case of Lance Corporal Daniel Smith, which has ignited anti-US sentiment and street protests in this former US colony and tested bilateral relations, presidential spokesman Igancio Bunye said.

Smith was convicted in December of raping a woman in 2005 and sentenced to 40 years in jail.

He was initially held in a local jail, with the courts rejecting custody demands by Washington, which then retaliated by threatening to scrap annual anti-terror war games with Manila called Balikatan.

Under pressure to repair ties with Washington, President Gloria Arroyo's

government recently transferred Smith to the US embassy, angering many Filipinos.

The government has defended the move as legal, citing the terms of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), a treaty signed in 1998 that gives legal protection to American soldiers on official tour here.

Manila is "resolved to review the VFA, and, if warranted, to work with Congress to amend certain provisions thereof in order to prevent future controversies", Bunye said.

"It is now time to move on as we let the wheels of justice take its course," he said. "Meantime, the government will firm up its security arrangements with the US."

A handful of leftists, led by Congresswoman Rissa Hontiveros, staged a rally at a public square to condemn the transfer of Smith, calling Arroyo a "traitor of the nation" and demanding a repeal of the VFA. ■

Lotilla: Oil, LPG prices to go down

January 23, 2007

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla on Tuesday announced that another oil price cut will be implemented this week. Lotilla added that the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is likely to go down in February.

The energy chief said the impending price cuts are results of the dwindling demand on LPG in the world market as the winter season ends.

Local oil firms last week cut the

pump prices of their gasoline and diesel products by P0.50 per liter amid easing global crude rates. These oil companies were Petron Corp., Philipinas Shell, Chevron, Seaoil, Total and Flying V.

"Within this month there will be a series of rollbacks before February because of a large decrease in contract prices," he told DZMM, adding that the LPG price cut could go as high as P3 per kilogram. ■

From Page 17

HOSTAGES

workers not to travel to Nigeria.

"The president has ordered a temporary halt to deployments to Nigeria until the security of our nationals is guaranteed," her spokesman Ignacio Bunye said.

Oyo said Nigeria saw the Philippines as a "friendly nation" and that Arroyo's travel ban would be handled "in a friendly manner".

She further said that Obasanjo "is very concerned and unhappy about the situation and he has said that his government will no longer continue to treat the hostage-takers with kid gloves".

Philippine foreign ministry spokesman Ed Malaya told AFP that Nigeria was one of the biggest employers of Filipino workers in Africa, with some 3,900 Filipinos employed here at the end of 2006.

Earlier Monday, Nigerian officials said they were intensifying efforts to

secure the release of the six Filipino hostages.

According to two different separatist groups in the delta, the men were seized by disgruntled youths from a local community rather than by an armed group in the strictest sense.

No group has so far directly claimed responsibility for the attack. The latest kidnapping brings to nine the number of foreigners currently being held hostage in the region. The three others are two Italians and a Lebanese national.

In the past eight days one Italian, five Chinese and nine South Korean hostages have been freed by their respective captors.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of kidnappings and attacks on oil installations in the Niger Delta since the beginning of last year.

In 2006 more than 60 foreigners, mostly oil workers, were kidnapped, and dozens of Nigerians were killed by militants and bandits. ■

From Page 3

ENGINEER OF DEATH

on the six months I had close contact with Solaiman during our year of captivity, I would say he was the most dangerous of the Abu Sayyaf leaders because he was filled with hate." Who can forget Sali and his group along with 17 of the hostages proceeding to the Jose Torres Memorial Hospital in Lamitan, Basilan, where they seized and detained additional hostages?

Among his catalog of crimes was a series of department store bombings in October 2002 in Zamboanga City that killed at least a dozen civilians, an American soldier and wounded more than 200 others. And there was the 2004 SuperFerry 14 bombing and the 2005 Valentine's Day bomb attacks.

Interviewed by the Associated Press last year, Sulaiman said, "I know that being once a builder of things would make me more efficient in destroying them." He was an engineer -- of death.


Sulaiman probably died with only one regret: that he didn't take many more soldiers with him. That he was hunted down and killed is a genuine achievement for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, a feather in the cap for our elite forces, a tribute to cooperation with the United States. There will be those who wish he'd been captured alive to stand trial, but many more can only be relieved that the man's trail of death and destruction has come to an end.

Sali's own passing, remarkably

enough, might have passed unheralded and unnoticed. He'd actually been buried before photos from the battlefield led to the exhumation of his corpse, and the identification of his remains. It's even possible that had his death remained unrecorded, he might have been reported to escape, never to be seen again, with every future bombing attributed to him. This is how legends are made. Thankfully, his body was identified and a legend has been nipped in the bud. He is now, and should always be, yet another dead fanatic and mass murderer.

But 400 more Abu Sayyaf members remain at large, according to the military's own estimates. The thousands of troops who have been tracking down Sali have many more forced marches and fire fights to endure. And Mindanao must be fought over for many more weeks, months and years, if success is to be measured by picking off Abu Sayyaf bandits one by one.

Or in handfuls, such as last week's operations in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu, in which troops killed seven Abu Sayyaf members, including three sub-commanders -- Bandang Sali, Jundam Jamalul alias Black Killer and Abu Hubaida -- and an Indonesian member of the international terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah identified only as Gufran. Still, it is better to keep them on the run, than to allow them to hide - and plot revenge. ■



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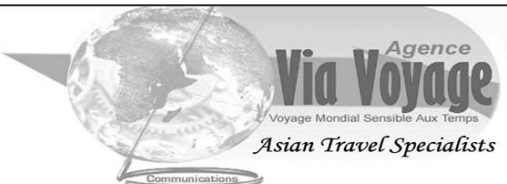
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HEALTH & SCIENCE

Dr. Victor C. Gavino, Ph.D.
Professor, Université de Montréal
Dept. De Nutrition, Faculté de médecine

Citrus and Oral Cancer

A study by a Harvard study group headed by Dr. Nancy Maserejian demonstrated that citrus as fruit or as juice but not green leafy vegetables provides significant protection against oral cancer. The report was published in the July 2006 issue of the American Journal of Epidemiology.

What are the facts concerning oral cancer? Almost all cases of oral cancer develop from what are called oral premalignant lesions. However, one must add that less than half (16-40%) of these oral premalignant lesions actually develop into cancer. Although oral cancer accounts for only 2 to 4% of all cancers in North America, survival from this type of disease figure among the lowest in the major cancer diseases. Of particular concern is that the survival rate in patients who do develop oral cancer has not changed over the past 30 years, 36% for African Americans, and 60% for Caucasians. This means that roughly speaking, less than half of people who develop oral cancer remain alive 5 years after diagnosis. In contrast to the relatively low prevalence of oral cancer in North America, Asian populations show greater susceptibility to this disease. The Centers for Disease Control report that oral cancer accounts for about half of all cancers in Sri Lanka and India. Southeast Asia reports a high incidence as well.

Data concerning the incidence of oral cancer among Filipinos is not as easy to locate. However, we can arrive at a rough idea by comparing cancer data from various sources. In a monograph written by Dr. Angela Prehn in March 1999 for the Northern California Cancer Center, Filipinos living in the U.S. show a total cancer rate of 220 cases per 100,000 population for the years 1988-92, while the rate for Filipinos in Greater Manila was lower at 100 cases per 100,000 over the same period. The World Health Organization (WHO) has data on the incidence of oral cancer among Filipinos living in Manila for the same period 1988-92. The WHO data is classified according to age. Beginning at age 45 and above, there begins a sharp increase in the incidence in oral cancer (combined mouth, lip, tongue and salivary gland). By 60 years of age, the cases of oral cancer among Filipino men have reached 28 cases per 100,000. Combining this statistic with the data published by the Northern California

Cancer Center, we see that oral cancer represents 28% of all cancer cases among Filipino men living in Greater Manila. By age 70, this number goes up to 37%. Therefore, Filipino men living in Manila show similar trends with other Asian countries with respect to the incidence of this disease. The incidence rates are significantly lower for Filipinos living in the United States. The National Cancer Institute reports that for the same period 1988-92, there were 5 to 6 cases of oral cancer per 100,000. Combined with the statistics from the Northern California Cancer Center, this translates to around 2% of all cancers among U.S. Filipinos, identical to that reported for all Americans regardless of ethnicity.

Now the 2001 census of Statistics Canada reported that there are 308,575 self-identified Filipinos in Canada, of whom 18,550 live in the province of Québec. Of those in Québec, 17,890 are in Montréal and surrounding suburbs. Being a Filipino myself, I can almost hear what some in our community might be thinking: Since there are no more than 18,000 Filipinos in Montréal and suburbs, and since there are only 5 cases of oral cancer per 100,000 or one in 20,000 in North America, then Montréal-Filipinos need not worry. Wrong – statistical data are approximates, not exact figures. There can be more, there can be less. And what if, God forbid, you become that one in 20,000?

The best course of action is prevention and early diagnosis, as is true of all cancers. Your dentist, and there are a number in the Filipino community, is the best health professional able to detect oral premalignant lesions. The National Cancer Institute lists some of the signs that we are to watch out for. These are: a mouth sore that does not heal or that bleeds easily; a white or red patch in the mouth does not go away; a lump, thickening or soreness in the mouth, tongue or throat; difficulty in swallowing or chewing food. If you experience any of these signs, a visit to the dentist or the family physician must be the priority.

Going back to the study conducted by Dr. Maserejian concerning citrus and oral cancer, in brief, it was a prospective cohort study conducted among 42,311 male health professionals, about half of whom were dentists. What is a prospective cohort study? It is one of the best experimental designs of this type. You take a large group of people, record their lifestyle characteristics periodically over many years, ideally until

death by disease, accident or old age. Next, you look for associations or correlations between the various lifestyle characteristics and the onset of disease or the cause of death. Specialized statistical methods are employed to isolate the effect of a given lifestyle characteristic versus that of another. The results are at the same time new, confirmatory, and alarming.

First, it is clear that tobacco use, either by smoking or by chewing, significantly and by a large margin increases the incidence of oral premalignant lesions. Secondly, citrus fruit or citrus juice cuts down the occurrence of these lesions by as much as 30 to 40%. In contrast, the consumption of vegetables at whatever quantity has no effect. Of course we quickly add that this is not to say that vegetables are not good. Vegetables have other important beneficial effects: they just aren't related to oral premalignant lesions. What is alarming is that for smokers, green leafy vegetables as well as lycopene-containing vegetables (red as in tomatoes) actually seem to promote the appearance of pre-cancerous lesions in the mouth. This needs further study. It is interesting that several years ago, it was reported that beta-carotene (carrots, for example) seem to be associated with higher cancer incidence and risk among smokers. All these are further evidence that tobacco alters the way the body works in that even the good components in food produce bad things in the smoker's body. Lastly, the data suggest that the earlier in life one begins to eat citrus fruit, the more effective the protection against oral cancer and oral premalignant lesions. One note of caution: grapefruit is not compatible with a certain type of cholesterol-lowering medication. Please ask your physician about it.

In conclusion: eat citrus fruit regularly, stay away from tobacco or stop using it

altogether. Don't miss any of those regular visits to the dentist. The dentist does not just look at your teeth; among other things, he/she also looks for evidence of pre-cancerous lesions inside your mouth. Early detection is critical.

Philippines signs labor agreement with Saskatchewan

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Advanced Education and Employment of the Province of Saskatchewan concerning cooperation in the fields of labor, employment and human resource deployment is now in effect, Ambassador S. Brillantes reported to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The MOU was signed on Monday, 18 December 2006 at the E.D. Feehan High School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, by Labor Secretary Arturo D. Brion (for the Philippine Government) and the Minister Responsible for Immigration Pat Atkinson for the Province of Saskatchewan.

The MOU seeks to facilitate increased recruitment of skilled Filipino workers to Saskatchewan under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program, particularly in occupations with critical labour market needs such as welding, metal fabrication, long haul trucking and health care. The province of Saskatchewan is targeting to attract 5,500 newcomers annually by 2008.



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In a statement issued following the signing ceremony, Minister Atkinson said, "Immigrants from the Philippines area already making significant contributions to our society and economy, and the number of Filipino immigrants coming to the province is increasing dramatically. The Philippines is the number one source country of applications to the

world choose Saskatchewan will build our economy and make life better today for everyone, including new immigrants and build a strong future here for our young people."

Secretary Brion's delegation composed of Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (PDEA) Administrator Rosalinda D. Baldoz and POEA Governing Board Member

Saskatchewan on Sunday, 17 December before proceeding to the dinner hosted by Min. Atkinson at 7:00 p.m. Following the signing of the MOU on Monday morning, 18 December, Sec. Brion again met with Filcom officials.

On Wednesday, 20 December, Sec. Brion and delegation proceeded to Winnipeg for meetings with officials of the Manitoba Ministry of Labour and Immigration as well as the Ministry of Competitiveness, Training and Trade for discussion on possible similar MOUs with the province of Manitoba. The Secretary had fruitful discussions with Manitoba's Minister of Labour and Immigration Nancy Allan, Deputy Minister Jeff Parr, and Assistant Deputy Minister Gerald L. Clement as well as Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade Scott Smith. Mr. Cris Aglugub, a Filipino Canadian Member of Legislative Assembly of Manitoba joined in the discussions. ■

Arroyo and allies attempted to change the 1987 constitution without the consent of the Senate.

Arroyo wanted the Philippines' US-style presidential form of government changed to a parliamentary form, which she argues is more efficient. Opponents say this appears to be a ploy to prolong her stay in power.

The plan was dropped after threats of massive street protests.

"We are deeply bothered by the observation that the current administration seems to have become very comfortable with the idea of simply barreling through with (its) political initiatives and measures with very little regard to constitutional, legal and moral constraints," del Rosario said.

Corruption and alleged electoral fraud, meanwhile, are pulling down prospects in the long term, del Rosario said, noting that the country was at the bottom of various competitive surveys.

"The past two years have been particularly frustrating and discouraging in terms of our country's aspirations towards a regime of greater accountability and good governance," he said.

Arroyo survived two impeachment bids after admitting she called a poll commissioner while votes were being counted for the May, 2004 elections.

The Makati Business Club, once an Arroyo supporter, called for her resignation after the furore over her telephone calls became public. She has denied any wrongdoing.

Henry Schumacher, executive vice president of the European Chamber of Commerce, said intense politicking was driving investors away and sidetracking infrastructure programs.

"2007 will be like 2006. In my view, we will muddle through. Be happy if you don't need government, like consumer-based industries. If you need government for your business in 2007, take an extended leave," he said.

Both businessmen pushed for wide-ranging reforms, with del Rosario pushing for a revamp of the Commission on Elections. ■

Businessmen concerned over Philippines' political outlook

January 19, 2007

Foreign and local businessmen in the Philippines have expressed grave concern over alleged electoral fraud and policy reversals under President Gloria Arroyo.

These factors risked undermining recent successes in fixing the economic and fiscal front, they said in a forum with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines.

Firms have been turned off by a series of policy "flip-flops" involving aviation, oil exploration and anti-corruption said Ramon del Rosario, chairman of the influential Makati Business Club.

He also said the business community was scandalized that



Ambassador Jose S. Brillantes and Embassy officers meet with Secretary Arturo D. Brion at the dinner hosted by the Ambassador. In photo, from left are: Consul Rhenita B. Rodriguez, Consul General Joseph Gerard B. Angeles, Ambassador Brillantes, Consul Eloy B. Bello, Art Brion, Secretary Brion and Antonella Brion.

SINP.

"Skilled workers from the Philippines will give Saskatchewan business owners another means of filling their jobs, which will foster the continued growth of our province," Minister Atkinson added. "Opening our doors and helping people form around

Guillermina Gabor, was met at the Saskatoon airport by Mr. Dean Kush, Economic Immigration Advisor for Saskatchewan's Ministry of Immigration, on their arrival on Saturday, 16 December. The Secretary and his delegation also touched base with the Filipino community in

Marlys Pizza

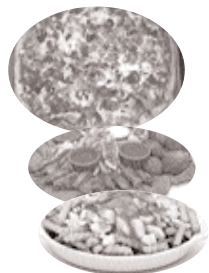
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As many of you may already know, I have decided for personal reasons to close the restaurant for good January 7, 2007.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Filipino community for their generous support over the years. It was greatly appreciated.

Earl Wong"

Community News

PHILIPPINE EMBASSY OTTAWA PRODUCES ITS OWN 'GRANDMASTER'

Ambassador Jose S. Brillantes today added his own accolades to the numerous acclamations received by the Philippine Embassy's Alvar Rosales, Attache for Finance, for taking home the grand prize in the advanced category at the chess tournament jointly organized by the Ottawa Diplomatic Association (ODA) and the

other participants from ten (10) other participating Missions, namely, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Greece, Indonesia, Mexico, Libya, Pakistan and Russia. Mr. Najm us Saqib from the High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Mr. Felipe Izquierdo from the Embassy of the Republic of Ecuador finished second and third in the advanced category, respectively. In the



Ottawa Chess Club (OCC) on 13 January 2007. Second Secretary and Consul Eloy Luis B. Bello won third place in the beginners' group.

Mr. Rosales and Consul Bello both hold the distinction of winning in the first-ever ODA Diplomatic Chess Tournament, which was open to all members of the diplomatic community in Ottawa.

In placing first in the advanced group, Mr. Rosales bested fifteen (15)

beginners' group, Consul Bello placed third to Mr. Rasmus Lumi, charge d'affaires for the Embassy of Estonia, who took the top spot, and Mr. Loukas Tsokos of the Embassy of Greece, who finished second.

Mr. Rosales was awarded a trophy by OCC President Neil James Frarey during ceremonies following the tournament.

Ambassador Brillantes congratulates Presidential Awardee from Ottawa

Ambassador Jose S. Brillantes today personally congratulated Armando V. Baisas, an Ottawa-based culinary sculptor who was bestowed the Pamana ng Pilipino award at the 2006 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas during the Awarding Ceremony and Testimonial Dinner on 07 December 2006, at the Malacanang Palace.

At a simple reception at the Embassy in honor of Mr. Baisas, Ambassador Brillantes congratulated Mr. Baisas on behalf of the Filipino community in Canada for being one of only sixteen (16) Pamana ng Pilipino awardees chosen from among hundreds of nominees around the world. Mr. Baisas was nominated by the Awards Committee in Ottawa composed of Ambassador Brillantes as Chairman, Minister and Consul General Joseph Gerard B. Angeles, Vice Chairman, Second Secretary and Consul Rhenita B. Rodriguez, Member, as well as Atty. Alicia Natividad, Dr.

Ruby L. De Guzman-Formoso and Mr. Paul Imperial, all past Presidential Awardees, as members.

Chef Baisas, a native of Paete, Laguna, where his skills in carving were developed and honed, first displayed excellence in culinary sculpture during a stint with the Hilton International Hotels Group as kitchen artist and garde manger in various Hilton hotels in Cyprus, Egypt, Kenya and Sudan. Chef Baisas has since joined Le Cordon Bleu Ottawa Culinary Arts Institute as master chef sculptor and instructor.

His unique talent in the intricate art of ice and food carving has earned for Chef Baisas numerous awards and recognition. Among these are gold medals for three consecutive years, from 1995 to 1997, at the Olympiad de Cuisiniers in Montreal, Quebec; first honors in ice carving at the Euro Expo, Coupe du Monde de la Patisserie in Lyon, France; first place in the Individual Block Ice Carving category in 2000, the Carver's Choice trophy in 2002 and the People's

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Notice to the Public

This is to inform the public that the following persons are no longer connected with Marche Divisoria Cubao, a cooperative store managed by the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative:



Jose Gaviola

member of the board of directors
Mr. Eugene Salinas - former volunteer and appointed bookkeeper.
Mr. Jose Gaviola and his wife,



Adelia Gayiol



Eugene Salins

Mr. Jose Gaviola, former president and store manager
Mrs. Adelia Gayol, former

Mrs. Adelia Gayol, jointly submitted their irrevocable letter of resignation on August 14, 2006. Mr. Eugene Salinas submitted his irrevocable letter of resignation on September 6, 2006. Their respective resignations were acted upon, resolved and accepted by the board of directors concerned and as such was presented to the general assembly meeting held on October 22, 2006 at the basement of said Marche Divisoria Cubao.

Now, be it known that any business transactions made, proposed and entered into by these persons mentioned above for or in behalf of Marche Divisoria and the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative, are void ab initio and will not be honored by the said store and its management.

Choice award in 2005 at the Winterlude International Ice Carving Competition in Ottawa, Ontario; and the prestigious Carver's Choice award at the International Ice Sculpture Competition in 1993 in Plymouth, Michigan.se No.

Ambassador Brillantes leads Filipino Community at homelands gathering

15 January 2007

Ambassador Jose S. Brillantes led the Filipino community at the annual Homelands Gathering (Celebration Multiculturelle) on Sunday, Jan. 15, 2006, 2:30 p.m., at the Notre Dame Cathedral in Ottawa. His Grace Marcel Gervais, Archbishop of Ottawa, made special mention of the Filipino community at the beginning of this unique Mass, an occasion designed to gather a cross-section of the various communities that comprise the Catholic Church in Ottawa and to celebrate the diversity in the cultural landscape of Canada due to the influx of immigrants and refugees.

Decked in their respective national attires, participants joined a procession of all communities present with their national flags and platters of food native to their home countries. Carrying the Philippine flag, Ambassador Brillantes joined other dignitaries who also carried their

respective flags at the sanctuary during the celebration of the Mass. Consul General Joseph Gerard B. Angeles and Consul Rhenita B. Rodriguez, with Filipino community leader Sonia Del Rosario, represented the Filipino community in the offertory procession. They conveyed special greetings from the Filipino community to Archbishop Gervais at the end of the Mass and thanked him for the special welcome he accorded to the Filipino community. Readings were read in Congolese and German, while the Gospel was proclaimed in Filipino by Deacon Rudy De Castro, representing the Filipino community. Intentions were read in Croatian, Chinese, Spanish and Korean.

Presided by Archbishop Marcel Gervais, this annual Homelands Mass is aimed at celebrating cultural diversity in Canada and in the Catholic Church, and recognizing the numerous contributions of the different cultural communities who have come to Canada from foreign lands.

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Global Perspectives



Managing the age of transition

"On the faces of the aged there are wrinkles made by sympathy, others by strong pure thought, and others are carved by passion: who cannot distinguish them? With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful, and softly mellowed, like the setting sun. I have recently seen a philosopher on his death-bed. He was not old except in years. He died as sweetly and peacefully as he had lived"

...From, As a Man Thinketh, by James Allen.

I participated in an International Experts Meeting on TEVET for the Aging Society, 4-8 December 2006, in Manila, Philippines, organized by the Colombo Plan Staff College for Technician Education (CPSC). For my part, I presented a paper on Managing the Age of Transition that included the following items that are particularly relevant to Canadians.

There is a group in my hometown that is called "The Ottawa Creative Thinking Group" and for the past couple of years they have been kind enough to include me in their meetings and deliberations. Recently the group held its Tenth Anniversary celebrations and one of the members, Fred G. Thompson, made a presentation on "Getting the Most Out of the Rest of Your Life". Fred is a very spry and creative 93-year-old who oozes elder wisdom, continues to publish books on his work as a long-term futurist, designs websites for others, has his own website and his own Blog. Fred says that to get the most out of the rest of your life—at any age, you simply must have a clear intention to place high priority on diet,

exercise and attitude. These three things are of equally high priority because they are necessary to enable one—at any age, to deal with the other three main factors that affect how we manage the age of transition, namely, managing relationships, finances and health.

As we consider the complexities of managing the age of transition, it is clear that one of the most important transitions is to retirement but that is not so clear cut anymore. For example, in November 2006, in the Province of Ontario, Canada, newspapers published a notice under the following headline:

"The choice of when to retire will soon be yours." The notice showed that December 12, 2006 would mark the end of mandatory retirement in Ontario. However, it remains to be seen how this will be carried out since employers, including the Federal Government have a compulsory retirement age, and on top of that, there is strong resistance to employing older workers in many organizations—in spite of the fact that so many can demonstrate the value of elder wisdom in the workplace. Furthermore, as far as the work place goes, it seems that when people retire their files are "archived" and they are "counted with the dead".

In 2006, more than 40 percent of Canadians polled in a global workplace survey said they have been discriminated against when applying for jobs. And ageism has overtaken race and sex discrimination. Older and younger age groups reported the greatest prejudice when applying for a job with 63.6 percent of respondents

55 and older, and 49.3 percent of those 20 and younger reporting discrimination. Canada's levels of discrimination were relatively low, with Sweden, Thailand and Singapore recording the highest rates. This is a disturbing trend because it comes at a time when we are facing a combination of an ageing population and skills shortages. Canada's biggest job site on the Internet; "workopolis.com" is placing emphasis on the merits of employing retired people for one main reason and that is reliability.

In Canada, in 2006, there has arisen a shortage of executives and companies are increasingly looking to "interim executives" to cover for absences or handle special projects. Highly skilled, these people cover for the temporary absence of a senior employee, or the sudden departure of a senior full-time, or accomplish a critical task that employees don't have the skills or the time to do. These interim executives are different from the traditional consultant because they actually carry out the work of the executive in implementation, whereas the consultant would normally carry out work such as to develop a strategy and deliver a report.

Another new term has appeared in newspapers to describe a situation for a growing number of North American "Baby Boomers" and that is "reto-retirement". That is a long work career followed by part-time work and a relatively short period of idleness in old age. Three factors drive reto-retirement. The first is that Boomers can expect to live longer than any previous generation. The second is that Boomers have been poor savers and have been lulled into a false sense of security by seeing the previous generation enjoying pensions and the fact that they put saving ahead of

spending during their working life while the Boomers have not saved for retirement. The third factor is that Boomers may not be able to count on an inheritance since many of their parents will need all of their money to finance their own longer lives, and some boomers may also be expected to help ageing parents financially in the last few years when health-care costs are escalating. Increasingly it appears that Boomers may not be able to rely exclusively on government-provided pensions and health benefits because productivity is declining and the ageing workforce is shrinking to the point where the levels of benefits can not be sustained by the segment of the population still working—especially if too many are in low-paying jobs.

Recently, Economists have concluded that, in only 31 years out of the 'life cycle' that is currently based on a life span of 80 years, does the average North American earn enough money at work to pay for the goods and services that he or she consumes. The cross-over takes place, on average, at ages 26 and 57. Before 26 and after 57, they live off their parents, live out of their savings or their consumption is subsidized by the state. However, there is no free lunch. Levels of consumption are as follows: At age 5 years = \$20,000 per year; at age 50 = \$32,500 per year; and at age 85 = \$40,000 per year

However, the cost of schooling has been rising and the length of time preparing for work has been increasing. At the same time people have been retiring earlier, living longer, and drawing on health services whose costs have steadily increasing. Population growth in working age

See Page 22

Transition

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Armando V. Baisas, an Ottawa-based culinary sculptor who was bestowed the Pamana ng Pilipino award at the 2006 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations, holds his plaque during a simple reception at the Phil. Embassy.

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From Page 21

TRANSITION

group has not kept pace resulting in severe financial problems in the system. So now, Canada faces a debt crunch because governments have made commitments which cannot be serviced under the present and emerging circumstances. Recently, a report was released that shows that federal, provincial, and local governments have been 'generous' in taking on commitments and obligations, such as public health and education, but the current and projected levels of productivity cannot support these commitments.

As results of trends over the past few years, Canada has two serious economic issues: a chronic lack of productivity growth and an ageing and shrinking work force. As a result the Provincial and Federal Governments have undertaken commitments that will be extremely difficult to meet unless meaningful reforms are implemented. The problem one of demographics: Since these programs were created in the 1950s and 1960s birthrates have declined; income growth has stagnated; and mortality rates have decreased. The latest figures available, last week, show that Canada has dropped to 17th place in terms of productivity in the among the 30 member countries of the OECD. Overall Canadian productivity is now at 77.7 percent that of the United States, and looks to be rolled over by China and India. Some older folks are "saying let

us help". Those who helped to build the system for comprehensive and integrated human capital development that enabled Canada to become one of the Group of Seven richest countries in the world would be helpful. The present trend to diminishing productivity can only be reversed by a return to competency based instruction and education more in tune with the reality of productivity, but this will be difficult to do at this time.

In the meantime, an over-educated underclass is a squandered resource that strains relationships, tears at the social fabric and invites bitterness, alienation or worse. One in five university graduates work at jobs that require only high school or less. Most of the underemployed are young workers. They are also immigrants and people with commerce, arts or humanities degrees. Many work in the low-paying retail or wholesale sector and many toil in silent frustration. Skilled workers in trades are in short supply but the emphasis has been on higher education that is not related to either the employment aspirations of the students or the employers demand for competence. Immigrants automatically have their qualifications undervalued and downgraded.

Aggressive and misguided competition in promotion of education has produced an army of University Students. Enrollment in Canada is now at one million raising the question: what will all these students do with their lives? In 2004/05, out of one million

university students, 757,000 were full time and the rest part time. This represents a 20 percent increase in five years despite rising tuition costs. Women are now 59 percent of undergraduates and 51 percent of graduate students. However a disturbing fact is that enrollments by fields of study bear no relationship to "where the jobs are". Also, in 2004/5, another significant factor contributing to the growth in enrollment was the number of foreign students. They represented about a quarter of the growth in total enrollment from the previous year and made up 7.4 % of the total enrollment, nearly double the proportion in 1994/95

What have we learned from past experience? For those of us with a long memory the situation today is reminiscent of an earlier age. The industrialization of Canada began during the Second World War and following the war, the Canadian Department of Employment and Immigration was successful in bringing about 2.5 million skilled immigrants to Canada by 1959. The skilled workforce spoke with a foreign accent and chances for up-dating and up-grading were minimal. When Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian, observed that the (then) new electronic technology "recreates the world in the image of a global village", like most Canadians I was functionally illiterate in terms of ability to use the emerging information technology. Then, in 1960, the Federal

Government passed the Technical Education and Vocational Training Act that provided funding for 75 percent of the cost of education and training that would respond directly to the market-driven demand for human resources. From 1960 to 1967, the Federal Government's share of the total investment was \$1.17 Billion. By 1967, Canada had moved from middle-income country status to one of the Group of Seven as one of the richest countries in the World. For over a decade, Canadians were the most productive people in the World. Then, in the 1980s, the situation in Canada changed. Human resource development that had previously been Competency-based and driven by the employment market, became qualification-based and driven by educational institutions, resulting in the present imbalance in the human capital base whereby there is a dearth of human resources in the, so called, productive sectors where wealth is created.

In the short term immigration can help, but integration must be improved and, ultimately, we must seriously consider the internationalization of education and training as the key to planning prosperity together. Otherwise we fit Albert Einstein's definition of insanity by: "Endlessly repeating the same process while hoping to get a different result". ■

From Page 16

OVERSEAS WORKERS

2.7 million Filipinos, as of December 2004. Figures for 2005 and 2006 have yet to be compiled.

The Middle East employed 1.6 million Filipinos, with one million employed in Saudi Arabia alone in sectors ranging from the oil and gas industries, to building, technology and health care.

According to government data, Filipinos are employed in at least 194 countries and territories around the

world. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo slapped a temporary ban Monday on workers traveling to Nigeria for employment after the weekend kidnapping of six Filipinos.

Unknown assailants took six Filipino oil workers and one local staffer hostage on a cargo ship in the Niger Delta, the latest in a string of kidnappings to hit Nigeria's multibillion-dollar oil industry. ■

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Is this the end for Abu Sayyaf?

January 23, 2007

The Islamic militant group Abu Sayyaf has long been seen as the most radical of the separatist movements in the southern Philippines.

Estimated to have fewer than 300 core members, it has made up for its small size by the ruthlessness of its actions - kidnapping Western tourists for ransom and carrying out various high-profile bomb attacks.

But with the recent deaths of two senior Abu Sayyaf leaders, analysts are wondering whether the group might now be a spent force.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo recently said a "mortal turning point" had been reached in the fight against this shadowy organisation.

"They're definitely a much diminished threat than they once were, and they're on the run right now," agreed Professor Zachary Abuza, a US-based expert on South East Asian militant groups.

But while Abu Sayyaf has definitely been set back, there is still some doubt

about whether more militants will emerge from the lawless jungles of the southern Philippines to fill the gaps.



Philippine troops launched a new offensive last August

"They're not just going to give up - it's still relatively easy for them to find new recruits," said Prof Abuza.

Abu Sayyaf - which means *Sword of God* in Arabic - began as a splinter group from the less radical Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1991. Led by the now deceased Afghan Mujahideen veteran Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, it quickly established a reputation for using extreme tactics to further its aim of

establishing an Islamic state in the southern Philippines, especially on the island of Jolo.

Abu Sayyaf has long been a thorn in the side of the Philippines military, and an offensive against the group in 2002 - called Operation Endgame - clearly failed to live up to its name.

But since US-backed Philippine troops launched a new operation last August, dubbed Oplan Ultimatum, they have netted several major Abu Sayyaf figures.

First Khaddafy Janjalani - the group's nominal leader and brother of Abdurajak Janjalani - was reported to have been killed in September. DNA tests confirmed the death on 20 January. Then came the news last week that another key member, Abu Sulaiman, had been fatally wounded in a gun battle.

Both had \$5m bounties on their heads, but analysts agree that, of the two, Sulaiman's death was probably the most significant because he was behind so many of the group's major plots and attacks - including the bombing of a passenger ferry in 2004, which killed at least 100 people.



The military recently announced the death of Abu Sulaiman

"Abu Sayyaf will definitely have difficulties finding someone with the leadership skills of Abu Sulaiman," said military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Bartolome Bacarro. The army says that so far, Oplan Ultimatum has "neutralised" five senior Abu Sayyaf leaders as well as about 70 other members.

Abu Sayyaf is "disorganised and suffering from a major leadership vacuum," said Lt Col Bacarro. "We will keep up the tempo and take advantage of that. We're confident we can finally put an end to the menace of Abu Sayyaf." ■

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